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Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies

2006

Volume 8



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

General Editor: Peter Vassallo

Volume Editor: Patricia Ellul-Micallef

JOURNAL OF ANGLO-ITALIAN STUDIES

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Anglo-Italian
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First published by Malta University Publishers Ltd. in 2006.

Email: mupl@mus.com.mt

Printed by Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd.

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Typeset and Page Layout by Patricia Ellul-Micallef.

ISSN 1560-2168

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From the Editor

Most of the essays in this volume were delivered as papers at the Fifth International Conference on *England and Italy: Literary and Cultural Relations* which was held at the University of Malta in September 2005.

The editor would like to thank Ms. Patricia Ellul-Micallef for her generous help in the production of this issue of the *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies*.

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From Leon Battista Alberti to Jane Austen via Giacomo Leoni and BBC Drama

John Woodhouse

Despite the exalted presence in the title of the names of Leon Battista Alberti and Jane Austen, the present paper is fundamentally a plea for greater recognition of the talents and achievements of Giacomo Leoni (1686-1746), as editor of the great Italian humanist, Leon Battista Alberti, as an architect in his own right and as a proselytiser of Anglo-Palladian architecture. Leoni's English edition of Alberti's great Renaissance treatise *On Architecture* (1726-29) endured for two and a half centuries, and even now has a strong presence in the only other translation done since that date, Joseph Rykwert's edition of 1988.¹ Leoni helped create and consolidate a taste for Palladian or Anglo-Palladian architecture in England through that edition of Alberti, and through his earlier publication of Andrea Palladio's *The Four Books of Architecture* (1715-20).² It was an achievement aided by his own practical designs for mansions built for important patrons domiciled throughout England, from Essex to Cheshire, from Surrey to Yorkshire. Yet, with one brilliant exception, an all-too-brief but splendid article by Richard Hewlings,³

¹ *The Architecture of Leon Battista Alberti* in ten books, *Of Painting* in three books and *Of Statuary* in one book. Translated into Italian by Cosimo Bartoli. And now first into English, and divided into three volumes by James Leoni. (London, Edlin, 1726). Leoni seems to wish to avoid claiming responsibility for the translation into English which is probably in large part due to the famous professional translator John Ozell, and the final volume must have been issued in 1729, or early 1730, given a reference in a letter of Leoni's to his patron, Sir Peter Legh, dated 30 May 1730, in which he refers only then to sending him the third volume. *Cfr On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor, (Cambridge, Mass. MIT Press, 1988); quotations from the text of Alberti will be from this edition, except when quoting from Leoni's letter *To the Reader*, when the 1726 edition will perform be used.

² *The Architecture of Andrea Palladio, Design'd and Publish'd by Giacomo Leoni* (London. Watts, 1715) (the trilingual edition); the second edition, 1721, in English alone, revised by G. Leoni and translated by Nicholas Du Bois, was the more important.

³ Richard Hewlings, 'James Leoni, an Anglicised Venetian,' in *Architectural Outsiders*, Roderick Brown (ed.), introduced by Kerry Downes, (London. Waterstone, 1985), 21-44; H.M.Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, 3rd ed. (1995), T.P.Connor, 'Leoni, Giacomo (c.1686-1746),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (OUP, 2004).

Leoni has so far merited only summary critical mentions, notably in H. M. Colvin's *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, and more recently in T. P. Connor's item in Oxford's *Dictionary of National Biography*. In his native Italy he appears to be completely unknown.

Work on Leoni necessarily includes many other related cultural interests. It involves serious consideration of the Renaissance of classical ideas as promoted particularly by Leon Battista Alberti, details of which had an influence in Leoni's own style of building. It directly concerns fashionable architecture in the form of certain fine Georgian houses in England, a score of which Leoni himself designed or constructed. And as a background to all of this there is the literary and historical Georgian countryside eulogized by Alexander Pope, and depicted in Jane Austen's novels, above all in *Pride and Prejudice*.⁴ This is the landscape architecture which Leoni also helped to perpetuate through his study and translation of Alberti and which we now associate with Launcelot (Capability) Brown (1715-1783), and with his successor, Humphrey Repton (1752-1818).⁵

Indeed it is not difficult to see the serenity of Capability Brown landscaping and the calm of Palladian architecture as placid backdrops to the contrasting scenes of emotional crises and nervous breakdowns exhibited by Jane Austen's protagonists. In spite of a recent attempt to insert a new realism into a filmed version of her *Pride and Prejudice*, there are no slums or tenements in her world – at worst a less than prosperous vicarage or a carelessly tended manor house.⁶ For centuries before and after Jane Austen had posed the problem, the awful dilemma in which women of Austen's own class and status found themselves was best resolved by a safe marriage to a husband, who, if he could not provide wealth and luxury, might at least guarantee comfort and security. Not to all was granted the privilege of a love-match with a wealthy landowner

⁴ For the curious a *Literary Tour Guide: Jane Austen's England*, currently published by Footstep Maps in Western Australia, and including the locations, fictional and otherwise for her novels, is proving deservedly popular with tourists.

⁵ In particular the material of Alberti's, *On the Art of Building*, Book 5, Chapters 17-18, pp. 145-51, though the topic is discussed *passim* by Alberti, not only there, but also in his *Della famiglia*, and in the *Villa*.

⁶ I refer to the film (coincidentally released today, 16 September 2005) under the direction of Joe Wright, who admitted that when he accepted the commission he had never read the novel. See Joanna Briscoe, 'A costume drama with muddy hems,' in *The Sunday Times*, 31 July 2005.

such as Fitzwilliam Darcy; the ghastly Mr Collins might suffice for Elizabeth Bennet's less ambitious friend Charlotte Lucas 'who accepted him solely for the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment, cared not how soon that establishment were gained.'⁷ The materialism of Jane Austen's heroines is not only understandable but was absolutely indispensable for the continuation of civilized society as it was then recognized. It also spurred their menfolk to build more glamorous domiciles to pacify them, a factor of which Alberti himself and his predecessors had been conscious.⁸

Long before Jane Austen dwelt upon such things, it was to the fashionable ambitions of noble (or *nouveaux riches*) females that James I attributed the expansion of palatial building in London, forced ruinously upon husbands, and particularly on fathers, by ladies eager to escape the boredom of the provinces, to do the London season, and seriously to look for a husband. London, said the King, was becoming too large for the body of a healthy commonwealth, like an overgrown liver, which causes the human body to waste away. James was no doubt also concerned with a superfluity of influential men in the nation's Capital, who had little to do there for six months of the year but think about entertaining their women-folk, and who were consequently, during their dreary leisure hours, open to the temptations of intrigue and politicking.⁹ In 1615 James attempted to oblige noblemen to return to their provincial seats by proposing legal measures to prevent new building in London, even going so far as to imprison builders and to destroy certain edifices already in course of construction.¹⁰ One effect of the King's attempted reform was to stimulate instead the building of great mansions in the English countryside; houses which in turn became provincial imitations

⁷ And this despite the thought that 'The stupidity with which he was favoured by nature must guard his courtship from any charm that could make a woman wish for its continuance,' Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London, Harmsworth, Penguin Illustrated Classics, 1938), 106-7.

⁸ See below, p.10, note 25.

⁹ And no doubt there were always female precedents for the powerful Georgiana Spencer (1757-1806), who was famously to foster such intrigues at the highest level. See Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London, Harper Collins, 1999).

¹⁰ *The Political Works of James I*, edited by C. H. McIlwaine (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard UP, 1918), 326. Cfr James's *Elegie written by the King concerning his counsellor for Ladies and Gentlemen to depart the Citie of London according to his Majesty's proclamation*, in *Poems of James I*, edited by J. Craigie (Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1958), vol.2, p.179.

of the London court, houses no longer suited to the old domestic gatherings of forty years previously (when master and man had been on much more sociable terms), but now pretentious centres of fashionable rivalry, that on occasions bankrupted their noble owners. Those great houses were to become part of Jane Austen's literary legacy, and we may nowadays be thankful that some at least of the destitute nobility left gorgeous palaces for a less privileged posterity to appreciate.

King James's reign coincided with the first waves of Grand Tourism and with the new admiration for Renaissance Italy's classical splendour. His reforming legislation to restrict building speculation was no match for new fashions, and eventually the Capital continued its inevitable growth. Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren were the brilliant vanguard of a whole squadron of admirers and imitators of classical art and architecture, filtered through the genius of Andrea Palladio. And Inigo Jones, the first of those two Anglo-Palladian pioneers was Giacomo Leoni's particular hero:

The English need no foreign examples of perfection in the way of Architecture. Inigo Jones, their illustrious countryman, who flourished in the Reign of Charles I, made in Italy so great progress in this art, that he attained to the first rank in it. Many noble monuments executed and many designs invented by this great man are still preserved entire. He carefully studied and closely followed the great masters that had gone before him.¹¹

Building development, particularly in the Stuart Capital, was mildly hampered by the prolonged and bloody Civil War, the great Plague of 1660, and the Fire of London which followed. But the Great Fire led perforce to an increase in London's stock of elegant housing, an increase which brought with it an influx of immigrant builders, artists, and interior decorators from Italy. By 1708 John Vanburgh was writing to Lord Manchester suggesting that all England's noble families were going mad for constructing new dwellings.¹² And by this time Giacomo Leoni had begun his journey to London, pausing in Düsseldorf, where he assisted in some way the Venetian architect Matteo d'Alberti, at that time engaged in constructing the *Schloss Bensberg* for the Elector Palatine of that

¹¹ *Leon Battista Alberti*, ed. Leoni, cit., here the appendix *To the Reader*; there are no page numbers.

¹² See John Summerson, 'The Classical Country House in 18th-century England,' *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* (July, 1959), 539-86, here p.541.

province. A manuscript of Leoni's, dated 1708 shows him attempting a treatise on *The Five Orders of Architecture*, based on Palladio's masterpiece and evidently aimed at catching the popular mood and fashion for Palladio's version of classical architecture.¹³ Although that particular treatise was never published, by 1714 Leoni was in London, and one year later began to commission and work on the trilingual translation of Palladio's *Architecture*, in Italian, French and English. By 1720 publication of this edition was completed, and in the following year the section translated solely into English was issued separately with great success.¹⁴

Despite all this talk about Palladian architecture and despite the inroads made by great architects such as Wren, Jones, Vanburgh and their contemporaries, it is worth noting that England boasted some unusual architectural contradictions. Some of the wealthiest and most noble English families still lived in magnificent medieval dwellings built of wattle and daub. And there is a sharp contrast between such buildings and the brilliant new palaces constructed in the neo-Palladian style by successive architects, among them Giacomo Leoni. The renovation of the Hesketh family house, *Rufford Old Hall*, was done in 1662. Now the Heskeths, who lived at Rufford permanently until 1724, were (and are) one of the richest and most venerable families in the North West of England. Contrasting with their house are two mansions constructed or reconstructed almost contemporaneously by Giacomo Leoni, *Moor Park*, built (in conjunction with Sir James Thornhill) after 1720, and *Lyme Park*, extensively redesigned and rebuilt by him in the late 1720s.¹⁵ Some of the attitudes to such great houses and to their restyling is expressed by

¹³ See Peter Collins, 'The McGill Leoni' in *The Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, XXXIV, (1957).

¹⁴ Richard Hewlings, art. cit., supports the notion that this edition was the most influential, being preferred over Lord Burlington's rival edition commissioned from Isaac Ware; Joseph Rykwert, suggests that Isaac Ware's edition of 1738 "replaced Leoni's version of Palladio definitively." In a further coup, for the edition published in 1742, Leoni added the manuscript notes of Inigo Jones.

¹⁵ At this point I would like to express my gratitude to Jon Moore, Chief Executive of Moor Park Golf Club, for his kindness and courtesy in allowing access to that magnificent park and mansion. To those thanks I must add deepest gratitude to the National Trust and to the Trust's Curator of Antiquities at *Lyme Park*, Clair Bissel, without whose courtesy and helpful assistance this and other papers on Leoni's great house would not have been written.

Jane Austen, writing some seventy years after the rebuilding of *Lyme Park*. It may be recalled that, in her *Pride and Prejudice*, the rich Bingley family under its new head, Charles Bingley, had taken the tenancy of *Netherfield Park*, not far from the Bennet house. Bingley, with an income of £5,000 per annum, had inherited from his father a fortune of some £100,000 (made in trade), and the Bingley sisters 'were very anxious for his having an estate of his own.'¹⁶ His influential sister, Caroline Bingley, aspires to something more than a mere tenancy, and evidently expects her brother to acquire a property and rebuild or build *ex novo*, a new palatial residence. She even suggests imitating the Darcy family house, *Pemberley*. It is almost as though the Bingleys were merely proposing to redecorate the parlour rather than building the eighteenth-century equivalent of a fifty-million-pound mansion.¹⁷

Into the non-fictional world of untold wealth and luxury, stepped an impoverished, Italian *immigré*, perhaps in 1713. Giacomo Leoni described himself, notably on the title pages of his editions of architectural classics, as 'Giacomo Leoni, Architetto Veneziano.' We know little about him: he married and had two sons, and he died aged 60 in 1746. Most of the rest of his life is a mystery, but he did leave a legacy of over a score of Anglo-Palladian houses and monuments (now sadly reduced in number by the effects of time, fire, commercial demolition and development, including speculative building), and with them a small but important dossier of fine architectural drawings. His life in England suggests a biography more suited to the conflicts of Charles Dickens than to the serenity of Jane Austen. Leoni arrived in London full of hope and ambition, and found himself surrounded by immensely prosperous new entrepreneurs and venerably wealthy nobility. He had expectations of a friendly reception from certain rich patrons, but his hope was constantly deferred and he died in poverty, intestate, his great gifts unrecognized, except by patrons who had taken advantage of his services in return for small handouts. No doubt Leoni was hoping all the time for the one big commission which would make his name and fortune. He had followed all the good practices for aspiring *arrivistes*, cultivating what Machiavelli or Castiglione would have considered his particular *virtù*, his personal

¹⁶ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 21.

¹⁷ This arbitrary figure may seem to have been plucked from the air, but coincidentally in 2004 the Hesketh family house in Lancashire, to which the family moved after Rufford Old Hall, was on the market for that sum.

qualities, in order to catch the nearest way and ingratiate himself with rich patrons, but he was unlucky. Good fortune was regarded by both Machiavelli and Castiglione as an essential addition to those personal qualities.

Yet, by the early 1720s Leoni seemed to have fallen on his feet. He was engaged on the building of a palatial mansion for William, Lord Scawen at Carshalton. Having drawn up the plans and, possibly for the first time in his career, having within his reach control of the lucrative construction process, he learns of Lord William's death in 1722.¹⁸ Nevertheless the project continued for a while under the control of Lord Scawen's nephew and heir, Thomas Scawen, to whom his uncle had left £10,000 specifically to complete the building.¹⁹ This was when Leoni's luck changed: the work had to be suspended (Thomas had a reputation as a spendthrift), the great new project for *Carshalton House* was never completed, and Thomas Scawen spent the rest of his life at *Stone House*, the smaller family mansion nearby.

Those apparently wasted years, and that blow to his ambition might have been an important factor in Leoni's publication during the years 1726-1729 of the magnificent bilingual edition of Leon Battista Alberti. The volume provided a home for Leoni's designs for *Carshalton House*, and a compensatory outlet for the architect's frustrated energies. A massive book in three tomes, Leoni's edition (in Italian and English) also included Alberti's *De pictura* and his *De statua*. With one or two honourable critical exceptions, that edition, rather like Leoni himself, though by no means forgotten, has been treated very casually in both architectural and literary circles. Leoni's comments in his *To the Reader* showed his enthusiasm for certain Albertian principles, above all for a love of classical simplicity and for a certain spirit of practicality, qualities in Alberti's work which, deliberately or subconsciously, Leoni employed in the buildings which he himself designed or had constructed.

Despite the hope deferred by the death of William Scawen, it is true that by 1726 a confident new Leoni no longer felt the need for self-

¹⁸ For the list of workmen employed by Leoni (indicating a possible financial hold), see A. C. Edwards, *The Account Books of Benjamin Mildmay, Earl Fitzwalter*, (London: Regency Press, 1977), noted by Richard Hewlings, *James Leoni* cit., 194-5.

¹⁹ Some hint of this is visible in one of Leoni's letters to Sir Peter Legh of 1725, regretting that he had not yet sent a plan for *Lyme Park*, because of his commitment to the building process at Carshalton.

publicity in the same way as had been evident in his edition of Palladio. His edition of Alberti's *Architecture*, by definition, gave him a new public image, not only as a prime exponent of the new Anglo-Palladian movement, but also as the only contemporary expert on Alberti's work. The appendix to Leoni's edition of the treatise contains various plans for the great house which he had so recently been designing at Carshalton, drawings evidently rendered redundant for that particular project, but useful now for showing his prowess to a wider audience in a publication of this kind. He also published accompanying prints of other projects and designs of a technical architectural nature, not necessarily (according to Leoni) aimed in this case at attracting other patrons. That had been his stated aim in the plans and designs published in his earlier *Palladio*, which had also included technical drawings to attract artisanal subscribers.

In fact the majority of the new designs in his *Alberti* were more technical than aesthetic, and could have risked boring non-experts at the time, more inclined to accept the merely fashionable elegance of traditional Palladian illustrations. The drawings certainly illustrated the architectural flair which marked out Leoni's work, but, more importantly now, in addition to the glamorous palaces which might attract the aesthete, he introduced, in his appendix to volume three, examples of practical and accurate designs, not unlike those he had found in the text of the *De re aedificatoria*. In this way he continued the practice begun in his *Palladio* of offering other architectural aspects of his profession more appropriate to the artisans and master-masons who would be likely to peruse those particular pages.²⁰ As far as the text of Alberti was concerned, it indicated a revolutionary change in direction and in audience. Leoni had the foresight and courage, if that is not too strong a word, to highlight for *artisans* the scholarly treatise based on Vitruvius's *De architectura*, which Alberti had intended as an academic text directed rather at the intellectual élite of fifteenth-century Italy.

At the time that his *Alberti* was in preparation, Leoni was fully committed to two important projects, the building of Carshalton for Lord

²⁰ Coincidentally, less elegantly disguised than Leoni's advice, a more specifically technical aid for artisans was the volume by Richard Neve, *The City and County Purchaser, and Builder's Dictionary* (London. Browne, 1726), published the same year that the first section of Leoni's translation was issued. But, unusually, this, the second edition of Neve's volume, had been corrected by the urbane John Ozell, deliberately to create an edition more appropriate for gentlemen, since the first edition had been aimed at artisans.

Scawen, and the re-building of Lyme Park for Sir Peter Legh. In the appendix *To the Reader* in his *Alberti*, Leoni's relationships with noblemen such as Peter Legh show that he was to all intents and purposes a courtier, and like courtiers of any epoch, he had to exploit his own talents as best he could.²¹ He needed to make use of his position in the small country entourages where he might well consider that he had certain advantages which might glamorize his *curriculum vitae*, and so enhance his position in the eyes of potential patrons in the high society of the time. One of his *fortes* was his familiarity with Italian and his knowledge of Alberti's text in the Bartoli translation, superior to any potential English rival. If Leoni's purpose had been to captivate the imagination of a rich public of Grand Tourists enchanted by the beauty of Italian architecture, the launch of his new version of Alberti's major treatise, a new star to shine in the galaxy of Anglo-Palladian architecture, was an instance of a clever adaptability worthy of his sixteenth-century predecessors.

And that new audience is borne out in the list of subscribers to Leoni's *Alberti*. They include some of the most illustrious names in the English nobility, beginning with the new king, George II, who succeeded to the throne in 1727. But among the three hundred subscribers, there were also names of independent builders: fifteen masons, including John Churchill 'mason to His Majesty,' eleven carpenters, seven engravers, two plumbers, and other names of similar entrepreneurs. And in his letter to his readers, in words which recall his letter to Sir Peter Legh (who subscribed to two copies of the volume), Leoni underlined that practical aspect which he shared with Alberti, 'Be warned, also, Reader, not to suffer yourself to be imposed upon by any that pretend mighty things in the theory, but are not able to draw, from which they excuse themselves by saying they have others that draw for them [...]. Do not, I say, be imposed upon by them, for these theorists are entirely deficient in the practice.' The words seem directed at Lord Burlington, who had a reputation for asking others to do his drawings for him.²²

²¹ And in the letter to Sir Peter Legh accompanying the final volumes of his *Alberti*, this dependency becomes subtly clear, when he passes on to Legh the good wishes of Thomas Scawen, perhaps in a subtle way to imply familiarity.

²² As for the acolyte required to do the practical work: "And even though such copist should have the most excellent judgement himself, it is easy to conceive that either subjection or modesty, or the respect paid by and inferior to a superior, would be unavoidable impediments to his serving as he ought the person who is sure to pay well for his service." These and other notes at that point in Leoni's letter *To the Reader* were thinly disguised criticisms of Lord Burlington.

The links between courtier-architects and noble patrons are clear. Lord Burlington, the most influential and one of the richest patrons of the age, dictated fashion and, through his control of Wren's old Office of Public Works, handled most important commissions. In the earlier introduction to his *Palladio*, Leoni had praised Burlington for having promoted the Palladian style in England. Perhaps in that first stage of his English career Leoni had hoped for some advantage from his mild flattery, but he never dedicated any of his designs to the noble lord, except for a single print in the appendix of his *Alberti*, and one which Burlington later appropriated for his own design of the *Egyptian Hall* in York. For his part, Burlington, who may have enjoyed an initial burst of enthusiasm at the arrival of the young Italian, showed only irritation at the fact that Leoni, in his edition of *Palladio*, had had the temerity to add his own detail to one of Palladio's famous façades.²³ Burlington's reaction was to marginalise the young man, at the same time commissioning Isaac Ware to complete a rival edition of the *Palladio* volume.²⁴ Yet in his appendix to the *Alberti* Leoni seems at first glance to repeat his eulogy of Burlington, 'And here infinite praises are due to the Right Honourable Richard, Earl of Burlington. It is he that has revived and set in its true light, the Glory of that illustrious architect [Inigo Jones] the follower of our Andrea Palladio.' On the other hand, such praise might be viewed as exalting Palladio and Jones, while implying Burlington's having a mere popularizing role.

In Leoni's translation one very accessible feature which could have had an immediate impact upon architectural planning was Alberti's novel attitude to the house in its landscape. Alberti's villa was meant to be a working estate, but he nevertheless had firm ideas about the location of his dwellings, and the aesthetic quality of their setting, if for no other reason because he realized (and states) the need to keep the womenfolk happy with their house and surroundings: 'Yet the villa should be pretty enough to ensure that the mother of the family will enjoy living there and will give careful devotion to its domestic upkeep.'²⁵ Leoni's translation naturally includes lengthy passages concerning the siting of the house,

²³ See Rudolf Wittkower, 'Giacomo Leoni's edition of Palladio's *Quattro libri dell'architettura*,' in *Arte Veneta*, 8, (1954), 310-16, here p.314.

²⁴ This eventually came out in 1738, by which time the strictly Palladian phase was *passé*.

²⁵ Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, 152.

its landscaping, the views it enjoys, particularly down to and over water, its ornamentation with statues, and other features.²⁶

Alberti's instructions had also contained practical details concerning the direction of prevailing winds and the siting of important rooms at points of the compass which might best ensure all-year comfort for its inhabitants. 'Every consideration must be given to region, weather, use, and comfort – to keeping out biting Boreas and chill from air and ground in cold climates, or the troublesome sun in hot ones; and to letting in the refreshing breath of the heavens and a reasonable amount of pleasant light from all directions.'²⁷ This was the era of Capability Brown, who had, coincidentally, associations with several of the great houses that Leoni had earlier built, including two with remarkable importance from the point of view of landscaping: *Moor Park*, which had boasted one of the finest formal gardens of the seventeenth century, before its new owner allowed Capability Brown to turn it into a more 'natural' environment, and *Stowe House*, which the same celebrated landscape artist was to convert into a model for classical garden design for the next two centuries.²⁸

Editions of Leoni's *Alberti*, containing long sections in the fifth Book concerning siting and landscape, must have been popular with men of the calling of Launcelot Brown, who would have been in his prime when the definitive 1755 edition was published. Alberti's classical ideas, already culled by him before 1450 from Vitruvius and Pliny the Elder, chimed felicitously with the eighteenth-century fashion for manipulating nature in a way not visibly artificial. And humanity was seen inside the landscape structure, at harmony with its own creative manipulation. Alexander Pope, in his somewhat sycophantic *Epistle to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington*, congratulates the noble lord on his good taste in gardening, and notes there Viscount Cobham's estate at *Stowe*, where Leoni had constructed Palladian arches and possibly designed the northern

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 145. The descriptions and situations described by Jane Austen in Chapter 10 of *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. cit., are remarkably similar to these judgements on landscape, even including the delights of fishing in a conversation there between Messrs Darcy and Gardiner; *cfr.* below, p.13, note 33.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 146. Those concerns recur in Leoni's own recommendations in his *To the Reader*.

²⁸ Sir William Temple remarked on magnificence of the formal garden at *Moor Park* in a letter of 1685; see Martyn Pedrick, *The Grosvenor Legacy* (Rickmansworth: Riverside Books, 1989), 85-88.

entrance porticos.²⁹ The harmony expressed there by Pope is in its way a kind of apotheosis of Alberti's landscaping. It might also go some way to explain the apparently materialistic opinions manifested by Elizabeth Bennet when speaking of *Pemberley House* in *Pride and Prejudice*, since Mr Darcy's character, in conformity with contemporary socio-philosophical thought, might be seen as the personification of the good taste and beauty of his surroundings, both in the woodland of the park and in the elegance of the great house itself.

Elizabeth Bennet's journey to Derbyshire, and to *Pemberley* reminds the reader that for the English middle classes the practice of visiting such country mansions, like Grand Tourists stranded in the English shires, was evidently very fashionable in itself. Elizabeth is said to be 'tired of great houses, after going over so many, she really had no pleasure in fine carpets or satin curtains.' In the case of Mr Darcy's *Pemberley*, it must be said that it is Elizabeth Bennet's curiosity about its owner which spurs her on to inspect the estate. Indeed Jane Austen's narrative reduces Elizabeth's visits to Derbyshire's architectural delights to merely 'robbing it [the county] of a few petrified spas.'³⁰ Questioned by her sister Jane, Elizabeth jokingly attributes her falling in love with Mr Darcy to her first sight of the magnificent estate, and confesses, 'I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley.'³¹ Elizabeth's response is understandably not taken seriously by her sister, but the underlying reality of her statement is soon appreciated openly by her more materialistically minded mother, content that her daughter will soon be in the £10,000 per annum bracket. And Elizabeth's first impression of *Pemberley* chimes with a more materialistic viewpoint:

It was a large, handsome stone building, standing well on rising ground and backed by a ridge of high woody hills, – and in front, a stream of such natural importance was swelled into greater but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They

²⁹ For more positive speculation concerning the traditionally uncertain nature of Leoni's work at Stowe, see the *Stoic*, XXIII, 4, (Dec. 1968), 160-1.

³⁰ *Pride and Prejudice*, 193-94. Tradition has it that Jane Austen's model for *Pemberley* was *Chatsworth House*, a notion to be followed in Joe Wright's newly filmed version of the novel, while *Basildon Park* becomes another *Netherfield*.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 297.

were all of them warm in their admiration, and at that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something.³²

Elizabeth's inspection of the estate from the panoramic site of *Pemberley House*, produces descriptions not unlike the views counselled in Leoni's translation of Alberti: 'I would prefer to locate the house of a gentleman somewhere dignified, rather than in a particularly fertile stretch of land, where it could enjoy all the benefit and delight of breeze, sun and view [...]; it should be in view, and have itself a view of some city, town, stretch of coast, or plain, or it should have within sight the peaks of some notable hills or mountains, delightful gardens and attractive haunts for fishing and hunting.'³³ And Elizabeth Bennet's inspection and admiration of the house and its surroundings continues:

Elizabeth, after slightly surveying it, went to a window to enjoy its prospect. The hill, crowned with wood, from which they had descended, receiving increased abruptness from the distance, was a beautiful object. Every disposition of the ground was good; and she looked on the whole scene, the river, the trees scattered on its banks, and the winding of the valley, as far as she could trace it, with delight. As they passed into other rooms, these objects were taking different positions; but from every window there were beauties to be seen. The rooms were lofty and handsome, and their furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor; but Elizabeth saw, with admiration of his taste, that it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine; with less of splendour, and more real elegance than the furniture of Rosings.

"And of this place," thought she, "I might have been mistress!"³⁴

Elizabeth and the others leave the house, enter the woods, and reach higher ground which gave many charming views of the valley, hills in the distance, and woods occasionally revealing the winding stream, again comparable to Alberti's suggestions elsewhere.³⁵

The delight in a rural walk with its upland paths and gentle gradients that overlook gorgeous vistas is present in Alberti's other work, notably his volumes *On the Family* and his *Villa*, which contain other eulogies of

³² *Ibid.*, 195.

³³ Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, 145.

³⁴ *Pride and Prejudice*, 196.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 200.

rural charm. It is another aspect which justifies for Georgina Masson and Patrick Goode singling out Alberti as the forerunner of European garden architecture.³⁶ When the Italian Romantics wrote in praise of English gardens, and English cemeteries (which to Ugo Foscolo and Ippolito Pindemonte and others seemed like gardens), they were unconsciously reflecting the Georgians' admiration for and imitation of the Renaissance ideals propounded first by Alberti and popularized by Leoni's luxurious volumes of 1726.

The landscaping of gardens and parks to achieve certain effects was of course a very popular eighteenth-century pastime, and in discussing it writers would often find themselves encountering a basic neo-classic problem – to what extent does man with his art *correct* nature's faults and improve her, and to what extent does his art follow nature, helping her to realize her own most felicitous intentions and display her qualities to best effect? One of the most forward-looking aspects of Alberti's thought, both in the *De re aedificatoria*, and elsewhere was his concept, humanistic in the most modern sense, that man should have faith in his own creative discernment. Nature, indifferent (in a Leopardian sense) to her own creations, throws up spontaneously beauty and mediocrity, whereas the discerning man has a permanent and innate sense of beauty, which allows him to judge how creatively to bring out a consistent ideal of beauty. That ideal, while evidently visible in the buildings which he constructed, is subtly expressed too in man's control of nature, present in his expression of landscape architecture. *Pemberley* is conceived of by Jane Austen as being just such a work to wonder at, and Darcy is regarded as its creator. In responding to aesthetic qualities as being symptomatic of and related to humanity's ordering of its own behaviour, Elizabeth is following a main line of eighteenth-century thought. It is worth reflecting that these incidental eighteenth-century philosophical reflections on the implications of Nature controlled by human hand, had already been physically put into practice by such as Capability Brown, and that Leoni's translation was instrumental in setting forth the similar views expressed by Leon Battista Alberti three centuries earlier. In the *Penguin Illustrated Classics* edition of 1938, Helen Binyon's wood-engravings of the fictional locations of Jane Austen's narrative include her impression of the visit to

³⁶ Georgina Masson, *Italian Gardens* (London. Thames and Hudson, 1961); Patrick Goode, *The Oxford Book of Gardens* (Oxford. OUP, 2001).

Pemberley. The mansion clearly visible in the background is evidently Anglo-Palladian in style, as is an earlier, less palatial version for *Netherfield*. And when in 1995 under Simon Langton's direction, the BBC drama department created its lavish film of *Pride and Prejudice*, the producers made use of Giacomo Leoni's *Lyme Park* as a splendid surrogate for *Pemberley House*. Critics were not slow to see how this prime example of Italianate Palladian beauty had come to represent in the most English of novels, something which was quintessentially English. James Leoni, as he often styled himself in England, would have been justifiably pleased at that judgment.

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Absence, Desire and the Female Other in Petrarch and Wyatt

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'Absence gives rise to desire and desire gives rise to the poet's song, but desire itself is never to be fulfilled, never to secure its object.'¹ This thematized model of the origins of the lyric tradition lies at the heart of Francis Petrarch's formulation of the paradigmatic Western idiom of desire as expressed in his *Canzoniere*. In what follows, I will be focusing on such a formulation and on its appropriation and transformation by Sir Thomas Wyatt, particularly as exemplified in his poems *They flee from me* and *Whoso list to hunt*. In examining the interplay between absence and desire, I will attempt to recover the muted voice of the displaced and objectified female figure in both Petrarch's and Wyatt's verse. While acknowledging the appeal of the recovery of the female muted voice in male-authored texts, especially the feminist appropriation, the underlying danger of creating a presence or plenitude which never really existed in the first place will also be considered. The female figure in Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and in Wyatt's body of verse is, after all, a masculine construct that tells us less about female desire and more about male fantasy.²

With these issues in mind, I will be raising a series of questions which have to do with notions of desire as they interlock with male figurations of female absence. More to the point, I will be asking: what is the nature of desire as it appears in Wyatt's love poems? What specific alternative does Wyatt's verse offer to the Petrarchan model of physical

¹ Gregory L. Lucente, 'Lyric Tradition and the Desires of Absence: Rudel, Dante, and Michelangelo (*Vorrei uoler*),' *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 10 (1983), 313. Lucente's article discusses the poetics of absence and desire with a particular focus on Provençal verse and early Italian love lyric.

² On the portrayal of the female figure as a masculine construct, see J. M. Ferrante, *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature: From the Twelfth Century to Dante* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975). On notions of women's selfhood within male-authored works, see also S. Fisher and J. E. Halley (eds.), 'The Lady Vanishes: The Problem of Women's Absence in Late Medieval and Renaissance Texts,' *Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings. Essays in Feminist Contextual Criticism* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 1-17.

unattainability of the eroticized female Other? If distance is indispensable to the perennial regeneration of desire, does the physical attainment of the female figure in Wyatt's poetry signal the demise of desire? What role does sublimation play once sexual gratification becomes a reality? And finally, what type of female Otherness does Wyatt's verse invent, and to what extent does this Otherness echo or depart from the one created by Petrarch?

There are many avenues into Wyatt's Petrarchism, but the most direct for our purposes begins with the specific analysis of the relationship between self and Other in Petrarch and its transition from the *Canzoniere* to Wyatt's verse. The obsessive focus of attention throughout the *Canzoniere* is not so much Laura, the female object of desire, but rather the desiring subject which constitutes at one and the same time both the subject and object of a narcissistic self-reflection constantly shifting over time. In his analysis of Petrarch's allegoresis, particularly self-allegoresis, John Freccero compares Petrarch and Laura to Pygmalion and his creation, in that Petrarch's beloved, rather than being an agency aiming beyond herself, is a 'pure signifier' which points back to the lover and his narcissistic self.³ The equivocal web of repeatedly intermixed signifiers and metonymic associations woven by the multivalent, polysemic name of the beloved Laura which is echoed in 'l'aura' (the breeze), 'l'oro' (gold), 'l'aurora' (dawn) and so on and so forth can be transformed into the 'lauro,' the laurel tree, or the emblem of poetic fame and glory, only to be once again re-metamorphosed into Laura.⁴

The shifting configuration of words resulting from the tenuous link between signifier and signified shapes the very form of the *Canzoniere* which tells the story of the poetic persona desiring the unattainable through seemingly discrete, though finally unified, individual segments, all coming together in the *Canzone* to the Virgin Mary, the concluding poem, (no. 366), to create the effect of a year's entries plus one as a sort of poetic capstone. This capstone, however, should itself be taken only in part as a conclusion, since in fact it moves the reader either forward, as in Dante's *Commedia*, to contemplate the deity through the formation of a circle of intelligibility in which the meaning of the narrated events is ultimately

³ J. Freccero, 'The Fig Tree and the Laurel,' *Diacritics* 5 (1975), 39.

⁴ I have discussed at greater length the link between signifier and signified in Petrarch and Shakespeare in 'Verba versus Res in Shakespeare's Reversal of Petrarchan Epideictic Rhetoric,' *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies*, Vol. 7 (2002), 19-33.

revealed or, as in Giambattista Vico, backward into the creative process itself and so, in a sort of *ricorso*, back to the beginning of the *Canzoniere*. Desire thus functions in Petrarch as an apparently forward motion that moves forward only in terms of circularity, not as genuine motion but only as an illusion of progress. The result of this circular to and fro is not so much stasis as the stasis of repetition or, in other words, motion without change. This motion then leads to the fixity of illusion, so that Laura, or more precisely her absence, is what keeps the *Canzoniere* going and allows it to remain focused on the same predictable circular track.

In his analysis of 'the etiological passage' from Petrarch's Italian text to Wyatt's English text, Thomas Greene focuses on the opening up of the *Canzoniere*'s circular, self-referential system to an 'external presence,' or 'a second person,' who responds to the speaker.⁵ As Greene puts it, the transition from Petrarch to Wyatt can be described 'as an *engagement* of the closed system with its human surrounding, an opening up to the nonself, an involvement, a contextualization.'⁶ Because of such an involvement, in Wyatt the rapport between the self and the Other takes on a radically different cast when compared with Petrarch. In studying such a rapport, Jacques Lacan's notions of the self can provide us with a particularly insightful hermeneutic device which can shed light on the underlying differences between the two poets.

In Lacanian terms, desire in Petrarch can be seen as constantly striving for but never really attaining the reaffirmation of subjectivity in the obsessive return of its own image. The potential of Otherness and the final impossibility of its attainment ultimately lead to the re-establishment of the dominant self. Petrarch's self-idolatry, or his so-called 'poetics of narcissism,' drives him to obsessively seek in the Other a point of view from which he can see himself: 'conoscete in altrui quel che voi siete' ('you see in the Other what you yourself are') (71. 60).⁷ In a very general sense, it is with this refusal or impossibility of the erotic impulse to

⁵ T. Greene, *The Light in Troy. Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven and London. Yale University Press, 1982), 248.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Citations from Petrarch's poetry are taken from *Francesco Petrarca. Canzoniere*, G. Contini (ed.) (Torino. Einaudi, 1964). The English translation of Petrarch's poems is from Mark Musa's *Petrarch. The 'Canzoniere' or 'Rerum vulgarium fragmenta'* (Bloomington and Indianapolis. Indiana University Press, 1996). On Petrarch's attempt to see himself in the Other, see B. Boysen, 'Crucified in the Mirror of Love: On Petrarch's Ambivalent Conception of Love in *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*,' */cont...*

approach the Other even in terms of dialogical discourse that the modern lyric, which is to say poetry that expresses the desires and the plight of the authentically individual subject, begins.

It can be argued that Lacan's reading of the narcissistic self can also be loosely applied to Wyatt's body of verse. Desire, after all, is invariably made up of a narcissistic component. However, in what follows I would like to propose Julia Kristeva's revisitation of Lacan's position with its emphasis on the recognition of difference rather than sameness as a more pointed definition of Wyatt's relationship with female alterity.⁸ In applying Kristeva's revisitation to Wyatt's verse, the self can be defined not only as a narcissist, but rather as 'a narcissist with an *object*.'⁹ In fact, in Wyatt the interplay between the male desiring subject and the female object of desire does not invariably lead to a return to sameness, as in Petrarch's case. In reaching for his '*object*,' Wyatt sees beyond the narcissistic mirror and in the process he posits the Other not only and exclusively as the reflection of the self but also as the Other.¹⁰

But what type of Otherness does Wyatt's poetic persona desire? To what extent does Wyatt's rapport with Otherness constitute a radical subversion of Petrarchan convention? Much has been written on Wyatt's so-called anti- or un-Petrarchism by Patricia Thomson, Kenneth Muir, and Donald L. Guss, among others, who focus primarily on the disappearance in Wyatt's verse of visual imagery, the suppression of classical mythology, the passage from transcendental idealism to cynical

/cont. Orbis Litterarum, 58 (2003), 163-188. On Petrarch's so-called 'narcissistic poetics,' see G. Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 58-79.

⁸ In applying Julia Kristeva's 'revisitation' of the Lacanian position to my reading of Wyatt, I am indebted to Catherine Belsey who applies Kristeva's version of Lacan to her analysis of John Donne's poetry in *Desire. Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 130-149.

⁹ Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 33. In her discussion of Donne's notions of selfhood and desire, Belsey also draws on Kristeva's definition of a lover as a narcissistic with an 'object.' See Belsey, 136.

¹⁰ On the 'plainness' of Wyatt's language, and in particular on the use of proverbs, see A. O. Ward, 'Proverbs and Political Anxiety in the Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey,' *English Studies*, 5 (2000), 456-471. On the absence of concrete descriptions of the beloved, see N. S. Leonard, 'The Speaker in Wyatt's Lyric Poetry,' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, XLI (1977-78). On the "inwardness" of Wyatt's language, see A. Ferry, *The Inward Language: Sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983).

reasoning and the sexual availability of the beloved.¹¹ Guss, for example, describes Wyatt's transformation of Petrarchism as a passage from 'narrative to direct address, pictorial symbolism to irony and elevated mystery to bitter common sense.'¹² He goes on to say that Wyatt's imitations 'depart from Petrarch in denouncing the lady, in clamouring for sexual reward and in introducing derogatory descriptions of feminine beauty and rural charm.'¹³

The transformation of erotic unattainability into reciprocal consummation is considered by Guss as one of the most significant un-Petrarchan themes in Wyatt's verse. However, it is only with the more recent works of Stephen Greenblatt, Marguerite Waller, Jonathan Crewe, Barbara Estrin, Heather Dubrow and Elizabeth Heale that the darker implications of such a transformation have begun to be explored in greater depth.¹⁴ In focusing their attention on such a transformation, these critics have offered a powerful corrective to the position which sees in Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and the Renaissance Petrarchan discourse it inspires a monolithic image of a passive female figure which is silenced both metaphorically and literally by a male subject, posited as the source and sign of power and agency. By presupposing the stability of female identity, such a position overlooks the fact that the *Canzoniere* does not offer only a model of epideictic rhetoric whereby the praise of the beloved is deployed as a device through which she is mythologized and therefore

¹¹ See, among others, K. Muir, *Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool. Liverpool University Press, 1963); P. Thomson, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and his Background* (Stanford. Stanford University Press, 1964); D. L. Guss, 'Wyatt's Petrarchism: An Instance of Creative Imitation in the Renaissance,' *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, XXIX, I (Nov. 1965), 1-15.

¹² Guss, 11.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁴ S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning. From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 1980); M. Waller, 'The Emperor's New Clothes: Refashioning the Renaissance,' *Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings. Essays in Feminist Contextual Criticism*, S. Fisher and J. E. Halley (eds.) (Knoxville. University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 160-183; J. Crewe, *Trials of Authorship. Anterior Forms and Poetic Reconstruction from Wyatt to Shakespeare* (Berkeley. University of California Press, 1990); B. Estrin, *Laura. Uncovering Gender and Genre in Wyatt, Donne, and Marvell* (Durham and London. Duke University Press, 1994); H. Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire. English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca and London. Cornell University Press, 1995); E. Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey and Early Tudor Poetry* (London. Longman, 1998).

silenced. Rather, the *Canzoniere* also contains within it a significant number of revealing moments in which Laura's voice or gaze, or even the combination of the two, retains a strong measure of agency whose effect on the subjectivity of the poetic persona can result in the violent dissolution of the self.

The drama of rupture and fragmentation, of mutability and stasis and of power and powerlessness reaches a key narrative moment in Petrarch's reworking of the Ovidian myth of Actaeon and Diana in *Canzone* 23, when the male desiring subject falls into the punitive grip of the invincible female figure and is transformed into a stag destined to be eternally pursued by his own devouring hounds. As in Ovid's story of Actaeon and Diana, in which Actaeon accidentally wanders into a grotto and sees Diana, the virgin goddess of the woods bathing naked while surrounded by her nymphs, it is desire that spurs on the lover and leads him to violate the solitary sanctity of the beloved's abode:

I' segui' tanto avanti il mio desire
 ch'un dì, cacciando sì com'io solea,
 mi mossi, e quella fera bella et cruda
 in una fonte ignuda
 si stava, quando 'l sol più forte ardea. (23, 147-151)

(And my desire I pursued so far
 that one day, hunting as I often would,
 I came upon that cruel and lovely beast
 naked within a fountain
 when the sun strikes the hottest time of day).

As in the Ovidian story, the violation of boundaries is punished by the dissolution of the self.

Vero dirò; forse e' parrà menzogna:
 ch'i' senti' trarmi de la propria imago
 et in un cervo solitario et vago
 di selva in selva ratto mi trasformo,
 et ancor de' miei can fuggo lo stormo. (23,156-160)

(I'll tell the truth, though it may seem a lie!
 I felt myself ripped from my very image
 and quickly turned into a solitary,
 wandering deer that moves from wood to wood,
 and still I flee the rage of my hounds).

Unlike Actaeon, Petrarch is not destroyed by his own hounds.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the poet directs against himself the same violence of both the literal and contemplative death triggered by desire through the scene of his own self being ripped from his 'imago,' or image. As in Ovid's tale, the agent of such violence is the threatening female figure who is capable of inflicting on the male desiring subject the violent distancing of human consciousness from its bodily source through the transformation of living flesh into organic matter. Petrarch's representation of the multivalent perils emanating from the oxymoronic and duplicitous female object of desire therefore undermines the widely-held assumption that the Petrarchan love poem is a theatre of desire in which men are assigned an active role while women are invariably portrayed as silent, iconic figures.¹⁶ Rather than exemplifying the dichotomy male speech / female silence, Petrarch's portrayal of Laura as the source and embodiment of the constant mutation of subjectivity into objectivity, of male into female and of passivity into agency, destabilizes the paradigm that articulation and the ability to silence the Other is gendered masculine.¹⁷

In Petrarch, what often puts into question the stable configuration of gendered roles is competition for discourse between a desiring male subject and a negating female alterity. Such a competition also lies at the heart of *They flee from me*, one of Wyatt's most controversial and enigmatic poems. In their analysis of the poem's transformation of the theme of erotic unavailability into physical possession, various readings tend to concentrate on what has been attained rather than on what remains

¹⁵ As Musa writes in the notes to his English translation of the *Canzoniere*, the hounds have been variously identified as Petrarch's own thoughts, his desires, and even his contemporaries. See Musa, 536.

¹⁶ For such an assumption, see for example, G. F. Waller, 'Struggling into Discourse: The Emergence of Renaissance Women's Writing,' *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patron, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, M. Patterson Hannay (ed.) (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985), 242.

¹⁷ On the constant slippage between power and powerlessness, male and female, and silence and speech, see Dubrow, 11.

irrevocably beyond reach even after sexual consummation. What Wyatt himself treats as secondary is thus treated as primary. In an article published in 2004, for instance, Gordon Braden writes that 'part of Wyatt's legacy to English Renaissance poetry' has to do with 'one of the most complicated metamorphoses that Petrarchism is called upon to perform: its evolution into the poetry of successfully mutual love.'¹⁸ It is within this general framework of metamorphosed Petrarchism that Braden goes on to read *They flee from me* as a poem in which 'there is no disdain on the woman's part: desire has been gratified and the question is what happens next.'¹⁹

Undoubtedly, Braden's analysis has the merit of potentially opening up Wyatt's text to innovative reinterpretation by shifting the focus of attention on what he calls the 'aftermath of sexual love,' an aspect which Petrarch and the Petrarchan tradition decisively veer away from.²⁰ However, total acceptance of Braden's generalized formulation can give rise to a misreading of the very poems by Petrarch and Wyatt from which such a generalization on the gratification of desire seems to be deduced. What determines the signature unattainability of desire in Petrarch is Laura's increasing sublimation and idealization, particularly after her death, a process through which she gradually becomes the agent of transcendence and the speculum of divine beauty. After all, Laura is unattainable precisely because she is an ideal, and were she to be attained, she would cease to be worthy of the idealizing desires which give rise to her creation. Wyatt's verse, in which the female object is construed as a worldly woman signifying earthly pleasures, is simply not inspired by the same idealizing desires. It thus follows that erotic fulfilment does not have the same consequences in Wyatt as it would have had in Petrarch. True, Wyatt does replace the unsuccessful lover with one who actually conquers the lady. But this does not mean, as Braden asserts, that 'desire has been gratified.' Simply put, the fulfilment of desire cannot be conflated with sexual consummation. As Catherine Belsey observes, 'understood as sexual impulse, desire fulfilled (got) would be desire in abeyance (dead).'²¹ To put it differently, the fact of the speaker's tormented desire

¹⁸ G. Braden, 'Wyatt and Petrarch: Italian Fashion at the Court of Henry VIII,' *Petrarch and the European Lyric Tradition. Annali d'italianistica*, 22 (2004), 253.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 263.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Belsey, 146.

and the absence of its object are not coincidental, but rather the necessary conditions which give rise to the poet's 'song.' Instead of causing the cessation of poetic discourse, the continuous sliding or deferral of desire feeds back into the production of poetry. For desire is born out of absence, and as such, it is always directed at what is lacking, at what is never to be fulfilled. To use Lacan's words, 'the indestructibility of unconscious desire' amounts to 'no other derangement of instinct than that of being caught in the rails – eternally stretching forth towards the *desire for something else* – of metonymy.'²²

So what exactly is that 'something else' that desire yearns for once erotic impulses have been gratified in *They flee from me*? When the desiring self is 'caught in the rails [...] of metonymy,' what other object does it eternally yearn for? In what can be considered as one of the most inspiring discussions of *They flee from me*, Estrin reads the poem as a 'disquieting' reversal of male discourse and the male gaze, a reversal which breaks down gender distinctions and subverts the traditional dyad of an entreating male poetic persona and a silent but negating female alterity. The plot of *They flee from me* is generated by a female figure who embarks on the quest for physical possession and penetrates into the privacy of the male poetic persona to offer her sexual availability. By taking on the man's stalking attitude and appropriating what is traditionally construed as male discourse, the woman crosses the boundaries separating male from female, subject from object and the pursuer from the pursued:

They fle [*sic*] from me that sometyme did me seke
 With naked fote stalking in my chambre.
 I have sene them gentill tame and meke
 That nowe are wyld and do not remembre
 That sometyme they put theimself in daunger
 To take bred at my hand and nowe they raunge
 Besely seeking with a continuell change.²³ (37, 1-7)

Much of the ambiguity underlying *They flee from me* arises from the chain of signifieds generated by the signifier 'stalking,' which can be

²² J. Lacan, 'Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious,' *Ecrits. A Selection* (New York. Norton, 1977), 167.

²³ K. Muir (ed.), *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (London. Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949), 37. All references to Wyatt's poems are taken from Muir's edition.

taken to refer to both the hunter and the hunted. As Greene observes: “‘Stalking’ (l.2) at first appears to mean “walking cautiously” and “walking with high stiff steps like a bird;” only on rereading does it reveal itself to mean “approaching an animal stealthily in order to kill it.”²⁴ The tenuous link between signifiers and signifieds which permeates the entire poem sheds light on the inconsistency not only of language but also of conventional gender distinctions. Traditional roles are reversed and male subjectivity is transformed into the scopic object of the female figure – indeed, of a multiplicity of indeterminate female figures. Instead of allying itself exclusively with the male point of view through which the female figure would have been objectified, the gaze belongs to a male poetic persona who is at one and the same time both a subject and an object, or as Estrin puts it, ‘both a spectator who sees himself in the woman and a spectacle whose objectification is determined by her.’²⁵

The reversal of the gaze whereby the male subject is transformed into the prey of the female hunter is deeply entwined with the reversal of discourse. Speech is the exclusive prerogative of the female figure whose physical prowess is equalled by her verbal manipulation as she ‘swetely’ and ‘softely’ asks her lover: ‘*dere hert, howe like you this?*’ But male expressivity is incapable of matching female articulation, and by the end of the poem the desiring self can only confess its inability to understand the female Other:

It was no dreame: I lay brode waking.
 But all is torned thorough my gentilnes
 Into a straunge fasshion of forsaking;
 And I have leve to goo of her goodenes,
 And she also to vse new fangilnes.
 But syns that I so kyndely ame serued,
 I would fain knowe what she hath deserued. (37, 15-21)

The poem’s concluding line, ‘I would fain knowe what she hath deserued,’ encapsulates the predicament of the desiring male who erotically attains the female object of desire but at the same time remains incapable of attaining anything else beyond that. For to ‘know’ the female Other physically is to be condemned to the awareness of a deeper Otherness which will remain ‘unknown.’ Full possession of female Otherness which

²⁴ Greene, 257.

²⁵ Estrin, 132.

projects itself to the male imaginary as an indecipherable, mysterious force remains perpetually beyond reach and desire is eternally displaced and deferred. Or to use once again Lacan's words, the awareness of the evasiveness of the female Other even after sexual gratification entraps the desiring self 'in the rails [...] of metonymy' and urges it to eternally stretch forth towards 'something else.'

They flee from me thus ends on a note of lack and undecidability, rather than one of fulfilment and gratification. In this respect, Wyatt's poem exemplifies the Lacanian notion of desire as a displacement which is set in motion by a female figure, even though at the same time it is not reducible to it. Despite the evolution of Petrarchism into what Braden defines as 'the poetry of successful mutual love,' desire therefore is not gratified. And yet, one cannot deny that in many respects, the consummation of desire on a purely erotic level is what contributes in giving the interplay between absence and desire in Wyatt its distinctive configuration when compared to Petrarch.

Clearly, one could assert that such an interplay resonates so differently in *They flee from me* primarily because there is no specific original Italian text which requires us to subread a Petrarchan text within it. For this reason, it would be useful to turn to *Whoso list to hunt*, Wyatt's famous rendition of *Una candida cerva*, insofar as it allows the reader to trace what Greene calls the 'heuristic passage from the subtext to the surface text.'²⁶ It also permits the reader to examine an ostentatiously anti-Petrarchan sonnet which still looks at Petrarch as its model – a model which it echoes and departs from at one and the same time.²⁷ In this respect, *Whoso list to hunt* can be read as the enactment of 'the two contradictory drives that are at the very core of Petrarchism: the compulsion to imitate and the pressure to differentiate.'²⁸

In Petrarch's sonnet, the structure sustaining the visionary experience of a white deer is built around a series of irreconcilable dichotomies between transcendence and worldliness, the sacred and the profane, freedom and possession.²⁹ In confronting the original text by

²⁶ Greene, 250.

²⁷ Dubrow, 94-97.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁹ On this series of dichotomies, see R. Falconer's close reading of *Whoso list to hunt*, in M. Hattaway (ed.), *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 176-186.

Petrarch, Wyatt remoulds or even rejects these basic shaping hierarchies by eliminating its transcendent aspect and placing the image of the deer in the specific context of a courtly world of sexual pursuit. Petrarch's text eludes temporality and history by pointing to transcendence as the owner of the deer, whose untainted nature is protected against the temptations of sinful erotic desire by Caesar, or God:

'Nessun mi tocchi,' al bel collo d'intorno
scritto avea di diamante e di topazi.
'Libera farmi al mio Cesare parve.' (190, 9-11)

('No one touch me,' around her lovely neck
was written out in diamonds and in topaz:
'It pleased my Caesar to create me free.')

If in Petrarch the inscription points to transcendence, in Wyatt it refers to an interdiction imposed by a worldly agent. Wyatt's text puts back temporality and history into its version of the Italian text by inviting us to consider Henry VIII as the Caesar protecting the collared deer and Anne Boleyn as the deer which is being pursued:

And, graven with Diamonds, in letters plain
There is written her faier neck rounde abowte:
'*Noli me tangere*, for Cesars I ame;
And wylde for to hold, though I seme tame.' (7, 10-14)

The radical modifications introduced by Wyatt vis-à-vis the Italian model have been treated extensively by a host of critics ranging from Thomson, Greene and Crewe to Greenblatt, Estrin and, more recently, to Rachel Falconer. Greenblatt, for example, describes Wyatt's treatment of Petrarch as 'the wrenching transformation of the sacred to the profane' and of 'a whole mystical visionary [...] to a corrupt and dangerous game of power.'³⁰ In a similar vein, Crewe reads Wyatt's *Whoso list to hunt* as a 'secular' refiguration of 'a deer epiphany' into 'a mysterious deer hunt in progress' in which 'the political and the erotic are ferociously entangled.'³¹ Despite all the differences which set apart one text from the other, what ultimately links the two poems is the certainty of nonfulfilment which pervades the pursuit of the deer in both Wyatt and

³⁰ Greenblatt, 147-148.

³¹ Crewe, 37.

Petrarch. However, though in both cases desire is destined to remain unfulfilled, the deeper ontological paradoxes which make the object of desire unattainable in the two poets are of an entirely different nature.

To address these underlying differences, it is necessary once again to return to the discussion of Petrarch's and Wyatt's notions of the self with which we started. In Petrarch, the object of desire eludes certainty: is the 'cerva' Laura, a self-image, or writing? If Laura is indeed, as Freccero asserts, a 'pure signifier,' which invariably and obsessively leads back to the self, in being drawn to the image of the deer the desiring subject is actually being drawn to his own image in an act of unmasked self-reflexivity and amatory self-obsession. Though the image of the Other is indispensable in the process of self-consciousness, at the same time the inability to differ from the Other can lead to the dissolution of the self and to death, as in the Ovidian myth of Narcissus.³² It is the paradoxical state of pure identity and resemblance with the mirrored object and the inability to differ from it that leads the desiring subject in *Una candida cervia* to suffer the same fate as that of the Ovidian figure of Narcissus when he falls into the water:³³

Et era 'l sol già vòlto al mezzo giorno,
gli occhi miei stanchi di mirar, non sazi,
quand'io caddi ne l'acqua et ella sparve. (190, 12-14)

(The sun by now had climbed the sky midway,
my eyes were tired but not full from looking
when I fell in the water and she vanished.)

As Waller argues, by the end of the sonnet, the figure of the deer has become so clearly 'a Narcissistic projection that when the sun reaches its zenith and the lover must lean out over the water to keep the image in view, he falls in and the image disappears.'³⁴

Though Narcissus's name is not explicitly referred to in *Una candida cervia*, the Ovidian figure is transformed by Petrarch into an autobiographical one which enables the poetic persona to play out his own story in an intensely self-reflexive fashion.³⁵ As in the Ovidian myth

³² Boysen, 164.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Waller, 174.

³⁵ On Petrarch's autobiographical revision of the Ovidian stories, see L. Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body. From Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 91-124.

in which Narcissus unwillingly admits that the Other is nothing but the mirror of the self ('iste ego sum;' 'I am he'), the paradox of Petrarch's love lies in the disturbing conflation of subjectivity and objectivity.³⁶ Or to use Waller's words, the paradox of Petrarch's love lies in the designation of the male position as 'the site of a self-identical presence existing outside the relational play of difference.'³⁷ The analogy with Narcissus implies that what Petrarch desires in chasing the deer is paradoxically beyond reach because he already possesses it: 'quod cupio mecum est' ('What I desire I have').³⁸ As Mazzotta writes, the failure to possess what one already possesses leads to a return to sameness, which in turn results in the re-establishment of the dominant male self and the transposition of Laura to the 'nonplace of the imagination,' or 'the utopian domain of the imaginary.'³⁹

Mazzotta convincingly argues that Laura literally belongs nowhere since the space she inhabits cannot be named or identified. Hence her constant elusiveness. In transposing into English *Una candida cerva*, Wyatt places the deer within a precise context which he invites his reader to identify. This consideration brings us to the controversy in the criticism of *Whoso list to hunt* regarding external reference. As Falconer observes: 'The poem is full of pointed and insistent hints that suggest an actual, specific context that would be recognizable to a contemporary reader.'⁴⁰ Despite these hints, from the available evidence, the identity of neither the deer nor that of Caesar can be determined with any certainty by a contemporary reader. Both figures remain enigmatic even after all the possibilities of interpretation have been exhausted (the most often mentioned being, as I have already noted, Anne Boleyn as the deer and Henry VIII as Caesar). More recently, it has even been suggested that the decision to abandon the hunt can be read as the decision to abandon not only the courtly game of erotic pursuit but also 'the entire Petrarchan tradition' together with the 'idealization' and 'the delusions of the fictive lover' it brings with it.⁴¹

³⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III, 463. All citations are to Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Trans. F. J. Miller (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1984).

³⁷ Waller, 174.

³⁸ Ovid, III, 466.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴⁰ Falconer, 176-177.

⁴¹ Dubrow, 95.

Despite the indeterminacy of the referential object in *Whoso list to hunt*, as opposed to Petrarch the reader is constantly aware of the reality of a female figure which is distinct from the male poetic persona. Interestingly enough, in comparing the female figures of *Whoso list to hunt* and *They flee from me*, notions of selfhood and alterity, and more specifically, the interplay between male articulation and female silence, actually become even more complicated and undefinable. Indeed, the unresolved questions *Whoso list to hunt* raises are endless. In wanting to hold a wild creature which is uncapturable as the wind, is Caesar being 'duped'?⁴² Does the deer's wildness refer to the female figure's attitude toward Caesar, the poetic persona, or to both? Can the collar with its inscription be read as a strategy through which the silenced female subject rediscovers her muted voice? Or should the collar be interpreted as the sign of the status of womanhood as a possession or a hunted object? Is it possible to reconcile Greenblatt's reading of the deer as the portrayal of female irreducibility with Waller's counterreading of the same figure as a 'symptomatic denigration and exclusion of woman?'⁴³ In short, is the female voice muted and displaced, or is it recovered and valorized?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to establish the identity of the author of the inscription on the deer's collar: could it be the hind, Caesar, or the male poetic persona? If the text describing the female's duplicitous power as 'tame' and 'wild' is to be ascribed to the female figure, then the inscription can be read as a strategy whereby the woman rediscovers her silenced voice and establishes her dominance not only over the speaking persona, but more importantly, over Caesar himself. On the other hand, if the unseen author of the inscription belongs to Caesar, then the presence of the female figure is totally erased except as a hunted object, or one that is already possessed.

The translation into the Latin original ('noli me tangere') of Petrarch's 'nessun mi tocchi' complicates matters even further. As Crewe writes, in restoring the Italian inscription to its Latin original, the English ending of Wyatt's sonnet enables it 'to reach more imperiously than Petrarch's towards an enviable, presumably masculine language of eternal power, duration, alterity and exclusiveness.'⁴⁴ However, as Crewe adds,

⁴² Greene, 262.

⁴³ Waller, 164.

⁴⁴ Crewe, 41.

the language of 'absolute power' has 'no definite speaker.'⁴⁵ It thus follows that if the authorship of the Latin inscription is ascribed to the deer, the female figure is appropriating the discourse of male domination to declare her uncapturability. But if the invisible hand is ascribed to Caesar, or even to the male poetic persona, then the collar can be read as the sign of female absence.

The final, authoritative meaning of *Whoso list to hunt* remains unknown. Consequently, any reading which hypostatizes the presence of the female figure in this male-authored text can give rise to a counterreading in which woman is seen to be present only as absence. True, it is the absence of the female object of desire that generates male discourse and that keeps it going. Still, to put it in Adrienne Munich's words: 'Suppression, distancing, alteration or any other defences against woman's role in a text's creation are compelling examples of women's history and are therefore a vital subject for feminist criticism.'⁴⁶ The fact that Petrarch's and Wyatt's poems are male-authored texts does not mean that these canonical works cannot be used as a compelling object of inquiry which can shed light on the implications of the absence of the female figure within male poetic discourse.

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⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ A. Munich, 'Notorious Signs, Feminist Criticism and Literary Tradition,' *Making a Difference. Feminist Literary Criticism*, G. Greene and C. Kahn (eds.) (London and New York. Methuen, 1985), 244.

Mary Shelley, *Anglo-Italicus*:
Female Self-Assertion and the Politics of Distinction

Maria Schoina

Without a metaphor I *cannot* live.
Mary Shelley, *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, vol. II

Written in Genoa a few months after Percy Shelley's death, Mary Shelley's mourning poem *The Choice* records the speaker's dejection and bereaved condition caused by the tragic loss of her husband and two children while in Italy: 'Here let me cling, here to these solitudes, / These myrtle shaded streams and chestnut woods; / Tear me not hence – here let me live & die, / In my adopted land, my country, Italy!'¹ *The Choice*, unsurprisingly, depicts Italy in contradictory and often confusing colours. On the one hand, the country assumes a soothing, almost therapeutic role, on account of the happy memories it evokes, of its natural setting and stimulating environment. On the other hand, Italy looms as an implacable accomplice to the domestic misfortunes and sad destiny which beset the speaker. Italy is cast simultaneously as 'murdress'² and healer.

Nearly a month later and while on her way back to England in August 1823, Mary Shelley would avow her genuine, though conditional, affection for Italy in a letter to Leigh and Marianne Hunt. Specifically, she admitted her love for Italy and her aversion towards the Italians, a feeling that epitomizes, according to traditional scholarship, her overall response to her 'adopted land:'

[T]he inhabitants were never favourites with me – I had been habituated to many of their defects until I was hardly aware of them, but the absence of them strikes me as agreeable [*sic*] Still I love & turn to Italy as the place where all my delights were centred & where I can feel most forcibly that I am still united to those I have lost – besides I like its country & the life & the daily habits one has there better than any others – [...] and all my hopes are centred in returning there.³

¹ P. R. Feldman and D. Scott-Kilvert, (eds.) *The Journals of Mary Shelley, 1814-1844* 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), II, 492.

² *Ibid.*, 476.

³ B. T. Bennett, (ed.) *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* 3 vols. (Baltimore and New York: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), I, 356.

In 1823 and 1824 Mary Shelley alternated between Italy and England, past and present, presence and absence. The sphere of liminality and displacement she occupied in that moment of transit created a strong sense of disorientation, confusion and uncertainty. Appropriately, both *The Choice* and the letter extract, written in a critical period of Mary Shelley's life, duly record this state of spatial and temporal 'betweenness.' Nevertheless, this liminal condition that seemed to constitute an erratic subject position, would soon 'provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood'⁴ and for initiating new signs of identity. In my opinion, this situation was an opportunity for new definitions, as well as a challenge to her positioning as participant/observer in a culture other than her own: betweenness became the *raison d'être* of the Anglo-Italian, a highly sophisticated figure Mary Shelley invented in her writings when she was back in England and which eventually proved an extremely useful cultural-critical tool.

More particularly and as I argue in this paper, Mary Shelley's reviews on books about Italy and essays published in the *Westminster Review* and in the *London Magazine* between 1825 and 1832 – such as 'The English in Italy,' 'A Visit to Brighton,' 'Modern Italy' and 'The Bravo: A Venetian Story' – in conjunction with her letters of this period provide a space not only for the juxtaposition of the two cultures – Italian versus English – but for the configuration of a hybrid identity. By means of this identity, the author wishes to prescribe a model of acculturation into the Italian society as well as a standard of taste. By capitalizing on the aesthetic competencies conferred by this exclusive taste, as well as on the professed originality of her views over things Italian, granted by personal experience and years of study, Mary Shelley claims distinction as a mediator of cultures and as a female writer. I believe that the latter strategy is ramifying, as it enables Mary Shelley to legitimize her voice not only as an acculturated author, but as an acculturated woman author and to claim the authenticity and originality of her Italian experience among a milieu of male 'competitors.'

Like her husband, Mary Shelley adored Italian nature and its climate, as well as the country's rich cultural heritage. By 1820, she was fluent in the Italian language and literature and showed a keen interest in the art of improvisation, as practised by the famous *improvvisatore*

⁴ E. D. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, Mass. Blackwell, 1996), 143.

Tommaso Sgricci. It is also of note that during the years in Italy and despite the several impediments to her development as a young writer, Mary Shelley's literary objectives and enthusiasm persisted. She studied Greek and Latin; she expanded her reading in the great writers and thinkers of the past and present; she wrote *Mathilda*, *Valperga*, several short stories and two short verse dramas. Finally, she was the only woman contributor to *The Liberal*. In this respect, Italy had an enriching and positive influence on her mind and work. Nonetheless, despite her temporary affiliation to some cultured, 'refined' Italians of the Pisan circle (Professor Pacchiani and Tommaso Sgricci for instance), her letters consistently attest to her indignation and resentment towards the Italians in the places where she resided, as she found them 'so very disagreeable,'⁵ money-minded and tattlers. Her sharpest comments are recorded in her letters during the Pisan period (1820-1822), when domestic complications and hardships amplified her awareness of being a cultural alien.

Mary Shelley's contradictory feelings for Italy have partially been attributed to the tensions and anxieties caused by her relationship with Percy Shelley during their sojourn in the peninsula (1818-1822): the deaths of their children; financial worries; Shelley's interest in other women; domestic responsibilities and a transient existence. Furthermore, assuming a psycho-biographical approach, the majority of scholars and literary critics have interpreted Mary Shelley's gradual change in attitude and ardent defence of Italian politics in the years that follow her return to England as a sublimation of her love for Shelley, or as an effort to assuage her guilt. In my view, this reading, though it does not lack an entirely logical basis, is limiting and reductive, as it simplifies Mary Shelley's complex relationship to Italy and her configuration of 'Anglo-Italianness,' one of the most challenging and rich chapters for critical enquiry. A re-examination of Mary Shelley's Italian experience⁶ and of the intriguing literature around the 'race' of Anglo-Italians she constructed back in England can, I believe, offer fresh insight not only into the study of her Italian works, but also into the various meanings that Percy Shelley, Byron and other members of the Pisan circle attached to their own acculturating practices.

⁵ *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, I, 85.

⁶ The phrase deliberately alludes to the title of Alan Weinberg's book *Shelley's Italian Experience* (London: Macmillan, 1991), a work which offers invaluable scholarship with regard to Italy's role in the formation of Percy Shelley's poetic and aesthetic identity.

Mary Shelley's literary production after 1823 figured numerous topographies of Italy, as various and as far-reaching as the genres in which they appeared: historical fiction, romances, literary biography, travelogues, tales, short stories, reviews, essays. Her conceptual maps of Italy, as well as her instructive, detailed accounts of the customs and mores of the Italians were extremely vigorous and insightful as pieces of cultural criticism. At the same time, however, they were topical and acclimatized to the needs of a wide reading public, which emerged in the 1820s and 1830s, following the post-Napoleonic influx of British travellers to Italy. From the start, Mary Shelley claimed the incontestability of her opinions on things Italian by endorsing and displaying a distinctive 'Anglo-Italian' taste, thus rendering her writings more competitive and commercial. What I would like to suggest, in other words, is that her trajectory from an overshadowed figure to a respectable woman writer of her age and, tellingly, to one who earned herself a professional living, is related to Italy in an intrinsic, multifaceted and, ultimately, material way.

Mary Shelley formally introduced the figure of the 'Anglo-Italian' in a review of three works – Lord Normanby's *The English in Italy*, Charlotte Anne Eaton's *Continental Adventures* and Anna Brownell Jameson's *The Diary of an Ennuyée* – published in the *Westminster Review* in 1826. In an elaborate definition, Mary Shelley maps a community of cultured, sophisticated emigrant English in Italy with a distinct standard of taste, which combines intellectual rigour and aesthetic competencies, a discrete sense of attachment to 'Italianness' – place, culture, community, language – and a shared vision for cultural reform:

The Anglo-Italian has many peculiar marks which distinguish him from the mere traveller, or true John Bull. First, he understands Italian and thus rescues himself from a thousand ludicrous mishaps which occur to those who fancy that a little Anglo-French will suffice to convey intelligence of their wants and wishes to the natives of Italy [...] Your Anglo-Italian ceases to visit the churches and palaces, guide-book in hand; anxious, not to see, but to say that he has seen. Without attempting to adopt the customs of the natives, he attaches himself to some of the most refined among them and appreciates their native

talent and simple manners; he has lost the critical mania in a real taste for the beautiful, acquired by the frequent sight of the best models of ancient and modern art.⁷

In a recently published article, Timothy Morton argues that in this review essay Mary Shelley 'looks for general cultural patterns in the behaviour of Anglo-Italians.'⁸ I would add that rather than simply describing the behaviour of this group of expatriates, Mary Shelley seeks to classify and categorize their conduct according to very specific 'structures of feeling,' prescribing a model of acculturation, or of second culture acquisition. The reviewer adds suggestively in her definition that 'the Anglo-Italians may be pronounced a well-informed, clever and active race; they pity greatly those of their un-Italianized countrymen [...] and in compassion of their narrow experience have erected a literature calculated to disseminate among them a portion of that taste and knowledge acquired in the Peninsula.'⁹ If social space tends to function as a symbolic space and as one which is organized according to the logic of difference, then the qualitative differences outlined between the Anglo-Italians and the 'un-Italianized' expatriates function, in the words of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, 'as distinctive signs and as signs of distinction.'¹⁰ In the construction of the exemplary Anglo-Italian, 'real taste' becomes an exclusive and exclusionary aesthetic competency, so much so, that 'un-Italianized' English are scoffed at for their narrow experience and insularity, what Mary Shelley ironically calls their 'stayathomeativeness.'¹¹ In other words, the assertion of a distinctive taste based on the acquisition of an 'Anglo-Italian' cultural capital ultimately demarcates a social position.

⁷ Mary Shelley, 'The English in Italy,' *Westminster Review* 6 (1826), repr. in B. T. Bennet and C. Robinson, (eds.) *The Mary Shelley Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 341-357, 343. All subsequent references are to this edition.

⁸ T. Morton, 'Mary Shelley as Cultural Critic,' in Esther Schor (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 259-273, 260.

⁹ 'The English in Italy,' 343.

¹⁰ P. Bourdieu, 'Social Space and Symbolic Power,' *Sociological Theory*, 7.1 (1989), 14-25, 20.

¹¹ 'The English in Italy,' 343. Mary Shelley calls on the science of phrenology, which was popular in her days, and its practitioner Johann Caspar Spurzheim, to treat in a bantering tone the insularity of her compatriots. See editors' note n. 7, 343.

Of course, Mary Shelley's reification of taste in her discourse on Anglo-Italianness becomes particularly meaningful in the context of late eighteenth - and early nineteenth - century aesthetic doctrines and theoretical speculations about taste. Given its ramifying social, political and cultural implications, to engage with this topic was almost *de rigueur*, mainly because its exploration was related to dominant concerns of the time: the response of the human mind to aesthetic experience, or the issue of whether a standard of taste can be fixed and in what ways. Thus, Mary Shelley's observations about the complex sensibility required by art and literature often echo Edmund Burke's or Samuel Coleridge's ideas on how taste is measured.¹²

Although Mary Shelley does not openly assert her Anglo-Italianness in the beginning of her review essay on *The English in Italy*, but rather prefers to cite Lord Byron as a paradigmatic agent of this 'new race or sect,' she lays claim to it in a number of interesting ways when she engages in literary criticism. After dismissing Charlotte Anne Eaton's and Anna Brownell Jameson's works as examples of 'Anglo-Italian literature'¹³ on account of their guide-book style and all English groundwork, Mary Shelley focuses on Lord Normanby's *The English in Italy* and generously praises it for bearing the 'perfect Italian stamp.'¹⁴ Her praise, however, is conditional and the authority of Lord Normanby's opinions and conclusions is in many places questioned or undermined by Mary Shelley, who boldly 'marks *her* experience as the standard to which he must measure up.'¹⁵

More specifically, her commentaries on both his stories 'L'Amoroso' and the 'Politico' vaunt a more thorough and scrupulous

¹² See, in particular, E. Burke's 'Introduction on Taste' which begins his second edition of *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1759) and S. T. Coleridge's essay 'On the Principles of Genial Criticism concerning the Fine Arts.'

¹³ It becomes clear from 'The English in Italy' that Mary Shelley's use of the term Anglo-Italian to qualify literature departs from the standard dictionary meaning of the compound form, that is, English in connection with something else, which would accordingly refer to works which variedly combine English and Italian themes, characters, and settings. Such a qualification would apply, for instance, to Anne Radcliffe's novels or to a work like *Corinne*. Conversely, 'Anglo-Italian' is used here to designate the literature which derives from 'Italianized' English proper, like Byron, Lord Normanby and herself.

¹⁴ 'The English in Italy,' 353.

¹⁵ J. Smith, *Mary Shelley* (New York: Twayne, 1996), 161.

understanding of the Italian conjugal system and of Italian politics respectively. In *L'Amoroso*, Lord Normanby recounts the love story of a 'high-bred English girl' with a 'Neapolitan count'¹⁶ and the strains this relationship places on the girl, on account of the marked differences between English and Italian domestic customs. Although the development of the story is deemed as 'admirably managed'¹⁷ and Mary Shelley concurs with the author's approach, her criticism ultimately sets her gendered understanding of both English and Italian customs against Lord Normanby's. Mary Shelley professes a deeper understanding of Italian domestic mores, first, on account of her insider knowledge as an Anglo-Italian and second, on account of her female perspective, which she pits against Lord Normanby's narrow (male) viewpoint. Thus, by considering the case of an Italian girl's marriage to an Englishman – that is, by reversing Normanby's version of the story – Mary Shelley flaunts a more comprehensive and authoritative opinion than his. It is worth pointing out that, in order to validate her bicultural sensibility, she purposefully adopts a double perspective by figuring an Italian self along her English one. Appropriately, English domestic life – grimly described in the extract that follows – is 'seen' through the eyes of an Italian woman, when, in reality, it is represented by a cultural alien. Mary Shelley confidently assumes an Italian woman's point of view, a rhetorical position which, incidentally, allows her to be outspoken and criticize with acumen the codes of propriety imposed by English society on its women. By pointing to the deeper implications of domestic customs for women's lives, Mary Shelley's 'other' story transgresses the bounds of a comparative portrait of cultures and, inevitably, though not inadvertently, exposes the fault-lines of Normanby's version:

Let us imagine the daughter of a Neapolitan noble, dragged from her beautiful country and sunny clime [...] to the toils and dulness [*sic*] of an English home – to the cares of housekeeping – a charge not imposed on Italian females – her snug, but monotonous, fireside, her sentry-box of a house; to our cloudy sky; to the labour of giving dinners and entertaining evening parties; to those numerous etiquettes easy to the natives, unattainable by foreigners; to the *sotto voce* tone [...] which characterizes our social intercourse, to the necessity of for ever wearing that thick and ample veil of propriety which we throw over every act and word:

¹⁶ 'The English in Italy,' 344.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 344.

introduce the ardent, simple-hearted, undisguising Italian to this world, so opposite to her own and she would experience the same heart-sickening disappointment that visited the heart of the heroine of the *Amoroso*.¹⁸

Another issue on which Mary Shelley dissents from Normanby's views is politics. In this respect, her review 'The English in Italy' heralds her advocacy of Italian nationalism, a cause she is going to defend nearly twenty years later in her travelogue *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842 and 1843* (1844). Mary Shelley contradicts Normanby's argument about the ineffectiveness of the Piedmontese revolt in 1820-21 and supports her judgment of the true, beneficial, long-term effects of the revolution. Her 'gentle' sneer at Normanby's conclusions, which she finds superficial and injudicious, is another bold attempt to place her own Anglo-Italian authority against his: 'The author, it is true, judging only from the apparent effects, blames this sudden burst of impatience on the parts of Italians any longer to bear their galling chains. He says, that they had better have waited a few years, as if the capacity of waiting did not engender a callousness to the evils of tyranny, incompatible with a generous love of liberty.'¹⁹ Furthermore, Mary Shelley founds her claim to political authority on her acquaintance with the diverse maps of human and cultural geography of Italy. It is this quality that grants her knowledge of 'the true Italian character' which one can encounter off the beaten track, that is, in the Italian countryside:

We are surprised that lord Normanby has not introduced more of the country life of Italy, which bears a peculiar stamp and which is pregnant with interest and beauty. Generally speaking, our country-men see only the surface of the country and are unaware of the minutiae of the peasants' life and their mode of agriculture. [...] [A]nd yet it is in the country of Italy that you see most of the true Italian character.²⁰

Mary Shelley eventually reproaches Normanby for his offensive display of superiority of rank expressing her liberal conviction that 'the prerogatives of rank can also trespass on genius.'²¹ Considering all, it can be safely argued that the extract and the essay in its entirety, resonate issues crucial to Mary Shelley's contemporaries, issues that certainly

¹⁸ 'The English in Italy,' 344-345.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 345.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 348.

²¹ Morton, 267.

transgress the limits of literary criticism and step into the contested ground of cultural criticism.

Her 1826 essay 'A Visit to Brighton' contains more references to Normanby's work as well as a strong affirmation of Anglo-Italian taste. Mary Shelley uses culture and Italian opera in particular, as an instrument of symbolic domination:

I like to [...] be secure of hearing the best performers and singers at concerts and go to the opera when Pasta and Velluti are strung to the top of their bent, at the sight of the accomplished amateurs and Italianized English, who are certainly better judges than those lovers of noise who force Miss Paton to sacrifice her own good taste to their partiality for cadence and bravura.²²

As C. P. Brand notes in *Italy and the English Romantics*, Italian opera had been the fashionable recreation of the aristocracy in England since the mid-eighteenth century, while for most cultured Englishmen and artists it was synonymous with the Italian country itself.²³ In spite of its slow decline in the post-war period, Italian singers and opera performers remained a main attraction for the opera-goer. Mary Shelley's enthusiasm for Italian sopranos and tenors, whose names and performances she records meticulously in the essay, reflects a facet of the English fascination with opera.

Mary Shelley takes a more polemical stance, as far as aesthetic distinction is concerned, when she comes to defend in public an Italian male soprano, Giovanni Battista Velluti. In 1826 she wrote two letters to the editor of the *Examiner* (the second was not published) in which she insinuates that Velluti's reviewers and censors lack that instinctive good taste and aesthetic appreciation that would allow them to judge him beyond his vocal deficiencies. As she puts it, '[t]he defects of his voice are so glaring as to be evident to the coarsest ears and are therefore the less to be insisted on by the judicious and delicate.'²⁴ More specifically, Velluti's detractors have missed 'his chief merit [which] is in his expression, in his perfect *gusto*, in his mode of linking note to note in a manner that

²² Mary Shelley, 'A Visit to Brighton,' *London Magazine* XVI (1826), repr. in N. Crook and P. Clemit (eds.) *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* 8 vols. (London: William Pickering, 1996), II, 164-171, 164.

²³ C. P. Brand, *Italy and the English Romantics: The Italianate Fashion in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 225.

²⁴ *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, I, 517.

chains the ear and touches the heart.²⁵ Significantly, the classification of taste evinces its ramifications into social space more clearly in Mary Shelley's contentious remark that Velluti's foremost strength, that is, his 'sentiment' is 'a sentiment that the generous and the gentle must instinctively feel, but which it would be labour in vain to attempt to instil into the coarse and the vulgar.'²⁶

Although Mary Shelley's second letter of defence focuses on particulars from one of Velluti's opera performances in London, the language of aesthetic elitism that permeates her first defence is once more clearly identifiable, when she maintains, for instance, that 'we must be [...] instinctively attracted and charmed, or the spell is wholly without avail.'²⁷ Through the appropriation of distinctive symbols of power in the form of 'natural' distinction, personal authority and artistic culture, Mary Shelley's aesthetic judgments command a legitimacy in the wider sphere of the social world. Being associated with a whole set of conditions of existence, taste distinguishes in a powerful way, so much so, that the affirmation of a 'legitimate' aesthetic 'principle of vision and division'²⁸ is, in effect, an affirmation of power.

Tellingly, both letters in the *Examiner* are signed 'ANGLO-ITALICUS,' a suggestive pseudonym which reinforces the authority and exclusivity she claims in Velluti's defence and affirms the legitimacy of an Anglo-Italian taste, of which she purports to be an exponent. Carrying the reverberations of the Classical age in its Latinized form, this portentous denomination outlines in a definitive way the spatial, temporal and affective contours of the new identity that Mary Shelley adopts at the time. Her resounding and categorical classification of tastes – undoubtedly more systematically pursued in the letters than in her review of Lord Normanby's book – vests the Anglo-Italian with an aristocracy of culture which enhances his/her authority and social status.

At the same time, this insistent affirmation of distinction is carefully mutated into a strategy for gender distinction, by way of which Mary Shelley's female viewpoint subtly vindicates a place in a male-dominated discourse. Mary Shelley's conscious 'manipulation' of Anglo-Italianness to the interests of her gender is best depicted in a description included in a letter to John Howard Payne in the same year (1826). In reporting a

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 517.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 518.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 523.

²⁸ Bourdieu, 21.

night at the Opera with her friend Jane Williams, she recounts her successful effort to pass off as an Italian among a group of unversed English opera-goers:

We were comfortably situated as far as the respectability of nos alentours went [...] One old lady beside me with her glass tried to follow the English of the Italian in her book. I put her right as far as I could in dumb show. But when she obstinately turned over the pages of the 2nd act of the 'Crociato' in search of the words of Nina I saw no hope of setting her right except by speaking and that was not in the bond — I could understand a little English but not speak a word. The personage before me offered me his book — Apparentment, Madame vous êtes étrangère, voulez-vous vous profitez de mon livre? in my character of Italian I accepted his civility, as an English person I could not.²⁹

Mary Shelley's unconventional behaviour is predicated on the professed advantage granted by her Anglo-Italian authority and distinction. Owing to her knowledge of Italian and familiarity with opera, she can instruct her fellow spectators and initiate them into the delights of Italian culture. The educational role of the acculturated British regarding the Italianization of their 'un-Italianized countrymen,' which had been emphasized in *The English in Italy*, is reinforced by Mary Shelley's personal intervention at the Opera in the 'hope of setting [the old lady] right.'

Furthermore, the extract from the letter to John Howard Payne is arresting in the way it registers how Mary Shelley 'stages' her English and Italian selves next to each other. In pretending to be a foreigner, she relishes her anonymity and limited approachability, as well as the strange unease people around her experience. Under the guise of an Italian lady, she flaunts her familiar Otherness and cultural superiority. As an Italian, she can indeed enjoy the courtesy of the man before her who offers her his book, while she immediately admits that she could never allow that 'as an English person.' In other words, her Italian 'character' — the word choice is once more striking in its implications — entitles her to more freedom and opportunities for self-expression in her social conduct. In this respect, the opera incident strongly resembles a masquerade, where the 'switching' of cultures, via the switching of language, is treated by Mary Shelley as a playful, capricious exchange of roles. The letter extract

²⁹ *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, I, 519-520.

records how the adoption of an Italian persona releases her inhibitions and proves a highly liberating experience. On the other hand, the last two lines suggest the pleasure attendant on her experience of doubleness, on 'a fantasy of two bodies simultaneously and thrillingly present, self and Other together, the two-in-one.'³⁰ Mary Shelley's stylized doubleness or betweenness at the Opera, couched in the histrionic vocabulary included in the text – 'shadowless,' 'dumb show,' 'personage,' 'character' – destabilizes the notion of identity as a fixed, natural quality and highlights its mutability and plasticity on account of its fashioning in culture-specific contexts.

In this eccentric masquerade, language switching, as pointed out earlier, plays the role of the mask and the change in language is the emblem of a leap into a new persona. The insertion of foreign words in accounts of foreign places was, of course, a common rhetorical strategy in travel writing at the time. According to Chloe Chard, writers would 'sprinkle the commentary lavishly with foreign words; conveniently made visible even at a casual glance through the use of italics, terms borrowed from other languages assure the reader that the traveller has indeed managed to [...] grasp the topography in its full alterity and is offering it up to the reader as an object of pleasurable speculation.'³¹ As mentioned earlier, Mary Shelley took knowledge of the Italian language as one of the main distinctions between the tourist and the Anglo-Italian, as well as a passport to his/her integration in the adopted culture. Language switching is thus a significant instance of her vacillating between two linguistic and cultural worlds. She often crossed languages in her writings, private and public, during and after her residence in Italy. For instance, in order to add some local flavour to the letters she wrote from Italy to her compatriots in England, Mary Shelley frequently dropped Italian words or phrases, the occurrence of which increased significantly, if the recipient was a speaker of Italian, too. Interestingly, when she came to write a whole letter to Leigh Hunt in Italian from Pisa, she did exactly the opposite: she wrote in the foreign idiom and dropped one or two English terms for emphasis: 'I poveri Pisani lo [Pacchiani] credano matto; e raccontano tante storiette di lui che ci fa credere che davvero è un poco stravagante, o per parlare in

³⁰ T. Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford Ca. Stanford University Press, 1986), 4-5.

³¹ C. Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography 1600-1830* (Manchester. Manchester University Press, 1999), 4.

inglese – *eccentric*.³² Of course, the connection between Italian language and women's liberty to express themselves is not incidental either. By Mary Shelley's time, Italian had become an acceptably 'feminine' language, variedly implemented as a gendered strategy by women writers. In the opera episode, Italian ultimately proves to be the language of expressivity and power, as it allows Mary Shelley to assert her female self more forcefully.

Other forms of taste and distinction appear in Mary Shelley's review of Henry Digby Beste's *Italy as it Is; or Narrative of an English Family's Residence for Three Years in That Country*, which appeared in July 1829 in the *Westminster Review*. The essay begins with a long digression on Italian scenery and a detailed description of Rome, incited, as she caustically notes, 'by the absence of any thing like description in the volume entitled "Italy as it Is."³³ Mary Shelley does not rank Beste among the race of Anglo-Italians, as she had tentatively done with Lord Normanby, arguing suggestively that, although the book is 'amusing' and 'useful, for he details the minutiae of his domestic life, [...] something more is required of a traveller in Italy.'³⁴ Moreover, she does not find fault only with Beste's 'erratic' observations, which purportedly stem from his zealotry in defence of Catholicism; his judgments on Italian works of art are mocked and found equally distasteful. In the following extract, Mary Shelley asserts her cultural authority with surprising tenaciousness when she exposes Beste's lack of good taste and learning and contends, just like in 'The English in Italy,' that aesthetic appreciation is an innate characteristic: 'Works of art belong to the imagination, certain forms of which they realize; those who do not possess this portion of mind are incapable of perceiving the excellence of the objects created only to be understood by it – [...] Mr Best's work will not be revered by men of taste, nor consulted for its philosophy and enlarged views.'³⁵

A similar case could be made for the forms of taste and distinction which appear in Mary Shelley's reviews of Louis Simond's *A Tour in Italy and Sicily* (1829) and of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Bravo: A Venetian Story* (1832). Her standard itinerary through the Anglo-Italian

³² *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, I, 163.

³³ Mary Shelley, 'Modern Italy,' *Westminster Review* 11 (1829), repr. in B. T. Bennett and C. Robinson (eds.) *The Mary Shelley Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 358-364, 361.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 363, 361.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 362-363.

discourse of authenticity and superior knowledge is particularly enabling for her as a woman writer, since it elevates her above Normanby's, Beste's, Simond's and Cooper's male, 'un-Italianized' discourse. If, as Mary Poovey has claimed, Romantic women 'created opportunities for self-expression through strategies of indirection, obliqueness and doubling,'³⁶ Mary Shelley's hyphenated figure, besides being a strong statement on the issue of Romantic identity in general, is a covert but effective way of expressing her positions and feelings without breaking the rules of propriety dictated by her age.

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³⁶ M. Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 42.

Presence and Absence in Byron's *The Prophecy of Dante*

Valeria Tinkler-Villani

Byron's poetry and drama are key texts in the study of relationships between English and Italian cultural matters. I want to focus on what I consider to be the most crucial of these texts, though it has received scant critical attention so far, *The Prophecy of Dante*, in order to reconsider accepted views of this particular facet of Anglo-Italian literary relations. In a letter to John Murray, his publisher, Byron stated that the *Prophecy of Dante* is 'the best thing I ever wrote, if it be not unintelligible.'¹ I hope to highlight some of the ways in which this poem can be seen as Byron's 'best thing' at the time. I am also interested in putting forward some observations on the current discussion on 'presentism,' to see to what extent it is possible to project, or not to project, the values of one's own time onto one's criticism of a text from a previous age.

The Prophecy of Dante (finished in March 1820, just after Cantos II and III of *Don Juan* and published in March 21 together with *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice*), is a poem 770 lines long, divided into four cantos. In it, in Byron's own words in the *Preface*, the reader is requested to suppose that 'Dante addresses him in the interval between the conclusion of the *Divina Commedia* and his death' (and very close to the latter), 'foretelling the fortunes of Italy in general in the ensuing centuries.'² This becomes clear immediately in Canto I:

Once more in man's frail world! Which I had left
So long that 't was forgotten, and I feel
The weight of clay again,— too soon bereft
Of the immortal vision which could heal
My earthly sorrows and to God's own skies
Lift me from that deep gulf without repeal,
Pure from the fire to join the angelic race;
Midst whom my own bright Beatrice bless'd
My spirit with her light; and to the base
Of that eternal Triad! first, last, best,

¹ Letter to Murray, 23 March 1820. Leslie Marchand (ed.) *Byron's Letters and Journals*, 13 vols (London, Beccles and Colchester. Murray, 1977), VII 59.

² In *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (London and New York. Frederick Warne & Co, 1892), 30. Further references will be by canto number in the text.

Mysterious, three, sole, infinite, great God!
 Soul universal! Led the mortal guest,
 Unblasted by the glory, though he trod
 From star to star to reach the almighty throne.
 Oh Beatrice!

In a reading of this poem which follows the generally accepted critical approach to Byron's poetry, Beverly Taylor writes that 'Byron personally identified with Dante,' whom he admired for the whole of his life, that Dante's exile from Florence 'may well have appealed to Byron as a parallel to his own life,' and that there was 'a further parallel in the two poets' values,' since both 'passionately yearned for Italy to achieve political unity and freedom.'³ The poem, like other poems by Byron, would therefore be autobiographical and a contribution to the revolutionary movement of the Italian *Carbonari* supported by Teresa Guiccioli (to whom the poem is dedicated) and her husband. External support for this latter point is found by Taylor in a letter Byron wrote to John Murray (V, 172; 7 September 1820). In this letter, Byron states that the poem's appearance would be particularly appropriate 'in light of Italy's current revolutionary sentiment' (Taylor, 106). What Byron actually says, however, is: 'If you want to publish the *Prophecy of Dante* – you will never have a better time,' referring rather to the publisher's interest in sales than to Byron's own political motive. Be that as it may, the fact is that a poem in English published in England is going to contribute to the struggle for Italian independence only indirectly, by affecting English public opinion.⁴ Indeed, the very last words of the brief preface stress that 'his business,' as Byron calls it, is not with the Italian reader, but with 'the English one.'⁵ This introduces the alternative reading of Byron's poem and of similar texts, voiced for example by Jerome MacGann: 'Is this text "about" Byron or is it about Dante, about Italy or about England?' This presents the issue in terms of a duality, a binary reading in which there is either one way or 'the other way around.' That is, Byron might be contributing to the *Carbonari* movement, but his real objective would be to shed light on the various English political and social upheavals of the period. MacGann calls this 'a structure of convertibility which turns

³ Beverly Taylor, "Byron's Use of Dante in *The Prophecy of Dante*," *The Keats-Shelley Journal*, 28 (1979), 105.

⁴ and the interested few using the services of continental publishers such as Galignani.

⁵ *Preface*, PD, 284.

everything into its opposite.⁶ What I hope to show is that the case is much more complex than this (and I am indebted to McGann's own views and understanding of Byron in other works of his). I would like to propose that a theatrical reading rather than a biographical or historical one is more appropriate to the poem, by which I mean that the poem is 'about' the speaking voice of a great poet. Such a theatrical reading will prove to be more accurate also from the point of view of placing the poem in its historical/biographical moment in time.

Byron fully exploits the ironies offered by this structure of convertibility when he has Dante say 'I am not of this people, nor this age.' Whose voice is this? Is Dante speaking to his compatriots, who persecute him, in the 1300s? Or is this a nineteenth-century version of Dante (a mask, maybe, of Byron), speaking in English, addressing the English public in the 1820s? Or is Byron speaking to Italian tyrants, or to their English counterparts? Byron is playing with time and with voice and the implications are also that the mode or genre of the poem is complex and layered. Is this lyrical poetry, expressing the state of mind of an individual? Or is it a dramatic monologue, leading the way to Browning's best-known mode? Or is it partly even, a (closet) play and we have to imagine an actor, a voice – perhaps Byron impersonating Dante, or Dante as a mask of Byron? Who is physically present here, whom do we see in front of us speaking?

Time here is as ambiguous as persona. In fact, the present and the past become even more blurred, since the concept of prophecy, taking the thirteenth century as its starting point, turns our past into the poem's future. But in order to explore the issue mentioned in the previous paragraph more closely, it is important to place *The Prophecy of Dante* in its own moment in time. I do this by focusing on two other works by Byron from the same period: the third canto of *Don Juan* and the play *Marino Faliero*. First I need to foreground certain points in the *Prophecy of Dante*. Is it mainly about the Italian political situation of the 1820s?

Canto I is quickly summarized. As its opening, quoted above, makes immediately clear, we listen to a Dante just returned from his journey in the afterlife. Later in the nineteenth century and particularly in the twentieth century, Dante became the towering epitome of the poet and

⁶ Jerome McGann, *Byron and Romanticism*, James Soderholm (ed.) (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 107.

scholar. He was visualized, and indeed pictured in the pose which, in English literature, has become iconised as ‘the man that in his study sits.’ Marlowe thus describes Faustus like St Jerome translating the Bible and Tom Phillips pictures Dante in this same pose in one of his illustrations to the *Inferno* – sitting alone in his study, consulting a number of books open in front of him, a pen in an inkstand a prominent vertical in the composition. It is indicative that it is this particular illustration that appears on the cover of the paperback of the recent *The Poet's Dante: Twentieth-century Responses* (edited by Peter Hawkins and Rachel Jacoff). In Byron, Dante *the poet* is present in the background, as it were; he is a figure to be explored and studied, to be developed in this poem – as a Promethean figure who utters prophecies. But Byron fully belongs to his own moment in time here and prominently presents Dante as a speaker and a man of experience.

At the very beginning of the poem, quoted above, Dante speaks of his return to earth and men; there is frequent reference to ‘my own bright Beatrice,’ which foregrounds Dante as the writer of love poetry, but even more as the protagonist of a love story. The focus is on the actual experience in the three realms, as if it were real – so we are not really facing Dante the writer of *La Divina Commedia*, but Dante the protagonist of the adventure. Further in the canto, this protagonist portrays himself as ‘The man who fought, toil’d, travell’d and each part / Of a true citizen fulfill’d’ (l. 87) – with no mention of sitting in a study. We already have three layered Dantes before us, therefore: the man who loved and fought in the real world, the protagonist of a journey beyond this world and – gradually becoming apparent to a Romantic audience and certainly apparent to a twenty-first century audience – the great poet. Dante’s voice continues in this first canto by meditating on fame and on the non-existent personal power of the famous poet, describing himself as:

[....]

A wanderer, while even wolves can find a den
 Ripp’d from all kindred, from all home, all things
 That make communion sweet, and soften pain –
 To feel me in the solitude of kings
 Without the power that makes them bear a crown –

[....]

He adds, however, ‘They made an Exile – not a slave of me.’ The second canto begins with the prophecy proper:

The Spirit of the fervent days of Old,
 When words were things that came to pass, and thought
 Flash'd o'er the future, bidding men behold
 Their children's children's doom [...]
 And if, Cassandra-like, amidst the din
 Of conflict *none will hear, or hearing heed*
This voice from out the wilderness, the sin
 Be theirs, and my own feelings be my meed,
 The only guerdon I have ever known.
 Hast thou not bled? And hast thou still to bleed,
 Italia?

The prophecy is, indeed, of a political nature – Dante addresses Rome and says 'never, never / shall foreign standards to thy walls advance.' He concludes:

What is there wanting to set thee free
 [...]?
 To make the Alps impassable and we
 Her sons, may do this with *one* deed – Unite!

But this should not blind us to the emphasis on the speaking voice (my emphasis in the quotation). Also, apart from this impassioned address, this canto and the rest of the poem do not contain much by way of references to actual battles or events; instead, we move in Canto III to a survey of the poetry of Petrarch, Tasso and Ariosto. It is, therefore, the course of literature and poetry, rather than the course of historical events, that represents the course of human progress. The narrator retraces a cultural heritage: 'A heritage enriching all who breathe/ With the wealth of a genuine poet's soul.'

Canto IV focuses on other arts and particularly painting and sculpture, centring on the figure of Michelangelo. It closes – bringing to a close also the whole poem as we have it – with a return to the individual and to his position in society. Translating a quotation (as Byron points out in a footnote, from a letter cited in the *Vita di Dante* by Lionardo [*sic*] Aretino), he has Dante say, 'What have I done to thee, my people?'

The drift of the poem is clear and we have few references to political events and hardly any specific name. I am not denying that this is a poem about the Italian and/or the English political situation; but it is also, *through or by means of* the political level, a poem about the position of the poet, the political action reflecting the strengths and weaknesses of the poet's position and efficacy in society. There is much one could study in this respect; that the history of the arts is as telling as the history of events,

for example; or that Dante's poetry encompasses both 'The hero's ardour, or the lover's sighs' – lyric and epic, feeling and action. What I want to focus on, however, is one aspect of the poet's function, well represented by the figure of Dante as writer of poetry, but who is presented here as a speaker. The fourth canto begins like this:

Many are poets who have never *penn'd*
 Their inspiration, and perchance the best;
 They felt, and loved, and died, but would not lend
 Their thoughts to meaner beings; they compress'd
 The god within them, and rejoin'd the stars
 Unlaurell'd upon earth, but far more bless'd
 Than those who are degraded by the jars
 Of passions, and their frailties link'd to fame,
 Conquerors of high renown, but full of scars.
 Many are poets without the name,
 For what is poesy but to create
 From overfeeling good or ill; *and aim*
At an external life beyond our fate,
 And be the new Prometheus of new men,
 Bestowing fire from heaven, and then, too late,
 Finding the pleasure given repaid with pain,
 And vultures to the heart of the bestower. (*my emphasis*)

This 'mute inglorious Milton' is not a figure of the poet that Byron usually celebrates; yet, here, even such a silent poet is presented as a Prometheus – the reason being that, although he did not 'pen' poetry, he felt it or acted it. It is the spoken word, the inner power and the potential of the individual which is here under scrutiny. This becomes clear when we compare this passage and this theme to the other texts by Byron I mentioned, to which I now turn.

The Prophecy was published in one volume with *Marino Faliero* and written at the same time as Cantos II and III of *Don Juan*. It is therefore sandwiched between a narrative poem, in which a character and a narrative voice are created, and a play, in which characters speak in their own voice. In the third canto of *Don Juan*, a famous episode is the marriage of Don Juan, at which a local poet declaims a poem in celebration of Greek culture. Here, the comparison of the present of the poem with the ancient Greeks is both critical of modern Greeks and inspiring for them. This poet – as for example, Linda Marshall argues – has clear Byronic traits and is therefore a mask for Byron himself. This poet would therefore be an example of the customary biographical reading of Byron's poetry, yet he is presented in these terms:

He was a man who had seen many changes,
 And always changed as true as any needle;
 His polar star being one which rather ranges,
 And not the fix'd; [...]

[...]

He lied with such a fervour of intention,
 There was no doubt he earn'd his laureate pension.⁷

Linda Marshall recognizes that here Byron is Southey – a rather paradoxical figure.⁸ This poet, so changeable, seems the complete opposite of the figure of Dante, so monumental and static in his ethical certainty and immobility. The narrative voice in *Don Juan* comments on the changeability of the Greek poet in these terms:

But words are things; and a small drop of ink,
 Falling, like dew, upon a thought, produces
 That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think;
 'tis strange, the shortest letter which man uses
 Instead of speech, may form a lasting link
 Of ages; to what straits old Time reduces
 Frail man, when paper – even a rag like this –
 Survives himself, his tomb and all that's his! (III, 88)

I would argue that one of the issues examined here is the power of writing as opposed to speech; for the Greek poet only spoke and it was the narrator who wrote down the poem, or at least, 'some sort of hymn like this.' In this canto of *Don Juan*, therefore, we have not two figures – the Greek poet and Byron – but three or more: the Greek poet, the narrator and Byron (who could further be seen as both the man and the myth). I would like you to keep these words in mind, while I briefly look at a similar issue in the play *Marino Faliero*.

There, the crucial crime is a scrawl which insults Faliero's wife. Because of the inadequate punishment meted out by the senate to the writer of the insult, interestingly called Steno, the doge joins the mob in a failed revolution. At the close of the play, just before being executed for treason, Faliero utters a prophecy. As Malcolm Kelsall points out, this prophecy clearly is not really applicable to the current events in Italy – Italy's aristocratic or mob struggles against tyrants – but concerns 'the further decline of a sea-borne empire (that is, Britain),' and as he further

⁷ Canto III, stanza 80, in *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, 522.

⁸ L. E. Marshall, "'Words are Things': Byron and the Prophetic Efficacy of Language," in *Studies in English Literature*, 25/4 (1985), 801-822.

points out, 'Byron's heroes are not builders of nations.'⁹ I want to focus on one relatively small detail: Byron makes clear that this prophecy remains unheard by the public pressing around the doge's palace:

Doge: May I speak?
 Ben. Thou may'st;
 But recollect the people are without,
 Beyond the compass of the human voice.
 Doge: I speak to Time and to Eternity,
 Of which I grow a portion, not to man.
 Ye elements! in which to be resolved
 I hasten, let my voice be as a spirit
 Upon you!¹⁰

Rather than being concerned with effective action, what all these texts explore is the value of the spoken word (the voice) in relation to the written word. Faliero is trying to erase the written scrawl, whose power, at least over him, seems out of all proportion, too great for the actual *thing* it is – a small drop of ink. So, the power of the written word can be excessive and dangerous. Moreover, once we are dealing with a play, the language used assumes a particular importance, because we are faced with the impact of the spoken voice, which takes on almost the efficacy of the written text. The people making up the audience of the play *Marino Faliero* are not in the position of the mob, but are the privileged listeners and are equal to the senators. It is the theatrical experience that is important here and the immediate presence – real or imagined – of the actor facing us. If the play is performed, we are spectators and listeners; if it is a closet play, we are readers, but the genre directs us to imagine a theatrical experience, grafting it onto a reading process.

What my selection of texts tries to illustrate is that Byron was exploring a set of poetic values at this time, under the guise of making a comparison between past and present (ancient Greeks and modern Greeks) and between the present and future of theatrical action (immediacy) and prophecy (projected onto the future). In *The Prophecy of Dante*, I would argue, Dante is placed on the stage of our minds not as a firm and solid monumental example, but as a specimen of study. The poet speaking in *Don Juan* and the narrator writing things down, the writing and speaking

⁹ Malcolm Kelsall, "Venice Preserved," in Robert Gleckner and Bernard Beatty (eds) *The Plays of Lord Byron: Critical Essays*, (Liverpool. Liverpool University Press, 1997) 41.

¹⁰ Act V, scene III in *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, 347.

in *Marino Faliero* and the figure of Dante in *The Prophecy* are all forms of the same experiment: Dante as man and as a speaker becomes a presence that we, as readers and his audience, must assess. I would even suggest that when we read a passage such as the following from the first canto:

For I have been too long and deeply wreck'd
On the lone rock of desolate Despair,
To lift my eyes more to the passing sail
Which shuns the reef so horrible and bare;
Nor raise my voice – for who would heed my wail?

we are asked to be critical. The importance of Dante to the *Carbonari* movement shows that this speaking voice might be prophetic but has very little self-knowledge. At this point, we can attempt to unravel Byron's concern with fame, with silence, with lack of audience or individual responsibility. In any case, we are not only to admire, but also to judge and what is to be admired is not just based on Byron's support of Italian independence.

The reader who focuses only on the immediate political or biographical application of the poem might well miss two things. First, he might miss a widening of Byron's horizons (and our current situation adds ironies to ironies, so that our own present reading of these verses must be quite different from Byron; it seems to us that Byron indeed is writing not about the Italian language, but about English):

We can have but one country and even yet
Thou'rt mine – my bones shall be within thy breast,
My soul within thy language, which once set
With our old Roman sway in the wide West;
But I will make another tongue arise as lofty
And more sweet, in which express'd
The hero's ardour, or the lover's sighs,
Shall find alike such sounds for every theme
That every word, as brilliant as thy skies,
Shall realize a poet's proudest dream,
And make thee Europe's nightingale of song;
So that all present speech to thine shall seem
The note of meaner birds, and every tongue
Confess its barbarism when compare to thine. (II) (*my emphasis*)

There is a stress here on something wider than Italy. The focus on ancient Greece in *Don Juan III* and on the seafaring empire of Venice in *Marino Faliero* were not Byron's 'best thing.' But Rome, as (already in 1820) the centre of Italy, and the figure of Dante, as not only poet but speaker in *The Prophecy*, give Byron the opportunity to go beyond a duality and an

ambivalence (England and Italy), to a focus on Europe – a focus which has been neglected in Byron – and a focus on a struggle which goes from past to future and into the present. Rome and Dante, as the most Italian of cities and poets, are the best tools for a broadening of Byron's poetry, and therefore 'the best thing' Byron ever wrote.

The second point the reader might miss is the form Byron uses. If experiments in the written and spoken language are central to *The Prophecy*, what can we say of Byron's language here (the specific form of Dante's speech and Byron's written word)? In one of the first comments on the poem, the anonymous reviewer of the *Edinburgh Review* of July 1821 complains of the 'interminable periods and endless interlacings of the diction.'¹¹ Byron wrote in *terza rima* and called it in the *Preface* 'a metrical experiment.' It really is an experiment for Byron.

Terza rima involves sets of three lines in which the middle line of the first tercet becomes the first and third rhyme of the second and so forth. This is supposedly much more difficult in English than Italian, which is a language that rhymes more easily. Therefore, the rhymes will also sound less forced in Italian, as many translators have stated. *Terza rima* can create an effect of imprisonment and enclosure, as in Dante's *Inferno*, when the tercet closes with a punctuation mark, or an effect of narrative continuity and movement, as in *Paradiso*, when the syntactic units are longer than the tercet. Byron's rhymes are quite unobtrusive, in spite of the fact that they are not just approximate rhymes, but often quite accurate. But Byron totally transforms the effect of *terza rima*. First, he creates the expectation of the pentameter by beginning with a steady 5-stress pattern, but then he varies this pattern. For example, in these three lines (already quoted above)

But I will make another tongue arise as lofty
And more sweet, in which expressed
The hero's ardour, or the lover's sighs,

we find six stresses in the first line, four in the second and five in the third; the line with four stresses is split into two units, of two stresses each, by the strong pause of the comma. This slows down that line, but speeds up the previous and the following one. Shelley learned from Byron and the effects he creates in the *terza rima* of his *The Triumph of Life* are perhaps more subtle. His caesuras are lighter and the enjambments less

¹¹ The *Edinburgh Review*, 70 (July 1821), 285.

marked.¹² In his analysis of Shelley's poem Donald Reiman mentions Milton as an example for Shelley, but, unlikely as it may seem, Byron, too, clearly looks back to Milton rather than his favourite eighteenth-century poets. Byron creates tremendous speed and power mainly by means of his driving, torrential enjambments. The verse engulfs us in a passion for the word and, in particular, for English poetry. This is not Dante speaking, but actually, it is not Byron, either. Byron's customary clipped stanzas, which often sound like stretched Popean couplets, are absent here. This is the voice of Milton speaking, or of Blake. Byron has first followed closely, and then in fact fractured the constraints of *terza rima*, in order to explore, expand and sympathetically criticize the poet's voice – an Italian poet who becomes an English poet, whose presence and voice are built up in layer upon layer, in order to become a universal presence.

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¹² See Donald Reiman's wonderful analysis of Shelley's prosody in *Shelley's "The Triumph Of Life": A Critical Study*, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature (55) (Urbana, Ill. University of Illinois Press, 1965), especially ch. 3.

Enchantment and Disenchantment: English Romantic Visions of Italy

Manfred Pfister

I. Romantic Thresholds

One cannot define cultural or literary periods in terms of fixed dates; they emerge in long, complex and contradictory processes and trying to bring order to them and identify the moment when the threshold to the new period is actually crossed is difficult, both for those involved in these processes and for the historian looking back at them with hindsight. Let's take the English experience of Italy as an example! To be sure, Italy was not discovered for the English by their Romantic travellers, artists and poets but, I would argue, what began to emerge in the late 18th century was a new attitude towards Italy and new ways of engaging with it. To explore what kinds of thresholds were crossed here – thresholds between England and Italy as well as between a Neo-classical and a Romantic culture – I will look more closely at a handful of images and texts.

Let me begin with a painting by William Marlow who had visited Italy on his Grand Tour from 1765 to 1768 and was to draw inspiration from this experience for the rest of his life. Here, in this painting, we

seem to witness just such a crossing of a threshold: where the art and literature of the Grand Tour had carefully separated the English and the Italian and kept Italy and the Italians at a safe distance, here a new, a Romantic vision seems to open up – the dream of a mutual complementation of the English and the Italian, even of a fusion of the self and the Other. We look at the *Canal Grande* from a perspective which the many



ILL.1: W. Marlow:

*Capriccio: St. Paul's and a Venetian Canal*¹

¹ A. Wilton and I. Bignamini (eds.), *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century* (London. Tate Gallery Publications, 1996), 290 (Ill. 252).

vedute of Canaletto and his disciples had made thoroughly familiar to the English gentry in the 18th century. Bewilderingly unfamiliar in this context is, however, what rises at the end of the canal: not *San Marco* or *Santa Maria della Salute* but London's St. Paul's Cathedral. Venice and London are superimposed one upon the other in what Marlow calls a *Capriccio* and they do not appear to be strangers to each other. St. Paul's, after all, is half Italian, the fruit of Christopher Wren's admiration for the Italian High Baroque and inspired by St. Peter's in Rome or Borromini's *Sant' Agnese in Agone*. This reference to the Baroque in itself – a style and a period rather alien to Romanticism – makes us, however, already hesitate to read the painting as an anticipation of the Romantic dream of a fusion between North and South. What also tells against such a reading is that Marlow's image is not the Romantically immediate expression of his experience of Italy, but was composed some thirty years after the event and not from 'emotions recollected in tranquillity' but from extant etchings. Above all, the English and the Italian components of this picture are not related to each other in a way that would suggest an English desire to dissolve into and merge with, the Italian Other. For this, the English element is all too self-confident, self-possessed and triumphant: St. Paul's demonstrates that the English, if only they were to put their minds to it, can beat the Italians on their own field of Baroque architecture and the English cathedral lords it over the Venetian canal in a gesture of domination and protection. And Venice needed protection at that time in 1797, when the painting was completed. The *Serenissima* had just lost its centuries-old glorious independence and was made to bow under the Austrian yoke in the Treaty of *Campo Formio*. Not as the desired Other is Italy imaged here, therefore, but as subjugated by an imperial power, Austria, and recommended to the protection of another imperial power, Great Britain.

Intimate as is the juxtaposition of the English and the Italian aspect in this painting, its glance at Italy remains too confined within a perspective originating in England to allow for a crossing of cultural thresholds. This is also true of the representations of Italy in the gothic novels of the late 18th century. Ann Radcliffe, for instance, never made it to Italy, never got further South than the German Freiburg and thus her *Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797) draw for their picturesque as well as sublime and horrifying Italian spaces entirely upon the images of a Claude Lorraine or Salvator

Rosa and the literature of the Grand Tour. And even where the frequently female protagonists of such Italian romances fall into ‘raptures,’ ‘exaltations’ or ‘transports’ over the sublime beauty of the Italian landscape – as Charlotte Smith’s Rosalie does in *Montalbert* (1795), who feels herself ‘transported to a world of higher rank in the universe than that she had inhabited while she was in England’ – the narrator promptly reclaims them for their native lands, often, as here, within the same sentence that seems to ratify the giving in to the allure of the Italian Other and the crossing of the threshold:

And she was of an age and disposition to forget, or at least be indifferent to those circumstances which can hardly fail to remind English travellers, that, though other countries may have more bold and attractive scenery, their own is that where life is enjoyed with the greatest comfort.²

The commentary of the narrator only anticipates the disenchantment that the heroine will have to go through, the terrifying despotism of an evil Italian mother-in-law, imprisonment in a sombre castle far away from human civilization, her Italian yearnings painfully turned into nostalgia for her native England.

Let me contrast this with a text written some thirty years later, Anna Jameson’s *Diary of an Ennuyée* of 1826, the fictional diary of an Italian journey made in the early 1820s. Like Charlotte Smith’s Rosalie at the beginning, Jameson’s heroine is enchanted with Italy and the view of Naples and its bay transports her into an ecstasy which makes her pulse beat faster. Here, ‘the mere consciousness of existence is happiness enough,’ ‘not to be conceived by those who have lived always in the vapoury atmosphere of England.’³ She also thinks back to her native England, a ‘dear England’ of comfortable drawing rooms and cosy chimney fires, but in her thoughts, unlike Rosalie’s, the England of homely pleasures and civilized comfort remains emotionally distanced, while the

² C. Smith, *Montalbert. A Novel* (London. Booker, 1795), II, 144. – cfr. C. Chard, ‘Crossing Boundaries and Exceeding Limits. Destabilization, Tourism, and the Sublime,’ in: C. Chard, H. Langdon (eds.), *Transports. Travel, Pleasure and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830* (New Haven. Yale UP, 1996), 117-149, here 127f, and C. Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830* (Manchester. Manchester UP, 1999), 44f and 189.

³ A. Jameson, *Diary of an Ennuyée* (London. Colburn, 1826), 239f; cfr. Chard, ‘Crossing Boundaries,’ 129f.

picturesque bay and the sublime Vesuvius keep holding the Romantic traveller in search of spiritual recovery in their spell. Where the narrator of *Montalbert* and her protagonist reject the Italian sublime as soon as their loyalty to the familiar, the home, the homely and the self is at stake, Jameson's *Diary* undermines for good, all such loyalties and celebrates abandoning oneself to the enchantment of Italy and to the overwhelming experience of the Italian sublime. In that celebration of crossing the threshold between the native home and the Italian Other, the diarist has also crossed the threshold to a Romantic aesthetics of self-abandonment and self-creation.

II. Beckford

The first, in our sense truly 'Romantic' experience of Italy, however, can be identified already before the historical watersheds of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. I am speaking of young William Beckford's Italian journeys in 1780/81 and again in 1782 and his account published of them in 1783, his *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents*. 'Published' is perhaps not the right word for a privately printed edition of only 500 copies, of which only five survived the prompt intervention of his mother, who destroyed the rest, fearing that the *haut goût* emotionalism of these recollections of a young Briton on the brink of 'going native' in Italy might damage the family reputation and her son's prospects of a political career. (When they were really published in 1834 under the title of *Italy; with Sketches of Spain and Portugal*, it was in a version drastically revised and expurgated by the author himself.)⁴

What was so scandalous about the waking dreams of this scion of an extremely wealthy sugar dynasty, who soon was to enter the European canon of Romantic and decadent literary and cultural history as author of the oriental tale *Vathek* (1786) and ruin-builder of Fonthill Abbey? After all, his Italian journey followed in its route (from Venice to Rome and on to Naples), its duration (less than two years) and its mode (chaperoned by a mature mentor or 'bear-leader') the well-established and decorous

⁴ The misfortunes of this book continue to the present: *Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents* is still awaiting a modern scholarly edition. The only readily available text, a selection from the Beckford papers in the Bodleian Library at Oxford compiled and edited by E. Mavor, *The Grand Tour of William Beckford* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1986), is unsatisfactory.

mode of the Grand Tour and the literary form the account took, a series of letters to a friend back home, also followed a standard format. Where it transgressed the accepted and acceptable models, was in its motivation: the aesthetically hypersensitive young man, schooled in classical poetry and art by private tutors, was sent to the Continent by his mother to distract him from a platonic passion for a boy of eleven. This was all but a good idea, for hardly had he arrived in Venice when he fell in love with the youngest son of one of the noblest patrician families there. And when his alarmed tutor bundled him off to Naples to put him under the protective care of Lady and William Hamilton, this also proved to be of little avail. Even if Beckford does not spell out these homoerotic imbroglios in his travelogue, the emotional and eroticised intensity which mark his experience of Italian art and music – opera, church music and in particular the passionate cadences of *castrati* – and of Italian nature give away the erotic subtext. No wonder that such emotional transports were more than an embarrassment to his squarely Protestant family, who found his raptures over Italian sensuous beauty deeply disturbing. It is, however, precisely in what disturbed his family that the Romantic aspect of his encounter with Italy resided: it is Romantic to the extent that it is transgressive, and transgressive to the extent that it dreams of a fusion with the non-British Other.

Italy to the young aesthete is not, as for the Grand Tourist, a museum of canonized cultural products, but an echo chamber or cabinet of mirrors for his own fantasies and desires, his erotic yearning and his aesthetic sensibility. This marks a new departure in the history of English perceptions of Italy: there is a new and self-conscious subjectivity that focuses on its own shifting moods and refined perceptions rather than on the objects of observation and turns Italy, no longer out there, no longer perceived from the other side of a threshold, into a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of its own creation.

The descriptions offered by Beckford are highly picturesque – ‘picturesque’ not in the traditional sense of striving towards the symmetry and harmony of a painting, but of enchanted and enchanting images of great suggestive power. In this, Beckford has learned from his private art teacher Alexander Cozens, the great ‘sentimental’ painter and water-colourist, who, in programmatic treatises and series of etchings such as *The Various Species of Composition of Landscape in Nature*, had systematically explored the range of correspondences between natural

sceneries and human moods and had thus prepared the ground for the radically subjective internalisation of landscape experience which was to culminate in Turner's 'landscapes of the mind.'⁵ Beckford's account of his first crossing the threshold to Italy already illustrates these qualities:

My heart beat quick, when I saw some hills, not very distant, which, I was told, lay in the Venetian state and I thought an age, at least, had elapsed before we were passing their base. The road was never formed to delight an impatient traveller; loose pebbles and rolling stones render it, in the highest degree, tedious and jolting. I should not have spared my execrations, had it not traversed a picturesque valley, overgrown with juniper and strewed with fragments of rock, precipitated, long since, from the surrounding eminences, blooming with cyclamens. [...] Fratillarias and the most gorgeous flies, many of which I here noticed for the first time, were fluttering about and expanding their wings to the sun. There is no describing the numbers I beheld, nor their gaily varied colouring. I could not find in my heart to destroy their felicity; to scatter such bright plumage and snatch them for ever, from the realms of light and flowers. [...] I left them imbibing the dews of heaven, in free possession of their native rights and, having changed horses at Tremolano, entered, at length, my long-desired Italy. The pass is rocky and tremendous, guarded by a fortress (Covalo) in possession of the Empress Queen [Maria Theresia of Austria] and only fit, one should think, to be inhabited by her eagles. There is no attaining this exalted hold, but by the means of a cord let down many fathoms by the soldiers, who live in dens and caverns [...]. A black vapour, tinging their entrance, completed the terror of the prospect, which I shall never forget.⁶

Crossing the pass of Covalo, he leaves behind him the Austrian territories of Empress Maria Theresia, drawn in the dark colours of a military state made up of fearful fortresses, eagles and cave-dwelling soldiers, to find himself in a serene and fertile valley and soon surrounded by singing and

⁵ Cfr. K. Sloan, *Alexander and John Robert Cozens. The Poetry of Landscape* (New Haven. Yale UP, 1986), W. Busch, *Das sentimentalische Bild. Die Krise der Kunst im 18. Jahrhundert und die Geburt der Moderne* (München. Beck, 1993), 335-356 and E. S. Shaffer, "To Remind us of China" – William Beckford, *Mental Traveller on the Grand Tour. The Construction of Significance in Landscape*, in Chard and Langdon (eds.), *Transports*, 207-242, here: 210-213.

⁶ Quoted in M. Pfister (ed.), *The Fatal Gift of Beauty. The Italies of British Travellers. An Annotated Anthology* (Amsterdam. Rodopi, 1996), 69.

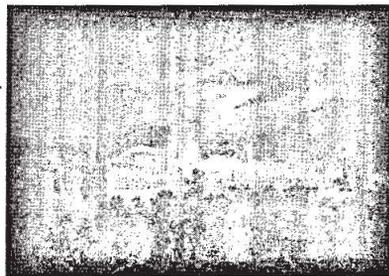
welcoming country folk. He is reborn and metamorphosed like the beautifully variegated butterflies freed from their chrysalis cocoon, which flutter round him in aimless pleasure and show him the way in their aimless manner and he feels new sensations of joy flow through his veins.

Italy becomes for Beckford a deeply stirring and disturbing experience, in which such exaltations of aesthetic rapture again and again turn quickly into anxious melancholy. Venice will not remain the joyfully enchanting 'total work of art' of his first morning there; it will draw him into its dark labyrinths, fascinating and frightening as Piranesi's *Carceri*, which cast their spell over him. And Venice and Rome and Naples will reveal to him an oriental underside, drawing him beyond Italy towards a more distant and exotic Otherness, which haunts his transgressive fantasies and, being ultimately unreachable, steeps him in melancholy again.

His emotional turmoil finds its echo in the sublime turmoil of Italian nature. His Italy, as that of Turner, is a land of indomitable and sublime natural forces, shaken by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and thrashed by violent thunderstorms. This is also turned into powerful images – both his own poetic images and the images he has the mentor of his second tour, John Robert, son of Alexander Cozens, paint for him. Thus, Cozens' watercolour, *A Storm over Padua*, projects Padua into an apocalyptic scenery and, in this process, completely disrupts the picturesque conventions of *vedute*, which it otherwise quotes in its well-balanced composition.

The well-known panorama of the ancient and noble see of learning is here turned into a dramatic *chiaroscuro* vision of human endeavour lacerated by the sublime forces of nature – just the kind of vision Beckford himself projects in his own diary, when he describes this thunderstorm over Padua from inside the church of *Santa Giustina*:

The ceremony was about half over when such a peal of thunder reverberated through the vaults and cupolas, as I expected would have shaken them to their foundations
The principal dome appeared invested with a sheet of fire



ILL. 2: J. R. Cozens: *A Storm over Padua*⁷

⁷ Wilton and Bignamini, 151 (Ill. 104).

and the effect of terror produced upon the majority of the congregation, by this sudden lighting up of the most gloomy recesses of the edifice, was so violent that they rushed out in the wildest confusion.⁸

Such terrifying turmoil of the elements is at the same time an emotional turmoil and triggers a collective panic, which strikes traveller and 'travellee' alike and links the beautiful and sacred with terror. Beckford's *Dreams and Waking Thoughts* are thus not only the daydreams of one enchanted with Italy but also the nightmares of one who encounters in the Other the terror within himself.

III. Shelley

Three and a half decades later, an English poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, will look down upon Padua from a distance once again. His *Lines written among the Euganean Hills* are separated from Cozens' painting and Beckford's travelogue by political events which had a crucial impact upon the relationship between the English Romantics and Italy. The French Revolution and then the Napoleonic Wars made Italy – with the exception of the brief Peace of Amiens (1802) – for all practical purposes, inaccessible to British travellers for twenty years. This put an end to the Grand Tour as it was known and – more importantly in our context – it cut off the first generation of English Romantics from Italy, turning it into a land one could only, as Goethe had to with Greece, seek with one's soul, 'mit der Seele suchen.'⁹ This did not, however, diminish the lure of Italy. Paradoxically, its inaccessibility even enhanced its enchantment and fascination.

After the historical watershed, after Waterloo and the Congress of Vienna, the second generation of English Romantics, Shelley, Byron, Keats, James Leigh Hunt, Felicia Hemans and many others, flocked to Italy with motivations and expectations entirely different from those of the Grand Tourist.¹⁰ Keats came in a last desperate bid to regain his health,

⁸ Quoted in Shaffer, "To Remind us of China," 216.

⁹ For non-German readers a reference may be helpful for this quotation widely used in Germany: *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, 1.1.12.

¹⁰ Cfr. the classic study by C. P. Brand, *Italy and the English Romantics: The Italianate Fashion in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957) and the more recent work by M. O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Imagination* (London: Macmillan, 1998), L. M. Crisafulli (ed.), *Immaginando l'Italia. Itinerari letterari del Romanticismo Inglese / Imagining Italy. /cont...*

Byron and Shelley under the cloud of scandal and in search of a 'Paradise of exiles,'¹¹ a 'retreat of Pariahs.'¹² *Incipit la vita nuova* was the motto of their escape from England, a complete dissociation from the English self and a rebirth under new skies. We sense this in Shelley's *Lines written among the Euganean Hills* (1818), which express his hope to have found, at long last, one of those 'green isles' of which seafarers dream 'in the deep wide sea of Misery' (v. 1f). Here, where the winds 'rain balm / On the uplifted soul' (v. 359), he desires for himself and his beloved 'some calm and blooming cove, [...] Far from passion, pain and guilt' (v. 342-45). But as his gaze roams across the fertile valley of the Po and distinguishes 'the sun-girt City' of Venice (v. 115) and 'many-domed Padua' (v. 215), he realizes that they are no longer what they were – Venice no longer the free mistress of the seas and Padua no longer the luminary of enlightened learning. Dark clouds loom over both and both suffer under the Austrian yoke and the Holy Alliance. The restoration of the old potentates on the Continent and the repression under Castlereagh in England has caught up with him even here and his dream of an Italian *locus amoenus* gives way to the more urgent and more deeply stirring dream of revolt against the despotic 'anarchy.' All the poems created by Shelley in Italy – and among them are his greatest poems, as Italy made him a Romantic poet in the first place – share this revolutionary dream: *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Cenci*, the satires on the political situation in England, *A Defence of Poetry* and the odes.

The images in which he imagines this revolt are images of the turmoil of the elements, of cataracts, avalanches, volcanoes, earthquakes, storms and thunderstorms. This shows particularly impressively in his *Ode to the West Wind* – his greatest Italian poem, in the double sense of having been written in Italy (as underscored by the introductory note with its emphasis on meteorological truth to the place) and of being about the poet's experience of Italy. In three stanzas, Shelley evokes the West Wind and celebrates it as the incarnation of revolutionary energy, driving

/cont. Literary Itineraries in British Romanticism (Bologna. Clueb, 2002), L. Bandiera and D. Saglia (eds.) *British Romanticism and Italian Literature* (Amsterdam. Rodopi, 2005) and R. Cavaliero, *Italia Romantica. English Romantics and Italian Freedom* (London. I. B. Tauris, 2005).

¹¹ 'Julian and Maddalo,' in D. H. Reimann and S. B. Powers (eds.), *Shelley's Poetry and Prose* (New York. Norton, 1977), 112-127, verse 57.

¹² F. L. Jones, (ed.) *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* 2 vols. (Oxford. Oxford UP, 1964), II, 170.

before it all that is decayed or dead in all the elements, bursting all bounds and preparing in its destruction the space for the creation of the new. The last two stanzas then culminate in the identification of the poet with the destructive and creative spirit of the storm. He is, like the storm, 'tameless, swift and proud' and thus dares to become one with this spirit:

Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one. (v. 61f)

The poem requires to be read on at least three levels. As a *poem of nature*, it takes as a point of departure a dramatic phenomenon of the Mediterranean climate and enacts its fascination with the elementary rhythms of death and rebirth, destruction and re-creation; *poetologically*, it celebrates the empowerment of the poet through the union with the natural forces, which are both radically Other and an echo of his own soul; *politically*, it prophesies revolt in a Europe of restored feudal structures and foreign dominion. The latter has, of course, a particular cogency for Italy and the Italians and this Italian reference has inscribed itself into the very form the stanzas take, the *terzine* of Dante, like Shelley a poet fighting despotism in exile. And that the wind blows from the West does not only make sense meteorologically but also geo-politically: it was from the West, from France, that the revolutionary spark had blown, which needs to be rekindled now by the republican and nationalist movements of the *Federati* and the *Carboneria*, the first signs of hope in the darkness of restored dynasties, tightening church control and Habsburg dominion over Northern Italy.

IV. Byron

Shelley's engagement with Italian politics remained largely theoretical and poetical, in contrast to Byron's, who plunged himself heart and soul into the struggle for Italian liberty and independence. Unlike Shelley, he never dreamt the dream of an enchantingly idyllic Italy, which might provide for him a *hortus conclusus* among gentle hills overgrown with vines and olive trees. For him, from the outset, Italy was like himself, in passionate turmoil and thus the 'northern wanderer' of his *Ode on Venice* comes into his own here.¹³ 'My blood is all meridian,' he writes in his *Stanzas on the Po*,¹⁴ and accordingly he immerses himself in the

¹³ G. G. Byron, *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (London. Oxford UP, 1945), 103.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

meridional life: in the Venetian carnival, in which the divisions between high and low and between natives and foreigners become blurred; in erotic imbroglios with the wives of bakers as well as with married ladies of the highest rank; in political adventures on behalf of the *Carbonari*, for whom he distributes pamphlets, organizes plots and procures weapons from England. Where the Grand Tourist had been scandalized by the handy Italian institution of 'second husbands,' which he observed and commented upon from the outside, Byron performed the *cicisbeo* with great zest himself and where others attacked the papal yoke and the Austrian or Spanish dominion in Italy in their poems and travelogues, he conspired actively on the side of the suppressed and barely escaped an assault by the papal *sbirri* in Ravenna.

All this he tells with ravishing gusto in the letters and diaries of his Italian years, in his Italian canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1818).¹⁵ However, he carefully erases all the traces of such border crossing. It is the account of a journey from Venice to Rome which once again plays through all the themes and motifs of the Grand Tour. Venice and its gondolas, the pilgrimage to Petrarch's Arqua and Tasso's Ferrara, the art treasures of Florence, the Arcadian enchantment of the Clitumnus source, the classical monuments of Rome. Yet all changed, changed utterly, in the harsh light of contemporary politics. Italy is no longer what it had been for the Grand Tourist. It has been destroyed by its own charm. Its 'charms' have proven to be 'destructive' in having provoked across the ages the concupiscence of its less charming neighbours (stanza XLIII). It is due to this 'fatal gift of beauty' (XLII) that now in a Venice subjugated by the Austrians, the *gondolieri* remain mute, that Ferrara is desolate, Florence a provincial backwater and Rome nothing but a 'chaos of ruins.'

But Italy is not alone in being no longer what it used to be. He also has changed. Childe Harold 'is no more' (CLXIX) and right at the end, Byron, dropping the errant pilgrim's mask, insists:

I am not now
That which I have been
[...] and the glow
Which in my spirit dwelt is fluttering, faint and low.
(CLXXXV)

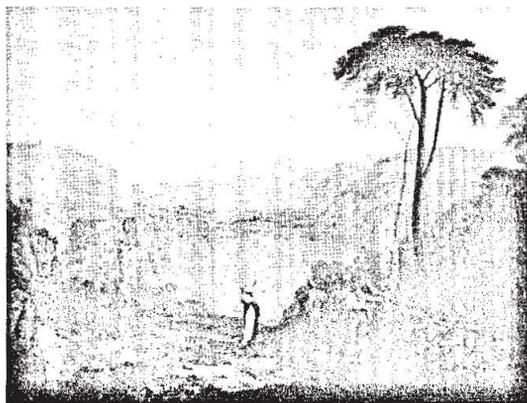
There is no spark left that a Shelleyan west wind could fan into revolutionary flames in this panorama of an Italy which is – from the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 226-252.

Bridge of Sighs between the despot's palace and the prison to the *Laocoön* in the Vatican – abandoned to repression and decay. What remains for the pilgrim are nostalgia and the dream of an escape from Italy and politics into union with the ever-constant and ever-changing ocean as the greatest of all natural forces (CLXXIX-CLXXXIV).

V. Turner

A year after the publication of the Italian canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, William Turner will set out for Italy for the first time to walk in the ways of Byron and to make Byron's vision of Italy as a land of decayed splendour and splendid decay, of a pristine enchantment lost to the present, his own. Turner had, of course, painted Italy before, but these early Italian pictures drew, like Radcliffe's descriptions, entirely upon previous pictures and descriptions. The most celebrated of these is Lake Avernus painted in 1798.¹⁶



ILL. 3: W. Turner: Lake Avernus. Aeneas and the Sibyl

In its reference to one of the *loci classici* of the Grand Tour, Lake Avernus near Naples; in its mythological frame, the Virgilian motif of the Cumaean Sibyl showing Aeneas the way to the Underworld; in its genetic context of being commissioned by the prominent antiquarian, collector and Grand Tourist, Sir Richard Colt Hoare; and on the other hand, in its suggestiveness of a new experience of the Italian landscape, that draws the viewer into the depth of the lake and the infinitude of the horizon, it

¹⁶ Wilton and Bignamini, 279 (Ill. 234).

marked the very threshold between the old and the new. Now however, in the steps of Byron, he crosses the threshold, most impressively in a painting of 1832, which Ruskin considered the greatest of his mature period:



ILL. 4: W. Turner: Childe Harold's Pilgrimage – Italy¹⁷

Where the title might lead one to expect the illustration of a particular episode of Byron's epic poem, the painting distills its quintessence, evoking an Italian ideal landscape, made up of elements familiarized in the paintings of Claude and his followers: the valley of the Tiber and the *Campagna*; the bridge of Narni and the temple of Clitumnus; yet all refracted through the nostalgic gaze of the Byronic wanderer. All appears as if in the process of dissolution, de-objectified into an internal landscape of the mind independent of external reality. When Turner first exhibited his painting in the Royal Academy, he added a quotation from *Childe Harold* highlighting this sense of an enchantment enhanced in the very process of vanishing:

[...] and now, fair Italy! [...]
 Even in thy desert, what is like to thee?
 Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste
 More rich than other climes' fertility:
 Thy wreck a glory and they ruin graced
 With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced. (XXXVI)

VI. Disenchanting Postlude

My story has no happy ending. The enchantment that had enthralled the English poets in Italy, turned into nostalgic or critical distance and disenchantment at the very point where the identification with Italy was at its deepest and most intensive. To a certain extent this was due more to

¹⁷ D. B. Brown, *Turner and Byron* (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1992), 65 (Ill. 36).

the Italians than to Italy, to the contemporary Italians who refused to live up to the Romantic dream. A note in one of Byron's letters written from Ravenna in 1821, at the height of his engagement with the cause of the *Carbonari*, is telling here:

I have no news. As a very pretty woman said to me a few nights ago, with the tears in her eyes, as she sat at the harpsichord: "Alas! the Italians must now return to making operas." I fear that and macaroni are their forte [...]¹⁸

Coleridge as well, on his brief excursion from Malta to Italy in 1805/6, did not warm to the Italians he encountered, decrying them as 'creatures of habit and momentary passions.' Even their famously euphonious language sounded, the way they pronounced it, harsh and shrill as the 'Platt-Deutsch of the Hartz' and came into its own only 'in the mouth of a sensible agreeable-voiced Englishman.'¹⁹ It is amazing to observe how English Romantic poets fell back here into the supercilious arrogance of the Grand Tourists, whom they otherwise despised for the superficiality of their encounter with Italy. Indeed, the fantasy of an Italy without Italians, an Italy that would be so much more enchanting without them, is one of the *leitmotifs* of their letters and diaries. Shelley went the whole way here and distinguished categorically between

two Italies; one composed of the green earth & transparent sea and the mighty ruins of ancient times [...], & the warm & radiant atmosphere which is interfused through all things. The other consists of the Italians of the present day, their works & ways. The one is the most sublime & lovely contemplation that can be conceived by the imagination of man; the other the most degraded, disgusting & odious.²⁰

Such disenchantment with the 'modern Italians' reflects a sense of having come too late for the 'authentic' Italians of whom they had dreamed as the opposite to their modern compatriots in Britain. Instead, they encountered a people who were lagging behind in their social, economic and political development in comparison with the English and yet were already in the process of a far-reaching modernization destroying the magic of Italy. What they did not realize was that their own presence in Italy was part of this modernization which opened the floodgates to a

¹⁸ Quoted in Pfister, 234.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 293.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 294; *cf.* also 297f for Ruskin's vociferations against the modern Italians.

new kind of literary tourism in the wake of their own Romantic vision of Italy.²¹ Much as they saw themselves as ‘anti-tourists’²² – as true travellers who had crossed the threshold to the other culture, whose authentic inner essence they had discovered for themselves and had not just inspected from the outside as mere tourists would – they spearheaded a modern kind of tourism which would take generations of middle-class English families to Italy to walk in their footsteps in search of an authentic Italy. Occasionally, their nostalgic reflections are tinged here by a painful awareness of their complicity in destroying a form of life they then proceed to mourn, of being an instance of each man killing the thing he loves.²³ It is not by chance that it was a Romantic poet, Byron, who coined the term for one of the central media of modern tourism, the ‘Guide-book,’²⁴ and it was his publisher, John Murray, who in the 1830s began to cash in on the unprecedented success of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* with his *Handbooks for Travellers*, larding them with poetical excerpts from poems by Southey, Scott, Byron and others. And when, in the 1860s, Thomas Cook organized the first package tours to Italy, he encouraged his travellers to admire – the fourth canto of *Childe Harold* in hand – the Bridge of Sighs or to pay a literary pilgrim’s homage to the places where the English poets had lived or died. The Romantic poets, who had seen themselves as escaping the tourist rituals of prescribed sight-seeing, had become sights themselves – alongside Virgil’s birthplace or tomb, Petrarch’s grave, Juliet’s balcony in Verona or Milton’s Vallombrosa.²⁵

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²¹ Cfr. M. Robinson, H. C. Andersen, *Literature and Tourism: Reading and Writing Tourism Texts* (London. Continuum, 2002).

²² Cfr. J. Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1993).

²³ I owe this point to Indira Ghose, who also – as always – has helped to de-Teutonise my English.

²⁴ Cfr. the entry on *guidebook* in the *OED*, which quotes as earliest reference Byron’s *Don Juan*, XI, 23: ‘I could say more, but do not choose to encroach / Upon the guidebook’s privilege.’

²⁵ Cfr. S. Rogers on Milton’s Vallombrosa in *The Fatal Gift of Beauty*, 321f.



'A Freak of Freedom:' British travellers to the Republic of San Marino

Maurizio Ascari

My paper will deal with some aspects of the centuries-long interest of British travellers in the tiny Republic of San Marino, which was perceived as an enclave of freedom, proudly surviving from the Middle Ages in spite of the political turmoil that had involved the surrounding Italian regions.¹ The 'myth' of San Marino took on different nuances according to the varying perspectives of travellers, as well as to the historical changes affecting Italy. It is my contention that both in the 18th and in the 19th centuries British travellers idealized San Marino – projecting their own political visions on this territory (sometimes to the detriment of truth) and contrasting it with the rest of Italy. Thus, San Marino became the reverse side of the Italian coin – a political paradigm that could be employed to assert the traveller's beliefs and to criticize the decline of the peninsula.

Joseph Addison and the construction of the myth

It was thanks to Joseph Addison's *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* (1705) that the 'myth' of San Marino acquired a European – and even American – dimension, although Addison was not the first political thinker or traveller to deal with the small Republic. In 17th century Italy various political works focusing on San Marino as an ideal state had already been published.² We do not know whether Addison had read any of these writings, but although he claimed to be the 'discoverer' of San

¹ I wish to thank Amalia Giannini – who graduated under my supervision in the year 2000 with a dissertation on British travellers to San Marino – for kindly providing me with some of the texts I have used as my sources.

² In 1612-13, Traiano Boccalini had discussed San Marino in his *Ragguagli di Parnaso*, in 1623 Matteo Valli had published a volume on the origin and government of the Republic of San Marino, and in 1625 Ludovico Zuccolo's *Il Belluzzi, o vero della Città Felice* (1625) – a political writing of utopian import, focussing on the tiny Republic – had appeared. This text is part of Zuccolo's *Dialoghi*, a volume that also includes his famous utopia describing the Republic of Evandria. For further details on these 17th century political writings, see A. Garosci, *San Marino. Mito e storiografia tra i libertini e il Carducci* (Milano. Edizioni di Comunità, 1967), 23-62.

Marino,³ he had certainly read the extended description of this political phenomenon that John Ray had included in his *Observations* (1673) – a book Addison mentioned in his Preface to the *Remarks*.⁴ Yet while Ray gave a rather factual and sober account of what he termed a ‘petty Commonwealth,’⁵ it was Addison who imaginatively ‘recreated’ the geographical, social and political space of San Marino, turning it into an icon of freedom and democracy.

By emphasizing the isolation of San Marino, Addison virtually presented the small Republic as a utopia. If we go back to Thomas More’s seminal *Utopia* (1518), we discover that this ‘non place’ (ou-topos) was originally an isthmus, which was cut off from the mainland by a providential king,⁶ who desired to turn it into an aseptic political laboratory. By severing the contacts between this perfect society and other peoples, King Utopus ‘de-historicised,’ so to speak, his political creation. Those who are interested in literary utopias know that the communities these texts portray are often set either on far off islands or in otherwise isolated lands, which are encircled by various kinds of impenetrable wilderness – mountains, deserts, marshes or perennial ice.⁷

As the Italian political economist Pietro Verri wrote during his stay in London in 1767, with reference to the relation between the British isles and the continent, ‘Politics is like electricity. Two bodies can present different degrees of it only if they are isolated, but if they communicate, a balance is soon achieved.’⁸ In Addison’s eyes, San Marino enjoyed this privileged condition of ‘isolation’ and I find it interesting that the Whig

³ See J. Addison, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, &c. in the Years 1701, 1702, 1703 in The Works*, Richard Hurd (ed.), 6 vols. (London. George Bell and Sons, 1890), Vol. I, 402.

⁴ See Addison 357. Addison had also read Maximilien Misson’s *Voyage d’Italie*, which included a section on San Marino.

⁵ J. Ray, *Observations Topographical, Moral and Physiological, made in a Journey through part of the Low-Countries, Germany, Italy and France* (London. Martyn, 1673), 382.

⁶ King Utopus ‘cut a channel fifteen miles wide where their land joined the continent, and caused the sea to flow around the country.’ Sir Thomas More, *Utopia*, R. M. Adams (ed.) (New York and London. Norton, 1992), 31.

⁷ More’s *Utopia* includes the account of yet another ideal community – the Polylerites, who live far from the sea but who ‘are nearly surrounded by mountains’ and who never tried ‘to enlarge their boundaries [...]’ More, 15-6.

⁸ P. Verri, Lettera XLV (20) February 1767, in *Viaggio a Parigi e Londra (1766-67) Carteggio di Pietro e Alessandro Verri*, G. Gaspari (ed.) (Milano. Adelphi, 1980), 263. My translation.

ideologist decided to open his account of the small state by referring to its topography in rather imaginative terms, for he not only wrote that 'The town and Republic of St. Marino stands on the top of a very high and craggy mountain,' but he also added that 'It is generally hid among the clouds and lay under snow when I saw it, though it was clear and warm weather in all the country around it.'⁹ The setting for Addison's political play was ready. San Marino could now be contrasted – in terms of climate and moral fibre – with the rest of Italy and an implicit parallel between San Marino and Great Britain could also be drawn.

The spatial discontinuity between San Marino and the surrounding territory enabled Addison to emphasize a different connection – i.e. the continuity in time between this commonwealth and previous kinds of political organization, such as 'Venice in its first beginnings, when it had only a few heaps of earth for its dominions, or [...] Rome itself, when it had as yet covered but one of its seven hills.'¹⁰ In order to understand the role San Marino played for Addison within the political geography of Italy, one should read the whole of the *Remarks*, notably the pages the writer devoted to the other Italian Republics. Genoa and Venice were described by Addison as experiencing a condition of decline. Only Lucca still embodied the civic virtues the English writer cherished, but although the small Republic was deemed 'the richest and best peopled state of Italy,'¹¹ it was encircled by the dominions of the Grand Duke of Tuscany and was likely to be annexed to them. While large Republics found it difficult to preserve their democratic institutions and their independence, San Marino had a better chance of surviving, due to the paucity of its territory and natural resources, in spite of the fact that since 1631 (when the Duchy of Urbino had ceased to exist) it had been completely surrounded by the States of the Pope. In other words, according to Addison, San Marino enjoyed an 'a-historical' condition of sameness, 'This petty republic has now lasted thirteen hundred years, while all the other states of Italy have several times changed their masters and forms of government.'¹²

As we have seen, Addison compared San Marino not only with the other Italian Republics, or with the decay of Italy at large, but also

⁹ Addison, 403.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 402.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 495.

¹² *Ibid.*, 404.

with the origins of Rome and once again the verdict was in favour of San Marino. According to popular belief, the small state had been created in late Roman times by St. Marino, a Dalmatian mason who had retired to the Rimini mountains as a hermit and had been offered a stretch of land by a rich local matron. Commenting on this 'foundation myth,' Addison wrote, 'the commonwealth of Marino may boast at least of a nobler original [*sic*] than that of Rome, the one having been at first an asylum for robbers and murderers, and the other a resort of persons eminent for their piety and devotion.'¹³

The Christian origin of the Republic would become a powerful aspect of the San Marino 'myth,' together with the *Sanmarinese* love of freedom, which is at the heart of Addison's concluding remarks,

The people are esteemed very honest and rigorous in the execution of justice and seem to live more happy and contented among their rocks and snows than others of the Italians do in the pleasantest valleys of the world. Nothing, indeed, can be a greater instance of the natural love that mankind has for liberty and of their aversion to an arbitrary government, than such a savage mountain covered with people and the Campania of Rome, which lies in the same country, almost destitute of inhabitants.¹⁴

While virtuous people can turn a wilderness into a garden, even fertile land can become unproductive under a corrupt government. The contrast between the pure mountain air of San Marino and the bleak vision of the malaria-ridden plains around Rome is a rhetorical masterstroke. Thanks to Addison, the myth of San Marino spread like wildfire in the following years and the small Republic became a regular stage of the Italian tour. In 1765, James Boswell visited San Marino and even wrote a report of it, which unfortunately has been lost,¹⁵ while in 1786, Hester Lynch Piozzi regretted missing the tiny state.¹⁶

¹³ *Ibid.*, 403-4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 406.

¹⁵ See J. Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour. Italy, Corsica and France 1765-1766*, F. Brady and F. A. Pottle (eds.) (Melbourne - London - Toronto. Heinemann, 1953-55), 95.

¹⁶ See H. Lynch Piozzi, *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey Through France, Italy, and Germany*, H. Barrows (ed.) (Ann Arbor. University of Michigan Press, 1967), 310.

The American Revolution and the dissemination of the myth

To understand the dissemination of the myth of San Marino in late 18th century British culture one also needs to take into account what was happening at that time across the Atlantic. After the American Revolution, Great Britain recognized the independence of the United States in 1783 and the ex-British colonies became a political laboratory. Thus when John Adams – who would become second President of the United States in 1797 – wrote his *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America* (1787), he took into account a series of past and present countries to compare their institutions and find inspiration for the government of the new-born political entity. In Adams's *Defence*, San Marino is discussed as a notable instance of 'Democratical Republic.' Yet, after a long description of which the acknowledged source is Addison's account,¹⁷ the small Republic is ultimately rejected as a model for the United States precisely due to its 'particular circumstances,'

An handful of poor people, living in the simplest manner, by hard labour, upon the produce of a few cows, sheep, goats, swine, poultry and pigeons, on a piece of rocky, snowy ground, protected from every enemy by their situation, their superstition and even by their poverty, having no commerce nor luxury, can be no example for the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Georgia, or Vermont, in one of which there are possibly half a million of people and in each of the other at least thirty thousands, scattered over a large territory.¹⁸

While Addison had pointed to San Marino as an exemplary commonwealth, charging it with great symbolic value, Adams pragmatically denied the universal quality of this model. As we shall see, this attitude would become more and more common in the following century, also due to the transition the Western world was experiencing from an agrarian to an industrial society.

The end of the 18th century, as we all know, was the age of the American and the French Revolutions – two events which deeply

¹⁷ Adams's discussion of San Marino is based on Addison's account, which is actually imperfect, for Addison believed that the Council of Sixty, which ran the country, was 'made up half out of the noble families, and half out of the plebeian' (Addison, 405) while actually half of its members were from the city and the other half from the countryside. See Garosci, 129-46.

¹⁸ J. Adams, *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States* (London, Dilly, 1787), in http://www.constitution.org/jadams/jal_00.htm

influenced the developments both of political thought and of historiography. The name of John Gillies comes to mind in this respect, for in 1786, Gillies authored a notoriously conservative *History of Ancient Greece, its Colonies and Conquest*, in which he trained his rhetorical weapons on Athenian democracy, while actually attempting to criticize the independence of the American colonies.¹⁹ Gillies also felt the need to visit San Marino and to write an account in which he gave classical resonance to the tiny state, comparing it with the ancient Greek Republics. Like Adams, however, Gillies explained the freedom of the small commonwealth as a 'local' phenomenon, that is to say, as the result of the genius and habits of its mountain people.²⁰

The link between ancient and modern Republics recurs in the *Familiar Letters* Peter Beckford published in 1805, emphasizing the alliance of smallness and civic virtues that explained the survival of San Marino,

I know no Republic so likely to last for ever. Luxury and expence, which weakened and at length destroyed, the Commonwealths of Athens and of Rome, are little to be feared by these mountaineers: nor are they in danger, like modern Republics, from the jealousy of their neighbours, that can neither dread their power, nor envy their possessions.²¹

Little by little, San Marino acquired the character of what Lady Morgan described as 'at once a miracle and an anomaly in the order of things,'²² and it must be admitted that in the course of the 18th century the Republic proved able to survive a series of dramatic events both on a local and a wider scale. It was in 1739 that Cardinal Alberoni, the Pope's Legate in the Romagna region, taking advantage of some inner strife within the government of the small country, tried to annex its territory to the Papal States. The attempt was aborted and in the end the Pope not only acknowledged the freedom of the Republic, but also removed

¹⁹ See C. Ampolo, 'Modern States and Ancient Greek History,' in *Nations and Nationalities in Historical Perspective*, Gudmundur Hálfdanarson and Ann Katherine Isaacs (eds.) (Pisa. Edizioni Plus, 2001), 108.

²⁰ See J. Gillies, 'Account of the Republic of San Marino. Détails sur la République de Saint-Marin,' in *Bibliothèque britannique*, Tome quatrième (Littérature) (Genève. 1797), 370-93.

²¹ P. Beckford, *Familiar Letters from Italy to a Friend in England* (Salisbury. Easton, 1805), 421.

²² Lady Sidney Morgan, *Italy* (London. Colburn, 1821), 326.

Alberoni from the Legation.²³ Half a century later, the *Sanmarinese* people had to face another dangerous time, for when the French army invaded Italy under the command of Napoleon, San Marino found itself in the ambivalent position of being ‘a Republic within a Republic,’²⁴ as Lady Morgan phrased it. On that occasion, a deputation was sent to San Marino with the offer to extend its boundaries, but the people of San Marino prudently refused this offer, thus preserving themselves from the international conflicts that in the end swept away Napoleon’s empire and its satellite states.²⁵

San Marino versus the Kingdom of Italy

As we know, although the reforms that had been introduced in Italy by the French were largely cancelled after 1815, this interval of relative freedom gave rise to the movement referred to as the *Risorgimento*, which eventually resulted in the creation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, under the crown of the Savoia family and in the 1870 annexation of Rome (with the exception of the Vatican) to the new-born state.

Interestingly, throughout the 19th century San Marino preserved its character of Otherness with reference to the rest of Italy. As we have seen, the small Republic managed to remain intact, surviving not only the Napoleonic Wars, but also the 1815 Congress of Vienna and in the second half of the century it was left untouched even by the Unification of Italy. This meant that San Marino could still be contrasted with the rest of the peninsula and even used as a propaganda tool against the neighbouring state. Such is the case of an article Reverend G. Lambert published in the March 1876 issue of *The Month and Catholic Review*.

Although the development of public transport had made it more difficult to describe San Marino as a secluded spot, Lambert utilized precisely the perspective of a railway traveller to introduce his readers to the Otherness of San Marino,

If the traveller who journeys from Ancona to Rimini by the railroad which lies along the shore of the Adriatic looks towards the west as he is nearing the city of Rimini, he will see, some miles away in the distance, an isolated mountain with a jagged irregular summit [...]²⁶

²³ See Garosci, 107-28.

²⁴ Morgan, 330.

²⁵ See Garosci, 147-63.

²⁶ G. Lambert, ‘The Republic of San Marino’, *The Month and Catholic Review*, XXVII (CXLI) (March 1876), 277.

Lambert presented San Marino as isolated and distant, in spite of the fact that the railway ran only a few miles away. But under the pen of the author, the journey from Rimini to San Marino also became a journey in time, on board a carriage 'of the heavy, old-fashioned, post-chaise description,'²⁷ which was first driven by horses and then by large white oxen. After duly describing the smallness and virtue of 'the most ancient Republic in the world,'²⁸ Lambert could employ it as a weapon of propaganda, presenting it as a model community whose Catholic virtues highlighted by contrast the irreligious character of the new Italian state, where young men were

dragged by force from their homes into the cruel slavery of military service, compelled, in the prime of their youth, to unavoidable enlistment in a troop or in a regiment in which the total neglect of the worship of God and of the Sacraments is not only connived at but usually encouraged [...].²⁹

The Republic of San Marino, where monks and nuns 'remain unmolested in homes of their choice,'³⁰ was thus contrasted with the rest of Italy, where 'the tyranny of modern liberalism, by means of the impious votes of a sacrilegious Parliament, has seized and turned into barracks the monasteries and convents [...].'³¹ Rather nonchalantly, the text offers a rosy account of the past relationships between the Republic and the neighbouring States of the Church, whose 'paternal protection [...] has preserved its autonomy intact during so many centuries,'³² but in the eyes of Lambert serious dangers were in store for San Marino due to the proximity of the new kingdom,

Time will show whether the small Republic of San Marino will be able to retain its autonomy in the midst of that infidel administration which is called United Italy. Emissaries of 'the sect' insinuate themselves amongst the population and endeavour to spread their socialistic and irreligious ravings even amongst the simple hearted peasantry and people of San Marino, although fortunately, until now, they have met with little success. These poor but independent mountaineers are amongst the most pious

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 277.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 278.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 280.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 296.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 295-6.

³² *Ibid.*, 286.

and religious people of Europe and in their time-hallowed institutions, religion and the State are united in a just and intimate relationship.³³

As we can see, in this piece of Catholic propaganda, Lambert utilized San Marino to undermine the lay foundations of the new Italian state, advocating close ties between state and church. To understand the full import of this controversy, we should remember that after Rome was invaded by Italian troops in September 1870, Pope Pius IX refused to accept Italy's occupation of the city and regarded himself as a prisoner in the Vatican. His successors shared his attitude and it was only in 1929 upon ratification of the Lateran Pact that the Pope recognized the state of Italy, with Rome as its capital and in return the Vatican City was recognized as a separate state.

Of course, most of Lambert's countrymen hardly shared his Papist stance, but at the end of the century other good reasons could be found to contrast San Marino with the rest of Italy. Like Lambert, J. Theodore Bent chose to open *A Freak of Freedom or The Republic of San Marino* (1879) with a view of San Marino from a train window, so to speak,

The 'via Emilia' of Roman days is now succeeded by the railroad from Bologna to Brindisi and though the traveller on the great overland route to India may frequently have seen and may frequently have heard of this small republic, yet the phases which this mountain has passed through in history are comparatively unknown to those who pass so near [...] Nurtured and matured in the centre of everything that was Italian, yet now that Italy is itself no more but the vast sarcophagus of its former greatness, the Republic of San Marino alone remains to us as a specimen of those constitutions which formed the mediaeval greatness of Florence and Venice, an idiosyncrasy in history [...].³⁴

With these words, Bent managed to position San Marino both within the frame of the new Italian state and of the British empire, thus making the history of the small Republic doubly relevant to his readers. We should not forget how important the cyclical paradigm of history was to 19th century culture, also due to the reception of influential works such as Volnay's *Les Ruines, ou méditations sur les révolutions des empires* (1791).³⁵ Suffice it to think of the implicit parallel Turner's paintings

³³ *Ibid.*, 295.

³⁴ J.Th. Bent, *A Freak of Freedom, or The Republic of San Marino* (London. Longmans, 1879), 1-2.

³⁵ Giambattista Vico's *Principi della scienza nuova* (1725-44) could also be mentioned.

drew between the former greatness of maritime powers like Carthage and Venice and the current imperial greatness of London.³⁶ In addition, we should remember that Victorians perceived a strong link between the political and cultural life of a country. John Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1851-3), eulogising the civic and religious virtues of the Gothic and denouncing the moral decay of Renaissance art, is a case in point. Bent himself shared this attitude, as is proved by his words,

the striking contrast now exhibited by San Marino to the rest of Italy at once suggests the thought that, if Italy had all along been independent under a settled government and no foreign elements had been brought to bear upon it, we should never have heard of the names of Raphael and his fellows, nor have had the stately structures with which each town is decorated to admire.³⁷

In his well informed work, Bent compared San Marino to political entities such as the 'Republics of Switzerland,' the 'old Greek Republics,' the 'commercial towns of Germany,' as well as the 'sister Republic of Andorra,'³⁸ always underlining their difference from San Marino, which he described as 'a solecism in the polity of Europe. The offspring of centuries long gone by, it has grown old in its infancy [...].'³⁹ While the rest of Italy had been governed by a cyclical law of rise and fall, only the small Republic was exempt from this destiny. Yet, instead of mentioning the civic virtues of the *Sanmarinese* people as the ultimate reason for their protracted independence, Bent prosaically explained this phenomenon as the result of accidental causes, claiming that 'San Marino owes its existence not so much to its own integrity, as to the happy run of circumstance.'⁴⁰

³⁶ See D. Blayney Brown, *The Art of J. M. W. Reynolds* (Secaucus, NJ. Wellfleet P, 1990), 89. The rise and fall of empires are also at the heart of Thomas Cole's celebrated *The Course of Empire*, a group of five pictures the American artist painted in 1836.

³⁷ Bent, 58. Addison himself had contrasted the simple architecture of Republican Rome with the imposing relics of the imperial age, 'Among the remains of old Rome, the grandeur of the commonwealth shows itself chiefly in works that were either necessary or convenient, such as temples, highways, aqueducts, walls, and bridges of the city. On the contrary, the magnificence of Rome under the emperors, is seen principally in such works as were rather for ostentation or luxury, than any real usefulness or necessity, as in baths, amphitheatres, circuses, obelisks, triumphal pillars, arches, and mausoleums [...]' Addison, 459.

³⁸ Bent, 210-11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 216. This prosaic view did not prevail unconditionally at the time. In an article that appeared in the *Rivista Europea* in 1881, /cont...

San Marino had ceased to be regarded as a model of universal value and had become a local phenomenon – ‘an idiosyncrasy which could not have existed in any other country but in Italy,’⁴¹ as Bent wrote. What San Marino could now provide was rather an opportunity for a study in the picturesque, as is shown by the engravings that accompany Bent’s volume, where the institutions, buildings and inhabitants of the Republic are described as ‘relics of the past.’⁴² The quaint old San Marino was still seen as a community which had been frozen in its Arcadian youth, in its primeval Golden Age, but its appeal rested on its Medieval aura rather than on its political relevance.

Narrating the nation

In conclusion, the ‘myth’ of San Marino can be regarded as one of the many ways of ‘narrating the nation,’⁴³ to borrow Homi Bhabha’s expression. It is arguably no coincidence that San Marino became so popular in Britain precisely in the 18th and 19th centuries, that is, at the high point not only of the Grand Tour but also of nationalist thought. At the end of the 19th century, nationalism certainly did not cease to exist, but it changed its nature as Ernest Renan claimed in his seminal essay ‘*Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?*’ (1882),

At the time of the French Revolution, it was commonly believed that the institutions proper to small, independent cities, such as Sparta and Rome, might be applied to our large nations, which number some thirty or forty million souls. Nowadays, a far graver mistake is made: race is confused with nation and a sovereignty analogous to that of really existing peoples is attributed to ethnographic or, rather, linguistic groups.⁴⁴

/cont. the Italian, Vittorio Peri described his journey to San Marino with these enthusiastic words, ‘Visiting this celebrated place was for me like a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for a Christian or to the Mecca for a Muslim.’ Like 18th century British travellers, Peri – whose Republican sympathies are apparent – openly described San Marino as a utopia come true, like ‘Thomas More’s *Utopia* or Campanella’s *City of the Sun*.’ V. Peri, ‘La Repubblica di San Marino,’ *Rivista Europea – Rivista internazionale*, Vol. XXIII (1881), 59, 64. My translation.

⁴¹ Bent, 218.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴³ H. K. Bhabha, ‘Introduction: narrating the nation,’ in *Nation and Narration*, H. K. Bhabha (ed.) (London and New York, Routledge, 1990), 1-7.

⁴⁴ E. Renan, ‘What is a nation?’ in *Nation and Narration*, 8.

While between the 18th and 19th centuries Britons had studied San Marino as a paradigm of survival, embodying the self-contained character of utopian places and escaping the cyclical course of history, at the end of the 19th century the discourse of nationalism focused on new categories – such as race and language instead of geography – and the case of San Marino became less relevant to political debates. The small state that had been regarded by Addison as a link in the chain of freedom connecting the ancient city states of Greece to Republican Rome and to its modern heir, i.e. Great Britain under Whig government,⁴⁵ was becoming an Italian curiosity and a thing of the past.

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⁴⁵ See D. Niedda, *Joseph Addison e l'Italia* (Roma. Bulzoni, 1993), 52-67.

Leigh Hunt in Italy, 1822-5

Nicholas Roe

L.H. was our spiritual grandfather, a free man.

*Virginia Woolf*¹

A little notebook bound in red boards; 'Hunt in Italy' written in pencil on the front cover, with four arabesques. Inside are miscellaneous scribbles: a list of four words - 'mantichora,' 'porpoise,' 'fazzer,' 'boney;' two odd phrases, 'happiness in being' and 'hypochondria a hysterical disorder;' a query: '1789? *Calais sands - Porpoise / Viareggio strand 1822*' and underneath that: '*Mount Edgumbe orangery*,' heavily underlined and then: 'Idea of Italy: vs: miserable actuality.'

This was my sketch of Leigh Hunt's 'first life' - that is, the years leading up to his sojourn in Italy, 1822-5. As a child, he was terrified by the image of a monstrous mantichora, and the word 'porpoise' frightened; the 'fazzer' was a weird creature that stalked the cloisters of Hunt's school at Christ's Hospital and Boney was the awe-inspiring colossus of the age, about whom Hunt was consistently in two minds. As a young man Hunt evolved a philosophy of the heart, with which he tried to contain his struggles with hypochondria, anxiety and depression. Lastly, Mount Edgumbe house stood across Plymouth Sound from Stonehouse, where Hunt and his family wintered, 1821-2, *en route* to Pisa and the *Liberal* and Shelley's cremation on the beach at Viareggio.

The juxtaposition, 'Idea of Italy: miserable actuality,' opens a double perspective: the golden prospect and Hunt's anguish in the days after Shelley's death. He had anticipated that the warm south would embrace him as a haven of sunburnt mirth and happy love. One week after his arrival, he was left shattered and adrift: 'One has been taken, & the other left. Instead of the health which I looked for in his society to restore the springs of life, I waste them with the perpetual pall of sorrow.'²

¹ Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, (eds.) *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* 5 vols (London. The Hogarth Press, 1977-84), II, 130. Hereafter *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*.

² One of several fragmentary notes at the back of Hunt's journal of his sea voyage to Italy; see Nicholas Roe, *Fiery Heart: The First Life of Leigh Hunt* (London. Pimlico, 2005), 348.

Hunt's melancholy reflections might stand as the preface to one version of his years in Italy. This narrative dwells upon the failure of the *Liberal*; Hunt's ill-feelings towards Byron and Mary Shelley; his persistent money problems; his quarrel with his brother John; his wife's alcoholism and illness; the unexpectedly bleak winters and his separation from Elizabeth Kent, 'Bess,' Hunt's sister-in-law, comrade and long-time confidante. Lowering over the whole dismal scene is the loss of Shelley: 'my divine-minded friend, your friend, the friend of the universe.'³ So Hunt's glory days as the editor of the *Examiner*; as the poet of *The Story of Rimini* and as the champion of 'young poets,' came to an end. The remainder of his life would be spent indoors, with eyes turned ruefully upon the past.

Walking through Hunt's Italian haunts now, it's possible to see his experiences in relation to the landscapes, the houses and even the rooms he inhabited. In those surroundings, the light and shade fall quite differently across the contours of his life, revealing patterns of place and feeling that connect Italy in the 1820s with his earlier years. Hunt himself was particularly alert to such symmetries. To take the simplest example, he liked to find reminders of Hampstead everywhere: 'Genoa is truly *la superba*,' he told Elizabeth Kent: 'Imagine a dozen Hampsteads one over the other, intermingled with trees, rock and white streets, houses and palaces.'⁴ Hampstead for Hunt was always associated with shelter, recuperation and home. Above all, it offered him an environment in which he could write – the equivalent of Wordsworth's Grasmere or Emily Bronte's Haworth or Seamus Heaney's Glanmore. To find Genoa like 'a dozen Hampsteads' at the end of his voyage was promising indeed. A few days more would bring the reunion with Shelley and Byron and a new beginning in the 'Paradise of Exiles, Italy!'

An evening at Pisa, summer 1822. Let's join Shelley, Hunt and his family as they leave the warm light along the *Lung'Arno* and step into the hall of Byron's *Casa Lanfranchi*, a cavernous feudal palazzo. Byron reported dungeons below, hidden cells in the walls, a wide marble staircase

³ *Ibid.*, 348.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 339.

said to have been built by Michaelangelo and ghosts that terrified the servants. After the open road, the Hunts find the interior dim, cool and full of echoes. To the right is the grand staircase up to Byron's apartments on the first floor. Ahead of us is the arched doorway leading into the back rooms Byron has furnished ready for the Hunts' arrival – quite possibly, as we shall see, the original prison rooms. The first room has a vaulted ceiling, with painted designs of flowers and bowls of fruit. To the right is another room with barrel-vaulted ceilings and a window that looks out on a garden with orange trees, a weeping willow and Byron's bathing-room (this room will be Hunt's study and Byron will chat with him through that casement). The main room is painted with frescoes of trees, crumbling sarcophagi and a ruined classical temple – as in a pastoral by Claude or Poussin. Tendrils of painted foliage frame the doors. Overhead is a blue ceiling with white clouds billowing from wall to wall.

All of this decoration though faded is still visible now and it helps us understand how Hunt contrived to write himself through and eventually out of the tragedy of Shelley's death. Looking around his lodgings, he wrote: 'The look is at first very gloomy and prison-like, but you get used to it.'⁵ That knowing observation comes from one of Hunt's contributions to the *Liberal*, the first of his 'Letters from Abroad.' It reflects Hunt's awareness that his Pisan lodgings uncannily resembled the bower he had constructed for himself ten years earlier inside Horsemonger Lane Prison, with flowered wall-paper, green Venetian blinds and the ceiling painted as a breezy summer sky. It seems likely that Byron intended the rooms to recall the scene of their first meeting in prison, aware that Hunt had been most at home as 'the wit in the dungeon.' The poet's bower had enabled Hunt to survive two years in prison, writing his *Examiner* columns, his sonnets about Hampstead, canto three of *The Story of Rimini* and his masque the *Descent of Liberty*. Now, nearly a thousand miles from smoky Southwark, similar surroundings helped Hunt in the aftermath of Shelley's death.

He flung himself into work on the *Liberal*. Byron had offered *The Vision of Judgment* and Hunt resolved to make a start on writing up his impressions of Italy. When he settled down to describe the *Casa Lanfranchi*, he was immediately in touch with centuries of gaiety and violence:

⁵ *Ibid.*, 344.

It is curious to feel oneself sitting quietly in one of the old Italian houses and think of all the interests and passions that have agitated the hearts of so many generations of its tenants; all the revels and the quarrels that have echoed along its walls; all the guitars that have tinkled under its windows; all the scuffles that have disputed its doors. Along the great halls, how many feet have hurried in alarm! how many stately beauties have drawn their quiet trains! how many huge torches have ushered magnificence up the staircases! how much blood perhaps has been shed!⁶

With brisk strokes Hunt captures the deep allure of Italy: all the long generations of passion and revelry; all the music at nightfall; all the scuffles; the hurry and alarms and, in the torch-blaze and the whispering textures of 'ushered magnificence,' the suggestion of intrigue, bloodshed, murder. Hunt is looking back to ideas of Italy in Shakespeare, Webster and Gothic novels, but he is also opening the way for many nineteenth and twentieth-century writers about Italy – most obviously perhaps in his 'Letter from Abroad' about 'Genoa.'

Everywhere Hunt went he absorbed impressions with his painter's eye: faces; the colours of houses; dusty artificial flowers in the churches; huge gold ear-rings; 'a merry old brown gardener, with a great straw-hat and bare legs.' A boatman 'with his brown hue, his white shirt and his red cap, made a complete picture.' In the intense Mediterranean light, the cap appeared 'like a scarlet bud in the blue atmosphere.' Here were gardens with statues and orange-trees and windows with vines trailed sinuously over and around them 'like great luxuriant green hair.' After years of reading, singing and writing Italian, Hunt was fluent in the language. He went into every church he came to, pausing in one to hear a sermon on tears – 'the tears of joy and the tears of sorrow, of penitent tears, tears of anger, spite, ill-temper, worldly regret, love, patience.' At each turning were scenes that reminded him of the poets – Chaucer was said to have been at Genoa. In a back street a man was singing and playing a pipe exactly like the 'ancient shepherds.' As he wandered down another street he heard distant music, a 'bustling sound of feet' and was caught-up in a religious procession: he noted a four-year-old girl with silver crown and sceptre; a little St. John dressed in lamb-skin; clergymen with lighted candles and hordes of ragged little boys collecting drips of wax to sell; a young friar with a head from a Raphael painting; another friar trying to

⁶ *Ibid.*, 346.

look saintly while eyeing the girls; St. Antonio in wax, large as life, kneeling before a waxen Virgin and yet more friars, their heads cowled like executioners. The paganism of Italy fascinated him - there was no doubt, Hunt thought, that, just as Jupiter sat now under his new name of St Peter, 'the ancients, under other names, had these identical processions.'

The vivid details Hunt drew from the streets and alleys of Genoa would later bring 'life's flash' to the painterly impressions of Italy in Robert Browning's *Fra Lippo Lippi* - 'a hurry of feet' and 'whiffs of song,' the urchin watching

Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The dropping of the wax to sell again ...⁷

Brother Lippo's gathering of 'old gossips,' 'candle-ends,' 'earrings and a bunch of flowers' would revisit the territory that Hunt had discovered in 1822 and written about in his 'Letters from Abroad.' Hunt's sense of lurking danger - huge torches, ushered magnificence, friars cowled like executioners - would later be at the heart of Dickens's and E. M. Forster's visions in which Italian vivaciousness can quickly turn to violence.

Hunt's writings about Italy marked a stylistic breakthrough with far-reaching implications. His 'Letters from Abroad' adopt a fanciful, free-flowing, associative technique that gathers elusive, momentary impressions - much as he had done in *The Story of Rimini* and in the prose poem *A Now. Descriptive of a Hot Day* written with John Keats in summer 1820. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* had speculated that Fancy might be 'a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space.' Echoing Coleridge, Hunt's *Wishing-Cap Papers* deliberately 'mak[e] as little of time as ... of space' and in some ways they anticipate the experimental techniques of twentieth-century literary Modernism.⁸

⁷ Ian Jack (ed.), *Browning. Poetical Works, 1833-1864* (Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1970), 568-78.

⁸ James Engell and W. J. Bate, (eds.) *Biographia Literaria*, The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 7, 2 vols. (Princeton and London. Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd and Princeton University Press, 1983), I, 305. Leigh Hunt, 'The Wishing Cap' in *The Wishing-Cap Papers. By Leigh Hunt* (Boston and New York. Lee, Shepard and Dillingham, 1873), 16. Hereafter *Wishing-Cap Papers*.

A year passes. Hunt and his family move from Pisa to the village of Albaro, above Genoa, where they part from Byron and Mary Shelley, and then onwards in late August 1823 to Florence. '[W]e get out into the country air in a day or two,' Hunt writes and on 19 October, his 39th birthday, he dates from 'bel Maiano.'⁹

Maiano was and is a hamlet about three miles to the north of Florence, in sight of Fiesole and bordering on the 'Valle delle Donna' – Boccaccio's setting for the *Decameron*. An ideal spot for any admirer of Italian poetry, one might think, and there were additional attractions for Hunt as well. Like Hampstead, Maiano was outside the city yet within easy reach of it and the enclosed setting of Hunt's new home, surrounded by hills, resembled the Vale of Health. Hunt described it all in a letter sent to his sister-in-law with an engraving of his new home:

I look right across to Fiesole out of my study window, taking a full view of the Doccia by the way; which is the name of that arcaded house you see up aloft, so called from a water-spout, which is the origin of the little rivulet just mentioned. The hill in the background (a part of the Apennines) which has unfortunately been stripped of its trees, in process of time for firewood (though not quite so barely as in the picture) ought to send its line further on-ward ... On this slope of it, which is full of green lanes, & olive-trees, & vines, our house stands. It is a sort of large farm-house, though the ground floor, which is occupied by another family in summer time, & is locked up in winter, partakes more of the villa. The remainder, which we occupy, we have never taken kindly to, on account of a certain dreariness & inconvenience and this is the reason why I have never sent you the particulars of it, our rooms having been changed several times. In spring & summer however I hope to occupy sometimes a room more retired from the rest of the family than my present study, & sometimes a most cheerful little summer-house at the very top of the house in a little turret. But at present I can sit in neither for *good*, as there are no fire-places in them; & the winter here, though very fine overhead, is colder than we expected.¹⁰

Hunt's fifteenth-century 'farm-house' is no longer to be seen, but the nineteenth-century development on the site is all too visible in the shape

⁹ Leigh Hunt to John Hunt, 3 October 1823; Leigh Hunt to R. Finch, 19 October 1823.

David R. Cheney Papers, MSS 157, Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections, The University of Toledo, hereafter *Cheney Papers*.

¹⁰ Leigh Hunt to Elizabeth Kent, 8 January 1824. *Cheney Papers*.

of the *Villa Di Maiano*. Queen Victoria stayed here in 1883 and the villa also featured in the Merchant/Ivory film of *Room with a View* and Zefferelli's *Tea with Mussolini*. A massive, two-storey tower replaces the little turret room where Hunt put up green blinds, book-shelves and a little sofa and prepared to write his *Wishing-Cap Essays*:

I do what I can. I think of Petrarch and Boccaccio, of Milton and Galileo and Fiesole, which I see from my window. And which is a common boundary to my walks. I endeavor to keep the vines and the olive trees new to me ... In short, I am in a world of poetry and romance, of vines and olives and myrtles (which grow wild), of blue mountains and never-ending orchards, with a beautiful city in the middle of it. What signifies? I think of an English field in a sylvan country, a cottage and oaks in the corner, a path and stile and a turf full of daisies and a child's book with a picture in it becomes more precious to me than all the landscapes of Claude.¹¹

Once again, Hunt arranged his study to recreate the bower he had enjoyed in prison: 'It may not be the most grateful thing in the world to think of a jail while strolling about the most classical ground in Tuscany,' Hunt writes, adding: 'I confess I think of it very often.'¹² Exile at Maiano over the cold winter of 1823-4 had effectively pitched him back into prison, enabling him to recapture the circumstances of his earlier poems and essays with, now, a more daring edge, 'making as little of time as ... of space:'

I make love very often a hundred years ago and may dine to-morrow at the table of Anacreon. My tea I am fond of taking with Pope and the Miss Blounts. A person in Tuscany often rouses me out of the club, at the Mermaid in Cornhill, where I am listening to Beaumont and Ben Jonson. I make nothing of being in Arcady at twelve o'clock and with Horace between two and three.¹³

The Wishing-Cap draws in history, biography, poetry, reminiscence, theatre, gossip and anecdote and takes its bearings from place – most often the geography of London – rather than 'the order of time:'

There, at Will's Coffee-House, used to sit Dryden in his arm-chair, encouraging a young author with a pinch out of his snuff-box. Addison is keeping it up over the way at Button's, with Steele, Garth, Congreve and Colonel Brett

¹¹ 'Spring,' in *Wishing-Cap Papers*, 78-9.

¹² *Ibid.*, 78.

¹³ 'The Wishing Cap,' in *Wishing-Cap Papers*, 16.

(who married Savage's mother and bought Cibber's wig). Here come, to attend a rehearsal, Mrs. Barry, who acted such fine love-parts with her husband; Mrs. Bracegirdle, Congreve's mistress and Mrs. Oldfield, the Flavia of the *Tatler*, who gave Savage a pension.¹⁴

These historical figures mingle alongside Hunt's friends and contemporaries Charles and Mary Lamb, William Hazlitt, Edmund Kean and Vincent Novello and the narrative develops along and across the streets and squares of London:

In Leicester Square, at the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds ... were many meetings of Johnson, Goldsmith and others. Leicester House (now lost in the large house with shops on the north side) was the residence of Frederick, Prince of Wales, who affected the love of liberty and patronized Thomson. Whitcomb Street was formerly called Hedge Lane, no doubt from a lane which ran up from Charing Cross to the fields about Piccadilly and Marylebone. Think of lovers having walked there on a May-morning! In a house opposite Coventry Street lodged an early friend of mine ... an intelligent fellow, full of goodness and in love with music and poetry and all good things. I once walked with him a hundred and twelve miles along the coast from Margate to Brighton, talking, laughing and singing all the way ... We did it in four days. Poor J. R.! He had an overstock of love, which was not very happily placed. He became sick, unsuccessful, a wanderer and was at last taken prisoner by the French and died during the long detention of his countrymen by Napoleon. He wrote me a long letter from Bagnères, where he had been suffered to go for the benefit of his health and I delayed, from day to day, in order to write him as long an answer, till I delayed for months and heard of his death. The letter has been on my conscience ever since.¹⁵

In a few lines Hunt ranges from literary associations, through local history, to personal memories, a death in far-off France and his own enduring regret. Hunt's light touch is inimitable, but the associative technique whereby memory is separated from the order of time and space may have proved liberating for one of his twentieth-century admirers, the author of *Street Haunting. A London Adventure*: Virginia Woolf.

Hunt's reflections on time and space hark back to Laurence Sterne, yet also sound startlingly modern:

¹⁴ 'A Walk in Covent Garden,' in *Wishing-Cap Papers*, 23-4.

¹⁵ 'Piccadilly and the West End,' in *Wishing-Cap Papers*, 34-5.

It is a vulgar supposition, that one man of forty and another man of forty are of the same age and that if two persons set out at four o'clock to dinner and arrive at the same place at the hour commonly called five, they have both taken the same time to arrive ... We have no idea of time but that of space. In thinking of the hour between one and two, we measure a distance on our watches. Now, as in the same space of measurement may be crammed many particles and in the same journey one road may be straight and another crooked, so in the same space of time (the common phrase), we may include many different masses of duration and varieties of experience.¹⁶

Twentieth-century buzz-words like 'relativity' come to mind, although Hunt comes closest, perhaps, to evoking the effects of Virginia Woolf's novels in which time and space are infinitely permeable to consciousness. The following passage from *Orlando* is well-known, but not usually juxtaposed with Leigh Hunt:

But time, unfortunately, though it makes animals and vegetables bloom and fade with amazing punctuality, has no such simple effect on the mind of man. The mind of man, moreover, works with equal strangeness upon the body of time. An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be represented on the time piece of the mind by one second. This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation.¹⁷

I'm not fixing Hunt as a 'source' for Woolf, but merely suggesting that Hunt's writings may have helped her towards her own distinctive manner: 'I like [Hunt's] inquisitive human sympathies,' she writes, 'history so dull because of its battles & laws; & sea voyages in books so dull because the traveller will describe beauties instead of going into the cabins & saying what the sailors looked like, wore, eat, said, how they behaved.'¹⁸ Here is Mrs. Ramsay 'going into' things past in *To the Lighthouse*:

And was Carrie still living at Marlow and was everything still the same? Oh she could remember it as if it were yesterday – going on the river, feeling very cold. But if the Mannings made a plan they stuck to it. Never should she forget Herbert killing a wasp with a teaspoon on the

¹⁶ 'The Wishing Cap,' in *Wishing-Cap Papers*, 16-17.

¹⁷ Virginia Woolf, *Orlando. A Biography* (Harmondsworth. Penguin, 1972), 69.

¹⁸ *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, II, 130.

bank! And it was still going on, Mrs. Ramsay mused, gliding like a ghost among the chairs and tables of that drawing-room on the banks of the Thames where she had been so very, very cold twenty years ago; but now she went among them like a ghost and it fascinated her, as if, while she had changed, that particular day, now become very still and beautiful, had remained there, all these years.

Whereas Hunt had written from prison or exile in terms of fanciful projections across time and space, Woolf's narrative hovers between the present and the past like a spectre beyond the world of time. Like Hunt, Woolf is keenly alert to the goings-on of London life and, again like him, she can move from vivid detail to a more abstracted, ghost-like manner. Here is Clarissa Dalloway crossing Victoria Street one morning in June after the war:

even now, at this hour, discreet old dowagers were shooting out on errands of mystery and the shop-keepers were fidgeting in their windows with their paste and diamonds, their lovely old sea-green brooches in eighteenth-century settings to tempt Americans ... and she, too, loving it as she did with an absurd and faithful passion, being part of it, since her people were courtiers once in the time of the Georges, she, too, was going that very night to kindle and illuminate; to give her party. But how strange, on entering the park, the silence; the mist; the hum; the slow-moving happy ducks; the pouched birds waddling and who should be coming along with his back against the Government buildings, most appropriately, carrying a despatch box stamped with the Royal Arms, who but Hugh Whitbread; her old friend Hugh – the admirable Hugh!

'Good morning to you, Clarissa!' said Hugh, rather extravagantly, for they had known each other as children. 'Where are you off to?'

'I love walking in London,' said Mrs Dalloway. 'Really, it's better than walking in the country.'¹⁹

Walking in London better than walking in the country: that hits the authentic note of Hunt's essays, as does the imperceptible transition from the sights and sounds of London to a more reflective voice that is unaware of the hour, 'how strange ... the silence; the mist.' Hunt is always capable of such moments. In his early *Reflector* essay, *A Day by the Fire*, for instance, and in his collaboration with Keats, *A Now. Descriptive of a*

¹⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Frogmore, St Albans. Granada, 1981), 6-7.

Hot Day, where Hunt writes of the peculiar effects of embracing the 'space of time' or 'mass of duration' in a single moment. Far from excluding varieties of experience, Hunt finds that writing to 'now,' to the instant, opens the present to infinite possibilities, 'bringing the most remote things together,' Hunt says, much as Lily Briscoe will glimpse how Mrs. Ramsay 'brought together this and that and then this and so made ... something – this scene on the beach for example, this moment of friendship and liking, which survived, after all these years, complete.'²⁰

Hunt's *Wishing-Cap Papers* were an attempt to cast off the 'perpetual pall of sorrow' and 'live in imagination:' 'I can dilate myself, till mountains become mole-hills,' he writes, 'or shrink into such diminutive compass, as to stand by the side of a brook and live in imagination on the banks of it, with the little insects, as if it were some mighty river. Millions of times have I ridden on the bat's back and gone to sleep in a buttercup.'²¹ Ironically, in attempting to banish the thought of Shelley's death - 'It is not for me to think of the drowning' – Hunt had projected himself as the 'airy spirit' that would become the Victorian idea of his lost friend, Shelley/Ariel. Woolf's writings are saturated with references to Shelley. Her affinity with Hunt, sketched in this essay, is less well known although Woolf herself acknowledged the likeness. A century after Shelley's death and some six decades since Hunt's, Virginia Woolf greeted them across the years and claimed kinship with both: 'These free, vigorous spirits advance the world,' she observed, '& when one comes across them in the strange waste of the past one says, "Ah! you're my sort," – a great compliment.'²²

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²⁰ Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (Frogmore, St Albans. Granada, 1981), 150.

²¹ 'The Wishing Cap,' in *Wishing-Cap Papers*, 18.

²² *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, II, 130.

‘Walking in the footsteps of the Illustrious Dead:’ Nineteenth-century Travellers in Southern Italy

Sharon Ouditt

In a recent article on British travel writing, Ben Colbert draws attention to the flurry of interest in European travel by the British in the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. This enthusiasm centred initially on France, but later concentrated on Italy. The Italy that attracted attention, however, was that of the Grand Tour. The major sites, the major cities, the *palazzi*, art treasures and routes by which they may be visited were the primary focus of attention. Few travellers cared to deviate from the beaten track.¹ The focus of this paper is on three writers and travellers of the early nineteenth century who were fascinated by the less-travelled paths of the southernmost Italian provinces. Conventionally thought to be barbaric, pestilential and liable to earthquakes, this area was, of course, once the site of Greek and Roman civilizations and thus held significant appeal to those willing to abandon the more conventional itineraries for the ‘nooks and by-ways’ of Basilicata, Calabria and Apulia. The period under discussion is one reverberating with rebellions and insurrections against the Bourbon monarchy, which had assumed the throne of the Kingdom of Naples at the defeat of Joachim Murat in 1815. It is also the period before the railway system had developed and well before any other form of mechanised transport was available. Of the three writers discussed, one travelled on horse-back, accompanied by armed guards and pack-animals for his baggage. The other two travelled on foot. If we are to agree with Auden that ‘[W]hat we see depends on who’s observing’² then not only the means of travel, but the perspective of the traveller and the hierarchy of social relations that provides the setting for introductions to local inhabitants will determine the version of the culture and landscape

¹ See B. Colbert ‘*Bibliography of British Travel Writing 1780-1840: The European Tour, 1814-18 (excluding Britain and Ireland)*,’ *Cardiff Corvey. Reading the Romantic Text*, 13 (Winter 2004). Online: accessed 21.11.05 <http://www.cf.ac.uk/encap/corvey/articles/cc13_n01.html>

² W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland* (London. Faber and Faber, 1937), 211. Quoted in Tim Youngs ‘The Importance of Travel Writing,’ *The European English Messenger*, 13, 2 (2004), 59.

produced by the travel narrative. I want to suggest some of the differences of perception and perspective generated by these various forms of travel alongside other variations in point of view.

The travellers in question are the Honourable Richard Keppel Craven (travelling in 1818), friend of Sir William Gell and once Chamberlain to Caroline, Princess of Wales; Craufurd Tait Ramage, who undertook his journey in 1828, tutor to the sons of the British Consul at Naples and Edward Lear, now best known for his nonsense verse, but in 1847, when he undertook the journey, a professional landscape painter.³ Craven was a scholar and a gentleman. His account pays homage to the classical past (rather as did Eustace's and Colt Hoare's before him⁴): his knowledge is considerable and his enthusiasm for the historical texture of the region unmistakable. Ramage similarly brings an educated eye to this now wild, romantic landscape. The title of this paper, 'Walking in the footsteps of the Illustrious Dead,' is derived from a quotation from the opening of Ramage's book.⁵ In once sense that walking is, of course, metaphorical: Ramage is seeking to imbibe the aura of his classical heroes (rather as Gissing was to do at the end of the century⁶), to absorb the atmosphere, in the hope, perhaps, of improving his moral and cultural education - as others had on the Grand Tour. The shades of Virgil, Horace, Catullus and Theocritus (among others) seem to precede and surround him and to shape the nature of his prose. But it is also meant literally in that Ramage intended to visit, on foot, every spot made famous in poems and tales and myths - and his knowledge of these is extensive. Lear, on

³ Richard Keppel Craven, *A Tour Through the Southern Provinces of the Kingdom of Naples* (London. Rodwell and Martin, 1821); Craufurd Tait Ramage, *The Nooks and By-Ways of Italy. Wanderings in Search of its Ancient Remains and Modern Superstitions* (Liverpool. Edward Howell, 1868). This book was published four decades after the journey. Ramage gave as his reason for this a reluctance to implicate, in the eyes of the Bourbon government, any person who had received him hospitably during his journey. Edward Lear, *Journal of a Landscape Painter in Southern Calabria &c.* (London. Richard Bentley, 1852). Reprinted under the title *Edward Lear in Southern Italy* (London. William Kimber, 1964). Page references will be to the latter volume.

⁴ John Chetwode Eustace, *A Classical Tour Through Italy* 4 vols, 4th ed., (Leghorn, 1818). Sir Richard Colt Hoare, *A Classical Tour Through Italy and Sicily* (London. J. Mawman, 1819).

⁵ Ramage, *Preface*, v.

⁶ George Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea. Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy* (London. Chapman and Hall, 1901).

the other hand, is driven more by the shapes and forms he sees in front of him as defamiliarizing established cultural tropes. Thus we see, in this brief selection, three kinds of narrative emerge: one validated by the claims of classical antiquity (Italy is *always* not what it was); the second by a humanist interest in the people, their histories and traditions and the third by the inhospitable and awe-inspiring landscapes in which those individuals' histories and traditions are set.

Richard Keppel Craven

Letters of recommendation were crucial to anyone travelling off the beaten track and all three were well-supplied with these. Craven, who moved in the highest circles in Naples, was often to be found in Lady Blessington's salon and was widely praised for his manners and charm. He seemed to command a very high tariff, gaining access to quite opulent residences. Ramage, who dedicates his volume to General Filangieri, Prince of Satriano, also seems to have been very well connected, although he by no means always makes use of this and often stays in impoverished dwellings. Lear, too, had the requisite letters, but seems to have been offered more humble accommodation. Craven, however, sets off with 'all the attendance of high rank,'⁷ on horseback, dressed in uniform, accompanied at the outset by two *gendarmes* as an escort, having sent ahead two servants, three saddle horses and a muleteer, for his baggage. At a later point he is provided with four civic guards (to do him 'honour' rather than to protect⁸) – and someone, presumably, to accommodate his English terrier. Inevitably, this entourage has a rather imposing effect on those on whom he descends. On arrival at Troia, he says, 'I have every reason to suppose that my uniform and that of my attendants made the natives apprehensive that the hospitality thus solicited might be enforced in the shape of a billet,'⁹ and the use of the term 'natives' suggests an innate sense of cultural superiority. At Ostuni (near Bari) his host is to be found 'painfully wading in silk stockings through floods of mire' to greet him, before ushering him into a 'hospitable mansion where I was entertained in a style of magnificence far superior to anything I had yet met with.'¹⁰ The sense of quiet satisfaction at being the recipient of

⁷ Ramage, vi.

⁸ Craven, 115.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

this egregious respect is counterbalanced by the suggestion that perhaps he has underestimated the richer inhabitants: not 'natives' here, but hosts. Not all came up to scratch, though. One family to whom he has a letter of introduction is considered 'not much used to opportunities of exercising it, if I may judge from the confusion created by my arrival and the more than usual delay of the dinner hour!'¹¹ Craven's sense of his own social standing and of the level of hospitality he assumes to be his due, colours his narrative throughout and by implication sets up an opposition between the sophistication of the British ruling classes and the (amusing or irritating) nature of the more erratic social arrangements of Southern Italy.

Craven's frame of reference is the Neapolitan and English nobility. He is well-informed about the classical inheritance of the places he visits, well-read in accounts by previous travellers, makes it his business to understand the history, topography and commercial activities of the towns on his itinerary and offers detailed descriptions of the churches, cathedrals and *palazzi* that fall under his gaze. He has particular views about taste (finds the baroque extravagances of Lecce, for example, disgusting¹²) and is learned about mythologies attaching themselves to particular places (the *tarantella* at Taranto, or the hair-highlighting properties of the rivers Crati and Coscile, for example). He has good tales to tell gleaned from the well-connected people with whom he is brought into contact, but he is more accustomed to conversing with the culturally and politically educated than with the ordinary inhabitants of the land. His implied reader, it seems, is a member of his own class, interested in the Classical world, yet confident that its influence has produced another great civilization in which he and his reader are arbiters of taste and humanism: confident, a little smug, yet proud of an inheritance which has evolved the democracy which defeated the demagogue Napoleon. The 1820 insurrection with which this account ends, a revolt that attempted to impose a form of constitutional government on the Bourbon monarchy, was a movement with which he had some sympathy. Its prime movers, however, were liberal reforming monarchists, not agricultural labourers. While there is an unspoken preference for the company of the gracious, he nevertheless is intrigued by the humbler inhabitants of the land. He does not speak their language, does not recount any meetings with them, but generalizes as follows:

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹² *Ibid.*, 136.

The outline of the face is generally more African, the complexion either a pale olive, or a highly tinted copper colour; the hair is ... frizzed like that of negroes. Their stature is low, nor did they, though straight, strike me as well made. The expression of the eye is that of melancholy, qualified by a certain cast of wildness.¹³

This is the kind of image we find in accounts of other, similarly elevated travellers (such as Colt Hoare or Forsyth¹⁴) and while it is not likely to generate respect or admiration, the melancholy and wildness are sufficiently Other to the English ruling classes as to suggest a kind of mystique. Here it is a romanticized image of the agricultural labourer, but it can have another, more threatening implication for a mind coloured by the French Revolution and the ensuing violence which had engulfed Europe. When transferred to a murdered band of brigands, the image seems to appeal to the gothic horrors of a novel by Mrs Radcliffe:

the sullen brow, strongly contracted over the glaring eyeball, the pallid lip curled to a sardonic smile, each bespoke the final agonies of desperate bravery, ineffectual revenge, or the hopeless struggles of expiring crime.¹⁵

Undoubtedly, Craven attracts a range of experiences different from those undergone by Ramage and Lear, neither of whom witnesses a shoot-out nor is mistaken for visiting royalty (which Craven deals with rather sullenly – it impedes his progress). His account is informed by scholarly debates and covers a wide range of reference – classical, geological, historical and political. He doesn't have the passion for history that Ramage seems to have, but he is unusually struck by the landscape of Calabria, whose 'magic ascendancy' he is reluctant to leave:

in no other part of Europe has the hand of Nature traced so magnificent an outline for the genius or industry of man to work upon, or the efforts of art to improve.¹⁶

His view of Calabria, then, is that of a classicist who is also a post-Revolutionary, post-Romantic, proto-Victorian keen to celebrate not only the touchstones of antiquity but also the magnificence of Nature and the importance of self-help. Calabria is in a raw state, awaiting completion by a suitably gifted force. The sum of its parts can be catalogued,

¹³ *Ibid.*, 247-8.

¹⁴ Joseph Forsyth, *Remarks on Antiquities, Arts and Letters during an Excursion in Italy in the years 1802 and 1803* (London. John Murray, 1816).

¹⁵ Craven, 59.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 350.

enumerated, reduced to order by a well-planned itinerary and plenty of documentary detail. Craven's travelogue is synoptic, descriptive, impersonal. Although it goes considerably beyond the Grand Tour in terms of its itinerary, it appears to draw from accounts by those such as Eustace, Colt Hoare or Forsyth for its literary and cultural models.

Craufurd Tait Ramage (April – September 1828)

Craufurd Tait Ramage had been brought up and educated in Scotland. At the age of twenty-four, having acted as tutor to the sons of Sir Henry Lushington, British Consul at Naples, he decided to make a solitary and pedestrian tour of the southern provinces of Italy. His aim was to:

visit every spot in Italy which classic writers had rendered famous – to identify the site of battle-fields and trace the position of the adverse armies – to realize the scenes so poetically described by Virgil – to walk in the footsteps of the illustrious dead and muse over the graves that cannot die.¹⁷

Ambition, vigour, idealism and the desire to fix his cultural lodestones shine out of this. He prepares to throw himself 'unarmed and fearlessly on the protection of the Italian people' in order to experience those scenes that had 'witnessed the noblest exhibitions of human prowess.' There is small sign here of Craven's anxiety about the wildness of the 'natives.' Ramage is less interested in recounting the familiar history of ancient towns than he is in exploring the everyday life of the Italians who, according to him, were 'more at home with an unpretending traveller than with those whom they could not help regarding as their superiors' and who were 'ready to enter into conversation with one who made no pretence to be different from themselves.'¹⁸ And another thing emerges here to immediately distinguish him from Craven: he speaks the language.

He must have cut an extraordinary figure working his way, on foot, through provinces in which communications between nearby villages are rendered difficult enough. And his eccentricity would have been underlined by his appearance:

¹⁷ Ramage, v.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vi.

I have a white merino frock-coat, well furnished with capacious pockets, into which I have stuffed my maps and note-books; nankeen trousers, a large-brimmed straw hat, white shoes and an umbrella.¹⁹

Ploughing about the Italian countryside, with neither guide nor companion, dressed like this, would certainly have resulted in some odd reactions. Apparently unaware of this and, having scared off one band of women, he innocently comments: 'What they could have imagined me to be I cannot conceive, for they gave me no opportunity of questioning them.'²⁰ His itinerary forces him to clamber up mountain paths, to hack his way through overgrown passageways and to wade through rivers. Only vaguely conscious of the uproar he causes when arriving in a town square in a damp and dishevelled state, demanding to be conducted to the residence of the local magistrate, Ramage thinks only of sticking to his aims and achieving his objectives. 'I kept to my resolution' seems to sum up his unwillingness to stray from his course of action; 'having satisfied my curiosity' peppers the account as he inspects sepulchral inscriptions or collections of ancient coins and 'I rose in good spirits, ready to encounter the fatigues of another day's pleasure' typifies his attitude.

Unlike Craven, Ramage did not have an armed guard. At one stage he is briefly accompanied by some armed soldiers, but only because they happened to be travelling in the same direction as him. Brigands were assumed to infest the Calabrian countryside. He is warned about them and hears stories of their unruly deeds. But with blithe and enthusiastic confidence he ignores the threat and never in fact encounters it, which was perhaps just as well as his sole means of self-defence was his umbrella, which he intended to flourish in an intimidating way at any banditti in the hope that they would think it an obscure weapon and take fright. Insurrection, nevertheless, was much in the air when he was travelling in 1828. The revolt of 1820 that Craven witnessed, an account of which forms an Appendix to his book, was ultimately put down and this of course fomented pockets of rebellion across the South, which were given greater encouragement by the Greek revolution of 1828. It was generally assumed by those Ramage meets that he, as an enlightened Scot, would have sympathy with such groups, but he normally plays this down and rather indicates a desire not to become involved with local political issues.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

The one exception to this is his commentary on the intellectually depressing effect on ordinary people of the clergy. He is, of course, a Protestant and while not ostentatiously anti-Catholic, he permits himself some criticism of the oppressive power of the Church and state over education. While he comes into contact with plenty of well-educated individuals, the majority, he contends, are 'as yet unfitted for a representative form of government.'²¹ This is not, he suggests, because of a lack of native intelligence, but because of the system of government and education, by which 'Everything is done to repress their energies and to keep their minds in obscure twilight.'²²

I can see [he says] that there is a reign of terror everywhere – I do not allude to brigands, but to the repression exercised by government against intellect and against all who show a desire to improve their minds.²³

A certain link with Craven's cast of mind thus emerges – Ramage shares that British horror of what the French Revolution ('Reign of Terror') had become and implicitly retreats to the safety of notions about British standards of fair play under a constitutional monarchy and parliament. And he, too, is influenced by the post-Romantic idea of the noble savage and honest labourer, of the need to create space in the modern state for self-help to flourish. Indeed, he goes much further than Craven in this respect. Rather than stereotyping Italian peasants according to their physical characteristics, Ramage analyses the process by which they are kept in ignorance. The classical past, for him, provides an example of civilized, sophisticated humanism that is being viciously and systematically destroyed by autocratic Bourbon rule and its principal institution, the Catholic Church.

Ramage, then, makes it his business to meet a great many more ordinary Italians than does Craven. He stays overnight variously in the houses of educated men, monasteries, rude peasant shacks, a room above a baker's oven, once with a man under police surveillance and once in an animal pen, where he is awoken by the 'pugnacious or playful propensities of two young pigs' who upset a chicken coop onto his bed.²⁴ Where he stays and those he meets affects the form of his narrative, which is almost

²¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

²² *Ibid.*, 95.

²³ *Ibid.*, 76.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

dialogic in its inclusion of multiple points of view. His conversations cover, for example, forms of local government, the education system and its recent history, government taxes, local dialects, classical history according to the particular detail of the places where he is staying, local remains – coins, other antiquities – the superstitions and religious practices of the area, the benefits of the Napoleonic Code, methods of preserving figs and catching quails. And these are conducted in a range of tones of voice, from the cultivated and engaged, to the quizzical and then the combative, such as when he is threatened with arrest by a lieutenant, thinking him to be some kind of spy – ‘I saw at once that he was an unprincipled bully and I determined to meet him without flinching.’²⁵ He presents himself as vulnerable, open-minded and there to learn rather than to teach. One becomes conscious that he is unprotected and that he has only his own presence of mind to call upon as a defence against brigands, spies or over-zealous policemen. He has constant trouble with local authorities over his passport (which is quite in order, although many would like to prove otherwise) and is driven to rely on the goodwill and judgment of those he meets in order to set him on the right path. And, ultimately, this placing himself in the hands of others and trusting to their benevolence results (in most cases) in benevolence in return. As he says in his Preface, ‘from almost all [he] received unvarying kindness.’²⁶ In contrast to Craven’s urbane, magisterial account, Ramage’s is bristling with detail. Voices, observations, light, colour, history, stories jostle with each other for ascendancy. The lure of the classical past provides a steadying pulse, but it is offset by the many and conflicting tales that speak to the lives of the living.

Two convergent narratives emerge from this account: one constructed by the writings and remains of the ‘illustrious dead’; the other from the words of the inhabitants of southern Italy, whose lives are seen to be at the mercy of governmental changes, of a fear of revolution and of countless examples of petty bureaucracy which prevents travel, education and the enlivening of the mind. While on the one hand Ramage is able to trace in his contemporaries customs and tastes that go right back to ancient times, on the other, he is equally keen to piece together the details of these ordinary lives, to build a richly textured view of the place and its people on the foundations of its past.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, v.

Edward Lear

Edward Lear, like Ramage, completed his tour of Southern Italy on foot. He had a few more creature comforts – a companion, for example, in John Proby and a muleteer that they hired at Reggio: a taciturn fellow known as Ciccio, who is characterized, comically, by his grave amenability. Lear's object was to cover as much of Calabria as he could in the period July to September of 1847 with a view to making sketches and drawings that he would later turn into lithographs and sell. In short, quite apart from the curiosity which fuelled this tour, he was on business, earning his living. And he came well-prepared, having read Craven, Swinburne's account of the area (1777-80) and Arthur Strutt's (1841),²⁷ another illustrator, who is mostly concerned with an attack on him and his party by a band of brigands and of their subsequent rescue and rehabilitation by a local nobleman. Lear, while conscious of the classical heritage of the area, does not allow it to obscure his view, a view much more clearly coloured by Romantic and gothic impressions of the province than were those of his predecessors:

Calabria! – No sooner is the word uttered than a new world arises before the mind's eye, – torrents, fastnesses, all the prodigality of mountain scenery, – caves, brigands and pointed hats, – Mrs Radcliffe and Salvator Rosa, – costumes and character, – horrors and magnificence without end.²⁸

He was, then, also on an adventure. The book that he published in 1852, *Journals of a Landscape Painter in Southern Calabria and the Kingdom of Naples*, was accompanied by twenty lithographs, mostly of landscapes, predominantly depicting the dramatic nature of the terrain: rugged cliffs in masses and spires, dwarfing villages that somehow seem perched among them, any human figures minute against the imposing scenery.

Lear's descriptions are, as one might expect, often painterly and conveyed in terms of line, colour and form: 'blue, woody hills,' 'ridges and lines beyond lines of chalky-bright heights,' 'glaringly white fiumaras, a great tract from hill to sea of glitter and arid glare;' 'a great rock rising out of the plain and built with all that beauty of simple form and that independent irregularity, so identified now in our minds with the towns

²⁷ Swinburne, Henry *Travels in the Two Sicilies* (London. 1783); Arthur Strutt, *A Pedestrian Tour in Calabria and Sicily* (London. T. C. Newby, 1842).

²⁸ Lear, 29.

of Calabria;’ ‘villages, starry bright against the blue waves.’²⁹ And unlike Craven, who seemed confident that the Calabrian landscape was ripe for the improvement of art, for Lear it has its own brooding majesty:

Now our route lay on this, now on that side of the torrent, sometimes at the level of the river, among blooming oleander-trees, of the largest size I ever saw [...]; sometimes at a great height, among the trunks of luxuriant ilex-trees, overhanging the rocks. The sentiment of these scenes and solitudes – the deep, deep solitudes of those mountains! Are such as neither pen nor pencil can describe!³⁰

For Lear, then, the landscape has about it a kind of ‘immanence’ that he doesn’t seek to master or control, which animates *him*, rather than the other way around and whose silences and solitudes are capable of revivifying him.

Like Ramage, Lear attracted a certain amount of attention, travelling around these unknown parts. Local people found it hard to understand why somebody should visit somewhere as remote as Polsi, for example, which so self-evidently has little to offer. That they should be drawing landscapes made Lear and his companion even more curious. Again, as was the case with Ramage, it was often assumed that they were spies, perhaps heading up an invasion. Strangers making plans and taking notes were bound to cause concern in this much-invaded region. But the peasants were generally pleasant and generous, offering refreshment and hospitality and Lear’s ability to speak Italian both brings him close to them and renders them amusingly out of touch with the wider world. One ‘begged me to ask my king to ask hers to let her have salt cheaper;’ another put in a claim to have her house re-roofed.³¹ There is a great deal of curiosity about England and Lear rehearses, without comment, some of the suppositions about his country – for instance that ‘It is altogether about the third part of the size of the city of Rome [...]. The whole place is divided into two equal parts by an arm of the sea, under which there is a great tunnel.’³² The same questions arise time and time again – how can there be no rice, no wine? What misery! And of course, Lear cannot always pursue the rational line of truth and justice. Having dozed off in

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 67, 66, 65.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 63-4.

³² *Ibid.*, 76.

the household of Don Ferdinando at Rocella, he wakes and answers their questions at random. Upon his responses he reflects:

I will not say what I did not aver to be the natural growth of England – camels, cochineal, sea-horses, or gold-dust and as for the *célèbre tunnel*, I fear I invested it drowsily with all kinds of fabulous qualities.³³

To top this, however, with the assertion that England did in fact produce fruit, the like of which was perhaps not seen in that part of Italy, seemed an insult to the credulity of these people: “E che cosa sono Gooseberries e Gringhegi?” said the whole party in a rage; “non ci sono queste cose – sono sogni.” So there was nothing for Proby and Lear to do but continue their supper in quiet, convinced that, inadvertently, they had been telling lies; ‘that gooseberries were unreal and fictitious; greengages a dream.’³⁴ Southern Italy in Lear’s version is both absurd and charming, a land in which dream becomes reality and all the confident assurances of the British quietly crumble.

One of Lear’s techniques is to turn his hosts and acquaintances into ‘characters’ and to ventriloquise portions of the conversation (rather as Norman Douglas was to do half a century or so later). The aptly named Count Garrolo, in his attempt to be hospitable and to entertain his guests with the history and culture of the region, is thus depicted as follows:

would we have some snow and wine? Bring some snow, bring some wine. – He would read us a page, two pages, three, [...] Normans, Saracens – Indian figs and Indian Corn – Julius Caesar and the Druids, Dante, Shakespeare, silkworms and mulberries – rents and taxes, antediluvians, American republics, astronomy and shell-fish [...].³⁵

Subject to similar treatment are Don Ilario Ascitti and his oratorical grandfather, who flies into a rage when they announce their departure; Baron ‘perchè’ whose endless and fruitless questions signal some mysterious anxiety on his part and the proprietor of the so-called Silkworm Hall, Don Musitani, whose appalling living conditions, noisy children and howling dogs provide among the first of Lear’s experiences of Calabrian hospitality.

Lear’s method is not to criticize, nor to judge (which both Craven and Ramage tend to do, although to different ends), but to present his

³³ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

readers instead with a view of Southern Italy that is infinitely more physically impressive and strange than Craven's and Ramage's visions and populated by 'characters,' tales and folktales that add, variously, to the mystery, humour or absurdity of the place. Yet fundamentally it is sound, its discourse disarming and engaging, in opposition to the rationalist mode of Western humanism. It is a place where conversation is properly important. Lear's implied reader appreciates this and does not require moral or logical directions. Where Ramage, for example, cross-questions a man attempting to convince him that a statue of the Virgin Mary exudes manna on a regular basis, Lear presents, without comment the following explanation for the founding of the monastery, *Santa Maria di Polsi*:

The worthy superior presented us with a medal and a print of the Madonna di Polsi, the original picture having been discovered by a devout ox, who inveigled one of the early Norman Conquerors of Sicily all the way from Reggio to this place, for the particular purpose of inducing him to build a monastery. The excellent ox, said the monk, led on the prince from hill to hill till he reached the proper spot, when, kneeling down, he with his pious horns poked up the portrait of the Virgin Mary, which was miraculously waiting some inches below the ground for its bovine liberator.³⁶

This benign, apparently uncritical attitude to such 'miracles' provides a picture of southern Italy that is whimsical, populated with eccentric, but mostly welcoming people, dramatic and fearful in its landscape. Lear's presentation of Pentadattilo, for instance, a small hill-top town right at the end of the Aspromonte range of mountains, near the southernmost tip of Calabria, is entirely coloured by this approach:

Wild spires of stone shoot up into the air, barren and clearly defined, in the form (as its name implies) of a gigantic hand against the sky and in the crevices and holes of this fearfully savage pyramid the houses of Pentadattilo are wedged, while darkness and terror brood over all the abyss around this, the strangest of human abodes.³⁷

Lear's Pentadattilo has two contexts, one ancient, one contemporary. The ancient one is the story of the Baron of Montebello, a great rival of the family of Pentadattilo, who fell in love with the daughter and in taking

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 152.

her away, killed all of her family apart from one grandchild, hidden in one of the crevices, who, in later years avenged the death of his tribe by massacring the Montebello family. Here, then, we have an image of Italy deeply inscribed in the British consciousness: of ancient rivalries, death and destruction, love and tragedy, the kind of darkness and terror that might find a sympathetic reflection in a craggy appenine landscape or a gothic novel. The contemporary context is the 1847 insurrection in Reggio, which anticipated the 1848 revolutions in Italy and elsewhere across Europe. And in many respects this is no less illustrative of the 'darkness and terror' of the legendary inter-familial massacre. The family with whom Lear lodged the night previous to his expedition to Pentedattilo was nervous, ill at ease, upset and convinced that Lear must know something about the incipient political disruption. There was shrieking, there were sobs and groans and a fainting fit as Lear, in all innocence, denied everything. On his return to Reggio, however, he found that they were right. The whole place was in uproar and he did well to escape to Messina to pick up a passing steamer en route to Naples. Could these dual contexts have contributed something to the melodramatic depiction of Pentedattilo offered in the lithograph? Pino Orioli dismisses Lear's vision saying it bears little resemblance to the original and that that should come as no surprise to anyone.³⁸ And a visit to the area confirms that it is hard to distinguish the five wild spires of stone, although there is certainly a dizzying limestone backdrop to the mostly ruined village, topped by what are clearly the remains of a castle.

One might argue, then, that Lear has adapted what is there to what he sees or wants to see, or what will sell within the canon of European images of wild romantic landscape. A slight degree of exaggeration transforms a landform into something that clearly resembles a hand. The very name of the village, however, suggests that this is hardly a grotesque distortion. Lear sees what those who first named the village saw and what he sees is the smallness of mankind in the monumental hand of Nature, caring and careless simultaneously. Somehow, his narrative and sketch seem to suggest that the Italians understand this frailty rather better than the British.

We have here, then, three accounts of similar territory. Craven, an aristocrat, travelling with full entourage, seems to be looking to do for

³⁸ G. Orioli, *Moving Along. Just a Diary* (London. Chatto & Windus, 1934), 177.

the South what Eustace did for the rest of Italy. Ramage, a twenty-four-year-old Presbyterian, sets out on foot with a missionary zeal to plot out ancient sites, but also to map on to them the vibrant confusion of a present rendered unstable by an inappropriate form of government. Lear, on the other hand, presents a view of the landscape that is unquestionably Romantic: vast, imposing land forms barely seem to accommodate transient human forms. But he populates these with characters that would be more at home in a Dickens novel than in *The Prelude*. Both Craven and Ramage are fascinated by the illustrious dead. Ramage and Lear, as their form of travel indicates, are equally animated by the culture of the complex and varied living. It provides them with an alternative vision of the imperial culture from which they travelled, re-writes that culture productively. One senses from their writing that both returned happier and wiser men, nurturing an experience that could not possibly have been provided by the safe routines of the Grand Tour.

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Authenticating Italy: Poetry, Tourism and Browning's *The Ring and the Book*

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'I sail this morning for Venice – intending to finish my poem among the scenes it describes.'¹ So Robert Browning wrote of his poem *Sordello* in April 1838, succinctly articulating what would remain for him a guiding creative principle: poetry needed place. To complete the troublesome *Sordello*, at which he had labored sporadically for five years, Browning sought something intangible, something that could be provided only by immersion in Italy. Twenty-five years later, in what would become his longest and, by most accounts, his signature work of Italy – *The Ring and the Book* – Browning again identified his creative process as one of discovery, a 'pilgrimage / O'er old unwandered waste ways of the world,' hoping to 'chance upon some fragment of a whole, / Rag of flesh, scrap of bone in dim disuse' (l.750-753).² Appropriately enough, the poem opens with Browning himself perusing the marketplace of Florence until he happens upon *The Old Yellow Book*, a collection of legal briefings and other documents related to a long-forgotten 1698 murder trial in Rome. This scrap in turn becomes the source of his poem.

For Browning's admirers, his unique style of literary tourism ultimately brings Italy into being in ways that cannot be equalled by even the most accurate, original novel or non-fiction travelogue. In 'The Novel in *The Ring and the Book*,' no less an accomplished travel writer and novelist than Henry James testifies to this particular capacity to transcend and contain other genres: upon opening the poem, according to James, one immediately encounters 'that breath of Browning's own particular matchless Italy which takes us full in the face and remains from the first the felt, rich, coloured air in which we live.'³ More recently, Jacob Korg has suggested that the Italian elements of Browning's poetry

¹ P. Kelley and R. Hudson, (eds.) *The Brownings' Correspondence* 14 vols. to date (Winfield. Wedgestone Press, 1984-), IV, 24.

² R. Browning, *The Ring and the Book* Richard D. Altick (ed.) (Harmondsworth. Penguin, 1967).

³ H. James, 'The Novel in *The Ring and the Book*,' *Quarterly Review*, 217 (1912), 79. Further references to this source will be made in parentheses.

give one 'the pleasures of sightseeing, but also, in their context, function as parts of a poem, embodying serious themes.'⁴ Korg in part recounts his own visits to Italian sites associated with Browning, making him only the latest in a long line of commentators who have sought to illuminate the poetry by going directly to its source. For the London Browning Society in the 1890s, William Hall Griffin diligently photographed dozens of sites mentioned in *The Ring and the Book*, an effort replicated in 1913 by Sir Frederick Treves for *The Country of 'The Ring and the Book.'*⁵ Clearly, many other members of Browning societies in Britain and the United States made similar literary excursions to Italy. Anna Berenson McMahan described 'A Browning Pilgrimage' for the Chicago-based monthly *The Lamp* in 1903; a year later, she published *Florence in the Poetry of the Brownings*, an anthology that featured photographs of various sites linked with the poets. And while Browning tourism may have reached its peak by the early twentieth century, a restored *Casa Guidi* in Florence continues to receive visitors to this day.⁶

In an uncanny way, it appears, Browning's poetry invites reading as travel – a quest for a place that is real but never quite so real as it is in the poetry. As James proposes, 'Browning alone . . . is a temperature. We feel it, we are in it at a plunge' (p.80). Put simply, my goal in this essay is to unpack James's metaphor, revealing how the poem functions within a broader social field, one that conjoins poetry with other forms of cultural engagement, such as tourism, and to show how these forms in turn come to define each other. Browning's creative methodology and the poem's subsequent critical reception both underscore the important role that tourism and the literature of tourism played in the development of a

⁴ J. Korg, 'Robert Browning and Italy,' *Creditable Warriors 1830-1876. English Literature and the Wider World* M. Cotsell (ed.) (London. Ashfield, 1990), 214. See also Korg's earlier study, *Browning and Italy* (Athens. Ohio U. P., 1983).

⁵ Griffin presented lantern slides of his photographs at a London Browning Society meeting in October 1891. I would like to thank Cynthia Burgess of the Armstrong Browning Library of Baylor University, Waco, Texas, for allowing me access to, among other Browning holdings in their possession, a copy of the syllabus that accompanied Hall's presentation. Special thanks is also due to my home institution, Auburn University, for providing a travel grant that enabled my archival research.

⁶ See A. B. McMahan, *Florence in the Poetry of the Brownings* (Chicago. A. C. McClurg, 1904). Of related interest, E. C. McAleer's *The Brownings of Casa Guidi* (New York. Browning Institute, 1979), describes the Browning's day-to-day life in Florence as well as their home and its furnishings. Casa Guidi was purchased by Eton College in 1993 and is now maintained by the Landmark Trust of Great Britain.

modernist poetics of difficulty and exclusivity. The long poem, especially, would come to possess its own sort of *genius loci* as the site of a demanding but intense, all-encompassing reading experience. If *The Ring and the Book* could not challenge the commercial dominance of non-fiction travel guides and travel romances, it would become a unique source of discovery for readers who identified themselves as more discerning and resourceful consumers of culture.

Browning's engagement with Italy, of course, long predates *The Ring and the Book* and before turning to an analysis of the poem, I want to begin with a passage from a letter he wrote to Elizabeth Barrett in September 1845 that in many ways captures the primary objective of his own travel verse. The letter reveals his disappointment in a book that she had loaned to him, Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, which had been published the previous year:

why dont you tell us that at Rome they eat roasted chestnuts and put the shells into their aprons, the women do and calmly empty the whole on the heads of the passengers in the street below; and that at Padua when a man drives a waggon up to a house and stops, all the mouse-coloured oxen that pull it from a beam against their foreheads sit down in a heap and rest.

Browning adds that Shelley 'is wrong, every where, that is, not right, not seeing what is to see, speaking what one expects to hear.'⁷ What appears to have inspired Elizabeth – Shelley's interest in *Risorgimento* politics – tellingly goes un-commented upon in Browning's letter. By and large, what Browning sought in Italy was something more hidden: something that would resonate with authenticity but at the same time appear innocuous. Implied in Browning's impatience with Shelley is the sense that he, the poet, would *see* Italy more clearly should he return there, which, of course, he did when he eloped with Elizabeth to Italy one year later.⁸

⁷ Kelley and Hudson, IX, 70.

⁸ I do not wish to suggest that Browning ignores the *Risorgimento* in his work, only that it takes a subordinate position to other concerns, as Matthew Reynolds has argued recently in *The Realms of Verse 1830-1870: English Poetry in a Time of Nation-Building* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2001). While acknowledging, for instance, that several passages in *The Ring and the Book* bear an allegorical relationship to Italy's political struggle, Reynolds proposes that Browning's poetry overall is only indirectly political, perhaps best understood as an effort to help 'bring Italy into cultural existence'/cont...

Browning's own mission would be to lend new life to those sights that the more prosaic eye passes over and, in turn, to help the reader see 'what is to see' in Italy. The quest for such authentic markers, as Jonathan Culler has observed, is an enduring trait of Western travel practices. Tourism, at its essence, is about the consumption of signs:

Even tourists who take the most packaged package tours . . . venture bravely forth from their hotels in search of atmosphere and discover something which for them is unusual, authentic in its Otherness, a sign of an alien culture – say a butcher's shop with undressed fowl and rabbits hanging in the window. And characteristically tourists emphasize such experiences – moments regarded as authentic – when telling others of their travels.⁹

My point here is not to reduce Browning's work to the kind of unexamined striving for local colour that Culler describes above: while Browning does depend heavily upon a dialectic of earnest traveller/idle tourist, *The Ring and the Book*, as I reveal in more detail later, manages to push this opposition past its apparent limits, revealing in more subtle ways how the concepts of travel, reading and interpretation can inform each other. What I am suggesting, however, is that the prevalence of that 'unoriginal' treatment which Browning ascribes to Mary Shelley and tourists in general serves him as a foil against which he will define his own work. Browning, in this way, mirrors the efforts of other nineteenth-century travel writers who, in James Buzard's analysis, turned Italy into 'a market-place of cultural goods, each location chiefly of interest for the demonstrably appropriatable tokens of authenticity it afforded.'¹⁰ In other words, before *The Ring and the Book* begins in earnest, Browning first argues for the distinctiveness of his perspective on Italy.

In a broader sense, his argument begins with the shorter dramatic monologues that predate *The Ring and the Book* and form some of Browning's most recognizable portraits of Italian cultural history – My

/cont. in the eyes of his readers who would in turn see the justice of its political independence (178). Likewise, I would add, although a wish to travel to Italy did not necessarily mean one supported its quest for nationhood, the two were clearly linked in the minds of many Victorians, Elizabeth Barrett Browning herself being a prime example.

⁹ J. Culler, *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions* (Norman. University of Oklahoma P., 1988), 159.

¹⁰ J. Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture' 1800-1918* (Oxford. Oxford U. P., 1993), 6.

Last Duchess, *The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church*, *Fra Lippo Lippi* and *Andrea del Sarto*. These earlier efforts helped to establish Browning's reputation as a keen observer of the past of Italy that was also always strangely present – an admixture of history and place that one could visit and experience in person. The dramatic monologue form itself adds to this sensation of time-travel: the apparent absence of a mediating authorial voice gives one the peculiar impression of hearing a person speak directly from the past, 'from within the Renaissance,' as Hilary Fraser observes.¹¹ Within this framework, the series of markers and details that enrich the poem's content combine to form that uniquely resonant landscape, 'Browning's Italy.' John Ruskin's oft-cited praise of *The Bishop Orders His Tomb* is, in many ways, a recognition of this powerful ability to authenticate the past of Italy and to make it come alive in the present:

I know no other piece of modern English, prose or poetry, in which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit, – its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury and of good Latin. It is nearly all that I said of the central Renaissance in thirty pages of the *Stones of Venice* put into as many lines, Browning's being also the antecedent work.¹²

At the same time Ruskin honours Browning's insight into Renaissance culture, he also elevates poetry as a discourse, making it, as Herbert Tucker notes, 'a medium that can perform, with enviable efficiency, much the same work of knowing that is executed by Ruskin's own prose.'¹³ For Ruskin, Browning's shorter dramatic monologues illustrated especially poignant moments of the past that readers and travellers could draw on for enhancing the experience of Italy. A longer poem such as *The Ring and the Book*, if it could not lay claim to the efficiency of *The Bishop Orders His Tomb*, could offer a prolonged immersion – not a taste, but an atmosphere, as James describes. It could weave the past more tightly with the present, making readers feel as if they were experiencing Italy in a deeper, more profound and lasting way.

¹¹ H. Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (Oxford. Blackwell, 1992), 172.

¹² E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, (eds.) *The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols. (London. George Allen, 1903-1912), VI, 449.

¹³ H. Tucker, 'Wanted Dead or Alive: Browning's Historicism,' *Victorian Studies*, 38 (1994), 26.

The Ring and the Book is a work obsessed with its own creative origins, revealing in detail in Book I how the poet came upon the source of the poem and how that source blossomed into a larger project. Book I next provides an overview of the poem's central monologues, which explore, from various points of view, the circumstances leading up to and following Count Guido Franceschini's murder of his estranged wife Pompilia and her parents. In various studies of the poem, Pompilia, her confidant Caponsacchi and the Pope, who passes ultimate judgment on Guido, have all been put forth as heroes of Browning's epic, but as Allan C. Dooley has suggested, its hero, if it must have one, is just as easily the poet himself, 'who takes the important journeys in space and time.'¹⁴ Dooley, in fact, notes a parallel between Browning's discovery of *The Old Yellow Book* and Aeneas's quest for the Golden Bough, but whereas this moment of discovery typically concludes an epic, in Browning's case, it sets the poem in motion, as the poet attempts to persuade readers to follow him into what might seem like very un-poetic territory – a brutal murder perhaps more justly forgotten. The lengthy treatment given to such a subject would also require some justification. Browning agreed with his publisher Smith and Elder that some 21,000 lines all at once might overwhelm readers; as a consequence, the poem was published in four serial installments from November 1868 to February 1869. Continued sales would thus depend in part on a successful first number – on Browning's ability to convince readers to invest their time and money in the textual journey he was proposing.

The title of the poem encompasses the two-tiered argument that Browning makes in defence of his source material and the overall value of such a labyrinthine reading experience. 'Do you see this Ring?' (I.1) opens the poem, as Browning explains how any serviceable work of art, like fine jewellery, mixes a base alloy with more precious metal. Despite the many refinements one could make to this argument – and the ring metaphor has been a source of extensive critical analysis – the ring, at the very least, symbolizes poetic imagination. In the second verse paragraph of the poem, Browning turns our attention to *The Old Yellow Book*, which he 'twirl[s] about / By the crumpled vellum covers' (I.34-5). As Browning makes quite clear, *The Old Yellow Book*, on the

¹⁴ A. C. Dooley, 'Epic and Anti-Epic in *The Ring and the Book*,' *Browning Institute Studies*, 15 (1987), 140.

surface at least, is almost worthless. Further perusal reveals the value of its contents, but *how* and *where* Browning finds *The Old Yellow Book* are just as significant. One person's trash becomes the poet's gem of insight, or more precisely, the raw ore that will be refined into the higher form of the poem:

I found this book,
 Gave a *lira* for it, eightpence English just,
 (Mark the predestination!) when a Hand,
 Always above my shoulder, pushed me once,
 One day still fierce 'mid many a day struck calm,
 Across a Square in Florence, crammed with booths,
 Buzzing and blaze, noontide and market-time. (I.38-44)

Browning locates himself at one of the centres of touristic activity in Florence: the bustling marketplace outside the Church of San Lorenzo, overflowing with goods – and potential souvenirs. With a touch of mock-heroic irony, the poet hints at the intervention of a divine hand, but while he may not seriously be suggesting predestination, he does espouse a highly developed sense of the value Italy has to offer – a kind of intuition – that immediately seizes upon *The Old Yellow Book*. Revealing the historic significance of the scene, Browning notes that the book stall lies 'precisely on that palace-step / Which, meant for lounging knaves o' the Medici, / Now serves re-venders to display their ware' (I.50-52). Browning reveals the ease with which the still relatively un-modernized city lends itself to communion with the past – the special appeal of Italy to many Victorian travellers. This is a site charged with the intensity of a more vital past, 'when hearts beat hard' (I.36). Past and present combine to give the initial location of *The Old Yellow Book* the mystic energy of the *genius loci*.

The 'odds and ends of ravage' (I.53) that surround the book also serve to highlight the uniqueness of Browning's source material. These commodities seem typical of the Italian marketplace – pieces of furniture, tapestry now sold as carpet, prints of landscapes. The books in the stall are also typical:

Vulgarized Horace for the use of schools,
 The Life, Death, Miracles of Saint Somebody,
 Saint Somebody Else, his Miracles, Death and Life, –
 With this, one glance at the lettered back of which,
 And 'Stall!' cried I: a *lira* made it mine. (I.79-83)

Browning's rather self-satisfied description assumes the knowledge that he shares with his well-travelled reader: this is why one goes to Italy,

why one puts up with the bustle of a city square – to find that one piece of authentic Italy. The paradox of the authentic is that it can only be verified by juxtaposition with the hackneyed, more mundane signs of Italy.

Back at *Casa Guidi*, from the same balcony where he and Elizabeth had witnessed the 1847 civic celebration that forms the focus of her poem *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851), Browning maps out the feature events of his own work, foreshadowing the important role that location will play later in the flight and pursuit of Pompilia and Caponsacchi from Arezzo to Rome. His placement is well calculated to add to the authority of his vision. Soon after the death of Elizabeth in 1861, *Casa Guidi* had taken on a touristic lure of its own as a site where, in the minds of many contemporaries, Italy had come into poetic being. The Brownings' acquaintance Kate Field, for instance, wrote for the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1861 that 'for nearly fifteen years Florence and the Brownings have been *one* in the thoughts of many English and Americans; and *Casa Guidi*, which has been immortalized by Mrs Browning's genius, will be as dear to the Anglo-Saxon traveller as Milton's Florentine residence has been heretofore.'¹⁵ Field's remarks point to the growing assimilation of poetry and continental travel in the minds of Browning's audience. Regardless of whether one was a member of the Anglo-American expatriate community in Florence, or simply a tourist making a briefer pilgrimage, to read the Brownings was to go to Italy in some sense, to the Italy of a joint 'Anglo-Saxon' literary heritage. Once Browning 'stepped out on the narrow terrace' (I.479) of *Casa Guidi*, he was capitalizing on a series of cultural associations whose recognition and value with readers would continue to expand with his own reputation.

From this unique post of observation, Browning models the kind of imaginative re-peopling of the landscape that defines historical/literary tourism. The reader journeys with Browning's imagination to 'the wayside inn' (I.507) in Castelnuovo where Guido apprehends Pompilia and Caponsacchi and continues, 'Step by step, missing none and marking all, /Till Rome itself, the ghastly goal' is reached (I.517-18). With this act of 'resuscitation,' as he calls it later (I.719), Browning gains an almost god-like creative command over his material:

The life in me abolished the death of things,
Deep calling unto deep: as then and there
Acted itself over again once more

¹⁵ K. Field, 'Elizabeth Barrett Browning,' *Atlantic Monthly*, 8 (Sept. 1861), 369.

The tragic piece. I saw with my own eyes
 In Florence as I trod the terrace, breathed
 The beauty and fearfulness of night,
 How it had run, this round from Rome to Rome. (I.520-26)

Through the interpretive, visionary process described here – one in part fuelled by the 'atmosphere' of Florence, which Browning literally inhales – *The Old Yellow Book* becomes *The Ring and the Book*. Of this process, Browning asks himself, 'Is fiction which makes fact alive, fact too?' (I.706) – that is to say, does his act of recreation carry the same authenticity and meaning as fact? Yes, the poem answers and much more: without the poet, *The Old Yellow Book* would have been lost entirely. For readers, the poem becomes not a quest for truth – for facts – but a quest for the authentic – that which *rings* true but cannot be measured or quantified.

Connections among truth, authenticity and travel abound in the poem's main narrative as well as its frame. Ten different monologues recount virtually the same events as the reader ponders not just the guilt or innocence of Guido and Pompilia but the nature of truth itself. As E. Warwick Slinn and, more recently, Suzanne Bailey have argued, the poem's 'authoritative word' does not lie buried in the text as a hidden authorial intent that the reader is charged to uncover. Rather, the poem endorses a more variegated, fluctuating understanding of truth as created by author, text and reader.¹⁶ The foregrounding of the poet as traveller in Book I is of critical importance in Browning's efforts to justify this de-centered notion of authority. Browning likens the quest for truth to a dynamic encounter with a rich but challenging landscape, the kind of experience associated with the 'traveller' – as opposed to the 'tourist' who seeks passive gratification from a more pre-packaged destination. Poetry, like Italy, no longer sublimely emits its essence, but demands an engaged perception. The reader must become like the poet – comfortable

¹⁶ According to Slinn, 'Browning emphasises not truth as product, but truth as process, truth in the making' (*The Discourse of the Self in Victorian Poetry* [London: Macmillan, 1991], 123). Bailey analyzes the complex ways in which the poem links ideas of Biblical truth and the body, noting that 'a truth which cannot be fully articulated may be communicated on the level of somatic knowledge as something which registers visually, or as an object which may be held' ('Somatic Wisdom: Refiguring Bodies in "The Ring and the Book"' *Victorian Studies*, 41 [1998], 579). In a similar way, poetic truth becomes something that one experiences not just intellectually but along the body as well—a physical encounter, like travel, that envelops a range of senses.

amid uncertainty, prepared to find insight in places where one would not readily look for it.

Other than Browning himself, the most vocal advocate of this understanding of truth in the poem is Pope Innocent XII – the one speaker whose interpretation of events will decide the fate of Guido. On several occasions, Browning stresses that the Pope himself is a traveller who in his earlier capacity as a papal emissary ‘had trod many lands, known many deeds, / Probed many hearts, beginning with his own’ (I.303-04). Browning links this experience with the Pope’s unique ability to see events from multiple points of view – to dwell in others, in some sense and to displace his own ideological commitments. In judgment, he will become ‘not Pope but the mere old man o’ the world, / Supposed inquisitive and dispassionate’ (X.392-93). He does not boast of infallibility, but he does assert the possibility of encountering truth once one has completed a difficult and exhaustive exploration. Well attuned to the threat that the pre-Enlightenment rationalism of his times poses to religious certainty, the Pope offers the reader not escape from such doubts but containment of them via an earnest, exploratory journey outward: ‘We have built wall and sleep in city safe’ (X.1858), he says at one point, criticizing faith that goes untested and unexamined. Alternatively, he proposes, ‘The moral sense grows but by exercise’ (X.1414).

For endorsing a sense of religious truth that merges so seamlessly with his author’s own, the Pope has on occasion been called Browning’s ‘Protestant Pope.’ This apparent historical revisionism, however, should not blind us to the more radical merger of North and South that Browning’s tolerant, cosmopolitan Pope embodies. To portray the papacy in this way was to invert what had become a ready signifier of everything opposed to British religious and political pre-eminence in the Victorian period. And some of the poem’s reviewers, at least, were willing to follow Browning’s lead in endorsing a more broad-minded response to Italian culture. To see what a dramatic reversal even this was, one only need recall how often Browning had been taken to task earlier in his career for concentrating too heavily on Italian subjects – for not fulfilling the epic poet’s traditional role of articulating the nation, such as Tennyson had assumed with the *Idylls of the King* (1859-1885). Charles Kingsley, for one, stridently criticized Browning for ‘Italianesque pedantry,’ and wondered when poets would ‘discover that the Italian mine is well-nigh worked out and that those who go thither for teaching are likely to find

swine bad lecturers on the pearls before them.'¹⁷ Kingsley demanded that Browning orient himself in the way contemporary novelists back home had, 'casting all his rugged genial force into the questions and the struggles of that mother-country to whom and not to Italy at all, he owes all his most valuable characteristics.'¹⁸ As late as 1865, the *London Times* had said of Browning and other British poets in Italy that they were unable to 'modulate their voices for the ears of their fellow-countrymen and women.'¹⁹

The Ring and the Book, however, brought to a swell the critical tide that had already begun to turn in Browning's favour in the 1860s. Reviewing the poem for *Tinsley's Magazine*, Walter Bagehot, noting Browning's appeal to 'a select, if not a numerous, body' of admirers, chastised earlier critics for doubting the poet's decision to exile himself from Britain: 'genius has a wonderful selective faculty, a sort of divine instinct, which leads its possessor, in the face of prudential or other arguments, to select this or that material, this or that scene.'²⁰ For others as well, Browning's Italian connections were no longer a liability. An extended essay on *The Ring and the Book* by John Morley in *The Fortnightly Review* began by contrasting Browning's work to a more domestic, pastoral poetry, making the same connection between moral vision and travel that the poem had. Those who found the subject of the poem too distasteful needed to see beyond 'a ten-mile radius of Charing Cross.' According to Morley, a troubling modern world demanded poetry that could match it in complexity and depth: 'we have this long while been so debilitated by pastorals, by graceful presentation of the Arthurian legend for drawing-rooms, . . . that a rude inburst of air from the outside

¹⁷ C. Kingsley, 'Mr and Mrs Browning,' *Fraser's Magazine*, 43 (1851), 175.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 176. As it turned out, Kingsley's criticism of Browning was merely one round of an on-going effort to rescue British culture from the 'Latinated' influence of France and Italy. In the 1860s, Kingsley delivered an influential series of lectures entitled 'The Roman and the Teuton,' which, as Clare Simmons argues in *Eyes Across the Channel: French Revolutions, Party History and British Writing, 1830-1882* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000), were emblematic of a turn among British cultural commentators towards stressing linguistic and ethnic kinship with Germany (169). Browning, however, would continue to ground his poetry in Italy and, alternately, France right up until his last volume, *Asolando*, published in 1889.

¹⁹ 'Modern Poets,' *Times* (London) 11 Jan. 1865, 12.

²⁰ Quoted in B. Litzinger and D. Smalley, (eds.) *Browning: The Critical Heritage* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), 300, 302.

welter of human realities is apt to spread a shock, which might show in what simpleton's paradise we have been living.²¹ Browning's poetry, in contrast, was for grown-ups, for those whose 'simpler northern natures' would not be overwhelmed by a brusque encounter with the South.²² Morley's comments, of course, are troubling in other ways and provide an example of the ease with which cosmopolitan gestures can sometimes slip into acts of cultural superiority that belie a move toward inclusiveness. Italy, like the brutal subject of the poem, becomes for him a kind of dangerous if necessary Other, an experience not meant for more timid (and, it seems, implicitly female) readers and tourists. His tone betrays something of the impatience and anti-touristic self-fashioning that would come to characterize later critical excursions into Browning's Italy.

The reputation of *The Ring and the Book* as a specialized medium through which to see and experience Italy continued to grow as the nineteenth century progressed and at the dawn of the twentieth, readers and travellers had several 'guides' to Browning's Italy from which to choose. Sir Frederick Treves's *The Country of 'The Ring and the Book'* testifies to the transformation of the poem into the ultimate signifier of Italy, paradoxically more real than the country itself: 'The Pompilia and Caponsacchi of the poem may never have walked the streets of Arezzo, but in some place and at some time, they must have trod the highway of the world together . . . and so have added some lustre to the chronicle of human endeavour and devotion.'²³ The characters' relation to historical Arezzo is, in some sense, not all that important, according to Treves: they have become Arezzo, they have become Italy. Many of the locations Treves photographs for the book seem oddly abandoned and those living Italians who do get included tend to look away from the camera in order not to 'intrude' on the scene – an effect for which Treves might have purposely aimed. He does, however, note encountering an Italian girl who reminds him of 'Pompilia as she would have appeared some few years before she became a countess.'²⁴ The ultimate goal of the book, he

²¹ J. Morley, 'On *The Ring and the Book*,' *Fortnightly Review* 27 (1869), 331.

²² *Ibid.*, 332.

²³ F. Treves, *The Country of 'The Ring and the Book'*, (London: Cassell, 1913), ix.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 100. I am also reminded of Hall's photographs for the Browning Society, particularly that of Guido's cell in Rome, for which, he points out, special thanks is due to the Italian government for temporarily removing the real prisoners who were occupying Guido's cell at the time. Their removal, while of course necessary to provide a clear view for the camera, nonetheless underscores the kind of erasure /cont...

writes, is to isolate landmarks associated with the poem, 'lest some interested in the story, should pass them by as if they were like other roads' – an oversight he compares to 'the holiday folk who trample the English beach first touched by the prows of Caesar's galleys.'²⁵ The irony, however, is that Treves himself becomes a kind of Browning tourist, someone who seeks the immediate cultural gratification that comes from visiting pre-determined sites of authenticity, sites that lose some of their appeal with the arrival of each new tourist that his guidebook directs there.

James's 'The Novel in *The Ring and the Book*' also amounts to a kind of travel-guide to the poem, but one that advises a different approach than Treves's to Browning's Italy. Browning earns high praise in James's eyes as a key interpreter of Italian culture and history for the English speaking world, someone who affords a 'prime assimilation of the elements for which the name of Italy stands' (p.79). James is careful to point out, however, that the reader's experience of Browning's Italy is not a passive one. Reading the poem is a process of 'imaginative collaboration,' where Browning may have 'his wilful way with me, but I make it my own' (p.80). In the end, James says, 'I make to my hand . . . my Italy of the eve of the eighteenth century – a vast painted and gilded rococo shell roofing over a scenic, an amazingly figured and furnished earth' (p.81). Whether readers of Browning today would still wish to build such an edifice is another issue, but James's point still stands: the reader imaginatively recreates Browning's tour, becoming an authorial force – the more engaged, discerning reader presupposed by modernist aesthetics. James thus brings us back to the tourist/traveller dichotomy upon which Browning's poem rests: James offers an active, bold reading experience, while Treves, despite his anti-touristic grumbling, offers what amounts to a sightseeing tour through Browning's Italy.

Whose Browning is the correct one? *The Ring and the Book*, finally, validates both kinds of engagement. On balance, the poem may give its highest endorsement to James's more reader-centred approach, one echoed today by post-structuralist interpretations of the poem which stress its indeterminacy – its location of truth within dialogue and shifting points of view. Nonetheless, there always remains the lingering sense that the

/cont. of modern Italy that his efforts seem to demand. What is of interest to him is not Italy itself but the Italy of the poem.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, viii.

poet has done the major work of interpretation himself – that Browning has found Italy on his own and provides, in the form of the poem, a map for readers to follow in the manner of Treves. The tourist, then, remains a sign that cannot be escaped, that which lies at the centre of modern travel, just as, to continue the analogy, post-structural analyses of meaning must always identify the centre they seek to avoid. Such is the complex, uncertain landscape that the reader of *The Ring and the Book* finally inhabits and therein, perhaps, lies the true ‘country’ of the poem.

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'A real picture of natural and feminine feeling?'
Anna Jameson's *Diary of an Ennuyée*

Kate Walchester

In the introduction to Anna Jameson's *Diary of an Ennuyée*, the tour of Italy from the perspective of a heartbroken narrator is apparently legitimized by the approval of a fictional, male Editor:

The following Diary is published exactly as it was found after the death of the Author; varied only by the omission of certain names. As a real picture of natural and feminine feeling, the Editor hopes that it may interest others as much as it has interested him.¹

The diary, which purports to be a 'real picture' of female sensibility, offers a critique of other versions of sensibility and instead presents an account of Italy through the experiences of a young Englishwoman. Published at a time when foreign travel had become more accessible to the middle classes, Jameson's book proved extremely popular.² Readers were convinced of the veracity of the account and of the death of its narrator. Mary Shelley was one such reader, referring to her as the 'heartbroken, dying, dead diarist.'³ The popularity of the text indicates Jameson's literary accomplishment and supports her claims, albeit through the voice of a fictional male editor, for the particular insight on foreign travels offered by women writers. This paper considers Jameson's construction of a sensitive female narrator and the potentially controversial exposition of Italian politics through her representation of the tragic figure of 'female Italy' who is both muse and 'friend' (p.308).

The first part of this paper discusses Jameson's construction of the female narrator through whom she presents a particular version of the

¹ Anna Jameson, *Diary of an Ennuyée* (London. Colburn, 1826), 1. Further references are in parentheses in the text.

² *Letters of Anna Jameson to Ottilie von Goethe* G. H. Needler (ed.) (London, New York and Toronto. Oxford University Press, 1939), xi.

³ 'The English in Italy,' an essay which appeared in the *Westminster Review* 6 (October 1826), 325-41, reprinted in *The Mary Shelley Reader* Betty T. Bennett and Charles E. Robinson (eds.) (New York and Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1990), 241-357, 355. For an account of the generic instability of earlier travel writing see Jean Viviès, *English Travel Narratives in the Eighteenth Century: Exploring Genres* Claire Davison (trans.) (Aldershot. Ashgate Press, 2002).

woman writer and enacts the effects of feminine 'excess.' Jameson's narrator writes to record her experiences and to diminish her pain, apparently not for publication. Her failed relationship is the catalyst for writing, sharpening the female responses to landscape and art, which Jameson presents as a 'natural expression' of emotions.⁴ *Diary of an Ennuyée* is a re-writing of Germaine de Staël's 1807 text, *Corinne; or Italy*, in which a talented orator and poet, Corinne, is subject to a tragic love affair.⁵ The generic instability of *Diary of an Ennuyée*, that is its negotiation between Jameson's experiences on her tour of Italy in 1821 and her imaginative account of the heart-broken diarist, allows Jameson to play out a critique of 'excess,' which was not possible in other less imaginative versions of travels. In contrast with the narrator of Charlotte Eaton's 1820 travelogue *Rome in the Nineteenth Century* for example, Jameson's *ennuyée* is the victim of an excess of emotion. At Rome, her 'eyes and heart were both too full' and she cannot cope with reading de Staël's text as it is a 'too deeply and eloquently true' reflection of her feelings (p.110).⁶ The narrator's death in Autun in *Diary of an Ennuyée* offers a conclusive and compelling revelation of the damaging effects of such feminine 'excess.'

Jameson's account of the effect of feminine excess and her re-writing of *Corinne; or Italy* allows her means to discuss the political situation in Italy following the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Drawing on the narrative of *Corinne; or Italy*, Jameson's *ennuyée* narrator, like Corinne, enacts the fate of Italy. In *Diary of an Ennuyée* Jameson presents Italy as a 'friend,' in whom the narrator seeks help, unsuccessfully, to recover from the betrayal of her lover and her subsequent overwhelming

⁴ Jameson adds this reference to 'the natural expression of female sentiments' in a later edition of the text, *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad with Tales and Miscellanies now first collected and a new edition of Diary of an Ennuyée*, 4 vols. (London. Saunders and Otley, 1834), IV, 32.

⁵ Madame de Staël, *Corinne; or Italy*, Emily Baldwin and Paulina Driver (trans.) (London. George Bell and Sons, 1888). Further references are in parentheses in the text.

⁶ In *Rome in the Nineteenth Century: Containing a complete account of the Ruins of the Ancient City, the Remains of the Middle Ages, and the Monument of Modern times with Remarks on the fine arts, on the state of society, and on the religious ceremonies, manners and customs, of the Modern Romans in a series of Letters written during a residence at Rome in the Years 1817 and 1818*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh. Constable, 1820), Charlotte Eaton tells of her emotional reaction to seeing the statue of the Apollo Belvedere but recalls Corinne's death noting, 'but English maids don't die of love – neither for men nor statues – therefore I hope to live to admire the Apollo' (I, 65).

pain. As I discuss in the final section, Italy is likewise associated with 'excess' through the extreme, debilitating beauty of the south and 'her former splendour' (p.340). An excess of feminine sensibility is responsible for the region's present state, Italy's people have been effeminised and the country's chances of liberation are dead. In *Diary of an Ennuyée* therefore, Jameson depicts the fearful consequences of feminine 'excess,' on one level damaging to the individual and at another having catastrophic implications for Italy.

Jameson, like many of her contemporaries, presents the domination of the region by foreign governments as the most significant factor of the trope of 'female' Italy. Italy was ruled by foreign powers until 1861 and it is this subjugated state reinforced by the beauty of the country that underpins Jameson's presentation of Italy as female. Her most scathing attacks are levelled at the Austrians and their conduct after the Congress of Vienna. Jameson's presentation of Italy as a subjugated woman shows her interest in the political affairs of a country, which, like her native Ireland, was governed from abroad. Anna Brownell Jameson was born in Dublin in 1794, the eldest child of a miniature painter, Denis Brownell Murphy. Despite the fact that Anna and her parents moved to Whitehaven in England in 1798 and Anna never returned to settle in Ireland, she saw herself as Irish. Macpherson describes how, in March 1846 Jameson, regarding the Repeal of the Corn Act, had stated patriotically, 'the new policy with regard to Ireland is also of interest to me, an Irishwoman.'⁷ In 1843, Jameson identifies Ireland as both subjugated and female, 'as for Ireland, there may be – I hope there is – redemption for her some time or other, but nothing can be gloomier than the present prospects.'⁸ Written almost twenty years previously, *Diary of an Ennuyée* shares Jameson's sense of concern for the welfare of a subjugated country, which she represents as female and her lack of hope for its fight against oppressive governments. Italy, it seems, like the *ennuyée*, died following her betrayal by those who should have protected her.

⁷ Gerardine Macpherson, *Memoirs of the Life of Anna Jameson* (London. Longmans, Green and co., 1878), 197.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 255. Macpherson describes how Anna Jameson saw herself as Irish throughout her life.

The Sensitive Ennuyée Traveller

‘What young lady, travelling for the first time on the continent does not write a “Diary?”’ writes Anna Jameson in the first pages of *Diary of an Ennuyée*. Her young, inexperienced narrator is apparently following a conventional literary precedent (p.3). However, later in the text the narrator reveals that she has another motivation in writing the diary, to console herself and control her excess emotion. She wonders, ‘what would have become of me if I had not thought of keeping a diary? I should have died of a sort of mental repletion!’ (p.288). Jameson writes in the first person, leading the reader to assume that she is associated with the naïve and heartbroken narrator she constructs. The text describes how the narrator travels with an unspecified number of companions to Italy in the first part of the nineteenth century in order to overcome her broken heart. It seems that she has been deeply hurt by an unsuccessful love affair. The restorative powers of Italy fail her and finally, the editor informs the reader of the narrator’s death (p.354). The presentation of Jameson’s material as a diary in epistolary form has several implications: firstly, it compounds the illusion that the narrative is factual; secondly, it marks a difference between the text and travel guides about Italy which were rising in popularity; and finally, it formed a way of linking public and private subject matter, allowing Jameson to comment on the political situation in Italy in the same text as the account of her narrator’s psychological state.

Despite the identification of the text as fiction, there are some biographical connections between *Diary of an Ennuyée* and the events preceding Jameson’s tour. Anna Murphy, as she was, went on her trip to the Continent in 1821, after her engagement to Robert Jameson, a barrister, had been broken off. The text was, according to her niece, based on the 1821 tour, when Murphy set off for the Continent with the Rowles family as a governess.⁹ The tour lasted about a year, followed by Anna Murphy working for several years as a governess for Mr Littleton, until her ill-fated marriage to Robert Jameson took place in 1825. Macpherson describes the breakdown of the Jamesons’ marriage, referring to ‘the incompatibilities of temper and disposition, which at a later period

⁹ *Ibid.*, 216.

separated them finally.'¹⁰ It was after her wedding that Anna Jameson decided to publish *Diary of an Ennuyée*, five years after the original trip. The publication was encouraged by Robert and his friend, Mr Thomas, a bookseller, who then sold its copyright to Colburn for fifty pounds, 'probably after its success had become obvious to experienced eyes,' as Macpherson notes.¹¹

Overwhelmingly, Jameson constructs her narrator as a sensitive traveller. *Diary of an Ennuyée* opens with the central character in the text, who has been weakened by an unhappy love affair, expressing her longing for relief. She notes, 'I leave behind me the scene, the objects, so long associated with pain; but from pain itself I cannot fly: it has become part of myself' (p.4). Frequently the narrator emphasizes her physical and mental vulnerability. In Venice, for example she writes:

This is all I can remember of today. I am fatigued and my head aches; – my imagination is yet dazzled: – my eyes are tired of admiring, my mind is tired of thinking, and my heart with feeling. – Now for repose. (p.70)

Italy, it seems, is not enough to cure the narrator of her love-sickness and although the sights are a welcome diversion for her mind, the experience weakens her further. Jameson stresses the sensitivity of her narrator by alluding to her 'feeling' a response to the places she visits in addition to seeing and thinking about them.

Despite the fiction that the diary was written only for the narrator, 'I sit down to scribble' she notes '*pour me desennuyer*,' to unburden herself of the sorrow (p.129) as well as effecting a change in her own state of mind, she emphasises the significance of affecting an emotional response in the reader. She argues that an emotional response is at the basis of the process of thinking and writing: 'we must feel deeply before we can think rightly' the narrator asserts (p.97). Later she notes, 'all that I see, I feel – all that I feel, sinks so deep into my heart and memory.' She hopes that she can share this emotion 'at least in my little book' (p.89). At the beginning of the text, the narrator highlights the difference between herself and other more radical writers, acknowledging that 'some keep a diary because it is the fashion – reason why I should not; some because it is *blue*, but I am not *blue*, only a *blue devil*' (p.4). Jameson makes a forceful disavowal of her being associated with 'bluestockings' before her claim

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

that she is a 'blue devil,' which indicates her intention to inspire others to melancholy, reflecting her own psychological state. Writing, it seems, is part of her attempts at recovery, but it is also intended to create a sensitive response in the reader.

Jameson's success in highlighting the sensitivity of her narrator was demonstrated by the fact that many readers believed that the narrator had actually died after her tour. Jameson uses the motif of a sensitive, dying central character as a defence against her critics who she hopes, 'will not criticize but sympathize' (p.89). Certainly, the author of the piece in the *Monthly Review* seemed reluctant to be completely unrestrained in criticism despite having suspicions that the work was fictitious, noting that they were unwilling to submit the text to 'cold and fastidious criticism' if it were indeed a diary.¹² James Buzard notes the importance of both the dead narrator and her apparent sensitivity in the text's success. He writes:

The death of Jameson's narrator turns her book into a kind of 'last testament,' borrowing for it the air of unmediated authenticity which such utterances exude. And by foregrounding the narrator's consciousness, Jameson strengthens an inherent feature of the diary form: she makes us aware of the author's *responses* as the objects of our contemplation.¹³

As Buzard identifies, it is the combination of the dying narrator and the form she has chosen that enhances Jameson's claim to an original view of Italy. Her text is apparently marked out from other texts about Italy because the focus becomes the narrator's responses to her tour rather than Italy itself. Such sensitivity was a popular feature of other travel writing from the middle of the eighteenth century. Chloe Chard has noted in her analysis of the linguistic techniques used by travel writers that 'travel writing makes great use of a rhetoric of intense emotional responsiveness [...] between (roughly) the 1740s and the 1830s.'¹⁴ Chard discusses how such emotional responsiveness came to be viewed as a

¹² Cited in Judith Johnston, *Anna Jameson: Victorian, Feminist, Woman of Letters* (Aldershot and Vermont. Scholar Press, 1997), 103.

¹³ James Buzard, *The Beaten Track; European Tourism, Literature and the Ways to 'Culture' 1800-1918* (Oxford and New York. Oxford University Press, 1993), 162.

¹⁴ Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour; Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830* (Manchester and New York. Manchester University Press, 1999), 6.

masculine accomplishment, repositioning conventional connections which had identified emotional reactions with femininity.

In *Diary of an Ennuyée*, Jameson reclaims the associations between femininity and sensitivity, noting the difference between the reactions of her narrator and the presumed reactions of male viewers of art. In a later version of the text, Jameson adds her response to art as a woman to her reflections on paintings in Florence:

I do not know how *men* think and feel, though I believe many a man, who with every other feeling absorbed in overpowering interest, could look unshrinking upon a real scene of cruelty and blood, would shrink away disgusted and sickened from the cold obtrusive, *painted* representation of the same object; for the truth of this I appeal to men. I can only see with woman's eyes and think and feel as I believe every woman *must*, whatever may be her love for the arts.¹⁵

The gender of Jameson's narrator is pivotal in her expression of sentiment and refinement of emotion. The narrator throughout this extract emphasizes her gender, repeating 'I' and 'woman.' In this account of the difference between real and represented horror she sets men apart as a separate category stating her inability to speak on their behalf. She presents men as potentially impassive in the face of cruelty or horror, but adds that they also must surely turn from art which depicts similarly violent scenes. In this premise there exists the possibility, about which the narrator expresses uncertainty, that men may not be able to respond to art as sensitively as she can 'with woman's eyes.'¹⁶

In addition to responses to art, Jameson emphasizes the sensitivity of her narrator through intense reactions which contradict those of many other travellers to the Continent during this period. She emphasizes the difficulty of adequately portraying the sublime scenery of the Alps and after reading other accounts had 'resolved to attempt no description of scenery' (p.41). However, despite her awe at attempting to convey its aesthetic appeal, there was a compulsion to write: 'but my pen is fascinated,' she writes, negating her authorial control to some extent (*ibid.*). Jameson's description of the Alps centres on the effect that the scene has on the narrator, but additionally she mentions the fact that

¹⁵ Jameson (1834), IV, 251.

¹⁶ Chard provides a discussion of the reaction to scenes of horror in Chapter 2 'Hyperbole and observation,' particularly 99-101.

descriptions she had read of the scene had not prepared her, 'no description had prepared me for this prospect' (p.33). Words, it seems, cannot do justice to these scenes and Jameson is critical of previous descriptions. Her physical and emotional vulnerability is highlighted in this view of the Alps as she notes, 'the feeling of its immense extent fatigued my imagination till my spirit gave way in tears' (*ibid.*).

Jameson emphasizes the physical and mental debilitation of her heroine so as to demonstrate her superior sensitivity in the appreciation of art and landscapes over male counterparts. Jameson uses a description of a famous waterfall to criticize the work of a male contemporary. The narrator tells how she returns from the Falls at Terni and picks up a copy of John Chetwood Eustace's *A Tour through Italy*:

I quickly threw down the book with indignation; deeming all this verbiage the merest nonsense I had ever met with: in fact, it is nonsense to attempt to image in words an individual scene like this. (p.131)

The waterfall had been the focus of many accounts of the sublime and Jameson, as in her account of the Alps, uses this aspect of the place's reputation in order to suggest paradoxically that writers of travel guides should not attempt to describe sublime scenes. Eustace's description of the waterfalls is of a similar length to Jameson's and is written in a less florid style. Eustace notes:

At length you climb the shaggy sides of the hill, and from a natural platform, behold the cascade opposite. This point enables you to see, with much advantage, the second fall, when the river, bursting from the bason [*sic*] into which it was first precipitated, tumbles over a ridge of broken rocks, into various sheets, half-veiled in spray and foam.¹⁷

Eustace's description, not cited in full, is more practical and descriptive for the traveller than Jameson's version. The opinion offered by the narrator of *Diary of an Ennuyée*, that it is impossible to describe sublime scenery, is ironic because it follows Jameson's own attempt at describing not only the Falls at Terni, but also many other places that had long been represented as 'sublime' in travel writing and literary texts about the Grand Tour, such as the Alps and Mont Blanc, the Coliseum

¹⁷ John Chetwood Eustace, *A Tour through Italy, Exhibiting a View of its Scenery, its Antiquities and its Monuments, Particularly as They Are Objects of Classical Interest and Elucidation with an Account of the Present State of its Cities and Towns*, 2 vols. (London. Mawman, 1813), I, 183.

and the coast of Naples. By referring Eustace's attempt to describe this sublime scene as 'verbiage,' Jameson both diminishes the account of her eminent contemporary and reinforces her own claims to originality through her sensitive, emotional descriptions.

The presence of footnotes attributed to a male 'Editor' further legitimizes and emphasizes the sensitivity of the narrator and complicates the text's status as fiction. With hindsight we are aware that the Editor's comments are fictitious, the most significant entry noting the author's death after her completion of the diary. The Editor reinforces the text's appearance as non-fiction and emphasizes the vulnerability of the sensitive narrator. Here, as in Sydney Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl*, an authoritative view is claimed by a male 'Editor,' who comments on the narrative and offers an interpretation and his opinion of events.¹⁸ Apart from the Preface, the Editor's comments are made in footnotes, which are usually employed to add authority to a text and to refer the reader to academic or scientific debates beyond the text, confirming points raised by its narrator. Gary Kelly notes that in Sydney Morgan's text the footnotes act to validate the text itself and its concern with 'authentic Irish culture.'¹⁹ In *Diary of an Ennuyée* however, the Editor confirms and consolidates the sensitivity of the protagonist. After the descent from the Alps, for example, Jameson's narrator notes the toll that the journey has taken on her, 'fatigue and excitement have lately proved too much for me,' she writes (p.43). The main body of the text gives an account of the sufferings of the narrator until the Editor's footnote commenting on the tears which have erased the text. He notes, 'the sentence which follows is so blotted as to be illegible' (p.44). The disruption of the text demonstrates the narrator's loss of control and alludes to the enormity of her pain. In response, the Editor is detached, objective and mediates between the text and the reader. The editor's comments frame the text and present its narrator as a 'picture' or study of an idealized femininity. The quasi-masculine approval of the text endorses both the content of the text and its sentimental narrator.

Jameson's rewriting of *Corinne; or Italy* assumes the narrative structure of the tragic heroine and her flight from domesticity but subverts

¹⁸ Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan), *The Wild Irish Girl* (London and New York. Pandora, 1986).

¹⁹ Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830* (London and New York. Longman, 1989), 94.

Germaine de Staël's depiction of the aristocratic, mysterious and celebrated woman artist's response to Italy. It repositions the viewer of Italy as a modest middle-class British woman. *Corinne; or Italy* was drawn upon extensively in texts about Italy and also in fiction during this period; and, along with *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the text was used to signal a sensitive, original response to the region. James Buzard describes the texts as providing travellers 'with a script for being original.'²⁰ The tragic protagonists and their heightened emotional responses connect *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Corinne; or Italy*. Moreover, Corinne has been described as a female version of Byron's hero. Ellen Moers states that 'for literary women, Corinne was the female Childe Harold.'²¹ Therefore in creating a rewriting of the *Corinne* story, Jameson associated her narrator with the tragic and artistic protagonists of these earlier texts, thus reinforcing her claims to a particularly sensitive and novel response at a time when the account of a tour of Italy had become a popular theme in women's writing. Furthermore, Jameson offers an innovative version of this sensitive response applicable to new types of travellers to the Continent.

The engagement between *Diary of an Ennuyée* and *Corinne; or Italy* is overt in the narrator's reference to the work and also implicit in Jameson's re-working of the narrative. Jameson uses a similar plot to *Corinne; or Italy* in order to associate her narrator with the sensitive and doomed Corinne, whilst marking her differences to Corinne's ambition, confidence and participation in the public sphere, which were at odds with conservative notions of femininity. However, I suggest that the most significant aspect of Jameson's rewriting of *Corinne; or Italy* concerns the fate of its doomed narrator. Jameson emphasizes the emotional excess of the central character and highlights the similarities between the *ennuyée* and Corinne in terms of their reactions to disappointment in love. The narrators' predicaments in *Corinne; or Italy* and *Diary of an Ennuyée* are almost identical: both suffer from unhappy love affairs in which they are jilted and finally both heroines die as a result of their psychological wounds. Both texts are set predominantly in Italy and the ages of the two heroines are identical. The editor notes how the author of *Diary of an Ennuyée* died in 'her 26th year' on her return from Italy (p.354). Similarly, de Staël introduces the character of Corinne in Book II of the text, adding

²⁰ Buzard, 111.

²¹ Moers, 176.

that 'she was now about twenty six years old' (p.18). Corinne's fate is the same as that of the narrator of *Diary of an Ennuyée* and it is the sensitivity of both women that causes them to be so deeply hurt that nothing can restore them.

The narrator of the diary overtly refers to and rejects de Staël's text and the assistance it may offer her in responding intensely to her surroundings. Whilst in Florence, the narrator notes that she felt that she ought to have a copy of *Corinne*, as it was the 'fashionable *vade mecum* for sentimental travellers in Italy,' however, the narrator states that she is sensitive enough to respond to Italy without inspiration from the fictional heroine and does not want to read the text (p.110). 'I can suffer enough, feel enough, think enough without this,' she adds (*ibid.*). She can offer authentic emotion, with no need for textual support. In *Diary of an Ennuyée*, the narrator identifies that her feelings are so similar to those expressed by Corinne that there seems almost a danger in reading de Staël's text. In a style reminiscent of a Gothic heroine, the narrator describes how, 'when I began to cut the leaves, a kind of terror seized me [...] to find my own feelings reflected in the pages of a book, in language too deeply and eloquently true, is not good for me' (*ibid.*). The coincidence of reading her own feelings in the pages of a novel is made to seem almost supernatural. More importantly the narrator rejects *Corinne; or Italy* because it is 'too true,' that is, it would seem to refer prophetically to her own demise. Thus not only is there a similarity in the plots of the two texts but the former would seem to propel the other towards her fate merely in the reading of the same emotions.

'Caduta è la tua Gloria' ['Fallen is your Glory'] - Female Italy and the role of the woman writer

Jameson's depiction of Italy's political situation centres on the parallels she establishes between the narrator and the trope of female Italy. The narrator emphasizes her connection with the situation of the nation through 'feminine sympathy.' She depicts the region as a 'friend,' in whom she seeks solace after the betrayal of her lover. She has come to Italy, she writes, 'to implore from her healing airs and lucid skies the health I have lost and worship as a pilgrim at the tomb of her departed glories' (p.292). She notes that 'one leaves [...] Rome as we would bid adieu to an old and dear-loved friend' (p.308). The 'friendship' between

place and narrator reinforces the construction of the 'sensitive' narrator. For example, towards the end of the text, it is as though she is leaving a female friend as she laments 'Farewell to her bright blue seas! Farewell to her fervid skies!' (p.348). This exclamation is followed by a discussion of the merits of female friendship as opposed to the 'society of men' that she notes 'taints' and 'weakens' the mind. 'No woman' she asserts, 'can devote herself exclusively to the society of men without losing some of the best and sweetest characteristics of her sex' (p.348). Italy is portrayed as one such friend, whose influence relates to the narrator's emotional and subsequent physical debilitation. 'Her bright blue seas' and 'her fervid skies' improve the narrator's health.

The *ennuyée*'s 'long illness' has weakened her both physically and mentally. Nevertheless, she believes that Italy will 'elevate [her] mind' in its 'healing air' and so improve her emotional and physical state (p.32). In the south of Italy, the effects of the climate and scenery are most significant. Jameson writes,

Though I was weak and far from well, I felt the influence of the soft sunshine in every nerve: the pure elastic air seemed to penetrate my whole frame and made my spirits bound and my heart beat quicker. (p.194)

Despite the narrator's hopes in the restorative powers of female Italy, the scenery fails to cure the narrator of her ailments caused by her male lover. Towards the end of the journey, Jameson's narrator recalls Corinne's plea to Italy, "'Fair Italy, in vain you display all your charms to a broken heart. Would you reanimate my wishes to make me realize my pain?'" (p.392). The narrator of *Diary of an Ennuyée* seems similarly surprised that her presence in Italy has not cured her illness, 'Even at Naples this all-lovely land, fit haunt for Gods has it [the pain] not been with me as elsewhere?' (p.264). Noting her affection for Italy, she states, 'there would I willingly have died' (p.353).

In her re-writing of *Corinne; or Italy*, Jameson draws on the association between the narrator and Italy established in de Staël's text. She presents the landscape as influencing and reflecting her narrator's emotional state. In *Corinne; or Italy*, as Corinne and Oswald, her English lover, prepare to leave Rome for Venice and subsequently to part, Corinne speaks of her distress. Seated alone near the Coliseum at night, she muses on its effect:

Rome possesses an individual charm. You love it as if it were an animated being; its edifices and ruins are like friends to whom you must say adieu when you leave it. Corinne addressed her regrets to the Coliseum, the Pantheon, the Castle of St. Ang, and all the familiar places the sight of which had so many times fired her imagination [...] 'Adieu, regions where life does not depend upon society, nor events; but where genius is enkindled by vision and by the intimate union of the soul with external things!' (p.272)

At the end of this extract, Corinne compares what she sees as the superficialities and restrictions of English life with her more emotionally genuine Italian version. She connects the moonlit ruins to her emotional desolation. Similarly, the narrator of *Diary of an Ennuyée* links the way in which she is overwhelmed by the emotions inspired by the failed love affair with the disorientation she feels on her first view of Rome. The narrator cannot adequately describe Rome, 'for my eyes, my heart were both too full' (p.134), but it is Venice which seems to offer a metaphor for the narrator's situation. After reminding the reader of her fragile state, 'I am ill again. My eyes are so full of tears that I can hardly write;' the narrator portrays Venice 'like a gorgeous exhalation from the bosom of the ocean [...] sad indeed will be the hour when she sinks' (p.66). Venice, beautiful and fragile is, like the narrator, on the verge of demise.

The sympathy which she evokes between the narrator and female Italy enables Jameson to comment on Italian politics and avoid the censure of critics. Jameson's main assertion is that Italy is debilitated as a result of its domination by the Austrians. She presents Italy's current situation in terms of a 'fall' from relative prosperity to subjugation. As Chapman and Stabler assert, 'drawing on Corinne's language, Anna Jameson meditates on early nineteenth century Italy's double legacy of monumental past and disempowered present.'²² The domination of Italy by foreign governments and its fragmentation into various states were key aspects in the trope of Italy as female, which Jameson exemplifies through her narrator's empathetic language when her party is in Naples, writing:

She [Italy] does see it, - she does feel it. A spirit is silently and gradually working its way beneath the surface of society

²² *Unfolding the South; Nineteenth Century British women writers and artists in Italy* Alison Chapman and Jane Stabler (eds.) (Manchester and New York. Manchester University Press, 2003), 5.

Caduta è la tua gloria

-e tu no l' vedi

[Fallen is your glory/ And you don't see it] (p.292)²³

The use of the language of sentiment is significant. Jameson stresses that Italy sees and feels both the subjugation and the drive to counter it. In the first statement Jameson seems to reassure herself that Italy is aware of her domination. However, in relation to the quotation from Petrarch that follows, Jameson's appeal to the patriotic spirit of Italy acts as an oxymoron, negating her previous sentence. The quotation claims that Italy, who is referred to in familiar terms, does not see that her glory has fallen away.

Jameson was able to avoid the censure of critics for her discussion of politics by expounding relatively conservative and widely-held political views. Her criticism of the Austrian presence in Piedmont is such a perspective. Like other travel writers, Jameson was critical of Austria's role after the Congress of Vienna. She calls them 'despotic conquerors' noting that after three months, 'with all my heart I abhor them [the Austrians]' (p.217). Jameson relies characteristically on emotive language to express her views; she 'sympathizes' with the Italian feeling. However, her strength of feeling is discernible when she later describes Venice under Austrian control as 'the oppressor' becoming 'the oppressed' (p.81). The disapproval of Austrian rule of Italian states was, according to C. P. Brand, not such a radical viewpoint in the early nineteenth century; he notes, 'enthusiasm for Italian liberty was by no means exceptional.'²⁴ Therefore, Jameson's comments about Austria despite being strongly worded were not particularly controversial.

Whilst Jameson's views about Austrian domination of Italy were widely held, her quietly supportive comments about Napoleon are discordant with a wider opinion that viewed the French as misplaced in their rule of Italy; as Brand asserts, 'English eyes were bound to look favourably towards the victims of the hated French armies.'²⁵ Jameson adopts a contentious stance only several pages into *Diary of an Ennuyée* as she writes approvingly of Napoleon:

²³ From Canzone XIX of Francesco Petrarca, '*Che debb'io far?*' reprinted in *The Oxford Book of Italian Verse XIII Century-XIX Century* St. John Lucas (ed.) (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1952), 98-101, 99.

²⁴ C. P. Brand *Italy and the English Romantics; the Italianate fashion in Early Nineteenth Century England* (Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1957), 197.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 197-8.

Whatever we may think of Napoleon in England, it is impossible to travel on the Continent, and more particularly through Lombardy, without being struck with the magnificence and vastness of his public works – either designed or executed. (p.45)

She identifies herself with 'English' readers, emphasizing what 'we' think but continues to admire the benefits imposed on Italy by Napoleon. Later, she discusses the way he managed the Italian people's reaction. She writes approvingly that, 'in Italy he followed the rational policy of depressing the nobles and providing occupation and amusement for the lower classes' (p.45). Jameson's positive comments about Napoleon's strategy do not correspond with conservative perspectives in England, particularly just ten years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

Jameson's use of the language of feminine 'sympathy' and the various parallels which she establishes between the narrator and female Italy also offer her means to discuss the foreign domination of Italy and to successfully minimize the hostility of critics towards her potentially controversial views. Although Anna Jameson received several less than glowing reviews, she fared better than other women writers who dared put forward radical political views. Lady Morgan, for example, had been labelled a 'radical' after her *France* and following political comments about Napoleon in *Italy* she was referred to as 'utterly incorrigible' by the conservative journal, the *Quarterly*.²⁶ The fiction of the diary 'not intended for publication' and its 'dead author' was the main focus of the criticism of the text, and is, I suggest, another reason for the fact that Jameson was able to make a number of controversial points about politics without significant criticism.

Jameson's assertion of her diary as a 'private' document rather than purposely written for publication supports her presentation of the narrator as conforming to conventional notions of the role of women. In the sections of the text which address Italian politics, Jameson emphasizes her unwillingness to discuss the issue 'publicly,' preferring to express her views within the confines of the diary. Jameson's fictitious retreat from the public sphere is demonstrated when the party are near to Bolsena. She notes:

²⁶ Lady Morgan, *France* (London. Saunders and Otley, 1817). A review from *Quarterly* (1821) cited in William John Fitzpatrick, *Lady Morgan; her Career, Literary and Personal with a Glimpse of her friends and a word to her Calumniators* (London. Skeet, 1860), 212; *Italy* (London. Saunders and Otley, 1821).

After dinner Colonel - and Mrs. W** began to discuss the politics of Italy, and from abusing the governments, they fell upon the people, and being of very opposite principles and parties, they soon began an argument which ended in a dispute, and sent me to take refuge in my own room. How I detest politics and discord! How I hate the discussion of politics in Italy! (p.292)

Once in the confines of her room, the narrator begins an account of the present subjugation of Italy, noting that 'she does see' her domination by other governments and describing the rise of a potentially revolutionary middle class 'between a profligate and servile nobility, and a degraded and enslaved population' (p.293). Jameson completes the account by noting 'I would rather not think, or speak, or write, upon "matters which are too high for me"' (*ibid.*). Here she emphasizes her retreat from the discussion of politics confirming her acceptance of the conventions that assigned women to the 'private' sphere.

Despite her disavowal of interest in politics, Jameson reworks the familiar trope of Italy as female to offer a vision of the causes of the political situation in Italy and some notion of a solution to the region's problems. Jameson's discussion of the role of women is ambivalently played out in the construction of a fictitious narrator who, both sympathizes with and offers various parallels to the status of subjugated and 'fallen' Italy. Most of the instances of the feminization of Italy in this text are as a number of different female characters corresponding to Italian cities and regions. The fragmented representation of Italy as different, usually subjugated or 'fallen' women highlights the region's lack of a cohesive national government during this period. In a long and detailed depiction of various Italian cities as a series of women, reminiscent of Mary Shelley's 1824 short story *Recollections of Italy*, Jameson notes the degraded state of the majority of the places.²⁷ Beginning with Genoa, she writes:

She is like a noble matron, blooming in years, and dignified in decay; while her rival Venice always used to remind me of a beautiful courtesan repenting in sackcloth and ashes, and mingling with the ragged remnants of her former splendour with the emblems of her present misery, degradation and mourning. Pursue the train of similitude, Florence may be likened to a blooming bride dressed out

²⁷ Mary Shelley in *Recollections of Italy*, *London Magazine* 9 (January, 1824); reprinted in Bennett and Robinson (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 225-263, 260.

to meet her lover; Naples to Tasso's Armida, with all the allurements of the Syren, and all the terrors of the Sorceress; Rome sits crowned upon the grave of her power, widowed indeed and desolate. (p.344)

This long extract is rich in imagery presenting a range of different types of women. Both Venice and Rome are dilapidated, their former power seen only in their ruins. Venice, as courtesan is noted 'repenting,' Jameson's moral stance is reinforced when she refers to the city as a former 'oppressor' (p.81). The city has fallen from grace; it seems that her opulence and glory were excessive. Rome is the other ruined city in this extract. The clues to her downfall are few, other than that she is 'widowed;' the disappearance of her 'husband,' the presence of a masculine spirit, seems a part of her loss of power. Similarly, Genoa is a 'matron,' that is she is depicted as married, but she is also in 'decay.'

Jameson's presentation of Florence as a prospective bride connects the city's future prosperity to the presence of a masculine spirit; she is 'dressed out to meet her lover.' Earlier in the text whilst in Florence, Jameson uses Dante to describe the city, "*La bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma!*" as Dante calls her in some relenting moment' (p.87). Her identification of the city as '*figlia*' or 'daughter' of Rome indicates the relative youth of the city and her prospective glory; she is both very beautiful and very famous. Mary Shelley in *Recollections of Italy* offers a similar portrayal of Tuscany to Jameson's description of Florence. Shelley compares the Tuscan countryside to 'a young affectionate wife who loves her home, yet dresses that home in smiles.'²⁸ In Shelley's description, the young woman is newly married but still beautiful and of pleasant character. In both Shelley's and Jameson's accounts, there seems to be a reliance on the presence of a male figure or masculine 'spirit' to secure the prosperity of the metaphorical woman. The *ennuyée* narrator was similarly reliant on her lover, however, like the 'fallen' cities of Venice and Rome and Italy as a whole, she has been deserted.

Despite her account of Italy's betrayal by foreign nations, Jameson depicts the principal cause of Italy's and indeed the narrator's 'fall,' as 'feminine excess.' The narrator becomes a victim of her own excessively sensitive reaction to her desertion by her lover. She is too emotional. At Naples, she notes that she is 'over-excited' and that without the emotional outlet of the diary she would have died. Writing, it seems, provides at

²⁸ Shelley (1824), 260.

least temporarily, a method of moderating the dangerous accumulation of her emotions. In contrast, Jameson presents two related versions of Italy's 'excess': she is both too beautiful and has been too powerful. Her ambivalent portrayal of 'excess' is most significant in the South of Italy. She compares Naples to Armida from Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, a wicked and powerful character, who attempts to seduce the protagonist with her beauty.²⁹ Naples is excessively beautiful, it seems, luring both the population and travellers to a state of 'indolence.' As a 'sorceress' Naples captivates the visitor. Jameson describes the towns around the Bay of Naples as having 'entrancing skies' in 'the enchanting south' (p.255). As her party prepares to travel back to the North and England, she writes, 'one leaves Naples as a man parts with an enchanting mistress' (p.308). The seductive power of Naples reflects that of Venice; it combines a moral judgment with an account of the power of the region. By way of the female representation, the narrator portrays the influence of this area as potentially destructive to visitors and the population.

Jameson's depiction of the south of Italy as 'a paradise' but nevertheless a place which enchants its population and its visitors into a state of 'indolent delicious reverie' draws attention to the effeminising effects of such excess (p.262). The 'enervation in the warm South' is described by Chard as, 'from antiquity onwards, readily defined as a form of effemination.'³⁰ The effect of the 'soft balmy air' is that it discourages, what Jameson calls 'this comfort loving nation' from fighting against its oppressors (pp.260, 293). As if to emphasize the way in which the beauty and climate of the south mitigate against action, Jameson notes that she too feels the '*dolce far niente* of this enchanting climate' and tells how she lounged in 'pensive dreamy rapture' whilst in the south (p.262). She describes an acquaintance of the narrator, a young Englishman, who has developed this 'acquired luxuriance' in the time he has spent in Italy since he was twelve years old (p.241). Chard notes how the young man's similarity to a classical sculpture is 'an instance of smooth-limbed effeminacy.'³¹ The lack of vigour and energy induced by the enchantment of the South effectively effeminises both its visitors and its inhabitants and prevents action by the Italian people against their political enemies.

²⁹ *Tales from Tasso and other Poems and Translations*, G. Grinnell-Milne (ed.) (London. Nutt, 1909), 27.

³⁰ Chard, 219.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

Jameson presents the only hope for Italy's liberation as the encouragement of a masculine 'spirit' to counter the effeminization evident as a result of the beautiful climate and scenery of the south of Italy in particular. Her account of the political situation is not as precise as that of other women travel writers such as Mary Shelley. Published in 1826, *Diary of an Ennuyée* illustrates few hopes for the liberation of the region from foreign government and for its unification. The 'spirit, gradually working' is not identified but has an agency which can counter the effects of Italy's 'excess.' Although Jameson identifies Napoleon as having brought some aspect of agency and change to the peninsula, unlike Lady Morgan, she does not present him as the impetus for the re-masculinization of Italy. Jameson's account of Italian politics reflects with regret the events after the fall of Napoleon but written before the revolutionary uprisings of the 1830s, the text does not offer any indication of specific solutions.³²

In the editor's acknowledgement of the *ennuyée's* death in Autun, Jameson highlights the symbolic demise of Italy's hopes of liberty from foreign government. Autun was the French town in which Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord was Bishop between 1789 and 1791.³³ An inspirational figure during the 1790s, Talleyrand had been one of the principal negotiators at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. He was seen by many, such as Lady Morgan and Charlotte Eaton for example, to have betrayed Italian interests by allowing Austria to effectively gain control of Northern Italy. By setting her narrator's death in Autun as the conclusive event of the text, Jameson's parallel of female Italy with the *ennuyée* reaches a desolate vision of its present situation. Italy has little hope for the future. It has been fragmented and subjugated under diverse foreign governments and no view of unification is perceptible.

³² Holmes notes, 'The political insecurity of the Italian rulers may explain in part the apocalyptic climate of repression after the revolutions of 1820-1 [...] The Spanish rising of 1820 had triggered the Italian revolutions of 1820-1, and the July Revolution in Paris in 1830 was the cue for the next wave of insurrections in Italy.' George Holmes, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Italy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 187-8.

³³ Talleyrand had been an inspirational figure during the 1790s. After his publications arguing for equality of education, Mary Shelley dedicated *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* to him. In the preface she writes, 'having read with great pleasure a pamphlet which you have lately published, I dedicatè this volume to you.' Shelley refers to Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, *Rapport sur L'Instruction Publique, fait au nom du Comité de Contitution* (Paris, 1791). Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Carol H. Poston (ed.) (London: Norton, 1988), 3.

Conclusions

Diary of an Ennuyée demonstrates Jameson's construction of an innovative 'sensitive' response to the Continent, which expresses and enacts the fate of Italy. The most significant feature of the narrator of her imaginative re-writing of Germaine de Staël's *Corinne; or Italy* is her portrayal of an excessive sensitivity. Jameson's reworking of de Staël's text supports the artistic sensibility and the apparent vulnerability of the protagonist. Through her emphasis on particular reactions to her experiences in Italy, Jameson proposes both an alternative to other 'sensitive' responses to the Continent such as *Corinne; or Italy* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and makes potentially controversial commentary about Italy's political situation.

The various parallels between Jameson's narrator and her representation of 'female' Italy reinforce the complexities of the text and its ambiguous generic status. Her account of Italian politics is acknowledged as based on genuine observations made during her own tour. In her preface to the 1834 edition, she notes 'Italy has since undergone some social and political changes' (p.xi). However, the imaginative portrayal of Italy as a sympathetic female 'friend' to her tragic heroine similarly doomed and 'fallen,' complicates the reporting of 'real' events. This negotiation between genres offers Jameson means to transgress beyond the 'private' sphere and comment on Italian politics with less risk of censure, as well as present an original, authoritative and 'sensitive' response to Italy.

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'Fashioned from His Opposite:' Yeats, Dante and Shelley

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Yeats, Dante, Shelley: Yeats's responses to the Medieval and Romantic poets shape the three writers into a triangular field of literary forces. Yeats conceives of Dante in ways that flower out of his thinking about Shelley; in turn, Shelley's dealings with Dante, viewed through the prism of Yeats's thinking about Dante, casts a kind of proleptic light on Yeats's understanding of poetic originality. In the dialogue poem, 'Ego Dominus Tuus' (entitled at one stage of drafting *The Self & the AntiSelf*),¹ the second speaker, Ille, offers this view of Dante:

I think he fashioned from his opposite
An image that might have been a stony face
Staring upon a Bedouin's horse-hair roof
From doored and windowed cliff, or half upturned
Among the coarse grass and the camel-dung.
He set his chisel to the hardest stone.
Being mocked by Guido for his lecherous life,
Deriding and derided, driven out
To climb that stair and eat that bitter bread,
He found the unpersuadable justice, he found
The most exalted lady loved by a man. (ll. 27-37)²

Eric Griffiths chides Yeats for believing that 'he would have recognized Dante anywhere, however infernal the press or celestial the throng,' adding that the Florentine master 'looks quite like a well-fed hamster in many of the early illuminated manuscripts.'³ This is an entertaining put-down of a kind Yeats seems often to invite. But it misses wholly one of the points of Yeats's lines, that the 'spectral image' by

¹ See S. Parrish, (ed.) 'The Wild Swans at Coole:' *Manuscript Materials* (Ithaca. Cornell UP, 1994), 288-9.

² Quoted, as are all Yeats's poems unless indicated otherwise, from *W. B. Yeats: Selected Poetry*, ed. with intro. and notes T. Webb (Harmondsworth. Penguin, 1991). A judicious and implicitly cautionary insight into Yeats's dealings with other writers is provided by J. Woodhouse in 'D'Annunzio and Yeats,' *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies*, 5 (1998), 212-30. In the passage quoted from 'Ego Dominus Tuus' Yeats makes clear, by way of 'I think,' that Ille's view of Dante is just that: a view, an opinion, albeit one held with passionate conviction.

³ E. Griffiths, 'The Divine Comedy Collides with the Modern "Vision Thing,"' *The Guardian Review*, 8 Jan. 1998. *Guardian Unlimited*. Online. 10 November 2005.

which Dante is best known may well not have resembled 'The man that Lapo and that Guido knew' (phrase and line also from 'Ego Dominus Tuus,' ll. 25, 26). The relationship between that 'stony face' and Dante the man, 'the bundle of accident and incoherence,' to borrow the famous formulation from 'A General Introduction for My Work,' who sat down 'to breakfast,' is, says Ille, one of opposition.⁴ The lines offer an understanding of self-creation or self-fashioning central to Yeats: the notion that anything shaped, a self, a poem, a culture, is made from a conscious effort to 'imagine ourselves as different from what we are,' to move against the grain of what is natural, easy, straightforward, 'the passive acceptance of a code.' This idea appeals to Yeats as the source of modern heroism, of what in the same section of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* he calls 'Active virtue.'⁵ Such 'virtue' is heroic because it involves wrestling continually with 'new bitterness, new disappointment' (*Per Amica*, p.15); it entails a fight for imaginative life with the 'Daemon' (Yeats's term for the anti-self at its most imperious and occult), who 'delivers and deceives us' (*Per Amica*, p.11).

Yet what alliteration ('delivers and deceives') joins together, Yeats's keen self-awareness has already put asunder. Arguably, it is the defeats that lie in store for his treasured, desperate notion of the anti-self, after the break-through of 'Ego Dominus Tuus,' which make him a poet of power and great pathos. Yeats argues, through his conception of the anti-self, that the poet does not find himself so much as discover an image that embodies the capacity to imagine the self as different from what it is, thus escaping the restrictions of viewpoints, personalities, cultural horizons. That, at any rate, is the idea, but in Yeats's finest poems it is rarely unimperilled by contrary impulses. All that is opposed by the anti-self fights back in, say, 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul.' Ille and Hic reappear, in somewhat altered guises, as the poet's Soul and Self in the poem. The Soul, a good student of *A Vision*, urges the poet to 'Fix every wandering

⁴ Quoted from W. B. Yeats, *Later Essays*, W. H. O'Donnell (ed.), with assistance from E. Bergmann Loizeaux (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), 204. In *Later Essays*, the essay is entitled 'Introduction,' with the following sub-title, '(w. 1937) For the never-published Charles Scribner's Sons "Dublin Edition" of W. B. Yeats; published in *Essays and Introductions* (1961) as "A General Introduction for My Work."'

⁵ *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, quoted from W. B. Yeats, *Later Essays*, p.10; subsequent references to *Per Amica* will be drawn from this edition; page numbers will be given parenthetically in the main body of the essay.

thought upon / That quarter where all thought is done' (ll. 6-7); the Self chooses 'emblems of the day' (l. 29) and, in response to the Soul's contempt for 'the crime of death and birth' (l. 24), claims 'A charter to commit the crime once more' (l. 32). Yeats uses his roomy, eight-line stanza, with its quickening shorter lines towards the close, to accommodate both positions. But in the poem's second half Soul drops away and Self comes to the fore, uttering a tormented yet pugnacious defence of life and concluding with a vision of unesoteric blessedness that emerges from the previous acceptance of the 'blind man's ditch' (l. 59), Yeats's image for life at its most 'unpurged' ('Byzantium,' l. 1). True, the final blessedness in 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul' requires a casting out of 'remorse' (l. 68), but this casting out feels less like a return to the Soul's wisdom than a rejection of its disdain for quotidian experience. With more disenchanted knowingness, 'The Circus Animals' Desertion' records a comparable process, though not without backsliding in favour of the dream of art. When Yeats asserts, 'It was the dream itself enchanted me' (l. 28), the line does many things at once in a way that is characteristic: to employ the two nouns which give Conor Cruise O'Brien's well-known essay on Yeats its title, but to unite them in a more positive manner than O'Brien does, 'passion' wedds itself to 'cunning.'⁶ Yeats writes lines that are deliberate, even majestic and yet shot through with a mercurial elusiveness. In this case, the 'dream itself' takes on a value of its own, facing down the poet's own post-Freudian awareness; at the same time, 'enchanted' speaks not only of legitimate imaginative mastery but also of possible deception.

'Ego Dominus Tuus' is a major poem from a crucial period of self-remaking in Yeats's career, roughly 1915 to 1917.⁷ It is appropriate that the volume in which this poem about division and doubleness was first published, *The Wild Swans at Coole*, should itself appear in two forms (in 1917 and in an enlarged edition in 1919). The poem draws its title from a vividly allegorical episode in the *Vita Nuova*, section 3, when Love appears to Dante in a dream, holding Beatrice in his arms and makes her eat 'a thing that was burning in flames,' as Dante Gabriel Rossetti's

⁶ C. C. O'Brien, 'Passion and Cunning: An Essay on the Politics of W. B. Yeats,' in A. N. Jeffares and K. G. W. Cross, (eds.) *In Excited Reverie: A Centenary Tribute to William Butler Yeats 1865-1939* (London. Macmillan, 1965), 256-63.

⁷ See H. Bloom, *Yeats* (London. Oxford UP, 1970), for the view that 'the two years from late 1915 to late 1917' 'were the most important in Yeats's imaginative life,' p.198.

translation has it: this 'thing,' the poet learns, is '*cor tuum*' (your heart). Love has already said to Dante, '*Ego dominus tuus*' (translated by Rossetti as 'I am thy master').⁸ What Yeats draws from this dream-sequence, evoked as though it were a seance-like trance in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, section 1 of 'Anima Hominis,' is a vision of being mastered by a force outside the self (yet somehow within as well since 'Love' is an inner state); if the vision is 'antithetical,' at odds with expectation and defamiliarising, it provokes dim recognition, too. The mastered self must be able to undergo the discipline of an experience that makes strange and alters understanding of 'love.' It is part for Dante and Yeats of Love's mastery that Love said 'many things among the which I could understand but few' (Rossetti's translation, quoted by Yeats in *Per Amica*, p.4). The anti-self comes speaking a barely comprehensible language; the poet is a would-be medium spoken through by a power it both pretends to understand and shapes masterfully.

Per Amica Silentia Lunae, at the head of which 'Ego Dominus Tuus' was placed, was originally entitled *An Alphabet*, a self-mocking first thought, given that the work bears signs of being written 'in that extravagant style / He had learnt from Pater' (Yeats, 'The Phases of the Moon,' ll. 26-7). But *An Alphabet* is a first thought which indicates Yeats's intention that the work would distil his essential reflections on writing poetry and being a poet, and serve as 'a prose backing to my poetry.'⁹ *Per Amica* is his own version of a *Vita Nuova*, its first part, 'Anima Hominis,' acting as a gloss on 'Ego Dominus Tuus.' The poem opens and closes, as so many of Dante's cantos do in the *Commedia*, with images one might call liminal, threshold states: 'still / A lamp burns on beside the open book / That Michael Robartes left' (ll. 2-4). And, for all its moments of declarative force, 'Ego Dominus Tuus' bears out Yeats's assertion in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* that 'we sing amid our uncertainty' (p.8).¹⁰ Michael Robartes is a complex fictional persona. In 'The Phases of the Moon' he will be a sardonic repository of esoteric lore. In 'Ego

⁸ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Collected Writings*, selected and ed. J. Marsh (London. Dent, 1999), 81, 80.

⁹ See Yeats's letter to his father of 12 May 1917, in *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, A. Wade (ed.) (London. Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), 624, 625.

¹⁰ See A. N. Jeffares on the way in which in *Per Amica* Yeats 'undercuts [...] affirmations with questions, so that he often leaves his options open,' *W. B. Yeats: A New Biography* (London. Continuum, 2001), 169.

Dominus Tuus,' does he merely bequeath, as Hic indicates in the poem's opening lines, 'the unconquerable delusion' (l. 6)? 'Unconquerable' pulls against its accompanying noun, rather more strongly even than it does in Hic's source, Matthew Arnold's *The Scholar-Gipsy*, in which the scholar-gipsy is imagined as 'Still nursing the unconquerable hope' (l. 211) - is, indeed, implored still to be nursing such hope.¹¹ For 'hope' to be 'unconquerable' is one thing; for 'delusion' to be so is quite another since the uncompromising noun will not allow 'unconquerable' to do much more than point to a wilful persistence in error. The way this echo of Arnold functions shows the sardonic side of Yeats getting in his retaliation first, retaliation against the aspirations of his esoteric self. By way of the echo Hic says: 'for all your notions of breaking with what you will stigmatize as "our modern hope" (l. 11), you yourself are guilty of the "modern" sin of projecting your hopes onto an idealized Other - only, in your case, instead of a scholar-gipsy, you have chosen an aspect of your self, your "anti-self."' The joke, supposedly originating with Ezra Pound, that Ille is code for 'Willie' is a good one, but it overlooks the fact that Hic, too, has a smack of the Yeatsian about him.

It is clear from other associated prose writings that this side of Yeats - critical of his belief in occult wisdom - was never silenced during the years during which he wrote 'Ego Dominus Tuus' and effectively engaged in a remaking of the self. In 'The Poet and the Actress' (unpublished until 1991), the Poet prevails with his belief in the need for 'a violent antithesis' in 'our natures, and the circumstance that surround us,' but the Actress is for most of the dialogue unpersuaded of the need to wear a mask.¹² A few months later, in December 1916, Yeats wrote a letter to 'Leo Africanus,' his supposed occult alter ego. As R. F. Foster points out, 'It is a strangely irresolute text.'¹³ If it contains Leo's vehement assertion that he really exists - 'it is only because I am your opposite,' he says in Ille-like tones (as Foster points out), 'your antithesis because I am in all things furthest from your intellect & your will, that I alone am your Interlocutor -,' it closes with this characteristic stricken qualm on

¹¹ Quoted from M. Allott and R. H. Super, (eds.) *Matthew Arnold*, Oxford Authors (Oxford, Oxford UP, 1986).

¹² "'The Poet and the Actress: An Unpublished Dialogue by W. B. Yeats,' D. R. Clark (ed.) in *Yeats Annual No. 8*, W. Gould (ed.) (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1991), 136.

¹³ R. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: II: The Arch-Poet 1915-1939* (Oxford, Oxford UP, 2003), 72; hereafter Foster.

Yeats's part: 'I am not convinced that in this letter there is one sentence that has come from beyond my imagination.'¹⁴

In the poem itself, Ille brushes aside Hic's scorn. Picking up, instead, on Hic's final phrase, 'Magical shapes' (l. 7), set apart as if to foil its speaker's conscious intentions and making a highly rhetorical poetry out of the quarrel with the self, Ille develops the idea of the anti-self, reached through 'the help of an image' (l. 7). Ille does not quite 'call up.' Less peremptorily, he 'call(s) to my own opposite' (l. 8) and there is pleading - and stasis - in the summons. When at the end Ille 'call(s) to the mysterious one who yet / Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream' (ll. 70-1), there is progression; the abstract 'opposite' has become a being of spectral flesh and blood, but there is a sense, too, of progression as punishingly incremental, 'yet' drawing to itself a charge of still unfulfilled hope. The poem is a prelude to vision, as are at least two other significant poems in the 1919 version of *The Wild Swans at Coole*: the title poem, a poem suspended between past, present and future, between the 'now' of 'And now my heart is sore' (l. 14) and the 'now' of 'But now they drift on the still water' (l. 25), the swans offering as they 'drift' a glimpse of hope-suggesting uncertainty and 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory,' in which the last stanza burns up the 'entire combustible world' (l. 82) of the poem in a gesture of dejected failure - imagination has not brought a fitter welcome.

Yeats's 'Magical shapes,' as Bloom and George Bornstein have noted, are Shelleyan in origin, deriving from Cythna's account in *Laon and Cythna*, Canto 7, of her recovery from madness, which involved her drawing on the sand 'Clear, elemental shapes, whose smallest change / A subtler language within language wrought: / The key of truths which once were dimly taught / In old Crotona' (ll. 3111-14).¹⁵ Yeats, too, searches for a 'subtler language within language,' dimly taught by many predecessors, at the head of whom one might place Shelley. Indeed, it is arguable that Shelley, rather than Leo Africanus, shadows that 'mysterious one' who is both double and anti-self at the poem's close. Yeats's 'subtler

¹⁴ S. L. Adams and G. Mills Harper, (eds.) 'The Manuscript of Leo Africanus,' in *Yeats Annual No. 1* (1982); quoted in Foster, p.74.

¹⁵ See Bloom, pp. 200-2, and G. Bornstein, *Yeats and Shelley* (Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 1970), 91. Here and throughout the essay, Shelley's poetry and prose are quoted from *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*, Z. Leader and M. O'Neill (eds.) (Oxford. Oxford UP, 2003).

language' emerges from the pressure brought to bear on plain but active verbs, words such as 'call' and, crucially, 'find' and its cognates. Wishing to 'find myself and not an image' (l. 10), Hic provokes an attack by Ille on 'the gentle, sensitive mind' (l. 12) that has cost us 'the old nonchalance of the hand' (l. 13). Ille is at once among those afflicted by the modern condition ('We are but critics' (l. 15), he laments and the pronoun is telling) and a seeker after that 'old nonchalance,' gestured towards in the fine carelessness with which 'old nonchalance of the *hand*' fails to avoid an obtrusive repetition soon after Ille's wish to 'summon all / That I have *handled* least' (ll. 8-9; emphases added); again, the wording of 'by its light / We have lit upon' (ll. 11-12) - the light, that is, of the derided 'modern hope' - is calculatedly nonchalant in its mocking slovenliness.

The quest to 'find' is central to the poem. Yeats does not lazily assume knowledge of a body of ideas outside his poetry; he works towards them through the words he uses and the insistence with which 'find' (or cognate forms of the verb) is used tells us that this is an inward poem, concerned with imaginative exploration. At the same time, the fascination with doubleness and division has a muted but inescapable political relevance. In a lecture given a decade earlier, Yeats suggests the connections between his fascination with inner conflict and Ireland's troubled political landscape: 'England sometimes taunts us with our divisions,' he told his American audience, 'divisions that she has done her best to foment; as if she herself was ever united, as if it was natural for any country to be united. No land lives out a wholesome life, full of ideas and vitality, that is not fighting out great issues within its own borders.' Yeats in this lecture expresses reservations about 'an unnatural unity' achieved at great cost under a leader such as Parnell; such a 'unity' 'broke up explosively' since 'underneath were emotions, forces, seeking to express themselves.'¹⁶ One way of looking at the idea of self and anti-self in Yeats is to regard it as a means of channelling and regulating contrary 'emotions, forces, seeking to express themselves.' Throughout 'Ego Dominus Tuus' Yeats transforms Freudian thought and sub-textual political strife into a drama consonant with the drives that underpin imaginative discovery. Whereas Freud sees the sovereign ego as failing to exercise mastery in its own household, Yeats views the self as capable of 'a vision of reality' (l. 48), in the poem's words, through summoning

¹⁶ 'Four Lectures by W. B. Yeats, 1902-4,' R. Londraville (ed.) in *Yeats Annual No. 8*, pp. 105, 106.

its 'opposite.' Section 12 of 'Anima Hominis' is grudgingly haughty about 'doctors of medicine' who 'have discovered that certain dreams of the night [...] are the day's unfulfilled desire' (*Per Amica*, p.15): Yeats evidently feels Freud ends where a poet starts. The poet knows, takes as his given, that desire will not be fulfilled, but even as he knows this, he – magnificently, unreductively – refuses to accept that knowledge, uses his imagination to refute it.

In the lines with which this essay began, Ille interprets the image of hollow-cheeked Dante as a kind of creative mask. He and Yeats avoid producing a text that is merely expository through hints of speculation, provisionality and fantasy, as in the strikingly bizarre lines about the Bedouin encampment which feature Dante's anti-self 'Staring [...] / From doored and windowed cliff,' a scholar-gipsy, with a vengeance: 'And did he find himself [...]?' (l. 22). The question is rhetorical, begging the answer 'no' (although, in another sense, Dante finds himself by fashioning his opposite), but it paves the way for the recognition of subjectivity (in the very act of imagining an escape from subjectivity) in the phrase, 'I think.' Moreover, Ille imagines how Dante 'fashioned from his opposite / An image.' The verb, picked out by the iambic emphasis, implies that Dante both 'moulded' and 'gave shape to' (to give relevant *OED* meanings). It intimates that Dante brought something (or someone) new into existence and that this something (or someone) new was already there, *in potentia*. That the 'fashioning' involves imaging and imagination is brought out by the two-fold stage of the making: first, the meeting with, that involves a summoning up of, the poet's 'opposite;' then, the finding for that 'opposite' of 'An image.' Bloom is right to say that the poem's 'strength [...] is that Yeats evades the constriction of his still rudimentary doctrine.'¹⁷ Moreover, as already indicated, Hic has his moments and surely the poem's choice of *exempla*, Dante and Keats (whatever one makes of Ille's views about them), confirms a strong element of truth in Hic's assertion that 'A style is found by sedentary toil / And by the imitation of great masters' (ll. 65-6). At any rate, 'sedentary toil' was necessary for Ille's understanding of the two poets' careers, even if the passive voice ('is found') counters Ille's trust in subjective quest. Hic's 'found' is in touch with the need for foundations; Ille's kiss is given to the void.

Yeats's gloss in *Per Amica* mingles assertion and misgivings in arresting ways, as in the already quoted statement, so confident about the

¹⁷ Yeats, 198.

need for unsureness, that 'we sing amid our uncertainty.' 'I am no Dante scholar,' Yeats writes in *Per Amica*, 'and I but read him in Shadwell or in Dante Rossetti, but I am always persuaded that he celebrated the most pure lady poet ever sung and the Divine Justice, not merely because death took that lady and Florence banished her singer, but because he had to struggle in his own heart with his unjust anger and his lust; while unlike those of the great poets, who are at peace with the world and at war with themselves, he fought a double war' (p.7). The lines on Dante link directly with this account of 'a double war.' A Dantescan clarity finds expression in 'He set his chisel to the hardest stone.' The line, end-stopped even as it implies endless labour, acts as a 'stone' in the midst of the stream of two swirling long sentences; it brings out the work involved in imagining an image of one's opposite: Yeats avoids saying that Dante successfully carved or sculptured or wrought or even chiselled an image. Rather, he takes us back to the process of work, the act of chiselling. If the poem's thinking about Dante mingles supposed biography with the idea of art as 'a hollow image of fulfilled desire' (*Per Amica*, p.7), Ille's lines carry conviction because their rhythms and allusions participate in the fictional construction that is their subject. Didactic exposition turns into imaginative drama. So, the alliteration of 'Derided and deriding, driven out / To climb that stair and eat that bitter bread' helps to underscore the to-and-fro sways that beset a man compelled to live out his destiny. 'Deriding as well as derided, driven out,' he may be, but he is also the agent of two infinitives. The last two lines are all active and the use of 'found' pulls away from the idea of wish-fulfilment: 'He found [...], he found.' In a draft, Yeats wrote, 'He saw the unpersuadable justice in a vision.'¹⁸ But, wanting to hold back the word 'vision' (see l. 48) for Ille's next speech, he elected to cut the echo of *Kubla Khan* ('A damsel with a dulcimer / In a vision once I saw'), with its suggestion of unrecoverable inspiration and domes in air. His Dante not only 'saw,' he 'found.'¹⁹

At the same time, ambiguity surrounds the would-be unambiguous emphasis on finding. Did Dante find what was there? Or did he find, as we say, what he was looking for? The repetition of 'found' betrays the 'driven' nature of Dante's quest. If it is the case, as Eric Griffiths and Matthew Reynolds have argued recently, that Yeats's line is influenced

¹⁸ S. Parrish, (ed.) *The Wild Swans at Coole: Manuscript Materials*, 277.

¹⁹ 'Kubla Khan,' ll. 37-8, quoted from *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Oxford Authors, H. J. Jackson (ed.) (Oxford. Oxford UP, 1985).

by Dante's hendecasyllables ('The most exalted lady loved by a man'), Yeats, in turn, is pulling Dante into his 'phantasmagoria.'²⁰ This Yeatsian word occurs in many places, climactically in 'A General Introduction for My Work,' where we are told that 'there is always a phantasmagoria,' but also in 'The Poet and the Actress,' where the Poet argues that 'there must be [a] whole phantasmagoria, through which the life long contest finds expression' and through which 'the dream and the reality may face one another in visible array.'²¹ At the heart of phantasmagoria, for Yeats, is dramatic struggle. And the protagonists in the drama staged within Ille's lines are the belief that poetic quest results in true vision and the doubt whether poetic vision always and only tells about subjective need. The tension is there in the later lines that assert that 'art / Is but a vision of reality' (ll. 47-8). These words mean to keep at bay sentimentalism and rhetoric, but they make us look hard at what Yeats means by 'vision:' it is impossible to avoid the feeling that 'vision' for Yeats is always a state that 'Man's own resinous heart has fed' ('Two Songs from a Play,' l. 32). Moreover, 'reality' itself carries a doubled freight of suggestions. It is what the visionary imagination confronts and what emerges as a result of that confrontation: both the snow and the snowman. This doubleness is at work in the account of Beatrice as 'The most exalted lady loved by a man,' where 'exalted' reverences Beatrice's high state and concedes that for her to be 'exalted' there needed to be someone who did the exalting.

When Ille speaks of 'the unpersuadable justice,' he alludes to the words inscribed over the gate leading into hell in the opening of Canto 3: 'Guistizia mosse il mio alto Fattore' (Justice moved my High Maker)

²⁰ *Dante in English*, E. Griffiths and M. Reynolds (eds.) (London: Penguin, 2005), 288 (where we are asked to 'note the tendency to hendecasyllables' in lines 1-37 of 'Ego Dominus Tuus').

²¹ W. B. Yeats, *Later Essays*, 204; *Yeats Annual No. 8*, 135. For a possible source of Yeats's phrase 'life long contest' and for the emphasis on 'battle' in Dante, see Thomas Carlyle's description of the portrait of Dante attributed to Giotto as 'The face of one wholly in protest, and life-long unsundering battle, against the world,' 'The Hero as Poet,' in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1840; London: Chapman and Hall, n.d.), 80. For an excellent discussion of the way that 'Carlyle's discussion grows out of the matrix of earlier Romantic criticism' and may have given 'some slight impetus' to 'Ego Dominus Tuus,' see T. Rajan, 'The Romantic Backgrounds of Yeats's Use of Dante in "Ego Dominus Tuus,"' *Yeats Eliot Review*, 7 (1982), 120-2 (quotations from p.121).

(*Inferno*, 3, 4).²² But the phrase unravels intriguingly, especially when one recalls the fact that Yeats is 'persuaded,' to use his verb from *Per Amica*, that the origins of Dante's creation of 'the unpersuadable justice' lie in Dante's need to persuade himself of a God capable of absolute justice. If 'unpersuadable' suggests a power indifferent to human demands, it also gives the divine Justice something of the stoniness of Dante's anti-self and, thus, since the anti-self needs the self, pitches us back into that place 'where all the ladders start / The foul rag and bone shop of the heart' ('The Circus Animals' Desertion,' ll. 39-40). Again, the line 'To climb that stair and eat that bitter bread' uses a typical Yeatsian means of emphasis, the demonstrative adjective 'that,' to allude to the *Paradiso*, Canto 17 and the prophecy made of Dante's life in exile by Cacciaguida (ll. 58-60): 'Thou shalt make trial of how salt doth taste another's bread, and how hard the path to descend and mount upon another's stair.'²³ Yeats's line chisels itself into a kind of stony bitterness that speaks volumes about the poem's underlying phantasmagoria. Moreover, in the original Cacciaguida's prophecy follows an assertion that God's foreknowledge does not call into question the reality of free will (see *Paradiso*, Canto 17, ll. 37-42). In 'Ego Dominus Tuus' and *Per Amica*, freedom is less assured, Yeats remarking in *Per Amica* of poets that their work 'is the man's flight from his entire horoscope, his blind struggle in the network of the stars' (p.6).

Something of the poem's understanding of a necessary quarrel between 'blind struggle' and self-fashioning commitment to the 'anti-self' can be heard in these lines from the poem's close:

Those men that in their writings are most wise
 Own nothing but their blind, stupefied hearts.
 I call to the mysterious one who yet
 Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream
 And look most like me, being indeed my double,
 And prove of all imaginable things
 The most unlike, being my anti-self,
 And, standing by these characters, disclose
 All that I seek and whisper it as though
 He were afraid the birds, who cry aloud

²² Italian and translation quoted from *The Inferno of Dante Alighieri*, Temple Classics Edition, H. Oelsner (ed.) (London. Dent, 1900).

²³ Quoted from *The Paradiso of Dante Alighieri*, Temple Classics Edition, P. H. Wicksteed (ed.) (London. Dent, 1904).

Their momentary cries before it is dawn,
 Would carry it away to blasphemous men. (ll. 68-79)

If 'blind, stupefied hearts' suggests compulsion and its energies, 'stupefied' suggesting its etymological meaning of 'struck in amazement,' 'I call to the mysterious one' implies freedom to act. Ille summons, calls to his opposite, who is at once 'my double' and 'my anti-self.' It is noteworthy that the idea of the 'opposite' being a 'double,' a *doppelganger*, is accepted more readily than the idea that the 'mysterious one' is indeed 'my anti-self:' that second discovery is where work is required as the double has to 'prove of all imaginable things / The most unlike.' Without a self to wish to escape, there is no possibility of an anti-self. Ille, along with his anti-self, 'stands by' his magical characters, both as supporter and spectator of his own imaginings. A cunning circularity governs the enjambment in 'disclose / All that I seek;' since it is the anti-self that Ille seeks – seeks before he can find 'All' that he seeks – what can it 'disclose' other than Ille's wish to discover a figure that can disclose all that he seeks? Anti-self leads back, inexorably, to self.

Yeats's allusions to two of the most personal parts of the *Commedia* function to suggest that this process is at work in Dante. One passage is the affecting prophecy just quoted, where Dante creates a sense of himself as climbing the stairs of others as his own biographical future, even as he is engaged in his masterpiece on acts of imaginative descent and ascent. The second is alluded to in *Per Amica*, section 4. Here, Yeats speaks of Dante's reputation for lechery by way of comments from Boccaccio, Matthew Arnold and Guido Cavalcanti, who, in Yeats's words, 'as Rossetti translates him, finds "too much baseness" in his friend' (p.7) and, Dante scholar or not, he takes us to possibly the most affecting moment in the entire *Commedia*. 'And when Dante meets Beatrice in Eden, does she not reproach him because, when she had taken her presence away, he followed in spite of warning dreams, false images and now, to save him in his own despite, she has "visited [...] the Portals of the Dead" and chosen Virgil for his courier?' (p.7). The quotation is possibly taken from Shadwell's translation or from Thomas Okey's translation in the Temple Classics edition.²⁴ The scene is that where Dante and Beatrice meet again in the Earthly Paradise in *Purgatorio* 30; awe-struck, he turns to Virgil, rather as 'il fantolin corre alla mamma' (the small child runs to his mamma;

²⁴ See W. B. Yeats, *Later Essays*, 295.

my translation), but Virgil has vanished, Dante is on his own and for the first and only time in the entire poem is named as 'Dante' by Beatrice, who sternly reproves him for his way of life: she talks about him in the third person to the 'pitying angels:'

Nor did it avail me to gain inspirations, with which in dream and otherwise, I called him back; so little recked he of them.

So low sank he, that all means for his salvation were already short, save showing him the lost people.

For this I visited the portal of the dead and to him who has guided him up hither, weeping my prayers were borne. (ll. 44, 101, 133-41)²⁵

The passage is profound and moving, precisely because Dante is moved in recognisably human ways, whereas Beatrice is interested, it seems, only in the process by which an erring sinner can be redeemed. For this essay's purposes what is fascinating is that, for all his commitment to the notion of the stony-faced 'Dante' as a fiction, Yeats recognizes that the source for his own sense of Dante as a fiction is Dante's own self-presentation. What Yeats senses is that at such moments 'the verses are [...] a mirror of his history,' as *Per Amica* has it (p.7). The *Commedia* gives us Dante's self as well as his anti-self, both of which, Yeats suggests, are always if not only verbal creations, fictions, imaginative dreams.

One might look ahead, for the full power to haunt of 'Ego Dominus Tuus' and its beautiful accompanying prose poem, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, to the opening sentence of his later Introduction for the never-published Scribner's Sons 'Dublin Edition' of his work: 'A poet writes always of his personal life, in his finest work out of its tragedies, whatever it be, remorse, lost love or mere loneliness; he never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria.' The passage continues later on: 'he has been re-born as an idea, something intended, complete.'²⁶ 'Ego Dominus Tuus' shows Yeats's deep understanding of this process at work in Dante. As Ugo Foscolo contends,

²⁵ Quoted from the translation in which Yeats may have read the passage, *The Purgatorio of Dante Alighieri*, Temple Classics Edition, H. Oelsner (ed.) 3rd ed., (London, Dent, 1903).

²⁶ W. B. Yeats, *Later Essays*, 204. I follow this edition in reading 'tragedies' rather than the received reading, 'tragedy.'

writing of the *Commedia*, 'the first, only, true protagonist is the poet.'²⁷ So, Yeats gives us a Dante entangled in the drama of his life as a poet, setting his chisel to the hardest stone, fashioning a poem from his opposite, yet an opposite that could not exist without the self. In the poem, to its advantage, Yeats has no mythology, merely intuitions on the verge of codification. The anti-self, standing by Ille's 'Magical characters,' will 'disclose / All that I seek,' but even when he does this in some unstated future, he will 'whisper it as though / He were afraid' it might be told to 'blasphemous men.'

In the final section of *A Vision*, Yeats sees Dante's era as marking the first 'victory of personality:' 'Dante in the *Convito* mourns for solitude, lost through poverty, and writes the first sentence of modern autobiography, and in the *Divina Commedia* imposes his own personality upon a system and a phantasmagoria hitherto impersonal; the King everywhere has found his kingdom.'²⁸ There is a fuller account in 'A People's Theatre,' where Yeats writes of the relevant part of the *Convito* that it is 'the first passage of poignant autobiography in literary history.' Yeats comments that in 'describing his poverty and his exile [Dante] counts as his chief misfortune that he has had to show himself to all Italy and so publish his human frailties that men who honoured him unknown honour him no more.'²⁹ The passage in the *Convito* (or *Convivio*) follows, as Yeats would have noticed, a long discussion about the inappropriateness of talking about oneself, which has the effect of pointing up the pathos of Dante's account of himself as a 'wanderer, almost a beggar' as he has 'paced, revealing, against my will, the wound of fortune, which is often wont to be unjustly imputed to him who is wounded.' Dante continues: 'And I have seemed cheap in the eyes of many who had perchance conceived of me in other guise by some certain fame; in the sight of whom not only has my person been cheapened, but every work of mine, already accomplished or yet to do, has become of lower price.'³⁰ Dante plays into Yeats's hands, as it were, laying bare, not only his own

²⁷ Quoted in *Dante: The Critical Heritage*, M. Caesar (ed.) (London. Routledge, 1989), 488.

²⁸ W. B. Yeats, *A Vision* (1937; London. Macmillan, 1962), 289.

²⁹ Quoted from W. B. Yeats, *Selected Criticism and Prose*, A. N. Jeffares (ed.) (London. Pan in association with Macmillan, 1980), 186.

³⁰ Quoted from *The Convivio of Dante Alighieri*, P. H. Wicksteed (ed.) (London. Dent, 1924), I. 3, pp. 15, 15-16. Dante's 'yet to do' offers a parallel to Yeats's use of 'yet' in 'Ego Dominus Tuus,' I. 70.

experience, but also that most revealing of disclosures, his anti-self, or his idea of his anti-self.

The secretive ending of 'Ego Dominus Tuus' recalls the ending of another dialogue poem, Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo*, possibly the most striking pre-Yeatsian poem of self and anti-self: 'I urged and questioned still, she told me how / All happened - but the cold world shall not know' (ll. 616-17). Yeats's development, as critics such as Bloom and Bornstein have demonstrated, can be tracked in relation to his readings and misreadings of Shelley, a poet whom he links and contrasts with Dante. Yeats places Dante and Shelley (and himself) in phase 17 of his system in *A Vision* and yet he differentiates between his two predecessors in ways that favour Dante against Shelley. As George Bornstein points out, Yeats's 'interpretation of Dante's personality [...] assumes particular importance for understanding both Yeats's own ambitions and his view of Shelley.'³¹ But the exaltation of Dante for being able to attain 'Unity of Being' cannot disguise Yeats's recognition of affinity with and indebtedness to Shelley.³² Shelley, too, develops as a poet through the assimilation of a range of influences, central among which is the poetry of Dante. Dante's work sponsors a series of daringly metaphorical imaginings in the Romantic writer's later works, especially *Adonais* and *the Triumph of Life*. At the end of *Adonais* the atheistic Shelley plunders the Catholic medieval poet for images that suggest a secularized heaven.³³ In turn, Yeats, heavily indebted to Shelley, turns away from Shelley's political optimism in poems such as 'Leda and the Swan' and 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen.'³⁴ Yeats criticizes Shelley through an understanding of Dante as a poet who was, as he puts it in *A Vision*,

³¹ Bornstein, 220. See fn 53 on the same page for the comment that 'Richard Ellmann told me in conversation that Mrs. Yeats said her husband regarded himself as a man of phase seventeen.'

³² *A Vision*, 144, where Dante is said to have 'attained, as poet, to Unity of Being,' while, on Yeats's reading, Shelley is a poet 'in whom [...] as poet unity was but in part attained.'

³³ Among many other relevant works, see P. Vassallo, 'From Petrarch to Dante: The Discourse of Disenchantment in Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*,' *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* 1 (1991), 102-10, and M. O'Neill, 'Cathestant or Protholic? Shelley's Italian Imaginings,' *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* 6 (2001), 153-68.

³⁴ See M. O'Neill, "'The All-Sustaining Air: Romantic Poetry and Some Twentieth-Century Heirs,' in *Romantic Voices, Romantic Poetics: Selected Papers from the Regensburg Conference of the German Society for English Romanticism*, C. Bode and K. Rennhak (eds.) (Trier. Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2005), 201-2.

'content to see both good and evil.' By contrast, Shelley, drawn like Dante, to "simplification through intensity" (hence his Mask is a figure like Ahasuerus or Athanase or Dante's 'gaunt' self-representation), is said to have 'lacked the Vision of Evil, could not conceive of the world as a continual conflict, so, though great poet he certainly was, he was not of the greatest kind.'³⁵ Admittedly, all poets compared with Dante seem like sun-spots compared with the sun, but Yeats ignores that sceptical restlessness in Shelley which makes him refuse to come to ultimate judgments about the origin of evil, a restlessness at work in the Romantic poet's most Dantescan poem, *The Triumph of Life*.

The longer one stays with 'Ego Dominus Tuus,' the more Shelley's features obtrude. The Romantic poet cited by Hic as proving the capacity of artists simply to express inner happiness and by Ille to show that all happy art is compensation for experiential unhappiness is Keats. But it may be that Keats makes an easier target for Yeats than Shelley does. Ille caricatures Keats as 'a schoolboy [...] / With face and nose pressed to a sweet-shop window' (ll. 55-6), though, as often in Yeats, the tone of brutal, overriding assertion concedes that assertion is grounded in subjective impressive ('I see a schoolboy when I think of him,' l. 55). Ille starts with the question - surely a perceptive question so far as Keats is concerned: 'His art is happy, but who knows his mind?' (l. 54). Then, deploying that 'affirmative capability' which Ellmann discovers in Yeats, Ille tells us what he 'sees' when he thinks of Keats.³⁶ 'Certainly' comes later in the speech (l. 57). So, if the lines seem reductive about Keats - he made 'Luxuriant song' (l. 62) because he was 'Shut out from all the luxury of the world' (l. 60) - they offer themselves as little more than trenchant opinion.³⁷

If in the poem Yeats takes issue with a debased 'romantic' notion of art as self-expression, he exempts the practice of the Romantics from this debased romantic notion. Greatness is conceded to Keats, if not greatness of the highest kind: Dante is a tragic hero of the antithetical creative life; Keats is that life's inspired fool, tricked by needing to sublimate interiorised feelings of social rejection into a 'happy art,' to

³⁵ *A Vision*, 142, 141, 144.

³⁶ R. Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats* (London. Macmillan, 1954), 238.

³⁷ For a similar view of Keats as 'like a boy with his face glued to the glass window of a sweet shop,' and as someone who has altered 'the history [and] the direction of our poetry,' see 'The Poet and the Actress,' 134.

use Yeats's phrase from *Per Amica*, 'Anima Hominis,' section 4, that cannot include within itself recognition of its origins in misery. Or, as Yeats says in the same section of *Per Amica*, the 'lineaments' of Dante's art 'express also the poverty or the exasperation that set its maker to the work' (p.7), where 'set' chimes with the poem's use of the same verb in 'He set his chisel to the hardest stone.' And yet, though in March 1916 Yeats wrote to his father, 'I think Keats perhaps greater than Shelley and beyond words greater than Swinbourne [*sic*] because he makes pictures one cannot forget & sees them as full of rhythm as a Chinese [*sic*] painting,' Shelley is Yeats's true Romantic 'opposite.'³⁸ Yeats was fascinated by Shelley as a poet of doubles. It is intriguing that 'The Poet and the Actress' alludes to a story about Shelley one can sense ghosting the final lines of 'Ego Dominus Tuus.' Yeats speaks of Synge as keeping before him in his final months 'death [...] and the answer Shelley gave, when the spirit came to him in a dream before his drowning and said are you satisfied. Both [Shelley and Synge or his tragic heroine, Deirdre] answered "I am satisfied."³⁹ That final touch is an addition to the story, as David R. Clark points out, there is no mention in the original account of Shelley making any such answer.⁴⁰ The addition shows Yeats's unappeasable demand that Shelley should share his [Yeats's] quest for a 'group of images, which obeys us, which leaves us free, and which satisfies the need of our soul.'⁴¹

Yet, as Yeats himself says in *Per Amica*, in a meditation on how the heart of a poet cannot be satisfied: 'The poet finds and makes his mask in disappointment, the hero in defeat. The desire that is satisfied is not a great desire, nor has the shoulder used all its might that an unbreakable gate has never strained' (p.12). 'Finds and makes' is a phrase that rehearses the twinning of discovery and invention which supplies 'Ego Dominus Tuus' and *Per Amica* with their enabling inner quarrel. Yeats, who re-runs the same Shelleyan story in 'Are You Content?', a poem which concludes, 'But I am not content' (l. 24), or who in 'The Circus Animals' Desertion,' entertains with an audible snarl the notion that 'I must be satisfied with my heart' (l. 4), subtly condescends to Shelley in having him reply to the double who portends death, 'I am satisfied,'

³⁸ Quoted from Foster, 36.

³⁹ 'The Poet and the Actress,' *Yeats Annual No. 8*, 136.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 136.

because, as he himself taught many others to see, Shelley is a poet of 'infinite desire' who sought 'more in life than any understood.'⁴² 'Ego Dominus Tuus' knows better than the anecdote in 'The Poet and the Actress.' It knows that the 'mysterious one,' both double and anti-self, is longed for rather than attained, that the poem's drama has emerged out of Yeats's bitter soul. In 'Anima Mundi,' the second half of *Per Amica*, Yeats writes as if in possession of a comparable knowledge: 'When I remember that Shelley calls our minds "mirrors of the fire for which all thirst," I cannot but ask the question all have asked, "What or who has cracked the mirror?" I begin to study the only self that I can know, myself, and to wind the thread upon the perne again' (p.31). Shelley, too, in *Adonais* from which Yeats quotes (ll. 484-5) moves between the burden of selfhood and the longing for transcendence.

If Yeats reads Dante and Shelley in Yeatsian terms, Shelley sees Dante in terms that are both Shelleyan and, in part, proto-Yeatsian. In *A Defence of Poetry*, he writes: 'His apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise and the gradations of his own love and her own loveliness, by which as by steps he feigns himself to have ascended to the throne of the Supreme Cause, is the most glorious imagination of modern poetry' (p.691). 'As by steps he feigns himself: Shelley may praise the *Paradiso* as 'the most glorious imagination of modern poetry,' 'modern' asserting kinship with the medieval poet, but he frees himself from Dante's system of belief. Instead, he promotes a view of poetry as supremely fictive: a view which has its own desolateness, its own continual conflict. For when, in *The Triumph of Life*, he seeks to offer a 'vision of reality,' he is caught up in the endless, intractable, idealist conundrum that reality is what we make it. The impulse to hold Rousseau responsible for his fate in this poem, discernible in many critics, stems from the wish that Shelley should operate with some quasi-Dantescan understanding of evil. When in the *Commedia*, sinners meet the pilgrim and attempt to explain or justify themselves, intense compassion or poignancy is the consequence, as the cases of Francesca da Rimini and Brunetto Latini bring out, but though we and Dante may love the sinner there is no doubt that Dante's God has condemned the sin. Of what, by contrast, is Shelley's Rousseau guilty? Shelley employs the same technique as Dante - first-person narration,

⁴² Yeats's phrase and his quotation from Shelley's unfinished late lyric, 'The Zucca,' occur in 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry,' *Selected Criticism and Prose*; A. N. Jeffares (ed.), 78.

which, in Dante, accompanies resolute moral judgment – but it is much harder to find access to some seemingly objective frame of judgment. In Shelley's *Inferno-cum-Purgatorio*, judgment is possible ('their lore / Taught them not this – to know themselves; their might / Could not repress the mutiny within,' ll. 211-13), but it is always provisional, always the product of perspective and interpretation.

Yeats says of Shelley that 'he can never see anything that opposes him as it really is.'⁴³ But then Yeats had problems in seeing for what they really are those aspects of Shelley's poetry which opposed the younger man's mystical desires. Bloom makes a related point about Yeats's account in 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry' of the conclusion of 'The Sensitive Plant' as constituting 'a reference to a palpable spirit-world, a universe of squeaking phantasms that can be invoked by a Soho medium or a self-induced trance.'⁴⁴ One notes that for Yeats, in this essay, a symbol is a means of accessing a 'mystical state of the soul,' whereas one might feel that for Shelley an image or symbol is often fretting away at rather than confirming, ancient associations. Yeats himself comments that he does not know whether Shelley 'understood that the great Memory is [...] a dwelling-house of symbols, of images that are living souls,' and he revealingly, if beautifully, misreads *Mont Blanc* when he describes it as 'an intricate analogy to affirm that the soul has its sources in the "secret strength of things which governs thought, and to the infinite dome of heaven is as a law."⁴⁵ It is revealing that he stops short of considering the poem's final twist, its recognition that all depends on the 'human mind's imaginings' (l. 143). But, at his acutest, Yeats is alert to a strain of quest in Shelley that makes him an apt illustration of the admission in *Per Amica* that the poet 'may not stand within the sacred house but lives amid the whirlwinds that beset its threshold' (p.9).

In *The Triumph of Life*, what Yeats calls 'infinite desire' seems close to wreaking devastating revenge on the poet. In this poem, much concerned with seeing, Shelley is not always sure whether something or someone actually does oppose him (or his double or anti-self, Rousseau); he continually dramatizes the difficulty of drawing conclusions from experience. Not for this Shelley the stern clarity of the Dante who

⁴³ *A Vision*, 143.

⁴⁴ Bloom, *Yeats*, 61.

⁴⁵ 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry,' 65, 57-8.

addresses us thus in *Purgatorio* 8: 'Reader, here sharpen well thine eyes to the truth' (l. 19). When the 'shape all light' (l. 352) visits Rousseau, she comes trailing Dantescan clouds, recalling Matilda in *Purgatorio* 28 in a passage translated by Shelley. But at the centre of Rousseau's encounter with the shape all light there is no Dantean confrontation with his former self. Nor is there what T. S. Eliot, writing of *Purgatorio* 30, calls 'the passionate conflict of the old feelings with the new; the effort and triumph of a new renunciation, greater than renunciation at the grave, because a renunciation of feelings that persist beyond the grave.'⁴⁶ Rather, there is an inextricable sense of mixed feelings: the beguiling, lulling rhythms induce something close to trance, but the trance is one in which 'the gazer's mind was strewn beneath / Her feet like embers' (ll. 386-7). The shape is both destroyer of Rousseau's 'thoughts' (l. 384), trampling his mind's 'fires into the dust of death' (l. 388) and the haunting harbinger of possibly illusory hope. If 'like day she came, / Making the night a dream' (ll. 392-3), a few lines later when she is replaced by a further 'Vision' (l. 411) she accompanies the loss-stricken Rousseau like a star, 'A light from Heaven whose half-extinguished beam // Through the sick day in which we wake to weep/ Glimmers, forever sought, forever lost' (ll. 429-31). Shelley has taken Dantescan simile, so often the instrument of connection and clarification, and made it serve a different kind of illumination. Simile in *The Triumph of Life* illuminates ambiguity, the possible absence of answers to the explicit or implicit questions that fill its lines: 'Show whence I came, and where I am, and why' (l. 398) is Rousseau's request to the shape, a request that only leads to a drink she offers which leads to no clarification of his questions. For Shelley in *The Triumph of Life*, simile illuminates ambiguously, yet at no cost to the onward flow of the poem.

In *Adonais*, Shelley writes of the 'one Spirit's plastic stress' (l. 381), 'compelling there / All new successions to the forms they wear' (ll. 382-3). Shelley's trance of waking thought in *The Triumph of Life*, where all is time-bound and no 'One' beckons, allows little escape from 'successions,' experience crying out for, but refusing, to be accorded causal explanations. Figuration in the *Commedia* brings into play associations and makes demands on the reader's intellectual and emotional resources. Yet it does not involve the reader in tracking the process of mental

⁴⁶'Dante,' in T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London. Faber, 3rd enlarged edn, 1951), 263.

unravelling and ultimate bewilderment that occurs in *The Triumph*'s use of images. In Dante, the starlings borne along and the cranes chanting their songs to whom the 'ombre' (shades) are compared at the outset of the Paulo and Francesca episode; the suggestive comparison between Dante and Virgil and people 'who ponder o'er their road, who in heart do go and in body stay' (*Purg.* 2. 11-12), full of the deferred longing typical of the *Purgatorio*; the climactic account of 'the scattered leaves of all the universe' – again something the pilgrim says he 'saw' – 'bound by love in one volume' (*Par.* 33. 85-7): these moments crystallize and bind together feeling and thought. What Shelley gives in *The Triumph* are similes that trace the curve of shifting consciousness. When Yeats says of phase 17 that in it, by contrast with phases 13 and 14, 'where mental images were separated from one another that they might be subject to knowledge, all now flow, change, flutter, cry out, or mix into something else,' he might be describing the way that in *The Triumph* the narrator experiences the dawning Sun as both radiant and dispiriting, or the chariot of life as at once majestic or menacing - or, indeed, Rousseau's experience of the shape all light as now entrancing, now devastating, now deeply desired.⁴⁷ In the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley asserts that 'The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed' and he singles out Dante's writing as particularly full of such images (p.230). In *The Triumph* those mental 'operations' are enigmatic; so, in Rousseau's encounter with the shape all light, simile leads from one emotion to another, changes possibly explained by Rousseau's own shifting states of mind, possibly due to the shifting nature of the shape, possibly the product of his own projections – but all true to the difficulty of final judgment, final explanation.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *A Vision*, 141.

⁴⁸ S. Curran's fine 'Figuration in Shelley and Dante,' in *Dante's Modern Afterlife: Reception and Response from Blake to Heaney*, N. Havelly (ed.) (Basingstoke. Macmillan, 1998), stresses the affinity between the two poets' use of 'figuration,' both seen as using it to 'disconcert' and enforce 'an act of questioning as prior to any agreement that may be struck between signifier and signified,' p.55. My emphasis is laid on the way in which 'figuration' in Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* demands that we relate it to back to the workings of a consciousness that may be divided against or even, at moments, incomprehensible to itself.

In a late essay, 'Prometheus Unbound,' Yeats comes close, albeit inadvertently since his overt intention seems hostile, to doing justice to the side of Shelley that is never 'satisfied' when he comments: 'Shelley was not a mystic, his system of thought was constructed by his logical faculty to satisfy desire, not a symbolical revelation received after the suspension of all desire. He could neither say with Dante "Thy will is my peace," nor with Finn in the Irish story "the best music is what happens."' ⁴⁹ Shelley may wish to 'satisfy desire,' but Yeats suspends him between the Dante capable of intuiting and acquiescing in divine purpose and the Finn who accepts 'what happens.' Yeats may deny 'symbolical revelation' to Shelley, but he gives us a Shelley who lives through incompleteness. Indeed, Yeats makes his peace with Shelley both at the end of this essay, where he says that 'When in middle life I looked back I found that he and not Blake, whom I had studied more and with more approval, had shaped my life,' ⁵⁰ and in one of his last poems, 'Cuchulain Comforted,' which shapes a direct line between himself, Dante, whose *terza rima* is used for the only time by Yeats and Shelley whose resistance to closure is also honoured by the poem. As Peter Vassallo and others have pointed out, the cowards sewing in the afterlife, Cuchulain's antithetical anti-selves, recall Dante's image of an old tailor peering at his needle which precedes his recognition of Brunetto Latini in the *Inferno*, Canto 15, lines 20-1. ⁵¹ Yeats subjects his heroic ideal to majestic diminishment in this poem, as he anticipates an afterlife in which Cuchulain must submit to the rule of the Shrouds. The Shrouds themselves undergo a further transformation in the metamorphic last line, 'They had changed their throats and had the throats of birds' (l. 25), as though they (and Cuchulain with them) were able to take on the power of poets.

Fragile and spectral as the poem's vision of companionship is, it issues a rebuke to the image of heroic isolation which has sustained Yeats and which, in different ways, he projected onto Dante and Shelley. And yet, a further turn of the wheel, a further progress along the labyrinth of

⁴⁹ *Later Essays*, 120.

⁵⁰ *Later Essays*, 121-2; see Bloom, *Yeats*, for the view that the moving turn-around at the essay's end shows that 'Yeats's subject [...] tended to be his relation as poet to his own vision, in Shelley's mode rather than Blake's, for Blake largely centred on the content of the poetic vision itself,' p. 63.

⁵¹ See P. Vassallo, 'T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats and the Dantean "familiar compound ghost" in *Little Gidding*,' *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* 6 (2001), 243-4.

and beyond 'the *Shiftings*' (described in *A Vision* as a state 'where the *Spirit* is purified of good and evil') and Yeats will be on his own again.⁵² So, ultimately, the poet figures his union with previous poets and asserts his own 'final isolation,' in Bloom's phrase, much as in *Adonais*, Keats is absorbed into 'The splendours of the firmament of time' (l. 388), but Shelley is left voyaging 'darkly, fearfully, afar' (l. 492) on his own quasi-Dantescan, solitary quest.⁵³ Yeats speaks affectingly about such isolation amid company at the end of the first paragraph of *Per Amica*, 'Anima Hominis,' section 5, when the 'We' that has governed most of the paragraph drops away and the first-person singular takes centre-stage: 'I shall find the dark grow luminous, the void fruitful when I understand I have nothing, that the ringers in the tower have appointed for the hymen of the soul a passing bell' (p.9). The editors of *Later Essays* direct us to Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo* for those 'ringers in the tower,' and one might wish to assert, too, that for the Yeats of *Per Amica* no poet speaks so eloquently of 'the hymen of the soul,' the soul's marriage with 'reality,' as the Dante of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia*.⁵⁴

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⁵² *A Vision*, 231. See Bloom, *Yeats*, 463-4.

⁵³ Bloom, *Yeats*, 465.

⁵⁴ *Later Essays*, 296.

D. H. Lawrence and the Sicilian myth of Persephone

Peter Vassallo

The use and appropriation of myth in modern literature is closely linked to a metaphysical concern with projecting a world view at times ironic which underpins a writer's vision of society. In the modern era Yeats's immersion into Irish nationalistic folklore was a means of creating his own mythopoeic vision of an Ireland in need of cultural renewal. For Joyce myth was, as T.S. Eliot famously remarked, a way of giving shape and significance to the panorama of futility and anarchy which was contemporary history.¹ Eliot's fragmented vision of modern civilization necessitated the privileging of the quest of the holy grail on ancient fertility myths thereby giving a semblance of cohesion to fragmented experience. Thomas Mann's appropriation of the Faust myth (in *Doctor Faustus*) served to explore the darker ambivalence in relation to modernity against the backdrop of romantic aestheticism which gave rise to Fascist ideology. In cinema, Alain Resnais and Alain Robbe Grillet used the Orpheus myth in *Marienbad* to explore the equivocal plane of experience and perception and Cocteau's use of the same myth enables him to focus on the gray area of the threshold of life and death. Pablo Picasso appropriated the Minotaur legend to fathom the source of vitality in art by linking Spanish 'tauromachia' with the Cretan bull. D. H. Lawrence, as Michael Bell has argued, was possessed by an ontological vision which one would expect from a writer who was desperately at odds with his culture and who, in most of his novels, had rejected the 'old stable ego of character' in favour of delineating states of being or becoming.²

This paper focuses on Lawrence's fascination (or perhaps obsession) with the Persephone myth which informs some of his important works in the period following the First World War and particularly during his sojourn in Sicily.

The Greek myth of Persephone daughter of Demeter, abducted as she was gathering flowers on the slopes of Enna by Hades/Pluto God of the Underworld has had interesting reverberations and resonances in late

¹ *Dial* 75 (1923), 483.

² Michael Bell, *Literature, Modernism and Myth* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 93.

19th and early 20th century British literature. Jung's and Kerenyi's modern interpretation of this ancient fertility myth (in their stimulating study of the Myth of the mysteries of Eleusis) argue that it was quintessentially a myth uncovering the depths of the female psyche and was a latent expression of the female struggle to gain subjectivity and self-hood in a predominantly patriarchal society.³ There is of course much to be said for this 'modernist' interpretation or superimposition of modernist psychological concerns on a fertility myth. A close reading of this alluring myth might lead one to perceive it as female assertion of independence (the realization of selfhood) from both matriarchy dependence on the mother and patriarchy, the in-between space in which the female undergoes the rites of passage from protected virgin to married woman.

In the course of this paper, I shall focus on Lawrence's appropriation of the Persephone myth (particularly during his sojourn in Sicily) in his novels with particular reference to the *The Lost Girl*, the *First Lady Chatterley* and the novella *The Ladybird*. I propose to begin by briefly surveying the adaptation of this myth by English writers before Lawrence. At the end of the nineteenth century the myth of Persephone was revitalized by some prominent British authors particularly by Meredith in *The Day of the Daughter of Hades* (1883) and in Tennyson's *Demeter and Persephone* which were models of Victorian mother-daughter relationship and matriarchy suggestively compromising with patriarchy.⁴ To the ancient Greeks, of course, Persephone was a fertility symbol accounting for the phenomenon of the seasons, the cycle of life with birth in spring and a summer and death in autumn and winter, subsumed in Earth Mother Demeter's pact with her daughter's husband Pluto, himself a deity of the Underworld.

In Swinburne's *Hymn to Proserpine* and *The Garden of Proserpine*, the Sicilian maiden takes on an alluring fatal aspect, no longer docile but seductively sinister and this aspect is reflected in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting in which Proserpina is depicted as a languid sensual woman

³ See *Essays on a Science of Mythology: The Myth of the Divine Child and the mysteries of Eleusis* by C. Jung and C. Kerenyi (Princeton University Press, 1969), 70-100. For a suggestive discussion of the mother-daughter relationship in Victorian fiction see Allan Christensen, *Nineteenth-Century Narratives of Contagion* (Routledge, 2005), especially the chapter on 'Mothers, daughters and lovers.'

⁴ See Virginia Hyde's fine essay "Lost Girls" D. H. Lawrence's versions of Persephone' in *Images of Persephone* edited by Elizabeth T. Hayes (University Press of Florida, 1994), 106.

holding a bitten pomegranate, associated with sleep, poppies, wines and a certain attractive pallour, which Mario Praz assumed was typical of the *femme fatale* and *fin de siècle* sensibility, those fatally attractive pale ladies of death.⁵

Lawrence himself was attracted by the potential of the Persephone myth as a structuring device for his novel and as a symbol that nourished his mythopoeic vision of civilization desperately in need of regeneration through contact with the revitalizing power of blood consciousness.

Lawrence, as scholars have observed, was attracted to the Persephone myth probably because it seemed to give significance to his mother's Lydia Beardsall attraction to his father Arthur Lawrence an underground worker who did not share her aspirations to gentility.⁶ Lydia Lawrence was socially a cut above the miner Arthur Lawrence but was attracted perhaps fatally to this vital man from the Underworld. He himself as the miner's clever son had enticed a willing German Persephone away from dull conventionality (of marriage to an academic) in Nottingham. But biographical considerations apart, Lawrence saw in this myth the residue of the lost human faculties which could only be revived through the Underworld of the subconscious. In *Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover* Persephone is conceived as the symbol of inner instinctive faculties which modern man had lost in over-intellectualization, those very faculties which must somehow be retrieved through self-awareness 'How are we to get back Demeter Persephone and the halls of Dis? He asks, which is Lawrence's way of saying that in order to survive the apocalyptic iron deluge of the mechanized world (after the debacle of the First World War) one must come to terms with the intuitive side of our psyche, or rather the unconscious blood instinct.

Lawrence's reworking of the Persephone myth in terms of his apocalyptic vision of the end of civilization and particularly the end of old England is evident in *The Lost Girl*, his novel completed, significantly, in Taormina in 1920 but begun as the *Insurrection of Miss Houghton* seven years earlier. The theme of the languid English lady seduced by the warm South was popular in the years of female emancipation preceding the First World War - the New Woman craving for emancipation seeking

⁵ Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*. Translated by Angus Davidson (Oxford University Press, 1970), 200-287.

⁶ Notably John Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years (1885-1912)*, (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 521.

refuge from the constraints of her stifling environment. E. M. Forster's *Where Angels fear to Tread* (published in 1905) pointed the way to Italy as the land of redemption and the releasing of vital energies latent within the cerebral English lady's yearning to break out of the confines of stifling convention (figured by Sawston). In Forster's novel, Caroline Abbot is revitalized by her falling on love with the smooth but callous Gino Carella. Similarly, Lawrence's Alvina frustrated by the dullness of Woodhouse which turns its young women into sour old maids, revolts against the virtues of respectability and propriety and after a tepid relationship with the conventional Dr Mitchell, allows herself to be captivated (abducted) by Ciccio a vital Italian to whom she is attracted, a member of the continental group travelling circus the Natcha Kee Tawaras who rescues her from a living death in Woodhouse by offering passion and transforming her into the English Signora Marasca (the Morello cherry). Ciccio's troupe playing the part of red Indians are bizarre second rate artistes, but somehow in contact with the instinctual life at one remove (almost a travesty of Fenimore Cooper's vital Red Indians) which the people of Woodhouse, ensconced in their respectability, have lost.

But it is Ciccio's dominant *paesano* (and somewhat brutal) macho vitality that attracts and seduces Alvina. As Lawrence confided to Compton Mackenzie: 'My Alvina in whom the questing soul is lodged, moves towards reunion with the dark half of humanity.'⁷ As Alvina watches, Ciccio and the Natcha Kee Tawaras perform their tawdry dumb show in which Ciccio is significantly the dying Indian brave she reflects 'Awful things men were savage cruel underneath their civilization' and yet like most of Lawrence's heroines she submits to his magnetic power of sexual awakening.

Alvina is now an English Persephone allowing herself to be abducted by an Italian (Neapolitan, in fact) seedy Pluto. In trying to avoid the pitfall of sentimentality and romantic escapism, while adhering to the mythical account of Pluto's forceful abduction of the maiden, Lawrence is compelled to go to the extreme of representing Alvina's loss of her virginity as a rape — a scene which Secker his publisher had objected to and which Katharine Mansfield detested.

At this point it would be instructive to consider an important factor about this novel. In *The Lost Girl* the Italian scenes which form more

⁷ *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence* Vol III James T. Boulton and Andrew Roberston (eds.) (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 521.

than half the novel were actually composed when Lawrence was in Taormina enthralled as he then was by the Sicilian landscape, writing his observations on Sicily and the Sicilians. In his essay on Verga's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, he remarked that for all its seeming sophistication and corruption, Sicily still preserved some flower of human candour 'that eternal dawn freshness' which had inspired Theocritus long ago. He also observed (in translating Giovanni Verga's novels *Little Novels of Sicily*), that 'the Sicilians of today (the 1920s) are supposed to be the nearest thing to the classic Greeks that is left to us.' For Lawrence writing in Taormina this was *Magna Graecia* where the Greek myths were reenacted and transposed from Eleusis to the vale of Enna where (according to Ovid's *Metamorphosis*) Pluto checking the foundations of his Underworld kingdom for damage caused by tremors from Vulcan's forge (Etna) carried off Persephone as she was innocently gathering flowers. As Eugenio Manni observed in *Sicilia pagana* there has been traditionally an enduring connection between Sicilia and the Persephone myth.⁸ For Lawrence, Sicily - and Italy by implication and contiguity - was the dark lover beckoning delicate English ladies in a kind of mystic embrace. 'The ecstasy of light and dark together, day hovering in the embrace of night (as he writes in *Twilight in Italy*) like Eurydice in the arms of Orpheus or Persephone embraced by Pluto.' As Paul Fussell has observed, Lawrence's characters tend to discover their identities through their response to the landscape.⁹ In the short story, 'Sun' exposure of the naked body to the sun in the Sicilian countryside is a recommended therapeutic cure for the neurotic American woman Juliet, who is sexually aroused by the hot shy Sicilian peasant whose child she would like to bear.

The intertextual resonances of the Persephone myth underpin the story. Lawrence goes out of his way to tell the reader that his heroine yearned secretly for 'A Dark master from the Underworld' and in her eventual marriage to Ciccio, Alvina is made to feel that she had eaten some dark poison fruit from the Underworld which is meant to remind the reader of Persephone's eating of the pomegranate which binds her to the Underworld for a third of the year.¹⁰

⁸ Eugenio Manni, *Sicilia pagana* (Palermo, 1963).

⁹ Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (Oxford University Press, 1980), 143.

¹⁰ D. H. Lawrence, *The Lost Girl* John Worthen (ed.) (Penguin, 1981).

The voyage of self-renewal to Italy necessitates the severing from her country. Lawrence's apocalyptic vision is mediated through Alvina when she sees England slowly submerge into the sea 'like a long, ash-grey coffin.' The pregnant Alvina soon finds herself smothered in the embrace of Italy and in particular Pescocalascio where Ciccio's inner self flourishes and the true Italian male in Ciccio emerges – the place his home 'would never be the Englishman's castle but his castle really was the piazza of the village where he lived in the open air in the community.' In his superimposition of the Persephone myth, Lawrence makes Alvina undergo a metamorphosis as she is overwhelmed by the powerful and magical scent of the flowers around the village.

She is now a metamorphosed Persephone in her naturalized, primitive Italian surroundings – it was her great joy to wander looking for flowers' lavender crocuses seven pointed lilac stars, the gay magenta anemonies. The metamorphosis to pagan deity is underlined 'The more she wandered the more the shadow of the by-gone pagan world seemed to come over her.... Black and cruel presences were in the under-air...'¹¹

The transformation itself brings about a loss of self-assertiveness for the rites of passage demand that Alvina Houghton be submissively in awe of her mysterious vital lover from the Underworld. This superimposition of the Persephone myth on the narrative was in keeping with Lawrence's view that women should be submissive sexual partners for their own good, an attitude which understandably outraged some of his intellectual female readers, notably Virginia Woolf. In her critique of *The Lost Girl* in the *Times Literary Supplement*, she expressed her indignation that Alvina's submissiveness was 'contrary to her inclination to revolt against the conditions of her society'¹² and Katherine Mansfield expressed her disgust at the final scene in the book in which Lawrence's extraordinary English heroine is transformed into a docile submissive Italian wife. 'Take the scene when the hero throws her in the kitchen, possesses her and she returns singing to the washing up. It's a disgrace' - she wrote down angrily in her scrapbook.¹³

Having brought his rebellious heroine from the dull English Midlands to the reinvigorating experience of Italy (actually a desolate

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 332.

¹² In *The Times Literary Supplement*, 2 Dec. 1920.

¹³ Katherine Mansfield, *The Scrapbook of Katherine Mansfield*. Edited by J. M. Murry (Constable, 1939), 156.

village in the Abruzzi), his own experience of his sojourn in 'staggeringly primitive' Picinisco (November, 1919), Lawrence is uncertain as to what to do with her and leaves Alvina – a lost woman – meditating on the dark future when her husband goes off to the War 'like a lump of darkness in that doomed Italian kitchen – as death and eternity were settled down on her. A glimmer of hope is provided in the suggestion that if Ciccio returns they might seek a new life in America, the home of Lawrence's utopian dream *Rananim*. E. M. Forster, by contrast, solves the problem of the transformation of the rebellious heroine by making Caroline Abbott return to dull respectable Sawston the town she had reacted against – but a changed woman after her contact with Italy and the callous Gino Carella. A tame and facile solution to the problem which made Katherine Mansfield exclaim that Forster had lovingly warmed the cosy tea-pot, but there was no tea to be had. Lawrence had recognized his affinity with Forster and admired Forster's ability to incorporate aspects of Greek mythology – particularly the God Pan – in a story about British travellers in Italy. Earlier in 1915, Forster had given Lawrence a copy of the *Celestial Omnibus and other stories* and Lawrence typically reacted to Forster's tame treatment of the Pan myth. In *The Story of a Panic* a group of British tourists in Tuscany are alarmed by a strong gust of wind which betokens Pan's presence and take flight, but the boy Eustace (originally hostile to the Italian landscape) eventually leaves the hotel room to disappear and become a disciple of Pan. In his letter to Forster, Lawrence asserted all too bluntly that Forster had, in *The Story of a Panic* falsified the Greek Pan by making him a symbol of love thereby Christianizing him and unpardonably misrepresenting the Greek myth.¹⁴

Lawrence returned to the Persephone myth when he came to write *The First Lady Chatterley* in 1926. Again the problem of what to do with his escaping Proserpine presented itself. Connie Chatterley whom Lawrence associates with Persephone contrasts her Plato spouting intellectual husband (physically and symbolically half paralysed from the waist downwards) with the sensual natural man Parkin the gamekeeper by whom she is revitalized through furtive sexual encounters. In an early chapter the reader is buttonholed in Lawrence's idiosyncratic style and told 'She was an escaping Persephone, Proserpine. Well she'd rather be married to Pluto than Plato. She'd rather be caught by the wild hound of

¹⁴ See P. N. Furbank, *E. M. Forster: A Life* vol 2. (Secker and Warburg, 1978), 163.

Pluto than by the speculative spaniel of Plato.¹⁵ The gamekeeper's natural, uncouth Underworld life style has its attractions as a refuge from the vapid inert intellectual life of the English upper class and their cursed mind-consciousness. But deprived of the possibility of an Italian adventure or escapade, this English Persphone confined to England, as Lawrence realized, could never completely detach herself from the moorings of her class. Further encounters with the volcanic Parkin awaken Connie Chatterley who thinks of him in Swinburnian terms for he is one of the hounds of spring - this English demigod from the Underworld who presides over her initiation into the mystic of the open sesame. But the novel's truth to experience as 'the book of life' must be preserved. Lawrence resists the fairy tale element which prevailed in *The Virgin and the Gypsy*. Connie's intelligence makes her see the other side of coin. For all his volcanic vitality, Parkin inhabited a world which was, in its way, also static. Life with Parkin as queen of his Underworld would have been unbearable, especially when she realizes that culturally he was another race. She would have to rise obediently to get the brown tea-pot from the hob and pour him his cup of tea. She could never imitate his speech, he was culturally an alien 'like the Italian paesano.' Connie's intellectual self would wilt. She would hanker after her beloved Swinburne (symbolic, to the late Victorians of subversive individuality, as Isobel Armstrong has cogently argued). Connie would want to play bits of Mozart, or visit Cezanne or Renoir or Van Gogh. Or spend an evening at the Russian ballet or even glance at the *Times Lit Supp*. Life of the instinct, blood consciousness, would mean the death of the intellect (mind-consciousness) and though this was desirable to Lawrence (this notion informs *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, *St Mawr*) it was something to be feared. This is really Lawrence's dramatizing of the dialectical conflict in himself as he moved away from the working class into middle class values to which he was becoming increasingly attracted, as John Worthen has observed.

The First Lady Chatterley afforded no facile resolution. This modern Persephone is unhappy in both the upper and lower regions she inhabits and Parkin remains defiantly working class throughout.

Lawrence returned to the Persephone myth in the third version now known as *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in which he refashions the dynamic

¹⁵ D. H. Lawrence, *The First Lady Chatterley* (Penguin, 1972), 89-90.

between frustrated aristocratic lady and the gamekeeper from the Underworld. This time his Plutonic abductor is more articulate and informed than the original Parkin. Mellors's experience makes him self-consciously bilingual in that he effortlessly switches registers as he bestrides two worlds - a working class gamekeeper whose army experience helps him rise from the ranks and gain a commission. The problem of cultural incompatibility, which dogged *The First Lady Chatterley* has now been neatly solved, but at some loss to the integrity of his story for, as Frieda remarked, in preferring the first version there was more natural spontaneity whereas in the second Lawrence had become 'too aware of his contemporaries' minds.'¹⁶

The Persephone myth again suggested itself to Lawrence in the writing of the apocalyptic novella *The Ladybird* in connection with the revitalizing of defunct essential values in a post War Europe that had died in spirit. The mother-daughter relationship is explored in terms of Lawrence's vision of integration and disintegration of modern society. Lady Beveridge is portrayed as the ethic of dwindling Edwardian liberalism and her married daughter, the sensitive and ailing Daphne, is drawn mysteriously to the weird but hypnotic Bohemian Count Psanek (wounded in hospital as a casualty of war). An outlaw rebel and misfit whose weird inhuman song draws the sympathetic Daphne irresistibly to kneel at his feet to be transformed into a Persephone figure, the night time wife of this Bohemian Count the king of the Underworld, representing in Lawrentian terms, the dark side of the human psyche. *The Ladybird* verges on mythopoeic allegory in which Lawrence strives to come to terms with the dichotomy of intellect and soul. Lady Daphne is married to her intellectual decent husband by day but finds a soul mate in this bearded and odd-looking little man (Lawrence's self-parody, presumably!) who is her master and King of the Underworld. In Lawrence's idiosyncratic metaphysic, the source of female regeneration now shifts from Sicily to bohemian central Europe and significantly from Sicilian peasant to Bohemian aristocrat with the emphasis on power and submission.¹⁷

Pluto is no longer the Italian *paesano* (Lawrence became increasingly disenchanted with Sicily) but an amalgam of lost civilized values which Lawrence meant to revive through the novel - 'the book of

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ D. H. Lawrence, 'The Ladybird' in *Three Novellas* (Penguin, 1974), 73.

life.' The name is significant, Count Johan Dionysius. Johan the voice crying in the wilderness and Dionysius the releasing of irrational emotions. It is indeed through the irrational forces in the human psyche, here represented by the hypnotic and absurd Count Psanek, and his mysterious, seductive night-time crooning that the dying spirit of Europe is momentarily revived (at a crucial time when European democracies were plunging into anarchy).¹⁸ In Lawrence's rewriting of the myth it is this aristocratic Pluto from the Bohemian Underworld who offers salvation in the form of submissiveness, to the susceptible Lady Daphne, an English Persephone in search of self-fulfilment. It is through a kind of hypnosis not abduction, in Lawrence's modern version of the myth, that Persephone (the modern woman) is revitalized.

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¹⁸ D. H. Lawrence, 'The Ladybird' in *Three Novellas* (Penguin, 1974), 73.

Angels and Vagabonds: Breaking through Barriers in the Anglo-Italian Encounter

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The transformative effect of Italy on the English is a literary topos with a long history, most famously articulated by E. M. Forster in his 'Italian' fiction.¹ Like so many writers before him and many subsequent ones, Forster sees something lacking in the culture of northern Europe which is starkly exposed in the Italian sunlight.² Brushes with Italian characters constitute the plot's kairos, generating a change in consciousness in the more sensitive or impressionable English protagonists; yet that pivotal figure of the Italian is paper-thin, inconsequential, or dispensed with altogether. The result is, that despite the centrality of Italy in its symbolically liberatory role and of Italians as catalysts, these works are held, by general critical consensus, to be about the English. Forster's contemporary Rose Macaulay produced a lesser-known novel (*The Furnace*, 1907, never reprinted) apparently belonging to the same genre of the Anglo-Italian comedy of manners, but which furnishes English fiction with a suggestive counterpoint to the Forsterian perspective, one which contemplates and complicates the Anglo-Italian encounter through an Anglo-Italian prism.

This article outlines the tradition in literature, predicated on a north-south binary, which stipulates that Italy affect English visitors. The novels both work within this tradition, drawing for instance on well-established assumptions about southern spontaneity and gaiety, versus northern conventionality and anxiety; but *The Furnace* also works to some extent against this tradition, undermining the tendency to binary thought generated by stereotype. To demonstrate this, the remarkable similarities in the discourse relating to the construction of the Anglo-Italian encounter will be highlighted, such as the way each novel articulates the manner in

¹ Forster's short story 'The Story of a Panic' (his first piece of fiction, written in 1902 while in Ravello, and first published in 1904) is often seen as containing the basic plot structure and themes of the novels *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), discussed in this article, and *A Room With a View* (1908).

² See, for example, T. Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912), D. H. Lawrence's 'Sun' (1926) and A. Huxley's 'The Rest Cure' (1930), which belong to this tradition.

which the English look at Italians, as in their fascination or revulsion at Italians eating spaghetti or expectorating. It is when comparing the effect of the English on Italians, however, that the apparent similarities are shown to be less significant than the differences. Examining and accounting for these differences leads to the suggestion that while Forster draws on the most familiar, even clichéd Italian images, *The Furnace* makes a small advance in the 'naturalizing' of Italy in English prose, breaking through barriers of textual precedent by presenting place through the eyes of vagabonds, adolescents, figures existing at the margins of the dominant culture (dominant in the novels' taxonomies). The barriers with which the novels explicitly concern themselves are social and national; but it is *The Furnace* which breaks textual barriers by exposing an Italian scenario to English ethics. While neither novel affirms a successful heterosexual union between Italian and English figures, *The Furnace* offers an innovative configuration of the Anglo-Italian encounter in the form of the Crevequer siblings; it also rejects customary rhetorical strategies by evoking an Italy without gods, museums or violent death, in prose that decentres the English.

The Tradition

Affirming the credo acquired through generations of leisured travel to Italy, Philip Herriton declares, "And I do believe that Italy really purifies and ennobles all who visit her. She is the school as well as the playground of the world."³ He directs this at his 'vulgar' sister-in-law Lilia as she departs for a tour of Italy, but it is her chaperone, Caroline Abbott who, in his eyes, is eventually 'ennobled' through her contact with Italy. The choice of Italy as a destination for upper-middle class women was at that time a natural one; indeed, Pemble writes, 'it is clear that by the end of the nineteenth century women were outnumbering men among the tourists in southern Europe.'⁴ A cultural pilgrimage southwards since the age of the Grand Tour had been considered to be conducive, crucial even, to intellectual and personal improvement. 'Even

³ E. M. Forster, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), 22. Hereafter referred to as *Angels*; page numbers will appear parenthetically within the text.

⁴ J. Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 77.

before it was named as such, the Grand Tour came to be regarded as an important process of self-fashioning, initially generating a vituperative 'anti-cosmopolitanism' in texts such as Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570), Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) and Jonson's *Volpone* (1606).⁵ By the late eighteenth century, the idea of 'the singularity, authenticity and transformative potential of travel experience' becomes the defining aspect of travel to Italy. For the increasing numbers of people who could afford travel to Italy in the nineteenth century, Romantic travel narratives with their 'moments of self-discovery' provided reading material and generated in turn further texts; moreover, 'this intensified inwardness could provide a means of differentiating oneself as a "true traveller" from the unimaginative herd of visitors pursuing similar itineraries and consuming the same prepackaged sights and spectacles.'⁶ It is this Romantic epistemology which informs Edwardian writing on Italy and is in evidence in Philip Herriton's injunction to Lilia, "And don't, let me beg you, go with that awful tourist idea that Italy's only a museum of antiquities and art. Love and understand the Italians, for the people are more marvellous than the land." (p.2). Despite this emphatic plea on behalf of 'the people,' it is rare to find in the period's literature on Italy any construction of Italians that does not fall back on stereotype and aestheticizing metaphor. Thus Arthur Symons in 1907 writes, of churchgoers in Rome, 'And face after face, as I watched them pass me, was absolutely beautiful; now a Raphael Madonna, now a Roman goddess; adorable young people in whom beauty was a tradition.'⁷ And Maurice Hewlett in 1904 writes,

Or behold a man shaped like a god, who (as he leans on his spade to observe you) takes the attitude – compact of mystery and power – of the Olympian Hermes, yet who lives with swine and copies their customs.⁸

⁵ For a fuller overview of pre-Romantic polemical constructions of the 'inglese italianato' see Maurizio Ascari, "English Italianate is Devil Incarnate:" National Prejudices and the Role of Grandtourists in the Hybridisation of European Cultural Memory,' (forthcoming publication in ACUME conference proceedings, Cyprus, February 2004); full text also available at <<http://www.lingue.unibo.it/Acume/agenda/cyprus/papers/ascari.pdf>>

⁶ R. Jarvis, 'Self-discovery from Byron to Raban,' *Studies in Travel Writing*, 9 (2005), 185-204.

⁷ A. Symons, *Cities in Italy* (London. Dent, 1907), 44.

⁸ M. Hewlett, *The Road in Tuscany* (London. Macmillan, 1904), I, 29.

Italians are like gods, or statues, or paintings; like animals, or children, or elemental; evoked in terms of body parts, or in crowds; they only have first names, they are spontaneous, passionate, cunning, cruel, they are Nature and so on. So familiar are these tropes that their recurrence across genres abounds: for instance, in *Angels* Gino, 'with the brutality so common in Italians, had caught [the cat] by the paws and flung her away from him' (p.34); while a reviewer of *Angels* writes, 'In "Gino" we have a real Italian type, a nature easy-going and amiable, affectionate and unfaithful, swept by gusts of sudden temper. His love for his son is true to the half-womanly tenderness, half-animal passion of the average Italian towards his child.'⁹ The nonchalant confidence with which such unqualified assertions are made attests to the familiarity of Edwardian writers with endlessly recycled Romantic ideas about Italians, as well as to their pervasiveness in the era's discourses.

Typically posited in terms of north and south, texts representing the Anglo-Italian encounter formulate Italy as an Other which is 'culturally encoded as closer to paradise, more sensuous, passionate, pleasurable and colourful than the North.'¹⁰ Macaulay's and Forster's contributions to this canon each exploit this literary topos to satirize the figure of the English traveller who believes him/herself able to see the 'real' Italy, that is, one able to leave the tourist trail of monuments and knowledge-acquisition in order to engage with the 'passionate' people. But as Buzard points out,

For all that he figures himself a 'traveller' in touch with the people, not just the tourist attractions, of his favoured land, Philip clings to a shop-worn set of stereotypes about the Italians, whom he prefers to imagine in romantic and picturesque postures rather than in prosaic modern circumstances.¹¹

Such circumstances include expectoration, or the ingestion of pasta, prosaic actions which find their way into *The Furnace* too. Mrs Venables,

⁹ *Guardian* (October, 1905), quoted in P. Gardner, (ed.) *E. M. Forster: The Critical Heritage* (Routledge, London, 1973), 49. Emphasis added.

¹⁰ M. Pfister, 'Travelling in the Traces of...: Italian Spaces and the Traces of the Other' forthcoming ACUME conference proceedings. 'Sites of Exchange: Cities, Rivers, Borders, Seas' (Naples, September, 2004). Conference website: <<http://www.lingue.unibo.it/acume/agenda/naples/abstracts/pfister.htm>>

¹¹ J. Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature and the Ways to Culture 1800-1918* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993), 310.

as will be seen, is equally intent on the sort of Byron-esque posing required of an artistic sensibility in Italy, while struggling comically to overcome her philistine, matronly disapproval of the actual lives of the poor.¹²

E. M. Forster and Rose Macaulay in Italy

Forster (1879-1970) was brought up an only child in a well-to-do, all-female household in the south-east of England, attending public school and Cambridge University, where he studied classics and history. In 1901, at the age of twenty-one, he travelled to Italy for a year, in the company of his mother, staying in English *pensioni* and resenting the lack of opportunity to escape this stifling atmosphere of spinsterish respectability: 'I wish I didn't see everything with this horrible foreground of enthusiastic ladies, but it is impossible to get away from it' he complained in a letter.¹³ He did not befriend or enter the home of any Italian; his only contact was with Italians connected with travel arrangements and tourism, such as cab-drivers, railway officials and shopkeepers. This limited contact (though punctuated by the epiphanic realization of wanting to be a writer) will account in part for why, as Buzard argues, Italian life in Forster is 'defined in terms either of local colour or of necessary services for visitors,' and why Compton Mackenzie comments that Forster's characters, 'regardless of sex, race and class, acted, spoke and thought like middle-class English gentlemen.'¹⁴

Rose Macaulay (1881-1958) was born into a distinguished family which had produced prominent Victorian liberal-minded intellectuals and clergymen. In the first ever book written on Forster's writings, Rose Macaulay draws an evocative (and slightly ironic) line of comparison between Forster's ancestry and her own:

Gentle, intelligent, high-minded, high-browed, these
ancestors of ours look down on us from drawings and

¹² *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18) served for many as a 'manual of appropriately soulful attitudes to strike in relation to the monuments and spectacles observed.' Jarvis, 189.

¹³ February or March, 1902, from Rome to G. L. Dickinson, in M. Lago and P. N. Furbank, (eds.) *Selected Letters of E. M. Forster, Vol. 1: 1879-1920* (London. Collins, 1983), 52.

¹⁴ Buzard, 310; and Mackenzie is quoted by Sally Beauman in her Introduction to C. Mackenzie, *Vestal Fire* (London. Hogarth, 1985 (1927)).

paintings on our walls, faintly coloured in their gold frames, their minds set on freeing West Indian slaves, on lightening child labour, on attending Evangelical conferences, on reading good books; whatsoever things are pure, lovely, of good intent, they think, we may be sure, on these things....¹⁵

Her father's academic career was limited by the demands of his six children and his wife's ill-health: when Rose was six they were obliged to leave Rugby for a warmer climate. They chose Varazze, near Genoa on the Ligurian coast in northern Italy. The only British family in the area, their imposing red-stone villa on the shore was known locally as *Villa Macolai*, after their unfamiliar surname. In all three of her Italian novels are passages reminiscent of those in countless essays of her later years, in which she evokes an idyllic vision of her childhood existence there:

On either side of the house was an orto, full of oranges and lemons, eucalyptus and figs and behind rose steep terraced hills, clad with pines, olives, myrtle and juniper, with stony paths winding up them. The little town lying between sea and hills had deep stone streets smelling of fish, drains and roasting coffee and deep arches opened on to the shore, where they dried and mended fishing-nets, made rope, or built ships. [...] The pattern woven by memory is of those evenings playing pirates and explorers by and in the sea, or rounders and cricket on the sands; of hill walks, with my father telling us stories from Herodotus [...]. It was against this background that were set the ecstasies, tragedies, adventures and dreams, bewildering, tediums, excitements and dramas that are the wild stuff of that tranquil time, childhood.¹⁶

Macaulay supplemented this unconventionally free, outdoor existence with avid reading, especially Shelley, but also Dante, Tennyson, Browning, 'Dickens and Scott, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Lorna Doone*, *The Three Musketeers* and *Tom Jones* [expurgated].'¹⁷ It was a tomboyish, isolated life, so when the family eventually returned to England, Rose, aged thirteen, and her sisters experienced difficulty adjusting to the proprieties and restrictions of middle-class Edwardian town-life 'where we wore

¹⁵ R. Macaulay, *The Writings of E. M. Forster* (London. The Hogarth Press, 1938), quoted in Sarah LeFanu, *Rose Macaulay* (London. Virago, 2003), 216.

¹⁶ R. Macaulay, 'Villa Macolai' in A. Pryce-Jones, (ed.) *Little Innocents: Childhood Reminiscences* (London. Cobden-Sanderson, 1932), 47-49.

¹⁷ C. Babington Smith, *Rose Macaulay* (London. Collins, 1972), 29. See also LeFanu, 28.

shoes and stockings all day.¹⁸ After Oxford University she embarked on a writing career and *The Furnace* is the second of three early novels she wrote that are set in Italy. Once she was an established writer she tried to suppress these early works, ostensibly because they were naïve; but it has been suggested it was rather because they are so candid and revealing in autobiographical detail. *The Furnace* is considered the most intensely autobiographical.¹⁹ In 1905, Macaulay had visited Rome and Naples, a trip which 'proved a turning point for Rose, for it introduced her to an adult Italy, an Italy of art and culture and history and antiquity, which was different from her familiar childhood Italy of ponies and canoes and barelegged freedom.'²⁰ For those who would wish to pursue the biographical parallels, April 1906 saw the actual eruption of Vesuvius; in *The Furnace*, published the following year, the eruption occurs in April. But here the focus will be on the two texts themselves, as testaments to the Anglo-Italian encounter as it was played out in literary form in the early twentieth century.

Angels

In Forster's novella, the wealthy Herriton family and family friend Caroline Abbott, live a pious, conventional existence in Sawston. Philip is sent by his snobbish and philistine mother twice to Monteriano, a Tuscan hill-town, first to rescue his widowed sister-in-law Lilia from her scandalous liaison to Gino Carella, a dentist's son, then later to bring their baby (Lilia dies in childbirth) to Sawston. Both missions are undertaken in the company of Caroline and both missions fail. But Philip and Caroline have gradually been seduced by the charms of the Italians,

¹⁸ Macaulay, 'Villa Macolai,' 49.

¹⁹ Emery writes, 'Some officials of the London Library feared at one time that this respected (and eccentric) member might secretly remove her first novels from the shelves after the head librarian had refused to do so. She attempted to purchase the remaining stock of them from her publisher in 1921 because, she said, they were an embarrassment – they were "jéjune." Her modesty about her writing was genuine, but her argument in favour of its erasure is perhaps not wholly candid. Personal revelation, not insipidity, characterizes these five early novels. Embedded in their pages are the private griefs of her girlhood and youth: the shock of the move from Varazze to Oxford [...].' J. Emery, *Rose Macaulay: A Writer's Life* (London: Murray, 1991), 102.

²⁰ Le Fanu, 61.

especially Gino and they abandon the idea of taking the baby. However, Philip's sister Harriet is impervious to any Italian enchantment and perseveres with the plan, which culminates in the accidental death of Gino's baby. Peace is eventually made and the novel ends symbolically on the approach to the St Gothard tunnel, Italy's border, on their journey home: Philip is about to confess his love for Caroline 'quickly, as if their free intercourse might soon be ended' (p.203); she has become, for him 'a goddess.' (p.195). Instead she divulges her own secret, lustful passion for Gino. Chastened by the whole experience, Philip will return to 'London and work' (p.200), Caroline to 'Sawston and work' (p.201); the two will be 'friend[s] for ever.' (p.207).

From its very first reception, it was seen as a book about the English, illuminating specifically English repressions and anxieties, rather than presenting an innovative construction of Italy. For example, one of its earliest reviewers argues that 'a refreshing and brilliantly original touch in his novel is so to expose Sawston's ideals and ways of life in the glare of the vertical Italian sun, that the comedy of north meeting south has for us English delicious significance.'²¹ This view has maintained currency, as these more recent assessments show: 'For Forster, as for a long line of tourists from Goethe onwards, the meaning of the Italian journey lay in its seductive invitation to recognize aspects of himself that had been suppressed at home;' '[Forsterian characters] travel to other cultures and, forced to confront the reality of the Other, they confront themselves. But clearly what is crucial in this process is the "reality" the English protagonists find in themselves. The non-English cultures and people are important primarily as catalysts to the English;' 'Forster [...] offered the Italian people as a life-affirming contrast to the gloom of English conventionality.'²²

The 'Italian people' offered in *Angels* are, however, 'life-affirming' only in their anonymous, chaotic noisiness, as in Philip's reception at his hotel:

The entrance seemed blocked with a crowd. Dogs were barking, bladder whistles being blown, women waving their handkerchiefs, excited children screaming on the

²¹ *Speaker*, October 1905, quoted in Gardner, 50.

²² I. Littlewood, *Sultry Climates: Travel and Sex Since the Grand Tour* (London: Murray, 2001), 87; P. Dodd, 'England, Englishness, and the Other in E. M. Forster,' in S. Gatrell, (ed.) *English Literature and the Wider World; 1876-1918: The Ends of the Earth* (London: Ashfield, 1992), IV, 209; LeFanu, 64.

stairs and at the top of the stairs was Lilia herself, very radiant, with her best blouse on. (p.31).

The very syntax (strings of simple clauses; syntactic equivalence of dogs, whistles, women and children) and lexical choices (barking, whistles, screaming) purvey a sense of uncontrolled, excessive movement and sensory overload, in contrast to the restraint and static, elevated figure of [English] Lilia.

Even Gino, the principal Italian character, is portrayed 'as typically Italian: arrogant, devious, misogynist and lustfully desirable.'²³ At their first meeting, Philip watches him at dinner:

For the youth was hungry and his lady filled his plate with spaghetti and when the deliciously slippery worms were flying down his throat, his face relaxed and became for a moment unconscious and calm. And Philip had seen that face before in Italy a hundred times – seen it and loved it, for it was not merely beautiful, but had the charm which is the rightful heritage of all who are born on that soil. But he did not want to see it opposite him at dinner. It was not the face of a gentleman. (pp.32-33)

The narrator dwells momentarily on Gino's ingestion of spaghetti, with what might be considered a peculiarly English fascination and for Philip, who becomes the focalizer, Gino's face comes to stand metonymically for all Italians; it has 'charm' but no pedigree. Although Philip's snobbery is eventually attenuated, Italians even at his happiest moments are never more than anonymous sounds and body parts: '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.' (p.138).

Characterized by Caroline as "The son of an Italian dentist, with a pretty face" (p.205) Gino never achieves the psychological depth or narratorial focus proportionate to his role in the plot; after all, it is Gino

²³R. Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy* (London: Routledge, 1993), 95. Even Rose Macaulay in 1938 sees clichés rehearsed in the figure of Gino: 'Gino, the tough, flashy, extrovert Latin youth, the kind of youth one meets now and then in Juvenal or Petronius, handsome, avaricious, greedy and stupid, something of a smart Alec, something of a crook, more of a spoilt child, his black hair oiled, his body poised magnificently against the magnificent Tuscan landscape, against the magnificent, brutal centuries of Roman culture. What English creatures can help loving Gino?' Macaulay, *The Writings of E. M. Forster*, 37.

who marries Lilia, has her child, loses his baby and almost kills Philip; he inspires love in two English women and in Philip. He is textually marginalized, as in the following two examples, which go some way towards accounting for the impression of his diminished ontological status. When his new wife questions him about Monteriano's social mores, her speech is given as direct speech, whereas his replies are merely summarized:

“Would it make it easier if I called all round? Isn't that your foreign way?”

He did not think it would make it easier.

“But I must know someone! Who were the men you were talking to this afternoon?”

Low-class men. He could scarcely recollect their names. (p.50)

Elsewhere, his behaviour, motivation and feelings are related telescopically by the omniscient narrator, in terms of Catholic ritual, impetuosity and natural forces, which deny any sense of a specific consciousness at work.

Gino's relative slightness is even more conspicuous in his actual dialogues with other Italians, especially in the absence of English characters. Here, he discusses his marriage to Lilia:

“It pleases me very much,” said Gino simply. “If you remember, I always desired a blond.” Three or four men had collected and were listening.

“We all desire one,” said Spiridione. “But you, Gino, deserve your good fortune, for you are a good son, a brave man and a true friend and from the very first moment I saw you, I wished you well.”

“No compliments, I beg,” said Gino, standing with his hands crossed on his chest and a smile of pleasure on his face.

Spiridione addressed the other men, none of whom he had ever seen before. “Is it not true? Does not he deserve this wealthy blonde?”

“He does deserve her,” said all the men. (p.54)

Gino is boastful, his interlocutor flattering and sententious; strangers speak as one. The dialogue is stilted, unsophisticated banter, rendered in a comic, simplified English, implying childlike reasoning and superficiality.

Having ended on a note of sadness, with friendship rather than marriage the rather sombre outcome, the English protagonists briefly consider their Italian experience. Having witnessed Caroline, 'the stiff suburban woman unbending before the shrine' (p.133), Philip, 'more anxious than heretofore to be charitable towards the world' (p.164) inwardly worships her; but Gino, who has suffered the most atrocious events, is from their viewpoint, merely "unhappy, like the rest of us. But he doesn't try to keep up appearances as we do. He knows that the things that have made him happy once will probably make him happy again." (p.154). In this final appraisal, the line is once more drawn between hypocritical northerners and southern gaiety; the Italian catalyst is dispensed with and national differences remain in place. As one critic has commented, 'The real subjects of Forster's Italian novels and shorter writings around this time are the English in Italy. In the character of Gino, his domestic arrangements and Italian friendships, Forster tried to imagine Italians apart from the English [...] But they are clearly scenes based on the imagination not on experience.' The result is a 'mixture of experienced English and imagined Italian worlds.'²⁴

Vagabonds

Macaulay's imagined Italian world in *The Furnace*²⁵ is a place to which the English *come*, not go; the poor Naples slums are the given, the already-there, peopled by minor Italian characters and two Anglo-Italians and disrupted by the arrival of the Other – in this case the English tourists.

This novel is set entirely in Italy, in and around Naples, save the last chapter, which is set on the Ligurian shore. 'Two stuttering orphaned siblings, Betty and Tommy Crevequer, just out of their teens, are living with innocent abandon in a pair of messy rooms and in the noisy streets and restaurants of a Neapolitan slum.'²⁶ The Crevequers, brought up by an English father in Italy and having experienced only briefly life in Edwardian England upon his death, scrape a living, Betty in the music hall theatre and Tommy as an illustrator for an inferior local newspaper.

²⁴ S. P. Rosenbaum, 'Towards a Literary History of Monteriano,' *Twentieth Century Literature*, 31 (1985), 189, 90.

²⁵ R. Macaulay, *The Furnace* (London. John Murray, 1907). Page references will be made parenthetically within the text.

²⁶ Alice R. Bensen, *Rose Macaulay* (New York. Twayne, 1969), 27-28.

The arrival in Naples of a family group of respectable English tourists, the Venables and cousin Prudence Varley, at first amuses the pair, then disrupts their carefree existence. The encounter with the English makes them cathartically aware of the system of social niceties that differentiates people into 'sorts.' Warren Venables' attraction to Betty and Tommy's to the aloof Prudence is thwarted at the very moment of its incipience because of the social chasm that separates them. The Crevequers become painfully aware of how unrespectable they and their Italian friends appear and of how they are merely 'copy' to the aspiring novelist Mrs Venables. 'The whole is symbolically enacted against the backdrop of Vesuvius, whose eruption is a metaphor for the "crucible" or "furnace" by means of which life crises test one's ultimate values. Only Betty's tie to her brother proves to be "gold." All other individuals are perceived as shadows.'²⁷ At the novel's end, the pair can neither bear to stay in Naples – it has been 'spoiled' irreparably – but neither can they face the awkwardness of re-integration into English society. So they opt out: they choose 'this companionship of two which should endure, stronger than death, surer than the thing called love, failing nowhere.' (p.167). In the final chapter, they have gone to inhabit the villa inherited from their father at Santa Caterina, idly playing with toy boats in the sunshine.

Championed by her father's friend from Eton, John Murray, this novel was presented to American publishers and to 'celebrities. When the Archbishop of Canterbury (Randall Davidson) asked him to recommend some good light reading he sent him *The Furnace* and *Abbots Verney* [1906] too.'²⁸ Its earliest readers already drew the comparison with *Angels*, Murray's reader deciding that 'it is too delicate and fine for the average novel devourer. It lacks "the grip" that the confirmed fiction-reader likes; nor has it the dare-devil cruelty or incisiveness of *Where Angels Fear To Tread*.'²⁹ It is certainly more scholarly than *Angels*, each chapter being headed by quotations from an eclectic selection of writers, such as Shelley, Maeterlinck, Chesterton, Dante, Italian proverbs, Whitman, Emerson and Stevenson. It was praised in the likes of

²⁷ Jeanette Passty, *Eros and Androgyny: The Legacy of Rose Macaulay* (London. Associated University Presses, 1988), 206.

²⁸ Babington Smith, 54.

²⁹ Quoted in Emery, 105. He also reported, 'The story is clever and it has distinction... There is a limited cultured public to which it would appeal ... It is too good [for great general popularity], yet not supremely good.' Emery, 103.

Athenaeum and Macaulay revisited Italy in later novels, including *The Lee Shore* (1912), *Views and Vagabonds* (1912, in which Betty and Tommy make another appearance) and *What Not* (1919). However, there is no getting away from the fact that Forster's novella endured, while Macaulay's has for the time being been lost to today's readers and the Anglo-Italian encounter in literature is diminished by the loss.³⁰

Betty and Tommy are presented as integral to the Naples scene, undifferentiated at first from the native Neapolitan figures who are picked out one by one: 'A facetious young man' (p.3); 'The stout youth, whose name, one gathered, was Luli, roared with laughter and spat many times' (p.5); 'a finely developed young woman ate *spaghetti* with admirable speed and dexterity and drank red Posilipo.' (p.6). The narrator betrays an unmistakably English perspective, noting, like Forster's narrator, the skilled way of eating pasta, the noisiness and expectoration. Even when the protagonists are individuated, they are still integrated among their peers: 'they exchanged greetings with most of their fellow-eaters. Some of these were really comparatively reputable; quite a number were very gaily attired and most seemed light of heart.' (pp.6-7). It is not until page 8 that the narrator discloses their names or the fact that they are English.³¹ Furthermore, the Crevequers' integration with their environs is complete; there is no mention of the Cumæan sybil, or Virgil's birthplace, or fashionable Roman resorts when they visit Baja, outside Naples: they merely build sandcastles there. Similarly, they 'knew Pompei as a place with nice, hot, bright streets, scampered over by lizards, where it was agreeable to spend an afternoon among the gaily-hued, roofless houses and go to sleep.' (p.40). The deliberate, even conspicuous, lack of reference to Grand Tour stomping grounds, classical literature, aristocratic

³⁰ *The Lee Shore* has recently been resurrected online as part of the Project Gutenberg.

³¹ The reader is told they are at ease in both languages, though speak English when alone together, with a stammer (p.8). Their background, which is related extensively in Ch. X by the narrator, and in Ch. XI in a retrospective monologue by Betty, resembles in some ways the Macaulays.' The Crevequers, born into an educated English family, were brought up in carefree abandon on the Ligurian coast, until their parents died. After experiencing Edwardian London briefly in their teens, they chose to live together in Naples. Betty explains, "We didn't think – or care – whether the things we did were decent, or honest, or anything of that sort. We just went on from day to day, playing round with each other and our friends, and we were very happy." (pp.202-3). It is in this state the reader encounters them at the start of the novel.

forebears, or guide-book sights is an expression of the normality of the setting, their complete assimilation in that setting and their childlike, prelapsarian state. This is crucial in what follows, for it is the English tourists who are thus the Other, strange and comic in their habits and attitudes.

Mrs Venables, 'the impression-seeker' of Chapter II's title, arrives in Naples 'in order to absorb impressions' (p.21) for her novel. Clearly the target of a satirical attack on the figure of the pretentious and sentimental writer (like Forster's Miss Lavish), Mrs Venables exists in a constant pose of artistic open-mindedness, finding 'copy' – invariably Romantic cliché – on every street corner: "There is certainly," Mrs Venables remarked, watching, "something refreshingly picturesque in the movements of the Southern people. The lithe use of their limbs –" She took in the impression with satisfaction.' (p.69). Her speech is characterized by such musings, reminiscent of the language of Hewlett and his predecessors in Victorian travel writing. Envisaging mutually beneficial dinner parties with 'the Neapolitan poor,' (p.37) the Crevequers are taken on in her project of 'Intimate Contact with the People.' (p.66). Among the rich, it was common practice to do charitable work for the poor; it is Caroline Abbott's principal occupation and Macaulay herself spent some time with factory-girls in Chesterfield. Moreover, this was the era of the Liberal party's landslide election victory and the founding of the Labour party and questions of social justice and democracy were debated with unprecedented vigour in the Edwardian decade. Mrs Venables belongs to the leisured class whose ostentatious do-gooding inclinations, the narrator suggests, conceal a fear of appearing '*bornée*.' (p.66).

Tommy, in considering who to invite, speaks naturally about his friends: 'He's a silly ass, Morello is. But we'll have supper with him by all means, particularly with him and Gina; Gina's great sport.' (p.29). Gina and Morello's Italianness is not marked in his speech. Indeed, the Neapolitan characters, though minor, are present throughout the novel. They have surnames and histories – the 'finely developed young woman' of before is Gina: 'Gina Lunelli was a fine young woman, rather beautiful, with black curly hair and an immense amount of experience, on and off the music-hall stage, for her twenty-seven years.' (p.56). It is when the English gaze falls upon the Italian characters that exoticist rhetoric is brought into play: Miranda, (who, unlike her mother, 'did not wish to

achieve intimacy') (p.67) 'was introduced to Morello, the painter, whose ugly flexible face and expressive gestures set her wondering and whose extraordinary skill at rapidly absorbing immense lengths of macaroni fascinated her.' (p.96). Here again the narrative assumes the perspective of the scrutinizing English gaze; but it gently mocks Miranda rather than Morello.

The Italian characters are of a different ilk to the mostly silent and paper-thin ones in Forster. In the construction of the Crevequers' environment, they enjoy a higher ontological status than the anonymous peasants and cab-drivers of other contemporary writing; they are not gods or forces of nature. It is *their* 'normality,' the slum environment, from which are seen the English visitors.

For the most part, it is Tommy and Betty who are the primary focalizers. To read the conversations the Crevequers have, out of earshot of these English tourists, is to share their hilarity and sense of distance and difference from the Venables; but this difference does not immediately present for them a barrier – it is merely another game: 'The Crevequers were copy; they came to be studied, to be drawn out; they responded to the process with their usual affability.' (p.36). They also respond by asking outright for money, eating huge lunches at the Venables' expense and feeding Mrs Venables with embellished tales about Southern Catholicism, the habits of the poor, even playing a secret game in which they get her to say her catchword 'striking!' as often as possible. Mrs Venables is lampooned not only by the narrator but by the Crevequers themselves.

Tommy and Betty at first enjoy their mediating role between the English visitors and their Italian friends. But at the novel's turning-point, the Crevequers acquire a growing self-consciousness and 'the curious element [...] of embarrassment.' (p.109). Warren's attraction to Betty and Tommy's to Prudence inaugurate in the siblings the dawning of a realization that they are treated differently to people of the Venables' 'sort.' *The Furnace*, writes Emery 'is like *Daisy Miller*; Betty's freedom of movement, night and day, damages her reputation with the English. And both the Crevequers discover that the casual, open love-making of their Italian friends further tarnishes their social credentials in the eyes of the Venables.'³² Betty experiences this cathartic retrospection alone in her room:

³² Emery, 106.

[Retrospect] showed in turn Warren. It painted him outside the theatre, in a difficult position – the Essingtons and his mother on one side of the picture, Gina and Luli and Betty Crevequer on the other. (p.121)

A clear line is drawn here between the Italians, including Betty and the respectable English tourists. Similarly, when Prudence declines to come up to their room,

it was as if it had broken through barriers and suddenly pierced their senses [...] a certain tawdriness it had, the litter of things incongruous: on the table a scattered pack of dingy cards; bottles and glasses, unwashed from last night. [...] Tommy said an odd thing, a thing it is possible he had never said before, 'W-What a beastly mess!' (pp.106-7)

Their 'old' life of late night card games and drinking – signifiers of happy sociability – now appear 'incongruous' through the prism of English codes of social propriety, of hospitality, of convention, which had formerly been absent in the siblings.

The Crevequers' passage from their unselfconscious and chaotic world of childhood to the adult realm of order, cleanliness and responsibility can be construed as a coming of age, brought about through contact with English middle-class social mores. The process of acquiring and internalising social literacy is figured in textual terms: 'their barred faces were written over, large, with words. The Crevequers, having begun to learn to read, spelt them out.' (p.129). So difference is articulated along both national and developmental lines: the adult realm of rules and respectability is embodied in the English set; the paradise of childish freedom and lack of regulation equated with the Neapolitan side. Betty and Tommy's identity with their Neapolitan life is compromised by exposure to the English and rudimentary traces of their experience of English life resurface to alienate them from their prelapsarian state.

At the novel's end, the Venables have not been transfigured; for Miranda, 'It'll be rather ripping getting home and getting some cricket and tennis' (p.211), while Mrs Venables continues to see the Crevequers as merely exotic objects of study:

"But those childlike, seemingly almost soulless natures are a most interesting study to me. One wonders how far their climate and their faith contribute towards the result as we see it. There is certainly something in the beauty and gay paganism of this city, mingled as it is with the simple devoutness of a symbolic faith, that seems to develop such characters freely." (p.209)

Among the English it is only Prudence Varley who gains any insight and even then it is, like Caroline Abbott's, a sense of the impenetrability of barriers. She 'knew [...] with a sad, hopeless certainty' (p.200) the impossibility of friendship or more between 'sorts.' In her last speech, discussing the Crevequers with Warren, she says,

'I can't help being stiff and puritanical and disliking certain things. They can't help being – well, street-children with gregarious habits and wide tastes. [...] It's always open to us to improve our own roads – only not, I think, successfully to leave them.' (p.216)

There are no gods and rather than ennobling, the Anglo-Italian transfiguration has been sobering and sad. Offered a new life in England, the Crevequers prefer a new life together and they retreat to their empty family villa:

To the further north there lay, in sunshine, a little warm bay of blue sea and a Ligurian fishing-city, pink and yellow and white and green, was set curving round it – Santa Caterina, of deep stone-paved streets, where odours dwelt of roasting coffee and drying fish and cheese and drains and tar. (pp.167-168)

Here they are cocooned in a world of eternal childhood, last seen playing with pine-bark boats. 'It was not in them to analyse, as Prudence analysed and thought out.' (p.233). Analytical thought is inimical, constituting what was customarily felt to be an English, or northern, trouble, part of the notion of the intellect stifling the life of the senses; but also as a feature of adulthood, which the Crevequers reject.

The novel's conclusion is that 'the fusion of two "sorts" was at the best a rash experiment, at the worst a most tragical catastrophe.' (p.217). This is the moral gleaned from *Angels* too. The catastrophe in *Angels* happens to Gino, but the focus remains on the English (those English sympathetic to Italy). In *The Furnace* the two 'sorts' of people focused on are both English. But the perspective of the Italianized ones is privileged. Like Gino, they are harmed by the English, against whom they bear no grudge and enjoy a relaxed, carefree existence at one with their environment; unlike Gino, they are focalizers, articulate, possess agency, the complexity of an inner life, the capacity for change.

Conclusion

It is not that Macaulay has broken new ground in her portrayal of Italians. The Italians are only relatively unsentimentalized. But by aligning the Crevequers with those Italians on the fringe of society, endowing them with what are commonly thought of as Italian qualities – childlike, spontaneous, unmaterialistic, sociable – and making *them* the protagonists, Macaulay has furnished British fiction set in Italy with an Anglo-Italian perspective with which to interrogate a certain kind of Englishness. Instead of the Forsterian eye-view which focuses on the English through the English, creating and disposing of Italian characters expediently, in Macaulay the English are satirized through Betty and Tommy Crevequer, the Anglo-Italian encounter personified.

Perhaps Macaulay's subversion of the certainties of identity in her novel sat less easily with a reading public at the beginning of the century more in tune with the stereotypical Italy found in Forster. The Crevequers' liminal state of being – neither wholly English nor Italian, neither children nor adults, neither respectable middle class nor working class, as well as the ambiguity of their gender and sexuality,³³ render them more modern than the rather more purposive, distinct English characters in *Angels*, drawn from a narrow social milieu and their thinly-sketched Italian interlocutors. No longer feeling that they belong to their Neapolitan environment, but neither able to contemplate integration into English society, Betty and Tommy opt out of this polarity into a permanent state of asocial, asexual autonomy, in an idyllic natural environment off the beaten track.³⁴ This recurrent Macaulayan vision, as LeFanu points out, 'fed her strong desire for self-sufficiency and the positioning of herself, as a writer, on the edges of the worlds she described.'³⁵ But such an assertion of independence may have been premature for Edwardian tastes; the kind of ahistorical, Romantic constructions of Italy found in much of the period's writing satisfied the hunger for constants at a time of great political, environmental and social change.

³³ See J. Passty, *Eros and Angrogyny* on gender and sexuality in Macaulay.

³⁴ There was a vogue during these years among some writers and artists for living in isolated, rural communities, of which *The Furnace's* readership would have been aware. And as Pemble suggests, in relation to constructions of the Mediterranean, there was a widely-felt desire to 'preserve the sense of novelty, mystery, and potency that suggested a return to childhood and a rebirth of the innocent mind.' (p.273).

³⁵ LeFanu, 42.

It has been seen that *Angels* and *The Furnace* both concern themselves with the Anglo-Italian encounter in a contemporary rather than Renaissance fictional Italy; their protagonists mediate between the two nationalities and are the most affected by the experience, though it is a rather bitter pill. Macaulay's Italy is innovative and unusual in that it is the novel's given, a place where one can live without guidebooks or maps. While Forster's Italy functions as a means of exposing English repression and hypocrisy, the narrative does not provide or offer any sustained instance of an Italian perspective. It might be said that in *Angels* Italy happens to the protagonists, while in *The Furnace* England happens to the protagonists.

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“Dark juxtaposition” – D. H. Lawrence, Verga and Cultural Difference

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In this short paper, I propose to consider D. H. Lawrence as a travel writer and translator of the work of Giovanni Verga, the Sicilian novelist best known for the novels *I Malavoglia* and *Mastro Don Gesualdo* and author of numerous short stories and sketches of peasant and country life in Sicily, collected principally in *Vita Dei Campi*, *Novelle Rusticane* and *Vagabondaggio*. I would like to suggest that it is unfair to Lawrence and an inadequate appraisal of his engagement with Verga and his work to base our judgment on his limited knowledge of the Italian language and the haste with which he carried out his translations of *Mastro Don Gesualdo* and the short stories in *Vita dei Campi* and *Novelle Rusticane*.

Lawrence's responses to Verga are, in an important manner, bound up with his engagement with cultural difference and his sense of place and with his search for the so called Other of European civilization. We should also take into account Lawrence's status as a working novelist and an advanced and highly perceptive critic and theorist of the novel when seeking to define the criteria by which to judge his translations.

Furthermore, his approach to translation could help us, in our examination of his achievement, to extend and enrich the vocabulary of the criteria we apply in the evaluation of literary translation, particularly when we consider the need for a more empirical approach to the assessment of literary prose translation, which has been traditionally left somewhat in the shade due to the greater attention paid to poetry.

So one of my aims is to seek to broaden the scope of analysis which we apply to Lawrence's involvement with Italy and Verga in order to show how his decision to undertake these difficult and extensive translations is consistent with the spirit of this involvement and is linked, as it were, symbiotically, to his critical and theoretical interest in the novel *per se* and to his personal agenda both as traveller and travel writer.

Lawrence's involvement with Verga's work, in the form of translation and critical commentary, takes us to the heart of Lawrentian critical discourse and debate and creates an added opportunity to appraise Verga as seen by a highly individual and perceptive critic.

The key text in travel writing that comes from Lawrence's Italian experiences is *Sea and Sardinia*, written in 1921 during his stay with Frieda in Taormina and describing their eight day visit in January of that year to Sardinia, which, Lawrence says:

[...] lies outside; outside the circuit of civilization. Like the Basque lands. Sure enough it is Italian now, with its railways and its motor omnibuses. But there is an uncaptured Sardinia still. It lies within the net of this European civilization, but it isn't landed yet.¹

Lawrence's specific agenda for visiting Sardinia remains ambiguous in the text, but can be seen as couched within the framework of his declared engagement in a personal search for alternatives to first British and later European civilization, which would take him eventually to Ceylon, Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, America, Mexico. Helen Carr notes that Lawrence's travels were 'energized by a passionate quasi-primitivist quest; he longed for a truer, simpler, more intense way of being and was endlessly disappointed.'²

The latter years of his life, subsequent to his definitive break with and departure from England in 1919, would be spent travelling and living abroad and this is the period in which he produces his travel writing and his translations. As far as Italy is concerned, he had begun as a travel writer, or rather, as a writer for whom travel was indispensable, with the bringing together, from earlier travel sketches, of *Twilight in Italy* in 1915 but the text that is most emblematic of his engagement with place and cultural difference remains *Sea and Sardinia*. Thematically, this intricate and demanding book gives evidence of Lawrence's fear of the female and of his speculation on the possibility of asserting forms of masculine independence from the female, as can be seen in his attitude to Frieda, nicknamed 'Queen Bee' and the threatening personification of Etna as a 'wicked witch,' or in his interest in the 'Girovago' encountered while they are in Sorgono. There is also his fear of the post war *en masse* rise of the workers, with, as he envisioned it, a concomitant reduction of life in society to a servile elimination of individuality and originality. Yet one of the most striking characteristics of *Sea and Sardinia*, which marks its

¹ D. H. Lawrence, *Sea and Sardinia* (Harmondsworth. Penguin, 1997), 9.

² Helen Carr, *Modernism and Travel 1880-1940 in The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Peter Hulme and Tim Young (eds.) (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 83.

uniqueness, is Lawrence's ability to comment and change and reappraise both his positive and his many negative reactions to places and people, which is symptomatic of his total honesty aided by a mercurial intelligence which manifests itself in his refusal to accept a limiting, constricting single voice. It is as if he were engaged in the creation of a form of internal polyphony in his appraisal of surroundings and experiences and his resistance to and intense irritation at being perceived by the Other, Sicilian or Sardinian, in stereotypical form. Travel, for Lawrence, is a lived experience which symbiotically, in relation to the landscape, people, buildings and trees, contributes to the formation of the living self. Jack Stewart sees the trip to Sardinia as 'a voyage of total perception, its dynamics a process of interpenetration with the world'³ and suggests that Lawrence is seeking out primitive landscapes in connection with nostalgia for blood consciousness:

In his response to such landscapes, Lawrence projects and receives back, altered or clarified, something of his deepest self. He reads the landscape as if it were the physical form of his idea.⁴

In a well known passage in Chapter VI, Lawrence acknowledges the 'conscious genius' of the place, Italy:

[...] For us to go to Italy and to penetrate into Italy is like a most fascinating act of self-discovery – back, back down the old ways of time [...]⁵

He likens himself to a restored Osiris:

Italy has given me back I know not what of myself, but a very, very great deal. She has found for me so much that was lost.⁶

When we turn to Lawrence's involvement with Verga, it is sense of place which immediately comes to the forefront in his comments on the Sicilian writer. Probably Lawrence's best known statement in this regard comes from his opening essay in *Studies in Classic American Literature* in which he declares that every continent has its own great spirit of place and that

³ Jack, F. Stewart, "Metaphor and Metonymy, Color and Space, in Lawrence's *Sea and Sardinia*" in *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 41, No.2 (Summer, 1995), 211.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁵ Lawrence, *Sea and Sardinia*, 117.

⁶ *Ibid.*

every people is polarized in a particular locality which is home, that the spirit of place is 'a great reality.'⁷

In his translator's note to Verga's *Short Sicilian Novels* he comments:

Many of these sketches are said to be drawn from actual life, from the village where Verga lived and from which his family originally came. The landscape will be more or less familiar to any one who has gone in the train down the east coast of Sicily to Siracuse, past Etna and the Plains of Catania and the Biviere, the lake of Lentini, on to the hills again. And anyone who has once known this land can never be quite free from the nostalgia for it, nor can he fail to fall under the spell of Verga's wonderful creation of it, at some point or other.⁸

In his critical comments on *Mastro Don Gesualdo* he makes an emotional declaration which brings together his sense of what Sicily had given him and his sense of its uniqueness as a place, evoked by Verga:

[...] If you have any physical feeling for life [...] if you have any appreciation for the southern way of life, then what a deep fascination there is in *Mastro Don Gesualdo!* Perhaps the deepest nostalgia I have ever felt has been for Sicily, reading Verga. Not for England or anywhere else- for Sicily the beautiful, that goes deepest into the blood. It is so clear, so beautiful, so like the physical beauty of the Greek.⁹

For Lawrence, *Mastro Don Gesualdo* is 'a great undying book, one of the great novels of Europe:'

If you cannot read it because it is *a terre* and has neither nervous uplift nor nervous hysteria, you condemn yourself. As a picture of Sicily in the middle of the last century, it is marvellous [...] There are no picture-postcard effects. The thing is a heavy, earth-adhering organic whole.¹⁰

In 1957, Giovanni Cecchetti published an extended English version of a paper originally presented in Italian two years previously at a Chicago

⁷ D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (London. Penguin, 1971), 12.

⁸ Giovanni Verga, *Short Sicilian Novels (Novelle Rusticane)* translated from the Italian by D. H. Lawrence (New York. Daedalus, 1984).

⁹ Anthony Beal, (ed.) *D. H. Lawrence. Selected Literary Criticism* (London. Heinemann, 1956), 278.

¹⁰ Giovanni Verga, *Mastro Don Gesualdo* translated by D. H. Lawrence, (London. Jonathan Cape, 1925), xiv.

meeting of the Modern Language Association which, while praising Lawrence for bringing Verga to an English reading public, severely criticized the end product, commenting that the work of translation was done at 'unbelievable speed'¹¹ without proper revision and checking and that Lawrence's knowledge of Italian was inadequate to the task. Cecchetti limits his comments – he cites numerous examples of errors and failures in comprehension in Lawrence's translations – to the translations of *Novelle Rusticane* and *Vita dei Campi*, which are collections of short stories and does not examine the novel *Mastro Don Gesualdo* since, he says 'the short stories provide enough material for observations on Lawrence's work as a translator.'¹²

G. H. McWilliam, in his 1999 introduction to his own translation of *Cavalleria Rusticana* comments that 'Lawrence's version's of Verga can hardly be regarded as adequate' and notes a couple of examples, similar in nature to those listed by Cecchetti, of incomprehension of phrases and items of vocabulary.

We can make a distinction between two types of voice in translation. One is the voice of the author, which may be difficult to pin down. This is particularly so in the case of Verga, who, particularly in *Mastro Don Gesualdo*, is actively engaged in the technical obfuscation of narrative, authorial voice in favour of an impersonal method of presentation which privileges choral and polyphonic narration and voicing and the use of free indirect speech in his fictional representation of the busy life of his home town of Vizzini. *Mastro Don Gesualdo* is, in many of its episodes, a marvellous inebriating kaleidoscopic tour de force of crowd and group scenes which acquire and provoke in the reader a sense of both the spontaneity and density of theatre.

The novel is noteworthy for the richness of its language, particularly in its powerful and consistent metaphorical representation of animality in human behaviour and expression, as Verga seeks to convey what Lawrence calls 'the incredible spiteful meanness' of life in the villages and small towns of Sicily. The use of free indirect speech, as an alternative to direct authorial narration can only have been sympathetic to the author of *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, critical comment on which has

¹¹ Giovanni Cecchetti, "Verga and D. H. Lawrence's Translations" in *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Autumn 1957), 335.

¹² *Ibid.*

come to propose the idea that Lawrence's novels are structured dialogically and that he was purposefully engaged in narrative experimentation that involved the surrendering of his own voice in favour of that of another mind or minds, those of his characters.¹³

The other type of voice is that of the translator or rather a 'discursive presence' which can make itself heard in the choices made by the translator in a variety of ways. We need to establish to what extent that presence is competent, adequate or accomplished and to what extent it is disruptive or even wilfully meddling. In Lawrence's case, while it is fair to say that many of his linguistic choices are in error, either because of an inadequate understanding of the original or because of haste or lack of revision, it is also fair to say that his critical awareness of the nature of the text he was translating made him sensitive to some of the principal issues involved in trying to translate Verga into English.

Cecchetti, for example, acknowledges Lawrence's sensitivity to the question of language in the novel citing a letter to Edward Garnett in which Lawrence states:

He (Verga) is *extraordinarily good* – peasant – quite modern – Homeric – and it would need somebody who could absolutely handle English in the dialect, to translate him. He would be most awfully difficult to translate. That is what tempts me: though it is rather a waste of time and probably I shall never do it. Though if I don't, I doubt anyone else will – adequately at least.¹⁴

McWilliam, while commenting on Lawrence's lack of modesty, acknowledges the critical astuteness of the first part of this declaration, which draws attention to three of Verga's outstanding qualities as a writer of narrative:

his familiarity with popular, colloquial speech; the modernity of his prose style which placed him at the forefront of literary innovation in the latter part of the nineteenth century ... and the epic structure of his two major novels.¹⁵

¹³ M. Elizabeth Sargent, Garry Watson, "D. H. Lawrence and the Dialogical Principle: 'The Strange Reality of Otherness,'" *College English*, Vol. 63, No. 4, (Mar. 2001), 412-13.

¹⁴ Aldous Huxley, (ed.) *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* (London. Heinemann, 1932), 529.

¹⁵ Giovanni Verga, *Cavalleria Rusticana and Other Stories* translated and with an Introduction by G. H. McWilliam (London. Penguin, 1999), xiii.

Cecchetti notes that this comment shows 'that he felt the regional linguistic stratum lying just beneath the surface of Verga's prose' but remarks that Lawrence fails to indicate how the 'dialect' should be used, adding that 'very probably he meant to employ it directly' and alludes to what he calls Lawrence's inconsistent and rather inappropriate use of London cockney in parts of the dialogue in *Cavalleria Rusticana*.¹⁶ Cecchetti's reference to cockney is mistaken. The language used by Lawrence in the dialogues between Turiddu, Alfio, Lola and Santa in his translation of the story *Cavalleria Rusticana* owes much more to his native North Midlands than to Cockney and is consistent with the translator's need to render colloquial non-formal speech in dialogue. There is certainly no speaking equivalent of the Joseph of *Wuthering Heights*, nor for that matter, of a character like Horsepool in Lawrence's own story *The Sick Collier*. It should be noted that the language of Verga's characters, depending of course on who is doing the talking, can be simple syntactically, grammatically incorrect and highly colloquial, but he never uses dialect directly except for isolated words and expressions, which are usually italicized to indicate their markedness in the text. It is also worth noting that Lawrence generally manages to render the meaning and the spirit of expressions in dialect well and makes a consistent and diligent attempt to be faithful to tone and rhythm in colloquial speech which is such an important element in Verga's writing.

In assessing Lawrence's translations, of *Mastro Don Gesualdo* in particular, because Lawrence's discursive presence can be observed more consistently than in the short stories, attention could, I believe, be very profitably drawn to specific and important questions in the field of translation studies, such as equivalence at word level and in terms of idiom and fixed expressions and the translation of metaphor.

To return briefly to the question of dialect and colloquial speech already mentioned, one interesting example of just such an area of analysis in the specific case of *Mastro Don Gesualdo* can be seen in Lawrence's interfering 'discursive presence' in his use of North Midland colloquial country speech in the scene in Chapter Four of Part One of the novel in which Mastro Don Gesualdo returns to his house at Canziria after an eventful day of work and hard dealing. Here he finds Diodata, his servant woman and mother of his two illegitimate sons and sits down and talks

¹⁶ Cecchetti, "Verga and D. H. Lawrence's Translations," 337.

with her and relaxes as she serves him food and wine. In his notes to the Einaudi edition of the novel, Giancarlo Mazzacurati comments how here Mastro Don Gesualdo returns to his 'rural Beatrice' and, surrounded by his accumulated property 'la roba,' allows his senses to relax while his mind relentlessly and restlessly turns over new possibilities including that of marrying Bianca Trao and thereby acceding to a higher sphere of local power and social influence.¹⁷ It is perhaps the only moment of genuine peace and contentment that Don Gesualdo will enjoy before the turn of events and the bitterness that will eventually destroy him from the inside begin their slow process of erosion.

Sensitive to the idyllic rural calm of this moment in the novel, Lawrence inserts forms of address in Don Gesualdo's speech to Diodata, such as 'thee' and 'thou' and 'lass' which simply are not present in the original, but which tend to reinforce the idyllic and pastoral atmosphere of the moment. Two chapters later, as Don Gesualdo sits gazing at Bianca Trao's house considering her potential qualities as a wife, while Diodata, the mother of his children sits by him, Lawrence's translation reads: 'Diodata looked as well, saying nothing, her heart swelling.'¹⁸

The problem is that the line simply doesn't exist in the original, but perhaps an explanation for its presence can be found in Lawrence's comment, in his introduction to his translation of the novel, that:

He should, of course, by every standard that we know, have married Diodata. Bodily, she was the woman he turned to. She bore him sons. Yet he married her to one of his own hired men, to clear the way for his, Gesualdo's marriage with the noble but merely pathetic Bianca Trao. And after he was married to Bianca [...] he still went back to Diodata and paid her husband to accommodate him. And it never occurs to him to have any of this on his conscience.¹⁹

Lawrence here is discussing the fact that he fails to understand what motivates Gesualdo, why he does what he does and why he brings about his own ruin and Lawrence's critical questioning clearly contributes to his 'discursive presence' in the translation.

¹⁷ *Giovanni Verga Mastro Don Gesualdo*, (a cura di Giancarlo Mazzacurati), (Torino. Einaudi, 1992), 108.

¹⁸ Verga, *Mastro Don Gesualdo* translated by D. H. Lawrence, (London. Jonathan Cape, 1925), 114.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xvii.

Analysis of his translation of Verga should therefore be carried out in tandem with analysis of his critical comments on Verga's texts. It should take into account perceptible similarities between the narrative techniques of the two writers, but should be alert to departures of the kind I have just illustrated.

Lawrence's engagement with Verga is therefore, illustrative of concerns which regard Lawrence the man and his personal preoccupation with what one critic has called an 'ethics of alterity.' There is also his critical concern with the novel and the short story. It is, I feel, significant when a figure like Lawrence declares that Verga's stories, *Rosso Malpelo* and *Jeli Il Pastore* are 'among the finest stories ever written.' Together with these considerations, there is also his strong feeling for Italy, for Sicily, for Sardinia. These places fuel life-giving and restorative responses and are an integral part of the permanent examination of self, in relation to the world and the Other, in which Lawrence was engaged. It is the context in which we can appraise his ability to take the sensibility of a practising novelist to translation in a language of which, technically, he was not a master.

In her St. Jerome lecture in the Queen Elizabeth Hall in 2003, the late Susan Sontag, quoting the saint himself to the effect that 'the inevitable result of aiming at a faithful reproduction of the author's words and images is a sacrifice of meaning and grace' offered a complementary account of the process of translation which seems to me appropriate to Lawrence's encounters with Verga. She writes as follows:

Literary translation is, I think, preeminently an ethical task and one which mirrors and duplicates the role of literature itself, which is to extend our sympathies; to educate the heart and mind; to create inwardness; to secure and deepen the awareness (with all its consequences) that other people, different from us, really do exist.²⁰

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²⁰ Susan Sontag, "The World as India: Translation as a Passport within the Community of Literature," (TLS, June 13, 2003), 15.

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memoir in *Sicily and England*:
Political and Social Reminiscences, 1848-1870
by Tina Scalia Whitaker

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Among the British families who migrated to Sicily in the nineteenth century (such as the Sandersons, the Woodhouses, the Hoops, the Cossins, the Roses and the Gardeners), the Whitakers and the Inghams before them, are certainly those who left most traces of their commercial and cultural activities. There are still interesting and conspicuous testimonies to the direct and indirect contribution of the Whitakers and the Inghams to the improvement of the general economic conditions of the island and of the city of Palermo in particular.

Benjamin Ingham is generally considered as the founder of the Whitaker family. A native of Yorkshire, Ingham moved to Sicily at the beginning of the nineteenth century, managing to build a huge economic empire on the island and also in America. After his death, in 1861, his fortune went to his nephew's sons, among whom was Joseph Whitaker jr. Between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries the main characters in the Whitaker family were Joseph, his wife Tina Scalia, their two daughters Delia and Norina and Norina's husband, the fascist general Antonino Di Giorgio. A fascinating historical, social and cultural fresco of events overwhelming the English magnates transplanted to Sicily has been brilliantly achieved by Raleigh Trevelyan in his *Princes under the Volcano*.¹ First published in London in 1972, this book focuses on the Anglo-Sicilians linked to important families of the island, from the end of the eighteenth century to the 1970s. Moreover, the absorbing story of the Whitakers has also been the object of increasing attention in Sicily thanks to seminars organized following the reorganization of their private

¹ R. Trevelyan, *Princes under the Volcano* (London. Macmillan, 1972). Here quotations will be taken from the edition printed in New York, by William Morrow & Co., in 1973.

and business archives in Palermo and Marsala.² Tina Scalia Whitaker's *Sicily and England* – published in London in 1907³ – together with her private diary and correspondence, have played a relevant role in the search for information about the social and cultural life of the Whitakers, as well as about the political and social relationships between Sicily and England from the *Risorgimento* up to the Second World War.

Although *Sicily and England* has enjoyed a certain popularity among historians and intellectuals in Sicily, it has never been analyzed in detail in relation to a series of ontological and literary questions relating to genre, gender and identity issues. Hence, my main purpose is that of providing an alternative examination of Scalia's work as expatriate writing, in relation to the representation of history and the self-representation that it offers. In particular, one needs to question what lies behind Tina Scalia Whitaker's need to write history, what kind of representation of the past she conveys in her book and how she locates her hybrid Self in relation to the Other. Additionally, we should look briefly at the *fortuna* of Scalia's work in England and Italy and how this text oversteps the boundaries of its target Anglophone audience.

From Italy to England and return

Caterina Paolina Anna Luisa Scalia (better known as Tina) was born 'in exile' in London in 1858. As the daughter of Italian patriots, her family's past had been linked to a number of significant people. In fact, from the earliest years of her life, Tina was brought up in an extremely stimulating environment, where liberal political ideas and artistic interests met, constantly, influencing her imagination, beliefs and behaviour. These influences, together with her hybrid, Anglo-Italian upbringing in London and later her union to an Englishman in Sicily, are key elements in

² See *La storia dei Whitaker*, R. Lentini and V. Tusa (eds.) (Palermo. Sellerio, 1988); *L'archivio Ingham-Whitaker di Marsala: indice generale delle corrispondenze* (Trapani. Libera Università del Mediterraneo, 1990); *I Whitaker e il capitale inglese tra l'Ottocento e il Novecento in Sicilia*, C. D'Aleo and S. Girgenti (eds.) (Trapani. Libera Università del Mediterraneo, 1992); F. Brancato, 'I Whitaker di Villa Malfitano: lineamenti e l'archivio documentario,' *Nuove Prospettive Meridionali*, 9 (1994), 15-34; *I Whitaker di villa Malfitano*, R. Lentini and P. Silvestri (eds.). Seminario di studi, Palermo, 16-18 March 1995, Joseph Whitaker Foundation, Palermo.

³ T. Scalia Whitaker, *Sicily and England: Political and Social Reminiscences, 1848-1870* (London. Archibald Constable & Co., 1907).

understanding her main work, as well as building up a picture of a woman continually engaged in creating an English/Italian/Sicilian identity through writing.

The family of Tina's father had lived in Palermo for generations. Tina's father, Alfonso Scalia, was a general in the Sicilian Merchant Navy and fought against the Bourbons in Messina and Catania, between 1848 and 1849. After the fall of Palermo, he fled to London together with other patriots. At that time, London was a refuge for numerous Italian political exiles, such as Mazzini, Pepe, Arrivabene and Gallenga. Tina was particularly proud of her brave Neapolitan grandmother, Caterina Serretta Scalia, who had been initiated into the *Carbonari*.

Tina's maternal grandfather, Pompeo Anichini, was a Tuscan supporter of Napoleon and of the Florentine clergy. Like other Italian expatriates, Anichini was well accepted by the liberal English middle-class; he obtained English citizenship and converted to Anglicanism. Tina's mother, the artist Giulia Anichini, was born in London and brought up in the Church of England. Tina's admiration for her mother – also 'idolized' by Italian exiles for her artistic and political commitment – emerges constantly throughout her writing. She was ever-present in Tina's writing, often a sort of internal interlocutor. Tina Scalia Whitaker considered her mother as a kind of guide and a strong model. Giulia Anichini had a command over her daughter's life. She decided which social events Tina was allowed to take part in, encouraged her daughter's vocal skills and took her around the most exclusive salons of Italy and England, scrupulously selecting her daughter's acquaintances.

Tina's parents had two marriage ceremonies, one Roman Catholic and one Anglican; she was baptised an Anglican, had a Protestant education, developed her passion for singing and grew up surrounded by writers, musicians, patriots, revolutionaries and politicians who used to visit her parents' house in London. Writing about her parents the author reports:

The first eight years of their married life in exile seem to have been very happy, more especially perhaps for my mother, who, having been born in England, had all her friends around her. Her patriotism was very strong, but as she had never been brought face to face with the miseries of her native country, it was consequently more abstract than that of my father. Their Sunday dinners, always beginning with the national macaroni, at which the poorer exiles mixed with the richer and all talked of

the great future day that should see the liberation of Italy, were one of their chief joys. All the possessions and means of existence having been lost by the exiles, my parents were naturally obliged to work for their living.⁴

In 1866, during the war against Austria, she moved to Florence with her parents, then to Palermo, Naples and Parma and eventually to Sicily again. Her own family background in London had already made her very familiar with Sicilian social and political events. In Palermo Tina Scalia met the Whitakers, married Joseph in 1883 and had two daughters. In 1890, in London, Tina Scalia published an unsuccessful novel, *Love in the Sunny South: A Romance*.⁵ The female novelist Lynn Linton had urged Tina Scalia to try her hand at fiction; she also edited and tidied up the work. The result was not brilliant and in later years Scalia very seldom chose to refer to the book. Set in the South of Italy, the story has, as its main protagonist, a woman with a 'strange, fascinating southern languor,' neglected by a husband she does not know much about. A young Anglo-Italian lady, a wise mother, a jealous husband, a womanizer, a group of English tourists are some of the other characters in Scalia's novel. They are surrounded by a crowd of Southern upper-class men and women and their Southern *milieu* is constructed according to ready-made images. Moreover, the characters of the novel are inspired by those women and men the author met in her real life. Women's acceptance of their roles in a patriarchal society, their loneliness at home, the dream of a different life and the impossibility of breaking social orders and going against conventions, are the main topics of the novel. Despite its weaknesses and clichés, the work can be decoded as an analysis of Southern Italian middle-and upper-class society, culture, education and women's conditions. Facts narrated in the novel reflect the author's life and feelings.⁶

⁴ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

⁵ T. Scalia Whitaker, *Love in the Sunny South. A Romance* (London. Remington and Co. Publishers, 1890).

⁶ Before getting married to Joseph Whitaker, Tina was training as an opera singer and giving various concerts all around Italy. After the marriage, she had to abandon her career. Moreover, during the first years of their marriage, Tina felt neglected by her husband who was travelling to Tunisia and was involved in the discovery of the island of Motya.

Joseph Whitaker, Tina's husband, was an intellectual rather than a businessman.⁷ In Sicily, he always behaved like the prototype of the Victorian dilettante and the typical Edwardian country gentleman. He was always more interested in hunting, reading and spending time in the company of peasants, than in associating with the Sicilian upper class. Although Joseph Whitaker was born in Sicily, like other English residents in Italy, he kept his English citizenship and his wife did the same. Tina generally made her social life conform to that of the English expatriates – and it needs to be underlined that the British community in Palermo, as in other parts of Italy, tried to preserve their social and cultural customs. In Sicily, throughout the nineteenth century, British residents exerted particular influence on social models, often offering incentives for urban modernization and the livening up of local artistic and cultural life.⁸

However, on a few occasions, in her *Diary* and her memories, Tina Scalia lamented the 'fairly retired life' and the limited society in Palermo, far from 'any really intellectual centre' and the 'petty interests of the town excluding all those of a wider range.'⁹ Nevertheless, the Whitakers' sumptuous *Villa Malfitano* used to be patronized by the Sicilian upper-middle class, as well as by travellers and noble foreign visitors to Sicily. Especially in the first half of the twentieth century, the British press dedicated various articles to the Whitaker family and their business and interests in Italy.¹⁰

⁷ He was extremely interested in archaeological studies of the little island of Motya, where he started tracing the site of an ancient Phoenician colony. He founded a museum there to house his findings. He reported his discoveries in *Motya, a Phoenician Colony in Sicily* (London. Bell & Sons, 1921). See, B. S. J. Isserlin, 'Motya as I knew it: a vanished piece of rural Sicily', in *Studi sulla Sicilia Occidentale in onore di Vincenzo Tusa* (Padua. Bottega Di Erasmo, 1993), 101-104. Later, Whitaker got involved in naturalistic and ornithological studies, encouraged by a series of hunting trips to Africa. In 1905, in London, Joseph Whitaker published two volumes of his *The Birds of Tunisia, Being a History of the Birds Found in the Regency of Tunis*.

⁸ On this subject see M. D'Angelo, *Comunità straniere a Messina tra XVIII e XIX* (Messina. Perna Edizioni, 1995); and I. Fazio, 'Temporanee confusioni: matrimoni e modelli di successo nelle comunità estere a Messina nell'Ottocento,' *Quaderni Storici*, 107/ a. XXXVI, n. 2 (August 2001), 475- 517. See also E. Iachello and A. Signorelli, 'Borghesie urbane dell'Ottocento,' in *Storia d'Italia. Le Regioni dall'Unità a oggi. La Sicilia*, M. Aymard and G. Giarrizzo (eds.) (Turin. Einaudi, 1988), 89-155.

⁹ T. Scalia Whitaker, *Fifty Years of a Life*, autographic manuscript of seventy-four pages, n.d., and *Diary*. The latter had originally been preserved in the Whitaker Archive, Joseph Whitaker Foundation, Villa Malfitano, Palermo, till a fire destroyed it in the 1980s. Numerous sections from the *Diary* are now available only in Trevelyan's *Princes under the Volcano*.

¹⁰ See for example *The Times* of 3/11/1936.

Trying to fill her hunger for knowledge, while fulfilling the formalities requested by her class, Tina Scalia Whitaker enjoyed serious conversations and the company of politicians, writers, scholars, patriots and members of the military. Belonging to the Whitaker family, her varied artistic interests, as well as her philanthropic commitment, conferred on her a great popularity in Palermo. The couple founded the Institution for waifs and strays, *Infanzia Abbandonata*, in Palermo. At the outbreak of the Great War, Tina Scalia's energies were taken up by the *Alleanza Femminile*, whose aim was to provide children of soldiers at the front with housing, education, health and food. She spent the last years of her life in Rome where she died in 1957.¹¹

Writing history as a need to live life

The *Risorgimento* and the people who participated in it, significantly influenced Tina Scalia's views. As a woman, she could also identify with her mother's and grandmother's contribution to social and political events. It should be stressed that the Italian cause conquered the imagination and re-awakened the political awareness of many foreign bourgeois women. A conspicuous number of them contributed to the Italian struggle by promoting and supporting Mazzini and Garibaldi in their own country and in Italy. They did this by means of their active participation in military campaigns as nurses and propagandists, as well as through their writing. Philanthropy was a means by which the feminist movement made its way through Victorian society. Julie Salis Schwabe, Mrs Chambers, Sara Nathan, or the upper-class Lady Shaftesbury, Lady Palmerston, Mrs Gladstone and the Duchess of Argyll, as well as Harriet Hamilton King, the Ashurst sisters and Jessie White Mario are some of the several British and Anglo-Italian women who joined and founded voluntary associations and societies, organized medical aid for Garibaldi's troops and became involved in a variety of radical campaigns in support of Italian republicanism. The Italian struggle for independence, as well as post-*Risorgimento* social and political problems, represented more than one occasion to be charitable for many of these women. Whether remaining in their native country, or travelling and moving to Italy, or

¹¹ For this biographical information I am mainly indebted to Trevelyan, *Princes under the Volcano* and his 'The Anglo-Sicilians: La storia dei Whitaker,' trans. into Italian by A. Carapezza, in *La Storia dei Whitaker*, 13-115.

even linking their lives sentimentally or intellectually to those of Italian patriots, these women decided to go beyond the domestic boundaries, politically and nationally.

At a moment when many women were concerned about making the transition from the private to the public sphere, the events of Italian Unification made the latter accessible to them in a particularly exciting and glamorous way. These women attempted to link their personal lives – marriage, companionship and social relations – to their political commitment. They not only rejected the conception of public and private life as separate and gendered spheres, but also refused to conceive of a politics confined to the public sphere and consequently excluding them.

Sicily and England was published in 1907, in London. After the clamorous events leading to the Unification of Italy, Tina Scalia, following in other women's footsteps – and having also had her mother and grandmother to look up to – re-delineated the boundaries of politics and society through a writing which unified the public and private spheres, collective history and self-representation. Yet unlike *Risorgimento* women, Scalia recorded the Italian struggle for unification retrospectively and passively. Instead of physically moving to search for identity in the Italian events, Scalia travelled in time, digging into her family's past. For the author, writing becomes the expression of a life need: through it she can dig into her personal history and assert her feminine presence in political and social life. As she eventually explained:

My *Sicily and England*: 'un besoin de vie vécu' in the turmoil of great events. To have been in touch with those who helped to make these events; this was my excuse for it being published.¹²

Scalia's writing on history provided a motivating factor in terms of writing on life. It also responded to contemporary gender constraints. For a long time, autobiography and biography had been considered as the main genres suitable for women, even when the authors were politically and socially active. Through these two genres women could put their lives into print. In the second half of the nineteenth century, rejecting the conventional image of their little or no involvement with public and political life, women started to recognize the limits of those genres 'in terms of gender-specific and ontological constraints.'¹³ Like other contemporary women, Scalia

¹² Scalia Whitaker, *Fifty Years of a Life*.

¹³ P. Polkey, 'Reading History through Autobiography: politically active women of late nineteenth-century Britain and their personal narratives,' *Women's History Review*, vol. 9, 3, (2000), 483-500.

must have felt the urge to see her individual story published together with collective history: a self-representation in a historical context. *Sicily and England* then reveals the author's desire to be written into Italian and British history, at a time and place when women were largely being written out of history by men. In the second half of the nineteenth century, when history was beginning to develop into a professional discipline, historically-minded bluestockings started to get more involved in historiography than before. They had access to libraries, archives and learned societies. However, a certain number of women writers seemed to avoid any involvement in political history (or ancient history) and prefer minor areas of study, such as historical biography, stories of life at court, society, 'morals and manners' and the history of art. Others turned to travel history, editing and translation of documents. Women could frequently move into specific fields thanks to fathers and husbands who took positive views of the importance of educating women. At other times, their middle-class families cultivated bookish interests and were in contact with current social and political debates.¹⁴ A number of foreign women travelling and living in Italy used to combine their travel diaries, journals and autobiographies with historical erudition. For example, travelling in Southern Italy in 1889, Janet Ross – described by Scalia Whitaker as the 'queen of Florentine expatriates' – published *The Land of Manfred* and Julia Kavanagh's reputation increased thanks to her historiographic and biographical works, such as *Woman in France During the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1850) and *Women of Christianity, Exemplary for Acts of Piety and Charity* (London, 1852). In the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century, upper-middle class Anglo-Italian women took advantage of their international contacts with leading personalities to write memoirs, historical biographies or family histories. Thus, Margaret Symonds, John Addington Symonds's daughter, wrote *Days Spent on a Doge's Farm. A Memory of Countess Pisani* (London, 1908); Countess Valeria Gigliucci wrote *Clara Novello's Reminiscences. Compiled by Her Daughter Contessa Valeria Gigliucci. With a Memoir by Arthur D. Coleridge* (London, 1910); Teresa Duchess of San Teodoro was the author of her *Memoirs* (London, 1929). Friendly male mentors often provided personal advice and support, facilitating women's access to wider literacy

¹⁴ R. Maitzen, "'This Feminine Preserve,'" *Historical Biographies by Victorian Women*, 'Victorian Studies', 38 (1995), 371-393 (373-374).

and the academic field. At the end of the nineteenth century, learned women were already more easily allowed to have access to British libraries and archives than before.¹⁵

Tina Scalia's friends, the artist Ronny Gower and the journalist Frank Hird, encouraged her to write about her family history and the interesting entourage within which she grew up. Additionally, both in London and in Italy, Tina Scalia had access to a varied, stimulating cultural world, thanks to her parents' acquaintances first and to her salon in her mansion in Palermo later. Contacts with men of letters and politicians, as well as with other like-minded women and writers also gave her access to research material.

After *Sicily and England*, Tina Scalia wrote two short biographical works which appeared in Italy: *Studi sulla Regina Maria Carolina*, published in 1908 and *Benjamin Ingham of Palermo*, published in 1936.¹⁶ The occasion for the essay *Studi sulla Regina Maria Carolina* is the publication of two new biographies of the Queen – the wife of King Ferdinand IV Bourbons of Naples – one of them written by a female historian. In the essay, Scalia develops ideas and thoughts already sketched in *Sicily and England*:

Manca per l'Italia una vita completa, un analisi' del carattere e della personalità forte e passionale di Maria Carolina, moglie del Re Ferdinando IV di Borbone di Napoli, vituperata dai suoi contemporanei, non mai riabilitata dai posteri. Questa donna [...] è rimasta quasi sconosciuta o mal conosciuta nel paese ove pur passò tanti anni della sua vita! [...] Ho cominciato deplorando la lacuna che esiste in Italia sull'argomento.¹⁷

The author goes even further, offering an intimate portrait of a woman of royalty and her private life and social conditions, rather than a theoretical or large-scale military or strictly political history. She focuses on Maria Carolina as a sovereign and on some of her public affairs, but also on the queen as mother, daughter and sister of Marie Antoinette of France. In particular, Scalia argues that the cruel events in France are the real reasons

¹⁵ R. A. Mitchell, "The busy daughters of Clio: women writers of history from 1820 to 1880," *Women's History Review*, 7, 1 (1998), 107-134.

¹⁶ T. Scalia Whitaker, *Benjamin Ingham of Palermo* (Palermo. Scuola Tipografica 'Boccone del Povero,' 1936) and 'Studi sulla Regina Maria Carolina: considerazioni sopra due nuove biografie della medesima,' *Rassegna Contemporanea*, 1 (October, 1908), 275-286.

¹⁷ Scalia Whitaker, 'Studi sulla Regina Maria Carolina,' 275.

which awoke in the queen those strong feelings of hatred and revenge she is accused of. For Scalia, then, an explanation of the queen's complex personality must be produced through an understanding of her private suffering. In this way, Scalia sets a distance from other historians and their 'wrong' interpretations of Maria Carolina. Yet she appeals to historians to produce a more accurate biography of the queen. At the same time, Scalia claims authority for herself not only as a meticulous researcher, but also as a woman more qualified to penetrate the mystery of another woman's life.

An element which links Scalia's first novel with *Sicily and England*, the essay on Maria Carolina and her other unpublished works, is the attention she paid to women's social and domestic conditions, to their private and public worlds. Noble women, actresses, singers, writers, travellers, middle-class ladies, servants, peasants, humble citizens and women patriots dominate Scalia's writings, often occupying full pages with their lives and brave undertakings and stealing the scene from men. The strong authoritarian personalities of Tina Scalia's grandmother and mother, the frequent absences of her father and also a husband who was not often present, must have pushed Scalia towards a kind of self-defence, as well as to challenge and substitute men's role at home and in social life.

Benjamin Ingham of Palermo is a monograph depicting the story of the English magnate in Sicily. After having written about her own family history, Tina endeavours to sketch the past of her husband's family. Publishing the book in English, but in Palermo, she gave visibility and authority – especially among the foreign communities on the island – to a portion of the history of English merchants in Sicily.

A journey in time

Scalia's main work is made up of twelve chapters and contains two illustrations. From the beginning, *Sicily and England* was conceived as a memoir addressed to the author's daughters. The process of mixing historical narrative and family reminiscences is soon made clear in the 'Introduction' to the book:

My reminiscences are only disconnected memories which, though carefully authenticated, have no literary pretensions, nor, as I have said, do they purport to give a

continuous history of those times. They were not originally intended for the critical eye of the public, but merely for my daughters and a few intimate friends.¹⁸

And in the first chapter the author clarifies:

In order that my readers may realize more clearly the condition of Sicily at the time of the revolution of 1848, as well as the many links which bound the island to England, I have thought it advisable to preface these reminiscences of my family by a sketch of the political events which produced the several risings against the Bourbons and culminated in the insurrection of 1848, when so many of our patriots were driven into exile after maintaining their island's independence for a year and a half against the power of Naples.¹⁹

She also stresses the aim of her book in the final paragraph of the work:

[...] Italy must and will live and the memory to the glorious revolutions, which gave her independence, must ever remain as a precious inheritance for the descendants of those who fought and suffered for their country. This is the reason which prompted me to write these memoirs of their grandparents for my girls, that they may ever remember the gratitude Italy owes to the silent help of the English nation (if not to its Government) towards the Unification and the hospitality, sympathy and kindness with which the exiles were treated in that truly great and liberal country.²⁰

In *Sicily and England* facts, people and circumstances are selected and accommodated in order to fulfil the purpose of presenting to the reader a scenario which depicts the state of Sicily and of Italian exiles in London, during the Italian *Risorgimento*. At the same time, the author's main goal is more specific: 'to point out the many connecting links that have existed for centuries between England and Sicily.'²¹ In this way, Scalia's reminiscences constitute yet another contribution which helps to document the various British representations of the romance of the Italian *Risorgimento* and the ways Italy had been constructed and imagined by middle-class British men and women. On the other hand, the author's wish to see Sicily internationally identified as part of Italy and historically connected to Britain, can be interpreted ontologically. It is a necessity for

¹⁸ Scalia Whitaker, *Sicily and England*, 'Preface,' vii-viii.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 363-364.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 'Preface,' vii.

her to find a (politically recognized) connection between her Southern and Northern Italian roots, as well as to link two cultural identities which met and clashed within herself: the Italian and the English.

It can be observed that a game of identification and un-identification repetitively occurs in Scalia's writing. She feels close to her father's compatriots. Often, she identifies with the Italians as a whole; sometimes she identifies with the English and at other times she keeps her distance from the Sicilians. Remembering her childhood, she writes about her Italian upbringing in Victorian London:

where elders reigned supreme and children never spoke until they were spoken to. Mercifully my parents were not of that strict opinion and I was permitted all the freedom of speech if not of action the average Italian child has always enjoyed until quite lately.²²

In another passage she identifies with the Italians, referred to as 'we,' although she feels gratitude for the English intervention:

Looking back dispassionately on the bitter disappointment of the hopes of the Sicilians in Lord Palmerston in 1849 and recalling to my memory all that I have heard from my parents of the events of those days, I see that, notwithstanding the disillusion, we of Italy must feel the deepest gratitude towards that great man. [...] His courage in allowing arms and ammunition to be supplied to the Sicilian insurgents from England can never be forgotten by Italy.²³

On the other hand, at times she seems to distance herself from her Sicilian origin, as in this passage from *Sicily and England*:

My father's sense of humour was unusual for a Sicilian, as the children of that race take themselves and the world around them very seriously as a rule. His eleven years in England gave him a thorough knowledge of the language, although he always spoke English with a strong accent. He was a delightful raconteur and especially enjoyed telling stories of English people and English life.²⁴

²² Scalia Whitaker, *Fifty Years*. It should be pointed out that in this memoir, as in other private writings, Scalia Whitaker's English does not always sound correct. This can be both because of the informal nature of the diary and of problems she might have had with the language.

²³ Scalia Whitaker, *Sicily and England*, 360-361.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 177-178.

The same attitudes transpire in pages written in her old age, when she remembers her first impressions of Palermo. She perceives the Sicilian culture from the point of view of an outsider, stressing the difference between Sicily, Britain and the rest of Italy:

Thus from that narrow street I learnt the first words of this most interesting Sicilian dialect. Thus I learnt to know my fathers' compatriots, so different from any other part of Italy except perhaps compatriots of Calabria. Thus fascinated coming from the island proceedings of Great Britain's people, thus did I spend many hours living their lives, more the life of the oriental than the Latin.²⁵

At various points she identifies with the English, as in these passages from her *Diary*:

It is sad to think how the British colony here and generally throughout Sicily, has dwindled gradually away and is now almost non-existent. Throughout Italy, however, I understand it is the same, but after all I suppose one cannot complain if the Italians now find they can do without us.

I am proud of being a British subject and love and admire beyond words the country of my birth in exile. I resent those English-born persons, married to Italians and living in Rome, who would dare to hide the nationality of their birth. I consider my object in living is to prove that Britain is Italy's natural ally.²⁶

In all these works Scalia moves from one perspective to the other; 'us,' 'we,' 'that race' indicate identification with, or distancing from, this or that cultural group alternatively.

In *Sicily and England* the image of Sicily is created through a journey in time. For the author, Sicily is the land related to her family history and an 'unfortunate' land whose history is re-written and re-constructed through its links with another island, Britain. Thus, Scalia depicts Sicily as oppressed by 'dark times of tyranny and royal oppression.' 'Expensive toy to England during the occupation,'²⁷ Sicily is used and tormented by merchants, modern tourists, politicians, soldiers and kings. Hints at traditions and customs are sporadically present in Scalia's private memoirs, but it can be observed that they are mainly used as pretexts to recall something else, to talk about social life or to

²⁵ Scalia Whitaker, *Fifty Years*.

²⁶ Scalia Whitaker, *Diary*, Malfitano, 10 March 1933, and Rome 6 April 1941.

²⁷ Scalia Whitaker, *Sicily and England*, 53.

introduce people. Traditions do not really interest the author and, if mentioned, they are described superficially; they are mainly small wedges of her memory which help the author to insert new facts in the narration. Apart from a few notes meant to offer linguistic or historical explanations of unfamiliar words and facts, generally Sicilian customs are not analyzed and explained. Moreover, people move and behave according to images already fixed in the mind of the observer, who has recorded specific pictures of Sicily through stories told by others, read in travel books and seen in plays. For example in her late memoir, *Fifty Years of a Life*, Scalia Whitaker wrote:

Nor is the Sicily and the Sicilian people much changed now after 50 years. It has been made known to the world at large in its tragic side, by the great Sicilian actor Grasso who with his company had such great success in London. [...] the jealousy of the man, the oriental submission of the woman to him. Their wonderful power of gesticulation making the subject almost clear by mere pantomime, without understanding the words!²⁸

And earlier, in *Sicily and England*, images of the island are frequently constructed through references to travel books. In her main work she quotes John Galt, Lady Morgan, Lady Blessington and Brydone together with officials and diplomats who visited Sicily during both the Napoleonic Wars and the events of the unification. The author relies on travel books and citation, consequently, legitimizing their representation of reality.

Therefore, it can be argued that despite her Sicilian origins, the author does not really identify with Sicilian culture. Besides, it can also be said that for Scalia, Sicily is her father's land and although she showed admiration for him, it is clear that her affection for and identification with, her Anglo-Florentine mother was stronger. From this perspective, *Sicily and England* can be read as an attempt to justify and explain to the reader – and above all to herself – Scalia's link with the island. Additionally, for the author the book is an occasion to construct and unify her identity; it is an instrument she uses to find a solution to her hybridity: Corinne's unresolved transit between Italy and England, between father and mother. This can help to explain her identification with the oppression and struggle for liberation of the island. In other words, the author tries to overcome that fragmentariness which is both of history and life. In so

²⁸ Tina Scalia Whitaker, *Fifty Years*.

doing, the past and present of Sicily, as well as the author's past and present, cannot be separated from the rest of Italy and from Europe. The author needs to accomplish this 'unification' through a re-composition and re-construction of historical and personal facts and events. From this perspective, writing is, for the author, a way to identify herself as a woman, an Anglo-Italian and a writer in relation to the Other (English and Italian women and men, family, friends and audience). Her representation/interpretation of history originates from a projection of her idealized Self onto the Other.

Narrating public and private past

Tina Scalia's work, with its hybridity, must be seen as a text which incorporates two genres, both problematic to codify: memoir and historical narrative. In Scalia's book public events are incorporated into the author's family past and become annexed to her family history. At the same time, family history stands at the heart of Scalia's understanding of the recent past; it is an instrument through which political events that happened in Italy and Sicily in particular, could be interpreted, tamed, or better 'domesticated.' In her book, Scalia's need to include numerous details of the political events of her time is mainly dictated by the unique situation of her family – in constant contact with patriots, politicians and artists – and, consequently, by the impossibility of separating her family's past from history. In this sense, *Sicily and England* fulfils one of the conventions identifying the genre of memoirs. In fact, a memoir in the nineteenth century was expected to break down the line between public and private by showing the private aspect of public affairs, or the public manifestations of private problems, or just by making the intimate, minute details of someone's private problem public.

In *Sicily and England* political situations are interwoven with domestic life, frivolous private recollections and personal thoughts. Two forms of memory need to be identified in Scalia's work: personal memory and collective memory. The former takes the form of reminiscences (the main subject of her work) and is also presented as the motif for the book. The latter is the raw material for the writing of history, generally found in books, written documents and oral reports. The author's own recollections, together with those she gathered from English friends and

Sicilian exiles in London, are used as a 'living source' in the text.²⁹ Rambling mental, oral and written reminiscences are put together with other primary and secondary material and the past is selected and manipulated, as well as accommodated to the needs of the present. Moreover, others' memories, particularly in the form of unpublished letters and diaries – apart from forming the primary source for her writing – are also used to confirm the author's own memories and to confer durability and consistency on them. Author and informants, then, co-operate in the construction of the past, as ethnographer and guide-translator co-operate in the construction of the Other's culture. All of them can be considered as what Benjamin calls 'storytellers.' The author as a 'storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale.'³⁰ The author gathers stories from others' mouths and then passes them on to the reader. It can be argued that by writing and publishing her work Scalia affirms the 'authenticity' of reminiscences and confirms them. Especially if memories are her own, the author constructs a long-lasting self-image, even if these reminiscences are proved wrong or inaccurate. Memories originate from experience, but they are never identical to it. Imagination – as well as conscious self-construction – play a relevant role whenever memories are recorded. Moreover, memories are subject to manipulation by time and by different societies. However, as they can be checked only against other recollections of the past, never against the past itself, false memories can be as durable and powerful as true ones:

the more natural the process by which the storyteller forgoes psychological shading, the greater becomes the story's claim to a place in the memory of the listener and, the more completely it is integrated into his own experience, the greater will be his inclination to repeat it to someone else some day, sooner or later.³¹

By sketching, chronicling and explaining the historical connections between *Sicily and England* in the 'Historical Introduction' and then the events of the *Risorgimento* through the rest of her book, Tina Scalia becomes not only a 'storyteller,' but also a 'history-teller.'³² However,

²⁹ J. Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. by S. Rendall and E. Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), xi.

³⁰ W. Benjamin, 'The Storyteller,' in *Illuminations*, H. Arendt (ed.), translated by H. Zohn, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 83-109 (87).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

³² *Ibid.*, 96.

Scalia needs to distance herself from other 'historians,' as she makes clear in the 'Preface' to *Sicily and England* where she points out that:

In writing these memoirs I have not had the least pretension of giving a history of Italy's great struggles for independence - struggles which finally led to her freedom and unity. Those who would wish to follow this movement in its entirety cannot do better than read Bolton King's 'History of the Italian Unity.' No publication, even in Italian, can equal its concise and careful detail and if a little undue importance is at times given to a few of the numerous works the conscientious author has consulted, this does not affect the impartial *resumé* of the events which led to the creation of the Unity, which he lays before the reader.

In this way the female author shows a double attitude towards her audience. On the one hand, she strategically craves indulgence for any incomplete information she gives in her work; on the other, she claims expertise based on her use of valid sources. Evidence of the use of other texts and documents is frequently given in the book:

For the Historical Introduction I have consulted many authorities upon the different periods and have found special help in the *Storie Siciliane*, a work most carefully and conscientiously compiled from existing documents by my father's cousin, Isidoro la Lumia.

In the concluding chapter on Modern Italy my remarks on the value of the English hierarchy of the nobles and on the importance of an hereditary peerage, come at an interesting moment. They were written before the present conflict between the House of Lords and the house of Commons took place and before the agitation in favour of reducing the powers of the Upper House had arisen. I may mention that I have consulted several eminent political men in Italy with regard to the facts in this chapter.³³

Women writing history often avoided openly claiming reliability as 'historians' and attempted instead to create their own brand of authority. One way in which they often did this was by declaring their intention to stay away from 'all encroachments on the peculiar province of history.'³⁴ At the same time, they insisted on providing proof of the scientificity of

³³ Scalia Whitaker, *Sicily and England*, viii-ix.

³⁴ L. Aikin, *Memoir of the Court of Queen Elizabeth*, 2 vols (London. Longman, Hurst, Rees, 1826), I, vii. Quoted by R. Maitzen, 374.

their work. Scalia's contact with relevant personalities involved in the political events narrated in her work and her own research based on primary sources, gave the author enough confidence to offer new views on historical events. For example, see the following passage: the author mentions Lord Amherst, a British ambassador in Sicily from 1809 to 1811, who was widely accused of having failed in his duty towards the island:

There is a general opinion amongst writers on this period of Sicilian history and it has recently been repeated by Bianco in his book, *La Sicilia durante l'occupazione Inglese*, that Lord Amherst was recalled for lack of energy in the discharge of his duties. The Amherst papers prove this to be untrue. Historians have invariably construed his leaving the island as a sign that his embassy was regarded as a failure by the British Government and even so late a writer as André Bonnefons falls into the same error in his book on Queen Maria Carolina. [...] I am happy to be able to prove the contrary by quotations from his letters and private papers which have never been published.³⁵

Providing an alternative version of this episode, Scalia proudly asserts her expertise as accurate researcher even against well-known historians. Tina Scalia's authority lies in her attempt to correct dominant beliefs distorted by accretions or misconceptions. As Federico Curato also acknowledged in his review to the translation of the book, Scalia's text challenged widespread ideas on historical events:

E questi pregi erano ancor più rilevanti quando esso fu pubblicato nell'edizione inglese perché molte cose scritte avevano allora il sapore della rivelazione inedita.³⁶

At other times, recognizing her privileged position as writer and reporter of important events, she feels she has got the task of bringing to light the memory of forgotten or unknown people and acts of heroism which passed unnoticed:

But how many more patriots are there, now completely forgotten and ignored? I find constantly in my uncle's diary such little entries as this: 'Pozzo di Gotto called; fled from Sicily in 1850: comes from New York; professor of Oriental languages: gave him some temporary

³⁵ Scalia Whitaker, *Sicily and England*, 34.

³⁶ F. Curato, 'Sicilia e Inghilterra,' *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, 39, 1, (Jan.-March 1952), 86-87.

pecuniary help.' These names, with the few words that follow them, open out vistas of lives that were sacrificed for their country by men who were never known save by a few people long since dead. [...] For the great majority of the patriots there was only the knowledge that the strivings and sacrifices of their earlier years had helped to free Italy.³⁷

The author reveals herself simultaneously as an innovator, recorder and creator, as both passive and active memoirist. She gathers all data of interest and explains the material in hand, attempting to unify and harmonize what is fragmented, forgotten and mistaken.

Although – as already stated – reminiscences can be made believable, the reception of historical narrative is more complex and problematic. The writing of history is traditionally perceived as contingent, based on empirical sources which can be verified or falsified by public records. Historical knowledge can often be confirmed or rejected although, paradoxically, no historical account ever corresponds exactly to any actual past.³⁸ Although the 'authenticity' of familial memories has not been really questioned in *Sicily and England*, the accuracy of historical information has been at issue. Doubts about Scalia's skills as historian will be mentioned later. In 1952, four years after the book was translated into Italian, Federico Curato identified some historical mistakes occurring in the text. Wrong dates, swapped names and misspellings were not corrected even in the translated edition.³⁹ The mistakes may be attributed

³⁷ Scalia Whitaker, *Sicily and England*, 184.

³⁸ D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1993), 210 and 214-217.

³⁹ 'All'estinzione della casa aragonese di Sicilia fu Martino il Vecchio, e non Alfonso, che pretese il trono (19); il richiamo di Lord Minto e di Lord Napier non fu simultaneo, ch  quello ebbe luogo nel 1848 ma questo nel 1849, e d'altronde quello di Minto non fu un richiamo, ma un rimpatrio per fine della missione (112); le ostilit  napoletane contro Catania non cominciarono tra il 30 agosto ed il 5 settembre del 1848, bens  tra il 2 e il 6 aprile 1849, giorno in cui la citt  cadde (117); il trattato di Milano fu firmato il 6 e non il 7 agosto (118); l'insurrezione di Genova scoppi  il 31 e non il 17 marzo (118), ch , altrimenti, sarebbe scoppiata prima della battaglia di Novara; Firenze,   ovvio, non divenne la capitale d'Italia nel 1862 (131); Piero Maroncelli ben difficilmente pu  essere il medico di Goldoni (135), essendo nato due anni dopo la morte del commediografo veneziano; il generale Gorganand,   ovviamente il Gourgaud (171); il Barbieri, autore della vita della principessa Belgioioso,   ovviamente Raffaello Barbiera (185); l'ingresso trionfale di Napoleone III e Vittorio Emanuele II a Milano avvenne l'8 e non il 7 giugno 1859 (216); William Temple era il fratello e non il nipote di Lord Palmerston (210-211).' Curato, 86-87. Cfr. Scalia Whitaker, *Sicilia e Inghilterra*.

to inaccuracies on the part of both author, translator and editors. But they could also be due to the author's naive reliance on sources. In any case, inaccuracy risks invalidating the immediate representation of reality which the book is meant to give.

In the light of these observations, how can such a text, with its limitations and mixing of 'facts' and imagination, personal memory and history, objectivity and subjectivity, be considered as a reliable representation of historical reality? An answer may be found in Hayden White's definition of a historical work:

a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of *explaining what they were by representing them*.⁴⁰

Similarly, in *Sicily and England* the chronicle is transformed into a story by means of further details, motifs and descriptions which confer unity to it. These elements also romanticize and fictionalize the event and the author's feelings permeate from the description. This sort of fictionalization of history can call into question the veracity of the events. But, paradoxically, it is in this concatenation of literature and history that Scalia's work manages to answer the claims of validity and truthfulness.

In *Sicily and England* factual events are taken and transformed into stories. Chronicle is then mixed with self-depiction and fictionalization. The author organizes her own discourse and makes it suitable for communication. This often implies the use of subjectivity. However, in the text, subjectivity does not limit knowledge; it might reveal the limits of the author's knowledge, but it still holds the power to make the reader believe in the realism of the representation. The authority of *Sicily and England*, in England and especially in Italy, does not really depend on the data and accuracy in Scalia's recording, but rather on the impression of 'reality' it conveys through language. The various stories the text is made up of and the entire work itself, have maintained their strength over the years.

'Sicily and England' in Britain and in Italy

After the publication of the book in 1907, reviews published in England stressed these main characteristics. It should be noticed that

⁴⁰ Hayden White, *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 2.

Scalia's book was constantly reviewed under 'History.' For instance, in the *Westminster Gazette* Robert Hichens commented:

In this book written in English by a Sicilian Italian, there will be found humour, pathos, excitement, common-sense and heart. Mrs Whitaker can tell you a good story. She can gossip agreeably about social affairs and people of the great world. She can deal lucidly with matters of history. But it is when she is writing of patriotism and the noble actions that it prompts that she is at the very best. For then she makes us feel that the daughter of the intrepid general Scalia has fighting blood in her despite her English upbringing. There beats a Southern heart, a heart that loves devotedly her exquisite Island that longs to see it recognized as the brightest jewel in the crown of United Italy.⁴¹

The reviewer concludes with an exhortation to translate the book 'promptly' into Italian. In this review as in others, the hybrid (Anglo-Italian) identity of the author and the hybrid nature of the book were stressed, together with comparisons between Italy and Great Britain, highlighted in the text, for the benefit of the English readers:

Mrs Whitaker is herself a representative of this Anglo-Sicilian alliance, for she is the daughter of Sicilian parents, but English by education and marriage. It is natural, then, that she should give to her reminiscences a title which does not actually cover their full scope. She does, indeed, preface the volume by an historical sketch of the relations of the two island kingdoms and much of it is devoted to the movements in Sicily for liberation from the yoke of Bourbon Naples. But not the least interesting part of the book is that in which she goes beyond the limits of its title and discusses the Italian question generally and the outcome of the struggles which she records.⁴²

In Great Britain, then, *Sicily and England* was received not only for its 'good deal of historical matter'⁴³ related to the events of Italian and Sicilian independence, but also for the social and political picture of Italy. The target, English (middle-class) audience could define Italy in terms of difference from England. In particular, the final Chapter on 'Modern Italy' offered food for thought on issues concerning the monarchy, the political position of the aristocracy, education and the

⁴¹ R. Hichens, 'Sicily and England,' *Westminster Gazette*, 13 July 1907, 5.

⁴² W. A. Phillips, 'Sicily and England,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 July 1907, 212.

⁴³ 'Sicily and England,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 June, 1907, 183.

family, the power of the Church, taxation and judicial administration. It was also an occasion to (re)draw images of contemporary Italy in relation to well-known past ones, as a review of the book on the *Times Literary Supplement* highlighted:

The three plagues of Italy were once 'friars, Germans and fever;' to-day they would seem to be professional politicians, educated *fainéants* – the excessive output of cheat Universities – and a ruinous fiscal system. Rightly or wrongly, Mrs Whitaker ascribes much of the disease that afflicts the Italian body politic to the deliberate exclusion of the old aristocracy from its legitimate influence in the State. As to this opinion will naturally differ; but her comparison of Italy and Great Britain in this respect may be heartily commended to the attention of those who wish to destroy the House of Lords.⁴⁴

In 1908, in the *Giornale d'Italia*, Domenico Oliva wrote a long review of Scalia's work, summarizing its content. Unlike most English reviewers, Oliva focused on the Italian patriots and artists mentioned in the book, the Sicilian historical events narrated in it and the links between Sicily and England as represented in Scalia's work, as well as their relevance for a potential Italian readership. Praising the author for her clear, effective style he hoped the work could soon be translated into Italian:

Ma, senza volerlo, la Whitaker Scalia ha scritto un libro per tutti e in Inghilterra meritò lodi sincere di critici e fu largamente divulgato e merita essere conosciuto in Italia e converrebbe fosse recato nelle nostra lingua. Certamente ha svelato agli inglesi molto delle nostre storie, delle nostre cronache e dei nostri drammi.⁴⁵

However, the book did not always meet with a favourable reception. An example of the kind of negative response it elicited can be found in a review which appeared in the *Cambridge Review*. In it Scalia's book was compared unfavourably with *The Roman Journals of Gregorovious, 1852-1874*, whose translation into English also appeared in 1907:

Mrs Whitaker's need not detain us – her memories are 'political and social' and she recalls so many lords and ladies, in so diffuse and rambling a style, that the reader loses patience, if he is interested in the Italian movement.

⁴⁴ Phillips, 212. (*TLS*)

⁴⁵ D. Oliva, *Giornale d'Italia*, 1908.

Her last chapter has been praised in high quarters. The troubles of Italy were not unknown, however, before she wrote and her attribution of them very largely to the want of a House of Lords on the English model and to the excessive cheapness of University education may be index enough to her qualifications to write history. Gregorovious is another matter. Here is a historian of mark and the writer of a great history and he is giving day by day, his impressions as a great story develops under his eyes.⁴⁶

The article clearly stressed the gap between the two kinds of memoir, as well as the idiosyncrasies in Scalia's book. In his review, Hichens also highlighted – although with more magnanimity – the author's limits as historiographer:

Mrs Whitaker has none of the faults, though possibly she may lack one or two of the virtues, of the trained professional writer. She never 'piles on the agony,' she never plays to the gallery. She writes simply, naturally and with transparent sincerity of the things she knows and as she knows many interesting things about the heroic struggles of the Sicilians in the revolution of 1848 and onwards, her book is deeply interesting and often moving. [...] The discursive writer is sometimes wearisome, but Mrs Whitaker's book resembles an extremely interesting though occasionally rambling conversation.⁴⁷

Perceptions of Scalia's book in Britain were clearly divergent. Although the picture of the Italian political situation, as in her last chapter, was generally appreciated, most of the time her skills as writer of history were at issue. Her 'rambling' style and the attention on many social events and people seemed to annoy some sections of the British audience. In 1948, *Sicily and England* was translated into Italian and re-published in Palermo, on the occasion of the centenary of the 1848 revolution, with the title of *Sicilia e Inghilterra: ricordi politici. La vita degli esuli italiani in Inghilterra (1848-1870)*.⁴⁸ The book is still considered as a source for historical and social information. This and the attention paid to the book today in Sicily, provide evidence of the unremitting power of its representation. Moreover, Raleigh Trevelyan's use of *Sicily and England*

⁴⁶ *Cambridge Review*, vol. 29, (1907/1908), 152. For another English review see *Academy*, 73, 3 (August 1907), 743-745.

⁴⁷ Hichens, 5. However, Hichens' positive comments on the book could be due to his close friendship with Tina. See, Trevelyan, especially 311.

⁴⁸ Tina Scalia Whitaker, *Sicilia e Inghilterra: ricordi politici. La vita degli esuli italiani in Inghilterra (1848-1870)*, trans. by Vera Certo (Palermo. Mazara, 1948).

as one of the primary sources for his saga, *Princes under the Volcano*, demonstrates the authority of such a book even at the end of the twentieth-century.

The reception of Scalia's book in Italy was slightly different from its reception in England, forty years earlier. The publishing company, the Sicilian Mazara, published *Sicilia e Inghilterra* in its series 'Biblioteca storica,' in 1948. The author was still alive at the time and she certainly contributed to the translation.⁴⁹ Addressed to an Italian audience, its subtitle, 'the life of the Italian exiles in England' stresses the aim of the book to embrace episodes of national history. In the Introduction to the translation, Biagio Pace clearly defined the book as part of that 'genre' so little represented in the Italian literary production: a collection of family memories and social life characterized by private details, minor anecdotes and facts which confer strong plasticity and tone on the historical narrative:

Esso appartiene a un 'genere' tanto scarsamente rappresentato nella produzione libraria italiana – non saprei ricordare che le *Memorie* della principessa Vittoria Colonna, *Il Diplomatico sorridente* di Daniele Varé e i *Ricordi* del conte San Martino – quanto è comune presso inglesi e francesi. Raccolta di ricordi familiari e di vita di società, cui sono riservati quei particolari intimi, quelle minuzie aneddotiche, quei retroscena umili, che nel grande quadro della storia rappresentano le sfumature, atte a conferire pieno valore di plasticità e di tono.⁵⁰

Unlike the English reader, the Italian one seems to be guided towards an interpretation of the book as a family memoir. Antonio Pagliaro, in *L'Italia che scrive*, highlighted the fact that Scalia's book was not properly a historiographic work, but rather a family memoir:

Epperò non si tratta di un'opera propriamente storica, bensì di un libro di memorie, che, per essere buona parte riflesse o indirette, hanno richiesto un attento lavoro di selezione e di completamento. [...] Le sue memorie, più

⁴⁹ See Scalia Whitaker's 'Prefazione' to the Italian version of the book, in which she thanks Vera Certo 'della sua premurosa collaborazione alla traduzione,' and remembers Biagio Pace's solicitation to translate her work for the centenary of the 1848 Sicilian revolution. In 1947, in an entry of her *Diary* she writes 'I intend to spend what energies I have on looking through the last chapters of the translation of my blessed *Sicily and England*.' Scalia Whitaker, *Malfitano*, 12 November 1947, in *Diary*. See also, Rome, 26 February 1947. According to Trevelyan one of her daughters had the task to check Tina's poor translation. Trevelyan, 447.

⁵⁰ B. Pace, 'Premessa' to *Sicilia e Inghilterra*, 5-9 (6).

che personali, sono, per ovvie ragioni cronologiche, memorie di famiglia.⁵¹

The limits of Scalia's historiographic narration needed to be underlined too, although they did not invalidate the representation of facts and people, as well as the self-construction of the author:

Non può certamente dirsi che la trattazione esaurisca storiograficamente il complesso dei rapporti fra la Sicilia e l'Inghilterra sino al 1870; né che, specie per la fase anteriore ai moti del Risorgimento, alla quale è dedicato un ampio capitolo introduttivo, tutti gli aspetti di siffatti rapporti abbiano completo rilievo. Quello che dà fisionomia al libro e ne rende avvincente la lettura è la personalità dell'Autrice, che introduce i suoi personaggi con mano leggera ma sicura e aneddotica intelligente e garbata.⁵²

All twelve chapters are maintained in the Italian version, although the editor decided to reduce the section on 'Modern Italy.' As explained in a footnote of 'Alcune considerazioni sull'Italia moderna,' only the first and the last pages of the original chapter are published in Italian, as the social and political problems it originally tackled were considered already outdated at the time of the translation. The main explanation for cutting out this anachronistic section can be found in the author's political orientation. She believed in a liberal monarchy and in the power of the nobility and, before the Second World War, she also supported Mussolini.⁵³ Therefore, in the last chapter of *Sicily and England* Scalia

⁵¹ A. Pagliaro, 'Sicilia e Inghilterra,' *L'Italia che scrive*, n. 3 (March 1949), 58.

⁵² Pagliaro.

⁵³ In 1924, in Sicily, a short pamphlet by Scalia was issued during the first election immediately after the rise to power of fascism: *Al popolo siciliano. Scritto da un anonimo (che sono io Tina Whitaker Scalia)*, manifesto a stampa di sei pagine (six-page printed manifesto). Whitaker Archive, Palermo. Scalia encouraged the Sicilian people to wait patiently for the positive results of the new regime and to vote for Mussolini. It is probable that Joseph Whitaker collaborated in writing this pamphlet, as he shared his wife's political ideas, but the great popularity his wife enjoyed was to give the pamphlet a larger diffusion. By supporting the Government, Tina Scalia aspired to contribute to the improvement of the conditions of the Sicilian lower classes and of Sicily in general. The author addressed people from an Italian and, more specifically, Sicilian standpoint, considering herself to belong to them, and identifying herself as an 'Italian patriot.' Yet her education, her Northern background, as well as her social position and popularity gave her the authority to shape the thinking of the Sicilians, attempting to influence action on public issues. However, years after her pamphlet written to advise the Sicilians to vote in favour of Mussolini, Scalia Whitaker filled her *Diary* with sarcastic comments on fascism and Mussolini.

showed ideas and beliefs no longer in line with the Italian political reality of 1948.⁵⁴

Selecting and omitting sections from the book implies an attempt to rewrite the text in order to make it conform to changed domestic interests and political circumstances. At the beginning of the book, a note points out that: 'I frequenti riferimenti nel testo a persone o a situazioni vanno sempre riportati al tempo in cui il presente libro vide la luce nella edizione inglese.'⁵⁵ By manipulating the text and its representation, author, translators and editor have moulded the reception of *Sicily and England* in Italy.

In the Italian translation of *Sicily and England* eight illustrations have been added to the two pictures of paintings included in the original book.⁵⁶ They are either painted or photographic portraits of the author's parents, relatives, Italian and English friends. Pompeo Anichini, Caterina Serretta, Alfonso Scalia on horseback, a young Giulia Anichini, as well as the controversial writer and traveller Lady Sidney Morgan are some of the individuals whose pictures were included in the book.

In the memoir, these images portraying past people and events become part of an intricate system of memories and meanings through which the author can make sense of her life; they are a medium through which the author confirms and explores her identity. At the same time, for contemporary readers, the private significance of these pictures can be translated into a more public domain.

In Scalia's book, Victorian portraits are placed in a specific context and burdened with new signs. Three uses of these portraits need to be distinguished: a synchronic use made by the subjects themselves and their families, a diachronic use made by the author and one made by the translator (and editor).

In Victorian times, portraits were meant to describe individuals visually and to inscribe and frame their social identity. In the new context of the translation of *Sicily and England*, the pictures transport the self-image of the English Victorians across space and time by inscribing it onto the political and social history of Sicily. In so doing they offer a

⁵⁴ See Scalia Whitaker, *Sicily and England*, 324-325.

⁵⁵ Scalia Whitaker, *Sicilia e Inghilterra*, 12.

⁵⁶ The two paintings are: *The First Meeting Between Garibaldi and King Victor Emanuel on the Battle-field Near Teano* and *The Last Meeting Between Garibaldi and King Victor Emanuel at the Palace of the Quirinale in Rome*.

document in which public and family histories intertwine visually. These pictures gaze inwards and outwards: they are evidence of a private and collective past, as well as a contribution to a historic reconstruction of a private and public narrative. For the user/author – who must have contributed to their selection for the translation – these pictures denote a double reconstruction of the past. The author first attempted to assemble and frame history through the writing of the memoir. Later she could do it again by cooperating in the translation of the text and by looking at and selecting, the pictures for the Italian version of her book. Illustrations are then used to locate and reanimate the past visually. They are traces of identity and of a sense of Self brought back through the author's family history.

Like memories, these illustrations do not represent any objective truth about past reality, but together with memories they can function as evidence of experience. In particular, for the target Italian readers, pictures – especially photographs – can operate as proof of events, historical and social facts and also ethnic and cultural identity. They also become part of popular memory and accounts of history which reinforce a sense of national and cultural identity.

Conclusions: beyond and behind 'Sicily and England'

Together with other women's works, *Sicily and England* is part of those forms of female writing which explore political and social issues mixing them with domestic affairs. And, together with other marginalized texts which are themselves minor, impure and ostensibly trivial, Tina Scalia's book offers original ways of representing the private and collective past. She does it by linking the personal with the political, the mundane with the historical, the trifling with the significant. She crosses the boundaries between personal reminiscences, social comment and history, making history and imagination overlap in the same text. This creation of a hybrid literary form implies essentially a process of recognition of the past and preservation of the ego from disintegration.

For the author, re-writing collective history, through family history, means re-writing her Self. This process runs parallel in Scalia's published works and private autobiographical writing such as *Fifty Years of a Life* and her *Diary*. The former is an unpublished manuscript which was meant to be a private memoir aiming to tell Scalia's life from 1872 to 1922. It includes a rich portrait of numerous people of social, cultural and historical

stature she met during her long life. The manuscript was never completed and the undertaking was clearly ambitious, considering the author's intense social life. Unlike *Sicily and England, Fifty Years of a Life* is directly concerned with the author's own past. In this way Scalia can connect her existence with her earlier Self and transmit it to future generations.

Scalia frames time and preserves the continuity of life also through the recording and writing of the present. Throughout her life Tina Scalia showed a real mania for collecting letters, notes, scraps of paper containing short impressions of people and events, articles on politics, economics and society taken from Italian and English journals, as well as reviews and comments on *Sicily and England*.⁵⁷ Some of her fragmentary notes seem to be isolated recordings of an impression, a moment or an idea. Other notes are also present in her *Diary*, where they have been copied through a constant task of writing and re-writing. It seems that for Scalia, fragments of collective and personal history must be constantly preserved, reassembled and protected. As reported by Trevelyan, although at that time she was only thirty-five, she had a presentiment that she would not live long and wanted to make her diary a sort of confidant. Then, these pages started to be used as an outlet for emotions, grief, worries, anger, doubts and disappointment over missed opportunities, as well as a podium from which to moralize. Things which could not be said in public, or in *Sicily and England*, are thus recorded in the diary. It is clear that the diary is also used to rebel, or to break a silence about facts that perhaps should not be talked about or known, especially by a woman. Moreover, comments on social issues such as marriage and religion are often expressed and are particularly indicative of the meeting and often the clashing, of two cultural models, the English and the Italian.

Writing a diary especially satisfies Scalia's need for a forum for opinions and ideas on social issues and politics. The diary contains a section called 'Riflessioni filosofiche.' This is an interesting commentary on the political events which she could not include in *Sicily and England*: the history of Italy in the first half of the twentieth century and of its involvement in the First and Second World Wars.⁵⁸ Pages dealing with

⁵⁷ See 'Carte di Paolina Anna Luisa Caterina Scalia Whitaker,' Notes (13 envelopes) and Letters (15 envelopes), Whitaker Archive, Joseph Whitaker Foundation, Villa Malfitano, Palermo.

⁵⁸ Scalia Whitaker, 'Riflessioni filosofiche,' 1930, Archivio Whitaker, Joseph Whitaker Foundation, Palermo.

contemporary problems, such as the Mafia, Mussolini's law restricting emigration, Italy's worsening relations with Britain, are *loci* where private writing and trivial entries are set aside to give space to issues of public interest. It seems that Scalia is again looking for an overt acceptance of her knowledge and opinions on significant contemporary social subjects. Thus, attention to detail and the accurate reporting of the situation suggest the possible intention of making her 'riflessioni' public and of acquiring credibility. Besides, at the start of the thirties, Scalia began losing interest in her diary. Imagining that her life was nearly over, she hoped that her daughters would pass her memoirs to Frank Hird, who might use them as a sequel to *Sicily and England*.

The writing of remembrances, together with the recording of the present, are the means through which selected moments of life can be stopped, fixed and framed. For Scalia the main aim of this process is searching for identity, as woman, mother, daughter, wife and Anglo-Italian resident in Sicily. In this way, Scalia perpetually re-writes her Selves through fragmented information, certain and doubtful data, trivial and significant details, collective and personal history. Facts from her notes and diary are re-used and re-elaborated upon in order to reiterate her personal (hybrid) history, both for herself and for others. Her re-writing is, then, achieved through a series of adjustments and re-readings which – from the early *Love in the Sunny South* to the last pages in her *Diary* – are meant to guarantee the 'truth' of her existence in what Picard calls *images-écrans*,⁵⁹ in which she can repeatedly reflect and recognize herself.

Tina Scalia Whitaker is an 'ex-patriate' twice. She is an exile first, as her parents left Italy for London for political reasons; then, she moved from London to Italy and particularly to Sicily, for personal reasons. This experience and all that it implies in terms of construction of identity, emerges in all her writings. In her work her Self is permanently in search of unity against the effects of time and of cultural hybridity. Additionally, being in between two cultures since birth confers on her a strong authorial/authoritative voice. Scalia moves from a fictional representation of her (cosmopolitan) world – as in the novel *Love in the Sunny South* – to a private writing representing her everyday hybrid Self – as in her *Diary* – via *Sicily and England* (and other historical writings) which mixes history and imagination.

⁵⁹ Michel Picard, *Lire le temps* (Paris. Les Éditions de Minuit, 1989), 157-164.

Scalia Whitaker's Italian version of her book certainly enjoyed a wider Italian audience although, as already said, studies on the author's life and family are now circumscribed to a regional, Sicilian area. However, in Italy, *Sicilia e Inghilterra* has acquired a new meaning and it is read for its reports of Sicilian events during the *Risorgimento*, as well as for details of the lives of Italian expatriates in London. *Sicilia e Inghilterra* has been appropriated as a text which, through personal reminiscences, constructs a portion of the historic past for the Italians (and now specifically for the Sicilians). In this way *Sicilia e Inghilterra* has become part of a collective (historical) memory and has acquired a certain amount of authority within a group. Moreover, through its consumption, the representation of 'reality' it provides has been legitimized throughout the years.

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The Romance of Anglo-Italian Studies: Brief Fictions of Francesco Marroni

Allan C. Christensen

Anglo-Italian cultural interactions occur in various dimensions. In a primary dimension, English and Italian people encounter one another or one another's books and cultural products. In a secondary dimension, the original or primary incidents of inter-cultural encounters become the objects of study as in the books that we write or the papers that we present at conferences. Works of fiction, like many of the short stories of Francesco Marroni, may then treat inter-cultural exchanges in a tertiary dimension as well. As English and Italian scholars interact in these stories, the Anglo-Italian academic context itself becomes the site of romance.

Among the twenty-nine stories in the four collections that Marroni has so far published, eight relate to the academic context. These eight resemble the others, however, as inexhaustible variations upon a common theme – the human longing for new horizons or what Samuel Johnson's Imlac in *Rasselas* calls the 'hunger of imagination.'¹ In 'Il pendolare del treno giallo,' one of the non-academic stories, a friendless old commuter tells the narrator of his daily flight from his home in Sulmona: 'La solitudine è terribile... Allora corri, scegli di scappare prendendo la strada più vicina... un po' con l'immaginazione, un po' con un treno come questo, che come me è destinato prima o poi... alla rottamazione.'² He has been taking the same rickety train every day for the last thirty years to Pescara, where he buys books about English history: 'mi piace molto,' he says, 'il periodo elisabettiano.'³

In the stories related to more precisely scholarly activity, the romantic attraction to a foreign culture may develop through three typical stages. In the first stage, there is the original allure of the other country.

¹ S. Johnson, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, D. J. Enright (ed.) (Harmondsworth. Penguin Books, 1976), 108. The phrase occurs in Chapter XXXII in reference to the tyrannising human drive that leads to constructions such as the pyramids.

² F. Marroni, 'Il pendolare del treno giallo,' *Finisterre* (Pescara. Edizioni Tracce, 2004), 75.

³ *Ibid*, 70.

While a work of both scholarship and imagination, the story 'George e Nell' thus narrates an episode in the life of George Gissing in which the young writer in London longs for Italy:

George immaginò in quei momenti terre lontane, immaginò la grande distesa azzurra del Mediterraneo, le coste della Calabria e la luce della Sicilia, pensò alla Magna Grecia e ai suoi poeti preferiti, si risvegliò in lui intenso il fascino di un mondo verso cui si sentiva attratto in modo incontenibile.[...] C'era forse qualcosa di più bello di un universo sottratto al tempo, di un mondo in cui si respirava l'innocenza dell'inizio?⁴

Unhappily distant from the atmosphere of Italy, he must be content with an 'edizione originale' of Dante for which he has imprudently spent his last shillings. The *Inferno* is 'sufficiente a saziare il suo appetito'⁵ for a while, until his rather infernal wife returns with the two guineas that can satisfy more material appetites. Besides paying due attention to the hunger of both imagination and body, Marroni's stories often turn on a rivalry between literature and living people for the hero's love.

In other stories, the Anglo-Saxon enthusiasm for Italy receives more ironic treatment. The Italian protagonists coming to England for conferences and for research must listen to many gushing statements about the beauties of Italian cities and the musicality of the Italian language: 'Quando ha citato Dante in italiano,' an Englishwoman exclaims to the narrator, who had thought her to be asleep during his reading of a paper, 'oh, che bello! Musica per le nostre orecchie ... il bel canto.'⁶ (Presumably, like the other English characters, this woman has addressed the narrator in English, but then she has brainlessly uttered the phrase *bel canto* in Italian.) At a drunken poetry reading in Ireland, featuring poets of many nationalities, the auditors are particularly eager to hear the Italian poetess, not because they will understand her but because 'vogliamo sentire la lingua di Dante e di Petrarca.'⁷

The corresponding attitudes of the Italians towards England are more complex, for they observe both the dreary aspects of English weather and food and the country's charms. On an especially cold and foggy day in Yorkshire, the narrator of 'Brughiere' registers the English setting as

⁴ F. Marroni, 'George e Nell,' *Silverdale* (Palermo. Edizioni della Battaglia, 2000), 97.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 92. The edition is 'originale' presumably because in the original Italian.

⁶ F. Marroni, 'Sul Tamigi,' *Silverdale*, 29.

⁷ F. Marroni, 'Poeti,' *Il silenzio dell'Escorial* (Bari. Palomar, 2002), 99.

the precise negation of Italy: 'Nulla del mio Mediterraneo, nulla della terra rossastra della mia isola, nulla del profumo di aranci e di limoni, nulla dei capperi e dei fichidindia, nulla del raggio che costringe la lucertola all'ombra e piega le foglie di agave su se stesse.'⁸ 'Nulla di tutto questo,' he concludes, but he nevertheless desires nothing better than to be there with his English colleague, Jennifer, who is the typical inhabitant of this northern world. In another story, 'Rylands,' he has longed even to arrive in Manchester as a place to escape that hot Italian sun 'che costringe la lucertola all'ombra.' Besides the absence of Italian features, the stories frequently observe the positive attractions of the English countryside: 'Ho sempre amato il paesaggio inglese,' the narrator of the first story, 'Silverdale,' reports: 'le distese aperte delle Midlands non meno dei dolci declivi del Cheshire,'⁹ and here and elsewhere occur references to the paintings of Constable: 'Nonostante l'inverno, nonostante gli alberi spogli e il grigiore senza vita dei campi, il paesaggio qui aveva qualcosa di inebriante, era ricco di vita e di semplicità come i dipinti di Constable.'¹⁰

More importantly than through its landscape, however, England has attracted Marroni's Italian academics through its literature. The narrator of 'Silverdale' has been inspired at Knutsford to commit his life to Elizabeth Gaskell: 'molti anni prima in quel posto avevo scoperto che Elizabeth Gaskell sarebbe entrata nel mio destino più di quanto non vi fosse entrato un parente o persino mia moglie.'¹¹ For the third-person protagonist of 'Il racconto di Bath' such a literary commitment has begun at the age of fifteen with passionate reading of Stevenson and Steinbeck, 'che [...] gli erano parsi i fari e i profeti della sua vita.'¹² Lifetime commitments of this sort evidently prompt the choice of an academic career as a sacred or romantic calling and the romantic aspect continues to motivate the relationships of academics with one another. The old friendship between the Italian protagonist of 'Sul Tamigi' and the English

⁸ F. Marroni, 'Brughiere,' *Brughiere* (Fasano [Br]. Schena editore, 2002), 12.

⁹ F. Marroni, 'Silverdale,' *Silverdale*, 11.

¹⁰ F. Marroni, 'Liz a Roma,' *Silverdale*, 107. References to Constable as a convenient icon for the characteristic charm of the English countryside also occur in 'Silverdale,' 11, and 'Sul Tamigi,' 26 and 31.

¹¹ 'Silverdale,' 14.

¹² F. Marroni, 'Il racconto di Bath,' *Brughiere*, 143.

Professor Robertson is based on their common 'incrollabile passione per la poesia di George Herbert.'¹³

Since the commitment is to literary figures of the past, the romance flourishes not only along the synchronic or spatial Anglo-Italian axis but also along the diachronic axis of past and present. 'Mi piace molto l'idea del rapporto tra i vivi e i morti,' remarks the narrator to a female participant at the Oxford conference: 'mi fa pensare ai fantasmi di Thomas Hardy.'¹⁴ In part because she shares his enthusiasm for the ghosts of Hardy, they will in fact go on to make love. In 'Brughiere,' however, the romantic encounter is with an actual ghost. For fifteen frustrating years the narrator has been conducting research for a book about Charlotte Brontë, but Brontë 'mi pareva sempre più irraggiungibile, sempre più lontana, sempre più sottratta alle fatiche della mia immaginazione.'¹⁵ His journey into the moors of Yorkshire then brings him closer to the past in which she has existed. The grey and melancholy setting 'mi suggeriva parole e immagini d'altri tempi' and at the cemetery of Haworth, he reads on the tombstones the 'tristi parole di un mondo lontano: [...] lapidi consunte, spaccate dalle radici delle querce che in qualche modo, scuotendole, ridonavano a quelle ossa l'illusione della vita.'¹⁶ Walking away into the moors, 'mi sentivo nel cuore dell'universo brontiano [...] dinanzi a me una sequenza interminabile di brughiere. [...] Ero del tutto catturato da quel mondo irrequieto e selvaggio.'¹⁷ In this harsh environment, a girl dressed in clothes of an earlier century and later identified as 'Charlotte' appears. Speaking with 'il tono morbido di un venticello mediterraneo,' she seduces him: 'I nostri corpi si erano incontrati senza imbarazzo alcuno, quasi si attendessero da secoli, come emisferi in attesa di un totale congiungimento.'¹⁸

This 'congiungimento' figures probably the romantic meeting of the two half-worlds, the Mediterranean and the northern as well as the

¹³ 'Sul Tamigi,' 26. The most fully treated of the many literary friendships between men in Marroni's stories is that of George Gissing and his German friend Eduard, of whom George's wife is jealous. Eduard presents George with a volume containing 'la corrispondenza tra Goethe e Schiller,' and George responds, ' - Grazie, da tanto tempo cercavo queste lettere ... mi aiuteranno a capire ...' ('George e Nell,' 100).

¹⁴ 'Sul Tamigi,' 28.

¹⁵ 'Brughiere,' 9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

present and the past, which is the scope of Anglo-Italian studies. Maybe all historical scholarship aspires to meet and to complete a past that does not possess its full meaning in itself. In the guise of the ghostly Charlotte Brontë that past has also been awaiting the arrival of the appropriate scholar, an Italian in this case, who could fulfil in his later century the implications of her life. But in the erotic component of his passion for the past, the scholar experiences a terror as well: 'Ero stato un passivo esecutore di ordini,' he realizes, 'mi ero piegato al suo gioco erotico senza godere dell'erotismo.'¹⁹ The ghostly historical material often controls Marroni's present-day scholars, who find themselves not to be living authentically in the present. The narrator of 'Silverdale' repeats 'movimenti e parole che erano già state immagazzinate nella mia memoria' and enacts 'la perfetta replica di una scena del passato.'²⁰

In its second stage, the quest into the past has produced especially the 'replica' of the archetypal nymph that afflicts the scholar with the impotence that the Romantics called nympholepsy. She emerges not only as a ghost but in other intriguing incarnations. 'Rylands,' the story set in Manchester, introduces her as Anna, an unscrupulous Italian that claims the narrator as director of her thesis on Ruskin's *Praeterita* some ten years before. Unable to recall the situation, he becomes inexplicable to himself and a part of *her* 'macchina finzionale in cui io non ero che un passivo attore, incapace di recitare la parte vera della mia personalità.'²¹ A common interest in Ruskin and a common inability to produce a valid scholarly work on him have enabled Anna to take ruinous possession of the narrator's English friend Professor Edward Horton-Stokes too: 'Povero Ruskin ridotto a una malattia,' comments the narrator. It is too late, he understands, to save his friend from the disaster of 'una romantica fuga' with Anna to a faraway country and he may, in his turn, become 'impazzito. Come Ruskin.'²² In the tomb-like Rylands library, panic about the suffocating past prompts him to renounce his scholarly investigation of Gaskell manuscripts and to flee from Manchester.

In 'Il racconto di Bath' the dangerous woman from the narrator's academic past is 'un ragno tessitore' in whom the psychological menace

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ 'Silverdale,' 15.

²¹ F. Marroni, 'Rylands,' *Brughiere*, 62-3.

²² *Ibid.*, 77.

of nympholepsy is associated with the physical menace of the HIV virus. She has contracted the infection in India, the land of her own imagined origins: 'l'India di mia madre,' she exclaims sadly, 'l'India della mia avventura mi ha lasciato questo dono!'²³

Another Anna, an older scholar, seeks to involve the narrator in her own devastating illusions at the Oxford conference. She claims to have discovered, during no fewer than twenty years of patient reading of *Fraser's* magazine, six unsigned stories by Elizabeth Gaskell, but no one will accept her claim. There is, she is sure, a conspiracy to deny her credit for her discovery, and some other scholar will receive the credit after her death. While the narrator wonders whether to believe her, a colleague observes: 'c'è chi ama vivere di illusioni. Io ho finito da un bel po' di tempo. Anna Harmsworth è una di quelli, beata lei!'²⁴

Whether or not a blessed condition, the living with illusions leads still another Gaskell scholar to the criminality that may represent the supreme danger of the scholarly quest. In 'Silverdale,' Florence Preston has come perilously to identify herself, as the narrator realizes, with Elizabeth Gaskell and her characters: 'Mi parlava dei protagonisti di *Mary Barton* come se lei stessa avesse vissuto l'esperienza narrata dall'autrice.'²⁵ Her intuitions about Gaskell have permitted her to unearth ten important letters of the novelist, and she is on the track of two more. In these, certain scholars that are eager for a scoop expect to find evidence for a hitherto concealed romantic affair worthy of 'un romanzo di Henry James.' (The phrase may allude to the interweaving of romantic motifs with the unscrupulous plots of scholars to gain possession of manuscripts in *The Aspern Papers*.) Marroni's narrator finds, however, that Florence Preston has succeeded most cleverly, not in discovering but in forging documents in the handwriting of Elizabeth Gaskell. Her captivity within Gaskell's 'macchina' may almost justify her re-writing, as if at dictation, the letters that must once have existed. The narrator nevertheless remains shocked and decides not to go ahead with his own plan to commit an academic crime.

What is a criminal forgery on the part of Florence Preston becomes, interestingly, a legitimate use of the scholarly imagination on the part of

²³ 'Il racconto di Bath,' 165.

²⁴ 'Sul Tamigi,' 36.

²⁵ 'Silverdale,' 20.

Francesco Marroni. For in the story 'Liz a Roma' Marroni narrates, as if it has really occurred, that hypothesized romantic episode in Gaskell's life for which the epistolary evidence is lacking. The story indeed supplies some of that evidence in that it includes, in plausible Italian translation, a few supposedly lost letters. Gaskell travels in this tale to the Italy of her dreams and willingly succumbs to its enchantment. During the carnival, Rome provides the setting for a flirtation with the famous young American italphile, Charles Eliot Norton. The transgressive romance is also one between scholars because Norton requires her advice for his composition of a paper about Guido Reni.

Both Gaskell and Norton sensibly return home, in time to escape the devastation of nympholepsy, and Marroni's other protagonists appear to survive the crisis too. They have arrived at the inconclusive third phase of the dangerous scholarly quest, involving the partial, but not total, loss of illusions. After long experience of academic conferences, Venanzio Sala knows enough 'a non farsi troppe illusioni sul loro valore scientifico,' and at Bath he observes the 'convegnisti afflitti da molte ore di parole inutili e di sorrisi insinceri.'²⁶ More than from nympholepsy, the contagious menace derives now from academic gossip: 'i [...] pettegolezzi si diffondevano nei convegni come un virus influenzale.'²⁷ In this gossip the Italian protagonists hear constantly of the demoralizing nastiness of academic politics in England. Many English academics seem worn out scholars and human beings, ready like passengers of the yellow train and the various 'macchine finzionali' for 'rottamazione.'

Yet conferences remain essential rituals and some figures, like the still innocent old Bowler Boyd, frequent them with undiminished enthusiasm: 'Chissà da quale infinita lista di convegni è costellata la vita di Bowler Boyd.'²⁸ Venanzio Sala too continues to participate in conferences because they provide a context for social interactions and for the never finally excluded romantic hope. He has first met the captivating Janet Turner at a conference in Italy on Rossetti during which he accompanied her to the ruins of a Roman theatre and noticed her similarity to a Pre-Raphaelite model. And his decision to attend the present conference at Bath has resulted from the vain expectation that she would

²⁶ 'Il racconto di Bath,' 135.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 136.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 150.

show up there too: 'il convegno ci era parso il modo più naturale e bello per riallacciare un vecchio legame, forse una vecchia passione.'²⁹ For a moment during an excursion in a bus with the other conferees he also feels a surprising well-being: 'Venanzio si sentiva più leggero, quasi etereo, in quell pullman pieno di gente innamorata della letteratura vittoriana.'³⁰ In an academic world vitiated by jealousies and deceptions, the sincere affections that do sometimes unite living men and women remain fundamentally based on literary passions.

The romance of the dangerous academic career does not arrive at a resolving denouement. In accord with the last chapter of *Rasselas*, 'nothing is concluded.' The Brontë scholar achieves no clear vision amidst the 'sequenza interminabile di brughiere'³¹ that will enable him to complete his project, and any certainty about the intriguingly Pre-Raphaelite woman eludes Venanzio: 'tra i frammenti di storie che non ambivano a nessuna verità [...] la verità di Janet gli si frantumava dinanzi agli occhi in tanti itinerari incerti e senza ordine.'³² As Elizabeth Gaskell warns Norton regarding his study of Guido Reni, 'velo dopo velo non si arriva mai al centro.'³³ The scholars of these Anglo-Italian stories continue to live and conduct their research amidst tantalizing desires generated by the illusions of the foreign culture. In the other stories, the Mediterranean half-sphere extends to Greece, Albania, Malta and Spain and the northern half-sphere includes Ireland, Germany, Sweden and Russia. Marroni's fictions narrate components of a beguiling Europe, each insatiably – but also by now sceptically – hungry for *congiungimento* with a wholeness reminiscent of 'l'innocenza dell'inizio.'

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²⁹ *Ibid*, 140.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 148.

³¹ 'Brughiere,' 20.

³² 'Il racconto di Bath,' 167.

³³ 'Liz a Roma,' 124.

Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies

Editor: Peter Vassallo

The *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* is an interdisciplinary Journal published by the Institute of Anglo-Italian Studies of the University of Malta. It is devoted to current research in the history of cultural relations between England and Italy from 1300 to the present.

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Subscription Rates:

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Institutions: £Stg 15, US\$ 30