Johnson and Baretti. Some aspects of eighteenth-century literary life in England and Italy.
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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 Marcatantonio 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

1 Rassegna bibliografica della Letteratura Italiana, 1895, pp. 7–12.
3 Voltaire contro Shakespeare, Baretti contro Voltaire, 1882.
4 Giuseppe Baretti, prima della Frusta.
5 Nuova Antologia, 16 dic. 1911: "Sono in se stesse cosa di poco conto, ma come fanno già presentire e pregustare l'autore della Frusta. Il Baretti, giovane allora di 28 anni, non era ancora stato in Inghilterra e si vede che non era necessario (come da molti si crede) v'andasse per imparare quel...
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 madre 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 ehe si veniva, come è naturale, anche perfezionando da sè."

3. L'eredità del Rinascimento in Arcadia, 1928, Chapter XIV.
5. L'estetica e la critica di Giuseppe Baretti in Poeti e Critici, 1910.
7. Le più belle pagine di Giuseppe Baretti, 1921, Prefazione, pp. I—XI.
8. Il Baretti artista, 1921.

the material to which the thesis not only reflects the quintessence of an adventure-loving personality is Mario Fu
di Muratori, this book Piccioni 1940.
3. Storia della L 1942
4. Cf. Cesare Ari
di book Piccioni 1940: "La critica delle quali l'Ariete si da alcuna intimità ingegno."
5. Dal Muratori
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 1, Walter Binni 2, Francesco Flora 3, 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. 4

The only Italian who has expressed doubts as to Baretti's originality is Mario Fubini 5, 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 presa 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

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1 Giuseppe Baretti nella sua Frustra in Studi Letterari (Luigi Russo), 1940.
2 *Preromantico* Italiano, 1948, p. 120.
5 *Dal Muratori al Baretti*, 1946, p. 145.
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 “nonsenso” (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:

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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 piace, piace cantato e piace 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.

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It is difficult to generalize about the evidence of Baretti’s book he published in England on Italian criticism (A. Devalle, *Essai sur l’histoire de la critique littéraire italienne*).

I have no difficulty in making certain conclusions; but her too superficial to warrant any one intimately familiar with Johnson and Baretti, and especially as Johnson was his main subject, has already been published, a one-sided character of Johnson. Of my investigations the character of the one-sidedness on Baretti was far-reaching consequences the character of the man and Baretti, morally and intellectually, the opinions of Johnson, the philosopher of his age. He had never doubted the many respects Johnson’s works, it can be shown — Baretti also adopted his own character and criticism.

It is not the matter of another, or that he had to matter when doing so, in the way in which this was done.

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1 See D. C. Gallup in candidacy for the L.
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, to his being, in a way, its auctor intellectualis. It was on his English works and on conversations with Johnson that Baretti drew for the ideas of his other writings, of his principal Italian work La Frusta Letteraria and of all 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

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 encyclopædic character of his work, can hardly fail to be somewhat bewildering to the unini-

tiated reader. For chronological order to be possible to follow events and the main events in his life, we may divide them after his contact with Johnson.

Moreover, we can distinguish:

The first, from 1760, the years of Johnson's absence from London in January 1760, the years of Johnson's absence from London in January

The second, from 1766, the years of Johnson's absence from London in January

The third, from 1766, the years of Johnson's absence from London in January

The fourth or last, from 1766, the years of Johnson's absence from London in January.

The relevant matter-headings:

Chapter I: Baretti in the 18th century, and his contact with Johnson.

Chapter II: Baretti's English works.

Chapter III: Baretti's relation between Johnson and T. Hazen's investigation of English works.

Chapter IV: Preliminary:

a) A survey of Baretti's works during his stay in England, his contact with Johnson.

b) An outline of his personality.

Chapter V: Baretti's stay in England, his contact with Johnson.

Chapter VI: Preliminary...
retti's works in relation to the following chapters, the reader is given himself about Baretti's works in both English and Italian languages. Therefore, he achieved a rise as good as forgotten increased of late. He is forgotten for that very reason. Such a writer mirrors early than do the great, aspersed the ideas of men on the literary value of different aspects of his reason of the discovery affords greater oppor-
tunities to throw more light on his relation to Samuel Johnson. I shall bring forward, that generally accepted our estimation of his
memorial character of the unimi-
tiated reader. For the sake of clarity, I shall, therefore, keep to a chronological order in dealing with my subject. In this way it will be possible to follow one straight course through the variety of events and the multiplicity of Baretti's opinions.

We may divide Baretti's life into two main parts: before and after his contact with Johnson, which took place about 1753.

Moreover, we can distinguish four periods in his life:

The first, from his birth in Turin in 1719 until his departure to London in January 1751.

The second, from 1751 to 1760, the period of his first sojourn in England, which may be subdivided: 1751—1753, and 1753—1760, the years during which he lived in close intimacy with Johnson.

The third, from 1760—1766, years spent in Italy, where he wrote a description of his travels in epistolary form: Lettere ai tre fratelli, and a critical literary periodical, La Frusta Letteraria.

The fourth or last period, in which he settled in England for good, from 1766 to his death in 1789.

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 III: 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* (Lonidres, 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. MDCCLIII*, 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.

3. *Recueil nouveau des Pièces choisies des plus célèbres Auteurs Français. A Londres. Chez D. Wilson & T. Durham in the Strand. Chez Davo*. Although neither of these works is included in the second edition of the Encyclopaedia Italiana, in which information has come to my attention, they are included by Lacy Collison-Morley. Yet the chronology of publication, in which we are interested, is such that it is probable that they preceded the publication of the *Opera*. Yet the chronology of publication is in such a state of confusion that an exact date cannot be given; for reasons given in chapter II I have accepted the dating of the book as 1753. I think that the title refers to Baretti, whose name is mentioned throughout the book.

4. A separate copy exists of this work in the British Museum Library (London, 1753). It is in the possession of the Rare Book Room of the Library of Congress at Washington, and a microfilm of the whole book is in my possession.

5. In the following items further information has come to my attention.

a) An autograph manuscript: *Account of Zacharias and Joseph Baretti*. (3 pages) (Yale University Library, gift of C. Reymers in Haringtonton.)

b) A holograph letter: *Letter to T. Davies in Rome*. (3 pages) (Yale University Library, gift of C. Reymers in Haringtonton.)

c) An autograph letter: *Letter to T. Davies in Rome*. (3 pages) (Yale University Library, gift of C. Reymers in Haringtonton.)

d) A copy of the
Sur Shakespeare et sur son milieu, des fragments from Johnson.

The works of Joseph Baretti are considered by Piccioni and Lacy Collison-Morley as forming a half a century to an entire generation, resulting in the publication of a complete edition of the works of Baretti, which were formerly published in Piccioni's biography, but have been deleted in his book: 

Friendships and Feuds

A shorter account of this work can be found on p. 147 ff. of the book:

Les Éloignons (Londres, 1759), next alongside, hitherto unknown, the Library of Congress, Yale University Library and 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.)

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. MDCCLXXXIII (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.
Issued solely for the performance on 12 March, 1779. With manuscript notes in ink, not by Baretti, (Huntington Library, Pasadena.) 1 (See pp. 51—52).

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 di Nanni was born in Tuscany in 1719. His grandfather was an architect and his mother was a well-known musician. He studied at the University of Pisa and then went to Rome, where he became a priest. He married a wealthy woman and had three children, but the marriage was unhappy and he was eventually divorced.

In 1735 Giuseppe's brother, Gianbattista Baretti, was appointed to the post of librarian at the University of Pisa. Giuseppe followed him there and began to teach himself the art of draughtsmanship. He spent the next few years studying art in Rome and then moved to Venice, where he became a successful painter.

In 1737 he returned to Italy and became involved in the world of literature. He wrote several works on philosophy and politics, and was a friend of many famous Italian writers, including Tiepolo and Gaspare Gozzi.

In those days, and while in Venice, he was appointed to a post he occupied for many years. Two years later, two works by him were published in Milan for the benefit of his friends, and they became very successful. The death of his son, however, caused him great sorrow, and he was very distressed.

In 1762 he returned to Italy and continued to work on his literary projects. He died in 1762, leaving behind a legacy of important works that continue to be studied and admired today.