

Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Allocuzione* to the Academicians of S. Luca in Rome

Silvia Gavuzzo-Stewart

Introduction

In 1756, at the age of 36, Piranesi was sure of having published a work that was going to have imperishable fame. This was his four volume *Antichità Romane*. This publication also plunged him into a bitter dispute over the dedication of the work. Piranesi predicted that also the arguments arising from the dedication of these immortal volumes would have had an equally long life. The volumes, with the original dedication effaced, Piranesi argued in this *Allocuzione*, that is, in his address to the academicians, would become a document, of the 'everlasting memory of the honour' he intended to give to his patron, and of the 'ingratitude received as a reward'.

Here I present an English translation and an Italian transcription of this *Allocution* by G. B. Piranesi (1720-1778), originally intended for the Academicians of San Luca, that prestigious art association founded in Rome for the protection and the promotion of the Arts. The title is:

'Address of Signor Giambatista Piranesi to the most excellent Gentlemen Members of the illustrious Academy of drawing and design of San Luca on the occasion of his donation of the present work of the *Antichità Romane*'.

This address consists of two long forgotten manuscript sheets, in beautiful calligraphy, found by Giuseppe Morazzoni in the Biblioteca Braidense in Milan, inserted in the first of the four volumes of Piranesi's *Antichità Romane* (Rari.B6/1-4). Morazzoni published a transcription of the address in 1921. My transcription, however, is based on Piranesi's original manuscript since Morazzoni's is not always accurate. I have kept the same paragraphs with the same emphasis given to the initial words, written in larger letters. I also left larger letters where, in a Latin quotation from Aulus Gellius, Piranesi wants to give greater stress to words particularly relevant to his personal polemic such as *adversus vim et petulantias injuriarum*, and *contraque insidias iniquorum*.

I have also left Piranesi's bibliographical notes, even when not accurate. In the translation Piranesi's capitalization and punctuation have been kept whenever possible.

In the title of the address, Piranesi mentions his intended gift to the Academy of the magnificent volumes of his *Antichità Romane*. Not being a member of the Academy, he asks to be forgiven for his intrusion into its affairs, and the presentation of his volumes was presumably intended to ingratiate himself in the eyes of the academicians. It could also have been a way of publicising his recent work among fellow artists.

Piranesi's Italian is very elaborate and not always easy to understand. It needs then some words of introduction mainly to clarify passages obscure to us today, and allusive references to two individuals not named explicitly, i.e. a 'Personality', and a 'Member' of the Academy (*Consocio*).

The identity of this 'Personality' can be easily understood since Piranesi declares that these volumes of the *Antichità Romane* were originally meant as a gift to one whose name is recorded therein and whose arms are embossed on the cover, namely Lord Charlemont, the 'Personality' in question. It may be of interest to know that another set of the *Antichità Romane*, also with the arms of Charlemont on their cover, and also intended as a gift to him, is in the National Library in Madrid. (McDonnell 2012, pp. 81–90)

The Anglo-Irish viscount James Caulfield, later Lord Charlemont, young, cultivated and wealthy, had all the qualities to raise in Piranesi the hope of having found a reliable, sympathetic and generous patron. Piranesi had been introduced to him by John Parker, an English painter and dealer, resident in Rome, who was also acting as Charlemont's agent.

Piranesi initially dedicated to Charlemont his volumes of the *Antichità Romane*, but when he finally bitterly realized he could not rely on Charlemont's promised patronage as he expected, after having already published about 70 copies of the volumes, he boldly erased the former dedications in 1757 and instead dedicated his work to his contemporaries (AEVO SVO), to later generations (POSTERIS) and also to the public advantage (ET VTILITATI PVBLICAE). He ended his new dedication with three barely noticeable letters C. V. D. which I suggest is an acronym for CAUSA VOTI DEDICAVIT (Gavuzzo-Stewart 2016). See Fig. 1.

If the 'Personality' is easily identifiable with Lord Charlemont it is not so easy to understand who is the 'Member' (*Consocio*) of the Academy,

ferociously attacked by Piranesi, and clearly the main target of his complaints. Piranesi here claims that he is defending himself against the slanders of a member of the Academy who, in damaging his reputation is also undermining the honour of the Academy, and ‘prostituting’ the Arts, ‘the worst conceivable crime’ (*delinquenza...capitale*) for the Academy, he asserts.

This member of the Academy is generally thought to be Lord Charlemont, but this is not possible because Charlemont was never a member, and Piranesi’s accusations here do not accord with the complaints he usually directs towards Charlemont. I believe that this unnamed ‘Member’ was instead the painter John Parker, whom at the time, the Academicians could easily identify in Piranesi’s accusations. Parker, had been a member of the Academy since 3 October 1756, when he was elected after the objection of him not being a Roman Catholic was overcome. Parker had gradually infuriated Piranesi with his offensive dishonest and ambiguous behaviour as Charlemont’s agent (Gavuzzo-Stewart 1999, p. 124).

The address can then be safely dated after Parker’s election in 1756 but, very probably, before Piranesi’s heard of his own election to the Society of Antiquaries in London in 1757, which he does not mention despite his pride in it. (Gavuzzo-Stewart 2014).

Among Charlemont’s agents in Rome Piranesi mainly blamed Parker for the failure of the dealings with Charlemont regarding the sponsorship of the *Antichità Romane*. Parker must also be the person accused by Piranesi, in the last sentence of his address, for having obliged him to suppress the dedication of his volumes of the *Antichità Romane*, and against whom Piranesi makes his passionate request for justice (...*giustizia...contro chi mi ha obbligato alla soppressione della dedica de’ presenti Volumi...*). Furthermore, the accusations against this member of the Academy accord perfectly with those against John Parker in Piranesi’s *Lettere di Giustificazione scritte a Milord Charlemont e a’ di lui agenti di Roma dal Signor Piranesi Socio della Real [sic] Società degli Antiquari di Londra intorno la dedica della sua Opera delle Antichità Rom [sic] fatta allo stesso Signore ed ultimamente soppressa*, a pamphlet dated 1757 and published in February 1758. (Fig. 2).

This pamphlet opens with a vignette of a serpent biting its tail. Parker, in a letter to John Murphy, Charlemont’s tutor, rightly interprets it as a symbol of eternity (Parker 1758, in Gilbert 1891, vol. 1, p. 245). This serpent can also be seen as a visual reference, to the eternal memory Piranesi intends to give to the

dispute for the failed sponsorship of the *Antichità Romane*. It is the same idea as expressed by Piranesi in his *Allocuzione*. (Fig. 3)

Another point to clarify is the passage where some ‘other sheets’ are mentioned. Piranesi states that the ‘public cancellation’ of the dedication to Charlemont from the *Antichità Romane* needed an equally public justification, and that this was contained ‘in these other Sheets’ (*in questi altri Fogli*) which he clearly intended to distribute among the Academicians. These sheets do not refer to the sheets on which the address was written, since a few lines below, Piranesi again mentions these ‘same sheets’ which evidently for him constituted an important additional polemical documentation to substantiate his arguments. Very probably they presented the same arguments that we find printed in his *Lettere di Giustificazione*, containing a ‘public justification’ for having effaced the dedication. The word ‘justification’ suggests the same topic of his *Lettere di Giustificazione*.

I would also like to add that the reason why Piranesi says in his address, that the academicians could see the famous Rostra in the Roman Forum, he views as a symbol of freedom, is because at that time the academy’s rooms were close by.

The Academy would have been the right place to advocate the protection of the arts but one may wonder if this address was ever delivered. It is most unlikely that Piranesi, who at that time was not a member of the Academy, could ever have been allowed to pronounce such violent attack against an artist regularly elected, and to accuse him of ‘prostituting’ the arts, and so being guilty of a capital crime.

In any case, the *Allocuzione* is not to be found in the archive of the Academy (but see Panza 2017), and there is also the fact that there is no record that the Academy ever received Piranesi’s intended gift of the *Antichità Romane* with the arms of Charlemont. As already mentioned, the work is now in the Braidense in Milan, while the volumes of the *Antichità Romane* now in the library of the Academy were donated by Piranesi when he was elected as member in 1761. I agree with Morazzoni (1921) and Donati (1950) who thought it unlikely the address was ever given.

In this address Piranesi makes abundant use of Latin quotations. The title itself, *Allocuzione*, a rare word in Italian as in English, evokes a solemn classical speech. These Latin quotations from famous authors were meant to support Piranesi’s arguments by authoritative sources. The quotations

sometimes are incomplete, this is here indicated by three dots in square brackets. The delivery of this speech with so much Latin in it, would have been very difficult for a listener to understand. Piranesi's notes to the text seem rather to suggest an invitation to read the text and meditate on it.

The essence of the address is centred on the patronage of the Arts just as in the *Lettere di Giustificazione*. Piranesi in all that he wrote concerning the dedication of the *Antichità Romane* is passionately advocating justice. But not having received it from his patron, Lord Charlemont, he turns his request to the members of the Academy and to the public, present, and future. Furthermore when, soon after, he re-etched the plates of his famous *Carceri* he created, so to speak, a place fit for people such as Charlemont and Parker who, in his opinion, had committed a capital crime, deserving capital punishment. He dedicates ironically, in plate XVI of his *Carceri d'Invenzione*, an epitaph on a tomb to those who impiously have not protected the arts and are guilty of evil deeds (IMPIETATI ET MALIS ARTIBVS). (Gavuzzo-Stewart, 1999 & 2016). See Fig. 4.

With this address I conclude the English translations of Piranesi's main polemical texts against Lord Charlemont and his agents, available online in *Italogramma*. They are all focused on matters which had a personal profound impact on Piranesi, driving him though to defend universal principles such as the honour, the freedom and the dignity of the artists, too often threatened by humiliating patronage, as he laments in this address.

Many thanks are due to Dr. A. D. Stewart for his help with the English translation, and to Prof. Pietro Petrarola for providing for me the photograph of the *Allocuzione*. I wish also to thank Carlo Stewart-Gavuzzo for his acute comments. In the Archive of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, and in the Biblioteca Romana Sarti, I encountered the most kind assistance.

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Translation of Piranesi's Address to the academicians of S. Luca

Address of Signor Giambatista Piranesi to the most excellent Gentlemen Members of the illustrious Academy of drawing and design of S. Luca on the occasion of his donation of the present work of the *Antichità Romane*.

I believe, Gentlemen, that you will wonder that I, though not a Member of your Academy, might appear in this respectable Assembly, to steal the time destined for your worthy Deliberations; but, I flatter myself that the reasons which bring me to do this will obtain from You the forgiveness for my importunity, in the same way as these same reasons persuaded me to overcome my most lengthy hesitation about refraining from exposing them.

The fact of having cancelled the dedication shown on the title page of my recently published Work, and that I am offering to you in these present Volumes, requires today from me the public justification which I set forth to you in these other sheets. And since this concerns not so much the restoration of my reputation but rather the support of the decorum of those same Arts that You are here engaged in promoting, and since this justification is also based on the accusations of a Subject honoured with the title of your membership; therefore in making you aware of this matter, I believed I had to distinguish you from any other rank, by my coming here to assure you of the homage due to you and the respect which I profess towards you.

This Work forms one of a set of volumes that I had destined as a gift to the Personality to whom it was dedicated, as you can see from his name, and his coat of arms, which I abstained from removing, indeed with the purpose of depositing them in the most renowned Academies of the Liberal Arts of Europe, as I am now doing in yours, which is the first of them all, to perpetuate the memory of the honour I had endeavoured to give him, and of the ingratitude with which I have been rewarded for it. I will not talk to you, Gentlemen, of the quality of the Work, because it is for You and the Public to judge it; but I will ask you if for it I deserved to endure the wrongs that you will deign to detect in these same sheets, that I therefore submit to your criticism. I am sure, that if you gave them a glance you would shiver at the damage (*mal'incontri*) caused to me by the person I am accusing of it; and you will also have the opportunity of being glad to see that the commitments which introduced him to you as a Member are now in doubt, and of rejoicing that the world sees verified all that you foresaw and meant to signify with your wise objections.

It is not a question, Gentlemen, of reprimands for faults which do not have any connection with your Society, and yet are fundamental among You who do not admit in your group any Subject who may be suspected of such faults: but the question is about the prostitution of Your Arts, attempted by someone who had implored by every means to be admitted together with You to profess their promotion: a crime which in your Academy must be the capital one. Nor should it be said that the wrongs done to me, being limited to controversies about the dealings over a dedication, cannot be extended to such prostitution, if the value of the Work has not been impaired; because You know well, that it is not the criticism of the Works which tends to debase the Arts, but rather the slanders done to the reputation of the Professional, and the disrepute caused by them, without any reason having been given by either incapacity or immorality. Criticism, either spiteful, or friendly, when it is based on a sound reprimand of the defects of a work of Art, if it spurs the Professional, stimulating him though to defend himself, exercises his talent and increases his ability. (1) 'Emulation nourishes the mind, and it is now envy, now admiration, which incites creative action'. On the contrary personal slander undervalues the Professional among the Promoters of the Arts, and these remain prostituted because of the contempt of the artist.

One of the principal merits of this Metropolis [Rome] is, indeed, the memory of her ancient grandeur, and the precious remains of the works of the Liberal Arts of those most happy times: but of not less value are the many Works of our time; and the throngs which come here [to Rome], while lamenting the devastations of the ancient grandeur, caused by time and by the Barbarians, do not cease however to admire in it [Rome] the compensation of so many losses in the rebirth of the same Arts, with equally happy progress, and furthermore finding a source of pride in the fact that if in ancient times Rome was instructed by the Greeks, today the world is instructed by Rome.

But among the Professionals who have had or are having the most enviable successes, can You find anyone who has achieved them through enduring his own vilification? Neither do I know of such a thing, nor can You demonstrate it. Our Arts, according to Cicero (2) are called liberal, because they are worthy of a free man. He who allows himself to be oppressed, ceases

to be free; and how estimable Freedom is, is recalled to you by the nearby location of those famous Rostra, from where the magnanimity of the ancient Romans commended and inculcated daily love and zeal of Freedom to the People. Nor should you think that since that Freedom had its foundation in the civil life of a Nation, it cannot offer an example to ours, which I intend to restrict to the intolerance of slanders; because, if the Romans, by finishing under tyranny, have seen the ruin of their Empire, we, overwhelmed by public contempt, will see our Arts perish. These unfortunate effects of the endurance of abuses, are those which confirm the opinion of Panaetius the philosopher who includes among one of the principal duties of a prudent man that of opposing the abuses, and also to inculcate this notion with words which the more refined and ample they are, the more apt to lead us to such a useful sentiment: 'The life of men' (he says, according to the version of Aulus Gellius) (3): 'the life of men who live in the middle of affairs, and want to be useful to themselves and to their people, bears the frequent and almost daily problems and sudden, unexpected trials: therefore it is necessary to be on guard and avoid them with a mind always ready and alert like those Athletes who are called Pancratiasts; for, just as they, when called to the contest, stand firm with their arms stretched out high and protect their head and face by having put their hands almost like a rampart: and all their limbs are careful either to avoid blows or ready to inflict them before the battle has started, in the same way the soul and the mind of man with foresight, while looking ahead everywhere and at all times, must be resolute, upright, on guard, determined, ready for action, against violence and the viciousness of insults, never looking away, on no occasion lowering one's gaze. Stretching forth, almost as arms and hands, resolutions and forethoughts against the blows of fate, and against the snares of evil people, so that a sudden attack, in a moment of adversity, might not find us unprepared and without defence.'

Our Arts are then, called honest by Cicero because they require more talent than the vile ones (4) 'The arts which require greater insight, [...] such as medicine, Architecture, the teaching of the liberal arts, are honourable for those belonging to that kind of social position'. And this greater talent does not consist so much in the design and in the methodical ordering of those things

concerning the honest Arts, as in the knowledge of History and Moral principles: of History, as far as the representation of facts and customs is concerned, and of Moral principles for the expression of characters'. Then, how could one ever be judged excellent who does not care to keep up his reputation when the Science of History and of Moral principals, while instructing us, is at the same time teaching us to be jealous of our personal credit? According to Vitruvius (5). the perfection of the Professional consists in this jealousy: 'Philosophy endows the Architect with magnanimity, [...] so that he can protect his dignity by keeping his good reputation': because, also according to Vitruvius, one learns from the experience stemming 'from the ancient Sculptors and Painters, that those who acquired marks of dignity and of excellence keep an eternal memory with posterity.' For, what good will redound to a Professional, despite all the excellence he may have, without the help of these sciences, if, when Works are commissioned from him, he finds himself obliged to honour those who despise him? Profit, perhaps? Cicero warns us that one has to be more prepared to fight for defending one's honour than for the other advantages of life (6) *Dimicare paratius pro honore et gloria, quam de caeteris commodis*: and experience demonstrates to those who have no feelings for this honour, that emoluments for them are not measured according to skill, but are snatched, in proportion to the level of wretched artisans and of those (7) 'from whom one purchases the manual crafts and not the creative arts'. So, if personal decorum is that which obtains rewards worthy of the arts, it is also that which sustains the art schools, because they are mostly maintained for the hope of profit. Now then, with what commitment should such decorum be supported by every Professional of our Arts and especially by those of the Roman school, which, since it is the leader of all the others, [would be ruined] if the object of making a profit were to cease, thus removing any excuse for ugliness to cause the decay of its splendour?

What is left, therefore, is that in consequence of these same feelings, you can do justice to the complaints advanced by me against he who obliged me to suppress the dedication of the present Volumes, and forgive me for the tedium which I have caused you with the aim of demonstrating to you that I am not one of those (8) 'who do not dare to say what they think, even if it is the best argument, for fear of unpopularity.

Transcription of Piranesi's Address to the academicians of S. Luca

ALLOCUZIONE

del Signor Giambatista Piranesi agli Eccellentissimi Sig'ri Socj dell'Inclita Accademia del Disegno di S. Luca, in occasione del deposito da esso fattovi del presente Corpo della sua Opera delle Antichità Romane.

Credo, che vi maraviglierete, Signori, che senza il distintivo di vostro Consocio, io comparisca in questa rispettabile Adunanza a scemarvi il tempo destinato alle vostre virtuose Consulte; ma i motivi che mi c'inducono, mi lusingo, che mi otterranno da Voi la scusa della importunità, in quella guisa che mi han fatto vincere i più forti riflessi, che avevo di dovermene astenere.

L'aver soppressa la dedica che portava in fronte l'Opera da me data ultimamente alla luce, e che vi offro ne' presenti Volumi, richiede oggi da me la giustificazione pubblica, che vi esibisco in questi altri Fogli. E perché questa riguarda non tanto il riparo della mia riputazione, quanto il sostegno del decoro di quelle stesse Arti, che Voi qui siete intenti a promuovere; ed è altresì fondata sulle accuse d'un Soggetto onorato del titolo di vostro Consocio: così nel farvene intesi, ho creduto di dovervi distinguere da ogni altro ceto, con questo atto, che vi attesta la convenienza che vi si deve, ed il rispetto che vi professo.

I Volumi sono un de' Corpi dell'Opera, che avevo destinati per offerta al Personaggio a cui ella era dedicata, come ravviserete dal nome, e dalle armi del medesimo, che mi sono astenuto di torne, sul proposito appunto di depositarli nelle più rinomate Accademie delle Arti Liberali d'Europa, come ora faccio nella vostra, che ne è la prima, a perpetua memoria dell'onore che mi era studiato di dargli, e della sconoscenza con cui ne sono stato ricompensato. Non vi parlo, Signori, del pregio dell'Opera, perché sta a Voi, ed al Pubblico l'esserne giudici; vi domanderò bensì, se per essa meritavo d'incontrare i torti, che vi degnerete di ravvisare negli stessi fogli, quali perciò sottopongo alla vostra censura. Son sicuro, che se darete loro una scorsa, fremerete su i mal'incontri procuratimi da chi ne incolpo; ed avrete altresì occasione di rallegrarvi al vedere ora confusi gl'impegni che ve lo diedero per Consocio, e di gloriarvi, che il mondo veda verificato quanto prevedeste, ed intendeste significare colle vostre savie ripulse.

Non si tratta, Signori, di riprensioni sopra mancanze, che non abbiano veruna relazione alla vostra Società, e che pure fanno stato presso di Voi, i quali non ammettete nel vostro Ceto verun Suggetto che ne sia sospettabile: ma trattasi della prostituzione delle vostre Arti, tentata da chi aveva implorata ogni forza per essere ammesso con Voi a professarne la promozione: delinquenza, che nella vostr'Accademia debb'essere la capitale. Né si dica, che i torti fattimi, riducendosi a delle opposizioni sul negoziato d'una dedica, non possano estendersi ad una tale prostituzione, quando non è stato intaccato il pregio dell'Opera; imperocché Voi ben sapete, non esser la critica delle Opere quella che tende all'abbattimento delle Arti: esser bensì le ingiurie, che si fanno alla riputazione d'un Professore, e 'L discredito che se ne procura, senzaché ne porga motivo o l'inabilità, o la scostumatezza. La critica, o astiosa o amorevole, quando si appone ad una soda riprensione de' difetti dell'Arte, se picca il Professore, animandolo però alla difesa, n'esercita il talento, e ne accresce l'abilità (1) *Alit aemulatio ingenia, & nunc invidia, nunc admiratio incitationem accendit.* All'incontro il discredito personale lo avvilisce presso i Fautori delle Arti, e queste rimangono prostitute nella di lui disistima.

Uno de' principali pregi di questa Metropoli, sono, è vero, la memoria della di lei antica grandezza, ed i preziosi avanzi delle produzioni delle Arti Liberali di que' felicissimi tempi: ma non lo sono meno le tante Opere de' tempi nostri; ed il gran mondo che vi concorre, se compiangere le devastazioni delle antiche magnificenze, fattevi dagli anni e da' Barbari, non cessa però di ammirarvi il compenso di tante perdite nel risorgimento delle stesse Arti, con progressi ugualmente felici, e col vanto inoltre, che se Roma anticamente n'era istruita da' Greci, inoggi il mondo n'è istruito da Roma. Ma tra' Professori, che vi hanno fatte e vi fanno le più invidiabili riuscite, trovate Voi alcuno, che le abbia fatte colla sofferenza del proprio avvilitamento? né io lo so, né Voi potete additarlo. Le nostre Arti, secondo Cicerone (2) si dicono liberali, perché degne dell'uomo libero. Chi si lascia opprimere, cessa di esserlo; e la libertà quanto sia pregiabile, ve lo rammemora il vicin luogo di que' famosi Rostri, dai quali la generosità degli antichi Romani ne raccomandava, e ne inculcava quotidianamente al Popolo l'amore, e lo zelo. Né vi sembri, che quella,

(1) Vell. Paterc. lib. 1. cap. 16.

(2) de Offic. I. 1. cap. 58.

essendo consistita sulla vita civile d'una Nazione, non possa porgere esempio alla nostra, che intendo di restringere alla insofferenza delle ingiurie; imperocché, se i Romani col ridursi sotto i tiranni, han veduta la rovina del loro Imperio, noi sopraffatti dal dispregio vedremo perite le nostre Arti. Questi disgraziati effetti della sofferenza delle ingiurie, son quei, che porgono ragione a Panezio il Filosofo di riporre fra uno de' principali doveri dell'uomo prudente il rintuzzarle, e d'inculcarcelo con parole, quanto più ricercate e diffuse, tanto più intese ad indurci in così utile sentimento: *Vita hominum* (dic'egli, secondo la versione d'Aulo Gellio (3): *Vita hominum, qui aetatem in medio rerum agunt, ac sibi, suisque esse usui volunt, negotia, periculaque ex improviso assidua, et prope quotidiana fert: ad ea cavenda, atque declinanda perinde esse oportet animo semper prompto atque intento, ut sunt Athetarum [sic] qui Pancratiastae vocantur; nam sicuti illi ad certandum vocati, projectis alte brachijs consistunt, caputque et os suum manibus oppositis, quasi vallo praemuniunt: membraque eorum omnia, priusquam pugna mota est, aut ad vitandos ictus cauta sunt, aut ad faciendos parata; ita animus atque mens viri prudentis adversus vim et petulantias injuriarum omni in loco, atque in tempore prospiciens, debet esse erecta, ardua, septa, solida, expedita, nunquam connivens, nusquam aciem suam flectens. Consilia, cogitationesque contra fortunae verbera, contraque insidias iniquorum, quasi brachia et manus protendens, nequa in re adversa et repentina incursio imparatis, improtectisque nobis oboriatur.*

Sono poi le nostre Arti da Cicerone chiamate oneste, perché richiedono maggior talento delle sordide (4) *Quibus autem artibus prudentia major inest, [...] ut medicina, ut Architectura, ut doctrina rerum honestarum, hae sunt ijs, quorum ordini conveniunt, honestae.* E questo maggior talento, non tanto consiste nel disegno e nella ordinazione metodica di qualche esse riguardano, quanto nella scienza delle Storia e della Morale: della Storia, per la rappresentazione de' fatti e de' costumi: della Morale, per la espressione de' caratteri. Come dunque potrà mai esser giudicato eccellente colui, che non si cura di sostenere la propria riputazione, quando la Scienza della Storia e della

(3) Noct. Attic. lib. 14. c. 26.

(4) de Offic. I. 1 cap. 58.–

Morale, mentre ne istruisce per le Arti, ne insegna ancora ad esser gelosi del credito personale? In questa gelosia, secondo Vitruvio (5) è riposta la perfezione del Professore: *Philosophia perficit Architectum animo magno, [...] ut cum gravitate suam tueatur dignitatem, bonam famam habendo*: per la sperienza, che, parimenti secondo lui, se ne ha: *ab antiquis Statuarijs, et Pictoribus, quod ex his, qui dignitatis notas, et commendationis gratiam habuerunt, aeterna memoria ad posteritatem sunt permanentes*. Ed in fatti qual bene ridonderà ad un Professore, quante volte se ne dia l'eccellenza senza l'ajuto di tali scienze, se, quando gli saranno commesse le Opere, si vedrà costretto ad onorar con esse chi lo disprezza? forse il Lucro? Cicerone ci ammonisce, che debbesi esser più pronti a combattere per l'onore, che per gli altri comodi della vita (6) *Dimicare paratius pro honore et gloria, quam de caeteris commodis*: e la sperienza dimostra a chi non ha sentimenti per quest'onore, che gli emolumenti per lui non si regolano secondo l'abilità, ma appena si strappano proporzionati alla condizione de' miserabili, e di queglii (7) *quorum operae, non quorum artes emuntur*. Dunque, se il decoro personale è quello, che ne ottiene le ricompense degne delle arti, è parimenti quello, che regge le scuole, giacché queste sono per lo più coltivate dalla speranza dell'utile. Or con quale impegno non dovrà sostenersi un tal decoro da ogni Professore delle nostre Arti, e specialmente da quei della Scuola Romana, ch'essendo la maestra di tutte Le altre, quando anche cessi il fine dell'utile, toglie ogni scusa alla bruttezza di lasciarla decadere dal suo splendore? Voi non avete bisogno, Signori, di esser persuasi di questi sentimenti, perché gli adottaste fin da principio colla professione delle vostre Arti.

Resta pertanto, che in conseguenza de' medesimi sentimenti, rendiate giustizia alla querele da me promosse contro chi mi ha obbligato alla soppressione della dedica de' presenti Volumi, e che mi perdoniate il tedio recatovi sul proposito di dimostrarvi, che io non son di queglii, (8) *qui, quod sentiunt, etiamsi optimum sit, tamen invidiae metu non audent dicere*. –

(5) lib. 1. c. 1. de Architectis instituendis. Præfat. libri 3.–

(6) De offic. I. 1. c. 25.

(7) Ibidem cap. 58.

(8) Cic. eod. lib. c. 25.

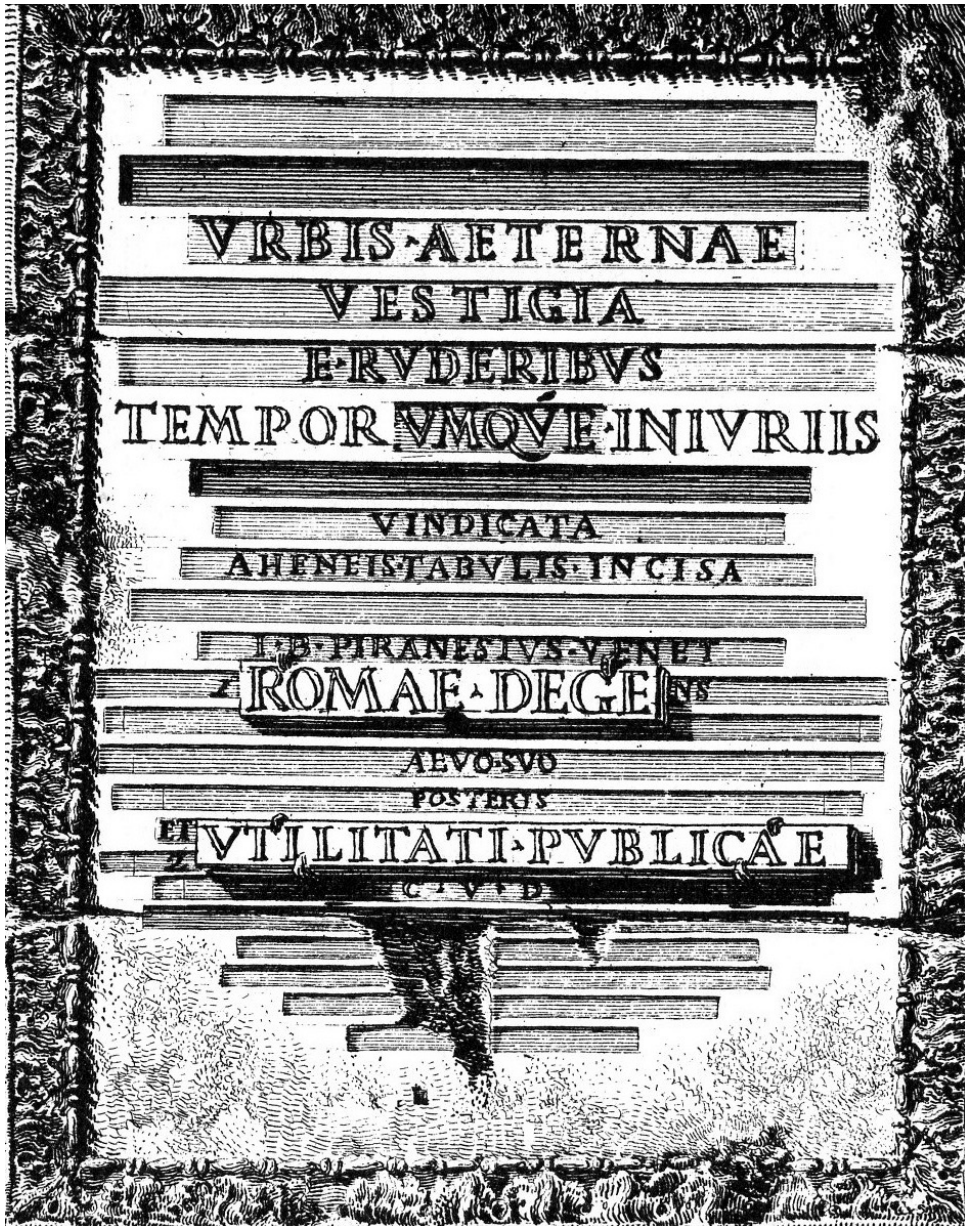


Fig. 1 Detail of the new dedication of the *Antichità Romane*, substituted for the original dedication to Charlemont. Note the letters C. V. D. in the bottom line of the inscription. The modified dedication was replicated in Piranesi's *Lettere di Giustificazione*, from which this illustration is taken.



Fig. 2 The title page of Piranesi's *Lettere di Giustificazione* dated 1757 but published in 1758.



Fig. 3 Vignette from the *Lettere di Giustificazione*, showing a serpent biting its tail, symbol of eternity. In the area enclosed by the serpent, the names of the recipients of the pamphlet were written. The example shown here, from the Biblioteca Romana Sarti in Rome, interestingly, has been left blank.

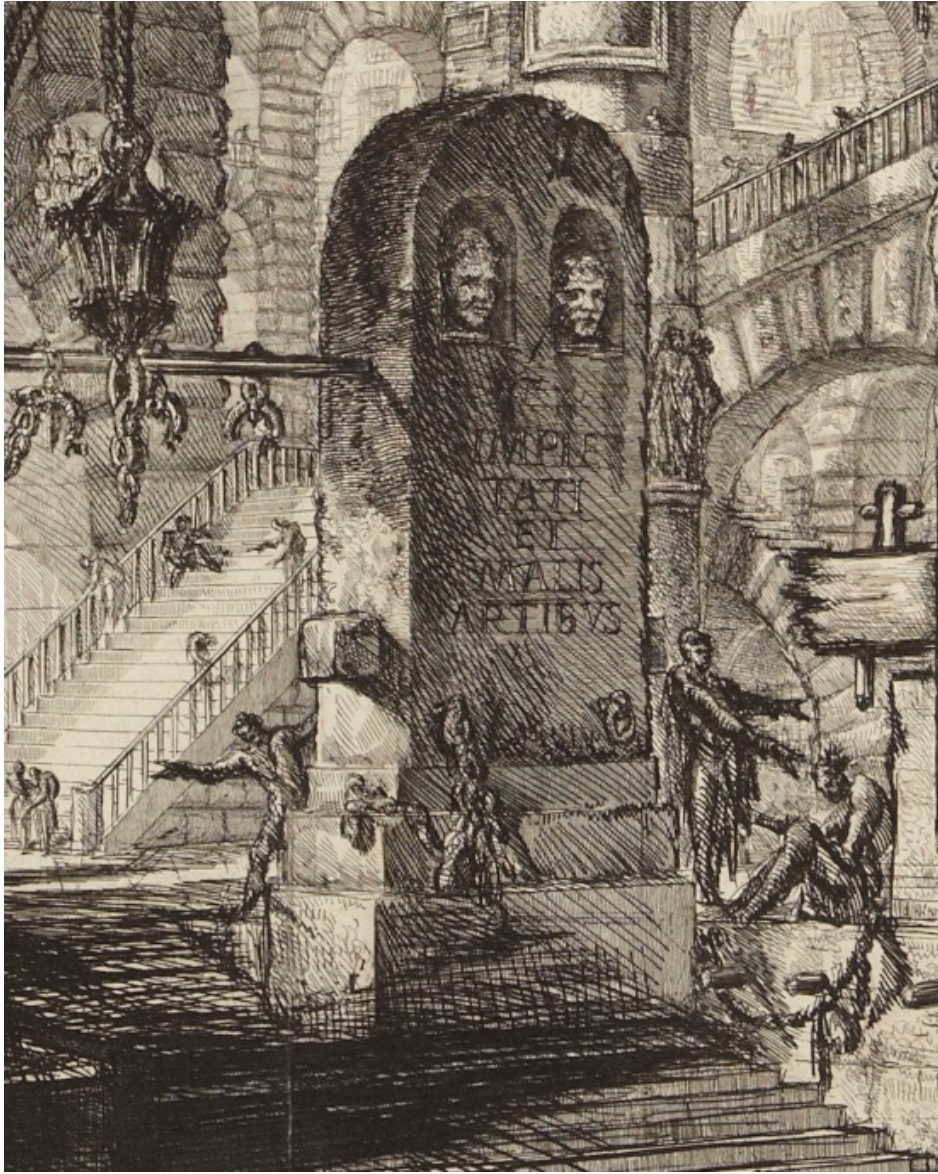


Fig. 4 Detail of Plate XVI of Piranesi's *Carceri d'Invenzione*. On the tomb dedicated to those who do not protect the arts, the epitaph reads IMPIETATI ET MALIS ARTIBVS, as mentioned in my text.