

HAMISH F.G. SWANSTON

THE VOICE OF THE POOR IN THE WRITINGS OF S. ALFONSO

SUMMARY

Introduction; 1. – *The «pro bono» Lawyer*; 2. – *A Strange Beast appearing on its own Stage: li Shiorentine*; 3. – *Telling Tales amid Tellers of Tales*; 4. – *The Shareable Language*; 5. – *«Con modo semplice»*; 6. – *«Ecco il momento della rivoluzione»*; 7. – *«et usque ad ultimum terrae»*.

The visitor to Naples, it seemed to Giulio Cesare Capaccio in 1634, must be aware of *«un susurro per tutto come fusse»* he observed with deliberate virgilian resonance, *il bombo dell'api*.¹ To others, the voice of the neapolitan poor could not sound so attractively. The moan of the sick in the old Incurabili hospital, the insistent whine of the beggar, the curse of the galley slave, the shout of the irate neighbour from tenement to tenement above the vicolo, were none of them pleasant to hear. Nor, as Bl Gennaro Maria most feelingly protested were the doorway enticements of the poor prostitutes. And with these should be reckoned that mumble against the rich and powerful which might grow into the noise of a rioting mob, as it had in the 1585 demand for cheaper bread, in the 1620 protest against rising taxes, and, most loudly, in the ten-day wonder of the rebellion of 1647.

Early in the morning of 7 July that year the country traders arriving at the city gates for the Sunday market had refused to accept the reimposition of a *gabella* on their fruit. Setting fire to the customs post, and rushing into the city along the Largo di Portanova, they were joined in their angry demonstration by large numbers of the poorer citizens, and found their voice in the tumultuous speeches of Tommaso Aniello d'Amalfi, 1622-1647.² This eloquent fisherman,³ who was greeted as

¹Giulio Cesare CAPACCIO, *Il Forastiero*, Naples, 1634, *Giornata nona*, p. 847; cf. *Aeneid*, I, 11, 430 ff.

²D'Amalfi was a patronymic. The family had not lived in that lovely city for some

«Masaniello» by everyone down the strada de' Lanajuoli, had had it was popularly agreed, a most encouraging vision of the Madonna del Carmine.

During this crisis, along with the Mormile de' Duchi di Campo-chiaro, the Agnese, the Gattoli, and other alarmed cavalieri of the *seggio* of Portanova,⁴ Don Antonio del Liguori, 1591-1650, and his son, Don Alfonso, 1615-1666, put what influence they enjoyed into stiffening the sinews of the viceré, Don Rodrigo Ponze de León, duque de los Arcos. It was, after all, a house which their neighbour, the mean-spirited flour merchant, Girolamo Letizia, rented from the Mormile that had been among the first to be ransacked and set afire.⁵ But within the week, the popular party had upturned the benches of these dignitaries, the viceregina had minced down the grand stairway of the Palazzo Reale to greet Masaniello's wife, Bernardina, «*Sea V.S. Illma muy bien venida*»,⁶ and the

generations certainly not in the life-time of Cicco d'Amalfi, our hero's father.

vid. Bartolomeo CAPASSO, *Masaniello, La sua vita, la sua rivoluzione*, ed. Luca Tone, Naples 1993; V. CONTI, *Le leggi di una rivoluzione*, Naples 1983; F. MIDON, *The History of the Rise and Fall of Masaniello*, London, 1729; M. SCHIPA, *Masaniello*, Bari 1925; R. VILLARI, ed., *L'uomo barocco*, Rome-Bari, 1990.

Lady Morgan, relying on the account given her by cardinal Fesch, chose to describe Masaniello as «this piscatory demagogue», but she thought him, in a portrait attributed to Salvator Rosa, 1615-1673, quite an attractive hero «in his fisherman's simple and picturesque habit». S. MORGAN, *Life and Times of Salvator Rosa*, 2 vol., 1824.

³For Masaniello's vision, vid. P. BURKE, *La Madonna del Carmine e la rivolta di Masaniello in Scene di vita quotidiana nell'Italia meridionale*, Rome-Bari 1988.

⁴The Porta was erected next S. Eligio with its old soldiers' hospital, on the sea-facing campo del Moricino, a little to the east of the present Chiesa del Carminello al Mercato.

⁵The tumult had, most likely, been provoked by the arrest and imprisonment, a month earlier, on Letizia's orders, of «la povera donna Bernardina» for attempting to smuggle a little flour past the customs post at the Porta Nolana. Masaniello, who had had to sell their household goods to bail out his wife, on taking her from the prison, had turned to the customs officer to say, «*Per la Madonna del Carmine o ch'io non sia più Masaniello, o che un giorno mi vendicherò alla fine di questa canaglia*». G. DONIZELLI, *Partenope liberata*, Naples 1647, p. 22; T. DE SANTIS, *Historia del tumulto di Napoli*, Leyden 1652, p. 26, cited by CAPASSO, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

⁶CAPASSO. *op. cit.*, p. 103. Donna Caterina d'Ayala was, after Masaniello's murder, to take a precise revenge for this self-humiliation; vid. Capasso, p. 111.

nervous police commissioner had been brought to accept terms for a restoration of civic order negotiated by the archbishop. Cardinal Ascanio Filomarino, 1583-1666, whose godparents had shared, evidently, neapolitan enthusiasms for all things virgilian, proved himself a kindly advocate of popular virtue. «Questo Masaniello», he wrote to Pope Innocent X, Pamfilj, 1574-1655, «ha dimonstrato prudenza, giudizio e moderazione; insomma era divenuto un re in questa città, e il più glorioso e trionfante che abbia avuto il mondo».⁷ He had listened for several hours as Masaniello voiced the grievances of the poor and then proposed to the viceré that the king in white trousers, «ad uso di pescatore», should be received as a traditional condottiero «Capitano Generale del fedelissimo Popolo di questa fedelissima città di Napoli». de los Arcos promised to restore «i privilegi di Carlo V» to the citizenry. Masaniello, trusting the duke as he had the cardinal, went out to the people. «Popolo mio caro e amato», he declared to the assembly, «rendiamo a Dio grazie con eterne voci di giubilo della pristina libertà riavuta».⁸ It cannot, therefore, have much disturbed any member of the *seggio* when Masaniello, who had, most unhappily, begun to adopt the accents of a town-boss, was assassinated by a gang of *lazzaroni*. The Liguori and the rest would hope only that no one in their families should be further bothered by those vociferous multitudes.

By making their noise, the urban poor had, during the archbishop's negotiations, retrieved their right to first claim upon the often-scarce supplies of wheat in the Kingdom, to some reduction of taxes on fresh fruit and other foodstuffs, and to a range of ill-defined pristine liberties.⁹

⁷cf. P. PALERMO, *Documenti diversi sulle novità accadute in Napoli l'anno 1647* in «Archivio storico italiano», Ist Series, vol. IX, 1850. p. 385.

It may be significant that the attractive Filomarino was, among the seicento archbishops of Naples, the only one to collect contemporary painting. The derelict figures of Caravaggio's *Our Lady of Mercy*, Guerino's homely women in *The Birth of the Virgin*, or the young sailors of Lanfranco's *Landing of S. Paul at Pozzuoli*, all persuade the viewer to look as clearly and as sympathetically as the painters at the contemporary poor.

⁸A. GIRAFFI, *Le rivoluzioni di Napoli*, Parma 1714, p. 171, cited by Vittorio DINO, MASANIELLO, *L'Eroe e Il Mito*, Rome 1995, p. 31.

⁹CAPASSO, *op. cit.*, p. 99 ff; Dino, *op. cit.*, pp. 172 ff. These were the privileges granted by HRE Karl V and confirmed by king Philip IV. Some of the rebels would rather

The promise of these civic rights did not long survive the arrival in the great harbour of the bastard Don Juan of Austria, 1628-1679, with a spanish armada on 10 October, 1647. There was a rounding-up of the people's leaders. The poor Bernardina was reduced to be another of the city prostitutes, serving the pleasure of Don Juan's marines.¹⁰ And thus, in no time at all, Masaniello's name was restored to popular honour.¹¹ After another attempt at rebellion by the *cappe nere* in the Portanova seggio,¹² the ruling class thought to quieten the people by supplementing cheap bread with expensive circuses. The seggio regularly commissioned *flottole* from Gaetano Greco, 1657-1728, at the Conservatorio dei Poveri, and Al-

have relied on Henri de Lorraine, duc de Guise, for the protection of their liberties in their «serenissima real repubblica», but he proved incapable of looking after even himself.

The granting to the poor of the city a first claim to the wheat of the Kingdom added to the difficulties of the poor in the countryside and the likelihood of rioting there; *vid.* the correspondence of Alfonso and the Carafa duca di Maddaloni, 23 January, 1764, LETTERE, I, 515. Inequitable taxes too were troublesome to the country poor, *vid.* Alfonso to the duke, 3 April, 1764, LETTERE, I, 529.

¹⁰CAPASSO, *op. cit.*, pp. 135 f.

¹¹DINO, *op. cit.*, p. 40. For Masaniello's reviving reputation, see the romanticizing portrait of Masaniello by Onofrio PALUMBO, reproduced in Clovis WHITFIELD and Jane MARTINEAU, ed., *Painting in Naples 1606-1705, from Caravaggio to Giordano*, p. 23, and the excited depiction of the beheading of Giuseppe Carafa by Micco Spadaro (Domenico Gargiulio), 1609-1675, in the Museo di Certosa di S Martino. Masaniello's fame was ever wider-spread. In 1706, Reinhard Keiser, 1674-1739, composed a Masaniello opera, *Die Neapolitanische Fischer-Empörung*, for his Theater am Gänsemarkt, Hamburg. In 1727 this was revized by Philip Telemann and received louder applause. Even a century later, George Soane, 1790-1860, wrote a play, *Masaniello, the Fisherman of Naples*, with incidental music by Sir Henry Rowley Bishop, 1786-1855, which found an appreciative audience for a run of performances at Drury Lane, London. And in Paris, 27 December, 1827, Michele Enrico Carafa, 1787-1872, son of Giovanni, duca d'Alvito, and aide to Joachim Murat, King of Naples, whose ancestor had been beheaded by the people, had been gratified by the Opera-Comique production of his *Masaniello, ou Le pêcheur napolitan*, libretto by C. F. Q. B. MOREAU DE COMMAGNY and A. M. LAFORTELE. His opera was, however, driven from the french stage the next year by La Muette de Portici by Daniel-François-Esprit Auber, 1782-1871, this, the first example of french grand opera, had a libretto by Germain Delavigne, revized by the great Eugène Scribe, 1791-1861. After the belgian revolution, 22 August, 1830, Auber's opera was regarded as politically dangerous by every conservative princeling and rarely performed in nervous countries.

¹²CAPASSO, *op. cit.*, 127 ff. Cardinal Filomarino proved again a good negotiator.

fonso's old tutor had a popular success with his *litanie a quattro voci*.¹³ The government was not always so happy in the choice of entertainment. To celebrate the Queen's birthday in 1696, Don Luis de la Cerda y Aragón, duque de Medinaceli, 1660-1711, had a serenata for five voices and one hundred and fifty instrumentalists performed in front of the Palazzo Reale for all Naples to enjoy. The viceré was much peeved that the people found this costly production not to their taste.¹⁴ The voice of the poor was this time heard as persistent booing.

Nevertheless, Medinaceli in 1696, like Filomarino fifty years before, was expressing the sense of neapolitan grandees that the good things of their city's culture were shareable and should be shared. If the self-protective squirrels of the *seggi* still insisted on the old rules of land inheritance, of fiefdom, primogeniture, and entailment, they were at least ready to share the delights of melody and harmony with the poorest orphan. Their support of several local Conservatories enabled a most splendid flourishing of scholarship boys in the first half of the eighteenth century. These grew up to be «the Naples School». The *popolani*, as the gentry termed the merchants, who kept a business in the family not by inheritance but by hard work, cleverness, and luck, knew rather more than the little noblemen about the risks as well as the rewards of sharing on account of their taking part in joint charterings of cargo vessels in the pirate-infested waters of the Mediterranean.¹⁵ These commercial ventures, too, had their wider effect. A prospering *popolano* put money into the poor box, paid the Easter bonus of the local *maestro di cappella*, and, since the uses of reading, writing, and accounting, as well as music, were quite generally acknowledged by these good citizens, secured some further employment for the bench-school usher.¹⁶ Traders' sons, and sometimes their daughters, along with the scions of noble houses, were being

¹³vid. P. FLORIMO, *La scuola musicale di Napoli e i suoi conservatori*, Naples, 1880-1883; S. DI GIACOMO, *I quattro antichi Conservatori di Napoli*, Palermo 1924.

¹⁴vid. T. GRIFFIN, *Alessandro Scarlatti e la serenata a Roma e a Napoli*, in *La musica a Napoli durante il Seicento*, Naples 1985, 358, and George J. BUELOW, ed., *The Late Baroque Era*, London 1993, p. 119.

¹⁵cf. Alfonso to Remondini, 23 May 1757, LETTERE, III, 57.

¹⁶For a magisterial review of *La scuola* in the Kingdom of Naples at this time, vid. Giuseppe ORLANDI, *Il Regno di Napoli nel Settecento*, in *SHCSR* 44 (1996) 78 ff.

taught by men, and women, who, like good teachers everywhere, were eager to share the freedom of classical civilization with as many of these practical young persons as would receive it.¹⁷ There had been moves towards such educational sharing all through the seventeenth century, but only at the century's end was there a quickening of pace with some truly popularizing projects. In 1699 Giancola Sitillo, 1648?-1712, made the first translation of the *Aeneid* into «*ottava rima napoletana*».¹⁸ And the maccheronic Nicola Capasso, 1671-1745, once he'd been elected to his conveniently time-tabled «*cattedra della vespertina*» at the Law School in 1717, accepting the further responsibilities of a man of *magna graecia*, employed his mornings in making a translation of the *Iliad* into local dialect. Book I was circulating in 1726.¹⁹ Educated gentlemen, all over the city, were exercising such an option for the poor.

There was a complementary readiness for such riches among those who were, perhaps, as yet unsteadily literate. When Antonio de Vico, c. 1636-1708, who had come up from the Maddaloni farmstead in 1656 to work in a city print shop, opened his own store, there were already more than three dozen bookshops in the via San Biagio.²⁰ And quite a number

¹⁷The diverse experiences of the lawyer's daughter, Giulia Crostarosa, 1696-1755, who had to teach herself to write, Autobiografia in Benedetto D'ORAZIO, *Una grande mistica del '700*, Rome 1965, p. 62, and those girls who went, ninety years before, to the school started by Mary Ward under the protection of the Jesuits at Gesù Nuovo, *Life of Mary Ward* by Catherine E. CHAMBERS, introduction by H. J. Coleridge, London 1882-1885, and M. PHILIP, *Companions of Mary Ward*, London 1939, makes any generalization about the education of neapolitan women suspect. R. DE MAIO, *Società e vita religiosa a Napoli nell'età moderna*, Naples 1971.

¹⁸Giancola SITILLO, *Eneade*, Naples 1699, *vid.* art. *Virgilio* in Istituto centrale per il catalogo unico delle biblioteche italiane e per le informazioni bibliografiche, 1981.

¹⁹CAPASSO's translation of the first VI Books and part of Book VII circulated in various small, author-sponsored, printings. They were published together in a posthumous collection, *Varie poesie*, Naples 1761.

Not everyone welcomed this declension in neapolitan. Educational distinctiveness may be as jealously preserved as aristocratic privilege. The poor book-seller's son, Giambattista Vico noted that there were among his students some who, after a mere six-month study, were eager to put themselves at a pretentious distance from their fellows: «*O si graece, et Platonis mel degustares*», *Orat.* III, 1701.

²⁰*vid.* P. NICOLINI, *La giovinezza di Giambattista Vico, 1688-1700: Saggio biografico*,

of street-hawkers, predecessors of Alfonso's enthusiastic disciple, Bartolomeo, who all found ready buyers for the cheaply-printed bestiaries, song-books, and *Vite* of neapolitan saints displayed on their trays.²¹ Reprints of the 1615 *La Galleria* of Giambattista Marino, 1569-1624, with its guide-book verses celebrating the goddesses to be viewed in local collections of paintings and sculptures,²² were also selling well. As Alfonso lamented.²³ And, complementing this evidence of a popular eagerness for classical culture, a second edition of Sitillo's *Aeneid* was printed, piratically, for the hawkers by Carlo Troisi within a year of its appearing in the bookshops.

Alfonso was, certainly, among those who were sensitive to common rights in culture and active in handing on what they had received. Not only in catechism classes for the *scugnizzi* outside S. Angelo a Segno and in the exercizes of the *cappelle serotine* at the barber's shop next the chiesa del Carmine.²⁴ He'd not say anything tactless there about Masaniello, the district hero, but what Don Domenico Buonaccio had shown him of greek and latin heroes informs what Alfonso says of Hercules in his *discorsi* for the Christmas novena as he directs us toward a re-appraisal of the bambino in the crib,²⁵ what he says of the son of Theseus «*favoloso Ippolito*», as he reconsiders the martyrdom of the anti-pope in *Vittorie de' Martiri*,²⁶ and what he says, scatteredly, in, for example, *Verità della Fede*,

2 ed., Bari 1932, and *Il Vico nella vita domestica* in G.Vico, *Opere*, Milan 1953, pp. 94-106, and Donald Phillip VERENE, *The New Art of Biography*, Oxford 1991, p. 6.

²¹There are such hawkers in the via San Biagio still. I have bought volumes of Vico and Marino from them.

²²*La Galeria* opens with poems on *Venere in atto di disvelarsi a Marte* di Giacomo Palamo and *Venere assisa in una conca* di Bernardo Castello. Alfonso, disapproving of his brother Ercole's having a couple of such paintings in his house, had a good story to tell of cardinal Bellarmino's mode of dealing with such gentlemen and such pictures. *Istruzione al Popolo*, Pte I, cap. IV, 4.

²³*Via della Salute*, Pte II, *Riflessioni divote* 17, note.

²⁴TANNOIA, I, cap. XIV, 47.

²⁵*Novena del Santo Natale*, discorso IX, *Opere ascetiche* IV, 115. cf. MILTON, *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* XXV, 11, 227-8. For the importance of the myth of Hercules in the economy of Vico's thought, cf. *De constantia philologiae*, XXIII, 11, *Scienza Nuova* 1725, 262 and 1744, 514.

²⁶*Vittorie de' Martiri*, I, para. LVIII. 2.

of Cicero, Ovid, and, most domestically, Virgil.²⁷ Alfonso was eager, also, to hand on what his father and his cosmology tutor, D. Carminiello Rocca, has told him of the pleasures of astronomy. His ascetical writings are replete with allusions to the armillary sphere by which a seaman might calculate the ascensions and declensions of the stars, and to the more recent mechanical orrery which represented for the visitor» waiting in the library the pretty motions of planets about the sun and moons about the planets. It is, Alfonso remarks casually, one of the peculiar happinesses of modern culture that we can penetrate «le bellezze de cieli e terra», map out «il corso dei pianeti», predict «gli eclisi e gli equinozi».²⁸ He could slip easily from such talk into the bright affirmation that «il sole fu figura di Gesù Cristo».²⁹ And into celebrations of the Lady as «questa bella stella».³⁰ He had also, evidently, been a snapper-up of the trifles of western history as he listened to the supper-table gossip of his father's snobbish friends. These, too, he would distribute. Louis XI's unsuccessful courtship of the Infanta of Portugal, the unholy life of Henry VIII, the distressing funeral of the Empress Isabella, even the heavenly estate of Philip II, are all retailed in Alfonso's writings.³¹ It may be, in reading *Lives of saints*, «i poveri non ben conoscono la loro povertà, se non quando vedono i ricchi»,³² but Alfonso surely does not purpose, as he tells these royal tales, to rouse Masaniellesque sentiments in his hearers. He is,

²⁷egrr. *Verità della Fede*, Pte I, cap. II, 12; cap. III, 9 and 11, Fte II, cap. IV, 11 and 12, Pte III, cap. II, 10; *Breve Dissertazione contra i Deisti*, Pte II, cap. I; *Riflessioni sulla verità della Divina Rivelazione*, cap. I, 5, et pl. al. I have suggested that a pattern for Alfonso's story-telling is to be discerned in *Odyssey*, XI, Hamish F. G. SWANSTON, *Celebrating Eternity Now*, Chawton 1995, pp. 187 f.

²⁸*Verità della Fede*, Pte I, cap. III, 8. The hero-worshipping Tannoia was pleased to record that Alfonso had made such a model himself and used it as a visual aid when instructing Redemptorist students, TANNIOIA I, cap. II, 9.

²⁹*Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, cap. III, 2, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 118. For this solar imagery and for the Marian application of complementary lunar language, vid. SWANSTON, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-62.

³⁰*Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, cap. III, 2, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 122.

³¹*Vera Sposa*, cap. I, 4, *Opere ascetiche*, XIV, p. 15; *Apparecchio alla Morte*, Cons. XX, punto II, *Opere ascetiche* IX, p. 191, Cons. II, punto II, Op. Asc., IX, p. 24, Cons. XIX, punto II, *Opere ascetiche*, IX, p. 181.

³²*Vera Sposa*, cap. IV, 12, *Opere ascetiche*, XIV, p. 101.

rather, suggesting that the barber's assistant, the fisherman's widow, the builder's labourer on the Girolamini steps, have, in their poverty no cause to envy the grandees. There would be more obvious comfort for those who never had a chance at power in the story of cardinal Wolsey's bidding a long farewell to all his greatness.³³ Nardiello, meditating on the *Massime eterne*, may have repeated this cautionary tale at every evening meeting. Or he may not.

Though Alfonso went on, throughout his missionary life, presenting such *esempi* and drawing out their lessons, that he did not judge teaching to be his proper exercise of the option for the poor is plain from his response, during the 1732 arguments at Scala, to Vincenzo Mannarini's suggestion that they establish a few country grammar schools.³⁴ Rather than be their teacher, it must seem that Alfonso was by temperament and training better fitted to argue the defence of the poor.

³³*Massime eterne*, Med. I per la Domenica, in *Opere ascetiche* IX, p. 383. A reference in S. Leonard of Port Maurice *Prediche quaresimali* XXI to «il segretario di Francesco I, re di Francia» befuddled Alfonso, though he clearly knew the english provenance of the story, into talking of «Francesco, re d'Inghilterra». cf. SHAKESPEARE. *Henry VIII*, Act III, scene II, 428-457.

³⁴cf. Auguste BERTHE, *S. Alphonse de Liguori*, Paris 1900, 2 vol., Book II, ch.1 and T. REY-MERMET, *Dalla Fondazione all'Approvazione Pontificia*, in Francesco CHIOVARO, ed. *Storia della Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore*, Vol. I, Rome 1993, 168. There must, of course, always be something of an educationalist's sense of the relation of the missionary and the poor in any Redemptorist accommodation of «Evangelizare pauperibus misit me».

1 -The «pro bono» Lawyer

On his son's first entering Law School in 1708, Don Giuseppe was entertaining hopes of Alfonso's so prospering at the Bar that he might marry a princess, having first, of course, made enough money to sustain the lady in her accustomed style. His were not unusual hopes. Giambattista Vico, 1668-1744, the most distinguished of European intellectuals, who admitted Alfonso and his classmates to the Law School, equally recognized that, in the splendid reign of their king Carlo II, «*universi ordines dum studiis et officiis Civitas cuncta dum onore et laude eruditum quemque virum prosequitur vos eruditissimos esse cupit*».³⁵ Most especially the State would bestow these highest positions in the Civil Service on hard-working Law students.

Vico, the poor book-seller's son, educating himself atop the precarious store-ladder, had, when about eighteen years old, been accepted by the Bar authorities as the court-room representative of his lawyerless father in a suit brought by another book-seller. And then, after a visit to Antonio Vico's shop, Monsignor Geronimo Rocca, 1623-1691, had recommended the young man to his brother Don Domenico, 1641?-1699, as a suitable tutor for his children, so Vico was able to continue his self-teaching in the near-by library of the franciscan friary, S. Maria della Pietà, at Vatolla, where the family spent the summers. There he had begun to read Virgil. And taken steps to register as a part-time student in the Naples Law School. He was nine years the Rocca family tutor. Then, having failed to get a town-hall job as *segretario della città*, he had scraped into a university lectureship in January, 1689. He gained a number of discerning friends, the bibliophile Giuseppe Valletta, 1636-1714,

³⁵VICO, *Oratiae* I, 1699, final paragraph. *Le Orazioni Inaugurali* I-VI, ed. Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Bologna 1982, Vol. I of *Opere di Giambattista Vico*, Centro di Studi Vichiani, Naples.

For general accounts of Vico and his thinkings, I have relied on Leon POMPA, *Vico, a Study of the New Science*, Cambridge 1975; Donald Philipp VERENE, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, Cornell 1981; Joseph MALI, *The Rehabilitation of Myth*, Cambridge 1992; Marcel DANESI, *Vico, Metaphor and the Origin of Language*, Indiana 1993; Mark LILLA, *G. B. Vico, The Making of an Anti-Modern*, Harvard 1993, and shortest of all, Peter BURKE, *Vico*, Oxford 1985.

Niccolo Caravita, 1647-1717, *avvocato fiscale della Real Giurisdizione*, the excitable philosopher, Paolo Mattia Doria, 1662-1746, and a range of practicing attorneys, including both the fashionable Gian Antonio Castagnola, 1671-1760, and Fabrizio del Vecchio, whose single historical notice is Vico's *Vita* tribute: «*avvocato onestissimo che poi vecchio morì dentro una somma povertà*». But he could not win promotion to an adequately-rewarded professorship. The brightest man of the university was reduced to a reliance on what he could persuade ambitious gentlemen to pay for some latin-coaching of their lumpish sons, together with the autumnal bonus of the abilitation fees of registering students at the Law School.

Vico's career instances both the possibility of a poor man's voice being raised in contemporary society and a deliberate deafness of those in academic and political authority to what a poor man, even of such rare eloquence, was saying.

It is not, therefore, at all surprising that, in his 1704 address to the re-assembling students and the newly-registered freshmen, Vico, expressing the regret that their parents were not present to hear him denounce the mean quest for honours and titles, went on to remark how much the meaner were those «*qui earum fructum liberis suis vile lucrum proponunt*».³⁶ Alfonso's relations did not possess the popularist credentials of the family of Vico's favourite pupil, Giambattista Filomarino,³⁷ but he was ready enough to learn from Vico that the lawyer's eloquence was to be put to articulating the share each neapolitan had in the rights and duties of a common citizenship. To the freshman's question, «*Quid est justitia?*», Vico had responded, «*Constans est communis utilitatis cura*».³⁸ His most

³⁶*Ibid.*, Oratio IV, final paragraph. For the story of the poor man's son becoming the grand professor, and of the jealousies which conspired to keep him poor, *vid.* VICO, *Vita scritta da se medesimo*, and Donald Philipp VERENE, *The New Art of Autobiography*, supplementing these with S. MASTELLONE, *Francesco Andrea politico e giurista*, Florence 1969.

³⁷*vid.* Vico's epithalamium *Giunone in Danza* and the *Johanni Baptistae Philomario dedicatio, Notae in duos libros*, in *Opere Giuridiche*, ed. Paolo Cristofolini, Florence 1974, 735. For another of Vico's pupils with whom Alfonso was intimately acquainted, *vid.* Oreste GREGORIO, *Giulio Cesare Marocco «Postillatore» della Seconda Scienza Nuova di Giambattista Vico?*, in *SHCSR* 22 (1974)147-64.

³⁸VICO, *Opere*, ed. Andrea Battistini, Milan 1990, Vol. I, pp. 188 and 189.

famous lecture, *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*, inaugurating the academic year in 1708, Alfonso's first year at Law School, when he was still likely to be attending lectures with an expectation of enlightenment, is in great part a summoning of university men to the defence of a *sensus communis* against the individualistic criticism of the cartesian «cogito».³⁹ It seemed to Vico that while Renato delle Carte, along with Hobbes and Spinoza and the most number of contemporary theorists, held to «*una morale di solitari*»,⁴⁰ busying themselves in closed gardens, he should insist that human beings are by their nature brought to live together, in cities.⁴¹ Vico's meditations on «*l'uomo socievole*»,⁴² on that awareness human beings have of their lives as already shared and more fully shareable, were developed through the two versions of his *Scienza nuova*, 1725 and 1744. It had been, he suggested, the great distinction of roman jurists that they appealed to «*il senso comune d'esso genere umano sopra il quale riposano le coscienze di tutte le nazioni*».⁴³ It was now the vocation of neapolitan jurists to make that same appeal. Further, they were to expound, as the pagan romans could not, «*una teologia civile ragionata*

³⁹It would be a relief to the dullest students that the great intellectual was warning them against attending the lectures of some of his colleagues. There was, Vico says, a danger even in their own Law School that instruction in advanced philosophical criticism may, since such cartesian stuff would take them further from the common sense and «*adolescentes reddat eloquentiae ineptiores*». *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*, Inaugural lecture, 1708. VICO, *Opere*, ed. Battistini, vol I, p. 104.

cf. E. GRASSI, *La priorità del senso comune e della fantasia in Vico* in ed. E. RIVERSO, *Leggere Vico*, Milan 1982, pp. 128-142; G. GIANIZZO, *Del «senso comune» in Vico*, in *Vico, la politica e la storia*, Naples 1981, 125-141; G. MODICA, *La filosofia del «senso comune» in Giambattista Vico*, Caltanissetta 1983.

⁴⁰VICO, *Vita*, ed. Battistini, *Opere*, vol. I, p. 15.

⁴¹*Scienza Nuova*, 1744, 2. Vico is there celebrating «*la vera civil natura dell'uomo*», and explaining the reference of the law of the city to *diritto in natura*.

⁴²vid. VICO, *Lettera* to Abate Giuseppe Luigi Esperti, a small-time lawyer, ed. Battistini, *Opere*, I, pp. 322 ff.

cf. W. STARK, *The Theoretical and Practical Relevance of Vico's Sociology For Today*, in *Vico and Contemporary Thought*, II, 160-167, ed W. J. CAHNMAN, *Vico and Historical Sociology*, *ibid.*, pp. 168-178.

⁴³*Scienza Nuova*, 1744, 350, cf. *ibid.*, 141 and 142.

della provvidenza divina».⁴⁴

Defining together «popolo», «regno», and «libertà», so that each citizen's rights are identifiable within the design of God, Vico was taking up the recurring cry of the people and thereby bringing his students to some understanding of the contribution others were making to the common life of the Kingdom.⁴⁵ In the dedication to the published text of his lecture notes, *de Universi Iuris*, Vico makes a deliberate reference to the gracious intervention of cardinal Filomarino «in masanelliano tumulto», and the lectures themselves may be read as giving the cardinal's intuitions about «fedelissimo popolo» a necessary intellectual structure.⁴⁶ If his sympathetic account of the struggle of the serfs for a liberty within roman society is always tempered by the affirmation that the aristocratic families were preserving a valuable local tradition, that is because Vico understood, along with Masaniello and Filomarino, and wished his students, Alfonso among them, to understand, that tradition to be, when truly itself, declaratory of the common rights and duties of all the people.⁴⁷ He had no augustinian doubt about the propriety of the prophecy of Anchises to his great great son and to every responsible roman:

*hae tibi erunt artes pacique imponere morem,
parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.*⁴⁸

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 2 and 342. cf. E. DE GIOVANNI, *La «teologia civile» di G. B. Vico*, in «Il Centauro», II, maggio-agosto 1981, 12-22.

Vico took it to be his especial claim to admiration that «con gloria della cattolica religione» he had, by his careful attention to the history of divine care for the workings of *senso comune* among the gentiles, made it impossible for an italian reader to envy the Protestants their Grozio, Seldeno, and Pufendorffio. *Vita*, final paragraph, ed. Battistini, *Opere*, I, p. 59.

⁴⁵*Scienza Nuova*, 1744, 105.

⁴⁶cf. *Notae in Duos Libros*, dedication. Vico proved in these interesting lectures outlines to be a most percipient critic of Homer.

⁴⁷*Scienza Nuova*, 1744, 668, 1100-1104. cf. Vico's unaccented generalization, from the histories of Rome and Naples: «plebei di voler sempre mutar gli Stati, come sempre essi gli mutano», *Scienza Nuova*, 1744, 609.

⁴⁸*Aeneid* VI, 11, 852 f, cited in original at *Scienza Nuova*, 1744, 553 in a discussion of the Roman excellence in «l'eroismo della virtù», and at similar contexts in italian translation at *Scienza Nuova*, 1744, 18 and 1099. Vico was, as his sonetto of 1735 wit-

At least, he had no doubt of the prophecy's accommodated reference to neapolitans. It would be the proper employment of the occupant of *la cattedra di retorica bandita* to prepare the young men training to be officers in the city courts for the realization of this prophecy. There'd be no great difficulty in this.⁴⁹ Among present neapolitans, a *sensus communis* is surely manifest in the court-room relations of judge and accused as they are governed according to *aequitas civilis*.⁵⁰ «*In summo regni senatu aequum civile naturali saepe in decernendo praeferri*».⁵¹ In the lower courts, «*non multa hodie eloquentia opus est*», Vico observed with a bow to the royal representatives on the governing body of the university. «*Ut in iuris quaestionibus aequum obtineatur*» and «*Hodie quivis rusticus momentis aequi indiserte et incondite demonstratis obtineret*».⁵² But so expeditious are the royal policemen and the magistracy that an accused has, usually, only a couple of hours in which to put his defence together.⁵³ So, even today, in Naples, the halting peasant is likely to be in need of an advocate to plead his civic share in the shareable tradition.

The lawyer makes his peculiar contribution to their common life

nesses, particularly devoted to the saint. He had certainly studied the *City of God* as carefully as any of the Naples professors, cf. *Scienza Nuova*, 1744, 38, 80, 98, 175, 366, 425, 668.

Alfonso, in his use of this quotation as in other matters, is nicely augustinian, quoting only James 4, 6 in his *Novena del Santo Natale*, discorso IX, *Opere ascetiche*, IV, p. 118, which begins with *La superbia* and, just before ending with the reference to James, arrives at an inaccurately-remembered quotation from AUGUSTIN, *Sermo* 177. The same James verse occurs at the start of *Pratica*, *Opere ascetiche*, I, p. 115.

⁴⁹At least there was no difficulty in advancing a theory within the academy. Outside, the practice might be opposed by every section of the populatio; vid. Vittorio DINO, *op. cit.*, 14, referring to VICO. *La congiura di principi napoletani*, ed. Claudia Pandolfi, Naples 1992, p. 196.

⁵⁰VICO, *De nostri temporis*. XI. Ed. Battistini, *Opere*, I, p. 188. Something of this sense of a shared justice was preserved in the Camera Reale di Sommaria where the eight judges sat with three presidente officially entitled *idioti* on account of their representing the interests of the uneducated people. They were assisted by twenty-four officials, the *rationali*.

⁵¹VICO, ed. Battistini, *op. cit.* I, p. 194.

⁵²*Ibid.* I, p. 180.

⁵³*Ibid.*, I, p. 108.

even as he is pleading: «*sensus communis ut omnis prudentiae ita eloquentiae regula est*». ⁵⁴ Vico has organized a patriotic transference of those *artes paci*. The young men are to appreciate that chief among «*pacisque artibus Neapolitanum nomen per gloriam nunquam interituram collustrarunt*» ⁵⁵ was the command of a language which was patient of its own epic expression of communality. The grandeur of Ariosto's invention and the ease of his diction, «*Homerum referunt*». Tasso's grace and musical sublimity, «*Virgilium exprimunt*». ⁵⁶ In such a language the young lawyer might speak well for every citizen.

Though it would, in due time, prove mighty useful for his particular arrangement of the Congregation's cause in the litigations prosecuted by Francesco Maffei and Nicola Sarnelli, between 1765 and 1767, and in the preparation of his deposition to the Concilio di Capua in 1777, ⁵⁷ Alfonso is, it seems to me, quite generally understanding his lawyerly training as fitting him for the advocacy of a vichian *senso comune*. He is, in all that is distinctive in his moral thinking, from his analysis of *bestemmia de' morti* ⁵⁸ through the establishment of *aeque probabilis* as his usual instru-

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, I, 104.

⁵⁵Vico, *Oratio* IV, 1704.

⁵⁶Vico, *De nostri temporis*, ed. Battistini, VII, pp. 140-142. It was a commonplace among his fellow citizens that Naples was actually what Rome and, indeed, Athens, had hoped to be. cf. Richard Grashaw's 1646 englishing of MARINO's 1632 *Sospetto d'Erode*, Lib. I, 4, and the invocation of Naples as Muse:

Thou, whose strong hand with so transcendent worth
Holds high the reine of faire Parthenope
That neither Rome nor Athens can bring forth
A Name in noble deeds Rivall to thee!
Thy Fame's full noise makes proud the patient Earth,
Farre more than matter for my Muse and mee.

For reasons unconnected with literary or patriotic virtue, Alfonso did not share Vico's estimate of ARIOSTO, *vid. Istruzione al Popolo*, I, VII.

⁵⁷*vid. Andreas SAMPERS, Duo Memoriaia in defensionem S.i Alfonsi*, in *SHCSR* 15 (1967) 208-299, and Giuseppe ORLANDI, *art.cit.*, in: *SHCSR* 44 (1996), especially 259-282.

⁵⁸*Theologia Moralis*, Lib. III, Tract. II, cap. I, GAUDÉ, 130. This cursing of an opponent's ancestors was not confined to the conversation of the poor. Perhaps the most notorious public oath of this sort was that of Giovanni PAISIELLO, 1740-1816, at a royal

ment of elucidation,⁵⁹ to his notorious account of *aequivocatio*,⁶⁰ accepting, as experience and wide reading show him, that there is commonly more than one christian way of looking at a situation. He is suggesting, next, that we, who enjoy the good things of christian culture, should exercise this *senso comune* and choose to look with those who lack power in our society.⁶¹ In his discussion of *aequivocatio*, for instance, after a pause to notice those puns in which all civilized persons delight,⁶² Alfonso takes his examples from the terrifying experiences of the battered wife, the man threatened with condemnation to the oars and the debtor cornered by menacing creditors.⁶³ Experience prevented Alfonso's being convinced by what Vico had been saying about the present workings of *iusticia* in the Kingdom, even while he was being led to re-affirm the great man's description of the desirable *senso comune*. He had, after all, met *judex incompetens* whose questioning of a witness was not according to *ordinem*

command performance of his *Dramma sacra per musica*, Baldassare, 1787, at which the second Lady Hamilton was his guest. At one crisis in the performance the composer leapt up in a fury with the bad singers, crying «Ah, managgio dei morti, siete stati tutti castrati in cattivo tempo». The audience, though in a church, burst into gales of laughter.

⁵⁹*Theologia Moralis*, Lib. I, Tract. I, cap. 3, *De conscientia probabili - Morale systema*, GAUDÉ, 54-89.

⁶⁰Notorious at least amongst english readers of John Henry NEWMAN's *Apologia*. Charles KINGSLEY and Newman had both misunderstood Alfonsian notions, in great part because what Alfonso was saying had been misrepresented in both, the *Theologia Moralis Universa*, 1847, of Pietro SCAVINI, 1791-1869, and the *Compendium Theologiae Moralis*, 1841, of Dieudonné NEYRAGUET, 1798-1867.

⁶¹He could not always be successful in this appeal for sympathy. I have met a nun in Naples who supposed that every present wickedness in her city, and she noticed a great deal, could be traced as originating in the continuance of *bestemmia de' morti*.

⁶²Alfonso engineers many a wry grin at his punning, *egrr*. on «pinguis», *Theologia Moralis*, Lib. III, Tract. IV, cap. I, 374, on «benedetta», *Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, cap. I, 3, *esempio*, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 42, on «Napoli la gentile», Med. VIII, *Opere ascetiche*, IV, p. 218, and on *angelo*, LETTERE, I, 187, and the running play of *salve*, *salute*, and *salvare*, in *Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, cap. IX, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 303.

⁶³*Theologia Moralis*, Lib. III, Tract. II, cap. 2, *dubium* IV, *An in Juramento liceat uti Aequivocatione*, GAUDÉ, 151 ff, especially 156 and 162, cf. the discussion in *Istruzione al Popolo*, Pte II, cap. VIII, 5, about the uses of *equivocation* in order to effect some restoration of a man's good name.

juris, let alone *aequitatem civilem*.⁶⁴ Still, he was, by temperament, very ready to receive Vico's suggestion of the fundamental resource for any who would appreciate the proper workings of justice in society: «*Et exempla primas leges fuisse*».⁶⁵

Vico is famous for his imaginative reconstructions of earlier people's understandings of *senso comune* from the workings of their language tradition in myth, epic, and every sort of story-telling. Since «*ogni comune di uomini è naturalmente portato a conservare le memorie di quelle costumanze, ordini, leggi che gli tengono dentro quella società*»,⁶⁶ it was a principle of Vico's new science that it is in their stories that we should look for «*narrazioni storiche degli antichissimi costumi, ordini, leggi delle primi gentili nazioni*».⁶⁷ Most particularly, Vico affirmed the social, indeed social-scientific, value of «*le tradizioni volgari de' popoli*», preserved in folklore.⁶⁸ Even though such a lore might be subversive of present social arrangements. He bravely approved the account Phaedrus gives in *Liber Fabularum* of the origin of the stories neapolitans were still inheriting from these gentile nations:

«*Nunc fabularum cur sit inventum genus
Brevi docebo. Servitus obnoxia,
Quia quae volebat non audebat dicere
Affectos proprios in fabellas transtulit*».⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Alfonso hints at such rotten judges at *Theologia Moralis*, Lib. III, Tract. II, cap. 2, *de juramento*, dubium iv.

⁶⁵ VICO, *Il Diritto Universale*, cap. XV, iii, *ed. cit.*, 485. Perhaps Alfonso discussed these notions with Vico at supper with his theology tutor, Giulio Nicola Torno, 1676-1756, who served as the ecclesiastical censor of Vico's writings from *De uno*, 1720, to *De mente heroica*, 1732. cf. P. NICOLINI, *Vico e il suo censore ecclesiastico*, in *Saggi vichiani*, III, 1, 1941. Vico calls Torno «il dottissimo», *Vita*, 48 and 71; «doctissimo magistro meo» and «doctissimus Torni», are the phrases Alfonso uses in *Dissertatio scholastico-moralis pro usu moderato opinionis probabilis*, 1749, *Dissertationes quatuor*, XV, *ed. Turin* 1829, 69 and *Theologia Moralis*, Lib. I, Tract. II, cap. 4.

⁶⁶ *Scienza Nuova*, 1725, cap. IX, 93.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Liber Fabularum*, Book III, prologue, 11, 9-12, cited by VICO, *Scienza Nuova*, 1744, Battistini, I, p. 598.

Echoing Vico, Alfonso is happy to be the christian inheritor of these story-tellers. «*Noi che siamo nati in queste regioni*», «*tutti i nostri antenati erano gentili*», and «*che sarebbe di noi, se fossimo nell'Asia, nell'Africa, nell'America?*».⁷⁰ But while the diplomatic Vico was generally content to employ such myth, *vera narrazione* in the investigation of his society's past,⁷¹ Alfonso was eager that story-telling should be moving things on in their society towards that *ultima aetas* prophesied by their local Sibyl.⁷² He would tell stories which should bring the rich to look with the poor. His stories should declare what it means for a housewife to have no other respite from chores than a quiet moment in church, what it means for a poor man, like Masaniello, to lose a day's fishing through illness, what it means for a poor woman, like Bernardina, to find herself on the street.⁷³ Here again Alfonso was putting Vico's lecturings to experiential test.

Vico had romantically observed that in the original age, when *poeti teologi* ran society, human beings had all been temperate hard-working, magnanimous, taking pleasure only in what was both lawful and useful. He had, even more romantically, exhibited the townsman's illusion about the peasant. Whatever his father had tried to tell him about life down on the farm, Vico persisted in believing that the manners of those innocent originals survived in the Kingdom, «*come tuttavia osserviamo i costumi contadineschi*».⁷⁴ Alfonso has, however, some acquaintance with those law-breakers who, according to the very unillusioned Mgr Celestino Galiano, the Cappellano maggiore formed almost the entirety of the rural population.⁷⁵ And who inhabit the most part of Salvator Rosa's land-

⁷⁰*Meditazione VII*, in *Novena del Santo Natale, Opere ascetiche*, IV, p. 218 f.

⁷¹*vid.* the discussion della logica poetica, *Scienza Nuova*, 1744, 401, 408, 808, 814. His account of Anchises' prophecy shows how immediate might be the reference of his history to the condition of the present city.

⁷²VIRGIL, *Eclogue*, IV, 11, 4, 60 and 62. Alfonso cites 11. 4-7 in *Verità della Fede*, Pte II, cap. IV, 11.

⁷³*Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, *Raccolta*, 10, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 366; Pte I. cap. I, *Opere ascetiche* VI, pp. 323-324; Pte I, cap. VI, 1, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 216.

⁷⁴*Scienza Nuova*, 1744, 516.

⁷⁵*L'Opera delle Missioni*, a memorial concerning the Institute of the Most Holy Saviour, 22 August, 1747; TANNIOIA, II, 192. It was in the mountain region of Cilento, however, that Vico was employed as tutor to the children of don Domenico Rocca,

scapes. Alfonso retells stories of the mountain robber, the forest foot-pad, the highwayman.⁷⁶ As he tells each one's story, he shirks nothing. His highwayman has had every advantage, a squireling father, a pious mother, a fine start to his career in a princely household, and he has abused these advantages, drifting into bad company, gambling away his inheritance, getting himself dismissed from the prince's service, taking up a life of crime. He is very soon apprehended by those expeditious policemen and as expeditiously sentenced by the magistrate. Yet, Alfonso so manages the boy's story that the most respectable hearer will, by the time the ne'er-do-well is nearing the scaffold, be wholly on his side.⁷⁷ Alfonso makes each and everyone aware of a community of law-abider and law-breaker.

Alfonso did not, on his taking his graduation oath to defend the doctrine of the immaculate Conception of Mary *usque ad effusionem sanguinis*, become at once the defence lawyer for such a *senso comune*. It was very plain that Vico's civil account of the lawyer was hardly relevant to the fulfilment of Don Giuseppe's design. And Alfonso so far fell in with his father's plans to go first to work in the offices of the society lawyer, Don Luigi Perrone, and then, on joining the practice of Don Andrea Giovene, to get himself known as the expert in the profitable law of fiefdom. He was known too, as the avid opera-goer.⁷⁸ He was occupying his evenings as well as his days in ways that would certainly have Don Giuseppe's ambitious approval.

Since 1673, when the viceré, the marchese di Astorga, took the teatro San Bartolomeo for an evening of operatio excerpts sung by his

1641?-1699, and discovered there the wonders of Virgil in the library of the Franciscans. Vita, in *Opere*, Battistini, I, p. 12.

⁷⁶*Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, Raccolta, 25, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 375; Pte I, cap. VII, 375; Pte I, cap. VIII, 1, cap. VI, 3, and cap. VI, 1, *Opere ascetiche* VI, pp. 265, 238 and 216.

⁷⁷There is a real difference of pastoral intention, as well as of narrative mastery in such a way of telling stories from that generally apparent in preachers' use of *esempi*. For a splendid short review of these devices, *vid.* Giuseppe ORLANDI, *L'uso degli "esempla" in S. Alfonso*, in *SHCSR* 39 (1991) 3-39.

⁷⁸*vid.* TANNOIA, II, cap. V, 18; Frederick JONES, *The Saint of Bourbon Naples*, Dublin 1992, 27; T. REY-MERMET, *art.cit.*, in *Storia della Congregazione CSsR*, p. 122.

volatile favourite, Giulia de Caro,⁷⁹ it had become quite usual, indeed almost a weekly event during the viceregency of the opera-mad Medinaceli, for the court to attend public performances by the Febi Armonici company.⁸⁰ A summons to be one of the party in the first tier boxes defined a nobleman's place in neapolitan society. Rather less enthusiastic, the austrian governors had maintained this custom of high-day opera. Sometimes at the San Bartolomeo. Sometimes at the house of a princeling. Sometimes in a parish hall. It would have been, at the *Acì*, *Galatea*, e *Polifemo* that George Frideric Handel, 1685-1759, wrote for the Alvito wedding in 1708⁸¹ that Don Giuseppe first had an opportunity of presenting Alfonso to the viceré, the quick-spirited cardinal Vincenzo Grimani, 1655-1710.⁸² The youngster had his first notable social success in the production of the little *S. Alessio* opera presented by the Congregazione de' Giovanetti Cavalieri at the Girolamini.⁸³ «Pazzo che sono stato in averci

⁷⁹The viceré ordered that *Giulla de Caro*, whose vulgar airs, «la sfacciata», «la var-chetta», et al. pl., had led to her being ordered to do penance in a local convent, should star in a revival of the 1670 *Marcello in Siracusa* by Giovanni Antonio BORETTI, 1640-1672, with a text by the equally scandalous venetian exile Matteo Noris, 1650-1714, to which a neapolitan prologue by Giovanni Cincinelli was added and set by Pietro Andrea Ziani, 1616-1684. CROCE, most uncharacteristically, was unable to unmuddle these facts, *vid. I teatri di Napoli*, Naples 1891, ed. Giuseppe Galasso, 1992, p. 107.

⁸⁰*vid. U. PROTA-GIURLEO, Breve storia del teatro di corte e della musica a Napoli nei secoli XVII-XVIII*, in *Il teatro di corte del palazzo reale di Napoli*, Naples 1952, and Lorenzo BIANCON, *Dalla "Finta pazza" all "Veremonda", storie di Febiarmonici*, in «Rivista italiana di musicologia» 10 (1975) 379-454.

⁸¹The princess Beatrice di Sanseverino, daughter of the prince of Monte Mileto, married the notably pro-austrian duca. cf. A. DELLA CORTE, *Haendel a Napoli*. Turin 1950, and H. P. G. SWANSTON, *Handel*, London 1990, pp. 16-17. It is gratifying that Frederick JONES accepted my suggestion about *Acì* for the second edition of his biography of Alfonso, p. 27.

⁸²VICO describes Grimani, in *Principium neapolitanorum coniurationis historia*, as «impetuoso» and «versatile nelle decisioni»; *Scritti vari e pagine sparse*, ed. F. Nicolini, Bari 1940, p. 324.

⁸³The Naples Oratory had a reputation for such entertainments, ever since January, 1630, when the Fathers had presented two performances of «una bell'opera spirituale» one for an audience of gentlemen, the other for ladies. The next year, one of the Oratorians, Antonio Glielmo, had written a «rappresentazione spirituale», *Incendio del Monte Vesuvio*, which was presented, as Lazaro Scoriggio wrote in his 1632 preface to

perduto tanto tempo», Alfonso commented on his operatic enthusiasms later,⁸⁴ but he was being, I think, a little economical with the truth when he made his further excuse, «*ma doveva ubbidire, perchè così voleva mio Padre*». Still, *aequivocatio* or not, it was, surely, the remembrance of his father's estimate of such occasions which prompted Alfonso's finding an image of the pains of hell in the frustration a nobleman must feel on his being excluded from the company invited to his sovereign's theatre for some heavenly music.⁸⁵

Several of the more distinguished of his fellow lawyers had more than a box-holder's interest in the San Bartolomeo *opere serie*. That suggestion of lawyerly eloquence's being a daily resumption of the great tradition of Homer and Virgil, Ariosto and Tasso, which Vico made in his exposition of *il senso comune*, found a response in the nightly ambition of many a Naples lawyer to be accepted as a stage poet, a librettist. Even the ironic Capasso found morning time, again, to put down some wry verses for an *Ottone*, though, since, characteristically, neither his heroine nor his hero reached the *lieto fine* unmocked, Capasso's words remained unset.⁸⁶

the printed text, «*con l'applauso di tutta la città*»; cited by CROCE, *I teatri*, ed.cit., p. 87.

For these festive occasions, the Oratorians could choose among many «*commedie con soli uomini senza mistura di donne*», CROCE, *ibid.*, 284. There had been a famous performance at Benevento of *La vanità conosciuta ovvero il trionfo celeste per la vita di s. Alessio* by Pietro PIPERNO, but it is more likely that Alfonso had been brought to perform his part in either the *Sant'Alessio* of Stefano LANDI, 1590-1655, with libretto by Pope CLEMENT IX, ROSPIGLIOSI, 1600-1669, or the piece by Bernardo PASQUINI, 1637-1710, cf. H. F. G. SWANSTON, *Celebrating Eternity Now*, p. 67.

It may be that there was an histrionic branch of the family. The part of the old lady, Zenobia, in the *Alvida* of Francesco D'ISA was undertaken, in February 1630, by a certain signora de Liguoro, CROCE, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁸⁴TANNOIA, I, cap.III. The effects of this early enthusiasm were diverse. The opera paradigm, in which equally importantly placed arias, equally applaudible high notes, are allowed to heroines and old retainers and unhandsome generals, encouraged an equiprobabilist appreciation of the complexity of human affairs.

⁸⁵Sermo XLVIII, for nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost, *Sermoni compendiatii*, 1771, cf. contrariwise, the hint we have in «*qualche armonia*» of «*delizie eterne del paradiso*», *Vera Sposa*, XVI, 3, 10, *Opere ascetiche*, XV, p. 161.

⁸⁶Things were better arranged in Stefano Benedetto PALLAVICINO's revision of the text for Antonio LOTTI, Dresden 1719, and then again improved in Nicola Francesco HAYM's libretto for HANDEL's *Ottone*, London 1723.

Other professors had a nearer acquaintance with the vagabondish theatre-folk whose fortune was in their voices. Giuseppe Pasquale Cirillo, 1709-1776, appointed to *la cattedra primaria di diritto civile* in 1735, was a near relative of Francesco Cirillo, 1623-1669?, «*primo operista napoletano*», who, besides being an innovative adapter, director, and singer, winning applause in both baritone and tenor roles, had had some local success at writing his own operas.⁸⁷ The family could still boast the talents of Nicola Cirillo, 1671-1735, a professor in the Medical School of the university, who was writing a new *opera seria* libretto for each theatre season. It had been to Nicola Cirillo that Capasso had run after reading Vico's 1725 *Scienza nuova*, fearing, he said, with rather too obvious a relish for his own sarcasm, that he must have lost his senses amid so much madness. On this episode's being reported to Vico, he simply observed, with, doubtless, a nod towards Capasso's *Ottone*, that he had not been writing to please «*pei poetuzzi*». None of these poetasters was a worthy companion, of course, for Pietro Metastasio (Trapassi), 1698-1782.

Like Vico, Metastasio came of a poorish, rural family. Like Vico, again, Metastasio had a father who hoped to better himself by a change of occupation. Felice Trapassi had somehow managed to buy himself out of the papal infantry regiment and set up a small grocer's shop.⁸⁸ Despite his own hard-work and the energetic help of his wife, this lower middle class-enterprize had not prospered. The Trapassi certainly could not have afforded more than the most elementary education for their exceptionally gifted child, but happily his talents had been recognized by those who could afford to patronize him. Pietro had been taken up first by the splendidly civilized cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, 1667-1740,⁸⁹ and then by

⁸⁷vid. N. D'ARIENZO, *Origini dell'opera comica*, in «*Rivista musicale italiana*» 2 (1895) 597-628, and U. PROTA-GIURLEO, *Francesco Cirillo e l'introduzione del melodramma a Napoli*, Naples 1952.

⁸⁸For the biography of Metastasio, vid. S. MATTEI, *Memorie per servire alla vita del Metastasio in una lettera dell'abate Giuseppe Orlandini*, in *Opere drammatiche del signor abate Pietro Metastasio*, vol. VIII, Naples 1784, and Charles BURNEY, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Abate Metastasio*, London 1796. cf. also, F. GAVAZZENI, *Studi metastasiani*, Padova 1964, and *Introduzione, Opere scelte di Pietro Metastasio*, Torino 1968.

⁸⁹For Ottoboni as patron, vid. H. J. MARX, *Die Musik am Hof Pietro Kardinal Ottobonis unter A. Corelli*, in: «*Analecta musicologica*», 5, 1968, pp. 104-177; M. L. VOLPICELLI,

the distinguished jurist Gian Vincenzo Gravina, 1664-1718,⁹⁰ and set to study with his cousins the Scalea cartesian Gregorio Caloprese, 1650-1715.⁹¹ Gravina and Caloprese were both men of immense intellectual generosity. They had both of them been very kind to Vico.⁹² And Gravina, when he died in January 1718, bequeathed his protégé 15,000 scudi, a quite vast sum. This the young man immediately spent. Metastasio had then come to Naples and in 1720 had been lucky enough to find a place as a junior in Don Castagnola's city law firm.⁹³ He was now being urged by Marianna Pignatelli to chuck up his safe job and risk a life in the theatre. The contessa was sister-in-law of that cardinal Friedrich Michael von Althan, 1682-1734, who intervened to secure the dismissal of the Orsini claim when the Amatrice suit was being brought before the Camera Regia della Sommaria. She was also a great favourite with HRE Karl VI.⁹⁴ The viceré, Marcantonio Borghese, 1660-1729, was, therefore, disposed to accept her recommendation of a new poet for the entertainment he was planning in 1721. Nicola Porpora, 1686-1768,⁹⁵ son of yet another Naples book-seller, would provide the music «*in occasione del fedelissimo giorno natalizio della Sac. Ces. Catt. R. Maestà di Elizabetta Augusta Imperatrice Regnante*».⁹⁶ The libretto of *Gli orti esperidi* would be printed at

Il teatro del Cardinale Pietro Ottoboni in Il teatro a Roma nel settecento, III, Rome 1989, pp. 681-782; H. F. G. SWANSTON, *Handel*, London 1990, p. 7 ff.

⁹⁰vid. B. BARILLARI, *La posizione e le esigenze del Gravina ed altri saggi*, Torino 1953, M. PICCOLOMINI, *Il pensiero estetico di Gianvincenzo Gravina*, Ravenna 1984, and J. G. ROBINSON, *Studies in the Genesis of Romantic Theory*, Cambridge, 1923.

⁹¹cf. VICO, *Vita, Opere*, ed. Battistini, 1990, vol. I, p. 27, and Raffaele COTUGNO, *Gregorio Caloprese*, Trani 1910.

⁹²VICO, *Vita*, ed. cit. I, 44, and S. CARAMELLA, *Gravina e Vico*, in «Baretti» 28 (1964) 41-56.

⁹³For the poetic ambitions of Castagnola himself, vid. DIODATI, *Vita dell'abate Ferdinando Galiani*, Naples 1788, 8, and METASTASIO, *Lettere*, Naples 1780-1785, vol. XIII, xxviii-xxx, ed. Saverio Mattei, of whom Alfonso thought so highly, *Riflessioni devote*, 1773, add. XVII.

⁹⁴H. BENEDIKT, *Das Königreich Neapel unter Kaiser Karl VI*, Wien 1927, passim.

⁹⁵cf. F. WALKER, *A Chronology of the Life and Works of Nicola Porpora* in «Italian Studies» 6 (1951), 29-62, and U. PROTA-GIURLEO, *Per una esatta biografia di Nicolò Porpora*, in «La Scala» 36 (1957) 21-29.

⁹⁶The Lutheran princess, Elizabeth Christina von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel,

Palazzo Reale. Marianna Bulgarelli, 1684-1734, «*La Romanina*», would sing the part of Venus.⁹⁷ This *azione*, too, would be properly virgilian. «The companions of Dido», Dr Charles Burney, 1726-1814, was to note down from neapolitan informants later, «while Eneas was relating the tragical events which happened at the siege of Troy, could not have listened with more eagerness than the neapolitan audience did at this representation».⁹⁸ Metastasio's long dominance of european opera had begun. «Universal curiosity was excited, and enquiries made after the author». If Don Giuseppe and his son were unhappy enough to miss that famous occasion, they would certainly have made sure of their places at Metastasio's 1722 birthday piece, the *serenata scenica*, *Angelica*.⁹⁹

Proving to enjoy a talent well able to bear comparison with those of

1691-1750, had, with some difficulty, been persuaded, on her marriage in 1708 to HRE Karl VI, 1685-1740, that she should become a Catholic, *vid.* J. ZIEKURSCH, *Die Kaiserwahl Karls VI.*, Wien 1902. For her birthday, the viceré, remembering the lessons of 1696, had also arranged «*in sollievo del Popolo, una ricca e superba cuccagna*», TANNIOIA, I, cap. VII, p. 25.

⁹⁷ «*La Romanina*» had a limited vocal range, especially so late in her career, but a grand stage presence still and, it appears, almost limitless personal charm, engaging at once the affections of her husband, Domenico Bulgarelli, the viceré, and the young Metastasio.

⁹⁸ Charles BURNLEY, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Abate Metastasio*, London 1796, vol. I, pp. 28 f; Dr Burney recorded the seventy-five-years-old tradition that, on the first words of the first recitative of Metastasio's libretto for *Gli orti esperidi*, the audience had ceased the chattering which had, as usual, made it impossible to hear the orchestra. 'Now everyone delighted by the new and decorous arrangement of the scenes, the original beauty and sweetness of the verse, the force of the sentiments, texture of the parts, and all the wonders of Metastasio's dramatic poetry, was forced almost insensibly, into profound silence and attention.'

It was Metastasio's brilliance in the portrayal of diverse characters which suggested the virgilian comparison to STENDHAL, *Lettres sur Metastase*, 1812, *Vies de Haydn, de Mozart, et de Metastase, Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Daniel Muller, Paris 1970, tom. 419, p. 332: «*ses personnages, les êtres semblables à nous et qui fussent intéressants, du naturel le plus parfait dans les détails, et c'est en quoi il a égale Shakespeare et Virgile, et surpasse de bien loin Racine, et tous les autres grands poètes*».

⁹⁹ This was a revival of the Metastasio and Porpora *serenata* first presented in Naples on the Emperor's birthday, 1720, and repeated in Wien that year on the Empress' name-day.

Ariosto and Tasso, seeming, indeed, to Vico, «*pien del divin furore*»,¹⁰⁰ Metastasio became the most influential of contemporary dramatic poets. Acknowledging this influence later, Alfonso agreed that Metastasio's *drammi sacri* were «*eccellenti e degni d'ogni lode*».¹⁰¹ There could be no objection to S. Gerardo's singing a verse from one of these as he jogged from village to village, or to his teaching a metastasian song to the nuns of Celeste Crostarosa's convent at Foggia.¹⁰² But, at more grumbly moments, Alfonso expressed his regret that the librettist should have so vividly portrayed the play of violent emotion among his characters, «*poiché le sue espressioni quanto sono state piu tenere e vive, tanto piu han potuto accendere nel cuori del poveri giovani fiamme perniciose d'affetti impuri*».¹⁰³ Perhaps the reports of some undistinguishing gallants led him to allow, for a time, that the interest of metastasian *opera seria* lay in the representation of unbridled passion by a singer whose pitiful ambition reached only to the achievement of some startlingly high note.¹⁰⁴ True, in

¹⁰⁰ *Giunone in Danze*, 1, 419.

¹⁰¹ *Riflessioni divote sovra diversi punti di spirito*, 1773, VI; cf. final paragraph of XVII. Alfonso was very likely thinking of the *Morte d'Abel* set by Piccinni for a Naples performance in 1758. No other of Metastasio's oratorio texts had been performed in the city by 1773. Alfonso may have had some knowledge of the 1728 Christmas *Componimento sacro* or the 1730 *Passione di Gesù Cristo*.

¹⁰² *vid.* Angelomichele DE SPIRITO, *Gerardo Maiella e la Religiosità popolare del suo tempo in San Gerardo tra Spiritualità e Storia*, Materdomini 1993, pp. 77-105, p. 81.

¹⁰³ *Riflessioni divote*, VI. The effect of Alfonso's criticism is somewhat lessened by his going on to allow that there is nothing immodest in the librettos of Metastasio, and by his selecting for especial condemnation *Il Pastor Fido*, forgetting for an unfortunate moment that this glittering tragi-comic-pastoral was actually the work of Battista GUARINI; 1537-1619. In 1712, this had been rendered, not well, into a libretto for Handel by Giacomo ROSSI, but Alfonso could not have heard this piece. Perhaps he confused Guarini's work with METASTASIO'S *Il re pastore*, set by, among others, Giuseppe Bonno in 1751, Giuseppe Sarti in 1752, Johann Adolf Hasse in 1755, Christoph Willibald Gluck in 1756, Niccolò Piccinni in 1760, and by that most successful and influential of neapolitan opera composers, Niccolò Jommelli in 1764. Alfonso returned to the criticism of *Il Pastor Fido* in *Istruzione al Popolo*, I. VII, this time joining Guarini with Ariosto.

¹⁰⁴ If he did, indeed, attend the 1722 *Angelica*, Alfonso might himself have got this notion from the preening efforts of Carlo Broschi, the star "Farinelli", 1705-1782. Later Farinelli took the personal advice of HRE Karl VI after a Wien performance in 1731, and gave up his mighty struggles to astonish his hearers, putting his talents rather to the en-

his *Estratto dell'Arte poetica d'Aristotele*, 1783, Metastasio had declared «*Son pur le umane passioni i necessari venti co' quali si naviga per questo mar della vita*». ¹⁰⁵ But Alfonso could not have been unsympathetic to an analysis of theatre-going which took account of «*la catarsi aristotelica*». He was perspicacious enough to recognize that Metastasio was, in his libretti attempting the encouragement of some self-understanding and showing his audience a way forward to establishing that civil community to which Vico had pointed his students. Metastasio's experience of what it was to be a silly wastrel, reduced to shameful poverty, had made him the eloquent poet for that society which would give women and men «a second chance».

Appointed Caesarian court poet at Wien in 1739, Metastasio was attempting, too, the virgilian task of bringing his imperial patron to accept the responsibilities of the governor among the governed. The obsessive lovers, unscrupulous politicians, angry princes, of his libretti, though they

gagement of their sympathies. Alfonso had not of course, seen the mature best of Metastasio's work, «*confesso liberamente*», wrote the sensible critic Alessandro Moreschi, 1745, «*che l'Angelica e gli Orti Esperidi sanno un non so che del Pastor Fido per via di certi concetti troppo fini, di certi nascondigli, di certe ripetizioni, di quel vaghissimo principio dell'Angelica*»:

*Esci dal chiuso tetto
Medoro, idolo mio: tra queste frondi
Tra queste erbe novelle, e questi fiori

Odi come susurra
Dolce scherzando una leggiara auretta
Che all'adorate piante,
Lieve fuggendo, i piu bei spirti invola,
E nel confuso errore
Forma da mille odori un solo odore»*

A. MORESCHI, *Riflessioni intorno le feste ed azioni teatrali di Pietro Metastasio*, pp. 175-176.

¹⁰⁵ The virgilian character of Metastasio's enterprize was quite generally recognized by his more distinguishing contemporaries throughout Europe: vid. Francesco ALGAROTTI on *Didone abbandonata*, *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica*, 1754, in *Opere varie*, Vénice 1757, vol. II, pp. 277-364; F. J. de CHASTELLUX, *Essai sur l'union de la poésie et de la musique*, Paris 1765; J von RETZER, *Metastasio, Eine Skizze für seinen künftigen Biographen*, Wien 1782; C. BURNEY, *A General History of Music*, 1789, vol. 49, p. 547.

inhabit distant countries at long-ago times, are presented as warnings to the women and men in his opera audience against the abuse of emotion, the waste of talent, the misconstruction of power in their own place and time. In his theatre-art, women and men might hear again the virgilian praise of the dutiful hero, the assessment of kingly rule according to the standard of the careful housewife, the hope that the victor might yet prove a *cunctator*.¹⁰⁶ «Quando veggiamo», he wrote in that posthumous essay on Aristotle's Poetics, «*le rappresentazioni d'azioni così lodevoli e luminose s'ingrandisce l'animo nostro nella gloria della nostra specie, che ne crediamo capace; ci lusinghiamo d'esser atti ancor noi ad eseguirle: e, nutriti di così nobili idee, si può anche sperar che talvolta ci rendiamo abili ad imitarle*».¹⁰⁷ Such virtuous imitation should begin in the king's court. Virgil had looked for the coming of the lady *Justitia*, as Alfonso noted, «*Iam redit et Virgo*».¹⁰⁸ And Metastasio was another such poet of social justice. That ordering of rhyme and assonance and pun in the verse line, that alternating prosody of ceremonious rhetoric and sprung rhythm, which so impressed contemporary audiences,¹⁰⁹ that balancing of lovers in appropriate pairs, that hieratic progression of characters through a scene, in which confidant, prince, and king come on stage to sing proportionately strophied *da capo arie*, and that libretto-long affirmation of the man of honour who would protect the widow of his sovereign, rescue the girl captured by a noisy villain, and, most readily, sacrifice himself for the good government of the State, were elements in a persuasive representation of the desirable, decent, society. Against these signs of good order, the singular half-line in the midst of a period of heroic verse, the sudden emotional shifts of his characters, especially their alterations of loyalty, the complex twists of his plots, throw into high contrast what human in-

¹⁰⁶*Aeneid*, I, 1, 305 *et pl. al.*, VIII, 11, 407-415, and XII, 1, 94 *et al.*

¹⁰⁷Cited by Mario FUBINI, *Introduzione to Pietro Metastasio, Teatro*, Milan and Naples, 1968, vol. I, li; Metastasio had published an annotated translation of the *Ars Poetica*, 1749 and *Osservazioni sul teatro greco*, 1768.

¹⁰⁸*Eclogue*, IV, 6, *vid. Verità della Fede*, Pte II, cap. iv, 11 and 12. Alfonso observed a parallel in Daniel, «*ut aducatur iustitia sempiterna*» which may, I suppose be his version of Daniel 4.34 or 7.14.

¹⁰⁹*cf.* Stephano ARTEAGA, *La rivoluzioni del teatro musicale italiano*, 1785, vol. II, p. 83 ff.

dividualism may do to obscure the «*verità semplicissima*» of our shared interest in a settled justice.¹¹⁰ It is this order of justice which is manifest in the concluding song. All the principal singers are brought together on stage to form a *coro*. The queen and the king, the young lover and his lady, the threatful military man, who have each been so independently high-voiced in the opera's action, are ranged along the foot-lights as interdependent sharers in a common desire. In three or four-part harmony, they announce together a betterment of life for governor and governed. The endings of all but three of the twenty-seven Metastasio *drammi per musica* performed in Naples during Alfonso's life-time have this form. It is thus, certainly, in the first Metastasio libretto to be staged at the San Bartolomeo. *Siface, Re di Numidia*, with music by Francesco Feo, 1691-1761,¹¹¹ and sung by an all-star neapolitan cast, including the much-loved «Nicolino»,¹¹² opened on 13 May, 1723. This was, very probably, the last opera that Alfonso attended.

Vico, who had always to have his jealous Law School colleagues in mind, had stopped his account of the common tradition at an impressive declaration of the gentile justice manifest in the city's court-rooms. Alfonso could make a rather plainer distinction between *giustizia* and the practises of any nation's magistrates. He was not of a temperament to be content with so delicately a one-sided description of the good society. Justice is not enough. And there was a promise for him of how things might be taken further as he listened to the singers of Metastasio's words or, next day, read them in a hawker's booklet. It must be apparent to a sensitive opera-goer that as Virgil makes, in the last lines of the *Aeneid* an appeal for *miser cordia* which Augustus was to hear as plainly as

¹¹⁰21 February, 1750, *Lettere*, ed. B. Brunelli, *Tutte le Opere*, 5 vol., Milan 1943-1954.

¹¹¹Feo was *primo maestro* at the Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo, 1739-1743, retiring when the institution was converted into a seminary.

¹¹²The neapolitan, Nicolo Grimaldi, 1673-1732, was the first star castrato to make his career in english opera houses. Alfonso would have known something of the singer on account of a little local festivity. When he left England, Nicolino had "removed from the hands of the heretics" the great relic of S Joseph's staff which he bequeathed to the Real Monte church. The parish held an annual procession through the Naples streets. *vid.* Angus HERIOT, *The Castrati in Opera*, London 1960, p. 123 ff.

Aeneas,¹¹³ so Metastasio is anxious, as he writes opera after opera, for the Holy Roman Emperor to exercise *la clemenza* as wonderfully as Tito. The Italian empress, Maria Luisa, was swift to recognize this impertinence at the first performance of Mozart's coronation setting of Metastasio's imperial libretto in 1791.¹¹⁴ It cannot be supposed that Alfonso would be less aware of what was happening in *Siface*.

In that early opera, Metastasio tells a warning story of a king too self-regarding to exert himself for the discovery of truth and the defence of the innocent against the treacherous attacks of selfish courtiers. He condemns his virtuous wife, Viriate, to death on the false evidence of the envious Ismene. In the third act, Siface comes down to Viriate's prison cell and discovers her writing a farewell letter to her father, a neighbour king. Assuming that her message must be designed to cause him further nuisance, Siface snatches the paper from his wife and reads:

«Io son tua figlia, e basta
Questo nome a provar che rea non sono:
Al mio sposo perdona, io gli perdono
E se vuoi vendicarmi
Questo perdono sia
Il suo castigo e la vendetta mia».

The wonder of this echoing «perdono» is worked out in the next

¹¹³cf. the urgent appeal for Aeneas *cunctans*, to spare young Turnus, *humilis subplexque*, at the climax of the *Aeneid*, XII, 11, 930 ff.

¹¹⁴METASTASIO'S *La clemenza di Tito*, had been written for Antonio Caldara, c. 1670-1736, to set for HRE Karl VI's name-day celebrations in 1734. It was still «una porcheria tedesca» in the Empress' notorious opinion. Perhaps she was simply retreating into old-fashioned, upper-class slang. In 1708 Count Zambeccari was lamenting, that at an opera evening in the San Bartolomeo, he'd had to mingle with an audience, «dove non è altro che la Marchesini» and if he went to the teatro Fiorentini for opera «in lingua napoletana» he'd have to listen to «una vera porcheria». L. FRATI, *Un impresario teatrale del Settecento e la sua biblioteca*, in *Rivista musicale italiana* 1911, 6 and 10, cited CROCE. *I teatri*, 1992, pp. 157 and 159.

Metastasio's words went as unregarded by HRE Leopold as Mozart's notes. «La Marchetti chant si bien, l'Empereur est enchanté», Diary entry for 6 September, 1791 of the diplomatic Count Karl Zinzendorf, Otto Erich Deutsch, *Mozart. Die Dokumente seines Lebens*, revized by J. H. Eibl, Kassel 1961.

eight scenes, from Siface's immediate response:

«Qual incognito effetto
D'importuna pietà, mi sento in petto!»

to the final acclamation of the numidians as they admit, together, repeatedly, their grateful amazement at Viriate's merciful judgement on Ismene:

«Generoso perdono... perdono ... perdono».¹¹⁵

Alfonso at the opera must appreciate the forward thrust of this *azione* from the non-workings of royal justice, through the vindication, of truth, to the decisive community-forming, splendour of mercy. Standing with his wife, amidst the echoing *coro*, Siface is recognizable as the figure of each woman and man in the audience who would find a place in a world of mercy.

The longing for such a world, which impelled the action of every one of Metastasio's subsequent *melodrammi*, was consistently expressed in the recitative and aria of the castrato hero, «*il primo uomo*».¹¹⁶ To contemporary audiences' taste this was the most beautiful of voices. The castrato was simply «*il musico*».¹¹⁷ And, recognizing a market, poor peasants of the outlying Kingdom would quite commonly bring their third or fourth son to the capital in hopes of his being acceptable at one or other of the music schools. For the present, there would be a saving on the boy's food. For the future, a hope of his earning enough to keep his parents. After the voice trial, the boy, eight years old or so, was sent to the local barber who performed the operation as another of his side-trades, along with dentistry and marriage-brokerage. Alessandro di Liguoro, whose shop was just behind the Nuncio's palazzo, off the via Toledo, was

¹¹⁵*Siface*, Atto terzo, scene iv, xi and xii; *Opere dell'abate Pietro Metastasio, con dissertazioni* tomo quarto, Firenze 1788, pp. 247-319.

¹¹⁶For a general review of matters concerning the selection, training, and careers of the eighteenth century castrati, *vid.* F. HABOCK, *Die Kastraten und ihre Gesangkunst*, Stuttgart 1927, A. HERIOT, *The Castrati in Opera*, London 1956, and Patrick BARBIER, *Histoire des Castrats*, Paris 1989.

¹¹⁷It was this general high estimate of the voice rather than any well-mannered delicacy which dismissed the earlier *il evirato* from musical conversation.

the acknowledged expert in obtaining permits for the operation from the ecclesiastical authorities.¹¹⁸ Not that it was usually difficult to find a moral theologian with the *senso comune* to agree, as Alfonso noted later, that «*eunuchi utiles sunt bono communi ad divinas laudes in ecclesiis suavius canendas*»; after all, the boys «*per illud conditionem notabiliter in melius mutantur*», so «*ab Ecclesia toleratur*».¹¹⁹ A promisingly-voiced youngster would stay studying at the music school for anything up to a dozen years, generally accepting that he would likely end up in one of the many church choirs, but hopeful of his voice's being fine enough to get him concert bookings, and, best of all, a place in the household of some kind prince. The young Carlo Broschi, who became the acknowledged greatest of these singers, was following common custom when he took the professional name «Farinelli» in gratitude for the protection that the Farina brothers, his first Naples patrons, had afforded him while he was at the Conservatorio di S. Maria di Loreto. There was, sometimes, a hint of social-climbing in some of these assumptions of stage-names, but even if the modest Farinelli had been mindful, at the height of his european fame, to forget that he had once been a poor orphan under Porpora's strict discipline there was no persuading his compatriots to stop calling him «*il ragazzo*».¹²⁰ Others, the sienese Francesco Bernardi, 1690?-1759, «*Senesino*», Handel's awkward alto star,¹²¹ and the anconan Giovanni

¹¹⁸cf. BARBIER. *op. cit.*, ch. 2; Alessandro di Liguoro, who was from Basilicate, worked mostly for the ecclesiastical Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo. After performing the operation, he remained a life-long friend of Matteo Sassano, «Matteuccio».

¹¹⁹*Theologia Moralis* Lib. III, Tract. IV, cap. i, *de quinto praecepto Decalogi*, Resp. II, 2, «*Quaeritur an liceat pueros castrare ad vocem in eis conservandam?*» with reference to ELBEL, *De Homicidio*, 29, «*Hanc, opinionem videtur confirmare praxis saltem tolerata, praesertim in Italia, proptereaue insinuandam censui*».

¹²⁰For «Farinelli», *vid.* G. SACCHI, *Vita del Cavaliere Don Carlo Broschi*, Milan 1784, and R. BOUVIER, *Farinelli, le chanteur des rois*, Paris 1946.

Porpora, who became *primo maestro* at the Conservatorio di S. Onofrio in 1715, and, on his return from years in London, at the Conservatorio di S. Maria di Loreto in 1739, was, along with the retired castrato Domenico Gizzi, 1680-1758, one of the two most famous teachers of the boys in the city. He was responsible for the career starts of «Farinelli», «Caffarelli», and Felice Salimbeni, 1712-1751.

¹²¹cf. L. CELLESI, *Un poeta romano e un sopranista senese*, in «*Bollettino senese di storia patria*», new series, 1 (1930) 320 ff; A. MAZZO, *I tre «Senesini» musici ed altri can-*

Carestini, 1705-1176, «*Cusanino*», who was first a soprano and later an alto,¹²² had come from even poorer homes. Filippo Balatri, the only castrato of the period to write his autobiography, was so ashamed of his original poverty that he contented himself with the simple opening statement, «*Nacqui*».¹²³ The mezzo Gaetano Majorano, 1703-1783, «*Caffarelli*»,¹²⁴ was a peasant's son from Bitonto, near Bari and, despite some training in deportment by the anxious Porpora, seldom attempted to be even moderately polite in the fawning gentry's company, indulging in a life-time of indecent gestures and was, therefore, in and out of prison for his impertinence. Nicolo Grimaldi, 1673-1732, «*Ricolini*», the Siface of 1723, had been plucked from the Naples *scugnizzi* to become, as Richard Steele, 1672-1729, allowed «an actor who by the grace and propriety of his action and gesture does honour to the human figure».¹²⁵ The soprano Matteo Sassano, 1667-1737, «*Matteuccio*», who was the first of them to get away from the ecclesiastics and join the Febi Armonici company at the San Bartolomeo, 1697, was the son of a San Severo labourer, and never quite lost his Foggia accent.¹²⁶ Nothing of this sort spoils the articulation of Farinelli who was accepted as the confidential adviser of the despondent Philip V in Madrid. More distinguished yet, he had, after the Naples performance of *Angelica*, become the life-long friend, «*il gemello*», of Metastasio. The castrato had seemed to the librettist, that evening in the Torella palazzo, to be the perfectest interpreter of his meaning:

tati evirati senesi, Siena 1979.

¹²²Cusanino was particularly influential in securing early productions of operas by neapolitan composers, Vinci, Porpora, Feo, among them, in Venice from 1724, in München from 1731, and in London from 1733.

¹²³*vid.*, for this autobiographical sketch, HERIOT. *op. cit.*, p. 200 ff.

¹²⁴*vid.*, E. FAUSTINI-FASINI, *Gli astri maggiori del bel canto napoletano*, Gaetano Majorano detto «*Caffarelli*», in «*Note d'archivio per la storia Musicale*» 15 (1938) 121-128, 157-170, 258-270.

¹²⁵*cf.* FAUSTINI-FASINI, *op.cit.*, C. BURNEY, *Present State of Music in France and Italy*, London 1771, and R. STEELE Tatler No.115

¹²⁶*vid.* U. PROTA-GIURLEO, *Matteo Sassano detto «Matteuccio»*, in «*Rivista italiana di musicologia*» 1 (1966) 97-119, and F. MARI, *Muratori, la musica e il melodramma negli anni milanesi 1695-1700* in «*Muratoriana*» 16 (1988), pp. 19-124.

«Appresero gemelli a sciorre il volo
La tua voce in Parnasso, e il mio pensier»¹²⁷

The voice of the poor was to be heard in a range of three octaves, reaching to the D above C⁵ to pierce the hearts of those who would cramp justice and deny mercy.

Ironically, Metastasio's disclosure of the perfected ruler at the end endeared his libretti to petty despots. Each local princeling saw himself as already the admirable king of the *lieto fine*. Musicians everywhere in Europe were commissioned to make tunes for Metastasio's verse. Everywhere, therefore, opera was taken to be an art-form expressive of establishment values.¹²⁸ Alfonso's refusing to attend the 1723 performance for the Empress' birthday was received as a most shocking symbolic gesture. Don Giuseppe could not go to the Palace alone. The most awkward questions would be asked.¹²⁹

Alfonso had withdrawn from the court to work in the Casa degli Incurabili. There, the Achates-like Tannoia says, he heard the re-affirming call of God. «Lascia il Mondo e datti a me».¹³⁰ Leaving that world which he now thought he knew did not, however, entail a sudden uninterest in metastasian opera.

The first San Bartolomeo had been built, in 1620 or so, on land owned by the hospital.¹³¹ From then on, the trustees relied on the Febi Armonici rents to sustain their work.¹³² Don Giovanni de' Liguoro, 1588?-

¹²⁷ *La Nitteti*, 1756, *dedicatio* to the printed libretto produced for the court performance at Madrid, Buen Retiro, 23 September, 1756. The neapolitan composer, Nicola Conforto, 1718-1789(?), had been invited to Madrid at the suggestion of «Farinelli» who was then in command of Ferdinando VI's theatrical ventures.

¹²⁸ Opera had been so esteemed before. As early as 1651, Inigo Velez de Guevara, conde de Onate, vicere and *capitan generale nel Regno* had ordered performances in the Palazzo Reale of opera *all'uso di Venezia* in order to demonstrate, after the Masaniello tumulto his indisputable authority over the disagreeable lower classes.

¹²⁹ Tannoia, I, cap.vii, 25, for Don Giuseppe's angry departure for the country.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ cf. Archivio degli Incurabili, *Libro patrimoniale*, 1699, fol. 234ff. The site is now occupied by the chiesetta della Graziella on the strada Medina.

¹³² vid. V. MAGNATI, *Teatro della carità storico, legale, mistico, politico in cui si dimostrano le opere tutte della Real Santa Casa degli Incurabili*, Venezia 1727, p. 248 ff.

-1649?, their Co-Rettore, Alfonso's great-great-grandfather's brother, had further secured the hospital's finances by obtaining from Philip IV of Spain in 1644 a *jus prohibendi* decreeing that no one should present opera at any other of the city's theatres without paying a tax to the Incurabili.¹³³ Nevertheless, during the Masaniello tumult, the people had viewed the San Bartolomeo as a symbol of aristocratic privilege and plundered the building.¹³⁴ On the property's being returned to them, the Incurabili trustees had spent a deal of money on restorations, but in 1697 Medinaceli persuaded them to pull down this old structure and erect a much enlarged house.¹³⁵ The finances of the hospital still depended, as Alfonso would well know, on the success of opera in this and all the other theatres of the city.

That *iustitia* described in Vico's lectures *de Universi Iuris uno principio*, and its complement in the *perdono* of Metastasio's libretti, remained important for Alfonso, figuring in everything he would say of the possibilities open to human beings, «*exules filii Hevae*». But, listening to his fellow citizens on the venereal wards of the hospital,¹³⁶ and listening rather more carefully than the police informer who confused *cotoletta*

¹³³This symbiosis of theatre and hospital was a common practice in Spanish cities and led to irritations for both managements and trustees. cf. the letter, 3 December, 1583, Philip II to the duque di Ossuna allotting the concession for *las comedias que se representan en esta ciudad* to the Incurabili just as *con otros ospitales se haze en villa de Madrid*, cited by CROCE, *I teatri*, 1992, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.

There was a court case before the Gran corte della Vicaria in 1627 in which the leaser, Sancho de Plaz, got a reduction of the rent he paid to the Incurabili trustees on account of there being no performances in Lent. Cited by CROCE, *Ibid.*, p. 75, from Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Segreteria vicereale, vol. 4480, Vicaria. fol. 52.

¹³⁴CROCE, *Ibid.*, p. 97, note 5.

¹³⁵When the new San Bartolomeo itself proved too cramped and was replaced by the San Carlo in 1737, Charles III revoked both the *jus prohibendi* and the *jus repraesentandi* and authorized an annual grant to the Incurabili from the Treasury.

¹³⁶Alfonso writes of its being the very same zeal which brought Bl. Gennaro Maria to serve the sick at the Incurabili which led him to develop his mission among the poor prostitutes of the city. *Compendio della vita del servo di Dio P. Gennaro Maria Sarnelli*, 1752, reprint of 1996, p. 44. For the venereal horror of so many Incurabili patients, *vid. Istruzione al Popolo*, Pte I, cap. vi, 3.

and *coltello*,¹³⁷ wanting very much to join in their talk, Alfonso knew already that these poor patients were grumbling, joking, cursing, praying in a language entirely unlike that of Vico's lecture-theatre and Metastasio's opera house.¹³⁸

2.—A Strange Beast appearing on its own Stage: li Shiorentine

The popular language of the hospital patients was heard in street performances of mystery plays all over the Kingdom.¹³⁹ And of local miracle plays.¹⁴⁰ It was heard in the side-songs of *commedia dell'arte* shows, and in the more raucous lyrics of the *compagnia degli Alarbi* on the feast of the Madonna del Carmine, which had had their part in send-

¹³⁷Is this suggestion of police grassers having dyslexic ears entirely beyond the pale of linguistic likelihood?

¹³⁸For a literary tradition of this theatre of the poor, *vid.* Vico's reference when commenting on HORACE, *Ars Poetica*, 128:

Difficile est, proprie communia dicere,

to Menander-like alternative comedy: «*novae comediae genera poetica, sive characteres, sive personae facile a Menandro eius principe conficta sunt quae in theatro vulgus vitae officia docerent, quod ut metaphysica difficile percipit, ita facile illustribus movetur exemplis*», *Note all'Arte Poetica*, sometime after 1730.

¹³⁹Late in the eighteenth century, the government was attempting to suppress piazza theatricals during Holy Week in which *sacrae passionis mysteriae* were presented in dialect. *vid.* Lorenzo GIUSTINIANI, *Nuova collezione delle prammatiche del Regno di Napoli*, Naples, 1803-1805, vol. IV, p. 276.

¹⁴⁰Alfonso would have at least heard accounts of the S Alessio play at Benevento, presented by the Oratorians *nel pubblico pelagio della città*, the plays of S Nicola at Bari and S Stefano at the monastero of S Gaudioso, and very likely have seen the mysteries of S Pantaleone at Ravello, S Giovanni at the monastero of S Liguoro and S Romita in Naples, and S Francesco Saverio at Marigliano. His own cheerful story of the pious-seeming nun who, without permission, ate a garden lettuce and who, on being wracked with stomach pains went to an exorcist, has quite the rascally tone of the miracle plays of the piazza. On being disturbed by the exorcist, a cheeky demon complains: «*Che male ho fatt'io? Io sedea su quella lattuga, ella è venuta e m'ha preso*». There's a nice commedija to be made out of that story, a tour manager has only to find room for the juggler, write a catchy song and dance routine for the soubrette, and provide some dog-latin tags for the First Player's summoning of the comic devil. He'd be sure of a success cf. *Vera Sposa*, cap. VIII, 2, *Opere ascetiche*, XIV, p. 279.

ing the people off on further rampaging in July, 1647.¹⁴¹ Along with these home-grown pieces, some more modern spanish comedies could be heard in this language at local play-houses.¹⁴² In 1652, Onofrio di Solofra had engineered a huge success for his company with *Il Convitato di Pietra*, a translation of Tirso de Molina's *Burlador da Sevilla* into dialect neapolitan. This was a rather lewder version of the play than that *opera buffa* which Lorenzo da Ponte made for Mozart in 1787. Solofra's Leporello was allowed that licence, so upsetting to young Hamlet, to interpolate his crude jokes, prompting some quantity of barren spectators to laugh while the stone guest waited in the wings.¹⁴³

Such *giochi* and *bagatelle* were plays of self-discovery for their audiences, provoking attempts at self-expression. They were not, therefore, wholly approved by the authorities. «*Il popolo è una bestia varia e grossa*», the revolutionist Dominican, Tommaso Campanella, 1568-1639, had observed after an afternoon's ramble through the city streets, «*ch'ignora le sue forze*».¹⁴⁴ But what the people had felt, mostly in sullen silence, to be oppressive in the forms of their society, what they had hoped, just as silently, might be bettered, was loudly voiced in the carica-

¹⁴¹F. CAPECELATRO, *Diario delle cose avvenute nel reame di Napoli negli anni, 1647-1650*, ed. Angelo Granito, Naples 1850, vol. I.

¹⁴²Plays by Villayzen, Calderon, and Lope de Vega, which had appeared at court as *Re rivale del suo favorito*, *Casa con due porte*, and *Cane dell'ortolano*, were revived on the popular stage in dialect versions throughout the century.

¹⁴³That libertinage was not, alas, confined to the enactment of Don Giovanni's adventures, is further suggested by the viceregina Monterey's foundation of the Maddalenella convent for *mulieres hispanae ab hara ad aram traductae*. C. CELANO, *Notizie del bello, dell'antico e del curioso della città di Napoli*, ed. G. B. CHIARINI, Naples, 1856-1860, vol. IV, p. 621. This and others of my evidences for the theatrical life of Naples at this period depend on the original study of Benedetto CROCE, published in *I teatri di Napoli dal Rinascimento alla fine del secolo decimottavo*, 1916, an indispensable reference work since, most happily, it was completed before the war-time destruction of so many archival and library resources in the city. I have used the 1992 reprint. ed. Giuseppe Galasso, and page references after this are to that edition. For the Maddalenella convent, *vid.* p. 93.

¹⁴⁴*La Cantica*, 33, in *La Città del Sole e poesie*, ed. A. Seroni, Bari 1927, and reprinted in Tommaso CAMPANELLA, *La Città del Sole e altri scritti*, ed. Franco Mollia, 1991, p. 129.

turing antics of ferocious barons, stuttering debt collectors, and sentimental lovers of these plays. Those dangerous Alarbi satirists had long been suppressed by the time the young Alfonso was exploring the streets leading to the piazza del Mercato,¹⁴⁵ but something of their insurrectiveness survived in the slyly subversive comedies of travelling puppeteers. And in the lighter melodramas staged in any convenient space, in which mistaken identity, transvestism, and princely foolishness lead - as in *Twelfth Night* or the modern pantomime - to lovers meeting.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps Fonzo squeezed himself into the crowd to grin at Tommaso de Mauro's naughty puppets in *La donna sempre s'appiglia al peggio* on the Largo del Castello in 1706,¹⁴⁷ or stood in 1708 in the courtyard of the magistrate Matteo Capuano to applaud the troupe enacting *La Diana* by Nicola Maresca, 1677-1706.¹⁴⁸ This was a piece, Maresca declared in his preface to the skimpily printed word-book, which presented, in «*le proprie parole*», the ingenious lives of the poor, «*le azioni, le invenzioni, le proposte, le risposte*».¹⁴⁹ The intent of the piece is signalled in the subtitle «*Il Lavenaro*». The playwright would show the actions and reactions of the wily poor around the street fountain at the Portanova, and offer a nice reflection of its local audience in their daily struggle to smile and survive.

Alfonso was well aware of the ways in which such plays might touch a life very rawly. He re-told a fine story whose crisis is reached - as in *Hamlet* and *Pagliacci* - at the performance of some travelling players. A

¹⁴⁵Though there were still some recalcitrant singers of that 1648 song of the people's poet:

O popolo stordito
hai cominciato
non hai fermuto

vid. Vittorio DINO, *op. cit.*, Naples 1995, p. 57.

¹⁴⁶The political radicalism of some at least of these performances may be surmised from one of the showmen, Andrea Naclerio, being *eletto del popolo* during the Masaniello tumult. vid. CROCE, *I teatri*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁷For Mauro, vid. CROCE, *I teatri*, pp. 147 and 156.

¹⁴⁸The patronage of such comedies by Capuano, who was *consigliere di S. M. nel Regio Collaterale di Napoli*, covered them with a very helpful cloak of respectability.

¹⁴⁹cf. U. PROTA-GIURLEO, article in «*Giornale*», Naples, 22. October. 1949. cited, CROCE, *ibid.*, p. 164.

poor girl has been living with a handsome devil and, on coming into the piazza, finds her own experience being played on the platform stage in «*un opera della vita di Maria*».¹⁵⁰ Fainting in her confusion, she falls «*in mezzo al teatro*». The actors are quick to offer to perform another play, «Seneca cannot be too heavy nor Plautus too light». The townsfolk, however, have been held by the plot of the little opera and, on the girl's so irritatingly interrupting the piece, are ready to lynch her. But, by the close of Alfonso's story, everyone at the piazza entertainment is caught up to a christian climax that fulfills every demand made of the *Metastasio lieto fine* by upper class opera-goers. Actors and audience, parish priest and bishop, the pope, and the Lady herself, the poor girl's *liberatrix*,¹⁵¹ conspire together to bring her to the moment of *perdono*. We are all made a little happier by this story-telling. There is, evidently, much in popular opera that a good missionary can turn to his use.

The spectacular failure of Medinaceli's attempt on the Queen's birthday to get the public to like his aristocratic entertainment, and the success of such piazza performances, suggested to mercantilely alert city lawyers that there was a future for vernacular opera. They would, as they made their lawyerly way after Ariosto and Tasso, be manifesting a further dimension of Vico's meaning when he told them of the demanding service required of them as defenders of the *senso comune*. These vernacular venturers began, of course, with a reading of Virgil. Their first dialect libretto was scrambled together by Silvio Stampiglia, 1644-1725, from

¹⁵⁰ Alfonso repeats this story in *Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, at the end of cap. X. *Opere ascetiche*, VI, pp. 323-324, with references to Giovanni RHO, *Sabati del Giesù di Roma*, Rome 1655, and A. VAN LIERE, *Trisagion Marianum*, Antwerp 1648. This is yet another fine story that Grimm supposed unfit for an english-reading public.

¹⁵¹ There is a nice feminism in Maria's becoming *schiafa della sua liberatrice*. The Jesuits had admitted men only to their famous sodality, *Schiavi di Maria Vergine*, cf. Archivium Romanum Societatis Iesu, Provincia Neapolitana, 76, I, iv, fol. 27, cited by David GENTILCORE, *Adapt Yourselves to the People's Capabilities, Missionary Strategies, Methods and Impact in the Kingdom of Naples, 1600-1800*, in «Journal of Ecclesiastical History», London, vol. 45, ii, April, 1994, pp. 269-296. Interestingly, Dr. Gentilcore links the practices of this sodality to the theatricality of carnival and masquerade and penitential procession.

cf. *Glorie di Maria*. Pte I, cap. i, 3, for a Jesuit slave of the Virgin.

Aeneid VII and XI. In this *Trionfo di Camilla*, 1696, with music by Giovanni Bononcini, 1670-1747, the bombast of characters in the *bellatrix* episodes is put into common sense context by the raw neapolitanisms of the commentary offered by nanny and butler on their foolish betters. These betters sing, of course, with metastasian dignity in tuscan. Bononcini's music was well received.¹⁵² Stampiglia's mixture of languages was not counted a success.¹⁵³ Nor were like experiments during the next decade. But for the 1707 Christmas theatricals at the palazzo of Fabrizio Tiberio Carafa, 1669-1742, principe di Chiusano, who was a prosperous lawyer from a tribe of lawyers, the sprightly librettist, Francesco Antonio Tullio, 1660-1737, took full charge of the entertainment, engaging Michel'Angelo Faggioli, 1666-1733, another lawyer, to fit tune to the words of *La Cilla*, a comedy of city intrigues.¹⁵⁴ The Liguori, father and son, would not, I guess, have been invited to the Boxing Day presentation before the new austrian governor, Feldmarschall Lorenz Dietrich von Daun, 1688-1741.¹⁵⁵ And anyway this was a social disaster. But there were other performances during the holiday season to which they might well have gone.¹⁵⁶ And the old soldier's refusing to be impressed by such vernacular stuff could not deter money-wise lawyers from an enterprize.¹⁵⁷ The

¹⁵² Bononcini, the modenese house-composer of de la Cerda, had an immense success with the music he provided for this *Trionfo*, especially with the tunefulness of the *da capo* aria. Within a decade, the opera had been presented in nineteen italian cities, and Bononcini was installed as court composer to HRE Leopold I as *le modèle pour les gracieux*. F. RAGUENET, *Parallèle des italiens et des francais*, Paris 1702.

¹⁵³ There might be a suspicion of some snobbery in this derangement of languages. Rospigliosi and his courtly audience had been much amused by the dialect verses he'd allotted to servants and demons in the *S. Alessio* set by Stefano Landi. Let us hope that the Oratorians put on the Pasquini opera.

¹⁵⁴ Diomede Carafa, duca di Maddaloni, had been set by the viceré in 1647 to prove to the crowd that the new gabella was entirely lawful. On his escaping them, the crowd had beheaded Fabrizio Carafa, his brother. Faggioli was another practising lawyer at the Tribunali.

¹⁵⁵ Von Daun was austrian governor, 1707-1708, and then viceré, 1713-1719.

¹⁵⁶ This first effort by the most prolific of comic librettists may have been the first opera in neapolitan dialect heard by Alfonso who was that winter being brought into adult society by Don Giuseppe.

¹⁵⁷ For a still-useful general view of the reaction of educated persons to dialect

magistrate Vincenzo Boraggine and his partner Francesco De Rano had begun planning for profitable runs of neapolitan opera in a public theatre.¹⁵⁸ They were ready by twelfth night next year to transfer the Christmas play, *La Lollo Pisciaportelle* of Nicola Orilia, 1681-1736?, from salon to public theatre. They had all a sense of their venture being a continuation of a street-performance tradition. The word-smith, publishing his dialect verses, expressed the hope that S. Exc. Barone Paterno del Gessu, who had been so kind at the palazzo, would extend his patronage as the piece went out into the piazza.¹⁵⁹ By the time his vulgar libretto was in the bookshops, Orilia's one-act piece, enlivened with some catchy tunes by Michele Falco, 1688-1734, *maestro di cappella* at S. Geronimo, had already been performed as the opening offering of a season of *commedeja pe' mmuseca* at the triato de li Shiorentine.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps not yet convinced that taking part in this Fiorentini enterprize would do anything for his reputation as a lawyer, «Agasippo Mercotellis» pseudonymously provided verses to be set by Antonio Orefice, 1688-1740, another lawyer, for *Patro Calienno de la Costa*,¹⁶¹ the next production, but by late autumn 1709 it was quite the fashion to be a man of the new opera.¹⁶² Carlo de Petris, 1658(?) - 1710, was very ready to own the verses for the sixty-two *arie* on which he had collaborated with the old puppeteer Tommaso de Mauro

writing, *vid.* P. MARTORANA, *Notizie biografiche e bibliografiche degli scrittori del dialetto napoletano*, Naples. 1874.

¹⁵⁸ They enlisted Nicola Pagano, Alessandro Scarlatti's brother-in-law and rather more distantly related to Alfonso's director, in their enterprize.

¹⁵⁹ «Quel Dramma, ch'ha. avuto la fortuna tante volte di esserli gradito elegantemente rappresentato in note, farsi più noto ambisce sotto il notissimo nome de V. S. Ill. che se l'ha favorito in casa, deve altresì proteggerlo in piazza». *Prefatio*, 1709.

¹⁶⁰ The old teatro di San Giovanni dei Fiorentini had for many years presented a repertory of spanish comedies. It continues to serve ordinary neapolitans looking for a pleasant night out as a cinema just off the via Toledo.

¹⁶¹ CROCE was assured that this was the pseudonym of a local poet, Niccolo Corvo, *vid. I teatri*, 1992, p. 157. Croce noted that SCHERILLO, *Storia letteraria dell'opera buffa napoletana*, Naples 1883, pp. 40-41, had suggested that the pseudonym was an anagram of some otherwise-unknown «Giaseppo Martoscelli».

¹⁶² *vid.* E. BATTISTI, *Per una indagine sociologica sui librettisti napoletani buffi del settecento*, in «Lettura» 8 (1960) 114-164.

for *Lo spellechia finto razullo*.¹⁶³

Not every showman was enthusiastic for this sort of entertainment. Late in the century musical plays were still being rehearsed in the Montoliveto convent before being taken on the streets. The cloth-cap collection was as rewarding to the players as their share of the box-office receipts once the lawyers had taken their cuts. And the street-takings were not taxable. For the Incurabili trustees had been quick to enforce their rights to a levy on performances of this new opera at the Fiorentini and, after 1724, at the two rival *buffa* houses, the Teatro della Pace¹⁶⁴ and the Teatro Nuovo.¹⁶⁵ Alfonso would be aware that this new money allowed the trustees to hire more staff, enlarge the wards, and receive greater numbers of the sick poor. He would have been made aware, too, on the evidence in such performances, that it was possible for men of his class and education to speak to the poor in their own language.

The words of this theatre were «*semplice*», «*chiaro*», «*naturale*». No elaborating *da capo* repetitions here. No carefully paced, courtly, defences of some generalizable *giustizia*. And not all that sense of the need for *perdono*. But a lively *senso comune*. This audience wanted to understand its own experience. So no numidian kings. No palaces. In its own voice. So not too many notes. Those within the compass of the zampogna would suffice. And no *primo uomo*. That is to say, no castrato.¹⁶⁶ With clear and intelligible words went the demand for recognizable characters. Washerwomen and coachmen wanted to see themselves on this stage. And believable incident. They would hear and see themselves in the usual difficulties of vicolo living. When, at «*Il mio ben quando verrà*» in *La Pazza per amore*, a sentimental libretto by the young Giuseppe Carpani, 1752-1825, set to tunes of delightful simplicity by Giovanni Paisiello, 1740-

¹⁶³Petris and Mauro had collaborated on *La donna sempre s'appiglia al peggio*, 1700, and *Ergasto*, 1706, *vid.* V. VIVIANI, *Storia del teatro napoletano*, Naples 1969.

¹⁶⁴Sited, 1718, next to the ospedale della Pace on the vicolo Lava. Less successful than the Fiorentini and the Nuovo, this house went dark in 1749.

¹⁶⁵There is little sign now of this 1724 theatre in the vicolo Teatro Nuovo, a street off the via Toledo.

¹⁶⁶Only gradually, even in Naples, did tenors, who were deemed the mere attendants of the castrati achieve their present popularity.

1816, the poor heroine Nina presented the very emblem of «virtue in distress» the whole audience rose to assure her that they were on her side and would see to it that all would be well. After all, as the librettist had declared in Act I, «il Ciel esaudisce i voti dell'onesta povertà».¹⁶⁷

At the Fiorentini, after the vichian «vera narrazione» of their storytelling, the poor were creating «une drôle de vérité».¹⁶⁸ At such performances, the decent jurisconsult who was making himself ever more sensitive to «le tradizioni volgari de' popoli» would begin to appreciate that the poor's first need was not for a school usher nor for a defence lawyer. Their first need was for an attentive listener. The poor could tell their stories for themselves.

This was so truly a theatre of the people that, by mid-century, the poorest citizens might recognize the Fiorentini librettist as one of themselves. Maresca had been a fan-maker before throwing in his lot with a passing troupe of players. Saverio Pansuti, c1640-1730, was known as «il poeta della botte» from his standing on a cask in the piazza del Mercato to assail the crowd with his verses during a 1701 uprising.¹⁶⁹ Now, Francesco Cerlone, 1722-1812, an illiterate embroiderer, became so enthusiastic for these operas that he taught himself the art of writing and had eleven of his libretti accepted for production. In his operas, neapolitans were encouraged to see themselves as explorers of an enlarging world. Cerlone's story-lines reached from the local inn, *L'Osteria di Marechiaro* for Paisiello, 1768, through *I napolitani in America* for Niccolò Picinni, 1728-1800, and the «spettacolosissimo» *Colombo*, 1769, as far as the *Tiranno cinese*, 1771, and the fantastic land of *Aladino*, «con spettacoli grandiosi», 1773.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷*La Pazzo per amore*, atto I, scena iv. Carpani had at this and several other important crises of the libretto plagiarized a 1786 french text put together by Benoit-Joseph Marsollier des Vivetières for Nicolas-Marie D'Alayrac, 1753-1809.

¹⁶⁸STENDHAL, *Rome, Naples, et Florence*, vol. I, 1818, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Daniel Muller, tom. 13, p. 392.

¹⁶⁹He had lived to be promoted to a magistracy by the austrians, and satirized by Capasso, *vid. discorso critico prefacing Ottone*, CAPASSO, *Opere*, Naples 1811.

¹⁷⁰It is an indication of the greater popular interest in words than music that no composer is recorded for these last two texts. Perhaps Cerlone made some *pasticcio* scores for himself, with a few *arie di bagaglio* provided from the management's trunk.

In attempting these oriental plot-lines, Cerlone may have been following the example of Pietro Chiari, 1712-1785, in his exotic celebration of Kouli-Kan and Xanadu, but he did not suppose that the foreign setting put his work at a distance from his audience. Like Matteo Ripa, 1682-1746, and the other members of the «Chinese College», Cerlone knew that their sort of poor women and men lived in the Indies and the furthest Orient as well as America. «*Ho per esperienza veduto che quanto più per luogo dell'azione ci allontaniamo dalla nostra Italia, tanto più gradita essa riesce ad ogni spettatore*».¹⁷¹ He proved his point, complementarily, in the popular comedy he made from the notion of an eastern girl finding love and happiness in their city. Scattered with friendly jokes about the mistakes a foreigner might make among local conventions, *La Zaide in Napoli* was a generally sympathetic comedy, encouraging an audience's self-recognition in the stranger.

Nothing in this line achieved the popularity of the 1739 *Amor vuol sofferenza* which yet another lawyer, Gennarantonio Federico, 1690-1743,¹⁷² made for Leonardo Leo, 1694-1744.¹⁷³ The fun here arose from the encounter of a neapolitan gang of pranksters, led by the coachman Mosca, with the rich gull, Signor Fazio Tonti from Lucca.¹⁷⁴ The lucchese even then were boasting the perfectest pronunciation of tuscan, and, not urged this time to any sympathy for the foreigner, the neapolitans delighted in the misfortunes of the pantaloonish Tonti in his pursuit of the flirtatious baker-girl, Vastarella. They fell about with laughter at his morose complaint, «*Io non so dove mi sto*». Federico complicated these linguistic games by writing pseudo-metastasian solemnities for the earnest young lovers, Alessandro and Camilla, and the piece's original title is a

¹⁷¹CERLONE, *Commedie*, Naples 1775, vol. VIII, Prefazione.

¹⁷²For Federico, vid. M. SCHERILLO, *L'Opera buffa napoletana durante il settecento*, Naples 1883, 2 ed. 1917, G. HARDIE Gennaro Antonio Federico's *Amor vuol sofferenza* and *Neapolitan Comic Opera*, in «*Studies in Music*» 1 (1976) 62-66, and C. E. TROY, *The Comic Intermezzo: A Study in the History of Eighteenth Century Opera*, Ann Arbor 1979.

¹⁷³vid. G. A. PASTORE, *Leonardo Leo*, Galatina 1917, and G. TINTORI, *L'opera napoletana*, Milan 1958.

¹⁷⁴Alfonso was as aware as any other neapolitan of the trickiness of coachmen, vid. *Istruzione al Popolo*, Pte I, cap.ii, 2 and 3, and Frederick JONES, *Alphonsus de Liguori, Saint of Bourbon Naples*, 1992, p. 65.

mock heroic reference to the story of these over-named persons. But every neapolitan referred to the comedy as «*Il Gioè*», «Mr That-is-to-say», from the catch-phrase of the tuscan Tonti's efforts at self-explanation on the Naples street.¹⁷⁵

Though costing more than a standing-place at one of the Monteliveto plays, a seat at these entertainments, and at operas at the second theatre, della Pace, and at the third, Il Nuovo sopra Montecalvario, was well within the means of small shop-keepers, and there were plenty of cheaper benches for their assistants. A contemporary visitor to the city remarked distastefully that it must be difficult for Londoners to imagine the vulgarity of an audience composed mostly of men in shirt-sleeves and sweaty caps.¹⁷⁶ So, preparing what he should say at the *cappelle serotine*, Alfonso could assume that Nardone, Peninno, and their barber-shop cronies-would be entirely at home with theatrical talk of «*la scena di questo mondo*»,¹⁷⁷ would enjoy the reminiscence of the pantomime transformation machinery, «*mille azioni diverse in un sol colpo d'occhio vedute*»,¹⁷⁸ at his sudden exclamation «*ecco allora mutarsi la scena*»,¹⁷⁹ and would, giving a twist to Don Giuseppe's idea, find it a hell indeed if they had supposed they'd bought a ticket for «*una comedia*» and then found themselves at «*una musica*» whose slow action made it seem as if they were in the theatre all night and next day, for a month, for a year.¹⁸⁰ They would be readied, at sermons on the Lord's Passion, for Alfonso's localizing ref-

¹⁷⁵ Lucchese were not the only foreigners to be mocked. Giulio Cesare CAPACCIO has a decent tale to tell of the comedians' rendition of an unintelligible spaniard, *Epistolarum liber primus*, Naples 1615, p. 78.

¹⁷⁶ cf. S. SHARPE, *Letters from Italy*, London 1767, letter xxvii, *vid.* also, STENDHAL's later assessment of «*les sots*» at the Fiorentini, February 1817, *Rome, Naples, et Florence*, ed. cit. p. 378.

¹⁷⁷ *Massime eterne, meditazione per lo mercoledì*, *Opere ascetiche*, IX, p. 389; cf. «*scena di questa terra*», *Apparecchio alla Morte*, XXV, punto ii, *Opere ascetiche*, IX, p. 241.

¹⁷⁸ CERLONE, *Commedie*, 1778, vol. XI, Prefazione.

¹⁷⁹ *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, Discorso IV, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 80.

¹⁸⁰ *Apparecchio alla Morte*, considerazione xxvii, punto 1, *Opere ascetiche*, IX, p. 261; cf. the further hellish image of Herod, Pilate and Nero who take «*la parte di dannati della tragedia del giudizio*», *ibid.*, considerazione XXV, punto 29, *Opere ascetiche*, IX, p. 241.

erence to «*tre principali teatri*»,¹⁸¹ the first at the Monteoliveto, the second in the centre of Jerusalem, the third on Montecalvario; «*Calvario fatto teatro dell'amore divino*»,¹⁸² in which Jesus is the player king, «*re di burla*»,¹⁸³ fitted out with a player's costume, «*vestito da re di scena*». ¹⁸⁴

Often, the Fiorentini librettists, like earlier piazza actor-managers, were mining the same rich lode of plot-lines, character-lists, and narrative devices, as the street-corner fabulists and their country cousins. *L'Osteria di Marechiaro*, «*Il cioè*», and *La Pazza per amore*, take their starts from incidents and characters belonging to a stock of story-tellings that was Kingdom-wide. And, often again, the *esempi* of Alfonso's gospel-preaching are recognizably within that popolar tradition. In its theatrical forms as in those heard in the rural tavern.

There was little in the forms of classical education that Alfonso had endured to encourage his turning to contemporary forms of *vera narrazione*. Neither the tutor Don Giuseppe had hired to drive him through greek and latin literatures, nor any one of the Law School lecturers provided by the government at no cost to parents or students,¹⁸⁵ would have given any serious time to considering the significance of the milk-maid's song or the boot-boy's tale.¹⁸⁶ Vico, developing his thesis about language, poetry, and society, had, certainly, an interest in the poor as tradition-carriers. He had been delighted to find the origins of the iambic metre in vulgar battle-songs composed during a struggle about *connubium* which

¹⁸¹*Affetti su la Passione*, intro., *Opere ascetiche*, V, p. 136.

¹⁸²*L'amore delle anime*, cap. XII, 1, *Opere ascetiche*, V, p. 93.

¹⁸³*Meditazioni per ciascun giorno della settimana*, Giovedì, 1, *Opere ascetiche*, V, p. 391.

¹⁸⁴*Considerazioni ed Affetti su la Passione*, X. *Opere ascetiche*, V, p. 159.

¹⁸⁵Law School courses were provided without fee to all who were accepted by the university interviewing committee, *vid.* VICO, *Oratio* V, 6, in C. CALASSO, *Orationes Quinque Ineditae*, Naples 1869, and G. GENTILE and F. NICOLINI edd., *G. B. Vico, Opere*, I, 1914. Of course, as Vico had noted just a moment before, many parents had been spending a great deal of money on tutorials for their sons. And a poor boy would have had some difficulty, unless he could find himself a patrono in keeping up a life-style with his classmates.

¹⁸⁶For these unofficial delights, *vid.* Celeste Crostarosa's *Autobiografia*, in Benedetto D'ORAZIO, *Una grande mistica del '700*, Rome 1965, cap. 1, p. 50.

had ended in the plebeians hanging the barons.¹⁸⁷ But he was looking at contemporary farmers, their daughters, and their daughters' sweethearts, only so that he might discern more clearly what had been happening in the primeval past. Thus he remarked the birth of tragedy in the antics of the horned peasantry in ancient greek times, «i contadini così rozamente mascherati sopra i carri», noting «la qual ancor oggi hanno i vendemmiatori della nostra Campagna felice».¹⁸⁸ But Vico was not, after these references to vintage exchanges, intending to say anything more about modern folk. He was not interested in the cart-plays of contemporary travelling players. Equally, though he had the authority of «due aurei luoghi nell' Odissea» for saying that stories are best told «da musico e da cantore»,¹⁸⁹ and that *uomini volgari* had kept the homeric tradition, «partitamente conservavano a memoria i libri de' poemi omerii», singing «nelle fiere e feste»,¹⁹⁰ Vico would not have been the one to encourage his students to spend evenings at the *buffa* theatre. He had not much time even for Pindar, «che scrissero in versi che nella nostra italiana favella si dicon "arie per musica"».¹⁹¹ Rather, he would have been pausing in class to re-iterate his disapproval of the Old Comedy which «prendeva argomenti ovvero subietti veri e gli metteva in favola quali essi erano»,¹⁹² and, most particularly, of «il cattivo Aristofane», who made such injurious fun of «il buonissimo Socrate» in the *Clouds*.¹⁹³ If they must have plays then let them arrange supper-party readings of the *Negromante* or, somewhat more dangerously, perhaps, the *Studenti* of Ariosto. Or, let them wangle invitations to the quite respectable recitations of their own Professor, Giuseppe Pasquale Cirillo, whose talents they would know, had been popularly recognized even to the bestowal of a nickname, «Covellino». Vico certainly would not wish them to go off to these modern *commedie* which

¹⁸⁷ *Scienza nuova*, 1744, 912.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 910.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 849.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 851.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 909.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 808.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 808, 906, et al. pl.; C. V. GRAVINA also held that the *Clouds* was staged before the condemnation of Socrates, *vid. Della ragione poetica*, I, 20.

deal in *gli argomenti finti*, in the inconsequential experiences of *privati sconosciuti*, and which are yet, most curiously, believed by simple audiences to be *veri*.¹⁹⁴

If, as is confidently rumoured still in Naples, the young Pietro Metastasio had at one time a romantic attachment to Luisa Vico, he would not have quarrelled with his prospective father-in-law about these great theatrical topics. He had a working playwright's interest in Aristotle's dramatic criticism, and supposed himself, even as he ignored unities of time and place, to be writing within classical conventions. His *opere serie*, if they are not precise examples of those «*drami per musica del quali gli argomenti son tutti tragici*» are at least generally «*presi da istorie*», as Vico recommended, and equally classically, they both thought, concerned with grand personages.¹⁹⁵

Metastasio had, too, a lyric poet's interest in how it was that at the time of Virgil «*nella lingua italiana è venuta la melica ne' di lei tempi più inteneriti e più molli*». ¹⁹⁶ This interest in the elegances of melodic writing kept him, again at a remove from what was happening in vernacular play-making. Whatever Metastasio was saying about the inadequacies of justice and the necessities for mercy, his aristocratic audiences were not being taught to put any value on the theatrical efforts of their tenants and servants. No one sitting at a performance of one of his operas need have noticed anything in the stratagems of the grand librettist as he presented greek princesses and mesopotamian tyrants to connect with those life-like pieces being played on the piazza platforms and the *buffa* stages.

And, if he looked for any encouragement to explore what was happening on those stages, Alfonso would certainly not have got it from Ludovico Antonio Muratori, 1672-1750, a favourite among the authors he read as a maturing adult. Muratori, writing, of course, before the words and music revolutions of Metastasio and Vinci, despaired of «*poesia alla musica*» in the theatre. «*Non poca parte dei drammi si occupa dalle ariette, cioè da parole non necessarie*». ¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 817.

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 909.

¹⁹⁷MURATORI, *Della perfetta poesia italiana*, written before 1703, published

It is, therefore, remarkable that Alfonso should have been at all appreciative of the ways in which men of the popular theatre were sustaining a folk culture in his society. But it is apparent that he was well aware of their narrative methods, their ways of retaining interest, of forwarding a plot, of presenting a character, and, most especially, their ways of drawing a listener into the dramatic action and taking its meaning to herself. He used them. Often.

The flirtatious girl in one of his stories who entertains two gentlemen callers, the young Scot in another who travels to Naples for a change of air after the dulness of Rome, the cavalier, his wily servant, and the heiress in another,¹⁹⁸ might each have appeared on the popular stage. So might that neapolitan squireling in another of these stories who was so well-served by his moorish lacché. And, even as he told the story, Alfonso, as readily as the girl in the crowd at the piazza play or the protectors of the abandoned Nina at the opera, might be struck by the likeness of story and lived experience. He would be thinking again of Abdala.¹⁹⁹ And of the good Lord who had died that Abdala and he and all of those who heard these stories might live. Listening to the men's talk at the *cappelle serotine* as they recalled the previous night's performance, Alfonso was picking up Fiorentini hints for his presentation of that divine *azione* in «*il teatro de' dolori*».²⁰⁰

Modena, 1706, III, 5 (*Il melodramma*).

¹⁹⁸*Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, cap. VIII, 2; cap. I, 2; cap. V, 1; *Opere ascetiche*, VI, pp. 273, 42 and 172.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, Pte II, Raccolta, 59, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 397, TANNIOIA, I, cap. iv, p. 13. A similarity of art and life must also have occurred to Alfonso when he recalled the S Alessio opera, *vid.* SWANSTON, *Eternity now*, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

Another of Alfonso's stories, about Pedro Téllez Girón, duque de Osuna, viceré, 1616-1620, visiting a galley ship might have struck Alfonso's father as equally verisimilitudinous, though it must seem to present readers to be rather the stuff of Fiorentini opera. *vid.* *Istruzione al Popolo*, Pte II, cap. V. 3. Less flattering episodes in the viceré's career did appear on the Paris stage, *vid.*, Jean-Jacques MAYRET, *Les galanteries du duc d'Osone viceroi de Naples* 1632.

²⁰⁰*Meditazioni per ciascun giorno*, Mercoledì, *Opere ascetiche*, V, p. 389. Alfonso was re-using, along with Groiset's imagery, the older language of the *teatro del Paradiso* by Mattia BELLINTANI, 1533-1611 and of *Magnum theatrum vitae humanae* by the Fleming Lorenz BEYERLINCK, 1578-1627. But *vid.* also the song of the Oratorian cardinal Pier Mat-

3.— Telling Tales amid Tellers of Tales

Later, on his missioner journeys, Alfonso would listen as attentively to the story-tellings of countrywomen and men. He would learn, gradually it may be, to re-tell these stories in village chapels, in ways that they would recognize as their own, and with them, in as recognizable ways, he would tell the complementary story of Jesus' suffering. This was a story which should touch them nearly. More nearly, for sure, than Tasso's *Aminta*, 1573, Guarini's *Pastor Fido*, 1581-84, and their silvan imitations which remained so unaccountably fashionable in the salon.²⁰¹ The real lives of shepherdess and goatherd were not so amusing. And they expressed their hardships in horrid tales. The story of the shepherd boy Pelagio ends in howls on a dunghill.²⁰² Alfonso would be familiar with other frightening examples of countryside imagination collected by Giambattista Basile, 1575-1632, in *Lo cunto de li cunti*, 1634-36. *La sciavottella*, *Li tre ri animale*, and *Il turzo d'oro*, along with many others in that favourite nursery book, are stories of a world of immediate menace.²⁰³ And Alfonso would put these stories with the tales of human unhappiness that he was himself being told, stories of the country wife who, despairing of ever regaining her husband's love, hangs herself in their home, or the silly girl and the beguiling stranger on the woodland path, of the dis-

teo Petrucci, 1636-1701, «Questo mondo volubile e cadente è scena di ruine», quoted by ALFONSO, *Vera Sposa*, cap. xiv, 1, *Opere ascetiche*, XV, p. 66. Alfonso's readers would necessarily understand this language according to their own theatrical experiences.

²⁰¹vid. the *Riflessioni* of Giambattista Alessandro MORESCHI on those «azioni teatrali, nelle quali è rappresentato massimamente il costume pastorale», p. 177; Francesco Savèrio QUADRIO, *Della Storia e della ragione d'ogni poesia*, Milan 1739-1752, vol., III, Pte II, pp. 406, 412, 414 for accounts of the *CINTIA* of Carlo Noci, the *Tigurina* of Orazio Comite, and the 1628 *Avventurose disavventure* of Giambattista Basile. Domenico Basile had made a translation of *Il Pastor Fido* into neapolitan, and Alfonso knew a charming story of a gentle shepherdess, *Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, cap. 1, 3, esempio, but this was never a favourite genre with him.

²⁰²*Istruzione al Popolo*, Appendix, esempio 1.

²⁰³*Lo cunto de li cunti*, *trattenemiento ottava de la giornata seconna*, tratt. terzo de la giornata quarta, and tratt. quarta de la giornata quinta ed. Michele Rak, 1986.

Perhaps none of these stories is as scaring as that Alfonso tells of the giant who stretches the cursing boy on a table and, having chopped him into pieces, feeds him to his dogs. *Istruzione al Popolo*, Pte 1, cap. IV, 3.

charged soldier who sells his wife to a devilish cunning buyer, or the simple shepherdess who, still no more than a child, dies stretched out on a little straw.²⁰⁴ These are a people acquainted with grief. Alfonso, leaning from the pulpit of their church, makes their own village stories more powerfully available as he re-tells them. One or another of the poor hill-siders might see himself, as he listened to Alfonso, in the villain who skulks in the darkened doorway.²⁰⁵ Most would see themselves in this skulker's victims. All were labouring in a world where, after the failed harvest, the city tax-man, the baron's beadle, and the baron, conspire to harass poor women and men.²⁰⁶ Their stories, and Alfonso's skilful re-telling of their stories kept alive their hopes of justice and mercy.

In such a world, they knew, certainly, as much as Vico about the need for common justice. As much as Metastasio about the need for mercy. But there was little enough in their experience to encourage a hope of the *lieto fine*. They did not expect ever to be greeting the land-owner's wife with plaudits or «*Generoso perdonò!*». They might, then, as well indulge themselves, like the urban poor at *Aladino*, with talk or fantastic rescue. At the end of *La schiavottella*, the poor girl is recognized as a long-lost lady, «*e marita ricca ricca la nepote*». In *Li tre ri*, the king's son finds his sisters, slays the dragon and marries his princess. Not quite so happily, perhaps, Parmentella, «*figli de no vellano povero*», in the adventures which follow upon the opening of the trunk, has to undergo a thousand perils before she may release a husband from the power of his mother, «*ch'era n'orca*». And, since, her story suggests that living happily ever after is not easily achieved, provincial folk assured themselves that they had other marvellous helpers, escape organizers from their poor lives. Alfonso knows that they are telling tales and making plays of the

²⁰⁴*Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, Raccolta, 36, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 381; Pte I, cap. X, esempio, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 323; Pte II, Raccolta, esempio 48, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 388; Pte I, cap I, 3, esempio.

²⁰⁵*Istruzione al Popolo*, Pte I, cap. VI, 1; *Glorie di Maria*, Pte 1, cap. VIII, 1, esempio, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 264.

²⁰⁶It was not that long ago that Gaspar de Haro, marchese del Carpio, viceré 1683-1687, had had to imprison the duca di Termoli, the duca di Acerenza, and the marchese di Salcito, to deter other noblemen from *banditismo*, cf. Carlo DE FREDE, *I Viceré Spagnoli*, Rome 1966, p. 55.

helpful interventions or their local saints, S. Stephano at Gaudio, S. Nicola at Bari, S. Pantaleone at the step-gardened Ravello.²⁰⁷ Though, again, there were stories told of those who had paid a dreadful price for not doing the right thing by these heavenly patrons. The farmer at Villa de' Rossano who took his team ploughing on the feast of S. Ursus fared very ill.²⁰⁸ So they were telling more confident stories yet of the most blessed Lady.

The Lady knows what it is to be poor, living in their world, «*nella sua povera casa*», dying «*sul suo povero letticiulo*»,²⁰⁹ having nothing to bequeath to the women who had been with her but «*due veste poveri*», one for weekdays, perhaps, one, little better, for village festivals, or one to be wearing and one to hang drying on the line.²¹⁰ Alfonso is very ready to listen as they tell their stories of this poor lady and then to repeat what they have told him of her coming as one of themselves, now as a goatherdess in the barren mountains, now as a storm-togged boatwoman in the bay, now as a cottager who maintains herself by her sewing, now as a beggar hand-in-hand with her wounded child on the village street.²¹¹

It's the poor what helps the poor. Poor but beautiful, this Lady presents them with a firm promise of her assistance. She is gracefully performing those offices for the poor which Alfonso was already realizing that he could not manage himself, unless he, like her, lived poor like them. Their plays show that poor theatre-goers, standing in the Fiorentini or crowding round the village platform, do not much care for either the

²⁰⁷*Evidenza della Fede*, cap. VI.

²⁰⁸*Istruzione al Popolo*, Pte I, cap. III, 4; cf. the story of the cursing coachman, *ibid.*, cap. II, 3.

²⁰⁹*Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, Feste, Discorso VII, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, pp. 153 and 155.

²¹⁰*Ibid.*, III, *Delle virtu di Maria Santissima*, 7, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 303.

²¹¹*Ibid.*, Parte I, cap. VI, 3, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 232; cap. VIII, 3, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 287, No classical reference to the local perils of Scylla and Charybdis here; Pte II, III, 7, *Opere ascetiche*, p. 303; and Feste, III, esempio, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 79. For the increasing number of unemployed seamstresses in the Kingdom, after the silk industry concentrated on producing thread for the loom rather than cloth and clothes, *vid.* Stuart Woolf, *The Poor in Western Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries*, London 1986, ch. 2.

schoolmaster or the lawyer.²¹² So do their stories. But this Lady is happily-received by the mountaineers of Cilento, and the Portici fishwives as their school-ma'am, careful of their education in the *spelunca magistra* of Bethlehem.²¹³ And as their expert guide among the perplexities of the squire's law. This Lady is their «*liberatrice*», «*administratrix*», «*sequestra*».²¹⁴ Expertly effective. And if there be some over-demanding magistrate or mean accuser suggesting that they have not paid their dues, she will get to court first and pre-empt the accusation,²¹⁵ or quietly do a little cheating for them, adding the weight of her hand on the scale.²¹⁶ Should these anecdotes go against respectable persons' notions of *giustizia*, there is a further disturbing insistence on a *perdono* which is given to the undeserving as readily as to the deserving poor in stories of the Lady's keeping the convent door while a portress goes gallivanting,²¹⁷ and of her requiring an honourable grave for a notorious robber.²¹⁸ It is she

²¹²*vid.*, G. C. CAPACCIO, *Epistularum liber primus*, p. 78 and T. COSTO, *Il Fuggilozio*, 1596, ed. C. Calenda, Rome 1989, pp. 100-101.

²¹³*Novena del Santo Natale*, Disc. VIII, *Opere ascetiche*, IV, p. 99. Alfonso says that this is a phrase he takes from S Augustine, but the indefatigable editors of the *Opere Ascetiche* have not located it.

²¹⁴*Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, cap. VIII, 1, cap IX, and cap. VI, 3, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, pp. 265, 302 and 236.

Alfonso suggests that *administratrix* is S. Catherine of Siena's word, but it isn't. It's his own.

²¹⁵*Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, cap. II, 3, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 98.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*, cap. III, 2, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 130.

²¹⁷*Ibid.*, cap. VI, 2, *esempio*, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 226.

²¹⁸*Ibid.*, Pte II, *Raccolta*, 10, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 366. If we are tempted to take an educated city-dweller's view of such an exciting story as «an obvious invention», there's another sort of shock in the story of Mary as a dance-hall arsonist. Or rather, a couple of shocks, for this story of the Lady's putting a couple of torches to the building is precisely dated to the Vigil of Pentecost, 1611, and is repeated by ALFONSO, *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, *Vari ossequi di divozione*, V, Op. As., VII, p. 341, not from some senile calabrian but from sworn eyewitness statements in the account of the Montevergine enquiry two years later by Padre Pietro SPINELLI, S. J., *Maria Deipara thronus Dei*, Tract. II, *de exemplis ac variis Deiparae miraculis*, N. 62-68, *Conflagratio Hospitii Montis Virginis*.

Not all educated folk have found it easy to share Alfonso's identification with those who tell such stories. The story of that poor lady driven, to hang herself is described by the editors of the *Opere ascetiche* as «questa narrazione veramente straordinaria».

who delivers the young highwayman from the police. And she has surprises of other sorts in store. Even Alfonso must have blinked when he came upon the story of «il sacerdote», «il ricco» and «una povera dama che stando in fine di vita», in which the parish priest is busy with the squire, the curate is tardy, but «Maria gli prende lo scabello, assicchè sieda e senta la confessione della sua serva».²¹⁹

ria», *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 117 note 28. After the grand story of the Holy Roman Emperor and the talking skeleton, which Alfonso had from PELBARTUS DA TEMESWAR, *Stellarium coronae gloriosissimae Virginis*, lib. II, pars ii, art. I, fol. 217, Grimm remarks: «This is undoubtedly a very strange fact». This time however, he did not excise the story from Alfonso's text as he translated. Nor, this time substitute it by another.

Alfonso refers his reader, *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, *Raccolta di vari esempi*, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 359, to what Jean CRASSET, 1618-1692, says in his *Veritable devotion envers la sainte Vierge*, 1679, about its being a rash man who would set limits to what God chooses to do and a rude man who would refuse to credit the testimony of persons of good will. If, as Alfonso remarks ironically, we put our faith in Tacitus and Suetonius. can we deny it to learned and honest christians? At any rate, as S Peter Canisius observed, it must be less temerarious and less likely to lead us into error, if we trust such christians than if we reject their testimonies. *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 360, note 3. Properly obedient, the *Opere ascetiche* editors allow that «niente passa il potere di Maria» referring to a girl who was quite recently brought back to life in Alexandria, dying a second time as a Carmelite nun in 1878. And Grimm notes that, after all, Pelbart had dedicated his book, with its account of the skeleton, to Pope Sixtus IV.

²¹⁹*Glorie di Maria* Pte I, cap. II, 3, *Opere ascetiche*, cap. VI, p. 103. Alfonso makes an acknowledgement for this story to Laurentius CHRYSOGONUS, S. J., *Mundus Marianus*, pars II, *Maria speculum mundi caelestis*, discursus 38, *Quod Virgo Deipara Iovis planetae proprietates repraesentet*. For various other written versions, depending sometimes on each other, at others on diverse folk-tellings, *vid.*, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 1034 note 26.

If he felt entirely comfortable in the Galileo context in which he found this story even Alfonso might be startled for a moment into a wry grin at finding that there were two ways of looking at questions about the minister of a sacrament. *Theologia Moralis*, Lib. VI, Tract. IV, *de Sacramento Poenitentiae*, cap. I, *de essentia huius sacramenti* quotes Busenbaum on «simplex rusticus» and «rustici et pueri», GAUDÉ, para. 504, but there is nothing at these places about so extraordinary a minister. That matter is discussed at cap. II, *de Ministro Sacramenti Poenitentiae*, dub. 1, with an insistent on «sacerdos approbatus ab episcopo», 539, and «nullo casu vel dispensatione, hoc sacramentum valide administratur a non sacerdote», though it is allowed that S Antoninus «clericus absente sacerdote et laicus absente clerico in articulo mortis ex praesumpta concessione Ecclesiae possit assolvere». However, «probabilius hoc negant communiter tam de laico quam de clerico». In this spirited story, a priest present, no considerations of this kind are allowed to prevent

The voice of the country poor is heard clearly as Alfonso re-tells their stories. And in these re-tellings the temper of Alfonso's missionary vocation is being disclosed.²²⁰ For such a listening to the rural poor was as rare in Alfonso's day as in our own. Rarer. The Naples Jesuits, on their segnerian expeditions, to take the instance of the most prominent of Alfonso's fellow workers, habitually referred to the country regions of the Kingdom as «*le Indie*»,²²¹ and described both in their *relationes* of individual mission successes delivered to the Provincial and in the amalgamating *litterae annuae* he forwarded to the General, these forays into the Mezzogiorno in just the terms that their brethren were employing in like *litterae* from Asia and the Americas.²²² The local peasantry were simply «*pagani*». It would, therefore, have been odd to listen to them in hope of some christian insight.²²³

Of course, Alfonso uses some christian discretion as he listens. While he is happy to retail the poor's stories of the Lady's care for them, there were some which, as he listens, he knows he is not going to re-tell. He does not, for example, hand on that popular rumour of Masaniello's pre-riot colloquy with the Madonna del Carmine. And he puts aside other stories at whose repeating the poor were giving ever-widening scope to their notions of the Lord who had been himself reckoned by the civic worthies of his time to be a consorter with rogues. Inventive villagers

the *lieto fine*.

²²⁰For the context of Alfonso's determination to be a missionary in the countryside rather than in the city, *vid.* D. GENTILCORE, *art. cit.*, note 15.

²²¹*vid. egr.*, the story of S Francesco de Geronimo, 1642-1716, who, on his applying for assignment to the foreign missions, was told by his Naples Jesuit Provincial that «era buono per far l'apostolo nell'India di questa città». AVS, Congr. Riti, 2022, f. 232 r.

I was put on the track of this reference by Dr GENTILCORE, *art. cit.*, note 7, and brought on my way by P. Michael A. BLUMEG, SVD, and conclusively helped by P. Sergio Pagano, Vice Prefetto at the Archivio Segreto Vaticano.

²²²*vid.* Elisa NOVI CHAVARRIA, *L'attività missionaria dei Gesuiti nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia tra XVI e XVIII secolo*. in G. GALASSO and C. RUSSO, eds., *Per una storia sociale e religiosa del Mezzogiorno d'Italia*, II, Naples 1982, pp. 159-185, and Mario ROSA, *Strategia missionaria gesuitica in Puglia agli inizi del Seicento*, in *Religione e società tra Cinque e Seicento*, Bari 1976, pp. 245-272.

²²³Adriano PROSPERI, «Otras Indias»: missionari della Controriforma tra contadini e selvaggi, in *Scienze, credenze, livelli di cultura*, Florence 1982, pp. 206-234.

were spreading broad tales of Jesus» unrecorded miracles which were near kin to the magic moments of the *cunti* and the astonishing transformation scenes of the Cerlone extravaganzas. Local sermon-givers, too, were filling out their Sunday moralizings with such things.²²⁴ Alfonso had no need of that sort of invention to bring the meaning of Jesus home to country folk.

When they come from the fields for the mission service, Alfonso speaks to the people of the ox who is content with a bundle of straw, of the sheep-dog who wants only a pat and a bone, and of their requiring so much more of life.²²⁵

He has heard in their tales a human cry for a mercy after judgement, and he knows that there is a divine response to that cry. Listening, he has understood better what he should say to these people of the Lord. At their complaining of the oppressive landlord, at their cry «*Ma, Padre siamo poveri*»,²²⁶ Alfonso moves immediately to tell them gospel stories of just such a tyrant, and his oppression of their poor Redeemer, poorer even than Masaniello.²²⁷ As at the Fiorentini, sympathetically following the drama of Nina, they might see themselves in this poor man, «*nacque povero*», «*trema di freddo in quella grotta*», «*vagisce e piange su quelle paglie*». ²²⁸ This man, he told them, had continued to live poor, «*povero in tutta la sua vita*». ²²⁹ They should feel with him «*in quella povera casa di Nazareth*», «*ora a scopar la casa*», «*a prender l'acqua*», «*ad aprire e serrare la*

²²⁴ cf. *Acta Concilio Provinciale Neapolitano*, Tit. I. cap. iii, col. 162, *De Praedicatione verbi Dei*, cited by Giuseppe ORLANDI, *L'uso degli «exempla» in S. Alfonso de Liguori*, art.cit., p. 22. Some moral theologians might excuse these inventions on the grounds of «*ignorantia vel simplicitate*», vid. quotation from Busenbaum at *Theologia Moralis*, Lib. III, Tract. I, de primo praecepto Decalogi, cap.I, dub. 1. 3. 5, but the Synod deemed them to be mortally sinful.

²²⁵ *Apparecchio alla Morte*, consid. xxi, punto 1, *Opere ascetiche*, IX, p. 195.

²²⁶ *Istruzione al Popolo*, Pte I, cap. III, 4 and 7.

²²⁷ *Novena del Santo Natale*, discorso III, *Opere ascetiche*, IV, p. 41.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, discorso IV, *Opere ascetiche*, IV, p. 57.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, discorso VIII, *Opere ascetiche*, IV, p. 101. Celeste Crostarosa developed this mode of reconstructive meditation in her *Esercizio di amore di Dio per tutti i giorni dell'anno*, vid. Domenico CAPONE, *Suor Celeste Crostarosa e Sant'Alfonso de Liguori, Incontri-Spiritualità*, Materdomini 1991, pp. 298-342.

bottega»,²³⁰ in everything «come appunto vivono gli artigiani e i figli degli artigiani».²³¹ This was the beginning and middle of his life and the end was apiece with such experience. «Semplicemente quel chi ci dicono della Passione di Gesù Cristo i sagri Vangelisti».²³² Alfonso describes how Jesus comes to the poor man's death. «Povero e nudo su d'una croce». So poor that he did not own even a shroud.²³³ As he tells this story, each of those figli degli artigiani is being pulled into the drama that is being played in «teatri di sua Passione»,²³⁴ as their urban cousins are pulled into the drama played at the teatro Nuova sopra Montecalvario. This is their story. At its finale, they may, as those cousins at the opera house curtain-call, be prompted to turn to each other with a new understanding of human possibility. «Padre, siamo poveri» will sound differently now. To be i poveri, they may now appreciate, is to enjoy a *senso comune* with il povero Gesù Cristo.

«Orsu, Maria invita tutti, nobili e plebei, ricchi e poveri,
santi e peccatori ad entrare nella grotta di Betlemme».

Alfonso's mission congregation for the evening sermon was a mix of persons. He was not, as he looked at them from the pulpit, immediately struck by differences of their economic conditions. «L'uditorio» was, it seemed to him, most significantly divided by the inequalities of their shares in cultural privilege, «composito di rozzi e di letterati», «di letterati e di ignoranti».²³⁵ Alfonso, equipped for the imaginative understanding of experience by his father's demonstrating the movements of stars and planets, by his tutor's bringing him along a line of the *Aeneid*, by his music-master's shewing him the possibilities of counter-point, will long, as each educated woman and man must long, to share what he has been

²³⁰*Ibid.*, discorso III, *Opere ascetiche* IV, p. 42.

²³¹*Ibid.*, discorso VIII, *Opere ascetiche*, IV, p. 102.

²³²*Considerazioni ed affetti su la Passione*, Intro., *Opere ascetiche*, V, p. 136.

²³³*Riflessioni sulla Passione*, cap. VI, 16. The definition even of economic poverty is likely to differ in mediaeval, early modern and post-modern society, but *i poveri* are always at the margins of a society which is never their own. Alfonso had no need of late twentieth century experience to be convinced that «semper pauperes habetis vobiscum».

²³⁴*Considerazioni ed affetti su la Passione*, Intro., *Opere ascetiche*, p. 136.

²³⁵*Istruzione ed Avvertimenti ai Predicatori*, Naples 1890 [1778], Lettera I, 1 and 3.

given, to equip others. And his missionary experience would certainly make it clear that, in their ignorance, the strutting squire and his field-labourer had often to be lumped together, both unable to credit what the school-usher and the choir-master were saying about Scarlatti and Ariosto. And in large tracts of the Kingdom there was neither school nor choir. All were *ignoranti*.

Alfonso is very sensitive to the vichian sense of a common inheritance in law and story. And his own *senso comune* is perfectly informed by that belief of cardinal Filomarino that it was the neapolitan's priest's vocation to bring all in the Kingdom to an actualizing appreciation of themselves as «*il popolo fedelissimo*». No need for the poor to envy the grandees, those unhappy queens and kings in his stories. Standing with this faithful people, it is the sense of what is common which prompts whatever Alfonso says of the law of Christ, whatever story he tells. *I rozzi*, discerning what they share with *i letterati* and *i letterati* coming to understand that *i ignoranti*, living under the same divine law, hearing the same gospel story, are so very like themselves, will appreciate that we are *un popolo povero*, and all of us together will put our faith in Jesus, «*ut inopia illius divites essemus*».²³⁶

Alfonso returned often to the consideration of the relation of *i poveri* with *i ricchi*, but nowhere, I judge, with such rhetorical energy as at the meditation on the burial of Jesus in his 1773 *Riflessioni sulla Passione*. Still simply re-telling the gospel story, he moves again from «*una grotta*» through «*una bottega*» into the astoundment of Jesus' willingness to die «*così povero*», and then proceeds to definitive declarations of the communal significance of such a birth, life, and death: «*Si consolino i poveri mirando Gesù Cristo, re del cielo e della terra, vivere e morir così povero per render noi ricchi*».²³⁷ That «*ricchi*» is positioned just at that moment in the

²³⁶ A like use of *II Corinthians* 8. 9 occurs at *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, III, *Delle virtù di Maria SS*, 7, *Opere ascetiche* VII, p. 30, and *Novena del Santo Natale*, discorso VII, three times, *Opere ascetiche*, IV, pp. 98, 101, 105. With the pauline text, Alfonso is here citing S. BERNARD, *In Nativitate Domini*, Sermo 3.

²³⁷ *Riflessioni sulla Passione*, *Opere ascetiche*, V, p. 276. A similar structure is discernible in a passage of *Regolamento di Vita di un Cristiano*, IV, 3, which climaxes at «*farci ricchi di maggiori meriti e beni celesti*», *Opere ascetiche*, X, p. 311.

story-telling at which country folk had put, in their delight at the good fortune of a story's heroine, a climactic shout of «*ricca, ricca!*».²³⁸ Alfonso is, however, assaying a more complex declaration than anything tried by the comforting aunt in the inglenook. Reading his sentence we are first struck by the distance between «*i poveri*» and «*noi ricchi*». They are kept apart by heaven and earth, by life and death. We recognize at once a precise rhetorical structure for our sense of divided existence. We are made uncomfortably aware of the unheavenly character of a society which allows, even seems to promote, so many kinds of earthen poverities. Aware of the poor quality of even our best living as we contemplate the horrid truth that all those on whom we rely for affection are marked to die. *Et mentem mortalia tangunt*. And aware, most shamefully, of our natural scrambles to impose our own meanings on these divisions, to make sense of them at least for our own lives-time. To boast our distinctiveness. To establish the grand difference of «our sort» from all others. To pretend to be «*i ricchi*».

There were, certainly, both linguistic devices and social conventions by which those would would suppose themselves to be «*i ricchi*» in the contemporary Kingdom of Naples²³⁹ could secure that «one of us» was preserved, whatever the economic difficulty, from being confused with «them». The government and the appropriate philanthropic confraternities oftentimes deemed it socially expedient that a thread-bare nobleman, who would be ashamed to be known as a poor man when he came to church, be given a quiet subsidy so that he might keep up appearances. Such «*poveri vergognosi*» were to be received, pretendingly, as «*noi ricchi*». But it is precisely in the Church that *i ricchi*, all their sort, must, if they are to be reckoned among «*noi ricchi*» with *i poveri*, admit the shameful truth of our shared human poverty. There'd be nothing easy

²³⁸BASILE, *Lo Cunto de li cunti: «La Schiavottella», trattenemiento ottavo de la iornata seconna*, ed. Michele Rak, Cernusco 1986, p. 398.

²³⁹As in the Venetian Republic, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and the Papal States. *vid.* for the long history of such social engineering, G. RICCI, *Da poveri vergognosi a ex nobili poveri. Privilegio nella povertà e discesa sociale nella Toscana napoleonica*, in G. POLITI, M. ROSA, and F. DELLA PONTE, eds. *Timore e carità. I poveri nell'Italia moderna*, Cremona 1982, and *Povertà, vergogna, e povertà vergognosa*, Società e storia, V, 1979.

in making this admission. «*Dives difficile intrabit in regnum*». Alfonso has a story of a mission sermon and an old man's owning to years of pretending, «*vergognandomi d'un peccato*».²⁴⁰

The rich were not the only self-deceivers. The poor had their stories of pretending. In Francesco Cerlone's dialect *Aladino*, the poor boy hero had, at the magical moment of comic metanoia, «*ecco allora mutarsi la scena*», been changed out of his rags into *veste nobili*. There is sudden cause for the audience to cheer. After *tanti pericoli*, including an encounter with the Grand Vizier which brought our hero very near the executioner's scimitar, «*in punto di morte*», *Aladino* is marrying the beautiful, virtuous, enormously rich, princess. It must seem for this foot-lit moment, that every neapolitan, every country cousin, every adventurous relation in America, might enjoy that life of *i ricchi* which has been so wondrously bestowed on all those lined up for the final *coro*. And the same mirage of good fortune is projected by Basile's re-tellings of the country tales. At the close of *Lo turzo d'oro*, for instance, «*e Truone-e-lampe, fatto fare pace a Parmentella co la cainate, stettero felice e contiente, trovanono vero lo mutto ca "chi la dura la vince"*». But in Alfonso's story of «*un vecchio di molti anni*» and his shame, his hearers must understand that such a transformation scene would not effect that *lieto fine* which they so desire. There is certainly much that may be done to better the social and economic condition of the old man, this is as plain to Alfonso as he went preaching among the villagers as it was to Cerlone when he put his pantomime on the Naples stage. And as it was to the villagers when they told their stories. Or when they sat in sullen silence. But now, as they listen to Alfonso's story, they are to recognize that however rich and strange the garments he were given, the old man would be the old man still, a de-

²⁴⁰*Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, *Raccolta*, 12, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 367. *vid.* the Appendix to *Istruzione al Popolo* of melancholy examples of those who have been falsely ashamed of their sins and have made sacrilegious confessions. These stories of the hellish punishment of pseudo-saints, the english princess, the egyptian abbess, and the peruvian servant, are among the most disturbing in Alfonso's narrative repertoire.

With these should be read his no-less-warning stories of aristocratic italians who refuse to abandon their ignoble strategies to sustain a monied appearance, *egr.*, *Istruzione al Popolo*, Pte I, cap. VII, 1 and 2.

pressing figure of the old Adam. As poor when dressed-up among the pretentious rich as when in his old clothes. There would be no getting away from the shame, of his sinner's poverty by any such *Aladino* enrobing. He'd likely become a character in quite a different sort of popular play. With demons waiting in the wings.

It is just in the way of the popular play within a play that we are now to hear Alfonso's story within a story. The old man is to be told a protective story from our common heritage. He needs, of course, to be among us when he is told that story. In the Church. That is the way to bring him to his proper enjoyment of the *senso comune* of those who know themselves to be truly among the poor. And who know, too, that they are enrichable. So the story begins with a story-telling preacher in their parish church. The priest leans from the pulpit and tells our story of the Lady who lived «*nella sua povera casa*» and the wonder that «*il povero Gesù Cristo*» has worked for her. And the wonder he has worked for all of us. Making her our «*liberatrice*».

Alfonso is never as keen to issue threats as he is to make the kind promise. Lest we shudder in silly anticipation of any demon-pleasing ending, he tells this story of the shamed veteran in flash-back. At its start, the poor man has already, «*dopo la predica di Maria*», come to the Redeptorist preacher and confessed his old sin. It is only after first offering this assurance that Alfonso moves to talk of «*tanti pericoli*» which the old man has escaped, of «*punto di morte*» and «*certo dannato*». This is an encouraging story, moving faithfully from sin and shame and danger into sacramental community.

Just so, in the great *Riflessioni* sentence, when he would declare the present christian reality, Alfonso begins from the proleptic assurance that there is no need for us to be afraid, «*si consolino...*». It is our happiness now to have penetrated the mysteries of a renewed world, to know that the Lord of «*le bellezze de' cieli e terra*» has, by his living and dying with us, already enabled us to enjoy the *senso comune* of those who have been given their *perdono*, and who can recognize each other. The old man, «*vergognandomi d'un peccato*», the subvented cavalier, «*povero vergognoso*», and we, hearing the story, are members of a race created to enjoy the noble life of God's grand friends. We have all had to stand together properly ashamed, before our Creator. We have, all together, been wel-

came into grace. *Est confusio adducens gloriam et gratiam.*²⁴¹ We are members of a race that may, through the work of our Redeemer, come out of shame. *Sustinuit crucem confusione contempta.* However the vicere had disappointed Masaniello's followers, we are a freed people, truly sharing «*pristina libertà riavuta*».

This freedom is not divisible. With the Lord, we are together. *Quis ergo separabit a charitate Christi? tribulatio? an angustia? an fames? an nuditas? an periculum?*... In Alfonso's carefully constructed sentence, this wonder is signified through a precise positioning of preposition and pronoun. Those divided human beings were «*i poveri*»: we, in the christian community, are «*noi ricchi*».

The redeeming Lord of all, who had no cause to be ashamed, who yet chose the shames of poverty, even the pauper's burial, «*pro nobis peccatum fecit ut nos efficeremur justitia Dei in ipso*»,²⁴² is now enriching the whole race by his new testament of grace. «*Oh che due gran misteri di speranza e di amore sono per noi*», Alfonso tells his mix congregation of poor women and well-heeled men, literate ladies and ignorant pedlars, «*la Passione di Gesù Cristo e il Sacramento dell'altare!*».²⁴³ There is a satisfaction of the justice of God in Christ's Passion which is re-presented as

²⁴¹ *Ecclesiasticus*, 4.25, cited by Alfonso in *Sermoni compendiatì*, Sermo. XVII. 4

²⁴² *Hebrews* 12.2 cited at *L'Amore delle Anime*, cap. VII.7, *Opere ascetiche* V, p. 65.

²⁴³ *Pratica di Amar Gesù Cristo*, cap. III, *Opere ascetiche*, I, p. 28. Alfonso's sense of enjoying eucharistic riches and nobility was perfectly expressed for him in S. TERESA's remark about the King in Madrid: «*aquí no hay tocar gente pobre y no caballerosa, sino preguntar quién son los más privados*», *Libro de la vida*, c. 37. Alfonso shares her delighted surprise that, contrariwise, the King of Heaven should be always ready to receive each christian. Citing this Teresian passage in *Visite al SS Sacramento*, X, *Opere ascetiche*, IV, p. 328, got him into trouble with the Bourbon court in 1748, *vid.* Frederick JONES, *op. cit.*, pp. 208-209, but he returned to it ten years later in *Apparecchio alla Morte*, consid. xxxv, punto II, *Opere ascetiche*, IX, p. 359; cf. also, *Novena del Santo Natale*, discorso X. *Opere ascetiche*, IV, pp. 126-127.

With the voices of the poor and their fellow human beings in that eucharistic audience chamber, Alfonso is hearing the first notes of the animal and vegetable and mineral world, *vid. egr.* the grand story of S. Wenceslaus in which, snow, mountain, wheat, and vine, are brought into eucharistic harmony with equerry and duke. *Visite*, Intro., *Opere ascetiche*, IV, p. 294, and *Pratica di Amar*, cap. II, 13, *Opere ascetiche*, I, p. 22.

pardon for humanity in the Sacrament. At the celebration of the Eucharist, each of us is enabled to be a sharer «*de suoi meriti*», justified, and «*de suoi beni*», sanctified. At this vitalizing declaration of the story of the night in which the Lord was betrayed, women and men, whatever their social status or cultural privilege or economic condition or political power, may, more truly than at any other representation, identify with this hero. «*Vivo autem non ego, vivit vero in me Christus*».

Living that life, sharing the graceful energy of the Passion which is released at the Eucharist, each christian is called to sustain the telling of that story and all sorts of story-tellings in the Church. The sense of this *communio* is, like the vichian *senso comune* of every good city, manifest in *le tradizioni volgari de' popoli*. And, as in every such city, these popular traditions are chiefly concerned with the human desire for *perdono*. The disciples were to tell a story of Jesus *in quo habemus redemptionem per sanguinem ejus, remissionem peccatorum, secundum divitias gratiae ejus*. The proclamation of the gospel of forgiveness, the repetition of the parable of the wastrel son, open, we have all to recognize, upon that especial vocation of the missionary to ensure that our vitalizing stories, our narratives of present forgiveness, are made known to more and more women and men. «*Diè licenza ad esso Padre di predicare il fatto*».²⁴⁴

Alfonso was ready to make the story-teller's own apologia for his story-telling. This time it is not by the device of a story within a story that the community is declared but by the gossipy continuities of a missionary's story-telling. He tells a story which P. Paolo Segneri had repeated from P. Daniello's *Vita* of P. Nicolò Zucchi.²⁴⁵ It is, evidently, a story which belongs in a tradition of christian story-telling. Everyone should know it. «*E' celebre*». It is a story of a youngster «*di mali abiti*» who is brought by P. Zucchi to say an «*Ave Maria*» every morning and evening. No sudden *metanoia* occurs. But, when the young man returns from travels abroad P. Zucchi is delighted to find him «*tutto mutato e libero dalle antiche soz-*

²⁴⁴ *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, *Raccolta*, 12, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 367; cf. *Raccolta* 45, and discorso VI, *Opere ascetiche* VII, pp. 386 and 141, for similarly personal stories presented to «*un Padre de' nostri*» and «*un sacerdote mio compagno*».

²⁴⁵ Paolo SEGNERI, *Il Cristiano istruito*, parte 3, rag. 34, n.12; Daniello BARTOLI, *Vita di P. Nicolò Zucchi*, lb. 2, cap. 6.

zure». There's no likelihood, of course, of the old Jesuit's keeping such a story to himself. «*Il medesimo confessore narrò dal pulpito questo fatto*». So the story continues its effective way through the community. An army captain, P. Bartoli records, standing in the congregation, appreciating the story as meant for himself and his immoralities, «*propose anch' egli di fare la stessa divozione*». He, too, is released «*da quella orribil catena, che lo tenea schiavo*». Story-telling is again manifest as an occasion of grace. «*Così anch'egli lasciò pratica e cambiò vita*». And as an occasion of ecclesial community. The sinning youngster, P. Zucchi, the military man, P. Bartoli, the readers of the Vita, P. Segneri, the readers of his *Cristiano Istruito*, Alfonso, his listening congregation, we, the latest readers at the ends of the earth, and the gloried Madonna are brought together at this telling. Alfonso delighted in this story. He told it more than once.²⁴⁶

It is the articulate christian's vocation to tell each other's story to the cursing farm-worker, the grocer's wife, the *seggio* magistrate, the boy standing at the back of the theatre. Each christian, as she turns the page of a meditation, as he arrives late for a mission sermon, is to recognize *un esempio* in each other's life story.²⁴⁷

Alfonso is most skilful in preserving each one's peculiar tone as he repeats these stories. Some retain a country air. Two friars, passing through the mountains, meet a company of lovely girls and, on their asking the leader, one more beautiful than the rest, what they are about, receive the welcoming reply: «*Io sono la Madre di Dio, che con queste sante vergini andiamo a visitare nella vicina villa una pastorella moribonda, la quale tante volte ha visitato me*».²⁴⁸ The friars are happy to be of such a company. They tramp along with them through the woods and stay awhile at the lonely shepherdess' cottage. Other stories are distinctly towny. Stories of the talented youth at Macerata, the wretched girl at Maastricht, and Suor Paola Maresca, the rascally playwright's relative, in

²⁴⁶ *vid. Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, diso. IV, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 104 and *Istruzione al popolo*, Pte I, cap. VI, 4, iv.

²⁴⁷ On the causes of such late coming *vid.*, *Istruzione ed Avvertimenti ai Predicatori*, op. cit., Lettera II, 18, and *Esercizi di Missione*, cap. viii, 1.

²⁴⁸ *Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, cap. I, 3, *esempio*, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, pp. 60 f.

a Naples convent.²⁴⁹

Some are gallantly aristocratic. The story of the neapolitan cavalier who makes his short-sworded bow to his Lady and is allowed to kiss her hand and take away an encouraging message. Some are almost unbearably espressive of the poverty down the road. The story of the beggar at Domenica's kitchen door.²⁵⁰ And some bring aristocracy into sudden confrontation with that poverty. That of the archduke Albrecht and the raggedy nun, for instance.²⁵¹

Some have a familiar, gossipy, tone, as Alfonso sits with us in the evening sun and leans across to repeat his anecdote of «*un sacerdote, mio compagno,...*».²⁵² We listen like a three year's child. Some propose that, as serious scholars, we take ourselves off to the high-ceilinged Girolamini library and reach down a couple of folio volumes, so that we may check a reference together: «*Si narra da Valerio Massimo...*», «*Narra Svetonio di Tito imperatore...*», «*Di più racconta Pelbarto*».²⁵³ These solid personages, along with Tacitus and Pliny the Elder, find their places between Balaam and his ass. And then S. Nicola comes across from Bari. S. Gennaro arrives from Pozzuoli.²⁵⁴ And, with them, those *nuove gente* converted to Christ «*in queste ultimi secoli nelle Indie*», good people all, with their own tales to tell, «*che Dio anche in questa terra vuol vedere onorati*».²⁵⁵

Assuredly, no small-town deputy would complain, as some complained, on the prospect of a jesuit invasion, that the missionaries were as-

²⁴⁹*Ibid.*, cap. X and cap. IV, 1, esempio, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, pp. 323-324 and 142; *Visite al SS Sacramento, della Comunione Spirituale*, *Opere ascetiche*, IV, p. 301.

²⁵⁰*Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, cap. VI, 3 and Pte II, discorso III, esempio; *Opere ascetiche* VI, p. 234, and VII, p. 78.

²⁵¹*Vera Sposa*, cap. IX, 2, *Opere ascetiche*, XIV, p. 327.

²⁵²*Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, disc. VI, esempio, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 141.

²⁵³*Ibid.*, Pte I, cap. VI, 1, and cap. VIII, 1. *Opere ascetiche*, VI, pp. 211, 228 and 262.

²⁵⁴*Verità della Fede*, Pte III, cap.1, 20-22. The Calvinist Pietro Molineo and «*un certo eretico luterano*» remain quarelling outside.

In putting the contemporary poor's stories alongside those of greeks and romans and hebrews, Alfonso was re-invigorating the project of the great, Jesuit missionary, Joseph LAFITAU when he published his stupendous study, *Les Moeurs des Sauvages Amériquains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*, 1724.

²⁵⁵*Ibid.*, Pte III, cap. I, 21.

suming that provincials were necessarily dumber than city folk.²⁵⁶ Though, again, such proud burghers might raise an equal grumble at finding themselves, as Valerius Maximus made a space on the bench, so close to the peoples of the Indies in Alfonso's honoring estimate. The missioner would not find it easy to bring all these christians to hear one another. He would not find it easy, for a start, to determine the fit language for their diverse stories. «*Tantae molis erat*», as Virgil observed so long ago, «*condere gentem*».²⁵⁷

4. – The Shareable Language

It was in the confidence that he was the man to manage this re-telling within the *pax eucharistica* that the poor had given him their warrant, *ampia licenza di predicare e publicare da per tutto*.²⁵⁸ He had long since abandoned the affected usage of the Naples court-room.²⁵⁹ A few sorties down to the wharf would have shewn him that metastasian formalities would not do for the *cappelle serotine*. Was he then simply to adopt the language of the Fiorentini audience, vulgar without exactitude, in his declaration of that *iustitia Dei* which issues in *perdono*? There was certainly the royalest precedent for something of the sort. The king in Naples, if not the king in Numidia, proved very ready to slip into dialect. Henry Quin, an irish visitor in 1787, deemed Ferdinando IV, 1759-1825, «the fittest man in the world to be King of the Lazzaroni» on account of his talking «the barbarous Neapolitan jargon» so very well, being, indeed, accustomed at Caserta «to call out of the window and enter into familiar Conversation with every Blackguard that passes by».²⁶⁰ It was no wonder

²⁵⁶ *Archivium Romanum Societatis Iesu, Provincia Neapolitana*, 76, 1, fol. 56v, cited GENTILCORE, art. cit., p. 291. note 86.

²⁵⁷ *Aeneid* I, line 33.

²⁵⁸ *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, disc. VII, *Opere ascetiche* VII, p. 142.

²⁵⁹ «*È un dottor di legge in Napoli ... il quale spende tanto tempo in attillarsi il collare della camica ed in far professione di favellar toscano (ma alla fidenziana) ch'io credo che gliene avanzi poco per lo studio delle leggi*». T. COSTO, *Il Fuggilozio*, 1596, ed. C. Calenda, Rome 1989, pp. 100 ff.

²⁶⁰ *Diary of Henry George QUIN*, vol. III, 1787, Trinity College Dublin, MSS Misc. 32, fol. 96 and 97.

that, as Quin reprovingly allowed, «he should be so popular».²⁶¹ Perhaps something of this popularity was on account of the king's having, as the first lady Hamilton observed, «a natural disposition to justice».²⁶² And their king was speaking the language not of blackguards only. This was the language of Tanucci's messenger-boys, of Don Castagnola's office-cleaner, of Vico's wife. And doubtless Alfonso had heard this language when his father shouted at the stable-lads. Noblemen are often, still as coarse as coachmen. But it was not the language of Dr Crostarosa's daughters, or of the Girolamini, or of Vico. And Alfonso needed a language for all of them.²⁶³

While there are plain evidences in his writings of Alfonso's gradually learning how to deploy his scholarly interests, his legal expertness, his musical enthusiasms, the discovery of how he came to fix on the forms of language «*all'apostolica*» is more problematic.²⁶⁴ Don Giuseppe's

²⁶¹The King's popularity with the *lazzaroni* was, perhaps, his one real advantage in his struggle against the 1799 effort by middle class and intellectual republicans to send him packing.

²⁶²E. and H. ANSONS, eds., *Mary Hamilton: Letters and Diaries, 1756-1816*, London 1925, p. 146. Ferdinando was the first of the Kings to grow up in Naples.

²⁶³There may be an autobiographical element in *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, *Raccolta*, 12 and discorso VI, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, pp. 367 and 141 f.

For Vico's account of Homer and Dante as engagers in a conversation with all levels of person in their societies, cf. Letter to Gherardo degli Angioli, 26 December, 1725, ed. Battistini, I, pp. 314-321.

²⁶⁴The 1750, *Avvertimenti per la lingua Toscana*, the 1760 *Breve Istruzione degli Esercizi di Missione*, and the 1761 *Lettera sul modo di predicare all'apostolica* represent achieved conclusions of Alfonso's effort for a quarter of a century and more. There remains much work to be done, for example, in referring the vocabulary recommended in the *Avvertimenti* to the voci of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, vid. «*Il grammatico*», in E. MARCELLI and S. RAPONI, *Un Umanista del '700 Italiano*, Rome, 1992, pp. 139-156, and Eric W. COCHRANE, *Tradition and Enlightenment in the Tuscan Academies*, Rome, 1961. And more may yet be learnt, it is to be supposed, from a scrutiny, with this topic in mind, of the notes towards sermons in the *Diarium primum*, 1726-1742, vid. Fabriciano FERRERO, *La mentalità moral de S Alfonso*, in *SHCSR* 21 (1973) 198-258, and the 1740, *Adnotationes*, no. 307 of Hernán ARBOLEDA-VALENCIA's *regestum* of MSS in *Studia et Subsidia de Vita et Operibus S. Alfonsi Mariae de Ligorio*, *Bibl. Hist.* XIII, Rome, 1990, 315-483.

A good start has been made by Rita Librandi in her 1984 ed. of Alfonso's *Brevi*

brusqueries in barking out directives to the teenager could not provide the paradigm for missionary preaching. There's nothing to suggest that either Don Rocca or the worthy Don Buonaccio had command of a pedagogical method that would have succeeded with a boy of less imaginative intelligence. There's some comparison to be made of Alfonso's discerning the language and method fit for his purpose with the process by which Vico came from the precisenesses of the *Scienza nuova intorno alla natura delle nazioni*, 1725, to the language freedoms, still not swapping exactitude for vulgarity, of the *Scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni*, 1744.²⁶⁵ And, in making this shift, Vico was setting his enterprize alongside that of a number of new scientists, from Pirro Maria Gabrielli's writing his 1705 *L'eliometro fisiocritico* in «stile parlato» so that it might be intelligible to «ogni sorta di persone»,²⁶⁶ through to Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti's choosing «un linguaggio di popolo» and «uno stile narrativo semplice» for his 1751 *Relazioni d'alcuni viaggi* in search of botanical specimens.²⁶⁷ But the investigators of «le bellezze di cieli» in which Don Rocca had interested Alfonso were generally rather older-fashioned in their prose style, some of the Florentine cosmologists even composing their treatises in would-be metastasian stanzos.²⁶⁸ There could be little

avvertimenti di grammatica e aritmetica, and her article, Alfonso Maria de Liguori e la predicazione nel Settecento in «Studi linguistici italiani» 14 (1988) 217-250.

²⁶⁵cf. P. NICOLINI, *La giovinezza di G.B. Vico*, Bari, 1932, pp. 163-164; M. FABRINI, *Dalla prima alla seconda «Scienza Nuova»*, [1940], and *La lingua del Vico*, [1943], in *Stile e umanità di Giambattista Vico*, Milano, 1965, pp. 3-82 and 83-134; G. NENCIONI, *Corso e ricorso linguistico nella «Scienza Nuova»*, in *La lingua dei «Malavoglia» e altri scritti*, Naples, 1988, pp. 283-314.

²⁶⁶GABRIELLI, *L'eliometro fisiocritico*, Siena, 1705, p. 3, and *Atti Fisiocritici*, 1774, p. iv.

Despite Alfonso's continuing interest in armillary and orrery, he would not, if he had glanced at them, have been much impressed by Florentine attempts to restrain astronomy within metastasian limits, Mattia DAMIANI's *De' satelliti di Giove* in *Muse fisiche*, 1756, say, or Giuseppe TARGI's *Il sistema planetario, poema filosofico*, 1759. There was no greater attempt at any vulgarization of the language of science in the comments of the Volterra Padri delle Scuole Pie 'sopra la sfera armillare', 1755. vid. Emilio BERTANA, *L'Arcadia della scienza*, Parma, 1890, and E.W. COCHRANE, *op.cit.*, ch.IV.

²⁶⁷TOZZETTI, *Relazioni*, 2 ed. Florence, 1768, vol.I. p. xiv.

²⁶⁸eggr. Mattia DAMIANI, 'De' satelliti di Giove', 1756, Giuseppe TARGI, 'Il sistema

help from them when considering the *questione della lingua* exercising a missionary.

Alfonso himself was quite keen to associate his apostolic style with the authoritative recommendations of the golden-tongued Muratori, «*che certamente ha tenuto ed anche ritiene il luogo tra i primi letterati d'Europa*».²⁶⁹ So grand a personage is likely, however, even when intending to be gracious, to slip into condescension. And, though he noted Muratori's advice that the preacher, looking down from his pulpit at the assembled peasantry, «*dee figurarsi com'egli fosse uno di loro*»,²⁷⁰ Alfonso did not need to resort to any kind of substituting imagination. Just as the novice Redemptorist preachers are «*i poveri giovani*» and their patient hearers «*la povera gente*»,²⁷¹ so Alfonso is himself already, when he is speaking with the poor, *un povero, uno di loro*. It is thus even when he is looking for a way to declare the gospel afresh to *i letterati* of Europe along with *i ignoranti*. For it is precisely his accepting, an educated man, well-spoken, with a great deal to tell, that he is one with the rough-accented poor, able to rejoice in the redemption won by Christ, which allows him to speak selfincludingly of «*noi ricchi*». It is, complementarily, by their accepting him as one of themselves that *i poveri* may discover what it is to speak the language of «*noi ricchi*».

planetario, 1759, Carlo STENDARDI, 'Inno della natura ad imitazione degl'Inni d'Orfeo', 1763.

²⁶⁹Selva, Pte terza, *Degli Esercizi di Missione*, VIII.3.3

²⁷⁰cited by ALFONSO at *Istruzione ed Avvertimenti ai Predicatori*, op. cit., Lettera I, 21.

MURATORI's *L'eloquenza popolare* was one of only four works of other authors to which Alfonso gave the title 'libro d'oro'. vid. *Breve Istruzioni degli Esercizi di Missione*, 1760, VII, iii, *Lettera sul modo di Predicare all'apostolica*, 1761, *Verità della Fede*, 1767, III,XI,9, and *Confutazione del libro ...De la prédication*, 1767,2.

²⁷¹For «*i poveri giovani*» and «*la povera gente*», vid. *Istruzione ed Avvertimenti*, op. cit. Lettera II, 18. On this evidence of Alfonso's knowing that the missionary was to be received by the poor as «one of us», it is possible to see the frightful de Meo incident as a comedea enthusiast's being confronted by an *opera seria* performer. Or perhaps de Meo was brought down from the pulpit in just the way that the disrespectful crowd brought down the Medinaceli entertainers. Whether or no he had the murmuring backing of the parishioners, Alfonso could not bring himself to be ashamed of this episode, vid. his unrepentant boast, *Esercizi di Missione*, VII, iii, *Elocutio*.

Assuredly, the man who, when a boy, had been brought to discern the silver precision of the *Aeneid*, who, when a student, had been shewn how the lawyer might be the upholder of the virgilian tradition, might at the least be the continuer of the graceful prosodic line of Ariosto and Tasso, should not «be expected, on his finding his adult voice, to decline into *il goffo*. Or to resign himself to leaving others in mere vulgarisms.

During 1749(?), Alfonso spent time and energy setting out «*alcuni brevi avvertimenti*» for the Redemptorist students, setting before them the acceptable uses and pronunciations and spellings of a wide range of words that they would be employing in their sermons.²⁷² He paid particular attention to the precise management «*degli articoli e preposizioni*» and to what they should know «*circa i pronomi*». These students were to acquaint themselves with the grammatical structures of the language which manifests the structures of their apostolic life. They should then like him, be able to express the soteriological import of «*i poveri*» and «*noi ricchi*», and persuade their hearers to take up the offered share of redemptive living.

Alfonso's apostolic style witnesses to his assuming that it is for him an essential part of sharing the truly human life with all hearers and readers that he offer them whatever he has received and recognized as expressive of redemption. And there is, he sees, a vasty range of these signs. *Copiosa apud eum redemptio*. In preachings, in recreation-room conversations, and in writings, figures present themselves from all he has experienced of art and literature, music and history. To keep only with figures he has learnt from *lo lavinaro* in the Naples street or at the village pump, would be to confirm society's limits on the imaginative scope of his hearers and readers. It would be to leave them supposing that they had already exhausted all that there was to human living. Or, at the least, exhausted all there was for them. There'd be no promise of rescue in that. A christian gentleman would, therefore, rather be indicating the livelier way. He should be taking them along with him. They should all

²⁷²*Alcuni brevi avvertimenti per la lingua toscana, Opere ascetiche, Introduzione Generale*, pp. 105-115. The editors suggest a dating 'poco dopo 1750'; in E. MARCELLI - S. Raponi, *Un Umanista*, op. cit., p. 141, it is suggested that the work was composed at Illiceto «intorno al 1746».

be seeing the way together. He'd have to start, of course, from where the poor were standing. Perhaps this was what Muratori had meant.

It cannot, then, surprise that though he talked of having wasted time both in taking part himself in amateur opera and in attending the professional theatres, making no distinction between the performances at the San Bartolomeo and these at the Fiorentini, Alfonso's preaching «*a'popoli di ville*» in «*do stile popolare, purché non si dia nel goffo, acciocché quei poveri villani restino capacitati e mossi a modo loro*»,²⁷³ has more than a little in common with the language being developed at the popular theatres during these same years.

It would be natural to assume that Alfonso would be discerning something that should provide both base and scaffolding for his project in the usages of that Fiorentini language of *i poveri* which was «*sempre naturale*», and as Niccolò Signorelli wrote of Federico's libretti, «*sempre vera*» while remaining «*sempre graziosa*». ²⁷⁴ But Signorelli's tribute could not easily be re-applied to every *buffa* librettist. Those many neapolitans, *i poveri* with *i ricchi*, who crammed into the popular theatres knew, as they listened, that language practices there had reached a very complex state. Reviewing his own experience on Fiorentini evenings, and taking into consideration what others had told him of developments in the style of entertainment there and at the della Pace and the Nuovo theatres, Alfonso would be made more sensitive to the difficulties of finding words for himself and his mixed congregations. For it is evident that the theatre folk were having to confront these very difficulties at just this same time.

It may be that Boraggine and the lawyers he employed to make each new season's libretti were as interested in the *questione della lingua* as other educated citizens.²⁷⁵ In their discussions of the theatre's man-

²⁷³ Selva, Pte terza, VII.5. For theatre-talk, *vid. Vera Sposa*, XXIII, *Avvertimenti alla badessa*, vii, Op. Asc, XV, p. 379 and Tannoia, *Vita*, Lib. I, cap. v, p. 18.

²⁷⁴ SIGNARELLI, *Vicende della coltura nelle Due Sicilie*, Naples, 1786, vol.V, p. 551.

²⁷⁵ *vid. egr.*, the distinction of «*favellar gentile*» from «*parlar goffo*» in Giovanni Battista DEL TUFO, 1548-1600, *Ritratto o modello delle grandezze, delitie e meraviglie della nobilissima città di Napoli*, 1588, ed. Tagliareni, Naples, 1959, pp. 233-234, the discussions of Leonardo DI CAPUA, 1617-1695, in various editions of the *Parere*, 1681, 1689, 1695, and the delicious lampoonings of «*Partenio Tosco*» in *L'Eccellenza della lingua Napoletana con la maggioranza alla Toscana*, 1662, ed. Renato de Falco, Naples,

agement however, there was small reference to the old debate about purer tuscan and purest neapolitan. They'd leave that sort of thing to the academics. Like Alfonso, the theatre men were concerned enough with retaining the attention of the people. Of all the people. Not of one sort only. They had to face a pratical problem affecting box-office receipts.

The Fiorentini audience was just that mix of persons Alfonso was addressing, «*l'uditorio composito di rozzi e di letterati*». The new middle and upper class ticket purchasers, who were now and again graced by the company of the king himself, brought their canary-fancier prejudices from the grandeurs of the new San Carlo opera house into the Fiorentini. These people demanded higher notes than earlier audiences had expected from their favourite local singers. So Boraggine's agents were sent hiring in the Veneto, and in Parma, Bologna, and Rome. However, as Dr Burney noted, «the Neapolitan dialect is unintelligible to the rest of Italy»,²⁷⁶ so these new recruits to the Fiorentini company were quite unable to cope with the old libretti. The impressarii had, in some haste, to commission new texts in singable tuscan. The first of these to reach the stage, Antonio Orefice's *Il gemino amore*, put on during the 1718-19 season, did not find favour with the Fiorentini regulars and had to be taken off smartish. The neapolitan groundlings and galleryites were as impatient with others of that sort the next season. Though the tunes of Alessandro Scarlatti, 1660-1725, were catchy enough to secure a run of eighteen performances, the Fiorentini laundresses and coachmen could not be comfortable with either the language or the moral assumptions of *Il Trionfo dell'onore*. The tuscan libretto of Francesco Antonio Tullio, 1660-1737, prevented every attempt in successive years to revive this expensive piece. Faggioli, who had hopes of being in the van of the new tuscan opera as he had been with the house's dialect comedy, was so frightened by these fiasci that he offered his refugee talents to the San

1984. In 1777, the university established «la cattedra di eloquenza italiana», installing Luigi SERIO as the first professor who, in *Lo vernacchio*, 1780, took arms against the spurious, contaminated, *dialetto illustre* championed by Ferdinando GALIANI in *Dialetto napoletano*, 1779.

²⁷⁶BURNEY, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*, 1789, vol. IV, p. 552

Carlo and retreated into writing a *Didone abbandonata da Enea*.²⁷⁷ More robust, Bernardo Saddumene, 1680-1734, experimented, in a libretto for Leonardo Vinci, 1696?-1730, with a selective «tuscanization» of phrases that he guessed were least manageable by the northern signers. After this queer *Don Giccio* in 1721, Saddumene manufactured more neologisms for *La Noce Veneviento* the next year. Neither of these libretti pleased. So Saddumene tried again. He put together a «*capa y spada*» libretto *La Zite 'ngalera*, in which among all the other dialect characters, Federico, the captain of a galley ship, sings in tuscan.²⁷⁸ Don Giuseppe, on hearing from Alfonso at breakfast about this nice distinguishing of language and social class, might be the better content that his son should have an evening at this *buffa* entertainment. The imported *basso* might not even notice the oddity of his singing. Tuscan was, after all, the language of his usual opera. The neapolitan *coro* would be happy to get the night's work. But such mishmashes could please no one for very long.²⁷⁹ Certainly Alfonso could not make use of any device of that sort when he stepped into the pulpit. Nor would he want to raise the sort of laugh Cerlone squeezed from such language stews in *La filosofante riconosciuta*. He could not,

²⁷⁷Composers had, almost from the start, been happy to shift between the San Bartolomeo and the new houses. Vinci, for example, Alfonso's contemporary at the Conservatorio dei Poveri, had a most to-and-fro career. Becoming the Fiorentini house-composer in 1719, he wrote a *Scipione* for the San Bartolomeo management in 1722, went back to the Fiorentini for *Lo labborinto* for the Carnival of 1723 and then, that autumn, joined forces with Cassani for a *Silla dittatore* for the Real Palazzo. He was back with Saddumene to compose *La moglie fedele* for the opening of La Pace in 1724.

In 1767, the Nuovo company put on a command performance at the palace, and, more significantly yet, in 1776, King Ferdinando went to the theatre for PAISIELLO's *Dal finto il vero*.

²⁷⁸This all-dialect *Li zite 'ngalera*, 1722, is the earliest surviving score of the Fiorentini operas.

²⁷⁹The effect of Saddumene's libretto must, unintentionally, have been akin to that funny stuff which the famous actor, Silvio FIORILLO, known as «*capitan matamoros*», wrote, «*mezza napoletana e mezza toscana*», for the people's delighted scorn; *vid. L'amor giusto, egloga pastorale in napolitana e toscana lingua*, Naples 1605. For the tradition of such things in the city, *vid. U. PROTA GIURLEO, Il teatro di Napoli nel '600, la commedia e le maschere*, Naples, 1962, p. 20 ff.

would not, attempt the comedians» patter, «*il linguaggio della idiota*».²⁸⁰

Alfonso had missed the most idiotic of these entertainments. He had given up his regular nights at the opera just at the time when most word-mongers in the *buffa* theatres were recognizing that there would be no future in the «tuscanization» strategy or in the mixed-language hotch-potch, and were getting ready to slip back into dialect for a quick profit. Second-rate comedians, Tommaso Mariani, 1704?-1761, for instance, or Antonio Palomba, 1705-1769, thought to retain their city audiences with pieces that were ever more bawdy and irreligious.²⁸¹ At these entertainments, the members of the company on stage were required to represent the poorer members of the audience at their worst. Plot, character, gesture and words, demonstrated mere *volgarità*. They earned much lewd applause at curtain call. And it was a rather hypocritical social sense of decency that was re-asserted by the middle class patrons as soon as they had left the theatre. After a performance of the most notorious of these comedies, the 1741 *La tavernola abbentorosa* of Pietro Trinchera, 1702-1755, the librettist was imprisoned for ten months and the daring printer who had put the libretto on his hawkers» trays was forced to take sanctuary in the chiesa del Carmine from the clutches of righteous monsignori.²⁸²

This unfortunate connection of *il goffo* and scandal in the theatres became established in the minds of proper and improper citizens. The career of Ghiennaro Finelli, the fellow lawyer who had too unthinkingly accepted Trinchera's dedication of the entertainment, took a sudden downward turn. A like misfortune overtook the comic librettist Giambattista Lorenzi, 1719-1805, in mid-century.²⁸³ He had been making at-

²⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 18.

²⁸¹Mariani had mis-spent his youth in Rome but Palomba had a native acquaintance with neapolitan folk drama. The plot-lines and characters of his plays were often derived from the old *commedia dell'arte scenari*, *vid.* for instance, the comedy of the servant girl, *La commediante*, 1754.

²⁸²U. PROTA-GIURLEO, *Notar Pietro Trinchera*, in «Corriere di Napoli», 20 marzo, 1940.

²⁸³Lorenzi had begun his stage career in one-man dialect shows and gone on to be a royally-patronized improviser of comic pieces. He had not been eager to undertake libretti. *vid.* LORENZI, *Opere teatrali*, Naples, 1806-1820, *prefazio*.

tempts at a working partnership with Giovanni Paisiello, 1740-1816, writing *L'idole cinese* for him in the 1766-67 season and *Il furbo malacorta* for 1767-68, both libretti mingling country comic characters from the commedia dell'arte tradition, Pulcinella and the rest, with contemporary bourgeois citizenry and a sprinkling of aristocrats. Lorenzi had, it seems, learnt much from his reading of Shakespeare's comedies and become a skilful weaver of divers plot-lines. But he made a mess of his own career, finding himself without a partner when the Queen balked at Paisiello's design to jilt the widow Pallini. The composer ran away to be Catherine II's maestro at St Petersburg. He was back in 1783 as King Ferdinando's *compositore della musica de' drammi*, just in time to get caught up in a scandal more notorious yet. At a performance of *Le astuzie teatrali* in the court theatre that summer, the two *donne*, the aging Caterina Galli, 1723-1804, and the ageless «la Moreschi», came to on-stage fisticuffs, tearing off each other's wig to the noisy encouragement of their partizans in the gallery.²⁸⁴

Alfonso must be sensitive to the continuing connection of a vulgarity of language and an irruption of vulgar conduct in the new comedy. These things went so often together that to admit the one anywhere would almost inevitably be to admit the other. It must be that every element in the courteous character of so gentlemanly a preacher should revolt against a lapse into *il goffo* when speaking of the Lord. Cerlone might suppose that «un napoletano grazioso» could be defined in terms of «goffo», «vigliacco» and «spropositante»,²⁸⁵ but Alfonso had the learned and pastorally careful Muratori with him in declaring that «le parole goffe non son necessarie né convengono anche nei discorsi familiari e tanto meno nelle prediche».²⁸⁶ Whether or no the theatre had been, as Muratori alleged, a place for inconsequential music with a story line put together from «parole non necessarie», if the only entertainment now on offer in the

²⁸⁴ *vid.* U. PROTA-GIURLEO, *Paisiello ed i suoi primi trionfi a Napoli*, Naples, 1925, E. FAUSTINI-FASINI, *Opere teatrali, oratori, e cantate di Giovanni Paisiello*, Bari, 1940, and M. F. ROBINSON, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera*, Oxford, 1972.

²⁸⁵ At least that is CROCE's paraphrase of Cerlone's remarks, *vid. I teatri*, *ed. cit.*, p. 222 f.

²⁸⁶ *Istruzione ed Avvertimenti ai Predicatori*, *op. cit.* Lettera I, 23.

popular theatre were an opera of «*le parole goffe*» and lewd gestures, equally «*non necessarie*», Alfonso would have no more to do with it. So, while he went on telling stories of the old Fiorentini sort, there's abundant evidence of his turning from the new comedy. He now judged that a good parent would forbid his children to get mixed up in the performance of any nonsense of the sort,²⁸⁷ that a good hishop would require not only that his priests decline to take a singing part in such stuff,²⁸⁸ but that they keep away from wherever these things were being performed, even if it were the local baron's hall,²⁸⁹ and that a good girl would make ready to quit her convent school if the Prioress authorized a comedy for carnival.²⁹⁰ «*Commedie*», he assured those who lingered to regret their loss of the fun, though they may appear to some silly folks to be among «*i beni del mondo*», really are not worth much, «*credete a chi ne ha l'esperienza*»,²⁹¹ By sad association, even the little memory of his *S. Alessio* triumph was turning sour: «*Se poi v'invitano a recitare in qualche opera, scansatevene quanto piu potete; se altro danno non ne riceveste, almeno starete dissipata per uno o due mese senza oratione e senza raccogliamento*». ²⁹² From all he knew of modern developments in the *buffa* theatre, it would be impossible for him to frame his preaching «*come una parte di commedia*». ²⁹³ Alfonso became known, Croce asserts, as «*severissimo*» among diocesans in his opposition to «*le compagnie comiche nelle provincie*». ²⁹⁴

²⁸⁷*Istruzione al popolo*, IV, 5.

²⁸⁸Letter to Bartolomeo di Capua, principe della Riccia, 11 October, 1768, LETTERE, II, 91.

²⁸⁹TANNOIA, III, cap. xiii.

²⁹⁰Letter to Maria Antonia Blanc, 15 November, 1766, LETTERE, I, 617.

²⁹¹*Visite al SS Sacramento*, Introduzione, *Opere ascetiche* IV, p. 297.

²⁹²*Vera Sposa*, cap. XXIV, vi, 4, *Opere ascetiche* XV, p. 408.

²⁹³*Istruzione ed Avvertimenti ai Predicatori*, op. cit., Lettera I, 14.

²⁹⁴CROCE, *I teatri*, ed. cit., p. 286.

5.- «*Con modo semplice*»

Whatever rumour of disgraceful goings-on in the city theatres, whatever report of those companies of comedians touring the provinces that had been brought to him by respectable clergy, Alfonso was the more appalled by scandals within the Church. There was a danger, he'd heard, even in the performance of the liturgy, of convent communities adopting the manners of the opera house, decorating their decent plain chant in elaborate imitation of the new San Carlo singers. Young men were coming to the Holy Week services just to hear these nuns sing. They'd even broken out, at the end of a particularly high-noted Lesson, in loud applauding, «*come si pratica ne' teatri*». ²⁹⁵

By the time he was a bishop, Alfonso had the old man's assurance in matters of taste, especially in the condemnation of all this modern music. The formal ban on the fashionable *canto figurato* in his retreat address to the Prioress and community of SS Annunciata at Foggia, ²⁹⁶ and his advice to all Mothers Superior in *La Vera Sposa*, ²⁹⁷ is almost severe enough to prepare the reader of his *Lettere* for the shock of Alfonso's deliberate under-mining of the Prioress' authority on a couple of nuns' reporting that she had not heeded his warning. ²⁹⁸ He was irritated enough, when putting the book together in 1760, to set up a baleful dichotomy for the nuns' contemplation: «*La musica mi piace e da secolare vi sono stato molto applicato - meglio mi fossi applicato ad amare Dio*». ²⁹⁹

There was, indeed, in the very name of that *canto figurato* enough to provoke Alfonso to sniff out some wickedness. His 1761 *Lettera sul modo di predicare all'apostolica* is replete with muratorian denunciations of «*fiori di acutezze*», of «*i stile alto e fiorito*», of «*un discorso molto elegante e fiorito*», of «*fiori e frasche*». ³⁰⁰ And Alfonso has, as usual, a batch of

²⁹⁵ *Vera Sposa*, cap. XXIII, vii, *Opere ascetiche* XV, p. 378.

²⁹⁶ Letter to the Prioress, January(?), 1746, *Lettere* I, 108.

²⁹⁷ *Vera Sposa*, cap. XXIII, *Avvertimenti alla badessa*, vii, *Opere ascetiche*, XV, p. 379.

²⁹⁸ *Lettere*, 30 January, 1747, to Sr Maria Celeste Poppa and Sr Maria Crocifissa Petitto, *Lettere* I, 124 f.

²⁹⁹ *Vera Sposa*, cap. XXIII, viii, *Opere ascetiche* XV, p. 379.

³⁰⁰ *vid. Istruzione ed Avvertimenti ai Predicatori*, op. cit., *Lettera* I, sections 4, 6, 27,

popular tales to complement his expressions of distaste for such things. This time, since he is dealing with recalcitrant clergy, there shall be no holding back. He'll declare the full horror of their situation. That'll bring them to their senses. Force them to renounce every sophisticating fancy as they mount to the pulpit. One of these death-bed-scream stories he'd had straight from P.Sparano, «egli mi riferì un fatto terribile», Alfonso announces warningly at the start of this horrid tale: «Mi disse che un certo sacerdote che predica con polizia, stando in morte...».³⁰¹

Alfonso must, therefore, be expected to react roaringly to all talk of a music which is «molto elegante», «fiorato», «figurato». This is precisely the critical vocabulary being employed in, for instance, the fourth Part of the 1667 *Compendium of Practicall Musick* of the cavalier Christopher Simpson, 1605(?)–1669, devoted to «the Figurate Descant» which is «the ornament or rhetorical part of music», presenting fuges, syncopes, and «what else art and fancy can exhibit» which «as different flowers and figures» adorn the composition, «whence it is named *Melothesia florida* or *figurata*». Looking about him for a fit story in which to speak persuasively of the harms of such music, Alfonso found just what he needed in the 1734 *Manuale sacro* of S. Leonardo da Porto Maurizio, 1676–1751. He much improved the story in the telling. There was this cistercian chanter who, much encouraged by a loud cry of «Bravo, bravo! canta» as he filled the church with his fine voice, went on to attempt grander and grander elaborations «in acutis vel potius in acutissimus, vocem quatiendo modulose tinnulos flexibilitate vocis formando, solita lasciva decantaret», and all the while, Alfonso adds, the cry came louder, «Bravo, canta, canta!», But, with this praise, a dreadful stench was filling the church, «e così scovrissi chi era quegli che applaudiva a un tal canto». His *canto figurato* had pleased only the demon.³⁰²

But to be severe, even most severe, in estimating *le compagnie comiche* and their lewd word-mongers, is not to condemn every theatrical enterprize. And to condemn the use of *canto figurato*, the petals and ten-

36, et al. pl.

³⁰¹Ibid., 34.

³⁰²Vera Sposa, cap.XXIII, viii, *Opere ascetiche* XV, p. 378.

drils of *melothesia florida* curling about the psalmist's words, obscuring them with prettinesses, in a convent's choir-chant is not to be «severissimo» about «la musica».

So it is that Alfonso's presentation of the paradigmatic homily for the student preachers, in *Esercizi di Missione*, directed throughout against whatever is florid in rhetoric, starts in a truly theatrical way. «La proposizione o sia l'argomento del sentimento che si ricava dalla canzoncina che si è premessa».³⁰³ This song has the simple-seeming form of the old Fiorentini aria, but it is to be sung in the recognizably San Carlo manner, as a *da capo* aria, «talvolta anche è bene introdursi colle stesse parole della canzoncina». It is a song of justice, but again, as in the story of the old sinner, as in the *Riflessioni* exploration of what it means to be *i poveri* and *i ricchi*, this proclamation of justice is anticipated by an affirmation of mercy:

Viene un Dio tutto pietà
A chiamarti in questi giorni;
Ma se presto a Dio non torni,
Dio non più ti chiamerà.

Within this *da capo*-aria, the resonance of «pietà» and «torno» is most skillfully maintained according to the pattern of metastasian prosody:

Torna, figlio, torna al padre,
Torna, agnello, al tuo pastore

and

Torna a Dio, fa penitenza,
Peccator non tardar più

until the echoing repetitions of the final verse which ends most cleverly at the assertion of there being no ending:

Pensa, figlio, pensa a quel mal
Che in eterno non finirà.³⁰⁴

In the sermon which Alfonso is developing from this little aria, his

³⁰³ *Selva di Materie Predicabili*, III. *Esercizi di Missione*, cap.I, 1.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, *Introduzione*, *Diverse canzoncine per li sentimenti di notte*.

elucidation of his meaning is constructed «*con periodi corti, sciolti e tutti alla semplice*»³⁰⁵ in the manner of «*il Teatro della vita umana*»,³⁰⁶ but this simple-sounding rhetoric is possible in the pulpit only if, as he has been demonstrating in other parts of these *Esercizi*, the preacher has a proper mastery of the technical elements of oratory. He must be able to manage «*loci communes interiores*», «*enumeratio partium*», enthymene and sorites, antonomasia and metonymy, «*similitudo et comparatio*», «*le parabole e le favole*». ³⁰⁷ Only if he come to such management, may he arrive at the proper place to tell the well-worn story. «*Un re essendo stato offeso da un suo vassallo, l'ha giustamente condannato a morte...*»,³⁰⁸

There's no telling now whether his students, as they took note of Alfonso was saying about *canzoncina* and *favola* and about their being required to attain command of rhetorical parts, rivalling in this those elaborating Lenten preachers, remarked a likeness to what Vinci was doing in the contemporary music theatre. But that there was a likeness is plain. Alfonso himself, wary of word-mongers and warblers would certainly be aware that Vinci, his fellow pupil in the old days of Gaetano Greco's conservatorio classes, was, at this time, working for a simplifying change in neapolitan music.

6. – «*Ecco il momento della rivoluzione*»

Greco, who belonged to a family of music teachers, had, from his first being appointed *mastricello* at the Conservatorio dei Poveri in 1678, been almost singular among the city's composers in concentrating on instrumental rather than vocal music-making. He kept away from operas. But his works were shaped by a strongly dramatic purpose. Greco plotted a lively succession of changes in rhythmic pattern as incidents along a sustained tonal line, taking the listener with him through a sequence of inventive surprises to a complexedly amazing *finale* of the movement.

³⁰⁵*Ibid.*, III.

³⁰⁶*Ibid.*, cap. VII, 1 *Dell'invenzione*. In a list of recommendable authors, this *Magnum theatrum vitae humanae* of LORENZ BEYERLINCK, 1578-1627, is the only book to be cited by title. Alfonso evidently liked the theatrical resonance.

³⁰⁷*Selva*, III, *Esercizi*, cap VIII, *Della predica*, I.1; II.2; and III.1.

³⁰⁸*Ibid.*, cap.I.3, *Esempio del sentimento di giorno*.

Making music with anything like this careful shaping was beyond the compositional skills of most of the contemporary *maestri*, but the more immediately accessible decoration was all too easily imitable. Many a naughty music teacher encouraged a convent community to indulge in Greco-like ornament as the chanters made their way along the plain-song. That way led, alas, to the *canto figurato*.

Vinci, like every good student, had a high notion of his instructor's talents. The brilliance of Greco's keyboard *intavolature*, most particularly his intricate fugal writing, impressed Vinci every bit as much as it impressed the other professional musicians in the Kingdom. But Vinci, like every good student again, was reactively eager to try other ways of writing music. For the theatre. Already by 1719, when he obtained his first appointment as *maestro di cappella* in the illustrious household of Paolo III di Sangro, VI principe di Sansevero, Vinci had settled on an opera house composer's career. That year, his *Le doje lettere* and *Lo cecato fauzo* were presented at the Fiorentini. And *Lo scagno* and *Lo scassone* put into rehearsal for the next season. In these experimental works, Vinci, very like Alfonso in his preaching later, was looking to find out ways of his turning a command of technique to the declaration of his meaning «*con modo semplice*».

Vinci, with a young man's immediate hope of mastery in the theatre, had very quickly made it clear to librettists and singers that the *azione* of an opera, whether he were writing for the *buffa* or the *seria* house, would take place within his music. And thus the audience would become aware of the composer as the teller of the story they were to hear. Assailing their hearts and minds in the thrust of his music, the exuberant Vinci was certain that he could make them all recognize him as the great enabler of their evening's happiness. And, further, as the interpreter of their next day's experience. To this end he was employing all those technical devices in which Greco had so well instructed him. All the delicacies of the «table of graces» which Greco had spread out for him, *acciaccatura*, *appoggiatura* linked with *tremolotto* and *ribattuta* in a *cadenza tronca*, *cascata tirata* and *cascata per raccore il fiato*, and that english oddity «the double fore-stroke», *mondente fresco*, *mezzo-sospiro* and its french variant, «*demi-soupir*», were perfectly managed in Vinci's recitative writing. Most often by the surprizingness of restraint. At the moment when the practice

of imitating composers led experienced listeners to expect a cascade of brilliant sounds, the revolutionary Vinci gained his doubled effect by a sheer simplicity. By disentangling the voice-part «from fugue, complication, and laboured contrivance», as the visiting Dr Burney observed after a night at the Naples opera, «by simplifying and polishing melody», Vinci made a music, «pleasing and intelligent», that Alfonso also should approve.³⁰⁹

Bringing the bravura declaration of the hero, the agitated aria of the heroine, within the scope of a continuously forwarding rhythm, Vinci was ensuring that his audience should listen to him, that however sympathetic an individual character, however delightful an individual singer, they should attend to what was being communicated within the structured length of his opera. First at the Fiorentini and then at the San Bartolomeo and the San Carlo, Vinci and the composers who followed where he was leading, the young Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, 1710-1736, Leo, and Johann Adolf Hasse, 1699-1783, «*il caro Sassone*», who was spending a learning time as in-house composer at the teatro Nuovo,³¹⁰ were intent on audience's appreciating that their operas bore a meaning for their audiences' lives.

These were not changes that an audience would accept at once. They were becoming used again, at the Fiorentini certainly, to inconsequential trifling, and, at the San Bartolomeo, they were concentrating on the singer and the high note rather than on either Metastasio or his composers. After the first performance of *Li Zite 'ngalera*, for instance, while captain Federico's aria, «*Or piu non mi fa guerra*» provokes a subtle change of tone for the *azione* of the opera, the most whistled tune about town was the folk-songish opening number, «*Vorria reventare sorecillo*», which in Vinci's intention simply stated the point from which his opera's meaning departed. The composer's effort to match sentiment and tune never seemed whole-hearted enough to those who came into the theatre in expectation of a credible narrative, like those they'd known when librettists ran things. The poor impassioned heroine of Vinci's *Semiramide*

³⁰⁹Charles BURNLEY, *A General History of Music*, 1789, vol. IV, p. 547.

³¹⁰A.-E.-M. GRETRY, *Mémoires, ou essais sur la musique*, Paris, 2 ed., 1797, vol. I, pp. 225-227.

riconosciuta, 1729, sounded to unappreciative parisians as if some Petulant Pulcinella were in a tantrum.³¹¹ Few noticed that it was precisely the likeness of a grand operatic heroine and a poor street girl that Vinci meant them to hear in her aria, «*Torna innocente*». But, for the next thirty years, Vinci and the rest pressed their attempt to convince audiences that this new music was capable of the most sensitive presentation of human experience. And that, therefore, they should listen with more than their previous care to this simple music.

Singers, not altogether understanding the composer's over-all design, but pleased enough with the *arie* he was providing, began to take these operas north. The «Naples School» had now a growing fame over all Italy. And the composers were packing their bags to go north themselves. In the winter season 1725-26, after superintending rehearsals of his *Astianatte* at the San Bartolomeo in December, Vinci went on to Rome for the opening of his *Didone abbandonata* at the teatro delle Dame with «Nicolini» in January, and then to Venice and the Grimani family's teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo for his *Siroe, re di Persia*, with «la Romanina» in February. He received rave reviews in Venice. Feo, *primo maestro* of the Conservatorio dei Poveri, who had made his name in the city by that *Siface* in 1723, went on writing highly successful *opere serie* but fixed his maturing ambitions not on Naples productions but, for a while, on the carnival commissions of the Seminario Romano professors and then on the Turin management and the wilder applause of the teatro Regio patrons. Porpora, Metastasio's accomplice for *Gli orti esperidi* and *Angelica*, was also travelling north, presenting his own setting of *Siroe* in Rome, 1727, his *Ezio* in Venice, 1728, and his *Semiramide riconosciuta* for the Doge's carnival of 1729. He had, even before these competitive expeditions, had a *Damiro e Pitia*, performed in München during the 1724-25 season. The fame of the «Naples School» was now over all Europe.

When Handel had visited the city for his 1708 Alvito wedding performance of *Aci, Galatea ed Polifemo*, he'd known little more of Naples than could be acquired from playing in the Hamburg pit for *Die neapolitanische Fischer-Empörung*, the Masaniello opera by the impressario

³¹¹ STENDHAL, *Lettres sur Metastase*, 1812, ed.cit., pp. 345, 354, 348 and 349.

Reinhard Keiser, 1674-1739. He returned in 1729 to catch up with developments in modern theatre music and to hire some of the singers who were skilled in such things. He took away ideas for his neapolitan opera *Parthenope*, 1730, and a bundle of modern *arie* from operas by Vinci and Hasse. Handel had quite a London success next season with these borrowed *arie* in his pasticcio *Ormisda*. He also took away the soprano, Antonia Maria Merighi, fl. 1714-1740, and the castrato Antonio Maria Bernacchi, 1685-1756, who were to star in his King's Theatre company. By December, 1733, Porpora, «Senesino», and the soprano Francesca Cuzzoni, 1696-1778, were also in London, working for the rival Opera of the Nobility. London was now the battle-scene of two neapolitan factions.

The harmonious Niccolò Jommelli, 1714-1774, took this northward notion to greater length, mightily surprizing his fellows who, like Alfonso's first companions, were not at all keen on leaving Mamma, «*perché ognuno non si vuol partire da Mamma*»,³¹² by taking a house in Bologna in 1741, and even more adventurously moving to Wien in 1749.³¹³ Not everyone in Naples could so overcome their dislike of foreign travel. Gaetano Latilla, 1711-1788, tried living out of the city twice, accepting a roman appointment as *maestro* at Santa Maria Maggiore and then, for a shortish stint, taking the post of assistant *maestro* at S. Mark's. But, despite the prestige of the venetian job, he was happy to settle back in Naples as in-house composer at the Fiorentini. He remained, however, as skilful as any of them in arranging journeys for his music. *Gismondo* was adapted for the roman stage within a few months of the 1737 first night at the Fiorentini, brought back for a Naples revival and then sent on to London, revived and revized again at the Fiorentini and given a Paris outing in 1752, each revival being astutely accompanied by a title change, so that each city might suppose it was getting its own new opera.³¹⁴

³¹²vid. F. JONES, *Alphonsus de Liguori*, op. cit., p. 299.

³¹³For Jommelli, vid. A. YORKE LONG, *Music at Court, Four Eighteenth Century Studies*, London, 1954; M. McClymonds, *The Evolution of Jommelli's Operatic Style*, in «Journal of the American Musicological Society» 33 (1980) 326-355.

³¹⁴For Latilla, vid. T. Weil, *I teatri musicali veneziani del settecento*, Venice, 1897; M. BELLUCCI LA SALANDRA, *Saggio cronologico delle opere teatrali di Gaetano Latilla*, in «Japigia» 5 (1935) 310 ff.

These neapolitan composers were making their ways in the northern world very fast. There was just a quarter of a century between the performances of Vinci's *Siroe* in the teatro S. Giovanni Grisostomo and the triumphant 1752 Madrid first night of the *Siroe* of Vinci's fellow neapolitan, Nicola Conforto, 1718-1789, skilfully managed by «Farinelli» who was by this time director of the court theatres at Aranjuez and Buen Retiro. This was the quarter of a century in which Alfonso was working out his way of speaking for the poor, in the dissertation *sulla povertà*, 1733, the letter *sopra l'abuso di maledire i morti*, 1746, and the *Theologia Moralis*, 1748, with the *dissertatio scholastico-moralis pro uso moderato opinionis probabilis*, 1749. These were the years in which he was developing his apostolic style of story-telling in the *Massime eterne*, 1728(?), the *Visite al SS. Sacramento*, 1745(?), and, climactically, in *Le Glorie di Maria*, 1750. The years in which he was becoming a well-recognized author in the Kingdom, and beginning to think that he could do further good as an author further afield. There was not, however, any immediate encouragement for other neapolitans in the success-story of the composers. The librettists certainly were not sharing in venetian praises. Northern theatre managers were shewing themselves disposed rather to commission northern playwrights to make translations of neapolitan originals. And not always with acknowledgements. Even when the librettist had some fame. In 1753, Federico's *Il Cioè* was handed to one of their local adapters by the San Samuele management. Chiari had been writer-in-residence at the theatre but he had just quit the Imer-Casali company for the teatro S. Angelo, Carlo Goldoni, 1707-1793, had only that year settled into the teatro S. Luca, but the San Samuele could evidently call upon a sprightly versifier. He re-wrote the dialogue in *veneziano*, added some risky campello jokes, and excized the heroic Alessandro and his metastasian lover. Thus metamorphosed, the Fiorentini entertainment was most successfully presented as *Li Matti per amore*, with newly commissioned music by the similarly imported neapolitan, Giacchino Cocchi, 1718-1804, at the start of the 1754-55 season. This new version was aimed, Cocchi declared proprietarily, at «*quella naturalezza e facilità che caratterizza il vero*».³¹⁵

³¹⁵Cocchi, dedication to his *opus* 63. Cocchi's facility in setting any italian text

The venetian houses were evidently entirely agreeable that it should be the composer who would give his structure to the presentation of this truth. So were houses beyond the Alps. In Paris, for example, André-Ernest-Modeste Gretry, 1741-1813, was ready with the rash assertion, «*Pergolèse naquit et la vérité fut connue*», And the more careful Stendhal, coming from Pergolesi's 1735 *L'Olimpiade*, had also recognized that «*la musique*» in the Vincian opera had become «*une langue*» itself, having need of only «*un très petit nombre des paroles*» from the serviceable librettist.³¹⁶

Nevertheless, these composers had shewn their fellow neapolitans that it was in the north that they should find the larger audience they wanted for their words. Cerlone, by far the most ambitious of the librettists, having tried to hitch a ride into the northern theatres with words for Vinci, Pergolesi, Paisiello, Piccinni, Giacomo Tritto, 1743-1824, and the equally ambitious working-class youngster, Giuseppe Gazzaniga, 1743-1818,³¹⁷ decided on another way into venetian esteem. He wanted to be received as a member of the properly honoured profession of Goldoni, the retired tuscan lawyer, of Chiari, the infantryman turned *abate*, of Metastasio. He had his verses printed. In a «*Collected Edition*», The Vinaccia printers in Naples had then sent the *commedie* to be sold at several small veneto bookshops. Cerlone gained at once, or so he would have his home-audience believe, a reputation as a vernacular poet «*per tutta Italia*

placed before him secured his posting to the Haymarket Theatre, London, in 1757. After his replacement by J. C. Bach in 1762, he remained in the city as a singing teacher for another ten years or so, and returned a rich man to Venice.

³¹⁶For Hasse, vid. F. S. KANDLER, *Cenni storico-critici intorno alla vita ed alle opere del cel. Gio. Adolfo Hasse detto il Sassone*, Venice, 1820; G. M. URBANI DE GHELTOF, *La «nuova Sirena» e il «caro Sassone», note biografiche*, Venice, 1890; R. STROHM, *Handels Pasticcis* in «*Analecta musicologica*» 14 (1974) 208-267; F. L. MILLER, *Hasse and London's Opera of the Nobility*, in «*Music Review*» 35 (1974) 240-246.

³¹⁷Gazzaniga had, by his father's timely death, just avoided ordination and, accepted as a scholarship boy by Porpora, had grown to be a nicely rewarded composer of opera for the Nuovo and the San Samuele, the San Carlo and the Argentina in Rome. His most famous work was a 1787 *Don Giovanni* for the San Moise in Venice. vid. S. DI GIACOMO, *Il Conservatorio di Sant' Onofrio a Capuana e quello della Pietà dei Turchini*, Palermo, 1924.

ed Europa». ³¹⁸ He wrote further verses to celebrate his veneto success:

«per Venezia appresso mi vuol comico autore
Ov' è un Goldoni è un Chiari, autori rinomati
i scritti miei, che sprezzì, son stati ricerati.

.....

«Se dici da romanzi che ho le commedie estratte
queste (se colpo sono) Goldoni ancor le ha fatte;
un Metastasio, un Chiari prendon da libri ancora;
e che perciò? il mondo l'opre lor non onora?» ³¹⁹

It is significant that Cerlone writes of Goldoni, Chiari, and Metastasio as «*autori*» and points to their «*libri*» as indicators of their achievement. It is, he knows, not in the theatres but in the bookshops that he will find his northern audience. And his success was, on the bookshelf, mightily impressive. Seventy-three of his *commedie* were printed in a 14 volume collected edition, 1764-78.

7. – «....et usque ad ultimum terrae»

Alfonso was being made increasingly aware of a *senso comune* being expressed in the writing, printing, pirating, buying and lending of books in the Kingdom. Naples was now over-spilling with publishers, or at least with men and boys working little printing presses in the back-rooms of bookshops. ³²⁰ Through their publications an author might reach a wide variety of his fellows. So Alfonso had dealings with a dozen or so of these firms. ³²¹

³¹⁸ CERLONE, *Commedie*, vol. XI, 1775, Prefazione, responding to a *sonetto* against his *Giustina*.

³¹⁹ CERLONE, *Versi inediti*, MS cited by CROCE, *I teatri*, ed.cit., p. 257.

³²⁰ They are still at work in those backrooms. I bought a splendid print of Alfonso in 1996 from Sgnr. Mario Raffone, Stampatori della Real Casa di Borbone delle Due Sicilie next the Porta Alba.

³²¹ Among them, Alfonso chiefly favoured Onofrio and Antonio Paci. Their firm was one of the oldest in Naples. The partnership of Gio. Giacomo Carlino and Antonio Paci, the elder, had issued Giulio Cesare CAPASSO's *Delle imprese* in 1592. They had remained among the foremost of Naples printers of Fiorentini libretti, issuing Gennarantonio Federico's *Lo curatore*, 1726, *Le bbirbe*, 1728, and many reprints of *La*

He took in his late middle-age, a young man's pleasure at seeing his words in print. He wanted, he said, no greater re-imbursement from a publishing venture than «*una sola copia per vedere come son fatti*». ³²² But then, of course, he must have some few copies more «*che ho da regalare necessariamente agli amici e ministri*». ³²³ As soon, however, as he had recovered from that first delight, Alfonso, like the rest of authors, noted several ways in which a book might be improved. ³²⁴ Not only in the text. These little neapolitan printings too often appeared on the hawkers' trays proof-unread, their sheets of poor quality paper, sadly ill-sewn, unlikely to survive being thrust into a coat-pocket. ³²⁵ Not a single copy of the

Zeza de Casoria up to 1770. Arranging with the Paci brothers for the fun of a «Collected Ascetical Works» in 1779, Alfonso was fulsome in their praise, 29 July, 1779, LETTERE III, p. 529, but there were other printers in the Kingdom for whom Alfonso held no brief. Those who, with the horrid booksellers who stocked so many pernicious foreign books, were making Foggia such a notoriously immoral town. There were too many tales of young persons being distracted from the practice of virtue by the sort of books they were producing. Things were, perhaps, worse abroad. Alfonso lives in a world invaded by french books, *vid.* letters of 7 January and 19 November, 1766, 18 February and 9 October, 1768. And then in Portugal, «*si potranno leggere liberamente i libri di Lutero, di Calvino, ecc*», Letter to Remondini, 1 June, 1768. Though, again, Alfonso can tell a fine story of a boy's throwing a bad book into the sea, *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, *Raccolta*, 2, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, p. 360, and there were hopeful signs of the Naples government doing something about such printers and publishers and importers, *vid.* dedication, 1772, of *Istoria dell'Eresie* to Tanucci.

³²²Letter of August, 1758 to the Remondini, LETTERE, III, 75. One Naples publisher did not send him even this single copy of the *Pratica*. Alfonso bought one. *vid.* Letter of 12 December, 1759, LETTERE, III, 105.

³²³28 August, 1757, LETTERE, III, 61. Like the rest of us, he found he had given away all his complementary copies and needed more. A lot more, for safety. Letters of 19 November, 1766, and 18 February, 1768, LETTERE, III, 290 and 312. He had, evidently, rather more friends than Frederick Jones suggests, cf. JONES, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

³²⁴That this shift from oral to printed versions of the tradition was not at all easy to effect may be observed in the dulness of ALFONSO's *Sermoni compendiat per tutte le domeniche*, 1771, which has chiefly to be attributed to his not being confident that the unknown curates for whom he was putting these paradigms together would be able to tell stories. He felt obliged to omit them. So, properly, his fellows in the Congregation did not bother with these emptied homilies. *vid.* Letter to P. Gaspare Caione, 20(?) October, 1776, LETTERE II, 380.

³²⁵Letters of May, 1759, and 21 May 1764, LETTERE III, 95 and 207 and Letter of

original printing of the *Massime eterne* has survived. Not one of the tract on *bestemmia de' morti*.³²⁶ Of course these collapsing editions did good work. They fulfilled some part of Alfonso's missionary vocation. With, or as often without, his permission, for there was no securing copy-right for these small well-selling works, the little publishers became agents of the popular christian tradition. The catch-word at the foot of each right-hand page witnesses to these books being read aloud. In a group of listeners. The local community of christians, unlettered and lettered together, at one story-telling.³²⁷ But Alfonso knew that he should be making the story heard by poor and rich «*per tutta l'Italia*» and «*nelle regioni oltramontane*».³²⁸

Like every other civilized chapess and chap in the Kingdom, Alfonso would hear, in «*il bombo dell'api*», of the triumph of Vinci, the *convittore* of his Conservatorio days, and the other neapolitan composers through all Italy and over the Alps. And a man need not be a musician to hope for a like audience. Vico was much gratified in 1728 that the venetian Gian Artico di Porcia should commission a biographical sketch, «*scritta da se medesimo*», and even better pleased in 1730 when, having been elected to the academy of the Assorditi of Urbino, he was asked for a few supplementary pages by the great Muratori himself. Such attention might, if only for a little while, recover him from the disappointment following a very favourable review of the first parts of *De universi iuris* in the 1722 *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*. Jean le Clerc, 1657-1736, had there allowed that Vico's writing gave him occasion «*ostendendi nostris septentrionalibus eruditibus acumen atque eruditionem non minus apud italos inveniri quam apud nos*». Vico had gone about Naples making as much noise as Cerlone to ensure that his colleagues understood what a great

20 July, 1761, LETTERE III, 132.

³²⁶cf. letter of 11 September, 1758, LETTERE III, 79, for Alfonso's revision of this little treatise for the *Theologia Moralis*.

³²⁷Author and reader, «*lettore mio caro e fratello*», enjoy, Alfonso felt, a present companionship which may reach out to the future of the celebrating community: «*Lasciando sulla terra questo mio povero libro il quale seguiti per me a predicarvi e ad animare anche gli altri pubblicare le vostre glorie*». *Glorie di Maria, Introduzione and Supplica, Opere ascetiche*. VI, p. 15 and 10.

³²⁸Letters to Remondini, 7 July, 1756 and 2 June 1757, LETTERE III, 32 and 58

man he was. But Vico had heard no more northern praise for his analyses of *giustizia*, *diritto*, and «*il senso comune*». Neither Le Clerc nor Sir Isaac Newton, 1642-1727, acknowledged receipt of the 1725 *Scienza nuova*. His history did not provide a promiscuous *esempio* for any neapolitan hoping for foreign recognition. Others might scrutinize the experience of Metastasio for an encouragement of their northward ambitions. He had, certainly, gained a reputation across Europe. From 1730 onwards, for at least forty years, he was the undisputed master of *opera seria* in Rome and Wien and St Petersburg. Even as late as 1789, Dr Burney was acknowledging that in London every one acquainted with the Italian language knew the verses of Metastasio's *Siroe* by heart. By that year, Vinci's original setting, «*con modo semplice*», had been rivalled by those of Porpora in 1727, Handel, 1728, Fiore, 1729, Hasse, 1733 and 1747 and 1763, Prez, 1740, Wagenseil, 1748, Cocchi, 1750, Piccinni, 1759, and twenty-two other composers. «*Questo dramma*», Giovanni Carlo Bonlini, 1673-1731, remarked in his famous Venetian *catalogo purgatissimo dei drammi quivi sin'hora rappresentati* 1730, «*universalmente gradito ha reso immortale il Nome del suo celebre Autore*». But whatever the encouragement in all this for others, Alfonso could not deem Metastasio's audiences, aristocratic in temper, leisured, bilingual, quite that company of divers women and men, *i rozzi e i letterati*, whom the missionary would bring together to hear, *universalmente*, the redeeming news of Christ.

Not looking for Vico's philosophic colleague or Metastasio's caesarian patron more than for any other woman or man to hear gospel, parable, and the stories of popular ecclesial tradition, and like Cerlone recognizing the uses of Venetian bookmen, especially for his getting his collected ascetical works in print, Alfonso wrote to the grandest of European publishers, the Remondini of Bassano, suggesting that his *Theologia Moralis* would make a proper addition to their list. This was a firm with outlets not only over all northern Italy but, through a network of reciprocal relations with other printers, publishers, and booksellers, and the firm's own sale-or-return agents, in Spain and Portugal, across the Alps in Germany and France, across the Atlantic in Popayan.³²⁹

³²⁹For the risks of Remondini's trans-Atlantic publishing venture, *vid.* Fabriciano

The Remondini had not become so important a publishing house over-night.³³⁰ The founder Giovanni Antonio Remondini, 1634-1711, had begun, in 1657, as a printer of sheets of playing cards and, on the same machines, using the same format, sheets of prayer-cards. He had early seen the possibilities of converting the road-walking pedlars, *bianti* and *calcanti*, into travelling salesmen for the firm. They would now go about the veneto, baskets of books slung from their sboulders, folders of prints under their arms, talking poor country folk into buying an alphabet-table, a couple of easy story-books, or, at the least, a few of the Remondini *Santi*. And not only in the veneto. These *merciai ambulanti* were, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, wandering across borders into Germany, Hungary, and Poland.³³¹ The Remondini wares, mass-produced on paper from their own mills at their own printing works, stacked and packed in their own warehouses, sold by their own hawkers and their own assistants in the Venice shop, were cheaper than those of any of their veneto rivals.³³² They found their popular market.³³³ On the death of the founder, his better-educated son Giuseppe, 1672-1742,³³⁴ had determined to dignify the firm by issuing volumes of Virgil, Horace, and Cicero, together with shelves of greek poetry, french fiction, and british

FERRERO, S. *Alfonso y los dos processos de 1772-1773 contra Giambattista Remondini*, in *SHCSR* 19 (1971) 304-390.

³³⁰For the history of the firm, *vid.* Mario INFELISE, *I Remondini di Bassano*, Bassano 1980; Mario INFELISE and Paola MARINI, ed. *L'Editoria del '700 e i Remondini*, Bassano 1992; *Le stampe popolari dei Remondini*, illustrated catalogue prepared by Carlo Alberto ZOTTI MINICI, Veneto, 1994; John Baptist JACKSON, exhibition catalogue, Museo Biblioteca Archivio di Bassano, 1996, prepared by Giorgio Mastropasqua; G. M. ZILIO, *L'arte della stampa*, in *Storia di Bassano*, Bassano 1980, pp. 271-310.

³³¹Alfonso thought that getting such travelling salesmen to make calls on parish priests would be the most likely way of selling the Remondini 7th ed. of *Theologia Moralis* in the Kingdom of Naples. Letter of 23 September, 1773, LETTERE III, 453.

³³²M. INFELISE, *I Remondini*, ch. I, V, and VI.

³³³Sheets of illustrative cards for the Saints, the Sacraments, the Litany of Loreto, were still being advertized in the 1772, 1778, 1791, 1797, 1803, 1817, and 1842 catalogues. *vid.* *Cataloghi della Tipografia Remondini*, 163 A 22.2, Biblioteca Civica di Bassano del Grappa. *Catalogo delle stampe*.

³³⁴For the Remondini genealogy, *vid.* Mario INFELISE, *La famiglia*, in M. INFELISE and P. MARINI, ed. *Remondini, Un Editore del Settecento*, Milano, 1990, pp. 60-66.

philosophy. But while he went on publishing the cruscan *Prose Fiorentine* in *edizione novissima*, Giuseppe took a balancing interest in the democratization of italian, issuing with mercantile acuteness the first printing of Pietro Galesini's *Tesoro della lingua volgare*. His elder son Giovanni, 1700-1769, took over the running of the firm's finances in 1742, whilst his younger son, Giambattista, 1713-1773, set about enlarging the house list still more grandly. His ambitions led to their issuing 5 volumes of Giambattista Margagni's forensic medicine text, *De sedibus et causis morborum*, 1761, and, setting out on another 5 volume set of Ruggero Boscovich' *Opera pertinentia ad opticam et astronomiam*, and a 10 volume Aquinas, between 1760 and 1770, with «*opuscula omnia nunc prima collecta*», and a portrait of the saint in a *Trionfo della Chiesa* series of *Santi*. Their Venice showroom stocked a vasty selection of their own and other firms' editions of the *Imitatio Christi* in french and german as well as in italian and latin. And the brothers had conducted a daring raid on the property of their venetian rival, Antonio Zatta, issuing a 7 volume edition of Metastasio's libretti.³³⁵ Most ambitiously of all, Giambattista committed the firm to what became a 15 volume folio collected works of Pope Benedict XIV, Lambertini, 1675-1758, with follow-up of 7 separately published appendices *Ad casus conscientiae*.³³⁶ Alfonso rightly surmized, in 1757, that this was a man to be enticed by the suggestion of his firm's publishing yet another set of really heavy books.

³³⁵ P. METASTASIO, *Opere Drammatiche con tutti gli altri Componimenti Poetici che l'Autore ha fin'ora dati alla luce*, Tom. 7, 1776, and *Indice delle predette sue Opere, ove i celebri concetti massimi e detti sentenzioni delle medesime si contengono*.

³³⁶ This edition held up the 6th edition of ALFONSO's *Theologia Moralis*, vid. letters of 29 December, 1765 and 19 March, 1766, LETTERE, III, 272 and 282. The 6th edition was the first to include in its title page the reference to *Epitome doctrinae moralis et canonicae ex operibus Benedicti XIV nunc primum ab eodem autore plurimis additamentis illustrata et pluribus in locis correctata*. In 1773, when Remondini was considering the printing of the *Bullarium* of Benedict XIV, Alfonso was anxiously writing to ensure that, even if he had to pay for it himself, the Brief of Approbation of the Congregation should be put in its proper chronological place in the collection. Letters of 10 July, 1773, 21 August, 1773, 7 October, 1773, LETTERE, III, 448, 450, 452.

The Aquinas project entailed some delays in the Remondini publication of Alfonso's own *Trionfo della Chiesa cioè Istoria dell'Eresie*, vid. letter of 27 March, 1773, LETTERE, III, 442.

The *Theologia Moralis* would, they agreed, be printed in clearer type, on much larger, thicker, paper. It would be strongly bound. And in three rather than two volumes.³³⁷ Alfonso assumed that the firm would go on to publish all his opuscula. Acknowledging «*ho anticipato a V.S. Illma questa cosa*», Alfonso mentions that «*ho fatto le Visite al SS Sacramento colle considerazioni sulla Passione di Gesù Cristo - libretto di 30 fogli incirca*»,³³⁸ «*ho stampato ancora un picciol libro delle Glorie di Maria SSma*», «*ho dato un'altro libretto alle stampe contra gl'increduli moderni*», and he makes the daunting promise, «*questi libri poi ce l'invierò*». ³³⁹ Giovanni had relished Alfonso's assurance that he and his many brethren would, as eager salesmen, open up the book markets of the Kingdom of Naples for the Remondini catalogue,³⁴⁰ his brother may have been somewhat nonplussed at finding himself a participant, along with all those members of the Congregation who were enlisted as researchers,

³³⁷ *vid.* Alfonso's reply to Remondini's contracting letter, August, 1755, LETTERE, III, 18.

³³⁸ 16 June, 1756, LETTERE, III, 30.

³³⁹ 7 July, 1756, LETTERE, III, 32.

³⁴⁰ In the first of his surviving letters to the Remondini, Alfonso promises that he and his companions will do their utmost to make the venture a success. Two years later, the Congregation was buying books from the Remondini at 75% of list price, 2 June, 1757, LETTERE, III, 58; next year, Alfonso has become an informal agent of the firm, LETTERE, III, 75, and in May, 1759, he is writing to enquire about the latest catalogue, prices, opportunities for selling, LETTERE, III, 95. Things did not, however, go easily. Despite Remondini's letting the members of the Congregation have a book-seller's discount of 40%, «*io per smaltire presto i suoi libri li do per quello che ne trovo*», 8 October, 1759, LETTERE, III, 100. «*In quanto all'incombenza dello smaltimento de' suoi libri, io ne ha dato il pensiero ad uno de' nostri Padri che sta ancora qui con me in Nocera, il P. Ferrari*», 17 Januar, 1760, LETTERE, III, 106. «*A me era impossibile, per lo governo che tengo in mano della Congregazione, l'attendere allo smaltimento de' libri*», 24 May, 1760 LETTERE, III, 112. P. Ferrari began the arrangement of swapping books for mass stipends, LETTERE III, 112, 323 and 438, but «*nè credo che, in questo tempo di età, ha fatto molto smaltimento*», 28 August, 1760, LETTERE, III, 118.

After Ferrari's death, Alfonso put this excessively difficult business into the hands first of Br. Francesco Tartaglione who died in 1774, and then of Br. Michele Ilarda who, he supposed, would make a mess of it. When he didn't, Alfonso was sure that the Remondini should not give him some present «*Questi Fratelli, servendo V.S. Ill.ma, hanno servito me*», 3 August, 1774, LETTERE, III, 465.

translators, scribes, book-sellers, accountants, in an immense mission project.³⁴¹ Alfonso manipulated the Remondini as every author would wish to manipulate a publisher. Soon he was writing to re-assure the nervous brothers that «se stampa quella della Visita e della Madonna, ed anche l'altre, non se ne pentirà», after all their publishing the *Theologia Moralis* had made him so well-known. So it is time to publish these opuscula. If not, well, «oggi appunto ho ricevuto lettera dal Sig. Antonio Zatta».³⁴²

Giambattista was not at all eager to add these little works to his list. They had not the desirable tone. His father may have been content with the Galesini vulgate *Tesoro*. Giambattista was the publisher of *Voci Italiane d' Autori approvati dalla Crusca* and of *Vocabolario della Crusca compendiato da un' Accademico*. His careful northern education had not made him sensitive to voices speaking in south Italian accents. He was the publisher of Muratori's *De superstitione vitanda circa Votum Sanguinarium pro immaculata Conceptionis BVM*, 1740, with the offensively defensive 1743 appendix *Ferdinandi Valdesi epistola* and of *La regolata Divozione del Cristiano*, 1747.³⁴³ He was not ready to trust the judgement of neapolitans in matters of extra-liturgical propriety. Even the terrible reproach, in June 1758, «vedo la Madonna e Gesù Cristo V.S. Illma li fa andare sempre in ul-

³⁴¹ Alfonso became so much the author that he had to tell the Congregation that no one was to hesitate to write to him on any matter on account of some fear of disturbing him in the midst of his book-making. August, 1758, LETTERE, I, 397.

It must be impossible to read Alfonso's letters to the Remondini without coming to desperate sympathy for Angelo Ruscigno, 1725-1755, Pascal Amendolara, 1723-1758, who both collapsed at the onset of tuberculosis, the disease of the poor and the over-worked, for Geronimo Ferrari, 1715-1767, and for his successor as book-keeper, the much-abused Br Michele Ilardo. I take it that Alfonso's student helpers, Lorenzo Nigro, 1736-1799, Deodato Criscuoli, 1738-1809, and Francesco de Paola, 1737-1814, for examples, survived their devilling chores by grinning at one another meanwhile.

³⁴² 15 April, 1757, and 16 July, 1758, LETTERE, III, 55 and 72.

³⁴³ The first was published, 1740, under the name «Antonio Lampridio», an anagram of the pseudonym, «Lamindo Pritanio» which he used again when publishing the second in 1747.

On account of Benedict XIV's silencing the controversialists, 14 November, 1748, Remondini could not print MURATORI's *Supplica ai vescovi d'Italia a nome de' Poveri di essa Italia*, vid. *Scritti inediti*, 1872, p. 276-322.

«tuo luogo» did not secure the desired result.³⁴⁴ Next July, Alfonso tried what letting Remondini know that he is «un'vecchio» and «s'accosta la morte» might do to hasten things along.³⁴⁵

Alfonso's particular concern was for the publishing of *Le Glorie di Maria*: «desidererei che quest'opera la stampa prima», «quest'operetta e la più faticata e forse la più applaudita».³⁴⁶ In the first Part of this lengthy work, which only an outrageously wheedling author could term an «operetta», Alfonso expounds the *Salve Regina*, the prayer of the banished children of Eve, «poveri noi» who are being translated into «noi ricchi». This is a work of perfectly assimilated learning and delightful narrative skill, in which the *senso comune* is nicely affirmed as Alfonso leads his reader in shared exploration of what the Fathers, theologians, and folk story-tellers are saying, together, of *Regina*, *Mater*, and *Spes*. Listening to scholars and aunts, turning to the Lady, we learn how we ourselves may join more tunefully in the singing of the lovely antiphon.

The *Salve Regina* is a Compline antiphon. Sung at the coming of the dark. When any of us may feel afeared. When any of us with the talent may feel allowed to sing for the Lady's help. Neapolitan musicians of *commedeja pe' mmuseca*, Piccinni, the composer of Cerlone's *I napoletani in America*, Leo, who made the original tunes for *Il Cioè*, for examples, had not thought themselves barred from joining *opera seria* composers in making a setting of the antiphon which should express the citizens' *common sense* of needing the Lady's care in a shadowing world. Still, Piccinni was *vicemaestro di cappella* at the cathedral and «rather grave for an Italian»,³⁴⁷ and Leo was always rather more ambitious than his fellows, successfully contending to be Feo's successor as *maestro* at the Conservatorio dei Poveri in 1739. More expectedly, Feo himself, the composer of the first *Siface*, Vinci, *pro-vicemaestro* of the chapel royal, Porpora at the Conservatorio di S. Maria di Loreto, who had been given a commission by the *seggio* of Portanuova, each made at least one bid to set the great anti-

³⁴⁴5 June, 1758, LETTERE, III, 67.

³⁴⁵5 July, 1759, LETTERE, III, 97.

³⁴⁶*Ibid.*

³⁴⁷This, at least, was Dr Burney's judgement after meeting the composer in 1770, *vid. The Present State of Music in France and Italy*, 1771, p. 92.

phon. None could come near the delicate expression of hope amid fears that was heard in the third try of the dying Pergolesi, in C-minor for solo soprano voice and a consort or strings. Stendhal was right about Pergolesi and the musical language which presented a challenge even to the splendid speech of Metastasio. And whatever Gretry said about his birth, the composer shewed in his dying moments just how truly a sharer of this our exile may phrase our petition to the Queen or Heaven.

Not only Pergolesi's piercing music, but this taken with the musics of so diverse composers perfectly exemplifies Alfonso's appreciation of the Church as the community in which our differences of talent and temperament make common sense. He himself proved very ready, in his elucidations of this same antiphon, to employ, in his telling of popular stories of the Fiorentini sort, the structures of San Bartolomeo *opera seria*. In his fine story of Tommaso the Cistercian who longs to meet the Lady, for instance, Alfonso introduces his characters according to a formal theatrical hierarchy, starting with the lowly Tommaso himself and proceeding to his three visitors, first, «*una vergine bella*» who sings with such sweetness that the monk must think himself in Paradise, then, «*finito il canto*», another virgin comes to sing «*il suo canto*», sweeter still, and at her ending, bidding Tommaso prepare himself «*a ricevere una grazia maggiore*» on the entry of the *Prima Donna* «*E la SS Vergine cominciò a cantare*». At her aria, as in the opera house when Bulgarelli sang and strong men in their boxes collapsed with pleasure, Tommaso faints quite away.³⁴⁸ Along with these formal devices, Alfonso will take over a metastasian plot-line. He re-tells *La Clemenza di Tito* more than once.³⁴⁹ But his re-tellings direct his reader's attention away from every emperor and vicere to «*la nostra imperatrice Maria*».³⁵⁰ He places her in the roman's stage position. Centre-front. In the candle-light. There we may applaud

³⁴⁸*Glorie di Maria*. Pte I, cap. VIII, 39 *Opere ascetiche* VI, pp. 288-289. cf. the similarly structured story of S. Opportuna, *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, *Raccolta*, 89, *Opere ascetiche* VII, p. 416.

³⁴⁹*Ibid.*, Pte I, cap. I, i and cap IX, *Opere ascetiche* VI, pp. 28 and 295. Metastasio's libretto had attracted audiences everywhere in Europe and more than forty composers had assayed a setting before Mozart took it up in 1791.

³⁵⁰*Ibid.* Pte I, cap IX, *Opere ascetiche* VI, p. 295.

«la clemenza di Mamma Maria».³⁵¹

Both Metastasio's arrangements for a hierarchy of singers and his plot devices towards the *lieto fine* of *perdono* are perfectly to Alfonso's hand when he sets out to re-tell one of Carlo Bovio's stories of the Lady and her petitioner.³⁵² And with these *opera seria* elements, Alfonso places the popular humour of the *buffa* comedy. He exhibits a bright command of the funny situation. And as bright a command of funny dialogue. «*La solita canzone*» of the betrayed wife in the Lady Chapel, «*Giustizia Madre di Dio, Giustizia!*», sounds, at the start of this story-telling, a properly conventional note. We may all expect the Lady to defend our respectable interest. She is the patroness of our decent society. Then the song of the wife is taken up and given an extraordinary turn by the Prima Donna. Given a turn which is both comically *buffa* and metastasially significant. This angry wife is asking for the wrong thing. She should be recognizing her shared need for *perdono*. The Lady does not defend as we do. She does not judge as we do. «*Giustizia?*», she repeats with the *da capo* elaboration of Vinci's musicianly singers, «*a me cerchi Giustizia?*», She brings her aria to a quite unexpected close. «*Quella peccatrice ogni giorno recita un saluto*» and «*Io non posso soffrire ch'ella patisca e sia castigata per suoi peccati*», The woman is truly «*quella peccatrice*», No glossing over that. But, as Alfonso tells the story, we are brought to appreciate that the Lady is exercising that perfect government of forgiveness which Metastasio was urging on his unenlightened princes. She is the Regina who is *Mater misericordiae*. And, as we listen to Alfonso telling the story, may recognize that we are not, as perhaps we had supposed when the betrayed wife seemed our representative, righteous women and men. We are, rather,

³⁵¹Letter to a Scrupulous Person, VIII, 1766(?), LETTERE, I, 625.

³⁵²*Ibid.*, Pte I, cap. IX, *Opere ascetiche* VI, pp. 303-304. In the Bovio version, the wife makes not a *canzone* to the lady but a *grida*. cf. Domenico CAPONE, *Le citazioni nelle Opere ascetiche di S. Alfonso*, IV, B. in *Opere ascetiche, Introduzione*, pp. 369-376, for parallel texts from Carlo Bovio, *Esempi e miracoli della SS Vergine Madre di Dio*, Venezia 1749 and *Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, cap IX. Grimm excised this shocking story from his english translation. But, ironically, the story of Antonio di Colleli that he substituted reaches the happy ending of a prostitute's being preserved from one of her angry clients by the intervention of the Lady. *Glories of Mary*, 1931, p. 258.

the fellows of «*quella peccatrice*». In an emperor-ruled world we should be alarmed for our future. «Use every man after his desert, and who shall scape whipping?», Hamlet had warned Polonius, «Use them after your own honour and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty». The Lady is most bounteous. We look for pardon with this *peccatrice*. We make our salute together. We recite the *Salve Regina*.

«*Jam redit et Virgo*». As Alfonso expounds this wondrous antiphon, placing his stories so that we shall appreciate what it may mean for us, we have some common sense of a wondrous resolution of the vichian understanding of *iustitia*, that «*constans communis utilitatis cura*», into the metastasian proclamation of the complementing *misericordia*:

«Noi ben confessiamo che Gesù Cristo è l'unico mediatore di giustizia, che coi meriti suoi ci ottiene le grazie e la salute: ma diciamo che Maria è mediatrice di grazia, e che sebbene quanto ella ottiene, ottiene per i meriti di Gesù Cristo, e perché prega e lo domanda in nome di Gesù Cristo; tuttavia quante grazie noi cerchiamo, tutte le abbiamo per mezzo della sua intercessione».³⁵³

It is no wonder, therefore, that «*qui in Napoli*», as Alfonso observed to the Remondini brothers, «*quello della Madre già è stato stampato più volte ed è piaciuto universalmente a tutti*».³⁵⁴ No wonder, either, that Alfonso should be so urgent that the Remondini set *Le Glorie di Maria* on their presses and get the book quickly into the shops of all Italy and beyond. For this is the book in which the tradition sounds most splendidly, most nearly, in which all those voices of *i poveri* may be heard harmoniously together, enjoying the happiness of *perdono* and the completing companionship of *noi ricchi* with the Lady in Christ's Kingdom. If the Remondini would only get on with the veneto printing, «*v'assuro che da per tutto ella sarà applaudita*», «*n'avrebbe uno smaltimento immenso per tutte le sorti di gente*».³⁵⁵

³⁵³*Ibid.* Pte I, cap. V, 1, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 161.

³⁵⁴14 April, 1758, LETTERE, III, 65. The book's reception had not been quite universally favourable, *vid.* Letter to Canon Giacomo Fontana, 12 October, 1750, *Lettere*, I, 234. Outside the city, Lamindo Pritanio *redivivus* had, in 1755, made a systematic attack on Alfonso's notions. *vid.*, ALFONSO's 1756, *Risposta ad un anonimo*.

³⁵⁵*Ibid.*

«Universalmente», «per tutto», and «per tutti le sorti di gente», have here their full significance as «Catholic». In determining that the Remondini should be his agents «in Germania, Spagna, ecc.»,³⁵⁶ Alfonso was making them his partners in an ever-widespreading mission. He has been collecting stories not only from local worthies and their wives but from the diversity of authors and books, stories of a brigand in the Trentino, a nobleman in Madrid, a good Portugese and a horrid German, a danish archbishop and a couple of boisterous belgian undergraduates.³⁵⁷ His having served as a galley-slave and his making disguised fun of a gallant captain may have kept Cervantes off Don Giuseppe's shelves. Alfonso has, however, been reading Rousseau's *Emile*, though not with any great pleasure.³⁵⁸ He has been talking about Shakespeare, his comedies and his tragedies, with a courtier newly-arrived from the theatrically-advanced Madrid.³⁵⁹ He has been button-holing trans-Atlantic travellers and got them to tell him of a native wig-maker in Mexico and a colonial recidivist in Peru.³⁶⁰ Then, talking with returned missionaries, he has been admiring the histories of so many modern Japanese, forming them into a dip-tych with the earliest christian witnesses for the *Vittorie de' Martiri*. He knows that all these are to be heard together, voicing their divers praises «per gloria della Madonna», «per la gloria di Gesù Cristo», «la gloria di

³⁵⁶ 16 June, 1756, LETTERE, III, 30

³⁵⁷ *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, *Raccolta*, 10, 11, 14, 15, 25, *Opere ascetiche*, VII, pp. 366, 368, 367, 369, 374; Pte I, cap.VIII,I, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, p. 264.

³⁵⁸ vid. «Emilio» quotations and references in *Riflessioni sulla verità della Divina Rivelazione*, I.2 and 32, III, 44, 46, and 50; *Verità della Fede*, I.VI. II.23. Alfonso had also read carefully ROUSSEAU's *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité*, 1755, vid., *Verità della Fede*, I.VI.10.

³⁵⁹ There were no public performances, or recorded private performances, of any of Shakespeare's plays in Italy before the end of the eighteenth century, and no printed translations, but there are definite resonances of *As You Like It* in *Apparecchio alla Morte*, consid. xiii, *Opere ascetiche* p. 121f, of *Merchant of Venice* at *Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, V.ii, esempio, *Opere ascetiche* VII, pp. 187 f, of *Hamlet* in *Apparecchio alla Morte*, consid. xiii, *Opere ascetiche* p. 121f and *Breve Istruzione degli Esercizi di Missione*, VII,iv,2, and of *Lear*, *Vera Sposa*, cap XIV, i, 5, *Opere ascetiche* XV, p. 63 and *Via della Salute*, *Meditazioni per ogni tempo*, *Misericordia di Dio*, II, *Opere ascetiche* X, p. 52.

³⁶⁰ *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, *Raccolta*, 49 and 14, *Opere ascetiche* VII, pp. 388 and 368.

Dio».³⁶¹

There is a certain irony in the Remondini's hesitating to print *Le Glorie di Maria*, for their own catalogues expressed that very *senso comune* of christians which Alfonso was affirming in his expositions of ourselves and the Lady in the Church. The 1751 *Catalogus librorum*,³⁶² co-lists Busenbaum's *Theologiae Moralis Medulla*, annotated *Sermones* of S. Zeno, the *Omelie ed Orazioni volgarizzate* of Pope Clement XI, cardinal Baronio's *Annales Ecclesiastici* in 13 volumes folio, Muratori's *Romana Vetus Liturgia illustra*, along with translations of the works of S. Basil, the sermons of S. Peter Chrysologus, the *Epistolae* of S. Isidore, the plays of Corneille, and M. du Be's *Le Medecin des Pauvres*, «a beneficio de' Poveri». With these, the Remondini shelves were stocked with no less than 41 editions, differently printed and bound, of the *Offizio B.V.* And a perusal of the appendices «delli copiosi sortimenti di carte» to the catalogues of 1751, 1759, 1762 and 1764, and then of their regular *cataloghi delle stampe incise* from 1766 to 1842 shows that the Remondini were taking an increasingly popularist part in that catholic mission manifest in *Le Glorie di Maria*.³⁶³

These catalogues perfectly reflect that picture of the Church which Alfonso is presenting in *Le Glorie di Maria*, not only in his exposition of the *Salve Regina* but, after the climactic exclamation «O dulcis Virgo Maria», made by the catholic community, by Alfonso and Alfonso's reader, «lettore mio caro e fratello», in «discorsi sulle sette feste principali di Maria».

These meditations, too, exhibit his enthusiasm for what is universal, everywhere received by all. Beginning at the beginning, with Mary's immaculate Conception, he at once adduces the evidences of the Church's

³⁶¹5 July, 1759; 16 July, 1758; 7 July, 1756, 23 January, 1757; LETTERE, III, 97, 72, 32, 50.

³⁶²*Catalogus Librorum qui Latine atque Italice ex Typographia Remondiniana nuperrime prodierunt ... Venetiis, in Via Mercatoria ... MDCCLI. Biblioteca Comunale, Bassano, 163 A 22.2.*

³⁶³For these catalogues and the sometimes splendid quality of both originals and prints, see John Baptist JACKSON, *Chiaroscuri dalla Collezione Remondini*, catalogue of the exhibition, Palazzo Agostinelli, Bassano, April-July, 1996, ed. Giorgio Mastropasqua.

liturgies,³⁶⁴ and the personal testimonies of SS. John Damascene³⁶⁵ and Bernard³⁶⁶ and Bernardine of Siena,³⁶⁷ of S. Augustine³⁶⁸ and three quite distinct pseudo-Augustines,³⁶⁹ of a mediaeval french abbot, a renascence german cardinal and a swatch of modern spanish Jesuits.³⁷⁰ Then, he cannot bring himself to forego mentions of SS. Ambrose and Anselm,³⁷¹ and, of course, the angelic S. Thomas.³⁷² And then, there's the learned Cornelius a Lapide,³⁷³ and «un moderno autore», «molti dottori», and «*accademie della Sorbona, di Alcala, di Salamanca, di Coimbra, di Colonia, di Magonza*» and, climactically, «*di Napoli*».³⁷⁴ Here, too, Alfonso sets reminiscences of *opera seria* concerns with a man and his honour, a man and his mother's honour, and a hero's duty to undertake the gallant rescue of a maiden from the villain's clutches.³⁷⁵ And this time those reminiscences are joined with like echoings of Fiorentini evenings and encouraging entertainments in which a bright youngster, brought up among the poor, makes his way in the world, despite the boorish antics of the squire, until he is finally recognized as the queen's true son.³⁷⁶ Most plainly of all, Alfonso is continuing his vichian effort to ensure that we attend to *le tradizioni volgari de' popoli*. We are to hear what a poor woman

³⁶⁴Alfonso brings forward evidences from both Greek and Latin liturgies, *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, discorso 1, *Opere ascetiche* VII, pp. 10, 14, 21 and 39. cf. the shape of Alfonso's argument for this doctrine from the declarations of the liturgy, *Theologia Moralis*, Lib. VII, cap. 11 *de excommunicatione*, dub. iv, art. iii, Diss. de Imm. Conc. B.V. Mariae, especially GAUDÉ, 259.

³⁶⁵*Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, discorso 1, *Opere ascetiche* VII, pp. 10, 15, 16, and 35.

³⁶⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 10, 17, 20, and 39.

³⁶⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 13, 17, 25, 29 and 36.

³⁶⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 12, 22, 24 and 26.

³⁶⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 19, 24, and 18.

³⁷⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 20, 27, 31, 32 and 33.

³⁷¹*Ibid.*, pp. 18 and 15.

³⁷²*Ibid.*, pp. 13, 15, 21, 29, 31, 39 and 40.

³⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 29.

³⁷⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 37, 32, 38. Alfonso makes special mention of his old theology tutor, Giulio Torno (Torni), 1672-1756, *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁷⁵*Ibid.*, punto II, p. 17 ff.

³⁷⁶...*potendo averla nobile, la volesse villana?*, *Ibid.*

has to say.³⁷⁷

She has a story to tell of her obdurate husband, a missionary, and one of those little prayer-cards. The husband has not been to confession for years. If the poor woman nag him about it, he beats her. Encountering such troubles, Alfonso had so often advized, «serviti delle cartelle di Maria immacolata». Then they were all to pray. «Così potrai aver la grazia».³⁷⁸ So, on her making her complaint «ad un Padre de' nostri», the instructed Redemptorist produces «una cartella di Maria immacolata» for the woman to hand to her husband.³⁷⁹ Of course, when she comes home with bothersome talk of confessor, confession, and card, he refuses to listen. On her handing him the little picture, however, «ecco!», a truly metastasian metanoia occurs. «E bene», he says, «quando mi vuoi portare a confessare, che son pronto?» The Padre has been trained by Alfonso to ask the rhetorical question.³⁸⁰ «E come ti sei mosso questa mattina a venire a confessarti?» The countryman has an answer ready which we all may appreciate. Even the most sophisticated of us. He gives a perfect *opera seria* balance to «notte» and «giorno», «momento» and «mille anni», in his response: «questa notte ogni momento mi pareva mille anni che si facesse giorno». The husband of the poor woman is using, with gracious catholicity, the formal sentence-structure of the master librettist. There is in this

³⁷⁷*Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, discorso I. esempio, Op. Asc, VII, p. 41. Is this an autobiographical reminiscence? Or, perhaps a little more likely, was this missionary Bl. Gennaro Maria who, in his devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin gave away a great quantity of pictures of her, cf. S. ALFONSO, *Compendio della Vita de Serv. di Dio B. Gennaro M. Sarnelli*, 1996, p. 27. But then, every missionary had like experiences. *Glorie di Maria*, Pte II, discorso I, Op. Asc., VII, p. 40 with note 112 on page 41.

For Alfonso's wide-spreading use of such little pictures, vid. letters of 7 June and 15 July, 1734, asking Francesco de Viva to send him further copies of the little picture of Mary, and the lettera 1766(?) to a scrupulous person, 1; LETTERE I, 37, 38 and 622.

³⁷⁸*Istruzione al Popolo*, Pte I, cap. I. vi.

³⁷⁹Among the 285 *Santi e Sacre Immagini* illustrating the *Culto Mariano* in the 1770, 1772, 1778, 1784, 1791, 1797 and 1799 Remondini catalogues, there were 29 different representations of «Immacolata Concezione» and «Madonna immacolata» compared with 9 of «Assunzione della Madonna», 3 of «Madonna della misericordia», and 2 of «Madonna della salute».

³⁸⁰vid. the notes on Erotesis and Antiphora, *Selva di materie predicabili*, Pte III, cap. VI, *Delle figure di sentenze*, III, i and ii.

a nice figure of the inclusive Church. So, the man comes to confession, justice and mercy.³⁸¹ Receiving *perdono*, he may now appreciate *il senso comune*.

The mysterious companionship of the card-printers, surely the Remondini workmen, the Redemptorist, who, if not Alfonso himself, is surely Bl. Gennaro Maria, the country wife, and the Lady, is a musical companionship. That obdurate husband had been «*il sordo secondo il solito*», maintaining on his small-holding «*una morale di solitari*» much like those followers of Renato delle Carte, «*sfaccendati chiusi ne' loro orticelli*», who so scandalized Vico. But *il sordo*, like all *fedelissimo Popolo di questo fedelissimo Regno*, belongs with the grand *coro* of singing saints. He is to take his place in the *finale* line with the girl who asks Tommaso «*avresti a caro di sentire il mio canto?*», with the gallant who, for love of the Lady, «*si metteva alle volte con istrumento di suono a cantar d' amore avanti una sua imagine*»,³⁸² with those who came, like Alfonso, hurrying from the San Bartolomeo so that they might try an aria at the keyboard in the parlour, with those who next morning were whistling a tune from the latest Fiorentini success, with Signora Crostarosa's kitchen maids and her husband's boot-boy humming «*Il sole mio*», with the old man on the village bench recalling another such little lyric from his own courting days. And we with him and all those others, may, as darkness gathers, join in singing the *Salve Regina*, and all of us, together, hear a responsive chorus «*come risuona di canti e d'armonia tutto il Paradiso*».³⁸³

³⁸¹Alfonso tells another story of a missionary, an irascible man from Salerno, and such a *cartella* immediately after this which is, in his telling, as *metastasian* in its twists of plot and alterations of character.

vid. also the story of *figurina di Maria Santissima*, TANNOIA III. cap. xiiv, p 230 and another of Suor Maria Teresa's throat and the *cartella* Celestino M. BERRUTI, *Lo Spirito di S. Alfonso*, Naples 1857, and LETTERE II, 633.

³⁸²*Glorie di Maria*, Pte I, cap. VIII, 3, *esempio*, and cap. I, 3, *Opere ascetiche*, VI, pp. 288 and 56.

³⁸³*Vera Sposa*, cap. XVII, 10, *Opere ascetiche* XV, p. 184.