

The book also seems disjointed at points. Almost all of the material has been published before in articles, and the book often reads more like a set of related articles than a monograph. The jump from Chapter 4 on Savile to Chapter 5 on the historical understanding of Euclid up through Savile is especially abrupt. The introduction attempts to explain how the separate chapters fit together, but the train of thought does not flow smoothly from one chapter to the next.

These flaws are relatively minor though. On the whole, each chapter's material provides a fine example of the incorporation of the history of mathematics into wider cultural and intellectual contexts, an area in which the history of mathematics has often trailed behind the main trends in the history of science.

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Guglielmo Libri, matematico e storico della matematica. L'irresistibile ascesa dall'Ateneo pisano all'Institut de France.

By Andrea Del Centina and Alessandra Fiocca. Florence (Olschki). 2010. ISBN 978-88-222-6003-1. XXII + 342 pp. + CD-ROM. 39 €

In the history of mathematics Guglielmo Libri (1802–1869) is perhaps best known because of his bitter disputes with Joseph Liouville and is still remembered for his erudite and influential *Histoire des Sciences Mathématiques en Italie* [4 vol.; Libri, 1838–1841] relying on many sources since lost. Respect for Libri the historian is usually paired with the assessment that he was not a high-class mathematician.

Born in Florence, his talents in mathematics and physics were so highly regarded that in 1823, by the age of 21, he was made professor of physics in Pisa. In 1824/25 he made his first extended trip to Paris where he became acquainted with Ampère, Cauchy, Fourier, Laplace and the visiting Alexander von Humboldt. He became friends with Sophie Germain and a protégé of Arago. After his return to Italy he became more and more interested in the history of mathematics and science while at the same time writing on physics and mathematics. However, as the Academy of Turin declined to publish two of his papers he decided to print them privately as *Mémoires de Mathématique et de*

Physique [Libri, 1829]. Charles Babbage saw them while traveling in Italy and was sufficiently impressed to seek Libri's acquaintance. Libri spent another year in Paris in 1830/31, learning and, as we might say today, networking. We also find him on the barricades of the 1830 revolution. As a result of his political activities, shortly after his return from France he had to flee Tuscany. However, his French friends and colleagues saw to his career in France, where he became member of the Académie in 1833 (taking the place of Legendre), professor at the Sorbonne in 1834 and at the Collège de France in 1843 (preferred over Cauchy and Liouville).

This is about as far as the book under review takes the story in detail. In these first 120 pages, Libri aficionados will learn a lot about his education and early career, his Paris connections, about his later disputes with Arago (after he fell out with him) and Liouville (who considered Libri a mediocre mathematician and accused him of plagiarism). The biographical part is followed by a discussion of Libri's mathematical work (60 pages) and the genesis of his *Histoire des Sciences Mathématiques en Italie* (130 pages). An appendix of unpublished documents is added on CD-ROM, particularly including 42 letters to and from Libri and the diaries of his two Paris trips of 1824/25 and 1830/31 (another 235 pages as PDF file, which one might either consider a nice and inexpensive way to include extra material or a further step towards the deterioration of publishing standards).

The short part on Libri's mathematics gives a detailed description of his mathematical papers without, however, dwelling much on the historical context. In the part on Libri the historian an impressive amount of detail on his historical research and the publication history of the *Histoire* is given along with thorough discussions of its reception in Italy and Germany. However, the very important political dimension of the *Histoire* is strangely absent. This can, perhaps, be illustrated by focusing on Galileo who is heavily featured in the final volume of the *Histoire* by the émigré Libri frustrated with Italian politics. Thus it is not surprising that Libri presented Galileo as a symbol of revolution and portrayed him as martyr and victim of ecclesiastical persecution. According to Libri, Galileo was to be honored as the father of the great revolution in the sciences ["Cette grande révolution est due à Galilée", Libri, 1838–41, vol. IV, 157]. He openly fashioned a new Galileo out of these aspects, reverberating the apotheosis of the 17th century, turning Galileo into a divine intellect who had descended from the heavens and brought hitherto unknown creative genius to the earth. Thus Libri's Galileo became a symbol of Italian revolutionary potential, who had challenged the old authorities and achieved the transformation of the hierarchy of scientific disciplines. By his efforts to mint Galileo into an emblem of the Risorgimento, the movement of Italian unification, Libri widely disseminated the conception of Galileo as a symbol of the revolution in the sciences. Thus in analyzing the *Histoire* it is essential to be aware of Libri's political convictions.

What is completely missing in Del Centina's and Fiocca's treatment of Libri is his later career. Libri's biography has not yet been made into another Hollywood epic about the fatal attraction of books though by way of script one could easily turn to the biography by Alessandra Maccioni Ruju and Marco Mostert [Maccioni Ruju and Mostert, 1995]. There we find a description of how following the revolution of 1848, when he fell out of favor, Libri fled to England as his true passion, the systematic looting of rare books and manuscripts from Italian and French libraries and archives, was revealed. The 'Libri affair' was debated by academics all over Europe. When Sotheby's had his magnificent library on sale in the late 1850s and early 1860s the catalogue printed for the occasion was a volume of more than one thousand pages. His reputation was ruined when he returned to Italy after a long exile in 1868 shortly before his death.

The authors were induced to write on Libri by the fact that in 1999 a substantial part of Libri's manuscripts became available in the Biblioteca Moreniana in Florence. The earlier biographies of Maccioni Ruju and Mostert [Maccioni Ruju and Mostert, 1995] and Giuseppe Fumagalli [Fumagalli, 1963] had concentrated on the spectacular aspects of Libri's life. Thus it is an important step that Del Centina and Fiocca, who have already written on the fate of the Libri papers [Del Centina and Fiocca, 2004], set out to fill this gap turning to Libri's work in mathematics and history of science and mathematics. However, further research, as for instance undertaken recently by Caroline Erhardt, will be needed to root Libri more deeply in 19th-century mathematical culture, scientific controversies and the historiography of history of science and mathematics.

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