

The third of the *Lettere di Giustificazione*: G. B. Piranesi to the
Abbé Peter Grant, translated into English.

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Introduction

The translation of the two previous letters which form part of the booklet entitled *Lettere di Giustificazione*, addressed by Piranesi to Lord Charlemont and his agents, has already been published in *Italogramma*. This third letter, as the other two, is here translated into English for the first time. It has the title: *Lettera Terza. Questa fu scritta dal Signor Piranesi al Signore A. G. e rimessagli in proprie mani il dì 31 Maggio 1757 dal Signore Abate Piermei.*

As in the previous letters I have tried to be faithful, as far as possible, to Piranesi's original, at times very convoluted style. Paragraphs have been introduced because they were almost totally lacking. Piranesi's note numbers have been kept, but the notes have been added at the end rather than at the foot of each page. The original capitalisation has been retained.

This letter, like the others, originates from Lord Charlemont's failure to patronise Piranesi's four volumes of the *Antichità Romane*, published in May 1756. In the letter Piranesi insists on the avarice of Charlemont and his agents which, according to him, indicates an offensive lack of appreciation of his work. The *Antichità Romane* was first dedicated to Charlemont, but the dedications were later erased and substituted by a dedication to his contemporaries, future generations and the public good. Piranesi in this letter continues his diatribe against those who, having the means, do not protect the Arts, diminish the role of the artist and jeopardise their freedom.

The most serious accusations by Piranesi in the letter deal with the threats he had received of being murdered, of the interception of his letters to Charlemont, of the falsification of correspondence by milord's agents, and of the malevolent calumnies spread publicly by Charlemont's agents. Piranesi has to refute all this publicly in this booklet, calling the public to be the ultimate judge of the whole matter.

Piranesi cares to tell us that this *Lettera Terza* had been delivered personally by the Abate Piermei, an interesting figure very close to Piranesi and Winckelmann. Piranesi, on the other hand, is reticent in naming the recipient of the letter, addressing him as A. G., for Abbé Grant. I believe that

the reticence is due to the ambiguous feelings of Piranesi for Grant which alternate between aggressiveness and sympathetic understanding. It may be significant that in later years Piranesi dedicated one etching of his *Vases* (1778), to the Abbé, with the inscription:

*Dedicato all'amicizia dell'Illu'mo Sig.r Abb.te D. Pietro Grant
amatore delle belle arti
In atto d'Ossequio il Cavaliere Gio Batta Piranesi D. D. D.*

The Abbé Peter Grant, (1708-1784), was a Jesuit, representative of the Scottish Roman Catholic secular clergy to the papal court, and lived in Rome for some 50 years. He was a point of reference for most of the English speaking people visiting the city, and also acted as one of Charlemont's agents.

Grant wrote to inform Charlemont of the publication of the *Lettere di Giustificazione* and commented also on the *Lettera Terza* addressed to him. Grant's letter from Rome to Charlemont is dated 1st April, 1758:

Your lordship must know, then, that notwithstanding the formal precept that was intimated to him in June last by the government here, never to dare to publish any thing either in writing or print, wherein anything that could reflect on your lordship might be mentioned, and particularly that the scandalous letter he had wrote to me after I had communicated to him, with all the smoothness and coolness of temper imaginable, your sentiments with regard to his dedication to your lordship, which he had threatened to publish, should never appear in print, under the most rigorous and severe penalties of galleys; [...] yet the fellow had the boldness and audaciousness, in the begining [*sic*] of February last, not only to publish the two letters he had formerly sent printed to your lordship, and that most scurrilous one to me, but moreover was so mad as to publish at the same time, several most satirical prints...(HMC, vol. 1, pp. 240-241)

One passage in this third letter is rather strange, and needs some explanation. Piranesi in it accuses Grant of being the mouth piece for the other agents who are ready to falsify letters for Piranesi, pretending they come from Charlemont. He then boldly asserts '[...] vi farò vedere, che so conoscere le copie del Lovelace, sì ben maneggiato dal Fielding nel suo Romanzo della Clarice.' This can be translated as '[...] I will show you that I can recognize the copies [the imitators] of Lovelace, so well handled by Fielding in his Novel *Clarissa*.' Piranesi quotes mistakenly the unscrupulous character of Lovelace as Fielding's creation rather than Richardson's in the latter's epistolary novel *Clarissa* (1748), making us wonder what knowledge Piranesi

had of this work. Nevertheless he must have known that Lovelace was accused of been responsible for the ‘villainous forgery’ and re-elaboration of intercepted letters (*Clarissa*, vol. VI, letter LXXI). The same accusation is addressed by Piranesi to the agents of Charlemont.

Apart from Grant, Piranesi in this letter is also addressing the public, his most reliable patron, as well as Charlemont, and his other agents to whom he sends oblique messages. Of these other agents the only one explicitly mentioned by Piranesi is his arch-enemy John Parker, who in fact ended up ruined a few years later following this diatribe. On the other hand Charlemont’s agents are referred to in Piranesi’s satirical vignettes (figs. 1, 2, 3) which accompany the *Lettere di Giustificazione*. In the first one of the booklet, an allegory of *Time discovering Truth*, (fig. 1) Parker, identifies the personages on the right as:

...a fat fellow, with a swelled leg, his hat fallen off, passing under the three spears, to characterize me; follows my dear friend, Mr. Murphy in a despairing action, and after comes an abbé for Mr. Grant...(HMC, vol. 1, p. 245)

In this way, Parker, followed by Murphy, Charlemont’s tutor, and finally Grant are humiliated like the shamefully defeated Roman soldiers after the battle at the Caudine Forks.

In the final vignette (fig. 3) the same three personages are interred in the humble Campus Esquilinus along with the buffoons and the wastrels mentioned by the poet Horace, quoted here by Piranesi. Their names, originally written on their headstone, have been partially erased, just as the name of Lord Charlemont had been erased from the dedications of the volumes of the *Antichità Romane*, echoing a *damnatio memoriae*.

A peculiarity of this letter is the extraordinary long note 3. This note functions as a second letter, parallel to the main text, addressed mainly to the public, called to judge, as Piranesi repeatedly writes, the whole intricate affair. Piranesi in this note talks about himself in the third person, as the ‘Author’, to distance himself from the object of the discussion. In this way he introduces a narrator meant to give an objective view of the whole matter. A great part of this note is to be found in manuscript form in the Vatican and the Corsini libraries in Rome, included within the *Antichità Romane* (Piranesi refers to the manuscript letters in note 16 p. XII in the first of his *Lettere di Giustificazione*). This manuscript letter, which I quote from the Barberini copy in the Vatican Library is entitled: Terza Lettera, Al Pubblico, al Sig.re Ab.te Grandi, ed al S.r Parker

In the manuscript letter Piranesi writes in the first person. The transposition made from the first to the third person generates in note 3, a number of confusing pronouns and occasional errors, which I have tried to explain in square brackets in my translation.

In this note great emphasis is given to the generous way Piranesi's work, of which the *Antichità Romane* formed such remarkable part, is esteemed and valued by the 'English Nation', as he calls it; so much so that Piranesi is proud to let us know he has been elected honorary fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in London, which he erroneously calls 'royal' both here and in the title of his *Lettere di Giustificazione*.

A warm letter by Thomas Hollis in Italian is provided by Piranesi to show how highly regarded he is in England. Piranesi qualifies Hollis as: 'Sig. Cav. Tommaso Hollis, soggetto rinomato non solo in essa Nazione [Inglese], che in tutta l'Europa, per la nascita, la probità, e per le scienze...' (Piranesi, *Lettere*, p. XXVII). Hollis was indeed a remarkable person, a benefactor, a political thinker and a stern defender of liberty. He could have read the first two letters of the *Lettere di Giustificazione* to Charlemont, originally issued in print in the *Antichità Romane*, and deeply sympathised with Piranesi's pleas for a respectful treatment, his dignity and pride in liberty so boldly expressed. Piranesi also quotes the letter by the secretary of the Society, William Norris, written in Latin, which notified him of his election showing also the general esteem.

The text of the *Lettera Terza* is accompanied by two vignettes (figs. 2, 3): both of which deal with death. The first vignette (fig. 2) refers in synthesis to the most striking issue of the letter: that is, the threats of being murdered which Piranesi received from Grant. It represents the funeral of Meleager, based on an ancient Roman relief in the Capitoline Museum in Rome. Parker in a letter to Murphy, interprets the vignette as alluding to the supposed dead Peter Grant carried to the pyre. (HMC, vol. 1, p.246)

The final vignette (fig. 3) shows Piranesi's condemnation of Charlemont's agents to an infamous burial. His vendetta is evident: Piranesi is alive, despite the threats received, but the agents are not, and for them he reserved an ignoble burial.

I gratefully thank my husband Dr. Alexander D. Stewart for his help in the translation.

THIRD LETTER

This was written by Signor Piranesi to Signor A... G... and delivered into his hands the 31st May 1757 by Signor Abate Piermei.

SIR

This morning, after I left you, I went to see a Prelate, a man eminent by birth and fortune, more than 55 years old and able to give good advice. I showed him the rough copy of the letter that you had persuaded me to write to Milord Charlemont, and that you had so much approved of. I related to him all that passed between us during the two last interviews we had together. I told him that you came to reprimand me and threaten me on behalf of Milord; that you showed me a letter purporting to have come from him; that after putting aside the role of his Agent you had assumed that of a mediator; that you confessed to me that the letter you had shown me was not Milord's after all; and finally that you assured me that my letters to him had been intercepted, and that the enemies created around him, either by envy or by interest, had slandered me in his presence, and also in yours. If you will take the trouble to call to mind the motives which led you to come to see me on this occasion, the confessions that you have been obliged to make to me, and finally all that you have done in my presence, you will agree with me that your behaviour must have caused in me suspicions justified later by the events. I believed I had to clarify them, and therefore shared them with my friend, who, instead of removing them, has revealed their strength and foundation.

Here it is, dear Sir, the result of our deliberations on this point that I am going to tell to you with that frankness everybody knows to be mine, and which must be used in an affair which concerns equally my honour, Milord's reputation, and perhaps your own interest. It is first and foremost evident, dear Sir, that I was right in writing to Milord that I would have not acknowledged as his any letter not sent directly to me, and I surely had to write this while I had reason to suspect that his letters could have been intercepted by untrustworthy hands, and that Milord's answers could be falsified or even suppressed. You yourself told me that such a case had occurred, and that my letters had not had a chance of reaching him. I was therefore right to take the precautions which indeed I had taken, and therefore I am ever more right not to acknowledge as Milord Charlemont's any answer which might have passed through unreliable hands. Therefore, my dear Sir, even if the letter which you claimed to have received from him had not been a fake, as you later confessed

to me in the presence of someone that you could not see, but who could overhear you, it is certain that it would not have achieved your proposed aim, because to me, as a letter, it was as false as a forged coin encountered in the course of ordinary commerce. But you have shown me a much easier way to discover what had happened on this occasion, by telling me that Milord had never seen my letters, that he had not even been informed of the business, and that I had been disgraced in his eyes.

Therefore, if I am wrong in complaining, why do they [the Agents] not let him be both his own judge and mine? And if I am right, and he has been deceived, why do they not want what is my due to be conceded to me? Why do they not disillusion him? And finally, why do they not let him discover the truth by himself? And if what you said is true, how did you ever have the boldness to come to my house in order to threaten me on behalf of Milord about a business he is not even aware of? Why do you let him say in an answer concocted by you and your friends that he has seen some letters that afterwards you are telling me he has not seen? Whence comes this chaos of contradictions, which carries in itself the mark of falsehood and the character of an intrigue plotted by people whose conscience reproaches their past and makes them fear for the future?

But, thanks to your good advice I have at last come to know how I have to judge the past, think about the present, and act in the future. As for the past, it is certain that Milord and I have been duped; because, if all the ways to make myself heard by him have been closed, they [the Agents] have also barred him from all those which could allow me to recognize him as a man of honour. I have written letters to enlighten him on a question which I was so keen he should be aware of; but according to what you yourself tell me, they [the Agents] did not show them to him; and since they will always act in this manner, if I continue to use the ordinary post, you can well see that no other way is left to me in order to inform him of what goes on, and to let him know by what sort of people he is surrounded, and to disabuse him of the sinister ideas they have given him about me, than using a different channel and allow myself to be heard by the Public. This, my dear Master, is what I want to do by publishing the letters, which will unveil a mystery of iniquity, and an intrigue plotted with the darkest roguery. I will expose to the eyes of the Public, that will not have but a feeling of disdain about it, a bunch of rascals who put themselves between two gentlemen in order to divide them.

Here is how I judge the past and what I am going to do from now on. As far as what I must think about the present; do tell me, my dear Sir: You who come to tempt me to sell my reputation for fifty *zecchini*, and in this way prostitute my name among the Public: You who have the impudence to offer

such a mean sum on Milord's behalf, and expose him as such an unworthy figure, without his knowledge: You, who dare to make me understand that *Milord is able to come to murder*, [and] to the face of one who did not meet him if not in order to dedicate to him a Work of the most prestigious kind ever published in this field: You, I say, who proved that neither vile interest, nor an even viler fear, have been able to move a man with whom you could but not agree: You, who here sacrifice the honour of such a respectable Gentleman to the interest of your friends; do tell me, did you not confess that you had not come on behalf of this Gentleman?

Well now: You could only come either on his behalf, or on behalf of those who betray him by intercepting his letters; is it not true? Therefore having granted me that you were not coming on behalf of Milord; therefore you came on behalf of those who prevent him from seeing his real interests. As such, I regard you as a partisan of Milord's enemies and mine; therefore I let you judge if I can trust you on a matter where I know that your friends would like me to defer to one from whose mouth I could not expect anything but a judgement dictated by them. Why did you then come to me? I will tell you, and I will show you that I can recognize the copies of Lovelace [character] so well handled by Fielding in his Novel of Clarice.

You expect to obtain a letter for me from Milord, and that it will be exactly as I want; but someone listening to you carefully would say to himself: How is it ever possible that he can promise that Milord will answer if he says that this Gentleman has not even seen Piranesi's letters, and it is absolutely necessary for him to have seen them in order to answer him? But I will convince anybody who might argue in this way, and I will demonstrate to him in what way you can make such a promise, and also keep it.

You went on and on telling me that if I did not care about money, everything will go according to my wishes, and since you have so much insisted on this point it is my duty to dwell on it. I told you regarding this letter that you pretended to be from Milord, that in this matter there was in no way a question of money, but of honesty and justice. You would have been very embarrassed if I had answered you that I meant to be reimbursed for the many expenses I endured; but you know that I am incapable of such behaviour (although I believe, nobody would find it strange that having spent two thousand *scudi* for a gentleman such as Milord, I might have supposed that he was going to make me a present of his portrait; and even when I flattered myself that he might give me a considerable present, by supposing so I would have honoured Milord, because I would have esteemed him sensitive to honesty and able to act generously; and this is how I imagined it to be. But the conception I had of him was sufficient, without leaving space for self interest,

to undertake an arduous task, which has only been the fruit of my goodwill and of the respect due to him.)

You know my dear Sir, and you must testify this in public, that I am not as covetous as you would like to portray me. You also know that I have sufficient means to be on an equal standing with the wealthiest dealers. But let us see why ever you were so muddled about the money you believed I could claim, and for what reason you were lowering Milord, universally recognised as generous, to the point of saying that he had bargained with me a dedication for fifty *zecchini*, by inventing a calculation on a completely false assumption; because about this matter you, along with those to whom you could show this letter, should know that it is a lie that Milord has made an offer so little in keeping with his character, and it is equally certain that I would have never have let it pass if offered by anyone else.

But here I am ready to unloose the Gordian knot. It is sure that if in order to protect Milord's reputation one had to spend money, none of those gentlemen who so generously intercept his letters would do it; and therefore had I asked for money there would have been no way to come to an agreement; so another way had to be found to persuade me; and therefore they thought that threats might achieve the effect; but you have seen what a handsome case I made of it. On the other hand without me asking for money, it is certain, that all difficulties would be resolved because since you are all as prodigal with opinions as you are tight fisted, you will not be less generous when the moment comes to provide [faked] answers; and even more you are able to promise them to be just as desired. Indeed, one can confidently make promises when one knows from where to get what one promises. But you found yourself rather confused when I told you that a letter was wanted written by Milord's own hand, and you choose to provide the excuse of telling me that he is affected by a hand impediment. After all, there are those Gentlemen [the Agents] who can write to me themselves [another forged letter]; and I am sure that in order to free themselves from any trouble they would provide me with the answer I want. It is known that they have Milord's seal and in order to fabricate an answer from Milord to Piranesi it would not take them longer than it did to intercept the letters written by Piranesi to Milord.

Besides, since you, who did not enter into this business but for your friends, have confessed misusing this Gentleman's name without him knowing; do also confess that you are persuaded that those who have their own interest in this affair could also make use of His seal without him knowing, just as You could make use of his name without him being aware of it. And in this way, according to the scheme you were proposing to me, it is

certain that, not content to have deceived me, you were also getting ready to ridicule me; But I will take care that you will not succeed, and I will show you that I have patrons who can defend the innocent, recognize justice, and deplore evil behaviour. But to what extremes can passion carry you? And how is it possible that a residue of gratitude does not restrain you from putting into action all in your power to avoid blackening the reputation the Public attributes to Milord? But what? Are you not blushing in proposing to me that I should dedicate to him only one (1) volume? But should this be the volume on ancient sepulchres, and consequently happen to be the third one of the complete Work? Tell me then: if I were a man easily swayed, and if I had an idea of Milord such as the one you were inducing me to conceive from your conduct, could I not have bitterly vindicated myself? I would have not had to do anything but follow the example of Horace and Boileau, dedicating the first Volume to my Gardener and the second one to somebody else of similar condition; and in the meantime you would have seen that the outcome of your advice would have been to make Milord's name useful for the last sentence of an epigram.

Do tell me: would it have been a decent thing? Was it right to suggest such a proposal? I nevertheless, did not adhere to it, because I am unable to forget the deep respect I owe to him. I pity him with that sincerity that every man of honour feels in seeing another being cheated; and without losing heart after so many unfruitful attempts, I will do all in my power to make him aware of the [bad] behaviour that You, one of his Agents, have assured me the others are showing at his expense. I will demonstrate to the whole world, or at least all those countries where love of the Arts and of belles-lettres will promote my Works, that no other way was left to me to explain myself to Milord. It will then become evident that I was right to think of writing to him that in case he denied me justice, or failed to provide an answer to my complaints against Parker, I would have appealed to the Public and would have had the letters I was writing to him printed. In taking this resolution I did not so much intend warning him as threatening those who are intercepting my letters, thinking that, seeing the risk they were running of seeing them printed, they would have refrained from hiding them from their master, by reflecting that sooner or later he would have found out from public knowledge. But despite my slight trust in such people, my opinion of them was still too high.

I must, though, pay homage to the English Nation, where love for the native country passes every limit. I met a man of honour, who has no particular attachment to Milord; and who nevertheless just for that friendship that a fellow countryman owes to another, was able to forget any reason he had of complaining about Parker in order to use all imaginable reasons to

dissuade me from making my letters known publicly, in which Milord's name is indeed always respected, but too closely associated with the one of a subject who has done nothing else but persecute me in the name of one who should have protected me. English generosity could not suffer to see imputed to the master the insults received by the servant. Now he will find consolation in seeing that I pity Milord who has not been able to find compassion even in his own household. I then, must take up his [the British man of honour's] position and expose myself to the cost of dying with him like Virgil's Eurialus.

These, my dear Sir, are my reflections; You will be able to acknowledge their reasonableness; and if you need another person [to help you to understand], I allow you to show this letter to Mr Parker. You will be able to do Milord a favour much greater than the one you wanted to offer him by coming to dupe me in his name. You do not have to do anything else than send a copy of the present letter, or even the original, to the interceptors of his letters. Perhaps in seeing their intrigues discovered they will become less bold in devising such actions; but to behave as a man of honour, I would advise you to send it to Milord himself, and I will give one hundred *zecchini* to You, who have the courage to offer fifty *zecchini* to me, if you want to take the responsibility, but without cheating in delivering it to him.

At least he [Charlemont] will be informed of the way others think for him, and of the infamous deeds they do not restrain themselves from doing me, but that will soon be punished. He will then get to know by your mouth that he is being deceived, and I myself will tell him what You yourself ought to tell him, because it is more important for him to know it than for me. You can well appreciate that I could continue at length with these reflections, because it is a question which lends itself to many; but I will limit myself to give you two or three warnings which could be useful to you.

It is really extraordinary that You are promising me a letter from Milord, which your friends are preparing for me, when they have not even resolved to write to me an honest letter in answer to my first. It is certain that if they were making Milord say that he was contented with my dedications and was disapproving the conduct and the offences that I had received from Parker, it is certain, I say, that I would have been satisfied, because I would have not known I was being duped. But you had not esteemed me worthy of this respect; and if the matter is like this You should now inform yourself better; or perhaps they might have believed that a letter without money would have made little impression; but they should have seen from the letter which had been intercepted that I was saying I did not want any. In that way, my dear Gentlemen, it would have cost you then but a small strip of paper bearing a compliment, but since I have now warned you about it, you could make use of

the warning, and since it is a sure thing that instead of receiving a letter from Milord, I would receive one written by you under his name, you can well see that a simple letter with compliments would not be enough for me, after you have hindered and kept in suspense any correspondence with him for so long; and I believe that if Milord were informed about it, he would certainly be the first to think in this way.

What does not cease to amaze me is to see that You, who dare to put words in Milord's mouth and in front of me reporting him say that *he would be capable to having me murdered*, and to make him haggle over a dedication for fifty *zecchini*, and to make him appear such a poor figure, [I am amazed] you have never tried to make him appear a man of honour; and I can tell you that it would have cost you so much less in that you would then not have made him appear responsible for an action which could be suspected false, but instead you would have represented his true character by writing to me a polite letter, just as I had reason to expect; but here one can recognise the donkey's ears under the lion's skin. Do call to memory the fable. So, my dear Sirs, when there is nothing but threats, I cannot recognise in them the gentleman, but rather the people who abuse him in serving him.

With regard to threats it is necessary, Sirs, that I warn you, you who so lavish them on men's lives, that I had been advised to denounce it to the criminal judge to deter you from putting them into effect. And since they are of your invention, as You confessed to me, dear Sir, it would be fit for someone like you to be more moderate and prudent.

The third warning left to me to give you is that if I come to know that you take any steps against my interests, I will immediately go to those to whom you would have spoken, and will show them the original of this letter; and you know well that I do not lose my papers; and I have some that would be impugned if one knew I no longer had them, with the aim of denying to me that Milord Charlemont accepted and approved the dedication of my Volumes. But I have kept the originals he wrote and had delivered to me by the hand of Mr Parker (2).

I finish promising you even more, that at the least move tending to some further abuse of power I will feel obliged to publish this letter also (3). Do think about it, my dear Sir, and do not dirty your hands in an affair where You yourself recognize an element of malice and injustice; and lastly do recognize the truth of Aesop's maxim, that deceit falls on the deceiver.

P. S.

I did not give you any definite answer for five or six days, keeping the present letter back, which only needed, so to say, but the right moment to come to see

you. But you can well imagine that I needed some time for all the reflections here contained in order to take a line of conduct from which I will never depart, and in order to follow you in all the turns and twists of your intrigues. And considering that it took you more than six months to plot them it was reasonable for me to take at least six days to untangle them.

Piranesi's notes to the third letter

1 This is one of the solutions that Milord's Agents have advanced [as a subject] of conversation in Rome, as a compromise intended to dispense the Author with the undertaken resolution; and they have not considered that with this public announcement, instead of doing Milord a service they have abused his generosity; because to show the public only one Volume with his dedication, after the publication of four, was to make known, as they are now doing, that he [Milord] having proposed fifty *zecchini* as a contribution towards the dedication of only one volume, would not want to oblige himself to show as much gratitude for the other three.

2 Here is meant the already mentioned original Inscriptions, and Signor Mercati's Letter, all of which were referred to in note 10 of my first Letter.

3 The public rumours spread by Mr A. G. have induced the Author to maintain the promise made to him by producing the equally public present Letter. Therefore, seeing himself obliged to print it, he [the Author] thinks it right to express candidly his own feelings about the person [A. G.] to whom he addressed it. Despite the fact that he [A. G.] went to his [the Author's] house to make him impudent threats, he [the Author] is nevertheless far from confusing him with those who have perpetrated so many despicable actions at his [the Author's] expense. If he [A. G.] got rather over excited in an affair which was so dear to his friends, this is to be accounted to friendship, which, to whatever side it is directed, is always a feeling full of honesty. If the Author found himself forced to criticize his [A. G.'s] feelings, and to confuse them with those of others who are so very different from his [A. G.'s], both in way of thinking and habits; this derived from the fact that he [A. G.] adopted their feelings in the false persona that he had undertaken to put forward.

The consequences will serve him [A. G.] as a useful warning for the future, and to show him [A. G.], that a man of honour who frequents people who are not so and who undertakes to defend an evil cause, risks to be confused with them, and shows himself in a light which makes one forget

whatever good reasons could have been induced to excuse him, and makes one recall only those which condemn him.

But on the other hand the Author appreciates the justice of the zeal which Mr A. G. shows for Milord. Among all those who ought to have at heart this Gentleman's interests, he is the only one who kept faith; and when he saw the Author uncertain about the wicked actions they [the Agents] were not ceasing doing against him [the Author], and just on the point of taking a resolution able to remove all the problems which are now obliging him to pick up his pen and write, he [A. G.] said to him while at his [the Author's] Bookseller, not to give up, because he [the Author] would have had good reason to be glad of Milord, who was a most honourable man dreadfully duped by those around him. He [A. G.] said even more to the Author, that they were the ones who had kept him away from Milord, and he mentioned to him two of them, who, against the orders of the same Milord, had kept his door shut for him. There is no point in mentioning their names; it is sufficient that they recognize themselves through this allusion; neither does one want to repeat the epithet by which Mr A. G. thought fit to qualify them, the energy of which is sufficient to depict their true nature.

But how does it come about that he, knowing them so well, did not refrain from frequenting them, and until now was induced to lower himself to the point of entering their cause against a man whom, he knows well, they persecute against every law and against every reason? But one would like to believe that, in going to see the Author, he was acting for Milord; and that after having tried in vain all ways of reaching an agreement with his own friends, that he imagined it easier for him to take one step backward rather than persuading them to take one step forward. If this was his reason, he is praiseworthy, and the public is here invited to render him due justice.

As for his [A. G.'s] friends, the Author does not believe that they will be able to justify their conduct so easily. And nevertheless they would like to do so, and if they want to answer his letters, he [the Author] offers to hand down to posterity their defence along with his Works, printing them therein at his own expense. Then the Public, hearing both Sides, will be able to judge better the arguments of each. Those of the Author are so valid, and he is so confident of the justice which protects him, that he does not fear in the least to see them appear next to those [the arguments of the Agents] intended to destroy those [of the Author], indeed, they would come useful as new evidence, as already happened with the defences hitherto brought up by the same Agents, and that in the meantime will be divulged throughout Europe with the present sheets in anticipation of the publication of those [defences], that they may want to add.

In the meanwhile they [the Agents] are urged to prepare them, while the Author warns them that if they [the defences] consist, as they [the Agents] have insisted until now, in arguing that self interest, insanity, hastiness, lack of respect and lack of prudence, induced him [the Author] to suppress the dedication, these imputations are not sufficient without a point by point justification.

In fact, in regard to self interest, the many protestations made to Milord by the Author before the suppression of the dedication, inclined the one to the honourable decision not to accept any gift, and exempted the other [Lord Charlemont] from a reputation of avarice in not giving him [the Author] one; and the delicacy of the Author on this point has gone so far as not to accept the generous offers by a Gentleman from Germany, respectable equally for birth as for profound erudition and protection of the fine Arts, as already indicated in the second Letter.

As for insanity, the Author knows well that this is the appellative used by Milord's Agents for the redemption of a reputation, since by prostituting theirs at every occasion, they have given sufficient demonstration of their contempt for it.

That the tolerance of so many abuses, their repeated denunciation to Milord for a whole year, asking him to do justice, and the lack of any answer by this Gentleman, except for the one that he would have resorted to murder, might not exclude haste in having suppressed the dedications, is left to the judgement of the Public.

As for the lack of respect, either it is in regard to the suppression of the dedication, or in the publication of the present sheets. If it is in the suppression of the dedication, they are the ones who have lost it [respect] for him [Charlemont] either by intercepting the letters, or by making him indifferent to the remonstrations made to him in them. If it [the lack of respect] is in the publication of the present sheets, these, beside being necessary for the justification of the Author in the eyes of the Public, are at the same time in the eyes of same [Public] a most abundant manifestation of respect for Milord, both as expressed, and in the distinction of his character from that of his Agents. And then let us decide who are those who lack respect for Milord; if it is they who attribute to him meanness in his affairs, the curtailing of recompenses, the ingratitude, the threats of assassination, and all the rest one can read in the present sheets of paper; or the Author, who in order to justify himself is forced to let the Public hear of the faults that the servants attribute to their master?

It is indeed a matter of astonishment how ever they can accuse the Author of lack of prudence when their conduct in this business from start to end was

convincing us that they would not even know the word. And now, either this lack of prudence consists in the alleged offence to Milord caused by the suppression of the dedication, or in the responsibility of the Agents for this suppression imputed to them [by the Author], or in the Author having caused, as they maintain, the aversion of the English Nation, and thereby having ruined his affairs with it.

If [the lack of prudence is] in the claimed offence to Milord, the interests of this Gentleman are saved by these present sheets, and whatever bitterness may remain in him for it [the suppression of the dedication], in noble souls cannot but leave space for reason. If [the lack of prudence resides] in the responsibility imputed [by the Author] to the Agents, one wonders how they can look for imprudence in justice.

If [the lack of prudence is], then, in the fact that the Author caused the aversion of the English Nation and therefore spoiled his dealings with it, since this could not happen, as one has deduced, because of Milord, always respected by him [the Author], but rather for having complained of his [Milord's] Agents, the answer is that there would have been a lack of prudence on his [the Author's] part just if he had abstained from it [complaining] on the most offensive supposition that the same Nation protects abuse of power and oppression when it poses the greatest of its merits on being free.

If the Author, despite his smallness of mind, and troubled, as one can understand by passions, was nevertheless able to distinguish between Milord's character and the actions of his Agents, it would have been an excess of presumptuous boldness on his part to suppose that a Nation where all virtues thrive should not have the same discernment [as the Author].

And that indeed it [the English Nation] did have it [discernment] one can argue from the following Letter written [in Italian] to him by Sig. Cav. Tommaso Hollis, a subject renowned not only in that Nation, but in all Europe, for birth, integrity and sciences:

*To the most illustrious Signore etc.
Signor G. B. Piranesi. Included I am sending you the Letter of your election as a Fellow of our Society of Antiquaries of London. I confess that this election succeeded through my mediation with the friends of that most respectable Society etc. Do see from this, Most Illustrious Sir, the sincerity of my regards, and do accept this honour, which (if I am not wrong) you will like even more because it is English etc. Live happily, love our British Nation etc. London 6 August 1757.... T. Hollis.*

This Letter is dated long after the suppression of the dedication [to Lord Charlemont], which had become public knowledge far earlier in England; and

the Society of Antiquaries of London, which constitutes one of the most enlightened parts of that Nation, even if aware of the suppression, and ignorant of the reasons by which the Author could have been induced to do it, uses towards him the generosity of supposing them justified, while it [the English Nation] honours him with most estimable grace in the following Letter [in Latin], which was included in the previous Letter of Mr Hollis:

To the illustrious & most famous Giovanni Battista Piranesi Esq.
It has long been a custom of the Society of Antiquaries in London to elect to its fellowship men from foreign Nations recommended to it for their outstanding knowledge of Antiquity, because hardly anything seems to contribute more to embrace minds and to uphold friendship than similar studies. Therefore it has admitted among its Fellows, you, most illustrious Sir, equipped with the most abundant attestations.
Done by the Society with unanimity, etc. ✠ in lieu of the seal.....
William Norris, Secretary.

Milord's Agents, nevertheless are doing all they can to prove that the Author is out of favour with the English Nation by discrediting his Work in the eyes of those Gentlemen who come from there and with whom they become acquainted, threatening them, furthermore, that Milord will oppose in their home country the issue of the same Work [*Le Antichità Romane*], and that his friends are not going to buy it.

And here we have a new wrong done to Milord's honesty, by supposing him capable of the meanness of their thoughts, and subject to the same envy which torments them. But during the few months that they have been trying to discredit the Author's Work, they have not succeeded in preventing the Author from selling the same Work for three thousand Roman scudi to those who have never supposed that the Works might lose their intrinsic value by the suppression of the dedication. Neither could they [the Agents] prevent him [the Author] sending many copies of his works to London to that well-known Merchant Bookseller Mr Bayer. Indeed the present war has succeeded more than they in hindering their greater distribution.

If Milord's Agents want to be more successful in stopping their issue let them see if they can succeed, for instance, in showing that the remains of the Theatre of Marcellus [in *Le Antichità Romane*] are not exact, clearly depicted and well etched; in short that the Work as a whole is not full of useful, curious and original observations. It is etched on copper; and since this is a metal able to resist the insults of time, the Work will equally resist those [insults], with which they [the Agents] would want to denigrate it, and after also having attacked the Author with them [the insults]; and if they examine the matter

carefully they will abandon the enterprise, as the Serpent of Espouse abandoned the thought of gnawing the steel file which he found to be harder than his teeth.

But these impostures are the least of those which trouble Signor Piranesi. What troubles him more are the calumnies that these same [Agents] go spreading around by saying they have in their hands Letters by the same Piranesi full of insults and affronts directed against the most worthy and respectable person of Milord. The worst is that Signor Piranesi cannot clear himself of this unjust calumny except with negative arguments. He denies then, and denies one thousand times all that they [these Agents] assert even in public with neither respect for truth nor for their conscience and honour; and he [the Author] defies them all to exhibit these letters; and if they fail to do so, he [the Author] will testify to the whole World that they ARE LYING IMPUDENTLY.

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Fig. 1. G. B. Piranesi, *Lettere di Giustificazione* vignette, *Allegory of Time discovering Truth*, 53 × 134 mm. On the right Lord Charlemont's agents can be identified: John Parker passing under the spears, followed by Edward Murphy and the Abbé Peter Grant.



Exemplum veteris anaglyphi marmorei, in Museo Capitolino asservati.

Fig. 2. G. B. Piranesi, *Lettere di Giustificazione*, vignette, *Exemplum veteris anaglyphi*, 50 × 135 mm. The funeral of Meleager.

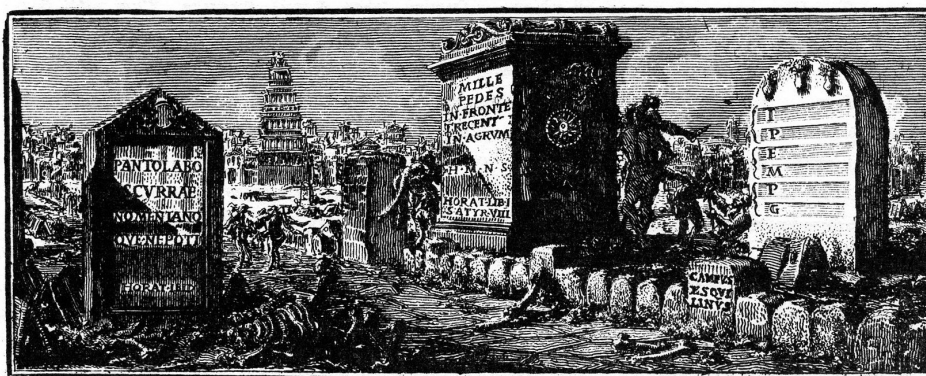


Fig. 3. G. B. Piranesi, *Lettere di Giustificazione*, vignette, *Campus Esquilinus*, 54 × 135 mm. On the headstone on the right one can read the initials of Lord Charlemont's agents.