
**'Try what my credit can in Venice do':
The Consumption of British Painting at the Venice Biennale,
1895-1914**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Declaration of Authorship

I, Marie Tavinor, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own.

Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: 

Date: 18.06.2016

ABSTRACT

**‘Try what my credit can in Venice do’:
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With a few notable exceptions, British painters from the late Victorian and Edwardian periods have suffered from the modernist bias which deemed them ‘insular’ and unworthy of study. Recent developments in art history have generally revised such scathing opinion and have sought to reassess the artistic quality of many pre-war British painters.

While riding this wave of reappraisals, this dissertation is less interested in entering the aesthetic debate than disputing the ‘insular’ nature of late Victorian and Edwardian art. Indeed, by drawing from an interdisciplinary approach including cultural studies, cultural economics, sociology and art history, the present study aims at contextualising late Victorian and Edwardian painting in an international artistic environment in order to assess its visual and commercial consumption.

Due to its dual nature as exhibition and commercial platform as well as some strong *Anglophile* leaning in its early period, the Venice Biennale arguably provides an attractive case study. Over its eleven ante-bellum editions running between 1895 and 1914, its visibility in the field of international art exhibition gradually improved. Chartering the evolution of the presence, reception and commercial consumption of British painters at Venice, this dissertation intends to shed more light on a sample of circa three hundred artists and the extent of their insertion within the exhibiting and commercial mechanisms of the international art world at the time.

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*Choose ... instruction instead of silver
Knowledge rather than choice gold,
For wisdom is more precious than rubies,
And nothing you desire can compare with her
(Proverbs, 8:10-11)*

Although offering many an alluring promise of rich gratifications, instruction, wisdom and knowledge are no easy preys. What the present modest step has taught me is that getting closer to them does not simply derive from personal achievement. Any progress towards them is also a great deal the outcome of other people's unstinting generosity. I have been very lucky to find many companions, who have encouraged, helped, challenged and cheered along the way. To all of them, I owe much and the list below can only partially reflect my true debts.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASAC	Archivio storico delle arti contemporanee
ASBI	Archivio storico della Banca d'Italia
A.R.A.	Associate of the Royal Academy
A.R.S.C.	Associate of the Royal Scottish Academy
A.R.S.W	Associate of the Royal Scottish Watercolour Society
A.R.W.S.	Associate of the Royal Watercolour Society
A.S.W.A.	Associate of the Society of Women Artists
B.I.	British Institution
Exh.	Exhibited
F.A.S.	Fine Art Society
G.G.	Grosvenor Gallery
H.R.M.S	Honorary Member of the Royal Society of Miniature Painters
N.E.A.C.	New English Art Club
N.G.	New Gallery
N.W.S.	New Watercolour Society
O.W.S.	Old Watercolour Society
P.R.A.	President of the Royal Academy
R.A.	Royal Academician
R.B.A.	Member of the Royal Society of British Artists, Suffolk Street
R.E.	Member of the Royal Society of Painters and Etchers
R.I.B.A.	Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects
R.M.S.	Royal Society of Miniature Painters

R.O.I	Member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Oil-Colours
R.S.A.	Member of the Royal Scottish Academy
R.W.S.	Member of the Royal Scottish Watercolour Society
S.A.F.	Société des Artistes Français
S.N.B.A.	Société nationale des Beaux-Arts
S.S.	Society of British Artists, Suffolk Street
S.W.A.	Society of Women Artists

INTRODUCTION

*No man is an island
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.*

John Donne

An article published during the summer 1917 surveyed the field of 'Contemporary Art in England'.¹ Starting with the anecdote of a renowned 'foreign writer of art' visiting England and despondently noticing the provinciality of the British visual arts, it went on to analyse the causes for such inferior production. Historically, it argued that insular fashion more than a live artistic tradition had nourished young English painters apart from a few notable exceptions. Presently, it lamented the general Philistinism of the English art ecosystem and its incapacity to acknowledge that the epicentre of the modern art world was located in Paris. In short, the essay defined the British art scene as provincial, ignorant and suburban thereby putting itself 'beyond the pale of contemporary culture'.² As a consequence of such dire situation, no English artist could possibly boast 'a European reputation'.³ Appropriately, it called for a revisionist historiography of art allocating a distinctly third-rate role to British painting:

It is a fact that their [British artists] work, by reason of its inveterate suburbanity, so wholly lacks significance and seriousness that an impartial historian who could not neglect the mediocre products of North and Middle Europe, would probably dismiss English painting in a couple of paragraphs.⁴

¹ Clive Bell, 'Contemporary Art in England', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 31, 172 (July 1917), pp. 30-37.

² Bell, p. 34.

³ Bell, p. 34.

⁴ Bell, p. 33.

Although this article might have provoked a few raised eyebrows when it was published, its vision of British art gained ground in the following decades. Written by Roger Fry's disciple Clive Bell (1881-1964) and published in the monthly Fry founded, *The Burlington Magazine*, the main arguments of this indictment of the visual art scene in England were generally to become accepted as part of the modernist narrative.⁵

Underpinned by a Hegelian sense of historical progress, Modernism generally presented avant-garde art as the latest logical development of art history thereby using artistic tradition with a view to justify such a teleological sequence. In the case of Roger Fry and his followers, the traditional hierarchy of genres was thus replaced by a strict hierarchy of form which they sometimes called 'plastic consciousness'.⁶ The modernist narrative thus created a broadly Manichean framework of understanding whereby French modern art generally emerged triumphant whereas most British visual arts, especially those produced before the First World War, prompted more cautious and apologetic statements. For example, a post-war art historian could only acknowledge that 'It seems to have been difficult for painters in the late Victorian and Edwardian atmosphere to have realised the possibilities of *forward movement*, the vital impetus contained in French Impressionism' (our italics).⁷ It was thus implied that most British artists of that period had been incapable of understanding the evolutionary aspect of art history by refusing to jump on the bandwagon of Modernism. Such imperviousness to the latest Continental trends was largely attributed to Britain's position as an island; indeed Bell repeatedly used the terms 'insular'. Creating a correspondence between

⁵ Nikolaus Pevsner presented Roger Fry's stance on British art as deriving from 'abject inferiority complex' in *The Englishness of English Art* (Norwich: Penguin, 1956), p. 25.

⁶ John House produced a very useful discussion of the assumptions underpinning the modernist narrative in his chapter 'Coda: Impressionism's Histories Reviewed', in *Impressionism, Paint and Politics* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 207-237.

⁷ William Gaunt, *A Concise History of English Painting* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), p. 201.

physical position and cultural output, historians used a metaphorical displacement of Britain's geography to encapsulate its contribution to art.⁸

The modernist art historical narrative seems to have somewhat undermined our understanding of Britain's contribution to the modern European visual art tradition. In the introduction of *The New Art History* published in the 1980s, Stephen Bann called for an examination of the 'rhetorical underpinning of the historical craft' in order to explore the limits of the modernist episteme.⁹ Clive Bell's postulate of insularity as an intrinsic quality of British art henceforth defined what Michel Foucault has described as its 'condition de possibilité',¹⁰ i.e. the framework of understanding within which art historical investigation could take place. Indeed even when recent developments in art history have questioned the appropriateness of modernist art history to understand modern British art it seems that its shackles were sometimes difficult to shake. Frances Spalding's *British Art Since 1900* sought to justify and illustrate Britain's 'splendid isolation'.¹¹ In her first chapter on figurative artists entitled 'Edwardian reflections' she explained that their emphasis on 'tonal acuity' derived from a close study of Velasquez and Whistler may partly account for their disinterest in the French formal experiments.¹² In addition, although immediately predicating its 'marginal' role, David Solkin underlined the fact that the modernist ideology had been detrimental to a nuanced understanding of the historical causes for this peculiar position.¹³ David Corbett and Lara Perry further questioned the adequacy of a monolithic concept of 'modern'; rather they contextualised its meanings historically to

⁸ For an interesting discussion of the notion of island and its metaphorical use, please see Anthony Strugnell, 'An Island race: Diderot's deconstruction of English history', in *Diderot and European Culture*, ed. by Frédéric Ogée and Anthony Strugnell (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2006), pp. 103-114.

⁹ Stephen Bann, 'How Revolutionary is the New History?', in *The New Art History*, ed. by A.L. Rees and F. Borzello (London: Camden Press, 1986), pp. 19-31 (p. 28).

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses* (Paris : Gallimard, 1966), p. 13.

¹¹ Frances Spalding, *British Art since 1900* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), p. 13.

¹² Spalding, pp. 10-35. She acknowledged in the preface of her book that she had sought to take into account facets of British art which 'had previously been undervalued or ignored'. Spalding, p. 7.

¹³ David Solkin, 'The British and the Modern', in *Towards a Modern Art World*, ed. Brian Allen (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 1.

see which of its categories applied to British art.¹⁴ Art historians have thus increasingly questioned aspects of the modernist episteme even if some were partly reluctant to go beyond its limits.

Concomitantly to – and perhaps as a consequence of – the beginning of the deconstruction of art history and its narratives, an increasing number of publications and exhibitions have reexamined the fame and place of some of the famous Victorian and Edwardian artists from the 1980s onwards. Towards the end of the decade, an exhibition at the Barbican Gallery presented the first comprehensive show of ‘late Romantic’ British artists working in a narrative and figurative manner over a fifty year time span.¹⁵ The process of their reevaluation has accelerated since the end of the last century: whilst some authors reclaimed the quality of academic painters,¹⁶ other exhibitions sought to survey Edwardian Opulence in all its forms (paintings, photographs, artifacts)¹⁷ or focused on renowned painters of the period: John Waterhouse (1849-1917) (London, 2009),¹⁸ Robert Brough (1872-1905) (Aberdeen, 1995),¹⁹ John Lavery (1856-1941) (Ulster, 1984 or Dublin, 2010).²⁰ In 2014, a small exhibition at Tate Britain also explored ‘Forgotten faces’ featuring the last two artists mentioned above as well as others such as Charles Wellington Furse (1868-1904) or

¹⁴ *English Art, 1860-1914, Modern Artists and Identity*, ed. by David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 1-2.

¹⁵ *The Last Romantics, The Romantic Tradition in British Art, Burne-Jones to Stanley Spencer*, ed. by John Christian (London: Lund Humphries, 1989).

¹⁶ *The Edwardians and After: The Royal Academy, 1900-1950*, ed. by MaryAnne Stevens (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1990).

¹⁷ *Edwardian Opulence, British Art at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Angus Trumble and Andrea Wolk Rager (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013). In this publication, Angus Trumble even mentioned that Frank Brangwyn exhibited his works ‘at the Venice Biennales of 1905, 1907 and 1914’, p. 342.

¹⁸ *John Waterhouse: the Modern Pre-Raphaelite*, ed. by Elizabeth Prettejohn and others (Groningen: Groningen Museum; London: The Royal Academy of Arts, 2008).

¹⁹ *Robert Brough, A.R.S.A., 1872-1905* (City of Aberdeen: Aberdeen City Council, Arts & Recreation Division, 1995).

²⁰ *Sir John Lavery, R.A., 1856-1941* (Belfast: Ulster Museum; Edinburgh: Fine Art Society, 1984); Sineád McCool, *Passion and Politics: Sir John Lavery – The Salon Revisited* (Dublin: Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane, 2010).

Ambrose McEvoy (1878-1927).²¹ Of late, some key artistic groups have also received renewed academic interest: for example the Glasgow Boys were the objects of an acclaimed exhibition at the Royal Academy in London in 2010-11.²² Perhaps more than anyone else, art historian Kenneth McConkey has played an important part in recreating an academic historiography of hitherto neglected movements and figures of late Victorian and Edwardian art.²³

Riding this wave of deconstruction and re-appraisals, this dissertation seeks to address Clive Bell's central criticism of 'insularity', i.e. one of the boundaries of the modernist episteme when it comes to studying the British visual arts. However the main problem stemming from crossing boundaries lies in the presence of a largely 'unchartered' territory. Symptomatically most reevaluations of Edwardian artists have left out their international presence or have given it a somewhat cursory treatment.²⁴ The exhibitions quoted above as well McConkey's seminal studies are all examples of this proclivity to study artists as home products mostly destined to home consumption. Indeed William Vaughan pointed out in 2004 that 'the investigation of British art in terms of its international relations is a process that has been gathering pace in recent years. To a certain extent, it is the product of new ways of considering the history of art – and the abandonment of old ones'.²⁵

²¹ Caroline Corbeau-Parsons, *BP Spotlight: Forgotten Faces* (London: Tate Britain, 7 April to 12 October 2014).

²² Roger Billcliffe et al., *Pioneering Painters: the Glasgow Boys, 1880-1900* (Glasgow: Glasgow museums, 2010).

²³ See for example: Kenneth McConkey, *A Painter's Harvest: Works by Henry Herbert La Thangue, R.A., 1859-1929* (Oldham, UK: Oldham Libraries, Museums and Art Galleries, 1978); *Edwardian Portraits: Images of an Age of Opulence* (Woodbridge, UK: Antique Collectors' Club, 1987); *Impressionism in Britain* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1995); *Memory and Desire: Painting in Britain and Ireland at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002); *New English: A History of the New English Art Club* (London: Royal Academy of Art, 2006); *Alfred East: Lyrical Landscape Painter* (Bristol: Sansom & Co, 2009).

²⁴ For example Roger Billcliffe only devoted a final chapter to the Glasgow Boys' international career in his book *The Glasgow Boys* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2008), pp. 292-299.

²⁵ William Vaughan, 'Afterword, British Art and its Histories', in *English Accents, Interactions with British Art, c.1776-1855*, ed. by Christiana Payne and William Vaughan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 251.

Recently, academic publications have increasingly focused on locating British art within an international context. Working on the Pre-Raphaelites, Susan P. Casteras first studied their reception in America;²⁶ then together with Alicia Craig Faxon, they invited scholars to contribute articles on their knowledge of and links with other Continental artists.²⁷ Whilst the latter book mainly probed the relationship between the Pre-Raphaelites and French-speaking Europe, later publications broadened the geographical remit of their transnational studies. For example some articles contained in *Internationalism and the Arts in Britain and Europe at the Fin-de-Siècle* edited by Grace Brockington and focusing on the period 1880-1920 included Central Europe, Scandinavia and Russia.²⁸ It is now not uncommon to find chapters or articles devoted to an artist's international career.²⁹

Thus our understanding of the British visual arts from the late Victorian and Edwardian periods has dramatically changed over the last thirty years due to the questioning of the modernist art historical narrative, the reevaluation of many artists and the opening up of transcultural studies. In its attempt to address the insular 'nature' of British art, the present work owes much to these new approaches and contributions as they provided new theoretical and research avenues to follow.

Clive Bell not only lambasted the blissful insularity of British artists, he also preferred the Paris art ecosystem to its London counterpart as a whole. Indeed, he argued that the former's public, critics and patrons were generally more knowledgeable and open-minded in their appreciation of the latest artistic trends; its

²⁶ Susan P. Casteras, *English Pre-Raphaelitism and its Reception in America in the Nineteenth Century* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Press, 1990).

²⁷ *Pre-Raphaelite Art and its European Context*, ed. by Susan P. Casteras and Alicia Craig Faxon (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1995).

²⁸ *Internationalism and the Arts in Britain and Europe at the Fin-de-Siècle*, ed. by Grace Brockington (Oxford, New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

²⁹ For example Tim Wilcox, 'The Songs of a Wayfarer: Brangwyn's paintings on exhibition in Britain and abroad, c1885-1905', in *Frank Brangwyn, 1867-1956*, ed. by Libby Horner and Gillian Naylor (Leeds: Leeds Museum and Galleries, 2007), pp. 50-69.

education system much more open to experimentations. Bell's discussion thus brought a social and commercial context to underpin contemporary artistic production and consumption. To his mind only a 'fashionable world which dabbles in culture and can afford to pay long prices', or what Marxist art historians have then called *bourgeois* patrons, would consume contemporary English art.³⁰ The insularity of the British painters was thus reinforced by the insularity of the British art consumers both from an institutional and commercial point of view.

Interestingly, Solkin concluded his remarks on 'The British and the Modern' with a call to 'reopen the boundaries between modernist and other forms of painterly practice, and [to] situate all of these practices more securely within the institutional and commercial mechanisms of the modern art world'.³¹ Further to Solkin's approach, Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich also underlined how 'economic factors' have on the whole been left out of art history studies. Their reassessment of 'the processes through which value is assigned to art in both the primary and secondary markets' in fact leads to a reappraisal of 'artists and art works [...]'.³² Contextualising artistic practices commercially and institutionally is thus increasingly advocated as a means to study the complex pre-war period.

Dwelling on these observations, the present dissertation seeks to probe the consumption of British late Victorian and Edwardian art abroad in order to challenge Bell's criticism of 'insularity'. In particular the following questions guided the narrative presented here: how did British art fare on the competitive international artistic scene? How was British art viewed and consumed abroad during the *fin-de-siècle* period? How far was it part of the international institutional and commercial mechanisms of the art world at the time? These questions could only be tentatively answered with the help of a transdisciplinary methodology in which cultural and sociological studies, cultural economics, art market studies, transnationalism and art history mingled. Most of all,

³⁰ Bell, p. 35.

³¹ Solkin, p. 6.

³² *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, 1850-1939*, ed. By Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 1-2.

this analysis demanded a carefully chosen case study which would contain a sample of British visual arts for sale over a period of time coinciding with the rise of the Modernism.

Art historians argue that during the second half of the nineteenth century a phenomenon of 'expansion of the world of art' took place which slowly unified artistic disciplines, democratised public access to the arts, changed the framework of patronage and consumption habits.³³ Exhibitions formed the backbone of that process from a number of perspectives. The 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition in London has been repeatedly used to date this shift in consumer culture as it offered to a widening audience a tantalising amount of goods for comparison thereby acting as 'agent of diffusion' which connected businesses to their potential clientele. Paul Greenhalgh calculated that between 1855 and 1914, 'an event involving more than twenty nations was held somewhere in the world on an average of every two years'.³⁴ This may give a sense of the magnitude of the World Fair phenomenon; yet it does not account for other types of art exhibitions which sprang at all levels, from a privately-owned modest gallery to State-sponsored Salons. In order to grasp the diversity of these exhibition platforms, Elizabeth Gilmore Holt has provided a very useful anthology of the main State-sponsored and artists-led exhibitions between 1874 and 1902 together with their contemporary critical reception.³⁵ In addition, Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich have studied the rise of the modern London art market, which gives an additional dimension to include in any study on the phenomenon of exhibitions during the *fin-de-siècle* era.³⁶ Such structural shift in the art world led to taste being challenged like never before; widely diverging or similar artistic styles were offered to public gaze using the same platform and paraphernalia such as catalogues, tickets, critical reviews

³³ Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, *The Expanding World of Art, 1874-1902*, 2 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), I (1988), 1-17.

³⁴ Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas, the Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 15.

³⁵ Holt, pp. 1-17.

³⁶ Fletcher and Helmreich.

and publications. The multiplication of exhibitions also led to a competition between the platforms in order to attract leading or rising stars of the art world.

An extremely developed and diversified supply of exhibitions on all scales thus provided the backbone of structural and aesthetic changes taking place in the art world during the *fin-de-siècle* period. During that time, the art market moved decidedly towards 'a dealer-critic system' successfully competing with the Academy-directed Salon system which lost its preeminence, sometimes disappearing altogether.³⁷ In parallel, other Salons or exhibition ventures were launched throughout Europe by societies or groups of artists such as the *Salon d'automne* in France in 1903, the *International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Engravers* in 1898 founded by Whistler in London or the *Secessions* in Munich (1892) and in Vienna (1897). These alternative exhibition spaces offered non-academic artists possibilities to be seen and discussed. Their multiplication fostered a diversification of the artistic offer whilst creating a more complex layered system of supply for the art buyers.

The *Esposizione internazionale della Città di Venezia* nowadays known as the Venice Biennale was launched in 1895, a year when at least five other international exhibitions were organised in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and Budapest.³⁸ Much in the same vein as its Munich Glaspalast counterpart, the Venice venture was meant as an official celebration of the Silver Anniversary of Italy's King Umberto and Queen Margherita. First modelled on what Lawrence Alloway defined as 'a Super Salon'³⁹ with a stringent selection process and State-sponsored prizes, the Venice Biennale gradually incorporated elements from World Fairs or the Secessions in its organisation and taste. Absorbing and using the diversity of the exhibition phenomenon enabled the venture to survive and thrive, finally becoming a reference in the art world from the mid-

³⁷ David W. Galenson, Robert Jensen, 'Careers and Canvases: the Rise of the Market for Modern Art in the Nineteenth Century', *National Bureau of Economic Research*, 9123 (2002), p. 13.

³⁸ Jensen, p. 277-278.

³⁹ Lawrence Alloway, *The Venice Biennale, 1895-1968, From Salon to Goldfish Bowl* (London: Faber, 1969), p. 30.

1900s.⁴⁰ In setting up the Biennale, its organisers had three main objectives in mind as was succinctly expressed by its first General Secretary Antonio Fradeletto (1858-1930) in his annual report:

Present to the public the most noble and characteristic examples of contemporary artistic creation;
Promote and refine an aesthetic culture;
Create a substantial art market;⁴¹

Although the second point was mainly intended for the Italian public and artists, the founding aims of the Venice Biennale provide an interesting avenue to analyse the international artistic production of the period: which artists or works were deemed to be 'noble and characteristic'? Which artists or works were sought after? Who were the buyers who came to the pre-war Biennale? These questions provide a convenient framework to approach the British presence at Venice and to confront Clive Bell's remarks regarding artistic practices and the consumption of British art.

True, the early period of the Venice Biennale has been viewed as little more than a system of artistic distribution fostering *bourgeois* taste.⁴² In that respect, it may also have been defined as 'insular' as well thereby adding a layer of complexity to the problem. Of late, in the same way as late Victorian and Edwardian art are being reassessed, the early period of the Venice Biennale is being reexamined. Instead of dismissing in a pun – the Biennale 'was born... old'—⁴³ what was deemed its Salon-like choices and taste, art historians now acknowledge more diversity and quality displayed

⁴⁰ Although he might be suspected of partiality, its first General Secretary Antonio Fradeletto claimed in 1906 'noi, giunti tardi nella gara, abbiamo ormai vinto o stiamo per vincere le Mostre straniere più antiche e più reputate' (Antonio Fradeletto, *La Gestione finanziaria delle Esposizioni internazionali d'arte di Venezia, Relazioni e Bilanci presentati dall'On. A. Fradeletto, Segretario generale al Sindaco, Co. F. Grimani, Presidente* (Venezia: Carlo Ferrari, 1908), p. 20.)

⁴¹ Fradeletto, p. 19: 'Porgere al pubblico gli esemplari più nobili o più caratteristici della creazione artistica contemporanea; estendere ed affinare la coltura estetica; creare un cospicuo mercato d'arte'.

⁴² For example Ivana Mononi, *L'orientamento del gusto attraverso le Biennali* (Milano: La Rete, 1957), p. 12.

⁴³ Enzo di Martino, Paolo Rizzi, *Storia della Biennale, 1895-1982* (Milano: Electa, 1982): 'La Biennale 'è nata... vecchia', p. 15.

in the first years of the Biennale phenomenon.⁴⁴ Lawrence Alloway's pioneering study published in 1969 already called to 'confront its historical density' instead of conveniently polarising academic and modern art.⁴⁵

The choice of the Venice Biennale as case study to address the 'insularity' of British art thus represents a number of advantages: its dual nature as international exhibition platform and commercial venture enable different perspectives on consumption. Also, the historically close relationship between Britain and Venice may add an additional layer of meaning to the present study. Lastly, the timespan chosen of nineteen years between 1895 and 1914 allows to chart the dramatic evolution of the British presence at the Biennale in the years when Cubism, Expressionism and Futurism were born.

As explained above, a largely uncharted territory awaits anyone toying with the postulated boundaries of art history. In the case of the present study, not only do the research questions run counter to the supposed 'insularity' of British art, but its case study is also located in Italy. Indeed another broadly accepted hypothesis underpinning art historical research is to treat the Anglo-Italian artistic relationship as a one-way process whereby the latter radiates over the former. Whilst this dissertation will not question the overall validity of this premise, its purpose is to explore the possibility of an unbalanced yet somewhat reciprocal relationship in which the Italians also took an interest in British artistic production. With these two research avenues, the first major challenge encountered by the present dissertation was thus to check its feasibility.

Unsurprisingly, the secondary literature on British art in Italy is fairly restrained both in English and in Italian. Whilst the literature on the Italian experience of the

⁴⁴ *Venezia e la Biennale, I percorsi del Gusto* (Milano: Fabbri Editori, 1995) or *Arte d'Europa fra due secoli, 1895-1914: Trieste, Venezia e le Biennali*, ed. by Maria Masau Dan and Giuseppe Pavanello (Milano: Electa, 1995).

⁴⁵ Alloway, p. 89.

eighteenth century Grand Tour has been the object of several publications,⁴⁶ the impact of the British artistic presence in nineteenth and early twentieth century in Italy has received more cursory treatment.⁴⁷ So far, critical attention has mostly focussed on the reception of the Pre-Raphaelites and notably on Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882).⁴⁸ On the other hand, the British sections at the Venice Biennale have been the object of a few key studies mostly due to the growing importance of the Biennale phenomenon. The most comprehensive publication on the British presence there was produced for the centenary of the Biennale.⁴⁹ The first chapter written by Sandra Berresford tackled the first few editions from 1895 to 1905 and the shift of attention from the Pre-Raphaelites to Impressionist-influenced painters.⁵⁰ Put together, these works give a broad idea of the main painters exhibiting at the Biennale until 1907 and their reception by Italian critics. In addition, an article by Sophie Bowness discussed the phases of the setting up of the British Pavilion in 1909 and its management until the British Council took over in 1932;⁵¹ it thus addressed the institutional shift which changed the nature of the British presence at the Biennale. However seminal these studies were to assess the feasibility of this dissertation, none of them tackled the

⁴⁶ See for example Ilaria Bignamini, 'The Grand Tour: Open Issues', in *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignamini (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1996), pp. 31-35.; or Ilaria Bignamini, 'The Italians as Spectators and Actors: the Grand Tour Reflected', in *The Impact of Italy, the Grand Tour and Beyond*, ed. Clare Hornsby (London: The British School at Rome, 2000), pp. 29-39.

⁴⁷ Giuliana Pieri, 'D'Annunzio and Alma-Tadema, between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism', *The Modern Language Review*, 96, 2 (April 2001), 361-369.

⁴⁸ Bianca Saletti, 'I preraffaelliti nella critica d'arte in Italia tra Otto e Novecento', in *I Rossetti tra Italia e Inghilterra*, ed. by Gianni Oliva (Roma: Bulzoni, 1984); Giuliana Pieri, 'The Critical Reception of Pre-Raphaelitism in Italy, 1878-1910', in *The Modern Language Review*, 99, 2 (2004), 364-381.; Giuliana Pieri, *The Influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on fin-de-siècle Italy: Art, Beauty and Culture* (London: Maney, 2007); *I Rossetti e l'Italia: atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Vasto, 10-12 dicembre 2009*, ed. by Gianni Oliva and Mirko Mena (Lanciano: R. Carabba, 2010).

⁴⁹ *Britain at the Venice Biennale, 1895-1995*, ed. by Sophie Bowness and Clive Phillpot (London: the British Council, 1995).

⁵⁰ Sandra Berresford, 'The Pre-Raphaelites and their Followers at the International Exhibitions of Art in Venice, 1895-1905', in *Britain at the Venice Biennale*, ed. by Bowness and Phillpot, pp. 37-49. Recently, a MA dissertation has attempted to survey the years 1901 to 1907 with a view to understand the taste ruling the British section: Luca Benvenuti, 'L'arte della Gran Bretagna alla Biennale di Venezia dal 1901 al 1907' (unpublished master's Thesis, Università degli studi di Padova, 2014).

⁵¹ Sophie Bowness, 'The British Pavilion before the British Council', in *Britain at the Venice Biennale*, ed. by Bowness and Phillpot, pp. 18-36.

consumption of British painting. As such they were only partially helpful to formulate a coherent epistemological framework to confront the modernist criticism of 'insularity'.

An in-depth research of elements relating to the consumption of British painting at the Venice Biennale in the secondary literature allowed some nuggets of information to emerge. For example, Walter Shaw-Sparrow's biographies of Frank Brangwyn (1867-1956) and John Lavery, both central protagonists of the present work, followed the same structure. Both contained appendices listing the international exhibitions they participated in, as well as their main sales.⁵² However fundamental as sources on their international exhibitions and collectors, Shaw-Sparrow's compilations were riddled with mistakes and omissions; as a result, the importance of the Venice Biennale in these artists' careers was somewhat distorted. In the same vein, Giuliana Donzello produced a seminal study of the first two general secretaries of the Biennale, Antonio Fradeletto and Vittorio Pica (1864-1930) and their influence on Italian collectors.⁵³ In particular she collated data on acquisitions by important buyers at the pre-war Biennali such as the Italian Royal Family or members of the nobility. A few British painters appeared in her appendix such as Frank Bramley or Constance Walton which represented a great encouragement. Yet the Venice archives (ASAC) revealed that Donzello's list was far from complete as will be shown in the coming pages. Indeed only repeated trips to the Italian archives corroborated the viability of the research questions and methodology.

Before fully embarking on this project, a few definitions were necessary. The most difficult one in many respects was the meaning to give to 'British' and whom to include or exclude from this study. The geographical and political boundaries of that time demanded English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish nationals to be considered. However a glance at the Venice exhibition catalogues soon shattered this seemingly simple

⁵² Walter Shaw-Sparrow, *Frank Brangwyn and his Works* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co, 1910); Walter Shaw-Sparrow, *John Lavery and his Works* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co, 1911).

⁵³ Giuliana Donzello, *Arte e collezionismo, Fradeletto e Pica primi segretari alle Biennali veneziane, 1895-1926* (Firenze: Firenze Libri, 1987).

definition of 'British'. In the British sections, painters such as Bavarian-born Hubert von Herkomer (1849-1914), American-born John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) and James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) or Australian-born Grosvenor Thomas (1856-1923) exhibited alongside British nationals whereas Welsh-born Llewellyn Lloyd (1879-1949) was placed in the Italian section. Also what to make of Anglo-American George Henry Boughton (1833-1905)? Luckily the catalogues mentioned the artists' nationalities next to their names which helped classify them; whenever in doubt, the position of the leading Italian art critics reviewing the exhibitions was used as a yardstick. For example, though Whistler or Singer Sargent mostly exhibited in the British section, they were always described as 'American'.⁵⁴ Although a difficult decision to take, excluding them both from this study maintained coherence in the approach; also it meant that they would not overshadow the rest of the British painters present at the Biennale and studied here.

Other difficulties arose from going through the Italian archives listing vast quantities of unknown painters from all countries. How wise was it to try and match 'British-sounding' names with British painters? For example while George Smith (1870-1934) was Scottish, Alfred Smith (1854-1932) was French; while Anthony de Witt (1876-1967) was Italian, Albert Ludovici (1852-1932) was British; while Walter MacEwen (1860-1943) was American, John Quincy Adams (1873-1933) was Austrian. How wise was it to trust Italian lists when it came to foreign names? Scottish artist John Campbell Mitchell (1862-1922) was called 'John Mitchell Campbell'.⁵⁵ In spite of repeated checks in various dictionaries, it is still unclear how to list Frederick Cayley Robinson or Frederick Cayley-Robinson (1862-1927), who was sometimes referred to

⁵⁴ Grischka Petri explained that Whistler utilised nationalities in order to better position himself on specific international markets: whereas he chose to be labelled 'American' at the second exhibition of Les XX in Brussels in 1886, he exhibited in the British section at the Munich 1888 International exhibition as 'more space was available'. Grischka Petri, *Arrangement in Business, The Art Markets and the Career of James McNeill Whistler* (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2011), p. 476.

⁵⁵ *Quarta esposizione internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia, Catalogo Illustrato* (Venezia: Carlo Ferrari, 1901).

as 'Rolins Cayley'.⁵⁶ Similarly names of buyers were butchered on both sides of the Channel: while Walter Shaw-Sparrow indicated that Lavery's *Night over the Sea* was in the Fradeletti Collection (probably the Fradeletto collection),⁵⁷ the Biennale clerk writing down the names in the ledgers had a tendency to Frenchify international names: for example Hungarian nobleman Mihály Károlyi (1875-1955) was transformed into Michel Karolyi.⁵⁸ Only through careful and constant cross-referencing could most of these mistakes be spotted and corrected.

Although the Biennale has continuously grown to encompass Music (1930), Cinema (1932), Theatre (1934), Architecture (1980), and Dance (1999), the first editions up to 1903 presented painting, sculpture and works on paper only. In 1903 the decorative arts were allowed in, not unlike what went on at Bing's *Maison de l'Art Nouveau* in Paris or at *Secession* exhibitions in Vienna and Munich. However for the purpose of this study, not all media were included. Rather it was decided to focus on paintings, drawings and watercolour. Indeed as this research focussed on consumption, the criteria of saleability and prices were taken into account and swayed the choice towards unique works of art rather than multiples.

A broad survey of the British sections at the Venice Biennale shows that over the eleven editions of the pre-war period running from 1895 to 1914, a sample of circa three hundred British painters exhibited there. Some of these artists enjoyed a firmly established international reputation, such as Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912) or Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), whilst some others have sunken into oblivion such as Miss Mary Elizabeth Atkins (active 1897-1949) who exhibited three times there in 1909, 1910 and 1912. Some artists only participated once while others were regular exhibitors.

⁵⁶ Alessandro Stella, *Cronistoria della Esposizione internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia, 1895-1912* (Venezia: G. Fabbris, 1912), p. 113.

⁵⁷ Sparrow, p. 193.

⁵⁸ Venice, Archivio storico delle arti contemporanee (henceforth ASAC), Ufficio vendite, 1895-1973, Registro vendite 7-8, VII Esposizione internazionale d'arte della Città di Venezia, 1907.

Firstly it will be necessary to focus on the competitive exhibition system which existed during the *fin-de-siècle* period and the evolution of the Venice Biennale venture in order to understand what its place was within the international artistic field mainly using Pierre Bourdieu's methodology. This will shed some light on the reasons which drew –or not– international artists to exhibit there.

Chapter II will then seek to account for and chart the diversified British supply within the Venetian system of distribution. Concomitantly it will study the impact of Britain's institutional shift in the form of the Pavilion in 1909: how far did this affect the British presence in Venice and what can this evolution tell us about the place of British painters on the international art scene at the time?

Studying popular objects and artefacts from an anthropological perspective, David Howes explained that they 'substantiated' the culture that produced them through a reciprocal process: whilst these objects were recognised as expression of a peculiar cultural system, they also served to bolster specific values associated with that system.⁵⁹ The same may be argued about paintings as they are the reflections and reinforcement of a cultural and intellectual disposition. However when these expressions of a specific culture are taken out of their original environment, Howes argued that through a process of 'cross-cultural consumption', the reading of their meaning are partly compromised thereby inducing a rethinking in the receiving culture. The purpose of chapter III is to examine British paintings at the Venice Biennale through this process of cross-cultural consumption. By studying its non-economic values as ascribed by leading Italian art critics, chapter III will attempt to answer the following questions: how was British painting perceived outside Britain? How transformed was its reading abroad? How far could this illuminate the motives of international buyers for acquiring it?

⁵⁹ *Cross-Cultural Consumption, Global Markets, Local Realities*, ed. by David Howes (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 2.

Lastly though many British painters left Venice without selling a single canvas, others were extremely successful. Dwelling on the findings of the previous chapters, chapter IV will focus on the Venice Biennale as a commercial platform and will attempt to shed light on the consumption of British paintings there. The chapter will try to analyse the portfolio prompted by sales patterns and Britain's market share. In so doing, it will seek to understand the typology of buyers interested in British art and will attempt to confront Clive Bell's definition of 'insularity'.

CHAPTER ONE

NEITHER SALON NOR GOLDFISH BOWL: THE POSITION OF THE PRE-WAR BIENNALE WITHIN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITIONS

With a few exceptions, many statements characterising the contemporary art world could equally apply to the situation at the turn of the twentieth century: an ‘expanding world of art’,¹ increasing prices in a booming art market, a handful of trend setters counterbalanced by a majority of docile collectors buying ‘a handful of fashionable painters’.² In such a complex and fast-paced field, artists may choose to stand aside or they may try to navigate fairs, dealers, museums, collectors and art critics at the local, national and international level. In the same way, the *fin-de-siècle* art field offered exciting new avenues for artistic promotion and sales: on the one hand, the New World clientele was increasingly tapping into the artistic offer of Europe since the 1880s while Europe itself was undergoing major changes in the art world which gave more prominence to the distribution of contemporary art. In such an evolving context, what to make of the newly-founded Venice Biennale? Above all, how could it attract the international painters and collectors of importance who were wooed by a plethora of rival ventures?

1.1 The Field of International Art Exhibitions

One of the key concepts used by Pierre Bourdieu as methodological tool was ‘field’ which became widely used in sociological studies of art. This concept appeared in his

¹ The phrase was borrowed from Elizabeth Gilmore Holt’s title *The Expanding World of Art, 1874-1902, Universal Expositions and State-Sponsored Fine Arts Exhibitions*, vol. 1 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

² The remarks on the contemporary art world are based on Sarah Thornton’s introduction to *Seven Days in the Art World* (London: Granta, 2008), the last quotation can be found on page xv.

work in the 1970s and constantly evolved throughout his books. Indeed Bourdieu himself kept a flexible definition of 'field' as it was meant to be applied in a variety of contexts. Broadly defined as 'arenas of production, circulation, appropriation of goods, services, knowledge or status', 'field' was mainly envisaged along two main avenues.³ Firstly, it entailed a 'relational' thinking in which actions could only be understood as deriving from 'underlying and invisible relations'.⁴ This pointed to the tight networks at play in any social situation. In addition, 'field' had been coined to reject idealist views of social relations and practices since it encapsulated a concept of struggle. Influenced by Marxism mainly through the writings of French philosopher Louis Althusser (1918-1990), Bourdieu envisioned social relations as driven by force and vying for legitimisation.⁵ The sociologist therefore identified different strategies used by players in the 'field' depending on their status within the hierarchy and the amount of capital they possessed: conservation, succession and subversion.⁶ Understandably those in power wish to maintain a *status quo* in the social order (conservation) whilst new comers can either deploy a strategy aiming at replacing those in command (succession) or destroying the existing order (subversion). In the present chapter, 'field' will be understood as the 'matrix of institutions, organisations and markets' involved in the distribution of art and our aim will be to understand the evolution of the Venice Biennale within that hierarchical structure.⁷ In particular, this section will focus on the phenomenon of exhibition as the means through which various components of the field vied for domination in attracting and retaining consumers, and ultimately capital. Indeed the proliferation of exhibitions during the period studied here showed that they constituted the most efficient tool to mediate between a widening consumer base and the producers, i.e. the artists. On the other hand, their multiplication also intensified the struggle within the field: new comers such as the Venice Biennale had to choose

³ David Swartz, *Culture and Power, the Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 117.

⁴ Swartz, p. 119.

⁵ Swartz, p. 123.

⁶ Swartz, p. 125.

⁷ Swartz, p. 117.

between strategies of succession or subversion to gain a place and visibility within the field.

While exhibitions of contemporary art were institutionalised in Italy and France in the seventeenth century and in England in the eighteenth century, they had multiplied all over Europe and the Western World by the 1890s.⁸ When Venice entered the arena as host city to an international artistic exhibition in 1895, the system of fine arts exhibitions had been firmly grounded in the international landscape for half a century, as shown in an exhibition in Paris in 1993.⁹ Universal and international exhibitions alternated at an ever-increasing pace in order to meet the deeply transformed framework of patronage and nationalistic concerns. Paul Greenhalgh surveyed the development of the Great Exhibitions phenomenon up until 2010¹⁰ and showed that between 1855 and the First World War, large-scale events involving ‘more than twenty nations’ took place very regularly.¹¹

Before dwelling further on the scale of the exhibition phenomenon during the *fin-de-siècle* period, it is worth pointing that these events contributed to the nascent paradox of growing internationalism assorted with stronger nationalism which still lies at the heart of today’s world in some respect.¹² Historians have sought to define these terms as well as connate concepts seen as key to understanding the modern age such as ‘imperialism’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’.¹³ In substance they seem to be closely

⁸ Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Painting and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 3.

⁹ Monique Nonne, ‘1893: Les peintres exposent’, in *1893 : L’Europe des peintres*, ed. by Françoise Cachin, (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1993), pp. 24-39.

¹⁰ Paul Greenhalgh, *Fair World: A History of World’s Fair and Exhibitions, from London to Shanghai, 1851-1910* (Winterbourne: Papadakis, c2011).

¹¹ Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas, the Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 15.

¹² *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, ed. by Gerard Delanty and Krishan Kumar (London: Sage Publishing, 2006).

¹³ The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy gives a comprehensive definition together with its historical development from Ancient Greece to the recent issue of ‘moral cosmopolitanism’: Pauline Kleingeld, and Eric Brown, ‘Cosmopolitanism’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/cosmopolitanism/>> [accessed 11

associated to the issue of political and cultural identity which became especially problematic in the nineteenth century and of which Italy is a good example.¹⁴ Indeed historians sometimes argue that the *Risorgimento* only exacerbated tensions between regional, national and international identities and the idea of nationhood.¹⁵ As a City-State with a longstanding history of its own, Venice is a paradigmatic case in point. In turn international power, conquered territory, and regional capital, its fluid identity had left it yearning for international recognition as a means of regaining its cultural and political status. As will be explained in the upcoming pages, the Biennale was a tool in this process of self-identification in an increasingly international world.

In addition to these self-celebrating mammoth-like events in which the fine arts only played a minor role, smaller scale State-sponsored or artist-led international exhibitions spread across the artistic year, sometimes inconveniently overlapping. At the end of the nineteenth century, the pre-eminence of the traditional Academy-directed Salon system was increasingly questioned as other Salons or exhibition ventures were launched throughout Europe by societies or groups of artists such as the *International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Engravers* founded by Whistler in 1898 in London or the *Secessions* in Munich (1892) and in Vienna (1897) or the *Salon d'automne* in France in 1903.¹⁶ The rise of these diversified Fine-Arts exhibitions was the object of a study entitled *The Expanding World of Art, 1878-1902* which was very useful to understanding their differences as well as the intense competition surrounding the creation of the Venice Biennale.¹⁷ Robert Jensen listed a selection of

November 2015].

¹⁴ Many publications have focused on that subject; the following books give an general introduction to the problem: Ernest Gellner, *Culture, Identity and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); P.W. Preston, *Political/Cultural Identity: Citizens and Nations in a Global Era* (London: Sage Publication, 1997). In 2005, Mary Bernstein gave an overview of the research on identity politics and their theoretical grounding in 'Identity Politics', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 31 (2005), pp. 47-74.

¹⁵ *The Politics of Italian National Identity: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*, ed. by Gino Bedani, Bruce A. Haddock and Brian Cainen (Cardiff: The University of Wales Press, 2000).

¹⁶ David W. Galenson, Robert Jensen, 'Careers and Canvases: the Rise of the Market for Modern Art in the Nineteenth Century', *National Bureau of Economic Research*, 9123 (2002), p. 13.

¹⁷ The paragraph on the system of international exhibition is loosely based on the introduction by Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, *The Expanding World of Art, 1874-1902: Universal Expositions and State-*

five such exhibitions in Antwerp, Brussels, Hamburg, Munich and Vienna in 1894; in 1895, the first Venice Biennale was one among five events organised in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and Budapest. Although Jensen underlined that after 1900 ‘the number of international shows markedly dropped (sic) off’ he acknowledged that his selection only contained the most prominent ones.¹⁸ Not only did exhibitions multiply in Europe, they also appeared in America where the Carnegie International started in Pittsburgh in 1896.¹⁹

Lastly, a rising number of national and local exhibitions also played a part in the busy artistic calendar as they demanded prestigious or novel paintings to give to an increasingly art-savvy public. In London, as shall be explained in the next chapter, the schedule of exhibitions as developed by specialist art dealers became progressively crowded between 1850 and 1914.²⁰ For example during its 1907-1908 season, the Carfax and Co Ltd. Gallery, specialising in British contemporary art, organised no less than eight different exhibitions with painters such as Augustus John (1878-1961), Miss Anna Airy (1882-1964), Max Beerbohm (1872-1956), Maxwell Armfield (1881-1972) or Frederic Cayley Robinson (1862-1927), who all featured at the Venice Exhibition.²¹ As early as 1888, an American observer of the art market had derided London as:

The home of special exhibitions – permanent, temporary, mixed and individual... In season and out of season the whole year round they tread close upon each other’s heels at the dealers and so-called galleries, and are scheduled in advance like theatrical dates.²²

Sponsored Fine Arts Exhibitions, vol. 1 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 2-6.

¹⁸ Jensen, p. 277-278.

¹⁹ Bruce Altshuler, ‘Exhibition history and the Biennale’, in *Starting from Venice, Studies in the Biennale*, ed. by Clarissa Ricci and Angela Vettese (Milano: Et al., 2010), p.20.

²⁰ *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, 1850-1939*, ed. by Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

²¹ *The Year’s Art 1909, A Concise Epitome of all matters relating to the Arts of Painting, Sculpture, Engraving and Architecture*, ed. by A.C.R. Carter (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1909), p. 139.

²² Sheridan Ford, *Art: A Commodity* (New York: Rogers and Sherwood, 1888), p. 20.

While these exhibitions both educated and sated the public's appetite for art, their density pushed artists to make choices and elaborate exhibition strategies suited to their styles, status and ambition thereby making their ways within the 'space of possibles'.²³ This represented a major challenge for the Biennale as its organisers had to create the material, critical and institutional conditions to attract international artists. Indeed as late as 1903, Fradeletto lamented the severe competition and the artists' demands:

We are showing them deference; we are treating them better, a thousand times better than they are treated in Paris or in Munich, in terms of material conditions, or of display or of anything else. Yet in spite of this, in spite of the fact that the Exhibition is now running its fifth edition, we still have to pray and pray, sometimes in vain.²⁴

As shall be developed in the next chapters, this complex situation affected the number and quality of British artists coming to the early Venice Biennali as they enjoyed a plethora of choices to exhibit their works at the local, national and international levels. One of the fundamental problems encountered by the early Venice Biennale was thus not only to establish itself as a viable venture but to become a noticeable part of the 'field'. Assessing the latter element represents a crucial part of this study yet the complexity of the period requires nuanced answers. Indeed as early as 1899, J. Montez the 'Secrétaire general des Beaux-Arts' in Monte-Carlo asked Fradeletto for his help to improve the local art exhibition. No doubt this letter contained some elements of flattery but it nevertheless showed that the Venice Biennale had acquired a local reputation after only a few editions.²⁵ Whereas the press

²³ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 176.

²⁴ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 25 'Varie', 3/1/1903-9/III/1903, 339: Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa: 'Noi li trattiamo con ogni deferenza, meglio, infinatamente meglio che non li trattino a Parigi e a Monaco, sia per le condizioni materiali, sia per il collocamento, sia per tutto il resto. E malgrado cio', malgrado l'Esposizione sia oramai alla sua quinta prova, bisogna pregare, pregare, spesso vanamente'.

²⁵ Venice, ASAC (Archives Sarah Berresford), SN11, Letter from J. Montez to Antonio Fradeletto dated 6 September 1899.

releases issued by the Biennale and reported on by the Italian press understandably blew the trumpet of the venture, the foreign press was not always impressed with it, when it mentioned it at all. For example *The Times* did not publish a single article on the Biennale between 1897 and 1907. That year, it pithily noticed that:

Foreign countries are well-represented; but for foreign visitors to Italy, the interest of the exhibition lies rather in the opportunity it affords them of gaining a bird's eye view of modern Italian art than in the exhibits from abroad.²⁶

The British correspondent in Rome did not even think fit to mention the opening of the Belgian Pavilion that year, the first of its kind in Venice, but encouragingly concluded that the edition was 'a distinct improvement upon its predecessors'.²⁷ Probably even worse than scarce press coverage was the snub given to the organisers by one of the world's most important collectors reported to have spent a staggering \$60 million on art.²⁸ Indeed in June 1909, the *Steam Yacht Corsair* was mooring in Venice and its owner, John Pierpont Morgan (1837-1913) received an invitation to visit the Eighth Edition of the Biennale. Politely but firmly, he declined on the pretext of leaving for Milan in but a few hours' time.²⁹ This clearly demonstrates that the visions and understanding of the 'field' varied from country to country; while the Biennale was clearly seen as a major achievement at the local level, its international importance remained relative until major countries became actively involved through their pavilions.

²⁶ 'The Venice Art Exhibition', *The Times*, 38342 (25 May 1907), p. 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ This would be the equivalent of about \$900 millions in today's figures according to the Frick Collection website: <<http://research.frick.org/directoryweb/browse/browse.php?-action=browse&-recid=6792>>, [accessed 24 June 2015].

²⁹ London, Tate Gallery Archives (henceforth TGA), 72-45/ 244, Letter from John Pierpont Morgan to Giulio Fradeletto, dated 19 June 1909.

1.2 The Difficult Beginnings of the Venice Biennale

Reflecting the growing industrialisation of Northern Italy and increasing cultural ambition of the Peninsula, Venice officials decided to commemorate King Umberto and Queen Margherita's Silver anniversary with the creation of an international fine art exhibition such as the ones already hosted in Berlin, Munich or Vienna.³⁰ The *Serenissima* thus sought to revive its glorious past whilst looking at its political allies for inspiration: indeed Munich had successfully managed to set up an international exhibition backed with government funds and managed by the association of the local art academies and artists' societies.³¹ Housed in the Bavarian Glaspalast, which architectural appearance linked back to the imposing temporary glass and iron constructions made for universal exhibitions, the *Internationalen Kunstausstellung* had first opened its doors on 20 July 1869 and was repeated annually with a few exceptions until 1931 when the building was destroyed in a fire.³² In 1895 however, the Munich exhibition offered a fine example of a long-standing venture which successfully introduced new international artists to the public.³³ Lawrence Alloway probably rightfully stated that the Biennale organisers looked to Munich, rather than Paris, for a template to follow.³⁴ Pragmatically, Venice also compared its nascent venture to local competitors; according to Shearer West, Florence represented 'radical artistic forces' whereas Rome stood for reactionary tendencies. As to Turin and Milan, they chose to capitalise on the exhibition phenomenon with the establishment of an Industrial Exhibition in 1884 for the former and the Milan Triennale in 1895.³⁵ Interestingly

³⁰ Turin also organised the first international exhibition of applied art in 1902, which launched the Italian version of Art Nouveau called 'Stile Liberty'. For more information on this, please see *Torino 1902, Le arti decorative internazionali del nuovo secolo*, ed. by Rossana Bossaglia, Ezio Godoli and Marco Rosci, (Torino: Fabbri, 1994)

³¹ *Salon to Biennial, Exhibitions that Made History, 1863-1959*, vol. 1, ed. Bruce Altshuler (New York: Phaidon, 2008), p. 13.

³² Munich also provided the template for the organisation as Venice officials decided to select artists as well as to limit the size of their exhibition. Holt, p. 335.

³³ This is where the Glasgow Boys whom will be widely discussed in the present work showed their works for the first time in 1890. Roger Billcliffe, *The Glasgow Boys* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2008), p. 295.

³⁴ Alloway, p. 33.

³⁵ Shearer West, 'National Desires and Regional Realities in the Venice Biennali, 1895-1914', *Art History*,

enough, reports written in 1894 compared the exhibitions in Milan and Turin in order to settle on the most appropriate format for Venice: biennale or triennale.³⁶

Yet in spite of intense cultural and political ambition and a nascent industrial rebirth, the city of Venice did not possess the adequate structures to launch such a venture. The story goes that the Biennale was born out of heated discussions at Venice's *Caffè Florian* in the early 1890s. Luckily, these discussions were preceded by more tangible forerunners such as an exhibition of Fine Arts successfully organised in Venice in 1887 and other regional comparables throughout the young Kingdom of Italy.³⁷ Yet art historians generally stress that in the 1890s the market structure in the field of contemporary art in Venice was slim with only the *Accademia di Belle Arti*, a *Società Promotrice di Belle Arti* loosely based on the Parisian *Société des Amis des arts*, as well as a handful of generalist dealers to occupy the ground prior to the launch of the Biennale.³⁸ In addition, the institutional structures destined to house and display contemporary art were non-existent in Venice unlike in other cities competing for status as contemporary art capitals such as Paris with the *Musée du Luxembourg* (1818) or Munich with its *Neue Pinakothek* (1853).³⁹ Some historians go as far as to suggest that the Biennale organisers were deprived of a working structure since the first edition was said to have been planned from an *ad hoc* desk at Ca' Farsetti, the Library of the Commune.⁴⁰ Though this may pertain to legend rather than fact, it is undeniable that the nascent Biennale had to run on a comparatively low budget: indeed whilst the Italian local government provided a non-repayable sum of ITL 150,000 (GBP 6,000) to fund the event, this somewhat paled in comparison to the sum

18, 3 (September 1995), 404-434 (pp. 405-406).

³⁶ Venice, ASAC (Archives Sandra Berresford), SN1, 'Periodo dell'organizzazione, 1894-1895', Cartella: Rapporti con altri esposizioni.

³⁷ Paolo Rizzi, Enzo di Martino, *Storia della Biennale, 1895-1982* (Milano: Electa, 1982), p. 13.

³⁸ The Venetian Società was founded in 1864 and had its seat at Palazzo Mocenigo in San Benedetto. Paola Zatti, 'La gestione della prime Biennali tra tradizione e innovazione (1895-1912), I contribute esterni' (Unpublished master's thesis, Università degli Studi di Venezia, Ca'Foscari, 1992).

³⁹ On the other hand, London's National Gallery of British Art opened in 1897 only. Frances Spalding, *The Tate, a History* (London: Tate Gallery, 1998).

⁴⁰ Di Martino, Rizzi, p. 15.; and Alloway, p. 33.

of \$670,000 (GBP 134,000) paid to create but one Palace of Fine Arts at the Chicago Columbian Exhibition in 1893.⁴¹

These inauspicious circumstances were counterbalanced by careful discussions occupying the first part of the 1890s and followed by a resolution adopted by the City Council on 19 April 1893 to organise a biennial exhibition of fine arts starting the following year. The *Exhibition*, located in a Pavilion situated in the *Giardini*, eventually opened on 22 April 1895 in the presence of the King and Queen of Italy. Until the decree of January 1930 voted in April of the same year when its status was changed to 'ente autonomo' ('autonomous body'),⁴² the Venice Biennale was under the full control of the local government from both an organisational and financial point of view. Although the same governing broadly conservative political alliance stayed in power between 1896 and 1919 with the Town Mayor Filippo Grimani (1850-1921) as President of the Biennale, internal conflicts repeatedly plagued the venture. They were often leaked in the local newspapers.⁴³ These caused the General Secretary Antonio Fradeletto to hand in clamorous resignations on a few occasions in 1905, 1906 or 1908.⁴⁴ A key character in this study, Antonio Fradeletto's position within the 'field of power' will be closely analysed in the upcoming pages as his vision and background affected the future of the Biennale.

⁴¹ Alloway, p. 34.; regarding the conversion of US-GBP prices, an endnote found in Petri, *Arrangement in Business*, p. 693., explained that 'In 1898, £1 approximately corresponded to \$4.85 or 25.43 francs'. For the sake of clarity, it was decided to keep a constant rate of conversion of £1= \$5 throughout the period under study.

⁴² Di Martino, Rizzi, p. 112.; in 1998, another institutional reform granted the Biennale 'private legal autonomy', Sara Catenacci, 'Beyond the *Giardini* of the Biennale: Some Considerations on a Supposed Model' in *Starting from the Biennale*, ed. by Ricci and Vettese, pp. 78-88 (p. 81).

⁴³ In particular, the *Gazzetta di Venezia* regularly published articles criticising the rules and regulations or the organisation of the Biennale.

⁴⁴ For example on 6 July 1906, Fradeletto sent a theatrical resignation to Mayor Grimani claiming that his decision was 'so definitive, so irrevocable that no vote could possibly make me change my mind' ('ma definitiva, ma irrevocabile, ma tale che nessun voto vorrebbe ormai a rimuovermene'). A conciliatory reply accompanied by a salary increase won over the angry Secretary. Venice, ASAC, Fondo Storico, Carte di Segretari generali, conservatori, capi ufficio stampa; Carte del Segretario generale Antonio Fradeletto, Sezione 8, Busta 1, Corrispondenza 1895-1914, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Filippo Grimani, 6 luglio 1906.

Before analysing his role as organiser of the Biennale, Antonio Fradeletto's biographer Daniele Ceschin introduced him as 'a Venetian intellectual',⁴⁵ whose interest in journalism and literature alike started in 1876 when he contributed to the *Giornale di Padova* while studying literature and philosophy at the prestigious university there.⁴⁶ In the late nineteenth century, Italy was undergoing deep economic and social changes whereby the middle-class gradually took on more power.⁴⁷ Higher Education was a primary tool in their cultural empowerment and the most successful courses were, not unlike today, Law, Engineering, Medicine or possibly Literature and Philosophy (classical studies). New academic paths were being invented to form the future elite of the Nation, such as the Venice *Scuola Superiore di Commercio* (later University of Ca'Foscari) created by Luigi Luzzatti and opened in 1868. In 1882, Fradeletto was offered the Chair in Italian literature at the *Scuola* when he was barely 22 years old;⁴⁸ there he taught literature, the history of commerce, political and diplomatic history while gaining a reputation of 'artist of words' through his famous conferences on great intellectual figures.⁴⁹ Some of his students later remembered him as 'our great Master'.⁵⁰ From the few accounts of Fradeletto from his contemporaries as well as from the enormous correspondence thus emerges the portrait of a buoyant personality who craved knowledge, power and companionship perhaps also due to the fact that he was an adopted child.⁵¹ They also point to an orator capable of producing impromptu verses, coaxing or persuading his audience be it in a classroom, conference hall or at the Parliament.⁵² During his formative years and early career in the late 1870s

⁴⁵ Ceschin (2001), p. 25.: 'un intellettuale veneziano'.

⁴⁶ Enrico Polichetti, 'Antonio Fradeletto, Venezia', *Ateneo Veneto*, 4, 2 (luglio-dicembre 1966), 100-126 (p. 104).

⁴⁷ Alberto M. Banti, *Storia della borghesia italiana, l'età liberale* (Roma: Donzello, 1996), p. 53. Although the percentage of Government representatives belonging to the nobility slightly rose to 20.6% between 1903 and 1913, they only represented 25% of the number of Deputies at the Chamber.

⁴⁸ Ceschin, pp. 30. and 81.

⁴⁹ Augusto Michieli, 'Un artista della parola, Antonio Fradeletto', *Nuova Antologia* (1 maggio 1912), 51-61. Among others, he lectured on Dante, Carducci, Goldoni, Hugo, Rossini, Zola or Rossetti. Polichetti, p. 113.

⁵⁰ Maria Pezzè Pascolato, *Antonio Fradeletto, Commemorazione tenuta nell'Aula Magna di Ca'Foscari nel Primo anniversario della morte (5 marzo 1931 -a. IX)* (Venezia: Libreria Emiliana, 1931), p. 6.: 'il nostro grande Maestro'.

⁵¹ Ceschin, p. 25.

⁵² Pezzè Pascolato, p. 6. or Michieli, pp. 57-58.

and 1880s, Fradeletto thus developed friendly connections with current or future intellectuals, journalists, academics, economists and political figures from the Venetian area. As early as 1882, Fradeletto became friends with the poet Riccardo Selvatico (1849-1901) who was to become Town Mayor in 1890 and who instigated the idea of an international exhibition in 1893, perhaps during a discussion at *Caffè Florian*. In those years, he also met Venetian-born Luigi Luzzatti (1841-1927) who was to become Prime Minister between 1910 and 1911. Broadly speaking, Fradeletto created long-lasting relationships within the middle and upper-middle class in the Venetian area which gradually enlarged with his membership of various Institutes such as the *Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere e arti di Venezia* from 1906.⁵³ Then Fradeletto became an MP as early as 1900 and he gradually took on more political activities as a Radical, then Radical Independent, elected at the Venice III constituency alongside his duties as General Secretary of the Biennale. In addition to his local political activities, Fradeletto also had a national profile with numerous honours: in 1903 he was appointed Officer of the Order of Sts. Maurice and Lazarus; in 1907 he became Commander of the same order. In addition between 1904 and 1909, he undertook the task of Secretary of the 'Vigilance Commission on the Chamber Library' in which Luigi Luzzatti was also a member (1907-1909). Such national profile and public involvement enabled him to extend the ramifications of his already abundant local network yet it gradually took more of Fradeletto's time, so much so that he relinquished part of his duties at the Biennale after 1910.

Thus not only the Biennale had to face an intense international competition vying for the best-known contemporary painters, but it also had to overcome internal problems linked to structure, politics, funding or artistic controversies.⁵⁴ Favourable

⁵³ Website of the Italian Senate, Individual File for 'Antonio Fradeletto':
<<http://notes9.senato.it/web/senregno.nsf/e56bbbe8d7e9c734c125703d002f2a0c/a0512221c4de0e6b4125646f005bd67d?OpenDocument>>, [accessed 1 August 2014].

⁵⁴ In that respect, all publications on the history of the Biennale refer to the 1895 painting by Giacomo Grosso, *Il Supremo Convegno*, which triggered a polemic between the Biennale organisers and the clergy.

reviews such as those printed after the first *Esposizione* saluted the event as ‘memorable... for the great moral and material success obtained’ must therefore be contextualised.⁵⁵ Yet there is generally a consensus on the exceptional qualities of the first General Secretary Antonio Fradeletto. Comparing the quadriennial exhibition of Fine Arts in Turin in 1902 to the Venice venture, a reviewer pointed out that Turin had sorely missed a man ‘capable of major sacrifices, whose ideals of dignity are so high as to be willing to jeopardise his own name and his merit’, a man ‘ready to survey, oversee, advise and ratify even the smallest details from the decoration of a room to a bold invitation that could trigger protests’.⁵⁶

1.3 The Biennale as Hybrid Platform: Borrowings from Other Structures of the Field

In many ways, it is highly surprising that the Venice Biennale should have thrived. However a closer look at its organisation and structure reveal that it was conceived, especially in the early editions, as a flexible and innovative venture freely drawing inspiration from other structures in the field of international art exhibitions. It therefore chose a ‘succession’ strategy rather than a ‘subversion’ one, to borrow the terminology created by Bourdieu.

Many historians have pointed out that the pre-war editions of the Biennale resembled a conservative *Salon* in which avant-garde art was largely unwelcome as proven by Fradeletto’s refusal to hang a Picasso in 1910.⁵⁷ Indeed even Lawrence Alloway who sought to confront the ‘historical density’ and to go beyond the damaging schism of

The scene representing five nude female figures crawling around Don Juan’s coffin was deemed by some to offend public morals. Romolo Bazzoni, *Sessant’anni della biennale di Venezia* (Venezia: Lombroso editore, 1962), p. 82.

⁵⁵ *The Studio*, 4, 33 (December 1895), p. 50.

⁵⁶ Efsio Aitelli, ‘L’esposizione quadriennale di belle arti in Torino’, *Emporium*, 16, 94 (ottobre 1902) 250-270 (p. 252.): ‘uomini capaci dei maggiori sacrifici, innamorati della solennità cui arrischiare il loro nome e la loro benemeranza, di uomini pronti a sorvegliare, a vedere, a consigliare, a sanzionare ogni minimo particolare, dall’addobbo d’una sala all’audacia di un invito che potesse sollevare delle proteste’.

⁵⁷ Bazzoni, *Sessant’anni della Biennale*, p. 82.

Academism vs. Modernism defined the Biennale as a 'Super Salon'.⁵⁸ In general, these historians built their analysis on the stringent selection process based on confidential invitations sent directly to famous national and international artists.⁵⁹ They also condemned the stranglehold of a handful of rear-guard Venetian artists on the artistic committees,⁶⁰ or the lack to international openness of the venture.⁶¹ In 1899 a mixed approach was tried: on the one hand the invitations were transferred from artists to artworks in order to preserve the aesthetic quality of the show. Alternatively, works could be freely submitted to a jury.⁶² These juried commissions were sometimes so stern that in 1903, after only 15% of the works were accepted, a '*Sala dei rifiutati*' located in Room K and modelled on the 1863 French '*Salon des refusés*', was installed at the heart of the main building. Historians also raised their eyebrows at the prizes rewarding the best artists. In 1895, as President of the International Jury, William Michael Rossetti contributed an 'encouragement prize' of ITL 400 (GBP 16) awarded to the young and promising Venetian painter Vittore Antonio Cargnel (1872-1931) for a large-scale sentimental piece depicting a kneeling single mother in prayer hiding her face.⁶³ That same year, the ITL 5,000 'Popular prize' which was cancelled straight away rewarded the scandalous *Il supremo convegno* by Giacomo Grosso depicting scantily dressed women crawling into Don Juan's coffin for one last reunion. *The Studio* concluded that 'time is evidently not yet ripe for universal suffrage in terms of art'.⁶⁴ These remnants of the *Salon* system have caused art historians to categorise the early

⁵⁸ Alloway, *The Venice Biennale*, p. 30.

⁵⁹ In that respect, it is interesting to quote the letter sent to Fradeletto by Scottish painter Archibald Kay which frankly attacked the Biennale's selection process: 'As in other cities, i.e. Paris, Glasgow etc, you appoint some local man who packs such a list with prejudice and camaraderie instead of broad-minded sympathy and even handed justice. And I feel sure that until there can be someone independently of each city duly appointed, the invitation list will include many bad painters and will exclude many artists of great ability'. Venice, ASAC (Archives Sandra Berresford), SN 12, Letter from Archibald Kay to Antonio Fradeletto, dated 31 August 1901.

⁶⁰ Emilio Franzina, *Venezia* (Roma: Laterza, 1986) p. 434.

⁶¹ Some historians argue that from 1901, the presence of regional rooms gave more prominence to the 'Italianisation' of the Biennale to the detriment of its international dimension; the increased amount of space Italian artists used within the main building is seen as a cause for extending the Biennale into the *Giardini*. Martini, in *Starting from the Biennale*, ed. by Ricci and Vettese, pp. 69-70.

⁶² Stella, p. 36.

⁶³ *Vittore Antonio Cargnel 1872-1931*, ed. by Cristina Beltrami (Treviso: Canova, 2008), p. 12.

⁶⁴ *The Studio*, 6, 33 (December 1895), p. 50.

Biennale as yet another conservative art structure. However true these conclusions may be, they often obfuscate the fact that the Biennale developed and increased its prominence during the pre-war period.

Indeed, it shall be argued here that the Biennale continuously expanded its offer and developed features which were used by other players within the circuit of art distribution.

Firstly, the modes of displays chosen by the Venice Biennale organisers were different from the Salon ones. Academic exhibitions traditionally favoured a floor-to-ceiling hanging in which large formats were favoured by the aristocratic or public patrons.⁶⁵ In the nineteenth century such crowded displays were also adopted by World's fairs which were conceived as 'planned environment of mass consumption'.⁶⁶ From the 1870s, this crowded mode of display came under attack both in England and on the Continent. Whistler has been credited with creating the first carefully thought-out exhibition designs which dramatically challenged the established display patterns.⁶⁷ Indeed at his first one-man show at the Flemish Gallery in 1874 and later as President of the Society of British Artists between 1884 and 1888 Whistler devoted particular attention to staging artworks in an aesthetically coordinated ensemble including lighting, floor, frames, seating and accessories such as plants.⁶⁸ Such new take on display with a space of six to twelve inches between the paintings was adopted straight away at the Grosvenor Gallery for example.⁶⁹ In France, a broadly Impressionist group including Degas also favoured a linear hanging system with works arranged 'in two

⁶⁵ Altshuler, p. 17.

⁶⁶ Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 7.

⁶⁷ David Park Curry, 'Total Control: Whistler at an Exhibition', *Studies in the History of Art*, 19 (1987), 67-82 (p. 67).

⁶⁸ Curry, p. 69.

⁶⁹ Colleen Denney, 'The Grosvenor Gallery as Palace of Art: An Exhibition Model', in *The Grosvenor Gallery, A Palace of Art in Victorian England*, ed. by Susan P. Casteras and Colleen Denney (New Haven, London: Yale Centre for British Art, 1996), pp. 9-37 (p. 20).

horizontal rows'.⁷⁰ Whilst Whistler aimed at creating an aesthetic ensemble, the French approach to the manipulation of the environment sought to underline the singularity of the artworks, perhaps as an increased effort to differentiate art from commodities cluttered in 'chaotic-exotic' displays in department stores.⁷¹ Such studied displays became more commonplace in the 1890s although official or some private exhibitions bodies still kept the traditional hanging system throughout Europe: in London in spite of Whistler's proposals the Dudley Gallery reportedly kept its crowded hanging system into the twentieth century.⁷² As shown in the illustrations, the Venice Biennale adopted in many cases the two horizontal rows of artworks in the Exhibition Palace thus following trends set up by artists in the commercial art world.

Moreover, deemed by Fradeletto 'the major attraction' of the Exhibition, the presence of one-man shows of renowned foreign artists further blurred the lines between museum and commercial world. A novel feature of the 1855 Paris exhibition when rooms had been devoted to Delacroix and Ingres,⁷³ the concept of exhibition centring on a particular artist had also developed due to dealers. For example Ernest Gambart repeatedly organised one-man and one-woman shows dedicated to Lawrence Alma-Tadema, William Holman Hunt or Rosa Bonheur from the 1850s onwards; Durand-Ruel used it to highlight the works of Boudin, Monet, Renoir or Sisley in 1883.⁷⁴ By the late nineteenth century, one-man shows constituted a common feature of the commercial art world which Fradeletto was eager to adopt and develop from 1899 onwards. In 1908, he used the one-man shows as advertising tools for the success of the upcoming Biennale:

⁷⁰ Altshuler, p. 17.

⁷¹ Rosalind H. Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 71.

⁷² Denney, pp. 9-37 (p. 13).

⁷³ Courbet was apparently also offered a room but he declined and arranged his own solo exhibition outside of the main building. Altshuler, p. 21.

⁷⁴ Jeremy Maas, *Gambart, Prince of the Victorian Art World* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1976), pp. 74-76 and pp. 133-134.; Ann Dumas, Michael E. Shapiro, *Impressionism, Paintings collected by European Museums* (New York: Harry N. Abrahams, 1999) p. 21.

The major attraction will be given by a series of personal exhibitions of great foreign Masters who have left an indelible mark on contemporary art. These exhibitions will provide a summary of their intellectual perspective and will gather the best of their output. To this end, we have already secured the support of public galleries and private collectors who have already promised to lend us a great number of renowned works. After our City will have gathered these works for study and admiration, they will be dispersed again and we will never see them again together.⁷⁵

As Francis Haskell noticed, the argument of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see an important gathering of famous works of art was widely used in exhibitions of Old Masters during the same period.⁷⁶

Furthermore, contrary to most fine arts exhibitions which followed the traditional hierarchy separating paintings and sculptures on the one hand from decorative arts on the other hand, Fradeletto was a supporter of Ruskinian ideas to return to 'artistic unity'. Indeed he was opposed to Academies and Fine Arts exhibitions, which in his view, had institutionalised the gap between pure and applied arts.⁷⁷ Following the previous attempts by the Vienna Secession, Bing's *Maison de l'Art Nouveau* from 1895 and *Aemilia Ars* founded in 1898 in Bologna,⁷⁸ Fradeletto pushed to change the Biennale regulation in order to allow the decorative arts from 1903. In his own eyes, such a move was 'really revolutionary', as a consequence he feared that the Council might refuse or transform the proposal.⁷⁹ This bold move also came as an

⁷⁵ Venice, ASAC (Archives Sandra Berresford), Scatola Nera 28, 'G', Official release by Antonio Fradeletto sent to Filippo Grimani, 27 December 1908, p. 3.: 'L'attrattiva maggiore sarà formata di una serie di Esposizioni personali di grandi Maestri stranieri, che hanno impresso un' orma indistruttibile nell'arte contemporanea. Queste Esposizioni riassumeranno la loro vista intellettuale e raccoglieranno il fiore della loro produzione. A questo fine noi ci siamo già assicurati il concorso di pubbliche Gallerie e di privati professori, che hanno promesso di prestarci un numero considerevole di opere insigni. Dopo che la nostra Città le avrà in tal modo radunate per argomento di studio e di ammirazione, esse andranno nuovamente disperse e non sarà mai dato di rivederle riunite'.

⁷⁶ Francis Haskell, 'Les expositions de maîtres anciens', in *L'Amateur d'art* (Paris: librairie générale française, 1997), pp. 40-89.

⁷⁷ Antonio Fradeletto, *L'arte nella vita* (Bari: Laterza e figli, 1929), p. 14.

⁷⁸ The movement *Aemilia Ars* which is an Italian equivalent of the *Arts and Crafts* movement and which lasted between 1898 and 1903 was created by Alfonso Rubbiani (1848-1913). For more information, see *Aemilia Ars, 1898-1903: Arts & Crafts a Bologna*, ed. by Carla Bernardini, Doretta Davanzo Poli, Orsola Ghetti Baldi (Milano: A+G, stampa, 2001).

⁷⁹ Venice, ASAC, Scatole Nere, Segnatura b.01, Carte personali Vittorio Pica, letter from Antonio

answer to the successful 1902 Turin exhibition of decorative arts, traditionally viewed as introducing Art Nouveau in Italy.⁸⁰ Other media than painting and sculpture were indeed shown at the Biennale and were seemingly exempt from the same stringent selection criteria. Indeed under the impulse of art critic Vittorio Pica (1864-1930), another key protagonist of this study, the Biennale exhibited innovative prints which were then discussed at length in Pica's monthly *Emporium*. In her seminal essay on the early development of the Biennale, Maria Mimita Lamberti identified the selection of 'bianco e nero' as a bold presence testifying to a certain freedom of action; however she correctly linked it to the lesser economic impact born by the market for prints.⁸¹ Thus the aesthetic and economic gap between the fine arts and the decorative arts or prints illustrated the qualms of the organisers who feared the reactions of their growing audience.⁸²

Last but not least, the presence of pavilions was borrowed from Universal Exhibitions. Foreign participation in exhibitions was no novel phenomenon: the first recorded presence of national pavilions reportedly occurred in France in 1867 during the *Exposition Universelle* when *ad hoc* structures were erected around the main exhibition site housed in the *Palais du Champ de Mars*. However the concept seemed to fully develop during the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876.⁸³ Henceforth universal exhibitions had to devote growing sites to sprouting national pavilions. The choice of a park at the easternmost part of Venice for the site of the Biennale rather than a palace in the heart of the city suggests that the organisers ambitiously modelled

Fradeletto to Vittorio Pica, 14.I.1898: 'addirittura rivoluzionario'.

⁸⁰ Cristina della Coletta, *World's Fairs Italian Style: The Great Exposition in Turin and Their Narratives, 1860-1915* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

⁸¹ Maria Mimita Lamberti, 'Il contesto delle prime mostre, dalla fine del secolo alla guerra mondiale: artisti e pubblico ai Giardini', in *Venezia e la Biennale, I percorsi del gusto*, ed. by Giandomenico Romanelli (Venezia: Fabbri, 1996), pp. 39-47 (p. 41).

⁸² Attendance figures for the pre-war Biennali show that they were as popular as they are now. From 224,327 visitors in 1895, the figures peaked to 457,960 in 1909, a record even by post-war terms. Lamberti, pp. 39-47 (p. 39).

⁸³ While Pauline de Tholozany suggests that the Paris 1867 exhibition used foreign pavilions first (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Brown University, 2011), Paul Greenhalgh states that the concept really emerged at the Philadelphia Centennial exhibition in 1876 (Greenhalgh, p. 28).

their ventures on Universal Exhibitions, rather than other traditional Fine Arts Exhibitions. Indeed as one of the few areas of the city with space to expand, the public gardens offered an ideal plot of land. Although it may be objected that national pavilions were erected only from 1907, i.e. over a decade after the beginnings of the Biennale, a letter found in the archives revealed that the idea was present much earlier: as early as 1898 art critic Vittorio Pica asked the General Secretary 'yet again, if it would not be possible to build up a few pavilions in the gardens surrounding the Exhibition?'.⁸⁴ Thus from a surface of 2,450m² in 1895 the Biennale grew to 5,548m² in 1909 following an ambitious development plan.⁸⁵ The evolution from a single building placing all foreign art on a par to a multiplication of national constructions vying for attention and success contributed greatly to the longevity of the Biennale. Indeed the art world sociologist Sarah Thornton pointed out that 'without the national pavilions and the dozens of countries that apply for participation, the Biennale would surely have floundered'.⁸⁶

1.4 Power and the Accumulation of Capital

In *The Rules of Art* among other books, Pierre Bourdieu applied one of his key concepts, the 'field of power', to the social situation described by Flaubert in *L'Education sentimentale*. To the sociologist, the concept of 'field of power' encapsulated the struggle for diverse forms of capital: economic, social and cultural as expressed by opposite social groups and their ensuing quest for power.⁸⁷ Taken at the macro level of the field of international art exhibition, the concept of 'field of power' represents a useful tool to understand how structures competed to survive and strive

⁸⁴ Quoted in Paola Zatti, 'La gestione delle primi Biennali tra tradizione e innovazione, 1895-1912: I contributi esterni' (Unpublished master's thesis, Università degli Studi di Venezia, Ca' Foscari, 1992), n.p. Letter from Vittorio Pica to Antonio Fradeletto dated 6 VI 1898.: '*ancora una volta, se non sia possibile costruire nei giardini che circondano la Mostra alcuni padiglioni?*'

⁸⁵ Venice, ASAC (Archives Sandra Berresford), Scatola Nera, 26, 'VIII° Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, Le sviluppe dell'Esposizione dal 1895 in poi', Stamped 30 March 1909, 4pp.

⁸⁶ Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (London: Granta, 2008), p. 235.

⁸⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art, genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), p. 28.

within an intensely competitive environment. Indeed although the previous paragraphs have shown that the structure of the Biennale was essentially hybrid and flexible whereby it adopted some features from different circuits of distribution, these elements in themselves can only partly explain why it survived. On the other hand, a successful accumulation of combined social, cultural and economic capital could account for the growing importance of the Biennale within the field.

Endowed with a very strong cultural and artistic tradition radiating all over the world, Venice used its past glory to introduce its exhibition in 1895. As shall be further shown in the upcoming chapters, painters were sensitive to creating a connection between their works and the illustrious Venetian school while visitors were enthralled by the promise of spending a few days in the 'wonder city of the Adriatic'.⁸⁸ Indeed, the postcard-like image of Venice was abundantly utilised in the posters made for the *Esposizione*; this was inclemently picked up by *The Times* correspondent as 'admirable example of street hoarding'.⁸⁹ However in 1909, the organisers of the Biennale did not shy away from sending descriptions of the city to British newspapers with an abundance of photographs showing picturesque canals, gondolas and posters.⁹⁰ Thus the Biennale combined its glorious past and scenic present in order to attract different crowds of cultural tourists and build up its cultural capital.

Secondly, as stated before, the institutional structures for contemporary art were not adequate. One of the priorities for the organisers was to encourage the founding of a Gallery of Modern Art, later called Ca' Pesaro, to house international contemporary art. The structure opened in 1897 and progressively developed alongside the Biennale, together with the *Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna* in Rome founded in 1883 which also acquired international art until 1937.⁹¹ The details of the

⁸⁸ *The Sphere*, 17 April 1909. Shearer West has analysed how Venice 'marketed desires' and used its unique geography to attract tourists. Shearer West, 'National Desires and Regional Realities in the Venice Biennale 1895-1914', *Art History*, 18, 3 (September 1995), 404-434.

⁸⁹ *The Times*, 20 November 1895, p. 15.

⁹⁰ *The Sphere*, Supplement, 5 June 1909.

⁹¹ Arduino Colasanti, *La galleria nazionale d'arte moderna in Roma, Catalogo* (Milano, Roma: Bestetti e Tumminelli, 1923). Lamberti also pointed out that the *Accademia* as well as the *Museo archeologico*

founding of the Venice gallery will be dwelt on later on as part of the analysis of the acquisitions. Cultural capital and art institutions are tightly linked. Unsurprisingly, the Biennale organisers sought to attract not only national but international art institutions in their venture as acknowledgement of their importance. In a letter written in 1905, the prominent art critic Ugo Ojetti triumphantly announced to Antonio Fradeletto:

I have talked and talked again of your exhibition to M. Marcel, Directeur des Beaux-Arts... I have persuaded him to make an official purchase for the Luxembourg at the next exhibition. He says that he does not have much to spend: but the act will be meaningful, and people will talk about it...⁹²

Indeed the presence of prestigious international institutions in Venice endowed it with 'symbolic capital' which the organisers were keen to develop: from that perspective, modest acquisitions from foreign museums contributed greatly to the prestige and reputation of the Venetian venture. The French 1905 acquisition was preceded by German museum directors in 1903 coming from Darmstadt, the Kunstverein of Königsberg and the Kunsthalle in Hamburg.⁹³ In addition Antonio Fradeletto invited personalities of the art world to curate rooms for their own nations: for example French art historian and Curator at the Luxembourg Museum Léonce Bénédict (1859-1925) selected and displayed the French section from 1907 onwards and was appointed President of the International Jury in 1906. As the next chapter will show, various artists also contributed to curate their own national sections: landscapist Alfred

were refurbished at the end of the nineteenth century, reopening to an increasing amount of 'cultural tourists'. Lamberti, pp. 39-47 (p. 39).

⁹² Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Carte dei Segretari generali, conservatori, capi d'ufficio stampa, Carte del Segretario generale Antonio Fradeletto, Sezione 8, Busta 1, Corrispondenza 1895-1914, Letter from Ugo Ojetti to Antonio Fradeletto, dated 14/VIII/1905.: 'In varie volte, parlando e riparlando della tua esposizione con M. Marcel, Directeur des Beaux-Arts... l'ho convinto a comprare ufficialmente pel Luxembourg un'opera alla prossima mostra. Dice d'aver pochi danari: ma l'atto sarà significativo, e farà rumore...'

⁹³ Stella, p. 66.

East took care of the British section in 1905, while Sergei Diaghilev was involved in the Russian display of 1907.⁹⁴

Perhaps more than anything else, the introduction of national pavilions radically transformed the structure and visibility of the Venetian venture by bringing together social, cultural and economic capital. Not only did it radically alter its structure and shifted some of the heavy organisational burden off the shoulders of the Venice Biennale Secretary, but it also encouraged individual countries to take a long-lasting artistic and financial interest in the venture thereby accruing the unique combination of economic and symbolic capital offered by the Biennale. Indeed the inauguration of the Belgian Pavilion, the first of the kind in 1907 was saluted by its promoter Fierens-Gevaert as ‘a very modern and unprecedented venture’.⁹⁵ From a financial point of view, the annual reports showed substantial investments from countries: in 1907, foreign governments and groups spent almost ITL 40,000 (GBP 1,600) in the *Giardini* whereas two years later, the sole Hungarian government spent as much as 200,000 crowns to create ‘a Magyar house’.⁹⁶ By the First World War, seven pavilions had sprouted in the *Giardini*. In 1914 the Russian Pavilion boasted a surface of 450m² on two floors and its bombastic façade reclaiming an imagined Russian vernacular past was blessed and officially opened by the Grand-Duchess Wladimira together with her son and a crowd of dignitaries. It was saluted as the ‘most important event of the pre-war Biennale’.⁹⁷ By coalescing together art, nationalistic interest and international politics relayed by the press, the presence of the Pavilions ensured that permanent attention, money and representation would be devoted to Venice and its venture.⁹⁸ Perhaps more than anything else, the grandiose opening of the Russian

⁹⁴ Stella, p. 75 and 81.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Martina Carraro, ‘I Belgi e la Biennale di Venezia: premesse e protagonisti del primo padiglione nazionale ai giardini (1895-1914)’ (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Università Ca’ Foscari di Venezia, 2008) p. 173.: ‘une entreprise très moderne et sans précédent’.

⁹⁶ Fradeletto (1908), pp. 46 and 55. 200,000 crowns were roughly equivalent to ITL 40,000.

⁹⁷ For details of this well-orchestrated event, see Matteo Bertelè, ‘L’inaugurazione del Padiglione russo all’esposizione internazionale d’arte di Venezia del 1914’, *Europa Orientalis*, 9 (2009), 97-108 (pp. 101-102).

⁹⁸ Pavilions continued to be built in the *Giardini* until 1995 when saturation occurred. Catenacci, pp. 78-

Pavilion thus plainly demonstrated that by the First World War, the Biennale was in a good position to conquer the 'field of power'.

In spite of a strong international competition and unpromising beginnings, the Venice Biennale managed to survive and gain a place within the field of international art exhibitions. Although the importance of its pre-war position within the field was relative and possibly only slowly evolving in foreign eyes, the venture sought to encourage the creation of supporting structures while it evolved in a flexible way to attract major players of the international art institutions. Most of all, the creation of national pavilions contributed to the longevity of the venture as it enabled it to dramatically accrue its cultural, social and economic capital abroad. Such borrowing from Universal Exhibitions became a trademark of the Biennale. By assimilating features from other structures of the field and using its own cultural capital, the Venice venture managed to give a loaded meaning to the term 'biennial' as a specific exhibition format 'for artistic, cultural, political and social event'.⁹⁹

88 (p. 81).; however a pavilion for Australia appeared at the 2015 Biennale, the first addition of the twenty-first century: Australia Council for the Arts, <<http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/strategies-and-frameworks/venice-biennale/>> [accessed 22 May 2015].

⁹⁹ Catenacci, pp. 78-88 (p. 86).

CHAPTER TWO

DECIPHERING THE 'SIGN-SYSTEM' OF THE BRITISH PRESENCE AT THE VENICE BIENNALE

As the previous chapter sought to show, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'field' was useful to confront the complexity and density of the phenomenon of international art exhibitions during the *fin-de-siècle* period. It thus provided a valuable framework to contextualise the nascent Venice Biennale while pointing to the limits of its use in a highly dynamic and international environment where perceptions of the field changed in place and time. Indeed while Bourdieu mainly developed his concept out of his intra-national analyses of society and literature in France, this purely national perspective did not fully fit in the emergence of an international phenomenon such as the Biennale, which was bound to be read differently in Italy and in England. On the one hand, the venture was clearly mapped as part of the field and hailed as successful in Italy while on the other hand references were more sporadic and sometimes critical in England or in the international sphere. As a result, chapter two will shift perspectives on two fronts as it will focus on the British presence in Venice. Taking up the question raised in the first chapter, it will first seek to assess the extent of the opportunities offered by the Venice Biennale for British painters. Then it will also show how the Venetian side gauged the importance of the British presence in their venture. This dual perspective should thus shed further light on the British sections as 'sign-systems', i.e. as bearing more meaning than the 'sum of the separate exhibits that it contains'.¹

Although curator, lecturer and art critic Lawrence Alloway (1926-1990) is best-known for coining the concept of Pop Art in the late 1950s, his interest in post-War artistic practices were comprehensive as shown in the series of exhibitions he curated at the Solomon R. Guggenheim museum in New York during his curatorship

¹ Lawrence Alloway, *The Venice Biennale, 1895-1968, From Salon to Goldfish Bowl* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 36.

there between 1962 and June 1966. His non-orthodox approach to the international contemporary scene was also underpinned by his open-mindedness to theories developed in other fields which he adapted to his research. In particular, Alloway incorporated 'systems theory' and 'information theory' to his understanding of art and the art world.² The General System Theory was elaborated by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1930s as positing a logical underlying order to any structure while Norbert Wiener's *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* proposed to view Information Theory as 'a non-hierarchic network of available messages'.³ Both point out Alloway's interest in understanding structures, processes or entities and how communication can contribute to shaping or fostering relationships between their components. Alloway developed their ideas into his critical output of the 1950s and 1960s. His book on the Venice Biennale testifies to his belief that it should be understood as part of a 'communication system'.⁴ Indeed to Alloway exhibitions were 'open situations' in which the works of art were decontextualised and given a new meaning both by the new structure and by the public.⁵ As Alloway underlined it, 'the total effect, the sum of the physical plant and its content of individual works, has a meaning'.⁶ Therefore, works of art could be studied *per se* but an analysis of their sequence as modelled by the structure of the exhibition and the reaction of the public would endow them with an additional layer of meaning. From that perspective, exhibitions constituted 'sign-systems' which needed decoding at different levels in order to fully grasp their impact. Not only the visual level, i.e. the art works, contributed to shaping the exhibition, but also the communication process involving 'group membership, role concepts, and social structure' moulded its final shape.⁷ Following Alloway's semiotic approach, the present chapter will try to

² Courtney J. Martin, 'Lawrence Alloway's Systems', in *Lawrence Alloway, Critic and Curator*, ed. by Lucy Bradnock, Courtney J. Martin and Rebecca Peabody (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2015), pp. 86-106 (p. 88).

³ Nigel Whiteley, *Art and Pluralism: Lawrence Alloway's Cultural Criticism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), p. 53.

⁴ Whiteley, p. 231.

⁵ Lawrence Alloway, 'Art and the Communications Network', in *Imagining the Present: Context, Content and the Role of the Critic*, ed. by Richard Kalina (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 112-120 (pp. 116-117).

⁶ Quoted in Whiteley, p. 232.

⁷ Whiteley, p. 53.

examine the actors involved in the communication system which gave the British sections their appearance.

2.1 International Exhibitions and Career Opportunities for living British painters

2.1.1 The Home Market for Living Painters

As seen in chapter one, professional opportunities for British painters were expanding at the end of the nineteenth century as the period was characterised by unprecedented possibilities to exhibit at home and abroad. Yet Clive Bell's indictment presented British art as developing in a narrow-minded environment in which local patrons could afford high prices.⁸ Bell therefore implied that British painters took advantage of a strong home market while not daring to compete with foreign artists abroad where their names would be unknown and their asking prices would be unpaid. As a result, their insularity could be interpreted as a strategy to maintain artificial reputations and high prices.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the London art market underwent a significant structural evolution as commercial art galleries multiplied and took on an increasing role in promoting and selling works by living artists. As Pamela Fletcher explained, the rise of the gallery system promoted a 'new set of structures and practices' with specific marketing strategies or features traditionally associated with museums or the Royal Academy such as catalogues and fee-paying exhibitions.⁹ Indeed dealers such as Ernest Gambart (1814-1902), Victor Flatou (1820-1867) or later William Agnew (1825-1910) had played a seminal role in creating or fuelling the market for such painters as William Holman Hunt, William Powell Frith or Frederick Walker.¹⁰ Guido Guerzoni identified three categories of

⁸ Bell, p. 35.

⁹ Fletcher, p. 12.

¹⁰ For more information on these dealers, see Geoffrey Agnew, *Agnew's 1817-1967* (London: Bradbury Agnew Press, 1967); Jeremy Maas, *Ernest Gambart, Prince of the Victorian Art World* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1976); Pamela M. Fletcher, 'Creating the French Gallery: Ernest Gambart and the Rise of the Commercial Art Gallery in Mid-Victorian London', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* [ejournal], 6, 1 (Spring 2007): <<http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/46-spring07/spring07article/143-creating-the-french-gallery-ernest-gambart-and-the-rise-of-the-commercial-art-gallery-in-mid-victorian-london>> [accessed 20 October 2013]; Samuel Shaw, 'The new Ideal Shop': Founding the Carfax Gallery, c.1898-1902', *The British Art Journal*, 13, 2 (Autumn

dealers operating in the London art ecosystem during the period 1850-1914: a handful of high-end dealers often present in the 'golden triangle London-Paris-New York', a medium-sized group of urban 'skilled professionals' specialised in 'steady sectors' such as national painting and focussing on a 'medium range of prices and clients'; lastly a large group of highly specialised 'small operators'.¹¹ At the eve of the First World War, dealers' had multiplied alongside Bond Street and Piccadilly and were upwards of two hundred.

Although not all dealers specialised in living painters, advertisement pages showed that a number of them clustered around auction houses and traded in 'High-class Modern Pictures and Drawings' such as a M. Newman situated at 43 Duke Street St James's or Dyson Lister at 26 King's Street, St James's Square.¹² Some others such as N. Mitchell boasted to be 'sole agent for the works of many well-known artists' with 'always on view, a Choice Collection of Pictures and Drawings by members of the Royal Academy, Royal Scottish Academy, Royal Watercolour Society, Royal Institute etc. etc.'¹³ Lastly some others such as Dowdeswell's openly invited artists to submit their works '*personally* with specimens'¹⁴ or others such as the Doré Galleries leased their 'six important galleries of varying sizes... for exhibition' boasting their 'very large and very valuable' clientele to artists desirous to show their works at the heart of Bond Street.¹⁵ In the state of the current research on the Edwardian art market, it is difficult to map precisely the galleries specialising in living painters. Yet it is generally thought that the best-known galleries, clubs or societies showing living artists included the Marlborough Gallery on Pall Mall where the New English Art

2012), pp. 35-43.; Anne Helmreich, 'David Croal Thompson: The Professionalisation of Art Dealing in an Expanding Field', *Getty Research Journal*, 5 (2013), pp. 89-100.

¹¹ Guido Guerzoni, 'The British Painting Market 1789-1914', in *Economic History and the Arts*, ed. Michael North (Köln: Weimar and Wien: Böhlau, 1996), pp. 99-100.

¹² Ed. A.C.R. Carter, *The Year's art, a Concise Epitome of all Matters relating to the Arts of Painting, Sculpture, Engraving and Architecture, and to Schools of Design, which have occurred during the year 1908, together with information respecting the Events of the Year 1909* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1909) p.26. Since July 2013 the *Burlington Magazine* has also received funding from the Monument Trust to index the advertisement published in its magazines since 1903; it is freely consultable at the following address: <<http://www.burlington.org.uk/archive/index-of-illustrations>>.

¹³ *The Year's Art* (1909), p. 23.

¹⁴ *The Year's Art* (1909), p. 13.

¹⁵ *The Year's Art* (1909), p. 234.

Club which started in 1886 displayed many of the painters present in Venice. In addition the New Gallery, created by the Grosvenor Gallery's managers Charles Hallé and J. Comyns Carr in 1888 showed many of the painters previously exhibiting at the Grosvenor Gallery.¹⁶ Although the Fine Art Society did not limit itself to living artists, its first Director Marcus Bourne Huish worked with many of the painters present in Venice. In addition, as will be developed in the upcoming pages, Huish became member of the Committee for the British Pavilion in Venice from 1909 which enabled him to use his extensive network at home. With the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers which started in 1898, Whistler developed an international artistic network which enabled painters such as John Lavery to befriend French sculptor Auguste Rodin; its members counted a few of the artists who exhibited in Venice such as Charles Shannon (1863-1937) or Glyn Philpot (1884-1938).¹⁷ Besides these prominent exhibition spaces, other smaller entities also specialised in living artists: founded in 1898 by artist William Rothenstein, solicitor Arthur Bellamy Clifton and John Fothergill, the Carfax Gallery is an interesting example singled out by Charles John Holmes as offering the 'best of our younger artists'.¹⁸ The stock presented there is of particular interest to this study as many of the artists who later exhibited at the Venice Biennale held their first one-man shows there: Roger Fry and Augustus John in 1903, Maxwell Armfield and Wilfried Gabriel De Glehn in 1908 or Charles Holmes in 1909 (see Appendix 2).¹⁹

A broad survey of the growing artistic field in London therefore showed that it offered a thriving environment for living artists. Turning to Bell's comments on unjustified high prices, some literature seemed to support his statement. For example William Laidlay exclaimed in 1898:

¹⁶ Chris Mullen, 'Introduction', in *The Dictionary of British Artists 1880-1940*, ed. by J. Johnson and Anna Gruetzner (Sudbury, Suffolk: Antique's Collector's Club, 1976), pp. 7-15. Mullen's introduction still represents one of the most comprehensive existing accounts of the different venues where living artists could show their works during the Edwardian period.

¹⁷ A footnote with a short biography will be provided for artists mentioned in this dissertation who did not exhibit at the Biennale. For those who sent works in Venice, information has been compiled in Appendix 2.

¹⁸ Charles John Holmes, *Pictures and Picture Collecting* (London: A. Treherne, 1903), p. 45.

¹⁹ Barbara Pezzini, 'More Adey, the Carfax Gallery and the *Burlington Magazine*', *The Burlington Magazine of Art*, 43 (December 2011), 806-814 (p. 808).

English pictures are absurdly dear; they have to keep the prices up owing to the way they [the artists] live... and believe me, with them, it is purely an affair of commerce: they paint simply and solely for money and to meet the market.²⁰

While Laidlay was himself a painter and as such might have been accused of bias or jealousy, Gerald Reitlinger produced an important study of the art market published in 1961 and entitled *The Economics of Taste*. Devoting a chapter to the period comprised between 1850 and 1914, he labelled it 'The Golden Age of the Living Painter'. He justified his title with the astronomical prices fetched by the Pre-Raphaelite painters of the first and second generation mainly, adding further references to social realist and genre painters from the *fin-de-siècle* era. For example, Reitlinger used the 1913 McCulloch sale to evidence his argument that prices for Millais, Burne-Jones, Leighton, Waterhouse or Alma-Tadema had remained high. This seems to be confirmed by Millais's price tag of £6,000 for *The Ornithologist* (also known as *The Ruling Passion*, today at Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow) which astonished viewers at the Venice Biennale as was reported by art critic Vittorio Pica in 1895: 'With a mix of astonishment and incredulity, visitors whisper to each other's ears the price of 150.000 lire, a truly amazing amount for an Italian painter'.²¹

With a few exceptions, Reitlinger thus presented the market for living painters as a sustained and lively one resting on a few industrialist collectors such as George McCulloch (1848-1907), William Hesketh Lever (1851-1925), Sir Edmund Davis (1862-1939) or institutional mechanisms such as the Chantrey Bequest acquisitions.²² Reitlinger's chapter is divided into four sections with the last one devoted to 'Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1872-1914' using the first

²⁰ Quoted in Grischka Petri, *Arrangement in Business. The Art Markets and the Career of James McNeill Whistler* (Hildensheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2011), p. 475.

²¹ Pica, *Arte Europea a Venezia*, p. 41.: 'I visitatori si sussurrano all'orecchio, tra meravigliati e increduli, il prezzo di 150.000 lire, somma addirittura favolosa per un pittore italiano'.

²² The sculptor Francis Chantrey (1781-1841) bequeathed his fortune to the Royal Academy with the view to acquire works of art (both painting and sculpture) produced in Britain. The first work was acquired in 1877. For more information on it, Wilfried Meynell, *The Chantrey Bequest* (London: The Windsor Magazine, 1909) or *Within these shores: a Selection of Works from the Chantrey Bequest, 1883-1985* (London: Tate Gallery in association with Sheffield City Art Galleries, 1989).

Durand-Ruel exhibition of Impressionist-to-be painters in London as starting point. Following the modernist precept, he predictably opposed French modern masters to 'the tragedy' of 'British provincialism or conservatism' and moaned about the absence of taste for Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in England.²³ From that perspective, the endeavours of the New English Art Club, defined as no more than 'genteel',²⁴ did not deserve a market analysis. Furthermore no mention whatsoever was made of the vast majority of British living painters who showed at the Venice Biennale such as Frank Brangwyn, William Nicholson, Charles Shannon, John Lavery, Alfred East or James Paterson. As a consequence little is known about the home market for these painters apart from some articles or essays.²⁵

Actually, the sample of circa three hundred artists shown at the Venice Biennale and spanning over nineteen years meant that a few generations of artists exhibited there: George Frederic Watts (1817-1904) was the eldest while Stanley Grimm (1891-1966) was the most junior. Therefore painters did not exhibit at the Venice Biennale at the same stage of their artistic development, nor of their career. In order to be clearer, the older and more successful generation will be labelled 'late Victorian' while the younger generation of artists born in the 1860s onwards will be called 'Edwardian'. Thus instead of using common labels defining artistic movements, a chronological delineation is here preferred. The older 'late Victorian' generation was the broadly successful group of Pre-Raphaelite and classical painters as well as their epigones who had enjoyed a sustained and strong home market, whereas the newer 'Edwardian' generation which assimilated the lessons from French realism, Whistlerian tonalism or rediscovered old masters had entered a turbulent and shifting home market. Of course this chronological categorisation is only meant as a tool which should not obscure the complexities of market realities, or contradictory examples.

²³ Reitlinger, pp. 172-174.

²⁴ Reitlinger actually quoted Sydney Cooper, p. 172.

²⁵ David Boswell, 'Frank Brangwyn and his Patrons', in *Frank Brangwyn 1867-1956*, ed. by Libbie Horner and Gillian Naylor (Leeds, Groeningen: Leeds Museums and Galleries, Groeningemuseum/Arents House, 2007), pp. 156-187.

Bayer and Page produced a chronological and quantitative survey of the art market in England between 1730 and 1900 in which they argued that the market for living artists changed dramatically towards the end of the nineteenth century.²⁶ While patronage of contemporary art in England had seen a substantial increase between the years 1840 and 1870 following the rise in patriotic patronage as symbolic cultural empowerment of the middle-class collectors,²⁷ figures seemingly started to fall after 1870. Causes for this decline were manifold yet Bayer and Page mainly ascribed the changes in pattern to a number of technical and legal motives connected to the rise of photography as a medium of reproduction. According to them, this broadly incurred an explosion of pictorial styles as attempts to create 'clearly differentiated cultural products' under increasingly changing market conditions.²⁸ Such competition forced painters to lower their prices which according to the data collected started dropping from around £350 to about £290 on average in the period comprised between 1895 and 1905; after that date, prices picked up again and seemingly boomed to almost £500 around 1910. Although Bayer and Page acknowledged that the data became less reliable after 1900, these trends nevertheless give a clue as to the challenges faced by living British artists in the Edwardian period.²⁹

In addition to technical changes, the London art market also offered higher numbers of old masters coupled with an openness to foreign living artists thereby becoming 'fully international' by the turn of the century.³⁰ Following the agricultural depression of the 1870s and the subsequent Settled Land Act of 1882, aristocratic collections were dispersed through auctions such as the seminal Hamilton Palace Sale taking place the same year. An astonishing number of paintings and art objects of high artistic value and carrying impeccable provenance were henceforth released onto the market thereby shifting its focus back onto old masters and creating intense competition for living artists. Dealers such as Agnew's,

²⁶ Thomas M. Bayer and John R. Page, *The Development of the Art Market in England: Money as Muse, 1730 -1900* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011).

²⁷ Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle-Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁸ Bayer and Page, pp. 179-190.

²⁹ Bayer and Page, p. 8.

³⁰ Bayer and Page, p. 4.

Knoedler and Co. and Duveen Brothers successfully fuelled the market notably in America where new money collectors such as Henry E. Huntington, Benjamin Altman or J. Pierpont Morgan could afford two million francs (or £80,000) for a Madonna by Raphael³¹ or British eighteenth century portraits by Reynolds, Romney and Gainsborough mainly. Barbara Pezzini has argued that the market shift towards eighteenth century British portraits as well as the scholarly development of art history as a discipline impacted the production of Edwardian painters as they sought to emulate what sold so well.³² Painter, art critic and later museum director Charles John Holmes confirmed this trend in 1903. To him, while dealers had traditionally been seminal in sifting the works by living artists, they were increasingly moving towards old master paintings at the beginning of the twentieth century. The main reason was that they represented a commercial and aesthetic safe haven. On the contrary, living painters often represented 'a cause of embarrassment' as they might fail to live up to expectations.³³ In addition, Holmes lambasted his fellow artists for 'liv[ing] expensively and charg[ing] corresponding prices' while he also acknowledged that contemporary art was 'comparatively cheap' in contrast to old masters.³⁴ Although these comments may seem fairly contradictory, they point to the difficulty that living artists might experience in finding clients in an otherwise extremely buoyant and expanding field, and to make a living out of their art. A glance at the *Year's Art* seem to confirm such a stance as one critic bitterly complained in 1908 that there were 'too many artists... not yet dead'.³⁵ Already in 1892, Marcus Bourne Huish later to become member of the British Committee for the Pavilion in Venice, wrote an essay entitled 'Whence this Great Multitude of Painters?' lamenting on the ever increasing numbers of artists exhibiting all year round.³⁶ One letter found in the archives in Venice suggests that

³¹ Meryle Secrest, *Duveen: A Life in Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 45.

³² Barbara Pezzini, '(Inter)National art: 'old masters' market and contemporary British painting in London (1900-1914)', in *Art Crossing Borders: The Birth of an Integrated Art Market in the Age of Nation States*, ed. by Jan Dirk Baetens and Dries Lyna (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2016).

³³ Holmes, p. 33-34.

³⁴ Holmes pp. 34-35.

³⁵ *The Year's Art 1909*, p. 1.

³⁶ Quoted in Julie F. Codell 'Artists' Professional Societies: Production, Consumption, and Aesthetics', in *Towards a Modern Art World: Studies in British Art 1*, ed. by Brian Allen (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 169-187 (p. 169).

some painters were indeed in need of selling their works; Scottish landscapist Alexander Kellock Brown wrote a note to the Exhibition organisers late in October 1903 in which he 'took the liberty of writing to say that (he) (should) be very much pleased if you can get me a good offer for either of my two pictures in the Exhibition'.³⁷ Unfortunately neither landscape found a buyer that year which may explain why Brown declined exhibiting both in 1905 and 1907.

Bell's statement thus proved somehow biased as he probably referred to a minor portion of living artists obtaining high prices. The London market underwent major changes during the period 1850 to 1914 with more opportunities offered to artists as well as more competition from different segments of the market. Living painters were thus increasingly faced with competition from the trade in old masters and foreign living painters. Although some Edwardian painters still achieved high prices on the secondary market, statistical analysis of the period has shown that prices were in decline. As a result, their depressed home market may have pushed them to explore possibilities abroad.

2.1.2 The International Presence of Living British Painters

The forthcoming analysis derives from the compilation of data from several dictionaries and put together in Appendix 2 entitled 'Index of British Painters Exhibiting at the Venice Biennale, 1895-1914'.³⁸ In compiling this index, the aim was to understand what their career, status and degree of recognition was at the time of their presence in Italy. Hence titles, membership or institutional purchases which took place after their passage at Venice were not included here as it would affect

³⁷ Venice, ASAC (Archives Sandra Berresford), Letter from Alexander Kellock Brown to Antonio Fradeletto, 20/X/1903.

³⁸ Grant M. Waters, *Dictionary of British Artists working 1900-1950* (Eastbourne: Eastbourne Fine Art, 1975); J. Johnson and A. Greutzner, *The Dictionary of British Artists 1880-1940* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1976); Wood, *Dictionary of Victorian Painters*; Paul Harris and Julian Halsby, *The Dictionary of Scottish Painters, 1660-1960* (Edinburgh, Oxford, London: Canongate/ Phaidon Press in association with Bourne Fine Art, 1990); Béatrice Crespon-Halotier, *Les peintres britanniques dans les salons parisiens des origines à 1939: Répertoire, Précédé d'un essai d'Olivier Meslay* (Dijon: Echelle de Jacob, 2003); Angus Trumble and Andrea Wolk Rager, *Edwardian Opulence: British Art at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2013).

our perception. This work thus sought to reconstruct the British presence at the time of the pre-war Biennali.

Although Clive Bell lambasted local painters for their ignorance of contemporary continental art as well as the insular education system in Britain, most painters exhibiting at Venice presented an international pedigree. With a few exceptions, many painters born before the 1850s only trained in the UK, generally attending the Royal Academy Schools. However biographical elements found on the participants in the Venice Biennale born from the 1850s onwards indicated that they not only studied at home (either in Scotland or in England mainly) but also in Paris, Antwerp, Florence, Rome, Munich, Dresden or as far as Riga. They usually spent a few years at the Royal Academy Schools, at the Slade School, at the Lambeth School of Art, at the Westminster School of Art or at Bushey's then moved to the Continent. In Paris most painters studied at Atelier Colarossi or Académie Julian established in 1868, both meant to be alternatives to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and open to female artists. Alternatively they could also choose painter's studios such as Léon Bonnat's. In Paris, British artists learnt alongside fellow artists from all over Europe and America: for example Newlyn painter Henry Scott Tuke who studied at the atelier of J.P. Laurens shared a studio with Jacques-Emile Blanche. He also met Jules Bastien-Lepage and John Singer Sargent during his stay in Paris.³⁹ The Académie Julian famously taught Fauvist leader Henri Matisse (1867-1954), Nabis leader Paul Sérusier (1864-1927) and Emil Nolde (1867-1956) member of *Die Brücke*. Although it may be dangerous to conjecture as the Académie Julian had large cohorts of students and British artists were reported to keep to themselves due to their higher social class and limited knowledge of French,⁴⁰ it is nevertheless tempting to think that Harrington Mann, Samuel Peploe, William Rothenstein or Frederick Cayley Robinson may have met with Matisse as they all attended the Académie Julian in the early 1890s. Besides, Edward Morris's analysis

³⁹ Caroline Fox, Francis Greenacre, *Artists of the Newlyn School (1880-1900)* (St. Ives: Newlyn Orion Galleries Ltd., 1979), p. 133-134.

⁴⁰ Edward Morris, *French Art in Nineteenth Century Britain* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 259. Letters found in the Venice archives show that British painters such as James Whitelaw Hamilton wrote very fluently in French or sometimes in Italian. For one such letter, see Appendix 5.

of the transnational links between artists, demonstrated the attraction that *plein-air* colonies outside of Paris exerted on British painters. In particular they settled in the Fontainebleau area, at Barbizon and Grez-sur-Loing where not only French but also Scandinavian and Japanese painters mingled.⁴¹ As the next chapter will explain in more detail, Scottish painters were particularly sensitive to the lessons of Corot and Bastien-Lepage, which in turn helped them find an audience in Italy. Other artist colonies were mainly found in Northern France such as Dieppe where an Anglo-French community including Edgar Degas, Jacques-Emile Blanche or Walter Sickert freely interacted.⁴² William Rothenstein not only befriended Degas, Pissarro and Toulouse-Lautrec but he also exhibited his works at the same dealer in a gallery on Boulevard Malesherbes.⁴³ Archibald Standish Hartrick may well have met with Paul Sérusier in Paris in 1886; as Martin Bailey explained, the British artist then spent the summer of 1886 at Pont-Aven where he befriended Van Gogh and to a lesser extent Gauguin.⁴⁴

It seems therefore that British painters of the Edwardian period who exhibited at the Venice Biennale generally possessed a much more international outlook than their predecessors having spent a few years on the Continent for studies and met their fellow artists there. Although most eventually went back to Britain, apart from watercolour artist Clara Montalba who died in Venice in 1929, their continental sojourn often enabled them to establish the embryo of an international network which pushed them to exhibit or from which they obtained invitations to exhibit on the Continent.

Before turning to the British presence in Venice specifically, it is necessary to consider their efforts to exhibit internationally with a few examples. In the case of well-known 'late Victorian' painters such as Walter Crane (1845-1915), invitations were received to send his works on travelling exhibitions. In his *Reminiscences*,

⁴¹ Morris, pp. 231-244.

⁴² Morris, p. 173.

⁴³ Douglas Cooper, 'IV: English Artists and their Relations with France: the New English Art Club', in *The Courtauld Collection, A Catalogue and Introduction* (London: The Athlone Press, 1954), pp. 29-37 (p. 32).

⁴⁴ Martin Bailey, 'Memories of Van Gogh and Gauguin: Hartrick's reminiscences', *Van Gogh Museum Journal* (2001), 96-105.

Crane recalled that around 1894 a number of his paintings went on tour around Germany, Austrian, Bohemia, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden after touring American the year before.⁴⁵ This was followed in 1900 by an invitation from the Iparművészeti Museum in Budapest to exhibit 'a large representative collection' of his works at the expense of the museum where 'dejeuners, banquets, receptions and entertainments followed thick and fast'.⁴⁶ No doubt he was not the only one as well-known painters and their works were in large demand throughout Europe and America. Indeed although contacted a year in advance, Lawrence Alma-Tadema refused to send any picture to the 1907 Venice Exhibition as he 'had no picture [he] can dispose of for that period 22nd of April - 31st October'.⁴⁷ Even more telling was the reply sent by Edward Burne-Jones to Venice on February 18, 1895:

I have found great difficulty in obtaining anything. I have had to borrow my pictures from their owners so often of late that I do not know where to turn for one. The special work I hoped to send to you is at an Exhibition in the North of England which I find does not close until the end of May – and I have nothing else in my own studio that would be suitable.⁴⁸

Letters sent to public and private owners received the same answer.⁴⁹ International success was not limited to English painters or Royal Academicians. For example, the Glasgow Boys disdained the Scottish Royal Academy and received very mixed reviews at the London Royal Academy when they sent their paintings in the 1880s. Their contribution to the New English Art Club from 1887 was cut short when they

⁴⁵ Walter Crane, *An Artist's Reminiscences* (London: Methuen and Co, 1907), pp. 430-431.

⁴⁶ Crane, pp. 466-469.

⁴⁷ Venice, ASAC, Collezioni autografi, (riproduzioni), 2-3, BA-BE (CA 2), Letter from Lawrence Alma-Tadema to Antonio Fradeletto, 11/VIII/1906, 1p.

⁴⁸ Venice, ASAC, Collezioni autografi, (riproduzioni), 2-3, BA-BE (CA 2), Letter from Edward Burne-Jones to Filippo Grimani, 18 February 1895, 2pp.

⁴⁹ For example: Venice, ASAC, Letter from the Earl of Wharnccliffe to Filippo Grimani, 2/IX/1896, 3pp. 'Lord Wharnccliffe regrets most sincerely that he is unable to comply with His Excellency's request, but he dares not run the risk of injury to his picture (by Burne-Jones) either by accident, or by weather, on so long, and broken, a journey from London to Venice. No payment in money for any damage done would compensate Lord. W. for the loss sustained'. pp. 2-3.

disagreed with the Club policies, which led to their mass resignation in 1892.⁵⁰ Following their successful group exhibition at the 1888 Glasgow Fine Arts exhibition and at the Grosvenor Gallery exhibitions in 1889 and 1890, they also explored the international route, which proved a success.⁵¹ The year they started sending pictures to Venice, the Boys also participated in the Vienna Secession. By 1897, they had won *Mentions honorables* at the Paris Salons and had repeatedly exhibited in the United States, Belgium, Spain and Germany.⁵² However Roger Billcliffe rightly pointed out that success abroad was also a means of conquering the English and Scottish markets: their invitation to exhibit at the 1890 Munich Glaspalast 'swung the balance of public opinion in their favour'.⁵³ Indeed, the Glasgow Boys had a group show in London at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1903 and at the Art Museum of Toronto in 1906. Benevolent reception abroad thus sometimes represented a step towards further critical, commercial and institutional recognition at home.

The 'Edwardian' generation was desirous to participate in exhibitions abroad as in some cases they might help them break into their home market. Indeed many painters who studied in Paris tried to show their works at a variety of *fin-de-siècle* Paris Salons such as Wilfried Gabriel de Glehn who showed there from 1891 after attending the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Investigating the British presence at the French Salon, Olivier Meslay stated that contrary to commonly-held opinions, 'more than two thousand' artists and 'nearly fourteen thousand works' by British hands appeared there since its inception.⁵⁴ Some British artists even received medals in Paris such as Herbert Hughes-Stanton (1870-1937) who was awarded Gold Medals in 1907 and 1908 or William Russell Flint (1880-1969) who received a Silver Medal from the Paris Salon in 1913. Gerald Kelly (1879-1972) opted for the

⁵⁰ Roger Billcliffe, *The Glasgow Boys, the Glasgow School of Painting, 1875-1895* (London: John Murray, 1985), p. 292. Billcliffe points out that the Boys were more successful at the Grosvenor Gallery.

⁵¹ Kenneth McConkey, 'Rural Naturalism at the Grosvenor Gallery', in *The Grosvenor Gallery, A Palace of Art in Victorian England*, ed. by Susan P. Casteras and Colleen Denney (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 129-145 (pp. 143-145).

⁵² Billcliffe, p. 297.

⁵³ Billcliffe, p. 295.

⁵⁴ Olivier Meslay, 'Tea in the Salons', in *Les peintres britanniques dans les Salons parisiens des origines à 1939*, ed. by Crespon-Halotier, pp. 23-35 (p. 23)

more independent *Salon d'Automne* in 1904. In some cases, even painters who had only studied in Britain also went abroad to expand their market opportunities: for example James Stevens Hill (1854-1921) regularly showed landscapes at the *Salon des Artistes français* between 1903 and 1911 while he also exhibited three times at Venice between 1905 and 1912.⁵⁵ In some cases, foreign acquisitions and awards were followed by institutional recognition at home: Herbert Hughes-Stanton sold a view of *A Port in Dorset* to the *Société des Artistes français* in 1904 and his Salon medals were followed by the Chantrey acquisition of *A Pasturage Among the Dunes in Pas-de-Calais, France* in 1908 after the painting was exhibited at the New Gallery the same year. In some other cases, British artists followed the demand and established a studio abroad. Although Edwardian artists have often been criticised for failing to adapt to the growing American market,⁵⁶ portrait-painter Harrington Mann decided to set up a second studio in New York as his American clientele grew. He eventually died there in 1937.⁵⁷

Participation in exhibitions abroad seems therefore to have been fairly common amongst Edwardian painters although no systematic analysis of their overseas presence can yet be offered. While Britain's foreign policy in the late nineteenth century has been described as 'splendid isolation',⁵⁸ its presence on the international art scene was much more inclusive. Indeed, Great-Britain slowly relinquished its insularity in the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, and started to participate in international exhibitions on a regular basis, slowly disclosing its artistic wonders to baffled continental critics.⁵⁹ At Great

⁵⁵ Olivier Meslay and Béatrice Crespon-Halotier have worked on creating an online database of British paintings in France called 'D'Outre-Manche': <<http://musee.louvre.fr/bases/doutremanche/index.php?lng=0>>. For more information on French official acquisitions of British paintings, see Crespon-Halotier.

⁵⁶ Petri, p. 175.

⁵⁷ Unsigned, 'The Paintings of Mr. Harrington Mann', *The English Illustrated Magazine*, 46 (January 1907), 337-351.

⁵⁸ For a discussion of the phrase and its political reality, see C.H.D. Howard, *Splendid Isolation* (London: Macmillan, 1967)

⁵⁹ For example the 1894 Vienna exhibition showed for the first time works by Leighton, Alma-Tadema, the Glasgow Boys, or photographic reproductions of Burne-Jones's paintings, which was admired as 'a strong and special one' by Loris, aka Hugo von Hofmannsthal, art critic for the *Neue Revue* (quoted in Holt, p. 330).

Exhibitions, Britain was usually second only to France in the number of its fine art exhibits from 1855 onwards,⁶⁰ with ever-growing sections at international exhibitions: 259 artists were present at the 1897 Brussels exhibition, 501 at the 1904 St Louis Exhibition and 511 at the Christchurch Exhibition in New Zealand in 1906-1907.⁶¹ Interestingly enough, a government report on the subject underlined that: 'of late years there has been a growing appreciation of British art in foreign countries'.⁶² Although these grand-scale exhibitions certainly represented valuable career opportunities for living artists, they were mainly under the control of 'Royal Commissions', in other words committees largely controlled by the Royal Academy or similar official bodies. This meant that some artists were side-lined due to their conflicting relationship with the Royal Academy. For example William Holman Hunt feared that the Venice Exhibition would be under such control; in a long letter, he warned that:

In the years past I noticed that the Exhibitions abroad – which are much under the control of the Royal Academy delegates (the Committees reasonably regarding the body as the proper protection of English Art interests) put my paintings in places where they could not be seen, and as this fact quite outweighed the advantage of being present, I determined to retain my works of art at home.⁶³

However as Julie F. Codell explained, there was a shift in the late nineteenth century whereby the control of exhibitions abroad was taken over by Societies.⁶⁴ This is what happened in Venice when the British Pavilion was set up in 1909 and it may have swayed the content of the section. An analytical survey of the British

⁶⁰ Greenhalgh, p. 210. The author added a caveat for the 1900 Exposition universelle when the British section (282 artists) was less numerous than the German and Austrian ones. (p. 207).

⁶¹ Report (1907), p. 9. In Italy, the 1911 Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition held in Rome displayed as many as 366 paintings and 254 watercolours by deceased and living artists in the British section. *International Fine Arts Exhibition, Rome, 1911. British Section Catalogue* (London: Ballantyne, 1911)

⁶² Report (1907), p. 9.

⁶³ Venice, ASAC, Collezioni autografi (riproduzioni), 2-3, BA-BE (CA 2), Letter from William Holman-Hunt to Riccardo Selvatico dated 17/VIII/1894, p.3.: 'I must also trust to your kind assurance that the contribution should not be under the jurisdiction of the official English Council but shall be placed by yourself for it is my ambition to be seen fairly in the city of the great painters of Italy'. Venice, ASAC, Collezioni autografi (riproduzioni), 2-3, BA-BE (CA 2), Letter from William Holman-Hunt to Riccardo Selvatico dated 9/III/1895, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁴ Codell, pp. 169-187.

presence at Venice will hopefully give more indications as to the type of painters and their motives for participating.

2.1.3 Living British Painters at the Venice Biennale

A glance at the Appendix 2 compiling the British presence in Venice reveals a highly heterogeneous situation whereby some artists came very regularly when others only showed there once; some were extremely illustrious whereas others were completely unknown; a few sold their works while the majority did not. While the latter point will be discussed into more depth in chapter IV, this section aims at bringing forth some patterns explaining the diversity of the British presence in Venice.

Out of 297 painters present over the eleven editions of the pre-war Biennale, half came only once while circa 25% participated in three or more editions. These figures seem to point to a nucleus of keen participants and a majority of opportunistic contributors. In terms of motives to send works to Venice, several categories may be drawn within the group of eager participants. First of all, some of them such as William Logsdail (1859-1944) or Clara Montalba (1842-1929) lived in Venice in the 1890s when the Biennale was set up. In addition, Samuel Melton Fisher (1860-1939) should be singled out for participating in an exhibition in Venice in 1887 which became to be regarded as the forerunner to the Biennale; his early presence in Venice was certainly linked to the fact that his father-in-law Federico Stefani (1827-1897) was the Head of the government archives in Venice.⁶⁵ Similarly to Logsdail and Montalba, Fisher had been living in Italy for ten years at the time of the first Biennali. Thus these 'local' British painters who often enjoyed strong networks in Italy were probably known to the organisers who invited them to exhibit. Then some British artists readily responded to Venice's cultural capital and were particularly benevolent towards the venture. For example Frederic Leighton (1830-1896), George Frederic Watts (1817-1904) and William Blake

⁶⁵ Venice, ASAC (Archives Sandra Berresford), Letter from Augusta Stefani to Antonio Fradeletto?, 27/XII/1904.

Richmond (1842-1921) all enjoyed honours in Britain where their careers were tremendously successful. Yet probably due to their ties with Italy —Richmond was a close friend to Giovanni Costa and Watts worked at the Medici Villa Careggi in Florence in 1843— they responded positively to the repeated invitations of the organisers. Lastly, the most obvious group was the one containing the commercially successful artists such as Cecil Rea (1860-1935) and his wife Constance *née* Halford (exh. 1891-1935) or some Scottish painters such as Tom Robertson (1850-1947) or Robert Macaulay Stevenson (1856 or 1860-1952). These artists will be analysed further in the fourth chapter on acquisitions at Venice.

Among the group of keen participants, the Glasgow Boys deserve special mention. Exhibiting for the first time in 1897, they provided more than half of the British section that year, so much so that they were given their own Scottish room at Venice both in 1897 and 1899.⁶⁶ Some members of the group sent in works until 1910 although none of them were present at the last pre-war edition. In general, the historiographers of the Boys consider that their heydays were in the 1880s and 1890s. As was explained earlier, the latter decade was devoted to intense international exposure which continued into the first decade of the twentieth century in Italy but also in America.⁶⁷ Their international presence thus stemmed from a clear exhibition strategy which brought them success on several continents.⁶⁸ As a result, their absence from the last edition might indicate that they had reached their strategic goals at home.

Besides the nucleus of eager participants, a number of artists came to Venice after exhibiting and selling their work on the Continent. For example, Maxwell Armfield first showed in Venice in 1905 after the French government received *Faustine* as donation from its owner Jules Blanck the year before.⁶⁹ Coincidentally Herbert Hughes-Stanton's oil landscape of *Dorset Port* was also

⁶⁶ This was the object of a presentation at the Forum *Kunst und Markt* in Berlin in November 2015.

⁶⁷ *Catalogue of Pictures by the Glasgow Painters: Exhibition held under the Auspices of the Toronto Art Museum and the Ontario Society of Artists* (Toronto: Society of Artists, 1906).

⁶⁸ Billcliffe touched on their international success in a chapter entitled 'Border Crossing', pp. 292-299.

⁶⁹ Musée d'Orsay, <http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no_cache=1&nnumid=9133&cHash=a9714d88ea> [accessed 19 June 2015]; the museum website defined Jules Blanck as a 'merchant'.

acquired in 1904 by the French State at the *Salon des artistes français* which perhaps prompted him to exhibit in Venice the year after. In other cases of French institutional acquisitions, artists waited longer before trying their luck in Venice. For example one of William Lee Hankey's genre scenes showing a young girl combing her hair was acquired in 1904 but he only exhibited at Venice in 1909.⁷⁰ From the limited available data, it seems therefore that British painters first sought to exhibit where they had been educated, i.e. generally in Britain and France, before turning to other possibilities such as the Venice Biennale.

Regarding the large group of one-off participations, the limited presence of the artists makes it fairly difficult to draw general explanations. For the major part of the pre-war period from 1895 until 1907, artists were invited so the reasons mostly lie with the organisers. Why would the President of the Royal Academy Edward Poynter, Camden Town Walter Sickert or Pre-Raphaelite William Waterhouse only be invited once? While the painters may have refused other invitations for personal reasons, Sickert's case is interesting to relate. On March 1st, 1903, the General Secretary Fradeletto received a letter reporting on the latest negotiations with the invited artists. The famous French portrait-painter Jacques-Emile Blanche offered to send a few pieces to Venice but he also asked the organisers to invite Walter Sickert 'to compensate for an omission, to give him justice'.⁷¹ Hence the 1903 catalogue of the British section shows a view of Venice entitled *San Michele* by the Camden Town painter. As stated above, Sickert was close to Jacques-Emile Blanche with whom he had been at Dieppe where an Anglo-French artistic colony developed around the end of the century. Interestingly, Blanche and Sickert were more than friends; Edward Morris stated that Blanche met Sickert in 1882 in London henceforth becoming 'his most important friend and patron until about 1910'.⁷² Blanche thus used his own fame and influence to advance the cause of his *protégé* and gain at least one invitation to Venice on his

⁷⁰ Musée d'Orsay, <<http://www.musee-orsay.fr/fr/collections/catalogue-des-oeuvres/notice.html?nnumid=161089>> [accessed 19 June 2015].

⁷¹ Venice, ASAC (Archives Sandra Berresford), Letter from Vincenzo Tosi to Antonio Fradeletto, 1/III/1903: '*comme la réparation d'un oubli, comme un acte de justice*'.

⁷² Morris, p. 173.

behalf. Local and international networks of artists often sought to manipulate the contents of exhibitions to their own end.

With the opening of the Pavilion, the number of new exhibitors soared due to a much larger amount of exhibition space. In total over half of the overall contingent of British painters participated in the Biennale from 1909 onwards. While this may indicate openness to a more diverse section or looser conditions of acceptance, the number of one-off participations also increased to almost 59% during the last four editions. A high turnover of painters may be interpreted in two opposite ways: on the one hand, it seems that it gave the Italian public the possibility to become acquainted with more figures of the British art scene. Indeed artists such as landscapist Samuel John 'Lamorna' Birch (1869-1955), painter and decorator Charles Sims (1873-1928) or Scottish colourist Samuel Peploe (1871-1935) all sent in works after the opening of the Pavilion. On the other hand, it may also mean that the artists did not have a real incentive to send their works to the Biennale or that they did not consider it worth pursuing. Artists such as Christopher Nevinson (1889-1946) or Vorticist Percy Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) or Camden Town Harold Gilman (1876-1919) never exhibited at the Biennale while their career was taking off in the years leading to the First World War.⁷³ As such it may point to its aesthetic or commercial unattractiveness for some British painters.

Furthermore, it is interesting to mention that thirty-three women-artists sent their works which represented a little over 10% of the contingent. As was the case for the men, some of them were well-known while it was difficult to find any information on a few such as an Elizabeth Taylor who only participated once in 1899 with a view of San Gimignano. Other lady artists were probably better-known as they were mentioned in Walter Shaw Sparrow's book on *Women Painters of the World*: Lily Blatherwick, Biddie Macdonald and Lawrence's daughter Anna Alma-

⁷³ Harold Gilman exhibited very regularly in Paris from 1908 at the *Salon des artistes indépendants*. Crespon-Halotier, p. 215-216.

Tadema.⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that in proportion, more women exhibited in the later editions of the Biennale.

Lastly, it became apparent that artists participated in the Biennale with members of their family or close friends, as was the case with the Alma-Tademas mentioned above. It is not uncommon to find repeated participations from male painters while their wives only showed once. For example American-born Hazel Lavery, John Lavery's second wife, exhibited one portrait in 1910, the year her husband had a one-man show in Venice. Similarly Edyth Rackham sent in only one portrait whereas her husband Arthur, the celebrated illustrator, sent five works over two editions. On the other hand Constance Rea participated as many times as her husband Cecil and Laura Knight exhibited twice at Venice when Harold Knight only showed once in 1910. Not only husbands and wives came together but also members of extended families: for example portraitist William Nicholson showed at Venice in 1905 for the first time. When he returned in 1909 and 1910, his brother-in-law and artistic partner James Pryde accompanied him. It is however interesting to point out that Mabel Pryde, who married Nicholson in 1893 and was an artist in her own right, never exhibited in Venice. Artistic partners did not always follow in the same footsteps. Indeed Charles Shannon and Charles Ricketts used different strategies at Venice: while the former sent in works in 1909, 1910 and 1912, the latter only participated in 1912. In the absence of comparisons with other international exhibitions, it is difficult to draw a conclusion from this pattern of behaviour. It may mean that word-of-mouth in family or friendly circles helped promote the Venice venture. In some of these cases, the partner came after a sale took place so this may reinforce the view that confidence in the venture was greater once it had been positively tested.

The British presence at Venice is thus far from homogeneous and multiple motives may have come into consideration before the artists were invited or selected to go to Venice. Although established 'late-Victorian' painters probably

⁷⁴ Walter Shaw-Sparrow, *Women Painters of the World: from the Time of Caterina Vigri (1413-1463) to Rosa Bonheur and the Present Day* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1905).

participated to honour Venice's cultural capital and link their names to that of the city, 'Edwardian' artists seemed more cautious and either came only once, or tested other continental exhibition venues before turning to Italy. Lastly it seems that networks and word-of-mouth were important factors which shaped the British sections; however much more research would be needed to bring out the 'sign-system' underpinning these sections. Overall the field of international art exhibition was thus expanding in the eyes of British artists who had to manoeuvre it to their best interest and manage the sometimes highly complicated schedule of circulation of their works.

2.2 The Venetian Perspective on the British Presence

2.2.1 The First Two Editions, 1895 and 1897

So far this chapter has focused on the British perspective and has attempted to show possible motives which pushed artists to include the Biennale within their field of international art exhibitions. However this is only one side of the story as the Venetian side also had an important role to play in shaping up the British sections.

The nascent Biennale represented the first regular and sustained exhibition platform for British painting in Italy and arguably on the Continent. However, before the first Venice Biennale in 1895, exhibitions containing British paintings were the exception rather than the rule in the Peninsula. The 1883 'Esposizione Internazionale di Belle Arti' in Rome organised by Giovanni Costa had only featured paintings by Lawrence Alma-Tadema and Frederic Leighton as well as a watercolour by John Henry Bradley.⁷⁵ The Venice Biennale thus represented a turning point in

⁷⁵ Ferdinando Fontana, *Pennelli e Scalpelli, Esposizione Internazionale di Belle Arti, Roma 1883* (Milano: Giuseppe Galli, 1883). As the author himself pointed out, the exhibition did not really deserve the term 'international': 'the adjective "international" did not bring luck. Works by foreign artists are rare' ('l'aggettivo 'internazionale' non porto' fortuna. Le opere di artisti stranieri vi figurarono in scarsa quantità'), p. v. A landscape, topographical painter and watercolourist, John Henry Bradley (1832-1884) was a pupil of David Cox and James Holland. *Dictionary of Victorian Painters* (1978), p. 60.

the gradual presentation, knowledge of and taste for British painting at the national level.

As shall be explained further in the next chapter, a knowledge of British painting was still at an embryonic stage in the 1890s in Italy, apart from a handful of intellectuals and professionals of the art world. For the first Biennale, the organisers thus heavily relied on their networks. Through intermediaries —perhaps some painters belonging to cosmopolitan circles or perhaps through diplomatic representation— the organisers managed to create a contact with the President of the Royal Academy early in 1898.⁷⁶ Elected in 1878, Frederic Leighton was ‘more prominent in public life than any other painter whose career fell within the span of the reign of Queen Victoria’.⁷⁷ He was also deeply *Italophile* and at the centre of an Anglo-Italian artistic network counting Giovanni Costa.⁷⁸ When contacted by the Venice Mayor Riccardo Selvatico, the ailing President nevertheless took time to give advice and help organise the first British section at Venice ‘as one taking much interest in (the) forthcoming exhibition’.⁷⁹ It is striking that the first letter he received, which was accompanied by a draft list of potential exhibitors, betrayed such scanty knowledge of British painters:

With regard to the little list which you send to me, I am at a loss to know how to answer you, for it is composed of men of very unequal merit, and omits many important names. Two of them I could add are not the names of Englishmen at all... meanwhile, two of the artists whom you name, Mr. Frank Holl,⁸⁰ and Mr. Albert Moore,⁸¹ have both been dead for some time.⁸²

⁷⁶ Paola Zatti affirmed that Selvatico and Fradeletto used portrait painter Giovanni Boldini (1842-1931) to help gather a prestigious Committee both in France and in England. Paola Zatti, *La gestione delle primi Biennali tra tradizione e innovazione (1895-1912), I contribute esterni* (unpublished master’s thesis, Università degli studi di Venezia, Cà Foscari, 1992), no page number.

⁷⁷ Christopher Newall, *The Art of Lord Leighton* (London: Phaidon, 1993), p. 139.

⁷⁸ For more information, see *Nino Costa ed i suoi amici inglesi*, ed. by Paul Nicholls, (Milan: Circolo della stampa, 1982). Letters indicate that Costa had hosted Leighton on several occasions. Giuliana Pieri, ‘The letters of Giovanni Costa to George Howard’, *Walpole Society*, 76 (2014), 308-432.

⁷⁹ Venice, ASAC, Collezioni autografi (riproduzioni), 9-10, I-J-K (CA 9), LA-LU (CA 10), Letter from Lord Leighton to Riccardo Selvatico?, dated 15/III/1895.

⁸⁰ Frank Holl (1845-1888), painter of portraits and genre and illustrator. Influenced by 17th century Dutch painting, he gradually became one of the most popular Victorian portrait painters. *The Dictionary of Victorian Painters* (1978), p. 229.

Although the content of the list could not be found, it may be deduced from the rest of Leighton's answer that neither Lawrence Alma-Tadema nor Sir Edward Burne-Jones had been included in Selvatico's proposal, which is surprising as they were both famous in Italy. Alma-Tadema in particular had inspired some of Gabriele d'Annunzio's poetical pieces,⁸³ while Burne-Jones had been commissioned to design mosaics to decorate St Paul's Within the Walls, the American Episcopal Church in Rome.⁸⁴ The first exchanges were thus characterised by a deep gap between Venice and London which demonstrated the organisers' surprisingly limited knowledge.⁸⁵

As stated earlier, Leighton was known to be an *Italophile*; he therefore showed patience and good will to the nascent venture. Graciously providing Selvatico with more contacts, he thus replied later in June 1894:

As landscape painters I suggest Mr. Alfred Parsons and Mr. Adrian Stokes – Mr. Adrian Stokes is also a very talented artist. As examples of portraiture I may mention Mr. A.C. Cope,⁸⁶ Mr. John Collier, Mr. Carter⁸⁷ and Mr. Charles

⁸¹ Albert Joseph Moore (1841-1893), neo-classical painter mostly interested in incorporating Grecian figures posed in an elaborate design and paying special attention to colour. *The Dictionary of Victorian Painters* (1978), p. 326.

⁸² Venice, ASAC, Collezioni autografi (riproduzioni), 9-10, I-J-K (CA 9), LA-LU (CA 10), Letter from Sir Frederic Leighton to Riccardo Selvatico, dated 8/VI/1894, pp. 2-3.

⁸³ Giuliana Pieri, 'D'Annunzio and Alma-Tadema, between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism', *The Modern Language Review*, 96, 2 (April 2001), 361-369.

⁸⁴ The design for these mosaics had been exhibited in the 1890s in Rome, *The paintings, graphic and decorative work of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, 1833-98*, (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975). More recently, the design for these mosaics also featured at the exhibition on *The Pre-Raphaelites and Italy*, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 16 September–5 December 2010.

⁸⁵ Sandra Berresford pointed to the same problem. In an endnote she mentioned a letter written by Antonio Fradeletto to his Secretary Romolo Bazzoni during his visit to London in June 1898. Probably visiting the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, 'he noted that they had seen some seven or eight thousand pictures in a few days, many by artists whom he had never even heard.' Sandra Berresford, 'The Pre-Raphaelites and their Followers at the International Exhibitions of Art in Venice, 1895-1905', in *Britain at the Venice Biennale, 1895-1995*, ed. by Sophie Bowness and Clive Phillpot (London: The British Council, 1995), pp. 37-49 (p. 48).

⁸⁶ There is no entry for 'A.C. Cope' in the *The Dictionary of Victorian Painters*. Was Leighton referring to Sir Arthur Stockdale Cope (1857-1940), RA, a prolific portrait painter exhibiting at the RA from 1876? *The Dictionary of Victorian Painters* (1978), p. 104.

⁸⁷ There are over twenty entries in *The Dictionary of Victorian Painters* for male painters with 'Carter' as last name. The two most likely candidates could be Frank Thomas Carter (1853-1934), a Newcastle portrait painter who exhibited at the RA from 1898 or William Carter (1863-1939), RBA, a Norfolk painter of portraits, animals and still-life who exhibited at the RA from 1883 and who was a member of the Society of Portrait Painters, *The Dictionary of Victorian Painters* (1978), p. 84.

Furse. You know, I think, probably, that Mr. Alma-Tadema is an extremely gifted artist... May I ask you to regard this communication as absolutely confidential – you will feel the difficulty of my position in advising you.⁸⁸

Such a list presenting artists not just belonging to the Royal Academy but to a much broader spectrum of British painting including more modern developments clearly put Leighton at odd with his official position of PRA. The 1895 catalogue of exhibits shows that Selvatico successfully contacted Alfred Parsons (1847-1920) and the Hon. John Collier (1850-1934), student of Edward Poynter and *protégé* of both Alma-Tadema and Millais. Leighton went further and sent one of his own works, *Perseus and Andromeda* (1891, now at the Walker Art Gallery). Furthermore he persuaded Alma-Tadema, Millais and Burne-Jones to lend their reputations to the Committee of Patronage (Comitato di Patrocino) and to help gather a decent British section for the first group exhibition in Venice. As a result, they all had pride of place in the first catalogue with a picture and a biography.⁸⁹ That year William Michael Rossetti chaired the International Prize Jury.⁹⁰

The few exchanges quoted above may account for the limited British section at the First Venice Biennale. Out of the one hundred and fifty foreign artists invited, only eighteen came from Great Britain. The section was composed of twenty-eight paintings mostly sent by Academicians or, as was discussed previously, artists who lived in Venice at the time such as William Logsdail, Clara Montalba or Samuel Melton Fisher. Millais's Pre-Raphaelite fellow Holman Hunt decided to send *May Morning on the Magdalen Tower*, perhaps following a visit by his friend Giulio Aristide Sartorio and certainly after receiving reassurance from the organisers that his painting would be well hung.⁹¹

While the Preface of the first catalogue clearly indicated the scope of the venture: 'the international Exhibition will aim to attract the public using first and

⁸⁸ Venice, ASAC, Letter from Sir Frederic Leighton to Riccardo Selvatico, dated 29/VI/1894, p. 2.

⁸⁹ *Prima Esposizione internazionale d'arte della Città di Venezia, 1895, catalogo illustrato* (Venezia: Fratelli Visentini, 1895)

⁹⁰ Berresford, pp. 37-49 (p. 41).

⁹¹ Sandra Berresford further argued that Sartorio was sent by Antonio Fradeletto. Berresford, pp. 37-49 (p. 39).

foremost the fame of international artists who will participate',⁹² the following editions also secured well-known patrons as a means of publicity and as a guarantee to attract demanding cosmopolitan crowds. Such patrons also acted as institutional consolidation. In return, they were sometimes awarded Italian decorations: for example, when Millais succeeded Leighton as head of the English Committee of Patronage in 1896, King Umberto bestowed on him the 'Cross of Great Officer of the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus', no doubt at the request of the Biennale organisers.⁹³ The fact that Millais's successor as PRA Edward Poynter did not receive the same honour perhaps points to his lack of support of the venture. This hypothesis is corroborated by the fact that unlike Leighton, Poynter never exhibited in Venice.

A close study of the first edition of the Biennale thus brought forth some interesting facts about the Venetian perspective. The organisers' keen ambition to create a worthy venture was hampered by their very limited knowledge about British living artists; however their clever use of networks and their city's cultural capital helped save face. In the case of the first British section, the next chapter will show that in spite of its limitations, it attracted a great deal of interest.

Unsurprisingly the content of the next editions of the Biennale showed an intense phase of adjustment. While letters to important personalities of the British art world were sent by Riccardo Selvatico, and later his successor Filippo Grimani, the Secretary General of the Venice Biennale was from the start the deeply Anglophile Antonio Fradeletto, one of the main protagonists of this dissertation.⁹⁴ Appointed Secretary in 1893, Antonio Fradeletto participated very actively in all the preparatory stages of the setup of the Biennale and he became seminal to the promotion and encouragement of its international character. As shall be shown in this chapter and the next ones, he also became the centre of a restrained yet

⁹² *Prima Esposizione internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia, 1895, catalogo illustrato* (Venezia: Fratelli Visentini, 1895), no page number: 'una Mostra internazionale dovrà attirare maggiormente il pubblico con la fama degli illustri stranieri che vi concorreranno'.

⁹³ Berresford, pp. 37-49 (p. 39).

⁹⁴ For more information on Antonio Fradeletto, please see the biography written by Daniele Ceschin, *La 'Voce' di Venezia, Antonio Fradeletto e l'organizzazione della cultura tra Otto e Novecento* (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2001).

efficient Anglo-Italian network dedicated to the promotion of British art until his final departure in 1919. As Chiara Rabitti underlined, Fradeletto was:

The right person in the right position. He possessed mediating and organising skills, he paid close attention to petitions and requests from local artistic circles on the one hand, and to opportunities of economic development on the other hand. In some ways, this behaviour made up for his lack of sensitivity towards important developments in international contemporary art.⁹⁵

Indeed Fradeletto was a deeply energetic and hard-working man who quickly sought to increase his knowledge of contemporary international art with visits to Munich, Paris and London during the years 1896 to 1898,⁹⁶ to which he later added the *Salon d'Automne* where he quickly formed a taste which did not evolve dramatically in the following years.

Unfortunately both Leighton and Millais died in 1896 while Burne-Jones passed away in 1898 and Francophile Edward Poynter became President of the Royal Academy, until 1919.⁹⁷ As a consequence the Biennale organisers could not rely as much on their contacts in London. As a result, Antonio Fradeletto had to take the matter into his own hands. The ASAC archives contain a wealth of letters sent by Fradeletto to British artists, inviting them to exhibit in Italy, negotiating prices, and answering queries on all matters linked to the Biennale. The following example was sent to the Birmingham artist William A. Breakspeare (1855-1914) in 1898,⁹⁸ and shows Fradeletto's undying determination to obtain exhibits from less well-known painters:

⁹⁵ Chiara Rabitti, 'Gli eventi e gli uomini', in *Venezia e la Biennale, percorsi del gusto*, ed. by Giandomenico Romanelli (Venezia: Fabbri editori, 1995), pp. 26-38 (pp. 27-28.): 'La persona giusta nel posto giusto: le sue qualità di mediatore e di organizzatore, la sua vigile attenzione alle istanze e sollecitazioni dei più vicini ambienti artistici da un lato e alle possibilità di affermazione economica dall'altro, compensano in qualche modo la scarsa sensibilità nei confronti di importanti sviluppi della contemporanea arte internazionale'. Rabitti also underlined that the Biennale not only needed to assert its role at the international level, but also had to defend itself at the local level as its relationship with other Venetian institutions were quite antagonistic.

⁹⁶ Berresford, pp. 37-49 (p. 43).

⁹⁷ Still, Poynter agreed to become part of the Committee of Patronage in 1899.

⁹⁸ William A. Breakspeare (1855-1914), London genre painter, he was a member of the Newlyn School. *The Dictionary of Victorian Painters* (1978), p. 61.

Dear Mr. Breakspeare,

Your letter from the 6th caused me great pain.

I much admired your painting *Memories*, which I considered as best representing the English spirit. It deeply moved me when I saw it at the Royal Academy Exhibition. I would be very sad not to have it in Venice.

Please let me insist for you to send it indeed. If it were acquired, please give me the name of the owner. Our President and Lord Mayor Count Filippo Grimani will contact him directly to obtain the painting.⁹⁹

As was shown earlier, the first Biennali were instrumental in spreading a knowledge of British painting in Italy. Although the previous quotation showed that not all British artists were keen to send their works to Venice, Antonio Fradeletto's input in selecting, marketing and pushing for some artists should be underlined. This is the case of the Glasgow Boys, whose special group exhibition at the Munich Glaspalast was admired by Fradeletto in 1896. The General Secretary then decided that he should replicate the Munich 'feature' exhibition in Venice for the following edition. Unlike what happened with English painters, Fradeletto did not seem to have any network in Scotland; he therefore had to rely on the Rev. Alexander Robertson (1846-1933) a Scottish Minister residing in Venice in Ca' Struan who wrote extensively on Italian topics and was later made Knight of the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus.¹⁰⁰ Having received a letter from Fradeletto with a list of Scottish painters to be invited to the 1897 exhibition, the Reverend sent enquiries to his Edinburgh circle. He reported back in December 1896 that: 'all the names are of artists residing in Glasgow; in addition most of them are little known.' Robertson then advised Fradeletto to write to the President of the Scottish Academy Sir

⁹⁹ Venice, ASAC, Scatole Nere, Attività 1894-1944, #9, fascicolo 1898-99B, n°93, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Sir W.A. Breakspeare, 14/VII/1898, 2pp.: 'Caro Signor Breakspeare, La vostra lettera del 6 corrente mi ha recato vivo dispiacere. Io ammiro assai il vostro quadro *Memories* e lo considero come uno dei più rappresentativi dello spirito inglese. Esso mi ha profondamente commosso, quando visitai l'Esposizione della Royal Academy. Mi rincrescerebbe dunque assai di non poterlo avere a Venezia. Permettetemi di insistere affinché abbiate la cortesia di inviarcelo. Se fosse stato acquistato, indicatemi il nome del proprietario. Il nostro Presidente e Sindaco (Lord Mayor) conte Grimani si rivolgerà direttamente a Lui per ottenerlo'. In this instance, in spite of Fradeletto's insistence, Breakspeare did not appear at the 1899 Biennale.

¹⁰⁰ Rev. Robertson's extensive bibliography includes: *The Bible of St Mark* (1898), *Fra Paolo Scarpi, the Greatest of the Venetians* (1894), *Venetian Sermons* (1905), *Through the Dolomites, from Venice to Toblach* (1903), *The Roman Catholic Church in Italy* (1903), *The Papal Conquest* (1909), *Vittore Emanuele III, King of Italy* (1925), *Mussolini and the New Italy* (1929); he also contributed regular articles in *The Scotsman* between the 1880s and 1830s.

George Reid to seek advice ‘for the honour of the Exhibition’.¹⁰¹ Fradeletto sent an immediate answer which showed his determination:

As to the Scottish artists who have already accepted to come to the Exhibition in Venice, they might not be as well-known as others in official circles but their merit is indisputable. I have seen and admired their works myself in Munich a few weeks ago.¹⁰²

He tactfully concluded: ‘I would like to invite a group of artists from Edinburgh as well; but we are faced with a very difficult problem, that of space’.¹⁰³

As suggested in chapter one, Fradeletto showed that he did not strictly abide by academic principles to select works but rather by his own taste using it as a yardstick for the public visiting the Biennale. In the case of the Glasgow school, he further affirmed: ‘the Scottish school will be one of the major attractions of the Venetian exhibition, inasmuch as it has only showed at two exhibitions on the Continent so far: at the Secession and at the Glaspalast’.¹⁰⁴ As the next chapter will show, some information on these painters was leaked to the newspapers —Antonio Fradeletto had a broad network in literary and journalistic circles— prior to the opening of the Biennale, therefore creating a hype.¹⁰⁵ In addition, Fradeletto decided to publish biographies of some of the Glasgow Boys in the exhibition catalogue. These ‘biographical notices’ appeared in the 1897 catalogue with a two-fold aim: to help the Italian public become acquainted with these mostly unknown

¹⁰¹ Venice, ASAC, Scatola Nera 7, Attività 1894-1944, Letter from Alexander Robertson to Antonio Fradeletto, 5/XII/1896, 2pp.: ‘tutti i nomi sono di artisti della sola città di Glasgow e di più che la più parte son poco conosciuti’; ‘pel onore del (sic) Esposizione’.

¹⁰² Venice, ASAC, Scatola Nera 7, Attività 1894-1944, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Alexander Robertson, 5/XII/1896.: ‘Quanto agli artisti scozzesi che fin quà hanno aderito all’Esposizione di Venezia, puo’ darsi che siano ufficialmente meno conosciuti di certi altri, ma il loro valore è indiscutibile... Io ho visto e ammirato le loro opere a Monaco poche settimane or sono’.

¹⁰³ Venice, ASAC, Scatola Nera 7, Attività 1894-1944, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Alexander Robertson, 5/XII/1896.: ‘lo vorrei invitare anche un gruppo di artisti edimburghesi; ma ora si presenta una gravissima difficoltà, quella dello spazio’.

¹⁰⁴ Venice, ASAC, Scatola Nera 7, Attività 1894-1944, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Alexander Robertson, 26/XI/1896.: ‘la scuola scozzese sarà una fra le maggiori attrattive della Mostra veneziana, tanto più che fin quà ha figurato in due sole Esposizioni del Continente: quella dei Secessionisti e quella del Glaspalast’.

¹⁰⁵ The presence of these artists at Venice was also due to the fact that the Biennale organisers did not have to comply with an Academy-bound Committee; as a result the diversity of the British section grew.

figures, and to create a taste for them by showing their European reputation and their special links with Italy. Of Alexander Brown, it was written that 'he exhibited at the Champ de Mars Salon; in Munich in 1893 he was awarded a medal for his painting *The Gravelock* which was then acquired by the Bavarian government. Some of his best paintings can now be admired in some German museums'.¹⁰⁶ As to Kerr-Lawson the organisers chose to translate part of his letter: 'We are now translating part of one his letters: 'I was born in Anstruther, in the ancient Kingdom of Fife, the most beautiful part of Scotland... My masters have been and will always remain the great Italian painters, in particular the Venetian painters, who are incomparably the best of all'.¹⁰⁷ In these couple sentences seemingly offered transparently to the Italian public, one can find a romantic evocation of the proud Scottish history; the firm allegiance of Scottish painters to Italy's artistic domination and a flattering mention of Venetian painters. These marketing tools dwelling on special cultural and artistic bonds aiming at titillating the Italian public were used specifically for the Scottish painters, and as shall be seen in the following chapters, they also helped them secure a market in Italy.

The second Biennale showed that 'Sala P' contained 37 English paintings. With regards to the previous edition, viewers could still find a nucleus of Pre-Raphaelite works (Arthur Hughes, Walter Crane) alongside Academic painters (Alma-Tadema, Collier), French-taught artists (Stott of Oldham), Venice-based artists (Logsdail or Montalba) and a few additions from provincial artistic groups (Moffat Lindner from the St Ives group or Henry Scott Tuke from the Newlyn school). Contrary to the first edition, the English room thus offered a more diverse group exhibition with fewer internationally acclaimed painters of the calibre of Millais or Burne-Jones. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the absence of the great masters was sometimes picked up by the Italian press. Even the most

¹⁰⁶ *Seconda esposizione internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia, Catalogo Illustrato* (Venezia: Carlo Ferrari, 1897), p.79.: 'espose al Salon du Champ de Mars; A Monaco nel '93 fu premiato e il suo quadro 'The Gravelock' acquistato dal Governo bavarese. Le cose più elette di questo pittore si ammirano sparsamente nei Musei germanici'. Indeed Brown showed 6 paintings at the 1893 Glaspalast exhibition in Room 53 but the painting referred to in the Italian catalogue was actually entitled *The Gareloch*.

¹⁰⁷ *Catalogo* (1897), p. 83.: 'traduciamo da una sua lettera: "Nacqui ad Austruther, nell' antico reame di Fifer, che è la contrada più bella della Scozia ... I miei maestri sono stati e saranno sempre i grandi pittori italiani, e massime i veneziani, che sono incomparabilmente maggiori di tutti"'.

Italophile of British men, William Michael Rossetti only offered to send a couple of mediocre drawings by Dante Gabriel which were refused by the organisers.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, the Scottish school benefited from a separate room, 'Sala R' and sent twice as many works as their English counterparts, i.e. 71 paintings. They also demonstrated their good will by sending biographical details *en masse*. Their friendliness and seemingly group cohesion in return attracted warm press reviews and comments. The Scottish group benefited from a privileged position with their own exhibition room for the next two editions, an honour traditionally reserved to Italian regions only. In addition, they enjoyed sustained press reviews until 1903.¹⁰⁹

In terms of number of exhibits, the second Biennale already showed great improvements from the first edition due to the presence of the Scottish artists. The changes at the Royal Academy and the deaths of a few *Italophile* artists in those years (Leighton, Millais, Burne-Jones) also partly caused a deep shift with the attention of the public moving from Pre-Raphaelite and Symbolist works to decorative art (Frank Brangwyn) or French-inspired and plein-air painting as represented by the Glasgow School and English artists such as Alfred East. The diversification of the British section also reflected the Italian organisers' intense phase of adjustment: not only they were now following *The Studio* they were also setting up a local network to rally British artists to the Venetian cause.¹¹⁰

2.2.2. Developing a Network: Two Agents in London, Mario Borsa and Giulio Fradeletto, 1898-1909

As explained in the first chapter, the inclusion of the Biennale in the field of international art exhibitions was not only an intrinsically difficult task due to the intense competition but also diversely perceived according to geographical positions. The first section of this chapter sought to further explore the idea of

¹⁰⁸ Vittorio Pica, 'L'arte mondiale a Venezia, VIII, ancora i pittori inglesi', *Marzocco*, 2, 23 (11 July 1897), p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ It is thus highly surprising that their repeated presence and appreciation in Venice was not even mentioned in the latest exhibition catalogue on the Glasgow Boys: *Pioneering Painters, the Glasgow Boys* (Glasgow: Glasgow Museum Publishing, 2010).

¹¹⁰ Berresford, pp. 37-49 (p. 42).

relative perception of the field by showing that living British artists took an interest in new ventures as reaction to a turbulent home market. However their main task was to navigate the expanding world of art according to their career strategies or primary need which was to make a living out of their art. On the other hand, the Venetian approach was dictated by two main concerns: the first one was to attract internationally-acclaimed artists in order to draw the public to the Giardini and the second one was a sheer Anglophilia which pushed the General Secretary Antonio Fradeletto to promote an important British section.

In spite of his many efforts to establish fruitful contacts in England, Fradeletto may have been disappointed with the rebuffs from artists such as Breakspeare and he soon realised that he would need an agent *in loco* if he wanted to achieve a better and more comprehensive section at Venice. Such an agent could visit local exhibitions in order to map the contemporary artistic scene, contact artists, develop a network and help organise the Biennale from England. He actually used two agents in a span of eleven years: Mario Borsa (1870-1952) and his own son, Giulio Fradeletto.¹¹¹

Two founding influences on Bourdieu derive from linguistic theory. On the one hand, he owed to Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) the concept that language —or systems in general— were the result of interconnected units. On the other hand, Bourdieu believed with Noam Chomsky in ‘generative grammar’, i.e. in sets of rules being internalised, reproduced and handed over to language users. The combination of these two influences heavily shaped Bourdieu’s sociological analysis who developed his two key concepts of ‘field’ and ‘habitus’ as a result. As seen in chapter I, the field can be seen as the sociological application of the study of the ‘interconnected units’ yet Bourdieu added a Marxist dimension of social struggle to this. Indeed in a broad sense Bourdieu considers that the field is composed of agents vying to occupy a position of power within it. Bourdieu thus places urges of conflict and domination at the heart of social relationships. Although the meaning

¹¹¹ The role of Mario Borsa was touched on by Sandra Berresford. Berresford, pp. 37-49 (p. 43).

he attached to 'agent' was much broader than the one adopted here, i.e. 'an emissary acting as advisor or intermediary in artistic transactions', some of his observations may still be applied. On the other hand, Bourdieu explains that agents abide by an unconscious *modus operandi* which he called 'habitus' and which has been described as 'the structural mapping of social positioning'.¹¹² The concept of 'habitus' has more to do with Chomsky's generative grammar as it creates unspoken rules which are copied and transmitted through social behaviour and education. Although human beings are partially determined by their habitus, it is also true that it is intrinsically bound to a temporal and geographical environment thereby making it culturally construed. Although Bourdieu does not really take into consideration the transnational applications of his concepts, it is important to stress here that in their fight for domination, the agents' behaviours obey cultural logics which may be lost when crossing borders. Indeed if habitus is about 'knowing one's place' as well as others', it becomes clear that new social environments prompt some readjusting.¹¹³ At least with Fradeletto's first agent Mario Borsa, letters clearly show that at first, his understanding of the British habitus was approximate thereby hampering the advance of the Venetian venture in England.

Fradeletto may have met the then young journalist Mario Borsa in June 1898 in London when he came to visit the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition.¹¹⁴ In the late August 1898, Borsa received a letter from Fradeletto asking him for more details about his position in London and his objectives. Borsa accepted Fradeletto's initial offer on 7 September 1898:

I am honoured by your gratifying offer: thank you, I gladly accept. Could you possibly send me more details as well as the credentials? In particular I would like to know more on the second point dealing with my eventual duties on the

¹¹² Grenfell and Hardy, p. 29.

¹¹³ Grenfell and Hardy, p. 29.

¹¹⁴ Mario Borsa was born in Somaglia (Lombardia) in a family of farmers. He went to the *Accademia scientifica letteraria* in Brera where he received his diploma in 1892 with a dissertation written on *Pier Candido Decembri e l'umanesimo in Lombardia*, published the following year in Milan. He soon became a journalist at *Il Secolo*, one of the most important Italian daily at the time; later he decided to move to London where he remained until 1910. In 1919, he became correspondent for *The Times*. (*Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 36 vols (Roma: Treccani, 1960), XIII, 108-110 (pp. 108-109).

réclame to do on behalf of the venture and on the task to advise on the artistic manifestations which could have a special interest for you.¹¹⁵

Following this, Fradeletto sent Borsa an official letter of introduction appointing him both as Representative and Publicist for the Venice Biennale:

This letter is to serve for introducing the Doctor Mario Borsa who has most kindly undertaken to represent in London the international Art Exhibition of Venice. Please put every confidence in him and address yourself, if there are any pressing communications for us, directly to him. He takes great interest in the artistic success of our Exhibition and as publicist he shall try in every way to second it.¹¹⁶

Borsa was thus supposed to do in England what painter Giovanni Boldini and art critic Vittorio Pica did in France: establish contacts with local artists and promote the Biennale.¹¹⁷ It is not clear why Fradeletto decided to hire Mario Borsa: he may have been charmed by the sensibility and youthful enthusiasm transpiring from his letters, or he may have identified with Borsa's background in literature and appreciated his deep-rooted Anglophilia.¹¹⁸ Other more pragmatic reasons may include his own inability to speak or write English and his absence of local contacts.

¹¹⁵ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1894-1944 n°9, Fascicolo '1898-1899 Borsa Mario', 9Ib14, Letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto, 7/IX/1898, 4p.: 'La proposta mi onora e mi lusinga: grazie, accetto ben volentieri. Voglia avere la bontà di mandarmi, colle credenziali, schiarimenti più precisi e dettagliati. Specie riguardo al secondo punto delle mie eventuali attribuzioni sulla réclame intellettuale da farsi all'impresa e sul segnalarle quelle manifestazioni d'arte che potessero avere per loro uno speciale interesse'.

¹¹⁶ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1894-1944 n°9, Fascicolo '1898-1899 Borsa Mario', 9Ib12, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa, 14/X/1898, 1p. This letter represented the only official document Borsa had in hand to act as the Biennale Representative. Indeed, his was an unpaid position and many a letter also asked Fradeletto or his administrator Romolo Bazzoni for a prompt reimbursement of expenses.

¹¹⁷ Zatti, no page number; however Pica's French network was much better established while he did not live in France.

¹¹⁸ Like many of his fellow-countrymen at the time, Borsa seemed much better versed in English literature than contemporary art. He wrote on English theatre: *Il Teatro inglese contemporaneo* (1906) translated as *The English Stage of Today* (1908). He then turned to politics and history, translating George Bernard Shaw's *On the rocks (Fra Gli Scogli)* in 1934 and writing about prominent tragic figures of English history: *Maria Stuarda, 1542-1587* in 1934 and *La Fine di Carlo I, 1625-1649* in 1936. Borsa also wrote several vindications of Britain during the First and Second World War to counteract German propaganda.

Retrospectively, the many letters exchanged between the two men seem to point to the difficulty of the given task. First and foremost, Borsa did not seem to have any contact in the London art scene nor a particular open-mindedness towards the local avant-garde:

I have visited two or three exhibitions which have opened here in London: the Grafton Gallery, the New Art Gallery, the New English Art Club, they have very little good things on offer. Only at the Grafton have I seen a very good portrait by Shannon, who is not J.J. Shannon.¹¹⁹

According to Sandra Berresford, Borsa liked Charles Conder but did not think much of Walter Sickert, Impressionist Philip Wilson Steer or William Rothenstein who would exhibit in the British Pavilion in 1909 only.¹²⁰ His taste seemed to lie with those painters who synthesised the lessons from the old masters with a modern brushwork such as Charles Shannon, referred to in the quotation above, and his companion Charles Ricketts whom he contacted as early as 1899.¹²¹ As sole agent of the Biennale in London, Borsa's taste had an important influence on the British sections until 1909.

In understanding Borsa's role and contribution vis-à-vis Fradeletto's will and taste, the many letter exchanges provide a very vivid account of the situation. On the one hand, Fradeletto made it very clear from the beginning that 'I am very keen on the success of the British section'.¹²² However what transpired clearly from the

¹¹⁹ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1894-1944 n°9, Fascicolo '1898-1899 Borsa Mario', 9Ib3, Letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto, 19/XI/1898, 4pp.: 'Ho visitato due o tre esposizioni aperte ora in Londra: la Grafton Gallery, la New Art Gallery, New English Art Club, c'è poco o nulla di veramente buono. Solo nella Grafton ho notato un ritratto molto forte di Shannon, che non è JJ Shannon'. The two Shannon mentioned are: Charles Hazelwood Shannon (1863-1937), RA, ARPE, painter of figure subjects and portraits, illustrator and lithographer; and Sir James Jebusa Shannon (1862-1923), RA, RBA, RHA, painter of figure subjects and society portraits, considered by some as a rival Sargent. *The Dictionary of Victorian Painters* (1978), p. 423.

¹²⁰ Berresford, pp. 37-49 (p. 43).

¹²¹ Berresford, pp. 37-49 (p. 43).

¹²² Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 2 'Varie, corrispondenza varia', 21/XII/1898-10/III/1899, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa dated 22/XII/1898, p. 8.: 'tengo immensamente alla buona riuscita della sezione inglese'.

letters were Borsa's difficulties to adapt to the English habitus. Firstly he was not *au fait* with the visiting *etiquette* as the following anecdote revealed:

Regarding Watts, I must say that since he had not sent me any reply, I went to Guidford. He was in bed; he could not see me; he had his wife tell me that he could send anything; that he did not have anything in his studio.¹²³

Worse, although sent to England as a correspondent for *Il Secolo* he failed to give reliable information on newspapers addresses thus causing delay in advertising the venture in England.¹²⁴ As discussed in the first chapter, scarce coverage in the press impacted on the visibility of the Biennale in the field of international exhibitions. Fradeletto was particularly meticulous about promoting the Biennale and using newspapers in Italy; this is probably why he had made it one of Borsa's main tasks as Representative of the Venetian exhibition to develop press coverage in Britain. On a few occasions, he also reminded Borsa that 'it will be necessary to create an avalanche of *réclame*'.¹²⁵ Overall Borsa proved largely unable to advertise the venture in England; instead he published a few articles in specialised magazines in Italy, focussing in particular on two British artists.

In April 1899 an article was published on the decorative painter Frank Brangwyn by the *Emporium*.¹²⁶ Signed 'MB' and dated 'Londra, Novembre 1898', it was written as a cross-genre, half-way between a conversation and a biographical

¹²³ Venice, ASAC Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1894-1944 n°9, Fascicolo '1898-1899 Borsa Mario', 9I912, Letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto, 9/II/1899: 'A proposito del Watts Le debbo dire che non avendomi risposto mi sono recato a Guidford; ch'era a letto; che non mi potè ricevere; che mi fece dire dalla sua signora di non poter mandare nulla; nulla avendo di privato'. Watts must have changed his mind as he sent *A Bacchante* to the Biennale that year (exhibit number 40). However, his later participation at the Biennale never equalled that of 1895.

¹²⁴ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 23 'Varie', 17/II/1902-23/VIII/1902, Letter from Romolo Bazzoni to Mario Borsa, dated 11/VII/1902, 413.: 'Some of our releases destined to English newspapers were returned because of an incorrect address' ('Dei nostri comunicati ai giornali inglesi ci vennero ritornati dalla posta per insufficienza d'indirizzo'.)

¹²⁵ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 2 'Varie, corrispondenza varia', 21/XII/1898-10/III/1899, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa dated 14/I/1899, 97.: 'sarà anche necessario dar fiato alle trombe di *réclame*'.

¹²⁶ Mario Borsa, 'Artisti contemporanei: Frank Brangwyn', *Emporium*, 9, 52 (April 1899), 262-277. (p. 262.): 'Fu un giovanotto che mi si fece innanzi e mi stese la mano. Io ne ebbi un' impressione di viva simpatia: subito!'

study. It portrayed the young artist of thirty years old as an eminently friendly man and a brilliant artist: 'A young man appeared in front of me and held out his hand to me. I became immediately fond of him, straight away!' Frank Brangwyn was one of the first artists that Mario Borsa contacted as part of his representational role for the Biennale. That initial affable contact turned into a very regular collaboration, which in turn opened up the Italian market for Brangwyn's works.¹²⁷

The only other artist for whom Mario Borsa wrote an article in *Emporium* was Alfred East, in June 1901.¹²⁸ Borsa went to visit the artist at his Kent property. In the same way as the article on Brangwyn, Borsa's description of East's work was extremely laudatory. His landscape paintings were described as picturing a 'vague, sincere, pleasing romanticism'¹²⁹ comparable to Corot. Similarly to Brangwyn, the artist was singled out as talented yet humble and approachable: 'there is no other English landscape painter who can produce such an impression: Alfred East ... is waiting for you with an affable smile, and he immediately has many nice things to say.'¹³⁰ As in the case of Brangwyn, East proved a valuable contact for the Venice Biennale in England. In turn, his works received a particularly favourable reception in Italy. Later, Brangwyn's contribution to help set up the Pavilion was rewarded with a decoration 'in recognition of the most valuable services ... rendered to [the] Exhibition'.¹³¹

These two articles illustrate Mario Borsa's main weaknesses as the Representative of the Biennale. Firstly his artistic judgement seemed to rest on a

¹²⁷ As early as February 1899, Borsa wrote to Fradeletto that 'Brangwin [sic] ... has always treated me as a friend. Today he sent me a letter inviting me to go to his on Monday'. ('Brangwin [sic] ... mi ha sempre trattato da amico. Oggi mi scrive invitandomi ad andare là per Lunedì'). Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1894-1944 n°9, Fascicolo '1898-1899 Borsa Mario', 91912, Letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto, 9/II/1899, 8pp.

¹²⁸ Mario Borsa, 'Artisti contemporanei: Alfred East', *Emporium*, 13, 78 (June 1901), 403-417.

¹²⁹ Borsa, p. 403.: 'un romanticismo vago, sincero, soave'

¹³⁰ Borsa, p. 403.: 'non c'è che un paesista in Inghilterra il quale sappia produrre una tale impressione: Alfred East...Vi aspetta con un sorriso affabile; ed ha subito, anche lui, un mondo di cose gentili da dirvi.'

¹³¹ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 100, 'Padiglione inglese, 25/I/-7/XII/1909', letter from Giulio Fradeletto to Frank Brangwyn, 2/XII/1909, 494-495, 2pp. The petition to the Italian Government was presented by Fradeletto and Grimani.

friendly relationship with artists.¹³² Perhaps as a result, Borsa relied heavily on Brangwyn and East to organise the British sections at Venice. As East was Brangwyn's patron who owned some of the paintings he exhibited in Venice, it seems that the former partly controlled this triangular relationship. Until 1909, both Brangwyn and East suggested new artists to Borsa to contact, and they both participated in the juries of the Venice Biennale.¹³³ East was President of the Jury and Member of the Artistic Committee in 1905,¹³⁴ while Brangwyn was Member of the Organisation Committee (1907), Commissioner (1907) and Member of the artistic sub-committee (1909). In addition to various official functions, Brangwyn was also decorator of the British Pavilion for which he received a Gold medal (1905, 1907).¹³⁵ Lastly he benefited from a one-man retrospective exhibition in 1914, which was warmly introduced by Mario Borsa in the Biennale catalogue.¹³⁶ On the other hand, East was invited by the Director of the Uffizi to send his *Self-portrait* which reached Florence in 1912.¹³⁷

¹³² Brangwyn and Borsa remained on friendly terms until 1920 at least: Brangwyn designed some book plates for Borsa and inscribed his name on the Skinner's Hall guest list. Boswell, pp. 156-187 (p. 165).

¹³³ Jealousies occasionally sprang between the two men: in 1907, after East decided not to participate in the Committee as he wished to go to America, Borsa turned to Brangwyn to take up the role. However, the trip to Pittsburg was cancelled and East was upset to learn that his position had been taken. Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1898-1944, Fascicolo 'Sala inglese', 23Ma2, Letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto, 22/III/1907, 4pp.

¹³⁴ As part of this, East helped Borsa with invitations to the artists and lenders and dealt with the confusion arising from the too many British paintings being sent to Venice, offering to sacrifice his own exhibits if necessary: 'I am sorry to note that it will be impossible to hang all the British paintings selected for the section. Some have to be left out or displayed in other parts of the exhibition. I can leave out one or two of my own'. ('Sono dispiacente nel trovare che sarà impossibile di appendere tutte le pitture inglesi nella nostra sezione. Alcune devono esser lasciate fuori per altra parte dell'Esposizione. Sono disposto a lasciare fuori una o due delle mie'). Venice, ASAC, Scatole Nere, Padiglioni, Gran Bretagna, n°9, Letter from Alfred East to Antonio Fradeletto, 5/IV/1905.

¹³⁵ Brangwyn's commission prompted the first article of a series of four on the 1905 Venice Exhibition in the art monthly *The Studio*. The author, Arthur Sinclair Covey, was an American artist and a friend of Brangwyn's who greatly contributed to diffusing his work in America: 'Frank Brangwyn's scheme for the decoration of the British section at the Venice Exhibition', *The Studio*, 34, 146 (May 1905), 285-292.

¹³⁶ Although both Brangwyn and East were honored at Venice, it is not entirely certain whether expenses linked to their services were covered at all. In 1908, Borsa complained to Fradeletto: 'Ieri vidi l'East. Egli mi ha detto che né lui né il Brangwyn hanno ancora ricevuto il rimborso delle loro spese per la loro venuta a Venezia or è un anno.' Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, 23mc25, Letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto, 2 maggio 1908, 3pp.

¹³⁷ *Gli Uffizi, Catalogo generale* (Firenze: Centro Di, 1980), p. 863. Frank Brangwyn had been invited to send his self-portrait as early as 1909; he eventually painted it in 1920 and the painting reached the museum only in 1949. *Catalogo*, p. 818.

In addition to his own biases, Borsa also generally experienced difficulties in getting hold of potential exhibitors, obtaining loans or even meeting the painters in some cases:

... Unfortunately I can only give disheartening news. ... I will start with the painful note on Burne-Jones. I must say straight away that I could not obtain a single painting.¹³⁸ ...As to Richmond, he seems to have learnt from his prolonged stay in Italy the art of not answering letters and to miss appointments... Orchardson: Extremely nice but could not send anything ... To James S. Forbes —who lives outside of London but has his mail redirected here— I have written three times. Didn't receive a single line of answer!... Peppercorn showed me the letter from the owner of The Cannon whereby he refused to lend the painting...¹³⁹

In spite of this doleful note, Borsa managed to obtain two paintings by William Blake Richmond for the 1899 edition. For the following edition, he also secured *The Dream of Lancelot* from the Burne-Jones estate in 1901; Orchardson also sent a portrait in 1901 while Barbizon-inspired Arthur Douglas Peppercorn became a regular exhibitor from the fourth edition onwards. In addition to contacting artists, this letter shows that Borsa's role was also to obtain some loans from prestigious collectors such as James Staat Forbes (1823-1904) a Scottish collector mostly known for his taste for paintings of the Hague School. Although Forbes never seemed to have accepted to send his collection to the Biennale others, such as

¹³⁸ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1894-1944 n°9, Fascicolo '1898-1899 Borsa Mario', 9I912, Letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto, stamped 9/II/1899, p.2. Although Edward Burne-Jones had shown willingness to help and had sent *Sponsa del Libano* in 1895, his son Philip did not seem so keen to take any risk with his father's estate.

¹³⁹ Venice, ASAC Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1894-1944 n°9, Fascicolo '1898-1899 Borsa Mario', 9I912, Letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto, 9/II/1899, Letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto, stamped 9/II/1899, pp. 4-6.: '...Pur troppo sono tutte notizie sconfortanti quelle che devo dare. ... E qui comincia la dolente nota su Burne-Jones. Le dico subito che non ho potuto ottenere nemmeno un quadro... Il Richmond, il quale per essere stato a lungo in Italia ha imparato a non rispondere alle lettere ed a mancare gli appuntamenti...Orchardson: Gentilissimo ma non ha potuto dar nulla... James S. Forbes - che abita fuori di Londra ma che si fa reindirizzare le lettere qui – ho scritto tre volte. Non una riga di risposta! ... Peppercorn mi mostrò la lettera del proprietario di 'The Cannon' colla quale si rifiutava di prestare il quadro...'. The painters mentioned are William Blake Richmond (1842-1910), William Quiller Orchardson (1832-1910), Arthur Douglas Peppercorn (1847-1924). On the other hand, James Staats Forbes (1823-1904) was a Scottish collector.

Ernest Seeger,¹⁴⁰ or Alexander Young,¹⁴¹ lent their Japanese or Modern masters' collections.

Thus in spite of a handicap due to his lack of knowledge of the English habitus coupled with the seemingly limited awareness British painters had of the Venetian venture, Borsa gradually managed to create contacts in the art world and organise more representative sections.

In 1903, the Biennale organisers decided not to have any foreign national sections. Rather they mingled works on a thematic basis. The highlight of the Exhibition was to be 'La Sala del Ritratto' or 'Portrait Room', either located in Room N or P according to the catalogue.¹⁴² Fradeletto was extremely worried about that 'relatively small' room where only the best international portraitists were to be represented. This room gives a very good insight into Fradeletto's hierarchy. He warned Borsa that John Singer Sargent's presence was of the utmost importance as 'his absence would already signal the complete failure of the initiative', further adding 'nothing could compensate his absence!'. He further indicated that he wished to include Arthur Walton, Walter Oules, Hubert von Herkomer but was willing to let go of Orchardson.¹⁴³ Unfortunately Sargent only sent two paintings, one of which only stayed in Venice until the beginning of June.¹⁴⁴

As explained before, Fradeletto slightly changed his tactics in 1905, inviting painter Alfred East to curate the British section. Perhaps this represented an attempt to relieve Borsa and to use East's network more directly in order to display a more diversified selection of the British artistic scene. However a disappointed letter was sent in February 1904 which is quoted here at length:

¹⁴⁰ Little is known of Ernst Seeger except that he was a German collector and dealer. More information on his participation and acquisitions at the Biennale will follow in chapter four.

¹⁴¹ Alexander Young (d. 1910) has received little scholarly attention. A Scot by birth, he amassed a collection of modern masters mingling Barbizon paintings (Corot, Daubigny), Hague school paintings (Israëls) and modern British painters such as Arthur Douglas Peppercorn. His collection was sold at Christie's on 13 and 14 March, 1910.

¹⁴² *Quinta Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della città di Venezia, 1903, Catalogo Illustrato* (Venezia: Carlo Ferrari, 1903), p. 1.

¹⁴³ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 24, 'Varie', 23/VIII/1902-2/I/1903, 296-301, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa, dated 8/XI/1902.: 'la sua mancanza sarebbe già un grosso fiasco dell'iniziativa'...'nulla mi compenserebbe della sua assenza!'

¹⁴⁴ *Catalogo* (1903), p. 90.

Dear Mr. East,

Allow me, please to address myself confidently to your courtesy and to your friendship. I have got the schedules of notification of English invited Artists. Unfortunately they are in a very small number (only seven painters) and they announce works of little size and importance (at least to my judgement) and of the same nature. All this keep me rather unquiet [sic]. Then I beg you warmly in order that the English room may contain works of much importance and of different character (landscape, figure, portraits).¹⁴⁵

The catalogue of the British section showed that East took Fradeletto's comments into account as it offered landscapes, portraits, religious, mythological and symbolic scenes. A few artists such as Herbert Hughes-Stanton or James Hill exhibited in Venice for the first time thereby showing that East had brought fresh exhibitors. In all fairness, a broader look at the exhibits indicated that other foreign sections did not seem to fare much better than the British one.¹⁴⁶ The number of paintings in the English section amounted to 37 in 1905 and the British section displayed 35 exhibits altogether in 1907. In spite of Borsa's litany of vows, the overall numbers were roughly the same as in other sections. For example, in 1905 the French section had 34 paintings and two years later their number rose to 43. In terms of diversity, the British section also offered a broader array of aesthetic choices with time: followers of the Pre-Raphaelites (Byam Shaw, Walter Crane, John Waterhouse), rural naturalism either inspired from the French or from the Dutch schools (Henry Herbert La Thangue, The Glasgow Boys), members of the New English Art Club (William Orpen, David Muirhead).

¹⁴⁵ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 53 'Sala Inglese', 2/XI/1904-9/VI/1906, 46-47, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Alfred East, 9/II/1904, 2 pp.

¹⁴⁶ In a letter to Fradeletto, John Lavery, a member of the international jury in 1899, underlined that the overall quality of foreign works was lacklustre: 'We found that a number of invited pictures were below the standards of merit that we had thought to fix for the work submitted to us, and we are anxious to point out how very unfair it would be to Italian artists if bad pictures by foreign artists were hung in the Exhibition while better home works were rejected'. Venice, ASAC, Collezioni autografi (riproduzioni), 9-10, I-J-K (CA 9), LA-LU (CA 10), Letter from John Lavery to Antonio Fradeletto, undated [Sunday morning], IV/1899?, 2pp.

It is difficult to assess the quality of the British section without falling into the modernist trap. Many painters exhibiting at Venice during the years 1900 to 1914 have now fallen into near or complete oblivion and much more research would be necessary in order to replace them properly in their contemporary local and international markets. As was shown previously, both Fradeletto and Borsa have been criticised for their conservative taste. Yet some examples seem to point to Fradeletto encouraging Borsa towards more open-mindedness. For example in 1906, Fradeletto sent the following request: '(I am speaking in full confidence) I would like the Anglo-Saxon section to be more lively and varied than last year';¹⁴⁷ to which, Borsa replied optimistically: 'From what I can see, I can promise for 1907 an excellent, varied, new British room'.¹⁴⁸ This also indicates that Fradeletto considered the 1905 section, externally curated by Alfred East, as a failure. A few months later, Borsa was able to confirm that he had managed to secure an interesting array of paintings: 'I managed to obtain a few very good paintings: a really good Peppercorn, an excellent Muirhead, a large and well executed A. Brown, another from La Thangue and one by Mark Senior'.¹⁴⁹ All these artists except La Thangue were among the 148 artists accepted by the international jury.¹⁵⁰

1907 was the last edition of the Venice Biennale organised by Mario Borsa. If we judge by his comments, the exhibits at Venice and Fradeletto's approval, he had by then succeeded in setting up a restrained but efficient network. Although he still had to work hard on uncooperative artists, he had also found friendly and helpful ones such as Brangwyn and East. As can be surmised from the correspondence, Borsa's selections for the British section were firmly aided by

¹⁴⁷ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 59 'Varie', 10/IX/1906-18/XI/1906, letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa, dated?, 386-390. '(Le parlo in tutta confidenza) io vorrei che sezione anglo-sassone fosse più viva e variata dell'anno scorso'.

¹⁴⁸ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1898-1944, Fascicolo 'Sala inglese', 23Mc24, Letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto, 21/XI/1906, 4pp.: 'Le prometto, per quanto stimo, per il 1907, una sala britannica ottima, varia, nuova'.

¹⁴⁹ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1898-1944, Fascicolo 'Sala inglese', 23Ma8, Letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto, 10/II/1907, 8pp.: 'ho assicurato alcuni quadri veramente buoni: un ottimo Peppercorn, un eccellente Muirhead, un largo e buonissimo A. Brown, un altro del La Thangue, ed uno del Mark Senior.'

¹⁵⁰ The jury was composed of Ludwig Dettmann, Domenico Trentacoste, Trajano Chitarin, Frank Brangwyn, Leonardo Bistolfi; only 24% of the works presented were selected. *Settima Esposizione internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia, 1907, Catalogo illustrato* (Venezia: Carlo Ferrari, 1907), pp. 19-21.

East's own taste, whereas Fradeletto pushed for broader representation of the British artistic scene. Therefore the pre-Pavilion sections can be seen as the results of Anglo-Italian compromise, taste and availability.

2.2.3. An Example of Transnational Cooperation: Setting up the British Pavilion

East and Brangwyn not only contributed to the artistic and organisational success of the British section at Venice, they also participated in the negotiations to set up the British Pavilion.¹⁵¹ Change was afoot in Venice as immediately after the closure of the sixth edition of the Biennale in 1905, the Venetian authorities had passed a Resolution whereby 'henceforward and by degrees, each country should have a permanent building of its own... such buildings to become the property of the governments of the various countries or eventually of private committees'.¹⁵² In 1907, the first foreign Pavilions opened for Belgium and Hungary and increasing pressure was put on other countries to take their own arrangements. In the case of Great Britain, Fradeletto had swiftly asked Borsa in 1905 to petition the British Government to publicly fund the British section at Venice. A facsimile of the negative answer from the Treasury Chambers is kept in the Biennale Archives. Sent by George H. Duckworth and dated 7th March 1905, it was addressed to the following recipients 'Alfred East, Esq., A.R.A., Walter Crane, Esq., R.W.S., and George Frampton, Esq., R.A., F.S.A.' Borsa must have forwarded it as soon as it was received as the letter bears the stamp of the Biennale with the date '13 Mar 1905'.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ On the creation of the British Pavilion, there is one article: Sophie Bowness, 'The British Pavilion before the British Council', in *Britain at the Venice Biennale*, ed. by Sophie Bowness and Clive Phillpot (London: British Council, 1995), pp. 18-36, in which the author covers the years 1909 till 1932 when the British Council officially took over from the British Committee. Bowness also discusses the decorative schemes carried out by Frank Brangwyn in 1905 and 1907.

¹⁵² Tunbridge Wells, Salomons Archives, DSH.M.00336, volume VIII, *The Standard*, 'Venice Exhibition, Permanent Pavilion for British Art', 16 January 1909, p. 69.

¹⁵³ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Padiglioni 9, Gran Bretagna, VI Biennale, 1905, Letter from H.M. Treasury (George H. Duckworth) to Alfred East, Walter Crane and George Frampton, 7/III/1905, 2pp. As the Biennale closed on October 31st, Fradeletto must have known of the Resolution much before the end of the sixth edition.

The following year serious negotiations started between Fradeletto and Borsa's London network to push for the acquisition of a Pavilion at Venice inasmuch as the American government had secured the last galleries of the main building. In that context, the danger had become 'imminent that the art of this country will for the first time be excluded from an exhibition which, from the day of its inception, has been of the greatest artistic and financial importance'.¹⁵⁴

Exchanges which occurred during the year 1908 on the topic of the British Pavilion between Fradeletto and his English network are fascinating as they give an opportunity to understand the mechanisms of cooperation established in transnational networks as well as the difficulties encountered due to a different habitus. This climactic moment of the pre-war British presence in Venice gives the opportunity to study Mario Borsa's uneasy and shifting habitus as it impacted the negotiations and ultimately his role as Representative of the Venice Biennale.

During the 1905 edition, Fradeletto and East evoked the possibility of setting up a Pavilion for Britain for which East appeared 'enthusiastic'. Such a Pavilion could be established either with the help of the Government or through a public appeal:

There were exchanges between myself, East and the Marchese di San Giuliano.¹⁵⁵ I saw the latter in Rome, he confirmed to me that he felt the only way would have been the second one as the English Government would not have subsidised the project.

On March 24th, I received a letter from Alfred East in which our common friend was sorry to tell me that the Government would not to give a penny and that a public appeal would not be welcome as a subscription for a monument to Shakespeare had just been launched.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Tunbridge Wells, Salomons Archives, DSH.M.00336, volume VIII, 'Letter to the Editor of the Daily Mail, '£3,000 Gift for Art', Sir D. Salomons and the Venice Exhibition', *Daily Mail*, 15 January 1909, p. 66.

¹⁵⁵ Antonino Paternò-Castello, the sixth Marchese di San Giuliano (1852-1914), was Ambassador to France and Great-Britain between 1906 and 1910. Treccani Encyclopedia online, <<http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/san-giuliano-antonino-paterno-castello-marchese-di/>> [accessed 28 June 2015].

¹⁵⁶ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 79 'Varie', 26/XII/1907 – 30/VII/ 1908, 89-96, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa, 1/IV/1908, 8 pp.: 'Ci fù in proposito una corrispondenza epistolare fra me, l'East e il Marchese di San Giuliano. Questo, che io vidi a Roma, mi confermò ? che il solo mezzo possibile sarebbe stato il secondo perché, a sua impressione, il Governo inglese non

As was the case historically or with other countries Fradeletto used the diplomatic route here embodied by the Marchese di San Giuliano in order to start negotiations on the British pavilion. This enabled him to obtain an 'objective' assessment of the forces at work. What is more interesting is the deep cultural misunderstanding taking place between Fradeletto and East and their unequal footing in the negotiation. In Bourdieu's terminology, one could say that the two men had two life-styles generated by different habitus as well as cultures.¹⁵⁷ In terms of capital and cultural value, East was in a dominant position as his habitus was in homology to the British system whereas Fradeletto was clearly in a dominated position owed to his linguistic, cultural and geographical isolation.¹⁵⁸

Indeed Fradeletto could not understand East's incapacity to push for the Pavilion; according to him, only five to six hundred pounds would be necessary to arrange a small unit erected in the Giardini used until then as a restaurant. After a lyrical description of the building, he incredulously asked: 'Is it possible that in the great and rich England one might not be able to collect 600 sterling in spite of a monument to Shakespeare?'¹⁵⁹ I do not doubt it for a single second, so please act warmly, swiftly and with courage'.¹⁶⁰ Borsa was thus asked to put all his energy into a campaign of communication on the future Pavilion which Fradeletto proposed to dedicate to 'John Ruskin', in memory of the great 'Anglo-Venetian' man.¹⁶¹

avrebbe mai dato alcun sussidio. Il 24 marzo ricevetti una lettera di Alfred East con la quale il nostro comune amico mi dice in sostanza, e con vivo senso di rincrescimento, che il Governo non accorderà un quattrino; che un appello al pubblico non sarebbe opportuno in questo momento, essendosi lanciata la sottoscrizione per un monumento allo Shakespeare'. For more on the Shakespeare Monument, please see Lynne Walkout Hinojosa, *The Renaissance, English Cultural Nationalism, and Modernism, 1860-1920* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 157-158.

¹⁵⁷ According to Bourdieu, a life-style is 'a system of classified and classifying practices'. Bourdieu (1984), p. 171.

¹⁵⁸ Bourdieu, p. 176.

¹⁵⁹ For the other countries, the land was handed out to the various governments free of charge. Paolo Rizzi, Enzo di Martino, *Storia delle Biennale, 1895-1982* (Milano: Electa, 1982), p. 28.

¹⁶⁰ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 79 'Varie', 26/XII/1907 – 30/VII/ 1908, 89-96, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa, 1/IV/1908, 8 pp.: 'Possibile che nella grande, ricca Inghilterra non si riesca a raccogliere 600 sterline, malgrado il monumento a Shakespeare? Io non ne dubbio un solo momento, quindi si faccia con calore, con coraggio e presto.' This letter is fully reproduced and transcribed in Appendix 5.

¹⁶¹ ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 79 'Varie', 26/XII/1907 – 30/VII/ 1908, 89-96: Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa, 8 pp. It is interesting to note that Fradeletto had started defining Ruskin as the great 'Anglo-Italiano'; he then crossed out the later word and replaced it with 'veneziano'. Being a fervent admirer of Ruskin, Fradeletto sought to organise an exhibition of his drawings in

After months of pressing advice to Borsa and discouraging news from East, Fradeletto acknowledged his sense of powerlessness in a depressed letter dated July 1908: 'I believe that the dream of English Pavilion has disappeared forever. I am very sad about this, as I said before; but it is better to face the unpleasant truth than to be deluded by new illusions'.¹⁶² In thinly veiled terms, Fradeletto reproached Borsa and East their strategy which he considered too cautious.

From these exchanges one can sense Fradeletto's deep Anglophilia, his idealised belief in the power and greatness of Great-Britain. Fradeletto further interpreted East's behaviour as seemingly reluctant and defeatist which ran contrary to his conviction. To him, it pointed to the lukewarm interest the painter took in the Venetian venture, in spite of all the help he had given previously and the painting he had donated in 1905.¹⁶³

Fradeletto's anger exploded early in November 1908 after East sent him a letter explaining that for financial and other reasons, he definitely decided to give up on the venture.¹⁶⁴ In a very revealing letter Fradeletto then exposed the political interpretation he gave of the Biennale:

I still cannot believe what happened there...

I could give the Pavilion to Austria, who would happy to have it. But in addition to being the General Secretary of the Exhibition, I am a politician; and I cannot and I do not want to give a preeminent place to Austria and resign

1900 (Sandra Berresford Archives, SN 12, Letter from Collingwood to Fradeletto, stamped 2 November 1900) which never materialised. Later he organised an international Symposium commemorating Ruskin in September 1905 in Venice. Interestingly the same proposal was taken up by Marcus Bourne Huish in the conclusion of an article dated July 1909: 'Should not Englishmen place their tribute to the debt they, too, owe to their great countryman, who has enabled them to enter into the heart and soul of Venice, and where better could they erect it than on the spot in Venice over which Great Britain's flag may be flown, namely, the British Pavilion in the *Giardini pubblici*?' Tunbridge Wells, Salomons Archives, DSH.M.00336, volume VIII, Marcus Bourne Huish, 'IX British Art at Venice', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 389 (July 1909), p. 79.

¹⁶² Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 79 'Varie', 26/XII/1907 – 30/VII/1908, 380-381, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa, 10/VII/1908, 2 pp.: 'Credo che il sogno del Padiglione inglese sia definitivamente svanito. Me ne dole assai, ripeto; ma è meglio guardare in faccia la realtà incresciosa che abbandonarsi ad illusioni nuove'.

¹⁶³ The painting was entitled *Riposo* (Rest) and is now at Ca' Pesaro in Venice.

¹⁶⁴ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 80 'Varie', 30/VII/1908 – 26/X/1908, 246-247, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa, 12/IX/1908, 2 pp.

myself to the exclusion of England. Because it would be indeed a definitive exclusion. (as I wrote to East but perhaps he did not understand?)¹⁶⁵

This letter is particularly illuminating in highlighting the interconnections between politics and artistic relationships as seen by Fradeletto. Since May 1882, Italy was part of the Triple Alliance together with Germany and Austria-Hungary. In spite of their official position on the international political exchequer, not all the Italians enjoyed cordial relationship with their allies. In particular, some Venetians could still remember vividly the Austrian occupations which occurred intermittently between 1797 and 1866 and how the Venetian insurrection led by Daniele Manin in 1848 was repressed.¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, a friendly relationship with Great Britain was deemed by many Italian politicians as necessary; indeed the German Ambassador in Rome Count Monts acknowledged in 1906 'the Triplice was agreed with the premise of friendly relations with England'.¹⁶⁷

As a last resort, Fradeletto sent his only son, Giulio,¹⁶⁸ as his Representative in London to settle the agreement. Giulio's delegation seemed to have been carefully planned. He had sojourned in London in 1906 for a few months.¹⁶⁹ During

¹⁶⁵ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 81 'Varie' 6/X/1908- 10/XII/1908, 196-199, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa, 9/XI/ 1908, 4 pp.: 'Quanto è accaduto costà, mi sembra ancora inverosimile. ... Io potrei dare il Padiglione all'Austria, che sarebbe felice di averlo. Ma, oltrechè Segretario generale dell'Esposizione, sono uomo politico; e non posso e non voglio accordare un posto eminente all'Austria rassegnandoci senz'altro all'esclusione dell'Inghilterra. Perché tratterebbe (come scrissi all'East ed egli forse non comprese?) di esclusione assoluta'. This letter and its transcription in Italian can be found in Appendix 5.1. 'Organising the British Section, Setting Up the British Pavilion'.

¹⁶⁶ Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny. A History of Italy since 1796* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), p. 173.

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Luigi Albertini, *Le Origini della Guerra del 1914*, 3 vols, (Gorizio: Libreria editrice goriziana, 2010), I, *Le relazioni europee dal Congresso di Berlino all'attentato di Sarajevo*, (p. 232): 'La Triplice è stata conclusa col presupposto di relazioni amichevoli coll'Inghilterra'.

¹⁶⁸ Very little is known about Giulio Fradeletto (1888-1939). His parents married in 1883 and he had two sisters, Regina and Adriana. He published two books: *Venezia alle Indie Orientali* (1902) and *Per le nuove convenzioni marittime e le comunicazioni oltre Suez: note e proposte* (1908) which seem to indicate that he took a keen interest in promoting Venice's role in international economics, especially thanks to an amicable relationship with Britain.

¹⁶⁹ During his time in London, Giulio lived at 17a Pembridge Gardens, Bayswater. The post-scriptum of a letter sent to his father provided a glowing report of his occupations in London: 'Giulio leaves tomorrow... he employed his time remarkably well; he visited what most people could not see in three years; he met lots of people; he had fun and learnt as a good, learned and very intelligent young man. He leaves more Anglophile than he was when he arrived'. ('Giulio parte domani ... Egli ha fatto tesoro del suo tempo: ha visto ciò che altri non arriverebbe a vedere in tre anni; ha

that time, he had been introduced to the Anglo-Italian network and had helped Mario Borsa to organise the 1907 Biennale. In particular, he managed to obtain the highlight of the British section: the five paintings by John Lavery among which was the *Portrait of Miss Eileen* belonging to August Rodin.¹⁷⁰ From his letters transpire a very strong sense of organisation and developed negotiating skills, which were put to good use for the benefit of British art and Anglo-British cooperation. Antonio Fradeletto also sent letters in preparation for his son's business trip to London. The Biennale archives contain one letter sent to Frank Brangwyn on the subject,¹⁷¹ and one to William Michael Rossetti which gives more details as to Fradeletto's plans:

My dear friend,

...He (Giulio) was officially appointed by the Lord Mayor of Venice, President of the Exhibition and by myself, the Secretary —to bring a definitive conclusion to the talks which started with the view that English art should have a permanent Pavilion at the Venice international Exhibition, in the same way as other countries such as Belgium, Hungary, etc. ...

To me and to others, it seems fair and suitable that English art should have its own home in our City, which is the luminous asylum of all forms of beauty.

I have taken the liberty of addressing myself to you, because I can remember that you were among the first and best friends of our venture. ...¹⁷²

conosciuto un mondo di gente: s'è divertito e istruito di quel buono, colto e intelligentissimo giovanotto che è. Egli parte ancora più anglofilo di quanto lo era'). Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1898-1944, Fascicolo 'Sala inglese', Letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto, 28/XII/1906, 23Ma12, 4 pp.

¹⁷⁰ In the sequence of letters exchanged between Giulio and his father, six paintings were announced. It seems that Lavery's *Self-portrait*, which was supposed to arrive late, actually never made it to Venice. Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1898-1944, Fascicolo 'Sala inglese', 23Ma19, Letter from Giulio Fradeletto to Antonio Fradeletto, 21/XI/1906, 4 pp.

¹⁷¹ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere vol. 81 'Varie', 1908/X/6 – 1908/XII/10, 210-211, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Frank Brangwyn, 9/XI/1908, 2 pp.

¹⁷² Venice, ASAC, Collezioni autografi (riproduzioni), 13-14, NA-PU (CA 13), QU-RU (CA 14), Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to William Michael Rossetti, 15?/XI/1908.: 'Mio caro amico, Egli (Giulio) ha ricevuto dal Sindaco di Venezia, Presidente dell'Esposizione, e da me, Segretario, un incarico ufficiale —quello, cioè, di concludere definitivamente le trattative accennate affinché l'Arte inglese abbia all'Esposizione internazionale di Venezia un Padiglione permanente, come l'hanno già altri paesi, quale il Belgio, l'Ungheria ecc... A me e non solo a me, parebbe bello e degno che l'arte inglese avesse una casa propria in questa nostra Città, chè è l'asilo luminoso di tutte le forme della bellezza. Mi sono preso la libertà di rivolgermi a Voi, perchè ricordo che siete stato fra i primi e più buoni (?) amici della nostra impresa.'

In spite of some gaps in the letter due to poor quality of its reproduction, this is a fascinating insight into the central role played by Antonio Fradeletto in setting up the British Pavilion and his use of a restrained but influential network in England. It is also a testimony to his unwavering commitment to the British cause. It is however important to elucidate why Fradeletto decided to send his son rather than rely on his London agent Mario Borsa.

Several letters kept at the ASAC betrayed Fradeletto's anger and deep incomprehension of East and Borsa's incapacity to carry out his political and cultural ambition. As explained at the beginning of this section, Borsa was also an Anglophile whose enthusiasm was displayed in his correspondence. In the first years following his arrival to England in 1898, he had also showed not to have adapted straight away with the local habitus. Yet in 1908, he had lived in England for ten years where he had settled down and adapted to the local customs to his best, integrating a restrained but seemingly close-knit network of artists. Using Bourdieu's terminology, one could say that in 1908 Borsa had shifted to understanding and integrating codes or signs which allowed him to integrate his network's habitus. He was thus emulating the 'dominant condition'.¹⁷³ On the other hand Fradeletto's perceived impulsive ambition and aggressive demands could also be interpreted as displaying a discrepancy of habituses.¹⁷⁴ As a result of his adaptation to a new habitus, Borsa did not seem prepared to challenge the existing system and practices but rather to accept and internalise the local life-style. In such a conflicting situation as the negotiations surrounding the British pavilion, Borsa's shifting allegiance was incompatible with the cause of the Biennale of which he was the official Representative in England.¹⁷⁵

On the other hand, Giulio Fradeletto had acquired the necessary linguistic tools to negotiate in England but like his father, he enjoyed an external position in

¹⁷³ Bourdieu, p. 176.

¹⁷⁴ Bourdieu, p. 176.

¹⁷⁵ In his last letter to Borsa, Fradeletto reproached his agent's lack of eagerness in carrying out the Pavilion project; in addition he hinted at the fact that Alfred East might have partly acted in bad faith: 'I believe that during the whole process and even more in the last period, East may have behaved with a lack of sincerity'. ('io credo che in tutta questa faccenda e massimamente nell'attimo (?) periodo l'East si sia condotto insinceramente'). Venice, ASAC, Copialettere vol. 82 'Varie' 1908/XII/10 – 1909/I/30, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa, 450-458, 16 pp.

the structure. He thus did not have the same pressure as Borsa to conform nor was he overtly reliant on linguistic mediators. Unlike Borsa, his established position of outsider enabled him to act on the dynamics of the field with the help of local dominant forces such as William Michael Rossetti, John Lavery and the Marchese di San Giuliano. As such Giulio felt entitled to act in ways that Borsa could not. As Brangwyn summed up very neatly:

Young Fradeletto came over and after having had a row with East and telling him to go to the Devil, he set to work himself with the result that all is going strong.¹⁷⁶

The Venice Archives contain the last letter sent by Fradeletto to Borsa dated 28 January 1909 in which the former condemned the latter's behaviour and justified his son's clamorous exchange with East. It is interesting to read that the two men did not understand each other anymore as the letter expressed thinly veiled accusations of duplicity and insincerity.¹⁷⁷

The Fradelettos' proactive and combative Anglophilia as well as external position thus ensured that Britain could have, instead of Austria, a Pavilion at the Venice Biennale as early as 1909. From that perspective, the case of the British pavilion represents a perfect example of what Bourdieu called the 'competitive struggles which tend to (...) transform this force-field'.¹⁷⁸

Although the letters quoted here mostly show the efforts made by the Venetian side, we may suspect that both sides worked hard on the project of the Pavilion throughout 1908, especially when it became clear that Britain would not

¹⁷⁶ Manchester, Chetham's Library, The Phelps Collection, Letter from Brangwyn, Temple Lodge to Kitson, undated (c. January 1909). I am grateful to Libby Horner for bringing this letter to my attention.

¹⁷⁷ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 82 'Varie' 1908/XII/10 – 1909/I/30, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa, 450-458, 16 pp.

¹⁷⁸ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996) p. 232.

have any space to exhibit at the Biennale. Indeed, as early in 1909 an 'Appeal of the British Committee for the Acquisition, Decoration and Maintenance of a Fine Art Pavilion' was issued.¹⁷⁹ Between Fradeletto's letter and early 1909, a 'Committee for the Management of the Permanent Pavilion for British Art' had been formed and they had managed to persuade Sir David Lionel Salomons (1851-1925), Bart., from Broomhill at Tunbridge Wells to give the £3,000 necessary for the acquisition of the Pavilion.¹⁸⁰ The public statement accompanying the benefaction included Sir David Lionel's motives: in addition to promoting the 'good feeling between Italy and England', he wished 'that English artists should not be placed in a worse position than foreign artists at an important periodical exhibition; that English artists may extend their means of becoming known and earning their livelihood; that their art may be improved by competition of a healthy character'.¹⁸¹ He later gave an additional £100 towards the decoration of the Pavilion, which was exceptionally matched by the Venice Municipality.¹⁸² No doubt at the request of Fradeletto, Salomons was later presented with the Order of the Crown of Italy.¹⁸³ From then on, the organisation and management of the British section at Venice shifted from

¹⁷⁹ Venice, ASAC, Fondo, storico, Scatole Nere, Padiglioni 9, Gran Bretagna, VIII Biennale 1909, *Venice International Exhibition of Fine Arts, 1909, Appeal of the British Committee for the Acquisition, Decoration and Maintenance of a Fine Art Pavilion*: the appeal is fully reproduced in Appendix 5.

¹⁸⁰ Research into the Salomons archives at Broomhill has proven inconclusive as to precisely who persuaded Sir David Lionel to fund the British Pavilion at Venice. Some Italian newspapers suggested that Paul Konody, secretary of the British Committee, managed to persuade Sir David Lionel to give the £3,000. However they did not support their statement. On the other hand, I am very grateful to Kathy Chaney, Librarian and Archivist at the Salomons Estate, Canterbury Christ Church University, for offering a much more consistent explanation. Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, or the Honorable John Scott-Montagu until 1905 the year he received his hereditary title, was on friendly terms with Sir David Lionel as both were passionate about motoring projects. Further proof of their acquaintance, if not friendship, may be found on the flyleaf of a book edited by Montagu, to which Salomons contributed a chapter: *A History of the First Ten Years of Automobilmism, 1896-1906*. The inscription reads: 'Sir David Salomons from Montagu, Nov 1906'. As member of the British Committee for the Management of the British Pavilion, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu could have approached his friend and asked him for help. Such explanation involving personal ties and close network fits in perfectly with the urgency of the scheme. Also the absence of public appeal in the newspaper seemingly points to a private settlement.

¹⁸¹ Tunbridge Wells, Salomons Archives, DSH.M.00336, volume VIII, '£3,000 Gift for Art, Sir D. Salomons and the Venice Exhibition', *Daily Mail*, 15 January 1909, p. 66.

¹⁸² Tunbridge Wells, Salomons Archives, DSH.M.00336, volume VIII, 'The Venice International Fine Arts Exhibition, 1909, Appeal of the British Committee for Funds to purchase and decorate a Pavilion, and towards the Expenses of the British Section', p. 91.

¹⁸³ Bowness, pp. 18-36 (p. 32).

Italian to British hands. This in turn had an impact on both the numbers and diversity of works shown and ultimately the sale volume at the Biennale.

2.2.4 The Impact of the British Pavilion in England and in Venice

The Committee for the Venice Biennale was composed of six or seven members and was mainly divided into a representational side (the Earl of Plymouth, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu) and an executive body: Marcus Bourne Huish (1843-1921), treasurer and the 'officer appointed under convention with the municipality of Venice',¹⁸⁴ and the honorary secretary Paul George Konody¹⁸⁵ (1872-1933). It is unclear when Huish stopped working for the Committee but Konody remained in post until 1932, when the Department of Overseas Trade took over the management of the British Pavilion.¹⁸⁶ The art sub-committee was composed of three artists among whom there was one sculptor; it changed over time. For the purpose of this study, the main focus of interest was the art and executive members of the British Committee as they were in constant correspondence with their Italian counterparts, the Fradelettos and Romolo Bazzoni, acting Secretary at the Biennale. In her article on the 'British Pavilion before the British Council', Sophie Bowness related the formation of the British Committee as an informal series of friendly gestures starting off with John Lavery's who was 'the very first Gentleman... to take an active interest in the matter. He wrote indeed to the Rt. Hon. Earl of Plymouth, and introduced me to Mr. Grosvenor Thomas. This latter Gentleman, in his turn, interested Mr. P.G. Konody in the matter; and he had the opportunity of securing the worthy cooperation of Mr. M.B. Huish'.¹⁸⁷ On the Italian side, Giulio

¹⁸⁴ Kew, The National Archives (henceforth N.A.), Board of Trade, 4914, December 20-21, 1910, 'Venice International Art Exhibition, British Pavilion Endowment Fund'.

¹⁸⁵ His unsigned obituary published in *The Times* dated Saturday 2 December 1933 presented a mixed review of his contribution to the art world: 'His knowledge of art was extensive rather than profound and his actual writing told better in immediate effect than upon reflection', p. 17. Konody worked in the Committee until 1931 when the British Government took over the Pavilion.

¹⁸⁶ In 1937, the Pavilion was transferred to the custody of the British Council and has remained so to the present day. Bowness, pp. 18-36 (p. 18).

¹⁸⁷ Bowness, pp. 18-36 (p. 18).

and Antonio Fradeletto were also later thanked for their 'untiring efforts and never failing tact'.¹⁸⁸

It is important to point out the difficult position of the British Committee until the management of the Pavilion was taken over by the British government in 1930. As often in the British history of arts institutions, the government was reluctant to spend more money than strictly necessary on funding such venture. However the setting up of the British Pavilion in Venice and its committee intervened a few months after the the creation of the Exhibitions Branch of the Board of Trade which was constituted in July 1908.¹⁸⁹ Created after a Report detailed the beneficial impact of international exhibitions on British Trade and Art, the Exhibition Branch was in charge of organising exceptionally important international state-sponsored exhibitions such as the 1910 Brussels or the 1911 Rome ones. However the position of the British Committee in charge of the Pavilion in Venice was more difficult as its relationship with the Exhibition Branch was far from clear. For want of documents it has not been possible to understand their exact connections but it seems that the Committee was not officially part of the Exhibition Branch although some documents show that it reported to the Board of Trade and thus sought to implement the conclusions of the *Report*. In short, it seems that the Committee acted officially without receiving any public funding.

The blatant unfairness of the British Committee's situation with regards to the Exhibition branch of the Board of Trade led Marcus Bourne Huish to write a public protest:

¹⁸⁸ Bowness, pp. 18-36 (p. 32).

¹⁸⁹ *Report of the Committee appointed by the Board of Trade to make enquiries with reference to the participation of Great Britain in Great International Exhibitions, together with the Appendices thereto* (London: Wyman and Sons, 1907). The Committee had been appointed in October 1906 by the President of the Board of Trade David Lloyd George with the following instructions: 'To inquire and report as to the nature and extent of the benefit accruing to British arts, industries and trade, from the participation of this country in great International Exhibitions; whether the results have been such as to warrant His Majesty's Government in giving financial support to similar exhibitions in future, and, if so, what steps, if any, are desirable in order to secure the maximum advantage from any public money expended on this object'. p. 12.

It would seem proper, therefore, that to Rome and Turin should be added Venice, where British art could be very materially assisted in the future at a very small expenditure for the nation, now that the preliminary outlay has been met out of private purse. Great-Britain would then fall into line with other countries, whose sections are all under governmental control.¹⁹⁰

As Sophie Bowness pointed out, the Pavilion went through a lot of turmoil and Huish and Konody had to present several petitions before the government eventually agreed to take over the Pavilion in 1930.¹⁹¹

From the beginning of their mandate, the British Committee showed that, unlike Mario Borsa, they had a sound and extensive network in Britain including access to the most important media. In Bourdieu's terms, their habitus enabled them to be in a dominant position. The Committee Appeal mentioned earlier was published in all the main newspapers of the country: *The Times*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Athenaeum*. Contrary to earlier sporadic and condescending mentions, the Biennale was now presented in a favourable light. For example as early as January 1909, *The Times* published a short article on 'British Art at Venice', describing the Biennale as of 'the greatest artistic and financial importance to us ... from the day of its inception'.¹⁹² *The Art Journal* also started reporting on the Venice Biennale in 1909, albeit with some mistakes.¹⁹³ Frequent announcements in the newspapers helped the British Committee keep the public informed and interested in the Venice Biennale. In November 1909, a short article in the *Morning Post* offered further proof that Venice and London were working hand in hand: 'The British Committee of the Venice International Exhibition of Fine

¹⁹⁰ Huish, p. 95.

¹⁹¹ Bowness, pp. 18-36 (pp. 22-26).

¹⁹² British Committee, 'British Art at Venice', *The Times*, 15 January 1909, p.8. No doubt the article had been written by Huish.

¹⁹³ It was Giulio Fradeletto's task to read the British press and write an open letter whenever misinformation was spotted. This happened for example in August 1909 when *The Art Journal* wrongly reported on the sale of Lavery's *Polimnia* [*Polymnia*]: 'it had been printed that that picture was paid 'the maximum sum of 3,000 francs'... I think it right to let you know that ten thousand francs is the maximum sum which, regarding the law now in force, the Italian government is allowed to pay for a modern work of art'. Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, volume 100 'Padiglione Inglese', 25/I/1909 – 7/XII/1909, 274-277, Letter from Giulio Fradeletto to 'The Editor of *The Art Journal*', VIII?/1909, 4pp.

Arts has been requested by the Municipality of Venice to ask your kind insertion of an announcement'.¹⁹⁴

A closer examination of the committee composition explains these links with the media. Though there are no extensive studies on Paul Konody or Marcus B. Huish, their backgrounds are extremely interesting and complementary. Trained in law, Huish became the President of the Fine Art Society (1879-1911). He was also editor of the monthly *The Art Journal* (1883-1891) and of the *Year's Art*.¹⁹⁵ Paul Konody was 'born in Budapest and educated in Vienna';¹⁹⁶ he became an art critic and editor of *The Artist* (1900-1902),¹⁹⁷ contributed to *The Connoisseur*, *The Observer*. He was also an art historian.¹⁹⁸ Their well-connected positions and intimate knowledge of the London art market enabled them to foster more diverse and commercially rewarding Biennali.

Indeed, the acquisition of a Pavilion changed the status of Great Britain in Venice. More room and an official presence demanded more important participation. Also, a building incurred maintenance costs which created additional financial pressure on the Committee. Unlike previous negative responses to Mario Borsa's attempts to integrate the artistic community in the Biennali organisation, the existence of the Pavilion had in turn an effect on the artists' willingness to cooperate. The Art Committee persuaded them to create an Art Union called 'The Venice International Exhibition: British Pavilion Endowment Fund'. The 'Draft Instrument Rules and Regulations' can be found at the National Archives as it was

¹⁹⁴ Marcus Bourne Huish, 'Venice International Exhibition', *Morning Post*, 17 November 1909.

¹⁹⁵ Anne Helmreich, 'Marcus Huish (1843-1921)', *Victorian Review*, 37, 1 (Spring 2011), 26-30. In addition the University of Glasgow provided an entry on Huish in: The Correspondance of James McNeill Whistler,

<http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/biog/display/?bid=Huis_MB> [accessed 21 November 2012]. Huish was made Knight of the Order of the Crown of Italy for his position as Treasurer of the British Committee.

¹⁹⁶ 'Mr. P.G. Konody', *The Times*, Saturday 2 December 1933, p. 33.

¹⁹⁷ *The Artist* was a monthly published in London and ran from 1880 to 1902.

¹⁹⁸ Paul Konody was a versatile and prolific art historian with interests ranging from the Flemish Primitives (*The Brothers Van Eyck*, 1907) to Renaissance painters (*Raphael*, 1908; *Filippino Lippi*, 1905), to Romantic (*Delacroix*, 1910) and contemporary British figures (*The Art of Walter Crane*, 1902; *Frank Brangwyn und seine Kunst*, 1900; *Sir William Orpen: artist and man*, 1932). Konody also published an article in German on Brangwyn's panels decorating the British Rooms at the 1905 Venice Biennale.

submitted to the Board of Trade for approval in December 1910.¹⁹⁹ It was signed by all the members of the British Committee for the Management of the British Pavilion at Venice. The Art Union offered private subscriptions of five guineas which entitled every buyer to win a lot amongst the works of art donated by the artists. The aim was 'the promotion of the fine arts by providing an endowment fund to meet the recurring expenses of the Annual or biennial art exhibition at Venice, the only art exhibition on the Continent which has a permanent Pavilion for the exhibition of contemporary British art, and for the completion of decorations of such Pavilion'.²⁰⁰ The Art Committee was then composed of George Henry, ARA, RSA, Grosvenor Thomas and Francis Derwent Wood, ARA. They managed to persuade 130 artists to participate in the scheme, from all the sections of British art; from Alma-Tadema to Frederick William Pomeroy²⁰¹ to William Orpen. Curiously enough, though Charles Holmes and Roger Fry both exhibited in Venice at that period, they were not part of that subscription. The scheme was approved in January 1911 and from February 20th to 25th 1911, the temporary exhibition displayed 194 paintings and works on paper, 3 vases and 11 sculptures at MacLean's gallery, 7, Haymarket, graciously lent for the occasion by its owner Eugene Cremetti.²⁰²

As the British Pavilion was composed of six galleries, the number of exhibits progressed significantly to 94 in 1909 and 128 in 1910. It then stabilised to 117 in 1912 and rose again to 121 in 1914. These figures were comparable, if not higher, to those of other sections: during the last pre-war Biennale, Germany showed 87 paintings while France decided to focus exclusively on one-man exhibitions. However the increased number of exhibits at Venice first created pressure on its quality. Indeed, in 1909, the Art Committee received an official letter of warning from Fradeletto:

¹⁹⁹ Kew, N.A., BT58/37/COS/4914, 'Venice International Exhibition, British Pavilion Endowment Fund', 20 December 1910

²⁰⁰ Kew, N.A., BT58/37/COS/4914, p. 3

²⁰¹ Frederick William Pomeroy (1856-1924), sculptor who trained in the Arts and Crafts Movement

²⁰² Tunbridge Wells, The Salomons Archives, DSH.M.00336, vol. VIII, 'Haymarket Gallery', *Standard*, 27 April 1911, p. 99.

...in pursuance of the Rules set forth in our General Regulations and with the power ensuing from such regulations, we have decided that some British works which were sent to Venice for exhibition should be withdrawn... chiefly desiring that the collection of British exhibits should not result – as a whole – of an inferior character compared to other foreign sections.²⁰³

This may also have been due to the fact that the newly formed Art Committee only had a few months to gather the exhibits before the beginning of the Biennale. To our knowledge, letters similar to this one did not appear in later archives thereby showing that Britain thereafter complied with Italian standards.

The Venice Biennale became increasingly popular during the immediate pre-war years. In 1909, visitors peaked to an unprecedented 457,960. Later editions reported circa 300,000 visitors, still a handsome number compared to post-war ones.²⁰⁴ In turn, such high attendance figures created expectation regarding sales. As Treasurer, Huish demanded regular reports from the Fradelettos on sales. In 1909, Giulio Fradeletto, then 'Acting Honorary General Secretary',²⁰⁵ was eager to remind him that he 'had not spared in fact any occasion doing [his] best in order to get a sure (?) success and [he] was quite proud to say that no other Foreign section has reached up to the present such an important amount of sales as it has the British section'.²⁰⁶ The year after, as the Venice Biennale was forwarded due to the 1911 Rome exhibition, Giulio also reassured his British correspondents in an 8 page letter that such short notice to prepare the Biennale would not result in any

²⁰³ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 100, 'Padiglione inglese', 25/I/1909-7/XII/1909, letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Art Sub-Committee of the Venice International Fine Arts Exhibition, 12/V/1909, 240, 1p. The list of artists who were sent back did not appear in the archives.

²⁰⁴ Maria Mimita Lamberti, 'Il Contesto delle prime mostre, dalle fine del secolo alla guerra mondiale: artisti e pubblico ai Giardini', in *Venezia e la Biennale, Percorsi del Gusto*, ed. by Giandomenico Romanelli, pp. 39-47 (p. 39). After the Second World War, the number of visitors exceeded 200,000 from 1972 onwards.

²⁰⁵ Chiara Rabitti interestingly wrote of Giulio's appointment: 'tra il 1909 e il 1910 aveva sostituito come facente funzioni il padre impedito da una malattia. In quel caso l'evidente parzialità della scelta aveva suscitato disagio e malumore tra gli impiegati dell'Esposizione, portando a rapida conclusione l'infelice suppleanza'. She however does not mention the fact that Giulio had been involved in negotiations and matters pertaining to the British Pavilion. Chiara Rabitti, 'Gli eventi e gli uomini: breve storia di un'istituzione', in *Venezia e la Biennale*, ed. by Romanelli, pp. 26-38 (p. 30).

²⁰⁶ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 100 'Padiglione inglese', 25/I/1909-7/XII/1909, Letter from Giulio Fradeletto to Marcus Bourne Huish, 13/VII/1909, 267-270.

financial loss, and optimistically concluded that 'I am sure there will be a v. good financial success next year also'.²⁰⁷ Such claims will be examined in chapter four.

On the whole, Anglo-Italian cooperation seemed to produce satisfactory results as exemplified by the relatively smooth transition from room to Pavilion. Fradeletto and Huish also worked together on raising the number of exhibits and improving sales. However, underneath such a friendly and efficient surface, tensions loomed especially as the war was drawing nearer. In particular, many a letter between Marcus Huish and Romolo Bazzoni, acting secretary of the Biennale, pointed to problems related to costs, delayed payments, problems of transportation to and fro, or even, on one occasion, a case of damaged painting. On top of these logistic issues, problems of pre-eminence arose. One letter sent by Huish to Bazzoni clearly shows this growing distrust, as Huish felt the need to reassert his control and authority:

[regarding permission to exhibit separately some paintings] ...The Exhibition is under the control of the British Committee... It would also point out that the same permission applies to the Black and White work contributed to the Brangwyn section, namely that all sales both here and in the Davis section be notified in the first place to the Committee. Kindly let me hear your assent on this...²⁰⁸

Such a harsh tone is surprising if one bears in mind the many efforts from the Fradelettos to promote British art in Italy, their deep Anglophilia, and their many encouraging letters. Were the British organisers put off by nagging logistical problems? Or were they indirectly influenced by international tensions? Such tensions were far from appeased after the First World War as Britain decided not to participate in the 1920 Biennale, to the great dismay of the Italians. One of the reasons lay in the fact that the British paintings exhibited in 1914 only returned to

²⁰⁷ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 100, 'Padiglione inglese', 25/I/1909-7/XII/1909, Letter from Giulio Fradeletto to Marcus Bourne Huish, 16/XI/ 1909, 380-388.

²⁰⁸ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 117, 'Padiglione inglese' n°3, 14/VI/1909-27/XI/1917, Letter from Marcus Huish to Romolo Bazzoni, 28/III/1914, 398-399.

Great Britain in June 1920.²⁰⁹ Also the organisational body of the Biennale changed with Fradeletto being replaced by Vittorio Pica, closer to the French than the English. All in all, the golden period of Anglo-Italian cultural relationship at the Biennale dawned as the First World War loomed.

This chapter aimed at deciphering the 'sign-system' created by the evolving British sections at the Venice Biennale. In so doing, it had to bring in widely different perspectives in order to illuminate the positions held by living British painters, the Biennale organisers and the fluctuating networks bridging the two groups. Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' has helped illuminate the tensions between these positions in terms of cultural (mis)understandings and adjustments. In the context of an increasingly diversified and international art market, living British painters were faced with fiercer competition whilst benefitting from more exhibiting opportunities than ever before. As explained in chapter one, the Venice Biennale only represented a recent and fragile venture in spite of its prestigious cultural capital. This chapter thus showed that it owed its longevity to the untiring efforts of its organisers who positioned themselves as outsiders in order to achieve their goals. This is made especially clear when looking at the British section, which could have disappeared after 1907 had the Fradelettos been less proactive. In this case the evolving 'sign-system' was backed up by a restricted yet efficient network of Anglophiles which points to the interconnection between political and cultural admiration and artistic relationship. This will be probed further in the next chapters.

²⁰⁹ Bowness, pp. 18-36 (p. 22).

CHAPTER THREE

CROSS-CULTURAL CONSUMPTION: THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF BRITISH PAINTING IN ITALY, BEFORE AND DURING THE BIENNALE

As explained in the first chapter, the newly-founded kingdom of Italy was keen to develop economically and to gain a role on the international political and cultural scene. The case of the Venice Biennale is particularly emblematic of such a push forward yet other exhibitions of international contemporary styles flourished in the main cities of the Peninsula in the same period: the Florentine European art exhibition called 'Festa dell'arte e dei fiori' in 1896-1897, the Milanese Triennale or the 1902 Turin exhibition, credited with launching the style *Liberty* in Italy, a local variation on *Art Nouveau*.¹ In addition to economic returns, these regular displays sought to bring the Italian public on a par with other artistic centres in terms of visual literacy and international canon, and to reassess Italy's central role in the field of cultural production, exhibition and consumption. The elite also hoped that the consumption of international contemporary art would fuel local creativity and would foster a stronger national identity. In this respect, they firmly relied on a few art critics whose roles as cultural mediators and interpreters were publically acknowledged and rewarded. Thus contrary to the previous chapters which studied the structures and positioning of the Biennale and British painting within it, this part will focus on the Italian critical output of the period with the aim of shedding light on the cultural and intellectual postulates underpinning the Italian appreciation of British painting. Using a chronological remit going beyond the Venice Biennale, it will show the dramatic development of the knowledge and appreciation for British art in Italy whilst also bringing forth some important cross-cultural interpretations which influenced the taste of the Italian critics.

¹ *Torino 1902: le arti decorative internazionali del nuovo secolo*, ed. by Rossana Bossaglia, Ezio Godoli, Marco Rosci (Milano: Fabbri, 1994)

3.1 The Reception of British Painting in Italy Prior to 1878²

As a preamble a methodological consideration on the typology of the material gathered in this section should be made. A heterogeneous array of documents, articles and books written by historians but also journalists and art professionals provided the basis of this study. This inevitably raised some questions as to how to process, select and order the material. In particular, sources from both art history and art criticism were used, bringing in substantially different perspectives. However, Italian philosopher cum art critic Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) helped reconcile these two seemingly diverging disciplines. He explained that art criticism should not only apprehend art objects *per se* but also place them in a wider context and claimed that 'to understand a work of art is to understand the whole in its parts and its parts in the whole'. Hence, Croce concluded that 'true historical interpretation and true art criticism are the same'.³ As a result, instead of a purely typological selection of the material, this section embraced diversity as a means of understanding how much British art was known, understood and consumed in Italy before the Biennale dramatically improved its display and means of consumption.

The pre-unification Italian cultivated public was acquainted with English literature through local and international journals, periodicals and magazines but the situation is more uncertain when it comes to the fine arts. Before the second half of the nineteenth century, it is quite difficult to find Italian criticism on British painting. Geographical distance cannot explain it all however, as it has been widely reported and studied that British painters went to Italy to learn and perfect their art.⁴ How much of that intense artistic activity in Italy thus transpired in local books,

² Like in chapter two, a short biography will only be provided for the artists who did not exhibit at the Venice Biennale. For the others, see Appendix 2.

³ Quoted in Lionello Venturi, *Storia della Critica d'Arte* (Torino: Einaudi, 1964 and 2000), p. 34.: 'Comprendere un'opera d'arte è comprendere il tutto nelle parti e le parti nel tutto' and 'la vera interpretazione storica e la vera critica d'arte coincidono'.

⁴ Critical literature on this subject is very extensive. Exhibitions and studies focusing on the artistic attraction exerted by Italy include *Italian Art and Britain* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1960); Julian Halsby, *Venice, the artist's vision: a guide to British and American painters* (London: Unicorn, 1999). As dealer Gaetano Lombardi noted, it had even become compulsory for some of the British artists: 'Many British painters came to Italy, either for professional or entertainment motives, and even more because of the regulation of the Society of Dilettanti of London which did not accept a

articles or accounts? So far, art historians have on the whole showed that British painters had comparatively few Italian contacts and patrons, thereby implicitly justifying the absence of reference in contemporary Italian —or other foreign— literature.⁵ Such lack of international visibility could also be explained by the fact that before Gustav Waagen's *Kunstwerke und Künstler in England und Paris*, published in 1837,⁶ and most of all the Redgrave brothers' 1866 *A Century of Painters of the English School*,⁷ there was not an art historian comparable to Vasari or Abbot Lanzi that disseminated names of the most famous British artists. It also needs to be pointed out that large scale public exhibitions of British art were very scarce outside of the Royal Academy summer exhibition.

By and large, the first comments on British painting were due to Italian travellers to the island, who then decided to publish their memories, as was the case with Lorenzo Magalotti for example.⁸ However, artistic and aesthetic considerations were often of lesser importance than political and societal observations. Potentially unproductive, the systematic research of these published recollections and analyses was nevertheless useful to gather scattered pieces of information on British art up until the nineteenth century.

It is noteworthy that travelling to England had become fashionable for

members those who had not crossed the Alps, and had not visited the classical land of art. For all these reasons, some painters have and still paint among us'. ('Eppure molti pittori britanni or per professione o per divertimento, e molto più per il regolamento della società dei dilettanti di Londra che non accoglieva per suoi componenti coloro che non avevano traversato le Alpi, e visitato la terra classica dell'arte, e per tutto ciò certo vi hanno assai dipinto e dipingono tra noi'). Lombardi (Firenze: per conto dell'autore, 1843), p. viii.

⁵ At the beginning of the nineteenth century, *'The English felt themselves to be a very distinct artistic group'*. Nicholas Penny, 'The Activity of English Artists in Nineteenth Century Italy', in *Giornale di viaggio in Italia: l'attività dei pittori europei in Italia nell'800, occasioni e memorie*, ed. by Raffaele De Grada (Busto Arsizio: Bramante, 1985), pp. 147-173 (p. 154).

⁶ Gustav Waagen, *Kunstwerke und Künstler in England und Paris* (Berlin: Nicolaischen Buchhandlung, 1837-39), this is apparently the first comprehensive attempt at surveying English art.

⁷ Richard and Samuel Redgrave, *A Century of Painters of the English School* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1866).

⁸ William. E. Knowles Middleton, *Lorenzo Magalotti at the Court of Charles II: his Relazione d'Inghilterra of 1668* (Waterloo: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 1980): Setting foot in England on 8 February 1667, Cosimo III's courtier Lorenzo Magalotti was reportedly the first Italian author to mention Shakespeare. Accompanied by Paolo Falconieri, Magalotti toured Europe as far as Hungary before going to England where he took notes about political and religious institutions and customs.

eighteenth century Italians and Southern Europeans in general.⁹ At the time, a widespread *Anglomania* pervaded the Continent, during which 'even in the fine arts, even in music, a traditional Italian monopoly, we saw England challenging and leading us'.¹⁰ In that respect, travellers' comments betrayed the desire to go and see examples of British art, especially amongst members of the art world where contacts between British and Italian professionals were more widespread. For example, Conte Carlo Gastone della Torre di Rezzonico (1742-1796), 'Permanent Secretary of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Parma' since 1769, spent several months in England in 1787-1788 and kept a diary of his trip and his impressions. The diary was eventually published in 1824 under the title *Viaggio in Inghilterra*.¹¹ Carrying a letter of introduction as was the customs, he toured many private collections and noted down comments on the British paintings he saw. At Windsor Castle, he defined a *Last Supper* painted by Benjamin West 'well painted';¹² he marvelled at the endless series of portraits at Arundel Castle 'among which many by Wandick (*sic*) and Lely'.¹³ He noted a 'Gavino' Hamilton¹⁴ at Kedleston Hall but criticised a ceiling painted by 'Thornhille (*sic*)' at Chatsworth, which indicates his

⁹ For a discussion of comments on English art by Spanish travellers and influence of British art in Spain, please see Sarah Symmons, "'A new people and a limited society": British art and the Spanish spectator', in *English Accents, Interactions with British Art c.1776-1855*, ed. by Christiana Payne and William Vaughan (London: Ashgate, 2004), pp.101-124.

¹⁰ Luigi Piccioni, 'Inghilterra e Italia nel secolo XVIII', *Il Fanfulla della Domenica*, 19 February 1911, p. 2.: 'persino le belle arti, persino la musica, vanto e monopolio italiano si videro allora tra noi contrastato il primato dell'Inghilterra'.

¹¹ Carlo Gastone della Torre di Rezzonico, *Viaggio in Inghilterra* (Venezia: Alvisopoli, 1824). There may have been an earlier publication entitled *Giornale del viaggio d'Inghilterra negli anni 1787-88* (1789) to which it was not possible to get access. The reprinting of the *Giornale* seems to indicate that the Italian audience was in demand for those 'exotic' works. There exists a portrait of Carlo Gastone della Torre di Rezzonico painted by Elizabeth Vigée Le Brun in 1791, probably painted in Rome.

¹² Della Torre di Rezzonico, p. 2.: '*ben dipinta*'. Benjamin West (1738-1820), PRA, history and portrait painter. Born in America, he travelled to Europe in 1760, visiting Italy before settling in London in 1763. Founding member of the Royal Academy, he was appointed historical painter to the King in 1772, Surveyor of the King's pictures in 1790 and PRA in 1792. Exalted to a high pinnacle during his lifetime, he has since then been depreciated. Samuel Redgrave, *A Dictionary of Artists of the English School* (Bath: Kingsmead Reprints, second edition, 1878), pp. 463-465.

¹³ Della Torre di Rezzonico, p. 92.: 'fra quali molti di Wandick [*sic*] e di Lely'. Peter Lely (Sir) (1617-1680), Bart., portrait painter. Born in Westphalia, he came to England at the age of 24, was appointed principal painter to Charles II and made a baronet in 1679-80. Redgrave (1878), p. 267.

¹⁴ Della Torre di Rezzonico, p. 111. Gavin Hamilton (1723-1798), history and portrait painter. He made numerous sojourns in Italy and in particular in Rome where he studied classical antiquity. He also painted about 1794, an apartment in the Villa Borghese at Rome, in compartments, representing the story of Paris. Redgrave, p. 194.

preference, very widespread at the time, for classical rather than baroque art.¹⁵

It is at that time that British art thus acquired an important status on the Continent, confirmed by the acquisition of some prominent painters such as Hogarth and Wright of Derby by Catherine of Russia.¹⁶ Prints held a paramount role in the dissemination of the latest British artistic trends as they prompted discussions in literary magazines. Although there did not seem to be specialised magazines until the second half of the nineteenth century, artistic news from England speedily reached the Continent. In France for example, journalists were best informed about artists as they liaised with expatriates directly.¹⁷ Although the equivalent has not been found in Italy yet, it is also highly possible that the Italian public was informed through the same French journals which widely circulated in the Peninsula. Moreover, indirect sources indicate that articles on British artists appeared in Italian literary magazines in the early nineteenth century such as *Gazzetta letteraria* (which published articles on Prince Hoare and enamel artist Charles Muss), *Giornale periodico* (with an article on Joseph Wright), *Magazzino mensile* (which also published an article on Joseph Wright) or *Magazzino europeo* (with an article on George Robinson).¹⁸ Unfortunately, it has been so far impossible to track any of these periodicals.¹⁹

¹⁵ Della Torre di Rezzonico, p. 111. It is curious that the author did not say a word about Reynolds whom he seemed to admire. Indeed, at the example of the First President of the Royal Academy, he also composed annual speeches, or *Discorsi Accademici* which were published in 1772. Reynolds's *Discourses* had been translated by Baretti and published in Florence in 1778 and in Bassano in 1787. On the other hand, there is no wonder why della Torre di Rezzonico did not mention Hogarth as the painter was generally not found in aristocratic collections. However, as his essay *Analisi della Bellezza* had been translated, published and widely debated in Italy in 1761, the Secretary must at least have known his name. Since his preferences obviously go to historical painting, he may have voluntarily left out Hogarth's low life representations. James Thornhill (1676-1734), Sir, Knt., historical painter. He was patronised by Queen Anne and became her Serjeant-Painter; he enjoyed a lot of prestigious commissions. He was knighted by George I, thus becoming the first native painter who received that distinction. His daughter clandestinely married Hogarth. Redgrave, pp. 430-431.

¹⁶ Rosalind P. Gray, 'Help me to eclipse the celebrated Hogarth; the Reception of Hogarth in Russia', *Apollo*, 153, 471 (May 2001), 23-30. The article explores Hogarth's popularity in Russia, 'which was so extensive that there is a special Russian word, *Khogartistika*, to denote the study of his work'. (p. 23).

¹⁷ Michel Polge, 'William Hogarth, Sa réception par les Français au XVIIIe siècle, appréciée à partir des périodiques de ce temps', *The British Art Journal*, 7, 2 (Automne 2006), 12-23.

¹⁸ These references have been found in the appendix compiled by Gaetano Lombardi at the end of his *Saggio dell'Istoria pittorica d'Inghilterra* (Firenze: per conto dell'autore, 1843); the book will be discussed at greater length later on in the chapter.

¹⁹ Denis Reidy of the British Library should be thanked for his kind suggestions of possible websites

Other sources confirm that the knowledge of British art in Italy, though far from comprehensive, dramatically increased during the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, no doubt pushed by political considerations. At that time, a number of British painters such as West, Lawrence,²⁰ or Fuseli were appointed 'Academicians of merit' at the Roman *Accademia di San Luca*.²¹ These writings also confirmed a slow but definite shift from tourist recollections to scientific analysis and integration in the European pictorial tradition. This was made clear in the two successive editions of Stefano Ticozzi's *Dizionario dei pittori dal rinnovamento delle belle arti fino al 1800*, published in 1818 and 1830-32.²² Clearly stemming from the encyclopaedic and Neo-classicist tradition of the Enlightenment, Ticozzi's dictionaries sought to adopt a scientific method based on 'objective' evaluation of the artists' works rather than biased account of their fame. In terms of breadth of knowledge, the twelve year gap between the two dictionaries provides a fascinating insight into the evolution of the amount written on British painting: no less than twenty-five artists appeared in the 1830-1832 edition, as opposed to three only in the 1818 dictionary, namely Joshua (Josuè) Reynolds, 'Hogart' (sic) and Kneller.²³ In addition, the entries were expanded and provided more nuanced critique. For example the entry for Hogarth is three times longer in the second

and databases where to look for information. It is not uncommon for pre-unification periodicals to be in incomplete collections; the library collections are still in a fragmentary state in spite of the creation of *Biblioteche nazionali*, which, it must be noted, were founded after the Unification of the country: although it originated in the eighteenth century, the Florentine National Library opened as such in 1861 while the Roman one opened in 1874.

²⁰ Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), Sir, Knt., PRA, portrait painter. He came to London in 1787 where he studied at the RA. He was not long in gaining public patronage and royal favour, being appointed painter in ordinary to the King in 1792. He was elected an RA in 1794 and henceforth enjoyed the chief honours and profits of his profession. He was knighted in 1815, unanimously elected PRA in 1820 and decorated with the Legion of Honour. Redgrave, pp. 263-264.

²¹ Penny, pp. 147-173 (pp. 150-151).

²² Stefano Ticozzi (1762-1836) was Honorary member of the Carrara Academy of Sculpture and later appointed Honorary member of the Carrara Academy of Fine Arts and of the Venice Atheneum: *Dizionario dei Pittori dal Rinnovamento delle belle arti fino al 1800*, 2 vols (Milano: V. Ferrario, 1818) and *Dizionario degli Architetti, Scultori, Pittori, Intagliatori in Rame ed in Pietra, Coniatori di Medaglie, Musicaisti, Niellatori, Intarsiatori d'orni età e d'ogni nazione*, 4 vols (Milano: G. Schieppatti, 1830-32).

²³ Godfrey Kneller (1648-1723), Sir, Bart., portrait painter. Born at Lubeck, he spent time in Leyden and Amsterdam where he had some instruction by Rembrandt. He then visited Italy before settling in England in 1674. He was state painter to Charles II, James II and William III who knighted him in 1692, Queen Anne and George I who created him a baronet.

Dizionario, it is also more explanatory and slightly less pithy in its judgement. One could read in the first edition 'In his paintings, we can see bad design and worse colouring... Since he did not possess all the required qualities to produce perfect works, neither in his writings nor in his paintings was anything created which could grant him immortality'.²⁴ On the other hand, the second entry alternates anecdotes and general statements. Contrary to later critics such as Ernest Chesneau or Antonio Agresti, Ticozzi did not present Hogarth as the father of the English school.

With Hogarth and Kneller, Reynolds was the only English painter who appeared in both editions of Ticozzi's dictionary. With a few additions, these entries are the same in substance: Reynolds's artistic creativity heavily derived from his Italian trip. Ticozzi deemed Reynolds' portraits 'extraordinary likenesses' and declared that his masterpiece was the family portrait located at Blenheim palace, thereby confirming the fact that some Italian critics knew about the contents in British private collections.²⁵ Gainsborough, though given much less space than Hogarth, was by far the most praised English artist in the second *Dizionario*. Ticozzi insisted on the 'surprising resemblance' of his portraits and described his landscapes as 'striking due to the simplicity of their subject matter, the truthfulness of the representation, the strong colouring and the learned distribution of light and shade'.²⁶

Actually Ticozzi's dictionaries are as interesting for what they leave out as for what they contain. For example, it is highly surprising not to find an entry for Thomas Lawrence, PRA and highly regarded in Italy around 1815-1820 as he had been invited to paint Pope Pius VII in 1819.²⁷ Ticozzi did not write an entry on

²⁴ Ticozzi, *Dizionario*, 1818, p. 268.: 'I suoi quadri vedonsi perciò mal disegnati e peggio coloriti... e come pittore e come scrittore, non possedendo tutte le qualità necessarie per poter fare una cosa perfetta, niente produsse che gli assicuri l'immortalità'.

²⁵ Ticozzi, *Dizionario*, 1830-1833, p. 236. Reynolds produced a portrait of the *Fourth Duke of Marlborough and Family*, c.1778, now in the Red Drawing Room to which was later added a pendant by John Singer Sargent of the *Duke of Marlborough Family* painted in 1905.

²⁶ Ticozzi, *Dizionario*, 1830-1833, p. 132.: 'sorprendente rassomiglianza'; 'distinguonsi per la semplicità dell'argomento, per la verità con cui sono rappresentati gli oggetti, per la forza del colorito e per la dotta distribuzione delle ombre e dei lumi'.

²⁷ Nicholas Penny wrote that Lawrence's 'portrait of the Pope [Pius VII] – as well as the other portraits which he had brought with him – was immensely admired'. Penny, pp. 147-173 (p. 150).

Benjamin West either, who was also PRA until his death in 1820, and who was mentioned in a laudatory essay published in Bologna in 1852.²⁸ He did not include Constable or Turner either. A partial explanation for this may be found in Ticozzi's preface: 'In the fifth volume of this series, we shall gather detailed information on living artists and their main works; they had to be separated from those who have already been judged'.²⁹ Since Thomas Lawrence died in 1830, John Constable in 1837, David Wilkie in 1841 and William Turner in 1851, this may be why they did not appear in the published volumes of the *Dizionario*. However, Benjamin West passed away in 1820, and Henry Fuseli in 1825. From these omissions may be deduced that the knowledge of English painting was still piecemeal in Italy at that time. On the other hand, Ticozzi displayed a strikingly better knowledge of English print makers and engravers. This may explain why 'Blake (W)' obtained a very small entry in which he was described as 'English wood carver who thrived in the last decade of the last century. In 1784, he resided in London where he used stone printing and created various works taken from English painters and designers'.³⁰ The discrepancy of knowledge between painting and prints points out to further research avenues to map out the Italian familiarity with British visual culture.

Stefano Ticozzi's dictionaries provide very good examples of the transitional nature of the amount and treatment of the information on British painting circulating in Italy at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Information was seemingly much more available than before, although it still betrayed important gaps in knowledge. The methodology used by the author was also transitional as it mingled anecdotes and scientific attempts at classifying on positive and objective

²⁸ *Iconobiologia dei piu eccellenti pittori d'Europa incominciando dall'epoca del Risorgimento di quest'arte sino ai nostri giorni* (Bologna: Sassi, 1852). There were only two entries for English painters: Reynolds and West, the first two Presidents of the Royal Academy. Both essays were signed 'A.G. tradusse' so they must have been drawn from another source.

²⁹ Ticozzi, *Dizionario*, 1830-1833, p.13.: 'Raccolte in un solo volume, che sarà il quinto dell'intera opera, si daranno circostanziate notizie degli artisti viventi e delle principali loro opere; perocchè ragion voleva che si tenessero separati da coloro che sono di già giudicati'. It was not possible to find a copy of that fifth volume of the *Dizionario*. Was Ticozzi ever able to complete it and have it published?

³⁰ Ticozzi, *Dizionario*, 1830-1833, p. 169.: 'intagliatore inglese, fioriva in sul declinare del p.p. secolo. Nell'anno 1784 dimorava in Londra dove fece diverse stampe a granito, tratte da pittori e disegnatori inglesi'.

grounds. The next document which will be discussed here was on the other hand a fully-fledged scientific and comprehensive account of the development of British painting, which was published ten years after the second dictionary. Although no personal data were found on the author, Gaetano Lombardi must have belonged to a younger generation of art critic highly influenced by the latest historiographical methods coming from Germany. His *Saggio dell'istoria pittorica d'Inghilterra* is exceptional as it demonstrates a very comprehensive knowledge of British art, and has no parallel in continental critical works of the time.

Modelled on Abbot Luigi Lanzi's *Storia pittorica dell'Italia* published in two parts in 1792 and 1796, Gaetano Lombardi provided the first chronological account of the evolution of English painting in the Italian language. As he underlined: 'Nobody had written a chronological study of English painting before now'.³¹ This landmark in the Italian historiography on English painting was published in 1843 in the Anglophile city of Florence. Interestingly enough, this *Istoria* appeared nineteen years before Théophile Thoré-Burger published his reflections on the 1857 Manchester Art Treasures exhibition and twenty-one years before Ernest Chesneau published his first chronological history of English painting in France, both of which are usually amongst the earliest and most comprehensive continental accounts on English painting.³² The main reason Lombardi gave for writing this essay was that 'Apart from the modern school, English painting is generally still little known by learned Italians, and almost completely ignored by mediocre ones, except for those who visited England'.³³ There he drew a clear distinction between those Italians

³¹ Gaetano Lombardi, *Saggio dell'istoria pittorica d'Inghilterra* (Firenze: per conto dell'autore, 1843), p.vi.: 'Nessuno fino ai nostri giorni, aveva scritto cronologicamente sull'istoria della pittura d'Inghilterra'. Unfortunately, it is not known the extent to which this book circulated in Florence and elsewhere in Italy but it is suspected that it was restrained to a narrow audience. Since it was published 'per conto dell'autore' it can be speculated that there was a limited edition. Furthermore, it was not possible to find references to this book anywhere else or in posterior Italian writings on English art.

³² Théophile Thoré-Burger, *Trésors d'art en Angleterre* (Brussels: F. Claassen, 1860); Ernest Chesneau, *L'art et les artistes modernes en France et en Angleterre* (Paris: Didier et Cie, 1864) Of course, as was mentioned early on, Gustav Waagen published the first continental account on English painting in 1837.

³³ Lombardi, p. ix.: 'la pittura inglese, eccettuata la moderna scuola, è poco conosciuta generalmente anco dai profondi italiani periti, e niente quasi dai mediocri, se non quando questi o quelli, siano stati in Inghilterra'.

who, having travelled to England were generally better versed in English painting than their fellow countrymen who had not.³⁴

Contrary to della Torre di Rezzonico who embodied the *Curioso* and Ticozzi who adopted a transitional methodology, Lombardi's methodological approach was clearly scientific, as indicated in his subtitle 'methodically arranged'. He thus sought to classify English painters 'by chronological order and by school' and provided titles of paintings for each;³⁵ he also compiled an appendix with references and biographies to read.³⁶ This appendix was extremely useful to get a glimpse of Lombardi's sources.³⁷ As far as content organisation is concerned, the *Istoria* is divided into twelve chronological chapters, each covering a special period in English art from its very beginnings under the reign of Henry III to its latest developments in the 1840s. From what the author repeatedly stated, this book represents an attempt to study the development of English painting and to provide information on its founding fathers. The same methodological approach was adopted in the following decades by Ernest Chesneau and Robert de la Sizeranne in France.

The last three chapters offer the most recent developments of English painting, and Lombardi clearly wished to equate evolution with improvement. Contrary to what Clive Bell could write fifty years later, he thus established that

³⁴ This confirms the fact that, in spite of the widespread presence of English painters in Italy, very few paintings had been exhibited in the Peninsula.

³⁵ Lombardi, p. vii.: 'per ordine di tempo e di scuola'.

³⁶ This was crucial in order to get an understanding of what English and Italian sources Lombardi might have consulted for his book.

³⁷ Lombardi listed no less than 26 different sources, some of which were recurring, and some of which were only mentioned once. He obviously had wide access to English contemporary works, as shows the list that follows. The five most used sources were, in order of importance: John Gould's *Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Artists* (London: Routledge, 1839), Rev. Matthew Pilkington's *A Dictionary of Painters from the Revival of the Art to the Present Period* (London: J. Walker, 1810), Allan Cunningham's *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters and Sculptors* (London: J. Murray, 1829-33), Edward Edwards's *Anecdotes of Painters who have resided or been born in England, with critical remarks on their productions* (London: Leigh and Sotheby, 1808), and lastly, the *General Biographical Dictionary: Containing an historical and critical account of the lives and writings of the most eminent persons in every nation*. (London: printed for J. Nichols, 1812-17). Other than these key works, Lombardi used a wide range of sources including Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, the *Catalogue of the Shakespeare [sic] Gallery* (1796) or an unidentified source called *Gleanings of a Bee* where he found further information on John 'Giovanni' Boydell. It is interesting to note that Lombardi also used a few Italian sources, such as Stefano Ticozzi's *Dizionario dei pittori dal rinnovamento delle belle arti fino al 1800* (1830-1833 edition) or articles which were published in Italian magazines such as *Gazzetta Letteraria*, *Giornale periodico* or *Magazzino mensile*.

around the year 1800, English painting 'could be compared to the period of Leo X in Italy, due to the progress that it made and to the fact that England could then boast its most well-known artists'.³⁸ The same chapter covers the careers of a variety of artists, some of whom are virtually unknown nowadays: Benjamin 'Beniamino' West; James 'Giacomo' Barry;³⁹ Henry 'Enrico' Fuseli; L.F. Abbott;⁴⁰ John 'Giovanni' Opie, or 'Hoppy';⁴¹ Samuel 'Samuele' Finney;⁴² John 'Giovanni' Singleton Copley;⁴³ Raeburn; Richard 'Riccardo' Cosway;⁴⁴ Edward 'Edoardo' Bird.⁴⁵ The last chapter ends with a discussion of the period covering Thomas Lawrence up to David Wilkie.⁴⁶

The *Istoria*, though clearly the work of one individual, is particularly illuminating in terms of taste as artists who are generally favoured in England did not necessarily appeal to the Italian palate. For example, Lombardi admired the *Marriage à la mode* series by Hogarth, on display at the National Gallery, but criticised Hogarth's compositions 'partly flawed in their design, colouring and

³⁸ Lombardi, p. 109.: 'potrebbe paragonare, per il progresso che la pittura fece nella Grand Bretagna, a quello di Leon Decimo in Italia, essendo che fiorissero in questo tempo i più famosi artisti, che l'Inghilterra abbia fin qui potuto vantare'.

³⁹ James Barry (1741-1806), RA, history painter. Born in Ireland, he visited Italy from 1765 to 1770 then settling in London. He defended the English school against the attacks of Abbé Winckelmann. In 1782, he was appointed professor of painting at the Royal Academy but the charge was then removed from him. Redgrave, pp. 26-29.

⁴⁰ Francis Lemuel Abbott (1760-1803), portrait painter. He settled in London about 1780 and first exhibited at the RA in 1788. He enjoyed a good clientele but later became insane. Redgrave, p. 1.

⁴¹ John Opie (1761-1807), RA, historical and portrait painter. About 1780 he was brought to London and started exhibiting in 1782. In 1788 he was elected RA. Redgrave, pp. 316-317.

⁴² Samuel Finney (1719-1798), miniature painter both on ivory and in enamel. He was a member of the Society of Artists, 1761-66 and was appointed portrait painter to Queen Charlotte; Redgrave, p. 152.

⁴³ John Singleton Copley (1737-1815), RA, history painter. Born in Boston, he was elected in 1767 a fellow of the Society of Artists in Great Britain. He came for a Continental tour in 1774, settling in London in 1775. He became a RA in 1779. Redgrave, p. 98.

⁴⁴ Richard Cosway (1740-1821), RA, miniature painter. He became a student of the RA in 1769 and was elected RA in 1771. His career was rapid and he enjoyed the intimacy of the Prince of Wales. Redgrave, p. 100.

⁴⁵ Edward Bird (1772-1819), RA, subject painter. He first worked in Bristol where he opened a drawing-school. In 1815 he was elected a RA, and was appointed historical painter to Queen Charlotte. Redgrave, p. 42.

⁴⁶ David Wilkie (1785-1841), Sir, Knt., RA, subject painter. He first studied in Edinburgh but came to London in 1805 and studied at the Royal Academy. His skilful subject paintings gained him a reputation. He was elected a RA in 1811 and received commissions from the Duke of Wellington or the King who later appointed him painter in ordinary. He travelled to France, Italy, Spain, Central Europe and eventually to the East. Redgrave, pp. 470-472.

chiaroscuro'. He also mercilessly denigrated Hogarth's attempts at history painting.⁴⁷ Lombardi also criticised Richard Wilson: 'to say the truth, sometimes he possessed a soft Claudian style, sometimes a sinister and terrible one'.⁴⁸ Whereas most Italian criticism on Benjamin West was positive, Lombardi asserted that unfortunately, some of his paintings were 'much inferior to his fame'.⁴⁹ On the other hand, Lombardi really appreciated Blake 'who distinguished himself with his wonderful watercolours'.⁵⁰ Much like his French counterparts, Lombardi loved Richard Parkes Bonington whom he defined as 'delicate, harmonious and bright'.⁵¹ However, contrary to French taste, Lombardi did not think much of John 'Giovanni' Constable. Having qualified him 'one of the good painters', he then found him 'charged with mannerisms', and a 'cold painter'.⁵² Even more curious is the fact that Lombardi did not mention Turner a single time. Given the public status of that painter as a Royal Academician since 1802 and as Professor of Perspective at the Royal Academy since 1807, it seems hardly conceivable that he should have been left out of such a comprehensive book.

This *Istoria* is an exceptional document as it offers an unparalleled account of the development of English painting by an Italian writer. From what he explained in his introduction, Gaetano Lombardi was a dealer and an art expert specialising or interested in English painting. He travelled extensively and accessed collections throughout the country from the most famous to the more secluded. In his introduction, he proudly reported that 'Magnanimous King William IV verbally

⁴⁷ Lombardi, p. 63.: 'in parte difettose nel disegno, nel colorito, e nel chiaro scuro'. His description of Hogarth is largely based, if not partly plagiarised, on the version of Ticozzi's 1832 entry.

⁴⁸ Lombardi, p. 97.: 'in vero, ora ebbe uno stile dolce e Claudiesco, e ora uno fosco e terribile'. Richard Wilson (1714-1782), RA, landscape painter. He was sent to London in 1729 and studied under a portrait painter for six years. He then started his practice, gaining a reputation and painting members of the royal family. He spent six years in Italy where he discovered a bent for landscape painting, returning to London in 1755. His new manner was not understood, and his bad temper alienated some clients. He worked as Librarian to the Royal Academy from 1776. Redgrave, pp. 477-478.

⁴⁹ Lombardi, p. 112.: 'molto inferiori alla sua fama'.

⁵⁰ Lombardi, p.132.: 'che si distinse dipingendo maravigliosamente all'acquerello [*sic*]'.
⁵¹ Lombardi, p.134.: 'delicato, armonioso e chiaro nei suoi quadri'. Richard Parkes Bonington (1801-1828), landscape and subject painter. He went to Paris at the age of 15 and was admitted to the Louvre, later gaining a gold medal for one of his marine subjects. About 1822 he went to Italy, and started exhibiting in London in 1826. He died unexpectedly in 1828. Redgrave, p. 47-48.

⁵² Lombardi, p. 147.: 'uno dei buoni pittori'; 'tacciato di manierato'; 'freddo nel dipingere'.

granted me the possibility to examine at ease the paintings present in the British royal palaces and public buildings'.⁵³ Much in the same way as Gastone della Torre del Rezzonico, Lombardi also accessed private cabinets owned by Gentlemen and members of the nobility; for example, he described a head of a young man by John Hoskins that he saw in the house of 'Lord Fanshaw [*sic*']'.⁵⁴ He also mentioned English paintings that he saw in Paris, such as a 'full-length portrait of a man dressed in red in a beautiful landscape' by Gainsborough, which was 'in the Standish collection, donated to King Louis-Philippe of France'.⁵⁵ Whenever possible, Lombardi provided detailed information as to which collections to visit to find paintings by a certain artist: for example, Bonington's works could be seen 'in the palaces of the Duke of Bedford, the Marquess of Lansdown [*sic*], of the Countess Grey, and Vernon'.⁵⁶

These few documents showed how knowledge on British paintings dramatically increased in Italy before the second half of the nineteenth century. From piecemeal documents mostly resulting from personal Anglophile inclinations, it gradually turned into a comprehensive scientific analysis of the development of British painting. This is all the more fascinating as one must bear in mind that many

⁵³ Lombardi, p. x.: 'il Magnanimo Rè Guglielmo Quarto mi concedè verbalmente di poter esaminare i dipinti a mio agio e piacimento nelle Britanniche residenze reali, e nei pubblici stabilimenti'. Unfortunately the Senior Archivist at the Royal Archives could not trace any information on Gaetano Lombardi in the royal records as most of the papers of King William IV were destroyed after his death.

⁵⁴ Lombardi, p. 9.: 'il signor Fanshaw [*sic*], gentiluomo inglese'. John Hoskins (1590-1664) was a miniature portrait painter and Samuel Cooper's uncle.

⁵⁵ Lombardi, p. 96.: 'ritratto di un uomo in piedi vestito di rosso in un bel paese'; 'nella collezione Standish, ceduta in legato al Re Luigi Filippo Primo di Francia'. Lombardi also said that this collection contained two landscape paintings by Richard Wilson; p. 98; indeed the Standish collection of paintings was sold by Christie's and Manson on May 28 and 30, 1853. The Gainsborough appeared on the second day of the sale as lot 233 and was described as follows 'Portrait of a gentleman, in a red dress, seated in a landscape – whole length'. *The Catalogue of the Pictures forming the Celebrated Standish Collection Bequeathed to his Majesty the Late King Louis Philippe by Frank Hall Standish, Esq. Which Will be sold by Messrs. Christie and Manson, at their Great Room, 8 King Street, St James's Square, On Saturday, May 28 & Monday, 30, 1853* (London: Clowes and Sons, 1853), p. 28.

⁵⁶ Lombardi, p. 134.: 'nel palazzo del Duca di Bedford, del Marchese di Lansdown [*sic*], della Contessa Grey, e Vernon'. Lombardi refers to Francis Russell, 7th Duke of Bedford (1788-1861), Henry Petty-FitzMaurice, 4th Marquess of Lansdowne (1816-1866), Mary Grey, Countess Grey (1776-1861), and Robert Vernon (1774-1849).

British paintings were not easily accessible to the general public until 1855.⁵⁷ These few testimonials and pieces of research prove that in spite of the difficulties, the information circulated and individual contacts enabled Italian professionals of the art world to see and comment on British painting. Further research into the circulation of prints would no doubt yield interesting results and would contribute to a better understanding of the Italian acquaintance with British visual culture.

3.2 Cross-Cultural Reception of British Painting in Italy, 1878-1914

3.2.1 The Evolution of Italian Visual Consumption of and Taste for British Painting 1878-1914

In terms of first-hand access to information, a dramatic change took place in the second half of the nineteenth century when countries started to organise their own international exhibitions on a grand scale, which included all their latest industrial and artistic novelties in a patriotic effort to outshine their neighbours. After the success of the 1851 Crystal Palace exhibition, British artists started to send paintings abroad on a regular basis. On the continent, the French 1855 exhibition acted as a catalyst for the interest in British painting.⁵⁸ Critics such as Théophile Thoré-Burger (1807-1889), Joseph Milsand (1817-1886), Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893), Ernest Chesneau (1833-1890), Edouard Rod (1857-1910), later Robert de la Sizeranne (1866-1932) or Gabriel Mourey (1865-1943), to name only the most important

⁵⁷ Even the National Gallery, which had opened to the public in 1824, only displayed a few selected samples of British painting. As Judy Egerton underlined, no purchase of British art took place before 1862. The acquisition of the Angerstein collection in 1823 became the main nucleus of British paintings at the National Gallery: it comprised David Wilkie's *The Village Holiday* (1809-11), Reynolds's *Lord Heathfield* (1787), Hogarth's *Self Portrait with Pug* (1745) and the *Marriage à la mode* series (1743). Then George Beaumont presented four British paintings including two by Richard Wilson and two by Benjamin West, to which gifts by Charles Long of Gainsborough's *Market Cart* and the presentation of Constable's *Cornfield* in 1837 must be added. Judy Egerton, *The National Gallery Catalogue: The British Paintings* (London: National Gallery Company, 1998), p. 11.

⁵⁸ For a survey of the French reception of British painting at the 1855 universal exhibition, please see Marcia Pointon, 'Voisins et Alliés: the French Critics' View of the English Contribution to the Beaux-Arts Section of the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1855' in *Saloni, Gallerie, Musei e Loro Influenze sullo Sviluppo dell' arte dei secoli XIX e XX*, ed. by F. Haskell (Bologna: CLUEB, 1981), pp. 115-122.

ones, attempted to understand, theorise, explain or even circumscribe the specificity of English art.⁵⁹ Their writings often crossed the Alps and sometimes heavily tainted Italian appreciations for British art, even before the paintings were judged directly. Although the perception that British painting was still little known outside of the national shores lingered on,⁶⁰ the 1878 universal exhibition seems to have represented the first occasion for Italian art critics to write reviews of the British section. Such findings prompted the decision to broaden the chronological remit of this section to include the 1878 Paris exhibition.

In the Peninsula, sustained first-hand knowledge of British painting came later. It gradually became widespread with the Venice Biennali, from 1895,⁶¹ and climaxed with the 1911 Rome International exhibition which provided a historical overview of the development of the British school of painting. As shall be further explored in the course of this chapter Italian critics gradually moved away from French criticism to build up their own interpretative model during that period.

Up to recently, the reception of British painting in an international context has attracted little critical attention. When it did however, the emphasis was almost exclusively placed on the Pre-Raphaelite painters. Their links with other European artists were discussed at length by Susan Casteras and Alicia Craig Faxon.⁶² Going

⁵⁹ In order to better understand the position of Italian critics, it was necessary to read about the reception of British art in France. For an informative article on the reception of Pre-Raphaelitism in France, see Jacques Lethève, 'Rossetti et les Pre-Raphaelites devant l'opinion française', in *I Rossetti tra Italia e Inghilterra*, ed. by Gianni Oliva (Rome: Bulzoni, 1984), pp. 341-351. For a more comprehensive analysis of the reception of British Art in France, see Barthélémy Jobert, *La Réception de l'école anglaise, 1802-1878* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Sorbonne University, 1994), and for an account of the exhibition of British painters in France, see Olivier Meslay, 'Du thé aux Salons', in *Les peintres britanniques dans les Salons parisiens des origines à 1939* ed. by Béatrice Crespon-Halotier (Dijon: Echelle de Jacob, 2002), pp. 10-20.

⁶⁰ For a discussion of Britain's reception in France and strategy for the 1878 Paris exhibition, please see Guillaume Evrard, "'English Pictures Are but Little Known and Esteemed Out of England': The Royal Academy of Arts and the 1878 Paris Exposition Universelle", in *Marketing Art in the British Isles, 1700 to the Present*, ed. by Charlotte Gould and Sophie Mesplède, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 211-226.

⁶¹ However, it must be added that in the succinct bibliography outlined in the 1897 illustrated catalogue of the Venice Biennale, Chesneau and de la Sizeranne were the only critics listed as references on English painting. 'Notizie biografiche sugli artisti esponenti' *Seconda esposizione internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia, Catalogo illustrato* (Venezia: Carlo Ferrari, 1897), p. 5.

⁶² *Pre-Raphaelite Art in its European Context*, ed. by Susan P. Casteras and Alicia Craig Faxon (London: Associated University Press, 1995).

against the modernist bias and challenging the traditional view of British artistic insularity, Craig Faxon in particular showed that Pre-Raphaelite and Continental painters were aware of one another's works and borrowed from one another.⁶³ However, she restricted her analysis to French-speaking countries, thereby conspicuously leaving out the rest of Europe.⁶⁴ Thus, their reception in Southern Europe was scantily researched.⁶⁵ With regards to Italy, to our knowledge, Bianca Saletti was among the first art historians to write on the critical reception of Pre-Raphaelitism in any depth.⁶⁶ Her article spanned over forty years, from the first important journalistic reviews in the 1880s up until the scholarly analysis of Lionello Venturi in 1926.⁶⁷ Drawing from many different sources and combining literary, poetical and pictorial interests, she analysed the phases of appreciation of the movement, with a clear emphasis on Rossetti. More recently, Giuliana Pieri also looked at the reception of Pre-Raphaelitism and its influence in Italy between 1878 and 1910. Pieri thus published the first comprehensive study of the essays and reviews written in Italian on the first and second generation of Pre-Raphaelite painters and structured her article into three main sections: the phases of discovery of the English group of painters in Italy, their channels of diffusion and lastly the main Italian personalities who disseminated the information.⁶⁸

Though central and particularly well-discussed the Pre-Raphaelite painters were at the time, they were not the only notable exponents of the British school of painting, nor were they the only artists reviewed by Italian columnists. This was touched on by Sandra Berresford at the end of her article on 'The Pre-Raphaelites and their Followers at the International Exhibitions of Art in Venice 1895-1905'.

⁶³ Alicia Craig Faxon, 'Introduction', in *Pre-Raphaelite Art*, ed. by Casteras and Faxon, pp. 11-24.

⁶⁴ The continental reception of the Pre-Raphaelites, Ruskin, Morris or Walter Crane was the object of more recent publications such as Andrzej Szczerski, 'The Arts and Crafts Movement, International and Vernacular Revival in Central Europe c. 1900', in ed. Brockington, pp. 107-113.

⁶⁵ Only one article described the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites in Spain: Giovanni Allegra, 'Il Preraffaellismo in Spagna come elemento dell'immaginario modernista. Idee, tematica, figure', in *I Rossetti tra Italia e Inghilterra*, ed. by Oliva, pp. 371-393.

⁶⁶ Bianca Saletti, 'I preraffaelliti nella critica d'arte in Italia tra Otto e Novecento', in *I Rossetti tra Italia e Inghilterra*, ed. by Oliva, pp. 427-436.

⁶⁷ Lionello Venturi, *Il Gusto dei Primitivi* (Roma: Zanichelli, 1926).

⁶⁸ Giuliana Pieri, 'The Reception of Pre-Raphaelitism in Italy, 1880-1910', *The Modern Language Review*, 99, 2 (April 2004), 364-381.

With many useful archival references, she contrasts the waning fame of the Pre-Raphaelites to the growing appreciation of painters influenced by Impressionism at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶⁹ Drawing from these articles, this section will therefore attempt to bring together the existing information and to add hitherto unpublished material in order to give a more comprehensive image of the cross-cultural reception and appeal of British painting in the Peninsula in the years 1878-1914.

Before studying the reception of British painting in Italy into any depth, it is important to introduce the channels of information which commanded its diffusion. As mentioned before, pre-Unification magazines and newspapers were generally local, mostly literary and heavily influenced by French examples. However, during the reign of Umberto I (1878-1900), the journalistic panorama in general and the typology of art critics in particular changed dramatically in Italy. A new generation emerged in the 1880s: these were journalists such as Diego Angeli and Ugo Ojetti who under the influence of Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863-1938) belonged to a group of intellectuals often interested in literature, philosophy and art alike. They broadly diffused their thoughts and articles through the blossoming yet volatile network of post-unification local and national printed organs. Magazines and periodicals generally attempted to publish quality articles on a wide range of humanities and scientific subjects to a local or national audience. Their role was instrumental in bringing the Italian public up to par with their European neighbours and in opening it up to international events and intellectual currents. As such, they efficiently aided in the growing knowledge of foreign art catalysed by the international exhibitions in Florence, Rome and above all Venice.

In order to try and catch 'the spirit of the time' and to offer a representative sample of the reception of British art by Italian intellectuals, this section will mostly rely on three newspapers and magazines which were studied from their respective

⁶⁹ Sandra Berresford, 'The Pre-Raphaelites and their Followers at the International Exhibitions of Art in Venice 1895-1905', in *Britain at the Venice Biennale, 1895-1995*, ed. by Sophie Bowness and Clive Phillpot (London: The British Council, 1995), pp. 37-49.

inception till 1920: *Il Fanfulla della Domenica* (1879-1919),⁷⁰ a national weekly printed in Rome and the first literary journal of its kind; *Emporium* (1895-1964),⁷¹ a nation-wide monthly, and arguably the most influential art journal in the late 19th century and early 20th century; and *Il Marzocco* (1896-1932),⁷² a Florentine monthly central to the Italian avant-garde. While many Italian newspapers and magazines of the period only lasted for a fairly short amount of time, these three journals not only lasted for several decades, but also, and perhaps as a consequence, conveyed an authoritative position in the diffusion of culture to the Italian middle to upper-middle classes. In particular, *Il Fanfulla* was described as 'the stem from which all the other newspapers germinated'.⁷³ On the whole, these organs also shared a common bias towards Symbolist and Art Nouveau artistic expressions and, from a cultural point of view they symptomatically adopted an overall anglophile stance. Lastly, they offered interesting and revealing perspectives: though the diffusion of *Il Fanfulla della Domenica* was nation-wide, it privileged events occurring in the Italian capital. Even more obvious was *Il Marzocco's* clear focus on Florentine and Tuscan literary and cultural news. On the contrary, *Emporium* sought to be much wider-ranging and inclusive; however, as will be discussed, it betrayed the artistic biases of its Director Vittorio Pica, who was very much involved in the organisation and running of the Venice Biennale. Though the analysis proposed in the following sections mainly relies on these three sources, other magazines, newspapers and books were incorporated on an *ad-hoc* basis in order to give a more comprehensive

⁷⁰ *Il Fanfulla della Domenica* was founded by writer and politician Ferdinando Martini (1841-1928) who remained in command until 1882, the year Gabriele d'Annunzio started publishing articles.

⁷¹ *Emporium* was a nation-wide magazine published between 1895 and 1964 by Paolo Gaffuri (1849-1931) and Arcangelo Ghisleri (1855-1938). Ghisleri went to America to study 'their approach to education' and the relations between civil society and its cultural forms. For further discussion on the birth of *Emporium*, see Giorgio Mangini, 'Alle origini di *Emporium*, il viaggio di A.Ghisleri all'Esposizione universale di Chicago di 1893', in *Emporium, parole e figure tra il 1895 e il 1964*, ed. by Giorgio Bacci, Massimo Ferretti and Miriam Fileti Mazza (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2009), pp. 39-94.

⁷² Florentine magazine *Il Marzocco* was founded in 1896 by poet Angiolo Orvieto and Enrico Corradini, the first theoretician of Italian nationalism. Its decadent philosophy aimed at reacting against the dullness and vulgarity of fin-de-siècle Italy. *Il Marzocco* was among the first magazines to give a platform to Gabriele D'Annunzio's. After the First World War, the journal slowly declined and eventually closed down in 1932. For more information on *Il Marzocco*, please see Henri Bédarida, '*Il Marzocco*, journal littéraire', in *Etudes italiennes*, 2 (April- June 1933), pp. 139-142.

⁷³ Edoardo Gennarini, *Il giornalismo letterario della nuova Italia, dalla 'Cronaca bizantina' alla morte del 'Marzocco'* (Napoli: Luigi Loffredo, 1937), p. 20.: 'il tronco da cui tutti gli altri [giornali] germinarono'.

picture.

In broad terms, twenty-three articles related to British art and culture appeared in *Il Fanfulla della Domenica* between 1880 and 1919, twenty-four articles were published in *Il Marzocco* between 1897 and 1919, and over fifty articles appeared in *Emporium* between 1895 and 1919. In the first two newspapers mentioned here, these articles appeared on a regular basis and mostly resulted from topical events, such as exhibitions, new publications or obituaries. Though these numbers may seem relatively small, it must be born in mind that these newspapers were still mostly centred on local events. As the format and editorial ambition of *Emporium* slightly differed, so did the number and format of articles on British art. A series of articles on internationally acclaimed artists started as early as 1895 and was entitled 'Pittori Contemporanei'. *Emporium*, as presumably other magazines did, directly extracted or requested information on artists from foreign magazines,⁷⁴ correspondents, biographers or dealers, which were then synthesised and presented in the form of illustrated monographs to the Italian public, often for the first time. Arcangelo Ghisleri remembered in 1920 that before the *Emporium* was published, 'there were not many people who knew the names and works of Aubrey Beardsley, Walter Crane, Frederic Leighton, John Ruskin, Edward Burne-Jones, Alma-Tadema, William Morris and the English Pre-Raphaelites... apart from some references in French magazines'.⁷⁵ Indeed, the first years of *Emporium* offered an exceptional survey of British culture, with no less than twenty-four articles on famous literary, critical and artistic figures published between 1895 and 1902. In terms of coverage and critical attention, Britain was more or less on a par with France during that period. Then the interest waned slowly and the number of articles dwindled to seven articles on British artistic personalities published between 1903 and 1914.⁷⁶ These figures, however, did not take topical events into

⁷⁴ In England, its main sources were *The Athenaeum*, the *Studio* and the *Art Journal*.

⁷⁵ A. Ghisleri, 'Nel XXV Natale dell' *Emporium*, Ricordi e Confidenze', *Emporium*, January 1920, p. 24.: 'non erano molti coloro, che conoscevano i nomi e le opere di Aubrey Beardsley, di Walter Crane, di Fred. Leighton, J. Ruskin e E. Burne-Jones, Alma-Tadema, William Morris e dei preraffaelliti inglesi ... se non per qualche accenno delle riviste francesi'.

⁷⁶ In her MA dissertation on '*Emporium* e l'arte inglese del suo tempo (1895-1920)', Silvia Rambaldi identified two distinct periods of coverage of British art in *Emporium*: the 'Intense five years, 1895-

consideration but only demonstrated two broad and distinct phases of critical attention towards British art: firstly direct contacts with novel works; then their integration into and comparisons with a wider spectrum of international trends. From that perspective, *Emporium* provides an unparalleled reference on the critical reception of British art in Italy.

In terms of events which fostered knowledge of British art, the 1878 Paris exhibition prompted the first significant wave of publications in Italy, either as series of articles,⁷⁷ or elaborated essays.⁷⁸ These reviews must have aroused some public interest as *Il Fanfulla della Domenica* thereafter asked English literary figures to give their opinion of English exhibitions. During the period studied in this chapter, the first newspaper article offering a presentation of contemporary British artists appeared on 24 April 1881.⁷⁹ However, until 1895, when the Venice Biennale offered a unique platform for first-hand access to a comprehensive sample of British painting, articles on British paintings were scarce. Between 1895 and 1914, articles mostly reviewed the contents of the Biennali and other exhibitions, thus adding to the knowledge of British art. The British school of painting was thus compared and contrasted to other countries, thereby systematically placing it in a broader international context. Other international exhibitions held in Italy prompted more critical reviews of British art and took part in its progressive and nuanced integration in Italian artistic culture: the 1902 'Bianco e nero' exhibition in Rome and the exhibition launching the Art Nouveau style in Turin the same year, the 1906 Milan

1899' and 'Going beyond the Anglophile phase, 1900-1920'. Her useful survey of the *Emporium* mostly listed articles and summed up their contents thereby providing a good ground work. However, her limited critical framework prevented from any in-depth analysis of these phases of reception. Silvia Rambaldi, *Emporium e l'arte inglese del suo tempo (1895-1920)* (unpublished master's thesis, IULM Milano, 1983).

⁷⁷ Diego Martelli wrote a series of three articles entitled 'Esposizione universale' which presented British contemporary art (*Il Risorgimento* dated 10 October, 31 October, 25 November 1878).

⁷⁸ Alberto Rondani, *Saggi di critiche d'arte* (Firenze: Tipografia editrice della Gazzetta d'Italia, 1880); Rondani's *Saggi* will be discussed into more depth in the third section of this chapter.

⁷⁹ Agnes Mary Frances Robinson, 'Corrispondenze letterarie, Da Londra', *Il Fanfulla della Domenica*, 24 April 1881, p. 1. Robinson also sent a review of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in August 1881 but her collaboration with the journal must have stopped because her name altogether disappeared. Mary Robinson Darmesteter Duclaux was a poet and a close friend of writer and essayist Vernon Lee (Violet Paget, 1856-1935). At the time the *Fanfulla* article was published Mary Robinson was staying at Casa Paget where she was introduced to a dazzling array of local and international literary figures. For more on these years, see Vineta Colby, *Vernon Lee, A Literary Biography* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), pp. 47-50.

exhibition of decorative arts or the 1911 Rome Exhibition featuring 536 works by deceased and living British artists.⁸⁰ Many more lesser-known exhibitions blossomed in the Peninsula around the turn of the century, in which some British artists received important critical attention.⁸¹

Probably due to the mostly topical nature of articles written on British art, relatively few Italian articles were devoted to deceased painters of the English school. Artist Giulio Aristide Sartorio sent two pieces on Constable and Turner which were published in *Nuova Rassegna* in 1893.⁸² William Blake was among the best-known deceased painters as he was the object of several pieces, either as literary figure or as painter until the late 1910s. This is doubtless partly due to his influence on the Pre-Raphaelites.⁸³ However, Italian critics knew the English Old Masters as they incorporated references to their style and works in their analyses; in that respect, they probably relied on studies by French art critics,⁸⁴ on prints or perhaps on their own direct observation during trips to England. In Italy, the 1911 Rome Exhibition provided an important pictorial summary of the chronological development of British art therefore offering more direct visual and critical references. Though living artists were clearly favoured, only one article dealing with an avant-garde English painter, Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson (1889-1946) has been found.⁸⁵ Such choice becomes more understandable when it appears that he was a follower of Futurism and had befriended Marinetti. Throughout the period

⁸⁰ *International Fine Arts Exhibition Rome, 1911, British Section, Catalogue, issued by the Royal Commission* (London: Ballantyne and Cie., 1912).

⁸¹ As Silvia Rambaldi underlined it, '*international exhibition of painting took place in the main Italian cities, and for England, a few artists' names keep coming up such as Brangwyn, East, Shannon*'. (*In tutte le più importanti città italiane si tengono di continuo mostre di pittura internazionale in cui, per l'Inghilterra, primeggiano solo i nomi di due o tre artisti come Brangwyn, East, Shannon*). Rambaldi, p. 100.

⁸² 'Joseph Turner', *Nuova Rassegna*, 27 (1893), 112-114; 'John Constable', *Nuova Rassegna*, 28 (1893), 144-146. These articles were quoted in Pieri, pp. 364-381 (pp. 372-373).

⁸³ Linda Villari wrote an article on 'Un romanziere inglese, William Black [*sic*]' but she focussed exclusively on his literary activity (*Il Fanfulla della Domenica*, 17 July 1881, p. 2.) Piero Misciatelli explored both the literary and artistic aspects of Blake in 'Un poeta-pittore: William Blacke [*sic*]', *Vita d'Arte*, November 1909, 47-482. Lastly, Piero Rebora wrote an essay on Blake as a Romantic figure: 'Cenni su William Blake', in *La Vita Britannica* (November-December 1919), 451-461.

⁸⁴ See for example Leandro Ozzola, 'I Ritrattisti contemporanei inglesi all'esposizione di Roma', *Emporium*, October 1911, p. 296.

⁸⁵ Luigi Giovanola, 'Un pittore inglese della guerra moderna: C.R.W. Nevinson', *Vita d'Arte*, 11, 17 (1917), 5-16.

between 1878 and 1914, most reviews thus dealt with living or recently deceased British painters evolving from a broadly traditional or at least figurative strand of art. Lastly, it is also worth noting that interest in British artists often started with their literary or theoretical activities from Hogarth, Reynolds and Blake up to Dante Gabriel Rossetti⁸⁶ or Edward Poynter.⁸⁷ Publications of art treatises, discourses and verses very often preceded discussion of pictorial production.

Several phases of discovery and attention thus shaped the way British art was seen in Italy. During the period between 1878 and 1914, individual figures and groups emerged in particular, which will be here broadly classified according to labels commonly used by Italian critics at the time: Pre-Raphaelite, Academic, landscape, portrait and genre painters.

Chronologically, the first group of artists which attracted critical attention was the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood with the brief historical account sent from London by Vernon Lee's friend Mary Robinson and published in *Il Fanfulla* in 1881. It is also the group which retained most critical attention through the years up to the 1920s when Lionello Venturi included them in his scholarly book *Il Gusto dei Primitivi*.⁸⁸ Between 1895 and 1900, no less than ten articles centred on Pre-Raphaelite artists of the two generations and their predecessors and followers appeared in *Emporium* only: Ford Madox Brown,⁸⁹ George Frederic Watts,⁹⁰ John Everett Millais,⁹¹ Dante Gabriel Rossetti,⁹² Edward Burne-Jones,⁹³ John Ruskin,⁹⁴

⁸⁶ Giuliana Pieri showed that translations and literary criticism on the Rossettis including both Gabriele and Christina, started in 1878 with Luigi Gamberale. Pieri, pp. 364-381 (p. 366).

⁸⁷ *Il Fanfulla della Domenica* advertised in 1879 a translation of Poynter's *Dieci letture sull'arte*, 12 October 1879, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Lionello Venturi, *Il Gusto dei Primitivi* (Roma: Zanichelli, 1926).

⁸⁹ Helen Zimmern, 'Ford Madox Brown', *Emporium*, November 1897, 322-339.

⁹⁰ Although Watts is nowadays associated with Leighton in the classicist school, Italian critics repeatedly called him a 'Preraffaellista classico' as a go-between the two strands of English painting, especially in Antonio Agresti, *I Preraffaellisti: contributo alla storia dell'arte*, (Torino: Società tipografico-editrice nazionale, 1908).

⁹¹ Unsigned, 'Artisti Contemporanei: Sir John Everett Millais, P.R.A.', *Emporium*, September 1896, pp. 162-183; the front cover of the magazine bore a profile portrait of the deceased artist.

⁹² Rossetti benefitted from two articles in *Emporium*: Ulisse Ortensi, 'Artisti Contemporanei: Dante Gabriel Rossetti I', *Emporium*, July 1896, pp. 3-15.; and 'Artisti Contemporanei: Dante Gabriel Rossetti II', *Emporium*, August 1896, pp. 83-97. The August magazine also bore a portrait of the artist on its front cover.

Walter Crane,⁹⁵ Frank Brangwyn,⁹⁶ and Byam Shaw⁹⁷ who obtained great successes at the Venice Biennale.⁹⁸ Interest also crystallised on the theoreticians of the movement: John Ruskin primarily, with no less than a dozen articles,⁹⁹ but also Algernon Charles Swinburne,¹⁰⁰ and Walter Pater.¹⁰¹ Thus in terms of sheer number of articles published on Pre-Raphaelitism, John Ruskin came second after Dante Gabriele Rossetti, Burne-Jones was third while William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais were clearly left aside.

During those climactic years, the movement thus captured public and critical attention in Italy and became a point of reference against which to gauge other European artists.¹⁰² However, the year 1900 and the death of Ruskin marked a symbolic turning point. In February of that year, Romualdo Pantini talked about 'the defunct English school'.¹⁰³ Whereas aesthetic interest partly declined with a few

⁹³ Like Rossetti, Burne-Jones had two articles signed by G.B., the same author who wrote about Watts and Beardsley: 'Artisti Contemporanei: Sir Edward Burne-Jones I', *Emporium*, December 1895, pp. 445-465.; and 'Artisti Contemporanei: Sir Edward Burne-Jones II', *Emporium*, January 1896, pp. 36-53.

⁹⁴ Helen Zimmern, 'Illustri contemporanei: John Ruskin', *Emporium*, August 1898, pp. 91-110.

⁹⁵ For an in-depth discussion of Crane's international fame, see Francesca Tancini, "'L'ultimo dei pittori preraffaelliti": Walter Crane e *Emporium*', in *Emporium, parole e figure tra il 1895 e il 1964*, ed. by Giorgio Baci and Mariam Fileti Mazza (Pisa: edizioni della Normale, 2009), pp. 379-401.

⁹⁶ Mario Borsa 'Frank Brangwyn', *Emporium*, April 1899, pp. 262-277.

⁹⁷ Byam Shaw's *Love the Conqueror* (1899, present whereabouts unknown) was considered his masterpiece. Valentino Leonardi, 'All' esposizione di Venezia, IV, Amore il Conquistatore', *Il Fanfulla della Domenica*, 17 September 1905, pp. 1-2.

⁹⁸ The number vastly increases when including other followers such as Robert Fowler or Arthur Hughes, or looking at more periodicals such as *Nuova Rassegna*, or *Nuova Antologia*.

⁹⁹ These are only articles specifically dealing with Ruskin: Helen Zimmern, 'Illustri contemporanei: John Ruskin', *Emporium*, August 1898, pp. 91-100.; Th. Neale, 'Ruskin, Rossetti and Company', *Il Marzocco*, 2 April 1899; Diego Angeli, 'John Ruskin, Obituary', *Il Fanfulla della Domenica*, 28 January 1900; Angelo Conti, 'La religione dell'amore', *Il Marzocco*, 28 January 1900; Domenico Tumiatì, 'I Nemici di Ruskin', *Il Marzocco*, 4 February 1900, pp. 2-3.; Luigi Ambrosini, 'Ruskiniana', *Il Marzocco*, 13 December 1908, p. 3.; S.A., 'Giovanni Ruskin', *Il Fanfulla della Domenica*, 23 March 1919, p. 1.; Antonio Muñoz, 'Nel Centenario di Ruskin', *Il Marzocco*, 23 February 1919, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁰ Ulisse Ortensi, 'Letterati contemporanei: Algernon Charles Swinburne', *Emporium*, March 1901, pp. 202-210.

¹⁰¹ Ulisse Ortensi, 'Letterati contemporanei: Walter Horatio Pater', *Emporium*, January 1902, pp. 23-28.; G.S. Gargano, 'Walter Pater', *Il Marzocco*, 12 May 1912, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰² For example, Enrico Thovez strangely deemed French painter Pascal Adolphe Jean Dagnan-Bouveret (1852-1929), 'the only *legitimate Pre-Raphaelite* that the modern period has, indeed more than Millais or Holman Hunt'. ('unico *preraffaellita legittimo*, assai più di Millais e di Holman Hunt, che abbia l'età moderna'), in 'Artisti Contemporanei: P.A.J. Dagnan-Bouveret', *Emporium*, August 1897, p. 98.

¹⁰³ Romualdo Pantini, 'Concorso internazionale Alinari', *Emporium*, February 1900, p. 146. The Pre-Raphaelite founder William Holman Hunt was still alive, as were many followers.

notable exceptions, critical interest lingered and took on more historical and scholarly forms with books on the *Prerafaellisti* by Antonio Agresti,¹⁰⁴ diverse translations of Ruskin and Pater,¹⁰⁵ and discussions of their theoretical contributions. This scholarly interest may also have been due to the presence in Italy of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's nieces, Helena Marcia and Olivia Frances Madox Rossetti, who both got married to Italian intellectuals.¹⁰⁶

Regarding academic painters, the *Emporium* provided once again a series of portraits. Interestingly enough, their very first monographic article in the series 'Pittori Contemporanei' was on the then President of the Royal Academy, the classicist Sir Frederic Lord Leighton (1830-1896).¹⁰⁷ In five years until 1900, *Emporium* made an effort to publish five monographic articles on the English academic celebrities of the time: Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912), who had also featured in the 1883 Rome exhibition;¹⁰⁸ Bavarian-born portraitist Hubert Herkomer (1849-1914); and the successor of Leighton as President of the Royal Academy, Sir Edward Poynter (1836-1919).¹⁰⁹ In that group, Lawrence Alma-Tadema was the Academic painter who captured most critical attention, perhaps due to his deep and long-lasting influence on Gabriele d'Annunzio and his early and sustained presence at public exhibitions in Italy. D'Annunzio's article dated 1 April 1883 and published in *Il Fanfulla della Domenica* set the tone with his deep praise of Tadema's 'gem-like painting'.¹¹⁰ However, critical interest was mixed and it seemed

¹⁰⁴ Antonio Agresti (1867-1927) was a leading translator, literary and art critic who greatly contributed to the early appraisal of Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites in Italy from the late nineteenth century onwards.

¹⁰⁵ For a review of the main translations of Ruskin's works in Italian in the early twentieth century, see E. Sdegno, 'Le prime traduzioni artistiche', in *L'eredità di John Ruskin nella cultura italiana del Novecento*, ed. by Daniela Lamberini (Firenze: Nardini Press Ltd., 2006), pp. 221-246.

¹⁰⁶ Helena Marcia married Gastone Angeli, brother of the art critic Diego Angeli, while Olivia Frances married Antonio Agresti.

¹⁰⁷ M, 'Frederic Lord Leighton', *Emporium*, March 1885, pp. 167-182. Leighton was a close friend of Nino Costa, and had exhibited a portrait of Costa at the 1883 Rome exhibition. Ferdinando Fontana, *Penni e scalpelli, Esposizione internazionale di Belle Arti di Roma 1883* (Milano: Giuseppe Galli, 1883), p. 62.

¹⁰⁸ Art critic Alberto Rondani pointed out that by the late 1870s, many articles had been written on Alma-Tadema but unfortunately did not give any specific reference. Rondani, p. 54.

¹⁰⁹ The last of the five articles was on a sculptor: P, 'George Frampton', *Emporium*, June 1896, pp. 403-411.

¹¹⁰ Gabriele d'Annunzio, 'Esposizione d'Arte, V., Alma-Tadema', in *Il Fanfulla della Domenica*, 1 April 1883, p. 2. For a discussion of the influence of Alma-Tadema on d'Annunzio's literary imagination,

to lapse at the turn of the century, probably following the display of various less well-known works at the Biennale.¹¹¹

Overlooked in scholarly analyses but nevertheless fascinating was the only example of orchestrated critical hype stemming from the first presence of the Glasgow Boys at the Venice Biennale in 1897, as chapter II already touched on. A note to a journalist written by the Biennale General Secretary Antonio Fradeletto and stamped 25 November 1896 explained the main exhibitors in each national section. However Fradeletto made a special case for the Scottish school: 'Please insist on the importance of that section. It is only the third time that Scottish artists have participated to a continental exhibition (before they were at the Secession and at the Glaspalast in Munich)'.¹¹² As a result of this note, no less than five articles before and during the Venice exhibition appeared in *Il Fanfulla della Domenica* or *Il Marzocco*.¹¹³ In addition the 1897 catalogue of the Biennale included a presentation of the already famous school which takes its name from the city of Glasgow' with short biographical notices of the individual painters sometimes accompanied by excerpts from their correspondence to the Biennale organisers to create further emotional ties between the Scottish painters and the Italian public.¹¹⁴ This exceptional treatment provides evidence of the direct collusion between the Biennale organisers and journalists; this will be probed further in the course of this study. However, *Emporium* did not devote a single monographic article to any of the Glasgow boys; this was perhaps due to their unified pictorial profile and their

see Giuliana Pieri, 'D'Annunzio and Alma-Tadema, between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism', *The Modern Language Review*, 96, 2 (April 2001), 361-369.

¹¹¹ As will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter on Institutional Acquisitions of British paintings in Italy, this did not prevent Alma-Tadema from being regarded as an artistic 'valeur sûre' in market terms, especially from an institutional point of view as one of his paintings was acquired in Rome in 1911. The same could be said of Frederic Lord Leighton.

¹¹² Venice, ASAC, Fondo Storico, Scatole Nere 7, Pubblicità velina, 203, 25 novembre 1896, pp. 1-4.: 'Insisti sull'importanza di questa sezione. E' soltanto la terza volta che gli artisti scozzesi espongono nella Mostra sul Continente (le due volte precedenti alla Secession e alla Glaspalast di Monaco)'.
¹¹³ Indeed, the Glasgow Boys followed Whistler's reaction against the strongly theoretical contents of the Pre-Raphaelite painters; they were also influenced by French painters such as Corot or Bastien-Lepage. Their first international success as a group occurred in Munich in 1896. For more information on the Glasgow Boys, please see Roger Billcliffe, *The Glasgow Boys, the Glasgow School of Painting, 1875-1895* (London: John Murray, 1985) or *Pioneering Artists: the Glasgow Boys* (Glasgow: Glasgow Museums, 2010).

¹¹⁴ *Seconda esposizione internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia, Catalogo Illustrato* (Venezia: Carlo Ferrari, 1897), p. 80.: 'ormai celebre scuola che s'intitola dalla città di Glasgow'.

presentation as a group.¹¹⁵ Regular coverage then accompanied these painters until the First World War as they often provided the most recognisable group of painters within the British section.¹¹⁶ However, in spite of their continued presence at the Biennale, critical interest slowly shifted after 1905 and focussed mainly on John Lavery.¹¹⁷ The individual exhibition featuring Lavery's works at the 1910 Venice Biennale further confirmed his independent calibre and his stature as portrait-painter, and the slow decline in interest for the rest of the group.¹¹⁸

Traditionally, landscape painting was regarded as a stronghold of British painting although broadly speaking they were the dominant genre at the Venice Biennale, perhaps providing visual continuity with the tradition of Venetian *vedute*.¹¹⁹ Partly due to his ties to the Scottish group and partly due to his friendship with Mario Borsa, the main English landscape painter who was regularly reviewed was Alfred East (1849-1913) who was the subject of one of the last articles devoted to a British painter in *Emporium*.¹²⁰ Other English landscape painters were reviewed on an individual basis, mainly according to their contributions to exhibitions. It is interesting to note that contrary to the Glasgow Boys, the 'British Impressionist' Newlyn group did not really receive attention as a group and were generally not labelled as such, except by Vittorio Pica.¹²¹ Rather, individuals such as Stanhope

¹¹⁵ However, it is also interesting to note that Italian critics did not seem to rely on their French counterparts to analyse the works of the Glasgow Boys; Ugo Ojetti compared their presence at the 1897 Biennale with earlier international exhibition at Louisville (KY) and Munich. Ugo Ojetti, *L'arte moderna a venezia, l'esposizione mondiale del 1897* (Roma: Enrico Voghera, 1897), footnote p. 28.

¹¹⁶ In 1910, Ojetti noted: 'The Scottish painters, as always since 1897, i.e. their first presence in Venice, are the most numerous group'. ('I pittori scozzesi, come sempre dal 1897, cioè dalla prima esposizione che fecero a Venezia, formano il gruppo più numeroso'). Ugo Ojetti, *Nona esposizione internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia, Pubblicazione dell'Illustrazione italiana, Fascicolo 1* (Milano: Treves, 1910), p. 22.

¹¹⁷ Contrary to the Pre-Raphaelites who were discussed at length, especially with regards to their theoretical contents, the Glasgow boys were never, to our knowledge, the object of a scholarly publication.

¹¹⁸ However, some Italians still highly regarded the Scottish painters in the 1920s: Camillo Pellizzi still praised their peculiar rendering of nature as a mix of soft tones and almost religious visual purity. Camillo Pellizzi, *Cose d'Inghilterra* (Milano: Alpes Milano, 1926), pp. 167-168.

¹¹⁹ West, pp. 404-434 (p. 409).

¹²⁰ Mario Borsa, 'Alfred East', *Emporium*, June 1901, pp. 401-417.

¹²¹ Pica defined them as a group as early as 1897: 'the important group of English realist painters, led by Stahope [*sic*] Forbes, based in Newlyn in Cornwall, to which H.H. La Thangue belongs'. ('l'importante gruppo di pittori realisti inglesi, che ha per capo Stahope [*sic*] Forbes, per centro Newlyn in Cornovaglia ed a cui appartiene H.H. La Thangue'.) Vittorio Pica, 'L'arte mondiale a

Forbes, Henry Herbert La Thangue or Frank Bramley were appraised —or not— in response to the paintings they sent to Italy.¹²²

Lastly, portrait and genre painters were also reviewed according to individual production, mainly in exhibition reviews. Recurring names included celebrities of the time: William Orchardson (1832-1910), Walter William Ouless (1848-1924), William Orpen (1878-1931), Charles Shannon (1863-1937), and especially Irish-born and Glasgow-trained John Lavery. Some other Glasgow Boys also sent portraits to Venice and obtained great success.¹²³ Hubert von Herkomer and Charles Shannon were the only two portrait painters to get a monographic article; the latter was reviewed and introduced in 1910 to the Italian public by his friend Count Antonio Cippico, an intellectual based in London.¹²⁴ Deceased or living British portraitists were also discussed in the newspapers when new self-portraits entered the Uffizi.¹²⁵ In terms of historical review, the 1911 Rome exhibition was the occasion to appreciate the British portrait tradition since the eighteenth century, where modern painters were compared and contrasted with the Old Masters, especially Reynolds and Gainsborough.

A brief overview of the number and type of publications on British art in Italy has already revealed some interesting data regarding preferences and coverage. Contrary to some prejudiced ideas, British painting was indeed appreciated and studied, albeit in a discriminatory way which focussed on clearly identified

Venezia, VIII, ancora i pittori inglesi', *Il Marzocco*, 11 July 1897, p. 2. In his review of the 1901 Paris exhibition, Vittorio Pica also called them 'the verist group of Cornwall' ('il gruppo verista di Cornovaglia'). Vittorio Pica, 'Pittura all'esposizione di Parigi', *Emporium*, February 1901, p. 102.

¹²² Perhaps this is due to their absence of group marketing. For example La Thangue participated to the Florence international exhibition 'Festa dell'arte e dei fiori' of 1896-1897 on an individual basis. Vittorio Pica, 'L'arte europeo a Firenze, I, I pittori inglesi', *Il Marzocco*, 28 February 1897, p. 2.

¹²³ For example, Thomas Brown's *Mademoiselle Plume-Rouge* was prized at the Munich Glaspalast in 1896 and aroused debates at the Biennale the following year.

¹²⁴ Antonio Cippico, 'Pittori rappresentativi: Charles Shannon', *Vita d'Arte*, 3, 5 (March 1910), 87-102. Although Cippico announced that he would also produce an article on Shannon's long-term friend Charles Ricketts, there was no such thing in later editions of *Vita d'Arte*, at least until 1920.

¹²⁵ Odoardo Giglioli wrote in the *Emporium* in 1906: 'Among the portraits which recently entered the Gallery, the best one is George Romney's' ('Il posto d'onore tra I ritratti recentemente entrati nella Galleria spetta a quello di Giorgio Romney'). Odoardo Giglioli, 'Nuovi acquisti della Galleria degli Uffizi', *Emporium*, March 1906, p. 238. Between 1878 and 1919, roughly twenty self-portraits by British artists entered the Florentine gallery.

individuals or groups. In addition, the case of the Glasgow Boys showed that the publication contents might have been directed in some ways by the Biennale organisers. In spite of this possibility, years of presence at the Venice Biennale also fostered a clear evolution in aesthetic reception, which will be examined in the upcoming paragraphs.

In order to study the evolution of the taste for British painting during the pre-war period, the emphasis will be placed on two key art critics of the same generation and will analyse their reactions to British art alongside other art critics: Vittorio Pica (1864-1930)¹²⁶ and Ugo Ojetti (1871-1946).¹²⁷ Clearly the figurehead of art criticism at the time in Italy, Vittorio Pica worked as an independent journalist and art critic (1895), as journalist for *Il Marzocco* (1897) and eventually became art critic and Director of *Emporium* from 1898 onwards. All his reviews for the period henceforth appeared in the latter art magazine. The 'Prince of art critics' Ugo Ojetti published as a freelance art critic (1897), or occasionally in *Il Marzocco* (1904) and *Emporium* (1913) but also synthesised some Biennali for the *Illustrazione italiana* (1910 and 1914). Most of all, Ugo Ojetti was the 'authoritative critic' of the leading Italian daily at the time, the Milanese daily *Il Corriere della Sera*, between 1898 and

¹²⁶ Born in Naples of an English mother, Vittorio Pica was, together with Riccardo Selvatico and Antonio Fradeletto, the founder of the Venice Biennale of which he became the Secretary and General Secretary between 1910 and 1927. The interconnection between his work as leading art critic on contemporary international art and his position within the Venice biennale organisation made him a particularly powerful figure whose taste greatly influenced his contemporaries. So far, the critics have privileged his links with French writers and poets such as the Goncourt brothers and Stéphane Mallarmé, or his love of prints which he called 'bianco e nero'. Pica started covering the Venice Biennale from its inception in 1895 and in spite of research, it was not possible to find out when Pica stopped covering the Biennale. Most libraries hold his reviews until 1909, which would indicate that he ceased to write on the Biennale when he became part of the organising committee. In January 1902, the *Emporium* proudly announced that Pica had won the 'Primo premio della critica d'arte' for his review of the Venice exhibition, which undoubtedly furthered his position as leading art critic of international contemporary art. For more information on Pica, see Nicola D'Antuono, *Vittorio Pica, un visionario tra Napoli e l'Europa* (Roma: Carocci, 2002), or Alessandro Gaudio, *La sinistra estrema dell'arte, Vittorio Pica alle origini dell'estetismo in Italia* (Manziana Roma: Vecchiarelli, 2006).

¹²⁷ Ugo Ojetti graduated in Law at the University of Rome and was tempted by a diplomatic career due to his knowledge of English and French. However, after he met D'Annunzio who was eight years his elder, Ojetti turned to journalism and literary and art criticism. In Rome, he became part, together with Diego Angeli, of the group of intellectuals comprising Antonio della Porta and Giannino Antona-Traversi. Ojetti then transferred to Milan where he worked at the *Corriere della Sera*. For more information of his activity as critic, see Giovanna De Lorenzi, *Ugo Ojetti critico d'arte: dal 'Marzocco' al 'Dedalo'* (Firenze: Le lettere, 2004).

his death.¹²⁸ Though the argument will be based on these two important critics, others writing for *Emporium*, *Il Marzocco* and *Il Fanfulla della Domenica* may be quoted as further points of comparison.

The emphasis on these two art critics does not simply stem from their authoritative position. More interestingly perhaps, the two men knew each other and most of all both had longstanding friendships with Antonio Fradeletto. Indeed the ASAC contains several folders of letters sent and received by them which will be analysed in the upcoming pages. In addition Vittorio Pica became General Secretary of the Biennale after Fradeletto's retirement in 1919 until 1926. Although Ojetti never held an official position at the Biennale, he became part of the official commission in charge of public acquisitions in 1904.

Appreciation of British paintings seems to have evolved fairly dramatically. To start with Italian critics were on the whole favourably impressed by British painting, as Pica noted in 1905 'once again, many beautiful, vigorous and original canvases have come from England. As manifestations of noble art, they can satisfy many different aesthetic tastes!'¹²⁹ Similarly, Arturo Lancellotti exclaimed in 1909: 'the [English] Pavilion is a real temple to art. It displays a nobility, refinement and elegance that one would be at pain to find anywhere else'.¹³⁰ Ojetti shared this position in 1910: 'The English Pavilion gathers paintings in which one may find everything that one can't find in the Italian ones: good taste, national character, many a beautiful portrait, more figures than landscapes, few sketches and many paintings, no ostentatious techniques, either original or thought to be so, painters

¹²⁸ Is that why he was chosen to be translated and published in the British illustrated catalogue of the Roman exhibition? Excerpt from the *Morning Post*, quoted in *International Fine Arts Exhibition Rome 1911, Souvenir of the British Section*, ed. by Sir Isidore Spielmann (London: Ballantyne Press, 1911), p. 624.

¹²⁹ Vittorio Pica, 'L'arte mondiale alla Sesta esposizione di Venezia', *Emporium*, Numero Speciale 1905, p. 58.: 'Quante belle, vigorose ed originali tele non sono, ancora una volta, venute dall'Inghilterra a Venezia, riuscendo, con manifestazioni sempre d'artistica nobiltà, a soddisfare i più differenti gusti estetici!'

¹³⁰ Arturo Lancellotti, *Le biennali veneziane dell'ante guerra, I-XI* (Alessandria: Casa d'arte Ariel, 1924), p. 74.: 'il padiglione [inglese] è un vero tempio dell'arte. V'è una nobiltà, una signorilità, un'eleganza che in vano cercheremmo altrove'.

who know what they are and what their limits are'.¹³¹ However, both in 1912 and 1914, the critics offered mixed reactions to the British pavilion. Lancellotti pointed to 'a simplicity to which we were not used to' in 1912,¹³² while he frankly lambasted the 'rather mediocre' 1914 section.¹³³ Though less harsh, Ojetti called it 'an honest gathering of paintings which seems to have come into existence only to justify the very presence of the pavilion'.¹³⁴ Though critical outputs tend to indicate two periods of appreciation of British painting, namely a generally positive period between 1895 and 1910, followed by a declining interest during the last two pre-war editions in 1912 and 1914, a closer look at the writings reveal a more complex and discriminatory situation according to genre and style of paintings.

Before addressing the more controversial sections of British painting, it is appropriate to say a word about the overall consensual appreciation of some of its strands. Traditionally considered strongholds of British painting, watercolour and portraits seemed on the whole immune from criticism. Watercolour was defined glorious, which pushed critics to ask for more exhibits.¹³⁵ Then portraits by deceased or living British painters were also praised on the whole, as partaking in a distinguished tradition initiated in the eighteenth century. They were all the most appraised when they were compared to Italian portraits, as explained by Ugo Ojetti:

¹³¹ Ugo Ojetti, *Nona esposizione internazionale d'arte di Venezia* (Milano: Fratelli Trèves, 1910), p. 23.: 'Nella pittura raccolta nel Padiglione inglese si può trovare tutto quello che non si trova nelle pitture esposte dagli italiani: buon gusto, carattere nazionale, molti e bei ritratti, più figure che paesaggi, pochi bozzetti e molti quadri, nessuna ostentazione di tecniche originali o credute originali, pittori che fanno quel che sono e conoscono i proprii limiti'.

¹³² Arturo Lancellotti, *Le Biennali veneziane dell'ante guerra, I-IX* (Alessandria: Casa d'Arte Ariel, 1924), p. 187.: 'una modestia alla quale non ci (England) aveva abituati'.

¹³³ Lancellotti, p. 221.

¹³⁴ Ojetti, *Undicesima esposizione internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia, 1914* (Milano: Fratelli Trèves, 1914), p. 12.: 'un'onesta raccolta di quadri che sembra fatta tanto per giustificare l'esistenza del padiglione stesso'. Perhaps after the exceptional historical display of 1911 at the Rome Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition, Britain weakened its presence in Venice, which was picked up by disappointed critics.

¹³⁵ Ojetti, p. 23: 'Venice needs to organise a retrospective exhibition which would reveal to the Italian public the glorious history of English watercolour, from Turner to Barrett, from Bonington to Peter De Wint, from Hunt to Rossetti and the other Pre-Raphaelites'. ('Ma bisognerebbe che con una mostra retrospettiva, dal Turner al Barrett, dal Bonington a Peter de Wint, dal Hunt al Rossetti e agli altri prerafaeliti, Venezia rivelasse una volta al pubblico italiano la storia gloriosa dell'acquarello inglese'). Perhaps as an answer to that call, the 1911 Rome exhibition provided a retrospective on the development of landscape with many a watercolour, for which there was a particular taste in that city. Ojetti underlined that the Roman Association of Water Colour painters 'had its origin in the imitation of the English watercolourists'. Ojetti, p. 83.

Admiration for the English models of Gainsborough, and from Gainsborough down to Lawrence, is amply attested by the pictures collected by us at Florence in the Exhibition of Portraits. And what Italian, standing before the pictures of Sir H. Von Herkomer, Sir G. Reid,¹³⁶ J.S. Sargent, Sir J. Guthrie, A.S. Cope, J. Lavery, G. Henry, W. Nicholson, W. Orpen, A.E. John, and those others who are exhibiting at Rome, but must wish that this admiration may continue to make proselytes among the scanty numbers of our portrait painters?¹³⁷

Comparing foreign schools with the Italian one was a recurring trope in the critical reception at the Venice Biennale whereby critics sought to spur local creativity. British portraits were especially appreciated for the imaginative, effortlessly elegant compositions drawn from their national tradition while using a modern brush work: 'Among the portraits, one can admire one by Bramley, another one by Birley, one by Connard: all these works are more or less good but they are always elegant and tasteful. By personal inclination or thanks to the attitudes of the models, in particular their female models, English portrait painters manage to create effortless poses'.¹³⁸ As portrait painter, John Lavery attracted most praises in 1910, the year of his personal exhibition in Venice. He was generally presented as an heir to Gainsborough: 'with his illustrious predecessor, he has but one common goal: that of constantly looking for spontaneous grace and beauty'.¹³⁹ Aesthetic appreciation was thus on the whole the result of the admiration for a mix of nobleness and spontaneity as expressed by 'a large and assured brushwork... excellent chromatic relations'.¹⁴⁰

Some other strands of British painting aroused more mixed aesthetic

¹³⁶ Sir George Reid (1841-1913), PRSA, HRSW, Scottish portrait painter and illustrator. He studied in Edinburgh, Utrecht and Paris and soon established himself as Scotland's leading portrait painter in the late 1870s. He became President of the Royal Scottish Academy and was knighted in 1891. *The Dictionary of Victorian Painters* (1978), p. 389.

¹³⁷ Ojetti, p. 83.

¹³⁸ Lancellotti, p. 188.: 'Fra i ritratti, uno del Bramley, un altro del Birley, uno del Connard: sono tutte opera più o meno forte, sempre elegante e di gusto, perché i pittori inglesi, nel ritratto emergono, un poco per inclinazione personale, un pò per le attitudini dei loro modelli, e specialmente delle modelle, a posare con disinvoltura'.

¹³⁹ Arduino Colansanti, *La galleria nazionale d'arte moderna in Roma, Catalogo* (Milano: Roma, Bestetti e Tumminelli, 1923), p. 130.: 'egli con il suo grande predecessore non ha che un solo punto di contatto: quello di muovere sempre alla ricerca della grazia e della bellezza spontanea'.

¹⁴⁰ Lancellotti, p. 139.: 'la pennellata larga e sicura... l'eccellenza di rapporti cromatici'.

appreciations however. It is particularly interesting to study the reaction to Pre-Raphaelitism in that respect. The foremost criticism applied to pictorial technique; it no doubt derived from the French critical influence. Thus, both Pica and Ojetti echoed Chesneau, objecting to 'minute, dry, painstaking, detailed craftsmanship of the true Pre-Raphaelites... often lacks consequence, and almost always lacks life'.¹⁴¹ Both quoted Robert de la Sizeranne as primary source of study for the critique of the Pre-Raphaelite technique, which Pica deemed unlikely to be appreciated 'by us Latin people'.¹⁴² Even after he distanced himself from the French school of criticism, Pica maintained his judgement and wrote in 1911 that Rossetti's 'technique was insufficient or erroneous'.¹⁴³ Some of these criticisms were also applied without discrimination to the entire British school of painting. For example Diego Angeli judged British painting technique clumsy on the whole: 'these painters are representative of their own race: we should not judge them on their shortcomings or their different techniques. Obviously many are still far from reaching perfection but we must admire in them what they have'.¹⁴⁴

Colour was subjected to the same analysis and targeted the Pre-Raphaelite painters mainly. Pica went with Chesneau and criticised the 'crude brightness of their brush strokes',¹⁴⁵ while Angeli opposed Rossetti to Burne-Jones, the latter using 'cold colours, devoid of that internal warmth that even the most mediocre Latin painters possess'.¹⁴⁶ However the discourse completely changed when critics looked at the Scottish school of painting, in which both technique and colours provoked enthusiastic praise. In 1897 Guido Martinelli set the tone with a warm appraisal: 'among all these more or less excellent painters, not a single one sings a

¹⁴¹ Ojetti, 1897, p. 27.: 'la fattura piccina, secca, stretta, sminuzzata dei veri Prerafaeliti... e spesso manca di rilievo, e quasi sempre di vita'.

¹⁴² Pica, 1895, p. 37.

¹⁴³ Pica, 1911, p. lxxvii.: 'tecnicamente insufficiente or scorretta'.

¹⁴⁴ Diego Angeli, 'L'esposizione di Venezia, I. I pittori rappresentativi', *Il Marzocco*, 12 May 1901, p. 2.: 'sono i pittori della loro razza: noi non dobbiamo giudicarli a traverso le loro manchevolezze o a traverso le loro tecniche diverse. Certo, molti di loro sono lungi [*sic*] dalla perfezione mai noi dobbiamo ammirare in essi quello che essi hanno'. The recurring correlation made between technique and aesthetic appreciation based on race will be addressed into more depth in the next section.

¹⁴⁵ Pica, 1895, p. 24.: 'cruda vivacità della pennellata'.

¹⁴⁶ Angeli, 1901, p. 1.: 'colorito freddo e privo di quel calore interno che ebbero anche i più mediocri pittori di razza latina'.

false, vulgar or tone-deaf note. They convey a harmony of half tones, of half and subtle tonalities which never cease and which are never disturbed'.¹⁴⁷ His judgement was echoed by Pica's 1903 review extolling 'the grace of the design and the pleasantness of colours which characterise today's Scottish school'.¹⁴⁸ The critic elaborated several times on the artistic achievements of these painters, whose vision always seeks a poetic representation of reality, and whose technique is soft and fluid'.¹⁴⁹ English (as represented by the Pre-Raphaelites) and Scottish schools (as influenced by Whistler) were thus treated as thoroughly different entities with their own pictorial traditions and expressions, as stemming from opposite theoretical and aesthetic approaches.

Hence a somehow paradoxical situation arose whereby on the one hand, Pre-Raphaelitism was by far the most discussed strand of British painting. On the other hand, it was far from creating aesthetic consensus. In that respect, the first Venice Biennale revealed a clear discrepancy between theoretical interest and unalloyed aesthetic appreciation. Pre-Raphaelitism and the Scottish school of painting thus offered a polarised aesthetic experience which was accentuated by the typology of the Venice Biennale.

Indeed, another criterion of appreciation was linked to the very nature of the exhibition: as the Venice Biennale was the first Italian international platform of contemporary art, novelty was of paramount importance. For example, Pica thus started his review of the 1895 Biennale: 'The room which most demands public attention is the one displaying English painters. This is only fair as they show us a truly original vision of nature and humanity; they reveal to us a truly new aesthetic

¹⁴⁷ Guido Martinelli, 'Le grandi esposizioni internazionali: Venezia', *Emporium*, August 1897, pp. 142.: 'fra tutti quanti più o meno eccellenti, non ve ne sia uno che porti una nota falsa o stonata di volgarità. Vi è una armonia di mezze tinte, di tonalità medie e tenui che non cessa un istante e che non è mai disturbata'.

¹⁴⁸ Pica, 1903, p. 126.: 'la grazia di disegno e quella piacevolezza di colore che caratterizzano l'odierna scuola della Scozia'.

¹⁴⁹ Vittorio Pica, *L'arte mondiale alla Va esposizione di Venezia* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arte grafiche, 1903), p. 249.: 'dalla visione sempre ricercatamente poetizzatrice della realtà e dalla fluidità carezzevole della fattura'.

concept'.¹⁵⁰ His review encompassed each strand of British art as explained in de la Sizeranne's *La peinture anglaise contemporaine*.¹⁵¹ Magazine and newspaper readers had been witness to debates surrounding theoretical content, especially in the case of Pre-Raphaelitism. In the 1890s, Ojetti and Angeli actively took part in a *querelle* on the aesthetic origins of the English group, stemming either from the German Nazarenes or from the Italian 'primitives'.¹⁵² However until 1895, these readers had not had a direct encounter with either the Pre-Raphaelites or with other major academic painters such as Hubert von Herkomer. Nevertheless, in the case of Pre-Raphaelitism, novelty did not equate with fresh paint nor with a real effort on the English side to send quality works to Venice. Consequently, most critics' fascination quickly turned into disappointment. As early as 1897, Ugo Ojetti underlined that 'In Italy, too many people still think that the painting produced by the old Pre-Raphaelites is the most extreme and modern fruit of contemporary art... This is perhaps because the glorious group which made the most glorious effort to lift up modern painting towards an Ideal is dwindling, between tiredness and death.'¹⁵³ His stance was widely echoed in the Italian press over the years when each death of a member of the brotherhood further took the toll of the movement.¹⁵⁴ Disappointment was made all the more acute in 1897 as the jury had to send back drawings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti due to their poor execution.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Pica, p. 19.: 'La sala che maggiormente richiama l'attenzione del pubblico è quella dei pittori inglesi, ed è naturale e giusto così, perchè essi ci presentano una visione della natura e dell'umanità affatto originale, ci rivelano una concezione estetica affatto nuova'.

¹⁵¹ Berresford, pp. 37-49 (p. 37-38). The groups are: 'Mythical (G.F. Watts), Christian (Holman-Hunt), Academic (Leighton), History (Alma-Tadema), Genre (Millais), Portraiture (Herkomer) and Legend (Burne-Jones)'.

¹⁵² The *querelle* has been described by Giuliana Pieri, 364-381 (p. 372). The right definition of the Pre-Raphaelites' artistic influences and theoretical premises was important as it also influenced young Italian 'Pre-Raphaelite' painters.

¹⁵³ Ojetti, p. 25 and 66.: 'Troppi ancora credono in Italia che la pittura dei vecchi preraphaeliti sia l'estremo, il modernissimo frutto dell'arte contemporanea... Forse anche perchè la schiera gloriosa che rappresentò il più glorioso sforzo fatto dalla pittura moderna verso l'Ideale, si va assottigliando, e chi muore e chi è stanco'.

¹⁵⁴ Articles entitled 'L'ultimo dei Preraphaeliti' were recurrent until 1919.

¹⁵⁵ No doubt with Antonio Fradeletto's consent, Vittorio Pica leaked the news in his article published on *Il Marzocco* dated 4 July 1897 and gave his approval to the jury: 'It seems that the family decided at the last minute to send only a few insignificant drawings and the Committee was right to send them back'. ('Sembra pero che, all'ultima ora, la famiglia non abbia mandato che alcuni pochi e insignificanti disegni ed il Comitato ha avuto ragione di rifiutarli'). Pica, 'L'arte mondiale a Venezia VIII', *Il Marzocco*, 11 July 1897, p. 3. However, unfulfilled expectations enhanced the effect of his three paintings sent to Rome in 1911, especially the watercolour *Paolo and Francesca*: 'The spirit of

As touched on in the previous section the Scottish school of painting and its seventy-one landscapes and portraits exhibited in a separate section in 1897 provided the much sought-after novelty which the Biennale organisers wanted to convey. All Italian critics emphasised its originality, 'youthful robustness'¹⁵⁶ and their group identity, thereby systematically contrasting them with the Pre-Raphaelites for whom the Brotherhood had become but an empty notion.¹⁵⁷ Both Pica and Ojetti presented the Scottish group as the poetic result of mixed influences from the French landscape painters and Japanese art through James Abbot MacNeill Whistler.¹⁵⁸ Italian critics were particularly sensitive to the poetic and lyrical treatment by that unified group of painters, which generated an overall concert of praise for over a decade.

Clearly, the Pre-Raphaelite painters and their followers, together with the Glasgow boys, captured most critical attention. However, the pressure to establish the Venice Biennale at the international level also meant that major artists should

Dante Gabriel Rossetti has returned in his homeland with the most dazzling expression of a dream of love and pain. That square decimeter of paper, finally sent to Rome for universal admiration, is a finished painting. No need to be a seer to feel all the fascination and the joy of such a beautiful dream, contained in such a small space'. ('Dante Gabriele Rossetti è tornato in ispirito nella sua patria e con la espressione più smagliante di un suo sogno d'amore e di dolore. Quel decimetro quadro di carta, che viene concesso in Roma finalmente all'ammirazione universale, è una pittura definitiva. E noi non dobbiamo farci agrimensori per sentire tutto il fascino e tutta la gioia di un così bel sogno, racchiuso in così breve spazio'.) Romualdo Pantini, 'Il Ritorno di Dante Gabriele Rossetti', *Il Marzocco*, 9 April 1911, p.1. This quotation confirms Rossetti's unparalleled position in Italy which stemmed from his being the emblem of fruitful Anglo-Italian cultural ties. Ulisse Ortensi summed up Italian aspirations to cultural appropriation when he wrote: 'Both England and Italy can be proud of such a genius, of the son of an exile, of the boy who heard the deep and prophetic voice of Giuseppe Mazzini, there was not a single word which did not betray his affection for his ancestral land. Perhaps this was due to his education, or to the surrounding Anglo-Saxon world. But Dante Alighieri was the ongoing inspiration for his poetry: Cimabue and Giotto were the fathers of his painting, and in such Italian glory, he rose to the highest points of art'. ('Di un tale genio possono l'Inghilterra e l'Italia andare orgogliose, qualunque dal figliuolo dell'esiliato, dal bambino che udì la voce grave e profetica di Giuseppe Mazzini, niuna parola sia mai uscita che ricordasse l'affetto alla terra avita. Forse ciò dipese dalla educazione, forse dal mondo sassone circostante. Ma Dante Alighieri fu il continuo ispiratore della sua poesia: Cimabue e Giotto i padri della sua pittura, e in tale gloria tutta italiana salì ai più sublimi cieli dell'arte'). Ulisse Ortensi, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti', II, *Emporium*, August 1896, p. 95.

¹⁵⁶ Ojetti, 1897, p. 29.: 'giovenilità robusta'.

¹⁵⁷ Vittorio Pica, 'L'arte mondiale a Venezia, I Pittori scozzesi', *Il Marzocco*, 23 May 1897, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵⁸ Pica, 1897, p.2., and Ojetti, 1897, p. 27. Due to the fresh discovery of the Scottish group, Italian critics were on a par with their French colleagues. Therefore they had to get the information from other international sources: the Grosvenor Gallery exhibition of 1889, the 1895 Louisville exhibition, and the 1896 Munich exhibition.

be discovered and promoted there. The very existence of the Biennale had been hailed as a 'miracle' by Ojetti who noted in 1897 that 'all these hopes which were only looking forward to reunions abroad in Paris, Munich, Barcelona, Vienna, London or Zurich, now they trust Venice'.¹⁵⁹ As explained in more depth in the first chapter, this sentence contained as much hope as truth as it illustrated the deeply-rooted concern at the heart of the Biennale to be an integral part of new international trends.

Some British painters were clearly among the favourite artists exhibiting at the Biennale. Unsurprisingly, they stemmed from the strands discussed above, i.e. Pre-Raphaelitism, Scottish portraiture and English landscape and crystallised continuity together with a renewed pictorial technique. In that respect, those preferences all betrayed the national aesthetic preoccupation of many Italian critics who projected British success against the lack of continuity among Italian painters. For example the Italian public appreciated decorative painting originating from Pre-Raphaelitism in a broad sense. William Morris's student Frank Brangwyn (1867-1956) had been noticed at the 1896 Paris exhibition but he then gradually took firm ground in Venice supported by the publications by Mario Borsa.¹⁶⁰ As early as 1897, Ojetti placed him 'amongst the best painters'¹⁶¹ while A. Centelli defined him 'the strongest artistic personality',¹⁶² and Pica hailed him as the only English artist with 'a bravely vigorous and indisputably original personality'.¹⁶³ As explained in chapter two, Brangwyn was a regular exhibitor in Venice between 1897 and 1905. Besides sending decorative and large paintings, he was commissioned to decorate the English rooms in 1905 and 1907; furthermore he obtained artistic consecration there in a solo exhibition in 1914. On the whole, Italian critics appreciated his

¹⁵⁹ Ojetti, 1897, p. 11.: 'tutte quelle speranze che tendevano soltanto alle riunioni di oltre monte e di oltre mare, a Parigi o a Monaco, a Barcellona o a Vienna, a Londra o a Zurigo, ora fidano in Venezia'.

¹⁶⁰ In an Appendix, Walter Shaw Sparrow listed the Italian publications on Brangwyn, which were all written by Mario Borsa: in addition to the *Emporium* article discussed in chapter two, there was an article published on *L'illustrazione italiana* in April 1905 and an article published on *Nuova Antologia* on 16 November 1909. Shaw Sparrow, p. 250.

¹⁶¹ Ojetti, 1897, p. 97.

¹⁶² A. Centelli, 'L'esposizione internazionale di Venezia', *Il Fanfulla della Domenica*, 6 June 1897, p. 2.: 'la personalità artistica forse più spiccata'.

¹⁶³ Pica, 1897, p. 4.: 'una personalità arditamente vigorosa e d'indiscutibile originalità'.

vigorous treatment, strong colour scheme and decorative subjects, stemming from an original synthesis between French, Italian and English artistic influences.¹⁶⁴ Understandably, Mario Borsa was keen to emphasise Venice's role to promote Brangwyn as part of an avant-garde network of international contemporary exhibitions: 'It would take a while to explain or summarise the gradual ascension of Frank Brangwyn, which first took place not in England, but in Paris, Munich and Venice'.¹⁶⁵ Aesthetic appreciation was thus also linked to self-promotion and claims to be a major artistic platform alongside more established centres for contemporary art such as Paris and Munich.

John Lavery (1856-1941) was another British artist who gradually acquired a special status in Italy, especially as a portrait painter. Originally part of the Glasgow school of painting which he contributed to found, he was soon singled out from the rest of his group. As soon as 1897, Pica hailed his portraits as 'delicious glorifications of female grace and elegance',¹⁶⁶ although he also produced some mixed views on some of his later portraits.¹⁶⁷ Lavery's solo show at Venice in 1910 contained forty-five pieces and further secured his indisputable position. Ojetti pointed out that such consecration was 'the biggest he had ever done' and positioned Lavery as heir to English portrait tradition: 'They are almost all portraits of young, elegant, serene or happy women; almost all harmonies of white, blue, black, pink and purple; his visible brush stroke is large and visible but his *bravura* is not shown off with insolence; he remains more or less in the tradition of Romney and Raeburn'.¹⁶⁸ Much in the same way as Brangwyn, Lavery pleased Italian critics as he managed to synthesise tradition and modernity, as was expressed by Arturo Lancellotti: 'his technique derives from that of the masters who fathered the English school at the end of the 18th century. He does not forget the good tradition although he is a

¹⁶⁴ Pica, 1903, p. 254.

¹⁶⁵ Ojetti, 1914, p. 47.: 'Sarebbe lungo dire anche solo sommariamente, la graduale ascensione di Frank Brangwyn, a cui prima, e più che l'Inghilterra diedero fama Parigi, Monaco, Venezia'.

¹⁶⁶ Pica, 1897, p. 2.: 'deliziose glorificazioni della grazia e dell'eleganza femminile'.

¹⁶⁷ This may explain the fact that *Emporium* did not devote a monographic article to John Lavery.

¹⁶⁸ Ojetti, 1910, p. 12.: 'Quasi tutti ritratti di donne, e giovani e eleganti e serene e anche liete; quasi tutte armonie di bianco, azzurro, nero, rosa e viola; una pennellata visibile e sicura che però non vuole ostentare con insolenza la sua bravura; Romney e Raeburn, presso a poco, per restare nella tradizione'.

modern painter using large brush strokes'.¹⁶⁹ As was the case with Brangwyn, Italian critics boasted to have discovered and promoted Lavery before his career kicked off in Britain: 'His painting *Mother and Son* was acquired by Venice for its gallery when no English galleries, apart from that of Glasgow, owned pictures by him'.¹⁷⁰

Lastly, landscape painter Alfred East (1849-1913) exhibited on a regular basis from 1895 in Venice, Florence and Rome. Although the first works he sent in 1895 and 1897 were only deemed average by both Pica and Ojetti, Pica changed his judgement and defined him 'an English landscapist of uncommon ability' in 1901.¹⁷¹ That same year, he agreed to publish Mario Borsa's monographic article on East in *Emporium*.¹⁷² In his introduction, Borsa summed up the reasons for which East was appreciated in Italy: 'A delicate landscape which expresses a vague, sincere, agreeable romanticism with the classical perfection of its forms; one of these landscapes that one cannot forget, that one takes away, not so much for the striking effects of light and colour, as for the intimate and felt poetry contained in the paintings'.¹⁷³ East was thus presented as the English equivalent of the Glasgow Boys and most of all a disciple of Corot. The close stylistic ties with the French master may explain why Pica affirmed that he considered East the best landscape painter of the British section in 1907.¹⁷⁴ Similarly to Lavery, East's perceived continuity with the eighteenth century romantic tradition in landscape was positively welcomed in Italy as it could be opposed to the 'technical and scientific dogma of the school of Parisian impressionism'.¹⁷⁵ Indeed Pica related the landscapes produced not only by East but also by James Whitelaw Hamilton or Arthur Douglas Peppercorn to the

¹⁶⁹ Lancellotti, p. 139.: 'La sua tecnica si riallaccia a quella dei maestri che iniziarono verso la fine del Settecento, la scuola inglese. È pittore che non dimentica la buona tradizione pure essendo, per la pennellata larga e sicura, artista moderno'.

¹⁷⁰ Ojetti, 1910, p. 12.: 'La sua *Madre e Figlio* furono comprate dal Municipio di Venezia per la sua galleria quando nessuna galleria inglese, meno quella di Glasgow, aveva tele di lui'. Lavery's portrait entitled *Mother and Son* was acquired in 1899.

¹⁷¹ Pica, 1901, p. 65.: 'un paesista inglese di non comune valentia'.

¹⁷² Mario Borsa, 'Artisti contemporanei: Alfred East', *Emporium*, June 1901, pp. 403-417.

¹⁷³ Borsa, 1901, p. 403.: 'Un paesaggio delicato che, nella classica finitezza delle forme, esprima un romanticismo vago, sincero, soave, uno di quei paesaggi che non dimenticate, che portate via con voi, non tanto per gli effetti di luce e di colore che vi abbiano colpito, quanto per l'intima e sentita poesia ch'era in essi'.

¹⁷⁴ Pica, 1907, p. 194.: 'I rate East above everyone else'. ('East... che io antepongo a tutti gli altri').

¹⁷⁵ Ojetti, 1911, p. 92.

'glorious tradition of Constable and Bonington'.¹⁷⁶ Unsurprisingly, Pica's leanings were for those British artists appreciated in France.

In spite of quality works sent by individuals such as the ones described above, it must nevertheless be pointed out that Italian critics felt that the English section at the Biennale not always renewed its stocks and rather sent its second-rate artistic overflow to Venice. Pica pointed out in 1905 that Watts's *Endimione* 'had already been seen in Venice in 1895'¹⁷⁷ and Ojetti asked in 1914 when England would start offering interesting solo exhibitions or any other 'more appetising novelty than these... unsold leftovers from the Royal Academy'.¹⁷⁸ By the First World War, novelty was to be found in other pavilions, although the new avant-garde movements were far from creating critical and aesthetic consensus.

While it is difficult to synthesise the material over the twenty year period covered by this section, it is nevertheless important to show the evolution in the writings by Pica, Ojetti, and their colleagues. As was explained above, British painting generally equated with novelty both in 1895 and 1897. However by the First World War, the position had somewhat changed. As discriminative partisan of modernism, Pica started questioning the novelty of British painting as early as 1901 when he reviewed the Paris exhibition: 'Undeniably, English painting is going through a period of crisis'.¹⁷⁹ While still praising individual or group achievements, he further confirmed his judgment in 1906: 'It has been a few years that the English have not moved forward',¹⁸⁰ due to their strict and unimaginative allegiance to Ruskin's outdated ideals. Since the turn of the century, Pica had been in a process of rethinking his aesthetic judgement towards more modernist alternatives to which Brangwyn or representatives of the New English Art Club belonged. Although Pica still appreciated British art on the whole, he and some of his colleagues often found

¹⁷⁶ Pica, 1905, p. 58.: 'gloriose tradizioni di Constable e di Bonington'.

¹⁷⁷ Pica, 1905, p. 47.: 'era già venuto a Venezia nel 1895'.

¹⁷⁸ Ojetti, 1914, p. 12.: 'novità più nutriente di questi... residui invenduti della Royal Academy'.

¹⁷⁹ Vittorio Pica, 'Pittura all'esposizione di Parigi', *Emporium*, February 1901, p. 100.: 'la pittura inglese attraversa indiscutibilmente una periodo di crisi'.

¹⁸⁰ Vittorio Pica, 'L'arte decorativa all'esposizione di Milano', *Emporium*, July 1906, p. 20.: 'gl'Inglese sono rimasti da alcuni anni stazionari'.

its conservative aesthetic unimaginative. Emilio Cecchi was amongst the harshest critics of English art at the end of the Rome exhibition:

There are partial or exceptional manifestations which bear the signs of a crisis. Coming out of an otherwise full and organised exhibition, one does not feel that there might be any new forces, full and conclusive, or that there might be at least a hope of new trends.¹⁸¹

On the other hand, it is precisely the absence of revolutionary aesthetics that endeared British art to other critics such as Ojetti. Indeed the adjective 'traditional' was repeatedly used to characterise the British sections at Venice, a pregnant term when the concept of 'avant-gardism' was becoming more prominent. In Venice the Futurists were particularly active as Marinetti decided to throw manifestos from the bell tower to express his anger at such past-oriented city in 1909. In opposition to such desires to break away from the past, Ugo Ojetti could see in England an uninterrupted pictorial tradition going back to the eighteenth century, contrary to what happened on the Continent.¹⁸² His colleague Diego Angeli further commented on the deeply rooted English aesthetic tradition, visible in all strands of its school of painting. To him 'the fundamental base of English painting is that sense of composure and respectability, that reflection of domestic life, that fruitful and sound robustness' was identical in paintings by decorative artist Gerald Moira, Augustus John, Scottish colourist John Duncan Fergusson or exponents of the modernist New English Art Club.¹⁸³ In 1907, the same art critic thus praised the

¹⁸¹ Emilio Cecchi, 'Dopo la chiusura del Padiglione inglese, Da Turner a Brangwyn', *Il Marzocco*, 12 November 1911, p. 2.: 'Ci sono manifestazioni parziali, d'eccezione, che portano addosso tutti i segni di un'epoca in crisi. Non ci pare che da tutta la mostra, pur tanto piena e ordinata, venga fuori una sola forza nuova, composta e conclusiva, e si accenni, almeno, una speranza di tendenze nuove'.

¹⁸² Ugo Ojetti, 'Notes on the British Section', *International Fine Arts Exhibition Rome 1911, British Section Catalogue* (London: Ballantyne and Cie, 1912), p.82.: 'England's good fortune was that her political and moral history saved her from the Napoleonic Academy, from the reaction of David, Canova, and Appiani, and permitted her to become a kind of sanctuary, where that religion of the eighteenth century for life and truth and joy and grace remained shut away to emerge once more with the return of liberty, to vivify portraiture, landscape and genre painting in France and Italy'.

¹⁸³ Diego Angeli, *Decima Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia 1912, Illustrazione Italiana* (Milano: Treves, 1912), p. 31.: 'la base fondamentale della pittura inglese, quel senso di compostezza e di rispettabilità, quel riflesso della vita familiare, quella robustezza sana e feconda'.

British painters as 'the aesthetic exaggerations of other European countries do not have any appeal to their balanced minds'.¹⁸⁴ He had not changed his mind five years later when the first post-impressionist paintings were hung in the British pavilion as he argued that 'English impressionists know how to remain English. Once again, even when they encounter foreign alternatives, they keep their national soul intact'.¹⁸⁵ At a time when aesthetics were being shaken to their roots by a wave of modernist art movements, English art thus stood for a reassuring stronghold of tradition and still produced aesthetically pleasing paintings. It could thus be an alternative to 'the improvisations of the most recent school of French painting, which is only superficially interesting',¹⁸⁶ to Russian art, a mere 'display by a decrepit people which pretends to be very young',¹⁸⁷ or to the 'often rough and sometimes brutal' German art.¹⁸⁸

As was shown here, the critical reception of British art in Italy was thus far from homogeneous. It mingled fascination and disappointment, appreciation and discrimination, generally relating to the type and quality of works sent to Venice, or to the other exhibitions taking place in the same period. However, as transpired, many critics expressed a strong preference for painting with soft tones, elegant and poetic treatment, which most of all harked back to a strong tradition. This is probably why later modernist critics sneered at the first Biennali and defined them a mere 'review of fashionable realistic and naturalistic trends',¹⁸⁹ thereby leaving them out of most historical studies. At the time, some curators and journalists also criticised the aesthetic choices of the Biennale organisers; in their eyes, British painting was unadventurous to say the least. Sounding very much like Clive Bell, Ca' Pesaro Director Nino Barbantini criticised 'the superficial quality of the design' of

¹⁸⁴ Diego Angeli, 'Gl'Inglese all'Esposizione', *Il Marzocco*, 12 May 1907, p. 2.: 'le esagerazioni estetiche degli altri popoli d'Europa non hanno presa sui loro spiriti equilibrati'.

¹⁸⁵ Angeli, 1912, p. 30.: 'Gli impressionisti inglesi sanno mantenersi inglesi e una volta di più, anche attraverso le derivazioni straniere, essi conservano intatta la loro anima nazionale'.

¹⁸⁶ Ogetti, 1912, p. 92. This is a diatribe against the Impressionists in particular, to which Ogetti was strongly opposed.

¹⁸⁷ Angeli, 1910, p. 2.: 'ostentazione di un popolo decrepito che vuol sembrar giovanissimo'.

¹⁸⁸ Pica, 1907, p. 198.: 'spesso rude e talvolta brutale'.

¹⁸⁹ Giuliana Donzello, *Arte e collezionismo, Fradeletto e Pica primi segretari alle Biennali veneziane 1895-1926* (Firenze: Firenze libri, 1987), p. 18.: 'rassegna delle correnti realistiche e naturalistiche in voga'.

such 'insipid painting'.¹⁹⁰

The study of the evolution of the visual consumption of British painting at the Biennale has brought forth some interesting aspects such as the most favoured individuals and groups as well as the qualities associated with the British sections. In addition these critical reviews often betrayed more than mere aesthetic considerations. Indeed they were generally tainted with concerns for the role of the Venice Biennale, for the education of the Italian public, for the definition of Italian artistic culture. Beyond these topical considerations, reviews also revealed some specific philosophical or political considerations linked to the cross-cultural shift in 'codes'. The next section will thus address how Italian critics created a peculiar semiotic framework when looking at British painting.

3.2.2 The Italian Code to Decipher British Painting

3.2.2.1 Some philosophical concepts underpinning the Italian consumption of British paintings

Reflecting on the Kantian approach to the notions of taste and aesthetics, Bourdieu challenged them as sociologically and historically construed. To him 'reading a work of art' implied 'an act of deciphering, decoding which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code'.¹⁹¹ He further showed that the acquisition of such 'codes' broadly depended on education and social milieu, which enabled individuals to differentiate themselves socially through cultural competence.¹⁹² As for his concepts of 'field' and 'habitus' discussed in the previous chapters, such theory has to be discussed in a national context as 'codes' tend to change across boundaries. In the case of the critical reception of another country's school of

¹⁹⁰ Nino Barbantini, *La Galleria internazionale d'arte moderna di Venezia* (Venezia : Ferrari, 1925), p. 132. : 'la qualità del disegno... superficiale' of such 'pittura blanda'.

¹⁹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction, A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London, Melbourne, Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 2.

¹⁹² Victorian genre painting could provide a good case to challenge Bourdieu's thesis.

painting, an international perspective implies a cross-cultural analysis. It becomes not only necessary to understand how knowledgeable the Italian elite were about British painting but it is also indispensable to analyse how far British visual culture was perceived and rethought in the Peninsula. Indeed, according to anthropologist David Howes, the semiotic process created by the images lose part of its meaning when they are geographically and culturally displaced.¹⁹³ Thus the receiving culture has to create another one, more adapted to its own system. As outlined above, cross-cultural reception mingled several considerations which influenced the taste for British painting. In the eyes of the Italian, British painting was deciphered and contextualised according to a specific philosophical framework which enabled it to acquire a new set of attributes. In opposition to the theory of Formalism in development at the turn of the century, Italian critics often linked form, content and context. For example philosopher Benedetto Croce theorised his opposition to Formalism in his *Aesthetica in Nuce*. He thus explored the complex scope of aesthetics, which to him dealt with 'problems... of relation between art and other spiritual forms'¹⁹⁴ and further asserted its fluctuating contents as dependent on a wider context.¹⁹⁵ Though published in the 1920s, Croce's *Aesthetica in Nuce* was conceived around 1910-1912 thereby conceptualising the tight interconnection between art and philosophy as expressed by aesthetics.

When reading the reviews produced in Italy between 1878 and the 1920s, it is interesting to note two strong philosophical influences: on the one hand, Hippolyte Taine's ideas, as they were expressed in his 1864 series of lectures on the *Philosophy of Art*,¹⁹⁶ and on the other hand, the Ruskinian doctrine of moral aesthetics as it was developed in *Modern Painters*. Attempts to see paintings as pictorial expressions of salient cultural or moral traits were numerous in Italian reviews. Thus, numerous dichotomies were used to classify art, stemming either from Tainian or from Ruskinian roots: primitivism/ civilisation; Latin/ Nordic;

¹⁹³ *Cross-Cultural Consumption. Global Markets, Local Realities*, ed. by David Howes (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetica in Nuce* (Roma: Bari, Laterza, 1979), p. 24.: 'problemi ... di relazione tra l'arte e le altre forme spirituali'.

¹⁹⁵ Croce, p. 23.

¹⁹⁶ Hippolyte Taine, *Philosophie de l'art*, (Paris : Germer Baillièrè, 1865).

honest/ conceited; spiritual/ void. In order to contextualise properly the philosophical ideas underpinning Italian criticism of the time, it is necessary to explain some key concepts developed by Taine and Ruskin.

What has often been reduced to the triad '*race, milieu, moment*' was actually developed by Hippolyte Taine as a positivist method to understand works of art as part of concentric cultural and societal circles. Taine believed that art belonged to three main wholes: the artist's *oeuvre*, his contemporary artistic period, and lastly a broader cultural climate which favoured its appearance. Thus he explained that 'a work of art is determined by a whole which is the general mind-set and surrounding customs'.¹⁹⁷ Using a comparative analysis taken from biology, Taine explored the idea that what he called 'moral temperature' produced a specific sort of culture and art, the way physical temperature produces specific vegetation. In that respect, art could be but the expression of a people's essence and should be judged only from that perspective to the exclusion of pure aesthetic concerns.

In 1878, Alberto Rondani visited the Paris Exhibition; he elaborated his critical essays on English, German and French art and published them in a book two years later.¹⁹⁸ Echoing Diego Angeli's analysis, Rondani underlined that British paintings contained many technical flaws: 'in general these paintings lack solidity and significance';¹⁹⁹ also, they displayed 'stiffness',²⁰⁰ and 'deficiency in the contours'.²⁰¹ Even the generally highly praised paintings by Lawrence Alma-Tadema seemed to him 'deficient in light and lacking in aerial perspective'.²⁰² However, following Taine, Rondani repeatedly refused to limit his analysis to pictorial technique: 'it is not my intention to dwell on lengthy technical questions',²⁰³ and the reason he gave for abstaining was the following: 'the English jumped into contemporary art feet first... they still lack technical expertise but they are devoid of

¹⁹⁷ Taine, p.77.

¹⁹⁸ Alberto Rondani, *Saggi di critiche d'arte* (Firenze: Tipografia editrice della Gazzetta d'Italia, 1880).

¹⁹⁹ Rondani, p. 6.: 'quelle pitture mancano in generale di solidità e di rilievo'.

²⁰⁰ Rondani, p. 8.: 'rigidità di contegno'.

²⁰¹ Rondani, p. 12.: 'povertà delle linee'.

²⁰² Rondani, p. 54.: 'poveri di luce e mancanti di prospettiva aerea'.

²⁰³ Rondani, p. 54.: 'non è mia intenzione di fare delle lunghe questioni tecniche'.

prejudices. Their art is still a sort of raw material'.²⁰⁴ Drawing his analysis from parallels with Darwinistic theories of evolutions, Rondani invited the public to overlook technical imperfections as English painting had not yet reached the necessary stage of development in order to master it.²⁰⁵ Observing many a genre scenes, Rondani came to the conclusion that such 'raw material' emanated from 'everything that makes people strong: complacent souls, healthy bodies, a useful and saintly life'.²⁰⁶ Indeed a telling sentence summed up Rondani's beliefs about English Art:

English art is full of very chaste feelings; it is eminently spiritual; it seems to belong to a candid, faithful, austere, strong and benevolent people; to a century without malice, primitive, idyllic.²⁰⁷

Here this quotation contains two interesting notions: English painting is considered the synthetic expression of a peculiar historical moment and essential qualities. In that respect, Rondani applied Taine's philosophy. However, the critic also added some 'spiritual' considerations, stemming from a Ruskinian approach to art.

In order to show John Ruskin's instrumental role in the shift of taste regarding the Italian primitive painters that occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century, Lionello Venturi devoted an entire chapter to explaining his thinking process as it was exposed in *Modern Painters* mainly.²⁰⁸ To Ruskin, reality and truth were distinct concepts in art and artists needed imagination to transform

²⁰⁴ Rondani, p. 20.: 'Gl'Inglese... son saltati a piè pari nell'arte contemporanea...e si trovano poveri ancora di perizia tecnica, ma vergini di preconcetti e di pregiudizi. La loro arte è ancora come una specie di materia prima'.

²⁰⁵ Interestingly enough, the same analysis was applied to a renewed understanding of the 'Italian Primitive' painters: their technical flaws meant that they did not focus on the mathematical or physical appearance of things and persons, but rather on their spiritual qualities.

²⁰⁶ Rondani, p. 23.: 'tutto quello che fa la forza de' popoli, la compiacenza dell'animo, la salute del corpo, l'utilità e la santità della vita'.

²⁰⁷ Rondani, p. 5.: 'L'Arte inglese è riboccante di sentimenti castissimi; è eminentemente spirituale; pare che appartenga a un popolo ingenuo, fidente, austero, forte e benigno; a un secolo senza malizia, primitivo, idillico'.

²⁰⁸ Venturi, pp. 183-220.

the truth into reality. Therefore the artist's earnestness became the only element worth appraising in the process of reaching the truth. Even if a painter's truth did not correspond to reality, then he still may not be wrong, as he worked from the heart under the guidance of God. Ruskin thus coined the concept of moral aesthetics in which love played a key part. As Venturi underlined it, Ruskin placed love and earnestness above faithful reproduction of reality. The following excerpt from *Modern Painters* is particularly illuminating from that perspective:

The only true test of good and bad is, ultimately, strength of affection. For it does not matter with what wise purposes, or on what wise principles, the thing is drawn; if it be not drawn for love of it, it will never be right; and if it be drawn for love of it, it will never be wrong –love's misrepresentation being truer than the most mathematical presentation. ... If the artist is in anywise modifying or methodizing to exhibit himself and his dexterity, his work will, in that precise degree, be abortive; and if he is working with hearty love of the place, earnest desire to be faithful to it, and yet an open heart for every fancy that Heaven sends him, in that precise degree his work will be great and good.²⁰⁹

This quotation shows that technical flaws were not an impediment to appreciate works of art, far from it. Rather, these flaws underlined the fact that the artist had worked from the heart, rather than slavishly copying Nature. In that sense, it was logical to call such a painter 'spiritual', be it an Italian Primitive or an English artist. One should not forget that the 'revival' of British art started with Pre-Raphaelitism which heavily drew from the Italian and Flemish primitives.

In Italy, the word 'primitive' came to be used indifferently to describe artists such as Burne-Jones,²¹⁰ or Ruskin himself, who was occasionally compared to Saint

²⁰⁹ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. IV (London: Hazell and Sons, 1888) p. 33.

²¹⁰ Angelo Cecconi (1865-1937), whose pen name was Thomas Neal, defined Burne-Jones as 'naturally primitive, in the same way as Tertullian defined each human being as naturally Christian', ('naturalmente primitivo come Tertulliano diceva ogni uomo naturalmente cristiano'). Th. Neal, 'Edward Burne-Jones', *Il Marzocco*, 26 June 1898, p. 2. He also wrote of Ruskin that 'his character has a sort of fairness and primitiveness which guarantees the sincerity of his feelings and the strength of his will'. ('egli ha nel suo temperamento qualcosa di giusto e di primitivo che garantisce della genuinità del suo sentire e della forza del suo volere'). Th. Neal, 'Ruskin, Rossetti and Company', *Il*

Francis of Assisi by Italian critics.²¹¹ The same qualifications 'simple' and 'candid' often applied to the Glasgow school artists in particular, especially when they were novel on the Italian artistic scene.²¹² As late as 1926, intellectual Camillo Pellizzi applied the same philosophical framework to analyse British landscapes. Using the same qualifying term of 'primitive', he proclaimed that British painters enjoyed a direct and close connection to Nature, which enabled them to reproduce it with simplicity.²¹³ Although Pellizzi took a step further and compared English painters to noble savages, his analysis took part in the same concept of race, purity and primitivism expressed by Rondani, Gilberto Sécrotant or Diego Angeli. The Tainian and Ruskinian philosophies were tightly intertwined in Pellizzi's analysis.

Links between austere customs and spiritual art were further elaborated by Taine. Indeed, he devoted an entire chapter of his *Philosophy of Art* to providing details about Greek and Spartan education and customs in order to explain how this had helped develop their unique art of the statuary. Their rough lifestyles as well as strong moral beliefs were contrasted to the decay of the Roman Empire and their sensual art leading to the barbarian conquests in the Middle Ages.²¹⁴ Comparisons between Great Britain and the ancient civilisations in Rome and Athens were

Marzocco, 2 April 1899, p. 1.

²¹¹ Voicing such widespread analysis in Italy, Antonio Muñoz explained that Ruskin's thought was more akin to mysticism than to philosophy. The critic defined Ruskin a 'Franciscan' due to 'the devout and immense love for nature, the candid passion for mountains and lakes, for the trees and for the birds'. ('amore immenso e devoto per la natura, la candida passione per le montagne, e per i laghi, per gli alberi e per gli uccelli'). Antonio Muñoz, 'Nel Centenario di Ruskin', *Il Marzocco*, 23 February 1919, p. 2.

²¹² Gilberto Sécrotant, 'Il Salon veneziano', *Il Fanfulla della Domenica*, 17 January 1897, p. 2. Such importance placed on earnestness thus prompted a discussion between Ojetti and Pica. Pica had classified the Scottish painters as 'candid' ('ingenui') whereas Ojetti refined the analysis and defined them 'candid and shrewd at the same time. Candid when they always offer a renewed vision of reality, full of wonder and joy... Shrewd because they can render these virgin sensations and sincere emotions on a canvas with a refined technique, a dexterous paint brush, a sure drawing... they behave as if they had studied art from all over the world, from all the periods, and knew it all'. ('ingenui e furbi a un tempo. Ingenui quando vedono la realtà sempre con occhi nuovi, stupendacendosene e godendone... Furbi perchè rendono su la tela queste sensazioni vergini e queste totali e sincere emozioni con una tecnica raffinatissima, con un pennello abilissimo, con un disegno sicurissimo, da gente che ha studiato l'arte di tutto il mondo, di tutte le epoche, e sa tutto'). Ojetti, 1897, p. 137.

²¹³ Pellizzi, p. 168.

²¹⁴ Taine, pp. 101-117. His presentation of the decaying Roman Empire may have been inspired from Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* published between 1776 and 1788.

frequent at the time. In that respect, the concepts of purity and primitivism applied first and foremost to morals. However, these had a civilisational and political impact as clearly indicated by Carlo Placci:

England is today's Rome. Instead of colonising Europe, she is colonising the rest of the world. Instead of building the Via Appia and Via Emilia, she embarked on colossal projects and is building railways from Cairo to the Cape.²¹⁵

Strong morals were thus to be contrasted with decay, which in turn provoked the collapse of empires. This was dwelt on by Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice*. Perhaps inspired by their reading of the English art critic, some Italian intellectuals such as G. Bevione feared such cyclical historical downturns:

That England is great, and should never end. She gave the world too many precious gifts, that we might contemplate the possibility of her decline for a second without quivering [...] England taught the modern world the Roman art of good laws, and how to govern diverse peoples.²¹⁶

Thus, when Rondani called Italian artists to study and get inspiration from English art: 'I say, let's study the English without shame, us famous for our fine arts',²¹⁷ he but expressed the ideas commonly held in Italy at the time: as artistic expression reflected the political and moral state of a people, British painting could be studied as much as its political system in Italy. In that respect, Italian critics departed from the Tainian idea that art could be but the expression of one people and could not be

²¹⁵ Carlo Placci, *In automobile* (Milano: Carabba, 1908) p. 190.: 'L'Inghilterra è la Roma d'oggi, che invece di colonizzare l'Europa, sta colonizzando le restanti parti del mondo, che, iniziatrice d'impresе colossali, in cambio di vie Appie e vie Emilie, costruisce la via ferrata dal Cairo al Capo'.

²¹⁶ Giuseppe Bevione, *L'Inghilterra d'Oggi* (Torino: Fratelli Bocca, 1910), p. 436.: 'Questa Inghilterra è grande, e non dovrebbe finire mai. Essa ha dato al mondo troppi preziosi doni, perchè si possa contemplare per un attimo la possibilità del suo crepuscolo senza fremere [...] L'Inghilterra ha insegnato al mondo moderno l'arte romana delle buone leggi, e come si governino i popoli più diversi'. At the time, Bevione was correspondent for *La Stampa* in London.

²¹⁷ Rondani, p. 22.: 'dico: studiamo gl'Inglesi senza vergognarci, noi popolo famoso nelle belle arti'.

transposed to others.²¹⁸ The beneficial cultural influence stemming from England encouraged a sound cultural and moral renewal in Italy linking it back to ancient civilisations. When after the war, Camillo Pellizzi declared that 'as a whole, the old English artist is a vanishing type, if he ever existed',²¹⁹ he regretted more than a type of artists, he longed for a disappearing civilisation. Political fears thus deeply influenced aesthetic appreciations of paintings.

This brief analysis of Taine and Ruskin's influence on Italian art critics brought forth some contradictions.²²⁰ On the one hand, critics deemed British art 'primitive' and 'spiritual' as emanating from an austere people whereas on the other hand, some of its strands such as portraiture were also 'refined' and 'aristocratic' thereby bearing the mark of an advanced civilisation.²²¹ However all these analyses point out to specific qualities attributed to British painting which were inseparable from broader cultural and political considerations elaborated during the second half of the nineteenth century.

3.2.2.2 Political Interpretation

The period of the pre-war Biennale was indeed characterised by acute international tensions in Europe reinforced by a complex system of diplomatic alliances mainly

²¹⁸ Italian critics thus differed widely from their French counterparts who used Tainian ideas to create a watertight barrier between English and French art: both Chesneau and de la Sizeranne heavily tried to debunk the appeal of British art in France as they felt it threatened national production. Chesneau in particular clearly opposed French/Latin to English painting as emanating from irreconcilable races and aesthetic stances. Chesneau, p. 176.

²¹⁹ Pellizzi, p. 169.: 'in complesso il vecchio artista inglese, se pure sia mai esistito, è un tipo che va scomparendo'.

²²⁰ Taine himself was not fully consistent when he claimed that his scientific method only 'recorded and explained' (p. 21), i.e. underlying its non-judgemental quality, and at the same time he recorded with pride the civilising influence of France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, over 'a savage Muscovite, an uncouth German, a clumsy Englishman, a barbarian or a half barbarian from the North' who 'relinquished his liquor, his pipe, his furs and his feudal life as hunter and lout'. It is to be noted that Taine always started from the Mediterranean (pp. 15-16.) presented as a centre of civilisation and as a soil for lush vegetation, and gradually moved northward where vegetation and civilisation slowly rarefied and dried. His scientific stance thus thinly veiled a tight hierarchical view between races, civilisations, and artistic productions.

²²¹ Vittorio Pica thus included Rossetti and Burne-Jones in his book *Arte aristocratica* (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1995), pp. 264-265.

polarised between the Triple Entente (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy from 1882) and the Triple Alliance (France, Russia and Great Britain from 1907), further complicated by secret negotiations and active colonial expansion. In such a context, it seems highly likely that international politics pervaded European public life in the early twentieth century before climaxing in the First World War. As explained in the previous section, some philosophical theories such as the one developed by Hippolyte Taine also encouraged art critics and the public to decipher art as the expression of a broader cultural and historical context. Therefore this section will study how far the aesthetic and political situation intersected in critical reviews of British painting during the pre-war period.

During most of the nineteenth century, Britain provided a political and economic model for Italy and for the rest of Europe. Since its parliamentary revolution, England represented an example of political freedom and economic growth.²²² Great Britain was thus perceived as an 'example to imitate' although it was also believed that Italy could never actually move close enough to this model. Laura Cerasi thus defined England as a 'mirror of ideology' for Italian politicians.²²³ The Italian understanding of the English model varied according to political interests. During the Giolittian era, it was interpreted in different ways by Italian political groups.²²⁴ The Lombard-Venetian school of economy led by Luigi Luzzatti and the Italian liberals in general appreciated the British capacity for reforms conducted with aristocratic discernment. To the right-wing nationalists to which Attilio Brunialti belonged, the appeal came from the 'protectionist and colonialist' attitude of England, especially from the 1880s on. Lastly, politicians such as Pasquale Villari or

²²² According to Middleton, coming from the powerful and stable Florentine Duchy, Magalotti was deeply troubled by the spectacle of a country fighting for its political liberty. William. E. Knowles Middleton, *Lorenzo Magalotti at the Court of Charles II: his Relazione d'Inghilterra of 1668* (Waterloo: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 1980), p. 13. The Italian traveller's nineteenth century experience is the exact opposite: coming from a troubled country struggling to acquire and then maintain its freedom, they were impressed by the stability of the English institutions.

²²³ Laura Cerasi, 'Anglophilia in Crisis: Italian Liberals, the "English Model", and Democracy in the Giolittian Era', *Modern Italy*, 7, 1 (May 2002), 5-22 (p. 7).

²²⁴ Giovanni Giolitti (1842-1928) was Prime Minister between 1892-1893, 1903-1905, 1906-1909, 1911-1914, 1920- 1921. For more information on this important figure of early twentieth Italian politics, please see Indro Montanelli, *L'Italia di Giolitti (1900-1920)* (Milan: Biblioteca universale Rizzoli, 1999), and Aldo Alessandro Mola, *Giolitti: lo statista della nuova Italia* (Milan: Mondadori, 2003)

Aristide Gabelli reflected on the 'national character' and contrasted the English model to the —absence of— an Italian one.²²⁵

The perception of the English model evolved with time and with historical events. At the turn of the century, Italian politicians feared a 'continentalisation' of the English model, where advanced social reforms and imperialistic domination abroad endangered the traditional perception of the aristocratic and integrative civilisation. Those fears crystallised in the person of the Prime Minister Joseph Chamberlain, who was thought to bring Caesaristic responses to social unrest. Laura Cerasi argued very convincingly that Italy's deep unease with the increasing democratisation of English society actually demonstrated the country's lack of democratic maturity, especially amongst the liberals.²²⁶

In addition, the mood somewhat changed over foreign policies. England had provided a strong political back-up for the Italian unification, with its public opinion generally in favour of the Italian popular upheaval.²²⁷ Revolutionaries such as Ugo Foscolo, Giuseppe Mazzini or Gabriele Rossetti who had been banned from Italy and most of the continent, had found a harbour and political support in London.²²⁸ However the *fin-de-siècle* period proved slightly more complicated due to Italy's expansionist ambitions. On the surface Italy's foreign policy reflected the country's general *Anglophilia* and repeated friendly declarations. Below the surface, Italy pricked Britain every time its colonial expansion upset the fragile balance in the

²²⁵ Roberto Romani, *L'Economia politica del Risorgimento italiano* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1994), pp. 208-209.

²²⁶ Cerasi, pp. 5-22 (p. 9 and p. 19).

²²⁷ Denis Mack Smith affirmed that 'politicians in London knew much more about Italy than about Germany or the United States' and 'no other issue in foreign policy attracted so much sympathy as the 'Italian question' in his article on 'Britain and the Italian Risorgimento', *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies*, 5 (1997), 83-102 (p. 84). Genuine affection was doubled with politic interest of course.

²²⁸ There is an abundant literature regarding the Italian presence in England. One of the first histories of those Italian exiles was written by Margaret Wicks, *The Italian Exiles in London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1937); Piero Rebora also lists the best-known nineteenth century Italian exiles in Great Britain in the appendix of his book *In Inghilterra* (Roma: Società nazionale Dante Alighieri, 1938), pp. 107-110. England harboured nineteenth century political refugees much like it had harboured sixteenth century Italian religious dissenters, such as Bernardino Ochino (1487-1564), Jacopo Aconzio (1492-1567) or Giordano Bruno (1548-1600).

Mediterranean or in Africa, or when it threatened to erode Britain's hegemony.²²⁹ From that perspective, the 1911-1912 Italo-Turkish war certainly provided an anti-climax in the Anglo-Italian relations. Yet they seemed much more peaceful and constructive than with the ambitious French and German neighbours. After the unification, Great Britain was Italy's first capital investor, and remained so until the First World War. The influx of English capital was particularly prevalent in the primary (extraction of raw material) and tertiary sectors (banks, commerce, insurance, transportation).²³⁰ Britain thus positioned itself as a sort of mentor to the new kingdom, giving practical economic support and political guidance on the international scene.

As was explained earlier, it took Italian art critics some Biennale editions to adjust and build up their own interpretative codes to decipher British painting. Indeed the influence of French art critics such as Ernest Chesneau had created some preconceived ideas that continental critics could not really understand British art. However the French philosophical model also fostered an interpretative model as seeking 'national character' in works of art, a recurring phrase in Italian reviews throughout the period. The following examples will analyse the growing importance of political interpretation in the Italian pre-war cross-cultural code.

In 1905, the British section curated by Corot-inspired landscapist Alfred East was contrasted to the newly formed Russian room curated by Sergei Diaghilev. Although the latter contained a mix of young and well-known artists such as Diaghilev's friends Leon Bakst (1866-1924) and Nicolai Ulyanov (1875-1949) or Ilya Repin (1844-1930), who had already exhibited in Venice, comments were scathing. Diego Angeli lambasted Diaghilev's arrangement describing it as 'ostentatious, the expression of a decrepit people which wants to seem very young, of the unbalance of a body upset by a period of crisis, of the complete absence of tradition, of the

²²⁹ Christopher Duggan, *Francesco Crispi, 1818-1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) p.526 or p. 662.

²³⁰ Peter Hertner, 'Il Capitale Straniero in Italia (1883-1913)', *Studi Storici*, 22, 4 (October-December 1981), 767-795. In particular Hertner includes four charts at the end of his paper detailing the main sources of capital in Italy between 1883 and 1911 and to which regions they were allocated.

uncertainty of the objective to reach'.²³¹ On the other hand, the British section gave to see 'the most sincere expression of a people sure of the way to go and [...] that the way is drawn to the end of the world'.²³² Beyond his sheer dislike of Diaghilev's display, Angeli's comments seemingly referred to the deep social unrest storming Tsarist Russia from 1905 onwards with bloodshed, rebellions and strikes. As 1907 was also a year of social and economic crisis in Italy, the fear of contamination was present and possibly tainting some critics' aesthetic appreciation. Indeed, seen as a reassuring aesthetic stronghold and a strong political power in which reforms occurred without too much social unrest, Britain provided a political and social model.

After June 1907 when Great Britain joined the Triple Entente, Italy and Great Britain were theoretically in different if not opposed camps. However within this apparently rigid system, the two countries managed to remain on broadly friendly terms as was already explained in the previous chapter. When the War broke out, Italy's reluctance to embrace the cause of its allies partly accounted for its decision to secretly sign the Treaty of London in 1914. On 26 April 1915, this officialised Italy's decision to side with the Triple Entente in exchange of territories. However, during the crucial years leading to the War, such possibility was already visible in the comments made by critics at the Biennale as the cultural arena seemingly allowed for more freedom to express anti-German feelings.

Indeed although the Austro-Italian relationships were far from friendly, most attacks by art critics focussed on Germany, then commonly opposed to Great Britain. Interestingly enough art mirrored politics as their Pavilions were facing each other in the Biennale *giardini*. For example, after visiting both pavilions in 1909 Arturo Lancellotti strongly contrasted the two countries:

²³¹ Diego Angeli, 'Gl'Inglese all'Esposizione', *Il Marzocco*, 12 May 1907, p. 2.: 'in una si ha l'ostentazione di un popolo decrepito che vuol sembrar giovanissimo, lo squilibrio di un organismo sconvolto da un periodo di crisi, l'assenza totale della tradizione, l'incertezza della meta da raggiungere'.

²³² Angeli, 1907, p.2.: 'sono la più sincera espressione di un popolo sicuro della via da percorrere e conscio che questa via [...] è tracciata fino ai confini del mondo'.

A single, quick visit is enough to understand that in painting as elsewhere, the different nations reveal their characters. Germany, a conquering country is, I would say, almost aggressive in her paintings: one can see the desire, nay the firm willingness, to gain the upper hand. And her paintings are vigorous, if vulgar at times [...] England, which has already reached the height of prosperity, is looking even higher in her paintings. She is not preoccupied with overtaking others and succeeds with elegance and delicacy.²³³

That year, Secession painter Franz von Stuck (1863-1928) had a one-man show whilst the majority of German painters exhibited in the Bavarian Pavilion alongside artists from Switzerland or Norway. Stuck's historical paintings were appreciated although their 'pagan' vision was seen as containing 'barbarian virulence'.²³⁴ On the other hand the newly-opened British Pavilion offered an array of almost one hundred painters, among whom Lavery, East and Sir James Guthrie were much appreciated in Italy at the time. That year Italian officials acquired works by Lavery, Shannon and Grosvenor Thomas. Although the British display at the 1909 Biennale certainly encountered more success than the German one, Lancellotti's comments went beyond sheer artistic appreciation. It is tempting to see the use of the adjectives 'conquering' and 'aggressive' as evidence of political interpretation. In 1896 Germany's naval policy started with Alfred von Tirpitz's nomination as Secretary of the Imperial Navy office.²³⁵ His Naval Bills enabled Germany to build up her fleet to rival Britain's traditional naval supremacy. From 1906 onwards, the threat became plainer as Germany incorporated the yearly construction of battleships into her fleet, which in return accelerated the Anglo-German naval race. At the time of the opening of the eighth Biennale in 1909, the 1908 German Navy

²³³ Arturo Lancellotti, *Le biennali veneziane dell'ante guerra, I-XI* (Alessandria: Casa d'arte Ariel, 1924), p. 73.: 'Basta una prima visita, anche rapida, per capire che anche in pittura le diverse nazioni rivelano il loro carattere. La Germania, paese conquistatore, è, direi, quasi aggressivo nei suoi quadri: si vede il desiderio, anzi la ferma volontà di affermarsi, di guadagnare il primato. E la pittura è vigorosa, non senza essere talora volgare alquanto [...] L'Inghilterra, che ha già raggiunto il massimo della prosperità, volge anche in pittura, le sue mire più in alto. Non ha la preoccupazione di scavalcare gli altri e riesce signorile, fine'.

²³⁴ Vittorio Pica, 'L'arte mondiale all'VII Esposizione di Venezia. I. Le mostre individuali di Besnard, Zorn e Stuck', *Emporium*, July 1909, p. 62.

²³⁵ Patrick J. Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2011)

Bill had provoked British retaliation with the 'Navy Scare' voted early that year.²³⁶ Similar comments were to follow which also presented a lofty Great Britain being attacked by an invidious Germany:

Through her three or four major representatives, English painting seems to have reached a level of thoughtful and absorbed beauty as if she had received an infusion of the tranquil, diffuse and secure well-being of her Nation which, today, a younger empire, Germany, is envying so much, and that England might have to prepare to defend one day in the near future, perhaps with arms.²³⁷

By then, comments showed a plain intersection between politics and aesthetics as the war lexicon had invaded artistic comments. As shown earlier, this was further complicated by the opposition between visions of modernity. This type of comments was not exclusive to the Venice Biennale as similar impressions were expounded at the 'International Feminine Exhibition' at Turin in 1913:

England and Germany seem to fight between two hegemonies: that of an art educated to antique severity and that of an uninterrupted stream of new and disputable ideals. Who will win the victory palm? It is difficult to say.²³⁸

Thus contrary to early interpretative model derived from the French one which qualified British art as 'barbarian' or alien to Latin people, the Italian code used at the eve of the War suggested that Britain was seen as the champion of classicism

²³⁶ Amelia Hadfield-Amkhan, *British Foreign Policy, National Identity, and Neoclassical Realism* (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010).

²³⁷ Antonio Cippico, 'Pittori rappresentativi: Charles Shannon', *Vita d'Arte*, 3, 5 (March 1910), 87-102 (pp. 96-97): 'La pittura inglese invece, nei suoi tre o quattro maggiori rappresentanti, sembra essere giunta a un grado di bellezza pensosa e raccolta, quasi anche in essa si fosse riversata un'ondata di quel benessere diffuso, tranquillo e sicuro della nazione che oggi, un impero più giovane, la Germania, così ansiosamente le invidia, e che ella stessa Inghilterra deve pur prepararsi a contendergli in un giorno non lontano, forse con le armi'.

²³⁸ Alfredo Vinardi, 'L'esposizione femminile internazionale e la mostra degli amici dell'arte', *Emporium*, July 1913, p. 78.: 'Tra due egemonie sembrano lottare Inghilterra e Germania; quella di un'arte educata alla severità antica e quella di un irrompere baldanzoso di nuovi e discutibili ideali. A chi la palma della vittoria? Sarebbe difficile rispondere'.

and civilisation. Such shift of vocabulary cannot be fully explained by the artistic 'threat' posed by the avant-garde. Only if politics are intersected with aesthetics can these comments acquire their full meaning. This in turn shows that Italian art critics saw more than specific genres or subjects in British paintings and that their aesthetic appreciation was underpinned by political analysis.

The critical reception of British painting in Italy is a complex and vast field of investigation, of which this chapter does not pretend to give a comprehensive review but rather possible directions to explore. In terms of breadth of material, a greater number of Italian magazines would probably yield a more nuanced analysis, both in terms of opinion and taste. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, the documents are unfortunately piecemeal but they reveal some fascinating data touching on links between professionals and collectors in both countries. The second half of the nineteenth century saw a dramatic increase of interest and diffusion of the knowledge on English art, fuelled by widespread cultural *Anglophilia*, the rise of a new generation of critics, and the organisation of international exhibitions in Italy. Such in-depth interest seemed to have been prolonged until the First World War, when English art and culture were presented as the antithesis of destructive avant-garde trends. A closer look at reviews showed not only the evolution of the visual consumption of British painting but also revealed some specific philosophical and political perspectives in the Italian deciphering code. This confirmed that cross-cultural consumption caused art critics to fit foreign works of art in their own interpretative model. This resulted in aesthetics to be often mingled with other considerations. The findings in this chapter thus reinforced what chapter II had already suggested, i.e. that the British presence at the Venice Biennale was inseparable from some political concerns. This now needs further testing with the commercial performance of the sections over the pre-war period.

CHAPTER FOUR:

'THE GREAT PICTURE MART OF ITALY': ACQUISITIONS OF BRITISH PAINTINGS AT THE VENICE BIENNALI

The previous chapter focussed on different parameters contextualising the market for British paintings at Venice, i.e. the Biennale as a platform for exhibiting and dealing in the primary and secondary art market, the evolution of the offer in the British section and its cross-cultural reception. Various factors influenced the amount and quality of the offer on the British side as well as its appreciation on the Italian side. In particular it has been shown that political beliefs and friendly cultural ties may have fuelled the taste for British painting in Italy. Although the elements discussed in the previous chapters already question the notion of 'insularity' as Clive Bell intended it, this chapter aims at testing these cultural parameters further with the economic consumption of British paintings in Venice. Indeed the purpose of this chapter is to conduct a detailed market analysis which will bring forth its major characteristics and the results achieved at Venice. By so doing, it is hoped to recontextualise the international demand for British artistic output in a competitive market environment.

4.1 General Report on Sales at Venice, 1895-1914¹

Research for this section was carried out at the ASAC in Venice where fortunately the sales ledgers have all been kept and represent the key source of information upon which this study rests. In addition to these, financial reports were also consulted as well as secondary sources when necessary in order to compare the data.² In spite of

¹ See Appendix 4, charts 1 to 4.

² Although books dealing with the presence of specific countries at the pre-war Biennali do not include a section on their sales; they rather focus on the evolution of the contents of their sections and the reception of their nations' art.

some inaccuracies, or missing comparative data in some years (the year 1914 was unsurprisingly the least reliable), it was possible to obtain a broad understanding of the pre-War financial trends at the Biennale.³ In terms of currency, most paintings were sold in Italian Liras, some in French Francs and a very limited number in Pound Sterling. In spite of possible minor currency fluctuations during the period covered, the figures found have allowed to fix a conversion rate of GBP 1= ITL 25 and FF 1= ITL 1 which will be used throughout this study for the sake of clarity.⁴ Overall it is also good to bear in mind that not all works exhibited at the Venice Biennale were for sale. Statistics have been used as a primary interpretational tool in this section as they reveal some general patterns; they will be further contextualised with the discussion of macro-events such as the national and international economic and political situations in the next sections.

Whereas secondary sources of the period often talk about ‘the Venetian venture’ with pride, underlining its ‘resounding economic success’,⁵ the ledgers and reports generally let the figures speak for themselves thereby providing a more reliable source. The overall number of sales which comprised not only paintings, but also works on paper, prints, sculpture and from 1903 decorative arts, shows a spectacular rise between 1895 and 1909 from 186 to 1209 works, i.e. an increase of over 600% in eight editions of the Biennale [See Appendix 4, Chart 1]. The upward tendency was only tempered by a slight decrease in 1903 and 1907. Although it is difficult to explain the former, the latter can easily be ascribed to the financial crisis which shook up Italy that year.⁶ However, the crisis did not affect the number of visitors as it augmented by over

³ Venice, ASAC, Registri delle vendite, 1 to 15, listed in the bibliography. Unless stated otherwise all prices mentioned in this chapter can be found in those ledgers and are referenced in Appendix 4.

⁴ Some figures showed that the conversion rate between Liras and Sterling had varied between 25 and 27 during the period; however the conversion rate between Liras and Francs remained fairly constant as both countries were part of the Latin Monetary Union, which started in 1865 and officially ended in 1927. Because the Lira and Sterling currency symbols look fairly similar, their ISO 4217 code equivalent will be used throughout this study in order to avoid ambiguity. For more information on the Latin monetary union, see Henry Parker Willis, *A History of the Latin Monetary Union* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1901).

⁵ Alessandro Stella, *Cronistoria della Esposizione internazionale d'Arte della città di Venezia 1895-1912* (Venezia: G. Fabbri, 1913), p. 70.: ‘clamoroso successo economico’.

⁶ The Panic of 1907 started in New York where the stock exchange lost half its value from the previous year reaching an alarming low in April 1907. In Italy, the stock exchange crisis was followed by a banking

30%; with another 28% increase for the following edition, visitors rose to an unprecedented 457,960, a figure which was only exceeded in 1976.⁷ More arduous to account for is the perceptible decrease in the number of sales which occurred in 1910, paralleled by a decrease of over 100,000 visitors to the Giardini from 1909 [See Appendix 4, Chart 3], which may simply be ascribed to a counter-effect of the record-breaking year 1909. Indeed, while visitors are slightly under the 1907 level, sales are nevertheless 25% higher than they were that year. In spite of a tense international context following the Second Moroccan Crisis and the Italo-Turkish war of 1911, both the number of visitors and the overall sales increased significantly in 1912, rising by 22% and 32% respectively. On the contrary, the last pre-War Biennale was unsurprisingly affected by the looming First World War and saw both its number of visitors and sales go back to 1907 levels when a national crisis took place.

For a better understanding of the overall performance of the Biennale as an art market, the number of sales needs to be related to the sales volume, i.e. the total amount of money spent for each edition of the Biennale [See Appendix 4, Chart 2]. The turnover increased by over 60% between 1895 and 1912, from ITL 360,000 to ITL 590,844.25, registering an uninterrupted growth between 1899 and 1912, before plummeting to its worst ever result in 1914 with ITL 324,228. Contrary to what the number of sales suggests, the sales volume shows that falls in sales do not necessarily mean a worse turnover. Both in 1907 and in 1910 when the number of sales notably decreased the sales volume augmented; this seems to suggest that buyers focused on works with higher individual prices. It also shows quite clearly that national or international crises only had a limited impact on the financial results of the Biennale, except for the onset of the First World War. The only year which recorded a slight decrease in the turnover was 1899 when the sales volume went back to the 1895 level. Yet the number of sales slightly increased from 1897 which had marked a peak in the

crisis in October 1907, and an accompanying social crisis with national strikes. For more information, see O.M.W. Sprague, 'The American Crisis of 1907', *The Economic Journal*, 18, 71 (September 1908), 353-372.

⁷ Enzo Di Martino, *The History of the Venice Biennale, 1895-2005, Visual Arts, Architecture, Cinema, Dance, Music, Theatre* (Venezia: Papiro Arte, 2005), p. 119.

sales volume. Equally, the period between 1899 and 1903 may be qualified as 'stagnating' as it only registered a slight increase of 6% in the sales volume whereas the number of sales augmented by almost 60% in 1901 and lowered by 10% in 1903. Such discrepancies are difficult to explain and may be coincidental. Only more in-depth research at the archives could give a better clue as to possible causes.

A cursory look at the type of sales shows that the Biennale seems to have managed to move successfully from a national market to an international one. Indeed the sales of foreign works progressed exponentially between 1895 and 1909 thereby broadly accounting for the trend described above. However as shown on Chart 4 the progression of foreign sales regularly suffered from major drops. Indeed sales of foreign works were fairly equal in numbers for the years 1899 and 1903, and for the years 1901, 1907 and 1914, which means that they relapsed half the time. This seems to indicate some inconsistencies in the market which will need to be looked at into more depth. On the other hand, the market for Italian works progressed steadily between 1895 and 1909 (except for 1905) and sales were multiplied by 5 during that period. Following the general trend, they dropped in 1910 but recovered in 1912 and 1914. Compared to any single foreign sections, sales of Italian works were always much more important. It seems therefore that sales for Italian and foreign works followed distinct if not opposed patterns. The former one showed qualities of strength, consistency and steady rise, with exceptions, while the latter demonstrated a great volatility characterised by sharp rises and falls. While the former stemmed from a robust domestic market in which the artists were generally well-known, economically desirable and reflecting regional taste, the latter probably depended on novelty, fashionable trends and perhaps elements of speculation. This will need to be probed further in the course of this chapter.

From its inception, the organisers wished to promote an international presence which was broadly reflected in the sales. Indeed, as shown on Chart 4, only on four occasions were there more sales of Italian paintings than of foreign ones: in 1899,

1903, 1907 and 1914, with only 1903 and 1914 showing a significant gap between the two. Whilst the 1914 result may easily be ascribed to the nationalistic retreat which characterised all European countries, the 1903 results are more difficult to explain from a geopolitical point of view. However, as this was the year when Fradeletto allowed the Italian sections to exhibit and sell decorative arts alongside the fine arts, a higher turnover of cheaper works in the Italian sections may account for it. In turn, Fradeletto's decision to extend the exhibition of decorative arts to the foreign sections was reflected in their sales peak during the 1905 edition. Whilst the first two peaks of foreign sales could be ascribed to purely aesthetic trends with, in 1897, the success of the Japanese and Scottish sections and, in 1901, a marked taste for 'Northern' artists defined by Vittorio Pica as 'Northern Obsession',⁸ the 1909 record high is no doubt linked to an institutional step. Indeed, from the point of view of space and even more so from the point of view of foreign representation and involvement in the Biennali, Fradeletto, perhaps on the suggestion of Vittorio Pica,⁹ encouraged the construction of Pavilions. Although the first Pavilion, built by Belgium for the 1907 edition, did not immediately encounter the commercial success it could hope for due to the stringent international financial context already mentioned, the 1909 edition saw the opening of the British, Bavarian and Hungarian Pavilions, followed by France and Sweden in 1912 and eventually by Russia in 1914. As surmised in chapter I, these seven Pavilions indisputably contributed to the greater marketing and financial success of the Venice exhibitions: from a purely numerical point of view, these Pavilions encouraged greater numbers of exhibits hence offering more for sale. Also, they fostered competition and official interest from the countries, which in turn sent more representatives and

⁸ Vittorio Pica, 'L'arte mondiale alla IV esposizione di Venezia, L'ossessione nordica', *Numero Speciale Emporium*, 1901, pp. 1-150. There was an exhibition on that theme at the Palazzo Roverella at Rovigo, 22 February- 22 June 2014.

⁹ Paola Zatti, , *La gestione delle primi Biennali tra tradizione e innovazione (1895-1912), I contributi esterni* (unpublished master's thesis, Università degli studi di Venezia, Ca' Foscari, 1992). The letter from Vittorio Pica to Antonio Fradeletto, dated 9 June 1898 contained the following question: 'lo vi chiederò ancora una volta, se non sia possibile costruire nei giardini che circondano la Mostra, alcuni padiglioni?' (n.p.)

journalists to Venice.¹⁰ The case of Great Britain will be discussed in more depth in the next section. In addition to more international press coverage, the 1909 edition thus saw the foreign sales triple from 1907 with 764 items sold. This excellent result was unparalleled in the pre-War period as both the 1910 and 1914 Biennali were marked by sharp declines in sales. Although foreign artists still sold almost three times as many works as their Italian counterparts, their overall sales diminished by 36% in 1910. Two reasons may be brought forward for this decline: on the one hand, the 50th Anniversary exhibition in Rome, due to take place in 1911, upset the calendar of the Biennale as for obvious reasons the Venice organisers did not wish the two exhibitions to take place at the same time. In a bold move, Fradeletto decided to anticipate his exhibition, thereby leaving only five months to prepare for the next edition. In parallel, the number of visitors dropped in 1910, probably for the same reason. The Rome exhibition also seems to have had an adverse impact on the quality of the 1912 Venice Biennale, although sales in the foreign sections increased very slightly.

In addition to increasing international tensions, the last two Biennali also saw a rising controversy as to the taste promoted by the organisers: undisturbed by the Futurist Manifesto thrown from the bell tower onto St Mark's Square and the virulent criticism from the Director of Ca' Pesaro Nino Barbantini, Fradeletto had refused to hang a Picasso in 1910.¹¹ However his position was increasingly under attacks and the appointment of Vittorio Pica as Vice-Secretary from 1912 represented an additional push to allow more avant-garde presence at the Biennale. As a possible —negative— answer to the opening up to newer artistic trends comprising artists of post-impressionist sensibility, sales in the last two Biennali progressively refocused on Italian paintings: they more than doubled between 1910 and 1912 and eventually largely overtook the sale of foreign works in 1914.

¹⁰ Stella, p. 95. Stella reported that British journalists flowed to Venice in 1909 from the *Standard*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Graphic*, *Daily Mail*, *Globe*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Daily Chronicle*, *Morning Post*, *Daily Express*, *Manchester Courier*, *Westminster Gazette*, *Illustrated London News*, *Parson's Magazine*, *Schoolmaster*, the *Western Morning*, the *News Plymouth*, and the *Evening Standard*.

¹¹ Bazzoni, p. 82. Throughout this chapter, the name 'Ca' Pesaro' will be used to designate the Gallery of Modern Art, Venice.

The sales were thus the product of various and intertwined factors which derived from the international and local levels alike. It is nevertheless possible to identify the main trends underpinning their evolution: increasing international opening, reluctance to embrace avant-garde production and some sensitivity to national and international events. Overall they reflected the broad and increasing success of the Venice Biennale, with two distinct sales patterns assigned to domestic and foreign works.

4.2 Report on British Sales 1895-1914¹²

A statistical analysis of the general market results at the Venice Biennali has already revealed some interesting data which can sometimes be explained by macro-events. The same methodology will be applied here in order to obtain a broad understanding of acquisition patterns and their evolution.

Sales in the British section followed their own trajectory which was in some respect different from the general foreign sales or from the Italian sales charts studied previously. When compared to the general sales curve, the British one also shows signs of steep increase and falls thereby broadly following the same strongly fluctuating pattern as the rest of the foreign sales [See Chart 5]. Indeed its first peak in 1897 and its depressions in 1907 and in 1914 were echoed by the general foreign sales curve. In the same vein, Britain's sale rise by over 50% in 1905 reflected the increase foreign sales which multiplied by over 3 overall peaking to 473 works. This result took place the very year Britain, together with Germany, France, Hungary and Sweden, was encouraged to exhibit decorative arts within its fine arts sections.¹³ On the other hand, its second peak took place in 1910 a year when both foreign and Italian sales fell sharply as was pointed out before. In addition, an additional exhibit was sold in the British section for a total of 11 paintings and watercolours in 1903, whilst the general foreign sales dropped by almost 30%. On the contrary, some highs in the general

¹² See Appendix 4, Charts 5 to 8.

¹³ Antonio Fradeletto, *L'arte nella vita* (Bari: Laterza, 1929), p. 43.

foreign sales curve corresponded to relapses in the British section: for example in 1901, British sales were halved whilst the general sales rose by over 30%. The sales of British paintings might have been affected by the presence of cheaper items of decorative arts in a similar way to what happened with the Italian section.¹⁴ Lastly the slight 1912 increase in foreign sales actually saw a steep drop in the British section, with results falling by circa 60%. These comparisons must be tempered by the fact that the sales curve for the British section does not take into account sculptures, prints, decorative arts or crafts whereas the other graphs encompass all exhibits. This may account for the partly different pattern created in the British sales charts.

The sales volume roughly follows the number of sales with one caveat [See Chart 5]. In 1905 the ledgers consigned 15 works as being sold in the British section, which marked a sharp 50% increase from 1903, echoed by sales volume which rose from ITL 17,272.22 to ITL 37,100.55. This result is somehow artificial as four decorative panels by Frank Brangwyn were actually sold outside of the Biennale to Leeds woolen manufacturer Samuel Wilson for a total of ITL 10,000.¹⁵ Although Fradeletto was made aware of the sale only in November 1905, he nevertheless decided to add it to the total figure. On the other hand, the sales volume accentuates the depression of the year 1901 where the turnover fell by over 70%. Lastly, it confirms the exceptional nature of the years 1897, 1909 and 1910.

Although a glance at the number of exhibits and sales confirmed that the setting up of the British Pavilion in 1909 acted as a market catalyst, it must

¹⁴ From 1907, the firm Pilkington's Tile and Pottery Company was introduced and gained some success at the Biennale; from 1909, the Ruskin Pottery and Enamel Works also competed for Italian and international clientele at the Biennale. The last two Biennali saw the introduction of crafts such as jewels.

¹⁵ The sale of the four panels appeared as an addendum on Venice, ASAC, Registro Vendite, 6. Other sources indicated that Samuel Wilson's art adviser Mark Senior offered £400 to Brangwyn for the panels before the opening of the Venice Biennale and that Brangwyn informed the Biennale organisers that his panels would not be for sale. David Boswell, 'Frank Brangwyn and his patrons', in *Frank Brangwyn, 1867-1956*, ed. by Libbie Horner and Gillian Naylor (Sheffield: Northend, 2006), pp. 156-187 (p. 166). Yet letters and telegrams exchanged between Antonio Fradeletto and Mario Borsa dated November 1905 expressed their ignorance until Borsa sent an article from a local Leeds newspaper which announced the donation of the panels to the Art Gallery. Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 39 'Vendite', 29/VIII/1905-14/XI/1905, 314 and 430.

nevertheless be pointed out that proportionally the best years were 1897 with the introduction of the Glasgow Boys; 1905, when Alfred East curated the room with almost 30% of the exhibits sold; and 1903 when ten paintings were sold out of 48 exhibited there. By comparison, 1909 comes only fourth and 1910 sixth in proportion [See Chart 6]. This seems to suggest that when the British section was smaller and perhaps curated more carefully, it proportionally attracted more buyers than when numbers of exhibits soared to the detriment of quality. This was echoed in the reviews published in the Italian press whereby critics lamented the lowering of tone at the British Pavilion when smaller-sized watercolours, pastels and drawings almost outnumbered oil paintings [See Appendix 1]. As a consequence, the year 1912 and 1914 show a sharp decline in their proportional results with respectively 9.2% and 4.1% of their exhibits sold.

After delineating the general statistical trends characterising the market for British art between 1895 and 1914, it is now important to try and relate the sales to domestic and international events which may have affected them however the answers can only be tentative at this stage. As findings in chapter three strongly suggested that aesthetic appreciation was tightly connected with political or ideological opinions, an overview of the landmarks in Anglo-Italian relations seems necessary here. There was no particular antagonism between Italy and Great Britain in the late 19th and early 20th century; rather Italian politicians looked to England as the fourth plinth of their foreign policy as Prime Minister Marchese Rudini declared on 1st July 1896: 'with regards to our friendship with England, I considered it to be always necessary for Italy. Since the day we entered the Triple Alliance, I considered such friendship should be the necessary complement to that alliance',¹⁶ which was confirmed time and again by Foreign Secretaries and the Diplomatic corps. However it is true that when the same Rudini ceded the Sudanese city of Kassala back to the Kingdom of Egypt in 1897, thereby allowing the British to take it over in 1899, the

¹⁶ Quoted in Albertini, p. 134.: 'In quanto all'amicizia coll'Inghilterra, io la ritenni sempre necessaria all'Italia, e dal giorno in cui entrammo nella Triplice Alleanza, io ritenni pure che quell'amicizia dovesse essere il necessario complemento di tale alleanza'.

Italian public opinion protested vigorously, which may have led to the marginal drop of sales that year at the Biennale. More interesting to study in terms of politics was the plummeting 1907 sales result: how far could it be seen as a consequence of the dismay of a portion of the Italian elite after the sweeping Liberal victory in the General election the year before?¹⁷ Cerasi argued that the growing gap in Anglo-Italian relations significantly widened after Lloyd George's People Budget of 1909 and England's move towards social welfare.¹⁸ However 1909 and 1910 marked record sales in the British Pavilion at the Biennale. More importantly perhaps, the Italo-Turkish war of 1911-1912 certainly affected Anglo-Italian relations as Italy was severely criticised by the British press, which in turn provoked acrimonious retaliations in the Peninsula.¹⁹ This prompted the Vice-Chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce for Italy, A.C. Campbell, to write an open letter to the Editor of *The Times* to warn him against the possible backlashes springing from such situation: 'This unfriendly attitude of the British press has caused the greatest surprise and pain to our Italian friends [...] we would point out that commercially our relations with Italy are likely to suffer considerably, as the feeling of soreness will take some time to wear off. Sentiment counts for something in business transactions'.²⁰ The bitter and violent exchange through the press may well account for at least part of the 57% drop in sales in the British section amidst an otherwise expanding 1912 Biennale. The sharp fall in sales, with a result comparable to the year 1907, was not a surprising element of the 1914 edition; however the high number of exhibits, second only to the year 1910, indicated

¹⁷ Cerasi, 5-22 (pp. 11-12).

¹⁸ Cerasi, 5-22 (pp. 13-14).

¹⁹ Several articles from *The Times* testify to the disappointment and distress caused by the embitterment of Anglo-Italian relations; one article reported that Francis M'Cullagh, a war correspondent for the *New York World* and the *Westminster Gazette*, gave a public lecture on Monday 20 November 1911 at the Memorial Hall on alleged atrocities committed by the Italian army in and around Tripoli but the Italian members of the audience protested so loudly that the police were called in. Francis M'Cullagh was even challenged to a duel! 'Alleged Atrocities in Tripoli', *The Times*, Tuesday 21 November 1911, p. 5.

²⁰ A.C. Campbell, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Times*, Wednesday 18 October 1911, p. 7.

that the British Committee had not foreseen the War which broke out three months after the beginning of the Biennale.²¹

Thus statistics have helped design broad patterns of evolution in the market for British art at Venice. One of its first characteristics brought forth here was its highly fluctuating nature which was only temporarily remedied with the installation of the Pavilion in 1909. However the reasons for such instability are sometimes difficult to pinpoint even with the help of the international context. This makes it necessary to shift from macro explanations to a more detailed approach which will focus on the typology of works acquired and then on an analysis of their buyers.

4.3 Typology of Works Acquired

While the previous section was focusing on crunching numbers and analysing broad patterns in the sales of British art, this section will look chronologically at the group of one hundred and thirty six paintings, watercolours and drawings which met the demand of the buyers at Venice. Here the sales will be compared and contrasted to the critical reception of British art already discussed in chapter III. When reading this section, it is important to remember that the prices quoted were gross. A commission of 10% was systematically deducted from the sales price in most cases; also the expenses incurred from any form of communication from the Biennale organisers with the artists such as telegrams were taken off the net price. As a result, these were sometimes significantly lower.

As much as the Italian art critics had drawn the attention of the public to the British section and its selection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings at the first edition of the Biennale, this did not translate into sales and Britain was amongst the least popular countries. The total number of paintings sold amounted to three, as opposed to five for

²¹ Most of the paintings exhibited in the British section that year were kept in Italy and were returned only after the end of the War.

France, Germany and Holland, six for Norway or eight for Spain. In terms of type, all three paintings were landscapes, one by Henry Davis, RA (1833-1914) and two by William Hulton (fl. 1882-1921). Although Henry Davis had gone through a Pre-Raphaelite phase in the 1850s and early 1860s, his 1892 *Frutteto in Picardia [An Orchard in Picardy]* seemed broader in style [Figure 11].²² The extremely high price of ITL 13,921.50 (GBP 556.86) achieved for *Orchard* probably reflects the painter's status of popular artist who regularly exhibited at the Royal Academy, obtained good auction results and benefited from an institutional profile through the Chantrey Bequest. On the other hand, William Hulton stopped exhibiting at the Royal Academy in 1889 but was a regular visitor in Venice where he died. The relative obscurity of his artistic fame at the time may explain the comparatively lower price achieved by *Mattina [Morning]* and *Sera [Evening]* at Venice (ITL 600 each or GBP 24). Thus the first discrepancy between critical reception and market data shows that the Pre-Raphaelites were eagerly awaited and talked about without selling any works. One possible explanation lies in the fact that, as was seen in chapter II, the British art market for contemporary art was much stronger than the still embryonic Italian one in particular for the 'late Victorian' generation. Prices for fashionable living painters reached unprecedented peaks in sterling which, translated into Italian Lire, made local artists' mouth water. In 1895, Vittorio Pica underlined the public's bewilderment at Millais's price tag of ITL 150,000 (GBP 6,000) for *L'ornitologo [The Ornithologist]*, deemed a 'a truly amazing amount for an Italian painter',²³ and reported that altogether the Pre-Raphaelites were said to have earned no less than ITL 12 million (GBP 480,000).²⁴ To provide a point of comparison, ITL 150,000 was the non-repayable amount awarded by the Venice City Council to set up the International Exhibition in 1895.²⁵ Without going to the extreme

²² Throughout this chapter, the titles of the works will be given in Italian, followed whenever possible by their title in English quoted in between square brackets.

²³ Pica, 1895, p. 41. Please see chapter II, footnote 20, for the full Italian quotation.

²⁴ Pica, 1895, p. 22.

²⁵ Antonio Fradeletto, *La Gestione finanziaria delle Esposizioni internazionali d'arte di Venezia* (Venezia: Carlo Ferrari, 1908), p. 7. At that time, a non-skilled worker earned ITL 450 per annum while a white-collar employee earned up to ITL 1,500 per annum. Alberto M. Banti, *Storia della borghesia italiana, L'età liberale* (Roma: Donzelli, 1996), p. 100.

embodied by Millais, some painters simply refused to part with their pictures for less than what could be defined their 'reserve' price: for example the Newlyn artist Ernest Waterlow refused to sell his landscape *Sera sull'Ouse* for less than GBP 75 net (ITL 1,875).²⁶ In most cases however, the asking price was lowered in order to facilitate the purchase; for example Alfred Hayward's *Passeggiata vespertina – San José di Costarica* [*The Evening Promenade, San Jose*] was put up at ITL 2,500 (GBP 100) but found an acquirer for ITL 1,000 (GBP 40) meaning that the artist agreed to a 60% reduction of his asking price [Figure 45].²⁷ James Paterson accepted to relinquish his painting *Presso Edimburgo: l'eremitaggio* for ITL 400 net (GBP 16) in 1909, which he deemed a 'very small' price.²⁸

The first peak shown on the Sales Chart taking place in 1897 corresponded to the introduction and craze for Scottish paintings from the School of Glasgow at Venice [See Appendix 4]. As already mentioned in chapter two and chapter three, the Glasgow school received more critical acclaim than any other exhibitors; they also unusually benefited from their own room. They took the Biennale by storm which reflected in the sales. An article dated 17 October 1897 and signed by Gilberto Sécrotant confirmed that Scottish paintings were among the most attractive at the Biennale: 'sales ... in decreasing order: Italy, Holland, Japan, Scotland, Germany, Norway, Russia, France, England, Belgium, Denmark'.²⁹ That year, 21 out of the 25 paintings sold in the British section were Scottish and the painter Robert Macaulay Stevenson (1860-1952) sold four landscapes, i.e. as many as his English counterparts. However, it is interesting to note that in terms of sales volume, the discrepancy between English and Scottish

²⁶ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 39 'Vendite 29 VIII 1905- 14 XI 1905', 219, letter from Vincenzo Tosio to Cavaliere Pastine, date illegible: October 1905 ?

²⁷ It was acquired by a Venetian Bank in 1910 and offered to the Gallery of Modern Art, Venice.

²⁸ Venice, ASAC (Sandra Berresford Archives), Scatole Nere, 25, Letter from James Paterson to Antonio Fradeletto, 19 October 1909.

²⁹ Gilberto Sécrotant, 'L'Esposizione a Venezia, prima della chiusura', *Fanfulla della Domenica*, 17 October 1897, p. 3.: 'vendite... per la quantità in ordine decresciute: Italia, Olanda, Giappone, Scozia, Germania, Norvegia, Russia, Francia, Inghilterra, Belgio, Danimarca'. That newspaper article should be taken with a pinch of salt as it only represented a forecast of the sales given before the closure of the Biennale. A comparison between Sécrotant's data with the ones in the ASAC register reveals that his statement was as a result not entirely accurate: instead of the 'circa 180' works sold, the register listed 239.

painters was less pronounced. Indeed, the English sales amounted to a total of ITL 16,450 (GBP 658) whilst the Scottish sales rose to ITL 26,633.32 (GBP 1,065.33) [See Appendix 4, Chart 8]³⁰. This seems to corroborate the assertion made earlier that the buoyant London market favoured higher prices on the whole, but it also seems to show that the Scottish artists were not commanding the same level of prices. That year, Walter Crane accepted ITL 5,000 (GBP 200) for his painting *Libertà [Freedom!]* and Frank Brangwyn obtained ITL 6,750 (GBP 270) for *San Simeone Stilite [St Simeon Stylites]* [Figure 12].³¹ A letter from the General Secretary Antonio Fradeletto introducing the Scottish artists in November 1896 confirms that the low prices certainly constituted a strong selling point, beyond sheer aesthetic appreciation as described in critical reviews: ‘A piece of information which will rejoice amateurs. Scottish paintings are mildly priced.’³² John Terris (1865-1914) accepted as little as ITL 800 or the equivalent of GBP 32 for each of the two landscapes he sold in Venice that year. Edinburgh-based Mason Hunter (1854-1921) sold his landscape of Tarbert Loch Fyne for an astonishing ITL 250 ITL (GBP 10). On the other hand, acquirers for public galleries were more generous: for example Principe Alberto Giovanelli acquired Robert Brough’s *S. Anna di Brittany [Childhood of St Anne of Brittany]* and *Tra sole e luna [Twixt Sun and Moon]* for ITL 2,000 each (GBP 80) as they were both destined for the Museum of Modern Art in Venice [Figure 12 and 13].

The trends observed in 1897, i.e. more sales for the Scottish artists than their English counterparts with nevertheless generally higher prices for the latter, continued in 1899 with a few exceptions. In terms of number, 12 Scottish paintings were sold as

³⁰ Appendix 4, Chart 8 shows the respective sales made by ‘English’ and ‘Scottish’ painters. Of course these adjectives of nationality are not entirely accurate as for example Frank Brangwyn was counted as English, and so was Alfred East whose style was sometimes closer to that of the Glasgow School. However the separation was created following the Italian decision to have two distinct rooms in 1897 and 1899. The Chart aims to show the Italian overall preference for ‘Scottish’ paintings as expressed by Pica’s article on the ‘Northern Obsession’.

³¹ As he had a studio in London and spent most of his career there, Frank Brangwyn was counted as an English painter although he grew up in Antwerp of Welsh parents.

³² Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere 7, Pubblicità, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto a Pompeo Molmenti, dated 25 November 1896, p. 2.: ‘Una notizia che ricoglierà(?) gli amatori. I quadri scozzesi sono a mitissimo prezzo’. In a similar way, the Japanese section sold over thirty works but its overall volume remained fairly low.

opposed to 6 English ones. However, the sales volume showed a telling discrepancy of ITL 22,724.44 (GBP 908.98) for the former and ITL 18,797.22 (GBP 751.89) for the latter which means that with twice as few sales, Scottish artists only obtained 20% more in their sales volume. The successful English result was particularly due to the record price of ITL 14,000 (GBP 560) paid for Frank Bramley's *La tosatura delle pecore [A Dalesman's Chipping]* [Figure 24]. It seems difficult to explain why such a high price was paid for a genre painting by a member of the Newlyn School, except perhaps its unusually large size. Bramley regularly exhibited at the Royal Academy since 1884 and had his painting *A Hopeless Dawn* acquired for the Nation by the Chantrey Bequest in 1888 which established his reputation; he was appointed A.R.A. in 1894, the same year as John Singer Sargent.³³ However the Newlyn School had not been particularly praised or even identified as such by the Italian critics as was explained in the previous chapter. The acquisition may simply have been prompted by the realist representation of a peasant scene.³⁴ A letter sent to Bramley by the 'Sales Bureau' gives more clue as to the purchaser and his motives: Their Majesties the King and the Queen of Italy decided to acquire *La tosatura delle pecore [A Dalesman's Chipping]* to offer it to the Gallery of Modern Art in Venice; the King, 'wishing to have all his acquisitions settled yesterday, no reduction has been proposed in the price of demand you have given us'.³⁵ The high price paid for Bramley's painting is thus exceptional insofar as it equalled the asking price.³⁶ That year, the Biennale organisers had to renounce using Walter Crane to decorate the British room as he was asking GBP 250 (ITL 6,250)³⁷ and GF Watts curtly refused to sell his *Baccante [A Bacchante]*.³⁸

³³ Caroline Fox, Francis Greenacre, *Artists of the Newlyn School, 1880-1900* (St Ives: Newlyn Orion Gallery, 1979) p. 166.

³⁴ It was not possible to see this painting when in Venice hence it is difficult to provide a more detailed description of its style.

³⁵ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Attività 1894-1944 n°9, Fascicolo '1898-1899 B', Letter from G. Merloni to Frank Bramley, dated 25 October 1899.

³⁶ Perhaps as a consequence, Bramley's Newlyn colleague Stanhope Forbes refused to reduce the price for his painting *Dalla Cava [The Quarry Team]*; he kept it in his studio until 1941.

³⁷ Venice, ASAC, Scatole nere, Attività 1894-1944, Busta 6, Fascicolo 'Borsa Mario 1898-1899', 91 0 16, letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto dated 19 november 1898.

³⁸ Venice, ASAC, Scatole nere, Attività 1894-1944, Busta 6, Fascicolo 'Borsa Mario 1898-1899', 91 0 16,

It is interesting to note that the number of Scottish sales fell by 40% with regards to 1897 which seems to indicate that although buyers still appreciated their paintings, the novelty effect of the previous edition had somehow dispelled. Overall the public favoured the same artists as in 1897: John Terris, Macaulay Stevenson, William Pratt (1855-c.1897), or John Whitelaw Hamilton (1860-1932). Surprisingly enough, the latter did not see his prices significantly rise after he received a Gold Medal from Munich in 1897 as he obtained ITL 700 (GBP 28) for his landscape *Sulle sabbie [On the Sands]*, compared to ITL 500 (GBP 20) for his *Rêverie autunnale* in 1897. 1899 saw the first sale by a lady artist: Scottish Constance Walton's watercolour *Biancospino [Thorn Tree]*, displaying a distinct Japanese influence [Figure 23], received a generous ITL 3,000 (GBP 120) from German collector and dealer Ernst Seeger who offered it to the Gallery of Modern Art in Venice.³⁹ Lastly an individual figure emerged from the Scottish group who was to achieve significantly higher prices than his counterparts at Venice: Irish-born John Lavery. Both in 1897 and 1899 he exhibited two portraits of which *Madre e figlio [Mother and Son]* was acquired for the Museum of Modern Art, Venice for a conspicuous ITL 4,444.44 (GBP 177.78). Although Lavery was not to sell again until 1909, his fame and taste for his portraits were regularly acknowledged in art magazines as was shown in the previous chapters. His presence and sales in Venice as related to his reception and involvement in the British section will be analysed in more depth later on.

As explained in the general analysis, sales for both the English and the Scottish sections fell sharply in 1901 and 1903. However, the trends adumbrated above remained fairly similar during those years. First of all the decrease in sales number for

letter from Mario Borsa to Antonio Fradeletto dated 11 July 1899 in which he communicated Watts's reply: 'Dear Sir, I have no intention to sell *A Bacchante* at the moment ...Yours' (translation mine) 'Caro Signore, io non intendo al presente di vendere il quadro *Baccante*... Dev.isso'.

³⁹ Perhaps more importantly though not central to this study, the McDonald sisters Frances (1873-1921) and Margaret (1864-1933) from the Group 'The Four' sold two decorative low-relief panels, *La stella di Betlemme [The Star of Bethlehem]* and *L'annunciazione [The Annunciation]* to the Sicilian Art Nouveau artist Ettore de Maria Bergler (1850-1938) for a cumulative price of ITL 600 (GBP 22.2). It would be fascinating to study in what ways this purchase might have influenced the *Liberty* development in de Maria Bergler's style.

Scottish paintings accentuated, coming down to six in 1901, i.e. a 50% drop from the previous edition, but increased to eight in 1903. By then, the Glasgow School of Art had entered a phase of routine as the buyers seem to select paintings from the same artists. *Valeurs sûres* such as James Whitelaw Hamilton or John Terris were recurrent in the sales ledgers for years to come. On the other hand, English sales fell to 4 in 1901 and to 2 paintings in 1903, their worst result since the launch of the Biennale. In 1901 the only novelty was the first sale of a painting by Alfred East, who was mentioned in the previous chapters. His idealised view of the English countryside in the style of Corot entitled *La valle del Nene [The Nene Valley]* was acquired for the Gallery of Modern Art, Venice for ITL 3,000 (GBP 120), probably a much lower price than what East was accustomed to given his reputation at the time [Figure 26].

The depressing results obtained in 1901 and 1903 prompted some changes in the British section in 1905. The slow decrease in the number of Scottish sales reached an all-time low with four paintings, i.e. a 50% diminution from the previous edition and an 80% reduction from their first introduction in 1897. Only landscapes by James Whitelaw Hamilton and John Terris found buyers, two in Italy and two international ones for prices varying between ITL 400 (GBP 16) and ITL 800 (GBP 32). On the other hand, English paintings were more successful as seven of them were acquired that year for a total sales volume of ITL 24,600.55 (GBP 984.02). This represented their best result so far. Whilst art critics had mostly focussed on the Pre-Raphaelite epigone Byam Shaw's *Amore il Conquistatore [Love the Conqueror]* and Waterhouse's *La Signora di Shalott [Lady of Shalott]* (lent by the City of Leeds Art Gallery), buyers preferred landscapes, genres paintings and portraits [Figure 2 and 3]. In terms of style, 1905 showed some opening and diversity. Although Alfred East and Frank Brangwyn both found prestigious acquirers and achieved high prices thereby showing that they were *valeurs sûres*, William Nicholson also sold his portrait of his daughter entitled *Nancy [Nancy with Ribbons]*,⁴⁰ blending references to Velasquez with bold brushstrokes, to

⁴⁰ Patricia Reed has slightly changed the title of the painting from *Nancy* to *Nancy with Ribbons* in order to differentiate it from another portrait of the artist's daughter painted the same year. Patricia Reed,

the Venice Town Hall for no less than ITL 2,805.55 (GBP 112.22) [Figure 31].⁴¹ 1905 is also exceptional insofar as it was the only year when Stanhope Forbes sold one of his landscapes *Crepuscolo* to a private buyer for admittedly a much lower price than the one achieved by his Newlyn companion Bramley a few years earlier: ITL 4,000 (GBP 160).⁴² It is worth mentioning a sale which did not happen: the General Secretary Antonio Fradeletto sent several pressing telegrams to Mario Borsa enquiring about 'last price painting Furse'.⁴³ Indeed an unidentified buyer wished to acquire *Diana della montagna [Diana of the Uplands]* by Charles Wellington Furse (1868-1904). However perhaps owing to his death the year before or due to ongoing negotiations with the Tate Gallery which acquired the painting in 1906, the sale did not happen in Venice.

Unfortunately, none of the trends established in 1905 were carried on in 1907. Owing to the grim international and Italian financial context, acquisitions were quite conservative in the British section. Landscapes by East or Hamilton or a few representations of the Scottish countryside reached reasonable prices between ITL 350 (GBP 14) and ITL 800 (GBP 32), with two notable exceptions. A Scottish painting by Harrington Mann entitled *Accanto alla finestra [The Window Seat]* fetched ITL4,000 (GBP 160) [Figure 37]. Although Mann trained in Glasgow and exhibited mostly paintings relating to his first Scottish period in Venice up until 1907, he had moved to London in 1900, was a regular exhibitor at the Royal Academy. As mentioned in chapter II, he then pursued a successful career in America where he was mostly known as a portrait painter.⁴⁴ His career path developing from landscape to portraiture was thus similar in some ways to John Lavery or James Guthrie's, his close friends. In

William Nicholson, *Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings* (London: Modern Art Press, 2011), p. 67.

⁴¹ For more information on Nicholson's career, see Wendy Baron, 'British Art in the time of William Nicholson', in *Nicholson*, ed. by Reed, pp. 13-15. He had a one-man show in Venice in 1924.

⁴² The sale was confirmed to the buyer in a letter: Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, Vol. 35, 'Varie', 5/III/1905-17/VIII/1905, 457-458, letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Jacques Van Biene, 26/VII/1905.

⁴³ Venice, ASAC, copialettere, Vol. 38, 'Vendite', 26/IV/1905-28/VIII/1905, 148 or 116.: 'ultimo prezzo quadro Furse'.

⁴⁴ An unsigned article from the *English Illustrated Magazine* underlined his 'international reputation': 'in the United States he is so highly appreciated as a portrait painter that he now spends a considerable part of each year in America, executing commissions that pour in upon him in ever increasing numbers'. *The English Illustrated Magazine*, 46 (January 1907), p. 338.

addition, that year saw the first acquisition of a landscape by Grosvenor Thomas. Although he had exhibited four paintings in 1897 and had been noticed by the Italian press, he was not a regular exhibitor there and he contributed again in 1909 and 1910 only.

As already discussed and as shown on the charts in Appendix 4, the year 1909 was extremely successful overall. Great Britain contributed to that general trend with the opening of its own Pavilion. In turn this had a double impact: a significant increase in the number of exhibits, which almost tripled, and a conspicuous rise in the number of sales, which almost quadrupled. Whilst the number of sales did not quite match the peak on 1897 (23 as opposed to 25 paintings), the sales volume reached a record ITL 40,885 (GBP 1,635.4). These exceptional results were further confirmed in a letter sent by Giulio Fradeletto to Marcus Bourne Huish on July 13th, 1909: 'I am quite proud to say that no other foreign section has reached up to the present such an important amount of sales as it has the British section and it has not been spoken too much about the other sections as it has been done about the British Pavilion'. The letter was accompanied with a list of sales.⁴⁵ Early in June, Giulio Fradeletto had telegraphed the British Committee 'Have shown their Majesties Pavilion they admired decoration and following works Frampton Lavery Thomas Guthrie Shannon Nicholson Coventry Brown also pottery and jewellery'.⁴⁶ It is interesting to note the eclecticism of the Italian Royal taste which included some 'late Romantic painters' (Charles Shannon, James Guthrie or even the sculptor George Frampton),⁴⁷ portrait painters (Lavery, Nicholson) or some artists from Glasgow. The Royal taste will be examined in further depth in the next section. Of the painters quoted in the telegram the majority sold paintings that year:

⁴⁵Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 100, 'Padiglione inglese', 25/I/1909-7/XII/1909, 267-270, Letter from Giulio Fradeletto to Marcus Bourne Huish, 13/VII/1909, 4pp.

⁴⁶ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 100, 'Padiglione inglese', 25/I/1909-7/XII/1909, 263, Telegram from Giulio Fradeletto to British Committee, stamped 2/VI/1909.

⁴⁷ The term was coined as the title of an exhibition held at the Barbican Art Gallery, London in 1989. *The Last Romantics: the Romantic Tradition in British Art, Burne-Jones to Stanley Spencer*, Ed. by John Christian (London: Lund Humphries, second edition, 1993).

Brown, Coventry, Lavery, Thomas and Shannon.⁴⁸ Prices for these last three artists were particularly high: Shannon obtained FF 3,300 (GBP 132) for his *Signora dalla piuma* [*Lady with a Feather*], his only sale at Venice, while Thomas sold two landscapes for a total of ITL 8,000 (GBP 320) [Figure 42]. Lavery's *Mercato a Tangeri* [*Market at Tangiers*] and *Polimnia* [*Polymnia*] fetched ITL 5,500 (GBP 220) and ITL 10,000 (GBP 400) respectively [Figure 41 and 40]. Incidentally, Lavery's portrait of the muse in modern dress was acquired for the same price as Klimt's *Judith II*, also exhibited at Venice that year, the former being destined to the Gallery of Modern Art, Rome, while the latter went to the Gallery of Modern Art, Venice. Worth noting is the first appearance and sale of the young 'late Romantic' artist William Russell Flint (1880-1969) who exhibited one watercolour, medium for which he became particularly well-known. In Venice, he sold 3 of them altogether in 1909, 1910 and 1912 for prices comprised between ITL 750 (GBP 30) and ITL 1,500 (GBP 60).

In spite of the short amount of time to organise the British section for the following edition of the Biennale, it is remarkable that the number of exhibits rose by 40% thereby reaching 181 in total. This was to be the largest exhibition of British art at the ante-bellum Venice Biennale.⁴⁹ In proportion, the number of sales increased by 50% from 23 to 35 and the sale volume also reached a record ITL 67,615 (GBP 2,704.6). In that respect, the British section was slightly at odds with the rest of the countries at the Biennale which saw their number of sales decrease on the whole. Such a clamorous success is no doubt due to the first one-man show to be held in the British Pavilion: John Lavery's. The sale of his paintings accounts for almost 50% of the total figure; he single-handedly sold more paintings than the English artists put together. His Venice retrospective will be discussed in more depth in the next section and will be contrasted to Frank Brangwyn's, which took place in 1914. In the year when the Futurist Manifesto appeared and the first Post-Impressionist exhibition took place in London, it is

⁴⁸ George Frampton also sold two sculptures to the Danieli Hotel and to the Museum of Modern Art, Venice.

⁴⁹ However the largest exhibition of British paintings in Italy took place at the Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition in Rome in 1911 with 621 exhibits altogether.

interesting to note the remarkable constancy of the sales in the British section: Scottish painters such as Kay, Brown, Downie or John Terris were still in favour with the public over a decade after they were first introduced at Venice. For example John Terris, who ceased to exhibit at the Biennale after 1910, had sent sixteen works since 1897 and sold twelve, i.e. a rate of 75%.⁵⁰ In his case, it is worth mentioning that his prices remained fairly static: given the taste for his paintings and his continuous presence, one could have expected a rise in his value. This would tend to indicate that these paintings were not acquired speculatively. In the same vein, Grosvenor Thomas had also started sending pictures as early as 1897 but his presence was more erratic since he only exhibited next in 1907, 1909 and 1910. During those years, he sold all five landscapes that he had sent with prices varying between ITL 2,600 (GBP 104) and ITL5,000 (GBP 200). On the British side, Alfred East also sold his last landscape *Montreuil sur Mer* for ITL7,500 (GBP 300), altogether selling five paintings out of the seventeen he exhibited since 1897 [Figure 44].⁵¹

In spite of the overall impression of *déjà-vu* in the sales, there were some novelties, in particular on the English side. That year, Harold and his wife Laura Knight sent their first watercolours to the Biennale and Harold sold one, *Gradinata [The Steps]* for a modest FF 400 (GBP 16).⁵² More expensive were Alfred Hayward's *Passeggiata vespertina – San José di Costarica [The Evening Promenade, San Jose]* acquired for the Gallery of Modern Art, Venice for ITL 1,000 (GBP 40), one of the two paintings he exhibited in 1910 and 1912. That year the record price was paid for Leonard Campbell Taylor's life-size maternal scene *L'ora del letto [Bedtime]* inspired by Whistler with ITL 9,000 (GBP 360) which is now at the Gallery of Modern Art in Rome [Figure 46]. Campbell Taylor had become popular after he exhibited *Rehearsal* at the RA in 1907, a

⁵⁰ In 1897, he sold two landscapes for ITL 800 each, one representing Surrey and the other one Warwickshire.

⁵¹ This figure includes the year 1912 and 1914 as well. In addition, he also gave a landscape entitled *Riposo* to the Gallery of Modern Art in Venice in 1905, which he did not exhibit at the Biennale. Venice, Ca' Pesaro archives, Opere provenienti dalle Biennali d'arte : opere pervenute dalla VI Biennale, 1905.

⁵² Perhaps disappointed with this result, Harold ceased to send works there whilst Laura sent three more works in 1914.

painting similar to *L'ora del letto [Bedtime]* in dimensions and tones which entered the Tate Gallery through the Chantrey Bequest that same year.⁵³

In terms of sale numbers, both 1912 and 1914 were disappointing and as such may be discussed conjointly. Perhaps indicative of the causal relationship between the two, the type of work sold changed: in 1912, only half of the sales were repeats whereas in 1914 only Brangwyn was known to the Italian public. First of all, only one Scottish painting was sold in 1912 by William Ellis Ranken (1881-1941?), who did not belong to the Glasgow Boys. Instead of an idealised landscape, the painting represented a factory scene and it sold for a conspicuously higher price than the average Scottish painting: ITL 2,000 (GBP 80). Similarly in 1914, the only Scottish painting which found a buyer in Venice was David Muirhead's (1867-1930) *Il mulino a Ceres* which probably reflects his interest in Dutch 17th century landscape painting.⁵⁴ On the English side, Oliver Hall (1869-1957) was the only painter who had sold a work in 1905, whereas Ernest Waterlow, Miss Mary Elizabeth Atkins (dates unknown), William Russell Flint, and Cecil Rea (1860-1935) all sold paintings in 1909 at the earliest. It might be tempting to speculate as to the motives for these acquisitions: do they mean that the public was tired with figurative, Symbolist or Realist paintings and had integrated the lessons from the avant-garde? The decline in the number of sales seems to point to a certain weariness with regards to the British section echoed by negative critical reviews. However a closer look at the type of works sold belies such an assumption. For example Charles Sims's (1873-1928) *La caccia [The Chase]*, acquired for a substantial ITL10,000 (GBP 400)⁵⁵ probably a representative sample of the neo-classical style he developed at that time. Furthermore Frederick Cayley Robinson's (1862-1927) drawing of *Il pescatore [The Fisherman]* acquired for ITL 1,340 (GBP

⁵³ Herbert Furst, *Leonard Campbell Taylor, R.A., His Place in Art* (Cheltenham: Cheltenham Press, 1945), pp. 40-41 and pp. 64-65.

⁵⁴ For more information on David Muirhead, see *The Studio*, 57 (1912), pp. 97-107. or <<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/david-muirhead-1676>>, [accessed 10 July 2014].

⁵⁵ For more information on Charles Sims, see <<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/charles-sims-1944>>, [accessed 11 July 2014] and Kenneth McConkey, *The Edwardians, the Golden Years before the War* (London: The Fine Art Society, 2011), pp. 68-69.

53.6),⁵⁶ was conceived as a direct response to Puvis de Chavanne's *Pauvre pêcheur* (1881, Musée d'Orsay) [Figure 48].⁵⁷ Both examples indicate that the public's taste firmly stood on the side of modern Old Masters. The acquisition of Julius Olsson's (1864-1942) *Sole cadente* in 1914, the year he was made an A.R.A., may also be linked to the fact that the Chantrey Bequest had presented one of his works to the Tate Gallery in 1911.⁵⁸ On the other hand, the short-lived introduction in 1912 of the Scottish Colourists in the persons of John Duncan Fergusson or Samuel John Peploe, as noticed by Ugo Ojetti, offer further evidence that buyers did not particularly favour works derived from a post-impressionist style. One exception to mention was the acquisition of two drawings by Scottish colourist Francis Cadell (1883-1937) in 1914 by Carlo Ratti who donated them to Ca' Pesaro [Figure 50 and 51]. Curiously these two drawings do not appear on the official list of sales for that year (see Appendix 5). A survey of the works on display in 1912 and 1914 undoubtedly shows a greater variety of artists such as Roger Fry or his friend Charles Holmes, while traditional exhibitors such as the Glasgow Boys disappeared from the *cimaises*. Perhaps the growing decline in sales during those years was but a consequence of these artistic choices, more than the international context.

This survey of the typology of works and artists in demand at Venice has shown that buyers mostly sought pleasing landscapes, portraits or genre scenes from a restrained pool of artists, with a few exceptions. Artists with a market and institutional track-record were usually preferred as their value was more easily recognised. Lastly prices were overall lower than their equivalent in London which may have deterred some artists from participating.

⁵⁶ For more information on Frederick Cayley Robinson, see <<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/frederick-cayley-robinson-1857>>, [accessed 12 July 2014].

⁵⁷ McConkey, pp. 54-55.

⁵⁸ For more information on Julius Olsson, see: <<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/julius-olsson-1717>>, [accessed 11 July, 2014].

4.4. Two case studies on the impact of the one-man show

Chapter I already dwelt on the importance of the one-man shows for the Biennale. As a result this section will study the British one-man shows as a means of comparing different formats offered to the buyers. Although devoting sections to individual artists has now become the norm within national pavilions, one-man shows started in 1899 with two Italian artists, Francesco Paolo Michetti and Giulio Aristide Sartorio. The first foreign one-man shows took place in 1901 in the French and Swiss sections with sculptor Auguste Rodin and painter Arnold Böcklin respectively.⁵⁹ The British section picked up on that trend comparatively late as it staged its first one man show in 1910 with fifty-four works by John Lavery, the same year as Renoir and Klimt.⁶⁰ Frank Brangwyn was the protagonist of the second and last pre-War one-man show held in the British Pavilion in 1914, the same year as James Ensor and Emile Antoine Bourdelle.⁶¹ Compared to Lavery's, the scale of Brangwyn's show was smaller as he sent twenty-one pieces only. As these two artists were amongst General Secretary Antonio Fradeletto's favourite, it is interesting to compare these two shows in terms of quantity and sales in order to evaluate the links between visibility and market success.⁶²

Although by 1910 Lavery had exhibited all over Europe and America and was represented in many museums such as the Munich Pinakothek,⁶³ or the Luxembourg⁶⁴, this represented his first retrospective spanning twenty-five years of his career as noted by Walter Shaw Sparrow.⁶⁵ In 1907 Fradeletto through his son Giulio had already managed to persuade the artist to exhibit a group of five paintings among which one

⁵⁹ Di Martino, p. 149.

⁶⁰ The paintings displayed were listed in Shaw Sparrow, p. 191.

⁶¹ Di Martino, p. 145. Interestingly enough, Frank Brangwyn's 1914 one man show is not listed.

⁶² Curiously enough, the ASAC archives own a dozen photographs of John Lavery's one-man show whereas none were found for Frank Brangwyn's. Some photographs of Lavery's one-man show are reproduced in the Illustrations [Figures 7,8,9].

⁶³ The Munich Pinakothek acquired the *Tennis Party* in 1890. Billcliffe, p. 297.

⁶⁴ The Luxembourg bought *Père et Fille* in 1901 and *Printemps* in 1904. McConkey, p. 50.

⁶⁵ Shaw Sparrow, p. 87. He listed most of the works pp. 191-193. Unfortunately, they do not all coincide with the Italian titles, making the identification sometimes fairly difficult.

belonged to the collection of Auguste Rodin.⁶⁶ In 1910, the earliest paintings included a representation of Scottish history entitled *La notte dopo la battaglia di Langside* [*The Night after the Battle of Langside*] (c. 1887, now in the Musée royal des Beaux-Arts, Brussels) and *Arianna* [*Ariadne*], c.1887, a naked classical female figure seen from the back (present whereabouts unknown). The show also contained smaller landscapes or orientalist pieces such as *Tangeri al chiaro di luna* [*Moonlight, Tangiers* (?)], incidentally the very first picture to be bought that year on 23 April 1910 for ITL 1,650 (GBP 66) or *Hadeshia* [*Hadeshia, a Moorish Girl*], dated 1908. However the most part of the exhibition reflected the later evolution of Lavery as successful portraitist with personal pieces such as the unfinished *Padre e figlia* [*Père et Fille*] praised by Whistler (1898, now at the Musée d'Orsay),⁶⁷ mid-length or full length portraits of the nobility in a virtuoso handling such as *La signora dalle perle* [*La Dame aux Perles*] (1901, Hugh Lane Municipal Art Gallery, Dublin) or *Signora in rosa* [*Lady in Pink*], dated 1903, acquired for the Gallery of Modern Art, Venice for ITL 9,900 (GBP 396) [Figure 43]. Lastly, and although it does not show on the ASAC visual archives, Lavery also exhibited his *Westminster - Incoronazione di Edoardo VII* [*Coronation of Edward VII, Leaving the Abbey*], 1904, probably a study for a larger painting (10in x14in, present whereabouts unknown) which was acquired at the Biennale by the Paduan industrial Enrico Zuckerman for ITL 1,000 (GBP 40). All in all, Lavery sold 16 paintings in Venice, i.e. slightly more than a third of the works presented there. The result is all the more impressive when one becomes aware that 18 paintings were lent from private and public collections, thereby not necessarily for sale. Lavery's 'monographic and celebrative' retrospective was certainly the most clamorous critical and market success

⁶⁶ In his letters Giulio also spoke about Lavery's *Self-Portrait* (Uffizi Gallery) and the portrait of Madame Roy Deverrun, which were not part of the final display. Venice, ASAC, Fondo Storico, Scatole Nere, Busta 23 'Attività 1898-1944', 23Ma17, Letter from Giulio Fradeletto to Antonio Fradeletto, 18/XI/1906, 6 pp. and Letter from Giulio Fradeletto to Antonio Fradeletto, 21/XI/1906, 4 pp.

⁶⁷ McConkey, 1993, p. 75. and McConkey, 1984, p. 48. Whistler is reported to have exclaimed 'At last, my dear Lavery, you have done it. It is beautiful. It is complete'.

of the British presence at Venice, probably until Henry Moore's one-man show in 1948.

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On the other hand, Frank Brangwyn's one-man show showed only twenty-one paintings spanning his career from the early 1890s (with for example *Il mercato degli schiavi* [*The Slave Market*] dated 1893) to his latest development such as *La Pescivendola* [*The Fish Woman* (?)], (1910).⁶⁹ In some respects, the *clou* of the exhibition was his bright *I pirati* [*The Buccaneers*] dominated by the pirates' red flag (1892, then in the Pacquement collection, Paris), which had made him famous throughout Europe when it had first been exhibited at the Palais de l'Industrie in 1893.⁷⁰ Similarly as with Lavery, the Brangwyn exhibition was displayed in the central palace in Room 10, as opposed to the British Pavilion. This was because its organisation was directly taken care of by Fradeletto [See Appendix 1 for the location of the one-man show].⁷¹ To a disappointing number of items on display perhaps partly due to the large dimensions of the paintings –unfortunately no visuals were kept at the ASAC about the Brangwyn show- must be added a very low number of sales. Indeed it is highly surprising that he should have sold only one painting given the high critical esteem in which his works were held in Italy. The purchase was made by the Italian Department for Education for the Gallery of Modern Art in Rome, no doubt pushed by Fradeletto who relinquished the 10% commission due to the Venice Biennale.⁷²

⁶⁸ These types of shows were replaced by 'more democratic events' after 1968 following the protests against the 'commercialisation of art'. Di Martino, p. 62.

⁶⁹ Because of the outbreak of the War, the paintings were kept in Italy at the end of the Biennale and some of them were returned only in the 1920s. Boswell, pp. 156-187 (p. 166).

⁷⁰ Tim Wilcox, 'The Songs of a Wayfarer. Brangwyn's Paintings on Exhibition in Britain and Abroad, c.1885-1905', in *Frank Brangwyn*, ed. by Horner and Naylor, pp. 50-59 (p. 56).

⁷¹ The British Committee was rather displeased not to be involved and Fradeletto had to send an explanatory note, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 117, 'Padiglione inglese' n°3, 14/VI/1909-27/XI/1917, 344-345, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Marcus Bourne Huish, 21/XII/1911.

⁷² In a letter to Vittorio Pica, Fradeletto foresaw the sale: 'Acquisitions for the gallery... a Brangwyn will be acquired' ('Acquisti per la Galleria:... si acquisterà un Brangwyn'); Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Carte di Segretari generali, conservatori, capi ufficio stampa, Carte del Segretario generale Vittorio Pica, Segnatura b. 01, Corrispondenza Vittorio Pica (1913-1914), Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Vittorio Pica, dated 19/VI/1914. Fradeletto's gesture to relinquish the commission may also have been prompted by the acrimonious exchange he had with the central government in Rome as to the financial benefits he drew from the Biennale. This will be further addressed in the next section.

Although it fetched the conspicuous price of ITL 7,000 (GBP 280), *Bagno di Ragazzi* [*Boys Bathing*] belonged to Mrs. Annie East, Alfred East's widow; as a consequence the sale did not benefit Brangwyn directly.⁷³ This surprisingly unsuccessful result can of course be contextualised in the growing international tensions following Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination on 28 June 1914, yet as a comparison, John Lavery had sold five paintings between 23rd and 27th April 1910 for a sum of ITL 6,600 (GBP 264), and a total of 12 works by the end of June. It is thus possible that other negative factors came into play. As suggested in the correspondence exchanged between the artist and the Italian organisers, the show was supposed to take place in 1912. Talks had started in 1911 and on 3rd November Fradeletto sent a hopeful note to the artist: 'You know how your art is valued and admired from me. I desire therefore that we do every effort, for organize [*sic*] a beautiful Exhibition of yours in 1912. I hear with pleasure that you can dispose of fifteen pictures'. Fradeletto further planned to have two rooms.⁷⁴ However another letter sent probably one or two weeks later contained a widely different message: museums, institutions and private owners were slow to lend the works and it was to be feared that the exhibition should be postponed.⁷⁵ Although such delay was not exceptional,⁷⁶ it may explain why Brangwyn's exhibition contained half the number of paintings displayed at Lavery's. Brangwyn's one man show which aimed to crown the artist's reputation and career at the Biennale and in Italy thus

⁷³ I am grateful to Libby Horner for helping me identify the English title of this painting. *Boys Bathing* is fairly different from the other paintings by Brangwyn kept at Ca' Pesaro, Venice. The palette is dark and it is lacking the decorative qualities so appealing to the Italians. Please see the Illustrations for a reproduction of the painting.

⁷⁴ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 124, 'Varie', 8/X/1911-30/XI/1911, 362-363, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Frank Brangwyn, 3 or 13/XI/1911, 2 pp.

⁷⁵ In particular Fradeletto pointed to the Fine Art Gallery in Johannesburg, The Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin, the Museum of Modern Art, Prague, Captain Dudley Varmey (?), London, or Ernst Seeger, Berlin. ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 124, 'Varie', 8/X/1911-30/XI/1911, 495, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Frank Brangwyn, date illegible (November 1911).

⁷⁶ For example Fradeletto had tried to organise a one-woman show for Mary Cassatt for the 1914 edition, but it also failed as testified by letters. Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Carte di Segretari generali, conservatori, capi ufficio stampa, Carte del Segretario generale Vittorio Pica, Segnatura b.01, Corrispondenza Vittorio Pica (1913-1914), Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Vittorio Pica, dated 29/VIII/1913. Equally interesting is the attempt from Fradeletto to organise a retrospective for Whistler in 1912 and in 1914, which failed on both occasions. Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 125 'Varie 30.XI.1911-13?.I.1912', 22, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Edmund Davis, n.d.

yielded disappointing sales results, also perhaps partly attributable to the fact that many of the paintings already belonged to collectors or institutions. Moreover the results here presented do not include the sale of etchings for which Brangwyn was particularly renowned in Italy.

In terms of market analysis, it is interesting to compare and contrast artists such as John Lavery and Frank Brangwyn. Although both were appreciated by the Italian public and were favoured by the Biennale organisers, the format of the one-man show seems to have worked for Lavery only. Several reasons may be offered to explain this result: wrong timing in terms of the evolution of the market or international events, disconnection between the format of the display and the demand for the artist's works. Perhaps the organisers missed their target as they hesitated between a museum-type retrospective and a show aimed at selling.

The conjoint study of the general and the British sales trends have yielded interesting results which provide a necessary complement to the art criticism written on the Biennale. Although, as was shown, it may be difficult to assert with precision the extent to which national or international events affected the sales, it was nevertheless possible to draw some partial conclusions. First of all, the figures show a niche and fluctuating market for British paintings in Venice with 158 paintings and works on paper sold over the eleven editions of the pre-war Biennali, i.e. approximately 16.9% of the overall number of exhibits. Secondly the market focused mainly on clearly identified groups or individuals such as the Glasgow boys, John Lavery, Alfred East, Frank Brangwyn or a few others throughout the period studied with a few exceptions as was shown. Prices paid were generally lower than what artists could fetch in London and allowing for some margin they remained surprisingly stable between 1895 and 1914. Lastly the way the sections or shows were curated did not seem to meet the demand as growing numbers of exhibit or untargeted one-man shows yielded poorer results towards the First World War. The market results thus followed some trends already observed in chapter II and chapter III.

4.5 Public and private acquisitions of British paintings⁷⁷

The trends adumbrated above with the help of statistics and some elements derived from a SWOT analysis have already pointed to some characteristics regarding the niche market for British paintings at Venice in terms of evolution, typology of works in demand and weaknesses in the offer. This section will take these elements further and will seek to analyse the typology of buyers mostly in terms of geographical distribution and motives for acquisitions.

In order to understand general patterns of collecting British art, Dianne Sachko Macleod's *Art and the Victorian Middle-Class* is of seminal importance.⁷⁸ Indeed her sociological approach highlighted the links between social class, taste and the creation of a unifying cultural identity in Britain. Macleod argued that substantial ethical differences between the leisurely aristocracy and the hard-working middle-class impacted their relationship to art and collecting in particular with regards to the national school of painting. Collecting thus became a means of asserting a specific ethos as well as cultural and national pride. Yet such strong links between collecting and framing a specific cultural and social context generally does not apply outside the national boundaries. In the same way as Italian art critics reassigned meaning to British painting, so probably did the buyers. It will thus be important to see which social classes acquired British painting. Furthermore, it could be argued that the strong link between collecting national painting and asserting national pride partook in a form of insularity which Clive Bell so strongly denounced. In this section, the task will thus be to evaluate the prestige carried by British painting outside of an insular context, and to assess whenever possible why international buyers sought to acquire it.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the sales were consigned in ledgers which most of the time contained the names of the buyers and their addresses as a note to where to expedite the artworks. In case the addresses did not appear on the

⁷⁷ See Appendix 3 for a complete list of the buyers.

⁷⁸ Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle-Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

ledgers, letters to the buyers were consulted to supplement the information. On the other hand hotel addresses were systematically left aside as non-representative of the buyer's origin. As a result, it was not possible to find out where all the acquirers came from however this method of cross-referencing allowed to form a good idea of the geographical distribution of the buyers both in Italy and abroad, apart from a few exceptions. Their full list with addresses or areas of origin can be found in Appendix 3. Although adopting a geographical classification seemed the most reliable way of approaching the diversity of the buyers, it nevertheless entailed some problems. First of all, it did not really take into account the cosmopolitan reality of Europe on the eve of the First World War: the names found in the ledgers clearly showed that foreigners lived in Italy whilst some Italians had gone abroad. However in the absence of detailed biographical information on all the buyers such sub-categorisation may have proved more confusing than helpful. Secondly, geographical borders have dramatically changed since 1914 so research had to be carried out in order to restore their historical reality: for example a buyer from the Italian Tyrol had to be classified as 'International' since Tyrol was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before 1914. For the sake of clarity however some areas were grouped under a common name: for instance a buyer from Prussia was classified as 'German' although the geographical reality of Prussia was abolished only in 1947. Nevertheless in that case, Prussia was a physical part of Germany since 1871 and as such could be subsumed in it. Lastly when biographical information was found which indicated that a buyer had changed countries during his lifetime, the country he resided in when he made his Venetian purchase was retained. This is the case for Robert Schwarzenbach who is believed to have been born in Switzerland (Zurich?) but who later moved to New York where his family owned a silk business and later a bank. That buyer was classified as from Switzerland rather than America. Thus although it is granted that any classification may result in a simplification, it should nevertheless be seen as a convenient tool to build up an understanding of archival data.

The sales ledgers helped create a portfolio of seventy-nine individual buyers and fifty-seven official buyers of British paintings between 1895 and 1914. The data collected was represented in various charts to be found in Appendix 4. While Chart 8 gives a general breakdown of the proportion between Italian-resident or non-Italian residents, Charts 9 to 12 are more detailed as to the origins of these buyers.

According to the data, it appears that 53 (or 67%) of the individual buyers were located in Italy while 26 (or 33%) came from abroad. Although the group of 'international' buyers was fairly restrained in terms of number, it nevertheless spread over ten countries mostly from Europe but also from Russia and America which testifies to the success of the pre-war Venice Biennale. Surprisingly the most important group of buyers came from Russia (19%), followed by Austria-Hungary and the UK (both 15%), then Germany (11%) [See Appendix 4, Chart 9]. The majority of the countries shared a smaller proportion of the market: the USA, Portugal and Switzerland each took an 8% share while France, Romania, the Netherlands only represented a marginal proportion at 4% each. It is interesting to note that overall British paintings were appreciated by the Central powers and found comparatively more buyers in Eastern European countries than in Western or Southern Europe. Lastly the relatively small proportion of American buyers seems fairly surprising. The data on international buyers may already point to two different interpretations: while on the one hand it gives evidence of diversity within the market for British painting, most cases were single purchases thereby implying an inherent weakness in the market. It was thus important to try and gather biographical data on these buyers in order to analyse and contextualise their purchase whenever possible.

For example the Russian group offers a very interesting sample of five buyers. In chronological order the sales ledgers listed Sergei and Lydia Shchukin who each bought a Scottish landscape in 1897 for FF 2,000 (GBP 80) and FF 888.88 (GBP 35.56) respectively; Hyppolite Wawelberg (1843-1901) who purchased Walter Crane's Pre-Raphaelite *Libertà [Freedom!]* the same year for ITL 5,000 (GBP 200); a buyer listed as

'Family Tolstoy-Sherbatov',⁷⁹ who acquired a Scottish landscape by Henderson in 1903 for ITL 1,500 (GBP 60); and lastly a 'Max Neuscheller' who bought an allegorical piece entitled *La maschera [The Mask]* by George Lambert in 1912 for ITL 10,000 (GBP 400) [See Illustrations], as well as Charles Sims's *La caccia [The Chase]* for ITL 1,800 (GBP 72).⁸⁰ A first glance at these choices reveals a fairly homogenous group in terms of taste. All the paintings chosen were either Scottish landscapes or allegorical scenes, except perhaps for *La caccia [The Chase]* whose genre is unknown. Fortunately some biographical information was found on these buyers as well as on some of the paintings acquired at Venice due to the fact that after the 1917 Revolution, some were nationalised and incorporated into State museum collections. Apart from the aristocratic Tolstoy-Sherbatov family, the four other buyers belonged to the upper middle-class, being either businessmen (Shchukin, Neuscheller) or banker (Wawelberg) who profited from the fast-growing Russian economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. All four buyers were listed as living in the two leading yet competing cultural centres of Russia, Slavophile Moscow or Occidentalist St Petersburg where a resurgent appetite for art favoured new collectors looking out to Europe for the latest artistic trends or buying contemporary Slavic painters.⁸¹ Interestingly enough, half of the buyers at Venice were European émigrés to cosmopolitan St Petersburg who had moved there for business reasons. Neuscheller was apparently born in Switzerland while Wawelberg came from a Jewish-Polish background and was made citizen of

⁷⁹ However a letter regarding the expedition of the artworks is addressed to 'Gentilissima Signora Contessa' Tolstoy-Sherbatov. Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 31, Spedizioni. (Rispedizioni)', XI/1903-VI/1904, 191, Letter from Vincenzo Tosio to Contessa Tolstoy-Sherbatov, 19/XII/1903.

⁸⁰ The former painting seems to be today at the Hermitage Museum, <<http://nga.gov.au/Exhibition/Lambert/Detail.cfm?IRN=162232>>, according to the research carried out by the National Gallery of Australia however there is no entry in Elizaveta Renne's catalogue. As to Charles Sims, the Hermitage possesses his *Bacchanalia* which earliest provenance indicates '1926 from the Committee for the Improvement of the Life of Children via the State Museum Fund'. Unfortunately *Bacchanalia* does not seem to correspond to *La caccia [The Chase]*. Elizaveta Renne, *State Hermitage Museum Catalogue of Sixteenth to Nineteenth century British Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 226.

⁸¹ Beverly Whitney Kean, *All the Empty Palaces: the Merchant Patrons of Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1983) polarises Moscow and St Petersburg also in terms of artistic aspiration: 'From Moscow there emanated an atavistic pull towards all things Russian, a basic need to find and preserve the Slavic identity. St Petersburg represented the attraction of the West, the fashion and intellect of Paris and Munich', p. 30.

honour of St Petersburg.⁸² At least two of these buyers were considered as collectors or art amateurs. Firstly Maximilian Othmar Neuscheller (1860-1919) was an amateur photographer who had commissioned an Art Nouveau villa called 'Suur-Merijoki' from the famous Finnish architecture firm Gesellius, Lindgren, and Saarinen; the villa was destroyed in 1941.⁸³ Then Sergei Shchukin (1854-1936) here stands out as the representative of the 'Great merchant patron' of the early twentieth century who rose in the Russian capital amidst economic and industrial transformation.⁸⁴ Several studies have looked at his collection of French Post-Impressionist paintings; in particular his relationship with Matisse by whom he possessed 38 works has been the object of academic essays.⁸⁵ However his few British paintings have raised less interest as they have been seen as merely partaking in Shchukin's first cautionary steps as a collector; his visit to the 1897 Venice Biennale was not even recorded in Kean.⁸⁶ According to the Hermitage catalogue, he owned one allegory and one genre scene by Frank Brangwyn, *Charity* (1890) and *The Market*; the provenance for *Charity* reads '1910s coll. Sergey Ivanovitch Schukin, Moscow'⁸⁷ but neither painting was exhibited at Venice. In addition Shchukin also possessed a tapestry designed by Burne-Jones, *The Adoration of the Magi* of which nine versions were woven between 1890 and 1907,⁸⁸ and three

⁸² A couple websites give more biographical information on him: <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/wawelberg_hipolit>; <http://america.pink/hipolit-wawelberg_1961623.html>, [accessed 12 July 2014]

⁸³ An exhibition on the house entitled 'Suur-Merijoki as a total work of art' was organised in Helsinki in 2011. I contacted Pepita Ehrnrooth-Jokinen, from the Finnish National Board of Antiquities and Anna Autio, Curator at the Museum of Finnish Architecture, to check whether there might be any archival records to Neuscheller's acquisitions at Venice. Unfortunately, nothing seems to have survived. For more information on Suur-Merijoki, see Jeremy Howard, *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 175-176.

⁸⁴ Kean, pp. 62-100. The author listed Pavel Tretyakov (1832-1898), Savva Mamontov, Ivan Morozov, Shchukin, Botkin and Stepan Ryabushinsky as the main nucleus of these eclectic self-made merchant patrons.

⁸⁵ Sophie Juge, 'Sergei Shchukin and Henri Matisse: Anatomy of a Relationship' (unpublished master's thesis, IESA/ University of Warwick, 2010).

⁸⁶ Kean, pp. 123-152.

⁸⁷ Renne, p. 36. Walter Shaw-Sparrow stated that *Charity* was previously in the McCulloch collection and was exhibited at the New Gallery in 1900. Shaw-Sparrow, p. 230. *The Market* is now at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow and was already listed in the 'Tchoukine' (sic) collection in 1911. Shaw-Sparrow, p. 229.

⁸⁸ One of these tapestries is now at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

landscapes by Whistler, all seemingly acquired around or before 1900.⁸⁹ It is reported that Shchukin started buying art around 1895, i.e. two years before his purchase of a Scottish landscape at the Venice Biennale; whilst he acquired his first Monet around 1897, his early taste seems to have been fairly eclectic encompassing Symbolist or Impressionist-inspired landscapes such as Fritz Thaulow's *Icy River*. From that perspective his purchase of Paterson as well as his wife's choice of Stevenson fit in with the rest of the paintings mentioned above. What may have swayed Shchukin and his wife's taste towards Scottish painting was their successful exhibition of drawings and watercolours curated by Sergei Diaghilev in St Petersburg early in 1897.⁹⁰ It is worth mentioning that Lydia Shchukin's purchase of Robert Macaulay Stevenson's *'Tosto che le ombre della sera prevalgono, la luna incomincia il suo mirifico racconto'* [*Wooded landscape 'Soon as the Evening Shades prevail'*] in the Corot style [Figure 19] is listed as separate in the Venice sales ledger thereby indicating an individual purchase: however in Renne's Hermitage catalogue of British paintings, the author presented it as 'produced shortly before the international exhibition held at Munich in 1896, at which it appeared under n. 370 and was soon acquired by Sergey Shchukin' whilst the provenance section cautiously reads 'Coll. Sergey Ivanovich Schukin, kept in his house in Moscow'.⁹¹

In spite of an absence of information or precise provenance of the paintings, it has been possible to put together some interesting data regarding their buyers' typology or motives for buying. Whilst some seemingly responded to artistic events organised in Russia, others appeared to have made an occasional purchase in keeping with a more general taste. Contrary to Kean's assertion that taste in Moscow and St Petersburg were informed by opposed frameworks, i.e. commerce and industry on the

⁸⁹ There exists a *Catalogue des tableaux de la collection de Mr. Serge Stschoukine* published in Moscow in 1913; unfortunately it was not possible to access it.

⁹⁰ Billcliffe, p. 297. Kean gives a few more details about the event: Diaghilev's exhibition took place at the Stieglitz Art Institute and mingled contemporary German and British watercolourists. Kean, p. 37.

⁹¹ Renne, pp. 228-229. Kean also indicated that Lydia did not particularly appreciate Gauguin (p. 144.) Could it be that Shchukin accentuated his focus on French Post-Impressionist painters after her untimely death in 1907?

one hand and court and bureaucracy on the other hand,⁹² the group of buyers at Venice has shown a fairly homogeneous quality. It is interesting that regardless of their social background or city of living, the genres chosen throughout the period were either landscape or allegories whilst the styles appreciated were mostly Romantic or broadly inspired from French plein-air painting.

If we now turn to the group of buyers from the Central Powers (Germany and Austrian-Hungary) to which will be added those from Switzerland, the remarks made above will be further probed. There were nine of them, spread out as follows: one from present-day Hungary, two from Austria, three from Germany, two from Switzerland, and one from present-day Italian Tyrol. Although not as much information was found on the individuals as for the previous group, some trends may nevertheless be observed. The sales ledgers listed the purchases in the following order: Robert Schwarzenbach (1839-1904) from Switzerland was the first of the three buyers who chose a British painting in 1895. He acquired W.B. Henry Davis's *Frutteto in Picardia [An Orchard in Picardy]* for the record sum of ITL 13,912.50 (GBP 556.5). Then in 1897 H.H the Prince of Liechtenstein bought a landscape by John Terris, *Una piazza del mercato*, for ITL 800 (GBP 32) on 14 July. The next sale did not appear on the ASAC ledger: at the end of the third edition of the Biennale, Ernst Seeger from Berlin decided to purchase Constance Walton's *Biancospino [Thorn Tree]* for ITL 3,000 (GBP 120) as well as a Scottish Impressionist landscape entitled *Frutteto in fiore* by William Watt Milne for ITL 5,000 (GBP 200). Both paintings displayed Japanese inspiration and were immediately donated to the Museum of Modern Art, Venice where they appear in the archives [Figure 20 and 23].⁹³ On 28 July 1903, the Baron and Baroness de Luturitz from Lueben, Silesia (nowadays Lubin, Poland) bought a landscape by John Terris entitled *Durham: vecchia torre inglese* for ITL 800 (GBP 32). The next purchase occurred on 27 September 1907 when 'Comte Michel Karolyi' from Budapest acquired Scottish artist Harrington Mann's *Accanto alla finestra [The Window Seat]* for ITL 4,000

⁹² Kean, p. 65.

⁹³ Venice, Ca' Pesaro Archives, Inventory Number 133.

(GBP 160), an interior scene as was fashionable at the time [Figure 37]. Towards the end of the 1909 edition of the Biennale, on 23 October, a 'Dr. R.A. Peters' living at 'Petershall, Neviges' acquired a work by the British flower painter James Stuart Park, *Rose la France* for ITL 660 (GBP 26.4). Lastly the record year 1910 saw three new buyers from the Central Powers who bought five paintings altogether. On 16 May, Giovanni de Pasquali from Tyrol acquired the landscape *Giornata ventosa* by John Lavery for ITL 1,500 (GBP 60) while eleven days later, a 'Sign. R. Gemuseus Passavant' from Basel bought a flower painting by James Steven Hill for ITL 330 (GBP 13.2). Last but not least, between 29 August and 14 October 1910, Alice Forabosco from Austria acquired three paintings representing Scottish landscapes: James Clay's *Tramonto invernale sul Clyde* for ITL 660 (GBP 26.4), A.K. Brown's *Brughiera scozzese* for ITL 770 (GBP 30.8) and Grosvenor Thomas's *Le acque del Cluden [The Cluden Water]* for ITL 4,125 (GBP 165).

Unfortunately, not as much biographical information was found on these buyers. Rather some tentative deductions will be offered. From the Venice sales ledgers it appears that three of these buyers were noblemen: Baron and Baroness de Luturitz, the noted collector of Old Masters Prince of Liechtenstein (probably Johann II, 1858-1929) and 'Comte Michel Karolyi'.⁹⁴ This further adds to the list given in Romolo Bazzoni's memoirs of the illustrious characters who visited the early Biennali.⁹⁵ Regarding the other buyers, R.A. Peters may be the relative of David Peters, a textile manufacturer who had trading connections in England and who had a bourgeois Villa called Petershall built by the leading German architect Julius Carl Raschdorff (1823-1914).⁹⁶ In addition Robert Schwarzenbach is thought to be part of the banking family

⁹⁴ Although he gave a French-sounding name to the Venice staff, Mihály Károlyi (1875-1955) was an important political figure in early twentieth century Hungary who briefly served as Prime Minister and first President of the newly-founded Hungarian State in 1918-1919. After Hungary became a Soviet Republic in 1919, Károlyi went into exile to France and to Britain. For more information, please see Mihály Károlyi, *Memoirs of Mihály Károlyi, Faith without illusion*, trans. Catherine Karolyi (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956).

⁹⁵ Bazzoni, pp. 132-145.

⁹⁶ Amongst other building, Raschdorff made the plans for the Berlin Cathedral, the Berliner Dom built between 1894 and 1910.

who moved to New York in the early 20th century and where a building still bears their name on Park Avenue South. On the other hand, Herr R. Gemuseus-Passavant was a member of the Swiss Society for Popular Traditions.⁹⁷ Nothing has been found on either Alice Forabosco or Giovanni de Pasquali except that their addresses indicate that they lived in small towns rather than large urban centers. This indicates that art buyers in the Central Powers were not confined to the cultural capitals contrary to what was seen in the previous group; rather it seems that the Biennale attracted bourgeois and upper middle-class clients from neighboring provinces or countries. In terms of choices of painting, these buyers display similar features to the previous group. First of all, their purchases were overall fairly homogeneous in so far as they favoured landscapes painted either in broad style (Davis) or by Scottish artists giving a poetic interpretation to French *plein-air* painting. In terms of genres, the main difference from the previous group resides in the four still lifes acquired between 1899 and 1910.

This leads us to have a closer look at Ernst Seeger's acquisitions, as they stand out from the rest of the group. Presented as a 'Berlin dealer-amateur' in Robin Lenman's study of *Art and Society in Germany at the turn of the century*,⁹⁸ Baron Ernst Seeger enjoyed a multi-faceted career as privy councilor, a patron of German Realist painter Wilhelm Leibl (1844-1900), an art dealer and a collector of Japanese decorative arts which he generously lent to the Venice Biennale for a special show in 1897.⁹⁹ Giuliana Donzello considered him as 'the only true collector' at the Biennale where he purchased 22 paintings in total between 1897 and 1903 mostly by German painters (Friedrich Von Schennis, Wilhelm Leibl, Max Liebermann, Johann Sperl).¹⁰⁰ His purchase of both Constance Walton's *Biancospino [Thorn Tree]* and William Milne's *Frutteto in*

⁹⁷ *Mitglieder der Schweiz. Gesellschaft für Volkskunde* (1909), p. 232.

⁹⁸ Robin Lenman, *Art and Society in Germany, 1850-1914* (Manchester: New York, Manchester University Press, 1997).

⁹⁹ Roberta Boglione, 'Il Japonisme in Italia : Parte Seconda 1900-1930', *Il Giappone*, 39 (1999), p. 20.

¹⁰⁰ Giuliana Donzello, *Arte e collezionismo, Fradeletto e Pica primi segretari alle Biennali veneziane 1895-1926* (Firenze: Firenze libri, 1987), p. 27.: 'unico vero collezionista'. Donzello further published a list of Seeger's purchases in an Appendix 'Tabella L, Acquisti del Barone Ernst Seeger', p. 45. Apart from Walton and Milne, Seeger acquired only one non-German painting: Selvatico's *Ritratto di Irma Gramatica* in 1903 for ITL 1,000 (GBP 40).

Fiore in 1899 then offered to the Museum of Modern Art, Venice as a token for the nascent gallery was in-keeping with his taste for *Japonisme* as displayed in 1897, a distinct feature compared to the other buyers. One could further speculate on Seeger's choice which intervened at the end of the Biennale as what could be considered an after-thought: was he encouraged to contribute to the Venetian collection? Why did he choose a British watercolour and an oil painting to represent his taste for *Japonisme* in Venice? How far could this donation have a positive impact on his career in Berlin? The fact remains that he is the only non-Italian buyer at the Venice Biennale who donated his purchase of British painting to the *Serenissima* during the period covered in this study and whose choice does not correspond to the main qualities described as 'British' by Italian art critics at the time. Further research at Ca' Pesaro could yield more clues as to Seeger's motives; yet at present the historic correspondence is uncatalogued and inaccessible to researchers.

The second group of buyers was geographically and culturally closer to Italy which may account for some of the differences that were found from the Russian buyers. It seems that the Biennale attracted a more diverse clientele from the middle-class and nobility from *Mittleuropa* who overall looked for a one-off buy in the form of a pleasing landscape or still-life and were occasionally ready to pay a high price such as Robert Schwarzenbach. Thus visibly the paintings were most of all purchased as ornament or proof of social status for those who had taken advantage of the economic development of the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰¹ In both groups, the taste seemed fairly homogenous. As was the case with Sergei Shchukin, there may have been a unique case of a collector in the person of Baron Ernst Seeger; however it was unclear why the latter chose to donate British art in the Japonist style to the Museum of Modern Art, Venice.

The last international group of buyers comprises Western Europe, America and Romania. Its sheer geographical diversity makes it more heterogeneous in essence so

¹⁰¹ Robin Lenman stated that in Prussia alone, the number of millionaires had risen by 60% between 1895 and 1907. Lenman, p. 9.

this will have to be borne in mind when trying to find characteristics. If we turn again to the sales ledgers, the first striking fact is that this group started buying British pictures later than the previous two. The first two buyers registered on the sales ledgers visited the Biennale in 1901 and the entries listed the first one a 'F. Tessaro' from Amsterdam who purchased *Musica [Music]* by Frank Brangwyn on 28 August for ITL 800 (GBP 32).¹⁰² The second one was 'Giulio d'Andrade' from Lisbon who bought Melton Fisher's *La Convalescente* for ITL 4,444.44 (GBP 177.78), a painting probably similar to other fanciful genre scenes such as *Realms of Fantasy* kept at Tate Britain.¹⁰³ Then the next three buyers are listed for the year 1905: Ferdinand Hermann residing on 'Pine Street, New York' acquired a landscape by John Terris, *La vecchia torre di Durham* for ITL 800 (GBP 32) early on 8 May 1905 whilst a 'Charles Crocker' identified as living in London and probably a banker, came at the very end of the 1905 edition on 18 October to buy a Scottish landscape, *Tramonto sul villaggio* by J.W. Hamilton for ITL 400 (GBP 16). Lastly Samuel Wilson acquired the four decorative panels created by Frank Brangwyn to ornate the British Section probably in the UK yet the purchase appeared on the Venice ledgers for a total of ITL 10,000 (GBP 400). No buyers were registered for 1907 but two more were listed in 1909: a Frenchman by the name of 'GJME d'Aquin' living at '58, rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré, Paris' acquired a seemingly mythological painting by Cecil William Rea entitled *Amadriade [Amadryads]* for ITL 935 (GBP 37.4) whilst a 'Dr. Hoor' from London bought *Malignando* by the late Romantic artist Robert Bell Anning for ITL 1,300 (GBP 52). During the next edition of the Biennale, the British section saw three more clients: Lisbon resident Mr. Raul Lino who chose the watercolour *Gradinata [The Steps]* by Harold Knight for FF 400 (GBP 16); Jean Kalindero from the 'Palais royal-Bucarest' who bought Lavery's *Velo turchino [The Blue Veil?]* for FF 440 (GBP 17.6); finally a 'Miss Mary A. Ainsworth' from Moline, Illinois who also chose an Orientalist painting by Lavery, *Giardino arabo [Moorish Garden]*, which she paid ITL 500 (GBP 20). Last but not least, on the opening night of the last pre-war

¹⁰² In another ledger, the buyer's name was changed but was hardly legible, ASAC, Registro Vendite, 5.

¹⁰³ London, Tate, *Realms of Fancy*, N01678. It was exhibited at the R.A. in 1898 and acquired through the Chantrey Bequest the same year.

Biennale, Sir Edmund Davis bought a watercolour of a Venetian genre scene by Gerald Moira entitled *Merlettaie veneziane* for ITL 1,125 (GBP 45).¹⁰⁴ A first glance at the paintings here listed reveals the diversity of these buyers' choices as they sought not only landscapes, but genre scenes, Orientalist paintings and mythological scenes. The dates of these acquisitions are also interesting as they reveal irregular buyers who entered the Venice arena last.¹⁰⁵ Although this may be down to personal choice and would need further work to probe with certainty, it may be due to the fact that they used other art market platforms where they were more inclined to buy. This is certainly true of amateurs such as Ferdinand Hermann (1845-1912), a New York banker who regularly attended sales at Christie's and was a noted collector of Old and Modern masters,¹⁰⁶ or of Sir Edmund Davis (1862-1939) whose eclectic collection of Old and Modern masters, sculptures and decorative objects was partly bequeathed to the Musée du Luxembourg in 1915 and to the National Gallery of South Africa in 1935-36. In the case of the latter, the purchase probably occurred as the 1914 Venice Biennale hosted a special show of his wife Mary (*née* Halford)'s painted fans.¹⁰⁷ As to Miss Mary Andrews Ainsworth (1867-1950), the daughter of an agricultural industrialist, she was predominantly known as a discerning collector of Japanese prints which she bequeathed to her Alma Mater Oberlin College.¹⁰⁸

It is difficult to draw any conclusion from this group as the buyers appear to follow personal trajectories for which documents are lacking in most cases: although several well-known collectors are present in this group, their unique purchase of British painting at the Biennale point out to a topical buy. Lastly it is interesting to note the two buyers from Portugal, Raul Lino and Giulio (probably Julio) d'Andrade. Although no

¹⁰⁴ The official list of sales specifies that the acquisition took place between the artist and the buyer, meaning that the Biennale did not act as intermediary and did not receive any commission.

¹⁰⁵ This leaves out R.P. Austin, the only unidentified buyer, who acquired *Sera* by William Hulton in 1895 for ITL 600 (GBP 24).

¹⁰⁶ <<http://research.frick.org/directoryweb/browserecord.php?-action=browse&-recid=11811>>, [accessed 15 July 2014].

¹⁰⁷ *Undicesima esposizione internazionale d'arte della città di Venezia, Catalogo illustrato* (Venezia: Premiate officine grafiche Carlo Ferrari, 1914)

¹⁰⁸ William Green, 'Mary A. Ainsworth: Pioneer American Woman Collector of Japanese Prints', *Impressions*, 12 (Summer 1986), pp. 1-9.

further biographical information was found on them, the Venice sales ledgers reveal that the latter regularly attended the Biennale and acquired works from other sections.¹⁰⁹ Their sheer presence indicates that buyers from Southern Europe also participated in the international art market. In the case of the British sections at the pre-war Venice Biennale, Portuguese and American buyers were numerically on a par; the former were more numerous than the French ones traditionally reserved towards British painting.¹¹⁰

This succinct geographical and typological characterisation of the international buyers of British painting found in the sales ledgers in Venice have triggered as many questions as they have given clues about the state of the market. The sheer development of the Venice venture helped create a high-end platform for international contemporary art on the Continent at a strategic crossroad between Western and Eastern Europe in which British art increasingly participated. Due to a numerically high presence but a sometimes clumsy marketing, the market for British paintings and works of art remained niche yet its buyers' portfolio proved potentially attractive with clients ranging from Russia to America with a high buying power. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the buyers' motives, it appears that they chose first and foremost landscape paintings, or pleasing genre scenes and still lifes; occasionally they preferred allegorical, mythological or exotic subjects. More research into archives in order to identify and contextualise these buyers would be necessary to understand their culture of consumption. This would further contextualise the market share for British paintings at Venice and offer a broader understanding of the efficiency of the early Biennale as a market.

¹⁰⁹ Although no systematic research was carried out on d'Andrade's acquisitions, the sales ledgers listed him on at least three more occasions in 1899, 1901 and 1905. Over these years he bought three landscapes by Dutch painter Willy Martens (1856-1927), by Ang. Durst (?) and Austrian Rudolf Hellwag (1867-1942) as well as a drawing by Giulio Aristide Sartorio (1860-1932).

¹¹⁰ Olivier Meslay, 'L'Amour dans un climat froid', in *D'Outre-manche, L'art britannique dans les collections publiques françaises* (Paris : RMN, 1994).

In order to complete this market analysis, it is now necessary to turn to the Italians who provided the bulk of the buyers of British paintings at the Biennale. As was shown previously they provided two-thirds of the overall buyers' portfolio with a total number of fifty-three. However the major factor which characterised the Italian market was the existence of a separate portfolio of official acquisitions. Indeed not only individuals but banks, local and central Government offices or even the Crown of Italy made regular purchases of British paintings at the Biennali. When trying to create these categories, it appeared that individual and official ones sometimes overlapped. Royal acquisitions may epitomize the problem as most of the paintings were purchased to decorate the various royal properties (Royal Villa of Monza, Racconigi Castle) yet the monies were provided by the 'Ministero della Real Casa', i.e. a Government body. As a result, it was decided to include the Royal family in the portfolio of 'official acquisitions'. Thus these purchases were not necessary donated to the Nation; rather the label has been used when the works were bought with corporate or public monies, which creates an intrinsic difference from individual purchases. Another difficulty lay with Secretaries of State who sometimes appeared on the ledgers under their official titles or sometimes under their civil names. In that case, the former were included in the 'official acquisition' group whereas the latter were left in the 'individual buyers' portfolio. In total, while the individual buyers' portfolio was made up of fifty-three persons, the official acquisition portfolio contained fifty-seven acquirers from seven different institutions over the period studied [See Appendix 4, Chart 11]. Before dwelling into more details as to the 110 Italian individual and official purchases, let us turn to the geographical distribution of the Italian buyers.

Unsurprisingly the most important percentages of buyers could be found in Rome (13%), the Venice-Padua area (27% in total) and Milan who came first with almost one-third of the total number of Italian buyers [See Appendix 3 for a complete list]. These three cities represented strong economic and cultural centres in Italy which had benefited from the industrialisation and development of the country in the late nineteenth century. Whilst Rome as the Capital of Italy since 1870 developed a

bureaucratic and centralised system of offices, both Venice and Milan sought to place an emphasis on economic and industrial development. As a consequence the newly-formed industrial elite whose purchasing power had increased considerably since the Unification will be a protagonist of this study. Genoa surprisingly ranked fourth with 9% of the buyers whilst Florence only brought an astonishingly low 2% of the total number of individual buyers ranking *ex-aequo* with Naples. In spite of, or perhaps because of the fact that Florence attracted the largest English community of Italy in the early twentieth century with the first British Cultural Institute founded there in 1917, the Florentines did not seem to possess a peculiar taste for British painting or perhaps they did not buy it in Venice. On the other hand, Palermo scored better with 4% of the buyers' share being on a par with Turin.

When adding individual and official purchases together [See Appendix 4, Chart 12], the concentration of buyers in the three main cities, i.e. Venice, Rome and Milan is even greater. With the new classification, Milan comes third with 16% of the buyers, while Venice comes only second with 27%; lastly Rome tops the table with 36%, i.e. more than a third of the buyers' share. The difference in figures between individual and overall buyers shows the impact of public purchases on the geographical distribution of the buyers and will beg the question of the types of institutions involved as well as their motives for buying British paintings. Chart 11 breaks down the official acquisitions at Venice by category of institutions: the two main contributors were the Crown on the one hand and the Government on the other hand with 37% each. By 'Government' it is meant all levels of local and national bodies such as Town Halls, diverse Ministries, and any Secretary. In third position there were corporate buyers such as Chambers of Commerce with 11%, followed by banks (7%), then private businesses (3%). Lastly some museums sought to increase their collection of international painters such as the Museum of Modern Art in Milan which bought a landscape by Alfred East in 1907 for ITL 5,500 (GBP 220) or the Galleria Marangoni at Udine which chose a watercolour by William Russell Flint for ITL 750 (GBP 30) in 1910. Broadly speaking, in addition to being prestigious buyers, official acquirers could also

afford to be more lavish; indeed the prices paid ranged from ITL 440 to ITL 10,000 with an average price of ITL 2,762.46 (GBP 110.5). On the other hand, such acquisitions were sometimes burdened by a bureaucratic apparatus especially in the case of Ministries. Archives in Rome have shown that purchases at Venice had to be ratified by one or more decrees while payments depended from different offices and sometimes took one year to complete.¹¹¹

Contrary to the relatively small number of international buyers, the more important number of buyers in Italy prevents a detailed list of names, acquisitions, prices. Although as was the case previously, information is missing on some individuals, a broad socio-professional survey will be conducted across the country to see which segments of the population frequented the Venice exhibition with an intention to buy. This is partly to verify Pierre Bourdieu's theory that an individual's aesthetic sense is not natural in any way but rather reproduces group rules; he further asserted that taste was a class marker.¹¹² Therefore apart from the buyers for whom no biographical information was found, four socio-professional categories were created which have already been mentioned in the case of the international buyers: 'Nobility and Diplomatic Corps', 'Businessmen and Politicians', 'Intellectuals and Artists', or 'others'. The latter category will mostly be a repository for all the buyers with little or no biographical information which unfortunately represents one-fifth of our portfolio.

In numerical order, the least represented group was 'Intellectuals and Artists' with five individuals. Nevertheless they all had interesting profiles: Vittorio Alinari (1859-1932), Director of the famous Alinari Photographic Establishment in Florence from 1890; the Opera composer Maestro Umberto Giordano (1867-1948);¹¹³ the collector, scholar and historian Enrico Guagno (1870-1955); Milanese Giulio Pisa (1851-1905), a playwright, writer, art collector and expert who also participated in local

¹¹¹ Rome, Archivio dello Stato, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione/ Direzione generale Antichità e Belle Arti/ Divisione II : 1908-1912/15-8/Galleria Moderna : acquisti di opere.

¹¹² Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction, critique sociale du jugement* (Paris : Les éditions de Minuit, 1979), p. 31 and p. 60.

¹¹³ *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 55 (Roma: Treccani, 1960), pp. 285-289.

politics; lastly the intellectual and philosopher Eugenio Rignano (1870-1930) who co-founded and directed the Magazine *Scientia*. Their attendance at the Biennale spread from the early editions (1897 and 1899) to 1912 while their choice encompassed Scottish landscapes (two were bought in 1897), a landscape by John Lavery acquired in 1910, a musical genre scene entitled *Duetto [The Duet]* by Arthur Englefield and lastly a 'late Romantic' watercolour by William Russell Flint in 1912. This group unsurprisingly displayed heterogeneous taste yet again choices are difficult to fathom; for example Umberto Giordano who was appreciated for his realist operas (for example *Andrea Chenier*, 1896) acquired William Russell Flint's *The Maidens' Pool [Il laghetto delle fanciulle]*, which could seem like an aesthetic contradiction. In terms of purchasing power, the prices paid varied between ITL 500 (GBP 20) and ITL 1,000 (GBP 40) which roughly correspond to the annual salary of a non-skilled worker (ITL 450) or an employee (ITL 1,500).¹¹⁴

Numerically, the group of 'Nobility and Diplomatic corps' came next with thirteen representatives among whom only a few will be discussed here; consuls and vice-consuls from European countries all chose Scottish landscapes by Glasgow Boys or one by John Lavery with a variable purchasing power, between ITL 250 (GBP 10) and ITL 600 (GBP 24) for vice-consuls and up to ITL 900 (GBP 36) for a consul. Whereas so far the data has shown certain coherence with regards to genre or amount spent as probably depending on the annual salary, members of the nobility demonstrated a remarkable variety of possibilities. For example Prince Giulio Torlonia (1889-1919), 4th Duke of Poli and Guadagnolo, member of one of the richest Roman families in the nineteenth century, spent as little as ITL 180 (GBP 7.2) on a drawing by Francis Cadell Campbell *La ballerina [The Dancer]*, which he offered to the Museum of Modern Art, Venice in 1914 [Figure 50]. At the other end, Prince Alberto Giovanelli from Venice (1876-1937) acquired five paintings between 1897 and 1909 for a total amount of ITL16,800 (GBP 672). All were offered to the Gallery of Modern Art, Venice on the years they were bought. Overall these buyers also focused on Scottish landscapes by John

¹¹⁴ Banti, p. 100. These figures were already quoted in note 23.

Terris or David Fulton throughout the period studied. Only Alberto Treves di Bonfili chose a dark genre scene picturing *La vedova [The Widow]* by Dudley Hardy which he paid ITL 1,111.11 (GBP 44.45) and offered to the Museum of Modern Art, Venice [Figure 25]. The few examples discussed here show that half of these noblemen showed stewardship and contributed with their donations to increase the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Venice, thereby continuing, sometimes modestly, the princely tradition of sponsorship of artists. Giuliana Donzello further confirmed that noble families especially from Venice represented 'the faithful buyer'.¹¹⁵ Alberto Giovannelli's peculiar role in donating the first paintings to the nascent gallery in Venice will be discussed in more depth.

The last group 'Businessmen and Politicians' unsurprisingly provided the bulk of the buyers of British paintings at Venice. As in the rest of Europe, Liberal Italy was characterised by the economic and cultural empowerment of the Middle-class. Although the nobility still carried prestige which they sometimes sought to uphold with the help of art patronage, the deep changes brought about by the industrialisation and modernisation of the country rested on entrepreneurs, industrialists, bankers and engineers. Interestingly it was not uncommon for successful entrepreneurs to take up a political career and many of the industrialists here discussed later became Senators. Although not an entrepreneur, Antonio Fradeletto also rose to a successful political career using the same educational springboard as other members of the middle-class. Their accrued economic and political power sometimes translated into the cultural arena with increased appetite for symbolic value as conveyed by art. For example Enrico Zuckermann, an industrialist from Padua who produced metallic pieces, was able to buy the sketch of the *Westminster - Incoronazione di Edoardo VII [Coronation of Edward VII, Leaving the Abbey]* by John Lavery in 1910 for ITL 1,000 (GBP 40) while Domenico Tomba from San Remo, a wine industrialist knighted for his services to industry in 1907 could afford the idealised landscape *Mattino di maggio [Morning in May]* by Alfred Parsons for a conspicuous ITL 6,000 (GBP 240) in 1912. That price was

¹¹⁵ Donzello, p. 27.: 'l'acquirente fedele'.

the highest spent in that group. The same phenomenon occurred in Palermo where Ignazio Florio (1868-1957) heir to a fortune invested in bank shares, wine and shipbuilding, acquired a landscape by the regular R.A. exhibitor George Charles Haite for ITL 2,000 (GBP 80).¹¹⁶ Other buyers from this group included the founder of the *Corriere della Sera* Eugenio Torelli-Viollier (1842-1900), the tyre manufacturer Giovanni Battista Pirelli (1848-1932), the President of the Bank of Italy Bonaldo Stringher (1854-1930) or the Venetian ship-owner Marco Cosulich.¹¹⁷ Although the information collected on these buyers is far from comprehensive, the few examples gathered below will aim to explore the triggers which made these buyers choose British painting rather than focus on their own local or national schools. Thus more information as to the transnational appeal of British painting may be brought to the fore.

In some cases, these acquisitions may have been the topical result of a business move. For example, Ignazio Florio formed an alliance with the United Alkali Company to create a joint venture called Anglo-Sicilian Sulphur Company (ASSC) on August 1, 1896. It soon represented a very profitable venture as ASSC controlled two-thirds of the Sicilian exports of sulphur and their first client was the United States. However within a few years other sources of sulphur were discovered which in turn made the ASSC collapse; it closed down in 1906.¹¹⁸ In that context, Florio's 1897 acquisition of an English landscape may be interpreted as the celebration of a clever business venture in partnership with a British company.

Although this was an individual choice, another possible research avenue would be to explore group behavioural patterns linked to mimesis and see how one individual might have influenced friends or acquaintances. Here the example will focus on the Milanese entrepreneurs linked to the founding and running of the newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera*. Founded in 1876 by Eugenio Torelli-Viollier, the newspaper soon

¹¹⁶ *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 48 (Roma: Treccani, 1960), pp. 375-377.

¹¹⁷ For information on the Cosulich family, see *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 30 (Roma: Treccani, 1960), pp. 419-432.

¹¹⁸ Gerald Kutney, *Sulfur: History, Technology, Applications & Industry* (Toronto: ChemTec publishing, 2007), pp. 63-64.

found its daily readership; by 1882, it sold 12,700 copies per day and by the end of the century, under the aegis of Torelli-Viollier's protégé Luigi Albertini (1871-1941),¹¹⁹ it reached 100,000 copies per day, approximately the same amount as the leading newspaper of the time *Il Secolo*.¹²⁰ The sales ledgers listed a few names belonging to the same network. In addition to Torelli-Viollier who acquired a landscape by Macaulay Stevenson in 1897 for ITL 2,000 (GBP 80), three shareholders in the newspapers also bought British paintings. Firstly Benigno Crespi (1848-1910), who joined the venture in 1885, purchased an Orientalist genre scene by John Lavery in 1909 for ITL 5,500 (GBP 220);¹²¹ then Ernesto De Angeli (1849-1907),¹²² and Giovanni Battista Pirelli (1848-1932), who became shareholders from 1898 onwards, both acquired landscapes. De Angeli chose a bucolic scene by Scottish artist Archibald Kay *Armento sul prato* in 1899 for ITL 1,080 (GBP 43.2), while Pirelli preferred a view of a factory by Oliver Hall which he purchased in 1912 for ITL 2,750 (GBP 110). It is interesting to note that Ernesto De Angeli was the person who introduced Luigi Albertini to Torelli-Viollier, upon the suggestion of Luigi Luzzatti, a Venetian politician who later became Italy's Prime Minister and acquired a landscape by Alfred East, *Montreuil-sur-Mer* in 1910 [Figure 44].¹²³ In that light, it is possible to see Albertini's first buy of a landscape by Archibald Kay in 1907 as a repetition of De Angeli's choice eight years before.¹²⁴ Incidentally, it is

¹¹⁹ *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 1 (Roma: Treccani, 1960), pp. 336-342.

¹²⁰ Andrea Moroni, *Alle origini del Corriere della Sera. Da Eugenio Torelli-Viollier a Luigi Albertini (1876-1900)* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2005), p. 10. and p. 162.

¹²¹ *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 30 (1960), pp. 692-694. Benigno's brother Cristoforo Benigno Crespi (1833-1920) was a noted collector of Old Masters which he exhibited on the first floor of his palace on Via Borgonuovo in Milan. The 185 works in the collection were sold at auction at the Galerie Georges Petit (Hôtel Drouot) in Paris in 1914.

¹²² *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 33 (1960), pp. 255-260. Most of all, De Angeli was a noted collector of Neapolitan painting.

¹²³ Moroni, p. 157.

¹²⁴ Luigi Albertini is particularly interesting in many respects as he was also a convinced Anglophile, having had a work experience at *The Times* in 1894 which deeply influenced his way to conceiving journalism. In 1941, Albertini decided to publish a catalogue of his art collection shortly before dying. His preface is particularly revealing as he dated the beginning of his collecting activity in 1913, i.e. after he bought his second and last British painting at the Biennale in 1909. Furthermore the catalogue only contains Italian Masters from the 15th to the 18th century gathered as 'manifestations of our artistic civilisation [...] signs of our Country's nobility' ('manifestazioni della nostra civiltà artistica, [...] segni della nobiltà del nostro Paese'). Ettore Modigliani, *La Collezione di Luigi Albertini* (Roma: edizione numerata fuori commercio, copia n.179, 1942), n.p. This would point out to an intrinsic discrimination between the

worth bearing in mind that Ugo Ojetti, the staunch defender of British art, worked for *Corriere della Sera* from 1898 onwards. This short example only aimed to focus on one network of influence underpinning the running of one of the major Italian daily newspaper. Of course, each of the buyers mentioned above enjoyed other networks linked to their business and political careers, or leisure activities. For example, Pirelli was member of the Alpine Club where he met Alberto Vonwiller, the President of the Vonwiller Bank and of a railway company, who also acquired three British landscapes by Terris and Paterson at the Biennali between 1897 and 1899. These concomitant purchases could be independent yet Bourdieu's theory that taste is a class marker could further validate the connection between professional connections and culture of consumption which the above examples partake in.

Similarly to what was observed in the international group of buyers, Italian acquirers of British paintings came mainly from the rising entrepreneurial middle-class, less from the upper class and occasionally from artistic or intellectual professional categories. That the market for British paintings spread over such broad population segments was certainly a sign of strength inasmuch as its main buyers came from the middle-class which possessed the most important purchasing power. Furthermore it seems that British painting (mainly in the form of landscapes) benefited from social mimetic behaviour as expressed in group or class culture. Yet these factors cannot obscure the fact that the market for British paintings collapsed from 1912 onwards. Archival correspondence found in Venice and Rome may point to an explanation for such weakness in the market: while the examples above have overall demonstrated that purchases of British paintings were the result of a leisurely, artistic or mimetic experience, it seems that many were influenced, notably by the General Secretary Antonio Fradeletto.

Researchers who worked on the Biennale have generally agreed to define Fradeletto as an all-powerful, autocratic and centralising character sometimes

practice of collecting as a meaningful act of stewardship aimed at preserving national artistic expression as opposed to the activity of buying foreign paintings.

nicknamed 'Fradeletto I'.¹²⁵ As was shown in the previous chapters, his position as General Secretary enabled him to control most of the contents, display and advertisement of each edition. It also became clear that he took a close interest in sales and sought to influence the buyers sometimes to the point of acting beyond his remit. Yet as shall be shown, it is difficult to assert with certainty that Fradeletto's personal taste guided him. As he pointed out in one letter: 'in addition to being General Secretary to the Exhibition, I am also a politician'.¹²⁶ This section will therefore aim at untangling as far as possible the complex and intertwined links between Fradeletto, his network and the buyers, and to assess how far politics and art coalesced into the sales of British paintings before its collapse in 1912. As was underlined before, it is important to bear in mind the piecemeal nature of the picture presented here.

Some data observed previously seemed to point out some collusion between art critics and the sales bureau as newspapers and magazines discussed at length pictures which were to be bought. To our knowledge, Paola Zatti's dissertation was the first source to investigate 'external contributions' in the management of the Biennale focussing among other things on the role of Vittorio Pica as Fradeletto's private artistic adviser but also as an *eminence grise* trying to influence the taste and sales at the Biennale.¹²⁷ Using letters exchanged between the two men between 1894 and 1914 and kept at the ASAC, Zatti showed that as the Director of *Emporium* mostly (1898-1912),¹²⁸ but also as Vice-General Secretary (1912-1914), Pica pushed for exhibitions and acquisitions of specific artists or movements. Zatti did not dwell on the psychological weapons that Pica used to leverage Fradeletto's decisions. However, as evident from the ASAC carteggio, he was keen to use flattery, 'You, irresistible miracle

¹²⁵ Daniele Ceschin, *La 'Voce' di Venezia. Antonio Fradeletto e l'organizzazione della cultura tra Otto e Novecento* (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2001), p. 160.

¹²⁶ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol. 81, 'Varie', 6/X/1908-10/XII/1908, 196-198, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Mario Borsa, 9/XI/1908: 'oltreché Segretario generale dell'Esposizione, sono uomo politico'.

¹²⁷ Paola Zatti, *La gestione delle prime Biennali tra tradizione e innovazione (1895-1912). I contributi esterni* (unpublished master's thesis, Università degli studi di Venezia, Cà Foscari, 1992).

¹²⁸ Some sources state that Pica became the Director of *Emporium* in 1900 but 1898 was the date given in the publication focusing on the history of the magazine: *Emporium, parole e figure tra il 1895 e il 1964*, ed. by Giorgio Bacci, Massimo Ferretti and Miriam Filetti Mazza (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2009), p. 208.

worker',¹²⁹ or emotional blackmail, 'the sales are roaring and nobody can rejoice more than I do, as old and faithful friend of the Venetian exhibition; yet I cannot rejoice as a friend'.¹³⁰ As was shown in chapter II, Pica's opinion of British art evolved to become quite discriminately orientated on illustrations and etchings¹³¹ while he more broadly favoured artists from France, Belgium or Scandinavia. As early as 1899, he placed Lavery below Anders Zorn¹³² and Franz Lenbach¹³³ in his proposal for acquisitions at Cà Pesaro: 'I hope that Zorn will end up accepting [a reduced amount of money] otherwise after his refusal and Lenbach's, only Lavery's will be purchased, i.e. the less important of the three'.¹³⁴ When Pica was appointed vice-general secretary late in 1911, Fradeletto offered him a 5% commission on the sales in addition to wages and a lump sum to relocate to Venice. Pica agreed with a caveat, 'that my partial role as head of sales remain as much as possible an internal piece of information. I am sure you will understand my position'.¹³⁵ More than a tense international context, such a shift in the direction of the sales bureau may account for the collapse in sales of British paintings from 1912. Not a single time had Pica advised Fradeletto to acquire them, probably also because he knew the latter did not need to be pushed. However it is highly likely

¹²⁹ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Carte di Segretari generali, conservatori, capi ufficio stampa, Carte del Segretario generale Vittorio Pica, Segnatura b.01, letter from Vittorio Pica to Antonio Fradeletto, 27/X/1907.: 'Te, irresistibile taumaturgo'.

¹³⁰ Quoted in Zatti, Letter from Vittorio Pica to Antonio Fradeletto, 11/III/1907, no page number.: 'le vendite vanno trionfalmente e nessuno più di me, vecchio e fido amico della mostra veneziana ne è felice: non ugualmente contento come amico'.

¹³¹ For more information on Pica's taste for illustrations, please see 'La finezza, il numero, la veracità delle illustrazioni: l'opera pionieristica di Vittorio Pica su Emporium', in *Emporium: parole e figure tra il 1895 e il 1964*, ed. by M. Filetti Mazza, M. Ferretti, G. Bacci (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2009), pp. 203-219.

¹³² Anders Zorn (1860-1920), Swedish artist who enjoyed a great international career, especially as portrait painter. There is a museum dedicated to his work in Dalarna Country, Sweden. For more information on Zorn and access to a large number of his works, see <<http://www.anderszorn.org/>> [accessed 27 September 2014].

¹³³ Franz von Lenbach (1836-1904), German Realist painter from Munich who enjoyed international fame, especially as portrait painter.

¹³⁴ Quoted in Zatti. Letter from Vittorio Pica to Antonio Fradeletto, 14/VI/1899, no page.: 'Spero che Zorn finirà con l'accettare altrimenti, dopo il suo rifiuto e quello di Lenbach, dei quadri stranieri non si sarà acquistato che quello del Lavery, cioè il meno importante dei tre proposti...'. In 1899, Cà Pesaro acquired *Mother and Son* by John Lavery for ITL 4444.44.

¹³⁵ Quoted in Zatti. Letter from Vittorio Pica to Antonio Fradeletto, 23/XII/1911, no page number.: 'che la sotto qualifica d'incarico alle vendite rimanga, per ragioni che tu ben comprendi, quanto più sarà possibile di uso interno'.

that once he was in charge of the sales, he favoured his own artists to the detriment of others.¹³⁶

Zatti's invaluable contribution was partly facilitated by the fact that many of Vittorio Pica's letters are conserved in a single folder as part of the ASAC's records on the General Secretaries of the Biennale.¹³⁷ More difficult to assert due to the diffuse location of the archival material yet equally fascinating was the role of adviser that Ugo Ojetti might have played both officially and unofficially. As underlined by Enzo di Martino, while Pica won a critical award in 1897 only, Ojetti won it both in 1897 and 1899 thereby gaining the right to sit on the acquisition panel for Ca' Pesaro during those two years as well as in 1901.¹³⁸ That year, two British paintings were acquired for the Venetian museum of Modern Art: Alfred East's *La valle del Nene* [*The Nene Valley*] and Edward Walton's *Sera* [*Evening*], each for ITL3,000 [Figure 26 and 27]. In October 1901, Pica wrote a letter to Fradeletto complaining about the fact that neither Khnopff¹³⁹ nor Hesselbom¹⁴⁰ had been selected for the Venice Gallery.¹⁴¹ In 1903 Ojetti was nominated jury of the Biennale after winning another award as art critic. In addition, from 1905 and until the First World War at least, Ojetti sat on the Commission for the Antiquity and Fine Arts in Rome under the directorship of Corrado Ricci (1858-1934)¹⁴² thereby participating to the selection of paintings to be acquired by the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome. As suggested above, Ojetti and Pica

¹³⁶ The shift in taste on the French post-impressionists, Dutch and Swiss artists became all the more obvious from 1920 when Vittorio Pica became the General Secretary of the Biennale. That year, the British artists did not participate to the Biennale.

¹³⁷ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Carte di Segretari generali, conservatori, capi ufficio stampa, Carte del Segretario generale Vittorio Pica, Segnatura b.01.

¹³⁸ Di Martino, p. 17.

¹³⁹ Fernand Khnopff (1858-1921), Belgian Symbolist painter especially appreciated for his depiction of mysterious women.

¹⁴⁰ Otto Hesselbom (1848-1913), Swedish artist mostly known for his landscapes produced in the vein of Caspar David Friedrich.

¹⁴¹ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Carte di Segretari generali, conservatori, capi ufficio stampa, Carte del Segretario generale Vittorio Pica, Segnatura b.01, Lettere from Vittorio Pica to Antonio Fradeletto, 6/X/1901.

¹⁴² Corrado Ricci, author, art historian, archaeologist, museum director, director-general of the Antiquity and Fine Arts (1906-1919). For more information, see *La cura del Bello, musei, storie, paesaggi, per Corrado Ricci*, ed. by Andrea Emiliani and Claudio Spadoni (Milano: Electa, 2008).

promoted different schools and artists; as a consequence, Fradeletto may have possibly used them as advisory counterweights. For example in 1910, Ojetti warned Fradeletto that Pica's friend Léonce Bénédite planned to send artists such as Henri Martin or Aman-Jean to the French section;¹⁴³ he added 'between you and me, I was terrified... Please do not mention what I said to Pica but if you agree, choose the right moment to say that we want to show great artists and bold innovators, not the oldest mummies of the official Salons'.¹⁴⁴ Against Bénédite (and possibly Pica)'s advice, Ojetti persuaded Fradeletto to organise a retrospective on Antoine Bourdelle's sculptures in 1914. Although no archival material has yet produced the evidence that contrary to Pica, Ojetti was overall in favour of acquiring British paintings, his laudatory critical output campaigned for it. Furthermore both Lavery's *Polimnia [Polymnia]* and Brangwyn's *Bagno di Ragazzi [Boys Bathing]* were acquired for the National Gallery of Rome when Ojetti served on the Commission for the Fine Arts [Figure 49].

Documents may thus help adumbrate a triangular relationship in which Vittorio Pica and Ugo Ojetti, roughly placed at equidistant distance from Fradeletto, sought to influence his decisions regarding exhibitions and sales. Equally, Fradeletto must have used them as agents serving his views, or as Pica put it, the '*tambourineurs*' of the Exhibition. Both brought their sometimes intertwined national and international networks to Fradeletto's service in an attempt to raise the profile of the Venice Exhibition, and thus their respective influence. A revealing letter from Fradeletto to Pica underlines the similar behaviour displayed by his two advisers: 'I am greatly comforted by the judgement you make on our programme. Our great friend Ugo also sent me an affectionate telegram; I must say that he uses the same epithet

¹⁴³ The INHA in Paris has compiled an online dictionary of art historians and art critics; for more information on Léonce Bénédite, please see the article by Mathilde Arnoux, <<http://www.inha.fr/fr/ressources/publications/publications-numeriques/dictionnaire-critique-des-historiens-de-l-art/benedite-leonce.html>>, [accessed 15 July 2014].

¹⁴⁴ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Carte di Segretari generali, conservatori, capi ufficio stampa, Carte del Segretario generale Vittorio Pica, Segnatura b.01, Letter from Ugo Ojetti to Antonio Fradeletto, 19/VI/1910: 'In grande confidenza, pregandoti di non dir questo nemmeno al Pica, sono rimasto spaventato... tu al momento buono, se credi, gli dica che si tratta di mostrare grandi artisti e nuovatori audaci, non le più vecchie mummie dei Salons ufficiali'.

“magnificent” as you to describe the programme. In part, your opinions derive from affection; but I do hope that they might contain an element of truth as well’.¹⁴⁵

Such intimate connections between the Biennale organisers and art critics therefore showed that the reception and acquisitions of paintings may result from collusions thereby swaying the market to suit personal tastes. Further research into the archives revealed that Fradeletto’s sphere of influence encompassed several levels: personal, professional and institutional which were sometimes blurred. With several examples epitomising Fradeletto’s attempts to sway each level, the extent of his contribution to acquisitions at the Biennali is hoped to be demonstrated.

At the personal level, letters best convey Fradeletto’s nagging requests to his powerful friends, colleagues or acquaintances, as was the case with the Director of the Bank of Italy Bonaldo Stringher (1854-1930). In 1905, the year he acquired Robert Anning Bell’s *La coppa d’acqua* for ITL 1,000 (GBP 40) [Figure 29], his response to Fradeletto seemed wary: ‘My dear Friend, I received your two letters of the 25 May and 7th June. It is not in my intention to deprive the Venice exhibition from the usual contribution of 500 lire, but the Bank as such, cannot contribute to the objective indicated by Mayor Grimani ... This is why I wrote that I wanted to give a personal contribution, that I am free to give to the Venice Exhibition and entitled to refuse to other Exhibitions or objectives’.¹⁴⁶ His purchase intervened one month after the letter was sent. The ASAC archives contain a wealth of such letters in which Fradeletto urged potential buyers very straightforwardly. In 1899, he sent a clear request to Milanese Senator Vincenzo Breda (1825-1903) offering a reduction in price: ‘You expressed the

¹⁴⁵ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Carte di Segretari generali, conservatori, capi ufficio stampa, Carte del Segretario generale Vittorio Pica, Segnatura b.01, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Vittorio Pica, 4/X/1908.: ‘Il giudizio che mi dai sul nostro programma mi conforta altamente. Anche l’ottimo amico Ugo mi invio’ un telegramma affettuoso; ed è notevole ch’egli designa il programma con lo stesso tuo epiteto “magnifico”. Una parte del giudizio attribuisco all’affetto; una parte m’auguro che corrisponda alla realtà’.

¹⁴⁶ Rome, ASBI, Banca d’Italia, Gabinetto, pratt., b. 101, fasc. 22, letter from Bonaldo Stringher to Antonio Fradeletto, 12/VI/1905.: ‘Caro Amico, Ho le tue lettere del 25 maggio e del 7 corrente. No ho nessuna intenzione di privare l’esposizione di Venezia delle consuete 500 lire, ma la Banca, come tale, non puo’ contribuire allo scopo indicato dal Sindaco Grimani [...] Percio’ ho scritto che, la Banca non potendo, avrei offerto un mio contributo personale, che sono libero di dare all’Esposizione di Venezia e padronissimo di negare ad altre Esposizioni o ad altri scopi’.

desire or the intention to make a purchase at the Exhibition in Venice. As we are now approaching its closure, I take the liberty to remind you of your promise... The prices have now been reduced [...] it is now possible to acquire works of great artistic value for a relatively modest amount'.¹⁴⁷ Further to that letter, Vincenzo Breda acquired two Scottish landscapes for a total of ITL 1,000 (GBP 40) perhaps following a suggestion from Fradeletto.¹⁴⁸ Even clearer in objective was a telegram he sent to Ernesto De Angeli in November 1899: 'If you wished to acquire *Armento nel Prato* by Kay, please call me tonight with serious offer'.¹⁴⁹ These few examples aim to show Fradeletto's untiring determination to promote sales at the Biennale and his particular bias towards the British section.

At the professional level, Fradeletto used his prestige, his large network as well as the powerful narrative of Venice's glorious renaissance which he exploited deftly. For example on 18 May 1909, he boasted to Marcus Bourne Huish: 'I am right glad to inform you that I have been able to get the Venice Chamber of Commerce to buy Mr. JW Hamilton's picture "Pastoral landscape" and that it has been the only foreign oil painting bought by the Chamber at our Exhibition'.¹⁵⁰ The Venice Chamber of Commerce had only acquired the painting one day before the letter was sent. The fact that it was purchased within one month of the beginning of the Biennale shows that by then, the Chamber was accustomed to follow Fradeletto's suggestion. Indeed, it altogether acquired five British paintings between 1897 and 1914 thereby showing regular support to the Biennale.

¹⁴⁷ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol.10 'Varie', 17/X/1899-23/VIII/1900, 35, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Vincenzo Breda, 26/X/1899.: 'Ella mi ha espresso il desiderio o l'intendimento di fare un acquisto alla Mostra di Venezia. Avvicinandosi l'epoca della chiusura mi permetto di ricordarle la gentile promessa... Ormai i prezzi sono stati ridotti [...] con un'importo relativamente esiguo si possono avere opere di molto pregio artistico'.

¹⁴⁸ For more information on Vincenzo Breda, see *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, pp. 100-105.

¹⁴⁹ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol.10 'Varie', 17/X/1899-23/VIII/1900, 148, Telegram from Antonio Fradeletto to Ernesto de Angeli, stamped 11/XI/1899.: 'Se volesse scegliere *Armento nel prato* di Kay prego telefonarmi stasera avendo seria proposta di acquisto'.

¹⁵⁰ Venice, ASAC, Copialettere, vol.100 'Padiglione inglese', 25/I/1909-07/XII/1909, 246-248: Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Marcus Bourne Huish, 18 May 1909, 3pp.

However, in studying Fradeletto's power of persuasion, it is particularly interesting to report on the first acquisition of British painting in 1897 by the Venice Chamber of Commerce for which he had to deploy a whole battery of arguments. The painting was Frank Brangwyn's *San Simeone Stilita [St Simeon Stylites]* (now at Ca' Pesaro) for which several letters are reproduced in Appendix 5. A subscription appealing to the Venetian businesses was launched to raise the necessary ITL 7,500. It is clear from the letters that Fradeletto's intention was to encourage individual and corporate patronage perhaps in an attempt to revive the Venetian *Scuola* system whilst offering incentives such as publicity.¹⁵¹ However it also transpires from the letters that the task was arduous. Towards the end of the Exhibition on 8 October, Fradeletto sent a round of letters urging more businesses to participate as only ITL 2,350 had been raised, followed by yet another letter on 28 October as one third of the overall sum was still missing.¹⁵² The archives contain a number of negative replies arguing poor economic conditions; other small businesses gave modest amounts of money. For example F. Cosselli Stabilimento Pianoforti ed Armonium sent ITL 10.¹⁵³ More important firms such as the Banca Veneta di Depositi e Conti Correnti sent ITL 200 graciously responding that their subscription was partly motivated by a 'particular deference for the person making the consultation'.¹⁵⁴ The painting was eventually listed on the sales ledger as acquired on 25th November;¹⁵⁵ it was henceforth presented to Ca' Pesaro. The archives of the museum show that Venetian corporate patronage henceforth appeared regularly as donors of British paintings to the museum until 1910. The last letter reproduced in Appendix 6, C,ii probably dated from 1899 also

¹⁵¹ Venice, ASAC, Fondo Storico, Scatole Nere, b6, 6E28, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Venetian businesses, 8/X/1897. Fradeletto shrewdly added 'it goes without saying that the names of the patrons will all published in the newspapers'. ('S'intende bene che i nomi degli offerenti saranno tutti pubblicati dai giornali').

¹⁵² Venice, ASAC, Fondo Storico, Scatole Nere, b6, 6E65, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto 28/X/1897.

¹⁵³ Venice, ASAC, Fondo Storico, Scatole Nere, 6E53, Letter from Ettore Brocco to Antonio Fradeletto, 25/X/1897.

¹⁵⁴ Venice, ASAC, Fondo Storico, Scatole Nere, b6, 6E69, Letter from Banca Veneta to Antonio Fradeletto, 12/X/1897: 'particolare deferenza per la persona dell'interpellante'. See Appendix 5 for a full transcription.

¹⁵⁵ Venice, ASAC, Registro vendite 2, Prima Esposizione internazionale d'arte 1895; Seconda Esposizione internazionale d'arte 1897, no pagination.

showed from the list of donors that the subscription shifted from a broad appeal to individuals and businesses to a more restricted appeal to larger businesses and important personalities, hence developing along lines comparable to present sponsorship.

Lastly at the institutional level, Fradeletto acted either to persuade official patrons or to increase museum collections in particular the one at Ca' Pesaro. Paola Zatti stated that one of Fradeletto's main achievements had been to foster public patronage of the Biennale; she further pointed out that he cleverly managed to increase its symbolic value by involving the Italian Royal family.¹⁵⁶ Their first visit to the Biennale in 1897 was minutely described in the press, as was their generous support. The Exhibition Committee who wrote the press release insisted that King Umberto had refused many suggestions of acquisitions and had only followed his own taste and his wife's advice. Queen Margherita reportedly visited the Exhibition 'seven times' and 'took notes'. The article made it clear that the Sovereign's 'lavish' patronage resulted from purely personal inclinations thereby placing him in a long tradition of artistic patronage.¹⁵⁷ The ASAC archives further confirm that when looking at the list of buyers the Savoia House come first in terms of quantity. The same is true for British paintings with twenty-two paintings acquired between 1897 and 1914 for a total amount of ITL 59,240 (GBP 2,369.6). The predominant majority of these paintings are landscapes whether by English or Scottish painters such as Tom Robertson's *Luna Sorgente* acquired in 1897 for ITL 3,000, or Julius Olsson's *Sole cadente* or Alfred East's *Nel Costwolds*. Genre scenes come second with Frank Bramley's *La tosatura delle pecore* [A Dalesman's Chipping] or *Il Mercato di pesce* by Robert Coventry. On the other hand the King also exceptionally acquired an Orientalist painting by John Lavery in 1910: *Hadeshia* [*Hadeshia, a Moorish Girl*] for ITL 4,000.¹⁵⁸ Over the years, the Royal

¹⁵⁶ Zatti, no page number.

¹⁵⁷ Rome, Archivio di Stato, *Gazzetta di Venezia*, 24 settembre 1897.

¹⁵⁸ It is also listed as item 31 in Walter Shaw Sparrow's Appendix II on John Lavery's sales: '*Hadeshia, a Moorish Girl, 30in by 25in, 1908, King of Italy's Collection*'. It is interesting to note that in Donzello's list of Royal acquisitions only contains the paintings donated to the Museums of Modern Art, Venice and Rome. Donzello, pp. 34-39.

collection thus appears fairly homogeneous in terms of genre; in terms of style, it seems broadly representative of the main schools exhibited in the British section of the Venice exhibition and appreciated by the Italian public: Glasgow school and John Lavery, Alfred East and late Romantic painters such as William Russell Flint or Robinson Cayley. Apart from a few exceptions, there also seems to be continuity in taste between Umberto I, his wife Queen Margherita, and Vittorio Emmanuelle III. In spite of gaps in the archives, a broader look at what is left of the royal archives indicates that there was an evolution with regards to nationality. In 1897, Umberto I bought four British paintings out of a selection of 13 paintings comprising the Dutch Hendrik Willem Mesdag (1831-1915),¹⁵⁹ the German Hans Herman (1858-1942),¹⁶⁰ a couple of Italian artists such as Vincenzo Cabianca (1827-1902),¹⁶¹ or Vittore Zanetti Zilla,¹⁶² and seemingly some Eastern European artists whose names could not be deciphered.¹⁶³ That year, the King had decided to lay a firm emphasis on foreign artists in order to encourage the newly founded Galleria internazionale d'Arte moderna in Venice. The 1912 acquisitions by Vittorio Emmanuele predominantly focused on local artists: out of 17 paintings acquired, 11 were by Italian artists and out of the three works offered to the National Gallery of Modern Art, Rome, only Cayley Robinson's *Il pescatore [The Fisherman]* was not Italian. Of course, these shifts may be attributed to a change in mood whether personal, national or international; certainly the gaps in the archives do not allow a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of the royal taste. Indeed, any research into the Italian royal artistic taste is made difficult by the fact that after the 1946 referendum Italy became a Republic and the royal family went to live in Switzerland. Their departure was complicated by acrimonious divisions of their goods and papers, which is reflected in the archives. As a result, the papers related to the

¹⁵⁹ Hendrik Willem Mesdag (1831-1915), Dutch marine painter of the Hague School.

¹⁶⁰ Hans Emil Rudolf Herman (1858-1942), plein air painter whose style was broadly impressionist.

¹⁶¹ Vincenzo Cabianca (1827-1902), Italian painter who belonged to the Macchiaioli group.

¹⁶² Vittore Zanetti Zilla (1864-1946), Venetian landscape painter who trained under Giacomo Favretto and who had a one-man show at the Venice Biennale in 1914.

¹⁶³ The press such as the *Gazzetta di Venezia* widely reported that Umberto wanted to acquire Ilya Repine's *The Duel* but the artist had doubled his asking price at the last minute from FF 10,000 to FF 20,000.

royal visits to the Venice Biennales and kept in the folders of the 'Ministry of the Royal Household' in Rome do not contain any personal correspondence, rather official notes, bulletins and letters.¹⁶⁴ Thus the royal taste can only be studied indirectly through the list, albeit incomplete, of their purchases, secondary literature and some comments made by third parties in private letters. As a consequence, the suggestion that royal taste seemed overall fairly homogeneous has to be nuanced.

Indeed a first-hand witness to the events in the person of Romolo Bazzoni recorded his memories of the Biennale in a book published in the 1960s. Amongst the 'Exceptional visitors and buyers', he singled out Queen Margherita for her assiduousness and genuine interest in art: 'She used to come to the Exhibition early in the morning and left when the doors opened. She generally visited from 7am to 9am and came regularly throughout the period of her stay in Venice [...] I can speak for her interest, her perceptive observations, her comparisons, her references to other works [...] She kept abreast of artistic styles and she was friends with artists'.¹⁶⁵ More than her husband or her son, she was presented as a genuine amateur enjoying a direct contact with artists. The geographical and language barrier may account for her limited interest in British painting as she acquired only three landscapes in 1903. While Bazzoni praised Queen Margherita, he did not say a word for Umberto and Vittorio Emanuele which begs the question of their interest in artistic matters. Giuliana Donzello formulated a harsh criticism when she stated that 'the Sovereigns of the House of Savoy became buyers to comply more with moral duty than artistic interest'.¹⁶⁶ Her views may be extreme as Vittorio Emanuele III was a noted collector of ancient coins, which he considered 'the greatest passion of his life'.¹⁶⁷ Yet various letters exchanged

¹⁶⁴ Roma, Archivio di Stato, Ministero della Real Casa/Protocollo generale/1896-1921.

¹⁶⁵ Romolo Bazzoni, *Sessant'anni della Biennale di Venezia* (Venezia: Lombroso editore, 1962), p. 62.: 'Aveva preso l'abitudine di venire all'Esposizione di buon mattino per allontanarsene all'ora dell'apertura. Le visite avvenivano generalmente dalle 7 alle 9 e si ripetevano frequenti per tutto il periodo del suo soggiorno a Venezia [...] Posso dire dell'interessamento, delle acute osservazioni, dei raffronti, dei richiami ad altre opere [...] Era informata degli indirizzi artistici ed amica dei pittori'.

¹⁶⁶ Donzello, p. 141.: 'I sovrani di Casa Savoia si trasformano in acquirenti diremmo più per dovere morale che per interessi artistici'.

¹⁶⁷ He gave his collection of over 100,000 items titled 'Corpus nummorum Italicorum' to the Italian

between Fradeletto and Pica show once again that the King's choices were discussed at length, and attempts were made to influence them. For example in August 1901, Pica complimented Fradeletto 'Congratulations on the recent acquisitions by the Queen Mother',¹⁶⁸ but he sent a complaining note a few months later on the same subject: 'I am not enthusiastic about King's acquisitions [...] but certainly you could not do everything you wanted'.¹⁶⁹

The royal acquisitions such as many others already discussed were thus not exempt from Fradeletto's influence. Although it may be argued that not all members of the Royal family yielded to suggestions, the absence of the royal personal papers does not allow a more in-depth approach to their taste and acquisitions.¹⁷⁰

Lastly, the acquisitions and donations by individuals for Ca' Pesaro may be a good means of studying Fradeletto's influence, although in some cases, the results of the analysis derive from speculation more than evidence. These benefactors belonged to both the Venetian nobility and the bourgeoisie; their public gestures worked as unifying social cement in the cultural and institutional rebirth of the city. For example, it is fascinating to look at the conspicuous contribution from Principe Alberto Giovanelli (1876-1937) who offered to the Municipality the first nucleus of Ca' Pesaro's collection in 1897 with a letter published in the papers.¹⁷¹ Altogether he donated twelve

people in 1947. It is now kept at the Museo Nazionale romano and has been the object of various publications such as Emanuela Ercolani Cocchi, *Collezione di Vittorio Emanuele III di Savoia : Zecca di Ferrara*, (Roma: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Ufficio centrale per i beni ambientali, architettonici, archeologici, artistici e storici) 1987, or G. Angeli Bufalini, 'Le monete del Re numismatico', in *La moneta dell'Italia unita: dalla lira all'euro* (Roma: Codice edizioni, 2011), pp. 193-200.: 'la più grande passione della [sua] vita'.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in Zatti, letter from Vittorio Pica to Antonio Fradeletto dated 4/VIII/1901.: 'Mi congratulo tecco per i recenti acquisti della Regina madre'.

¹⁶⁹ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Carte di Segretari generali, conservatori, capi ufficio stampa, Carte del Segretario generale Vittorio Pica, Segnatura b.01, letter from Vittorio Pica to Antonio Fradeletto, 6/X/1901.: 'Degli acquisti del Re non sono entusiasta... certamente non hai potuto far tutto che volevi.'

¹⁷⁰ I would like to thank Paul Nicholls for all his help and generous share of his knowledge as he sent me a notice regarding *La collina di Ludgate and San Paolo, Londra [St Paul's and Ludgate Hill]* (ca. 1884), by William Logsdail acquired by Umberto I in 1897 and which reappeared on the Italian market in the late 1990s [Figure 15].

¹⁷¹ Giovanelli sent an open letter to Filippo Grimani on 11 May 1897 which was then reproduced in the first edition of the Gallery catalogue in 1902 and which is reproduced in Appendix 5. *Galleria*

paintings to the museum.¹⁷² For the purpose of this study, it is highly interesting to note that five of these were British, and they were given between 1897 and 1909 for a total of ITL 16,800 (GBP 672). His generous involvement in the financial success of the Biennale was publicised from the start in the newspapers, not unlike what Fradeletto offered to the local businesses. Flavia Scotton has rightly pointed out that Principe Giovanelli's shift from an inherited personal collection of Old Masters —his father Giuseppe had acquired *The Tempest* by Giorgione upon Giovanni Morelli's advice— to a public patronage of contemporary art at the Biennale partook in the wider political aims of the governing team in Venice.¹⁷³ In general, Giovanelli's contribution has been presented as spontaneous but it is tempting to read more into it. This is particularly important as the nucleus he offered to the Municipality contained six paintings, half of which were British: Robert Brough's *S. Anna di Brittany [Childhood of St Anne of Brittany]* and *Tra sole e luna [Twixt Sun and Moon]*, and Francis Newbery's *Sotto la luna [Under the Moon]* [Figure 13, 14 and 16]. A letter sent to Town Mayor Filippo Grimani in February 1905 gives a clue as to how Giovanelli chose the paintings in 1897: 'I intend to contribute to increasing the number of works of art in that collection, during this Exhibition. Yet I desire to make separate purchases instead of giving money to a commission for collective acquisitions as in the past years'.¹⁷⁴ Hence Giovanelli's personal taste had little to do with the choice of the paintings. However if such selection is viewed from a diplomatic standpoint, it becomes much more topical as 1897 was the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and of the opening of the

internazionale d'arte moderna della città di Venezia, Catalogo (Venezia: Carlo Ferrari, 1902), pp. 5-6.

¹⁷² Donzello, p. 150. Donzello wrongly affirmed that Giovanelli's patronage stopped in 1907 when he sent a letter to Fradeletto underlining the 'truly remarkable proportions' ('proporzioni veramente remarquevoli') of the museum (p. 153-154). Instead, Giovannelli went on to acquire at least another British painting in 1909, Grosvenor Thomas's *Il mulino grigo* for ITL 5,000 (GBP 200).

¹⁷³ Flavia Scotton, 'La Galleria internazionale d'arte moderna di Ca' Pesaro (1897-1914): un museo possibile', in *Arte d'Europa fra due secoli, 1895-1914*, ed. by Maria Masau Dan and Giuseppe Pavanello (Milano: Electa, 1995), pp. 36-51 (pp. 36-37).

¹⁷⁴ Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, Scatole Nere, Padiglioni 9, Gran Bretagna, VI Biennale, 1905, Letter from Alberto Giovanelli to Filippo Grimani, 9/II/1905, 3 pp.: 'Ho l'intensione di contribuire all'aumento delle opere d'arte in essa raccolte, anche in occasione di questa Esposizione. Desidero pero' fare l'acquisto separatamente, anziche' versare come gli altri anni una somma per l'acquisto collettivo a mezzo di una commissione'.

National Gallery of British Art (now Tate Britain). Furthermore Giovanelli's donation of Brangwyn's *I poponi [Melons]* in 1905 also suggests that his 'official' taste was strongly related to Fradeletto's since in the same letter as the one quoted above he asked Grimani to recommend an art adviser in order to proceed with his 1905 purchase [Figure 30].¹⁷⁵ Although the name of the adviser is not known, the choice of Brangwyn's *I poponi [Melons]* would have been whole-heartedly approved by Fradeletto. Giuliana Donzello thus pithily summarised the acquisition policy of Ca' Pesaro: 'all the buyers for Ca' Pesaro are like small satellites which gravitate around a single planet, and this planet is Antonio Fradeletto'.¹⁷⁶

These few examples have shown that part of the acquisitions of British paintings at Venice (and in particular the donations to Ca' Pesaro) resulted from Antonio Fradeletto's influence rather than an aesthetic choice. This situation points out one of the major weaknesses of the market for British painting at Venice: indeed such reliance on one individual's power and network could only prove fatal when that individual stepped down. The embitterment of Anglo-Venetian relations during the War and absence of Great Britain at the twelfth edition of the Biennale in 1920 further confirm Fradeletto's seminal mediation during the previous period.

As shown throughout this chapter, a niche yet consistent market for British paintings was created at the Venice Biennale which showed that the term 'insular' was probably an unfair epithet. However most individuals or indeed officials acquiring British paintings were occasional, topical or leisurely buyers who acted either of their own will or yielded to Fradeletto's pressure. Regardless of their class they bought mostly landscapes or genre scenes, a few portraits and occasionally allegorical or mythological

¹⁷⁵ Venice, ASAC, *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Donzello, p. 141.: 'tutti gli acquirenti di Ca' Pesaro sono come dei piccoli satelliti che gravitano attorno ad un unico pianeta, e questo pianeta è Antonio Fradeletto'.

scenes, focusing mainly on a few artists such as the Glasgow Boys, John Lavery, Frank Brangwyn, Thomas Grosvenor or John Terris. Fradeletto's *Anglophile* proclivity has been made clear in the previous chapters; here it was hoped to show that it also impacted on the overall market performance of the British sections at the Venice Biennali mostly between 1895 and 1910. The last two editions (1912 and 1914) were adversely impacted by both macro and micro events: the deteriorating international situation and the fact that Vittorio Pica took over Fradeletto's task of running the sales bureau. The overall analysis of the market for British paintings in Venice has thus shown that it had potential advantages (a widespread portfolio of Italian and international buyers, prestigious acquirers, a solid support from the rising entrepreneurial middle-class) while it also proved that it was unhinged by intrinsic weaknesses such as the inadequate marketing format and choice of exhibitors. Most of all it was overly reliant on the decision and energy of an individual, which may explain its collapse from 1912.

CONCLUSION

Riding the wave of the recent reassessments of the modernist framework of understanding art history, this study sought to question one of the limits of its episteme when discussing British painting, i.e. its intrinsic insular production and consumption during the late Victorian and Edwardian period.

The choice of the pre-war Venice Biennale as case study derived from several considerations framing the present work. Firstly from a quantitative point of view, this study focussed on a pool of nearly three hundred British painters. Arguably, this is a relatively small number of artists as British sections at Universal Exhibitions were generally much broader. Yet as many of these artists suffered from the modernist *damnatio memoriae*, the pool constituted a valuable window into the early twentieth-century British artistic scene. Then, it spanned over a period of nineteen years which enabled a diachronic study of the evolution of the British offer abroad. From a qualitative perspective, this means that several generations of painters broadly labelled 'late Victorian' and 'Edwardian' were considered thereby raising questions of market change, career strategy and international representation. In addition, the time length covered the crucial period during which the modernist shift occurred, especially in Britain with Roger Fry's landmark exhibitions of 1910 and 1912 as well as other modern displays until 1914.¹ As a result comparisons between pictorial and technical choices by British artists were incorporated in the discussion thereby assessing their respective consumption abroad. The choice of the Venice Biennale thus offered an

¹ Anna Gruetzner Robbins lists the following exhibitions as seminal to the introduction of modern art in Britain: Manet and the Post-Impressionists (1910), An Exhibition of Pictures by Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin (1911), Paintings by the Italian Futurist Artists (1912), the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition (1912), Post-Impressionists and Futurists (1913) as well as exhibitions at the Allied Artists Association between 1909 and 1914. Anna Gruetzner Robbins, *Modern Art in Britain 1910-1914* (London: Merrell Holberton, 1997), p. 7.

invaluable opportunity to look at developments in British paintings over a reasonable period of time.

Besides, the Anglo-Italian artistic relations have too often been presented through one-sided lens which saw the Italians producing art and the British consuming it. Many publications have thus emphasised the broad *Italophilia* driving the British artistic and collecting scene. On the contrary the present study hoped to show that cultural and artistic relationships between the two countries were more complex than generally thought. Until Anglo-Italian relationships soured in the 1930s over territorial and diplomatic reasons, there existed a warm feeling of *Anglophilia* in some Italian circles. The Biennale General Secretary Antonio Fradeletto was the epitome of such a trend. As was shown in this study, he demonstrated to have a deep political and cultural admiration for Britain which swayed his decision and pushed him to offer greater representation to the British section.

Lastly, it was of utmost importance to this study that the Venice Biennale possessed a dual nature as exhibition and market platforms. Unlike its present stance, the Biennale sought to establish itself as a market for international contemporary art with its own sales bureau and commissions. Thus it deemed it part of its founding aims to select and promote saleable works. In gauging Clive Bell's assumption that British art was essentially insular both in its production and consumption, the possibility to compare and contrast visual and economic consumption made the choice of the Venice Biennale obvious.

Yet the choice of the nascent Venice Biennale also presented limitations mainly due to its position within the field of international art exhibitions. Indeed as shown in chapter I, the pre-war period of the Biennale was mostly one of expansion and consolidation whereby the organisers sought to impose their venture onto a savvy international audience. Besides there existed a gap between its perception at the local and the international levels which made it more difficult to assess how far it attracted British painters. Articles in British daily newspapers and art magazines were sporadic if

at times slightly deprecatory. Only in 1909 did the coverage of the British presence in Venice increase dramatically due to the fundraising campaign launched by Marcus Bourne Huish to secure the Pavilion. Therefore it is important to point to the limitations of the present case study: the Venice Biennale cannot be used as the only yardstick to judge the insularity of late Victorian and Edwardian painters. However it gave invaluable insight into the inner workings of the international art scene.

Indeed from the research conducted and presented here it appears that the early Venice Biennale was characterised by its very fluid nature. This meant that contrary to some publications emphasising its Salon-like taste and organisation, the contents did not strictly abide by academic choices. In the British section, the example of the Glasgow Boys is particularly relevant from that perspective. Besides, chapter two has shown that the early editions rested on personal relationships and the use of networks, rather than official representation and selection. No doubt this made the international sections less representative of their home artistic scenes; on the other hand, it allowed greater transnational manoeuvring. From that perspective, Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' has been discussed as offering a valuable national framework of understanding; yet in a transnational context, it appears that it may sometimes be more advantageous not to be fully *au fait* with local customs. Chapter two illustrated the differences between the two main Biennale agents in London: Mario Borsa and Giulio Fradeletto and their respective understanding of the British habitus. By unwittingly blurring the social and artistic lines, Giulio Fradeletto achieved more than Mario Borsa who tried to abide by the local cultural rules. The result was that Britain was amongst the first countries to open its own Pavilion in Venice, in an enviable position in the *Giardini*.

Thus the results of this study may need to be judged bearing in mind the limitations linked to the choice of case study. However some preliminary conclusions may be drawn from the British presence at the Venice Biennale. Though Clive Bell was adamant in defining the British school as 'insular', this study sought to challenge his

assumption by contextualising it in an international perspective. Hence the problem shifted from a national to a transnational exploration of 'insularity'. This demanded a triangulation between the perception of British art in a home context, in an international context, and the possible insular quality of the onlookers themselves. In other words, did the Italian and international public coming to the Venice Biennale see British painting as 'insular' or not? Also how far were these onlookers 'insular'?

Chapter I attempted to provide a nuanced answer for the latter question by showing the limits of the venture in its early days whilst acknowledging its growing presence in the field of international art exhibitions. In addition chapter III studied the state of Italian art criticism with regards to British art first from a historical perspective, and then followed its development throughout the pre-war Biennale. This revealed extreme gaps in knowledge on British painting which the Biennale undoubtedly helped bridge. Before the Biennale opened, Italian critics had a somehow piecemeal understanding of what was produced in Britain probably based on prints and on political *rapprochements* whilst some dealers such as Gaetano Lombardi showed evidence of an in-depth firsthand knowledge of artists and collections of British painting thanks to their personal travels and networks. Such lack of circulation in the information could point to a form of 'insularity' whether in Britain or in Italy, or in both countries. Comparisons with neighbouring countries such as France further showed that British artistic practices seemed to be largely unknown to continentals hence confirming the insular position of Britain. However during the second half of the nineteenth century, universal exhibitions fostered a better access to some famous British artists and enabled Italian art critics to develop their visual experience. At that point however, they still seemed to rely heavily on French literature, in particular on Ernest Chesneau and Robert de la Sizeranne or on foreign correspondents such as Mary Robinson or Helen Zimmern.

The opening of the Biennale coincided with a wave of interest in Pre-Raphaelitism which had started in the 1880s mostly in Symbolist and decadent circles.

Archival evidence shows that the most important Italian art critics of the period, i.e. Vittorio Pica or Ugo Ojetti, travelled widely in order to refine their visual understanding of contemporary art and to cultivate their transnational networks. Yet until the Biennale brought regular displays of British painting, only a handful of individuals had some understanding of its main exponents. Indeed in decadent circles, part of its appeal lay in its perceived secrecy and elite quality. Therefore it seemed that even after Britain purportedly relinquished its artistic insularity, the circulation of the information was slow and it took a few decades for the Italian elite to adjust, helped by a wave of *Anglophilia*.

For all its imperfections, it is fair to state that the Biennale revolutionised the relationship the Italian public had with British painting by fostering firsthand experience and media coverage on the subject. Archival evidence showed that the eleven pre-war editions radically transformed the knowledge, appreciation and consumption of British painting by the Italian elite. It also revealed that Italian art critics generally did not consider British painting to be 'insular'. Though Pre-Raphaelitism was defined as 'alien' in 1895, following the French view, and though Scottish painting carried an element of exoticism, critics were keen to look for national characteristics in paintings in order to create their own understanding of what 'British' meant. They also wished to compare it to other sections. As seen in chapter III, aesthetic considerations were sometimes heavily tainted with political views, which was all in all fairly positive in Britain's case. This was explored as indicative of a process of cross-cultural consumption during which the meaning attached to paintings shifted as the onlooker's cultural environment changed. Of course the reception of British painting evolved quite noticeably with time. While the two groups mentioned above were seen as novel, Edwardian painting was generally deemed to be 'traditional' by the First World War. The meaning of the word 'traditional', though central to this study, is pretty difficult to assess. In some instances as with Ugo Ojetti, it had positive connotations as a form of modernity prolonging yet transforming the Old Masters. On

the other hand, some critics such as Nino Barbantini, who defended artists close to the latest French artistic developments, rejected British painting. Unsurprisingly, Italian art critics took part in a wider European artistic debate in which what constituted the 'Modern' was discussed at length. Therefore it seemed that by the First World War, Italian art critics were firmly taking part in broader European artistic debates in which British painting played a role as generally upholding a soft approach to modernity. This should be further contextualised in a political interpretation in which the British system, although undergoing some substantial social reforms, such as the 1909-1910 People's Budget introduced by liberal H.H. Asquith's government, still retained its traditional aristocratic governance for some foreign onlookers.

It was one of the main aims of this study to combine a quantitative and a qualitative exploration of the international market for British painting during the *fin-de-siècle* period. As stated before, the choice of the Venice Biennale also stemmed from that objective as it proudly advertised itself as a market whilst the ASAC luckily kept all the sales ledgers for the pre-war period. In spite of some limitations in gathering the data, it was thus possible to create an accurate survey of the salability of British painting in Italy. Studying the consumption of British painting showed that Clive Bell was not altogether wrong in his assessment of late Victorian and Edwardian painting as an artificially high-priced market sustained by local patrons. Indeed the Venetian archives have disclosed a stark contrast between English and Scottish practices from that perspective. It was not uncommon for English artists to refuse to sell their paintings in Italy as continental prices did not match their expectations. Famous painters such as Walter Crane or Stanhope Forbes did not wish to drop their prices and create discrepancies in their home and international market as it might perhaps have encouraged private buyers to negotiate further. In the case of Stanhope Forbes, the archives have shown that he preferred retaining his painting rather than down-selling. Of course English painters agreed to give discounts on their works when they were acquired by public bodies or prestigious collections as it contributed to their

institutionalisation and thus ultimately to a rise in their price list. On the other hand, Scottish painters were willing to negotiate their already lower expectations. In addition to Fradeletto's praise of their 'soft prices',² letters have shown that overall discounts of up to fifty percent could be accepted. This discrepancy seems slightly paradoxical as many Glasgow Boys seemingly enjoyed a stronger international reputation than many of their English counterparts with group exhibitions in museums in America.³ However this difference in prices between English and Scottish artists may be partly explained by accommodation prices in London. Then as now artists found life much more expensive in London than in Paris for example.⁴

Then the Biennale ledgers revealed that overall the buyers favoured a restrained number of artists in the British section. Out of the 298 participants seventy-five sold one or several works in Venice, i.e. roughly one fourth of the British contingent. What is more revealing is that thirty artists sold two or more paintings while only seventeen of them sold three or more paintings, this latter figure representing less than 6% of the total number of participants. Therefore the quantitative analysis conducted in chapter IV not only seems to point out to an overall niche market for British painting but most of all to a taste focusing on a few key individuals. In decreasing number of paintings sold, these were: John Lavery (nineteen), John Terris (twelve), James Whitelaw Hamilton (nine), Grosvenor Thomas, Robert Macaulay Stevenson and Alfred East (five), Archibald Kay and Frank Brangwyn (four) while three paintings were sold by James Paterson, William Pratt, David Fulton, William Russell Flint, Melton Fisher, John Patrick Downie, Robert McGown Coventry and Alexander Kellock Brown. This list of names strongly suggests an overall preference for

² Venice, ASAC, Fondo storico, scatole nere 7, Pubblicità, Letter from Antonio Fradeletto to Pompeo Molmenti, 25/XI/1896, p. 2.

³ For example, the Glasgow Boys had group exhibition at the Chicago Art Institute in 1895 and in Toronto in 1906.

⁴ Walter Shaw-Sparrow, *John Lavery and his Works* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd, 1911), p. 40.: 'And a room cost little in a comfortable hotel, just forty francs a month. Forty francs! What sort of room could have been hired in London for that sum? Food, too, was inexpensive, despite tariffs and fettered trade. There was no need to be at all anxious about ways and means. Even a small purse managed quite well in the Quartier Latin'. The rent would have been the equivalent of GBP1.6!

the Glasgow School which generally remained a favourite throughout the pre-war period. As a result their overall absence from the last two editions of the Biennale may also partly account for the declining commercial results of the British section. This is interesting to point out as the last four pre-war editions were curated by Marcus Bourne Huish and the British Committee. Although his in-depth knowledge of the national artistic scene opened up the section to a more diverse sample of artists, this strategy did not prove altogether successful in commercial terms. Could it be that the buying public coming to the Biennale preferred a smaller, better curated and more aesthetically unified British section? Although other factors no doubt affected the results in 1912 and 1914, it would be interesting to compare with the displays in other sections.

Chapter IV also tried to show that a purely quantitative analysis can only offer one perspective which has to be further contextualised. On the one hand, the attempt to link the market results to macro-events such as the economic situation in Italy or international political tensions between European countries proved somewhat inconclusive. Although some connections between the sales patterns and the political situation in Europe could be found, it was difficult to pinpoint with certainty the causal links. Rather the findings showed that sales at an international exhibition tend to be the results of many intertwined and complex micro and macro factors going beyond but also connected to taste, politics and networks. Indeed one of the main findings of this study was to point out the seminal role played by Antonio Fradeletto, General Secretary of the Biennale. Chapter II revealed his *Anglophile* tendencies which no doubt greatly contributed to the uninterrupted British presence throughout the pre-war period, and to the fact that Britain was among the first countries to secure a pavilion in the *Giardini*. Furthermore, chapter IV explained how he used his extensive local and national networks in order to tirelessly promote British (and other) artists in the media. Shamelessly pushing for sales, he encouraged friends and foes alike to acquire works, sometimes going as far as relinquishing the ten percent commission due to the Biennale. Archival evidence has shown that the personal relations he had with

some artists such as John Lavery or Frank Brangwyn had a major impact on their visibility and ultimately their commercial success in Venice. This in turn may partly explain why the British section underwent a spell in the wilderness after the First World War when *Francophile* Vittorio Pica succeeded Fradeletto at the sales bureau from 1912 and then as General Secretary from 1920. Thus it could be argued that in some cases the personal inclinations of the organisers and their networks may have a more pronounced impact than some broader economic or political situations.

In the same way as in chapter III, chapter IV sought to explore how far a cross-cultural market might have affected the values ascribed to British painting outside of its national boundaries. Indeed MacLeod's seminal study in patronage of British painting in the nineteenth century in England had insisted on the patriotic motivation pushing British nouveaux-riches collectors to use national art as a form of cultural empowerment. This might be seen as a form of 'insular' collecting which affected most of the European nations in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century. On the other hand international markets precisely enabled British painting to be stripped of that 'insular' patriotic aura. The findings showed that British painting appealed to a restrained portfolio of buyers from all over Europe and beyond. No less than ten different nationalities of buyers have been identified, thereby showing the diversity of the clientele. All in all the ledgers revealed that some 136 paintings, watercolours and drawings were acquired by 79 individual and 22 official buyers, most of whom were unsurprisingly Italian. Overall it has been difficult to trace these buyers as most of them did not leave archives or did not bequeath their paintings to museums. Yet the evidence found seems to suggest that most of them did not collect British paintings specifically. Rather they bought them as part of a broader trend of international art consumption with a view to decorate their interior or complement other national schools rather than to invest or gather a comprehensive sample. In one example discussed in chapter IV, the catalogue of an Italian collection did not mention the two

Scottish paintings acquired at the Biennale; rather it focussed on the Italian Old Masters acquired in a patriotic attempt to retain national treasures.⁵

Twenty years before Clive Bell, the Redgrave Brothers had been trumpeting future successes for the British school of art:

We know that the English school has much to achieve, and we do not believe in our brethren flagging in the race. The talent rising up to succeed that which is passing away is abundant... Even as we write we read in the press the successes of our painters, at the Paris 1889 Exhibition... we have every confidence that British artists will continue to produce works worthy of record in a future century.⁶

When looking at the British sections at the pre-war Venice Biennale, the reality lies in between the Redgrave Brothers' confident optimism and Bell's cool contempt. The presence of the British painters in Venice has yielded some fascinating insight into their individual or coordinated attempts to internationalise their careers and find other outlets for their works. This work has also showed that international buyers or collectors took an interest in British painting and acquired it, generally alongside other schools. Yet this conclusion is far from satisfactory and would want some more points of comparisons. One of the main limitations of this study has been the absence of continuous comparisons with other sections during the pre-war years. Indeed, as the ledgers contain more information in relation to the performances of the other sections, it would be of great interest to make use of them and obtain a better understanding of general sales pattern between 1895 and 1914. In addition, a systematic exploitation of these data would also allow us to get an unparalleled picture into the typology and

⁵ Ettore Modigliani, *La collezione di Luigi Albertini* (Roma: s.n., 1942).

⁶ Richard and Samuel Redgrave, *A Century of Painters of the English School; with Critical Notices of their Works, and an Accounts of the Progress of Art in England*, vol. 1 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1890), pp. 474-475.

nationality of the buyers, their taste and frequency of their presence at the Venice Biennale. Furthermore, more research should be carried out regarding Edwardian painters and their international presence. Too many artists are still relatively unknown when they were active part of the international art market. Ultimately much more needs doing regarding the consumption of British paintings abroad as this study only opened up a discussion which should be pursued further.

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