CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE ITALIAN “READERS” OF BODIN, 17TH–18TH CENTURIES: READERS OF BODIN IN ITALY—FROM ALBERGATI TO FILANGIERI

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1. Discontinuity or Continuity

From the perspective of Peter Burke’s methodological approach, Bodin’s reception in Italian culture appears—even at a first glance—to have been many-sided. In fact, his ideas seem to have been received by concurrent or successive acts of censorship, translation, censored translation, refutation, partial refutation, concealed reading, selective reading, and confrontation. Moreover, most of these acts seem to be politically oriented interpretations of his texts.

Despite these *prima facie* impressions, and while the period and the point in time ending with the definitive inclusion of Bodin’s *Démonomanie* and of his *République* in the Clementine index of prohibited books (1596) have been widely studied, historical scrutiny of the following period is still rather sketchy. Therefore, in the absence of further studies, my paper shall focus on those texts, themes, and contexts, which suggest—either by direct or by circumstantial evidence—that Bodin’s Italian readership was not marginalized by the ecclesiastical condemnation of his treatises.

Let us begin by asking what the effect of the condemnation was. May it have caused a temporary pause in the studying of Bodin, followed thereafter by a slow rediscovery of his thought? Or should the condemnation in

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1 Translated from the Italian by Andrew Cecchinato.

2 This paper is a preliminary essay aimed at locating some significant contexts, prior to a more analytical research. For the general Bodinian bibliography see the *Bibliographie* of M.-D. Couzinet (Paris-Rome: Memini, 2001). For the text of *République* I have employed the Italian translation edited—with exemplary critical apparatus—by M. Isnardi Parente and D. Quaglioni, *I sei libri dello stato* (Torino: Utet, 1964–1997, 3 vols.). The textual quotations have been compared with the 1583 (Paris, Dupuy) edition.

itself be considered as a specific instance of Bodin's Italian reception, for it altered the conditions, but not the substance of the reasons why readers kept studying his main texts?

According to Roland Crahay, the power of ecclesiastical authority effectively to prevent access to prohibited books was generally overestimated. First of all, once a work's inclusion in the *Index librorum prohibitorum* with the clause *donec corrigatur* was determined, besides hindering the circulation of books it inevitably excited the curiosity of learned readers as well. For instance, it proved possible to revise and republish the Italian translation of the *Démonomanie* (1587) in two Venetian editions, prior to its definitive prohibition (1594). The translation of the *République* by Lorenzo Conti (1588) seems to have had a similar editorial success, but it had no chance to be printed again, despite the translator's shrewd censorship of the French text, because, prior to the decision of the Congregation of Index (1592), the Holy Office had condemned this work, as published in any language, in 1591. Further, local inquisitors often allowed owners of prohibited books to retain them, as part of their own private libraries. In spite of Rome's repeated injunctions to seize and burn all available copies of Bodin's treatises, and to deny readers access to these texts, many of the documents referred to by Michaela Valente demonstrate the weak effectiveness of such prohibitions and injunctions. For example, in 1591 Traiano Boccalini wrote to Giulio Pallavicini of Genova, reminding him of "il Bodino et il Machiavelli". It is likely that the letter refers to the Genoese edition of Bodin's *République*, which would have been prohibited shortly thereafter.

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4 See Crahay, "Jean Bodin": 167.
5 See M. Valente, *Bodin in Italia. La Démonomanie des sorciers e le vicende della sua traduzione* (Firenze: CET, 1999): cap. 2. After the definitive prohibition, 675 unsold copies remained to the Venetian printer Manasse: that means a considerable number of printed copies.
6 Considering the number of copies listed till now in Italian libraries by the “Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale”.
8 Firpo, "Ancora sulla condanna di Bodin": 181.