

# Abstracts

Maurizio Piseri

*Schools and literacy in Lower Aosta valley in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries*

This article aims historically to reconstruct the school system in a mountain region (Aosta Valley) in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. During this period, the Aosta Valley possessed a broad educational system based on a close network of little schools. This kind of organization allowed a lot of children to gain easy access to literacy, despite the dispersion of inhabited settlements. Nevertheless, the schools disposed of scarce financial resources. Therefore, due to the low level of salaries, the teachers were mainly priests or simple people without pedagogical skills. However, the schools still proved to be effective. The literacy rate was high, especially in the higher up villages, where the prevailing socioeconomic conditions – in which handicraft and seasonal migration were highly relevant – increased the demand for literacy.

Daniel Syrový

*Literature and Censorship in the Italian-speaking areas of the Habsburg Monarchy in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries*

Between its implementation in 1751 and its abolition in 1848, book censorship in the Habsburg Monarchy was anything but one-dimensional. This article looks at the special case of the Italian-language areas of the empire: Austrian Lombardy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; Venetia after 1797; and Lombardy-Venetia after the Congress of Vienna. It traces the evolution of censorship through a number of conceptual and formal changes, all the while considering its central role in the field of literary – at a crucial point before the publication and distribution of all written material. The central argument concerns the various political uses of censorship and how conflicts between nationalism and conservatism could play out in different ways, depending on the manifold organizational and legal processes involved, including the centralizing tendencies of the Viennese bureaucracy after 1815.

Liliana De Venuto

*Books, libraries, and readers in the Adige valley in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*

The article examines the circulation of books in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the Adige region, focusing particularly on the towns of Trento and Rovereto. The investigation reveals an undoubted increase in publishing activity, in the production of printed works by local presses, and in the consumption of literary texts, whether on the part of scholars or general readers. A notable increase in the number of libraries was directly connected to these developments. At the same time, libraries became typologically more diverse. Alongside the traditional collections of books pertaining to clerical congregations, religious institutions and the liberal professions (law, medicine, pharmacy), libraries were built up for the purposes of scholarship and also personal enjoyment. Such developments, which were even more evident in the most advanced European countries, were linked to a series of specific factors in the region of Trentino: the establishment of academies of letters and the various reforms leading to mass schooling, the modernization of the judicial system, improvements in sanitation and ecclesiastical reforms.

Michael Span

*“All existing books”. Inventories from the rural district court of St. Michaelsburg as sources for the investigation of book ownership in Tyrol 1750–1800*

Who owned which books 250 years ago? This question stands at the centre of this investigation, which is based on the analysis of inventories, a widely spread source used in the research project *Reading in the Alps*. Taking data from the district court at St. Michaelsburg in the South Tyrolean Puster valley between the years 1750 and 1800, the author examines the inventories in order to explore historical questions about private book ownership. He presents some preliminary findings and refers to an earlier pilot study in order to discuss the methodological problems bound up with the material. These include questions as to the correlation between financial standing, gender, occupational status, and book ownership on the one hand, and issues relating to identification and classification of the literature named in the sources on the other. The article thus provides insights into new empirical research at the micro-historical level regarding book-ownership and readership in a Roman Catholic dominated alpine district on the eve of the modern era.

Peter Andorfer

*Reading Traces. Leonhard Millinger's Description of the World as a source for peasant reading habits*

Which books did a Tyrolean farmer read at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and why? Answering such a question is difficult, not only because of the fragmentary nature of the historical sources relating to literacy and book ownership in rural, alpine areas, but also from a methodological point of view, given that the act of reading usual leaves few concrete traces. For this reason, Leonhard Millinger's *Description of the World (Weltbeschreibung)* constitutes an even more valuable exception. Millinger (1753–1834) was a peasant farmer from the village of Waidring in Tyrol, who between 1790 and 1815 composed a roughly 1,000-page long handwritten manuscript in which he described the world, its continents, countries, towns and inhabitants. The basis for Millinger's work was approximately 20 books, which were all named in the manuscript. The article identifies these books and categorizes them according to content and reader response. In addition, the author analyzes the intertextual connections between the manuscript and the sources used by Millinger, in order to reconstruct the latter's reading interests and knowledge.