

**Journal
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**L-Università
ta' Malta**

**A Journal published by the
Institute of Anglo-Italian Studies
University of Malta**

**General Editor: Peter Vassallo
Volume Editor: Gloria Lauri-Lucente**

JOURNAL OF ANGLO-ITALIAN STUDIES

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In Memoriam

Professor Michael O'Neill (1953–2018), formerly Head of the Department of English Studies and founding Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies (Arts and Humanities) at Durham University, died of cancer aged 65. He had a distinguished academic career over forty years and had established a reputation as a leading scholar of Shelley's poetry. Nicholas Roe, Professor of English at the University of St Andrews, described him as "one of the most brilliant scholars of Romantic poetry." He was also a very gifted poet in his own right who was awarded many national awards. He visited the English Department as an external examiner sixteen years ago and came over to Malta as a main speaker at some of the Conferences on "Britain and Italy: Literary and Cultural Relations" which were organized under the aegis of the Institute of Anglo-Italian Studies.

Michael was also a visiting professor at the Institute. He was an excellent speaker and I particularly recall his superb public lecture on "Dante and English Romantic Poetry" which has since been published, in revised and expanded version, in *Dante Rediscovered* by The Wordsworth Trust. In January 2019 he was honoured posthumously with the Distinguished Scholar Award of the Keats-Shelley Association of America at the MLA Convention in Chicago.

Patricia Ellul-Micallef 1959-2019 (née Stewart) who edited Volume 10 of the *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* also contributed significantly to the organization of two of the Institute's International Conferences on "Britain and Italy: Literary and Cultural Relations."

Peter Vassallo

“The Pretender
(whom you desire an account of)”:
*Curious travellers and the exiled
Stuarts in Rome*

Anne McKim

ABSTRACT: The Stuart Court in Rome fascinated eighteenth-century English visitors to Italy. These curious travellers were keen to report sightings of the exiled royal family in their letters home to their equally curious relatives and friends. This article considers varying attitudes to the Stuarts, and the associated politics of identity, revealed in the correspondence of five English writers – Thomas Gray, Horace Walpole, Joseph Spence, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Lady Henrietta Pomfret – who visited Rome between 1738 and 1745, a period identified as “the heyday of the exiled court.” Their letters home demonstrate that their attitudes to the prohibited Stuart court were often more complex, and sometimes more ambivalent, than one might assume from their political allegiances. The article concludes with examining a hoax letter that cleverly caricatures the “curious traveller” in Rome by sending up the anxieties associated with maintaining a safe distance from the exiled Stuarts.

KEYWORDS: Stuarts, Rome, Thomas Gray, Horace Walpole, Joseph Spence, Mary Wortley Montagu, Lady Pomfret, curiosity.

The extended exile of the royal House of Stuart, first of James II following the so-called “Glorious Revolution”¹ in 1688–1689, and

1. Ulrich Niggemann establishes that this “concept was created for the aim of Williamite clerics and other propagandists to legitimise the new regime during William’s reign” and that the term was common in sermons of the time. “Some Remarks on the Origins of the Term ‘Glorious Revolution’”, *The Seventeenth Century* XXVII, No. 4 (1 December 2012), 477–487, p. 481.

then of his son, James III and his sons, Charles Edward and Henry Benedict Stuart, has been examined by Edward Corp in several finely detailed studies.² In his monograph, *The Stuarts in Italy, 1719–1766: A Royal Court in Permanent Exile* (2011), Corp considers what he calls the second phase of the Stuart royal court in exile, at Rome (with a brief removal to Bologna between 1726 and 1729), and challenges previous representations of the Jacobite court. The evidence for his fresh approach is largely drawn from descriptions of the court in weekly letters between 1722 and 1757 sent from Italy to London by the Hanoverian spy, Baron von Stosch. Corp illustrates just how much can be learned from these letters. My own research on eighteenth-century travellers in Italy reveals that private correspondence, intended for family and friends, can also be a rich source of observations of the exiled court.

The Stuarts in exile fascinated eighteenth-century visitors to Italy, especially those on the Grand Tour of Europe. This article considers attitudes to the Stuarts, and the associated politics of identity, revealed in the correspondence of five elite English travellers who visited Italy between 1738 and 1745, during the period identified by Corp as “the heyday of the exiled court” in Rome. In the early 1740s these travellers all stayed in Rome, widely considered the highpoint of the Grand Tour because of its antiquities, architecture and art. While they reported on these Roman sights in their letters home, they also reveal their curiosity about the exiled Stuart family, who “had become, in a sense, one of the sights of Rome.”³

2. Edward Corp, *A Court in Exile: The Stuarts in France, 1689–1718*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004; *The Jacobites at Urbino: An Exiled Court in Transition*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2008; and *The Stuarts in Italy, 1719–1766: A Royal Court in Permanent Exile*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. See also his chapter, “the Extended Exile of James II” in *Monarch and Exile* edited by P. Mansel and T. Riotte, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 165–177.

3. Patricia Andrew, “The Grand Tour: an Overview”, p. 37. <https://www.amdigital.co.uk/primary-sources/the-grand-tour> [accessed 16 October 2011].

The Stuart Court in Exile

James Francis Edward Stuart, the son of the deposed Catholic king James II (of Britain) and VII (of Scotland), spent the whole of his life from six months of age in exile on the continent, the majority of it in Rome, from 1718, when he married the Polish princess, Maria Clementina Sobieska, until his death in 1766. Their two sons were born in Rome: Charles on 30th December 1720, and Henry five years later, on 6th March 1725. The Pope provided the family with a residence in the city, the Palazzo del Re, and a country villa at Albino, as well as an annual allowance from the papal treasury. One of Benedict XIV’s first acts as a new pope in August 1740 was to give James a celebratory gift of 10,000 *scudi*, and to renew the Stuart annual pension.⁴ Corp has established that the Stuart court employed and supported about 135 people in the early 1730s but this number reduced slightly after the death of the queen in 1735. By 1740, about half of the court employees were Italian, “but there remained a group of anglophones surrounding the royal family.”⁵ James’s secretaries and the *Maggiordomo* were British.⁶ Particularly influential, though unpopular among other Jacobites in the court, was the Scot, James Murray (1690–1770), created Earl of Dunbar by James in 1721 and appointed as tutor and governor of the young princes in 1725–1726.

While the Pope, resident cardinals and most Roman aristocrats recognised the royal status of the exiled Stuarts, the British pro-Hanoverian government did not, of course. As there was no British embassy in Rome since the Vatican did not recognise Queen Anne and her Hanoverian successors, the Stuart court became a kind of “surrogate embassy” for travellers needing passports and diplomatic

4. *The Stuarts in Italy*, p. 225.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 308. The king’s confessors were all Italian and his chaplain was Father Lawrence Mayes (1673–1749), who had arrived in Rome 1706. The family regularly heard mass in the Chapel Royal (p. 312).

6. “The Extended Exile”, p. 172.

protection.⁷ The Palazzo del Re also housed a chapel royal, to which Protestants were granted admission by the pope. Corp observes that the court's Anglican chaplains "were particularly active in helping the Grand Tourists and attracting them to visit the court."⁸ While parents warned their touring children against getting involved with Jacobites, it seems that Jacobite courtiers welcomed and offered assistance to each new arrival in the capital.⁹

The Curious Travellers

Five English travellers met in Italy between 1739 and 1741 and recorded their impressions of the country, and of their compatriots, in letters home to family and friends. These "scribbling travellers"¹⁰ were all writers, or became writers, of various kinds. While most of their letters were never intended for publication, they have all been published since.¹¹ For Thomas Gray (1716–1771) and Horace Walpole (1717–1797) the trip to Italy was part of their Grand Tour of

7. According to Corp, "because successive popes refused to give even *de facto* recognition to Queen Anne, King George I or King George II, there was no British embassy in Rome [...]. The Stuart court filled this gap, providing the Grand Tourists with a substitute or surrogate embassy where they could obtain passports, diplomatic protection, an Anglican chapel and various other services. The court was used in this way by Protestants and Catholics, by Whigs and Tories, by Hanoverians as well as Jacobites. King James was personally more influential at the papal court than any ambassador could have been." *The Stuarts in Italy*, p. 3. Citing John Ingamells (*A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy, 1701–1800*), New Haven, Conn, Yale U.P., 1997, he also notes that "The Roman customs officers apparently passed on to the Stuart court the names of all the British and Irish tourists who arrived in the city." *Ibid.*, p. 4, n. 10.

8. *The Stuarts in Italy*, p. 4.

9. Susan Lamb, *Bringing Travel Home to England: Tourism, Gender, and Imaginative Literature in the Eighteenth Century*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2009, p.110. Corp, *The Stuarts in Italy*, p.3.

10. Slava Klima (ed.), *Joseph Spence: Letters from The Grand Tour*, Montreal and London, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975, Introduction, p. 8.

11. Horace Walpole prepared an edition of his correspondence that appeared after his death, and Joseph Spence edited a selection of his "Travelling Letters", but these remained unpublished until 1997.

Europe.¹² Friends since their student days at Eton, like so many privileged young men of their generation, Gray and Walpole made the tour from 1739–1741 after finishing their studies at Cambridge. Both in their early twenties at the time, they went on to be recognised as major cultural figures, one as a poet and the other as an art critic, author (most famously of the novel, *The Castle of Otranto*), and politician. Walpole, the youngest son of the then prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, and the wealthier of the two young men, had invited Gray to be his travelling companion. Both sent the obligatory accounts of their travels to their parents, as well as letters to friends from their Eton schooldays, Richard West and Thomas Ashton.¹³ Another former school friend, Henry Fiennes Clinton (1720–1794), earl of Lincoln and later second duke of Newcastle, was also on the Grand Tour at the same time, but it is the lively letters of his travelling companion and tutor-governor, Joseph Spence (1699–1768), Oxford Professor of Poetry, to his mother, that I draw on in this article. Unlike the younger men, this was not Spence's first Grand Tour; he had visited Italy with another young charge in 1732.¹⁴

In the course of the eighteenth century more and more women travelled to Italy, often in the company of their husbands. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762), although married, was somewhat unusual in travelling there alone. Aged 50 at the time, and a well-known poet, her infatuation with the Venetian intellectual, Francesco Algarotti, led her to follow him from England to Italy in 1739. It was a fruitless mission; in the event, she remained abroad in a self-chosen exile, only returning to London when she received news of her husband's death in 1761; she herself died the following year.

12. Walpole and Spence had their portraits painted in Rome by Rosalba Carriera in 1741.

13. References to Thomas Gray's correspondence are to The Thomas Gray Archive, University of Oxford, <http://www.thomasgray.org/> and references to Horace Walpole's letters are to *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 13, <http://images.library.yale.edu/hwcorrespondence/>.

14. Ingamells, p. 881.

Lady Henrietta Louisa Fermor, Countess of Pomfret (1698–1761) was a lesser known poet and translator who had first become acquainted with Wortley Montagu in London in 1738. Pomfret, her husband and two of their daughters were also not typical Grand Tourists. An economy drive took them abroad for over three years, two of them spent in Italy. Throughout the trip Lady Pomfret maintained a regular correspondence with her friend, Frances Seymour, Lady Hertford, whom she had known since they both served as Ladies of the Bedchamber to Caroline, wife of George II until the queen's death in 1737.¹⁵ The family's longest residence was in Florence, where their frequent visitors included Gray and Walpole, among other young male travellers, and where Joseph Spence's ward, Lord Lincoln, fell in love with Sophia, the elder Pomfret daughter. When Wortley Montagu came to Florence in the autumn of 1740 she stayed with the family for around two months. These assorted travellers all visited Rome as part of their tour of Italy. Corp suggests that British people visiting Rome in the first half of the eighteenth century, many of whom were young, tended to band together:

The fact of being surrounded in Rome by a much more significant and indeed overwhelmingly dominant “other” – by the Italians and other foreigners living in the papal city – forged a sense of national identity among Britons on the Grand Tour.[...] Political differences within the British Isles did not automatically take precedence over practical considerations in a far away country. The fact is that British visitors to Rome socialised together, whether they were Whigs, Tories or Jacobites.¹⁶

15. *Correspondence Between Frances, Countess of Hertford, (afterwards Duchess of Somerset,) and Henrietta Louisa, Countess of Pomfret, Between the Years 1738 and 1741*, 3 vols., R. Phillips (ed.), London, 1805. I use the modern spelling, “Hertford”, in this article. My article, “‘A woman of infinite wit, and agreeable conversation, always entertained me’: The Countess of Pomfret and Italian hospitality”, *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* vol. 15 (2017), pp. 1–18 examines the letters from Italy in some detail.

16. Corp, “The Extended Exile”, p. 173.

Although the Jacobite court was out of bounds, it seems that travellers felt at some liberty to socialise with exiled Jacobites. Wortley Montagu clearly mingled with Jacobite courtiers in Rome. Her sister Frances had spent twenty years at the Stuart court after following her husband, the forfeited Earl of Mar, into exile after the failure of the 1715 Jacobite rising. Montagu wrote to her from Rome in February 1741 to say “I am now in a place where I hear you spoke of with a great deal of regard, and remember’d with real Esteem.”¹⁷ In her letters to her Tory friend, Frances Seymour, Lady Pomfret relates that she met the elderly Lady Nithsdale several times in Rome. This would have been newsworthy as Nithsdale was still something of a celebrity at the time (and since), having masterminded the escape of her Jacobite husband from the Tower in 1716.¹⁸ After joining him in exile in Rome she became governess to Prince Henry, and continued in this role until Lord Dunbar became his tutor. Pomfret also mixed socially with known Jacobites such as David Wemyss, Lord Elcho (who later joined in the 1745 Rising) although she herself was certainly not a Stuart sympathiser. Even Walpole, the British Prime Minister’s son, says of the Jacobite Earl of Dunbar:

I meet him frequently in public places, and like him. He is very sensible, very agreeable and well-bred.¹⁹

While “visiting the Jacobite court in Rome was technically a capital offence under English law for a British traveller”, according

17. Rome, 20th January 20, 1741. *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Robert Halsband. 3 vols. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966, vol. 2, p. 224. All references to Wortley Montagu’s letters are to this edition.

18. Lady Nithsdale lived in exile with the Jacobite court, first at La Flèche, in France, from 1717 to 1718, and then from 1718 to 1726 at Rome, where she died in 1749. Lady Nithsdale became a popular heroine in early Jacobite writing.

19. Walpole to Thomas Ashton, 14 May, 1740. *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, vol. 13, pp. 217–218. <http://images.library.yale.edu/hwcorrespondence/>

to one historian, there were plenty of occasions to see the Stuarts in public places.²⁰

Travellers were keen to catch a glimpse of the family so they could report such sightings in their letters home. The language used in the letters of all these travellers is illuminating. It conveys their curiosity and their desire to satisfy that of their correspondents back in Britain, but also their caution about appearing to get too close. All of them were keenly aware of the likely interception of their letters by both Stuart and Hanoverian functionaries. Gray wrote to his mother shortly after he arrived in Rome and allayed her fears by resorting to sarcasm when he informed her:

I have not yet seen his majesty of Great-Britain, etc., though I have the two boys in the gardens of the Villa Borghese, where they go a-shooting almost every day; it was at a distance, indeed, for we do not choose to meet them, as you may imagine.²¹

His companion, Horace Walpole, went further and denied the family any special status, royal or otherwise, by referring in his letters to “Mr Stuard and his two sons”, as in this example:

We are going tonight to a great assembly at one of the villas just out of the city, whither all the English are invited; amongst the rest, Mr Stuard and his two sons.²²

In other letters he signalled his loyalty to the Hanoverian dynasty by using the designation “Pretender”, signifying “the pretended Prince of Wales”, the term routinely applied in government circles at the time to the son and grandson of King James II and VII, distinguished from

20. Hugh Douglas, *Jacobite Spy Wars: Moles, Rogues and Treachery*. Stroude, Sutton Publishing, 1999, p. 41.

21. *Thomas Gray to Mrs Dorothy Gray from Rome*, 2nd April, 1740. Letter no. 93, The Thomas Gray Archive, University of Oxford, <http://www.thomasgray.org/>

22. To Thomas Ashton, from Rome, 14th May, 1740. *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 13, pp. 217–218.

one another as the old and young Pretender.²³ “Chevalier” was the preferred title among Jacobites. Walpole wrote to another correspondent about the particular difficulty he had in conversation, in Reggio, with an Italian duke who was related to the old “Pretender”: “we were both at a loss how to call him, but compounded all by saying *quello a Roma*” (i.e., the one at Rome).²⁴

Nomenclature could certainly be a challenge, and the names chosen are revealing. James Boswell famously expressed his own dilemma when he asked George III what he should call Charles Edward Stuart in his forthcoming publication, *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, since “to call him the *Pretender* was what he could not think of doing, as it was against his principles; that to name him the Chevalier de St George was awkward, it being a title that in reality did not belong to him.”²⁵ When the king said he should call him as he pleased, Boswell waggishly replied: “I may say then that I have your Majesty’s sanction for styling him ‘The unfortunate grandson of King James the Second.’”²⁶ This was in 1785, nearly forty years after Jacobite hopes of a restoration of the Stuarts were finally dashed at the Battle of Culloden. Yet, as Murray Pittock has remarked, even in modern historiography “the continuing avoidance of ‘Prince’ for ‘Pretender’ [...] is indicative of an inbuilt and surviving set of prejudices which surface both through the treatment of the Jacobite movement at large, and the character of Charles himself. The term used to indicate his status has always been deeply politicised.”²⁷

This is a continuing issue. A plaque at the start of a current exhibition, “Imagining Power: The Visual Culture of the Jacobite

23. Murray Pittock, ‘Charles Edward Stuart’, *Etudes Ecossaises*, (2005: 4/10): 57–71, p. 58.

24. To Horace Mann from Reggio, 18 May 1741 NS. *Supplement to the Letters of Horace Walpole, fourth earl of Oxford*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1918, 2 vols – Vol. 1, pp. 30–31.

25. James Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, Peter Levi (ed.), Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1984, p. 265, note.

26. Boswell, p. 266.

27. Pittock, p. 59.

Cause”, at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh, contains a proviso, couched in politically cautious terms:

Names and Titles

Generally, both the names and the titles used in this exhibition are those used by the people at the time their portrait was made. The man known as the ‘Pretender’ (meaning claimant to the throne) and then the ‘Old Pretender’ by the British government is usually referred to as James III of Great Britain – the title he used himself and by which he was recognised by half of Europe after 1701. He was, to Jacobites, James VIII of Scotland and III of England.

His son, the ‘Bonnie Prince Charlie’ of popular history, is Prince Charles Edward Stuart or the Prince of Wales, although he was the ‘Young Pretender’ to his enemies. Similarly, the courtiers of James III are given their Jacobite honours at the time, and George I remains George I even though the Jacobites called him (and his son) the ‘Elector of Hanover.’ Exceptions to this principle have been made when a particular work has a specific given title, not least as the naming of the subject was never a neutral act, but a revealing political and ideological choice in an age which considered titles as vital indicators of personal and social identity.

Curious travellers did not lack opportunities to see the Stuarts in person. “James III” could be seen at the opera every night in winter.²⁸ In January 1741 Joseph Spence sent to his mother this excited account of seeing James and his younger son at the Aliberti opera-house, where his ward, Lord Lincoln, had secured a box:

And, whether by good or bad luck, in the very box under the Pretender’s. He was there last night, with his second son (the eldest was gone out on a party of hunting) and some other blue and green garters, for red, you know, they have none.

The custom of operas here is to visit from one box to another: and, though I never make any visit to my neighbour above stairs, I

28. This according to Lord Elcho (quoted by Corp, 253). Details of particular opera houses, including the Aliberti, and operas seen between 1739 and 1741 are given by Corp on p. 270.

went over to my Lord Strafford, who is opposite to us, to take a view of them. The Pretender looks sensibly older since I was here last; he read his opera-book with spectacles; his son sat by him in front, the Duc de St. Aignan behind [i.e. the French Ambassador], and by him Dunbar. He has three boxes all flung together, and they were all filled with his company and attendants of one sort or another.²⁹

It is worth noting the guarded wording of "whether by good or bad luck", before the avowal: "I never make any visit to my neighbour above stairs." Nevertheless, he engineers an opportunity "to take a view of them." He is clearly well-informed and knows the whereabouts of the absent prince Charles. Spence goes on to remark that the "Pretender" has aged since he last saw him, which was on his earlier visit to Italy in 1732. And he finds it noteworthy that his large entourage requires the use of "three boxes all flung together."³⁰ These are all details he knows his mother will appreciate.

James III/the Pretender could also be seen at church and, often with one of his sons, in the long thoroughfare known as the Corso, as well as at balls and other social assemblies to which tourists were often invited.³¹ Thomas Gray reported various sightings, apparently to satisfy his father's curiosity:

The Pretender (whom you desire an account of) I have had frequent opportunities of seeing at church, at the corso, and other places; but more particularly, and that for a whole night, at a great ball given by count Patrizii to the Prince and Princess Caron (who were come to Rome at that time, that he might receive from the hands of the Emperor's minister there, the order of the golden fleece), at which he and his two sons were present. They are good fine boys, especially

29. Jacobite kings conferred the Order of the Garter and the Order of the Thistle, but not the Order of the Bath. Lord Strafford: William Wentworth (1722–1791), Earl of Strafford; Dunbar: James Murray, Earl of Dunbar.

30. *Joseph Spence: Letters*, p. 342.

31. Douglas, *Jacobite Spy Wars*, p. 41.

the younger, who has the more spirit of the two, and both danced incessantly all night long.³²

In contrast to the “good fine boys”, their father makes a poor impression on Gray:

For him, he is a thin, ill-made man, extremely tall and awkward, of a most unpromising countenance, a good deal resembling King James the Second, and has extremely the air and look of an idiot, particularly when he laughs and prays: the first he does not often, the latter continually. He lives private enough with his little court about him, consisting of Lord Dunbar, who manages everything, and two or three of the Preston Scotch lords, who would be very glad to make their peace at home.³³

Walpole attended the same ball and noted that all the English travellers spurned the Stuarts by refusing to dance:

Last night all the world was at the Villa Patrizzi: there was music, dancing, two banks at pharaoh, cards, etc. The Pretender and his two babes, being present, none of the English would dance.³⁴

While Walpole here allows James Stuart the status of claimant to the British throne, he literally belittles the princes (who were aged 20 and 15 at the time) by referring to them as “his two babes.” Walpole was writing to Horace Mann, the British diplomatic representative in Florence, for whom he had agreed to spy on the Stuarts while in Rome, although the dramatic tone of some of his reports to Mann suggests he may have regarded espionage as a diverting cloak-and-dagger game:

32. Rome, 16 July 1740.

33. *Ibid.* Possibly including William Drummond, 1st Viscount of Strathallan and Charles Radcliffe, Fifth Earl of Derwentwater who, along with his brother James, had fought at Preston in 1715 and later was very active in the exiled Stuart court.

34. To Horace Mann, Rome 14 May 1740. *Supplement to the Letters of Horace Walpole, fourth earl of Oxford*, vol. 1, p. 27.

I send Engelbert away with this to give you notice, that the Pretender’s two sons left Rome yesterday morning [...] to go toward Civita Vecchia under pretence of quail shooting. I have been told this morning that the eldest is to go off for Spain.³⁵

As it turned out, this was not reliable intelligence anyway. Charles did not leave Rome for Spain, *en route* to lead the 1745 rebellion in Britain, until 1744. Wortley Montagu, responding to her husband’s request for an account of the Stuarts in Rome, repined that she “never saw the Chevalier during my whole stay at Rome.”³⁶ Her choice of nomenclature is noteworthy. She goes on to describe the striking figures cut by his two sons at another ball:

I saw his 2 Sons at a public Ball in Masque; they were very richly adorn’d with Jewell. The eldest seems thoughtless enough and is really not unlike Mr. Lyttelton in his Shape and air. The youngest is very well made, dances finely, and has an ingenuous Countenance; he is but 14 years of age. The family live very splendidly, yet pay every body, and (where ever they get it) are certainly in no want of money.³⁷

This provides rather a different impression of the exiled Stuarts from the account given by Gray: she accentuates the glamour, the family’s apparent wealth and sumptuous lifestyle, whereas Gray dwelt on the unprepossessing features and manner of the father and referred dismissively to “his little court.” They share an appreciation of the princes’ dancing though!

Like Gray, Wortley Montagu’s friend, Lady Pomfret, succeeded in seeing all three of the Stuarts during the time she and her family spent in Rome, and was delighted to tell her friend, Lady Hertford,

35. Cited by Lamb, *Bringing Travel Home to England*, p. 109. She dates the letter April 1740.

36. To Edward Wortley Montagu from Leghorn, 25 February 1741. *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, II, p. 227.

37. *Ibid.*

that “I have now seen the whole family.”³⁸ A former lady of the bed-chamber to Caroline, Queen Consort to George II, she was warmly welcomed in Rome by Italian noblewomen. The contessas Patrizzi and Bolognetti hosted salons in her honour and took the family sightseeing. Pomfret describes her first sighting of Prince Charles at a private ball held by the Bolognettis, and attended by the Roman nobility:

When the whole assembly was collected together (which in rich clothes and jewels might vie with those of any birth-day), in which were all the English as well as other foreigners, a tall, fair, young man came in, whom they called *il Principe*; and for whom a party of cards being made, the rest of the company disposed themselves to play or walk about, as they liked best. As I had a curiosity to see that person, I staid some time in the room, at a distance from the table where he was.³⁹

It is interesting to note her use of the Italian royal title here, *il Principe*, her frank disclosure of her “curiosity to see that person”, yet cautious keeping of a safe “distance from the table where he was.” In another letter to her friend, she describes an expedition to Albino where she sees the residences of the Pope and the Pretender, “the first at a distance only”, wording that leaves room to wonder whether she inspected the Stuart residence there at closer quarters.

The Stuarts in exile clearly held an exotic appeal for eighteenth-century visitors to Rome. Since recording the exotic and curious⁴⁰

38. Pomfret to Hertford, Rome, March 1741, *Correspondence Between Frances, Countess of Hartford, (afterwards Duchess of Somerset), and Henrietta Louisa, Countess of Pomfret*, vol. II, 291. The sighting was on the Corso which she describes in the same letter: “the Corso (where we live), is near a mile and a half long, and leads to the Capitol [...] our lodgings are good.”

39. Her letter gives a very full account of that day which included mass in St Peter’s and a Vatican visit.

40. *The Traveling and Writing Self*, edited by Marguerite Helmers and Tilar Mazzeo, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007, p. 5.

has long been a part of travel writing it is not surprising that, in their letters home, British travellers display both curiosity and caution when they describe their encounters with the exiled Stuarts. As I pointed out earlier, Gray felt he had to reassure his mother that, although he saw the two young princes shooting quail almost daily, “it was at a distance, indeed, for we do not choose to meet them, as you may imagine.” Curiosity has long been understood as “the temptation that leads us toward dangerous and forbidden waters.”⁴¹ In the eighteenth century, Catholic Italy, and Rome in particular, was seen as posing a danger of seduction to young British male travellers, many of whom were destined for political office and for whom “the Jacobite court, was also a source of ideological challenge.”⁴² When Spence was in Rome in 1732 he wrote to assure his mother that he had managed to leave “the Pope’s town without turning papist.”⁴³ He finds ways to tell his mother that he ends his second visit to Rome without turning Jacobite!

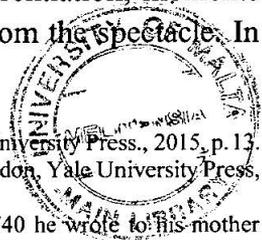
Although it is a relatively recent coinage, the term “identity politics” seems apposite here since, according to Seyla Benhabib, “identity politics is always and necessarily a politics of the creation of difference, so establishing one’s identity includes differentiating oneself from what one is not.”⁴⁴ The language of these “scribbling travellers” often reveals such moments of differentiation, moments when the spectator consciously remains apart from the spectacle. In

41. Alberto Manguel, *Curiosity*, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press., 2015, p. 13.

42. Jeremy Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2003, p. 5.

43. *Joseph Spence: Letters*, 144. In Rome in early December 1740 he wrote to his mother about his strong desire to see the Pope, Benedict XIV, who had been elected a few months before. He expected there to be plenty of opportunities as “he goes out every day, and performs all the great ceremonies in person” p. 335. He later reported to his mother on his sighting (p. 337).

44. “Strange Multiplicities: The Politics of Identity and Difference in a Global Context”, *Macalester International*: Vol. 4 (1997), Article 8. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl/vol4/iss1/8> p. 28.



her study, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour*, Chloe Chard has observed that some nineteenth-century travellers “register uncertainties, however, about the degree of separation imposed by the boundary that separates the spectator from the spectacle, [when presented with the opportunity to] explore the possibilities and dangers of crossing this boundary.”⁴⁵ Similar uncertainty is also registered in eighteenth-century travel writing.

One such moment occurs when Spence and his charge, Lord Lincoln, literally have to cross “dangerous waters”, the overflowing River Tiber, to enter Rome. It is here, on this return visit to the city, that he has his first glimpse of an exiled Stuart – Prince Henry – and his tutor, and he wastes no time in sending an account to his mother:

As soon as we got on the bridge, who should we see there but the Pretender’s second son with his governor Lord Dunbar (as they call him) and other of his attendants, who had stayed for some time to be witness of our courage: which we should be more ready, no doubt, to make use of against him and his than against the waves of the Tiber.⁴⁶

Apart from the figurative features of Spence’s language, one notes the shift as the tourist spectators (“who should we see”) – Spence and Lincoln – become the spectacle here. The curious travellers transmute into a sight themselves.⁴⁷ Prince Henry and his tutor, “Lord Dunbar (as they call him)”, are the eyewitnesses “who had stayed for some time to be witness of our courage.” One can readily imagine their account of the incident on their return to the Stuart court.

Spence is one of those travellers whose curiosity did not extend to visiting the court itself, although a letter purporting to be from him describes several such visits, culminating in kissing the hand of Prince

45. Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1999, p.157.

46. *Joseph Spence: Letters*, p. 332.

47. Chard, p. 170.

Charles. The letter, which is included as an appendix in a nineteenth-century volume, *Memoirs of the Jacobites*, is described there thus:

This letter was addressed by the Rev. Joseph Spence, author of “Polymetus,” and of “Spence’s Anecdotes”, and prebend of Durham, to his father, who had forbidden him to enter into the society of the Chevalier, at Rome.⁴⁸

The compiler of the *Memoirs*, the English novelist and biographer, Katherine Thomson (“Mrs Thomson”), claims she acquired the letter from her brother-in-law, Samuel Coltman.⁴⁹ While this provenance is credible, it is clear that the letter itself is a hoax. Although undated, the letter is addressed to Spence’s father who had died in 1715, nearly seventeen years before Spence first visited Rome in 1732. It is nonetheless interesting to consider this letter here as the forger describes what might happen if an upstanding English traveller succumbed to seduction and entered the Stuart court, which resulted in “turning” Jacobite.

In one of his many genuine letters to his mother Spence described himself as a “very curious traveller”⁵⁰ and it is this very curiosity that lures him into the Stuart court, according to the hoax letter. This letter recounts how Spence and another (unidentified) English tourist meet an Englishman in Rome whom they take for another “curious traveller”:

48. *Memoirs of the Jacobites of 1715 and 1745* by Mrs Thomson in 3 volumes, London, Richard Bentley, 1845–1846, vol. III, Appendix, p. 515.

49. Samuel Coltman (1772–1863) was the son of John Coltman (1727–1808) and Elizabeth Cartwright (1737–1811). Elizabeth was the one who left the Spence spoof to her son, Samuel. According to Thomson:

“An interesting letter in the Appendix of this work, will be found relative to the social state of the Chevalier St. George, at Rome. For permission to publish this I am indebted to the valued friendship of my brother-in-law, Samuel Coltman, Esq., in whose possession it is, having been bequeathed, with other MSS. to his mother, by the well-known Joseph Spence, author of the ‘Anecdotes,’ and of other works.”

50. 2nd December 1739 from Turin. Spence, p. 231.

Dr. Cooper, a priest of the Church of England, whom we did not suspect to be of the Pretender's retinue, but took him to be a curious traveller.⁵¹

This amusing case of mistaken identity is compounded because "Dr Cooper", like Spence, is an Anglican priest and is able to entice Spence to enter the Palazzo del Re to attend an Easter service in the chapel royal. He learns that 'the Pretender (whom he called king)' had obtained "a licence from the Pope for holding a service in his palace for Protestant gentlemen of his suite, his domestics, and travellers."⁵² Shortly after attending the service, which he describes as "the occasion of my first entrance into the Pretender's house", Spence comes "face to face" with the Stuarts and their retinue while out for a walk:

In some days after, my friend and I went to take the evening air, in the stately park called Villa Ludovici, there we met, face to face, on a sudden, with the Pretender, his Princess, and court; we were so very close before we understood who they were, that we could not retreat with decency, common civility obliged us to stand side-ways in the alley, as others did, to let them pass by. The Pretender was easily distinguished by his star and garter, as well as by his air of greatness, which discovered a majesty superior to the rest. I felt at that instant of his approach, a strange convulsion in body and mind, such as I never was sensible of before, whether aversion, awe, or respect occasioned it, I can't tell: I remarked his eyes fixed on me, which, I confess, I could not bear – I was perfectly stunned, and not aware of myself, when, pursuant to what the standers-by did, I made him a salute; he returned it with a smile, which changed the sedateness of his first aspect into a very graceful countenance.⁵³

51. Thomson, III, p. 515.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 515–516.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

In this public place, Spence finds himself showing deference to "the Pretender" as he emulates others by standing aside to let the royal party pass, and then by greeting him with "a salute." He struggles with startling feelings that almost overcome him, but nevertheless acknowledges the "air of greatness, which discovered a majesty superior to the rest." He finds himself addressed by "the Pretender" who, having established that he is an English visitor, tells Spence and his companion that "he had a house, where English gentlemen would be very welcome." Then "his Princess", whose physical attributes and demeanour have captivated Spence, urges them "in the prettiest English I think I ever heard" to attend her concert at the palace that evening.⁵⁴ Dr Cooper convinces him that "there could be no prohibition to a traveller against music [...] [and] that if we missed this occasion of seeing this assembly of the Roman Royalty, while we stayed in Rome we might not recover it."⁵⁵ They go, and thoroughly enjoy the occasion, after which: "We had a general invitation given us whilst we stayed in town, and were desired to use the palace as our house." Other visits follow, including one to an exclusive dinner. Spence discovers that:

There is every day a regular table of ten or twelve covers well served, unto which some of the qualified persons of his court, or travellers, are invited: it is supplied with English and French cooking, French and Italian wines; but I took notice that the Pretender eat only of the English dishes, and made his dinner of roast-beef, and what we call Devonshire-pie: He also prefers our March beer, which he has from Leghorn, to the best wines.⁵⁶

54. Concerts were held regularly at the Palazzo del Re, twice weekly during the carnival season between 1738–1744 (Corp, *The Stuarts in Italy*, 250). The Stuarts also held private balls to which the principal Roman nobility were invited, including the Bolognetti and Patrizzi families (251). In 1741 and 1742 these took place every Thursday, with Charles Edward appearing in Highland dress (Corp, 252).

55. Thomson, III, Appendix, p. 517.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 518–519.

The writer's approval of his host's English tastes is unmistakable, and assists him to feel quite at home in the prohibited Stuart court.

After dinner the Princess insists they meet her son, Charles, and the verdict is: "he is really a fine promising child."⁵⁷ He is reassured to find that the young prince "is attended by English women, mostly Protestants."⁵⁸ They are blamed, however, for making Spence and his companion "kiss the young Pretender's hand",⁵⁹ a gesture that traditionally signifies personal fealty and loyalty to a sovereign. Spence's conversion is seemingly complete.

This spoof cleverly caricatures the curious traveller in Rome by sending up the anxieties associated with maintaining a safe distance from the exiled Stuarts, and avoiding the risk of transgressing boundaries which could lead to altered allegiances or even "misplaced identities."⁶⁰ The cliquish inclination of British travellers in strange places to band together, and to identify themselves with "all the English" in Rome, is reflected in their letters home, letters which also demonstrate that their attitudes to the prohibited court of the exiled Stuarts were not uniform, and often more complex, and sometimes more ambivalent, than one might assume from their political allegiances.

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57. *Ibid.*, p. 520.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*

60. Paul Allatson and Jo McCormack (eds.), *Exilic Cultures, Misplaced Identities*, Amsterdam & New York, Rodopi, 2008. Exile as a form of identity has been the theme of a number of recent literary studies. See Jane Stabler, *The Artistry of Exile: Romantic and Victorian Writers in Italy*. Oxford University Press, 2013; John Simpson (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Exile*, Oxford University Press, 1995; Roberto Bolaño, "Literature and Exile", *Nation*, 31 January, 2011.

Literary ventriloquism in Byron's *The Lament of Tasso* and *The Prophecy of Dante*

Peter Vassallo

ABSTRACT: This article deals with significant aspects of Byron's propensity to ventriloquize when appropriating the character of famous figures in literature and his tendency to transform them into Byronic heroes and, in some ways, representations of himself. His visit to Tasso's cell in Ferrara inspired his *Lament of Tasso*, a dramatic monologue spoken by the poet Tasso who had been, in Byron's view, unjustly imprisoned. The second part of this paper focuses on *The Prophecy of Dante* a dramatic monologue composed in *terza rima* and written at the request of Teresa Guiccioli who wanted Byron to enter the lists and break a lance on behalf of the revered Italian poet by defending him against his denigrators, who had impugned Dante's patriotism while acknowledging his greatness as a poet.

KEYWORDS: Byron, Tasso, biography, empathy, literary ventriloquism, Dante's patriotism, Alfieri, Italian Risorgimento, Teresa Guiccioli, Ravenna.

Introduction

This paper focuses on Byron's tendency to appropriate and subsume the lives of the great epic poets of Italy, his adopted country, in particular Tasso and Dante, in the process of artistically expressing their personalities and turbulent life in the form of a self-conscious "dramatic" monologue. In both poems, *The Lament of Tasso* composed earlier in 1817 and in *The Prophecy of Dante*, written two

years later, Byron projected himself and his personal troubles by ventriloquizing, using poetry as “disguised analytical biography.”¹ Soon after his arrival in Italy in the Autumn of 1816 Byron immersed himself in his adopted Italian milieu and developed an abiding interest in Italian poetry, especially in the lives of the revered poets of antiquity, namely Dante and Tasso, with whom he readily identified since he felt that they were like him victims of their countrymen’s ingratitude. Byron’s *Lament of Tasso* was composed after a day’s visit to the hospital of St Anne in Ferrara six months later (on the 19 April 1817) where he actually entered the cell in which Tasso was supposedly confined for seven years. As is usually the case with Byron, he was profoundly impressed and immediately empathized with the plight of the Italian poet who, in his view, had been unjustly imprisoned by Alphonso II, Marquess of Este because he was strongly opposed to Tasso’s “secret” love for his sister Leonora. Byron had read Manso’s *Vita di Torquato Tasso* which gave credibility to this account and he chose to accept this version of Tasso’s imprisonment mainly because he identified with the poet whose genius was suppressed by a tyrant.² Gian Battista Manso, Marquis of Villalago, was considered a reliable biographer since he had befriended Tasso and had known him personally. This version also had an obvious attraction because it metamorphosed Tasso into a Romantic Promethean hero tormented by a despotic Duke for allegedly having dared to proffer his love to the Duke’s sister Leonora. In his *Historical Illustrations to Childe Harold Canto IV* Hobhouse preserves the view that it was Duke Alphonso’s vindictiveness that had caused Tasso’s imprisonment. There were at

1. See Jerome McGann, *Don Juan in Context*, London, John Murray, 1976, p.46. Stuart Curran in *Byron and Shelley: Becoming Italian, Romantic Dialectics: Culture Gender, Theater*, eds. S. Baiesi and S. Curran, Bern, Peter Lang, 2018, p. 25 observes that Byron did try his hand, in *The Lament of Tasso* and *The Prophecy of Dante*, “in impersonating Italian voices.”

2. Giovanni Battista Manso, *Vita di Torquato Tasso*, Venezia, Francesco Cavalli, 1625.

the time other versions of Tasso's life which contradicted Manso's version and which showed that Tasso periodically suffered from paranoia and bouts of delirium which compelled Duke Alphonso to have him confined, for his own good, in the Hospital of Sant'Anna. J.D. Black's judicious study of the poet, for instance, concluded, after a careful evaluation of the evidence, that Tasso did suffer from "mental alienation" before his confinement in Sant' Anna.³ Byron was most probably acquainted with Black's study which was entitled *Life of Torquato Tasso with an historical and critical account of his writings* and was published in 1810. However, he preferred to acknowledge the "legend" of the creative artist cruelly oppressed by a tyrannical Duke, a predicament with which he could readily sympathize.

Byron's Tasso in the *Lament*, as expected, complains about the fact of his being reduced to a kind of bestial existence in a lair, "like a beast of prey", alienated from the outside world. Byron adds another dimension to Tasso's life which is not found in Manso's *Life* by making the composition of *Jerusalem Delivered* co-extensive with Tasso's own life, the travails of artistic composition being equated with the poet's turbulent career. The Holy Sepulchre is in the end delivered from the occupation of the Infidel and, in a sense, Byron's Tasso liberates himself from his unjust confinement in the process of writing. He is freed as it were by his own self-knowledge and by the very laborious act of composition. His own personal freedom will be obtained at the expense of Ferrara's perennial shame:

3. John Black, *Life of Torquato Tasso with a historical and critical account of his writings*, London, John Murray, 1810. For a comprehensive survey of the Legend of Tasso's life see C.P. Brand, *Torquato Tasso. A Study of the Poet and his Contribution to English Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1965, pp. 205-225.

A poet's wreath shall be thy only crown,
 A poet's dungeon thy most far renown,
 While strangers wonder o'er thy unpeopled walls! (*LT*, 225–227)

Future generations, the poem argues, will admire the *Jerusalem Delivered* but they will also venerate the name of the poet who was, in Byron's view, wrongfully imprisoned there. The idea of Tasso's becoming Ferrara's glory and shame and the notion that Alphonso of the antique brood of Este had changed from generous patron to miserable despot is developed in the stanzas on Tasso (35–39) in *Child Harold's Pilgrimage Canto IV* composed a year later. In battling with his agony Tasso transcends the personal entombment of his dungeon wall.

Peace to Torquato's injured shade! 'twas his
 In life and death to be the mark where Wrong,
 Aim'd with her poison'; but to miss'd arrows (*CHP*, IV, 39, 341–345)

The spirit of the artist, Byron reminds his readers, will prevail over all forms of petty injustice and Tasso, in Byron's version of the biographical facts, becomes a symbol of quiet defiance against oppression and, by analogy, an emblem of Italy's efforts to shake off the yoke of Austrian oppression. This spirit of defiance is also subsumed by Byron as a reaction against his countrymen who, he strongly felt, had maligned him and leads to the grand rhetorical gesture of the Forgiveness – Curse sequence in the ensuing stanzas (133–136) in Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Byron's overcoming of his desire for revenge on all those who had humiliated him resonates strongly in Tasso's quelling of his feelings of revenge on the Duke who had wronged him

Great God!
 Take these thoughts from me – to thy hands I yield
 My many wrongs.... (*LT*, I, 18–20)

There was something intimately therapeutic in Byron's portraying Tasso's release of his pent-up emotions. In composing the *Lament* Byron's adhered to the popular Romantic view of Tasso's unjust and vindictive confinement in the hospital of St Anna. In so doing, as Anna Jameson had observed in her *Loves of the Poets* (1829,I,289), he adapts and incorporates sentiments of affection expressed by Tasso in some of his minor poems especially in the canzoni written in praise of Leonora and Lucretia, the two sisters of Alphonso "O figlie di Renata" and "Mentre ch'a venerar movon le genti" with their hyperbolic praise of Leonora.⁴ But the poem also subtly incorporates Byron's own wounded feelings after his separation from Lady Byron. During the awkward times of the painful separation process Byron became aware of Lady Byron's secret investigation of his mental health. At the time he regarded the breakdown of his marriage to Annabella Milbanke as a personal humiliation and bitterly resented the fact that he was shunned by those in high society who had previously lionized him. The later part of the poem dealing with Leonora's seeming indifference to Tasso's plight and her aloofness is a fine piece of ventriloquism which is a restatement of Byron's resentment of Lady Byron and his subdued affection for his half-sister Augusta especially in the concluding lines of the poem:

Yes Leonora! it shall be our fate
To be entwined for ever –but too late! (246–247)

Verses which distinctly echo the sentiments expressed towards the end of his "Epistle to Augusta" written a year earlier in 1816:

We are entwined – let death come slow or fast,
The tie which bound the first endures the last! (125–127)

4. Anna Jameson, *Loves of the Poets*, I, Henry Colburn, London 1829, p.289.

Byron must have realized that he had put too much of himself and his woes into Tasso's lamentations and in the Eighth section he jerks the poem back to Tasso's own situation by referring to a strange happening in Tasso's confinement which was singled out by Manso (in his *Life*) as a very curious incident. Manso, Tasso's friend and benefactor, describes a strange happening in which he witnessed Tasso supposedly talking to a spirit in his cell but he remarks that he could not see this spirit. In a letter to Maurizio Cataneo (30 December 1585) Tasso mentions that he was haunted by this "folletto" as he calls him, a sort of friendly mischievous demon or sprite who was fond of teasing him by hiding his letters and his food.⁵

Tasso, as portrayed by Byron in the poem, refers to his awareness of his delusion:

Unwonted lights along my prison shine
And a strange demon who is vexing me
With pilfering pranks and petty pains... (8,190–193)

The lines are in fact a summary of Tasso's awareness of his mental delusions as confided in that letter to his friend Maurizio Cataneo. The poem expresses the personal anguish of both Tasso and Byron at the loss of a woman they loved, each in his own way. Both poems reveal the inner process of self-understanding in proclaiming their woes.

I shall now turn to Byron's appropriation of Dante in *The Prophecy of Dante* in which the focus is on his prophetic vision and his relation to his contemporaries and the modern Italians who were debating his value as a symbol of the literary greatness of Italy. In his Preface to *The Prophecy of Dante* Byron stated that the poem was written on the insistence of the Countess Teresa Guiccioli who urged him to enter the literary controversy raging at the time between the

5. See *Le Lettere di Torquato Tasso*, Cesare Guasti (ed.) II, Le Monnier, Firenze, 1854, p. 479.

Classicists who sought inspiration from the old masters and the Romantic liberal writers who looked to foreign literary models. During his stay in Ravenna in the summer of 1819 Byron himself was aware that most cultured Italians, especially the Ravennese, including Teresa Guiccioli herself, “knew Dante at their fingers’ ends.”⁶ Ravenna was Dante’s last refuge in exile before his death in 1321 and the town resonated with Dantean echoes. Interestingly, Byron and his friend the celebrated physician Francesco Aglietti (who was at the time treating Teresa Guiccioli for a serious illness), both elegantly dressed, visited Dante’s tombstone where Byron placed a volume of his own poems as a tribute to the famous Italian poet. For the Italian literati who were opposed to Austrian domination Dante became the symbol of the indomitable spirit of Italy which had been suppressed and subdued by foreign occupation. As Byron admits in his Preface to the poem he was disposed to enter, with some reluctance on his part, “the present bitterness of the classic and romantic war.” Teresa wanted her “cavalier servente” to break a lance on behalf of Dante who in her view was being unjustly criticized. Besides, she had had another reason for suggesting that her *amore* should undertake the composition of a poem about Dante for this was also her way of distracting Byron from continuing the middle Cantos of *Don Juan* because in her view they were lacking in sentiment and decorum.⁷ Byron later obtained permission from his “Dictatress” to continue writing the middle Cantos.

When Byron entered Milan via the Simplon Pass on October 9th 1816 he visited Monsignor Ludovico di Breme and his brother the Marchese de Breme with a letter of recommendation from the formidable Madame de Stael. The former had been a guest of de Stael at Coppet and was known to be an Italian patriot, man of letters and

6. Thomas Medwin, *Conversations of Lord Byron*, London, Henry Colburn, 1824, p.160.

7. See Leslie Marchand, *Byron. A Portrait*, London, John Murray, 1971, p. 344.

liberal promoter of Romanticism. Both Byron and Hobhouse were impressed with his erudition and honourable character and with his coterie of enlightened friends, among them Silvio Pellico and the poet Vincenzo Monti. According to Teresa Guiccioli it was Byron's friendly association with these liberal intellectuals which had first attracted the suspicion of the Austrian authorities.⁸

When the conversation turned to Dante the controversy over the nature of Dante's patriotism was raised. There were some among the more avant-garde of the moderns who impugned Dante's patriotism while acknowledging his poetic genius. The *Inferno*, they argued, depicted Florence and the Florentines as a corrupt city torn apart with violent factional strife. In a letter to Teresa from Ravenna (7 August 1820) in his stilted Italian Byron states that during the composition of *The Prophecy* he was reading the second volume of Perticari's scholarly vindication of Dante entitled *Dell'Amor Patrio di Dante* which had just been privately printed.⁹ The treatise in two volumes were written in response to the accusations put forward by Dante's detractors who argued that throughout the *Divina Commedia* there were passages which showed that the poet lacked the fine feelings of a patriot and that his *saeva indignatio*, his "parole acerbissime" stemmed not from a love of his country but from his detestation of his political enemies who had caused him so much

8. See Iris Origo, *The Last Attachment. The Story of Byron and Teresa Guiccioli*, London, John Murray, 1972, p. 6. Ludovico di Breme, Vincenzo Monti and Silvio Pellico were contributors to the liberal journal *il Conciliatore* championing Romanticism in art and literature against the Classicists who proclaimed the established canon of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. It was suppressed by the Austrian authorities because of its "subversive" political content in 1819.

9. Giulio Perticari's *Dell'Amor Patrio di Dante* was printed privately in 1819. For a discussion of this controversy at the time see my *Byron: The Italian Literary Influence*, London: Macmillan, 1984, pp. 30–36. For a detailed account of this Classicist-Romanticist controversy see Lilla Crisafulli, "An Infernal Triangle": Foscolo, Hobhouse, Di Breme and the Italian Context of the *Essay on the Present Literature of Italy*" in *Imagining Italy: Literary Itineraries in British Romanticism*, ed. Lilla Maria Crisafulli, Bologna: CLUEB, 2002, pp. 251–285.

misery and hardship. Peticari's defence takes the form of a eulogy of Dante and an attempt to exonerate him from the imputation of unpatriotic sentiment, especially those expressed in his bitter condemnation of Florence and the Florentines throughout the *Inferno*. His strategy is to resort to the device of selectively quoting Dante's own words in his favour. Dante's nobility of spirit is shown by a dignified refusal to accept a conditional pardon and by his preferring exile to a life of servility. This was the classicist point of view and is presented as such by Peticari, who in the general drift of his treatise portrayed Dante as a victim of petty malice and envy. An interesting side issue of the literary controversy raging at the time was, in the view of the modern critics, that Dante's mind was so warped with feelings of animosity for his fellow Florentines that it affected his treatment of passions and emotions in the *Divina Commedia* and that his chief defect as a poet was his lack of gentle feelings. Byron felt outraged by these rash assertions of those who chose to denigrate Dante and wrote in his defence in his Ravenna Journal, "there is gentleness in Dante beyond all gentleness, when he is tender" and cites the case of Dante's Francesca and Paolo, the fate of Ugolino and also the tragedy of *La Pia dei Tolomei* arguing that the fact that Dante actually introduced any "gentleness at all into Hell" was a remarkable achievement.¹⁰ He also indignantly takes Peticari's point of view when he defends Dante against the critics who argued that Dante was not actually the "favourite" of his countrymen.

Not a favourite! Why they talk Dante, write Dante, think and dream Dante at this moment to an excess, which would be ridiculous, but that he deserves it. (*Ravenna Journal*, entry for 29 January 1821).

10. See *Byron's Letters and Journals*, Leslie Marchand (ed.), 8, "The Ravenna Journal" entry for 29 January 1821.

In the *Prophecy* (significantly written in *terza rima*), Byron's representation of the Florentine poet is complex and involves Dante's sense of achievement as a poet in his bid to articulate the ineffable; his sense of his being unappreciated by the "tyrannous faction and the bawling crowd"; his stoic endurance of the bitterness of exile. Byron blends biography with intertextual quotation and proleptic utterance. In the first two Cantos Dante is made to speak in his own words with adaptations from his works, his outburst against Florence in the *Inferno* (such as "Godi Fiorenza" in the opening of Canto XXVI) and his vituperative excursus on Italy in Canto VI of *Purgatorio*:

Ahi serva Italia di dolore ostello
Nave senza nocchiere in gran tempesta (76-77)

The proleptic passages foretell, with the advantage of hindsight, historical events as they evolved in Florence during his life time. Dante invests himself, as it were, with the power of prophecy in his celebrated encounter with his illustrious ancestor Cacciaguida (his great-great grandfather) in Canto XVII of the *Paradiso*. It is the dead who now instruct and advise the living and foretell the shape of things to come, events which have actually happened at the time when Dante was composing the *Commedia*. Cacciaguida foretells the pangs of exile that Dante must suffer when exiled from Florence as a result of internal dissensions and bitter in-fighting. But Byron's Dante goes a step further and prophesies the oppression of Italy by foreign invaders. There are moments when Byron fuses Dante's character with the personality of Alfieri who, in his *Del Principe e delle Lettere*, loftily proclaimed his opposition to princely patronage and his reluctance to enter the house of a despot (Vittorio Amadeo II in 1784) expressed in the utterance "chi entra in casa del tiranno si fa schiavo" which Byron expands into a Dantean exclamation:

He who enters in a tyrant's hall
As guest is slave, his thoughts become a booty, (80–83)

The topic of Italian patriotism was associated in the minds of most Italian literati with Alfieri's fiery spirit and in his Preface to *The Prophecy* Byron pointedly refers to Alfieri's fine sonnet on Dante "O gran padre Alighier, se dal cieli miri" which was meant a tribute to the Florentine poet as well as clarion call to his contemporaries to resist foreign oppression which would strike a responsive note in most cultured Italians. Alfieri in fact had transformed Dante into a symbol of defiant patriotism. Byron for his part mythologized Dante as a Byronic hero and Shelley a few years later overlooked Dante's stern sense of eternal justice and portrayed him in *A Defence of Poetry* as "the first awakener of entranced Europe".¹¹ Besides, Byron as was his wont, felt a deep sense of empathy with Dante and succumbed to the temptation of equating Dante's suffering with his own predicament at the time, typically using poetry as a means of disguised autobiography, a form of Romantic ventriloquism. As he himself admitted to Thomas Medwin:

The place of Dante's fifteen years' exile where he so pathetically prayed for his country and deprecated the thought of being buried out of it; and the sight of his tomb which I passed in my almost daily rides – inspired me.

Besides there was somewhat of a resemblance in our destinies – he had a wife, and I have the same feeling about leaving my bones in a strange land.¹²

Byron here purposely stressed Dante's feelings for Florence and his own marital situation but went on to project himself into the Florentine poet's persona and, contrary to the known historical facts,

11. *Shelley's Prose: or The Trumpet of a Prophecy*, David Lee Clark (ed.) London, Fourth Estate, 1988, p. 291.

12. *Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron*, p. 25.

attributed to Dante the misery of an unhappy marriage. This contrived similarity enables Byron to subsume the character and personality of Dante while presenting a veiled statement concerning of his own unhappy marital situation at the time.

In the first part of this extended monologue Byron follows the drift of Peticari's arguments in favour of Dante by making the Florentine poet proclaim his genuine love for his country (Florence, in this case):

Alas ! how bitter is his country's curse
 To him who for that country would expire
 But did not merit to expire by her
 And loves her, loves her even in her ire! (PD, I,68–72)

The emphatic repetition of "loves her" is Byron's refutation of the charge of Dante's lack of patriotism and his own contribution to the controversy about Dante's alleged lack of patriotic sentiment. Dante's harsh words were in fact directed against the prominent Florentines of his day and against the internal divisions and rival factions which had torn Florence apart. But Byron goes a step further and turns Dante into an oracle who predicted the ruin of his country through foreign invasions. Both *The Lament* and *The Prophecy* put forward the unpalatable truth that throughout the turbulent history of the Italian states poetic geniuses have frequently been the victims of the ingratitude of their countrymen. The city state of Florence had served Dante a cruel sentence of exile and the despotic Duke of Ferrara had confined Tasso to an asylum. Byron felt that, by empathy with the greater Italian poets, his countrymen had unjustly ostracised him, an established poet, who had achieved a measure of fame.

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The Italian Hospital in London: 1884–1990

Maria Chicco

ABSTRACT: The Italian Hospital in London was a voluntary hospital founded in 1884 to provide medical assistance, on a charitable basis, to the Italian community in the UK. Research conducted in local archives, contemporary newspapers and book literature, reveals the importance of the Hospital in the context of Anglo-Italian relations, whose developments it closely mirrored. An interplay between social, political and medical factors shaped the Hospital's fortunes until its closure in 1990. These factors include: the presence of a large community of poor Italian immigrants in need of the Hospital's services, its role as a symbol of UK – Italy cooperation and later as a political tool used by the Italian fascist regime, and the impact of the foundation of the National Health Service. With post-war prosperity, integration of the Italian community within British society and availability of free healthcare, the *raison d'être* for the Hospital ceased. Today, only the elegant building in Queen Square remains to testify to the past of this institution and its importance for Anglo-Italian relations.

KEYWORDS: Anglo-Italian relations; Italian immigration; Fascism; Voluntary hospital; National Health Service.

Introduction

The Italian Hospital stands on the South side of Queen Square, London. It is now part of Great Ormond Street Hospital and is used as an accommodation for families coming from outside London to visit their hospitalised child. The elegant architectural design, the “Italian Hospital” engraving on the façade and the coat of arms of

the House of Savoy (the Italian ruling dynasty until 1946) are the only remaining hints to this institution's past history and to its former prestige and importance for Anglo-Italian relations. Great Ormond Street Hospital purchased the building in 1990, when the Italian Hospital closed down. Its archives have been lost, however a substantial documentation on the Hospital's activities exists, in the contemporary press and spread across various London archives.

The present article examines the Italian Hospital's relevance from a social, political and medical viewpoint through the entire period of its existence. The Hospital's development is placed in the context of Italian immigration flows to the UK, and to London in particular, and of the historical vagaries of Anglo-Italian relations. The impact of these factors is examined with particular attention to the advent of Fascism, WWII, the creation of the National Health Service (NHS) and post-war economic prosperity.

From the Hospital's Foundation to the 1920s

The Founder

The Italian Hospital was founded in 1884 by Giovanni Battista Ortelli, who emigrated to England in the 1840s from Appiano, in the Northern Italian province of Como. He soon became a successful businessman and acquired substantial wealth.¹ Ortelli is representative of a first wave of Italian immigration to the UK, which took place in the first half of the 19th century: it consisted mainly of skilled, enterprising men from the Northern regions of Italy. These early migrants spread across the UK and established successful businesses in industries such as barometer and looking-glass manufacturing.² They spoke good

1. J. Hood, "The Later Ortellis and the London Colony 1825–1912", http://www.jeanhood.co.uk/later_ortellis.html [accessed 20 November 2017].

2. L. Sponza, *Italian Immigrants in Nineteenth Century Britain*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1988, p. 55.

English, were well integrated into British society and many married into British families.³ This first wave also included political exiles with a good level of instruction – among the best known are the poet Ugo Foscolo, the national hero Giuseppe Mazzini and Gabriele Rossetti, the father of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.⁴

The Context of the Foundation

In the latter half of the 19th century, a second wave of immigration occurred. These later Italian migrants were mostly poor and unskilled workers, who arrived in the UK in hope of a better life. In London, they settled in the area of Saffron Hill, which soon became a sort of Italian ghetto or “colony”, as it was usually referred to. This neighbourhood became infamous for the poor living conditions in overcrowded and insalubrious housing. Migrants often worked as organ grinders, ice cream and statuette sellers and in other petty occupations. Most could not speak any English and some not even Italian, but just their regional dialect.⁵

The Founding Myth

The foundation of the Hospital and the founder figure retained, throughout the Hospital’s existence, a sort of mythical character linked to the moral stature and the generosity of the founding father.⁶ Ortelli was a founding member of the Italian Benevolent Society, created in 1862 and aimed at helping Italian beggars on the streets,

3. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 129–131.

5. T. Colpi, *The Italian Factor*, Edinburgh, Mainstream Publishing Company, 1991, pp. 50–54.

6. H. Avery, “The Italian Hospital in London” (1962), p. 2. Document available at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, reference A/01334/1/4.

children in particular.⁷ Frequently, poor boys were brought over from Italy by “padroni”, supposedly to teach them a trade, but in reality to send them begging on the streets.⁸

The Foundation

Ortelli decided to turn one of his properties into a hospital for Italians living in the UK, where Italian-speaking medical staff would be available to communicate with patients. The hospital would welcome people of all nationalities, although priority would be given to Italian nationals and Italian speakers.⁹ The Italian Hospital opened on the 1st of January 1884 at number 41, Queen Square, with a capacity of 26 beds. The medical staff comprised both Italian and British doctors and nurses from the Order of St Vincent de Paul, whose services were not retributed.¹⁰ As a voluntary institution, the Hospital depended for its existence on the charitable services of its staff, as well as on private and public donations.

Support from the Public

Ortelli was the most important contributor, but financial support was also obtained from well-off members of the Italian community and from the British public. Newspapers reported on the Hospital’s opening in a favourable light and encouraged British citizens to help the newly founded institution. A contemporary newspaper, *The Philantropist*, wrote:

7. Hood, http://www.jeanhood.co.uk/later_ortellis.html [accessed 20 November 2017].

8. “Italian Children”, *The Times*, 20 July 1877, p. 11.

9. G. Clinch, *Bloomsbury and St. Gile’s: Past and Present*, London, Truslove and Shirley, 1890, p. 190.

10. “The Italian Hospital Queen’s Square”, *Nursing Record & Hospital World*, 21 December 1901, p. 503.

We have no hesitation in saying that the foundation of the Ospedale Italiano in London is a wise and humane proceeding [...] it is in pressing need of funds for ordinary maintenance [...] our readers will have to help, especially in the way of annual subscriptions.¹¹

From the start, the Hospital encountered great success within both the Italian community and British society. In its first year of activity, the Hospital treated 1,754 outpatients and 102 inpatients¹² and by 1887 these numbers had risen to 7,998 and 673, respectively.¹³ In 1884, the percentage of Italian outpatients was 85%, but by 1889 this number had sunk to 45%, while 49% of outpatients were British.¹⁴ The number of patients increased to the point that the Hospital was finding it difficult to cope. Ortelli decided to acquire a house located next door¹⁵ and to undertake the construction of a larger building, which opened in March 1900.¹⁶ It had a capacity of 40 beds and was fitted with electric lights, an electric passenger lift and newly available X-ray equipment.¹⁷

Institutional Support

The Italian Government took interest in the Hospital: it decided to grant an annual donation and to appoint the Italian Ambassador to the UK as president of the Hospital. On the occasion of the first Italian

11. Avery, p. 10.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

13. "News from the Dioceses: The Italian Hospital, Queen Square", *Tablet*, 9 February 1889, p. 36.

14. "Italy in London Reconstruction of the Italian Hospital", *Daily Graphic*, 15 March 1900, p. 33.

15. G.N. Dani, "Onoranze al Cav. G.-B. Ortelli, Fondatore dell'Ospedale Italiano in Londra" (1889), p. 6. Document available at The British Library, General Reference Collection 10602.d.21. (6.).

16. *Daily Graphic*, 15 March 1900, p. 33.

17. Avery, p. 24.

Exhibition in London in 1888, the Italian Prime Minister Francesco Crispi offered his patronage. A year later, the Royal Houses of both Italy and Britain also became patrons and King Umberto I granted the use of his Royal coat of arms.¹⁸ From the very start, the Hospital acquired a symbolic status as a token of Anglo-Italian friendship and cooperation. This symbolic role was reinforced by the services it provided during WWI. When the war broke out, the Hospital placed beds for wounded soldiers at the disposal of British authorities¹⁹ and when Italy entered the war on the side of the Entente in May 1915, medical examination of recruits for the Italian army was carried out by the Hospital's medical staff. Honours were awarded by the King of Italy for its services.²⁰ Numerous visits by members of both countries' Royal Houses and Governments followed, up to the very eve of WWII.²¹

Professional Support

In order to work at the Italian Hospital, it was necessary for physicians and surgeons to hold the MRCP or the FRCS, or their Italian equivalents – *Libero Docente in Clinica Medica* or *Clinica Chirurgica*.²² Reputed physicians and surgeons, both Italian and British, accepted to work at the Hospital without retribution and, as a consequence, the Hospital's status and reputation rapidly rose. For instance, in the 1932 Annual Report the listed medical staff comprises Sir George Lenthal Cheatle – eminent surgeon, Sir St Clair Thomson

18. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

19. K.G. FitzAlan, "Italian Hospital, Queen Square, London, W.C. 1. Free to All Nationalities" (October 1934), p. 1. Document available at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, reference A/01334/1/8.

20. Avery, p. 41.

21. Italian Hospital Annual Report 1938, p. 15. Document available at Wellcome Library, shelfmark WX28.BE5 L84188 55th.

22. Avery, p. 28.

– eminent ear, nose and throat specialist and Sir Aldo Castellani – famous pathologist and bacteriologist,²³ later physician to the Italian Royal House and Mussolini, as well as surgeon general of the Italian army in Ethiopia.²⁴

Following a request for assistance by Ortelli himself, the Hospital received the support of the Prince of Wales Hospital Fund,²⁵ later to become the King Edward’s Hospital Fund. This was regarded as a certificate of good quality and contributed to the reputation and prestige acquired by the Hospital. It was a source of great pride for the Italian community that a charitable institution, originally founded for the relief of the poor, had become a reputable hospital in London, where specialist care from some of the most eminent physicians and surgeons in the country could be obtained free of charge.

Reasons for success: the “Italophiles” and the Italian public

The initial success of the Italian Hospital can be attributed to the context of the time: the *Risorgimento* – Italy’s struggle for unification – and its main actors had gathered considerable sympathy among social and intellectual elites in the UK;²⁶ this feeling was later confirmed and reinforced by the alliance during WWI. The Hospital benefited from the support of many British “Italophiles” – persons who had a special sympathy for Italy and the Italian people – expressed, in particular, in the form of legacies and endowments of beds. For example, in 1928 Miss E.J. Barling from Halifax left one-

23. Italian Hospital Annual Report 1932, p. 8. Document available at Wellcome Library, shelfmark WX28.BE5 L84I88 49th.

24. A. Castellani, *A Doctor in Many Lands*, New York, Kessinger Legacy Reprints, 1960.

25. Letter by G.B. Ortelli to Prince of Wales Hospital Fund, 18 June 1897. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/266.

26. U. Marin, “Italiani in Gran Bretagna”, <http://portale.lombardinelmundo.org/nazioni/Europa/Articoli/studiric/marin10> [accessed 20 November 2017].

third of her residuary estate to the Italian Hospital, with the following words:

For the Italian Hospital, Queen Square, London, as an evidence of my admiration of their splendid patriotism and loyalty to their allies and the great service they rendered to the world in preserving civilisation during the Great War.²⁷

Even more important, however, was the presence of a continuously replenished *reservoir* of poor Italians, unable to speak English, and therefore in need of the Hospital's services. Positive perception of the Hospital in the Italian community was key in prompting donations: the Hospital relied on this *reservoir* in order to advertise itself as an indispensable charitable institution. This gave legitimacy to the Hospital's existence and to its claim for support.

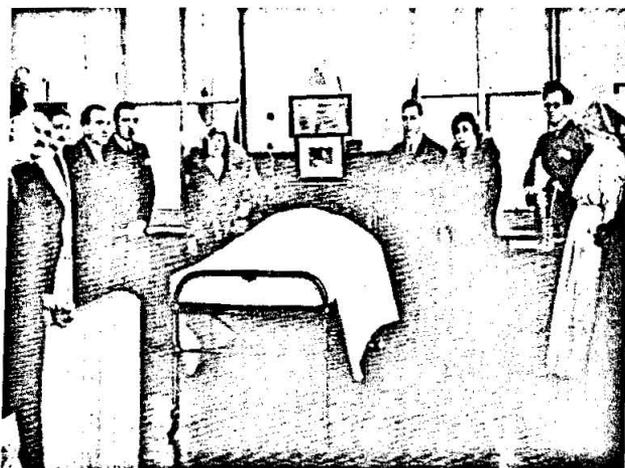


Figure 1. *Baron Albert Profumo, owner of insurance companies and father of future UK Minister John Profumo, endows a bed at the Italian Hospital in 1932. Image from the 1932 Italian Hospital Annual Report.*

27. Avery, p. 50.

Post-WWI difficulties

Despite the favourable atmosphere described, in 1920 stricter immigration policies were adopted by the UK and, a few years later, the fascist regime in Italy officially prohibited emigration.²⁸ As a consequence, the number of Italian migrants started to decrease. This, combined with the progressive integration of earlier migrants, depleted the *reservoir* and meant that the need for the Hospital's services was levelling off. During the 1920s, the Hospital experienced increasing difficulty in gaining support from the Italian community²⁹ and had to close for several months.

The rise of Fascism and the Second World War

The fascist regime and its outreach

After accessing power in 1922, the Italian fascist regime progressively set eyes on the large Italian communities abroad. The Italian community in London, which by 1930 comprised approximately 30,000 people, was a target of key strategic importance.³⁰ The Hospital's potential as a means for reinforcing the fascist party's control on the Italian community was soon recognised, and fascist efforts to gain influence ensued. A new Italian ambassador to the UK was appointed in 1932 and became president of the Hospital: Dino Grandi. He was an important figure in the fascist party and indeed is often regarded by historians as the only potential rival

28. M. Strazza, "Il Fascismo e l'Emigrazione negli Stati Uniti", [accessed 20 November 2017].

29. Letter by E.A. Last-Smith, Vice-Chairman of the Committee of Management, to King Edward's Hospital Fund, 28 April 1941. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/267.

30. C. Baldoli, "The Remaking of the Italian Community in London: L'Italia Nostra and the Creation of a Little Fascist Italy during the 1930s", *London Journal*, 26, 2001, pp. 23–34.



Figure 2. *Italian Ambassador Dino Grandi and Foreign Secretary John Simon in 1932. Image from la Bibliothèque Nationale de France.*

of Mussolini, who sent him to London in order to upgrade relations with the UK, but also to keep him at a distance.

That same year, Commendator Carlo Camagna, Secretary of the Italian *Fascio di Londra*, received a seat on the Management Committee, and facilities were afforded to the *Fascio* for conducting a “Free Fascist Clinic for Italian Children.”³¹ In an open letter to the Italian community published in 1934, Grandi exhorts the public to donate to the institution, whilst reminding everyone that “assistance, in all its shapes, is an essential activity of the Regime” and that “all the Italians in

the UK will give, in this field too, an example of fascist discipline, intelligence and generosity.”³²

However, the fascist regime also enjoyed support from British “admirers”: in 1933, a donation of £1,005 was received “from a group of British admirers to endow a bed, which was unveiled and dedicated to Signor Mussolini.”³³ In a telegram acknowledging the gift:

31. Annual Report 1932, p. 23.

32. D. Grandi, “Agli Italiani di Gran Bretagna” (12 August 1934), pp. 1–2. Document available at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, reference A/01334/1/8 (my translation).

33. “Orbis Terrarum”, *Tablet*, 3 June 1933, p. 24.

The Duce expressed his deep appreciation of such a practical expression of sympathy [...] “a proof of the friendly spirit of cooperation which unites the people of the two countries.”³⁴

Consequences of Fascist Policies

The attempt by the fascist regime to use the Hospital as a political tool meant that an increasing strain was being placed on its function as a means of Anglo-Italian cooperation. In the Hospital’s beginnings, members of the Management Committee and of the medical staff were mostly Italian. However, over time, an increasing number of British members had become involved. By 1932, the Management Committee consisted of 14 British and 7 Italian members. The British representation in the medical staff was even stronger, with a total of 17 British members out of 21.³⁵ A campaign was launched for the “Italianisation” of the Hospital and its first target was the British-dominated medical staff. By June 1935, its relations with the Management Committee had deteriorated,³⁶ due to a disagreement over the latter appointing several “temporary members” to the medical staff.³⁷ Rules were modified in order to award these “temporary members” a seat and a vote on the medical staff Committee. One particular appointment was hotly contested: the appointee was a prominent fascist, with both Italian and German qualifications. The Secretary of the Hospital himself noted that this appointment caused “real danger of racial feeling.”³⁸ The Management Committee received “a petition [...] from 7 medical

34. “The Hospital World”, *British Journal of Nursing*, June 1933, p. 154.

35. Annual Report 1932, pp. 6–8.

36. “The Italian Hospital Resignation of the Medical Staff”, *Supplement to the British Medical Journal*, 29th June 1935, pp. 310–311.

37. “Italian Hospital: Medical Staff” (December 1935), p. 5. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/266.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

practitioners and 700 Italian residents asking for his appointment”,³⁹ suggesting therefore that a specific campaign, based on political considerations, had been carried out within the Italian community in order to support this appointment.

Resignation of British Members of the Medical Staff

The situation reached a breaking point with the Management Committee's untactful handling of a complaint involving a honorary surgeon, most probably British. Again, the Management Committee was accused of ignoring the medical staff's objections; eventually 14 members of the medical staff resigned, all of them British. This power struggle is reflected in an article printed in the British Medical Journal in June 1935, which concludes that

the appointment of practitioners of lower qualifications and less experience [...], the alteration of the rules of the hospital for the specific purpose of regularising these appointments, and the decision to give the practitioners appointed [...] a position and a vote on the medical staff Committee – all these steps taken without consulting the medical staff – [...] have created a position which the staff of the hospital cannot but consider to be detrimental to the hospital and the public.⁴⁰

Although the British medical staff invoked the safety of patients as its main concern, it is likely that they resisted what they saw as an attempt by fascists to take over the Hospital's managing bodies.

Resignation of British Members of the Management Committee

The Italian members of the Management Committee soon turned against its British component. In July 1937, the Management

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Supplement to the British Medical Journal*, 29 June 1935, pp. 310–311.

Committee's Chairman, Marquess Bernardo Patrizi, "intimated the wish of the Italian element to have control of the Hospital to the exclusion of the British members."⁴¹ Six out of eleven British members of the Committee decided to resign, among whom Vice-President Viscount K.G. FitzAlan of Derwent, who had been a stalwart supporter of the Hospital for many years.⁴² This episode was discussed in the British press and further prejudiced the Hospital's image, at a time of growing tension between the two countries. It also shows that the Hospital's symbolic role was vulnerable to manipulation for political ends. The 1938 and 1939 Annual Reports indicate however that, while the proportion of Italian members on the Management Committee and in the medical staff did increase, a solid British representation was maintained.^{43,44}

The Second World War

When the war broke out on 3rd September 1939, the Management Committee promptly offered to place some beds at the disposal of the Ministry of Health and established a first aid post.⁴⁵ This reflects the ambiguity of Italy's position until its entry in the war in June 1940. At that moment, Italian members of the Hospital's managing body were excluded, but British members remained and

were determined to show that the spirit of the founder of our institution still remained with us. Signor Ortelli had recognised no

41. "Meeting of the British Members of the Committee of Management" (5 October 1937), pp. 1–2. Document available at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, reference A/01334/1/9.

42. Letter by K.G. FitzAlan, Vice-President of the Committee of Management, to Ambassador Grandi, 11 October 1937. Document available at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, reference A/01334/1/8.

43. Annual Report 1938, pp. 6–8.

44. Italian Hospital Annual Report 1939, pp. 6–8. Document available at Wellcome Library, shelfmark WX28.BE5 L84188 56th.

45. Avery, pp. 57–58.

boundaries of nationality, race or religion where charity was concerned, so we retained the name – the Italian Hospital – and kept the wards and out-patients clinics open.⁴⁶

The Hospital ran an entire year exclusively under British management,⁴⁷ a fact stressed to gain support from the potentially hostile British public.⁴⁸ The Chairman Sir Ronald Graham, former British ambassador to Italy, asked members who had resigned in 1937 to return.⁴⁹ Despite their efforts, the Hospital closed in June 1941.⁵⁰ However, the Committee continued to meet regularly for the entire duration of the war with “the object to conserve and augment the funds of the hospital so that it could be repaired and re-opened as soon as circumstances would permit.”⁵¹

From the Postwar Period to Final Closure

The Political Context

WWII ended in Europe in May 1945. In November, the – entirely British – Management Committee met and “decided to open the Hospital as soon as possible and to invite the participation of the representatives of the Italian Nation as soon as they should be accredited and arrive in this country.”⁵² The damage sustained during

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.

47. Italian Hospital Annual Report 1940, p. 4. Document available at Wellcome Library, shelfmark WX28.BE5 L84I88 57th.

48. Letter by Universal Cookery and Food Association to King Edward’s Hospital Fund, 12 March 1941. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/267.

49. E.A. Last-Smith to King Edward’s Hospital Fund, 28 April 1941.

50. Letter by the Secretary of the Italian Hospital to King Edward’s Hospital Fund, 16 June 1941. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/267.

51. Avery, p. 59.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

the war and the disuse of the following years meant that the Hospital was in very poor condition. This however was not the only factor affecting the Hospital's reopening. The Beveridge Report, published in December 1942, had proposed the creation of a welfare system providing nationalised health care, free at the point of use. This proposal contributed to Labour's landslide victory in the 1945 general election. In 1946, the National Health Service Act was adopted: it foresaw the acquisition by the State of all voluntary hospitals, bar a specific exemption granted by the Ministry of Health.

The Italian Hospital remains outside the NHS

Although incorporation into the NHS was certainly considered by the Hospital's managing bodies, no references to this can be found in the available documentation. In his May 1947 letter to the Minister of Health, the Management Committee's lawyer invoked the following motive for the decision to remain outside the NHS:

The Committee, anxious as they are to preserve [...] the national character and tradition of the Italian Hospital, strongly urge that, if it is found possible to exclude any voluntary hospital in the area [...] the Italian Hospital has a very special claim to be excluded.⁵³

The Committee urged the Minister of Health to exercise the discretion conferred upon him by Section 6 (3) of the Act, which gave him the power to exclude any hospital from the takeover. It is interesting that an exclusively British Committee would be so fondly attached to the Italian character of the Hospital: even after WWII, the original "Italophile" commitment remained untouched. The Hospital's size was the probable reason that allowed it to retain

53. Letter by H. MacMaster, lawyer to the Italian Hospital, to Minister of Health the Right Honourable Aneurin Bevan, 14 May 1947. Document available at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, reference A/01334/1/10.

its independence. In fact, a Survey report by the Ministry of Health on the London hospital services concluded that the Hospital would not be required:⁵⁴ 54 beds were unlikely to make a difference to the NHS in this part of London, which was amply provided with hospital care.

The reopening of the Italian Hospital

When the NHS was launched, on 5 July 1948, the Italian Hospital retained its independence with the status of voluntary hospital. However, as mentioned earlier, the Hospital was in poor material conditions. The Committee's eagerness to reopen as soon as possible⁵⁵ meant that outpatient clinics started in January 1948, before any renovation work could be undertaken. In a letter to the King Edward's Hospital Fund, a member of the staff gives a striking account of the situation:

As a result of the snow, the temperature in the dispensary was 32°F, and that in the surgery 40°F [...] the hospital was without essential equipment as rubber gloves, stethoscope etc, and working conditions were almost impossible, the lack of heat and running water being the worst obstacles – I had to carry buckets of water into the surgery.⁵⁶

The winter of 1948 was especially bitter, and central heating in the Hospital was not yet working. Dr Avery, a senior physician,

54. Letter by F.W. Beek, UK Ministry of Health, to the Chairman of the Italian Hospital, 25 July 1947. Document available at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, reference A/01334/1/10.

55. Letter by A. Burnett Brown, architect to the Italian Hospital, to the Ministry of Health, 17 January 1947. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/267.

56. Letter by M.H. Porter, pharmacist to the Italian Hospital, to King Edward's Hospital Fund, 5 March 1948. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/267.

recalls how “doctors sat in their overcoats and examined patients in front of a small gas fire, which never gave a great deal of heat, and with gas-pressure often very low, owing to a shortage of gas in London at the time”, and how the staff was surprised that

patients came at all. But they did come – and were happy to come – for here was an Italian Hospital once again, where recently arrived Italians who knew no English, or only a smattering such as “Cheerio” which meant both a greeting and a farewell, could come and pour out their tale of woe to sympathetic ears.⁵⁷

The Third Wave of Italian Immigration

In the previous passage, Dr Avery alludes to the third wave of Italian immigration in the UK, which started right after the war. Italy’s economy was in ruins and the UK, a traditional destination for Italian migrants, was in need of manual labour. This new wave consisted mostly of unskilled labourers from Southern Italy, who found employment in factories and coalmines.⁵⁸ While previous Italian immigration had concentrated in London, this third wave spread across the country and this was reflected in the places of origin of the Hospital’s patients. They came not only from London, but in increasing numbers from the rest of the UK “often [...] from long distance [...] as far as North Wales, Cardiff, Peterborough, Bedford and East Anglia.”⁵⁹ Patients were also sent to the Hospital by NHS doctors from across the UK. The majority of cases were patients deemed too difficult to deal with because of language problems.^{60, 61}

57. Avery, p. 61.

58. Colpi, pp. 144–145.

59. Avery, p. 62.

60. Note by A.B. King, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at St James’ Hospital, 30 May 1961.

Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/267.

61. Annual Report 1964, pp. 65–67.

The NHS and the Italian Hospital

The NHS and the Ministry of Health seemed to have a favourable opinion of the Hospital's activities. The useful role of the Hospital was recognised by representatives of the King Edward's Hospital Fund in their 1955 visit report: "the Hospital serves a useful purpose in relieving the pressure of beds in other quarters."⁶² The interest displayed by the Ministry of Health towards the Italian Hospital culminated in the attendance by Minister Enoch Powell as the guest of honour at the 1962 Italian Hospital Annual Ball. On this occasion Enoch Powell enthusiastically endorsed the Hospital's activities: "we in the National Health Service [...] welcome instead of rejecting the additions to our Capital – to our hospitals – which voluntary efforts can make. We welcome and would like to have more."⁶³ However, moral support from the Government never translated into a material one, despite the Hospital's repeated appeals for compensation with regard to patients sent from NHS hospitals.^{64, 65}

A Period of Renewed Support

The arrival of post-war Italian immigrants meant that, for a time at least, there was a clear need for the Hospital's services. This translated into a revival of interest and support, allowing the Hospital to

62. King Edward's Hospital Fund, "Italian Hospital, Queen Square, W.C. 1. Report" (January 1955), p. 2. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/267.

63. "The Italian Hospital Queen Square – London W.C. 1 The Annual Dinner and Ball held at the Criterion in Piccadilly on 14 February 1962 under the Presidency of: His Excellency The Italian Ambassador", pp. 5–6. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/267.

64. King Edward's Hospital Fund, "Italian Hospital Report on Investigation" (October 1959), p.3. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/267.

65. Letter by the Secretary of the Italian Hospital to the King Edward's Hospital Fund, 12 June 1961. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/267.

recuperate and to enjoy a period of stability. Representatives of the King Edward's Hospital Fund had visited the Italian and the French hospitals and had reported that "in 1957 both were in a deplorable state materially, they seemed not to have recovered from the war" and that "the Italian Hospital lacked direction and seemed unlikely to pull out of its troubles."⁶⁶ In 1959, to the contrary "the old depressing atmosphere was gone and the place seems alive."⁶⁷ A "League of Friends" of the Italian Hospital was founded in 1956 as a means to encourage sustained support from the Italian community. In the beginning, it counted 91 members,⁶⁸ but by 1960 the membership had risen to 525⁶⁹ and the League had established "a considerable list of subscribers [...] both in the Italian colony in England and in Italy itself."⁷⁰

The Reservoir is emptying

The situation began to change during Northern Italy's economic boom – known as the *miracolo economico* – when the Italian migration pattern shifted from an external to an internal one, and most migration took place between Southern and Northern Italy. At the same time, integration of post-war immigrants meant that the number of poor, non-English-speaking Italians was declining. The historical *raison d'être* of the Hospital, that had guaranteed strong support among the public, was being put into question. Furthermore, another of the

66. King Edward's Hospital Fund, "The French and Italian Hospital" (January 1960), p. 1. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/267.

67. King Edward's Hospital Fund, "The Italian Hospital Annual Visit Report" (December 1959), p. 1. Document available at London Metropolitan Archives, reference A/KE/C/02/06/267.

68. Italian Hospital Annual Report 1957, p. 10. Document available at Wellcome Library, shelfmark WX28.BE5 L84I88 74th.

69. Italian Hospital Annual Report 1960, p. 14. Document available at Wellcome Library, shelfmark WX28.BE5 L84I88 77th.

70. "The Italian Hospital Annual Visit Report" (December 1959), p. 1.

Hospital's historical purposes was becoming obsolete. After the war, the Hospital had resumed, at first, its role as a symbol of Anglo-Italian friendship. In 1951, Alcide De Gasperi – the first Prime Minister of the newly-founded Italian Republic – paid a visit and promised government support involving a yearly donation of £10,000,⁷¹ and the following year, Queen Elizabeth II accorded her Royal patronage.⁷² However, as the UK and Italy became close allies within NATO, and members of institutions such as the Council of Europe and the OEEC, the need for such symbols of cooperation waned. The progressive integration within the European Communities, following UK accession in 1973, deepened this evolution.

Finding Solutions: Private Patients

In this context, the purpose of the Hospital had to be reconsidered. Costs were rising exponentially, while support was declining. In order to maintain income, private and semi-private beds were introduced. By 1984 only 25% of patients were treated without any charge.⁷³ The Committee argued that “the surplus generated by the care of the private patients [...] was needed to provide for the present level of free provision” and that “the more private patients income we receive the more charitable patients can be treated.”⁷⁴ By then, 96% of the Hospital's budget was financed via private patients' fees and only 3% stemmed from donations and other fundraising activities.⁷⁵

71. “Italian Hospital Report on Investigation” (October 1959), p. 1.

72. Avery, p. 69.

73. “Italian Hospital: a Century of Care” (1984), p. 2. Document available at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, reference A/01334/1/6.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

75. *Ibid.*

Specialising in Surgery

The Hospital underwent another important development: private beds were increasingly occupied by surgical cases. The 1970s saw the introduction of specialized surgery, in particular of open-heart surgery. In due time, the Hospital was supporting a major cardiac surgery programme. Many of the patients undergoing heart surgery were flown in from Italy, where such specialized procedures were not yet available, and operated privately at the Hospital. Costs were covered by the various Italian regional health systems.⁷⁶ Despite the Committee emphasising that many of the private patients were “Italians from Italy itself”,⁷⁷ most of the patients were in fact not Italian at all: e.g. in 1980, out of 1,165 inpatients only 323 were Italian.⁷⁸

Consequences on the Public’s Perception

Although income derived from private activities was essential for the Hospital, this development dramatically affected the Hospital’s image within the Italian community. In 1980, support was so low that the Italian ambassador set up a committee to investigate the community’s feelings towards the Hospital and whether it should continue its operations at all.⁷⁹ As reported in the minutes of the League of Friends meeting, President Lady Thorneycroft remarked that the Hospital had been criticized for not being close enough to the Italian community: in the recent past.

76. “A Londra ma senza lista d’attesa”, *Il Tempo*, 27 January 1982, p. 11.

77. “Italian Hospital: a Century of Care” (1984), p. 4.

78. *La Voce degli Italiani*, 15 January 1982, pp. 8–9.

79. League of Friends of the Italian Hospital, “Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on the 15 January 1980 at the Italian Hospital”, pp. 3–4. Document available at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, reference A/01334/2/6.

the Hospital was greatly used by Arabs and other nationalities [...] now the Arab occupancy has fallen in line with policy set by the Committee of Management, to make the Hospital more Italian [...] we in fact want more Italians in those beds.⁸⁰

It was finally decided that the Hospital should continue and that efforts should be exerted to make it more relevant to the Italian community.

Efforts to remain competitive

If the Hospital was to maintain its attraction for private patients, it needed to provide the same standard of care and to acquire the same advanced equipment available at NHS hospitals. Rising costs and emergence of new expensive technologies were proving a heavy financial burden for a small Hospital of 54 beds. Nonetheless, by 1984 an ambitious plan was under way which foresaw the fitting of 15 new private beds, a twin operating theatre suite and an Intensive Care Unit.⁸¹ By 1986 hopes were high that “the hospital is currently entering a very exciting phase of the development with the completion of the new theatres [...] once these are open the hospital will provide facilities comparable to those in top London hospitals.”⁸²

The End

The Hospital’s last endeavour at renewing the public’s interest for its activities was an ambitious one, but despite attempts at

80. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

81. League of Friends of the Italian Hospital, “Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on Thursday 5 July 1984 in the Boardroom of the Hospital”, p. 4. Document available at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, reference A/01334/2/6.

82. League of Friends of the Italian Hospital, “Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on Thursday 10 April 1986 in the Boardroom of the Hospital”, p. 4. Document available at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, reference A/01334/2/6.

publicising the new facilities and at encouraging members of the Italian community to use them, demand did not follow. In 1989, the difficult decision to close the Hospital was taken and the Trustees met on several occasions to discuss sale modalities. In December 1989, the Italian ambassador Boris Biancheri sent a letter to various newspapers of the Italian community announcing the Hospital's closure. He justified the decision with the following words:

With the assimilation of the Italian community and the use made of the NHS, the needs for which the Hospital was founded have gradually faded. Moreover, had the Hospital to survive, the advances in medical science would require a substantial injection of new capital. The Trustees have considered various schemes of obtaining new capital but none of them would enable the Hospital to remain both financially viable and maintain its charitable objectives.⁸³



In the Deed of Foundation, Orтели had asked that, if the building were to be sold, funds should be invested in a charitable institution dedicated to assisting Italians in the UK or in his hometown of Appiano.⁸⁴ To this day, the Trustees administer remaining assets via the Italian Hospital Fund, later renamed the Italian Medical Charity, which helps Italians in the UK with their healthcare costs.⁸⁵

Independent Scholar

Figure 3. A goodbye from the Italian Hospital. Image from the 1961 Italian Hospital Annual Report.

83. B. Biancheri, "Ospedale Italiano", *Londra Sera*, December 1988/January 1989, pp. 6–7.

84. H. MacMaster to Aneurin Bevan, 14 May 1947.

85. Italian Medical Charity, <http://www.italianmedicalcharity.co.uk> [accessed 20 November 2017].

D.H. Lawrence's Search for Wholeness of Being: From *Twilight in Italy* to *The Lost Girl*

Renzo D'Agnillo

ABSTRACT: In his novel *The Lost Girl*, Lawrence would resume the themes he had explored in his travelogue, *Twilight in Italy* in which his euphoric discovery of the country is set against his rejection of modern mechanisation and industrialism. The heavily brooding philosophical reflections he added to the original descriptive essays testify to a linguistic and intercultural restlessness that is symptomatic of his search for what he called *wholeness of being*. With attention to the stylistic and rhetorical features of the text, this article aims to show how, in his representation of the relationship between the two main protagonists, Alvina Houghton and her Italian lover Ciccio Marasca, Lawrence dramatizes this search in terms of a metaphysical quandary in which interpersonal relations override the confines of national and cultural identity.

KEYWORDS: metaphysical, philosophical, physical, spiritual, stylistic, consciousness, unconsciousness.

Introduction

The notable transformation in D.H. Lawrence's writing between 1913–1915 can be traced to two main events: his encounter with his future wife Frieda Von Richthofen and his subsequent elopement with her to Italy. Whilst Frieda's liberal traits would prove to be a constant source of torment to Lawrence the man, her strong sense of female emancipation would have a definite influence on the development of

his metaphysical vision. From an intellectual angle, she was no less inspiring. It was she who introduced Lawrence to the ideas of Freudian psychoanalysis as well as overseeing the final stages of the composition of *Sons and Lovers*, providing insights into the perspectives of the female characters he was struggling to represent. Their uneasy relationship, which was continually marred by conflict and even physical violence, seems to have borne out Lawrence's own conception of what he was to term the "defiant, splendid split between the sexes"¹ – a notion reflected in the alternation in his works between a sympathetic response to female sexuality and insistence on male authority and dominion in sexual relations.

Lawrence's Italian sojourn offered a template from which he began to elaborate a metaphysical world-view that was the result of a cultural revelation in which he came to re-evaluate the ethics of his own country. His famous letter to Ernest Collings of January 1913 owes much to his thrilled response to Italy and its people:

My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes, and says, is always true [...] That is why I like to live in Italy. The people are so unconscious. They only feel and want: they don't know. We know too much. No, we only think we know such a lot [...] we are Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. We cannot be. 'To be or not to be' – it is the question with us now, by Jove. And nearly every Englishman says 'Not to be.'²

The letter is an instance of the linguistic misunderstandings to which Lawrence would be prone throughout his writing life, the terminological embarrassment in this case arising through the interconnection of the nouns *blood* and *religion*. The distorted

1. D.H. Lawrence, *Sea and Sardinia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002 (1921), p. 67.

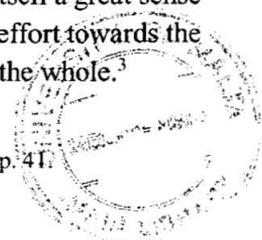
2. J.T. Boulton (ed.) *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, Vol 1: September 1901–May 1913, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 503.

interpretation relies on the idea of Lawrence's exclusive endorsement of physical reality at the expense of the spiritual or intellectual dimension. In reality, Lawrence is redressing the importance of bodily knowledge as fundamental to the totality of human experience denied by a puritanically-oriented culture driven by a middle-class suffocated by convention and false morality. In this respect, "blood" represents the spiritual sap of the body, conveying in a more dynamic way the intense participation in the flux of life as well as suggesting the separate intelligence within the body that is incapable of committing the deceptions to which the mind is prone. The suppression or negation of bodily experience for the benefit of the intellect and the spirit is, conversely for Lawrence, a sinful act.

This theme lies at the heart of his first Italian travel book, *Twilight in Italy*, which he wrote at two separate moments, the first during his stay on Lake Garda, the second in England during the years of the First World War. Some of the essays that make up the final text were originally published separately. When Lawrence collected the material for the book, he reworked several of the pieces inserting elaborate metaphysical reflections of his new-found philosophy. The result is a somewhat schizophrenic text in which the reader has to be on the alert for textual intermissions which provoke a complete shift of focus and mood. The first of these speculative passages, which introduces *in nuce* the basic tenets of Lawrence's philosophical reflections during this time, comes as an unexpected interruption to a description of the natural landscape:

In the Middle Ages Christian Europe seems to have been striving, out of a strong, primitive, animal nature, towards the self-abnegation and the abstraction of Christ. This brought about by itself a great sense of completeness. The two halves were joined by the effort towards the one as yet unrealized. There was a triumphant joy in the whole.³

3. D.H. Lawrence, *Twilight in Italy*, Middlesex, Penguin, 1981 (1916), p. 41.



Lawrence's concern with the principles governing the Other (i.e. the Italian) as well as his perception of his own difference with regard to the Other informs the conceptual framework of *Twilight in Italy*. This is clearly rendered in the opening passage of the chapter "The Spinner and the Monks" in which he describes his sense of disorientation in his new environment: "Women glanced down at me from the top of the flights of steps, old men stood, half-turning, half-crouching under the dark shadow of the walls, to stare. It was as if the strange creatures of the under-shadow were looking at me. I was of another element."⁴ The counterposed phrases "strange creatures of the under-shadow" and "I was of another element" convey not only a sense of mutual estrangement, but also Lawrence's awareness of his condition as an alien. In the following paragraph he elaborates this notion of the Italians as creatures of darkness and is again quick to underline his own difference in their eyes: "And I was pale, and clear, and evanescent, like the light, and they were dark, and close, and constant, like the shadow."⁵ The equally balanced clauses (four stressed syllables in each) do not enact a contrast so much as an attempt to connect the opposing principles. Far from suggesting an implicit critique, the contrasting pairs *pale/light* – *dark/close* are the binary opposites of what should reside within a single entity. This problematic is presented towards the end of the chapter where Lawrence describes a perplexity which has nothing to do with his foreign surroundings as such rather a metaphysical dilemma articulated at a later moment (the second phase of composition):

Where is the supreme ecstasy in mankind, which makes day a delight and night a delight, purpose an ecstasy and a concourse in ecstasy, and single abandon of the single body and soul also an ecstasy under the moon? Where is the transcendent knowledge in

4. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

5. *Ibid.*

our hearts, uniting sun and darkness, day and night, spirit and senses? Why do we not know that the two in consummation are one; that each is only part; partial and alone for ever; but that the two in consummation are perfect, beyond the range of loneliness or solitude?⁶

Lawrence replicates through coupling and the rhythmic insistence of simple coordinated sentences, the search for the perfect consummation: "what makes day a delight and night a delight [...] purpose an ecstasy and a concourse in ecstasy [...] sun and darkness, day and night, spirit and senses [...] that the two in consummation are one [...] that the two in consummation are perfect [...]." Yet the interrogative clauses simultaneously problematise such a realisation. Furthermore, Lawrence's recourse to religiously connotated words (*Ecstasy*, *transcendent*, *consummation*) throughout these metaphysical-philosophical passages betrays a sense of unease in his attempt to validate his theory of the union of opposites – of the two interrelated but never identical infinities, the Father (the body, the flesh) and the Son (the mind, the spirit) – self and selflessness, the-God-that-is-Me, the-God-that-is-Not-Me. One may almost go so far as to say that Lawrence's assessment of the Italian soul in reality reveals more about his own self:

This is the soul of the Italian since the Renaissance. In the sunshine he basks asleep, gathering up a vintage into his veins which in the night-time he will distil into ecstatic sensual delight, the intense, white-cold ecstasy of darkness and moonlight, the raucous, cat-like, destructive enjoyment, the senses conscious and crying out in their consciousness in the pangs of the enjoyment, which has consumed the southern nation, perhaps all the Latin races, since the Renaissance.⁷

6. Lawrence, *Twilight in Italy*, cit., pp. 37–38.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

The main subject of the second sentence (*the senses conscious*) is delayed (or embedded) by a series of clauses that symbolically evoke a primitive-pagan voluptuousness that is emotionally heightened by the use of asyndeton and oxymoron (*destructive enjoyment – pangs of enjoyment*). This pagan-like celebration of sensuous consciousness is contrasted with his denunciation of the northern spirit which, having pursued the principle of selflessness and abstraction now seeks to return to the other extreme: (what Lawrence calls the God which is Not-Me), the principle of abstraction:

But we try to be both at once. We do not cease to be the one before we become the other. We do not even play the roles in turn. We want to be the tiger and the deer both in one. Which is just ghastly nothingness. We try to say, 'The tiger is the lamb and the lamb is the tiger.' Which is nil, nihil, nought.⁸

The suggestion here is that this condition is symptomatic of northern civilisation's denial and denigration of the body and the complementarity of corporeal, sensorial and spiritual and intellectual experience.

Twilight in Italy also traces the obverse process at work in the Italian. At various points Lawrence describes his encounters with young men who are turning against the principles of the body in their attraction for the abstractions of industry and commerce, and, in this way, enacting their own form of negation. In this respect, *Twilight in Italy* can be seen as a lament for "the process of disintegration ... the perfect mechanising of human life"⁹ towards which Italy was already turning. Lawrence was witnessing what he regarded as the final stages of this process and he felt acutely its humiliating effects on the individuals involved. His distress is most powerfully

8. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

conveyed in his description of a young man he has befriended sailing to America to start a new life:

Nothing was more painful than to see him standing there in his degraded, sordid American clothes, on the deck of the steamer, waving us good-bye, belonging in his final desire to our world, the world of consciousness and deliberate action. With his candid, open, unquestioning face, he seemed like a prisoner being conveyed from one form of life to another, or like a soul in trajectory, that has not yet found a resting-place.¹⁰

Lawrence alternates words connotative of moral condemnation (*degraded, sordid, prisoner*), innocence (*candid, open, unquestioning*) and abstract nouns (*the world of consciousness, deliberate action, trajectory*) in order to render the man's plight even more uncertain and painful in the eyes of those watching him sail away. However, there is also an unconscious mirror-like effect in which Lawrence's own attempt to escape from his cultural affiliations in seeking an affinity with the new world he has discovered is apparent.

Lawrence's attempt to liberate himself from his cultural conditioning entailed a personal revolution which would completely alter his approach to the novel, particularly in his re-conceptualisation of character. In another famous letter to his agent Edward Garnett, dated 5th June 1914, he warns not to look in his novel for the old stable ego of the character: "I don't care so much about what the woman feels [...] That presumes an ego to feel with. I only care about what the woman is – what she is – inhumanly, physiologically, materially – according to the use of the word: but for me, what she is as a phenomenon [...]."¹¹ In his writing Lawrence sets out to delineate a space in which the individual

10. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

11. Boulton, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

becomes a field of vital forces animated by tensions inherent to sensorial and intellectual experience. This concept of character is intrinsically connected with his sense of the importance of the wholeness of being. If there is a message on which Lawrence continually insists in his writings it is precisely that man is not an absolute entity (there being no absolute either for good or evil in Lawrence). All things flow, change: "my yea! of today is oddly different from my yea! of yesterday."¹² Man's integrity lies precisely in his capacity to change. For Lawrence any attempt at final definitions is equivalent to death. This is why he disdains the idea that every novel should be founded on a moral scheme, because an imposed morality is a form of death. Whereas the morality of a novel is what he defines as "the trembling instability of the balance."¹³ The novel shakes us out of our mechanical, deathly, existence and helps us to understand what it is to really *live* – which for Lawrence always means intense participation in the living moment. This moral function of the novel can help the reader not to feel like a "carcass in the street and house"¹⁴ and to develop an instinct for life rather than formulating theories of good or evil. The novel allows the possibility for all the dimensions of being to enter into play – and from this emerges "the wholeness of a man, the wholeness of a woman, man alive and live woman alive."¹⁵

This objection to the moral scheme is seen in his hostile response to a novel that had been sent to him while he was on Lake Garda (by his friend A.W. McLeod):

I have read *Anna of the Five Towns* today, because it is stormy weather. For five months I have scarcely seen a word of English print, and to read it makes me feel fearfully queer. I don't know

12. D.H. Lawrence, *Selected Literary Criticism*, London, William Heinemann, 1955, p. 106.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

where I am. I am so used to the people going by outside, talking or singing some foreign language, always Italian now; but today, to be in Hanley, and to read almost my own dialect, makes me feel quite ill. I hate England and its hopelessness. I hate Bennett's resignation. Tragedy ought really to be a great kick at misery. But *Anna of the Five Towns* seems like an acceptance – so does all the modern stuff since Flaubert. I hate it. I want to wash again quickly, wash off England, the oldness and grubbiness and despair.¹⁶

The Lost Girl originates in Lawrence's reaction against the hopeless fatalism of modern literature through Bennett's characterisation of Anna Tellwright who, in many ways, becomes the anti-model for Alvina Houghton. His attack on the grand master was therefore a statement of intent on Lawrence's part that he would take the opposite course.¹⁷

Lawrence had written a first draft of the novel which he provisionally entitled *The Insurrection of Miss Houghton* during his first stay in Italy in 1913: "It lies next to my heart, for the moment", he wrote. Somehow the manuscript was mislaid and he only managed to retrieve it on his return journey to Italy in 1920. During the second phase of writing he altered the title to *Mixed Marriage*. It has been suggested that the final version of *The Lost Girl*, has little to do with the previous drafts, being in effect, a new work Lawrence rewrote in eight weeks after he had settled at the Fontana Vecchia in Taormina. Yet, because no manuscripts under the former titles have ever been found, it is impossible to say whether this is the case.

In compositional terms *The Lost Girl* is located between Lawrence's activity immediately post-*Sons and Lovers*, and after the publication of *Women in Love*. Thus, just as *Twilight in Italy* is a composite of two very different kinds of writing, *The Lost Girl* is a

16. Boulton, *op. cit.*, p. 459.

17. Bennett was to praise Lawrence's work when it was published. See Keith Sagar, *The Life of D.H. Lawrence*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1980, p. 122.

hybrid of two very different styles, the first part being noticeably reminiscent of Bennett's social realism, the second adopting the intricately psychological and metaphysical language that marks *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. As such, it bears witness to the extent to which Lawrence's ongoing search for a language is symptomatic of his insistence on mobility and change precisely because the phenomenon to which he is seeking to give a language is caught up in the flux of his living moment.

The opening of the novel immediately establishes the kind of tetchiness, off-handedness and "matey discursiveness" that characterises much of the first part of the novel:

Here we are then: a vast substratum of colliers; a thick sprinkling of tradespeople intermingled with small employers of labour and diversified by elementary schoolmasters and nonconformist clergy; a higher layer of bank-managers, rich millers and well-to-do ironmasters, episcopal clergy and the managers of collieries, then the rich and sticky cherry of the local coal-owner glistening over all.¹⁸

This caricature of the social setting, the various elements of which are compared to the ingredients of a wedding cake, recalls the Dickens of *Hard Times*, and, like Dickens in that novel, Lawrence sets up a binary opposition between a group of people who live the instinctual life of entertainers and a mechanised society that is losing contact with real life. But Lawrence's satirical portrait of the social world has a precise target, given the fact, as stated above, that his heroine, Alvina Houghton, is a direct descendent of Bennett's Anna Tellwright. Like Anna, Alvina is motherless and lives with her father, James, a Midlands drapery-store owner. In contrast with Anna, however, she challenges the hypocritical ethics and respectability of the local

18. D.H. Lawrence, *The Lost Girl*, John Worthen (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 74. From now on quoted in the text as *LG*.

community to the point of becoming a figure of scandal. The novel intimates from early on Alvina's difference to her environment in her unconscious resistance of the teachings of her governess, aptly named Miss Frost, so that whilst she "remained for twenty years the demure, refined creature of her governess' desire [...] there was an odd, derisive look at the back of her eyes, a look of old knowledge and deliberate derision. She herself was unconscious of it. But it was there (*LG*, p. 222)." Alvina comes of age just as her father's business is failing. In his attempt to regain his fortune, James Houghton opens a cinema-music-hall in which Alvina works as a pianist:

On the whole, Alvina enjoyed the cinema and the life it brought her. She accepted it. And she became somewhat vulgarized in her bearing. She was *déclassée*: she had lost her class altogether. The other daughters of respectable tradesmen avoided her now, or spoke to her only from a distance.

[...]

Alvina did not care. She rather liked it. She liked being *déclassée*. She liked feeling an outsider. At last she seemed to stand on her own ground (*LG*, 234).

The cultural and social associations connoted by the adjectives *vulgarised* and *déclassée* (as opposed to the *respectable* men of commerce) sanction the transition from social exclusion to social exclusiveness that affords Alvina a privileged position outside the financial and behavioural laws of the community. From this standpoint emerges her attraction for the eccentric artistes ("the odd people of the inferior stage") who perform at her father's music-hall, so that her eventual befriending of a group of travelling players, the Natcha-Kee-Tawara, comes as no surprise. The Natcha-Kee-Tawara is made up of five individuals, Madame Rochard and four young men: "They were a strictly Red Indian troupe. But one of the young men, the German Swiss, was a famous yodeller, and another, the French Swiss, was a good comic with a French accent, whilst Madame and

the German did a screaming two-person farce" (*LG*, p. 367). The other member of the group, an Italian named Ciccio, soon captures Anna's attention. Ciccio is a low, Neapolitan type who conceals the traits of the Italian male and seems to emerge directly out of the pages of *Twilight in Italy*: dark-eyed, dominant and blood-conscious. Lawrence ingeniously introduces the Natcha-Kee-Tawara troupe into the novel as an incongruous combination of instinctual life, transnational identity, human solidarity and social decadence. Its philosophy is summed up by its founder, Madame Rochard, when she scolds the Swiss-German Max for insulting Ciccio:

"Ah, the animal, the animal, he wasn't worth all my pains!" cried poor Madame, sitting with one shoe off and one shoe on. "Why, Max, why didst thou not remain man enough to control that insulting mountain temper of thine. Have I not said, and said, and said that in the Natcha-Kee-Tawara there was but one nation, the Red Indian, and but one tribe, the tribe of Kishwe? And now thou hast called him a dirty Italian, or a dog of an Italian, and he has behaved like an animal (*LG*, p. 374).

The "one nation" of Madame Rochard's ideal is, of course, a fiction, played out on an imaginary level to give a moral significance to their artistic activity. Indeed, Ciccio already represents an element of disruption within the self-democratised group, merely playing along with their game out of necessity. It is significantly Alvina who takes the initiative of persuading the offended Ciccio to return to the company and make his peace with Max:

"You are coming, aren't you?" she said, looking over her shoulder into his eyes. And taking consent from his unchanging eyes, she let go his hand and slightly opened the door. He turned slowly, and taking his coat from a nail, slung it over his shoulders and drew it on. Then he picked up his hat, and put his foot on his half-smoked cigarette, which lay smoking still. He followed her out of the room,

walking with his head rather forward, in the half loutish, sensual-subjected way of the Italians (LG, p. 381).

In the interplay between Alvina's *looking* and Ciccio's *unchanging eyes* Lawrence anticipates the meeting between consciousness and unconsciousness that will characterise their sexual union. What is notable in this description is the extent to which Ciccio's sense of manly independence is expressed in terms of an almost childish insolence.

Significantly, Lawrence narrates Alvina and Ciccio's relationship from the point of view of the former who, as a result of her unconventional behaviour and the loss of all the privileges of her class through her father's bankruptcy, reaches a metaphysical point of no return. Indeed, it is from a sort of social limbo that she responds to the unconscious, blood-knowledge of the Italian whose conduct pertains to a non-human world which is a complete revelation to her:

He looked down at her with the same long, half-sardonic look of his yellow eyes, like a cat looking casually at a bird which flutters past. And again he made his shrugging motion.

[...]

She was afraid of his long, cat-like look. Yet she felt convinced of his ultimate good-nature. He seemed to her to be the only passionately good-natured man she had ever seen. She watched him vaguely, with strange vague trust, implicit belief in him. In him – in what? (LG, p. 392)

The vagueness of Ciccio's animal-like look corresponds with the vagueness of Alvina's implicit trust in him as the encounter oscillates between conscious and unconscious response. Lawrence's consistent association of Ciccio with the animal world recalls his description in *Twilight in Italy* of a group of Italian Bersaglieri in the theatre:

They are like young, half-wild oxen, such strong, sturdy, dark lads, thickly built and with strange hard heads [...] They keep close together, as if there were some physical instinct connecting them.

And they are quite womanless. There is a curious inter-absorption among themselves, a sort of physical trance that holds them all, and puts their minds to sleep.¹⁹

Lexemes connoting separateness (*half-wild, strong, sturdy, thickly, hard, trance, sleep*) and union (*close, connecting, inter-absorption*) which constitute the physical consummation of the men also anticipate the binary opposition between distance and proximity that becomes an infuriating dilemma for Alvina in her sexual relationship with Ciccio. Not only, but like Ursula Brangwen in *The Rainbow*, Alvina is animated by contradictory, paradoxical, mysterious and irrational forces which are the touchstones of the sense of wholeness of being Lawrence seeks to explore through her tumultuous changes. Her reactions towards Ciccio, for example, are never defined under the common denomination of "love" since love, in Lawrence, is never represented as a static phenomenon that can be easily categorised but is the experience of change. The word 'love' is used most often in the novel with reference to Ciccio. But his love is physical and blind. Love, in a spiritual sense, does not belong to his mental or cultural sphere. When Alvina asks him why he wants to be with her of all people, his reply is laconic: "'Why do I want you?' He gave a curious laugh, almost of ridicule. I don't know that. Ask me another, eh?'" (*LG*, p. 567). Love is not a problematic word for Ciccio who easily accommodates his feelings for Alvina within the limits of his physical appreciation of her. Yet, during one of their first encounters Ciccio is described watching Alvina intensely "in the same way he might have watched a serpent". Although undoubtedly physically attracted to Alvina, Ciccio fundamentally distrusts her as a creature of another world – the world of consciousness. Significantly, this is not an attitude he reserves for Alvina as a foreigner, as an Englishwoman. In

19. Lawrence, *Twilight in Italy*, cit., p. 83.

fact, Lawrence overrides the notion of national entities through Ciccio's disgust at the Italians of his own class.

The constant sense of antagonism between Alvina and Ciccio is intensified during their first sexual encounter. Lawrence writes Ciccio: "killed her. He simply took her and assassinated her". Alvina, in turn, feels that "she could have struggled, if only the sense of his rich beauty had not petrified her like a poison." She is undoubtedly forced into a position of submission in spite of herself and unable to find the power to resist Ciccio's mysterious male force. After the pro-feminist attitudes expounded in *The Rainbow* and (partially) in *Women in Love*, after his attempts in those novels to represent feminine sensibility as a central factor in the relationship between men and women, Lawrence seems to be abandoning such a position for a decidedly chauvinistic stance in which woman becomes completely subservient to man's will. What would have appeared even more scandalous to Lawrence's readers at the time is that his protagonist willingly, almost carelessly, subjects herself to this relationship with a working-class foreigner. There is also a sense that Ciccio is presented not as an ideal man for Alvina,²⁰ but the lover she is destined to encounter (and has desired to encounter) at a particular time and as a consequence of her social estrangement. On the one hand, through her alliance with Ciccio, Alvina affirms her isolation from her own society, because she recognises the extent to which both of them are outsiders. As one critic rightly notes "her transgression against the English culture can be read as a challenge against the dominance of industrial/imperial culture."²¹ On the other hand, Alvina is also painfully aware that the limitations of Ciccio's

20. Jeffrey Meyers, *D.H. Lawrence and the Experience of Italy*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982, p. 101: "The great weakness of *The Lost Girl* is that Lawrence does not make Alvina's love for Ciccio convincing or persuade us that Ciccio, though better than her five unsatisfactory lovers, is the right man for her."

21. Eunyong Oh, "D.H. Lawrence's *The Lost Girl* as a Transitional Work", *Journal of British and American Studies*, Vol. 10, 2004, p. 140.

physical love is the sacrifice she has to pay for this challenge: "His love did not stimulate her, it did not excite her. It extinguished her. There was no intimacy in the discourse between them." The word "discourse" betrays the extent to which love, for Alvina, must also accommodate rational, intellectual experience. In spite of this, she adamantly stands beside Ciccio in the face of all the forces against their relationship:

She clung to Ciccio's dark, despised foreign nature. She loved it, she worshipped it, she defied all the other world. Dark, he sat beside her, drawn in to himself, overcast by his presumed inferiority among these northern industrial people. And she was with him, on his side, outside the pale of her own people (*LG*, p. 434).

Like Connie in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Alvina finds herself pregnant at the end of the novel and abandoned by Ciccio who insists on going off to fight in the war. In *Twilight in Italy*, Lawrence had speculated on this apparent "unashamed enthusiasm for war" in the Italian male which he interprets as a metaphysical gesture beyond the mere affirmation of masculine independence:

Partly it is the true phallic worship, for the phallic principle is to absorb and dominate all life. But also it is a desire to expose themselves to death, to know death, that death may destroy in them this too strong dominion of the blood, may once more liberate the spirit of outgoing, of uniting, of making order out of chaos, in the outer world, as the flesh makes a new order from chaos in begetting a new life, set them free to know and serve a greater idea (*LG*, 456).

This factor may explain Ciccio's refusal to talk about war and politics with Alvina: "She tried to make him talk and discuss with her. But he wouldn't. An obstinate spirit made him darkly refuse masculine conversation with her." Alvina is finally left stranded and alone in the desolate mountainous region of what was then Abruzzo in the village of Pescocalascio:

It seems there are places which resist us, which have the power to overthrow our psychic being. It seems as if every country has its potent negative centres, localities which savagely and triumphantly refuse our living culture. And Alvina had struck one of them, here on the edge of the Abruzzi (*LG*, 463).

Alvina experiences a profound metaphysical alienation in which the spirit of place transcends the sense of a nationally or culturally circumscribed reality. Furthermore, with the outbreak of war comes a unity of purpose which unites nations and it is to this reality that Ciccio turns his attention. As with Birkin and Ursula in *Women in Love*, there is an underlying lack of comprehension between Alvina and Ciccio, an impossibility to communicate through language that which motivates their unconscious choices. Therefore, just as with *Women in Love*, the novel ends with a naked exchange in which Alvina's question is left hanging in the air:

"I'll come back, and we'll go to America," he said.

"You'll come back to me," she whispered, in an ecstasy of pain and relief. It was not her affair, where they should go, so long as he really returned to her.

"I'll come back," he said.

"Sure?" she whispered, straining him to her (*LG*, 471).

The uncertainty of Alvina's destiny, however, is symptomatic of the way she has always lived her life as an outsider – that is, living, in the Lawrentian sense of the term, with a capacity to change and adamantly pursuing the conscious and unconscious impulses that determine her quest for the wholeness of being.

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Multitudes of Otherness:
Italian and Indian Crowds in Forster's
Where Angels Fear to Tread and
A Passage to India

Francesca Pierini

ABSTRACT: This paper proposes a reflection on E.M. Forster's literary construction of national otherness through a reading of two specific scenes, from his first and last published novels, that centre on the depiction of foreign crowds. From *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) to *A Passage to India* (1924), it is possible to detect a movement of growing awareness, within Forster's consciousness, of the presence of the other. If the encounter with the Italian other is still highly mediated by an age-long literary tradition of fantasizing about the south of Europe that had depicted countries like Italy as unique constellations of counter-values to the British ethos, in *A Passage to India* the presence of the other is indeed more corporeal and revelatory of Forster's acquired maturity in his ways of dealing with the responsibility of thinking and representing otherness.

KEYWORDS: E.M. Forster, writing of crowds, construction of national otherness, imperial imaginary, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Italian anarchy, *A Passage to India*, British ethical values, (British) Apollonian ethos, (Italian/Indian) Dionysian ethos.

Introduction

In this paper, I propose a reflection on E.M. Forster's literary construction of national otherness through a reading of two specific scenes, from his first and last published novels, that centre on the

depiction of foreign crowds. In *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Forster creates an Italian theatrical audience characterized by anarchist enjoyment, lawlessness, and physical and emotional expressivity; in *A Passage to India*, he stages a crowded trial-act that precipitates, from a collective and individual perspective, the power dynamics inscribed in the colonial encounter. Although such episodes convey vastly different atmospheres, moods and impressions, I suggest they are affiliated by their enactment of a comparison between the British ethos and its national others. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said points out that the historical moment occupied by Forster is of special importance in the history of Western imperial consciousness. Modernism is the time in which the colonized others cease to be remote and unsubstantial ghosts and gradually acquire a tangible presence that reflects itself in the work of the writers of the time.¹ On a reduced scale, an analogous development is detectable in Forster's own work. From his first to his last novel, it is possible to detect a movement of growing awareness, within Forster's consciousness, of the presence of the other. If the encounter with the Italian other is still highly mediated by an age-long literary tradition of fantasizing about the south of Europe that had depicted countries like Italy as unique constellations of counter-values to the British ethos, in *A Passage to India* the presence of the other is indeed more corporeal and revelatory of Forster's acquired maturity in his ways of dealing with the responsibility of thinking and representing otherness.

Before beginning my discussion of the night at the opera scene in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, I would like to clarify my use of orientalist/colonial discourse analysis applied to literary texts that centre on the Anglo-Italian encounter. My aim in doing so is not to negate or neglect the important fact that the historical and cultural context of the Anglo-Italian encounter is not formally colonial. My

1. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York, Vintage, 1993.

use of “orientalism” to denote the general process of otherizing Italy should be understood in light of the fact that I make use of the scholarly tradition of postcolonial studies which has emerged in the wake of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* to analyse literary discourses that specifically concern themselves with Italy as a cultural construct.²

In a particularly well-known review of *Orientalism*, James Clifford argues that “the key theoretical issue raised by *Orientalism* concerns the status of all forms of thought and representation for dealing with the alien.”³ He asks: “can one ultimately escape procedures of dichotomizing, restructuring, and textualizing in the making of interpretive statements about foreign cultures and traditions?”⁴ If Clifford observes that Said condemns orientalism “for its construction of static images”,⁵ my approach to the subject is still very much informed by these fundamental questions and issues, and the object of my inquiry is precisely those “static images” specifically employed by Forster to represent Italy. I believe Forster’s work to be of particular importance in the making and consolidation of a type of literary imagery that relates specifically to Italy.

Moreover, although I do believe that several of the discursive patterns employed in the description of Middle Eastern cultures also recur in descriptions of southern European cultures and of Italians in particular – a perceived slyness, cunning, uncleanliness, and backwardness, for instance – my goal is not that of advocating an all-encompassing equivalence between these different sets of discursive patterns. Rather, my use of “orientalism” is meant to highlight my intellectual indebtedness to Said’s work (and the debate that it prompted) in this field. It should therefore be noted, from the outset,

2. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage, 1979.

3. James Clifford, “On Orientalism”, *The Predicament of Culture*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 261.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*, p. 263.

that I will use the term “orientalism” not so much to designate the specific discourses Said detected in Europe’s construction of the Oriental other, but to designate the *process* whereby a national, supra-national, or hegemonic entity constructs and projects its double image. Such a process, far from being a neutral act of the imagination, is always political and therefore culturally relevant.⁶

Part I: “Like a Hive of Happy Bees”:

The Opera Performance in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*

The night at the opera takes place just before events begin to take a dramatic turn. The scene seems to provide the protagonists of the story with a last and unexpected opportunity to truly understand themselves and one another “through Italy”; it also seems to offer the reader a last chance to hope that the Anglo-Italian encounter will, in the end, resolve itself positively. If only Harriet had stayed until the end of the performance, if only she had let herself be seduced by that joyous and flamboyant spectacle, and if only she had managed to question, just for one moment, her “fretful and insular” attitude and her assumption of superior moral grounds ... but Harriet is, as Philip observes, “acid, indissoluble, large; the same in Italy as in England – changing her disposition never, and her atmosphere under protest.”⁷

The opportunity for a night of entertainment and relaxation in Monteriano arises suddenly: Caroline and Philip notice the opera-bill of a unique representation of Gaetano Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* and decide, against Harriet’s protestations, to go. The opera performance happens at a time in the narrative suspended between Harriet’s categorical and Philip’s reluctant machinations to

6. On the issues raised by the use of Said’s approach to a European context, see Anna Carastathis, “Is Hellenism an Orientalism? Reflections on the Boundaries of ‘Europe’ in an Age of Austerity”, *Critical Race and Whiteness Studies*, 10, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1–17.

7. E.M. Forster, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, London, Penguin Books, 2012, pp. 97, 94. Henceforth, for references to *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, page numbers are inserted directly in the text.

get Lilia's child back: "so this strenuous day of resolutions, plans, alarms, battles, victories, defeats, truces, ended at the opera" (96).

Philip, straightaway, informs Caroline that it will be an animated performance: "Italians don't love music silently [...] the audience takes its share – sometimes more" (94). Before the performance begins, Caroline shows an open-minded attitude towards it, liking everything, by her own admission, "most awfully" (98). As Philip notices of Caroline, "the stiff suburban woman was unbending before the shrine" (98), and, as he predicted, the audience, from the very beginning of the show, partakes actively in the performance: "the audience accompanied with tappings and drummings, swaying in the melody like corn in the wind" (98).

Harriet succeeds, for a short while, in hushing the loud spectators, but then:

The boxes began to fill, and Harriet's power was over. Families greeted each other across the auditorium. People in the pit hailed their brothers and sons in the chorus, and told them how well they were singing. When Lucia appeared by the fountain there was loud applause, and cries of 'welcome to Monteriano!' (98)

When the soprano, who interprets Lucia, starts singing, the theatre "murmured like a hive of happy bees. All through the coloratura she [the soprano] was accompanied by sighs, and its top note was drowned in a shout of universal joy" (99). Caroline "chatted and laughed and applauded and encored, and rejoiced in the existence of beauty. As for Philip, he forgot himself as well as his mission. He was not even an enthusiastic visitor. For he had been in this place always. It was his home", (99) Harriet, on the other hand, cannot bring herself to enjoy the performance at all. Remaining distant and outraged, she "looked around grimly", (99) while "violent waves of excitement, all arising from very little, went sweeping round the theatre" (99).

An Italian boy from the audience throws flowers at the soprano and she thanks him: “she darted at the little boy and kissed him.” (99) At that point, “the noise became tremendous” (99). Someone else from the audience throws a bouquet of flowers at Lucia and she tosses it back, hitting Harriet in the chest. At this, Harriet leaves, offended: “‘Call this classical?’ She cried, rising from her seat. ‘It’s not even respectable! Philip! Take me out at once’” (100).

At that very moment, however, Philip’s hands are “affectionately” (100) seized by Gino who happens to be, with friends, among the audience. Philip is transported by the warm and friendly atmosphere to a novel state of mind of contentment and relaxation:

Philip had whispered introductions to the pleasant people who had pulled him in – tradesmen’s sons perhaps they were, or medical students, or solicitors’ clerks, or sons of other dentists. There is no knowing who is who in Italy. The guest of the evening was a private soldier. He shared the honour now with Philip. The two had to stand side by side in the front, and exchange compliments, while Gino presided, courteous, but delightfully familiar. Philip would have a spasm of horror at the muddle he had made. But the spasm would pass, and again he would be enchanted by the kind, cheerful voices, the laughter that was never vapid, and the light caress of the arm across his back.” (101)

Once they return home, Philip and Caroline exchange impressions on the evening. They both enjoyed it so much that Philip convinces himself that he will be able to solve matters amicably with Gino; Caroline is also excited: “Her head, too, was full of music, and that night when she opened the window her room was filled with warm sweet air. She was bathed in beauty within and without; she could not go to bed for happiness” (102).

However, Caroline's happiness is mixed with the presage of imminent threats: "help me!" She cried, and shut the window as if there was magic in the encircling air" (102). She reminds herself of the reason why she is in Monteriano: the rescue of the baby, "to champion morality and purity, and the holy life of an English home" (102). She therefore feels, at the same time, distressed and overwhelmed by recent events: "but the tunes would not go out of her head, and all night long she was troubled by torrents of music, and by applause and laughter ..." (102) During her sleep, she will dream of a "joyless, straggling place, full of people who pretended" (103), and she will understand, the following morning, that that place had been Sawston.⁸

In this narrative sequence, Forster shows us a spectrum of possible reactions to the overwhelming spectacle of the performance and the foreign reality of spontaneity and familiarity with the emotions it represents: there is Caroline, who gets genuinely touched by the experience, even if, in the end, she will not let it change the course of her life. Caroline is perhaps the character who understands Italy the best, its potential for existential emancipation from conventions and social constraints, and its dangers – she has seen what has happened to Lilia for attempting a radical trespassing to that world.

Philip, who, during the performance, thinks he is "at home", in truth never ceases to idealize the country; he always contemplates its exoticism from a place he never truly questions and according to ethical and aesthetic expectations that are intellectually mediated and abstract; therefore, his understanding of himself and others tends to be superficial and immaterial, and so his rebellions. By rejecting, throughout the story, to engage with the prosaic, the mundane and the carnal, Philip keeps misinterpreting his own feelings and Caroline's, semi-consciously and practically choosing to remain the intelligent

8. The small British town Caroline and Philip are from, described by Forster as the epitome of provincialism, monotony and conservatism.

puppet he knows he is.⁹ Thus, Michelle Fillion defines the whole novel as “the failed sentimental education of Philip Herriton.”¹⁰

At the other end of the spectrum, there is Harriet, the same in Italy as in England: intellectually and emotionally conventional, unimaginative, never touched by doubt, leaving the performance early because the audience does not conform to proper norms of “acceptable” behaviour.

In the sequence, the Italian audience enjoys the performance collectively, emotionally, and physically. More importantly, Italians seem to display a natural disposition (like corn in the wind) that connects them with beauty and art, and lets them delight in the spectacle without inhibitions. The performance becomes a pretext for an anarchical demonstration of collective gratification, a semi-comic ceremony of social exchange and participation. The actual performance, therefore, is a spectacle within the larger spectacle of Italians expressing their disinhibited joyous nature (a hive of happy bees), familiar relations (the mutual complimenting and greeting), and physical enjoyment (the generalized touching and kissing).

The transgression of the ritual of the performance, therefore, only takes place to honour another, more important one: the collective celebration of life through art: life comes first, art second. And this is, ultimately, the very lesson Philip fails to understand, according to Forster, as he keeps filtering everything through aestheticizing lenses that prevent him from really understanding himself and the world.

9. “Philip saw no prospect of good, nor of beauty either. But the expedition promised to be highly comic. He was not averse to it any longer; he was simply indifferent to all in it except the humours. These would be wonderful. Harriet, worked by her mother; Mrs Herriton, worked by Miss Abbott; Gino, worked by nothing to distract him this time; his sentimentality had died, so had his anxiety for the family honour. He might be a puppet’s puppet, but he knew exactly the dispositions of the strings.” *Ibid.*, pp. 77–78.

10. Michelle Fillion, *Difficult Rhythm: Music and the World of E.M. Forster*, Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 2010, p. 26.

The life-affirming significance of the audience's behaviour is strengthened and made symbolically more poignant by its jubilant and loud reaction to the climactic scene of Lucia's madness; the audience transforms tragedy into farce, bringing to realization, through its boisterous fruition, a crucial aspect inscribed within the genre's fabric.

When Philip meets Gino, he is taken up by a vortex of novel and warm physical familiarity brimming with homosexual eroticism (the light caress of the arm across his back) which, once again, he seems to enjoy without really understanding. All Philip seems to perceive is a positive (and obviously false) impression of a lack of social classes in Italian society, and its alleged (and obviously false) freedom from social conventions. Forster fully understands the fallacy and facileness of such an interpretation, as he creates, in the novel, an Italian society full of its own conventions (albeit often implausible and incongruous).

Caroline, as usual, understands more, and this is perhaps why Forster ends the sequence with her worries and premonitory dream: Caroline shuts once and for all her window on the night at the opera and on the happiness and excitement it caused. Before going to sleep, she feels in the air outside "the magic of Italy", a remark that typifies the country as a place governed by forces other than rational ones.

Elisabetta Girelli's *Beauty and the Beast*, an investigation of representations of Italy and Italians in British cinema, sets itself the goal to demonstrate that "typecast, specific notions of Italianness have deep roots in British society, and are related to equally fixed ideas of Britishness."¹¹ The focus of her study on filmic texts does not prevent

11. Elisabetta Girelli, *Beauty and the Beast: Italianness in British Cinema*. Bristol, Chicago, Intellect, 2009, p. 10.

it from providing a set of useful historical clues on the perception of Italians in British culture at large.¹²

Girelli frames her argument within the context of the insights and tenets of postcolonial theory. By extending the application of such findings to a context that is not strictly colonial, Girelli demonstrates that “colonial/orientalist discourse”, as the “codification of perceived racial, ethnic, and national differences”,¹³ is very much present in the context of British (cinematic) encounters with Italy. This occurs because “Italianness”, as a British notion that “rests on a complex interplay of high-brow concerns, popular culture, and national attitudes towards immigrant minorities”,¹⁴ has been made to encompass, in the course of the modern centuries, all the values, positive and negative, that were perceived as opposite to the British ones.

Italy and Italians, therefore, have mostly been depicted as representatives of a unique constellation of counter-values: at times there was something to be learned from them, at times they were seen with condescending eyes. This precise mixture of admiration and condescension, I wish to argue, is at the basis of Forster’s representation of Italians in the novel here discussed, and it is epitomised by this scene. If the British protagonists must renounce

12. Another work that has investigated the field of British representations of Italian culture is Annemarie McAllister, *John Bull’s Italian Snakes and Ladders: English Attitudes to Italy in the mid-nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007. The study demonstrates how a certain imagined and composite notion of “Italian-ness” has contributed to the formation of British modern identities. By showing how this notion has entered British cultural and literary traditions taking the form of a reservoir for all that was deemed discordant to the making of the British individual, collective, and national identities, McAllister illustrates how self-representations and narratives of national consolidation took place not only in opposition to the Orient, but to others within Europe as well. McAllister’s work examines the last segment of the nineteenth century, and the period of the *Risorgimento* in particular, making evident the construction of a European “other” represented by those geographical areas that were not moving as quickly as Britain towards technological advancement and industrial development.

13. Girelli, p. 11.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

some intellectual sophistication to make space for a more emotional appreciation of art, Italians are, all along, thoroughly unaware of the existence of such a higher level of understanding of the world. Their wisdom comes from (pre-modern) ignorance; their bliss from continuously enacting their eternal traits and inborn character. The British characters are the ones who ought (for their own benefit) to incorporate a little "Italian-ness", as it were, momentarily "forgetting" the obligations imposed upon them by civilization. All throughout the novel, the Italian world is a pre-modern realm of heroism, sensual enjoyment and exotic attitudes on the one hand; backwardness, stagnancy, ignorance and cunning on the other.

Girelli rightly observes that "British attitudes [towards Italy] reflect a heritage of centuries of Grand Tour travel and literature, and the internalization of an image of Italy which, through its development from Classical to Gothic, and from Romantic to Victorian, remained based on notions of past glory and present decay."¹⁵ According to this split vision between the land and its inhabitants, typical of orientalist discourse, Italy is the cradle of Western civilization, a land of beauty, art, and ancient traditions; Italians are "a charming but inept, farcical, and a morally suspect people."¹⁶ Forster makes a particularly successful job of translating this "charming but farcical and not very trustworthy Italian" cultural trope into a literary context. This description of character fully applies to Gino, and the scene at the theatre, in particular, masterfully mixes together, from a British point of view, the perceived Italian tendencies towards the farcical, the vulgar, the unruly and the sensuous.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, p. 16. Such ambivalent patterns of representation, Girelli maintains, are still detectable today, "modernized by encompassing a desirable, consumable Italianness made up of fashion, design, cuisine, and sex (endlessly exploited in advertising), together with an Italianness of inefficiency, corruption, and organized crime, of moral and political instability." (16)

Furthermore, as Girelli reminds us, Italy has been constructed, in opposition to puritanism, as a land of freedom and disinhibited passions. Hence all the attractive characteristics of Italians, often depicted, in British literature (and cinema), as carefree, untroubled, pleasure-loving and life-affirming. The novel, in this regard, is no exception, but it should be said that, as always with Forster's narratives, such a depiction of Italian-ness is not straightforward nor without contradictions.

By mocking Philip, sometimes gently, sometimes not so gently, Forster warns against blind idealizations of Italy and a facile understanding of it. Philip remains, throughout the story, incapable of coming to terms with the country's everyday aspects, its banality, *de facto* choosing to remain blind to a true possibility of existential emancipation (that Italy undoubtedly represents for Forster) and preferring a more literarily mediated one, one that will make him, at the end of the novel, thoroughly misunderstand the experience.

Italy, as the place where paganism still exists and can be intelligently and judiciously learnt, is a trope widely used by Forster, one which, in itself, offers numerous motives for discussion. As Girelli warns, for instance, "the step from paganism to savagery is brief, and any representation of the Italian as disinhibited, free-living and free-loving, risks becoming a eulogy of the Good Savage."¹⁷ Hence, Italians are often depicted as untroubled, for instance, because they lack depth of thought and/or are incapable of self-reflection. Once again, the character of Gino is attractive, charming, sensual and strong, but he is also a successful literary instantiation of the modern savage: shady, dishonest, prone to violence and incapable of self-reflection.¹⁸

17. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

18. On the topic of the interpretation of Gino as a modern instantiation of the good savage, see Francesca Pierini, "Such is the Working of the Southern Mind: A Postcolonial Reading of E.M. Forster's Italian Narratives", *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies*, 16, 2017–2018, pp. 27–54.

To my mind, the split vision that accords a greater amount of rationality and civilized behaviour to one area of the world in comparison to others constitutes the crucial *and* enabling element for epistemic acts of classifications “from a distance”, that is to say, taxonomic gestures that “deny coevalness” to the other, accommodating it along a previous state of human development.¹⁹ This existential and cultural attitude constitutes the ultimate object of my investigation, as I believe it allows, at least in the case of Forster’s “Italian narratives”, the construction of intelligent and unconventional stories framed within a fundamentally “false episteme” of dichotomies and oppositions. Moreover, such false dichotomies are often covered by a discourse, fundamental in Forster, that, in privileging the less contrived (therefore less civilized) other, often makes such oppositions come across as epistemically harmless, a taxonomic world of cultural antagonistic values one just ends up taking for granted.²⁰

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19. The “denial of coevalness” is an expression coined by Johannes Fabian in his 1983 seminal critique of anthropology *Time and the Other*. Fabian argues that in order for there to be an anthropological object of study, a temporal distance has to be first premised then constantly maintained in discourse, even though this discourse is presented as a mere continuation of a work of rapprochement with the other. Observer and observed do not pertain to the same time: the observer belongs to the time of writing, whereas the observed belongs to the past. The time of writing is the dynamic time of the present, but the observed objects of study live in a different dimension which can be contemplated, explained, and written about, precisely by virtue of its not being coeval with the time of the observer. This mechanism obviously confers authority to the time of writing over other temporal dimensions: “Anthropology’s claim to power [...] belongs to its essence and is not a matter of accidental misuse. Nowhere is this more clearly visible, at least once we look for it, than in the uses of Time anthropology makes when it strives to constitute its own object – the savage, the primitive, the other.” Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1983, p. 1.
20. Here is a recent instance of this problematic approach to Forster’s vision: commenting on J.G. Farrell’s indebtedness to Forster, Alberto Carbajal observes: “like Forster’s fiction depicting the subcontinent, Farrell’s Indian novel constitutes not so much an objective exploration of India’s colonial history, as a historically infused literary examination of India’s challenges to British ‘senses’ which goes on to explore more primal states of being.” Carbajal does not seem to perceive as problematic the notion of India as a “primal culture.” Alberto Fernández Carbajal, *Compromise and Resistance in Postcolonial Writing: E.M. Forster’s Legacy*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 76.

Recent criticism has brought attention to discursive practices which classify geographical places according to a taxonomy of the more or less “primal”, “magical”, “irrational”, “traditional”, and “pre modern.” Although we should be wary of a reductionist view of Forster’s work that reads it as “ultimately colonial” – Forster’s vision is indeed more complex and, as such, undeserving of this crass judgement – we should see as problematic the epistemic gesture of accommodating the other along a linear historical development that one (in this case the British subject) can contemplate from the vantage point of “the end of history.” The point, perhaps, is not so much, or not only, to criticize Forster’s political positioning towards imperialism; it is to detect and question the notions that “exceed” the author’s intentions, that belong to the imperial archive, and that recur in his narratives.

**Part II: “The Natural Gestures of an Inferior Race:”
The Trial Scene in *A Passage to India***

There is no doubt that Italy and India occupy two very distinct places in Forster’s personal experience and literary imagination. Of course, from a personal perspective, Forster had of India a much more prolonged and direct experience, engaging, while there, in professional and personal relationships, whereas Italy always remained the place for a gentler kind of otherness, for the betterment of the soul, for making existential discoveries through the encounter with myth.

Italy is also the place for reconnecting with one’s primal needs and desires. Therefore, its dangers are always there, waiting, but they tend to be of an eminently existential and individual nature; India, on the other hand, and the politically concrete circumstances of the Anglo-Indian encounter, raise, for Forster, a series of contingent and actual issues. In *A Passage to India*, Forster, always drawn to the

depiction of personal existential crises, articulates his own interpretation of the power relations inscribed in the colonial encounter.

David Dowling observes that in both novels (*Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Passage to India*) there is a failed attempt at successfully balancing self and otherness: “neither Caroline nor Philip has been able to connect English prose with Italian passion; but the failure of their own friendship will not be repeated in the form of such a bleak ending until *A Passage to India*.”²¹ The failure, therefore, is mainly personal in the first novel, even if it is articulated in terms of national difference; in the second, the failure is, simultaneously, personal and political.²²

I would add to this another similarity I see as important: both novels stage the ill-fated journey of a woman who truly tries to cross national and cultural borders. The result of this attempt is death, in both cases. Before they die, both women become, by virtue of their state of in-betweenness, a problem, both for their original social milieu, and for the one they aim to transition to. As Said remarks in *Culture and Imperialism*, “to the Westerners Mrs Moore is a nuisance, as she is to herself after her sojourn in the Caves.”²³ Moreover, Said notices that Mrs Moore “has an experience of India that she does not understand, whereas Fielding superficially understands but does not have the deep experience.”²⁴ *Mutatis mutandis*, the same interpretive schema could be successfully applied to Philip and Lilia: Lilia does

21. David Dowling, “Where Angels Fear to Tread”, afterword to *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, by E.M. Forster, London, Penguin Books, 2012, pp. 155–156.

22. In the course of the development from his first to his last published novel, Forster’s (foreign) characters undergo a transformation from symbolic and literary types to characters that are more human and concrete, in spite of what Said terms as their “posturing.” Just compare, for instance, Gino’s “grief” at losing his wife, depicted with farcical colours, and Dr Aziz’s, depicted in a pietistic tone perhaps, but plausible and real. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 203.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

not understand her experience of Italy; Philip understands more, but does not experience what Lilia did.

Before further discussing this struggle for balance within the context of the scene under scrutiny, I would like to briefly point out that what Dowling terms as “Italian passion” reminds me of those “petrified” constructs David Spurr discusses in reference to colonial discourse. These notions, Spurr argues, solidify language “around a series of concepts whose substance is presented as already known and therefore beyond contestation. The *heritage of mankind* and the *benevolence of nature* are like *France’s mission* and *Algeria’s destiny* in that their substantive form presents them grammatically as postulates not open to dispute; it naturalizes them within the discourse and confers upon them the quality of hypostasis.”²⁵ In other words, the “passionate” or “primal” quality of the Italian character, becomes, through language, an acquired cultural taxonomic notion.

Let me now go back to the attempt at balancing the self with otherness and at finding a balance within the self *through* otherness, which is the theme that connects not only the two novels, but particularly the opera night scene and the trial scene. The two sequences, in each novel, serve very different purposes within the plot, and they convey vastly different moods and impressions. The similarities among them are few, but, I believe, significant: (1) both scenes come as long culmination/climactic sequences before the stories meet their respective dissolution; (2) they both stage British individualities set against a foreign crowd: in the Italian case, however, the crowd remains a crowd (at least until Gino appears); in the Indian one, Adela begins to find the courage to take her path back to honesty, liberation (and emancipation from Anglo-India), when she starts distinguishing faces (individualities) among the multitude.

25. David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1993, p. 31.

Finally, (3) both scenes require that the British protagonist(s) pick sides.²⁶ Italians and Indians, in each sequence, are unaware of the inner struggle going on in the minds and hearts of the British protagonists; they just live unaware of the conflicts tormenting the “civilized” individual, showing the same inborn characteristics of unruly, noisy, thoughtless and unpredictable behaviour, a tendency towards irrational conduct, and a love of theatricality. These traits are common to both peoples, because, one suspects, they were felt as deeply disquieting, un-British features, rather than peculiarly Italian or Indian. After all, Italy and India are occasionally summoned, in *A Passage to India*, as two different but “comparable” (because other) realities, reflecting their presence in Forster’s personal experience and literary imagination.²⁷

The trial scene puts on stage, in physical and figurative opposition, the terms of Englishness and Indianness. The Anglo-Indian community enters the courtroom “with a condescending air, as it was a booth at a fair;” its members, confident in their imminent

26. Fillion defines the opera scene as “the structural and symbolic pillar of the novel, comparable in this regard to the Fifth Symphony scene in *Howards End*” and as “the testing ground for English middle-class values.” If in *Howards End* different approaches to music were made to speak of social differences within one country, in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* they define national character. Fillion, who interprets the opera scene through music, understands it as follows: “The opera’s marriage of an English literary source with an Italian libretto by Salvatore Cammarano echoes the novel’s cultural antithesis of North and South [...]. The Opera scene also served Forster admirably as a meeting point of our English tourists with the hubbub of daily life in Italy, which they can experience with rapture or revulsion, but never call home.” Fillion, pp. 25, 27.

27. When Fielding returns to Europe, he stops in Venice where he is immediately reminded of “the beauty of form.” Rather than the grandiosity of Venice, Fielding appreciates “the harmony between the works of man and the earth that upholds them, the civilization that has escaped muddle, the spirit in a reasonable form, with flesh and blood subsisting.” Fielding thinks of the Mediterranean as “the human norm”, outside of which there is “the monstrous and extraordinary.” Venice is the door to the Orient, the last bastion of Mediterranean civilization before the unknown. Italy stands, for Forster, between two worlds, a domain that is, at the same time, civilized and on the verge of the unfamiliar and nameless. E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, London, Penguin Books, 2015, p. 250.

victory, joke among themselves intimidating the Indian authorities.²⁸ The whole segment of the trial is eventful, chaotic and lively with confrontations, such as the one between the British and the Indians over seats on a platform, a place of authority that Anglo-India will ask to occupy (“a platform confers authority”, 196).

The Indian audience, inside and outside the courtroom, offers, throughout the sequence, a series of contrapuntal reactions to the events of the trial; the spectators constitute a gathering in the background that occasionally expresses itself, coming forth, alternatively, through provocations, hostile noises, jeering, unruly laughter, and uproars. For instance, when the fight over the platform and special chairs is won by the Indians, “people jeered outside” (196). The British superintendent expects “these outbursts of insolence [as] the natural gestures of an inferior race” (197).

The journey of Adela’s conscience that the scene encompasses goes through different stages: it begins when Adela notices the man who pulls the punkah, a servant of the lower classes that occupies the platform with naturalness, appearing “to control the proceedings” (192) by virtue of his central position within the courtroom and remarkable physical beauty. The sight of this man makes Adela ask herself “in virtue of what had she collected this roomful of people together? [...] By what right did they [the British] claim so much importance in the world, and assumed the title of civilization?” (193) From the beginning of the sequence, Adela’s acknowledgment of (and attraction to) the other makes her conscience doubt itself, undermining her feelings of superiority and awakening her conscience.²⁹

28. *Ibid.*, p. 192. “Anglo-India” is the term with which Forster designates the community of British expats residing in Chandrapore. Henceforth, for references to *A Passage to India*, page numbers are inserted directly in the text.

29. The episode is commented upon by Benita Parry: “All who are of ‘low-birth’ and, unlike the loquacious elite Indians, have no lines to speak are offered as sources of voyeuristic excitement to be surveyed as captive objects of desire without the expectation of a gaze returned. But although their muteness *does* signify the exercise of a homoeroticized

At the remark, proffered by one of the British lawyers, that “the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer, but not vice versa” (194), one single voice detaches itself from the crowd to ask, daringly: “even when the lady is so uglier than the gentleman?” (194) There is, therefore, just as in the Italian scene, a “vulgarly expressed truth” coming from the crowd of others, an invitation to let go (even momentarily) of pretentiousness and self-importance, a lesson for the British protagonist(s) to either assimilate or reject. It is up to Adela’s conscience to make something of it, to keep questioning her self-righteousness. Adela, right at this point, begins to “make” individuals out of an indistinct mass of people; to recognize faces among a faceless gathering:

While the prosecution continued, Miss Quested examined the hall – timidly at first, as though it would scorch her eyes. She observed to left and right of the punkah-man many a half-known face. Beneath her were gathered all the wreckage of her silly attempt to see India – the people she had met at the Bridge Party, the man and his wife who hadn’t sent their carriage, the old man who would lend his car, various servants, villagers, officials, and the prisoner himself. There he sat – strong, neat little Indian with very black hair, and pliant hands. She viewed him without special emotion. Since they last met, she had elevated him into a principle of evil, but now he seems to be what he had always been – a slight acquaintance. He was negligible, devoid of significance, dry like a bone, and though he was “guilty” no atmosphere of sin surrounded him. (195)

In accordance with what Frederick C. Crews, discussing Forster’s Italian short stories, terms as his “total ethical ideal”, that is to say “the Apollonian one of proportion, but of *vital* proportion

cultural power by the narrative’s seeing eye, the novel’s language registers not violence but affect, and the silence ascribed the figures has resonances other than the scopophilic.” Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, London, New York, Routledge, 2004, pp. 187–188.

between body and soul, passion and intellect",³⁰ the British protagonists of his stories must negotiate with, and at least partially understand and incorporate the values coming from an other. In the case of *A Passage to India*, unlike the Italian novels and short stories, the challenge posed to the protagonist(s) is not that of recuperating a set of "forgotten" values, but that of questioning the alleged superiority of the British ethos and the ideal of civilization it produces and attempts at imposing. In the course of this scene, Adela's conscience goes through "a trial within the trial", as it were, finding its way back to honesty the moment Adela humanizes the crowd, and Dr Aziz within it.

In his study *Challenge and Conventionality in the Fiction of E.M. Forster*, Stephen K. Land analyses the plot structure and characterization in Forster's novels and short stories. Land maintains that, in Forster's novels, there is usually a hero, or a heroine, "deliberately presented as at first weak and unimpressive", but owning "an imaginative spark which makes them at first vaguely discontented, and later openly hostile to, the restrictions of the conventional world from which they emerge."³¹ Lucy Honeychurch, of *A Room with a View*, fully impersonates the description. Following Land's terminology, the "challengers" are those characters representing "the rational, free alternative", and "liberal frankness in the sphere of personal relations."³² Such characters are depicted as emotionally boisterous and physically more robust. They have an almost mystical love of nature, they are frank, and a source of truth. According to this analysis, the "hero/heroine begins as a member of the conventional group, but through his/her association with the

30. Frederick C. Crews, "E.M. Forster: The Limitations of Mythology", *Comparative Literature*, 12, no. 2, 1960, p. 101.

31. Stephen K. Land, *Challenge and Conventionality in the Fiction of E.M. Forster*, New York, AMS Press, 1990, p. xxix.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. xvi-xvii.

challenger he/she undergoes a genuine and fundamental change of heart in the course of the story.”³³

Crews explains that “The Dionysian”, the ideal that Land’s “challengers”, to various degrees, seem to incarnate

is the spirit that feels the oneness of all things, and which consequently shares in all the pain and ecstasy in the universe. This Promethean seizure of forbidden experience quickly becomes unbearable and must be succeeded by the spirit of Apollonianism. The Apollonian is the *principium individuationis*; it recognizes forms, borders and categories, and imposes the image of infinite humanity upon the disorder of experience. As opposed to the Dionysian involvement in excess, the Apollonian insists on measure and morality; it substitutes the ideal of knowledge for that of participation.³⁴

The crowd depiction in both sequences could be read in direct and opposed reference to this very definition. The scene at the theatre, as we have seen, thoroughly sacrifices the intellectual enjoyment of music and drama in favour of a pagan ritual of participation; the trial scene depicts a gathering that is largely unaware of what is going on, but perfectly understands, and finds gratification in, collective participation.

One could quite literally apply the very definition of *principium individuationis* to this very moment in the scene, and argue that Adela manages “to impose the image of infinite humanity” upon the disorder of the crowd. She individuates, recognizes, and finally imposes order over chaos, within her, and upon what she sees. The point, naturally, is that the *principium individuationis*, the Apollonian condition of

33. *Ibid.*, p. xxviii. It is true that Forster’s “challengers” are British (Leonard Bast in *Howards End*), Italian, and Indian, but certain modes of description, especially those which emphasize dishonesty, meanness, irrational behaviour, and a certain “primitive” quality of the body and the soul, are reserved for the Italian and Indian characters.

34. Crews, p. 97.

rational discerning, is a prerogative of the British, who prefer it over disorder and chaos because disorder is a previous state (the Dyonisian is *succeeded* by the Apollonian) that has been found inadequate. Therefore, some people, and some peoples (the Italians and the Indians), still have not discovered this advanced stage of development, the superiority of the British ethos; they still privilege, one way or another, participation over knowledge, and this makes them good subjects for crowd depictions against which British individuality is played.

At this point, the prosecution's attempt at depicting Dr Aziz as a cold-blooded criminal who, with the help of accomplices, has premeditated the crime down to its last sordid detail, provokes "another storm" (198) among the audience. The reason for the dispute now shifts to the possible reasons for Mrs Moore's absence from the courtroom. Mrs Moore has always believed in Dr Aziz's innocence, and her testimony would have likely made a difference in his favour. Dr Aziz's defence lawyers are throughout the sequence, depicted as corrupted, poorly organized, and emotional. When one of them theatrically leaves the courtroom,

The tumult increased, the invocation of Mrs Moore continued, and people who did not know what the syllables meant repeated them like a charm. They became indianized into Esmis Esmoor, they were taken up in the streets outside. In vain the Magistrate threatened and expelled. Until the magic exhausted itself, he was powerless. (199)

Rationality is momentarily powerless in the face of magic. Magic applies to Italy as it applies to India, but Italy's magic is a seducing song, whereas Indian magic is the collective and irrational expression of dissent. As Said remarks, "to the Indians roused momentarily to a sort of nationalist coherence during the court scene, Mrs Moore is less

a person than a mobilizing phrase, a funny Indianized principle of protest and community: 'Esmiess Esmoor.'"³⁵

The "refrain in the street continued" (201) until Adela's deposition. Adela delivers her statements with much honesty and sincerity: following the fragile thread of her memory, "leading her along the paths of truth" (202). Adela recants all her previous accusations: "Dr Aziz never followed me into the cave" (203). Adela's account provokes the audience's reaction: "slight noises began in various parts of the room, but no one yet understood what was occurring except Fielding" (203). The audience expresses its collective feelings even before it understands the events (participation over knowledge); Mr Fielding, on the contrary, already "the only European who remained in the body of the hall" (194), the individual in possession of the Apollonian spirit set against the Dionysian crowd, not only understands it all, but signals, through his position within the courtroom, his capacity to choose autonomously between the two opposing terms.

At Adela's final declaration: "I withdraw everything" (204), "the flimsy framework of the court broke up, the shouts of derision and rage culminated, people screamed and cursed, kissed one another, wept passionately." (204)

Concluding Remarks

My reading of the trial sequence of *A Passage to India* has been enabled by approaching Forster's text as the multi-layered cultural/literary product of a larger episteme that Lindan Lin effectively describes as "the humanist perception of cultural identity, a perception that tends to reinforce cultural distinctiveness, difference, and distance in the arena of intercultural positioning and in so doing

35. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 203.

provides the epistemic basis for the historical emergence of colonial expansion.”³⁶

The object of my considerations is precisely that epistemic basis, which, I believe, lies at the bottom of Forster’s depictions of Italy *and* India. My aim is not so much to decide whether Forster was successful, on a personal level, in emancipating himself from it (I believe his vision to be basically conflicted, oscillating between adherence to and questioning of the imperial ethos and the “necessary” domination of a collective political and cultural entity over an other), but to observe the mechanism that enables Forster to create two alternative realms to the British ethos, to construe them and perceive them in opposition to it and to identify their distinctive characteristics as innate and eternal.³⁷ On this last point, Lin’s observes:

36. Lindan Lin, “The Irony of Colonial Humanism: ‘A Passage to India’ and the Politics of Posthumanism”, *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 28, no. 4, 1997, p. 133.

37. I no longer agree with Lin when she claims that “Forster’s insistence on the incommensurability of Englishness and Indianness is ultimately motivated by the desire to subordinate the other into inferior categories so that the ruling of it can be properly justified.” (*Ibid.*) I believe that Forster’s vision was more conflicted than this, and I am quite sure there is not one latent and univocal intentional design, hidden within Forster’s narratives, to categorize in order to oppress. I believe there is an anxiety to name and classify otherness in order to control it, but I perceive such an anxiety, in Forster’s narratives, as productive of multiple, fascinating, and contradicting patterns. I do not see anywhere, in his work, an “ultimate motive.” Similarly, I disagree with Lin when she argues that “the juxtaposition of British rationality and Indian irrationality is clearly meant to be a critique of the latter by the former” (*Ibid.*, 139). I believe Forster was extremely bothered by “the British pretentious claims of superiority over the Indians” (*Ibid.*, 137), and although his annoyance with traits that he perceives as “typically Indian” is often manifest, I believe his irritation with Anglo-India is, throughout the novel, stronger, more palpable, and more effectively expressed. This is probably partly due to the fact that he was more familiar with this social milieu than with the Indian one, but, following Benita Parry, I am prone to think that the novel “undermines imperial grandiloquence and offers a disenchanting perspective on empire, registers a dispersed consciousness, and by reflecting ironically and critically on its own project, manifests a waning of narrative power.” (*Ibid.*, 175)

Using Englishness as a yardstick – thus almost exclusively attending to the uniqueness, singularity, and peculiarity of each culture – Forster tends to organize different cultural behaviours, habits, and values in terms of contrast and opposition. Even more important, Forster tends to hold to the belief that the differences between Englishness and Indianness are not just temporary, not just time- and space-specific; rather, they are transcendental insofar as they are culturally and racially determined; they go deep into “character”, and thus are absolutely irrevocable. The final implication is that a given culture can constitute its own system of signification, its own cultural autonomy, one that is independent of intercultural relations.³⁸

In this paper, I set out to demonstrate how these two major systems of signification (Italy and India), that correspond to two important registers of Forster’s personal experience and literary imagination, constitute two realms affiliated in their opposition to British values and construed along trajectories that become less abstract and literary, and more personal, in time. Forster depicts foreign crowds to convey a sense of that deep national “character” which, in both cases, he perceives as exotic and striking: if the Italian crowd mainly transmits a sense of anarchy and liberation from social conventions, the Indian one coalesces in a potentially rebellious entity that can only be controlled and made sense of by the Apollonian civilized ethos.

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38. *Ibid.*, 135. I would add to Lin’s remarks that this is the very notion of inborn traits (“cowardice”, “irrational behaviour”, “childishness”, are features attributed, by Forster, to Italy and India) that makes itself manifest in the depiction of the Italian other as well. In *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, in particular, Forster talks about the irreconcilable nature of the relationship between “the Latin man” and “the northern woman”: “No one realized that more than personalities were engaged; that the struggle was national; that generations of ancestors, good, bad or indifferent, forbade the Latin man to be chivalrous to the northern woman, the northern woman to forgive the Latin man” (53).

Goffredo Parise and the Female Figure: An Italian Writer's Encounter with American Post-Physiognomy

Lucia Rodler

translated by Maddalena Frigerio

ABSTRACT: In the 1960s Goffredo Parise made use of a series of interesting similes to describe the men and women of his time. The similarity between human being and animal gave rise to comparisons with objects, which brought with it the end of traditional physiognomy. Can this rhetorical choice which was deeply influenced by American post-physiognomy be considered a lucid and visionary anticipation of post-humanism? How did it shape Parise's depiction of the female figure?

KEYWORDS: Feminine beauty, idealization, physiognomy, misogyny, mother-type, girlfriend-type, cosmetic surgery, Italian sixties, American lifestyle, consumerism, simile, metaphor.

According to the philosopher Roberto Esposito, in the 1960s the Italian way of thinking recognizes the conflict between “the power of life” of those who reflect and resist, and “the power over life” practiced by institutions and official history; if, in the first case, the individual is body and word, in the second it is appearance and artifice.¹ During the same period, the Italian writer Goffredo Parise

1. See Roberto Esposito, *Da fuori. Una filosofia per l'Europa*, Einaudi, Torino, 2016, p. 164: “il potere della vita”, “il potere sulla vita.”

(1929–1986) recounts something similar when talking about the discomfort of a man of flesh and blood within welfare society. On various occasions, he narrates the metamorphosis of the Italian agricultural system and man's poor identity in a consumerist, Americanized and post-physiognomic lifestyle. In this context, the analysis focuses on the similes through which Parise describes women above all. Beautiful as butterflies or as mannequins in the department store? Or zoomorphic, according to the humanistic tradition or the cyber-morphic, to draw on a neologism modelled on the theories of the biologist Donna Haraway?

Like a Butterfly

Vicenza, 1947. "Butterflies' flights, visions of beauty": some very young ice skaters show their ability with grace and agility. They seem like butterflies.

Roma, 1962. Silvia is a young wife who lives instinctively, without bothering much about her husband's habits. He would like to have a coffee in the morning, Silvia burns it every day. He would like to have the flat's doors closed, she always keeps them open. Because of distraction or levity. As a butterfly.

Treviso, 1963. A young woman has the elegance and the beauty of a tropical butterfly: she is seductive, moving. However, her extreme spontaneity makes a dialogue with a man impossible for her. Therefore, she surrounds herself by objects.²

These three feminine figures are described by Parise by way of a simile with an animal: the appearance and the behaviour of the young

2. See Goffredo Parise, "Voli di farfalle, visioni di bellezza", in Bruno Callegger and Mauro Portello (eds.), *Opere*, Milano, Mondadori, 2006, vol. 1, p. 1485 (first ed. *Il Gazzettino*, 23 settembre 1947); Parise, "Descrizione di una farfalla", in Bruno Callegger and Mauro Portello (eds.), *Opere*, Milano, Mondadori, 2005, v. 2, pp. 515–534 (first ed. *L'approdo letterario*, XXIII, 79–80, December 1977, pp. 84–95); Parise, "L'assoluto naturale", in *Opere*, v. 2, pp. 563–648 (first ed. Milano, Feltrinelli, 1967).

women is compared to that of a butterfly, to its beauty, levity, instinct and mystery. Butterflies are important because they represent a traditional anthropocentric imaginary:³ in fact, according to physiognomic thought, individual behaviour is also known through the similarity with animals. This pseudoscientific knowledge characterizes Italian humanism and it produces two well-known syntheses in Europe and in the US: the first is *Della fisionomia dell'uomo* by Giambattista della Porta (1535–1615) and, three centuries later, the studies on criminals, prostitutes and insane men of the criminal anthropology by Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909).⁴ Again, the zoomorphism is necessary in order to underline the spontaneity of the feminine body, often giving shape to misogyny. In Parise, the simile of the young journalist conveys an admiration that, during the 60s increasingly signifies a detachment from the rational and analytic man, and indicates in women instinct and convention. In both cases, however, the writer makes use of animals to talk about individuals. And besides, at the beginning of the decade, Parise reads *L'origine dell'uomo* by Charles Darwin and also, for this reason, he is strongly focused on scientific thought: evolution, the struggle for power, the transformation of the nature of individuals and of species. All this becomes even more evident after he visits New York, Miami, Dallas, New Orleans and Las Vegas.

Like James Bond or the Palmolive advertisement

During the spring of 1961 Parise goes for the first time to America with the enthusiasm of a provincial man in search of freedom.

3. See Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2013; Ivan Callus, Stefan Herbrechter, Manuela Rossini, "Introduction: Dis/locating Posthumanism in European Literary and Critical Traditions", *European Journal of English Studies*, 18, 2, 2014, pp. 103–120.

4. See Lucia Rodler, *Leggere il corpo. Dalla fisiognomica alle neuroscienze*, Bologna, Archetipolibri, 2009.

However, he is disappointed when he observes dirty, miserable, decaying cities and he perceives, a few decades before his time, the bewilderment of non-places: suburban motels and petrol stations host the loneliness of individuals like Edward Hopper's subjects that waste their lives consuming objects. Recovering from this "cognitive shock", Parise writes *Il Padrone* (which wins the prestigious Viareggio Award in 1965), the story of a provincial man who discovers the violence of a big industrial Italian town and at the same time the fascination of American lifestyle (the plot foreshadows an autobiographic reference to Parise's experience in Milan at the time of Garzanti). They are the same impressions of Parise: on the one hand he reflects on the homologation of mass consumerism (in an interview with Andrea Barbato for *L'Espresso* on the 11th of April in 1965):

In the US there is an identification between person and object. It is not the only commonplace of standardization, of mass civilization. There is an internal chemistry that is equal for all. It is a scientific law. We tend not to be different. The victorious species become stronger, they arrange new adventures, but within the species the individuals who compose them become more and more alike. In the US this is clear, it appears in a spectacular and magnificent form. It is a desperate reality, but it is that of the modern world and it cannot be denied or rejected.⁵

But, on the other hand, Parise is moved by this spectacular reality – magnificent, and at the same time desperate – right from the arrival

5. See Andrea Barbato, "Il Colosseo di plastica", *L'Espresso*, 11 aprile 1965: "C'è in America un'identificazione fra persona e oggetto. Non è solo il luogo comune della standardizzazione, della civiltà di massa. C'è una chimica interna che è identica per tutti. È una legge scientifica. Tendiamo all'indifferenziazione. Le specie vittoriose si rafforzano, si dispongono a nuove avventure, ma nell'interno della specie gli individui che la compongono si somigliano sempre di più. Tutto questo in America è chiaro, e appare in una forma spettacolare e grandiosa. È una realtà disperante, ma è quella del mondo moderno, non si può rinnegarla o respingerla."

in New York, a city which appears uprooted, dreamlike and artificial (as the story *Arrivato* suggests):

It is a wonderful city. And it is maybe the only place in the world that does not disappoint me. Why? I constantly ask myself this question. Because it is not a real city. Because it was the first who suffered, in its birth, the most important fact of the modern world. That is the process of non-realisation, of the uprooting of the reality. I suspected it and I found it: what dreams, images, shades, epiphanies, visions and ectoplasms of reason come out of these walls, these doors, these elevators.⁶

During the second half of the decade Parise also becomes familiar with the America of the Vietnam war: how is it possible to defeat the Vietcong with arms but not ideas, if not that of anti-communism? Parise's accounts of the war are lucid reports of the anthropology of the young American soldiers' bewilderment. Without comprehending them, they follow the orders of the supreme commander of the American Army, General Westmoreland, the "perfect product of American industry", identified with "a series of serial images": "the Roman consul's face, the discus thrower's skeletal and muscular structure, Abraham Lincoln's authority, James Bond's twitch, Superman's superhuman powers, and lastly the sweet, familiar, universal brand of Palmolive."⁷ Once again, the similes help

6. See Goffredo Parise, *Arrivato*, in Lucia Rodler, *Goffredo Parise. I sentimenti elementari*, Roma, Carocci, 2016, p. 141: "È una città stupenda. Ed è forse l'unico luogo al mondo che non mi delude. Perché? Mi faccio continuamente questa domanda. Perché non è una città reale. Perché essa ha subito per prima, nel nascere, il fatto più importante del mondo moderno. Cioè il processo di derealizzazione, di sradicamento dalla realtà. Lo sospettavo e l'ho trovato: quali sogni, immagini, parvenze, epifanie, visioni ed ectoplasmi della ragione escono fumando da queste pareti, da queste porte, da questi ascensori."

7. Goffredo Parise, "Guerre politiche", in *Opere*, v. 2, pp. 847-849 (first ed. Torino, Einaudi, 1977): "prodotto perfetto dell'industria americana", "una serie di immagini in serie", "il volto d'un console romano, la struttura ossea e muscolare del discobolo, l'autorità di Abramo Lincoln, lo scatto di James Bond, i poteri sovrumani di Superman e infine la dolce, familiare, universale marca Palmolive."

to understand Parise's thoughts on the Human: Westmoreland has nothing natural because he represents the ideology of a country which is already post-physiognomic.

And yet, during the autumn of 1975, Parise decides to return to New York, despite the awareness that the American city has become the dreamlike myth of the West. His personal situation has deeply changed: by now in his forties, the well-known writer of *Padrone* and *Sillabario I* and a tireless war journalist, Parise observes the American reality of "waste" (the Darwinian outcome of the consumption of the sixties) in order to comprehend the Italian "colony" of the years of terrorism ("the years of Lead"). Thus, while Pier Paolo Pasolini arranges the collection *Scritti corsari* before being murdered on November first, Parise identifies New York as a model of the "great revolution" of post-war society: the most important scenery of the cruel struggle of consumerism, New York is at the same time display and butchery, an institute of beauty and a mortuary of the new culture. And Italian people imitate the American way of life, renouncing first an authentic bond with their background, with their family, with the popular culture of the nation, its religion and politics, that is with their own traditions.⁸ America produces and consumes through a substantial "duo", and, on the contrary, Italy consumes and nothing more, thanks to a culture that is "non-ideological, based only on materialism", a culture that has distorted its "national features" after the economic miracle. The risk deriving from the *Italian way of life* is soon uncovered (and it has been denounced more than once, for instance in the articles *Ecco dove porta la via del consumo* published on 19 June 1979, and *Ribelliamoci ai dogmi: ogni uomo è diverso dagli altri* published in June 1985): turning New York into a parody that sometimes appears as "an immense dump beaten by the wind,

8. Goffredo Parise, "New York", in *Opere*, v. 2, pp. 1000-1005 (first ed. Venezia, Edizioni del Ruzante, 1977): "spreco", "colonia", "grande rivoluzione", "disumana."

where rubbish and men are confused with each other, thus prefiguring the image of all the cities of the future.”⁹ An artificial world where, according to the director Robert Altman, interviewed at the Venice Film Festival in 1982, American and Americanized monsters will live.¹⁰

Like a Tin

But let's go back to his first journey to the US in 1961, when Parise discovers a world that gives more importance to objects and money than to individuals, that count only if they consume or even waste. Wealth turns out to be not only a social issue; it also defines two different species that fight for the production of objects and people (“a species shall be considered to mean a real biological species, with somatic, psychic and psychological defined features that, rarely, if ever, conform to those of the other species”).¹¹ This conflict determines a real evolutionary regression, a barbarization that suggests a pre-humanism instead of a post-humanism. However, Cary Wolfe has recently underlined the ambiguity of the prefix *post* that can also indicate a dimension that comes before the humanistic idea of the individual.¹² In any case, it concerns a metamorphosis that pertains to the essential nature of the human being, the coherent integrity of the body, behaviour and speech defined by the physiognomy of classical Renaissance. Once again a simile is

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 1035–1041: “un immenso mondeszaio battuto dal vento, dove rifiuti e uomini si confondono, prefigurando l'immagine di tutte le città del futuro.”

10. Goffredo Parise, “L'America di Altman è fatta di mostri”, in *Opere*, v. 2, pp. 1480–1484 (first ed. *Corriere della sera*, 20 settembre 1982).

11. Goffredo Parise, “Il Padrone”, in *Opere*, vol. 1, p. 926 (first ed. Milano, Feltrinelli, 1965): “e per specie si intende una vera e propria specie biologica, con caratteri somatici, psichici e psicologici ben definiti, che raramente, anzi mai, concordano con quelli dell'altra specie.”

12. See Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota, 2010, p. XV.

revelatory: at the end of *Padrone* the narrator wishes to have a son-object, lacking of intellect and speech: "I wish he would have a life which is similar to that of the tin which his mother is holding in her hands right now, it is the only way through which no one can hurt him." Thus, in a welfare society, only the misappropriation of the humanistic traits of the individual guarantees tranquillity: intellect and speech have to be replaced by cars, televisions and refrigerators. And besides, the narrator asks himself, thinking about his own silent wedding with Zilietta, a woman affected by Down's Syndrome that he married upon the insistence of his "master": "what do we need speech for? It is said that human beings need speech to communicate with each other and to be poets. Perhaps once it was used. To me it is only an instrument of defence and offense when fighting. Between Zilietta and myself there are no words nor any struggle and, unlike some other couples that talk to each other and fight, we are very happy."¹³

Therefore, the tin-little boy is the *homo tacens* that guarantees the "power over life" to consumerism on behalf of consumerism (to say it with Esposito). That's why silence often returns in the thirty-three stories written between 1963 and 1967 and then collected in *Crematorio di Vienna* (published by Feltrinelli in November 1969, immediately sold out and printed again in December). It is a wonderful text that analyses the relationship between individual, objects and money, along with convention and behavioural aggressiveness. The title suggested by the publisher should have been *L'uomo in serie* for two reasons: the description of individual

13. Parise, "Padrone", p. 1073: "Gli auguro una vita simile a quella del barattolo che in questo momento sua madre ha in mano, solo così nessuno potrà fargli del male"; «a cosa serve la parola? Dicono che la parola serve agli uomini per comunicare tra loro e per essere poeti. Forse sarà servita un tempo. Per conto mio essa è soltanto uno strumento di difesa e di offesa nella lotta. Tra me e Zilietta non ci sono né parole, né lotta, e, a differenza di altre coppie che parlano tra di loro e litigano, siamo molto felici."

archetypes of a general human condition and a clinically detached writing, reminiscent of Alberto Moravia. Thus, for instance, a suburban mother-type, a coat check girl in a restaurant in the centre of an industrial city, is the narrator in *Difettoso* (a story published in *Corriere della Sera* on the 21 February, 1966): the woman raises by herself three little boys aged nine, six and two and a half and asks them to be silent like perfect machines, which are useful in society. Unfortunately, the youngest one gives her some trouble: he screams, rather he “barks” tirelessly, like a television, a radio or a recording device, which is defective due to manufacturing mistakes. There are many like them “abandoned in small senseless and voiceless piles beyond the enclosure of public housing” in the area of industrial warehouses. What could she do then to silence the defective son? “I lifted him up from the ground where he was, his head against the floor of the new enclosure, I opened the window and I threw him in the direction of the factory.”¹⁴ This is how the Humanism of the word ends up in the rubbish dump.

Like a Mannequin or a Calendar Face

When confronted with psychosomatic blemishes, humanistic physiognomy and, to some extent, criminal anthropology, the practice of virtue is expected, via the intervention of culture, education and society in order to compensate for any potential natural lacks. Ugly people, for example, can be lovable if they choose to be wise, as in the case of Socrates, at least as stated by the sixteenth-century physiognomist Giambattista Della Porta, among others. Even in the 1960s free will exists, but it appears in a completely different way, at

14. Goffredo Parise, “Il crematorio di Vienna”, vol. 2, pp. 165–170 (first ed. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1969): “abbaia”; “abbandonati in piccoli mucchi senza senso e senza voce oltre il recinto delle case popolari”; “L’ho sollevato da terra dove stava, la testa contro il pavimento del recinto nuovo, ho aperto la finestra e l’ho gettato in direzione della fabbrica.”

least in Italy. And Parise grasps at a new idea of perfection made possible by technology, anticipating what Paul Steehan defines as contemporary technophile addiction.¹⁵

So, some years after Barbie was invented, a twenty-year-old salesgirl, neither beautiful nor ugly, with a serious, determined and stubborn personality, who has been working in a department store for five years, changes the physiognomy of her face with cosmetic surgery to be as beautiful as a mannequin in a shop window. All this comes from the suffering caused by the insistent words of her boyfriend: “You are different from everybody else. And yet, I like you.”¹⁶ The protagonist of the story *Diversa*, published by *Corriere della Sera* on 11 January 1965 and then by *Crematorio di Vienna*, still feels the resonance of that “and yet”, especially after being left by her boyfriend: to be loved one must look like all other women. There is no doubt:

If I had a different face, let’s say a face you see in fashion magazines or advertising, or, exactly in the mannequins coming from America, no one would have questioned it and I would have been the same as everybody else. I just have to change my face. Thus, as everyone knows, it is quite easy. I only have to go to a plastic surgeon and there are so many in this city.¹⁷

Twenty years have passed since the simile of the butterflies. The new imagery offers an important testimony: in Italy, fashion magazines and mannequins (as well as cinema and then television) make a

15. See Paul Steehan, “Posthuman Bodies”, in David Hillman and Ulrika Maude (eds.), *The Body in Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 245–260.

16. Parise, “Crematorio”, p. 126: “Tu sei diversa da tutte le altre. Però mi piaci lo stesso.”

17. *Ibid.*, p. 128: “Se avessi avuto un’altra faccia, mettiamo una faccia come se ne vedono tante nelle riviste di moda o nelle pubblicità, o, appunto, nei manichini che arrivano dall’America, nessuno avrebbe trovato da ridire e io sarei stata uguale alle altre. Non mi resta dunque che cambiare faccia. Per questo, come tutti sanno, è abbastanza facile. Basta andare da un chirurgo plastico, come ce ne sono tanti in questa città.”

standard seductive body a must, a body that can only be realized thanks to medical technology made in the United States.¹⁸ The development of anaesthesia, the discovery of antibiotics, as well as widespread economic well-being were necessary, to launch the display of a body that has to feel ashamed only if potentially different.¹⁹ There is no shame, on the contrary, in contemplating oneself in the mirror: “I began to look at myself in the mirror for hours!” affirms this miniature Orlan who immediately discards the hypothesis of speaking to a psychiatrist about her own insecurities. On the contrary, she chooses a young doctor who has been learning the profession in America for ten years: he welcomes and clarifies the desire to “become another woman”, a copy of herself in body and personality and he offers the salesgirl a catalogue of photographs that look all the same – the young woman reflects – “like glasses: there are many, of all types, yet they are all made of glass and they all can be used to drink.” These object-women show:

A vague and smiling expression, like a sweet, modest, satisfied person, of a man who was happy with everything, who likes everything, who does not wonder so much why, who does not object to anything but approves and is amazed by things as if they were always new. So, that is exactly what was good for me.²⁰

18. See Pascal Ory, “Le corps ordinaire”, in Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine, Georges Vigarello (eds.), *Histoire du corps*, Paris, Seuil, 2006, pp. 129–161; Rossella Ghigi, *Per piacere. Storia culturale della chirurgia estetica*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2008, pp. 137–186; Francesca Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 37.

19. See Vanni Codeluppi, *La vetrinizzazione sociale*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2007.

20. Parise, “Crematorio”, p. 129: “ho cominciato a guardarmi allo specchio per ore!”, “diventare un'altra”; “come i bicchieri: ce ne sono tanti e di tanti tipi. eppure sono tutti di vetro e servono tutti per bere”; “un'espressione vaga e sorridente, come di persona dolce, modesta, soddisfatta, insomma di persona a cui va tutto bene, a cui piace tutto, che non si domanda tanti perché, che non trova da ridire su niente e anzi approva e si stupisce delle cose come se fossero ogni volta delle novità. Dunque proprio quello che andava bene a me.”

Following the ideal of conformism of the glass-woman, the tin-little boy and the Westmoreland man, Parise grasps the new post-physiognomic identity, modelled on cinema, advertising, objects, consumption. The natural “power of life”, realized also thanks to the strenuous exercise of virtue (according to the hypothesis of Della Porta), retreats when faced by the “power over life” of cosmetic surgery, as the surgeon of the young patient explains:

“And will I have, besides the hair that is easy, a forehead like that, a nose like that, green eyes, a mouth and a chin like those?” “Of course. You will have not only that forehead, those eyes, that mouth and that chin, but you will also have the essence of that forehead, of those eyes, of that nose and that chin, one and the other, the same thing.”²¹

Thus, it is no longer just a question of simile. The rhetorical figure that accompanied the traditional physiognomy adds both appearance and essence of the human body to the surgical scalpel and becomes a metaphor. Which means that each of us can become someone else, of our choice. And in fact, after two months of operations, pain and hope, the “different” woman finally is “like anybody else”, and therefore is happy: “It is true, if you touch my face I am all over a little bit cold, but this should not cause any inconvenience. What matters is that the expression has completely changed, more than changed, it has disappeared.” And the satisfaction soon follows: a young engineer courts her with words that are completely different from those of her ex-boyfriend. Instead of alluding to supposed differences, he indicates an evident similarity with the girl on the calendar hung behind a bar counter. Here is the young girl’s reaction, her happiness and security coming from the post-physiognomy:

21. *Ibid.*, p. 130: “‘E avrò, oltre i capelli che si fa presto, una fronte così, un naso così, gli occhi verdi così, una bocca e un mento così?’ ‘Certamente. Non solo avrà quella fronte, quegli occhi, quel naso, quella bocca e quel mento, ma avrà anche l’essenza di quella fronte, quegli occhi, quel naso e quel mento, essendo, l’una e gli altri, la stessa cosa.’”

It was true. I was as every other girl [...] I laughed, I was delighted and I think I was even blushing. “But it’s me”, I said, so quickly that I did not even realize I was lying. But was I lying? Thinking about it I realized I wasn’t lying at all: that was my hair, my nose, my eyes, my mouth and even my coat’s hood. So what was the difference between myself and that girl? No difference.²²

Thus, the salesgirl becomes a poster girl, according to the metaphorical prophecy of the surgeon: the outside models the inside, the artifice prevails over nature, the *homo mendax* is the winning alternative to the *homo tacens*. Parise repeatedly insists on the degradation of the individual debased to caricatural humanism, suggesting a possible cause during an interview with Rosanna Guerrini for the monthly *Il Dramma* in January 1970. After the disappearance of faith in God, Man cultivates the illusion of “being God for himself and for others”, a creature that has no limits and that violates in so many ways his own identity and that of others: by also choosing spare parts for its own body in a global body shop.²³ Therefore, in the physiognomic world the simile with the butterflies means much less and less.

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22. *Ibid.*, p. 131: “diversa”; “uguale alle altre”; “È vero, a toccarmi sono tutta un po’ fredda, in faccia, ma questo non dovrebbe dare nessun fastidio. Quello che conta è che l’espressione è completamente cambiata, anzi più che cambiata è scomparsa”; “Era vero. Ero uguale a quella ragazza [...] ho riso, tutta contenta e mi è parso anche di arrossire. ‘Ma sono io’ ho detto, così in fretta che non mi sono nemmeno accorta di mentire. Ma mentivo? Pensandoci mi sono detta che non mentivo affatto: quelli erano i miei capelli, il mio naso, i miei occhi, la mia bocca e perfino il mio cappuccio del paltò. Dunque che differenza c’era tra me e quella ragazza? Nessuna.”

23. See R. Guerrini, “Sono contro l’atroce legge dell’aggressione”, *Il Dramma*, gennaio 1970, p. 121: “essere Dio di se stesso e di altri.” See also Remo Bodei, *Limite*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2016, p. 23.

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