Recent Books


Cambridge

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ITALY

[The reviewer apologizes for the lengthy delay with which these notices of books published in 2012 appear. Forthcoming issues will cover subsequent years.]


The dukedom of Parma was held by the Farnese family from 1545 to 1731, when rule passed to a branch of the Bourbons, and existed, much as today, as a quiet, wealthy backwater, with bookshops and a minor publishing activity. The present author has conducted extensive research on book history and libraries in the city in this period, and has previously published Il posto di Caifa. L’inquisizione a Parma negli anni dei Farnese in 2008 and Eredità di carta. Biblioteche private e circolazione libraria nella Parma farnesiana in 2010; see The Library, VII, 13 (2012), 490. The present work, in best Tolkein fashion, completes the trilogy, but is also mostly about wrapping up material not included in the first two books. Two-thirds of the volume therefore are taken up with the transcription of lists of titles, scrupulously identified, in post mortem bookseller inventories; although these are undoubtedly useful, the layout, in which a huge amount of text is cramped into every page, is hard on the eye.


Lelio Basso (1903–78) was a lawyer and left-wing politician who established a foundation in the centre of Rome which bears his name and that of his wife, Lisli. The important, specialist library focuses on the history of political thought and is European rather than Italian in content. The present catalogue, thematically ordered, surveys the holdings relating to the history of democracy, though how useful this
might be for a scholar is something of a moot point. It could also be wished that a more explicit attention had been given to bibliographical matters: for instance, the second entry, Le reveille-matin des François by Eusèbe Philadelph (or Nicolas Barnaud), published in ‘Edimbourg’ in 1574 (and thus documented in ESTC, which receives no mention), is extant in three look-alike editions, produced either in Geneva or in Strasbourg, and it is not clear which of the three is being described here.


Pastoral theatre became a vogue in Italy in the second half of the sixteenth century, with the publishing market dominated by bestsellers such as the Aminta by Torquato Tasso, written in 1573, and the Pastor fido by Giovan Battista Guarini, written a decade later and published in 1590. Miniature editions were published with elaborate woodcut or copperplate illustrations, sometimes in alternation within the same edition. The first volume describes the publishing history of the genre, the second is entirely made over to the illustrations. Given the scale of the misreading of Italian pastoral in the English Renaissance in writers such as Spenser and Milton, the documentation deserves scrutiny from scholars working in other fields.


This book, published in order to accompany an exhibition that travelled between Milan, Domodossola, and Fribourg, illustrates one of the stranger episodes in modern textual criticism, when Gianfranco Contini (1912–90) entrusted his edition of Petrarch to the handpress, at Alpignano just outside Turin, of Alberto Tallone (1898–1968). The result was a typographical masterpiece, which gave the work a new name, or restored the title of the autograph, Rerum vulgarium fragmenta, and effectively established the modern text of Italy’s most important Medieval lyric poet.


Torrita di Siena is home to the Società Bibliografica Toscana and its energetic president, Paolo Tiezzi Mazzoni della Stella Maestri. So, quite appropriately, they have catalogued the hand-press books in the local parish library. The collection is mostly Missals, Graduals, Breviaries, and other texts for worship, all in reality extremely rare. Just to give the example of the two sixteenth-century books herein, both Graduals printed by the Venetian Giunta firm in 1580 and 1596, according to the Editi6 census, the first is extant in four copies, including this one, and the second is not known at all. So all praise to this and similar initiatives that concentrate on small, out-of-the-way Italian libraries.


As its name implies, Finale is on the end of Liguria, the South-Eastern tip, or the point furthest from Genoa. During the Renaissance it was the feudal of the Del Carretto family, a tiny state subject to the whims of its powerful neighbours. It was inherited in 1535, while still a child, by the marquis Alfonso II Del Carretto (1525–