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Travel, Migration, Exile

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Sommario

Editors' Introduction/Editoriale

Gioia Angeletti and Michael Bradshaw

In the autumn of 1820, John Keats was in quarantine. Travelling to Italy, where his doctor and friends had advised him that the warm climate would alleviate his chronic tuberculosis, the English poet found himself stranded off-shore. The voyage from Gravesend to Naples had not gone smoothly, afflicted by both storms and a dead calm; it would eventually take Keats and Joseph Severn six weeks to reach Rome. The ship was quarantined for ten days in Naples's harbour due to news of an outbreak of cholera in Britain. During this period of uneasy stasis, beset with anxieties of disease and infection, Keats wrote a letter to the mother of Fanny Brawne:

> A few words will tell you what sort of a Passage we had, and what situation we are in, and few they must be on account of the Quarantine, our Letters being liable to be opened for the purpose of fumigation at the Health Office. We have to remain in the vessel ten days and are at present shut in a tier of ships. The sea air has been beneficial to me about to as great an extent as squally weather and bad accommodations and provisions has done harm. So I am about as I was. Give my Love to Fanny and tell her, if I were well there is enough in this Port of Naples to fill a quire of Paper—but it looks like a dream—every man who can row his boat and walk and talk seems a different being from myself. I do not feel in the world. It has been unfortunate for me that one of the Passengers is a young Lady in a Consumption—her imprudence has vexed me very much—the knowledge of her complaints—the flushings in her face, all her bad symptoms have preyed upon me—they would have done so had I been in good health. [Scott 2009, pp. 477-478]

Keats's letter conveys the heightened and disrupted perceptions of people who migrate across national borders. He has melancholy thoughts of home but is eager to experience the new. He has the tourist's anxious self-consciousness, unsure that his feelings are the right ones, or that he is fully appreciating the culture around him. Keats's illness makes him vulnerable and uneasy,

unconvinced that the journey has yet been of benefit to him («I am about as I was»). He is also aware of being subject to an intrusive bureaucracy, as the port authorities root through personal belongings and open private letters in their attempt to mitigate the risk of infection.

Re-reading Keats's letter in the age of Covid safety and «social distancing», one can empathize with his nervous impatience with his fellow «consumptive» passenger, who seems blithely unconcerned that her own symptoms may transfer to others. This moment of suspension, which many people now experience in the generic anonymity of airports, weighs heavily on Keats, as he tries to reposition himself as an artist and observer: his anticipation of the new world just across the border and his sense of his own identity are characterized by both a hallucinatory intensity and the blank neutrality of waiting for something to happen. The occasion of this letter is a source of personal awkwardness; Mrs Brawne was equivocal about her daughter's informal engagement, which the couple both seemed to perceive as a prelude to impending widowhood. Unable to address Fanny Brawne directly and confess his passion and distress, Keats writes his inhibited reflections to her mother.

Keats died in Italy in February 1821, still a migrant. His grave in Rome effectively identifies him as a traveller, and segregates him as a stranger — Englishman, Protestant, poet —, his epitaph famously witnessing to the ephemeral nature of writing and fame: «Here lies One Whose Name was writ in Water.»

Another icon of British Romanticism, S. T. Coleridge, had a similarly complex relationship with migration — as both an experience and a concept. With Robert Southey, Coleridge originated one of the fundamental myths of 1790s Romanticism, innately concerned with concepts of migration and settlement. The dream of Pantisocracy was short-lived, quickly falling apart when utopian theory was tested against practical planning, personal relationships, and domesticity. The much-memorialized project is a case study in how Romantic ideals fare under pressure, and how idealistic plans are often projected onto foreign territory.

Romantic-era writers who experienced international migration include not only celebrated cases such as Byron, Coleridge, Keats, and the Shelleys, but also Frances Burney, Joseph Priestley, Helen Maria Williams, and many others.[1] Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants*, published in 1793, not only contributed to the modern usage of the key term, but anticipated some of the urgency and complexity around the issue, staging a humanitarian encounter with political refugees at a national border, and challenging the nationalism of the British state with a plea for safe asylum for those who need to enter the country.

[1] Michael Wiley gives a comprehensive overview in the Preface to *Romantic Migrations* [Wiley 2008, pp. iv-xiii].

Writing on Romanticism has long sought to expand traditional debates beyond the parochial borders of national literary traditions. Modern scholarship has invoked a range of allied concepts, such as postcolonialism, cosmopolitanism, and globalization. New work on translation studies, transcultural exchange, collaborative communities, and social networks has further promoted the diversification of Romantic studies. International journals such as *La questione Romantica* and the *European Romantic Review*, among others, have consistently promoted the crossing and erasure of national boundaries to create a genuinely European Romanticism. What is distinctive about the specific instance of migration *per se*, and what role does this phenomenon have in Romantic culture?

In an article on text-to-screen adaptation entitled «A Fine Pickle», Salman Rushdie compares the processes of literary adaptation and translation to the migration of people across national and cultural borders:

> «Poetry is what gets lost in translation,» said Robert Frost, but Joseph Brodsky retorted: «Poetry is what is gained in translation,» and the battlelines could not be more clearly drawn. My own view has always been that whether we are talking about a poem moving across a language border to become another poem in another tongue, a book crossing the frontier between the world of print and celluloid, or human beings migrating from one world to another, both Frost and Brodsky are right. Something is always lost in translation; and yet something can also be gained. I am defining adaptation very broadly, to include translation, migration and metamorphosis, all the means by which one thing becomes another. [Rushdie 2009]

Rushdie quietly engages the etymological meaning of the word *translate* — to carry something physically from one place to another. This is not exactly a metaphorical usage — more a sense that the physical movement of people across frontiers and the transformation of texts into different languages, media, or genres are allied phenomena, with comparable effects. All such instances are conducive to shifts of meaning, both intended and unintentional, controlled and uncontrollable. People who are impelled or compelled to cross borders to live in a new land undergo and practise *adaptation*, and we access their experiences textually, reading what they themselves produce and how they are represented in the productions of others. Rushdie's emphasis in this article is on the cultural enrichment that ensues — «pickling» has the effect of preserving distinctive local flavours, but it also intensifies and subtly alters them.

Literary periods and movements are renewed and transformed as they reflect the preoccupations of the present. There are various cases for our present time having a special relationship with the Romantic era, in which each

age gazes on the other, conferring mutual relevance and legitimacy. There are the by-now familiar claims for Romantic-era Gothic literature anticipating the ideology of trans identities and stigmatized bodies. There is a special — if contested — place for Romantic poetry in the Environmental Humanities and the literatures of climate crisis. But perhaps the most distinctive claim is in the field of migration and refugee studies. Romantic-era migration took innumerable forms, from the enforced transportation of enslaved human beings[2] to forms of elective international travel in search of educational experience or economic advantage, or in pursuit of love and family, health and recovery. Crossing national borders is conducive to ambiguity and change: subjects adapt and evolve in unpredictable ways, often under the pressures of objectification and othering. The condition of living and being perceived as a foreigner in an adopted country is part of the migrant theme; and so is that transitional state experienced by Keats in Naples in 1820 — suspended, inchoate, full of contradictory potential. Romantic literature is known for its propensity for generic hybridization and its search for newness in textual form: we can understand these literary qualities better by continuing to research the expanding geographical frontiers of the Romantic era.

It is further hoped that new research on Romantic migrations will catalyze a response to the contemporary phenomena of migration and expatriation, and especially the European refugee crisis of the twenty-first century. These ongoing processes in contemporary Europe reached an early peak in the year 2015, two centuries after Waterloo. People fleeing Syria and other war zones and gaining entry to states in the EU exceeded one million in total that year, with deaths in transit counted in the thousands [Dearden 2015; spindler / UNHCR 2015]. Daniel Trilling argues that what is often referred to as a «refugee crisis» in Europe should more properly be termed a «border crisis» [Trilling 2019, pp. xii-xiii]. The response of the EU member states to the arrival of displaced persons from outside Europe is typified more by concern for state security than for human life [pp. 254-258]; this has entailed a redefinition of the *border* — no longer essentially a physically-located boundary, but a technocratic state system, extending from periphery to centre, which seeks to categorize people as legal or illegal, deserving or undeserving, endangered asylum-seeker or «economic migrant».

This is a continuing process, inextricably connected to the tactical games of political power. The regular jar between populist nativism and liberal compassion makes migration one of the defining political issues of twenty-first-century Europe, as parties and governments appeal to their bases with claims to reduce, control, or justify the movement of people across their

[2] The historical study of this phenomenon has transformed the interpretation of Romantic texts previously thought to be remote from the politics of race (such as Coleridge's visionary poems).

borders. Romantic-era politics was similarly affected. Following a surge of *émigrés* fleeing revolutionary France in 1792, the wartime government of William Pitt passed the «Aliens Act» to regulate and limit the influx of political migrants.[3]

Refugees from France are the central figures in Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants*, strangely silent in their challenge to the English narrator, whose persona gradually develops through sympathetic response to these fellow travellers: «for I too have known / Involuntary exile» [Smith 1793, p. 19]. Smith closes Book I of the poem with an affirmation of the value of offering asylum to those in need:

> These ill-starr'd Exiles then, who, bound by ties,
> To them the bonds of honour; who resign'd
> Their country to preserve them, and now seek
> In England an asylum—well deserve
> To find that (every prejudice forgot,
> Which pride and ignorance teaches), we for them
> Feel as our brethren; and that English hearts,
> Of just compassion ever own the sway,
> As truly as our element, the deep
> Obeys the mild dominion of the Moon—
> This they *have* found; and may they find it still! [Smith 1793, pp. 31-32]

At a time when modern nation states are struggling with the politics of migration in relation to electoral advantage, it is worth remembering that it was a Romantic-era author who pioneered an alternative concept of patriotism, based not on conquest but on compassion.

This special issue of *La questione Romantica* aims to consolidate the scholarly advances already made in this field, by showcasing new research on various forms of international migration in the Romantic period: it includes new insights into the representation of enslavement and colonialism, while also making space for elective travel and creative discovery.

The volume opens with Alexander Dick's article «Highland Emigration and the Poetics of Whiteness», which examines the controversial literary responses to the phenomenon of post-Culloden Highland Clearances and ensuing migration to America by focusing on three poignant poems respectively by Henry Erskine, Luke Booker, and Anne Grant published between the 1770s and 1790s. Dick reads the poems and their sympathetic endorsement of the Gaelic-speaking Highland emigrants' plights against the late-eighteenth-cen-

[3] «An Act for establishing Regulations respecting Aliens arriving in this Kingdom, or resident therein in certain cases» was passed in January 1793, and later repealed in 1871.

tury prevailing discourses of racial categorizations, stadial theory of social development, and white supremacy. In other words, their whiteness, characterized as a «mobile property», underscores the distinct position held by Highlanders within Britain despite English colonial dominance and control. Hence, while advocating against emigration, these poems prompt readers to empathize with the Highlanders' marginalized status, while also acknowledging their valour in military endeavours, their inherent resilience, and their moral integrity. Ultimately, whiteness serves as a safeguard, symbolizing the security of land once accessible to them but now denied.

In «Writing the Unspeakable: Labouring-Class Atlantic Crossings», Franca Dellarosa analyzes another form of forced migration towards America and the West Indies: transatlantic slavery as seen through the eyes of Liverpool-based labouring-class writers such as Edward Rushton and James Field Stanfield. Reflecting on the historical obliteration endured by both the «unspeakable» Middle Passage and the literary contributions of labouring-class authors, Dellarosa delves into the different discursive strategies employed in portraying one of humanity's most lamentable epochs. First, she scrutinizes Thomas Clarkson's approach in his seminal work *History of Abolition* (1808), which relies on the narrativization of a factual experience, albeit not directly witnessed, to authentically convey its truth by resorting to the contemporary discourses of sympathy and sensibility. Secondly, she analyses Rushton's and Stanfield's accounts of their first-hand testimonies of the Middle Passage and slavery across various paratextual materials and biographical writings. Interestingly, these accounts not only document the horrors witnessed but also interrogate the inherent challenges in trying to verbalize them. In essence, their texts raise the fundamental question of how to convey the inexpressible, thus embodying a discourse that variously oscillates between articulation and silence, the ethical duty to report direct testimony *vis-à-vis* the need to create an imaginative space of shared feelings as in Rushton's *West Indian Eclogues* (1787).

Gioia Angeletti's article, «Scottish Literature of Migration and Transculturality: Subversive Reticence and Gender Negotiations in Lady Anne Barnard's Cape Writings», deals with a different rhetoric of silence. Angeletti underscores a critical negligence concerning Romantic-period literature engaged with issues concerning colonial history, migration, and expatriation: the absence from prominent studies of an examination of the travel writings of Lady Anne Lindsay, the wife of colonial secretary Andrew Barnard, during her sojourn in South Africa from 1797 to 1802. In her essay, Angeletti underlines that, despite the recent reassessment by a select group of scholars, Lady Barnard's works deserve a more thorough analysis as documents that subtly challenge prevailing colonial discourses and enrich our understanding of the intricate ambiguities inherent in colonial environments. By focusing on the distinctive style, tone, and rhetorical strategies employed in Barnard's Cape

writings, Angeletti illustrates how their idiosyncratic interplay of explicit and implicit elements, combined with irony, not only offer valuable insights into the challenges women encountered within colonial settings but also prompt crucial reflections on the complex dynamics of colonial relations, racial identities, and slavery at large.

The subsequent article in this collection shifts the focus from South Africa to India. In her essay titled «Indo-Italian connections in the Risorgimento: Lazzaro Papi, Leopoldo Sebastiani and Carlo Cattaneo», Elena Spandri draws upon the research of Buddhologist and Tibetan scholar Giuseppe Tucci, who explored the historical and cultural ties between India and Italy. Notably, Spandri investigates the works of two Italian intellectuals who migrated to India in the early nineteenth century: Lazzaro Papi's *Lettere sulle Indie Orientali* (1802) and Leopoldo Sebastiani's *Storia universale dell'Indostan* (1812). Specifically, Spandri examines the Indian discourse within both texts, elucidating a compelling parallel between the Italian Risorgimento and India's colonial subjugation and latent potential for emancipation. This correlation gains further credence through her reading of positivist historian Carlo Cattaneo's essay «Dell'India antica e moderna» (1845), which reinforces this transcultural relation and underscores the impetus that the Risorgimento gave to the advancement of Indology in Italy. Ultimately, Spandri convincingly illustrates that these Italian literati's engagement with Asian history takes on renewed and enlightening significance when viewed within the political framework of Italy's struggle for national liberation.

Elisabetta Marino's essay, titled «Frances Trollope and the African American Question: The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw; or Scenes on the Mississippi», marks another shift in geographical focus. Like Angeletti, Marino laments the scholarly neglect of a female author who gave a significant yet unrecognized contribution to early nineteenth-century travel writing. Overshadowed by the fame of her son Anthony Trollope, Frances Milton Trollope, portrayed by Marino as a staunch advocate of human rights, a skilled traveller, and an artist, has been largely overlooked. Marino resurrects her legacy by recounting her journey in 1827, when she followed her friend, the Scottish reformer Frances Wright, to Tennessee to join the Nashoba Community – a short-lived utopian project meant to re-educate slaves and finally set them free. This experience led Trollope to become engaged with the slave question in the United States, where she lived for a few years before returning to England in 1831. Through an examination of Trollope's groundbreaking abolitionist novel, *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whiltlaw* (1836), Marino analyzes the literary strategies employed by Trollope to address the issue of slavery. Moreover, by placing special emphasis on her portrayal of novel's heroine, Juno, Marino highlights Trollope's engagement with feminist themes.

The sequence concludes with Michael Bradshaw's «Elegy and Exile: Letitia Landon's *The Zenana*». This article discusses migrant themes in relation to textuality and poetic genre, using the first posthumous publication of poems by «LEL» as a case study. Bradshaw re-reads the «text» of Landon's death by poisoning in west Africa in 1838 as a «crucible of unwelcome knowledge», with the potential to draw attention to her husband George Maclean's complicity with illegal slaving activity. The discussion is informed by recent biographical work, which qualifies critical consensus on Landon's agency as a writer with a greater sense of how she was exploited, sexually and financially, by William Jerdan. Landon's marriage to Maclean, and subsequent journey to the Cape Coast, where he was Governor, removed her from potential scandal at the cost of total isolation. The publication of *The Zenana* was an attempt to manage risk, preserving «LEL» as a profitable brand by sanitizing the story of her final months in Africa and deflecting rumours of suicide. In this context, Bradshaw examines how Landon's elegiac writing aestheticizes female suffering using tropes of migration and exile.

In his seminal study *Romantic Migrations: Local, National, and Transnational Dispositions*, Michael Wiley argues that, «[Romantic-era] experiences and representations of emigration show that it leads to no promised land, but that it does offer a variety of promises: for destructive and productive instability, transformation, and new ways of conceiving selfhood and otherness» [Wiley 2008, p. 149]. As the field of Romantic studies continues to expand and change, challenging our assumptions about both past and present, we hope that this new collection will make a fruitful contribution, and stimulate new discoveries.

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Saggi

Highland Emigration and the Poetics of Whiteness

Abstract

This article reads three poems responding to the emigration of Gaelic-speaking Highlanders from Scotland during the early Romantic era: Henry Erskine's «The Emigrants» (1773), Luke Booker's «The Highlanders» (1787), and Anne Grant's «The Highlanders« (1795). All three poems opposed the emigrations and particularly the increase in land rents that precipitated them and the Clearances generally. But they also encouraged their readers to sympathize with the Highlanders' dispossessed state and to recognize their military prowess, their natural perseverance, their virtue, and, above all, their whiteness. Whiteness is defined as a mobile «property» that «orients» (Hartman) the multifarious entanglements of space, colour, and movement in order to ensure the security once available in land that is denied to the Highlanders themselves. The poems thus delineate a new kind of migrant subject, the white Highlander, whose embodiment of the abstractness of mobile property exculpates imperial dispossession.

Alexander Dick

Between 1760 and 1815, a significant majority of Scottish emigrants to North America came from the Highlands [Bumsted 1981, p. 65]. The exodus was as controversial as it was sporadic. Recurrent colonial wars meant that sea travel was dangerous. Peacetime brought opportunities to move, but incentives were at a premium. Some Highland landlords helped, even financed whole communities to make new lives abroad. Others evicted their tenants with no regard for their welfare. If they moved to America, advocates of emigration insisted, Highlanders could retain their culture, own land, and expand the imperial economy. Opponents warned that nefarious colonial agents were luring hapless Highlanders into vessels barely more comfortable than slave ships, landing them in hostile wildernesses, and draining Britain of a vital workforce [Calder 2013, p. 4]. The cause of emigration, they said, was not progress, but exorbitant rents charged by chiefs embracing the luxuries and ignoring the consequences of the post-Culloden Clearances [Devine 2018, pp. 267-285].

Given such controversies, it is not surprising that literary responses to Highland emigration were varied and contradictory. Anglo-Scottish and Gaelic poetry alike lamented the Clearances, but also celebrated the new colonies

[Shields 2012; Daly 2000]. Poems by Gaelic soldiers serving overseas in the hope of preserving their family homes, also show that they would «accept without challenge the right of the British state to invade foreign lands or dispossession and rule native populations» [MacLeod, 2013, pp. 61-62]. Visitors to the Highlands like John Walker, Thomas Pennant, and Samuel Johnson, wanted to see its land improved, its population enlarged, and its society «civilized» but they also considered its traditional, hierarchical social system to be a model for modern Britain (see Jonsson, Leask). In his 1782 *Letters from an American Farmer,* Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur insisted that Highlanders would be at home in the rugged landscapes of the American frontier, a belief later put into practice by the Earl of Selkirk's schemes to relocate Highlanders to Canada [Shields 2016, pp. 74-75; McNeil 2020, pp. 163-170]. Burns's «Address of Beelzebub» (composed in 1787, though not published until 1818) lambastes the patrons of the Highland Society of Edinburgh, part of whose mission was to protect Gaelic culture, for preventing their evicted tenants from emigrating to America where they might «to patrician right aspire!». These responses share a premise: though Scottish Highlanders may be culturally different from most Britons, they should enjoy the same rights of property and movement. In short, Highlanders are white.

What did it mean to make such a claim in the late eighteenth century? The broader context is Britain's growing colonial Empire, especially in America, and the migrations it produced. As the legal historian Cheryl Harris demonstrates, the presumption of European sovereignty in American colonial courts, first in land treaty cases against Indigenous nations and then in cases on the legal status of slaves, gradually filtered into American culture as proof of the superiority of white-skinned people. Records from Highland settlements in Georgia and the Carolinas show that Gaelic-speaking settlers owned slaves, even bringing them when, after the Revolutionary War, they moved north to the Canadian colonies [Plank, 2011, pp. 233-234; Newton, 2012, pp. 285-286].[1] In Britain meanwhile, as Roxanne Wheeler, Nicholas Hudson, and others have shown, attitudes about race were hardening. The stadial theory of social development, first outlined in the mid-eighteenth century by Scottish philosophers and informing much of the literature of travel and improvement, entailed that humans had a single origin and linked racial difference to geographical conditions, a view we today call mono-genesis. But David Hume in «Of National Characters» and Lord Kames in *Sketches on the History of Man* were among the first thinkers to consider that thriving in certain climatic or

[1] I do not have space here to explicate the common experiences and affiliations between Gaelic and other Indigenous peoples in the colonial era: for more see especially Newton (2012 and 2013), Szasz (2007), and Calloway (2008). The extent to which eighteenth-century improvers saw the Highlands as a colony is explicated at length by Mackinnon (2017).

geographical conditions might be signs of poly-genetic differences between human beings. Continental theorists like Pieter Camper and J. F. Blumenbach, and British anatomists like John Hunter (who influenced Coleridge and other Romantic poets) severed civility and geography and attributed white anatomical and intellectual superiority to such features as cranial size and facial symmetry [Fulford, 2001, pp. 120-125; Kitson, 2001, pp. 95-108]. In his *Enquiry into the History of Scotland,* John Pinkerton argued that Scotland's people comprise several irreconcilable racial groups: the original Celts, who eventually settled in Wales and Ireland, the migratory Germanic Teutons, who settled in Northern England and lowland Scotland, and the primitive Caledonians who inhabit the far North [Shields, 2010, pp. 40-42; Stroh, 2017, pp. 186-189]. While influential, Pinkerton's theories were far from uncontroversial, especially at the end of the century when Highland landlords were actively recruiting their tenants' sons into newly-established regiments to be sent overseas. The pledge that these landlords made to preserve their tenants' land rights in exchange for military service was seen by many of these recruits to affirm British citizenship. That their families were often cleared anyway proves that, far from being an actual, material condition, whiteness is a useful and highly malleable tool of persuasion, especially for those with the power and privilege to wield it.

By 1800 whiteness had become, to use Sara Ahmed's word, the «orientation» by which the multifarious entanglements of modern space and mobility are «straightened» to ensure the security of those in power [2006, pp. 548-549; 2007, p. 150]. Whiteness maintains legal eminence by constantly adjusting the standards by which other figures, like colours, and especially those associated with skin tone, are validated in relation to each other. The tendency in European art and literature to associate whiteness with beauty and innocence and black or brown with evil, indolence, violence, and primitivism can thus be read as such an orientation device. Metaphors of colour are never neutral; they constitute a history of racializing orientations *within* the history of literature. Realizing that this history exists has profound implications for how we understand Romanticism. While Romantic literature, Marc Canuel notes, celebrates cultural diversity and ironizes colonialism, it also «depends upon the pre-eminence of white flesh»; its «whiteness is the condition for capturing the seductive altering hues that demarcate mood and solicit desire» [2015, p. 304]. Scottish anti-emigration poetry likewise demonstrates how whiteness orients literary culture during the Romantic period. It stipulates that while Highlanders must live under English colonial control, they do so as white citizens of a region of Britain and thus deserve national sympathy.

Henry Erskine's *The Emigrants* is a good example of how this works. Composed in 1773, *The Emigrants* was first published anonymously in March 1776 in Walter Ruddiman's *Weekly Magazine or Edinburgh Advertiser* (which also published Robert Ferguson's poetry) under the bi-line «Scots Spy» and

with the extended title «The Emigrants: An Eclogue Occasioned by the late numerous Emigrations from the Highlands of Scotland.» The poem features a shepherd lamenting the hypocrisy of his clan chief for cherishing feudal privileges while increasing rents. Unable to pay, the community is «forced» to undergo the same «pangs» that «banished felons must endure» [p. 7]. That Erskine would see the Highlanders' plight in quasi-legal terms is not surprising. The brother of David Erskine, 11th Earl of Buchan, who founded of Society of Antiquaries, and Thomas Baron Erskine, later Lord Chancellor, Henry Erskine was educated at St. Andrews, Glasgow *and* Edinburgh Universities. He became an advocate of individual legal rights, eventually defending (unsuccessfully) the thief Deacon Brodie and the radical Thomas Muir and serving as both Dean of the Faculty of Law and Lord Advocate of Scotland. In the 1780s and 90s, as Erskine was establishing his radical bona fides and the emigration crisis was resurfacing after the American Revolutionary War, *The Emigrants* reappeared in chapbook form. What attracted the publishers to the poem, one stated, was that it was clearly intended «to heighten and to diffuse that spirit of benevolence and humanity towards our distressed countrymen» [see Erskine, 1800?, p. 2].

The poem establishes this affinity through its arrangements of colour. It opens on an imaginary coast, a zone of conflict between water, the instrument of modern mobility, and land, the foundation for indigenous emplacement: «Fast by the margin of a mossy rill, / That wandered, gurgling, down a heath-clad hill, / An ancient shepherd stood, oppress'd with woe, / And eye'd the ocean's flood that foam'd below" [p. 3]. The clash of greens, purples, blues, and yellows soon fades to monochrome, as

> …gently rocking on the rising tide,
> A ship's unwonted form was seen to ride.
> Unwonted, well I ween; for ne'er before,
> Had touch'd one keel, the solitary shore;
> Nor had the swain's rude footsteps ever stray'd
> Beyond the shelter of his native shade.
> His few remaining hairs were silver grey,
> And his rough face had seen a better day.
> Around him, bleating, stray'd a scanty flock
> And a few goats o'erhung the neighbouring rock. [p. 3]

Pre-clearance Highland goats and sheep are black; their «scanty» appearance on the hills and cliffsides mirrors the «unwonted» ship. At the centre of this coastal scene, is the ancient emigrant himself, his «few remaining hairs» of «silver grey» atop a «rough face» seen again a few lines later as «furrow'd cheeks» on which «salt drops ran.» The old man's face focalize the sympathetic attentions of readers. The rest of the poem underscores the debt owed to this

long-suffering figure. Erskine's shepherd compares on one hand the «richer climes / Whose hills are rich in gems, whose streams are gold,» to the «Hunger, Nakedness and Grief» that he will endure when evicted by his «insatiate chief!» [p. 6]. Yet he also expresses his "content" to stay on the coast — ne'er have I seen / A vale more fertile nor a hill more green and his willingness to endure «banishment» where «nor billows, rocks, nor wind. / Can add of horror to my tortur'd mind» [p. 6-7]. The shepherd then recalls with «pride» that three of his five sons had «for their country died» overseas during the Seven-Years War, when Highland Regiments first achieved acclaim for dedication and ferociousness. Images of Scottish patriotism and Highland dress were commonplace in British art during the later decades of the eighteenth century; they not only denoted the importance of the Highland regiments to ongoing control of North America, the Caribbean, and India but also connoted the successful assimilation of a formerly insurrectionist culture into the British hegemony [Tobin 1999, pp. 221-222]. In return for their military service, the poem laments, his surviving offspring are forced to work not for themselves but rather for the «gold» demanded of their «lord» for whose «guilty pleasures, our poor means must pay» [p. 5]. Though he is «robbed by what they JUSTICE call» [p. 6], the Highlander stoically accepts his fate, but he also assures his «neighbours of the vale» that the «king, whose breast paternal glows / With tenderest feelings for his peoples' woes» and «the rulers of this mighty land, / To ease your sorrows stretch the helping hand» [p. 7]. Citizenship is the reward of compliance.

The Reverend Luke Booker's *The Highlanders*, published at Stourbridge in 1787, is another anti-emigration poem to promote racial affinities between reader and subject. Oxford educated and primarily a writer of sermons, Booker became interested in the Highlands after reading John Knox's *View of the British Empire* and James Anderson's *Account of the Hebrides*, the publication of which led directly to the establishment of The British Society for Extending the Fisheries and Improving the Sea Coast of this Kingdom in 1786.[2] Both men believed in the applicability of Smithian market principles to Empire, advocating a regionalist approach to their implementation: protected and supported by a centrally-administered infrastructure (roads, bridges, ports, military installations), colonies can build commercial economies by monopolizing local resources and allowing private companies to manage their extraction and trade [Rashid, 2009, pp. 16-17, 22]. In the case of the Highlands, which both writers regarded as a colony, this support entailed the expansion of wool production in the vast inland regions and fish and kelp on the western coast [Jonsson, 2013,

[2] Born in Midlothian, Knox spent his formative years as a bookseller in London. After retiring, he made 16 tours of the Hebrides between 1764 and 1775. Anderson was a prominent improver and, later, the editor of two prominent journals, *The Bee* and *Recreations in Agriculture*.

pp. 104-107]. Their attitude to Gaelic peoples was that they are «a numerous race of hardy and robust people, whose labour, if properly directed, might prove of great utility to the state» [Anderson pp. 17]. Anderson and Knox blamed the poor state of the Highland fishery on landowners who provided boats and provisions but who demanded so much of the fish that the fishers themselves were unable to provide for their families without backbreaking work or going to into debt; the Islanders «are then unable to find the means of emigrating to other countries, and dare not propose even to alter their situation at home, lest they might thus provoke their master to strip them of their all» [p. 23]. The underlying cause of precarity in the Islands is prejudice: «Persons,» Anderson writes in a passage cited by Booker, «who observe very little more of [Hebrideans'] mode of life, save that they frequently desert those employments which such observers think would turn out profitable to them, rashly conclude that this proceeds from an unsteady disposition, a disinclination to labour, and an insuperable indolence of temperament. Contumely is thus added to oppression, and the poor wretches are cruelly insulted and abused, instead of being tenderly sympathized with» [Booker, p. iii].

Citing Anderson and Knox throughout, Booker's poem orients its readers toward this sympathy by stressing their racial affinities. *The Highlanders* opens with a long epigram from James Thomson's *Autumn* in which «one scene» of poverty is said to inspire even «Vice» to «stand appall'd» and «Impulse… to think» [p. 2]. But such sympathy must also be joined with national identification. Booker gives an encomium to British landscapes and their varied and distinctive «climes» – the idea that Britain's temperate climate is better suited to agriculture than regions south and east. «Shall British souls / Sigh to degen'rate 'neath an Indian palm / To lose their native fire midst Gallia's sons, / In vineyards bland and aromatic scenes?» [p. 3]. The crux of this superiority, though, is not just climate, but whiteness. The poem asks its readers to look on «Britainnia's flocks and fleecy herds» where «rivers slide; and, in their silver waves, / Inverted woods and cultur'd hills display…Thro all her people scenes commercial Hope / And Female Beauty shine» [p. 4]. The poem then invites its readers to look in the same way at its «kindred Kingdom…. Caledonia» with its «lofty summits, crown'd with lasting snow» where «a race / Whose bosoms (undebas'd by Vice's train) / Boast each affection that ennobles man» [pp. 5-6].

Like Erskine (and in keeping with Anderson and Knox's regionalist economics), Booker turns the challenge of the coastal environment into a synecdoche for the Highlanders' precarious lives. Watching from a cliff, Booker's «Nature» views their fraught attempts to catch herring alone in open boats:

> Shudd'ring, she sees a patient suff'ring race
> Of friendless mortals quit their lowly sheds,
> And launch, in crazy barks, o'er seas unknown,

The wintry fry to capture: oft unblest
With other store for their adventurous cruise
Than mealy food and water from the spring.
Their heaths supply them with a rushy bed,
Exposed alike to Tempest-driven rains;
To chrystallizing frost and fleecy snow. [p. 16]

Having to work on both land and sea, the unsupported Hebridean fisher inhabits a confused, littoral world in which even his bed is waterlogged and the snow is like wool. This precarity extends beyond fishing to include the dangers of emigration which Booker, again following Anderson, blames on the lack of support for the fishery and the continuation of imperial wars. Describing the herring as a «shoaly tribe» whom the fishers must render «captive in the fatal air,» Booker implies that Highlanders are implicated in a process of imperial war-mongering: as the catch is taken to market, «The refluent tide conducts [the Highlanders] to the shore, / To oft (when desolating War demands) / To be enslav'd; and, with tyrannic force, / Dragg'd to encounter does ne'er prov'd their own» [p. 17]. Impressment, Booker declares, is a «Disgrace to Freedom, and to Britain's laws, / Which brook such deeds inhuman» and imagines the Highlanders' wives made destitute by their husband's recruitment and compelled to wander and beg with their many children: «(Pressing with blood-stain'd feet, the pointed stones — / Their lips all trembling and empurpled deep) / Look up to meet a mother's streaming eyes, / And vainly strive to sooth her troubled soul» [p. 18].

At this point, Booker refers his readers to his frontispiece, by the printer Matthew Houghton (1766-1821), better known at the time for classically-inspired drawings of nymphs and angels and here refiguring the Highland into a perfect picturesque specimen.

Figure 1: Matthew Houghton, Frontispiece to *The Highlanders* (1787)

Garbed in both tartan skirts and classical drapery, the wandering mother and her children that Houghton produced for Booker figure a classical whiteness underlying the sympathy he encouraged.

The centrepiece of Booker's poem is the allegorical tale of Louisa, who lives in a remote valley with her aging father until she is seduced and abandoned by the callous Hilario. Booker pays special attention to Louisa's complexion, which «bloom'd the fairest of that sex» [p. 8]. Whiteness signals desirability as well as precarity: when her lover abandons her, Louisa falls into despair «while ceaseless sighs, / Swell'd the light veil that deck'd her snowy breast» until «from her shame,» she takes «fatal refuge in a neighb'ring stream» [p. 12]. With Louisa, as with the poor fishers' wives, Booker mythologizes Highland life as both a sympathetic spectacle and an object of violence. In rendering his poetic subjects as exemplars of both precarity *and* whiteness Booker legitimates the mechanisms by which Highlanders were assimilated into a national-colonial system.

Many of the same tropes employed by Booker recur in Anne Grant's long poem, also titled *The Highlanders*. Subtitled «Sketches of Highland Scenery and Manners with Some Reflections on Emigration», the poem was the foundation for Grant's career as an amateur ethnologist of Highland culture [McNeill 2007, p. 147]. The poem was written in 1795, but its publication was

likely spurred by the 1803 Passenger Vessels Act, ostensibly intended to halt the deaths and miseries faced by Highland emigrants duped into trans-Atlantic voyages on thin promises and under egregious living conditions — not that these conditions hadn't been faced by African slaves for hundreds of years already — but also as a strategy to stop emigration, which had risen from 3,000 in 1800 to 20,000 in 1802 [Hunter 1976, pp. 20-29]. In support of the Act, the Highland Society intensified its efforts to cultivate Highland heritage by popularizing tartan and championing «bardic» poetry. Grant participates in this process by invoking Macpherson's Malvina to be her muse, establishing a trans-historical parallel between present-day Highland culture and Macpherson's epics, the authenticity of which Grant was an avowed believer:

> Daughter of Toscar! Who by Lutha's streams
> Oft met thy warlike spouse in mournful dreams;
> Malvina! Come in all thy pensive charms,
> Stretch from thy robe of mist thy snowy arms;
> Lift thy slow-rolling eyes, whose azure beams
> So oft of old were quench'd in sorrow's streams;
> When sons of little men, an abject race,
> Appeared in thy departed hero's place. [p. 23]

In the lines that follow, Grant warns against importing economic «systems» into the Highlands that dispossess the clans of their farms and compels them «across the Atlantic's roar» where «homeward» they «strain» their «aching view / Where restless waves each other still pursue» – lines that blend ocean storms with capitalist competition [p. 27]. Grant hints that the system-building improvers are themselves somehow less than white, locating their origins not in the lowlands or England per se but rather in the «south» and relating that the improver «recoils and shivers at th'autumnal breeze» [p. 28]. The improver's frame is «languid» because it is «Born in the sun's enlivening beams to play / Like sportive insects of a summer day». She further compares the incomers to swallows, who migrate to Africa and back, and contrasts them to the British skylark, a bird that does not migrate. At the end of Part 1, Grant urges her readers not to be seduced by «eastern groves» and «Afric's wilds» but to listen to «native» Highlanders' songs [p. 29].

An association between feminine beauty, pale complexion, and nativist sentiment recurs throughout Grant's *Highlanders*. For instance, she compares the mountains of the «Celtic race» to the «white heads» of fair Highland girls: «Even such, so silky soft, so dazzling white / Her modest bosoms seems, retired from sight» [p. 31]. The two narratives that make up the latter book — a story about young Farquhar discovering his missing cows with the fair Moraig whose family have been evicted and an account of the flight of Bonnie Prince Charlie to Skye — exemplify a connection between Gaelic vigour and racial

whiteness that is especially noticeable when under duress. Grant consistently refers to the old tropes of civility and barbarism in noting the difference in stature and refinement between the Prince, the paragon exile, and the «savage natives» in whose «power» he often finds himself «e'er [he] safely reached the destin'd shore» [p. 83]. At his lowest point, the Prince prays to the face of the sun, which, in a deliberate recasting of Ossian's Hymn (which she cites on the same page), Grant presents as

> Thou radiant Orb of Light
> At whose first smile recedes the shades of night!
> When from the sacred East thy beams arise,
> A flood of glory brightens all the skies:
> The constellations fades before thy sight,
> And ocean rolls his thousand waves in light [pp. 85-6]

The face of the sun turns Charles' mind to the other fallen monarchs (his great-uncle Charles II at Worcester, Gustavus of Sweden hiding in a mine «While distant glimmering like the polar star, / The diadem allures their steps afar») who roused themselves in the face of exile and danger. Charlie is rescued by «Fair Flora» who «with fortitude serene / And tranquil courage in her modest mien» brings sustenance to the Prince, along with (again referencing Ossian) shellfish gathered from the shoreline [p. 90]. Like Erskine and Booker, Grant figures the coast as a zone of cultural precarity for her subjects and as a setting of aesthetic pleasure for her readers: every moment in Prince Charles' and Flora's journeys becomes the occasion for a celebration of «social sympathy» which Grant repeatedly figures in images of light faces and «beauty bright» [p. 95]. Though she objects to the causes of emigration, Grant nevertheless relishes the drama of precarity that emigration stages. What makes this possible, I have been arguing, is Highland whiteness, the sense, which Grant inherits from Erskine and Booker, that their race is suitably equipped to represent the Britishness that conquered them.

As Evan Gottlieb has argued, Grant's poem influenced Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel,* «most obviously its use of sympathetic discourse both to model and to promulgate a closer Anglo-Scottish union». Sympathy, Gottlieb goes on, is a «quasi-mystical force guaranteeing that inherent intra-national similarities will always trump culturally constructed differences» [p. 268]. That Scott's setting is the Borders rather than the Highlands suggests that the British affinity Grant was trying to promote had broad appeal. When he toured the Hebrides in 1814 and wrote about them in *The Lord of the Isles* in 1815, he utilized the same combination of colouring and precarity that anti-emigration poets encoded as white. Though Scott did this with at least some sense of the arbitrariness of the designation — his 1816 review essay on the Culloden papers suggests the extent to which Scott still saw Highlanders as «barbarians»

[p. 283] — the sympathy he encouraged for Highlanders demonstrates, to borrow Gottlieb's terms, the «quasi-mystical force» of their whiteness. It is not for nothing that Scott was the most popular novelist in the ante-bellum South or that the burning crosses of *The Lady of the Lake* became a symbol of white supremacy. In spite of the efforts of anti-emigration campaigners, even if not every Highlander went to America, the ideological power of Highland whiteness certainly did.

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Writing the Unspeakable: Labouring-Class Atlantic Crossings

Abstract

In the opening pages of Thomas Clarkson's *History of Abolition*, published in the wake of the 1807 Bill, a well-known and most revealing passage states the unspeakability of the Middle Passage experience, which apparently escapes both description and re-enacting on the reader's part through some kind of imaginative process. From a different angle, transatlantic slavery, the forced migration of millions of human beings, and their significance in the making of the modern world were long subject to historical erasure, as was, for that matter, the writing experience of labouring-class writers — including those who chose to engage in the slave trade, slavery and abolition discourses. This paper investigates how literal «truth claims» [Baucom 2005] may find their way across the silences of history on these foundational processes in the making of the modern world in the testimonies of Liverpool-based labouring-class writers Edward Rushton and James Field Stanfield. Their declarations of reliability and/or experiences as eye-witnesses feature in their prefatory material or emerge elsewhere in their texts, or even, as in the case of the former, paradoxically surface in their very biographies in the form of silence.

Franca Dellarosa

> To place this [the treatment of Africans] in the clearest, and most conspicuous point of view, I shall throw some of my information on this head into the form of a narrative: I shall suppose myself on a particular part of the continent of Africa, and relate a scene, which, from its agreement with unquestionable facts, might not unreasonably be presumed to have presented to my view, had I actually been there. [Clarkson 1786, pp. 117-118]

With this claim for the truthfulness of an account that is admittedly non-pertaining to the category of fact («I shall suppose myself»), Thomas Clarkson opens Part III of his *Essay on Slavery and Commerce* (1786), devoted to exploring «the Slavery of Africans in the European Colonies», as the comprehensive title of the section reads. The fictionalization of a factual experience that is non-existent and its vicarious but still supposedly *truthful* positioning in a true-to-life virtual space within the realm of the imagination is a rhetorical device that is founded on an ontological paradox,

i.e., that of conferring the status of fact to non-factual (i.e., imaginative) experience, thus activating a process of approximation to a reality that is not — nor can it possibly be — experienced. The relevance of Clarkson's *Essay* at the onset of the long campaign for the abolition of the transatlantic trafficking in human beings has been widely discussed.[1] The young activist is experimenting here with a rhetorical pattern that is concurrent, as Ian Baucom notes, with the epistemological turn brought about by the development of the novel form and its «poetics of fancy», locating fiction «somewhere between truth and lies» [Baucom 2005, pp. 213-241]. Clarkson was to resort to that same pattern twenty years later, at the end of that same campaign, in a well-known passage that revealingly shows the entire communication circuit [Jakobson 1987] as affected by such a claim, once the addressee is explicitly summoned and required to share in the process. In what follows, I consider the intricate rhetorical transactions shaping the onset of Thomas Clarkson's 1808 *History of Abolition*, with the intent to prompt a reflection on the nature of *witnessing*, and its relation to writing; then I move on and into my case studies, bringing together and investigating two witness experiences of the Middle Passage — the central leg in the most important process of forced migration in human history. The testimonies of the Liverpool-based labouring-class writers James Field Stanfield (1749-1824) and Edward Rushton (1756-1814), while sharing some important traits, differently inflect the ethics of testimony, and interrogate the possibility itself of giving voice to the unbearable trauma of violence witnessed.

Fact as Fiction, Fiction as Fact

In the opening pages of his ex-post celebration of the *Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament* (1808), Clarkson invites the reader to take «a glance into [the] subject» of the «African trade» machinery, in order to be in a position to appreciate «the blessing» of its abolition and learn the «importance of the victory obtained»:

> To value the blessing of the abolition as we ought, or to appretiate the joy and gratitude which we ought to feel concerning it, we must enter a little into the circumstances of the trade. Our statement, however, of these needs not be long. A few pages will do all that is necessary! A glance only into such a subject as this will be sufficient to affect the heart—to arouse our indignation and our pity,—and to teach us the importance of the victory obtained [Clarkson 1808, vol. 1, p. 10].

[1] See Kitson 1999, pp. ix-xxvi; Carey 2005, pp. 130-7; Baucom 2005, pp. 211-213, 270-271.

That the procedure entails the reader's emotional involvement is presented as a plain statement of fact – the «glance» on the printed page instantly *affecting the heart*: as soon as you see, you feel. At the same time, though, the reader is immediately summoned to take on an active role, and carry out *themselves* a performative process of the imagination, so as to experience the violence of enslavement as a doubly distanced vicarious eyewitness, re-creating the tragedy that is being conjured up fictionally, *as if they were there*:

> To see it as it has been shown to arise in the first case, let us suppose ourselves on the Continent just mentioned. Well then — We are landed — We are already upon our travels — We have just passed through one forest— We are now come to a more open place, which indicates an approach to habitation. And what object is that, which first obtrudes itself upon our sight? Who is that wretched woman, whom we discover under that noble tree, wringing her hands, and beating her breast, as if in the agonies of despair? Three days has she been there at intervals to look and to watch, and this is the fourth morning, and no tidings of her children yet. Beneath its spreading boughs they were accustomed to play — But alas! the savage man-stealer interrupted their playful mirth, and has taken them for ever from her sight. [Clarkson 1808, vol. 1, pp. 10-11]

The present tense and sequence of actions hastily following one another and making their way through dashes operate to enhance the illusionary effect of experienced reality and help intensify the emotional tension deriving from the imagined sharing of another's suffering as a result — as the rhetoric of sensibility dictates.[2] Eye perception-by-proxy is insistingly and consistently conjured as the sensory experience presiding over the work of the imagination — the printed pages providing the medial environment for the construction of a visual object («obtruding itself before our sight») that only takes shape before the reader's mind's eye. However, when it comes to the second leg, the assumed narrative persona must record his expressive failure — his inability

[2] In Adam Smith's wording, «[a]s we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation […] it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his ['our brother's'] sensations» [Smith 2002, p. 11]. Editor Knud Haakonssen highlights the centrality of the imaginative act that allows the individual to access the other's «standpoint», «which is preparatory to any assessment of people» [Smith 2002, p. xiv]. See also Carey 2005, especially pp. 28-36. In his thought-provoking study on the epistemological, ethical, and aesthetic entanglements underlying the relations between discourses of slavery and sensibility, Marcus Wood identifies the «essentially […] voyeuristic basis of Sentimental theory» as central to Smith's very conceptualization of sympathy [Wood 2002, p. 102].

to either *describe* or *exhibit* what would actually be *seen* — the physical suffering, the tortured bodies — much less to «find words» for all the indeed unspeakable forms of emotional and psychological distress the enslaved human beings undergo:

> Let us now […] examine the state of the unhappy Africans, reduced to slavery in this manner, while on board the vessels, which are to convey them across the ocean to other lands. And here I must observe at once, that, as far as this part of the evil is concerned, I am at a loss to describe it. *Where shall I find words to express properly their sorrow*, as arising from the reflection of being parted for ever from their friends, their relatives, and their country? *Where shall I find language to paint* in appropriate colours *the horror of mind* brought on by thoughts of their future unknown destination, of which they can augur nothing but misery from all that they have yet seen? *How shall I make known their situation*, while labouring under painful disease, or while struggling in the suffocating holds of their prisons, like animals inclosed in an exhausted receiver? *How shall I describe their feelings* as exposed to all the personal indignities, which lawless appetite or brutal passion may suggest? *How shall I exhibit* their sufferings as determining to refuse sustenance and die, or as resolving to break their chains, and, disdaining to live as slaves, to punish their oppressors? *How shall I give an idea* of their agony, when under various punishments and tortures for their reputed crimes? Indeed every part of this subject defies my powers, and I must therefore satisfy myself and the reader with a general representation, or in the words of a celebrated member of Parliament, that "Never was so much human suffering condensed in so small a space." [Clarkson 1808, vol. 1, pp. 13-15, my emphasis]

The rhetoric of the unspeakable as characteristically pertaining to the experience of trauma has long been a central assumption in the multifaceted debate constituting the area of trauma studies – whether in relation to the Western subject-in-history or in the attempt at addressing a wider global perspective.[3] No, the voice of the sympathetic historian can't invite his readers to «suppose [themselves]» on board a slaving ship – the slaving ship's darkness appears to resist all attempt at shedding light on it in order to make it *visible*, and, therefore, containable – above all, not via a fictionalized narrative of witnessing. As

[3] See, amongst others, Caruth 1996; Edkins 2014; Craps 2014; Andermahr ed. 2016. On the other hand, as Marcus Wood observes, «[t]wo hundred years before Elaine Scarry came to a very similar conclusion, [Adam] Smith was to present extreme pain as an untranslatable experience, and, perhaps more significantly, as an experience which cannot be recovered by the victim but only by the spectator» [Wood 2002, p. 101].

Baucom observes in his challenging construct of the Zong episode [2005, pp. 272-273],[4] Clarkson does find his way in the end, by resorting in the second volume to the «famous print of the plan and section of a slave-ship; which was designed to give the spectator an idea of the sufferings of the Africans in the Middle Passage» [Clarkson 1808, vol. 2, p. 111]. Such a manoeuvre implies switching from the emotional appeal to the abstractly factual measurement of «the mathematical facts of suffering» [Baucom 2005, p. 273].

As I ultimately intend to argue, the rhetoric of unspeakability — and consequently, or conversely, the invisibility – of such a subject may insinuate itself in many different ways — at times even literally, in *the work of those marked by history*, as Duncan Wu defines «Poetry of Witness» in his introductory essay to the homonymous anthology (2014) he co-edited with Carolyn Forché. This is a selection of about 300 poems spanning the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, and featuring, in Forché's words, «appeals for a shared sense of humanity and collective resistance» as «poetic language attempts a coming to terms with evil and its embodiments» [Forché 2007]. The two editors pose a number of diverse and related questions on the nature of their subject. As Wu observes, «[t]he connection between the outside world and a work of art that testifies to its atrocities is unclear and, to a large extent, unknowable […]», and, again, «the initial response of the imagination» may well be «silence and […] language is inadequate to the task of articulating fully our reactions to the extremes of experience». Both Wu and Forché highlight the extent to which 'poetry of witness' naturally demands engagement in the readerly act. According to Wu, it is the reader's «responsibility» to comprehend the world where it was produced, in order for them to do full justice to both the «price» and the «burden» of those utterances. Within those space-time coordinates, then, it is the doleful humanity conveyed in those poems, the fact that they «*are acts of resistance*» [Wu 2007], that compels us not to forget, knowing, with Forché (herself a poet of witness), that «[w]hen we read the poem as witness, we are marked by it and become ourselves witnesses to what it has made present before us. Language incises the page, wounding it with testimonial presence, and

[4] The murder by the jettisoning of 132 human beings on board the slaving ship Zong in November 1781 was reportedly the consequence of a shortage of water on board and consequent danger for the crew, following the loss of the original route. The incident resulted in a judicial case opposing a syndicate of Liverpool merchants – Edward Wilson, James Aspinal, William Gregson, and his sons James and John – to their Liverpool insurance underwriter, Thomas Gilbert. The underwriters would not recognize the loss of that *cargo* as eligible for refunding. The case came to be known to public opinion following an article on the *Morning Chronicle* for 18 March 1783. In Ian Baucom's reading, the Zong mass murder and its entangled legal follow-up exemplify the violence inherent in the logic of capital accumulation based on speculative finance, which marks its resonance in our own time [Cf. Baucom 2005].

the reader is marked by encounter with that presence. Witness begets witness. The text we read becomes a living archive» [Forché 2007].

Labouring-Class Poets as Witnesses

In their selection for the section they name «Revolutionary Upheaval», Wu and Forché include a number of sailor and labouring-class poets and writers — women and men, black and white — from John Newton and James Field Stanfield, to Ann Yearsley, Phyllis Wheatley, and Olaudah Equiano – all bearing quite different forms of witness to the immense human tragedy of that process of forced migration that resulted in transatlantic slavery.[5] Irish sailor, actor and poet James Field Stanfield provided one of the earliest accounts of the intercontinental trafficking of human beings from an insider's perspective — an eyewitness account which, as Marcus Rediker observes, he was best equipped to do and would thus «capture the drama of the slave trade» [Rediker 2007, p. 132]. Recent scholarship has contributed new findings based on manuscript sources documenting his network of connections, partly related to his career as a successful stage actor in the provincial circuits, which were also instrumental in supporting his political engagement in the campaign against the trade [McCormack 2019, p. 217].

«A forgotten hero of the abolition movement» according to Declan McCormack [p. 214], Stanfield is here styled exactly as was Liverpool blind poet, former sailor, and radical antislavery / anti-imperialist campaigner Edward Rushton, in a militant short book published at the beginning of the 2000s. Local political activist Bill Hunter was the first to offer, in a form of poetic justice, full recognition to this now increasingly relevant figure in the late eighteenth-century North-West radical milieu [Hunter 2002]. Rushton and Stanfield do share a number of traits and personal experiences, as well as long-lasting fates of historical erasure, which typify the experience of the labouring-class poet. Only recently have these obliteration processes begun to be redressed, thanks to the work of many engaged scholars forming the labouring-class poetry scientific community.[6] Both writers operated in Liverpool

[5] I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Bridget Keegan, and her leading scholarship on James Field Stanfield.

[6] The foundational multi-volume anthology edited in the early 2000s by a team of scholars led by John Goodridge, Professor Emeritus at Nottingham Trent, has in time been followed by numerous modern scholarly editions of individual writers (both in print and electronic) and critical studies, as well as edited collections of essays, including Goodridge and Keegan 2017, alongside dedicated special issues of journals, such as *Criticism*, 47.4 (2005). To these tools, the on-going project of the *Catalogue of Labouring-Class Writers 1700-1900* must be added, which includes, in its latest edition of June 2021 a list of over 2,300 entries. The list is updated regularly and available

(at least momentarily, in the case of Stanfield);[7] both experienced a slaving voyage with a Liverpool merchant company, which had catastrophic effects on their personal lives (including the disease which cost young Rushton his sight) — and proved transformative to their politics. Both were in touch with Thomas Clarkson, who mentions both in his *History*, assigning Rushton's name to one of the tributary streams appearing in the map of the great river of Abolitionism — Clarkson's visionary rendering of the process in his *History*.[8] He counted Rushton among his earliest and most important acquaintances in his eventful stop at Liverpool during his fact-finding journeying [Clarkson 1808, vol. 1, pp. 372-373]. Stanfield, in turn, was a key figure at the centre of the propaganda campaign, for which the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade ordered 3,000 copies of his 1788 pamphlet *Observations on a Guinea Voyage, in a series of Letters Addressed to the Rev. Thomas Clarkson*, as the addressee himself records in the *History* [Clarkson 1808, vol. 1, p. 498]. Reading Stanfield and Rushton in parallel, then, offers important insights, especially when it comes to their experience of *witnessing* the Middle Passage. They commit to absolutely diverging strategies which, nevertheless, convey their shared need for engagement — which is human, ethical and political (political *because* ethical, ethical *because* human) — and, in their distinctive ways, relies on the «truth claims» investing their testimonies.[9]

Both Stanfield and Rushton appear to have been engaged in different slaving voyages at exactly the same time. In his book-length study *The Slave Ship*, Marcus Rediker carries out a careful reconstruction of Stanfield's experience on the basis of his report in the *Observations*, combined with the documentary sources available, and identifies Stanfield's Atlantic crossing on the *True Blue* — following his eight-month stay in a slaving trading fortress in Africa – within the invaluable repository of the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database as Voyage id #91985.[10] Bringing together the bare data made

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open access at https://hcommons.org/deposits/item/hc:38629/ See Goodridge 2022 for a general survey of the project. An edited collection by Binfield and Christmas [2018] exploring the topic from the perspective of teaching dynamics added to the debate.

[7] On Stanfield's eventful life, cf. McCormack 2019, pp. 208-212, and Pieter van der Merwe's *ODNB* entry «James Field Stanfield», latest version 8 January 2009, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26236, accessed 11 Mar. 2023. For Rushton's biography, see Baines 2014, pp. 1-19, and Dellarosa 2014, pp. 1-14.

[8] For a critical reading of the image, see Wood 2000, pp. 1-6.

[9] I am here using this locution with a different inflection from Ian Baucom's reading, which discusses the investment of truth in the tradition of factual fiction. Cf. Baucom 2005, Chapter 8 in particular, and above, p. 36.

[10] The home page of the new *Slave Voyages* website introduces it as «a collaborative digital initiative that compiles and makes publicly accessible records of the largest slave trades in history», involving «a multi-disciplinary team of historians, librarians, curriculum specialists, cartographers, computer programmers, and web designers, in

visible in the database once you click on any of the columns and expand the information available to full detail does have a dislocating effect on the researcher, when read against both the eye-witness report of the *Observations* and the poetic transmutation Stanfield carries out in *A Guinea Voyage*, a three-book poem published in 1789. The ship's owner, origin, intermediate and final destinations (the triangle which is a circle: Liverpool-Los Islands-Jamaica-Liverpool), the two captains and crew, the dates, the gap between slaves embarked and disembarked — the bare facts take on their overcast colours – *voyage completed as intended, delivered slaves for original owners* — even before we turn our attention to their *narrative*. This is James Field Stanfield's *Observations on a Guinea Voyage*, printed in 1788 by the Quaker official printer and activist James Phillips, who played a prominent role from the earliest day of the London-based abolitionist movement [Clover 2013].

As always, paratext offers revealing details. Thus recites the Advertisement to Stanfield's *Observations*:

> That the following account is no imaginary scene, no picture overcharged by enthusiasm or prejudice, the publick may be satisfied, when I inform them, that I have taken an affidavit, substantiating the principal facts that led to these Observations. [Signed] J. F. Stanfield [Stanfield 1788, n.p.].

From Medieval Latin, literally, «he has declared on oath», *affidavit* comes from *affidare*, to trust [oneself to]; Johnson's *Dictionary* entry reads «A declaration upon oath», with the specification that «*affidavit* signifies, in the language of the common law, *he made oath*». Taking legal accountability for the truthfulness of the report entails partaking in such trustworthiness — which, in turn, lends reliability to the account itself — thus bringing the logical loop that such a performative legal action carries out full circle. What you're going to read here, in other words, is no construct – no fictional product of an affected heart – no «imaginary scene» — not even the least credible, given the *unaccountably* harrowing particulars that the narrator profusely details. It seems likely that such strategy of *augmented reality horror*, as it were, as sanctioned by an official test of credibility, was directly functional to the propaganda aim to which the pamphlet was destined, as reliability was certainly a crucial prerequisite in the abolition campaign – especially when considering, as the writer does, the difficulty in making things known — what the pamphleteer refers to as the «impenetrable veil» thrown over the Guinea trade [Stanfield 1788, p. 2]

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consultation with scholars of the slave trade from universities in Europe, Africa, South America, and North America». The product of decades of collaboration and shared research, the Transatlantic and Intra-American database has involved scholars working on data in libraries and archives from across the Atlantic world. See https://www.slavevoyages.org/about/about# [accessed 28 Oct. 2022].

and, conversely, the false information of pro-slavery propaganda, surrounding what is sardonically defined as the «humane process of the Slave-Trade» [p. 3]. The denunciation is actually focused less on the conditions of those enslaved below deck than those semi-enslaved above. It provides evidence, literally on oath, of the extent to which, under conditions of extremity — the fatal latitude 28° [p. 11], the passing of which marks the shedding of all control on the part of Captain and officers — unrestrained violence is exerted, «as soon as there is no moral possibility of desertion, or application for justice» [p. 10]. This inevitably makes the content of the scanty pages directly dedicated to the treatment of the enslaved people, in the last-but-one Letter VI, all the more appalling for being left almost *unspoken*:

> no pen, no abilities, can give more than a very faint semblance of the horrid situation. One *real* view—one MINUTE, absolutely spent in the slave rooms on the middle passage would do more for the cause of humanity, than […] the whole collective eloquence of the British senate [p. 30].

Recording the failure of rhetoric against the experience of witnessing which Clarkson would declare in his *History*, thirty years and a victorious campaign apart — while itself performing an effective rhetorical manoeuvre in that it qualifies its object in absentia, amounts at the same time to a statement of fact. This move finds its most haunting exemplification in the *missing* description of the rape of an enslaved child:

> One instance more of brutality I would, however, willingly relate, as practiced by the captain on an unfortunate female slave, of the age of eight or nine, but that I am obliged to withhold it; for though my heart bleeds at the recollection, though the act is too atrocious and bloody to be passed over in silence, yet as I cannot express it in any words, that would not severely wound the feelings of the delicate reader, I must be content with suffering it to escape among those numerous hidden and unrevealed enormities, the offspring of barbarity and despotism, that are committed daily in the prosecution of this execrable trade [p. 33].

The passage stands out as evidence of the condition of experiential, emotional, ethical, and ultimately rhetorical agony facing the eyewitness, who finds himself in a predicament without solution — a communicative impasse where the experience of the horror witnessed entails both the ethical demand to express it and the rhetorical failure to do so. Scanty details are at the same time conjured up and denied to the reader — how can you express that which cannot be spoken? While this rhetorical aporia leaves the question unresolved as to whether any form of inexpressible voyeurism may be detected in the passage [cf. WOOD 2002], a few qualifiers are sufficient to pierce the veil of the speaker's reticence and activate the reader's *imaginative* construct,

whereby each individual is implicitly asked to take on the responsibility to imagine for him or herself what must be left «hidden and unrevealed», as the reference to «the feelings of the delicate reader» allows one to infer. One cannot help perceiving the voice of Conrad's Marlow, sharing his yarn in the suspended time-space situation on board the *Nellie* yawl on the river Thames, and conjuring up for his listeners, at the end of his narrative, the silhouette of Kurtz's unknowing fiancée, who, he deems, would not be able to bear the horror underlying the true story that he chooses *not* to give her. *It would have been too dark — too dark altogether* [Conrad 1978, p. 98].

Silence as Witness

Let us return to Rushton, and the Slaving Voyages Database. Following the lead of Marcus Rediker, and applying the scanty biographical data at our disposal to the main grid — i.e., the merchant company he worked for, Watt and Gregson, the one reference in his son's obituary [Rushton Jr., 1814] that locates him in Dominica when he contracted trachoma, and his age, nineteen, when he became blind, one likely candidate does appear for the slaving ship in which young Rushton was employed, for what is recorded as his only and fatal slaving voyage. And this is the match — the slaving ship *Gregson*, Voyage id #91608, fitted out for Gregson, Boat, Wilson and Hanley in Liverpool, setting out on April 6, 1775, and completing its triangular (or circular) transatlantic route on October 6 of the same year, with the intermediate stops at Bonny, West Coast of Africa, to *upload the cargo*, and indeed, Dominica, to «disembark» 550 slaves over an original total of 674 — which means a loss of 124 *items*. Incidentally, the data available record also the loss of three of the crew — but do not speak of any specific illness. Here, too, the box for the «outcome», as in the previous example, records *voyage completed as intended, delivered slaves for original owners*.

After years of post-traumatic physical and psychological distress, Edward Rushton rather tentatively began his writing career, experimenting with libertarian and rather flat loyalist verse, over a phase that had its peak with *The Dismember'd Empire*, dated 1782, which lamented the loss of the American colonies and the prospective demise of the British empire. This was followed by a sudden and unexplained five-year creative silence, in which there is no trace whatsoever of any published text on Rushton's part. This gap exactly corresponds to the time in which another tragic — indeed sensational — slaving voyage, id #84106 in the database, made the unspeakable horror of the Middle Passage finally lacerate British public opinion. The Zong case, as I argue elsewhere [Dellarosa 2014, pp. 127-141], cannot but have had a tremendous impact on the writer – considering that the syndicate of its owners included that William Gregson who had been young Rushton's employer.

Rushton stayed silent between 1782 and 1787 — to date, no new poem has been discovered that may be attributed to his name in what appears to have been a veritable ethical caesura, arguably corresponding to a phase of profound personal and political crisis. When he resumed writing, his former loyalist posture gave way to an increasingly radical stance, which first took shape in the experimental and rebellious form and content of *West Indian Eclogues* (1787). This collection, as is claimed in the Advertisement, was indeed the product «of actual observation» — *poems of witness*, in fact:

> The author of the following Eclogues has resided several years in the West-Indies. They, who have spent only a small portion of time there, must have been frequent witnesses (it is to be hoped, unwilling ones also) of barbarities similar to those, which are here related. [Rushton 2014, p. 42]

The extant biographical sources — i.e., his son's obituary [Rushton Jr. 1814] and William Shepherd's account of Rushton's life that opens his posthumous edition of his works [Rushton 1824], consistently locate Rushton's experience of transatlantic slavery and the trade in the later part of that phase of his life when he was employed in the merchant navy — roughly, between 1766 and 1775-76, i.e., from the moment he was first indentured as «a sea boy» for Watt & Gregson at the age of 10 [Rushton Jr. 1814, p. 474], until he quit service following the onset of his eye condition at nineteen. The opening paragraph, on the other hand, indicates a residence of «several years» in the West Indies — which, one may conjecture, must have been mostly spent on shipboard service in the Caribbean area. As I argued elsewhere [Dellarosa 2014, pp. 150-54], it appears clear that the pre-adolescent or adolescent Rushton must have had first-hand experience of slavery as an established practice in British colonial possessions, aside from his actual experience of a slaving voyage.[1] As the opening paragraph allows one to infer, if even those «who have spent only a small portion of time there» acquire full consciousness of the «barbarities» of human enslavement, the burden of horrors *witnessed* by somebody who «resided [there] several years» must be hardly endurable:

> In delineating the following scenes, the author has painted from actual observation. He writes from the heart: for he feels what he describes. In striving to give simplicity of stile to the dialogue, he may have too much neglected those ornaments, of which Poetry ought never, perhaps, to be

[1] From both biographical accounts it emerges that the voyage on the *Gregson* must have been his only experience. See Dellarosa 2014, pp. 151-152 for a full treatment of the subject.

> entirely destitute. But the praise, due to poetic excellence, has not been the author's chief hope. Humanity has been the first, the leading, motive of this undertaking. And if these Eclogues shall contribute, in the humble sphere, to prevent excessive punishments from being unnecessarily inflicted on that wretched race, to whom they relate,—the author of them will receive the highest gratification, of which his mind is capable […]. [Rushton 2014, p. 42]

The emphasis laid on both the authenticity of the testimony («actual observation») and its mediation through the invented sign (*painted*) accounts for a poetic language that must do without the «ornaments» expected of «Poetry». The search for a simple language to find expression for the «wretched» had been circulating in the developing antipastoral vein as well as in the poetry published in contemporary periodical press,[2] and was underlying the body of balladry in-the-making upon which the *experiment in form* to come of *Lyrical Ballads* would be constructed.[3] In Rushton's case, the experiential and 'objective' level — «actual observation» — is mediated by the experiential and subjective faculty to *feel*: writing «from the heart» is consequent to the capacity to «feel», i.e., experience in emotion or sensation, «what [one] describes» — the object of *actual observation* — that is, the *barbarities* of which the poet reports he was the (unwilling) witness. By implication, this capacity must be exerted also with respect to the emotion or sensation of *others*, as the act of sympathetic understanding encapsulated in Adam Smith's formulation entails. It is then upon the combination of observation and sympathetic responsiveness that the entire poetic project of *West Indian Eclogues* is founded. The writer's eyewitness testimony, forever fixed in his mind's eye,[4] is reshaped by an act of *imaginatively* sharing, a partaking in the situation of those, whose predicament asks to find expression in *simple* words. «Humanity has been the first, the leading motive of this undertaking», is the claim: not «poetic excellence» — as conjured up and assumedly brought about by poetic «ornaments» — but poetry as direct *action*, intended to bring about change as an exercise in «humani-

[2] Cf. Mayo 1954, especially pp. 490-495, whose main focus is the poetry of the magazines, particularly in the1790s. On the antipastoral vein exemplified in Crabbe's narrative long poem *The Village* (1783), see Curran 1986, pp. 92-99.

[3] See McLane 2008, pp. 200-203; Curran 1986, pp. 97-107; McEathron 1999, pp. 1-26.

[4] There is a further level of irony entailed in the writer's condition of blindness, which is related to his relying on a «rhetoric of eye-witness vision»: Burke 2001, p. 251. The article compellingly interrogates the polysemic articulation of the trope of *vision* in the poem — as a narrative device and a metaphor, but also the instrument of a strategy to displace violence onto an often-complicit readership.

ty». Various inflections of the word are intended here, recorded by Johnson's *Dictionary*, including «*benevolence*; *tenderness*» — but also resonating with the echoes of a continuing conceptual elaboration. The notion of humanity as a shared condition — «Humankind; the collective body of mankind», in the *Dictionary* — developed alongside the naturalization of a racialized classification, and was in fact the assumption underlying the identification itself of a racially-based hierarchy, as Tim Burke notes: «[i]n its post enlightenment formulation, the common denominator of 'humanity' is not some universal essence, but a relativized — or racialized — construction of equally natural but not equivalent natures».[5]

In *West Indian Eclogues* — where the only speaking voices are those of the enslaved Africans in their whispered elaboration of possible strategies to counteract white violence — but also in the antislavery poems that followed, from «Toussaint to His Troops», where the black leader of the Haitian Revolution addresses his troops in the first person, to the late anti-imperialist ballad «The Coromantees», Rushton's five-year silence following the literally *unspeakable* tragedy of the *Zong* explodes in a polyphony of voices, summoning all the actors of the revolutionary Atlantic in a deliberate and fully consistent act of defiance, devising a poetic as well as political project. Against this rebellious backdrop, the Middle Passage is itself constructed as a viable space for resistance. «The Coromantees» is quintessential Rushton — at the end of his life and at his most radical:

> On the wing for Barbadoes, and sweeping along
> Before a brisk easterly gale,
> An African trader with wretchedness stored,
> With his crew half destroy'd and contagion on board,
> Beheld on his quarter a sail. [Rushton 2014, p. 174]

«When we read the poem as witness», Carolyn Forché reminds us, «[l]anguage incises the page, wounding it with testimonial presence, and the reader is marked by encounter with that presence. Witness begets witness. The text we read becomes a living archive». As modern readers of these testimonies of resistance, we are asked to bear witness. Rushton's terse articulation of the unspeakable horror of the Middle Passage, including crew mortality and the concealed tragedy of its human cargo — *wretchedness stored* — does indeed *wound* the page for us, ultimately asking of us an act of recognition and engagement.

[5] Burke 2001, pp. 245-248 (p. 247). See also Richardson 1999, pp. 129-133 in particular.

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Scottish Literature of Migration and Transculturality: Subversive Reticence and Gender Negotiations in Lady Anne Barnard's Cape Writings

Abstract

The prevailing perception among scholars identifies the Romantic-period Scottish poet Thomas Pringle as the first South African writer in English during the nineteenth century. However, recent scholarship has brought to light that, well before Pringle's major works emerged in 1834, another Scot had extensively chronicled the life, culture, and colonial dynamics in the Cape Colony from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century: Lady Anne Lindsay, the wife of colonial secretary Andrew Barnard, with him in South Africa from 1797 to 1802. During this time, she produced poetry, diaries, and letters that warrant deeper critical exploration than they have previously received. This article aims to advocate for the reassessment of Lady Barnard as a significant travel writer whose narratives of exile offer crucial insights into the negotiations and compromises women faced in colonial settings. Specifically, the article endeavours to demonstrate that her Cape writings exhibit a dialectics of the said and unsaid, an ironic tone, and a semantics or poetics of silence unveiling her deliberately ambiguous stance on colonial relations, racial otherness, and slavery. In doing so, Lady Barnard subtly challenges official colonial discourses, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the ambiguities and complexities inherent in colonial contexts.

Gioia Angeletti

This essay represents a culmination of a two-month research project conducted in Edinburgh during May and June 2022 and supported by a Nominated Fellowship awarded by the he Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh.[1] While serving as a preliminary overview of my work in Scotland, which will be further elaborated in forthcoming publications, it is not intended to provide an exhaustive examination of all pertinent historiography and critical debates. At this junc-

[1] Most of this research concerned papers and miscellaneous manuscripts pertaining to Lady Anne Barnard (*née* Lindsay) stored at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh.

ture, the primary objective is to reassess the writings of Lady Anne Lindsay, a Scottish woman whose significance in the context of Scotland's role in the British Empire remains underappreciated, despite her notable contributions to colonial and imperial literature during the late eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Lady Anne Lindsay, the wife of colonial secretary Andrew Barnard, resided in the Cape of Good Hope from 1797 to 1802. Born at Balcarres House in Fife in 1750, she, as the eldest child of James Lindsay, the Fifth Earl of Balcarres, had connections with prominent figures in Edinburgh and London.[2] Notably, throughout her life, she engaged with eminent literati and leading politicians of her time, including David Hume, Henry Mackenzie, Dr Johnson, Edmund Burke, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Walter Scott, William Pitt, Lord Monboddo, Arthur Wellesley, and Henry Dundas. Additionally, she was well acquainted with the Prince of Wales, creating a rich tapestry of relationships that contextualize her life within the intellectual and political milieu of the late eighteenth century.

In 1793, Lady Anne Lindsay defied societal expectations by marrying Andrew Barnard, a former soldier and the son of an Irish Bishop. At the age of 42, she astonished acquaintances further by choosing a husband twelve years her junior, less renowned, and notably less affluent. Remarkably, through her connection with Lord Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War in William Pitt's first administration, her husband secured the position of Colonial Secretary to Lord Macartney, the Governor of the Cape Colony, in 1796. The Barnards resided in Cape Town, mostly in the Governor's Apartments in the Castle of Good Hope, from May 1797 to early January 1802, during a period that saw the colony's transfer to Dutch rule.[3] However, when British rule was reinstated in 1806, Andrew Barnard returned to South Africa, but this time without his wife. Tragically, after only a year, he passed away. Following her husband's death, Lady Anne relocated to London, where she lived with her sister until her own demise in 1825. During her final years, she devoted herself to writing and revising records that chronicled her life in Scotland, England, and South Africa.

As a literary figure, Barnard is primarily recognized for her composition of the ballad «Auld Robin Gray», published posthumously in 1825 within a volume curated by Sir Walter Scott through the Bannatyne Club, a publication society he established. However, the extensive archive of Lady Anne Barnard, consisting of miscellaneous items primarily housed in the National Library of Edinburgh and in Balcarres House, is extraordinary and calls for recognition, as pointed out by Greg Clingham, emeritus professor of English at Bucknell

[2] For details of her life see both Fairbridge 1924 and Taylor 2015.

[3] On the Scots' presence in the British occupations of the Cape see MacKenzie with Dalziel 2007, pp. 37-57.

University to whom I feel greatly indebted for having mapped the Barnard archives [Clingham 2021]. Building upon his groundwork, my investigation into Barnard's journals, letters, and diaries from her South African sojourn underscored the necessity of a more meticulous and thorough examination of what can be termed «Scottish literature of migration and transculturality». In essence, it became apparent that any serious exploration of this literary field cannot afford to overlook Barnard's contributions. Indeed, Lady Anne Barnard should be situated among those Scottish writers who, spanning the 1780s to the early 1830s, actively and diversely engaged with British imperial administration, spending significant periods in or journeying through regions colonized or soon to be colonized by Britain. This firsthand exposure led to diverse encounters with otherness and the development of trans- or intercultural relationships, vividly documented in various forms of life writing such as letters, journals, diaries, and travelogues.[4] Therefore, Barnard's narratives enrich the broader tapestry of Scottish literature during this period, shedding light on the complex dynamics of migration, cultural exchange, and imperial engagement which characterized it.

However, contemporary scholars seldom acknowledge Barnard's sojourn in South Africa as akin to the experiences of temporary expatriates or exiles. Surprisingly, her writings have been largely overlooked by literary critics and historians, despite the availability of modern editions for some of her most significant works [Barnard 1973; Barnard 1994; Barnard 1999; Barnard 2006]. On the contrary, the Scottish poet Thomas Pringle, who lived in the Cape Colony much later, from 1820 to 1826, following his family's participation in the British Government's scheme for assisted emigration, is widely recognized as the first British writer to extensively document the life, culture, and colonial situation in the Cape Colony between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Unlike Barnard's, Pringle's contributions to our understanding of the discourses surrounding race, slavery, colonialism, and imperialism during that period – including Scotland's contested involvement in the colonial and imperial cause [Mackenzie 1993; Fry 2001; Devine 2003; Leask 2007] – has garnered well-deserved scholarly attention.[5] This notable contrast underscores the need for a reassessment of

[4] Other exponents of this literature are Thomas Pringle, John Leyden, Mungo Park, Janet Schaw, Frances Wright and Anne Grant. For a treatment of similar issues emerging in earlier Scottish colonial writings, from the Union of the Crowns to the Union of Parliaments, see Sandrock 2022. Another relevant recent study examining the dialectics of home and exile as regards Scotland's role in the creation and circulation of imperial ideology is Gust 2021. For the editorial history of Barnard's letters, memoirs, diaries and journals see Barnard 2006, pp. 10-16.

[5] See, among others, Voss 1990; Shun 2006; Angeletti 2011; and Vigne 2012.

Barnard's works and their significance in relation to the broader critical discourses on colonial experiences and perspectives during the same historical period.

For example, the South African writer Laurens van der Post has argued that, when delving into the inaugural phase of English literature in South Africa, our examination should commence with Thomas Pringle and the 1820s Settlers. Consequently, he dismisses the significance of Barnard's Cape writings, contending that they lack local flavour and the depth of historical documentation of colonial life due to their perceived universality: «they might have been written anywhere in the world», he argues, «their local colour going no deeper than the colour of its surroundings into a chameleon» [Van der Post 1985, p. 28]. Contrary to this perspective, the textual examples that will be presented prove that Barnard, particularly during her South African stay, actively engaged with the colonial politics of the First British occupation, and that she meticulously documented the lives of indigenous people, including the Khoikhoi and the Xhosa,[6] their traditions, the natural environment, and pertinent Empire-related issues such as the frontier conflicts caused by the Xhosa and Khoikhoi rebellions and the slave trade. Therefore, all her private and public documents serve as an invaluable source of information shedding light on the ethical, moral, and political controversies influencing the contemporary British government, both domestically and within the Cape colony. This challenges Van der Post's assertion: Barnard's writings, instead of lacking connection to any specific place, intricately capture the complexities and nuances inherent to a distinct historical and geo-cultural context such as that of the South African colony during her sojourn.

However, as a woman, her exploration of issues and subjects traditionally labelled as masculine within contemporary gender norms is often characterized by a stylistic approach that veers towards avoiding transparency, assuming a tactful reticence whenever she crosses the boundary between the private and public spheres. Her thoughtful recourse to omissions, half-statements, hesitations, irony, self-deprecation, and apology carries latent subversiveness, particularly when addressing aspects of the social and political life of the Cape that were considered beyond the purview of women. Her writings are characterised by a dialectics of utterance and silence, confession and reticence which demonstrate a keen awareness of the gender essentialism prevalent in her time, as well as of the material conditions shaping the production and reception of literary texts during that era. Therefore, compared to Thomas Pringle's writings, the plethora of documents she left behind, including her drawings and watercolours, holds added value, since they unveil crucial

[6] She refers to them as Hottentots and Kaffirs respectively, which at the time, unlike now, were not pejorative terms.

details concerning the positions and roles women could assume in colonial contexts.

In her pioneering book *Discourses of Difference* (1991), Sara Mills takes issue with those scholars who have depicted women solely as victims of colonial powers:

> Most studies which consider women and imperialism consist of descriptions of «native» and British women as the objects of male gaze or male protection within colonial texts. […] many women were actively involved in colonialism: they wrote about the colonial situation and their works were very widely read. [Mills 1991, p. 58]

«[L]ittle serious work has been undertaken», Mills argue, «to analyse women as agents within the colonial context» [Ivi]. In fact, since the publication of her book in 1991, there has been a notable emergence of scholarly studies diligently seeking to remap the relationship between women and imperial history.[7] Consequently, the territory is no longer as uncharted as it was thirty years ago. Nonetheless, considering that gender history and Imperial History have developed along separate lines for a very long time [Midgley 1998, p. 1], numerous unexplored niches persist, especially concerning «the way that women's writing contributes to and subverts the maintenance of the discursive frameworks of the period» [Mills 1991, p. 199]. Mills poignantly argued that analyzing women's colonial writing presents challenges as it necessitates discussing inclinations towards aligning with colonial discourses or towards writing influenced by femininity discourses. Nevertheless, it is evident that their writing does not align straightforwardly with Orientalist perspectives as described by Edward Said. "There are statements within the texts", Mills observed, "which are clearly colonialist, but there are also statements which undermine them." [*Ivi*, pp. 61-62].

This apparent paradox becomes particularly relevant when delving into an examination of Barnard's works. On one hand, it is indisputable that Barnard, as a British subject, supported the imperial goals of the Cabinet in South Africa, and her writings predominantly echo a colonialist perspective. It is essential to acknowledge that, pragmatically, her alignment with hegemonic discourses of colonialism and imperial ideology was driven by a financial need – securing her husband's appointment as Colonial Secretary. "[T]ho' sick at sea, cowardly, and not quite young enough to think a new climate very safe", she wrote to Henry Dundas, "I am ready to put on my cork jacket for his advantage" [Barnard 1973, p. 17]. On the other hand, a closer

[7] Among others: Chaudhuri and Strobel 1992; Midgley 1998; McEwan 2000; Ware 2015; Jones 2017; Agnew 2017; and Walker 2020.

examination reveals that her remarks on the local government, the conditions of the natives and the slave system occasionally carry subtle undertones of resistance, introducing discordant (albeit mild) notes into her apparent endorsement of *status-quo* politics. These nuances suggest the presence of paradoxes and moral ambiguities inherent in colonial life. It is my contention that readers of Barnard have often overlooked the political implications embedded in her omissions, half-statements, reticence, and consistent self-belittling and deferential tone. This issue, combined with the tendency to hastily dismiss what she labels as "domestic concerns" [NLS MS 27/3/1-6] as trivial, raises the question of whether this lack of attention to the latent subversiveness of her words contributed to the neglect of Barnard's writings, especially the unpublished ones. This disregard persisted at least until the 1990s, when a few scholars began breaking the silence surrounding her work [Lenta, 1991; Lenta 1992; Driver, 1995; Murray, 2012a; Murray, 2012b; Taylor 2015.].

Considering the aforesaid nuanced interplay between maintaining and subverting the «discursive frameworks» of the time, my research on Barnard in Edinburgh was guided by pivotal inquiries. I sought to unravel how gender shapes the Self-vs.-Other dynamics embedded in colonial discourse and evident in Barnard's writings. Delving into her perspective on black slavery at the Cape became another focal point, as did deciphering the political significance embedded in Lady Barnard's documents, including her letters to Lord Henry Dundas from the Cape Colony, through which she consistently provided him with detailed updates on all the events and occurrences during her residence. Addressing these queries in the present essay necessitates a dual focus on key themes within her writings: firstly, an exploration of local politics, scrutinizing her depictions of the Cape's administration during her sojourn; and secondly, an examination of her profound engagement with the subject of black slavery, manifested not only in her writings but also in her remarkable drawings and watercolors, integral components of her narratives.

«Talking in a womanish way of those sacred matters called politics»: Barnard's political discourse

Barnard was aware of the societal constraints dictating the discursive boundaries that a woman of her class was not permitted to cross. In her most intimate writings, the Cape diaries, she notably adopts the second person singular pronoun, seemingly addressing all women who might share her circumstances: «Once more thou creature of omissions, always intending right – always forgetting … thinking your journal unimportant & what you have to say not worth paper pen and ink yet always regretting afterwards you did so, Once more try to be regular for one year at least – all the time that you perhaps may

be at the Cape of Good Hope» [Barnard 1999, I, p. 1]. The Cape diaries serve as unabridged journals that she wrote for herself as memoranda throughout her life, even if only those from 1799 and 1800 survived. In contrast, what we refer to as the Cape journals (divided into three volumes: 1: Sea Journal; 2: Residence at the Cape of Good Hope; 3: Tour into the Interior of Africa) document the initial two years of her residence in South Africa (1797-98); later in her life, Barnard revised and shared them among members of her family and close acquaintances. In both sets of writings, she scrupulously observes the social and political life during the First British occupation of the Cape, consistently adopting the perspective of a woman cognizant of the contemporary gender codes and the need to negotiate her intentions as an informant and narrator. However, the diaries exhibit a more direct and less constrained approach compared to the journals, reflecting a reduced concern for societal propriety.

Similarly, in her letters to Dundas, when delving into the politics of the colony – for instance, the frontier disputes between the British and the natives, the complex relationship between the British and the Cape Dutch, and the corruption and scramble for power of Governor Macartney's successors (in particular Sir George Yonge) – she strategically endeavours to confine herself to her sphere of action, seeking to present herself as respectful of the contemporary conduct codes through the deployment of apologetic or self-justifying statements. In a letter to Dundas from September 1799, for example, she writes: «I fear I may be led to place myself in a presumptuous position & improper point of view to my dear friend, by throwing out opinions on the wisdom of some things going forward there which I have no business to touch on» [Barnard 1973, p. 193]. Contrastingly, in the unabridged diaries, she generally appears less preoccupied with feminine propriety, as illustrated by an entry also dated September 1799, in which she states: «It takes a liberty […] by talking in a womanish way of those sacred matters called politics […] & I may be thought a little presumptuous for sporting them, but I must write as I think & feel at the time» [Barnard 1999, I, p. 277]. A comparative analysis of various kinds of texts, such as the letters to eminent politicians *vis-à-vis* the private unabridged diaries, underscores the chameleon-like nature of her writerly self, and her tendency to adeptly perform different identities in her writing in response to readers' expectations, «textual constraints» or «discursive pressures on production and reception« [Mills 1993, pp. 1, 5-6]. By and large, in her private diaries — fundamentally serving as personal memoranda — she did not feel compelled to adopt the self-belittling mode and reticence that prominently pervade her other forms of writing.

As an illustrative example, I will compare two texts originating from the same period but intended for different audiences: the first is extracted from a diary entry dated 3 May 1799, while the second is from a letter written by

Barnard to Governor Macartney a few days later, on 15 May 1799. Despite the varying tones and levels of irony in the two excerpts, they exhibit intriguing resonances with each other. The following is the excerpt from the unabridged Cape diaries:

> — part of Margarets [*letter*] to me […] gave me discomposure, when asking Ly Jane Dundas if Mr D was satisfied with Mr B in his department, she said she believed that Mr D thought Lady Anne the most official person of the two; this comes from the shyness of my dear but unpolitic husband, who thinking Lord Macartney gave to Mr D the constant account of all the business of the colony while I gave him all the slight detail & gossip, conceived it woud [*sic*] only be an intrusion & impertinence in his troubling him with unnecessary letters […]. *I* the official person! poor *I* who never know any thing & can appear *Beckey* sometimes from ignorance of common events which I hear by accident, Mr B never telling us women any thing […]. [Barnard 1999, I, p. 126]

Barnard refers to a letter from her sister conveying Lord Dundas's perception that she holds a more official status than her husband. With little circumspection, she describes her husband as «dear but unpolitic», subtly implying his naivety in assuming that she can only offer Dundas «the slight detail & gossip». Despite the self-diminishment she employs by acknowledging her ignorance and the fortuitous nature of her knowledge, Barnard's self-assertiveness shines through with the emphatic use of «I». The messages conveyed are less veiled than in her public writing, as evidenced by the cheeky concluding remark – «Mr B never telling us women any thing».

In the following excerpt from the aforementioned letter to Macartney, Barnard's tone takes a slight shift:

> Certainly there never was a poor woman who interfered less with things out of her sphere than I do […]. And certainly there never was a man fond of his wife and having rather a high opinion of her, who told a woman Less than Mr. Barnard tells me, particularly during the time your Lordship was here. […] Mr. Barnard has the idea (not a bad one, you will say) that women have nothing to do with the knowledge of politics or measures […]. All I learn is by accident […]. In writing to you I skim the surface of appearances, very accurately right on *No point* I dare say; but as I do not *affect* to be so, no harm is done. Wise matters, as I ought, I left to Lord Macartney in the first instance, & to the General now in the second, reserving the *gossiping department* to myself. [cf. Fairbridge 1924, pp. 108, 110-111]

Preceding this excerpt, Barnard transcribes a portion of another letter she dispatched to Henry Dundas, wherein she remarks on what she perceives as the misconduct of the local government headed *pro tempore* by his nephew, General Dundas. In the letter to Macartney, her apologetic and self-deprecating demeanour is prominently evident as she emphatically disavows any involvement in «things out of her sphere», encompassing politics and other «wise matters», in contrast to the realm of «gossiping department». Similarly, she acknowledges the fortuitous acquisition of knowledge rather than actively seeking it. Aware of her position as a female subject and wife of a colonial officer, she strategically feigns ignorance and disinterest to avoid contradicting her husband's (and potentially Macartney's) views on women's prescribed sphere of action. Yet, beneath her characteristic tactful irony and shrewdness, her words subtly reveal a veiled annoyance at the patriarchal notion dictating that her gender should remain disconnected from political matters.

In fact, Barnard's writing exhibits a subtle interplay of self-denial with self-assertion, skilfully blending apparent compliance with societal gender-prescriptions and oblique challenges to the same. Importantly, these nuances never destabilize the role she assigns herself within the Cape colony and the broader social and cultural milieu of her era. Her endorsement of a femininity mirroring the prevailing cult of domesticity also becomes evident when Barnard addresses one of the most contentious issues of colonial discourse: the horror of slavery.

«I could not help feeling more pity for them than I thought perhaps that I was justified for»: Lady Barnard and black slavery

The profit *vis-à-vis* the ignobility of black slavery was a contentiously debated issue in eighteenth-century Scotland. This discourse involved prominent Scottish Enlightenment philosophers such as Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and James Beattie, as well as Scots who actively contributed to the anti-slavery movement and played pivotal roles in drafting the 1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, including James Ramsay, Zachary Macaulay, Henry Brougham, and James Stephen. There is no indication in Barnard's writings that she feigned support for the Cabinet's imperial goals in South Africa solely to endorse her husband's appointment as Colonial Secretary. The Barnards were slave owners, which cannot be simplistically justified by the fact that there was not much market for free labour at the Cape. However, as regards the enslaved people and their conditions, in her Cape writings, there are instances where she appears to distance herself from certain hegemonic discourses. At these moments, she seems to fluctuate toward the condition of the Other, as if it were a reversed mirror reflection of herself, so the boundary between the Self and Other of colonial ideology becomes porous, and Barnard seems

to reconsider her class and racial privileges when confronted with scenes of oppression.

Shortly after her arrival at the Cape, she finds herself face to face with one of these scenes – a group of enslaved people, fatigued by their long walking under the weight of wood bundles for their masters:

> The first indications of Slavery to my free born eyes, and of the opposite ranks in human life, here trotted past us; it was evening, the time when the Slaves sent by their Masters to gather wood, at a distance perhaps of 8 or 10 miles from Town, return with their bundles, the poor fellow sets off each morning before day break, without shoes or Stockings […]. New to me as the appearance of those poor Slaves were, I could not help feeling more pity for them than I thought perhaps that I was justified for afterwards, when I saw the kind manner in which the *Stromboms* and some of my acquaintances treated theirs … so much the reverse of what I have heard of the hardships shown to those in the West Indies. [Barnard 1994, pp. 157-158]

This is one of those passages highlighting Barnard's inner conflict between the unconscious need to alleviate the sense of guilt participating in a system upholding the practice of slavery (as indicated by the reference to the «kind» treatment) and the full awareness of the disturbing class contrast between her «free born eyes» and those of the «opposite rank». On the contrary, her unwavering condemnation of the unspeakable atrocities committed against enslaved people eliminates any ambiguity, as evidenced in the following entry from the unabridged diaries dated 14 March 1799, in which she reports the arrival of an illegal cargo of 1,600 slaves from Mozambique, part of a despicable bribe accepted by Governor Yonge from a slave dealer:

> [N]ext day there was to be a sale if slaves belonging to Mr Hogan – a *cargo* from Mosambique – […] – to me there must be something sadly melancholy and degrading to Human nature in that sight but I am told that the poor people have no feelings of that sort themselves and their vanity lyes in looking as well as possible when they are put up for sale […] – I wishd to consider the countinances of each poor slave, look at his eyes, & try to discover if there were any minds amongst them – […] –Mr B. told me afterwards that it was a place I coud [not] find myself in with comfort to myself […]. This circumstance of course made me lay aside the intention, all I wishd for was that I coud render myself invisible & then without impropriety I coud have been one of the company & stockd myself with some observations to lay before Mr Wilberforce. [Barnard 1999, I, pp. 71-72, misspellings are in the original]

Not only does Barnard openly express her sympathy for the leader of the abolitionist campaign, but she also subtly challenges her husband's disapproval of her attending the auction. Without directly critiquing his objection, near the end she strategically employs the word «impropriety» in relation to societal expectations of women's behaviour, a choice of language which subtly reveals her disagreement with these norms.

Nevertheless, Barnard's representation of the Cape slaves is marked by contradictions and tensions. One of Anne Barnard's poems, titled «The Slave of Africa» finds a place in the second volume of her Cape Journals [Barnard 1994, pp. 214-215]. While not deemed a masterpiece, the circumstances surrounding the creation of this poem warrant careful consideration. In this segment of the journal, she recounts observing from the Castle windows, where she resides, the gallows that served as a site for the torture and execution of rebellious slaves under Dutch administration. Expressing profound consternation and disgust, she specifically condemns the Dutch government's practice of beheading slaves and burying their heads separately from their bodies. Following these reflections, she shares a narrative relayed by an Officer about a slave who fell in love with his master's wife and was punished by death for that. She poignantly queries, «What can I do for Urbain [the slave's name] now no more?» and finds her response in the act of setting «his Story to music and [giving] it to the Child of Africa to sing Commemorating thus his love and his misfortune» [Barnard 1994, p. 214].

Barnard unequivocally condemns the cruelty inflicted upon the enslaved. However, the reader's empathy with her words cannot but weaken when she attributes that cruelty to the past era of Dutch rule, acknowledging a significant improvement in the condition of the enslaved since the British takeover:

> I must own that Slaves are but rarely used at the Cape. […] when one sees the lightness of heart in them which can sing and dance all day long and be ready to sleep sweetly and soundly at every spare moment one cannot think their sense of hardship is deep. If this disposition attend complexion, who would wish to be white?» [Barnard 1994, pp. 215-216].

Disturbing contradictions and ambivalences of this nature underscore the complexity of the late eighteenth-century discourse of sympathy, a complexity that carries the inherent risk of desensitizing the impact of colonial exploitation. As previously mentioned, Barnard demonstrated considerable artistic talent. Much like her diaries and journals, her drawings and paintings occasionally capture impressions and visions of the country, conveying ambivalent messages. A particularly noteworthy example is a drawing depicting a slave wet nurse breastfeeding a Boer child.

A slave woman and her children [Reproduced from Barnard 1973, p. 173]

On one hand, Barnard transforms the arduous tasks endured by female slaves into a narrative, converting the factual nature of serfdom into an aesthetic artefact; on the other hand, she captures a sense of shared humanity, particularly that of motherhood, transcending racial and class boundaries. Greg Clingham raises pertinent questions about the interpretation of this drawing, asking for instance: «Can a white artist in the 1790s see race without representing it hierarchically? If so, is this the product of enlightenment or blindness? Genius or incompetence?» [Clingham 2021, p. 381]. It becomes evident that the conventional binary oppositions characterizing traditional colonial discourses, such as Self/colonizer and Other/colonized, are replaced in this context by an anthropological and cultural paradigm grounded in analogy. Barnard distances herself from hegemonic discourses by juxtaposing the domestic and the foreign, emphasizing shared attributes rather than highlighting differences. Significantly, the woman and her child on his knees do not appear racially distinct from the white baby she is breastfeeding, which presents a departure from conventional colonial perspectives by challenging the tendency of colonizing subjects to objectify or exoticize the Other through their gaze. On the other hand, can the aesthetic act and the sentimental mode dull the impact of colonial violence?

In relation to this drawing, it is pertinent to recall a relevant fact in Barnard's life. In the later stages of her life, she discovered that her husband had fathered a daughter named Christina with the Khoikhoi woman Rachel van de Caap. Following this woman's death, Barnard adopted the child and brought her to London, providing her with an education. Christina subsequently served as Barnard's amanuensis and lived with her until her marriage to an Englishman.

As argued by Greg Clingham, «Barnard's personal involvement with Christina echoes her artistic and intellectual interest in race, miscegenation, slavery, and social justice in general» [Clingham 2021, p. 374]. Consequently, regarding the drawing solely as an aestheticization of universal motherhood would be overly simplistic, since Barnard's benevolent actions demonstrate the tangible potential for human solidarity to transcend racial and ethnic boundaries.

Regrettably, these significant messages predominantly remained within the restricted circle of Barnard's friends and relatives. In the Prefaces to her journals and memoirs, she emphatically forbids the dissemination of her writings beyond this intimate enclave. An illustration of this can be found in the Cape journals:

> I leave these pages to the chance of winds & waves to carry them safe to England, and to the discretion of my Sisters who will not shew them (unweeded from nonsense as they are) except to such intimates as are ready to be pleased with whatever comes from them or from me. […] The partiality of my family may possibly overrate the merit of a Work which has nothing but good humour to recommend it, but let me remonstrate against that partiality ever misleading any one to harbour the slightest Idea of publishing it. […] I utterly debar the publication now or ever of any work of mine. I know my own deficiencies. [Barnard 1994, p. 22]

Determining whether Barnard's self-criticism and humility in this passage are strategic forms of *captatio benevolentiae* is challenging. However, given her meticulous editing and transcription of the Cape journals in later life, featuring compelling narratives presented in an engaging style, the hypothetical audience she envisioned could extend beyond the circle of her «intimates». In essence, Barnard's situation suggests that the demarcation between private and public modes of production and reception is more intricate than it initially appears.

In her book *The Autobiographical Subject. Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (1989), Felicity Nussbaum contends that the delineation between the public and private spheres becomes blurred in women's autobiographical writing, asserting that «the edges of the public/private dichotomy become very hazy when we consider the way generic filters shape perceptions of experience» [Nussbaum 1989, p. 136]. Moreover, she observes that the «insistence on a public/private split with the emphasis on personal and emotional life elides the way that production of a rich and complex inner life is itself a political practice» [Ivi]. Notably, in the dedication of the Cape Journals, Barnard expressly declares their intended readership as those «who have nothing better to do than Read this by the fire side with Good nature for their Companion» [Barnard 1994, p. 15], thus deliberately dismissing the journals as mere diversions, neglecting their potential as historical and political documents serving as valuable sources of information on British domestic and foreign politics between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Conclusion

Despite Barnard's explicit prohibition against making her autobiographical writings «public», it is conceivable that she was too witty not to assume that they would be published posthumously. However, her Cape writings demonstrate that even the private act of crafting a complex and nuanced personal life can be, in itself, a political undertaking. In Barnard's case, this enterprise involved navigating the peculiar "autobiographical pact", to adapt a concept articulated by Philippe Lejeune, which a woman of her era was expected to observe. Lejeune generally defines this pact as an implicit agreement between the writer, aiming for the work to be received in a particular manner, and the potential reader, willing to accept it in that specific way – an assumption resting on the shared understanding between the writer and reader regarding the appropriateness of publishing a life story [Lejeune 1989: 3-30]. The journals, letters and diaries she wrote during her residency at the Cape, even if not designed for publication, reveal her awareness of this "pact" to be negotiated with her readers, a cognizance which elucidates the diverse tones and styles she employs depending on her intended audience. Once she said to Admiral Thomas Pringle that «he [was] mistaken if he suppose[d that she was] *one* woman», since she could be «one, two, or three different ones, and [was] capable of being *more*, exactly as the Circumstances [she] was placed in required» [Barnard 1994, p. 164]

Fortunately, some of Barnard's writings are accessible in modern editions; however, a significant portion of Barnard's archive, located in Scotland and in South Africa, remains a wealthy and uncharted territory awaiting thorough exploration, reassessment and recontextualization from both critical-literary and historical perspectives. I fully concur with Clingham's assertion that

> by comparing her with contemporary writers — travelers and natural scientists (John Barrow, Carl Peter Thunberg, Anders Sparrman, François Le Vaillant), novelists (Charlotte Lennox, Frances Burney, Jane Austen), political thinkers (Burke), theologians (Hugh Blair), economists (John Bruce, Adam Smith), essayists (Hume), and moralists (Johnson) — readers will discover a subtle, witty, and penetrating mind. [Clingham 2021, p. 375]

A respectable attempt at reassessing Barnard's journals in light of the cultural and ideological contexts of her time has been accomplished by the critic David Johnson by situating Barnard's shrewd political perspectives within the framework of discourses on political economy and sentiment articulated by Scottish Enlightenment philosophers [Johnson 2012]. However, the journey toward a comprehensive understanding of her Cape writings is still ongoing. Moreover, an extensive reassessment of Anne Barnard's contributions should not confine itself solely to these writings. Rather it should encompass her

broader literary endeavours, including the twenty-six poems collected in the unpublished volume *Lays of the Lindsays*,[8] archived in the National Library of Scotland (H.30.a.6), which also features poems by her sisters Lady Hardwicke and Lady Margaret Burges.

As has been observed, not every aspect of Barnard's writings deserves commendation or reassessment, and her evasiveness concerning the injustice and ignominy of colonial exploitation can be quite disconcerting at times. On the other hand, the wealth of documents she has bequeathed to us, recognized as "the earliest records we have of a British woman's life at the Cape" [Driver 1994, p. 1], demands our utmost attention. Despite occupying a subordinate position within the colonial community as a woman, these records emerge as an invaluable source of information, enlightening us on the intersectionality of the discourses of femininity, race, class and colonialism, as well as on an extensive array of topics concerning the human, political, natural and cultural geography of the Cape at the turn of the century – from controversial issues such as race, miscegenation, slavery, and war to everyday concerns like gardening, cooking and domestic chores.

The Afrikaner poet Antjie Krog admitted selecting Barnard as the subject of her work *Lady Anne. A Chronicle in Verse*, «because she represented white privilege and initially frivolousness», but research «showed her […] as a much more multi-faceted character during the six years she spent at the Cape of Good Hope» [Krog 2017, p. VII]. Indeed, Lord Dundas's request and trust in Barnard's reports endow her with an authoritative role, transforming her writings into more than a mere autobiographical account, engaging and entertaining readers with a narrative style infused with witty self-irony and humour and seamlessly interweaving the imaginary with the real.

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[8] Originally intended for publication in 1824 by the Bannatyne Club under the title *Lays of the Lindsays being poems by the Ladies of the House of Balcarres*, this volume ultimately saw a limited Bannatyne edition in 1825, following Lady Anne's death. This featured solely "Auld Robin Gray" and its two continuations. However, three copies of the volume have survived (one in the family's library at Balcarres, one at Scott's Abbotsford Library and one at the National Library of Scotland). A comprehensive account of this publication is available in the Walter Scott papers housed at the National Library of Scotland. The correspondence between Scott and Barnard reveals multiple references to "Auld Robin Gray" and its origin, with a notable example being Scott's letter to her dated July 14, 1823 [Grierson 1935, pp. 37-44]. In 1849, the ballad and its continuations were reissued by the editor John Murray, in the Appendix to the second volume of the three-volume collection *Lives of the Lindsays*, authored by Alexander Lindsay, Barnard's nephew and 25th Earl of Crawford and Balcarres. This work heavily relies on the unpublished *Memoirs* which Barnard meticulously crafted by revising her lifelong diaries from 1812 to 1822, intended to bear the title *The History of the Family of St. Quinton & the Memoirs of Louisa St. Aubin*. The folio volumes of these manuscripts are currently preserved at both Balcarres and the National Library of Scotland.

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Indo-Italian connections in the Risorgimento Lazzaro Papi, Leopoldo Sebastiani and Carlo Cattaneo

Abstract

The article draws on Giuseppe Tucci's survey of early Italian Indology to explore the interplay of Orientalism and Risorgimento in the accounts of two eminent Italians who travelled to India at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The first is Lazzaro Papi's *Lettere sulle Indie Orientali*, a knowledgeable and lively narration of India's history, geography, manners, and religion first published in 1802 and revised in 1829. The second is Leopoldo Sebastiani's *Storia universale dell'Indostan* (1812), a specimen of those nineteenth-century fashionable universal histories that provides an interesting sample of «partisan» cultural mimicry. In the last section, the article engages with «Dell'India antica e moderna» by positivist historian Carlo Cattaneo, a text which sheds light on both Papi's and Sebastiani's Indian discourse and establishes an insightful parallel between the Italian struggle for independence and India's colonial status and still unexpressed potential for liberation.

Elena Spandri

Orientalism and Risorgimento

Given the pervasive presence of India in the domains of literature, history, linguistics, anthropology, and comparative mythology of European Romantic culture, the paucity of Italian scholarship is symptomatic. The most obvious reason is that being Indological discourse a branch of Orientalism and, being Orientalism an offspring as well as a powerful ally of colonialism, Indology was more active in imperial countries where it played a prominent role in the nation-building process and in the elaboration of modern liberal ideologies [see Pitts 2005, Bayly 2012]. In the context of British imperialism in Asia, the twin disciplines of Orientalism and anthropology provided the ideological backbone not only for missionary intervention but also for administrative policies [see Bayly 1988, Stokes 1989, Inden 1990, Majeed 1992, Muthu 2003, Masuzawa 2005, Strong 2007, Yelle 2013]. However,

the deployment of Indian religion and customs as testing grounds for distributive and evolutionary ideas about the humankind by German philosophers such as Herder, Creuzer, Schlegel, and Hegel proves that India could serve purposes other than the consolidation of empires.

A few years after the end of World War II, eminent Buddhologist and Tibetan scholar Giuseppe Tucci addressed the question of Italian Orientalism from a different angle, providing a historical description of Italy's systematic contacts with India and the Far East from Marco Polo down to Ippolito Desideri, as well a catalogue of Italians who could boast high levels of expertise in Oriental topics.[1] Tucci admitted that Italy did not share the enthusiasm for the «Oriental Renaissance» with the other European countries and ascribed the reason to the struggle for national independence that had drained all its moral and spiritual energies. For the few Italians who were lucky enough to accomplish the passage to India – in geographical or merely cultural terms – Tucci offered an escapist explanation according to which India supplied their vigorous minds a way out of feelings of disappointment and impotence generated by the miserable state of the country over most of the century, thus aligning with a typical Romantic trope of exotic evasion.[2] Such a compensatory reading of Italian early Indological discourse plausibly relates to Tucci's shifting vision of Buddhism and Eastern wisdom after the fascist decades, which, according to Gustavo Benavides, consisted in «a move away from the heroic vision of the 1930s and 1940s to one which stressed compassion» [Benavides 1995, p. 175]. Tucci's engagement with a specifically «Asian humanism that is not aggressive like ours» and «did not assert the dignity of man as to establish hasty and transient hegemonies» [Benavides 1995, p. 175) – which is the task of the Oriental scholar to disclose to the West – accounts for the sympathetic light he sheds on the nineteenth-century Italian discourse on India. Yet, in establishing a direct and almost causative link between Indology and Risorgimento, Tucci at once incorporated the scarcely audible Italian discourse on India into the transnational debate on the epistemological foundations of modern Europe.

The article explores Tucci's vindicated Indo-Italian connections through the cases of Lazzaro Papi and Leopoldo Sebastiani, two remarkable Italians who migrated to India during the Risorgimento and who stand out for the rel-

[1] The study is *Italia e Oriente*, 1949. Along with Giovanni Gentile, in 1933 Giuseppe Tucci founded IsMEO (Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente) and became its director after Gentile's death in 1947.

[2] «L'Italia restò, rispetto agli altri paesi, alquanto indietro come mole di lavoro e vastità di indagini. La passione politica del Risorgimento distolse gli studiosi dalla ricerca di cose orientali» [Tucci 1949, p. 223]. «Compared to other countries, Italy was left behind in terms of amount and scope of investigations. The political passion entailed by Risorgimento diverted scholars from Oriental studies». On the ground-breaking scholarship of Giuseppe Tucci see Di Castro and Templeman 2015.

evance of both their lived and textualized Oriental experience. Lazzaro Papi wrote *Lettere sulle Indie Orientali*, a knowledgeable and lively narration of India's history, geography, manners, and religion, unfolding within an epistolary frame, which was first published in 1802 and revised in 1829. Leopoldo Sebastiani published *Storia universale dell'Indostan*, an interesting specimen of those nineteenth-century fashionable universal histories that provides an interesting sample of «partisan» cultural mimicry. In the last section, the article engages with «Dell'India antica e moderna», a long essay by positivist historian Carlo Cattaneo published in the influential *Rivista Europea* in 1845, which sheds light on Papi's and Sebastiani's Indian discourse and establishes an insightful analogy between the Italian Risorgimento and India's colonial status and still unexpressed potential for liberation.

Perché tutto si ha a far venire dall'India?»[3]

Lazzaro Papi appears as the type of the curious and ambitious expatriate responding to the revolutionary spirit of the age with a cosmopolitan desire to see the world and find a social and professional status abroad. He was born in 1763 in a village near Lucca (Pontito) and studied at the local seminar which he soon left to join the Neapolitan army in Naples. He then studied medicine in Pisa, became a doctor and, in 1792, embarked as the ship's surgeon aboard the Ferdinando III di Toscana (whose captain was a friend), heading to Calcutta. He spent ten quite adventurous years in India, travelling extensively, working as the Raja of Travancore's physician at the time of the war between Tipu Sahib (the Sultan of the Southern province of Mysore supported by the French) and the English, and eventually served in the British Army as colonel of a company of the Bengala Lancers, a reward for supporting the Anglo-Indian cause. In 1802 he returned to Italy where he worked in the Napoleonic administration of the Republic of Lucca and became the Royal Librarian and the Secretary of the Reale Accademia Lucchese. In 1811 he published a translation of Paradise Lost and, in 1830-31, the first part of his major work, *Commentari della Rivoluzione Francese* (the second part was published in 1839).

Stylistically, *Lettere dalle Indie Orientali* combines the immediacy of a travelogue and the richness of an ethnographic treatise[4]. Yet, unlike much travel writing, it does not dwell on personal circumstances and highlights the

[3] «Why must everything descend from India?».

[4] The second edition of *Lettere dalle Indie Orientali*, published in 1829, included in appendix Cesare Lucchesini's «Lettera sull'Origine della mitologia delle Indie», in which the author maintains the fundamental monotheism of Indian religion, in line with the Orientalists of the Asiatic Society, and connects Indian mythology to Hebrew traditions.

author's opinions. The work is modelled on *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, a series that published the letters of missionaries from India and other parts of the world which had begun in the sixteenth century [see Halfbass 1988, p. 44]. The announced scope is illustrative and pedagogical: to improve the Italian people's knowledge of a country and a civilisation of which they have only vague notions, so as to bring it to the level of the other European countries. Despite the choice not to use autobiographical material as the backbone for the *Letters*, Lazzari cannot entirely skip the personal note, as he confesses in the Prefazione:

> Non so s'io debba chiamar crudele o pietosa quella fortuna che per tanto tempo mi ha tenuto dalla patria lontano. Ho sofferto non leggeri disagi, ho incorso non pochi pericoli: ma sono sfuggito almeno al dolore di veder cogli occhi miei l'Italia fatta gioco di straniere nazioni, gli acerbi mali che l'hanno afflitta e l'ultimo suo avvilimento: non ho veduto almeno l'orgoglio più stupido e cieco, la corruzione più infame e la più vile e detestabile ipocrisia attizzar le stolte discordie de' suoi cittadini insensate, e la più grande e dolorosa causa pubblica vituperevolmente tradirsi ed opprimersi. [Papi 1802, p. VII.][5]

To emphasize the conditions which prompted the author to undertake such a hazardous passage to India, the preface ends with a quote from Vittorio Alfieri's *La Congiura de' Pazzi* (1789), a tragedy that narrates the failed attempt to overthrow the tyrannical order of the Medici in Renaissance Florence. The lines compare the sense of alienation attached to living in a remote and inhospitable land to the frustration of witnessing the enslavement of one's own homeland:

> E qual estranea mai lontana terra
> (E selvaggia ed inospita pur sia)
> Increscer puote a chi la propria vede
> Schiava di crude e assolute voglie? [p. VII]

Besides providing a justification for the self-imposed Indian exile, Papi's excursion into the rhetoric of the Risorgimento – Italy as a land of conquest and

[5] «I am unsure whether to give the name of cruelty or pity to the circumstance that took me away from my homeland for such a long time. I suffered many discomforts, I incurred into many dangers, but I at least escaped the pain to see Italy become the sport of foreign countries and go through bitter evils and humiliations. At least I didn't bear witness to the most stupid and blindest pride, I didn't see the most abominable corruption and vilest hypocrisy ignite the foulest conflicts among her citizens and the most important public cause ignobly betrayed». This and all subsequent translations from Papi's, Sebastiani's, and Cattaneo's writings are mine.

despotic powers, its moral humiliation, its social fragmentation, its deep-seated corruption – paves the way for a parallel between the two countries which is implicitly established on the grounds of their common colonial status and accounts for the insightfulness and intellectual honesty of his picture of India.

Papi's narrative voice recommends great caution in dealing with such a complex and diversified topic as India. He stays away from condescending picturesque sketches, as well as from the sublime visions of amateur orientalists like Thomas Maurice and Padre Paolino da San Bartolomeo, a barefoot Carmelite monk who was an enthusiastic admirer of Indian religion and laws (illustrated in his *Systema Brahamanicum*) and who, according to Papi, became a Hindu convert instead of converting Indians to Christianity [Papi 1802, p. 53]. His descriptive method is based on empirical observation, the use of different sources, including reliable pandits, and a good amount of scholarly reading, first and foremost the *Asiatic Researches*, the series that collected the studies of the scholars of the Asiatic Society of Bengal which had been founded by William Jones in 1784. What makes this narrative peculiarly lively is the ostensible lack of an agenda. Not in the sense that his observations sound neutral, but in that they do not serve any political interests beyond the achievement of scholarly credit and the advancement of learning. Papi's British affiliations do not prevent him from condemning the exploitative nature of colonial economy: «Il lusso degli Inglesi in India sembra a prima vista che dovrebbe essere vantaggioso agl'Indiani e riversare fra loro una parte di quel danaro che viene ad essi rapito; ma la cosa è infatti assai differente» [p. 141][6]. Nor does his Catholic education silence him in the face of the arrogance of Christian missionaries who escape European convents to indulge in all sorts of improper behaviour in India:

> I raggiri con cui spesso disturbano la pace delle famiglie e delle piccole società, in cui si fanno i tiranni di immaginazioni inferme e deboli, l'ignoranza che portano seco dal convento, le imprudenze e le balordaggini che commettono per non sapere i costumi del paese in cui giungono, l'orgoglio con cui pretendono subito riformarli, l'aria pedantesca che assumono con persone, le quali gli superano di molto in buon senso… tutto gli rende o odiosi o ridicoli e dispregevoli non solo ai principi e ai Raja, ma a tutti gli indiani in generale [Papi 1929, p. 79].[7]

[6] «You'd think the English luxury would be an advantage to the Indians and pay them back for what was stolen from them; yet things are very different from what they appear».

[7] Papi 1929, p. 79. «The deceptions with which they disturb the peace of families and small communities, where they patronize weak imaginations, the ignorance they bring from convents, the imprudence they fall under for ignoring the customs of the country they reach, the pride with which they feel entitled to immediately re-

Papi's marginal position with respect to the European colonial conflicts enables him to adopt a multi-perspectivism that translates into undogmatic and eclectic textual politics. Thus, for example, in the dispute between Orientalists and Anglicists[8] he does not feel compelled to take sides and endorses the former's syncretic approach to Indian civilisation, as well as the latter's reformist attitude. He subscribes to an environmental explanation of Hindu manners, religious practice and even beliefs (for example with respect to metempsychosis), which is ostensibly drawn on the Scottish Enlightenment historians, but criticizes Lord Kames for praising the hypertrophy of Hindu mythology. He bears witness to the violence of some rituals, as well as to the enigma of Brahamanical mysticism, but he makes a point of not adopting the sensational rhetoric that typified many accounts of Hindu religion and is accurate and insightful when he outlines the essential traits of the Indian deities. He does not endorse the British hostility towards the Moghul empire nor Britain's *divide et impera* policy and maintains that the pugnacious character of the Muslim people has been softened by contact with the tolerant Indian temperament. At the same time, similarly to what Carlo Cattaneo would hold five decades later, Papi rightly grasps the faults of the Indian sepoys and the inherent frailty of the Anglo-Indian military force.

Among the Italian proto-orientalists portrayed by Giuseppe Tucci, Papi features as the one who best realized that the cult of Brahma was not merely a religious faith but a comprehensive social order, the proof of this being that it was highly tolerant with other creeds, including atheism, and yet wholly uncompromising with respect to the most trivial injunctions of custom and tradition [Tucci 1949, p. 238]. The spectre haunting Papi's narrative is what he terms «il ricercatore antiquario» («the antiquarian scholar»), a seemingly downgraded version of William Jones and his fellow Indologists. The eclecticism and open-mindedness of his narrative stem from a stubborn refusal to fall into the antiquarian fallacy of merging India's past with its present condition, as well as of confounding culture-specific traits with manifestations of a universal history that unifies Western and Eastern civilisations under the same rubric. Despite his deep admiration for William Jones (whom he calls il «Cavaliere Guglielmo Jones»), the chief cultural battle conducted by *Lettere sulle Indie Orientali* was engaged against the so called «Aryan hypothesis», a theory warily suggested by Jones and upheld by the other Indologists of the Asiatic Society (in particular Francis Wilford), which claimed the codescendence of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Indian civilizations from a proto Indo-Europe-

form then, the pedantic attitude they affect with people far more sensible than them… all this makes them detestable or ridiculous not only to Rajas but to all ranks of Indians».

[8] On the relevance of the dispute for the nineteenth century European reception of Indian civilization see Halfbass 1988, Trautmann 1997, and Macfie 2002.

an language and from the same mythologizing mind.[9] Assuming that India and Europe shared a common lineage, the Calcutta-based school had not only provided Orientalist studies with advanced linguistic and ethnological bases, but had worked as a powerful contact zone between Europe and Asia. Jones's major concern was to appraise the foundational role of Indian civilisation in what he conceived to be a universal history of mankind, without undermining the superiority of the Biblical account. He was convinced that Christianity was the only true religion, and yet believed in a fundamental universalism of human faculties and in the viability of a religious cosmopolis [cf. Spandri 2018]. Against Enlightenment universalism, Papi persistently and often ironically voiced his radical dissent from a comparative ethnology that fabricated a myth of origins he perceived as logically untenable and historically misleading. Instead of acknowledging the plurality of geocultural contexts and of human responses to natural and social environments, the notion of common origins projected onto them the shadows of identity and homogeneity, thus inevitably generating the conditions for improper civilizational taxonomies:

> Perché tutto si ha a far venire dall'India? […] E qual è la religione e quale il popolo che in vari punti non si assomigli ad un altro? A me par certo che se alcune similitudini nel costume, nelle maniere, nelle opinioni, ne' riti religiosi e civili bastano a provare che una nazione discende da un'altra, si può prendere qual popolo più piace sopra la terra, e assicurare ch'esso è il ceppo di tutti gli altri [pp. 179, 172].[10]

Considering the political remarks of the preface and the insistence on the term «nazione» with reference to India throughout the work, it is impossible not to read in Papi's defence of the specificity and legitimacy of the Hindu pantheon – monstrous and unchaste as it may have appeared to Westerners – and, more generally, of India's hyperitualism and puzzling metaphysics, a vision of national liberty endangered by the homogenizing and globalising pressure of imperial powers and ideologies. And when, referring to Indian political weakness, he writes that «dove non è uguaglianza di diritti non può essere unione e dove non è unione non è forza»[11], he is clearly merging what he considers two similar national destinies.

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[9] See Trautmann 1997 and Figuera 2015.

[10] «Why must everything descend from India? Is there a people or a religious creed that does not look similar to another in some respects? I believe that if analogies of custom, manners, opinions, religious and civil rites are enough to prove that a nation descends from another, one can take whatever people one likes, and claim that it is the source of all the others».

[11] Papi 1802, p. 62 «Where there is no equality of rights there can be no unity and where there is no unity there can be no power».

The interest of *Lettere dalle Indie Orientali* also lies in the way the author converts the derivative nature of his scholarly apparatus into a mark of authenticity, a sort of personal brand. This is achieved through an always explicit, self-reflective, and undogmatic use of his textual sources, which are drawn on all the different compartments of European Indology and widely interrogated – from the professional Orientalists of the Asiatic Society to amateur scholars like François Bernier and Thomas Maurice, down to Catholic and Protestant missionaries as different as Padre Paolino, Vincenzo Sangermano and Claudius Buchanan. Undeniably, *Lettere dalle Indie Orientali* resonates with the most fashionable eighteenth-century doctrines that were circulated at the time, whose most distinguished advocate had been Voltaire, and whose major tenets were hostility to tradition and to priestly classes. Still, as Tucci maintains, Papi shows a «palpable effort to be impartial and to discover the good side even when what prevailed was the ugly, the bad, and the grotesque» [Tucci 1949, p. 240]. An example of this relaxed and anti-essentialist philology is the way in which he provides a rather domesticated and Christianized account of Buddhism by translating into Italian Charles Buchanan's English version of Vincenzo Sangermano's writings on the Burmese religion. In all evidence, Papi did not grant anyone and anything the ultimate authority over such a complex subject as India, not out of a cultural relativism that neutralized truth-claims amidst a jungle of different and opposing views, but thanks to an awareness of the dangers of textualizing cultures, especially those appearing as the most alien ones. His caution is both an intellectual posture and a resistance strategy that may well apply to all historical contingencies in which people and countries are denied agency and congealed within a timeless and unalterable frame [see Said 1978 and Fabian 1983].

Lo scoglio fatale[12]

Lazzaro Papi's open-minded approach gets somewhat lost in Leopoldo Sebastiani's *Storia universale dell'Indostan*, which was published in Rome in 1821. Sebastiani was a «singular missionary figure» [Tucci 1949, p. 226] who got entangled in the diplomatic intrigues of France and Britain in the middle of the Italian Risorgimento and could not escape the charisma of the British empire. Before travelling to India, Sebastiani had served as Prefetto of the sacred missions in Persia where he cooperated with the British diplomacy to sabotage the emperor's alliance with Napoleon. In 1808 he was forced to leave Persia without the Papal placet and went to India, where he visited Bombay, the Malabar, Ceylon, Madras, arriving in Calcutta on 24 May 1810. He was appointed Secretary of the Bible Society and entrusted with a Persian translation of the

[12] «The fatal rock».

New Testament. After five years, he left both India and the Propaganda Fide on the charge of having resigned his appointment in Persia without permission, returned to Rome and proceeded to London, where he befriended eminent people of the establishment, such as Lord Castlereagh, William Hamilton and Lord Elgin. About the latter, who had greeted him in Costantinople years before, Sebastiani wrote that his friendship created an indissoluble bond with the British nation. In London he published a highly praised Persian translation of the New Testament in 1817, whose Preface includes details of his adventurous life [see Tucci 1949].

Storia universale dell'Indostan had a wide circulation, was reviewed in outstanding journals, and elicited different responses. *Biblioteca Italiana* (1821) criticized it for appearing as the product of home-based erudition rather than of a traveller's experience. The anonymous reviewer captured Sebastiani's strong dissent from Hindu's religious inclusivity and concluded that to question Indian religious tolerance, on the one hand, and to sound as the apologist of European colonialism, on the other hand, was deeply contradictory. Conversely, *Nuova Antologia*, that revised the work in 1874, was more appreciative and praised the third part of the volume for being based on personal experience and oral testimony. Unquestionably, *Storia universale dell'Indostan* reads as an erudite compilation of geographical, historical, military, and ethnographic knowledge claiming «exactitude», «truthfulness», and «impartiality» [p. VI], while overtly, though not uncritically, aligning with the British party. Unlike Papi, Sebastiani starts with an agenda and steadily pursues it until he believes he has proved his point: namely, to demostrate through «un esatto ragguaglio di tutte le invasioni, guerre, stragi, saccheggiamenti, revoluzioni, ribellioni, ed altri disastri da lei infin da' primi tempi della sua memoria sofferti»[13], India's inexorable colonial destiny. Indeed, only such a militant programme can account for the author's obsessive dwelling on every single battle fought on Indian territory, from Sesostri's alleged expedition down to the latest British Governor's war against local rulers and rival colonial powers.

Far from being contested cultural products, Indian histories written by Europeans are deemed by Sebastiani as the only means to provide Indian people with a usable past and a sense of origins not grounded on childish mythological fables but on the rationality of Western scholarship. Against Papi's problematization of Indian histories based on «exteriority» [Said 1978] and on a misapplied notion of universality, Sebastiani's unrelenting chronology operates as a powerful tool for promoting an idea of universal history based on the twin concepts of progress and teleology.[14] This hermeneutic posture makes

[13] Sebastiani 1821, p. V. «An accurate report of each and every invasion, war, massacre, plunder, revolution, rebellion, and other disasters suffered by India since time immemorial».

[14] On the relevance of the European concept of teleology for both colonial rule

Storia universale dell'Indostan a remarkable specimen of cultural mimesis where the understatement of personal experience, on the one hand, responds to the author's controversial Indian adventure and, on the other hand, serves the higher purpose of joining the cosmopolitan Indological debate at work in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The volume combines the precision of William Robertson's influential *An Historical Disquisition Concerning the Knowledge Which the Ancients Had of India* (one of his acknowledged sources, 1791) with the patronizing tone of James Mill's History of British India (1817). Still, instead of Robertson's indictment of colonial violence, Sebastiani offers justification and realpolitik. Indeed, a galaxy of Indophobic anglophone accounts gets refracted through his voice: from the judgemental stance of Thomas Moor's *The Hindu Pantheon* (1810) to the gothic imaginary of Robert Southey's *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), down to the condescending idiom of missionary propaganda.[15] To reinforce the argument about the idolatrous and bloody nature of Hindu devotional practice, for example, Sebastiani interpolates a long excerpt from Claudius Buchanan's horrified chronicle of the Jagganath festival in Orissa, which was one of the evangelical hits, strategically placing it as the watershed between the first and the second part of the *Storia*.[16] Differently from Anglican missionaries, and in keeping with a deeply Catholic fundamentalism, Sebastiani holds that the most monstrous side of Hindu religion is not idolatry but inclusivity. Much more than idol-worship, it is tolerance and permeability what denies revelation, justifying a religious relativism that equals paganism:

> La più grande singolarità da notarsi nella religione degl'Indiani è, ch'essi, lungi dal perseguitare quegli di contraria credenza, costantemente ricusano, eccettuatine i Seik, di ammettere un proselito. Credono che tutte le religioni siano al pari accette dall'Ente supremo; adducendo come una ragione, che se l'Autore dell'universo preferisse una all'altra, sarebbe stato impossibile che qualunque altra avesse prevaluto oltre quella ch'Egli approva. Dunque, concludono, ogni religione è adattata al paese dov'è stabilita; e tutte nella loro primiera purità sono ugualmente accette. Questo è lo scoglio fatale,

and imperial historiography see Chakrabarty 2000 and Chakrabarty, Truper, and Subrahmamy 2015.

[15] On forms and scopes of missionary discourse see Teltscher 1995, Strong 2007, Porter 2004, Yelle 2013. On the interconnection of Orientalism and religion see the ground-breaking studies of King 1999 and Masuzawa 2005.

[16] Buchanan was the Calcutta chaplain and vice president of Fort William College. «The two characteristics of the worship of Brahma are impurity and blood […] they constitute the very essence of Brahaminical superstition […] there is no single authentic historian of the Hindu manners and religions from Tavernier down to this time that has ventured to dissemble it» [Buchanan 1814, p. 25]. See Spandri 2018.

> incontro cui sogliono miseramente urtare e frangersi tutti coloro, i quali o ciecamente ignorano, o maliziosamente rigettano la divina rivelazione, nell'ordine stabilito della Provvidenza assolutamente necessaria. [Sebastiani 182, p. 50.][17]

Significantly, Sebastiani's othering view of Indian civilisation was criticized in Italy on the grounds of his support of British colonialism. One of these critiques was levelled by Tucci himself who praised the «remarkable documentary value» of the second part of the *Storia* and added that its value could have been even higher if the account had been less partisan and if its author had not been so keen on justifying the British cruel enslavement of India [Tucci 1949, p. 226]. Clearly, Sebastiani's interest in India was as genuine as was his incapacity to imagine it outside a colonial context. What paradoxically remained in the background were the subversive denominational implications of his Indian discourse, that undermined the sense of the Catholic mission in the Subcontinent. Indeed, if the Indians were morally and spiritually unredeemable, as he seemed to believe, the missionary project could make sense only within the context of the British empire, as a form of 'soft power' harnessed to complement administrative and military policies. More than his Roman colleagues, Sebastiani must have felt that, for the time being, the Catholic world had lost its Indian chance. Still, despite the overzealous support of British colonial rule, he too couldn't resist the temptation to project onto the Indians the nationalistic fantasy of one united people, when he imputed to the castal system and to the age-old injunction of interreligious marriages the reason for India's present political fragmentation: «se si fossero potuti unire o mescolare cogl'invasori, sarebbero tosto divenuti un popolo, ed i mali dalla conquista risultanti sarebbonsi graduatamente obliati [p. 30]».[18]

L'impresa comune dell'umanità[19]

Some twenty years later, positivist historian Carlo Cattaneo rehearsed the idea of India's passive resistance to foreign influence in his long essay on ancient

[17] «The utmost singularity of the religion of the Indians is that, far from persecuting opposite creeds, they (except for the Sikhs) constantly refuse to proselytize. They believe that all religions are equally accepted by the Supreme Being, the proof of this being that if the Author of the universe had privileged one upon the others, it would have been impossible for the unprivileged ones to have survived. This is the fatal rock against which those who blindly ignore, or viciously reject, the divine revelation – absolutely necessary as it is, according to the divine order of Providence – sadly stumble».

[18] «Had they been permitted to unite and mix with their colonisers, they would have soon become one people and the evils of conquest would have gradually been forgotten».

[19] «Humanity common enterprise».

and modern India «Dell'India antica e moderna» (1845).[20] Tucci maintains that, as Cattaneo had never visited India, he had not witnessed the positive side of such resistance, which was no less than a defence strategy whereby a politically weak, divided, and contemplative country imperceptibly assimilated all conquering powers that slowly adjusted to her apparent torpor [Tucci 1949, p. 233]. Cattaneo looks at India through a progressivist politological lens, situating it in the context of the Eastern Question and the spread of nationalisms in Europe and all over the world. From his point of view, a reflection on what was going on in British India grounded on a solid and unbiased historical knowledge was the only way to eschew the antiquarian fallacy dreaded by Lazzaro Papi.

However, the self-same historical method premised upon the idea of a common lineage (a notion that had been originally upheld by Giambattista Vico) and advocated as the only reliable approach to the Indian question, interrogated Cattaneo on the same ground as it had interrogated Sebastiani, in that it clashed with the opposite and deep-seated habit of essentialization. How were scholars to historicize a seemingly unmovable and timeless object as India? If the missionary's response had been paramount Orientalism – Indian history existing only as the product of Western rationality – in Cattaneo the dilemma entailed ethical as much as historical preoccupations. Given India's age-long history of oppression and conquest, was British colonialism an agent of modernization and a spur to the rise of national consciousness or, rather, another and more efficient vehicle of paralysis? Cattaneo does not insist on chronology like Sebastiani and is more concerned with identifying the recurrent features of Indian history which interests him as an index of the different civilizational trajectories charted by the European planetary expansion.

Apart from the works of Lazzaro Papi, Henry Colebrooke, and his university professor Giandomenico Romagnosi, the most cited textual source is *L'Inde sous la domination anglaise*, a study by French historian Barchou de Penhoën that was published just one year before Cattaneo's article and envisaged British India impending collapse consequential to an inherently faulty colonization. Cattaneo appropriates De Penhoën's analysis but does not entirely embrace his conclusions. He cannot resist the charm of oversimplification when he reduces India to the basic elements of pantheism, castal system, and pre-modern agrarian economy and yet he does not venture into any prediction and admits the possibility for change and emancipation. In this sense, the rhetorical arrangement of the essay is significant. He moves from a comparison between Italian, European, and Indian geography and language and then asks why a profound cultural diversity ensued from an original similarity. This argumentative line enables him to avoid the racialist binary of the Western/East-

[20] Reprinted in Carlo Cattaneo, *India-Messico-Cina* 1942.

ern mind that had been theorised by the German philosophers and extensively appropriated by colonial discourse, while questioning the Eurocentric idea of the universality of progress.

Cattaneo's voice is never condescending but sympathetic. He is not preoccupied with political correcteness but his terminology is never abusive. He speaks of «basso feticismo» («low fetishism», p. 5) of the religious rites, of «esagerati rigori» («exaggerated severity», p. 42) and «inemendabili turpitudini» («irrredeemable turpitudes», p. 42) of the brahminical caste; he indicts «la divozione che comprende tutti i doveri della vita» («the devotion that encompasses all the duties of life», p. 40) and stifles «la libertà morale, la volontà e la ragione» («moral liberty, will, and reason», p. 41), but he is not interested in classifications. He pursues a consistent explanation for India's backwardness and for what he sees as utter impermeability to all achievements of Western civilization: scientific progress, capitalist economy, individual consciousness. His commitment to an idea of Risorgimento as civic enlightenment leads him to find such an explanation not in comparative anthropology but in a long history of oppression which hampered the development of an Indian public sphere.

Significantly, Cattaneo identifies an embryonic form of nationality in the sepoy troops, the multiethnic and multireligious Anglo-Indian army originally financed by the East India Company, in whose cultural mixture that defied castal divide he envisages the potential for rebellion, political unity, and social change. Considering that only ten years later (1857) the first glimpses of organised resistance to British colonisation would ensue in the so called «Indian Mutiny» (in fact, the first Indian war for independence, see Metcalf B.D and Metcalf T.R. 2001), and that the political response to the traumatic event was that Britain closed ranks and intensified its control by officially including India within the perimeter of the empire, Cattaneo's proto-nationalist Indian hermeneutic was to prove as prophetic as it was premature. Clearly, to observe India's present condition at mid-century, when Italy was on its way to independence after a long history of struggles and drawbacks, and to envisage for its people the possibility to participate in what he conceived as «l'impresa comune dell'umanità»[21] was a way not to succumb to the strong pressure of nineteenth-century imperial teleologies. Cattaneo's Indian intervention should be read in relation to transnational cultural politics constituent of his positivist and patriotic creed, as well as to an unrelenting confidence in the possibility for Italy to take part in the European Oriental discourse in vocal and anticolonial terms.[22]

[21] «Humanity common enterprise». Prefazione to vol. 3 of *Il Politecnico* (1840).

[22] Another site of latent political union is identified in the religion of Buddha, on which Papi, Sebastiani, and Cattaneo extensively dwell. Their accounts share the sense that Buddhism was somewhat heterodox with respect to the religion of Brahma espe-

Developed through different textual strategies and intellectual postures, the Romantic Indo-Italian connections embodied by Lazzaro Papi, Leopoldo Sebastiani, and Carlo Cattaneo illustrate that Risorgimento was not only an obstacle but a strong incentive to the rise of Indology in Italy, and that Giuseppe Tucci's influential studies and life-long engagement with Asian thought belonged in a tradition firmly rooted in the spirit of enquiry, liberty, and transnational solidarities that nourished this complex phase of Italian history. The scholars who were to tread the same path further attested the fecundity of such an inspirational encounter.[23]

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cially in relation to caste, animal sacrifice, poverty, and social order. Papi and Sebastiani capture the confusion looming around the figure of the Buddha and the former portrays him as a reformer akin to Martin Luther, highlighting his ethical views and adopting a Christian terminology and conceptual frame. Cattaneo mentions Buddhism at the end of the article to appraise its censure of castal divide, thus associating Buddhist equalitarian doctrine to an instrument for political and cultural liberation.

[23] Tucci's catalogue of Italian Orientalists include: Graziadio Ascoli (1829-1907), Giovanni Flechia (1811-1892), F.L Pullé (1850-1934), Carlo Valenzani (1840-1913), Gaspare Gorresio (1808-1891), and Michele Kerbaker (1835-1914). Pullé and Valenzani travelled to India and founded *Studi italiani di filologia indo-iranica* and *Giornale della società asiatica di Firenze* (1888), the major publications of the Italian school of Orientalism. Gorresio published a complete Italian translation of *Ramayana* in 1943. Kerbaker was appointed to the first Sanskrit chair at the University of Naples and translated *Il carretto d'Argilla* (*The Little Clay Car*t), according to Tucci a unique sample of Indian drama, as the notion of tragedy is alien to a culture «whose faith in reincarnation reduces life to an episode of the temporal chain» [Tucci 1949, p. 252].

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Frances Trollope and the African American Question: *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw; or Scenes on the Mississippi*

Abstract

Relegated to a footnote in most literary anthologies, better known for being the mother of Anthony Trollope, Frances Milton Trollope was a remarkably prolific author, a staunch advocate of human rights, a skilled traveler, and a truly transnational artist. Indeed, even though she began her writing career in her fifties, prompted by the financial necessity to support her family, she published over one hundred acclaimed narratives, including several travelogues, novels, and shorter pieces. In 1827 she followed her friend, the Scottish reformer Frances Wright, to Tennessee, to join the Nashoba Community, a short-lived and controversial utopian experiment. Purchased by Wright, African American slaves in Nashoba were educated and gradually prepared to be repatriated to Africa or Haiti. Trollope became fully acquainted with the slave question in the US, where she lived for a few years before moving back to England: she witnessed the hardships slaves had to endure and the violence inflicted on fugitives seeking sanctuary in Canada. By focusing on her groundbreaking abolitionist novel, *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* (1836), this essay sets out to explore the strategies she employed to tackle the issue of slavery in the US; special emphasis will be placed on her treatment of the real protagonist of the novel: Juno, a woman in her seventies who interprets Trollope's ideal of maternal feminism.

Elisabetta Marino

Better known for being the mother of the famous Victorian novelist or dismissively called «the "other" Trollope» [Wagner 2011, p. 159], Frances Milton Trollope is nowadays relegated to a footnote in most literary anthologies, rather than holding a prominent position within the main narrative.

Despite her short-lived fame,[1] however, she was widely acknowledged as one of the leading artists of the so-called «Romantic Century» (1750-1850), following William Galperin's and Susan Wolfson's proposed redefinition of the Romantic era [Flynn 2009, p. 163]. Indeed, in the time-span between 1832 and 1856, she published 114 acclaimed works, including novels, travelogues, verse dramas, poems, and shorter pieces of fiction, which bear witness to her unfaltering commitment to social justice and human dignity, while documenting her remarkably transnational experience. After exploring the reasons that prompted Trollope to spend four years in North America, this essay sets out to investigate the strategies the author employed to tackle the controversial issue of slavery in the US, by focusing on *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw; or Scenes on the Mississippi* (1836), «arguably the most important novel» [Ayres 2006] she composed, according to Brenda A. Ayres, given its social and cultural resonance, as well as its seminal influence on subsequent literary endeavors on the same subject. Besides exposing the limits and contradictions of American democracy, Trollope depicted slavery as a universally degrading and dehumanizing practice, which reduced people of African ancestry to an animal-like condition, or even transformed them into machines for the production of marketable goods. As will be shown, the issues of racial oppression and gender violence are often intertwined in the novel; far from being victimized and disempowered, however, the female slaves featured as protagonists are surprisingly dynamic and resourceful figures. In this respect, special attention will be devoted to the analysis of the real heroine of the story, an elderly slave called Juno, who seemingly embodies the principles of communal justice and maternal feminism[2] that Trollope had wholeheartedly embraced and fostered all her life.

As a result of Mr. Trollope's mismanagement of the family income (coupled with his inability to make a successful career as a barrister), Frances and her children faced severe financial difficulties for many years. The Trollopes had mistakenly assumed they would soon inherit from an affluent uncle; however, their expectations were frustrated when, in spite of his advanced age, the wealthy man decided to remarry and start a new family [Michie 2011, p. 242n]. After months of tension and hardship, the Scottish-born reformer Frances Wright provided Mrs. Trollope with an unforeseen opportunity to re-

[1] As Frances Eleanor Trollope (her daughter-in-law and biographer) lamented, «fashions change, reputations fade, books are forgotten» [Trollope 1895, p. 1]. Yet, she believed that, to acquire «an adequate acquaintance with the lighter literature of [that] century» [Trollope 1895, p. 1] (a slightly belittling comment), Frances Trollope's narratives could not be entirely overlooked.

[2] Maternal feminists never neglected traditional female virtues and skills; yet, they strongly supported women's participation in public life and their claims to education and independence.

lease herself — albeit temporarily — from her troubled marriage. On November 4, 1827, she set sail with three of her children and Auguste Hervieu (her protégé and a promising painter) to join Wright at Nashoba (Tennessee), where the freethinker had initiated an experimental project in 1825, aimed at eventually ridding the country of the plague of slavery.[3] The «Nashoba Community» had been modelled on Robert Owen's utopian village at New Harmony (Indiana) and, in Wright's intentions, would serve as a prototype plantation to emulate across the nation. According to her carefully devised plan, the slaves she had specifically purchased for that purpose would earn enough, through their manual labour, to compensate for her initial investment. Educated and finally set free, they would be transported to a suitable country such as Liberia or Haiti[4] [Bederman 2005, pp. 446-448; Midgley 1992, p. 82]. Diane Roberts has described Frances Wright as «a gender outlaw» [Roberts 1994, p. 68]: she often cross-dressed, consorted with men and women of all classes, travelled unchaperoned and unprotected, advocated free love and the abolition of marriage, and believed in the gradual blending of blacks and whites «till their children became one in blood, in hue» [Rossi 1966, p. 93]. In her view, racial amalgamation was a progressive form of development. Unsurprisingly, Wright was labelled «a female monster», «a voluptuous preacher of licentiousness», «a bold lady-man» [Roberts 1994, p. 67]. Her experiment failed[5] in 1829, but Frances Trollope and her companions had abandoned Nashoba well before that. Both her son Henry and Hervieu had been offered a teaching position in the community: the precarious housing conditions in the malaria-ridden area, the fear of starvation, and the general atmosphere of chaos and disorder contributed to limiting their stay to a few days. At last, the company moved to Cincinnati, where ingenious Trollope embarked on an ambitious business venture: opening a bazaar that, as well as selling goods, would also act as a cultural and artistic centre for the community [Heineman 1979, p. 64]. Nevertheless, her «unorthodox, unfeminine manners and associations» [Heineman 1983, p. 187] (she was independent, outspoken, indifferent to traditional notions of femininity) made her unwelcome to most Americans, who responded unfavourably to her bold initiative: bankruptcy followed within six months of activity, and Trollope and her children were forced to return to England, in August 1831.

[3] Frances Wright had also tried to persuade Mary Shelley to join her. Notwithstanding her warm interest in the causes of freedom and equality, however, Shelley declined the offer [Marshall 1889, II, pp. 168-182].

[4] The dubious quality of Wright's project (apparently, the freed slaves' integration into society was not a feasible option) is highlighted by Gail Bederman. In her words, «Nashoba was a scheme to abolish all US slavery in order to save Wright's true utopia, the United States» [Bederman 2005, p. 447].

[5] Wright managed to fulfil her obligations to her slaves, who were relocated in Haiti [Rossi 1966, p. 96].

As the family's finances were in a desperate state, Frances decided to capitalize on the copious notes she had taken during her disappointing American sojourn. Well in her fifties, therefore, she began her career as a writer, releasing a successful (and lucrative) travelogue: *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), which voiced her contempt for a population whose men were actively engaged in chewing and spitting tobacco, while mistreating their women. In *Domestic Manners*, Trollope also highlighted the inconsistencies of the American ideology, supposedly grounded in the principles of equality and freedom; as she elucidated, in fact, «you will see [Americans] with one hand hoisting the cap of liberty, and with the other flogging their slaves» [Trollope 1904, p. 196]. Even though she abhorred the very idea of slavery, she was also persuaded that the immediate emancipation of all blacks throughout the Union was not consistent «with the safety of the country» [Trollope 1904, p. 221]; on the contrary, the «possibility of amelioration» [Trollope 1904, p. 221] of their harsh condition by means of legislature was advisable to ease the situation, being «no longer […] a subject of either indignation or pity» [Trollope 1904, p. 221]. Trollope would further explore this debatable issue[6] four years later, in *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*, the first fictional narrative published in England to delve into the African American question. The book was meaningfully dedicated «to those states of the American Union in which slavery has been abolished or never permitted» [Trollope 1836, p. i].

The story revolves around the eponymous protagonist, Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw, a callous overseer whose principal occupation is tormenting and spying on the five hundred slaves that toil in Paradise Plantation (Louisiana), the property of Colonel Dart. As the plot unravels, Whitlaw's path crosses those of the other main characters: Clio (his good natured aunt), the Steinmarks (a family of German settlers who run a large farm, yet refuse to own slaves), Edward and Lucy Blight (a pair of siblings from Kentucky, who strive to spread the word of the Lord among the slaves), Phebe and Caesar (the betrothed slaves that used to belong to the Blights, before their financial collapse), and Juno, the real heroine of the novel, an abused slave, a devastated mother, a powerful woman in her seventies who, despite her crippled and dwarfish body, turns into a vehicle for revenge against the evil oppressor.

The many faults of America and its jarring paradoxes are clearly exposed by Trollope, starting from the choice of the name for her protagonist. In Marilyn D. Button's opinion, the choice of *Jonathan* might stem from «Brother Jonathan», a figure invented by British cartoonists to epitomize the American national character (he is coarse, arrogant, self-centered) [Button 1994, p. 74].

[6] As Clare Midgley has pointed out, by the time Trollope released her volume, British ladies had long been involved in anti-slavery activities and other charitable groups; between 1825 and 1833, at least seventy-three ladies' anti-slavery associations were functioning at some point in time [Midgley 1992, p. 45].

Jefferson recalls the statesman and third president of the United States, who fathered numerous children by his slaves. «The ever-to-be-venerated Jefferson» [Trollope 1836, p. 208] and «immortal Washington» [Trollope 1836, p. 208] are actually mentioned in the novel as two of the founding fathers of democratic America, who obviously «approved the institution of slavery, and practiced it greatly to their own comfort and advantage» [Trollope 1836, p. 208]. Heartless Whitlaw is the perfect embodiment of the cruel *white law* (only one letter short); moreover, as Ann-Barbara Graff has noticed, his surname also «suggests someone who does not care a whit about the law» [Graff 2002, p. 105], somebody that is convinced that laws can be bent to suit one's purposes. In aunt Clio's view, just like any other American, one day Jonathan may be elected to Congress or even become President [Trollope 1836, p. 10; p. 25]; his truly American dream, however, is owning slaves[7]: «I'd rather own five hundred negurs than be President» [Trollope 1836, I, p. 120]. On the occasion of his first interview with Colonel Dart, Whitlaw succeeds in winning his favor by expressing his aberrant conception of liberty, based on the principle of «self-defense» (i.e., private revenge), which paradoxically makes any individual worthy of legal protection, regardless of the moral implications of his/her actions. As he clarifies, «the man what has not courage to do vengeance for himself, don't deserve the protection of the law in a free country. […] What's freedom for, if we can't do what we like with our own born slaves? […] If 'twasn't for this, I don't see where our great superiority over the queer English folks lies» [Trollope 1836, I, pp. 122-123]. Trollope's use of vernacular words and phrases emphasizes the rusticity of the Americans, and their lack of self-awareness, especially when flaunting their alleged preeminence. Furthermore, Linda Abess Ellis has argued that the extensive use of American dialect throughout the text also conveys «the common perception among English readers that the American language is a corruption of their native tongue» [Ellis 1989, p. 100].

Ostensibly, debasement and degeneration are the native attributes of the promised land of liberty and opportunities. Louisiana is depicted as the «land of white man's sin and black man's suffering» [Trollope 1836, p. 240]; New Orleans is a city of squalid gambling-houses and sordid ballrooms, where Whitlaw gladly abandons himself to an unbridled «license of debauchery» [Trollope 1836, p. 181]. Far from resembling a sheltered garden of Eden, the lush natural landscape only hides its mortal pitfalls, like Dante's *selva oscura*: «the monster Fever, […] breathing avenging curses with his poisonous breath» [Trollope 1836, p. 181] and, along the Mississippi river, «the drowsy alligator, luxuriating on its slimy banks, or the unsocial bear, happy in the un-

[7] In the novel, the acquisition of fresh slaves is a clear indicator of social advancement.

disputed possession of its tangled tickets» [Trollope 1836, p. 2]. In Trollope's moral wasteland, slaves are stripped of their humanness and, therefore, almost revert to an animal-like condition. Accordingly, they are equated to «black beetles» [Trollope 1836, p. 309; p. 327], «black toad[s]» [Trollope 1836, p. 79] or «black viper[s]» [Trollope 1836, p. 279]. Other times they are simply portrayed as commodities, to be purchased, abused, and discarded; standing before a group of attractive quadroon women, Whitlaw anticipates the (perfectly acceptable) joy he will feel in «insult[ing] with impunity all whom he beholds» [Trollope 1836, p. 202], as no legal protection is granted to them.[8] In the lavish mansion of a creole lady, «fantastically dressed» [Trollope 1836, p. 211] slaves are showcased as if they were part of the fancy furniture; one of them, a «little automaton» [Trollope 1836, p. 212], even serves as a «living but apparently immovable footstool» [Trollope 1836, p. 211], whose sole function is supporting the delicate feet of his mistress. The dehumanizing process slaves undergo often transforms them into mere body parts: slave drivers «traffic in the muscles and sinews of the poor negroes» [Trollope 1836, p. 54], as their value is proportional to their work capacity; likewise, Whitlaw is fetishistically aroused by «the roundness of [Phebe's] arms» [Trollope 1836, p. 57]: as a person she is insignificant to him. In the novel, most black slaves operate as moneymaking machines who must «sweat into dollars uncountable» [Trollope 1836, I, p. 120] or produce children who, in turn, become a source of income for their owners. Consequently, Whitlaw and Coloned Dart carefully calculate the number of lashes that can be safely inflicted on a female slave «without permanent injury to herself or her future progeny» [Trollope 1836, p. 148]. The narrative abounds in descriptions of «sundry half-naked negro children» [Trollope 1836, p. 49] who, at no cost to their masters, will either increase the slave population on the plantation or be converted into ready cash. Their mothers' feelings are completely overlooked; bred like livestock and acting as incubators, they are not entitled to display any emotion: «beyond the mere animal functions of giving life and nourishment, [they] cannot show that [they are] mother[s]» [Trollope 1836, p. 72]. Trollope's graphic representations of American slavery are even coloured with cannibalistic overtones; indeed, children[9] are «well fattened and fed» [Trollope 1836, p. 174] but, instead of «being made in God's own image» [Trollope 1836, p. 174], they are associated to «young swine» [Trollope 1836, p. 174], whose succulent meat can be devoured or sold to ravenous whites.

[8] In another passage of the novel, the quadroons of Louisiana are featured as a «race whom all men are permitted to insult» [Trollope 1836, p. 97]. As long as harassing a quadroon is legal, Whitlaw is not concerned with the morality of such behavior.

[9] As the author observes, «the multiplication of this branch of produce» – children – is «one of the most profitable speculations» [Trollope 1836, p. 174].

Initially depicted as a «wretched relic of life and labor» [Trollope 1836, p. 80], Juno shared the same lot with her fellow-slaves before growing into a nurturing and protective figure, capable of redressing wrongs and enforcing justice. Trollope devotes a whole chapter to her distressing vicissitudes, starting from the time she became the mistress of her owner, an English settler, who took pride in experimenting with her outstanding intellectual faculties. Widely educated in the liberal arts and delighted with her first experience of motherhood, Juno was soon deserted and donated to a friend of her proprietor's, who departed for Europe with their eighteen-month-old daughter, «a little yellow girl» [Trollope 1836, p. 119] he intended to raise as a lady. From that moment onward, while passing from master to master, Juno slowly metamorphosed into a «well-regulated machine» [Trollope 1836, p. 119] for childbearing (one of the several tasks she was to perform), numb in her feelings for the countless little creatures expelled from her womb and doomed to be sold like cattle. She used to awaken from this «unnatural state of torpidity» [Trollope 1836, p. 120] only when she fantasized about her first child (conceived when she was still treated as a human being) and their forthcoming reunion, once finally released from bondage. Predictably, freedom never came and, late in her life, she was sold again and transferred to Paradise Plantation. The character of Juno is apparently entrusted by the writer with the responsibility of casting light on the biases and misconceptions regarding African Americans. Their supposed inferiority and intellectual deficiencies (which somehow justified their subjection) are replaced with her shrewdness and extraordinary manipulative skills, with her ability to switch from «the negro gibberish usually spoken by her race» [Trollope 1836, p. 125] to the most refined language, used when she wants to direct Whitlaw's actions to suit her schemes. As a trickster, in fact, she persuades the credulous man that the rhymed prophecies she utters are dictated by some superior entity that cannot be questioned. Hence, the superstitious and ignorant overseer dutifully complies with the black sybil's commands, foolishly convinced that he is actually paving his way to success. The whites' gullibility is often exploited by Juno as an empowering tool, that enables her to rescue runaway Caesar — sold in absentia to the welcoming Steinmarks through her mystical intercession — and Phebe, when she is about to be flogged after Whitlaw's attempt to rape her (even the stereotype of the sexually predatory black male is thus subverted). Moreover, the magical aura surrounding her persona allows her unchecked freedom of movement, the possibility to cross the boundaries imposed by both her gender and race.

The alleged barbarism and irrational behavior of the slaves are also challenged. Encouraged by their former master Edward Blight to «pray to the great God of the white man and the negro» [Trollope 1836, p. 127], Caesar and Phebe are featured as kind and deeply religious people, incapable of any harm. Conversely, Whitlaw and his fierce cronies identify Blight's proselytism as

a threat, since the doctrine of solidarity and universal brotherhood preached by Christianity could undermine the asymmetrical power relationship between whites and blacks. In one of the most poignant episodes of the novel, therefore, a «savage mob» [Trollope 1836, p. 345] viciously seizes and hangs «the gentle unresisting martyr» [Trollope 1836, p. 345] Edward Blight, «with the most unneedful violence» [Trollope 1836, p. 345]. In a thought-provoking role-reversal, the white mob operating under Lynch-law is portrayed by Trollope in the same, dehumanized way in which the slaves had been previously presented. Perceived as a «tremendous animal» [Trollope 1836, p. 301], as a monstrous body with multiple «murderous hands»[10] [Trollope 1836, p. 344], the mob performs its «impious task» [Trollope 1836, p. 345] before the only «living being» [Trollope 1836, p. 345] endowed with compassion who witnesses the scene: paradoxically a black slave, Juno. As the author seems to suggest, slavery corrupts and pollutes not just its prime victims, but also whoever condones or endorses this brutal system.

Juno succeeds in undercutting even the deeply-ingrained American belief in the separation of the races, as well as its dark corollary, namely the fear of miscegenation. In the novel, in fact, the elderly woman is credited with being «the progenitor of a white and beautiful free race in England» [Trollope 1836, p. 161], stemming from her long-lost daughter: the divide between blacks and whites, slaves and freeborn individuals is not so clear-cut nor is the gulf between them unbridgeable. When Selina (Juno's British great-granddaughter) reaches New Orleans with her father to sell her family's estate, the slave is informed of her unexpected arrival by one of her acquaintances with the following words: «It will be for certain, Miss Juno, a pleasure for you to see such a lily-white posterity. Arnt the whites unaccountable, Mis Juno, that cant see how easy it is for black blood to turn white? 'Tis plain enough, that Goda'mighty has no objection whatsumever to it, at any rate» [Trollope 1836, p. 244].[11]

[10] In the novel, a little slave called Dido is also lynched by a mob of white women; the scene is described in a similar way: «the strength of more than one active and practiced female arm was exhausted in lacerating the back and limbs of the unfortunate child» [Trollope 1836, pp. 279-280].

[11] Even though Trollope fostered an improvement in the slaves' condition and possibly the end of their bondage, unlike Frances Wright, she did not promote the amalgamation between blacks and whites. When Lucy is blamed for being the «unnatural abomination of a nigger fancier» [Trollope 1836, p. 278], just because Caesar had paid her a visit, she defends herself by stating that the accusation was «an infamous falsehood» [Trollope 1836, p. 278]. Her words are also echoed by the narrator, who underlines the falseness of that «insulting accusation» [Trollope 1836, p. 278]. As Christine Sutphin has noticed, this shows «the limits of even the more enlightened voices in the text» [Sutphin 2009, p. xlviii].

The novel also offered Trollope the opportunity to contribute to the cause of women's emancipation, by transforming Juno into a universal icon of justice, into the patroness of her racialized and white sisters alike. Reflecting on the choice of her name, Mary Wilson Carpenter has observed that, among her prerogatives, the mythological Juno[12] (herself a matron) was the guardian of both national finances and mature women and their offspring [Carpenter 2002, p. 105]. Indeed, the highly innovative character of Juno (given her blackness, elderly age, disabilities, and power of agency) personifies the traditional nurturing qualities of women combined with an uncommon education, a deep sense of righteousness, and an active participation in the public sphere, thus perfectly interpreting the notion of maternal feminism. Furthermore, Jessica S. Boulard contends that she «symbolizes a mother to all races, sexes and classes» [Boulard 2005, p. 60], almost incarnating the ideal of a reformed mother-land. In a country where law and ethics clash, Juno embraces the role of a goddess — a sort of *dea ex machina* — to chastise the tyrant that otherwise would go unpunished: Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw. In truth, the overseer was responsible for triggering mob violence against Blight; besides, by revealing to Selina she was actually a quadroon,[13] he had pushed her to commit suicide. Hence, «called upon by Heaven» [Trollope 1836, p. 352], Juno becomes «the instrument of ridding the earth of such a monster» [Trollope 1836, p. 352]. After stating her charges against him, the woman consigns Whitlaw to an atrocious death at the hands of four slaves, who «avenge the cause of the whole negro race, in destroying the most systematic and brutal enemy they had ever known» [Trollope 1836, pp. 352-353]. The overseer's demise also facilitates the social advancement of another injured woman: his aunt Clio. In *Domestic Manners*, Trollope had already described the wives of American cottagers as the real «slave[s] of the soil» [Trollope 1904, p. 104]: overworked, thin, pale, and aged before time. At the beginning of the novel, Clio and Whitlaw's mother are treated by the householder as pack animals, and even given alcohol to increase their production capacity.[14] Juno's last act is to safeguard the financial interests of the white lady who, on many occasions, had shown her benevolence towards the blacks. The previously hidden

[12] According to Lyra D. Monteiro, the common use of classical names for slaves in the US was ironic, aimed at «mock[ing] their lowly bearers» [Monteiro 2012, p. 264].

[13] Whitlaw had initially asked Selina to marry him, so that he could seize her properties with no expenditure on his part. When he found out about her ancestry (as a quadroon, she was legally prevented from owning land), he crudely told her she could only become his mistress.

[14] «The poisonous inspiration did its work, and under its feverish influence the young women dragged and pulled, and pushed and carried […], with a degree of strength and perseverance greatly beyond what their age and appearance promised» [Trollope 1836, p. 5].

body of her nephew is, therefore, found close to his mansion: once his death is finally confirmed, Clio becomes eligible to inherit his fortunes, thus continuing to share «kindness and munificence to all the world» [Trollope 1836, p. 364]. Despite what has been argued so far, however, Juno's (and Trollope's) maternal feminism is not fully convincing as it appears intrinsically contradictory. If, on the one hand, she manages to perform the part of a caring and empowering figure for those who rely on her resourcefulness and talents (her symbolic offspring), on the other hand, she is also portrayed as the victim of white men's oppression exercised through the maternal function *par excellence*, that of childbearing.

Tamara S. Wagner views the novel as a fine example of «British abolition triumphalism» [Wagner 2011b, p. 242]. In the end, the Steinmarks, Lucy Bligh, Caesar, and Phebe return to the Old World which, following the pattern of reverse migration, seemingly becomes the real promised land, a suitable refuge for the honorable and sympathetic characters. Slavery had been abolished in the British Empire in 1833, but it was only in 1838 (two years after the publication of *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*) that the contentious apprenticeship system came to an end.[15] Trollope's perception of Europe (of England, in particular), therefore, is not devoid of ambiguities. Christine Sutphin has underlined that «Britain was economically dependent on United States slave-grown cotton» [Sutphin 2009, p. xlvi]; moreover, the first man who abused Juno was an Englishman, whose great-grand-daughter Selina, in spite of her advanced education,[16] is persuaded that the «marked and hitherto most unhappy race [are] the descendants of Cain» [Trollope 1836, p. 226]. Unable to endure the shame of belonging to «the accursed race of Cain» [Trollope 1836, p. 228], she eventually opts for a self-inflicted death, thus demonstrating that racial prejudices are still rooted in her culture.

The novel was not printed in America, nor was it ever reviewed, with the exception of a disdainful note in *The American Quarterly Review*, which depicted the volume as «the newest specimen of ignorance and misrepresentation which ha[d] emanated from the English press» [1836, p. 405]. Conversely, although *The Athenaeum* blamed the writer for «disfigur[ing] the fairyland of fiction» [1836, p. 463] with her choice of a disturbing subject, the novel acquired great popularity in Britain, going through three editions in 1836. Susan S. Kissel Adams maintains that Trollope's fiction «was a modernizing force» [Kissel Adams 2002, p. 163]. In truth, as a social-problem novel, *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* anticipated some of the concerns

[15] In 1833, all slaves became free, but those over six were required to work for their previous masters as *apprentices*, for a period between four and six years [Nwulia 1978, p. 89].

[16] She is described with «a volume of Spenser» [Trollope 1836, p. 226] in her hands.

that she herself, as well as several Victorian authors, would widely explore in the following decades, namely the relationship between slavery and industrial capitalism[17] [Sheehan 2016, p. 179] or, better, the «causal connection that links the factory system backward to the slave trade» [Sheehan 2020, p. 522]. Her novel was seminal: unquestionably, it inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)[18] and several allusions may be detected in Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby*, serialized in 1838-1839 [Michie 2011, pp. 233-251]. Patronizingly deemed «emotional» [Trollope 1922, p. 19] by her son Anthony, and «unable to avoid the pitfalls of exaggeration» [Trollope 1922, p. 28], Frances Trollope firmly believed that fiction had the duty and the responsibility to document and hand down to posterity the individual stories neglected by official history. Hence, as the narrator of *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* elucidates, the lynching of Edward Blight is surely a sickening scene «the historian would gladly shrink from describing; but such things HAVE BEEN, nor could the narration of it be soften or omitted» [Trollope 1836, pp. 343-344].

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[17] It might not be a chance that the title of *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* (1840), a novel dealing with the exploitation of child labour in factories, bears a close resemblance to *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*.

[18] The analogies between the two works have been thoroughly investigated (among others) by Harold H. Scudder [1944, pp. 46-48], Helen Heineman [1978, p. 144], Brenda A. Ayres [2006], and Elsie B. Michie [2011, pp. 248-249].

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Elegy and Exile: Letitia Landon's The Zenana

Abstract

The popular lyric poet Letitia Landon, known as «LEL», died in October 1838, in the Cape Coast in west Africa, poisoned by the ingestion of hydrocyanic acid; she had married George Maclean, a British colonial governor, earlier the same year. The shock of Landon's sudden death was compounded by its mysterious circumstances, quickly giving rise to rumours of suicide, murder, adultery, and cover-up. Landon's first posthumous collection included a reassuring and almost certainly dishonest «Memoir» of the poet. The publication of *The Zenana* in 1839 fulfilled both a literary and a social need. The volume served to cool down the strong possibility of scandal in the circumstances around Landon's death, to sanitize Landon's reputation, and give her admiring public a final re-affirming taste of her exquisite work. This article interprets the «text» of Landon's death in the light of new biographical work on Landon and Maclean, re-evaluation of poetry of the 1830s, and debates about the nature of modern elegy.

Michael Bradshaw

The poet Letitia Elizabeth Landon, known universally as LEL, made two journeys between Britain and west Africa.[1] Her outward journey was aboard the brig *Governor Maclean*, sailing from Portsmouth to Cape Coast in present-day Ghana, via Madeira, in the summer of 1838. Her symbolic return journey was in the form of a body of work, information and misinformation, news, rumour, and scandal, the idea of LEL transformed forever in her brief disappearance from the public gaze. Landon's mortal remains were buried on the night of her death, in torrential tropical rain, after a hasty postmortem inquest, and still lie in the courtyard of Cape Coast castle.[2]

[1] Following established practice, this article will distinguish between «Landon», when referring to matters of biography, and «LEL» when discussing the constructed authorial persona, or the poet's public reception.

[2] Information on Landon's biography is drawn mainly from Watt (2010) and Miller (2019), with some material from Greer (1995).

Landon was extraordinarily prolific as a writer; some of her work is hard to trace, because she often wrote anonymously for small payments, placing her poems in ephemeral publications. Landon bibliographers such as Glenn Dibert-Himes and Cynthia Lawford confirm that she produced — at least — six complete volumes of poetry, ten poetry annuals, three novels, and a volume of stories; another novel and a tragedy were published posthumously.[3] A large quantity of occasional lyrics, critical reviews, and short stories is still being identified and catalogued. As Miller explains in the introduction to her life of Landon, biographical and critical interpretation of the poet changed greatly with the emergence of descendants of her relationship with William Jerdan, which was previously assumed to be non-sexual and without issue: «Feminist critics of the 1990s […] dismissed the gossip about her love life as a clear example of patriarchal prejudice: the smearing of a woman simply because she had dared to step outside her proper sphere by publishing at all» [MILLER 2019, p. 11]. Anne Mellor's chapter on the poet and her career in *Romanticism and Gender* (1993) is in many ways a landmark intervention in the modern interpretation of LEL. Yet on re-reading in 2023, it is striking how heavily the emphasis falls on Landon's agency, her creation and strategic manipulation of her profitable alter-ego; this contrasts sharply with Miller's conclusions based on long-suppressed evidence, in which Jerdan appears not as a publisher and mentor, but much more like an abuser who groomed and controlled a very young woman, exploiting her both sexually and financially. Miller's reading of the poems is in turn deeply inflected by this knowledge, tracing a career-long addiction to evasiveness, ambiguity, and concealment in plain sight. If Landon was in control of her marketable image, with its enticing combination of innocent passivity and knowing sensuality, it was a continual strain for her to maintain this image while constantly at risk of moral scandal and reputational ruin. As Germaine Greer observes, the poet's «documentation is a curious compilation of breathy eulogy and coarse innuendo» [GREER 1995, p. 261]. A narrative of flattery, seduction, betrayal, and lonely demise lives on in modern interpretations of her life and work.

In a frequently quoted anecdote, Edward Bulwer-Lytton witnesses to her titillating celebrity among young male readers in his student days:

> There was always in the reading-room of the Union a rush every Saturday afternoon for the «Literary Gazette»; and an impatient anxiety to hasten at once to that corner of the sheet which contained the three magical letters, «L.E.L.» And all of us praised the verse, and all of us guessed at the author.

[3] See «An Index to the Poetry of Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802-38)» by Glenn Dibert-Himes and Cynthia Lawford, in LANDON 1997, pp. 387-506.

> We soon learned it was female, and our admiration was doubled, and our conjectures tripled. Was she young? Was she pretty? And – for there were some embryo fortune-hunters among us — was she rich? [WATT 2010, p. 30]

The rapid brutality of Landon's fall from public favour is plain to see in the following sarcastic notices in the press:

> A well-known English Sappho, and like her Greek prototype famous for the amorous glow of her fancy, has just been detected in a faux pas with a literary man, the father of several children. [*Sunday Times* 1826, quoted in MILLER 2019, p. 103]

> In the course of a few months [LEL] acquired so perceptible a degree of *embonpoint*, as to induce her kind friend Jerdan to recommend a change of air, lest her health and strength should be affected. She followed his advice, and strange to say, such was the effect of even two months' absence from Brompton, that she was returned as *thin* and poetical as ever!' [*The Wasp* 1826, quoted in MILLER 2019, p. 109]

The castle

The term «Cape Coast» is an English mistranslation of a Portuguese name. A fortress on the Atlantic coast of modern-day Ghana, it still stands today, its guns trained on unseen enemies out to sea, restored and maintained by the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, along with other «slave castles», as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Cape Coast Castle had been a fortified European trading post since the seventeenth century. The site fell under British rule during a colonial war with the United Provinces in the 1660s, becoming the primary British stronghold on the west coast of Africa. George Maclean was appointed not as the governor of a colony, but as the commander of the castle itself, and President of the Council of Merchants; the limits of his jurisdiction in the surrounding area were ill-defined. By this time, trading in enslaved people had been unlawful in the British Empire for over twenty years, following the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1807); the Slavery Abolition Act (1833) had followed. In the 1830s, therefore, Cape Coast, like many British territories, was in transition: the eighteenth-century high point of slave trading was over, and yet the territory was not established as a colony under direct British rule as the Gold Coast until the 1860s. On his appointment in 1830, Maclean was given a specific brief to root out illegitimate slaving activity on the stretch of coast over which the castle presided. The castle itself maintained a military presence, and was used to accommodate prisoners, a troublingly

ambiguous concept.[4] In 1836 a complaint had been made that British West African traders were flouting the 1824 Slave Trade Consolidation Act (proscribing any indirect financial dealings with known slavers), abetted in this by Maclean [MILLER 2019, p. 231]. The complainant proved to be not credible and Maclean's personal enemy; Maclean was vulnerable to slanders and accusations throughout his tenure at Cape Coast, yet it is unlikely that commercial companies active in that area could operate entirely without some contact with the continuing trade in slaves, which remained a part of commerce in Ashanti, Brazilian, and Portuguese territories [WATT 2010, pp. 169-70 ff.]. In 1842, shortly after Landon's death at Cape Coast, Maclean was again investigated for abusing his office, following allegations that British traders had been supplying slave ships in territory under his jurisdiction. Maclean was also indicted with the illegal imprisonment of large numbers of people without trial, and for fraudulently claiming the right to administer capital punishment in the colony. He was exonerated at a parliamentary select committee, when it was accepted that he held no legal powers to prosecute the slavers, yet also relieved of his position [WATT 2010, p. 224 ff.].

In her «Memoir», Emma Roberts emphasizes Landon's admiration for Maclean's integrity:

> No one could better appreciate than L.E.L. the high and sterling qualities of her lover's character, his philanthropic and increasing endeavours to improve the condition of the natives of Africa; the noble manner in which he interfered to prevent the horrid waste of human life by the barbarian princes in his neighbourhood; and the chivalric energy with which he strove to put an end to the slave-trade. [LANDON 1839, p. 29]

In her two months at Cape Coast Castle, Landon wrote many letters reassuring her friends about her pleasant situation and cheerful state of mind, some of them confessing to feelings of isolation and loneliness, and some of them «protesting too much»; in one letter signed Letitia Maclean (15 October 1838), Landon describes herself as «a feminine Robinson Crusoe» [LANDON 1839, p. 34]; but the theme she returns to again and again is solitude.

> «The castle is a fine building — the rooms excellent. I do not suffer from heat; insects there are few or none, and I am in excellent health. The solitude, except an occasional dinner, is absolute; from seven in the morning till seven when we dine, I never see Mr. Maclean, and rarely anyone else.

[4] «The cleaning was carried out by the prisoners — most of them debtors confined for unspecified terms in the fort prison — under the supervision of a soldier with drawn bayonet. Like most slaves, they worked badly» [GREER 1995, p. 351].

> We were welcomed by a series of dinners, which I am glad are over […] But fancy how awkward the next morning; I cannot induce Mr. Maclean to rise, and I have to make breakfast, and do the honours of adieu to [the] officers — white plumes, mustachios, and all. […] On three sides we are surrounded by the sea. I like the perpetual dash on the rocks; one wave comes up after another, and is for ever dashed in pieces, like human hopes, that only swell to be disappointed.» [Landon 1839, pp. 34-35]

The death

Mrs Letitia Maclean, née Landon, died on 15 October 1838, poisoned by excessive ingestion of hydrocyanic acid (then known as «prussic acid»), a sedative commonly prescribed for patients who had become desensitized to laudanum through over-use. In her biography, Miller evaluates extensive evidence, both direct and indirect, in the correspondences around Landon's death, and finds that the balance of probability strongly suggests suicide due to multiple sources of personal stress, notwithstanding Landon's protests about her serenity of mind as the solitary English lady in Cape Coast Castle [miller 2019, pp. 263-282].

The inquest into Landon's death in October 1838 was made up of members of the British West Africa trading association and others with every reason to protect Maclean's reputation; the inquest was carried out under Maclean's own jurisdiction in the Cape Coast castle. Strenuous efforts to eliminate the clear potential scandal of suicide, and all that might imply about Maclean as a husband, may have inadvertently led to more sinister developments. Landon's doctor was emphatic that he had never prescribed her with prussic acid and therefore did not furnish the means of self-slaughter. Everyone knew *how* she died; drinking prussic acid straight from the bottle (the recommended dose was very sparing, one drop in a glass of water) was fatal, and no one disputed the decision to dispense with a full postmortem investigation. But *why* did she die? The allegation of a murder soon followed, supported for a time by Landon's brother Whittington, who later recanted. A racist scenario began to circulate of Ellen Maclean, George's «country wife», having acted against her rival, with the connivance of Maclean himself. The story was easier to swallow thousands of miles and several weeks' journey away in London, where Ellen could be imagined as an exotic and hot-blooded native concubine, moved by passionate jealousy to destroy her rival; in fact Ellen was a family woman, very accustomed to British society, who may have been directly involved in trade in her own right; she came from a family of mixed African and British heritage, and was almost certainly literate in English. [miller 2019, pp. 284-286]

Speculation about the death of a former literary star, luridly fallen from grace, began to circulate immediately: among papers published in Africa, *The Courier* and *The Watchman* were quick to pick up the story; and from January 1839 onwards the news circulated in Britain, with coverage in papers and periodicals such as *The Scotsman* and *John Bull*. *The Morning Post* seems to have been the first paper to air the possibility that Landon had been murdered [Watt 2010, pp. 199-200].[5] A conflict arose among British officials in west Africa. Maclean had long been caught between his explicitly Abolitionist orders from the British Colonial Office and the powerful commercial interests on the coast, in particular Matthew Forster, foremost among the traders who tacitly continued to deal with slavers, who had long pressurized Maclean to tolerate or overlook more than he was willing. Richard Madden, a committed Abolitionist, was despatched to Cape Coast with a brief to investigate both the rumours of murder, which he quickly dismissed, and the complicity with slaving, which he confirmed in angry and forthright terms. When the matter went to a parliamentary Select Committee, Maclean was exonerated and his reputation cleared; Matthew Forster was also an MP, and exerted influence in many spheres [Miller 2019, pp. 287-290].

Emma Roberts's «Memoir» in *The Zenana* played an early part in maintaining an official version of Landon's death by misadventure — a tragic accident, untainted by distress or felony: «unless in some moment of actual delirium, brought on by excessive bodily anguish, she never wilfully would have destroyed herself. […] Could distress of mind have driven her to so fatal an act, I cannot but think that it would have been committed long ago» [Landon 1839, pp. 14-15]. The definitive memoir, however, was published a few years later, in the form of Samuel Laman Blanchard's *The Life and Literary Remains of L.E.L.* (1841). Notwithstanding his initial suspicion that Landon had committed suicide, Blanchard had been carefully chosen as a biographer, for his gentle, conflict-averse nature, as a writer who could be trusted to praise Landon and lament her loss, while avoiding inflammatory controversy. The book was effective in allowing the sensation of Landon's life and death to fade from public attention, but it was universally deemed a failure. Blanchard himself committed suicide in 1845; Miller brilliantly observes that Bulwer's statement that both Landon and her biographer had killed themselves was the only published allusion to her suicide by any of her circle [Miller 2019, p. 299].

[5] Watt and Miller do not agree as to the likely cause of Landon's death. Watt speculates that Landon may have had an undiagnosed heart condition, which the hydrocyanic acid was treating inappropriately, exacerbating the spasmodic symptoms that she and others refer to. Miller is fully committed to the explanation that Landon had developed an addiction to the drug first prescribed as a pain-killer, and that her death is somewhere in the grey area between a deliberate act of suicide, and suicidally reckless self-medication [Watt 2010, p. 203 cf. Miller 2019, p. 282].

The book

The revival of scholarly attention to Landon's writing continues to prioritize poetry as commodity in nineteenth-century material culture, the construction of consumer taste, and the commercial production and distribution of books. As David Stewart observes, there is a concomitant uncertainty about how — or even whether — to interpret the actual content of the poems, as objects of critical interest in themselves [Stewart 2018, p. 98]. In Anne Mellor's phrase, LEL provides her reading public with «a purchasable icon of female beauty» [Mellor 1993, p. 112]; Mellor argues that Landon's decorative craft, expertly adapted to the aesthetic taste of a specific paying audience, constitutes a critique of the commodification of female beauty, with its assumptions about the philosophical depth and endurance of the dominant masculine form of Romanticism [Mellor 1993, pp. 107-143]. A certain quality of emptiness beneath the exquisitely crafted exterior is a persistent problem encountered by scholars who write on Landon: «Her poems inhabit a world of absolute artifice, of pure surface. They do not justify themselves by reference to an external reality, but exist purely on the page» [Stewart 2018, p. 100]. And yet Stewart is also concerned to displace the assumptions of «failure» which can adhere to poets like Landon when anomalous aesthetic criteria are applied to them. The flatness of style in Landon's verse that many critics have observed — its apparent lack of depth or even «quality» — is also apparent in its general lack of development over time; Landon found her «voice» precociously early, found a willing and profitable audience for it, and continued to produce more of the same, in prodigious quantities. Like her near-contemporary Thomas Hood, Landon has been affected by a style of materialist criticism that makes a literary text more or less equivalent to the economics of its production and consumption. David Stewart's *The Form of Poetry of the 1820s and 1830s: a Period of Doubt* (2018) seems to me to have gone a long way to redress this imbalance, with a series of astute readings, which learn from and respond critically to dominant historicist methods, while also acknowledging that poems have denotative content — they tell specific stories, articulate specific feelings, and must be allowed to be *about* things. Above all, Stewart is a subtle critic of the literary self-awareness in the practice of writers like Landon and Hood, focusing our attention on their deceptive subtlety. Nevertheless, Landon's superbly fluent facility of composition can be conducive to an impression of poetry with very little depth of meaning to be explored, a text consisting of «pure surface», leaving the critic nowhere to go. Stewart negotiates this potential impasse by helpfully re-framing the debate: Landon's self-aware poetic method does not invite and thwart an analytical search for depth, but rather appeals to a visual and intellectual interest in surface; her poetry is not to be mined, but rather traced as it were in two dimensions [Stewart 2018, pp. 96-104]. This balanced approach responds to both textuality and material culture, applying nuance

to the gender binary between masculine posterity and feminine ephemerality proposed by some critics.[6]

The elegiac tradition in poetry is concerned not only with mourning and laying to rest, but also with the symbolic transportation of human remains; in Landon's case, what remained was textual as well as bodily, corpus as well as corpse. *The Zenana* is a product of the transportation of Landon's symbolic body out of colonial west Africa, back to a genteel and abolitionist Britain, intent on detoxifying and concealing its legacies of enslavement. The collection is a significant attempt to memorialize LEL, and to impose some control over her postmortem transmission and reputation. The thematic heart of the publication can be found somewhere in the conjunction of Emma Roberts's memoir of the poet, the title poem with its symbolic themes of feminine orientalist adventure, and LEL's elegy for Felicia Hemans — re-printed following earlier publications in the *New Monthly Magazine* (1835) and *Fisher's Drawing-room Scrap Book* (1838). When printed in *Fisher's*, for which Landon served as editor, «The Zenana» had been lavishly decorated with engravings of Indian tombs, monuments, and ruins, in the sentimental orientalist manner. When *The Zenana, and Minor Poems* was published in 1839, it was unlikely to be many readers' first encounter with the news of her death; it was an intervention to redress the power of rumour and scandal. Emma Roberts's «Memoir» is a quick and effective biographical response, written with the authority of someone who claimed to have been close to Landon, reassuring social anxieties provoked by rumours of sexual intrigue, murder, and suicide.

The Zenana is an anthology of elegiac lyrics and narratives. It contains one of Landon's finest short poems, «Felicia Hemans», which offers an arrestingly simple definition of the poetess as a coalescence of the poet and the woman, united in their sacrificial role of feeling deeply and conveying those feelings elegantly, for others to feed on. The title poem offers a series of nested elegiac tales within a melancholy framing narrative. The two central characters are alike enslaved, transported, lovelorn, and betrayed. In considering *The Zenana* in relation to the genre of elegy, I will invoke two main paradigms — the ethical discomfort of the modern elegist and related questions of self-elegy, and the sub-genre of the *tombeau*, the specific instance of a poet's elegy for a fellow poet. A noted critic of modern elegy, Jahan Ramazani writes: «modern elegists are wracked by what I call the economic problem of mourning — the guilty thought that they reap aesthetic profit from loss, that death is the fuel of poetic mourning» [Ramazani 1994, p. 6]. In a straightforward way, the *tombeau* may be defined as a poet's elegy for a fellow poet — Jonson on Shakespeare, Shelley on Keats, Auden on Yeats. Landon's poem commemorating Felicia Hemans assumes a significant place in this tradition. In a more

[6] E.g. Bennett 1999, discussed by Stewart, p. 102.

critically exacting sense, the *tombeau* is characterized by the poetic mediation of inheritance and succession. A *tombeau* is a commemorative poem in which a poet lays a comrade to rest and, in doing so, makes a considered intervention in their emerging postmortem reputation. Although typically eulogistic in stance, the key factor in a true *tombeau* is that it transmits a specific view of the poet's achievement and thus mediates future interpretation of their work. A by-product of the genre — or alternatively, for the cynic, its undeclared mission — is the long-term association of the elegist's name with that of the deceased, and the intermingling of their reputations.[7]

Landon's «Felicia Hemans» is noted as a competent and florid elegy for the older poet, but it is also an effective *tombeau* in that it offers a specific aesthetic theory of Hemans's composition, and announces itself as her literary resting place: «a grave which is a shrine» [p. 251].[8] Landon's interpretation of Hemans's achievement is basically an aesthetic of sacrifice (or alternatively exploitative predation), the theme which emerges from her use of the Prometheus analogy in the third stanza:

> Yet what is mind in woman but revealing
> In sweet clear light the hidden world below,
> By quicker fancies and a keener feeling
> Than those around, the cold and careless, know?
> What is to feed such feeling, but to culture
> A soil whence pain will never more depart?
> The fable of Prometheus and the vulture
> Reveals the poet's and the woman's heart,
> Unkindly are they judged — unkindly treated —
> By careless tongues and by ungenerous words… [Landon 1839, p. 249]

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[7] A key prototype for this effect is Stéphane Mallarmé's «The Tomb of Edgar Poe» («*Le tombeau d'Edgar Poe*», 1887), in which Mallarmé enacts an exchange of properties between Poe's and his own poetic styles, offering to absorb a little of Poe's trademark macabre, and in turn causing the reader to colour future re-readings of Poe with some of his own sonic experimentation and ambiguity.

[8] For a detailed analysis of Landon's poetic response to Hemans in terms of female literary agency and social critique, see Lucy Morrison's «Effusive Elegies or Catty Critic: Letitia Elizabeth Landon on Felicia Hemans», e.g.: «Landon's poetic address of Hemans challenges the double standard nineteenth-century critics applied to these poets and their works» [Morrison 2007, p. 6]; «In emphasizing the discrepancy between Hemans's life and her public image, Landon indirectly insinuates the need for her own work and life to be separately considered as well. She both admires Hemans's work and perceives her subversion of assigned roles in her duplicitous embrace of domesticity» [p. 36]. For Judith Pascoe, Landon's career serves to demonstrate «the conflation of public and private spheres that occurred whenever women wrote poetry [and yet] a cultural narrowing of the possibilities for female authorial performance as the century proceeded» [Pascoe 1997, 229].

The elegy makes a statement about the role of the poet as a mediator of natural beauty, but also about the specific instance of the woman poet, who draws both form and substance from the experience of suffering. In this sense, she anticipates the function of the self-conscious modern elegist, summarized by Geoffrey Hill in a weary parenthesis in «September Song» (1968): «(I have made / an elegy for myself it / is true)» [Hill 1994]. Ramazani traces further contradictions relating to the gender of elegy in nineteenth-century print culture:

> Elegies […] posed a risk to women poets. For them, the genre was doubly problematic in gender terms — «masculine» as an élite literary form yet «feminine» as a popular cultural form and simulation of mourning. A female poet who wrote elegies risked being tainted by the type of «poetess» or «nightingale,» at a time when securing literary credentials required that she shun it. [Ramazani 1994, p. 21]

Landon's choice of the Prometheus myth to convey this idea is curiously masculine, with its implied presence of a martial male body in torment, producing an unresolved awkwardness in the claim she makes about female suffering for aesthetic gain. At any rate, the striking image of Prometheus on the rock proposes a sacrificial, even parasitic, relationship between a male-dominated society feeding on the emotional sustenance provided by women and/or poets. The violence of the image hardly resonates with Hemans's writing or her public persona; this is surely Landon making «an elegy for herself».

«Zenana» is an anglicized Urdu word, meaning the part of a wealthy household (either Hindu or Muslim) that was reserved for women and for female seclusion. More neutral than the titillating idea of a harem, the *zenana* is nevertheless a part of the standard array of exotic colour deployed by orientalist poetry in English during the Romantic period. The editorial choice of «The Zenana» as the title piece demarcates the collection as a space for feminine experience and a melodramatic tale of a female life and death, with the further implication that the posthumous book was a vessel for the poet's reputation. The publication of *The Zenana* in 1839 simultaneously fulfilled a literary and a social need. The volume served to cool down the strong possibility of scandal in the circumstances around Landon's death, which various interested parties would find damaging — Maclean from a political and moral perspective, and Jerdan in relation to both personal and business interests, his prominence and wealth as a publisher having been substantially built on the fashioning of LEL for the public taste. *The Zenana* also served to repair and sanitize Landon's reputation, to give her admiring public a final re-affirming taste of her exquisite work, and give them permission to enjoy it as respectable readers.

The long title poem uses a similarly diffuse structure to Landon's earlier collection *The Improvisatrice*: an oriental narrative of tragic female incarceration and sacrifice is interspersed by a series of tales and lyrics sung to the protagonist Nadira by the minstrel Zilara. Like her mistress the child bride Nadira, Zilara is enslaved and exiled, pining languidly for the delights of her homeland. The women are not clearly distinguished through either plotting or dialogue, and their voices blend into one another, to form a continuous music of eroticized yet somewhat unexamined female suffering. The narrative is characterized by languor and inertia, drifting inevitably to a melancholy close in decorative feminine grief…

Zilara finishes her song of the sacrificial death of Kishen Kower. The zenana remains quiet. Nadira communes with the beauty of nature, but remains desolate in her solitude; she appeals to the sun as a revelation of divine eternity, and measures human grief and human death as trivial by comparison. Zilara is pining for a lost love, a man who rejected her before her enslavement and arrival at Murad's household to share the zenana with Nadira. Moohreeb is Murad's prisoner, defeated in war. Zilara begs Nadira to have Moohreeb released, even though she knows he has another bride. After a sleepless night, Murad returns with his victorious army the next day; Nadira makes Zilara's request, which is quickly granted. That night, Moohreeb's boat is seen leaving Delhi by the river, and the following morning Zilara's dead body is found leaning on a white stone tomb. Nadira cherishes Zilara's lyre until it can be played no more, and Zilara's grave becomes a shrine to love and song, bedecked with ephemeral flowers, which bloom and die, decorated with shells from the ocean and resonant with strange music.

Long did the young Nadira[9] keep
The memory of that maiden's lute;
And call to mind her songs, and weep,
Long after those charmed chords were mute
A small white tomb was raised, to show
That human sorrow slept below;
And solemn verse and sacred line
Were graved on that funereal shrine. […]
Oh! if her poet soul be blent[10]
With its aerial element,
May its lone course be where the rill
Goes singing at its own glad will;

[9] *Nadira*: 'sultana' (1834).

[10] i.e. referring to the songstress Zilara, not to Nadira.

Where early flowers unclose and die;
Where shells beside the ocean lie,
Fill'd with strange tones; or where the breeze
Sheds odours o'er the moonlit seas:
There let her gentle spirit rove,
Embalmed by poetry and love. [Landon 1839, pp. 70-71]

The close of the poem is entirely typical of Landon's style, and a suitable gift to initiate a new reader to the pleasure of her work; Landon's closing lines are accomplished, almost unimprovable within their own chosen limitations. Harriet Linkin is able to find a purposeful, even optimistic, interpretation of the frequent spectacle of decorative female death in Landon, observing that if she often returns to images of «the silenced female», she does so «to rewrite Romanticism, to insist on the silenced female as an image constructed by a social reality that need not prevail in the Romantic aesthetic» [Linkin 1997, p. 181]. Notwithstanding readings of this kind which attempt to reinstate some agency at an unpromising graveside, Landon's poems repeatedly find their utmost eloquence in the erotic closure of a last line gesturing into blank space.

The truth

In the late 1830s, the story of Landon's death, and the *idea* of Landon's death, acted as a kind of crucible of unwelcome knowledge — literary, moral, and political. The literary establishment was confronted with the unwelcome knowledge that Jerdan, his business partners, and his customers, had created the expedient myth of LEL, built her up as a «a purchasable icon of female beauty» and stimulated a romantic curiosity among readers, only to let her fall and ruin her own reputation. They had both an aesthetic and financial stake in the whole process, rise and fall. The poetic taste that Landon had created with such consummate skill revolved around an aesthetic of eroticized female submissiveness and sacrifice; the story of her death was the culmination of her writings in embodying this aesthetic.

Morally, the gender dynamics of nineteenth-century bourgeois society were laid bare for anyone who cared to see. William Jerdan had had a long-term extra-marital relationship with Landon, while exploiting her marketable feminine myth; she had three children by him. Landon's reputation was in ruins, to the extent that she embarked on a hasty middle-aged marriage and emigrated to a distant colonial outpost in order conveniently to remove herself from the public gaze. Jerdan continued to preside over his lucrative publishing business, and to be an arbiter of literary taste in London; he even indulged in

some distasteful memorializing of Landon, claiming credit for fashioning her genius for the reading public.[11]

The political knowledge of the case goes well beyond gender politics, however. Maclean, with some justification, continually fell under suspicion of tacitly tolerating the illegal continuation of slave-trading in British-controlled western Africa. The death in mysterious circumstances of his fallen celebrity wife focused public attention on him once again. The taint of rumour and scandal surrounding Letitia's death — including the theory that the «country wife» Ellen had had Letitia murdered — further damaged his reputation and gave fuel to his enemies. The flirtatious society poet, who died miserably thousands of miles from home, whose remains were hastily buried in the rain, became a focus for the unwanted knowledge of British imperial guilt. Landon's own feted poetic style, which had typified the bourgeois literary taste of the 1820s and '30s, by recycling the fashionable orientalism of its day, with tales of exotic (almost white) princesses, noble warriors, and tragic sacrifice, relinquished its pretence of innocence, and was enfeebled in its encounter with historical truth.

The case is revealing also in terms of poetic genre. There is considerable consistency between the various readings of Landon as a poet, revolving around ideas of lyrical fluency, a narrow repertoire of endlessly repeated themes and moods, and a widely acknowledged superficiality of style. For example… there is the fashioning of LEL as a «purchasable icon of feminine beauty» (Mellor); the poems' propensity to live upon the page with little sense of external object, enraptured by their own reflexive textures (Stewart); and there is the literary life entirely devoted to masquerade and equivocation, as Landon balances riskily between the chaste and erotic possibilities of her LEL persona (Miller). The discourse of elegy may be added to these themes: Landon's poetry not only consists of numerous formal elegies and elegiac moments in narrative, in which bereavement is lamented and aestheticized; the elegiac is a pervasive mood of melancholy which captures and repeatedly expresses a fundamental idea — that poetic language is forever doomed to lament the loss and absence of its signified, turning in on itself in its inability to move on, becoming static, self-involved, gorgeously two-dimensional.

Landon may have had just one story to tell, and one song to sing. But the stories that eddy around her life and death continue to have far-reaching repercussions in our understanding of nineteenth-century culture.

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[11] «My poor, dear, all but adored L.E.L. — the creature whose earliest and precocious aspirations it was mine to cherish and improve, whose mind unfolded its marvellous stores as drawn forth and encouraged by me — well did she sweetly paint it when she said '*We love the bird we taught to sing*'». [William Jerdan, letter to Lady Blessington, quoted in Miller 2019, p. 291]

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Marginalia

Wanderers of the trackless way: Queer epistemologies of seafaring in Byron's *The Corsair*

Abstract

The sea has long represented a last vestige of the unknown. During the Romantic period, maritime expeditions were charting the seas and coastlines in greater detail than ever before, collecting vast taxonomical datasets in an attempt to both understand and control the sea. This way of collecting and categorizing knowledge in order to rationalize an unknown phenomenon had distinctly masculine and heteronormative connotations, especially given the strict codifying of gendered and sexual behaviour which was taking hold in society at large. This article considers how the navigational methods in Byron's poem *The Corsair* disrupt these epistemological frameworks of categorization and control. The characters in Byron's poem use a mixture of epistemologies in order to cross the sea, often focusing on emotions and sensory input rather than latitude or longitude. The rejection of taxonomic epistemologies can be understood as queer, offering a new interpretation of the text itself, and raising questions about how we relate to and understand the sea in Romantic texts.

Rebekah Musk

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the sea was at the heart of Britain's growing empire. It was a space for exploration, discovery, conquest, and control, which helped to shape the era in terms of society, politics, and identity. The aims of maritime voyages were numerous, but there was often an emphasis on collecting data with a view to influencing trade and creating colonies. Thus, the accepted way of knowing and controlling the sea depended on knowledge of latitude and longitude, charts and maps, meteorological data and other empirical scientific methods [Edwards 1994; Ingleby 2018; Bushnell 2018; Mathieson 2016].

In his book, *Written on the Water*, one of the most comprehensive works on Romanticism and maritime culture to date, Samuel Baker notes that the desire to chart and control the sea, and the development of maritime technology, was a direct response to the «unliveable chaos immanent to the existing

order of things» which one encountered at sea [Baker 2010, p. 25]. This suggests that the sea was understood not only as means of access to other places and people, but as something other and chaotic in its own right. This is interesting considering the epistemological approach of the era; the desire to chart and map, to impose order on chaos, was also an attempt to understand and control a threatening other. Indeed, this need to control the sea through rational means was strongly linked to both heterosexual masculinity and imperialism, assuming that knowledge, taxonomy, hierarchy, and regulation would nullify the threat of the «less advanced» or the «degenerate» other [Richardson and Hofkosh 1996; Dolan 2000; Baker 2010].

This link between methods of categorization and control is a key theme in the work of Foucault, especially his *History of Sexuality*, which examines how a taxonomical approach to understanding sexuality was used to control supposed sexual deviance. As both «sexual deviance» and the sea presented a threat to the social order during this period, it is possible to draw a parallel between the taxonomical methods employed to try and nullify that threat [Foucault 1990]. Moreover, indeed, the methods of data collection are particularly interesting given their gendered qualities: the masculine association with logic and reason constructs the other it studies as something non-masculine [Shoemaker 2013]. Thus, the desire to categorize and control the other, whether that be same-sex desire or a chaotic sea, may be seen to come from a masculine epistemology that cannot be extrapolated from its gendered and heteronormative origins, and which seeks to uphold a strict hierarchical order. By extension, any epistemological approach which values and accepts the «unliveable chaos» of the sea can be considered queer through its rejection of the desire to control through knowledge and taxonomy. A queer epistemology of the sea is one which rejects attempts to reduce it to a binary hierarchical system, just as a queer epistemology of gender and sexuality is one that embraces possibility. Understanding these links between the taxonomy and control of both the sea and gendered and sexual practice can enable queer readings of ostensibly heteronormative maritime texts. Using this framework, I will analyse Byron's poem *The Corsair* in a way that leverages the potential queerness of this text.

Throughout the poem, characters' attitudes towards the sea and the methods they use to navigate it take on new significance in light of their gendered connotations. The text centres on a community of pirates and their leader, Conrad. Already on the margins of society due to their chosen profession, Byron's pirates also present a threat to the established social order through their navigational epistemology. Instead of using accumulated data and heading for specific destinations, their sea-faring is described as follows:

Oh, who can tell, save he whose heart hath tried,
And danced in triumph o'er the waters wide,
The exulting sense — the pulse's maddening play,
That thrills the wanderer of that trackless way? [I, 13-16]

This shows the pirates engaging with the sea on a level that is embodied, sensory and emotional rather than detached, empirical, and rational. Moreover, references to «dancing» and «the pulse's maddening play» give the description a sensual, almost erotic quality. Using the language of sensibility to describe the sea in this way suggests a queer epistemology, since knowing things through sensory experience and intuition was considered feminine during this period [Mellor 1993; Shoemaker 2013]. Thus, this use of «feminine» epistemology destabilizes the superficially hyper-masculine image of the pirates and invites interrogation of other gendered and sexual binaries within the text.

Moreover, in this quotation, the pirates are described as «wanderers» and the sea as a «trackless way». Again, this highlights a non-empirical relationship to the sea, in which the destination is perhaps less important than the journey, and the aim is to experience rather than to record and control. However, the positive connotations associated with wandering are themselves gendered. Ingrid Horrocks identifies the precarity of female wanderers in the eighteenth century and contrasts them with their male counterparts for whom wandering was often associated with freedom [Horrocks 2017]. Therefore, the pirates' freedom to experiment with these non-masculine methods of navigation is only possible because of their masculinity, creating further complications for an epistemology grounded in binary gender.

It is not only the crew for whom navigation is a queer practice. When Conrad boards the ship headed for the palace of his adversary, Seyd, his methods are described as follows: «Down to the cabin with Gonsalvo bends,/ And there unfolds his plan — his means — and ends; / Before them burns the lamp, and spreads the chart, / And all that speaks and aids the naval art» [I, 585-589]. Here, Byron's description of navigation as an art directly contradicts the conventional scientific approaches of the time. Indeed, the lack of reference to any precise geographical location or cartographic methods lends the practice a distinct air of mystery. Additionally, the image of a few men huddled around a lamp, surrounded by unspecified equipment, planning out their «means and ends», has a supernatural quality, almost as if they are preparing to cast a spell or divine the future. More like witchcraft than science, Conrad's navigational methods are far removed from the masculine, logical epistemology which one would expect of an experienced seafarer. Instead, they seem to rely heavily on an intuitive relationship with the sea; navigation is presented here as a subjective art, not an exact science. Indeed, the secrecy which surrounds Conrad's

methods suggests forbidden knowledge, something which — as Sedgwick attests — almost always has a queer dimension [Sedgwick 1991, p. 73]. In this case, the queer dimension is in the epistemology itself: by using intuition, subjectivity and «art», Conrad may be seen to be rejecting the strict taxonomical and hierarchical methods of navigation which are used to control the non-masculine other and embracing the alternatives. This signals that Conrad also accepts the potential for disrupted social structures aboard his ship — including those relating to gender and sexuality.

The queerness of these navigational epistemologies which blur the bounds of masculine and feminine, rational and emotional, is also present in the relationships in the text. *The Corsair* is ostensibly a heteronormative narrative which features two obvious love triangles: the relationship between Conrad, Gulnare, and Seyd, and the relationship between Gulnare, Conrad, and Medora. Whilst there is nothing obviously queer in any of these — unlike in the text's companion poem *Lara* which features a relationship between a knight and his page, but which is ultimately «straightened» when the page is revealed to be a woman — there is nevertheless a queer dimension to the love triangle. For Sedgwick, this queer dimension is the invisible line connecting two people of the same gender; the relationship remains invisible or transfigured, but is still vitally important to those involved and often more intense than their connection to the shared heterosexual love-interest. This makes the love triangle an important site of queer analysis [Sedgwick 2015]. Here we note that triangulation was also an important skill in navigation: the ability to trace all sides of the triangle was paramount, especially for a pirate like Conrad who rejected the newer, data-hungry navigational epistemologies which had all but replaced this medieval method [Sheehan 2013]. Using this framework, an argument could be made for the queerness of Conrad's relationship with Seyd. However, I believe Gulnare's relationships with both men also have a queer dimension. Gulnare herself transgresses traditional gender roles through her murder of Seyd, an act which throws Conrad's gendered assumptions into turmoil as he struggles to comprehend blood which hasn't been «shed by men» [III, 429]. Indeed, Kirsty Harris notes that during their escape from Seyd's palace, Conrad «surrenders the role of navigator to Gulnare, forgoing the stars which guide the seaman in favour of the light in her hand» [Harris 2016, p. 62]. Conrad's willingness to allow her the role of navigator further queers their relationship, since following both a woman and an artificial light source completely overturns a heteronormative epistemology of navigation. Gulnare's refusal to conform to passive femininity with either Seyd or Conrad is another instance in which the text destabilizes binary gender since, as Conrad's confusion demonstrates, she operates outside a conventional gendered epistemology.

Once safely back aboard ship, Conrad looks at Gulnare and realizes «the worst of crimes had left her woman still» [III, 522]. This realization is fol-

lowed by a kiss between the two, described as «The first, the last, that Frailty stole from Faith» [III, 551]. This adds another queer dimension to the relationship. Not only is the kiss a result of Conrad's «Frailty», it also seems somewhat contrived. Conrad experiences «bodings in his breast» [III, 547], but these anxieties have little to do with his wife, Medora, who it is noted «might forgive the kiss» [III, 549]. Moreover, the kiss is obviously meant to be a singular event — being both «the first» and «the last» — although the figures of Conrad and Gulnare are often understood to be the aforementioned lovers in *Lara*. This mixture of anxiety and lack of passion — especially compared to other (homosocial) expressions of emotion in the text — suggests the kiss between rescued and rescuer is a societal expectation rather than a moment of genuine desire. Of course, even if this is read as a moment of genuine desire rather than performative heterosexuality, it nevertheless has a queer dimension given the reversal of traditional gender roles concerning who is rescued and who is rescuer.

In conclusion, this article traces the connections between queer epistemologies of navigation and the underlying queerness of *The Corsair*'s characters. By refusing to categorize the sea as a threatening other which needs to be controlled through knowledge and taxonomy, Conrad and his crew challenge the inherently gendered nature of accepted navigational methods in this period. In moving away from a rational, masculine approach to the other they destabilize ideas of binary gender, thus challenging heteronormative modes of control and authority. This queer instability recurs in the text, especially in the figure of Gulnare who, through her «unfeminine» actions, exposes the gender instability in Conrad's own world view. Even the text's moment of notional heterosexual passion — the kiss between Conrad and Gulnare — is underpinned by a queer exchange of gender roles and an unsettling inevitability. Through charting the navigational epistemologies of the text it becomes clear that, despite its ostensibly heteronormative surface, *The Corsair* is a text with strong queer undercurrents.

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The Worm and the Butterfly: the Sanctuary of Death in the Works of Edgar Allan Poe

Abstract

This article explores social transformations regarding death, mourning, and burial practices during the nineteenth century, in relation to examples from Edgar Allan Poe's major writings. The Industrial Revolution's urban expansion led to overcrowded, disease-ridden cemeteries, prompting the emergence of the Rural Cemetery Movement in America and Europe. New cemeteries, conceived as restful spaces for both the living and the dead, provided a contrast to chaotic urban landscapes. Concurrently, formal mourning rules, influenced by middle-class culture, turned remembrance into social display. Re-reading Poe in this context challenges traditional assumptions of his morbidity, emphasizing his representation of the liminal space between life and death. Poe's narratives and poems persistently blur boundaries, undermining conventional perceptions of mortality and suggesting a continuity of consciousness after death. The article highlights Poe's exposure of social hypocrisy in mourning rituals, and his sense of the dual nature of death as both a release from suffering and a potential source of dread.

Charlie Guy

The nineteenth century had a problem with the dead. The rapid oppidan expansion of the Industrial Revolution had brought with it overcrowding and disease, with congested, chaotic cemeteries as a result being considered not as places of remembrance, but as public health hazards. In response, the Rural Cemetery Movement swept America and Europe, bringing forth planning and architecture tailored toward both the living and the dead [Bender 1974, p. 196], the production of a more ordered and romantic burialscape posing a welcome contrast to the uncanny, disquieting aspects of the new, oppressive urban cityscape. Gravesites once solemnly deemed the sequestered dominions of the dead were transformed into civilized areas for spirited recreation, and as the population was encouraged into new Garden Cemeteries the living became playmates with the dead; sports, picnics and leisure activities being overseen by the marbled eyes of neat, yet often elaborate, memorials. The resting space of the departed quickly became a sanctuary of the living.

Alongside this transformation of physical space, from the 1830s onward, complicated sets of formal rules governed the bereaved in every aspect of the mourning process, turning the subjective act of remembrance into an opulent social display of middle-class culture [Stobert 2000, p. 283]. Indeed, Edgar Allan Poe himself, as a young man, engaged in just such sorrowful opulence — being so affected by the death of the mother of one of his school friends, and one of his earliest muses — Jane Stith Stannard — that he confessed to taking himself obsessively to her graveside, every night [Baum 1949, p. 290]. However, the fashion for vociferous grief disturbed the peace of the sleeping dead – nostalgic reverie having the concomitant effect of bringing individuals from the past back into the experience of the present [Hertz 1990, p. 195]. The dead, newly awakened in the thoughts of the communities they had left behind, frequently found themselves warring for attention with those who mourned them, and often lost the battle [Stobert 2000, p. 283]. It was an age in which displays of grief were also displays of both fashion and moral fibre, and it can be seen that popular literature contributed enormously to a decline in common sense about dying [Fry 1986, p. 10]. Death was no more a beautiful conclusion, but rather an unpleasant end, to be feared, avoided, and ruminated over to excess. To authors, this age of performative death provided ample, freely accessible opportunity to examine lessons of life, mortality and the afterlife, the common experiences of death, loss and suffering offering endless examples of divine justice ripe for the picking [Walvin 1982, p. 361]. Romanticism lent itself perfectly to the liminal space of the recreational cemetery.

Poe is frequently tarred with the same passionately melancholic brush. For instance, William John Watkins's biographical poem portrays him as a man of tragedy, whose life was all-encompassed by an obsession with death and melancholy borne from the intolerable nature of lived experience:

> The single tone he lived was loss.
> The unity he cried was death.
> His flower was the graveyard moss.
> The single tone he lived was loss.
> Virginia pulled the sun across
> His life the space of one short breath.
> The single tone he lived was loss.
> The unity he cried was death. [Watkins 1968, p. 21]

However, there is another way to read Poe's accounts of death. Death in Romantic literature can be seen to take place in two ways; promptly, or prolonged, with the slowly dying subject depicted as gradually turning themselves away from the gaze of the living. Paul Fry (1986) asserts that this turning away «expresses, in absolute simplicity, a complex register of emotions: exhaustion, despair of recovery tempered by indifference to life, and embarrassment in the

presence of those onlookers who must be left behind with the pain of loss» [FRY 1986, pp. 12-13]. Indeed, this complex spectrum of emotions can be seen in the works of the English Romantic poets Poe admired and imitated [UNRUE 1995, p. 113], for instance Keats.

For example, in «Ode to a Nightingale» (1819), Keats writes of being «half in love with easeful death […] Now more than ever seems it rich to die» [KEATS 2008, ll. 52, 55]. Within these lines, Keats recognizes the miseries of life by which he is surrounded, and presents death as both a luxurious sleep, and a welcome end to suffering. However, it can be argued that Keats here emulates the turning away of the Romantic dying, approaching the inevitability of death with a sense of hopelessness and fatigue – «Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!» [KEATS 2008, l. 61]. Death is here presented not as a sanctuary, but as a sanction as, for Keats, death would render him insensible to the beauties of the world, and as a result the overbearing emotions of the poem are those of hopelessness, injustice, and sorrow. However, it is perhaps the final words of the poem which render themselves most pertinent and influential to a discussion of Poe's own work: «Fled is that music: — Do I wake or sleep?» [KEATS 2008, l. 80].

It is the liminal space between life and death — the standing in the metaphorical doorway — that Poe best inhabits. As he himself wrote, «the boundaries which divide life from death are at best shadowy and vague. Who shall say where the one ends, and where the other begins?» [POE 2006, p. 587]. Poe's depiction of death frequently alludes to the popular nineteenth-century idea that, even though the dead may show all outward appearances of being dead, they are in fact not wholly dead to consciousness (see, for example, Oscar Wilde's «The Canterville Ghost» (1887) — «Death must be so beautiful. To lie in the soft brown earth, with the grasses waving above one's head, and listen to silence. To have no yesterday, and no to-morrow. To forget time, to forgive life, to be at peace» [WILDE 1906, p. 13]). In blurring the boundaries between life and death, it can be seen that Poe not only amplifies the uncanny, but also passes comment on the lack of comprehension which accompanies the act of dying. Indeed, in his short story «Mesmeric Revelation» (1844), Poe discusses the existence of the soul, with the mesmerised character of Mr Vankirk stating — with ethereal wisdom — that:

> There are two bodies – the rudimental and the complete; corresponding with the two conditions of the worm and the butterfly. What we call 'death', is but the painful metamorphosis. Our present incarnation is progressive, preparatory, temporary. Our future is perfected, ultimate, immortal. The ultimate life is the full design [POE 2006, p. 633].

Within this work, Poe strips death of its finality, instead presenting the act of dying as a natural progression of existence. Ultimately, the dead body as

presented through Poe's lens is often therefore difficult to classify, being at the same time neither wholly dead, nor wholly living [Sederholm 2017, p. 1].

As he stated in his essay *The Philosophy of Composition* (1846), it was Poe's opinion that «the death […] of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world» [Poe 2017, p. 7], and he frequently combined the ideas of untimely female death and ongoing spiritual consciousness within his work. While Poe's association of (and, perhaps, preoccupation with) death and women can arguably be seen to hold some autobiographical influence (Poe being bereaved of a string of women throughout his lifetime), Elisabeth Bronfen, in *Over Her Dead Body* (1992), highlights that this combination is not unique to Poe, but rather «appears as a popular though diversely utilised thematic constant in literature and painting from the age of sensibility to the modern period.» [Bronfen 1992, p. 60]. Bronfen further argues that the representation of feminine death being «the most poetical topic» [Poe 2017, p. 7] means speaking of an aesthetic moment of excess, which points to a set of conventional societal norms: «for if any discussion of death involves masking the inevitability of human decomposition, it does so by having recourse to beauty» [Bronfen 1992, pp. 61-62].

Whether his motive is autobiographical, aesthetic, or otherwise, an interesting example of Poe's use of this combination is to be found in «Lenore» (1843):

> The life upon her yellow hair but not within her eyes —
> The life still there, upon her hair — the death upon her eyes [Poe 2006, p. 55]

A comment on the contemporary fashion for enthusiastic grief and mourning, while the speaker of «Lenore» is grief-stricken, Lenore's death is presented not as a devastating loss of life, but rather as a release from the corruption of the living. In dying, Lenore has crossed a boundary, gaining protection from the dishonesty and exploitation to be found in life, and the narrator states that formal mourning should be abandoned, lest the conscious spirit of the lost Lenore be tempted away from the sanctuary of death:

> Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth and hated her for her pride,
> And when she fell in feeble health, ye blessed her — that she died!
> […]
> Let *no* bell toll! — lest her sweet soul, amid its hallowed mirth,
> Should catch the note, as it doth float up from the damnéd Earth [Poe 2006, p. 55]

It can be seen that while the act of mourning demands the utmost sincerity of emotion on the part of the bereaved, the popular rituals of formalized

mourning allowed the potential for individuals to play a competitive social game, while harbouring neither grief nor sympathy either for the deceased, or the bereaved who mourned them [Stobert 2000, p. 283]. In «Lenore» Poe passes comment on this potential for insincerity, and the aptitude for hypocrisy to be invited into the ranks of sentiment.

In point of fact, far from utilizing his command of liminal space to represent the pursuit of life, Poe's writing often presents the notion that the true quest of the dying is to overcome mortal existence, an obvious example being found in the opening stanza of «For Annie» (1849):

> Thank Heaven! the crisis,
> The danger, is past,
> And the lingering illness
> Is over at last —
> And the fever called 'Living'
> Is conquered at last. [Poe 2006, p. 85]

While death is often depicted as a cruel but beautiful mistress, bringing forth eternal sleep and dreams (Keats, for instance, writes of a passionate and dizzying «swoon to death» [Keats 2008, l. 14] in «Bright Star, Would I Were Steadfast As Thou Art» (1819-20), it is Poe's use of death to provide social commentary, and communicate a welcome and natural release from the trials and sufferings of life which run undercurrent throughout many of his works. For instance, while it has been noted that the speaker in «Annabel Lee» (1849) observes the traditions of memorializing the dead, the poem can ultimately be seen as a warning — prolonged mourning not only fails to provide solace, but indeed exacerbates the sorrow of the bereaved [Bradford 2011, p. 74]. Poe here makes comment on the duplicitous nature of formalized mourning, and the ability of social convention to inadvertently draw out unnecessary suffering in place of natural, necessary healing. While Annabel Lee slumbers peacefully in the refuge of her seaside tomb, the living — watched over by the eyes of freshly-carved marble effigies — dangle in insomnia, a condition bitterly reminiscent of Poe's own early experiences with grief, and the reciprocal haunting of him and his treasured Jane.

Taking his exploration of mortal existence in «Mesmeric Revelation» further, with the short story «The Facts in the Vase of M. Valdemar» (1845) Poe can be seen to explore the idea of the undead corpse, reflecting on contemporary society's preoccupation with the dead, the dying, and the body. The novelty-science of mesmerism — much like the Rural Cemetery Movement — had achieved enormous (albeit short-lived) popularity during the early nineteenth century [Sidney 1947, p. 1077], and was widely hailed as a natural, effective, cure-all to the myriad health concerns of an overpopulated, washed-out, death-obsessed society [Sidney 1947, p. 1078]. In «The Facts in the Case of M.

Valdemar» Poe can be seen to indulge the fascination — both subjective, and social — with the liminal potentials of death: living death, ostensible death, and mistaken death [Ashworth 2016, p. 565]. While the prospect of being buried alive was a very real nineteenth-century anxiety, that anxiety gifted the corpse with ongoing sentience – rendering it vital to the subjectivity of the deceased and providing a link to their earthly connections. Indeed, Suzanne Ashworth argues that contemporary anxiety «made the corpse seem potentially sentient and alive» [Ashworth 2016, pp. 568-569], and it is this potential which Poe grasped at, and utilized, within much of his work. In reference to Mr Vankirk's «ultimate life» [Poe 2006, p. 633], mesmerism, for Poe, was a means of spreading his arms within the doorway between life and death, and exploring the consequences of stepping to either side, or remaining at the midpoint.

In «The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar», Poe presents the idea that an individual mesmerized «in articulo mortis» [Poe 2006, p. 721] — at the point of death — may, in fact, be able to evade the touch of death. The living representation of Valdemar himself conforms to the notion of the undead corpse:

> His face wore a leaden hue; the eyes were utterly lusterless; and the emaciation was so extreme, that the skin had been broken through by the cheekbones. His expectoration was excessive. The pulse was barely perceptible. He retained, nevertheless, in a very remarkable manner […] his mental power. [Poe 2006, p. 722]

In this description, Poe places Valdemar in the liminal space; he is neither entirely dead, nor entirely alive. The mesmeric state of Valdemar is also presented to the reader as a state of «sleep-waking,» in which the active mind has no control over the dormant physical form. Indeed, Valdemar nestles further into the metaphorical doorway as he states «"yes; — no; — I have been sleeping — and now — now — I am dead."» [Poe 2006, p. 726]

This impossible statement serves to secure Valdemar's interstitial status; he is neither in the realm of the living, nor the dead, and Poe fortifies this status with scientific detail: «the mirror no longer afforded evidence of respiration. An attempt to draw blood from the arm failed» [Poe 2006, p. 726]. Indeed, there is a distinct lack of sentimentality throughout «The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar», which affords its reputation as one of Poe's great hoaxes — although Poe himself did not seem interested in perpetuating its status as such [Frank 2005, p. 635]. The physical body of Valdemar has ceased to be, and yet remains, and despite the impossibility of the act he speaks to his mesmerizer. In this state, Poe leaves Valdemar suspended, for a period of seven months.

Poe's penchant for social commentary can arguably be seen in the first attempts made by the narrator to awaken the entranced Valdemar — «the first indication of revival was afforded by a partial descent of the iris. It was […] accompanied by the profuse out-flowing of a yellowish ichor (from beneath

the lids) of a pungent and highly offensive odor» [Poe 2006, p. 727]. The use of the word «ichor» is in itself representative of the liminality of existence which Valdemar enjoys. While now an antiquated medical term, used for the description of a blood-tinged pus, or infectious fluid, the original ichor was the blood of the Gods and immortals of Greek mythology; rich in immortal qualities — and deadly to mankind. Valdemar is now in a state between the mortal and immortal — oozing a tangible juxtaposition of both immortality, and death, to those of mortal flesh around him. Furthermore, ichor's quality of stickiness renders Valdemar's corpse a dreadful representation of the terror of death contact. The early nineteenth-century feared «the miasma theory of disease [which] held that airborne remnants of decay — foul-smelling particles of putrefying matter — were agents of illness and death. […] Actually touching the corpse had even more lethal implications [and] penetrating the corpse meant hazarding pain, psychological disturbance, illness, and death. For the nineteenth century, the corpse was noxious waste and a biohazard. Hence, Valdemar threatens his caretakers with his immediate presence» [Ashworth 2016, pp. 570-571]. The reader is presented with a sense of dread, with the undead man becoming less of a potential and curiosity, and more a disquieting object of unease and fear. Holding Valdemar in the threshold has begun to place threat upon the living, as in his weeping indication of rotting and stickiness he has been given the potential to physically adhere himself to those around him. The status of the doorway has changed, becoming a necessary crossing between realms.

Valdemar's final statement – «"For God's sake! — quick! — quick! — put me to sleep — or, quick! — waken me! — quick! — I say to you that I am dead!"» [Poe 2006, p. 727] followed by ejaculations of «"dead! dead!"» [Poe 2006, p. 728] encapsulates the duality of the speaker's state as at once dead and alive, as well as neatly revealing Poe's moral undertone. As Mónica Peláez highlights, Poe drew on, and experimented with, an aesthetic that centred around death and comfort and, in particular, he engaged with the trope of sentimental death, turning the ultimate symbol of loss into one of solace (Peláez 2007, p. 65). Death, the worm, provides the metamorphosis which allows both the living and the dead to become the butterfly, and mourning, in Poe's world, was a private, sentimental love affair. The public nature of grief in the Rural Cemetery Movement was, therefore, arguably problematic for him. In removing the trials and sufferings of life, death provides a sanctuary for the deceased. But similarly, in removing the dead from the realms of the living, a further sanctuary is presented for those who remain alive – perhaps one which Poe had yearned for as he wept at the gravesides of not only Stannard, but a tragic company of beloved, lamented women bestrewed throughout his sorrowful life. The overarching message of much of Poe's work is therefore that death is natural, and it is often better for something to die, than to suffer. However, it can be questioned whether the locus of that suffering sits within the dying, the dead — or those who remain.

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Bilingualism and Transnational Identity in Mary Shelley's Letters from Italy

Abstract

Italianism, intended as the combined influence of Italian literature and first-hand experience of Italy, has long been acknowledged as a fundamental element in Mary Shelley's oeuvre. A complementary, still unexplored aspect of what Jean de Palacio termed her «Italian vocation» is the use of Italian and Italianisms in her private writings, particularly her letters of the Italian period. Mary Shelley's Italian is rich in colloquialisms and regional variants, revealing an awareness of the complex sociolinguistic situation of pre-unification Italy as well as an attention to the foreign popular culture and its linguistic manifestations. Taking as its point of departure the new interest in Romantic letter writing and recent studies of Byron's use of Italian, this article examines the bilingualism in Mary Shelley's correspondence, to which I apply Gianfranco Folena's influential concept of *eteroglossia*. Italian emerges not only as Mary Shelley's language of affection and the medium of her everyday communication, but also as a secret code she used to establish an exclusive, intimate relationship with her recipients and thus reduce the communicative distance from them. At the same time, her effortless, spontaneous code-switching indicates that she turned the experience of exile into one of linguistic and cultural immersion, not unlike that of her fellow expatriate, Byron. As I contend, Mary Shelley's bilingualism signals her embracing Italianness, which, incidentally, is what enabled her to celebrate Italy, its culture, and its inhabitants in the works following her emigration. The adoption of the Italian language for her private communication thus contributed to the construction of her transnational identity of «Anglo-Italian», as she herself later defined the cultural hybrid represented by the members of the Pisan circle.

Valentina Varinelli

«Italianism», meaning the combined influence of Italian literature and first-hand experience of Italy, has long been acknowledged as a fundamental element in Mary Shelley's oeuvre [Palacio 1969, p. 23]. A largely overlooked complementary aspect of what Jean de Palacio termed her «Italian vocation» is the use of Italian in her private writings, which, unsurprisingly, is especially conspicuous in her letters of the Italian period (spanning the years 1818 to 1823), but also characterises her journals and correspondence following her return to England. In particular, Mary Shelley's correspondence includes both letters written entirely in Italian, usually addressed to Italian

recipients,[1] and letters in English interspersed with Italian words and phrases, thus exemplifying the distinction between a consistent, «organic» use of the foreign, or second, language as the language of communication, temporarily substituting the mother tongue, and an extemporaneous, «non-organic» use of the same within a first-language context [Brugnolo 1997, p. 314]. In this article, I argue that Mary Shelley used Italian in her letters from Italy to establish an exclusive, intimate relationship with her addressees and reduce her communicative distance from them. At the same time, and more importantly, her effortless, spontaneous code-switching indicates that she turned the exile experience into one of linguistic and cultural immersion. Mary Shelley's written Italian is distant from the language of the canonical authors she read with Percy Bysshe Shelley — from Dante to Ariosto and Tasso — and is instead rich in regionalisms and colloquial expressions, revealing her receptivity to foreign popular culture and its linguistic manifestations as well as her awareness of the complex sociolinguistic situation of pre-unification Italy. Her bilingualism can thus be related to the larger process of the construction of her transnational identity as an «Anglo-Italian», which, in turn, enabled her to present herself as an expert on things Italian in her later works.

As she started to learn Italian in England, in autumn 1817, Mary Shelley adopted her husband's preferred language-learning method, self-taught and literature-oriented; to wit, she read the Italian translation of Françoise de Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* (1747) and Dante's *Inferno* in Henry Francis Cary's bilingual edition (1805-06) [Shelley, M. 1987, I, pp. 181, 183].[2] However, after their arrival in Italy in April 1818, she resumed her Italian studies in a different mode from the one Shelley continued to employ. While the latter plunged headlong into the great works of Italian literature, famously retreating inside the Duomo in Milan to read the Divine Comedy [Shelley, P. B. 1964, II, p. 8], Mary Shelley, together with her stepsister, Claire Clairmont, wasted no time in arranging language lessons with an «Italian Master» and writing «Italian exercises» [Shelley, M. 1987, I, p. 207]. The following month, in Leghorn, she complemented these activities with extensive reading in the original, beginning with two fairy-tale plays by Carlo Gozzi, *La Zobeide* (1763) and *L'amore delle tre melarance* (1761), and Vincenzo Monti's tragedy, *Ari-*

[1] All such extant letters are included in Shelley, M. 1980-88, but readers should exert caution in relying exclusively on this edition, as the texts contain numerous mistranscriptions, occasionally affecting meaning.

[2] In Claire Clairmont's allegedly fake copy of a letter of her mother, Mary Jane Godwin, to Lady Mountcashell, now in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle at the New York Public Library, it is stated that Godwin's three daughters were taught «French and Italian from masters» as children (quoted in Seymour 2000, p. 53), but this evidence is dubious and cannot be verified (see Campbell Denlinger 2018).

stodemo (1786), which she read in part with Shelley. Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and Tasso's *Aminta* and *Gerusalemme liberata*, also read with Shelley's assistance, followed in rapid succession [Shelley, M. 1987, I, pp. 210-25]. At the end of July, Shelley could proudly announce to Godwin: «Mary has just finished Ariosto with me, & indeed has attained a very competent knowledge of Italian» [Shelley, P. B. 1964, II, p. 21].

Mary Shelley retrospectively reflected upon the knowledge of Italian she had acquired during her sojourn in Italy in her travelogue, *Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, as she recounted how she surprised her travelling companions by speaking the language at the Swiss border:

> I certainly did speak Italian: it had been strange if I did not; not that I could boast of any extraordinary facility of conversation or elegance of diction, but mine was a peculiarly useful Italian; from having lived long in the country, all its household terms were familiar to me; and I remembered the time when it was more natural to me to speak to common people in that language than in my own [Shelley, M. 1996, VIII, p. 104].

This passage indicates that Mary Shelley's knowledge of Italian was practical as well as «competent» and permitted her to bridge the communicative gap with locals, setting her apart from many of her countrymen abroad. British (Grand) tourists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were notorious for their almost complete ignorance of Italian, which was partly explained by the abundance of reading rooms, coffee houses, and other such establishments catering for the English-speaking community in all the major Italian towns, which saved them the need of mixing with the inhabitants, especially the lower classes [Cartago 1990, p. 31]. Daily intercourse with «common people» was, instead, a necessity for Mary Shelley as a young mother who was also responsible for her household [Webb 2011, p. 210]. Not only had she to resort to Italian to make herself understood by cooks, servants, and nursemaids, it is quite possible that, at least occasionally, she needed to address her own children in that language. William, aged two when the Shelleys moved to Italy, soon began to mix Italian and English; as for Percy Florence, who was born in Italy, he could not «speak a word of English» [Shelley, M. 1980-88, I, pp. 91, 336]. The «peculiarly useful Italian» that constituted the medium of Mary Shelley's everyday communication must not be confused with the standard literary language. According to a widespread assumption, before the unification of Italy in 1861 Italian was restricted to formal, written uses and only dialects were spoken. However, recent research has evinced that a large proportion of Italians, including members of the lower, uneducated classes, could move along a spectrum from their local dialect to an oral Italian modelled on the written language (though by no means unitary, as it retained more or less pronounced

regional features), which was used instead of the dialect whenever the situation thus required, for instance when addressing foreigners (Serianni 1997, pp. 481-483). This is the Italian Mary Shelley used to speak.

The many Italian terms and phrases, generally untranslated, contained in her letters from Italy — especially those addressed to the Hunts and Maria Gisborne — provide evidence of her experience of the everyday spoken language. For the most part, Mary Shelley's Italianisms do not belong to the trite repertoire offered by contemporary travellers' accounts, such as the inevitable *gondola* or *vetturino*, and cannot be accounted for by the lack of an English equivalent. The majority of them are everyday words — e.g.: «zucche» («pumpkins»); «piano di sotto» («downstairs»); «festa» («holiday») [Shelley, M. 1980-88, I, pp. 81, 223, 230] — and colloquial expressions, e.g.: «*Seccatura*» («*A pain in the neck*»); «*tempo matto*» («*mad weather*»); «*se dio vuole*» («*God willing*»); «Ma pazienza» («But never mind») [Shelley, M. 1980-88, I, pp. 178, 202, 222, 236]. Her use of the term «*ceppo*» («*log*») to indicate Christmas [Shelley, M. 1980-88, I, p. 218] is particularly interesting, as this meaning is attested only in Tuscany [Fanfani 1863, p. 252]. It thus signals her receptivity to the vernacular spoken in the region where she stably resided from 1820. The excerpt below from a letter to Maria Gisborne gives an idea of how Mary Shelley seamlessly incorporated Italian words and expressions into her sentences:

> We have had for the last fifteen days a *tempo patetico* [*pitiful weather*], as Maria calls it — true enough, it is always crying. perhaps some little misfortune has happened la su [*up there*], and that il *figlio* is infreddato [*the son caught a cold*], or the padre [*father*] got a stroke of the palsy, and all the pretty angels and cherubs are weeping [Shelley, M. 1980-88, I, p. 112].

Here is further confirmation of Mary Shelley's exposure to ordinary spoken Italian. By acknowledging that her servant, Maria, had taught her the saying (although the irreverent joke on it is presumably her own), Mary Shelley revealed that her knowledge of colloquialisms stemmed from casual conversations with the people. Her attention to oral Italian also emerges from the transcriptions of direct speech that abound in her letters, where linguistic interest combines with the novelist's dramatic ear for dialogue to lend liveliness and expressivity to her epistolary writing.

These interpolations do not have a merely decorative function, as is often the case with the Italianisms in Mary Shelley's fictional works (a discussion of which is beyond the scope of this article). Rather, they acquire the value of a secret code, with which she established an exclusive, intimate relationship with her addressees by virtue of their shared superior knowledge of the language. She sometimes reinforced this sense of intimacy by means of direct

addresses to her recipient in Italian in the body of the text (e.g.: «Ah Marianna mia», addressed to Marianne Hunt) or in the farewell formula, e.g.: «Addio, Cara mia amica!» («Adieu, My dear friend!») [Shelley, M. 1980-88, I, pp. 111, 113]. This is a common strategy in the epistolary genre to overcome the communicative distance between correspondents by mimicking a face-to-face conversation [Antonelli 2003, p. 79]. The bilingualism in Mary Shelley's letters illustrates Gianfranco Folena's concept of *eteroglossia*, i.e. «the use of an alternative language, a language which is the "other" language of the "other" culture, [...] the ideal construction of a second language, which presents itself both as a vehicle or an impressive alterity and as an escape or a private, familiar refuge» [Folena 1983, pp. x-xi; my translation]. Furthermore, her bilingual experience situates her within a tradition of cosmopolitan European artists who chose Italian for their private communication, from Voltaire and Mozart to James Joyce, which also included her fellow expatriate, Byron [Folena 1983, pp. 397-469; Zanotti 1999; Cartago 2002; Pomarè 2016].

Mary Shelley's use of Italian as an alternative language culminated in her first extant letter written entirely in that tongue, which — contrary to what one may expect — is addressed not to a native speaker but to Leigh Hunt. The latter's well-known love of Italian literature may sufficiently explain her choice of language. Nevertheless, it is hardly a coincidence that the letter, dated 3 December 1820, was written only two days after the Shelleys' encounter with the celebrated *improvvisatore* Tommaso Sgricci (which is narrated in it). Like Shelley's review of one of Sgricci's extempore tragedies, written in Italian possibly for publication in a local newspaper [Rossington 2007, p. 240], Mary Shelley's letter betrays a desire to emulate the *improvvisatore*'s eloquent, flowing speech. She did so by describing her new Pisan acquaintances (alongside Sgricci, Francesco Pacchiani and Teresa «Emilia» Viviani) in a way that reveals her enjoyment of their conversations in Italian. Mary Shelley quoted both Sgricci and Pacchiani, and compared the latter's «most beautiful» language, «completely different from today's idiom», to Boccaccio's and Machiavelli's Italian: «Parla una belissima lingua Italiana, tutto differente della idioma di oggi, che ci fa credere d'udire il Boccacio o il Macchiavelli parlando come scrissono».[3] This remark testifies to Mary Shelley's alertness to the linguistic dimension of her Italian experience outlined above at the same time as it shows her awareness of the ever widening gap between spoken and written Italian.

Superlatives and hyperbolic constructions are characteristic features of nineteenth-century epistolary Italian, and are used throughout the letter to achieve a higher degree of expressivity that may compensate for the physical distance between correspondents [Antonelli 2003, pp. 62-70]. Mary Shelley

[3] Quotations are from Shelley, M. 1980-88, I, pp. 162-164, which I have corrected in places against the holograph manuscript (San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, HM 2747).

wrote in an informal register, using the neutral courtesy pronoun «Voi», as was appropriate to a woman's correspondence with a male friend [Antonelli 2003, p. 58], addressing Hunt as «amico mio caro» («my dear friend») and «amico mio» («my friend»), and styling herself «la vostra amica costante» («your constant friend») in the subscription. For the actual signature she used the nickname «Marina», a diminutive of «Maria» («Mary»), which further conveys intimacy and affection. This had previously been employed in her letters to Hunt of 5 and 18 March 1817 with a humorous intent: in the course of the first letter, Mary Shelley had suggested that she should learn Italian to have elegant conversations with him [Shelley, M. 1980-88, I, pp. 32-33, 35]. The diminutive resurfaced three years later in the signature of her letter to Marianne Hunt of 24 March 1820, from Pisa, in which, after reassuring her recipient that she was not «unenglishifying» herself, Mary Shelley stated «that we are not travellers but exiles» [Shelley, M. 1980-88, I, pp. 137, 139]. Here, as in the letter to Hunt of 3 December 1820, the Italianisation of her name signals her embracing the language of her adoptive country and, consequently, the culture of which it was the expression.[4]

It has been argued that in writing to Hunt in Italian Mary Shelley invented «an authoritative identity, as commentator on Italian politics, culture and mores», presenting herself as «a knowledgeable but ultimately detached observer» of contemporary Italian society [Schoina 2009, pp. 79-80]. This view is only part of the picture, as it does not take into account the circumstances in which the letter originated. I maintain that Mary Shelley's adoption of an Italian persona – by translating her name and using Italian as her first language of communication – was primarily an act of integration into the multicultural, multilingual social and literary network that began to form around her family in Pisa in the winter 1820-21. Not coincidentally, Shelley used the diminutive «Marina» to indicate his wife in l. 601 of *Epipsychidion*, composed in that period, where he also referred to the Williamses with Italian nicknames as he envisaged his ideal of intellectual community. The *eteroglossia* characterising Mary Shelley's correspondence prefigures her self-identification as an «Anglo-Italian», as she retrospectively termed the cultural hybrid embodied by the British Romantic exiles in Italy. The Anglo-Italian is defined as someone who «attaches himself to some of the most refined among [the natives], and appreciates their native talent and simple manners»; this is made possible by knowledge of the language, which distinguishes the Anglo-Italian from the

[4] The signature «Maria Shelley» in her note in Italian to the authorities of Viareggio or Leghorn of 16 September 1822, delegating Trelawny to collect the shipwreck of the Don Juan, is less significant than her use of the nickname «Marina» in her letters to the Hunts, as Italianising foreign names was standard practice in official documents at the time (in the same note, she translated Trelawny's first name, Edward, as «Odoardo») [Shelley, M. 1980-88, I, p. 259].

«mere traveller» [Shelley, M. 1996, II, p. 149]. In Mary Shelley's letter to Hunt, the language is also the vehicle of her appreciation, as she imitated the very manner of speaking of the «refined» Italians in her circle.

Bilingualism was the chief means by which Mary Shelley constructed her transnational identity. Her use of Italian and Italianisms in her daily communication attests to her linguistic and cultural immersion in the reality of her exile, which stemmed from and enabled her to promote the cosmopolitan and communal ethos of her Pisan circle [Scrivener 2007, pp. 203-214; Stabler 2013, pp. 21-40]. By identifying herself as an Anglo-Italian, Mary Shelley gained the authority to write about Italy in her fictional and non-fictional works, from the historical novel *Valperga* (1823), set in fourteenth-century Tuscany, to the biographical essays on Italian writers and the account of her late travels around Italy. The extent of the impact of Mary Shelley's early translingual and transcultural experiences on her artistic development invites a reappraisal of her mature works that foregrounds the principles of transnationality and cosmopolitanism, of which Mary Shelley, no less than Shelley and Byron, was a champion.

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Spazi e luoghi del fantastico in *Frankenstein* (1818) di Mary Shelley

Abstract

The following essay tries to analyze some of the spaces and places of the fantastic in *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley, focusing on Romolo Runcini's literary and cultural perspective (this essay is essentially dedicated to him, nine years after his death as both a scholar and my guiding light during my studies at and after my university years) and the newest essays by Patricia García and Robert T. Tally Jr. The fantastic designates the incursion of an unrealistic element in a realistic frame. Such a dialectic realizes a transgression that provokes estrangement, apprehension, anxiety, fear; in a word, the uncanny. These ex-centric, marginal, liminal spaces and places push the characters as well as the readers towards an alternative, dangerous, excessive, scandalous, rebellious way of seeing the world. The familiar houses, streets, mountains, and towns, and particularly the laboratory, the Pole, and the body of the monster itself become the scene of a demonic, fascinating, awful metamorphosis that leads to inspect what lies beyond the border, or limit of what is socially allowed teaching us that to transgress also implies awareness, creativity, and rebirth.

C. Bruna Mancini

Nel saggio che segue si cerca di analizzare alcuni spazi e luoghi del fantastico in *Frankenstein* (1818) di Mary Shelley, concentrandosi sulla prospettiva letteraria e culturale di Romolo Runcini (dedico questo saggio, dieci anni dopo la sua morte, a lui che è stato un grande studioso e docente, ma anche uno dei miei fari, sia per i miei studi, sia per la presenza paterna che ha avuto nella mia vita) e sui saggi più attuali di Patricia García e Robert T. Tally Jr. Il fantastico designa l'incursione di un elemento irreale in una cornice realistica. Questa dialettica realizza una trasgressione che provoca un distacco alienante, paura, ansia, preoccupazione – in una sola parola, l'*uncanny*/*Unheimliches* freudiano. Questi spazi e luoghi ec-centrici, marginali, liminari spingono i personaggi e il lettore/la lettrice verso un modo alternativo, pericoloso, eccessivo, ribelle di vedere il mondo. Le strade, montagne, città e case, in particolare il laboratorio, il Polo e il corpo stesso del mostro, da 'familiari' diventano la scena di una metamorfosi demoniaca, affascinante, terribile

che li conduce oltre il limite o il confine di ciò che è socialmente consentito; in questo modo si insegna una trasgressione che implica consapevolezza, creatività e rinascita.

Spazialità e fantastico: la prospettiva runciniana

Nel saggio "Il fantastico come dispositivo anamorfico e modellazione sensuale del demoniaco: Ovvero, come mettere il sale sulla coda" (2009), Romolo Runcini ha descritto il fantastico – tema a cui ha dedicato l'intera esistenza – come un ponte instabile tra reale e irreale, una breccia del reale che permette l'irruzione inaspettata dell'irreale che inquieta e fa paura in un ambiente del tutto familiare e rassicurante. Questo scontro o collisione di quotidiano e conosciuto col sovrannaturale e il misterioso – che rimanda, tra gli altri, a Callois (1965) e Todorov (1973) – provoca sia nei lettori che nei personaggi confusione, paura, shock, orrore, terrore, perdita dei sensi e della coscienza. Secondo Runcini, il fantastico richiede la totale assenza del piano dell'esperienza; tutto ciò che si è appreso, sia in maniera personale sia dal punto di vista della conoscenza e della storia collettiva, non esiste più o non ha più senso e l'individuo si ritrova oggetto di forze e circostanze che non sa più nemmeno decodificare, figurarsi gestirle o dominarle. Insomma, il fantastico è un avvicinamento o una caduta inquietante e terribile negli abissi del reale, sperimentando il capovolgimento di ciò che è domestico e familiare, ovvero, *das Unheimliche*, usando il celebre neologismo freudiano; o, ancora, l'incontro/scontro con ciò che abietto, come ha scritto Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* (1980).

Robert T. Tally, uno dei maggiori esperti della *literary geography*, profondamente interessato al rapporto esistente tra spazio, narrativa e rappresentazione, in *The Fiction of the Dread: Dystopia, Monstrosity, and Apocalypse* (2024) ha analizzato quei luoghi che provocano ansia e paura o che possiedono caratteristiche minacciose. Ciò che colpisce della definizione runciniana di fantastico è, infatti, che sia tutta incentrata sulla spazialità – una spazialità ordinaria e tranquillizzante che diventa improvvisamente mutevole, metamorfica, incerta, traballante per mezzo dell'irruzione dello sconosciuto che sconvolge, inquieta, paralizza – che si avvicina molto al tipo di indagine portata avanti da Tally. D'altro canto, nel 2015 anche Patricia García si è concentrata sui concetti di spazio e luogo per definire il fantastico: «(The fantastic) designates the incursion of an impossible element in a realistic frame […]. Therefore, a characteristic of fantastic narratives is that the supernatural transgresses the pre-established textual realism. It is the problematic coexistence of two excluding orders (the realistic and the supernatural) that generates the fantastic transgression» [García 2015, p. 544]. Un ambiente realistico diventa, così, un prerequisito essenziale per la trasgressione fantastica. Anzi, quanto più realistici sono i riferimenti spaziali, tanto più accre-

scono gli effetti di straniamento e ansia quando il fantastico vi si rivela in maniera inattesa[1].

Trasgredire (*trans-gradus*) significa attraversare, oltrepassare, superare norme, pratiche, leggi, convenzioni stabilite. Di solito, viene considerato un comportamento aberrante, perché trasgredire implica sempre una sfida all'ordine costituito, una provocazione o ancora un capovolgimento dei limiti (e delle limitazioni). Perciò, rimanda a ciò che è eccessivo, sovversivo, pericoloso e, quindi, scandaloso, ribelle, indisciplinato. Infatti, la trasgressione ha sempre a che fare con la liminarità, la marginalità, l'ambiguità di chi spesso è allo stesso tempo dentro e fuori, con un piede al di qua e l'altro piede al di là del confine, occupando un luogo insicuro ed inquietante, incarnando l'alterità. Ma trasgredire implica anche creatività e rinascita e conduce a modi nuovi e/o alternativi di osservare, capire, essere e, naturalmente, anche esprimersi, scrivere, comunicare. In questo senso, trasgredire può fare parte di una certa prassi critica, politica e artistica (come quella fantastica). Secondo bell hooks, non a caso, il margine rappresenta quel luogo in cui inizia il progetto di revisione, di trasformazione, di critica, di lotta, di analisi, di rinnovamento. È quel luogo che possiede il potenziale rigenerativo della differenza, che sovente giace inespressa e sotterranea in un ambiente apparente piatto, reazionario e oscurantista; rappresenta lo sguardo obliquo o il dialogo di mutua relazione con l'altro da sé, ciò che ci spaventa perché capovolge tutto ciò che crediamo di conoscere.

D'altro canto, sempre hooks ha invocato la necessità di una educazione che si appropriasse del margine[2]. E forse non è un caso se Runcini, negli ultimi dieci anni della sua vita, aveva dichiarato che gli studi sul fantastico lo avevano condotto ad indagare lo spazio inquietante e fecondo – decisamente marginale – dell'eccentrico. Il movimento spaventoso, osceno, liminare, dalla luce al buio, dal familiare all'inconsueto, produce un atto di conoscenza improprio, privo del piano di esperienza, che riesce a rendere percepibile «lo spazio neutro, non simbolizzato, del presente, configurandosi nell'immagine doppia (fascinosa/fobica – erotica/mortale) dell'impatto che l'evento produce sull'individuo che lo subisce» [Runcini 2012, p. 89]. Questa 'situazione al limite' sottrae l'individuo – almeno per il tempo della fruizione della narrazione – al potere universale dell'affabulazione degli individui[3]. Evocando, capovolgendo e

[1] Anche Rosalba Campra, nel 2000, ha analizzato la trasgressione operata dallo spazio che contribuisce al dinamismo della narrazione fantastica.

[2] In *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), bell hooks invita all'educazione come pratica della libertà. L'aula è quella zona pericolosa, il luogo dell'estasi, della resistenza, della rivoluzione, del cambiamento.

[3] Oltre a *Declinazioni del fantastico La prospettiva critica di Romolo Runcini e l'opera di Edgar Allan Poe* (2020), si veda anche *Space(s) of the Fantastic. A 21st Century Manifesto* (2021).

trasformando il reale, la scrittura fantastica sa cogliere ed esorcizzare le paure, le ansie, le esitazioni e le contraddizioni culturali/sociali, soprattutto nei momenti di crisi, attraverso una scrittura fascinosa e disturbante.

Secondo Runcini, il fantastico «intrattiene con la realtà rapporti assai lontani dalla sottomissione mimetica, mette in luce – una luce abbagliante – le interferenze del soggetto nella esperienza visiva e cognitiva dell'oggetto, evidenzia i vuoti che costellano l'omogeneità del continuum quotidiano, le pause che ne sospendono il ritmo temporale» [Runcini 2012, p. 101]. Infatti, partendo dal cronotopo (lineare o frastagliato) della quotidianità, il fantastico si spinge verso l'indeterminato, assimilando nel suo discorso narrativo – per via di tranelli e *trompe l'œil* linguistici, confronti anomali, allusioni inquietanti, improvvisi mutamenti e capovolgimenti di senso – i vari aspetti del reale e l'ambiguità dei dettagli. Osserva ancora Runcini: «[…] il fantastico gioca sulla paura del diverso, dell'altro da sé, e anche se allude ambiguamente al piano soprannaturale (l'irreale) trattiene il suo discorso affabulatorio in ambito terreste (il reale), insinuando discese agli Inferi e cadute negli abissi del linguaggio che sospendono ogni giudizio di merito sull'evento appena descritto per affascinare il lettore nel labirinto di scelte infinite senza una via di salvezza» [Runcini 2007, p. 107).

Spazi e luoghi del fantastico nel Frankenstein (1818) di Mary Shelley

Ma che differenza c'è tra il concetto di spazio e quello di luogo? E come interferisce o contribuisce questa differenza alla costruzione della narrazione fantastica? Secondo autori come Marc Augé, Yi-Fu Tuan e Bertand Westphal, tra gli altri, il 'luogo' è uno spazio circoscritto o delimitato dall'essere umano che possiede identità, interrelazioni e una storia, mentre lo 'spazio' è una superficie indifferenziata, un foglio vuoto su cui i luoghi tracciano un significato e costruiscono relazioni tra di loro. Quindi, lo spazio si articola ed è diviso in luoghi, mentre i luoghi (umanizzati) sono posizionati nello spazio. Scrive Patricia García: «[…] in relation to the relatively precise idea of place, space is an abstract physical category composed of a set of relations and dimensions. Places, in contrast, are constricted by a set of frames which define their physical shape, make them mathematically measurable, and allow them to be mapped or localised within a coordinate system» [García 2015, p. 546]. Secondo García, quindi, nella narrazione fantastica è essenziale sapere dove si svolge la vicenda per meglio fruire dell'effetto drammatico del fantastico: «place-centred fantastic stories focus on a particular site (or a group of them), and on what occurs in it (or them) […] (While) the Fantastic of Space deals with a more complex fantastic transgression, since it affects the laws of space. Space is what causes – and not what hosts – the fantastic transgression» [García 2015, p. 546].

Gli spazi e i luoghi nel *Frankenstein* (1818) di Mary Shelley sono straordinari esempi di questo tipo di trasgressione. Nell'intero romanzo, infatti, si può esperire lo Spazio del Fantastico grazie all'evidente intrusione di elementi inquietanti e spaventosi che incrinano e, poco alla volta, alterano, ribaltano e compromettono definitivamente l'ambiente urbano e naturale in cui si svolge la vicenda, oltre ai rapporti tra gli individui e la vita di tutti i personaggi che ne resteranno irrimediabilmente segnati. Come si sa, la vicenda narra della storia di uno scienziato, Victor Frankenstein, talmente avvinto dai suoi studi incentrati sulla vita e sulla morte che – come un novello Faust – oltrepassa ogni tipo di limite per raggiungere l'obiettivo (o forse l'ossessione) di ridare la vita a coloro che hanno superato il confine ultimo, la morte. La scrittrice lo segue nel suo percorso di ricerca che lo conduce, poco alla volta, dagli spazi luminosi della Ginevra di fine Settecento al rifugio in Irlanda, alla fuga e all'inseguimento sulle Alpi, fino a giungere alle distese ghiacciate del Polo. Il testo è disseminato, inoltre, di molti luoghi fantastici degni di nota che, da familiari e rasserenanti, si trasformano in un vero incubo ad occhi aperti, costellato di morte, violenza, sofferenza, inquietudine per il protagonista e tutti coloro che egli ama o ha amato. In particolare, le case che, da luogo di pace e di affetto condiviso, diventano terreno di caccia della Creatura e luogo di dolore, di orrore, dell'espiazione di Frankenstein, reo di aver superato confini invalicabili. In questo percorso infernale e spaventoso, i luoghi della bellezza e del pittoresco[4] (Ingolstadt, Belrive, Sécheron, Plainpalais, Salève, Chamonix) mostrano un volto inquietante e demoniaco quando vengono osservati e descritti esclusivamente da una prospettiva liminare (colpevole, dolorosa, trasgressiva, violenta, rancorosa).

Si pensi, ancora, al laboratorio dello scienziato Frankenstein, che aggiunge una coloritura fantascientifica ai tanti studi demoniaci in cui – nei testi letterari della tradizione – dei personaggi faustiani giocavano con l'occulto. Una volta che l'ambito scientifico si rivela perfetto per la propria ambizione, Frankenstein si dedica totalmente alla ricerca, concentrandosi su tutto ciò che risulta più abietto e orrifico per la delicatezza dei sentimenti, come la decomposizione dei corpi e il passaggio dalla vita alla morte. Ed è dalle tenebre dei suoi studi e del suo laboratorio che nasce improvvisa la scintilla che illumina in manie-

[4] Nel Romanticismo, il concetto di «pittoresco» – come ha scritto, tra gli altri, Giulio Carlo Argan – rimanda a una natura che è luogo di accoglienza e prosperità, positività, felicità. Si rimanda, tra gli altri, a *Three essays: on picturesque beauty; on picturesque travel; and on sketching landscape: to which is added a poem, on landscape painting* (1792) di William Gilpin, *An Essay on the Picturesque: As Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; And, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape* (1796) di Sir Uverdale Price e ai saggi sul pittoresco nel Settecento, come il numero incentrato su «Viaggio e Paesaggio» de *La questione Romantica*, nn. 15-16 (2014).

ra accecante e straordinaria il segreto sbalorditivo che mira ad acquisire: nel quarto capitolo egli scopre, infatti, il modo per dare vita alla materia inanimata. Nel profondo della notte e alla luce della luna, come in *trance*, Frankenstein fruga con dita profane nei recessi del corpo umano e nel mistero della vita. Una stanzetta che sembra quasi una cella funge da laboratorio, posto nell'ultimo piano della casa, separato dal corpo principale da una rampa di scale e un lungo corridoio – perfetta metafora della trasformazione dal noto al trascendente e orrifico, dove si sospende il ritmo temporale del quotidiano e si trascina chi legge nel vortice dell'interdetto. Solo in questo luogo isolato, lontano quanto basta da tutto ciò che è ordinario e familiare, egli può realizzare la sua oscena creazione, mentre gli occhi gli sembrano schizzare fuori dalle orbite per la tensione e l'ansia. Quanto ancora c'è di umano in lui si ritrae con disgusto di fronte all'atto che sta realizzando, sebbene la brama crescente di realizzare la sua opera non gli consenta sosta.

Ed è in una notte fredda e tempestosa (di uragani esterni ed interni) che il Dottore dà vita al suo Golem, desideroso di concepire una nuova specie che l'avrebbe – blasfemamente – venerato come proprio Creatore e fonte di vita. Il senso di vertigine per le prospettive che gli si palesano dinanzi non è scevro da un senso di casualità che sembra combaciare col miracolo e con la magia nera. Il Dottore non può non sapere che sta camminando su un filo sottile che si stende sull'abisso; tant'è che nel suo racconto si erge ad esempio da non seguire, dimostrando quanto sia pericoloso acquisire una conoscenza che sfidi le Leggi della Natura e che porta inevitabilmente all'infelicità e alla rovina. Frankenstein diventa così l'archetipo di tante narrazioni a venire in cui studi e laboratori scientifici si trasformeranno in luoghi malefici e ipertecnologici; come avviene nel caso del laboratorio di Dottor Jekyll e quello del Dottor Moreau, oltre alle tante versioni cinematografiche che li hanno fatti rivivere sul grande schermo[5].

L'Altrove è rappresentato anche dai geli inesplorati del Polo, dove si incontrano Walton, Frankenstein e la Creatura, venendo a patti con la propria vita e la propria scelta di sondare il limite, nonostante gli evidenti pericoli. La scienza rappresenta, infatti, l'espediente e la modalità con cui i protagonisti del romanzo shelleyano osservano e analizzano il mondo e la realtà che li circonda, cercando di risolvere traumi, ossessioni ed ambizioni personali. Del resto, i timori della fallibilità della scienza e il fatto che chi ne fa uso possa spingersi troppo oltre, infrangendo i limiti della religione e della morale, è il tema principale di questa narrazione. In quanto attività intellettuale e pratica che si fonda sullo studio sistematico della struttura e del comportamento del mondo fisico e naturale attraverso l'osservazione e la sperimentazione, naturalmente essa non

[5] Pensiamo a quelli più famosi, come il laboratorio di Dottor Jekyll e quello del Dottor Moreau, oltre alle tante versioni cinematografiche che li hanno fatti rivivere sul grande schermo.

interessa solo il personaggio del Dott. Frankenstein, ma anche l'esploratore Walton, scopritore di nuovi mondi, e l'autrice Mary Shelley con la 'scienza della scrittura', che nel romanzo tanto affascina la Creatura quando ascolta per la prima volta Felix leggere ad alta voce ad Agatha e al vecchio nonno cieco. Per questo motivo, *Frankenstein* è considerato uno dei primi romanzi di fantascienza (*science-fiction* in inglese) in suolo britannico[6].

Una creazione orrifica e blasfema

La struttura testuale consta di tre livelli narrativi in prima persona (lo scambio epistolare tra Walton e sua sorella, il Dott. Frankenstein che parla con Walton, il Mostro o la Creatura che parla con Frankenstein), oltre all'Introduzione scritta da Mary Shelley nel 1831, che danno vita ad un'articolata composizione che si basa sul *frame-within-the frame* o *story-within-the-story*. Nell'Introduzione di Mary Shelley si viene a conoscenza che la giovane autrice, figlia di due celebrità letterarie e culturali di prima grandezza quali William Godwin e Mary Woolstonecraft, era stata interessata alla scrittura fin da piccola. Trascorreva il tempo libero scrivendo e dando libero spazio all'immaginazione: «the formation of castles in the air — the indulging in waking dreams — the following up trains of thought, which had for their subject the formation of a succession of imaginary incidents. My dreams were at once more fantastic and agreeable than my writings» [Shelley 2000, p. 21]. Ci viene, poi, narrata la genesi – la leggenda – del romanzo: l'amicizia con Lord Byron e il 'povero' Polidori; l'estate senza sole del 1816; il viaggio in Svizzera; il confinamento forzato a Villa Diodati, dove risiedeva Byron, e la lettura di storie di fantasmi; la sfida a scrivere loro stessi una storia simile: «One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror — one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart» [Shelley 2000, p. 23].

In pochi righi, Mary riassume gli elementi principali del fantastico: l'irruzione del perturbante in un ambiente familiare; lo smarrimento e l'inquietudine di assistere alla trasformazione di ciò che è noto in qualcosa di strano e spaventoso; la paura che fa battere forte il cuore e gelare il sangue nelle vene. In effetti, Mary definisce in questi termini la narrazione fantastica: «Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself. In all matters of discovery and invention, even of those that appertain to the ima-

[6] Si ricordano, a tal proposito, critici e scrittori come Brian Aldiss e Brian Stableford, ma anche il celebre *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel* (1982) a cura di George Levine.

gination […] invention consists in the capacity of seizing on the capabilities of a subject, and in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it» [Shelley 2000, p. 23].

Secondo Mary, la creazione di un romanzo (e, in particolare, del *suo* romanzo più famoso) possiede strane affinità con la costruzione della stessa Creatura di Frankenstein. Sia l'invenzione scientifica che quella artistica devono forgiare e dare vita ad una sostanza già esistente, inerte e senza forma, a cui fornire una apparenza seducente e intrigante, seppur mostruosa ed eccessiva. L'autrice inserisce nella narrazione idee e sollecitazioni determinate dalle esperienze vissute, dalle letture accorte, dalle conversazioni che aveva avuto modo di ascoltare su vari argomenti delle dottrine filosofiche, come la natura del principio della vita, oppure gli esperimenti prodigiosi e sbalorditivi di Erasmus Darwin «who preserved a piece of vermicelli in a glass case, till by some extraordinary means it began to move with voluntary motion. Not thus, after all, would life be given. Perhaps a corpse would be re-animated; galvanism had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and endued with vital warmth» [Shelley 2000, p. 23]. Come ha scritto Laura Otis, negli anni Trenta dell'Ottocento la parola *science* aveva cominciato ad assumere un significato moderno, trasformando un'arte in una scienza; di fatto, da abilità pratica era diventata una conoscenza di tipo sistematico e teorico che veniva comunicata attraverso libri e saggi [cf. Otis 2002, p. XVII]. Nel 1833 ricercatori che fino ad allora erano conosciuti come filosofi naturali erano stati definiti *scientists*. Questa *querelle* tra scienza moderna e filosofia naturale è centrale in *Frankenstein*. Non a caso, la scintilla che concede quasi inaspettatamente la vita alla Creatura accosta pericolosamente gli studi di Victor Frankenstein alla magia nera[7].

Nell'Introduzione, l'autrice rievoca lo straordinario incubo, a metà strada tra la fantasticheria e la realtà, che l'avrebbe ispirata a scrivere il romanzo: «I saw — with shut eyes, but acute mental vision, — I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together» [Shelley 2000, p. 24]. Lo studente di una scienza/arte profana e trasgressiva che, non avendo rispettato i limiti di ciò che è sacro ed inviolabile (la legge di Dio, della Natura e della Società), osserva con sgomento il raccapricciante fantasma – «hideous phantasm» [Shelley 2000, p. 24] – a cui ha regalato la scintilla della vita, quale moderno Prometeo. Con la sua sola presenza, questa 'cosa' – «horrid thing» [Shelley 2000, p. 24] – senza nome sembra beffarsi dell'unico Creatore di tutte le cose, l'unico che può dare la vita e la morte. Insomma, Frankenstein ha avuto il peccaminoso ardire di innalzarsi al livello di Dio, aspirando a forgia-

[7] Frankenstein racconta che i suoi primi studi si erano concentrati su antichi filosofi occultisti: Alberto Magno, Paracelso e Cornelio Agrippa, che scrisse *De Occulta Philosophia* (1531), uno dei testi più significativi del Rinascimento sui poteri dei rituali magici.

re una nuova razza di esseri viventi perfetti. Per questo motivo la Creatura a cui ha dato la vita, costituita da pezzi di cadavere, è una 'cosa' – «the Thing» [Shelley 2000, p. 24] – talmente orrifica e oscena che lo stesso artista/autore che l'ha forgiata alla fine trova odiosa la sua opera. L'essere gigantesco che ha creato non è che un non-morto (come il vampiro) che ha varcato con passo incerto la soglia tra reale e irreale incarnando tutti quei tabù, quei pensieri, quei desideri, quelle aspirazioni riguardo la scienza che la società e la cultura ritiene pericolosi. Del resto, l'intero romanzo affronta la questione dell'eccessiva ambizione, che troppo spesso porta individui dotati di grandi capacità a trasgredire limiti invalicabili e, come Lucifero («portatore di Luce»), uscire dalla grazia di Dio, venendo scaraventati nell'Inferno.

D'altro canto, anche la buia camera da letto in cui Mary avrebbe immaginato o sognato la vicenda narrata nel romanzo è uno dei luoghi del fantastico più potenti, che ricorda il celebre quadro di Henry Fuseli intitolato proprio *The Nightmare* (1781). Nel luogo più intimo e privato della casa, nel talamo designato alla procreazione, il fantastico perseguita Mary al punto da infestarne anche la scrittura. Ormai, scienza e narrazione collidono:

> The event on which this fiction is founded, has been supposed, by Dr. Darwin, and some of the physiological writers of Germany, as not of impossible occurrence. I shall not be supposed as according the remotest degree of serious faith to such an imagination; yet, in assuming it as the basis of a work of fancy, I have not considered myself as merely weaving a series of supernatural terrors. The event on which the interest of the story depends is exempt from the disadvantages of a mere tale of spectres or enchantment. [Shelley 2000, p. 26]

Il fantastico rappresenta una modalità di conoscenza 'straordinaria', nel senso etimologico di eccedente i limiti del quotidiano, dell'ordinario, del comune. Nel romanzo, il creatore è l'artista/scrittore, ma anche Dr. Frankenstein, lo scienziato, lo studioso, l'inventore che ha il suo doppio in Robert Walton, il capitano della nave che finisce intrappolata nei ghiacci del Polo Nord, che domina la cornice della narrazione. Il *Doppelgänger* è uno dei principali marchi del Fantastico[8], come ben osserva Todorov. Infatti, esattamente come Victor, Walton è un esploratore alla ricerca appassionata di quella «country of eternal light» [Shelley 2000, p. 28] che rappresenta la conoscenza sconosciuta, quel luogo al di là dei limiti del noto e del consentito che fa di lui un altro Prometeo moderno e *alter ego* di Frankestein. Nella prima lettera a sua sorella, Walton identifica il Polo come quell'Altrove che incarna i piaceri della scoperta e della

[8] Oltre a *The Uncanny* (1919) di Sigmund Freud, si pensi ai testi di ETA Hoffmann e alle teorie di Otto Rank.

trasgressione: «a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man» [Shelley 2000, p. 28]. Nella mente e nell'immaginazione del narratore il Polo rappresenta, infatti, «the region of beauty and delight» [Shelley 2000, p. 28], rimandando chiaramente al binomio usato da Burke nel suo celebre trattato; insomma, è quel luogo in cui il sole (la bellezza e la luminosità) è sempre visibile all'orizzonte e continua a diffondere infinitamente il suo splendore (l'insolito e il prodigioso). L'ardente curiosità di Walton (doppio di Victor Frankenstein) lo spinge, perciò, a raggiungere quella terra inesplorata: «and sailing over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe» [Shelley 2000, p. 28].

Avamposti del sublime, dell'orrifico, del fantastico in Frankenstein

Il Polo Nord, avamposto del gelo e della desolazione, insieme agli altri paesaggi descritti nel romanzo possono fungere da esempi perfetti per la teoria del sublime ascritta al filosofo Edmund Burke nel saggio *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* del 1757[9], che fa capo a Longino e alle numerose traduzioni succedutesi nel corso dei secoli[10]. Si pensi all'immensità delle montagne e dei precipizi vicino Chamonix di cui si legge nel nono capitolo, col rumore del fiume che infuria tra le rocce e il rombo delle cascate che si infrangono tutt'intorno comunicano una potenza imponente ed eterna. Castelli gotici e fiumi impetuosi trasformano la bellezza – già «singolare» – dei luoghi in qualcosa di dichiaratamente «sublime»; come se le montagne poderose fossero la dimora di un'altra razza di esseri umani. Del resto, nel Settecento si credeva che le Alpi fossero infestate da demoni, mostri e draghi. Come osserva Jane Nardine nel 2006, vi venivano spesso organizzate delle spedizioni 'scientifiche' per osservare da vicino questi luoghi e scoprirne i segreti più spaventosi; Mary lo sapeva per aver visitato Chamonix nel 1816, proprio mentre scriveva il suo Frankenstein. Diventa, così, il luogo 'perfetto' in cui ambientare l'epico inseguimento tra il Bene e il Male, che si scambiano continuamente di posto. Ancora, nel decimo capitolo si descrivono le sorgenti dell'Arveiron che nascono dai ghiacciai, un infinito muro congelato che sporge verso il cielo. Di fronte a questo paesaggio Frankenstein si sente elevare rispetto ad ogni altra piccolezza quotidiana, mentre di notte quelle forme enormi ritornano nei suoi sogni, lo braccano e lo circondano.

[9] Cf. *The Sublime from Antiquity to the Present* (2012) a cura di Timothy M. Costelloe.

[10] Si vedano i capitoli «Longinus and the Ancient Sublime» di Malcolm Heath e «…And the Beautiful? Revisiting Edmund Burke's "Double Aesthetics"» di Rodolphe Gasché in *The Sublime from Antiquity to the Present* (2012) di Timothy M. Costelloe.

Come si sa, il Sublime non nasce dal piacere che deriva dalla osservazione di cose belle, aggraziate, sinuose e armoniose ma dal sentimento di sgomento, paura, dolore, stupore, terrore, orrore; insomma, è l'emozione più forte che la mente possa provare in natura – proprio il tipo di sentimento che il fantastico mira a provocare in chi si gli si avvicina nella letteratura, nell'arte e nelle narrazioni proprie degli altri *media*. Gli effetti meno elevati sono l'ammirazione, la reverenza, il rispetto. Si pensi alla curiosità ardente che l'esploratore della 'cornice narrativa' del romanzo afferma di provare al solo pensiero di poter scoprire una parte del mondo mai visitata prima. Questa potente e profonda fascinazione/seduzione (nel romanzo Walton parla di *enticements*, una meta che lo attira, lo affascina, lo seduce così intimamente da conquistare «all fear of danger or death» [Shelley 2000, p. 28]). Con la morte e con il pericolo i personaggi del fantastico sembrano intessere una sorta di *dance macabre*, ad uso e consumo di coloro che leggeranno o guarderanno le loro avventure. In questo modo, potranno provare il piacere inquietante di osservare il paesaggio dall'alto di un dirupo, sfiorando la morte ed il pericolo, al sicuro (forse) della propria casa o di un luogo conosciuto e rassicurante; come avviene con la camera dove Mary sogna la spaventosa Creatura senza nome che la osserva con occhi giallastri e acquosi che si trasforma – quasi cinematograficamente – nella camera da letto di Frankenstein, che sente sempre su di sé lo sguardo dalla creatura che ha abbandonato con la speranza che morisse. L'unico modo con cui l'autrice può venire a patti con quell'incubo terrificante è la scrittura che, nel caso del romanzo che Mary sta scrivendo, ha l'obiettivo di terrorizzare i lettori, almeno quanto l'incubo ha scosso tanto profondamente lei.

L'autrice narra una vicenda che si incentra sulla morte, sulla perdita e sul dolore che – diversamente da quanto ammette nell'Introduzione – aveva incrociato già nella sua giovane vita. Prima tra tutte, la morte di sua madre qualche giorno dopo essere nata, seguita dalla morte di sua figlia a sole due settimane, senza nemmeno aver ricevuto un nome, e dal suicidio della moglie di Percy, Harriet, nelle acque del Serpentine, evento che permise a Mary di diventare la legittima signora Shelley. Nel vortice di occhi e di sguardi, di cui il romanzo è uno scrigno prezioso, c'è l'autrice che indaga nel profondo del suo animo e sogna di poter sconfiggere quella morte che le opprime il cuore e le toglie il fiato, come se il demoniaco *incubus* (dal latino, incubo indotto da un demone) che pesa sul petto della fanciulla nel quadro di Fuseli opprimesse anche lei. La giovane Mary, come il Dottor Victor Frankenstein, sa bene che si tratta di pensieri blasfemi e cerca venirne a patti nel corso della sua narrazione. In un ben congegnato gioco di specchi, quindi, tra la Creatura, lo Scienziato e l'Autrice scorre un presentimento condiviso di angoscia e perdizione che irrompe nel romanzo.

Si veda ancora quando, in apertura del quinto capitolo, l'autrice descrive l'infernale notte dell'esperimento, osservando il laboratorio attraverso gli oc-

chi e il cuore del Dr. Frankenstein. Qui il fantastico è dovunque: nel laboratorio scarsamente illuminato dalla luce delle candele, nella mente ottenebrata di Frankenstein e negli occhi, sulla pelle e sul corpo della sua orrida Creatura. D'altro canto, è indicativo che il modo in cui Frankenstein mette insieme i vari pezzi di cadavere[11] e realizza l'intero esperimento non vengano descritti affatto, restando nell'interdetto, nel rimosso, e trovando una modalità di rappresentazione nell'estrema ansia «that almost amounted to agony» che prova lo scienziato mentre raccoglie gli «instruments of life» utili per infondere «a spark of being into the lifeless thing» [Shelley 2000, p. 60] che giace ai suoi piedi. Quella «cosa di tenebra» [*The Tempest*, V, 1, 267] che è la Creatura – che non può non rimandare al Caliban/*cannibal* shakespeariano, alterità primordiale *par excellence* – è orrido e sublime ad un tempo e rappresenta la fine del sogno di Frankenstein e l'inizio dell'incubo di tutti. Infatti, egli incarna la «catastrofe» (o *denouement*) che infesta ogni spazio e ogni luogo della narrazione, offuscati dalla sua fantasmatica e demoniaca presenza. Eppure, il romanzo ha un finale aperto: ai confini del mondo, Frankenstein il Creatore muore; la Creatura (l'aborto, l'angelo caduto trasformatosi in demonio crudele) si allontana da solo nel buio, promettendo il suicidio; Walton, raccolto il monito che quella vicenda gli ha mostrato, decide di non proseguire il suo viaggio – alla scoperta di un'Artide dove splende sempre il sole – che potrebbe condannarlo alla morte insieme al suo equipaggio. Dunque, chi legge non può sapere se il sacrificio della Creatura sarà effettivamente perpetrato o se continuerà a vagare indisturbata nei suoi incubi. D'altro canto, chi ci dice che Robert Walton tornerà davvero a casa e non sarà ammaliato da qualche altra temibile chimera?

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[11] Hoogle osserva che l'enorme Creatura portata in vita attraverso pezzi di cadaveri rimanda ai pezzi del gigante fantasma che compare in *The Castle of Otranto*, così come la Creatura che si sveglia nel buio abbandonata dal suo Creatore è un riferimento alla giovane fanciulla walpoliana che si trova persa e confusa dall'ambiente che la circonda [cf. Hoogle 2019, p. 313].

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Poet’s corner

Ambrose Musiyiwa

Ambrose Musiyiwa is a poet and a journalist with a background in the intersection between activism, migration, and community action. He coordinates Journeys in Translation, an international, volunteer-driven initiative that is translating *Over Land, Over Sea: Poems for those seeking refuge* (Five Leaves Publications, 2015) into other languages. He also coordinates Forced Migration and The Arts, a monthly online series that aims to create space for people with lived experience of forced migration, artists, academics, and activists to meet for conversation, to share ideas and possibly also explore ways of collaborating with one another. Books he has edited include *Welcome to Britain: An Anthology of Poems and Short Fiction* (CivicLeicester, 2023), *Black Lives Matter: Poems for a New World* (CivicLeicester, 2020), and *Bollocks to Brexit: An Anthology of Poems and Short Fiction* (CivicLeicester, 2019).

Shoes at the gate
for Richmore Tera

At the river,
you drink to friends lost.
Passports are not trophies.
Shoes at the gate are not talismans.
Questions are markers of struggles seen
but not understood, not engaged with
because other things
had to be done first.
Questions are promises made
that can no longer be kept.

Who stayed?

leaving,
setting off
and getting off,
who did you say goodbye to?

who said
farewell
stay
don't go?

who followed?

who stayed
keeping watch
hoping you'd come back?

Journeying

you left home
and have been many things
in many places

you stayed alive
even as the journey took from you
everything you thought you knew
about what it means to be alive

how do you keep moving
when the journey stops making sense?

Carmina Masoliver

Carmina Masoliver is a poet from south London, and creator of She Grrrowls feminist arts nights. She has been sharing her poetry on both the page and the stage for over a decade, and her small chapbook was published by Nasty Little Press in 2014. Her latest book *Circles* is published by Burning Eye Books (2019) and is an illustrated long-form poem. She recently self-published *Selected Poems, 2007-2012*, a mixed-media pamphlet of poems. Her poetry has also been featured in publications such as *Popshot Magazine*, *The Rialto* and *Brittle Star*. Carmina was long-listed for the Young Poet Laureate for London award in 2013, the inaugural Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships in 2017, the Out-Spoken Prize in Performance Poetry in 2018, 2022 and 2023, and the Grindstone International Poetry Prize in 2020. An alumna of the Roundhouse Poetry Collective, she has featured at nights such as Bang Said the Gun, and festivals including Latitude, Bestival and Lovebox, both as a collective and individually. She performed internationally whilst living abroad, in Singapore, and in Spain.

Apology for Yarl's Wood

I'm sorry for your loss.
I'm sorry those men invaded your home
and then your body. I'm sorry
they dragged you to a house
with open doors, swinging off hinges
the way they pulled your legs back,
pinned your arms down, took it in turns
like a game of roulette where you lose
every single time.

I'm sorry this was not the last time,
that they tied you down, a slave
for their pleasure; the act,
a weapon to extract money. I'm sorry
to be a part of this capitalist confusion,
where without legislation we are left
with consumer power, and an addiction
to buying more, ignorant to the infliction
on women like you.

I'm sorry you had to leave your restaurant,
wonder about the fate of your children.
I'm sorry not all men
are like the ones who saved you,
I'm sorry men had to save you,
that for two of the women, it was too late.
I wonder if they were given a funeral. I'm sorry
for Yarl's Wood, for the first fundamental flaw:
trapped once again, guarded by men.

I'm sorry you were detained at all,
that you were a number, one in two thousand.
You were a refugee, not a criminal.
All you did was be a woman,
trying to stand strong in the middle of a war.
I'm sorry that you came here
to be treated like less than a human.
I'm sorry that money is so loud
we couldn't hear you cry out.

I’m sorry that this seems to fall on deaf ears now.
I’m sorry that I’m writing this on a device
that excavates minerals
like your body is a land mine.
I’m sorry I don’t know all the answers,
but I want this to change, to find solutions
from the soil of your country
to the fabric of mine. Only then
can we be proud to wave our flags.

Welcome

they say you are not welcome
but that isn't what we say
they say you can't cross the border
but that isn't us at all

they don't care for your children
but even us atheists pray
they say they write the sun
but all we see is a wall

people power increased numbers
but lives cannot be measured in statistics
and right now, there is a teacher
who has been waiting over a hundred days

and when we think with our hearts
they tell us we're not realistic
but Ali has been living in the jungle camp
tent fabric dripping with malaise

we hope for a happy ending
where the image of a home destroyed
no longer haunts him or his family

hold a candle to welcome

a new home
a new beginning
a new future

Jack McGowan

Jack McGowan is a poet and Principal Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Worcester. His research focuses on contemporary poetics, spoken word, affect, and the oral traditions of performance. He is co-editor of *Spoken Word in the UK* (Routledge, 2021). Through his creative practice Jack interrogates the impacts of nostalgia, reconsidering modern and historical cultural phenomena through the lens of the contemporary world. His poetry pamphlet *Powerless Rangers* was published by V. Press in 2022. The poems below are selected from a new sequence reimagining the life of 'Calico' Jack Rackham, an eighteenth-century pirate captain.

Flagship

The Kingston is Jack's first hand-captured home.
He sweats the coasts for fish and small change ships.
It's not the best, but a start nonetheless,
and gives Vane's ghost-hung Ranger final rest.
The Kingston flutters at Bermuda's windowpanes
proud to be a general nuisance –
a thorn in the foot of the sea.

But Jack sees the beginning of great things
in this ship of twigs, the builder's first day of Rome.
Nothing but a glorified fish rack
yet a steppingstone, a home.

Anchor

Jack strikes on the simplicity of it,
every time the anchor's tossed
from deck to froth
its shark's head plunging to the bed.

What brute assurance guarantees the stick?
The same faith he's always learned:
an anchor's fall is weighed by what is earned.

Sphagnum Moss

The ship's doctor stuffs sphagnum moss
inside a seashell, stores it in a cool dry place
while summer bakes the boat like bread.
Sailors trust a cure-all more than a specialist.
Little do they know: the moss is dead.

Pirate Proverbs

When the air is heavy the gulls fly low
and rain falls and winds blow.

When the air is light the gulls fly high
and the sun holds and the decks dry.

When the gulls are watched the kettle boils
the pirates bicker and the rations spoil.

When the gulls aren't watched the captain fails
to see the limpness of his sails.

Recensioni

Colin Carman, *The Radical Ecology of the Shelleys: Eros and the Environment*, New York, Routledge, 2018, 220 pp., ISBN 978-036-703-0230.

In *The Radical Ecology of the Shelleys*, Colin Carman aims to trace a path of continuity between the work of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, and the most recent queer ecocritical theory. He does so by focusing on the Shelleys' blurring of boundaries within the dichotomy between nature and culture, freeing Eros from social prejudices, in their poetical thought and literary production. For Carman, one of the main reasons why the Shelleys had not been analysed in terms of queer ecology is because of the relative lack of critics working with the field [p. 21], although Carman takes into consideration the contribution of influential work such as Timothy Morton's *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste: The Body and The Natural World* (1994), in which Morton argues for the inseparability of social problems from environmental ones in works like *Queen Mab* and «Ozymandias». Carman has an interdisciplinary approach, as his research moves in the field of queer ecocriticism, while selecting elements from traditional ecocriticism, poststructuralist responses to history and sociology, and the Foucauldian history of sexuality.

Carman aims to show how both the Shelleys attempted, throughout their production, to overturn dominant notions of the natural during the English Romantic age. The most interesting and innovative aspect of his monograph, in fact, is the acknowledgement of both Mary and Percy Shelley's avant-garde queer approach to nature and eroticism. Carman has the ability to attribute to this sexual Romantic radicalism a science-based and ecocritically paradigmatic viewpoint, in order to show how the Shelleys introduced a discourse on the de-naturalization of heterosexuality, and yet were forced by their contemporary intellectualism to find indirect ways to express their opposition to a patriarchal ethics. By doing so, the Shelleys subtly dismantled the binary of nature and culture, advocating that nature is fundamentally a cultural production.

In Chapter 2, «The Nature of Love and Friendship: Ecotones and other fine lines in Percy Shelley's writings on Romantic friendship», Carman reasons on Shelley's vision of the Greek world and homoerotic relationships, claiming that if Eros is timeless, sex is local. For Shelley, the Greeks acted according to their nature, and the climate was individuated by Shelley as a possible «cause» for male homosexuality in the classical world, raising in this way the question whether homosexuality is a cultural or environmental factor, or whether it is rather an intermixture of the two. Shelley believes that nature and culture are not opposites, but rather deeply mingled and «interpenetrated», going further than the contemporary Romantic period in naturalizing same-sex Eros. This is shown in his *Discourse on the Manner of the Ancient Greeks Relative to*

the Subject of Love. However, Shelley is ambiguous in his personal view of male homosexuality in his works, interrogating the theme of acting according to individual desire. He reiterates three rules in his *Discourse*: that «he or she should pursue physical pleasure and not pain», «to pursue a partner with the highest intellectual and physical qualities», and «to act according to nature». He preserves a strongly Platonic idea of love, extending the concept of Beauty beyond the body, as shown in Plato's *Symposium*, whereas «Eros transcends the terrestrial world of bodies». In Chapter 3 («Percy Shelley's Hermaphroditus: Queer Nature and the Sex Lives of Plants in "The Sensitive-Plant" and "The Witch of Atlas"»), Carman attends to P.B. Shelley's image of the hermaphrodite, while analyzing it both in their vegetal and animal form. In this pair of poems, the world of Animalia and Plantae is interfused in a queerly ecological re-interpretation of the world. Sexuality is the point of connection, continuity, and sympathy between the vegetal and the human, as shown in «The Witch of Atlas», in which the eponymous character creates a hermaphrodite, symbol of the witch's anti-anthropomorphism. In «The Sensitive-Plant», Shelley explores the vegetal world as it relates to human sex, showing the story of a plant in love with a human in the Garden of Eden.

The last two chapters of Carman's book are dedicated to Mary Shelley's work and her visions of queer domesticity and the relationship between human beings and their environment. In Chapter 4 («Communal Ecology and the Queer Domesticities of Mary Shelley's *Maurice* and *Valperga*»), for instance, Carman argues that Shelley enacts an erosion of the idea of a bi-parental, heteronormative household. Invoking Aldo Leopold's theory of the «land ethic», which includes «soils, waters, plants, and animals or collectively: the lands» in the definition of community, Carman maintains that Shelley may have anticipated Leopold's idea of a biotic community, overcoming the paradigms of Western society. Furthermore, the interactions between a single organism or species and their environment acquire an ethical dimension, prompting the reader to consider a person's effects on others, human or otherwise. Mary Shelley thus re-elaborates her father William Godwin's utilitarianism by imagining a relationship between a prototypical Shelleyan hero, with the power to improve the community as a whole, and their environment, promoting an ethic of environmental justice that facilitates a «good ecologically-situated life» [p. 121]. Another topic investigated by Carman is the dialogical connection in Mary Shelley's works which links motherhood and men's struggle with erotic and platonic bonds in the community. Carman claims that, in ecocriticism as in Shelley's works, the domestic and the natural are interchanging environments. In *Frankenstein,* for instance, the Creature, who is rejected by his father, elevates his spirit and exalts the beauty of nature by observing from the outside the De Lacey family's daily life, and contributing to their domesticity. The cottage, hence, seems to become for the Creature a utopic projection, a space in which nature and human culture overlap, the Latin archetype of the *locus*

amoenus of Romantic-era literature. At the same time, Shelley transforms this space from a recurring pattern of Romantic literature into a space where queerish families flourish. In *Maurice,* there is interchangeability between the protagonist's name and a cottage under a cliff. Also, the disarticulation of the maternal from the female body, representing gender as mobile, is considered by Carman as a revision of G.H. McGavran's notion of «Romantic boyhood», since Maurice acts free of bourgeois manhood during his youth by queering the relationship with his father. In this work, while using the dichotomy of the traveller-father and the lost child, Shelley is re-interpreting the myth of Ceres and Proserpine in a male way, focusing thus on male affection and emotivity.

In the fifth and last chapter («Osculate wildly: Earth-Kissing and Tree Kissing: Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* and *Lodore*»), we see how Shelley reflects on male affection and communitarianism during a pandemic, pushing the main eponymous character, Lionel Verney, to embrace a natural state by leaving his dying society, exterminated by the plague. Lionel is brought to recognize the appearance of masculinity as a performance built on the repression of male feelings, and thus he is shown sublimating his erotic male impulses while kissing the earth stepped on by his beloved friend Adrian. For Heidi C. M. Scott, *The Last Man* shows the estrangement between humans and their «accustomed environment», deconstructing Walter Scott's idea of «home ecology», and revising the concepts of «home» and family life. In *Lodore,* on the other hand, Shelley promotes the love between two women, Fanny and Ethel. At this point, Carman looks at Ethel as a female counterpart to Lionel in *The Last Man*, since both of them experience nature while understanding the interdependence of living things.

In *The Radical Ecology of the Shelleys,* Colin Carman shows us how in both P.B. and Mary Shelley there is the theorization of a dependently sensuous interchange between humans and environment. Two centuries before the foundation of the field of ecocriticism, the Shelleys explored the nature of Eros and the Eros of nature, and celebrated the idea that living things were moved by a mysterious force.

Matteo Cardillo

Sarah Haggarty, ed., *Blake in Context,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, Isbn 978-1-107-14491-0

In una lettera al suo amico Thomas Butt, in cui veniva criticato per alcuni suoi lavori, William Blake ribadì che si riconosceva sia come poeta sia come pittore, sottolineando così la complessità e la completezza della sua arte. Allo stu-

dio e all'analisi di questa complessità, dei tanti volti e sfumature di un artista che ha vissuto intensamente e attivamente il suo lungo percorso di vita, sono dedicati i trentotto saggi contenuti nel volume *Blake in Context*.

Sarah Haggarty, che ha raccolto e introdotto i contributi, eterogenei e non afferenti a una specifica metodologia, scritti dai più importanti studiosi di Blake a livello mondiale, afferma che il volume vuole essere, oggi, un modo per affrontare e considerare la multimedialità dell'opera dell'artista inglese. *Blake in Context*, perciò, si candida a essere una raccolta completa, volta a osservare a 360 gradi William Blake come uomo e artista sincretico all'interno del suo mondo e del suo contesto. La definizione di contesto, però, come afferma la curatrice, va ripensata alla luce della personalità e dell'attività del poeta che, per sua natura, non è mai rientrato, in ogni sua attività, in nessun tipo di definizione o catalogazione. Per questo motivo, il volume si dipana in un'osservazione multiprospettica che si propone di analizzare numerosi degli aspetti, dei temi, dei motivi, delle idee che hanno caratterizzato la vita e l'Opera dell'autore. Tale molteplicità di oggetti di studio, se osservata complessivamente e trasversalmente, può fornire una sintesi della complessità ideologica ed estetica dell'artista e della sua attiva presenza in tutti gli ambiti dell'esistenza e, allo stesso tempo, un quadro composito della sua partecipazione agli aspetti storici, culturali, politici, religiosi, artistici, economici e letterari del mondo a cui apparteneva.

Il volume è diviso in quattro sezioni, di cui la prima, «Life, Works and Reception», si concentra sulla vita e sull'attività di Blake non solo come poeta ma, soprattutto, come artista figurativo, conoscitore e produttore di diversi media. Un aspetto della sua opera, questo, che per molti anni la critica ha considerato separato dalla sua attività letteraria e che raramente, se non negli ultimi anni, così come in questo contributo, è stato ripensato negli studi interpretativi dedicati all'opera dell'artista inglese.

L'analisi si apre con gli interventi di Leo Damrosch («Life») e Jon Mee («Networks»), che forniscono una panoramica sulla vita e sull'opera di Blake, insistendo sull'aspetto umano di un artista che vive in un ambiente sociale vivo, attivo e prospero, in cui elabora le proprie conoscenze letterarie, filosofiche e religiose e in cui probabilmente si muove d'impaccio a causa della propria condizione sociale, ma dove si impone con decisione grazie a una ferma e testarda fede nel proprio credo, nelle proprie idee e «visioni».

In particolare, Jon Mee fa riflettere sulla capacità di Blake di aver saputo creare, nei circoli e nei salotti socio-culturali dell'epoca, una vera e propria rete fatta di contatti, discussioni e incontri volti all'interpretazione e penetrazione delle proprie opere. E siccome, afferma Mee, una rete è «a constant act of renovation» [p. 20], è possibile e auspicabile interpretare Blake e la sua opera in rapporto a un contesto che pone l'azione creatrice al centro; un'azione che,

a sua volta, crea relazioni con il mondo e la società in cui esse nascono e che, nel tempo, si espandono e si rafforzano.

A seguire, i contributi di Mark Crosby («Engraving») e David Worrall («Illuminated Books») focalizzano l'attenzione, il primo, sulla tecnica d'incisione di Blake e sulla sua evoluzione e, il secondo, sugli *Illuminated Books*. In modo particolare, Worrall si sofferma sulla ricezione di un determinato tipo di arte composita in cui il linguaggio visivo e narrativo si intrecciano e si completano; un linguaggio che alla fine del Settecento avrebbe parlato ai fruitori delle opere di Blake in un modo del tutto differente che merita di essere preso in considerazione.

Continuando, Sarah Haggarty, nel suo intervento («Manuscripts»), concentra lo sguardo sui testi che Blake non ha mai pubblicato e che ci sono pervenuti sotto forma di manoscritti. Luisa Calè («Book Illustration») e Martin Myrone («Painting»), invece, indirizzano l'argomentazione e l'analisi sulle illustrazioni che Blake crea per le opere di altri autori e sui dipinti, i quali reclamano una certa supremazia rispetto ai testi. E, ancora una volta, si sottolinea quanto sia importante, nell'accostarsi all'interpretazione dell'opera di Blake, concentrarsi sul concetto di arte come prodotto e sulla materialità del libro come mezzo di espressione che sviluppa una consistenza e importanza proprie e si definisce nel contesto in cui Blake opera.

Ulteriori contributi della prima parte sono quelli a cura di S. Erle e K. Davies («Early Reception») e di J. Whittaker («Late Reception»), che approfondiscono il discorso sulla ricezione dell'opera di Blake nel corso dei secoli. Analizzare l'opera nel suo contesto, in questo caso, permette di osservare Blake sotto una luce diversa: non più quella dell'autore ignoto e disdegnato, ma quella di un autore riconosciuto e discusso a cui un certo tipo di pubblico, di tutte le epoche, può fare riferimento.

A chiusura della prima parte del volume M. Eaves contribuisce con un saggio («Editing and Editions») sulle edizioni dei testi di Blake e sulla necessità di studiare il processo editoriale in una prospettiva olistica e totalizzante, quale espressione umana e culturale. Le scelte editoriali, infatti, secondo Eaves, permetterebbero di comprendere il processo di acquisizione, ricezione e interpretazione, nel corso del tempo, dell'arte composita di Blake.

La seconda parte del volume, «Form, Genre and Mode», è dedicata alle forme e ai generi che l'opera di Blake ha toccato, sfiorato, abbracciato e assunto nel tempo. Il saggio di Fred Parker («Comedy»), per esempio, si occupa della commedia, un genere poco praticato da Blake ma che caratterizza in maniera importante il testo di *An Island in the Moon*. Ian Balfour, diversamente, nel saggio «Prophecy», si concentra sulla profezia, genere prediletto da Blake, ponendo, però, l'accento sull'evoluzione che il genere stava subendo negli stessi anni in cui l'artista scriveva e, quindi, sulle innovazioni che Blake apportò al genere stesso.

Altri contributi si concentrano su alcuni concetti estetico-narrativi (come, per esempio, il saggio «Sublimity» di David Baulch o «System, Myth and Symbol» di Tilottama Rajan) e sullo stile di Blake. Per esempio, Derek Attridge, nel suo contributo intitolato «Rhythm», ci guida attraverso i ritmi e i metri più usati dal poeta, oltre a soffermarsi sulle molteplici eccezioni. Il capitolo «Songs» di Steve Newman, invece, analizza il genere della canzone che Blake rende canonico nei suoi componimenti più famosi e che, in realtà, integra anche nei suoi poemi epici. Nello spirito del volume, Newman contestualizza l'uso della canzone, che, nell'epoca della Rivoluzione Industriale, diventa luogo poetico votato alla descrizione e riflessione sulla città da parte di diversi autori a cui Blake si unisce: una scelta di genere che assume un valore politico e sociale ben definito.

La terza parte del volume, «Creative Cross-currents», vira l'attenzione sul rapporto di Blake con altri scrittori e concetti e sulla ricezione di Blake nelle opere di altri autori. Contestualizzare in questo caso significa, per i saggisti, non isolare Blake nel suo laboratorio, bensì renderlo parte di un'epoca, di un'idea più generale, di un quadro europeo e romantico, soprattutto con riferimento alla nozione di estetica della religione che William Blake ha sicuramente contribuito a formare.

Il primo saggio è di Stephen Prickett («The Bible»), il quale sviluppa un ulteriore punto di vista sull'influenza e il valore delle Scritture nella reinterpretazione che Blake ne fa e pone l'accento sull'importanza, non solo di ritrovare nei testi blakeiani allusioni ai testi sacri, ma di leggere la rimodulazione dei motivi e dei temi alla luce dei nuovi studi ermeneutici sulla Bibbia coevi all'opera del poeta inglese.

David Fuller, invece, nel saggio «Chaucer, Spenser and Shakespeare» si interroga sull'influenza di tali autori nell'opera blakeiana. Fuller, però, sviluppa un'analisi trasversale, il cui fine non è andare a ricercare nelle fonti concetti o motivi che Blake imita o riprende. Diversamente, egli si orienta verso un'analisi della lettura, intesa come il rapporto tra l'autore e il lettore e verso uno studio dei ruoli degli enunciatori e degli enunciati (questi ultimi sempre nuovi ed originali) che Blake crea nella riconfigurazione dei testi che conosce e che frequenta. E lo stesso avviene, si può dire, con la figura e l'opera di Milton, che G. A. Rosso (nel saggio «Milton») analizza e che Blake non solo reinterpreta ma rende parte integrante, dialetticamente, della sua stessa arte.

Dopo un confronto proposto da J. McGann tra Blake e Byron incentrato sul rapporto tra religione e storia («Byron»), E. Helsinger («Pre-raphaelites and Aesthetes»), E. Larissy («Yeats, Eliot and Auden») e L. Freedman («Whitman, Crane and the Beats») analizzano il modo in cui Blake, a partire dai Pre-raffaelliti, sia penetrato nel pensiero di altri autori nel corso degli anni, arricchendo e modulando la loro opera in momenti diversi e con sfumature sempre nuove e penetranti.

La quarta parte del volume, «History Society and Culture», più eterogenea dal punto di vista della tematica rispetto alle altre sezioni, si presenta come una panoramica su concetti e temi sociali, storici e culturali che Blake ha affrontato o attraverso i quali Blake può essere letto e interpretato. Tra i saggi troviamo quello di Kurt Fosso («Animals»), che si occupa della presenza del mondo animale nelle opere di Blake analizzando il modo in cui questo universo si intreccia, contestualizzandosi, ad un momento di evoluzione del pensiero della storia naturale e dell'evoluzione dell'uomo.

Il saggio successivo di N. Heringham («Antiquarianism») inquadra invece Blake negli anni di espansione della scienza antiquaria (mondo che Blake conosceva grazie alle sue collaborazioni e ai propri interessi e studi personali). I contributi di L. Joy («Education and Childhood»), N. M. Williams («Empricism») e D. Gigante («Life Sciences»), invece, si occupano dell'importanza, da un lato, del rapporto di Blake con i ruoli dell'educazione e dell'infanzia e, dall'altro, di quello con l'empirismo e le teorie filosofiche di Locke, Newton e Hartley. Il legame con i temi del sociale, così come con le ideologie più diffuse dell'epoca, è parte integrante della vita e dell'opera di Blake, il quale viveva e analizzava ogni aspetto della società in cui era immerso, trasformandolo in arte e rendendolo visibile.

Gli interventi di A. Regier («Moravianism») e L. Quinney («Mysticism»), d'altro canto, esaminano le connessioni di Blake con la religione attraverso due lenti diverse. Il primo saggio approfondisce gli aspetti del background religioso e culturale della madre di Blake, appartenente alla congregazione del Moravianesimo. Quinney, invece, col suo intervento, si interroga sulla natura religiosa di Blake.

Decisamente interessante anche il saggio di Susan Matthews («Sex, Sexuality and Gender») che concentra l'attenzione sullo slittamento di significato che i termini *sex, gender* e *sexual* stavano subendo proprio all'epoca di Blake. Il modo in cui Blake dal canto suo utilizza tali termini, stravolgendone il significato convenzionale, denota una vera e propria rivoluzione e un attacco alle strutture istituzionalizzate che utilizzavano, all'epoca, la parola come forma di coercizione.

Per concludere*, Blake in Context,* con la sua molteplicità di interventi e prospettive sulla vita, le opere e il mondo dell'artista inglese, è sicuramente un contributo unico alla nuova critica del poeta. Osservare, esaminare, analizzare Blake «in contesto» significa abbracciare non solo il periodo in cui l'autore inglese è vissuto, di per sé già molto vasto, ma allargare lo sguardo verso orizzonti più ampi – non solo letterari ma culturali, storici, politici, ideologici – che hanno trasformato l'uomo Blake nell'artista, nel pensatore e nel filosofo. *Blake in Context* offre una panoramica completa e precisa del contesto in cui Blake operava e, insieme a essa, ridisegna i contorni interpretativi che definiscono Blake quale artista eclettico, completo, totalizzante e colto, ma soprattutto atti-

vo e partecipe del suo tempo e del suo spazio, aperto ad accogliere gli stimoli più vari e diversi provenienti dall'ambiente che frequentava e che definivano la società in cui abitava. Tutti questi elementi sono imprescindibili e non possono essere sottovalutati né ignorati ma, invece, debbono essere esaminati, poiché hanno contribuito a rendere la sua arte un «prodotto» unico nel suo genere.

Marta Fabi

Nicoletta Caputo, *Richard III as a Romantic Icon. Textual, Cultural and Theatrical Appropriations*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2018, pp. 270, Isbn 978-3-0343-2998-9

La figura di Riccardo III ha avuto nell'Ottocento una controversa reputazione sia fra gli storici che fra i critici letterari. Quello di Nicoletta Caputo è uno studio originale della figura di Riccardo III nel Romanticismo, sia dal punto di vista teatrale che da quello culturale. L'autrice, partendo da un approccio multi-prospettico, tratta della controversia intorno alla figura storica, e conseguentemente drammatica e teatrale, di Riccardo III. La ricerca di Caputo prende in considerazione la ricezione del personaggio di Riccardo III nella critica letteraria del Settecento e dell'Ottocento e studia come questa influenzi l'interpretazione teatrale del personaggio di Riccardo. Obiettivo dello studio è «to highlight the coalescence of discourses related to the figure of Richard III that emerged in the last decades of the eighteenth century, investigate the Romantics' morbid fascination with this character in its various manifestations, and explore what can be considered a true Romantic-period myth from a variety of points of view» [p. 12]. La scena romantica presenta diverse, e spesso opposte, interpretazioni di Riccardo. Caputo analizza, puntualmente e con grande dovizia di particolari, le performance di grandi attori come George Frederick Cooke e Edmund Kean. L'autrice ricostruisce tali rappresentazioni sia attraverso le recensioni teatrali contemporanee, sia attraverso i testi degli adattamenti.

La prima parte del volume esplora, attraverso un numero sorprendente di fonti contemporanee, le trasformazioni e la revisione che il mito di Riccardo e la sua reputazione in particolare in epoca Tudor subirono con l'avvento della cultura e della società romantica. I primi due capitoli («Revising the Tudor Myth in the Eighteenth Century» e «Richard's Reputation in Romantic Times») presentano la controversia intorno al personaggio di Riccardo e i tentativi di redimerlo, come quello di Mary Shelley in *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*, che offrì «a highly revisionist and counterhistorical version of the story from which Richard III emerged in a completely different light» [p. 18]. Il terzo capitolo mostra come gli attori più importanti del periodo si distacca-

rono dalla interpretazione di un Riccardo stizzoso che Garrick aveva portato in scena, per offrire un Riccardo «mostruoso» (Cooke) o demoniaco (Kean), un Riccardo che i grandi scrittori e critici dell'epoca trovarono affine al Satana miltoniano e a Napoleone.

La seconda parte dello studio di Caputo, basata su una ricerca ben accurata e documentata, esplora i cambiamenti della ricezione della figura di Riccardo e, di conseguenza, della ricezione della tragedia e la loro connessione con gli studi romantici sul personaggio. Il cap. 4 («Eighteenth-Century Character Criticism») esamina il tentativo della critica di sminuire la lettura di Riccardo come personaggio malvagio per sottolinearne invece la natura trasgressiva e ribelle e per offrirne una più empatica, prima cercando motivazioni dietro alla sua *villainy* e poi sottolineandone le doti straordinarie. Il cap. 5 («The Romantic-Period Critics») mette in rilievo come, ai primi dell'Ottocento inizi l'associazione fra Riccardo e gli attori, visti come trasgressivi, dannati, immorali. La seconda parte si chiude con un capitolo («Two Unhappy Stage Adaptations») che esamina due adattamenti di *Richard III* nel 1820 e nel 1821, rispettivamente di Thomas Bridgman e William Charles Macready, che rappresentano «peculiars manifestations of the symbiosis of dramatic criticism and performance in this period» [p. 148].

La terza parte del volume è un eccellente studio di *Riccardo III* sulle scene dell'Ottocento, con un'enfasi particolare sulla poliedrica interpretazione del malvagio Riccardo da parte di Edmund Kean. Nel cap.7 («A Hybrid Richard») Caputo sottolinea quanto Riccardo sia un personaggio ibrido che «synthesizes elements pertaining to different domains and different traditions» [p. 156]. Questo ibridismo del Riccardo romantico deriva dal suo essere una creazione sia di Shakespeare che di Cibber. Il cap. 8 («The "Ogreish" Cooke») si focalizza sulla messinscena di George Frederick Cooke ed esplora il rapporto fra Cooke e il melodramma, una modalità che caratterizzava sia la tragedia di Shakespeare che, in modo maggiore, l'adattamento di Cibber. Nel cap. 9 («The "Harlequin" Kean») Kean viene connesso non solo al melodramma ma si esamina anche la componente pantomimica della sua recitazione, che divenne sempre più visibile nel corso degli anni. Il suo affidarsi al linguaggio non verbale, sottolinea Caputo, «was transgressive because it downplayed the centrality language had in legitimate drama» [p. 205].

Lo studio di Nicoletta Caputo, puntuale e meticoloso, getta una nuova luce da una parte, sulla ricezione nel periodo romantico di Riccardo III come personaggio malvagio, oggetto di un inesauribile fascino fra i romantici, ma spesso lontano dall'originale shakespeariano; dall'altra, sulla ricezione di Shakespeare filtrata e influenzata dalla critica del tempo incentrata sull'analisi del personaggio.

Fernando Cioni

Diego Saglia**,** *European Literatures in Britain, 1815-1832*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, 261 pp. ISBN 9781108426411.

Saglia's important study contributes to the burgeoning interest in the global aspects of British Romanticism and to urgent current debates in the discipline about how to decolonize the curriculum. It shows convincingly through selected case studies how Britain's interaction with Continental literatures during the Romantic era constituted «a complex, far from straightforward combination of processes of translation and appropriation» [p. xiii], and how intellectual relations with Europe «broadened the scope of literature and culture in Britain, while also complicating their identities by weaving national imperatives together with the lure of the foreign» [p. viii]. Saglia's focus on the late Romantic period (1815-1832) designates the post-Waterloo years as a distinctive time of intense and fertile conversation with the literatures and cultures of Continental Europe — and, ultimately, as a period which shaped profoundly and enduringly Britain's national literature and culture. Indeed, the end of the wars with France, and Britain's leading role on the international military and economic scene, impacted deeply literary production and the literary market alike, promoting a new ethos of reading and writing: cross-cultural, cosmopolitan, and diversified. In material terms, as Saglia argues in his lucid and informed introduction, this shift is ascertained by the rising numbers of imported French, Italian, Spanish, and German books; the public's growing interest in translated fiction; the launching of periodicals dedicated to reviewing untranslated works; and the expanding circulation of anthologies and collections of foreign works. Throughout the book, Saglia aptly places and reads these cultural trends against the current ideological milieus of the times, which saw Britain wrestling on the one hand with its internal divisions and debates and on the other with its foreign policy towards political developments in Europe.

Chapter 1 brings into focus the role of British periodicals in disseminating and conditioning knowledge about foreign literatures and cultures. Saglia illustrates through examples how literary magazines such as the upmarket, highly popular *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* treated Continental literatures as «battlegrounds» [p. 35] where conflicting views and ideological positions about national culture were openly debated, underpinning, in this way, the adversarial character of much periodical literature in the beginning of the nineteenth century. At the same time the chapter grants that despite their partialities, the two Great Reviews paved the way for literary internationalism and the greater inclusivity of post-1815 periodicals by discussing the innovative works of Madame de Staël's Coppet circle [p. 38], such as *De l'Allemagne* [p. 38], con-

necting, therefore, «British critical discourse with Continental debates» and advancing reflection on the place of Britain within European literature and culture [p. 39]. Diverging from the model of the Great Reviews, *Blackwood*'s interventions on foreign literatures, evinced mainly through the long-lived series of essays on German literature titled «Horae», ranged from a conservative interest in foreign traditions to «hostile and aggressive facets» [p. 54], raising questions about the periodical's ideological motivations. The chapter goes on to argue that in the 1820s this debate became more pronounced as the *New Monthly Magazine*, the *Foreign Quarterly* and other liberal periodicals invested widely in Continental traditions, and even rivalled each other in the marketplace, proving that by that time the literatures of other countries had infused British periodical publishing affecting the character of British culture en masse.

Chapter 2 turns to four anthologies of European poetry, and more specifically, John Bowring's *Specimens of the Russian Poets* (1820-21), John Gibson Lockhart's *Ancient Spanish Ballads* (1823), Charles Brinsley Sheridan's *The Songs of Greece* (1823) and Edgar Taylor and Sarah Austin's *The Lays of the Minnesingers, or German Troubadours of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (1825). Through expert and deliciously researched close readings of these works' texts and paratexts, Saglia shows how they served as «instruments for effecting discursive interventions in national and foreign culture and politics» [p. 76]. Of special interest is the discussion of Sheridan's *The Songs of Greece* (a translation of Claude Fauriel's *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne*) which, as Saglia contends, «unpicks Fauriel's scholarly construct and turns it into a literary weapon», making it «more suitable to his [Sheridan's] philhellenic priorities» [p. 100] as well as to his broader, ambitious vision about the «geopolitical and economic reconfiguration of Europe and the world» [p. 104].

With Chapter 3, the spotlight is moved to one of the key concepts of the book, translation. Saglia deftly assesses its dynamics as a cultural and political tool in the Napoleonic aftermath within the context of the famous cosmopolitan literary coterie at Holland House. By exploring the intriguing collaborative exchanges of Ugo Foscolo, Henry Brougham, and Lady Dacre over the construal of Italian poetry, the chapter illustrates how «translation emerges as an instrument to promote sympathetic connections among individuals, nations and cultures» [p. 141]. At the same time, it shows insightfully how specific translational modes and appropriations of the discourses of Italian authors «were keyed to […] party politics, foreign policies, diplomacy, and forced displacements such as exile» [p. 141].

Chapter 4 registers the centrality of drama and theatre in the current debate about the place of Continental traditions in post-Napoleonic British culture. According to Saglia, the influx of foreign plays and performing modes on the Romantic-period British stage was documented not only by the translations

of foreign plays, mainly French and German, but by the numerous adaptations and imitations of Continental sources [p. 157], all of which made the British stage «far from insular and self-referential» [p. 179], yet it also raised concerns and provoked «xenophobic reactions» [p. 158], mainly among conservative circles. But Saglia adds that «even though hostility to Continental drama was common in reviews and critical commentary, theatres staged and audiences applauded a growing number of foreign plays and foreign forms» [p. 158]. This discrepancy grew even bigger in the mid-1820s with the rise of the aesthetically suspicious and «controversially foreign» [p. 166] genre of melodrama, which intensified anxieties about the «integrity and originality of the national drama and theatre» [p. 170]. But like most foreign aesthetic forms, melodrama was gradually appropriated, naturalized and incorporated «into what constituted the theatre of the nation» [p. 170]. In this chapter, the detailed examination that emerges of the complicated state of the British stage in the early nineteenth century offers us illuminating insights into the ideological and political import of the theatre at the time.

The final chapter deals with «national/foreign poetic hybrids» and their engagement with «the political and historical transformations of the period» [p. 188], taking as examples selected works by the «internationally oriented poets» Robert Southey, Lord Byron, and Felicia Hemans [p. 189]. The close examination of the Spanish component of Southey's *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* (1814) corroborates the stimulating view of the latter as «a culturally hybrid text», an attempt of Southey's to «create a poem that, in some respects, reads as a portion of Spanish literature» [p. 193]. Saglia's analysis of the ways Byron intertwines Italian voices, poetic and popular, in his writings from and about Italy «to convey political commentary» on Italy, Europe and Britain [p. 201] is certainly thought-provoking, though not always consistently argued. The section on Felicia Hemans and her *National Lyrics* offers a refreshing reading of the poet's engagement with foreign sources, directing our attention once again to «the potential and the impasses of appropriation and translation, within a broader poetic context that was deeply and proudly national as well as in conversation with Continental voices» [p. 221]. Saglia foregoes a formal conclusion and rounds his book off with a coda on historical fiction, making a case for Walter Scott's *Waverley* and Charles Robert Maturin's *The Albigenses* as sites «for intersections and overlaps between the local, the international, and the transnational in the later Romantic period» [p. 236], a challenging thesis that offers scope for future research.

Saglia has produced an intellectually engaging study which enhances greatly our understanding of British Romanticism, duly revitalizing our idea of the exchanges and conversations between the Continental and British traditions in the post-Napoleonic era. The definite strength of *European Litera-*

tures in Britain, 1815-1832: Romantic Translations is that it covers an impressively wide range of important materials, concepts, and authors, and is bound to incite further research in areas of related interest.

Maria Schoina

Patrick Leech, *Cosmopolitanism, dissent, and translation. Translating radicals in eighteenth-century Britain and France*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2020, pp. 195, Isbn 8869234967

Il volume di Patrick Leech *Cosmopolitanism, dissent, and translation. Translating radicals in eighteenth-century Britain and France* è una rappresentazione ricca, articolata e dotta del contesto culturale «radicale», soprattutto inglese e francese, tra Sei e Settecento. In particolare, dopo una dettagliata introduzione [pp. 7-23], l'autore ricostruisce puntualmente il clima intellettuale nell'ambito del quale pensatori ugonotti come Jean Le Clerc e Pierre Coste, mediante un'attenta opera di traduzione e divulgazione di testi, contribuirono, tra le altre, alla diffusione delle idee di John Locke, di Isaac Newton e del pensiero deista inglese [pp. 25-58].

Inoltre, mutuando la nota interpretazione proposta da Jonathan Israel in *Una rivoluzione della mente. L'Illuminismo radicale e le origini intellettuali della democrazia moderna* (2009), poi ripresa in *La Rivoluzione francese. Una storia intellettuale dai Diritti dell'uomo a Robespierre* (2014) [pubblicato da Einaudi nel 2015], Leech si sofferma su alcuni esponenti di spicco dell'«Illuminismo radicale» francese, a cominciare dal Barone d'Holbach e dalla sua «coterie» di traduttori impegnati nella diffusione di opere di contenuto prevalentemente ateo e materialista [pp. 59-84].

Successivamente, la riflessione si sofferma su alcuni protagonisti della Rivoluzione francese, come Joel Barlow, Thomas Paine e Jean-Paul Marat [pp. 85-118]; sul circolo londinese di Joseph Johnson, impegnato anche sulle pagine della rivista mensile *Analytical Review* [pp. 119-142]; e infine su alcuni «radicali» inglesi attivi tra Parigi e Londra, negli anni che Mark Philp ha definito «all'ombra della Rivoluzione in Francia» [pp. 143-158]. Seguendo ancora la chiave di lettura di Israel, «la causa predominante che impresse la spinta repubblicana democratica» alla Rivoluzione francese fu proprio la diffusione delle idee dell'«Illuminismo radicale», «questo il fattore che deve essere collocato al centro dell'attenzione» [Israel 2015, p. 776].

In tal senso, fu l'ampia circolazione delle idee e degli scritti a rendere la Rivoluzione francese «qualitativamente differente da tutte le precedenti rivoluzioni conosciute» [Israel 2015, p. 777]. La ragione della sua peculiarità, infatti, «discende dalla speciale connessione tra la Rivoluzione e l'Illuminismo, in modo particolare l'ala laicizzante, democratica e repubblicana dell'Illuminismo. Fu particolarmente fondativa in quanto confluì in tutte le rivoluzioni posteriori in Europa, America latina e Asia, fissando da un lato i contorni e i dilemmi del repubblicanesimo moderno, della monarchia costituzionale e della democrazia, e dall'altro mettendo in uso i principi sociali e costituzionali che definivano il mondo politico moderno. È stata l'unica rivoluzione democratica fino ad oggi che abbia concepito la democrazia come la ricerca del benessere della maggioranza, che affida al governo il dovere di promuovere il benessere comune della società e lottare contro l'ineguaglianza» [*ibidem*].

In questi termini, portando a pieno sviluppo una ricerca che Leech aveva avviato già nel 2017, curando proprio un fascicolo monografico de *La questione Romantica* dal titolo *Translation and Revolution* (2017), la riflessione proposta nel volume completa le intuizioni di Israel, argomentando che l'attività di selezione, traduzione e disseminazione di scritti di carattere «radicale» ebbe un significato politico esso stesso altrettanto «radicale», favorendo la circolazione di un pensiero sovversivo, dissidente e ostile alle ortodossie dell'Antico Regime, il quale riuscì, al contempo, a generare e diffondere un senso di appartenenza «cosmopolita», al di là dei confini nazionali.

Particolarmente dinamico e vivace fu lo scambio tra i due paesi separati dalla Manica, grazie a una contaminazione linguistica e ideologica reciproca e particolarmente feconda, nella quale l'attività di traduzione fu tutt'altro che marginale bensì «centrale per la produzione intellettuale e la missione politica» dei traduttori [p. 160]. In effetti, questi ultimi furono spesso dei personaggi di frontiera, «*out of place*», creature «anfibie» [p. 12], la cui intera esistenza seppe talvolta testimoniare e praticare gli ideali di cui si professavano seguaci – si pensi, tra i tanti esempi citati nel volume, a Mary Wollstonecraft [1759-1797], traduttrice, *reporter*, scrittrice, filosofa, oggi nota per un'opera considerata un caposaldo della letteratura femminista (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792).

L'indagine ha molti meriti, tra cui quello di portare a emersione una grande quantità di informazioni che, osservate congiuntamente, forniscono, come tessere di un mosaico, una panoramica puntuale, articolata e plurale. L'esperienza della traduzione nella quale furono impegnati molti intellettuali a cavallo tra Sei e Settecento appare, infine, come un esercizio di apertura e scambio interculturale, e ciò solleva molti interrogativi, ancora validi per il nostro tempo. Qual è il confine tra appropriazione culturale e disseminazione di un testo tradotto? Esiste un rapporto «proprietario» tra un autore e i suoi scritti? Quanto

«aperti» dovrebbero essere, in particolare, gli spazi dedicati alla pubblicazione delle idee scientifiche e accademiche? E, ancor più ampiamente, a che punto dobbiamo porre un limite alla libertà di espressione e a quella di ricerca? Si tratta di interrogativi tutt'ora aperti, ma ai quali i radicali del Settecento seppero dare profonde e inedite risposte.

Serena Vantin

Friedrich August Schulze, *Fidanzate alla prova*, traduzione, introduzione e note a cura di Aldo Setaioli, Marietti Editore, Bologna 2021, pp. 160, Isbn 978-8821113451

Con *Fidanzate alla prova* Aldo Setaioli porta a conoscenza del pubblico italiano un autore dell'era goethiana oggi pressoché dimenticato: Friedrich August Schulze (1770-1849), prolifico esponente della *Trivialliteratur* di lingua tedesca. Servendosi di diversi pseudonimi, Schulze ha firmato quella che è stata definita da Setaioli come una «sterminata produzione letteraria» [p. 5], che ha permesso all'autore di sperimentare quasi tutti i generi letterari in voga al suo tempo. Basti pensare, per esempio, all'antologia di racconti dell'orrore *Das Gespensterbuch* (*Il libro dei fantasmi*), che lo impegnò come autore e curatore dal 1810 al 1818 e che lo portò a collaborare con personalità come August Apel e Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué.

Al di là dell'aderenza al diffuso gusto gotico dell'epoca, a caratterizzare la poliedrica figura di Schulze è, soprattutto, la sua propensione per la narrativa d'intrattenimento, incentrata sulle vicende della borghesia del tempo. Fra le sue opere che rientrano in quest'ultimo genere, spicca proprio il romanzo del 1819 intitolato *Brautproben*, pubblicato per la prima volta in italiano per i tipi di Marietti Editore con la curatela di Aldo Setaioli. Nella chiara introduzione che precede il testo, Setaioli presenta, seppur brevemente, la vita e l'opera di Schulze e procede poi con un esaustivo commento all'opera da lui tradotta. Il paratesto è arricchito anche da alcune note, che spiegano le allusioni dell'autore al contesto sociopolitico e chiariscono alcuni richiami letterari. Il legame di Schulze con altri intellettuali del suo tempo, del resto, è ben evidenziato anche nell'introduzione, dove Setaioli sottolinea come Schulze si relazionasse molto con pilastri del Romanticismo tedesco, quali Jean Paul, Friedrich Schlegel e Ludwig Tieck.

Le citazioni intertestuali presenti nell'opera sono spesso funzionali alla narrazione o a delineare il carattere misogino del protagonista. Ne è un esempio la citazione goethiana che il protagonista declama per descrivere una donna,

la cui vena poetica non è di certo ritenuta un vanto: «L'entusiasmo poetico, dice Goethe, non è un'arringa che si può tener sotto sale per anni. Chi avrebbe dovuto soccombere: la sua ispirazione o il mio palato e il mio stomaco?» [p. 55].

Fidanzate alla prova è, dunque, un'opera appartenente a quella letteratura di consumo che di fatto si sviluppa in parallelo al Classicismo di Weimar e al Romanticismo. In questo romanzo a tappe, sebbene non un vero e proprio *Bildungsroman*, si riscontrano intrecci ricorrenti sia nel teatro sia nella prosa dell'epoca, che ruotano attorno a matrimoni combinati, speculazioni finanziarie e accaparramento dell'eredità; intrecci che rispecchiano, insomma, la quotidianità di una borghesia alle prese con l'annosa lotta per la propria conservazione. L'ossessione per la sicurezza economica e familiare, che avrebbe poi pervaso lo spirito del Realismo della successiva epoca *Biedermeier*, è qui rappresentata attraverso le vicende del protagonista Max: uno scapolo di 39 anni, il quale, a detta del padre, non ha più l'età per esserlo e rischia di essere diseredato se non assolverà per tempo all'obbligo di sposarsi.

La narrazione sembra quasi richiamare lo schema dei romanzi d'appendice, poiché viene sviluppata attraverso una minuziosa suddivisione episodica. Vi sono, infatti, macrocapitoli definiti «Prove» e ulteriori sotto-capitoli, i cui titoli anticipano il contenuto o preannunciano i nomi delle tante fanciulle che concorrono, molte delle quali inconsapevolmente, per il ruolo di futura sposa.

I motivi che da sempre rendono personaggi di estrazione borghese dei soggetti letterari e che, peraltro, ricordano talvolta le vicende biografiche dello stesso Schulze, si snodano, in *Fidanzate alla prova*, attraverso una prosa leggera, ricca di elementi di comicità e animata da dialoghi quasi teatrali. La focalizzazione interna si rivela di grande ausilio per il coinvolgimento del lettore, al quale è noto solo ciò che il protagonista percepisce e le idee che Max esprime durante i suoi incontri con le figure femminili: «La mia ammirazione non ebbe un attimo di sosta durante tutto il pranzo, tanto si mise in luce la classe di Bertha. Non c'era traccia di macchie di inchiostro o di altro, e di penne ce n'erano solo sul suo cappello di paglia e non tra i suoi capelli» [p. 58].

La narrazione in prima persona e l'esternazione delle reazioni emotive del personaggio di Max proiettano l'attenzione sulla sfera privata del protagonista e sul suo modo di rapportarsi alle donne. Ciò nonostante, non mancano qua e là riferimenti scherzosi al contesto storico-politico dell'epoca, come dimostrano le irriverenti allusioni alla liberazione della Germania dall'egemonia napoleonica, rese attraverso la derisione dei prestiti francofoni. Setaioli traduce tali passi in maniera congeniale alla lingua d'arrivo, mantenendo in italiano lo stesso tono sbeffeggiante che si avverte nel tedesco: «Siamo finalmente tornati tedeschi e la parola *naiveté* va tradotta ormai con "affettazione"» [p. 49].

Nonostante i rimandi al contesto politico che Schulze inserisce in questo romanzo restino sempre sul piano dello scherzo, *Fidanzate alla prova* può

comunque rivelare elementi di interesse sociologico, riscontrabili nel ritratto delle gerarchie sociali e nella rappresentazione di alcune consuetudini, come ad esempio il matrimonio e l'attribuzione dell'eredità. Ma allo stesso tempo, Schulze illustra anche il bisogno di rottura di quelle consuetudini. Nel rifiuto della vita coniugale, che Max definisce come quel noioso schema di chi «ha vissuto, ha preso moglie e poi è morto» [p. 18], si ravvisa proprio la sua spinta all'evasione, che egli concretizza nel suo *grand tour* europeo. Anche quando si vede costretto ad accettare di dover condividere il resto della sua vita con una donna per assicurarsi il patrimonio, Max trova sempre un qualche *escamotage* per scampare a tale destino e inizia, per esempio, a scartare le papabili spose dalla corposa lista che gli era stata proposta – quasi a ricordare il lungo catalogo del Leporello mozartiano – adducendo scuse che si fanno sempre più assurde: «Per non darmi troppa pena scartai non solo tutti i soggetti contrassegnati nel catalogo come in qualche modo menomati, ma anche quelli che potevano vantare un unico elemento positivo […]» [p. 24].

Nel momento in cui iniziano gli incontri tra Max e le fanciulle «in prova», colpisce, in particolar modo, la percezione maschile delle figure femminili: «Le donne, Dio sia ringraziato, le ho conosciute tanto da vicino da rinunciare a una conoscenza più stretta, perché non potrei acquistarla che a prezzo della felicità di tutta la mia vita» [p. 17] dice, infatti, il protagonista ricordando i suoi viaggi e alludendo al suo rapporto con l'altro sesso. Max finisce per trovare difetti in ognuna delle «candidate» e li esterna con tono paternalistico e malcelata misoginia: «La sua figura era descritta come slanciata, il suo volto come oltremodo aggraziato, i suoi modi come oltremodo esemplari. Un solo dettaglio mi andava poco a genio: era una poetessa» [p. 55]. Non a caso, egli non riesce a tollerare nemmeno il minimo accenno di esuberanza nelle donne che incontra, né la loro vena artistica. Alcuni comportamenti sono ritenuti disdicevoli per una futura regina del focolare domestico e diventano oggetto di critiche da parte di uno scapolo incontentabile: «Mi preoccupavo che la sua ispirazione poetica potesse nuocere al mio benessere. Se le fosse venuta proprio a mezzogiorno o la sera, vale a dire in un momento in cui il mio interesse era rivolto al cibo?» [*Ibidem*].

Questo atteggiamento, definito con sarcasmo dal padre di Max come «caparbietà che lo priva di discendenza» [p. 18], non può evidentemente guidarlo nella scelta di una moglie, motivo per cui viene egli viene «aiutato» nell'impresa non solo dal padre stesso, ma anche da Niklas, un attendente attempato, che Schulze presenta come figura a metà tra un confidente e un sensale. È proprio lui, non a caso, che descrive meglio di tutti il bisbetico carattere di Max, con una calzante immagine presa in prestito dalla medicina: «Sì perché Lei si accosta col coltello chirurgico alle più squisite femminilità per anatomizzarle. Poi osserva con un mostruoso telescopio ogni singola parte selezionata» [p. 125].

Immagini simili, così come eufemismi, perifrasi e allegorie per definire i comportamenti di Max, e anche quelli più eccentrici delle ragazze, sono elementi stilistici ricorrenti nel romanzo, che ne rafforzano anche la vena comica, perfettamente percepibile nella traduzione italiana grazie alle accurate scelte di Aldo Setaioli. I taglienti giudizi di Max sulle donne, per esempio, che dovevano suonare esilaranti all'epoca, sebbene oggi colpiscano per l'oggettivazione della figura femminile, conservano nella lingua d'arrivo l'effetto dell'originale: «Chi nel mondo reale trova una donna che sa limitare la propria eloquenza alle due parole essenziali e veramente femminili di tutta la lingua, sì e no, quello ha trovato la pietra filosofale nel matrimonio» [p. 34].

Quasi come posto davanti al susseguirsi di scene teatrali ricche di battute irriverenti, il lettore di *Fidanzate alla prova* ha dunque modo di scorrere un ricco catalogo di pretendenti, con tutte le loro «stranezze» [p. 36], e di accompagnare Max passo dopo passo negli incontri più disparati. È così che si assiste al succedersi delle citate tappe che, pur non portando il protagonista al raggiungimento di una autentica *Bildung,* ossia di una formazione*,* lo conducono a tornare di continuo sui suoi passi e, in alcuni casi, a ravvedersi. Come gli ricorda, non a caso, il fedele aiutante Niklas, una sorta di Sganarello che cerca di rettificarlo moralmente con vari rimproveri, è lui stesso che si ostacola nella ricerca di una moglie: «Le ho detto che avrebbe trovato in sé stesso le maggiori difficoltà per le sue intenzioni matrimoniali?» [p. 125].

A dar senso alle tante «prove» evocate dal titolo sarà, però, un finale piuttosto inatteso, che serve soprattutto a dimostrare come la sequela di assurde «sentenze di condanna» verso le donne, che leggiamo in queste pagine, altra origine non trovino se non nell'«eccessiva schifiltosità» dello scapolo Max [p. 122-123]. Rendendo note anche al pubblico italiano queste esilaranti vicende di matrimoni e eredità narrate da Schulze, Aldo Setaioli trae così un nuovo autore fuori dal dimenticatoio.

Federica Rocchi

Annamaria Loche, *La liberté ou la mort. Il progetto politico e giuridico di Olympe de Gouges*, postfazione di Thomas Casadei, Modena, Mucchi Editore, 2021, pp. 153, Isbn 8870008800

Un dialogo su Olympe de Gouges. Donne, schiavitù, cittadinanza, a cura di Thomas Casadei e Lorenzo Milazzo, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2021, pp. 231, Isbn 978-884676284-9

La dichiarazione sovversiva. Olympe de Gouges e noi, a cura di Vittorina Maestroni e Thomas Casadei, con una graphic novel di Claudia Leonardi, Modena, Mucchi Editore, 2022, pp. 116, Isbn 9788870009217

Esistono personalità letterarie che riemergono dopo un periodo più o meno lungo di latenza moltiplicando il potere fascinatorio; in questo senso, la parabola esistenziale di Olympe de Gouges, derisa, inascoltata, condannata a morte, dimenticata e infine clamorosamente riscoperta, resta esemplare della sopraffazione compiuta sull'opera di una donna da parte del potere egemone. Autrice, ma non solo, della *Déclaration des Droits de la Femme et de la Citoyenne* (1792), essa salì al patibolo pochi giorni dopo Maria Antonietta precedendo di poco Mme Roland, altra figura di spicco dell'ala girondina tacitata nel sangue; e a Robespierre, che volle la sua condanna, un anno prima di morire l'indomita de Gouges si rivolse così: «Della Rivoluzione tu non sei stato e non sarai altro che l'abominio, l'esecrazione; ad ogni tuo capello è attaccato un crimine». Consapevole delle conseguenze delle sue parole – «Io ho previsto tutto e so che la mia morte è inevitabile», scriveva di sé –, dal 1788 al 1793, anno della sua morte, la scrittrice accompagnò con l'alterità della sua voce gli eventi della Rivoluzione, contrapponendosi alle scelte del re prima, e dell'Assemblea Nazionale poi, suscettibili ai suoi occhi di ampliamenti, revisioni e correzioni in favore di quella vasta parte della società che il potere tacitava: le donne, certo, escluse dalla *Déclaration des droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* (1789), ma anche gli indigenti, gli anziani, i figli illegittimi, le giovani costrette in convento e non ultimi gli schiavi neri nelle colonie, cui de Gouges dedicò una *pièce* teatrale che gli intrighi del partito dei coloni fecero fallire fin dalla prima rappresentazione. «Vedo tradimenti di ogni genere, li smaschero: non vengo creduta. Offro ogni sorta di progetti utili: vengono accolti; ma sono donna, e non se ne tiene conto», scriveva.

Una tenace volontà d'esclusione soppresse la sua voce anche nel secolo seguente – un medico la definì perfino affetta da isteria rivoluzionaria – e solo nel secondo Novecento, con le prime ondate femministe e i pionieristici lavori di Fraisse, Varikas, Groult e Blanc a lei dedicati, ebbe inizio in Francia la rivalutazione dell'opera complessiva; negli ultimi anni in particolare accanto al moltiplicarsi delle letture critiche, ad affascinare è la vicenda umana di questa bella donna giunta a Parigi dal Midi della Francia e che nel maggio 1792 esortava le sue concittadine all'autodeterminazione in questi termini: «Non sarebbe ora che si facesse anche tra noi una rivoluzione? Le donne saranno sempre isolate le une dalle altre e non faranno mai corpo con la società?». Nella lotta tuttora in corso per «far corpo» con la società, il ricordo della testa mozzata di Olympe de Gouges continua ad agire per identificazione sull'immaginario di altre donne diversamente amputate: lo testimoniano gli innumerevoli siti femministi o al femminile, in cui la sua figura di combattente e vittima occupa il centro della scena, spesso sostituendosi con una non comune carica simbolica alla densità propositiva dei suoi scritti, oggetto, questi ultimi, dei tre volumi di cui ora ci occuperemo.

Strettamente connessi l'uno all'altro, i tre testi s'inseriscono in un percorso interpretativo in gran parte inedito: affiancati dai contributi di uno stuolo di studiosi di cui qui dispiace non poter dar conto singolarmente, Thomas Casadei e Lorenzo Milazzo, docenti di Filosofia del diritto, conducono da qualche anno un appassionato riesame in chiave politico-giuridica dei testi di de Gouges. A coadiuvarli è Annamaria Loche, docente di Filosofia politica, che nel suo *La liberté ou la mort* offre una rilettura giusfilosofica del teatro degougiano e della *Déclaration des Droits de la Femme et de la Citoyenne* (1792). Di tale testo Loche difende in primo luogo la coerenza argomentativa, ravvisabile nell'art. II, relativo alla conservazione dei diritti umani naturali e imprescindibili: ripreso quasi alla lettera dalla *Déclaration* al maschile del 1792, l'inserzione da parte dell'autrice di un semplice avverbio – «[tali diritti naturali] sono la libertà, la proprietà, la sicurezza e *soprattutto* la resistenza all'oppressione» – è sufficiente a decostruire il testo del 1792, orientandone il senso verso la «maggiore e diversa oppressione cui è sottoposta la donna in società» [p. 54]. Da tale testo de Gouges si allontana ancora più esplicitamente all'art. IV: denunciando la mancata applicazione dei diritti naturali della donna, da sempre preclusi per la «perpetua tirannia che l'uomo le oppone», alla parola «libertà» essa associa quella di «giustizia», un binomio irrinunciabile per un'idea di società radicalmente riformata, capace di destinare alle donne gli strumenti specifici, relativi ai beni materiali, alla libertà di parola, alla partecipazione alla vita pubblica e a una sostanziale revisione della gestione sociale della maternità, su cui sperimentare per la prima volta un'idea di *uguaglianza* basata sulla differenza di genere.

Autodidatta, rousseauiana, seguace delle idee illuministe, de Gouges rifiuta ogni forma di pensiero inutilmente astratto: la realtà convulsa degli anni rivoluzionari la spinge a attualizzare le istanze sociali attraverso la vibrante sonorità dei suoi *pamphlets*, cui essa affianca il mezzo teatrale, che muta nelle sue mani in una tribuna a più voci in cui dar corso a un vasto progetto umanitario e riformista. Si pensi in particolare a *L'esclavage des noirs ou l'heureux naufrage*, una *pièce* all'epoca erroneamente censurata dal potere: infatti, più che un appello abolizionista, essa riflette la posizione sostanzialmente attendista dell'autrice nei confronti di un'idea di libertà che, più che un diritto, è una conquista da attuare attraverso meditate negoziazioni; e questo, malgrado la ripresa ossessiva e incalzante, nella *pièce*, della parola *liberté,* grazie alla quale, pur collocandosi tra i moderati come già Rousseau e Condorcet, l'autrice perviene a far risuonare nelle coscienze l'orrore della schiavitù, in nome di un universalismo inclusivo da contrapporre ai carenti diritti su cui poggia il giusnaturalismo rivoluzionario.

Nel secondo testo in oggetto – *Un dialogo su Olympe de Gouges* – l'apparente contraddizione, segnalata da più critici, che situerebbe ambiguamente de Gouges tra radicalismo e moderatismo nonviolento, viene sciolta alla luce

del pensiero illuminista e rousseauiano, in cui i due fronti già convivevano sovrapponendosi creativamente: ciò permette, in ultima istanza, di collocare de Gouges in «una moderata posizione dal punto di vista politico, e [in] una tensione radicale su quello sociale» [p. 45]. Del resto, come non cogliere – ancora nella sua *Déclaration* – il significato dirompente racchiuso nell'affermazione: «la Costituzione è nulla se la maggioranza degli individui non ha cooperato alla sua redazione» [art. XVI], che altro non è se non una rivendicazione del diritto delle donne al voto in quanto cittadine attive. Il coraggio di de Gouges, ovvero la sua «audacia» nel disegnare una nuova idea di cittadinanza inclusiva e nel riconsiderare radicalmente le relazioni giuridiche tra uomini e donne, sono tra gli elementi innovatori che, seguendo Casadei, fanno di questa scrittrice uno dei «classici» del pensiero politico e giuridico dell'oggi. Di fatto, con la sua *Déclaration* essa scardina la fortezza in cui gli estensori del testo al maschile del 1782 elaboravano provvedimenti e riforme ad uso esclusivo del «Citoyen»; all'incompletezza di tale testo, essa oppone l'idea realmente rivoluzionaria di un soggetto duale, uomo e donna: ciò che conduce «il principio di *eguaglianza* a commisurarsi con le differenze, [in nome di] una pluralità di soggetti che dai margini sono posti al centro dello spazio aperto della cittadinanza» [pp. 52-53].

Poco importa se il suo sguardo pecca talvolta d'idealismo o forse perfino di provvidenzialismo – e la minuziosa disamina dell'esplosiva situazione haitiana compiuta da Milazzo toglie non poco al valore testimoniale dell'*Esclavage des noirs*; resta che quella *pièce* inaugura, come osserva Orzù, un'idea più che attuale nell'oggi: quella di un universalismo delle differenze, inteso come processo dinamico in cui «l'eguaglianza non è una premessa, ma un fine» [p. 98].

Non che de Gouges si illudesse che la sua veemente difesa dei diritti della donna, «naturali, inalienabile e sacri», per riprendere le sue parole, potesse portare a un effettivo cambiamento in tempi brevi. Con un percorso ancor più accidentato rispetto a quello di Mary Wollstonecraft, fautrice, come ben documenta Vantin [pp. 151-165], di un contesto politico costituzionalmente garantito e di una ridefinizione degli strumenti giuridici da intraprendere gradualmente, quando la nostra autrice si dichiara «consapevole di non avere che paradossi da offrire e non problemi facili da risolvere», certo non sospetta di stare inoltrandosi in un dilemma femminista ad ampio raggio e ancor oggi irrisolto: quello che, come ricorda Persano, porta la donna ad affermare e insieme rifiutare la differenza sessuale [p. 183]. Resta che l'aspirazione di de Gouges a una soggettività sostanzialmente «altra», in cui lei per prima si colloca quando spavaldamente definisce se stessa «un monstre», «un animal sans pareil», «ni homme ni femme», si direbbe anticipare il dibattito in corso da anni sull'identità e sul soggetto «altro», verso il quale, osserva Giolo [p. 194], la letteratura giuridica guarda ancora con sospetto e circospezione.

Infine, nel godibilissimo terzo volume intitolato *La dichiarazione sovversiva* e aperto dal toccante *graphic novel* di Leonardi ispirato alla vita della scrittrice, una selezione di parole-chiave tratta dalla sua *Déclaration* – Uguaglianza e Differenza, Libertà, Giustizia, Teatro, Parola, Suffragio, Cittadinanza, Lavoro, Schiavitù e Oppressione, Rivoluzione – offre lo spunto per una stimolante rilettura a più voci, focalizzata sulle carenze, le modificazioni, gli interrogativi dell'oggi. Dal proprio osservatorio rivoluzionario, lontano nel tempo eppure ancora attuale, de Gouges anima il dibattito, sollecita l'autocoscienza, insegna alle donne a trasgredire. Non solo: anticipa la «caring democracy» delle femministe americane e il contratto matrimoniale paritario, perora la causa di una democrazia non più incompiuta, di una cittadinanza plurale e di una giusta ridistribuzione e retribuzione del lavoro, come se questa tenace riformatrice, sempre sospesa tra visionarietà e senso pratico, fosse indefinitamente disponibile a riprogrammarsi in un altro tempo – il nostro –, in vista della sospirata messa in atto delle sue legittime istanze.

F. Zanelli Quarantini

Franco Marucci, *George Eliot's* «*The Lifted Veil*»*: A Sequential and Contextual Reading*, Abingdon, Routledge, pp. 246 pp., ISBN 9781032183602.

Franco Marucci's study provides invaluable and much-needed insights into George Eliot's mysterious tale about a talentless poet, Latimer, who develops the clairvoyant ability to see the future. Because of its seemingly impenetrable formal and thematic features, this (long) short story, first published anonymously in *Blackwood's Magazine* in July 1859, might be easily considered one of the most enigmatic texts of nineteenth-century British literature, and one that certainly deserves more scholarly attention and recognition than it has received to date. In this respect, Marucci's book, the first in any language to have been entirely devoted to «The Lifted Veil», crucially contributes to the process of positive re-evaluation of a text that, apart from a few exceptions, has surprisingly attracted little attention from Eliot's biographers and critics (although there are numerous recent specialized essays devoted to it). As a matter of fact, the story underwent a century or so of critical neglect in which it was regarded not only as a fairly mediocre piece of fiction but also a foreign body in Eliot's production, before being rediscovered and reassessed as an essential part of the Eliotian canon since the late 1960s. Marucci, however, complicates this now widely shared interpretation by taking up again

the idea of considering «The Lifted Veil» as an anomaly, but an anomaly that proves the rule, i.e. that confirms the inherent nature of Eliot's *oeuvre* as a «compact macrotext where themes, motifs, patterns, and cultural and personal archetypes recur with variations» [p. 7]. The author here appropriates Eliot's own famous Darwinian metaphor of the web, which she employed especially in *Middlemarch* in order to illustrate the intricacy of the novel's multiple plots and the complex network of relationships between its characters, and uses it to describe the whole of her literary production, of which «The Lifted Veil» is intriguingly seen as the undisputed mainstay.

Marucci presents his critical investigation as «sequential» and «contextual»: «sequential» because he explores the story's characters, themes, issues, settings, and events in the same order as they are introduced by the omniscient (yet unreliable) first-person narrative voice of the tormented Latimer; «contextual» because, on the one hand, he examines the story in the context of Eliot's *ouevre*, and, on the other, he puts emphasis on its relationship with other works of Victorian mid-century poetry and fiction. This twofold approach allows for a thoroughly meticulous analysis of the text in all its aspects which has the merit of highlighting new research paths and previously unexplored aspects.

Chapter 1 gives a rich account of the genesis of «The Lifted Veil» starting from the assumption that Latimer is to be considered an alter ego of George Eliot, though one filtered through a «powerfully deforming lens» [p. 10]. While examining masked clues and red herrings laid down by the author, Marucci suggests and provides convincing evidence that the original idea for «The Lifted Veil» can be traced back to well before 1859, when it was written and published, since several recognizable elements of the plot had been clearly foreshadowed in various essays and reviews Eliot wrote during the late 1840s and 1850s, when she was subject to extreme oscillations of mood that might have influenced her conception of Latimer's precarious emotional and mental state. Moreover, it is in this period that Eliot travelled extensively in Germany and acted as reviewer and assistant editor for the *Westminster Review*, inevitably coming into direct contact with a huge body of literature, both past and present, from which she seems to have borrowed more than is commonly acknowledged. In particular, while addressing Eliot's significant literary debt to Nathaniel Hawthorne, Marucci points to the «extraordinary shaping power of Hawthorne's "mesmeric" stories "of the veil"» [p. 21], a meaningful symbolic image which, as he illustrates more extensively in the following chapter, has numerous literary antecedents (including Dickens and Tennyson). Moreover, shedding new light on the American author's often overlooked influence on Eliot also means bringing out unexpected links between her own works: the motif of the veil, along with those of premonition,

clairvoyance and others, also appears in novels such as *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*, in which several aspects of «The Lifted Veil» are echoed, further developed, or even utterly reversed, thus cementing the tale's pivotal position within Eliot's canon.

Chapter 2, by far the longest, opens with an analysis that takes its cue from Genettian terminology in order to examine «The Lifted Veil»'s paratextual elements, focusing in particular on the meanings and implications of its title and epigraph, which have somewhat opposite purposes: while the former alludes to the eventual outcome of the story, the latter, added in a 1878 reprint of the text (this is also the version attached at the end as appendix to the book), subverts the overt plot development, informing readers that «the content of the story should be taken as a Dantesque counter-demonstration, and its true meaning inverted with respect to the manifest message of the text» [p. 51].

Marucci then moves on to the text itself and its protagonist/narrator, whose superior narrative skills mimic Eliot's own, reinforcing the connection between the two. Names, times, places and any other detail that might reveal something more about the story and her author is painstakingly scrutinized, from the protagonist's name, fascinatingly linked to Darsie Latimer, the main character of Walter Scott's novel *Redgauntlet* (1824), to the choice of Geneva as one of the plot's settings, a city with clear literary (the parallels between «The Lifted Veil» and *Frankenstein* would arguably deserve a book in their own right) and, most notably, religious resonances. In this respect, Marucci laments critics' surprising lack of interest in exploring the story's strong religious subtext, so far inexplicably ignored despite being rather obvious from the epigraph itself as well as from key scenes such as Latimer's prevision of Prague. In one of the book's most compelling passages, Marucci reads Latimer as a «Christ-like figure whose life parallels and camouflages, under a deforming lens and with ingenious variations and updatings, the narrative of the Gospels» [p. 108]. This places «The Lifted Veil» within a peculiar subgenre of Victorian poetry and fiction dealing with what critic J. Hillis Miller famously called the «disappearance of God», with Latimer being involved in an ongoing search for religious faith, and ultimately, for the meaning of life. His prophetic vision of Prague is therefore interpreted as a possible Jewish epiphany, considering the «messianic vocation of the city» [p. 119], which Eliot seems to recognize, not only because of her apparent acquaintance with Jewish thought and, most notably, with the doctrines of the Jewish Kabbalistic mystical movement, but also because, as Marucci ventures to suggest, of her alleged discovery of her own Jewish extraction (although the question remains completely open). This interpretation would create a beguiling parallelism between Latimer's and Eliot's own spiritual

search for personal identity and an anticipation of the themes of her final novel, *Daniel Deronda*.

Continuing with the sequential approach, Chapter 3 discusses the second half of «The Lifted Veil», with an initial focus on the polarity between Latimer's visionary imagination and the pragmatic, down-to-earth personalities of his father and brother. The sensitive Latimer, a modern Tasso enamoured of poetry and unable to fit into normal human society, is forced to pursue a scientific education in keeping with a mid-Victorian cultural mood in which the humanities were gradually losing their primacy in favour of natural sciences, a «complete reversal of accepted values» [p. 136] that Eliot, aligning herself with other writers of the time, subtly criticizes. Marucci then investigates further themes and motifs that Eliot seems to have appropriated from a wide range of literary and non-literary sources: this is certainly the case with the topic of mesmerism, a pseudoscience that straddled the line between science and religion by encompassing everything from electromagnetism to Spiritualism, which clearly pervades «The Lifted Veil», here described as a mesmeric tale following in the footsteps of literary precursors such as E.T.A Hoffmann, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton as well as popular phrenological and mesmeric writings of the day. The gory blood transfusion scene which concludes the story is inscribed to the tradition of nineteenth-century fictionalizations of mesmeric and pseudo-scientific practices as well, owing especially to the weird tales of Edgar Allan Poe and their exploration of the mysterious region between life and death. As Marucci shows, Eliot was fully exposed to the influence of this nocturnal world but maintained a certain distance from it, «zigzagging between approval and skepticism, and masking her final opinions» [p. 138].

The fourth and last chapter deals with the aftermath of «The Lifted Veil», that is the «emotional, religious and aesthetic reverberations» [p. 169] of the tale filtered through Eliot's correspondence and subsequent novels. This kind of analysis is especially encouraged by the fact that Eliot herself, as demonstrated by her belated epigraph, allows for a retrospective re-interpretation of her works, each one being further illuminated by those which followed it. *Middlemarch* is therefore daringly defined as a «colossal elaboration» [p. 181] in «The Lifted Veil»'s epigraph, while *Daniel Deronda* is regarded as the second part of a diptych in which the titular protagonist continues and expands on the theme of Latimer's search for a spiritual and racial identity, functioning as an *ex post* explanation/clarification of the hidden suggestions and meanings lying under the surface of «The Lifted Veil».

As a whole, *George Eliot's «The Lifted Veil»: A Sequential and Contextual Reading* is an extremely comprehensive if somewhat dense book that provides a better understanding of Eliot's literary art, offering the first fresh

and long overdue insightful and thoughtful analysis of one of her most important works. The book's twofold approach, combined with an impressive attention to detail, helps bring all the themes and issues evoked by «The Lifted Veil» together, and analyze the way they interact with each other against the background of the cultural context of the story's production. With his characteristic scrupulous care, Marucci thus addresses an important lacuna in George Eliot studies, filling many critical gaps and paving the way for future research on the Victorian author's multifaceted literary world.

Fabio Bazzano

Mary Shelley, *Valperga. Vita e avventure di Castruccio, principe di Lucca*, a cura di Lilla Maria Crisafulli e Keir Elam, Milano, Mondadori, 2021, pp. LXXXV-609, Isbn 9788804740995

Sono trascorsi esattamente duecento anni dalla pubblicazione del romanzo *Valperga; or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca* di Mary Shelley (1797-1851) e questa nuova edizione in italiano offre l'occasione per avvicinarsi al testo e coglierne alcuni aspetti di sicuro interesse.

Il romanzo viene dato alle stampe per la prima volta, a Londra, nel febbraio del 1823 per i tipi di G. e W.B. Whittaker e non verrà più ristampato mentre la scrittrice è in vita. Nonostante al momento della sua uscita esso sia fatto oggetto, anche da parte delle riviste letterarie, di una certa attenzione, *Valperga* verrà ben presto dimenticato. La ragione può essere rinvenuta nell'«eccessivo "femminismo"», nell'enfasi su pensieri e sentimenti «insieme moderni e femminili» [p. XXXIV] che trapelano dalla narrazione.

Valperga è stato tradotto in italiano in anni recenti: risale, infatti, al 2007 la prima edizione curata da Lilla Maria Crisafulli e da Keir Elam pubblicata da Mondadori nella collana degli «Oscar». Questa nuova edizione è stata data alle stampe a seguito «delle straordinarie manifestazioni culturali sorte in tutto il mondo – e, in particolare, in Italia – intorno al capolavoro della Shelley, *Frankenstein*, in occasione del bicentenario della prima edizione nel 2018», manifestazioni che hanno rinnovato «il desiderio di leggere anche le altre opere narrative della grande autrice britannica» [p. V].

L'autrice del romanzo, come è noto, è figlia dello scrittore e filosofo di ispirazione anarchica William Godwin (1756-1836) e della scrittrice protofemminista Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797); è universalmente nota per essere l'autrice del romanzo gotico *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*,

considerato oggi come il capostipite del genere della fantascienza. Di fatto Mary Shelley, nel corso della vita, è autrice di altri romanzi – da quello semi-autobiografico *Mathilda* (composto nel 1822 ma pubblicato postumo solamente nel 1959), all'apocalittico *The Last Man* (1826), fino agli ultimi due, *Lodore* e *Falkner*, dati alle stampe rispettivamente nel 1835 e nel 1837 – e di un numero consistente di opere, riconducibili a generi letterari anche molto diversi fra loro.

Valperga viene pubblicato nel 1823, mentre Mary Shelley attende alla scrittura di *The Last Man*. Il romanzo ha una lunga e travagliata gestazione. È la stessa Shelley a descriverne la genesi (sapientemente ricostruita da Crisafulli ed Elam nell'«Introduzione») attraverso alcune lettere inviate all'amica e confidente Maria Gisborne, conosciuta e frequentata in occasione dei suoi soggiorni a Pisa. Il romanzo viene concepito già nel 1817 e verrà portato a compimento il primo dicembre del 1821.

A differenza di *Frankenstein*, *Valperga* «è un romanzo storico di dimensioni epiche che nasconde, al suo interno, una straordinaria e assai precoce narrazione protofemminista, cosa che rende l'opera malgrado la sua ambientazione medievale, di sorprendente attualità nonostante i due secoli che ci separano da essa» [pp. V-VI]. Più precisamente, nel romanzo Shelley si misura con il genere dell'*historical romance*, all'epoca molto in voga in Inghilterra, i cui esponenti più celebri sono Walter Scott (1771-1832), l'autore di *Waverley* (1814) e di *Ivanhoe* (1820), e lo stesso William Godwin, cui si devono i romanzi *Caleb Williams* (1794) e *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799).

Per la costruzione di questo grandioso affresco medievale, Shelley attinge a numerose fonti storiche – scritte in italiano, in latino e in francese – da lei direttamente compulsate e che i curatori dell'edizione italiana puntualmente descrivono: fra queste, *in primis*, la *Vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca* (1520) di Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), le *Dissertazioni sopra le Antichità italiane*, in tre volumi pubblicati, rispettivamente, fra il 1723 e il 1751 e fra il 1751 e il 1755, di Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750); non ultima, l'*Histoire des Républiques italiennes du Moyen-age* di Sismonde de Sismondi (1773-1842).

Valperga rientra nel filone letterario del romanzo storico, ma la narrazione delle vicende non è fine a se stessa. La storia della vita di Castruccio Castracani è metafora del declino e della caduta dell'Italia dei Comuni e Shelley «usa il Medioevo anche per dar voce a una acuta e autorevole riflessione sullo stato delle cose dell'Italia a lei contemporanea» [p. XV]. E si spinge ancora oltre. Infrange e stravolge i canoni propri del genere letterario: in primo luogo, «accrescendo, se non privilegiando, il tasso di autenticità storiografica rispetto agli aspetti romanzati» [p. XXXVII]; in secondo luogo, rovesciando il modello narrativo che imponeva come unico protagonista della storia un eroe maschile e proponendo due figure femminili come protagoniste di un'epopea, per di più medievale.

Nel romanzo il ghibellino Castruccio Castracani, signore di Lucca, è in realtà solamente co-protagonista della storia. Nell'interpretazione squisitamente romantica della scrittrice, egli diventa paradigma dell'avidità di potere e dell'egoismo maschili, della potenza distruttiva della guerra contrapposti alla forza creativa, all'amore e alla volontà di pace delle due protagoniste femminili: la «razionale e coerente» Eutanasia, signora di Valperga, e l'«emotiva e sensuale» Beatrice, profetessa di Ferrara. Esse, pur incarnando «due modelli opposti di donne» [p. VIII], rappresentano il fulcro di una storia «altra», il «centro emotivo» di un modo differente di intendere le relazioni.

In questo modo *Valperga* «oltre a essere la biografia di un uomo storicamente ben visibile, è anche la vicenda di due donne del tutto invisibili sul piano storico – perché inventate, e perché le donne medievali non avevano una propria storia "ufficiale" –, ma certamente non meno significative come presenze e come voci all'interno del discorso narrativo» [p. XVI]. Per questo motivo Mary Shelley dedica idealmente il romanzo alla madre, della quale – questa l'acuta interpretazione suggerita – «Eutanasia incarna i valori femministi e le istanze intellettuali illuministe, mentre Beatrice ne ripropone più problematicamente i travagli personali e le tendenze preromantiche» [p. XLI].

Fin dal primo incontro fra Castruccio e Eutanasia «si intravede […] la possibilità di una politica alternativa "al femminile", basata non sulla forza e sull'antagonismo, ma sulla ragionevolezza e la solidarietà: nel castello di Valperga, infatti guelfi e ghibellini convivono in assoluta armonia» [p. XII]. L'immaginario castello, luogo utopico del regno di Eutanasia, «diventa così la metonimia topografica di una storia *fictional* al femminile, che prende il sopravvento sulla vicenda storiografica legata a Castruccio» [p. XXII]. Eutanasia, paladina del repubblicanesimo toscano, si rifiuterà di consegnare il castello di Valperga e i suoi domini nelle mani del sanguinario Castruccio e dovrà affrontare con coraggio la propria sconfitta: sarà così costretta all'esilio; durante un naufragio la nave su cui è imbarcata affonderà trascinandola negli abissi, dove ella finirà per trasformarsi in una creatura delle profondità del mare.

Beatrice, a sua volta, cadrà vittima del malvagio Castruccio di cui ella si innamora, sacrificando per lui i suoi poteri e l'onore, fino ad essere da lui abbandonata e lasciata al suo destino di follia. Solo Eutanasia le sarà amica e sorella, infondendole conforto nella speranza di riportarla alla vita e all'amore, ma invano [cfr. pp. XLII-XLIX]. Così «queste parabole femminili diventano metafore non solo di destini di donne, pur diverse fra loro, ma, anche, più in generale di una storia d'Italia in una fase in cui se ne decreta il disfacimento» [p. VI]: è senz'altro questa una delle ragioni per cui, a distanza di due secoli, l'opera può ancora definirsi un «capolavoro sconosciuto» [p. XI] o, quanto meno, misconosciuto.

Silvia Bartoli

Notizie

Young Romantics in the City exhibition

Keats House London,
16 February 2023 - 4 February 2024

The *Young Romantics in the City* exhibition was on view at the Keats House in London. It started on 16 February 2023, and was open to visitors until 4 February 2024. The exhibition was a partnership project between Keats House and Cardiff University, co-curated by Dr Anna Mercer, Lecturer in English Literature, and Keats House. *Young Romantics in the City* allowed visitors to learn more about the writers and the writing of the Romantic period through themes such as politics, class, gender, and race.

Pride and Prejudice: A Rocky Romance

Denver, Colorado,
3-5 November 2023

The Jane Austen Society of North America is the most renowned association dedicated to Jane Austen, one of the most important authors who lived between Romantic and Victorian eras. JASNA has multiple regional groups located in North America. In 2023, the group in Denver, Colorado was chosen to host the Annual General Meeting for those members interested in discovering a new perspective on the author. The Denver/Boulder regional delegation decided to focus the convention on the «rocky» dynamics and situations developed in the novel, so as to combine the peculiar landscape surrounding the city with innovative insights into Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. An imaginative connection was proposed between the «rocky» interpersonal relationships between the protagonists, such as Elizabeth Bennett and Mr Darcy, and the «rocky» nature that influences Austen's characters.

The three main plenary speakers were: Janet Todd, novelist, literary critic, and scholar specializing in women's writings and feminism; Claudia L. Johnson, Murray Professor at Princeton University and specialist in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literature and gender studies; and Francine Mathews, popular mystery and spy fiction writer, who also wrote the *Jane Austen Mysteries* series.

NASSR 2024: Romantic Insurrections/Counter-Insurrections

Georgetown University, Washington D.C.,
15-18 August 2024

The 31st Annual NASSR Conference will take place from the 15 August 2024 (6 p.m.) to 18 August 2024, at Georgetown University in Washington DC.

The revolt witnessed in Washington DC on 6 January 2021 inspires a reflection on the nature of Romantic-era insurrection and counter-insurrection in the wake of modern uprisings. Romanticism has often been associated with revolution and inversion of the social order, which is why the 31st Annual NASSR Conference chose to explore the social and textual actions of rebellion, acts of resistance, and repressive reactions that characterized the nineteenth century. The intention is to draw a line that connects nineteenth-century uprisings and our current political realities.

Papers will be presented both in person and virtually.

ERCC Conference: Inventing the Human

University of Melbourne, Parkville Victoria,
30 November 2023 - 2 December 2023

The hybrid and interdisciplinary conference *Inventing the Human* took place at the University of Melbourne, Parkville campus, between November and December 2023. It was organized by the Research Unit in Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Contemporary Culture (ERCC), with the aim of investigating the liberal humanist subject theorized by posthumanism and its positioning in Enlightenment/Romantic thought, addressing themes of reason, imagination, liberty, and the body. The conference embraced both the prevailing Eurocentric perspective that was once accepted as the only valid interpretation, and the many different traditions which have engaged the theme in different ways, due to their different cultural and historical backgrounds.

The event included a range of different activities: from conference panels, roundtables, and keynotes, to exhibitions concerning topics connected to colonialism and liberty, gender disability, non-European enlightenment, and post-humanism.

Byron Now – Third Edition

Ca' Foscari University of Venice,
17-18 January 2024

Since 2019, the Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies and the Italian Byron Society have been organizing a series of conferences on Lord Byron. Every year in January (except in 2021 and 2022 due to Covid restrictions) professors, authors, and experts interested in Byron come from all over the world to discuss one of the leading figures of the Romantic Movement.

This conference was held in Ca' Bernardo, a seventeenth-century historic building now home to the Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Contributing scholars gave illuminating talks on aspects of Byron's life and work. The first session held on 17 January included: "The Byronic Hero's adventures in Italian literature" by Alan Rawes (Manchester University): "'I hate tasks': Byron and Foscolo, the dialogue missed between two tempestuous souls" by Paola Tonussi (independent scholar); and "Reading from "Intervista impossibile" by Vincenzo Patanè (independent scholar). The second Session included the following papers: "New Perspectives on Byron and Godwin: the view from the archives" by Valentina Varinelli (Università CaIolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano); "Byron and the Sublime" by Peter France (Victor Valley College, California); "'We are born for lateness' – Byron, Cixous and the Unbearable Lateness of Being" by Mirka Horova (Charles University, Prague). Session 3 followed with these contributions: "Should we read Gabriel Matzneff on Byron?" by Francesco Rognoni (Università CaIolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano); and "'Frequent turn to linger as you go': Byron Plays Guide", by Will Bowers (Queen Mary University of London). On the 18th of January the first session opened with the paper "Byron's parody of satirical print discourse in the Russian cantos of *Don Juan*" delivered by Emily Paterson-Morgan (Byron Society, London). The following two papers were: "He Do the Poet in Different Voices: W. H. Auden's appropriation of Byron" by Carla Pomarè (Università del Piemonte Orientale), and "Uncloseting Byron": A Mixed-Media Literary Vassal to Our Liege Lord" by Kaila Rose (Byron Society of America). The last session, which concluded the event, consisted of a roundtable discussion of *Beppo*.

BARS 2024 International Biennial Conference

University of Glasgow,
July 2024

The BARS International Conference has a long history of successful events attended by eminent Romanticists and emerging scholars from all over the

world. BARS conferences highlight new research and insights in the field of Romantic Studies through panels and plenary sessions. The conference programme also typically includes trips to Romantic locations and provides plenty of opportunities for conviviality, networking, and the sharing of enthusiasm.

The 2024 International Biennial Conference will take place between 23 and 25 July 2024 at the University of Glasgow. The conference will be in person, but will also include online and hybrid elements.

For further information, please visit the official website of BARS (https://www.bars.ac.uk/main/) and the BARS Blog (https://www.bars.ac.uk/blog/?s=&submit=Search).

The Liberal: Romantici inglesi a Pisa

Museo della Grafica,
Palazzo Lanfranchi, Pisa,
1 June 2023

On 1 June 2023, Museo della Grafica at Palazzo Lanfranchi in Pisa hosted a one-day conference to celebrate the bicentenary of the magazine *The Liberal: Verse and Prose from the South*, created by Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, and Leigh Hunt during their stay in Pisa.

The event, attended by numerous scholars from many different Italian universities and open to the public, was organized by professors and lecturers of the Department of Philology, Literature, and Linguistics, together with the Inter-university Centre for the Study of Romanticism (CISR). The conference started with a series of speeches about the stories, context, and contents of the *Liberal*, divided into two sessions. The first session, «*Il Liberal*: storie e contesti» was chaired by Roberta Ferrari (University of Pisa) and saw the participation of Marco Manfredi (University of Pisa), Lilla Maria Crisafulli (University of Bologna), and Barbara Allegranti (Scuola Normale Superiore Pisa). The second session, «Dentro il *Liberal*», chaired by Laura Giovannelli (University of Pisa), included contributions by Serena Baiesi (University of Bologna), Paolo Bugliani (University of Rome «Tor Vergata»), Diego Saglia (University of Parma) and Nicoletta Caputo (University of Pisa). The event ended with a roundtable discussion on two specific volumes: *Imprinting Anglo-Italian Relations in* «*The Liberal*» (Peter Lang, 2023) and *Modernità del Romanticismo* (Marsilio, 2023). The roundtable session was chaired by Diego Saglia (University of Parma) and featured the involvement of Gioia Angeletti (University of Parma), Fernando Cioni (University of Florence), Carlotta Farese (University of Bologna), Fabio Liberto (University of Bologna), Andrea

Peghinelli (University of Rome La Sapienza), and Elena Spandri (University of Siena).

On this occasion, the copy of the *Liberal* preserved in the library of the Scuola Normale Superiore was displayed.

20th GER International Conference: Romanticism and its Media

Bibliotheca Albertina (University Library), Leipzig,
5-8 October 2023

The 20th International Conference *Romanticism and its Media* organized by the Society for English Romanticism (GER – Gesellschaft für Englische Romantik) was held in Leipzig, Germany, from 5 to 8 October 2023.

The conference focused on the relationship between the Romantic Era and the media through which the historical period has been approached and explored in different fields. At the same time, the conference set out to investigate the many media-related issues in the Romantic era and their connection with our historical period and our current attitude towards media and mediation. The fields of investigation varied from a historical approach that took into account the digitalization of manuscripts and print publications to the re-mediation of Romantic topics in theatre, movies, television shows, and other digital formats. Particular emphasis was given to contemporaneity, including a wide range of medial manifestations covering Jane Austen fanfiction, period drama, Gothic films and videogames. The conference also addressed its core theme from a theorical perspective, tackling issues of media ecology, media archaeology, remediation, and cultural techniques that could inspire new methodologies and points of view on traditional Romantic topics and genres.

The conference program saw the participation of a large number of Romantic scholars from all over Europe, Canada, and the United States. Besides panels and plenary sessions, the four-day conference included other entertaining activities such as a music performance by the Linus Haagen Trio and a walking tour of the city centre.

Hanno collaborato a questo numero:

Gioia Angeletti / Silvia Bartoli / Fabio Bazzano / Michael Bradshaw / Matteo Cardillo / Fernando Cioni / Franca Dellarosa / Alexander Dick / Marta Fabi / Charlie Guy / C. Bruna Mancini / Elisabetta Marino / Carmina Masoliver / Jack McGowan / Ambrose Musiyiwa / Rebekah Musk / Federica Rocchi / Maria Schoina / Elena Spandri / Serena Vantin / Valentina Varinelli / Franca Zanelli Quarantini

In copertina: Albert Lynch, *Manon Lescaut And Her Lover Des Grieux Are Set Ashore In Louisiana* (1896).