

**CENTRO STUDI BASSANIANI**  
**of the COMUNE di FERRARA at CASA MINERBI-DAL SALE**

**Guide to the Visit by Portia Prebys**  
**English Version**

**Introduction**

Giorgio Bassani was born on March 4 in 1916, by chance in Bologna, while his mother, Dora Minerbi (Ferrara, 1893-1987, Ferrara), was visiting her husband, Angelo Enrico Bassani (Ferrara, 1885-1948, Ferrara), who was serving in the military there as a volunteer medical officer. Bassani grew up in a family from the upper Hebrew bourgeoisie in Ferrara for many generations: he attended the local secondary school for classics “Ludovico Ariosto,” and, alongside his formal studies including studying the piano, he accompanied his passion for tennis by frequenting assiduously, along with Michelangelo Antonioni who was a few years older, the Marfisa d’Este tennis club, very close to his home and meeting place for the middle classes in Ferrara.

In 1934, deeply moved by literature, he enrolled in the Faculty of Letters at the Università di Bologna where his classmates were Attilio Beertolucci, Augusto Frassinetti, Franco Giovanelli, Antonio Rinaldi and the Arcangeli brothers Francesco e Gaetano. In May of 1935, he published his first story, *III classe*, inspired by his experience as a commuter, in Ferrara’s *Corriere Padano*, founded in 1925 by Italo Balbo and directed by Nello Quilici who inaugurated outside collaboration with stories, poems, articles and translations, an initiative carried forward until November 1937. Bassani completed his university degree with Carlo Calcaterra in 1939, despite the racial laws, with a thesis on Niccolò Tommaseo. He subsequently taught in the Jewish school in via Vignatagliata, 79, in the ghetto in Ferrara at that time.

The Bassani family home, located in via Cisterna del Follo, 1, inside the city walls, was originally a monastery and, later on, belonged to the Tibertelli family to which Filippo De Pisis was born. The entire Bassani family lived there from the beginning of the Twenties when their paternal grandfather, David Bassani (Ferrara, 1854-1923, Ferrara), a well-off textile merchant, purchased and renovated it to live in with his wife, Jenny Hanau (Ferrara, 1855-1909, Ferrara), and their children, Bice and Enrico, who lived on different floors. Giorgio’s father, Angelo Enrico Bassani, landowner, took his degree in medicine with a specialization in gynecology, but he never practiced medicine; passionate about soccer, he was President of the S.P.A.L., the Ferrara soccer team, from 1921 to 1924. Enrico married Dora Minerbi (Ferrara, 1893-1987, Ferrara) a student of the classical lyric, in 1915, after having met her thanks to their family doctor, Cesare Minerbi (Ferrara, 1856-1954, Ferrara), Dora’s father.

Cesare Minerbi, son of Salomone (Ferrara, 1822-1910, Ferrara), and professor of medicine, as well as an important scientist and intellectual, was chief physician of the Archispedale Sant’Anna, Ferrara’s civic hospital, for forty years; he took his degree in Bologna in 1879 and was one of Augusto Murri’s chosen few. He knew English, self-taught, spoke perfectly French and German in which he wrote his medical treatises, published in France and

Switzerland. He was the first to introduce yoghurt into Italy and to realize that many illnesses could be cured rectally. His wife, Emma Marchi (Ferrara, 1864-1938, Ferrara), a nurse at the hospital, was Dora's mother and "the Catholic grandmother." Dora also had a brother, a doctor, Giacomo, and two sisters, Carmen and Luisa. The Minerbi children all studied classics at the public secondary school.

Enrico and Dora had three children: Giorgio (1916-2000), Paolo (1920-2001), Eugenia, called Jenny (1924-2004). The entire Bassani family left Ferrara in the fall of 1943 due to the racial laws and the Italian and European political situation. While the family was in hiding in Florence, their home in Ferrara was completely plundered and when they returned in September of 1945, they had to put the building in order and refurbish it to live there again. After the war, Dora lived the rest of her life there in via Cisterna del Follo; her husband, Enrico died in 1948 from an ulcer he developed during his military service in the trenches during the First World War.

After the war, Giorgio lived in Rome; Paolo lived in Bologna, then in Rome, with his wife Valeria; Jenny, married to Rodolfo Liscia (Livorno, 1918-2013, Livorno), first lived in Livorno, and later in Florence. The Bassani family home in Ferrara was sold in 1995, after Dora's death.

This is the Bassani family present herein, also in various other ways, at the Centro Studi Bassaniani in the Casa Minerbi-Dal Sale, in via Giuoco del Pallone, 15-17, in Ferrara's historical center. In the second half of the fourteenth century, this area was completely occupied by several private homes owned by the Dal Sale family. The Minerbi family is already present in the city in 1205 and this area with all its living spaces becomes the property of the Minerbis by the nineteenth century. Jewel of the historical patrimony of Ferrara, today Casa Minerbi-Dal Sale, of a late medieval nature, developed over two floors within a closed courtyard, with a loggia and a vegetable and flower garden at the back, is an architectural complex that is distinguished by the fascinating dialogue between the antique and the modern, immediately perceived within the internal spaces where fourteenth-century pictorial cycles can be admired that are tied to contemporary spaces. A salon on the upper floor of the adjacent fourteenth-century building known as the "Room of the Vices and the Virtues," with rare fresco paintings dating from 1370, has been attributed to a follower of Giotto's, identified by Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti as the "Master of Casa Minerbi," in 1970.

Giuseppe Minerbi (1903-1991), Beppe for his friends, following ownership by inheritance, came into possession of a part of the building where the ground floor areas had been mostly turned into warehouse areas with no connection to the floor above that was fit for habitation even before remodelling. In 1957, Minerbi invited his Milanese architect friend, Piero Bottoni (Milano, 1903-1973, Milano), to carry out restoration that was finished in 1963 of what remained of the fourteenth/fifteenth-century arrangement to create new spaces to meet the additions functionally and compositionally necessary for a stable residence, one of which was the exceptional and well-preserved "Room of the Coat of Arms," when the property had been purchased by the Italian State and the City of Ferrara. This historical building, important from every point of view, was opened to the public in 2016 by the City Administration under Mayor Tiziano Tagliani, in collaboration with the Direzione Regionale per i Beni Culturali e Paesaggistici dell'Emilia. Restoration is currently in progress.

Via Giuoco del Pallone is one of Ferrara's oldest streets. The main entrance to the Palazzo del Paradiso was here, seat of the Università degli Studi di Ferrara, founded on March 4

1391. Long ago, university students used to often abandon their classrooms and descend into the street to play ball in front of the university entrance, and from here derives the name of this street.

The Italia Nostra Association is particularly tied to this Minerbi-Dal Sale home since here in 1960 was born the Ferrara office of the Association thanks to the goodwill of both Giorgio Bassani and Beppe Minerbi, the first President of Italia Nostra in Ferrara and illuminated Proprietor who curated the restoration of this building. From the very beginning, the contribution of the Ferrara office was right up front and of utmost importance nationally; it is sufficient to recall the themes of the Parco del Delta del Po and of the salvaging of the Estense City Walls conceived in direct correlation to the achievement of the Parco Urbano, the so-called Addizione Verde.

The Minerbis of the Bassani family and Beppe Minerbi, owner of this complex, author and benefactor of the public spaces here, in the historical center of the city, were distant relatives, friends of the family forever. Beppe's wife, Olga, Milanese and Catholic, gave piano lessons to Giorgio before he enrolled in the university; the Minerbis hid Jenny Bassani on their estate, La Montina, in the countryside near the Po, for a month in the fall of 1943, before the Bassanis and the Minerbis left Ferrara to go into hiding. Giorgio Bassani dedicated his novel, *The Heron*, to his friend, Beppe, in 1968.

The Centro Studi Bassaniani, founded with donations to the City of Ferrara by Portia Prebys, intends to introduce the person Giorgio Bassani close up, recreating for the visitor and scholar here, his milieu and the atmosphere surrounding the Writer through personal particulars, along with objects that were part of his daily life when Bassani lived not only in Ferrara, but also in Rome, in Lungotevere a Ripa, during the last years of his life. Their condominium apartment in Trastevere enjoys a broad panoramic view immersed in the greenery along the Tiber with its island, the Palatine Hill across the river hovering above the Basilica of S. Maria in Cosmedin, the Bocca della Verità square with its fountain, the Temple of Hercules Victor, the Circus Maximus and the Aventine Hill: a true Roman kaleidoscope of brilliant, colored images, more or less iridescent according to the season, the weather and the time of day.

Giorgio Bassani died in the Eternal City on April 13 2000 and is buried in Ferrara, in the Hebrew cemetery in via delle Vigne.

## **Entrance**

Entry to the Centro Studi Bassaniani is from the second internal courtyard on the ground floor of Casa Minerbi-Dal Sale in via Giuoco del Pallone, 15.

Inside, to the right, facing the glass entrance doors, sitting on a small walnut table can be seen a *Testa di Donna*, a mosaic figure done by Robert H. Cook (Boston, 1921-2017, Canale Monterano, Roma). After his military service as an engineer responsible for maps and models, Cook studied in Paris, at the Academie des Beaux Arts, with Marcel Gaumont, after which he arrived in Rome in 1948 thanks to a Fulbright Fellowship and decided to stay in the Eternal City permanently. Known as the "master of fluid bronze" for his grand sculptures of figures, he created his art, first, in his studio in via Margutta, then, in Canale Monterano, Rome.

To the right, against the wall facing the entrance is a walnut settee, from the second half of the nineteenth century, upholstered in light green velvet, from the Bassani home after the war.

On the walls, there are three large paintings, oil on canvas, by an unknown Orientalist: “Arab architecture with figures,” from the second half of the nineteenth century, in their original wood and gilded pastiglia frames, from the Bassani home after the war.

On the wall above the walnut bookcase to the right, a rare print from 1816 by “Sivieri Giovanni Capo Mastro Muratore” that illustrates the floor plan and sections of the Ferrara Castle at that time.

In front of the walnut bookcase, there is a medium-sized curved sofa with two matching armchairs, upholstered in dark blue velvet, with a small table, all produced in Italy in the Novecento, from the Prebys home in Rome; the foot stool is upholstered in blue wool needlepoint with a floral design embroidered by Prebys. At the center of the small table which sits on an oriental Bukhara pachistani” carpet (180 x 125 cm.), there is a crystal platter in the shape of a leaf, French-made by Lalique, with dried flowers.

Further to the right, under the window, there is a large round walnut table, made in the beginning of the nineteenth century, originally belonging to Prof. Cesare Minerbi and used as his worktable in his home, in Ferrara, in via della Ghiara, 18, very close to the city walls. This place is mentioned by Giorgio Bassani with great affection in his works: *La passeggiata prima di cena*, in *Opere*, Mondadori, 1998, p. 1636; *La cuginetta cattolica*, in *Rima e senza*, Mondadori, pp. 159-160. About his grandfather, in *Di là dal cuore*, Bassani writes: “Elia Corcos, ...è in qualche modo il ritratto del mio nonno materno, Cesare Minerbi.” [Elia Corcos ... is in some way the portrait of my maternal grandfather, Cesare Minerbi.”] In the center of the round table is an antique punch bowl in American pressed glass with matching cups and a silver ladle for serving punch, a refreshment much in use in the US in the Fifties and Sixties, all on a silver tray in Sheffield silver signed by George H. Hulley.

Cesare Minerbi is buried in Ferrara’s Hebrew cemetery in via delle Vigne; his tombstone carries Giorgio Bassani’s memorial citation for his grandfather:

In questa tomba / accanto a quello del figlio / è sepolto /  
il Professor Dottor / Cesare Minerbi / per quarant’anni  
Primario / dell’Arcispedale Sant’Anna / scienziato originale  
e clinico / di fama / medico curante di quattro / generazioni  
di ferraresi / Nato nel 1856 / quando ancora a Ferrara governavano  
/ i Cardinali Legati / morì nell’autunno del 1954 / quasi centenario  
/ vivendo fino all’ultimo del proprio lavoro / passando arguto e solitario  
fra noi / col sorriso del saggio e del filosofo / e lo sguardo distante di chi  
ha scrutato il / dolore.

[In this tomb, next his son’s, for forty years Chief of the Arcispedale Sant’Anna, original scientist and clinician, famous, doctor-in-charge for four generations of people from Ferrara. Born in 1856 when the Cardinal Legates still ruled Ferrara, he died in the fall of 1954, almost centenary, until the end, living of his own labors, passing amongst us as quick-witted and

solitary with the smile of a wise man and philosopher and the distant gaze of someone who has witnessed pain.”]

An important photographic portrait of Cesare Minerbi can be seen in the Salon of the Centro Studi Bassaniani.

Back to the main entrance, on the left wall, there is a poster done by the City of Ferrara, in black and white, with a photograph of the Author, in remembrance of Giorgio Bassani's death in April 2000: “Ferrara extends its final salute to our poet and friend, Giorgio Bassani.”

Also on the left wall, further down from the bookcase and cabinet, before the doorway, there is a poster from the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche “Segnature,” showing an antique print of the Academy and announcing the Presentation of Giorgio Bassani's *Poesie complete*, edited by Anna Dolfi, to be held on Wednesday, April 20 2022, at five-thirty pm, at Palazzo Corsini, in via della Lungara, 10, in Rome. Speakers introducing the volume: Roberto Antonelli (President of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei), with Gian Luigi Beccaria (Linceo member, Università di Torino) Luciano Formisano (Linceo member, Università di Bologna) and Raffaele Manica (Università degli Studi di Roma “Tor Vergata”).

Finally, on the left in the corner after the doorway, the original poster from May 1962 that proclaims the goal met of sales of the first one hundred thousand copies of *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*. The poster reproduces the etching *Campo da tennis* (1923) by Giorgio Morandi (Bologna, 1890-1964, Bologna) whom Bassani had frequented in Bologna. This etching as a loose sheet included inside the book was an integral part of the first editions of the *Garden*.

Presented in Rome for the first time on February 22 1962, at the bookshop of the Giulio Einaudi publishing house in via Veneto by Italo Calvino, Mario Soldati, Carlo Muscetta, Goffredo Bellonci and Alberto Arbasino, the novel's bookjacket showed a painting in color chosen personally by Bassani, *Nu couché* by Nicolas de Staël (San Pietroburgo, 1914-1955, Antibes), by “kind concession of Mme. Françoise de Staël” and, inside, the dedication “to Micòl.” In a few months, the *Garden* became the second “bestseller” of the Novecento in the Italian language after *Il Gattopardo* by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, discovered and published by Bassani for Feltrinelli, in 1958, from his editorial office in via Arenula, in downtown Rome.

### **First Room: Office of the Secretary**

Entering the room, on the left on the windowsill, is a large black marble urn in the form of a jar, filled with dry flowers, gift of the fashion designer, Micol Fontana, a longtime friend, given to Prebys as a personal memento when Fontana left her home across the Tiber near the Teatro di Marcello, in Rome, to go into retirement.

On the wall facing the arched passageway, to the right, is the original poster publicizing *The Garden of the Finzi-Contini* film, directed by Vittorio De Sica (Sora, 1901-1974, Neuilly-sur-Seine), for its world premier in Jerusalem on December 2 1970, with Prime Minister Golda Meir in attendance seated next to De Sica. Already at the beginning of 1963, Documento Films procured the film rights for the *Garden*, beginning a long line of script-writers, including also Bassani, interested in adapting the novel for the screen. Vittorio De Sica's final

attempt in 1970 to do so left Bassani very dissatisfied in that he felt the film betrayed his novel “in its substance and above all in its spirit.” He turned to the courts in Rome to have his name removed from the film, winning his case. In fact, on this poster one can see, added later on over the original printing, the wording “freely taken from the novel,” wording that still today accompanies every projection of the film in the world. Bassani recounted this matter in his essay “The Garden Betrayed,” published on December 4 1970, in *Ma'ariv*, in Tel Aviv, and on December 6 1970, in *L'Espresso* in Rome that today can be found in Bassani's collection of essays, *Di là dal cuore*.

Lino Capolicchio, a protagonist of the film *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, in his recently published diary, relates that on June 26 1970, in Ferrara: “We are filming at the Bassani home, outside and in the entrance. For me, this will really be a sort of marathon, I have to undergo seven changes of outfits. I have met the mother of the writer, a handsome lady with refined manners, very kind, who invites me into one of the bedrooms to change clothes. She even offered me a cup of iced tea. The house is handsome and sober.”

About the Italian premier of the film, held in Rome on November 20 1970, Capolicchio writes: “The movie theatre is the Fiammetta which is not too capacious but everyone wants in, for which there will be one too many quarrels. At the end of the projection, deep feelings overflowed from the screen invading the hall. There is a triumphant applause that seems to never end. It is an overwhelming wave that wraps around us and electrifies us. Around me all I see are people drying their tears with a handkerchief.”

In Paris, the film came out on December 8 and, in New York, on December 16 1971, at the Plaza. Every single newspaper article, in all languages, reported news exclusively about De Sica. In 1972, the film won the Oscar for the best foreign film. Bassani never skipped a chance to express his own intellectual disdain for the situation. He used to say: “A script-writer does not express himself in a screenplay, he is not the creator. A film director expresses himself when he creates visually. I knew all this when I sold the rights to my novel. I sold them without reserve. The objections that I posed later on were not of an aesthetic nature, but of a moral one. Given that they identified me, as a private citizen, with a story that was not mine, as a script-writer, I could not sign it. In fact, in the end, I did not write that screenplay.” The antagonism between Bassani and De Sica never died.

In the first glass display cabinet on the left, from the top:

§A pair of ceramic vases, turquoise in color, with various colored flowers over the entire surface, found, by chance, by Bassani's mother, Dora, together with his sister, Jenny, in an antique shop while they were taking a walk downtown on Corso Giovecca right after the war and their return to Ferrara in September 1945. They demanded possession; the antique dealer denied any possibility that the vases had belonged to them. Jenny answered back that she had personally repaired one of the vases, repairs that are still visible today. The antique dealer immediately ceded the vases to them. Memorable in the Bassani family history is the fact that Paolo had broken that vase by playing ball inside the house and his mother had been cross with him for a long time afterward.

At the center, on the same shelf:

§A sculpture of a pyramid in gilded bronze, 20 x 20 cm. tall, on a perspex base, by Arnaldo Pomodoro, carries the dedication: “Giorgio Mondadori, on the occasion of the new Milanese headquarters of Arnold Mondadori Editore to honor the memory of his father ordered this sculpture in one hundred copies from Arnaldo Pomodoro in 1973.” Signed: “Arnaldo Pomodoro, 16/100.”

§To the right of the pyramid, a medal from the Légion d’honneur, a chivalrous order founded by Napoleon Bonaparte, the highest honorable decoration awarded by the French Republic, assigned to Giorgio Bassani on December 31 1971.

§To the left of the pyramid, is a copy of a bronze medal portraying Lucrezia Borgia in profile dating to about 1505, attributed to Filippino Lippi or Bartolomeo Melioli. In February of 1502, Lucrezia, daughter of Pope Alexander VI, made her entrance into Ferrara to marry Alfonso d’Este, son of Duke Ercole I and heir to the Estense Duchy, accompanied by an enormous retinue of servants, pages, knights and ladies-in-waiting. The face of this medal with Lucrezia’s profile presents the following inscription: LVCRETIA-BORGIA-ESTEN(sis)-FERRARIAE-MVT(inae)-AC-REGHII-D(ucissa); the reverse side of the medal presents the following inscription: VIRTUTI-AC-FORMAE-PVDICITIA-PRAECIOPSISSIMUM. Probably, these inscriptions are a motto coined for Lucrezia or adapted to her. Wife and model mother of seven children, loved by her subjects and her husband, she brought the most celebrated artists and literary figures to her court in Ferrara.

On the second shelf:

§Page proofs, thirty-six single pages corrected and numbered by Giorgio Bassani for *La passeggiata prima di cena*, and single page proofs (from page 111 to page 151) corrected and numbered by Bassani for *Una notte del ’43*.

§To the right of the page proofs, a copy of *Una città di pianura* that Giorgio Bassani had printed at his own expense in 1940, in Milan, by Arte grafica A. Lucini e c., under the pseudonym of Giacomo Marchi due to the racial laws: Giacomo, the name of Bassani’s maternal uncle, son of his maternal grandfather, Cesare Minerbi, whose Catholic wife was Emma Marchi. This pseudonym was also used for some journalism collaborations in the same period. This first published volume brought together, besides the text of the same name, four other short stories: “Omaggio,” “Un concerto,” “Rondò” and “Storia di Debora,” along with a poem, “Ancora dei poveri amanti,” writing which in various ways would be reworked and included in other publications by Bassani during his lifetime. *Una città di pianura* inaugurates Bassani’s personal topography and construction of his very own city of Ferrara.

§At the center of the shelf, the round brown leather box for Dunhill Medium Pipe Tobacco that Bassani always used is here together with his favorite pipe, placed in front of *Una città di pianura*.

§To the left of the page proofs, the Einaudi edition of Bassani’s *Le storie ferraresi* (1960) with his dedication: “a Carmen, ascoltatrice / paziente di tanti autunni ferra- / resi, e a Claudio, primo maestro / e amico, ricordo affettuoso di / Giorgio / 18 luglio 1960.” Through the kind courtesy of Carmen and Claudio Varese, from Ferrara.

On the third shelf:

§A typewritten manuscript corrected by Giorgio Bassani: “Reworking of *Un concerto* (1947-48)” and various other typewritten manuscripts along with some loose sheets. Behind on the left, a vase and lacquered chopsticks from Japan brought home by Prebys as mementos of a long journey.

§On the right, by Gustave Flaubert, *L'educazione sentimentale. Storia di un giovane*, translation by Beniamino Dal Fabbro, Giulio Einaudi editore, seconda edizione, 1949: edition which Bassani always kept next to him on his bed to read before falling asleep; also always present were the complete works of Dante Alighieri.

§A round ash tray from the Parioli Tennis Club in Rome where Bassani went every day, to be surrounded by greenery, have lunch and, often, play tennis.

§A membership card dated 1989 from the Circolo del Ministero degli Affari Esteri at the Aniene River, in Rome, where Bassani went for lunch and to play tennis every time the Tennis Parioli was closed.

§A rectangular ash tray from the Buenos Aires Lawn Tennis Club brought home as a token to Portia Prebys when Bassani visited Argentina in April 1983 to take part in the Buenos Aires Book Fair, a new occasion for the Writer to meet his Argentinian readers. There, he read his essay "Il giardino tradito." He also visited the city of Rosario, and sought out examples of his favorite Liberty architecture, abundant there on the banks of the Paraná River. In the hall of the Italian School, Bassani gave a conference on "Venice in architecture" organized by the Dante Alighieri Society and the Italian Consulate in Rosario.

On the bottom shelf:

§Donated to the Centro Studi Bassaniani by the Ansaloni-Lanaro Fund, Giorgio Bassani's first typewriter, an Italian portable with the brand name of "Littoria" a gift from his father when he passed his high school final exams in 1934:

Il professor Ermanno Finzi-Contini interPELLa il protagonista quando comincia a lavorare nella biblioteca della sua casa:

‘Cosa combini? Stai già ricopiando?’, gridò allegro.

Mi raggiunse, e volle vedere la macchina. Si trattava di una portatile italiana, una Littoria, che mio padre mi aveva regalato qualche anno prima, quando avevo superato l'esame di maturità. Il nome della marca non provocò il suo sorriso, come avevo temuto.

(*Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*)

High up on the wall above the glass display cabinets hang two portraits of Giorgio Bassani painted by Margaret McCann, American from Ohio and friend of both Bassani and Prebys, Fellow at the American Academy in Rome in the Nineties.

In the second glass display cabinet on the left, there are many first editions of Bassani's publications with autographed personal dedications to family members, friends and Portia Prebys. On the top shelf, a black enameled box from Japan:

§Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. *Premio Antonio Feltrinelli*, Estratto: "Giorgio Bassani" ("Sono nato nel 1916...", pp. 16-19), con bibliografia, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Roma, 1992.

§Berardi, Pier Niccolò. *Pier Niccolò Berardi pittore*, introduzione di Giorgio Bassani in italiano, inglese, francese, tedesco; G. C. Sansoni S.p.A., Firenze, 1973; dedica: "a Pisulin, con molti auguri, Giorgio, Roma, 5 aprile 1974."

§Prebys, Portia. *La bibliografia delle opere di Giorgio Bassani – La memoria critica su Giorgio Bassani*, 2 vols., EDISAI, Ferrara, 2010.



§Bassani, Giorgio. *Due Novelle: Les Neiges d'Antan & Nel Pozzo*, Sodalizio del Libro, Venezia, 1965, esemplare N. 2; "Questo volume fuori commercio stampato in 300 copie numerate a cura di Nino Clementi Righetti per il Sodalizio del Libro è da lui dedicato agli amici in occasione del Natale 1965."

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Opere*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, 1998 (in a slipcase); dedica: "alla mia amata Portia, Giorgio, Roma, 25.5.98."

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il romanzo di Ferrara*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore 1974; dedica: "alla mamma, alla mia Muse, per sempre, Giorgio, Ferrara, 12.12.1974."

§Bassani, Giorgio. *The Garden of the Finzi Continis*, translation by William Weaver, Harvest Book, Inc., HBJ, New York & London, 1977; dedica: "a Sister Paola, Suor / Paola, con molto affetto, / e con la speranza che possa / presto rileggere questo libro in / italiano. / Il suo / Giorgio B. / Roma, 1.5.1986."

§Bassani, Giorgio. *L'odore del fieno. Il Romanzo di Ferrara*, Libro Sesto, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., Oscar narrativa, Milano, novembre 1985; dedica: "a Portia, a PORTIA, / questo piccolo Oscar, con / la speranza che voglia trovargli / un posticino nella sua / bella, solenne libreria, / quella arrivata oggi. / Giorgio, Roma, 9 dicembre 1985."

On the second shelf, Italian marble obelisks; a bookend portraying the white-headed eagle, national symbol of the United States of America as of 1789:

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il Romanzo di Ferrara*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., Milano, settembre 1980; dedica: "a Portia, per / sempre, for ever, / il suo / Giorgio / Roma, 27.9.80 (!)."

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il Romanzo di Ferrara*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, II edizione, maggio 1990; dedica: "I wrote this – all this – / enormous poem, when I was / a real tiger. Now it is / for you, Portia, still tigress, / and also for me, old / man and lover, Giorgio / Roma, 28/10/'90."

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Di là dal cuore*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., Milano, aprile 1984; dedica: "a Portia, questa prima / copia (l'ho ricevuta / mezz'ora fa), col / bacio dal suo / Giorgio, / Roma, 9 aprile 1984."

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Dietro la porta*, il romanzo di Ferrara IV, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., Milano, maggio 1985; dedica: "'Olgiata, 15 agosto 1985 / Duro a capire, inchiodato / per nascita a un destino di / separazione e di livore, la / porta dietro la quale ancora / una volta mi nascondevo inuti- / le che pensassi di spalancarla. / Non ci sarei riuscito, niente / da fare. Né adesso né mai'. / pag. 140 / Però tu x abbi ancora un / po' di pazienza. Chissà. / G. x, a Portia."

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il Romanzo di Ferrara -I, Dentro le mura*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, ottobre 1973; dedica: "alla Mamma, con / gli auguri più affettuosi / del suo / Giorgio / Roma, 26 nov. 1973."

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il tempo della guerra – Quaderni inediti 1941-1944*, Telecom Italia – Progetto Italia S.p.A., Milano, 2006.

§*Racconti e novelle dell'Ottocento*, scelti da Pietro Pancrazi, G. C. Sansoni Editore, Firenze, maggio 1943, terza edizione aumentata; epigrafe a mano di Giorgio Bassani: "Il diavolo ci porta / via dalle nostre belle. / La giovinezza è morta, / e i nostri amori con ella."

On the third shelf, four miniature Italian marble and silver obelisks; two Italian marble obelisks:

§Bassani, Giorgio. "Relazione", *Nuova Antologia*, 113, Vol. 534, Fasc. 2127, Luglio-Settembre 1978, Felice Le Monnier Editore, Firenze, pp. 451-453.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il Romanzo di Ferrara*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., Milano, settembre 1980; dedica: “a Paolo e a Valeria, nella / speranza che trovino tanta forza / e tanta pazienza di rileggere / tutto questo da principio come / se fosse la prima volta (!), il loro / Giorgio/Roma, 16.12.’80.”

§Bassani, Giorgio. “Otto poesie”, *Nuova Antologia*, 115, Vol. 543, Fasc. 2136, Ottobre-Dicembre, 1980, Felice Le Monnier Editore, Firenze, pp. 146-155: “Brindisi per l’anno nuovo”, “Amori impossibili”, “Raccordo anulare”, “Da ballare”, “Negli spogliatoi del Tennis”, “A mia figlia per il suo compleanno”, “Gli spettri”, “In sogno.”

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Rolls Royce and other poems*, Aya Press, Toronto, 1982; edizione bilingue.

§Giorgio Bassani, *Storie dei poveri amanti e altri versi*, 2a ediz. accresciuta, Casa Editrice Astrolabio, Roma, aprile 1946.

§Varese, Claudio. “Scrittori d’Oggi: Giorgio Bassani, Il Giardino de Finzi-Contini”, *Nuova Antologia di Lettere, Arti e Scienze*, Fasc. 1938-Giugno 1962, Roma, pp. 262-265.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *In rima e senza*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., Milano, novembre 1982; dedica: “a P. / perché sappi bene come ero / dunque come sono / e mi voglia un po’ di / bene / anche così / G. / Roma 7 dicembre 1982.”

§*La Ruota, Rivista mensile di letteratura e arte*, III serie, N. 7-8, Ottobre-Novembre 1940, XIX, Editore Arti Grafiche Panetto & Petrelli, Spoleto.

On the fourth shelf, a paperweight, gift to Prebys from Bassani on his return from lecturing in Canada:

§Bassani, Giorgio. “L’airone (VII-XII)”, in *Paragone*, Rivista mensile di arte figurativa e letteratura, Letteratura XVIII, Numero 208/28, giugno 1967, G. C. Sansoni Editore, Firenze.

§Bassani, Giorgio. “Epitaffio”, in *Paragone*, XXI, 240, febbraio 1970, G. C. Sansoni Editore, Firenze (estratto).

§Bassani, Giorgio. “Introduzione alla pittura di Pier Niccolò Berardi”, Estratto dalla monografia *Pier Niccolò Berardi pittore*, edita dalla Casa Editrice Sansoni-Firenze. Maggio 1973”, Industria Grafica L’Impronta Spa, Scandicci (Firenze).

§Bassani, Giorgio. “Mario Cavaglieri e dell’esilio felice”, *Mario Cavaglieri*, Galleria Menghelli, Firenze, marzo 1973. (2 copies).

§Centro Culturale Italiano, *Le passeggiate romane* di Robert Carroll (dépliant mostra 15 febbraio – 12 marzo 1979), con la poesia ‘Piazza Indipendenza’ di Giorgio Bassani, Haifa, 1979.

§Cain, James. *Il postino suona sempre due volte*, traduzione di Giorgio Bassani, Soc. An. Ed. Valentino Bompiani & C., Milano, luglio 1946.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Gli occhiali d’oro*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 1958; dedica: “A Mario Soldati [stampato] / alla cui intelligenza / e al cui insegnamento / debbo, in grandissima / parte, se ho potuto / intendere ed amare / il povero Fadigati. / Giorgio / Roma, 30.5.’58.”

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Le parole preparate, Considerazioni su tema di Venezia nella letteratura*, La Consulta di Verona, Verona, 1965.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Te lucis ante 1946-47*, Ubaldini Editore in Roma, dicembre 1947; dedica: “al nonno Cesare con molto affetto, il suo Giorgio, Aprile 1948.”

§Cain, James. *Il postino suona sempre due volte*, traduzione di Giorgio Bassani, Soc. An. Ed. Valentino Bompiani & C., Milano, novembre 1945.

§Catania, Lorenzo. “Condizione borghese e storia nel ‘Giardino dei Finzi-Contini’” (estratto), *Otto/Novecento*, V, n. 2, marzo/aprile, Milano, 1981.

§Forti, Fiorenzo. “Incontro con Bassani”, estratto da *Convivium raccolta nuova*, 1948 – N. 4, Società Editrice Internazionale, Torino – Milano – Genova – Parma – Roma – Catania.  
§Bassani, Giorgio. “Una lapide in via Mazzini” (estratto), *Botteghe Oscure*, X, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Roma, 1952.

On the fifth shelf, a bookend portraying the white-headed eagle, national symbol of the United States of America as of 1789; a copy in blue wax of a medal with “Munich, city seal, 12th c.” written on the back:

§Ragghianti, Carlo L. editore. *Gli affreschi di Casa Minerbi a Ferrara*, Cassa di Risparmio di Ravenna, Amilcare Pizzi S.p.A., Cinisello Balsamo (Milano), 1970; volume fuori commercio; regalo di Beppe Minerbi.

§Bassani, Giorgio. “Presentazione”, *Paesaggio di Spina* di Mimì Quilici Buzzacchi, Editore De Luca, Roma, febbraio 1962, pp. 7-14.

§Bassani, Giorgio. “Presentazione/Introduction”, *Futuribili*, V, 30-31, gennaio-febbraio, 1971, I.R.E.A., Roma, pp.28-33.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Francesco Tabusso pittore*, Galleria Gian Ferrari, Milano, 1970.

§Bassani, Giorgio. “Intervento di Giorgio Bassani”, *La difesa della Natura in Italia. Atti del Congresso di Bagni di Lucca promosso dalla Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals*, La Nuova Italia Editrice, Firenze, 1970, pp. 63-65.

§Ragghianti, Carlo L. *Pittura tra Giotto e Pisanello*, Trecento e Primo Quattrocento. Civiltà artistica a Ferrara, 2, Gabriele Corbo Editore, Ferrara, 1987; dedica: “Ferrara, 23 Aprile 1988. A Portia Prebys, con Giorgio Bassani, abbracciandoli Beppe [Minerbi].”

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Francesco Casorati, pittore*, Galleria Gian Ferrari, Milano, aprile 1971.

§Andersch, Alfred. “Laudatio”, in *Giorgio Bassani oder vom Sinn des Erzählens*, Kulturpreis der Stadt Dortmund, Nelly-Sachs-Preis 1969, Dortmund.

§Bassani Giorgio. *Richard Piccolo*, Galleria Il Gabbiano, Roma, febbraio 1985.

On the wall to the left of the passageway into the next room, a pendulum clock, early Novecento, from Prof. Cesare Minerbi’s office in via delle Scienze, 8.

To the right of the passageway, under the poster for the *Giardino* film, a white display cabinet:

§From the top left, a sheet of protocollo, issued by the Prefecture di Ferrara, on December 20 1938-XVII, signed by the Prefect, addressed to “Mr. Angelo Enrico Bassani fu Davide, born in Ferrara il 1/7/1885, former combatant and fascist since December 1920,” who gives his permission to “maintain employed the maid of Italian race and citizenship...” in his own home.

§To the right, a silver medal from the city of Osimo (AN). Along the edge of the front face is written the civic motto “BRUNUS – VETUS – AUXIMON – AUXIMAS.” On the back, the medal bears, in the center, the following dedication: “To the National President of Italia Nostra / Giorgio Bassani / as a sign of recognition / 9 Ottobre 1977.” Along the edge of the back face is written: “CITTÀ DI OSIMO – IL SINDACO.”

§In the back to the left, the identity card n. 17225 of the Florence Refugee Center, Allied Commission, in the name of Bassani, Eugenia, age 9.21, Florence. (The document has a mistaken birth date and place; Eugenia Basani was born on May 19 1924, in Ferrara).

§At the bottom to the right, the identity card n. 8394 issued on March 9 by the “Unione Nazionale Ufficiali in Congedo d’Italia, Concessione Speciale V, Valido solo per il 1948”, in the name of “Capitano Bassani Angelo”, who “has a right to the special concession F”.

§From the top right, the id “Tessera Postale di Riconoscimento”, n. 411432, of 20 II 1947, in the name of “Franchi Alberto fu Alfonso, doctor, Florence,” with a photo of Angelo Enrico Bassani, with tax stamps and signature (false document). Document dated 22.II.44 XXII, valid until 20.II.47.

§Below, the id “Tessera Postale di Riconoscimento”, n. 411433, of 20 II 1947, in the name of Franchi Luisa Morletti, housewife, Florence, photo with tax stamps and signature (false document). Documento dated 22.II.44 XXII, valid until 20.II.47.

§Below, id card with photo of Dora Bassani, made out to Dora Merletti Lanfranchi, born in Pescara on 15 ottobre 1893, resident in Roma, Via di Villa Massima, 24, issued by the City of Naples; the names of her father, Cesare, and her mother, Emma Marchi, are correct (false document). Document dated 7 gennaio 1941 XIX.

§At the bottom, postcard from Berkeley (California, USA), dated 16.4.76, mailed by Giorgio Bassani to his mother, Dora.

§On the top right, postcard from Berlin (Germany), postmarked 29.6.14, sent by Davide Bassani to Dora Minerbi.

Below, postcard from Pieve de Cadore, posrmarked 4.8.04, mailed by Jenny Bassani to Dora Minerbi.

§Below, a free entry id for the Cinema Apollo in the name of Dottor Bassani, Enrico, dated 1933.

§Down below, id card n. 329, of the Società Polisportiva di Ferrara, Anno 1929-1930, in two parts, for the “meritorious Bassani dr. Enrico,” signed by the President, with “S.P.A.L. seals, paid.”

§At the bottom, an id for “Bassani Augusto, fiduciary for the province of Ferrara, of the Federazione Nazionale per la Lotta contro la Tuberculosi, 15.3.36 XIV”, with a photo of Enrico Bassani.

§On the top right, postcard from Cortina [at the time, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire], with an Austrian stamp, an illegible date, sent to Dora Minerbi, signed “Enrico Elisa Clara Minerbi Jenny (Hanau).”

§Below, an id card from the Reale Automobile Club d’Italia, n. 9882/243, for Enrico Bassani, dated 4 febbraio 1928, with tax stamps for 1928, 1929, 1930, and 1931, signed by the President, with a photo of Enrico Bassani.

§On the top right, postcard from Faido (Canton Ticino, Switzerland), dated 24.8.09, mailed to Dora Minerbi by Enrico Bassani.

§Below, from 1916, postcard with an Italian stamp sent by “Dora,” addressed to “Signor Enrico Bassani, Villa Conelly, Cattolica.”

§Below, id card from “The Atlantic Refining Company – A.N.S.C.A., Azienda Nazionale Stazioni Custodia Automobili, Bologna, Piazza Ravegnana, 1, Servizio di Custodia Automobili, subscription with reciprocity for all A.N.S.C.A. stations, issued to Signor Bassani Dott. Enrico valid for custody of the car (missing), license plate (missing), Ferrara, 21/3/29 VII,” signed by “Il Consigliere Delegato.”

§In the lower left, id card for C.O.N.I. in Ferrara, for Dott. Enrico Bassani, no date, signed “Il Presidente del C.O.N.I.”, with a photo of Enrico Bassani rubber-stamped.

§Below left, Dott. Prof. Cav. Cesare Minerbi’s calling card.

§Berlow right, id card n. 70, of the Unione Nazionale Protezione Antiaerea (U.N.P.A.), Consiglio Provinciale di Ferrara, with the name of Enrico Bassani, dated 9 March 1935 XIII; with note: “The spiritual adherence to U.N.P.A. is worth more than the membership fee and implies the meritorious action of propaganda to procure new members.”

§Top right, a receipt corresponding to the international money order n. 21, “for the sum of L. 50”, Fr. 92.59, tax collected L. 1.50, sent by Enrico Bassani to his son Paolo, to Grenoble (Francia), on March 14 1939 XVII.

§Below, small laboratory glass slide cover, turquoise-colored, that belonged to Prof. Cesare Minerbi.

§Below, Italo Balbo's calling card: Maresciallo dell'Aria, Governatore Generale della Libia, with his signature, from January 1934.

§At the bottom, framed round photo of Enrico Bassani, with dedication, 1910.

Top right, envelope with letter inside from Dora Bassani Minerbi, addressed to "Tenente Medico Dottor Angelo Enrico Bassani, Direzione Sezione Sanità 17. IX: Corpo d'Armata, Zona di Guerra," dated 16.1.17.

§Also at the bottom, a letter with envelope postmarked 17.3.1939 XVII, from Tripoli, from the Maresciallo dell'Aria, Governatore della Libia, Italo Balbo, addressed to Signora Dora Bassani Minerbi.

§Bottom right, a bronze medal from the State of Indiana (USA). Along the edge of the front is written: "SEAL OF THE STATE OF INDIANA – 1816." Along the edge of the back side is written: "1816 – STATE OF INDIANA – 1966 – SESQUICENTENNIAL."

§Three small vases in veined marble are in this display area, one pink and two red.

On the right, on the wall with windows, beginning top left can be found:

§A portrait of Giorgio Bassani, a pencil drawing by Ervardo F[ioravanti], born in Calto, near Rovigo, in 1912, died in Ferrara in 1996, painter, engraver and designer; donated to the Centro Studi Bassaniani by Anna Ansaloni and Daniele Ravenna, 2016.

§Below, a portrait of Giorgio Bassani, photograph given as a gift by Bassani himself as his favorite to a few intimate friends, for Christmas, 1990.

§Photo taken for the silver anniversary of the wedding (December 24 1882-1907) of Jeni Hanau and Davide Bassani. Below are the framed daguerreotypes from 1907 from which the photo was printed then (the names of the subjects are indicated on the photo).

§Under the window, a pen-drawing of a map that outlines the imaginary location of the garden of the Finzi-Contini family based on Bassani's description provided in the novel. This drawing is by Herbert Schneider, husband of Marilyn Schneider, author of the excellent volume *Vengeance of the Victim: History and Symbol in Giorgio Bassani's Fiction* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986).

§A page of scribbling in red ink by Alberto Moravia carried out in the Eighties during a book presentation at the Mondadori offices in via Sicilia and given to Prebys who was seated next to him, at the end of the ceremony.

§On the right, a Bassani family tree researched, designed and painted by Jenny Bassani Liscia, Giorgio's sister, in 2000.

Between the two windows hangs a work by Giosetta Fioroni, from 1974, *Micòl Finzi-Contini*, a gouache used for the front cover of *Il romanzo di Ferrara*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, ottobre 1974. The silver figure of Micòl with the Estense Castle in the background is one of Fioroni's famous "argenti" that uses industrial colors, in this case, aluminum. Fioroni was the longtime companion of Goffredo Parise who was a friend of Bassani's until Parise's death in 1986. Fioroni was a friend and collaborator of many writers and poets of the period.

Under the window on the right:

§The program from the presentation by the National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene, at the New York City Opera, in New York, of *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, January 27 – February 6 2022, with music by Ricky Ian Gordon, libretto by Michael Korie.

§On the wall next to the above-described program, a German calendar, “Autoren porträts,” from 1998, that shows Giorgio Bassani in the main square in Munich where Bassani had gone to recite his own poetry at two events open to the public. The photo was taken by the famous photographer Isolde Ohlbaum.

§On the top of the bookshelves to the right, is “Testa di donna,” sculpture of a woman’s head, in grey peperino, done in 1989 by Luigi Fondi as part of his “Papacqua” fountain.

In the display case immediately to the right of the bookshelves are some original early editions of Bassani’s publications.

From top left:

§*Una notte del '43*, Giulio Einaudi editore S.p.A., Torino, 1956, I Coralli; in copertina: Pablo Picasso, *La guerre* (particolare); dedica: “alla mamma, ricordo del suo / G. / Ferrara, 5 ottobre 1960.”

§*Storie dei Poveri Amanti e altri versi*, Astrolabio, MCMXLVI, Roma, 2a ediz. accresciuta; dedica: “al nonno Cesare, con molti auguri / per il 1947, il suo / Giorgio/Roma 31 Dic. 1946.”

§*Un'altra libertà*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, I Edizione dicembre 1951; dedica: “alla mamma, il suo / Giorgio / Roma, 19.1.'52.”

§*La Passeggiata prima di Cena*, G. C. Sansoni, Firenze, 1953; contiene “Storia d’amore”; “La passeggiata prima di cena”, “Una lapide in via Mazzini”; dedica: “Roma, maggio '954 / alla mamma, dal suo / G.”

§Original typewritten text of forty-seven pages (numbering handwritten by Bassani himself at the top of every page to the right), with the title *I funerali di Clelia Trotti*, the original title of *Gli ultimi anni di Clelia Trotti*, published January 31 1955, by Nistri-Lischi, Pisa, in the series ‘Il Castelletto’ directed by Niccolò Gallo (Roma, 1912-1971, Orbetello), with the book jacket designed in color by Mino Maccari (Siena, 1898-1989, Roma), *Sguardie Mute*, 105pp. The epigraph on the first page of the typewritten text is by Umberto Saba (born Umberto Poli in Trieste 1883-1957 Gorizia): “Il nascere, / come il vivere, è contro gentilezza. / E la pietà di chi soggiace spezza il cuore.” The epigraph of the edition published by Nistri-Lischi is by Italo Svevo (born Aron Hector Schmitz in Trieste, 1861-1928, Motta di Livenza): “Le persone di cui si conquista l’affetto con un im- / broglio non si amano mai sinceramente. Io ricordo che / un moribondo non accettò neppur di parlare con delle / persone che lo amavano perché egli aveva fatto creder / loro di amarle.” The story appeared for the first time in April 1954, in *Paragone* where Bassani was an editor. Today, this story is considered the fourth of the *Cinque storie ferraresi*.

§A note handwritten by Bassani quotes the epigraph he wrote in 1948 for his father’s tomb in Ferrara’s Hebrew cemetery of which only the first part was utilized:

Qui  
accanto ai suoi genitori  
nel cimitero che gli fu più caro  
riposa  
ANGELO ENRICO BASSANI  
medico-chirurgo moel

Liberi  
dalle offese e dai terrori  
del mondo  
eppure ancora viventi  
almeno fin che duri la vita  
di chi ci conobbe e ci amò  
eredi degni anche noi  
Signore  
di tanta pace

---

1885 - 1948

§

[Here, next to his parents, in the cemetery that was dear to him, rests Angelo Enrico Bassani, physician and surgeon, free from insults and terror in the world, and yet still living, at least as long as life lasts by those who knew us and loved us, we too worthy heirs, Lord, of so much peace. 1885-1948.]

§In the lower part of the display, on top of the typewritten copy, a bronze memento of the Palio Etrusco at Poggio Civitate, Murlo, Siena VI<sup>o</sup> century BC, from the Azienda Autonoma di Turismo di Siena along with some small marble vases.

§Typewritten text with no corrections of *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini*. Above it, a small watercolor, in pale colors, of walnuts and berries, that Bassani kept on his dresser in his bedroom.

§Profile of a face in transparent Murano glass.

At the center of the room, an Italian-made triangular walnut desk from the Thirties with drawers on three sides from the office in the Prebys home.

On top of the desk:

§This original publication, *Italia da salvare*, from 1965, expresses Bassani's commitment as an environmentalist and as an intellectual supporter of the debate in the civilized society in the Italy of the Sixties and the Seventies during Bassani's presidency of the Italia Nostra Association (1965-1980), but also confronts the situation of contemporary Italian writers and intellectuals regarding the environment.

§A copy of the popular magazine, *L'Europeo*, of September 9 1962, with the article "I premiatori occulti" about the *Giardino*, by Carromlo Bo (pp. 59-61); gift of Ottavia Minerbi e Alfredo Vallisnieri.

## Dining Room

Entering, immediately to the left, are two pencil drawings, portraits of Bassani and Prebys, done in 1995 by their friend, Richard Piccolo, an American artist, resident of Rome and Umbertide for many years. Bassani wrote an essay entitled "Presentazione" for the catalogue *Dal 15 febbraio 1985*, for an exhibition of Piccolo's work at the Galleria d'Arte "Il Gabbiano," in Rome.

Between the two windows on the left, from the Bassani residence after the war, a walnut chest of drawers with four drawers and above an upper fall-front desk that recalls the Louis XV style, from the second half of the twentieth- century; the top part of the bureau hides a small compartment in the center with two small drawers on each side. Above the chest of drawers hangs a large gold-framed mirror from the end of the nineteenth century; an antique gilded copper clock rests on the top of the desk.

On the left under the first window, the first display case contains one hundred and eighty-eight pages of the original page proofs of *Il Gattopardo*, by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, stamped with the date June 12 1958, and the identifying seal of “Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, Ufficio Tecnico,” with corrections, numbering and comments by Giorgio Bassani. To the right of the above, dated July 28 1958, additional page proofs with corrections and comments by Bassani, among which a first page typewritten and a page on the back of which Bassani wrote: “The cover of the notebook on which, in the Author’s own handwriting, *il Gattopardo* was recopied,” and a copy of the last page on which Bassani wrote: “Last page of the *Gattopardo* manuscript” (pages framed that can be found to the left of the window that looks onto the display case).

Also in the display case are two hundred and thirteen pages of the original page proofs dated October 15 1958, and stamped “Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Ufficio Tecnico,” with a preface from pages 7 to 12; Giorgio Bassani’s preface to the volume, dated October 15 1958, in page proofs stamped “Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Ufficio Tecnico,” with corrections made by Bassani by hand. In addition, there is a copy of the first edition of *Il Gattopardo*, dated October 25 1958, printed in Milano, for the Biblioteca di letteratura series directed by Giorgio Bassani, I Contemporanei 4, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore. At the far right, Tomasi di Lampedusa’s original typewritten text of *Il Gattopardo*. Bassani often used to say: “After *Il Gattopardo*, here in Italy writing a novel has become much more difficult.” Various decorative porcelain and crystal eggs are spread throughout the display case.

On the left, under the second window, the second display case contains four “compusteria” notebooks handwritten throughout by Giorgio Bassani with the texts of the poems from *Epitaffio* (1973-1974) and *In Gran Segreto* (1976-1978). Small silver baskets filled with Murano glass hard candies that amused Bassani greatly are spread throughout the display case.

To the right of the second window, two oil paintings, *Paesaggio umbro* and *Natura Morta*, by Richard Piccolo, from the Nineties.

Facing the arch of the next passageway on the left, two prints, *Anfiteatro Flavio detto il Colosseo* (1778) and *Veduta di Cecilia Metella* (1778), both by Giovanni Battista Piranesi.

To the right of the passageway, a French-Empire-style bookcase, with two doors and bronze gilded columns and capitals with a collection of various American and European antique plates resting on top of the bookcase.

From the top left inside the bookcase, various silver-framed photographs:

§Giorgio Bassani with Rita Levi-Montalcini in Roma, at the Chiesa di Sant’Ivo, March 8 1980, for the conferring of the laurea *honoris causa* in Letters by Saint Mary’s College, Notre Dame, Indiana, USA.

§Giorgio Bassani with Portia Prebys in Piazza Navona, Rome, 1979.



§Bassani with Prebys in Ragusa, 1990.

§Bassani with Mario Soldati, at the Aula Magna of the Università di Ferrara, September 25 1992, on the occasion of the awarding of the laurea *honoris causa* in Natural Sciences to Bassani.

§Bassani stopping on a street in Rome to add text in the notebook he always carried with him.

§Bassani at the presentation of *Il Romanzo di Ferrara*, Roma, 1980.

Four porcelain custard cups, nineteenth-century Austrian MZ production.

Below, from the left:

§A silver framed photo of Beppino Minerbi with his bicycle along with Paolo Ravenna, taken in front of casa Ravenna in via Palestro a Ferrara, "... in atteggiamenti rispettivamente tipicissimi di loro due," according to Daniele Ravenna who donated this precious memento to the Centro Studi Bassaniani in 2016.

§A small frame on the left enclosing a handwritten dedication to Prebys by Bassani: "a P. / perché sappia come ero / dunque come sono / e mi ricordi per / sempre / così."

§Prebys in Ferrara, 1975.

§In the center, Bassani reading his own poetry at the Circolo degli Affari Esteri, in Rome, in the Nineties.

§Prebys with Bassani at the Thanksgiving banquet for her students, Hotel Tiziano, in Rome, 1980.

§The last photo on the right shows Bassani in Mina Ferri's villa garden, Città di Castello, 1999.

§The last photo on the right shows Bassani at Casa Bellonci; his dedication: "A Portia, nel giorno, / anzi nella sera, che celebra / i nostri primi dieci anni / di convivenza e d'amore. / Giorgio / Roma, Da Luigi, 9/2/1988 / (nella foto: io, Cassola, e Soldati, / probabilmente nel '56. B.)."

§*Testa di Mercurio*, bronze sculpture by Vincenzo Gemito (Napoli, 1852-1929).

Small decorative silver boats with *bonbons* in Murano glass.

Below, on the center shelf:

§An American silver *cocktail shaker* from the Fifties with three crystal "Manhattan" cocktail glasses.

§An American silver water pitcher.

§Photo in a malachite frame of Giorgio Bassani resting in Umbertide, on the terrace of Richard Piccolo's home, in the fall of 1998.

§Two English silver candlesticks with putto on a marble base, early Novecento.

§An American silver-covered chafing-dish.

§An Italian silver oval box with lid with a rose on top.

§Large round American silver serving platter with over-all engraved decoration.

§Nineteenth-century antique silver handbag frame, from the Prebys family home.

Below, as follows:

§Photo of Giorgio Bassani receiving the Premio Campiello in Venice, in 1969, for *L'airone*.

§Small light blue glass plate from Murano.

§An American pale pink Lenox vase in the shape of a basket with a white handle.

§A light green oval platter in Murano glass, in the shape of a fish containing decorative Murano glass eggs. Resting behind the platter is a white ostrich-feather fan with an ivory handle, late nineteenth-century.

§On the right, a photo of Giorgio Bassani in Ferrara, November 1961, with Beppe Minerbi and the Rettore of the Università di Ferrara, Giovanni Battista Dell'Acqua, to whom Bassani is illustrating his notebook he always carried with him containing part of the handwritten manuscript of the *Giardino*.

§Small low round light blue pressed glass vase from the nineteenth-century.

§Photo of Bassani on the jury for the Premio Montale, 1990.

Lastly:

§“Premio Città di Ferrara 2019 – Ippogrifo d'Oro” awarded to Portia Prebys on May 24 2019, by Mayor Tiziano Tagliani, in a ceremony held at Casa Minerbi, seat of the Centro Studi Bassaniani.

§Prebys family Chinese vase.

§Venini orange-colored jar with lid in Murano glass.

§Photo of Prebys with the Minister dei Beni, delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo, Dario Franceschini, at Villa Aurelia on the Janiculum Hill, on the occasion of the awarding of the laurea *honoris causa* in Scienze Umanistiche to the Minister by John Cabot University, in Roma, on May 19 2016, as “recognition for his important contribution to the democratic life of the Nation and for his commitment to the promotion of the Italian artistic patrimony.”

§Two peacock feather fans from India, gifts of Emanuela Ricciardi and Richard Piccolo.

§Photo of Bassani at the Premio Scanno, 1995.

On the wall to the right of the bookcase, top left, an aquaforte, *Veduta di una parte de' fondamenti del Teatro d Marcelllo* (1784), and below it, another, *Avanzi di un antico sepolcro, oggi detto la Canocchia* (1778), both by Giovanni Battista Piranesi.

Further to the right, on the entire wall facing the windows, hang the seventeen framed folios of the *Nuova Pianta di Roma* (1748), by Giambattista Nolli, originally from the Prebys home in Rome. Almost every morning while taking his cup of coffee in bed, Giorgio Bassani would look at (without eyeglasses!) the Nolli map with great attention, then, he would get up out of bed, he would choose a particular folio and draw close to it to point a finger at a particular area on it while announcing that as soon as he was up and dressed, he would go visit that place on foot, or by car – his very own personal way of staying in touch with the many quarters in the Eternal City.

At the center of the room is the dining table, extendible, in fruitwood, Biedermeier style from the Ottocento, with ebony and inlaid decorative details, with eight straightback chairs in the same Biedermeier style and decorative details, upholstered in wool with floral designs done by Prebys in needlepoint, from her home in Rome. The table sits on an oriental “Caucasico nuovo” carpet (192 x 132 cm.). At the center of the table is a large round plate in green Murano glass from the first half of the twentieth century that holds two Murano glass peppers, red and yellow, from the Bassani home from after the war.

Top right, a French-Empire-style bookcase with two doors, and columns with capitals in gilded bronze. On the top of the bookcase there are two antique English porcelain plates, five Chinese ginger jars from the Ottocento in various hues of blue with pewter lids.

To the left of the bookcase: *Pianta di Roma e del Campo Marzio. Clementi XIII Pontifici Maximo Promotori Bonarum Artium Eques Io. Bt. Piranesius Architectus*, by Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1774).

Inside the bookcase, top left:

§A set of Simone Cenedese handblown glasses, from Murano, made to order for Prebys for her family in the United States during her first visit to Venice in 1962.

§A light blue vase in Murano glass, Liberty style, from the Prebys family home.

§Cachepots in three sizes belonging to the Ginori Antico Doccia dinner service.

§Three Saint Louis French crystal wine carafes with gold etching.

Below, from the left corner, can be found:

§An antique French toy doll, in painted porcelain from the second half of the Settecento, dressed in ivory-colored satin, with an incorporated carillon rotation mechanism and a whistle on its ivory base.

§A Neapolitan Capodimonte vase with antique mythological figures in relief, from the beginning of the Novecento.

§Antique perfume bottles of which two are black and gold in Liberty style, one is clear Murano glass, and one is greygreen French Lalique crystal.

§A set of Simone Cenedese handblown glasses from Murano, gold-colored goblets with emerald-green stems.

§A set of dark red and green champagne flûtes from Murano.

§An antique dessert set in topaz-colored Bohemian crystal, with matching glasses and cakestand from the Prebys home.

§A coffee set in German porcelain, marked “F”, in white and lilac of which Bassani was very fond.

On the middle shelf:

§Italian Ginori Antico Doccia porcelain “Due galli,” with a small silver Italian coffee pot.

§A set of antique Meissen porcelain from the Prebys family home.

On the shelf below:

§Multicolored, gold-rimmed Richard Ginori Italian coffee cups and saucers with the production date stamped on the bottom of each cup and saucer: 1939.

§The Antico Doccia di Ginori porcelain dinner service in orange and gold preferred by Bassani.

On the bottom shelf:

§An antique dark blue English Wedgwood pitcher.

§Behind the pitcher, a Schumann Bavarian multi-flowered serving plate for sweets, stamped “Germany US Zone”, first half of the Novecento.

§Green Bohemian crystal bowl with handpainted floral decoration.

§Bright red antique American champagne goblets from the Prebys home.

§Typical *mise en place* with the favorite Antico Doccia by Ginori with American sterling silverware and Murano glassware, set on a French lace placemat.

§An American Lenox porcelain vase.

§French antique crystal cigarette holders in the form of a small bouquet of flowers.

To the right of the bookcase hangs a needlepoint bell pull embroidered by Prebys in green wool with a floral design.

## Salon

Entering, to the right are two portraits in pencil (1995), of Bassani and Prebys, by Richard Piccolo.

Entering, to the left in the first row, the prints represent: *Veduta di Villa Pamphilj Fuori di Porta S. Sebastiano* (1778), *Veduta delle Terme di Tito* (1778), e *Veduta delle Cascatelle a Tivoli* (1778), all by Giovanni Battista Piranesi.

Then, following:

§A pair of antique silk-embroidered landscapes from the Settecento, with antique walnut root frames, probably made in Bologna, from the Prebys family home.

§In the middle, a black and gold enamel-framed mirror, from the Ottocento.

§A second row of prints represent *Veduta del Pantheon di Agrippa oggi Chiesa di S. Maria ad Martire* (1778), *Veduta del Tempio Ottangolare di Minerva Medica* (1778), and *Veduta di Piazza Navona* (1778), all by Giovanni Battista Piranesi.

Below, in the two display cases:

§A photostatic copy of the notebooks containing the manuscript of *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini* that Bassani gave to a Venetian friend, Countess Teresa Foscari Foscolo (1916-2007) shortly before the publication of the novel:

Cara Teresa, senza il tuo aiuto  
“Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini” non  
sarebbe mai stato scritto. Desidero  
che questi quaderni restino per sempre  
con te.

Giorgio

Venezia, 17 dicembre 1961

[Translation: “Dear Teresa, without your help “The Garden of the Finzi-Continis” would never have been written. I want these notebooks to stay with you always. Giorgio, Venice, December 17 1961.]

§The original manuscript contained in five notebooks handwritten by the Author was then kept by the Countess in her home in Vienna and was donated by her grandson, Ferigo Foscari, in May 2016, to the Comune di Ferrara, and is now preserved at the Biblioteca Ariostea, in Ferrara.

§A typewritten copy of the text of the *Giardino* made by Bassani, with no corrections by hand by the Author. The first version of the novel carried the title *La casa sotto l'erba*.

§The two display cases also contain three colored American “lattimi;” two small Japanese trees made of jade; a Japanese bronze vase containing two Murano glass eggs; a Chinese sage in ivory; a jade Buddha; two Egyptian beetles; a Liberty-style silver folding pocketknife; a green-enameled letter opener from the Settecento; Austrian porcelain putti. In addition, there are two small photos of Bassani: one from the Sixties, the other from the Nineties.

Following, on the left wall, a very rare aquaforte *Veduta del prospetto principale della Colonna Trajana* (1774), by Giovanni Battista Piranesi.

Next is a sitting room area with an original, southern Italian, Louis Philippe divan “a barca,” in walnut root wood with inlay on its curved back, on its front strip and on its curved feet; with a pair of English wingback armchairs from the early Novecento, upholstered in red silk shantung. The silver-handled cane resting on the right one indicates Bassani’s favorite armchair. To the left of the divan is a tall, three-legged round table in rosewood, with a cloisonné disk illustrating mainly turquoise-colored flowers on the tabletop. The needlepoint throw pillows were embroidered in wool in floral designs by Prebys. The sitting room area rests on a restored antique “Kurdish vecchio” oriental carpet (455 x 150 cm.).

Above the divan, are the *Ritratto Doppio* of Bassani and Prebys (1995) by Richard Piccolo; the *Ritratto di Giorgio Bassani* (1953) by Carlo Levi; two *Ritratti* (1995) of Bassani by Richard Piccolo, both preparatory studies for the *Ritratto Doppio* described above; on the sides below, three *Ritratti*, also preparatory studies by Richard Piccolo for the *Ritratto Doppio*. All of the portraits are painted in oil. The decorative zebras made from a fusion of enamelled metal and gilded cloisonné are Chinese and date from the Ottocento.

Next on the wall is the very rare *Veduta del prospetto principale della Colonna Antonina* (1774) by Giovanni Battista Piranesi.

Donations made by the Liscia family - Dora, David and Claudio - children of Jenny Bassani, Giorgio’s sister, and her husband, Rodolfo Liscia, can be seen in the display case located immediately after the green divan.

From the top:

§Three antique oil lamps from the home of Cesare Minerbi in via della Ghiara. From the same home are the soup tureen, the gravy boat and serving plate here, all English antiques that show scenes of Ferrara. Minerbi kept his medical ambulatory in via delle Scienze, 8, at the end of via Giuoco del Pallone.

On the second shelf:

§A French dinner service, Opaque Sarre Guyemines, 1850, from the Minerbi home, with antique silverware initialed “DB” (Dora Bassani).

§The photo shows Cesare Minerbi with his wife, Emma Marchi, and their children, Giacomo, Carmen and Maso (about 1890).

On the third shelf:

§Porcelain hand-decorated by Jenny Bassani Liscia: a Christmas platter for *panettone*; two teacups with saucers in white porcelain painted blue with the initials “B” (Bassani) and “P” (Prebys) and scenes of Ferrara.

§Antique gilded porcelain vase dating from the Ottocento that depicts a young couple and a country home.

§A coffee service, in light blue and white porcelain with floral motifs, indicated as “nuova decorazione eseguita da R. Ginori 2598,” that belonged to Bassani’s mother, Dora.

§The elementary course book in philosophy by Carlo Cantoni from Milano, 1870, Volume I, for the “Ginnasio Comunale di Ferrara, pareggiato ai Regii,” second level prize won by “Minerbi Cesare, alunno della 5° Classe, per il suo profitto e la sua disciplina durante l’anno scolastico 1869-70.”

§A white linen hand towel from the Novecento with the initial “M” (Minerbi).

On the bottom:

§Various antique containers in tin and glass; a large white and blue ceramic cup and saucer, all belonging to Cesare Minerbi, with some of his laboratory instruments and medicine bottles of the period.

§A Chinese vase with lid in dark colors from the Bassani home after the war.

After the last display case on the left, on the wall are a series of photographs of the period donated to the Centro Studi Bassaniani by the Liscia family.

From the bottom:

§A portrait of Cesare Minerbi, Bassani’s maternal grandfather referred to earlier herein, and, above, his son, Giacomo Minerbi (Ferrara, 1886-1930, Ferrara), Dora’s brother and Giorgio’s uncle. Giacomo, graduated in Florence in 1909, was director of the Italian hospital in Alessandria, in Egypt, and in 1913 carried out an anti-malaria campaign in Dalaman; the following year, he served the Sovereign as his personal physician there and later was forced to flee from Constantinople when the Khedive was removed by the British. Back in Ferrara subsequently, as a medical officer, lieutenant in the infantry regiment, he was wounded in 1917 on Mount Vodice in Slovenia. Personal friend of the Ferrara Podestà, Renzo Ravenna, in 1922 he became docent of medical pathology there and in 1927, thanks to Italo Balbo, he assumed the position of Chief Physician of the hospital in Bassano del Grappa.

§Top right, Giacomo’s university class photo taken in Florence.

§Below, in the center, a portrait of aunt Egle Minerbi (Ferrara, 1873-1975, Ferrara), Cesare’s sister, done by her niece Dora, Giorgio’s mother. Egle’s mother died giving birth to Egle and she was sent to a wet-nurse who looked after lots of children. It was said that the wet-nurse had not nursed her and gave her only apples for which her growth was stunted. She died at the age of 102 with the reputation of having been bitter all her life for having always lived with her brother.

At the center:

§Drawn by Giacomo, Giorgio’s mother’s brother, the small portrait depicts Grandfather Cesare. Above, in the gilded oval frame, is a portrait of Jeni Hanau Bassani, David Bassani’s wife and Enrico Bassani’s mother. This antique oval frame still has on the back of it the label “D.B. Butler & Co., Pictures – Frames, Madison Chambers, 601 Madison Avenue, New York.”

§Photo of Enrico Bassani, Giorgio’s father.

Below:

§The last document on the right from April 1917 that accompanied a bronze medal awarded to Giacomo Minerbi declares: “A voi ufficiali che nel nome d’Italia e per la civiltà rinnovate gesta di antico valore i comitati e le delegazioni di Roma e di Torino per i doni ai combattenti della IV Armata auspicio di vittoria offrono segnato nel bronzo il simbolo che da XIX secoli ricorda il trionfo latino sui germani di arminio.” [“To you officers who in the name of Italy for renewed civilization feats of ancient values the committees and delegations of Rome and of Torino as gifts to the combatants of the IV Army hopeful of victory offer marked in bronze then symbol that for nineteen centuries recalls the Latin triumph over German militants.”].

Below the photographs, on an English, four-legged oval side-table, in mahogany, there are a large Venini amber-colored vase and fruit bowl made in Murano. The table rests on a “Bukhara pachistani” oriental carpet (170 x 130 cm.), all from the Prebys home.

To the right, a sculpture of a woman’s head in white marble from the beginning of the Novecento, atop a walnut pedestal, from the Bassani home after the war. Next to it, an Italian walnut armchair from the Ottocento, in the Luigi XV style, upholstered in topaz-colored wool needlepoint in a floral design embroidered by Prebys from her home in Rome.

On the wall above to the right, four platters from the antique French service of Opaque Sarre Guyemines (1850) from Cesare Minerbi’s home described above.

Facing the photos, in the large display case in front of the picture window onto the first courtyard, is the original manuscript of *Gli Occhiali d’Oro* (1956-1958), in three notebooks handwritten by Bassani. Also here is the typewritten manuscript of one hundred and three single pages of *L’Odore del Fieno* without corrections. Small French Lalique animals in colored crystal are interspersed between the pages of these manuscripts.

To the right of the large display case, is another containing many first editions of Bassani’s works. On the top shelf is a small white glass vase, a copy of one found in Pompeii in the early excavations. From the left:

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Cinque storie ferraresi*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 1956; dedica: “a Gianni Venturi, / con l’affetto del suo / Giorgio Bassani / Ferrara, 7/5/1993.”

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 15 novembre 1962, with book jacket.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 9 febbraio 1962; dedica: “a Francesco Guzzinati, / il mio caro compagno / di banco, il suo / Giorgio / Ferrara, 29.3.1973.”

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Gli occhiali d’oro*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 1958.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Te Lucis Ante*, Ubaldini, Editore in Roma, 1947; dedica: “a G.B. Angioletti, / devoto omaggio di / Giorgio Bassani / Roma, 28.12.48.”

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 9 febbraio 1962, with book jacket.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 30 aprile 1962, terza edizione, with book jacket.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 8 agosto 1962, quarta edizione, with book jacket (two copies).

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Milano, 16 settembre 1972, sedicesima edizione, with book jacket.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 30 aprile 1962, terza edizione; dedica: “Montecatini, 21/31 agosto 1962, a Silvia De Luca, / in ricordo di / Giorgio Bassani/ Roma, 25.1.’63.”

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Storie dei poveri amanti e altri versi*, Astrolabio, Roma, 1945.

On the second shelf, a medal with an icon of Saint George with a gilded frame, from Assisi:

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Dietro la porta*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 1964, with book jacket.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Epitaffio*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, 1974, with book jacket.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *L'alba ai vetri. Poesie 1942 – '50*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 1963, with book jacket.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Cinque storie ferraresi*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 1956.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *La passeggiata prima di cena*, Sansoni, Firenze, 1953, with book jacket.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Una notte del '43*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 17 settembre 1960.

§Betti, Laura. *Giro a vuoto, canzoni di L. Antonioni, Arbasino, Bassani, C. Cederna, Flaiano, Fortini, Mauri, Moravia, Negri, Parise, Pasolini, Patti, Soldati*, All'Insegna del Pesce d'Oro, Milano, 1960, copia n. 374.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Gli ultimi anni di Clelia Trotti*, Nistri-Lischi Editori, Pisa, 1955, with book jacket.

On the third shelf, a small cross with a gilded frame, from Assisi:

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Le parole preparate e altri scritti di letteratura*, Giulio Einaudi editore s. p. a., Torino, 1966, with book jacket.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *In gran segreto*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., Milano, marzo 1978.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il Romanzo di Ferrara – I: Dentro le mura*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, ottobre 1973.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *L'airone*, Romanzo, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, ottobre 1968, with book jacket.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Di là dal cuore*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., Milano, aprile 1984, with book jacket.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Le storie ferraresi*, Giulio Einaudi editore S. p. A., Torino, 1960, with book jacket.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *L'odore del fieno*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, marzo 1972, with book jacket.

On the fourth shelf, a French Lalique crystal sculpture of a young woman; a French Lalique crystal sculpture of a fish diving; two Japanese polychrome vases:

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il romanzo di Ferrara*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, 1990.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *In rima e senza*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, 1982; dedica: “a Portia, from (by) / her / Tiger / Roma, 1dicembre 1982.”

§Bassani, Giorgio. *The Novel of Ferrara*, translated by Jamie Aciman, W.W. Norton & Company, New York / London, 2018.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Il romanzo di Ferrara*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, ottobre 1974.

§Voltaire. *Vita privata di Federico II*, translation by Giorgio Bassani, Atlantica Editrice, Rome, 1945, copy of *La vita di Federico II*, De Voltaire (pseudonym of François-Marie



Arouet); original title: *La vie privée du roi de Prusse ou Mémoires pour servir à la vie de M. de Voltaire écrits par lui même.*); the first modern edition (Edizioni Studio Tesi srl, Pordenone, 1988) faithfully carries over the lesson from the first edition.

§Bassani, Giorgio. *Opere*, I Meridiani, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., Milano, maggio 1998, with slipcase.

On the fifth shelf, a red Japanese cup with white lining, with Murano glass balls inside:

§Bassani, Giorgio & Soldati, Mario. *Venise. Des saisons*, photos Gianni Berengo Gardin, La Guilde de Livre et les Editions Clairfontaine, Lausanne, 1965.

§Bassani, Giorgio & Soldati, Mario. *Venedig. Stadt auf 118 Inseln*, photos Gianni Berengo Gardin, La Guilde de Livre et les Editions Clairfontaine, Lausanne, Josef Keller Verlag, Starnberg, 1965.

§Italia da Salvare and Centro Di eds. *Art & landscape of Italy, too late to be saved?*, STIAV, Florence, January 1972; “Foreword” by Giorgio Bassani.

§Colombo, Lanfranco, ed. *Venezia muore*. “Presentazione” di Giorgio Bassani, Casa Editrice Il Diaframma S.a.s., Milano, 1970.

§Buonarroti, Michelangelo. *Le rime*, edited by Mario Luzi; *La pittura*, edited by Alessandro Parronchi; *La scultura*, edited by Alessandro Parronchi; *I disegni e l'architettura*, edited by Alessandro Nocentini; Nardini Editore – Centro Internazionale del Libro S. p. A. & Giunti Marzocco S. p. A., Firenze, 1975, with slipcase.

Between the display cases is a Tuscan walnut divan “a barca,” from the Ottocento, upholstered in red and beige striped velvet.

On the right, a display case containing photos of Bassani. From the top left:

§Bassani with Vincenzo Cicognani, in Venice.

§Bassani in the Fifties in the old Hebrew cemetery at the Lido in Venice, founded in 1386, near the Church of San Nicolò.

§Paolo Bassani, the Author's brother, e Paolo's wife, Valeria, on their wedding day, July 24 1956, in Bologna.

§Photo of Giorgio Bassani: *Cinque storie ferraresi*, “I coralli” pp. 265, Einaudi bibliographical sketch, n. 28, May 1956.

§Bassani with American university students strolling through Ferrara, in the early Nineties.

§Enrico Bassani, father of the Author.

§On the right, Bassani at a conference.

On the second shelf:

§In the back, three photos of Bassani with Pier Paolo Pasolini.

§On the right, an extract from “Roma, Winter '44, (pages from an unpublished diary)”, with the dedication: “alla Jenny e a Rodolfo, ricordo di G., Roma, settembre 1966.”

§In the center, Bassani in the courtyard of the Bassani home in via Cisterna del Follo, 1, in Ferrara, together with his brother, Paolo, and sister, Jenny, 1938.

§On the left, Bassani with Pier Paolo Pasolini and Natalia Ginzburg, in Rome, circa 1960.

§Giorgio Bassani as a university student, in his study at home, in Ferrara, on the ground floor.

§On the left, the Premio Ferrara medal.

§In the center, Dora Bassani, the Author's mother, at home, in via Cisterna del Follo, in Ferrara, early Eighties.

§Bronze prize medal of the Associazione Porta Saracena of the Comune di Segni (Rome); on the front edge is written “Associazione Porta Saracena”; on the back, “Signia Civitas prima Romanorum colonia.”

On the third shelf, from right to left:

§Tor Margana Prize 1974 for Giorgio Bassani, prize-sculpture by Roberto Ruta (Tulcea, 1912-1994, Roma), in gilded silver.

§Photo of Bassani seated in front of the frescoes at Casa Minerbi, during a visit to Beppe Minerbi, in the Seventies.

§Villa d’Este Prize, Città di Tivoli, 1983 for Giorgio Bassani, Associazione Culturale Tiburtina, awarded in Tivoli on January 24 1984.

§Photo of Bassani, at Umbertide, at the home of Richard Piccolo, 1995.

§Metal replica from the Fifties of the Statue of Liberty at the port entry to New York City, gift of Massimo De Paolis, and, in front of it, a decorative gilded metal box.

§Two photos of Bassani reading out loud “Il Prologo” to the *Giardino*, at the home of Antonella Savarese Vigeveno and Carlo Vigeveno, at the Castello di Santa Severa, on October 17 1998; dedication of their copy of the *Giardino*: “ad Antonella e Carlo / oggi, al Castello di Santa / Severa, tutti insieme, / in Allegría e amicizia. / Santa Severa 17/10/98 / Giorgio Bassani.”

§On the right, photo of Bassani receiving a laurea *honoris causa* from Saint Mary’s College, Notre Dame, in a ceremony at Sant’Ivo in Rome, March 8 1980.

§Honorary bronze plaque from the City of Verona.

§Honorary bronze plaque from the Province of Milano.

§In the center, Bassani walking through Ninfa, in the Nineties.

At the bottom:

§In a blue and gold leather box, a set of coasters with views of Rome by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, gift from the Italian Chamber of Deputies, in Rome.

§On the left, a group photo of soldiers from the First World War; the first soldier on the left is the Author’s father, Medical Lieutenant Dr. Angelo Enrico Bassani, Direzione Sezione Sanità 17, IX, Army Corp, 1916.

§To the left towards the front, the prize medal from the Premio Internazionale San Valentino d’Oro di Terni (on the front, along the border is written “Premio Internazionale San Valentino d’Oro. Terni;” the plaque below carries the name “Giorgio Bassani”).

§Decorative blue disc of petrified wood.

On the right in the second large display cabinet in front of the picture window that gives onto the first courtyard are:

§The original handwritten manuscript of *L’airone* (1965-1968), in three notebooks; various small Japanese perfume bottles and tiny wooden ducks.

§Page proofs corrected by Giorgio Bassani when the novel still carried the title *Natura morta*, with a dedication to Beppe Minerbi, and the change of citation from *Ulysses* to a phrase by Lee Masters: “It takes life to love Life” from the poem *Lucinda Matlock* (1915), from the *Antologia di Spoon River*, translation by Fernanda Pivano, Collana Universale, Giulio Einaudi Editore, Torino, 1943.

§A second page of page proofs bearing the title *L'airone*, with a citation by Arthur Rimbaud, the final choice for the publication: “Elle est retrouvée. / Quoi? / L'éternité,” da *Une saison en enfer suivi de Illuminations et autres textes*, Pierre Brunel, Éditeur, Paris, 1873-1875.

§A small booklet with fifty-three pages, indicated as *Bozze di Stampa*, by Sodalizio del Libro, with no formal title or publishing information, that contains part of the text of *L'airone* with abundant corrections by Giorgio Bassani.

Leaving the room, to the left on the wall, two portraits of Bassani (1995, 1998) by Richard Piccolo. Next to them on the wall, a beige needlepoint bell pull in wool with floral designs embroidered by Prebys.

## Archives

To the left, above the file cabinets, an original poster from the Lorenzo Viani exposition organized by the Fondazione Premi Roma per le Arti, held at Palazzo Barberini, in Rome, in June 1955. Viani was one of Bassani's favorite artists.

On the right, the poster announcing the tribute in Reggio Emilia on March 24 1990 for Italia Nostra's twenty-fifth anniversary (1965-1990), and Bassani's twenty-five years of service to the Association.

High at the far end of the room, is an aquaforte, *Pianta di Villa Adriana a Tivoli*, with a dedication to S. M. Stanislao Augusto King of Poland (1838), by Francesco Piranesi.

On the right, just before the passageway to the last room, the memorial poster distributed by the City of Ferrara, in white and black, with a photo, announcing Bassani's death, from April 2000: “Ferrara extends its final salute to our poet and friend, Giorgio Bassani.”

## Library

The library of the Centro Studi Bassaniani has some 6,000 volumes, in various languages, available to the visitor and the scholar for consultation, the same choice of archival materials available to Bassani and Prebys at their home, in Roma. There are volumes on archeology, architecture, and art, on geography and history, and on American and European literature. The file cabinets contain copies of Giorgio Bassani's works along with more than 5,000 articles from books, newspapers, magazines and journals about Bassani's life and work, from 1935 to the present, in 18 languages, catalogued in *La bibliografia delle opere di Giorgio Bassani*, Volume I, e *La memoria critica su Giorgio Bassani*, Volume II, edited by Portia Prebys, Edisai srl, Ferrara, 2010, with addendas. There are also some 2,000 catalogued photographs relating to Bassani and his life. This bibliographical material is available for consultation on request *in situ* by visitors and scholars.

After having published six narrative works about Ferrara  
I realized I had written a single book. ...I arrived at a sort of  
fictional poem of almost a thousand pages. As far as its  
extensiveness is concerned – take note, extensiveness – I like  
to compare it to the *Odyssey*, to *War and Peace*. I spent my



with the people around him, asking about customs in the area, the most convenient stores, the closest square. In this way, Giorgio participated in Roman life, the daily life he chose, that he really desired, his very own personal amusement, source, then, of the day's thoughts and meditation. This was his search for reality, for the truth, immediate and innovative. This exercise in living spread out over two or three days of the week, in winter as in summer, going outside Rome for the day, towards the south or towards the north, to search for Nature that symbolized, in Italy, for him, History and Art, both of which he admired and loved: hill towns, forgotten monuments, abandoned castles, deserted beaches that remind us of whom we are despite modern progress. He said in that same interview with Rattazzi: "A country that destroys its own monuments cuts itself off from the past and loses its identity. And a country that treats its monuments with the same perfunctory care that is given the aging – because it wouldn't look nice if we killed them – is not a civilized country"<sup>5</sup>. He never stopped his own highly personal, eternal search for the truth.

Giorgio loved having company at meals, outside, in the open air, or at home, and it is for this reason that at the Centro Studi Bassaniani we have tried to reproduce the ambience in which he liked to stay seated at the table to enjoy his view of the Tiber and his guests. He used to chat at home, at dinner, at least twice a week with his brother, Paolo, and Paolo's wife, Valeria, with their sister, Jenny, when she used to come to Rome from Florence, with his friends, Attilio Bertolucci and his wife, Ninetta, Mario Soldati, Giulio Cattaneo and his wife, Cecilia. Giorgio did not speak much in company, but he never lost the thread of the conversation that he had attentively followed. He loved to recite, canto after canto, from the *Divine Comedy*, by heart. A well-set, old-fashioned table with silver, china and crystal amused him greatly and he expected it every single day. These rites were important in our household. Giorgio ate little, everything in moderation; before dinner, he would sip a thimble of whiskey, J&B, with ice, in a short, wide glass, "where a man's friend can navigate." At dinner, he rarely tasted wine, he would drink half a Ceres beer. He did have, however, a sweet tooth.

Everyday practical details bored Giorgio terribly: he would go out to purchase, at most, a measure of coffee, his Tuscan cigars, a perfumed bar of soap; he would go to the bank when he absolutely had to. Quizzing him about how much a liter of milk cost, or a chilo of bread or apples, was to do him a terrible wrong and this lack of practicality of his was used against him in the last years of his life. How other people carried out their day was of no interest to him whatsoever, just as he did not care at all about things, objects, so-called material goods. (I have always wondered if a person forced to get up on any given day, in the fall of 1943, to leave home in a hurry abandoning his or her existence behind the door because of racial laws and what followed them, were immune to the desire to possess anything, to own something). He liked two or three ties, in particular, two wool scarves, a few photographs, a couple of pipes, and his dark leather cigar holder. He would look after the future of his writings, defining his wishes always with a lively will, firm, decisive, for one single volume, *The Novel of Ferrara*, even in pocket format, with his literary agent. (He never shared the idea of his «novel» divided into two volumes and sold in a slip box<sup>6</sup>). Living his day did not include modern consumerism in any way.

Giorgio never showed his judgment of people, it was not a habit of his, he never pronounced malice, not even privately. At most, after having met someone whom he did not take a liking to, he would comment: «What a pity he did not complete his regular formal studies». Sometimes, finding himself at receptions, or meeting where admirers would come up to greet him, speaking of this and that, a bit embarrassed because of his stance, they would ask him:

“What are you writing now, professor?” Giorgio who hated being interviewed, would look them straight in the eyes and ask: “If Dante were here today, would you have asked him what he was writing?” He intended to say that he had already completed his masterpiece, the work of a lifetime, *The Novel of Ferrara*, and now it was time to leave him in peace.

2. In the Prologue of *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, Giorgio Bassani, as so very few times in his writings, specifically informs us that “the impulse, the push” to write about the Finzi-Continis had come to him a year earlier, “a Sunday in April of 1957,”<sup>7</sup> during “one of our usual weekend trips,” along with a small group of friends, they were on their way to Santa Marinella, north of the Eternal City, a beach town on the Tyrrhenian Sea, easily reached on the Aurelia, dear to Romans in that it was only an hour away by car<sup>8</sup>. Bassani used to go there whenever he could – on a free afternoon, a free day or weekend – to take advantage of the silence there and the absolute tranquillity for writing.

In April of 1957, Bassani was living an intense and very rich period of editorial and literary production, managing at the same time, a front row seat on the intellectual scene. At the beginning of that month, as Editor, he had handed over proofs of his nineteenth number of *Botteghe Oscure*, the literary review edited together with Marguerite Caetani, since 1948. That number XIX Spring 1957, with an astonishing 595 pages, offered a complex variety of prose and poetry in English, French, German and Italian, by American, Austrian, British, Danish, French, Italian and German authors, that included a theatrical piece in one act, in English, by René Char, entitled *The Man Who Walked in a Ray of Sunshine*<sup>9</sup>, a short story, *A Country Tale*, by Isak Dinesen<sup>10</sup>, besides *Fourteen Letters* from Henry James to Henry Brewster<sup>11</sup>, and *New and Old Unpublished Poems* by Carlo Betocchi<sup>12</sup>. Besides, he amused himself translating and publishing the poems of René Char<sup>13</sup> and of Paul Jean Toulet<sup>14</sup>. This anniversary volume concluded ten years of publication.

A few times a week, Bassani would go to Palazzo Caetani, in via delle Botteghe Oscure, to consult with the seventy-seven-year-old Princess about the editorial choices of the review, or else, he went to Ninfa, historical medieval property belonging to the Caetanis, below Sermoneta, in the shadow of the Lepini Mountains. The noted garden at Ninfa represented for Bassani his earthly paradise, idyllic and perfect. The choice of works to include in the already famous literary review was based on Caetani’s premise: «I live with the belief that the artist is the most important person alive.»<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, he was working intensely on his short novel, *The Gold-Rimmed Spectacles*<sup>16</sup>, negotiating its publication in *Nuovi Argomenti* with Alberto Moravia, but, in the end, he opted towards publication in *Paragone-Letteratura*, non wanting to do without the generous offer of payment on their part; he decided to accept the proposal and conceded the preview of his celebrated *Spectacles* to the Florentine review.

An important debate lasting for months that year centered on the question: “Does Italian society have the courage to represent itself in cinema?” Considered an expert on the subject after having worked many years in cinema and having written a dozen or so scripts, Bassani, interviewed more than once, maintained that “a sincere and truthful representation of our epoch: this only can we writers give to cinema. Truth is always educational: I am against educational conformism”<sup>17</sup>. A conference of the Centro Studi dell’Anica, «Meetings among writers», (Soldati, Pratolini, Zavattini, Bernari, Pasolini, Ungaretti, Blasetti), towards the end of the year, had the purpose of recalling writers to their function of representing contemporary society and expressing judgment on it. Bassani affirmed that: “literature is not



making a good copy: it is feeling more deeply”; he felt a collaboration among writers possible “on the level of sincerity and truth, and not on the level of conformism.”<sup>18</sup>

With great passion, he continued teaching history of the theatre to student actors and directors studying in Rome at the National Academy of Dramatic Art “Silvio D’Amico” where he went most mornings. In the afternoons, he consulted for the Giangiacomo Feltrinelli publishing house, with offices in via Arenula, near Largo Argentina, in downtown Rome. As editorial director, he was extremely satisfied examining numerous translations and manuscripts, seeing them to publication.

Bassani, at this point, shows he knows how to weave together in the same period of time the threads of all of his activities – writing, editing, criticism and teaching – developing and maintaining personal contacts in all of these fields, contacts that were the fruit of years of continuous approaches – almost an apprenticeship – to and in European and extra-European culture, on all levels. Few people know that Bassani, in these years, to broaden his own horizons, assiduously attends the international meetings of the PEN Club to find himself in the period immediately after the war, politically and intellectually, together with colleagues who shared the same vision of reality, happy to debate it all together in the hopes of offering valid alternatives after living through a twenty-year period of totalitarianism and war.

PEN is a pleasing acronym, not at all hermetic, for “poets, essayists, novelists” in English, “poètes, essayistes, narrateurs” in French, an abbreviation that also means «pen» in English. Word and abbreviation reflect the origin of the organization, in England, in 1921, thanks to the poet Catherine Amy Dawson-Scott (1865-1934), and they are easily recognizable in many languages worldwide. The libertarian, John Galsworthy, is elected the first President of the English Club; English intellectuals react to the horrors of the Great War by trying to break out of isolation and create an international pacifist society for writers<sup>19</sup>.

The PEN Clubs reunite writers from all over the world in various PEN national organizations, that meet annually in a congress, to discuss some of the more relevant literary themes. This habit has always made the PEN Club an important organization in that it allows writers and men of letters from every tendency and nationality to shake hands, to integrate the ideal knowledge that one has of the other through books at a real, tangible meeting, worldwide. The Italian section was founded in 1922 by the Roman, Lauro de Bosis, together with Tommaso Gallarati Scotti (signer, later, of his family friend’s, Croce’s, *Manifesto degli intellettuali antifascisti*), Enzo Ferrieri, Corrado Govoni from Ferrara (who changes sides politically after the Germans shot his son Aladino for antifascist activities, at the Fosse Ardeatine, in Rome, in March of 1944), Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.

In 1945, Ignazio Silone reorganizes the Italian Club with a prestigious steering committee: Maria Bellonci, Goffredo Bellonci, Libero De Libero, Mario Praz, Lionello Venturi, Mario Vinciguerra, Antonio Russi, and, later, from 1947 onward, Umberto Morra di Lavriano. In 1947, the International PEN Congress, dominated by the presence of Thomas Mann, met in Zurich; Italians present: Ignazio Silone, Guido De Ruggiero, Mario Praz, Diego Valeri, Luigi Magnani. In Copenhagen, in 1948, they discuss the theme: “Prose in various countries of the world,” the Italian delegate present: Bonaventura Tecchi. Bassani admires the efforts of these friends and colleagues whom he knows well, he carefully follows the political and literary developments, he speaks about them even with Croce.

Long hoped for as a venue Venice, the lagoon city, hosted the XXI PEN International Congress from September 10 to 16, 1949, with five hundred participants at the Ca' Giustiniani where they discussed: "Criticism: literary, musical and pertaining to the figurative arts." Giorgio Bassani was present at the inaugural ceremony along with Sibilla Aleramo, Luciano Anceschi, Giovan Battista Angioletti, Rosario Assunto, Gabriele Baldini, Maria Bellonci, Libero Bigiaretti, Carlo Bo, Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, Giacomo Debenedetti, Galvano Della Volpe, Giansiro Ferrata, Francesco Flora, Anna Garofalo, Francesco Jovine, Erich Käestner, Emanuele Lisi, Luigi Longa, Roberto Longhi, Oreste Macri, Paula Masino, Alberto Moravia, Umberto Morra di Lavriano, Aldo Palazzeschi, Guido Piovene, Vasco Pratolini, Mario Praz, Salvatore Quasimodo, Luigi Russo, Ignazio Silone, Bonaventura Tecchi, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Diego Valeri, Lionello Venturi, Renzo Vespignani, Giorgio Vigolo and many others. The entire Italian intellectual and literary world was present. Conspicuously absent: Benedetto Croce, then eighty-four, semi-paralyzed by a cerebral ictus.

In Venice, Roberto Longhi expresses in his own presentation, "Proposals for art criticism," the idea that the first duty of an intellectual today is to place the figurative arts and literature on the same level: poetry "in words," and art "in figures," and not only in Italy. His contribution becomes then the opening article for his new review, *Paragone*<sup>20</sup>.

In 1952, the financial report lists payments to Bassani and others for their participation in the World Congress in Nice, from June 15 to 19. For the XXVI World Congress in Amsterdam, from June 20 to 26, 1954, PEN again reimburses Bassani for his participation. They all meet in Vienna in 1955, in London in 1956, in Frankfurt in 1959, from July 19 to 25; Bassani's participation is again reimbursed; Alberto Moravia is elected International President. In the second year of Moravia's presidency, from July 23 to August 1 of 1960, the Italian delegation includes Elsa Morante, Umberto Morra, Mario Praz and Gino de Sanctis whose participation is guaranteed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their travel to Brazil; they visit Rio de Janeiro, San Paolo, Brasilia, Ouro Preto, Bahia, Recife, Curitiba, Belo Horizonte, Iguassu, Sete Quedas.

The group listed above, composed of people of letters that met often even though they were not always in agreement on questions of a political and literary nature, had been together at the Strega Prize on July 14 when Carlo Cassola won with *La ragazza di Bube*. Bassani had just published with Einaudi his *Stories of Ferrara* and was finishing *Una notte del '43*. At the same time, Moravia was preparing the proofs for *La Noia* with which he won, in 1961, the Viareggio Prize. The arrival of the Italian delegation at the Congress coincided with the growing diffusion of Italian culture abroad.

Think only about Fellini's film, *La dolce vita*, distributed in Europe and in the United States, in the spring and summer of 1960, and about the first translation into English of *Il Gattopardo* in the same year. It is difficult to imagine today the importance that the International PEN Club exercised in the literary world and elsewhere, in 1960.

At the end of January 1957, a colleague at work from the period in which Bassani used to write film scripts, a friend of Ennio Flaiano's, Fabrizio Sarazani, published in *Il Messaggero*<sup>21</sup>, a very long and highly detailed article entitled "Assisting at the opening of an Etruscan tomb in Cerveteri," with sensational photos and sub-titles that intrigued Bassani who already frequented Cerveteri, Santa Marinella and the Santa Severa Castle. Broad coverage of this discovery was also published in other national papers. A new tomb, from the sixth century BC, the period in which Cerveteri enjoyed the maximum splendor of its civilization, was found at Monte Abbatone, in Cerveteri. The famous excavation Director at



Cerveteri, Mario Moretti, in person, was overseeing this discovery of vases and amphoras and who knows what and how many other priceless treasures. Everyone was talking about it, charmed by the novelty.

Bassani certainly did know the history of the Etruscans from the classical studies carried out under his beloved professor, Francesco Viviani, at the Ariosto Lyceum, in Ferrara. About those studies, he said: “And so I shone most in Latin and Greek orals (after the initial skirmish Guzzo [Viviani] started to like me: reading Homer and Herodotus – above all Herodotus – it was almost always to me that he turned to obtain, as he used to say ‘the exact translation’)”<sup>22</sup>. He was fascinated by the story of Herodotus (Greek historian of the V century BC, Halicarnassus, 484 BC –Thurii, after 430 BC) who speaks about the characteristics of non-Greek peoples on the peninsula (*Histories*, I, 94) and the destiny of the Tyrrhenians, followers of the son of king Atys, Tyrrhenian, forced to emigrate to the Umbrians because of a serious famine. Strabo, Greek historian and geographer of the first century BC, completes the story of Herodotus, calling these colonists Etruscans, and indicating that the Romans used to call them Tuscians. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Greek historian of the first century BC, disproved the thesis of Herodotus in the first book of *Roman antiquities* (I, 9) basing himself on their linguistic differences; he maintained that Caere was the most prosperous and populated city in Etruria. Finally, he admired Livy, Roman historian contemporary of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who recognized the twelve cities of the Etruscans, located between the two seas, beyond the Po as far as the Alps (*Histories* V, 33, 7-11).

To get Giorgio to accompany me to the movies was an almost impossible undertaking. If I insisted a great deal to see a film that everyone was talking about, perhaps, he would bear with me, in the end. We would go to the movie theatre in the late afternoon, we would always sit in the first three rows up front, and after a couple of minutes, but I underline exactly two minutes after the beginning of the film, he would pull out his pocket watch to check the time; if it were very dark inside the movie theatre, he would light up his “BIC” lighter for cigars to help him see the time better. He would grumble out loud: “too many close-ups.” He would again look at his watch, then, within five minutes, we would leave, with no comment whatsoever. He could not even imagine wanting to look at a film on the television.

Bassani had collaborated on the drawing up of about a dozen film scripts around 1950, for a few thousand pages (he was considered a genius for dialogue in the Roman world of cinema!). He declared: “I do not remember any one of those pages: and not because I had written them without commitment (hope you will believe me), but for the simple reason that they did not have any deliberate minimal autonomous value<sup>23</sup>.” He used to admit, however, that the work of script-writer was useful for his literature, that the experience forced him to get out of his shell, to express himself completely on the page. He affirmed: “Writing for the cinema, doing a job so different from that of a writer, I realized fundamentally that the writer, to express himself, has no other means at his disposal than the word and punctuation. Nothing else<sup>24</sup>.”

One could not mention the name of Vittorio De Sica at home: if by chance someone spoke about him on television, Giorgio would shut off the set and leave the room. You will remember that the novel, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, came out at the end of February 1962, and was presented for the first time, in Ferrara, at the Casa di Stella dell’Assassinio. Already in 1963, Bassani had sold the rights for the film, for the highest sum ever paid in Italy, in that period, to a writer, for the rights to a literary work. He agreed to assist with the

drawing up of the film script with Vittorio Bonicelli for Valerio Zurlini's Documenta film company. Early on, Bassani, after years of non-comprehension and misunderstandings, realized that the Documenta film company had no intention of respecting his vision and his contributions and he requested that his name be removed from the project, above all, when Vittorio De Sica was called, in 1970, to resolve the question, once and for all, with yet a fourth film script. The two had known each other for some time, but Bassani detested De Sica personally for his lifestyle and his politics. Older by a generation, and with a much more extroverted temperament than the reservedness always exhibited by Bassani, the seventy-year-old personified absolute superficiality, for Giorgio, with, in addition, an extremely vulgar taste for melodrama. They would meet socially, in the Sixties, at Carlo Ponti's and Sophia Loren's "Villa Sara", in Marino, where De Sica felt at home. Often accompanied by his friend, Mario Soldati, Bassani appreciated the vast art collection located in the villa: 156 first-class quality paintings, including a few by Francis Bacon, one of Bassani's favorites.

Bassani viewed the film in its entirety, for the first time, in November of 1970, along with the judge after he took the producers to court to have his name removed from the film. The film was shown, in preview, on December 2 1970, in Jerusalem, in the presence of the Prime Minister, Golda Meir, who was seated next to Vittorio De Sica. Israeli press reaction was emotional and sentimental. Two days later, the film came out in Italy. Few people know that, after a few days, Bassani published a kind of apologia in *L'Espresso* on December 6 1970<sup>25</sup>, in which he objected to the extreme liberties with which his characters were treated, above all, the portrait of his father, whose destiny in a concentration camp contrasts totally with his destiny described in the novel. There is no room for misunderstanding the pungent and bitter tone of the article entitled "The Garden Betrayed," in defense of himself: Bassani had received a serious moral and spiritual wrong. In fact, today, every showing of the film, worldwide, carries as a subtitle to the film, the phrase "freely taken from the novel." Bassani won, but it was of little importance at that point.

In Paris, the film came out on December 8 and, in New York, on December 16 of 1971, at the Plaza. Every newspaper article, in all languages, spoke exclusively about De Sica; in 1972, he won the Oscar for the best foreign film. Bassani never gave up demonstrating his intellectual indignation about the matter. "A script-writer doesn't express himself in a script, he is not a creator. A director expresses himself when he creates visually. I knew all this when I sold the rights of my book. I sold them without reserves. The objections I made afterwards were not of an aesthetical kind but of a moral kind. Because they charged me, as a private citizen, with a story that is not mine, as a script-writer I cannot sign it. In fact, as it came out, I did not write the script"<sup>26</sup>. He always underlined the fact that the film and not the book speaks about him in the first person: "You see, the film, instead of the book, is about me: the character's name is Giorgio, the scenes in his house were shot in my own house, in Ferrara; a house which was my great-grandfather's, then my grandfather's, and now is mine. In the book, on the contrary, that 'I' is used in its lyrical translation, in its absolute value, the way Marcel Proust uses it. Micòl never existed, the garden itself does not exist. In the film my father dies in Buchenwald, but my father did not die in Buchenwald, he died in his own bed. If the film was going to stick to reality so much, how could I sign a script where I played with the life and death of my own father? I would have been ashamed of myself"<sup>27</sup>. The antagonism between Bassani and De Sica never died.

Bassani always denied wanting to work on the film version of the novel. He says: "The language of image does not interest me. I do not understand how a poet in words can change level and be active in another kind of art. Every artist loves his medium, he is tied by a

certain sensuality to his own medium. The written word makes me shiver, this is an emotion the camera cannot give me. I am tied by my own medium. I used my book as I would have used somebody else's book. I wrote the script seeing myself as a craftsman, a craftsman with a certain taste"<sup>28</sup>.

Poet? Artist? Artisan? Bassani clearly distinguishes with passion his art from that of the script writer: "If I was only and totally an artist, how could I live? I could not take care of practical things: I could not go to a bank, I could not take a train. An artist cannot wish to be only an artist. If he doesn't tend to the opposite, he cannot be an artist. An artist cannot resign himself to Art: Art is pure beauty, Art is pure contemplation. Art is useless. The artist wants to be an extraordinary lover, a warrior, a politician, a perfect father. But he fails. The echo of this strain will give to the Art of this unfortunate man the warmth that distinguishes poetry from pure Art"<sup>29</sup>.

As an artist, Bassani cannot participate actively in real life, he never completely belongs to it as he lives beyond life. He arrives at the garden, and therefore at non-existence and he yearns for it: "Art is the opposite of life, but it has nostalgia for life, and it is precisely because it feels this nostalgia that art is real. The artist is separated from life in the present in that he prefers to explain himself in order to reflect upon it, and he is separated from it by time lived, by the past. I recognize myself in the verbal tense of the perfect, the imperfect, the indefinite past perfect. And even in the present of poetry. As far as the future is concerned, it is a purely grammatical tense, for beasts"<sup>30</sup>.

3. The Centro Studi Bassaniani is located in the historical center of Ferrara, in the Casa Minerbi-Del Sale, in via del Giuoco del Pallone, 15-17, at the back of the famous Biblioteca Ariostea, in via delle Scienze, 17, an area of Ferrara that was urbanized beginning in the tenth century. The Minerbi family appears in the city already in 1205<sup>31</sup>. This vast building complex of medieval origin was the property of the Minerbis beginning in the nineteenth century, and of the City of Ferrara since 1995. Now, despite the terrible earthquakes that took place in Emilia-Romagna in 2012, this marvelous jewel today houses city multicultural entities after many years of conservational restoration and consolidation work.

A long-time close local friend of Bassani and his family, (Giorgio dedicated *The Heron* to him in 1968), Giuseppe Minerbi, Beppe to his friends, following inheritance by succession, came into possession of a part of the building where the ground floor areas were, mostly, used for storage and were not connected to the upper liveable floor<sup>32</sup>. In 1957, Minerbi invited his Milanese architect friend, Piero Bottoni, to carry out a restoration on what remained of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century ordering to create new spaces to handle the additions functionally and compoundly necessary for a stable living place, with recognizable and contemporary language<sup>33</sup>.

This house, of a late-medieval type, on two floors, with a closed courtyard, with a loggia and rear kitchen-garden, is connected to a salon on the first floor of the adjacent fourteenth-century building, of great importance for the frescoes and decoration saved therein, whose particular building type seems compatible with a public function of the period. The great room known as "Room of Vices and Virtues", with rare frescoes dated 1370, can be attributed to a follower of Giotto's, identified by Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti as "Master of the Minerbi House"<sup>34</sup>. The other rooms of this singular building, one of which is the exceptionally well-preserved "Room of the Coats of Arms", adjoining the "Room of Vices and Virtues," became state property in 1995. In the end, we are dealing with an important historical building from all points of view that has been put at the disposal of the public by

the City Administration, in collaboration with the Regional Office for Cultural and Landscape Assets in Emilia-Romagna<sup>35</sup>.

The main purpose of my donation to the City of Ferrara to create the Centro Studi Bassaniani is to make available to the public all the material I collected over the past forty-five years regarding Giorgio Bassani: about 7,500 files containing writings about Bassani, in eighteen languages, from 1935 to the present; about 1,000 files containing Bassani's writings from various sources; about 1,000 various editions of Bassani's works in Italian and other languages; and about 5,000 books on literature, history and art of the twentieth century in Italy. There are also the notebooks containing the complete original manuscripts of *The Gold-Rimmed Spectacles* and *The Heron*.

Moreover, one can know the Author from Ferrara close-up: at the Centro Studi Bassaniani, the living room and the dining room (reproduced in the smallest detail, together with other objects that were part of his daily life) from our home in Rome, in Lungotevere a Ripa, where Giorgio lived during the last years of his life – we met in 1977. The Nolli map is an integral part of it all, along with other important prints that Giorgio was fond of and that inspired him to investigate our faraway past such as Giambattista Piranesi's map of Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, his Campus Martius map of Rome, his Trajan's Column and his Antonine Column, imposing works more than three feet tall. Giorgio shared my passion for antique maps of Rome, and Piranesi scenes that, for him, meant a literary walk through the flow of images, exempt from specific literary memories, and will have never been casual. He lived for these inspirations and for these ideas, for this Art. His person was a living bridge between past and present, anchored in his own mind, in his poetry, the immortal leitmotif.

Images dear to Giorgio are also part of the Centro: His portrait painted by Carlo Levi in 1953; other portraits done by a friend of ours, Margaret McCann, and also pencil drawings, sketches done in oil, charcoal, and others done in red and white chalk in preparation for two portraits and a double portrait, an Umbrian landscape and a still life by our dear Richard Piccolo. There are a couple of framed embroidered scenes one in the eighteenth century, probably from Bologna, very Finzi-Contini-like. A couple of pieces of sculpture, a mosaic head, that amused him and other furnishings of which he was fond. This place brings Giorgio Bassani back to life for us and for posterity.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Intervista a Giorgio Bassani," by Delphina Rattazzi, in *Inter/View. Andy Warhol's Film Magazine*, 21 May, 1972, Inter View Inc., New York, p. 24: "Everything is always different and everything is always the same. The spirit never does the same act twice." ["Tutto è sempre diverso, ma è sempre lo stesso. Lo spirito non si ripete mai due volte"].

<sup>2</sup> Dante Alighieri, *La divina commedia*, Torino, UTET, 1962.

<sup>3</sup> Giovanna Bemporad, *Dall'Eneide*, Milano, Rusconi, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> Gustave Flaubert, *Trois contes: Un coeur simple, La legende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier, Herodias*, Paris, Nelson, 1945.

<sup>5</sup> "Intervista a Giorgio Bassani", by Delphina Rattazzi, cit., p. 24: "A country that destroys its own monuments cuts itself off from the past and loses its identity. And a country that treats its monuments with the same perfunctory care that is given the aging because it wouldn't look nice if we killed them-is not a civilized country. ["Un paese che distrugge i propri monumenti si taglia fuori dal passato e perde la sua identità. E un paese che tratta i monumenti con la stessa cura superficiale che dà agli anziani-perché non faremmo una bella figura se li amazzassimo-non è un paese civile".]

<sup>6</sup> Giorgio Bassani, *Il romanzo di Ferrara*, Milano, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991, 2 vols.

<sup>7</sup> G. Bassani, *Opere*, a cura di Roberto Cotroneo, Milano, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, «I Meridiani», maggio 1998, p. 317.

- <sup>8</sup> Ivi Libro Terzo: *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, pp. 315-578, Prologo, pp. 317-322.
- <sup>9</sup> «*Botteghe Oscure*, XIX Spring 1957, Roma, pp. 62-74.
- <sup>10</sup> Ivi, pp. 367-417.
- <sup>11</sup> Ivi, pp. 182-194.
- <sup>12</sup> Ivi, pp. 558-562.
- <sup>13</sup> «Traduzioni. René Char. Poesie», *Paragone-Letteratura*, VIII, 94, ottobre 1957, Firenze, Sansoni Editore, pp. 56-59.
- <sup>14</sup> G. Bassani, "Paul Jean Toulet & René Char", in Attilio Bertolucci, *Poesia straniera del Novecento*, Milano, Aldo Garzanti Editore, 1978, pp. 2-5.
- <sup>15</sup> "I live with the belief that the artist is the most important person alive...", in Laurie Dennett, *An American Princess: The Remarkable Life of Marguerite Chapin Caetani*, Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queens University Press, 2016, p. 40.
- <sup>16</sup> G. Bassani, *Gli occhiali d'oro*, *Paragone-Letteratura*, IX, 98, febbraio 1958, Firenze, Sansoni Editore, pp. 6-75. Bassani became an editor of *Paragone*, Anna Banti and Roberto Longhi's magazine, in 1953, and he left it definitively in 1971. The original manuscript of the short novel, composed of 374 pages, is part of the patrimony of the Centro Studi Bassaniani of the City of Ferrara and is conserved there. The initial title was *An Ugly Ending*.
- <sup>17</sup> G. Bassani, "La verità è sempre educativa: Scrittori e il cinema", *Fiera Letteraria: Settimanale di Lettere Arti Scienze*, XII, 48, 1 dicembre 1957, p. 3.
- <sup>18</sup> G. Bassani, "Lo scrittore può dare un contributo al cinema", in *Cinema Nuovo, Rassegna Quindicinale*, 120-121, 15 dicembre 1957, *La Scuola di Arzignano*, Milano, p. 324 (Incontri tra scrittori; Convegno del Centro Studi dell'Anica).
- <sup>19</sup> Informazioni della storia del PEN Club dal sito Web: [http://www.penclub.it/storia\\_ita.aspx](http://www.penclub.it/storia_ita.aspx).
- <sup>20</sup> Roberto Longhi, *Proposte per una critica d'arte*, I, 1 gennaio 1950 in *Paragone: Mensile di arte figurativa e letteratura*, Firenze, Sansoni Editore, pp. 5-19.
- <sup>21</sup> Fabrizio Sarazani, "Assistendo alla apertura di una tomba etrusca a Cerveteri", *Il Messaggero*, 31 gennaio 1957, Roma, p. 3.
- <sup>22</sup> G. Bassani, *Opere*, cit., p. 525. I thank Prof. Claudio Cazzola for the kind and fitting suggestion.
- <sup>23</sup> G. Bassani, *Opere*, cit., p. 1245.
- <sup>24</sup> G. Bassani, *Opere*, cit., p. 1246.
- <sup>25</sup> G. Bassani, *Il giardino tradito*, *L'Espresso*, XVI, n. 49, 6 dicembre 1970, pp. 20-21.
- <sup>26</sup> *Intervista a Giorgio Bassani*, by Delphina Rattazzi, cit., p. 24. "A script-writer doesn't express himself in a script, he is not a creator. A director expresses himself when he creates visually. I knew all this when I sold the rights of my book. I sold them without reserves. The objections I made afterwards were not of an aesthetical kind but of a moral kind. Because they charged me, as a private citizen, with a story that is not mine, as a script-writer I cannot sign it. In fact, as it came out, I did not write the script." ["Uno sceneggiatore non si esprime in una sceneggiatura, non è creatore. Un regista si esprime quando crea visualmente. Sapevo tutto questo quando ho venduto i diritti del mio romanzo. Li ho venduti senza riserva. Le obiezioni che ho fatto dopo, non erano di genere estetico, ma morale. Dato che mi hanno identificato, come cittadino privato, con un racconto non mio, come sceneggiatore, non potevo firmarla. Infatti, alla fine, io non ho scritto quella sceneggiatura."]
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibidem* "You see, the film, instead of the book, is about me: the character's name is Giorgio, the scenes in his house were shot in my own house, in Ferrara; a house which was my great-grandfather's, then my grandfather's, and now is mine. In the book, on the contrary, that 'I' is used in its lyrical translation, in its absolute value, the way Marcel Proust uses it. Micòl never existed, the garden itself does not exist. In the film my father dies in Buchenwald, but my father did not die in Buchenwald, he died in his own bed. If the film was going to stick to reality so much, how could I sign a script where I played with the life and death of my own father? I would have been ashamed of myself." ["Il personaggio si chiama Giorgio, le scene sono state girate nella casa di Giorgio, a Ferrara; una casa che era del mio bisnonno, poi, di mio nonno, e che ora è mia. Nel libro, al contrario, quell' 'io' è utilizzato nella traduzione lirica, nel modo in cui lo fa Marcel Proust. Micòl non è mai esistita, il giardino stesso non esiste. Nel film, mio padre muore a Buchenwald, ma mio padre non è morto a Buchenwald, è morto nel proprio letto. Se il film intendeva rispettare la realtà così tanto, come avrei potuto firmare una sceneggiatura in cui giocavo con la vita e la morte di mio padre? Me ne sarei vergognato."]
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibidem* "The language of image does not interest me. I do not understand how a poet in words can change level and be active in another kind of art. Every artist loves his medium, he is tied by a certain sensuality to his own medium. The written word makes me shiver, this is an emotion the camera cannot give me. I am tied by my own medium. I used my book as I would have used somebody else's book. I wrote the script seeing myself

as a craftsman, a craftsman with a certain taste.” [“Il linguaggio dell’immagine non mi interessa. Non capisco come un poeta con le parole possa cambiare livello ed essere attivo in un altro tipo d’arte. Ogni artista ama il proprio mezzo, è legato attraverso una certa sensualità al proprio mezzo. La parola scritta mi dà i brividi, questa è un’emozione che la macchina da presa non mi può dare. Sono legato al mio mezzo. Ho utilizzato il mio libro come avrei utilizzato il libro di qualcun altro. Ho scritto la sceneggiatura da artigiano, un artigiano con un certo gusto.”]

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, “If I was only and totally an artist, how could I live? I could not take care of practical things: I could not go to a bank, I could not take a train. An artist cannot wish to be only an artist. If he doesn’t tend to the opposite, he cannot be an artist. An artist cannot resign himself to Art: Art is pure beauty, Art is pure contemplation. Art is useless. The artist wants to be an extraordinary lover, a warrior, a politician, a perfect father. But he fails. The echo of this strain will give to the Art of this unfortunate man the warmth that distinguishes poetry from pure Art.” [“Se fossi soltanto e unicamente un artista, come potrei vivere? Non potrei occuparmi di cose pratiche: non potrei recarmi in banca, non potrei prendere un treno. Un artista non può desiderare di essere soltanto artista. Se non tende all’opposto, non può essere un artista. Un artista non può rassegnarsi all’Arte: l’Arte è pura bellezza, l’Arte è pura contemplazione. L’Arte è inutile. L’artista desidera essere un amante straordinario, un guerriero, un politico, un padre perfetto. Ma fallisce. L’eco dello sforzo darà all’Arte di quest’uomo sfortunato il calore che distingue la poesia dall’Arte pura.”]

<sup>30</sup> Hugo Beccacece, “El autor de ‘El jardín de los Finzi-Contini’ quizás el narrador mas importante que hay in Italia junto a Alberto Moravia, reflexiona sobre su vida y su obra,” in *Tiempo Argentino*, 21 aprile 1983, Buenos Aires, R. H. Burzaco, pp. 12-13. “Art is the opposite of life, but feels nostalgia for life, and it is precisely because it feels this nostalgia that it is true art. The artist is separated from life in the present in that he prefers to explain himself in order to reflect on it, and he is separated from it for the time he has lived, for the past. I recognize myself in the verbal tenses of the perfect, the imperfect and the indefinite past perfect. And even in the present in poetry. As far as the future is concerned, it is a purely grammatical tense, for beasts.” [“El arte es lo contrario de la vida, pero tiene nostalgia de ella, y es preciso que sienta esa nostalgia para que sea arte verdadero. El artista está separado de la vida en el presente porque prefiere desdoblarse para reflexionar sobre ella y, por supuesto, también está separado de ella por el tiempo transcurrido, por el pasado. Yo me reconozco en los tiempos verbales del perfecto, del imperfecto, del pretérito indefinido. Y también en el presente de la lirica. En cuanto al futuro, es un tiempo meramente gramatical, para bestias.”]

<sup>31</sup> Emanuele Mattaliano, “Nel centro storico di Ferrara, dal Trecento al razionale,” *Casa Vogue*, 155, settembre 1984, Milano, Condé Nast, pp. 299-305.

<sup>32</sup> Paolo Ravenna, “Casa Minerbi a Ferrara. Una lapide (ancora) non scritta,” *Ferrara, Voci di Una Città. Rivista Semestrale di Cultura, Informazione e Attualità*, 11, 20, giugno 2004, Ferrara, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Ferrara, pp. 9-13.

<sup>33</sup> Costanza Cavicchi, “Il restauro di Casa Minerbi (1953-1961),” *Ferrara Storia: beni culturali e ambiente*, I, 4, luglio-agostosettembre 1996, Ferrara, Tecomproject Editore, 1996, pp. 69-71.

<sup>34</sup> Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, *Gli affreschi di Casa Minerbi a Ferrara*, Milano, Ass. Casse di Risparmio Italiane, 1970.

<sup>35</sup> Carla Di Francesco, “Casa Minerbi-Del Sale a Ferrara, Prime osservazioni sull’architettura dopo l’acquisizione al demanio,” *QdS: Quaderni di Soprintendenza*, 2, Ravenna, Longo Editore, 1996, pp. 11-15, 101-106.

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On the front cover, the portrait, *Ritratto*, of Giorgio Bassani, by Carlo Levi (Roma, 1953), is part of the permanent collection of the Centro Studi Bassaniani in Ferrara.

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