

‘What’s the Roman Republic to me, or I to the Roman Republic?’: Victorian Classicism and the Italian Risorgimento

1848 was a year of crisis across Europe, with republican uprisings against unpopular monarchies, such as the end of the July Monarchy and declaration of the second French Republic; nationalist struggles against foreign dominance and attempts to create unified nation states in Germany and Italy; radical demands for democratic rights and political and social reform including the third and final presentation of the People’s Charter to Parliament in Britain.¹ Such rapid and dramatic changes in Europe highlighted the relative scarcity of heroic action or nationalist fervour for British authors to immortalise in verse. Poets educated in the classical tradition – such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Arthur Hugh Clough, Matthew Arnold and Algernon Charles Swinburne – looked for ways to create poetry which might equal classical precursors such as Homer, Virgil and the Greek tragedians, but it was hard to conceptualise a conventional epic or tragic hero in contemporary Britain. The 1848 revolutions presented an opportunity for classicising dramatic events in the present, especially when the ancient grandeur of Rome formed the backdrop to violent uprisings. The struggle for the unification of Italy seemed to be a crisis in which modern heroes might be found: the rise and fall of a new Roman Republic only intensified a sense that the epic theme that was hard to conceptualise in contemporary England might be found in European nation-building. The dominance of Latin literature and Roman history in the education of the British elite provided an automatic recourse, a fund of images of heroic virtue and martial glory, available to shape the understanding of the Italian crisis. Poems and articles in periodicals such as *Punch* demonstrate the ease with which the celebrated men of ancient Rome could be used to lend dignity to their modern counterparts. Yet when British writers, living in Rome but observing events at a distance, sought to apply heroic models even as they saw the

revolutions fail, they introduced doubts and qualifications into their classical reflections. It was only long after the unification of Italy had been achieved that the narrative of the Risorgimento could be confidently reframed and classicised as an epic period in history with a great hero.

The Risorgimento and the unification of Italy

Metternich had famously claimed in 1814 that Italy was ‘a geographical expression’, not a nation. Under his leadership the Congress of Vienna freed Italy from French domination and restored the smaller states of the pre-Napoleonic era. From that time until 1871, when Rome finally became the capital of the united Italy, revolutionary societies such as the Carbonari sought to rid Italy of foreign monarchs, to establish a liberal constitution and to unite Italy as a nation. The notion of a Risorgimento (resurgence) depends on the idea that Italy had existed as a nation in the past, and that the current division into small states must be eradicated in order to re-establish a unified Italy. Risorgimento thinkers such as Mazzini, the founder of Young Italy, looked back to ancient Rome for an Italy which was not only unified but proud of an Italian identity, and which modern Italians could venerate for its influence on Western culture.

Giuseppe Mazzini, a prominent republican nationalist, became the leader of the government of the Roman Republic in 1848-9. The importance of ancient Rome for nineteenth-century Italians was reinforced by the ‘continued familiarity of classical models for a public whose education was still bound up with the learning of Latin’ (Lyttelton 2012: 45). One of Mazzini’s fellow students claimed that the approach to Greek and Roman studies in Italian schools was ‘little else than a constant libel upon monarchy, and a panegyric upon the democratic form of government’. The focus on republican heroes such as Cato and Brutus

influenced Mazzini's republicanism, undermining the 'despotic rulers' who promoted classical training in Italian schools in the belief that it would 'keep their youth innocent of any itch of innovation' (King 1902: 2). After Mazzini was arrested for revolutionary activities in 1830, the prison governor allowed him to read 'the Bible, Byron and Tacitus, innocently thinking that they contained no revolutionary material' (King 1902: 20). Amongst classical authors Mazzini's strongest influences were Tacitus and Aeschylus, 'for whom his veneration was unbounded' (King 1902: 10). The Roman historian Tacitus wrote *Annals* and *Histories* which cover the period from the death of Augustus to the death of Domitian, in which he critiques tyrannical emperors. Mazzini was concerned with the dangers of tyranny and in the *Westminster Review*, he acclaimed 'the great type of Prometheus' as a symbol of the European struggle for democracy and individual liberty against inherited privilege (Mazzini 1852: 446-7). Mazzini drew on his reading of Roman history to inform his adoption of the model of the triumvirate as the government of the new Roman Republic after the Pope fled from Rome in 1849: 'Mazzini and two of his associates proclaimed themselves triumvirs (on the model of Mark Antony, Octavian and Lepidus in 43 BC) of a restored though short-lived Roman Republic' (Vance 1997: 27).

Another notable hero of the Roman Republic is Giuseppe Garibaldi, who was appointed as a general by the provisional government of Milan in 1848 and by the Roman Republic in 1849. Writing in the early years of the twentieth century, the historian G. M. Trevelyan takes advantage of Garibaldi's military prowess and his long journey home from the South American rebellions where he learned his guerrilla tactics to present him as an Odysseus, the clever, pious, courageous, much-suffering hero of a narrative of war and siege, bravery and craftiness, love and homecoming. Trevelyan represents the uneasy relationship between Mazzini, the spiritual leader of the movement for Italian unity, and the warrior Garibaldi as

fraternal competitiveness. He presents them as Romulus and Remus, or as Castor and Pollux, ‘the rival *Dioscuri* of a Roman Republic’ (Trevelyan 1907: 52).

While nationalists debated whether the Italian state should be a constitutional monarchy, a republic or a confederation of smaller states, the existence of a Roman Republic in 1849 assumed great symbolic importance because it could be represented as a new incarnation of the ancient Roman Republic. However, as the monarch displaced by the revolution in Rome was the Pope, his restoration was tied up with the loyalties of Catholics as well as monarchists. The Pope relied on the French army to quash the short-lived republican government, and in other Italian states the intervention of foreign powers was similarly crucial to the failure of the revolutions. In the classicising discourse of the period, barbarian Gauls had overthrown the Roman Republic.

Classicising the Risorgimento

Given the prominence of Latin and Greek in Victorian education and political discourse, it is not surprising that classical analogies are pervasive in Victorian representations of the Risorgimento. After years of education based on the study of Latin and Greek texts, history and philosophy, the men who entered Parliament, the Church of England and the Civil Service, as well as prominent authors and journalists, saw the problems of the present day refracted through the eras that they knew best. Notable controversies of the day therefore became bound up with ancient literature and history. For classically-educated Englishmen, an interest in Italian politics depended partly on a sense of their own similarity with ancient Romans, and an assumption of their superiority to modern Italians. A sense of fellowship between England and Italy was fostered by the dominance of Latin literature and Roman history in formal education, while Greek was reserved for a more select group.

Following the fall of the Roman Republic in 1849, an appeal for ‘The Italian Refugee Fund’ in *Punch* invokes statesmen, generals and orators from the ancient Roman Republic to emphasise the heroism of Italian political exiles in England. The Italian refugees, the appeal suggests, had proved themselves worthy of comparison to their illustrious Roman ancestors by resisting the French invaders (‘barbarous Gauls’) who sought to re-establish the Papal monarchy:

Messrs. J. and M. BRUTUS, Mr. C. CASSIUS, Mr. M. CATO, and ancestors, Mr. M. CURTIUS, Messrs. DECII, Messrs T. and C. GRACCHUS, Mr. M.A. REGULUS, Mr. P.C. SCIPIO, and other gentlemen, forming a numerous and highly respectable deputation of ancient Romans, headed by their spokesman, Mr. M.T. CICERO, proceeded from their mansions in the Elysian Fields to wait upon *Mr. Punch*, in his chamber, at 12 o’clock. The distinguished visitors were received by *Mr. Punch* in his nightcap. The object of the illustrious deputation was stated by Mr. M.T. CICERO, who would not pretend to magnify the heroism displayed in the late glorious though unsuccessful defence of Rome, by those whom he himself, and the gentlemen behind him, acknowledged as their worthy descendants. But those heroes, for the most part, were now exiles in this country, the only land almost wherein there remained a temple to Freedom. They were rich in nothing but honour. Having earned an historical immortality, they were in danger of perishing literally of want. If the finances of BRITANNIA had not permitted her to lend them assistance against the barbarous Gauls, could not Englishmen at least afford the wherewithal to save them from starvation? (*Punch* 16, 1849: 120)

While the historical connotations of the names mentioned here might not be equally recognisable to all readers, figures such Cicero, the Gracchi, Brutus and Cassius, Marcus Curtius and Regulus were familiar enough to be invoked in a similar context in *Punch* in a song acclaiming Mazzini despite the defeat of the Roman Republic:

Though brutish force the game has won,
Triumvir, thou hast nobly done;
Calm courage in a rightful cause
Gains thee a loftier world's applause;
And Rome's old heroes from their spheres
Shout, chiming in with British cheers,

BRAVO, MAZZINI!

He who, as now, in time of yore,
Tyrannic rule when to restore
In Rome a fierce invader sought,
Accounted pain and death as nought,
He, MUTIUS SCAEVOLA, exclaims,

BRAVO, MAZZINI!

He who the fearful gulf defied,
Which, in the Forum, yawning wide,
Gaped for a victim to appease
The ire of wrathful deities,
A self-devoted sacrifice;

Behold, the dauntless CURTIUS cries,

BRAVO, MAZZINI! (*Punch* 17, 1849: 35)

Although his Roman Republic fell to the French army, Mazzini is immortalised in song like an epic hero and acclaimed by the self-sacrificing heroes of the ancient republic as well as by ‘British cheers’.

An ‘epic moment in human affairs’

That events in Italy in 1848-9 invited a classicising treatment is a view strongly endorsed by the first prominent British historian of the Risorgimento. In the introduction to his anthology, *English Songs of Italian Freedom*, G. M. Trevelyan declares the Risorgimento ‘an epic moment in human affairs’ (1911: xxii).² Writing more than sixty years after the Italian revolutions and half a century after the unification of Italy as a kingdom, he reinterprets the events in terms of English poetry and classical heroism. He argues that the beginning of the revolutions (observed by Barrett Browning in Florence and recorded in her letters, and later in the poem *Casa Guidi Windows*, 1851) and the fall of Mazzini’s Roman Republic (described in Clough’s *Amours de Voyage*, 1858) are aesthetically superior to the pragmatic diplomacy by which Cavour finally achieved the unification of Italy (excepting Rome) in 1861: ‘The spring of 1848 was the ideal moment of the Italian *risorgimento*, a more perfect theme for poets than even those grand events which finally secured her freedom a dozen years later’ (1911: xxi).

Trevelyan observes that the texts in his anthology were written by ‘men who had been nurtured on ancient and modern poetry’ (1911: ix) suggesting that the poetry of the Risorgimento emanates from a cultural background not unlike Trevelyan’s own public-school

and Oxbridge education. Formal schooling in the classics was linked with social class because Latin and Greek had few practical applications and could not easily be acquired without a substantial investment of time and money. While Byron, Shelley, Swinburne, Landor, Clough and even Robert Browning (who could not study at Oxford or Cambridge because he did not belong to the Church of England) each to some extent received a classical education at school or university or both, other authors in Trevelyan's anthology – Samuel Rogers and George Meredith – did not. Trevelyan's easy allusion to classically-educated men also obscures the presence of two women poets in his volume. The omission is particularly notable in the case of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, celebrated in her own time as a prodigy of classical erudition and a serious contender for the position of Poet Laureate on the death of Wordsworth in 1850.

The Anglo-Italian Risorgimento

The Victorian literary response to the Risorgimento reflects the existence of a widespread English interest in Italian culture and the struggle for nationhood. Italian gratitude for political tolerance and friendship had created a sympathetic relationship exemplified by Robert Browning's poem, 'The Italian in England' (1845), which Mazzini translated into Italian to demonstrate to his compatriots the depth of understanding that could be found in England (Rudman 1940: 71). The members of W.S. Landor's Society of the Friends of Italy came from a wide variety of social backgrounds (Pemble 1987: 10). The most active centre of Italian nationalism outside Italy was London, as political exiles sought refuge in England after the Congress of Vienna restored reactionary governments in some Italian states and Austria replaced France as the dominant power. The relatively high status in London society of many Italian exiles such as Mazzini (the intellectual leader of the revolutionary movement

Young Italy), Gabriele Rossetti, Ugo Foscolo and Antonio Panizzi, drew attention to the injustice of their situation as political refugees, and therefore to the oppression of Italy (Brand 1957: 26-35).

Revolutionary activity in Florence and Rome dominates English accounts of the Risorgimento because these cities were the main centres of Anglo-Italian society. Writers such as Clough and Barrett Browning were aware that there was little accurate information available to their correspondents in England, and as eye-witnesses to the conflict they wrote records of the events which later fed into their poetry. The two longest texts in Trevelyan's anthology are excerpted from Barrett Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows* and Clough's *Amours de Voyage*. *Casa Guidi Windows* reflects Barrett Browning's experience as a woman watching the political activity in the streets of Florence in 1847-8 from the safety of her home: she is emotionally involved with events but physically detached from them. She relied on the newspaper reports brought home by her husband for political information. Written at a remove from the revolutionary activity in the streets below, Barrett Browning's poem is 'a window on history, presenting its report through a complex set of genres [and] poetic assumptions' (Dillon and Frank 1997: 472). Barrett Browning did not attempt to have *Casa Guidi Windows* published in Italy, so it is 'not in practice addressed to Italians, but offered to the English as an example of cosmopolitan solidarity' (Reynolds 2001: 99). Trevelyan also includes some of Barrett Browning's later poems, which show not only that she continued to engage with political developments in Italy in her poetry after *Casa Guidi Windows* but that her perspective was sufficiently valued by British readers to merit publication in some of the leading periodicals of the day. 'The Forced Recruit', published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, and 'First News from Villafranca', which appeared in *The Athenaeum*, relate to the 1859 Battle of Solferino and subsequent peace negotiations between Napoleon III and the Austrian Emperor. Barrett Browning's Risorgimento poetry eventually found favour with Italian readers: a

plaque placed above the doorway of the Palazzo Guidi in Florence, where the Brownings rented an apartment between 1847 and 1861, states that Barrett Browning's verse made a golden ring between Italy and England. Giuliana Artom Treves comments that the author of *Casa Guidi Windows* 'deserves the perennial gratitude of Italians for the way she frankly assumes the rôle of poet of the Italian Risorgimento' (1956: 76).

In *Casa Guidi Windows*, Barrett Browning foreshadows the creation of a type of heroic poetry that will be greater than Homer's because it is not based on the glorification of physical deeds:

The poet shall look grander in the face
Than even of old, (when he of Greece began
To sing 'that Achillean wrath which slew
So many heroes,') (2010: 2. 512-3)

Barrett Browning's engagement with the epic tradition throughout her poetic career shows her fascination with the idea that glory must be redefined in terms other than the warrior code of heroic epic, her awareness that poets bear a responsibility for representing glory in martial language, and her sense that women must intervene to avert the bloodshed. In the Risorgimento context, however, such aspirations are thwarted when she witnesses the defeat of the revolutions in Florence and she turns to Greek tragedy for the classical allusions in Part II of the poem.

Brutus and the Roman Republic

The use of classical exempla in Risorgimento discourse was mediated by their use in earlier crises. Mazzini noted that the French Revolution had changed the interpretation of political concepts previously associated with ancient Greece and Rome: ‘Some seventy years ago, we used to judge all republican ideas by our historical recollections of Sparta and Athens; now we judge all that is called liberty, equality, association, by the meaning given, or thought to be given, to these words in France’ (1852: 449-50). Images of ancient Rome had been used as part of the propaganda of the French Revolution (Vance 1997: 24-38; Sachs 2010). Robespierre and others, drawing on the histories of Livy and Tacitus, compared themselves to the idealised republican figures of Brutus and the Gracchi.

The role of Brutus in the assassination of Julius Caesar was cited in the Risorgimento context in relation to the assassination of the Pope’s chief minister. Pope Pius IX (elected in July 1846) initially appeared liberal and open to democratic reforms. He granted an amnesty to political exiles and prisoners, allowing revolutionaries to return to Rome as long as they took an oath of loyalty to the Pope (Header 1983: 109). He was favoured by many British observers as a possible leader of an Italian federation. However, as revolutions took place in several Italian states in 1848, Pius IX refused to join the nationalist resistance to Austrian rule, led by Piedmont. He appointed a new chief minister, Count Pellegrino Rossi, who was assassinated on the steps of the Senate in November 1848 by revolutionaries who hoped to force the Pope into setting up a democratic system in the Papal States. The Pope was imprisoned in the Palazzo del Quirinale and later fled from Rome disguised as a priest, remaining in exile until 1850. The Roman Republic was declared in February 1849 and the Pope declared that all the revolutionaries had been excommunicated.

Pellegrino Rossi’s killer escaped, and the knife was displayed to the crowd as ‘the dagger of Brutus’, recalling the assassination of Julius Caesar. In his memoirs, Garibaldi echoes this association, which seems to have become a commonplace: ‘The ancient

Metropolis of the world, worthy once more of her former glory, freed herself on that day from the most formidable satellite of tyranny, and bathed the marble steps of the Capitol with his blood. A young Roman had recovered the steel of Marcus Brutus' (quoted in Trevelyan 1907: 83). Trevelyan suggests that Garibaldi and his Italian peers had been educated to admire 'classical examples of tyrannicide' as emblems of republican virtue. For an American observer such as Margaret Fuller, a journalist, editor and feminist thinker who reported on the events of the Risorgimento in Rome, the idea of a justifiable tyrannicide outweighed the horror of murder. While Barrett Browning was a sympathetic but detached observer of the revolution in Florence, Fuller was involved with the revolutionaries in Rome. She married an Italian nationalist and volunteered at a hospital during the siege. She believed that Italy should be a republic: she met Mazzini and passionately championed his declaration of the Roman Republic (Deiss 1969: 20-25). Fuller positioned herself as an American whose interest in the cause of human freedom was based on a desire that other nations share the liberty enjoyed by America.

Fuller, who had arrived in Europe in 1847 to write a series of travel letters for the *New York Tribune*, witnessed the tumult following the assassination of Rossi, the Pope's chief minister. Accustomed to reading the political and moral aspects of revolution and republicanism through Roman history, Fuller noted the similarity between the stabbing of Rossi and the assassination of Julius Caesar. Her father had taught her Latin and encouraged her to identify with the masculine Roman values and republican ideology of liberty and civic virtue that pervaded nineteenth-century American culture. In 1834, at the request of her father, Fuller had written a defence of Brutus' role in the assassination of Julius Caesar, with evidence drawn from Plutarch and Velleius Paterculus (Capper 1992: 144-5). In a letter to her mother, Fuller wrote of Rossi's assassination as an act 'of terrible justice' in which the Roman crowds acted as silent conspirators against tyranny:

Yesterday, the Chamber of Deputies, illegally prorogued, was opened anew. Rossi, after two or three most unpopular measures, had the imprudence to call the troops of the line to defend him, instead of the National Guard. [...] Yesterday, as he descended from his carriage, to enter the Chamber, the crowd howled and hissed; then pushed him, and, as he turned his head in consequence, a sure hand stabbed him in the back. He said no word, but died almost instantly in the arms of a cardinal. The act was undoubtedly the result of the combination of many, from the dexterity with which it was accomplished, and the silence which ensued. Those who had not abetted beforehand seemed entirely to approve when done. [...] For me, I never thought to have heard of a violent death with satisfaction, but this act affected me as one of terrible justice (Fuller 1852, 2: 247)

Fuller's response to the assassination contrasts markedly with that of her British friend Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who alludes to Rossi's assassination in the second part of *Casa Guidi Windows*. She describes it as a troubling reminder that Rome's greatness was founded on the murder of Remus by his brother Romulus, after Remus jumped contemptuously over the walls of his brother's new city, Rome. In Part I, Barrett Browning had called Brutus 'Rome's sublimest homicide', but her admiration does not extend to Rossi's killer, whose violent act makes him a poor imitation of Brutus:

Rossi died silent near where Caesar died.

He did not say, 'My Brutus, is it thou?'

But Italy unquestioned testified,

'I killed him! I am Brutus. – I avow.'

At which the whole world's laugh of scorn replied,

'A poor maimed copy of Brutus!'

Too much like,

Indeed, to be so unlike. Too unskilled

At Philippi and the honest battle-pike,

To be so skilful where a man is killed

Near Pompey's statue, and the daggers strike

At unawares i'th' throat. (2. 545-56)

The scornful attitude towards the assassin which is here attributed to 'the world' contrasts with the more enthusiastic acceptance of the analogy with Brutus in Garibaldi's and Fuller's responses. Arthur Hugh Clough's poem *Amours de Voyage* represents a similarly disconcerting mismatch between familiar examples of classical virtue defined in terms of war and the reality of violence in the modern world.

Horace and *Amours de Voyage*

Arthur Hugh Clough's *Amours de Voyage*, published in 1858 in *The Atlantic Monthly*, combines a satirical approach to tourism with an eyewitness account of the siege of Rome. Matthew Arnold nicknamed his friend 'Citizen Clough' because of his republican sympathies, and Clough travelled to Paris for five weeks in the summer of 1848 to see the effects of the February revolution. He lamented the decline of the republic and the atmosphere in which an increasingly emboldened bourgeoisie abandoned any pretence of republicanism: 'Liberty – Equality and Fraternity, driven back by shopkeeping bayonets, hides her red cap in dingiest St. Antoine' (Clough 1869: 1. 123-4). In December 1848, Louis

Napoleon Bonaparte was elected President of the Second French Republic. In February 1849, Clough wrote to Tom Arnold (who had emigrated to New Zealand in 1847 in the hope of finding a more egalitarian society than England and establishing a Pantisocracy):

To-day, my dear brother republican, is the glorious anniversary of the great revolution of '48, whereof what shall we now say? Put not your trust in republics nor in any institution of man. God be praised for the downfall of Louis-Philippe. [... Are] we to salute the rising sun with Vive l'Empereur and the green liveries? President for life I think they will make him, and then begin to tire of him. Meanwhile the Great Powers are to restore the Pope! and crush the renascent (*alite lugubri*) Roman republic of which Joseph Mazzini has just been declared a citizen. (Clough 1869: 1. 140)

Clough's phrase 'the renascent (*alite lugubri*) Roman republic' alludes to a curse spoken by Rome's enemy, the goddess Juno, in Horace's *Odes* 3.3. 61-2. She foretells destruction for Rome: '*Troiae renascens alite lugubri / fortuna tristi clade iterabitur*' (the fate of Troy, if it is reborn again under an ill omen, will be repeated with gloomy destruction). The sense that history is cyclical, and the suspicion that another French republic might devolve into an empire, was based on the precedent of Napoleon Bonaparte, a military leader whose pretence at maintaining republican institutions concealed the assumption of imperial rule. His nephew became Napoleon III, Emperor of France, in 1852, once he could no longer be re-elected according to the Constitution of the French Republic. While still nominally a republican President, he attacked the new Roman Republic in support of the Papal monarchy. A poem in *Punch* addressed to 'French and Roman Republicans. Ode to Louis Napoleon' (1849) suggests that his imperial aspirations were already clear:

I really wonder you've the cheek
To talk about your *République*.
In dignity you merit an advance:
There is a post which you are fitter far
To fill than to be PRESIDENT OF FRANCE;
Instead of that, you ought to be the CZAR.
The Roman people to coerce and menace
You send your howitzers and bombs,
With OUDINOT to play the modern BRENNUS [...] (*Punch* 16, 1849: 125)

Here the French appear not as noble Romans but as barbarian Gauls attacking the Roman Republic. General Oudinot, the leader of the expeditionary force which besieged Rome in 1849 and eventually defeated the Republican forces, receives the most unflattering treatment in terms of classical parallels: he is compared to Brennus, the leader of the Gauls who captured Rome in 390 BC and spoke the famous words '*vae victis*' ('Woe to the conquered'). He is also likened to Attila the Hun and the Gothic warrior Alaric, who led the first occupying force into Rome since the time of Brennus, signifying the ultimate defeat of Roman power. Such analogies make Oudinot's forces seem like the destroyers of a great civilisation rather than a short-lived republic.

In *Amours de Voyage*, Clough too translates present events into the idiom of Roman history, describing the French invasion of Rome as 'the Gaul at the gates' (Clough 1968: 96). He had sent A. Stanley an account of the fighting between the 'Aequians and the Volscians' and the 'Garibaldians', joking that his brief dispatch was 'to be translated into the style of Livy!' (1869: 1. 148). Such classical allusions appear with relative frequency in Clough's '5-act epistolary tragi-comedy or comi-tragedy' (Clough 1869. 1. 232), in the letters written by

Claude to his friend Eustace. Like Clough and his male correspondents, Claude and Eustace are seemingly at ease with Latin poetry and Roman history, as might be expected of gentlemen educated at public school and university. Allusions to historical battles, to the *Odes* of Horace and to war poems such as the epics of Homer and Virgil reinforce the shared culture of the masculine elite, but also emphasise the distance between an education based on tales of war and the reality of violent conflict in the modern world. As Anna Barton observes, Clough's own letters 'adopt a tone of detachment from the political scene' and 'his citizenship of revolutionary Europe is compromised by his citizenship of the elite and knowing society of Oxford' (2017: 185-6). Claude's letters are even more self-consciously detached and knowing, and seem to be modelled on Horace's *Epistles*, verse letters in hexameters written to male friends on themes relating to philosophy and friendship. His plans to read classical poetry in appropriate locations and contemplate ancient monuments are thwarted, as his version of the Grand Tour is interrupted by the French besieging Rome. Clough himself had found that his travel plans were limited by the fighting. He obtained a permit to visit the Vatican museum from Mazzini, but was reluctant to seek authorization to travel outside Rome: 'bulbs from the fountain of Egeria I have no chance of getting, nor shall I see Tivoli, Albano, or Nemi, for it requires a permit from the Minister of War' (1869: 1. 147).

In Victorian travel writing, Rome is often associated with confusion and disenchantment, dirt and decay. One of the many repeated criticisms of modern Romans is that they lack reverence for ancient monuments. In Clough's 'Resignation – To Faustus', the speaker is unsettled by the combination of 'the graceful and the gross', 'the stately and the stinking' as he laments the unwashed, disease-ridden bodies the tourist must pass to enter the Pantheon. He complains of the juxtaposition of classical architecture with 'dirt':

Though priest think fit to stop and spit
Beside the altar solemn,
Yet, boy, that nuisance why commit
On this Corinthian column? (Clough 1968: 192)

Travellers were disappointed that Rome was a modern city, not a museum. Dickens writes ‘when, after another mile or two, the Eternal City appeared, at length, in the distance; it looked like—I am half afraid to write the word—like LONDON!!!’ (Dickens 1998: 116). In *Amours de Voyage*, Claude declares his disappointment with the ‘*Rubbishy*’ condition of modern Rome, deploring ‘All the foolish destructions, and all the sillier savings, / All the incongruous things of past incompatible ages’ (Clough 1968: 177). As Margaret Fuller explains, not only could it be hard to distinguish between the grandeur of the ancient city and the mediaeval, baroque and modern additions, but the existence of large groups of English expatriates and tourists meant that it was easy to be drawn into an ‘Anglicised Rome’. Having walked extensively in the city, she found that

As one becomes familiar, ancient and modern Rome — at first so painfully and discordantly jumbled together, are drawn apart to the mental vision. You see where objects and limits anciently were; the superstructures vanish, and you recognize the local habitation of so many thoughts. When this begins to happen it is that one feels first truly at ease in Rome. Then the old Kings, the Consuls, the Tribunes, the Emperors, drunk with blood and gold, the warriors of eagle sight and remorseless beak, return for us, and the toga’d procession finds room to sweep across the scene; the seven hills tower, the innumerable temples glitter, and the Via Sacra swarms with triumphal life once more. (Fuller 1991: 168)

These lines translate Horace, *Odes* 3.4 58-64, quoted in Latin in a footnote to Clough's stanza. Like a visitor to the Pantheon who might focus on its current status as a church or seek out the traces of its ancient Roman origins, the reader is free to examine the classical allusion and consider its significance, or focus on the larger structure of the romantic plot, according to taste. Phrases and aphorisms from Horace's *Odes*, relatively familiar and easy to recall, appear in poems, novels and periodicals in the Victorian period, and are usually associated with cultured and educated gentlemen.

Clough was aware of the formidable challenge of persuading novel readers to take up poems based on classical models: in a review of poems by Alexander Smith and Matthew Arnold he commented that while such poems undoubtedly had literary value, readers preferred *Bleak House* and *Vanity Fair* (1869: 1. 360). He included feminine voices and a courtship plot in the poem in the letters written by Georgina and Mary Trevellyn, two sisters travelling with their parents in Italy. Their perspectives emphasise Claude's reluctance to commit himself to love, politics, war or any other course of action. For tourists without a classical education, the fashionable itinerary prescribed locations related to Byronic texts such as *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Manfred*, poems which were handily excerpted in the popular Murray guidebook. While Claude communes with pagan deities, female acquaintances among the English tourists mistake his interest in ancient sites for a different kind of heterodoxy:

Mamma is alarmed and insists he has

Taken up strange opinions, and may be turning a Papist.

Certainly once he spoke of a daily service he went to.

'Where?' we asked, and he laughed and answered, 'At the Pantheon.'

This was a temple, you know, and now is a Catholic church; and

Though it was said that Mazzini has sold it for Protestant service,
Yet I suppose that this change can hardly as yet be effected. (1968: 185)

The idea that the Pantheon had been sold to the English as a Protestant chapel is one that Clough included in a letter to his mother as one of the joking rumours circulating in Rome at the time (1869. 1. 141).

Another of Claude's Horatian allusions is an adaptation of lines from *Odes* 1.7 (again cited in Latin in a footnote), and other poems celebrating the Italian countryside. He creates a composite picture of an idyllic rural life at Horace's Sabine farm:

Tibur is beautiful, too, and the orchard slopes, and the Anio
Falling, falling yet, to the ancient lyrical cadence;
Tibur and Anio's tide; and cool from Lucretilis ever,
With the Digentian stream, and with the Bandusian fountain
Folded in Sabine recesses, the valley and villa of Horace [...] (1968: 206)

At first it seems that Claude has left Rome to visit these Horatian sites, but it becomes clear that he has distracted himself from the turbulent present with an imagined journey based on Horace's poetry. While he visualises a classicising pastoral interlude, he is waiting for the French to invade the city. French troops landed near Rome in April 1849, followed two days later by the entry of Garibaldi into Rome. The guerrilla tactics of Garibaldi and his followers were initially successful even against a much larger French army, but after the arrival of reinforcements the French besieged the city for a month in June. Mazzini was aware that the Roman Republic would be defeated by the military strength of the French but thought that Rome could become a symbol of resistance, 'an exercise in the creation of a nationalist myth'

(Reynolds 2001: 146). A truce was agreed on 1 July 1849 and Garibaldi's troops withdrew from Rome to fight the Austrians.

Although surrounded by revolutionary activity, the tourists in Rome remain separate from the fighting. As the siege begins, Claude learns that 'we are fighting at last' when he enters the Caffé Nuovo with his guidebook in hand and discovers that there is no milk for his coffee (1968: 190). He observes the civilians and soldiers who come in to drink coffee and then he joins a group of foreigners gathering on the Pincian Hill to watch the battle from a safe distance. He celebrates the victory of the republicans over the French, but is preoccupied with the violence he witnessed at close quarters, although he questions and qualifies what he saw:

So, I have seen a man killed! An experience that, among others!

Yes, I suppose I have; although I can hardly be certain,

And in a court of justice could never declare I had seen it.

But a man was killed, I am told, in a place where I saw

Something; a man was killed, I am told, and I saw something. (Clough 1968: 192)

Drawing attention to the tension between an education based on narratives of war and heroism and the lack of any previous experience in combat, Claude questions whether he should involve himself in the fighting that surrounds him. He alludes to and questions one of the most familiar of Horatian tags, '*dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*' (*Odes*, 3.2.13: it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country). He expands on the dictum with qualifying phrases which lessen its force – '*Dulce* it is, and *decorum*, no doubt, for the country to fall, — to / Offer one's blood an oblation to Freedom, and die for the Cause' (1968: 188). Horace warns that Death will not spare the man who flees from conflict, but Claude is defiantly sceptical of

the notion of martial heroism: 'Sweet it may be and decorous, perhaps, for the country to die; but / On the whole, we conclude the Romans won't do it, and I shan't' (1968: 188). Horace's maxim, repeatedly intoned in English classrooms, breaks down under the pressure of an imminent threat as Claude argues that self-preservation, not sacrifice, is the law of nature. Claude is comically uncomfortable with the idea of defending the female tourists in Rome and not much more enthusiastic about fighting for the liberation of Italy from foreign control:

Am I prepared to lay down my life for the British female?
Really, who knows? One has bowed and talked, till, little by little,
All the natural heat has escaped of the chivalrous spirit.
Oh, one conformed, of course; but one doesn't die for good manners.
Stab, or shoot, or be shot, by way of a graceful attention.
No, if it should be at all, it should be on the barricades there;
Should I incarnadine this inky pacifical finger,
Sooner far should it be for this vapour of Italy's freedom,
Sooner far by the side of the d—d and dirty plebeians. (1968: 189)

He later elaborates on his sense that the problems of the modern Romans are not his responsibility with a phrase echoing Hamlet's surprise at the power of an actor to convey a passionate response to a tragedy in which he is not personally involved - 'What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, / That he should weep for her?' (*Hamlet* 2.2. 586-7):

And what's the
Roman Republic to me, or I to the Roman Republic?
Why not fight? – In the first place, I haven't so much as a musket;

In the next, if I had, I shouldn't know how I should use it;
In the third, just at present I'm studying ancient marbles;
In the fourth, I consider I owe my life to my country;
In the fifth, - I forget; but four good reasons are ample. (1968: 201).

Amongst these justifications for inaction, the lack of military training or equipment is followed by the claim that Claude is occupied with 'studying ancient marbles', although the poem as a whole has shown that his concern with the relics of antiquity is only an intermittent preoccupation. That patriotism is in fourth place in the list of excuses suggests that even the modified Horatian line 'Sweet it may be and decorous, perhaps, for the country to die' has lost its power over Claude. The classical quotations which enabled him to feel superior to other tourists while he was attempting a modern version of the Grand Tour become an impediment to participation in a national crisis which is not his own. Claude's dismay at the idea of fighting proves that being steeped in classical literature is not enough to inculcate the heroic spirit: the hero of the Risorgimento must be an Italian patriot whose fervour for the cause cannot be extinguished by Hamlet-like introspection.

Garibaldi as a modern Odysseus

Looking back within the following decade on the revolutions they had witnessed, poets such as Clough and Barrett Browning became sceptical about heroes and could see no prospect of a narrative of victory. Taking a longer view, the historian Trevelyan could see the defeat of the Roman Republic as part of an epic story which would end with the unification of Italy. His historical writing on the Risorgimento is informed by his classical reading and mediated by his reading of Victorian poetry. He could retrospectively apply his notion of the

Risorgimento as ‘an epic moment in human affairs’, so that the fall of the Roman Republic (like the fall of Troy in Virgil’s *Aeneid*) takes its place as an episode of extreme pathos which is followed by a story of suffering and the rise of an Italian nation. His fascination with ancient epic and the heroic code as meaningful analogies for the Risorgimento demonstrates the extent to which repeated readings of Homer and Virgil (supplemented by masculine camaraderie and wit from Horace) informed a romanticised understanding of war in the early twentieth century for young men of his educational background. In *Garibaldi’s Defence of the Roman Republic*, the first description of the area in which the defence of the besieged city took place alludes to ancient and modern literature, to Horace and his Sabine farm, the Mount Soracte of *Odes* I.9, and

the Alban Mount itself, the shape of which, never long out of sight, is like the presiding genius of the city – Alba haunting us still *- as it haunted Romulus and those who left its wooded slopes to colonise the Tiber bank, and Garibaldi as he ordered the battle day by day for a summer month on this very Mount Janiculum. (Trevelyan 1907: 2)

This passage and the author’s footnote (* See Clough’s *Amours de Voyage*, end of Canto I, written during the siege, 1849’) self-consciously brings together a Latin poet, a modern English poet who had alluded to that Latin poet in his poem about the siege of Rome, the legendary Romulus and the hero of the siege. The association of Garibaldi with Romulus suggests a close, but uneasy, competitive, and even potentially violent, relationship and resemblance between Garibaldi and Mazzini.

In *Garibaldi’s Defence of the Roman Republic* Trevelyan writes, ‘I shall tell how the man of destiny [...] was preserved by the strange working of chance, by the iron courage and endurance of the worn Odysseus himself’ (1907: 4). The historian even attributes to Garibaldi

the skill with words that has caused Homer's Odysseus to be read as a figure for the poet, calling him 'the most poetically-minded of the world's famous warriors' (1907: 14-15).

There is a suggestion of the primitive heroism of ancient epic about Garibaldi in Trevelyan's framing of his life. In South America, for example, the soldiers with whom Garibaldi fought had 'no food but the cattle which the troops drove with them and slaughtered at meal time, roasting the flesh Homerically on green spits' (1907: 21).

With no shortage of classicising responses to the Risorgimento, the automatic associations which a classical education could supply are more optimistically deployed by the journalist or the historian than by the poet. Observing the revolution through a window, Barrett Browning finds that the heroes of the rebellion do not match up to their ancestors. Clough, through the constant equivocation of his classicising protagonist, suggests that using literary allusions to frame the Risorgimento is a distancing tactic, a self-aggrandising excuse for remaining disengaged from the action. Fuller, with an American perspective on republicanism and revolution, more readily reconciles modern and ancient Rome, and accepts that a crisis may necessitate violent action. Trevelyan, remote from the crisis and secure in the knowledge of the eventual success of Italian unification, is able to reshape the fall of the Roman Republic into a celebration of a hero.

¹ While the Chartist movement did not lack for 'labour laureates' (such as Ernest Jones, Thomas Cooper, Gerald Massey and W. J. Linton), as well as anonymous rhymers, in the 'Chartist imaginary' classical models have little influence (Sanders, 2009: 3). Although an exceptional

working-class autodidact such as Cooper might learn Latin and Greek and read the *Iliad*, authors such as Shakespeare and Milton were more readily appropriated by Chartist poets (Hardwick, 2015, 34).

² The texts in Trevelyan's anthology include excerpts from Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*; Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Casa Guidi Windows*; Arthur Hugh Clough, *Amours de Voyage*; Robert Browning, 'The Italian in England', 'Old Pictures in Florence' and 'De Gustibus'; Walter Savage Landor, 'On the Slaughter of the Brothers Bandiera'; Swinburne, 'Super Flumina Babylonis'; George Meredith, *Vittoria*; Harriet Eleanor Hamilton King, *The Disciples*.