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Manuela D'Amore

The Royal Society and the Discovery of the Two Sicilies

Southern Routes in the Grand Tour

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To Francesco, light and strength in my life

PREFACE

Building upon the academic research that has been carried out until today, this book will shine a light on a novel and unexplored aspect of the British history of culture in the Enlightenment: that of the close relations between the Royal Society and the Grand Tour of Italy.

The letters that *Philosophical Transactions*, the Society's scientific journal, published on the *Bel Paese* ("the Beautiful Country") from 1665 to 1800, together with the Fellows' odeporic narratives, represent the book's main textual basis. They are still neglected and under-researched, yet they provide evidence that the Society fruitfully collaborated with several Italian scientific institutions, and that, especially from 1739 to 1780, it diffused the main events in Campania and Sicily, thus increasing not only curiosity about the Mediterranean south, but also the number of visitors to the region.

These rich and complex relations are at the heart of *The Royal Society and the Discovery of the Two Sicilies: Southern Routes in the Grand Tour*. There is still a lot to know concerning the way cultural news was circulated in England, especially the way travel itineraries were constructed in the long eighteenth century, and its two-part historico-thematic framework is meant to clarify both their main evolutionary phases and protagonists.

Part I is made up of three chapters focusing on the Society's contribution to discourse on learned travel between 1665 and 1700. Chapter 2 explains how the Society utilized the Galilean method to enhance long-distance navigation, while serving Britain's ambitions of politico-commercial expansion in far-off countries. As regards the European network of contacts, Chap. 3 shows that enlarging it was a

priority, also that the Fellows' continuous exchanges with France and Italy were crucial to acquiring prestige within the Republic of Letters, and to laying the foundations of the main socio-cultural phenomena in the Enlightenment.

In fact, the Grand Tour was the product of a process starting early in Restoration times, which gradually resulted in the construction of new regional identities. Going back to the roots of Anglo-Italian intellectual relations in the seventeenth century, and considering their special philosophico-literary, as well as artistic and scientific interconnections, Chap. 4 proves that it was in that period that learned voyagers began to associate cities of art like Rome with their vestiges of the past, and to consider the major volcanoes as the distinctive features of Naples and Catania.

Yet, the main purpose of this book is to show that this was only the beginning of a new chapter in travel history, and that what the modern reader may perceive as an example of cultural simplification, turned into a more complex phenomenon in the Enlightenment. Equally divided into three chapters, but chronologically referring to 1700–1800, Part II explains why the discovery of the buried Roman city of Herculaneum in 1738 suddenly—and radically—changed the Fellows' vision of Italy, particularly of Campania, the main region of the Bourbon Kingdom of Naples. Chapter 5 testifies to their admiration for the precious finds on the extensive archaeological site, also to their scientific observations of Mount Vesuvius between 1738 and 1780.

Time passed by, and it became clear that the south was richer in cultural and naturalistic resources than the rest of Italy; what is more important, it became clear that it was necessary to go beyond prejudices to appreciate them. This new way of approaching such a multifaceted reality prepared the English intelligentsia for a further evolution in the Grand Tour, thus for the “discovery” of wild and mysterious Sicily. Chapters 6 and 7 pursue their proto-Romantic quest for the “Sublime” across the Straits of Messina, but also focus on the impact that their longer narratives had on the construction of a more positive image of the island's treasures and “Otherness”. The level of popularity that they achieved stimulated a large flux of voyagers to visit its main cities and naturalistic sites, which laid the basis of the concluding phase of the Grand Tour on the eve of the nineteenth century.

Once again, the Fellows' relations and exchanges were crucial. They continued to involve exceptional men of knowledge, who were members of

a transnational intellectual community, and reinforced a liberal conception of communication. As for their letters, also those that are inserted in the main body of this book, or at the end in the appendix, they represent invaluable documentary resources, which should be specially valued even today. Replete with historico-scientific icons, interdisciplinary connections, and extraordinary human encounters, they clearly suggest that it is time to explore new paths to acquire a deeper understanding of the *Giro d'Italia*. We shall begin from the fascinating world of learned academies, particularly from the Royal Society as the most powerful cultural agent in the Anglo-Italian Enlightenment.

Catania, Italy

Manuela D'Amore

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I have many to thank for their help on this book. My first debt is to the 2013 Conference at Blaise-Pascal University (Clermont-Ferrand—France) on *Learned Societies and Academies. Travel and Travellers 1600–1900*. It was the starting point of my research, and I am particularly grateful to Sandhya Patel not only for inviting me on that occasion, but also for encouraging me to write more on the Royal Society and the Grand Tour. She was the one who first saw my manuscript, and who gave me her feedback. Our exchanges were, and will continue to be, very important for me.

The Royal Society and the Discovery of the Two Sicilies, however, is also the product of other forms of support. The Finanziamento della Ricerca di Ateneo Project, for instance, which was funded by the University of Catania in 2014, allowed me to carry out part of my research in London, both at the British Library and the Centre of the History of Science of the Royal Society. My warmest thanks to all past and present librarians, particularly to Katherine Marshall for her highly professional help and her commitment. As for a more academic level of contributions, especially in the field of Eighteenth-Century Studies, I will never forget the conversations that I had with Frank O’Gorman (University of Manchester), Annamaria Loretelli (University of Naples) and Francesca Orestano (University of Milan) during the Fifth Anglo-Italian Joint Conference on *Politics*. They were all precious, and really helped me to see the core issues in my project from new perspectives.

I will now finish with those senior colleagues and friends who supported me in the completion phases of this work: Lina Scalisi (University of Catania), who offered sound bibliographic advice on the special events in

the early history of Catania, also carefully considering this book's general framework, and David Flynn, who double-checked the final version of my manuscript.

Last but not least, Lidia De Michelis (University of Milan). She always encouraged me to progress in this research project, what is more important, she clearly suggested how it could be implemented. I will always be grateful for the time she dedicated to it. Without her invaluable insights *The Royal Society and the Discovery of the Two Sicilies* would not be the same.

A NOTE ON EDITORIAL POLICY

In addition to traditional research tools, online archives such as Early English Books Online (EEBO) and *Philosophical Transactions* were essential for this work as they offered valid alternatives to paper editions. Other useful resources were the *Oxford English Dictionary* and Thomas Sprat's latest edition of *The History of the Royal Society of London. For the Improving of Natural Knowledge* to clarify important form and content issues.

Yet, the texts quoted in Parts I and II are taken from the first printed editions and, where possible, from their original manuscripts. In those cases, all the spelling variants, as well as archaic or obsolete words, have been given in the notes. The only modernization for sixteenth-early seventeenth century texts is that of "i" into "j", "u" into "v" and "vv" into "w"; punctuation, capitalization and *emphases* have always been kept as they do not impair comprehension.

These choices were made in order to preserve the original flavour of the texts while making them accessible to non-specialists.

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