

# Travel, Expertise and Readers: Francesco Ottieri (1665–1742) and the Writing of Modern History

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## Abstract

This article analyses Francesco Ottieri's historical work, his authority as historian, and his book's eighteenth-century readers. During the seventeenth century, books concerning recent events and early newspapers informed an expanding European readership. Between 1716 and 1735, Ottieri authored the *Istoria*, an eight-volume account of the War of the Spanish Succession. Although the book circulated significantly during the eighteenth century, coming into possession of some of the period's most eminent historians, it was thereafter largely forgotten. Ottieri, a nobleman and holder of courtly offices, applied to modern history the antiquarian's new attention to sources and documents. His social status, and the experiences acquired at court and during his European travels provided both information and authority. Breaking with a late-humanist tradition of retired statesman-historians, Ottieri became in the reading public's eye an authoritative and impartial voice on modern history. The *Istoria* pioneered a new form of historiography, which combined elements of antiquarian scholarship with its author's unprecedented determination to inform the general public.

The *Istoria delle guerre avvenute in Europa e particolarmente in Italia per la successione alla Monarchia delle Spagne dall'anno 1696 all'anno 1725* is an eight-volume account of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), penned by the Count-Marquis Francesco Maria Ottieri between 1716 and 1735. The first volume was published in Rome in 1728 but it was quickly suppressed and for a short time listed on the Index of Prohibited Books; the additional seven volumes were also published in Rome ten years after Ottieri's death. The *Istoria* circulated widely during the eighteenth century and came into the possession of many of the era's most eminent historians, including Ludovico Antonio Muratori, Voltaire and Edward Gibbon.

The present state of scholarship on Ottieri and his work is rather limited. This reflects the relative scarcity of scholarship concerning Italy in the early eighteenth century,<sup>1</sup> although progress has been made in

<sup>1</sup> Before the 1970s, this period of significant cultural and social change was dismissed by most scholars as 'uniformly grim' (Brendan Dooley, *Science, Politics, and Society in Eighteenth-Century Italy: The Giornale de' letterati d'Italia and its World* (London and New York, 1991), p. 1).

the last two decades.<sup>2</sup> As Francesca Gallo has noted, Ottieri and the *Istoria* are not mentioned by some of the most relevant Italian-language monographs on the period,<sup>3</sup> whereas in the few publications where they do appear, the author and his book are discussed only cursorily.<sup>4</sup> Apart from three articles in Italian, no in-depth study has ever been published. Of these contributions, two are centred on the book's condemnation by the Roman Inquisition,<sup>5</sup> while only the third considers the work for its broader historiographical value.<sup>6</sup>

This article considers Ottieri and his work in a new light. It begins by presenting Francesco Ottieri's life, before turning to his historical method and sources. It concludes by considering the book's eighteenth-century readership. The article lays emphasis on the European travels of Ottieri's youth, during which he acquired proficiency in foreign languages and an overall greater understanding of his contemporary Europe. This knowledge enabled him to compile the *Istoria*. The interrelation between travelling and empirical knowledge was explicitly expounded during the Renaissance, when humanist educational travel was codified as *ars apodemica*. The promoters of the new travel methodology were empiricists who believed that all knowledge stemmed from sense perception; they had become interested in travel as a means of cultivating oneself and acquiring 'true' knowledge through the direct observation of foreign

<sup>2</sup> For a recent collection of essays concerning various aspects of early eighteenth-century Italy, see Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio, Cinzia Cremonini and Elena Riva (eds), *The Transition in Europe between XVIIIth and XVIIIth Centuries: Perspectives and Case Studies* (Milan, 2016). Other recent but more general works: Patrizia Delpiano, *Church and Censorship in Eighteenth-Century Italy: Governing Reading in the Age of Enlightenment* (London, 2017), published in Italian as *Il governo della lettura: Chiesa e libri nell'Italia del Settecento* (Bologna, 2007); and Vincenzo Ferrone, *Il mondo dell'illuminismo: storia di una rivoluzione culturale* (Turin, 2019). Finally, see also Giuseppe Ricuperati, *Frontiere e limiti della ragione: dalla crisi della coscienza europea all'Illuminismo* (Turin, 2006), which includes essays concerning the eighteenth century written by Ricuperati between 1968 and 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Francesca Fausta Gallo, 'Le inclinazioni della Corte, alcune considerazioni sulla *Istoria delle guerre avvenute in Europa e particolarmente in Italia per la Successione alla Monarchia delle Spagne* di Francesco Maria Ottieri', in José Martínez Millán, Concepción Camarero Bullón and Marcelo Luzzi Traficante (eds), *La Corte de los Borbones: crisis del modelo cortesano*, II (Madrid, 2013), pp. 1349–76, at pp. 1356–7. For example, see Franco Valsecchi, *L'Italia nel Settecento* (Milan, 1959); Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore* (7 vols; Turin, 1969–90); Guido Quazza, *Il problema italiano e l'equilibrio europeo 1720–1738* (Rome and Bari, 1990); Paolo Alatri, *L'Europa dopo Luigi XIV* (Palermo, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Virgilio Titone, *La storiografia dell'illuminismo in Italia* (Milan, 1975), pp. 28, 37; Dino Carpanetto and Giuseppe Ricuperati, *L'Italia del Settecento: crisi, trasformazioni, lumi* (Rome and Bari, 1986), p. 390.

<sup>5</sup> Silvia Grassi, 'Le implicazioni politiche di un'impresa editoriale: la *Istoria* della Guerra di Successione Spagnola di F.M. Ottieri', in Grassi, Vittor Ivo Comparato and Eugenio Di Rienzo (eds), *L'Europa nel XVIII secolo: studi in onore di Paolo Alatri*, I (Naples, 1991), pp. 535–49; Ermete Rossi, 'La disgrazia di uno storico', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 122 (1944), pp. 35–53.

<sup>6</sup> Gallo, 'Le inclinazioni'. In addition to the three articles, a not entirely accurate biography of Ottieri appears in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Cinzia Cremonini, 'Ottieri, Francesco Maria', *DBI*, LXXIX (Rome, 2013)). Finally, a number of letters written by Ottieri to Ludovico Antonio Muratori have been published: Silvia Grassi, 'Le lettere di Francesco Maria Ottieri a Ludovico Antonio Muratori conservate nella Biblioteca Estense di Modena', *Materiali di Storia*, 12 (1990), pp. 7–48.

lands.<sup>7</sup> But this was not the only way in which knowledge might be gained: once travellers returned to their places of origin they disseminated their empirically acquired knowledge throughout the Republic of Letters via literary works such as travelogues, which meant that knowledge ‘could be best utilised for the advancement of its original owner[s], [their] city or country, and mankind in general’.<sup>8</sup> Ottieri’s decision to compose a book of modern European history reflected his age’s understanding of the relationship between historical writing and travelling. It has been argued that at the turn of the eighteenth century, an epistemic development had transformed ‘early modern *historia*’ into ‘empirical history’ through ‘standardization, spatialization and deepening of historical thought’.<sup>9</sup> Following this interpretation, historians therefore became voyagers and assumed ‘the task of describing and writing about the present, as well as research into the foreign past, and its integration into the total of history’.<sup>10</sup>

During Ottieri’s lifetime, the periodical press enabled an unprecedented dissemination of news in Europe.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, historical writing was also evolving thanks to the methods developed by seventeenth-century antiquarians in relation to documentary sources.<sup>12</sup> In this context, the *Istoria* can be read as a work of modern history for three reasons. First, it is a book about recent events, of *modern* history or *contemporary* history, as opposed to *ancient* and *medieval* history. Second, it was the result of Ottieri’s scrupulous application of an evidence-based historical method, which allowed him to anticipate a form of historiography with a lesser degree of confessional or personal impetus. Finally, the *Istoria* was addressed by its author to a general reading public interested in contemporary history, and neither to a powerful patron nor written for Ottieri’s self-justificatory purposes. At the turn of the eighteenth century, this was something new: modern history was often relegated to a form of propagandistic and sensationalistic literary genre, or the work of

<sup>7</sup> Justin Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel, 1550–1800* (London and New York, 1995), p. 65. On the emergence of travel manuals in early modern Europe, see Karl A. E. Enekel and Jan L. de Jong (eds), *Artes Apodemicae and Early Modern Travel Culture, 1550–1700* (Leiden and Boston, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Stagl, *A History of Curiosity*, p. 65. On the impact of travel writing on early modern European culture, see Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travellers and Cosmographers: Studies in the History of Early Modern Travel and Ethnology* (Aldershot, 2007); idem, ‘Travel writing as a genre: facts, fictions and the invention of a scientific discourse in early modern Europe’, in *Journeys: The International Journal of Travel and Travel Writing*, 1 (2000), pp. 5–33.

<sup>9</sup> Cornel Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns: The French and British in the Mediterranean, 1650–1750* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 7–8.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 229–30.

<sup>11</sup> Tony Claydon, ‘Daily news and construction of time in late Stuart England, 1695–1714’, *Journal of British Studies*, 52 (2013), pp. 55–78, at p. 55.

<sup>12</sup> On eighteenth-century developments in Italian historiography, see Giuseppe Galasso, *Storia della storiografia italiana: un profilo* (Rome and Bari, 2018), pp. 55–70; and Edoardo Tortarolo, ‘Italian historical writing: 1680–1800’, in Tortarolo, José Rabasa, Masayuki Sato and Daniel Woolf (eds), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, III: 1400–1800 (Oxford, 2012), pp. 365–84. Older but still relevant are: Arnaldo Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (London, 1966); Sergio Bertelli, *Erudizione e storia in Ludovico Antonio Muratori* (Naples, 1960).

aristocratic ‘men of action’ – for, example, retired politicians such as the Earl of Clarendon and Viscount Bolingbroke in England, whose books were not originally intended for publication.<sup>13</sup> The English historians shared with Ottieri the same social standing, which provided access to *arcana imperii* and served as a guarantee of their authority as historians. Ottieri, however, was not a politician and, originally, did not intend to withhold his book from publication. Moreover, his authority also rested on other guarantees that form the focus of the article’s concluding section. Apart from social standing, these were the relationships fostered with both ministers and erudite scholars, and his personal experiences accumulated at the princely court and during his travels. Not only did Ottieri give history of contemporary events methodological standing, but, as a precursor of Voltaire, he wrote to inform an expanding European readership rather than with the intention of justifying his political past.<sup>14</sup>

## I

Francesco Maria Ottieri was born in Florence on 8 July 1665 into an old family of imperial vassals, holder of the titles of Count of Montorio and Sopano, and Marquis of Rigomagno.<sup>15</sup> At a young age, he entered the Medici court as a page, where he studied humanities and mathematics as a pupil of Francesco Redi and Vincenzo Viviani, and devoted himself to court activities and sport.<sup>16</sup> When he turned seventeen, Ottieri deserted the Tuscan court to commence a tour of Europe; he visited Rome and Naples before crossing the Alps. In France at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), Ottieri perfected his French in Paris and was introduced to Louis XIV in Versailles. He continued to London, where he was welcomed at the court of James II and learned to speak English. Back on mainland Europe, he travelled through the Dutch Republic to Flanders, crossed into the Spanish Netherlands and, having traversed

<sup>13</sup> Philip Hicks, ‘Bolingbroke, Clarendon, and the role of classical historian’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 20/4 (1987), pp. 445–71, at pp. 469–71. In Old Regime France, few official historiographers dedicated their work to recent events – with the notable exception of Voltaire. However, Voltaire’s truly ‘contemporary’ work, the *Précis du siècle de Louis XV* (1768), ‘reads like a political pamphlet in comparison with his magisterial *Siècle de Louis XIV*’ – as political biography and contemporary history were *de facto* forbidden. ‘Contemporaries who wanted to orient themselves by relating the present to the recent past had to turn to libel literature’. Robert Darnton, ‘An early information society: news and the media in eighteenth-century Paris’, *American Historical Review*, 105 (2000), pp. 1–35, at p. 34, n. 52.

<sup>14</sup> In 1789, Condorcet suggested that Voltaire had been the promoter of an eighteenth-century ‘revolution’ in the way of writing history, as he had addressed himself to ‘all mankind’. Nicolas de Condorcet, *Vie de Voltaire* (Yverdon, 1789), pp. 94–5. Cf. Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet, and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> The Ottieri family maintained political independence between Tuscany and the Papal States until 1616. See Giuseppe Caciagli, *I feudi medicei* (Pisa, 1980), p. 67.

<sup>16</sup> Lottario Ottieri, *Vita di Francesco Maria Ottieri* [henceforth abbreviated as *Vita*] (Rome, 1758), p. 6. Lottario’s biography of his father provides essential information as the Ottieri family archive did not survive (with the exclusion of few private records and letters patent in the De Vecchi family archive, Siena). Nevertheless, this article is also based on recently discovered documents, in addition to the *Vita*.

Germany, reached Vienna. At the court of Emperor Leopold I, Ottieri was admitted to audience and renewed his ancestral vassalage. He progressed to Hungary and considered travelling to Buda, possibly then still under siege, with the intention of fighting the Turks, but instead was convinced by his relatives to return to Tuscany.<sup>17</sup> In 1698 Ottieri settled in Rome, having married Olimpia Maidalchini, last descendent of a well-connected Roman family.<sup>18</sup> Introduced at the papal court, he initially obtained only minor offices in the city's administration, as he was considered too closely connected to the Habsburgs.<sup>19</sup> Instead, Ottieri joined the Roman court of Marie-Casimire, dowager Queen of Poland, and attended the literary circle of Bishop Michelangelo Conti.<sup>20</sup> In 1721, he finally entered the papal court, when Conti, now Pope Innocent XIII, appointed him as *Soprintendente alla Stalla Pontificia*.<sup>21</sup>

Ottieri started writing his account of the War of the Spanish Succession on 16 April 1719, although his son Lottario would later claim that he had started in 1716.<sup>22</sup> Over the years, Ottieri extended the book's scope to cover the period from 1696 to 1725, when Emperor Charles VI relinquished all claims to the Spanish throne in the Treaty of Vienna. The *Istoria's* first volume was dedicated to Pope Benedict XIII and published in late October 1728.<sup>23</sup> By then Ottieri had completed the manuscript of the first four volumes, which were due to be published within months.<sup>24</sup> This, however, did not come to pass. Barely a few weeks later, on 12 November, Cardinal Melchior de Polignac (1661–1741), representative of the King of France in Rome, professed to be irritated by the contents of the newly printed volume and demanded satisfaction from the pope.<sup>25</sup> Polignac particularly impugned a passage regarding the Polish royal election of 1697, where he – then French representative in Warsaw – had been portrayed by Ottieri as an incompetent and unable to secure the throne to the French candidate, the Prince of Conti.<sup>26</sup> Marquis Alessandro Capponi reported Polignac's protest in his diary, and claimed

<sup>17</sup> *Vita*, pp. 7–8. Buda was conquered in 1686.

<sup>18</sup> Grassi, 'Le lettere', p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> *Vita*, p. 9. Pope Clement XI (r. 1700–21) did not appreciate Ottieri's pro-Habsburg sympathies and allowed his criminal persecution, when falsely accused of assaulting a policeman; see *Umilissima Supplica del Conte Francesco Maria Ottieri*, Vienna, AT-Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/AVA Adel RAA 255.21; cf. Modena, B[ibliotca] E[stense] Mo[dena], Arch[ivio] mur[atoriano], 73.16, fos 32r–33r in Grassi, 'Le lettere', p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> *Istoria*, I, pp. 164–5, xviii.

<sup>21</sup> Benedict XIII later confirmed to Ottieri the office of *Soprintendente*, with an increased emolument and new title of *Cavallerizzo maggiore*. *Istoria*, I, pp. xix–xx. The *Cavallerizzo* (like the *Soprintendente* before) presided over the palatine stables, opened and closed the door of the papal carriage, and presented the pope with the horse before a ride.

<sup>22</sup> *Istoria*, I, p. xxv; *Vita*, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> The publication was mentioned by the Roman periodical *Diario Ordinario* (6 Nov. 1728, pp. 7–8). Francesco Valesio (1670–1742) registered it in his diary on 5 Nov.: Valesio, *Diario di Roma*, IV, ed. Gaetano Scano and Giuseppe Graglia (Milan, 1979), pp. 1014–5. Valesio, whose diary covers the years 1700–42, assisted Ottieri in his literary work. *Vita*, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> *Istoria*, I, pp. vi, xxv.

<sup>25</sup> Polignac's outrage was already reported by Valesio on 5 Nov. See n. 23.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186–8.

that opposition from within the *curia* had mounted even earlier – with the leader of the *zelanti* faction, Cardinal Giuseppe Imperiali, objecting to a passage in the *Istoria* concerning French interference in Clement XI's election.<sup>27</sup>

Having received support from Versailles, Polignac requested that Pope Benedict have the book withdrawn as offensive to France and that it be placed on the Index of Prohibited Books.<sup>28</sup> The sale of the *Istoria* was immediately halted and on 17 January 1729 the decree of condemnation of the book for *expressiones offensivas, et iniurias* against princes, ministers and nations was issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Index.<sup>29</sup> Ottieri was suspended from his office and eventually ordered to hand in all the existing copies of the *Istoria*; these were burned on 12 March, together with the manuscript of volumes II, III and IV, and some printed sheets from volume II, all found with the printer.<sup>30</sup> Ottieri, who had already left Rome for his ancestral home on 24 February, was finally removed from his office on 3 April.<sup>31</sup>

In February of that year, the Neapolitan Pietro Giannone had added his authoritative voice to the chorus of disapproving opinions on the *Istoria*. Cardinal Álvaro Cienfuegos, imperial representative in Rome and one of Ottieri's patrons, had in fact dispatched a copy of the book to Vienna in order to have its author rewarded as a Habsburg loyalist.<sup>32</sup> Giannone argued instead that the *Istoria* was one of those books which despised the 'German nation', especially for the passages concerning the ineffective efforts of the Viceroy of Naples, Aloys von Harrach, former imperial ambassador in Madrid.<sup>33</sup> The Viennese court eventually shared Giannone's position and banned the *Istoria* from the Kingdom of Naples.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, in the months after its publication, the contents of Ottieri's first volume were disapproved equally by both contenders of the war it recounted: the Holy Roman Empire and France.

The exiled historian considered abandoning the writing of the *Istoria*, 'his difficult and dangerous labour'.<sup>35</sup> On 17 April, Ottieri sent a copy of

<sup>27</sup> Alessandro Capponi, *Spese di libri*, Vatican City, B[biblioteca] A[postolica] V[aticana], ms. Capponi, ms. 313, fo. 157r–v. Capponi owned a copy of the *Istoria*, which is presently kept in the BAV [Stamp. Cappon. III.2(1–9)]. The *zelanti* cardinals opposed secular influences on the Church: Stefano Tabacchi, 'Cardinali zelanti e fazioni cardinalizie tra Sei e Settecento', in Gianvittorio Signorotto and Maria Antonietta Visceglia (eds), *La corte di Roma tra Cinque e Seicento, 'teatro' della politica europea* (Roma, 1999), pp. 139–65.

<sup>28</sup> Rossi, 'La disgrazia', p. 41.

<sup>29</sup> *Decretum Sacrae Congregationis* (Rome, 10 Feb. 1729); cf. Valesio, *Diario*, IV, p. 1018. On the Index during the period, see Patrizia Delpiano, *Church and Censorship in Eighteenth-Century Italy: Governing Reading in the Age of Enlightenment* (London, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Valesio, *Diario*, V, pp. 18, 30.

<sup>31</sup> *Avviso di Roma* (26 Feb. 1729), as cited in Rossi, 'La disgrazia', p. 46; Valesio, *Diario*, V, p. 44.

<sup>32</sup> *Memoria di Pietro Giannone al Consiglio di Spagna nel febbraio 1729*, Turin, Archivio di Stato di Torino, mss. Giannone, Mazzo II, BBB; Giuseppe Ricuperati, *L'esperienza civile e religiosa di Pietro Giannone* (Milan, 1970), pp. 380–1.

<sup>33</sup> See n. 65.

<sup>34</sup> Ricuperati, *L'esperienza*, p. 381n.

<sup>35</sup> *Vita*, p. 11.

the first volume to Ludovico Antonio Muratori, librarian of the Duke of Modena and celebrity in the Republic of Letters thanks to his historical and antiquarian scholarship.<sup>36</sup> Ottieri greatly admired Muratori's work, especially his *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* (24 vols, 1723–38), a vast and innovative collection of medieval sources.<sup>37</sup> Muratori read the *Istoria*'s first volume, and reckoned that it possessed 'all the necessary qualities' of a book of history, in particular how the author showed 'a free judgement', having weighed the historical information 'on the scales of correct reason'. In his enthusiastic letter in reply, he convinced Ottieri to continue the work.<sup>38</sup> Muratori was also impressed by Ottieri himself, a man who was 'persecuted by fortune, but glorious in his misadventures',<sup>39</sup> the archetype of the intellectual mind silenced by political power.<sup>40</sup> The epistolary relationship between Ottieri and Muratori continued until at least 1734.<sup>41</sup> Ottieri even joined Muratori's famous 'network of *eruditi*' by seeking the expert opinion of the antiquarian and providing himself information.<sup>42</sup>

Ottieri was not exiled for long. His father-in-law, Marquis Andrea Maidalchini, used his connections with the French court in the person of the Nuncio in Paris, Bartolomeo Massei, to rehabilitate Ottieri's reputation.<sup>43</sup> Through Massei's good offices, both Louis XV and Benedict XIII pardoned a contrite Ottieri. Returning to Rome on 29 July, Ottieri was welcomed in Polignac's house and – at the cardinal's request – reinstated in his old office.<sup>44</sup> Not long thereafter, the *Istoria* was removed from the Index.<sup>45</sup> In later years, Ottieri completed the book, but mindful of the experience of persecution and exile, he decided not to publish it – not even with papal patronage – but to leave it for posthumous publication.<sup>46</sup> He also maintained strong connections with the imperial court. In March 1733, Emperor Charles VI awarded him the marquisate of Poggio Sinolfo in the Kingdom of Naples, for his services to the

<sup>36</sup> BEMo, Arch. mur., 73.16, fos 1r–3r in Grassi, 'Le lettere', pp. 15–16.

<sup>37</sup> *Istoria*, V, p. 108

<sup>38</sup> Muratori's letter in response to Ottieri's (dated 23 July 1729) was published by Lottario Ottieri in the preface to: *Istoria*, II (Rome, 1752), pp. vii–viii.

<sup>39</sup> Ep. 2832, *Ad Umberto Benvoglienti in Siena*, Modena, 14 May 1729, published in Matteo Campori (ed.), *Epistolario di L. A. Muratori*, VII: 1728–1733 (Modena, 1904), p. 2846.

<sup>40</sup> See Ep. 5154, *A Fortunato Tamburini in Roma*, 31 Aug. 1745, published in Giorgio Falco and Fiorenzo Forti (eds), *Dal Muratori al Cesarotti*, I (Milan and Naples, 1964), p. 1983.

<sup>41</sup> See Grassi: 'Le lettere'. Ottieri, looking for some sort of intellectual satisfaction, requested that his friend recommended his book for review in the *Acta Eruditorum* of Leipzig; a positive review appeared in 1731. BEMo, Arch. mur., 73.16, fos 1r–3r; and: 86.4, fos 34r–35v in Grassi, 'Le lettere', pp. 16, 24. The review by Johann Burckhardt Mencke (1674–1732) appeared in *Acta Eruditorum* (1731), pp. 116–20. Cf. A. H. Laeven and L. J. M. Laeven-Aretz, *The Authors and Reviewers of the Acta Eruditorum, 1682–1735* (Göttingen, 2014), p. 103.

<sup>42</sup> See: BEMo, Arch. mur., 73.16, fos 36r–37v and 42r; BEMo, Arch. mur., 73.16, fos 28r–29v published in Grassi, 'Le lettere', pp. 46–7, 35. Cf. Tortarolo, 'Italian historical writing', p. 370.

<sup>43</sup> Rossi, 'La disgrazia', pp. 49–50.

<sup>44</sup> BEMo, Arch. mur., 73.16, fos 6r–9r in Grassi, 'Le lettere', pp. 16–18; Valesio, *Diario*, V, p. 112.

<sup>45</sup> *Vita*, p. 12. The book was removed in 1730 by Pope Clement XII and never figured in an edition of the Index.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

Habsburgs, but Ottieri refused the title of Imperial Prince.<sup>47</sup> During the War of the Polish Succession (1733–8), while the ‘Italian system’ was changing in favour of the Bourbons of Spain, Ottieri established friendly relations with the Spanish ambassador to the Holy See. Thanks to this friendship and his relations with some pro-Bourbon aristocrats, Ottieri sought the favour and protection of Charles of Bourbon in Naples, while his relations with the Empire inevitably deteriorated.<sup>48</sup> Ottieri died on 13 May 1742 and was buried in the basilica of Santi Celso e Giuliano in Rome, not far from his home.<sup>49</sup>

After his father’s death, Lottario Ottieri could finally undertake publication of the rest of the work, with Muratori’s support.<sup>50</sup> The second volume, dedicated to Pope Benedict XIV, appeared in 1752, while the remaining volumes were printed between 1753 and 1756.<sup>51</sup> Positive reviews of the *Istoria* appeared in Florence’s *Giornale de’ Letterati* in 1752, in the Roman *Giornale de’ Letterati* in 1753, and the following year in the *Journal des Sçavans*.<sup>52</sup> In 1758, Lottario published the biography of his father, and in 1762 a complete table of contents of the *Istoria*.<sup>53</sup> A second, unauthorised edition of the *Istoria* appeared in Venice in 1753–7 in four volumes.<sup>54</sup>

## II

Since the late sixteenth century, modern historians found a model of historical writing in the late-humanist statesman Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540). His celebrated *Storia d’Italia*, a history of Italy from 1492 to 1534, was grounded on official documents and Guicciardini’s personal experience. Posthumously published in 1561, it became a milestone in European historiography.<sup>55</sup> Many historians followed Guicciardini’s model, so that, 150 years after its publication, the *Storia d’Italia* was still a structural and stylistic model for Ottieri.<sup>56</sup> Ottieri divided his *Istoria*

<sup>47</sup> BEMo, Arch. mur., 73.16, fos 32r–33v, 23r–24v in Grassi, ‘Le lettere’, pp. 38–9, 45.

<sup>48</sup> Grassi, ‘Le implicazioni’, p. 547.

<sup>49</sup> *Vita*, p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> *Istoria*, II, p. viii.

<sup>51</sup> *Istoria*, II (Rome, 1752), III (Rome, 1753), IV (Rome, 1754), V (Rome, 1755), VI (Rome, 1756), VII (Rome, 1756), VIII (Rome, 1756).

<sup>52</sup> *Giornale de’ Letterati pubblicato in Firenze*, 6/3 (1752), pp. 182–5; *Giornale de’ Letterati per gli anni MDCCLII e MDCCLIII* (1753), pp. 310–30; *Journal des Sçavans combiné avec les Mémoires de Trévoux*, 7 (1754), p. 382. The Roman *Giornale* reported that the publication was so lengthily delayed, as Lottario was discouraged from publishing by some critics (pp. 310–11).

<sup>53</sup> Lottario Ottieri, *Indice generale della Storia d’Europa e specialmente d’Italia di Francesco Maria Ottieri* (Rome, 1762).

<sup>54</sup> *Istoria*, I (Rome [Venice], 1753), II (Rome [Venice], 1753), III (Rome [Venice], 1756), IV (Rome [Venice], 1757). The expedient of reporting a false place of publication suggests that the content of the *Istoria* was still problematic. Patrizia Bravetti and Orfea Granzotto (eds), *False date: repertorio delle licenze di stampe veneziane con falso luogo di edizione (1740–1797)* (Florence, 2009), pp. 88, 98, 107, 116.

<sup>55</sup> Mark Philips, *Francesco Guicciardini: The Historian’s Craft* (Manchester, 1977), esp. pp. 95–7.

<sup>56</sup> *Istoria*, I, p. xxxv.

into twenty-three books.<sup>57</sup> Like Guicciardini before him, he followed Tacitus' annalistic format: events were presented chronologically, and accompanied by brief abstracts, with the year in question marked at the top of each page. Unlike Guicciardini, however, Ottieri did not limit his narrative to Italy; he wrote a book about Europe with an Italian focus, as Italy was the 'main theatre' of the War of the Spanish Succession.<sup>58</sup> Yet, the reader is given the impression that the book contains every sort of historical information its author was able to collect – and not only concerning the period 1696–1725, as was the case with a long and incongruous digression concerning the missions of the Jesuits in China, inserted by Ottieri in the second volume.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, Ottieri embellished the narrative with several dramatic speeches, supposedly pronounced by the historical figures he portrayed, in an effort to amuse the reader and in conformity with the classical tradition.<sup>60</sup> In the book's preface, Ottieri claimed that these speeches were not 'capriciously' invented, but rather composed either as an approximation to actual statements, or transcribed and translated 'word by word' from their original sources.<sup>61</sup>

At the start of his *Istoria*, Ottieri affirmed that he intended to chronicle the 'wonderful' (*maravigliosa*) history of the War of Spanish Succession, unequalled for the 'mighty armies' involved, 'the conspiracies and the rebellion of entire cities and provinces. ... The passage of armies through inaccessible places. The capture of impregnable fortresses. Extraordinary battles and decisive victories. ... Proposed peace treaties never concluded, or concluded but disregarded'.<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, as Gallo has argued, Ottieri's main focus of attention was the courts of Europe, their internal power-struggles, factional self-interests, personal ties and patronage networks.<sup>63</sup> Ottieri, a courtier himself for much of his life, was naturally inclined to such a perspective, which offers the reader a rich and complex fresco of early modern court politics.

The *Istoria's* first volume, covering the years 1696–1700 that had led Ottieri to temporary disgrace, contains a preface concerning the work's origins and purpose, as well as the author's description of his historical method. It is centred on the court intrigues leading to the coronation of Louis XIV's grandson Philip, Duke of Anjou, as King of Spain instead of Holy Roman Emperor Leopold's son Archduke Charles, an incident that ultimately resulted in the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession.

<sup>57</sup> The *Istoria's* eight volumes cover the period 1696–1725 as follows: I: 1696–1700; II: 1700–2; III: 1703–5; IV: 1705–7; V: 1707–11; VI: 1711–5; VII: 1716–21; VIII: 1721–5.

<sup>58</sup> *Istoria*, I, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 365ff. The inclusion of the digression concerning the Jesuit missions was criticised by Francesco Zaccaria in *Storia letteraria d'Italia*, VIII (Modena, 1755), p. 156.

<sup>60</sup> *Istoria*, I, p. xxxv. Cf. N. P. Miller, 'Dramatic speech in the Roman historians', *Greece & Rome*, 22/1 (1975), pp. 45–57.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xxxvi–xxxvii.

<sup>62</sup> *Istoria*, I, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> Gallo, 'Le inclinazioni', pp. 1374–5.

Ottieri's narration began with the final stage of the Nine Years War, and he considered the resulting Treaty of Ryswick (1697) as the essential starting point of French manoeuvres to secure the Bourbon succession.<sup>64</sup> Ottieri illustrated how the Austrian initial advantage over France was negatively affected by the short-sightedness of the Viennese court and its emissaries, such as the aforementioned ambassador in Madrid, Aloys von Harrach, and by internal division and jealousy which from the very start fractured the pro-Austrian faction at the Spanish court.<sup>65</sup> The situation changed dramatically in favour of France with the appointment of Henry d'Harcourt as French ambassador to Madrid. Harcourt's manoeuvres, helped by significant expenditure, allowed Louis to exercise indirect pressure on King Charles by effectively convincing ministers and Grandees of Spain to embrace the French cause.<sup>66</sup> Ottieri referred openly to the insatiable ambition of Louis XIV,<sup>67</sup> and not without some admiration recounted the king's 'machinations' and 'plots' in supporting his candidate for the throne.<sup>68</sup> For instance, Ottieri believed that French interests were behind the Madrid riots of 1699 directed against the pro-Habsburg minister Count of Oropesa.<sup>69</sup>

The French were also involved with two partition treaties of the Spanish monarchy, with England and the Netherlands; the agreements would have avoided a succession war, but the dismemberment of his dominions was strongly opposed by the Spanish king. Ottieri reported that Louis deliberately leaked the confidential contents of the Second Partition Treaty (1700), which circulated widely in the gazettes. As neither England nor the Netherlands denied the leaked information, silence confirmed 'what rumour had disseminated'.<sup>70</sup> The death of Charles II on 1 November 1700 was followed by the opening of his last will and testament, and the proclamation in Versailles of Anjou as King Philip V of Spain. War erupted soon after, with the first military actions by France and the Empire taking place in northern Italy. Following Louis's supposed betrayal of the partition treaties, Ottieri argued that England's king William III also took advantage of the circulation of printed news – this time in order to influence the decisions of his parliament. In persuading public opinion to back the war against France, William was, in fact, supported by the gazettes, which reported at length the Habsburg victories in the Italian campaign. The success of William's media manipulation was sanctioned by parliamentary approval, and Britain joined the war against the Bourbons.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *Istoria*, I, pp. 65–8.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120, 392–3, 62, 67.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 119, 150.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 315–16, 327–8. Cf. n. 112.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

<sup>71</sup> *Istoria*, II, p. 155.

Ottieri seems to have had little trust in the periodical press. As newspapers often disseminated rumours, the historian's mission, according to Ottieri, was to correct this information with a more accurate narrative, based on his experience at court, his knowledge of European politics, and a careful evaluation of the available sources.<sup>72</sup> News about military operations, read by an unprecedented large number of readers, was not always precise.<sup>73</sup> Ottieri pointed out, for instance, that the Duke of Marlborough was unjustly accused of having lost a strategic position to the French army in summer 1705. The malicious allegation, which at first circulated only among the duke's opponents, soon spread widely thanks to the gazettes. As a consequence of the dissemination of unverified information, the duke's subsequent military successes fell into the background. Ottieri bitterly concluded by noting the dangers of such events, as even 'the more open minds' could confuse 'truth with exaggeration'.<sup>74</sup>

Ottieri described at length his historiographical method in the preface to the *Istoria*, which opened the first volume. Here, he declared his aim of writing 'with respect of princes', but to 'keep truth as greater friend, and as dearest thing'.<sup>75</sup> As for the work's sources, Ottieri informed his readers that he collected evidence from first-hand and secondary accounts alike. He gathered numerous manuscript memoirs and letters,<sup>76</sup> and books by authors such as Filippo Casoni, Camillo Contarini, Pietro Garzoni, in Italian and Charles-César Baudelot de Dairval and White Kennett in French and English respectively.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, Lottario Ottieri revealed how his father had acquired information from conversing with his peers, for instance when sitting at the gambling table.<sup>78</sup> With few exceptions, Ottieri did not usually cite his sources. This reflected his view that the historian of 'his own times', unlike those who narrate the distant past, 'deserves to be believed' because 'he had seen himself, or learned from wise and informed men, everything he is recounting'.<sup>79</sup> Secondly, Ottieri suggested that, by citing the names of his sources, he would have exposed them against their wishes.<sup>80</sup> In the selection of sources, Ottieri declared how he preferred those 'more approved by common belief, and that ... seemed [to him] truer, and more correct'.<sup>81</sup> When two equally reliable sources conflicted, he would report them both, in order to leave

<sup>72</sup> For instance, Ottieri noted that the *Gazette d'Hollande* (or *Gazette d'Amsterdam*) reported 'with certainty' dubious information. *Istoria*, VIII, p. 207.

<sup>73</sup> Claydon, 'Daily news', p. 69.

<sup>74</sup> *Istoria*, III, p. 468.

<sup>75</sup> *Istoria*, I, pp. xvi–xvii.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xxii–xxiii.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xxxii–xxxiv.

<sup>78</sup> *Vita*, p. 13.

<sup>79</sup> *Istoria*, II, p. 58–9. Cf. Guido G. Beduschi, 'Historians and politicians in an unpublished manuscript of Voltaire', *Revue Voltaire*, 20 (2020), pp. 199–216, at pp. 207–8.

<sup>80</sup> *Istoria*, I, p. xxii.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.

‘discernment to the cautious reader’.<sup>82</sup> In fields unfamiliar to him, such as theology, warfare and science, he stated that he sought advice from experts, believing that it was ‘better to ask for a light to better lead [himself], rather than run blindly and without a guide’.<sup>83</sup> Finally, in the process of writing the book, Ottieri had his drafts revised on a weekly basis by three learned bishops: Giusto Fontanini, Giovanni Bortoni and the future cardinal Domenico Passionei.<sup>84</sup>

We can understand Ottieri’s critical assessment of sources as an example of Catholic erudition. During the seventeenth century, the study of sources had been pioneered by the hagiographer and Jesuit Jean Bolland. His new scholarly method involved a combination of palaeography and the critical analysis of medieval source documents. After Bolland, these efforts were continued by the Bollandist Society, and by members of the Benedictine Congregation of Saint Maur, most notably Jean Mabillon – author of the foundational text on the subject, *De re diplomatica* (1681).<sup>85</sup> During the eighteenth century, Ludovico Antonio Muratori would continue this tradition with the publication of his *Rerum*.<sup>86</sup> In the 1720s–1730s, Catholic erudition inspired the *curia*’s reform of the procedures of canonisation and beatification, undertaken by the Promoter of the Faith Cardinal Prospero Lambertini, future Pope Benedict XIV. The study of documentary sources therefore became central to the investigation of candidates for canonisation.<sup>87</sup> This link between canonisation procedure and critical use of historical sources was, in turn, reflected in the eighth and last volume of the *Istoria*, where Ottieri considered two miracles which reportedly occurred in Rome during the year 1725. Ottieri stressed that unlike other miracles of which he was aware, these two were ‘detailed, clear and proved’, namely supported by adequate evidence, in order to be recognised by the Church and inserted in his historical narrative.<sup>88</sup> In the *Istoria*, however, the employment of this critical procedure was not limited to the discussion of miracles, but was generally adopted for the evaluation of historical events. Ottieri’s secular approach resulted from the late seventeenth-century breaking of the ‘unidimensional’ sacred history of the Counter-Reformation period, and from the gradual return to humanist ‘civil history’ which emphasised human behaviour and social and political organisation. This paradigm shift had commenced with the evolution of erudition from sacred to

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. xxix.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. xxiv.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp. xxiv–xxv.

<sup>85</sup> Maciej Dorna, *Mabillon und andere: die Anfänge der Diplomatie* (Wiesbaden, 2019).

<sup>86</sup> Bertelli, *Erudizione*, pp. 368, 386.

<sup>87</sup> Lambertini’s endeavours were collected in the four volumes of his *De Servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione*, published between 1734 and 1738. Philip Gavitt, Christopher M. S. Johns and Rebecca Messbarger (eds), *Benedict XIV and the Enlightenment: Art, Science, and Spirituality* (Toronto, 2016).

<sup>88</sup> *Istoria*, VIII, p. 179.

secular, and was epitomised by Muratori's oeuvre, which matured from works of sacred erudition into 'civil history'.<sup>89</sup>

If Ottieri felt confident in his ability to undertake the writing of the *Istoria*, it was in no small part thanks to his European travels. His travels in the 1680s laid the foundations for his later historiographical vocation, having nourished an interest for the politics and the recent history of Europe. Ottieri's journey was an inverse Grand Tour (*Bildungsreise*) of sorts, from south to north, which instead of introducing a young nobleman to ancient ruins, brought the future historian into contact with the reality of contemporary European court life and politics. Having returned to Italy, Ottieri settled in Rome and started a family, inaugurating a more stationary phase of his life, in sharp contrast with the previous itinerary one, but which allowed him to use the knowledge he had acquired during his travels. Ottieri's experience of travel then constituted a sort of 'apprenticeship' in historical writing.<sup>90</sup>

Ottieri's travels mirrored a common practice for young Tuscan men in the 1680s, who frequently undertook similar European journeys, either as grand tourists or as technicians with official assignments. The Grand Tour had both a cultural and private purpose; it provided international flair and direct knowledge of the world to the education of young noblemen. On the other hand, travelling allowed young technicians to acquire specific knowledge or training; in late seventeenth-century Tuscany, their journeys were decided upon and sponsored by Grand Duke Cosimo III (r. 1670–1723), a traveller himself, as a form of public investment in a larger programme of state modernisation.<sup>91</sup> Pietro Guerrini, for instance, was sent to Germany, the Netherlands, England and France between 1682 and 1686 – the same period when Ottieri spontaneously undertook a similar journey – and was tasked with providing the Grand Ducal court with memoirs and drawings concerning the latest outcomes of engineering progress achieved in the regions he was visiting.<sup>92</sup>

In the preface to the *Istoria*, Ottieri indeed insisted that his journeys had been the means 'to learn to know the world' and empirically acquire true knowledge.<sup>93</sup> This knowledge also included practical tools that would assist him in the writing of his book. His travels allowed him to create an

<sup>89</sup> Giuseppe Ricuperati, 'Comparatismo, storia universale, storia della civiltà: il mutamento dei paradigmi dalla "crisi della coscienza europea" all'Illuminismo', in Antonio Coco (ed.), *Le passioni dello storico: studi in onore di Giuseppe Giarrizzo* (Naples, 1999), pp. 511–80, at pp. 519–20. Tortarolo, 'Italian historical writing', p. 369.

<sup>90</sup> According to Koselleck, history is experienced as an alternation of different degrees of 'acceleration' and 'retardation'. In his perception of history, time and movement mingle together; by adventuring in historical time, the historian time-travels; see Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York, 2004), pp. 22–4.

<sup>91</sup> Francesco Martelli, 'Sulle orme del principe: viaggi di tecnici toscani in Europa negli ultimi decenni del Seicento', in Clizia Carminati and Stefano Villani (eds), *Storie inglesi: l'Inghilterra vista dall'Italia tra storia e romanzo (XVII sec.)* (Pisa, 2011), pp. 187–213.

<sup>92</sup> Francesco Martelli (ed.), *Il viaggio in Europa di Pietro Guerrini (1682–1686): edizione della corrispondenza e dei disegni di un inviato di Cosimo III dei Medici* (2 vols; Florence, 2005).

<sup>93</sup> *Istoria*, I, p. xvi.

extensive network of acquaintances, which covered the Italian peninsula and the countries he visited; having later maintained epistolary relations with some of these acquaintances, the historian used them to collect evidence for the *Istoria*.<sup>94</sup> Secondly, Ottieri acquired proficiency in foreign languages. Having learned Latin and French in Tuscany, he perfected the latter in Paris and learned English in London. English specifically enabled him to rely on ‘some books written in that language ... , which were to him of great help’. Finally, he could also read Spanish, possibly helped by its similarity to his native Italian.<sup>95</sup> Knowledge of several languages permitted Ottieri to expand the gathering of primary and secondary sources for the book. Crucially, by accessing materials directly in their original language, he could also dispense with translations made by third parties.<sup>96</sup>

Ottieri’s journeys served to turn him into what we might now term ‘an expert’. Like those merchants, diplomats, scientists, or simply travellers, who in that period were integrated into the network of European merchant colonies of the Levant and, once returned, were recognised as experts of those regions, Ottieri too came to be recognised as an Italian expert on Europe and European affairs.<sup>97</sup> Before the publication in 1728, people already knew of his work.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, his experience of travel exposed Ottieri to an early form of cosmopolitanism, which was reflected by his professed evidence-based approach, and by the discontent his *Istoria* provoked in Versailles, Vienna, and among the *zelanti* cardinals. Indeed, political authorities viewed with suspicion the historian’s stance of not siding with any of the war’s participants, and condemned several passages of his book. By devoting the *Istoria* to the history of Europe, and not only Italy as Guicciardini did, Ottieri committed to an ‘ideal of Europe as a harmonious system of balancing states’. He showed detachment towards national prejudice, while embracing the humanist concept of the Republic of Letters, and of a common European civilisation.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. Ottieri was shown documents *per amicizia* by aristocrats and courtiers: *ibid.*, pp. 260–1.

<sup>95</sup> *Vita*, pp. 7, 16. Cf. John Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2019). Gallagher’s unprecedented study offers a deep insight into language-learning and multilingualism in the early modern period.

<sup>96</sup> Ottieri stated that he had read numerous books written by foreign writers. *Istoria*, I, p. xxxiii. Ottieri inserted in the *Istoria* his own translations from French, English, Spanish and Latin. For instance: *Istoria*, II, pp. 181–4.

<sup>97</sup> Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns*, p. 185. On the connection between English commercial and diplomatic expansion in the Levant, and English scholarly and missionary interests, see Simon Mills, *A Commerce of Knowledge: Trade, Religion, and Scholarship between England and the Ottoman Empire, 1600–1760* (Oxford, 2020).

<sup>98</sup> Cf. n. 105.

<sup>99</sup> Karen O’Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 2, 12–13.

## III

In the first volume of the *Istoria*, Ottieri referred to his work as *memorie*.<sup>100</sup> This would have included his work within the genre of the diarists, who compiled huge manuscript compendia of contemporary history, ‘archives’ of sorts ‘of completed events intended for later historical reference’.<sup>101</sup> A major distinction between the diarists and Ottieri, however, is that the former did not intend to publish their work, possibly because they were convinced of not having the necessary skills for authoring a book of history. Ottieri, on the contrary, had acquired self-confidence in his ability and expertise; in short, he had become aware of his public role as historian.

It is possible to detect a change in Ottieri’s perception of the aim of his work over time, which is reflected in its evolution from *memorie* to a book of modern history. Lottario informs us that his father had started writing the *Istoria* in 1716 ‘more for personal entertainment, than with other aim’, as part of literary leisure when in his ancestral home – but soon the work acquired a different purpose.<sup>102</sup> This transition can be witnessed in the preface to the first volume of the *Istoria*, where Ottieri stated to have written the book ‘for [his] study, and for the information of the public’.<sup>103</sup> The *Istoria* remained a work for personal use – technically not intended for publication – but, at same time and in apparent contradiction, it had become a means to inform the public. Following the removal of the book from the Index in 1730, Ottieri continued to regard it as a product for the public. On the very last page of the *Istoria* the process was thus concluded as the exhausted and elderly author declared ‘the conclusion of our labours, according to the commitment taken with the public’.<sup>104</sup>

Ottieri’s endeavours did not pass unnoticed. The historian proudly admitted that he had received a great quantity of manuscript sources from people who did not know him personally, but knew his work.<sup>105</sup> In the 1720s, a continuous stream of material entered Ottieri’s study, forcing him to correct and update constantly his narrative of the events.<sup>106</sup> When the book appeared in October 1728, it naturally attracted wide attention as the long-awaited work of a renowned historian. Later political persecution increased Ottieri’s authority on history, as evinced

<sup>100</sup> *Istoria*, I, p. 277.

<sup>101</sup> Claydon, ‘Daily news’, pp. 74–5. A contemporary to Ottieri, the Bolognese diarist Antonio Francesco Ghiselli (1634–1730) penned 88 volumes of manuscript *memorie* in over sixty years; see Cecilia Ciuccarelli, ‘Ghiselli, Antonio Francesco’, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, LIV (Rome, 2000). In England, diarist Roger Morrice (1628–1702) was astonishingly well informed, and his readers are ‘constantly struck by the quality and circumstantial detail of his information about events at the highest level’. Mark Goldie (ed.), *Roger Morrice and the Puritan Whigs: The Entering Book of Roger Morrice 1677–1691*, I (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. xiii, 116. For a study on an earlier diarist, see Tom Hamilton, *Pierre de L’Estoile and his World in the Wars of Religion* (Oxford, 2017).

<sup>102</sup> *Vita*, p. 9.

<sup>103</sup> *Istoria*, I, p. xvi.

<sup>104</sup> *Istoria*, VIII, p. 236.

<sup>105</sup> *Istoria*, I, pp. xxii–xxiii.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxv.



**Figure 1** Pier Leone Ghezzi (1674–1755), The Marquis Ottieri walking towards the left, 1720s, pen and brown ink. The Albertina Museum, Vienna (Inv. 1250). © The Albertina Museum, Vienna. ‘Francesco Maria was a man of great stature, noble appearance, vivid complexion, and delicate build’ (*Vita*, p. 14). Ghezzi’s caricatures are the only known portraits of Francesco Maria Ottieri. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

by one of two caricatures of him by artist Pier Leone Ghezzi (Figures 1 and 2).<sup>107</sup> The second caricature (Figure 2) dates from 1738 and was accompanied by a short *résumé* of Ottieri’s life, including kinships and offices at court, which was penned by Ghezzi after the historian’s death. The artist described Ottieri as ‘very erudite’ and mentioned the *Istoria*, further commenting that it had been suppressed by Polignac because

<sup>107</sup> On Pier Leon Ghezzi, a well-established and prolific artist, see Anne Thurmman-Jajes, *Pier Leone Ghezzi und die Karikatur* (Bremen, 1998).



Figure 2 Pier Leone Ghezzi, The Marquis Ottieri, 1738, pen and brown ink. BAV, Vatican City (Ott.lat.3116, 5r). © 2021 Vatican Apostolic Library. The portrait of the now elderly Ottieri is accompanied by a caption: Ghezzi condensed Ottieri's life and mentioned how the *Istoria* was suppressed by Polignac because 'it expressly recounted many truths'.

it 'expressly recounted many truths'. The 1752 review of the *Istoria* in Florence's *Giornale de' Letterati* described the book as 'very well written' and containing 'excellent documents, which prove the truth of the facts presented in the history'. The reviewer believed that 'although one can read the history of our century in a thousand volumes', one will always read Ottieri's *Istoria* 'with pleasure and benefit'. He also claimed that he

had been a friend of Ottieri and hence had ‘admired his vast knowledge concerning the affairs of the princes, the histories of Europe and various fields of learning’. The review ended with an account of the 1729 incident involving Cardinal Polignac.<sup>108</sup> When Lottario Ottieri published the book’s last volume, fourteen years after his father’s death, he noted that the publication had been delayed, since the editor wanted to include the index of the whole work. In the end, the index was not completed in time, and the publication of the volume could not be deferred any longer since ‘continuous requests ... are made from the subscribers’.<sup>109</sup> This suggests that the *Istoria*’s readers eagerly anticipated each new volume of the work. Moreover, the book review, which appeared in 1753 in the Roman *Giornale de’ Letterati*, reported that twenty-four years earlier, the suspension of the publication had caused ‘public discontent’.<sup>110</sup>

By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, an unprecedented curiosity or need to know more about present and recent events had emerged in Europe, partly stimulated by the periodicals. This created a reading public for the *Istoria*, a book in which the historical past was, in fact, nearly contemporaneous. Ottieri’s work renegotiated recent events in the context of this wider change in understanding and addressed the rising critical audience, which – active and informed – did not differ much from later Enlightenment publics.<sup>111</sup> Ottieri’s choice to write his history in Italian, and not in Latin, further denotes his intention of targeting a wider public. In a 1738 letter to Matteo Galliani (1684–1748), the statesman Bernardo Tanucci (1698–1783) requested a copy of Ottieri’s *Istoria* alongside another book of modern history, written in Latin by Giovanni Vincenzo Lucchesini (1660–1744).<sup>112</sup> Despite the similarity of contents, the diffusion and readership of the two books of recent history were certainly very different.

Readers’ curiosity had not been frustrated by the 1729 ban of the book, as it remained possible to purchase the *Istoria*’s first volume. In December 1730, Ottieri informed Muratori, who had recommended the book to several people, that the volume was still available for purchase in Rome.<sup>113</sup> If anything, the fact that the *Istoria*’s first volume had been confiscated and put on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1729 might have

<sup>108</sup> *Giornale de’ Letterati* pubblicato in Firenze, pp. 182–3.

<sup>109</sup> *Istoria*, VIII, p. vii.

<sup>110</sup> *Giornale de’ Letterati per gli anni MDCCLII e MDCCLIII*, p. 310.

<sup>111</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 32–5.

<sup>112</sup> Tanucci to Matteo Galliani, 18 March 1738, published in Romano Paolo Coppini et al. (eds), *Epistolario di Bernardo Tanucci (1698–1783)*, I: 1723–1746 (Rome, 1980), p. 257. Lucchesini, a contemporary of Ottieri, is the author of *Historiarum sui temporis ab Noviomagensi pace* (3 vols; Rome, 1725–38). In later letters, Tanucci referred to Ottieri’s book as his source of information concerning the Oropesa Riots of 1699. *Epistolario di Bernardo Tanucci*, XVII: 1766 (Rome, 2003), pp. 129, 137.

<sup>113</sup> Muratori recommended the *Istoria* to Bolognese scholar Giovan Gioseffo Orsi, and the Duke of Modena’s Justice Adviser, Agostino Paradisi. BEMo, Arch. mur., 86.4, fos 34r–35v, in Grassi, ‘Le lettere’, pp. 24–5.

made it more attractive as a ‘forbidden book’.<sup>114</sup> The *Istoria*’s condemned volume could be found in the libraries of the prominent Roman families Barberini, Chigi and Capponi.<sup>115</sup> But its impact reached well beyond Rome: in the 1730s, it was already in the collection of the King’s Library in Paris. From there, François-Marie Arouet – better known as Voltaire – borrowed it in 1735 to collect information for his *Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751).<sup>116</sup> The *philosophe* eventually purchased his own copy of the *Istoria*. Having lent it to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Marquis of Torcy, he finally donated it in 1740 to Armand de Vignerot du Plessis, Duke of Richelieu.<sup>117</sup> The English historian Edward Gibbon also owned a copy of the *Istoria*.<sup>118</sup>

In Italy, Ottieri had his readers too. In 1747, the antiquarian and early Etruscologist Anton Francesco Gori (1691–1757) and the archaeologist Mario Guarnacci (1701–85) exchanged letters concerning Gori’s involvement in Lottario Ottieri’s plan to publish the rest of the *Istoria* in Florence. Guarnacci advised Gori in favour, stating that the first volume was ‘highly esteemed’ and that the work was ‘accredited’, but added that one could expect the publication of a cheaper and unauthorised edition ‘in Venice or elsewhere’.<sup>119</sup> His concerns proved to be justified.<sup>120</sup> There was, moreover, no cause for concern that Habsburg-Lorraine authorities would interfere with the book’s publication, as Francesco Ottieri was, according to Guarnacci, ‘rather inclined towards the Germans’ and ‘wise and did not get carried away’.<sup>121</sup> Gori did not come to an agreement with Lottario Ottieri and the book was eventually published in Rome. In 1752, the Florentine diplomat in Rome Francesco Vettori recommended that Gori subscribe to the *Istoria*’s volumes as they were published, as the book ‘is truly well written; it is believed entirely

<sup>114</sup> The *Istoria* might be regarded as belonging to the ‘forbidden’ genre of ‘political slander’. Moreover, *chroniques scandaleuses* were often disguised as books of history; see Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-sellers of Pre-revolutionary France* (New York, 1996), pp. 137–9. The events following the 1728 publication of the *Istoria* were known in France (see, for instance, anon., *Galerie de l’ancienne cour ou mémoires anecdotes pour servir à l’histoire*, IV (s.l., 1789), pp. 110–13). Montesquieu, who met Polignac in Rome and greatly admired him, recorded the Ottieri scandal in his ‘Voyage d’Italie’ (*Œuvres Complètes de Montesquieu*, X: *Mes voyages*, ed. Jean Ehrard (Lyons, 2012), p. 257).

<sup>115</sup> These books are now in the BAV. Inside his copy, Alessandro Capponi even pasted the 1729 decree of condemnation of the *Istoria*. Rossi, ‘La disgrazia’, pp. 46–7. Cf. n. 27.

<sup>116</sup> Voltaire, *Œuvres Complètes*, 13B (Oxford, 2015), p. 295. Voltaire freely translated into French one passage of Ottieri’s *Istoria*, and inserted it in the *Siècle*, *ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>117</sup> Beduschi, ‘Historians and politicians’, pp. 204–5.

<sup>118</sup> Gibbon’s copy of the *Istoria*, held by the Bibliothèque Cantonale et Universitaire of Lausanne, Switzerland (MMS: 991018145449702851) is available on Google Books: <[https://books.google.ch/books?id=yjYVAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=it&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.ch/books?id=yjYVAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=it&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)> [accessed 25 April 2021].

<sup>119</sup> Mario Guarnacci to Anton Francesco Gori, 6 Jan. 1747. Florence, B[iblioteca] M[arcelliana di] F[irenze], Carteggio di A. F. Gori, ms. BVII 14, fos 318r–319v; Guarnacci to Gori, 29 Jan. 1747. BMF, Carteggio Gori, ms. BV II 14, fos 322r–323v. Gori’s correspondence is available online: <<http://www.maru.firenze.sbn.it/gori/a.f.gori.htm>> [accessed 25 April 2021].

<sup>120</sup> Cf. n. 54.

<sup>121</sup> Guarnacci to Gori, 13 Nov. 1751. BMF, Carteggio Gori, ms. BVII 14, fos 467r–467v.

truthful, and does not require much commitment to read, or to have it read aloud'.<sup>122</sup>

Soon after its publication, Ottieri's work became a reference text and source for everyone who wanted to write on the period. Muratori used the book as a source for his *Annali d'Italia* (12 vols, 1744–9), as did Carlo Denina for his *Delle rivoluzioni d'Italia* (3 vols, 1769–70).<sup>123</sup> Denina, who considered the first volume of the *Istoria* far superior to the ones which followed, also shared Ottieri's criticism of the introduction in Italy of foreign customs – particularly French. When he addressed the issue in his *Rivoluzioni*, he even quoted a passage from the eight volume of the *Istoria* to support his own argument.<sup>124</sup> French author Jean-Baptiste Targe read and used the *Istoria* too. In his *Histoire de l'avènement de la maison de Bourbon au trone d'Espagne* (6 vols, 1772), Targe scrupulously reported the names of his sources in the margin of each paragraph. Ottieri is frequently cited along with Vicente Bacallar, Tobias Smollett and Voltaire, and with authors of memoirs such as Colbert de Torcy and Ferdinand Bonaventura von Harrach.

Four lists of subscribers, printed and published at the end of each of the four volumes of the Venetian second edition, further inform us of the book's readership.<sup>125</sup> In the first volume, the subscribers were only fifty in number. Having quadrupled in the second volume, they rose to 235 in the third and to 233 in the fourth. In the third and longest list, 124 subscribers hailed from Venice alone. The remainder mainly resided in north Italian cities, such as Bologna, Milan, Turin and Verona. Central Italy in this list only figured with readers from Pesaro since Rome, the place of publication of the first and only-authorised edition, is not present. In the South, finally, the volume had six subscribers from Naples, and twenty from Palermo. In Venice, the subscribers' social background was particularly heterogenous; among others, the names of the Doge Francesco Loredan (r. 1752–62) and of Isaac Treves, resident of the Jewish ghetto, stand out. All in all, the 124 Venetian subscribers in the longest list counted seventy-nine nobles, fourteen clerics and thirty-one commoners.

The lists of subscribers include some foreign residents, such as the Spanish ambassador to Venice,<sup>126</sup> as well as four women: three in Venice

<sup>122</sup> Francesco Vettori to Gori, 28 Aug. 1752. BMF, Carteggio Gori, ms. BVIII 12, fos 118r–118v.

<sup>123</sup> Ludovico Antonio Muratori, *Annali d'Italia*, XI (Milan, 1749), p. 447. Muratori regards Ottieri as the authority on the Spanish Succession alongside Pietro Garzoni (cf. n. 141). Carlo Denina, *Delle rivoluzioni d'Italia*, III (Turin, 1770), pp. 372, 391.

<sup>124</sup> Denina, *Delle rivoluzioni d'Italia*, III, p. 370. In his treatise *Della importanza e dei pregi del nuovo sistema di finanza dello Stato pontificio* (1794), political economist Paolo Vergani quoted a number of passages from Denina's *Delle rivoluzioni*, including the one from Ottieri's *Istoria*. Giuseppe Giarrizzo, Gianfranco Torcellan and Franco Venturi (eds), *Illuministi italiani, VII: Riformatori delle antiche repubbliche, dei ducati, dello Stato pontificio e delle isole* (Milan and Naples, 1965), p. 650.

<sup>125</sup> Lists of subscribers have been recognised as important sources for the history of readership: Ursula Rautenberg, *Reclams Sachlexikon des Buches* (Stuttgart, 2015), p. 374; Reinhard Wittmann, 'Subskribenten- und Pränumerantenverzeichnisse als lesersozilogische Quellen', in Herbert G. Göpfert (ed.), *Buch und Leser* (Hamburg, 1977), pp. 125–59.

<sup>126</sup> *Istoria*, III (Rome [Venice], 1756), p. 650.

and one in Palermo.<sup>127</sup> While the latter belonged to the nobility, their presence is nonetheless indicative of the wider, and varied, readership of Ottieri's work.<sup>128</sup> Just as with Voltaire's *Siècle*, the *Istoria* did not compete on the book market with the heavy folios of Mabillon or Muratori; but while 'large Latin volumes might be in the library of a great gentleman's house', they 'were certainly not to be found in his drawing room or his wife's *boudoir*' – as in the case of Ottieri's book.<sup>129</sup> To some extent, then, we can locate Ottieri's work within the wider eighteenth-century process of vulgarisation, in his case via the effective presentation and dissemination of a difficult subject, contemporary political history, to a wider audience. The *Istoria* disseminated knowledge to a vernacular public, which comprised traditional readers of modern history, such as literati and statesmen, but also, and more importantly, merchants and noblewomen.

#### IV

In a time when a clear separation between news and recent history did not exist, and 'published news was perceived as a record of the recent past', the voracious consumers of printed news constituted also the readership of recent history.<sup>130</sup> In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, books of recent history such as Guicciardini's *Storia* were normally published after the author's death, and addressed an elite reading audience.<sup>131</sup> In a humanist tradition, history was perceived as 'exemplary stories of successful and unsuccessful conduct', a 'sort of high, instructive account of past politics and war, that retired statesman and generals had written', 'in order to equip [the readers] with the prudence needed in the active life'.<sup>132</sup> Historians, nevertheless, had been using news reports as sources of historical information since the sixteenth century.<sup>133</sup> During the seventeenth century, this use increased as the periodical press sold political information 'at diminishing prices for widening publics'.<sup>134</sup>

Between 1685 and 1715, a thirty-year period punctuated by the Great Turkish War (1683–99), the Nine Years War (1688–97) and the

<sup>127</sup> In Venice: Catterina Sagredo Barbarigo, Marina Sagredo Pisani, Canciana Soranzo Corner. In Palermo: Lucrezia Branciforti, *ibid.* pp. 650–1.

<sup>128</sup> This is further supported by Lottario Ottieri's dedication of his *Vita* to a noblewoman: Isabella Vecchiarelli Santacroce.

<sup>129</sup> Denys Hay, *Annalists and Historians: Western Historiography from the Eight to the Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1977), p. 172.

<sup>130</sup> Daniel Woolf, 'News, history and the construction of the present in early modern England', in Brendan Dooley and Sabrina Alcorn Baron (eds), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2001), pp. 80–118, at pp. 98–100.

<sup>131</sup> Hicks, 'Bolingbroke', pp. 469–71.

<sup>132</sup> Anthony Grafton, *Worlds Made by Words* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2009), p. 43.

<sup>133</sup> Joop W. Koopmans, 'The varying lives and layers of mid-eighteenth-century news reports: the example of the 1748 Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in Dutch news media', *Media History*, 22/3–4 (2016), pp. 353–70, at p. 354.

<sup>134</sup> Filippo De Vivo, 'Microhistories of long-distance information: space, movement and agency in the early modern news', *Past & Present*, 242/14 (2019), pp. 179–214, at p. 184.

War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), Europeans witnessed an unprecedented circulation of printed information concerning ongoing conflicts, signalling the emergence of a growing sense of public awareness. Mario Infelise has shown how these military events brought in the Italian states ‘new forms of journalism and new expectations among those who used them’.<sup>135</sup> There existed ‘a curiosity that seemed limitless’ and a ‘constant demand for information’, which ‘forced the news out of the secret manuscript bulletins and into various printed forms’.<sup>136</sup> By the turn of the eighteenth century, the gazettes had expanded the readers’ ‘sense of what was happening *now*’. In England, in particular, ‘[t]he continuous vigour of the press after 1695 ensured that these presentations of time became a regular part of their readers’ lives and were not confined to moments of uncensored crisis’.<sup>137</sup> Yet, gazettes did not offer logical and cohesive narratives, nor commentary to the information reported; these were rather offered by news digests or mercuries, such as the *Mercurus de Hollande*.<sup>138</sup> News digests were located somewhere between newspapers and books of recent history, and appeared monthly or every six months.<sup>139</sup> During the years 1680–1720, they supplied political information concerning ongoing wars and negotiations, but also provided some political analysis of the events reported. Unlike the gazetteers, the authors of news digests possessed greater historical perspective, for instance in their choice of publishing those documents, such as peace treaties, on which events were based.<sup>140</sup>

The readership of gazettes and mercuries would find much of interest in Ottieri’s modern history.<sup>141</sup> Although it shared the focus on recent political history with contemporary periodicals, the *Istoria* is a rigorous book of history. As Ludovico Antonio Muratori observed, Ottieri, ‘dissatisfied with simply recounting the fact, as the gazetteer does, enters into the cabinet and the mind of the princes, and there plumbs the secret mainsprings’.<sup>142</sup> By alluding to the Tacitist trope of *arcana imperii*, Muratori distinguished the activity of the writer of history from that of the writer of periodicals. While they both reported information concerning recent events to a wide readership, only the historian Ottieri explored the logic behind politics, thanks to his critical method.

<sup>135</sup> Mario Infelise, ‘The war, the news and the curious: military gazettes in Italy’, in Dooley and Baron (eds), *The Politics of Information*, pp. 216–36, at p. 216.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Claydon, ‘Daily news’, p. 74.

<sup>138</sup> Koopmans ‘Varying lives’, p. 354.

<sup>139</sup> Marion Brétéché, *Les compagnons de Mercure: journalisme et politique dans l’Europe de Louis XIV* (Ceyzérieu, 2015), p. 9.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>141</sup> Two histories in Italian, concerning the War of the Spanish Succession, had already appeared: *Istoria della Repubblica di Venezia, ove insieme narrasi la guerra per la successione delle Spagne al re Carlo II* (Venice, 1716) by Pietro Garzoni (1645–1735), and *Annali delle guerre di Europa per la monarchia delle Spagne* (Venice, 1720) by Camillo Contarini (1644–1722). Both were known to Ottieri, who considered them biased but useful. *Istoria*, I, pp. xxx–xxxii.

<sup>142</sup> Letter from Muratori to Ottieri, 23 July 1729, published in *Istoria*, II, pp. vii–viii.

Francesco Ottieri's ultimate aim in the *Istoria* was the presentation of history to a varied readership: the same readership of the unnarrated and sensationalist periodicals. Prospective readers would choose to read the *Istoria* because they trusted Ottieri's authority and consequently the veracity of his book's contents. This authority partly rose from Ottieri's standing: his titles of nobility and membership of the court, fitting within the humanist tradition of aristocratic historians with privileged access to state secrets. But Ottieri's authority also derived from his relationships with men of letters, his own erudition, and the experiences gathered during his travels; these elements were typical of a new age of information and rising cosmopolitanism, and are the ones which distinguished Ottieri from other writers.

Ottieri's status as a noble is reported on the book's title page. Readers knew how this nobility had allowed the count-marquis to meet the protagonists of contemporary European history and engage with them as equals. Moreover, Ottieri was expected to inform his readers with a true and impartial account of historical events, since his noble ancestry constrained him to act honourably. In the preface to the *Istoria*, however, he admitted that even 'noble souls' could be twisted by personal and familial ambitions. Ottieri declared himself immune to such aims: at the Roman court, the greatest honours were exclusively reserved for members of the clergy, and he and his son were the only surviving male descendants of their noble house.<sup>143</sup> As Ottieri reported, his loose vassalage to a distant and foreign monarch served as a further guarantee of the impartiality of the account he presented.<sup>144</sup> In fact, it seems that the historian was not restrained by his ancestral loyalty to the Habsburgs, which was questioned by Giannone, and further belied by Ottieri's later cultivation of connections with the Bourbons. Nobility allowed Ottieri to be a courtier for most of his life. As a boy, he entered the Medici court, where he was educated. Later, during his European travels, he was welcomed in all the most influential courts of the time. Finally, during his Roman maturity, he first joined the court of Queen Marie-Casimire and eventually the papal *curia*. Courts were sources of secrets and scandals. As the historian himself admitted, it was only thanks to his membership of the court that he could collect much of the material needed for the *Istoria*.<sup>145</sup> Readers knew that Ottieri walked the corridors of power, and that represented a further guarantee of the contents of his book. Moreover, Ottieri's membership of none other but the papal court provided unofficial clerical sanction for his work, only suspended between the banning of the book in 1729 and its removal from the Index the following year. The first volume of the *Istoria* is dedicated to Pope Benedict XIII; in its preface, the readers were informed of the author's

<sup>143</sup> *Istoria*, I, pp. xxvii–xviii.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

membership of the papal court, which allowed him to be in constant, and close, contact with popes and cardinals.

Further guarantees of his authority were offered by Ottieri's relationships with erudite scholars as well as his own erudition. Across Europe, scholars mingled and conversed with 'amateurs of learning' in the learned societies. From this 'cross-fertilisation', and not from old-fashioned universities, modern European scholarship in the arts and sciences emerged.<sup>146</sup> Following his studies in Siena and Florence, Ottieri did not complete his education at a university, but rather established his expertise in recent history and politics by attending learned societies, where he associated with erudite scholars.<sup>147</sup> In 1729, it was not by chance that Ottieri started an epistolary relationship with Muratori, the leading and renowned historian of eighteenth-century Europe. Muratori's scholarly appreciation of Ottieri's work became a sort of certification of quality; this can be deduced from the fact that his first letter of praise was inserted by Lottario into the second volume of the *Istoria*.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, Muratori helped the circulation of the book in the Republic of Letters by recommending it to friends and literary journals. The approval and esteem of various intellectuals further qualified Ottieri as an authority on modern history, and as a member himself of the Republic, before a non-erudite public.

Lastly, Ottieri's experiences gathered during his European tour constituted a final guarantee for his work. In the Christian Middle Ages, excluding pilgrimages, the dominant motives for travelling were material and practical. Medieval travellers included nobles, clerics and soldiers, but also quacks, masons and homeless people. Then, in the course of the sixteenth century, a new legitimation for travel was found in education, and the traveller became an empiricist.<sup>149</sup> Ottieri, a noble and a soldier *manqué* who almost joined the imperial armies campaigning in Hungary, qualified in two medieval categories of traveller. During his itinerant youth, he acquired direct experience of contemporary European history and politics as an empiricist – one who in order to learn has to be in constant peregrination. Ottieri reflected the necessity of exploring and the restlessness of his times, a period of political change and socio-cultural unrest.

The combination of standing, relationships and experiences qualified Ottieri as an authority on contemporary history, which reconfirmed the veracity of the *Istoria's* contents to its readers. Ottieri's role of modern historian was partly born of the news and printing revolution. Between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, indeed, the information

<sup>146</sup> Hay, *Annalists*, p. 167.

<sup>147</sup> Ottieri was a member of the Accademia della Crusca (as reported on the *Istoria's* title page) and attended Conti's cultural circle. *Istoria*, I, p. xxv; see n. 20.

<sup>148</sup> See n. 38.

<sup>149</sup> Stagl, *A History of Curiosity*, p. 47; Enenkel and de Jong (eds), 'Introduction', in *Artes Apodemicae and Early Modern Travel Culture*, pp. 1–2. On travelling and travel writing during the Middle Ages, see Shayne Aaron Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel* (Chicago and London, 2017).

disseminated by printed periodicals altered readers' perception of time and their understanding of the present. The 'barrage' of raw information printed in the newspapers required expertise; it made the figure of the 'modern historian' necessary in order to offer a key to, and a judgement and analysis of, a new flurry of recent historical events.<sup>150</sup> Unlike some of his predecessors, such as Guicciardini, and contemporaries, Ottieri did not compose his book of contemporary history for manuscript circulation. In the early eighteenth century, some historians still believed that '[l]arge press runs were not necessary' for their works, as 'there was no perceived public for literature on such a high plane'.<sup>151</sup> Ottieri proved them wrong: although in contents a book of political history based on classical models, the *Istoria* was written for immediate and wide circulation. It was this 'public', who needed to know more about the recent past in order to better understand the present, that Ottieri wished to inform, and which prompted him to compose and publish his book and in so doing to assume the role of modern historian.<sup>152</sup>

### PEER REVIEW

The peer review history for this article is available at <https://publons.com/publon/10.1111/1468-229X.13140>.

<sup>150</sup> Claydon, 'Daily news', p. 75.

<sup>151</sup> Hicks, 'Bolingbroke', p. 469.

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