Imagining Italy

Imagining Italy:
Victorian Writers and Travellers

Edited by

Catherine Waters, Michael Hollington
and John Jordan

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Imagining Italy: Victorian Writers and Travellers,
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For Massimo Bacigalupo, Clotilde De Stasio, Francesca Orestano, Alessandro Vescovi, Luisa Villa and Paul Vita

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PREFACE

CHLOE CHARD

Evelyn Waugh, in a sequence of thumbnail sketches of the English abroad in his travel book *Labels*, begins the nineteenth century with "the survivor of the Grand Tour" (who "always has a pair of pistols and a great many letters of introduction"), but soon moves on to a more stolid figure: "Paterfamilias", a man who is "very suspicious of foreigners, chiefly on the grounds that they do not have baths, disguise their food with odd sauces, are oppressed by their rulers and priests, are dishonest, immoral, and dangerous, and talk a language no one can make head or tail of". The evocations of Italy considered in this book – traced out by the contributors in all their luxuriant complexity – are so full of dramatic convolutions and contrasts that they supply a cheeringly ironic – and intermittently Byronic – commentary on the imaginative limitations of Paterfamilias' vision of foreign dirt and skulduggery. Maria Theresa Chialant's finely calibrated understatement, when she writes that "Gissing's relationship with Italy was quite intense", would serve to summarize many of the other attempts to get to grips with the country charted here.

Dirt and skulduggery, however, are not entirely absent from these essays. The travellers and "Tarry-at-home Travellers" share with Paterfamilias the odd intimation of evil. They also share a proclivity to throw together apparently disparate qualities in unpredictable ways – a proclivity that reaches its most ebullient form, perhaps, in Flora Finching's famous vision of Italy in *Little Dorrit*, quoted by Clotilde De Stasio: "'Venice Preserved too', said she, '… is it well or ill preserved for people differ so and Maccaroni if they really eat it like the conjurors why not cut it shorter'".

Attempts to bring dissonant elements into conjunction are directly considered by Garrett Stewart, who examines Dickens's use of the rhetorical figure of hendiadys, or "twinning" – exemplified by the "faith and phlegm" in Genoese churches, as the mendicant faithful kneel and spit. The two terms in hendiadys are sometimes disturbingly – or satirically – disjunctive: another instance in Genoa, vaguely reminiscent of Waugh's Paterfamilias, appears in a list that registers "bafflement over

generically indicated trattoria wine, which can be of all different ‘flavours, qualities, countries, ages, and vintages’, the last two echoing designators being no longer redundant when you can’t trust the labelling”.

In other essays, disjunctive twinnings swell into unnerving paradoxes. Both Britta Martens and Chialant touch on the relation between attraction and repulsion – for travellers confronting Roman Catholic spectacle, in one case, and for Dickens in Naples, in the other. Michael Hollington demonstrates that, in Dickens’s Italy, “palaces and prisons were always in some way imbricated with each other”; a palace actually occupied by the novelist is named by him, oxymoronically, the “Pink Jail”.

In one of the many reflections on complicated relations between the foreign and the familiar in this book, this essay maps out a plot in which traumas from childhood in England resurge, for Dickens, within foreign places. An intriguingly inverted variant on this plot – traced out in cultural terms rather than in the individual psyche – crops up as an incidental snippet in Jeremy Tambling’s revelation of Dantean moments in Dickens: in the article “By Rail to Parnassus”, for *Household Words*, the novelist, with Henry Morley, tells the story of a clerk travelling by rail from Waterloo to Southampton, and reading Leigh Hunt’s version of “Dante’s own Paolo and Francesca”: “He is vexed that when they get to Southampton, ‘I must in that day read no more’” – a reflection that ironically translates “Francesca’s line about what happens after Paolo kisses her: ‘quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante’”.

A further theme suggests itself as a way of indicating the pleasures of the book’s multifarious approaches to Victorians in Italy: the theme of colour, already suggested by the paradoxically colourful “Pink Jail”. “Is she really in that favoured land with nothing but blue about her and dying gladiators and Belvederes”, says Flora Finching (again, in De Stasio’s essay, and in *Little Dorrit*). For Gissing, in Chialant’s essay, “Vesuvius sent forth today vapour of a delicate rose-tint … the cone, covered with sulphur, gleamed bright yellow against cloudless blue”. Charlotte Brontë, in Christine Alexander’s essay, “celebrates the power of her imaginative visions”, in a poem, by comparing them to the intensity of an Italian sunset, with its “crimson clear” and “ruby red”. Robert Polhemus argues that George Eliot’s *Romola* endorses the imaginative power of colour, beauty and sensual richness.

Two essays explicitly bring this theme into the ambit of visual modernity. Malcolm Andrews suggests that both Dickens and Turner deployed versions of the picturesque that moved away from traditional associations with Claudian composition and allotted a new, dynamic role to light and colour. Kate Flint discerns affinities between the interest in the

fleeting and the fragmentary shared by nineteenth-century writers – including writers on Italy – and the *macchie* of the *Macchiaioli* – spots of colour that these Florentine painters used to indicate areas of light and shade.

Such preoccupations, in an imaginative geography so suffused by a fascination with excess, could hardly fail to attract satirical attention: in an essay on "Cities in Plain Clothes" in Dickens's *Household Words*, cited by Catherine Waters, George Augustus Sala notes, in Venice, not only "landscapes, or, rather, water-scapes, with crimson, green and gold skies, orange waves and blue palaces (see Turner)", but also canals "studded with gondolas, painted with fanciful arabesques, hung with splendid tapestry, filled with purple velvet lovers and white satin angels (see Lake Price), making love and eating ices beneath a moon certainly twice as large as any French, German, or English one".

In the face of such chromatic ebullience, twenty-first-century readers might feel slightly abashed, realizing how readily we ourselves (following aesthetic advice offered by Aldous Huxley in an essay of 1925) mute the light and colour of Italy through the protective shield of sunglasses. This book invites us to be less muted in our sense of nineteenth-century visions of Italy, seeing them, rather – to attempt a final hendiadys – as thoroughly intense and lurid.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

MICHAEL HOLLINGTON
AND CATHERINE WATERS

Nearly a hundred Dickensians and Victorianists gathered in Genoa in June 2007 to attend a conference entitled "Dickens, Victorian Culture and Italy", and, for many of them, to visit for the first time the extraordinary palatial residences of Dickens and other nineteenth-century writers in that city. The idea of the conference came from Michael Hollington, but it could not have been realised without the most active contribution from colleagues in Italy and Spain – those at the University of Genoa in particular, Massimo Bacigalupo and Luisa Villa, but also other members of the organising committee from Milan and Madrid. It is to these colleagues that this book is dedicated.

Cambridge Scholars Publishing has already published one volume of selected papers presented at the conference, entitled *Dickens and Italy*, edited by Michael Hollington and Francesca Orestano. Its focus was a very specific one: each of the nineteen papers it includes deals with some aspect of one of the two works in which Dickens devoted significant attention to the representation of Italy: *Little Dorrit* and *Pictures from Italy*. In this second, companion volume, the focus is wider, and the scope more ambitious and speculative. Without in any way leaving Dickens or his writings about Italy behind, we attempt here to approach the Victorian fascination with that country from a broader, more theoretical perspective, in which several current debates about travel writing are taken up and critically redeployed. The aim here too at many points is to reflect on what the specific study of nineteenth-century travellers might tell us about tourism today.

While travel writing has a long history, the emergence of scholarly interest in it is relatively recent. The appearance of a volume devoted to the topic in the *Cambridge Companion* series in 2006 is just one indication that the development of a critical tradition of attention to travel writing is

now well underway (Hulme and Youngs). Our title, *Imagining Italy*, takes its cue from Chloe Chard's seminal book of 1999, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour*, and her account of the "network of rhetorical and theoretical strategies for understanding and appropriating the foreign" that she refers to as an "*imaginative geography*" (Chard 10). For Chard, this concept shifts the discussion from the domain of social history, in which tourism and the Grand Tour have been located most frequently by scholars, to focus upon discourse; it brings under critical scrutiny the epistemological, creative and aesthetic impulses evident throughout the history of narratives of travel. The movement from north to south that structured the Grand Tour continued to shape many later journeys, but as the essays collected here show, it was complicated by new travellers, itineraries, means of transport and accommodation and objects of narrative interest.

Chard observes the development of tourism in the nineteenth century as characterized by the emergence of new concepts of pleasure, including the "innocent" gratification to be derived from food and wine that was largely ignored by eighteenth-century travel writers (239). The writings of George Augustus Sala, later to be dubbed "the chief of traveled specials" (Hatton 169), provide exemplary evidence of some of these changes. From comic complaints about "the smell of decayed melons and warmed up macaroni" lingering in the "dilapidated, tumbledown, vermin-haunted" ([Sala] 149) rooms of his imaginary Italian hotel, the Casa Borbonica, in the pages of *Household Words* in 1856, Sala later returned on "A Journey due South", "in search of sunshine", to lament the evidence of commercial "progress" in the wake of Italy's reunification. Describing his visit in the autumn of 1870, Sala sees the transition from "old" to "new" Rome manifested in "the Deluge" of impromptu traders:

> Hitherto unheard-of hairdressers hung up their signboards at street corners, quite unexpectedly. A strange man from Turin suddenly proclaimed, in printed placards on the walls, that he had twenty thousand pairs of ladies' and gentlemen's boots to dispose of for ready money at surprisingly low prices. In the very midst of the Corso, between two ancestral palaces, a ready-made clothes warehouse started up as suddenly as though it had been the Palace of Aladdin; and from under the very lees of venerable monasteries and austere theological seminaries new cafes and new restaurants made an unblushing appearance. (Sala 229–30)

Even his favourite Caffè di Roma in the Corso has succumbed to the homogenising effects of commerce and mass tourism, as he complains that "[f]rom Calais to Constantinople the English beefsteak and potatoes reign

disagreeably supreme" (Sala 238). "To me", writes Sala, "the universal supremacy of the 'bifteck' represents not so much the prevalence of Anglo-Saxon ideas … as it does the feverish haste, flurry, and excitement of modern life, and the almost wolf-like desire to devour the largest amount of solid succulents in the shortest possible time" (Sala 239). Sala's journalism deploys the binary oppositions – between the familiar and the foreign, north and south, the ancient and the modern – that Chard identifies as one of the most common strategies for "translating foreignness into discourse" (40), as well as demonstrating the ambiguous generic position of travel writing – moving between the domains of fact and fiction, the real and the imagined (he did not in fact make his first trip to Italy until the early 1860s). But whether as an eyewitness or a second-hand observer, Sala's digressive style and interest in the phenomenology of travel allow us to see the extent to which the nineteenth-century journey south continues to speak to our own experience of venturing abroad.

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The book is articulated in three parts which aim to bring out these central concerns with the response to Italy of Victorian travellers and writers and its cultural and theoretical implications as clearly as possible; but it should be emphasised that there is a good deal of overlap between each. Indeed, the differences between them are characteristically matters of emphasis rather than of sharp categorical distinctions. For instance, Parts One and Two both concern at many points some major Victorian writers, above all Dickens, but the difference between them can be stated as follows: the major focus in Part One is what their writings can tell us about the history and theory of travel and travel writing, and in Part Two, on what they can tell us about the writers themselves and their work. Writers are likewise as omnipresent in Part Three as they are in Part Two, but here the emphasis is again shifted in order to compare writing and visual representations of the experience of 'abroad' in general and Italy in particular, in an era when what can be thought of as modern visual culture is gradually taking shape.

The kinds of theoretical, analytic and descriptive discourses that currently engage writers on travel to Italy in the nineteenth century (and before and after) emerge clearly in the essay by Britta Martens that opens the collection. Following Chard's study, Martens devotes a great deal of attention to the configuration of 'Spectator and Spectacle' in nineteenth-century accounts of Catholic rituals in Rome, probing the mixture of 'attraction' and 'repulsion' expressed by many of the English *badauds* who flock to old-style Vatican ceremonies. These, she shows us, were

already in some sense stagings put on deliberately for the sake of English and other tourists, who were clearly favoured over local worshippers in the provision of seats, the Vatican's essential motives being economic, for then as now the maximizing of income from travellers was a paramount concern. Thus the question of 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity' is engaged, and a direct line opened to contemporary debates about commodity tourism, in which 'simulacra' of local traditions and customs are often presented as entertaining spectacles for the consumer. In this, Martens's contribution very much looks forward from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first, as also in its focus on unruly and irreverent behaviour on the part of tourist punters at these ceremonies. As Chard suggests, these spectators tend to become part of the spectacle themselves.

Catherine Waters's essay clearly has a not dissimilar focus on travel as an emerging commodity in nineteenth-century Europe as well as on the "staged authenticity" of many of the sights presented to the tourist gaze. Hers is the first essay that underlines a particular feature of this collection – that it makes little or no distinction between those who actually went to Italy and those who, to adapt the subtitle of Isaac Taylor's 1821 travel book for children, *Scenes in Europe*, were 'Tarry-at-home Travellers'. It is clear that we do not have to wait for Huysmans's *À Rebours*, where des Esseintes gets as far on his journey to London as the Gare de Rouen in Paris before turning back, having decided that the fog that surrounds him there will do as an impression of his destination, to find armchair travellers whose experience of the foreign 'other' is consumed without leaving their own surroundings. Later in the book Christine Alexander will convincingly establish Charlotte Brontë as a significant Victorian 'imaginer' of Italy who never in fact went there, while Kate Flint remarks the invitation of Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. to readers of the *Atlantic Monthly* to embark with him upon a "stereographic trip" to Italy; and here it is George Augustus Sala who confesses, in his early writings about Italy, that "my Italian travels have been made hitherto, with my feet on the fender, and my eyes on a book", and Albert Smith who provides a multi-media 'Ascent of Mont Blanc' in London for those to whom "it seems unnecessarily laborious and expensive to perform the task elsewhere than in Piccadilly".

Following Waters, we are fortunate to be able to include (thanks to permission to reprint from *Victorian Literature and Culture*) a brief essay by one of the foremost players on the scene of contemporary travel writing specialists, James Buzard, whose work is drawn upon or referred to by several other contributors in this volume. Here Buzard briefly introduces the concept of 'autoethnography' (first coined by Mary Louise Pratt, but

championed and developed by Buzard himself in particular, in his influential book *Disorienting Fiction* of 2005) in the context of the passage from *Bleak House* to *Little Dorrit* in the 1850s. Buzard sees these two novels as in sharp contrast to one another. Like Robert Tracey and others, Buzard sees the first novel, *Bleak House*, as an examination of the state of Britain that protests against the Great Exhibition of 1851: here we have the dark side of the nation, not that glittering 'Crystal Palace' celebrating empire and global dominance and displaying a thoroughly spurious version of cosmopolitanism. To counter this lie, and to refocus attention where it ought to have been located, Dickens writes an 'autoethnography' of his own country, with virtually no attention paid to the world beyond Britain. Buzard sees a much more open and international focus in *Little Dorrit*, in which the issue of genuine cosmopolitanness plays a prominent role. Contrasting Rigaud and Cavaletto, seen right at the opening of the novel in prison together in Marseille, he argues that it is the local Italian smuggler who is the real cosmopolitan rather than the villainous gentleman-traveler. His essential point, which seems to apply for Buzard not only to the nineteenth century but for our own time as well, is that genuine cosmopolitanness can only grow out of genuine rootedness – a paradox that will find echoes in other essays in the book.

Concluding this section is an essay by Clotilde De Stasio which also takes us well beyond its initial focus – Dickens's representation of Venice in *Pictures from Italy* and *Little Dorrit* – to encompass the important issue of the general role of stereotyping in travel writing. With the aid of Chard she takes us back into the era of the Grand Tour as well as forward into the twenty-first century, and this temporal perspective is allied with a focus on time and travel from another angle which critically examines the question of the extent to which venturing to Italy actually manages to change in some lasting way the minds and hearts of those who undertake it. For both personal and professional reasons, Dickens certainly hoped that it would when he left Britain in the summer of 1844 for a year's sabbatical in Genoa, and his novel *Little Dorrit* is concerned to discriminate between those members of the Dorrit family who travel to Italy but bring the prison with them, learning nothing and changing not a whit, and those few – primarily Amy herself, but also her uncle Fred – who manage to change and develop as human beings through a process of slow absorption of and openness to the new realities surrounding them abroad. De Stasio's analysis of the hyperbolic clichés that surround Venice in travel literature from Byron through Dickens to contemporary puffs is again indebted to Chard and confirms Hale in his introduction to Samuel Rogers's *Italian Journal* in pinpointing the idea of *the dream* as the master metaphor

running through descriptions of Venice over several centuries into our own time. The clear implication is that those who are trapped in stereotype and cliché or who travel abroad simply to confirm received ideas and repeat known sensations remain 'in a dream', and are unlikely to gain much from exposure to the foreign 'other'.

Opening Part Two, where some of the issues and debates surrounding travel literature at times recede a little into the background, Michael Hollington's essay nonetheless picks up on pointers from all its predecessors. Like De Stasio, he is concerned with the possible effect of travel upon the traveller, in the case of Charles Dickens himself, as he attempts to give meaning to Forster's assertion that the year in Italy in 1844–45 was "the turning-point of his life". Thus the question of the authenticity of the travel experience resurfaces, as in Martens and Waters, but the focus here is rather more psychological than historical and sociological. Like Buzard, Hollington approaches Dickens's travels in Italy with a sense of paradox: if genuine cosmopolitanness can only be achieved through genuine rootedness, genuine personal change through travel can only be achieved through a recognition and acceptance of familiar past traumas that will not go away, but retain their force throughout all manner of exposure to the strange and new. Tracing the cardinal Dickensian image of the prison, he tries to show that there could be for him no Kafkaesque "leap out of murderer's row" in Genoa. Even in Tobia Pallavicino's Palazzo Peschiere – the most luxurious setting the former blacking factory child would ever enjoy – the ghosts of past and present (the unhappiness of his marriage to Catherine Hogarth in particular) would not go away. Using Benjamin's Hegelian notion of thresholds and boundaries between sleeping and dreaming and waking, he interprets Dickens's Italian sojourn as a threshold experience that leads on to the sequence of great novels that starts with *Dombey and Son* immediately upon his return. In these works he is now able to integrate past trauma more deeply into his art.

Maria Theresa Chialant moves from Venice and Genoa to Naples, and takes up a comparative perspective, principally discussing Dickens's and Gissing's representations of that city in relation to each other, but also conducting an arresting juxtaposition of Dickens and Leopardi in their respective meditations upon the twin icons of Naples, Vesuvius and Pompeii. For Leopardi, Vesuvius is "Vesevo Sterminatore", Vesuvius the Exterminator, mocking the nineteenth-century notion of historical progress and change. She too is thus concerned with time, even if her focus is once again primarily sociological and historical rather than psychological, and she detects in Dickens's negative response to Naples as a whole signs of

an essential pessimism about the city and its surroundings that is not dissimilar. She reminds us in particular that, whereas on his second visit to Genoa in 1853 he saw all kinds of improvements since 1844–45 in that city (and always thought the bay of Genoa far superior to that of Naples) he continues to describe Naples as "one of the most odious places on the face of the earth" in which "the general degradation impresses me like foul air". In 1845, he had depicted Vesuvius as "the doom and destiny of all this beautiful country, biding its terrible time", and although Chialant does not use the word itself, there is surely something allegorical in the imaginary conception of an avenger standing by to wreak terrible vengeance once more on a place where all sorts of evil (documented in particular in Gladstone's famous report on the prisons of Naples) are rife. The contrast between Dickens and Gissing, she avers, is stark, the latter witnessing belated signs of modernization in Naples at the end of the century but finding them ugly and vulgar affronts to his classically-inspired idealization of Southern Italy as "Magna Graecia".

Allegory is very much at the heart of Jeremy Tambling's ambitious and suggestive attempt to examine the possible relation between Dickens's writing and Dante's. He first marshals an impressive array of tiny details of evidence of Dickens's possible direct knowledge of the great Italian poet, bolstering his case at salient moments by introducing the intermediate figure of Thomas Carlyle, whose debt to Dante is as obvious as Dickens's own to Carlyle. Eschewing any easy route to the comparison, which might have employed the familiar stereotype of London as hell (as in Shelley) as a means of connecting the two, but which in his view could have led to commentary lacking in specific focus, Tambling fastens upon a much more interesting and original connection between the chance street encounters that Raymond Williams long ago hailed as a hallmark feature of Dickens's imagination and the surprise meetings between Dante and various sinners in hell. Once more the master image of the prison is ubiquitous in Tambling's essay, and he engages again, this time from a theological perspective, in an interrogation of the implications of the motto over the gates of hell in Dante: *lasciate ognor speranza voi ch'entrate qui* which has clear implications for reading *Little Dorrit* and the Dorrits' sojourn in Italy. How can one change and develop and grow outside the prison and in some way transcend or at least work through it? If Dickens's New Testament Christianity might have led him to side with Blake in his protest against the inexorability of the punishment of sinners in Dante's Hell, he also seems to have adopted Dantean techniques in his own work, often turning towards allegory to represent evils like 'Poverty' and 'Famine' in nineteenth-century Britain.

Richard Bonfiglio's fine essay on George Eliot's *Romola* concludes Part Two by returning fairly and squarely to issues first adumbrated in this collection by James Buzard. In some ways the two essays complement each other, and employ an interlocking dialectic. If in Buzard's account Dickens moves from the 'autoethnography' of Britain in *Bleak House* to the exploration of the meaning of cosmopolitanism in *Little Dorrit*, for Bonfiglio, Eliot moves from the painstaking "proximate cosmopolitanism" deployed in order to render with as much sympathetic solidity of specification as possible the Italian Renaissance world of *Romola* to 'return with a difference' in her focus on the purely national panorama of England in *Middlemarch* – but now seen from outside, from a position akin to the tourist's. Yet in his view *Romola* (regarded by Henry James as Eliot's greatest achievement) itself already urges us to think more deeply about the near at hand through the imaginative realization of that which is far away in time and space. In extending the nineteenth-century realist novel to a distant and foreign setting, and in juxtaposing Tito's "rootless cosmopolitanism" with Romola's "portable domesticity", Bonfiglio argues, Eliot's novel is part of a growing proximity between England and the Continent evident elsewhere in liberal discourse of the 1850s and 1860s. What we have in *Romola*, then, is an altogether more impressive attempt to meditate on sameness and otherness than is usually to be found in the standard accounts of Italy in nineteenth-century travel writing.

Christine Alexander's authoritative account of Charlotte Brontë's imaginary Italy, a country she never knew at first hand and which she approached in large measure through the visual arts, is concerned to a not inconsiderable extent with the impact of the notion of the "picturesque" on her mind and art. As Chialant has shown beforehand, and Andrews will later confirm, the notion of the "picturesque" as an appropriate conceptual framework with which to approach the experience of Italy was in a state of evolution and flux, in which Dickens's call in *Pictures from Italy*, in the context of Naples, for a "new picturesque" – more socially concerned, and less morally indifferent to the sufferings of the people who provided fodder for the picturesque observer – is a significant marker. But Brontë was from a conservative background, and in full innocence of the actual experience of the country, she was often content, particularly in her juvenilia, to rehandle conventional literary stereotypes like those derived from Salvator Rosa concerning the passionate, hot-blooded Southern *banditti*, for lovers of the picturesque to deplore and be fascinated by in equal measure. But Alexander is also able to demonstrate that at least some of Brontë's enthusiasm for Italian art derived from a more enlightened source encountered in the home of the Taylors, the banking

and cloth-manufacturing family of progressive views whom she got to know through her childhood school-friend Mary. It was through them that she gained, not only firsthand knowledge of specific Italian paintings, but also at a later stage of her life that sympathy for the cause of the Risorgimento that she shared with countless English writers and intellectuals: Dickens, the Brownings, the Trollopes and the Carlyles, to name but a few.

Malcolm Andrews has written about and anthologised "the picturesque" on numerous occasions, and is thus uniquely qualified to take further the discussion of its meaning in relation to painters like Turner and writers like Dickens. His is a critical account, focusing again at least in part on the question of easy and effortless consumption of potentially distressing scenes, an approach favoured by popular purveyors of "the picturesque", like John Wight, who offer to readers and spectators a voyeuristic experience of urban poverty as armchair tourists "without personal sacrifice". Andrews returns too to some of the most pervasive stereotypes we have encountered in nineteenth-century imaginings of Italy, including that studied by De Stasio in her essay on Venice: that city, he argues, is represented in Turner and Dickens, both perhaps following Samuel Rogers's poem *Italy*, as a waking dream. His essay, however, sketches a progress in Dickens and Turner away from conventional notions of "the picturesque" towards a more discriminating and sensitive version of the concept of which the *leitmotiv* in both instances is *colour*. Andrews practices a careful translation of terms from one art to another: the equivalent in Dickens of Turner's preoccupation with colour is not simply to be found in his attention to the novelist's excited encounter with the vivid intensity of light in Southern Europe – equivalent in its way to that of Van Gogh in Arles or of Derain and Matisse in Collioure – but in its insistence, in his own writing and in that of his *Household Words* "young men", on the necessity of stylistic heightening in writing about the real world, of dwelling "on the Romantic side of familiar things". His essay climaxes in some expertly managed detailed comparisons of paintings by Turner and passages in Dickens that reveal him as the protomodernist writer that Borinski and others take him to have gradually evolved into.

Kate Flint's essay is distinguished from all its fellows in Part Three in the attention it pays to specifically Italian developments in painting in the nineteenth century – the school of the *Macchiaioli*, whose *macchie* or spots of colour indicate their relatedness, from about 1860 on, to Turner on the one hand and French Impressionism on the other – in her magnificently panoramic study here of the evolution of modern visual culture and Dickens's place within it, focused as it is in particular on the

representation of Italy. She pays attention to the rôle of technological innovations in the optical sphere – the revolution effected by the introduction of photography as well as the importance of various pre-cinematic inventions like the diorama or the magic lantern – without succumbing to the temptation to link development and experiment in writing and painting too closely to technological advance. She eschews any simple celebration of such breakthroughs because she too is aware of the rôle of new media like photography in promoting tourism as consumption, and of how the pervasive dissemination of manufactured cliché tends to hinder 'authentic' visual and verbal experiment. Her emphasis, in the sphere of representing travel in Italy, is on those artists and writers who, like Dickens, insist on seeing things for themselves without regard for received stereotype of whatever provenance, modern or traditional. For her, visual modernity is about change, progress and development in the political and intellectual sphere as much as the technological, and she seems at moments to echo the late Sally Ledger's return to a focus on Dickens's relation to radicalism in her *Dickens and the Popular Radical Tradition*. Flint too brings us very much forward into the modern and the contemporary.

Garrett Stewart's distinctive achievement here is to provide us with the most thorough and detailed example of a method that manages to translate issues in visual culture into specific rhetorical figures which, as he triumphantly succeeds in demonstrating, abound in the writing of Charles Dickens. With great wit and verve he teases out numerous examples of syllepsis and above all hendiadys in Dickens's writing about Italy, and in doing so he ensures that Dickensian satire and humour are given the full emphasis they always deserve but do not nowadays always receive. For him too Dickens is a protomodernist writer, and the doubleness of these figures is shown to draw attention both to the formal bravura of the rhetorical techniques, and the characteristic satiric purposes in the service of which they are deployed. Concentrating in particular on satiric barbs in *Pictures from Italy* and *Little Dorrit* aimed at questionable painters and paintings and even more questionable consumers thereof, Stewart is able simultaneously to illuminate painting as ekphrastic *subject* in these texts and painting as a possible source of the verbal techniques that unmask pretension and fraud.

Our final essay, by Robert Polhemus, returns to George Eliot and *Romola* and, once more, to an approach to Victorian writing about Italy that is firmly rooted in a critical approach to the present. He begins with an incident at his home university, Stanford, in which a sculpture from the Venice Biennale was rejected for outdoor display by the president because

of objections on religious grounds. It depicted an upside down church with its steeple sticking in the earth, an image that the relevant committee unanimously considered relevant and thought-provoking in the university context but that some campus faith groups saw as blasphemous. Polhemus develops the controversy into a discussion of iconoclasm and the *Bilderverbot* in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic tradition, an age-old conflict between religion and art that he finds reflected in George Eliot's Italian novel. He introduces feminist perspectives into the argument, showing how in Eliot's novel and elsewhere the puritan denouncers of iconic art, like Savonarola, also tend to be denouncers of the evils of liberated female sexuality (the recent claim by an Iranian cleric that earthquakes and volcanic eruptions might be the consequence of female promiscuity obviously providing grist to this mill). Polhemus's reading of *Romola* is thus to be seen as an impressive polemical intervention and engagement in favour of art and freedom, seeing the novel in its eventual outcome as a refiguration of Boccaccio and Botticelli in their celebration of "the wonderful force of feminine beauty and complexity", and highlighting the role in the book of Piero di Cosimo, as a celebrant of the "passionate life … in form and colour". He reminds us that the best Victorian writing about Italy in the nineteenth century was also on the side of the Risorgimento as a movement for national liberty.

There is so much reference to the contemporary world, then, in this collection of essays about Italy in the nineteenth century, we are persuaded that the issues it raises might have a place in our thinking about the present. Particularly in Europe, perhaps, where the inexorable rise and rise of international tourism – the search for the sun and the sea and wine and all manner of pleasures – seems currently to go hand in hand in disconcerting ways with rises everywhere in nationalism and racism and calls for tighter security and protection against invading immigrant hordes. In such an atmosphere, there is real purpose in going back and reminding ourselves of past struggles, or indeed occasional pointers to the possibility of régimes of tolerance and openness, such as the porous boundaries of contact between the Roman Empire and the Barbarian World celebrated in the exhibition *Rome and the Barbarians* on display in Venice and Bonn in 2008. The wonderful objects there, and the essays on imagining Italy gathered here, might help us in turn to imagine what a genuine cosmopolitanism might be like.

References and Further Reading

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PART ONE

TRAVELLERS IMAGINING ITALY

CHAPTER TWO

VATICAN CEREMONIES AND TOURIST CULTURE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH TRAVELOGUES

BRITTA MARTENS

The decades after the 1815 peace treaty of Vienna saw the growth of mass tourism. The British middle class, who benefited from increased prosperity and significant improvements in the transport network, played an important role in the development of this new cultural activity, and the Italian tourism industry became one of its main beneficiaries. In the two centuries since, Italy has become the world's fourth highest earner from tourism and the fifth most visited country (World Tourism Organization 5). The confrontation with otherness that occurs in tourism is key to giving an insight into the tourist's values as well as opening up a dialogue between the self and the visited culture. Alongside remnants from Roman antiquity, Italy's main sights were and are its religious architecture and artefacts. As these sacred sights were Catholic, they represented a significant challenge of otherness to British tourists of the post-Napoleonic era they were not likely to encounter when travelling within the UK or other Protestant countries. The accounts of visits by British tourists to Italian religious sights predictably reveal attitudes shaped by anti-Catholic prejudice. Going beyond the obvious theological dimension of this opposition to Italian Catholicism, these travelogues offer important insights into the tourists' broader cultural assumptions about Italians and Catholicism as well as their own culture.

Reversing the normal perspective of these texts from their focus on the foreign "other" to an observation of the tourists' manner of observing, this essay examines whether the apparent dichotomies between self and "other" stand up to closer scrutiny. We have to ask what attracted significant numbers of British tourists to seek abroad an encounter with a religion which British public opinion often treated with hostility and how texts deal