ROUTLEDGE

Roscoe and Italy

The Reception of Italian Renaissance History and Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Edited by
Stella Fletcher

ROSCOE AND ITALY

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The Reception of Italian Renaissance History and Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Edited by
STELLA FLETCHER

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Introduction[1]

Stella Fletcher

A composite picture of the British in eighteenth-century Italy might reasonably depict Consul Joseph Smith in Venice, collecting incunabula and commissioning paintings from Canaletto, Horace Mann in Florence, providing hospitality to wave upon wave of grand tourists and keeping a wary eye on Jacobite exiles, the Pretenders themselves in Rome, Frascati and wherever their presence happened to be tolerated and William Hamilton in Naples, studying volcanoes and collecting antiquities. The ruins of Rome, Pompeii and Sicily particularly appealed to the classically educated elite though, as Rosemary Sweet has demonstrated; in the course of the century, British visitors came to display a preference for Florence over what were regarded as less salubrious cities elsewhere in the peninsula.[2] With the exception of Venice, each of the major *ancien régime* states to which envoys were sent or travellers ventured was governed by princes; in the case of Florence, the grand ducal house of Medici until 1737, followed by that of Habsburg-Lorraine. When the British returned home, freshly discovered antiquities and newly commissioned works of art disappeared into many a country house, some of which were designed by the arch-Palladian Giacomo Leoni or decorated by Italian craftsmen.

The same century offers only rare examples of British authors writing about Italian history: 1729 saw the Aberdonian singer and antiquarian Alexander Gordon publish his *Lives of Pope Alexander VI and his Son Caesar Borgia*, a work heavily dependent on Tomaso Tomasi's *Vita di Cesare Borgia* (1671), together with the histories of Francesco Guicciardini and Niccolò Machiavelli, Platina's lives of the popes, Johannes Burchard's diary and 'materials' by Pietro Bembo. Four decades later, William Robertson's *History of the Reign of Charles V* (1769) encompassed Italian history, but Charles's imperial reign did not begin until 1519. It was not until the sixth volume of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1788) that Edward Gibbon addressed aspects of fifteenth-century Italian history, including the last flickers of republicanism in papal Rome

[1] My thanks to David Bebbington, Dominic Bellenger, D.S. Chambers, Robert Kronenburg, David Laven, Frank O'Gorman and Emanuele Pellegrini, who provided varying combinations of advice and information during the writing of this text.

[2] R. Sweet, 'British Perceptions of Florence in the Long Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, 50, 4 (2007), pp. 837–59.

and the ecumenical council that met in Ferrara and Florence from 1438 and triggered a sustained interest in Greek literature on the part of Italian scholars. Indeed, Gibbon was so struck by the cultural patronage of Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici that he considered writing a 'History of the Republic of Florence Under the Medicis'. The later fifteenth century, the era of Lorenzo, did feature in the historical publishing sensation of 1768, but the subject matter was English: Horace Walpole's *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard III*. The same author had already cornered the market in Italian-inspired fiction with his utterly fantastical *Castle of Otranto* (1764).[3]

If the history of the British in Italy is resumed in the nineteenth century, after the caesura of the Napoleonic Wars and subsequent economic dislocation, it is one in which the railway-borne bourgeoisie came to replace the aristocratic grand tourists of the previous era and increasingly systematic instruction in every aspect of the serious business of travel was provided by writers such as Mariana Starke and Frances Trollope, as well as by Murray's handbooks.[4] Now the attractions of Florence and Venice far outstripped those of other peninsular destinations. The 'English' cemetery in Florence even attested to the city's popularity with Britons who chose to make it their final resting place. At the same time, many more Italians made their home in Britain during the turbulent decades that followed the fall of Napoleon than had done so in previous generations. Italian art ceased to be the private indulgence of wealthy individuals. Its public display in permanent collections and temporary exhibitions provided a means of educating the non-travelling masses. Prominent in that cause were Charles Eastlake, director of the National Gallery from 1855, and his wife Elizabeth.[5] Their endeavours were paralleled by a plethora of publications on the lives and works of Italian artists, as well as by an enthusiasm for the pre-Raphaelite 'primitives' who had excited little or no interest in the previous century.[6] Whether they travelled or not, the reading public was assured that the modern world in general and Britain's burgeoning civic

[3] The classic survey of writings in English on Italian history and culture, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, is J.R. Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance: The Growth of Interest in its History and Art* (London, 1954), now in its fourth edition (Malden, MA, and Oxford, 2005), with an introduction and updated bibliography by Edward Chaney.

[4] The world explored by J. Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford, 1987).

[5] Two recent studies address the phenomenon of bringing art to the public in nineteenth-century London and Manchester respectively: S. Avery-Quash and J. Sheldon, *Art for the Nation: The Eastlakes and the Victorian Art World* (London, 2011); E.A. Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857: Entrepreneurs, Connoisseurs and the Public* (Farnham, 2011).

[6] For the renaissance of the Italian Renaissance in nineteenth-century Britain see H. Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 1992). Specific case studies are explored

culture, in particular, were born in the cities of Italy. The concept of cultural rebirth, revival and resurrection was already familiar before Jules Michelet employed the term 'Renaissance' in relation to the history of France in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and Jacob Burckhardt applied it to Italy between 1300 and 1600. Both the concept and the term duly flourished: Burckhardt's *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860) received its first English translation in 1877, shortly after Walter Pater's collected *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) and John Addington Symonds's seven-volume *Renaissance in Italy* (1875–86). In the realm of historical fiction, this was the era of George Eliot's scrupulously researched *Romola* (1863), set in Florence in the 1490s.

Between private indulgence in the eighteenth century and public improvement in the nineteenth stood the figure of William Roscoe, connoisseur of Italian literature, collector of Italian paintings and prints, and author of the first English-language biographies of Lorenzo de' Medici and Lorenzo's son Giovanni, Pope Leo X.

As can be observed throughout this volume, Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo* became an iconic text in the nineteenth century and created the widely held impression that Lorenzo was somehow *the* pivotal figure of fifteenth-century Italian history. However, appreciation of Roscoe's contribution to the study of Italian history and culture waned significantly in the twentieth century, not least because historians enjoyed increasing ease of access to the archives which had been beyond his reach. In recent years the two Medicean *Lives* have come to the attention of literary scholars. J.B. Bullen argued that gaps in his knowledge allowed Roscoe to fictionalize the life of Lorenzo, turning it into the stirring adventure of a self-made hero who thwarted the designs of his villainous rivals.[7] Coming to Roscoe from knowledge of broad swathes of Italian literature, Amedeo Quondam meticulously examined both biographies to extract evidence for Roscoe's invention of the Renaissance *avant la lettre*. Beyond the texts Quondam's grasp was a little less firm, for he assumed that Roscoe was a liberal Anglican, rather than a dissenter.[8]

Roscoe's intellectual world – itself best exemplified by the dissenter Joseph Priestley – was one in which the arts and sciences did not occupy separate spheres. In spite of the fact that Roscoe's interests ranged across the realms of culture, politics,

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in J.E. Law and L. Østermark-Johansen (eds), *Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2005).

[7] J.B. Bullen, *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 38–58.

[8] A. Quondam, 'William Roscoe e l'invenzione del Rinascimento', in M. Fantoni (ed.), *The Anglo-Americans in Florence: Idea and Construction of the Renaissance/Gli Anglo-Americani a Firenze: Idea e costruzione del Rinascimento* (Rome, 2000), pp. 249–338.

horticulture and beyond, appreciation of his myriad achievements has tended to become compartmentalized: indeed, his enthusiasm for Italian literature and the biographical consequences of the same have been particularly prone to separation from the remainder of his activities. At the same time, even the relation of his life has been subject to a certain narrowing, of the geographical variety. In the half century after his death he was celebrated as a 'northern worthy' and a 'Lancashire worthy', after which civic consciousness prevailed in the centenary biography *William Roscoe of Liverpool* and in recent studies by Donald Macnaughton and Arline Wilson.[9] With Arline Wilson herself as an honourable exception, most of the contributors to the present volume are heirs to Roscoe in the sense that they are historians of Renaissance Italy. As their texts bear witness, they take as their point of departure the fourth chapter of J.R. Hale's *England and the Italian Renaissance* (1954). However, the very fact that they have come to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain by means of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy suggests a certain breadth of vision, an inclusive rather than a compartmentalizing approach to history. In addition, by emphasizing Roscoe as a figure of European and, indeed, transatlantic significance, they effectively reverse the process of geographical narrowing to which he has been subject.

In an autobiographical memoir Roscoe related that he was born on 8 March 1753 at the Old Bowling-Green, a public house kept by his father, also William, on Mount Pleasant, an eminence overlooking the flourishing port of Liverpool.[10] His formal education was with a Mr Martin and a Mr Sykes, but it was to his mother, Elizabeth, that he attributed his love of English literature. His father farmed several acres of land in a corner of England well suited to market gardening and, from the age of 12, Roscoe assisted him, particularly in the cultivation of potatoes. At 14 he chose to be apprenticed to a bookseller, but the lure of the land was too great and he left after a month. In 1769 he was articled to an attorney and solicitor, John Eyes, whose death obliged him to complete his clerkship under Peter Ellames. His legal career was firmly established when he was admitted to the King's Bench in 1774. All the while, he studied the English poets and composed his own verse. His introduction to Italian language and literature was provided by his brilliant but short-lived, friend Francis Holden, and appears to date to the early 1770s. They were joined by William Clarke and Richard Lowndes in what could

[9] H. Coleridge, *Lives of Northern Worthies* (3 vols, London, 1852), vol. 3, pp. 1–116; F. Espinasse, *Lancashire Worthies*, 2 (London, 1877); G. Chandler, *William Roscoe of Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1953); D.A. Macnaughton, *Roscoe of Liverpool: His Life, Writings and Treasures* (Birkenhead, 1996); A. Wilson, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture* (Liverpool, 2008).

[10] The memoir is reproduced in H. Roscoe, *The Life of William Roscoe* (2 vols, London, 1833), vol. 1, chap. 1. See also Wilson, *William Roscoe*, in which chaps 1–2 account for his intellectual formation.

pass for a Renaissance-style academy and it was in this period that Roscoe resolved to write a life of the fifteenth-century poet and statesman Lorenzo de' Medici as his contribution to the sum of human knowledge. Marriage to Jane Griffies in 1781 led to the births of seven sons and three daughters, but he was no less prolific as a writer, whether of prose or verse. In 1787–88 he expressed opposition to the slave trade by means of a long, two-part poem, *The Wrongs of Africa*. If the shade of Lorenzo was to be found anywhere in Roscoe's life in the 1780s, it was in urban development, for his involvement in the laying out of Liverpool's Rodney Street in 1783–84 was the closest he came to emulating Lorenzo's development of the via Laura in Florence three centuries earlier.

However tempting it may be to exaggerate the geographical and cultural distance between Roscoe and his chosen subject, the means of closing that perceived gap can be found in both Italy and Britain. On the Italian side were representatives of enlightened Catholicism, the most notable embodiments of which were Pope Benedict XIV and the prolific historian Ludovico Antonio Muratori, both of whom had sought dialogue between Christianity and contemporary philosophy. In Benedict's patronage of scientists and men of letters there was perhaps an echo of the cultural efflorescence associated with the Rome of Leo X: not all popes were *intransigenti*. Among the secular princes of Italy a clear example of enlightened absolutism was provided in Tuscany from the 1760s onwards by Pietro Leopoldo. One interest that the grand duke effectively inherited from the enlightened pope was the reclamation of marshland for agricultural or commercial development. It was an interest into which Roscoe poured much time and energy from 1793, when he initiated the draining of Trafford and Chat Mosses to the west of Manchester. Of more pressing concern to the grand duke was a campaign to transfer to the secular authorities powers that had hitherto been enjoyed by the Church. In this he found an ally in Scipione de' Ricci, bishop of Pistoia and Prato, a Jansenist who advocated austerity in religion and localism in ecclesiastical governance. This anti-Roman agenda lacked popular appeal and when the grand duke succeeded his brother as emperor in 1790, Ricci was forced from office. The clearest impact of this in Britain was some time coming, but was remarkably close to Roscoe when it did: Ricci's memoirs and biography were translated by Roscoe's fifth son, Thomas, and published in 1829.[11] Roscoe's most direct connection with both enlightened Catholicism and enlightened absolutism was provided by Angelo Fabroni, who enjoyed Benedict's favour early in his career and was Pietro Leopoldo's choice as rector of the University of Pisa. A prolific scholar, Fabroni's preferred medium was biography and his most notable achievement was the *Vitae italorum doctrina excellentium* (18 vols, 1778–99). Of greatest relevance for Roscoe's studies were

[11] L.J.A. de Potter and T. Roscoe (ed.), *Memoirs of Scipio de' Ricci* (2 vols, London, 1829).

his biographies of Lorenzo and Cosimo de' Medici (1784 and 1789, respectively) and Leo X (1797).

If, on the other hand, the apparent cultural gap between Roscoe and his subject matter is closed by starting at the British end, it means delving into the educational opportunities available to English Protestant Nonconformists, against whom the Anglican citadels of Oxford and Cambridge were barred. One option was to study at Scottish universities, as Francis Holden did at Glasgow, though his early death meant that the most prominent Scottish connection in the so-called Roscoe Circle was provided by the physician James Currie, who studied at Edinburgh but graduated from Glasgow, before settling in Liverpool.[12] Closer to home were the dissenting academies, established at Daventry, Hackney, Warrington and elsewhere. One notable product of Daventry and Hackney was the Unitarian minister William Shepherd, who was 15 years Roscoe's junior but proved to be that member of the Circle who most closely shared Roscoe's interest in fifteenth-century Italian literature. Particularly impressive was the pool of Nonconformist talent that gathered at the Warrington Academy between the 1750s and 1780s.[13] Most celebrated was the polymath Joseph Priestley, who taught there between 1761 and 1767, when Warrington was already home to the theologian John Aikin, whose children included the younger John Aikin, a physician, and the poet Anna Laetitia Barbauld. From 1770 until the academy closed in 1783, its rector was Priestley's friend William Enfield, whose most successful publication was *The Speaker* (1774), a collection of sources designed to 'facilitate the improvement of youth in reading and speaking'. From 1779 this circle was joined by the free spirit that was Gilbert Wakefield. These prolific authors had works printed by their neighbour William Eyres, printer to Warrington's 'stillborn university'.[14] Roscoe's entrée to this group was provided by Enfield, who served as minister at Benn's Garden Chapel in Liverpool, where Roscoe worshipped, before his move to Warrington. By this means Roscoe became firm friends with Dr Aikin and Mrs Barbauld; his early poem *Mount Pleasant* (1777) was printed by Willam Eyres. Enfield's ministry at Sankey Street Chapel kept him in Warrington until 1785,

[12] The Scottish dimension is one of those explored in I. Sutton, 'The Extended Roscoe Circle: Art, Medicine and the Cultural Politics of Alienation in Liverpool 1762–1836', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 30, 3 (2007), pp. 439–58. The Roscoe Circle enjoys the status of a reference group in the online ODNB: I. Sutton, 'Roscoe circle (*act*. 1760s–1830s)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/101301, accessed 19 September 2011].

[13] P. O'Brien, *Warrington Academy 1757–86: Its Predecessors and Successors* (Wigan, 1989).

[14] P. O'Brien, *Eyres' Press 1756–1803: An Embryo University Press* (Wigan, 1993), pp. 49–71.

when he became minister at the celebrated Octagon Chapel in Norwich. In the same decade Dr Aikin moved first to Great Yarmouth and then to Norwich. Thus Roscoe's network of correspondents acquired a marked East Anglian dimension, and led to his association with the Norfolk landowner, agriculturalist and sometime grand tourist Thomas Coke of Holkham.

The English provinces were uncongenial territory for those political radicals who initially welcomed the French Revolution. Aikin certainly found it wise to move to London in 1792. There he became part of the circle assembled by the radical publisher and bookseller Joseph Johnson. Johnson commissioned work from William Eyres and was very much linked to the then-disbanded Warrington group. It was via Johnson that Roscoe became a generous patron to the Swiss-born painter Henry Fuseli in the 1790s. Fuseli had worked in Rome throughout the 1770s, but the practice of artists learning their craft in Italy was one with a tradition closer to Roscoe's home town. In 1754, for example, the Liverpool-born George Stubbs travelled to Rome. Three decades earlier, the tenth earl of Derby sent another painter, Hamlet Winstanley of Warrington, to Rome to acquire paintings for Knowsley Hall, the largest country house in the Liverpool area.[15] As mayor of Liverpool and lord lieutenant of Lancashire, the tenth earl also played an active part in local government. That was not an option for those Lancastrian gentlemen who remained loyal to the old religion, among whom were the Townleys of Towneley Hall, near Burnley, and the Blundells of Ince Blundell, north of Liverpool. In Charles Townley and Henry Blundell these families produced two of the eighteenth century's most notable grand tourists and collectors of Italian art and antiquities. Townley toured the peninsula in 1767–68 and then persuaded Blundell to do likewise, which he did in 1777, 1782–83, 1786 and 1790, collecting the antiquities which he subsequently displayed in a purpose-built rotunda at Ince Blundell Hall.[16] Roscoe's relationship with Blundell dated from 1773, when the latter acted as president of a Liverpool-based Society for the Encouragement of the Arts of Painting and Design, of which Roscoe was a co-founder. Their subsequent dealings were cordial, reflecting both shared cultural interests and the sympathy which came from not belonging to the Anglican elite. By the 1780s there was even something of a trend among Unitarians for visiting Italy, illustrated by two products of the Warrington Academy: Josiah Wedgwood's son John, who toured

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[15] J. Ingamells (ed.), *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701–1800* (New Haven, CT and London, 1997), pp. 912, 1012–13.

[16] Ingamells (ed.), *Dictionary*, pp. 101–2, 948. For Blundell's collections: E. Southworth, 'The Ince Blundell collection: Collecting behaviour in the eighteenth century', *Journal of the History of Collecting*, 3, 2 (1991), pp. 219–34, and X. Brooke, *Mantegna to Rubens: The Weld-Blundell Drawings Collection* (London, 1998).

in 1787–88, and the Norwich surgeon Edward Rigby, a friend of Thomas Coke, who reached Turin in 1789.[17] It was Rigby's daughter who became Lady Eastlake and such a notable figure in nineteenth-century Anglo-Italian cultural relations.

As the well-known example of Birmingham's Lunar Society illustrates, the rational, orderly and non-dogmatic message of Unitarianism articulated by Priestley and others appealed to urban, educated, scientific and entrepreneurial types, but the works of Priestley that had the clearest bearing on Roscoe's Italian studies were surely the densely-packed *Chart of Biography* and *New Chart of History*, published in 1765 and 1769 respectively.[18] The writing of biography and history was practised by various members of the Roscoe Circle: in the older generation, for example, James Currie was the first biographer of Robert Burns; among the younger members, Dr Aikin's daughter Lucy published *Memoirs* of the courts of Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I. Ian Sutton has traced shared characteristics across this body of work, features that he attributes to the Unitarianism of many of the authors concerned. One of these was an ability to see what they regarded as progress in their own era reflected in that of the period they were not yet able to identify as the Renaissance.[19]

Of the Medici, Roscoe declared in the preface to his *Life of Lorenzo*, much had been said, but little was known.[20] Until the publication of Fabroni's *Laurentii Medicis Magnifici vita*, what was known of Lorenzo came from the Latin *vita* by Niccolò Valori, published in 1749, and the Italian life by Niccolò's son Filippo, published in 1568.[21] A life by Bruno Bruni appeared in a set of *Elogi degli uomini illustri Toscani* (1771). Each author had his own agenda. Writing in 1513–15, Valori spoke for those Florentines who rejected the broad-based government headed by Piero Soderini and craved a return to the narrower regime masterminded by Cosimo de' Medici, his son Piero and grandson Lorenzo. The fall of Soderini and the return of the exiled Medici to Florence in 1512, together with Giovanni de' Medici's papal election in 1513, provided the perfect opportunity for Valori to eulogize the new pope's father. Approaching the life of Lorenzo from the angle of his poetical works, themselves published in 1763, Roscoe found Valori's secular saint and 'miracle of nature' to be lacking in character, not fully rounded. Bruni

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17 Ingamells (ed.), *Dictionary*, pp. 813, 984, 987.

18 On the Lunar Society see J. Uglow, *The Lunar Men* (London, 2002).

19 I. Sutton, 'Unitarians and the Construction of History and Biography, 1740–1820', *English Historical Review*, 125 (2010), pp. 314–39.

20 W. Roscoe, *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, Called the Magnificent*, 9th edn, rev. T. Roscoe (London, 1847), p. 10.

21 For the relationship between these two texts see R. Fubini, 'Lorenzo de' Medici tra eulogia e storia' repr. in *Politica e pensiero politico nel Italia del Rinascimento* (Florence, 2009), pp. 205–26.

fared much worse. His account was so timid that it omitted any mention of the Pazzi conspiracy against Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano in 1478, a plot hatched in Rome, the author evidently fearing the consequences if he dared to even hint at papal complicity. Fabroni's was a considerably more substantial piece of work. Upon receipt of it Roscoe considered abandoning his own endeavours, but convinced himself that Fabroni's emphasis on Lorenzo's statecraft could dovetail with his own on Lorenzo and the revival of Italian literature.[22]

Among other sources for his *Life of Lorenzo*, Roscoe lists the histories of Florence by Machiavelli and Ammirato, together with the 'critical labours of Crescimbeni, Muratori, Bandini, and Tiraboschi'.[23] Roscoe's endeavours in 'a remote part of this remote kingdom' were assisted by the sales of two important libraries, those of the Venetian printer Maffeo Pinelli, held in London in 1789, and the tobacco merchant Pietro Antonio Bolongaro Crevenna, held in Amsterdam in 1790. His research was as far advanced as the availability of published sources allowed when his friend William Clarke chose to spend the winter of 1789–90 in the vicinity of Florence. Clarke's Italian odyssey had already taken him to Rome in 1786, Sicily and the kingdom of Naples in 1787, Turin in 1788 and Venice in the spring of 1789.[24] Roscoe took this opportunity to seek materials from the Biblioteca Laurenziana and the Palazzo Medici Riccardi, and duly expressed his gratitude for the 'munificence of the late Grand Duke Leopold, and the liberality of the Marquis Riccardi', together with the invaluable assistance of the 'venerable' Bandini.[25] A further acknowledgement is made to the marquis of Lansdowne, for a copy of the *Mémoires Généalogiques de la Maison de Médici* by Nicolaas ten Hove, a work which only appeared in English translation after Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo* had proved to be a commercial success. Roscoe admits that he did not make much use of the *Mémoires*, but cannot resist the opportunity to score a quick political point with his generous tribute to a former Whig prime minister who, as earl of Shelburne, had sought to cultivate dissenters and oversaw peace negotiations with France in 1783. By 1796, when the *Life of Lorenzo* was first published, Britain – led by Pitt's Tory administration – had been at war with France for two years.

Roscoe arranges his material chronologically, so that the first chapter traces the political and cultural history of Florence up to the death of Cosimo, and the next three do likewise for the years through to 1480. For the 1480s the story diverges, with two chapters devoted to the literature produced by Lorenzo and his

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22 Ibid., p. 15.

23 Ibid., p. 14. Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni's history of Italian poetry dated from 1698; Girolamo Tiraboschi's multi-volume *Storia della letteratura italiana* began to appear in 1772. Angelo Maria Bandini was librarian of the Biblioteca Laurenziana, in post since 1756.

24 Ingamells, *Dictionary*, pp. 212–13.

25 Roscoe, *Life of Lorenzo*, pp. 14–15.

contemporaries and one covering the affairs of Italy in the decade of the War of Ferrara and the revolt of the Neapolitan barons. The eighth chapter fills the gap that Roscoe had identified in the work of previous historians by focusing on Lorenzo's character and family life, the ninth provides a Vasarian survey of 'progress' in the visual arts from the age of Cimabue and Giotto to that of Michelangelo, with the pivotal role accorded to Lorenzo's patronage, and the tenth is a quick canter through Florentine history from the death of Lorenzo to the 'final extinction' of the republic in the early 1530s. Supplementary material includes 13 of Lorenzo's poems, transcribed by Clarke in the Laurenziana, and the texts of 31 prose sources. The overall result is an argument for Italian literature and art being 'revived' almost single-handedly. To understand that culture, all Roscoe's readers had to do was understand Lorenzo. That they did understand was because he made his case not with the caution and caveats of a scholar but with the skills of an attorney acting for his client and a campaigner championing a cause: 'Certain it is that no man was ever more admired and venerated by his contemporaries, or has been more defrauded of his just fame by posterity, than Lorenzo de' Medici'.[26]

The significance of the *Life of Lorenzo* is reflected in the number of angles on it provided by our contributors. Arline Wilson, Roscoe's most recent biographer, extracts from the Roscoe Papers in the Liverpool Record Office the letters sent from Italy by William Clarke in 1789–90, and thereby traces the process by which research was undertaken for the *Life*. The poems transcribed for Roscoe by Clarke provide the point of departure for Corinna Salvadori Lonergan's pioneering exploration of Roscoe as translator of and commentator on Lorenzo the poet, that persona which he privileged over Lorenzo the statesman. At the heart of Cecil H. Clough's wide-ranging chapter is a profusion of bibliographical detail inspired by the author's own collection of various editions of the *Life*. Cecil H. Clough also highlights Roscoe's acknowledgements and uses them to trace a dense web of literary connections, particularly of the Anglo-Dutch variety. John E. Law moves beyond publication to reception of the *Life of Lorenzo*, analysing the points of difference between Roscoe and the Swiss historian J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi, author of the *Histoire des républiques Italiennes du Moyen Âge* (1807–18), in which the Medici are cast not as culturally enlightened heroes but as enemies to the republican constitution of quattrocento Florence. Emanuele Pellegrini's contribution examines Roscoe's firmly Vasarian treatment of the history of art.

The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, Called the Magnificent struck a chord with readers and went through four editions between 1795/6 and 1800. Its popularity was not confined to Britain: the first German translation was published in 1797, though

[26] Roscoe, *Life of Lorenzo*, p. 9.

Roscoe was not aware of it until 1801; Italian and French translations followed in 1799, the former expressly entrusted by Fabroni to Gaetano Mecherini of Pisa. The first North American edition appeared in Philadelphia in 1803. Literary success encouraged Roscoe to retire from legal practice at the age of 43, when he had equalled the span of Lorenzo's life. In 1797 he spent a term at Gray's Inn, but made no further progress towards being called to the Bar. On the other hand, London presented an opportunity to make the personal acquaintance of leading Whigs. Lord Lansdowne introduced him to Charles James Fox and to the future premier Charles Grey. One embodiment of the Whig tradition nevertheless eluded him: Horace Walpole, who had kept alive the memory of his father, died on 2 March. By way of compensation, Roscoe did meet Walpole's friends, the Miss Berrys, 'who resided a long time in Italy'.[27] At this stage Roscoe's own Italian enthusiasms were channelled into a translation of 'La balia' ('The nurse') by the sixteenth-century poet Luigi Tansillo, which he published in 1798. The subject is perhaps a curious one, though improving in its own way: an appeal to mothers to breast-feed their own children. It met with the approval of the breastfeeding duchess of Devonshire, who also let it be known that she much enjoyed the *Life of Lorenzo*.[28]

Until his parliamentary election in 1806, Roscoe became ever more firmly entrenched in the cultural and commercial life of Liverpool. In 1797 he was one of the original members – known as proprietors – of the Athenaeum, and initiated the Liverpool Botanic Garden in 1803. In 1799 he purchased part of the Allerton estate, six miles from the town but close to William Shepherd's Unitarian chapel at Gateacre. The pastoral idyll was deceptive, for it was during this period that the seeds were sown of Roscoe's future financial distress. As William Clarke had helped him in Florence, so Roscoe assisted the Clarke family when their bank ran into difficulties in 1799. There were still problems in 1802, when Roscoe and the Clarkes sought help beyond their usual circle of radicals and Unitarians, inviting the wealthy merchant Thomas Leyland to become the senior partner in Leyland, Clarkes and Roscoe. That much of Leyland's fortune derived from the slave trade was a measure of the difficulties in which Roscoe found himself embroiled.

The gestation of Roscoe's second Medicean biography, *The Life and Pontificate of Leo X*, can be traced from 1797 and a suggestion by Frederick Augustus Hervey, the Italophile earl of Bristol and bishop of Derry, that he continue his narrative from the age of Lorenzo to that of Leo. Roscoe did not relish the prospect: 'to retail amongst my countrymen a compound, elaborated from the works of Jovius, or even the collections of Muratori, and the Histories of Guicciardini, &c., would not, I confess, gratify the literary ambition even of so

27 H. Roscoe, *Life*, vol. 1, pp. 158–9.

28 Ibid., p. 162.

humble an author as myself'.[29] Such a compound was precisely what issued from the press in 1805. Sixteen of the 23 chapters provide a political and ecclesiastical chronology of the period from the birth of Giovanni de' Medici in 1475 to his death in 1521, with his papal election in 1513 featured in chapter 10. As predicted by its author, this account relies heavily on Paolo Giovio's history of his own times and on Francesco Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia*, which rises above the 'local narratives' of his fellow Florentines, Machiavelli, Filipp de' Nerli and Jacopo Nardi. So detailed and authoritative are their accounts of the Italian Wars that Roscoe's version proves to be lengthier and much more heavily political than his first foray into Italian history. For life at the papal court his sources were headed by the diaries of the masters of ceremonies Johannes Burchard and Paride Grassi. Among the modern historians, Fabroni was the most recent authority, his biography of Leo having appeared in 1797. What Roscoe could not have known was that Alexander Gordon contemplated following his Borgia book with one on Leo. Gordon's joint biography of Alexander VI and Cesare left a gap for a biographical study of Lucrezia Borgia, but his negative portrayal of the pope's daughter left considerable room for rehabilitation, which Roscoe attempted with his brief dissertation on her character, awkwardly inserted into the first volume of the *Life of Leo*. In contrast to the *Life of Lorenzo*, politics and literature are not closely intertwined in this second work, for the pope was a patron rather than a practitioner of letters. With Tiraboschi remaining Roscoe's principal source of inspiration, chapters 2, 11, 16–17, 20–21 focus on literary culture. Emphasis is placed on the depressed state of learning in Rome at the beginning of Leo's pontificate, in order to highlight the transformation effected by his patronage. A single chapter charts similar progress in the visual arts.

In the *Life of Leo* Roscoe acknowledges his old friends and collaborators, including William Clarke, James Currie and the bibliographer William Parr Greswell, but his literary contacts now extended far beyond the north-west of England. In 1797 he met Dr Joseph Warton, a poet and sometime headmaster of Winchester College who had been a member of Samuel Johnson's Literary Club. Their literary tastes overlapped, not least with regard to Alexander Pope, whose works both of them edited at different times. Warton provided Roscoe with a link to his late brother Thomas, author of an influential three-volume *History of English Poetry* (1774–81), and to their friend William Collins, in whose unrealized 'History of the revival of learning' Leo X was projected to loom large. Once the *Life of Leo* was in train, Roscoe received assistance from a number of contacts in London, including Joseph Planta, principal librarian at the British Museum

[29] Ibid., p. 227.

from 1799. Like other authors, he benefited from the generosity with which the indefatigable bibliophile Richard Heber lent volumes from his collection.

Access to material in Italian libraries and archives was now facilitated by Roscoe's reputation as Lorenzo's biographer, but complicated by the vicissitudes of inter-state relations that were every bit as complex as those of the Italian Wars of the sixteenth century. In the preface to the *Life of Leo*, Roscoe prioritizes his debt to Lord Holland and Mr Penrose for securing grand ducal permission to use archival material held in the Palazzo Vecchio. Holland was Henry Richard Fox, Baron Holland, nephew and political heir of Charles James Fox. Roscoe praises 'the firm and consistent tenour of his public conduct' which, by 1805, included the expression of views on Anglo-French peace, Catholic emancipation and the abolition of the slave trade that accorded almost exactly with Roscoe's own.[30] Holland's only opportunity to intervene with Ferdinando III, last of the Habsburg-Lorraine grand dukes, was in 1795.[31] Again, therefore, this was Whig history by any definition of the term. Dr Thomas Penrose had been a pupil of Joseph Warton. After ordination he served as chaplain to the British envoy in Florence, in which capacity he was painted by Louis Gauffier in 1798. Among Florentine scholars, Roscoe singles out Bandini, who died in 1803 after more than four decades of service at the Laurenziana.

Only with reference to the 'immense collections of the Vatican' does Roscoe allude to 'the calamitous state of public affairs'.[32] As in the Italian Wars, from 1796 the smaller states of the peninsula provided a battleground for their more powerful neighbours, in this case France and Austria. Venetian neutrality was not respected by the combatants, who carved up the Veneto in the peace of Campo Formio (October 1797). Rome was taken by the French in February 1798, a republic declared and Pope Pius VI forcibly removed from the city. While Tuscany was next in the French line of fire, the pontiff was taken to France and died at Valence in August 1799. There followed a seven-month *sede vacante* until a new pope was elected in Austrian-held Venice in March 1800. War soon broke out once more between Austria and France, leading first to Napoleon's victory at Marengo in June 1800 and then to a series of diplomatic victories by which French control over the Italian states was secured. Thus the grand duchy of Tuscany became the kingdom of Etruria in 1801. It was in these political and military circumstances that Roscoe corresponded with Fabroni between 1800 and 1802. Britain and

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30 W. Roscoe, *The Life and Pontificate of Leo the Tenth* (5th edn, 2 vols, London, 1846), vol. 1, p. xiv.

31 For Anglo-Florentine relations in the 1790s see B. Moloney, *Florence and England: Essays on Cultural Relations in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century* (Florence, 1969), pp. 112–30.

32 W. Roscoe, *Life of Leo*, vol. 1, p. xvi.

France had been at war since 1793, so the treaty of Amiens (27 March 1802) provided a rare opportunity for travel and even for historical research. Fuseli and Shepherd both made for Paris, the former to survey works of art looted from Italian collections, the latter to work in libraries and to fulfil Roscoe's request for extracts from manuscripts of the diary of Paride Grassi. That window closed when Britain declared war again on 18 May 1803. It was also in 1802–3 that Roscoe was assisted by another traveller in Italy, John Johnson, who used his acquaintance with the prefect of the Vatican archives, Gaetano Marini, to make copies of relevant manuscripts. Johnson continued on to Venice, where he initiated correspondence between Roscoe and Jacopo Morelli, librarian of the Biblioteca Marciana. Although it is not known for certain, Anglo-Venetian correspondence may have been carried via Vienna: Britain and Austria were allies against France in the First, Second and Third Coalitions, the last of which was formed in 1805. In the meantime, Napoleon crowned himself emperor on 2 December 1804, with Pius VII no more than a bemused observer. If the composition and publication of the *Life of Leo* is seen against the backdrop of two successive popes falling victim to French imperialist aggression, it becomes a less surprising product to issue from the pen of a British dissenter. Such inclusivity was not reciprocated: the next pope, Leo XII, placed the life of his namesake on the Index.

Before Roscoe went into print with his second Medici-centred slice of Italian history and culture, the *Life of Lorenzo* inspired William Shepherd's *Life of Poggio Bracciolini*, which was published in 1802 and is analysed by David Rundle in the present collection. The *Life of Leo*, D.S. Chambers's subject, followed in 1805. Roscoe's reliance on research assistants and failure to travel to Italy prompts highly personal reflections from David Rundle about his own method of working and, indeed, the method of anyone who can access materials online and therefore avoid working in libraries and archives to a greater or lesser extent. D.S. Chambers takes a firmly archival approach, echoing Arline Wilson by extracting material from the Roscoe Letters in order to isolate the Liverpudlian's dealings with his Pisan counterpart. Again, as Roscoe published an appendix of primary sources in the *Life of Leo*, so does D.S. Chambers, in the shape of seven items of correspondence between Roscoe and Fabroni. Roscoe's correspondence with both Fabroni and Morelli also informs Emanuele Pellegrini's examination of the art-historical content of both Medicean biographies.

A fifth edition of the *Life of Lorenzo* appeared in 1806 and met demand for the next 19 years. The more scholarly *Life of Leo* never achieved the same level of popularity, but a French translation was published in Paris in 1808, even in the midst of war, followed by an Italian one in 1816–17. As the conflict wore on, Roscoe made periodic interventions in the cause of peace, but his most notable

opportunity to give voice to the principles of peace abroad, toleration at home and the abolition of the slave trade came suddenly in 1806 when he was invited to stand for parliament just two days before polling began in Liverpool. The Test Act prevented dissenters from holding office under the crown and the Corporation Act barred them from local government, but MPs were required to assent to the Act of Uniformity. This presented difficulties for anti-monarchical Presbyterians, but their Unitarian cousins were as latitudinarian in politics as in religious beliefs and could accommodate themselves as easily to monarchy as to republicanism. The borough's sitting MPs, Generals Tarleton and Gascoyne, represented the Whig and Tory interests respectively, but were united in their support of the slave trade. Roscoe stood as an independent and, regardless of his abolitionist views, polled more than the combined votes of the other two candidates and unseated Tarleton. In the course of his six-month parliamentary career he made half a dozen interventions in Commons debates, including an abolitionist speech on 23 February and one on 15 April concerning the removal of disabilities against Catholics.[33]

Although he sat as an independent, Roscoe supported Lord Grenville's Ministry of All the Talents and was personally acquainted with a number of ministers of the Whig persuasion, but the administration fell within a week of the Slave Trade Act becoming law on 25 March and new elections were called. Roscoe's return to Liverpool was far from a triumphal entry in the manner of Leo X, for he was greeted by a vociferous mob of anti-abolitionists and anti-papists, and resolved not to stand again. The partnership with Thomas Leyland had broken up shortly after Roscoe's election, with a new firm, Leyland and Bullin, operating from January 1807. William Stanley Roscoe now joined his father in the bank, which operated as Roscoe, Clarke and Roscoe. Although Roscoe was now free to devote more time to literary pursuits, various projects were contemplated but not realized. Aside from literature but nevertheless celebrated in verse, the Chat Moss venture continued, as Mrs Barbauld recorded in her politically controversial poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*:

> Where Roscoe, to whose patriot breast belong
> The Roman virtue and the Tuscan song,
> Led Ceres to the bleak and barren moor
> Where Ceres never gain'd a wreath before.[34]

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33 Summarized at http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/people/mr-william-roscoe/1807 [accessed 24 August 2011].

34 W. McCarthy and E. Kraft (eds), *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld* (Athens, GA, and London, 1994), p. 156.

Semi-retirement from public life gave him the opportunity to build a new wing at Allerton Hall in which to house his collections of paintings, prints, drawings and books. The alteration was completed in 1812. This was also the period in which he was befriended by Thomas Coke, paid visits to Holkham Hall and undertook the cataloguing of its library. Roscoe's relationship with Coke is charted for us in the chapter by Andrea M. Gáldy.

Although 1815 marked the end of the war against which Roscoe and his friends had agitated, peace brought with it a protracted period of economic depression, of which Roscoe was one of the earliest victims. Unsound mining investments contributed to a run on the bank and led to payments being suspended on 25 January 1816. A plan to liquidate its debts over a period of six years proved to be inadequate and the partners were forced to sell their personal property in an unfavourable economic climate. Roscoe resolved to sell all his books, prints, drawings and paintings, excepting a few gifts. Beginning with the library, the sales took place in late August and early September 1816: 1813 lots are listed in the sale catalogue, within which the largest category is 'Italian poets'. 'Italian history' – including Muratori's *Annali d'Italia* in 30 octavo and 14 quarto volumes – outweighs the history of any other region, and Italian authors loom suitably throughout, from palaeography on the opening day of the sale through to natural history on the last. Towards the end of the catalogue, incunabula from the general list are listed by year and identified by printer/publisher. Of the Italian incunables, Roscoe's earliest was the Sweynheim and Pannartz Lactantius printed at Subiaco in 1465. The leading printers of Milan, Rome, Venice and other centres are represented in the collection, with pride of place going to 57 Aldines. Among other works printed in the early sixteenth century, Roscoe's emphasis on the Medici and the revival of learning is perhaps nowhere more evident than in commentaries on Homer and Sophocles edited by Janus Lascaris for Leo X's Greek press.[35]

Aware of lacunae in the Holkham library, Roscoe recommended the purchase of certain volumes for that collection and Coke's agent obliged accordingly. Other purchasers included Richard Heber, from whom Roscoe had previously borrowed works, and the second Earl Spencer, another Whig grandee. Those volumes which passed from Roscoe to Spencer returned to the north-west of England in 1892 when they were purchased for the John Rylands Library in Manchester. Still others never left the region at all, the philanthropic merchant William Rathbone ensuring that they were presented to the Liverpool Athenaeum after Roscoe rejected Shepherd's scheme to buy them back for his personal use.

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[35] *Catalogue of the Very Select and Valuable Library of William Roscoe Esq.* (Liverpool, 1816).