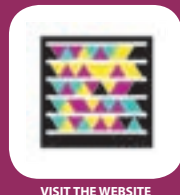


GHERARDO NERUCCI AND THE “NOVELLE MONTALESI” (“POPULAR TALES FROM MONTALE”)

Two distinguished citizens of Montale date back to the Risorgimento. The first is the priest Atto Vannucci of Tobbiana, a well-known politician and journalist, member of the Accademia della Crusca, the deputy in the first Italian parliament, and later a Senator of the Italian Kingdom. The second is Gherardo Nerucci, a landowner in Montale, who, as a young university student, fought as a sergeant at the battles of Curtatone and Montanara, and participated in many ways in the libertarian movement. Nerucci had studied law but soon was attracted by literature and held the Greek chair at the Forteguerra. His passion for linguistic and vernacular studies led him to collect and publish a volume of folktales entitled “*Sessanta novelle popolari montalesi*” (“Sixty Popular Tales from Montale”), which the town of Montale has re-issued in a lovely edition published by Roberto Fedi. And so Nerucci did something good on a cultural and on, what we would now call, a local marketing level as the short stories use the quite delightful Montale vernacular to interweave tales of fantasy and everyday life in the nineteenth century. This language is used to recount their enchanting adventures of the ogre, the magician with seven heads, the king of France, the shepherd’s and the Emperor’s sons, Fanta-Ghirò, the cunning Caterina, fearless Giovannin and other charming company. Alongside them is the delightful tale of Prezzemolina, a modern-day re-telling of whose story the City recently sponsored at Villa Smilea, with a participatory work of art created by Sandra Tomboloni.



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ITINERARIES OF ART AND HISTORY

MONTALE AND ITS MOUNTAINS

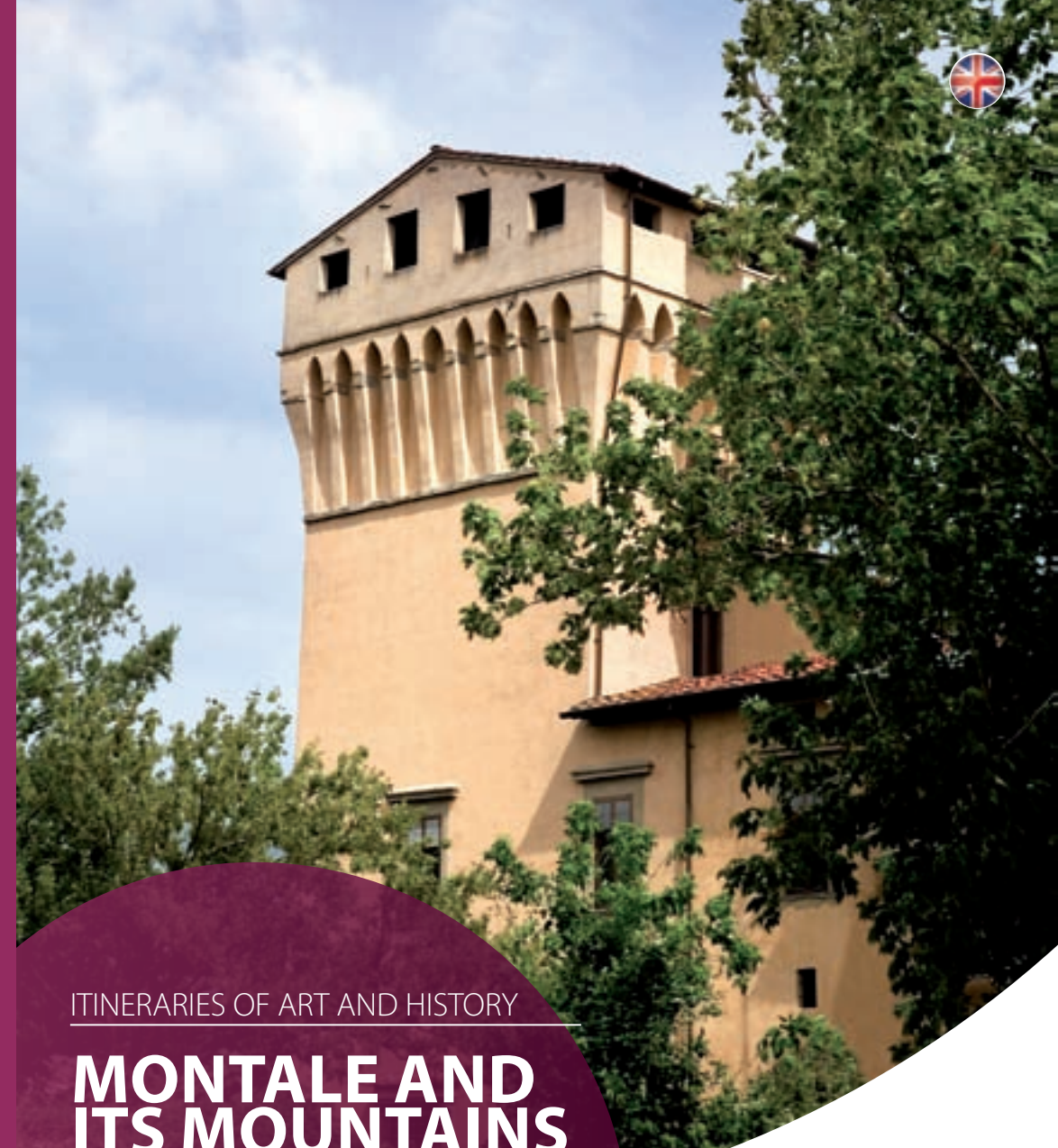


**AGENZIA
PER IL TURISMO**
ABETONE PISTOIA
MONTAGNA P.S.E.



Intervento realizzato all'interno delle azioni previste dal progetto interregionale (L.135/2001 art. 5) "Valorizzazione comprensorio sciistico toscano emiliano" cofinanziato da Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri - Dipartimento per lo sviluppo e la competitività del turismo - e dalla Regione Toscana

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MONTALE AND ITS MOUNTAINS

Like Agliana, Montale also traces its origin to the *Hellana* rest stop along the Roman Via Cassia, whose route was probably parallel, if not identical, to that of the current Via Montalese. However, at least the last part must have crossed the ancient course of the Bure River – later moved by a Communal land reclamation project – at the Seiarcole bridge, with a

roadside shrine built on the ruins of the remaining arches. From the Lombard period, there is the monastery of San Salvatore in Alina (Agn), an important hospice for travelers who, arriving at that crossroads, took the mountain road. The road passed by the parish of Villiano, the village of Bronia (an ancient spa), and the parishes of Fognano, Tobbiana and San



Poteto until arriving at the Cascina di Spedaletto (another *hospitium*) and then crossing over towards Acquerino and Badia a Taona as far as the Lombard arimannia (settlements of freemen warriors) in the mountains that opposed the Byzantine castles. This important road could have crossed another track that passed from the plains of Santomato to the still existing (but ruined) parish of Santa Lucia, known, until recently, for a small cypress tress had grown through the stone slabs of the roof. The center of this vast territory was the parish church of Villiano (Montale's ancient name), surrounded



by a scattering of huts. Thanks to its rich soil, the valuable cultivation of grapevines and olives began, which still marks the area today. But, very nearby, in Montemurlo was the feudal castle of the Guidi counts who, extending their influence towards the plains of Pistoia, attacked Villiano. When Pistoia was constituted as a free Commune and began to expand into its surrounding countryside, it had to defend itself against threats. So it built a fortified castle just above the church, in a place called Montale. With an official Communal declaration, this name was imposed on the entire

rural community that recorded 113 "*fochi*", or families, their members numbering between five and six hundred in the 1244 Pistoia tax census. By then, Montale's political and economic roles were well established, even being noticed by the Guelph faction of Florence and Lucca. They made war on Ghibelline Pistoia at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and conducted the disastrous 1305-06 siege against the smaller city. The general battle took place in 1303 when the castle of Montale, Pistoia's post in the direction of Florence, was attacked, captured, and destroyed.

