

# BAROCK- BERICHTE 42/43





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 English Prints of Dwarfs

Italy  
 Enough has been written in the introduction by Professor Bauer on Jacques Callot. It is right that Callot's genius with the etching needle at the Medici court in the first quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century should be at the heart of any graphic study of the dwarf in European art. His series of twenty prints called *Varie Figure Gobbi* was drawn in Florence in 1616 but not published in Nancy until 1621-2. These Gobbi were an immense success, but also a lasting one in that they have been copied, transformed, altered through the centuries, which is why they figure here in this brief account of the dwarf print in Italy.

Apart from countless copies of Callot's Gobbi, there are a number of other Italian prints of dwarfs, naturally lacking Callot's charismatic etchings. As early as 1627, after Callot's return to France, one Antonio Francesco Lucini published in Florence a set of twentyfour prints called *Compendio dell' armide*. These prints include some horrific duels lacking the sophistication of Callot, but of course influenced by him. Lucini was a pupil of Stefano della Bella and colleague of both Callot and Baccio del Bianco. Another Northerner, a Fleming, Arnold Westerhout (1651-1725), an engraver who worked for the Medici in Florence before settling in Rome, published in Rome in 1687 *Carica-*

*ture Pittoresche di diversi attitudini di varie figure*. The plates included dwarfs and Italian Comedy figures. To Westerhout has been wrongly attributed a series of dwarfs based on the Pfeffel edition of around 1706, with the main figures from *Il Callotto Resuscitato* arranged on oblong sheets, three or four on each sheet. This *Raccolta di diverse caricature* is dated 1765, which is to say the least most improbable since Westerhout died in 1725. The date 1765 is of particular interest in that it coincided with, perhaps even inspired the Italian porcelain factories at Doccia outside Florence and too at the Cozzi factory in Venice. In Venice too were issued fanciful copies of *Il Callotto Resuscitato*.



Abb. 3 and 4: *Facétieuses Inventions d'Amour ... Stefano della Bella, gestochen von F. Collignon (um 1650?) Flötenspieler Nr. 6 und Trommler Nr. 7, je 110 x 105 mm (Priv. Sammlung, Salzburg)*

The printmakers of Augsburg and Nuremberg had a profitable export market for their wares, as can be seen from the number of translations of the captions into French, English and Italian. There is a record of a plea made by a painter at the Capodimonte factory in Naples, Caselli, for suitable chinoiserie prints as models for the painters. The Neapolitan ambassador replied that there were none to be found in Paris, but that they could be found in Germany at Augsburg or Nuremberg. This shows clearly the dominance of the Germans in the decorative print market. Indeed, there seem to be no Italian prints of dwarfs in the early 18th century. There remains much investigation to find the sources, almost certainly prints, of the Doccia dwarfs on meissenesque bases or the Cozzi Venice figures. Some of the latter may have been based on Venetian piracies of Augsburg prints, a few of which have surfaced. Exceptional is a maiolica plaque made at Castelli, now in the Floridiana at Naples. This is painted with two pairs of dwarfs from two different German sets of engravings. At the back are figures of an "Elsasser Bäurin" and "Elsasser Bauer" from a large set of peasants in different parts of Europe, in the front are two peasant musicians also from a German source.

The Florentine delight in dwarfs is emphasized in the dwarf theatre of the early Medici. In 1612 was published *La famosa giostra de Gobbi*. Jousting was reported in the dwarf community in 1635 and 1651. The

presence in Florence of enough dwarfs worthy of giving entertainment to the Medici court seems to have continued later in the 17th century. Stefano della Bella (1610-1664) drew on such dwarf activities in some of his etchings. It is remarkable to find that there were still - or perhaps again - enough dwarfs to provide the occasional amusement in the early period of the Austrian rule. Thus on 10th March 1747 we find Sir Horace Mann, British Envoy to Tuscany, writing to his close friend Horace Walpole: "we have a spectacle which, for the oddity of it, everybody goes to, once: - a deep, horrible tragedy. The actors and actresses and the whole troop have most enormous natural humps...". These Hunchbacks or Gobbi may well have encouraged the Marchese Ginori, founder of the Doccia porcelain factory, to make a series of miniature dwarfs; and it is possible that one day prints will be found which were the original designs.

#### France

There are few French prints of the late 17th or early 18th century dedicated to the dwarf, although the occasional pigmy figure occurs sporadically as a minor element in the work of Berain and other ornamental engravers. An exception is the French engraver François (or Jean-Baptiste) Collignon. Born in Nancy in 1610 and dying in 1657, he belonged to the talented group of artists working in Florence, where he worked for a while in Callot's atelier. In 1640 he removed to Rome where he added

to his engraving the work of a print dealer. He later worked in Paris. Of interest to us is his rare set of dwarfs, *Facétieuses Inventions d'Amour et de Guerre pour le divertissement des beaux Esprits*. The twelve etchings comprise six of single soldiers and six of courting couples. They are more gently satirical than the work of Callot. His prints were in particular used by the Dutch glass engravers working in a stipple technique in the second half of the 17th century.

But of course it was one of the versions of *Il Callotto Resuscitato*, either the earliest set by Pfeffel or the Augsburg bound edition of 1715 or the Dutch piracy of 1716 which had the most influence on the applied arts, particularly in porcelain. There is a French edition of *Il Callotto* published by Marie Michele Blondel 1730 with two-line captions in French.

Both the German and Dutch publishers were conscious of foreign markets in that they varied the language of their long captions by including French as one of the three languages used.

#### England

No original prints of dwarfs have been found of the baroque period in England, but there are a number of evidently pirated editions of the German school, those prints mostly produced in Augsburg and Nuremberg in the late 1720's and even still in publishers' lists as late as 1753. These

were mostly the work of the prolific and popular publisher John Bowles, working from "The Black Horse in Cornhill". Happily there are preserved catalogues of his current productions in 1728 and 1753, from which it is possible to give approximate dates beyond those found on the prints themselves. The 1728 issue contains no dwarf prints, but is useful as a guide line. The 1753 issue has four sets of prints of interest to this brief study: The Lilliputian Humorists, The Lilliputian Months, The Lilliputian Riding School and The Lilliputian Dancing School.

But there were rivals to Bowles, in particular one C. Dicey operating in Alderman Church Yard, London. In 1728 he published the set of the Twelve Months, with Sutton Nicholls as engraver. Each month is represented by two figures copied in reverse from those to be found in some sets of *Il Callotto Resuscitato* attached as an appendix, as it were. Also copied are the brazenly baroque borders of Laub- und Bandlwerk inhabited by further but smaller dwarfs, monkeys and appropriate allegories. April bears the date 1728. Each print has six lines of doggerel verse which are not copied from the original but are an anglicized version of quite different meaning. These Months, and other titles to follow, were called Lilliputian after the great success of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* of 1726 in which Lilliput was an imaginary country inhabited by pygmies 15 cm high.

Another example of The Months from the press of John Bowles "At the Black Horse in Cornhill" seems to have been produced soon after the catalogue of 1728. It is described in the 1753 catalogue as *The Lilliputian Months*, "in seven prints, wherein the twelve months of the year are humorously represented by Lilliputian figures engraved as big as the life" at the cost of 1s. Their measurement is ten inches deep, and eleven inches wide. The number 7 seems to be a misprint for 12, since the only copy that I have seen in the British Museum has 12 sheets, each with a single month personified as two dwarfs.

Perhaps a little later in date are *The Lilliputian Humorists*, described in John Bowles's 1753 catalogue as "Eleven prints extremely comical, representing several pygmy figures, designed in humorous attitudes, and engraved as big as the life by Capt. Lemuel Gulliver". Since the engravings are not signed, it is difficult to decide whether this set is also from the Bowles company. Fortunately the title page is dated 1730, but the place of publication is given as The White Horse without Newgate



*My Lord and Lady mounted on,  
Their nimble Nags ride out of Town,  
And leave the splendor of the Court,  
To play's employes with Rural Sport.*

*The busy Monkey does his duty,  
And from the Sun saves Madam's beauty,  
The Square with Hawk on foot stands by,  
When game appears, to let him fly.*

*And Don Whiskero his dog Forster,  
In readings holds by the Collar;  
While on a Ladder Sancho tries,  
His luck, and makes a Sork his prize.*

Abb. 5: A Lilliputian harking match. (Falkenjagd der Zwerge). Englische Kopie im Verlag J. Bowles (um 1730), Kupferstich, 205 x 180 mm (Priv. Sammlung, England)

London. The size is "ten inches deep, and eleven inches wide", which agrees with the part set in the British Museum. As for the address of the White Horse, this would appear to be another address of Bowles. Each engraving is oblong and has a selection of characters from *Il Callotto Resuscitato*, two figures picked at random on each sheet. The borders are again Laub- und Bandelwerk interspersed with dwarfs and masks. The supposed engraver is given as Lemuel Gulliver, the hero of *Gulliver's Travels*.

The Lilliputian Riding School, listed as no.39 in Bowles's 1753 catalogue, derives from an amusing set of prints showing a riding school where the bourgeois horseman can learn to ride like a gentleman. There are a Nuremberg original, from the House of Wolrab and a Dutch copy, both probably printed around 1722. Their description in the 1753 catalogue reads "a comical representation of several dwarf figures riding the menage-horse", twelve prints for 1s.6d. This set of prints was used by the Meissen porcelain factory as a model for painting on early wares in the early 1720's.

The Lilliputian Dancing School is yet another set of exotic dwarf prints, copied by Bowles from the *Theatralische Zwerger*

*Tantz-Schul* published in Nuremberg by Wolrab, who was also responsible for many other dwarf sets. On the first page is inscribed on a simulated scroll the following: "The Lilliputian Dancing School, or an improvement on the mimes, pantomimes, scaramouches, and jack-puddings of all nations; with a display of the whole art and mystery of jigs, capers, courants, and other fashionable dances, represented by several grotesque pigmy figures dancing". The twelve prints cost 1s.6d. Each sheet has a pair of dancing dwarfs in absurdly theatrical clothes, doggerel verse below as in Dutch copies of this sheet. A colored copy of much of this original German set can be seen in the Graphisches Kabinett at the monastery of Göttweig.

Finally, there is in the Arents Collection in the New York Public Library a set of 17 oblong prints inspired by if not copied from the Pfeffel set of about 1706. It is uncertain who the English publisher or engraver was. The interesting aspect is that each dwarf has been christened with the name of an English actor or actress from the cast of John Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, first produced in 1728. So we have Polly Peacham, Capt. Mackheath and Lucy Locket Frizzle-rump side by side on the same engraving. The date of this set must be between 1728 and 1730.