Johnson and Baretti. Some aspects of eighteenth-century literary life in England and Italy.
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Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
1951

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):

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While an author is yet living, we estimate his powers by his worst performance, and when he is dead, we rate them by the best.

Johnson.

INTRODUCTION

In judging a literary product we may, if we like, confine our attention to the work as such, deliberately ignoring attendant circumstances. However, a knowledge of biographical details often proves very helpful in evaluating the worth of the author and may even be indispensable for arriving at proper conclusions about his work.

This is particularly true in the case of the writer I wish to discuss in this thesis: Joseph or, to give him his Italian name, Giuseppe Marcellonio Baretti (1719–1789), who spent one half of his life in Italy and the other in England, and who has long been represented as a rather bizarre figure, since these two phases of his life have never been properly correlated.

The question has arisen whether and to what extent Baretti can be said to have been influenced by the well-known English author, Samuel Johnson. As early as 1895 Vittorio Cian hinted at the need for a careful investigation into the subject, since opinions regarding this influence were very much divided. Foscolo, for instance, had accredited Baretti with certain merits of his own but, as far as his criticism was concerned, had dubbed him "la scimmia del Dottore" (an aper of Johnson). Morandi, on the other hand, had exalted Baretti's personal gifts. Luigi Piccioni, writing in 1912, took a more balanced point of view. Arturo Graf, with...
reference to an early work of Baretti's (Lettere sul Dr. Biagio Schiavo da Este) wrote that in his opinion Baretti had no need to go to England in order to learn the profession for which he had been destined by nature.

Various other authors have since written on Baretti, the most prominent being Natali (who thought Baretti had failed to understand the age in which he lived), Benedetto Croce (who attributed some value to him as a writer but none as a critic), Toffanin (who pointed out that, before Baretti, Becelli had advocated "a simple language"), and many others, such as F. Biondolillo, Massimo Bontempelli, Ferdinando Martini and Erminia Moroncini. A closer inquiry, however, into the question whether Baretti had, or could have, borrowed ideas from Johnson was still lacking, until a thesis appeared, entitled La Critica Letteraria nel '700: Giuseppe Baretti; i suoi rapporti con Voltaire, Johnson e Parini, by Albertina Devalle (Milano, 1932), with an introduction by Vittorio Cian, the man who in 1895 had advised an inquiry into the relation between Baretti and Johnson. In this study one chapter is devoted to the problem that concerns us.

It stands to reason that the author could not go into the subject in great detail in a single chapter. In fact, she limited herself to a comparison of some of Johnson's works with those of Baretti, without a closer investigation into the circumstances of the latter's English publications prior to the Frusta Letteraria (Baretti's principal Italian work) or into the details of the lives of the two authors, who were intimate friends over a period of thirty years. Utilizing

mestiere per cui madri natura l'aveva fatto, sebbene non sia da negare che soggiornando poi in Inghilterra, egli leggendo quei polemisti e quei satirici si perfezionasse nel mestiere in quella che si veniva, come è naturale, anche perfezionando da sé."

2 Problemi di Estetica e contributi alla storia dell'Estetica italiana, 1910, pp. 443—448.
3 L'eredità del Rinascimento in Arcadia, 1923, Chapter XIV.
4 Della novella Poesia, Verona, 1732, pp. 161—163.
5 L'estetica e la critica di Giuseppe Baretti in Poeti e Critici, 1910.
6 Il Baretti. La Frusta Letteraria. Classici Italiani [1914], Prefazione, pp. 11—23.
7 Le più belle pagine di Giuseppe Baretti, 1921, Prefazione, pp. I—XI.
8 Il Baretti artista, 1921.

the material to which the author building on Artur the same sense borrowed from impaired in conse- thesis not only reflect the quintessence of and Baretti entertain.

Since the appearance attempt has been to deny that Johnson is susceptible of various claim that he has another? None of the inconsistencies are in adventure-loving

The only Italian originality is Mario Futeraria del Settecento, la più originale or originalità si riduce studio del pensiero that Baretti's ideas already current at his ideas on the la- of being a pioneer.
the material to which Piccioni had already drawn attention and building on Arturo Graf's investigations, Devalle came to practically the same conclusion as the latter, viz. that Baretti had in a sense borrowed from Johnson, but that his originality had not been impaired in consequence. We may, therefore, assume that this thesis not only reflected the author's personal view, but represented the quintessence of the opinions on the relation between Johnson and Baretti entertained at the time by Italian experts on the subject.

Since the appearance of Albertina Devalle's work no further attempt has been made in Italy to throw light on the question. Later writers — G. Italo Lopriore, Walter Binni, Francesco Flora, to mention only three of the most recent — by no means deny that Johnson had a "certain influence" on Baretti (a term susceptible of various interpretations), but ask what author can claim that he has been entirely free from the influence of any other? None of these writers questions Baretti's originality. If inconsistencies are met with they are ascribed to his tempestuous, adventure-loving character.

The only Italian who has expressed doubts as to Baretti's originality is Mario Fubini, who writes: "A chi studia la critica letteraria del Settecento, la figura del Baretti non si presenta come la più originale o la più complessa: direi anzi che la pretesa sua originalità si riduce a poca cosa mano a mano si approfondisce lo studio del pensiero critico dell' Europa settecentesca." Fubini shows that Baretti's ideas were not introduced by him into Italy but were already current among many of his Italian contemporaries. Even his ideas on the language (which had won for Baretti the reputation of being a pioneer of modern prose and a worthy forerunner of
Manzoni) had been expressed in similar terms by Becelli before him, a fact already mentioned, as we have seen, by Toffanin.

Fubini leaves unexplained the fact that Baretti showed little understanding of his compatriots and even fulminated against many of them who had the same aim in view as himself, for instance regarding language and style: the Verris who, like himself, had attacked the Crusca, Gravina, some of whose ideas on poetry coincided with Baretti's (compare his *Ragione Poetica* with the latter's *Prefazione a tutte le opere di Corneille*), and Goldoni in his efforts to reform the theatre. Fubini also fails to account for the fact that Baretti's criticism was sometimes on a high level (though it can be shown that his knowledge was not in accordance with it), whereas at other times it verged on "nonsense" (as Lopriore calls it). The former is usually ascribed to his "buonsenso", whereas his lapses are put down to his "bizarre personality".

It seems to have occurred to none of these writers to inquire more closely into the years Baretti spent in England, in order to see whether this period might not provide material for a better understanding of the author of the *Frusta Letteraria*.

In England and America Johnsonian studies have led to a careful inquiry into the writers of Johnson's circle, Baretti among them. In 1937, five years, that is, after the appearance of Devalle's thesis, Allen T. Hazen published a book entitled: *Johnson's Prefaces and Dedications* (Yale University Press). This book contains the prefaces and dedications Johnson wrote for other authors, as well as his contributions of greater or lesser importance to the works of his friends, including Baretti's. Since Johnson was his main subject, Hazen limited his study, as far as Baretti was concerned, to the latter's English works. Hence we read:

1 In this work Gravina protests against the limited understanding of those who based their aesthetics on the principles of Aristotle. He was not concerned whether the *Endimione* should be classified as a tragedy, a comedy or a tragi-comedy; what he considered important was whether the poem was a good one or not. Cf. Baretti in *Prefazione a Cornello*: "Metastasio non ha soverchio badato a' precetti dell'Aristotele. Ma a che giova mai tutto ciò, se Metastasio pioce e se ha fatto guadagnar tanti ducati agli stampatori che lo hanno stampato tante volte. Metastasio letto pioce, pice cantato e pice recitato; ma quella de' ducati guadagnati dagli stampatori è la prova più grande per mio avviso del gran merito d'un autore, che aver si possa." - In the *Frusta Letteraria*, however, Baretti only fulminates against Gravina, with whom he here seems to be at one.

It is difficult to generalize about Joseph Baretti... The evidence of Baretti's book he published in England on Italian criticism (A. Devalle).

I have no difficulty in drawing conclusions; but her too superficial to warrant any one intimately acquainted with Johnson and Baretti, and especially the character of the latter.

Conscious, therefore, I have been so far-reaching consequences the character of the Johnson way, its *auctor intellectus* conversations with Johnson and other writings, of his friendless British and less than of the rest. Johnson's *d'arte* were for a larger repeated and defended by Baretti, compatriots, morally and the opinions of Johnson, philosopher of his age, never doubted the many respects Johnson it can be shown that Baretti also adopted his own character and endeavored.

It is not the mere another, or that he has taken that matters when it can be said in which this not another...
It is difficult to generalize satisfactorily about the literary career of Joseph Baretti... I do not doubt that Johnson gained much from Baretti; the evidence of Baretti's indebtedness to Johnson is continued in book after book he published in English and it has recently been traced in Baretti's Italian criticism (A. Devalle, 1932. One chapter is devoted to the influence of Johnson).

I have no difficulty in concurring with many of Devalle's minor conclusions; but her treatment is too limited in scope and, moreover, too superficial to warrant the acceptance of her final conclusion by any one intimately acquainted with the personalities of Johnson and Baretti, and especially with the two authors' complete works.

Conscious, therefore, that a renewed inquiry is desirable, I have ventured to undertake this task, giving due consideration to what has already been published about Baretti, but rejecting what has proved a one-sided or partial representation of facts. In the course of my investigations it has become clear to me that Johnson's influence on Baretti was much greater than is usually believed, and had far-reaching consequences. It amounted, in fact, to his determining the character of the latter's work in England, his principal Italian work La Frusta Letteraria no less than of the rest. Further, the opinions expressed in this opera d'arte were for a large part Johnson's ideas, which Baretti merely repeated and defended against the opposition of the majority of his compatriots, morally supported by the knowledge that they were the opinions of Johnson, whom he considered to be "the greatest philosopher of his age and perhaps of the coming ages too." He never doubted the correctness of Johnson's pronouncements. In many respects Johnson and Baretti were alike in character, but it can be shown — and this is a fact of prime importance — that Baretti also adopted ideas of Johnson's which ran counter to his own character and disposition.

It is not the mere fact that an author has been influenced by another, or that he has looked for inspiration to the works of others, that matters when determining his originality. What counts is the way in which this material has been used and assimilated. Upon

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1 See D. C. Gallup, *Giuseppe Baretti's work in England* (Dissertation in candidacy for the Ph. D. degree, Yale University, 1939.)
acquaintance with the various aspects of Baretti's works in relation to Johnson's, which I shall set forth in the following chapters, the reader may be able to decide for himself about Baretti's "originality".

Giuseppe Marcantonio (Joseph) Baretti belongs to both English and Italian literature, since he published works in both languages. During his lifetime he was reviled in Italy, but he achieved a measure of success in England. Nowadays he is as good as forgotten there, whereas in Italy his renown has increased of late. He is decidedly not a writer of the first rank, but is for that very reason a particularly interesting subject for study. Such a writer mirrors the ideas and trends of his period more clearly than do the great, whose strongly individual personalities overshadow the ideas of the age in which they live. General opinion on the literary value of such a writer varies according to the different aspects of his work emphasized from time to time, or by reason of the discovery of new information concerning him. This affords greater opportunity for an independent judgment.

As its title implies, the aim of this study is to throw more light on a certain aspect of Baretti, namely his relation to Samuel Johnson. However, in view of the facts which I shall bring forward, our conception of the man must differ from that generally accepted at the moment: and this may influence also our estimation of his contemporaries.

Baretti is an author with a limited field of vision. His various works deal repeatedly and always in the same manner with a few ideas only. These we find collected together in his two Italian publications written immediately after his first stay in England. It is in them that we shall best be able to trace Johnson's influence, although reference will also be made to his other works.

Baretti was restless by nature; he not only moved about from place to place in his own country, but after his thirtieth year began to wander from one country to another. For instance, we find him staying for various periods at Turin, Milan, Venice and Cuneo, visiting the first three cities several times. He spent more than half of his life in England and visited France, Spain, Portugal, Flanders and Holland. This, together with the encyclopaedic character of his work, can hardly fail to be somewhat bewildering to the uninitiated reader. For chronological order be possible to fol...
Baretti’s works in relation to Johnson’s opinions. The following chapters, therefore, will center about Baretti’s works in both languages. Sadly, he achieved a level of notice which is as good as forgotten today. It is for that very reason that I am writing this essay. Such a writer mirrors the thoughts of his time, and offers us a mirror to the literary value of the period. The idea of the literary periodical is the result of the discovery of this approach to life, the literary periodical, La Frusta Letteraria.

The first period, from 1719 to 1751, the years during which he lived in close intimacy with Johnson. The second period, from 1751 to 1760, the years during which he lived in close intimacy with Johnson. The third period, from 1760 to 1766, the years during which he lived in close intimacy with Johnson. The fourth period, from 1766 to 1789, the years during which he lived in close intimacy with Johnson.

The relevant material will be treated under the following chapter-headings:

Chapter I: Baretti’s youth in the Italy of the first half of the 18th century, and the reasons for his departure to England in 1751. Chapter II: Baretti’s endeavours to earn a living in England. His contact with Johnson (1751—1753). Chapter III: Baretti’s contact with Johnson continued, including a discussion of more English works; with a summary of Allen T. Hazen’s investigations into Johnson’s contribution to Baretti’s English works. Chapter IV: Prolegomena to Chapter V:

a) A survey of Baretti’s Italian works, written immediately after his stay in England, with a summary of Devalle’s opinions on the relation between Johnson and Baretti.

b) An outline of Johnson’s opinions as an expression of his personality.

Chapter V: Baretti’s opinions examined in the light of the foregoing material.

Chapter VI: Parallel passages from Johnson and Baretti.
Chapter VII: A discussion of the Discours sur Shakespeare et sur Mr. de Voltaire. More of Baretti’s borrowings from Johnson.

Conclusion.

A Summary in Italian.

Those who wish for detailed accounts of Joseph Baretti are referred to the biographies by Luigi Piccioni and Lacy Collison-Morley. Piccioni has devoted more than half a century to an extensive study of Baretti’s life and works, resulting in the publication of a biography and an almost complete edition of the original works, only parts and fragments of which were formerly available. Lacy Collison-Morley supplemented Piccioni’s biography, as far as Baretti’s years in England were concerned, in his book: Giuseppe Baretti, an account of his literary friendships and feuds in Italy and England (London, 1909).

For the benefit of those who desire a shorter account of this author — little known outside his native country — I have given a few biographical notes, based on the Dictionary of National Biography and the Enciclopedia Italiana, at the beginning of the first three chapters.

A complete list of Baretti’s works will be found on p. 147 ff. Special attention is drawn to the following items:

1. La Voix de la Discorde ou la Bataille des Violons (Londres, 1753), written in French with the English text alongside, hitherto recorded as untraceable, but still extant. The Library of Congress at Washington and the Rare Book Room of Yale University Library both contain a copy of this work. I include a facsimile of the title-page; a microfilm of the whole book is in my possession.

2. Remarks on the Italian language and writers from Mr. Joseph Baretti to an English gentleman at Turin, written in the year 1751. London. Printed for Dan: Brown etc. MDCCCLIII, which Piccioni excludes from the list of Baretti’s works, but which is included by Lacy Collison-Morley. For reasons given in chapter II I have accepted its inclusion.


Although neither the Library of Congress nor the British Museum of this work is a copy of the book, the Royal Library has the book. This is of course not the edition which Baretti, whose name appears on the title-page, was referring to. However, this is also an account of Italian: L’autore a L’autore a Zacht, C. Reymers in H. New York.) (See p. 58 for T. Davies in R. C. Reymers in H. Strand. Chez Durand, 1752.

4. A separate copy is included in the second edition of Piccioni’s biography, and should, with the Fazioni e Polemiche, be understood of the chapter.

5. In the following items:

a) An autograph copy of Account of Zacha, and the English text alongside, hitherto recorded as untraceable, but still extant. The Library of Congress at Washington and the Rare Book Room of Yale University Library both contain a copy of this work. I include a facsimile of the title-page; a microfilm of the whole book is in my possession.

b) A holograph (4 pages). Gift of the book was a separate copy of the manuscript. (See p. 58 for T. Davies in R. C. Reymers in H. Strand. Chez Durand, 1752.

c) An autograph (4 pages). Gift of the book was a separate copy of the manuscript. (See p. 58 for T. Davies in R. C. Reymers in H. Strand. Chez Durand, 1752.

See Bibliography.
Strand, Chez Davey Law, Ave Mary-Lane, MDCCLIX. A copy of this work is in the British Museum, and another in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek at The Hague. The latest catalogue of the British Museum includes it without further comment among Baretti’s works, whereas in the previous edition of the catalogue the book was asterisked, to indicate that it was only ascribed to Baretti. As far as I have been able to ascertain, no further information has come to light to justify the unconditional ascription to Baretti, whose name is not mentioned anywhere in the book. However, this is also the case with the French works for the Italian Opera. Yet the choice of the fragments it contains, the place and year of publication (London, 1759), together with the French language, in which Baretti had published before, make it highly probable that it was indeed Baretti who compiled this book. Although neither Piccioni nor Lacy Collison-Morley even mentions it, I think that the British Museum catalogue is right in ascribing it to Baretti. See Appendix I.

4. A separate copy of the Appendix to the Account of Italy, in answer to Samuel Sharp Esq. by Joseph Baretti. London. Printed for T. Davies in Russell Street, Covent Garden and L. Davies and C. Reyners in Holborn. MDCCCLXIII (64 pages), which was included in the second edition of the Account (1769), is in the Rare Book Room of the Public Library of New York. This Appendix should, with the Remarks, have been included in Piccioni’s Prefazioni e Polemiche, and is of great importance for a right understanding of the character of Aristarco Scannabue.

5. In the following pages particulars will be given about:
   a) An autograph presentation-note by Baretti in the book: An Account of Zachariah Williams, with Baretti’s translation into Italian: L’autore al Dottr. Francesco Zanotti Bologna, in the left-hand corner of the title-page. (Rare Book Room, Public Library, New York.) (See p. 50.)
   b) A holograph manuscript of: Ortografia della Lingua Inglese (3 pages) (Yale University, New Haven). (See photostat.)
Issued solely for the performance on 12 March, 1779. With manuscript notes in ink, not by Baretti. (Huntington Library, Pasadena.)

1 The fact that many of Baretti's works (his Dictionary with the grammars, the *Introduction to the Italian Language*, the Library, etc.) are available in most of the libraries of the United States of America is somewhat puzzling at first and requires an explanation. Precisely at the end of the 18th century, we find an interest in foreign languages, including Italian, in the United States, which, on account of the wars, did not start any earlier. As in England, Italian was taught first of all by private teachers (in New York by August Vaughan, in Philadelphia by J. M. Kramer; about 1770 Mr. and Mrs. Cozzani had already a fairly large number of pupils). In the early years of the 19th century it was introduced to the Colleges. In the autumn of 1825 Columbia College began to offer Italian with Lorenzo da Ponte, the librettist of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, as teacher. In a letter dated Nov. 7th, 1824, Da Ponte wrote that he had sent fifteen grammars, as many dictionaries and some Italian books to Mr. Patten, Professor in Middleburg College, "where the Italian Language is very much studied." As Baretti's works were the most up-to-date and the most suitable for another English-speaking country, it is likely that it was Da Ponte who introduced Baretti into the United States, by sending his manuals to Middleburg College.

Baretti's youth in the reason

**Biography.**

Giuseppe Maria Baretti was born in Venice in 1719. His grandparents, Giovanni Battista Baretti and Diana Maria Carretto, had married in 1714. The marriage was arranged by Giovanni Battista Baretti and Filippo Carretto, and no news of this marriage has been found. In 1725 Giovanni Battista Baretti and Filippo Carretto were already priests, and Filippo Carretto was the parish priest of Carletto. However, the marriage was arranged by Giovanni Battista Baretti and Filippo Carretto; but the marriage took place in Venice on 17 March, 1719. Giovanni Battista Baretti was inclined to the priesthood; but his father, who was a wealthy merchant, forced him to study law and to enter the law faculty of the University of Padua. Giovanni Battista Baretti graduated from the law faculty in 1740, and in 1741 he was appointed to a post in the court of Padua.

In 1735 Giovanni Battista Baretti married Diana Maria Carretto, and in 1739 they moved to Turin, where they lived until 1742. In those days, Giovanni Battista Baretti was a member of the Turin Academy, and while in Turin, he wrote his first work, *Le figure* (1736-1737), which was published in Turin in 1737. In 1737 he returned to Padua, and in 1742 he moved to Venice, where he continued to live until his death in 1774. Giovanni Battista Baretti was a member of the Turin Academy, and while in Turin, he wrote his first work, *Le figure* (1736-1737), which was published in Turin in 1737. In 1737 he returned to Padua, and in 1742 he moved to Venice, where he continued to live until his death in 1774.