

Lamberto Bozzi

The Irish Alphabet

Pesaro 1987

To Beth Berman and Mary Lawton

"...la divisa dal mondo ultima Irlanda."

Torquato Tasso

"La Gerusalemme Liberata" 1,44

A - Adrian IV

A Bull was sealed with a laudable note
When Nick Brekespeare kept Peter's boat afloat

B - Boycott

After obstinate Captain Boycott
Was caught up in an agrarian plot
He thought - 'Tis a shame for my family name
To be turned into a family blot -

C - Carleton

The hidden Ireland that his pen unfurled
Put Irish letters in the modern world.

Lamberto Bozzi

The French Alphabet

Pesaro 1988

"Difficile est saturam non scribere"

Juvenal

"L'armée américaine s'est repliée, a fui en déroute,
abandonnant chars, canons, munitions; et non pas même
devant les Allemands, mais devant les Italiens que les
Allemands jetaient à ses trousses."

André Gide

Journal, 20 février 1943

A - Armistice

When Hitler laid his clammy hands on France
After the infamous June armistice
He shocked the world with a quick step of dance
Then flew to Paris to the edifice
Tuned to his petit bourgeois taste for schlock
That is the epitome of neobaroque.

B - Blumsday
(June 7, 1936)

At the rendezvous in the Matignon
Capital, Labor and Premier Léon
Gave the French workers without delay
A shorter week and vacations with pay.

C - Casablanca colorized

Who needs a painted picture of Vichy
Can color turn into a whiter white
The candid uniform of decency
Whose small stars shone on the fleeing Semite
And that in tatters, to Gide's puzzlement
Gave the GI's an early punishment?
Color could help, perhaps, see Curtiz blush
If he appeared Hitchcocklike in this mush.

D - Deireadh

There was this wit and dramatist Oscar Wilde
Son of Sir William and so little his child.
His shrill mundane success was marred
At the drop of a visiting card
In which he was incorrectly styled.

E - Edgeworth

There was this woman whose artistic bent
Could, if unchecked, produce "Castle Rackrent",
But her fathers fetters put her world of letters
In the didactic mood then prevalent.

F - Famine

The Old Glory acquired a star-spudded trait
After the untuberous eighteen forty-eight.

G - G.B.S.

He whipped up witty words to animadvert
Upon a race that only rocks could hurt.

H - Hero

It was for pretty Kitty O' Shea,
A hero's portion after the fray,
That stone-faced Parnell blundered and fell
In his parliamentary heyday.

I - Irish

There was this language a little more than dead
That patriots tried to standardize and spread.
For a while Eire clung to this beautiful tongue,
But the results are better left unsaid.

D - Desk General

The Directors picked out General Clarke
To keep an eye on one fit for Plutarch.

E - Edgeworth

The shriver's eyes reflected the last glance
Cast by the martyred Monarch of old France:
No image-breaker dared touch such a thing
As the face with the last look of the King.

F - Franklin

Congress hard pressed for diplomatic aid
Employed a man of courtesy and tact
To secure an apt military pact
From a King marked for the National Blade.

G - Garibaldi

At Dijon this man sick with rheumatism
Beat the Prussians and hurt French chauvinism.

H - Hudson Lowe

This guy that dogged Napoleon to his tomb
Shamed all of England and one Irish womb.

I - Italian Campaign

It was outside Plaisance that Montcalm's guts
Cost him his freedom and five saber cuts

J - June 16th

On the Sabbath of misfits
Observe how aimlessly flits
That tragic bourgeois tramp
Making for the long Ramp
In incredible Auschwitz.

K - Kilcolman

Dai loro nascondigli in campo usciti
Pochi spiritati ribelli ibernesi
Giunser sotto il castello inavvertiti
Con lame, pietre e lunghi legni accesi;
Perse nel fuoco i canti già eseguiti
Il rio poeta dei poeti inglesi
Ch'alto volò e pur volò più basso
Di Ludovico e del divino Tasso.

L - Lage & Lac

Hugo aimait dire que l'Irlande entière
Avait assez de lacs pour remplir un calendrier,
Tandis que l'auteur de "La Condition Ouvrière"
N'y voyait que mares sales et fumiers.

M - Martello

At Cape Mortella the British forces were hard pressed
Under the flat-topped tower with the upright gunrest.

N - Neutrality

Vor dem armen Nazi Botschafter stand
Der parteilose Taoiseach von Irland.

O - Oliver's curse

Cromwell took Aston's life and wooden leg
To take the Millmount fighter down a peg.

J - Jail

Musing in the ruined Bastille, goes a stich,
Wordsworth picked up and pocketed a brick.

K - Kelly

The Celtic heritage of the Princess
Couldn't, in due time, but improve and impress
The good Monégasques good for Onassis
And as ridiculous as the good Swiss.

L - Lindbergh

On hearing the high-spirited machine
Half the people of the City of Light
Drove to mob Lindy at the end of his flight
Leaving half empty the Parisian scene.

M - Marshall to US Ambassador

Teachers, put in Pétain, caused the defeat
Of the army, the air force and the fleet.

N - Nap in exile

Why fly to America, the Tyrant thinks,
Where all would call me Forty Winks?

O - Orwell

'French deputies look like a set of crooks'
Says one of Eric Blair's posthumous books.

P - Persecution

It was the lot of Archbishop Talbot
To be locked up in a jail cell to rot,
And to this day a glass cabinet
Holds the head of Oliver Plunkett
Murdered for fear of a popish plot.

Q - Quotation

What itch, what urge had Sean to call P.G.
'English literature's performing flea'?

R - Revolutionary General

Dans un grand voilier sans espoir
Sur une mer qui sent le malaise
Hoche glisse à côté de l'histoire
Vers la belle malchance irlandaise.

S - Swift

On goes the irrepressible wake
In the church dear to Roger McHugh
Where rests the head with the big earache
Of that well washed do-shásta Yahoo.

T - Thackeray

The grand majestic Fotheringay
'Handsome off the stage' than in the play
Where women bear the whims of ghosts and men
Escapes the scrutiny of honest Pen.

U - Ulster

Six Irish counties with a reverend
That absolutely refuses to bend.

Père Lachaise

Epstein that had no use for Prince or King
As a graveyard monumental motif
Put Wilde under twenty tons on the wing
Then topped bad taste with a bronze 'fig leaf'.

Quoi?

'Lucia he couldn't love' Samuel the Silent said
'No, because he had no feelings and was dead'.

R - Referendum

Soon after his swift democratic fall
I caught a glimpse of General De Gaulle,
A beaten and benevolent gargoyle
Inside a stately car leaving the Dàil.

S - Shakespeare & Company

'Little you know the Irish', wrote G.B.S.
To Miss Beach the expatriate editress,
Turning down one of her subscription blanks
Touting Ulysses for too many francs.

T - Tocqueville

It was a good thing that this titled man
On leave of absence with the thin excuse
To observe the States from the calaboose
More than inside stayed outside the can.

U - United States

Green moved to his Fatherland to sit out
The war, the Germans, the mental blackout,
And all but quit French for an English close
But not close enough to his native prose.

V - Visionaries

It was one of those irresponsible acts
Done in the name of moderate liberty:
Shelley and two women distributing tracts
To a populace in abject poverty.

W - Wild Goose

A heavy hand was laid upon Mac Bride
For playing with fire in a black countryside;
It took all of Maud Gonne to defeat handsome John
Before that unpopular Eastertide.

X - Xenophobia

'Haven't you noticed' said Maureen Wall
'That our differences are small ?
The English and the Irish facially
Show but very little diversity'.

Y - Yeats

Born and schooled in orthodoxy then
Married to Susan Pollexfen.
Slow to get his portraits done
Had some influence on his son.

Z - Zurich

When Nora Joyce one Summer day,
As is reported by Richard Ellmann,
Dropped a wrapper in a hallway
She was confronted by a policeman
Who, in the gutturals of his dialect,
Expressed alarm mixed with dismay
And bade her forcefully to collect.

Lambozzi@tin.it

V - Vacancy

Bullit and Windsor both had a short lease
On the same Candé that was to prove
Unlikely as an embassy on the move
And no place where to trade one's headpiece.

W - Washington

This truthful man that set his country free
Showed Chateaubriand an oft-faked Bastille key.

X - Xenophobia

When Mussolini blundered into Greece
The French douaniers posted well east of Nice
To the armistice demarcation line
Welcomed the news with a vindictive sign
That set a limit to the Greek advance
And read 'Grecs arrêtez vous, ici France !'.

Y - Yeats's Translation

Marius Otto was there with all his worth
To see the Bard off to his native earth.

Z - Zelda

It was at Juan-les-Pins that Hem realized
Scott's wife was such as to be certified.

Lambozzi@tin.it

