

**Representations of Italy and Italians in British Fiction and
Travel Writing, 1900-1930**

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Declaration:

I confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Louise Collins', written in a cursive style.

Sally Louise Collins

June 2006

Abstract

This thesis is conceived as a critical exploration of the construction of Italy and Italians in texts by British writers published between 1900 and 1930. Despite this period representing the heyday of writers in and writing on Italy, scholarship on the specifically Italian-centred rhetoric and its significance is sketchy (though advancing): one must look piecemeal to literature on travel-writing, literary modernism, Englishness and regionalism, or on imperialist-colonialist discourse or on the Mediterranean in literature; and to pre-1900 periods such as Grand Tourism, Romanticism, the rise of mass tourism in the Victorian age; or the inter-war period. Drawing from this network of scholarship in detailed analyses of a dozen writers' works, a picture is built up of the principal characteristics of literary constructions of Italy and Italians in terms of tropes, rhetorical strategies and themes, accounting for their predominance, while maintaining a sense of variety and change within the parameters of genre and period.

The selection of writers is based on their high standing in contemporary literary circles, their personal contact with Italy and the popularity of their texts during the period. Each chapter examines writing on a particular region of Italy – Capri, Tuscany, the North and the South – drawing out the specific connotations of place found in and constructed by the texts.

By scrutinizing the workings of fiction and travel writing on Italy in the light of the discourses and contexts outlined above, the thesis will show that literary representations of Italy provide a window onto the way British writers conceived of British identity as well as of Italy and its people, during the first three decades of the century.

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Introduction

This thesis is conceived as a critical exploration of the construction of Italy and Italians in texts by British writers published between 1900 and 1930. Despite this period representing the heyday of writers in and writing on Italy, scholarship on the specifically Italian-centred rhetoric and its significance is patchy (though advancing): one must look piecemeal to literature on travel-writing, literary modernism, Englishness and regionalism, or on imperialist-colonialist discourse or on the Mediterranean in literature; and to pre-1900 periods such as Grand Tourism, Romanticism, the rise of mass tourism in the Victorian age; or to the inter-war period. Drawing from this network of scholarship in detailed analyses of a dozen writers' works, a picture is built up of the principal characteristics in terms of tropes, rhetorical strategies and themes of writings on Italy, accounting for their predominance, while maintaining a sense of the variety and change within the parameters of genre and period. The potentially huge scope of this undertaking necessarily involves questions of structure and selection which this introduction will expound.

Since many of the texts are currently out of print, it has been necessary to quote passages at some length; it is through close readings that rhetorical strategies and tropes are identified, enabling an investigation of how settings, narrative, figurative language, style and genre re-present to the British reading public Italy and Italian people.¹ Analysis of the place of the texts within their literary and historical contexts provides a means of realigning and revitalizing them within the current terrain of evolving academic interest in literature that crosscuts geographical and generic boundaries. This approach is intended as a means by which the main findings can be re-discovered by other readers of other texts on or set in Italy of the era. What the texts reveal about the historically-situated place of the Anglo-Italian encounter in the English imagination also sheds light on broader ideological issues such as British identity (Englishness and nationhood), subjectivity and the place of literature in constructing these. While current academic praxis tends to focus attention on the intertextual and provisional nature of language itself, the fact (particularly with regard to travel writing) that real writers were travelling to real places at a particular moment should not be neglected. Indeed, the intersections of auto/biography, essay and travelogue with romance and realist fiction found in the study of literary representation of Italy and Italians invites a rehabilitation of the writer in the ongoing debates around the location of meaning.

¹ Pratt affirms Europe's 'obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself' (*Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 5).

This introductory chapter sets out the various contexts relevant to the production and reception of the texts and an overview of the discourses within which the texts are working and with which they are analysed; it discusses the problematic of a fiction/travel writing distinction which arises in the project and presents regionalism as a rationale for the thesis's structure. It defends the choice of texts and writers and provides a chapter-by-chapter overview of the thesis.

Sociopolitical Contexts in England and Italy

While this is not the place to chronicle at length the events and changes in English and Italian society between 1900 and 1930, it is worthwhile highlighting those most salient to the discussions of the ensuing chapters.

Beginning with the contentious Boer War, the period sees the death of Queen Victoria, Empress of India (1901) during whose reign Britain's expansionist policies had reached their zenith. It is a period marked by rapid, wide-reaching change, in the world of politics (both international and domestic), in communications technology, in mass culture, in class relations, in international relations and in urban growth. The upper classes, membership of which according to McKibbin 'required an acceptable mix of breeding, education, wealth, and cultural assumptions', constituted 'at most 40,000 people' (around 0.1% of the population), and produced many of the writers in the thesis.²

In 1906 Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman took the Liberal party to a landslide victory under a progressive agenda of social issues such as education, pensions, the power of the House of Lords, and the right to strike; the Liberals remained in power until the fall of Lloyd George in 1922. Campbell-Bannerman's definition of Liberalism is a paradigmatic statement of the kinds of values prevalent among the educated middle classes in these Edwardian years:

I should say it means the acknowledgment in practical life of the truth that men are best governed who govern themselves; that the general sense of mankind, if left alone, will make for righteousness; that artificial privileges and restraints upon freedom, so far as they are not required in the interests of the community, are hurtful; and that the laws, while, of course, they cannot equalise conditions, can at least avoid aggravating inequalities, and ought to have for their object the securing to every man the best chance he can have of a good and useful life.³

His own efforts at reform, along with a generalized widening awareness of social problems through newly-commissioned statistics, Social Settlements and books and articles by the likes of Charles Booth and C.F.G. Masterman, led to innovations such as

² McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2.

³ Quoted in Wilson, *CB: A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman* (London: Constable, 1973), 232.

free school meals, shorter working hours and pensions. It generated among educated milieux interest in the life of the working classes and the rural poor, which, as will be seen, finds expression in writings on Italy.

Various international alliances were forged, including in 1907 the Triple Alliance between Britain, France and Spain, the Anglo-Russian Entente, and the renewal of the Triple Alliance of Italy, Germany and Austria; these were accompanied by a naval and air arms race. The new internationalist mood was echoed in civil life, with 1908 seeing London hosting the third Olympics and England playing the first ever international football match.⁴

Between 1911 and 1914 there were strikes by miners, railwaymen and dockers (membership of Trade Unions tripled between 1910 and 1920). McKibbin writes, 'The seemingly endless industrial disputes, the huge increase in union membership before 1920 and the apparent readiness of the Lloyd George government to placate the unions at every opportunity confirmed in the mind of the middle class their helplessness before an aggressive and powerful trade union movement'.⁵ Southern Italian labourers shifting stone or ploughs in rural settings, in some of the texts, embody an (ideologically loaded) ideal of peaceful contentment in their work, untroubled by the fight for the improvement of economic and working conditions – Compton Mackenzie writes,

There are few more soothing spectacles for jaded nerves than the deliberate motions of Southern Italian workmen, perhaps none except the contemplation of fish in an aquarium. It is not the exasperating slowness of the British workman who works slowly for the sake of a political-economic theory. You feel a Southern Italian workman has inherited a long tradition of leisure from sunshine, and that he is working slowly with a kind of savour, not as a protest against industrialism.⁶

This was a period which Eagleton characterizes as 'marked by utopianism, sexual politics, spiritual slumming, imperial wars, gospels of peace and fellowship, pseudo-orientalism, political revolutionism, exotic art-forms, psychedelic states, returns to Nature, the unleashing of the unconscious.'⁷ The quest for a Utopia of sorts would lead several writers to Italy, especially after the First World War which instilled in many of them among other things a dissatisfaction with contemporary society which led to a desire to escape. When the aspiring poet Harold Monro returned from a sojourn in Italy and Switzerland, he arrived in London on a grey morning in September 1911. 'The papers were full of news about strikes, armed escorts for food convoys, the growing threat from Germany and trouble in Ireland. Yet there was a longing for change everywhere; perhaps

⁴ Aldous Huxley in the twenties would complain, 'The horrors of modern "pleasure" arise from the fact that every kind of organized distraction tends to become progressively more and more imbecile' ('Pleasures' in *On the Margin: Notes and Essays* (1923) (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), 46-47).

⁵ McKibbin, 57.

⁶ Mackenzie, *Extraordinary Women: Themes and Variations* (1928) (London: Icon, 1967), 69-70.

⁷ Eagleton, *After Theory* (London: Penguin, 2004), 45. He is comparing the *fin de siècle* with the 1960s.

an innovating poet with a periodical at his command might be able to “do something” towards building Utopia.⁸ Britain became a place of censorship, suspicion, and shortage. The Defence of the Realm Act, passed summarily in 1914 to censor war reporting and control civilian behaviour such as alcohol consumption, introduced the passport system, making travel harder. The twenties saw a labour movement that culminated in the unprecedented General Strike of 1926; writers such as D.H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, Norman Douglas and Compton Mackenzie, all chose to live in Italy.

Italy too saw many changes in the period 1900-1930. The years 1870-1915 were known as the Liberal Period: no party had a clear majority, and government was possible only through coalitions.⁹ In the first decade of the twentieth century illiteracy still stood at 38%.¹⁰ However, some significant economic and social progress did take place before World War I, and in spite of a serious post-war crisis the process of economic transformation continued.

Italy had been united in 1861 by the North, in particular Piedmont; thus unification in reality meant the industrial bourgeoisie of the North dominating the rest of Italy and in a sense ‘colonising’ the South. Moe explains, ‘in the middle decades of the nineteenth century the forces of Eurocentrism and nationalism converged to produce a nation committed to participating in the civilization of western Europe. In the context of the drive to make Italy a more northern nation, the southern part of the country was identified as different.’¹¹ The profound differences between the impoverished south and the wealthier north were not reduced by unification but intensified; the scarce resources of the south were redirected to the north, via the banking system.

Between 1896 and 1908 Italian industry grew at an annual rate of 6.7%. At the beginning of the century agricultural production still dominated, representing in 1900 51.2% of GDP while industry was only 20.2%. By 1930, for the first time in Italian history, industry overtook agriculture (although in terms of numbers, the majority of the population was still working on the land).¹² There was a flourishing of trade union organisations between 1900 and 1906; in the lead up to the war there were several large-scale strikes, in some cases with violent conflicts and the police firing on crowds. (This

⁸ Hibberd, *Harold Monro: Poet of the New Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 92.

⁹ Universal male suffrage was not introduced until 1913.

¹⁰ Procacci, *Storia degli Italiani* (Rome: Laterza, 1991), 471.

¹¹ Moe, *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 2.

¹² Procacci, 457-58.

was temporarily cut across by the break out of the First World War, only to erupt on an even bigger scale in 1918-20).

The last decade of the nineteenth century had been marked by widespread peasant revolts, such as the *Fasci Siciliani*.¹³ In the north the extensive mechanisation of agriculture produced a huge surplus of labour and therefore high levels of unemployment among agricultural labourers. Thus, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, over 150,000 people emigrated from the north each year. In Sicily alone, after the defeat of the *Fasci*, between 1893 and 1918 a total of over one million emigrated.¹⁴

Italy was weaker internationally than its neighbours to the north; after the 'scramble for Africa' little was left and it suffered heavy losses in its failed attempt to take Ethiopia in 1896. Pemble explains that in 1911, with the Ottoman Empire collapsing, 'Italy embarked on her imperial adventures by seizing the Turkish possessions of Tripoli [Libya] and Rhodes; and in Tripoli the Italians perpetrated atrocities that revolted British liberal opinion.'¹⁵ Perceiving Italy as the underdog of Europe, Italy's bourgeoisie felt that Italy had been denied its rightful place in the world, a sentiment that was later to be exploited in Fascist propaganda.

Initially Italy remained neutral at the outbreak of the First World War, although previously it had been part of the Triple Alliance together with Germany and Austria. It finally joined the Allies, after having been promised territories (*Italia irredenta*), including the northern Italian-speaking districts of Trento and Trieste. Italy, unprepared for a major war, suffered unprecedented losses in the fighting; the hundreds of thousands of demobilised soldiers resented what they found upon returning home: unemployment, high inflation, low wages. Moreover, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Italy's imperialist aspirations were disappointed in the allocation of territories¹⁶ and in that year Gabriele D'Annunzio, a famous writer, led a force that occupied Fiume (which had been designated an 'international territory'). He held it for a while but was later forced to abandon it.¹⁷ Although D'Annunzio's attempt to rally support for his nationalist adventure eventually failed, his forces, the 'blue shirts', later became a model for Mussolini's 'black shirts'.

¹³ Not to be confused with the Fascists of later years.

¹⁴ Del Carria, *Proletari Senza Rivoluzione* (Rome: Savelli, 1979), II, 35.

¹⁵ Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 240.

¹⁶ See <<http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/london1915.htm>> for an overview of territorial allocation.

¹⁷ The singing of D'Annunzio's homebound soldiers is heard by D.H. Lawrence's narrator as he travels south by train in *Sea and Sardinia*: 'The naval officer is coming from Fiume, and is dead with sleep and perhaps mortification. D'Annunzio has just given up. Two compartments away we hear soldiers singing, martial still though bruised with fatigue, the D'Annunzio-bragging songs of Fiume' (in *D.H. Lawrence and Italy* (London: Penguin, 1997), 183).

The immediate post-war years were years of crisis. Production of wheat in 1920 had fallen to 38 million quintals compared to the 52 million prior to the War; of maize from 25 to 22 million. Forty per cent of the balance of trade deficit was due to the imports of foodstuffs. Industrial production had also fallen.¹⁸ In the same period the lira collapsed.¹⁹ The coal price index reached the figure of 1666 in 1920 (in 1913 it had been 100); fuel supplies were scarce.²⁰ By 1920 a total of 3,800,000 workers and peasants were organised in the various unions. This was five times the pre-war figure.

September 1920 saw the climax of the *Biennio Rosso*: half a million engineering workers occupied factories the length and breadth of Italy, not only in the traditional industrial heartlands of Milan, Turin and Genoa, but also in Florence, Rome, Naples, Florence and Palermo. In the same year, there were bitter struggles in which peasants occupied the land of their feudal landlords in many provinces in the south of Italy.

In October of 1922 Mussolini marched on Rome, and the king called on him to form a government. Not having a majority, he became prime minister with a coalition of parties; he introduced electoral reform and began eliminating opponents with his infamous death squads. In 1926 he was finally in a position to declare his dictatorship, destroying civil liberties, outlawing all other political parties, and imposing a totalitarian regime on the country by means of terror and constitutional subversion. Though few texts concern themselves with these events, Lawrence's and Huxley's being notable exceptions, it is argued that the era's turmoil and crises register in the way texts consistently use Italy to interrogate and rework the concept of civilization.²¹

Literary-historical Contexts of the Anglo-Italian Encounter

Italy had long been the destination for the English traveller; since medieval times Rome as home of the Catholic church attracted pilgrims while travel to Florence and Venice as cosmopolitan centres of the artistic Renaissance feature in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writings. Travel there generated a vituperative 'anti-cosmopolitanism' in texts such as Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570), Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate*

¹⁸ By 15% in mining, by 40% in the engineering industry, by 20% in the chemical industry (Spriano, *L'Occupazione delle Fabbriche: Settembre 1920* (Torino: Einaudi, 1973), 40).

¹⁹ The exchange rate with the dollar went from 6.34 lira at the end of 1918, to 13.07 in 1919 and 28.57 at the end of 1920. This led to a huge increase in inflation: the public debt reached 74,496 million lira in 1919 and 86,432 million in 1920 (Spriano, 40).

²⁰ Italy was in need of 800,000 tonnes of coal per year, but Britain was only supplying it with 300,000 (Spriano, 40), adding to anti-British sentiment.

²¹ H.G. Wells's novel *Meanwhile* (1927) (not one of the texts included) is unusual in its direct reference to contemporary politics in Italy and England, for example in the plight of outlawed Italian political party members.

Traveller (1594) and Jonson's *Volpone* (1606).²² It was not until the eighteenth century that travel to Italy became seen as a desirable, educational, and eventually essential, part of British upper class life.

Much scholarship has concentrated on the Grand Tour, ample accounts of which can be found for instance in Porter (1991), Black (1992), Buzard (1993) and Blanton (1998). Renaissance art, for aristocratic travellers in the eighteenth century, provided examples of neo-classical ideals of beauty and secular values (such as courtesy) which were felt to be suitably civilizing influences for future leaders of a growing empire; Italy was also a rich site for relic plundering. The orthodox narrative of the development of travel to the continent is condensed in Buzard's recent account, in which he states,

The history of travelling in Europe in the period that runs, roughly, from the Restoration of the British monarchy in 1660 to the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837 is marked by the emergence of this new paradigm for travelling – that of the 'Grand Tour' – and concludes with the first glimmerings of another paradigm that absorbed and superseded it: that of mass tourism. [...After Paris] One would then cross the Alps, as expeditiously as possible, proceeding via Turin or Milan down to Florence, to stay probably for some months. Venice might be next, then Rome, or vice versa. The Tourist might go as far as Naples.²³

The Napoleonic Wars (from the 1790s to 1815) precluded for most travel to the continent and Italy in literature for a period appeared primarily as a setting for Gothic novels, written by people who had never been there.²⁴ As Buzard argues, 'Gothic fiction initially functioned to supply imaginary *substitutes* for travel to southern European places inaccessible to the English during the Napoleonic era'.²⁵

After this break, the second generation Romantics – Byron, the Shelleys, Keats, Hunt, Jameson et al, around whom the bulk of scholarship on Anglo-Italian literature is centred, provided a corpus of writing on Italy whose emphasis is on nature and (later) the picturesque; as Pfister writes, '*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'.²⁶ The redefinition of self becomes, as Blanton indicates, the predominant feature of travel

²² 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). Blanton also writes of 'the xenophobia and Eurocentrism of medieval and Renaissance narratives' (in *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (Boston: Twayne, 1998), 17).

²³ Buzard, 'The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840)' in Hulme and Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 38, 39. He also notes, 'Personal experience of the places made famous by the Latin texts which the traveller had read in school would seal the bond between ancient and modern empires' (40).

²⁴ See, for example, Ann Radcliffe's novels *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797) which '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' (Pfister, 'Enchantment and Disenchantment: English Romantic visions of Italy', *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* 8 (2006), 60-61).

²⁵ Buzard, 'The Grand Tour and After', 44.

²⁶ Pfister, 'Enchantment and Disenchantment', 67. (See below for further discussion of Romantic discourse).

writing by the early 1800s: 'travel writing had clearly become a matter of self-discovery as well as a record of the discovery of others. [...] One no longer needed a scientific or political reason for going abroad'.²⁷ This century sees the inception of mass tourism – though as Buzard points out, it was still a relatively small number of people who could travel for leisure.²⁸ Duncan and Gregory, in another chronological account, observe how

Thomas Cook's first tour in 1851 marked the extension of modern travel to the petty bourgeoisie and fractions of the working class [...]. They too sought a romantic experience, but one that was well ordered and regimented – a sort of 'industrialized' romanticism – and the old elites sharpened their pens against the infringements and invasions of their own hitherto exclusive spaces of travel by common 'tourists'.²⁹

The introduction of popular guide-books soon after (such as Murray and Baedeker) exacerbated this imperative to distinguish oneself from the mere tourist, who was perceived as a complaisant follower of the guided tour, as directed by the guide-book, unable to make independent choices or opinions.³⁰ Hilaire Belloc differentiates himself from the common tourist by undertaking a pilgrimage on foot to Rome, while Maurice Hewlett does so by claiming to privilege the people over the art of Tuscany. Pfister's notion of travelling in traces interprets such attempts as forms of re-enactment: 'the tourist rituals of following beaten tracks, using the established means of locomotion' contrast with travellers who 'aim at defamiliarising the original Performative experience by alternative routes, means of travel or modes of interaction with the Other'.³¹

This need to differentiate oneself from the tourist is further intensified by the burgeoning of the publishing industry, which by the early 1900s was pouring out books on travel to, or set in, Italy. It generates interesting attempts to find innovative ways of writing on Italy that range from the effete to the eccentric. Thus the 'traveller' is an evolving persona in the period 1900 to 1930, concurrent perhaps with the emergence of the celebrity, the noteworthy individual (itself a Romantic derivation), as opposed to the impersonal (Victorian) voice of authority. The concealment of a companion in the

²⁷ Blanton, 15, 16.

²⁸ See Buzard, 'The Grand Tour and After', 47.

²⁹ Duncan and Gregory (eds.), *Writers of Passage: Reading Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 1999), 7. They point out that Porter (1991, 12) coins the phrase 'the anxiety of travel-writing' to indicate how 'in writing their own accounts of the beaten track, travellers had to find some way of describing the familiar in novel and entertaining ways'. Carr also acknowledges this phenomenon, observing that 'it was no longer easy for books about European travel to present the traditional Grand Tour style homage to its cultural heritage. As Edith Wharton shrewdly realised, now that Baedeker was there to describe authoritatively every famous church and statue, travel writers had to find other approaches' (Carr, 79).

³⁰ Carr notes that 'Travel writers, if at all possible, wanted to write of areas for which guide-books could not be purchased' (79); and Jarvis suggests that the 'intensified inwardness' of Romanticism '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' ('Self-discovery from Byron to Raban: The Long Afterlife of Romantic Travel,' in *Studies in Travel Writing*, 9 (2005), 187).

³¹ Pfister, 'Travelling in the Traces of... Italian Spaces and the Traces of the Other', in Ascari and Corrado (eds.), *Sites of Exchange: European Crossroads and Faultlines* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006).

travelogues – Lawrence, Hewlett, Douglas and Huxley for example all do this – contributes further to the Romanticization of the individualistic persona-author.

Blanton's 'faith to horror' narrative of the historical development of travel writing (Victorian era then World War I)³² elides a fruitful and prolific period. As books became cheaper, mass produced, and read by an ever growing literate public, so writing on Italy proliferated in this period. The revaluation of neo-classical Renaissance art by Symonds and Byzantine and medieval art by Ruskin generated fresh reconfigurations of the value of Italy in the consciousness of educated English people and Italy was more central than ever in writing on art and aesthetics. Vernon Lee and Arthur Symons for instance produced travel essays on Italy whose style and subject adhered to the decadent aestheticist doctrines they propagated; while Edward Hutton wrote prolifically on the specific art treasures of numerous Italian towns, villages and regions, finding an analogy for loss of religious commitment in the superficiality of the tourist. In fiction too the trope of the English visitor to Italy became a mainstay, as in E.M. Forster and Rose Macaulay before the war, and Norman Douglas, D.H. Lawrence, Compton Mackenzie and Aldous Huxley in the ensuing years. Most commentators concur that the heyday of travel comes in the period between the two World Wars;³³ and have characterized post-war writing as having lost Romantic innocence. Carr, for instance, writes that 'Freya Stark, like others in the twenties and thirties, mocks those who continue to dream of exotic otherness. Yet if travel writing had become deliberately anti-romantic, it was in addition anti-heroic'.³⁴ It will be shown that while there is parody of Romantic writing on Italy and Italians, particularly in Huxley, and acknowledgement of Italy's entry into the modern world, particularly in Lawrence, Romantic discourse continues to dominate, with (for example) its exoticizing tendencies and reverent aestheticization of landscapes and peasant figures, its construction of the subjectivity of the travelling individual as having unique and privileged insight into what is surveyed, and its nationalist and essentialist assumptions.³⁵ Writing that expresses disillusion with Italy is present from early in the century, for instance in Lee's encounters with Rome; and in 1925 Huxley laments, 'we must be content to live in an age of dissipated energies, of experiment and *pastiche*, of restlessness and hopeless uncertainty'.³⁶ Nevertheless, the enduring ideal of Italy (which generated huge book sales) meant that such disillusion did not on the whole galvanise the

³² Blanton, 20-21.

³³ See for example Blanton (xiii, 19).

³⁴ Carr, 82.

³⁵ Jarvis's recent article (cited in note 30 above) argues persuasively for 'the remarkably enduring influence on modern travel writing of the literary and cultural discourses of European Romanticism' (185).

³⁶ Huxley, 'The Pierian Spring' in *Along the Road: Notes and Essays of a Tourist* (1925) (New York: The Ecco Press, 1989), 205.

sort of experimental writing that literary scholars (of the post-Edwardian period at least) usually focus on.³⁷

Genre

Much of the above refers to travel writing, and of the two dozen texts referred to in the thesis just over half would conventionally be thought of as such. Fussell discerns 'the travel book's generic hybridity, its blending and overlapping of reportage, autobiography, quest-romance, picaresque adventure, pastoral and satire' which makes it a 'continuation of the essay collection by other means'.³⁸ Such generic considerations are significant – for example in the way fiction arguably incorporates forms of travel writing – but they cannot be made without acknowledging current debate around the question of the travel writing 'genre'.

Carr makes a typical distinction when she writes, 'In both imaginative and travel writing, modernity, the meeting of other cultures, and change are inseparable'. Acknowledging the problematic of separating 'imaginative' and 'travel' writing, she argues,

In the years from 1900 to the First World War, the 'realist' texts have not disappeared, but much travel writing becomes less didactic, more subjective, more literary. By the inter-war years, which saw a surge in the popularity of travel and travel writing, the literary travel book had become the dominant form: many of the best known examples of the genre were written by writers equally or better known for their fiction or poetry.³⁹

It can be seen how the boundaries between realism and literariness are not necessarily straightforward. As Blanton points out, 'the travel narrative is a compelling and seductive form of story-telling' whose style 'borrows from fiction in its use of rising and falling action, character and setting; a conscious commitment to represent the strange and exotic in ways that both familiarize and distance the foreign; a writerly concern with language and literature; and finally, thematic concerns that go beyond descriptions of people and places visited'.⁴⁰ Borm has also stressed that 'the *literary* is at work in travel writing', pointing to 'the inevitable element of fiction in the recounting of conversations in the course of travel' and other 'fictional techniques' such as 'the use of "free indirect style, scenic construction, present-tense narration, prolepsis, iterative symbolism, etc., [in]

³⁷ Even Lawrence, often bracketed with the Modernists, is found to be, as Baldick argues, 'better understood as [a] late Romantic' (*The Modern Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 399).

³⁸ Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 269.

³⁹ Carr, 74,75. This particular time-frame may be less appropriate to writing on Italy, which seems to favour 'the literary travel-book' well before the war.

⁴⁰ Blanton, 2, 5.

factual narratives”⁴¹. Confusion seems to arise when considering this overlap: ‘travel books may include fictional accounts or stories and myth; conversely, documents and discursive writing, as well as historical events, can also be used in novels’.⁴² This hybridity Borm resolves at an ontological level, so that a ‘travel book’ (and more debatably a ‘travelogue’) is ‘any narrative characterized by a non-fiction dominant that relates (almost always) in the first person a journey or journeys that the reader supposes to have taken place in reality while assuming or presupposing that author, narrator and principal character are but one or identical’;⁴³ while ‘*travel writing or travel literature (the literature of travel, if one prefers)* [can be considered] as an overall heading for texts whose main theme is travel’, that is, ‘as an overall thematic category (and not as a genre) that includes works of non-fiction and fiction.’⁴⁴ This distinction is still problematic as it would involve designating, for instance, much of Forster’s *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, or the last section of Lawrence’s *The Lost Girl*, as travel writing, insofar as travel to and within Italy constitutes a significant part of the narrative, but not Macaulay’s *The Furnace* or Douglas’s *South Wind* because travel does not.

Having said that, it has been found that for the purposes of this project the retention of a distinction between ‘fiction’ (novels, short stories) and ‘travel writing’ is convenient, if adventitious, and due consideration is afforded to such issues as the reader’s horizons of expectations, the circumstances of production (revisions, writings collected over a wide time span, biographical detail), analysis of contemporaneous letters and parallel accounts, and rhetorical analysis. An Italian locale as a novelistic setting functions differently from the description of the locale in a travel book; different expectations are set up in the reader, based on an *a priori* belief in the writer’s presence at the locale in the latter case. Duncan and Gregory put it thus:

It may seem strange to emphasize the spatiality of travel, but we fear that some critical readings fail to register the production of travel writings by corporeal subjects moving through material landscapes. [...] This is not to call for any comparison between ‘imaginative’ geographies and ‘real’ geographies, as persistent misreadings of Edward Said’s critique of Orientalism would have us believe, because all geographies are imaginative geographies – fabrications in the literal sense of ‘something made’ – and our access to the world is always made through particular technologies of representation.⁴⁵

This project wishes to assert a link between all the texts and their writers’ presence in Italy. *The Furnace* for example is shown to be heavily autobiographical; the portrayal of

⁴¹ Borm, ‘Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology’ in Hooper and Youngs (eds.), *Perspectives on Travel Writing* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 13 (original emphasis), and 15-16, the quotation within being from Lodge, *The Practice of Writing* (London: Penguin, 1997), 8.

⁴² Borm, 16.

⁴³ Borm, 17 (passage is emphasized in the original).

⁴⁴ Borm, 19 (original emphasis).

⁴⁵ Duncan and Gregory, 5. See below for discussion of Orientalist discourse.

Italians in *A Room With a View* derives not only from existing textual conventions but from the paucity of the actual encounters with Italians experienced by E.M. Forster travelling through Italy in his particular socio-economic circumstances. It would of course be reductive to substitute critical engagement with the texts, with interpretation based solely on biographical detail; but to approach the texts as divorced from the circumstances of the writers' lives, given also that they are produced as a result of the writers' presence in Italy, would justifiably be deemed spurious.

Discourses and Intertextuality

In Korte's survey of British travel writing, it is claimed that 'a writer's preference for certain textual strategies depends not only on their suitability for rendering a particular travel experience, but is also determined by the general aesthetic and cultural discourses in which the respective text participates'.⁴⁶ The same can of course be said for fictional writing as well. All texts have specific and generalized relationships with other texts; indeed a poststructuralist view would posit that they are constituted by these relationships, rather than by reference to an external reality. The participation of the thesis's set of texts in Romantic, imperialist, nationalist and regionalist discourse is of primary interest in the analyses, as is their conscious engagement with other texts.

Romantic discourse in writing on place is understood as the foregrounding of lavish and painterly attention to description of landscape, a heightened subjectivity of the narrating persona, a nostalgic and sentimental desire for the faraway. The picturesque in art and writing developed through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries from notions of the sublime and the beautiful. 'Central to romantic travel', write Duncan and Gregory, 'was a passion for the wildness of nature, cultural difference and the desire to be immersed in local colour'.⁴⁷ Travel, as noted above, began to be seen as an end in itself, with writing focusing on a new awareness of, as Jarvis observes, 'the singularity, authenticity and transformative potential of travel experience', especially on the solitary traveller; 'it can denote the incorporation in more self-consciously "literary" travel narratives of a key moment or moments of self-discovery'.⁴⁸ The sense of wonder

⁴⁶ Korte, *English Travel Writing: From Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 179.

⁴⁷ Duncan and Gregory, 6. See also Buzard, 'The Grand Tour and After', 45 and Blanton, 13.

⁴⁸ Jarvis, 187. She makes the proviso that 'Romantic-era travel writing is an impure genre that typically combines a number of different discourses (for example, the sentimental journey, social reportage, antiquarianism, natural history), but [...] its legacy has become identified with just one of its many vocabularies or rhetorics – a rhetoric, perhaps, more at home in "literary" (including poetic) representations of travel experience than in the travel accounts of scientific explorers or colonial administrators' (189-90).

inherent in Romantic mode as well as the idealization of remote figures in landscapes constitutes a way of writing that is silent on the actual social and economic relationship between agricultural labourers and the land; it is a mode with which the texts under scrutiny in the thesis are shown to have complex and variable relationships.

The Victorian heyday of exploration of colonial locations generated numerous widely-read texts which, as Pratt (1992), Spurr (1993) and many others (usually drawing on Said (1978))⁴⁹ have observed, participate in the imperialist project by naturalizing the kind of rhetoric which constructs the lands and people as an exotic Other, a construction which in its tendency to stereotype (and thereby fix) furnishes the bourgeois Western imagination with a converse definition of itself which is implicitly superior. Orientalist discourse, in Said's words, posits 'the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior.'⁵⁰ The relevance of this binary of West and Orient/colonial Other is not immediately evident in a discussion of the Britain-Italy configuration, but Pratt's influential study of imperialist discourse provides one means of interpreting certain rhetorical features of the texts.

Methodologically, this thesis has parallels with Pratt who 'pay[s] serious attention to the conventions of representation that constitute European travel writing, identifying different strands, suggesting ways of reading and focuses for rhetorical analysis. The book includes many readings of quoted passages'.⁵¹ Her study is based upon readings of passages from travel writing by European authors on non-European places; but she acknowledges the possibilities of applying her ideas and approach to intra-European travel writing. 'The eighteenth century has been identified as a period in which Northern Europe asserted itself as the center of civilization, claiming the legacy of the Mediterranean as its own. It is not surprising, then, to find German or British accounts of Italy sounding like German or British accounts of Brazil.'⁵² Other commentators have noted the wider implications of this approach: Duncan and Gregory for instance write that 'There is a sense in which all travel writing, as a process of inscription and appropriation, spins webs of colonizing power, but to locate travel writing within this discursive formation also involves plotting the play of fantasy and desire, and the possibility of transgression'.⁵³ And Nyman argues that 'British literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is overloaded with colonialist imagery, colonialist

⁴⁹ See Duncan and Gregory (2-3) for a useful overview.

⁵⁰ Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), 300.

⁵¹ Pratt, 11.

⁵² Pratt, 10.

⁵³ Duncan and Gregory, 3.

narratives and masculine adventures, projected onto Europeans and acted out in the peripheries and frontiers of Europe'.⁵⁴ In his analysis of Lawrence's *Twilight in Italy* Said's influence is made explicit: 'the text's representation of Europe as a variety of colonized space, the status of which is lower than that of Britain/England, follows the strategies used in the construction of the colonialist (master-)narratives, as outlined by critics such as Edward Said'.⁵⁵ This study asks how travel writing and fiction have 'produced' Italy for British readership in the early twentieth century, and in what way colonial discourse contributes. It will be seen that much writing on Italy manifests what Pratt identifies as 'standard elements of the imperial trope [...] the mastery of the landscape, the aestheticizing adjectives, the broad panorama anchored by the seer'.⁵⁶ It is by looking at Italy as the southern element of a European north-south binary (as opposed to Orientalism's east-west one), and southern Italy in opposition to its north, that this type of discourse is most in evidence.⁵⁷

The tendency to stereotype is also a well-noted feature of writing on foreign peoples. A 'we' and 'they' drawn up along national or racial lines are attributed qualities that gain familiarity through repetition over time: Huxley for example draws on the twin stereotypes of Italian spontaneity and sensuality and Anglo-Saxon puritanical intellectualism, when he writes,

Rare people! If only we Anglo-Saxons could borrow from the Italians some of their realism, their love of life for its own sake, of palpable, solid, immediate things. In this dim land of ours we are accustomed to pay too much respect to fictitious values; we worship invisibilities and in our enjoyment of immediate life we are restrained by imaginary inhibitions.⁵⁸

In his study of representations of southern Italy, Dickie writes, 'Stereotypes inform the whole experience of the difference of the South in the postunification period, whether that difference is thought in racial terminology or through the conventions of travel literature'.⁵⁹ Stereotypes, such as 'life-affirming/inhibited' or 'civilized/uncivilized', which inform and are perpetuated by so much writing on Italians, are also used to show contemporary readers the failings of British society. Leerssen suggests, 'national

⁵⁴ Nyman, *Under English Eyes: Constructions of Europe in Early Twentieth-Century British Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 99.

⁵⁵ Nyman, 99.

⁵⁶ Pratt, 209.

⁵⁷ Moe on the north-south binary writes, 'Between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, north and south became charged moral categories in the cultural imagination of Europe. In the work of philosophers and poets, historians and novelists, the idea that Europe was divided between northern and southern peoples and countries acquired a new evocative power and explanatory force. For many, Italy was the southern country par excellence. The lands and peoples of Italy were central to the elaboration of the idea of the south, while the south played an important role in the representation of Italy and Italianness' (13).

⁵⁸ Huxley, 'Centenaries' in *On the Margin*, 9-10.

⁵⁹ Dickie, *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860-1900* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 7.

stereotyping [should] be studied at a more fundamental level as a pattern of Janus-faced “imagemes,” stereotypical schemata characterized by their inherent temperamental ambivalence and capable of being triggered into different actual manifestations.⁶⁰ Thus, for example, the notion of ‘civilized’ behaviour as spontaneous, friendly informality, manifested by Italians, in contrast to formal, artificially acquired codes of British etiquette, can be interpreted as advocating the former; yet often within the same text, individual episodes of unwelcome irruption into the narrator’s personal space by Italian interlocutors implicitly redeems the latter.

The thesis draws in some respects from Spurr’s argument about how writers regard the Orient, ‘less an object of direct observation than a literary topos, a site upon which each writer’s imagination confronted those of his predecessors’.⁶¹ The particularly prolific history of the British writing Italy means that writers inevitably came to it filled with preconceptions; in a study of the literary connotations of Rome, Florence and Venice, one critic observes how, ‘owing to the rich literary overlay that each city has amassed, all three cities have by now become impossible to perceive innocently, with an eye uncontaminated by textual reminiscence.’⁶² Such considerations are vital, not only in analysis here of the distinctiveness of particular writers’ representations of Rome and Florence, but also in exploring perceptions of places off such beaten tracks.⁶³ Thus Huxley allows ‘textual reminiscence’ to frame his account of a visit to little-known Pietramala: it opens with a quotation from Browning’s ‘De Gustibus-’ (1855), a poem centred around the windiness of the place. Its quintessential Romantic idealism is out of place in 1925: the wind ‘confirmed [Browning] in his blustering optimism. In me on the other hand, the wind of the Apennines begets nothing but neuralgia and the profoundest depression.’⁶⁴

⁶⁰ ‘The Rhetoric of National Character: A Programmatic Survey’, *Poetics Today*, 21.1 (2000), 267-92. See <<http://www.jstor.org/browse/15275507/md100001/10267010?viewContent=citation>>.

⁶¹ Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 142.

⁶² Ross, *Storied Cities: Literary Imaginings of Florence, Venice and Rome* (London: Greenwood Press, 1994), 11.

⁶³ The copious scholarship currently engaged with representations of Venice has rendered its inclusion in this project impracticable.

⁶⁴ ‘A Night at Pietramala’ in *Along the Road*, 212. ‘In those bedrooms one could have preserved mutton indefinitely’ he comments sardonically (219).

Regionalism and Chapter Overview

The first half of the twentieth century saw a bounteous production of books charting journeys through English landscapes; Catherine Brace argues that ‘a powerful myth of regionalism was being constructed in England’⁶⁵ through topographies such as Hissey’s *Through Ten English Counties: The Chronicle of a Driving Tour* (1894); Evans’s *Highways and Byways in Oxford and the Cotswolds* (1905); and Ditchfield’s *By-ways in Berkshire and the Cotswolds* (1920). Edward Thomas’s *The South Country* (1909) was a hugely influential text in this myth-building. Brace’s overview of recent scholarship demonstrates how ‘rural landscapes are acknowledged as crucial in the way England was pictured in the first half of the twentieth century and especially the interwar years.’⁶⁶ The regional aesthetic, she argues,

represented a powerful argument against the perceived destruction of England and its people. The peril of mass cultural productions and entertainment eroding the minds of town and country dwellers alike was keenly felt by these writers, but there were other, more tangible threats to the English countryside that they identified. There was, for instance, uncontrolled suburban sprawl and the introduction of inappropriate building styles and jerry-building which posed a considerable menace to the ‘unspoilt’ villages of England and its rural landscapes [...].

England came to be defined not simply by rural landscapes alone, but by the uniqueness and individuality of the rural landscapes of its different regions. Such representations had a thinly veiled social and political intent, especially in the interwar years, when a myth of regionalism was set against the perceived threat of mass culture in the forms of suburban growth and recreational use of the countryside. [...] Developing the premise that landscapes can picture the nation, the specific regional identity attributed to the Cotswolds shows that such local identities were informed by and themselves informed constructions of English national identity. [...] If England’s identity was seen to rest in the *diversity* of landscapes, cultures and regional identities, the Cotswolds could be identified as the ‘best of England’ *because of*, not in spite of, its apparent difference from other regions.⁶⁷

Baldick also asserts the attraction of such synecdochic appropriation: ‘If a part of England is to stand for the whole of it, the question that arises immediately is which part can best serve as representative. Overwhelmingly, writers of this [early twentieth century] period answered that question with a favoured enclave of the English countryside, usually presented in pastoral terms as a tranquil idyll.’⁶⁸ This argument provides a useful and appropriate criterion by which to structure the thesis, since the publishing output on Italian regional landscapes was equally plenteous; Edward Hutton, for example, in the space of five years, produced *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (1907), *Country Walks about Florence* (1908), *In Unknown Tuscany and Rome* (1909), *Siena and Southern Tuscany* (1910), *Venice and Venetia* and *A Book of the Wye* (1911), *The Cities of Lombardy* and *Highways and*

⁶⁵ Brace, ‘Finding England Everywhere: Regional Identity and the Construction of National Identity, 1890-1940’ *Ecumene* 6.1 (1999), 106.

⁶⁶ Brace, 92.

⁶⁷ Brace, 104-5, 106 (original emphasis).

⁶⁸ Baldick, 305.

Byways in Somerset (1912), and *Ravenna: A Study* (1913).⁶⁹ Quite apart from Hutton's own ability to churn out books in quick succession, there was a generalized interest in regional writing. Tuscany was (and still is) a magnet to the English visitor, with its 'golden' hills, cypresses, and medieval towns, and Florence's vast Renaissance patrimony. It will be argued in Chapter 2 that Tuscany, like the Cotswolds for England, serves as a paradigm, a microcosm, an ideal, of the Italian nation, and moreover that Tuscan landscapes frequently bear resemblance in the writing to southern English landscapes – as when English places are called into service to aid description.⁷⁰ In this sense, Tuscany can be seen as a projection of a desired England, an intensified version of an idyllic English view, and as such the stage for a critique of contemporary English society and attitudes. Indeed, each Italian geographical zone represented in the thesis chapter headings carries with it a range of specific associations in the era's imagination, but which always ultimately lead back to questions of contemporary concern, such as those identified by Brace.

Chapter 1, exploring the literary constructions of the island of Capri found in novels by Norman Douglas and Compton Mackenzie, discovers strategies for rendering character which put Italian figures – even central ones – at the bottom of a hierarchy. An infamous colony of expatriates lived there in the early century, including the authors themselves; as such it usefully encapsulates the phenomenon of new kinds of British communities and travellers abroad, signalling the end of the 'Grand Tourist' approach to Italy. Using the eccentric, cosmopolitan circles as bases for their characters, as well as the poor native population that served them as domestic helpers, carriage drivers, or that provided a sceptical audience to their sexual transgressions, the novels critique contemporary codes of morality. In Douglas's popular modern romance *South Wind* (1917) Italy's effect on the northern subject is symbolized by the scirocco of the title; Christian values give way to a hedonistic outlook in a visiting English bishop. Yet this unlikely plot is found to be subordinate to the extended discussions of ideas which take place between two Douglasian figures, Keith and Count Caloveglia. The latter, though a courteous, secular, aristocratic figure endowed with generous intellect, on analysis is found to be a victim of his own Italianness: a fraudster, naïve and inscrutable. Promontory descriptions (a term Pratt coins to characterize the imperial gaze) abound, whether accentuating the island's ethereal or picturesque qualities, lending the narratorial voice a specifically British overtone.

⁶⁹ He also later wrote *Highways and Byways in Wiltshire* (1917) and *Highways and Byways in Gloucestershire* (1932).

⁷⁰ Hewlett for instance writes, '[Pienza] has a graceful pointed belfry, as you will not fail to notice when you leave it – a white stone affair, very like a Gothic spire seen across broad English meadows, half hidden in a clump of English elms. I do remember one near Malvern which might be its fellow' (*The Road in Tuscany: A Commentary* (Macmillan: London, 1904), II, 264).

In Mackenzie's *Vestal Fire* (1927), a key Italian figure, Carlo, subjugated in his catamite relationship with an aristocrat, is similarly undermined textually by a narratorial tendency to deny him direct speech and divest him of agency. While the British and American characters behave scandalously, the fundamental codes of decorum are maintained (ostracizing, apology, etiquette); but they are also subverted by the incongruous presence of the Caliban-like figure of 'O Gobetto. Anxiety about shifts in moral behaviour – especially women's – finds expression in Mackenzie's 1928 novel *Extraordinary Women*, also set on a fictional Capri which after the war is swamped with an international, elite lesbian set whose chaotic love lives are cast in a kind of harlequinade. Descriptions of the island of 'Sirene' engage satirically with Douglas's 'Nepenthe' and with Romantic discourse on Italy, so that the whole is a consciously artificial counterpoint to the kind of leisurely, affirmatory prose that was currency in the earlier century.

Chapter 2 examines how Tuscany functions as a literary trope. Tuscany had long been the destination of visitors to Italy, and the subject of tourist guides and art-historical tracts: some of the most prominent figures in medieval, Renaissance and Baroque art and literature were Tuscan, such as Boccaccio, Petrarch, Dante, Giotto, Botticelli, da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Bernini. Maurice Hewlett, the late Victorian gentleman of letters best known for his romance of medieval England *The Forest Lovers* (1898), was commissioned by Macmillan to write a guide to the region. In this two-volume tome, Dante, folk songs and the people are held up as Tuscany's true cultural capital. By comparing his evocation of San Gimignano in *The Road in Tuscany* (1904) with his illustrator's memoir of the occasion, the disjunction between the banalities of the occasion as told by the latter and Hewlett's ecstatic, flowery prose reveals the highly contrived and self-consciously literary construction of Tuscany. In the continual, voyeuristic references to peasants happy in their abjection, and the reiterated view that each town's people is racially different from every other town's, and unchanged through the centuries, the text participates in the period's discursive web of white, middle-class supremacist discourse. Edward Hutton's *Siena and Southern Tuscany* (1910), a prose guide to the towns and art treasures of the region, is in some senses an anti-tourist text, which takes every opportunity to expound on the lack of spirituality in the modern Christian, who is analogous to the tourist who rushes by artworks without taking the time to fully appreciate them. Forster's evocation of Tuscany, the setting for two of his earliest novels, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *A Room With a View* (1908), is one which draws unapologetically on cliché – opera, statues, olive trees, god-like or passionate Italian men – to convey an Italy which will have beneficial effect upon the English. But it is, especially in the later novel, formulated as a

heightened version of rural south-east England, from which its protagonists come. Indeed, the English emerge as the focus of the novels, rather than the Italians, and it is in the satirical attention to the subtle social hierarchies among the English abroad that Forster's texts exhibit a higher self-consciousness than his predecessors'. The critique of the contemporary in opposition to an idealized past perpetuates a Romantic way of thinking about Italy which Aldous Huxley will sabotage in 'Centenaries' (1923), 'A Night in Pietramala' (1925), *Those Barren Leaves* (1925) and 'The Rest Cure' (1930). While the demand for evocative representations of a Tuscan idyll peopled by recognisable Italian types still determined publishing commissions, Huxley refuses to treat his material with the reverent and earnest tones of a Hewlett or Hutton; he reconfigures the literary conventions attached to writing on Italy to produce a series of fictional and non-fictional works that take to task pointless hedonism, the irritations of travel and the delusions of Romanticism.

Arriving in the north of Italy (via the Alps, often into the Italian-speaking Swiss canton of Ticino) is a trope for a liberating experience, symbolic of passage into a better world, the south, with its inevitable literary associations with Arcadian antiquity, spontaneous people leading simple lives and a warm, healing climate: 'We all turn aristocrats when we cross the Alps' writes Muirhead Bone in his preface to Cyriax's *Among Italian Peasants*.⁷¹ Italy is anticipated as a positive correlative of the troubled north. But as Chapter 3 shows, neither Belloc's nor Lawrence's texts can sustain an untroubled vision of Italy, and become an exercise in resolving the inevitable contradictions of the encounter. *The Path to Rome* (1902) tells of Belloc's pilgrimage on foot from France to Rome, during which he breaks almost all of his self-imposed restrictions (such as not to use wheeled transport). The voice of *Lector* intervenes periodically to curtail the narrator's digressions and liven up dull tracts of the journey; it supplements the narrative of on-the-road camaraderie with a literary waggishness quite distinct from more earnest, didactic Victorian travel writings. Belloc's call for a return to pan-European Catholicism is a far cry from Lawrence's hope for a religion of the blood, a pagan vision of community that is manifest in his first essays on the Lake Garda area. In the 1913 essays 'By the Lago di Garda' and their later, revised versions published as a book, *Twilight in Italy* (1916), Lawrence's pre-war experiences of Lake Garda near the Austrian border both glorify a sought-after primitivism and display – especially in his revisions – a growing awareness of modernity's encroachment in the form of industrialization and emigration. In the run-up to the war, the certainties of national borders, languages and identities are called into

⁷¹ Cyriax, *Among Italian Peasants* (New York: Dutton, 1919), vi.

question, as Lawrence's narrator encounters economic migrants, foreign words irrupt in the prose, searchlights, new roads and factories characterize the landscape. The chapter focuses on the aversion to hybridity which emerges from the texts, and discerns in his discussions of a performance of *Hamlet* by Italians an innovative interpretation of northern malaise. His later text registers alienation rather than companionship, and rejects the traditional tendency of travel writing to culminate in tidy resolution.

Chapter 4 extends the discussion of the south-north opposition by looking at literary constructions of the south within Italy: the texts are found to engage emphatically with questions of civilization. As Dickie has shown, the south of Italy was already represented in its own literature as 'the Other to Italy', through the adoption of derogatory stereotype.⁷² In the context of the Italian south, the chapter explores the various configurations of 'civilization' that emerge in the period's texts. Since a greater number of texts and places are covered here, it is longer than preceding chapters. Rome was dense with literary and historical associations – not least as the 'Eternal City' – and Olave Potter's *The Colour of Rome* (1909), though a minor work, usefully provides background information on its English community, as well as a benchmark of the sort of uncritical survey of its delights that the other texts attempt to distance themselves from. Vernon Lee's narrator's verbose, reiterative and meandering contemplation of the city of her childhood (in *The Spirit of Rome: Leaves from a Diary* (1906)) demonstrates how the high contemporary demand for travel writing on Italy could result in books which stretch and pad out material. Her prose is also symptomatic of the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetic to which Arthur Symons was a contributor. In his *Cities of Italy* (1907) Rome is scarred by the encroachment of new housing, yet embraces its historical strata in a satisfying panorama. He sees in the profiles of Roman people faces from ancient medallions, or imagines them as the Roman mob. Such parallels with an imperial era force comparison with the British imperial project around whose destiny there was at this time profound ambivalence. Rose Macaulay's *Abbots Verney* (1906) and Huxley's 'After the Fireworks' (1930) provide fictional counterpoints to these versions of Rome.

Symons's Naples on the other hand is a vision of decay and 'uncivilization' which is described with unmistakable relish and elitist overtones. Macaulay's Naples in her anti-tourist novel *The Furnace* (1907) is home to a happy-go-lucky pair of young English siblings who have 'gone native', and instead of evoking its orthodox historical associations with the Sibyl of Cumae, Virgil, and Bourbon rule, it evokes the literary staple of its slum-life and iconic volcano. This Naples is populated with vital, cheery characters whose lack

⁷² Dickie, 1.

of inhibition comically shows up the English tourists as intrusive outsiders. In contrast to Forster's Tuscan novels, the focus is on the effect of English bourgeois values on the Italianate Crevequers, an effect as cathartic as that of the erupting volcano on Naples.

Writing on places away from the tourist trail provides opportunities for Douglas to display his witty, scholarly 'insider' persona. *Siren Land* (1911) collects and supplements previously published essays on diverse subjects inspired by the region of the Sorrentine peninsula: from hagiography and sirens to a rehabilitation of Tiberius's reputation. *Old Calabria* (1915) is another digressive and erudite account of his travels to Italy's less well-trodden south. It avoids the narrative unity common in travelogues, beginning and ending *in medias res*, and conceals travelling companions, dates, and the fact that several separate trips were undertaken. His south is populated by physiognomically distinct peoples, and characterized as a palimpsest of layered civilizations, in which 'our' roots lie.

Lawrence's own increasing disillusion with Italy is manifest in the novel *The Lost Girl* (1920) in which the eponymous Alvina marries an Italian from the godforsaken Abbruzzi mountains to which they travel in the novel's finale. Not admired by critics, this novel nevertheless preserves in writing an unusually unsentimentalized representation of southern Italian peasants; Alvina, subtracted from the familiarity of the English provinces, glimpses with horror in this southern primitiveness the enormity of what civilization once was and can no longer be. Civilization is what Lawrence seeks to escape from entirely in his brief trip around Sardinia. His persona in *Sea and Sardinia* (1921) is a comically cantankerous one, finding Celtic echoes in the landscapes and archetypes in the costumed peasants of Sardinia, but for the most part finding filth, uncouthness and unwanted attention to the fact of his being English. Lawrence's own dissatisfactions with Europe, of which Sardinia is perceived as the outermost limit, inevitably sift through to the writing. In 1926 he published the short story 'Sun', predicated on a fertility myth, which with its unpropitious ending stands as his acknowledgement of the end of his Italian fantasy.

Choice of Writers

The sheer proliferation of Italy and Italians in fiction and travel writing between 1900 and 1930 has forced a necessary selection and, therefore, exclusion. Since this is not intended as a comprehensive or exhaustive study, but rather one that characterizes the discursive networks and rhetorical features of a variety of writings, the authors have been chosen on the basis of their contemporary reputation among peers and readers, and for the range of texts they produced. All (save Potter) were well-known members of

influential literary circles, and were either extending or establishing their literary reputations. They represent different generations: Lee, Hewlett, Symons, Belloc and Douglas were born between 1856 and 1870, while Hutton, Forster, Macaulay, Mackenzie and Lawrence were born between 1875 and 1885; Huxley was born in 1894. Many knew each other personally; for example Forster and Douglas corresponded after 1917; Lawrence was a guest of Mackenzie on Capri and lived close to the Huxleys near Florence; Hutton was a friend of Douglas. Some texts sold very well, being reprinted for decades; some are still in print and others are being resuscitated today: for example, Vernon Lee's, Maurice Hewlett's and Rose Macaulay's texts and reputations are enjoying something of a revival.

Most lived in Italy for extensive periods; only Hewlett, Symons and Forster were visitors, but theirs were extended and repeated visits. The thesis has also taken into consideration the fact that, as Carr observes, 'Many incorporated their travels in parallel in fiction and travel writing'.⁷³ They were in many senses cosmopolitan individuals who acted as cultural mediators; most came from upper- or upper-middle-class backgrounds, with a private or public school education. This would, as one commentator writes,

exclude [them] not only from the world of the urban working class, but from modern life altogether. [...] They tended to see the working class only in their subordinate role – as people who carried your baggage or from whom you might buy a railway ticket. Even the lower middle class was largely unknown to them.⁷⁴

If the lower middle classes were 'largely unknown' they were also widely resented for impinging on social and geographical spaces that were traditionally the preserve of the elite. The displacement of such resentment (or admiration) onto writing on Italians provides a further dimension to the analysis of the texts, and the writers' social formations take on additional relevance. Inevitably, issues of identity in terms of Englishness and class are constantly being re-negotiated in representations of Italy and Italians. As Nyman argues,

The issues raised have more to do with the homeland than with the other nation. Douglas, like D.H. Lawrence, uses the spaces and peoples of Italy to be able to construct a truly British/English self, as required by the period's discourses emphasizing the importance of nation and tradition.⁷⁵

By scrutinizing the workings of fiction and travel writing on Italy in the light of the discourses and contexts outlined above, the thesis will show that the texts under discussion provide a window onto the way British writers conceived of British identity as well as of Italy and its people, during the first three decades of the century.

⁷³ Carr, 74.

⁷⁴ Wakeford, *The Cloistered Elite* (London, 1969), quoted by McKibbin, 246.

⁷⁵ Nyman, 5.

Chapter 1

Hedonism and Absurd Tea-Parties

Capri

Capri, an island of around four square miles, lies to the south of the Bay of Naples in the Tyrrhenian Sea. Since Imperial Roman times its natural beauty has attracted the visitor and the exile, the eccentric and the curious, the wealthy and the impecunious. It seems a fitting place to begin this exploration of early twentieth-century representations of Italy and Italians, since like its fictionalized renditions Nepenthe (in Norman Douglas's *South Wind* (1917)) and Sirene (in Compton Mackenzie's *Vestal Fire* (1927) and *Extraordinary Women: Themes and Variations* (1928))¹ it was populated then with writers, eccentrics, artists, aristocrats, businessmen, cosmopolitan dandies, exiles, of all nationalities, sexual persuasions and spiritual and philosophical proclivities. It evinces the dense, intimate and complex social space that gave rise to a new phase of writing about Italy.

Many of the writers whose works are analysed in this thesis knew Capri. Norman Douglas was a resident for much of his long adult life, receiving an honorary citizenship, while Compton Mackenzie, initially on Douglas's recommendation, lived there intermittently between 1913 and 1920. In turn, D.H. Lawrence took up Mackenzie's invitation to Capri in 1920, and Lawrence's future friend Maria Nys (Aldous Huxley's fiancée) also passed through Capri.

Capri's colony of expatriates in the early twentieth century was notorious in literary circles, even in London among those who had never been there.² Its petty allegiances and feuds, introductions and smear campaigns, gossip, decadent parties and aura of salaciousness inspired novels, short stories and semi-fictional monographs as well as numerous allusions in contemporary literature.³ *South Wind* was published in 1917 to great acclaim and is still in print today. It is set on a fictional island, Nepenthe, whose

¹ Page numbers will appear parenthetically in the text, referring to the following editions: *South Wind* (London: Penguin, 1953); *Vestal Fire* (London: Hogarth, 1985); and *Extraordinary Women: Themes and Variations* (London: Icon, 1967).

² Jessica Brett Young recalls meeting George Bernard Shaw in a London street upon her and her husband Francis' return from Capri. '[Shaw said,] "Well, well you're the first married couple I've ever seen come back from Capri together ..."' (*Francis Brett Young: A Biography* (London: Heinemann, 1962), 88).

³ Some examples: Ivan Bunin, 'the Gentleman from San Francisco' (1916); Aldous Huxley writes in *Crome Yellow* (1921): 'of old Lord Moleyn one wondered why he wasn't living in gilded exile on the island of Capri among the other distinguished persons who, for one reason or another, find it impossible to live in England' (*Crome Yellow: A Novel* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963), 187-88); E.F. Benson in *Colin* (1923) and *Colin II* (1925); W. Somerset Maugham, 'The Lotus Eater' (1945); Roger Peyrefitte, *The Exile of Capri* (1959).

topology is based on a composite of Italy's Mediterranean islands with which Douglas was familiar (he knew Ischia and Ponza), but draws principally and unmistakably on Capri, and on its cosmopolitan society.

Compton Mackenzie's fictional rendering of Capri is even less disguised: Sirene is inhabited by characters whose real-life counterparts are said to have recognized and liked themselves.⁴ The first novel spans approximately the years 1905-1920, while the second portrays the island in the aftermath of World War I. It will be seen how Nepenthe and Sirene, each an '*île enchantée*', (*Vestal Fire*, 53) serve as literary topoi, fictional realms in which moral or social dramas are played out, and onto which fantasy can be projected, transforming a geographically and historically situated place into a symbolic stage.

In all the texts, the adoption of both real and fictional place names, and other rhetorical features, provoke interesting questions about boundaries between fiction and non-fiction. While Nepenthe is 'Italian' and recognizably based on Capri, it is also evoked in terms of its unreality.⁵ For instance, very early on in *South Wind* Nepenthe is explicitly differentiated from Capri: '[Mr Muhlen] had visited other Mediterranean islands; he knew Sicily fairly well and had once spent a pleasant fortnight on Capri. But Nepenthe was different. The proximity to Africa, you know; the volcanic soil. Oh yes! It was obviously quite another sort of island' (7). In a knowing intertextual gesture, *Vestal Fire* refers to 'the island of Nepenthe rising like a great bronze on the other side of the Bay' (53) – 'the Bay' is the Bay of Naples (Vesuvius is named in *Vestal Fire*), supremacy of which the two fictional islands metaphorically vie for.

In this chapter it will be argued that although the novels are associated closely with Capri (and so with each other), they constitute quite different projects, doing quite different things with the trope of Italy. The 1917 text is a more relaxed, sensual and comfortable evocation of Italy, nudging at the acceptable limits of sexual and social mores at a time of great censorship and state intervention in people's everyday lives. It advances the south as a place where the cold, withered northern soul can flower, and where simple bodily pleasures combined with educated conversation generate the possibility for humanity to return to a state of civilized well-being. The Sirene novels on the other hand, written at a distance from the War and the ensuing influenza epidemic (which saw the streets of London sprayed with chemicals and people wearing anti-germ masks), utilize

⁴ Linklater in his biography of Mackenzie writes, 'Gwen Gallacher, later immortalised by Monty [Mackenzie] in *Vestal Fire* as Mrs Ambrogio [...] adored her fictional portrait, which was so precise that everyone referred to her as Mrs Ambrogio, and after her death no one could quite disentangle her real self from the double Monty had created' (*Compton Mackenzie: A Life* (London: Hogarth, 1992), 124).

⁵ The words 'Italy' or 'Italian' appear only thirty-one times in the entire text, usually to denote the language or to refer to dead people or institutions.

the Capri experience to comic effect, evoking a world of frivolous social relations, outlandish dialogue, and character-caricatures. The barbed satire on this kind of pointless existence is blended with a nostalgia for a time when it was still possible; the whole is 'watched over' by the Roman masters of elegy and satire, in the form of epigrams, and packaged in a rational and detached, tight, highly-crafted form.

The novels all draw on well-established modes of representation traceable to the discourse of Victorian and Romantic travel writing and fiction, but at the same time they manifest, to differing degrees, a new dynamic in the relationship between foreigner and native, north and south, Britain and Italy. This dynamic is inscribed in the representation of place, and more markedly in the representation of Italians; it has already changed profoundly in the decade which separates their respective appearances. This chapter therefore serves as an introduction to some of the rhetorical devices, motifs and ideological ground which are called in to play in writing on Italy in the first three decades of the twentieth century, and which will be explored further in later chapters.

Italy itself – in its manifestation as a Mediterranean island – in all three novels is a space of rural, sunlit, vine-clad beauty, of idyllic villas and wide views, enjoyed by educated British people. In its pre-industrial, pastoral innocence it recalls at every turn Greek and Roman civilizations, whose literature and mythology pervade the texts. This Italy is explicitly differentiated from a bleaker, unhappier north or Britain, a critique of which emerges in the comparative 'greyness' of climate and outlook, sexual repression, work ethic and oppressive sense of the state. Although descriptions have much in common with descriptions elsewhere of Italy, or of a more generalized 'south' or 'Mediterranean', the island trope will be shown to have its own significance. In the novels' portrayals of Italians the narrators construct themselves (and some of their northern characters) as sophisticated beings: discerning, complex and inclined to an essentialist view of Italians.

Nepenthe

Norman Douglas (1868-1952) first visited Capri in 1888 and lived there periodically for much of his long life. It was he who, working as a reviewer at Ford's *English Review* in 1913, recommended Compton Mackenzie go there for relief of his sciatica, and provided him with letters of introduction. Of Scottish and half-German parentage, born in Austria but brought up mostly in England, Douglas became a respected writer, counting Conrad among his supporters. Briefly married to his cousin,

with whom he had two sons, he gained notoriety for pederastic involvements with boys, particularly young local Italian boys, whom he enlisted as servants, guides and travel companions.

South Wind (1917)

Written while Douglas was in London working for the *English Review*, and typed up by Compton Mackenzie's wife Faith in 1916 on Capri, (on a typewriter later used by D.H. Lawrence) *South Wind* was published in 1917.⁶ Douglas had written on Italy's South in *Siren Land* (1911) and *Old Calabria* (1915), both essay collections (see Chapter 4 below). The move into fiction, then, comprises a further contribution to his body of work on the Italian South, drawing as it does on his experience of Capri in the years leading up to the First World War.

The novel tells how an Anglican bishop, Thomas Heard, spends a fortnight on Nepenthe to visit his cousin on his way back to England from missionary work in Africa. His experiences on the island change him to the point where a murder he witnesses seems quite defensible – 'He decided to relegate it into the category of unimportant events' (308). He witnesses local festivals, a volcanic eruption, and meets a series of eccentric expatriates living on the island (resembling, of course, members of the community Douglas had lived among on Capri), as well as the alluring resident Count Caloveglia.

Generically, this is a hybrid of several subgenres of narrative prose. It can be designated as 'modern romance' which 'requires the Christian – or like-minded "Western" – protagonist to undergo a literal or metaphorical divestment, a shedding of ill-fitting garments, and so to step out newly released into an acceptance of pagan sensuality or of "oriental" spirituality'.⁷ It resembles at times a collection of essays or disquisitions on a quixotic variety of topics, interspersed with the plot of the bishop's transformation; at others a novel of ideas, in the manner of some later novels such as *Those Barren Leaves* (Aldous Huxley, 1925) and *Meanwhile* (H.G. Wells, 1927), in which lengthy, articulate discussions between the principal characters dominate, on weighty subjects such as philosophy, education, aesthetics and religion.

Mr Heard's main interlocutors are Mr Keith – Scottish, outspoken and shamelessly hedonistic – and Count Caloveglia – Italian, charming and inscrutable. The reputation of the author (as travel writer) and of Capri at that time would add travel

⁶ Douglas had been charged with corrupting a young boy in London in 1916 and jumped bail, fleeing to Florence. It was Faith Mackenzie's diary recording the months spent typing *South Wind* which helped Douglas obtain bail.

⁷ Baldick, 218.

literature to its discursive repertoire: one was reading about a place and a lifestyle that 'really existed'. Indeed, the list of virtues attributed to *South Wind* by Holloway might constitute a précis of Douglas's character: 'its tremendous zest and high spirits, its excessiveness, its completely amoral devotion to fun, to the indulgence of moods and appetites for their own sakes, its explosive satyr's laughter and malicious wit – all embodied in the most urbane and civilised forms of communication: conversation, and polished ironical treatises and disquisitions'.⁸ It has been called the novel of a lost generation,⁹ and its popularity post-war was certainly due in large part to its escapist ethos, its portrayal of a far-off sunlit world of cheerful easy living and leisurely exchange of ideas.¹⁰

The novel's title refers to the sirocco, the stifling Saharan wind unknown in the north. Like the island's scenery, it is construed as having the capacity to bring about moral transformation in the English. Africa, site of the wind's origin and the bishop's diocese, though further south, does not exert such an influence; it is southern Italy which offers the possibility of change to the northerner. Mr Keith (a Douglasian figure, one of the main characters in the novel) tells Heard about a previous visitor's suicide:

'The scenery of Nepenthe. It got on his nerves; it unstrung him. Does that surprise you too? Don't you feel its effect upon yourself? The bland winds, the sea shining in velvety depths as though filled with some electric fluid, the riot of vegetation, these extravagant cliffs that change colour with every hour of the day? Look at that peak yonder – is it not almost transparent, like some crystal of amethyst? This coastline alone – the sheer effrontery of its mineral charm – might affect some natures to such an extent as to dislocate their stability. Northern minds seem to become fluid here, impressionable, unstable, unbalanced – what you please. There is something in the brightness of this spot which decomposes their old particles and arranges them into fresh and unexpected patterns. That is what people mean when they say that they "discover themselves" here. You discover a mechanism, you know, when you take it to pieces. You catch my meaning?'

'I catch it.'

He nodded. He understood perfectly. Some analogous process was going on within him at that moment. He, too, was discovering himself (156).

Implicit in Keith's explanation of the effects of the island is a construction of the northern mind as stable, solid, balanced, predictable; he resorts to the rational language of the sciences to articulate the implausible phenomenon to his fellow-northerner. The use of 'crystal' and 'amethyst' to evoke the island itself recalls numerous other examples in the text of lexis derived from the fairy-tale world of precious metals and jewels, such as 'It

⁸ Holloway, *Norman Douglas: A Biography* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1976), 239.

⁹ The phrase is thought to have been coined by Gertrude Stein and usually refers to the youth who lived through or died in the First World War.

¹⁰ The novel's immediate popularity is shown by the record of its initial print-runs: 'Secker started *South Wind* off with an impression of 997 in June, followed it cautiously as most publishers would have, with a further 516 in August, and when all doubt about its immediate success was removed by that second impression selling out, printed another 980 in November. Considering that 1500 was considered a good sale for a well-received novel in those days and that Douglas had published no other novels, this record of nearly 2500 copies issued in six months is one that any publisher would have been justified in thinking creditable' (Holloway, 259-60).

gleamed with golden rocks and emerald patches of culture [...] shrouded in pearly mystery'.¹¹ It draws on the trope of the *île enchantée*, popularised in *The Tempest*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Peter Pan*, the legend of Atlantis and so on. The island is ethereal, diaphanous, first seen from an approaching boat:

The comely outlines were barely suggested through a veil of fog. An air of unreality hung about the place. Could this be an island? A veritable island of rocks and vineyards and houses – this pallid apparition? It looked like some snowy sea-bird resting upon the waves; a sea-bird or a cloud; one of those lonely clouds that stray from their fellows and drift about in wayward fashion at the bidding of every breeze (6).

Mackenzie will have fun with the 'snowy sea-bird' in *Extraordinary Women* (see below), but the Romantic sublimity and exoticism Douglas employs when depicting Nepenthe is already partially deflated by the irreverence of his subject-matter. The island's British indulge in a whole spectrum of what would be considered immoral behaviour by British standards, from Miss Wilberforce's inebriety, Parker's doctored whisky racket, to Mrs Meadows' casual murder. Even the earnest and 'aloof' (257) scholar Eames, who advises Heard to ignore Keith's belief that 'the influence of Nepenthe can make Northern people irresponsible for their actions' (256) has had a scandalous liaison in his past. If Douglas wished to protect the anonymity of those he caricatures in the novel, he was also writing against the prevailing social realism of his time.

A counterpoint to Nepenthe's 'extravagant' landscape is found in a brief evocation of Scottish landscape. Keith divides his time between his native Scotland and adopted Nepenthe; he looks forward to returning to

his little place in the Highlands, at first. The meagre soil and parsimonious culture, the reasonable discourse of the people, their wholesome disputatiousness, acted as a kind of purge or tonic after all this Southern exuberance. Scotland chastened him; its rocks and tawny glinting waters and bleak purple uplands rectified his perspective. He called to mind the sensuous melancholy of the birches, the foxgloves, the hedgerows smothered in dog-roses; he remembered the nights, full of fairy-like suggestions and odours of earth and budding leaves – those wonderful nights with their silvery radiance, calm and benignant, streaming upwards from the luminous North.

Then, after strolling aimlessly elsewhere, on sea or land, visiting friends – no matter whom or where – he would return to Nepenthe to indulge his genius to the full in the vintage bacchanals (226-27).

The naming of familiar northern flowers and trees combines with the languorous tenor of the passage to produce a nostalgic vision of an idealized Scottish landscape. Keith seems to embody dividedness, someone to whom bacchanalia is both essential and immoderate – he needs to return to the presence of the 'meagre', the 'parsimonious', the 'reasonable',

¹¹ *South Wind*, 8-9. Pemble suggests these metaphors are common in the discourse of the time because the light was so markedly different from what the (especially urban) English were used to: 'Nothing delighted Victorian and Edwardian tourists like the Mediterranean light, and nothing teased the ingenuity of Victorian and Edwardian writers and artists more. It entranced them and eluded them. [...] Writers like Ruskin, Hare, Vernon Lee, and J.A. Symonds ransacked the vocabularies of metallurgy, mineralogy, and horticulture in a vain attempt to encompass its magic in art. Such enchantment is of course a common Northern response to the South, but in the Victorian and Edwardian British it was intensified by the experience of living in a country that was more than naturally dark and dingy' (50).

the 'wholesome', to be 'chastened', 'rectified'. The purification ritual of returning north and partaking in aimless wandering enables him to live purposefully, in the south. At some level, then, Keith, for all his enthusiasm about and integration in life on Nepenthe, retains an allegiance to his northern identity, including its puritan side.

The following passage gives a sense of *South Wind's* frequent merging of the narratorial voice with that of the bishop, voices sharing an educated, highly rational gaze that picks out not only un-British land shapes, vegetation and heat, but a landscape upon which histories of religious conflict, hierarchies and corruption have left indelible traces:

The distant volcano confronting him was wreathed in a sullen grey smoke that rose up from its lava torrent, and crowned with a menacing vapour-plume. Then an immensity of sea. At his feet, separated from where he sat by wide stony tracts tremulous with heat, lay the Old Town, its houses nestling in a bower of orchards and vineyards. It looked like a shred of rose-tinted lace thrown upon the landscape. He unraveled those now familiar thoroughfares and traced out, as on a map, the more prominent buildings – the Church, the Municipality, the old Benedictine Monastery, where Duke Alfred, they say, condescendingly invited himself to dine with the monks every second month in such state and splendour that, the rich convent revenues being exhausted, His Highness was pleased to transfer his favours to the neighbouring Carthusians, who went bankrupt in their turn; he recognized Count Caloveglia's place and, at the farther outskirts, the little villa Mon Repos (267).

The description of the view shares something of nineteenth-century travellers' narratives: the scene, narrated by an all-seeing male gaze, is, in Pratt's words, 'deictically ordered with reference to his vantage point, and is static'. It is not only flattened like a painting (the town is 'at his feet'), and imbued with a narrative and aesthetic value, but likened to a map, a terrain that has been defined, legible to the historically literate observer. The relation between who sees and what is seen is a 'relation of mastery': 'what he sees is all there is, and [...] the landscape was intended to be viewed from where he has emerged upon it'.¹² This monarch-of-all-I-survey discourse is a prominent feature of the construction of Italy in fiction as well as travel writing of the period, and not limited to colonial contexts.

Count Caloveglia's place is one of 'the more prominent buildings', with the civic and religious authorities; as the main Italian character in the novel, his home provides the setting for several extended conversations at which the Bishop is usually present. An impoverished aristocrat, he has a servant, provides his guests with excellent food and drink, and owns an impressive collection of art. For Heard, 'His was an enviable life. He dwelt among masterpieces. They were his beacons, his comrades, his realities. As for other things – the social accidents of time and place, his cares and his poverty – he wore them lightly; they sat upon his shoulders with easy grace, like his own threadbare coat' (223). That a life lived by the 'beacons' of art rather than religion should be 'enviable' to the bishop-narrator is part of the novel's irony; the allure of the pagan statue to all the

¹² Pratt, 205, 202.

protagonists, Heard included, augments its heterodoxy. Simple and refined, worldly and articulate, Caloveglia engages with Anglo-Saxon characters in distinctly modern debates. His speech, an English as polished and educated as Keith's and Heard's – "Will you do me the pleasure of coming to my house, and allow me to offer you a cup of tea?" (67) – contrasts starkly with that of other Italian characters, for instance the boatman: "The suicides' rock, gentlemens. Ah! Many is the poor Christian I have pick up there. He throw down hiself. Him dead. Often in small pieces. Here blood. Here brain. Here leg and boot. Here finger. Ah! The poor Christian. That so, gentlemens" (155). This reflects their polarized social status but also the Count's alignment with the middle-class, northern characters and his participation in discursive, intellectual debate.¹³ Heard and the Count share a world-view which nostalgically aestheticizes rather than empathizes with the labourers they idly watch:

'A singular illusion, is it not?'

He referred to a group of men and boys who, stripped to the waist, were bearing aloft immense masses of some argent-coloured rock.

'You've guessed my thoughts,' replied the bishop. 'How on earth are they able to support such a weight? They remind me of Atlas with the world on his shoulders.'

'It is pumice-stone – one of the old industries of the place. [...] Admirable figures! As you say, the spectacle takes one back into mythological times. Would you not call it a procession of Titans, children of the Gods, storing up mountain-blocks for some earth-convulsing battle? [...] The industry is decaying,' he added, 'but I hope it will outlive my time' (67-68).

The Count concurs in and expands the analogy to Greek gods, as well he might, being construed as a direct descendant of classical civilization.¹⁴ Although ideologically he has more in common with his British interlocutors than with his countrymen, his individual qualities are subordinate to the fact of his being Italian. Italians in the British imagination were simple and deceitful by nature, and their religion possessed a less rigid idea of sin. Douglas draws on these stereotypes to promote an ideal epitomised in the figure of the Count, while according a far greater range of idiosyncrasies to the British characters. Ultimately, the Count's naïve belief that he can defraud his friend, an American capitalist, affirms the assumption of Italians' lack of sophistication.

His appearances in the novel always occur in the presence of his 'double', his prize sculpture, the Locri Faun. The Faun, like the Count, is imbued with a magical quality, an otherworldliness in keeping with the evocation of the south wind and the Nepenthian

¹³ As for other Italian characters, most barely speak: when Heard visits his cousin's villa, he finds 'Old Caterina sat, sphinx-like, on the stones at the house entrance. [...] At his approach she rose up, stark and hieratic, without a trace of a friendly smile on her countenance. Was the lady indoors? No, she was out. Out! Where? There was a definite but enigmatical movement of her withered brown arm; it appeared to embrace the universe. And when would she be back? No reply whatever. Only a slight upward movement of the eyes as much as to say: "God knows!"' (232). She appears as a conglomerate of gesture and fragmented body parts, as do so many Italians in writing of the period.

¹⁴ 'He suggested, in a manner, the secret of youth, and all that is glad, unclouded, eternal; he was a reflection, a belated flower, of the classic splendour which lay in ruins about him' (247).

landscape; it seems to embody, like the Count, qualities such as pagan beauty and divinity, complete harmony with the environment, timelessness, serenity. The bishop observes the faun during their conversation:

An oval shaft of light, glinting through the foliage, had struck the pedestal of the Faun and was stealthily crawling up its polished surface. It was still slumbering in the shade. But a subtle change had spread over the figure, or was it, he wondered, merely a change in the state of his own mind, due to what the Count had said? There was energy, now, in those tense muscles. The slightest touch, he felt, would unseal the enchantment and cause life to flow through the dull metal (247).

The possibility of the revivification of this classical, pagan form suggests itself to Heard, the representative of Christian practice, reflecting his own metamorphosis. The Count plans to sell the sculpture to the wealthy American capitalist Van Koppen in order to provide his daughter with a dowry. However, in the final quarter of the novel, the reader learns that the Faun is a fake, sculpted by the Count himself; and furthermore, that Van Koppen realizes this but, because of their mutual admiration, decides to buy it anyway, without revealing that he knows. Early on in the novel the bishop had considered the Count ‘a charming dreamer’, but the enigma of the narratorial response – ‘As a matter of fact, he was an extremely practical old gentleman’ (71) – is now resolved.

This is the ‘duplicitous Italian’ clothed in an unusually graceful way: the narrator guides the reader through the Count’s reasoning about the impending transaction: ‘The Faun was his first forgery, and his last’; it would bring him ‘an ample dowry for Matilda. And, as regards himself, he could [...] afford to become a sculptor again’ (305-6). It does not seem unreasonable to defraud the American of three hundred and fifty thousand francs, in the light of these arguments, and in the light of the sympathetic portrait. This justificatory reasoning echoes Heard’s, who is sitting alongside the Count, contemplating the triviality of the murder he has witnessed, and another shocking crime is seen in its ‘true perspective’ (309). This readjustment of the bishop’s values has come about involuntarily through exposure to the island’s influence, but such ethics pre-exist in the Italian; he remains true to his type, while the British need to change.

The fact that Heard, a bishop, eventually acquiesces in the island’s perverse morality makes the novel an exercise in debunking staid and puritanical mores. The success of the exercise relies in part on the island setting – a fabled land far removed from the society it critiques¹⁵ – but also on the idea of Italy as a place where the English can behave reprehensibly with impunity, an idea derived from the era of the Grand Tour when respectable young men frequently exploited their new-found freedom, and from its relatively lax laws and law enforcement. Douglas’s dream-like island is antithetical to the clearly defined national borders of wartime; the protagonists debate ideas of freedom,

¹⁵ Tuscany functions analogously as an *île enchantée* in Forster, as will be seen in the next chapter.

order, reason, legality and civilization at a time when all of these are under threat. The notoriety of Capri itself makes it an apposite setting for a very different treatment of hedonism, as the ensuing section demonstrates.

Sirene

Compton Mackenzie (1883-1972) was born into a distinguished travelling theatre company; his father was a friend of Henry James. He was a brilliant scholar at St Paul's and Oxford, excelling in the Classics. A man of many interests and extravagant tastes, he aspired to become a successful writer to fund these; after some minor plays and poetry – and a spell of acting – he attained popular success with the novels *Carnival* (1912) and *Sinister Street* (1913), one of Secker's 'stable'. He also gained critical acclaim, not least from Henry James, who spoke of him as 'very much the greatest talent of the new generation'.¹⁶ Although a prolific writer, critical praise only resurfaced significantly when he published his two 'Capri' novels, *Vestal Fire* (1927) and *Extraordinary Women: Themes and Variations* (1928).

He and his wife Faith (née Stone) first arrived on Capri in 1913, on Norman Douglas's advice, and fell in love with it immediately. He leased villas there (which he would make available to friends, such as D.H. Lawrence in winter 1919) until 1920 when he went to live on Herm, the first of two Channel Islands whose leases he bought. He was received into the Catholic church in Capri, in 1914, just before going to the Dardanelles (Gallipoli) for war service as a spy for MI6 until 1917. At the end of October 1917, Mackenzie ('Monty'), dogged by ill health, was finally released from service and returned to Capri. Linklater explains,

The Capri to which Monty returned had changed dramatically from the island he had left in 1915. He arrived on the heels of news of the Italian defeat at Caporetto, and the chill despair of the casualty lists brought to the Capresi an experience common to all Europe. Their desolation was repeated in the empty hotels and unoccupied villas of the foreigners.¹⁷

According to Linklater, the arrival of Aldous Huxley's intellectual girlfriend and 'other harbingers of new literary fashions' spelt the end of an era. "I object to living on Capri because every quill-driver in England apparently thinks that is the key to success," he told

¹⁶ In his 1914 article in the *Times Literary Supplement* called 'The Younger Generation'. 'In his famous survey of the literary scene, he picked out Hugh Walpole, Gilbert Cannan, Compton Mackenzie and D.H. Lawrence as the rising stars and likely successors of Conrad, Galsworthy, Wells and Bennett, but clouded his reasons for doing so in language so opaque as to defy easy comprehension' (Linklater, *Compton Mackenzie*, 130). See also Kinkead-Weekes, *D.H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile, 1912-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 131. Linklater also points out that 'in an article for the *Outlook* late in 1913, Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford) associated the name of Compton Mackenzie with those of D.H. Lawrence and Ezra Pound as the young hopes of literature' (129).

¹⁷ Linklater, 173.

Christopher Stone in 1921'.¹⁸ And Mackenzie recalls, 'Maria Nys was self-consciously "intellectual"; she kept on asking me "intellectual" questions and making "intellectual" observations which my lack of "modernity" prevented me from appreciating, whether she made them in English or French; it was not a successful meeting'.¹⁹ In this memoir he refers sardonically to post-war Capri as 'Capree'²⁰ alluding to the common mispronunciation of the name by Anglo-Saxon visitors. Already discernable is Mackenzie's tendency to attempt to distance himself from new (and as he saw it, superficial) literary trends and social circles.

War he claimed had changed him; his marriage broke down (though he and Faith remained friends until her death in 1960) and his disillusion with post-war Capri drove him to move on to Herm, a private island in the English Channel. He wrote the Sirene novels while living on Jethou, the last of the Channel Islands he leased, and he was the inspiration for Lawrence's 'The Man who Loved Islands' (1927) and 'Two Blue-Birds' (1928). Mackenzie was financially overstretched when writing these two novels. His career was already in decline, sales were falling and after a series of pot-boilers this pair of novels gained some popular and critical success.²¹ Cyril Connolly wrote that *Vestal Fire* and *Extraordinary Women* 'are among the few modern novels that make the most of that wonderful subject, money, and which bring the Mediterranean lapping round our doors and the smell of cistus through the fog-bound windows'.²² They were reprinted until 1986 and as recently as 1993 in Italian translation. (They are freely available in Capri's bookshops). Written after the war about a period before and during the war, they are both set on Sirene, a Mediterranean island based on Capri.

Vestal Fire (1927)

Mackenzie dedicated this novel to his Capri friend John Ellingham Brooks who during Mackenzie's special visits to Capri in 1924 and 1925 helped him confirm dates and facts about the period.²³ The title alludes to the fire which the Vestal Virgins of Imperial Rome were required on pain of death to keep burning to ensure the city's protection. Of

¹⁸ Linklater, 188.

¹⁹ Mackenzie, *My Life and Times, Octave Five: 1915-1923* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), 144.

²⁰ See for example Mackenzie, *My Life and Times*, 134.

²¹ Secker's original print-run was of 2,000 luxuriously-bound copies, of which 100 were signed.

²² *The Condemned Playground: Essays 1927-1944* (London: Macmillan, 1946), 116-17.

²³ Brooks shared a villa on Capri with E.F. Benson and W. Somerset Maugham and was a much-liked member of the expatriate community. He was briefly married to (and paid to remain on Capri by) Romaine Brooks, a homosexual American artist portrayed as Olympia Leigh in *Extraordinary Women*. He may also have inspired Douglas's character in *South Wind* of Mr Eames the scholar, since his life-work was the translation (never published) of Hérédia's poetry. Mackenzie writes, 'In this book almost every figure is a portrait, and the earlier events were related to me in detail by John Ellingham Brooks, to whom *Vestal Fire* was dedicated' (Mackenzie, *My Life and Times*, 138). Douglas dedicated *Birds and Beasts of the Greek Anthology* (1928) to him.

patrician family, the chosen Vestals played a privileged role in the social customs and festivals of the city. The solemnity of their office is in stark contrast to the frivolity of the social whirl at the centre of which are the novel's 'Vestals', the Misses Virginia and Maimie Pepworth-Norton. The comic description of the circumstances in which they first meet the novel's other protagonist, Count Marsac, further undermines any gravitas which the novel's title might imply.

'Well,' Miss Virginia had exclaimed when they alighted from their carriage and surveyed the relic, 'did you ever see a cuter little temple anywhere? Why, it doesn't look like a temple, Maimie. It looks more like a cunning little tea-house. If that isn't just the loveliest little temple ... what does it tell us about it in the guidebook?'

And while Miss Virginia stood fanning herself under the cloudless Roman sky of March, Miss Maimie read to her a brief account of the Vestal Virgins, of their house in the Via Sacra, and of this innermost fane so many times burnt and rebuilt.

'The circular podium is about ten feet high, and consists mainly of concrete with some foundations of tufa blocks which may belong to the original building. Recent excavations have disclosed a pit in the middle of the podium...'

'Well, what is this podium anyway?'

'That's what the book says.'

'Why they can't write a guidebook for simple folks without using such crazy words beats me. Read on a bit, honey,' said Miss Virginia with a sweep of her fan.

'In the time of Pliny the tholus over the cella – symbolizing the canopy of Heaven – was covered with Syracusan bronze. It's [*sic*] position near the Temple of Castor is mentioned by Martial.'

'It is?' Miss Virginia exclaimed sarcastically. 'Well, that won't help us any if old Martial doesn't tell us what a tholus is any more than this stupid guidebook.'

At this moment a handsome fair young man with rosy cheeks drew near the ladies and, raising his hat, begged in English with a strong French accent to know if he could be of any help.

'Why, you certainly can,' said Miss Virginia smiling upon him. 'We're just dying to know what a podium is and what a tholus is. We think this is just the sweetest little temple we ever did see, but we don't care one bit for the crazy names.'

The young Frenchman, who was extremely voluble, was delighted to give the two ladies all the information he had.

'Oh, a tholus is just a dome? Do you hear that, Maimie? It's just an old dome the same as we've got at the Villa Amabile. And oh, wouldn't it be lots of fun to put up a little Temple of Vesta in our garden?' (*VF*, 29-30).

Mackenzie was writing for a wealthy, discerning readership; the joke relies upon a shared understanding of Americans as unable to interpret either the revered signifiers of the foundations of European civilization or the formal guidebook explications of it without the help of a European interlocutor (himself staged at this point as a caricature). This peculiarly British narratorial stance is a feature of the two Capri novels, as will be shown.

Vestal Fire spans the years 1905 to 1920 and recreates the lively, if morally lax, social life of the island. The novel traces the involvement of the two elderly American ladies with the eccentric and fabulously wealthy French dandy, Count Bob Marsac.²⁴ When he is ostracized for rumours of a shady past, excessively decadent parties, and for writing an unflattering volume about the island, they remain loyal to him: they protect

²⁴ The story is based on the championing of a French-Swedish count, Jacques d'Adelsward-Fersen, by two elderly American ladies (who, though not related to each other, hyphenated their surnames and cohabited on Capri until their deaths), Kate and Saidee Wolcott-Perry. D'Adelsward-Fersen's story is told in Roger Peyrefitte's 1959 roman à clef, *The Exile of Capri*, without name changes.

their 'fire'. Eventually however they become disillusioned and break with him; the novel's mood becomes elegiac and increasingly dominated by allusion to death.

Marsac is a rentier figure: his immense wealth flows from the profits from steel-works run by his family, who pay this miscreant to live far away. His literary pretensions (self-published, mediocre, classically-inspired verse) and sense of the melodramatic make him an object of ridicule in the novel, and a great deal of the comedy is generated through the irony of the American ladies' belief in him. He lives with a good-looking youth from Rome, whom he refers to euphemistically as his 'secretary'. Carlo in fact is one of the main Italian characters but is configured almost entirely in terms of his financial dependence on Marsac; he is Marsac's property, having been 'taken' by Marsac from his family as a boy.²⁵

In a continuation of the scene above, Marsac discovers the ladies live on Sirene. In the ensuing dialogue, it can be seen how Carlo is an outsider among these wealthy, worldly people.

'You are fortunate indeed, mademoiselle. One of my ambitions is to visit Sirene. Indeed I was projecting to visit that *île enchantée* very soon with my friend and secretary Signor Carlo di Fiore.' As the Count spoke a young Italian like Antinous drew near and was presented to the two ladies, who were by no means dismayed when they found he hardly knew a word of English. 'Never mind,' said Miss Virginia. 'We can understand quite a lot of Italian, because we've lived in Italy getting along for twenty years now. Bella Italia!' she added encouragingly to young di Fiore. 'Grazie, signora,' he replied with a low bow (31).

His lower social status is signalled in several ways: until now he has been an invisible bystander; when introduced, the lively dialogue is suspended, giving way to a summarized account of information exchanged between the Count and the ladies, 'above his head' as it were. He is not addressed immediately – Miss Virginia speaks first to the Count – and when she does speak directly to him it is with a feeble Italian cliché. Carlo is finally heard, uttering two words signifying respect and politeness, the accompanying gesture emphasizing his deference. Furthermore, the narrator repeats the epithet 'young' (a rhetorical stoop) and compares him to Antinous, who for the classically-educated reader, is shorthand for male homosexual youth and beauty, and rhetorically an aestheticization

²⁵ The text reads, 'he had taken Carlo as a boy of fourteen from the dampest corner of the Trastevere [poor quarter of Rome] to make a secretary of him' (202-3). Peyrefitte writes that d'Adelsward-Fersen, while wandering in Rome sees and falls for a fifteen-year-old labourer, Nino Cesarini. Of humble origins, he is easily bought: Jacques quickly decides that 'He would put the whole family in his pocket. He would have a child of his own, a boy who would owe him everything and whom nobody could claim away from him' (*The Exile of Capri*, trans. Hyams, (Fleet: New York, 1965), 120). Cesarini (1889-1943) was, as a result of d'Adelsward-Fersen's infatuation, cast in bronze by Francesco Ierace (1854-1937, Neapolitan sculptor), painted as a seated nude with pale cloth draped over his thighs, by Paul Höcker (1854-1910, German painter) and photographed by Wilhelm von Plüschow (1852-1930, commercial photographer of young boys) naked and in poses reminiscent of Greek statuary. A scholarly biographical article on d'Adelsward-Fersen can be seen at <http://semgai.free.fr/contenu/textes/fersen/W_Ogrinc_Fersen.html>.

of this character.²⁶ In a later episode, Marsac is in 'pastoral mood' as he anticipates his reunion with Carlo, not knowing of the latter's infidelity with the (female) housekeeper. He composes some self-indulgent verses of lyrical poetry. Occurring soon after in the text is an unattributed and untranslated line of Latin poetry, *Formosum pastor Corydon ardebat Alexim*. It is one of the many occasions when classical Latin poetry is quoted in the novel, usually without further comment; it provides a further layer of Roman allusion in an episode involving Carlo.²⁷

Carlo is ascribed a history, feelings and motivations; however, in a novel grounded largely on witty and abundant dialogue, it is noticeable that Carlo's actual speech is seldom given: the narrator appropriates his consciousness, as it were, repeating the proprietorial act of Marsac. In the above-mentioned episode, Marsac comments on Carlo's unusual reserve and for most of a page of the novel, Marsac's questions and suspicions are given in direct speech; yet Carlo 'replied that ...' or 'protested' or 'welcomed an opportunity to ...' – his words are never given verbatim. Marsac's jealousy is aroused and he threatens to finish with him "for ever"; his personality (and his farcicality) is very much evoked through his melodramatic speech. This is followed by a page and a half (with only one paragraph division) of the omniscient narrator by turns describing and accounting for Carlo's motivations. These emerge as wholly opportunistic: 'his life with Marsac was a career':

Carlo shivered. Five years of luxury with Marsac had not been long enough in which to forget the misery of his childhood in that swarming Trastevere alley. To whatever there was abnormal in his relations with Marsac he had become easily habituated in that strange bisexual pause in the growth of a normal adolescence. He had the capacity for facing facts which is the birthright of every young Italian male or female, and though there might be moments when the temptation to be normal was irresistible (of which the Roumanian [housekeeper] had taken advantage) he recognized that his life with Marsac was a career. The long Latin civilization had had time to incorporate so much of masculine experience, so much of feminine wisdom that the sentimentality of a semi-barbaric culture like the American or English is obnoxious to a Latin. The Latin individual is capable of what seems to the Anglo-Saxon a cynicism in sexual relations utterly beyond his comprehension. A decent Englishman would have despised Carlo; but a decent Italian would not have despised him, however much he might abominate his detestable situation. A decent Italian would have blamed Marsac's wealth and would have deplored the outraged dignity of his nation in the abuse of a humble compatriot, would have felt precisely that emotion of resentful pride at the way the world treats his whole country like a *fille de joie* to which Mussolini has known how to give practical and rhetorical expression (207-8).

²⁶ Antinous was the young lover of the Emperor Hadrian, who made him a God when he died. In *Extraordinary Women* Marsac makes another appearance with 'his Antinous' (87).

²⁷ *Formosum pastor Corydon ardebat Alexim* is in fact the opening of Virgil's second Eclogue: Corydon the shepherd is in love with Alexis, and the poem will go on to tell of Corydon's love being in vain, and of his agony – 'The shepherd Corydon burned for fair Alexis his master's darling, and found no hope: only among the thick shady-topped beeches he would continually come, and there alone utter in idle passion these artless words to the hills and woods. O cruel Alexis, carest thou naught for my songs? hast no pity on us? thou wilt be my death at the last' (Mackail (trans.), *The Eclogues and Georgics of Virgil* (London: Green, 1915), 6). This not only makes a mockery of Marsac's own attempt at pastoral, but also points forward to his own imminent love agonies.

So Carlo's silent corporeal 'shiver' gives way to an account that is at moments bourgeois historical ('The long Latin civilization') and at others conjectural ('A decent Italian would have ...'). Moreover, as was seen in the case of Count Caloveglia in *South Wind*, an unobtrusive transition is made from the individual character of Carlo to a declamation of Italian nationhood.

The following paragraph also begins with the words 'Carlo shivered'; his involuntary bodily action his only participation in these lengthy passages. The summary of Carlo's calculating consciousness – 'He was so horribly aware that if Marsac did disown him he might as well cease to have any ambitions above being a waiter. That was the utmost he could expect from life' – gives way once more to the usurping external voice, a Victorian narratorial voice which evaluates and appraises and speaks over the character's head to the reader:

It never entered his head that he might profit for awhile yet from his good looks and find another Marsac. Indeed he would have been sincerely shocked by such a proposal. He was now a perfectly healthy, perfectly normal young man of nineteen condemned to smoke opium and listen to Marsac's exotic rhapsodies for the sake of his career, a career which it must be remembered had been chosen for him by his poverty-stricken parents in the Trastevere slum, when they allowed Marsac to take him to Paris as a boy (208).

After this exposition ends on six lines from Propertius (quoted untranslated in Latin), Carlo finally speaks, but unusually (for the novel) his Italian is rendered in English: "You must not suspect me of that, Robert," Carlo entreated, abandoning French for his own language and acquiring with the change a warmth of sincerity for his denials to which fear of the waiter's tail-coat lent the final touch' (209). Those coat-tails return throughout the rest of the novel to haunt Carlo and symbolize the master-slave dynamic of the pair's relationship. Marsac's exploitation of the young man comes to seem less ignoble than the mercenary duplicity of the Italian.

At the end of this episode, 'O Gobbetto makes an appearance. Marsac, still outraged, declares this infidelity will taint their old age, when Carlo's hair will be white, 'his classic profile blurred':

And as he delivered this mournful prophecy to Carlo, who was thinking that he could stand even baldness quite stoically provided that he was wearing a well-cut suit and not a waiter's greasy tail-coat, the light in a wayside shrine of St. Anthony cast a pale beam upon the form of 'O Gobbetto standing cataleptically on his head in the path before them. Comic though the vision really was, it presented itself to Marsac like some macabre wood-cut of the Dürer school.

'There,' he cried, pointing dramatically to the old gnome upside down before them. 'There is what by your behaviour you have made of our old age! There it stands before you!'

As he spoke 'O Gobbetto slowly changed his posture. He stood now on one leg, the other at right angles to his squat form, a soil-grimed finger pressed to his nose.

'Buona festa, eccellenze,' he wished them in a voice that seemed to come gurgling up from the depths of a cask of wine.

'He wishes us a merry Christmas! He does not comprehend the agony of my spirits,' said Marsac sadly; and they swept on their way downhill toward the Hotel Grandioso (212-13).

The extraordinary figure of 'O Gobbetto is hard to account for; in passages such as the one just quoted he appears suddenly, and vanishes from the text, a non sequitur, an aberrance; in a twist on the master-slave dynamic he is reminiscent, deliberately or not, of Caliban, haunting the island in outdoor places, an expropriated figure, barely human.²⁸ It is worth quoting at length the first glimpse of him in the novel, not least for a sense of the relish with which he is described (few other characters receive this much description) and of the ultimate failure to describe anything recognizable or imaginable:

At the sound of a voice there emerged from a shelter of straw that resembled a large bee-skip in the shade of one of the gnarled carob-trees what anybody would have been justified in fancying to be an authentic gnome. 'O Gobbetto was more dwarf than hunchback, although he had enough of a hump to merit his nickname. He was under four feet in height with powerful hairy arms that nearly touched the ground, and his bare feet caked and grimed with a lifetime's soilure had the eloquent toes of an orang-outang [*sic*]. His shirt open in front showed a chest covered with hair, and his trousers were not so much like trousers as a slough of which he would presently rid himself. At the moment, in view of the fact that he was going to do business with Enrico Jones, he was sober, and this was such an unusual condition that it gave him the dazed look of a nocturnal animal which has been chased out into sunlight. When he was drunk he was often to be seen on this part of the island haunting the corners of the little paved *viali* in extraordinary poses. He would stand for an hour with his long arms flung up behind him, his nose almost touching the ground, like a bewitched fowl. He would stand for an hour on one leg with the other outthrust at right angles; he would even stand on his head with his legs in a V. Sometimes tourists sweltering up the exhausting road to view the ruins of the Villa Jovis would perceive in the midway of the path a face looking at them upside down between a pair of legs, and their memory would reach back nervously to childhood's tales of brigands in Italy. When the municipal authorities heard of such behaviour, they would order the arrest of 'O Gobbetto, because they did not think it was of advantage to the traffic in tourists that visitors to Sirene should be frightened. Then 'O Gobbetto would go to prison for a week, and when he came out he would sing all night long and go to prison again for making a public nuisance of himself. Yes, he was a queer figure, as queer as some of the foreign residents (67-68).

The narrator is fluent in the language of the ridicule of mass tourism, caricaturing tourists as mindlessly following exhausting itineraries, haunted by their reading, and the island authorities as motivated by profit, at the expense of 'O Gobbetto. The rife villa-building and villa-buying that occurs as a matter of course, unmarked, in both the Sirene novels, is a sign of a shift in the economic dynamic of the island, the replacement of an economy based on agriculture by one based on outsiders' money, on builders, labour, profit. In these Capri novels of Mackenzie, the protagonists belong to a rich, international elite, the source of whose independent incomes is at a distant remove from their daily lives. 'O Gobbetto might in this context be regarded as the obscene underside, the barbarous inverse of civilized, sophisticated social circles;²⁹ or as the answer of the island to the

²⁸ The Anglo-Italian Jones brothers sell 'O Gobbetto's land (to their own profit) to Marsac who wishes to build a villa there (65); this echoes Caliban's claim of expropriation by Prospero.

²⁹ A notion adapted from that of the 'Masterless Man' proposed by Brown, which he illustrates with characters in *The Tempest*: 'Stephano the "drunken butler" and the "jester" Trinculo obviously represent such masterless men, whose alliance with the savage Caliban provides an antitype of order [...] by which good order might be defined. Yet this moral and serviceable discourse displays in its descriptive richness precisely the intense and voyeuristic fascination for the other which it warns the gentry against' ("This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine": *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism', in Dollimore and Sinfield (eds.), *Political Shakespeare* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) 52-53).

bourgeois usurper, a grotesque incarnation of the detrimental effects on the island of superfluous wealth and decadent living.

In terms of its genre, *Vestal Fire* is a light, comic novel, a social satire, a period piece. It is written about a time that already seemed distant at its time of publication, an effect enhanced by fairytale overtones: it opens with the words, 'Once upon a time it was as much a matter of strict Sunday observance on the island of Sirene for the English and American colony to go to tea at the Villa Amabile in the afternoon as it was for the natives to attend Mass in the morning'.³⁰ It is funny and escapist but it is also elegiac. The action and characters are historically situated, with reference to events (actual feuds, the war), Mussolini's rhetoric, famous Modern artists (Prampolini, Casella), each character a 'portrait' of a known person.³¹ At the same time, its literariness aspires to something higher than a *roman à clef*. The mixture of satire and elegy makes recourse to two genres invented and perfected by the Romans. Pervasive use of the epigram points to the elements of satire: entertainment and critique, the ridicule of human folly and corruption; meanwhile, the shift in tone halfway through *Vestal Fire* from comic to elegiac (the focus pans out towards the end: Sirene is the backdrop to passing new fads, new movements, and time is compressed, no longer focusing on individual episodes) involves the bittersweet language of regret and death, and invocation of the masters of elegy such as Propertius. 'To live in the past is beautiful!' declares the narrator (417) near the end; but the reader is alerted from the very start to the element of elegy which will come to dominate: of the old ladies, the narrator says, 'they are dead now' (28). This is also a manifestation of the novel's self-conscious artificiality: although the busy and complex social lives of the characters are told in a seemingly haphazard way, the plot apparently meandering, leaping from scene to scene, time being compressed or drawn out – all of which might be construed as demonstrating lack of structure – closer inspection reveals that the book is tightly structured, divided into three parts, with each part containing eight chapters. Moreover, italicized Latin epigrams introduce and end the text as a whole, and introduce each Book and each Chapter. This extremely rational, formal design provides a sober counterbalance to the other-worldly and extravagant nature of the content, and works against the kind of undigested Romantic marvel with which texts had conventionally portrayed Italy.

³⁰ *VF*, 3. The phrase recurs, as in 'once upon a time before the war' (29).

³¹ Duncan Maxwell in *Vestal Fire* is said to be a caricature of Norman Douglas; see also note 23 above.

The last words of the novel are '*Causa perorata est*' (I rest my case; the case rests; my defence is complete): the text itself is retrospectively construed as an argument, a defence.³² It nostalgically laments what Sirene has become; in the final pages there is a shift to the present tense and reflections on new and recent phenomena which are seen as transient against the timeless backdrop of the island: 'One after another the apostles of modern art arrive, and one after another they retire before the unimaginable touch of time. *Pesce cani, tedeschi, americani, automobili, lesbiane, nazionalisti*, and finally *fascisti* all land in turn upon that fantastic rock' (412-13). It looks ahead to the ensuing novel which promotes a far less indulgent vision of the island.

Capri's literati are not spared Mackenzie's vilification: the novel is in many senses an invective against what Mackenzie felt was superficial literature, from which he distances himself:

English authors arrive to fatten upon the stimulating pasture, and the air is full of their plaintive bleatings about royalties and reviewers. Their works are sold in Zamponi's as a natural product of the Sirenian air. They are sold like serpentine paper-weights at the Lizard or cakes on the platform of Banbury station (413).

Although he claimed to be Scottish, he frequently alludes to such quintessentially provincial English place-names; at that time, it was in London that one had to be in order to get noticed as a writer.³³ His omniscient narrator assumes the reader shares specifically English moral, cultural and epistemological values (no matter where in the British-ruled world they were): 'In Littlehampton or Bognor or in the Isle of Wight a French count, however young and handsome and however rich, would not create a good impression on the life of the place by making his first public appearance disguised like a pulpit at a harvest festival; but once upon a time there was none of that kind of stuffiness in Sirene' (46-47).³⁴ Such a readership would recognize the signifiers ('harvest festival', 'stuffiness') of the social mores of provincial England, and understand the general atmosphere of suspicion of the foreigner.

Vestal Fire was compared unfavourably to *South Wind* – Cyril Connolly felt it was a 'feeble sequel' to *South Wind* in his *New Statesman* review of November 12, 1927. The comparison is unfair considering the gulf which separates them, in terms of when they were written, and what kind of writing project they constitute.

³² The phrase, already cited at the head of the final chapter, comes from Cornelia's *Elegy*, the 'Queen of Elegies', by Propertius. The ghost of the aristocratic wife of Lepidus, in her monologue, utters in legal rhetoric an indictment on Rome as well as a 'defence' of her own life.

³³ See Linklater, Chapter 13, for an extended discussion of Mackenzie's Scottish aspirations.

³⁴ *VF*, 46-47. See also *Extraordinary Women*: 'Now, in Littlehampton or Bognor or even in Brighton you could not tell the driver of a hackney-coach to take you to the moon; but in Sirene the drivers have a less literal notion of direction' (48).

Extraordinary Women: Themes and Variations (1928)

Capri became 'from about 1918 to about 1921 ... a fashionable watering-hole for the international Sapphic set'³⁵ and it is this set's intrigues, relationships and behaviour that the novel portrays. Linklater writes,

For a time it seemed that Capri would regain its pre-war gaiety, as the artists and the homosexuals began to return [...] The first parties were given and the villas began to fill up. But the mood had changed. Before the war a certain decorum had prevailed, even at Count Jack [d'Adelsward-Fersen]'s hallucinating parties, but the new arrivals recognised no limits. They sniffed cocaine and ether, they gave parties which scandalised the native Capresi, war profiteers from Naples ate till they vomited, drunken British officers forgot they were gentlemen and picked fights with the waiters, and the first lesbians made their appearance fishing for girls and quarrelling over their catches in Morgano's. They danced to jazz rather than ragtime, drank cocktails in place of wine, and their humour had a cruel edge.³⁶

There are in the novel episodes of cocaine sniffing, drunken British officers picking fights, 'stingers' rather than wine and a great deal of spite and cruelty among the lesbians. The Mackenzies knew some of the latter on Capri personally – Mimi Franchetti, Renata Borgatti, and Romaine Brooks are *Extraordinary Women's* Rosalba, Cléo and Olimpia respectively. 'Every one of the characters in *Extraordinary Women* is an exact portrait with a single exception; Rory Freemantle is a composite creation of my own'.³⁷

The novel's central character is Rosalba Donante, Italian and part-Swiss, who inspires love, lust and jealousy in all those she meets, and who is perfectly conscious of this power over others. She exploits it by deliberately breaking up couples, singling out new 'victims', and keeping Rory, her most loyal admirer, just within reach for when she has need of flattery or money. The reader is alerted early on to her 'lack of humour, her capacity for intrigue, her childish vanity, her egoism and her insincerity' (86) but it is not until later on that she gradually loses her power, as more rivals arrive on Sirene; these no longer succumb to her charms, but see her shallow and manipulative nature. Her desperation culminates in a farcical scene in which she and Zoe, a drunken American lesbian, compete to seduce an Italian youth, Carmine (neither succeeds).

Friendships and loves are formed in Paris, in Rome, in Switzerland, among Russian and English aristocrats, wealthy Americans born abroad, and continental artists and musicians; it is to Sirene that this ultra-cosmopolitan set comes for extended visits, letting villas or staying in luxurious hotels. Some of the characters and places from *Vestal*

³⁵ Linklater, 186.

³⁶ Linklater, 182.

³⁷ Mackenzie, *My Life and Times*, 138. Ezra Pound's friend Olga Rudge spent time on Capri in 1921 in the company of, among others, Franchetti and Borgatti.

Fire reappear, providing an explicit continuity between the two novels, and confirming the real-life inspiration for the novels.³⁸

This second Sirene novel is once again a social satire, but cast in a form resembling a harlequinade: again, formal features are based on historical Italian forms. The harlequinade's roots lie in the *commedia dell'arte*, an Italian theatre form reaching its peak in the Renaissance. Its appeal to Mackenzie would also lie in his own background (a travelling theatre troupe, family-run popular theatre in which for a while he himself acted). The harlequinade, rather than soapbox invective, pokes fun at contemporary issues (much as a pantomime); its stock characters are clown-like, without psychological depth, and the plots farcical, at one time exploiting regional dialects and using women rather than men to play the female characters. 'Rosalba was a harlequin' the reader is told (42), referring to the principal figure of the harlequinade, who is shrewd, opportunistic, always in search of female companionship, with the cunning of a child. In a scene of humiliation for Rosalba late in the book, in a conversation involving a *pulce* (flea), a pun renders her as 'Pulcinella' (240), (in English 'Punch'), the stupid servant figure, contradictory, both bold and cowardly, and incongruously masked as a cockerel. Her unlikely 'Columbine' (the charming, comical companion of Harlequin) is Rory, Mackenzie's grotesque creation, a rich English woman with 'hispid' jaw, whose twenty-five years in Paris have been spent as an unsuccessful imagist-then-symbolist poet, a promoter of female boxing and breeder of French bulldogs.

As in *Vestal Fire*, Mackenzie uses classical quotations to start and end his novel, and to head each chapter. This time they are all taken from Sappho, the female Greek poet (seventh century B.C.) associated with lesbianism. The quotations (and the utterances of some of the characters) are transcribed in ancient Greek characters but – perhaps as a concession to readers who may not be fluent in this script (women in the 1920s were not usually allowed to learn Greek) – are translated into English. The intellectual allusions – such as to Trimalchio, (a character in Petronius's *Satyricon*), Swinburne, Phoenician culture – imply an educated reader, as well as a writer displaying his own literary credentials. They furnish the writing with a strong sense of a literary tradition rooted in Western civilization: Swinburne translated Sappho; the Phoenicians invented a phonetic alphabet with which

³⁸ See for instance 144-45, in which the Misses Pepworth-Norton, Count Marsac and Mrs Ambrogio appear, the latter with her characteristic speech style from *Vestal Fire*. Such places as Zamponi's café, the Hotels Augusto and Quisisana, Anasirene and Monte Ventoso (all fictional names) and Naples all feature, as well as topographical consistencies such as the zig-zag road from the Marina, the 'funiculare' and the road between Sirene and Anasirene. Rory has letters of introduction to Count Marsac and can see his Villa Hylas from her own (56).

classical Greek literature developed; Trimalchio was a debauched nouveau riche surrounded by sycophants much as Rosalba is in the novel.³⁹

The representation of Sirene itself is more symbolically charged than in *Vestal Fire*. Exquisite descriptions of nature, of views, are heavily (and ironically) laden with historical references and intertextual allusion. The novel is in constant dialogue with *South Wind*.⁴⁰ Sirene is approached by boat, as Nepenthe was, and is explicitly differentiated from it in the retelling of a Roman legend (20). *South Wind*'s evocation of Nepenthe is caricatured in the following passage:

In the April when Lulu de Randan arrived with her little governess to cure herself of a precocious attachment, Sirene lay under a heavy mental cloud cast by the war, and it happened that on the day she landed there was also a cloud of *scirocco*, which was sitting upon the island like a great grey goose (20-21).

The deflation in 'great grey goose' of Douglas's 'snowy sea-bird', and the mention of the war, recall the gulf that separates the contexts in which the novels were written. In 1917 nationalism, propaganda and censorship veiled the truth about the scale of destruction and horror of the war; by the late 1920s, with a fuller grasp of its disastrous effects, and with a decade's experience of its aftermath, the calm, dilatory certainty manifested in Douglas's novel is no longer plausible.

Elsewhere, Nepenthe in Mackenzie's novel is 'amarantine' and 'a clouded blue as of chalcedony' (104) adopting mineral, biblical, and mythological metaphors in the style of *South Wind*.⁴¹ By Cyril Connolly's assessment, Mackenzie is a practitioner of the mandarin style.⁴² This, as Baldick describes, involved both 'typical attitudes and postures' such as 'dandyism, introspection, and conservative nostalgia' and a prose style that 'is often archaic and preciously "literary" in diction (*nay, lest, sublunary*, and so forth) and elaborate in syntax'.⁴³ Many of the passages describing landscape in *Extraordinary Women* are characterized by a juxtaposition of elements of mandarin prose with the ironic treatment of Romantic discourse. For example,

There was not always a full moon, because even over Sirene the moon behaves normally. But in the evenings there was sometimes a crescent in the green western sky beyond the flat roofs of Anasirene, and sometimes in the east above the hill of Timberio hung a decrescent that faded slowly in the rose and lilac sky of dawn. And even when there was neither ivory crescent nor pearly decrescent nor gibbous yellow moon nor full staring silver moon, there were nights of starshine when the air was so tender that one seemed to be wrapped in petals and fanned perpetually by the wings of moths (147).

³⁹ The *Satyricon* (written around 60 A.D.) is sometimes said to be the first novel-like narrative.

⁴⁰ *Extraordinary Women* is prefaced by a short letter to 'My dear Norman Douglas' who 'sent me to Sirene by the magic of your conversation so dearly enjoyed among the fogs of London fifteen years ago' (5).

⁴¹ *Extraordinary Women*, 104. Amaranthine is a deep purple-red colour, usually associated with the mythological flower amaranth of unfading, eternal beauty. Chalcedony is a blue gemstone, mentioned in the bible as being the founding stone of the New Jerusalem.

⁴² See for instance *Enemies of Promise* (1938) (London: Routledge & Paul, 1949), 14, 23.

⁴³ Baldick, 393.

The qualifying 'even' in the first line lampoons the notion of island enchantment (on which *South Wind* is predicated). At work is the Romantic language of metaphorically-invoked sensuous delight ('tender' air, 'wrapped in petals' 'fanned perpetually by the wings of moths'), associated with Italy, set against a pedantic, rational and metonymic discourse (the listing of the possible permutations of moon-types), quite British in its common-sensical irreverence.

It is the narrator's voice which is in dialogue with a superseded Romantic vision of Italy; the British characters continue to foster such a vision. Rory, in her misguided infatuation, sees her ambitious rebuilding of the Villa Beer as the creation of 'a shrine fit for Rosalba to hallow for the rest of her life' (62). She renames it Villa Leucadia; its appeal lies in the view through the loggia: 'a view such as the heart which has Italy graved inside of it aches for, desiring that lucid air threaded with the scent of how many aromatic grey herbs, desiring those crystalline deeps, those classic mountains and history-haunted shores, and most of all that timeless azurous peace swung between sea and sky' (90-91). This is not the topographical view itself, but an object of desire (the heart aches for it), a generic view which resides in the communal English imagination ('that lucid air', 'how many herbs', 'those crystalline deeps', generic mountains and shores), a great open space devoid of traces of man, and 'timeless'. It is a construction of an Italy desired by the educated English person, derived from innumerable literary and artistic representations. In clear contrast, Rosalba, in a battle of one-upmanship with her interlocutor, extols the virtues of Rory's villa, claiming it possesses 'the additional advantages of electric light and a carriage road passing the front gate' (65). For an Italian, these utilitarian features amount to enhancements which British representations of Italy (as will be seen in later chapters) tend to denigrate. Italians, it is suggested, embrace the modern.

The hopes Rory invested in the view from the Villa Leucadia are dashed: Rosalba never does fulfil Rory's fantasy of their cohabitation; her 'natural environment' is the Hotel Augusto, where so many of the party scenes occur. The hotel setting bears its own significance in relation to the time in which the novel is set. Soldiers back from the horrors of the front, civilians in need of holidays, entrepreneurs and property developers made newly wealthy by the war and looking for new investments, flocked to Capri and indulged to excess. The hotel represents social breakdown in microcosm: rootlessness, temporariness, an attitude of *carpe diem*, also the seductive comfort of luxury and of breaking the bonds of responsibility and domesticity. 'And the guests belonged to a new world. They were the product of the war [...] These *nouveaux riches* on holiday were in the brightness of their hues, in the resemblance of each one to his neighbour, in their restless



leaps and goggle eyes and gaping mouths like a shoal of stranded mackerel' (166). The lack of restraint – in clothes, in sexual behaviour, in spending – was in part a response to the sense of restriction, change and pessimism of the post-war period and in fiction this satirical rendering of the extravagance, transgression and glamour of the Sirenian lesbian set contributed to an evolving set of texts challenging the taboo of lesbianism, which Baldick calls

the 'period' vice most often exploited by novelists in the War years and the Twenties. The literary discovery of lesbianism was by no means, though, a liberatory celebration of sapphic love. On the contrary it tended to use lesbian characters as targets against which could be vented public (and some authors' private) anxieties about the general insurgence of women into masculine spheres of economic and professional power.⁴⁴

Rosalba is the one Italian protagonist in these Sirene novels: she is distinguished from the crowd of minor Italian players by her supposed wealth (with which she buys the devotion of all the simple people), her partly Swiss background, and her idiosyncratic speech: typically a mixture of English, French and Italian: "One cannot walk about this lovely place with two such ugly women, I think. *Dis, Lulu, tu seras contente être ma petite amie sirénienne? Ah, qu'il fait bon ici! E la luna cara! Che sguardo simpatico!* Don't you think the moon is very sweet, my dear?" (42). Her arrival on Sirene is, each time, 'a triumph' (86), but the triumph is figured in terms of the natives' reception of her, and the rhetoric employed reduces them to anonymous crowds or groups, as misshapen, as classical figures, and as faintly idiotic.⁴⁵ This passage exemplifies this rhetoric:

Such kissing there was of her hand by bare-legged old market-women and shrill welcoming children! Such shaking there was of it by the familiar loiterers of the Piazza who, peaked and hunched though they all were by four years of war, forgot those years for a moment in the grasp of that sunburnt boyish hand. [...] She hurried into Zamponi's Café to embrace Donna Maria; and it was Persephone embracing Demeter; [...] Fat Ferdinando, Donna Maria's son, came forward to greet her with little black eyes twinkling in his great firmament of a face (35).

Rosalba is aligned – as Caloveglia is in *South Wind* – with the elite expatriate community, and although a protagonist, as an Italian is shown to be of impoverished nobility, reliant on others' generosity, and devious.

Carmine, another Italian character, is the son of a chemist⁴⁶ whose low social status is the cause of the young Lulu's removal to Sirene. Their breathless passion for each other meets with her mother's disapproval; he is portrayed stereotypically as a latin lover:

⁴⁴ Baldick, 378-79. Other texts mentioned by Baldick as containing 'predatory, monstrous, or grotesque lesbian types' include Lawrence's *The Fox* (1923), Doris Kilman in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and Dorothy L. Sayers's *Unnatural Death* (1927). Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (a more serious, sympathetic study) was withdrawn soon after its publication in 1928.

⁴⁵ Robertson (in *Compton Mackenzie: An Appraisal of His Literary Work* (1954)) does not even mention the Italian characters in his remarks on the Sirene novels, while Beauman (in her 1986 introduction to *Vestal Fire*) notes merely Mackenzie's 'unusual and intuitive sympathy, with female characters, with servants, with the *demi-mondé*'.

⁴⁶ Possibly an allusion to Gino, the son of a dentist in E.M. Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905).

“*Dimmi, Lulu,*” breathed the youth, who was like two or three million others in Italy, but not less attractive for that. “*Mi vuoi bene?*” (9). He reappears two and a half years older, after ‘two or three months of active service, having made friends with an influential member of that most powerful secret society in Europe – the society of people who have something to do with the management of big hotels’ (176). The note of contempt for this upstart ‘society’ reverberates in the description of Carmine who aspires to join it, with his new wealth, a new mature demeanour: ‘He had already acquired that magnificent manner which distinguishes the management of big hotels. He was neatly dressed. He danced well. He was tall and he was as good-looking as a Southern Italian can be’. No Italian character in the literature of this period appears to wear money or outside influence well: they invariably adopt a swagger and an unappealing pretentiousness in the eyes of the English onlooker. Money (or Anglo-American manners) render impure what is perceived as their essential simplicity and natural subordination.

Carmine’s surname is never given, and although a key player in the sub-plot he is always an object of the narrator’s ridicule, reductively (and ironically) defined by his body parts – ‘a judicial calm, which only the lustre of his brown eyes and the flush on his velvet cheeks prevented appearing unnatural when he accepted their kisses’ (217) – and his speech: to his American seducer he begs,

‘Madame, please let us march. I am so excited. You must please have some misericord for my ardent spasms.’

‘Say, did you learn English in a fire-insurance office?’

‘No, madame, I have learnt him in the language school. I no speak well, yes?’ (223).

Indeed, as in *Vestal Fire*, other minor Italians are cast in diminutive terminology – ‘little’, (the violinist on pages 40, 114, 167, 192), or comically inept: ‘the little red-haired maid, her brows meeting in an anxious frown over the responsibility of her task’ (105); fat, or deferent, or in the case of the *maresciallo*, both: “*Sempre a Suo servizio,*” he gurgled as he wrung her slim boyish hand in his pudgy fist [...] a shrug of his fat shoulders’ (248). Thus the unarticulated paradigm against which the native Sirenians are measured is one resembling slim, educated, principled people; indeed *Vestal Fire*’s central signifier of an Italian incomprehensible Other – ‘O Gobetto – is barely human. While the text plays with the kinds of metaphors and stereotypes that have for centuries appeared in British writing on Italians, no attempt is made at moving outside of these parameters, so that once again most minor Italian characters are affirmed in their status as comic foils.

As an intermittent focalizer, Rory’s English consciousness regards a piece of land, assuming (‘no doubt’, ‘must have’) its decay is due to the incompetent profiteering of an Italian: ‘The land was probably an abandoned vineyard. No doubt formerly there had

been olives all the way up, and then some avid peasant must have cut them down, dreaming of a richer return from vines'.⁴⁷ It has the effect of rendering the Italians as naively inept. There is always an underlying suspicion, or assumption, that the natives (of whatever social standing) are swindling the visitors – Dr Squillace for example, 'looked very grave, because the graver he looked the more he felt he could charge' (124) – which both reinforces an essentialist construction of Italians as cheats, and reduces all Anglo-Italian relationships to cynical transactions between moneyed outsiders and grasping natives. Furthermore, as in the other two novels, the minor Italians' subjectivities exist only by virtue of the presence of the non-natives. In the elision of verbatim speech in the narrative, identified in the portrait of Carlo in *Vestal Fire* above, the narrator colonizes the thought of the homologous 'Sirenesi': 'All the Sirenesi knew [...] the natives felt [...] They expected [...] the Sirenesi only suspected [...] in the eyes of the Sirenesi [...] they were not capable of being shocked [...] the Sirenesi [...] disliked ugliness [...] They were genuinely sorry for Rosalba' (87). Sirene is inclusive and exclusive of Italians, including them as generalized minor characters who are nonetheless central to the novels' comicality; yet also as expropriated, owned, or relegated to the margins. The idea of Italy implied in Mackenzie's texts is one that both adopts and engages critically with the literary stereotypes that will be revisited in the ensuing chapters.

The attitude of the wealthy foreigners in *Vestal Fire* and *Extraordinary Women* is grounded in an implicit belief in their entitlement to build villas on the island, exploit labour, behave badly with impunity, akin to the manner of British colonialists. At the end of *Extraordinary Women*, it is an assertion of her Englishness to herself that saves Rory from further humiliation before Rosalba:

'After all, damn it, I am English,' said Rory aloud, stretching out her hispid chin at this wash of golden southern air and defying its fragrance by lighting up the strongest cigar she had. And it was with a profound consciousness of being English that Rory strode up the long rocky diagonal that gradually mounted the flank of Monte Ventoso, grasping an alpenstock with one hand, a packet of bread and cheese with the other. She was pestered for some of the way by various bands of very ragged and very dirty children who wanted to guide her to the summit, and who when she refused them this gratification wanted her to accept the limp bunches of crimson cyclamens they had been gathering in the copses. And their pestering fed her Anglo-Saxon consciousness. Those whining-reiterated cries for *soldi* and cigarettes sustained her. She derived a genuine pride from her unmistakably English appearance, though yesterday she would have felt hurt at being mistaken for a tourist (249).

The short-lived begging of these poverty-stricken children, and the wretchedness of their floral offerings, inflate her sense of her Englishness, a sense of power. Though the reader

⁴⁷ *Extraordinary Women*, 57. In *Vestal Fire* the Italians' lack of commercial nous is exemplified in this passage about an artist, Henry Jones: 'Within a few months of settling in Sirene the painter married the lovely daughter of old Cangiani, a peasant who owned large olive groves on the slopes of the Caprera. Cangiani cut down most of his olives to plant vines, supposing them to be more profitable. When Henry succeeded to the control of the property on his father-in-law's death, he dug up the vines and built villas, which were much more profitable than either' (62).

is invited to laugh at Rory's 'bread-and-cheese' Englishness, her purposeful resistance to the seductive Italian air, it is ultimately her literate 'Anglo-Saxon consciousness' which will read the signs of past civilizations inscribed in the landscape. From the summit (symbolically charged as a position of power and panoptic vision) she contemplates citizenship:

The view before her spanned too much of history, offered too much of beauty. Trojan and Goth, Roman and Greek, Oscan, Norman, Spaniard, Angevin, Saracen, each in his turn had left a sign and a legend of his passage. One could no longer be English. One could not even be a citizen of the world. Time alone was here one's country, where the windless gold of this October day diffused a richer peace than Rome's (249).

It is the contemplation of the Italian island's landscape that provides a context for the sense of the loss of Englishness: Italian landscapes in literature invariably bear the traces (physical or imaginary) of past civilizations, and here their profusion merely underlines their transience. This post-war world no longer offers the certainty of an identity grounded in nationhood.

Englishness re-emerges at the novel's end with the arrival of Rory's new companion, an effeminate Englishman, 'gushing' over tea – "Oh, Rory," he panted. "I've just walked up from Sirene, and I'm simply dying for a cup of tea!" [...] Rosalba had never sighed for tea like this' (252-53). The irruption of the English voice (thoughts of tea in the most incongruous of situations) buys into an ideology of home, comfort and familiarity which comically contrasts with Romantic exoticism, and aptly marks a shift in writing about Italy that had occurred by the end of the 1920s.

The Capri novels discussed in this chapter can be seen as belonging to what Baldick calls a "'Twenties" literary culture of esoteric and largely apolitical writing' in his scheme of early twentieth century writing which reasserts 'the significant departures from realism not among modernist works so much as in the traditions of modern Romanticism (Yeats, D.H. Lawrence) and in the overlooked corpus of the period's prose romances'.⁴⁸ All three novels adopt conventional rhetorical habits of writing on Italy, such as the aestheticization of landscape, the inscription of a natural simplicity into the Italian characters, or their evocation in terms of incongruous speech or gestures. But while Douglas uses these to offer a pleasurable excursion into heterodox values, suggesting the potential of Italian culture and climate to offer the northerner an alternative mode of being, Mackenzie undercuts this ideological ground by subjecting it to satire.

⁴⁸ Baldick, 394, 401.

Chapter 2

Tuscany: Unbending Before the Shrine

The very word 'Tuscany' generates a powerful set of images and associations familiar today through (and exploited by) the travel industry, advertising, films, television documentaries and so on. The images and vocabulary employed in these various media have become clichéd, endlessly recycling as they do a construction of an idyllic Tuscany based on features of its rural landscapes, such as cypress trees, 'golden' undulating fields and fertile valleys dotted with medieval villages. Florence has its own set of associations in literature, primarily derived from its significance as a Renaissance city, with the concomitant notions of rebirth, vitality and neo-classicism.

In this chapter it will be argued that early twentieth-century writing on Tuscany is not merely pandering to popular taste (it had long been a favoured tourist destination), but contributes to the broader project of defining Englishness; Tuscany is a microcosm of everything that was felt to be good about Italy, and in a wider sense what was felt to be best about England. Edwardian travel writers treat it in a similar way to other publications on the highways and byways of England, charting and idealizing it as a distinct region. There was at that time an interest in hill-towns, of which Tuscany has many, and their associations with medieval art. English visitors 'were leaving the beaten tourist track and making their way to churches and galleries in sleepy medieval towns like Padua, Assisi, Volterra, Perugia, Orvieto, Pavia, Vicenza, and San Gimignano, disturbing the dust and gloom of centuries in order to peer at frescos and altar-pieces and sepulchral monuments with the aid of tallow-candles and opera-glasses'.¹ This reverent activity – evident in Hutton's work for example – carried with it a certain degree of intellectual snobbery, satirized in E.M. Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905).

A Room With a View (1908) (and the 1986 Merchant-Ivory film it inspired) provides one of the most well-known, almost iconic, representations of Tuscany. It will be shown that Forster's fictional Tuscany has proved the most durable one of the period, because it draws on a network of contemporary discourses about the region, and reconfigures them as a symbolic space in which bourgeois English can experience a desired, heightened version of England, and in which right-minded individuals can supposedly free themselves from the constraints and pressures of class guilt and English social mores. The Tuscan setting seems to promise liberation to the 'good' characters, to suggest the possibility of glimpsing a reality beyond the prescriptive boundaries laid down

¹ Pemble, 200.

by Baedeker and the implicitly outdated mediating discourses of Christianity, chivalry, and Victorian propriety.

As Pemble emphasizes, Ruskin's influence on the Victorians' taste in art derived from his re-evaluation of pre-Renaissance art – art based on Christianity rather than on Classicism.² Just as Ruskinian medievalism persisted into the twentieth century, despite the growth of Pater's influence and art movements such as aestheticism, expressionism and futurism, so the worship of Renaissance art, and its Classical, pagan inspiration endured.³ Thus, a great deal of travel-writing of the period was generated by an interest in Tuscany's artistic heritage, not simply the Renaissance treasures of Florence, but the medieval frescoes, paintings and architecture of hill-towns like Siena, Volterra and San Gimignano.

But the period's interest in anthropology, nature and folklore also influenced the writing on Tuscany, though with different emphases and aims. Like Maurice Hewlett, E.M. Forster and Edward Hutton utilize Tuscany's simple, rural landscapes and the common people to advance an image of Tuscany which harks back to an idea of a pre-industrial England, in the spirit of Edward Thomas's 'South Country'. As suggested in the Introduction (above), Tuscany can be seen as a synecdoche, a fragment of Italy that represents the whole, but a fragment constructed as the peaceful, rural image so favoured in the era in the evocation of Englishness. The space of literary Tuscany can be seen as a heterotopian one, insofar as it enfolds juxtaposed, disparate spaces, such as medieval and Renaissance epochs alive in the present, the Anglocentric Pension community in Florence, nature 'imitating' Shelley's poetry; for Foucault, the heterotopia is 'a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory'.⁴

Hewlett's *The Road in Tuscany* (1904, two volumes) provides a euphoric account of travel through Tuscany's hill-towns, which explicitly prioritizes the people over the art in the attempt to represent the 'true' Tuscany. Read alongside his American illustrator's later account of the journeys, it becomes evident that Hewlett has concealed the prosaic details

² 'It was Ruskin, more than anyone else, who transformed the art treasures of Italy into a Christian preserve; a source of edification and reassurance for Christian travellers. [...] Until the First World War, received opinion about Mediterranean art remained Ruskinian [in Italy]' (Pemble, 208, 210).

³ As Pemble goes on to note, by Edwardian times, 'intellectuals were the disciples of other gurus. From Walter Pater they learnt that art was not religious, but a religion – the child and the parent of passionate experience. [...] Bernard Berenson, in the late 1890s, defined excellence in terms that nullified Ruskin's moral viewpoint, discarding emotional expression as redundant and religious idealism as superseded and substituting the "purely artistic" qualities of Tactile Values, Movement, and Space-Composition as the only possible criteria of permanent greatness in painting' (209). Forster famously satirizes Berenson's 'Tactile Values' in Ch. II of *A Room With a View*.

⁴ From Foucault's 'Of Other Spaces', *Heterotopias* (1967), <<http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>>.

of the journey – its discomforts, his cortege, the actual encounters with people – generating a highly contrived and ornamental vision. Hutton continues the exultant tone in another town-by-town account, *Siena and Southern Tuscany* (1910), with an eye more on the edification of his readers through ekphrastic passages and the plea for a return to Christian values. Forster's fictional depictions of Tuscany manage to undermine the snobberies and privileges of English tourists through the ironic treatment of people who claim to 'really' know it. Although advancing the notion that the English encounter with an Italy represented by an idyllic Tuscany exposes the anxious, puritanical state of conventional English life, Forster's novels make a leap in literary self-consciousness through focusing on the nuances of social behaviour that are observed among the English there. Aldous Huxley, writing after the First World War, takes up the tropes of writing on Tuscany in the satirical novel of ideas *Those Barren Leaves* (1925) and the short story 'The Rest Cure' (1930) and reworks them to produce texts which manifest (like his travel-writing in *Along the Road: Notes and Essays of a Tourist* (1925)) a jaded, cynical attitude to the tendency of upper-class English people to romanticize Tuscany and its inhabitants. The memory of war, the presence of Fascism, the decadence and unsatisfactory hedonism of the idle rich, as well as the experience of motoring and the sight of rife industrialization, are ubiquitous in Huxley's evocations; Italy has lost its transformative power and, like England, its innocence.

The Incomparable Freshness of Every Hue

Maurice Hewlett: *The Road in Tuscany* (1904)

Although now 'out of print and out of mind'⁵ Hewlett enjoyed enormous popularity at the turn of the century, both in terms of sales and critical reviews, and held prestigious literary posts. He is for example parodied in Beerbohm's *A Christmas Garland* (1912) and in 1930 was still considered significant enough to be included in Cutler and Stiles' *Modern British Authors and their First Editions*. At the time of researching and writing *The Road in Tuscany*, an illustrated two-volume account of journeys between towns, Hewlett was at the height of his success in Britain and the United States. He wrote historical romances, notably *The Forest Lovers* (1898), but, according to Hynes, grew to feel that this 'romantic medievalism [...] was neither challenging enough nor serious enough – and one finds in his letters a diary after about 1900 a growing desire to do something

⁵ Hynes, *Edwardian Occasions: Essays on English Writing in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1972), 173. His romances are however being revived as e-texts, for example through the Project Gutenberg.

more ambitious, something that he called subjective history, or imaginative history'.⁶ This is exemplified by the whimsical use of Hewlett's evident erudition (learned disquisitions on the Renaissance) alternating with extended commentaries on, for example, the imagined life of a woman he watches through a window. His principal claim is that to understand Tuscany one must look at the people rather than the art, the countryside rather than the towns. The opening lines read,

The pretensions of this book to be a companion of Tuscan travel, and a leisurely, sententious commentary upon the country, are based upon two convictions: First, that you don't get to know a country by seeing the great towns of it; second, that, let the history, fine arts, monuments, and institutions be as fine as you please, the best product of your country will always be the people of it, who themselves produced those other pleasant spectacles.⁷

He prides himself on the originality of this approach, boasting, '[Bacdeker] saw the museum, but I saw the custode of it' (II, 69) and asking rhetorically, 'Will he [the traveller] study Tuscany or the Tuscans? I do not hesitate to say that I find people more entertaining than pictures, and more germane to the matter of us all' (II, 70, n.1). However, as will be seen, the powerful romance element of the writing tends toward the depiction of ahistorical subjects: as Hynes observes, 'He paid little attention to political motives, or to economic motives, or to diplomacy, and the general populations of nations scarcely appear. (The world of romance is necessarily emptied of whatever is common, including the common people)'.⁸

Quite apart from exercising and displaying his poetic skills, the success of the book would enable him to finance his wife's expensive motoring and aeronautical interests and his Wiltshire manor house. The project would include the work of a respected American illustrator, Joseph Pennell (1858-1926) and be commissioned by Sir Frederick Macmillan as part of what Pennell terms his 'glorified series of travel books'.⁹ The alliance would not be a happy one (Pennell is not mentioned on the title page and only in passing in the 'Preambulatory Remarks') and the latter's fascinating, if rather sardonic, account of the Tuscan expeditions expose the contradictions of Hewlett's text. Pennell describes the inauspicious preparations he and Hewlett made:

So, by carefully concealing what we really meant to do, we got on, and by means of an ancient road map of Tuscany that I picked up and Hewlett finally appropriated, we arranged in London our route – and if only the ancient highways and byways had existed where they were marked on the map, everything would have been perfect. There were only two other matters: Hewlett did not want me to do the illustrations and I did not like his books. I never tried to read but one or two, and gave them up. He started for Florence in his big car before me. I purchased a fiery motor bicycle and rode after

⁶ Hynes, 178.

⁷ *The Road in Tuscany* (London: Macmillan, 1904), I, 1. As Hewlett himself points out, some of the material had been previously published in the *Quarterly Review*, the *Speaker* and the *Cornhill Magazine*. Henceforward it will be referred to as *Road*; page references will appear within the text.

⁸ Hynes, 179.

⁹ Pennell, *The Adventures of an Illustrator: Mostly in Following His Authors in America and Europe* (Unwin: London, 1925), 268.

him. [...] I was as usual at once arrested, this time for running over a boy on The Lung'Arno, but I arranged that, or the landlord of the Nettuno Hotel did; besides, the boy was not hurt.¹⁰

They arrange to meet in Pisa to begin the first of two tours of Tuscany:

One afternoon, as I loafed, and worked, on the embankment, waiting for Hewlett, who for days had been promising to come, a gorgeous carriage and pair passed with feathers on the horses' heads, bells on their necks, and a peacock plume in the driver's hat. Inside, a lady and a gentleman lolled – the real Ruskinian 'Milors Inglese' turnout up to date, for the gentleman wore Edward Carpenter openwork sandals. The carriage turned in to the city. After the Angelus, after the glow had left the marble mountains and the lights had drawn the curve of the winding river by their reflections in the water, I went back to the hotel and dined and then found Hewlett's card. He was at a hotel round the corner, and round I went. There, with him, were the Milors, and the carriage was Hewlett's and they were his guests. We – I because of having been arrested, he because of his turnout – were the sensations of Pisa. They had driven from Florence by way of Empoli and Lucca and were going on to San Gimignano. I was to cover their route in the reverse direction (269).

Hewlett's grandiose entrances always cause a stir, if Pennell is to be believed, whether among the townspeople, the local bigwigs, or resident expatriates, even though they evidently fail to impress Pennell himself. What is remarkable is the lack of reference to the size or grandeur of the Hewlett party in *Road*: there are merely brief allusions (such as, 'But some frowsy, dark-browed girls craned from upper windows in Pontedera to see us clatter through' (II, 29), or 'While we saw the sights of Paganico, the Pagani saw us and our equipage, and marvelled greatly' (II, 162), and occasional anecdotal reference to Trombino the driver, 'the jaunty proprietor of two old horses and a *milordo* – for thus he calls his carriage' (I, 325), or 'the pertest Florentine that ever sucked a lemon, and one of the best drivers' (II, 178).¹¹ Nor do the circumstances of the commission or the relationship with the illustrator feature. For the most part, *The Road in Tuscany* is a fanciful, stylized account of the region, in which dominate Hewlett's knowledge of medieval and Renaissance Tuscan history and art, his idiosyncratic imagination and his personal delight in such simple pleasures as lunching on bread and cheese in the shade of a tree.

On arrival in San Gimignano, Pennell writes,

Changed was the towered city; a big hotel jammed with those British one sees only in Italy and those Americans who make one ashamed of one's country by aping the English. By judicious whacks instead of soldi, one may escape the pestiferous plague of boys after a day or so. And once the people get to know you, they take your side and hammer the children themselves. [...] There was a relief for sale that kept Hewlett longer. The town people, the padrone, the mayor, the doctor, the owner, and the milors were insistent that he should buy it; but he neither got the relief nor got rid of the owner (271).

In contrast, Hewlett writes of the same town,

Blind towers, windowless houses, blank walls, present an inscrutable front: you think, a town cut in blocks, like something of the East, where men build against the sun. To enter the gate is to trust

¹⁰ Pennell, 269.

¹¹ Pennell is far more informative: 'Trombino, the driver, drooped, the only time I ever saw him do so, for was he not the biggest man in Ponte a Mensola, hired by Hewlett because he had killed more people than there were left in the place – quite a Little Novel out of Tuscany. He and his stories would have been most useful to Hewlett, only the famous author's Italian more or less stopped short with the Cinquecento period. And that was one reason why Giacomo and the Signora, the Milors, had places in his carriage. The great event in Siena was the arrival of Mrs. Hewlett' (272).

oneself to the uncouth companionship of giants. But not at all: the moment you are within you discover the truth. It is all gigantic still, but not monstrous, not humiliating; solemn and wonderful, rather, and silent, a place where beautiful pale people tread softly and never lift their voices, and dream-children, frail as breath and coloured as faintly as wood-flowers, come and stand about you, full of secret knowledge they are forbidden to impart (*Road*, II, 54).

The disjuncture between the social intercourse, minutiae and logistics of the journey, as recounted by the illustrator, and Hewlett's published account of the journey shows how highly mannered and contrived is the Tuscany which Hewlett wishes to convey. The disjuncture at some level is one between life and art, and highlights the significance of both Hewlett's own literary aspirations (in eliding the retelling of actual events) and the expectations of the genre and its readers, predicated on contemporary interest in folklore, medieval art and Hewlett's reputation as a writer of historical novels.¹²

In principle Hewlett's writings are characterized by the idea that the past lives in the present. The Tuscany he projects is both locally idiosyncratic and possesses a Tuscan 'spirit'. He bows to convention ('we must say') in his summary of the Tuscan landscape, evoking the artists most often associated with the region by writers since the Grand Tour; he also makes an explicit connection with a poem that seeks to retrieve a lost, quintessentially English community:

It is pastoral country, yet with a spice of classic formality in the way the towns are dotted in, each exactly fitting its own pedestal. It is, we may say, a Claude Lorrainish, Nicholas Poussinesque sort of country: Nymphs, goats, ruins, towns on hill-tops, bunchy trees, and a velvety texture over all. It has character; it has some mystery, for all those far-off towns look more grandiose than in fact they are. It is quietly but admirably composed; it chastens the fancy; it leads the mind from the politicians to the people, from the artists to the artisans. To put the matter in a nutshell, it is exactly like Gray's *Elegy* – a restrained, academic landscape (II, 115-16).

This particular evocation does not offer an innovative impression of a specific topographical site; rather, it points to pre-existing artistic models of idyllic landscapes; it is an effect of art rather than its source or origin. It invites the reader (who is assumed to share a familiarity with the art and poetry it alludes to) to regard Tuscany as a space of intellectual contemplation, upon which can be projected the aesthetic and moral values associated with a poem that evokes an idyllic England lost to the past. The narrator occupies a superior position, designating himself an 'intelligent traveller' (I,7; *passim*) who disdains the railways and the cities for the road and the country people; yet the text's pervasive emphasis on the centrality of the people is contradicted by the failure to present any instance of an individual Tuscan possessing agency, or of being anything other than an aestheticized object.

¹² Pennell's own opinion is, 'I never read *THE ROAD TO TUSCANY* [*sic*] – only bits of it. I have a standard of literature of my own, and Hewlett did not fit it. I do not like plovers' eggs, anchovies, grapefruit and cepes, and that's what Hewlett's writing was: hors d'œuvres, appetizers and exotics, though not really exotic and not really anything; that is why it was liked. He knew mediæval Italy, but he did not know his way about the land he described and had to have a guide when he went there' (278).

One of his earliest reviewers states he is 'persistently seeking, in life present, and in all records of life past, "buona materia" for a reconstructive study of humanity'.¹³ By applying his particular conception of imagination, epitomized in the literature of Dante and Boccaccio, which 'is more than conceiving, inventing, an act or a person outside experience: it is seeing this act or person *in the doing*, and so minutely as to be able to describe him. It is intellectual second sight' (*Road*, I, 60), Hewlett recreates for himself and for the reader a region and a people he believes unchanged in centuries. He takes the history of Tuscany, rife with feuds and fierce local loyalties, as resulting in negligible social, economic and cultural change within each community:

The Grand Duchy of Tuscany is of nine thousand square miles and no more; but you must reckon to find within it two dozen different nations. You may say with safety that every city was a nation, and indeed that so every city still is. If I were to add that every *paese, paesetto, terra*, every village and hamlet contains a race of men apart from every other, with a peculiar pride, code of custom, religious trend, habit of mind, and that once upon a time the very quarters of each city were as jealous and rigid of their own as the cities themselves, I should not be far wrong (I, 176).

Each community has thus retained through the centuries its own unique identity, and its people are correspondingly rugged as their mountain home ('stern, rock-faced people' (II, 96)) or shorter, or more dignified, or otherwise determined by their environment.

Why can one never mistake the Roman sternness of Volterra for the accipitrine trick of Siena? Wherein do the Lucchesi differ from the Pisani, and how does one know that some square-shouldered, straight-answering *fattore* comes from San Quirico d'Orcia? Here be questions: to which one answer is that all these several peoples have battled it out among themselves. Only the hardest and truest to type have come through, those in whom some double portion of their father's spirit has leapt. Like has bred like; hill-man cleaves to hill-woman, and she can abide in no other man's arms (I, 86).

Fedi comments, 'What Hewlett implied is that with every step and every breath modern-day Tuscans grow to be evidence of their own past. The assumption that brings the decisive twist inside this blend of tourism and racial determinism is that, given the history of Tuscany's towns [...] Tuscany is the perfect place to discover what life was like in a pre-modern civilization.'¹⁴

Such a theory is redolent of the social Darwinism and eugenics in vogue at the time, feeding into the white supremacist ideology so crucial to the British Empire. Since, as Fedi puts it, change is 'beyond the power of its people, [since] the authentic people of Tuscany [are] a dying breed, the last descendants of medieval merchants and bishops, soldiers and artisans', Hewlett associates stasis with authenticity, thereby proscribing the possibilities of advance and diversification that modernity might offer. In the same kind of gesture, people are portrayed as content, and exquisitely picturesque, in their poverty. Their hunger and abjectness are aestheticized, a sleight of hand which effaces the need for

¹³ Wilkins, 'Maurice Hewlett on Tuscan Literature, I', *Modern Language Notes*, 20 (1905), 148.

¹⁴ Fedi, 'The Bargain with Pistoia: Tuscany's Hidden Treasures' <<http://www.italianstudies.org/hui216/hewlett.html>>.

transformation of social conditions which would pose a threat to existing power relations. Peasants are conflated syntactically with their livestock and even with the land they work, endowed with Hellenic or Renaissance qualities and are utterly without subjectivity:

Here are pigs in the clover and geese on the grass, beans in flower and golden-tipped vines in the bullace-trees; and here are the peasants in the field, men and boys and girls, in rags which fold about them like bronze, and with glossy brown legs which Donatello might have copied, and indeed did copy. What he got also of theirs, the dignity of these dumb creatures, their slow, reposeful eyes, measured motions, patience, akin to the great beasts, their fellow-labourers, or the great earth, mother of us all, is a thing more enviable. To be at once so graced, so toil-worn, and so still! Herein they resemble their mother; even now they are so close that their very hue is of her; at a distance they are as the clods, nearer like dusty trees, or landmarks spattered with dry mud and caught straws (I, 334).

The passage moves on to the contemplation of a young peasant, who however remains a generic exemplar of his kind, 'a lad in a felt hat, such as the Greeks gave the young Hermes', eating and sleeping with his animals. 'I suppose his vocabulary contained a hundred words, all monosyllables; and theirs nearly as many. The happier hel' (I, 335). Like Norman Douglas in *Siren Land* (1911), (see Chapter 4 below), Hewlett revisits the trope of the beautiful boy peasant more akin to the animals he tends than to the 'intelligent traveller' who observes him. Moreover, (again like Douglas) Hewlett deplors army conscription and the attendant acquisition of literacy: 'It makes little difference. His term over, he comes back to the land, to his dumb outlook and his monosyllables. What is he to read? To whom shall he write? With whom is his commerce to be? So the earth draws him back with her other children – the hens, the goats, and dogs' (I, 335-36). As Brillì points out, Hewlett conceals the presence of the actual population he encounters on his travels, such as the wealthy aristocrats, bourgeois industrialists, or farmers struggling with the vagaries of nature,¹⁵ as well as the various transactions, invitations and logistics of his itinerary. The resultant text manifests an anxiety to promulgate an idea of a stable, racially pure, rural society, one which many other writers of the time would aspire to evoke when writing about England.

Edward Hutton: *Siena and Southern Tuscany* (1910)

Hutton, the prolific travel writer and art historian, belonged to the same sort of elite expatriate community outside Florence that is satirized in *Room*; he corresponded

¹⁵ Brillì, 'Il Libro Illustrato: *The Road in Tuscany* di Maurice Hewlett', in Brillì and Neri (eds.), *Un Artista Americano in Toscana: Joseph Pennell 1858-1926* (Sansepolcro: Silvana Editoriale, 1999), 42. The original text reads, 'Non un cenno dunque alla popolazione coeva di Hewlett dal marzo al maggio del 1902, non all'aristocratico senese che tiene i denari nella cassa, non al ceto Borghese che fa la propria comparsa in varie città con l'incipiente industrializzazione, non al contadino della Valdichiana o al pastore maremmano impegnati in una strenua lotta con la natura'.

with many leading figures of the day¹⁶ and had an unlikely friendship with Norman Douglas.¹⁷ He wrote an authoritative life of Boccaccio (1910) and founded the British Institute in Florence in 1917. His comfortable upbringing in Hampstead and the west country (his mother was from Somerset) was marred when at fifteen his father, a Sheffield cutlery heir, died; Hutton renounced a university education and married early, moving to Corbignano, three kilometres from Florence, where he lived for much of his life (wintering in Sicily or Rome). Largely self-taught, he had desired Italy from an early age, inspired by his reading of Ruskin, Pater and Lee (nearly twenty years his senior) and produced a large number of books about its regions (see Introduction above). Deeply religious, Hutton disdains the tourist who rushes past a pre-determined series of sights, as opposed to the traveller, and forms an analogy with the modern Christian who has not the time nor desire for contemplation and lacks deep religious conviction. In 1928 Hutton converted to Catholicism in Assisi, and received honours from the Pope and the British authorities in a long lifetime of service to both. However, despite his reverence for the saints and religious art of Tuscany, his Catholicism was what Pemble calls 'Vatican Catholicism: cosmopolitan, sophisticated, and smart' rather than popular Catholicism. Like Compton Mackenzie, who was also received into the Catholic church, Hutton aligned himself far more with the British intellectual and establishment circles in which he moved than with the Italian people and 'conversion meant substituting one form of religious elitism for another'.¹⁸

Hutton deploys *Siena and Southern Tuscany* to promulgate his faith at every opportunity; ostensibly a town-by-town guide to the region, with extended commentary on their works of art, richly illustrated with black and white and colour plates and photographs, the text frequently meditates on the loss of religion in contemporary life: 'there are few refuges in all Tuscany more secure from the rampant and sentimental

¹⁶ His wide correspondence attests to his prestigious standing: his papers at the British Institute in Florence include letters from (among many others) Harold Acton, James Barrie, Max Beerbohm, Arnold Bennett, Bernard Berenson, Kenneth Clark, J.L. Garvin (editor of *The Observer* from 1908-1914), Graham Greene, Maurice Hewlett, Christopher Isherwood, David Lloyd George, Harold Macmillan, F.T. Marinetti, Alice Meynell, Raymond Mortimer, Pino Orioli, Janet Ross, Giles Gilbert Scott, Arthur Symons (to whom he dedicated *Ravenna: A Study*), Edward Thomas, G.M. Trevelyan, Evelyn Waugh and Rebecca West. See <<http://www.britishinstitute.it/ing/hutton.htm>>.

¹⁷ It was a friendship which lasted all their lives, with Hutton helping Douglas out on many occasions through his contacts with influential or wealthy friends, publishers and Italian officials. It was through Hutton that Douglas made friends with Reggie Turner, Faith Mackenzie and others. Despite problems with collaborative writing they remained friends and Hutton was one of the few to receive letters from the elderly Douglas towards the end of the latter's life. Douglas dedicated *Alone* (1921) to Hutton who had serialized it in 1918 in his *The Anglo-Italian Review*. In 1919 he was central in Douglas's decision to visit Greece, and chose Douglas as his companion on his own first visit there, for three weeks in 1928 (see Holloway, 256, 264-65).

¹⁸ Pemble, 272.

materialism of our time than S. Gimignano'.¹⁹ The text seems underpinned by a hankering for a past time of piety and civic life of which the Tuscan hill-towns were once the epitome. They appear now as desolate, as in this passage in the chapter on San Gimignano:

Some wonder is gone out of the world. To-day all Europe is at peace, but we can do nothing to compare with what these four little cities did in the intervals of trying to annihilate one another. Why? Some wonder is gone out of the world. Is it, can it be, our Faith?

That question occurs very often to the traveller as he passes through almost every city in Tuscany; it is insistent in Florence, in Siena, in Pisa, nor is it likely to be dumb even in S. Gimignano. This little valiant town, so lonely on the hills, was once the centre of a vigorous life, civil and religious, even intellectual and artistic. It produced and employed painters; a poet was born here, little S. Fina stood for it among the blessed in heaven. Now the place is less than nothing, a curiosity for strangers; it has no life of its own, and is incapable of producing anything but a few labourers for the fields. As you pass through its narrow ways and look on the monuments of the Middle Age and the Renaissance, you find everything deserted and a cruel poverty the only tyrant left. Some virtue is gone out of it. Why? [...] The whole place is deserted. A few beggars, a lounge here and there, an old woman spinning at a door, a few children playing on the steps – these and the sun are all that life has left the Piazza of S. Gimignano which Dante trod as ambassador for the Florentine Republic. Only the past seems to remain here, magically embalmed for once by the indifference of men (31-32).

Rhetorical questions are, as can be seen here, a feature of the text and harangue the reader somewhat. The reverence for the past implicit in every page of *Road* is shared by Hutton; but unlike Hewlett, Hutton sees the past as embalmed rather than alive in the present. He, too, chooses to remain silent on the dates and circumstances of his itinerary, displaying his erudition, literariness (as in the personification of poverty) and perpetuating the tradition of presenting elements of a scene as picturesque (people as generic figures forming a tableau: 'a lounge here and there, an old woman spinning at a door, a few children playing on the steps'). He is disposed, however, to register decay and impoverishment where he finds it, though clearly with the purpose of undermining what he perceives to be the defects of modern life. There are shifts in the narrative between personae that are not evident in *Road*; the broodingly nostalgic polemicist can suddenly give way to the voice of the authoritative art historian – a little further on from the passage above comes this one:

On the left wall are the Old Testament scenes in three tiers, painted by Bartolo di Fredi in 1356; on the right are scenes from the New Testament, begun in 1380 by Barna of Siena, and finished by his pupil, Giovanni da Asciano. They win us by their simplicity, the quite naïve power of story-telling, and their charm of colour (33).

The reader is expected to share the point of view of the writer, through the use of 'us', to admire (here as elsewhere) qualities such as simplicity, naivety and charm. Hutton extends the guide-book brief into a hybrid form which incorporates the kind of strong personal views expressed in the essay form and the proselytizing features of a moral tract or

¹⁹ *Siena and Southern Tuscany* (London: Methuen, 1923), 26. Page references will appear parenthetically within the text.

sermon. Indeed, in summarizing San Gimignano's appeal, the qualities the text invokes are notably nun-like – feminized, poor, quiet, kind, humble, graceful:

It is not what she possesses – her pictures and frescoes, and churches and towers – that calls us, though we love that well enough: it is herself we need. She is poor, and her ways are quiet: how hospitable is her inn! She has the inevitable humility of those who have given up the struggle for pre-eminence, the inevitable grace of all those who have learned how to wait in meditation. Indeed, I have not told one-half of her sweetness, nor numbered the half of her treasures, nor told of her country byways, nor altogether understood why I love her so. Yet this I know: she has nothing to do with machinery or the getting of wealth. Come and see.²⁰

Once again, a Tuscan location serves as an epitome of a pre-modern time that 'has nothing to do with machinery or the getting of wealth', those aspects of contemporary society that dismayed so many Edwardian artists and writers. Hutton's simple invitation – 'come and see' – seems to invite not just the student of art history but the potential convert to a more contemplative way of life.

Tuscany puts Hutton's powers of description to the test, frequently resulting, as Pemble has it, in 'absurd hyperboles'.²¹ In this passage on Siena, there is barely any clue as to its physical appearance save perhaps its elevated position on a three-summited hill ('triune' being a word associated with the Christian trinity), whose base is covered in vines, olive trees and corn:

I think perhaps there is nothing in the world quite like Siena, no other place, at any rate, that has just her gift of expression, her quality of joy, of passion, of sheer loveliness. It is true that in Florence you will find a clear, intellectual beauty, virile and full of light; that in Assisi, that little super-terrestrial city in Umbria, a mysterious charm – is it the beauty of holiness? – will discover itself to you in the memory of a love, touching and still faintly immortal, pathetically reminding you of itself like the fragrance of a wild flower on that rude mountain-side; but in Siena you have something more human and not less divine – how shall I say? – you have everything that the heart can desire: a situation lofty and noble, an aspect splendid and yet ethereal, a history brave, impetuous, and unfortunate, a people still living yet still unspoiled by strangers. Yes, Siena set so firmly on her triune hill, towers there even to-day with a gesture of joy, radiant and beautiful, caught about by her vineyards as with a kirtle of green, girdled with silver and gold – the silver of her olives mixed with the gold of her corn.

Hutton, like Vernon Lee (though arguably with less accomplishment) adopts an ornate prose involving long chains of paratactic and hypotactic clauses, rhetorical questions, and hyperbolic lexis (see Chapter 4 below). The struggle to convey Siena, this epitome of Tuscany as it were, demands highly grandiloquent language which seems to preclude any sense of the presence of the writer in a particular place on a particular day: there is no specificity as to climate conditions or to details in buildings, even the vegetation is 'silver' and 'gold'. The volume's photographs and paintings function as a kind of counterbalance, restoring a sense of the art-historical aspect of the book and testifying to the materiality of the region which may have got lost along the way.

²⁰ Hutton, 38. Pemble suggests the value placed in medieval art derived from specifically Christian virtues such as 'dignity, sweetness, purity, strength, pathos, elevation, sublimity'; it is art which 'register[s] a spiritual inspiration superior to the purely intellectual and sensual content of both classical and modern art' (203).

²¹ Pemble, 157.

Crucially, Hutton perceives the town as ‘perfectly herself’, that is, not touched by ‘the modern spirit, a mean utilitarianism [which] is even now overthrowing Venice, and has rebuilt and ruined Florence; but Siena it has not really touched, she remains perfectly herself.’²² Of all Siena’s merits, it is the retention of a presumed essence, its integrity, in the face of ‘a mean utilitarianism’, which prevails. The search for such places, ‘unspoiled by strangers’, galvanizes the travel-writing on England and Italy throughout the early twentieth century. The way it functions in fiction is examined in the following sections.

The Better Class of Tourist

E.M. Forster: *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *A Room with a View* (1908)

Forster, eighteen years younger than Hewlett, was in the process of travelling to Tuscany and writing his two ‘Italian’ novels at the time Hewlett was researching and writing *Road*.²³ Fresh from Cambridge where he graduated in Classics and History, he first visited Italy on an extended trip with his mother, from 1901 to 1902, staying in the stuffily respectable boarding-houses (often English-run) of the tourist trail. Their fellow-guests were predominantly middle-aged or elderly English and American women.²⁴ His biographer Furbank reports that ‘neither he nor his mother had made any Italian friends, nor had they once entered an Italian home; at most they had struck up acquaintance with an occasional hotel-guest or kindly museum-attendant or stationmaster’.²⁵ The few Italians with whom they came into contact were therefore predominantly of lower class and it is they – the waiters, cabdrivers, maids, street vendors – who in the fiction represent the Italian contingent and are portrayed stereotypically.

The overarching theme of Italy having the potential to transform a certain kind of English person is present in Forster very early on and seems to precede his actual

²² Hutton, 68. Compare Arthur Symons: ‘The modern spirit has spoiled Rome, and is daily destroying there. It is more slowly, but not less certainly, destroying Venice, with a literal, calculated destruction. Florence has let in the English, who board there, and a new spirit, not destructive, reverent of past things but superficial with new civilisation, has mingled the Renaissance with the commonplace of the modern world. But Siena is content to remain itself’ (Symons, *Cities of Italy* (London: Dent, 1907), 210.

²³ Where appropriate, *A Room With a View* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) will be referred to as *Room*; *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995) will be referred to as *Angels*, with page numbers occurring parenthetically within the text.

²⁴ Pemble notes, ‘It is clear that by the end of the nineteenth century women were outnumbering men among the tourists in southern Europe’ (77).

²⁵ Furbank, *E.M. Forster: A Life, Volume One: The Growth of the Novelist (1879-1914)* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1977), 96.

encounter with Italy.²⁶ The general critical consensus on the early novels confirms that despite their Italian settings they are fundamentally about the English and Englishness: 'For Forster, as for a long line of tourists from Goethe onwards, the meaning of the Italian journey lay in its seductive invitation to recognise 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 [...] England and Englishness are not simply the framework of the books, but are themselves subject to interrogation'; 'Forster [...] offered the Italian people as a life-affirming contrast to the gloom of English conventionality'.²⁷ The English in his fiction are drawn from a narrow social milieu, but, particularly in *A Room With a View*, the subtleties of social gradations are exposed when they are away from a specific locale in England. By drawing out the complexities of differentiation among the tourists and expatriates – such as who is vulgar, who really knows Italians, their degree of confidence – Forster is undoing the ideological limits of the Hewlettian discourse, which conceals such issues. Just as Hewlett requires an idealized projection of England to affirm and naturalize conservative attitudes, so Forster requires one to stage a performance among his characters of their perceptions of each other, revealing thereby nuances of English snobberies and values.

Forster went to Italy full of the ideas he had gained through his classical studies and through his cultural milieu of an upper-middle-class family environment, public school-educated peers and atheist university dons; he was also coming to terms with an awakening homosexuality, and frustrated at the constraints the circumstances of his travels imposed on him. These tensions and attitudes reverberate in his first piece of fiction, 'The Story of a Panic', the result of an epiphanic experience near Naples.²⁸

²⁶ Furbank writes, 'During his stay in Rome he wrote what he called some "sentimental articles", in which his theme is Southern warmth and love of life, as against the ghosts and glooms, the self-denial and self-consciousness, of the Gothic north' (90).

²⁷ Littlewood, *Sultry Climates: Travel and Sex* (London: Murray, 2002), 87; Dodd, 'England, Englishness, and the Other in E.M. Forster', in Gatrell (ed.), *English Literature and the Wider World; 1876-1918: The Ends of the Earth*, 4 vols (London: Ashfield, 1992), IV, 209, 210; LeFanu, *Rose Macaulay* (London: Virago, 2003), 64. Even his earliest reviewers note the primacy of the English; a reviewer of *Angels* in *The Speaker* (October, 1905) writes, 'What Mr Forster has done with 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' (Gardner (ed.), *E.M. Forster: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1973), 50).

²⁸ Written in 1902, first published in *The Celestial Omnibus* (1911).

In this story – whose themes have been seen as a blueprint for all of his later Italy-based fiction²⁹ – the god of Nature, Pan, throws a picnic near Ravello into chaos. Of all the group – the narrator and his wife, a curate, two spinsters, their nephew Eustace, and an aesthete – it is only Eustace who does not flee in terror: this sullen adolescent instead is transformed by the encounter. His ensuing extraordinary behaviour, including displays of affection towards the fisherboy-waiter Gennaro, scandalizes his English circle and the story culminates in the ecstatic dash towards the sea of Eustace and in Gennaro's sudden, violent death. Furbank notes, 'Despite its crudities, it remains one of his most memorable stories, expressing his feeling of standing in the sunlight at last and possessing his own soul' (92). It contains the principal elements of *A Room With a View* and *Where Angels Fear to Tread*: the middle-class, philistine English party, the epiphanic encounter with Italy and with a lower-class Italian male, the satirical treatment of aesthetic snobbery and the implicit rejection of Christian values through the evocation of pagan myth.

The English characters in *Angels* come from Sawston, an affluent, rural south-eastern town based on Tonbridge, while the setting for the English section of *Room* is Summer Street, a village in a rural area modelled on Surrey, the Honeychurch family home being Windy Corner, a house with a view across the Weald. Although *Angels* was published before *Room*, the latter was conceived first; as Forster writes, 'The Italian half of the novel was almost the first piece of fiction I attempted. I laid it aside to write and publish two other novels, and then returned to it and added the English half.'³⁰

Where Angels Fear to Tread

In this short novel Philip Herriton and Caroline Abbott transcend the snobbishness, philistinism and hypocrisy of their Sawston environment. On two trips to Monteriano – the first to 'rescue' Herriton's widowed sister-in-law Lilia from her marriage to a handsome Italian, son of a dentist, the second to retrieve the couple's baby after Lilia dies in childbirth – Philip and Caroline are gradually softened and humbled by the encounter with Gino and with the life of the Tuscan town.³¹ The rescue missions both fail: Philip finds Lilia set on remaining with Gino though it is a troubled marriage, and the baby is killed during a dramatic kidnap attempt by Sawston incarnate, Philip's sister Harriett. However, in the final scene, on the homeward train approaching the border of Italy, Philip and Caroline are seen to have been changed by their experiences: Philip's

²⁹ Littlewood, for instance, states that it 'stands as a concise declaration of what were to be the central themes of both his life and work. On a larger canvas Eustace's story becomes that of Lucy Honeychurch, to whom Italy offers a modified version of the same revelation' (*Sultry Climates*, 87).

³⁰ In the Appendix of the edition of *A Room With a View* quoted here, 231.

³¹ A fictionalized San Gimignano, a Tuscan hill-town renowned for its medieval towers.

realization of his reverential love for Caroline remains untold on his discovery that she has felt a passionate, carnal desire for Gino. The sober ending, without successful love unions, sees Philip resolving to leave Sawston for London, and Caroline to devote herself to charitable work in Sawston.

The specifically Tuscan setting plays a more tangible role in this novella than in *A Room With a View*; indeed, Forster's working title was 'Monteriano'. Its centrality in effecting the transformations is evident even in the book's structure: the action in *Angels* is set, apart from Chapters 1 and 5, in Monteriano, while *Room* has Florence and its surrounding countryside as the setting for only the first, shorter half of the novel (and for its final chapter). Much of the novella is given over to evocative descriptions of the town, and to imagined conversations with and among Italians; the germs of Forster's satire of the guide-book in *Room* are found here too. It registers the anti-tourist attitudes around the turn of the century as articulated by the likes of Hewlett: as Lilia departs for a conventional tour of Tuscany in the company of Caroline, Philip counsels her 'that it is only by going off the track that you get to know the country. See the little towns – Gubbio, Pienza, Cortona, San Gemignano [*sic*], Monteriano. 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'.³² The irony of Philip's authoritative advice to his sister-in-law (his very first speech in the novel) is that she will do just as he says, go 'off the track' to Monteriano and 'love' (fall for and marry) an Italian. His initial vision of Italy is shown to be facile and idealistic; on discovering that her suitor is a dentist's son,

Philip gave a cry of personal disgust and pain. He shuddered all over, and edged away from his companion. A dentist! A dentist at Monteriano! A dentist in fairyland! False teeth and laughing-gas and the tilting chair at a place which knew the Etruscan League, and the Pax Romana, and Alaric himself, and the Countess Matilda, and the Middle Ages, all fighting and holiness, and the Renaissance, all fighting and beauty! He thought of Lilia no longer. He was anxious for himself: he feared that Romance might die (28).

Philip's construction of Tuscany, almost Hewlettian in its evocation of romance and history, is undermined for him by the juxtaposition there of the mundane, contemporary (and lower class) with the heroic, book-learnt landmarks of Western civilization. The improvement of Philip (which Forster claimed to be the purpose of the book) is concurrent with, and reliant on, the renunciation of a purely aesthetic approach to life:

At twenty-two he went to Italy with some cousins, and there he absorbed into one aesthetic whole olive-trees, blue sky, frescoes, country inns, saints, peasants, mosaics, statues, beggars. He came back with the air of a prophet who would either remodel Sawston or reject it. All the energies and enthusiasms of a rather friendless life had passed into the championship of beauty.

³² *Angels*, 2. Compare Hewlett's recommendation to look at 'live men and beating hearts [for] the hearts of the men of the Tuscan nation are worth finding out' (*Road*, I, 15).

In a short time it was over. Nothing had happened either in Sawston or within himself. [...] He concluded that nothing could happen, not knowing that human love and love of truth sometimes conquer where love of beauty fails (78).

These last words point forward to the lesson he will have learnt by the book's end. As with another Forsterian character, Cecil Vyse in *Room*, Philip's 'championship of beauty' will prove to be an obstacle to his personal development. He must experience the dismantling of his ideals in order to know the value of 'human love and love of truth'; this is configured as disenchantment with Italy. Halfway through the novel, Philip hears of Lilia's death:

Italy, the land of beauty, was ruined for him. She had no power to change men and things who dwelt in her. She, too, could produce avarice, brutality, stupidity – and, what was worse, vulgarity. It was on her soil and through her influence that a silly woman had married a cad. He hated Gino, the betrayer of his life's ideal, and now that the sordid tragedy had come, it filled him with pangs, not of sympathy, but of final disillusion (79).

Tuscany, then, functions synecdochically as Italy; the two are interchangeable terms. The 'Italy' he claims to know, 'the land of beauty', derives principally from exalted Tuscan-centred art and tales of medieval heroism (such as that of Countess Matilda), a hallowed, imagined place fixed in the past. That it can also be 'sordid' and produce 'vulgarity' causes him to reject it, and with it his misplaced idealism. His second stay in Monteriano sees him building up a new set of values and ideals; the place (unlike Sawston) provides him with experiences of physical contact (including a violent tussle with Gino³³) and camaraderie which ultimately ennoble him. While *Angels* posits the possibilities of more truthful human relationships within an idyllic Tuscany, *Room* allows more of its key events to take place in the idealized space of Summer Street, a kind of Tuscan double. The explicit resemblance of the Florentine countryside to English woods and open spaces in this novel demonstrates the significance of a heightened version of England which to the Edwardians was epitomized in its rural southern landscape.

A Room With A View

This novel, the *Bildung* of Lucy Honeychurch, is a light social comedy of manners in the tradition of Jane Austen, in which the foibles and misjudgements of types of people in small circles of English gentry are satirized. Against the grain of other early twentieth-century artistic practices, Foster's work is not experimental; the narrator abides by the nineteenth-century novelistic tradition of addressing the reader over the heads of the characters, interpreting their behaviour or providing his views on life. It does however move on from the writing on Tuscany exemplified by Hewlett (and his successors, such as

³³ Himself a sexualized, stereotypical Italian (see Collins, 'Angels and Vagabonds: Breaking through Barriers in the Anglo-Italian Encounter' in *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* 8 (2006), 191-93).

Hutton) which prefers to elide accounts of the English presence in favour of a romanticized Tuscany suspended in the past. While Hewlett's account of Tuscany incorporates elements of romance, privileging the fanciful over the prosaic minutiae of social realism, by concealing his encounters and relationships with expatriates and his travelling companions, Forster makes such relationships the focus of *Room*. This advance in literary self-consciousness exposes the network of social differentiation amongst the English abroad in the Edwardian era.

The title of Chapter VI, the climax of the first, Florentine part of the novel, ('The Reverend Arthur Beebe, the Reverend Cuthbert Eager, Mr Emerson, Mr George Emerson, Miss Eleanor Lavish, Miss Charlotte Bartlett and Miss Lucy Honeychurch Drive out in Carriages to See a View; Italians Drive Them') lists the principal characters and their titles, relegating the unnamed Italians to the margins. As Baldick argues, these characters (as those in *Angels* and the later *A Passage to India*), 'tend to divide between those who are sympathetically receptive to the local environment and people [...] and those whose undeveloped hearts are hardened against both' (323). It is in this novel particularly that such a division is further nuanced by the claims each make as to who 'really' knows Italy and the Italians, and who among their number is perceived as vulgar. The standard social distinctions of rank and wealth made at home are overlaid and magnified by the complexities of being abroad; there are for example the additional enhanced anxieties of demonstrating one's good breeding among strangers, or one's superiority over Cook's tourists.

The novel in its first part assembles the boarders at the Pension Bertolini, (clergyman Mr Beebe, elderly spinsters the Misses Alan, pretentious novelist Miss Lavish, the socialist/atheist Mr Emerson and his bohemian son George, naïve Lucy Honeychurch and her chaperone cousin Charlotte Bartlett), then reconvenes them in the second part, in the affluent, rural localities around Summer Street. The narrowness of their social circle is emphasized by the links among the characters: Mr Beebe had met Charlotte and Lucy in Tunbridge Wells; Lucy and Miss Lavish discover mutual acquaintances in Summer Street. Even the upstart Emersons are known to the Florentine chaplain Mr Eager, who had met them in Brixton, and Cecil Vyse later encounters them at the National Gallery, unaware of their connection to Lucy. The plot centres around Lucy's misreadings of her feelings for George Emerson, whom she first encounters at the Bertolini, and then at various points throughout the novel, and the eventual triumph of their love. It follows her growing awareness of hypocrisy in the way the people who surround her judge others, and the

reader is implicitly invited to accept Lucy's intuitive, rather than convention-bound, sense of who is good and right.

In the opening chapter, the orthodoxies of pension etiquette are contravened at dinner by the kindly intervention of Mr Emerson in the 'peevis' quarrel between Lucy and Miss Bartlett over their unsatisfactory rooms.

They were tired, and under the guise of unselfishness they wrangled. Some of their neighbours interchanged glances, and one of them – one of the ill-bred people whom one does meet abroad – leant forward over the table and actually intruded into their argument. He said:

'I have a view, I have a view.'

Miss Bartlett was startled. Generally at a pension people looked them over for a day or two before speaking, and often did not find out that they would 'do' till they had gone. She knew that the intruder was ill-bred, even before she glanced at him. [...]

[H]er glance passed on to his clothes. These did not attract her. He was probably trying to become acquainted with them before they got into the swim. [...]

'What I mean,' he continued, 'is that you can have our rooms, and we'll have yours. We'll change.'

The better class of tourist was shocked at this, and sympathized with the newcomers. Miss Bartlett, in reply, opened her mouth as little as possible, and said:

'Thank you very much indeed; that is out of the question' (24-25).

Miss Bartlett, a Victorian moral guardian figure preoccupied with keeping up appearances is affronted, like 'the better class of tourist', by the unconventionality of the manners of her interlocutor; she concludes he is 'ill-bred' from his mere act of intervention, revealing the strictness (and absurdity) of the code of propriety to which she is slave. The pension coterie's unspoken tenets of decorum preclude spontaneous gestures of kindness. Sympathies are transmitted silently with a mere look, which directed to Miss Bartlett by the two old ladies, indicates "we are genteel" (25). To speak, let alone exchange rooms, is not 'genteel'. The close observation, by the narrator and the characters, of such subtleties of behaviour attests to their very fragility; the Emersons represent the infringement of suburbanites into privileged circles, symptomatic of the time. Their frank, unconventional but clearly benevolent behaviour eventually isolates them at the pension. Miss Alan, one of the old ladies, will remark of them, "They don't understand our ways. They must find their level" (58).

The dawning in Lucy of a consciousness of such distinctions occurs in this very first scene; she wishes that they would 'do', but 'she saw that they were in for what is known as "quite a scene", and she had an odd feeling that whenever these ill-bred tourists spoke the contest widened and deepened till it dealt, not with rooms and views, but with – well, with something quite different, whose existence she had not realized before' (25). She will find an ally in Mr Beebe, whose arrival on the dinner scene she greets with a fresh enthusiasm which the narrator ironically attributes to her not having 'yet acquired decency' (26). Mr Beebe's sensible response to the Emerson question, ratified by his being a clergyman, allows the room exchange to take place; he explains of Mr Emerson,

'He has rooms he does not value, and he thinks you would value them. He no more thought of putting you under an obligation than he thought of being polite. It is so difficult – at least, I find it difficult – to understand people who speak the truth.'
Lucy was pleased and said, 'I was hoping that he was nice; I do so always hope that people will be nice' (29).

If Mr Beebe is gently mocking Miss Bartlett's over-reaction in this definition of the Emersons as 'people who speak the truth', a similar 'difficulty' – anxiety even – is in evidence amongst all the professedly respectable English in Florence on the question of the Emersons. Miss Bartlett's uncertainty about her own propriety in this new environment manifests itself in her nervous questions to Mr Beebe, "So you think I ought to have accepted their offer? You feel I have been narrow-minded and suspicious?" [...] "But ought I not to apologize, at all events, for my apparent rudeness?" [...] "Was I a bore?" (29). And Miss Alan reflects,

'About old Mr Emerson – I hardly know. No, he is not tactful; yet, have you ever noticed that there are people who do things which are most indelicate, and yet at the same time – beautiful?'
'Beautiful?' said Miss Bartlett, puzzled at the word. 'Are not beauty and delicacy the same?'
'So one would have thought,' said the other helplessly. 'But things are so difficult, I sometimes think' (31).

Miss Alan's inclination to see beauty in Mr Emerson's act meets with Miss Bartlett's inability to separate the ideas of beauty and delicacy, resulting in Miss Alan's discomposure. These moments of negotiation of the meanings of concepts that frame human intercourse highlight the transition from a medieval to a modern consciousness which the novel endorses.

Against the 'narrow-minded and suspicious' types Lucy begins to find her voice: her 'rebellious thoughts swept out in words – for the first time in her life' (75) when the expatriate chaplain, Mr Eager, insinuates that Mr Emerson was responsible for Mrs Emerson's death. But in casting a slur on Mr Emerson's name, he reveals his own social insecurities:

'To all intents and purposes he murdered her. That day in Santa Croce – did [the Emersons] say anything against me?'
'Not a word, Mr Eager – not a single word.'
'Oh, I thought they had been libelling me to you. But I suppose it is only their personal charms that makes you defend them.' [...]
'How could you think she was defending them?' said Miss Bartlett, much discomfited by the unpleasant scene. The shop-man was probably listening (75).

Miss Bartlett's preoccupation with others' perceptions of the behaviour of her social set conforms to what Littlewood has called 'anxiety to maintain standards of Englishness, which produced the Victorian tourist of caricature';³⁴ Mr Eager, though not a tourist, is just as uneasy and, as will be seen, represents a further effete, censorious voice.

³⁴ Littlewood, 92.

Lucy has to learn to decode the subtleties of behaviour of the people around her and the underlying fears that prompt them in order to come to an understanding of her own values. The ‘clever lady’ who attracts Miss Bartlett’s approval at the dinner table is Miss Lavish, a novelist with an affected belief in her ability to access ‘the true Italy’ (37) and who prides herself on her unconventionality: “‘Prato! They must go to Prato. That place is too sweetly squalid for words. I love it; I revel in shaking off the trammels of respectability, as you know’” (27). Her unconventionality however is not the same as the Emersons’; Miss Bartlett’s trust in her – she allows her to chaperone Lucy in Florence, shares gossip – alerts the reader to a more deep-seated conventionality, the affectation of the convention of unconventionality found also in Cecil Vyse. She rejects the prescriptions of Baedeker, comically exalting instead “‘a true Florentine smell!’” while out with Lucy. “‘Is it a very nice smell?’ said Lucy, who had inherited from her mother a distaste for dirt. “‘One doesn’t come to Italy for niceness,” was the retort; “one comes for life. Buon giorno! Buon giorno!’” bowing right and left. “‘Look at that adorable wine-cart! How the driver stares at us, dear, simple soul!’” (37). Thinking herself rebellious and original, she merely reproduces commonplaces about Italians’ simplicity and the habit of seeing charm in mundane objects. Her aesthetic and apparently empathetic approach to Italians (her direct address in their own language) is put to the test on the excursion to Torre del Gallo in the Florentine countryside of Chapter VI. When the cabdriver and his female companion steal a kiss, the response of various members of the party foregrounds the significant differences in their attitudes. The couple are made to part:

‘Victory at last!’ said Mr Eager, smiting his hands together as the carriages started again.
‘It is not victory,’ said Mr Emerson. ‘It is defeat. You have parted two people who were happy. [...] We have tried to buy what cannot be bought with money. He has bargained to drive us, and he is doing it. We have no rights over his soul.’
Miss Lavish frowned. It is hard when a person you have classed as typically British speaks out of his character (84).

It is not Emerson’s argument which disturbs Miss Lavish so much as his failure to conform to her idea of Britishness, in contradicting Mr Eager, whose mean-spirited response attracts no such censure. Mr Emerson had ‘patted [the lovers] on the back to signify his approval.

And Miss Lavish, though unwilling to ally with him, felt bound to support the cause of bohemianism. ‘Most certainly I would let them be,’ she cried. ‘But I dare say I shall receive scant support. I have always flown in the face of the conventions all my life. This is what I call an adventure.’
‘We must not submit,’ said Mr Eager. ‘I knew he was trying it on. He is treating us as if we were a party of Cook’s tourists.’
‘Surely no!’ said Miss Lavish, her ardour visibly decreasing (83).

Miss Lavish’s attempts to demonstrate her nonconformity are shown to be frivolous as she switches allegiance at a moment’s notice; her ‘ardour’ to be bohemian is quenched at

the possibility that she might resemble a Cook's tourist. Like Mr Eager she seeks at every turn to maintain a self-image of one belonging to an elite group. Meanwhile, Reverend Eager's determination to suppress the lovers shows him equally unsympathetic to Italians, who represent carnal passion and are cast as pagan (referred to by the narrator as 'Phaethon' and 'Persephone'). It is not only because of his position as chaplain but because his elite world excludes Italians; it is in some sense akin to the pension society, in its being another English enclave. Miss Bartlett is impressed by him; she

knew that Mr Eager was no commonplace chaplain. He was a member of the residential colony who had made Florence their home. He knew the people who never walked about with Baedekers, who had learned to take a siesta after lunch, who took drives the pension tourists had never heard of, and saw by private influence galleries which were closed to them. Living in delicate seclusion, some in furnished flats, others in Renaissance villas on Fiesole's slope, they read, wrote, studied and exchanged ideas, thus attaining to that intimate knowledge, or rather perception, of Florence which is denied to all who carry in their pockets the coupons of Cook.

Therefore an invitation from the chaplain was something to be proud of. Between the two sections of his flock he was often the only link, and it was his avowed custom to select those of his migratory sheep who seemed worthy, and give them a few hours in the pastures of the permanent.³⁵

At pains to emphasize the exclusivity of this colony, Mr Eager explains to Lucy (whom he clearly considers 'worthy') that "it is of considerable size, though, of course, not all equally – a few are here for trade, for example. But the greater part are students" (82). His defensive response affirms a new sense of vulnerability to the intrusion into his world of people of 'trade' and Italians identified by Littlewood:

One of Forster's shrewdest perceptions about English tourists towards the end of the nineteenth century identifies a new insecurity that has entered their relations with the locals. Unlike the confident Grand Tourist of the previous century, the narrator of 'The Story of a Panic' and the Reverend Eager in *Room with a View* [sic] are uneasily conscious of the surrounding threat to their cultural standards. They are typical of a new breed of Englishman abroad, perpetually on the lookout for any encroachment from the natives. Like servants of empire dressing for dinner in the jungle, they detect a landscape that is hostile to their values and can only be held at bay by close attention to form.³⁶

The Emersons clearly do not conform to the kind of person likely to be welcomed into the 'delicate seclusion' of the colony; not only of lower class, their Socialist ideals and disregard for norms of genteel behaviour represent the danger of 'encroachment'. In an earlier conversation with Miss Bartlett, Eager's summary of Mr Emerson's career barely disguises his distaste: "The son of a labourer; I happen to know it for a fact. A mechanic of some sort himself when he was young; then he took to writing for the Socialistic press." Miss Bartlett's response is equally damning: "How wonderfully people rise in these days!" (74). Mr Eager's view of such people exposes both a fear of appearing illiberal and an extreme condescension: "Generally," replied Mr Eager, "one has only sympathy with their success. The desire for education and for social advance – in these

³⁵ *Room*, 71. Hutton and Lee were among the contemporary Florentine expatriate colony satirized here.

³⁶ Littlewood, 91.

things there is something not wholly vile. There are some working men whom one would be very willing to see out here in Florence – little as they would make of it”.³⁷ Thus, when Mr Emerson’s concern for George in the wake of the picnic fiasco causes him to cry, “He may be killed!”, Mr Eager sneers, “Typical behaviour [...] In the presence of reality that kind of person invariably breaks down” (92). Once again, behaviour constitutes the principal means by which one is read: here a display of emotion founded on parental concern generates a contempt which in turn the reader is meant to understand as unjustified.

In Florence, Lucy hardly knows her own opinions about people; she experiences the clash between those she instinctively likes and those she is told to like or dislike. Back in England, she gradually makes sense of her impressions and becomes more clear-sighted and assertive in her judgments. Her opinion of Mr Eager is one which the reader has already attained: “He was truly insincere – not merely the manner unfortunate. He was a snob, and so conceited, and he did say such unkind things.” [...] “But isn’t it intolerable that a person whom we’re told to imitate should go round spreading slander? It was, I believe, chiefly owing to him that the old man was dropped. People pretended he was vulgar, but he certainly wasn’t that” (117, 118). It is Mr Emerson, towards whom such a great deal of scorn has been directed by the people around her, who articulates the values which Lucy ultimately acquires: “love is eternal. [...] Yes, for we fight for more than Love or Pleasure; there is Truth. Truth counts, Truth does count” (223, 225). The Victorian idea of respectability which seeks to shield women from any but the most regulated contact with other people is shown to be narrow and inadequate in the face of new, more modern and democratic ideas which aspire to social equality and which sanction the expression of physical love.

The Tuscan setting allows Forster to stage the comedy of manners in a way that highlights the intricacies and anxieties of a particular layer of English society in the early twentieth-century, because the pretensions, politenesses, and orthodoxies of these circles are exposed as such when removed from the relative safety and tightly-bounded confines of home. It is used by the characters who pride themselves on knowing the ‘real’ Italy, those who scorn Baedeker and Cook, such as Miss Lavish and Mr Eager, not as a means

³⁷ *Room*, 74. These attitudes will be echoed later when some of the established Summer Street residents lament the imminent letting of one of the new villas: ‘The place is ruined!’ said the ladies mechanically. ‘Summer Street will never be the same again.’ [...] ‘It would be a perfect paradise for a bank-clerk.’ ‘Exactly!’ said Sir Harry excitedly. ‘That is exactly what I fear, Mr Vyse. It will attract the wrong type of people’ (120, 121).

of saving their souls but to confirm their own sense of superiority and their existing prejudices.

Moreover, the novel registers the anxiety and insecurity occasioned by the intrusion of suburbanites into the 'respectable' affluent English enclaves of the pension, or the expatriate colony, or the rural English community overseen by landed gentry. But these various settings simply highlight this same point; the Tuscan setting for the scene of George and Lucy's first kiss has no intrinsically deeper significance to this theme than the pool in the woods in Surrey where Lucy sees George bathing naked, or the garden of Lucy's home where they share their second kiss. This is made explicit in Lucy's contemplation of the view from her home:

Ah, how beautiful the Weald looked! The hills stood out above its radiance, as Fiesole stands above the Tuscan plain, and the South Downs, if one chose, were the mountains of Carrara. She might be forgetting her Italy, but she was noticing more things in her England. One could play a new game with the view, and try to find in its innumerable folds some town or village that would do for Florence. Ah, how beautiful the Weald looked! (175).

If the novel's achievement is to expose the wider crisis of values in Edwardian England, Tuscany's function can be regarded as a paradigmatic embodiment of an emergent idea of England as a rural landscape inhabited by a stable and uncontested social hierarchy, based on feudal relations. Upon such a landscape the intricacies of English social mores can be ironically played out and the limits of the kind of discursive rapture exemplified by Hewlett and Hutton can be unmasked.

Wasn't There a Battle Here or Something?

Huxley's Tuscany

Huxley belongs to the next generation of writers and as such did not publish major works until after the war, the influence of which adumbrates his writing on Tuscany. It manifests a more cynical and jaded attitude augmented with the passage of time. His first visits to Florence and Forte dei Marmi (Tuscan locations where he would spend long periods until 1929) took place between April and October of 1921. Writing in 1922 about the Tuscan shore where Shelley died, and about festivities he has witnessed elsewhere in Italy, Huxley in 'Centenaries'³⁸ finds much to admire in both the landscape and the Italians' celebratory rituals as compared with English ones. However, his travel writing in *Along the Road: Notes and Essays of a Tourist* (1925) and his fiction in *Those Barren Leaves* (1925) and 'The Rest Cure' (a short story in *Brief Candles* (1930)) contribute

³⁸ One of several periodical articles collected in *On the Margin: Notes and Essays* (1923).

macroscopically to a generalized project in his writing of debunking Romantic ideology and specifically to a satirical and disenchanted reworking of the conventional tropes found in writing on Tuscany.

'Centenaries' (1923)

This essay, concerned with the English celebrations of the centenary of Shelley's death (he died in 1823) and with the Italian commemoration of Dante, begins with a topographical description of the Tuscan coastline and inland; the choice of adjectives and adverbs contributes to the impression of a harmonious, natural scene: 'the sandy beaches smoothly, unbrokenly extend', 'slow streams', 'slim poplars', 'fat water-meadows', 'noble crags'. Spatial relations are rendered pictorially, the foreground giving way to layers of background: 'behind this strip of plain, four or five miles from the sea, the mountains rise, suddenly and steeply', 'Over their summits repose the enormous sculptured masses of the clouds'.³⁹ At this point in the text Huxley quotes four lines of Shelley's poetry and writes 'The landscape fairly quotes Shelley at you' (3) – nature imitating art seems the ironical suggestion. But the text continues to eulogize both the landscape and the poet. 'Live on this coast for a little and you will find yourself constantly thinking of that lovely, that strangely childish poetry, that beautiful and child-like man' he writes. This connection of the poet to the place is conventional, but he then distances himself from 'the mellifluous chorus of centenary celebrators', declaring that the article is a 'protest against the outpourings of [...] people who would hate him and be horrified by him, if he were alive' (3). The rest of the article contrasts the 'genial miasma of hypocrisy and insincerity' (4) and 'reaffirmation of deadness' of English centenaries with Italians who 'make their dead an excuse for quickening life among the living' (5). Using the example of the celebrations of the six hundredth anniversary of Dante's death in Milan, and another 'jovial, warm-blooded' (8) religious festival, involving activities such as car and bicycle races, pigeon shooting and football matches, Huxley denigrates 'the stuffiness and the snuffle' (8) of English and Anglican centenaries, reaffirming the stereotype that Italians enjoy 'real fun' (7), 'life and the glittering noisy moment' (10). The culmination of his argument is that Italians 'are all futurists in that burningly living Italy where we from the North seek only an escape into the past. Or rather, they are not Futurists: Marinetti's label was badly chosen. They are Presentists' (10).

Although Marinetti is a radical contemporary, Huxley's particular formulation of a north/Italy axis is hardly innovative. What is innovative though is the praise of Italians'

³⁹ Quotations from *On the Margin: Notes and Essays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), 2.

delight in the modern, in the form of planes and cars, where so much English writing in the period deploras such technology. Indeed, this early 'Italian' piece, which starts out on the Shelley-haunted shores of Tuscany, is remarkably conformist in its discourse to received ideas about Italy and Italians (and in its comparative disparagement of Northern, English or Anglo-Saxon mores). Huxley's subsequent writing works much more against the grain, adapting clichéd constructions of Tuscany to his project of deflating Romanticism.

Huxley himself travelled extensively around Italy, mainly by car driven by his wife, the first woman to gain a driving licence in Italy. They holidayed at Forte dei Marmi and lived for extended periods from 1923 in a wing of the Villa Minucci near Florence. Huxley avoided the expatriate English set as much as possible, though he was friendly with some, including Vernon Lee and, from 1926, D.H. Lawrence (whom he had met once in Hampstead in 1915). The Huxleys were able to live comfortably, with servants, for much less than they could in England, though they frequently returned there, attending elite literary salons and advancing Huxley's literary career; he found it 'sadly mouldy and dim' compared to Italy.⁴⁰ Using his experiences of living in and driving around Italy in much of his work, he increasingly sheds the attitude of delighted admiration at its views and people, adopting a more sober and pragmatic stance. For instance, part of the 'Centenaries' essay involves the spectacle of a Fascist military display for the Dante celebration by which the narrator is evidently excited:

Hundreds of thousands of wiry little brown men parade the streets of Florence. Young officers of a fabulous elegance clank along in superbly tailored riding breeches and glittering top-boots. The whole female population palpitates. [...] Never having read a line of his works, we feel that Dante is our personal friend, a brother Fascist (7).

At this time, Mussolini had come to power but was not yet a dictator; Huxley could therefore write admiringly of 'Fierce young Fascisti with the faces of Roman heroes'.⁴¹ But personal experience contributed to a disenchantment with this aspect of Italian life:

One fine morning it was brought home to Aldous and Maria that they were living in Fascist Italy. Four ruffians in uniform forced their way into Castel a Montici and demanded to search the place. Now Aldous did not like the regime. He deplored its acts of brutality; he found it wicked.⁴²

⁴⁰ Letter 289 to Norman Douglas, 11th May 1929, in Smith (ed.), *Letters of Aldous Huxley* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), 312.

⁴¹ Huxley, 'Centenaries', 7, adopting here the common trope of seeing Italian faces as imperial Roman ones. (See Chapter 4 below for more on the use of ancient civilizations in physiognomic descriptions).

⁴² Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography 1894-1939*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), I, 159. She explains, 'The four ruffians on that June morning of 1925 were members of the political police and looking for an Italian professor, for Gaetano Salvemini, in fact, the historian, who had written against the regime and whom they believed to be in hiding at the Huxleys (who had never even met him as it happened)' (160).

Those Barren Leaves (1925)

The setting of his Peacockian house-party novel *Those Barren Leaves: A Novel* is the Cybo Malaspina, a Tuscan palace which Baker describes as a 'vast ensemble of gardens, stairways, and buildings, surrounded by allegorical and mythological sculpture'.⁴³ Huxley composed it between April and October of 1924; it was published in January 1925. In it, a variety of mostly upper-class English people, guests of Mrs Aldwinkle (a caricature of Lady Ottoline Morell), debate, posture, and pursue love, money or spiritual fulfilment with each other. The choice of Tuscany and the Cybo Malaspina, reminiscent of a real Italian building he knew,⁴⁴ over an English country house has been described as 'largely incidental, since little attempt is made to explore the possibilities of a foreign setting. It is English society with which Huxley is dealing – the Italian location provides only a certain amount of local colour'.⁴⁵ However, it may be argued that the setting is congenial in the context of his project in his early works of debunking the theatrically sentimental posturing and beliefs of an earlier generation. In a letter he writes, 'I have just finished a novel which is to appear in January. It comes off fairly well, I think. The main theme of it is the undercutting of everything by a sort of despairing scepticism and then the undercutting of that by mysticism.'⁴⁶ As one of a series of novels of ideas, in which the various sub-plots are punctuated by lengthy conversations on politics, literature, education, art, philosophy, death, (especially among the educated males Cardan, Chelifer and Calamy), *Those Barren Leaves* does utilize its Italian setting in its project of setting a worn-out Romanticism against a modern world, since it draws upon and debunks the literary constructions of Tuscan sites so familiar to his readership. Baker argues,

If, as Huxley repeatedly argues, romanticism (old or new) is a matter of roles, posturings, and histrionics, then Mrs. Aldwinkle's villa is the most suitable stage for the enactment of such a 'farce.' Indeed, for Huxley, it is the 'comic' as opposed to the cosmic lengths to which the romantic artists and poets were willing to go that most impressed him, and the Cybo is the concrete embodiment of 'the grand theatrical flourish' so deeply and persistently admired by Huxley's romantics.⁴⁷

The Viareggio coast where Chelifer first encounters Mrs Aldwinkle's coterie suggests Shelley, to both parties, as it has done in so much Victorian and Edwardian writing on Italy. Chelifer, relaxing in the sea, overhears some English people in a boat; one man pontificates on clouds, a woman quotes Shelley incorrectly, another wishes her tan looked

⁴³ Baker, 'The Fire of Prometheus: Romanticism and the Baroque in Huxley's *Antic Hay* and *Those Barren Leaves*', in Meckier (ed.), *Critical Essays on Aldous Huxley* (London: Prentice Hall International, 1996), 33.

⁴⁴ 'I have a plan to do a gigantic Peacock in an Italian scene. An incredibly large castle – like the Sitwells' at Monte Gufone [Montegufoni], the most amazing place I have ever seen in my life – divided up, as Monte Gufone was divided till recently, into scores of separate habitations, which will be occupied, for the purposes of my story, by the most improbable people of every species and nationality. Here one has the essential Peacockian datum – a houseful of oddities' (Letter 187 (1921), *Letters*, 202).

⁴⁵ Ferns (ed.), *Aldous Huxley: Novelist* (London: Athlone Press, 1980), 78.

⁴⁶ Smith (ed.), *Letters*, 234.

⁴⁷ Baker, 33.

less like 'the dreadfully unwholesome look of blanched asparagus' (83). Irritated, Chelifer reflects that in spite of the banalities of the overheard conversation he would 'probably have started thinking of Shelley'.

For to live on this coast, between the sea and the mountains, among alternate flawless calms and shattering sudden storms, is like living inside one of Shelley's poems. One walks through a transparent and phantasmagorical beauty. [...] Living here in an actual world practically indistinguishable from one of imagination, a man might almost be justified for indulging his fancy to the extravagant lengths to which Shelley permitted his to go. But a man of the present generation, brought up in typical contemporary surroundings, has no justifications of this sort. A modern poet cannot permit himself the mental luxuries in which his predecessors so freely wallowed (84).

He warms to his theme, arguing that

To escape, whether in space or in time, you must run a great deal further now than there was any need to do a hundred years ago when Shelley boated on the Tyrrhenian and conjured up millennial visions. You must go further in space, because there are more people, more and faster vehicles. The Grand Hotel, the hundred thousand bathers, the jazz bands have introduced themselves into that Shelleian poem which is the landscape of Versilia. And the millennium which seemed in the days of Godwin not so very remote has receded further and further from us, as each Reform Bill, each victory over entrenched capitalism dashed yet another illusion to the ground. To escape, in 1924, one must go to Tibet, one must look forward to at least the year 3000 [...].⁴⁸

As in 'Centenaries', Shelley's glorious reputation is acknowledged at the Italian site of his death, but the novel rejects the concomitant associations of Romanticism as outdated, inappropriate, inadequate, in the context of mass tourism, and contemporary politics and cultural phenomena. Mrs Aldwinkle in particular epitomizes the Romantic figure wallowing in emotionalism, exalting the "passion of the south" (42), ('Mrs Aldwinkle believed in passion, passionately' jokes the narrator (43)), and she is discredited throughout by the narrator and her more cynical interlocutors such as Cardan and Chelifer. The novel moreover, in its depiction of an idle, luxurious existence, takes to task post-war hedonism, especially in the characters of Cardan (who has been described as 'a one-dimensional Norman Douglas figure'⁴⁹) and Calamy, a bon vivant who at thirty, after a life of sexual conquests and worldly success, enters an existential crisis. The novel ends on Calamy's solitary retreat to the Tuscan mountains to contemplate 'a whole universe within me, unknown and waiting to be explored' (316); an ending of isolation and uncertainty. 'Huxley's novels of ideas thus deliberately fail to resolve themselves' writes

⁴⁸ *Those Barren Leaves*, 85. Huxley's non-fictional writing of the period contains several such eerily prophetic statements, such as, 'The march of progress is irresistible. Fiat and the State Railways have only to hire American advertising managers to turn the Italians into a race of week-enders and season ticket holders. Already there is a *Città Giardino* on the outskirts of Rome; Ostia is being developed as a residential seaside suburb; the recently opened motor road has placed the Lakes at the mercy of Milan. My grandchildren, I foresee, will have to take their holidays in Central Asia'. ('The Country' in *Along the Road: Notes and Essays of a Tourist* (New York: The Ecco Press, 1989), 69).

⁴⁹ Bedford, I, 153.

Meckier. 'They thrust the reader into modernity, a world of mutually exclusive choices, none of which seems totally satisfying'.⁵⁰

The climactic section of the novel involves the group undertaking a trip by car to Rome from the Cybo Malaspina. Characteristically, Huxley's writing incorporates the experience of driving through Italy as opposed to the carriage drives of Hewlett, the trains in Forster, the walks of Douglas. Thus the Tuscan towns they pass through are described perfunctorily, without dwelling on the sights which a guide-book would recommend:

They passed through San Quirico; from that secret and melancholy garden within the walls of the ruined citadel came a whiff of sun-warmed box. In Pienza they found the Platonic idea of a city, the town with a capital T; walls with a gate in them, a short street, a piazza with a cathedral and places round the other three sides, another short street, another gate and then the fields rich with corn, wine and oil; and the tall blue peak of Monte Amiata looking down across the fertile land. At Montepulciano there are more palaces and more churches; but the intellectual beauty of symmetry was replaced by a picturesque and precipitous confusion.

'Gosh!' said Lord Hovenden expressively, as they slid with locked wheels down a high street that had been planned for pack-asses and mules. From pedimented windows between the pilasters of the palaces, curious faces peered out at them. They tobogganed down, through the high renaissance, out of an arch of the Middle Ages, into the dateless and eternal fields. From Montepulciano they descended on to Lake Trasimene [*sic*].

'Wasn't there a battle here, or something?' asked Irene, when she saw the name on the map.

Lord Hovenden seemed to remember that there had indeed been something of the kind in this neighbourhood. 'But it doesn't make much difference, does it?' (237-38).

For this new generation of travellers through Tuscany, there is neither time nor will to delve into the historical aspects of the towns. The entire journey to Rome is described in such condensed and irreverent prose, the characters comically superficial and incurious. The motoring experience is vivid and integral, with constant interjections concerning the car's speed, the sensation of the ear flaps and goggles on the head, the wind in the face, the logistics of driving. Just as Hutton (and Symons) had found Volterra ominous and desolate, so Huxley's narrator describes a landscape which 'took on something of an infernal aspect'; Volterra is 'the capital of this strange hell' with 'the ravening gulf that eats its way into the flank of the hill, devouring the works of civilization after civilization, the tombs of the Etruscans, Roman villas, abbeys and mediaeval fortresses, renaissance churches and the houses of yesterday' (236). But where earlier writers had evoked this nihilistic vision of civilizations without irony, Huxley deflates the aestheticizing discourse through the voice of Hovenden: "Must be a bit slow, life in a town like vis" (236).

While the English characters are types, they are also developed as individuals, with traits such as Hovenden's speech defect, and Mrs Aldwinkle's tyrannical hold over her niece; no such distinctions are accorded to Italian characters who conform to the stereotype of the swindler. Miss Thriplow, the novelist who affects being supremely

⁵⁰ Meckier, 'Aldous Huxley and the Congenital Novelists: New Ideas about the Novel of Ideas', in Meckier (ed.), 9. Lawrence's 1922 novel of ideas *Aaron's Rod*, set largely in Florence, similarly ends on an inconclusive and mystical note.

knowledgeable on all matters, accompanies the elderly Mr Cardan on a trip to a local Italian who reputedly has a valuable statue for sale. The latter's brother, a grocer, is described thus: 'Small, sly, black eyes looked out from between pouchy lids. He had thick lips, and his teeth when he smiled were yellow. A long white apron, unexpectedly clean, was tied at neck and waist and fell down over his knees' (181). The litany of body parts shows a degree of attention to physical appearance not accorded to the English. But such stereotyping is essential to Huxley's aim of satirizing outworn Romantic idealism, as Miss Thriplow's response shows:

'How extraordinarily nice and jolly he looks!' she said enthusiastically as they approached.
'Does he?' asked Mr Cardan in some surprise. To his eyes the man looked like a hardly mitigated ruffian.
'So simple and happy and contented!' Miss Thriplow went on. 'One envies them their lives. [...] We make everything so unnecessarily complicated for ourselves, don't we?'
'Do we?' said Mr Cardan.
'These people have no doubts, or after-thoughts,' pursued Miss Thriplow, 'or – what's worse than after-thoughts – simultaneous-thoughts. They know what they want and what's right; they feel just what they ought to feel by nature – like the heroes in the Iliad – and act accordingly' (182).

Her refusal to perceive the grotesqueness of the man, and to cast all Italians as unsophisticated Homeric characters, shows her to be banal and unimaginative, especially when Mr Cardan's less blinkered response is echoed and sanctioned by the narrator:

At the mention of his brother and the sculpture, the grocer's face took on an expression of altogether excessive amiability. He bent his thick lips into smiles; deep folds in the shape of arcs of circles appeared in his fat cheeks. He kept bowing again and again. Every now and then he joyously laughed, emitting a blast of garlicky breath that smelt so powerfully like acetylene that one was tempted to put a match to his mouth in the hope that he would immediately break out into a bright white flame.⁵¹

Along the Road (1925)

Huxley's own experience of Italians amounts, like other writers', to encounters with hoteliers, shopkeepers, garage owners and the like. In 'A Night at Pietramala', an essay in *Along the Road*, Huxley relates how they stop for petrol in the mountains near Florence and ask if the passes are free of snow. 'Animated by that typically Italian desire to give an answer that will please the questioner, the garage man assured us that the road was perfectly clear. And he said it with such conviction that we imagined, as northerners would naturally imagine, that he knew' (213). At some length Huxley then reports on the simultaneous charm and insincerity of 'southern courtesy' which causes the man to give them this incorrect information. The inn-keeper at Pietramala where they later stop assures them the pass is blocked but would be clear by the afternoon. 'The inn-keeper's motives for not telling the truth were different from those that actuated the man at the

⁵¹ *Those Barren Leaves*, 183. A further example of the unscrupulous Italian: 'Seeing Mr Cardan busy with the bill of fare, the landlord approached, rubbing his hands and cordially smiling – as well he might on a Rolls-Royce full of foreigners – to take orders and give advice' (266).

garage. For the latter had lied out of misplaced politeness and pride; the inn-keeper on the contrary, lied merely out of self-interest. He wanted to make us stay the night' (217). They do stay, in some discomfort; Huxley at some length reports the conversations and events of the following day which reveal the landlord's duplicity. Once 'the game is up' they give him a silent stare to the significance of which he is good-humouredly impervious (235) and go on their way. Thus the persona of the decent Englishman is constructed: reasonable and trusting, subjected not only to the greed-driven duplicity of the Italian but also to a comically incongruous and unappetizing meal of 'spaghetti and broiled goat' (234), which functions as a confidential aside to the English reader. This alongside the confident assessments of the men's inner motives allows a superiority to be written into the fabric of the prose. Despite his disavowals,⁵² Huxley to some extent confirms the prejudices of the English towards Italians, though he refuses to participate in the idealizing tradition of other writers on Tuscany.

Something of Huxley's approach is gleaned from another essay, 'The Traveller's Eye-View':

There are few pleasanter diversions than to sit in cafés or restaurants or the third class carriages of railway trains, looking at one's neighbours and listening (without attempting to enter into conversation) to such scraps of their talk as are wafted across the intervening space. From their appearance, from what they say, one reconstructs in the imagination the whole character, the complete life history.⁵³

The 'game' has rules, such as speaking in a different language to the people being observed, and never attempting to get to know them. While there is a degree of irony – the essay later pokes fun at Conrad and other writers for their failure to infer thought from behaviour – it reveals the significance of class in Huxley's field of vision. His first example of the game is the 'season ticket holder from Surbiton' who 'gets so red in the face when he talks to his friends about the socialists', 'holds forth so knowledgeably about roses' and whose 'son has just won a prize for mathematics at school': 'One loves the little man; he is wonderful, charming, a real slice of life. But make his acquaintance. ... From that day forth you take pains to travel in another compartment' (34). Similarly, millionaires in Padua 'were over-dressed and wore white gloves' (37). There is a scarce-hidden antipathy for signifiers of petit-bourgeois attitudes and aspirations, for gaudy display of newly-acquired wealth.

To such as Huxley, educated at Eton and Balliol, the lower classes were peripheral, so that the depiction of lower class Italians in his writing is thin and

⁵² 'I am ordinarily very sceptical of those grandiose generalizations about racial and national characteristics, so beloved of a certain class of literary people'. ('Nationality in Love' in *On the Margin*, 95).

⁵³ *Along the Road*, 33.

stereotypical compared to the preferred targets of his satire, the English upper classes. Thus his parodies of 'the artistic rich' in Italy are generally more subtle and effective:

To see them at their best one must go to Florence. Florence is the home of those who cultivate with an equal ardour Mah Jong and a passion for Fra Angelico. Over tea and crumpets they talk, if they are too old for love themselves, of their lascivious juniors; but they also make sketches in water colour and read the *Little Flowers of St. Francis*.⁵⁴

Such are the targets of Forster's satirical fiction too; the description might be of the Miss Alans or Miss Lavish; and Huxley, like Forster, disdains 'Baron Bacdeker': 'How angry I have been with him for starrng what is old merely because it is old!'.⁵⁵ Constructing for himself a persona which is pragmatic yet discriminating, and privy to little-known Italian publishing, Huxley writes, 'The best illustrated guide I know is Pampaloni's Road Book of Tuscany, in which the usual information is briefly summarized, the main routes from place to place described and nothing starred that is not reproduced in a photograph'.⁵⁶ It is a no-nonsense approach which implies that Tuscany can be seen and enjoyed without Victorian authorities; it also ratifies Huxley's travelling persona as one who is not the 'pathetic [...] inexperienced traveller' he deplores: 'And the snobbery which decrees that one must like Art – or, to be more accurate, that one should have visited the places where Art is to be seen – is almost as tyrannous as that which bids one visit the places where one can see Life.'⁵⁷ This can of course be read as a form of inverted snobbery.

'The Rest Cure' (1930)

A further target of Huxley's Tuscany-based satire is the figure of Moira Tarwin, the wealthy, English protagonist of the 1930 short story 'The Rest Cure', who is sent for an extended stay to a villa outside Florence to recover from a nervous breakdown. Unhappily married to a respected but dull doctor, who visits her periodically, she falls for a local Italian, Tonino, of Neapolitan origin, who half-heartedly seduces her then loses interest. She has become obsessed with him and maintains a fragile hold over him through expensive gifts. His infidelity and her continual misreading of his motives eventually causes her to commit suicide, she mistakenly believing him to have robbed her. Huxley alerts the reader to Tonino's unreliability and exploitative nature but Moira fails, in her obsessive state of mind, to recognize these; she projects her received notions about his southern simplicity and passion onto him to 'escape' from the emptiness of her marriage to John. It is a parable explicitly predicated on class and national conflicts, as the narrator explains:

⁵⁴ 'Work and Leisure', *Along the Road*, 242.

⁵⁵ 'Guide Books', *Along the Road*, 43.

⁵⁶ 'Guide Books', 45-6.

⁵⁷ 'Why Not Stay at Home?' in *Along the Road*, 11, 13.

One of the pleasures or dangers of foreign travel is that you lose your class-consciousness. At home you can never, with the best will in the world, forget it. Habit has rendered your own people as immediately legible as your own language. A word, a gesture are sufficient; your man is placed. But in foreign parts your fellows are unreadable. The less obvious products of upbringing – all the subtler refinements, the finer shades of vulgarity – escape your notice. The accent, the inflexion of voice, the vocabulary, the gestures tell you nothing. Between the duke and the insurance clerk, the profiteer and the country gentleman, your inexperienced eye and ear detect no difference. For Moira, Tonino seemed the characteristic flower of Italian gentility. She knew, of course, that he wasn't well off; but then, plenty of the nicest people are poor. She saw in him the equivalent of one of those younger sons of impoverished English squires – the sort of young man who advertises for work in the Agony Column of *The Times*.⁵⁸

Here Huxley's narrator is almost Forsterian in his didactic, direct address to the reader, who is assumed to be literate in the language of class, sharing an understanding of 'the finer shades of vulgarity' which 'the insurance clerk, the profiteer' will unwittingly display. He seems to be expanding what Forster had only hinted at in *Angels*, when Philip is pulled in to a group of Italians, 'tradesmen's sons perhaps they were, or medical students, or solicitors' clerks, or sons of other dentists. There is no knowing who is who in Italy', making more explicit the class-based dynamic of the Anglo-Italian encounter.⁵⁹ The narrator sets up in this authoritative parenthesis the 'pleasures' and the 'dangers' in store: the happiness Moira finds with Tonino is evoked convincingly, but it will end in disaster because, being merely a hotel-owner's son destined to manage a boarding-house, he belongs to a separate social sphere. Moreover, he is, as both John and the archaeologist Signor Bargioni agree, an 'adventurer' (65). The reader learns how, to his friends in the café, 'Juicily, and with unction, Tonino described the car she drove, the luxurious villa she inhabited' (50-51) and the stereotype is reaffirmed satirically in his physical appearance: 'Making a deprecating gesture, he returned her smile. His teeth flashed pearly and even. His large eyes were bright, dark, liquid, and rather expressionless, like a gazelle's. He was exceedingly good-looking' (51). Moira's self-deception and naivety is reminiscent of Miss Thriplow's, or of Lilia's towards the dentist's son in *Angels*, and Tonino is as suave and avaricious as Gino, or as sensuously enthralling as a Laurentian peasant. The dysfunction in literature of relationships between British women and Italian men derives from what Pemble has called the 'jealous concern for racial integrity' of British travellers which caused them 'to regard the sexual allure of Southern men as a menace and to ridicule or admonish Englishwomen who showed themselves susceptible to Latin charm'.⁶⁰

The Florentine countryside is the backdrop of a story about the failure of a sexual union outside of an empty marriage, the site of a disturbed woman's ennui and pointless

⁵⁸ *Brief Candles: Four Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 49-50.

⁵⁹ *Angels*, 138.

⁶⁰ Pemble, 271.

death; a far cry from the symbolic fertility evoked in *Room's* picnic scene.⁶¹ Ross argues that at work here is Huxley's engagement with Lawrence's vision of the regenerative promise of southern Italy articulated in the 1926 short story 'Sun':

With careful malice, Huxley moves the locale northward from Lawrence's bucolic Sicily to the supercivilized ambiance of Florence, a setting congenial to the ironies attending Moira's progress toward erotic disillusionment and death. The light that shines here is not that of the procreative Sicilian sun. It is a light that failed, the last, attenuated glimmer of the Florentine Renaissance; and Moira [...] stands no chance of being sexually reborn. She arrives, instead, at a dead end [...] the foredoomed victim of predatory Tuscan machinations. The shift of setting is essential to Huxley's satiric aim, the subjecting of Lawrence's procreation myth to corrosive scepticism.⁶²

Tuscany, then, by the end of the period covered in the thesis, continues to function in writing as a stage on which the English play out their fantasies about love across classes, or to be revered as the place where literary greats of the past walked; but it also becomes a contemporary space in which writers such as Huxley work to expose the myths that define it.

⁶¹ The site of Lucy and George's first kiss, where 'violets, like other things, existed in great profusion [...] this terrace was the well-head, the primal source whence beauty gushed out to water the earth' (*Room*, 88).

⁶² Ross, *Storied Cities*, 2, 3. Of course, the mutual attraction between Juliet and the peasant does not culminate in consummation in Lawrence's fable either. See Chapter 4 below.

Chapter 3

The Watershed: Italy's North, Europe's South

From swarthy Alps I travelled forth
Aloft; it was the north, the north;
Bound for the Noon was I.
[...]
But O the unfolding South! the burst
Of summer! O to see
Of all the southward brooks the first!
The travelling heart went free
With endless streams; that strife was stopped;
And down a thousand vales I dropped,
I flowed to Italy.¹

These lines articulate a widespread sentiment of the time that the passage across the Alps into Italy symbolizes a watershed between north and 'South', dark and light, repression and freedom. In this chapter it will be seen how texts which describe the passage into or out of Italy across its northern frontier invoke a specific and unique set of associations and responses, which are mobilised into discourses about northernness and civilization. Readings of Hilaire Belloc's *The Path to Rome* (1902) and D.H. Lawrence's early Italian essays and letters will show the incursion of discursive constructions of north and south into writing about northern Italy and its people. The texts, like their authors wandering and rambling in this foreign-yet-familiar border country, roam across familiar and innovative intellectual and philosophical territory.

Chaucer crossed the Alps into Italy on pilgrimage in the fourteenth century² and Grand Tour carriages made the precarious journey over Devil's Bridge at the St Gotthard Pass. A tunnel was opened there in 1882 whose southern exit was Airolo, in the Italian-speaking Swiss canton of Ticino. Samuel Butler, whose frequent visits to northern Italy inspired his *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and the Canton Ticino* (1881), writes

For some years past I have paid a visit of greater or less length to Faïdo in the Canton Ticino, which though politically Swiss is as much Italian in character as any part of Italy. I was attracted to this place, in the first instance, chiefly because it is one of the easiest places on the Italian side of the Alps to reach from England. This merit it will soon possess in a still greater degree, for when the St. Gotthard tunnel is open, it will be possible to leave London, we will say, on a Monday morning and be at Faïdo by six or seven o'clock the next evening.³

¹ Alice Meynell, 'The Watershed: Lines Written between Munich and Verona' (1901), in *The Poems of Alice Meynell: Complete Edition* ([n.p.]: Kessinger, 2005), 56.

² See for example, Parks, 'The Route of Chaucer's First Journey to Italy', *ELH: English Literary History*, 16.3 (1949), 174-187.

³ *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and the Canton Ticino* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1986), 22. Diana Webb writes that in 1873 Henry James 'crossed the Old Saint Gotthard pass by coach, conscious of the mighty work of tunnelling that was going on beneath him. [...] James admitted to very mixed feelings about the work in progress, which were shared by Samuel Butler, who expressed his gratitude that "I have known the Val Leventina intimately before the great change in it which the railway will effect"' ('La Dolce Vita: Italy by Rail 1839-1914', *History Today*, 46.6 (1996), 45-50. See also Butler's *Alps and Sanctuaries*, 25.

For Philip and Caroline in the final pages of Forster's *Angels*, the village of Airolo and the St Gotthard tunnel signify not only the exit from Italy but departure from the realm of freedom and sincerity, of the possibility of genuine communication. 'The train was crawling up the last ascent towards the Campanile of Airolo and the entrance of the tunnel [...] their free intercourse might soon be ended'.⁴ Hibberd, the biographer of Harold Monro (founder in 1912 of The Poetry House Bookshop in Bloomsbury which advocated socialistic ideals, artistic and personal freedom and a new age of poetry) describes Ticino as 'a symbolic borderland between northern intellect and southern passion, free from both Teutonic over-regulation and Latin anarchy. Wells had made it the gateway to his Utopia, and many free-thinkers had been drawn there'.⁵ Monro undertook a long walk to Italy across the Alps in 1908-9. He himself called it a pilgrimage (the resulting book's title was *The Chronicle of a Pilgrimage*), though its inspiration came not from Catholic rite but from H.G. Wells. Hibberd calls this quest his 'Pilgrimage to Freedom', adopting in his description of it Monro's optimistic and ideological outlook:

a journey of the soul through snow and hard weather to the ever-returning spring. He would walk to Italy [...] hoping the rigours of the way would clear his mind and help him to see his own and the world's 'great wonderful future'. And in some strange way it worked. His old life of social conformism, sexual pretence and literary pastiche was left behind for ever.⁶

Hibberd argues that it is during this trip, with the writing of the poems which would be published in 1911 as *Before Dawn (Poems and Impressions)*, that 'his career as a genuinely modern poet begins'.⁷ It was not just on his writing that the passage into Italy had a transformative effect: for Monro the colony at Ascona (in Ticino) offered the possibility of 'a return of paganism';⁸ there, Otto Gross (who in 1907 had had an affair with D.H. Lawrence's future wife Frieda Weekley) preached 'his gospel of erotic liberation', and Monro now incorporated sexual fulfilment into his notion of an ideal society.⁹ Lawrence himself, even in his angst-ridden final essay in *Twilight in Italy*, recognises and exalts the southern air of the Swiss canton:

It is strange how different the sun-dried, ancient, southern slopes of the world are, from the northern slopes. It is as if the god Pan really had his home among these sun-bleached stones and tough, sun-

⁴ *Angels*, 203.

⁵ Hibberd, 71. He describes at length the mountain colonies at which 'guests could undergo cures while living in harmony with the elements [...] Food was vegetarian, raw wherever possible, and clothes were minimal or dispensed with altogether' (72).

⁶ Hibberd, 57.

⁷ Hibberd, 60.

⁸ Hibberd, 73. Monro had expressed this hope in his 1906 diary.

⁹ In the poem 'To Tolstoi' directed at what Hibberd terms 'the Tolstoyan creed of chastity', Monro wrote 'Praised be the fate that under southern skies / Hath led me forth from thy grim northern ways!' (Hibberd, 73). Monro's sexual liberation would culminate in a homosexual relationship begun in Florence with the young 'part-Latin, part-Celt' Arundel del Re, whom he met through Vernon Lee, herself a Florentine resident. (See Hibberd, 81).

dark trees. And one knows it all in one's blood, it is pure, sun-dried memory. So I was content, coming down into Airolo.¹⁰

Chiasso is the closest Italian frontier town, while the northern lakes, such as Como and Garda, are also in frontier country. Garda (Lawrence's home for some months) was part of Austria between 1797 and 1918, so the border at the time of his writing passed through the lake itself.¹¹

Familiarity with classical mythology and Romantic literature (especially the reputations and poetry of Byron and Shelley) generated an inevitable conceptual association in the minds of early twentieth-century writers of Italy with the south. Italy *is* the south the moment the Alps are crossed, and as such evokes its inverse, the north. Its landscapes and inhabitants are construed as embodying attributes felt to be lacking in the north. Entry into Italy persistently calls into play this north-south dichotomy in which, broadly speaking, north is the negative pole, signifying the mind, consciousness, the dominance of the intellect, as well as puritan repression and modernity in its industrial, metropolitan, crowded complexity. South is the positive pole, exemplifying a superior way of living rooted not in modernity but in the past, a mythic past by turns medieval, Roman imperial or pre-historical. This south is rural, peaceful, sensual; its people emotional, vital, living instinctually in the moment, in a harmony uncomplicated by intellectual solitudes. The north and south in question are European, and this Europe tends to mean Britain, France and Germany in the north (with occasional mentions of Scandinavia or Austria) and Italy in the south (Greece and Spain and the rest of the Mediterranean only by allusion or inference).¹²

For Belloc (1870-1953), centuries of daily Mass among poor but stable rural communities exemplifies Catholicism as it should be lived, religion being a powerfully unifying force throughout Europe, but most satisfactorily in Italy, where the gratification of physical and spiritual needs is balanced. For Lawrence, at first, the customs and hospitality of the peasants of Garda are a revelation, galvanizing his formulation of a philosophy, for which he will become notorious, of the primacy of the body and the instinct over the intellect. His praise is not unequivocal however; the texts register the transition of a way of life into detested modernity. After the start of the war, within two

¹⁰ 'The Return Journey', in Eggert (ed.), *D.H. Lawrence: Twilight in Italy and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), 222. Alvina in Lawrence's 1920 novel *The Lost Girl* (discussed in Chapter 4 below) similarly experiences the Alps as a watershed: 'She felt vaster influences spreading around, the Past was greater, more magnificent in these regions. For the first time the nostalgia of the vast Roman and classic world took possession of her. And she found it splendid' (351).

¹¹ Catullus was said to have a villa on Garda; Goethe made sketches there included in his *Italian Journey* (1816-17, based on his travels in 1786-88). D'Annunzio (already popular before the war among Lawrence's peasants) made it his home after making his stand on entering the Entente.

¹² At times, America is also implicated in the concept of northernness.

years of his arrival in Italy, his reworked texts exhibit more than mere dismay at encroaching mechanization and emigration; they speak with a critical, alienated voice, the final essay culminating in an embittered condemnation of the mechanization of human life – a far cry from the triumphant passage into the warm, alluring air of the south evinced by Belloc.

The idea of Italy as the south is enlisted by writers who feel that their writing has a social purpose, in changing the way their readership thinks about civilization. Despite the idiosyncratic world-views and diverse social situations of the writers themselves, the trope of northern Italy as south functions as a means of contemplating what is wrong with its imagined obverse, the north. The presence of soldiers in both texts attests to the era's increasing militarization which both writers deplored, while life improvised on a daily basis by the travelling writers in rural environments contrasted starkly with the complex urban lives they were accustomed to in Britain. The phenomena of economic migration and the construction of roads, factories and housing are lamented (more so in Lawrence) as a consequence of the spreading northern malady of capitalism.

Poverty is construed in the texts as the simple frugality of an unmaterialistic people. Such a conceptualization feeds into the ideology of racial and environmental determinism, which (as suggested in Chapter 2), by circumscribing and thereby fixing a particular societal configuration, grants itself the intellectual authority, agency and insight inaccessible to members of that society. The lack of agency ascribed to those others is also a question of gendered performance: Sidonie Smith argues that it is not only travel writing that asymmetrically confers agency, but also the very act of travel itself. She writes,

Ever in the process of becoming 'men,' travelers affirm their masculinity through purposes, activities, behaviors, dispositions, perspectives, and bodily movements displayed on the road, and through the narratives of travel that they return home to the sending culture. Thus travel functions as a defining arena of agency.¹³

Passing into the space of Italy – warm, feminine and passive – allows the masculine personae of the writers to etch their literary prowess and intellectual vision into its accommodating ground; in a sense the texts exceed the authorial project by affirming northern rationality and intellectualism in their very plea for southern simplicity and sensuality.

Arriving with preconceptions and congenially disposed towards Italy, the writers come up against an actuality which does not always correspond to expectation. Both make material out of this slippage between what they have anticipated and what they find, out of the difference between what 'we' know about Italy and what is 'strange', or

¹³ Smith, *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001), ix.

disagreeable. Belloc's narrator remains relatively unperturbed by the accidents or unpleasant moments of his journey, carrying with him a confident sense of himself and his task. If, as Glover argues, Victorian subjectivity can be identified by its 'connotations of self-reliance rooted in a disciplined application of the will'¹⁴ Belloc's persona is a Victorian par excellence. Lawrence's narrator is more introspective and tentative, and his responses more provisional, as the major revisions to his essays reveal.

Hilaire Belloc's Pilgrimage

Belloc is best known as a lay, militant Catholic apologist and for developing and advocating the philosophy of Distributism with his friend G.K. Chesterton.¹⁵ When he wrote *The Path to Rome* he was known for his political journalism and children's verse, but he had literary aspirations and this book quickly became and remained his most successful piece of writing.

Belloc was born at the height of the Franco-Prussian war in France to an Englishwoman of Irish descent and a French father who died when Belloc was two. He was brought up in England, and enjoyed brilliant successes at school and at Oxford in history and the classics. He became a naturalized British citizen in 1902 and a Liberal member of Parliament from 1906 to 1910. His prolific output as a man of *belles lettres* included essays and journalistic pieces on wide-ranging subjects, and his letters to newspapers and periodicals famously debated with other writers and intellectuals of the time such as H.G. Wells. His anti-German feeling and lifelong Catholicism originated in his childhood, the former from the trauma of the expulsion from and dispossession of his family home by the Prussians and the latter from his mother's Catholic conversion in part brought about by her friendship with Cardinal Manning.

The twenty-two day walk took place in June 1901. He chose the place of his French military service, Toul, as the starting point for his long walk to Rome, and declares in the book's preface that in Toul's church he made a vow

¹⁴ Glover, 'Bram Stoker and the Crisis of the Liberal Subject', *New Literary History*, 23 (1992), 983-1002.

¹⁵ *The Tablet* defines the doctrine of Distributism as 'a British version of early European Christian democratic thinking which was parodied as advocating "three acres and a cow" for every family [which] was a real attempt to apply Christian teaching to social and political realities. Like Christopher Dawson, Belloc believed that whatever Europe might become in the future, historically Europe was formed by Christianity' (Boyd, 'Hilaire Belloc: The Myth and the Man', *Tablet*, 12 July 2003). McCarthy states that Belloc was 'hostile to the doctrine of social efficiency called for by the Fabians and groped toward by the liberal-Imperialists. Belloc's work had a spirit of romantic neomedievalism which idealized a precapitalist, prenationalist Christian Europe where the social Darwinist concepts of racial politics were nonexistent' (*Hilaire Belloc: Edwardian Radical* (Liberty Press: Indianapolis, 1978), 76).

to go to Rome on Pilgrimage and see all Europe which the Christian Faith has saved; and I said, 'I will start from the place where I served in arms for my sins; I will walk all the way and take advantage of no wheeled thing; I will sleep rough and cover thirty miles a day, and I will hear mass every morning; and I will be present at high mass in St Peter's on the Feast of St Peter and St Paul'.¹⁶

One reason for going to Rome was that he wanted, as his biographer relates, to 'meet the ageing Pope Leo XIII, then in his ninety-first year. Leo XIII was one of Belloc's heroes. His encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, published in 1891, had shaped many of Belloc's own views on politics and the economy'.¹⁷ However, this was not a conventional pilgrim route (he drew a straight line on a map from Toul to Rome) and at that time there were means to travel quite comfortably to Italy; furthermore, he had barely any money, and would be abandoning a wife and three young children. But Belloc was set upon the idea, wishing to travel 'not as a tourist but as a pilgrim and, as he made clear in an essay entitled "The Idea of a Pilgrimage", published five years later, a pilgrimage "must not be untroublesome"'.¹⁸ Some would argue that the overcoming of obstacles is intrinsic to all travel narratives: alluding to Belloc's adventure, Gattrell observes, 'Since it seems to many journeying writers (and their readers) that the surmounting of barriers and the negotiation of physical dangers are essential parts of the proper travel narrative, some who remained in familiar European territory decided to set up their own difficulties'.¹⁹ The difficulties and sacrifices were to be central to the project; quite apart from tapping into the huge market for travel narratives about Italy, the account of the pilgrimage would provide him with a suitable framework for advancing his ideas about Catholicism.

The pilgrimage as conceived by Belloc resembles in its vows the kind of pilgrimage undertaken in medieval times by English and continental European Catholics, thereby creating a link with a specifically European past that Belloc was eager to promote.²⁰ Primarily, then, *Path* was to bolster Catholicism, to reassert a sense of its values, particularly the pilgrimage, at a time when religion was being displaced as society's principal unifying force.

The Path to Rome (1902)

So Belloc sets off on foot with just 'a large piece of bread, half a pound of smoked ham, a sketch-book, two Nationalist papers, and a quart of the wine of Brulé' (*Path*, 8).

¹⁶ *The Path to Rome* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), vii. Henceforth referred to as *Path*, page numbers will appear parenthetically in the text. Belloc would break each of these vows, save the last.

¹⁷ Pearce, *Old Thunder: A Life of Hilaire Belloc* (London: Harper Collins, 2003), 82. Through a series of contretemps he eventually missed his audience with the Pope.

¹⁸ Pearce, 76.

¹⁹ Gattrell, (ed.), 16.

²⁰ Belloc's declaration in the introduction to *Europe and the Faith* (1920), that 'The Faith is Europe and Europe is the Faith' is one of his best-known aphorisms.

The text is very much concerned with comfort and companionship, with the pleasures of food, drink, sleep and song. From the very start, the reader is made aware of the importance to the cheerful traveller-narrator of these, as in this passage:

For as I drank the wine and dealt with the ham and bread, I felt more and more that I had a right to the road; the stars became familiar and the woods a plaything. It is quite clear that the body must be recognized and the soul kept in its place, since a little refreshing food and drink can do so much to make a man (14-15).

Hearing soldiers singing in the distance, he joins in their song and 'by the time we met under the wood, we were already acquainted' (15). Despite the austere vows and the solitude of the road, the pilgrim, the reader is given to understand, can nevertheless rejoice in the simple, ancient pleasures of song, and commune with strangers. Attending Mass is another crucial aspect of the pilgrimage. The cause of the 'pleasing sensation of order and accomplishment which attaches to a day one has opened by Mass' is 'that you are doing what the human race has done for thousands upon thousands upon thousands of years' (24, 25). Catholicism is always conceived within a European frame in a text which is nevertheless mindful of frontiers and nationalities. Thus the narrator, in describing a woman to whom he applies for food and a bed, parenthetically writes,

(she had a little tree set up before her door for the Corpus Christi: see what religion is, that makes people of utterly different races understand each other; for when I saw that tree I knew precisely where I stood. So once all we Europeans understood each other, but now we are divided by the worst malignancies of nations and classes, and a man does not so much love his own nation as hate his neighbours, and even the twilight of chivalry is mixed up with a detestable patronage of the poor. But as I was saying -) she also was a Catholic, and I knew myself to be with friends (50).

Likewise, in the Swiss Alps, he rejoices in seeing 'all the men, women, and children of a place taking Catholicism for granted', and of witnessing their Vespers, writes 'My whole mind was taken up and transfigured by this collective act, and I saw for a moment the Catholic Church quite plain, and I remembered Europe, and the centuries' (84).

Clearly a particular version of religious practice is being promulgated in these pages, but Belloc's narrator is comically aware of the sorts of objections his Protestant, middle-class, liberal readership might make. Their imagined responses to his religious (and other) digressions are voiced within the text by an irreverent interlocutor, 'Lector'. By this means deviations from the main travel narrative are effected by dialogues such as the following:

Giromagny is no place for relics or for a pilgrimage, it cures no one, and has nothing of a holy look about it, and all these priests -
LECTOR. Pray dwell less on your religion, and -
AUCTOR. Pray take books as you find them, and treat travel as travel. For you, when you go to a foreign country, see nothing but what you expect to see. But I am astonished at a thousand accidents, and always find things twenty-fold as great as I supposed they would be, and far more curious; the whole covered by a strange light of adventure. And that is the peculiar value of this book. Now, if you can explain these priests -
LECTOR. I can. It was the season of the year, and they were swarming.

AUCTOR. So be it. Then if you will hear nothing of what interests me, I see no reason for setting down with minute care what interests you, and I may leave out all mention of the Girl who could only speak German, of the Arrest of the Criminal, and even of the House of Marshal Turenne – this last something quite exceptionally entertaining. But do not let us continue thus, nor push things to an open quarrel. You must imagine for yourself about six miles of road and then –
* * *

– then [...] (55-56).

Such dialogic interventions provide the narrative with an innovative co-text of literary self-awareness which subverts the experience of readerly complacency and complements the notion of companionship and camaraderie being promoted in the main travel narrative. It is perhaps a consolation for the lonely and solitary process of writing (and reading) to include such dialogues, alongside other quirks such as verses in Latin, transcripts of musical scores, jokes, story-telling and games (or just asterixes) to ‘fill in’ the spaces where the external details of the pilgrimage ‘should’ be.²¹ In fact, the ‘straight line’ to Rome across Europe, literally drawn across Belloc’s sketch maps reproduced in the book, is the pilgrim’s route which must be walked day after day; and the inevitable tedium implicit in the task, while on the road relieved by food and rest and Mass and song, is in the book relieved by such games and devices. While the pilgrim perseveres along the straight path (itself a problematic enterprise) the text slows down the narrative with detail, speeds it up with omission, meanders and wanders away from the straight ‘path’.

The passage into Italy forms the most detailed episode of the book (whose organizational principle is simply upper page titles and typographical devices), and occurs exactly midway through. This, and the resultant disruption to the narrative (in its disproportionate length, around sixty pages) signal its significance. More than the arrival in Rome (which is but briefly described and is cast as disappointing), the passage across the Alps signifies a crucial turning-point in the book. For Belloc, the Alps represent the great barrier he must overcome to reach Italy: Italy is the goal, the reward, for his manly exploits. Once Belloc has achieved the heroic feat he avoids writing at any length about the history, landscapes or art treasures of Lombardy, Tuscany and Rome.

Already the significance of passing from one country or region into another is marked in this book; for example, under the page heading ‘The New Country’, he writes, ‘The first turn cut me off from France, and I was fairly in a strange country’ (65); and ‘When I had climbed almost to the top, I looked behind me to take my last view of the north. [Picture]. “Surely,” I said, “if Switzerland has any gates on the north they are these”’ (69-70). Language is also a marker of transition:

When I got to the top of the ridge there was a young man chopping wood outside a house, and I asked him in French how far it was to Moutier. He answered in German, and I startled him by a loud

²¹ Carr sees the device as a sign that ‘nineteenth-century didacticism is already evaporating’ (78).

cry, such as sailors give when they see land, for at last I had struck the boundary of the languages, and was with pure foreigners for the first time in my life (87).

To signal the momentous crossing of the Alps into Italy the narrator prepares the reader: on page 109, the reader's own traversing of the pages is aided by the topography of the book: 'To understand what I next had to do it is necessary to look back at the little map on page 103'. But by page 118 the narrator has not yet begun his journey, since so much space is given over to the exposition. On this page, his (as it will turn out) rash choice of route is justified thus:

I said to myself: 'I will go on over the Grimsel, and once in the valley of the Rhône, I will walk a mile or two down to where the Gries Pass opens, and I will go over it into Italy.' For the Gries Pass, though not quite in the straight line, had this advantage, that once over it you are really in Italy. In the Ticino valley or in the Val Bavona, though the people are as Italian as Catullus, yet politically they count as part of Switzerland; and therefore if you enter Italy thereby, you are not suddenly introduced to that country, but, as it were, inoculated, and led on by degrees, which is a pity (118).

Already the prospect of Italy is being constructed as desirable, to be savoured (and Italianness as a historical (ancient Roman) quality rather than a politically-derived one); yet still he holds off. Despite the repeated pleas of Lector to keep to the narrative, the narrator builds up to the event deploring the railway route taken by 'drawn, sad, jaded tourists' (120); describes minutely the course of the road, the weather conditions, his sleeping arrangements; discusses the Sin of 'intellectual pride' (a northern 'disease', 126) and finally, in mockery of overblown narratives of exploration, delivers the hyperbolic 'But with the coming of the small hours, and with my waking, prepare yourselves for the most extraordinary and terrible adventure that befel [sic] me out of all the marvels and perils of this pilgrimage, the most momentous and the most worthy of perpetual record, I think, of all that has ever happened since the beginning of the world' (128).

What follows is a blow-by-blow account of his attempt with a local guide to cross the Gries Pass, now with barely an aside. Although the reader has been prepared for his eventual failure much effort is spent on writing a gripping and convincing account. Having been overpowered by a tremendous storm they decide to turn back (itself a perilous undertaking). The narrator writes,

I felt in a confused but very conscious way that I was defeated. I had crossed so many great hills and rivers, and pressed so well on my undeviating arrow-line to Rome, and I had charged this one great barrier manfully where the straight path of my pilgrimage crossed the Alps – and I had failed! Even in that fearful cold I felt it, and it ran through my doubt of return like another and deeper current of pain. Italy was there, just above, right to my hand. A lifting of a cloud, a little respite, and every downward step would have been towards the sunlight. As it was, I was being driven back northward, in retreat and ashamed. The Alps had conquered me.

Let us always after this combat their immensity and their will, and always hate the inhuman guards that hold the gates of Italy, and the powers that lie in wait for men on those high places. But now I know that Italy will always stand apart. She is cut off by no ordinary wall, and Death has all his army on her frontiers (132).

This is a quest narrative, with feminized Italy the incentive, the reward, the prize. It is cast as a story of adventure, bravery, defeat. Italy is 'the sunlight', northward is 'retreat'. 'Fools', 'tourists' take the alternative route; smarting, he writes,

But to think of it! I who had all that planned out, and had so nearly done it! I who had cut a path across Europe like a shaft, and seen so many strange places! – now to have to recite all the litany of the vulgar; Bellinzona, Lugano, and this and that, which any railway travelling fellow can tell you. Not till Como should I feel a man again... Indeed it is a bitter thing to have to give up one's sword (133).

The language is that of class contempt – 'the vulgar', 'any railway travelling fellow', from which he is anxious to dissociate himself. 'I will not write of the St Gothard. Get it out of a guide-book. [...] You who have never taken a straight line and held it, nor seen strange men and remote places, you do not know what it is to have to go round by the common way' (133, 134). Thus his passage into Italy is through 'the ordinary gates – not Italy even, but a half-Italy, the canton of the Ticino. It was very hard'.²²

Then comes the remarkable relief:

Only in the afternoon, and on those little zig-zags which are sharper than any other in the Alps (perhaps the road is older), something changed.

A warm air stirred the dense mist which had mercifully cut me off from anything but the mere road and from the contemplation of hackneyed sights.

A hint or memory of gracious things ran in the slight breeze, the wreaths of fog would lift a little for a few yards, and in their clearings I thought to approach a softer and more desirable world. I was soothed as though with caresses, and when I began to see somewhat farther and felt a vigour and fullness in the outline of the Trees, I said to myself suddenly –

'I know what it is! It is the South, and a great part of my blood. They may call it Switzerland still, but I know now that I am in Italy, and this is the gate of Italy lying in groves.'

Then and on till evening I reconciled myself with misfortune, and when I heard again at Airolo the speech of civilized men, and saw the strong Latin eyes and straight forms of the Race after all those days of fog and frost and German speech and the north, my eyes filled with tears and I was as glad as a man come home again, and I could have kissed the ground (134-35).

The climactic moment of recognition is emphasized by the rendering of direct speech, in which 'the South' stands central (as it does in Meynell's poem). There is a manifest shift, apparently without irony, from the previous detailed account of the logistics of the failed excursion, relayed in the realist discourse of conventional travel narrative, to a new, metaphoric language: the 'gate' of Italy is revealed through 'memory of gracious things', teasingly veiled by fog; the ever-strident masculine 'I' is 'caressed' and 'soothed' until it is softened to tears. The approach to a magical, feminine world is imaginary – 'I thought to approach' – abstracted further by syllepsis – 'vigour in the trees' being 'felt'; 'strong Latin eyes'. Latin (ancient Roman rather than 'Italian') and German (contiguous with 'fog and frost and [...] the north') are opposed: just as Germans were 'pure foreigners', Italy is 'a great part of my blood' and 'home'.

²² *Path*, 133-34. He later relents, stating, 'Indeed, this hackneyed approach to Italy which I had dreaded and despised and accepted only after a defeat was very marvellous, and this valley of the Ticino ought to stand apart and be a commonwealth of its own like Andorra [...]' (143).

The impressions of the first people he encounters are loaded with moral and generalizing epithets such as 'proper', 'noble':

The wine of Airolo and its songs, how greatly they refreshed me! To see men with answering eyes and to find a salute returned; the noise of careless mouths talking all together; the group at cards, and the laughter that is proper to mankind; the straight carriage of the women, and in all the people something erect and noble as though indeed they possessed the earth.²³

Images of communication and human intercourse dominate; but Belloc's attempt to communicate with an invented language, consisting of 'the essence of all the Latin tongues' is very much one-way, since he fails to understand their response:

'HA! Si jo a traversa li montagna no erat facile! Nenni! Il san Gottardo? Nil est! poohl! pocol! Ma besterna jo ha voulu traversar in Val Bavona, e credi non ritornar, nam fredo, fredo erat I alto! La tourmente ma prise...'

And so forth, explaining all fully with gestures, exaggerating, emphasizing, and acting the whole matter, so that they understood me without much error. But I found it more difficult to understand them, because they had a regular formed language with terminations and special words (135).

Undeterred by the reception of his improvised European lingua franca, Belloc relies on religion for the crossing of social barriers; and on money, since nearly all of his interlocutors (innkeepers, mountain guides, villagers) are in his pay.

The narrator constructs Italy as pleasingly aesthetic ('Church towers also repeated the same shapes up and up the wooded hills until the villages stopped at the line of the higher slopes and at the patches of snow', 137) and as a self-fulfilling prophecy: 'I had come to the great mother of fruits and men' (136-37); 'The houses were square and coloured, they were graced with arbours, and there seemed to be all around nothing but what was reasonable and secure, and especially no rich or poor' (137). Having been anticipated with such reverence, it now confirms and embodies all that Belloc's narrator wishes it to. His triumphant entry into Italy is epitomized in this heroic image of himself: 'I stood on the Alps at their last southern bank, and before me was Lombardy' (156). Static and elevated, his figure stands not merely on a particular summit or piece of high ground but 'on the Alps', as a god might straddle a continent, or as a symbol on a map. From this all-encompassing perspective, Lombardy 'was more evidently Italy than ever. A village perched upon a rock, deep woods and a ravine below it, its houses and its church, all betrayed the full Italian spirit'; a spirit which requires no further explication, just as previously 'the South' did not. Assuming the reader will share or understand this veneration, the ritual he is inspired to perform is stated without self-justification: 'The frontier town was Chiasso. I hesitated with reverence before touching the sacred soil which I had taken so long to reach, and I longed to be able to drink its health' (156).

²³ *Path*, 135. D.H. Lawrence was also struck by the straight backs of the women: see below, and in 'The Theatre' in *Twilight in Italy* (passim).

The religious lexis continues to pervade the text. At the northern boundary of Tuscany (Sillano) he experiences a kind of epiphany, 'a savour of Paradise', which he interprets as 'the gardens of home, and whatever benediction surrounds our childhood'. And in a highly nostalgic and rhetorical key he associates the 'southern air' with the 'immortal habitation' that in 'very early youth the soul can still remember':

Youth came up that valley at evening, borne upon a southern air. If we deserve or attain beatitude, such things shall at last be our settled state; and their now sudden influence upon the soul in short ecstasies is the proof that they stand outside time, and are not subject to decay.

This, then, was the blessing of Sillano, and here was perhaps the highest moment of those seven hundred miles (202).

Having attained a personal spiritual zenith, he proceeds with relative alacrity onto the final stages of his journey. In fact, now almost two thirds of the way through the book, there begins a perhaps surprising economy in the descriptions of places and people along the way. It is as though having passed into the promised land of Italy with a great effort and trial, his pilgrimage is almost done. Milan evinces a mere paragraph, and it is reached by train, breaking 'the last and dearest of my vows' (150). Milan he exclaims is 'magnificent', with its 'swift cars, drawn by electricity, for such as can afford them'. Its men are 'brisk and alert even in the summer heats', and it has shops, banks, newspapers, 'soldiers, good pavements, and all that man requires to fulfil him, soul and body; cafés, arcades, mutoscopes, and every sign of the perfect state' (160). Despite an ironic subtext – fulfilment, after all, has been predicated on the rural and Catholic, and 'the perfect state' seems to imply perfect according to northern values – there is also a hint at the positive side of modernity. But the narrator (as he will increasingly) recollects the nature of his journey:

My pilgrimage is to Rome, my business is with lonely places, hills, and the recollection of the spirit. It would be waste [*sic*] to describe at length this mighty capital. The mists and the woods, the snows and the interminable way, had left me ill-suited for the place, and I was ashamed (160).

The initial euphoria of the entrance to Italy is gradually diminished by such factors as poor weather, ('in Piacenza it rained and there was mud', 171) a scrape with the police (185), and 'intolerable heat' (204). The Italians themselves, however, remain the paradigm of European Catholicism. They

have a benediction upon them, granted them for their simple lives and their justice. Their eyes are fearless and kindly. They are courteous, straight, and all have in them laughter and sadness. They are full of songs, of memories, of the stories of their native place; and their worship is conformable to the world that God made. May they possess their own land, and may their influence come again from Italy to save from jar, and boasting, and ineptitude the foolish, valourless cities, and the garish crowds of shouting men ... And let us especially pray that the revival of the faith may do something for our poor old universities (195-96).

Ever conscious of borders, he spots the Appenines which he calls 'the watershed, the boundary of Tuscany' but he makes no attempt to cover its familiar historic and artistic

heritage.²⁴ Rather, he 'presses on much more hurriedly to Rome' (202) with increasing recourse to similes involving England and home: 'leafy like our streams at home' (199); 'it was like my own country in the north' (200); 'but the deep grass of the north was wanting' (211); 'I had no more desire to sleep than has the flittermouse in our Sussex gloamings' (221).

The relentless sun and 'the inhuman aspect of the earth' remind him of the Colorado desert which he had walked across in 1891; they lead him to make this remarkable and contradictory declaration:

The north is the place for men. Eden was there; and the four rivers of paradise are the Seine, the Oise, the Thames, and the Arun; there are grasses there, and the trees are generous, and the air is an unnoticed pleasure. The waters brim up to the edges of the fields. But for this bare Tuscany I was never made (217).

As if in preparation for re-entry to 'the north', the rhetorical bonds with Italy are being broken. Images of home are raised to a higher status than the now 'confused folds of brown earth and burnt-up grasses, and farther off rare and un-northern trees' (236) of the Roman countryside. The road to St Peter's constitutes his brief and final description ('littered with many scraps of paper, bones, dirt and refuse', (241)) while his last moments before Mass are spent not in company but alone in a café composing a poem which is reproduced on the last page. The book ends with a last taunt by Lector, and a sketch of his staff and boots hung up as his 'Ex-voto'. In one sense, then, Belloc has 'written out' Italy by glossing over vast swathes of his journey. While Italy occupies a privileged place in the text, especially the passage into it from the north, the qualities for which it is revered belong to the imagined Italy of its other textual manifestations rather than to the physical, external observations of the traveller.

Ultimately its function is to make his religious vision attractive, and it is in its peace and apparent stability that the appeal lies (England was waging an unpopular war against which Belloc was a vociferous objector). The fraternity of the road, (characteristic of the northern Italian life celebrated by Rose Macaulay in her novel *The Lee Shore* (1912)) rooted for Belloc in mutual recognition among Catholics, is gendered, and as has been seen, the Italians themselves, content in their poverty and fixed in their customs, do not emerge as autonomous, free individuals in the way the persona of the narrator does. Confident of his place in the world, even when aware that his tramp-like appearance causes mistrust in others, he brings his world with him to Italy, and lets little get in the way of his path to Rome. His assertive 'I', the subject of so many verbs of action, is

²⁴ Wilson observes, 'Towards the end of his pilgrimage, he races through the towns and hills of Tuscany with hardly an allusion to the fact that they contain some of the most magnificent architecture, paintings and sculpture, the bones of some of the most illustrious saints, and associates with some of the greatest poets and statesmen that the world has ever known' (*Hilaire Belloc* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), 104).

competent – he obtains what he wants, knows what to do; cheerful, rational, purposive, manly, sensible, kind, efficient, jovial, clever, devout, in short, the ideal late Victorian English subject. On the other hand, the Italians' actions and feelings are involuntary, determined by centuries of tradition or by their environment, while Italy itself lies passively in wait behind her 'gates'. Belloc's steadfast teleological undertaking – the pilgrimage to a destination – drives the journey and the narrative forward towards its actual and symbolically charged end, Rome.²⁵

D.H. Lawrence and Northern Italy

Lawrence was thirty-one when *Twilight in Italy* was published, Belloc's age when *The Path to Rome* was published. Lawrence, too, was in a financially unstable position, and trying to make a name for himself as a writer, and came to Italy across the Alps. The biographical similarities stop there though; Lawrence, brought up as a Protestant, lost his faith during his teens. He did not have Belloc's robust constitution, and though he writes about some travels on foot, avoiding tourists and seeking out locals, most of his northern Italy essays centre on the area where he and his older, married lover (with whom he had eloped) actually lived for some months. England was at war again, but this time Italy was too; it was a period of unprecedented industrial growth in Italy and of industrial unrest in Britain.²⁶ Belloc's arrow-straight religious pilgrimage is a far cry from Lawrence's extended stay in one area in a self-imposed condition of social exile.

This section will consider how the passage into Italy is, once again, a passage 'south', generating writing underpinned by a north-south binary. However, while north and south encompass similar sets of meanings in the two texts, the encounter with northern Italy in Lawrence evolves into a source of disillusionment rather than consolation. It is a south that has been contaminated by the northern maladies of industrialization and introspection but which is also diluted by them, unable to halt or even perceive its own hybridity. Lawrence garners ideas about Italian southernness to evolve a philosophical position for which he will become notorious: 'My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect'.²⁷ But the place and people he implicates in his formulations – with a few exceptions – do not live up to the hopes he

²⁵ Gatrell has commented on the 'artifice of the project' which 'leaves a hollow impression at the end of the reading experience, as if the exploit has been one of pure self-gratification and the narration of it a kind of super-journalism' (16).

²⁶ Italy entered the War on the side of the Allies in May, 1915. See Introduction.

²⁷ Letter 538 to Ernest Collings, 1913 in Boulton (ed.), *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence: Volume I* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 503.

invests in them. Malley suggests that Lawrence's preoccupation with Italian peasant life, his desire to capture it in his writing, is akin 'to the Grand Tourist's mania for sketching ruins', in its 'compulsion to recreate and preserve in artistic form cultures that are – because of the homogenizing effects of Western technology, commercialism, and ideologies upon the once fascinating diversity of the world and its peoples – certain to be transformed almost out of recognition'.²⁸ Sketching ruins is what Goethe did by Garda, a connection made explicit by Lawrence in the last of his new essays: 'It was wonderful on this south side, so sunny, with feathery trees and deep black shadows. It reminded me of Goethe, of the romantic period' ('The Return Journey', 221).

The texts are characterized by ambivalence, contradiction and disillusionment, the voice of the narrator estranged, self-conscious and increasingly nauseated. The landscapes retain their association with Romanticism and ancient Rome but the people turn out to have lost the 'blood-consciousness' of true primitivism. He places his hope in the racially differentiated aristocratic mountain people rather than, as he has it, the dark-skinned people of the plain. As suggested in the introduction to this chapter, he posits the difference from northerners of Italians – their otherness – rather than advocating their shared roots.

The function of Christianity and paganism in Lawrence's texts is very different from that in *Path*. Christianity is not advanced as hope or the way forward as it is in Belloc, nor as a means of unifying peoples; rather it separates them, absolutely. Lawrence's is an epistemological quest which subjects the history of Christianity to a fierce critique. But his is also a critique of the modern Italian, whose childlike unconsciousness, initially generating admiration, becomes a cause for despair.

Lawrence first went to Italy in 1912, with his married German lover Frieda Weekley, née von Richtofen. He stayed in Gargnano, a village set in mountains on the Lago di Garda, in a rented part of the Villa Igéa belonging to the declining aristocratic Di Paoli family, from September until April 1913; and in the nearby mountain farmhouse of San Gaudenzio, for around nine days, where their acquaintance Tony Cyriax was staying.²⁹ Deeply excited and inspired by the landscape, the way of life and the local people, Lawrence published a series of essays, 'By the Lago di Garda', in *The English Review* in

²⁸ Malley, 'Nostalgia and the Travel Writer as Last Survivor', *English Studies in Canada*, 20 (1994), 459.

²⁹ Antonia Almgren (1881-1927). Once separated from her Swedish sculptor husband, she spent some months with her young daughter Gisela in San Gaudenzio, and related these experiences in *Among Italian Peasants* (1919). She initially visited the Lawrences in February 1913, on the recommendation of the latter's correspondent David Garnett, her friend, the son of Edward Garnett to whom Lawrence was also writing prolifically at this time. See Garnett, *The Golden Echo* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1953), I, 226-27. Kinkead-Weekes (69) compares Cyriax's account of the owners of San Gaudenzio, Paolo and Maria, with Lawrence's.

1913.³⁰ To these essays, 'The Spinner and the Monks', 'The Lemon Gardens of the Signor di P.' and 'The Theatre' he later returned, making revisions and additions, which were published in the book *Twilight in Italy* (1916). This volume also contains 'San Gaudenzio', 'The Dance', 'Il Duro', 'John', 'Italians in Exile' and 'The Return Journey', the last two of which involve passage across Italy's borders.³¹

'By the Lago di Garda' (1913)

It is so lovely. And in the kitchen there's a great open fireplace, then two little things called fornelli – charcoal braziers – and we've got lots of lovely copper pans, so bright. Then I light the fornello and we cook. It's an unending joy. Bunny *must* come and cook over a fornello. There's nothing on earth so charming. And – in Rome etc – we eat spaghetti and risotto and so on, all of our own making. And the flat – furnished – 2 bedrooms, dining room and kitchen – big nice rooms – 80 lire a month – 64/-. Everything outside is Italian and weird and tumble-down, and seems to belong to the past. And the men sing – and the soldiers are always going by – they are so good looking and animal – and some of the women are adorable – they have such fascinating straight shapely backs – and when are you coming? The place smells rather of wine. They [are] treading it in the street, and in the courtyard. And our Padrone: Signor Pietro di Paoli – sends us baskets of figs and grapes and weird fruit, and queer fermenting grape juice – wine in its first stage. And you can go in a wine place – and there's the family at supper by the fireplace, and you drink at another table. The father is a shortish, thick set, strong man – these Italians are *so* muscular – and the wife is straight and I like her – he *click-clicks* to the bambino in her arms, across the table. And the white grandfather scolds a little girl, and the old grandmother sits by the fire. And I drink a ¼ litre of red wine for 15 centesimi – about 1¼ d – and I love them all.³²

Appearing in this extended quotation from a letter written just after his arrival at Gargnano are several of the elements that found their way into Lawrence's first articles on Italy: the simple charm of the place; his fixation with the cheap living; the food and drink; the ways of the men; the hospitality; the attractiveness and zoomorphic qualities of the people and the details of their bodies; their strange customs, the smells, Italian words. And beyond this it conveys a strong sense of Lawrence's enthusiasm and the overwhelming stimulus that his new surroundings were to him. The present tense predominates, lending it the quality of spontaneity, of experiencing from moment to moment a string of undigested sensual impressions. The essays themselves dispense with maps, distances and dates; they begin and end *in medias res*. Written separately over time for publication in a paper with an educated English readership, they retain some of the spontaneity and brio found in the letters.

The first writings on Italy are impressionistic, sympathetic and affirmative:

The marvellous clarity of sunshine that becomes blue in the height makes me laugh by myself. Across, the great mountain crouches its length along the lake, and the top half is brilliantly white and skyey, and the lower half is dark, grim. On my side, down sweeps the headland from a great, pale-

³⁰ In London in July 1913 Lawrence met Norman Douglas, who was working for *The English Review* at that time; their friendship and Italian connections were reinforced on several subsequent occasions.

³¹ Reference will be made to the Penguin edition (edited by Eggert, with notes and introduction by Stefania Michelucci) cited in note 10 above. Footnote references where appropriate will distinguish essay versions by date, as in 'The Theatre' (1913) and 'The Theatre' (1916).

³² Letter 503, To Edward Garnett, 3[-5] October, 1912 in Boulton (ed.), *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence: Volume I*, 458.

grey height, in a rush of russet and crimson, to the olive-smoke and the water. And between the two, quaint and naïve, the pale-blue lake goes poking further and further, pushing the mountains aside in its curiosity, inquiring into the Alps ('The Spinner and the Monks', 52).

In the cheery magnificence of the lakeside setting the narrator comes across an old woman spinning. 'She is so perfectly *the present*. She certainly does not look before and after, and pine for what is not. Nor do the flowers' (58, original emphasis). She embodies the principle of nature, unconscious of herself, immune to the vagaries of time and dissatisfaction.

The narrator's host offers him the use of his theatre box for the period between Christmas and Carnival (February). From this vantage point, the narrator 'looked downstairs' on the people. He admires the men who

lounge with their wonderful ease, unconscious of the patches on their clothes, of their zoccoli, of their collarless throats, of the scarlet rag that is perhaps tied round their neck. Perfectly at their ease, the men lounge and talk, or watch with that wistful sadness one sees in the eyes of a child that is 'glotzend'.³³

The twin notions of unconsciousness and childlikeness appearing in this passage characterize descriptions of people in all three essays. The focus of 'The Theatre' is always on the people (audience or actors), and the digressions (on, for instance, the separateness of the sexes, or the mind/flesh dichotomy in Ibsen) do not overshadow the descriptions of bersaglieri, or occupants of the boxes, or other groups. Here Lawrence describes how the actor-manager Persevalli's role of the son in Ibsen's *Ghosts* makes him feel 'sorry for him':

He is childishly dependent on his mother. To hear him say 'Grazia mammal' would have touched the mother-soul in any woman living. So forlorn he was, with this trouble that had got him down mysteriously, with such a child's bewildered forlornness, robust, vigorous man that he was, that one could feel and love this childish nation that lives by faith and wants no knowledge. Yet he was not to be trusted. Like a child, he would smash things if he could not have what he wanted, and being a man, his smashing might be more serious than crockery. His flashy, Italian passion for his half sister was real enough to make one uncomfortable: something he wanted, like a child that suddenly goes wild for a desired object. And then he looked frightened (71).

This portrait of the actor emerges as a grotesque melding of man and child, the 'childish' behaviour of the 'robust, vigorous man' being by turns appealing and dangerous. Belonging to 'this childish nation' which is Italy, he is completely subordinate in the observer's perception to the fact of his Italianness, which combines stereotype ('flashy, Italian passion') and the lack of self-awareness and self-control implicit in 'child'. The 'one' who is made 'uncomfortable' by the staged incestuous relationship is by contrast in possession of a subjectivity that can judge and circumscribe, and whose unease at the lack of restraint in the behaviour of the actor and the sexuality of the scene constructs a puritanical English persona.

³³ 'The Theatre' (1913), in Eggert (ed.), 70; 'glotzend' approximates gawking, goggling, staring.

To this Ibsen piece, ‘The contadini sat and listened intently, like children who hear and do not understand, and who yet know’ (72); but they are ultimately unimpressed. The reason the narrator – and the audience – ‘hated Ibsen’ is that he represents ‘the mind’, he ‘denied the universality of the blood, of which we are all cups [and] owned the universality of the mind, to which we all subscribe, as to the wearing of clothes’ (71). Lawrence’s narrator identifies the denial of the body as the fault, implying that it is his and the Italian audience’s intuition of this fact that cause them so to dislike Ibsen. The audience’s contrasting enthusiasm for D’Annunzio’s play is however not shared by the narrator, who calls it ‘childish and foolish’ (73) – as the audience must be to like it; the murders ‘only seemed to be silly showing-off, or bits of extreme mischief’.³⁴ Childishness, then, serves variously as cause for disdain and for admiration. At some level, then, Lawrence’s disavowal of the ‘mind’ is contradicted by the use of reasoned argument in his critiques of the plays and descriptions of the players and audience. As Nyman suggests (in reference to the description of the *Hamlet* performance), there is a specifically English superiority inscribed into the very construction of northern inferiority; Lawrence’s is

a narrative of exclusion that reflects the alleged superiority of Englishness and English culture, not merely an opposition between the Northern and Southern ‘races’. In Lawrence’s view the villagers are unable to perform Shakespeare properly, to translate its meanings into their codes. [This generates] an image of English culture as more developed; since it is more elaborate and complex, Italians lack insight into it and are unable to perform it properly. [...] For the Englishman cognition and reasoning, concepts that can be gendered as masculine and thus be considered more significant, are more important.³⁵

Lawrence’s interpretation participates in a centuries-long debate on the meaning of the play. The orthodox view was a reverent one: that *Hamlet* is the greatest of Shakespeare’s works and the character of Hamlet closest to Shakespeare himself. Lawrence is the first English critic to write of Hamlet as a blight; it is he that is rotten. He writes, ‘It seemed to me Hamlet was not mad, only diseased [...] the whole of Hamlet seemed to me like this gleam of decay’ (76). It is tied in to his ideas about the relative merits of the mind and the body, about being northern or Italian. In an act of writing which itself contributes to the intellectual tradition of *Hamlet* analysis, Lawrence describes the performance by peasants to peasants of the notoriously cerebral play. The lead actor

³⁴ ‘The Theatre’ (1913), 72. In the later version of ‘The Theatre’ Lawrence elaborates this idea of Italian childishness: “‘But you know – D’Annunzio is a poet – oh, beautiful, beautiful!’ There was no going beyond this ‘bello – bellissimo.’ It was the language which did it. It was the Italian passion for rhetoric, for the speech which appeals to the senses and makes no demand on the mind. When an Englishman listens to a speech he wants at least to imagine that he understands thoroughly and impersonally what is meant. But an Italian only cares about the emotion. [...] He is like a child, hearing and feeling without understanding. It is the sensuous gratification he asks for. Which is why D’Annunzio is a god in Italy. [...] and although much of what he says is bosh, yet the hearer is satisfied, fulfilled’ (‘The Theatre’ (1916), 139). The argument amounts to this, that the language is superficial and the Italians love it; they think he is praiseworthy but he is not; the narrator knows this and they do not.

³⁵ Nyman, 114.

made me hate Hamlet. Of all the sickly, unnatural beasts, that Prince of Denmark seemed the greatest. When a decent Italian, Enrico Persevalli, put himself through the creepings and twistings of the unwholesome Dane, I revolted. I saw the natural man of hot heart, crawling to an anaemic tune, and it made me sick. [...] I tried to imagine any Italian in the part: he would not have been a Hamlet. Because every Italian I have seen lives by the human ties which connect him with his neighbour. But Hamlet had no neighbour, and no bond held him to anybody. He could not love, he could only judge.³⁶

The critique in 'The Theatre' seems to be of the character Hamlet rather than the player. In a very specific way the Italian is associated with the notions 'decent' 'natural' 'hot heart', 'human', 'connect', 'bond' and 'love', and the northerner to 'sickly', 'unnatural', 'unwholesome', 'anaemic' and 'judge'. This is quite original on Lawrence's part, to see the Prince as the bearer of the discourse of northern spirituality and mind. In a letter written contemporaneously to the *Hamlet* performance, Lawrence designates the flame as a metaphor for a new epistemology:

And instead of chasing the mystery in the fugitive, half lighted things outside us, we ought to look at ourselves, and say 'My God, I am myself!' That is why I like to live in Italy. The people are so unconscious. They only feel and want: they don't know. We know too much. No, we only *think* we know such a lot. A flame isn't a flame because it lights up two, twenty objects on a table. It's a flame because it is itself. And we have forgotten ourselves. We are Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. We cannot *be*. 'To be or not to be' – it is the question with us now, by Jove. And nearly every Englishman says 'Not to be.' So he goes in for Humanitarianism and such like forms of not-being. The real way of living is to answer one's wants. Not 'I want to light up with my intelligence as many things as possible' – but 'For the living of my full flame – I want that liberty, I want that woman, I want that pound of peaches, I want to go to sleep, I want to go to the pub and have a good time, I want to look a beastly swell today, I want to kiss that girl, I want to insult that man.' – Instead of that, all these wants, which are there whether-or-not, are utterly ignored, and we talk about some sort of ideas.³⁷

In Italy he finds escape from the world of ideas back to a more primitive world of physical desires, the body, emotion; the root of human being. Arguably, his project itself is an attempt to 'light up with [his] intelligence as many things as possible', one advanced by the rewriting and supplementation of these essays.

So far, the essays have been seen to be predicated on binaries such as north and south, man and woman, mind and body, but as yet these Italian sketches are, as Kinkead-Weekes writes, a 'light-hearted tribute to Italy, [...] vivacious and often humorous, observant, evocative – without the "philosophical" significance they would acquire when rewritten into *Twilight in Italy* two and a half years later'.³⁸ But it would be a mistake to overstate Lawrence's sympathy for and with his adopted home and its natives. Very early on he writes,

Dear Mac,

Just this minute got your letter, and am in tears of wrath, humiliation and indignation. I am a fool, a fool – why need I put a bit of manuscript in those things – but they have swindled us again. These

³⁶ 'The Theatre' (1913), 76. It might be said that the phrase 'creepings and twistings' echoes a complaint articulated by Belloc as 'the very cumbersome air of questioning-and-peering-about, which is the bane of our moderns' (*Path*, 203).

³⁷ Boulton (ed.), *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence: Volume I*, 503, original emphasis.

³⁸ Kinkead-Weekes, 68.

damned dirty poverty stricken Italians diddle you whenever they get the chance: it's something fearful the way they try to do me. But I'm up to 'em now. I know no Italian – except the numerals and a few names of things – but I know Quanto, which means how much? and troppo – non, molto troppo – which means – no, it's far too much.

[...] They are *so* poor – all the money is paper and copper – paper from 5/- upwards – filthy rags: It grieves me to change good English money for such trash – fancy 5/- notes. Nobody has ever seen any Italian gold: and half the silver is French or Swiss.³⁹

If in his personal life he was experiencing disenchantment, so too in his writing on Garda there are discernible notes of disappointment. Italy is cast in a narrative of decline, lending the prose a nostalgic tone alongside the celebratory one.⁴⁰ In the piece 'The Lemon Gardens of the Signor di P.', the elegiac tone is evident in the description of the tour of his landlord's home and land. The ageing aristocrat's patrimony is diminishing as the formerly profitable Garda lemon trade is overtaken by the Sicilian one, Sicilian lemons being cheaper due to the (northern) technology of the railways:

'That was once lemon garden down there – you see the stumps of the pillars, between the vines. Twice as much, twice as much lemons, I had. Now it must be vine. And that piece of land brought in two hundred lire a year, from lemons, now from wine, only eighty.'

'But wine is a valuable crop,' I said.

'Così, così. For a man who grows much. For me, it is not lemons.' Suddenly he started into life, an agitated little ruin of a figure against the blue sky. 'Perchè – because the lemon is all the year, and the vine – one crop, one harvest.'

The last words ring like a knell. I sit and look at the lake. And now the lemon gardens in ruin among the hills, stand out to me. And yet, right up here, I can hear a man singing as he stands rowing down the lake in his boat (67).

The old man's economic hardship serves to illustrate what Lawrence perceives as a sad loss; aestheticizing him (a 'little ruin of a figure against the blue sky'; the quaintly stilted speech) lends him pathos; the impulse that sees beauty in 'ruin' is a Romantic one. The fact that the effects of an encroaching north have not yet overwhelmed the area is signalled by the contemporaneous singing of a boatman. Michelucci, accounting for the omnipresent sense of impending loss and sadness, writes of 'Lawrence's awareness that the uncontaminated nature of the lake and the mountains surrounding it already belongs to the past; what survives is soon to be swallowed up by progress and by the impatience of the new generation with places in which it feels trapped.'⁴¹ To Lawrence, the importance of emblematic figures such as the spinner, 'so perfectly the present', emerges in the context of a Garda that seems suspended between the past and the future. The notion of suspension between two poles achieves primacy in his later work *Twilight in Italy*.

³⁹ Letter 509, To Arthur McLeod, 29 October 1912, in Boulton (ed.), *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence: Volume I*, 464.

⁴⁰ For Porter, the writing 'already turns out to be both a celebration and an elegiac lament' (*Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 207).

⁴¹ Michelucci, in Introduction to Eggert (ed.), xxxvi.

Twilight in Italy (1916)

In *Twilight in Italy*, Lawrence not only makes numerous alterations to the 1913 pieces, he writes into them long, insistent philosophical tracts. The six new essays are underpinned by these ideas, they are their literary manifestation. Porter summarizes Lawrence's central concern thus:

[...] the struggle in Italy between, on the one hand, the pagan openness to life of a past that goes back to the Renaissance and, on the other, the attraction of the new industrial future raises disturbing questions. At the work's center is the mind/body dualism that for Lawrence had already been resolved in the wrong way in Northern Europe.⁴²

Twilight in Italy evolves into a project of rethinking the ills and gains of civilization, redefining it, casting it in the familiar terms of north and south, but all the while with an increasingly distanced intellectualism.

In reworking 'The Spinner and the Monks', the now 'heavy' mountain symbolizes the point of division between 'heaven and earth', in keeping with the book's motif of the resolution or meeting-point of opposites. The landscape, now 'arid', takes on a more sinister aspect, predatory, in motion, 'behind me', in a suspense heightened by the adoption of past tense verbs, and culminating in violent imagery. The narrator no longer laughs, but is effaced.⁴³ The spinner is evoked through a more complex array of metaphors, still belonging to the natural world of sun, moon, bird, hawk, daisies, but more artfully tied in with the oppositions that permeate the later essays: 'My little old woman was gone. She, all day-sunshine, would have none of the moon. [...] And the daisies at once go to sleep. And the soul of the old spinning-woman also closed up at sunset, the rest was a sleep, a cessation' (112-113). Sunshine, moon, sleep, shadows, sunset, all recall the idea of twilight, though she herself is specifically and exclusively to be connected with day (the affirmative quality of light which is shared by a select few of the Italians in a racially formulated superiority).

The 'twilight' of the title of the 1916 volume is generally seen as a trope for ending, decline, but also for the space between, which both separates and connects the two poles. The movement is implicitly towards darkness, so that Italy's 'twilight' signifies its decline, and by extension the decline of Europe. This decline is evidenced in the essays in many ways: by the building of new houses and new roads, which jar on the picturesqueness of an ancient, sparsely populated rural area;⁴⁴ the movement of peoples in and out of their native countries; changes in the economy that find peasants becoming labourers; and traditional industries and lands coming under the control of outside forces.

⁴² Porter, 207.

⁴³ See 'The Spinner and the Monks' (1916), in Eggert (ed.), 105 for the full, reworked passage.

⁴⁴ Sprawling suburbs built for a rising lower-middle class population in England as the century progressed diminished in the minds of the intelligentsia and upper classes the beauty and exclusivity of the countryside.

Twilight is the moment of transition, before one process is ended or the other has taken over, and in this space between Italy is suspended. Lawrence is happier with polarities, disliking neutrality and hybridity. Of two monks he watches walking backwards and forwards as the sun sets, he writes,

Neither the flare of day nor the completeness of night reached them, they paced the narrow path of the twilight, treading in the neutrality of the law. Neither the blood nor the spirit spoke in them, only the law, the abstraction of the average. The infinite is positive and negative. But the average is only neutral. And the monks trod backward and forward down the line of neutrality (112).

It is perhaps not accidental that it should be religious figures who tread this undesirable line. Lawrence dedicates much space in this later essay collection to defining the polarity of the pagan Infinite and the Christian Infinite, the former symbolized variously by the tiger, hawk, or eagle, and associated with the body, blood, the phallus, the Ego, realization in the Self, daylight, the south. The Christian Infinite is configured as deer or doves, the modern way of being, born of the urge towards self-abnegation, fulfilment in the Other, including the other of the mind, ideas, science, non-matter, and associated with darkness, the north, Puritanism, and America. He writes,

The substratum of Italy has always been pagan, sensuous, the most potent symbol the sexual symbol. The child is really a non-Christian symbol: it is the symbol of man's triumph of eternal life in procreation. The worship of the Cross never really held good in Italy. The Christianity of Northern Europe has never had any place there ('Exiles', 200).

Italians, with their Catholic worship of idols, their ease with the body, appear pagan to Lawrence; in this he shares something of Belloc's reverent attitude towards a pre-modern integration of bodily and spiritual life which has been lost. But Lawrence's position is in many ways more complex and philosophical than Belloc's, whose championing of the faith retains a cheery confidence that Lawrence, writing during the first world war, cannot adopt.

In his reworked version of 'The Theatre', the Renaissance marks the moment at which the 'world, our world of Europe, had now really turned, swung round to a new goal, a new idea, the Infinite reached through the omission of Self' (147); in order to 'know the whole world, my world, the two halves of the universe' (148) one must retain the knowledge of both Christian and pagan infinities. 'To be or not to be was the question for Hamlet to settle. It is no longer our question, at least, not in the same sense', he argues; 'in the war there is the position of neutralisation and nothingness. It is a question of knowing how *to be*, and how *not to be*, for we must fulfil both' (148). The north chooses 'not to be'. This appears to be a new modernistic idea, that Hamlet's central quandary is flawed; the blame for the war, a despised neutrality, seems to rest in it. Embodied by Enrico Persevali (previously 'a very decent, human fellow' (71)) Hamlet in this version is a far more despicable object of attention:

Enrico Persevali was detestable with his 'Essere, o non essere.' He whispered it in a hoarse whisper as if it were some melodramatic murder he was about to commit. As a matter of fact, he knows quite well, and has known all his life, that his pagan Infinite, his transport of the flesh and the supremacy of the male in fatherhood, is all unsatisfactory. All his life he has really cringed before the northern Infinite of the Not-Self, although he has continued in the Italian habit of Self. But it is mere habit, sham. [...] How can he know anything about being and not-being when he is only a maudlin compromise between them, and all he wants is to be a maudlin compromise? He is neither one nor the other. [...] He is as equivocal as the monks (148-49).

The 'habit of Self' intrinsic to Italians has been diluted by the ascendance of the north in modern Europe; in Persevali it is 'sham'. As Hamlet, the representative of the sickly northern mind, Persevali personifies the failure of Italy to conjoin the two incommensurate poles of north and south; their merging generates disastrous malaise.

Lawrence's vision becomes ever more brutal and despairing as the book comes to its final pages, culminating in a stark, uncompromising castigation of the evil of the machine. 'It is the hideous rawness of the world of men, the horrible, desolating harshness of the advance of the industrial world upon the world of nature that is so painful' ('The Return Journey' 214). The portrayals of individuals are made by an increasingly alienated voice; in the short portrait of *Il Duro*, the word 'strange' appears thirteen times, less an intrinsic quality of the observed (as 'unconscious' is) than a response in the observer. But as Michelucci argues, in this 'doomed country, [...] little islands of hopefulness survive'⁴⁵ in the shape of a certain kind of peasant, in whom he recognizes 'the fierce spirit of the Ego come out of the primal infinite, but detached, isolated, an aristocrat'. This superior people is a mountain race, 'fair, thin, and clear' and contrasted with the 'dark-blooded' people of the plain ('The Theatre' 150). In the village of San Gaudenzio, this racial binary is embodied in the husband and wife Paolo and Maria Fiori. Paolo

was strangely like the pictures of peasants in the northern Italian pictures, with the same curious nobility, the same aristocratic, eternal look of motionlessness, something statuesque. His head was hard and fine, the bone finely constructed, though the skin of his face was loose and furrowed with work. His temples had that fine, hard clarity which is seen in Mantegna, an almost jewel-like quality. We all loved Paolo, he was so finished in his being, detached, with an almost classic simplicity and gentleness, an eternal kind of sureness. There was also something concluded and unalterable about him, something inaccessible ('San Gaudenzio' 156).

The lexis generates a sense of stasis, in space (a bust, a painting) and in time ('eternal', 'concluded'). Paolo's wife is also a peasant, but 'had been in service, and had eaten bread and drunk coffee [...] She did not want her sons to be peasants, fixed and static as posts driven in the earth' (159); her type is associated with the dark and slowness: 'Maria Fiori was different. She was from the plain, like Enrico Persevali and the bersaglieri from the Venetian district. She reminded me again of oxen, broad-boned and massive in physique, dark-skinned, slow in her soul' (156). Both descriptions imply a profound difference from

⁴⁵ Michelucci, Introduction to Eggert (ed.), xxvi.

the observing subject, which can be seen in the light of Bell's argument that Lawrence was deeply interested in the encounter with the other: 'the problematic of otherness was his central concern in his encounters with individuals, cultures, races, and forms of life'; Lawrence wished 'to recover the strangeness of the other, and through that a revived sense of human being'.⁴⁶ A more politicized reading comes from Nyman, for whom Lawrence's Italy is a

racially differentiated and sectorally primitive society as is appropriate in the class-based context of evolutionary theories and the period's novels based on similar ideas. [...] By exploring Europe from a masculinized position of power, and locating the European as its Other, Lawrence's narrator is able to equate the politics of this particular identity with those related to English national identity.⁴⁷

Maria and Paolo symbolise two worlds, she the aspirational, materialistic modern world, he that of a traditional feudal hierarchy in which each individual happily accepts their lot. Intrinsic to their portraits is the idea that she is somehow tainted by her belief 'that money was only distinction'; it is a 'temporal' truth, the narrator concedes, but Paolo 'had hold of an eternal truth' (160). She had 'sent' Paolo to work in America, but he remained 'untouched' by the experience; 'For him there was some divinity about a master which even America had not destroyed. [...] Paolo regarded us as belonging to the Signoria, those who are elect, near to God. [...] It was pure bliss to him to bring us the first-fruit of the garden, it was like laying it on an altar' (160). Paolo's ritualistic and dignified servility, couched in religious terminology, emphasizes the idea of his humility, that he is conscious of and accepting of his lowliness. He is governed by a 'fatalistic attitude to his circumstance [...] The earth was the Lord's and the fullness thereof: also the leanness thereof' (159), so that he remains unchanged, even by the emigration: 'He left his own reality there in the soil above the lake of Garda' (163).

Maria on the other hand is brash, pragmatic and not at all revered by the narrator; 'she ruled her life according to money. Her supreme passion was to be mistress rather than servant, her supreme aspiration for her children was that in the end they might be masters and not servants' (160). It is not hard to discern an underlying affirmation of the ideology of feudalism which in England had given way to class-based capitalism; praise is accorded to the old peasant who identifies with his patch of land and reveres the aristocrat – or English signore – as a higher being than himself; contempt to the young, money-minded woman who would leave the life of the land at a moment's notice and who fails to recognise values outside of commerce – a mirror of the English lower middle-class social climber. To this extent then, Nyman's notion of Lawrence manifesting

⁴⁶ M. Bell, From unpublished transcript of paper 'Lawrence, the Academy, and the Other', Senate House, University of London, 11 November 2004.

⁴⁷ Nyman, 107, 113.

in his writing on Italians the contemporary class-based configurations of English identity is borne out.

For Lawrence, as for other writers such as Douglas and Huxley, contact with the north, with America in particular, can dilute and corrupt the 'essential' or 'pure' Italian. In contrast to Paolo, Giovanni (in an essay entitled 'John', his nickname, which the use of inverted commas insinuates is a sham) is characterized by the contemptible signs of his American travels in his dress and demeanour, despite the fact he is admired by the villagers: his is a 'sordid, degenerate American respectability' (181); he is repeatedly 'sordidly shabby and dirty' (182). It is part of Lawrence's loathing of hybridity, of the twilight zone in which polarities fail to have the ascendancy. In the words of Kinkead-Weekes, Giovanni 'is half-baked, half-educated, a hanger-on to the fringes of American life':⁴⁸ the Italian out of his country is out of his depth; he is construed as failing to integrate, to fully 'become' American, and ridiculed for the attempt; yet what it means to be American is left unsaid. He ought, it is implied, to have stayed in his place.

When peasants take on 'slave-work [...] to get away from the old system', for Lawrence they are reduced to an inhuman agglomeration, symptomatic of a wider malaise. During his final walkabout, he sees labourers:

These Italian navvies work all day long, their whole life is engaged in the mere brute labour. And they are the navvies of the world. And whilst they are navvying, they are almost shockingly indifferent to their circumstances, merely callous to the dirt and foulness. It is as if the whole social form were breaking down and the human element swarmed within the disintegration, like maggots in cheese ('The Return Journey', 223).

This apocalyptic note is characteristic of Lawrence's final vision; the book ends on a bitter note, in medias res as it began, without the consolation of a destination reached or a homecoming:

And there, in Milan, sitting in the Cathedral Square, on Saturday afternoon, drinking Bitter Campari and watching the swarm of Italian city-men drink and talk vivaciously, I saw that here the life was still vivid, here the process of disintegration was vigorous, and centred in a multiplicity of mechanical activities that engage the human mind as well as the body. But always there was the same purpose stinking in it all, the perfect mechanising of human life (226).

There is no satisfactory conclusion or sense of having completed a journey (or a book); the emergence of an alienated narratorial voice, and the renunciation of the traditional resolution of travel writing, marks this text as registering a new, modern sensibility.

Belloc and Lawrence's personae, as if oppressed by their northern intellectuality, rejoice in witnessing people acting with what they see as simplicity, instinct and age-old custom. Yet the very texts themselves are paradigms of reasoned argument, erudition and engagement in contemporary debate. What the words refute, the texts as a whole affirm.

⁴⁸ Kinkead-Weekes, 272.

Lawrence's persona is increasingly characterized by a sense of alienation and strangeness, and drawn to the delineation of difference, in contrast to the evocation of community, shared values and bonding found in Belloc's writing. Belloc's focus is on religion rather than Italy itself, and suitably the text ends in the capital of Catholicism; Lawrence's theme is transition as much as Italy itself, and appropriately the essays end in Milan, a kind of antithesis to Rome, in its vitality, modernity and lack of religious or imperial connotations.

The writers' imagined, desired south, largely an effect of education (literature, the Classics, painting) evinces a traditional, ancient way of life, of small communities living in symbiotic harmony with the land, unchanging, still attached as by a thread to a great ancient civilization, uncontaminated by the Protestant ethic, intellectualism, technology – in broad terms, for ideals such as purity, stability, nature, nobility and simplicity. While Belloc invests in this model a hope for the future of the north, Lawrence laments its passing through the tangible encroachment of the north (especially its economic and industrial influences). The elegiac tone of Lawrence's first set of essays becomes embittered and critical in their later rewriting and supplementation; if Belloc merrily deflects tedium, disappointment or unease in Italy, Lawrence in his later writing actively builds disillusion into the very discourse. In his travels he will move southwards, reaching Sicily and Sardinia, and eventually out of Europe altogether.

While both *Path's* and Lawrence's constructions of Italy are predicated on established ideas about north and south, the latter's encounter with northern Italy proves these to be superseded. As twilight, the Garda region becomes a relation not a pole, a border country marking the threshold of war. Travel writing here charts change as it happens and in its unsettling of the north-south orthodoxy is at the fulcrum of the change in consciousness and attitudes brought about by the war.

Chapter 4

The Italian South: Civilization

Chapter 3 showed how the very act of passing onto Italian soil symbolizes passage into the South, not merely a geographical European south, but a south imagined as the root, the seat of civilization. This chapter extends the discussion by looking at representations of the southern parts of Italy itself, which as Moe demonstrates, had become 'a place and people imagined to be different from and inferior to the rest of the country'.¹ From the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, he writes,

the south was first marked as backward in relation to that part of Europe that was increasingly identified as leading the way of progress: England, France, and somewhat later, Germany as well. A new sense both of the south's distance from western European civilization and of its liminal position with respect to Africa and the Orient emerged. Foreign travelers in particular, but southerners too, denounced the barbarism of life in southern Italy.²

The denunciation was however accompanied by an attraction to wild, rural places and peoples:

Travelers and artists looked south in search of a more natural, untamed world to find, in a word, the picturesque. From the late-eighteenth century on, the picturesque becomes the main prism through which the south's status as a source of interest and delectation for the civilized observer is viewed. The south therefore became both 'Africa' and *terra vergine*, a reservoir of feudal residues, sloth, and squalor on the one hand and of quaint peasants, rustic traditions, and exotica on the other.³

By the early twentieth century, as Dickie observes, literary discourse conventionally constructs 'the South as a place of illiteracy, superstition, and magic; of corruption, brigandage, and cannibalism; of pastoral beauty and tranquillity admixed with dirt and disease; a cradle of Italian and European civilization that is vaguely, dangerously, alluringly African or Oriental.'⁴ Moreover, as this chapter will find, it is sometimes opposed to (and thence defined by) the totemic term 'Tuscany'.

Both Moe and Dickie halt their discussions at the turn of the century; this chapter will show how writers engage with this tradition of writing on southern Italy in the years before, during and after the watershed of World War I. The apparent heterogeneity of the treatment of the southern cities and countryside in fiction and travel writing is tempered by the shared preoccupation with the notion of civilization; it is as much a theme in the early years of the twentieth century as it is in the late 1920s. It will be seen how the concept of the civilized is fought over within and among the texts, and how constructions of civilization are for British writers both an inward process of self-definition and an outward critique of 'progress'. The texts discussed here are set in the tourist destinations

¹ Moe, 1.

² Moe, 2.

³ Moe, 2-3.

⁴ Dickie, 1.

of Rome and Naples and in the less familiar (to the British) rural areas of Lazio, Abruzzi, Campania, Calabria, Sicily and Sardinia. They are by exiles (Norman Douglas, D.H. Lawrence), other residents (Vernon Lee, Aldous Huxley), childhood residents (Lee, Rose Macaulay) and Arthur Symons, who made several extended visits to Italy. They are all formulating a sense of what civilization has come to and what it means to be civilized; southern Italy is the ideal site for such questions, containing within its area Rome, the seat of western civilization, poverty in Neapolitan slums and the wilder areas suggestive of primitivism, and islands peripheral to mainland Europe where perhaps the 'taint' of civilization has not arrived.

The lengthy entry in the 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica for 'civilization' recycles nineteenth-century theories of cultural evolution, delineating the natural progression of mankind from savagery to barbarian states to civilized society.⁵ This hierarchical taxonomy posits complex societies as superior to simple ones. The article is rife with terms such as 'progress', 'civilization proper', 'growing complexity', 'highest civilizations' and is Eurocentric in its articulation of these: 'localized civilizations' such as those of Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Phoenicia, Carthage, Greece, Rome, Byzantium 'in due course waxed and waned, leaving a tremendous imprint on national history, but creating only minor and transitory ripples in the great ocean of civilization'; they merely paved the way for 'a new Great ethnic period': 'the Europeans of about the 15th century of the Christian era may be said to have entered upon the Second or Middle Status of civilization'. Steam machinery, industrialization and Darwinian thought ushered in with unprecedented speed the Third or Higher period: 'The revolution in practical life and in the mental life of our race that followed these inventions and this new presentation of truth probably exceeded in suddenness and in its far-reaching effects the metamorphosis effected at any previous transition from one ethnic period to another.' These claims, which seem so dated since the work of cultural relativists such as Boas, give a sense of the contemporary perception of tremendous change, and of the centrality of racially-defined notions of civilization.

With civilization accelerating towards its zenith, the narrative concludes with a projection about the imminent period which will see 'the final emergence of humanity from the insularity of nationalism to the broad view of cosmopolitanism.' This humanistic vision of international fraternity has its roots in Enlightenment thought and contemporary Liberalism. The ideologies of the period are laid bare in the final statement which confidently declares,

⁵ Quotations are taken from the online version, <http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/CHR_CLI/CIVILIZATION.html>.

the important lines of progress will include (1) the organic betterment of the race through wise application of the laws of heredity; (2) the lessening of international jealousies and the consequent minimizing of the drain upon communal resources that attends a military regime; and (3) an ever-increasing movement towards the industrial and economic unification of the world.

If this represents a ratified pre-World War I view of civilization, it is not of course one that was uncontested. It serves here to highlight the beliefs in 'progress', racial determinism and eugenics, the justice of imperialism and industrialism, as well as anxiety about national militarisms which underpinned much writing on 'abroad' at the start of the century.

The period's obsession with the concept of civilization is attested to by the publication of such non-fictional books as Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (third edition published in twelve volumes during the period 1906-1915), which posited religion as a cultural phenomenon; Clive Bell's *Civilization: An Essay* (1928), Norman Douglas's *Goodbye to Western Culture: Some Footnotes on East and West* (1930) and Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930). These last are characterized by a strong sense of disillusionment and crisis. Compton Mackenzie writes in his memoirs, 'I was depressed by the civilization we were fighting such a great war to preserve. Contemporary readers may be unaware that the official name for the First World War was "The Great War for Civilization"'.⁶ And G.K. Chesterton, in an essay which argues that the English descend from Latin roots rather than north European ones (and hence distances the English from the German enemy) writes, 'Our histories told us we were Teuton; our legends told us we were Roman – and, as usual, the legends were right. [...] England is nowhere more really English than where she is Roman'.⁷ It was not only the war which generated this re-evaluation of identity; as noted in the Introduction, religion no longer commanded the cohesive authority of earlier times; the imperialist enterprise was increasingly subjected to contestation both within the colonies and at home. Carr observes,

Travel writing in this period becomes increasingly aware of globalisation – not a word used but a condition that was widely recognised – and the resulting mixtures of cultures and peoples it brought with it. At the same time, many writers became increasingly anxious about the condition and value of modern Western civilisation: was it and the white race degenerating? Might there be an alternative elsewhere?⁸

The entire period contains outbreaks of unprecedented social unrest in both England and Italy; transport and communication systems, road and house building, seemed in a state of uncontrolled growth in England. Fussell argues that one of the principal reasons for travel

⁶ Mackenzie, *My Life and Times* V, 71. 'Contemporary readers' were those after 1966 when this volume was published.

⁷ 'Our Latin Relations' in Collins (ed.), *Selected Essays of G.K. Chesterton* (London: Methuen, 1949), 136.

⁸ Carr, 73.

to Italy was escape from Britain: 'departure [after the war] is attended by the conviction that England is uninhabitable because it is not like abroad.'⁹ The idea of southern Italy as a possible 'alternative elsewhere' derives in part from its association with classical civilizations and their myths. Frazer begins and ends his book at Lake Nemi near Rome, as if the site was the location of the mythological origins of Christianity; Turner's famous painting 'The Golden Bough' on the 1922 cover depicts Aeneas at Lake Avernus (near Naples) at the gateway to the underworld. Primitive people were imagined as happy, free of the neuroses generated by modern, urban society, in harmony with nature; their art influenced modern painting, sculpture and literature.

The word civilization itself connotes a variety of ideas – the word *civilis* is Latin, and imperial Romans' expansionist policy, rule of law, introduction of complex forms of engineering and strongly demarcated social hierarchies bring to the concept of civilization the connotations of order, refinement and efficiency. Civilization can suggest the conveniences and comforts of city life as opposed to the hardships and isolation of life in the wilderness, or it can refer to localized historical social conformations (Magna Graecia, Albanian settlements in Calabria, the Phoenicians and so on). Civilized behaviour connotes a standard of sophistication, refinement in tastes and manners, politeness, aristocratic breeding; it has been used to justify the imposition of one nation's practices on a 'barbaric' one. Its implied opposites are vulgarity, dirt, incompetence, ingenuousness and disorder. Many of the writers in this chapter contest the idea of civilization as modernity, the city, Protestantism, industrialism, high art, scientific progress, economic growth, sophisticated interaction, preferring instead to formulate the civilized as primitive, rural, Catholic, spontaneous, pagan, classical. It was felt that one could encounter such a civilization the further south one travelled in Italy. Capri and Tuscany were familiar and cosmopolitan, and northern Italy was visibly in the process of emulating the agricultural and industrial practices of its northern neighbours. Therefore texts concerned with the places covered in this chapter (starting with Rome and progressing southwards) are discussed in terms of the way they engage with the concept of civilization and the civilized.

Rome

Rome, the furthest north of these southern places, invariably functions as a symbol of time, history and eternity; it is history laid out in visible layers before the eyes, from classical times to modernity. As Ross argues, 'Rome, being eternal, makes even

⁹ Fussell, 15 and the chapter entitled 'I Hate It Here'.

the most venerable among other places look laughably ephemeral [...] Narratives that unfold within the “eternal” frame tend to be profoundly conditioned by the whole idea of temporality.¹⁰ Fictional renditions of the city in Rose Macaulay’s *Abbotts Verney* (1906) and Aldous Huxley’s short story ‘After the Fireworks’ (1930) focus on its upper middle-class British visitors and expatriate community, acquiescing in conventional themes of time or religion, but also bringing into focus the experience of interaction with the Roman poor. Ubiquitous poverty and new building, juxtaposed with ancient remains, means this imagined paradigm of imperial splendour is a ‘living’ embodiment of the pertinent contradictions and degradation of empire. So central is Rome to notions of European civilization and so overdetermined in advance by the plethora of literary-historical material acquired by any educated individual, that early twentieth-century travel writing inevitably engages with the contrasts between its reputation and what writers actually encounter. Thus, the eternal city, the seat of western civilization, is in turns exalted and reduced to ‘the ugly mass of houses which was Rome’, and ‘the hopeless sprawling of modern Rome’.¹¹

The decadents and aesthetes of the fin-de-siècle make a virtue of their pessimism, seeking in what they perceive as the highest form of civilization and refinement – art – an antidote to contemporary reality. Vernon Lee (in *The Spirit of Rome* (1906)) and Arthur Symons (in ‘Rome’, *Cities of Italy* (1907)) find in the travel essay an accommodating medium with which not only to rehearse their views on art, but also to critique modernity as symbolized in the spread of new building and in the ubiquitous signs of poverty and squalor. By evoking Roman civilization through descriptions of the church-goers, they present a narrative of degeneration, of stable social hierarchies which have corroded. In common with Lee, Norman Douglas’s persona contemplates the city from a semi-autobiographical perspective, though his recollections are altogether more salacious and light-hearted. Nevertheless, a similar contempt for the signs of civilization in decline is perceptible in the numerous digressions in *Alone* (1921).

Olave Potter: *The Colour of Rome* (1909)

Potter’s popular *The Colour of Rome: Historical, Personal and Local*, illustrated with picturesque watercolours, is an eloquent, determinedly celebratory evocation of the city’s picturesque populace; it constantly reiterates the idea of Rome’s centrality to European civilization. Not a pocket guide (it is a large hardback), it satisfies a taste for off-the-

¹⁰ Ross, 198.

¹¹ Macaulay, *Abbotts Verney: A Novel*, (London: Murray, 1906), 165; Lawrence, *Sea and Sardinia* in *D.H. Lawrence and Italy* (London: Penguin, 1997), 181.

tourist-trail tidbits to be enjoyed by the armchair traveller. The book is included here because it provides useful information about Rome's English community and is a paradigm of clichéd representations of the city against which the other texts can be compared. Rome and western civilization in its entirety are exalted interchangeably in this text; the city's past grandeur is an incontrovertible fact.

Travel writing on Rome is typically replete with hyperbolic declarations and aphorisms, relating to past civilizations: 'Rome is a sea in which many worlds have gone down'; 'Rome has never been so much Rome, never expressed its full meaning so completely, as nowadays. This change and desecration, this inroad of modernness, merely completes its eternity'; 'This is Rome – a capital of contrasts, ancient and modern; a city of dreams and a city of crisp delights'.¹² Commonly found are allusions to classical and Romantic writing, and comparison with London (and sometimes Paris), as in this passage by Potter:

Roman streets have never been famous for their peacefulness. Horace complains of them, and Martial; they are still narrow and still crowded, and, with the advent of the motor, they are more noisy than ever. Rome seldom sleeps. Even in the quiet hour before daybreak, when you can 'smell the meadow in the street,' you hear the creaking carts of the Campagna or the gay and passionate song of an Italian lover singing to the dawn. London has her lively street noises – the quick trot of horses on wooden roads, and the jingle of hansoms, now almost superseded by the ubiquitous *taxi*; but you do not hear in London the sleepy creak of country waggons climbing Piccadilly Hill, or the slow music of the wine-carts which breaks the stillness of a Roman dawn.¹³

The noisiness of 'the motor' is not foregrounded, cast simply as a modern version of an age-old phenomenon, suggesting Rome subsumes it in its greater charms; other writers are less tolerant of the advent of modernity. For Potter, Rome is to be apprehended aesthetically; the text's discourse is predominantly Romantic, in its penchant for the picturesque, choices of literary allusions, and earnest, sentimental narrator. As in so much writing of the era, the people are construed as part of an aesthetic whole, seen from balconies or by an apparently invisible observer, rather than as individuals with whom one interacts. As Douglas Sladen states in the book's introduction, 'the churches are not only treated as architectural monuments, but as the scenes of splendid festivities and the pathetic simplicity of the life of the poor'.¹⁴ In this account, the solitary, erudite wanderer gazes unchallenged at the anonymous poor as they go about their lives – peasants having their horses blessed, selling from their carts, attending Mass; carnival crowds, or picturesque groups of nuns, cardinals or schoolgirls.

¹² Symons, 'Rome' in *Cities of Italy* (London: Dent, 1907), 16-17; Lee, 103; Potter, 4. All references to Symons come from this book.

¹³ Potter, *The Colour of Rome: Historical, Personal and Local* (1909) (London: Chatto & Windus, 1925), 238. The quotation comes from Tennyson's 1850 poem 'In Memoriam A.H.H': 'I come once more; the city sleeps; / I smell the meadow in the street' [II, 3-4]; pointedly Romantic in its elevation of nature over the urban.

¹⁴ Potter, vi.

Arthur Symons: 'Rome' (1907)

Arthur Symons (1865-1945) is associated with the fin-de-siècle Decadent and Symbolist movements, to which he contributed keynote texts. He championed European literature, in particular the French Symbolist poets, whom he introduced to English circles. His most influential book was *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), developed from an earlier essay published in *The Yellow Book*. Born in Wales to a Wesleyan minister whose work uprooted the family many times, Symons grew up with a sense of entrapment in, and aversion to, a provincial, restrictive, middle-class environment, from which he found escape in study of the arts and later in travel. 'I prefer town to country' he wrote in the preface of *Silhouettes* (1892). As Buzard points out, the concept of the picturesque, by Symons's time, 'had extended from nature to cities and their inhabitants; metaphors came to include *tableaux vivantes* in which everyday features of life that might interrupt the charm are eliminated; people in a scene conveniently arrange themselves as part of the spectacle.'¹⁵ Symons's responses to old-world cities such as Naples, Seville, Budapest and Moscow were collected in *Cities* (1903); he reprinted the Italian essays, with additions, in *Cities of Italy* (1907), showing the marketability of books on that country.¹⁶ Among his experiences in Rome, which he visited for the first time from December 1896 to March 1897, he attended High Mass at St Peter's, met Gabriele d'Annunzio (some of whose work he later translated) and was shown Rome and its surrounding countryside, the 'Campagna', by aristocrats of his acquaintance.¹⁷ He writes to W.B. Yeats, 'I like Rome more and more, and am getting to know it quite well by now, though I am taking it very gradually, letting things come my way rather than going to seek them. [...] I am trying to make my notes for the Rome article not merely impressions, but studies in the meaning of things.'¹⁸ In the dedication of the 1903 book *Cities*, reprinted in the 1907 version, he elaborates on his technique: it is

more than [to] write a kind of subjective diary [...] I have put myself as little as possible into these pages; I have tried to draw confidences out of the stones that I have trodden but a few weeks or a few months, out of the faces that I have seen in passing, out of the days of sunshine that have after

¹⁵ Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature and Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 187-88.

¹⁶ He travelled extensively in France and Spain but never brought out books entirely dedicated to these countries.

¹⁷ Symons counted among his companions in Rome Count Giuseppe Primoli, the wealthy Italian author and friend of Gabriele d'Annunzio, and the actress Eleonora Duse.

¹⁸ New Year's Eve, 1896-7, Letter to W.B. Yeats, in Beckson and Munro (eds.), *Arthur Symons: Selected Letters, 1880-1935* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 113-14.

all warmed a stranger. I have respected the sight of my eyes and the judgment of my senses, and I have tried to evoke my cities in these pages exactly as they appeared to me to be in themselves.¹⁹

This is, then, not so much a didactic exploration of famous monuments as a deliberately subjective, impressionistic enterprise, (often expressionistic in its attention to colour); it is an essentialist quest for the *'vrai vérité'*. Using painterly language, he attempts, in Markert's words, to 'recreate in prose the moment of magical glow [...] This amounts to living life as art. In a sense, he looks for in a landscape or cityscape [...] the paradox of art in life. The moment when life crystallizes into art – the Paterian moment, is "magical"'.²⁰ Thus there is an attraction to sunsets, the transient moment symbolic of the passage from light to dark appropriate to an elegy to a civilization in decline.²¹

He is an 'ultra-civilized' figure, insofar as he is an arbiter of taste, something of a dandy, a connoisseur, an authority on literature and art, friendly with aristocrats and leading literary figures. His account of the encounter with Rome (the most extended essay in the collection) allows him to shift between personae, at times the professional art critic, at others lyrical and fantastical, often autobiographical. What unites the narrative is a constant reprise of the theme of civilization and barbarism. Much as Lawrence in his post-war *Sea and Sardinia* will rhetorically ask if 'Sardinia will resist through',²² Symons already at the turn of the century contemplates with uncertainty a southern Italian locale, as a unified whole, investing it with the charge of retaining its integrity:

So far, during so many centuries Rome has always, by a natural magic in its hills, its air, its sky, triumphed over every outrage of its enemies or of its citizens. Will it always continue to do so? is the question which one asks oneself, not too hopefully. It has had to fight against many barbarians, but never against so formidable a barbarism as the great modern barbarism, part vulgarity, part pretentiousness, part incompetence, which calls itself progress (64).

The essay is dominated by a persistent fluctuation between condemnation of the contemporary changes being made to Rome²³ and idealistic praise of its qualities; but on occasion the two extremes are mediated, either through recourse to a Romantic notion of beauty at its height in its very moment of passing, articulated by Pfister as 'Byron's vision of Italy as a land of decayed splendour and splendid decay',²⁴ or through its 'eternal' association, drawing favourable comparison with Paris and London:

¹⁹ Symons, iv. In this 1907 book he adds that 'though I am here limiting myself to Italy, my intention remains the same' (vii).

²⁰ Markert, *Arthur Symons: Critic of the Seven Arts* (London: UMI Research Press, 1988), 69.

²¹ The very first lines of the 'Rome' essay describe a sunset over the city. Sunsets abound in *Abbots Verney* too.

²² Lawrence, *Sea and Sardinia*, 91. See below for further discussion.

²³ See for example, 'No excuse, but that of money-making or of the most trivial material convenience, has ever been offered for the destruction of the Villa Ludovisi, for the encroachment on the Campagna by the building of factories and of tenements, for the gas-works of the Circus Maximus [...]' (56).

²⁴ Pfister, 'Enchantment and Disenchantment', *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies*, 8 (2006), 70. For instance, Symons writes of 'that mournful, yet not too mournful, atmosphere of partly faded splendour which is the atmosphere of Rome. All the garden walks [...] breathe an exquisite melancholy, the most delicate and

Since I lived in Rome I have come to find both London and Paris, in themselves, a little provincial: for I find them occupied with less eternal things, or with less of the immediate message of eternal things speaking in them, than this liberating Rome (64).

In London, 'There are too many people, too many books, too many museums, too many theatres; [...] I cannot escape the newspapers [...] I have not time to live. [...] Yesterday is to-day, and to-day is tomorrow, before I have been alone with myself for an hour' (66), while in Paris 'I require too little; life is too easy, and answers too readily to the demands of the senses. [...] Paris is not merely the city of the senses, but the city of ideas, the ideas of pure reason' (66-67). 'But Rome', he argues in the concluding paragraph,

has freed me from both these tyrannies [...] It neither absorbs me too much in material things nor forces me into too rapid mental conclusions. [...] Empires have lived and died here; the great spiritual empire of the Western world still has its seat upon the seven hills; here are all the kingdoms of art; and is it possible to find anywhere a more intimate message than in those voices, in this eloquent Roman silence?²⁵

Rome, here, is a symbol of centrality, which unifies in one place history, religion and culture – 'empires', Catholicism, 'the kingdoms of art' – and is constructed in opposition to northern cities whose principal characteristics, the bustle of modern living or the indulgence of the body and the intellect, seem peripheral in comparison. Symons sees his role as interpreting the city to his imagined readership; the Romans themselves are unable, in their rush to build, to appreciate their own city: 'What is subtlest in Rome must always reveal itself to strangers, and not to the Romans; for the modern Roman is given over to the desire and admiration of material things, and what is subtlest in Rome appeals to the soul, perhaps I should say, rather, to the mind' (64). Clearly, the modern Romans are not only motivated by a materialist impulse, and lack 'the artistic sense' (59), they lack the intellectual refinement that Symons's narrator is implicitly in possession of.

Apart from the city planners, who in a generalized sense he condemns for allowing the replacement of old buildings with new, the people themselves are devoid of individuality, viewed as living embodiments of their ancestry, especially through their faces: 'these beautiful Pagan faces, perfect as Roman medals' (13); '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. Some of them had complexions like wax, others were as brown as mahogany' (44). The churchgoers 'were unconscious of their beauty, with the unconsciousness of animals; and they swarmed

seductive breath of decay' (45) and later: 'all this pathetic casual mingling of ruined magnificence and the decrepit old age of people living on charity, how expressive of Rome it is, and how curiously it completes one's sense of that desolation which is, as Shelley found it, "a delicate thing"!' (48).

²⁵ Symons, 67. See also Douglas in *Alone*: 'There is something of the *grande dame* in Rome, a flavour of old-world courtesy. The inhabitants are better-mannered than the Parisians; a workday crowd in Rome is as well-dressed as a Sunday crowd in Paris. And over all hovers a gentle weariness' (London: Chapman & Hall, 1921), 201).

there like animals [...] I seemed to see the true Roman mob as it had been of old, as it will always be. It was just such people as these, with their strong nerves, their indifference in the matter of human life, who used to fill the Colosseum' (44). These rhetorical devices – the depiction of people as animal-like, unconscious, body parts, resembling decoration on archaeological artefacts, as will be seen, are consistently adopted in writing on southern Italians, in Lee, Douglas and Lawrence.²⁶

The status as living exemplars of past (and racially demarcated) civilizations has already been noted in Hewlett's Tuscan peasants, while their southernness confers on them an ideal of simplicity. Observing the carnival, he writes,

And that difficult way [towards Piazza del Popolo] along the street, its windows all aflower with faces, a soft rain of coloured paper raindrops, the sharp hail of confetti falling all the way, flowers flying above one's head, settling on one's hat, tapping against one's cheek, was a lesson in the Italian temperament, its Southern capacity for simple enjoyment, for the true folly, that abandonment to the moment's whim, in which there is none of the Northern brutality. Civilisation has sunk deeper into these people, in whom civility is a tradition; it has penetrated to the roots; and in this character so positive, so unshaded, from which the energy has dwindled away, but not the simplicity, the charming and graceful naturalness, there is the same superficial, yet in its way sufficient, quality as in the fine finish of these faces, equally finished in the peasant and in the noble (41).

This is an essentialist construction of 'the Italian temperament'; the people in their 'simplicity' and 'naturalness' epitomize civilization, though it is these qualities which exclude them from the epistemological assumptions underlying the claim. The narrator can see in the carnival scene a metonym for Italianness which the Italians themselves can have no conception of; indeed they exist in the passage not as individuals, but as faces, first adorning windows and later manifesting the 'fine finish' of a homogeneous 'character'. Framed by windows and possessing a 'finished' quality they are like paintings, to be gazed at and invested with value. The value emphasized (by its end position) belongs to the discourse of feudalism – 'the peasant and the noble' – who are levelled by the fact of their Italianness. Symons's picture of civilization excludes the faces of the middle classes, on whom he remains pointedly silent. Potter, less chary, writes, 'The men who lounge and loiter in her piazzas belong in the main to a middle class which is unbeautiful in all countries, and perhaps most unbeautiful of all in Italy' (237). Vernon Lee is particularly disparaging of contemporary urban Romans, evoking them and their city in language that betrays the sort of fastidiousness, disgust and sense of impending catastrophe fitting to an aristocratic or bourgeois late-Victorian sensibility, of which culturally she was a representative and with which in her life she identified.

²⁶ Douglas for instance writes of a peasant: 'I look at him and ask myself: where have I seen that face before, so classic and sinewy and versatile? I have seen it on Greek vases, and among the sailors of the Cyclades and on the Bosphorus. It is a non-Latin face, with sparkling eyes, brown hair, rounded forehead and crisply curling beard; a legendary face. How came Odysseus to Alatri?' (*Alone*, 258-59).

Vernon Lee: *The Spirit of Rome: Leaves from a Diary* (1906)

Between 1868 and 1873, aged from twelve to seventeen, Lee (1856-1935) resided for the most part in Rome; regular visits as an adult between 1888 and 1905 were recorded in her diaries, which she reproduces and reflects upon in *The Spirit of Rome*. Her distinctive prose style is characterized by asyndeton, parataxis, and a lack of governing verbs; it is, to use Connolly's term, mandarin prose. Like Symons's it evokes the *fin-de-siècle* mood which finds aesthetic pleasure in decay. For Lee each visit to a place must take the form of a search for the detail or moment or association that epitomizes its essence, its *genius loci*. The visits to Rome are a patchwork of re-visits, the thoughts and associations recorded more a mental recycling of text and experience than *in situ* reportage. Its tone is restrained, self-conscious, its style grandiloquent. Her own approach is one of 'aesthetic nostalgia for the past',²⁷ a past which mingles history with personal memory. The difficulty of identifying the *genius loci* of Rome results in tautology – 'What I meet in Rome is Rome itself' (10); 'Rome has never been so much Rome, never expressed its full meaning so completely, as nowadays. This change and desecration, this inroad of modernness, merely completes its eternity'.²⁸ What is constructed as an intensely personal response – the diary form, the allusion to people she has known there in the past²⁹ – subscribes to received ideas about Rome, its 'eternity'.

The solemnity and stark authoritativeness of such affirmations attest to the importance placed on identifying such a symbol for the educated reading public these books addressed. Here was a place that could withstand the pressures that modern touristic practices were placing on it, (practices from which the writers implicitly exclude themselves), pressures that are cast in terms of 'vulgarity' and 'barbarism':

The Arch of Drusus was surrounded by a band of Cookites, listening inattentively to their Bear leader; and the whole Via Appia, to beyond Cecilia Metella, was alive with cabs and landaus. But such things, which desecrate Venice and spoil Florence, are all right in Rome; Rome, somehow, knows how to subdue them all to her eternal harmony. That all the vulgarities of all the furthest lands

²⁷ Schaffer, *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England* (London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 62.

²⁸ Lee, 103. Rome exalted as a unique symbol of layered civilization that has the ability to subsume the 'ugliness' of modernity is a recurrent trope. Potter's account similarly chooses to characterize Rome as assimilating change: 'Rome, the Eternal City, to whom the eyes of Western civilization have turned since the rumour of her glory was spread across the world by her legions, is still trying to fit herself to her new estate, and behave as the capital of Italy. [...] She clothes herself with the garment of modern capitals, and faces the traveller searching for beauty with pretentious hotels and fashionable houses which familiarity has robbed even of the infinite variety of ugliness' (5-6).

²⁹ Lee declares, 'Only to me, in these sites, impersonal and almost eternal, on these walls which have stood two thousand years and may stand two thousand more, and these hillsides and roads full of the world's legend – there appear, visible, distinct, the shadows cast by my own life; the forms and faces of those changed, gone, dead ones; and my own' (205).

should all pass through Rome, like all the barbarians, the nations and centuries, seems proper and fit (99-100).

This 1900 entry is still disposed to forgive Rome its modernity; as the book progresses, there is an increasing sense of distaste and rejection. In the 1901 section she makes a biblical allusion to evoke the decline of civilization; seeing it from afar, she writes,

The desolation of this distant city, with its foreground of squalid hovels, and ill-favoured wind [...] this other moving background of ragged peasants and unutterable galled horses; the desolation of this dead city which I feel behind those mediæval walls comes home to them, like the sting of the dust whirlpools and roar of the wind. *Quomodo sedet sola civitas!*³⁰

The untranslated Latin transcription of a biblical lament for a ruined civilization both formulates the degradation of Rome in public, religious discourse, and provides an oblique intertextual connection which elevates her own prose (and persona, prophet-like outside the city, weeping); it also panders to an erudite reader. The superiority of the narrating persona manifests itself in progressively more damning descriptions; in a section entitled 'The Rubbish Heap', a metaphor for history, Lee exclaims,

The squalor of this Rome and of its people! The absence of all trace of any decent past, ancient barbarism as down at heel and unkempt as any modern slum! The starved galled horses, broken harness, unmended clothes and wide-mouthed sluttishness under the mound on which stand the Cenci's houses, a foul mound of demolition and rag-pickers, only a stone's-throw from the brand new shop streets, the Lungo Tevere, the magnificence of palaces like the Mattei, Caetani, & c. If Rome undoubtedly gives the soul peace by its assurance that the present is as nothing in the centuries, it also depresses one, in other moods, with the feeling that all history is but a vast rubbish-heap and sink; that nothing matters, nothing comes out of all the ages save rags and brutishness. There is a great value for our souls in any place which tells us, by however slight indications, of a past of self-respect, activity and beauty; and I long for Tuscany (139-40).

The glimpses of Rome are ambivalent, in which the narrator uses juxtaposition as the prime strategy by which to elevate the past at the expense of the present. Once again, Rome evokes 'the centuries', but not 'a past of self-respect, activity and beauty'; in Lee's struggle to articulate her notion of civilization in the face of the contradictions that the city presents to her, the final word 'Tuscany' thus constitutes, in a kind of intellectual shorthand, a trope for what is civilized.

In a later passage (dated 1903), she reprises the 'swept and garnished' motif, elaborating it more fully:

A school of little girls, conducted by a nun, was filing out of S. Maria in Cosmedin, and I helped up the leather curtain for them to pass. Tatters, squalor, with that abundant animal strength and beauty of these people; one feels they have been eating and drinking, and befouling the earth and the streets with the excrements of themselves and their lives, love-making and begetting, and suffering stolidly all through the centuries, and one wonders why? as one wonders before a ditch full of tadpoles. Low mass was going on at a side altar, and the canon's mass in the beautiful marble choir, behind the ambones, behind those delicate marble railings and seats, which, with their inclusion, makes the fine aristocratic, swept and garnished quality of that Byzantine architecture more delicate and dainty still.

³⁰ Lee, 128. These are the first words of the Lamentations of Jeremiah in the Vulgate Bible. They are a lament for the desolation of Jerusalem. 'How doth the city sit solitary, /that was full of people! / how is she become as a widow! /she that was great among the nations'. Dante also quotes them in his lament for Beatrice (*Vita Nuova* XXVIII).

The church was finished restoring two years ago, but the population of that low part of Rome, the Piazza Montanara St. Giles, has already given it the squalor of ages. I cannot say how deeply, though vaguely, I felt the meaningless tragic triviality of these successive generations of reality, in the face of that solemn, meaning full abstraction which we call history, which we call humanity, the centuries, Rome (158-59).

In the Byzantine aesthetic she finds an aristocratic ideal, objectified in the church's ornamentation, against which to contrast her feelings about the people populating it; a gelid and undisguised aversion to dirt, to prosaic everyday physical needs and bodily functions construes humanity in terms of bestiality. Her sense of history is one of loss, deterioration from that 'dainty' ideal.³¹ Her narrating persona's sensibility is offended at the seemingly savage lack of refinement in the presence of marble ornamentation, while with a rhetorical flourish towards the end she attributes the trivialization of something grand – history, humanity, Rome itself – to the actual people.

In the final section, dated 1905, the narrator admits a guilty pleasure at the contemplation of destitution ('horror' / 'liking it') which she associates with the 'East':

I have had, more than ever this time, the sense of horror at the barbarism of Rome, of civilisation being encamped in all this human refuse, and doing nothing for it; and the feeling of horror at this absorbing Italy, and at one's liking it! They are impressions of the sort I had at Tangier. And the face of an idiot beggar – the odd, pleased smile above the filth – suddenly brought back to me that special feeling, I suppose of the East (203).

The last line of this passage seems to reinforce the gulf between herself and the Romans, 'human refuse'. The beggar whose smile is incomprehensible to the onlooker, who sees only their filth and idiocy, can be seen as a metaphor for the East – grotesque yet alluring. The East thus becomes an entity, a world within a word, like Tuscany, its opposite. The text situates the East in a metonymic relation to Rome, in its aesthetic pull between fascination and repulsion, guilt and voyeurism, which she has felt in Rome and which is connected in the text's logic with the East. Rome, the East, Tuscany have each been circumscribed: Lee has managed to find a vocabulary that subsumes, contains, her impressions of place.

Norman Douglas: *Alone* (1921)

Alone is a collection of essays generated by a 1917 trip around Italy, including Rome and its outlying villages, which had been serialized by Norman Douglas's friend Edward Hutton in sixteen issues between 1918 and 1920 of his periodical *The Anglo-Italian Review*.³² Douglas was almost fifty when travelling and to some extent the Rome section

³¹ This is reinforced by Lee's inclusion of St Praxed's church in this volume, no doubt alluding to Browning's 1845 poem 'The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St Praxed's Church, Rome 15-', in which the secular and ostentatious desires of the Renaissance bishop contrast ironically with the supposedly spiritual and unmaterialistic requirements of his position.

³² Douglas dedicated *Alone* to Hutton and mentions the latter's *Unknown Tuscany* in it (58-59).

incorporates the (conventionally associated) idea of age, since in it the narrator reminisces (like Lee) about previous visits there. Its wry, digressive and good-humoured prose contains far more autobiographical detail than the earlier works (discussed below), and Douglas himself would later declare it his favourite book.³³

The slightly louche tone of much of the writing, the irreverence with which it treats established sights ('The fauna of the Coliseum – especially after 11 p.m. – would make a readable book; readable, but hardly printable' (132)) dovetails with a dismantling of some of the literary conventions of writing on Rome: for instance, he challenges the cliché of Rome as 'eternal', suggesting its location would have appeared highly unsuitable for a town even five hundred years ago, having 'every drawback, or nearly so, which a town may conceivably possess, and all of them huddled into a fatally unhealthy environment, compressed in a girdle of fire and poison' (202).

The discourse, though not of the experimental, modernist current which was emerging around this time, is in many senses innovative and quixotic, blending nostalgia with reportage, gossip, personal theories, mischievous blasphemies and intertextual engagement; layered and piecemeal, it no longer seeks to confer an absolute significance on the city as writers such as Lee and Symons did. What *Alone* shares with those texts is the nagging regret at what the city and contemporary civilization have become. Mankind, he maintains,

is forgetting the use of its nose; and not only of nose, but of eyes and ears and all other natural appliances which help to capture and intensify the simple joys of life. We all know the civilised, the industrial eye – how atrophied, how small and formless and expressionless it has become. The civilised nose, it would seem, degenerates in the other direction. Like the cultured potato or pumpkin, it swells in size (203).

'Civilised' here signifies 'degenerate' and his readership is presumed to be familiar with the equivalence; it is in opposition to 'the simple joys of life' which he constantly advocates. The effects of the war are immediately in evidence: 'The railway station at Rome has put on a new face. Blown to the winds is that old dignity and sense of leisure. Bustle everywhere; soldiers in line, officers strutting about; feverish scurryings for tickets' (118); he laments the lack of pasta 'made in the Golden Age out of pre-war-time flour' (210). Complaints about the intrusion of trams,³⁴ the way communication technologies 'have huddled mankind together into undignified and unhygienic proximity [...] We know what

³³ Douglas elsewhere writes, 'Were I forced to spend the remaining years of life on some desert island with no companion save one of my own books – unenviable fate! – I should choose *Alone*. A nostalgic and multiherbal fragrance hangs about those pages' (*Late Harvest* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1946), 37).

³⁴ For instance, 'Morning sleep is out of the question, owing to the tram-cars whose clangour, both here and in Florence, must be heard to be believed. They are fast rendering these towns uninhabitable. [...] Why this din, this blocking of the roadways and general unseemliness? In order that a few bourgeois may be saved the trouble of using their legs. And yet we actually pride ourselves on these detestable things, as if they were inventions to our credit' (*Alone*, 192-93).

everybody is doing, in every corner of the earth; we are told what to think, and to say, and to do' (193-94) echo Symons's complaints about London (see above), but to Douglas, Rome does not console by reconvening the touchstones of civilization on one hallowed site; it is to southern rural places that he goes to escape modern civilization:

I look back on our sojourn among those verdant hazels and see that it was good. [...] I thought of certain of my fellow-creatures. I often think of them. What were they now doing? Taking themselves seriously and rushing about, as usual, haggard and careworn [...] As for ourselves, we took our ease. We ate and drank, we slumbered awhile, then joked and frolicked for five hours on end, or possibly six (273-74).

It is in a sedentary pastoral setting rather than a modern urban setting that the Douglasian vision of authentically civilized living occurs.

Non-fiction writing on the sights of Rome continued to be successfully published: Potter's book was reprinted at least three times until 1930, Percy Lubbock's curiously modernist text *Roman Pictures* (1923) enjoyed some critical success and E.V. Lucas's *A Wanderer in Rome* (1926) was reprinted until 1951.

Rome in Fiction

The two texts considered in this section are the full-length novel *Abbots Verney* (1906) by Rose Macaulay and the short story 'After the Fireworks' (1930) by Aldous Huxley. They are both set almost entirely in and around Rome. Macaulay (1881-1958) spent a substantial period of her childhood on the Genoese coast, with her large family, between 1887 and 1894. It was an unconventional experience which would be recalled as a sort of Italian Eden for the rest of her life: Rose was home educated, allowed to run free and barefoot in the natural surroundings of the villa on the beach, and spared the social rounds of middle-class English life until a teenager. After university she decided to become a writer and her first novel, *Abbots Verney*, was well-received. In 1905 she had visited Rome and Naples with relatives, and her experience as an adult of these places generated material for this and her third novel *The Furnace* (1907) (discussed below) respectively.³⁵ She would only achieve wider success from the 1920s onwards partly because, as LeFanu relates, 'Rose herself made it difficult for people to read the book for themselves to see what it was like by regularly refusing permission for extracts to appear

³⁵ Emery asserts the relevance to *Abbots Verney* of her personal experience: 'She convincingly wrote the story of a young man in a foreign milieu, imaginatively transforming and extending her own experience' (*Rose Macaulay: A Writer's Life* (London: Murray, 1991), 95).

in anthologies, and by demanding that it be removed, along with her other pre-Great War novels, from the shelves of the London Library'.³⁶

Huxley lived near Florence during the 1920s, a friend of the nearby Lawrences, and travelled extensively all over Italy by car with his wife. He is the youngest of the writers considered in this thesis; his early Italian-based works include the essay collection *Along the Road: Notes and Essays of a Tourist* (1925), the novel *Those Barren Leaves* (1925) (a novel set principally in a Tuscan mansion), and the short stories 'The Rest Cure' and 'After the Fireworks' (in *Brief Candles* (1930)), the former concerning an English neurasthenic recovering in Tuscany who falls for a lower class local boy (see Chapter 2 above), the latter the story of the relationship in Rome between the ageing, narcissistic writer Miles Fanning and his ingenuous young admirer Pamela Tam.

During the period under discussion, there were well-established English communities in Rome, consisting usually of the well-to-do who owned properties in prestigious areas where they lived permanently or, more usually, for sojourns; there was a thriving artists' colony too. There were certain established customs and places for the English in Rome; they are usefully described by Potter, who observes of Rome that

roughly speaking, she has a floating population of thirty thousand strangers. [...]the Via dei Condotti and the Piazza di Spagna, the Via Sistina and the Via Babuino, are their shopping centres. Here the tourist will buy his Roman pearls, his Roman scarfs, his photographs, his bronze and marble mementoes; here he may regale himself at the famous German Conditorei in the Condotti, or gregariously drink his tea in the English tearooms at the foot of the Spanish Steps, where he will not only be surrounded by English-speaking people, but will even be asked to pay smart English prices. At Miss Wilson's he can buy his newspapers and change his library books; Cook, across the square, is probably his banker; and at Piale's he can read the papers and glean all the news that he has not already gathered at Cook's or in the English Library (13-14).

Names such as Piale's, Cook's, Via Condotti, recur as a matter of course in Lee, Macaulay and Huxley.

Rose Macaulay: *Abbots Verney* (1906)

In Macaulay's novel, a young Oxford graduate due to inherit the large property of the title, meets up in Rome with an Oxford friend Denham, who 'had been now for a year living in a flat in Rome in the Via Babuino, with his mother and sister, and learning to paint' (70). Through the Denhams he socializes with the English colony, who are comfortably lodged around the Spanish Steps; Verney's loyalty to his reprobate father Meyrick Ruth, who turns up in Rome and exploits the expatriates' hospitality and disappears again, causes him to be ostracized. He is forced to make a meagre living through making and selling postcards of picturesque Roman scenes, in the backstreets and

³⁶ LeFanu, 66.

company of Rome's poor. Falling ill, he makes a final arduous journey on foot from the Campagna to the 'shelter' of St Peter's (264); in England, he is disowned from the inheritance through his refusal to forsake his father and returns to Rome: 'So, on the last day of the year, he came again to Rome. Seeing her from far off, he felt no longer an exile' (385). As Emery neatly summarizes,

In it she captures not only the Holy City's guidebook wonders, and the skyline, the chiaroscuro, the street sounds and smells but also the atmosphere of the English colony, the gossip and speculation, the afternoon calls, the dinner parties, the Playing-at-Art of the young English students. And she succeeds at an even more difficult scene for the outsider to realize – a glimpse of the life of the very poor in the back streets of Rome.³⁷

Of interest here is this contrast between the Rome of the upper-middle class English set and the evocation of an alternative 'hidden' Rome which is unusual in the extent of its detail and its naturalization of interaction with Rome's 'other' residents. It becomes ugly in parallel with Verney's descent into poverty and isolation; he realises that the touristic sights

were not the important part of Rome – they did not constitute the city one lived in; they were mere appendages, show places, which the English in the Piazza paid to go and see. For the Piazza di Spagna these places possibly signified Rome; the Piazza di Spagna was grossly, heavily ignorant. It peacefully ignored Rome as it was. It was left to the dwellers in the Via del Teatro di Marcello to know the real Rome, in its dull squalor, its crude, raw hideousness (224).

The poverty and squalor are far from romanticized; Macaulay succeeds in sketching an unsentimental picture of a Rome peopled by a variety of Italian characters going about the daily rounds of making a living (Filomena the maid; Cecco the innkeeper; Valerio the painter and so on, each individually characterized). The narrative attempts to portray Rome from a different perspective, though retaining an English focalizer: 'Verney in these days grew to know the streets of the town as only the poor know them, with an intimate knowledge, not born of affection, but of expediency' (230). Forced to earn a living, he takes up painting; 'It was irony that fate should have laid upon Verney the painting of this grotesque city just at the time when he had discovered its manifold ugliness' (225) and what he 'learns' will sell is the pictorial form of what texts like Potter's seek to evoke in literary form: 'He learnt by degrees the necessary components of a picture – the string of scarlet seminarists crossing the piazza, the man in sombrero and the girl in laced-up bodice and folded handkerchief, the gay wine-cart, the vividly-hued garments hung on clothes-lines across the narrow streets'.³⁸ With some bitterness, he notes that [...] 'a series

³⁷ Emery, 94-95.

³⁸ *Abbots Verney*, 227. Compare Potter's Rome: 'Wine-carts are standing before *osterie*, mules are resting after their steep climb up the Via del Tritone, with scarlet tassels hanging from their harness and scarlet cloths over their backs; bakers are hurrying to and fro with trays of spicy cakes on their heads, which leave a trail of appetizing odours; the sellers of flowers are making bouquets at the fountain; priests and monks, nuns and soldiers, peasants and Carabinieri, thread their way across the piazza; and on the crest of the Quirinal

entitled "Rome in Summer," or possibly "Rome as it Is," [sic] would have shown the squalid city in all its grotesque plainness: the stale foam, the stranded refuse, the hot, aching glare of the unbeautiful streets, the crude vulgarity of the tasteless whole' (225).

Verney's values have undergone crisis through his experience of this other Rome; the super-civilized expatriate community has rejected him on the basis of his unswerving allegiance to his charlatan father; his uncle disinherits him for this intransigence. As a consequence, the ordinary working people of the city in their mutual helpfulness and warmth come to represent an alternative form of civilized behaviour. Likewise, the city presents a sordid and barbaric face in this novel alongside its more touristic and cosmopolitan one. There are however many passages which are not dissimilar to those found in the contemporary *Cities* and *The Spirit of Rome*, in their style, and in their contemplation of Rome as a repository of layers of time:

Rome was always there, waiting to seize one in a grip strangely, almost terribly personal. There was surely never a place – though every place has its individuality – so pervasively, potently individual as this city. She exhaled her personality from the stones of her streets; one could not escape from it. Every breath drew in the warm air of the accumulated ages; every sound was the voice of Rome, barbaric in her complex crudity. Classic, medieval, modern, the name of each superimposed layer mattered nothing; Rome was still Rome; she must have been the same through all the ages.³⁹

Aldous Huxley: 'After the Fireworks' (1930)

Two and a half decades on, Rome is still functioning in its capacity as a symbol of time, in Huxley's 'After the Fireworks', in this case age and youth. Seen as an anti-Romantic writer, he had already used Rome in *Those Barren Leaves* as an ironic setting for Mrs Aldwinkle's attempts to make Chelifer fall in love with her:

She had hopes that the Sistine Chapel, the Appian Way at sunset, the Colosseum by moonlight, the gardens of the Villa d'Este might arouse in Chelifer's mind emotions which should in their turn predispose him to feel romantically towards herself.⁴⁰

It will be seen how Huxley complicates Romantic representations of Italy and Italians not only in his reformulation of Lawrence's archetypal southern peasant figure but in his oblique allusion to Joyce's *Ulysses*. 'After the Fireworks' is the story of Pamela's naïve infatuation with the jaded older novelist Miles in 1920s Rome and his attempts to resist her youthful charm. It deploys and subverts the conception of southern Italy as a place of sexual liberation, summoning all the usual signifiers of Rome in a tale which ends in a vision of pathetic old age and degeneration. Rome as the seat of civilization is evidenced in the view from Monte Cavo, where Fanning exclaims,

are the slate roofs and tawny walls of the palace of Victor Emmanuel III, with the red, white, and green flag of Italy streaming out in the breeze' (9).

³⁹ *Abbots Verney*, 230. Compare Lee (above) and 'I felt Rome and its unchanging meaning grip me again, and liberate me from the frettings of my own past and present' (201) in *The Spirit of Rome* which was published in the same year.

⁴⁰ Huxley, *Those Barren Leaves*, 254.

‘What a panorama of space and time!’ he said. ‘So many miles, such an expanse of centuries! You can still walk on the paved road that led to the temple here. The generals used to march up sometimes in triumph. With elephants’ (161).

The protagonists’ perspectives of Rome are constantly played off against each other, registering the shift in attitudes between generations. Pamela at twenty, conscious of her ignorance and perpetually oppressed by her awareness that decorum does not permit her, as a young woman, to make sexual advances towards the older man, attempts to impress him with her forthright views. The reader gains access to her thoughts through her diary entries, which comically expose her failure to discern Fanning’s ironic treatment of her. Her view of Rome lacks the historical sense shown above to be possessed by Fanning; in her diary she writes,

A nice house, old, standing just back from the Forum, which I said I thought was like a rubbish heap and he agreed with me, in spite of my education, and said he always preferred live dogs to dead lions and thinks it’s awful the way the Fascists are pulling down nice ordinary houses and making holes to find more of these beastly pillars and things (165).

There is no reverence for imperial ruins (just as the young motorists in *Those Barren Leaves* are careless of Tuscany’s historical associations); her deployment of the ‘rubbish heap’ analogy resonates with the metaphor adopted by Lee, though its meaning is reversed – Lee’s condemnation was of the new Rome, not of its antiquities. Rome is brought into the present through the passing reference to Fascism, and through the assimilation of modern transport into the cityscape (‘An electric bus passed noiselessly, a whispering monster’ [...] ‘raising her voice against the clatter of a passing lorry’ (121)). The renegotiations of Rome’s image is concomitant with the reconfiguration of the love story, since the pair’s union ends in failure.

Fanning cuts a distinctive figure; as he strolls ‘very slowly, in a suit of cream-coloured silk, down the shady side of the Via Condotti towards the Spanish Steps’,⁴¹ he sees a group of young Italian women ‘absolutely unpunctured, unapologetic’; he mentally compares them to two German women, ‘pink and white monsters’ and exclaims inwardly, ‘These Nordics! Time they were put a stop to’ (111). And later he feels personally humiliated at being recognised by two English people: ‘For they were obviously regular subscribers to *Punch*, were vertebrae in the backbone of England, were upholders of all that was depressingly finest, all that was lifelessly and genteelly best in the English upper-class tradition’ (112). Although Fanning frequents the places where the English go, takes his money from Cook’s, socializes with English people, he is someone who sees in the Italians a naturalness lacking in the northerners, especially the English, from whom he wishes to distance himself. Yet there are no Italian characters; rather, the story focuses on

⁴¹ ‘After the Fireworks’, 110. Page numbers are taken from *Brief Candles* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

the politenesses and reserve of social interaction between two English people of the same class. The two civilizations that 'meet' are configured in time:

'For you and I are foreigners to one another, foreigners in time. Which is a greater foreignness than the foreignness of space and language [...] My country's called Middle-Ageia and every one who was out of the egg of childhood before 1914 is my compatriot' (181).

Fanning's perspective explicitly represents the pre-war generation's. There is a great deal of nostalgia on Fanning's part for the pre-war years, which Pamela comes to resent; the war constitutes the watershed of his own life. Showing her an Etruscan statue, which was discovered in 1916, "rising up in the midst of the insanity, like a beautiful, smiling reproach from another world" (156), he elaborates his idea of civilization which turns out to be a vision of life before and after "the great split that broke life into the spirit and matter, heroics and diabolics, virtue and sin [...] Homer lived before the split; life hadn't been broken when he wrote. They're complete, his men and women, complete and real [...] And this god's his portrait" (155). Belloc, Lawrence and Douglas all articulate such a split, though they locate it in different times. Fanning goes on to evoke a Douglasian world-view with its rejection of the modern way of life and concept of 'sin'.⁴² His allegiance to pagan values has already been made explicit in his description of himself as 'an old satyr', a 'superannuated faun' (130); here he draws a continuous line between ancient Greece and the modern day:

'Being alternately a hero and a sinner is much more sensational than being an integrated man. So as men seem to have the Yellow Press in the blood, like syphilis, they went back on Homer and Apollo; they followed Plato and Euripides. And Plato and Euripides handed them over to the Stoics and the Neo-Platonists. And these in turn handed humanity over to the Christians. And the Christians have handed us over to Henry Ford and the machines. So here we are.' Pamela nodded intelligently. But what she was chiefly conscious of was the ache in her feet.⁴³

Thus Fanning is thwarted at every turn; just as his philosophy is meaningless to Pamela, so will his principled resistance to her charms fail. His is the last, fading voice of a generation that still remembers a pre-war consensus of values and that perceives itself as bearing the responsibility of resisting the philistinism of 'Protestantism and the modernists' (150). But he is also a ridiculous figure, perceiving himself as a visionary yet ending up at Montecatini health spa 'hollow-cheeked, his eyes darkly ringed, his skin pale and sallow under the yellowed tan. He was on his way to becoming one of those pump-room monsters at whom they were now looking, almost incredulously' (189).

⁴² In *Old Calabria* Douglas declares that 'our conception of sin is alien to the Latin mind. There is no "sin" in Italy (and this is not the least of her many attractions); it is an article manufactured exclusively for export' (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), 269).

⁴³ 'After the Fireworks', 156. Fanning's casual dig at the Yellow Press shows disapproval of sensationalist journalism dominated by media magnates.

The narrative plays with the interaction of fiction and real life, authenticity and artifice: Pamela imagines herself as the heroine of one of Fanning's novels: all she knows is book-learnt, but she wants real experience. According to Fanning,

'she knows she doesn't want to live as though she were in a novel. And yet can't help it, because that's her nature, that's how she was brought up. But she's miserable, because she realizes that fiction-life *is* fiction. Miserable and very anxious to get out – out through the covers of the novel into the real world.'

'And are you her idea of the real world?' Dodo inquired.

He laughed, 'Yes, I'm the real world. Strange as it may seem. And also, of course, pure fiction. The Writer, the Great Man – the Official Biographer's fiction in a word' (138).

Pamela's belief that she will experience the real world with Fanning means she forgoes the luxury of Valadier's restaurant, favoured by her upper-class social circle, for Fanning's 'genuinely Roman place' (124) for lunch, though inwardly, as on other such encounters with Roman life, she regrets it. Rome provides an apposite location for the contestation of civilized behaviour, providing as it does a self-contained English milieu with its attendant standards and practices, and the southern sunshine, the 'natural' people, which promise liberation and abandonment to passion. On their first encounter, Fanning had placed a hand on her shoulder, an act which violated her sense of propriety yet which gives her a 'frisson'; the stifling social niceties that prohibit even such slight physical contact attest to the upper-class environment in which she lives, and which is therefore so different from the crowd at the display of fireworks in the Piazza del Popolo, where they first come close to becoming lovers:

Sunk head over ears in this vast sea of animal contacts, animal smells and noise, Pamela was afraid. 'Isn't it awful?' she said, looking up at him over her shoulder; and she shuddered. But at the same time she rather liked her fear, because it seemed in some way to break down the barriers that separated them, to bring him closer to her – close with a physical closeness of protective contact that was also, increasingly, a closeness of thought and feeling [...] He was silent; and suddenly, in the midst of that heaving chaos of noise and rough contacts, of movement and heat and smell, suddenly he became aware that his lips were almost touching her hair, and that under his right hand was the firm resilience of her breast (171-72).

Huxley observes the literary conventions of the Italian crowd as a 'vast sea of animal contacts', already noted above, and of the Englishwoman appalled while liking it; yet the scene ends in bathos with Fanning fleeing from Pamela's advances. Similarly, a fat woman 'expanding' against Pamela deflates the climactic fireworks display evoked in sexually suggestive language:

'Ooh! ooh!' the crowd was moaning in a kind of amorous agony. Magical flowers in a delirium of growth, the rockets mounted on the their slender stalks and, ah! high up above the Pincian hill, dazzlingly, deafeningly, in a bunch of stars and a thunder-clap, they blossomed.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ 'After the Fireworks', 173. The passage in Joyce reads 'And then a rocket sprang and a bang shot blind blank and O! then the Roman candle burst and it was like a sigh of O! and everyone cried O! O! in raptures and it gushed out of it a stream of rain gold hair threads and they shed and ah! they were all greeny dewy stars falling with golden, O so lovely!' *Ulysses* (1922) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 350.

The passage echoes the episode in the 'Nausicaa' section of *Ulysses* (1922) which figures Gerty as Bloom's fantasy-object. Huxley is hereby adapting a new literary convention for framing description of Rome.

Naples

Naples, a site of pilgrimage even before the Grand Tour, as the site of Virgil's tomb and the Cumaean Sybil of mythology, attracted tourists because of its long associations with each stage of European civilization, from Greco-Roman culture through to Spanish and Bourbon rule, containing popular sights such as Europe's oldest aquarium and opera house, archaeological and art museums, and the famous view over the bay with the backdrop of Vesuvius, itself a touristic destination. However, the city in early twentieth century texts generates a special set of associations; its poverty and slums are a source of fascination – the pleasurable repulsion already seen to some degree in representations of Rome. In the next section, Symons's response to the city is seen to be one of horror, its portrait of 'uncivilization' indulging a decadent aesthetic. The fictional Naples in Rose Macaulay's *The Furnace* (1907) is also preoccupied with its slum-life, but presents an alternative, more affirmative, construction of the city, in which tourist sights are eschewed in favour of the city as a lived-in space, a playground, and in which the tourists themselves are the 'other'.

Arthur Symons: 'Naples' (1907)

Symons left Rome in March 1897 for Naples, where he remained until the end of April. During that time he seems to have experienced a profound religious crisis accompanied by spells of debauchery.⁴⁵ After 'the ample and courteous leisure of Rome'⁴⁶ Naples comes as a shock to Symons's travelling persona: 'no city ever filled me with such terror as Naples' he writes. The notion of what constitutes the civilized finds its antithesis in the Naples piece. There is

something sordid in the very trees on the sea-front, second-rate in the aspect of the carriages that passed, and of the people who sat in them; the bare feet, rags, rainbow-coloured dirt, sprawling and spawning poverty of Santa Lucia, and not of Santa Lucia alone; the odour of the city [...] (115-16).

His first impression is one of generalized sordidness, applied indiscriminately to both people and objects. The lexis and tone of 'Naples' contrast starkly with the graceful,

⁴⁵ An account of an episode at a brothel can be found in Beckson's *Arthur Symons: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 167; around the same time he wrote a long poem entitled 'Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows' published in the volume *Images of Good and Evil* (1899).

⁴⁶ 'Naples' in Symons, *Cities of Italy*, 115.

generally positive portraits of other Italian cities in the collection: Naples is apprehended as a vision of degradation and repulsion. Whatever the correlation between Symons's personal crises of religion and sexuality and this apocalyptic vision, there is in the rhetoric a wider engagement with the concept of civilization. There is a distinctive note of class in the discourse: the contempt discernable in 'second-rate' for the 'dirt, sprawling and spawning poverty' reveals a conventional Victorian attitude towards the poor, as articulated by Pemble:

[I]n the South as at home, most Victorians were disposed to blame the poor for their misery; to see them as culprits rather than as victims and to deplore their penury as an unnecessary affront to delicate sensibilities and civilised standards.⁴⁷

Symons betrays a somewhat snobbish fastidiousness as he steps over the Neapolitans: 'I am not convinced that the whole of the pavement belongs to the dirtiest part of the people who walk on it, and that these have exactly the right to encamp with their wives and families in the way of one's feet, and to perform quite the whole of their toilet before one's eyes' (116-17). Such is his disgust that the essay abounds in hyperbole: 'They have an absolute, an almost ingenuous, lack of civilisation, and after seeing the Neapolitans I have more respect for civilisation' (116); 'Wherever I go in Naples, in the streets, the theatres, the churches, the cafes, I see the same uncouth violence of life, the same ferment of uncivilisation' (120-21). Civilization is being construed through the silent opposites of the derogatory terms – 'ingenuous', 'uncouth', 'ferment' rely on such concepts as 'sophisticated', 'refined' and 'calm' for their meaning – and as lacking or failing in a standard of behaviour derived from bourgeois ideals of cleanliness, division of spheres (children and women should not be in the streets with the men), smartness, restraint, self-discipline, order. This is a feature of colonial discourse as construed by Spurr in *The Rhetoric of Empire*. Drawing on Hayden White, he argues that 'when notions such as "civilization" and "reason" are in danger of being called into question, their definition, as well as their identification with a particular people, is established by pointing to their supposed opposites, to what can be designated as "savagery" or "madness"'.⁴⁸

Symons's narrator is disturbed at the apparent contradiction of its picturesque 'touristic' quality as seen from a distance, and the encounter close-up with its residents:

No, there never was a town so troubling, so disquieting, so incalculable as Naples, with its heavenly bay lying out in front for strangers to gaze at, and all this gross, contentedly animal life huddled away in its midst, like some shameful secret (120).

Just as Lee sees the 'bestiality' of the Roman poor, so Symons represents the people as 'gross [...] animal life', whose further outrage to civilized sensibility is their apparent

⁴⁷ Pemble, 238.

⁴⁸ Spurr, 76.

(inexplicable) contentedness. The distance between observer and observed is absolute, in that there is no irruption in the text of a Neapolitan voice, no empathy, no individuals and no exceptions; the scenes present themselves to the narrator as a picture to the eye, and jarring noise to the ear, and he describes them accordingly:

Old age and infancy are here more horrible than anywhere else [...]. A Christian ascetic, wishing to meditate on the disgust of the flesh, might well visit these quays. There he will see the flaccid yellowness of old women, like the skin of a rotten apple; wrinkles eaten in with grime, until they broaden into ruts; feet and ankles that have been caked and roasted and soaked into iridescent reds, smoky violets, shot purples; the horror of decayed eyes, deformed limbs, hair crawling with lice; and about these dishonoured bodies flutters a medley of blackened and yellowing linen, tattered trousers without buttons, tattered dresses without strings, torn shawls, still loud in colour, but purple where they had been red, and lavender where they had been blue. And all this malodorous medley is a-swarm, hoarse voices crying, hands in continual movement, the clatter of heelless shoes on the pavement, the splash of emptied vessels, laughter, the harsh notes of a song, rising out of their midst like the bubble of steam escaping out of a boiling pot (117-18).

Honour and shame are notions integral to the discourse. The 'dishonoured bodies' are fragmented, 'feet and ankles', 'eyes', 'limbs', 'hair'; they constitute a collective chaos of smells, noises and movement conflating the human with the inanimate and the decayed. It is through this dehumanizing, fragmenting rhetoric that the sense of the narrator's humanity and integrity is preserved, the body being the terrain upon which differentiation of the individual, articulating subject from its uncivilized other is predicated. The unmistakable relish with which the description is executed endows it, however, with a voyeuristic quality which betrays an undercurrent of fascination. For Spurr, 'the obsessive debasement of the Other in colonial discourse arises not simply from fear and the recognition of difference but also, on another level, from a desire for and identification with the Other which must be resisted'.⁴⁹ The participation of this text in this aspect of colonial discourse arises not through a colonial relation to Italy (it was of course often with reverence and for other motives that the British went there), but through a contemporary need for self-definition against a perceived crumbling of social hierarchies, the upper echelons of which are civilization's self-appointed representatives.

Rose Macaulay: *The Furnace* (1907)

The Furnace, which was published in the same year as *Cities of Italy*, presents a fictionalized Neapolitan slum inhabited by a cheerful, unmaterialistic group of Neapolitan artists, music hall players and loafers, among whose number are a pair of orphaned siblings, Betty and Tommy Crevequer, born to English parents but raised in Italy.⁵⁰ Their contented, improvised way of life is overturned by the arrival of philistine English tourists

⁴⁹ Spurr, 80.

⁵⁰ Some of the arguments presented here can be found in more detail in Collins, 'Angels and Vagabonds: Breaking through Barriers in the Anglo-Italian Encounter' *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies*, 8 (2006), 183-201.

led by the aspiring novelist Mrs Venables, who marshals the siblings into her project of 'Intimate Contact with the People'.⁵¹ Betty and Tommy acquire self-awareness and shame when confronted with the social codes of the English and in the final chapter abandon all for a life together in their childhood home on the Genoese coast. Naples in this novel is the site where four parameters of civilized behaviours meet: those of the English tourist and the Neapolitan underworld; and those of childhood and adulthood, each with their contingent moralities, social codes and expectations. Naples and its people are aligned with childhood, abandon, cheerfulness, spontaneity, to which the English visitors are the antithesis, representing the adult world of class differentiation, self-consciousness and convention. It is both an allegory of loss of innocence and an anti-tourist novel; it adopts the literary motifs of southern Italian freedom, Neapolitan slum-life and the iconic Vesuvius but rejects the historical view of Naples as exemplified in Douglas's survey of the view over the Neapolitan bay:

Not an inch of all this landscape but has its associations. Capua and Hannibal; the Caudine Forks; Misenum and Virgil; Nisida, the retreat of a true Siren-worshipper, Lucullus; the venerable acropolis of Cumæ; Pompeii; yonder Puteoli, where the apostle of the gentiles touched land; here the Amalfitan coast, Pæstum, and the Calabrian hills.⁵²

Rather, Pompeii is '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' (40) and Baja, an aristocratic resort in ancient Rome, is a place for making sandcastles (77). As a counterpoint to the Crevequers' childish and pragmatic view of the place, the novel offers a conversation between Tommy and the art-loving tourist Prudence:

'My Naples,' she said, 'isn't human: it's colour, and light and shadow, and the way the streets go – cut like deep gorges and climbing up – you know? [...] But that's Naples in one sense only – one meaning. The people who live in it I don't know.'
 'You don't want to know them, do you?' [...]
 Her next remark was a swerve, as usual, to 'things' (103-104).

As she did in *Abbots Verney*, Macaulay offers a version of the city which, though drawing on stereotypes (the eruption of Vesuvius, the merriment and loafing of the Naples poor), provides a back-view, a glimpse of life as lived by the residents of what conventionally are seen at a picturesque distance. The adoption of the child's eye-view, writes Baldick,

puts a critical distance between us and the familiar conventions of adult life, encouraging us to see them as artificial and open to justified resistance from the young hero or heroine. In this way it underpins the moral critique of 'Victorian' family values and school regimes so that the child-protagonist's poetic sensitivity serves to deny legitimacy to the system of values under which she or he is socialized.⁵³

⁵¹ Macaulay, *The Furnace* (London: John Murray, 1907), 66.

⁵² *Siren Land* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1948), 248. See below for further discussion of this text.

⁵³ Baldick, 354.

There was a literary cult of the childlike in the Edwardian era in which this novel explicitly participates (with epigrams taken from Maeterlinck for instance) in order to critique contemporary notions of the civilized; by shifting the setting to Naples, Macaulay can accentuate this by appropriating the cliché of the ingenuity and spontaneity of the Neapolitans for her Anglo-Italian protagonists. At the same time it satirizes the sophisticated English tourist/artist who believes they have a privileged vision of 'real' Italy (much as Forster does in *A Room With a View* in the figure of Miss Lavish), or the English reader of descriptive guides like *The Colour of Rome* who will be delighted by the glimpses of the 'real' city which amount to anonymous, colourful groups of peasants, animals and carts.

The Southern Countryside

In this section, the role of the concept of civilization in constructing Italy is explored in Norman Douglas's *Siren Land* (1911) and *Old Calabria* (1915).⁵⁴ Both volumes are quirky, highly learned collections of essays, most previously published as articles. These wild and less familiar places constrain the traveller to a particularly primitive regime of accommodation and comfort compared to the well-established tourist industry of the cities and more northern regions. Douglas's narrator seems happy and at home in these parts, anticipating and deflecting the possible objections of the British traveller here. D.H. Lawrence's, on the other hand, though famously on a primitivist quest, is less tolerant of rudimentary modes of existence, as evidenced both in his novel *The Lost Girl* (1920), which offers a fictional Abruzzi in whose primitive living conditions and isolation Alvina Houghton 'loses' herself, and in his 1921 travel book *Sea and Sardinia*, a last despairing look at European civilization by an edgy, irascible travelling persona.

Norman Douglas: *Siren Land* (1911) and *Old Calabria* (1915)

Douglas, part Scottish, part German, did not attend university, though he was immensely well-read and his early interest in geology and herpetology generated respected scholarly tracts. He was already forty-three when *Siren Land* turned heads in the literary world. He believes that 'the Englishman, who never submerges his identity, is a good describer of foreign lands, and the image of the South is not seen so clearly on the spot as when it rises like an exhalation before the mind's eye amid hyperborean gloom' (*SL*, 177). Douglas, a self-appointed 'good describer of foreign lands' (if not technically 'an

⁵⁴ Page numbers appear in parentheses within the text; where opportune, they will be referred to as *SL* (*Siren Land*) and *OC* (*Old Calabria*).

Englishman'), wrote some parts of these two volumes in the hyperborean gloom of wartime London. His precarious financial situation (particularly after his 1903 divorce) meant he had to publish to earn; since writing on the cities of Italy, especially north of Rome, was flourishing and therefore highly competitive, he was able to use his knowledge of Capri and the rural region around Naples (where he lived until 1911) to generate articles, some published in the *English Review* and the *Cornhill*, which he later collected and published in *Siren Land* and *Old Calabria*. During the war, when he was living in London, he undertook a series of visits to the southern parts of Italy to gather material for *Old Calabria*. His work was well-received and he became greatly admired in contemporary literary circles.⁵⁵

He made 'the South' his own, building his literary success on fictional and non-fictional depictions of the less beaten tracks of Italy. His exhaustive reading of historical texts on the region is much in evidence, as is his reading of his writer predecessors there: he is in dialogue with Lenormant, Ramage, Keppel Craven and Gissing: 'The shade of George Gissing haunts these chambers and passages [...] The establishment has vastly improved since those days' (OC, 308). He acknowledges and supplements the traces of those writers, observing how devoid of English visitors the area has become:

I have not yet encountered a single English traveller, during my frequent wanderings over south Italy. Gone are the days of Keppel Craven and Swinburne, of Eustace and Brydone and Hoare! You will come across sporadic Germans [...] but never an Englishman. The adventurous type of Anglo-Saxon probably thinks the country too tame; scholars, too trite; ordinary tourists, too dirty (OC, 195).

Although of the same generation as Lee and Symons his work is less obviously marked by the restrained, aestheticist voice; rather, personality comes through, the voice that of a worldly raconteur.⁵⁶ The style of the travel essays has been described as 'gaudily archaic' and in the 'assumption of a rapt reader-companion' betrays 'the reposeful confidence of the pre-War essayist, who takes us on a tour of his own mind as well as of his favourite places, and does so at his own pace.'⁵⁷ The organization of the material is 'circular or haphazard', the chapters' subject matter disparate and loosely structured.⁵⁸ In his Sorrentine peninsula, he finds a 'goat-world', where 'popes and emperors have come and

⁵⁵ Holloway gives the credit for 'launching' Douglas from 1908 onwards to Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Hueffer (see Holloway, 173ff).

⁵⁶ Connolly characterizes his prose thus: 'This is a good example of the reformed Mandarin. It is leisurely but not too leisurely, the syntax is easy, the thought simple, the vocabulary humdrum. The use of classical names takes for granted a reader who will accept this coin. The intellectual attitude is evident in the author's genial patronage of Nature and his calm analysis. It is readable, good-mannered and seems to-day a little flat, for the coins mean less to us and yet it is redeemed by the lovely image of the patterns on the sea from a height – if we know who Thetis is' (*Enemies of Promise*, 25-26).

⁵⁷ Baldick, 270.

⁵⁸ Holloway, 182. To give an impression of the apparent incongruity of the material's arrangement, some consecutive chapter titles of *Siren Land* read as follows: 'VIII Rain on the Hills / IX The Life of Sister Serafina / X Our Lady of the Snow / XI On Leisure' (SL, 5).

gone; the woodlands are swept away and the very mountains have put on new faces, but these goat-boys are the same dreamy, shy, sunburnt children as in the days when Phoenicians sailed in their black ships past yonder headland' (*SL*, 225). In Calabria and the rest of the southern peninsula he focuses on the traces of many diverse civilizations and settlements, such as Magna Graecia, Albanians, the Spanish. *Old Calabria* is concerned with local politics, physiognomies, ancestries, festivals, rural and town life, folklore, values and customs. These texts reveal Douglas's heterodox outlook, characterized by his belief in the beneficial effect of the south on northerners.⁵⁹ In the Romantic tradition they disguise his companions; for instance, he travelled around Calabria with a young London boy called Eric Wolton (whose own diaries reveal the more prosaic discomforts of the trips) without ever alluding to him in *Old Calabria*.⁶⁰

The topography of 'Siren Land' is evoked in the style of what Pratt has called 'promontory description':

A good idea of the country can be obtained from the well-known Deserto convent above Sorrento or, nearer the point of the promontory, from the summit of Mount San Costanzo which, if I mistake not, ought to be an island like Capri near at hand, but will probably cling to the mainland for another few thousand years. The eye looks down upon the two gulfs of Naples and Salerno, divided by a hilly ridge; the precipitous mass of Sant'Angelo, stretching right across the peninsula in an easterly direction, shuts off the view from the world beyond. This is Siren Land (20).

Such descriptions place the narrator at the centre (see Chapter 1 above). The voice, here as elsewhere, shifts between an authoritative, impersonal guide-book tone (passive verb, topographical description) and a more personal, speculative (first-person, hedging) one. He stakes 'his' geographical territory, his book's claim to originality, and establishes an educated, discerning persona:

Here, on these remote uplands [of Siren Land], I prefer to turn my back on the green undulations of Massa and Sorrento, on Vesuvius and Naples, Ischia and the Phlegræan Fields: all these regions are trite and familiar. I prefer to gaze towards the mysterious South, the mountains of Basilicata and the fabled headland Licosa, where Leucosia, sister-Siren of Parthenope, lies buried (28).

For Douglas, formulating interest out of a static landscape involves imbuing it with historical significance; and the history is one of western civilization: it is 'impossible to avoid stumbling upon relics of Roman rule, of old Hellas, or mediæval romance that are crowded into these few miles. The memories start up at our feet, like the fabled dragon-

⁵⁹ He famously writes, 'many of us would do well to *mediterraneanise* ourselves for a season, to quicken those ethnic roots from which has sprung so much of what is best in our natures' (*SL*, 38, original emphasis). And in *Old Calabria* he writes provocatively, 'Festivals like this are relics of paganism, and have my cordial approval. We English ought to have learnt by this time that the repression of pleasure is a dangerous error. In these days when even Italy, the grey-haired *cocotte*, has become tainted with Anglo-Pecksniffian principles, there is nothing like a little time-honoured bestiality for restoring the circulation and putting things to rights generally' (166).

⁶⁰ Nor was he 'alone' when making excursions for the articles collected in *Alone*, (although he acknowledges this in a final footnote). In this more autobiographical post-war publication, however, appear the names or initials of several acquaintances.

brood of Cadmus' (251). Cadmus is the mythological figure who introduced order and civilization, as told by Apollodorus and Ovid. Thus Siren Land is invested with meanings that are designed to construct a notion of who 'we' are, more specifically, who people 'of culture' are, those like Douglas of the leisured classes:

There are many spots on earth as fair as the Parthenopean bay – equally fair at least to us moderns, whose appreciation of art and of nature has become less exclusively human. The steaming Amazonian forests and the ice-craggs of Jan Mayen [a Norwegian island] appeal since yesterday to our catholic taste; but whoever takes the antique point of view will still accord the palm to the Mediterranean. Here, true beauty resides with its harmony of form and hue – here the works of man stand out in just relation to those of nature, each supplementing the other. Elsewhere, she is apt to grow menacing – gloomy or monstrous. In the North, the sun refuses her aid and man struggles with the elements; he vegetates, an animated lump of blubber and dirt, or rushes frantically in starving hordes to overrun the bright places of earth; in the tropics his works shrink into insignificance, he is lost in a fierce tangle of greenery, sucked dry by the sun, whom he execrates as a demon – he dwindles into a stoic, a slave. Here, too, an ancient world, our ancient world, lies spread out in rare charm of colour and outline, and every footstep is fraught with memories. The lovely islands of the Pacific have a past, but their past is not our past, and men who strike deep notes in such alien soil are like those who forsake their families and traditions to live among gipsies. Niagara will astound the senses, but the ruins of Campania wake up sublimer and more enduring emotions.

No person of culture, however prosaic, will easily detach himself from such scenes and thoughts – is it not the prerogative of civilised man to pause and ponder before the relics of his own past? (249-50).

This is a contemplation of a landscape that becomes a contemplation of civilization. Between the North ('gloomy') and the tropics ('monstrous') comes 'our ancient world', the Mediterranean, like a happy medium between extremities, but rendered temporally rather than topographically – 'memories', 'past'. The Classical ('antique') aesthetic characterizes this southern land – 'harmony of form and hue'; 'the works of man [...] in just relation to those of nature'. It prevails over the Romantic one (merely 'yesterday' in this time scale) implicit in 'ice-craggs' and 'astounding the senses'. His appeal is to 'us moderns', inhabitants of 'the North', who have lost such harmony with nature. Only 'civilised man', 'whoever takes the antique point of view' – like himself – people who have a special or privileged insight into 'the relics of our own past' can appreciate this, not 'the animated lump of blubber and dirt', the traveller to 'alien soil'. The ancient world is 'here', 'people of culture' feel more deeply than those who claim affinity with the 'bright places'. Mixed in with the elegant appeal is a surreptitious dig at the popular currency of exotic travel in writing of the era, a claim of superiority and difference.

The people themselves constitute a separate landscape in that they are conceived as a whole, and as *not* marked by the passage of time and history:

Whoever rightly deciphers the human palimpsest of the Parthenopean region will perceive how faint are the traces of Greco-Roman schooling, how skin-deep – as regards primitive tracts of feeling – the scars of mediæval tyranny and bestiality. And Christianity has only left a translucent veneer, like a slug's track, upon the surface; below can be read the simple desire for sunshine and family life, and a pantheism vague and charming, the impress of nature in her mildest moods upon the responsive human phantasy (118-119).

Again 'reading' the text which is *Siren Land*, Douglas here reaffirms the enduring notion of a fundamental closeness in the southern people to nature, a contented and harmonious coexistence based on an untroubled allegiance to 'sunshine and family life', that underlies the 'traces', 'scars', 'vener' of civilization. He upholds the 'archaic simplicity' of the environment in which boys are brought up as exemplary (not forgetting Douglas's own attraction to adolescent boys); he finds in this 'very ancient youth' an essential southern nature with which to critique the excesses and introspection of the north:

It is not praising them unduly to say that their minds, like their limbs, grow straight without schooling, and that they possess an inborn sobriety which would be sought in vain among the corresponding class in the North. [...] Inured to patriarchal values from earliest childhood and familiar with every phenomenon of life from birth to death, they view their surroundings objectively and glide through adolescence without any of the periodical convulsions and catastrophes of more introspective races. Their entire vocabulary consists, I should think, of scarce three hundred words, many of which would bring a blush to the cheek of Rabelais; yet their conversation among themselves is refreshingly healthy, and many subjects, popular enough elsewhere, are tacitly ignored or tabooed. [...] Emigration is unfortunately producing a very different crop of youths; gamblers, wine-bibbers, and flashily dressed *mezzo-signori*.

[...A]mid the wilderness of our ever-changing worldly circumstances they would be hopelessly lost; indeed, they regard our whole civilisation as a vast perambulating lunatic asylum (99).

The telling note of contempt for the upstart, the materialistic Italian youth who has made money in America, betrays the narrator's discomfort with the way the lower classes everywhere were acquiring wealth and aspirations.⁶¹ What Douglas seems to share with many of his contemporaries is the desire to preserve an old world order in which poor, illiterate peasants passively populate serene landscapes for contemplation by a circumscribing eye.⁶²

Part of his texts' appeal lies in the way he knowledgeably writes of places his readers are unlikely to have visited, and his attention to the customs of hospitality and manners in these remote places:

With the exception of Capri, which is the only spot within a hundred miles of Naples where a foreigner is reasonably well treated, no accommodation in the septentrional sense of the word can be found in Siren land save at Sorrento and Sant'Agata, the idea being that 'foreigners must first come' before anything can be done to welcome the few that flee into these solitudes from the din and confusion of that fair land whose frontier-station bears the ominous name of Chiasso (noise).⁶³

As ever reaffirming the exclusivity and desirability of his terrain – 'the few', 'these solitudes', escape from 'din and confusion' – Douglas obligingly spares his readers the trouble of experiencing for themselves the discomforts of travel here; he offers his readers

⁶¹ Elsewhere he returns to the theme (which was noted in Chapter 3, above): 'But he was a returned emigrant, and when an Italian has once crossed the ocean he is useless for my purposes, he has lost his savour – the virtue has gone out of him. True Italians will soon be rare as the dodo in these parts. These *americani* cast off their ancient animistic traits and patriarchal disposition with the ease of a serpent; a new creature emerges, of a wholly different character – sophisticated, extortionate at times, often practical and in so far useful; scorners of every tradition, infernally wideawake, and curiously deficient in what the Germans call "*Gemut*" (OC, 159). The term 'Gemut' approximates the English humbleness, humility.

⁶² Peasants epitomize 'contentment in adversity' (OC, 61), a common conception which privileges an aesthetic stance over a political one.

⁶³ *Siren Land*, 24. 'That fair land' is Italy, which is thereby construed as an other to these southern parts.

the vicarious experience of living in poverty too: 'I know them – I have lived among them' (41-42). In didactic mode, he acts as an interpreter of what would be considered by his implied reader as uncivilized behaviour, recasting it into a Hellenic perspective:

Once you have reached the latitude of Naples, the word *grazie* (thank you) vanishes from the vocabulary of all save the most cultured. But to conclude therefrom that one is among a thankless race is not altogether the right inference. They have a wholly different conception of the affair. Our septentrional 'thanks' is a complicated product in which gratefulness for the things received and for things to come are unconsciously balanced while their point of view differs in nothing from that of the beau-ideal of Greek courtesy, of Achilles, whose mother procured for him a suit of divine armour from Hephaistos, which he received without a word of acknowledgement either for her or for the god who had been put to some little trouble in the matter. A thing given they regard as a thing found, a hermaion, a happy hit in the lottery of life; the giver is the blind instrument of Fortune. This chill attitude repels us; and our effusive expressions of thankfulness astonish these people and the Orientals (136).

To be 'cultured' is to be 'complicated', a northern affliction which incorporates temporal knowledge ('things to come') and balance. 'They' on the other hand exist in a mythologically derived taxonomy in which the acts of giving and receiving are random; ingratitude is extraneous to their field of vision. The narrator thereby sets himself up as über-civilized, one who knows more than both his implied reader and the objects of his attention. The assumption of difference manifest in the constant opposition of 'us' and 'them' in the text is articulated in terms of social etiquette, of what is or is not considered civilized: a preoccupation in fact of an English consciousness. 'Greek courtesy' is offered as a mediating concept, a way of reconciling two potentially conflictual social codes; but it is 'we' who have the superior understanding as a result; 'they' will simply remain 'astonished'.

The unmarked equivalence of 'these people and the Orientals', in a passage using the present tense, suggests an ethnographic writing style, with its fixed groups identifiable not only in the matter of manners, but by their distinctive physiognomies, as borne out in descriptions such as the following:

You must watch the peasants coming home at night from their field-work if you wish to see the true Calabrian type – whiskered, short and wiry, and of dark complexion. There is that indescribable mark of *race* in these countrymen; they are different in features and character from the Italians; it is an ascetic, a Spanish type. Your Calabrian is strangely scornful of luxury and even comfort; a creature of few but well-chosen words, straightforward, indifferent to pain and suffering, and dwelling by preference, when religiously minded, on the harsher aspects of his faith.⁶⁴

The assumption that his readers may 'wish to see the Calabrian type' shows not only an unquestioned belief in such racial determinism, but also how the text is participating in a discourse of colonial exploration, whereby the British traveller observes the exotic for that

⁶⁴ *Old Calabria*, 122, original emphasis. See also, for example, 'There is certainly a scarce type which, for want of a better hypothesis, might be called Greek: of delicate build and below the average height, small-eared and straight-nosed, with curly hair that varies from blond to what Italians call *castagno chiaro*. It differs not only from the robuster and yet fairer northern breed, but also from the darker surrounding races' (67); and 'Nearly all Mediterranean races have been misfed from early days; that is why they are so small' (139).

frisson of horror and fascination, already noted in other texts. Douglas's claim to authenticity is stretched here; he has surmised that the Calabrian (itself reductive in its racially-distinguished categorization) is 'indifferent to pain and suffering'.

Sicily and Sardinia

D.H. Lawrence

Ah Mediterranean morning, when our world began!
Far-off Mediterranean mornings,
Pelagic faces uncovered,
And unbudding cyclamens.⁶⁵

While Douglas identifies 'our roots' in the values of Greek civilization, D.H. Lawrence sought origins in and connection with the pre-Greek Mediterranean ('Pelagic' here). The association of history, people (civilization) and nature characterizes much of his later writing on Italy, though the nostalgic tone wanes with time. Lawrence wrote, during his stay in the isolated villa Fontana Vecchia near Taormina in Sicily (between 1920 and 1922), among other works, *The Lost Girl* (1920), *Sea and Sardinia* (1921) and much of the poetry published in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923). The villa inspired the setting of his later short story 'Sun'. This was one of Lawrence's best-loved homes, for its lack of English 'society' and lush natural setting; but by this time his sights were set on other continents and his disillusion with Italy, for which he had had such high hopes, culminated with his break from 'the civilised world' in 1922.⁶⁶

The Lawrences had returned to Italy in November 1919, characteristically undertaking a complex itinerary which included, that winter, a sojourn in the mountain village of Picinisco, primitive even by his standards, as guests of Orazio Cervi.⁶⁷ The stay was foreshortened due to the discomfort and isolation the Lawrences endured there, though it found literary expression in the final chapters of *The Lost Girl*: the village was fictionalized as Pescocalascio and Califano, and Cervi as Pancrazio.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Lawrence, 'Sicilian Cyclamens', in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923) (London: Penguin, 1999), 49.

⁶⁶ Boulton and Robertson (eds.), *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence: Volume III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 521, 689.

⁶⁷ They had returned to Italy in November 1919 (Turin, Genoa, Leric), stayed in Florence with Norman Douglas's help; visited Rome and, after Picinisco, proceeded to Naples (via Atina and Cassino) in December, spending Christmas in Capri, where they found accommodation through Compton Mackenzie (who showed him *Ulysses*, about which Lawrence was 'horrified' (Mackenzie, *My Life and Times*, V, 167)) and the Brett Youngs. The Lawrences remained in Capri until the end of February 1920, meanwhile visiting Amalfi and Montecassino.

⁶⁸ Lawrence had begun *The Lost Girl* in 1913, under the original title of *The Insurrection of Miss Houghton*. Although poorly received then as now, it remains his only prize-winning novel, winning the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in December 1921.

During the first two weeks of 1921 the Lawrences undertook a journey primarily by boat to Sardinia, via Messina and Palermo, and back via Civitavecchia, Rome and Naples, a trip recorded in *Sea and Sardinia* (1921).⁶⁹ The endless travelling, as widely documented, was driven by his search for a utopian community which exists beyond the margins of a civilization characterized by economic migration, machinery and the hated northern state of 'self-consciousness'. As Carr explains,

Lawrence, for all his bitterness against post-war England, was not just escaping. His travels were energised by a passionate quasi-primitivist quest; he longed for a truer, simpler, more intense way of being, and was endlessly disappointed. Lawrence loathed modern hybridity; he wanted to seek out the pure essence of the people he visited.⁷⁰

Both the novel and the travelogue concern themselves with the Anglo-Italian encounter, which is construed as problematic, fraught with cultural incomprehension and resistance. The opposition between England and southern Italy is articulated in part through the discourse of civilization and barbarism, the underlying narrative drive powered by the conflict between the desire for primitivism – an escape from the codes and conventions of industrialized society – and the frustration of disappointment.

The Lost Girl (1920)

Compton Mackenzie recalls Lawrence as being 'in a bad way after the war';⁷¹ the war for him was so deeply traumatic that civilization, what it means to be civilized, and the significance of national identity are highly conspicuous in his fiction and travel writing. Michelucci (referring in part to his 1922 novel *Aaron's Rod*) articulates this in terms of a search:

The mood of both *The Lost Girl* and *Aaron's Rod* reflects the disturbing experience of World War I, which, because it prompts the dissolution of an entire system of values, necessitates the search for new points of reference and helps motivate the quest toward the unknown that both of the protagonists undertake. [...] The war almost inevitably brings the persecution of *difference*, a theme which becomes evident toward the end of *The Lost Girl*, while in *Aaron's Rod*, which begins as soon as the war is over, a sense of loss and anxiety predominates throughout, the result of a situation which demands a radical and problematic reworking of the concept of civilization.⁷²

This 'sense of loss and anxiety' prevails in the final chapters of *The Lost Girl* which see the protagonist Alvina Houghton leave provincial England for married life with the 'yellow-eyed' Italian Cicio in a mountain village in the Abruzzi. Arguably, these final chapters forget or stand apart from the rest of the novel, and constitute a kind of generic hybrid of novel and travel writing; 'The Journey Across' features for instance topographical descriptions of France and Italy and the minutiae of the experience of travelling. The

⁶⁹ The manuscript, begun immediately afterwards, was completed in just six weeks and was published in December.

⁷⁰ Carr, 83.

⁷¹ Mackenzie, *My Life and Times*, V, 168.

⁷² Michelucci, *Space and Place in the Work of D.H. Lawrence* (London: McFarland, 2002), 56.

break from England is rendered as a death: in a famous passage Alvina looks back from the departing boat at the 'ash-grey, corpse-grey cliffs [...] England, like a long, ash-grey coffin slowly submerging' (347). In contrast, the train journey through Tuscany – after death, the appropriate locale for her anticipation of a rebirth – finds her wildly enthusiastic about her new life in Italy:

But she saw the golden dawn, a golden sun coming out of level country. She loved it. She loved being in Italy. She loved the lounging carelessness of the train, she liked having Italian money, hearing the Italians around her – though they were neither as beautiful nor as melodious as she expected (354).

This last note of disappointment gradually comes to dominate; the further south they travel, the more alien, 'ancient and shaggy, savage still, under all its remote civilization' the landscape becomes (356). They arrive at Ossoina, 'an old, unfinished little mountain town' (359), in which they take coffee at a 'sort of shop' (360). The place is evoked through deprecatory epithets, thereby generating implicitly the idea of what a 'proper', civilized (English) coffee-shop should be: 'It was a little hole with an earthen floor and a smell of cats. [...] The hard-faced Grazia, in her unfresh head-dress, dabbled the little dirty coffee-cups in dirty water, took the coffee-pot out of the ashes, poured in the old black boiling coffee three parts full, and slopped the cup over with rum' (360). The perception of ungracious hospitality, squalor and unfamiliar method of making coffee accentuate the sense of an English consciousness being confronted by otherness in the most trivial of domestic practices: 'Alvina felt as if she were in a strange, hostile country' (360). Travelling next in a cart, Alvina sees and asks about 'a house, and a lurid red fire burning outside against the wall, and dark figures about it'.

'Ka – ? Fanno il buga' – ' said the driver.

'They are doing some washing,' said Pancrazio, explanatory.

'Washing!' said Alvina.

'Boiling the clothes,' said Cicio (361).

The rendering of dialect, the need for linguistic and cultural translation, the defamiliarization of common domestic practices, all contribute to the growing gloom and panic felt by Alvina: 'She felt she was quite, quite lost. She had gone out of the world, over the border, into some place of mystery. She was lost to Woodhouse, to Lancaster, to England – all lost' (361). The English reader is being transported, like Alvina, to an Italy entirely alien and incomprehensible, all the more so for the text's abandonment of literary conventions associated with that country. Indeed, where primitiveness in writing on southern Italy is often endowed with an aesthetic allure, here it serves as a negation of value, as a reaffirmation of the normative codes of civilized life.

The village of Pescocalascio is arrived at on foot, the tiny hamlet of Califano, where they will live, by donkey. Descriptions of the house and environs abound with such

adjectives as 'unspeakable', 'impossible', 'uninhabitable', 'hopeless'; Alvina's response is to methodically wash and scrub. 'And what was the difference? A dank wet soapy smell, and not much more. [...] It was hopeless. The same black walls, the same floor, the same cold from behind [...] the same come-and-go of aimless busy men, the same cackle of wet hens, the same hopeless nothingness' (375-76). This New Woman figure is reduced, through her distaste at the lack of cleanliness and the absence of cultural distractions, to carrying out pointless and traditionally female chores, among men who seem to inhabit a different plane, that of the domestic animals and the mountains.⁷³ Lawrence invests place with the capacity to resist and oppose the human, where human signifies culture and civilization, so that removing Alvina from the anchors of her English identity precipitates her decline:

There is no mistake about it, Alvina was a lost girl. She was cut off from everything she belonged to [...] At Pescocalascio it was the mysterious influence of the mountains and valleys themselves which seemed always to be annihilating the Englishwoman: nay, not only her, but the very natives themselves [...] It seems there are places which resist us, which have the power to overthrow our psychic being. It seems as if every country has its potent negative centres, localities which savagely and triumphantly refuse our living culture And Alvina had struck one of these, here on the edge of the Abruzzi (370-371).

Meyers argues, 'The great irony of *The Lost Girl*, like *Sea and Sardinia*, is that Alvina is profoundly disappointed in the primitive landscape and that Califano, though apparently very different, has the same restrictive features as Woodhouse.'⁷⁴ This levelling of the two communities of Califano and Woodhouse overlooks the profundity of Alvina's alienation – the certainties of her English identity are the resources she summons to endure this existence:

She was always making little plans in her mind – how she could get out of that great cruel valley and escape to Rome, to English people. She would find the English Consul and he would help her. She would do anything rather than be really crushed. She knew how easy it would be, once her spirit broke, for her to die and be buried in the cemetery at Pescocalascio (397).

Summoning the idea of 'the English Consul', with its attendant connotations of dependable, avuncular concern, authority, and action, constitutes a kind of panacea in the face of the obscurity of death in 'that great cruel valley'. Rome, too, a metropolis resonating with the idea of civilization, is antithetical to this 'negative centre', and harbours the civilized promise of 'English people'.

Cicio himself is a kind of metonym of southern Italian civilization, a mysterious Other invested with the myth of ancient origins, yet tainted by his contact with northern

⁷³ Vassallo positions Alvina's feminine submissiveness within the context of the Persephone myth; he argues that the deliberate imposition of this myth on the narrative structure of the novel requires that Alvina 'be submissively in awe of her mysterious vital lover from the Underworld' ('D.H. Lawrence and the Sicilian Myth of Persephone' in *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* 8 (2006), 178). (He also notes Virginia Woolf's and Katherine Mansfield's indignant response to this domestic submissiveness).

⁷⁴ Meyers, *D.H. Lawrence and the Experience of Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 103.

Europe: 'Alvina watching him, as if hypnotized, saw his old beauty, formed through civilization after civilization; and at the same time she saw his modern vulgarism, and decadence' (265). Through her obsessive and ambivalent gaze, Cicio is evoked as a barely human entity; he prefigures *Sea and Sardinia's* Sardinian faces in Cagliari, and the hot, dark presence of the peasant in 'Sun': 'the glimpse of his head was enough to rouse in her that overwhelming fascination, which came and went in spells. His remoteness, his southernness, something velvety and dark' (252); 'In his eyes was a deep, deep sun-warmth, something fathomless, deepening black and abysmal, but somehow sweet to her' (253-54). The incongruity of the marriage between the provincial shopkeeper's daughter and, to use Spurr's term, 'the wilderness in human form',⁷⁵ invites comparison with previous unsuccessful fictional unions between Italians and English characters (such as Gino and Lilia's in Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*); but with Cicio finally called up to fight in the war, and the pregnant Alvina left behind in the Abruzzi, this novel places the Anglo-Italian relation in a kind of limbo.

The apprehension of past civilization in the figure of the southern Italian is not cause for reverence, but enhances the sense of English subjectivity in crisis:

The terror, the agony, the nostalgia of the heathen past was a constant torture to her mediumistic soul. [...] Coming over the brow of a heathy, rocky hillock, and seeing Cicio beyond leaning deep over the plough, in his white shirt-sleeves following the slow, waving, moth-pale oxen across a small track of land turned up in the heathen hollow, her soul would go all faint, she would almost swoon with realization of the world that had gone before (372).

The iconic figure of the Italian working the land, seen from afar and evoked in poignant language, is deployed as an emblem of 'the world that had gone before'; but while in earlier writing on Italy 'nostalgia of the heathen past' is consolatory and indulgent, to Alvina it is a source of 'terror' and 'agony'. In that final word 'before', with its lack of qualifying adverbial (an unspoken 'now'), is invested the weight of trauma – Alvina's personal trauma (she is overwhelmed) at being confronted with, and experiencing a deep-seated connection with, civilization in its barest, most primordial form; and a wider trauma, implicit in the text's refusal or inability to articulate the profound bleakness of that 'now'. The text's ambivalent construction of the Abruzzi and Cicio as embodiments of a substratal civilization which is resisted by Alvina's English identity and by the advent of war provides literature with a novel representation of Italy and civilization.

Sea and Sardinia (1921)

Although much of *Sea and Sardinia* is given over to contemplation of the sea, and describes journeys to Sicilian ports, Rome station, the Campagna and other places, the

⁷⁵ The title of chapter 10 of *The Rhetoric of Empire*.

bulk of the book narrates an improvised trip northwards by train and omnibus through Sardinia, with a conspicuous knapsack in tow.⁷⁶ It is considered one of Lawrence's best pieces of travel writing, not only for the vividness of its sketches and the idiosyncrasy of its narrator, but for its preservation of a sense of immediacy, largely through the use of the historic present, what Worthen has called 'artful spontaneity'⁷⁷ and Ellis and Mills 'what appears to be a minute adherence to chronology, so that the reader has the impression of following Lawrence in his travels step by step and hour by hour [...] He appears to describe each [event...] in almost complete innocence of what comes next'.⁷⁸

In this text, as Stewart summarizes, 'Lawrence's sensibility engages freely with a Mediterranean world of volcanoes, vegetables, trains, steamships, sea, peasants, costumes, innkeepers, bus-drivers, and harlequins in an ongoing act of perception that metonymically arranges impressions in an animated Gestalt'.⁷⁹ Lawrence's growing disillusion with mainland Italy pushes him to its southern islands. Rather than adopting the familiar north-south dualism, he constructs an east-west binary: the journey from his Sicilian home to Sardinia is cast as a journey towards the west, which is 'strange and unfamiliar and a little fearful, be it Africa or be it America'; the east, rather than an exotic orient, is 'our Ionian dawn [which] always seems near and familiar and happy'.⁸⁰ It is with this anticipation of 'something African, half-sinister, [...] so far off, in an unknown land' that he embarks on the tour of Sardinia; this unfamiliarity, for example, is confirmed on arrival in Sardinia through constant repetition of the word 'strange' when describing Cagliari. Lawrence compares Sardinia to Malta: 'lost between Europe and Africa and belonging to nowhere. Belonging to nowhere, never having belonged to anywhere. To Spain and the Arabs and the Phœnicians most. But as if it had never really had a fate. No fate. Left outside of time and history' (55). And in Nuoro, 'No castles even. In Italy and Sicily castles perching everywhere. In Sardinia none – the remote, ungrappled hills rising darkly, standing outside of life' (143). Sardinia is liminal, an entity disconnected from the layers of civilization that have shaped the mainland. Yet his concession to the Spanish, Arabic and Phœnician influences point to the impossibility of this vision; place in this text

⁷⁶ To the narrator's consternation, the knapsack constantly draws unwanted attention to the travelling couple.

⁷⁷ Worthen, *D.H. Lawrence: The Life of an Outsider* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 241.

⁷⁸ Ellis and Mills (eds.), *D.H. Lawrence's Non-fiction: Art, Thought and Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 107, 108.

⁷⁹ Stewart, 'Cultural Primitivism: Lawrence's Peasant Portraits in Sardinia' in *Etudes Lawrenciennes*, 20 (1999), 7.

⁸⁰ *Sea and Sardinia*, 42. See Porter, 215: 'Lawrence, in fact, finds in the polarity between the eastern and western ends of the island of Sicily a refiguring of the classic binary opposition between civilization and barbarism in which the traditional hierarchy is, however, reversed'.

is very much a product or projection of Lawrence's primitivist fantasy, a fantasy which is subjected to further fragmenting in closer encounters with individuals.

If Lawrence is an anti-tourist⁸¹ then this text constructs an anti-Italy; there is an explicit rejection of Italy as art-historical repository:

There is nothing to see in Nuoro: which, to tell the truth, is always a relief. Sights are an irritating bore. Thank heaven there isn't a bit of Perugino or anything Pisan in the place: that I know of. [...] But I can always look at an old, grey-bearded peasant in his earthy white drawers and his black waist-frill, wearing no coat or over-garment, but just crooking along beside his little ox-wagon (150).

Lawrence substitutes the so-called civilized taste for academic, Tuscan art with contemplation of peasants; yet the evocation of the metonymic peasant figure is as much a picture to be 'looked at', a picturesque vignette, flat and colourful like the paintings by Jan Jata that illustrate the text. Likewise, description of the physiognomies of the peasants' faces require allusion to famous paintings: 'Sometimes Velasquez, and sometimes Goya gives us a suggestion of these large, dark, unlighted eyes. And they go with fine, fleecy black hair – almost as fine as fur. I have not seen them north of Cagliari' (67).

When dealing with Sardinian landscapes the narrator attempts to empty them of Romantic associations, just as he rejects the Romantic persona of the lone wanderer in the wilderness.⁸² He declares that it is

extraordinary how scrubby and uninhabited the great spaces of Sardinia are. [...] This is very different from Italian landscape. Italy is almost always dramatic, and perhaps invariably romantic. There is drama in the plains of Lombardy and romance in the Venetian lagoons, and sheer scenic excitement in nearly all the hilly parts of the peninsula. [...] But Italian landscape is really eighteenth-century landscape, to be represented in that romantic-classic manner which makes everything rather marvellous and very topical: aqueducts, and ruins upon sugar-loaf mountains, and craggy ravines and Wilhelm Meister water-falls: all up and down (71-72).

Italian landscape, he seems to suggest, is overdetermined by conventional representations of it; it cannot be viewed other than through a 'romantic-classic manner'. Sardinia, standing 'outside of time and history', offers an alternative to what Italy has come to signify in art and literature – claustrophobically framed and artistically overcharged landscapes. Sardinia, 'scrubby and uninhabited', offers 'a sense of space, which is so lacking in Italy' (72). Yet the descriptions inevitably bear traces of the writer's cultural formation. Ebbatson writes,

All acts of viewing the landscape are ideological [and] literary evocation of landscape must always be problematic, seeking as it does to supplement or mediate a 'real' nature, and these issues will often centre upon matters of style, where disjunctions between real countryside and its representation, or between nature and culture, are made manifest.⁸³

⁸¹ as Porter suggests, 213.

⁸² This text (unusually for travel writing on Italy, as has been seen) incorporates his travelling companion Frieda, albeit under the guise of 'Queen Bee' or 'the q.b'.

⁸³ Ebbatson, *An Imaginary England: Literature and Landscape, 1840-1920* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 10-11.

Lawrence's landscape descriptions cannot be innocent of painterly discourse, which selects and circumscribes, anchors the seer, and imbues value; nor of specifically English cultural points of reference. This is clear in the following passage which sets up a harmonious continuum between the wild heath, the agricultural land and the peasants:

It is wild, with heath and arbutus scrub and a sort of myrtle, breast-high. Sometimes one sees a few head of cattle. And then again come the greyish arable-patches, where the corn is grown. It is like Cornwall, like the Land's End region. Here and there, in the distance, are peasants working on the lonely landscape. Sometimes it is one man alone in the distance, showing so vividly in his black-and-white costume, small and far-off like a solitary magpie, and curiously distinct. All the strange magic of Sardinia is in this sight (71).

The attempt to evoke 'the strange magic of Sardinia' necessarily calls upon images familiar to his English readership – 'myrtle', 'magpie', Cornwall (and frequently in this book the Celtic, the fringes of Britain).⁸⁴

There are many similar occurrences of the far-off solitary costumed peasant in the text;⁸⁵ Stewart argues that they 'function as cultural metonyms':

Isolated male peasants in costume have a special attraction for Lawrence, expressed in quick verbal sketches. His active search for 'primitive' vitality gives figures silhouetted against the horizon, an apparitional quality [...]. Lawrence underlines the metonymic concentration of these visual figures. The solitary peasant working the land is a link with a rapidly disappearing culture and lifestyle: projected against sky and earth, he embodies a rare survival of rugged independence. [...] To the civilized viewer, such figures, although members of an agrarian culture, approximate 'the notion of the Wild Man [that] was associated with the idea of the wilderness [...] those parts of the physical world that had not yet been domesticated'.⁸⁶

Lawrence, 'the civilized viewer', admires the Rousseauesque 'Wild Man' untouched by either modern practices or modern self-consciousness. The long-distance perspective allows him to sustain this idealized metonymic construct, while the distinctive black and white peasant costume takes on an archetypal resonance. 'I seem', he writes, 'to have known it before: to have worn it even: to have dreamed it. [...] It belongs in some way to something in me – to my past perhaps' (62). The hedging ('seem', 'in some way', 'perhaps') suggests that identification is only partial ('vicarious and not actual depth' as Tague puts it⁸⁷) but no other aspect of the Sardinian journey arouses similar 'yearning' (63) or affirmation. The costume offers a paradigm of 'maleness' which makes modern dress appear 'ridiculous' (61) – a further example of how contemporary civilization fails to

⁸⁴ The Celtic in discourses of the time was utilized to endorse an essentialist view of the British race. The 1911 Encyclopedia for instance accounts for 'the long-continued vitality of the British nation' with 'the fact that the Celtic element held aloof from the Anglo-Saxon element century after century sufficiently to maintain racial integrity, yet mingled sufficiently to give and receive the fresh stimulus of "new blood"'.

⁸⁵ See for instance 'A black-and-white peasant on his pony, only a dot in the distance beyond the foliage, still flashes and dominates the landscape. Ha-hal proud mankind! There you ride! But alas, most of the men are still khaki-muffled, rabbit-indistinguishable, ignominious' (*Sea and Sardinia*, 88).

⁸⁶ Stewart, 7, 12, quoting White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 153.

⁸⁷ Tague, 'Levels of Participatory Experience in D.H. Lawrence's Italy books' in *RE:AL: The Journal of Liberal Arts* 25.2 (2000), 55.

provide Lawrence with the parameters necessary for achieving a fuller sense of one's identity.

The narrator invests 'his' male Sardinian peasants with a cultural potency that bypasses their individuality: 'I love my indomitable coarse men from mountain Sardinia, for their stocking-caps and their splendid, animal-bright stupidity. If only the last wave of all-alikeness won't wash those superb crests, those caps, away' (92). The ubiquitous uniforms of demobbed soldiers antithetically represent 'proletarian homogeneity and khaki all-alikeness', itself a phenomenon about to be displaced by 'the great fight into multifariousness' (92). Lawrence presents the moment as one of crisis, a turning-point, in which 'the old universality, [...] cosmopolitanism and internationalism' (which as noted above were central to commonly-held Edwardian notions of civilization) are superseded:

Which motion will conquer? The workman's International, or the centripetal movement into national isolation? Are we going to merge into one grey proletarian homogeneity? – or are we going to swing back into more-or-less isolated, separate, defiant communities?
Probably both. [...] As sure as fate we are on the brink of American empire (91).

Being in Sardinia (or subsequently writing in Sicily) does not for Lawrence constitute an escape from concerns at the direction which contemporary civilization will take; rather the resultant text addresses them head-on: his rhetorical questions emphasize a sense of uncertainty and provisionality while the resigned tone at the inevitability of American ascendancy prefigures the direction of his future travels.

One of the most noted features of this book is the persona of the narrator, noticeably more misanthropic and irascible than in the Garda essays; it is the voice of somebody impatient, intolerant even, with poor service, unsanitary conditions, food provision, all the paraphernalia of travel. Indeed, his is at times the voice of the indignant 'civilized' Englishman whose entitlements or requirements are not recognized by reprehensible foreigners.⁸⁸ Special animosity is reserved for the figure of the commercial traveller aboard ship, whose attempts to speak English and ingratiate himself with the travelling couple is cruelly parodied. Lawrence's aversion to lower middle classes complements his idealization of the aristocrat and the peasant (in Chapter 3 above shown to be combined in the figure of Paolo) and in Sardinia small business owners, travelling salesmen and the like receive far less sympathetic treatment than indigenous villagers or peasants. 'For all his aversion to civilization, he hates degenerate (or half-civilized)

⁸⁸ This kind of narrator is not unprecedented in writing on literature: Tobias Smollett's travelling persona in his *Travels through France and Italy* (1766) 'presents himself as a somewhat awkward and ill-humoured character whose temper is provoked by everything not running according to plan' (Kalb (1981) cited in Korte, 54).

rusticity even more' writes Stewart.⁸⁹ In the longest chapter 'To Sorgono' he utilizes the idea of quintessential Englishness to set up the same high expectations in the reader that he himself has on arrival in the remote village: 'we seemed almost to have come to some little town in the English West Country, or in Hardy's country' (95). This literary allusion in particular, to a trope familiar to the imagination of the educated English reader, promises an idyllic rural location, one populated by innocuous, quaint locals and in which he expects, 'relying on Baedeker', to find the Albergo d'Italia. The promised charm does not materialize: the hotel no longer exists, which Lawrence calls a 'frequent' and 'disconcerting' phenomenon.⁹⁰ Instead the village is a 'dreary hole' (97) and their room at the inn 'sordid' and 'dilapidated' (96). Particular malice is apportioned to the innkeeper whom Lawrence's narrator 'instantly hated [...] for the filthy appearance he made. He wore a battered hat and his face was long unwashed. [...] "Dirty, disgusting swine!" said I, and I was in a rage. I could have forgiven him anything, I think, except his horrible shirt-breast, his personal shamelessness'.⁹¹ The narrator seems most outspoken and outraged where there are signs of squalor and lack of personal hygiene; these affront not only his own standards of cleanliness and service, derived from English cultural norms, but also his ideals of a people untouched by demeaning commercialism.

Lawrence's irate narrator overtly rejects his Englishness yet covertly endorses the standards and practices of the Englishman abroad. On numerous occasions he asserts his non-Englishness, his individuality: 'I am not England. I am not the British Isles on two legs' (48). Lawrence has conceded earlier that 'it is our own English fault. [...] we have set forth, politically, on such a high and Galahad quest of holy liberty, and been caught so shamelessly filling our pockets, that no wonder the naïve and idealistic south turns us down with a bang. [Space] Well, we are back on the ship. And we want tea' (39-40). He proceeds to fuss over the cost of tickets, the notices about mealtimes and so on. Whether unwittingly or for comic effect, the attitude of the demanding traveller, who wants the quintessentially English beverage, might explain the constant attention he receives as travelling Englishman, which he so vehemently resents. 'I am no more than a single human man wandering my lonely way across these years. But no – to an Italian I am a perfected abstraction, England – coal exchange' [...] 'One should *never* let these fellows get into conversation nowadays. They are no longer human beings. They hate one's

⁸⁹ Stewart, 14. 'Half-civilized' recalls the idea of hybridity, so deplored in *Twilight in Italy* (see Chapter 3 above).

⁹⁰ *Sea and Sardinia*, 95. The authority of Baedeker is undermined by its failure to keep up with rapid change; this Victorian stalwart seems by implication irrelevant to the world of 1921.

⁹¹ *Sea and Sardinia*, 95-96. Not all the fellow-guests are subjected to such tirades, even when dirty; one man is described as 'a handsome, unwashed man with a black moustache [...] dark eyes and Mediterranean sheepishness' (106) – a portrait featuring a curious combination of individual traits and generalizing rhetoric.

Englishness, and leave out the individual'.⁹² Kinkead-Weekes accounts for this petulance by arguing that it is 'one thing to understand, and quite another to be continually held to account as a representative of his country – which he had already rejected – rather than the individual he felt himself to be'.⁹³ Yet the more Lawrence asserts his own right to be recognized for what he is regardless of his nationality, the more ironic the portraits of his 'metonymic' Italians appear.

Eulogistic only about peasants in costume viewed from afar, Lawrence's narrator bemoans each encounter with the abject, insubordinate or fawning individual, whose principal misdemeanour seems to be the failure to conform to codes of cleanliness, dress and behaviour derived from English norms. It is these aspects which the text draws attention to so frequently, and they seem to demarcate the boundary between Lawrence's narrator's sense of himself and his perception of otherness. By asserting antipathy for lower middle class figures and for those who see him purely as an Englishman he forges for himself an identity which attempts to erase class and nationality.

The conflict between Lawrence's desire to find and document a place untainted by civilization, and the constant reminder of it by the very people he has hoped would epitomize unselfconscious living, is played out through this plaintive narration. He wishes to be unobserved, but at the same time wishes to observe; he is thwarted in his wish to be invisible, that is to say, unaccountable. The refusal of the Italians here to corroborate his desired idea of civilization – their 'primitiveness' generally affords discomfort, the actual encounters result in a magnification of Lawrence's consciousness of his difference – constitutes a kind of resistance to the enterprise of the British travel-writer; its naivety is exposed. Sardinia is no Rananim and Lawrence despairs of Europe altogether.

'Sun' (1926, 1928)

'Sun', which Lawrence wrote in 1925 upon his return to Italy, is an appropriate story on which to end the analysis of Lawrence's writing on Italy, because it constitutes his acknowledgement that his Italy has been a fantasy.⁹⁴ Juliet, an American woman in southern Italy with her young son, on doctor's advice, sunbathes naked; gradually she unfolds and relaxes, 'given to a cosmic influence. By some mysterious will inside her,

⁹² *Sea and Sardinia*, 49, 51. In the post-war years, England was Italy's source of coal and its currency fared well against the lira. Douglas also complains of being held to account for the coal situation in *Alone*, published in the same year (100).

⁹³ Kinkead-Weekes, 626.

⁹⁴ Although the story was written while Lawrence was in Spotorno, its setting is based upon the Fontana Vecchia. The original, unexpurgated ending of "Sun" [was] published in Paris by Harry Crosby's Black Sun Press in 1928 and paid for magnificently with the Queen of Naples' snuffbox and three pieces of gold' (Meyers, 155); it is the 1928 text which is referred to here (see note 95 below).

deeper than her known consciousness and her known will, she was put into connection with the sun, and the stream of the sun flowed through her, round her womb'.⁹⁵ The story, seen by Vassallo as a version of the Persephone myth,⁹⁶ a feminine myth of fertility, regeneration and nature, recapitulates the trope of the unselfconscious peasant, 'broad and very powerfully set [...with] big blue eyes, dark and southern hot' (434), whose physicality and healthiness renders him animal-like, sunlike, and sexual compared to her 'cold shadow' (437) of a husband. The peasant is unnamed, a southern other, a 'hot inarticulate animal, [...] hot through with countless suns, and mindless as noon'.⁹⁷ However, she realizes on the unexpected arrival of her husband, with 'his grey city face, his glued, grey-black hair, his very precise table manners, and his extreme moderation in eating and drinking' (440) that she will not experience sexual passion with the peasant; it is her husband's child she will bear. Thus, although reiterating the procreative, sexually liberating myth of southernness, the story precludes the possibility of the northern figure crossing over from the artificial constraints of civilized society into sensual abandon. As Ross argues, 'sexual love, above all, could no longer serve as an avenue to personal renewal'.⁹⁸ In the frame of Lawrence's earlier enthusiasms over Italy, and foreshadowed by Alvina's misery in *The Lost Girl*, the bleak ending of the story shows how Lawrence has laid to rest the optimistic vision with which he had invested Italy.

⁹⁵ 'Sun' in Finney (ed.), *D.H. Lawrence: Selected Short Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), 431.

⁹⁶ See note 73 above.

⁹⁷ 'Sun', 441. Huxley parodies the allure of the Lawrentian peasant figure in 'The Rest Cure' (discussed in Chapter 2 above); he does so too in 'After the Fireworks'. Fanning's friend Dodo recounts to him a conversation about an affair her friend had had with a farmworker. Dodo is ventriloquizing her friend, her sarcasm emphasised by the use of italics: 'How *wonderful* it was to get away from the self-conscious, complicated, sentimental love! How profoundly *satisfying* to feel oneself at the mercy of the dumb, dark forces of physical passion! How *intoxicating* to humiliate one's culture and one's class feeling before some *magnificent* primitive, some *earthily* beautiful satyr, some *divine* animal!' (133).

⁹⁸ Ross, *Storied Cities*, 99. See last section of Chapter 2 above.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the ways that Italy and Italians are represented in the prose of British writers who travelled to and lived in Italy in the early decades of the twentieth century. It has sought to discern thematic tendencies and discursive patterns as well as to identify the distinctiveness of each writer's view of Italy.

The regional structuring principle was found to be appropriate in writing about literary representations of Italy because English identity was in part being constructed on a regional basis in the large, influential corpus of texts that were not participating in the modernist enterprise of the era. Ideologies of Englishness were evolving in response to widespread anxieties about the durability of the Empire, consumerism, urbanization; many writers addressed the sense of transformation and decline by locating Englishness in its rural life and in the past. Italy's appeal lay partly in the perception that such ideals were alive there still, and that one might find a space in which to live unconstrained by the proscriptions and ills of English society. This inevitably bears upon writing on foreign places, and textual analyses taking into account particular conformations of social and historical relations between the two nations showed that it is integral to an understanding of representations of Italianness. Thus, discursive features of travel writing identified as imperial or colonial in their assumptions were found in both fictional and non-fictional depictions of Italy and its people; anxieties about the perceived rise in numbers of the British lower classes and their increasing claim to cultural spaces traditionally the preserve of educated or moneyed elites were discerned; and the process of self-definition was seen to reside in every evocation of an imagined 'South' – paradigmatically Italy – whether in terms of individual writers' identities, or of a broader contemplation of civilization.

Chapter 1 demonstrated, through the microcosm of Capri, how Italy had become, by the early twentieth century, a place where the British went not just for the traditional motives of education, sightseeing and curative treatments, but to escape Britain's puritanical mores, urban and industrial growth, and grey skies. Writers invested Italy with high hopes of cheap, often hedonistic living, a contrast to complex metropolitan existence, and used the landscapes, people and lifestyle as material for developing their writerly reputations. *South Wind* offers to wartime readers and beyond a vision of Italy's colourful, relaxed and pagan atmosphere affecting orthodox British moral and philosophical values. In it, Italian characters are decidedly picturesque, in their comic speech, beauty, or sexual allure, but in their capacity as local colour are also denied the psychological depth or sense of history ascribed to Anglo-Saxon characters. Even the

aristocratic Caloveglia, who epitomizes pagan serenity, and who participates eloquently in debate with the British, is reductively ascribed the role of lovable fraud, affirming thereby a literary stereotype. Douglas's elevation of a hedonistic system of values in a setting redolent of classical antiquity and populated by natives made quaint (and occasionally distasteful) through their unconscious simplicity provided the British reading public with an antithesis to both the oppressive wartime atmosphere and the increasingly visible effects of modernity on British society.

Mackenzie challenges the decadence of the Capri community evoked fictionally in *Vestal Fire*, and the post-war excesses as figured in its lesbian coterie in *Extraordinary Women*. His use of mandarin prose works against the grain of ascendant contemporary modernist experimentalism, writing to an educated, unhurried readership, retaining an omniscient narrator and the unities of place, time and action. It both undercuts and partakes in the discursive practices conventionally employed in representing Italy, such as classical allusion, mellifluous Romanticism or authoritative guide book prose, reflecting the degree to which late 1920s texts had assimilated and tired of such practices. The exchange of money and rife villa-building is far more salient here than in Douglas's novel, reflecting the rise of materialistic relations between Italy and British visitors in the intervening years. Where *South Wind's* narrator is confidential and indulgent, Mackenzie's is sceptical, sensible, detached. *Vestal Fire* taps into an ideology of Englishness predicated on staid, provincial conformity which its readers are invited to laugh at. The text's nostalgic outlook constantly reasserts regret for the passing of the society it depicts. Both novels manifest the highly cosmopolitan and international flavour of Capri society, but the later one vilifies its excesses, in particular those of the female protagonists, suggesting not only a generalized male anxiety around the encroachment of women into traditionally masculine behaviours (property ownership, drinking, promiscuity), but also the failure of Italy to satisfy its visitors' hopes: the exposure of Rosalba's superficiality that leads to her social downfall and, in the final pages, Rory's reassertion to herself of her Englishness, provide a bleak conclusion of what Douglas had constructed as the beneficial influence of Italy on the British.

Chapter 2 examined the relationship of the British to the conventionally idealized space of Tuscany, tracing its role in literary works to critique or assert the notion of Englishness. From the exultant hyperboles of Hewlett (to some extent perpetuated by Hutton), to the more self-aware satire of Forster, to the jaded and parodic tones of Huxley, writing on or set in Tuscany exhibits attitudes towards and concerns about the state of contemporary England. In Hewlett's *The Road in Tuscany*, the narrating persona

projects and celebrates an idea of Tuscans as medieval, unaffected through time by social or industrial change. Happy in their poverty, transparent in their desires, and moulded by their environments, their ahistorical construction participates in the discourses of eugenics, feudalism and aesthetic appreciation that promulgate the ideology of English imperialism, since those discourses affirm racial determinism and stable power relations, and elevate the narrating voice to a position of omniscience, affirming its cultural supremacy. The narrator, in positioning himself as the 'intelligent traveller', erudite and fanciful, is shown to be highly selective in his account of the details of the journeys, through the comparison with his illustrator's account of them. Hewlett's text belongs to a conservative, Victorian tradition of writing about place, with its whimsical embellishments, artful concealment of the more taxing aspects of the journeys, and earnest tone.

Hutton perseveres in this tradition, though by 1910 when *Siena and Southern Tuscany* was published, signs of tourism, migration and poverty are more salient. The book combines art historical scholarship and images with an ongoing lament for the perceived loss of spirituality and reverence in both the tourist and the Christian; as such it privileges evaluative ('splendid and yet ethereal') over topographical descriptions of such towns as Siena, characterizing them with heroic epithets or religious qualities.

Forster also looks to Italy for a revitalizing of values, but in his fiction it is the stifling social mores of English upper-middle-class society that are targeted. Medieval chivalric codes, requiring the delicacy of young women to be protected, and embodied in such characters as Philip Herriton and Cecil Vyse, are exposed as false, through the exposure of ingenuous youth to violence and passion in Italy. Forster's engagement with the kind of textual evocation of Tuscany found in Hewlett and in contemporary guide books finds its first extended expression in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, which was seen nevertheless to borrow heavily from clichéd ideas about Italians and Tuscan landscape in its attempt to deflate Romantic idealism. The novella introduces the possibility of Italy's failure to live up to the expectations placed on it by the British, a feature of texts which becomes ever more conspicuous as the century progresses. The chapter demonstrated how Forster's *A Room With a View* not only exposes the snobberies and philistinism of the Summer Street and Sawston set as conventional criticism has it, but resonates throughout with the petty social distinctions made among different English sets in Italy itself. Tuscany functions by this argument as a place which is both 'abroad' and akin to home: where the foreign setting foregrounds the social insecurities of the Edwardian upper classes but also where the English are well-established and encountering each other rather than Italians.

Its landscapes, too, bear an explicit resemblance to the southern English countryside of the protagonists' home.

As a corpus, Huxley's writing on Italy extends the ironic treatment of the upper-class British in Italy, evolving a phlegmatic, anti-Romantic attitude in both the fiction and non-fiction. Although his *Tuscany* is alive with the voices of literary predecessors – Shelley in 'Centenaries', Browning in *Along the Road*, for instance – he deflates rather than succumbs to their fervent adulation of the sublime. Members of the Tuscan house-party who affect a deep affinity with the supposed passion or simplicity of the southern people are parodied mercilessly in *Those Barren Leaves*, while the hedonistic self-indulgence produces no heroes, only a spiritual crisis in the most sympathetic of the characters. Historical Tuscan landmarks no longer generate awe; they are seen from the perspective of the motorist, whose speed and route precludes the leisurely, close observation characteristic of forebears travelling on foot or by carriage.

A notable feature of Huxley's writing on Italy was found to be the incorporation of the experience of driving itself; still a relative novelty in Italy in the 1920s, the sensations and logistics are frequently foregrounded in accounts of journeys, restoring an emphasis on the means of travel which had declined when train travel had become too commonplace to generate curiosity.¹ Thus, Victorian Baedeker is rejected in favour of a 'Road Book of Tuscany'; an Italian role new in literature is that of the petrol-station attendant; and so on. The result is a distinctly modern mode of viewing Italy, and accordingly the texts no longer dwell with marvel on the novelty of its sights, but rather engage satirically with established literary representations of that novelty. While Huxley is on the whole disinclined to challenge the established stereotypical attributes assigned to Italians, he artfully recycles the stereotype of the Latin lover in 'The Rest Cure' in order to puncture the regenerative myth ingrained in the term 'Renaissance', so closely associated in the English imagination with Florence.

Chapter 3 focused on the way texts construct Italy as a European south: crossing southwards into Italy's border country was in the literary imaginary traditionally symbolic of passing into freedom, the past and paradise. Belloc's narrative was shown to be highly dependent on received ideas (already discerned in Hewlett for example) about Italy's historical and religious stasis; he invests in Italy his hope of encountering a stable and devout society which would serve as a model for his particular vision of pan-European

¹ Of course, some writers in the period covered here draw attention to the experience of travelling itself, notably Belloc, Lawrence and Potter; but for Belloc the fact of travelling on foot was a self-imposed constraint integral to the project of *The Path to Rome*, Lawrence focuses more on fellow-passengers than on train or coach travel itself, and Potter only refers to a train journey towards Rome, and that principally as a means of dramatizing the approach to her destination.

Catholicism. Passage across the Alps into the south was shown to be the most significant section of the book, in its disproportionate length, its attention to the heroic aspects of the venture and the poetic, densely allusive (rather than topographical) passages depicting the arrival on Italian soil. The prominence thereby accorded to the south in the text signals its potency in the English imagination, as a symbol of a superior way of being, lost to northerners.

It was seen how Lawrence also finds the passage into Italy the occasion for contemplating the ills of the north, which in a complex and innovative argument are borne by the figure of Hamlet. His initial rhapsodic encounter with northern Italy celebrates the childlike lack of self-consciousness of the peasants and the simple activities and customs of their rural life; the revised and new essays of *Twilight in Italy* manifest a more critical and caustic attitude. The intervening outbreak of war accounts to some extent for this – it was argued that the differences between the way Belloc's and Lawrence's narrating personae construct themselves illustrates the shift in consciousness that took place around the war: Belloc's bold and purposive narrator is a far cry from Lawrence's rootless, unstable one. In Lawrence's later texts, the machine becomes far more menacing, new roads and displaced Italian communities come into focus, and the peasants are distinguished racially. Contact with the perceived northern malady of aspiration to material gain or higher social status, through experience of city life or American emigration, is rendered as tainting the essential peasant nature, attracting particular virulence in Lawrence's narrator. Once again, issues of prime concern in Britain, including the demise of rural populations, the increasing visibility of urban lower classes, and the threat to national borders posed by the war, underpin writing on Italy.

The crisis of the war radically called into question the concept of civilization itself, but civilization was found in Chapter 4 to be already a central theme of writing throughout the period in question, especially writing on the southern half of the peninsula. Italy as the home of ancient Greek settlements, the Roman empire, and centuries of canonical literature and art, guaranteed its centrality to the concept of western civilization well before the turn of the century. As Chapter 3 showed, the idea of 'the south' engenders a host of associations, from classical antiquity (pagan gods, sensuality, ingrained civility, harmonious relations with nature and the body) and from Romantic literature (the picturesque, the Wordsworthian lone wanderer, liberation, immersion of the self in the sublime or the exotic). Chapter 4 took this forward, focusing now on texts depicting Italy's own south, and how they formulate, challenge or manifest ideologies pertaining to the civilized. The range and quantity of texts examined made this the longest

chapter, but it reacquaints the reader with many of the writers, themes, rhetorical strategies and ideological ground visited in earlier chapters, under this one encompassing theme.

It was shown how writers engaged ambivalently with the idea of civilization as 'progress', through for example the evocation of rampant tenement building, trams and poverty in cities, and variously contested ideas about what constitutes the civilized and the barbaric. Rome's associations with time and empire were seen to dominate a variety of texts' rhetoric, while writing on Naples turns to its slum life. The southern Italian countryside, largely unknown to the British reader or traveller, provided opportunities to write about 'civilization' as distinct from its conventional meaning of a modern, northern or urban phenomenon; in Douglas multiple former civilizations raise their heads wherever he looks, while Lawrence's longed-for pre-civilization fails to materialize.

The scepticism about Italy's charms and promises so prominent in 1920s texts (by Lawrence, but also by Mackenzie and Huxley) attests to the decline after the war of literary representations of Italy that endorse the orthodoxy that it offers an alternative, superior form of civilization, capable of revitalizing visitors from the dissipated north. Rather, in the texts' intense revisiting and reformulation of classical and Romantic myth from which such perceptions derive, representations of Italy participate in a discourse of entropy which will characterize much British writing in the ensuing decades.

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