

The Gallery of Memory

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The Gallery of Memory

Literary and Iconographic Models in the Age of the Printing Press

LINA BOLZONI

Translated by Jeremy Parzen



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Preface

Two refined gentlemen were having a lively conversation as they travelled on horseback towards Vigevano on a hazy day in October 1543.

If we lived at the end of the nineteenth century and this book were a novel, it could begin like this.

Since this is a book about memory, and memory has always played with the different aspects of time, we would like to start off in just this way – with this scene as described in a letter from the sixteenth century.¹ The first gentleman is the marquis of Vasto, Alfonso d'Avalos (1502–1546), the Spanish governor of Milan, and the patron and prince celebrated by Ariosto in *Orlando furioso* and immortalized in a splendid portrait by Titian (plate II); the second is Girolamo Muzio (1496–1576), one of the numerous literati who gravitated towards d'Avalos. In order to relieve the tedium of their journey each of them tries to outdo the other in poetry. Muzio begins one of his sonnets with the following couplet: 'Aura che movi le veloci penne / verso colei che muove le mie pene' [Breeze, you who move your swift wings / towards her, who moves my sorrows].² The quality of the poetry certainly leaves something to be desired, and d'Avalos, in fact does object to it, but for a reason that would never occur to us. 'He said to me,' writes Muzio, "'You give wings to the wind, but painters will paint them thus ...' and he filled his cheeks with air.' The problem is thus the manner of depicting the winds: the image suggested by the words does not correspond to that which one generally sees in paintings, and which d'Avalos is trying to act out by filling his cheeks with air. In his defence Muzio recites lines from many different poems, in both Latin and Italian, where the wind has wings. The marquis is amazed by this performance: 'you must have done a lot of reading,' he tells Muzio. 'Certainly,' retorts Muzio, 'but not as much as Giulio Camillo.'

Thus, at this point another character enters the scene: Giulio Camillo, man of letters and philosopher, Friulian and cosmopolitan, a master rhetorician, a fat man who knows how to enchant his interlocutors despite his stuttering, a man who is known above all for his plans to construct a large theatre of memory, a device that will be able to furnish its users with the words and images necessary to give form to all knowledge. After being evoked in this scene, Camillo does not leave; following the conversation on horseback described above, Camillo and d'Avalos will meet and speak together for three mornings. The result is a sort of infatuation: 'Be it true or not that this man possesses the *secret* of memory, I want him,' announces the marquis, saying that he is ready to pay four hundred *scudi*. What a pity (or perhaps it is providential) that Camillo, overly dedicated to the pleasures of love, was to die the following year.³

This whole story must seem rather strange to today's reader: these characters operate within the confines of a cultural code far removed from our own, a code in which the words of poets are translated into visible images, compared with paintings, and enacted through the language of the body. The code is founded upon a science of images, which is formed through extensive reading, which travels across and unites different forms of expression, which relies upon memory. Indeed, it culminates in the art of memory.

This book attempts to meet the challenge of such cultural strangeness and distance. The goal is to reconstruct the space that memory created for itself in sixteenth-century culture and the figures upon which it relied. By doing so we can rediscover a mode of perceiving words and images, a mode of receiving (and creating) them, that long enjoyed central importance but that has been discarded and forgotten because of its differences from our own. At the same time, along our path we will find themes and opinions that in many ways are not so far from our own, since they are also part of our contemporary reflection and experience: the dialogic and intertextual nature of literature; the relationship between writing, literary tradition, and reception; the status of images, the strategies of and the reasons behind their charm and power; the play of relationships that they create between the human body and the psyche.

But let us clarify the boundaries of the question. This will allow us to see how the concept of memory assumes particular richness in the cinquecento: a period of emerging modernity, though knowledge and experience have not yet become specialized or fragmented. First of all,

the importance of memory is bound into a cultural code based on a precise hierarchy of values. Memory is, in other words, an essential component of the classicizing canon, which clearly establishes itself in the sixteenth century, thus affecting Italian literature for centuries. It is during this century that literary models are set forth and fixed: in 1525 Pietro Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* [Discussions of the vernacular language] sanctions the rigorous division of written and spoken language, and in this work he proposes Petrarch's lyric poems as the ideal model of language and grammar; from the 1540s on, the debate over Aristotle's *Poetics* provides an opportunity to outline a system of literary genres. At the end of the century the work culminating in the Accademia della Crusca's dictionary of the Italian language marks the final outcome of a process of establishing fixed cultural norms. This process is closely interconnected with the vicissitudes of the literati (both as individuals and as a group), with a fertile period of literary production in Italian vernacular literature, and with the development and diffusion of printing.

Many scholarly works have shed light on the different phases of this process.⁴ One feature, however, has remained obscure: the role of memory and the close connection between words and images that memory helps to create. The literary and iconographic canons are established and defined together. Repertories of mythography are published. In the *Hieroglyphica* of the mythical Egyptian priest Horapollo, with a commentary by Pierio Valeriano (1567), hieroglyphic images are transformed into icons of moral and metaphysical ideas. The *Iconologia* of Cesare Ripa (1593) teaches how 'to represent all that can occur to human thought with the proper symbols.' At the same time collections of emblems and devices demonstrate different possible ways of combining textual and pictorial fragments.⁵

In a world so obsessed with giving itself norms and establishing models, memory plays an essential role. If, in fact, imitation of the old is a stage in the production of something new, and if a writer's individuality cannot be expressed without appropriating 'other' texts, then writing means above all remembering.⁶ The whole game depends on the relationship between imitation and variation. It is essential, therefore, for an author – and his ideal reader as well – to recall easily the text used as a model. But what to remember? First and foremost, language, metaphors, formal artifice, but also images – that great iconographic baggage that ancient literature and art have handed down, now made available for hermeneutic play. Thanks to allegorical interpretation, for

example, a text can suggest numerous meanings; its images are diffracted, as if reflected in different mirrors. As Terence Cave writes (with an image happily chosen from Rabelais), the texts used as models become cornucopian texts: the play of interpretation and imitation/emulation transforms them into fountains of infinite wealth.

In light of this it is easier to understand why Camillo, the master of memory whom we have just met, was such a celebrity in his time. Ariosto and Tasso, for example, praise him because he has found a quick and easy way to teach the secrets of fine writing.⁷ His method consists in providing logical schemes by which the figures that adorn classical texts can be dismantled, then reproduced and varied. Especially in his *Topica*, Camillo teaches how to apply to literature that technique (the use of topical places) that ancient rhetoricians used to find arguments supporting their own theses.⁸ As we will see, we are dealing with an important and widespread tradition: it is a tradition that teaches methods and techniques for learning and remembering the secrets of rhetorical figures, thus bringing to light the logic hidden in literary 'artifice.'

The other reason for Camillo's fame is his theatre of memory.⁹ Inside its complex structure the memory of human scientific knowledge (and of literature) is entrusted to a system of images – painted by great artists like Titian and Francesco Salviati – images that have unfortunately been lost. Camillo's theatre is the incarnation of the myths of the century: it unites repertories of words and images; it utilizes both the mechanism of the logical and rhetorical diagram and the magical fascination of the icon; all of this, in turn, is entrusted to memory and its capacity to give new forms to the things that it preserves. This book will show how such a complex edifice is taken apart throughout the course of the century, and, at the same time, how its different components continue to live together and to blend, as they influence each other and also interact with the new situation created, in part, by the printing press.

A rich tradition of scholarship – from Paolo Rossi to Frances Yates and Mary Carruthers – has rediscovered and brought to light the role played by the art of memory in Europe's cultural panorama over the centuries.¹⁰ Its long history is a fascinating mixture of continuity, variation, and diversity. The orators' techniques of memory reinforcement were handed down by the classical world to the Middle Ages. These techniques, based on observation of the mind's natural functions, use three essential components: places (*loci*), order, and images (*imagines agentes*).

The idea is to establish an ordered route of places in the mind. To each is assigned through an interplay of associations an image related to the thing to be remembered. Whenever necessary, a practitioner of this art retraces the places of his memory and finds the images that will reactivate the interplay of associations. The recollections linked to those associations are thus brought forth. There is memory of things and concepts (*memoria rerum*) as well as memory of words (*memoria verborum*). The technique has been called the art of memory, artificial memory, or *local* memory (in reference to the *loci*).

The basic techniques have been around for a long time. The Christian world inherited them from the pagans and changed them according to its own needs, giving them an aura of morality and piety. In the sixteenth century the art of memory sees the moment of its greatest splendour as it becomes a part of the complex quest to revive the ideal of an encyclopedia of learning and to master a universal key for access to knowledge.

The goal of this book is to redirect the traditional subject matter of scholarly analysis: it deals with the practices related to memory, rather than with the treatises on the art of memory. It is an attempt to reconstruct an *average* set of convictions and techniques shared by the wider culture, and its focus is not on the great theoreticians of memory who revived and creatively renewed the tradition, like Giulio Camillo and Giordano Bruno. Nevertheless, on the one hand I take as my point of departure Camillo's theatre, and on the other I focus on the practices, experiences, and uses of memory that form the basis for Bruno's daring studies.

My analysis is based on two convictions. The first is that the treatises on the art of memory are only the tip of the iceberg and that their rules – often dry and repetitive – are just the backdrop of a cultural drama that developed on many levels. I have used the treatises only as an incentive to remap the territory in which the techniques of memory interact with different experiences: with literature, for example, with the translation of words into images and images into words, and with experiments with the imagination (plate V).

My second conviction has to do with the transformations accompanying the development of the printed word.¹¹ It is thanks to the circulation of books that we can speak of an *average* or *middle* culture and the creation of a widespread set of ideas and practices in which different medical and philosophical theories about memory, for example, live side by side, and in which, more importantly, they are put to use.

Printing – and, even earlier, writing itself, as Marshall McLuhan and

Walter Ong have taught us – is not purely a tool. It has a feedback effect upon the subject using it, and it contributes to changes in the perception of the self and in the perception of the world. This insight proves to be very suggestive when applied to problems of memory. It helps us to understand some of the essential moments of that continuous, yet varied, series of events that typifies the presence of the art of memory in European culture. In ancient Greece memory is a goddess, Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses. This myth is a faithful expression of the vital role that memory plays in a society where writing has not yet been introduced. With the introduction of writing memory comes down from Olympus and enters the world of the city and its human professions: it becomes an art, something that can be taught and practised.¹² Writing, moreover, removes words from the unrepeatable temporal flux of oral communication and transforms them into objects positioned in space, into things that can be seen and analysed. Writing influences even the way in which the mind is perceived: thought takes on a spatial dimension, and thus intellectual processes are described in terms of movement. We can see how this is also essential for memory. It appears as a space divided into *places*, in which are deposited perceptible images that may be preserved or vanish away. The moment that memory becomes an art, writing remodels it in its own image and likeness. The comparison between the techniques of memory and those of writing becomes itself a topos: the lines that a scribe marks on a tablet are like the *loci* that the master of memory affixes on the tablet of the mind. The letters that permit us to read words with the distance of time are akin to the *imagines agentes*, repositories of the chain of associations that regenerates memories.

The perception of words and mental faculties in terms of space and visualization is enormously expanded by the phenomenon of the printing press. This book analyses a paradoxical situation: a long phase of rich, but precarious, equilibrium. Techniques of memory reach their greatest development in a world in which their meaning and importance are gradually being stripped away from them by the development of technology, especially by the printing press. At the same time, we will see how techniques of memory interact, often productively, with the new possibilities created by the printed word. Among other things, the printing press helps to expand that sense of the mirroring relationship between the mind and writing to which I have alluded, between mental places and textual places, between inner experience and the external world. Through a sometimes dizzying and illusionistic

play of relationships, poems can be transformed into galleries, texts into palaces, collections into encyclopedias and castles inside the mind, and vice versa.

But now let us see how our route through the territory of sixteenth-century memory unfolds in the different chapters of this book.

There is a long and persistent tradition that holds images and diagrams in low esteem. A rich heritage of tables and diagrams has consequently been removed both from our critical panorama and, physically, from the pages of books. Modern editions of sixteenth-century poetic and rhetorical texts generally reproduce only the words. The first two chapters of this book discuss this visual heritage, and show how the diagrams that these texts used are not merely curious accessories but an integral part of the text itself, inasmuch as they give expression to a precise cultural project and a way of perceiving and communicating knowledge.

In the mid-1500s method becomes one of the new aspects of the art of memory. Great faith is placed in the possibility of formulating a method that will rigorously regulate both knowledge and the ways of communicating and recalling it. The diagrams, the tables, and the large schemes in the form of *trees* visualize the logical path to be taken, and hence all of the material is presented to the eye reordered and reorganized in a clear, effective fashion that is easy to remember. The new directions of logic and dialectics interact productively with the new possibilities created by the book and by the ordered and reproducible space of the printed page.

The first two chapters of this book show how visual techniques play an important role in those decades of the century that saw the greatest expansion of printed vernacular texts and the formation and consolidation of a classicizing Italian canon. 'Making knowledge visible,' for example, is an essential component in the modern, yet utopian project of the Accademia Veneziana (chapter 1), which sees its maturation in the Venice of Aretino, Titian, and the printer Aldo Manuzio. Although it relies on the patrimony and political prestige of a great Venetian family, the Accademia Veneziana's cultural program is addressed to the world: in the name of good letters and beautiful books it dreams of ending the lacerating political and religious divisions of the cinquecento.

The use of visual schemata (diagrams, trees), however, extends far beyond the Accademia Veneziana and its projects. The second chapter follows these schemata through university courses, scholastic books,

and the rhetorics and poetics of Aristotelians and Platonists, laymen and ecclesiastics. It is thanks to texts like these that models of fine vernacular writing and the literary canon, developed in debates over language and genre, become a shared cultural heritage. At the same time, the medium transforms the message, and the forms of communication remodel the contents. In the sixteenth century visual charts not only place before the eyes of all, in a rapid and effective way, the path to follow in order to write well, but tend to reduce the procedures of literary composition to a combinatorial mechanism. Diagrams subject the great works of literature to anatomical dissection according to one widely known metaphor, and according to another commonly held conviction they also create the conditions in which one can recompose the parts and give life to a new body (or text). The visual schemata thus tend to become actual machines for producing texts: situated midway between the library and the writing desk, they act as an *interface* between the reading of texts and the creation of new ones. Rhetorical machines, in fact, regulate and structure memory, and therefore they provide material ready to use for invention. They offer words and images already predisposed for reorganization in the *places* of the text.

The literary classicism of the early cinquecento can be perceived as an automatic, reproducible mechanism, almost a game. This is the idea of one of the main protagonists of the second chapter, Orazio Toscanella, schoolmaster and collaborator of the major Venetian editors. Forgotten today, in his time he enjoyed a certain fame in Italy and Europe (it is highly probable, for example, that it is his book that Federico Borromeo was consulting and annotating on 1 January 1595). The third chapter starts with this provocative idea of a game – which has affinities to the modern school of thought, from Johan Huizinga to Gregory Bateson, that has emphasized the analogy between literature and play.¹³ Going backward in time, to the incunabula of cinquecento classicism, we bring to light the ludic dimension that is present in Bembo's *Asolani* and deeply embedded in the basic mechanisms of the literary practice of the period. The imitation of literary models becomes a competition, a virtuoso's game of variation based on the words and images handed down from the past and chosen from a codified literary canon. The game needs, in fact, a closed and artificial space, and it requires (and mobilizes) the memory of all those who participate, both the writer and his audience: the game does not work if the writer cannot find an interlocutor capable of remembering, and hence recognizing, the text that is the object of imitation or emulation.

Within the literary code the ultimate objective of the writer's game appears to be that of giving form to the sayable: in the three books (and three dialogues) of the *Asolani*, for example, literature puts itself on stage, and makes visible its universal, yet paradoxical dimension, which consists in this case of saying everything about Love: everything in favour, everything against it, and other things besides. So we understand how an unsuspected link associates the great dialogues of the early cinquecento (*Gli Asolani*, but also Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* [The book of the courtier], which originated in the choosing of a game) with the strange and fascinating game-books that would appear in the course of the century, like the *Triumpho di fortuna* [Triumph of fortune] by Sigismondo Fanti or the *Sorti* [Chance] by Francesco Marcolini. Through play, in fact, these books guide the reader along a path – or better yet, along different paths – of words and images. Starting with a question, the reader/player finds all possible answers, as well as the opposites of those answers. Cultural memory is broken into fragments of stanzas, condensed into images that can be recombined throughout the course of the game. In this way each player can see/remember his own future, and everyone can remember/write his own text. Thus, literary classicism interacts both with the literature of paradox and with the age-old tradition of didactic/mnemonic games that, already in use in the universities in the age of humanism, would become the fad of eighteenth-century Europe.

The perspective of memory, moreover, makes it possible to link the classic texts of the early cinquecento with those collections of games produced at the end of the century that mobilize an entire heritage of cultural, literary, and, above all, iconographic memory, transforming it into an occasion for play. If imitation is, in certain respects, a form of play, and the dialogue is an enactment of the nature and rules of literature, we can understand how there are games that draw upon the memory of literary texts and, vice versa, may culminate in the production of a text. Innocenzo Ringhieri's *Cento giochi liberali e d'ingegno* [One hundred free games of wit] is an example of the reciprocal translatability of literature and games. His one hundred games further suggest to the educated and alert reader the hidden meanings, the cultural and religious disquiet, that play can simultaneously express and mask.

But it is not only this central category of literary classicism, that is, imitation, that reveals new perspectives when shown through the double lens of play and memory. The entire fabric of writing is involved. The central part of the third chapter analyses those areas of cinquecento

experience in which metaphorical and combinatorial play have an effect on the written word, on its decomposition into visualizable parts, on the single letters of the alphabet. We meet rebus/sonnets, cryptic codes, machines for memory, and alchemical works that exalt the new magic of the printing press. We can thus see how memory techniques combine with something that has fascinated European thought in both the sixteenth and succeeding centuries, that is, the analysis of the nature of the sign, experimentation with mixed languages, the search – between play and metaphysics – for a language that unites the letter and the spirit, word and image.

In a certain sense the fourth chapter undertakes a journey in the opposite direction: it passes from memory techniques and the texts in which they are operative to the human subjects who produce them. We examine the nature of the images used by the art of memory, and we delineate the interior space in which they take *place*. These spaces are situated in an intermediate zone, between body and soul, between sensation and rationality, between desire and logic. The images of memory appear, in their turn, to be endowed with disquieting autonomy, with a vitality that can become difficult to control and limit. In many respects they are similar to the phantoms of Eros.

At this point, as we follow the image of the window onto the heart, we encounter different sciences (physiognomy, the art of gestures, the art of memory) that promise to construct an observatory into human interiority, to create an opening through which one can see the gallery of *phantasmata* that inhabits the internal space between the mind and the heart. A long tradition taught how to give shape to these phantoms: repertories and treatises provide the sixteenth century with a grid through which one can observe the inner self, using as signs the physiognomy, the gestures, and the movements of the body. The same grid allows for the reverse procedure. It teaches the painter and the writer how to give shape, through the language of the body, to the passions, the moral dispositions, the *motions* of the soul. Knowledge of this art is the common heritage of the orator, the actor, the cultured reader, and the artist. The art of memory easily recycles these diverse experiences and, in turn, incorporates and augments them: in order to animate the images of its internal theatre, it arranges them precisely in ways that make the language of the body the sign and expression of the language of the soul.

If the first three chapters, then, deal with the mechanical and, in some ways, abstract dimensions of the art of memory, here we focus on its

strong ties to the imaginary and the body. In the process we see that even the diagrammed trees of rhetorical figures and the surface of the literary text reveal an emotive and corporeal depth. As we retrace the intertextual relationships – citation, reappropriation, and plagiarism – that link treatises on memory to treatises on rhetoric and the figurative arts, we rediscover a feature of rhetorical figures that a long season of formalism has hidden from our critical horizon: the ability of the rhetorical figure to depict on the face of the text (as Quintilian puts it) those same passions that gestures depict in our body. This is what allows the art of memory to translate the text into an internal theatre: precisely because memory techniques reproduce internally that theatre of passions which rhetorical figures create on the surface of the text.

The last two chapters show other ways in which the art of memory constructs the map that links interiority with external experience, the visible with the invisible. The fifth chapter deals with the ways by which the tradition of mnemonics teaches how to translate words into images and images into words. These treatises, besides bequeathing a true and proper iconological repertory to their readers, accustom them to projecting narration in a cycle of images, to seeing the literary text in the form of a building, and to perceiving poems as palaces or galleries. Such intellectual habits provide a precise setting for the well-known passage in which Galileo compares the *Orlando furioso* to a splendid picture gallery and the *Gerusalemme liberata* [Jerusalem delivered] to a Mannerist *cabinet*, in which the objects in the collection are piled up in a chaotic and ostentatious way.

In a century in which the panegyric triumphs in literature and the arts, the art of memory teaches how to see biography and portraiture from a single perspective: portraits, in fact, become a synthetic expression or memory-image of a biography. We thus understand how the biographical portraits of Paolo Giovio's *Vite* [Lives] correspond to and ideally superimpose themselves on the famous gallery of portraits in his villa at Como: the paintings in the gallery are the visualized and synthesized version of the biographies. For analogous reasons, in his *Discorso sopra le imagini sacre e profane* [Essay on religious and lay images] Gabriele Paleotti, bishop of Bologna, places Vasari's biographies of the artists and the accompanying portraits of the 1568 edition on the same level. He thus inaugurates a book model destined for enduring success.

Not only is the function played by the art of memory in securing the translatability of words and images evidenced by treatises on mnemon-

ics: it also finds valuable confirmation from those occupied first-hand with projects for pictorial works (like Pirro Ligorio at the Villa d'Este in Tivoli) or from those analysing the work of an artist on the heels of its creation, like Francesco Sansovino when he became an interpreter of the Loggetta in Piazza San Marco, a structure which his father had only recently brought to completion.

While the image of the collection already appears in the fifth chapter, the sixth chapter reconstructs the methods, the metaphors, the ideas through which collecting and the art of memory cross paths and interact. If for many centuries memory has been understood and described as a place containing treasures, the extraordinary reality of the great collections of the sixteenth century greatly expand the potential of the metaphor and cause it to be taken literally: memory, aided and empowered by art, *becomes* the actual chamber of the treasure, the place where a unique collection has been deposited. And thus Saint Teresa of Avila, wishing to find an image that will enable her to remember and articulate, albeit in an inadequate way, the condition of her soul in the moment of mystical union with God, will compare it to the small chamber where the duchess d'Alba kept her treasures. The techniques of memory thus move with ease among words, images, and objects, interested as they are in guaranteeing maximum translatability among diverse planes of reality and in activating – and controlling – a protean game of metamorphosis.

This book is in part an elaboration of earlier essays that are occasionally cited.

Having reached the end of a project that took many long years to complete, I would like to remember and thank at least some of those persons who have been close to me throughout. It was Paola Barocchi who years ago started me off by allowing me to construct an archive of texts on the art of memory, published and unpublished, in the Library of the Scuola Normale in Pisa. I would also like to recall the adventurous experience of the exhibition *La fabbrica del pensiero: dall'arte della memoria alle neuroscienze* and its catalogue (translated into English as *The Enchanted Loom: Chapters in the History of Neuroscience* [New York: Oxford University Press 1991]), and also of the conference *La cultura della memoria* [The culture of memory], and, most of all, the friends with whom I shared it, particularly Massimiliano Rossi.

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The Gallery of Memory

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Making Knowledge Visible: The Accademia Veneziana

1 Federico Badoer and the Founding of the Accademia Veneziana

In just a few short years at the heart of the cinquecento the splendid yet ephemeral story of the Accademia Veneziana was played out. Also known as the Accademia della Fama (after the name of its device, a winged woman whose feet rest on a globe, with a horn in one hand and a scroll in the other that reads, 'I fly to heaven that I may rest with God'; figure 1), the Academy was founded in 1557 and continued to grow until 1561, when it abruptly collapsed.¹ Old and new, realism and utopia, all existed side by side in this short-lived yet highly significant venture. Hermetic and cabbalist leanings were blended with the use of the most modern editorial technology, and the myth of Venice lived side by side with a cosmopolitan perspective.

The Academy was born out of the initiative of Federico Badoer (1519–1593), a member of a patrician family that had traditionally played an important role in the political life and history of Venice.² Badoer began his successful political career very young. From adolescence on, however, his love of letters had an importance for him well beyond that which was generally required of a promising young patrician. This passion led to friendships with other young nobles who shared his interests, like Daniele Barbaro and, most importantly, Domenico Venier. It also led, however, to a deep conflict between the obligations that arose from his family's role in public affairs and his love of learning and desire to devote himself exclusively to his studies. The establishment of the Academy became a way to resolve this conflict.

His love of letters won for the young Badoer the praise of famous literati like Claudio Tolomei and Pietro Bembo, as well as Pietro Aretino,



1 Device of the Accademia della Fama

who was probably an intermediary in his contacts with Titian.³ At the centre of a dense network of relationships, Badoer also represented great hope for those seeking protection and patronage. Many of the restless characters who frequented the printers and publishers of Venice – Niccolò Franco and Anton Francesco Doni, for example – looked to him with great interest.⁴

In 1543 young Francesco Sansovino, son of the famous architect Iacopo Sansovino, dedicated to Badoer one of his *Lettere sopra le dieci giornate del Decameron* [Letters on the ten days of the decameron]. With a tone somewhere between the serious and the mischievous, Sansovino stated that women, according to the laws of nature, ought to be common property and that monogamy was the fruit of the same corruption that had altered the customs of earlier times. A woman's infidelity, therefore, was a proper return to ancient, natural customs.⁵ In these pages Badoer was a part of the playful 'carnavalesque' reversal of common morality that was enunciated in the name of nature-inspired reform. In 1548, however, his name also appeared as the addressee of a work devoted to the subject of matrimony: *De re uxoria* by Francesco

Barbaro, translated into Italian from the Latin by Alberto Lollio for one of the prestigious Giolito editions.

Some years before, Badoer had appeared as one of the interlocutors – together with Luigi Alamanni and Domenico Venier – in the *Dialoghi della naturale philosophia humana* [Dialogues on natural human philosophy] by Antonio Brucioli. Brucioli, a Florentine republican living in exile in Venice, played a very important role in Italian evangelism with his biblical translations and commentaries until 1548 when he was tried and imprisoned by the Inquisition. In a discussion of the relationship between the interior and exterior man in the 1544 edition of the *Dialoghi*, Brucioli has Badoer maintain that human intellect can be raised to a point at which it becomes the equal of angelic intellect and the two can join together.⁶ In contrast with traditional orthodox views, the distance between the angelic and the human worlds thus tends to disappear.

Badoer was also one of the addressees of the letters of Andrea Calmo. A curious work in Venetian dialect, this text was intended for the most part as a repertory for actors' improvisation.⁷

Thus, young Federico was clearly active on the cultural scene of Venice. The portrait of him handed down by these texts, however, is highly varied: a mixture of libertine game playing, patronage, a taste for literature, and philosophical and religious commitment on the margins of orthodoxy.

When he founded the Academy in 1557, Badoer was already the veteran of a prestigious diplomatic mission to the imperial court. According to Girolamo Tiraboschi, the great literary historian of the eighteenth century, the birth of the Academy was closely related to the group of poets and literati that gathered in the home of Domenico Venier, who had been immobilized by an illness in his youth.⁸ Badoer's brotherly friendship with Venier is evidenced by the letters of Bembo, Aretino, and Lodovico Dolce, as well as by the fact that in 1542 Paolo Manuzio, a future member of the Academy, dedicated his collection of letters in Italian to both Badoer and Venier. In a number of instances the two young men were also associated with the older and more noted Girolamo Molin: in Aretino's celebrated letter of 1537, for example, where he describes, in a burlesque and celebratory hodgepodge, a 'voyage to Parnassus'; and also in Doni's *Marmi* [The marble steps]; and in Girolamo Parabosco's *Diporti* [Games].⁹ Although Venier and Molin were not among the signatories of the Academy's *Capitoli* [Agreements], they certainly gave direct help and added the weight of their prestige to the undertaking.¹⁰

While this group was the original nucleus of the Academy, Badoer's

participation undoubtedly made it into something fundamentally different. From its beginnings as a group of friends and literati, the Academy developed into an institution characterized by a complex internal structure, by strong extension into the outside world, and by the intention to play a prestigious role in the life of the Republic. In official documents, for example, Badoer wrote that the Academy was born through divine inspiration, which he closely connected with its political activity and public service; he extolled the 'utility, delight, and great ornament' produced by the Academy.¹¹

The external activity of the Academy developed on two levels: public lectures and editorial activity. Internal activities included debates on certain *questions*, readings of ancient and modern texts, and discussions on what works ought to be printed. Great care was given to the public image of the Academy. The letters of Bernardo Tasso, who in 1559 accepted the position of chancellor of the Academy on the basis of rather favourable financial considerations, provide an example of the careful orchestration of public readings and the particular attention given to the quality and quantity of the audience.¹² Consensus was a vital condition for such an ambitious project, which had been 'upset' by the 'difficulties' and 'malice' and 'envy of men' since its beginnings, as Tasso reported.¹³ In the early years, however, the Academy was in a phase of full expansion. Badoer's *Instrumento* (an act registered with a rotary), although limited solely to the 'regents' and 'secretaries' of the various parts of the Academy, listed one hundred members at the end of 1560. In 1558 the library had been inaugurated and would later be opened to the public, wrote Carlo Sigonio, who held the office of regent of the Humanists.¹⁴ With its public lectures on 'matters of states, provinces, and kingdoms,' the Academy directed itself to a specific group of consumer: young Venetian patricians.¹⁵ To them, the future leaders and administrators of the Republic, it intended to introduce the most modern techniques in the fields of logic, linguistics, and rhetoric.¹⁶ The Academy offered the Republic the fruits of a sophisticated culture, independent, even with regard to the places and modalities of the transmission of knowledge, from the world of the university.¹⁷

Editorial production, the other component of the Academy's public life, was entrusted to a printer with a prestigious name: the director of the printing press was none other than Paolo Manuzio [Paulus Manutius]. The excellent quality of the books published by the Academy, that is, the beauty of the type and the paper, played an important role. Molin reminded Tasso of its excellence in this area when it was

trying to convince him to give his *Amadigi* to the Academy for publication, and the Council of Ten cited it in its deliberations in May 1560, when it decided to grant the Academy the rights to publish all official acts of the Republic.¹⁸ The high standards of printing marked an element of continuity with the Aldine tradition. Even the structure of the Academy, that is, the union of literati and printers, was modelled after the Academy of Aldo Manuzio [Aldus]. There was a strong connection, as we will see, even in the editorial program.¹⁹ One element of divergence and a substantial peculiarity with respect to the Venetian tradition, however, was the direct involvement of a patrician in the editorial enterprise.

2 The Editorial Program: The New Vernacular Literature and 'Ancient Knowledge'

The Academy's *Somma*, or compendium, published in 1558 and followed the next year by a Latin version, was a faithful portrait of a most ambitious editorial project. It was in its way a manifesto, a calling card, that the Academy put into circulation throughout Europe and Italy. The encyclopedic dimension of the *Somma* made it into a sort of universal catalogue, even though its contents were in sharp contrast with the works that had actually been printed: these were meagre in number, and the criteria according to which they had been chosen were rather unclear. This gives rise to the suspicion that the publicity for the *Somma* and the calculated dosage of dedications – aimed at eliciting the approval and protection of clergymen, merchant noblemen, and political exponents from different fields – were more important than anything else in the early phase of the Academy's life. It is for this reason that the *Somma* offers us such useful data for the reconstruction of the cultural model to which the Academy aspired.

The correspondence between the structure of the *Somma* and that of the Academy, for example, is an interesting first indication of this model. The division into disciplines in which the different works of the *Somma* are catalogued was exactly the same as the division of the *Consiglio delle scienze* [Council of the sciences], which determined the subdivisions among the members of the Academy. The same encyclopedic model thus inspired the internal organization of the Academy as well as its editorial program.

The *Somma* bears witness to a continuity with the Venetian Renaissance and humanist philological tradition (as exemplified by the work

of Aldo Manuzio), which was characterized by a strong relationship between the printing industry and the new wave of interest in vernacular language and literature. The members of the Academy intend, writes Molin to Tasso, to publish ancient books in every discipline, and

not only to purge those books of their infinite errors and inaccuracies, which they in truth carry with them to the great detriment of scholars, but to bring them out into the light, together with many useful annotations, disquisitions, glosses, and translations in different languages ... Besides this, they intend to produce new works, and works never printed, of their own as well as others.²⁰

The number and quality of the translations into the vernacular projected by the Academy are truly remarkable. There are works on mathematics, some of the most obscure Platonic texts, and also a contemporary text, *De harmonia mundi* [On the harmony of the world] by Francesco Giorgio Veneto, a work that already smacked of heresy.²¹ The Academy thus became a protagonist in a process that found its fulfilment in Venice between 1550 and 1560: the vernacular was acquiring a strong self-awareness, a sense of its own dignity and autonomy, in the field of poetry (both in theoretical reflection as well as in experimentation in the highest of genres) and generally in the field of printing. The great number of classical texts translated into the vernacular responded, as Amedeo Quondam wrote, 'to both the supply and the demand of mainstream literature.' It was both the result and also the cause of an extension of literacy that gave access to reading to a much wider audience.²²

The case of *De harmonia mundi* is indicative of the Academy's strong interest in the hermetic and Neoplatonic tradition, as well as the pre-Socratic philosophers and Pythagorean thought. The Academy thus embodies a continuation of Marsilio Ficino's work in rescuing, translating, and elaborating the Platonic and hermetic traditions.²³ This is evident even in its concept of poetry: poetry is seen as a repository of hidden knowledge and understanding that simultaneously reveals and hides itself, thus reserving access to its treasures for a select few. The *Somma* promises, in fact, a discourse 'on poetic theology, divided into four books, in which one can clearly see how the greatest mysteries of philosophy are hidden under the skin of the ancients' fables as well as some of the modern poets.' Also promised are works on Homer, Virgil, and Ovid that will both provide the key to the secrets of knowledge

hidden in their texts and allow one to recognize the structure of each work and its rhetorical figures.²⁴

The concept of poetry as a repository of hidden knowledge gives a particular connotation to the Bembo classicism still vigorous in the environment of the Academy. The stylistic models codified in Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* [Discussions of the vernacular language], characterized by the predominance of Petrarch's lyric poetry, are clearly present, although not exclusive. One projected work is an edition of Petrarch that is to be accompanied by autograph fragments of Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* taken from a codex that had belonged to Bembo.²⁵ Also promised is an edition of 'Dante, clarified by a new and most learned commentary that will reveal his deepest meanings perhaps better than any other before it.'²⁶ A full recognition of the value of Ariosto's poetry will inform a treatise, still to be published, on the wisdom of the *Orlando furioso*, a work 'on the beauties of Ariosto,' that is, 'the moral and natural allegories of the poet, comparing him with Homer and Virgil in the offices of poetry.'²⁷

This approach to poetry is typified by an unpublished text that Giacomo Tiepolo dedicated to Badoer and his Academy, *Il primo discorso sopra il Dante poeta* [The first essay on Dante the poet]. In this case the initial verses of the *Divina Commedia* become the pretext for the construction of a sort of patchwork of Neoplatonic, hermetic, and cabbalist themes. Dante's *selva oscura* [dark wood], for example, is interpreted as chaos (or first matter). The trees of the Earthly Paradise, however, are 'the fruit-bearing trees of illustrious and everlasting ideas.' Their true meaning is revealed to man only at the culmination of a process of moral elevation by which he realizes that he has 'within himself the Earthly Paradise unknown to many because they dwell in vain on the rind of the holy writings.'²⁸ The poetic text thus offers a way to penetrate into a world of eternal truths that man can find in the depths of his own interior self. This commentary on Dante's poetry gives Tiepolo the opportunity to expose ideas that had thrived for some time in the works of Giorgio Veneto and Camillo. They are ideas that must have been both familiar and dear to Badoer and his friends.²⁹

The conceptions that inspired these editorial programs perfectly matched the poetic practices and theoretical reflections of the leading poets of Badoer's brotherhood. It is highly probable, for example, that it was expressly for the Academy that Celio Magno wrote his *Prefazione sopra il Petrarca* [Introduction to Petrarch], a text which proclaims the primary

religious character of poetry. The result is the reversal of the classical hierarchy of genres: the first position goes to the lyric, thus permitting a marriage of the ancient poetry of the psalms with the modern experience of vernacular poetry.³⁰

Another text on poetics, *Ragionamento della poesia* [Discourse on poetry] by Bernardo Tasso, was read aloud in the Academy. In accordance with the humanist model, this work exalts poetry inasmuch as it 'embraces and encloses in its bosom all the arts and sciences.' The rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* and the work of his translators and commentators are seen in a quasi-providential light: 'now, in the fortunate and happy circumstance of this century,' Tasso writes, learning the art of poetry

is not so difficult as in past centuries when men strained, often in vain, merely to read and observe the great poets through prolonged study and vigils. Now the *Poetics* of the famous philosopher, certain and reliable guide, leads us along the difficult roads of poetry and teaches us with such order and detail this art that has been buried for so long in the murky darkness of the world's ignorance.³¹

In keeping with the climate of the Academy, Tasso's *Ragionamento* appears to have been born out of the effort to reassemble the literary experience of different epochs within a unified framework and to hide (almost as if to exorcise) the conflicts that had already appeared in contemporary poetics behind a screen of syncretic unity.

3 The Structure of the Visual Encyclopedia

Both the *Somma* and the *Instrumento* of 1560 contain elements that help to explain the nature of the encyclopedism that inspired the outline of the *Somma* and the structure of the Academy. In the *Instrumento* Badoer dictated some instructions before leaving for an official mission (he left the Academy in the hands of three nephews and Abbot Morlupino):

In order that it [the Academy] may be understood and consequently better supported by them and by others, I wish to represent my concept and the form I have given it. I founded this Academy in the likeness of the human body, which, having been made in the likeness of God, I believe could not be of greater perfection.

In the place of the head, therefore, I made the Oratory, where all of the noble and illustrious doctors of the Academy may observe the sacraments and the divine office. For the chest, the Council of all the Sciences, Arts, Faculties, and all the provinces and states of the world.

For the right arm, the Economic Council.

For the left, the Political Council.

For the right thigh, the Treasury.

For the left, the Chancellery.

For the right leg, the Gallery.

For the left, the Secretariat.

For the right foot, the Printing Press.

For the left, the Library.³²

Thus, in the *Instrumento* of 1560 encyclopedism is presented through the commonplace figure of the human body as microcosm. Badoer uses it here as a global metaphor, capable of providing him with all the necessary subdivisions and relationships: the *loci* of the human body also function as the *loci* of the Academy. In other words, they give spatial and logical positions to the internal divisions of the academic system (or, in this case, organism). We can visualize Badoer's *concept* and *form* through this Arcimboldesque imagery, similar to that which would inspire books like the Arcimboldo of the professions (Paris: rue Saint-Jacques, à la 'Pomme d'Or') by Nicolas Larmessin, published at the end of the seventeenth century.

The ideas and images used by Badoer were common, not only in the environs of the Academy, but also in some of the movements that were taking hold throughout Europe. For example, in his *Discorso intorno alle cinque parti de l'oratore* [Essay on the five parts of oration] (published in 1560, together with his *Lettere volgari*), Paolo Manuzio stresses the importance of *dispositio*, or the ordering of material in oration. He notes that the love of classification is the fruit of the imprint left by God on man and the order of the universe.³³

The concept of the musical, mathematical model of divine order impressed on the microcosm and macrocosm has great repercussions in the human arts. It becomes, for example, an easily reproducible source of delight, not only in the universe of words, but also, as Vitruvius had already taught, in architecture. In 1535 similar criteria had been invoked by Giorgio Veneto (a figure greatly admired by the Venetian Academicians) to guide the restoration of the Church of San Francesco della Vigna.³⁴