

# Searching for Family: Report from Italy

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I'd never been in Italy before, not really; in 1986, with Erich Alban Berg and his wife, I spent two hours in Tarvisio, just over the border from Landskron in Carinthia (southern Austria), but this largely German-speaking territory was amputated from Austria by the Treaty of St. Germain in 1920, so it hardly counts. Now, for just two days, I've gone and seen the real thing, and the experience is a breath of fresh air in my life. I've spent so much time in the German-speaking world that I am unprepared for the Mediterranean warmth and charm and lightness of spirit.

I arranged this trip some months ago with my friends Anna Maria, who lives in Milan, and Joan, who lives in Zurich. Both are colleagues who, like me, have dedicated a major portion of their careers to Alban Berg. Berg himself had an Italian connection, through his good friend the composer Gian Francesco Malipiero, who was also very close to my teacher Roger Sessions. There was a connection too through Luigi Dallapiccola, a better composer than Malipiero but, I think, not as close personally to Berg. Berg was in Italy in 1933 for the Venice Biennale, and I think at other times as well. (I remember, too, that when Berg's music was banned throughout the Third Reich and shunned nearly everywhere else, *Wozzeck* was staged in Rome in November 1942, at the height of the war, for three performances, directed by Tullio Serafin and with Tito Gobbi in the title role.)

Approaching from Zurich, one realizes that Switzerland moves into Italy both gradually and abruptly. Switzerland is, after all, partly an Italian nation, for which the Alps are only a formal linguistic division; nevertheless the Alps are the single largest topographic and climatological factor separating the two countries. On the train, through an endless series of tunnels, seemingly seldom faster than forty miles an hour, one goes from manicured mountains and fields to an increasingly urban environment. When one reaches beautiful Lugano, surrounded by mountains on Lake Como, it's still Switzerland but already a new kind of city. The architecture is more red stucco and less white, although the red clay tiles on the roofs are the same — bright if newer, gray-brown if older.

At Chiasso there is a pause, and maybe a delay — we were there at least twenty minutes while a new engine and crew took over. Passkontrolle went by but barely even looked into our compartment. (I noticed this everywhere I went this year. Passports are checked carefully when you get off the airplane, but on the train nobody seems to care — at least not on the Swiss border, where you would expect the Swiss to be zealous about their independence. On the other hand, going from Switzerland, which is not an EEU country, into Austria, the Austrian Passkontrolle does look more carefully — perhaps just to be officious.)

Bilingual announcements come on over the loudspeaker in the compartment, and you can't tell whether it's a Swiss German struggling with Italian or vice versa.

Arrival in Milan. A big European city, about 1½ million people, which is about the same size as Vienna, and I'm always making that comparison. I expected a noisier place. The train station is absolutely enormous, absurdly oversized and hideous but in an impressive way, like a monument to Mussolini's pomp and fake grandeur. Where the trains arrive, it's a half-cylinder of glass like Frankfurt or Chemnitz where I was last week, but larger. The main hall is maybe fifty feet to the vaulted ceiling, which has murals more like Roman mosaics than Florentine frescoes. On Sunday afternoon, the place is mobbed and surging with activity. At the cambio, I get \$200 worth of lire, a fistful of large banknotes.

Anna Maria waited forty minutes for us in her small red Opel while Joan and I looked on the wrong side of the station. Finally together, we set off directly for the coast. I began to be aware that this morning was cool and rainy in Zurich, just as it had been cold and rainy in Germany much of the week before, where I had got as far north as Dresden. (Another place with a cylindrical arrival platform?) Here in Milan it is genuinely warm, in the 70's. And there's a lot less air pollution in Milan than in Vienna, or maybe it's just my imagination. It took a while to get through the center of the city to the outskirts, and all this time Milan looked to me like urban Vienna, if I didn't think of any center-city monuments. The buildings are dirty piles of middle-class masonry, filled with shops with apartments above, stucco walls with balconies, concrete blocks with signs in Italian (if not for the signs you couldn't tell the shops from working-class Thaliastrasse). A startling contrast from Zurich. I saw only very few graffiti, and this was an even more startling contrast. Zurich, just outside city center, is filled with spray-painted graffiti in the manner of a bombed New York subway car (though often much less abstract in design and much more elegant technically), and this seems to be a sign of breakdown of social order among Zurich society and its youth. In Italy, the graffiti are brief, political ("Viva Hitler" with backwards-drawn swastika was startling, but I saw it only once), and seldom seen, at least in Milan.

South of Milan the terrain changes rapidly from mountain background to open plain. I think Anna Maria called it the Pianura Padana, which translates to the Plain of the Po. The Po is the central river of all of the Piedmont and Liguria, and indeed it is the longest river in Italy; the Arno, through Florence, and the Tevere (Tiber), through Rome, are more famous but a lot shorter. The plain is the first striking contrast to the Swiss mountain landscape that one perceives, and it is flat enough to support an extensive agriculture of rice, which is grown in large flooded paddies on both sides of the autostrada.

To fill up Anna Maria's empty Opel with gas cost 75,000 lire — maybe 50 bucks. (I have to check the current rate. With such enormous denominations I have trouble appreciating the dollar equivalent.) The pump jock, a man maybe 70 years old, smiles at the accent of my schoolboy Italian — I'm obviously an Italo-American looking for his ancestral country for the first time, and he is welcoming me home.

After a while one sees mountains again, straight ahead, but they are nothing like the Alps — steeply rounded hills entirely covered with forest. These are the Apennini Ligurii, the westernmost reaches of the mountains that form the backbone of the entire Italian peninsula, and that here reach all the way to the coast. All those movies you have seen that show the Italian Riviera as a sandy beach with mountains in the background, and steep roads running alongside stark rocky cliffs, reveal a terrain like this one. As the sun gets lower, it's approaching seven-thirty but still bright daylight; the road becomes narrower and more sinuous, traffic slows to a closely-packed 40 miles an hour with blocked lanes for road construction, and I don't worry about Anna Maria's driving even when the turns are sharp enough to make me worry if the car would hold the road in wet weather. We're coming into Genoa, which is

spelled Genova here, and there are tunnels everywhere. But we bypass the city and head east, not more than ten miles or so, and get off the autostrada at Rapallo, and I get a look at the Mediterranean to my right, for the first time since I saw it from Caesarea and Haifa in 1985.

Rapallo is famous for a post-WWI treaty between the Weimar Republic and Soviet Russia, but here it's just a Riviera resort town where all activity begins at night. We park and look for a restaurant. Anna Maria queries a group of men hanging around a car in front of the Hotel Miramare (how many places would have this name around here?). Even I am able to make out their first response: "Eh, non vad' al Miramare", and they point to some other places. We decide to move off the beachfront to the inner part of town, even just a block or two away, where we are sure prices will be lower. We settle on La Goletta, which I think means a kind of three-masted schooner — there's a framed picture on the wall. The place is quite small, maybe six tables, but the menú is elaborate and the service impeccable. Joan orders gnocchi con pesto, I order the house antipasto and a half liter of chianti, and Anna Maria gets the menú speciale, the complete dinner, which we all share. The antipasto is completely frutti di mare — polpo (octopus), pan-fried acciughe (anchovies) stuffed with herbs and pignolias, and thin slices of other fish marinated in oil and vinegar like Spanish boquerones — and is utterly wonderful. The whole dinner for three comes to L 72,000 and I think is worth every penny.

We're something like two hours at dinner and it's after 10 when we finish. All the night life at the beachfront seems to have calmed down, although eight-year-olds are still running around without their parents. There's a funny-looking gazebo with a painted ceiling, and Joan and I step up to look at it. Parts of the painting are in bad shape, but I look at one that's in better condition, a bearded figure that looks like Giuseppe Verdi. A closer look and it *is* Verdi, one of a pantheon of composers ringing the ceiling with cherubs and cute kitschy heraldry.

I wonder if, so late at night, it will be easy to find a place to stay, but Anna Maria assures us that there will be no problem. We head down the road not more than 6 or 7 kilometers and get off at Chiavari, accent on the first A. The name of the town rings in my memory; I had relatives who lived or worked there. The name is even like French *charivari*, shivaree, a word that used to be better known. The tollkeeper at the autostrada exit recommends the Albergo Europ (*sic*) Tours, 600 meters ahead. We register for two rooms which together, plus breakfast next morning, will cost less than \$100. My room is tiny and badly lit (I remember Bob Craft's complaint about "the strength of one aged lightning bug" issuing from his hotel lamp in Yugoslavia), and there is no toilet (though WC is right across the hall), and the shower in the room has a portable plastic sitz bath that I don't know what to do with. But the bed, though swaybacked, is comfortable, and the place is clean and relatively quiet. We agree to meet for breakfast at 9.

Next morning I awake early and go downstairs to look around. I borrow a phone book and spend half an hour copying names and addresses of people named Devoto. There are 34 in Genoa, 43 in Chiavari, 10 in Sta. Margherita, 14 in San Columbano Certenoli, 20 in Borzonasca. The pattern of Christian names is probably typical and not revealing, but then I don't know what I should expect to be revealed; clearly I'm looking for something but I don't know what. Another complicating factor: family names with a plural ending, Devoti. Anna Maria says that her informal sources suggest a family relationship despite the difference in spelling.

Chiavari by daylight. I go outside. It's cloudy but not raining. I'm on a city street, rectilinear, buildings three stories high, balconies, windows, trompe-l'oeil designs (often in Italy one gets the impression that if there's no room for an actual balcony, or money to build one, a painted substitute will do). Trees, and a church, and a few storefronts. A peek into the church; medium-sized, dark, baroque. The memorial candles are small electric lights. I walk a few blocks and look to my right, and there's a forested hill close by, disappearing up into the clouds. One can tell that these hills will be moist and well suited to rich agriculture.

Breakfast, 7000 lire per person, is toast, jam, rolls, and coffee. Strictly continental style, but Anna Maria emphasizes that there's nothing like Italian coffee. It is brought in a small cup less than half full, and she asks me to taste it before adding steamed milk, capuccino style. It's like Medaglia d'oro, bitter, with chicory, very full-tasting. I know it will upset my stomach but I try it anyway.

We are on the road to Borzonasca by ten. From the map in my library at home, I expect a barely-passable trail, but it is a fully paved mountain road with guardrails, though narrow and winding up the valley of the Sturla River. The biggest town on the way, Carasco, is about 5 miles out of Chiavari, into the mountains at increasing elevation. Carasco is still somewhat industrial, if one measures this quality by the presence of automobile dealerships. One of these is advertised as being on a main street up ahead, the via Devoto. We look for it but all we find is a privata Devoto, a small, elegant back alley. The only signs of agriculture are vineyards planted halfway up the mountainside, still not fully leaved out. The mountains are more than the gentle rolling hills of New England. Though not as tall, they are sharper and closer, so to speak, in that the towns are built more directly in the mountain valleys, and so you have the feeling of being actually in them; no manicured wide highways here. The forest is incredibly lush and green, much like the rain forest of the Olympic Peninsula, constantly freshened by fog and cloud, but of course the trees are entirely different, an Old World mixed woods.

Borzonasca. A pink-stucco town. One thinks of it as a village, but it's clearly an old town, with some buildings perhaps six centuries old, with a center where two main streets intersect at an acute angle like an X, the Banco di Chiavari in the angle between. Apartment blocks two or three stories high, with balconies, and laundry draped between windows. The population of the village proper is 800, but about 2000 if the surrounding area is included. In the center of town are a Piazza Luigi Devoto and a Via Carlo Marré, showing the importance of these two family names in local history. According to the *Dizionario Bibliografico degli Italiani*, Luigi Devoto (1864-1936), was not my great-grandfather but a professor of medicine and later a member of the Italian Parliament. He was born in Borzonasca; his mother, like my great-grandmother, was a member of the Marré family.

The Municipio is an old building in the center of town. With some difficulty we find a parking place and go inside. In the portico of the entrance, at the left, there is a sign for the Biblioteca G. Devoto. This is in honor of Giacomo Devoto (1897-1974), specialist in ancient languages and the co-author of one of the most renowned Italian dictionaries, in two volumes. (He was Betsy Sessions's teacher during the early 1960's. He was the son of the professor and senator Luigi Devoto just mentioned, and is buried in the family tomb in Borzonasca.)

The town offices are upstairs. We find, indoors, an old but essentially modern building, completely rehabbed, cluttered but spotless, with an elevator. On the second floor, in the main office, we find our

contact person, Signor Marco Bacigalupo, talking on the telephone. I look around the large, well-lit room and see three computers in an LAN with a printer, an unmistakable sign of modern living.

Signor Bacigalupo takes us to the Archivio downstairs, a room with a three-meter-high ceiling and metal automobile shelving, loaded to the summit with town archives. A testimonial to the modern era of paper-pushing: 90% of what I see on the shelves is of relatively recent and obscure bureaucratic origin. Signor Bacigalupo's title is "Dottore" but his official function is uncertain; maybe something like vice mayor or town clerk. He speaks some English, which is helpful, but I find that I am more courageous about using my very little Italian here than I have been in Switzerland about my far better German, which is puzzling. Signor Bacigalupo climbs up a squeaky ladder and fetches down ten small cardboard-bound ledgers tied together with string; a crumbling paper label identifies these as records of marriages performed in Borzonasca between 1850 and 1860, and I wonder whether anyone has looked at them at all for decades. Within a couple of minutes we have arrived at the marriage registration of Luigi Devoto and Maria Marré of Borzonasca on February 2, 1852, at the church of San Bartolomeo directly across the street. It is thrilling to have this visible evidence of the marriage of my father's paternal grandparents. An odd thought runs through my mind: why did these people leave this beautiful village, and apparently so suddenly? I remember my father's information in his 1927 letter to Forsythe, which was certainly vague:

Ancestry mayhap? Well, my Pa's Pa came to this country, I think from Milan, though there are also Genoa and Florence connections — it ain't important — some time before the Civil War, I don't know when. The yarn is — I do not vouch for it — that his wife, who was a DeRosa of the ancient house, was the daughter of a count or something of the sort and that the marriage with my Grampa, who came from a military family (what was a military family in Italy, at that time?) was sanctioned only on the condition that the pair would remove themselves permanently from the fatherland which she was disgracing by mingling her seed with that of a commoner. So runs my Aunt's account, but if God ever made a fool, she's it — though she was several years older than my Dad, and so knew more of their parents.

It astounds me that my father didn't know more than this obviously incomplete and highly inaccurate information. (The "DeRosa" especially. There is a "DeRossi" by marriage in the testament of Giuseppe Marré, but that is as close to "DeRosa" as we can get so far.) In his later writings I have only found a reference, in a letter to Kate Sterne, that his genes "had their origin in Genoa," which suggests that, by 1936, after the death of Florian Devoto, BDeV had improved his information at least that much.

Some of the records are faded and foxed and show water damage. Signor Bacigalupo explains that the Municipio was damaged when Borzonasca was bombed by the Americans in December 1944, as the Germans retreated during the collapse of the Salò Republic. (A memorial tablet on the wall outside commemorates the twelve citizens who were killed.) Nevertheless the quality of the paper, as usual for the nineteenth century, is still excellent and there is no difficulty reading the documents. Signor Bacigalupo is particularly advantageous as our guide through these records. He is working privately on a genealogical study of the Marré family, the most important family in all of Borzonasca, whose roots go back several centuries to, of all places, Germany. He invites us to stop at his house after lunch to see some of his materials. Later, he gives me the private telephone number of Laura Marré, the last survivor of this family, who lives today in Genoa. Nevertheless, it quickly becomes very plain that to prepare a

comprehensive enough list of the Devoto descendants from just 140 years ago would be a huge task, and to relate my branch of the family to any of those who have contacted me, such as David Devoto of San Francisco or Robert Devoto of New Jersey, would be pure luck at this point.

About an hour later we are joined by Giovanna Valperga, the Archivessa who is also the librarian of the adjoining Giacomo Devoto Library. She is able, after some searching, to find the death registration of Maria Marré's uncle Giuseppe (1822-1875), whose testament I already obtained in microfilm at Notre Dame. This new record names Maria Marré's grandparents. Investigation of this information directs us to the church across the street, and Signor Bacigalupo telephones to the Padre, who can see us at 3:30. We make some photocopies and Signora Valperga shows us the library, which is very small — perhaps a thousand books in all, many of them children's books. Not much of a showing for a public library in a village — far smaller than Eastport, for instance, whose library is a holdover from the time it was a city of 3000. I promise to send *The Uneasy Chair* to Signor Bacigalupo, and *Di Là dal Grande Missouri* to Signora Valperga for the library. Maybe I'll send the Italian version of Piston-DeVoto *Armonia* as well; of course, Piston's grandfather was Italian too, the sea captain Antonio Pistone.

Lunch at the Posada S. Rocco, a few blocks away. Signora Valperga leads me through some very narrow streets, the oldest part of town, and across the bridge over the river. Anna Maria orders frutti di mare, and I order pasta (in America we would call it ravioli, but that has a limited meaning here) stuffed with vegetables and herbs — as superb as last night's memorable dinner. Anna Maria, looking for the bathroom, beckons me to an adjoining hallway, where there are apartments, and points to a doorbell labeled "A. Devoto." Arturo, Alfredo, Ambrogio, Alessandro?

After lunch we walk down the via V. Massa, which parallels the river. I am entranced by the flowers and greenery. Rocky walls directly adjoining the road are covered with moss, ferns, and uncountable thousands of flowers in bloom, especially miniature daisies streaked with pink and red. I always feel uncomfortable about the weedy profusion of *Asteraceae* in the USA, when so many of them are alien species; here, they seem absolutely natural and right. I can't get over how lovely this quiet little village is. There's an atmosphere like that of Talloires, in the French Alps, but much more calm, more working-class, and utterly without the moneyed suburban pretentiousness that rubbed on my nerves in Talloires. One could just compare the restaurants; I doubt if the Père Bise, a three-star restaurant famous all over France, could provide a lunch any more delightful than the one I had at the Posada Rocco, though it might easily cost 600 francs. The noisiest thing I've heard so far may be a miniature truck — hardly more than a motorized garden cart, a covered tricycle with a meter-square flatbed in the rear that might, if strained, carry 200 kilograms. (There ought to be vehicles like this in America.) More and more I am seized by the longing to come back to Borzonasca to spend more time. I ask Signora Valperga how much it would cost to rent an apartment in Borzonasca. Perhaps \$250 a month, she says, and less than that if rented by the year. I find this astounding. Yet obviously the desirable real estate in this part of Italy is on the Riviera. It might be ten times that figure, I should guess, perhaps even more, to rent an apartment in high season in Rapallo or Chiavari.

Signor Bacigalupo's home is right alongside the river, a small but perfectly appointed place with splendid view. His baby son is taking a nap upstairs, so we congregate in the kitchen. He brings out his genealogical charts of the Marré family. I don't easily follow the animated dialogue between him and Anna Maria, but it is obvious that the Marré family is distinctly of the nobility — some were ennobled with the name Marré del Valle Sturla, referring to the local river — with a long history and many

members here in town. (I should have looked again in the phone book under this name.) A distinguished family, but I suppose now scattered to the four winds, and the last survivor of the name, as I mentioned, is an old woman in Genoa.

We return to the Giacomo Devoto Library. Signora Valperga gives me a local touring map, with cartography very much like an American topographical sheet but on a smaller scale, which makes it possible to indicate even each individual house and building. At 3:30 we bid farewell to Signora Valperga and wander across the street to the church of San Bartolomeo. The Padre brings us to his study in the adjoining rectory, or whatever such a house, attached directly to the church, is called. The Padre, whose name none of us manages to catch, is a late fortyish, rather chubby man with a warm smile. He is not entirely certain what we are looking for, but eventually he steps over to a glass-fronted bookshelf and pulls out several ancient registers. Once again I find a jarring comparison of old and new; old books, old furniture, ancient crucifix on the wall, high ceilings, a priest in black cassock, and a modern PC with laser printer on his desk.

We stay for about two hours. Joan is getting tired and eventually wanders outside while Anna Maria and I look at records. The priest pages through ledger after ledger, reading dozens upon dozens of Devoto names — I estimate perhaps 300 just between the period of 1803 and 1852. We find another copy of the marriage registry, identical with the one at the Municipio, filled out and witnessed by the same people. We try also to find the birthdates of Luigi Devoto's parents. We are able to establish that Luigi was born in 1829 (or maybe 1830) and Maria Marré on 12 August 1828; that Luigi's parents were Giobatta (Giovanni Battista) Devoto and Angela Devoto — a Devoto-Devoto marriage, presumably between cousins. Giovanni Battista Carlo Devoto was baptized 19 September 1803, together with his twin sister Maria Elisabetta. Anna Maria's notes indicate that Angela Devoto was baptized in 1795, which seems a bit unusual for that time, a wife eight years older than her husband. The baptismal records are in much-abbreviated Latin:

Anno a Christo nato MDCCCIII. die XIX 7bris

136. Devoti Maria Elisabeth. Ego Petrus Joes. bapta. Ginochio huius [?]Praeptis Ecclesiae S. Bartholi Borzonaschae Aeconomus infantem solemniter baptizavi quae nudius tertius ex Joe. Bapta. Devoti Vincenti filio, et Angela Currotti Bend. filia conjugibus huius parochiae ortum suum duxit, cuiq. fuit impositum nomen **Maria Elisabeth** [?]Patrini extitere praed+++ Vincentius Devoti qq [quondam?] Jois Baptae, et Elisabeth Uxor Josephi Devoto [?]d Vincenti Borzonaschenses -----

Anno Christianae Salutis MDCCCIII. die XIX 7bris

137. Devoti Joes Bapta Carolus. Ego Petrus Joes. Bapta Ginochio Par+++tis Ecclesia S. Bartholi Borzonaschae Aeconomus infantem gemellum per solemne regenerationis [?]lavacrum in Jesu Christo genui, qui nudius tertius ex Joe. Bapta. Devoti Vincenti filio, et Angela Currotti Bened. filia conjugibus huius Parochiae ortum suum duxit, cuique nomen impositum fuit **Joes. Bapta Carolus**, levantibus in sacro flumine Carolo Ginochio qq. Bartholi, et M.a Benedicta Devoti memorati Vincenti filia ambobus huius Parochiae ----

Much of this, though not all, is clear to me even without a dictionary. But a big difficulty is emerging even at this stage: profusion of similar names. That, plus the abundant intermarriage of Devoto and Marré, promises many complications. The baptismal records establish that the son of Giovanni Battista Devoto and Angela Devoto who was born on 13 April 1829 was named Carlo Giuseppe Devoto, and this would coincide, at least within the same probable year, with the birth of Luigi Devoto, for whom we found no record of birth in that year from those parents. This suggests that Carlo Giuseppe Devoto and Luigi Devoto are the same person. Would it have been possible to change a name? Indeed it would, the Padre assures us, and it could have been for any of several good reasons.

When we are done with the records, we leave the Padre's study and cross a narrow hallway, descending into a lower level by a short winding staircase that leads to a copy machine and a complicated electromechanical device mounted on the adjacent wall in a glass case — it turns out to be a timing switch for ringing the church bell. I wonder which of several doors exiting from this small angular room leads into the church itself. Finally we follow the Padre through a narrow door. The church interior is moderately large but not huge or very high, and resplendently baroque, richly decorated in red and white marble and plenty of giltwork. The altar rail is white marble from Carrara (of course — only a few kilometers away), and the Padre draws aside a hanging to show the carved date of 1720. There is no nave, nor any cruciform distribution of seats or walls; along the side walls, instead, are four miniature altars, each with its own style and symbolism. The main altar is very complexly designed, with much radiant gold, and a large crucifix above it showing the image of Christ with a black beard. The Padre mentions "la barba nera" twice, emphasizing its local importance as a symbol. Below the crucifix, centrally located, is a small half-cylinder lined in gold. When I ask the Padre what is supposed to be put there, he takes me into the sacristy and shows me a star-shaped object; I think he says that during Holy Week a candle, or maybe a flower or a relic, is displayed within it. There's supposed to be a most sacred relic here, a piece of the True Cross, but if so I don't see it and the Padre doesn't volunteer the information. I ask if there was any damage from the bombing in 1944. There was, but apparently not much, and the Padre shows me a small section at the rear of the church where it was restored.

Joan has stepped out during this dialogue to find Anna Maria, and I am left alone with the Padre and my struggling Italian. He speaks slowly enough for me to understand easily. I put some coins in a charity box and a 10,000 lire note in another. Eventually Anna Maria comes back and we thank the Padre and depart. Joan hands me a color postcard showing the interior of the church. Once again I am amazed by the ability of a community as small as Borzonasca to support such a beautiful and costly edifice, let alone two other churches which I haven't seen.

We drive out of town as the sun casts midafternoon shadows, probably around six o'clock. We all express a wistful regret at leaving, once again remembering what an interesting, even exciting day this has been. Anna Maria points to a hillside cemetery just outside of town, and mentions that the Devoto family tomb is there. We decide not to go to look for it, but I silently offer farewell greetings to my probable distant cousin Giacomo Devoto and all our dozens of other relatives. In the oblique afternoon light we see the craggy striated cliffs, draped here and there with patches of trees and vines that we didn't see on the way in. The road back to Chiavari seems shorter this way. I take a photograph of a strange crenellated tower like a battlement, with laundry hanging across it; the road passes right through it. I'll try to find out later just where it is.



In Chiavari we look around for a restaurant. The roads are complicated because the autostrada, the railway, and various main streets are all more or less tangled up in parallel; eventually we ask somebody for a recommendation, follow a sign, and park. The recommended place doesn't open until 7:30 — I must get used to Italian hours — so we wander to a grocery. Anna Maria buys some fruits and vegetables, including half a dozen nespole (loquats) for me, the first ones I have seen here. Then we drift toward the beach. The tide is in and the waves are significant; when I climb down onto the rocks I have to dodge to keep my feet from getting wet. I find plenty of skipping stones but the waves are too rough for throwing them. I settle for some lucky stones, which are plentiful here, and well polished by the waves.

Finally we choose another restaurant close to the beach with outside seating under a tent. My gnocchi aren't quite as good as Joan's last night but they are certainly very good indeed, far better than any I've ever had in America. Anna Maria chooses frutti di mare once more, and Joan gets something that includes a large slice of fried provolone — it looks like a rubber tire patch and is delicious. I am sitting with my back to the Mediterranean. A thunderstorm slowly makes its way across the mountains to the north, and I see a Ruisdael-like vision of green hills and dark sky that is very refreshing, reminding me, in some way I can't understand, that this part of Italy is very important and I have to find it once again.

Lightning illuminates the hills as we pass south of the thunderstorm without going through it. It is two hours back to Milan in the dark, but only after about 9:30 are we really aware of the night. I peek at the gas gauge, and realize that Anna Maria's amazingly fuel-efficient Opel has hardly used even a quarter of the full tank for the entire trip to Borzonasca and back.

Anna Maria's apartment in the via Carlo Poma, a working-class neighborhood, is large and cluttered, full of books, and very cozy. Anna Maria's son Pietro, age 17, is asleep in his bedroom with his girlfriend, and so we can't get a look at his room until the next day. Joan takes the guest room, a part-time study that seems to hold the least amount of embedded smoke, though Anna Maria deliberately smokes sparingly while we are here. We all sack in early, wiped out but somehow invigorated.

Next morning we sleep late, remembering that the train leaves at around 2 PM. At breakfast (nespole, cheese, fine bread), we greet Pietro and his girlfriend, who looks far younger even than he is. How times have changed since the 1950's! After they leave, we look at Pietro's room, which is a mass of posters, stickers, and graffiti as high as one can reach on all four walls, including much rocknroll language, Italian and English slang, and some occasional triumphs ("Fuck the system"). Pietro is about to complete high school, and is waiting to decide on military service or college. Anna Maria gives me a treasure — an inscribed copy of her book, *Suite Lirica: Alban Berg Scritti*, in which she has gathered together and translated all of Berg's published writings (though she was constrained by space to omit the long version of the *Gurrelieder Führer* and to use only the short version).

Anna Maria delivers Joan and me to the train in plenty of time. Last look at Milan, and a fond and wistful farewell. I'm determined to be back next year!