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Saggi

Anglo-Italian interdisciplinary networks 1765-1767.

Frise, Beccaria, the Verris and the Fellows of the Royal Society

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Abstract. The aim of this paper is to shed light on an under-researched area of study: that of the relations that the leading members of the «Caffé» – Paolo Frisi, Cesare Beccaria and the Verri – established with the Royal Society's Anglo-Italian circles in 1765-1767. These were generally men of science, even though it is also possible to detect the signs of their interest in the socio-legal topics underlying the iconic *Dei delitti e delle pene*. Building upon a complex epistolary network, as well as a series of unpublished materials, we shall try to show that Father Frisi was at the heart of the creation of a transnational cultural bridge between Milan and London, and that despite their stronger ties with Paris and its philosophes, Beccaria and the Verris benefited from these exceptional contacts. The picture that we shall draw will clarify the role of learned academies in eighteenth-century Europe, on the interdisciplinary nature of intellectual exchanges, particularly on the international milieu where the «book of crimes» was translated into English.

Keywords. Paolo Frisi, Cesare Beccaria, Pietro and Alessandro Verri, The Royal Society, Eighteenth-Century Anglo-Italian Relations.

1. INTRODUCTORY ISSUES.

The Milanese Enlightenment has always been associated with France and its great tradition of *philosophes*. Academic contributions have thoroughly investigated the influence that Montesquieu, Voltaire and Diderot exercised on the «Caffé» circle in the mid-1760s¹, yet there is documentary evidence that England and its learned academies were equally important, and that their members actively contributed to the debate on the latest scientific acquisitions, as well as on the most controversial civil issues².

¹ Aside from *Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Cesare Beccaria*, a cura di L. Firpo e G. Francioni, Mediobanca, Milano 1984-1994, voll. 1, 2 and 4, and G. Francioni e S. Romagnoli (a cura di), «*Il Caffé*» (1764-1766), Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 1993, see R. Abbrugiati (ed.), *Le Caf , Textes r unis par Raymond Abbrugiati*, ESN, Lyon 1997, pp. 11-29; and V. Ferrone, *Lezioni illuministiche*, Laterza, Bari 2014.

² See S. Romagnoli and G.D. Pisapia (a cura di), *Cesare Beccaria tra Milano e l'Europa*, Laterza, Bari 1990; L. Guerra, *Giambattista Biffi and His Role in the Dissemination of English Culture in*

This side of Italian relations had its roots in the European Republic of Letters³. It was made of exceptional intellectual circles and university institutions, which utilized “polite conversation”, epistolary exchanges and pamphlet-writing as tools to create a common framework of cultural-ethical values. Thanks to its members, Britain became closer to the southern regions of the Mediterranean, and learned more about the *Bel Paese*'s multi-layered national identity.

At a time, however, when – after the discovery of the buried city of Herculaneum (1738) – Rome and Naples were at the heart of Anglo-Italian relations⁴, the north continued to play a key role. Milan and London were obviously appreciated for their artistic treasures, but the reason why so many of their men of letters and of science were in contact was that the two cities were perceived as the new laboratories for liberalism. Rich in learned academies and literary *salons*, they offered special stimuli to all those who wished to participate in the elaboration of thought in a cosmopolitan *milieu*.

Thus, the intellectuals' activities in the second half of the eighteenth century cannot be detached from such important cities, particularly from their centres of learning. In fact, if we consider their long traditions and their European ties, we shall realize that especially the most prestigious ones were always in contact. A British icon of scientific excellence, for instance, the Royal Society (1660-) had always considered Italy a model in the field of experimental learning⁵, and had promoted its cultural events; since its foundation, its journal, «Philosophical Transactions» (1665-), had even enlarged the Fellows' network of relations⁶. Evidence that the north provided rich intellectual resources can be found in the numerous «Transactions» on the *Bel Paese*, which appeared

in 1700-1800⁷, particularly in the list of Italian Fellows, who were active when, in 1765-1767, an iconic work such as Cesare Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene* was discussed and translated into English⁸. There were almost thirty of them: politicians, men of the Church and of learning, who also belonged to the Universities of Turin and Pisa, to the Crusca and the Apatisti Academies, or to those of Science of Turin and Bologna. Enhancing humanistic and scientific studies, they managed to create a direct link between these Italian centres and the London Society.

The latest research has shown that these relations dated to the Restoration period⁹ and that, in a period when Natural Philosophy and Rationalism were perceived as barriers against religious extremism and obscurantism, they became even stronger. Still, focusing only on how learned academies and universities collaborated – even the impact that Freemasonry had on their activities¹⁰ – may not be enough to deeply understand the most stimulating years in the Italian Enlightenment. It is also important, in fact, to research even on smaller but influential intellectual circles, thus on the contacts that the most prominent members of the «Caffé» – Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794), the physicist Paolo Frisi (1728-1784), as well as Pietro (1728-1797) and Alessandro (1741-1816) Verri – established with the Royal Society. Their epistolary exchanges demonstrate that, although Paris was far more familiar to them, and French was

Eighteenth-Century Lombardy, «Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies», 33, 2010, 2, pp. 245-264, as well as F. O'Gorman and L. Guerra (eds.), *The Centre and the Margins in Eighteenth-Century British and Italian Cultures*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle 2014, particularly L. De Micheli's *Letters from London: A "Bridge" between Italy and Europe*, on pages 36-55.

³ See A. Van Dixon and S. Speakman Sutch (eds.), *The Reach of the Republic of Letters: Literary and Learned Societies in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Brill, Leiden 2008.

⁴ Information about this particular phase of the Grand Tour can be found in M. D'Amore, *The Royal Society and the Discovery of the Two Sicilies: Southern Routes in the Grand Tour*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2017.

⁵ See T. Birch, *The History of the Royal Society for Improving Natural Knowledge*, London 1756-57, 4 vols; and M. Boas Hall, *The Royal Society and Italy 1667-1795*, «Notes and Records of the Royal Society», 37, 1982, pp. 63-81.

⁶ See J. McDougall-Waters, N. Moxham and A. Fyfe, *Philosophical Transactions: 350 Years of Publishing at the Royal Society (1665-2015)*, The Royal Society, London 2015.

⁷ See the complete list of those special articles in D'Amore, *The Royal Society and the Discovery of the Two Sicilies*, cit., pp. 140-145.

⁸ They were Giambattista Albertini (1717-1788) (FRS 1760), Carlo Ludovico Allioni (1728-1784) (FRS 1758), Giovanni Battista Beccaria (1716-1781) (FRS1755), Ruggero Giuseppe Boscovich (1711-1787) (FRS 1761), Domenico Caracciolo (1715-1789) (FRS 1765), Giovanni Carafa di Noja (1715-1768) (FRS 1759), Giovanbattista Carburì (1722-1808) (FRS 1765), Gaspari Cerati (1690-1769) (FRS 1736), Giovanni Francesco Cigna (1734-1790) (FRS 1764), Giulio Fagnani dei Toschi (1682-1766) (FRS 1723), Paolo Frisi (1728-1784) (FRS 1757), Giovanni Marsili (1727-1773) (FRS 1758), Antonio Matani (1730-1779) (FRS 1763), Giovanbattista Morgagni (1682-1771) (FRS 1722), Lorenzo Morosini (1714-1793) (FRS 1763), Antonio Maria Niccolini (1701-1769) (FRS 1763), Giovan Battista Passeri (1694-1780) (FRS 1747), Falco Rinuccini (d. 1769) (FRS 1747), Paolo Antonio Rolli (1687-1767) (FRS 1729), Giuseppe Angelo Saluzzo di Monesiglio (1734-1810) (FRS 1760), Giovanni Salvemini di Castiglione (1708-1791), Giulio Toschi (1682-1766) (FRS 1723), Marsilio Venturi di Parma (d. 1783) (FRS 1751), Filippo Venucci (1709-1769) (FRS 1759), Francesco Maria Zanotti (1692-1772) (FRS 1741) and Eustachio Zanotti (1709-1782) (FRS 1740).

⁹ E. Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations since the Renaissance*, Routledge, Abingdon 2000, pp. 1-40 and 161-167; and M. D'Amore, *Learned Letters from Italy: Classical Rome, Vesuvius and Etna in Philosophical Transactions 1665-1700*, «Annali di Ca' Foscari - Serie Occidentale», 49, 2015, pp. 145-162.

¹⁰ See among others G. Giarrizzo, *Massoneria e illuminismo*, Marsilio, Venezia 1994; and R. Lomas, *The Invisible College: The Secret History of how the Freemasons Founded the Royal Society*, Random House, Reading 2009.

the only foreign language that they could master, Paolo Frisi and Alessandro Verri in particular were irresistibly attracted to London, and sojourned there not only to know its civilization, but also to become appreciated by its *intelligentsia*. The textual path that they created will shed light on the complex environment where the English version of Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene* came into being, as well as on the cultural experiences that the most distinguished intellectuals in the two capitals shared in those years.

2. CONNECTING MILAN TO «ILLUMINATED» LONDON: SCIENCE AND TRAVEL IN PAOLO FRISI'S LETTERS.

We shall start from Paolo Frisi. Certainly one of the most cosmopolitan figures in the Milanese Enlightenment, he built on his scientific excellence to create a link between the «Caffé» circle and the Royal Society. His election as a Fellow in 1757 explains why his *De inaequalitatibus motus planetarum* (1761) immediately became part of the Society's library, and the rest of his production is still housed at its Centre for the History of Science.

Yet, as Franco Venturi confirms, mathematics and physics represented only a portion of his cultural interests¹¹: he was fond of literature and published philosophical pamphlets, furthermore, he contributed to the most advanced European movements, which made Milan more international. Pietro Verri in *Memorie appartenenti alla vita e agli studj del signor don Paolo Frisi* (1787)¹² shows that he had contacts in most Italian regions, as well as in Austria, Germany, France and Portugal. As for England, apart from Charles Walmsley (1722-1797), vicar apostolic of the western district and mathematician, his reference point was definitely London, particularly the Royal Society and the Fellows «Morton, Waring, Maskelyne [and] Maty»¹³.

Franco Venturi and Antonio Gentili¹⁴ are clear on his special human qualities. He was far more open than Cesare Beccaria and Pietro Verri, but his wide cultural network derived both from his determination to con-

tinue to separate Rationalism from religious faith despite the emerging philosophical trends¹⁵ and his 1766 voyage to London. Pietro Verri says that he wanted to cross the English Channel for scientific purposes, that is to say, to see how the principles of mechanics and hydraulics had been applied in England¹⁶; precise information about his new exceptional encounters and experiences, though, can only be found in his partially edited diary¹⁷.

Starting his journey on 28 April 1766, and finding the time to discuss with Father Gerdil (1718-1802) Rousseau's and Helvetius's textual influences on the «book of crimes»¹⁸, Frisi sojourned in Paris until 12 August, and arrived in Dover on 18 August. He made a short visit to «Canterbury, Rochester [and] Darford», finally, he stopped in «illuminated London»¹⁹. It was Thursday 21 August when he met with Matthew Maty (1718-1776), the Chief Librarian of the British Museum and the Royal Society's Secretary, and went to the Royal Society. Thanks to the exchanges he had with other distinguished Fellows – James Douglas Earl of Morton (1702-1768), the Society's President since 1764; the Royal astronomer Nevil Maskelyne (1732-1811) and the Ambassador of Naples Domenico Caracciolo (1715-1789) – he learned more about the latest astronomic observations in England, and acquired precious information about the scientists Ruggero Giuseppe Boscovich (1711-1787) and Joseph-Jérôme Lalande (1732-1807). An ingenious physicist and Frisi's most fearsome competitor, the former, who was Professor of Mathematics at the University of Pavia, had been elected a Fellow in 1761, and would soon be sent to observe the passage of Venus in California²⁰.

Frisi continued to write about his stay in London. The accounts related to 22-24 August include his new experiences at the Royal Society and his close relation with the «Marchese Caraccioli», the only Italian Fellow

¹¹ Venturi, *Illuministi italiani*, cit., p. 290.

¹² Verri, *Memorie*, cit., p. 33.

¹³ Today an *Estratto delle note fatte da P.^e Paolo Frisi nel suo viaggio di Francia e Inghilterra: da un libretto di Sue memorie scritte nel viaggio medesimo* is housed at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan [Y 163 sup]. Some of the most significant entries, those related to 12-24 August 1766, however, are included in Venturi, *Illuministi italiani*, cit., pp. 310-314. We shall consider both Venturi's edited version and the original manuscript. For further information about the Italian intellectuals' learned letters from London, see De Michelis cited essay *Letters from London: A "Bridge" between Italy and Europe*, pp. 36-55.

¹⁴ Writing on 1 May 1766 while he was in Turin, Father Frisi reported Father Giacinto Gerdil's conviction about Beccaria's pamphlet. See the cited *Estratto*, sheet 43: «P. Gerdil [...] per un'occhiata al libro dei delitti vi ha riscontrato varie proposizioni di Rousseau tradotte letteralmente, e varie altre di Helvetius, nelle quali si considera l'uomo come un essere meramente sensibile».

¹⁵ Venturi, *Illuministi italiani*, cit., p. 311.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ Regarding Paolo Frisi's wide cultural interests, see F. Venturi (ed.), *Illuministi italiani*, vol. III. *Riformatori lombardi, piemontesi e toscani*, R. Riccardi Editore, Milano-Napoli 1969, pp. 289-290.

¹² P. Verri, *Memorie appartenenti alla vita ed agli studj del Signor don Paolo Frisi*, Milano 1787.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 79.

¹⁴ Here we refer to Venturi, *Illuministi italiani*, cit., p. 289, as well as to A. Gentili, *Paolo Frisi barnabita*, in G. Barbarisi (a cura di), *Ideologia e scienza nell'opera di Paolo Frisi (1728-1784)*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 1987, vol. I, pp. 11-16.

with whom he shared his exceptional routine. In that period, as Giuseppe Rutto explains²¹, they really enjoyed each other's company, and spent their time talking about d'Alembert, Fontaine and the American Fellow Benjamin Franklin. However, there was also room for other extraordinary encounters. On the 23 August²², for example, they were with President Morton and his Secretary Matthew Maty; with the cardiologist William Heberden (1710-1801) and the future President John Pringle (1707-1782), as well as the mathematicians Patrick Murdoch (d. 1774), Edward Waring (1736-1798) and George Witchell (1728-1785). These latter had all been elected Fellows between 1745 and 1763.

Frisi's notes clearly show that these Italian and English Fellows systematically discussed scientific topics during their meetings. It continued to be so on 26 and 27 August, even though, according to the original manuscript, on 30 August Frisi and Maty also exchanged their views on corruption, and agreed to call it «the Earth's daughter»²³. The Italian physicist left London on 2 September after a meeting with Hume and Pringle at the Ambassador of Spain's residence²⁴: his personal correspondence will help us to understand to what extent he and the «Caffé» circle were related to the Royal Society, and also the impact that this had on the intellectual debate connected to *Dei delitti e delle pene*.

The complete list of Frisi's letters is given by Rosy Candiani as an appendix of Gennaro Barbarisi's *Ideologia e scienza di Paolo Frisi*²⁵. Divided into sections, it shows that most of them are located at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, and that they have never been collected and edited. From this point of view, in order to have a complete picture of this special section of his network, we believe it is important to identify the Italian and English Fellows in 1766-1777²⁶, as well as to see if some of them were among Frisi's regular correspondents. Definitely larger than Beccaria's and Alessandro Verri's, we can immediately say that, covering the years 1753-1780, this epistolary corpus includes Frisi's exchanges with five influential English Fellows: Earl Macclesfield (1695-1764), who had been the Royal Soci-

ety's President until 1764, Nevil Maskelyne, Matthew Maty, James Morton and Edward Waring²⁷. We should not be surprised that Frisi met with the majority of them during the period he spent in London, and that he wanted to share their friendship with Alessandro Verri at the end of 1766. He had known them for a long time, and his work was highly appreciated²⁸, so he would continue to correspond with them on the latest acquisitions in astronomy and physics until 1771²⁹.

Aside from these five exceptional correspondents, however, Frisi had fruitful exchanges with other Fellows of the prestigious Society: the above-mentioned Ruggero Giuseppe Boscovich and Domenico Caracciolo; Gaspare Cerati (1690-1769), Antonio Matani (1730-1779), Antonio Niccolini (1701-1769), as well as Francesco Maria (1692-1777) and Eustachio (1709-1782) Zanotti. They had all been admitted between 1736 and 1763, and belonged to different Italian cultural institutions: the University of Pisa, the Apatisti Society and the Academy of Sciences of Bologna, which certainly helped to enhance the Anglo-Italian relations within the European Republic of Letters.

We have already mentioned Frisi's relations with Boscovich and Caracciolo: we can now add that they too spent time in Paris and London between 1760 and 1767³⁰, and that they were both highly esteemed at an international level. A distinguished contributor to the «Philosophical Transactions» since 1759³¹ and to the «Caffé» in 1766³², Boscovich, for example, who exchanged five letters with Frisi between 1765 and

²¹ Candiani's above-mentioned list shows that Paolo Frisi only received seven letters from the Royal Society's Fellows: one from Earl Macclesfield (London, 04-03-1756); two from James Douglas Morton (London, 10-02-1767-London, 05-02-1770); two from Matthew Maty (London, 05-08-1768-London, 01-09-1771); one from Nevil Maskelyne (Grenovia, 03-04-1770) and one from Edward Waring (Cautab. [?] 31-10-1770).

²² Evidence of Frisi's excellent reputation within the Royal Society's circle can be found both in Maty's and Morton's letters. In 1768, the former enthusiastically promised that he would always support the Italian scientist's contacts with the Fellows; in 1770, Morton wrote to him in Latin to praise his work. See manuscripts Y 154 165 and Y 154 181.

²³ See Maskelyne's and Waring's 1770 letters. They are still held at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana [manuscripts Y 154 166 and Y 154 180].

²⁴ Detailed information about those fruitful periods can be found in F. Ricca, *Elogio storico dell'Abate Ruggero Giuseppe Boscovich*, Marelli, Milano 1789, pp. 72-73; S. Laudani, *Un ministro napoletano a Londra: Domenico Caracciolo e le sue "Memorie"*, Sciascia Editore, Caltanissetta-Roma 2000, pp. 41-56; as well as R. Anderton, D. Stoiljkovich, *Roger Boscovich, the Founder of Modern Science*, Lulu Press, Raleigh 2015, pp. 1-8.

²⁵ See R.J. Boscovich, *De Proximo Veneris sub Sole Transitu*, «Philosophical Transactions», 51, 1759, pp. 865-888; and Abbé Boscovich, *Account of a new Micrometer and Megameter. By Abbé Boscovich*, «Philosophical Transactions», 67, 1777, pp. 789-798.

²⁶ For Boscovich's *Estratto del trattato astronomico del signor La Lande* see «Il Caffé, o sia brevi e varj discorsi già distribuiti in fogli periodici», I, 1766, pp. 430-432.

²¹ G. Rutto, *La corrispondenza scientifica e letteraria di Paolo Frisi e Domenico Caracciolo*, «Rivista storica italiana», XCVI, 1984, I, pp. 174-175.

²² Venturi, *Illuministi italiani*, cit., p. 313.

²³ None of these entries has ever been edited and published. See sheets 46-48 of the cited *Estratto*.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 48. The exceptional meeting took place on 1 September.

²⁵ R. Candiani, *Catalogo dei manoscritti e bibliografia*, in Barbarisi, *Ideologia e scienza*, cit., vol. II, pp. 533-706.

²⁶ See the complete *List of Fellows of the Royal Society 1660-2007*, The Royal Society, London 2007, also available at <https://royalsociety.org/media/Royal_Society_Content/about-us/fellowship/Fellows1660-2007.pdf> (Last consulted on 22 April 2018).

1767³³, was particularly close to Franklin. As regards Caracciolo, we know that he was constantly in contact, again, with Franklin, also with Douglas Morton and Matthew Maty. Most of his correspondence may have been lost³⁴, yet we know that he took an active part in the intellectual debate of the time, which was very important for him when he became Viceroy of Sicily in 1781, and started his liberal project of social reforms³⁵. Dated the 10 October 1766, for instance, the letter that he addressed to Frisi shows that he was utterly against Rousseau, and that, together with Maty and Maskelyne, he did his utmost to hinder his relationship with Hume³⁶.

Exchanging twenty-three epistles with Frisi between 1753 and 1768³⁷, Gaspare Cerati was another key figure in this extraordinary cultural network³⁸. Rector of the University of Pisa from 1733 to 1768 and an influential Jansenist, he had stayed in London in 1743, and had always been fascinated by Locke's theories. His 1755 contribution to the «Transactions» «concerning the Books and antient Writings dug out of the Ruins of and Edifice near Herculaneum»³⁹ testifies to his commitment to the creation of stable relations both with the London *intelligentsia* and the Royal Society. As for his main contacts, they were Martin Folkes (1694-1754), Premier Grand Lodge of England in 1724-1725 and President of the Royal Society in 1741-1752, as well as James Bradley (1693-1762), a skilled astronomer, who had won the Copley Medal in 1748. Pietro Verri in his *Memorie* maintains that Cerati was always close to Frisi, and that he generously supported his career⁴⁰; more recently,

³³ According to Candiani, they date Pavia, 26-01-1765; Pavia, 04-02-1765; Pavia, 21-06-1766; Milano, 08-11-1766; and Pavia, 20-12-1767. Today they are held at the British Library.

³⁴ Rutto, *La corrispondenza scientifica e letteraria di Paolo Frisi e Domenico Caracciolo*, cit., pp. 173-176.

³⁵ Laudani, *Un ministro napoletano a Londra*, cit., pp. 52-56.

³⁶ See manuscript Y 154 9 of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana. Interestingly, in this letter Caracciolo calls Rousseau «Lucifero d'orgoglio di Ginevra», and is clear that «non deve sorprendere alcuno che qui non si accorda meriti di sorta veruna a Rousseau, perché l'incantesimo è tutto nella sua penna».

³⁷ Considering Candiani's above-mentioned list, we find that in 1765-1767 Frisi received only four letters from Cerati: Pisa, 27-01-1766; Montecchio, 27-01-1767; Pisa, 21-05-1767; Firenze, 12-09-1767. They are held at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, but at the time of this research they did not seem to be available.

³⁸ On Frisi's international relations and exceptional correspondents, see G. Rutto, *Alcune note su Paolo Frisi e il suo carteggio*, in Barbarisi, *Ideologia e scienza*, cit., vol. II, pp. 221-230.

³⁹ Anonymous, *Copy of a Letter from a learned Gentleman of Naples, dated February, 1755, concerning Books and ancient Writings dug out of the Ruins of an Edifice near the old City of Herculaneum; to Monsignor Cerati of Pisa, F.R.S., sent to Mr. Baker, F.R.S.*, «Philosophical Transactions», 49, 1755, pp. 112-115.

⁴⁰ Verri, *Memorie*, cit., pp. 20-21.

Giuseppe Rutto has drawn the reader's attention to their philosophical exchanges on science and religious faith. In fact, even after Frisi left the University of Pisa in 1764, they continued to exchange their views on the Bulle Unigenitus's severe implications, as well as d'Alembert's public position against the Jesuits⁴¹.

Prominent members of the so-called Christian Enlightenment, Frisi and Cerati shared their principles with Antonio Niccolini. He had lived in London in the mid-1740s, and had been elected a Fellow in 1747. A member of the Hannoverian Lodge of Florence, he was close to the Presidents Hans Sloane (1660-1753) and Martin Folkes: there is historical evidence that they defended a group of illustrious masons from the Catholic Inquisition in 1739⁴², and that in the following years their main topics of discussion were antiquarian culture and politics. This may have also facilitated the connections between the «Caffé» circle and the Royal Society, also possibly the diffusion of the philosophical ideas underlying Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene*. From this point of view, the three letters that Niccolini exchanged with Frisi between 1761 and 1764⁴³, as well as Pietro Verri's references to his illness and death on the 20th September and the 7th October 1769⁴⁴, demonstrate that it is very difficult to detach the most prestigious learned academies' evolutionary phases from scientific-professional collaborations and Freemasonry. This latter in particular was a key component of eighteenth-century civilization.

Frisi's list of correspondents, however, also includes the scientists Antonio Matani, Francesco Maria and Eustachio Zanotti. None of them was ever mentioned in Beccaria's and the Verris' epistolary exchanges, which confirms that although they shared most of their acquaintances, science really represented a bridge for the «Sig. Abate» to differentiate and enlarge his personal cultural network.

Antonio Matani was part of it. A Professor of Theoretical Medicine of Tuscan origins and an expert on inoculation, he was especially remembered for his *Ragionamento filosofico istorico sopra la figura della Terra* (1760) and *De aneurysmaticis praecordium mor-*

⁴¹ Here we refer to Rutto, *Alcune note su Paolo Frisi e il suo carteggio*, cit., pp. 232-233.

⁴² On the Catholic Church's severe measures against Freemasonry in those years, particularly on the role that Martin Folkes played in the foundation and defence of the Florentine lodges, see Giarrizzo, *Masoneria e illuminismo*, cit., pp. 75-85.

⁴³ They are respectively dated 18-03-1761, 27-06-1761 and 21-01-1764. Written in Florence, they are still held at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana.

⁴⁴ Here we refer to letters XXX and XL. See F. Novati and E. Greppi (a cura di), *Carteggio di Pietro e Alessandro Verri dal 1766 al 1797*, Cogliati, Milano 1911, pp. 75, 100.

bis animadversione (1761). His election as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1763, thus his collaboration with such an important institution, was based on his international reputation⁴⁵, especially on his friendship with the historian Thomas Birch (1705-1766), the Society's Secretary in those years, and the diplomat John Strange (1732-1799), a Fellow since 1766.

Frisi exchanged only one letter with Matani⁴⁶ probably because, however close, they had a different approach to science⁴⁷. As for Francesco Maria and Eustachio Zanotti, in the years 1753-1780 they were far more frequent correspondents⁴⁸. Both eminent members of the Academy of Sciences of Bologna, they were putting a great deal of effort into the construction of solid relations with the Royal Society, which Frisi must have appreciated. Marta Cavazza⁴⁹ has demonstrated that Eustachio in particular was close to the Fellows James Bradley, John Strange and Edward Waring, who were also distinguished members of the Bolognese Academy.

Yet, if we consider the years 1765-1767, we realize that, within the Royal Society's Anglo-Italian circle, Boscovich, Caracciolo, Cerati and the Zanottis were his closest contacts. Going beyond scientific and religious issues, however, we may presume that he confronted the main socio-political issues of the time especially with Boscovich, Caracciolo and Morton. On 27 August 1766, for instance, the former was mentioned in Saverio Bettinelli's letter concerning Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene*⁵⁰; as regards Caracciolo and Morton, they were both residing in London and were sensitive to the pamphlet's core issues. Although the Royal Society never included it in its archives, Frisi's relations may have contributed to the circulation of its English version.

His commitment to the creation of a transnational cultural bridge continued in the following years. An internationally known *philosophe* and a generous friend,

he would utilize Alessandro Verri's stay in the British capital as a new opportunity to reinforce the links between the «Caffé» circle and the Society. Beccaria's and the Verri brothers' correspondence in those years will help us to understand the evolution of their members' relations, particularly if there was any significant reference to *Dei delitti e delle pene*.

3. TORN BETWEEN PARIS AND LONDON: CESARE BECCARIA, THE VERRI BROTHERS AND THE FELLOWS.

Science, for instance, continued to be at the heart of the connection between Beccaria and the four Fellows he knew or simply corresponded with: Ruggero Boscovich, Gaspare Cerati, Matthew Maty and the radical politician John Wilkes (1725-1797). Aside from Saverio Bettinelli's letter, Maty's report on a new inoculation case proves that Paris, London and Milan were tightly connected, and that socio-political engagement systematically combined with the new discoveries in the various branches of Natural Philosophy. It was 20 December 1765 and Condillac was eager to forward the note that he had received on «la petite verole de madame de Boufflers»⁵¹.

The medical treatment for smallpox had been a major focus of scientific research since the 1720s⁵², however, the Fellows were also discussing the implications of more liberal social reforms. Even though, again, it is not possible to find evidence of this part of their intellectual activities in Beccaria's epistolary corpus, there were certainly informal occasions when they could exchange their views. The short letter of invitation that John Wilkes addressed to Beccaria on 20 November 1766⁵³ will help to have a clearer picture of such a complex, stimulating environment. At this time the English radical activist was in exile in Paris, and was regularly attending d'Holbach's intellectual *salon*, which had put him in contact with Beccaria and the Verri brothers. Building upon their correspondence, Rosamaria Loretti has recently showed that «Beccaria is mentioned as a person Wilkes was well acquainted with»⁵⁴, also that

⁴⁵ See the anonymous *Elogio del Dottore Antonio Matani*, «Antologia romana», VI, 1779, pp. 123-128.

⁴⁶ According to Candiani, it dates Milano, 01-07-1767.

⁴⁷ M. Torrini, *Paolo Frisi in Toscana*, in Barbarisi, *Ideologia e scienza*, cit., vol. I, pp. 295-296.

⁴⁸ The Biblioteca Ambrosiana's archives show that Eustachio and Francesco Maria respectively addressed fifteen and thirteen letters to Frisi. If we consider the years 1765-1767, though, we shall find that they only wrote to him on three occasions: on 04-05-1765 (Y 148 sup. 64), on 02-09-1765 (Y148 sup. 43-44) and on 05-08-1766 (Y 148 sup. 45-46). Although their favourite topics were scientific, they also focused on d'Alembert and his pension, and shared information about their publishing deadlines.

⁴⁹ On the Zanottis' work from this point of view, see M. Cavazza, *The Institute of Science of Bologna and the Royal Society in the Eighteenth Century*, «Notes and Records of the Royal Society», 56, 2002, 1, pp. 10-13.

⁵⁰ On Boscovich's possible meeting with Beccaria, Andrea and Andrea Giulio Cornaro, as well as Lucrezia Pisani, see *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Cesare Beccaria*, cit., vol. 4, pp. 376-377.

⁵¹ The complete text can be found *ibidem*, pp. 172-176.

⁵² The Fellows' interest in inoculation started in the early 1720s. See among others Benjamin Gale's and Hans Sloane's contributions to «Philosophical Transactions», 49, 1755, pp. 516-520; and 55, 1765, pp. 193-204.

⁵³ *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Cesare Beccaria*, cit., vol. 4, p. 485: «Monsieur Wilkes fait bien ses compliments à monsieur le marquis de Beccaria, et le prie de lui faire l'honneur de diner samedi à deux heure. Rue des S.ts Peres, jeudi, 20 novembre».

⁵⁴ R. Loretti, *The First English Translation of Cesare Beccaria's On Crimes and Punishments. Uncovering the Editorial and Political Contexts*, «Diciottesimo Secolo», II, 2017, pp. 1-22: 16.

they – Wilkes, Beccaria and the Verris – shared the same philosophical views⁵⁵.

In the following years, Pietro and Alessandro mentioned Wilkes, who played an active role in the translation of *Dei delitti e delle pene*⁵⁶, in their letters too. On 23 September 1769, for instance, Pietro wrote about the recent dispute between the King and the Parliament over his election as a Member of Parliament⁵⁷; a few days later he confessed that sometimes he could not understand him because he was not very fluent in French⁵⁸. However close, these contacts always had French roots, which shows why Frisi remained the most cosmopolitan figure in the «Caffé» circle, and why Alessandro relied on him only during his stay in London. The letters that he exchanged with Pietro on this occasion, from 9 December 1766 to 16 February 1767⁵⁹, not only provide a colourful picture of his cultural life there, but also tell us how Italian intellectuals gained access to the most exclusive international circles, especially how they created fruitful relations with their most distinguished members.

Alessandro offered this type of information since he arrived in London. However confused by its chaos and dubious about the implications of its advanced intellectual freedom⁶⁰, he immediately used Frisi's letters of introduction to meet with Domenico Caracciolo and President Morton. As for his contacts with the Royal Society, he attended his first meeting on 25 December 1766⁶¹. Everything was new to him – the Fellows, their manners and their small meeting room – yet, this also represented a great opportunity for him to understand what was behind the Society's decision to make «Boscoivik» a Fellow⁶². This latter, as previously argued, was Frisi's most fearsome competitor, worst of all, he benefited from a clear position of privilege at the University of Pavia⁶³. President Morton could not but confirm that he was a great scientist, and that he had deserved his fellowship⁶⁴.

There may be envy and resentment in some of Alessandro's letters⁶⁵, but his main focus of attention in that

period was definitely cultural and scientific. On 6 January 1767, for instance, the possible existence of a population of monstrous giants in Patagonia was at the heart of his new exchange with President Morton and his Secretary Matthew Maty⁶⁶. At a time when academic institutions were competing for scientific excellence, he could see how England and France were fighting to demonstrate that they had been first to discover those curious creatures.

Alessandro corresponded with Pietro until the end of his stay in London. He continued to discuss scientific topics with the Fellows of the Royal Society even during their meetings, and what is more important, he continued to be grateful to Paolo Frisi⁶⁷. He had introduced him to the protagonists of this special Anglo-Italian environment, but dated 27 January 1767, his visit to Benjamin Franklin, «[the] Newton of electricity»⁶⁸, had been inspiring: his experiment combined theory with practice, which he found of great interest. As for his specific enquiry about Father Giovanni Battista Beccaria (1716-1781), a physicist from the University of Turin who had entered the London Society in 1755, it shows that although the two scientists had never met, they knew each other's scientific works and regularly corresponded. Academic research has demonstrated that Beccaria would enthusiastically promote Franklin's most controversial theories within the University and the Academy of Sciences of Turin for many years to come⁶⁹.

This letter, however, does not only reveal new aspects of Alessandro Verri's exceptional encounters. It also includes an account of his new experience at the Royal Society, where he could see the head of a curious veal-calf with «two mouths, two noses and three eyes» coming from Spain, as well as new details of the building where the Fellows actually met. Probably following Frisi's scholarly interests – his *Elogio del Cavaliere Isacco Newton* would appear in 1778 – he was impressed by «two portraits of Newton», «an antique pendulum clock» and the Society's «Museum of Natural History»⁷⁰.

Still, Alessandro's concluding remark about the Royal Society's «precious library», which had been

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁵⁷ F. Novati and E. Greppi (a cura di), *Carteggio di Pietro e Alessandro Verri dal 1766 al 1797*, Cogliati, Milano 1911, p. 73.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

⁵⁹ We shall consider P. e A. Verri, *Viaggio a Parigi e a Londra (1766-1767)*, a cura di G. Gaspari, Adelphi, Milano 1980.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 168-169.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 175-176.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 176.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 282. Letter XLIX is dated 14 February 1767. Here Pietro is clear that the University of Pavia was treating Frisi and Boscovich differently.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 176.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 148. Letter XXIX, for instance, expresses Alessandro's resentment for Beccaria and his conviction that *Dei delitti e delle pene* could never become popular in such a liberal city as London.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 220.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 233. Dated London, 12 January 1767, Letter XLIII reads: «Frisio è contentissimo di me perché ho assistito alla sessione della Società Reale [...]. Si rallegra di cuore con me perché sappia viaggiare come si deve. Io sono obbligato al suo buon cuore [...]. Devo a lui tutte le lettere che ho avute per Londra. Le ha scritte con grandissima premura».

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 277. Alessandro's account of his meeting with Benjamin Franklin dates 27 January 1767.

⁶⁹ On Father Beccaria's choice to disseminate Franklin's theories in Italy, see B. Cohen, *Benjamin Franklin's Science*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1990, p. 138.

⁷⁰ P. e A. Verri, *Viaggio a Parigi e a Londra*, cit., p. 278.

donated by the King of Hungary⁷¹, should be considered symbolic. It testifies to the links that the Fellows had established all over Europe and the excellent reputation that they benefited from. The letter that Frisi sent to Pietro Verri on 16 February 1767⁷² confirms that Alessandro was now highly regarded by Dr Morton, Nevil Maskelyne and Edward Waring. He was truly happy, and, although he and Alessandro had spent the whole day together «talking especially about rich and powerful England»⁷³, it was important for him to forward Morton's note. Written in Latin, it overtly praised him as an «ingenious and very illustrious young man»⁷⁴.

This section of the Verris' epistolary exchanges and President Morton's final praise are extremely important. They show that learned travel in the 1760s implied a wide and solid network of relations, and that letters of introduction were crucial to gaining access to the most exclusive circles in a foreign country. From this point of view, a generous friend, Paolo Frisi had carefully planned Alessandro's stay in London, and had put him in contact with the leading figures of the Royal Society. The reason why this represented a great opportunity for him – Alessandro – as a young intellectual is that it was the most prestigious British academy, furthermore, thanks to its ties with Freemasonry, it was at the heart of the European cultural debate of the time. Although there is no textual evidence of a discussion between the young Verri and the Fellows on any of the issues related to *Dei delitti e delle pene*, those special relations may have contributed to its circulation.

Allan Ramsay (1713-1784) and Sylvester Douglas (1743-1823), for example, represent two opposite views about Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene*. A prominent Scottish portrait-painter, the former, who had contributed to «Philosophical Transactions»⁷⁵, was utterly against the pamphlet. The long letter that he addressed to Diderot just after its publication⁷⁶ shows that he appreciated its «ingenious observations», but firmly believed

that it had «fondements trop incertains, trop en l'air, pour soutenir un edifice utile et solide, que l'on puisse habiter en sûreté»⁷⁷. Writing from Paris on «17–30 July 1766»⁷⁸, André Morellet (1727-1819), the economist who translated *Dei delitti e delle pene* into French, informed Beccaria about such negative criticism, and, again, on «14-15 March 1767»⁷⁹ suggested that he should consider it carefully⁸⁰. It seems clear that he feared the negative impact that this could have on the pamphlet's reception⁸¹.

A young intellectual who became part of the Accademia dei Pugni in 1767, and who would be admitted to the Royal Society in 1795, Sylvester Douglas saw «*Dei delitti e delle pene*» differently⁸². Dated 1 June 1769, his letter expresses strong enthusiasm not only for the Italian tradition of thought, but also for Beccaria's human and intellectual qualities. For him, «the Italians» represented a model for «science and art»; as for the Milanese *philosophe*, he had successfully combined «solid metaphysical principles» with his deep «love for humankind»⁸³.

Allan Ramsay and Sylvester Douglas, also President Morton and the Fellows Maskelyne, Maty and Waring continued to correspond with the leading members of the «Caffé» circle, particularly with Paolo Frisi, even after *Dei delitti e delle pene* was translated into English. The latest research has showed that in those years the connection between Milan and London became even stronger⁸⁴, and that, following the new revolutionary trends, Benjamin Franklin extended it to the other side of the Atlantic⁸⁵. Again, learned academies and literary salons – not only in Paris, but also in Milan and London – were at the heart of the major changes in the history of the eighteenth-century.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

⁷² *Ibidem*, pp. 477-478. Here we refer to one of Paolo Frisi's letters to Pietro dated 16 February 1767.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 477.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 478. The opening phases in particular read: «Gratias ago tibi maxime pro DD. Comite de Verri, juveni ingenuo et vere illustri. Si plures habes eiusdem fabricae (quod valde dubito) omne quaeso mihi mittas».

⁷⁵ See C. Paderni, *Extracts of Two Letters from Sig^r Camillo Paderni at Rome, to Mr. Allan Ramsay, Painter, in Covent Garden, concerning some ancient Statues, Pictures, and other Curiosities, found in a subterraneous Town, lately discovered near Naples. Translated from the Italian by Mr. Ramsay, and sent by him to Mr. Ward, F.R.S.*, «Philosophical Transactions», 41, 1740, pp. 484-489.

⁷⁶ C. Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene. Con una raccolta di lettere e documenti relativi alla nascita dell'opera e alla sua fortuna nell'Europa del Settecento*, a cura di F. Ventura, Einaudi, Torino 1973, pp. 536-545.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 537.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 350.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 522-525.

⁸⁰ *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Cesare Beccaria*, cit., vol. 4, pp. 341-355.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 524.

⁸² See Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene*, cit., pp. 548-549.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 548.

⁸⁴ See L. De Michelis, «Una rete immensa lega tutte le verità»: Cesare Beccaria's Lectures on Public Economy and Sylvester Douglas's Translation of his «Discourse on Public Economy and Commerce», in L. De Michelis, L. Guerra and F. O'Gorman (eds.), *Entangled Histories: Politics and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Anglo-Italian Encounters*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle (forthcoming 2019).

⁸⁵ In this case, it was Filippo Mazzei (1730-1816) who acted as a 'cultural mediator'. See J. Bessler, *The Birth of the American Law. An Italian Philosopher and the American Revolution*, Carolina Academic Press, Durham 2014; and Loretelli, *The First English Translation of Cesare Beccaria's On Crimes and Punishments*, cit., pp. 11-12.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES.

Made of countless letters in French, Italian and Latin, as well as private diaries and travel accounts, our textual path has showed that the «Caffé» and the most prestigious British academy, the Royal Society, were unexpectedly interconnected. At the time when Cesare Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene* was being translated into English, the physicist Paolo Frisi, who was at the heart of a wide cosmopolitan network, distinguished himself by creating solid Anglo-Italian relations. His cultural activity represented a model for the young Alessandro Verri, who soon decided to follow in his footsteps, and discover intellectual London.

The two intellectuals' extraordinary experiences and encounters can be found in their exchanges with the Fellows. They were mostly scientific, also related to the civil debate of the time, yet they do not provide evidence of their commitment to the promotion of Beccaria's work in England. John Wilkes, for example, had first met the leading members of the «Caffé» at d'Holbach's literary *salon*; as regards Allan Ramsay and Sylvester Douglas, they too were primarily close to the French *philosophes*.

Despite its limitations, however, we are convinced that this under-researched area of study has already offered useful insights into the history of eighteenth-century Europe: it has drawn our attention to the major English and Italian cultural institutions, particularly to their active role in the dissemination of liberal ideas and in the connection between interdisciplinary knowledge and civil engagement. Furthermore, it has emphasized Frisi's effort to change the Paris-centred cultural axis, which must have reinforced the link between Milan and London. Beccaria and the Verris could not but benefit from this side of his international contacts.

Of course, much research remains to be done in this field. The physicist's correspondence will always represent a key documentary resource, but the Fellows' writings will need to receive closer attention: they may reveal some hidden signs of the «Caffé»'s and the Royal Society's relations, thus adding vital information about the rich terrain which also favoured the circulation of Beccaria's «book of crimes» in England. A complex and fascinating chapter of the history of the Enlightenment, it will certainly be continued.