

Introduction of Lina Bolzoni, plenary speaker, XXIX International Congress of the  
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It is a particular pleasure and privilege for me to have this opportunity to introduce Lina Bolzoni, Professor of Italian Literature at the University of Pisa. A pleasure and privilege because she is an old friend and much-admired scholar, to whose work I, like many others, am much indebted. Professor Bolzoni has received wide recognition and many honors, including, if I may indulge in a bit of American campanilismo, guest professorships and visitorships at Harvard, UCLA and the Getty Center for Art History and the Humanities. I first knew Professor Bolzoni through her fundamental study of Giulio Camillo's seminal treatise, *Il teatro della memoria*; her explication finally made sense to me of a book of which I had owned a first edition for years, but which seemed beyond the comprehension of an ordinary brain like my own.

This introduction is a particular pleasure and privilege, however, because I first met Professor Bolzoni personally at an occasion that was a kind of pre-incarnation of the present one—when I was invited to participate in a colloquium devoted to memory that she organized together with the historian of science Pietro Corsi in Florence in 1989, with the wonderfully bivalent title *La cultura della memoria*, where “cultura” meant both culture and cultivation. The conference was accompanied by one of the most stimulating exhibitions I have ever seen, with the equally suggestive and untranslatable title, *La fabbrica della memoria*, where “fabbrica” means something like factory, structure and

crucible, all at once. The whole experience was in itself an unforgettable Theater of Memory.

But rather than dwell on Professor Bolzoni's numerous publications, I want to emphasize two aspects of her work that I think especially pertinent and instructive to our discipline of art history. In general, mnemonics is a theory and history of words—their sounds, their meanings, and their effects, and traditionally it has been treated as a branch of literary studies, notably rhetoric. Lina Bolzoni has greatly enlarged our vision of the subject, both literally and figuratively, in two respects. She has revealed time and again, and in many fascinating ways, the intimate relation between words and images, mental as well as pictorial, as mutually reinforcing and illuminating features of one, coherent underlying process. Her most recent book, published last year by Einaudi, *La stanza della memoria. Modelli letterari e iconologici nell'età della stampa*, is devoted to this theme, and you will shortly hear and see for yourselves a demonstration of her powerful mode of analysis.

The second great contribution, particularly in her collaboration with Pietro Corsi, has been to expand the study of mnemonics into the realm of science, and I do not mean social science, as one might expect, but the cognitive sciences, notably physiology and psychology—among the keynote speakers at the Florence conference, for example, were the Nobel laureate in neurology, Gerald Edelman, and the renowned clinical psychologist Oliver Sachs. These sciences were also important elements of the exhibition, which after Florence traveled to Madrid and Paris, and contributed mightily to the subsequent development of memory studies into what has become virtually a field in itself. I confess I am prejudiced because this aspect of her work coincided exactly with my own interest

in memory theory in relation to the history of psycho-physiology; but there can be no doubt that together these visual and conceptual contributions have placed Lina Bolzoni on the pedestal she presently occupies: the much-admired successor to Frances Yates as the Patron Goddess of Memory—to whom I now offer all due homage and obeisance, as well as the microphone!