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KOEN STAPELBROEK

MODELS TO IMITATE, MODELS TO AVOID

THE OSCILLATION OF EUROPEAN

POLITICAL ECONOMIC REFORM VISIONS

IN THE OLD ITALIAN STATES

Review article*

Just as the full title of this journal suggests that a constructive and enriching experience lies in the contact between the Italian and other cultures, so the theme of the volume under review suggests (and the introduction more or less stipulates)¹ that the political economy of the old Italian states may be better understood by recognising the influence of foreign 'models'. The volume consists of four parts with in total eighteen essays on the local contexts of, respectively, Tuscany, Naples, Piedmont and Milan. These four parts are preceded by a thirty-three page introduction that explains the rationale of the project and provides a general background, built up from lots of detail, on the relation between Italian political economy and Anglo-French debates.

The influence of foreign models on Italian eighteenth-century political economy was two-sided in what at first glance seems (deceptively so) a rather obvious way: a successful – rich and powerful – state like Britain easily constituted a worthy model for imitation. Likewise, Portugal, Spain and recently the United Provinces had lost their grip on global trade and had witnessed wholesale moral, socio-economic, administrative and cultural decay. Thus they formed models to avoid.²

In a sense these latter states were much like Italy itself, which had not once but twice in the history of humankind been the world's dominant nation and had both times fallen from grace.³ Not only in Italian sources, but in a great many of European eighteenth-century moral philosophical and political works the fall of Rome and the disintegration of the wealth that befell Renaissance Italy in the wake of the crusades were integrated into rival analytical schemes about the rise and fall of nations in history and the principles that governed general historical trends.⁴

* *Modelli d'oltre confine. Prospettive economiche e sociali negli antichi Stati italiani*. Edited by Antonella Alimento. Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2009. Biblioteca del XVIII secolo – Serie della Società Italiana di Studi sul Secolo XVIII. ISBN 8863720916, 48 euro.

It was with an implicit reference to these philosophical historical schemes that the words of Francesco Algarotti were quoted in a work published in 1783 in Venice, in which the decline of Italian industry and its underdevelopment were discussed:

Gl'Italiani hanno conquistato il mondo con le armi, lo hanno illuminato con le scienze, ripulito con le buone arti, e lo hanno governato con l'ingegno. Non fanno al presente, egli è vero, una gran figura. Ma egli è ben naturale che si riposi ancora colui che ha faticato di molto, e che dorma alcun poco fra giorno, chi si è levato prima degli altri di gran mattino.⁵

Surely, philosophical history writing flourished in the age we are still used to calling the Enlightenment, and Algarotti's image combined a certain scepticism about the concept of the progress of humankind underlying most of these philosophical schemes with a bitter self-deprecating sarcasm about the predicament of the old Italian states. In tune with Algarotti's scepticism, the focus of this volume also deliberately has been restricted. We do not encounter figures like Gibbon and Vico or other towering giants of the age in their capacity of theoretically minded historians, but run into lesser known administrators and policy advisors. When figures like Pietro Verri enter the scene we get to know them in a different way from how they are famous, not primarily as conveyors of great ideas, but as officials working their way through policy proposals, building up international networks of officials and diplomats and using these networks to inform themselves about administrative financial techniques innovations.⁶

In following this approach, the intellectual spirit of Mario Mirri – who himself took a remarkably active role in the proceedings of the conference⁷ – looms large in the conceptualisation of the project.⁸ As Mirri once explained his historical vision in illuminating contradistinction to the more famous and influential work of Franco Venturi, the latter's enterprise to a large extent had been inspired by a desire to come to a dismantling ['smantellimento'] of the existing nineteenth-century nationalistic historiography. Instead, Venturi deemed it far more important to develop an authentic understanding ['autentica comprensione'] of the political thought of the age of Enlightenment ['secolo dei lumi'] as the intellectual foundation of the Italian nation-state.⁹ Mirri may have shared some or perhaps most of Venturi's particular judgements, but not the programmatic character of his works. For Mirri, who regretted the fact that Venturi's historical outlook had become dominant and created a school of lesser-able followers, the added value of historical research lay not in recovering the eighteenth century to place its achievements under the heading of 'light' and 'reform'.¹⁰ Rather it came from remaining firmly fixed on the past without either reverting to highly politicised issues, and/or downscaling the focus on the relation between debates and socio-economic realities in the past to a set of principles governing a teleological scheme.¹¹

Whereas reform in Venturi's *Settecento riformatore* and in his political history of ideas took centre stage as a notion often one step away or floating above the nitty-gritty reality of everyday politics and sometimes appeared as an elusive ideal, the eighteenth-century figures discussed in this volume all

seem intent on taking matters into their own hands precisely at the level of shaping practical laws and institutions, calculating import and export figures and equating fiscal reform with patriotic self-realisation. An extreme testimony to this attitude was given by the Neapolitan Antonio Genovesi, who is better known for being 'Enlightened' than for his obsession with practical politics. As Genovesi wrote:

Chi non è savio, paziente e forte,
Lamentasi di se, non della sorte.¹²

Success, in modern advertising parlance, thus was a matter of choice (a form of self-determination, not fate), Genovesi believed – or at least that was what he told his fellow Neapolitans and Italians.

Emulation

That choice entailed breaking out of the passive state of accepting one's role in the interstate system as a given or as somehow externally determined, by adopting new political strategies that in the long term would prove to be solid foundations for economic development within a highly competitive interstate system. The real challenge was how to decide which political strategies were suitable. What successful means to power and wealth that other states (first the United Provinces, then Britain, and now also France and other states, like Sweden) had employed could be imitated? The actual problem, however, was not so much one of imitation, but one of emulation (a term frequently used by eighteenth-century political writers throughout Europe)¹³: the difference being that emulation rather than copying meant responding to the commercial policies developed by other states. In the case of the old Italian states this meant in the first place that for military and pure power political reasons it was impossible to imitate the policies whereby Britain had become a maritime empire. Also, the old Italian states had their own history, and geographical, demographical, social and legislative characteristic that differed from, for instance Britain. A writer like Montesquieu for instance, famously, believed that national banks could not exist, or at least function in the same way, in territorial monarchies as they did in trade driven republican systems of government. Likewise a major question addressed by a great number of political thinkers was to what extent the grain trade could be liberalised in territorial monarchies without effectively creating a Revolution.

But most importantly, the concept of emulation took into account the limits to national economic state-building that resulted from the struggle between rival principles of foreign trade, neutral trade in wartime and protectionist laws that had a massive impact on the exchange of goods between 'naturally' complimentary countries. Simultaneous to and underneath the battles waged between alliances in the Balance of Power in the first half of the eighteenth century¹⁴, Britain and France, in their interaction with other states and in their commercial and defensive treaty alliances, pushed for different ways of reconciling peace and trade, that is, they sought to neutralise the problematic 'Jealousy of Trade' that inevitably spiralled off into perennial warfare.¹⁵ Roughly put, was the future world order going to consist of relatively closed economies that favoured national markets and nascent

industries, or was the fate of small states going to depend on their ability to supply goods to a much more open world market? This question, still at the level of general debate among Europe, connected to competing outlooks on the long term (dis)advantages of advanced economies with high price levels and high labour costs and the consequences of different fiscal policies of a state's competitiveness. Would small states manage to prosper or were they more likely to be subjected to systematic exploitation by more developed economies under the conditions of international free trade?¹⁶ To conclude, from a small state's point of view emulation was not simply about choices to be made about which policies were most conducive to tapping into available domestic natural and human resources, but equally involved a political dimension of investing the national future into an unfolding state order. To make this more concrete, the policy choice to abstain from exploiting its neutral status in war (by carrying the goods of belligerents) consistently adopted by the Republic of Venice was given in by a British outlook on the future of international trade and political relations. On the one hand Venice in this matter supported the British case in the struggle for global hegemony with France. On the other hand, the effects of the choice (as one specific policy that fit within a complete commercial policy framework) were generally understood to matter enormously, up to the point of determining the Venetian capacity to remain politically sovereign.

In the Italian case, the decision between investing in a British or French oriented system for the future of international relations was complicated furthermore by the fact that in the aftermath of the great dynastic struggles of earlier European history, the old Italian states in some way remained partially dependent upon the foreign powers of Spain (Naples before 1707 and after 1734, arguably Genua) and Austria (Tuscany, Lombardy, Piedmont, Naples – between 1707 and 1734 – and arguably Venice) and/or too feeble to develop a foreign policy line. It cannot have been a matter of coincidence that precisely the Livornese edition of the Roman banker Girolamo Belloni's *Del commercio* of 1751 generated heated debate in the *Journal Économique* that was published in Brussels, i.e. in the Austrian Netherlands, during a period in which a great debate took place in Tuscany about the *porto franco* of Livorno and the economic future of the Grand Duchy within the Habsburg Empire. The nature of that debate was immediately understood by the reviewer, the famous Marquis d'Argenson, who perceived the Livornese choice to buy into British views as a cynical move. D'Argenson developed an argument for free trade between nations and in the process coined the phrase 'laissez-faire'. Against d'Argenson rose the voice of the editor of the journal who retorted that d'Argenson himself could not be serious in even contemplating the possibility that the divided nations of Europe might ever be united in trade.¹⁷

Oscillation

With this in mind it seems eminently justifiable that the long and amply annotated introductory essay to the volume under review reconstructs how around 1750 debates that were held everywhere in Europe about the management of state debts, fiscal policy profiles, trade companies and free ports filtered through to the old Italian states.¹⁸ Emulation, more even than imita-

tion, required education and it was for this reason that on the initiative of leading figures like Genovesi Italian translations of French and – hitherto available only through French translations – English political economic treatises were published.

Alimento identifies the year 1750 as a turning point.¹⁹ Venturi had done the same in 1969 when he focused on the debate on money and financial politics that after the Austrian Succession War and the Peace of Aix-La-Chapelle oscillated between the old Italian states.²⁰ What Alimento's perspective adds, by focusing on translations, is a full recognition of the Italian debates on political economy as a reflection of the spectrum of the wider European debate. The connections between Italy and Europe could be rather direct. British and French works were extensively discussed in reviews published by Italian journals, such as Giovanni Lami's *Novelle letterarie*. And when Jean-Bernard Le Blanc dedicated the French translation of Hume's *Essays* in 1754 to Giovanni Lami²¹, this signalled the fact that it was no longer necessary to rely upon French mediation in the reception of British works. After the publications of Italian translations of Locke along with Melon and Dutot commercial empire and competitive emulation could be discussed directly by a widened Italian audience.²²

The second part of the introduction loosely and elegantly pieces together various contexts of reception, translation and republication within Italy from one state to another and shows them to form a unity, intellectually and in terms of political economic ideas, even if these context were divided by differently shaped realities and restrictions on independent sovereignty.²³ Venice, interestingly, comes out as a key publishing centre in the dispersion of political reform ideas and a 'bridge' between *oltremontagne* and Italy.²⁴ Another interesting observation, one that perhaps may open up new research questions in the future, concerns the 'selective use' that was made of foreign models when they were picked up by Italian authors.²⁵

This second part of the introduction is preceded by a part that sets up a contradistinction between the new (late seventeenth-century) British science of commerce ('nuova scienza del commercio') and the French school of physiocracy led by François Quesnay and the Marquis de Mirabeau (the elder).²⁶ Alimento concentrates on how prominent members of the so-called school of Gournay, especially Forbonnais (Vincent de Gournay was *intendant du commerce* from 1751 to 1758 and the driving force behind numerous French publishing and political campaigns)²⁷, received British political economy and transformed it into economic and institutional reform policies.

Unfortunately, the link between the first part of the introduction (two opposed perspectives on the means to commercial hegemony) and the second part (the diffusion of these perspectives in Italy) remains underdeveloped. Alimento argues – in the words of the publisher's advertising text of the book – that Italy's old states were 'consapevoli di non poter incidere direttamente sugli equilibri politici ed economici europei' and hence sought to 'emulare i due modelli di sviluppo economico e di organizzazione sociale che si stavano imponendo nel corso del Settecento: quello proposto dalla "nuova scienza del commercio" e quello fisiocratico'.²⁸ What is missing is something along the lines of the explanation given above of the idea of emulation as buying into a

distinct scenario for the future of global trade. In addition it would perhaps have made sense to get into detail a bit more about the constitutive moral philosophical principles of the rival political economic models.²⁹

In relation to that last aspect there is an interesting footnote where, with reference to a recent book by Michael Sonenscher, a “logic of collective reciprocity” (quella della fisiocrazia) is contradistinguished with a logic “of collective self-preservation” (quella della scuola di Gournay e in particolare di Forbonnais).³⁰ The main text in Alimento’s introduction clearly and succinctly discusses how the rival schools of physiocracy and of Gournay envisaged the reconciliation of national interest and international peace. Still, the schematic presentation skims over the actual national and international policy issues and their theoretical foundations rather too quickly and does not take into account the fact that physiocracy and the perspective of Gournay are only two options within a much richer and varied debate about political economy within Europe. One unintentional consequence of not complicating the schematic opposition that Alimento sets up is that it too easily transforms into a morally laden dichotomy between agriculture and trade that, unless it is qualified as a schematic simplification, distracts from the authentic character of these ‘models’ and becomes a misleading shorthand for the actual debates that were held. For instance, Alimento tells us that the Neapolitan statesman Bernardo Tanucci, following in the footsteps of France, was highly sceptical about encouraging trade and manufacturing and thereby becoming a commercial society, but that does not warrant the conclusion that he was a physiocrat.³¹

Another problem of posing the British and French models as given is that this overlooks the fact that there was enormous discussion throughout Europe, Italy included, about the nature of British political economy. It would be much too simple to ascribe the rise of a British commercial empire to protective trade policies and import substitutions to protect nascent manufacturing industries. As writers like Pinto in the United Provinces emphasised, the real key to British prosperity was agriculture. Likewise, in the United Provinces there were massive discussions about what exactly the British outlook on neutral trade in wartime was and what the consequences of this outlook were for the future viability of the Dutch trade republic. Moreover, the same Pinto again also argued that the rationales of British political economy had themselves evolved considerably since the late seventeenth century and by the mid eighteenth century could be observed to give way more and more to free trade.³² From this point of view, it may be asked whether Genovesi’s *Storia del commercio della Gran Bretagna scritta da John Cary* was really primarily and directly a tool for finding and copying the magic formulas and recipes for wealth as deployed by Britain, or, more indirectly, a way to come to terms with how over the past eighty years interstate trade had developed and in what direction the British system of foreign trade was developing, in order for Naples to best respond to the present situation.³³

Metà strada

At this level of confronting political economic reform debates in the old Italian states and British and French texts the conceptualisation of the project

appears to struggle with itself a bit. Taking a closer look at ambiguities and disagreements amongst Italian writers about the mechanisms whereby Britain became great and France became a true rival, and about future scenarios, makes most Italian eighteenth-century texts come alive. Precisely at this point, moving away from schematic forms and understanding the complications of these texts becomes instructive not in the least for seeing the connection between the Italian eighteenth-century and later periods. However, here the project remains a bit stuck at *metà strada*; not in the first place because the comparative framework provided by the editor would not allow for such development, but rather because the editorial vision reaches further than its fulfilment by the essays as a whole.

Most essays do not actively or directly engage with the main questions underlying the project and there is a lot of variation in quality between the different contributions. Among the highlights are Giovanna Tonelli’s extensively researched treatment of Lombard fiscal politics to influence luxury consumption³⁴ and Giorgio Monestaro’s discussion of important documents by Piedmontese key figures such as the Marquis d’Ormea, Giacinto Sigismondo Gerdil and, especially, Carlo Baldassare Perrone conte di San Martino, which puts his previous work on Ignazio Donaudi delle Mallere in a wider context.³⁵ Possibly rather striking similarities in subject and tone – striking because Austrian Lombardy might be expected to have to face up to different challenges than independent Piedmont – occur between contributions about Piedmont and about Lombardy, where the topic of the commitment of the luxurious nobility to domestic economic development keeps on reappearing. Of special note are also the materials that Raffaele Iovine brings to our attention: by looking at manuscripts found in Florence by natives who left for Naples and kept up a correspondence with Tuscan contacts, Iovine sets up an interesting framework for studying the oscillation of economic ideas between Tuscany and Naples.³⁶ Elvira Chiosi in her introduction underlines nicely the importance of Matarazzo’s discussion of Francesco Longano³⁷, and Andrea Addobbati offers a series of interesting reference points for the reform debate in Tuscany.³⁸

But despite the merits of the contributions, the writers also struggle to get beyond the state of the art and break out of the traditional ideological reference points, teleological schemes, and moral connotations of Italian historiography. Discussions of luxury, inequality and self-interest, occasionally, rather than lead into analytical argument break off into distracted considerations. For instance, Monestaro’s sudden assertion that ‘paradossalmente’, a text by the ‘antilluminista’ Gerdil was *also* in opposition to the anti-Enlightened government imposes an artificial historiographical category onto an otherwise highly interesting argument to the effect of interrupting the actual analysis.³⁹ Postponing categories such as ‘Enlightenment’ was, one imagines, considered by Mirri to provide space for sustained focus on debates and their contexts.

In the end then, there remains the question to which extent these essays contribute to the development of new insights onto the interrelation between political thought and reform debates in the old Italian states and Europe. There are two answers. In one sense, maybe it is best to hail this volume mainly for

providing an approach to the study of eighteenth-century Italian political debates that carries with it great prospective rewards. In another sense, while the contributions attest to the difficulty of opening up Italian eighteenth-century historiography, perhaps that actually makes the book a strangely more illuminating contribution to what merits to be an ongoing enterprise.

Notes

1 A. Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, pp. XXIV and IX.

2 The volume is based on a conference held in Pisa from 11 to 13 October 2007 under the title *Modelli da imitare, Modelli da evitare. Discussioni settecentesche su morale e commercio, ricchezza e povertà negli antichi stati italiani*. The programme and abstracts can still be found on: www.storia.unipi.it/convegni/modelli/index.htm. In addition to papers included in the conference programme, some other chapters were included that notably lift the quality and appeal of the volume. For various reasons some presented papers were not revised for publication. See Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, pp. XXXVI-XXXVII.

3 S. A. Reinert, 'Blaming the Medici: Footnotes, falsification, and the fate of the 'English Model' in eighteenth-century Italy', *History of European Ideas*, special issue 'Commerce and Morality in Eighteenth-Century Italy' 32 (2006), pp. 430-455.

4 For a set of different kinds of philosophical history see J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 2: *Narratives of Civil Government*, Cambridge 1999.

5 Quoted from F. Algarotti by A. Piazza, *Discorso all'orecchio di monsieur Louis [Angelo Goudar]*, London [Venice], 1766, p. 52. See also F. Algarotti, *Saggio sopra il commercio*, Livorno, 1764, for his take on the history of the commerce of humankind, and its culmination in Algarotti's appraisal of the Navigation Acts as a supreme measure of commercial patriotism.

6 Not by coincidence the editor of the volume reviewed here recently published A. Alimento, *Finanze e amministrazione. Un'inchiesta francese sui catasti dell'Italia del Settecento (1763-1764)*, Florence 2008, 2 vols.. See also G. Klingenstein, E. Faber, A. Trampus, *Europäische Aufklärung zwischen Wien und Triest: Die Tagebücher des Gouverneurs Karl Graf von Zinzendorf 1776-1782*, Vienna 2009, 4 vols. for a like-minded project.

7 See note 2 above.

8 Among other works, see M. Mirri, 'Per una ricerca sui rapporti fra "economisti" e riformatori toscani: l'abate Niccoli a Parigi', *Annali dell'Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli* 2 (1959), pp. 55-120.

9 M. Mirri, 'Dalla storia dei "lumi" e delle "riforme" alla storia degli "antichi stati italiani"', in M. Verga and A. Fratoianni, eds., *Pompeo Neri. Atti del colloquio di studi*, Castelfiorentino, 1992, pp. 401-540 (pp. 486-7), with reference to F. Venturi, 'La circolazione delle idee', *Rassegna storica del risorgimento* 34 (1954), pp. 203-65.

10 There is a more generous way of understanding Venturi's project, which Mirri may for his own purposes may have abstracted from, see K. Stapelbroek, '"The problem of the republics": Venturi's republicanism reconsidered', *History of European Ideas* 35 (2009), pp. 281-288.

11 Mirri, 'Dalla storia dei "lumi" e delle "riforme"', pp. 480-481.

12 A. Genovesi, *Storia del commercio della Gran Bretagna scritta da John Cary [...] Tradotta in nostra volgar lingua da Pietro Genovesi [...] con un ragionamento [...] di Antonio Genovesi*, 3 vols., Venice, 1764 [2nd edition], vol. 1: lxxx. [italics in original].

13 S. A. Reinert, 'Emulazione e traduzione: la genealogia occulta della Storia del Commercio', in: *Genovesi Economista* eds. B. Jossa, R. Patalano, E. Zagari, Naples 2007, pp. 155-192.

14 The first sentences of the introduction make a case for seeing the end of the War of the Spanish Succession and the treaty arrangements of 1713 as the starting point of analysis. Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, p. IX.

15 On the concept and the contexts of this key eighteenth-century discussion see I. Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge Ma. 2005, especially pp. 1-165.

16 For what was called the 'rich-country poor-country' debate see Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, pp. 267-322.

17 D'Argenson, René Louis de Voyer de Paulmy, marquis (April 1751), *Lettre à l'Auteur du Journal Oeconomique au sujet de la Dissertation sur le Commerce de M. le Marquis Belloni, & en faveur de la liberté du commerce*, pp. 107-117 and *Journal Oeconomique* (June 1751), *Réponse de l'Auteur du Journal Oeconomique à la Lettre qui lui à été adressée au mois de l'Avril, au sujet de la Dissertation*

sur le Commerce de M. le Marquis Belloni: & Parallèle de l'Etat Monarchique & de l'Etat Républicain quant à la liberté du commerce, pp. 130-149. Fundamental for understanding the issues are A. Alimento, 'Tra Bristol ed Amsterdam: discussioni livornesi su commercio, marina ed impero negli anni cinquanta del Settecento', in: *Dall'origine dei Lumi alla Rivoluzione. Scritti in onore di Luciano Guerri e Giuseppe Ricuperati*, eds. D. Balani, D. Carpanetto, M. Roggero, Rome 2008, pp. 25-45 and A. Alimento, 'Tra "gelosie" personali e "gelosie" tra gli stati: i progetti del governatore Carlo Ginori e la circolazione della cultura economica e politica a Livorno (1747-1757)', *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 16 (2009), pp. 63-95.

18 Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, IX-XLI.

19 Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, XXVI.

20 F. Venturi, 'Il dibattito sulle monete', *Settecento riformatore*, Da Muratori a Beccaria, Turin 1969, pp. 443-522.

21 About the political significance of this translation in French economic reform debates see I. Hont, 'The "Rich Country-Poor Country" Debate Revisited. The Irish Origins and French Reception of the Hume Paradox', *David Hume's Political Economy*, eds. C. Wennerlind and M. Schabas, London 2008, pp. 243-323.

22 G. Costantini, *Delle monete, controversia agitata tra due celebri scrittori altremontani* Venice, 1754.

23 See particularly Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, p. XXXVIII and note the allusion to Venturi, 'La circolazione delle idee'.

24 Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, p. XL.

25 Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, pp. XXXV and XL.

26 Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, pp. IX-XXIII.

27 On Gournay, see T. Tsuda, *Mémoires et lettres de Vincent de Gournay*, Tokyo 1993.

28 www.storiaeletteratura.it/catalog/title/index.php?cmd=ext&title_id=1289&subclass.

29 An attempt to do so is K. Stapelbroek, 'Preserving the Neapolitan state: Antonio Genovesi and Ferdinando Galiani on commercial society and plan-

ning economic growth', *History of European Ideas*, special issue 'Commerce and Morality in Eighteenth-Century Italy' 32 (2006), pp. 406-429 and K. Stapelbroek, *Love, Self-Deceit and Money: Commerce and Morality in the Early Neapolitan Enlightenment*, Toronto 2008.

30 Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, p. XXIII. With reference to M. Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge. Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution*, Princeton 2007, pp. 179-253.

31 Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, p. XXV.

32 I. de Pinto, *An essay on circulation and credit: in four parts; and a letter on the jealousy of commerce*, London 1774.

33 Cf. Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, p. XXXV.

34 Giovanna Tonelli, '"Considerazioni sul lusso" nella riforma daziaria dello Stato di Milano (seconda metà del XVIII secolo)', Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, pp. 271-293.

35 G. Monestaro, 'L'armonia impossibile. Il dibattito sul lusso in Piemonte fra pubblica felicità e politica degli interessi', Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, pp. 221-238. G. Monestaro, *Negozianti e imprenditori nel Piemonte d'Antico Regime. La cultura economica di Ignazio Donaudi delle Mallere (1744-1795)*, Florence 2006.

36 R. Iovine, 'Celestino Galiani, Bartolomeo Intieri, Alessandro Rinuccini: Difficoltà di sviluppo dell'ideologia economica nelle Sicilie (1700-1750)', Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, pp. 67-87.

37 E. Chiosi, 'L'identità socio-economica napoletana: un "esprit de commerce" impossibile senza un diffuso spirito pubblico', and P. Matarazzo, '"Senza ineguaglianza e senza lusso". Mercato e virtù nella scuola genovesiana: il caso Longano', Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, pp. 107-112 and pp. 147-161.

38 A. Addobbati, 'Il dibattito sul lusso nella Toscana leopoldina', Alimento, *Modelli d'oltre confine*, pp. 45-63.

39 Monestaro, 'L'armonia impossibile', p. 232.

KOEN STAPEL BROEK

MODELLI DA IMITARE, MODELLI DA EVITARE

L'OSCILLAZIONE DELLE VISIONI EUROPEE DI RIFORMA POLITICA ECONOMICA NEGLI ANTICHI STATI ITALIANI

Il volume qui recensito ipotizza che un modo per far conoscere meglio i dibattiti politici sulle riforme economiche negli antichi italiani nel Settecento è quello di studiare i testi del tempo (e i loro contesti) riconoscendovi le influenze straniere. Il metodo proposto appare in effetti una combinazione dei

modelli interpretativi di Mario Mirri e di Franco Venturi sul pensiero politico settecentesco. Dal primo provengono l'attenzione per le pratiche politiche e l'astensione da rigidi schemi e categorie interpretative, mentre dal secondo viene assunto un esempio ormai famoso per lo studio della circolazione di testi e idee e delle loro trasformazioni in luoghi e circostanze differenti. Nell'introduzione del volume vengono ricostruiti i due opposti modelli economici che vennero introdotti dalla Francia e dell'Inghilterra, soprattutto dopo 1750, grazie alle traduzioni e alle recensioni nei giornali italiani. Ne emerge un ampio quadro delle oscillazioni negli antichi stati italiani rispetto alle visioni europee di riforma politico-economica. La questione sulla quale il progetto rimane un po' incerto è quella della concettualizzazione dell'idea di emulazione, che in realtà poteva essere indagato, forse nell'introduzione ma soprattutto dagli autori dei saggi, in maniera più approfondita in quanto problema di riforma 'nazionale' e allo stesso momento tipico del sistema interstatale, politico e commerciale.

GIAN PAOLO GIUDICETTI

GLI ANIMALI INTERPRETATI DALLA LETTERATURA

SIMBOLO, ANTROPOMORFISMO E INQUIETUDINE

Recensione*

On suppose toujours trop de pensée aux bêtes, et même aux hommes.

(Alain, *Propos*, Gallimard, Paris, 1956, vol. I, p. 406).

Les abeilles communiquent par e-miel.

(*'7 jours au Groland'*, Be Tv, 17.8.2005).

Animali della letteratura italiana, curato da Gian Maria Anselmi e Gino Ruozzi, riunisce ventisei articoli dedicati ad animali diversi, in alcuni casi a più animali per saggio (così per esempio *Pesci, crostacei, ostriche e sirene* di B. Capaci o *Lepri e tartarughe* di M. R. Panté). La presentazione degli animali in ordine alfabetico e l'impostazione ad ampio raggio – per numero di autori trattati e per l'asse temporale perlustrato – dei singoli contributi conferisce al volume una natura più enciclopedica che saggistica.

È un libro di piacevole lettura (salvo per i caratteri troppo piccoli – forse l'editore è stato traviato dal discorso sulla vista straordinaria dell'aquila nell'articolo di E. Pasquini (p. 28), e ha sopravvalutato l'acuità visiva dei lettori non alati), che introduce alle funzioni molteplici della presenza animale nella letteratura italiana, con sconfinamenti benefici in altre contrade.

Il primo ruolo dell'animale in letteratura è di rispecchiare caratteristiche reali o ideali dell'uomo, che nelle bestie si osserva. C'è asimmetria tra uomo e animale, poiché solo il primo conosce razionalmente il secondo: l'animale, immune dai tormenti e dalle gioie dell'autocoscienza, nello specchio non riconosce neppure se stesso. Così il gatto Beppo di Borges: *'El gato blanco y célibe se mira / en la lúcida luna del espejo / y no puede saber que esa blancura / y esos ojos de oro que no ha visto / nunca en la casa, son su propia imagen. / ¿Quién le dirá que el otro que lo observa / es apenas un sueño del espejo?'*.¹

A volte lo strumento del confronto tra uomo e animale è l'allegoria. N. Billi, per esempio, cita l'apologo di Leonardo *Il topo, la donnola, la gatta*, in cui un topo, assediato da una donnola, si rallegra quando la gatta la uccide, ma così esce allo scoperto ed è ucciso dalla gatta, animale che non piange mai sul latte versato: *'La nota più pungente – scrive Billi – [...] è il nobile ardore del topo verso la sua deità, il "sacrificio a Giove d'alquante sue nocchie" come*

* *Animali della letteratura italiana*, a cura di G. M. Anselmi e G. Ruozzi. Roma, Carocci, 2009.