

Illustration

VITTORIO TRAININI

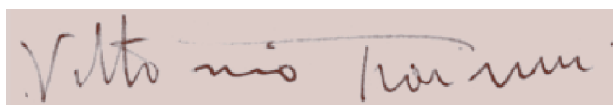
(ITALIAN ARTIST, MOMPIANO DI BRESCIA, 1888-1969)

"The works of Vittorio Trainini are, in the specific field, very remarkable and curious. The attraction for natural products that become later formal elaborations is also interesting, a process that is linked to a very old tradition. But I must add that this type of production especially sacred, is still too close to our time and our eye is still too conditioned by the taste of the vanguards to evaluate it objectively; time will come for a dispassionate reading".

Federico Zeri (art historian)

Only art can rise from the ashes, from the deepest oblivion. It is not easy to exonerate it from history. The passion that gave it its genesis nostalgically returns to the period of other men who often surprisingly contemplate the resurgence of creation. Art critics try to trace the mysteries of the works and of the lost artists; to inquire into the validity of paintings that return timelessly. Finding one of them is a prize, which, like art, has no material value, but the crown of honor that delivers the finding. This was not my purpose. I had hints of a Trainini painter lost in my family tree, but the real interest was centered on my ancestors. Nothing else. I did not inquire; I just stumbled upon my blood ancestor. I had a single clue. Once my father mentioned almost without emphasis *"we come from Brescia."* Those words were the reference that now impelled me on that day when I reached the city. I took possession of a *"tavola calda"* (bar) with a trembling table sitting on the cobbles of the central piazza. In that summer noon I asked for an espresso and the telephone directory. I noticed a certain surprise in the waiter. Then I checked with amazement the number of pages with the name Trainini. They were all there. Finding a beginning became impossible. In front of me the *consiglio comunale* (town council) and the cathedral were fixed in my pupils for a long time. I gave up trying, and while paying the bill, I commented on the reason for my rather unusual request. There I found that in Italy art is naked and visible in the streets. It is the culture of the town. I perceived a certain light in the expression of the waiter. Then he expressed with the satisfaction of being useful: *"guarda, signore, c'è una casa dei Trainini in via Leonardo da Vinci. È del pittore"*. ("Look sir, there is a Trainini house in via Leonardo da Vinci. It belongs to the painter").

I left to meet it. I found it on the outskirts of the city. It was a wide avenue with a striking distinctiveness: it had only one sidewalk. The other was replaced by a channeled river that ran agile, crystalline, with an interesting



"Self-portrait of Vittorio Trainini"

flow. On the opposite bank of the watercourse there rose a row of palatial, renaissance and romanesque houses. A passerby told me *"Una di quelle case è quella che stai cercando. Deve andare da dietro"*. ("One of those houses is the one you are looking for. You must go round the corner".) Suddenly, everything was simplified. One of those mansions had an oval mosaic on the pillar that supported the entrance gate. It read "G. Trainini".

Behind the railings there was a large ostentatious park of old trees and sculptures. In the background there was a house with two towers with a stone staircase in the middle. I did not need to announce myself. A middle-aged gentleman came hurrying up from an angle hidden to my sight.

-*Signore è cosa vuoi??* (Sir, what are looking for??)

Given my exaltation I could not think of another idea but to say straightforwardly. -*Sono Trainini*, (I am Trainini) I come from Buenos Aires – while at the same time I handed my passport. I noticed his surprise, but he replied calmly:

-*Come posso aiutarti?* (How can I help you?)

I told him that I desired to know about my family tree, just that. I noticed a relief in his face that at the end of the meeting I would understand.

- *Non sono un Trainini. Ho comprato questa casa da Gianluigi e Lucia, i figli di Giuseppe Trainini, ma passo.* (I am not a Trainini. I have bought this house from Gianluigi and Lucia, Giuseppe Trainini's children.)

Obviously I related the entrance plaque to this name. I entered the park. While he led me up the stairs to a high floor, on the side walls I saw large matrices with drawings in perspective, which the painters use to transmit to the frescoes for the vaults and domes. He must have noticed my interest. He stopped before one of them to explain to me -*Sono storici, appartengono al pittore Vittorio Trainini, il nipote di Giuseppe. Ha lavorato in oltre cento chiese dall'Italia.* (They are historical, they belong to the painter Vittorio Trainini, Giuseppe's nephew. He has worked in more than a hundred churches in Italy.)

I felt moved. -*Signore ...* (Sir...)

- *... Ingegnere Raúl Bottega ...* (Engineer Raúl Bottega) - he said extending his right hand.

- *... I had a reference in my ancestors of Vittorio the painter.*

-*Posso aiutarti, ottenere abbastanza dai Trainini.* (I can help you know a lot about the Traininis.)

We arrived at a terrace-like place packed with pots with leaves and multicolored flowers. To my surprise he invited me to lunch with his wife. The conversation was prolonged. He reassured me at first by repeating -*conosco bene i Trainini.* (I know the Traininis well.)

He told me that Vittorio (Figure 1) was the nephew of the decorator Giuseppe Trainini, very prestigious in the city and that the house had been built by both of them. Vittorio was an important painter, to such an extent that when buying this house from Giuseppe's children, he acquired the commitment by municipal order that if he sold it only the state could buy it. It had been declared a historical monument. Vittorio had works in innumerable basilicas and churches, especially in northern Italy. When commenting on the inquiries about my genealogy and with his knowledge about the Trainini family, we corroborated that Alessandro, my grandfather, who had left Italy due to the imminence of the First World War, was the painter's cousin. He died young without returning to his homeland. The minimal presumption that floated around me was reasonable. At this point in the conversation I considered that my host had already ruled out that my visit was for any inheritance. He himself dialed Gianluigi and Lucia, with whom I was able to rescue something more from my past. When I decided to say goodbye I did not know that the biggest finding was yet to come. In fact, it is the one which justifies this story, since at this point the insignificant mundane act of the visit is linked with

the eternity of art. Without thinking I would exhume a hidden work of art.

-*Vieni con me, devo mostrarti un segreto.* (Come with me, I have a secret to show you.)

He took me downstairs to a basement that had the same beauty as the rest of the house. He opened a door, solid and artistically molded, with two keys. He warned me that I was going to feel cold because the room was acclimated to preserve the walls. Upon entering we were in complete darkness. He reached the opposite side to open a window with stained glass and external blinds.

-*Vieni più vicino.* (Come closer.)

When I reached the opening, I saw that the river flowed rushing along its side. He took my arm and turned me to the right.

-*Aspettare.* (Wait)

He moved to one side and turned on the light. Before my eyes, a fresco that covered the entire wall (cover work) came into view. I was stunned. Then, as I walked through the room, endowed with remarkable pictorial details, I found that no piece of it lacked artistic work. The zodiac was painted in the ceiling.

Tutto è stato fatto da Vittorio. Questo lavoro non è noto. Non è aperto al pubblico. Rappresenta la sua famiglia al momento di essere dipinta. Dietro a tutto, come a spiare la scena, c'è Giuseppe. Di fronte a lui, a sinistra, Vittorio. Il lavoro si chiama "La famiglia" [cover work]. Significava che stavano lasciando la vita mentre i più giovani perseguivano il sogno artistico che coltivavano con pennelli, mandolino, libri. Quelli più avanti sono Gianluigi e Lucia. Questo affresco ha reso la casa un monumento storico (Everything was done by Vittorio. This work is not known. It is not open to the public. It represents his family at the moment of being painted. Behind everyone, as if spying on the scene, is Giuseppe. In front of him, on the left, Vittorio. The work is called "The family" (cover work). It symbolized that they were leaving life while the younger ones pursued the artistic dream that they cultivated with brushes, mandolin, books. The ones in front are Gianluigi and Lucia. This fresco made the house a historical monument).

He had the delicacy to leave me alone for a moment. I had a hard time recovering from tears. Before leaving I broke the secret of the place with a permitted photograph. The flash shone in Vittorio's eyes, crossing in an instant a century of absence between Brescia and Buenos Aires. When I said goodbye, I encouraged myself to a confession of the soul.

-*Non so come Gianluigi e Lucia ti abbiano venduto la casa* (I don't know how Gianluigi and Lucia could sell you the house)

I felt an honest look at the moment he answered - *Non lo so neanche io.* (Neither do I)

When I left, I was welcomed by the Silvio Pellico Street, where the Trainini House stands. I looked at the sky. The solar light of summer hid the presence of the dead stars. I perceived that the brilliance of one of them had been rescued from oblivion.

Jorge C. Trainini