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Memorie della

Guido Horn D'arturo: the world, the passions and the interests of a contemporary humanist

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1. Guido Horn D'arturo

The vast correspondence of Guido Horn D'Arturo, as well as highlighting a dense network of interpersonal relationships with well-known personalities of his time, is particularly important for a deeper knowledge of the man himself, his lifestyle, his passions and his interests. Horn, in fact, was not only an astronomer with brilliant intuitions.

Born in Trieste into a Jewish family, Guido Horn lost his father Arturo, a teacher in the Talmudic school, when he was only two years old. His education was thus entrusted entirely to his mother and his maternal grandfather, Raffaele Sabato Melli, the rabbi of the city of Trieste.

He had no children, Guido Horn, or even a stable relationship, despite his numerous female friendships. From his correspondence, in fact, emerges the figure of a great don Giovanni, who does not hesitate to place an advertisement in a newspaper if he thinks it will help him to win the woman he desires. So it is not surprising that, on April 3, 1913, he posted on the small ads page of *Il Resto del Carlino*: "Independence [street]. Blonde lady reading at the window, please agree to a meeting. "Your most devoted and respectful admirer".[1]

There are also numerous letters that over the years he wrote to his lovers, which are always stylistically elegant and never banal, like the one he wrote to a certain Tecla on July 6, 1932: "My dear, I come back lonely to this ancient and claustral house, among these bare walls that saw, from room to room, from bed to bed, the sweet and painful stations of our love up to the supreme abandonment. All my senses have had their new and unforgettable joy: the eyes in their contemplation of your beautiful limbs, the sense of smell still inebriated by the varying perfume that emanates from your hidden concavities so as to arouse even more the virility of the lover, the sense of touch, so that from now on even the most polished surface will seem rough, the ear intent on hearing the moan, mixed with my name, coming out of your lips and the invocation preceding the long silence: "My Jesus, I lose myself!". Whenever you tie the candid kerchief you will feel my arm upon your neck to free you from the insistence of your admirers. I know you will not turn to others the still, stern gaze with which

[1] A M S - U B (from now on U), Historical Archives of the Department of Astronomy, *Fondo Guido Horn D'Arturo*

you gave yourself to me, when your lips remained sealed: it is mine and it will be my companion on the long journey[2] I am about to undertake, and for as long as I live".[3]

And there is no lack of letters rich in contents and cultural references. On August 30, 1934, Horn wrote to an unspecified "friend and lover": "I still have the sound of your contralto in my ears and I seat myself at the typewriter to write to you at some length, to make amends for the failed visit to the beach; after your inflexible (but justified) refusal I had no choice but to leave; and to offer with one hand the brimful chalice and with the other keep from drinking of it would not have been pleasant even for you. I took the road to Rimini, where the contemplation of beauty distracted me for a while from the lascivious thoughts that you had aroused. In fact, the Malatesta Temple, which I saw for the first time is a masterpiece, indeed a sum of masterpieces, which would need several days to examine minutely; in the intention of Sigismondo Malatesta who conceived it, it was to bear witness to the gut-wrenching love for his third wife Isotta. The superb architecture designed by L. B. Alberti, was ornamented with dignity and finely chiselled by countless sculptors: you, who like the male profiles, will be particularly struck by the profile of Sigismondo, sculpted by Agostino di Duccio in the first chapel on the left. I am so glad you allow me to bring you a memory of this journey; I had thought about it several times already".[4]

Having no family of his own, Guido Horn maintained close emotional ties with his relatives, with his brothers and nephews in particular, and with his mother, Vittoria Melli. To her, the real woman in his life, many letters are directed, with the affectionate heading to "donnetta mia" (*my little woman*).

He sends her twenty lire every month, even in moments of greater economic hardship, and the day after his appointment to the Specola of Bologna he looks for decent accomodation for the two of them. "I cannot wait for the two of us to be reunited"[5] he wrote to his mother, expressing the hope that she would soon be able to leave Trieste and join him in Bologna. This comes to pass in the spring of 1913, when both go to live in an apartment in Via dei Mille.[6]

Seven years later, on December 27, 1920, Vittoria Melli died, leaving Guido in a state of profound prostration that would last for several years, and would never abandon him completely. "I too have known pain, and as while my mother lived I could not feel any real pain, now that she is gone, I will no longer feel any real joy. She will have been all the joy and all the pain for me",[7] he wrote to his friend Ferruccio a few months later, in February 1921.

And to the former comrade during the Great War, Nicola Reale (he and Guido Horn were together in the 98th Siege Battery[8]), repeats: "You who knew the greed with which at the front I read the news from my mother, you can easily measure the immensity of my distress".[9]

It was the time when Horn, as a good Triestine, and above all a convinced irredentist, fought to remove his native city from Austrian rule. A city with which he always maintained a strong emotional bond, and which our astronomer often recalls in his letters. It is the city where he took English lessons from James Joyce and the scenario which formed him as a man, with the "endless walks through the deserted park and the migrations from caf to caf",[10] and the evenings at the Filodrammatico "theatre waiting impatiently for the raising of the iron curtain".[11] A city defined as "advanced" as regards interpersonal relations between individuals of different ethnic groups and religions, without limits. A place to which

2 The reference is to the trip that, in the same summer, Horn will perform in the United States and Canada.

3 U , Historical Archives of the Department of Astronomy, *Fondo Guido Horn D'Arturo*

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his mind continually returned with nostalgic euphoria, despite the aversion, never hidden, for his Austrian nationality. In March 1914, Horn wrote to his friend Ferruccio Elias: "I would like to take the great Italian citizenship as soon as possible. However, it is necessary to separate from this pig Austria".[12] And a few months later, in October of that same year, he confessed to the French historian Henri Bedarida[13]: "I read with great pleasure and not without emotion the story of your war adventures and while I rejoice with you at the dangers you escaped, I wish you to be able to contribute so validly, both with the sword and the pen, to the victory and glory of this noble and intrepid French army. We are anxiously following the events of the war on the other side of the border, with a sure faith in the victory of the Allies".[14]

Shortly thereafter, Horn, already previously enlisted with the Italian army as a deserter from the Austro-Hungarian army, played his part in the cause (he would always call himself a "soldier of the Risorgimento"). And the traces of his war experience are also present in the library of the Specola bolognese, in the *ex libris*: a rectangular sheet in black and white, with the motto *In puro are vita*. A motto engraved by Horn on "a wooden board, which [...] served as a sign on the Piave for shelter for those affected by asphyxiating gas",[15] and that the astronomer would make his forever.

But in that hated Austria, Horn had completed his university studies: first in Graz and then in Vienna, earning his doctor's degree in 1902, with a thesis on cometary orbits. And Mittel-European cultural education and the stimulating Viennese environment of the time, mirror of a rapidly changing Europe at the turn of the century, would have a considerable influence on the formation of the vast cultural horizon of his interests.

Probably because of his nature as a meticulous observer and because of his studies of the history of astronomy conducted on ancient texts in search of phenomena to be investigated from a modern perspective and with more modern instruments, he is fascinated by philological and linguistic issues. Thus, answering a question posed by his friend Arturo Castiglioni[16], he writes: "I am not sure that the word "subub" has a specific astronomical or astrological meaning, whichever you prefer. [...] Generally speaking, the word "subub" would mean "rope" and also "spherical cup", in no harmony with the text; on the other hand, there is the word "sciabub" which is equivalent to "id quo ignis accenditur", and another of the same root [...] "masc'bub" and signifies: "ignis ardens" and also "lucidus apparens" and so on, always in a concept of flame, in perfect agreement with "ignis qui volat per arem". It is therefore not impossible for the Latin writer to have taken the Arabic "scin" for a "sin" and read "subub" for "sciabub". [...] I do not despair of tracing the word in some text of astrology and then you can better specify the meaning, which as you have already thought, can not be anything other than "comet" or shooting star".[17]

And speaking of the tassellated mirror on which he was working: "*Settore* and *tassello* are the same word; only the first is learned and derives from "secare" the second is vulgar and comes from "talea" to *tagliare* from where regularly *tassello*. [...] The vulgar word is increasingly more expressive and therefore I preferred it".[18]

Evident then, is Horn's passion for the Graeco-Roman antiquities, ranging from the papyri of Ercolano to his enthusiasm for the discovery of the remains of a Roman amphithe-

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[13] Henri Bedarida, historian, literary critic and French academic, considered one of the greatest French Italianists, was also a French speaking reader at the University of Bologna, and participated in the First World War as an officer of the French Expedition Corps on the Italian front.

[14] U , Historical Archives of the Department of Astronomy, *Fondo Guido Horn D'Arturo*

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[16] Arturo Castiglioni, from Trieste, an irredentist, and the same age as Guido Horn D'Arturo, was a doctor and professor at the universities of Siena and Padua. His formation also took place in imperial Vienna.

[17] U , Historical Archives of the Department of Astronomy, *Fondo Guido Horn D'Arturo*

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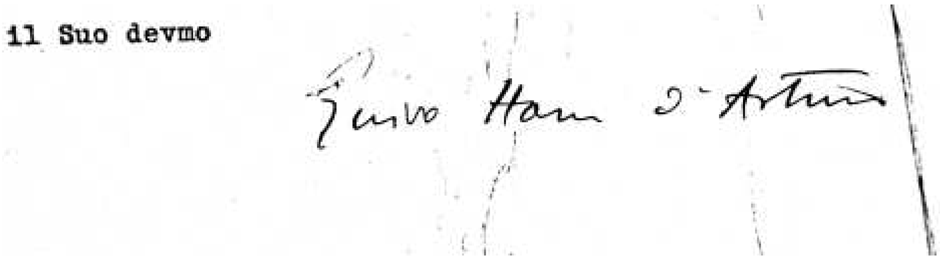

Fig. 1. Fondo Guidon Horn d'Arturo, file 1, n. 163)

ater in Trieste, and his linking of the mythological Aracne to the expertise with which his niece Lidia made him a sweater. And to his colleague Lacchini, author of an article on the Julian calendar, he suggests: "You do not speak of Roman civilization but simply of the Julian calendar because all the credit goes to Julius Caesar while the Romans did not understand at all what the reform consisted of and as soon as he was dead they intercalated a leap year every three instead of every four years and only Augustus put things right again 65 years later".[19]

Horn dedicated an important part of his life to sport, especially to motor racing and to soccer, which he followed as a big fan of the Bologna team. "Despite the bad weather, the Bolognese "Veltri" have taught Czechoslovaks what Italian football means", he wrote to his niece in January of 1929. "The goal has remained inviolate as ever. [...] These barbarians returning home must say that the only unbeatable team, or the only unconquerable goal, are those of Bologna". And then he reveals: "You will tell your ineffable little brothers that at the "Bologna" they will experience a field covering, made of sail cloths, designed by me; we will have the fields always dry even after the rain".[20] Soccer fields that, even today, are covered with tarpaulins to protect the turf from the rain, before a game.

Another type of game that fascinates him, and not a little, is undoubtedly the game of chess. A passion that in April 1933 led him to challenge even Efim Bogoljubov, a German chess player of Ukrainian origin, and a chess Grandmaster. "Master Bogoljubov played twenty-three games simultaneously on Tuesday evening in Bologna; I was one of his opponents, I was lucky enough to beat him, along with four others",[21] said Horn himself.

A passion that the astronomer shared especially with his friend Giorgio Morandi, his companion on visits to the Venice Biennale of Art ("I'll go to Morandi to see some of the etchings that he's about to send to the Venice exhibition"[22]), and not only. In July 1933, in fact, Horn wrote to the Bolognese painter: "You must come here with a brush to cover the conical surface of the prism with a rather dense color, except for a very thin generatrix: and as we now say the "o" by Giotto in the future we will say the "generator" of Morandi to indicate the unsurpassable limit of perfection".[23]

However, he does not seem to have been enthusiastic about mountain. With his friend Alfredo Corti, in fact, scientist, mountaineer and one of the greatest explorers of the mountains of Valtellina, Horn ironically wrote, in May 1934: "Write to me about the projects you have for summer and autumn; I mean lowland projects, because you can not expect me to follow you into the rarefied atmosphere, even though the motto of the Observatory, and my own, is "In puro are vita". The mere sight of a picture of precipices gives me vertigo. [...] Already the passion of the mountain is typical of an anomalous age like the present, while the ancients did not know it, and the poets sang of

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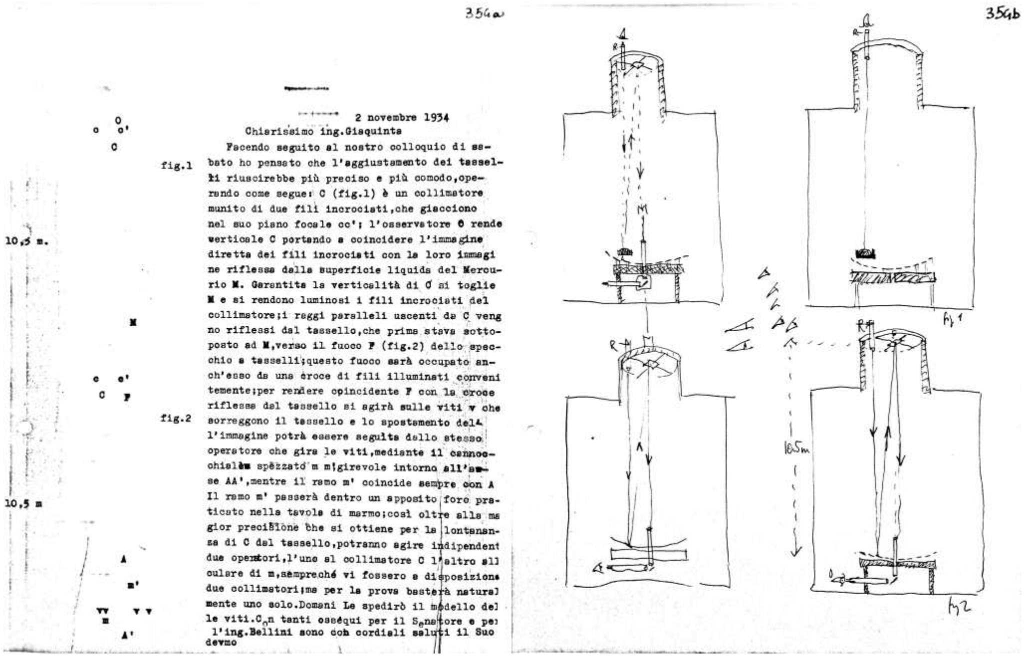
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2 novembre 1934

Chiarissimo ing.Giaquinta

fig.1 Facendo seguito al nostro colloquio di sabato ho pensato che l'aggiustamento dei tasselli riuscirebbe più preciso e più comodo,operando come segue: C (fig.1) è un collimatore munito di due fili incrociati,che giacciono nel suo piano focale cc'; l'osservatore O rende verticale C portando a coincidere l'immagine diretta dei fili incrociati con la loro immagine riflessa dalla superficie liquida del Mercurio M. Garantita la verticalità di C si toglie M e si rendono luminosi i fili incrociati del collimatore;i raggi paralleli uscenti da C vengno riflessi dal tassello,che prima stava sottoposto ad M,verso il fuoco F (fig.2) dello specchio a tasselli;questo fuoco sarà occupato anch'esso da una croce di fili illuminati convenientemente;per rendere coincidente F con la croce riflessa dal tassello si agirà sulle viti v che

fig.2 sorreggono il tassello e lo spostamento dell'immagine potrà essere seguita dallo stesso operatore che gira le viti,mediante il cannocchiale spezzato m m' girevole intorno all'asse AA',mentre il ramo m' coincide sempre con A Il ramo m' passerà dentro un apposito foro praticato nella tavola di marmo;così oltre alla maggior precisione che si ottiene per la lontananza di C dal tassello,potranno agire indipendent due operatori,l'uno al collimatore C l'altro all'oculare di m,sempreché vi fossero a disposizione due collimatori;ma per la prova basterà naturalmente uno solo.Domani Le spedirò il modello delle viti.Con tanti ossequi per il Senatore e per l'ing.Bellini sono con cordiali saluti il Suo devmo

Fig. 2. In a letter dated 2 November 1934 to the engineer Giaquinta, where he explains how he intends to place the dowels, Horn d'Arturo attaches an explanatory drawing. (U , AABo, *Fondo Guido Horn d'Arturo*, file 8, n. 354)

the peaks, but as seen from the plain. I cannot wait for air navigation to develop to the point where it makes the most impervious peaks accessible to everyone and puts an end to the morbid pleasure of climbing. Already I would forbid it by law, like suicide and gambling".[24]

Horn did not appreciate very much the concept of mountains even as metaphor. "I cannot accept this calling on the Alps to help whenever we must express the immense, the sublime, etc.", he writes. "There is nothing in the world less relevant than the height of the terrestrial mountains. On a globe of two meters in diameter, the highest mountain would proportionally measure just over a millimeter".[25] If we speak, however, of astronomical observations, the perspective changes: "*Caeteris paribus* the astronomer will always choose the highest peak, on which the light of the stars arrives after passing through a less dense layer of atmospheric cover".[26]

Unlike mountains, foreign languages always intrigue and interest him. Horn not only lovesd to read texts and literary works in their original language, but was fluent in German, English and French. He understood Dutch with some difficulty and started studying Norwegian, with the prospect of going to Norway, and Russian, of which he would say: "Russian gives only grammatical satisfactions. [...] It is interesting to find all the roots of other languages, barely counterfeited, and especially of the Greek, which [...] became the essence not only of the language, but also of the religion of those peoples".[27]

His vast horizon of interests ranged from philosophy to music. And in the summer of 1931, dwelling on the influence that the Italian Romantics had in France, Horn writes: "It

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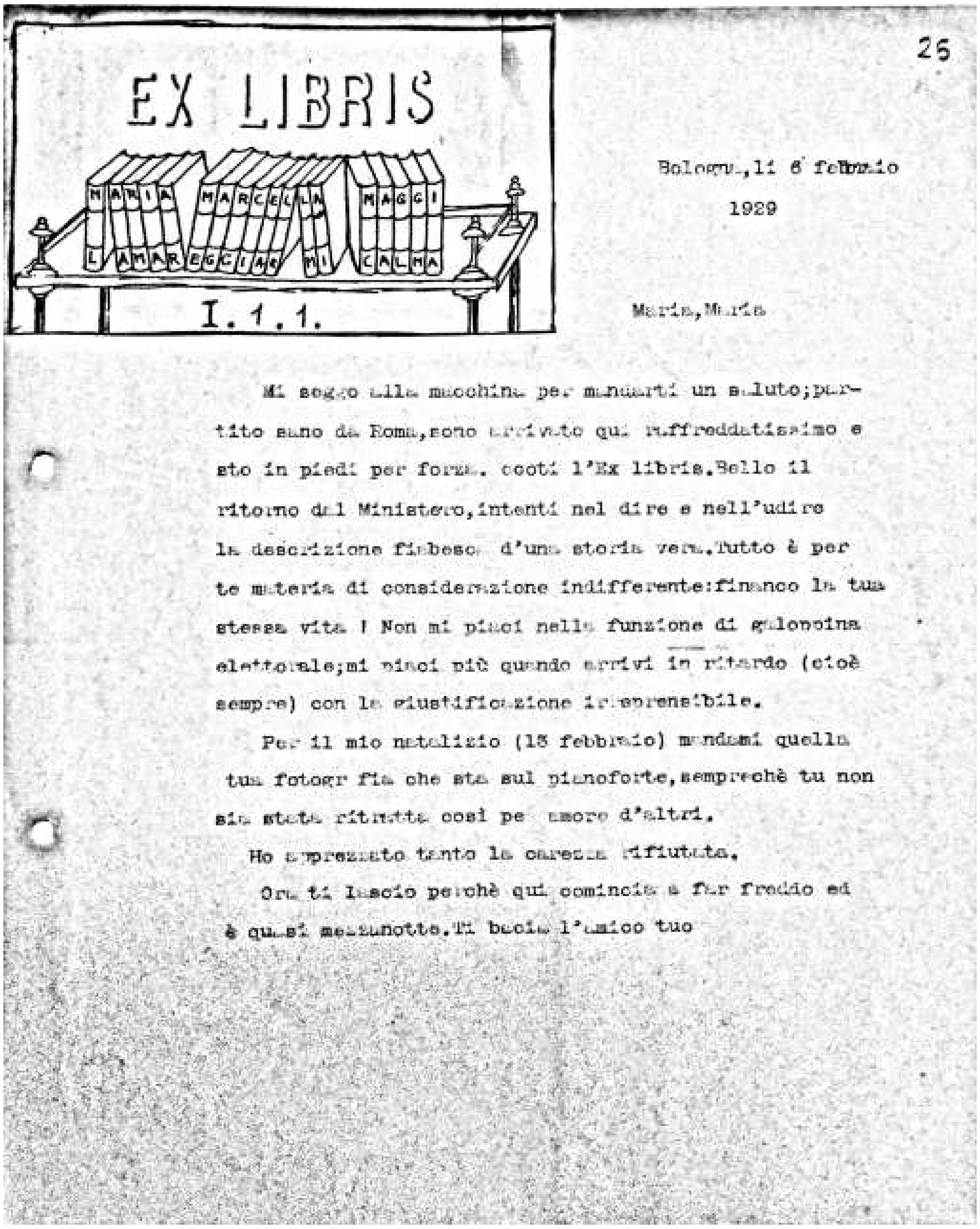

Bologna, li 6 febbraio
1929

Maria, Maria

Mi seggo alla macchina per mandarti un saluto; partito sano da Roma, sono arrivato qui raffreddatissimo e sto in piedi per forza. Ecco l'Ex libris. Bello il ritorno dal Ministero, intenti nel dire e nell'udire la descrizione finbesca d'una storia vera. Tutto è per te materia di considerazione indifferente: financo la tua stessa vita! Non mi piaci nella funzione di galoppina elettorale; mi piaci più quando arrivi in ritardo (cioè sempre) con la giustificazione irreprensibile.

Per il mio natalizio (13 febbraio) mandami quella tua fotografia che sta sul pianoforte, semprechè tu non sia stata ritratta così per amore d'altri.

Ho apprezzato tanto la carezza rifiutata.

Ora ti lascio perchè qui comincia a far freddo ed è quasi mezzanotte. Ti bacia l'amico tuo

Fig. 3. Letter to Maria Maggi dated 6 February 1929: in the *ex libris* we read the name of her friend, "M M M" and the writing "L' ". (U , AABo, *Fondo Guido Horn d'Arturo*, file 8, n. 5)

would be interesting to consider the musical influence in parallel with the literary influence as they are so similar, and it is certain that the penetration of literary romanticism has been facilitated by the great favor in which our music has been held by the French ever since the eighteenth century. And I think that the main vehicle used by the Italian language to pass the Alps was the libretto of the opera, while the great authors that you remember, from Dante to Manzoni were never really popular but only found their way into the hands of the learned. [...] In general, a Frenchman, too fond of esprit, does not always enjoy Italian literature, where it is entirely lacking, in tune with the solemn and the lapidary and it is therefore that of all the centuries the most accessible and suitable to French taste was the nineteenth century, which moves further away from the monumentality of classicism".[28]

It was precisely in France that the "seventh art", the cinema, had come to life, of which Horn practically witnesses the birth and rapid subsequent developments. And on the cinema, which he defines as an "admirable instrument, imitator of human thought",[29] on 18 January 1929 he wrote to his friend Bonacini: "I will tell you that I think the cinema has not yet given what it will give in the future, when it will no longer be used to represent the external drama of human life, in the treatment of which subject the scene with the spoken word will always be preferable, but rather the inner life and the scenes will represent not the events actually experienced by the subject, but his imaginary life, that is the one that the subject would like or would not like to live. How many dramas take place in the subject's mind alone, who judging from his external life, leads the most tranquil and normal existence! Thus one of the main defects of the cinema, which is its silence, will become a virtue because the mental drama is silent and consists almost entirely of scenes and not of words. How effective, for example, would be the representation of the ghosts that populate the mind of the subject with persecution mania, and the intolerable return of the ide fixe, from which the subject tries in vain to free himself. We are accustomed to the ordinary drama that has a beginning a development and an end, but the mental drama has neither beginning nor end, and it is born and dies with the subject. At most it changes with the passing of the years; so that the different acts of the drama will comprise three or four different period of the subject's life".[30]

Those were the years in which people were already working on the introduction of sound in the world of cinema, and on the topic Horn expresses his idea to his friend Maria Maggi: "In my opinion there is a place in the world for both methods, and as live theater has survived and will survive the silent cinema, so the silent cinema will survive the spoken word and each will continue on its way by each choosing the topics for which the one is insufficient and the other suitable and vice versa. But fashion is fashion and it may be that in the early days the fame of the silent is obscured and artists and companies that are famous and still powerful temporarily decline. They would benefit from a new idea at this moment and it would be necessary to present yourself with such an idea already fully worked out. Not, however a project about Leopardi, which is too much ours; it would be necessary to find a more internationally known topic, for example the life of Charlot himself: his miserable life in his native ghetto, then later the stunted life of the circus clown or the variety theater artiste, always dreaming of future glory, the delirious public, the wealth [...]; the tramp with an honest soul; the beggar of noble bearing. The artiste who studies and tries out the most suitable make-up and changes it and then changes ita gain, and how quips and grimaces flash into his mind".[31]

But soon the "spoken" cinema also conquered the astronomer from Trieste: "Reinhard's production of A Midsummer Night's Dream is a masterpiece and there are unforgettable scenes like that of bats and the other of the black fog cast over the world from Oberon", wrote Horn to his niece Lidia, on 22 February 1935. "What shall I say then of the character of Puck who would have provoked the admiration of the same Shakespeare who created him: this obedient son of the woods who by magic deletes old and arouses new

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love in lovers and on the screen truly takes on a supernatural aspect and sometimes wins out even over Shakespeare's word. What a cinematographic author Shakespeare would have been, he who felt the dream of constantly changing the scene (not like in the Greek tragedy) would have availed himself of the unlimited possibilities of the cinema to bring the actors and with them the spectator out of the material world".[32]

Shakespeare, together with Leopardi of whom he owned precious editions, was one of Horn's main literary loves. Those loves that complete his portrait as an authentic contemporary humanist, and among which Gioberti can also be cited ("I avidly read Gioberti's Civil Renewal, after devouring the Prolegomena and I am happy to have finally known the greatest writer of political things after Machiavelli, in Trieste they didn't let us read it"[33]), Foscolo, and the German poet Heinrich Heine, particularly appreciated for his humorous vein, so dear to the Trieste astronomer.

In fact, it is irony that can certainly be defined as the salient feature of his personality. "In my opinion, irony is the most appropriate look and comment of the multiple aspects of things", explains Horn. "The truth illuminating a single face with its straight radius neglects all the others. Indeed, the more intensely a man aims at the truth, the more surely he will hit far from it. It is unfair to consider irony as a vain ornament of conversation: it is an instrument of science, which Socrates and Plato taught to use and which Aristotle banished from the use and study of the world, with the damaging consequences that everyone knows".[34]

An irony that the astronomer shows in every moment and context of his life. As when, writing (moreover on the Bologna's Observatory letterhead) to the director of the Institute of Chemistry, whose staff was in the habit of pouring foul-smelling liquids at the foot of the *Torre della Specola*, Horn hoped that "the courtyard of the observatory be no longer considered as a receptacle of waste, and the air becleansed of miasmas, intolerable to human beings in general, and in particular to the astronomical family, which has chosen the motto: in pure are vita".[35]

Still ironically, Horn also commented on the political events of his time, showing himself to be an attentive observer not only of "heavenly things", but also of the reality that surrounded him, and not sparing anyone his sharp criticism. Very hard, for example, are the words he uses in the post-war period against the then US President, Wilson: "The world is sick and needs a good doctor; Wilson, instead of claiming to heal humanity, is rather a veterinarian and we hope that he will start dealing more with American foot-and-mouth disease and less with European gangrene".[36]

From Horn's point of view, there was also a shortage of good "doctors" in Italy. Indeed, his perplexities about the work of Italian governments are also strong, and even here there is certainly no lack of irony: "The Government having omitted to occupy the territories contemplated in the Pact of London at the appropriate time, that is, at the time when Orlando and Sonnino abandoned Paris (with the minds of choreographers rather than the minds of politicians) pushed D'Annunzio, at the most inopportune moment, into an incomplete enterprise, the more damaging to Italy the more successful it is. The Government should not have allowed itself to be towed by D'Annunzio, but should have employed the regular army in the occupation of all Dalmatia; even today it could still do so, and nobody would move a finger. A similar occasion will never be repeated: Germany impotent, Russia suppressed, England with the revolution at home, Wilson on the threshold of the asylum, France rightly worried about its uncertain future. Even the poets have understood that the moment of action had come".[37]

Horn's attention to political events remained constant also in the following years, and intervening on the possibility of a rap-

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prochement between the Italian Government and the Holy See, April 14, 1922, he wrote to his friend and former priest Rainaldi: "I would gladly talk to you about the latest ecclesiastics events and on the insane tendency to pacify the State with the Church, a tendency that seems to me to be no less harmful to the Church than to the State. With an absent and colorless dynasty like the Savoys, pacification would mean papal Italy. Suffice it to think of the delirium of the people of Rome only at the mere appearance of the Pope looking into on St. Peter's Square. What, then, if he came out of the Vatican and began to travel around Italy, in the face of religious majesty the gray-green of Vittorio Emanuele III would vanish".[38]

And four years later he confessed to this same Rainaldi: "I expect that I will soon be sent certain invitations that I find in the old books of the specula and addressed to the directors of the time: "You are invited to attend Mass in formal dress, etc." these fascists, after having saved Italy, want to assassinate it".[39]

Horn's irony remains the same even in a decidedly changed Italian, but not only Italian, socio-political context, the context that, in March 1935, led him to decline the invitation to a conference in Switzerland. "I fear", wrote the astronomer, "that my presence may be unwelcome to an assembly of Nazis and racists, to use these very pretty words; all the Jews having been expelled, it seems to me not very dignified to participate in the conference, although on Swiss soil they will abstain from political demonstrations".[40] And a few months later, in a letter addressed to his brother, he confessed: "Last night I listened to a wonderful lecture by Antonio Baldini[41] where words like freedom and human dignity were heard again, which seemed to have banned from the modern vocabulary. He spoke on "Carducci's Prose" and at a certain point I realized that I was crying". [42]

1935 was the year of the Nuremberg Laws, and Horn did not hide his concerns: "I am worried about the universal convulsion that is being prepared. Which finds Europe already tired of a war and a post-war period; while in 1914 the wounds were inflicted on the healthy body, now they are being inflicted on a tired, not say exhausted, body".[43]

Three years later, in the very Trieste that Horn was so closely tied to, Benito Mussolini announced the imminent promulgation of the racial laws. "I too feel the ground falling away from under my feet", the astronomer confesses. "The only comfort is the thought that the consequences will only fall on me and not on any wife and children that I could have had, if I had listened to those who until recently still urged me to marry!".[44] And on 21 October 1938 Horn experienced one of the moments of greatest discouragement, due to the loss of his teaching position and to his forced renunciation of the direction of the Observatories of Bologna and Loiano. "Yesterday I delivered Lojano to prof. Dore", said Horn himself. "At first I made myself strong, but when the car took the way back and from the Sabbioni the Observatory hill and the two buildings I had seen grow from their very foundations disappeared from sight, I burst into very bitter tears, which I could not stop for the entire journey, the banal comforting of my two companions could do nothing. To Dore who comforted me I said that he was seeing only one person cry, but that a whole people wept unjustly".[45]

Shortly afterwards, in November of that same year, he foretold to his Trieste friend Ugo Quarantotto: "The current state of affairs is very serious but is nothing compared to what awaits us, and until the extermination has been declared I will find everything acceptable".[46]

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41 Antonio Baldini, Roman and ten years younger than Guido Horn D'Arturo, was an Italian writer, journalist and essayist.

42 U , Historical Archives of the Department of Astronomy, *Fondo Guido Horn D'Arturo*

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This is the moment when Horn also thought of his possible departure from Bologna, and seriously thought of returning to Catania, a city where he had already worked in the first few years of his career. On 27 January 1939, in fact, he wrote to the Director of the Sicilian Observatory at the time: "Tell me some interesting news and if there is anti-Semitism in Catania, where I believe, however, that there are no Jews at all as there were none in my day. [...] I remember that distant 1907 when we were sitting opposite each other in the little room adjoining poor Riccò's study. I was getting letters from Olga who now lives in Paris in an attic, where I saw her again in 1935. And to think that I will soon end up in an attic, too, if I survive the persecution. I thought of coming to establish myself in Sicily to have the comfort (not just of my friends) of the beautiful nature and the mild climate. [...] But I will probably stay in Bologna until next May". [47]

However, the difficulties of the moment do not succeed in deeply damaging his way of life, and that humor that guided Horn throughout his life, did not abandon him even in the most difficult and darkest years of war and racial persecution. In October 1939 he wrote to his colleague Jacchia: "Humor is an irresistible force and counts in human life far more than brute force; it disarms the adversary and gains for us the sympathy of those few who understand it. Italy, which has produced geniuses in all fields, has very few humorists and those it has are not much appreciated; As for the Romans, they had no conception of it; the same is true of their literature except in the low latinity that sometimes imitated the Greek spirit successfully. Here is the scenic humor but it is of little effectiveness because not always first hand, but prepared; and the preparation spoils the pleasure, which instead becomes supreme when it shines out in conversation and especially in dialogue. In my family humor is hereditary and my paternal grandfather had a surprising readiness in this matter; [...] they say that even my father (who died when I was not yet three years old) had a subtle vein of wit that informed his every discourse. This precious human energy does not fail with age, and when old people have lost their liveliness in other things they keep it in humor and it is said that they even the last words whispered before expiring contain mostly a hint of humorism". [48]

And the anecdote that he related to Giovanni Battista Lacchini in August '43 is ironic. "Actually, I should no longer think of myself as an astronomer after what happened to me on the evening of the 14th when coming back from dinner and looking up at the sky I saw a magnificent first quarter of the Moon; so I said to myself: either I have gone mad or yesterday evening we were very close to the full moon? While I was absorbed in these considerations a passer-by seeing me look at the Moon told me: it seems to me that the Moon is eclipsed! In short, the ordinary man had understood before me, who was an astronomer, that it was an eclipse and I went home all disconsolate: it's over!".[49]

In reality, it was not, and having escaped the dangers of Nazi-fascist persecution, Horn returned to the observation of that starry sky that he loved so much, and carried on his studies, always with that spirit which, in January 1919, a few months after the conclusion of the Great Guerra, led him to write: "Italy needs an enthusiastic Youth and not a reasonable Youth, and both before and during and especially after the war we have seen and we will see how useless, if not harmful, the tendency to judge enterprises by the light of "calculations", silencing the voice of sentiment. The "calculators" of 1915 had foreseen Caporetto, while the enthusiasts of that time foresaw the final victory".[50]

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[49] Lacchini's Archives, Letter of 19 August 1943.

[50] U , Historical Archives of the Department of Astronomy, *Fondo Guido Horn D'Arturo*