

RENAISSANCE STUDIES
IN HONOR OF
JOSEPH CONNORS
I

edited by
MACHTELT ISRAËLS *and* LOUIS A. WALDMAN

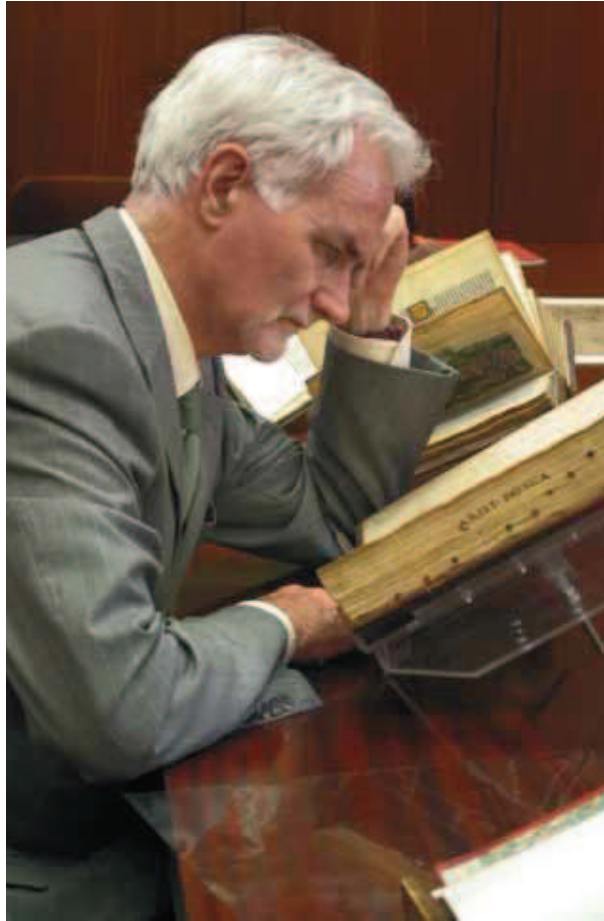


Villa I Tatti

The Harvard University Center
for Italian Renaissance Studies

29

FLORENCE



RENAISSANCE STUDIES IN HONOR OF JOSEPH CONNORS

edited by

MACHTELT ISRAËLS *and* LOUIS A. WALDMAN

with

GUIDO BELTRAMINI, BIANCA DE DIVITIIS,
ANTHONY D'ELIA, ALISON FRAZIER,
GIUSEPPE GERBINO, GUIDO GUERZONI,
ESTELLE LINGO, *and* MARICA TACCONI

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Villa I Tatti

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Volume I



Art History

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Introduction



Joseph Connors was director of the Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies in Florence, Villa I Tatti, from 2002 to 2010, and this Festschrift was conceived as a tribute to his directorship. It collects the scholarly homage of 177 appointees to Villa I Tatti during his time, including Fellows, Visiting Professors, Readers, members of the staff, and members of the Advisory Council of the Harvard Center.

Joseph Connors, a New Yorker by birth (1945) and long residence, was educated in classical languages at Regis High School in Manhattan and then at Boston College (B.A. 1966). He discovered art history during his two years as a Marshall Scholar at Clare College, Cambridge, especially in a course of magisterial lectures by Nikolaus Pevsner. He taught Latin and Greek at the Boston Latin School in 1968–69, concentrating on Virgil and Euripides. In 1969, in Gagny, France, he married Françoise Moison, a student of literature at the Sorbonne, with whom he has enjoyed over four decades of spirited conversation, love of art, and fondness for Italy. At Harvard, he studied principally with Ernst Kitzinger, the doyen of Early Christian art history and the great interpreter of Byzantine iconoclasm, and with James S. Ackerman, who at that time had just produced his classic studies of the architecture of Michelangelo and Palladio. He also had the opportunity to commute to New York in 1974 to take the last seminar of the great medievalist, Richard Krautheimer, in which, surprisingly, he found his field, Baroque Rome. From 1975 to 1979, he taught at the University of Chicago. He was deeply influenced by the interdisciplinary spirit of that pioneering university; in addition, he taught courses there on the Chicago School of Architecture and conceived a lifelong passion for the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. Perhaps the quality of curiosity that many have noticed in him, and an unusually wide *Belesenheit*, spring more from his years in Chicago than from any other source.

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“The Most Unspoiled of the Mediterranean Lands”: Bernard Berenson and Cyprus

LORENZO CALVELLI



In the spring of 1937 Bernard Berenson (1865–1959) left Italy on a trip to the Eastern Mediterranean that took him in sequence to the islands of Cyprus, Rhodes, and Crete. As on many of his other journeys, he was accompanied by his ever-caring and committed secretary-librarian Elisabetta “Nicky” Mariano (1887–1968). One of the reasons that led the two to escape from Italy at that time was the third season of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino festival, during which Florence was invaded by foreigners who, desirous to meet Berenson, would disturb his blissful seclusion at I Tatti. Despite this impulse, Berenson’s resolution to embark for Cyprus should not be interpreted as a last-minute decision, but rather as the consequence of a long-lasting intellectual interest that had brought him to plan many details of his trip well in advance.

Cyprus first caught Berenson’s multifaceted curiosity in early 1932. While on holiday in the French Riviera at Hyères, he was informed by

I am most grateful to Ilaria Della Monica and Giovanni Pagliarulo for their precious help in the Archive and Fototeca of the Villa I Tatti. Given the space constraints of this contribution I decided to arrange only a partial set of footnotes and a selected bibliography. It is my hope in the future to offer a complete reconstruction of Berenson’s trip to Cyprus, including a critical edition of his notebook, as well as of his letters and Nicky’s postcards to Mary, all kept in the Berenson Archive, Villa I Tatti, Florence (hereafter BA).

The phrase quoted in the title of this article is taken from a letter written by Bernard Berenson to Clotilde Marghieri on 5 May 1937, when he was in Nicosia: see *A Matter of Passion: Letters of Bernard Berenson and Clotilde Marghieri*, ed. DARIO BIOCCA, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford 1989, p. 188. I am grateful to Claudia Chierichini for this reference. All correspondence quoted in the footnotes is in the BA.

his close friend and hostess, Edith Wharton (1862–1937), about a lecture that the American scholar William Buckler (1867–1962) had recently given to the Society of Antiquaries in London. Buckler had talked about the mural paintings of the church of Our Lady at Asinou, located on the foothills of the Troodos mountains in central Cyprus, and had illustrated his lecture with a series of photographs, which Harold Buxton (1880–1976), the Anglican archdeacon of the island, had taken in 1931. The same pictures were shown to Berenson by Edith Wharton. Berenson immediately wrote to Buckler, stating how he “should be grateful for a set of the photographs”, and adding: “They would be of real use at I Tatti, not only for my own work but for other students as well.”¹ As a result, a number of postcard-sized prints, as well as a larger image of the paintings (Fig. 1), are now kept in the Fototeca of Villa I Tatti, in a box marked “Provincial Byzantine Painting, Cyprus”.

Berenson’s interest in Cyprus is attested in the following years by the correspondence that he exchanged with Sir George Hill (1867–1948), director of the British Museum from 1931 to 1936 and one of the leading ‘Cyprus experts’ of the time. In October 1934, answering Hill’s call for financial support, Berenson contributed £25 to the Cyprus Monuments Fund. In return, Hill assured him that he would be “told of anything that is found or done in the Byzantine Field in Cyprus”.²

Berenson eventually took the decision to visit Cyprus in early 1937. In a long letter to him dated 10 March, Hill remarked: “You are greatly to be envied. I wish I could get out to Cyprus. Failing that, I am deeply involved in its early history.”³ Clearly following Berenson’s own request, Hill continued his letter offering general bibliographical advice on Cyprus and on its monuments. While lamenting the absence of a Baedeker volume on the island, he suggested that Berenson should get hold of a copy of Rupert Gunnis’ *Historic Cyprus* and Georgios Soteriou’s *Ta Byzantiná Mνημεία της*

Κύπρου (*Ta Byzantina Mnemeia tes Kyprou* [The Byzantine Monuments of Cyprus]).⁴ Hill also gave Berenson a large number of practical hints. Although we can only refer to them here in summary form, they offer a brief, yet highly qualified, insight into the intellectual, political, and everyday life of 1930s Cyprus. Hill wrote:

He [i.e. Gunnis] knows the island topography better than any one, and likes nothing better than acting as guide to distinguished visitors. He had (may still have) an official position in the Department of Antiquities, but what exactly he is now I don’t know. He was very useful to us in 1934, but we have rather quarreled with him since, because he has not been helpful to the new regime which Peers and I promoted. You are certain to make his acquaintance; use him, but don’t believe all the gossip he retails. He is very well in with the Governor.⁵

Further advice concerned places to stay in the main cities of the island:

Hotels in Cyprus are few and with one exception inadequate. The Castellis [*sic*] at Kyrenia is quite good, and if you get rooms in the annexe on to the sea you will be comfortable, unless it has deteriorated since we were there. At Nicosia the Crescent is clean, but very small, and the only one with any attempt at civilized sanitation, which however didn’t always work. At Famagusta, there are two, the Savoy and (I think) the Otello, but I’ve not stayed at either, only lunched. At Larnaca – where you may land – the Grand (I think) has a magnificent staircase of local marble, but is otherwise very primitive. If you land there, I recommend you to hire a car (the Italian tourist agency on the quay is helpful) and go straight to Nicosia or Famagusta. The latter is what I should recommend, because my friend Th. Mogabgab, the tourist officer, a highly educated man, who knows every stone

1. CHARLOTTE ROUECHÉ, “The Prehistory of the Cyprus Department of Antiquities”, in *Mosaic: Festschrift for A. H. S. Megaw*, ed. JUDITH HERRIN, MARGARET MULLETT, and CATHERINE OTTEN-FROUX, London 2001, p. 157.

2. Letter dated London 29 October 1934 from George Hill to Bernard Berenson, fol. 1r.

3. Letter dated London 10 March 1937 from George Hill to Bernard Berenson, fol. 1r.

4. Both books can be found in the Biblioteca Berenson at Villa I Tatti bearing the usual “Ex libris Bernardi et Mariae Berenson”. They are shelfmarked respectively Dep DS 54.G8 1936 and NB 172.S68 1935.

5. Letter dated London 10 March 1937 from George Hill to Bernard Berenson, fol. 1r–v.

of Famagusta, will I am sure give you every help – find you a hotel, make arrangements for the hire of a car during your stay etc. etc. I enclose a note for him. Also one for the Director of Antiquities, A. H. S. Megaw, specializes on Byzantine monuments, whom you will find at the Museum at Nicosia.⁶

Berenson and Nicky started off their trip embarking on the steamer *Gerusalemme*, leaving from Brindisi on 21 April 1937. They landed at Larnaca four days later, on the evening of 25 April. No proper travel diary survives of their visit to Cyprus. Yet its course is fully reconstructible thanks to some providential archival material, namely Berenson's miniature-sized 1937 notebook, where he meticulously recorded what he saw and whom he met on each day of the year (Fig. 2); the long letters that he wrote almost on a daily basis to his wife Mary; and a series of 'post-card letters', which Nicky Mariano also sent to Mary, to give her "an adequate idea"⁷ of the places that she and Bernard saw during their trip.

In Larnaca (Figs. 3, 4) Bernard and Nicky stayed at a "third class hotel, but very clean", located "on the water front".⁸ In his first letter to Mary, written from Larnaca on the evening of 26 April, Berenson complained that "but for an inconspicuous Union Jack there was scarcely another sign that this place belonged to England".⁹ Despite this, he remarked that in the afternoon a "pleasant Greek driver" had taken him to the ancient site of Kition and to Hala Sultan Tekke (Fig. 4) in a "clean and fairly comfy English" car.¹⁰ The day after, he and Nicky moved to Nicosia, where they stayed until 8 May.

From Nicosia Bernard wrote ten letters to Mary, giving full account of all the monuments and sites that he visited, as well as of the people

that he met during his stay. One of the first encounters he had was with Rupert Gunnis (1899–1965), whose hat "was ever so much more on the way to deck the scarecrow than mine".¹¹ Together they visited the former Latin cathedral of St. Sophia (Fig. 5) and, on 27 April, took a car on a day trip "onto the hills to see churches".¹² The next day Berenson went to visit the Cyprus Museum, where he met the newly-appointed director of the Department of Antiquities, A. H. S. "Peter" Megaw (1910–2006): "The director is a very young man named Megaw, timid, serious, and school-mastery, but attentive and friendly."¹³ Berenson was shown the whole collection of the museum, "from the earliest periods down to Roman times". "All interesting," he commented, "some remarkably so, but scarcely any great works of art."¹⁴

On 28 April a driver took Berenson to Pyrga and Stavrovouni, where he saw a "small walnut cross, carved in 1476 into microscopic scenes from Old and New Testament".¹⁵ On 29 April the first visit to Famagusta (Figs. 6, 7) took place. Berenson was shown around by Theophilus Amin Halil Mogabgab (1888–1965), "a dark little man...who heads the bureau and seems to devote himself entirely to the preservation of the antiquities of the town".¹⁶ The monument that struck the visitors most was of course the former Latin cathedral of St. Nicholas (Fig. 8). Berenson also noted how some of the surviving medieval churches of the town had "remains of contemporary murals in which Italian hands are supposed to be visible, but not", he added, "to my eye".¹⁷

6. Letter dated London 10 March 1937 from George Hill to Bernard Berenson, fols. 1v–2r.

7. Postcard I dated Nicosia 3 May 1937 from Nicky Mariano to Mary Berenson.

8. Letter dated Larnaca 26 April 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 1r.

9. Letter dated Larnaca 26 April 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 1v.

10. Letter dated Larnaca 26 April 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 2r.

11. Letter dated Nicosia 27 April 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 5r.

12. Letter dated Nicosia 28 April 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 6r.

13. Letter dated Nicosia 29 April 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 1r.

14. Letter dated Nicosia 29 April 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 1v.

15. Letter dated Nicosia 29 April 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 3v.

16. Letter dated Nicosia 30 April 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 5r.

17. Letter dated Nicosia 30 April 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fols. 5v–6r.

Using Nicosia as a base for daily excursions, during the first week of May Bernard and Nicky visited several historical sites in central and eastern Cyprus. After reaching Vouni (Fig. 9) and Dali, and admiring the ruins of Bella Pais (Fig. 10), they went to Kyrenia. They considered renting a room there in “the best hotel in the island”. Nonetheless, the fact that this was crowded with “English retired colonels, and Anglo-Indian officials retired with their dames”¹⁸ persuaded them not to do so. Their drive continued to Lapithos and Lambousa, where they were welcomed by “a very handsome black bearded priest, not very pious, but rather Bacchus looking”.¹⁹ In the following days short expeditions were organized to see the village churches of Lagoudhera, Galata, Koutzovendi, and St. Chrysostom, as well as the castle of St. Hilarion.

On 6 May Miss Joan du Plat Taylor (1906–1983), “who works on the Byzantine field”,²⁰ took Berenson to the neolithic site of Khirokitia, “a circular construction of rough stones where they found calcined bones”.²¹ “God knows what cannibal hocus-pocus was carried out there. I confess I am fed up with pre-history”,²² was Berenson’s sarcastic and laconic remark to his wife Mary. The next day, the visit to the Panagia church at Asinou finally took place. The excursion was organized by Gunnis and the guests were brought to their destination first by car and then on donkeys. While admiring the mid-Byzantine paintings, Berenson was struck by “the single figures of the Comnenian type, most of them made over, but some still impressive and elegant, elegant as only Byzantine figures of that period can be”.²³

18. Letter dated Nicosia 3 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 5r.

19. Letter dated Nicosia 3 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 6r–v.

20. Letter dated Nicosia 7 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 3r.

21. Letter dated Nicosia 7 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 3v.

22. Letter dated Nicosia 7 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 3v.

23. Letter dated Nicosia 8 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 4v.

On 8 May Bernard and Nicky moved to Famagusta, whence they set off for short tours to Agia Napa, Salamis, the church of St. Barnabas (“a Byzantine structure that in its best days may have rivalled St. Mark’s in Venice”²⁴), and the Rizokarpaso. On these occasions they often enjoyed the company of either Megaw or Mogabgab. In a private conversation with Berenson, the latter noted how the former “always left one feeling rather uncomfortable, rather upset, rather sick”. “It is quite the way I feel after being with Kenneth or rather the way I used to feel before success had raised his blood pressure a bit”,²⁵ added Berenson in his letter to Mary, drawing a clear parallel between the characters of Megaw and Kenneth Clark (1903–1983). Further details on the difficult relationship between Megaw and Mogabgab are given in two letters written by the latter to Berenson in 1956.²⁶ These are worthy of publication in a different context.

On 11 May Berenson was back in Nicosia, where he said goodbye to all the acquaintances he had made in Cyprus over the previous two weeks. One last short visit was paid to Kyrenia and Bella Pais, and on the next day he and Nicky made their way towards the western coast of the island. They spent one night in Platres, the elegant mountain “Sommerfrische”²⁷ (as Nicky called it), celebrated among others by Seferis, and then moved on to the Pafos region. On their way there they stopped at Colossi and Kourion, where they met “a young man in shorts with a Polycletan head on a Lysippian body who greeted us as if we were intruders”,²⁸ most likely the University of Pennsylvania archaeologist George H. McFadden (1907–1953), who tragically died in a sailing accident off Cyprus some fifteen years after Berenson’s visit.

From 13 to 15 May Bernard and Nicky stayed at an inn run by locals in Ktima, “very clean and well served, such a contrast with the sordid

24. Letter dated Famagusta 10 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 4r–v.

25. Letter dated Famagusta 10 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 6r.

26. Letters dated Famagusta 4 October 1956 and 28 December 1956 from Theophilus A. H. Mogabgab to Bernard Berenson.

27. Postcard I dated Paphos 14 May 1937 from Nicky Mariano to Mary Berenson.

28. Letter dated Ktima 14 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 4r.

and squalid best hotel at Nicosia kept by English people”.²⁹ From there they took excursions to Nea Pafos, the monastery of Agios Neophytos (Fig. 11), “the cheeriest, the best kept we have seen in this island”,³⁰ and the so-called Tombs of the kings (which looked to Berenson like “Ercole Roberti ruins”).³¹ The last site they visited in Cyprus was the ruins of Kouklia (“small beer”³²). On the morning of 16 May they embarked at Limassol on the steamer *Egitto*, which would take them to the next destination of their Mediterranean trip: the island of Rhodes.

29. Letter dated Ktima 14 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 4r.

30. Letter dated Ktima 15 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 1v.

31. Letter dated Limassol 16 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 2v.

32. Letter dated Limassol 16 May 1937 from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, fol. 2v.

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1. "Panagia Asinou. 25 miles from Troodos. Cyprus". Fototeca Berenson, Villa I Tatti, Florence, Provincial Byzantine Painting. Cyprus.

2. Four pages from Bernard Berenson's 1937 notebook, Berenson Archive, Villa I Tatti, Florence (hereafter BA).



3. "Caravan Station, Larnaca, Cyprus". BA, Bernard and Mary Berenson Papers, Correspondence, Nicky Mariano to Mary Berenson, 3 May 1937.

4. "Tekké (Hospice) of Umm Haram, Larnaca (Cyprus)". BA (as in Fig. 3), 3 May 1937.



5. “Interior View of St. Sophia, Nicosia – Cyprus”. BA (as in Fig. 3), 14 May 1937.



6. “Venetian walls, Famagusta”. BA (as in Fig. 3), 3 May 1937.



7. “Old Gate, Famagusta, Cyprus”. BA (as in Fig. 3), 3 May 1937.



8. “St. Nicholas Cathedral, 1300 A.D., now a Mosque, Famagusta, Cyprus”. BA (as in Fig. 3), 23 May 1937.



9. “Vouni Palace – Cyprus”. BA (as in Fig. 3), 3 May 1937.



10. “The Abbey of Bella Paise, Kyrenia, Cyprus”. BA (as in Fig. 3), 3 May 1937.



11. “Saint Neophytes (Paphos, Cyprus)”. BA (as in Fig. 3), 14 May 1937.



1. The Mellon *Madonna*, thirteenth century, tempera on panel, 84×53.5 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., no. 1937.1.1.