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The figure of the naturalist–antiquary in the Kingdom of Naples

Giuseppe Giovene (1753–1837) and his contemporaries

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Genuine products of Enlightenment encyclopaedic culture, the naturalist–antiquaries followed Bacon and Buffon in applying the scientific inductive method with its reliance on material evidence to the study of history. This gave rise both to original research and to the formation of collections combining naturalist and antiquarian studies. This approach was particularly prevalent in Britain and in Italy in the Veneto and the Kingdom of Naples, thanks to exchanges between scholars. Giuseppe Giovene's collection and library are highly representative of this intellectual activity in southern Italy, with its vital local roots and awareness of contemporary developments abroad.

The widespread conviction, originating in the case of southern Italian intellectual history with Benedetto Croce, that eighteenth-century historical studies could be based either on erudition or on criticism, but that never the two would meet, has only recently begun to encounter any serious attempts at refutation.[1] Newer studies increasingly reveal a highly complex cultural situation and identify the salient distinction between *documentum* and *monumentum*, that is, the history of texts in opposition to the history of places.[2] In the eighteenth century the exclusive study of traditional sources, however philologically accurate, seems to have been left solely to backward scholars, while the practice of observing sites and monuments at first hand became in general the prerogative of the more 'enlightened' intellectuals, even when there was no evidence of the political commitment implied in adherence to the Enlightenment. In the complex world of antiquarianism in the late 1700s there were also some who tried to combine a critical study of sources with first-hand observation of sites. The results attained by this distinctive application of Enlightenment ideals could well be quite significant and often involved the formation of composite collections. The following pages present an examination of this very specific class of intellectuals who, in spite of the errors and contradictions inherent in the ideology to which they adhered, surely illustrate an interesting phase of the passage from ancient to modern.

The 'naturalist–antiquary' mentality focused on experimental data and on the methodological and epistemological common ground between scientific and humanist disciplines. It was rooted in an interpretation of Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton that privileged experimentation over theory, drawing on the philanthropy of the *ideologues* and the dictates of Francis Bacon. It also involved a reappraisal of Giambattista Vico and, in southern Italy, Giovambattista della Porta, as well as the study of the works of Muratori, Genovesi and Giannone. Of special significance was the reconciliation brought about between the methods of the antiquaries and the naturalists, as advocated in the earlier writings of Buffon.

In this perspective, history – meaning both the history of the Earth and the history of mankind – became a fundamental and unifying discipline for endeavours which were apparently quite disparate such as chemistry, geology and philology. The scientific method of the naturalist–antiquaries was based on the chemical analysis of rocks (always collected in person) and on drawings made on the spot (often the work of professionals). This went hand-in-hand with perusal of the historical sources and the critical interpretation of myths which might have a bearing on the site in question. The fundamental goal was to reconstruct the past history of a particular site with a view to improving the future of its inhabitants. There is no doubt that there were signs of a dated mentality in many of

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these naturalists: some for instance took an interest in natural phenomena bordering on magic (such as rhabdomancy), while others, particularly in southern Italy, saw it as their Christian duty to seek to reconcile the geological eras with the very short time spans dictated by biblical chronology. Yet, in their intentions at least, their research methods did in some respects anticipate the practice of modern archaeology.

The naturalist–antiquary mentality seems to have developed in eighteenth-century England, taking root in the context of the Royal Society, thanks above all to the influence of Sir Joseph Banks and Sir William Hamilton.[3] In Italy it was to be found sporadically throughout the length of the peninsula, but it was present particularly in the Veneto, in the context of the academy of Melchiorre Cesarotti in Padua, and in some Masonic circles of the Kingdom of Naples, especially that led by the De Gennaro brothers.

In the Bourbon capital during the 1770s and 1780s, the spell of ancient history and the spectacle offered by the frequent natural cataclysms were so closely linked as to make this part of the peninsula the ideal laboratory for all who sought to reconcile antiquarian and scientific studies. The Kingdom of Naples was all the more appealing to this class of intellectuals because, having thrown off the Austrian yoke, it was now ruled by a young king, Ferdinando di Borbone, and his consort, Maria Carolina of Austria – she in particular being attracted by the ideals of the Enlightenment and making no secret of her sympathies for a certain Masonic milieu. This situation was full of promise: the naturalist–antiquaries hoped not only to be able to advance their studies but also to achieve that chief aim of knowledge which they shared with all the adepts of the Enlightenment, namely Bacon's ideal of the common good. Scholars from all over Italy and Europe converged on Naples, which rapidly became a cosmopolitan city. Over the following two decades, the confrontation of intellectuals from very different backgrounds produced instances of consensus which were often far reaching and beneficial to the community.

A crucial role in managing the nation's economy was played by the Council of Finances, which numbered many of the leading exponents of the Enlightenment native to the Kingdom of Naples. At the same time its business was also greatly influenced by the British entourage, which exerted pressure even on the decisions taken by the King and Queen themselves. This was the case in particular of the powerful minister for war and the navy, John Acton, and his celebrated fellow countryman Hamilton, plenipotentiary envoy in Naples from 1767, who often appears to have acted as a go-between, linking the spheres of government and the Kingdom's intellectuals.

The court had founded or promoted such institutions as the Accademia di Scienze e Belle Lettere and the Accademia Militare. Nonetheless, most of the projects put forward by the enlightened intellectuals came to naught, sometimes in spite of the best – if overambitious – intentions of the court. The result was a growing sense of impotence and disillusion which led the intellectuals to resort to more radical ways of making an impact on political developments in the Kingdom.[4] After 1789 the grave political upheavals left the intellectuals deeply divided. The international community of naturalist–antiquaries which had formed in Naples around the charismatic figure of Hamilton was quickly dispersed. The foreigners returned to their own countries while almost all the Italians became involved, whether as protagonists or as mere bystanders, in the revolutionary uprisings. The subjects of the Kingdom participated in the all too brief lifespan of the Neapolitan Republic, and in many cases were caught up in its tragic demise. The few who did survive generally went on to live a secluded life, and in some cases even abandoned their studies. The dream of the naturalist–antiquaries was never fulfilled.

As collectors, the naturalist–antiquaries assembled and organized arrays of objects featuring items which at first appear to have nothing in common. On closer consideration, however, they prove to have been constituted on the basis of a precise criterion which responds perfectly to a specific experimental ethos. The collections contained mostly items which we would regard as having a geological interest, alongside others belonging to the spheres of palaeontology and archaeology. All these objects might typically have been found on a single site, visited in person and studied diligently by the collector with the aim of reconstructing its vicissitudes (whether human or geological), reaching as far back in time as possible, beyond the eras when men were able, whether consciously or not, to leave traces of their existence. The naturalist–antiquaries were firmly opposed to generalizing theories that they regarded as inevitably hypothetical and hence – at least in part – false. In their opinion, it was

preferable to gain certain knowledge of a single detail rather than elaborating explanations for the whole universe without a shred of experimental evidence.[5] They based their research on Bacon's inductive method, but also on Newton's experimentalism and the technique of digging down into the archives of the world, *les archives du monde*, advocated by Buffon. Accordingly, such research was essentially limited to the observing and understanding of a single part, at times a truly miniscule one, of the planet. In many cases, as with Giovene, a single part occupied the researcher for the whole of his lifetime.

Despite the heterogeneous nature of its components, the ultimate goal of visiting the collection of a naturalist–antiquary was exclusively taxonomic and instructive. Each item and the place assigned to it in the collection (according to the latest principles of classification) was the starting point and stimulus for the 'advancement of learning' above all for the collector himself and hence also for his visitors. Although certain aspects of such collections may be said to have derived from the sphere of the *Wunderkammern*, the collections themselves represented the exact opposite and negation of such an approach, despite their composite nature. For all their variety, they adhered to certain definite typologies; moreover they sought to include what was typical and typological, not what was monstrous and rare. These collections did not indulge in 'curiosity' for its own sake, and although they may have contained objects referred to as curiosities, these were displayed not so as to provoke amazement but rather to foster an understanding of the history of the Earth. In fact they were disposed not according to 'aesthetic' or 'spectacular' criteria but observed instead a 'systematic' and 'scientific' basis.[6] In short, whereas the *Wunderkammern* solicited wonder, the naturalist–antiquary collections were designed to elicit reflection.[7]

Following their strictly experimental approach to knowledge, the naturalist–antiquaries also greatly privileged the visual element in their collections. Each range of objects coming from a particular site was accompanied by a reproduction of the place itself or, more often, by pictures of particular spots, creating a link between the objects and the context within which they had been found. These illustrations not only provided additional proof in support of the collectors' theories but also showed that they had indeed accomplished particular journeys. These pictures that adorned the cabinets of the naturalist–antiquaries were seldom oil paintings; by preference they were *gouaches* or even the original pen and ink drawings made on the spot. It was believed that in easel painting some of the immediacy and faithfulness of the original experience would be lost, as we know from remarks made by both Hamilton and Ciro Saverio Minervino.[8] Many of these pictures depict both the draughtsman and the naturalist himself. This custom originated largely to give the viewer an idea of the proportions of the scene, but it came to testify, with pride, that the artist had worked from real life and that the naturalist had actually supervised the artist in his work. Like most eighteenth-century travellers, the naturalist–antiquaries made sure they were accompanied on their excursions by a draughtsman, with whom they came to collaborate very closely, to such an extent that in some cases it is difficult to establish what exactly is due to the scientist and what to the artist. The most familiar case concerns Hamilton and the artist Pietro Fabris, but in the Kingdom of Naples another such relationship, even more exemplary but much less well known, involved the naturalist Antonio Minasi, from Scilla in Calabria, and the Dutch artist Willem Fortuyn.[9]

Very often the English travellers sketched or painted the landscapes themselves, having taken lessons in drawing and painting for this purpose. The results were frequently admirable, not only in technical terms as regards the reproduction of a site's geological characteristics but also in terms of the beauty of the landscape depicted, as in the case of Henry Swinburne[10] and the less celebrated John Hawkins. The pictures produced for naturalist–antiquary purposes do not feature simple stratigraphies abstracted from the landscape setting. Appreciation of the beauty of a view or a sense of the sublime in the reproduction of a natural phenomenon seem to have characterized all these travellers, whether Englishmen or from other nations. It was important not only to give an exact idea of the landscape in question, reproducing for example a mountain with all its physical characteristics, rock by rock, but also to choose a particular viewpoint or weather condition so as to capture the 'spirit of the place'. Considerable care was taken in choosing which draughtsman to employ: only a certain type would do, and since there were not many of them it was not unusual for artists to be used by more than one naturalist. Some were well known landscape

painters, such as the Hackert brothers and Wilhelm Tischbein among the Germans, Fabris, Xavier Gatta and Alessandro D'Anna among the Italians. Others are today little known since they dedicated themselves almost exclusively to collaborations with naturalists, producing only drawings and engravings. Such is the case with Fortuyn, and also with Antonio De Bittìo, who was used in the Veneto region by Alberto Fortis and John Strange.

In keeping with their emphasis on first-hand observation of natural sites, when it came to publishing the naturalist–antiquaries paid great attention to the illustration of their volumes. During the last four decades of the eighteenth century there was a notable increase in the number and quality of illustrated books, and this undoubtedly owed much to the growing number of dilettanti and grand tourists interested in the reproductions of landscapes. Many of these volumes were products of the naturalist–antiquary culture, particularly those which dealt with major natural catastrophes such as the earthquake in Calabria of 1783 or the various eruptions of Vesuvius and Etna towards the end of the century (the subject of publications by both Hamilton and Minasi). Another reason for publication was a specific scientific topic of debate, like the famous question of the origin of columnar basalt, which prompted works by Fortis and Strange.

From the 1750s onwards a series of works were published in Naples concerning the history of the eruptions of Vesuvius in which the illustrations came to figure ever more prominently, particularly those by Gaetano de Bottis.[11] In the space of a few years the text in these scientific works dwindled in size and importance while the accompanying engravings became steadily larger and more numerous. Above all they were of far higher quality than anything previously produced, as for example the superb engravings done by Fortuyn for the work of Minasi, a collaboration which began in 1772.[12] This development reached its peak in the sumptuous colour prints based on drawings by Fabris in the celebrated *Campi Phlegraei* by Hamilton (1778), a work which is to be properly viewed as the culmination, not the point of departure, for this type of scholarship in Italy. The sublime, spectacular aspect of the mysteries of nature did indeed exert a great fascination over the naturalist–antiquaries and there readers, and it was often the case that the engravings had a much greater success than the volumes themselves. Booksellers were willing to sell the engravings alone, even singly, making it possible for even the most humble collector in the provinces to decorate his cabinet with pictures that were both beautiful and instructive.

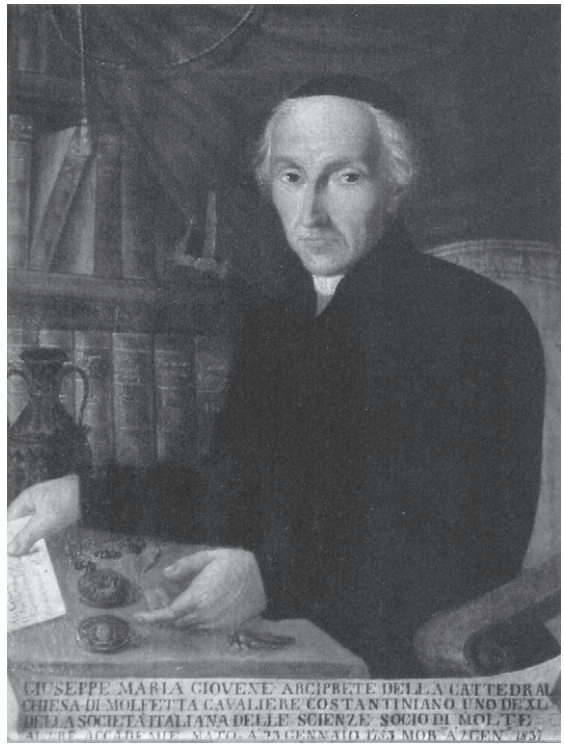

Fig. 1. *Portrait of Giuseppe Maria Giovene*, Anonymous. Oil on canvas, first half of the nineteenth century, Molfetta, Seminario Vescovile (with kind permission of the Seminario Vescovile di Molfetta).

In comparison with other cultural contexts where the phenomenon was more conspicuous (as in England and, to a lesser extent, in the Veneto[13]), little attention has been paid to the situation in the Kingdom of Naples, where nonetheless it was undoubtedly present, albeit with certain peculiar characteristics.[14] What we refer to as the naturalist–antiquary mentality developed in this southern Kingdom relatively early, and not out of passive acceptance of the English model. Methodological renewal was instigated in Naples by the scientific community: as early as 1735 the Accademia di Marina, founded by Carlo di Borbone, could count among its professors the De Martino brothers, two of the leading disseminators of Newton's theories.[15] Within a few years, thanks in part to the achievements of Galiani, there was a florid

production of works concerning the eruptions of Vesuvius, complete with illustrations and commentaries of scientific interest, all published in Naples by Giovanni Maria Della Torre, Giuseppe Mecatti and above all Giuseppe de Bottis. It was no coincidence that all three were highly regarded by Hamilton.

It was these studies on Vesuvius in particular that ensured that antiquarian studies came into contact with the experimental science. This was due both to the characteristics of the region where, from the discovery of Pompeii onwards, it became difficult for anyone to study ancient history without possessing some notions of geology, and above all to Vico's advocacy of the continuity between the human sciences and the so-called exact sciences in a common subordination to History.[16] The prevalence of this *panstoricismo* saw the formation of a considerable community of naturalist–antiquaries in Naples, among whom the leading figures were Ciro Saverio Minervino, Giuseppe Capecelatro, Francesco Daniele and Giuseppe Maria Giovene, all of them also collectors.

Canon Giovene's antiquarian–geological collection is highly significant in this regard, exemplary both for its composition and for the fortunate train of events that have ensured its almost total conservation. Giovene (Fig. 1) is an interesting example of a Southern Italian man of learning and a naturalist who deserves to be better known and esteemed, in spite of his provincial origins. He was born in Molfetta, a small town on the sea in Apulia near Bari, like his contemporary Giuseppe Saverio Poli and his mentor Ciro Saverio Minervino. Both of these played important roles in the cultural life of the Kingdom of Naples, Poli as tutor to the Crown Prince Francesco and Minervino as a scholar who made a name for himself in naturalist and antiquarian spheres both in Italy and further afield. Among the works written by Minervino, it is not surprising to find one dedicated to another universally renowned scholar of Vesuvius, the Abate Domenico Tata. Entitled *Monte Vulture*,[17] it is an attempt to reconstruct the ancient history of this geographical area based both on a philological analysis of the classic texts and on first-hand inspection of the rock features. The methodology used is therefore clearly antiquarian geological, even though its results cannot strictly be considered as scientific. Minervino possessed an important collection of antiquarian and geological objects in Naples which was highly esteemed by fellow scholars and much visited by those on the grand tour.

In fact the type of collection we refer to as antiquarian geological was very common in southern Italy, mainly, but not exclusively, in Apulia. Two more such collections were formed by Giuseppe Capecelatro and Francesco Daniele, both important figures in Enlightenment circles in the Kingdom of Naples who are likely to have been in touch with Giovene. Daniele's activity as an epigraphist and antiquary has yet to be related to his interesting collection. More is known about Capecelatro's activity as a collector but only with reference to his picture gallery. He assembled this collection, for the most part, in post-Napoleonic Naples,[18] after he intentionally disassembled his first collection, which was of the naturalist–antiquary type. He had put together this previous collection when he was archbishop of Taranto and housed it in the 'Casino di S. Lucia', which was built for the purpose but which has not survived. The composite collections created by Daniele and Capecelatro, like those of all the naturalist–antiquaries, were not intended to amaze visitors. They represented an attempt to reconstruct the history of a place with the help of objects of geological, palaeontological and archaeological interest. Both men made their intentions quite clear in works they published in connection with the collections: *Le forche Caudine illustrate*,[19] by Daniele, and Capecelatro's *Prefazione* in the *Memoria sui testacei di Taranto*.[20]

In Naples, Giovene spent quite a long period in the household of Minervino, learning much from his mentor and also meeting a great many intellectuals from both Italy and abroad, especially naturalists who pointed him in the direction of experimental science and the ethos of the Enlightenment. Acting on this orientation and on the principles of Bacon and Genovesi, whereby knowledge was to benefit public well-being, on his return to Molfetta he set out to improve the economic conditions in his town and in the Kingdom of Naples as a whole by promoting a saltpetre mine. The site, a karst basin in a locality named Pulo (Fig. 2), was remarkable for spontaneously producing potassium nitrate, the chief constituent of gunpowder.

Thus, it was that in the years 1783–91 Giuseppe Maria Giovene, together with his younger brother Graziano Maria, Barone di S. Giorgio, the famous Enlightenment scholar Melchiorre Delfico, and above

Fig. 2. *Vue de l'interieur de la nietriere nitrière naturelle près de Molfetta*, engraving signed *J.Hawkins Esq. delin.*, published in E. A. W. Zimmermann, *Voyage à la nitrière naturelle que se trouve à Molfetta dans la terre de Bari en Pouille … revue sull'original allemand, & agumentée d'une lettre de Mr. le Marquis Dondi-Orologio, de l'Accadémie de Padoüe, sur la pierre nitreuse de Molfetta, & d'une autre par Mr. le Chanoine de Giovene, sur la nitrosité generale de la Pouille* (Venice, 1790).

all their mutual friend the naturalist–antiquary Alberto Fortis, found themselves embroiled in the complicated vicissitudes of the Pulo saltpetre mine. From the beginning the project struggled, and eventually failed, on account of the machinations of shady saltpetre contractors, who even proved perfectly prepared to bribe substantial sectors of the bureaucracy and the scientific academies in Naples. Many of the leading exponents of the Enlightenment tried to help out Fortis and his friends and some even visited the site, confirming the natural occurrence of saltpetre in Pulo. Among others mention may be made of the southern Italians Giuseppe Vairo and Giuseppe Capecelatro, the Veneti Conte della Decima and Antonio Carlo Dondi dall'Orologio, and from Britain John Hawkins and Hamilton. The President of the Royal Society, Sir Joseph Banks, took a keen interest in developments in Apulia and asked his friend Hamilton to send him news and original specimens from Pulo. Even the greatest chemist of the age, Antoine Lavoisier, paid careful attention to reports on the Molfetta site. In fact many of the intellectuals who made the journey to Molfetta to encourage the efforts of Giovene and Fortis were naturalist–antiquaries, and the whole episode shows not only that they all knew and respected each other but also that they were willing to put up a united front to combat corruption and ignorance.[21]

Despite the fact that they hailed from the provinces, the members of the Giovene family were not in the least provincial or isolated. Profiting from the teachings of Genovesi, they soon conformed to European intellectual practices and knowledge. They exemplify the well-informed class of intellectuals produced by the Enlightenment which pursued scientific studies in the Kingdom of Naples and whose true merit has not always been recognized. Both Graziano and Giuseppe Giovene occupied themselves above all with geological studies. The former is also on record as conducting research relating to a medal of Sextus Pompey and so must also have taken some interest in antiquarian matters. We know of his friendship in particular with Eleonora Pimentel de Fonseca, and also with many other intellectuals in revolutionary circles. He himself played an active part in the short-lived Neapolitan Republic, sitting on a committee which organized a volunteer corps ready to quell uprisings in the provinces of Apulia, and was thereafter appointed president of the municipality. When the Republican institutions were overthrown, first in

Molfetta and then in Naples, Graziano and his family had to go into hiding to avoid serving a harsh sentence, being allowed to return to Molfetta only on the issue of the general pardon in 1801. The hardships he endured during the first Bourbon restoration were amply repaid by the award of the Légion d'Honneur at the hands of Murat, and by appointment to important offices during the years of French dominion. During this same period he contributed to the founding of the Società di Agricoltura.[22]

Giuseppe is somewhat better known (although only locally[23]) on account both of the substantial contribution he made to the renovation of the town's seminary and of his research in meteorology and botany. Giuseppe was forced to leave the Jesuit college in Naples when the Society was suppressed. He found hospitality in the household of Ciro Saverio Minervino, where he was also introduced to the principles of experimental science. His subsequent meeting with the celebrated naturalist–antiquary Abate Fortis, well connected to Jacobin and Masonic circles in the Veneto and northern Italy, marked his definitive introduction into the realm of the most advanced scientific theories in Europe. Fortis introduced him to many of his Italian and foreign friends, and Giuseppe was careful to maintain these contacts. He was highly esteemed by Lazzaro Spallanzani and the respected meteorologist Giuseppe Toaldo, who presented him with some precious scientific instruments. Following several interesting publications he was invited to join a number of scientific societies and academies, notably the Società Italiana delle Scienze (known also as the Società dei XL, Society of the Forty). Most of the works by Giovene published prior to his death appeared in the proceedings of the latter society.

This Società dei XL played a fundamental role in the wider dissemination of experimentalism throughout the length and breadth of the peninsula. Indeed, it may even have contributed a certain (albeit vague) idea of national unity.[24] There were only two requisites for acceptance as a member: being a scientist of note and being Italian. The statutes emphasized the importance of collaboration among Italian scientists, blaming the backward state of science in the nation on the lack of contact between intellectuals – a direct result of Italian political disunity. The members of the Society of the Forty, and above all its president, Anton Mario Lorgna from the Veneto, took pains to state that they had no wish to change the political situation. Nonetheless, in the use of terms such as 'love of the fatherland', 'the nation' and 'Italian scientists', foreshadowing a much broader-based unity, there can be no question that the Society deliberately fuelled susceptibilities of national pride.[25]

Giovene was in contact with intellectuals all over Europe and subscribed to the ideas promoted by the Society of the Forty. Yet, like many naturalist–antiquaries, his focus was the reconstruction of the history of his hometown by exploiting documents of every kind, from medieval manuscripts to fossils. Once back in Apulia, Giovene pursued his studies alongside his vocation, taking an interest in 'physical and natural history, and having care to accumulate a copious stock of objects related thereto'.[26] By the close of the century he had built up a collection of geological specimens, and presumably also of scientific instruments, many of which he owed to the generosity of Tolado. Before long his collection was enriched with other elements, which we would regard as belonging to the domains of palaeontology and archaeology. Like the rock specimens, these were acquired for the light they could cast on the history of his hometown.

Most of the items came from Pulo, which proved not only a source of saltpetre but also to be rich in archaeological finds. The walls of the doline, riddled with caves, made ideal burial grounds in the Neolithic age (sixth to fourth millennia BC); most of the archaeological traces belong to the civilization named Serra d'Alto, dated to the fourth millennium.[27] The vicissitudes of the saltpetre extraction caused the remarkable dissemination of palaeontological and archaeological finds (as well as other material of interest to geologists and physicists) to museums throughout Italy and the entire world, as attested by the museum in Bologna as well as many private collections.[28]

Here is how Giovene himself described his method of excavation:

> While emptying some caves still blocked up with debris, a number of clay vessels were found, undoubtedly handmade, very rough, with no glaze, and fired until they had blackened. What is truly remarkable, however, is that some flint knives were also found, together with a few made of black volcanic glass. In addition there were a few hatchets in very hard, greenish jade, all with a fine cutting edge, some slightly convex at one end and pointed at the other. When I saw hatchets belonging to the Tahiti islanders in the museum of Signor Poli in Naples, I was surprised to

find that they resembled exactly those from Pulo at Molfetta.[29]

In spite of his increasing responsibilities in the Church hierarchy, Giovene's scientific achievements led to his being elected as president of the Società Economica, to which his brother also belonged. In 1816 he finally succeeded in retiring to Molfetta, where 'he devoted himself entirely to antiquities of all kinds, both sacred and secular'.[30] In particular, he concentrated on a study of the geology of Apulia, producing the memoir *Topographia locorum aliquot Japygiae emendata,* which he never saw in print, as indeed was the case for many of his writings.[31] Most of Giovene's works were published posthumously by Luigi Marinelli-Giovene, son of his sister Annamaria and sole heir to the Giovene family, since Giuseppe's brothers, the Barone Graziano Maria and the restless Michele, both died without issue.[32] It appears though that the Canon's nephew possessed more manuscripts than were included in the posthumous publication. However, as a *Carbonaro* Luigi had a troubled existence, and most of these other manuscripts disappeared when all his property was confiscated.[33] In order to do justice to the figure of Giuseppe Giovene, it would be more rewarding to investigate his remaining unpublished correspondence, comprising a large number of letters addressed to the most enlightened intellectuals in Europe.

In the present study, it is more important to describe his collection, the surviving parts of which are still housed in their original premises. Indeed, up until the early years of the twentieth century the collection was apparently still laid out as Giovene had left it. Today it is to be found, although no longer properly ordered or entirely catalogued, in the seminary at Molfetta. As we read in a biography dating from early in the 1900s, the prelate:

> … on his death on 2 January 1837, left to this institute [Seminario Vescovile di Molfetta] in addition to some of his property, a rich library, various ancient palimpsests and manuscripts, a museum of natural history, some Italo-Greek vases, and a perpetual annuity for the librarian.[34]

As one walks through the old rooms of the Seminary today (not open to the public), it is immediately clear that the showcases contain geological specimens, worked stones and spearheads, fragments of hand-thrown and impressed pottery and Italiote figured vases. The fossils and scientific instruments are also still extant, although unfortunately no longer kept on the premises.

The original document recording Giovene's bequest to the seminary has not survived in its entirety. The part that is known to us concerns the library, which is still housed in the room designated for this purpose by Giovene himself. It conserves the ancient door and window frames and the cycle of frescoes which, presumably, were commissioned by the Canon himself (although some extensive alteration occurred at the end of the nineteenth century in the central part of the domed ceiling, during the replacement of glass panelling). The other rooms which currently house the collection no longer reflect the original layout. A document in the state archives in Trani[35] records the entire contents of the collection. Among other things it confirms the former existence of a sizeable coin and medal collection, which has been completely ransacked by successive generations of seminary students. The scientific instruments and the fossils have passed into the hands of the diocesan seminary. What remain *in situ* are the geological specimens, the prehistoric finds and the more strictly archaeological items, mainly vases. The layout as we see it today is evidently the result of various rearrangements and some losses, the most serious of which came about during the Second World War. We are fortunate in having some fine photographs taken in the early years of the twentieth century showing the library and the collection in what must be an approximation of the original layout (Figs. 3–5). We see the objects arranged in chronological order, and we see too that many of them have gone missing, above all fossils and some of the precious scientific instruments presented to the canon by Toaldo.

According to a preliminary inventory of objects currently in the Seminario Vescovile that was recently compiled by a group of young researchers, the following items were certainly acquired by Giovene, in addition to various fragments of nitrous rock from Pulo:

a. Sixty-nine ceramic vases, probably from fifth- and fourth-century tomb groups, including black- and red-figured Italiote and Gnathia style (black glaze with light overpainting) pottery, as well as indigenous Geometric banded and plain wares.
b. Three loom weights of uncertain date.
c. Seven Roman amphorae.

d. One terracotta female anthropomorphic figurine.
e. Three terracotta zoomorphic figurines.

More numerous (totalling about 200) are the prehistoric finds, representing a Neolithic culture dating from the seventh to the fourth millennium. All are from Pulo or surrounding areas and were either discovered personally by Giovene or were purchased from local peasants:

a. Fragments of hand-made impasto pottery decorated with stamped impressions (seashells, sticks, fingers and finger-nails).
b. Blades, razors, scrapers, flint arrowheads.
c. Seashells.
d. Fragments of clay daub from walls of huts in Neolithic settlements.[36]

In spite of this abundance, the collection of prehistoric finds has apparently been diminished over the years. This is how it was described at the end of the nineteenth century:

1. A jadeite axe 10.5 cm long and 5 cm wide.
2. A diabase axe, broken in half but with the cutting edge, 5 cm wide, well preserved.
3. Fragment of an obsidian axe.
4. Fragment of a small flint axe.
5. A flint blade, 6 cm long and 2 cm wide.
6. A small flint blade, 11.5 cm long.
7. Fragment of a flint scraper with three cutting edges.
8. Fragment of a flint knife with two cutting edges.
9. Pottery fragment blackened in firing with a crude hand-made knob, presumably a handle.
10. Terracotta fragment, badly fired and blackened, made of clay with sand.
11. Similar fragment made of clay, sand and slivers of flint.
12. Fragment of terracotta, a sort of tile, 6 cm long and 4 cm wide, on which appear in rough relief five Greek frets ….[37]

Another feature of the collection is the series of precious medieval manuscripts (mostly missals and breviaries from churches in Apulia, dating from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries) collected by Giovene. He wrote a commentary on these books entitled *Kalendaria Vetera*, of which only the first of two volumes was published. The inclusion in his collection of medieval manuscripts related to his native region is further confirmation of the importance attributed by Giovene to every kind of historical record.

The most remarkable feature is undoubtedly the library also conserved in the seminary, which has come down to us intact with every one of the volumes enumerated in the bequest.[38] In themselves the ancient volumes are virtually priceless, being mostly very rare eighteenth-century scientific illustrated publications that (rare as this is) maintain all their plates still intact. This collection of books is all the more significant because the titles make it possible to reconstruct the scientific and cultural interests of a typical progressive intellectual in southern Italy in the eighteenth century.

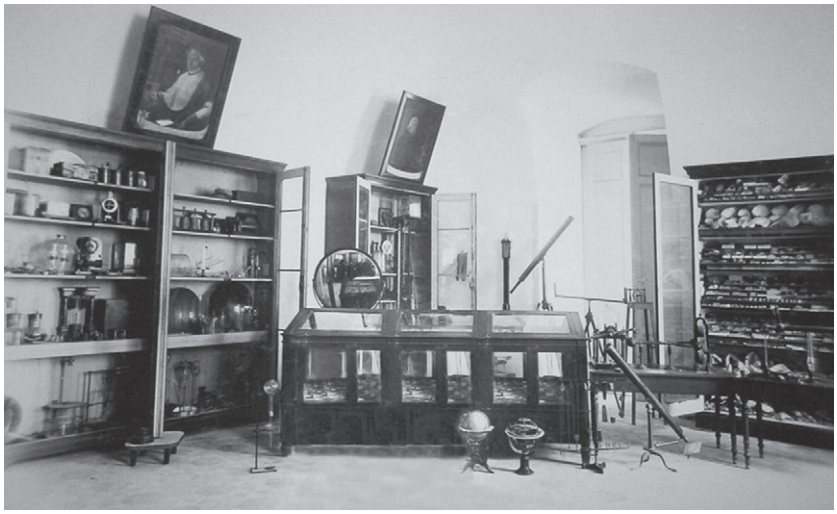

Fig. 3. *Gabinetto di Fisica*, photograph by Premiato Stabilimento Fotografico Tommaso Guerra, son of the late Vincenzo, Bari, August 1907 (with kind permission of the Seminario Vescovile di Molfetta).

Fig. 4. *Gabinetto di Storia Naturale*, photograph by Premiato Stabilimento Fotografico Tommaso Guerra son of the late Vincenzo, Bari, August 1907 (with kind permission of Seminario Vescovile di Molfetta).

In other words, we can say that the works in the library reflect the knowledge that Giovene carried in his head.

We find the most important journals of the time: *Antologia Romana*, *Effemeridi Romane*, *Opuscoli Enciclopedici*, *Opuscoli Scelti* (edited by Carlo Amoretti, a friend of Giovene and Fortis), *Giornale Enciclopedico di Napoli*, *Giornale Fisico medico di Pavia* and the proceedings published by the Società dei XL, the Istituto d'Incoraggiamento, the Società Patriottica di Milano, the Accademia dei Georgofili and the Accademia Pontaniana. Alongside the journals we find the great names in European chemistry and physics – de la Lande, Tournefort, Boyle, Rozier, Macquier, Saussure – as well as colleagues and correspondents of Giovene – Gaetano d'Ancora, Giuseppe Gioeni, Giuseppe Saverio Poli, Giuseppe Capecelatro, Giambattista Gagliardo, Grimaldi, Davanzati. In addition to the leading southern Italian exponents of the Enlightenment, we find, from the Veneto, Petagna, Zannoni, Arduino and Malacarne. Then of course there are the naturalists with whom he had frequent dealings: Scipione Breislack, Giuseppe Toaldo, Lazzaro Spallanzani, his close friend Alberto Fortis, Carlo Amoretti, Fantuzzi, Dolomieu and Thouvenel. The latter's reputation as a scientist was irremediably diminished by the hapless outcome of his far-fetched experiments with rabdomancy, but he was highly esteemed by both Giovene and Fortis.

There are books on historical, economic and political subjects, mostly written by intellectuals who were contemporary with and very close to Giovene, such as Melchiorre Delfico, another great friend, author of *Ricerche sul carattere della Giurisprudenza romana, Ricerche sulla sensibilità imitativa, Sul tribunale della Grecia, Storia di S. Marino, Elogio della marchesa Grimaldi, Nuove ricerche sul bello*, and also Pelliccia, Galanti, with his *Saggio sull'antica storia,* Vivenzio, *Sul tavoliere di Puglia, Antiche province di Napoli, Del servizio militare,* and Galiani, *Del dialetto napoletano*, as well as the indispensable Filangieri. At the same time Giovene, in common with many other adherents to the Enlightenment in the South, maintained close links with Masonic circles, especially that of the Di Gennaro brothers, which also attracted Fortis and Filangieri. It comes as no great surprise, therefore, that the good Canon also possessed the *Corrispondenza segreta del Conte Cagliostro.* Nor do I believe we should overlook his literary interests: we find the plays of Metastasio (Giovene was a friend of Saverio Mattei, who as a translator was in close contact with the poet), Planelli's treatises on the theory of music, Monti's *Il Bardo della Selva Nera* and *Der Geisterseher* by Schiller, all works which had some connection with Freemasonry

Fig. 5. *Gabinetto di Storia Naturale*, photograph by Premiato Stabilimento Fotografico Tommaso Guerra son of the late Vincenzo, Bari, August 1907 (with kind permission of Seminario Vescovile di Molfetta).

and point to tastes in reading which we can characterize as progressive and even perhaps pre-Romantic.

Giovene's library also featured works by the authors he considered his intellectual mentors, the Frenchmen Voltaire, Condillac and Rousseau, but also Genovesi, *Lezioni di Commercio, Meditazioni filosofiche,* Giannone, Muratori, *Annali d'Italia, Pirronismo Confutato, Regolata devozione, Dell'Intelletto umano, Felicità pubblica, Filosofia Morale*. His vocation as a naturalist–antiquary is seen in his combination of works by the antiquaries Alessio Simmaco Mazzocchi and Mabillon with others by Galileo and also the *Historia naturalis* by Ferrante Imperato, representing the most august seventeenth-century Neapolitan scientific tradition. Certainly he could not have failed to own the *Principi di Scienza Nuova* by Giambattista Vico, for as we have suggested, this author was at the heart of the naturalist–antiquary ideology, especially in the Kingdom of Naples.

From everything that has been said, therefore, and in particular from the examination of Giuseppe Maria Giovene's library, we get a clear idea of his ideology and methodology as a naturalist–antiquary. In his life and in his studies, history and science, antiquarianism and experimentalism – at times even scientific enquiry and superstition – were inextricably entwined. This is why Giovene and the other intellectuals who adhered to the Enlightenment whom we have described as 'naturalist–antiquaries' represent, with all their limitations but also with their features of excellence, what is surely a phase of intense interest in the rise of modern archaeology.

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Notes and references

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16 See M. Donzelli, *Natura e Humanitas nel giovane Vico* (Naples, 1970).

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19 F. Daniele, *Le forche Caudine illustrate* (Caserta, 1778).

20 Capecelatro, op. cit. (note 5).

21 I have tried to reconstruct the episode in M. Toscano, *Alberto Fortis nel Regno di Napoli: naturalismo ed antiquaria* (Bari, 2004). For interesting further information see Ciancio, op. cit. (note 13).

22 On Graziano Maria see C. Villani, *Scrittori ed artisti pugliesi antichi, moderni e contemporanei* (Bari, 1904), p. 30, and G. De Ninno, *I martiri e i perseguitati politici di terra di Bari nel* 1799 (Bari, 1915). His biographers mention that he published *Su' danni che la mancanza di combustibile produce alla provincia di Bari* and the memorial *Su' mezzi di ripararvi.*

23 On Giuseppe Maria see Villani, op. cit. (note 22), p. 305; E. De Tipaldo, *Biografia degli Italiani Illustri* (Venice, 1938), biographical note by E. Sassoli, vol. V, pp. 276–81.

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26 Sassoli, op. cit. (note 23) p. 277.

27 See A. Mosso, 'La necropoli neolitica di Molfetta', *Monumenti antichi dei Lincei* 20 (1916), pp. 238–51.

28 A. Jatta, 'Gli avanzi preistorici del Barese', in *Rassegna Pugliese di scienze, lettere, ed arti*, vol. I, no. 3 (1884), p. 57.

29 'Mentre si svuotavano alcune grotte ingombrate ancora di macerie, furono trovate delle stoviglie di argilla, certamente lavorate a mano ed alla peggio, senza vernice alcuna e cotte fino a nerezza. Quello però che è più straordinario si fu che furono ancora trovati in quantità coltelli di pietra focaia, ed alcuni pochi ancora di vetro vulcanico nero. Oltre a ciò furono ancora trovate alcune accette di giada verdastra e durissima, tutte affilate a taglio, e alcun poco convesse da una parte e dall'altra appuntate.

Allorché vidi nel museo del signor Poli in Napoli le accette degli isolani di Othaiti, fui sorpreso dalla perfetta somiglianza con quelle del Pulo di Molfetta': from 'Sul Pulo', in G. Giovene, *Raccolta di tutte le opere del Chiarissimo Cavaliere Giuseppe Maria Giovene, Arciprete della Cattedrale di Molfetta, uno dei XL della Società Italiana delle Scienze residente in Modena e socio di molte altre illustri accademie, con note dell'editore Luigi Marinelli Giovene*, 3 vols, (Bari, 1839–41), L. Marinelli-Giovene, (ed.), vol. II (Bari, 1840), p. 592.

30 Sassoli, op cit. (note 23), p. 279.

31 A. Jatta, 'Giuseppe Maria Giovene (1753–1837)', in *Rassegna Pugliese di scienze, lettere, ed arti*, vol. IV, no. 10, (Trani, 31 May 1887) p. 148.

32 See Giovene, op. cit. (note 29).

33 Jatta op. cit. (note 31), p. 149, writing while Luigi Marinelli-Giovene was still alive, specified: 'And moreover his heir and biographer Luigi Marinelli-Giovene states that he possesses unpublished …' The details of the life of Luigi Marinelli-Giovene were kindly supplied by his descendant Angelo Marinelli-Giovene, architect, whom I wish to thank.

34 'Morendo il 2 gennaio 1837, lasciò a questo istituto [il Seminario Vescovile di Molfetta] oltre alcuni suoi beni, una ricca biblioteca, vari palinsesti e manoscritti antichi, un museo di storia naturale, dei vasi italo-greci, ed un legato perpetuo per l'onorario del bibliotecario,' in Jatta, op. cit. (note 31), p. 148.

35 Archivio di Stato di Trani (AST), notaio Paolo Rotondo, cartella 1725, October 1823, no. 199, fol. 24.

36 I owe this information to the kindness of Giuseppina Gadaleta, archaeologist and friend, whom I wish to thank.

37 Jatta, op. cit. (note 28), p. 57.

38 The original document, which was kindly shown to me by the person currently responsible for the library, is uncatalogued. I wish to thank the Seminario Vescovile and Father Saverio Minervini who allowed me to work on this material and who greatly helped me during my research.