



*The First English Translation of Cesare Beccaria's  
On Crimes and Punishments.  
Uncovering the Editorial and Political Contexts*  
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**ABSTRACT.** Following the trails of Pietro Molini, an Italian publisher residing in London whose name appears in one of Alessandro Verri's letters to his brother Pietro, and of John Almon, the publisher of the first English translation of Cesare Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments* (1767), this article sheds light on the editorial, political and cultural environments in which the translation came into being. It also illustrates how, when Beccaria and Verri were in Paris in October and November 1766, they repeatedly met John Wilkes, who was living there in exile.

**KEYWORDS.** Cesare Beccaria; John Wilkes; Book history; Translation history; Eighteenth-century British history and culture.

Cesare Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene* was first published in 1764, and instantly galvanized the attention of European intellectuals and sovereigns, quickly becoming a bestseller<sup>1</sup>. This short treatise challenged contemporary criminal justice systems, placing the subject in a broad philosophical and social perspective.

In 1766 Beccaria's text appeared in French, translated by Enlightenment *philosophe* André Morellet, who contributed to its further dissemination and hence to the spread of its author's reputation.

The English version was printed in London in 1767, and made a conspicuous impact in the English speaking countries. A recent book has shown how *On Crimes and Punishment* penetrated the circles of America's Founding Fathers, shaping «the very fabric of the American Revolution»<sup>2</sup>. Whereas its reception in Britain has been relatively ne-

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank John Dunkley for discussing parts of this article with me.

<sup>2</sup> J.D. Bessler, *The Birth of American Law: An Italian Philosopher and the American Revolution*, Carolina Academic Pr., Durham 2014. For the quotation, see pp. XIV-

glected<sup>3</sup>, and much is still shrouded in mystery. Unknown are the cultural and political environments in which the translation came into being and the people involved in the project. Information is similarly scarce about its early reception among intellectuals, members of parliament and judges, at a time when the *Bloody Code* was still the core of the English penal system and general warrants, all-powerful judges and the scaffold were the means to achieve deterrence.

The aim of this article is to shed light on the editorial, political and cultural environments in which the first English translation of *Dei delitti e delle pene* came into being. On this scene, a man will stand out: John Wilkes, controversial politician and popular hero. Wilkes had been exiled and lived in Paris, where Beccaria and Alessandro Verri repeatedly met him when they were invited there by Parisian enlightenment *philosophes*. The article also uncovers information about the texts the translation was based upon.

xv. In his book, Bessler amply shows how wide was the presence of Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments* in the American Colonies.

<sup>3</sup> There are of course exceptions. For instance A.J. Draper, *Cesare Beccaria's influence on English discussions of punishment, 1764-1789*, «History of European Ideas», 26, 2000, pp. 177-199; L. Radzinowicz, *Cesare Beccaria and the English System of Criminal Justice. A Reciprocal Relationship*, in *Atti del convegno internazionale su Cesare Beccaria promosso dall'Accademia delle scienze di Torino nel secondo centenario dell'opera "Dei delitti e delle pene"* (4-6 ott. 1964), Accademia delle scienze, Torino 1966 («Memoria dell'Accademia delle Scienze di Torino, Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche»), s. IV, n. 9), pp. 57-66; and H. Dunthorne, *Beccaria in Britain*, in D.H. Howell, K.O. Morgan (eds.), *Crime, Protest and Police in Modern British Society, Essays in Memory of David J.V. Jones*, Univ. of Wales Pr., Cardiff 1999, pp. 73-82. To my knowledge, however, little more than passing references to Beccaria (albeit many, as for instance in the influential books by J.M. Beattie) can be found in Britain before Bentham. As to his presence in Bentham, H.L.A. Hart, *Beccaria and Bentham*, *Atti del convegno internazionale su Cesare Beccaria promosso dall'Accademia delle scienze di Torino*, pp. 21-29; and Bessler, *The Birth of American Law*, chap. 5. A history of the Italian post-war perspective on Beccaria has recently been drawn by Giuseppe Ricuperati in *Franco Venturi, Luigi Firpo e la riscoperta storiografica di Beccaria*, in V. Ferrone, G. Ricuperati (eds.), *Il caso Beccaria. A 250 anni dalla pubblicazione del "Dei delitti e delle pene"*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2016, pp. 25-61.

1. *Alessandro Verri's letters from Paris and London.*

In October 1766, almost two and a half years after the first publication on Italian territory of his *Dei delitti e delle pene*, Cesare Beccaria, whose fame was still soaring, accepted an invitation from the French *philosophes* to travel to Paris. There, he was to meet with André Morellet, the encyclopedist and translator of his work which had appeared in French ten months earlier under the title of *Traité des délits et des peines*<sup>4</sup>. From Paris, Beccaria was to continue on to London. Accompanying him on his journey was his friend, Count Alessandro Verri, whose letters home to his brother, Pietro, give us a glimpse of the intellectual milieu where the Italian travellers were welcomed with open arms, and where the *philosophes* vied with each other to win the favor of the celebrated Italian author. Alessandro writes:

Oggi, giorno seguente alla mia venuta, ho già conosciuto Diderau [sic], Tomas [sic], Alembert e il Barone d'Aulbac [sic], da cui abbiamo pranzato. L'Abbé Morellet ce li ha fatti conoscere tutti al momento<sup>5</sup>.

Although in private their relationship was headed for rupture -- Cesare was demanding, depressed, and very anxious about leaving his young wife alone in Milan, while Alessandro, exasperated with his friend, grew more and more irritable -- their days were filled with dinners, social engagements, theatre performances: Morellet was the «general agent», as Alessandro called him<sup>6</sup>. for their relations with French society. «Il mio amico fa tutt'ora una brillante figura», Alessandro writes a week later, «è festeggiato e venerato»<sup>7</sup>. He continues:

<sup>4</sup> Published on December 27, 1765, but dated 1766. See L. Firpo, *Le edizioni italiane del Dei delitti e delle pene*, in C. Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene*, a cura di G. Francioni, Mediobanca, Milano 1984 (Edizione nazionale delle opere di Cesare Beccaria, diretta da L. Firpo e G. Francioni, I), pp. 455 f.

<sup>5</sup> «Today, the day after my arrival, I have already met Diderau [sic], Tomas [sic], Alembert and Baron d'Aulbac [sic], at whose home we dined. Abbé Morellet introduced them all at once» (Lett. of 19 October 1766 from Alessandro to Pietro, in P. e A. Verri, *Viaggio a Parigi e Londra (1766-1767)*, a cura di G. Gaspari, Adelphi, Milano 1980, p. 24. Hereafter cited as *VPL*. All translations from this book are mine.

<sup>6</sup> *VPL*, p. 37.

<sup>7</sup> «My friend is still a great success, he is feted and venerated» (*VPL*, p. 38).

Le case ch'io frequento sono queste: Barone d'Olbach [sic]; Mademoiselle l'Épinace: vi trovo sempre Alambert [sic]; Madame Necker; la contessa Boufler [sic]; l'ambasciatore del Portogallo. Si sta bell'e bene dappertutto. Si mangia divinamente. Si parla molto: io poco, al mio solito; si ragiona come si può, ma il tuono è sempre di buona compagnia. Ho conosciuto M.r Marmontel<sup>8</sup>.

Despite his social success in this illustrious company, Cesare, increasingly restless, decided to cut short his journey at the end of November and return to Milan, while his former friend went on alone to London. Their friendship was destroyed, felt Alessandro. And his brother Pietro would soon come to feel the same disappointment over Beccaria.

Alessandro's letters from London are full of praise for a city that amazes him. He is impressed by its sheer size («illuminata di notte sei miglia all'intorno»<sup>9</sup>), its bustling trade, manufacturing and shops, its remarkable Exchange, and its arts and theatre in full swing. Moreover, he lays constant emphasis on the freedom and tolerance of the English. He is in his element.

On 16 December 1766, Alessandro writes from London about Beccaria's book:

... qui è stato stampato in Italiano dal Molini in casa di cui io sono attualmente, il quale è Fratello di quel Molini che ha stampato lo stesso libro a Parigi; ma non ha avuto grande spaccio; cosicché ha mandate molte copie a Parigi dove poi si sono spacciate<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> «I am often received at the homes of Baron d'Olbach [sic]; Mademoiselle l'Épinace: I always find Alambert [sic] there; Madame Necker; the Countess Boufler [sic]; the ambassador of Portugal. It is delightful everywhere and the food is heavenly. One talks a great deal, although, as usual, I only a little. One reasons as one can. The tone is always good company. I have met Mr. Marmontel» (*VPL*, p. 47).

<sup>9</sup> «All lit up at night within a radius of six miles» (*VPL*, 138). For Alessandro Verri in England, see the article by L. De Michelis, «Letters from London: A 'Bridge' between Italy and Europe», in F. O'Gorman, L. Guerra (eds.), *The Centre and the Margins in Eighteenth-Century British and Italian Cultures*, Cambridge Scholars Publ., Newcastle upon Tyne 2013), pp. 37-55.

<sup>10</sup> «Here it was printed in Italian by Molini, at whose home I am currently staying, and who is the brother of the Molini who printed this same book in

The Molini whom Alessandro Verri mentions here, was Pietro Molini, a London publisher and bookseller, whose shop and home were then on Bridge Street. Pietro lived there with his brother Jacopo<sup>11</sup>, but it is Pietro that Alessandro more often mentions in his letters and it is with him that he becomes friends.

In order to sketch the scene into which the first English translation of *Dei delitti e delle pene* was born, it is worthwhile inquiring who this publisher-bookseller was. Pietro Molini belonged to an important family of Florentine publishers and booksellers<sup>12</sup> who, besides the main branch in Florence and the London branch, had also a seat in Paris. The three branches were set up at the beginning of the 1760s. In 1763, Giovan Claudio Molini is an apprentice in Paris at André-François Le Breton's, one of the publishers of the *Encyclopédie*, and three years later he starts his own activity in that city. In 1764, Giuseppe Molini sets up shop in Florence, and in the same year we found news of Pietro Molini's buying books for his English clients, an activity he will continue all his life alongside the publishing and bookselling activities<sup>13</sup>. In

Paris, but not many copies have sold, so he sent many copies to Paris where they later sold out» (*VPL*, p. 148).

<sup>11</sup> On the brothers Molini (whose personal names, however, are not mentioned by Alessandro) see *VPL*, notes to letters XXVIII, XXIX, XLV, on pp. 582, 584, 612. For information also about eighteenth-century publishing in London of Italian books, see S. Parkin, «Italian Printing in London, 1553-1900», in B. Taylor (ed.), *Foreign-Language Printing in London, 1500-1900* (Boston Spa and London: The British Library, 2002), pp. 133-175. Although not directly focused on Italian publishers active in London, for general information on the dissemination of Italian books in London, A.G. Cavagna, *Eighteenth-Century Italian Books in London: The Presence of Italian Regional Publishing in the Collections of the British Library*, in R. Loretelli, F. O'Gorman (eds.), *Britain and Italy in the Long Eighteenth Century. Literary and Art Theories*, Cambridge Scholars Publ., Newcastle upon Tyne 2010, pp. 120-144.

<sup>12</sup> Information in this article about the Molinis, if not differently stated, is taken from R. Pasta, *Tra Firenze, Napoli e l'Europa: Giuseppe Molini senior*, in A.M. Rao (a cura di), *Editoria e cultura a Napoli nel XVIII secolo*, Liguori, Napoli 1998, pp. 251-283.

<sup>13</sup> See the list of books he bought for William Hunter in 1764 (University of Glasgow, Special Collections: MS Hunter H204). He also had an important role in the acquisition of the Pinelli library in 1787. For this, see *Journal of James Robertson, bookseller, of a tour to Italy in company with Peter Molini for the purpose of examining the Pinelli library* (B[ritish] L[ibrary, London] Add. MS 38837). During that jour-

1765 he published a very rich catalogue of Latin, French and Italian books for sale<sup>14</sup>.

In Paris, Giovan Claudio was closely monitored by the Police for selling banned books; and for the same reason Pietro was under the eye of the Italian Inquisition. In fact, in 1765 a letter sent from London to the Congregazione del S. Offizio accused Filippo Mazzei of smuggling banned books, explaining that he used to send those books to Italy without their front pages, while he brought the front pages through a different route. In this operation, said the letter, his ‘right arm’ was Pietro Molini<sup>15</sup>.

As is well-known, Filippo Mazzei will have a role in the dissemination of Beccaria’s thinking among America’s Founding Fathers<sup>16</sup>, discussing *Dei delitti e delle pene* at length with Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, when they were drawing up the *Declaration of Independence*. Mazzei had lived in London some time before 1760, becoming affluent enough to afford several visits to his native Tuscany. As a consequence of that letter from London to the Congregazione del S. Offizio, Mazzei was exiled from Tuscany. Back to London around mid-1766, he contacted Benjamin Franklin and other members of the American colonies then residing in London<sup>17</sup>. In some letters, both by the Inquisition prelates and by Mazzei’s friends, there appear the names of Marco Coltellini and Giuseppe Aubert<sup>18</sup>, the Livorno printers of *Dei delitti e delle pene*,

ney, Pietro Molini saw other libraries as well, and to the same purpose. I would like to thank Stephen Parkin for having drawn my attention to the two above mentioned manuscripts.

<sup>14</sup> *A Catalogue of Latin, French and Italian Books ... to be sold cheap ... by P. Molini*, London 1765 [Gale, Farmington Hills (MI) 2010].

<sup>15</sup> *Filippo Mazzei: scelta di scritti e lettere*, a cura di M. Marchione, Ediz. del Palazzo, Prato 1984, vol. I, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> E. Tortarolo, *Illuminismo e rivoluzioni. Biografia politica di Filippo Mazzei*, Franco Angeli, Milano 1986, and Bessler, *The Birth of American Law*. For Mazzei’s letters to Jefferson and Adams, see Marchione, *Filippo Mazzei*.

<sup>17</sup> Franklin met also Pietro’s brother Giovan Claudio, as proved by a letter he sent in 1768, where he wrote that he had sent something «to the care of M. Molini, a Bookseller near the Quai des Augustins». Bessler, *The Birth of American Law*, p. 177.

<sup>18</sup> Marchione, *Filippo Mazzei*, pp. 7-10, 15, 18-19.

who in 1765 were engaged in the laborious and prolonged printing of the fifth edition<sup>19</sup>.

If such were Pietro Molini's London and Italian environments, it is more than plausible that, as Renato Pasta hypothesized, he was the publisher of the English edition of *Dei delitti e delle pene* mentioned in Alessandro Verri's letter<sup>20</sup>. It would then be one of the two sixth editions, the other being known to have been issued in Paris in the same year 1766 by Pietro Molini's brother Giovan Claudio<sup>21</sup>.

Evidently, Pietro Molini belonged in a milieu which was active in the dissemination of enlightenment ideas, and which in 1765-66 was starting to have contacts with the representatives of the American colonies in Europe. Alessandro Verri mentions him again more than once and, interestingly, on 15 January 1767 he announces to his brother:

Il libro di Beccaria si traduce attualmente in Inglese per la prima [volta], ed è interessato alla stampa il mio ospite Molini. Ne porterò meco una copia a Parigi perché esce alla luce fra pochi giorni<sup>22</sup>.

On 8 February, in reply to Alessandro's letter, Pietro Verri writes: «Ho fatto sapere a Beccaria che la sua opera è tradotta in Inglese e fra pochi giorni sarà pubblicata»<sup>23</sup>. On 26 February, Pietro writes again to Alessandro who on the 16<sup>th</sup> had embarked for Calais. «Per mezzo di Frisi», he asks, «mandami un esemplare inglese dei *Delitti* e le critiche fattevi costì»<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Which will be in print in March 1766. Firpo, *Le edizioni italiane del Dei delitti e delle pene*, p. 456. Coltellini, himself an intellectual, was the owner of the printing shop and Aubert was in charge of it.

<sup>20</sup> Pasta, *Tra Firenze, Napoli e l'Europa*, p. 261.

<sup>21</sup> Firpo, however, asserted that both sixth editions were printed on French paper (*Le edizioni italiane del Dei delitti e delle pene*, pp. 456, 466-476).

<sup>22</sup> «Beccaria's book is being translated into English for the first time and my host Molini is involved in this operation. I will bring a copy of it with me to Paris because it will see the light in a few days» (*VPL*, p. 249).

<sup>23</sup> «I have informed Beccaria that his work has been translated into English and will be published in a few days» (*VPL*, p. 259).

<sup>24</sup> «By way of Frisi send me a copy of the English edition of *Dei delitti* and any reviews it has received» (Lett. of 26-28 February, in *VPL*, p. 320). Paolo Frisi was an Italian philosopher and mathematician. He was at that time already a member of the Paris Academy of Sciences, of the Royal Society, of the Imperial Academy of Saint Petersburg, and of the Berlin and Stockholm Academies.

How was Molini involved in the translation? Certainly not as a publisher, since *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments* (the title under which *Dei delitti e delle pene* appeared in English) was issued in London by another publisher, John Almon. Neither was he involved as a printer: Pietro Molini was not a printer, not even of the books he published under his own name. We must therefore presume that he was involved in some forms of collaboration either with the publisher Almon or with the unknown translator. He might have provided the Italian text, or supplied information about its publishing history for the translator's preface, or helped with the actual translation. Molini was Italian and knew English well, so he was well-suited for this task.

At this point, it is worthwhile trying to know who was John Almon.

## 2. *John Almon, publisher and journalist.*

*An Essay on Crimes and Punishments* was clearly very successful, since in the same year 1767 an Irish edition was printed in Dublin for John Exshaw and, in the years immediately following, more editions appeared in London, Ireland, Scotland, and America<sup>25</sup>. This first translation was undoubtedly the main channel of dissemination of Beccaria's bestseller throughout the English-speaking world<sup>26</sup>.

The first reviews of the English text appeared in April 1767, confirming what Verris' letters suggest, namely that the translation was published in February<sup>27</sup>. They were for the most part positive, and the author found

<sup>25</sup> The British Library catalogue contains fourteen editions issued before 1790.

<sup>26</sup> Bessler gives valuable information about the American readers of *On Crimes and Punishments* throughout his *The Birth of American Law*. For example, the libraries of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams contained copies of the Italian text, while George Washington read Beccaria in the English translation (Bessler, p. 186). Others probably read André Morellet's French translation, which was also printed in America. David Hume seems to have read Beccaria's work in both the original and the French translation. For Hume and the French *philosophes* at the time of Alessandro Verri's stay in Paris, see: E. Mazza, *Hume's 'Meek' Philosophy among the Milanese*, in M. Frasca-Spada, P.J.E. Kail (eds.), *Impressions of Hume*, Oxford Univ. Pr., Oxford 2005.

<sup>27</sup> *An Essay on Crimes and Punishment* is mentioned in the column «A Catalogue of New Books» of the April issue of *The Scots Magazine*. The book is listed neither



himself praised as «the humane and benevolent Beccaria», «the acute Reasoner», «so able and liberal a writer», «ingenious», «elegant»<sup>28</sup>.

But who was John Almon, whose name does not appear in Alessandro Verri's letters from London? He was not an ordinary publisher, bookseller or printer; and his activity was by no means limited to that. He was also a passionate political activist and a prominent journalist, who struggled for liberty throughout his life. Almon's life gives us more than one lead in our inquiry<sup>29</sup>.

Almon was born on 17 December 1737 and from 1751 to 1758 was apprenticed to a Liverpool printer, bookseller and binder. He then became a seaman, travelling to continental ports, and visiting The Hague, Cagliari, and Civitavecchia. On his return, he settled in London, where he found employment as a printer and bookseller. Soon he began to work as a political pamphleteer, and his abilities caught the attention of Charles Green Say, printer and proprietor of the Whig newspaper *Gazetteer*. In January 1761, Say hired Almon as a journalist, hoping to stir up some competition with the *Public Ledger*, where Oliver Goldsmith was employed<sup>30</sup>.

in the February (which excludes January as the month of publication) nor in the March issues. However, the column for new book in the March issue is all taken up by a summary of Adam Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, and ends informing that «The rest of the books are deferred».

<sup>28</sup> H. Dunthorne, *Beccaria in Britain*, in D.H. Howell and K.O. Morgan (eds.), *Crime, Protest and Police in Modern British Society, Essays in Memory of David J.V. Jones*, Univ. of Wales Pr., Cardiff 1999, pp. 73-82.

<sup>29</sup> The main sources of information on John Almon are his own autobiography, *Memoirs of a Late Eminent Bookseller*, s.e., London 1790 (Garland Publ., London 1974) (Inside: *Memoirs of John Almon, Bookseller, of Piccadilly*, London 1790), and D.D. Rogers who, in *Bookseller as Rogue: John Almon and the Politics of Eighteenth-Century Publishing*, Peter Lang, New York, Berne, Frankfurt 1986, has focused research on him as a case study in eighteenth-century publishing history, in the process leading from patronage to authorial remuneration. Also, *A Dictionary of Printers and Booksellers who were at work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1726 to 1775*, England by H.R. Plover, Scotland by G.H. Bushnell, Ireland by E.R. McDix, p. 4 (The Bibliographical Society, London 1968); L.L. Leitner, s.v. «John Almon», in *Dictionary of National Biography*, 2 (2008), pp. 885-886. For a later period, when Almon was involved in publishing tracts in favour of the American Revolution, see Bessler, *The Birth of American Law*, chap. 2: «The Runaway Bestseller: *On Crimes and Punishments*».

<sup>30</sup> Rogers, p. 6.

Almon was no doubt an excellent journalist, and in a short time both the quality and popularity of the *Gazetteer* improved. He also began to write in favour of Whig leader William Pitt and against George III's favourite and former tutor Lord Bute. He met Richard Grenville Earl Temple who brought him into contact with the leaders of the opposition. Among them was John Wilkes, and the two continued the best of friends until Wilkes' death in 1797<sup>31</sup>. Siding together, they fought battles against arbitrary arrest and the concentration of power in the hands of the executive; they supported civil rights, the freedom of the press and the rights of newspapers to publish parliamentary debates *verbatim*.

The English translation of Beccaria's text appeared towards the end of a period of great turmoil in English politics, when the administration of the country was again in the hands of the Whigs after a Tory government that lasted from October 1761 to July 1765. In October 1761, William Pitt had to resign the office of Prime Minister and George III, newly ascended to the throne and intending to play a more active role than his predecessor, substituted him with Tory Lord Bute as Prime Minister. It was then that Wilkes and Almon started waging a fierce journalistic warfare against Lord Bute and the King, championing Pitt's cause. Wilkes and Almon never wavered from strenuously opposing the policy of increasing direct power of the King's government over parliament, and never stopped supporting civil rights and freedoms. They maintained a lifelong devotion to Lord Temple, whom Almon later defined as the strongest and, at times, only supporter of the constitutional rights of the British people<sup>32</sup>. Temple, who stood for increasing the power of parliament over the executive, and of the electorate over parliament, supported Wilkes' and Almon's initiatives both financially and politically, realizing what powerful means of disseminating ideas they had with their capacity to talk through the press.

In 1763, Almon resigned from the *Gazetteer* and, probably with the economic help of Temple and other supporters of the opposition, started his own printing press and bookshop at 178, Piccadilly. From that moment, he would be active as both a journalist and a printer-

<sup>31</sup> The British Library holds several collections of John Wilkes's correspondence, among which many of Almon's letters to Wilkes are to be found. Rogers mentions also other letters, held by American libraries.

<sup>32</sup> Leitner, p. 885.

bookseller, publishing a large number of books in the fields of politics and – mainly later, during a period when he had been convicted of libel – of literature, «collection [...] compiled to disseminate political ideas in a light-hearted manner and an economical format»<sup>33</sup>.

Almon soon became the most distinguished bookseller of the Whig party, and his shop turned into the official seat of the opposition club *The Coterie*. As to his relationship with Wilkes, Deborah Rogers highlights several aspects of his activity on Wilkes' behalf. One was Almon's participation in what has gone down into history as the *North Briton: Issue No. 45* affair, a case for seditious libel which brought up the issue of the legality of General Warrants (warrants that specified the offense but not the offender) and on the basis of which John Wilkes had been arrested<sup>34</sup>. Almon's role was fundamental in starting the case and in supporting the issue of the illegality of General Warrants through a journalistic campaign. This time Wilkes was acquitted, but a short time later he was condemned on another case of libel. Wilkes was in France at the time, visiting his daughter and recovering from a wound inflicted on him during a duel. He decided to stay there, and was outlawed in England. From that moment until 1768, when Wilkes finally went back to his country, the two exchanged frequent letters, and probably used also other means of getting into contact with each other, out of a fear that their letters might be intercepted<sup>35</sup>.

During those years, Almon kept Wilkes constantly informed about the vicissitudes of English politics and of what Whig politicians thought of him. He also regularly sent Wilkes pamphlets, books, newspapers and all the printed materials he requested. In 1767, moreover, he offered to intercede on his behalf with Lord Temple, negotiating a pardon and financial help for him<sup>36</sup>. What's more, Almon made sure that

<sup>33</sup> Rogers, p. 50.

<sup>34</sup> For the several moments of this case, P.D.G. Thomas, *John Wilkes: A Friend to Liberty*, Clarendon Pr., Oxford 1997, chap. 3. If not differently stated, information about Wilkes' private and public life are taken from Thomas, *John Wilkes*, and from H. Bleackley, *Life of John Wilkes*, The Bodley Head, John Lane Co., S.B. Gundy, London, New York, Toronto 1917.

<sup>35</sup> Rogers affirms that the letter dated 23 October 1764 is the earliest still extant between the two. Rogers, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 27-31.

Wilkes was not forgotten at home,<sup>37</sup> creating a consensus around him through the *Political Register*, a periodical he founded in May 1767 and which had an immediate impact on public opinion, paving the way for Wilkes' stepping back into active politics<sup>38</sup>. Finally, Almon promoted Wilkes' cause through direct interventions on his behalf with his electorate and potential supporters<sup>39</sup>.

The year 1767 was crucial to Almon's publishing house. Besides printing *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments*<sup>40</sup> in February, in May they issued the first number of the *Political Register* and, during the summer<sup>41</sup>, the first English edition of *The Examination of Doctor Benjamin Franklin, Relative to the Repeal of the American Stamp Act*, an account of Franklin's testimony of 13 February 1766 before the House of Commons. This draws out attention to another chapter in Almon's career, his pro-American sympathies.<sup>42</sup> Again, the two friends sided together, giving support to the American Revolution. Wilkes was soon well-known in the American colonies, and from 1775 to 1784 Almon published a monthly report of American news, titled *The Remembrancer*. But even before, as Almon informed in his *Memoirs*, American writers constantly sent him their pamphlets and papers to be printed in England<sup>43</sup>.

It must be remembered that when Almon was starting to engage himself in the American cause and Franklin spoke before the House of Commons, Mazzei, was in London, and in London lived Molini, Mazzei's 'right arm', in whose house Alessandro Verri stayed between

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 31 ff.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 32.

<sup>39</sup> Almon's manuscript letter to John Wilkes: BL Add. MS 30875 (4).

<sup>40</sup> In an appendix to her book, Deborah C. Rogers gives a list of the «Works issued under Almon's Imprint», where *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments* appears with the author's name, «Bonesana Cesare, Marchese di Beccaria». Rogers does not mention this book anywhere else.

<sup>41</sup> Rogers, p. 76.

<sup>42</sup> Rogers mentions the presence of numerous letters in the British Library, from people who ask Almon for information about affairs in America and thank him (*Ibidem*, p. 80).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 79. In *Life of John Wilkes*, Bleackley drew attention to the great number of newspaper articles about Wilkes in the colonies in 1764 and, again, in 1768-69. Bessler, chap. 2.

December 1766 and February 1767. In a letter dated February 26, 1767, Pietro Verri mentions Franklin's friendship with Alessandro Verri<sup>44</sup>.

In 1768, in open defiance to the dispositions of the two Houses of Parliament, Almon started to publish the daily parliamentary debates in the *London Evening Post* and, in 1770, the issue of the freedom of the press was brought out once more to the forefront when he was charged with libel for publishing a letter of the virulent political pamphleteer who hid himself under the name of Junius<sup>45</sup>. This time, in both cases other publishers and other newspapers followed suit, and the two issues saw Almon on the winning side.

To sum up: Almon and Wilkes attacked the same people and for the same reasons: «They attacked Lord Bute for his Tory politics; Lord Mansfield, for his method of meting out justice, and even the King himself, for his notion of personal rule»<sup>46</sup>. They waged successful campaigns together to preserve and enhance English liberties – Wilkes owing much of his fame and political success to his own strategic insight and verbal ruthlessness, but also to his friend's capacity to use the medium of the press.

No small part did Almon play in Wilkes' career and in his becoming «the first leader of the new party of progress that was beginning to break away from the two old political combinations labelled Whig and Tory. "Wilkes and liberty" was the birth cry of British Radicalism»<sup>47</sup>.

We are now starting to see what was the political scene Beccaria's translation was born into. The London publishers differently involved in its publication were Pietro Molini and John Almon, and the reason why they presumably chose to be involved was their ideological and political allegiance. Moreover, both of them were in contact with the American

<sup>44</sup> *VPL*, p. 319.

<sup>45</sup> Rogers, pp. 43-48 and 58.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 73. Yet, many decades later, a letter by Morellet dated 1808 lists «Lord Mansfield, premier juge du banc du roi en Angleterre, et l'un des hommes plus éclairés de son siècle» among Beccaria's admirers: «Je lui ai entendu dire que le *Traité des délits de Beccaria* était *un des plus beaux ouvrages et des plus utiles qui eussent parus depuis cent ans*» (*Mémoires inédites de l'Abbé Morellet sur le dix-huitième siècle et sur la révolution*, Slatkine Reprints, Genève 1967, vol. II, «Notes et pièces justificatives», p. 353).

<sup>47</sup> Bleackley, p. 113.

colonies, particularly Almon, whose publishing house was very active on their behalf, before, during, and soon after the Revolution.

In our inquiry about the two publishers, a figure has stood out considerably, John Wilkes. Were there connections between Wilkes and Beccaria worth noticing? To answer this question, we must follow Wilkes into exile in France.

### 3. *John Wilkes in Paris.*

When Wilkes was charged with libel for the second time<sup>48</sup>, he was visiting his thirteen-year-old daughter Polly in Paris and recovering from a wound he had received in a duel. He decided not to go back to England, and would later remark that he «was never so happy»<sup>49</sup> as in his French exile. An exile which lasted from 1763 to 1768.

Once in Paris, Wilkes liaised again with a former friend from his university days in Leiden, Baron Paul Henri Thiry d'Holbach, who conducted what was probably the most lively intellectual *salon* in Paris, a meeting place for the French *philosophes* and foreign intellectuals visiting the city, as we have already seen in Alessandro Verri's letters quoted above.

Renewing a friendship which had been very warm twenty years before<sup>50</sup>, Wilkes regularly attended d'Holbach's *salon*, meeting his many Parisian guests and foreign visitors.<sup>51</sup> There was evidently also an intellectual consonance between the two, since they both tried to disseminate Nicolas Antoine Boulanger's *Recherches sur l'origine du despotisme orien-*

<sup>48</sup> Thomas, *John Wilkes*, chap. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Thomas, p. 59.

<sup>50</sup> In *Baron d'Holbach. A Study of Eighteenth-Century Radicalism in France*, B. Franklin, New York 1971, Max Pearson Cushing published several letters by d'Holbach to Wilkes, where warm friendship is expressed, particularly during their youth.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17: «Among D'Holbach's most intimate English friends were Hume, Garrick, Wilkes, Sterne, Gibbon, Horace Walpole, Adam Smith, Franklin, Priestley, James McDonald». A.Ch. Kors, *D'Holbach's Coterie: An Enlightenment in Paris*, Princeton Univ. Pr., Princeton 1976, pp. 25 f., 101-105, 112 ff. For Hume – and Wilkes – in Paris at D'Holbach's, see the essay by E. Mazza, E. Piccoli, *La grande variété du goût'. David Hume à Paris*, in Ch. Henry, D. Rabreau (eds.), *Le Public et la politique des arts au siècle des Lumières*, William Blake & Co., Bordeaux 2011, pp. 121-146.

*tal.* In 1761, Boulanger's work had appeared in print for the first time, translated by d'Holbach into French from the unpublished manuscript; and in 1763 Wilkes printed another edition of this book at his own private printing press in Westminster. In addition, Wilkes translated it into English under the title of *The Origin and Progress of Despotism, in the Oriental, and other Empires of Africa, Europe, and America* (London [«Amsterdam»] 1763)<sup>52</sup>. Moreover, in 1767, when d'Holbach published his first original work (a few copies of which had already been printed in Nancy in 1761), *Le Christianisme dévoilé, ou Examen des principes et des effets de la religion Chrétienne. Par feu M. Boulanger*, Wilkes promptly issued another edition from his private press<sup>53</sup>.

Although he could not officially go back to England, Wilkes might occasionally have met friends landed at a French port purposefully to see him. As it happened for instance towards the end of October 1764, when he went to Boulogne to see Humphrey Cotes, a friend he had entrusted with his finances and who revealed himself to be more willing than able, Charles Churchill, one of his and Almon's dearest friends, well-known writer and contributor to *The North Briton*, and some other friends (was Almon among them?)<sup>54</sup>.

Wilkes spent the first five months of 1765 travelling in Italy with a young Italian mistress, and on July 2 he was back in Paris, where he stayed the whole year 1766, with only two brief interruptions. On 12 May 1766 Wilkes stole secretly back to London, convinced that he would be pardoned; but his hopes were not fulfilled. He remained in London until the end of the month<sup>55</sup>, then returned to France. At the end of October, Wilkes made another visit to England, landing at Dover on 28 October, from where he set off for London, only to return to Paris in even greater disappointment on 7 November<sup>56</sup>. All this time, at least since mid-1765, he was desperately looking for money. He tried to convince his Whig friends, who had stepped back into power, to offer him some paid post either at home or abroad but, although he was pri-

<sup>52</sup> J. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, Oxford Univ. Pr., Oxford 2012, p. 134; Cushing, p. 69.

<sup>53</sup> Londres (Amsterdam), 1767. Cushing, pp. 38 f.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas, *John Wilkes*, p. 59.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 64.

<sup>56</sup> Rogers, pp. 33, 65.

vately given some money by Temple, he was not successful on the official front. He then sought to raise money by negotiating a contract with John Almon for publication of his *History of England*, assuring the printer on 7 April that he was making good progress, although he was not. The terms he asked on 25 May were an immediate advance of £300, and £300 on delivery in January 1768 of the manuscript for Volume One. Almon hesitated at this arrangement in a letter of 12 June, but did subsequently offer the £600, to be paid in instalments of £200, to start with, on 1 September, and £100 on 1 October<sup>57</sup>.

Let us now focus on a few publication dates which interest us. Until August 22, 1765, Beccaria's friends of the Accademia dei pugni (*Academy of the Fistsuffs*) – among them, Pietro and Alessandro Verri – discussed with Beccaria the revision of the third edition of *Dei delitti e delle pene* to be printed as fifth edition<sup>58</sup>. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, Beccaria sent everything to d'Alembert. At that time, Wilkes had been in Paris, back from his Italian tour, for almost two months, and was very likely acquainted at d'Holbach's with the new edition and Morellet's translation being both prepared. The fifth edition was issued in April 1766, and the two sixth editions appeared during the second half of that year. Beccaria knew of the sixth edition published for Giovan Claudio Molini<sup>59</sup>, whom he visited when he was in Paris with Alessandro<sup>60</sup>.

Comparing dates: Wilkes was in Paris when Cesare Beccaria and Alessandro Verri met the *philosophes* there and were frequent visitors to d'Holbach's *salon*. From 1763 to 1767, also Wilkes used to dine at d'Holbach's, and met them there several times. The British Library holds a manuscript letter in English from d'Holbach to Wilkes, dated «Paris, 9ber 10<sup>th</sup>, 1766», where Beccaria is mentioned as a person Wilkes was well acquainted with. The Baron, believing Wilkes still in London, writes to inform him about his friends' activities in Paris, adding: «Marquis Beccaria is going to leave us very soon being obliged to return to Milan: count Veri [sic] will set out for England at the same time»<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas, pp. 76-78

<sup>58</sup> Firpo, *Le edizioni italiane del Dei delitti e delle pene*, p. 448.

<sup>59</sup> Identified by Firpo as the «Harlem, et se vend à Paris chez Molini Libraire, Quai des Augustins» edition (*Ibidem*, pp. 466-473).

<sup>60</sup> Firpo, *Le edizioni italiane del Dei delitti e delle pene*, p. 456.

<sup>61</sup> BL MSS: Add 30869 (81).



That Wilkes was a regular visitor at d'Holbach's is confirmed in Morellet's *Mémoires*<sup>62</sup> and that he actually met Beccaria in Paris is mentioned in the correspondence between Alessandro Verri and his brother. In a letter dated 26 November 1766, Alessandro writes:

Ho sentito da Mr. Wilkes, che qui si trova attualmente e che è de' miei amici. [...] Mr. Wilkes, adunque, per parlare anche di quest'uomo famoso, spera che fra poco la sua causa sarà terminata e di ritornare presto a Londra. Egli è un uomo di spirito infinito, di somma erudizione, amabile infinitamente. Ha seco una sua figlia<sup>63</sup>.

Moreover, Alessandro and Beccaria not only met Wilkes at d'Holbach's, but at least on one occasion they also met at Wilkes's home, where he invited Beccaria and Alessandro to dinner on 22 November<sup>64</sup>.

«He is a man of infinite esprit and deep erudition, infinitely amiable»: Alessandro's description of Wilkes strikes us as unusual, very different from the image of the man which has passed down into history: from John Adolphus through Macaulay, to Bleackley and others, although with different nuances<sup>65</sup> and different degrees of antipathy, Wilkes has been described as a popular agitator, a spendthrift womanizer, often moved by his own personal advantage. Alessandro on the contrary considered him worthy of esteem for his brilliant conversation, his culture and manners. «A man of merit», he also calls him in a letter dated London 20 January 1767, extending his praise to ethics: «Il celebre Mr Wilks [sic], ch'è a Parigi da qualche tempo, [...] Me ne dispiace Wilkes, che conosco per uomo di merito»<sup>66</sup>.

Alessandro was not the only person who considered Wilkes highly. D'Holbach's letters show him sincere friendship and high esteem since their early days in Leiden; Winkelman wrote him admiring letters, and

<sup>62</sup> Morellet, *Mémoires inédites*, vol I, chap. VI, p. 133.

<sup>63</sup> «I have heard from Mr. Wilkes, who is here now, and is among my friends. [...] so Mr. Wilkes, speaking of this famous man, hopes that his suit will end soon and that he may return to London. He is a man of infinite esprit and high erudition, infinitely amiable. His daughter his here with him» (*VPL*, p. 119: November 14, 1766).

<sup>64</sup> Gaspari mentions a letter of invitation (BA, Becc.b.232/184) (*VPL*, p. 571).

<sup>65</sup> Bleackley, pp. 407-422; Thomas, pp. 2015-2020.

<sup>66</sup> «The famous Mr Wilks [sic] who has been in Paris for a while [...]. I am very sorry for Wilkes, whom I know as a man of merit» (*VPL*, p. 273).

admiration was expressed also by other *philosophes*<sup>67</sup>. In 1765, when Wilkes went to Milan, Florence, Bologna and Naples, he wrote to his daughter: «I have been caressed more than I can express during my whole journey»<sup>68</sup>.

A different Wilkes has appeared to us through the eyes of his French and Italian friends, one whose intellectual life included vigorous debates with enlightenment philosophes, conversation with Beccaria and Alessandro Verri, and translating Boulanger, a name which can mean a great deal.

The scene in which the English translation of *Dei delitti e delle pene* came into being has now taken shape. Two were the possible, and probably actual, mediators involved in it. One was Pietro Molini, with his Italian and French connections; the other was John Wilkes, who had deeply rooted contacts with John Almon and with French *philosophes*. A powerful thrust must have come from Wilkes' direction, given his beliefs in enlightenment principles and his admiration for the «great friend of man, the *Marquis Beccaria*»<sup>69</sup>.

I would now like to add just a few final brushstrokes to this picture, turning to the text of the translation. It will suffice for the moment, and a thorough collation with the original will be the subject of a subsequent article.

#### 4. An Essay on Crimes and Punishments. *Notes on the translation.*

The front page reads: *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments, translated from the Italian; with a Commentary attributed to Mons. de Voltaire, translated from the French*, followed by a quotation from Francis Bacon, which also ap-

<sup>67</sup> Two admiring manuscript letters by Winkelman are at the British Library Add 30869 (AOOA). For the others, G. Carruthers, *John Wilkes and the Enlightenment. The Political Ideas of John Wilkes and his Association with Enlightenment Philosophes in the 1760s and 1770s*, Lambert Academic Publ., Saarbrücken 2010. Also, Cushing, and Kors.

<sup>68</sup> Bleackley, p. 168.

<sup>69</sup> Reference to be found in the appendix to a collection of issues of Wilkes's newspaper *The North Briton*, published in 1769 under the pseudonym of «A Friend to Civil and Religious Liberty»; see Bessler, p. 87.

peared in the Italian editions. At the bottom of the page we find: «London: Printed for J. Almon, opposite Burlington-House, Piccadilly, MDCCLXVII». Then comes a six-page «Preface of the Translator» (III-VIII) and after, without a break, a table of contents for the *Essay* and for the *Commentary*, without any breaks in between.

In the English translation, the Italian preface, entitled «A chi legge» [*To the reader*] and the «Avviso» [*Notice*] (one or two, according to the different printings) have disappeared, together with De Soria's *Guidizio* and Verri's *Risposta* to Facchinei, which brought the number of pages in the Italian fifth and sixth editions to more than three hundred<sup>70</sup>. The English edition, instead, has 179 pages of the *Essay on Crimes*, plus 79 pages of Voltaire's *Commentary*.

The translation of Beccaria's text begins with his «Introduction», and contains all the expansions which were inserted into the fifth Italian edition for the first time<sup>71</sup>. This was the last edition for which explicit evidence exists of the author revising it<sup>72</sup>. The text of this edition was reproduced in the two sixth editions<sup>73</sup>. Therefore, when Beccaria's book was translated into English, there were three editions of the same text, a fifth and two sixth editions. John Almon's *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments* was based on one of them. However, if we collate the translation with the Italian original carefully, we see that the translator had no doubt Morellet's French translation on his desk as well, since there are passages whose structure and very wording follow the lesson of the French version<sup>74</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> G. Francioni, *Edizioni del secolo XVIII*, in Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene*, pp. 551-567.

<sup>71</sup> Firpo, *Le edizioni italiane del Dei delitti e delle pene*, pp. 444-461.

<sup>72</sup> F. Venturi, «Introduzione» a *Dei delitti e delle pene*, in *La letteratura italiana. Storie e testi*, vol. 46/III, Ricciardi, Milano 1958. For the history of this edition, see Francioni: *L'origine della 'vulgata' e l'edizione di 'Londra', 1774*, and Firpo, *Le edizioni italiane del Dei delitti e delle pene*, in Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene*, respectively, pp. 311-319 and 445-466.

<sup>73</sup> There are two slightly different printings of the fifth edition. The text reproduced in the sixth editions is what Francioni calls L5b (Francioni, «Nota al testo», in Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene*, pp. 327-329).

<sup>74</sup> We do not need to go far for an example. The first two sentences of the English translation of Beccaria's «Introduction» come from the beginning of Morellet's version and are not to be found at the beginning of the Italian original. The-

As to the presence of the *Commentary*, it should be noted that this was the very first translation of Voltaire's text, which had been published anonymously in France in early September 1766 and which, by February 1767, had run through six editions, plus a few pirated ones. An Italian version would appear as a separate volume a few months after the English translation, and only in 1769 would be issued in one volume with Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene*<sup>75</sup>.

The fact that Voltaire's and Beccaria's works appeared together in Almon's 1767 edition for the first time, and that Voltaire is named as author of the anonymous *Commentaire* at such an early date, is evidence enough of the fact that the people involved in this publication were well acquainted with the French intellectual world and knew it from the inside. This is confirmed also by other factors.

Like the Italian editions, the title page of *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments* does not mention the author's name. Where it differs from those editions, however, is in the fact that the name appears in the translator's preface, which states that «The author was the Marquis Beccaria, of Milan. Upon considering the nature of the religion and government under which he lives, the reasons for concealing his name are obvious». As we know, among the obvious reasons was the condemnation of *Dei delitti* by the Inquisition<sup>76</sup>.

The translator's preface, after stressing the importance of penal laws to the happiness, peace and security of each member of society, deplores their imperfection and cruelty in all nations. This is the reason why «an attempt to reduce them to the standard of reason must be interesting to all mankind». The translator then points out that it should

re follows the long passage which opens the Italian text but not Morellet's. For a discussion of Morellet's reordering of Beccaria's text, see Francioni, «Nota al testo», in Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene*, pp. 215-368, and S. Bersezio, *La traduzione francese del Dei delitti e delle pene di André Morellet, in Il caso Beccaria*, pp. 111-137.

<sup>75</sup> For the publishing history of the *Commentaire*, see Firpo, *Le edizioni italiane del Dei delitti e delle pene*, pp. 487-495.

<sup>76</sup> Beccaria's name appeared in only a few copies of the fifth edition, withdrawn at the author's request as soon as he learnt that, on 3 February 1766, it was condemned by the Congregation of the Index. See Firpo, *Le edizioni italiane del Dei delitti e delle pene*, pp. 446-450. In their reconstruction of the complex publishing history of *Dei delitti*, Francioni and Firpo tackle also the many pirated editions prompted by the book's instant success.

not be surprising «that this little book hath engaged the attention of all ranks of people in every part of Europe». He continues:

It is now about eighteen months since the first publication; in which time it hath passed no less than six editions in the original language; the third of which was printed within six months after its first appearance. It hath been translated into French; that translation hath also been several times reprinted, and perhaps no book, on any subject, was ever received with more avidity, more generally read, or more universally applauded [...]. The whole was read, at different times, in a society of learned men in that city [i.e. Milan], and was published at their desire.

Much precise information is given here, constituting further evidence of the fact that the translator was well-informed about the writing and publishing history of *Dei delitti e delle pene*. If we allow for a mistake over the exact number of months since the first Italian edition was published, and assume the translator thought it was December 1764, all the other pieces of information fall into place. It is true that when the translation appeared, the book had run to six (official) editions and had been translated into French and several times reprinted in that language; it is true that a «society of learned men» (i.e., Accademia dei pugni) had read the manuscript «at different times» in Milan. In fact, the Milanese coterie was not only deeply involved with the project and the preparation of the first draft, but also continued to be instrumental in preparing the fifth edition, which was a laborious process in several phases<sup>77</sup>. Not everybody would possess this piece of information, but the *philosophes* in Paris did.

The translator admits he knows Morellet's translation, but not that he used it. He says:

I have preserved the order of the original, except in a paragraph or two [...]. The French translator hath gone much farther; he hath not only transposed every chapter, but every paragraph in the whole book. But in this, I conceive, he hath assumed a right which belongs not to any translator, and which cannot be justified. His disposition may appear more systematical, but certainly the author hath as undoubted a right to the arrangement of his own ideas, as to the ideas themselves; and therefore to destroy that arrangement, is to pervert his meaning...

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 448.

The last two pages of the translator's preface contain a commentary on the English penal system, advocating reform:

It may [...] be objected, that a treatise of this kind is useless in England, where from the excellence of our laws and government, no examples of cruelty or oppression are to be found. But it must also be allowed that much is still wanting to perfect our system of legislation: the confinement of debtors, the cruelty of jailors and the extortion of the petty officers of justice, to all which may be added the melancholy reflection, that the number of criminals put to death in England is much greater than in any other part of Europe.

To conclude, I would like to highlight some unexpected and, to me, intriguing results of our inquiry. The starting-point in our search for information about the first English translation of Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene* was to focus on the two publishers mentioned in conjunction with its publication, namely Pietro Molini, whom Alessandro Verri said was involved in the initiative, and John Almon, whose name appeared on the front page of the book. Following these two rather obvious leads throughout their wider lives and activities, a larger picture has emerged which contains some outstanding historical figures – albeit with some nooks and crannies still in the shade. It has emerged that the key players in this translation not only converged in London but had also strong connections in Tuscany and in Paris. A name has come to the forefront, a famous politician and one of the first advocates of a thorough penal reform, John Wilkes. We have met him in a milieu unusual for his British historians, seeing him through the lenses of enlightenment *philosophes* during his long Parisian exile. Thus, what we have uncovered about *Dei delitti e delle pene*'s first English translation has also exhibited a different John Wilkes, distant from the figure traditionally passed down into history; and has shed some new light on his personality.