

App. I- Recensioni alla *Correspondence*¹

1) Michael Kugler (North Western College, Chicago), in *Scotia*, a journal edited by the Department of History of the Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia (vol. XIX, 1995, pp. 43-46):

The author writes:

"Scholars maintaining the surge of interest in the Scottish Enlightenment and, in particular, the work of moral philosopher Adam Ferguson, will welcome this collection uniting previously known manuscripts from various libraries in Britain and the United States. The relentless research of Vincenzo Merolle [...] now offers previously unknown letters from New Zealand, Geneva, Pennsylvania, and even Iowa. [...]"

Professor Merolle has enlisted the aid of two scholars for this edition. Kenneth Wellesley, professor emeritus of classics at Edinburgh University, consulted with professor Merolle on points of style and in questions about Ferguson's work in ancient history and literature. Professor Jane Fagg, one of Ferguson's most authoritative biographers, begins Volume One with a fine biographical essay, guiding the reader through the twists and turns of the philosopher's life. [...]

The edition contains 419 letters (359 from Ferguson) from 1745 to 1816. A series of appendices conclude Volume Two with manuscript and published material highlighting matters raised in the letters [...]. Included are copious footnotes to identify persons and obscure events mentioned in the letters. Professor Merolle supplements them with references to parallel passages in Ferguson's unpublished lecture notes, essays, and even to contemporary newspaper articles. Merolle has also translated the Greek and Latin phrases that pepper Ferguson's letters, as well as citing his ancient and contemporary sources, a real help to modern readers [...].

The two volumes are quite clear of typos; I found only a few, on pp. xcvi, 10, 222, 477 and 478. Other errors are more nagging. On p. cxxiii the author William Scott of *Adam Smith as Student and Professor* (1937) is listed as the author of the 1792 "Sketch of the Life of Andrew Fletcher of Salton...". Some notes are missing or are out of place: p. cxiii, 108, 333 and 493-4. Occasionally people are named in the letters but no note identifies them, even to list them as "unidentified" (pp. 125, 221, 483, 491, 522, 531). Some definitions of contemporary terms ("High Flyer", "a Storey in a Land", "lour", "Rob machg an Duig") might have been offered since others are defined elsewhere.

These, however, are of little concern in the face of Professor Merolle's massive investigative scholarship and painstaking editing, all very helpfully assembled for scholars of various levels of

¹ Chiedo venia per questa breve appendice che, come direbbero gli Inglesi, è piuttosto 'unusual'. In realtà questo libro è anche un pò un diario, almeno relativamente al primo periodo della mia attività, allorché, sentendosi affievolire il mio interesse per gli studi in Italia, e disincantato da certe esperienze, cominciai a trascorrere lunghi periodi all'estero, ed in particolare a Edinburgo, che è divenuta la mia seconda patria. A tali nuove esperienze devono la loro esistenza la *Correspondence* di Ferguson (2 voll., Londra, 1995), l'edizione dei *Manuscripts* (Londra, 2005), oltre a *Ferguson. History, Progress and Human Nature* (Londra, 2007), e *Ferguson: Philosophy, Politics and Society*, in collaborazione con Eugene Heath della New York State University at New Paltz, oltre a varie cose, pubblicate, o in corso di stampa, qua e là in Europa. Nonché, ovviamente, la mia rivista, *2000. The European Journal* che, sebbene fatta con modestia di mezzi, si è ormai conquistata un suo posto nella cultura europea, oltre a progetti che mi impegnano da anni (si veda qui, in internet).

Tutto ciò mi arreca grande soddisfazione, ed ampiamente mi ripaga di delusioni (e delusioncelle). Però devo anche riconoscere che queste non sono altro che la conseguenza della mia irrefrenabile propensione alla disobbedienza - peggio, alla rivolta-, che si manifestò in me ben presto, fin dagli anni del liceo, e che è stata la fonte di tutti, o quasi, i miei guai nell'università italiana (dove 'morirò' felicemente 'ricercatore', non essendo stato possibile compiere passi innanzi nella 'carriera', ovvero, essere cooptato tra i 'possessori di cattedre', per la ragione sopradetta, e per essere io stato, giustamente, fin dagli inizi etichettato come 'tipo difficile'). Ciò è per me ragione di grande rammarico, come fanno tutti quelli che mi conoscono. Ma che la 'corporazione' abbia avuto le sue buone ragioni, per rifiutare di 'cooptarmi', a causa del mio spirito di insubordinazione, non c'è dubbio (lo ammetto qui, *coram populo*), e non posso se non fare il *mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!*

O tempora, o mores!

expertise in British and Scottish history. This work is very welcome and will be a prominent addition to any collection in Scottish Enlightenment studies, as well as British and European intellectual history".

2) Colin Kidd, of the University of Glasgow, (*London Review of Books*, 14 November 1996, pp. 14-15), writes the following words:

"Vincenzo Merolle has produced an immaculate edition of the *Correspondence*, together with an informative commentary on correspondents, minor dramatis personae and historical context (though a reliance at times on the *DNB* risks obscuring a historiographical revolution)".

3) Alexander Murdoch, of the University of Edinburgh, (*Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, no. 11, Spring 1997, p. 28):

"This is a welcome addition to the published primary source material relating to eighteenth-century Scotland and the published correspondence of the leading figures of the Scottish Enlightenment. Vincenzo Merolle is to be congratulated on successfully bringing the project to publication".

4) Malcolm Jack, (*British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 1997, vol. 20, part II: 'Vincenzo Merolle's fine two-volume edition of Ferguson's correspondence... is presented with full scholarly apparatus of variation, footnotes and extensive index'.

5) David Allan (*The Scottish Historical Review*, vol. 76, no. 202, pp. 290-1): "the appearance in print of Ferguson's ... correspondence [...] matters of real satisfaction among those concerned with Scottish, indeed European, thought in the early modern period

Vincenzo Merolle's efforts have produced two volumes of edited correspondence which would certainly daunt students unfamiliar with Ferguson ... they ought hereafter to provide the necessary starting-point for modern scholars intrigued by a long and interesting intellectual career spanning the decades between the battle of Fontenoy ... and the defeat of Napoleon (These events and personal insights) mingle with material of wider cultural interest, such as his correspondence with Hume, Smith, Carlyle, Dundas and Gibbon. Pulled together from repositories as distant as Berlin and Ann Arbor, Dunedin and Geneva, the resulting collection amounts to one of the most comprehensive resources on an eighteenth-century Scottish man of letters which we are ever likely to see".