

CICOGNARA'S 'CATALOGO RAGIONATO' AS A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TOOL

After its publication in 1821, the *Catalogo ragionato dei libri d'arte e d'antichità* written by Leopoldo Cicognara was included in *Bibliografia* dedicated to *Belle Arti* of Gabinetto Scientifico e Letterario G. P. Vieusseux. The review, written by Gaetano Cioni and printed in the fourth volume of *Antologia*, highlights the more interesting peculiarities of *Catalogo ragionato*:

chiunque si compiaccia di percorrere questi due volumi si persuaderà agevolmente del pregio, in cui debba tenersi la doviziosa raccolta del celebre conte Cicognara, non tanto per numero, quanto ancora per merito de' libri che la compongono. Una ragguardevole collezione di 4800 opere diverse, la massima parte delle quali arricchite di tavole e disegni d'ogni genere pertinenti tutti alle belle arti, alla storia, all'antiquaria e a tutte le altre umane discipline che con quelle hanno qualche relazione, forma una biblioteca che può a ragione considerarsi una delle più preziose d'Europa, e degna di succedere in credito a quelle che possedevano il celebre ab. Bianconi, e il coltissimo cav. Giuseppe Bossi, meritissimo segretario il primo dell'accademia milanese, l'altro esimio e dotto dipintore.

Gaetano Cioni describes in detail the structure of the *Catalogo*, its division into subjects areas, and also adds a series of exemples. He focuses on the importance and merits of *Catalogo*, in its own right identifies its importance as a bibliographical tool:

il presente catalogo può essere utile non solo agli artisti eruditi, a' quali potrebber giovare le cognizioni che riguardano alle diverse diramazioni delle medesime, ma eziandio agli eruditi letterati e bibliografi, i quali oltre le semplici notizie di libri e delle edizioni, troveranno un pascolo soddisfacente nelle frequenti e importanti annotazioni che ai più pregiati libri per rarità di edizione o per merito intrinseco sono apposte.

He quotes large passages from it. In fact, the *Proemio* provides an excellent tool of interpretation of Cicognara's thoughts about his library. He explains that he composed the catalogue to please his friends' requests. Cicognara never made the slightest allusion to what had happened to his library, its sale or to the desire to maintain his collection intact. In fact, once it was sold, Pietro Giordani writes to his friend to congratulate him on the ultimate destination of collection of volumes:

ci è del bene, e del male, come in tutte le cose del mondo. È un vero bene che resti in Italia; resti intera e non vadano disperse e perdute tante tue fatiche e pensieri di molti anni; sia collocata in sede splendidissima, ad onore e profitto d'ingegni italiani. Questo dee consolarti molto, e come Leopoldo (voglio dir uomo bravissimo) e come buon italiano; io certo me ne consolo assai, con te, e con la povera madre (l'*Italia*). Ci è poi del male: perché devi figurarti che io sento benissimo la tua grave e ingiusta pena nel distaccarti da sì cari acquisti, che ti costan tanto e di fortuna e di cure.

In the *Proemio*, Cicognara never uses the word “biblioteca/library” to define his collection of volumes, he explains that his work «non è che un puro Elenco de’Libri da me posseduti», is just a list of his own books, and he talks about his treasure using the word “Collezione di Libri” or “Raccolta”. These references derive from the semantics of art collecting rather than from book collecting.

Between the 17th and 18th century, we can observe the transition from Wunderkammern, which represents the collector’s taste and curiosities to a methodically ordered placing of collections which foreshadows the modern Museum. The encyclopedic plan and the eclectic peculiarity remain but the convergence on a definite idea is expressed with a new lexicon. Cicognara endeavours to collect and preserve of works of art: as for public interest, he promotes the defence of the artistic heritage of Venice in his capacity as president of Accademia di Belle Arti and then president of Ateneo Veneto; while in his private life, it is worth remembering the fusion between artistic and literary interests illustrated in two letters. On 18 August 1832, Leopoldo Cicognara writes to Gino Capponi:

a me pare impossibile di avere radunate nella mia vita tre cose di tanta rarità e ricchezza: la biblioteca d’arte e d’antichità, la collezioni di nielli e carte, e la ricchissima collezione delle stampe antiche

and then, on 20 October 1825 to the Count Gerolamo Possenti da Fabriano:

fin tanto che la voglia di ampliare la troppo ricca mia collezione di libri d’arte e di antichità mi agitava, io trovava nelle ricerche di libri, e nel loro acquisto un grandissimo sollievo, e un godimento vero. Ma da che ne fu fatto deposito nella Biblioteca Vaticana, staccatomi da que’ cari compagni della miglior mia vita, non ebbi più la risorsa di credermi felice nel giorno ch’io facessi l’acquisto d’un raro libro. Siccome però non si può stare senza una qualche passione che agiti il cuore, ed il mio non è più agibile che per gli studi di questo genere, così ai libri, da cui mi sono distaccato sono successe le stampe, le quali mi accompagneranno ne’ miei funerali.

The *Catalogo ragionato* was not prepared just for the purpose of selling the collection or for crosschecking the removal of books from Venice to Rome. It is an artistic, literary and documentary proof that allows us to compare this work with the contemporary art catalogues which began to appear at that time. Really, Linda Borean (BOREAN 2009) notes the appearance printed catalogue in the middle of the 18th century.

Printed catalogues replaced illustrated repertories, such as *Dactyliotheca* by Anton Maria Zanetti il Giovane or *Dactyliotheca Smithiana* which belonged to British Consul Joseph Smith, and which brought fame to sculptures, precious gemstones and ancient medals.

As progenitor of this new literary genre, Borean suggests the catalogue of Bonomo Algarotti. Maria Algarotti Corniani had it printed in memory of her father and it describes the collection started by the uncle, Francesco Algarotti. The *Catalogo dei Quadri dei Disegni e dei Libri che trattano l'arte del disegno della Galleria del fu Sign. Conte Algarotti* (Venice 1776) was written by Giannantonio Selva. Selva was an architect, professor at Venetian Accademia, Cicognara's companion during the compilation of the two volumes of *Le Fabbriche più cospicue di Venezia* (Alvisopoli, 1815, 1820). Selva's *Catalogo* shows the full names of all the artists in alphabetical order and provides biographical explanations, information about pictorial techniques and the size of work. The unidentified works, created by «*autori incogniti*», are divided into schools. Sometimes we can find the origins of the masterpiece, especially in the case of pictures that came from religious buildings. The lemma is enriched with comparisons with other pieces of the collection, or with a list of copies and engravings, or with opinions about workmanship quality or repair, with notes about how it was purchased, or even literary allusions. So, this work seems to be a complete *vademecum* for the connoisseur.

In Venice, the appearance of this new literary genre follows in the footsteps of a European tendency, commented on by Krysztof Pomian (POMIAN 2007). The Polish Scholar asserts that the purpose of catalogues has changed: they not simply a supplement required for the sale of a collection but, along with the inventory, are an essential tool to describe an artistic collection.

Cicognara follows the example of foreign precursors as a large section of the book dedicated to the art catalogue testifies. In the second volume, under the item "Cataloghi" 195 titles are listed and the most of them were printed in France. The absence of Cicognara's notes stands out: only occasionally he does point out the features and relevance of works. However, he definitely follows the example of French catalogues by starting with the choice of the title *Catalogo ragionato*.

Pierre-Jean Mariette is considered to be the creator of this new literary genre. Mariette, collector and art writer, bookseller and engraver, honorary member of the Florentine Accademia delle Arti e del Disegno since 1733, was the doyen of French bibliography and a prolific catalogue author. Cicognara has some books belonging to him with handwritten annotations, for instance *Dialogo della pittura di Ludovico Dolce* (n. 110) or *Rimedio contro la fortuna tradotto in tedesco di Francesco Petrarca* (n. 1109), but also books written by Mariette or printed by his typography.

When he was young, Mariette was in Vienna to catalogue Prince Eugenio di Savoia's collection of prints, then he travelled around Italy. He planned an unfinished world history of engraving. But now, the most interesting work is the catalogue prepared by Pierre-Jean Mariette for

the sale of the considerable collection belonging to his friend, the rich patron of arts, Pierre Crozat. Crozat was an polite collector: his collection included Italian masterpieces, drawings and paintings. In 1741, he drew up a “catalogue raisonnée” and he started a literary tradition continued by Edme-François Gersaint, Pierre François Basan, Jean-Baptiste Regnault. These were well-know personalities for Cicognara because he wrote about being in possession of their works in his *Catalogo ragionato*.

Francis Haskell (HASKELL 1987) focuses on Mariette’s innovation based on his historical and critical attitude. Its catalogue was not draw up just as a sales catalogue but it was also aimed at satisfying the curiosity of art lover. The catalogue is divided in different parts; they coincide with the different parts of the collection. An introduction explains the importance of drawings and how they will improve taste and knowledge of history of art. Then, he makes a distinction between the different schools and analyses the associated works. Crozat and Mariette made an ambitious plan to reproduce all drawings held at Cabinet du Roi or close to other important Parisian collections. Cicognara mentions this in the section of his book dedicated to “Grandi Musei Gallerie, e opere di pittura” at number

3447: Recueil d’Etampes d’après le plus beaux Tableaux et d’après les pus beaux desseins qui sont en France dans le Cabinet du Roy et dans celui du Duc d’Orleans, et dans autres Cabinets. Paris, 2 vol. in fol. 1729-42

Questa è l’opera conosciuta sotto il nome di Gabinetto di Crozat con una descrizione storica di Mariette, e un estratto delle memorie della vita di ciascun artista. Prima edizione e preziosa per la freschezza e bellezza delle stampe, di mano de’primi intagliatori: contiene questa Raccolta 182 tavole, delle quali 42 non hanno i numeri.

In the part headlined “Cataloghi” he quotes this title, schematically and without any annotations:

4404: Mariette P. I. Description sommaire de desseins des grand Maitres d’Italie, de’Pays-Bas, et de France du Cabinet de M. Crozat. Paris 1741.

- On y a joint la description des pierres gravées et celle des statues, bronzes, et vases.

We have not doubt about Cicognara’s admiration in spite of the concise notes.

But, can book collecting be considered a ramification of art collecting? If the art collections exhibit a history of taste and an indipendent elaboration of aesthetical opinion, book collections aspire to reproduce literay history through admissions and omissions: it is a strategy to represent an ideal cultural model.

What is the relationship between *notitia litteraria* and *notita librorum* as far as the *Catalogo ragionato* is concerned? The two criteria are not completely equivalent. Cicognara confesses the absence of famous or easily available works but he looks for volumes which satisfy his *curiositas*. His library shows the interest of the possessor, it testifies to the fortune and the type of welcome that is given to writers, artists and masterpieces from Cicognara's perspective and taxonomic paradigm.

Recently, some initiatives, coordinated by prof. Massimiliano Rossi, concerning the collection of books reproduced on microfiche by the Cicognara Project and bought by Università del Salento in 2006, have brought to light Cicognara's passion for book collecting. Specifically, the project of importing dates, promoted with the collaboration of the Biblioteca Interfacoltà "T. Pellegrino" and the Vatican Library has highlighted the consistencies and inconsistencies between the *Catalogo ragionato* and microfiche content. Through a comparison between bibliographical descriptions provided by the Vatican Library and Cicognara's notes, we could understand his taxonomic and bibliographical paradigm and investigate the peculiarities of this book.

Leopoldo Cicognara describes the book using invariable categories: author, title, edition. Each book is defined by the date of issue, size, and substance expressed in the number of pages and the number of illustrations. The identity of the author is often uncertain: Cicognara is inclined to assign all the credit for a work to the illustrator and he does not attach much importance to the text. A set of illustrations is an essential qualification and also in his *Storia della Scultura* he sees to equip the text with high quality pictures:

meglio che alla descrizione verbale suppliranno le tavole dei dettagli che noi presentiamo, acciò che sieno pienamente conosciute le bellezze, le proporzioni, e i singolari ornamenti. [...]

Ogni ulteriore particolarità, che da noi non fosse indicata sui pregi di questo bel monumento, non servirebbe che ad allungare inutilmente questo capitolo, presentandone già bastevolmente l'idea queste nostre tavole, e lasciandone all'osservatore il modo di poter maturare tutte quelle riflessioni ch'egli è ben felice di poter fare, senza che ad ogni passo sia condotto dall'insistente guida dello scrittore.

He also suggests a personal form for the title: Cicognara tends to summarize or paraphrase the informations presented in the title-page.

At the end of the *Catalogo ragionato*, we can find an alphabetical index: every author is connected to the titles and a number which helps to trace works and to read Cicognara's considerations. Walter Ong (ONG 1986) suggests that the presence of an index and taxonomic system is a mnemonic strategy typical of oral and visual cultures. The classification facilitates the access at

books and became a map that orientates the lector in the ideal and real library. The classification of objects and informations is a peculiarity of literary works written by Leopoldo Cicognara.

Before the compilation of the *Catalogo ragionato*, he printed his two major works, one dedicated to sculpture and the other to architecture where we can observe his intent to offer accurate classification.

Barbara Steindl (STEINDL 2007) picks out that *Storia della scultura* and the catalogue of great art collections have in common the same descriptive technique: he recognizes the author, the subject, the origin, the quality and the preservation.

In Elena Granuzzo's opinion (GRANUZZO 2011), the work *Memorie spettanti alla storia della calcografia* also follows a taxonomical plan: Leopoldo Cicognara retraces the history of engraving and describes typesetting. The works are classified according to their place of origin and he provides a list of rare works. The illustrative tables are a tool of study and verification.

Also for his two volumes of *Le Fabbriche più cospicue di Venezia*, Cicognara studies a similar method: the history of Venetian architecture is divided into different ages. Each period is represented by emblematic buildings or monuments which are indexed, illustrated by pictures drawn by students from Venetian Accademia di Belle Arti and explained by historical-critical papers.

The *Catalogo ragionato* presents literary and artistic connotations: it is a bibliographical and critical tool to find one's way through the rich crop of artistic literary sources. In these annotations he makes no reference to himself. However it is very hard to imagine that they are only intended for the Vatican librarians whose task it was to organize the volumes on their shelves. It is quite clear that Cicognara intended to guide the reader or visitor either figuratively or literally so they could appreciate his collection of precious books. In his *Osservazioni sulla bibliomania*, he writes:

la passione dei liberi non regolata dalla filosofia e da uno spirito illuminato è una delle più ridicole. Bisogna o possedere i libri per studiarli e distinguerne il merito con filosofico discernimento; ovvero per farne parte ad altri con liberalità, con piacere, e senza riserva.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOREAN 2009

LINDA BOREAN, *Dalla galleria al "museo": un viaggio attraverso pitture, disegni e stampe nel collezionismo veneziano del Settecento*, in *Il collezionismo d'arte a Venezia. Il Settecento*, a cura di Linda Borean e Stefania Mason, Venezia, Marsilio, 2009, pp. 3-47.

GRANUZZO 2011

ELENA GRANUZZO, *Il carteggio Cicognara alla Biblioteca estense di Modena*, in *Le carte vive. Epistolari e carteggi nel Settecento*, a cura di Corrado Viola, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2011, pp. 419-427.

HASKELL 1987

FRANCIS HASKELL, *La nascita del libro d'arte*, «Ateneo Veneto», CLXXIV (XXV n.s.), 25, 1987, pp. 7-18.

ONG 1986

WALTER J. ONG, *Oralità e scrittura: le tecnologie della parola*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1986 (*Orality and Literacy: the technologizing of the world*, London-New York, Methuen, 1982).

POMIAN 2007

KRZYSZTOF POMIAN, *Collezionisti, amatori e curiosi. Parigi-Venezia XVI-XVIII secolo*, Milano, il Saggiatore, 2007 (*Collectionneurs, amateurs et curieux, Paris, Venise: XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Gallimard, 1987).

STEINDL 2007

BARBARA STEINDL, *Per un inquadramento della Storia della scultura: impostazioni storiografica e rapporto con Giordani*, in *Storia della scultura dal suo risorgimento in Italia fino al secolo di Canova del conte Leopoldo Cicognara per servire di continuazione all'opere di Winkelmann e di D'Angicourt*, a cura di Francesco Leone, Barbara Steindl, Gianni Venturi, Padova, il Poligrafo, 2007, pp. 15-62.

SILVIA VANTAGGIATO

Università del Salento

silvia.vantaggiato@gmail.com