

Simon Berington's *Adventures of Sig' Gaudentio di Lucca*

A.D. Harvey and Jean-Michel Racault

English novelists of the eighteenth century attempted most of the permutations of narrative form, the nineteenth century being in this respect a hiatus between two periods of technical experimentation: yet one of the most innovative and accomplished—and in its day one of the most popular—of eighteenth-century novels has been virtually forgotten since the 1850s, except by bibliographically minded scholars specializing in particular by-ways of early modern fiction.¹

In 1737 there appeared in London a volume entitled *The Memoirs of Sig' Gaudentio di Lucca*. There was a Dublin edition of 1738 and a French translation of 1746. The second London edition of 1748 was entitled *The Adventures of Sig' Gaudentio di Lucca*, which was the title under which all subsequent English language editions appeared. There was another Dublin edition in 1752, an Edinburgh edition in 1761, London editions in 1763 and 1764, a Glasgow edition in 1765, further London editions in 1774, 1776, 1786, and 1803, and a Dublin edition in 1821. The first American edition was published at Norwich, Connecti-

¹ See Philip Babcock Gove, *The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction: A History of Its Criticism and a Guide for Its Study with an Annotated Check List of 215 Imaginary Voyages from 1700 to 1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), pp. 295–300; Victor Dupont, *L'Utopie et le Roman Utopique dans la littérature anglaise* (Paris: Cahors, 1941), pp. 281–305; Jean-Michel Racault, *L'Utopie narrative en France et en Angleterre de l'âge classique aux lumières (1675–1761)*, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1991; Percy G. Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983) notices the novel on pp. 141–42, referring to the imaginary kingdom visited by Gaudentio as Mezzoramia. See also Lee M. Ellison, "Gaudentio di Lucca: A Forgotten Utopia," *PMLA* 50 (1935), 494–509.

cut in 1796. The original edition had had the words "Faithfully translated from the Italian, by E.T. Gent. London" on the title page, amended in subsequent editions to "Translated from the Italian," but in an early example of transatlantic literary theft the Philadelphia edition of 1799 stated that it was "Translated from the Italian / by E.T. gent., Philadelphia." There was also a Baltimore edition of 1800. Another publishing curiosity was a Dublin edition of 1798 in which *The Adventures* were printed together with a *History of the Inquisition*, the picture given in the novel of the procedures of the Inquisition evidently being taken as authentic by some Dublin literary paranoiac—1798 was the year of the great Roman Catholic rebellion in south-east Ireland. French language editions appeared in Amsterdam in 1753, 1754, and 1777 and at Paris in 1787 and 1797: this was a different translation from that of 1746 and utilized a mysteriously expanded text.² Despite the alleged Italian provenance of the work there does not seem to have been an Italian translation—perhaps in part because of the Inquisition passages—but a German translation was published at Frankfurt in 1751, and a Dutch translation came out at the Hague in 1775. *The Adventures of Sig^r Gaudenzio di Lucca* was thus one of the best-selling novels of the eighteenth century. As it was originally published in the very early days of the periodical press it seems to have escaped published criticism at its first appearance, but it was noticed by *Le Mercure de France* in March 1753³ and bitterly denounced as an impudent fabrication by J.G. Meusel in 1785 in his expanded edition of one of the great bibliographical works of the period, Struve and Buder's *Bibliotheca Historica*.⁴ In 1821 *The Retrospective Review* devoted sixteen pages to the novel, printing long extracts, praising it highly, and attributing it to the famous philosopher and ecclesiastic, George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne.⁵ Then, inexplicably, the novel sank into obscurity. In 1850 "the Phoenix Library: a series of original and

2 Information on editions is taken from the British Library Catalogue, the National Union Catalog, and Gove (*Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction*), pp. 295–98.

3 *Mercur de France*, March 1753, p. 116 foll

4 B.G. Struve and C.G. Buder, *Bibliotheca Historica*, revised and amplified by J.G. Meusel, 5 vols (Leipzig, 1782–90), II (part 2), 330–31: "Mera figmenta insunt, minime historia vera. Editor seu potius auctor in praefatione impudenter mentitur, dum veram historiam se tradere iactat. Si modo in ipsa narratione verosimilia protulisset, non adeo indignaremur: sed incredibilia ac mirabilia effudit, ut indignatio vehemens inde exoriatur necesse sit. Non viris. sed mulierculis credulis atque pueris narasse videtur."

5 *Retrospective Review* 4 (1821), 317–33. The Dublin edition of the same year also attributed the novel to Berkeley.

reprinted works, bearing on the Renovation and Progress of Society" published a cheap popular edition with a prefatory note stating confidently: "The following is a reprint of a Work, originally published in 1803, and which has been attributed to Bishop Berkeley." Since then, apart from a photographic reproduction of the 1737 edition issued in 1973 by Garland Publishing for the American university library market, there has been no new edition.

In the 1780s Andrew Kippis had attributed the novel to Bishop Berkeley in the second volume of his *Biographia Britannica* but in the third volume he printed the assurance of Berkeley's son "that his father did not write, and never read through, the 'Adventures of Signor Gaudentio di Lucca.'"⁶ In 1785 one "W.H." revealed in *The Gentleman's Magazine* that the true author was "Barrington, a Catholic priest, who had chambers in Gray's Inn, in which he was a keeper of a library, for the use of the Romish clergy."⁷ This "Barrington" was, more precisely, Simon Berington, the fourth son of John Berington of Winsley House, Hope under Dinmore, Herefordshire, who had been born in January 1680. The Beringtons were a noted Roman Catholic family: Joseph Berington, who was the first Catholic priest since the Reformation to go about openly in England dressed as a clergyman, was Simon Berington's great-nephew, and Charles Berington, Bishop of Hierocaesaria *in partibus* and Vicar-Apostolic of the Midland District of England, was a scion of another branch of the same family. Simon Berington was trained at Douai, became a priest sometime before the end of 1706, and taught at the Catholic college at Douai till 1713. He then became chaplain to a community of Austin nuns at Louvain till 1716, when, after a period of absence, he was forbidden by the Archbishop of Louvain to resume his post. He next served as chaplain to the Priory of St Thomas in Staffordshire even though he had proclaimed his support of the exiled Stuart dynasty, having published (apparently at Douai) a panegyric addressed to "His Most Excellent Majesty James III, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland Defender of the Faith":

Oh were BARDS Prophets, as They'de seem to bee,
I'de sing, young HERO thy great destiny:

6 Andrew Kippis, ed., *Biographia Britannica*, London: 1788-93 (5 vols only of incomplete edition), III "Corrigenda and Addenda to the Second Volume" *sub* Berkeley: cf. II, 261-62. For the attribution to Berkeley generally see *Notes and Queries*, series 1, vol. 2 (1850), 327-28.

7 *Gentleman's Magazine* 55 (1785), part 2, 757.

I'de search the deep recesses of thy Fate
And show what Triumphs for thy vertue wait.⁸

Later he became a member, eventually secretary, of the Chapter in London and librarian of the Chapter's theological collection. He died at his lodging in Gray's Inn on 16 April 1755. His most imposing publication seems to have been the 466-page *Dissertations on the Mosical Account of the Creation, Deluge, Building of Babel, and Confusion of Tongues, Etc.* (London, 1750) but at his death he left at least a dozen unpublished manuscripts including "The Quarrel between Venus and Hymen. An heroic Satyrical Poem in 6 Cantos," and also "Critical Remarks" on the same.⁹

According to "W.H."s communication to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1785 in which Berington's authorship of *The Adventures of Sig' Gaudentio di Lucca* was made public, "Mr Barrington wrote it for amusement in a fit of the gout. He began it without any plan: and did not know what he should write about when he put pen to paper."¹⁰ At first glance this seems consistent with the structure of the novel. It professes to consist mainly of Gaudentio's "Confession and Examination before the Fathers of the *Inquisition* at *Bologna* in Italy." The first ninety pages of Gaudentio's account is a series of thrilling adventures, rather in the Henry Rider Haggard style and very well handled and well written, especially by comparison with other adventure romances of the period. Then, Gaudentio having been taken by a strange people called Mezzoranians to their hitherto unknown country in equatorial Africa, a hundred and fifty pages of discourses on their history and institutions follow. The core of the novel is thus a description of a Utopia, with Tommaso Campanella's *Civitas Solis* (1623) and Denis Veiras's *Histoire des Sevarambes* (1677–79) as apparently the principal inspiration. In the final sixty pages the

8 The British Library Catalogue tentatively dates this poem as appearing in 1721, but at the end the authorship is ascribed to "Simon Berington Priest & Present Professour of Poetry in the English College at Doway" and the internal evidence of the poem also points to an earlier period. The British Library Catalogue is probably on safer ground in supposing the place of publication was Douai: the printing is humiliatingly inaccurate (for example, the last line quoted actually reads not "Triumphs for" but "Trinmphs fot").

9 Biographical details are from Joseph Gillow, *A Literary and Biographical History, or Biographical Dictionary of the English Catholics*, 5 vols (London, 1885–1902), I, 197; and Godfrey Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests: A Dictionary of the Secular Clergy of England and Wales 1558–1850*, 4 vols so far (Durham and Great Wakering: published privately, 1968), III, 12. Gillow lists Berington's writings (I, 198–99): even these shown to have been published seem in most cases not to have survived.

10 *Gentleman's Magazine* 55 (1785), part 2, 757.

adventures resume (though not as agreeably handled as at the beginning) and the account ends with Gaudentio's liberation by the Inquisitors. The text is intermittently interrupted by the Inquisitors, and decorated by weightily learned footnotes which are attributed to an editor, Signor Rhedi, and which give the real author an opportunity to show off the extent and profundity of his scholarship.

Closer examination shows that the novel is far from being as randomly and sporadically put together as it at first appears. The two narratives framing the account of the Mezzorania—the account of the journey to Mezzorania and the account of the journey back to the point of departure—have a balance and symmetry which are rare in accounts of utopias: Victor Dupont, who is perhaps alone among earlier critics in recognizing the quality of the novel, writes of “a sort of development in concentric waves ... which recalls a cross-section of a sphere composed of successive layers.”¹¹ The narrative itself is essentially a series of narratives within narratives: there are, successively or alternately, no less than six narrative voices within the novel, each one serving to give the semblance of credibility and authority to the successive narratives which they introduce:

1 The “voice” of the English translator to whom Signor Rhedi has entrusted a copy of the manuscript, and who appears in the preface (“The Publisher to the Reader”) and in some of the footnotes.

2 The “voice” of Rhedi, keeper of the Library of St Mark at Venice, who has been requested to give his expert opinion on the historical and geographical aspects of Gaudentio's narrative and who supplies the longer notes. As one might suppose, the authorities cited by Rhedi are similar to those in Berington's *Dissertations on the Mosaical Account of the Creation etc.*—i.e. the Bible, patristic writings, classical authors, “the learned Bochart,” and Bossuet, “the celebrated Bishop of Meaux.” One also notes that, like Berington, Rhedi is a librarian, though evidently installed (as Berington doubtless would have liked to be) in a more prestigious library. Rhedi seems an odd name, more Arab than Venetian, and may in fact be some sort of verbal conundrum or anagram.¹²

11 Dupont, *L'Utopie et le Roman Utopique dans la littérature anglaise*, p. 285.

12 The best we can suggest is that *Idem* (Latin: the same, the same person, oneself) reversed is *Medi* and that in certain eighteenth-century hand-writing a capital *M* would resemble *Rh*. In 1773 a novel was published in London entitled *The History of Rhedi, the Hermit of Mount Ararat. An Oriental Tale*, apparently by W. Duff.

3 The "voice" of the secretary of the Inquisition, F. Alisio di St Ivorio, whose letter to Rhedi explaining the circumstances of Gaudentio's arrest precedes the main narrative. He also notes, from time to time in the main narrative, the reactions of Gaudentio and the Inquisitors during the course of the interrogation.

4 The "voice" of the Inquisitors, in their questions to Gaudentio: numerous to begin with, they become progressively rarer; their object is partly to obtain further explanations, partly to ascertain his personal position on certain points of Roman Catholic doctrine.

5 The "voice" of Gaudentio, initially frequently interrupted by the Inquisitors but later on permitted to give his account as a continuous narrative: this narrative is itself divided between a personal account of his adventures and an "objective" description of Mezzorania, and when citing anything told him by the Mezzoraniens Gaudentio is careful to distance himself from their opinions: "Reverend Fathers! I only relate bare Matter of Fact, as it was spoke by the mouth of a *Heathen*, ignorant of our Holy Mysteries. ... I only acquaint your Reverences with the notions peculiar to these People."¹³

6 The "voice" of Gaudentio's informants in Mezzorania, particularly their leader, the Pophar, who recounts the history of the race.

But despite the elaborate apparatus serving to demonstrate the authenticity of Gaudentio's narrative, the text is allegedly incomplete, one important passage having been lost in transit. As F. Alisio di St Ivorio remarks in his letter to Signor Rhedi, "nothing looks so like an honest Man as a Knave" (p. 16), and the loss of a key passage seems almost too convenient to have been quite an accident. The combination of fortuitous occurrence and carefully scrutinized detail in the circumstances surrounding the presentation of Gaudentio's alleged narrative belongs to a well-established tradition. Many of the prophecies circulating among religious enthusiasts during the previous century had had a provenance not altogether unlike that of Gaudentio's alleged narrative: one such prophecy was "copied out of a book wherein was Wycliffe's works, lying in a tailor's shop at Harlow in Essex after the Dissolution of the monasteries"; another came from "An old written paper said to have been brought out

13 Simon Berington, *Memoirs of Sig^r Gaudentio di Lucca: Taken from his Confession and Examination before the Fathers of the Inquisition at Bologna in Italy ... Faithfully Translated from the Italian by E.T. Gent. London: Printed for T. Cooper, at the Globe in Pater Noster Row. 1737*, pp. 91, 121. References are to this edition.

of the Tower by Sir William Wade, and stopped in a hole in the wall in his house, where it was taken out after his death."¹⁴ Seventeenth-century novels are often introduced by similar devices: for example, Denis Veiras's *Histoire des Sevarambes* (1677–79), a utopian novel which Berington almost certainly knew, is allegedly printed from a text delivered into the hands of the editor by a friend of the author who, on his way home after his sojourn among the Sevarambes, has died of wounds received in one of the naval actions of the second Anglo-Dutch War. Among the novels of the same period as *The Adventures of Sig' Gaudenzio di Lucca* which embody an explanation of how the narrative came to be available for publication is Prévost's *Histoire de M. Cleveland*, the memoirs of a supposed "fils naturel de Cromwell" published in 1731, which are prefaced by an explanation of how Cleveland's son had permitted Prévost to take a copy from the original manuscript. Four years later Prévost's *Le Doyen de Killerine* is allegedly printed from a manuscript provided by the nonexistent dean's legatees.¹⁵ Authorial imagination had even been devoted to the question of why a self-revelatory manuscript should have been written in the first place: as early as 1672 the fictional *Mémoires de la Vie de Henriette-Sylvie de Molière* had been written allegedly to refute scandalous rumours, and were addressed as if to an influential friend, "Madame" or "Votre Altesse," who had requested this explanation.¹⁶ But Berington must be credited with a particularly inspired originality in choosing a judicial interrogation as the fictive pretext for self-revelation. Within a few years the intimate letter established itself as the standard fictive pretext for a first-person narrative, but as is clear from *Pamela*, the first real masterpiece of the epistolary novel, the letter format is awkward and somewhat inflexible. The judicial interrogation format, with its scope not merely for different "voices" but also for different referential locations for the different voices, and its emphasis on the whole question of the truthfulness and underlying motivation of the narrative itself, arguably has a much richer potential, for certain types of narrative at least, than the episto-

14 Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld, 1971), pp. 391–92, quoting British Library Lansdowne MS 122 f 31; and F.J. Furnivall, *Ballads from Manuscripts* (London: Ballad Society, 1868–72), I, 319.

15 Vivienne Mylne, *The Eighteenth-Century French Novel: Techniques of Illusion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965), pp. 73–74. Prévost's novels also appeared in English translation, *The Life and Entertaining Adventures of Mr. Cleveland, natural son of Oliver Cromwell* in 1734–35 and *The Dean of Coleraine* in 1742.

16 Mylne, p. 45. These *Mémoires* are by Madame de Villedieu.

lary form, and one notes in the present century the essential features of the judicial interrogation device have been revived in a number of self-consciously reflexive novels purporting to be confessions made to the narrator's psychiatrist.¹⁷

There is some indication that Berington was not unaware of such issues. The whole book purported to be a translation from the Italian: one of his other publications was *A Popish Pagan the fiction of a Protestant Heathen. Translated from the Dutch* (London, 1743);¹⁸ having resided at Louvain, a Flemish-speaking community, Berington was probably better equipped to translate a text from Dutch than from Italian, but as far as one can tell there was no more a Dutch original for the one text than there was an Italian original for the other. Claiming a foreign provenance for a controversial work was already a familiar publishing gimmick: nevertheless it suggests a certain style of provocativeness. Again, the French version published at Amsterdam in 1753, translated and edited by the miscellaneous writer Jean-Baptiste Dupuy-Demportes, restores sixty pages of text allegedly lost at the time of the original English publication and subsequently rescued from the customs at Marseilles; this rehabilitated section consists of romantic narrative and may not have been by Berington at all, though, since he had spent at least a dozen years—perhaps considerably longer—at Douai, he was presumably quite capable of writing French correctly.¹⁹ There is also an additional preface, or Avertissement, in which Dupuy-Demportes (narrative “voice” number seven) claims to have met the English editor in Paris in 1743, prints a translation of a letter from him, and adds that, apart from the sections rescued from the customs at Marseilles, various other omitted passages have been restored, “of which the first Editor did not judge it suitable to give a translation: we haven’t tried at all to discover the reason.”²⁰ This is either a dig

17 The confession-to-one’s-psychiatrist format seems to have been invented by Italo Svevo in *La Coscienza di Zeno* in the 1920s and popularized in English by Vladimir Nabokov in *Lolita* (1955, where the confession is written at the psychiatrist’s request) and by Philip Roth in *Portnoy’s Complaint* (1969).

18 The pamphlet was an answer to Dr Conyers Middleton’s “Letter from Rome; shewing the exact Conformity between Popery and Paganism.”

19 The passages from the rescued “cahiers” are given between vol. 4, p. 24 and vol. 4, p. 87 of the four-volume French edition (Amsterdam, 1754). A manuscript with lacunae caused by fortuitous circumstances later featured in another best-selling novel, Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771).

20 Four-volume French edition (Amsterdam, 1754), vol. 1, p. xi. The additions seem by no means to have been an improvement, but this does not necessarily exclude Berington’s participation: he was in his mid-seventies by 1753 and possibly past his best. Jean-Baptiste Dupuy-Demportes,

at the authors of the 1746 French translation or possibly a last joke of Berington's—he was then within a year of his death—or perhaps even a kind of *hommage* by Dupuy-Demportes to Berington, though indeed it is very likely that Dupuy-Demportes knew nothing about Berington personally.

The symmetry of the narrative has already been noted. Travel narratives and utopian fictions frequently consist of departures from Europe, arrivals somewhere else, and journeys back to Europe, but the *Adventures of Sig' Gaudentio di Lucca* goes much further, consisting of a number of duplications, recurrences, and parallelisms which strain credulity and which may have been introduced simply as devices to indicate to the perceptive the consciously fictive nature of the narrative. Ships are boarded at sea (pp. 32, 314), single combat is engaged in (pp. 35, 309), someone is placed under arrest (pp. 41, 303, 315), women fall insanely in love with Gaudentio (pp. 65–74, 328–33); the woman who secures Gaudentio's life (p. 37) is rescued by him in turn (p. 307), while the daughter of Bassa, rescued by Gaudentio from the Nile (p. 73), saves him (p. 75). This may of course simply be the result of poverty of invention, or perhaps the sexual fantasizing of a sworn celibate: Gaudentio is wonderfully good-looking and irresistible to women, but whether this is because he is a person marked out by a peculiar destiny, or because he is his creator's wish-fulfilment figure, or simply because he is the stereotypical protagonist of early eighteenth-century romantic fiction remains debatable. What is certain is that despite his normal avocations Berington was undoubtedly a close student of the fashionable literature of his day. In writing an account of fictional voyages he could hardly have been unaware of how popular such narratives were. The first edition of his novel appeared eleven years after Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*: in the half-dozen years immediately preceding the first publication of *The Adventures of Sig' Gaudentio di Lucca* there had been published *The Travels of an Adventurous Knight through the Kingdom of Wonders*, *The Travels of Mr. John Gulliver, Son to Capt. Lemuel Gulliver*, *The Wonderful Travels of Prince Fan-Feredin in the Country of Arcadia*, and *The Voyages, Travels and Adventures of William Owen Gwin Vaughan, Esq*; one might also mention Samuel Johnson's translation of Jeronimo

who died in 1770, published, *inter alia*, *Lettre d'un Anglais à M. **** sur la tragédie de Venise sauvée* (1747), *Le Printemps, comédie en 1 acte* (1747), *Le souper poétique* (1748), *Traité historique et moral du blason* (1748), and *Histoire du ministère du chevalier Robert Walpole* (1764).

Lobo's *A Voyage to Abyssinia*.²¹ Lobo's book, which Berington may of course have known in the earlier French version, might have particularly interested him as an account of a Roman Catholic priest journeying in tropical Africa: that Berington knew at least some of the novels named, or earlier works in the same genre, is sufficiently demonstrated by the accomplished and confident tone of his own narration. Similarly his account of the landscaped countryside of Mezzorania indicates a familiarity with the landscape poetry of Thomson and Mallet:

There are also vast Forests of infinite variety and delight, distinguish'd here and there with Theatrical Spaces of Lawns, either Natural, or cut out by Hand, for the conveniency of pitching their tents in the hot Seasons, with such Romantick Scenes of deep Vales, hanging Woods, and Precipices, natural Falls and Cascades, or rather Cataractes of Water over the Rocks, that all the decorations of Art are nothing but foils and shadows to those Majestick Beauties of Nature. (p. 256)²²

On the whole, the evidence of Berington's sophisticated knowledge of contemporary literature inclines one to the view that he could not have been unaware of the duplications and parallelisms in his narrative and that therefore they are conscious and deliberate, though with what object remains unclear. There is, for example, no indication that they were intended satirically, as a parody of contemporary travel fiction: though on the other hand, taking into consideration the oddness of a Roman Catholic priest's using the Inquisition as a fictional device, it may be that Berington was a practitioner of an unusually dead-pan brand of satire.²³

In any case, Berington's narrative devices are undoubtedly subordinated to a serious purpose. The heart of the novel, both structurally and thematically, is the utopian state of the Mezzorania. As in Campanella's *Civitas Solis*, Berington's utopia is a communist one:

They are all in the same manner Lords and Proprietors of their own Possessions, yet the Pophar and Governours can allot and dispose of all for the Publick

21 The novels listed are noted in William Harlin McBurney, *A Check List of English Prose Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), numbers 254, 263, 303, 312. *The Travels of Mr John Gulliver* is a translation of P.F.G. Desfontaines's *Le Nouveau Gulliver* and *The Wonderful Travels of Prince Fan-Feredin* a translation of G.H. Bougeant's *Voyage Merveilleux du Prince Fan-Feredin dans la Romancie*. Jeronymo Lobo's *Voyage* appeared in a French translation in 1728.

22 Cf. James Thomson, *The Seasons* (1726–30) and David Mallet, *The Excursion* (1728).

23 It should be noted, however, that English Roman Catholics of this period were inclined to maintain a certain reserve with regard to the policy of the Roman Curia, and tended to share the prejudices of their fellow-countrymen concerning such institutions as the Inquisition.

Emolument ... the Popbar is in some sense the Proprietor of the whole Country, as Head of the Government, and chief Patriarch ... they are all Masters, and all Servants ... everyone is employed for the common good more than for themselves. (pp. 212-17)

At one point Gaudentio likens them to "one gréat Family Govern'd by the Laws of Nature" (p. 214), and elsewhere he finds them "more like one universal regular College, or Community, than any thing else" (p. 232).²⁴ The details are not as fully worked out as in Campanella's book and, for example, the discussion of the question of workers' incentives to work in a society practising communal ownership seems little more than a sketchy paraphrase of Campanella. (On the other hand, since Berington's book had a far wider circulation than Campanella's, which was not even available in English translation, Berington's rudimentary description of a communist society must have been much the best-known communist text of the eighteenth century—other than Swift's account of the communistic super-horses, the Houyhnhnms, in *Gulliver's Travels*.) The ideological bonding which holds these perfect citizens together is a kind of competitive zeal to appear well before their fellows, a notion partly adapted from Veiras's *Histoire des Sevarambes*:²⁵

They place their great Ambition in the *Grandeur of their Country*, looking on those as narrow and mercenary Spirits, who can prefer a part to the whole: they pride themselves over other Nations on that Account, each Man having a proportionable share in the publick Grandeur, the Love of Glory and Praise seems to be their greatest Passion. (pp. 217-18)

They make a cult of their ancestors, and of urns containing sacred earth from Egypt, from which country their ancestors had migrated to central Africa, but, "They address all their Prayers, and most of the external Actions of their Worship to the Sun" (p. 191). The women also venerate the Moon: but both the Sun and Moon are perceived as merely subordinate to an unknowable Supreme Being called El.

The Mezzoranian moral order is contrasted with the immorality of an English Deist, member of a sect of Politici who, according to a footnote by Signor Rhedi, "were fore-runners of our modern Free-Thinkers

24 When referring to a "College" Berington does not mean an Oxford or Cambridge College, which would be an absurd model for a humane and amicable community; the adjective "regular" means belonging to one of the religious orders and "regular College" would be a convent or, for example, a community of Austin canons.

25 Cf. Denis Veiras (i.e., Denis Vairasse d'Allais), *Histoire des Sevarambes*, 5 vols (Paris, 1677-79), IV, 1-9. A Dutch translation was published in 1701 and an English translation (*A Voyage to Sevarambia*) in 1727.

whose Principles tend to the Destruction of all human Society" (p. 293), and who claimed that "most of our Men of Sense think one Religion is as good as another" and that "there was no such thing as *moral Evil* in Nature ... there was no harm in the greatest of Crimes, if they could but evade the Laws and Punishments attending them" (pp. 292-94). Rescued by the Mezzoranians, this Englishman repays them by breaking their laws and plotting a *coup*, till denounced by Gaudentio. Unlike the Englishman, who has had every opportunity to examine the truths of Christian Revelation, the Mezzoranians are persons of perfect virtue, except that hitherto they have had no knowledge of Christianity: but on his deathbed the Pophar asks to be baptized, and at the end of the novel preparations are under way for sending Roman Catholic missionaries to evangelize the Mezzoranians.

While Gaudentio brings to the Mezzoranians the first inkling of Christian Revelation, the Mezzoranians in turn reveal to him the truth about his own identity. Gaudentio is descended on his father's side from a Byzantine princess and from a Venetian admiral who had fought at Lepanto, but his mother is a mysterious foundling adopted by a Corsican family, who turns out to have been the long-lost niece of the Pophar himself. By marrying the daughter of the Pophar—who, like his grandmother, the Pophar's sister, is named Isiphena—Gaudentio seems in a symbolic sense to install himself within the patrilinear dynasty of the Pophars: though he is the maternal great-nephew and son-in-law of the ruling Pophar, the fact that his wife and grandmother have the same name suggests that he symbolically becomes his own great-grandfather, and also father of his wife—the Pophar himself. Whatever effect this may have on the succession, it obviously represents a powerful symbolic reintegration of a lost branch with the main line of the dynasty.²⁶ It is this theme of reintegration which is at the centre of Berington's mythic design. Mezzorania represents more than a set of moral examples; descended from the ancient Egyptians, the Mezzoranians represent the purest line of descent from Ham, second son of Noah, just as Gaudentio's father's family with their combined Venetian and Byzantine ancestry represent a principal line of descent from Japhet, the youngest son of Noah. Gaudentio is nothing less than the agent of the unification of two major branches of the

26 That the importance of the relationship is symbolic as much as actual is suggested by a curious, almost Freudian, slip on the author's part: the Pophar addresses Gaudentio as "Son of my Father's only surviving Daughter" (p. 114) when he really means grandson. In any case he had already adopted Gaudentio as his son on p. 56.

human race, and the significance of this reunification is a hidden text running throughout the entire narrative: on the one hand the adherents of a natural religion maintained in its pristine purity, on the other a Christian society which, despite the possession of Divine Revelation, is divided, confused, and uncertain. Gaudentio is obliged to explain to the Mezzoranzians that "our Law did really teach and command us to [do good to all, injury to none]; but that very few liv'd up to this Law; that we were oblig'd to have recourse to coercitive Laws and Penalties, to enforce what we acknowledg'd otherwise to be a Duty" (p. 58). The Mezzoranzians need to receive the message of Christianity: the Christians can only benefit from contact with the orderly and enlightened Mezzoranzians.

The implausibility of the various duplicated and paralleled incidents are quite overshadowed by what one might call the key implausibility of the whole novel—the discovery that Gaudentio's mother is the Pophar's long-lost niece. All the apparatus of successive narrative "voices" authenticating the narratives which they serve to introduce simply emphasizes the degree to which the core of the book is a fable, and it seems clear that Berington had an unusually clear sense that the function of narrative devices related to the fiction which they projected. One wonders where "W.H." got his information that Berington wrote the novel "for amusement in a fit of the gout ... without any plan ... and did not know what he should write about when he put pen to paper." This account probably originates with Berington himself, either some remark he made to "W.H." himself or to a third party who passed it on to "W.H." some time later; it may be considered as yet another narrative layer, narrative "voice" number eight.

One would like to have known more personal details about Berington. One suspects a somewhat melancholy life as a priest of an outlawed church, not always in good odour with his superiors, without an adequate market for the productions of a more than averagely able pen, a puckish humour perhaps embittered by habits of self-abnegation and concealment: unable for professional reasons to acknowledge his most successful literary offspring in his own lifetime, but at least spared the knowledge that the last and largest commercial edition of his only best-seller would not only attribute its authorship to someone else, to a cleric of a rival church, but would also totally misrepresent the history of its publication. And yet—all those narrative voices ... perhaps Fate itself wished to add one more.