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# CASTLES FORTIFIED MANOR HOUSES

ALPINE VALLEYS - THE PO PLAIN - THE APPENINES - THE ROMAN HILLS

## STATELY HOMES

- 4 | *Introductions* | RICCARDO BIANCHI
- | *Reportages* | PETE KERCHER
- 14 | Alpine Valleys |  
**Tirol,**  
**Val Venosta**  
**Valle di Anterselva**  
**Val Bregaglia**  
**Val d'Ossola**  
**Val d'Aosta**  
**Monte Bianco**
- 100 | The Po Plain |  
**Verona**  
**Treviso**  
**Parma**  
**Piacenza**
- 120 | The Appenines |  
**Firenze**  
**Pisa**  
**Siena**
- 140 | The Roman Hills |  
**Roma**  
**Rieti**
- 160 | Miramare |  
**Interni del castello con il parco**

## PARKS & GARDEN

- | *Reportages* | FLAMINIA PALMITERI
- 180 | Parks and Garden |  
**Cateaux de Gourdon**  
**Castel Frieberg**  
**Castello di Duino**  
**Castello di Montechiarugolo**  
**Rocca di Soragna**  
**Castello di Grazzano Visconti**
- | *Reportages* | RICCARDO BIANCHI
- 220 | Details of architecture |  
**Le Statue e gli Obelischi**  
**Finestre**  
**Porte**  
**Scale**  
**I Soffitti**



## | CASTLES FORTIFIED MANOR HOUSES |

“Italy is a geographical expression”, said Metternich in 1847, shortly before the Risorgimento that culminated in the country’s unification 150 years ago proved him wrong. And indeed, Italy had a long history as a chequerboard of feudal states great and small, each one jealously guarded by an astounding variety of castles, fortresses and fortified houses.

In due course, many of these fortresses were converted by the country’s nobility into stately homes, some on a quite modest scale, others fabulously palatial, and have been so well maintained over the centuries that they are still inhabited to this day by owners who are only too aware of the privilege of holding them in trust for future generations.

Some of these stately homes can be visited by the public, either at certain hours or by appointment, as can others that have been lovingly

preserved as unique museums. Each of them has something unique: a feature, a collection or a tale to tell.

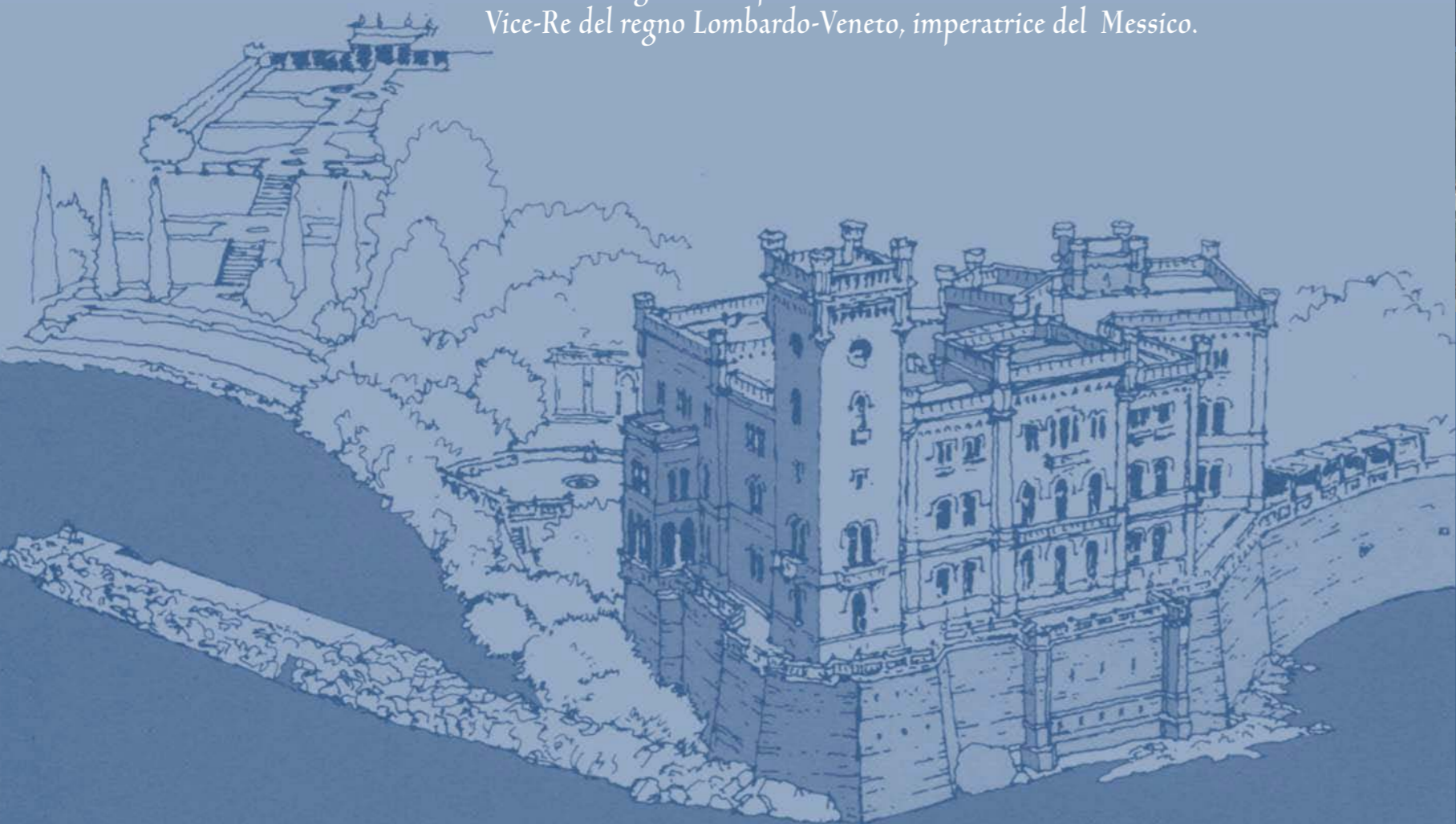
This volume breaches many an impregnable fortress and venerable gatehouse to narrate the history of Italy’s fortified architecture, explore mediaeval, Renaissance and romantic interiors and wander through enchanted parks and gardens, revealing their secrets and relating their anecdotes.

Tracing a journey from the Alpine valleys to the Roman hills, this volume is a goldmine of ideas for a different cultural experience, taking in well-concealed gems of history and staying in exclusive hotels along the way. All captured in evocative photographs and complete with the practical background information to help you plan your next journey of discovery to the timeless Bel Paese.



**F**erdinand-Maximilien d'Autriche (Vienna, Austria, 6 luglio 1832 - Querétaro, Messico, 19 giugno 1867) membro della Casa d'Asburgo, Principe Imperiale ed Arciduca d'Austria, Vice-Re del regno Lombardo-Veneto, fu Imperatore come Massimiliano I del Messico.

**C**harlotte princesse de Belgique, (Laeken, Belgio, 7 Giugno 1840 - Meise, Belgio, 19 Gennaio 1927) duchessa di Saxe, principessa del Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, spoasa di Ferdinand-Maximilien d'Autriche, Vice-Re del regno Lombardo-Veneto, imperatrice del Messico.



## THE CASTLE OF MIRAMARE

**Opening Hours** | The Castle of Miramare is open to the public from 9.00 to 19.00 every day of the year. The ticket office closes at 18.30. Access is only through the main gate in Viale Miramare after 17.00 from November to February and after 18.00 in March and October.

The park opens at 8.00 every day of the year and closes at 17.00 from November to February, at 18.00 in March and October and at 19.00 from April to September.

Audioguides are available in Italian, German, English, French, Spanish and Slovene. Guided tours are available in Italian, German, English, French, Spanish, Slovene, Croatian and Hungarian (reservation necessary). Both services entail a slightly higher price.

Paid parking is available at the Viale Miramare and Grignano entrances.

**Access for disabled visitors** | Call in advance for permission to drive right up to the castle.

**Worth visiting nearby** | The Miramare Natural Marine Reserve Visitors' Centre is located in the Castelletto in the Park.



**Address:**

Viale Miramare  
34151 Trieste

**For further information:**

Tel +39 040 224 143  
Fax +39 040 224 220  
[www@castello-miramare.it](http://www.castello-miramare.it)

**For reservations and guided tours:**

Tel +39 040 227 0470  
from 9.00 to 18.00 on weekdays  
and 9.00 to 14.00 on Saturdays

## LOCATION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Trieste and its immediate surroundings sit at the very northern end of the Adriatic Sea, at the point where that major waterway penetrates furthest into the heartland of old Central Europe. The city's magnificent natural harbour, sheltered from the north wind by high limestone karst mountains that come right down to the sea, explains its origins as a pre-Roman emporium.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the city and its environs belonged to the Patriarchate of Aquileia, before establishing a free commune. Seeking defence against the Republic of Venice, in 1382 Trieste petitioned Leopold II of Habsburg to become part of his domains: thus did the area around the Castle of Miramare first come into the hands of the House of Austria, where it was largely to remain – with exception of the Napoleonic period – until it was assigned to Italy at the end of the First World War, by which time it had developed into the Austrian Empire's most important port and a major base of the Imperial Navy.

It was this that brought the Archduke Maximilian (1832-67) to Trieste in 1854, when the Austrian Emperor Franz Josef appointed his younger brother Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Navy. Immediately taking a lively interest in developing the naval base of Trieste, Maximilian also sought a local site for a residence, happening on an isolated stretch of bare, rocky coastline, some 5 km north-west of the city centre. Here, in the lee of the high karst and commanding a magnificent view over the Gulf of Trieste, Maximilian decided to build what was to become the Castle of Miramare.

Although ground was broken in 1856, Maximilian moved to Milan in 1857, upon being appointed Viceroy of the Austrian possess of Austria's Lombardo-Venetian kingdom (which did not include Trieste), shortly before marrying Princess Charlotte of Belgium (1840-1927). It was only in 1860, after Lombardy was lost to the Kingdom of Sardinia (later Italy), that

the couple moved into the still-unfinished Miramare, where Maximilian received a delegation offering him the Mexican imperial crown. Accepting it at the end of 1863, he left in 1864, never to return, although he continued planning the park and sending exotic plants until shortly before his capture and execution at the hands of Benito Juarez in 1867.

Charlotte had meanwhile suffered a breakdown after returning from Mexico and was confined first in Miramare, then in Belgium, where she died in 1927.

The castle built for Maximilian by Carl Junker is a fine example of the hybrid Romantic style popular in German-speaking lands at the time, a successful blend of neo-Gothic, mediaeval and Renaissance revival, designed to stand out against the deep blue sea that laps against its foundations and the clear skies above. In an early example of interior design that set out coherently to generate a continuum between the natural environment and the interiors, the dominant colour scheme on the ground floor, which houses the imperial couple's private apartments, is also a refreshing pale blue.

Warmer tones of red and russet hold sway upstairs in the formal reception rooms, including a throne room that was never used, together with portraits of the Austrian, Bavarian, Belgian and Mexican royal and imperial families, many by Wintherhalter, and paintings recording the landmarks in Maximilian's life, by Cesare Dell'Acqua.

To create the park on the barren rocky karst shoreline, Maximilian's landscape architects Josef Laube and Anton Jelinek brought in enormous quantities of topsoil from Carinthia and Styria. While the western section features a classical Italianate garden, complete with ponds, sculptures and pavilions, as well as the castle's private dock, the eastern side is planted with exotic shrubs and trees arranged in the romantic English landscaping manner first popularised by Capability Brown.



Shielded from the north wind by the karst massif behind Trieste, the Castle of Miramare looks out over the Gulf and towards the Istrian peninsula in the background.<sup>3</sup> Brilliant white in the Mediterranean sunshine, Miramare sits on its rocky headland between the light blue of the sky and the deep aquamarine of the sea.









A portrait of Charlotte of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, princess of Belgium and Empress of Mexico, framed between pale blue drapery. 27



The table set for an intimate dinner in the private dining room. 55



**The bedroom** Once again, a fresh shade of pale blue lightens the impact of the inlaid wooden marquetry in the imperial couple's bedroom in the private apartments. 64



**The ceiling in the bedroom** bears the coats of arms of the provinces of Charlotte's native kingdom of Belgium. 63

**Maximilian's cipher** as a cadet of the House of Austria decorates the shoulders of this carved chair in the library. 43

**Didascalia** Didascalia. 52

**Ornate fountains** adorn both the gardens and the interiors at Miramare. 13 (12), 34



**Ornate fountains** adorn both the gardens and the interiors at Miramare. 13 (12), 34

**Mosaic work** for a fountain in the park. 15

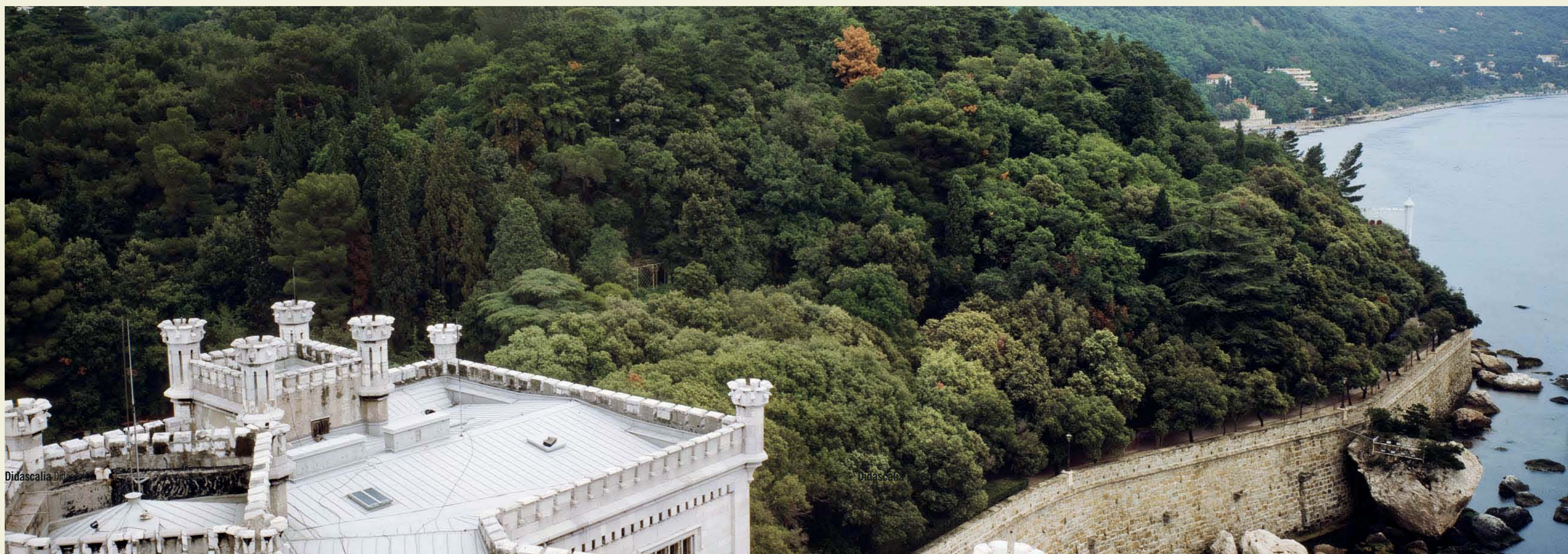
**The classically formal** Italian garden looks almost due south towards the open Adriatic 17:

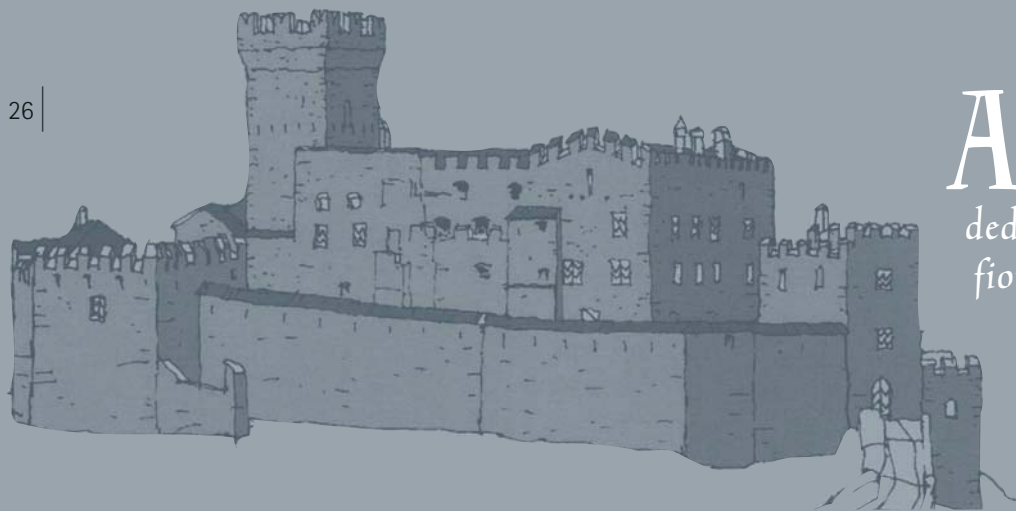


Didascalìa Didascalìa



Didascalìa Didascalìa





**A**l di là delle mura del Castello, un giardiniere attende con amorosa dedizione alla cura delle aiuole e dei fiori ~ fiori il cui rosso squilla con smalto indelebile la pienezza splendidamente matura di una quiete fondata (nell'Armonia e nel Valore) e rigonfia di vita.

Ma Conti non abita il Castello: può solamente spiarnne, da fuori, la luce dolce e inattingibile; la quiete che lo avvolge è di tutt'altro segno: è una monotonia sfibrante che penetra le ossa: è, alimentata dal fuoco di questo mezzogiorno, l'immobilità di un vuoto che anticipa la morte ~ sia pure, al principio dell'estate, la "morte per sole" nella canicola del tocco e delle successive ore del meriggio.

Soltanto la bambina, com'è giusto, non sente il peso insostenibile di questo "sole torrido". Desidera giocare ~ e questo desiderio comincia fatalmente a capovolgere il segno negativo della scena. Ma sono poi i tre esortativi, che Conti vibra a se stesso, a squarciare con profonde lame d'azzurro il torpore soffocante della quiete. Così, celesti e vaporose, le fate affiorano alla mente del poeta - un batter di ciglia, e saranno già racconto per far sognare la bambina.

Eppure, qui Conti gioca a divertire, a volgere altrove soprattutto se stesso a penetrare, in qualche modo, nell'altra quiete, nell'altra luce del Castello. Melme desiino batter di ciglia, le lancette dell'orologio tornano indietro di qualche ora e di qualche millennio.

Si noti: i "primi colli erbosi" non sono tanto i colli più vicini alla pianura ~ ma le colline illuminate dalla prima luce del giorno, accolte (ed avvolte) nello stupore del primo sguardo, dei primi occhi ("imbambolati") del mondo.

Di quella luce innocente, Conti si porterà dentro una scintilla, una scaglia, l'estate, la "morte per sole" nella canicola del tocco e delle successive ore del meriggio. Soltanto la bambina, com'è giusto, non sente il peso insostenibile di questo "sole torrido". Desidera giocare - e questo desiderio comincia fatalmente a capovolgere il segno negativo della scena. Ma sono poi i tre esortativi, che Conti vibra a se stesso, a squarciare con profonde lame d'azzurro il torpore soffocante della quiete. Così, celesti e vaporose, le fate affiorano alla mente del poeta ~ un batter di ciglia, e saranno già racconto per far sognare la bambina.

