THE ITALY OF THE ENGLISH ROMANTIC PoETS

GEORGE KAY, M.A.

Thesis submitted to the University of Edinburgh, for the degree of Ph.D. September, 1953.
INTRODUCTION

The object of this thesis is to study the Italian experience of the major English poets who are commonly termed Romantic, that is, who flourished in the High Romantic period of 1790-1825. These are recognised to be Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Blake, but as my concern is with actual experience of Italy, and not simply a poetic image of it, I have restricted the present enquiry to the three of these six who recorded their impressions of country and people in detail – Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley. Of Coleridge’s being in Sicily and Rome in the years 1804-06, we have little account, beyond the hints in his Biographia Literaria (1817). Keats in 1821 was too tormented by his near death to take in Naples or Rome. The “Italy” Blake knew remained a visionary thing.

The present work is intended as a contribution to both Romantic scholarship and the history of the Englishman in Italy; for it is a study of the nature and importance of Italian experience for Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley, considered collectively as well as individually. Numerous works have been published with, say, Byron’s years in Italy, or Shelley’s, as their subject, but I have not encountered any that has attempted a comprehensive picture of both, and also of Wordsworth’s notable visits. To present this is the aim of the present work.

The findings of my research require that the form of this thesis should be as follows: – a first chapter, in which it is demonstrated that the /
the interest in Classical Italy which was manifested in the celebrated 'Grand Tour' throughout the eighteenth century, continued into the nineteenth, and that it is this which lends a certain common character to the Italian experience of our Romantics; separate chapters on Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley, in which it is suggested how far their accounts of Italy were the traditional English account, and how far individual; finally, a conclusion, in which the Italy of the Romantics will be defined, both in itself, and by comparison with those known to Englishmen in other ages.
CHAPTER I: ITALY ESSENTIALLY THE CLASSICAL COUNTRY FOR ENGLISHMEN FROM ADDISON TO BYRON

1. How the Classical Tour survived into the nineteenth century ........................................ Page 1
2. Italy also known to the Classical Tourist as the Land of Art ........................................... 10
3. Italy always celebrated for its natural beauty ....................................................................... 19
4. Possibly strengthened elements in the Romantic poets' experience of Italy ................. 27
   (i) Awareness of Italy's literature and history ................................................................. 28
   (ii) Regard for the Italians: the two Italies ..................................................................... 34

CHAPTER II: WORDSWORTH AND ITALY

1. Wordsworth's discovery of Italian Nature . .................................................................... 36
   (i) First acquaintance with Italy ....................................................................................... 36
   (ii) Italy in Descriptive Sketches (1793) ........................................................................ 41
   (iii) Italian Nature in tour-poems from Addison to Wordsworth ................................... 45
   (iv) The personal importance of Italian Nature for Wordsworth: Italy as a private image 51
2. Wordsworth, Freedom, and Italy ...................................................................................... 56
3. Italy, the Classical Land, in Wordsworth .......................................................................... 65

CHAPTER III: BYRON, VENICE, AND ITALY

1. The Prospect of an Italian Journey to Byron from 1808-1816 ........................................ 71
   (i) Italy not the Classical Country or the Land of Romance for the young Byron ........ 71
   (ii) Byron's interest in Italy's language and literature: Italy as a possible new background for poetry ........................................................................................................................................ 75
2. Byron and the two Freedoms of Venice ........................................................................... 80
   (i) The immediate Freedom of "Venetian manners" - and the free style of Beppo (1817) and Don Juan (1818) .......................................................................................................................... 81
   (ii) The ancient Freedom of the Venetian Republic and the question of Italian independence . 87
   (iii) /
(iii) Byron's revulsion from his Venetian life: 

(iv) After Venice: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter IV: SHELLEY AND THE &quot;TWO ITALIES&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Shelley's design of settling in Italy, 1812-1818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Italy of Nature, Classical Remains, and Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Classical Remains and Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The &quot;Second Italy&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION: 149

Bibliography: 167
CHAPTER I: ITALY ESSENTIALLY THE CLASSICAL COUNTRY FOR
ENGLISHMEN FROM ADDISON TO BYRON

1. How the Classical Tour of Italy survived into the
nineteenth century

The pilgrimages English travellers made to "the country of the
Romans" in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are to be
associated with the celebrated Grand Tour of Europe.¹ This always includ-
ed a 'giro d' Italia', a journey which took the form of a visit to classic
places, in particular Rome and Naples, or Farthenope as the travellers
preferred to think of it. In short, the Grand Tour became in its Italian
stage a Classical Tour. The predecessors of the Classical Tourists had
also attended to the Roman memorials of Italy, but their writings do not
give us the impression that the country's classical past was the chief
matter of interest for each and every one of them. In the new age we find
just this agreement in the English travellers' recorded experience; and it
is this agreement which marks off an Addison and, later on, a Byron from
earlier and more independent travellers like Milton or Evelyn.²

One of the first accounts, and perhaps the most celebrated one,
of the new sort of Italian travel is Addison's own Remarks on Several Parts

1. The Grand Tour as a distinct manner of English travelling can be dated
broadly from the last quarter of the XVII century. Miss E. Manwaring
in her Italian landscape in Eighteenth Century England (Oxford University
Press, New York, 1925) considers it as coming into being after the Treaty
of Ryswick (1697); but the actual name "Grand Tour" is found considerably
earlier, in Richard Lassel's The Voyage of Italy (Paris, 1670), the work
in which it may have first been coined. See P.F. Kirby's The Grand Tour in
Italy (1700-1800) S.P. Vann, New York, 1962.

2. The "miscellaneous nature" of the English traveller's Italian experience
in the period before the Grand Tour proper was instituted, has recently
been stressed by J.W. Stowe in his English Travellers Abroad, 1604-1667
of Italy &c. in the years 1701, 1702, 1703 (London, 1705). This work offers an advantageous starting-point for our immediate enquiry. It serves us not only by presenting the Classical Tour of Italy in firm and simple outline, but also by offering an unparalleled example of antiquities studied with a will, of Roman places visited quite religiously. It could be argued that so full and serious a reverence for the classical is not typical of the Englishman on his Grand Tour who is traditionally known as a personage more curious than admiring; and doubtless Addison's great liking for the Latin poets made their "Italia" live more brightly for him than it did for many of his contemporaries. But the important point, after all, is that Addison represents in perfection the Englishman as Classical Tourist, and that in this character he was the ideal Italian traveller for his contemporaries and successors.

As one sign of this recognition, we find that he is repeatedly deferred to by later English visitors to Italy, and incidentally by a good proportion of those to be mentioned in this chapter, from Edward Wright who was there in the period 1720-1722, to Dr John Moore, Lady Miller, and William Beckford, who saw the country seventy and eighty years after Addison. The account is complete when we remember that Byron took a hint from the Remarks upon Several Parts of Italy &c. to describe the Cataract of The Velino in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, as he himself acknowledges. (See note to Stanza LXXXII of the Fourth Canto).

With Addison's being seen as so authoritative an Italian traveller, it is not surprising that some early questionings of the Classical Tour as the right way of appreciating Italy should be associated with his name. "Mr Addison travelled through the poets, and not through Italy; for /
for all his ideas are borrowed from the descriptions, and not from the reality. He saw places as they were, not as they are", declared the young Horace Walpole in 1740, writing to Richard West from Italy (letter of 2/10/40). Thomas Gray the poet who was making the Tour with Walpole reports another saying for the benefit of the same friend: "Mr Walpole says, our memory sees more than our eyes in this country. Which is extremely true; since, for realities, Windsor, or Richmond Hill, is infinitely preferable to Albano or Frescati" (letter of May, 1740 to West). Here were two travellers who could see Italian places bare of their classical associations, and who were not greatly impressed with some of the most famed in themselves. More important still, Walpole could not accept ancient poets as his chief guides through Italy as Addison had done.

Walpole and Gray are not to be considered average travellers of their generation. Few of their contemporaries would have let an interest in art\(^1\), or the natural face of Italy\(^2\), distract their attention so much from the classical. Not many in 1740 would have been reminded of lines from Tasso as soon as they had crossed the Alps, as Walpole was (see the quotation on approaching Turin in the letter to West, 11/11/39). The majority of English travellers kept with Addison and the Roman poets. Edward Wright who compiled Some Observations made in travelling through France, Italy, &c. in the years 1720, 1721

1. The enthusiasm of the two travelling-companions for the arts is often affirmed, for example:— "The rest of the day has been spent, much to our heart's content, in cursing French music and architecture, and in singing the praises of Italy" (Gray's letter to West, 21/11/39).

2. See Gray's letters and Journals for the whole Tour.
and 1722 (London, 1730), could be quite absorbed at times in Italian
architecture and painting; he admired many landscapes for their
natural beauty; but he did not forget the chief end of an Italian
journey, and classical notes fill the bulk of his volumes. Ideally
speaking, nothing counted with the Classical Tourist like his pleasure
at finding himself in the country of the Romans, or even his anticipation
of the joy he would have "in treading that ground, where at every step
we stumble on the ruins of some fabric described by the ancients, and
cannot help setting a foot on the memorial of some celebrated action,
in which the great heroes of antiquity have been personally engaged".
These were the words of Conyers Middleton in 1729, and he added:
"Such fancies as these, with which I often entertained myself on my
road to Rome, are not, I dare say, peculiar to myself, but common to all
men of reading and education". These sentiments were, in fact, so pre-
valent that the young English painter John Russell who spent the ten
years from 1739 in Italy seldom treats of painters or galleries in his
correspondence home, but gives copious descriptions of classical remains,
only undertaking to publish his letters at all because they contained
notes on the discoveries at Herculaneum (see the Preface to Letters from
a young Painter abroad to his Friends in England (London, 1750).

Although as Italian travellers Walpole and Gray were not
typical of their generation, they do hint the change that was soon to
come. Not that Englishmen after them were to entertain doubts about
the Classical Tour as such. In Walpole himself these had appeared
only momentarily. But some thirty or forty years after his Tour with
Gray, /

1. From Middleton's A Letter from Rome showing an Exact Conformity
between Popery and Paganism (1729). In this passage quoted Middleton
is insisting that he went to Italy not to compile his treatise, but
with the usual motives of the educated Englishman.
Gray, the travellers writing upon Italy, while they still agree or
even insist that the classical aspect of the country is the one that
should engage the Englishman's attention, do not give their own time
to it in any manner comparable to Addison's. We have only to look
at Dr John Moore, a man who wrote in his A View of Society and Manners
in Italy (London, 1781): - "We acquire an early partiality for Rome, by
reading the classics, and the history of the ancient republic. Other
parts of Italy also interest us more on account of their having been
the residence of the old Romans, than from the regard we pay to what has
been transacted there during the last fourteen or fifteen centuries".
In spite of Moore's candid admission of "the prejudice we feel in favour
of the Roman name", his travel-book is given more to Italian things than
to Roman, as its very title - "A View of Society and Manners in Italy" -
indicates. How the traveller's account has changed becomes immediately
evident if we put Moore's lengthy passage on Venice and her history, for
example, by the brief accounts of an Addison or a Wright, or observe the
comparatively reduced part Rome takes in the later work.

Not all "the travelling English" who published books on Italy
about the same time as Dr Moore did (and there are a good many among
whom we shall notice William Beckford, Lady Miller, Dr Burney and
Smollett the novelist)¹ had chosen to approach the country on some def-
inite line of enquiry. Several had done; and we are presented with
Dr Burney's The Present State of Music in France and Italy (or the
Journal of a Tour through those Countries, undertaken to collect
Materials for a General History of Music) [London, 1777], or Lady Miller's
Letters /

¹. Beckford's travel-book is Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents; in
a Series of Letters from Various Parts of Europe (London, 1783); Smollett's is Travels through France and Italy (London, 1768).
Letters from Italy describing the Manners, Customs, Antiquities, Painting &c. of that Country in the years 1770 and 1771 (London, 1776) which, in spite of its general title, and the precedence given there to "Antiquities", has painting for its special theme. But the majority of travel-books that appear in the 1770's and 1780's are works which are not, in fact, governed by any single interest. In them Art, Nature, music, society and lesser matters not only alternate with the classical but often displace it. Even so their common character is not a new awareness, say, of Art, or of Nature, or society. Italy's classical past is still the only attribute of the country that is given importance by the new travellers taken collectively. So our conclusion must be that with the weakening of the regard for what was Roman a common interest that is at the same time the dominant one is no longer to be distinguished in our travellers' experience of Italy.

By 1770, in fact, a subtle change has taken place. The definite common element in the Englishman's experience of Italy, that is, enthusiasm for the classical, no longer controls his impressions of the country. Instead each traveller's account is characterised by a free and quite personal selection of experience into which the classical invariably enters, or, to put it another way, individual interests are now the determining element. This means that no new kind of "Tour" is to be distinguished that replaces the Classical Tour; only a great many tourists who are still, each in his own measure, attentive to the classical but whose manner of appreciating Italy is predominantly individual, and so a matter for individual study. In fact, we are meeting the first Italian travellers who are of a kind with Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley.
The difference between travellers of the early eighteenth century and those of Dr. Moore's time shows plainly if we lay their works side by side. Individuality is not to be denied Joseph Addison, or Edward Wright, or John Russell, but when these came to write of Italy for the benefit of other Englishmen, they felt it no constraint to give the greater part of their record to a detailed description of what the classic peoples had left. What comment occurs in their books is largely kept for elucidation. The travellers of Dr. Moore's generation know that Italy is to be revered for its association with the ancients, and they visit the places most hallowed by this; but the classical interest does not inform their whole narrative. To take William Beckford, who travelled in 1780, as an example - before he entered Italy, he "anticipated the classic scenes" in fancy; and occasionally while he was there his imagination was "led...far into antiquity"; but these are only moments, and no more prominent than others when Beckford is moved to worship "in the vast temple of Nature", or in some temple of Art like St. Peter's or the Uffizzi; nor are these any more than instances of his musing on what comes under his immediate attention.

Beckford's narrative is particularly whimsical, but his Italian experience in its essential form is that of most of his contemporaries. In them, too, there is the acknowledgement of Italy's classical importance as her first attribute¹; they do take notice of Roman works and places, the most famous being chronicled by most travellers²;

---

1. Lady Miller goes so far as to insist with her readers that she could have included as many classical quotations in her book on Italy as Addison had done in his.

2. The statues, temples, and scenes that Byron brings into the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage were many times recorded before his day, some of them being described by men of letters as considerable as Addison, James Thomson and Smollett.
but the body of their narratives is taken up by the personal commentary that ranges over all matters without following any one devotedly. The manner of this commentary varies greatly - from Smollett's sour-tasting judgements (certainly influenced by the unfortunate circumstances of his progress through Italy) to Dr Moore's better-humoured general observation, to the daylight phantasies of Beckford. Each commentator from this period onwards has to be studied for his own sake, but William Beckford is of particular interest to us because in his brilliant imaginative writing, and particularly in his exquisite 'landscapes', we encounter impressions of Italy that are strikingly like some by our Romantic poets, particularly Shelley.

As a last note on this subject it might be mentioned that the differences and similarities between early and later eighteenth century experience of Italy are to be seen not only in the travel-books but in their verse accompaniments, the 'Tour-poems'. The most celebrated of these - the poem of which Oliver Goldsmith wrote in The Beauties of English Poetry (1767):- "had the harmony of this been equal to that of Pope's versification it would be incontestably the finest poem /

1. Laurence Sterne with his Sentimental Journey through France and Italy (London, 1768), represents the extreme of this last style, but author and work can hardly be included in any sort of general consideration.

2. Professor Mario Praz takes William Beckford as the earliest traveller to record a new kind of impression of Italian scenes, that is, one exhibiting the "intensification of life" that is normally to be associated with experience of artistic works. See the recent study, Giò che gli stranieri vedono in Italia in La Casa della Fama (Riccardo Riciardi, Milano: Napoli, 1952).

3. I use the name 'Tour-poem' for works by English poets which present us with something of their experience in travelling abroad, and which usually include an appraisal, from a distance, of their own country. In the High Romantic period, the chief examples are Wordsworth's Descriptive Sketches (1793) and Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (1812-1818).
poem in our language" was again by Addison, namely, *A Letter from Italy*, to the Right Honourable Charles, Lord Halifax. In the year 1701. Goldsmith himself wrote the best-known one of the later period, *The Traveller* (1764). To compare these two only is to see the resemblances and unlikeness of the two ages at their clearest.

Addison goes into raptures at finding himself in the Romans' country at all, and happily gives Latin names to every feature he sees. His lines are, in the truest sense, the poetry of the Classical Tour. In the other poem, Goldsmith has entered Italy as one country among several in which he examines, like Dr. Moore, the state of society (the poem bears the sub-title *A Prospect of Society*). Italy he manages to treat, as he does the other countries, in the general terms of Art and Nature, Religion and Commerce. But when Goldsmith describes the Italian landscape, one of the two features evoked is "some temple's mould'ring tops between (that) with venerable grandeur marks the scene"; and when he wishes to give a single image for modern Italy, he compares it to a poor-man's hut pitched under a great arch "where Caesars once bore sway". Italy, to Goldsmith and his contemporaries, still appeared essentially as the Classical Country, as it did to Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and their generations who honoured the earlier custom of journeying to where:

"........................ still,
The fount at which the panting mind assuages
Her thirst of knowledge, quaffing there her fill,
Flows from the eternal source of Rome's imperial hill"

*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto III, Stanzas 47

We have noticed that two interests - those in Art and in Nature - /

---

1. Byron's first public words on Italy delivered in the character of Childe Harold are not those on Venice at the beginning of Canto IV, but this earlier, quite 'classical' stanza of the third Canto.
Nature — came to play a more evident part in the Englishman's account of Italy as the eighteenth century proceeded, yet neither issued in a new sort of Tour, say, of Connoisseurship, or scenery-hunting. Nevertheless this development has to be studied here for its possible influence on the experience of our Romantic poets. But before we leave the subject of Italy's classical importance altogether, it should be noticed that on the objective view this also increased during the eighteenth century. The discovery of Pompei brought Italy's earlier classical period to light, drew attention to the Doric temples at Paestum, the Greek remains in Sicily. This has not been mentioned earlier because in spite of the magnitude of the new discoveries, in spite, too, of the greater attention given to Greek studies in England as the eighteenth century proceeded, the traditional Classical Tour through Italy did not grow to be a pilgrimage to both the Greek and the Roman memorials. Many Englishmen did visit the Greek places, but few thrilled to them as Shelley did;¹ and for most, Italy remained the home of the old Romans.

2. Italy also known to the Classical Tourist as the Land of Art

At a first glance it might appear that the strict Classical Tourists of the first half of the eighteenth century virtually ignored two other important gifts of Italy, namely, its more recent art and its natural beauty, that only with William Beckford and his contemporaries is a special appreciation of these developing. In the next two parts of Chapter One I shall suggest that in spite of this apparent change, the Art and Nature of Italy were particularly admired

¹ Shelley's transports upon "discovering" Pompei are well known, but it is not always remembered that he was wonderfully impressed by Paestum as well. See the letters from Naples, particularly those of January and February, 1819.
admired in the earlier period; that such admiration far from conflicting with classical enthusiasm administered to it; that, in this way, Art and Nature as matters that might interest the traveller, were put in a subservient position, and, consequently, a limiting one; and lastly, that the development the eighteenth century did see was the "liberating" of Art and Nature from Classical association, or "domination". This process and its consequences will be studied here, in so far as it throws light upon the experience of our Romantic poets. We shall begin with Art.

Early in the eighteenth century the third Earl of Shafesbury declared:— "One who aspires to the Character of a Man of Breeding and Politeness is careful to form his Judgement of Arts and Sciences upon right Models of Perfection. If he travels to ROME, he enquires which are the truest Pieces of Architecture, the best Remains of Statues, the best Paintings of a RAPHAEL, or a CARACHE" (Soliloquy or, Advice to an Author (1710). To be assured that the Italian arts were in fact regarded with interest by the Englishman touring at that time, let us turn back to Addison and Wright. In the Preface to his Remarks upon Several Parts of Italy &c., Addison in praising Italy says it is "the great School of Musick and Painting, and contains in it all the noblest Productions of Statuary and Architecture both Ancient and Modern". This is not an idle flourish. In the text of the book itself, although the art of modern Italy is not mentioned frequently, instances of appreciation such as Addison's astonishment at St. Peter's, his less surprised liking of the Cathedral of Siena, or his admiration for Raphael's "St. Cecilia" stand out as most memorable experiences.

But /
But even if Addison's interest in latterday works generally is nothing remarkable, this is not so important as his putting Italy's arts high on the list of "pleasures and advantages" the country can offer the traveller, particularly the Englishman.

Edward Wright who followed Addison by twenty years found more to like among Italian paintings and buildings. Works of Palladio, Titian, Guido Reni and a good many others even to Giotto himself\(^1\) are celebrated in his pages. But apart from his personal taste, Wright like Addison treats Italian art simply as a subject about which every Englishman should know something (he himself contributes "A Short Vocabulary" of art-terms for later travellers), but he does not take undue account of it. For these two travellers Italian art was not to be given exceptional importance because, as we shall now see, their admiration for it was ultimately one aspect of their admiration for the Classical.

It is to be noticed that the English Augustans could speak of the Italian Renaissance in Arts quite literally as a Classical, and more specifically Roman revival; in fact, this account of Quattrocento and Cinquecento works is found from Dryden's Epistle to Sir Godfrey Kneller (1694) (11.57-60) to Byron's The Prophecy of Dante (1820) (Canto IV, particularly 11.40-47). The willingness to believe that practically all the great modern works had been executed in the city of Rome, that is, in the presence of the Classic, the ease with which painting was /

---

1. See the remarks about Giotto's works at Padua and Pisa in Some Observations, etc. (1730). The Pre-Raphaelites and Ruskin undoubtedly did most to make the earlier Italian masters known to the English but, throughout the eighteenth century, some individual travellers are found who, like Wright, appreciated these quite directly.
was found to be of purely classical inspiration are to be wondered at today. The consequence at the time was that since Italy's sculpture and architecture were considered to derive strictly from ancient models, and since its painting too was thought to partake of this character, the art of the Italian Renaissance was seen simply as the latest expression of the Classical spirit. So, Addison and Wright travelling through Italy in the first quarter of the eighteenth century could see paintings and other Renaissance works as testifying to the Roman and Greek genius not the Italian. The Muses had revived "in Leo's golden days", as Pope termed it (Essay on Criticism, line 697); or, as the Earl of Shaftesbury so ably demonstrated in his Soliloquy or, Advice to a Young Author, there had been two races of great or classical artists - the ancients and the modern Italians.

This view - of Italian art as classical art - came to be modified in the course of the eighteenth century until it had lost much of its absoluteness. The men of letters who were its chief perpetuators knew well enough that there was no unbroken succession of artistic peoples from the Greeks to the Romans, and so to the modern Italians, because, as Dryden said:

"Rome rais'd not Art, but barely kept alive,
And with Old Greece unequally did strive:...."

[Epistle to Kenilworth, 11.45-46]

or as Thomson's Goddess of Liberty recounts the birth of Rome's stern genius:

"Here /

---

1. One of the most notable consequences proceeding from this "Roman" view of Italian art was that English travellers virtually ignored the works of Florence, both paintings and sculptures, so that, as P.F. Kirby points out, /The Grand Tour in Italy, 1700-1800 (New York, 1952)/, Masaccio, Donatello, Botticelli, Piero della Francesca found few or no admirers in the eighteenth century. This general indifference had not passed by the time Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley went to Italy, and they also keep silence on the great Florentine artists.
"Here from the fairer, not the greater, plan
Of Greece I varied; whose unmixing states,
By the keen soul of emulation pierced,
Long waged alone the bloodless war of arts,
And their best empire gained. But to diffuse
O'er men an empire was my purpose now -"

Observations of this kind were calculated to introduce doubt into the very supposition that great art was a classical heritage. Again, the period which saw Thomson's Liberty (1735-1736) also saw the first works of the "connoisseurs" after the manner of Jonathan Richardson. Unlike Shaftesbury, the new writers on art were not content to judge works as being of 'classical' quality or not. They insisted that really to appreciate painting, say, a man must understand its own special terms. But "connoisseurship" and the discussions of men of letters were not to be so destructive of the prejudices about the 'classical' superiority of Italian painting, as were the authoritative opinions of the masters in the new English School, especially Joshua Reynolds.

Because of his great contemporary reputation and the lasting value of his "Discourses", the opinions of Reynolds on art were heard and honoured by the English as the utterances of no painter had been before him. In our Romantic poets themselves, traces of this acknowledgement are found, Wordsworth quoting Sir Joshua on taste in the original Preface to the Lyrical Ballads (1798), the exact remark that /

1. See Miss Manwaring Italian landscape in Eighteenth Century England (New York, 1925) for a discussion of the way in which Shaftesbury's "virtuoso" yielded to Richardson's "connoisseur". It is to be noticed that in all these discussions of art Italy was represented simply by its painting. One or two Italian sculptors and architects, for example, Michelangelo who was famed as both, and Palladio, say, might be mentioned; but it was generally agreed that the ancient works of statuary and building, even when fragmentary, were the "models of perfection".
that Coleridge was to borrow later, in his *Biographia Literaria*.\(^1\)

As far as Italy was concerned, it could be imagined that Reynolds's influence was simply to enhance its fame with the English as the land of art; and certainly, for the painters, his practice and word vindicated the tour through Italy and the study of the Italians as models in face of the Hogarthian questionings.\(^2\) But in its more general import, Reynolds's teaching was to qualify the common opinion that Italian painters being 'classical' surpassed those of every other country, particularly the "Flemish"\(^3\) and the French. Simply by proclaiming the greatness of Rembrandt, Rubens, Poussin and /

1. See the footnote to Chapter XVI where Reynolds is described as "an artist, whose writings are scarcely less valuable than his pictures, and to whose authority more deference will be paid, &c."

2. It is fascinating to watch the almost controversial part Italian painting and scenery plays in the discussions and practice of the new English school - how Hogarth stands against imitation of the Italians and the painter's tour of Italy whereas Reynolds makes the Tour and preaches the Italians as models; how Wilson finds himself as an artist in the country around Rome, but Gainsborough discovers the English landscape; and how this "Italian" - or native opposition continues in English painting through J.M.W. Turner and John Constable. However this subject is not to be entered here because the painters of England were little known to our Romantics; the awareness is found rather on the side of the painters, as we see from records like Hazlitt's admirable Conversations of James Northcote, Esq., R.A. (1830) and except in the instance that is being considered in the text above, they have no appreciable bearing on the poets' experience of Italy's art and nature. On the other hand, there is some question of the poets' stimulating the painters' interest in Italy. See for example A.J. Finberg's *In Venice with Turner* (The Cotswold Gallery, London, 1930) for a discussion of "Child Harold's" part in attracting the artist to the city.

3. The eighteenth century writers were not careful to distinguish between Flemish and Dutch painting, and generally use the term "Flemish" for both.
and other 'non-Italians', he was undermining this generalisation.1

Once again, some influence of the painter's professional opinions is to be detected in our Romantic poets. Whereas in Shaftesbury we read:—"A French or Flemish Style is highly lik'd by me, at first sight, and I pursue my liking. But what ensues? — Do I not for ever forfeit my good Relish? How is it possible I should thus come to taste the Beautys of an Italian Master, or of a Hand happily form'd on Nature and the Antients?", and the same opinion is found in Walpole half a century later; Coleridge speaks of "the great Italian and Flemish masters" as of equals (in Biographia Literaria, Chapter XVI). Although Byron, like Reynolds himself, preferred the Venetians to other painters, he does not furnish the English country house in Don Juan with paintings from Italy exclusively, but puts Rembrandt and Teniers by Titian and Caravaggio (Don Juan, Canto XIII, SS. LXXI-LXXII). These and other instances hint the way in which Italy and its art was affected by the broadening and enlightening of the English view of painting throughout the eighteenth century.

While the Italians continued to be most highly regarded, the common English opinion of them was inevitably qualified. What had happened, in effect, was that Italian painting had lost its 'classical' status which had been its generally accepted claim to pre-eminence; for the layman could admire works of art while these were associated with the Roman and Greek name, but he was not so quick to admire them in their own

1. I have taken these names from a rough note for the Twelfth Discourse quoted by F.W. Hilles in his Literary Career of Joshua Reynolds (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1926) which runs:—"whether his (the young painter's) disposition leads him to the stile of M. Angelo or of Rembrandt of Paolo or Rubens or of Poussine, the most striking circumstance in all these Great Artists is their uniformity" (op. cit. p. 240).
own right. 1

The conclusion given above provides a comment upon the comparative indifference of the young Wordsworth and Byron to the art of Italy (Shelley was to become enamoured of it for a time), but one of its consequences is even more material to this subject. By the High Romantic period not only had Italian art been loosened from its bond with the Classical name, but the natural beauty of Italy, too, had come to be valued more for its own sake. Conceivably, then, our poets might have evidenced a more direct appreciation of both the Art and Nature of Italy. But here a new situation has arisen, and we find that a regard for Art in its own right can militate against a similar regard for Nature. Wordsworth on his first Italian trip gave himself entirely to enjoying the Italian landscape, and

1. That the new "connoisseurship" simply meant Englishmen were encouraged to a more candid appreciation of works of art, is quite belied by the accounts of travellers in Italy. Dr Moore felt quite diffident about venturing an opinion upon paintings in the face of so much pretended expert knowledge; and Beckett was so disgusted with hearing the loud explanations of "smart Englishmen and connoisseurs" in the public galleries of Europe that he entered these with reluctance. Of our Romantic poets, Byron's revulsion from the cant phrases of "connoisseurs" is well known (Child's Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV, Stanza LIII); and Wordsworth seems to have been thinking of the same tribe when in praising the statues on the Cathedral of Milan, he spoke of "persons whose exclusive taste is unfortunate for themselves" (note to "the Eclipse of the Sun, 1820" from Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820). As for Shelley, he became so interested in art as to plan a poetic catalogue of the Uffizzi, but the little he compiled of this work is free from set terms, though not without mistaken attributions.

To understand why "Connoisseurship" did produce such impatience in intelligent Englishmen, we have only to turn to an Italian traveller who professed to be learned in the Arts, Lady Miller, and read the enormous condescension or fatuity of remarks like: "(it was) the favourite moment of all landscape painters, the 45th degree - or (to speak with the vulgar) about ten o'clock": (on Gaereino's "Prodigal Son") - "every feeling of his mind is shown in the muscles of his back, legs and the soles of his feet": (on Leonardo's "Last Supper") - "our Saviour . . . . . is pretty well done" &c.
and only in 1820, when his passion for this had cooled, is he found attending to art and other matters. In Byron the opposition is an even more active one, and he finds he must turn from "Arms's dome of Art's most princely shrine/ Where Sculpture with her rainbow sister vies" to the Lake of Trasimena, because, as he explains, "I have been accustomed to entwine/ My thoughts with Nature rather in the fields, Than Art in galleries". (Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV, Stenza LXI).

Here, then is a difference between Addison's experience of Italy in 1700 and that of the Romantics a century later. Addison was not exceptionally interested in Italian arts, but they made a part of the Italy he admired - the Classic Land, nor did he find that a liking for what he considered classical art conflicted with his pleasure in the country's "classical" landscape. Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley honoured Italy as a country that had known both Romans and Greeks, but their interest in Italian nature and Italian art was neither encouraged nor restrained by this regard. They were all more attracted at first by the natural loveliness, and it was only when this occupied them less that they came to any appreciation of the artistic wealth of Italy: in short, their enthusiasms for these two endowments of the country are found to exclude, not supplement, one another.

Undoubtedly our Romantics slighted Italy's art in a passion for its countryside. In fact, Shelley, whose admiration for Italian paintings was stirred, like Addison's, by the St. Cecilia of Raphael, is the only one whose interest can compare with that of earlier travellers. Wordsworth at fifty is only beginning to evince a more conventional appreciation of Italy that included notice of paintings —
see the sonnet to Leonardo's "Last Supper" in the "1820 Memorials".

As for Byron, he could write a whole long poem on Italy - the
Fourth Canto of "Childe Harold" - to celebrate the Arts, as he said,
and only mention painting once - in the line:

"Where Sculpture with her rainbow sister vies".

The great works of Italy have shrunk to being the famous Graeco-
Roman statues, those by Canova, St. Peters, and the Pantheon.

When we remember Addison's lines beginning:

"Fain would I Raphael's godlike art rehearse....."

or the expressive catalogue of painters in Pope's Epistle to
Mr Jervas (1717), a work in which the poet makes an imaginary Tour
of Italy, we see clearly that the eighteenth century art movements
in England - connoisseurship, the rise of the English school -
had not, in freeing Italian art from its classical bond, increased
or even assured its fame.

3. Italy always celebrated for its natural beauty

In this part of the first chapter it is proposed to examine
the appreciation of Italy in terms of Nature that was developed by
English travellers throughout the eighteenth century; to show how,
in the matter of associations, the Italian countryside from first to
last spoke of the ancients whatever else it might have suggested;
and finally to relate the Romantic poet's enthusiasm for Italian
scenes to the traditional regard for them. No one would pretend
that Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley discovered the beauty of Italy for
the English, but, on the other hand, it is not generally realised how
much their descriptions embody of typical English praise for this,
and in particular, how Italian places were enhanced in their eyes because they had been known to the Romans or Greeks. But although our chief concern will be with classical and other suggestions which Englishmen drew from Italian landscape, we will see that through all the varying of these there is a constant — admiration for Italy's beauty naked of any association. This deeper feeling is clearly to be discerned at the beginning of the eighteenth century, for example, in Bishop Berkeley's letter to Pope from Capri in May 1714, which urged the poet to come to Italy. Berkeley's first inducement was to ask Pope if he would not bring his Muse from "bleak England" to "feel the same warm sun, breathe the same air with Virgil and Horace"; but when he made his ultimate appeal it was in the words — "Green fields and groves, flowery meadows and purling streams are nowhere in such perfection as in England: but if you would know lightsome days, warm suns, and blue skies, you must come to Italy...." Italy of the smiling landscape lives in the writings of Addison as it does in those of Wordsworth and every other traveller who cared at all for Nature.

The two-fold admiration of the Italian countryside I have alluded to is found from the time of the earliest Classical Tourists onwards. It is Addison who says of Italy that "there is something more particular in the face of the country", "more astonishing in the works of Nature", [Preface to Remarks &c. (1705)] and who in the course of his book lets us know how keenly he enjoyed the country's bright variety, particularly when he is confronted with Capri, Nemi and Naples. But Addison's book, if not justifying Walpole's neat criticism/
criticism of its being the record of a journey through the Latin poets and not through Italy, does reveal him more often transcribing and translating from the classics than noting his own impressions of the country before him. So, in his verse epistle, A Letter from Italy to Charles, Lord Halifax &c., although he celebrates the natural luxuriance that he has seen with his own eyes, his excitement comes from his being aware that he stands on Roman ground.

This viewpoint of being particularly interested in Italian scenery because it had already been known to the classical peoples and described by their poets, is found commonly among English travellers of the early eighteenth century, though seldom so pronouncedly as in Addison. In Edward Wright's Some Observations made in travelling through France, Italy, &c. (1730), the text is not laced up with quotations; but when the author arrives at Naples, he and his companions "took a Virgil along with us in this Tour, and with a great deal of pleasure read such passages in his sixth Aeneid &c. as refer'd to some of these Places in the Places themselves". John Russell, the painter, also speaks of the pleasure "in taking a view of places the most celebrated by the ancient Poets, and comparing their present appearance with the draughts those excellent painters have left us of them". Letters from a Young Painter &c. (1750) But if the Addisonian deference continued, the unquestioning Addisonian enthusiasm for Roman scenes did not. Already in Thomson's description of Roman places (Liberty, Part I) we get the sense of constraint, of dutiful praise. In fact the exuberant poet of The Seasons does not present us with one Italian landscape that is a living impression in the way his English ones are. Instead, he pretends that, with
the passing of Liberty from Rome, the beauty has gone out of the Italian countryside, so that he has to describe the places as they were. We are reminded of Walpole's remark and Gray's comment upon it:— "...our memory sees more than our eyes in this country. Which is extremely true, since for realities Windsor, or Richmond Hill, is infinitely preferable to Albano or Frescati".

Both Walpole and Thomson point the change that was coming in the English view of Italy's countryside. The classical import of its scenes was still honoured, but could no longer make them preferable to all others. It could not confer natural beauty, and the English were growing more and more interested in this. By 1740, a new criterion had been introduced generally into their appreciation of Nature's landscapes - these should be "picturesque". Italy's scenery and climate of themselves could so far satisfy the demands that the new enthusiasts were to make, whether this was the earlier requirement that a landscape should resemble the work or style of some admired painter like Claude Lorraine, or the later one that it should convey the sense of mood, say elemental calm or rage. But the cult of the Picturesque was not to bring Italian scenery into exceptional favour as classical enthusiasm had done. Italy was not one of the two countries that were particularly honoured by the new interest. These were Switzerland and Britain itself. In fact, English attention was being drawn away from the once-favourite Italian landscape.

It is strange to think that if the Picturesque movement had not

1. See Miss Manwaring's Italian landscape in Eighteenth Century England for a full and excellent account of the "picturesque" interest.
not progressed so far from its origins, it might well have strengthened
the fascination Italy had for the English. Certainly its beginnings
were associated with paintings of Italian scenes, often the classically-
renowned; and its two great names continued to be Salvator Rosa and
the almost Italian Claude Lorraine. But the Englishman applying the
Picturesque canon to natural landscape did not ask that it should be
like the places that these artists depicted, but that it should be in
the style of their work, that is, it should be "Claude-like" or
"Salvator-like", not "Italian". By the High Romantic period, style
and artists themselves were largely forgotten in the more general
demand that a landscape should be affecting. 1 Meanwhile English
travellers had learned to appreciate the terrific artistry, the
silences of the Alps; and Englishmen generally were re-discovering
the beauty of their own familiar countryside.

This admiration of Nature, particularly as it showed in Swiss
and English scenery, is found first in Thomson, Walpole and Gray and
it is to be seen too, developed but essentially the same, in our
Romantic poets. 2 Wordsworth and Shelley love the natural face of
their

1. The question of possible "picturesque" influence in our Romantics' appre-
ciation of Italian landscape will be left for consideration in later chapters.

2. Gray and Walpole's vivid letters upon ascending to the Grande
Chartreuse in the late autumn of 1739, Gray's Latin ode written on
his second visit there, the Alpine description and images in James
Thomson's poetry (the former in Liberty, Part IV, 11.348-362; for
an example of the latter, see The Castle of Indolence, Canto II, Stanzas
lixiv) are to be seen as the beginnings of English enthusiasm for the
Alps. Professor Legouis allows this in his The Early Life of Words-
worth, 1770-1798 (Dent, 1921) before making his special claims for
Wordsworth's Alpine passages.

The philosopher Berkeley wrote quite prophetically in May 1714 in
the letter to Pope already quoted: "I know not whether it might not be
worth a poet's while to travel in order to store his mind with
strong images of Nature." - and, a little later, "to enable a man
to describe rocks and precipices, it is absolutely necessary that
he pass the Alps". In the succeeding ages, English poets travelling
were to borrow strong images from the scenery of other lands, particu-
larly the Alps.
their own country. Like Gray, they are content to make journeys to the lovelier parts of England, Scotland and Wales; and they settle happily in regions like the Lake District or Thames Valley. When they do go abroad, each travels to Switzerland, for the Alpine scenery, and their acquaintance with Italian nature comes almost by accident. Again, although Byron saw the Alps as he journeyed towards Venice, he was more excited by Nature in his ten days among the glaciers than in all the seven years he stayed in Italy, as Manfred (1817) and the September 1816 Journal fully show. His is a common finding of English poets from Thomson onwards, and specially characteristic of the Romantics who wrote perhaps their most ecstatic hymns to the divinity of the visible world when they saw the Alps before them - witness Wordsworth's Simples Pass, Shelley's Mont Blanc, and Coleridge's Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamonix.¹

The cult of Nature did not mean a new regard for Italy: the classical interest no longer recommended Italian scenes so strongly to the English; yet when our Romantics crossed the Alps, they found the country beautiful, they remembered it had been the home of the Ancients. Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley do make their own personal discovery of the "something more particular in the face of (the Italian countryside)", and, by virtue of the new sensibility, they evoke it more finely than their predecessors did. But theirs is no discovery in any general sense. Englishmen had always found the "Lovely Country" in going to Italy. What makes the Romantic account all the more familiar is that they acknowledge the classical shadow lying upon the countryside.

In Italy the new peculiarities of taste - the "picturesque"

¹ Although Coleridge's sight of the Alps was imaginary, his description reads like an experience.
and other forms of nature-worship - had made little difference to the traveller's experience, and this is probably seen most clearly in the way the classical traces kept their significance. For the English who affected the Natural sensibility, ruins generally had come to be an element in a "picturesque" landscape, and then, as they attracted more interest, a symbolic comment on the scene of life itself. But the classic ruins of Italy still testified to the greatness of the Romans and the Greeks, as the experience of our Romantic poets demonstrates. Admittedly, Shelley did seem for a moment to consider them just a part of the Italian scene when he wrote to Leigh Hunt of the Italy of countryside, coast, and ruins which so enchanted him (Letter to J.H. Leigh Hunt of 22/12/1818); and Byron in the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage used them so far as a personal image; but these instances become nothing when we remember how fervently Shelley worshipped at the open shrine of Pompei, or how enthusiastic Byron grew in celebrating Rome and Roman places. In short, Italy is not a country that recommends itself to our Romantic poets either by the natural or 'classical' quality of its scenes, yet when they go there, they do homage to these as Addison and other Tourists had done before them.

One last point might be made before the subject of Italian scenery is left. Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley did not find the landscape of Italy "romantic" as some earlier travellers had done - that is, in the sense that it reminded them of tales or "romances" they had read.¹

Edward /

¹ Professor Mario Praz agrees with Logan Pearsall Smith in distinguishing the earliest precise meaning of the epithet "romantic" in English to be "like the old romances". See the second edition of The Romantic Age (Oxford Univ. Press, 1951), p. 11 et seq.
Edward Wright, for example, seems to have seen the country as a fit setting for Ariosto's incidents, when he remarked on the road from San Remo to Genoa:— "the nearer (prospects) often romantick enough, and would have been fine situations for enchanted castles". The fact is not that our poets were insensitive to this sort of "romantic" suggestion. Wordsworth entertained it seldom but Byron and Shelley responded to it quite markedly. What has to be seen is that this particular sort of interest depends on the traveller's imaginative background rather than on the look of the country he is visiting; that Italy would not necessarily be everyone's "romantic" land. As it happened, Byron found his in the Levant that had been the scene of his favourite early reading, and Shelley's was, if anything, the Switzerland that he already "knew" from the novels of Rousseau and Godwin. Admittedly, a trace of an Italy "romantic" in this sense is to be found in Byron's regard for Venice.¹ But it must be remembered that this was one quite particular city, not the Italian landscape, and that the poet probably found as William Beckford had done that "it is certain my beloved town of Venice ever recalls a series of Eastern ideas and adventures", and liked it the more because it reminded him of the true homeland of his imagination. With this exception it is quite clear that in the special matter of drawing literary suggestions from landscape, our poets hailed Italy as a renowned and classic, not a "renown'd romantic land".²

1. "I loved her from my boyhood; she to me
   Was as a fairy city of the heart
   .......And Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare's art
   Had stamp'd her image in me, .....

   [Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV, Stanza xvii]

2. "Oh, lovely Spain! renown'd, romantic land...."
   [Idem, Canto I. Stanza xxxv/
4. Possibly strengthened elements in the Romantic poets' experience of Italy

In the preceding parts of this chapter our study has been to trace the development of the English traveller's interest in Italy's Nature, Art and classical past, and to demonstrate the fundamental oneness of this from Addison's time to Wordsworth's. Now we are to treat briefly of two further attributes of Italy - its history and its literature - and of the Italians themselves. All of these were much more generally discussed by the English of the High Romantic period than they were by those of the Augustan, and so it might be expected that our poets' experience will reflect the greater interest of their time. As far as the present consideration of the literary and historical aspects of Italy is concerned, no attempt will be made to describe the quickening in Italian studies, or the growing appreciation of Italian history that England had seen in the course of the eighteenth century, as to trace the one from Pope, Thomas Gray and the Wartons to Thomas Mathias and William Roscoe, and the other from Edward Gibbon and William Robertson to Henry Hallam would occupy more than a few pages. These movements can only be referred to, since our interest is

1. Professor Roderick Marshall has studied these two developments in his Italy in English Literature, 1755-1819 (Columbia University Press, 1934), a work of some four hundred pages. In this he treats as works of cardinal importance Mathias's Pursuits of Literature (1794-97) edition of Gray's works (1814); Roscoe's two volumes on Medici /that on Lorenzo the Magnificent (1795), that on Leo the Tenth (1806); Gibbon's The Decline and Fall &c. (1776-1788) and Antiquities of the House of Brunswick (1796); Robertson's History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V (1769), and a few other works including translations such as Cary's Version of Dante (1814). He also gives consideration to Thomas Warton's History of English Poetry (1774-81), but does not note how Warton, in introducing the matter of Italian influence on English poetry prominently into his study, was realising the project that first Pope and then Gray had contemplated. The question of how the famous "pamphlet" by Pope summarising English poetry as a succession of schools, mostly of Italian origin, passed first to Gray, who amplified it, and then to Warton, who made use of it in his work, has, it appears, still to be examined in full.
is strictly limited to examining the possible change they may have brought in the English and so, our Romantic poets', experience of Italy. This matter will be studied here in outline and with more detail in the individual chapters.

(i) Awareness of Italy's literature and history

It is to be noticed first of all that an awareness of Italy's literature and history had always constituted something of an element in the English account of the country, and travellers right throughout the eighteenth century were on occasions mindful of them. To give examples, Addison remarked on "the singing stanzas out of Tasso at Venice", the custom which "Childe Harold" was to regret as having passed, and also recorded Ariosto's study at Ferrara a good century before Byron did. Again the story of the Cenci family, the subject of Shelley's play (1819), was given by John Russell in Letters from a Young Painter (1750), and quite dramatically too;¹ that of Marino Faliero which Byron turned into a drama in 1820, had already drawn comment from several travellers, Edward Wright, Lady Miller and Dr John Moore² among them. As for literary reminiscence, Italy never stimulated the young Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley to this, as much as it did William Beckford, whose travels reminded him not only of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto and Tasso, but Sannazaro, Marini, Metastasio and others.

When we look closer into the matter we find that while

---

1. Russell describes the fate of Beatrice Cenci for a female correspondent, and ends by saying: "You see, Madam, my willingness to excuse as far as possible this beautiful criminal: before whom it is time to let the curtain fall." (op. cit., Vol.II, p.239).
2. In the preface to his play Byron takes objection to Moore's account.
English travellers of the later eighteenth and the earlier nineteenth centuries generally seem more interested in Italy's literature and history than their predecessors, the new interest does not amount to a universal enlightenment. For a few like Joseph Forsyth or William Stewart Rose¹ what has happened and what has been written in Italy are familiar and particularly absorbing matters; but for the majority these continue to have a definitely limited importance. The reason for this will be readily appreciated. The traveller's awareness of a country's past and writers is usually stirred by the places that these have made significant. But knowledge of Italy's history and literature was not to add another dimension to the face of the country, because Italy was already storied for the Englishman by the thoughts and actions of the Romans and Greeks. These associations, we have seen, continued strong into the High Romantic period. In this way they kept our poets and their contemporaries from regarding Italy simply as the land commemorated by the Divine Comedy, or Machiavelli's Florentine History.

Of course, it was possible that the new Italian associations, literary and historical, might subsist at the side of the classical ones without replacing or overlaying them. This happened, in fact, and Italian was accommodated to Roman, Dante taking his place by Virgil, Gaston de Foix standing by Scipio. But here again there was a difference. The educated English traveller inevitably knew something of Roman events, of Latin writers, and Italy could hardly fail to remind him of this; but a knowledge of the more modern history and

¹. Forsyth's book is Remarks on Antiquities, Arts and Letters during an excursion in Italy (second edition, 1816); William Stewart Rose's Letters from the North of Italy to Henry Hallam, Esq. (1819).
and literature of the country did not make part of the Englishman's education in the early nineteenth century any more than it did in the early eighteenth, or, for that matter, at the present day. Awareness of these Italian matters, then, is still found to vary greatly from traveller to traveller in the new period, and has to be studied in each individually.

Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley sojourning in Italy do reflect the more general regard of the times for its literature in their particular ways; for example, Byron and Shelley make pilgrimages to the tombs of Dante (newly recognised in England) and Petrarch (to whom fame in England had been restored). Byron's experience of the country, too, moved him to bring great Italian poets into his works - Dante and Tasso. But what is particularly noticeable in our Romantic poets' feelings for Italian literature as these are stirred by their Italian experiences is that they regard Italy as possessing a great older literature, but not as having a really important contemporary one. They do reverence to Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Ariosto, Tasso, Michelangelo, Filisaja, Chiabrera, not the recent poets. True, Byron admired works by Alfieri and Monti, but we shall find that his passing remembrance of the first in Santa Croce did not amount to a recognition of him as one of the great Italians, no more /

1. Dante's reputation in England can be considered as assured by 1814 when Cary's celebrated blank-verse translation of La Divina Commedia as The Vision of Dante appeared. The fortunes of Petrarch in eighteenth century England are not easily summarised, but it is interesting to note how much his new reputation owed to his 'canzone' addressed to Italy which appealed to the growing sentiments of national Liberalism. See Marshall's Italy in English Literature 1755-1815.

2. See the works by Byron devoted to these figures. The question of Italian experience resulting in Italian literary influence - (for example, was it being in Italy that made Byron aware of Pulei and the other heroi-comic poets?) - will be left over to the individual chapters on Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley.
more than his meeting the second at Milan was an occasion for doing homage.

This last finding is important. It means that the Silver Age of Italian letters, as Forsyth named the decades of Alfieri, Parini, Monti and Foscolo, did not induce our Romantics to see Italy as a country which was enjoying a period in which memorable works of poetry were being created. Many of their English contemporaries did see the new flowering of Italy's poetic genius. Why it did not impress Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley was not only because of their comparative lack of interest in the recent and contemporary literary activities of the Italians, but also because they were particularly interested in those of other peoples. The late foreign authors most important to our Romantics were French - Voltaire and Rousseau; the important living ones, German - Schiller, Goethe, and lesser names. In short, the Italian experience of Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley argues that the modern literature of the country was still neglected by English men of letters in an attention paid to the contemporary writing of other parts of Europe, as it had been in the days when Addison visited Boileau at Paris, but did not seek out Italian writers, not Filicaja at Florence. The new interest in Italian letters had not been.

1. It is Macaulay who points out in his celebrated essay on Addison that "he seems not to have been at all aware that at Florence he was in the vicinity of a poet with whom Boileau could not sustain a comparison, of the greatest lyric poet of modern times, of Vincenzo Filicaja." (The Life and Writings of Addison, Edinburgh Review, July 1843). Extragant opinions of Filicaja's merits, like this of Macaulay's, are found commonly in the High Romantic period, for example, in Wordsworth's note to his sonnet on The Siege of Vienna raised by John Sobieski (1816) in which Filicaja's poems on the same occasion are described as "superior perhaps to any lyrical pieces that contemporary events have ever given birth to, those of the Hebrew Scriptures only excepted". For some account of the development of Filicaja's English reputation, see Professor Marshall's Italy in English Literature, 1755-1815.
not quite transformed the literary aspect of the country for our Romantic poets.

Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley as poets were so far interested in the literature of Italy, but only Byron took marked notice of the country's history, and that almost exclusively of its Venetian passages. This regard of the poet's for the city's past enters his Italian experience quite prominently. It undoubtedly influenced his decision to make his first Italian residence there, he feeling something of the Republican sympathy Dr. John Moore expressed when he said: — 'the independence of Venice was not built on usurpation, nor cemented with blood; it was founded on the first law of human nature, and the undoubted rights of man.' It also governed the poet's intention to dramatise striking passages from history; the first and only subjects he found were from the annals of the Doges, the stories of Faliero and the Foscarri. But Byron no more than Shelley or Wordsworth exhibits the new appreciation of Italy's mediaeval, Renaissance, and later ages that was coming into being at the time — as an instance it might be mentioned that Henry Hallam's View of the State of Europe in the Middle Ages was published in 1818. Like Shelley, Byron knew Sismondi's L'Histoire des Républiques Italiennes au Moyen Âge (1807-1618)¹, Roscoe's two Medici-Renaissance studies, Gibbon's writings on Italy², but Byron's picture of the Middle Ages in The

1. Shelley, we remember, began setting one of the immemorial incidents in this work — that of Pietro Mareschi, the brave Florentine — to verse, but did not take it far. See the poet's note to the fragment Mareschi (1818).

2. Byron's Parisina (1816) was "grounded on a circumstance mentioned in Gibbon's 'Antiquities of the House of Brunswick'". See the Advertisement to the poem.
The Prophecy of Dante shows little profit from this reading. In fact it quite ignores the Italian "Republics" which Thomson was careful to record fully eighty years earlier.¹

We will see that our Romantics did not surpass their predecessors notably in an understanding of Italy's history, in spite of their greater opportunity; that although they made more of universal Freedom, their Italian reading and experience provided little food for this enthusiasm. They could not appreciate the background to Italy's present subjection. It is not surprising, then, that their disappointment at the country seen in the light of ideal Freedom should be simply a developed form of the Classical Tourist's finding that Liberty had deserted the country with the passing of the Romans. But in Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley, this gloomy conclusion is singularly unrelieved. No one of them ever found a living image of Liberty in the Italian landscape as Addison did when he came upon the little Republic of San Marino:— "Nothing indeed can be a greater Instance of the natural Love Mankind has for Liberty, and of their Aversion to Arbitrary Government, than such a Savage Mountain cover'd with People, and the Campania of Rome, that lyes in the same country, almost destitute of Inhabitants." Nor did any of them leave off chiding and rallying "slavish" Italy to exclaim in the compassionate strain of Thomson:—

"Ah, /

¹. Thomson's description of the Gothic night that descended upon Europe is relieved by his noticing "the republics of Florence, Pisa, Lucca, Sienna"; the "free states and cities" of the Lombard plain, the Genoa of "her Dorias", and Venice where something of "the old Roman flame" was kept alive (see Liberty, Book IV, 11.264-321 and Notes). In Byron's "Italian" poems Venice is the only one that is remembered for "her years of freedom". Shelley, on the other hand, refers generally to "many a warrior-peopled citadel" that "arose in sacred Italy", during "the thousand years" from Roman times to Renaissance in his Ode to Liberty (1820).
"Ah, poor Italia! what a bitter cup
Of vengeance hast thou drained! Goths, Vandals, Huns,
Lombards, barbarians broke from every land,
....Where hadst thou treasures for this rapine all?"

[Liberty, Part IV, 11. 108-117].

(ii) Regard for the Italians: the two Italies

It will be noticed that the English attitude to the Italians themselves has not been specifically treated in this first chapter. The omission is intentional not only because of the broadness of the subject, but because any one who reads the accounts of Englishmen travelling through Italy in the eighteenth century will not be aware of any progressive universal change in their feelings towards the inhabitants. What is noticeable rather is that this was always an individual matter; and that so many of the travellers chose to ignore the Italian populace as far as they could. This habit of taking Italy virtually without the Italians persists then; and if Addison in 1700 exhibits a rare indifference to them, Shelley quite outdoes this in the next century with a violent instinctive dislike, which was to keep his experience defective in the "human part" to the end. Shelley, in fact, gives us the clearest statement of the matter when he speaks of the two Italies - the one of the countryside, coast, the ruins which he found "sublime and lovely"; the other of society which was "most degraded, disgusting, and odious". (Letter to J.H. Leigh Hunt of 22/12/1818). Although few of his countrymen shied so viciously at first sight of the Italians, the poet spoke for a great many in distinguishing the two Italies.

It is still true, however, that by the time Dr. Moore came to write his considerate View of Society and Manners in Italy (1781) that one /
one or two of the traditional English prejudices about the Italians had weakened. The Protestant hostility towards Italy as the stronghold of the Pope was drying down after its late aggravation by the events of the '45 Rebellion; and instances, too, of the Italians' being despised as the "base, degenerate progeny of Rome"¹ are not so common, nor is this general attitude in the new, less determined Classical Tourist. But a sympathetic appreciation of the Italians did not follow from these relentings. On the one hand, a fair understanding of the people is found much earlier in individuals such as Edward Wright or John Russell;² and, on the other, many in the new age show clearly that the old prejudices have not been laid once for all. Our Romantics are among the latter, Shelley making a severe attack upon the "Catholic" morality of the Italians,³ and all three, Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley vituperating the modern people in the name of the Romans and the Greeks.

We have seen that by the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the classical prejudices common to the English travellers' view /

1. The quotation is from Addison's Letter from Italy &c. In the year 1701 in which he is led to say, gazing upon the triumphal arches of Rome: "Where the old Romans' deathless acts display'd Their base, degenerate progeny upbraid".

2. Wright said of the Italians that they were "extremely sober": "the least provacious of all people": "a people very well to live with" /Observations &c. (1750)/. Russell, who also makes favourable comments in the course of his Letters from a Young Painter &c. (1750) defends the Italian people from the attacks contained in a current English travel-book A Short Account of a Late Journey to Tuscany, Rome and other Parts of Italy (London, 1741) (attributed to Stephen Whatley in Cambridge Bibliog.), in Letter XXX of Volume 1.

3. In the Preface to The Cenci (1819). The "vituperations" will be detailed in the following chapters.
view of Italy had lost strength. As a result it was possible that a greater attention might be paid to the Art, Nature, history and literature of Italy, or even to the Italians themselves. But the new travellers were not prepared for these other aspects of Italy by their education and background as they were still prepared for Italy's "classical character". The greater appreciation of the modern country depended, instead, upon the powers and interests of the individual. Some travellers are found who do combine a new awareness of the peculiarly Italian attributes of Italy with the traditional regard for the classical, and give an account of the country that is both rounded and finely detailed. Their number is small, but they were recognised by their contemporaries. One of them, in particular, was	
honoured by those who knew his Remarks on Antiquities, Arts and Letters &c. (2nd ed., 1816) as the paragon of Italian travellers in their time - Joseph Forsyth of Elgin. Forsyth was recognised as a considerable spokesman on Italy by the Romantics themselves.¹ Their deference is eloquent. None of them, not even Byron at his most "Southern" set up as an expert on country and people.

This was right. They had not appreciated the Italian with exceptional discrimination. The Romantic experience of Italy is remarkable for some passages of a highly individual colouring, but not /

---

¹ "Mr Forsyth...the most intelligent of our countrymen (in Italy)"
J. C. Hobhouse in Historical Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (1818); "Mr Forsyth, our best Italian traveller...." W. S. Rose in Letters from the North of Italy to Henry Hallam, Esq. (1819); "Mr Forsyth...a late traveller of much shrewdness and pith" J. H. Leigh Hunt in his Autobiography. Byron's opinion of Forsyth is strongly favourable (see Letter to John Murray, 28-29/10/1820); Shelley's less so, (Letter to T. L. Peacock, 23/3/19); and Wordsworth simply acknowledges Forsyth as an authority in a note to his poem on The Pillar of Trajan (1837): "Here and infra, see Forsyth".
not specially noteworthy in the history of the Englishman's awareness of Italy, repeating, as it does, so many of the old Classical Tourist's findings. A Forsyth, a Lady Holland, 1 a Rose gives us a far surer measure of the new possible enlightenment with which the English could regard the Italian scene. The Italy of the English Romantic poets recommends itself to us rather by its extremely interesting character, by the striking way in which it is focussed by both the 'Classical' vision and the personal. It is now time to see how Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley exhibit this individually.

1. Lady Holland's journal for the years 1791-1811 was only published in 1908. The Journal of Elisabeth, Lady Holland, 1791-1811, edited by the Earl of Ilchester (Longmans, Green & Co.). In her remarks on Italy she clearly evinces the new two-fold appreciation, taking a marked interest in Italian arts and letters as well as in the Greek and Roman remains. Her own opinion was that when an English traveller first entered Italy he was engaged by classical sentiments, but that "when the turbulence of the imagination subsides", modern Italy became his greater interest.

Her Journal also testifies to the ease with which she moved in Italian society - aristocratic, literary, artistic - a familiarity which, quite lacking in Wordsworth and Shelley, was only so far cultivated by Byron. She knew, among others, Madame Albany and Alfieri ("the great Sophocles of Italy", who "when he condescended to unbend, was very good company"): Canova and the Abbruzzi circle at Venice (Byron was to become acquainted with the latter); the Abate Casti, Giuseppe Acerbi and lesser writers. We remember, too, that Foscolo was welcome at Holland House when he came to England in 1816.
1. Wordsworth's discovery of Italian Nature

It was in August 1790, during his third summer holiday from Cambridge, that the young Wordsworth made acquaintance with Italy. Our records of the trip are quite full: the long letter to Dorothy from Switzerland (from Keswill on the Lake of Constance, 6/10/90), and the poetic accounts — the immediate one that comes in Descriptive Sketches &c. (1793), the reminiscent passage of Book Sixth of The Prelude (1805-6), and the rehandled versions of both prepared in 1849-50. In all these the poet lets us see clearly what impressed him, and more important, gives the commentary of his feelings so that, for our purpose, the Italy of Wordsworth's earliest experience is there to be traced.

(i) First acquaintance with Italy

It is clear that Wordsworth's first Continental trip had little in common with the Grand Tour that his contemporaries were still making. Wordsworth himself in dedicating Descriptive Sketches (1793) to his travelling-companion, the Rev. Robert Jones, ostentatiously contrasts their simple manner of journeying with that of "two companions lolling in a post-chaise". This was not the only difference. The young men of wealth travelling by coach would be bound for the great places of Europe, and particularly Classical Italy. Wordsworth was abroad for a different end. He wanted to meet /

1. As we are concerned with Wordsworth during the High Romantic period (1790-1825), the 1793 version of Descriptive Sketches &c. and the 1805-6 Prelude will be used here and throughout.
meet Nature that he knew so well in Northern England, in other countries. So he chose a way through Europe that would take him directly to the country most celebrated for scenery - Switzerland. He went straight -

"To where the Alps, ascending white in air, 
Toy with the Sun, and glitter from afar".

As for his experience of Italy, this was limited to appreciating the northernmost parts of Piedmont and Lombardy as examples of Alpine scenery. The subtitle to Descriptive Sketches runs: - "In verse. Taken during a Pedestrian Tour in the Italian, Grison, Swiss, and Savoyard Alps".

The continental tour undertaken to indulge a special interest was no new thing by 1790. Dr. Burney had gone abroad twenty years earlier to learn "the state of music in France and Italy", and in the same year Lady Miller was moving about Europe to appreciate works of art, although she dropped remarks on many other subjects. In these instances a journey undertaken to hear music or visit picture galleries had unquestionably meant a journey to Italy. Wordsworth, as the votary of Nature, was not so inevitably led there. His particular worship did not suggest an Italian pilgrimage, but a Swiss one, and when the poet entered Italy it was in search of Alpine landscapes. We shall see that in spite of his purpose being so opposite to that of the Classical Tour, Wordsworth like Dr. Burney, like Lady Miller, like his true fore-runner, Oliver Goldsmith, could not set foot in Italy without meeting places and scenes evocative of the Classical.

Wordsworth's /
Wordsworth's first experience of Italy, then, took a shape that we know from earlier travellers - a journey into Italy for some other definite purpose than that of the Classical Tour and yet a journey which touched upon Classical Italy. In calling Goldsmith the "true fore-runner" of Wordsworth, I am suggesting that Wordsworth's tour is not even original in its more particular character. After all, Goldsmith roaming through Europe with his flute and little other baggage had anticipated the "knapsack-tour" of 1790 by almost forty years. This is not all. Wordsworth's poetic purpose as he expressed it in Descriptive Sketches comes out as a remarkable parallel to the aims of Goldsmith in The Traveller - from the beginning where the poet is introduced as the disconsolate man who travels to escape his sorrows, to the full design of each poem which is presenting in the one instance, a prospect of society, in the other, a panorama of nature, both made a subject of a moralising enquiry. The likeness between the experience and the poetic accounts of these two men allow us to see where Wordsworth's true originality lay. It was not in making a foot-tour through several European countries to satisfy a personal interest. It was in being so incomparably struck with the Nature of these countries. This is particularly true of his experience of Italy. Italian Nature as Wordsworth knew it first on the shores of Lake Como came to him with the power of a revelation; and he traced its loveliness with a passion and devotion not found before.

(iii) /

1. Like Wordsworth, Goldsmith did not complete his poem during, or immediately after, his actual journey, but whereas Descriptive Sketches &c. was written within three years from its first conception in 1790, Goldsmith waited nine years, from 1756 to 1764, before he gave The Traveller its final form.
(ii) Italy in Descriptive Sketches &c. (1793)

The fullest account we have of Wordsworth's first encounter with Italy comes in the long Descriptive Sketches &c. Considered as part of the whole poem, the passage devoted to the two days by the side of Como is exceptional as being the one in which Wordsworth is least distracted from the occupation he has chosen - to describe Nature as she appears in these foreign regions. In the earlier part of the poem, humans enter the scene to distress him: the French Revolutionaries violating, as he imagined, the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse, the poor Gryson gypsy who seemed persecuted by the universe itself. In the latter section of his tour-poem, Wordsworth has become interested in Nature as it is seen and enjoyed by free men. Only at Como does he find landscape and figures that give him peace to contemplate what he loved - the earth's natural face.

The lines to this northern Italian lake could quite well be taken by themselves as an idyll, were it not for the intrusion of classical reminiscence. Even as Wordsworth adores the beauty of water and slope, and admires, too, the beauty of the girls in the foreground, he remarks that these people who seem so given to pleasure and love seem also oblivious of the Romans who knew these places before them -

"Soft bosoms breathe around contagious sighs,  
And amorous music on the water dies.  
Needless how Pliny, musing here, survey'd  
Old Roman boats and figures thro' the shade,  
Pale Passion, overpower'd, retires and woos  
The thicket, where th' unlisten'd stockdove coos".

Why this obliviousness of the ancients should be mentioned is not made clear /
clear at this point. The poet continues to celebrate the loveliness before him, but as he takes his farewell of Como and the Italians there, he suddenly condemns the merry-making by the lakeside, because Como's

".....fragrant gales and lute-resounding streams
Breathe o'er the failing soul voluptuous dreams;
While Slavery, forcing the sunk mind to dwell
On joys that might disgrace the captive's cell,
Her shameless timbrel shakes along thy marge,
And winds between thine isles the vocal barge".

What comes so abruptly and belatedly into Wordsworth's poem is a charge against the Italians that, found in many English travel-books throughout the eighteenth century, is particularly explicit in the most noted or representative tour-poems.¹ The substance of the accusation is that the Italians are the unworthy successors of the Romans, and that, instead of being ashamed at their own degeneracy, they have abandoned themselves to lascivious music and love-making.

In The Traveller (1764), we read:-

"But small the bliss that sense alone bestows,
And sensual bliss is all the nation knows..."

The /

1. I take, for "the most noted or representative tour-poems" of the eighteenth century - Addison's Letter from Italy &c. (1701), Thomson's Liberty (1735-36) and Goldsmith's The Traveller (1764). Thomson's work qualifies as a tour-poem, being a vision that came upon him as he was visiting Rome: and it did enjoy a fair reputation before Dr. Johnson damned it by his indifference. There are a good many tour poems to be found throughout the century, few of them distinguished as verse, (see Professor Marshall, op.cit.) but the one which Wordsworth quoted in a note to The River Duddon sonnet - series (1820) is not yet "known as (it) deserves" - John Dyer's The Ruins of Rome (1740). This work is of too particular a nature to be introduced in the text above, but it can be seen as a certain illustration of my arguments in Chapter One: it shows that before the middle of the century the Classical interest was continuing strong, yet the personal note was already to be heard, this, in Dyer, being "the kindly Mood of Melancholy".
The "feeble heart and long-fall'n mind" of the Italians finds an "easy compensation" in -

"The paste-board triumph and the cavalcade; Processions form'd for piety and love, A mistress or a saint in every grove. By sports like these are all their cares beguil'd The sports of children satisfy the child; Each nobler aim, repress'd by long control, Now sinks at last, or feebly mans the soul; While low delights, succeeding fast behind In happier meanness occupy the mind: As in those domes, where Caesars once bore sway..."

[11.150-1527]

- and Goldsmith closes with an image to suggest how reprobate the Italians are, compared to the Romans.

Again, in Thomson’s *Liberty* (1735-36) the lines occur:

"By Oppression relentless seized their better joys, To the soft aid of cordial airs they fly, Breathing a kind of oblivion o'er their woes, And love and music melt their souls away..... ...... ye Romans! ...... What would you say, deep in the last abyss Of slavery, vice, and unsavious want, Thus to behold (Italy) sunk?"

[Part I, 11.189-192, 251 & 261-283]

Addison was briefest of all, saying of Italy -

"But what avails .......... The charms of nature, and the smiles of art, While proud oppression in her valleys reigns And tyranny usurps her happy plains?"

- and of the Italians -

"......the old Romans' deathless acts displayed Their base degenerate progeny upbraid...." 

That Wordsworth was repeating the traditional condemnation appears not only from the general resemblances between his lines and the foregoing, but by his echoing quite distinctly those by Pope in Book IV of the *Dunciad* that describe the young traveller in Italy who goes -

"To /
To happy convents, bosom'd deep in vines,
Where slumber Abbots, purple as their wines:
To isles of fragrance, lily-silvered vales,
Diffusing languor in the panting gales:
To lands of singing or of dancing slaves,
Love-whispering woods, and lute-resounding waves".

Descriptive Sketches (1793) has -

"...Como bosom'd deep in chestnut groves"

and -

"...Thy fragrant gales and lute-resounding streams
Breathe o'er the failing soul voluptuous dreams;
While Slavery......
Her shameless timbrel shakes along thy marge,
And winds between thy isles the vocal barge."  

The Italian passage in the Dunciad deplored the way in which young Englishmen employed their time, even while they trod "classic ground"; the Italian passage in the Descriptive Sketches assures us that the poet withstood the temptations of the country.

Wordsworth's tour-poem was the production of a student in his early twenties, but just because of this it shows how strongly the English prejudices about the Italians as a softly vicious race, about the seductive nature of Italy itself had continued. From the body of the Como passage it is clear that the poet had been completely charmed by the "voluptuous charaster",¹ as he called it, of the Italian scene, that "pale Passion" who watched the happy Italian girls was a figure for no one so much as himself, and finally that thought of the joys "that might disgrace the captive cell" delighted as well as shocked him. Yet the young Wordsworth was induced to pass a moral judgment upon the people and incidentally the country. This was /

¹. See the phrases in the 'argument' of Descriptive Sketches &c. (1793): "Lake of Como - Time, Sunset - Same Scene, Twilight - Same Scene, Morning, its Voluptuous Character".
was not only because he was the unconscious heir to the Protestant horror at Italy that is found from Elizabethan travellers onwards. Wordsworth seems more influenced by a later motive for disgust which is proper to the era of the Grand Tour, namely, that the Italians could make light of their being subject to foreign dominion, that they did not show their want of freedom. How Wordsworth, like the Classical Tourists before him, could despise the Italians in the name of Liberty - a Liberty that was conceived as both Roman and British will be considered in a later part. Here we must see how his appreciation of the Italian scene differed from that of travellers before him, and also the unique importance the Nature of Italy had for him personally.

(iii) Italian Nature in tour-poems from Addison to Wordsworth

As Wordsworth's detailed impressions of Lake Como are embodied in his Descriptive Sketches, and so are necessarily of a poetic nature, it will be useful to compare them with the natural passages /

1. The outcry against Italian ways that is heard in Roger Ascham (who spent his nine days in Italy in 1551) and travellers of the Elizabethan age proper, was that of the Puritan, but in the period of the Grand Tour a new sort of condemnation of the Italians by the English is to be noticed. This is not on religious grounds so much as political, because the Grand Tour came into being in the age that saw the Glorious Revolution in England; and an Addison travelling in Italy a dozen years after this event prided himself rather on his national superiority as a free Briton, than on his moral superiority as a Protestant. Joseph Baretti, the Italian of Dr. Johnson's circle, who was not afraid to attack the superior English way of travelling altogether in his An Account of Manners and Customs in Italy (1766), sparing none from Ascham to Addison, traces the Briton's lack of sympathy for the Italians simply to hatred of Catholicism, and fails to see, or ignores, the British "justification" for despising his countrymen as "political slaves". For an account of Baretti's literary "duel", for the honour of Italy, with Dr. Samuel Sharp, the author of Letters from Italy (1766), see P.F. Kirby, op.cit., Appendix 4.
passages in earlier tour-poems rather than the stray observations found in travel-books. The works I shall adduce for this purpose will be Addison's Letter from Italy &c., Thomson's Liberty, and Goldsmith's The Traveller.¹

The first peculiarity that distinguishes Wordsworth's treatment of Italian Nature from that of Goldsmith, or Thomson, or Addison, is that whereas it comes into the picture that these others give of Italy, in Descriptive Sketches, it is the whole picture. The scenes of Italy had long been counted among the chief pleasures it held for the traveller; and so, although Addison in Italy was concerned with the Classical, Thomson, with the fate of ancient Liberty, and Goldsmith, with Society, they still recorded the country's natural beauty. Their own primary interest did not forbid their attending to Nature. Wordsworth's passion for Nature itself is of another order. It absorbs him. He sees the people at Como simply as the liveliest part of the scene.² They do not remind him of their history. Nothing he sees reminds him that Italy is also famed for other endowments such as Art. Only the classical aspect of the country which his education had made him aware of was not annihilated by his blind devotion to the Natural.  

1. See Page 42, Note 1.

2. Wordsworth did encounter one little group of Italians that had a more particular significance for him than the happy young people dancing about the lake. This was when he came upon a cottage hid in the woods about Como, where an old man lived in "redbreast peace" with children and grandchildren - "A Hermit - with his family around" ² see Descriptive Sketches (1793)11.168-175. Here Wordsworth had encountered an image of his ideal future life; and it is interesting to note that "sociable" Italy suggested a recluse with people about him, and not the complete solitary of Wordsworth's English countryside/see, for example, Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey (1798) - "Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire/ The Hermit sits alone." (11.21-22).
To come to the actual manner of representing the Italian countryside, all the poets from Addison to Wordsworth fixed on the sunny brilliance of the country, as Goldsmith expressed it, "Bright as the summer Italy extends"; Addison and Thomson suggest this a little more particularly; but Wordsworth's excitement at the general sunlight of Italy is so great that he spends line after line in trying to describe the actual way it plays about objects, and how this changes from one hour to another. Here we are touching the real difference between his description of Italy and that of his predecessors. For the young Wordsworth Italy meant a beautiful stretch of lakeland dazzling under the hot sun of August, meant, in fact, an immediate sensual experience. This experience was largely visual, and it is the predominance of real things observed closely and finely that distinguishes Wordsworth's first Italy from that of his predecessors.

When we turn from the passage in the Descriptive Sketches to the accounts of Italy's Nature in Addison, Thomson, Goldsmith, we cannot fail to notice that these last are not given in terms that are all, or nearly all, sensual. The warm luxuriance of Italy is appreciated as much for the produce as for the look it brings to the countryside.

---

1. Wordsworth's first two-day experience was actually of a sunny Italy; it is possible, too, that Goldsmith struck no bad weather during his visit; but Addison and Thomson in their longer sojourns would undoubtedly have encountered the "bad times" of the Italian climate. Whether it was described in immediate or conventional terms, the Italian scene in English poetry was one of blue skies and shining luxuriance until Shelley introduced a Tuscan landscape under a 'temporale' into his Letter to Maria Gisborne (1820):

````
...the hill
Looking hoary through the white electric rain,
And from the glens beyond in sullen strain,
The interrupted thunder howls;
````

(See the whole description, ll.114-126).
countryside; the Italians are envied the fruits of their happy climate and not only the smiling landscape. By contrast, the young Wordsworth does not praise the fertility of the country for itself; he delights in "the roofs of purple vines" and "little plots of wheaten glade" simply as parts of the wonderful scenery about Como. Again, even when the earlier poets do evoke a country place or region, they frequently do this, not with exact details drawn from sight, but in formalised or general epithets; for example, Addison speaks of "Baia's gentle seats" and "Umbria's green retreats", Thomson of "Baia's viny coast" and "Umbria's closing vales". Admittedly a poet like Goldsmith does attempt a "prospect of Italy" in The Traveller, but this sketch is static and idealised:

....."Bright as the summer Italy extends;
Its uplands sloping deck the mountain's side,
Woods over woods in gay theatric pride;
While oft some temple's mould'ring tops between
With venerable grandeur mark the scene".

The sun does not move on this landscape; the woods and temple could be any woods and temple. It is "picturesque" in the manner that Wordsworth intended to avoid in writing his own Descriptive Sketches.

Wordsworth tells us in a note to this poem (footnote to 11.332-347) that he had once given it the title of "Picturesque Sketches", but rejected the first word because "the Alps are insulted by (it)". In amplifying this remark, he explains that the scenery there "disdains the pencil", that at times, as during the "stormy sunset" he was describing, it positively forbad considerations of light-and-shade, all shadow being consumed in "a deluge of light or rather /
rather of fire". Our concern is not with Wordsworth's rejecting the "cold rules of painting" when he came to write of the Alps. The question is whether this conscious turning from the 'Picturesque' made a difference in the Como passage. We can see that it did. Wordsworth has not attempted to suggest the Italian landscape by selecting and arranging a few of its details as Goldsmith had done. Wordsworth's description ranges over the features of the Lake of Como without drawing them together in one view, without "framing" them. But what above all determines these lines as a "descriptive" and not a "picturesque" sketch is that in them sunlight and shadow have not been "disposed", but move, that the light-effects particularly are treated in a progressive way that might suggest the varying and constant blaze of the sun itself. In a word, the poet has done everything to give us a breathing impression of this place.¹

It is not surprising, after all, that Wordsworth who was so much the observer and the praiser of Nature, should record an Italy that in its living detail is new to English poetry. Although he knew the classical import of the scene before him, his interest in the natural for its own sake liberated him from any feeling of constraint. He was not kept from describing because what he saw had already been recorded. The earlier poets were not free in this way.

Addison /

¹. Wordsworth had, in fact, found out the advantage that poetry enjoyed over the visual arts - until the advent of the film. The poet can give a "moving picture" of a scene, whereas the painter with his "picturesque" method can only give set views. The impressionist Monet perhaps did as much as any artist could to overcome this handicap by painting several canvases of the one scene to show how the light effects changed with the passing of the day. See, particularly, his series of paintings on the West Front of Rouen Cathedral. It is interesting to remember that in Wordsworth's 'argument' to the Descriptive Sketches (1793), he groups his description broadly as "Lake of Como - Time, Sunset - Same Scene, Twilight - Same Scene, Morning...."
Addison had written daringly but unbelievingly:

"Oh oou'd the Muse my ravish'd breast inspire
With warmth like yours, and raise on equal fire,
Unnumber'd beauties in my verse shou'd shine,
And Virgil's Italy shou'd yield to mine!"

Thomson who so delighted in natural landscapes kept silent about Italy's beauties, partly because, like Addison, he could not see one without being reminded of lines by a Latin poet, and partly because he pretended that they had all withered with the passing of Roman Liberty, and that the Campagna, the "drear champaign", as he called it, was now the typical scene of the country. Goldsmith who was not the Classical Tourist, still made a classic ruin one of the few elements in his picture of Italy. Now while the young Wordsworth at Como did remember Pliny and "the old Roman boats and figures" that had been seen there once, he dwelt on the thought only for a moment, for two lines out of the ninety-six of his description. This is not enough to set his passage by those of the earlier poets, but only to point the difference. Wordsworth did not admire the scenes of Italy for being classically celebrated; he did not simply praise Italy for its natural beauty among other things; he was completely fascinated by Italian Nature as it was revealed to him in the burning presence of Como.

The last sentence leads us to a conclusion about the uniqueness of Wordsworth's first Italian experience as he describes it. It is not simply that classical associations enter so little and natural details so much - Como after all was far richer in the second - but that these last vibrate with an excitement that derives nothing from classical association. Italian Nature is appreciated first and last /
last for its immediate beauty. This is how Wordsworth added to the English account of Italy while he varied it. He did not forget the Classical, but he gave greater importance to Nature than had ever been given before, and so brought the "Lovely Country" more vividly into the world of English poetry.

(iv) The personal significance of Italian Nature for Wordsworth: Italy as a private image

Wordsworth's first experience of Italy as an English traveller, and in particular as an English poet travelling there, has been related to that of his predecessors, and has been found to exhibit something of the common regard for Italy as the homeland of the ancients, even while it was an encounter from quite other and more personally determined motives than those of the Classical Tourist. In short, here is an example of the Classical-individual appreciation of Italy. The individual part, that is, the significance of Wordsworth's visit in terms of his own life, has still to be considered and fortunately it can be suggested at no great length by referring to the testimony of his poetry.¹ This is now to be done because Wordsworth is one of the new tourists the sense of whose experience is not really conveyed unless it is studied in its quite personal as well as in its general aspect.

Just /

¹ Both Professor Legouis and Mr Hugh I'Anson Fausset find in their studies of Wordsworth that the best way of proceeding is to take the unusually complete autobiographical record contained in his poetry, particularly The Prelude, and corroborate this, where necessary, with letters, the accounts of others, &c. See The Early Life of Wordsworth by Legouis and The Lost Leader (London, 1933) by Hugh I'Anson Fausset. In the present chapter of this thesis, attention will likewise be directed to Wordsworth's own poetic testament.
Just how memorable Wordsworth's two days at Como proved to be for him can be guessed from the place they are given in his poetical autobiography *The Prelude*. One whole book of the original thirteen (1805-6) that make up the work is given to "Cambridge and the Alps" (Book Sixth), the larger part of it describes the journey he went in 1790, and while all of its stages are recorded with deep pleasure and gratitude, the "pair of golden days" on Como's bank are remembered with a special sort of fondness. The passage stands out here, as it did in *Descriptive Sketches*, because it still shows as the one time during his voyage of exploration, when Wordsworth encountered a completely happy Nature and was happy with her. In France in spite of "benevolence and blessedness/Spread like a fragrance everywhere", in spite of "dances of liberty", "the military glare of riotous men" was not far away. Switzerland brought disappointment as well as excitement, Wordsworth being disenchanted by the real Mont Blanc if wonder-struck at the Vale of Chamonix, and dismayed at having crossed the Alps without knowing it, though this was followed by the wonderful moment in the Simplon Pass. It is notable, too, that he omitted a large part of his reminiscences of the Swiss Alps in working from first draft to final version of *The Prelude* presumably as not being material enough to the story of his inner life. But while so many other sights and places were allowed to pass, Como remained and shone out incomparably.

To understand the way in which the northern Italian lake had attracted the young Wordsworth we have to return to *Descriptive Sketches*. It has been pointed out that the account of Italian Nature /
Nature given in this work is distinguished from that of earlier poets and travellers by its abundance of visual detail. When we consider the Como passage simply as an example of Wordsworthian poetry, it is still remarkable for this exact and copious observation. Later poems convince us that Wordsworth's feelings for Nature deepened, but they do not present landscapes as closely-traced as those he did about the year 1790. To take only the opening to Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey (1798), here the impression the scene makes is exquisitely conveyed, but the natural details of it have not been so thickly set or so particularised as those in the lines describing Como "bosom'd deep in chestnut groves".

It is in his earliest long poems, An Evening Walk (1793) and Descriptive Sketches (1793) that Wordsworth is devoted to the immediate appearances of things rather than the "forms" in Nature that he became so fond of contemplating either directly or as recollected images.

The /

1. See for example the description -

"To meadows thrown between, the giddy steeps
Tower, bare or silvan, from the narrow deeps.
To towns, whose shades of no rude sound complain,
To ringing team unknown and unaeging wain,
To flat-roof'd towns, that touch the water's bound,
Or lurk in woody sunless glens profound,
Or from the bending rocks obtrusive cling,
And o'er the whiten'd wave their shadows fling...."

(11.82-89)

Or, more vivid -

"Thy lake, mid smoking woods, that blue and grey
Gleams, streak'd or dappled, hid from morning's ray
Slow-travelling down the western hills, to fold
It's green-ting'd margin in a blaze of gold;
From thickly-glittering spires the matin-bell
Calling the woodman from his desert cell,
A summons to the sound of oars, that pass,
Spotting the steaming deeps to early mass;
Slow swells the service o'er the water born,
While fill each pause the ringing woods of morn".

(11.138-147).
The first of these works moves in the mountainous Lake District of Northern England; one passage of the second in a lake and mountain district of Northern Italy. Probably Wordsworth was fascinated by Como's scenery because it was ultimately so familiar and yet really so new to him. But the difference in the two landscapes is what we are made to feel from any comparison of the first poem with the Italian part of the second, and this difference, though it might appear one of outward detail, lies essentially in the separate ways the landscapes affect the poet. Wordsworth's converse with the stern features of the Westmoreland scene is already leading him towards his full, religious appreciation of English Nature, a regard instinct with love, but rarely expressing itself in a sensual excitement. In Italy where Nature closed him round with warmth and colour, he recognises nothing but the invitation to glory in his own senses.

It could be said that in his poem Wordsworth was simply giving new expression to a finding that Englishmen had made commonly for two centuries at least - that the airs of Italy had something relaxing, almost lascivious in them. Doubtless he does borrow something of the traditional opinion when he cries out so dutifully against the country's seductive charms. But Wordsworth gives a deeper meaning to this Nature of Italy than is found in other Englishmen, even the Shelley who not long after was to be so impressed by just the scenery of Como.1 Wordsworth at twenty was already the conscious /

1. Shelley could also say of himself - "No sooner had we arrived in Italy than the loveliness of the earth and the serenity of the sky made the greatest difference in my sensations" (Letter to T.L. Peacock, April 1818); and one of the first places where he felt this was in "the divine solitude of Como". But Como did not symbolise Italian Nature for Shelley, nor Nature acquire the same significance for him as it had for Wordsworth. What the two poets do share is the common English enthusiasm for the "blue skies and lightsome days" of Italy. See Chapter IV of the present work for a discussion of the importance Italian Nature had for Shelley personally.
conscious votary of Nature. At Como he felt a powerful temptation to become Nature’s voluptuary. He turned from this Earthly Paradise of Italy, not harshly, but with a loving regret that was to keep its image perpetually bright for him.

It is this first Italy of Nature that did grow to be an important image in Wordsworth’s life - the garden of sensual pleasure, the summer place where he had been so strongly attracted to the Woman. In fact, his figure for Como when he came to recall it fifteen years later was:

".......... a treasure by the earth
        Kept to itself, a darling bosom’d up
        In Abyssinian privacy.........."

When after fifteen years more had passed, Wordsworth returned to Como, he again celebrated the young Italian beauty -

"Such (but O lavish Nature! why
        That dark unfathomable eye,
        Where lurks a Spirit that replies
        To stilllest moods of softest skies,
        Yet hints at peace to be o’erthrown,
        Another’s first, and then her own?)
        Such haply, you ITALIAN maid....."

(From The Three Cottage Girls, Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820.)

but this second time the immediate bright variety of Como no longer absorbed him. It had shrunk to:-

"The towering maize.......       
        ....... the luscious fig;
        ....... paths sun-proof
        With purple of the trellis-roof,
        That through the jealous leaves escapes
        From Cadenabbi’s pendent grapes".

(From The Italian Itinerant, and the Swiss Goatherd)

which had made simply two details of his earlier fresh description.¹

Wordsworth /

¹. "And Silence loves it’s roof of purple vines.
        ...... fair dark-eyed maids
        Tend the small harvest of their garden glades,
        ...... their little plots of wheaten glade..."

/Descriptive Sketches (1793), 11. 91, 94-95 & 149/
Wordsworth still feels a delight in the Nature of Italy, but he can no longer celebrate it with singleness and passion. He grows at least as enthusiastic about other interests - the simple people, the art of the country. Most important, his consciousness of Italy's classic past is stronger; and from Como his thoughts turn to Paestum, Pompeii, Rome. Wordsworth, in short, is coming to the more usual, to the Classical Tourist's view of the country.

2. Wordsworth, Freedom, and Italy

Wordsworth's first trip into Italy, though of a brief and incidental character, issued in an appreciation of Italian Nature that is more intense than that of any other traveller known to us. For the poet himself, this earliest Italy of his experience became the image of a rich moment in his life - the youthful instant when his senses alone gave him the fullest pleasure. But, from the first, Wordsworth was aware, like other Englishmen, of Italy's character as the home of the Romans, and although this was never to captivate him entirely as the natural face of the country had done, it did come to be his chief interest as he travelled there. It was not, however, until 1837 that Wordsworth actually made the Classical Tour; in 1820 he left the country regretfully without seeing "the grandeur of /
of Rome";¹ but in the interval between his first and second trips, that is from 1790 to 1820, Wordsworth had moved from his weak "Roman" disapproval of the Italians in Descriptive Sketches to judging them explicitly in terms of a Liberty that he saw as both Classical and British, much as Addison and Thomson had done before him. This development will be considered before the more general question of Italy's classical importance for Wordsworth is taken up.

To the young Wordsworth the Italians at Como seemed to have forgotten their Roman ancestors and their own enslaved state in a round of music and love-making. As we noticed, his condemnation of this exhibits little force or coherence. He simply interrupts his praise of the lake and its happy inhabitants to make outbursts against the loose amorous Italian way of living - this, too, after he had so warmly celebrated the forms of the girls as they danced. In Descriptive Sketches (1793), Wordsworth is quite evidently repeating English prejudices which had not at this time become his own. In fact, /

1. See Stanzas composed in Simplican Pass ("1820 Memorials"). Wordsworth longed -
   "To range through the Temples of PAESTUM, to muse
   In POMPEII preserved by her burial in earth...."
   Although the Classical interest predominates, it does not conflict with others. Wordsworth had also desired to see Florence and its art -
   "The beauty of Florence, the grandeur of Rome,
   Could I leave them unseen, and not yield to regret?"
   - and he was strongly attracted by the "Miltonian shades" of Vallombrosa, as many earlier travellers had been - see the beginning of this poem, and the whole of poem XVIII of the 1837 Memorials,
   At Vallombrosa, in which Wordsworth at last sees -
   "Where our Milton was wont lonely vigils to keep
   For converse with God",
   and declares -
   ".... his Spirit is here".
fast, by calling both the Romans and Liberty to witness against
the Italians, he is borrowing the opinion that took definite form in
English tour-poems from Addison's *Letter from Italy* (1701) to
Thomson's *Liberty* (1735-36). This was briefly that the Italians
were to be condemned for not keeping, as the inheritors of the
Romans' country, the dearest Roman possession, Liberty; and no one,
it was made clear, sensed the absence of freedom in Italy more keenly,
or could pronounce upon it more securely than the Briton, because
Liberty now flourished in "Britannia's isle". In other words, an
Englishman born into the country that had known the Glorious Revolu-
tion was the true son of Ancient Liberty; in going to Rome he paid
homage to his spiritual ancestors; at the same time he could not
help seeing that compared to his own people, or to the Romans, the
modern Italians were slaves.¹

Wordsworth in his *Descriptive Sketches* was perpetuating
this traditional poetic judgment upon the Italians, even if he did not
entirely hold with it. When he came to visit Italy again, that is in
1820, he no longer cared to view the whole people in the light of
Freedom and contented himself with studying individuals, particularly
those of the simpler kind that he revered. So instead of general
remarks we are presented with two little sketches - of the Itinerant
and the Cottage-girl - which are incidentally the most sympathetic
portraits /

¹. Addison's *Letter* &c. (1701) is the first well-known tour-poem to
contrast the Italians with both the free Romans and the free British
Goldsmith asserts "There is in it a strain of political thinking
that was, at the time, new in our poetry", *The Beauties of English
Poetry* (1767), an argument that Thomson was to develop at great
length in his *Liberty*. I consider these poets as particularly
important in framing and perpetuating this condemnation of the
Italians in the name of Liberty, both ancient and modern, because
their works made it so explicit and concise that their successors,
and particularly later poets like the young Wordsworth, would be
content to think in their terms (see ante pp. 41-44).
portraits of modern Italians to be found in any of the poets we are considering. But even in these descriptive sketches of a new kind, he hints at the Addison-Thomson view of Liberty, and by the nature of the reference it is clear that he largely accepted it now. Encouraging the boy in his intention of visiting Britain on a pedlar's tour, Wordsworth tells him:

"What stirring wonders wilt thou see
In the proud Isle of liberty!"

Britain for the poet is the one land of the free, Italy, we are to understand, an enslaved country.

On the evidence of his tour-poems it would appear that Wordsworth's opinions of the Italians and their country had undergone no great change from 1790 to 1820, that they had not been affected by the revolutions in his more general opinions of Freedom. We remember how in the interim of his two Italian trips he had experienced "Free France" (1791-1792) and adopted the new 'Liberal' ideas; how later events turned him to a new reverence for traditional British Liberty; and how finally he attempted a reconciliation of the two creeds of Freedom, particularly in 1804-5 when he was writing the "French" Books of The Prelude. As for these developments' influencing his experience of Italy, it so happened that in 1790 Wordsworth had not yet caught fire with revolutionary doctrines, and that in 1820 he had so far abandoned these as to call Britain the home of the free. In fact, Wordsworth's impassioned discussions of Freedom would scarcely have touched his opinion of Italy at all, if he had not, during 1805, been led to reconsider people and country in a way so vivid that it almost amounted to a new experience of them.

The way in which Wordsworth came to introduce Italy into
Book Ninth of the 1805-06 Prelude was almost as accidental as his first experience of the country. The whole work is addressed to Coleridge who is occasionally referred to in person. As Wordsworth was writing the books on France and Freedom late in 1801, he was conscious that his friend was then in Sicily, and in a pause, directed these lines to him:

"Thus, O Friend!
Through times of honour, and through times of shame,
Have I descended, tracing faithfully
The workings of a youthful mind, beneath
The breath of great events, its hopes no less
Than universal, and its boundless love;
A story destined for thy ear, who now,
Among the basest and the lowest fallen
Of all the race of men, dost make abode
Where Etna looketh down on Syracuse,
The city of Timoleon! Living God!
How are the Mighty prostrated! they first,
They first of all that breathe should have awaked
When the great voice was heard from out the tombs
Of ancient Heroes. If for France I have griev'd
Who, in the judgement of no few, hath been
A trifler only, in her proudest day,
Have been distress'd to think of what she once
Promised, now is, a far more sober cause
Thine eyes must see of sorrow, in a Land
Strew'd with the wreck of loftiest years, a Land
Glorious indeed, substantially renown'd
Of simple virtue once, and manly praise,
Now without one memorial hope, not even
A hope to be deferr'd; for that would serve
To cheer the heart in such entire decay".

(ll. 942-966).

Here are the Italians despised in the name of Liberty, ancient and modern, by Wordsworth at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as they were by Addison and Thomson early in the eighteenth. There are differences. Freedom is no longer considered the right of one people, but of all; or to express it by the different metaphors that the poets of the two periods used - Liberty, the sun shining on one/
one country in each age has become Freedom, the rising ocean that shall sweep over all lands.\textsuperscript{1} Again, Addison and Thomson pointed to the Roman traces in Italy when they wished to shame the modern inhabitants.

\section*{1. The influence of Liberty} is consistently likened to that of the sun in the tour-poems of Addison, Thomson and Goldsmith; in fact as it affects Britain, it is regarded as a blessing that more than supplies natural warmth and light:

"O Liberty, thou goddess, heavenly bright
Thou mak'st the face of nature gay.
....We envy not the warmer clime that lies
In ten degrees of more indulgent skies" (that is, Italy)
"Tis Liberty that crown Britannia's isle
And makes her barren rocks and her bleak mountains smile."

- in Thomson -

"O blest Britannia! in thy presence blest
....The poor man's lot with milk and honey flows
And gilded with thy rays, even death looks gay.
Let other lands the potent blessings boast
Of more exalting suns."

\textit{Liberty, Part IV, ll.2.6-9.} See also Part I, ll.316-338 where Thomson contrasts Italy and England more specifically.

- in Goldsmith -

"Britain courts the western spring;
Where lawns extend that scorn Arcadian pride,
And brighter streams than fam'd Hydaspes glide.
There all around the gentlest breezes stray,
There gentle music melts on every spray;
Creation's mildest charms are there combin'd ....
Thine, Freedom, thine the blessings pictur'd here
Thine are those charms that dazzle and endear."

On the other hand, the Romantics, to suggest the advent of Freedom that must come to all peoples, and cannot come without violence, favour the image of mounting waves from Wordsworth's -

"O give great God to Freedom's waves, to ride
Sublime o'er conquest, tyranny and pride"

to Byron's -

"Through Calpe's strait the rolling tides advance, &c."

\textit{The Age of Bronze, ll.280-289.}

and -

".....murmuring Liberty's wide waves, which blend
Their roar even with the Baltic's."

\textit{Don Juan, Canto VI, Stanzas xciii.}

See also Byron's diary-entry for 9/1/1821:

"It is .... the spirit of liberty which must be spread. The waves which dash upon the shore &c."
inhabitants, Wordsworth to the Greek. But under these differences, greater and less, the charge against the Italians of indifference to Freedom is substantially the same in Addison, Thomson and Wordsworth, or, if anything, it has become more outright in Wordsworth, because in his time a general call had gone out to the peoples of Europe to liberate themselves, and the Italians had not "awaked (at) the great voice .... from out the tombs of ancient Heroes".

This is the first instance we have met of a Romantic poet applying the new 'Liberal' ideas to Italy with the seemingly paradoxical consequence of their meaning less sympathy for the enslaved Italians, instead of more. But the paradox is only apparent, because the Revolutionary principles as we find them expressed in Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley do not reflect simply a tenderness for oppressed peoples. They amount, in the first place, to a recognition of each nation's right to be free, but they also imply readiness and courage in that nation to win its own independence. In fact, the new doctrine of Freedom provided an unequivocal test for judging the moral worth of peoples - were they brave enough to rise? Wordsworth here in 1805, Byron in 1820, were to rail against the Italians for their apathy to a Freedom that was still considered Classical in its ideal origins. Shelley, too, was to have little real faith in the people of Italy even while in his poetry he dared them to be free.

The absence of general unrest in Italy, the failure of the first revolts there, the long preparation the Italians had to undergo before there could be a Risorgimento - these negative signs were to make the younger Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley, view the cause of Italian independence with disgust, despair, or at best a restrained benevolence.
benevolence. These poets could understand peoples like the Americans, the French, the Spaniards and the Greeks who seemed, in turn, to have gone "wild about Liberty"¹ and they applauded these. But in Italy enthusiasm for the new Age of Freedom was not to be encountered on every hand, and our poets, whose appreciation of the country's history was limited, and patience for difficulties of the moment, small, could not truly sympathise with the Italians as they were. In fact, Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley were each to damn the people for being dead to the cause of Freedom. This was not necessarily their last word. To take Wordsworth by himself again - he was the first one who used the new Freedom to decry the Italians in the old style; but although he said in The Prelude that Italy was -

"Now without one memorial hope, not even
A hope to be deferr'd..........."

he had not, in fact, given up all thought of Italian independence. However much he doubted circumstances, he would never, as a new 'Liberal', deny the possible advent of Freedom.

The new 'Liberalism' (and Wordsworth retained something of it to the end) was always interested in any oppressed nation that might free itself, and opposed to all foreign domination. So we find Wordsworth attacking Austrian despotism in Italy several times between

---

¹. The words are Byron's; and he used them in describing an individual - Pietro Gamba (Letter to T. Moore, 19/9/1821).
the writing of The Prelude (1805) and the Memorials &c. (1820). 1

But in these instances Wordsworth is acting upon principle, not from an immediate sympathy for the oppressed Italians. As we saw, Wordsworth despised them in 1790; had nothing to say to them in 1820; and the three sonnets he wrote at Bologna "...in Remembrance of the late Insurrections, 1837" are not really works of enthusiasm for the growing Risorgimento. Wordsworth is distressed, but he advocates caution, as an onlooker who is calm about the outcome of the whole business, not as a partisan. He would like to see the Italians free, but his final image for Italy as one of the countries that may never win independence, but

"..., sink or struggling to be free,
Are doomed to flounder on like wounded whales
Tossed on the bosom of a stormy sea"

gives/

1. In his Italian Nationalism and English Letters (London, 1940) A.W. Rudman cites three instances of Wordsworth's writing against Austrian domination and in favour of Italy's independence: in the tract (1809) Concerning ....the Convention of Cintra, in the Letter to Captain Fasley....(1811), and in a private letter to Sara Hutchinson (16/3/1815); but he does not claim more from this than that Wordsworth on occasions showed himself "highly in sympathy with Italian national aspirations;" (op. cit. p.46). Rudman does not recognise the distinction between the immediate sympathy for a people's "national aspirations" that can only come from personal experience (Wordsworth did have this for one foreign country, but that was France), and a general approval of the principle of freedom for all nations (this directs the enthusiasm of our Romantics in turn to America, France, Spain, Greece and Italy). Accordingly he omits consideration of Wordsworth's accounts of his Italian experiences from Descriptive Sketches (1793) to Memorials &c. (1820) which, as we saw, reveal the poet as quite oblivious of the living arguments for Italian independence: and ignores the passage in The Prelude (1805) which spurns the Italians as unworthy of liberty. Finally, in talking of the Memorials &c. (1837), Rudman finds "several sonnets" are strongly in favour of Italian independence, but does not remark that the epigrammatic tone of these on "the late Insurrections" at Bologna "Learn to make Time the father of wise Hope" (first sonnet): "Think not that Prudence dwells in dark abodes, /She scorns the future with the eye of gods." (second sonnet): "Thought that should teach the sealot..../ (To) seek through noiseless pains and moderation /The unblemished good they only can bestow..." (third sonnet): are not attuned to the active spirit of the Risorgimento.
gives little

"hope...that would serve to shear the heart".

3. Italy the Classic Land in Wordsworth

In Book Tenth of The Prelude (1805-6), after Wordsworth has given vent to his disgust at the Italians for being flagrantly unworthy of the country they have inherited, he turns to Coleridge again. Coleridge will make -

"the Place itself

Be conscious of thy presence, and the dull
Sirocco air of its degeneracy
Turn as thou mov'st into a healthful breeze..."

and suddenly the poet visualises his friend in the classic surroundings of Sicily, and is with him -

"Oh! wrap him in your Shades, ye Giant Woods,
On Etna's side, and thou, O flowery Vale
Of Emma...."

because -

"Child of the mountains, among Shepherds rear'd,
Even from my earliest school-day time, I lov'd
To dream of Sicily....."

The Prelude (1805-6), Book X, Il. 973-976 & 1002-1009.

Then comes a paean of Greek names - Empedocles, Archimedes, Comatoes, Theocritus, Etna's top, pastoral Arethuse. In this imaginative flight to Italy, Wordsworth is the Classical Tourist as markedly as Addison himself was - scorning the Italians while he hails Ancient Liberty, thrilling at the mere idea of being on the classic ground that he has loved since his "earliest school-day time".

Wordsworth did not actually make the Classical Tour through Italy /
Italy until 1837. When he went abroad in 1820, he was still more interested in visiting several European countries than in going to the famed Italian places, and so it is that after journeying through France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, he found time simply to skirt Lombardy, coming first again to Como. But although this second experience looks almost like a repetition of the first, there is a great difference. Wordsworth no longer journeys to feed his passion for Nature. He is not at fifty the man of whom it could be said -

"Moves there a cloud o'er noonday's blazing eye?
Upward he looks, and calls it luxury";

for whom Nature was "the strong and holy passion" that overcame him.

We have already noted with what little excitement he greeted Como -

"the same delicious lake" - that had quite enchanted him at twenty.

The change in Wordsworth's experience of Italy is not to be seen only in a weakened regard for the beauty of the Italian countryside. That he could still feel, though he now wanted the power to evoke it. There are other differences. In 1820 Wordsworth did not stop at Como, but went as far south as Milan, and Milan introduced him to

---

1. See, for example, the poem entitled The Eclipse of the Sun, 1820. At the beginning, Wordsworth speaks of passing -

"Afloat beneath Italian skies,
Through regions fair as Paradise",

but when he comes to evoke these heavenly places it is in quite conventional and unexpressive terms, for example, Lugano's "ample bay", Albegasio's "olive bowers", Porlezza's "verdant lawn"; and when he describes the passing of the eclipse it is with no more vividness than

"The cypress waves her sombre plume
More cheerily; and town and tower,
The vineyard and the olive bower,
Their lustre re-assume".

Compare these lines on Nature with the vivid ones on Art in the same poem (the fanciful picture of the statues on Milan Cathedral quoted above); or with the bright details of the Como landscape in Descriptive Sketches (1798).
to a new theme - Italian art. It is remarkable that the poet grew
decisely more eloquent about the works of men than those of nature
on his second visit to Italy. He fervently praised Leonardo's
"Last Supper" as a "labour worthy of eternal youth!" (See the Sonnet
on this subject). He introduced the statues on the pinnacles of
Milan Cathedral:

"that aerial host
Of figures human and divine,
White as the snow of Appenine
Indurated by frost..."

quite strikingly into his poem on The Eclipse of the Sun, 1820: they
seem "in the portentous light" to sorrow, like the angels, "after Man
had fallen":-

"Thro'ngs of celestial visages,
Darkening like water in the breeze,
A holy sadness shared".

But the new attention to the arts does not of itself distinguish the
1820 Memorials from Descriptive Sketches. Nor does the poet's
recording the simple lives of an Italian lad and lass, the Itinerant
and the Cottage-girl. The real difference is that Wordsworth travel-
ling in the latter period was already the Classical Tourist.

Wordsworth in 1820 is quite recognisable as one of the more
usual English travellers. He did not go to the classic south of
Italy, but his great desire was to see the "fortunate Region", the
"twice-glourified fields". It is not only for this, however, that he
can be described as a Classical Tourist. The Classical Tourist's
preoccupation with Roman and Greek things still allowed him, as we
saw, to take an interest in the Nature, Art, and other aspects of
Italy. His, in fact, was a comprehensive vision of the country. The
young Wordsworth clearly demonstrated that where an individual devoted
himself /
himself entirely to the single aspect of the country which he found of absorbing personal interest, he did not, in fact, enjoy a full experience of "Italy". Only when Wordsworth is no longer absorbed by Nature, does he begin to appreciate the country "in the round", in its several dimensions. This more general awareness shows already in 1820, is complete by 1837, and it is this that distinguishes the Italian poems in the two series of "Memorials" from the Como passage in Descriptive Sketches.

The Memorials of a Tour in Italy, 1837 are a group of poems that lie outside the period of our enquiry, but they will be briefly described here for completeness. Wordsworth had finally gone to visit Italy in its own right, and the journey he made was, most clearly, the Classical Tour. Already on the way to Rome he entertains himself with the thought that he is soon -

"To meet the shade of Horace by the side
Of his Balsamian font....
Or to loiter....
...... on that delicious Bay,
Parthenope's Domain - Virgilian haunt
Illustrated with never-dying verse"  
- the familiar thoughts of English travellers for more than a century.

Nor are the other advantages of Italy forgotten. Nature is saluted at Aquapendente and La Verna (at the second place Wordsworth's interest is once more engaged by individual Italians in the persons of the Franciscan Friars); Art at Florence (see the sonnet to Raphael's "John the Baptist"); and these Memorials also include a fair deal of literary reminiscence, Tasso being remembered at Rome, Dante and Michelangelo /

1. Wordsworth was to see the places about Rome on his third Italian visit, but was still denied experience of Naples and its "delicious bay" by "report, too well founded, of the prevalence of Cholera" there.
Michelangelo at Florence, though the poet recalled with most fondness is Chiabrera, from whose epitaphs Wordsworth had translated so deferentially:

"Modest Savona! over all did brood
A pure poetic spirit - as the breeze
Mild - as the verdure, fresh - the sunshine, bright -
Thy gentle Chiabrera!"

The final and conventional journey to Italy in 1837 is plainly foreshadowed in the visit of 1820, and, if we consider well, the beginnings of it are to be discerned already in the first encounter of 1790. At twenty Wordsworth was conscious of Italy as the Classic Land, although he saw it so much as Nature's Paradise. As his experience proved, it was only a matter of time before the commoner vision of Italy became his own. But if the classic interest and its growth - from the two lines on Pliny, to the excited rememberings when Coleridge was in Sicily, to the regrets of 1820 and finally the 1837 Tour - if this provides the continuity in Wordsworth's experience of Italy, it does not stand out, as it did, say in Addison's. For Wordsworth, the first true poetry of Italy /

1. In Wordsworth's Descriptive Sketches &c. (1793), there is a two-line imitation from Petrarch:

"I lov'd mid thy most desert woods astray
With pensive steps to measure my slow way"

from:

"Solo e pensoso i piu deserti campi
Vo' misurando a passi tardi e lenti".

This might have been in the nature of a literary reminiscence, Wordsworth recalling the Italian poet on Italian ground, rather than a simple literary borrowing, but if so, it is the only instance in either the 1790 or the 1820 tour-poems. In 1837 the matter is clearer. Besides the recording "Tasso's Convent haven and retired grave" at Rome, and "the laureled Dante's favourite seat at Florence", Wordsworth was aware of Michelangelo's presence at the last place (he recalled his poems in two translations), and of Chiabrera's at Savona. The history of Wordsworth's regard for Michelangelo as a sonnet-writer is an interesting one, but cannot be entered here; nor can the English poet's admiration for Chiabrera who seems to have been his special favourite among Italian poets - see the nine translations done from Chiabrera's epitaphs (the majority written 1809-10; all published by 1837) and the unusually humble notes to these, as well as Musings near Aquapendente in the 1837 Memorials.
Italy had not been to stand on Roman ground and feel his knowledge of the ancients come alive. It had been in discovering Nature warm and beautiful when he was most devotedly and most generously her adorer. This revelation was Italy's great gift to the creative Wordsworth both for its importance in the "growth of (his) poet's mind", and for the new Italy it brought into English poetry. Without it Wordsworth's Italian experience would not have been specially remarkable in the annals of the English visitor.

Wordsworth clearly illustrates the argument of this thesis. He is a Romantic poet whose experience of Italy shows as a development of the traditional one; that is, Italy is ultimately the Classic Land for him, though a more personal interest - in the country's Nature, as it happens - originally obscures this. It is also found that for Wordsworth the poet, this first private significance that Italy had for him - as a moment in the story of his mind's growth, or to put it more briefly, Italy as a personal image - is the more important part of his experience. We shall see in studying Byron and Shelley how far this is true of them, and so, of the Romantic poet in Italy.
1. The prospect of an Italian journey to Byron from 1808-1816

In 1816, at the age of twenty-eight, Lord Byron moved from England to Italy. He was to stay there almost seven years, and these, especially the earlier ones, were to prove a most important time for him, man and poet. But to understand the Italian period of Byron’s life we must begin not simply at 1816 or 1815, but much earlier, at 1809 and 1810. The poet’s feelings towards Italy have a rather involved history and only by studying them right from their origins will we appreciate the quality of his actual experience of country and people. Consequently, the first part of this chapter will be given to Byron’s regard for Italy before he went there, a subject which can be treated shortly, but which cannot be omitted from our enquiry.

(i) Italy not the Classical Country or the Land of Romance for the young Byron

The first major sign of Byron’s feelings towards Italy is a negative one. In 1808 when he left Cambridge he decided to travel, the time-honoured practice of the wealthy young graduate, but he chose to violate the time-honoured itinerary and go “not on the usual Tour” through Europe, but on “a voyage through the Archipelago” (letter to J. de Bathe, 2/2/08). This was a Classical Pilgrimage of a new kind, to Greece not Italy; it took Byron to the part of the world he knew he would find most “romantic” - that would both recall and suggest extravagant adventures - the Levant: it acquainted him with the sea for which he had inherited a family love, best seen in his ancestor Admiral /
Admiral Byron: and then, there was the satisfaction of doing "not the usual." These and other possible motives all make part of the Byronic biography, but for our purpose, they mean that, at twenty, the poet was not sufficiently interested in Italy to undertake the journey there that was virtually expected of him. His personal likes and interests quite outweighed whatever he felt of the English reverence for the land of the Romans.\(^1\)

Byron's visiting the classic Greek places as a young man had more than a passing significance for him. It was to mean that Greece, not Italy, became the great Classical Country of his experience, because it was there that he had offered the enthusiasm of his youthful imaginings. When later he went to Italy, he was not travelling expressly to see the places of the ancients. After six months at Venice, he did visit Rome, but journey and sojourn took no more than six weeks: his friend John Cam Hobhouse, could not tempt him to Naples, the other great Roman and also the Greek centre of Italy\(^2\) which no Classical Tourist would miss. In the remaining six years of his stay in Italy, Byron scarcely interested himself at all in the monuments of the older peoples. By contrast, during the much shorter period /

---

1. Byron tells us that he was "passionate for the Roman history" from boyhood, but in 1808 this did not sway him as much as two other passions - for Greece and the Levant - with their associations for him, literary and historical.

2. Byron was not excited by thought or experience of the 'Greek' parts of Italy. On his way to Greece in 1809, he actually touched on Sicily (at Girgenti - see the letter to his mother 15/9/1809), but when he came to write the first two cantos of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, there is no mention of his visit; which is all the more remarkable because Byron was celebrating Greek names and Greek places, and Sicily is rich in these. Wordsworth, as we saw, had recalled Cometes, Empedocles, Archimedes, Theocritus, the features of Etna and Arethusa, at the mere thought of Coleridge's being on the island. As a second instance of Byron's indifference to Magna Graecia', it is to be remembered that he never visited the Neapolitan coast to see Pompeii or Paestum.
period he spent in Greece, Byron travelled strenuously to visit the famous places, made a prolonged stay at Athens, was truly the Classical Pilgrim. So it is that, as a testament, Canto I of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, with its warm and earnest reverence for what was classical and Greek, quite defies comparison with Canto IV, with its more dutiful recording of the classical and Roman. This was not the only difference that Byron's early preference was to produce. The young poet quickly sympathised with the modern Greeks because they, the descendants of the ancients, were now enslaved; this sympathy did not end before his life did. With the Italians the older Byron was never to have the same patient understanding, and could, in fact, taunt them with the name of their ancestors.

If Classical Greece rather than Roman Italy had endeared itself to Byron at an early age, his Tour was to confirm his predilection for the Levant as the "romantic" region of the world; the ready proofs of this are his own Turkish tales. Here, once again, Byron had succeeded in distinguishing himself from the majority of his contemporaries. For most Englishmen, and particularly for the men of letters, Italy as the passionate South still represented the ideal fictitious background for violent love and crime as it had done for the Elizabethans. In fact, it is notable that as an accompaniment of the new general interest in Italy's literature and history, a good many highly-coloured "Italianate" works, particularly novels, were produced in /

1. The part that Byron's friend, John Cam Hobhouse, played in the composition of Canto IV cannot be easily defined. Hobhouse himself described the poet's Roman sojourn as a "short three weeks' visit" and explained the fullness and detail of the descriptions in Childe Harold as the result of their collaboration. Among other things, Hobhouse "made a list of certain objects which he (Byron) had not noticed". See the letter to Earl Stanhope of 3rd May 1856, in the correspondence of Hobhouse, then Lord Broughton.
2. "And you, ye men! Romans who dare not die....". (The Prophecy of Dante, Canto II, 1.112).
in England of the later eighteenth century, the most celebrated being, perhaps, Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1765), Dr. John Moore's Zelus (1789), Mrs Radcliffe's Sicilian Romance (1790), The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), and The Italian (1797). But, although Byron's reading, from Shakespeare to Mrs Radcliffe herself, was to make the city of Venice "romantic" to his eyes, Italy generally did not become a Land of Romance for him. His own "Italian" works treat of historical personages and, however much these may borrow from the author, they are not the mysterious self-portraits of The Giaour (1813), or Selim in The Bride of Abydos (1813). The beginning of the last-mentioned poem illustrates the matter clearly:

"Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime?
Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle,
Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime!"

Here Byron has not only echoed Goethe's lines upon the Southern isle of Italy to describe the Levant; he has found in the Levant his own passionate South, a region where he might picture himself against a background of dark deeds. He never found or expected to find in Italy another background and atmosphere that would lend itself to this sort of "personal" romancing.

After Byron had spent six years in Italy, he wrote to Murray:

"I have some thought of taking a run down to Naples... this Spring and writing, when I have studied the Country, a fifth and sixth Canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV, stanza xvii."

Letter of 25/10/1822.

The

1. "She to me
   Was as a fairy city of the heart,
   And Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare's art
   Had stamp'd her image in me;...."

   [Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV, stanza xviii]

2. See the poem by Goethe entitled Mignon that begins -
   "Kennst du das Land wo die Zitronen blühn...."
The poet had travelled extremely little in the Italian peninsula to this time, had celebrated few places, but he did not, after all, visit Naples. It was not only that his interest was already turning from the country he was living in. At Naples he would encounter the Classical-Greek part of Italy, and the true Italian south. Byron knew Greece itself, and a more extreme south. He could not become excited at the thought of seeing these in Italy, guessing, perhaps, they would be pale to him after his original experiences.

(ii) Byron's interest in Italy's language and literature: Italy as a new possible background for his poetry

Although Byron avoided the Italian peninsula almost entirely in his 1808 Mediterranean cruise, and went from the Iberian to the Greek, he did not quite escape the influence of Italy on the surrounding parts. At Athens in 1810, he found a knowledge of Italian so necessary and useful that he began to study the language with a teacher. Byron had a liking and a certain gift for foreign tongues. He took to the new one from the first, and returned to England with a desire to become better acquainted with Italian as well as the Levantine languages. At the beginning he thought more of the latter, one of his projects for the future being to go abroad again, settle "perhaps in Greece", and make himself "a good Oriental scholar" (letter to Francis Hodgson, 16/2/1812). But some twenty months later he was confiding to his Journal -

"My hopes are limited to the arrangement of my affairs, and settling either in Italy or the East (rather the last), and drinking deep of the languages and literature of both."

(Entry for 23rd (?) November, 1813).

Italian literature had grown in importance for Byron at the date /
date of this journal-entry. He had already begun to drink of its poetry, and he was being authoritatively introduced to the subject by Sismondi's De la Littérature du Midi de l'Europe (1815) - we remember the little signs of his new studies that appear in Byron's own writing of the time, the mottoes from Dante and Tasso to The Corsair (January 1814) and the mention of the Orlando Furioso in the text:-

".... the tale, by Ariosto told,
Of fair Olympia loved and left of old".                  

[Canto I. 11.439-440].

But although as time passed, Italian and Italian letters were to occupy Byron's active interest incomparably more than "Oriental languages", the poet's regard for Italy's literature did not steadily increase up to the time that he went to the country and was not, in the end, an important motive for his move. His schemes of language study were largely forgotten between 1814 and 1816 and were only to be remembered after he had reached Venice. Almost immediately he began learning Armenian with the Fathers of the Mekhitarist convent, a study which flourished for a while. From the first, too, he read a fair amount of Italian with one notable enthusiastic period in 1818, when he was "discovering" the heroi-comic poets, Pulci, Boiardo, Berni. But Italian letters were not to engage him so completely in Italy as they had done in England during the last months of 1813 and the early ones of 1814. Byron in Italy was too busy reading another /
another language - English. We can see from the correspondence with his publisher, John Murray, that nothing from home was too insignificant for the exile's attention. Some works like Keats's poems infurited him: others like Scott's novels were received joyously and honoured with a daily reading: but hardly anything was ignored.

Byron's ambitions as a scholar of languages and literatures do not seem to have affected his final decision to go to Italy, nor were they seriously furthered once he was there; but literary considerations did influence him to a point. Writing to Tom Moore early in 1815, he was to say:-

"By the way, don't engage yourself in any travelling expedition, as /

1. Byron continued to read generally in Italian once he was in Italy, but without any remarkable increase of interest or enthusiasm except, as I have said, when he came to the chivaleresque poets, a matter which will be considered later in this chapter when his Seppo (1817) is discussed. As for noticing the moderns, his liking for the plays of Alfieri and Monti's Aristodemo, which dates from 1813, suffered, in the first instance when Byron abandoned "regular drama" after 1821 for his "gay metaphysical style" which was accompanied by a shift of allegiance from Alfieri to Goethe; and in the second instance, by Byron's eventual disgust with Monti for his insconstancy in politics - which was the only sphere in which the English poet, by his own admission, was constant. Monti, however, shared the distinction of being mentioned favourably in both the letter of dedication to Canto IV (1818) of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage and the Preface to The Prophecy of Dante (1819) with Findemont whom Byron had met at Verona. As for Foscolo whom he never met, Byron came to accept Hobhouse's good opinion of him, was delighted with some remarks he made on Marino Faliero (1820), but latterly could not forgive him for the advice to attempt a "great work" that Murray passed on - see E.R. Vincent's Byron, Hobhouse, and Foscolo (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1949) which treats of the celebrated de Brème controversy. Byron's remark upon the affair is a fair indication of his lack of interest in contemporary Italian literature: -

"Tell Mr Hobhouse... that the Chevalier de Brème has written me a long letter, attacking him (Hobhouse) for abusing the Italian Romantici in his notes. Mr H. will answer for himself. I have never read the notes." (Letter to John Murray, 16/6/1818).

The notes on modern Italian literature, almost entirely the work of Foscolo, in Hobhouse's Historical Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (London, 1818).
as I have a plan to travel into Italy, which we will discuss. And then, think of the poesy wherewithal we should overflow, from Venice to Vesuvius, to say nothing of Greece...."

[Letter of 10/2/1816]

Byron knew that travelling would stimulate him again, not only to write tour-poems like the first two Cantos of Child’s Harold’s Pilgrimage, but also to give him new incidents and a new background for narratives. He needed this, because he had practically worked out his Eastern vein early in 1814. The Siege of Corinth (1816) was a forced return, as the poet knew:

"’Tis this that ever wakes my strain,
And oft, too oft, implores again
The few who may endure my lay,
To follow me so far away....."

[11.40-43]

But The Siege of Corinth had brought the Republic of Venice into Byron’s verse: and Parisina, the work that was published with it, was based on an incident from the annals of the House of Este which the poet had found in Gibbon’s Antiquities of the House of Brunswick (1796). Obviously he was prepared to use historical Italy in his works; but if he wanted to be as faithful in his setting as he had been in his Turkish tales - their “costume” had been his greatest pride - he would have to visit the country. In short, he could not settle to using an Italian background for his poetry, until he had experienced Italy.¹

Byron /

1. Parisina (1816), with its imagined Italian scene, represents a lapse in Byron’s practice. The poet had always insisted with pride that he only wrote of what he knew, and had scorned Wordsworth for a few inexact details about Greece (letter to Leigh Hunt, 30/10/1816). The possibility of Byron’s completing Parisina so as to be credited with “Italianism” before Leigh Hunt had published his The Story of Rimini (1816) is worth examination, as is the whole question of the influence of the latter poem upon the former - Hunt himself noticed one borrowing of Byron’s. See Leigh Hunt’s Autobiography where The Story of Rimini is discussed, and also the correspondence between Hunt and Byron from October 1815 to January 1816, the period in which Byron was reading and annotating Hunt’s “Italian” work and also completing his own Parisina.
Byron had divined early in 1815 that a poetic tour through Italy like the one he proposed to Tom Moore would both stimulate him to write and supply the material, but this was not sufficient motive of itself to make him go there. It was rather another sign that Italy would be his goal when next he decided to travel. His urge to be abroad had never quite died since he declared, six weeks after returning to England in 1811:

"I shall leave England and all its clouds for the East again: I am very sick of it already".

For a time he continued to think of the Levant as the place he might settle in, but gradually he seemed to realize that the experiences which had endeared that region to him were not to be repeated. From March 1814 onwards he talks of Italy, first to Moore who had suggested a trip to France:

"Your French scheme is good, but let it be Italian. All the Angles will be at Paris. Let it be Rome, Milan, Naples, Florence, Turin, Venice, or Switzerland ... I will join you upon the Arno, or the Po, or the Adriatic".

In September 1814, he wrote to the same correspondent to announce a trip which in its details was the one he was to make eventually:

"I am off for Italy next month. Hobhouse, I think and hope, will go with me, but whether he will or not, I shall. I want to see Venice, and the Alps".

Less than a week later he sent a letter with the news of his engagement remarking:

"If this had not happened, I should have gone to Italy".

Byron, returning to England in 1811, quickly found himself dissatisfied with his own country, and nothing, not his heaven-sent fame, his many amours, or his attempt at marriage, had reconciled him quite to passing his life there. So the rupture that occurred in 1816 /
1816 did not, as we have seen force him suddenly to think of going abroad, or residing in Italy. It did not really oblige him to leave England at all. The separation from his wife supplied the occasion for Byron's effecting the selfsame plan of travel he had been contemplating just before he married her - to see the Alps and Venice with Hobhouse. The mood in which the poet journeyed was certainly darkened by the unpleasant last months in England, and he escaped abroad as a social bankrupt, or feeling one. In sum, the 1816 scandal is to be treated rather as one important influence in Byron's experience of Italy than as its all-informing motive; and this is how it will be considered in the following pages which introduce the central part of our present enquiry - Byron's Italian years.

2. Byron and the two Freedoms of Venice

When Byron entered Italy in October 1816, he made straight for Venice. Undoubtedly, the city interested him for its Republican history; he had noted in his Journal, late in 1813:

"Give me a republic, or a despotism of one.... A republic! - look in the history of the Earth - Rome, Greece, Venice, France, Holland, America, our short (ehu!) Commonwealth &c."

Entry for 23rd (?)/11/1813.

Again, his reading already lent it a certain romantic character, and he probably wanted to see the place that had suggested the scene for so many favourite works, the place of "Shylock and the Moor, and Pierre".¹

Perhaps /

¹ "Shylock and the Moor, And Pierre cannot be swept or worn away - "
(Child's Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV, stanza iv).

"Pierre", of course, is the character in Otway's Venice Preserved (1682).
Perhaps, too, he knew that Piazza San Marco and the surrounding alleys afforded the Italian scenes most reminiscent of the Eastern ones he loved, that there a man might think himself in the bazaars of Constantinople, as William Beckford had found. Byron travelled with such anticipations, but they were hardly equal to his liking for Venice when he encountered it. From the first moment he became quite enamoured of place and people. He was to stay for some three years and in that time produce the most regarded poems of Italian subject that he wrote:— the Fourth Canto (1817-18) of Child Harold's Pilgrimage and Beppo (1817): two others, The Lament of Tasso (1817) and The Prophecy of Dante (1819), were done in short absences from the city: and after he had left for good, in January 1820, the only other "Italian" works he produced were the dramas from Venice's history, Marino Faliero (1820) and The Two Foscari (1821). Byron's works reflect his experience faithfully. For two years before his actual journey he was attracted by Venice rather than Italy and when he did experience country and city in 1816, he was happy to settle among the Venetians, not simply the Italians. We shall find, as the poems once again suggest, that when he turned from Venice, Byron did not find a larger Italy to engage his imagination and deeper feelings; that for him to renounce the city was the first step to renouncing the country as one that interested him personally and closely.

(i) The immediate Freedom - of "Venetian manners" - and the free style of Beppo (1817) and Don Juan (1818)

Hardly a year before Byron reached Venice, he had written imaginatively of it in The Siege of Corinth (1816). Describing the hero /
hero of his poem, "Alp, the Adrian renegade", he tells us:

"From Venice - once a race of worth
His gentle sires - he drew his birth; ..... 
- To him had Venice ceased to be
Her ancient civic boast - 'The Free'; .... 
In happier mood, and earlier time,
While unimpeach'd for traitorous crime,
Guyest in gondola or hall,
He glittered through the Carnival;
And tuned the softest serenade
That e'er on Adria's water played
At midnight to Italian maid".

For Byron, then, as for most other Englishmen, Venice, before he visited it, was known for two Freedoms, - the one it had enjoyed as a Republic now passed away utterly, and the other that, for ever associated with the Carnival, meant free living at its loosest.

Some eighty years earlier, Alexander Pope had commented upon the past and present character of Venice, and contrasted them to the extreme detriment of the latter. In the Dunciad, Book IV (1742) we read:

"But chief her shrine where naked Venus keeps,
And Cupids ride the Lion of the Deeps,
Where, eas'd of Fleets, the Adriatic main
Wafts the smooth Samuch and enamour'd swain".....

and in the footnote:

"The Winged Lion, the arms of Venice. This Republic, here-tolore the most considerable in Europe for her Naval Force and the extent of her Commerce; now illustrious for her Carnivals".

But Byron arriving at Venice in November 1816 made no such moral opposition.¹ He was interested in both Freedoms of the city. A few weeks /

¹. See Canto IV of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, stanzas i-iii, where Venice is celebrated not simply for its past greatness, but for having been -

"The pleasant place of all festivity,
The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy!"

(Stanza iii, ll. 8-9).
weeks after arriving, he learned of Marino Faliero, the Republican leader who had conspired against the Republic, and this story, one of the most interesting passages in Venice's "millennium of Freedom" at once struck him as a good subject for a play. In the meantime he had begun to enjoy the more personal liberties of the place. Soon it became clear that one or other would monopolize the poet's attention. Byron chose to devote himself to a pleasant round of Venetian amours; and "Marino Faliero" was to stay unwritten for almost three years.

In no time Byron had settled to a way of living that not only satisfied but delighted him. It reminded him considerably of his London days, but was different enough to carry the excitement of novelty. In London, he had spent much time by himself writing or reading; he would frequently meet his cronies, Tom Moore, Serope Davies and others, for private merriment; and occasionally, he would visit one of the salons, Lady Melbourne's, Lady Holland's, or some less important circle. Meantime, he had two other unfailing resources in the frequenting of theatres, balls and other social entertainments, and the enjoyment, with as much secrecy as he could procure, of his loves. At Venice his way of life preserved something of this form, but had also changed appreciably. There, too, he would stay at home to write or read, before going out to the theatre or a conversazione; and meanwhile, at least as much time was given to his mistresses. But from all this Byron seemed to derive a new, exceptional pleasure; so much so that he did not feel what was lacking in his Venetian life. For almost the first two years, until, in fact, he met Teresa Giucioi in 1819 who was to introduce him the following year to her brother Pietro Gamba.
Gaeha, Byron lived without one intimate friend by him, man or woman. His correspondence to those in England was voluminous, but could hardly supply the place of immediate company.

It is precisely Byron's correspondence that lets us see how happy he was in the first year or so at Venice; while his poetic works of the time show that the brilliant new period he had struck in Switzerland with *The Prisoner of Chillon* (1816) and *Canto III* of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1816) was continuing in *Manfred* (1816-17) and *Canto IV* (1817-18). Evidently the poet's lack of real friends was being supplied. In part, Venice itself contented him. Everything about it was new and "romantic". To go to the piazza he had to call a gondola, and we remember how he wrote to Augusta Leigh, half-mocking, but pleased too:

"I am going out this evening in my cloak and gondola - there are two nice Mrs Radcliffe words for you". (Letter of 19/12/1816).

But more important were the Venetians themselves. The women he slept with who were usually of the commoner kind, "naive" but passionate, imaginative; the aristocratic frequenters of the Albrizzi or the Benson conversazioni who, though more dignified, had something of the same fire and Pantaloon humour - Byron saw these as one people and society - did they not give proof of it themselves during Carnival?

Early in 1817, Byron did experience his first Carnival and loved it. He liked it so much that when a month or two later he visited Rome, he made his visit as short as was decent and hurried back to Venice. "I like its marine melancholy", he had written to Hobhouse in December 1816, "and rather wish to have seen Rome than to see it, though to be sure, having 'done' Constantinople, must also do t'other place". (Letter of 19/12/1816). But in May 1817 that was not the whole /
whole story. In the meantime he had made another great discovery in Venice’s favour - its social life. He had been quite charmed by the freedom of Venetian manners. This had not meant simply that he had been free to lead as dissolute a life as he pleased. That he might have done in London. What delighted Byron in Venice was that his private life was known, but no one condemned or shunned him for it. In London he had always been obliged to keep his personal doings concealed to a point. Discussion of them in the end had brought disaster. Here in Venice he did not need to consider just how far his private life should be kept strictly private. He had escaped cant. Encouraged by such tolerance, he abandoned his celebrated antisocial pose, and found he could enjoy himself openly, publicly, with a gay, easy-humoured people. In October he wrote Beppo, which was one proof that "the Secret History of a Carnaval would make a collection of very diverting Novels", as Addison had contended. Byron said of his excursion into humorous verse that it would show "I can write cheerfully, and repel the charge of monotony and mannerism". (Letter of 25/5/1818).
There was more to it than that. Byron was letting the English public know that far from being a dark-browed, perpetually haunted individual like one of his own heroes, he could laugh and joke it with the best of them.

It took experience of Venice for Byron to liberate his own terrific humour in verse. Even before Beppo was produced, he had begun, in letters, to use the uproarious manner with people outside the circle of his intimate friends, particularly his publisher, John Murray. But once Beppo itself and a little reading of Pulci had brought Byron to writing Don Juan, it was no longer so important for him to keep wit for /
for his correspondents. From now on, he could employ it in addressing
verse epistles to the English public at large: the Cantos of Don Juan
are this, however much or little they carry forward the tale. In
these, Byron could at last speak his mind to the world, without dis-
guise, could indulge every whim and humour. It had always been his
ambition as a poet, and from the beginning, when he wrote in the Preface
to the first two Cantos of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (1812) that he
would claim the right "to give full scope to my inclination", on the
authority of Dr. Beattie, James Thomson, and "some in the highest order
of Italian poets", particularly Ariosto, it had been associated with
Italy. It was to be Italy's gift to him, not through literary
eexample, but by the life he could live at Venice. As

For Byron's reading public his Venetian life had brought about
a/

1. As far as the literary inspiration of Beppo goes, Byron's repeated
statement - that the Prospectus and Specimen of an Induction to an
Intended National Epic (1817) of the "brothers Whistlercraft" (John
Hookham Frere) was his "immediate model" - must be taken as reliable.
Byron encountered the Abate Castil's Novelle Amorose at Brussels in
1816 and Stendhal tells us, had been delighted at Milan in the same
year, with the satires of the Venetian poet, Buratti. Both these
collections were in ottava-rima, but neither had moved Byron to
imitation. As for his being aware of Pulci, in 1817 Byron seems to
have forgotten J.H. Merivale's Orlando in Ronscevalles (1814) [a work
in good English oct ave rhyme which incorporated translations of some
hundred stanzas from the Morgante Maggiore] which he had read and
praised, especially for its "measure", in January 1814: he thought
he had found out Frere's indebtedness to Pulci in 1818 when, from the
beginning, Frere had most consciously imitated Pulci: and, lastly, it
is only in 1820, with the remarks that begin the Advertisement to his
translation of the First Canto of the Morgante Maggiore that Byron
seems to appreciate the poetic succession from Boiardo to Ariosto,
understand the relation of Berni to Pulci (each of whom he had hailed
at different times as the father of jocose poetry), and to recognize
that new styles of Italian derivation had entered contemporary English
verse with the works of Frere and Merivale.
a revolution in his poetry - the complete lightness of *Beppe* (1817) and then, by consequence, the middle style of *Don Juan* (1818); and it had done this simply by letting him be frank and open with everyone. For Byron the new style meant that he had a fresh hold upon the English. His "regular dramas", *Marino Faliero* (1820) and *The Two Foscari* (1821), could be damned by audiences or critics, verse like *Masoppe* (1818) and *The Prophecy of Dante* (1819), not take appreciably, but *The Vision of Judgment* (1821) and the successive cantos of *Don Juan* were read and discussed, favourably or not. So Venice had played its part - it mattered a great deal to the exile not to be forgotten in England - but the Venetian life was soon to degenerate. This might have been foreseen. Byron could not keep perpetual carnival, and through the rest of the year, his social life continued to be a matter of polite conversational gatherings and mistresses who could be little more than bedfellows. He had never before relied entirely, or greatly, on either, and soon they were to lose their charm for him, and then produce disgust. In the next part our study will be to trace Byron's revulsion from the people of Venice, how he came to scorn and revile them in the name of their "Roman" ancestors more vehemently than the Classical Tourists were used to decry the Italians.

(ii) The ancient Freedom of the Venetian Republic
and the question of Italian independence

Byron's life at Venice was devoted, as we have seen, to the immediate /

---

1. Byron accepted the common tradition that Venice was founded by Romans who there "built 'gainst Attila a bulwark" (*Marino Faliero*, Act V, Sc. i, line 47). Not all English travellers knew or credited this story of Venice's origin. For example, James Thomson does in Part IV of his *Liberty* (1735-36): but Dr. John Moore in his travelbook *A View of Society and Manners in Italy* (1781) asserts "Venice claims no importance from ancient history .... whatever we feel .... (is) independent of the Roman name". 
immediate Freedom of conducting himself with no restraint but what he chose; and in the first two years it was characterised by a frank, good-humoured carelessness that is reflected in poetic works, Beppo and Don Juan. But all the while Byron never ceased to be aware of the Freedom that Venice had lost, the liberty she once enjoyed as a Republic, and although there is little mention of this for the first months of his stay, as he became more used, and then less satisfied with the modern people and their ways, so he came to dwell more upon the greatness of their ancestors, the last of the Ancients, until he was to contrast the two to the shaming of the moderns in the way Pope had done in Book IV of his Dunciad. We shall now examine this development in Byron as it is to be traced in his poetry from Canto Four of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (1817-18) to Marino Faliero (1820).

The treatment of Freedom in Canto IV of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is quite unlike that in any tour-poem we have considered, from Addison's to Wordsworth's. Not that Byron fails to honour the Romans and their Liberty. He does, at length and loudy, is the most enthusiastic of Classical Tourists in this point. Where he departs from his predecessors is not in the way he regards the ancients, but in the way he sees the modern inhabitants of Italy. We remember that the

1. See particularly the "shocking" motto to Beppe in which Byron makes fun of the Puritanical English horror at Venice as "the seat of all dissoluteness".

2. "the heroic and the free,
The beautiful, the brave, the lords of earth and sea".
"The commonwealth of kings, the men of Rome!"

(Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV, ss. xxv & xxvi).
the earlier poets all despised the Italians for being the descendants of the Romans and "slaves". This scorn is quite missing in Childe Harold. Instead Byron has nothing but sympathy for the oppressed moderns in "their still unquenched 'longing after immortality' - the immortality of independence" (from the letter (2/1/18) prefixed to Canto IV, dedicating it to Hobhouse) and asserts that the independence of Italy is the responsibility of Europe that owes religion, arts, existence to her -

"Mother of Arts! as once of arms; thy hand
Was then our guardian, and is still our guide;
Parent of our religion! .......
Europe, repentant of her parricide,
Shall yet redeem thee, and all backward driven,
Roll the barbarian tide, and sue to be forgiven."

[Stanza lxvi]

In particular, Britain should not have idly watched the subjugation of Venice:

"(Venice's) lot
Is shameful to the nations - most of all
Albion! to thee: the Ocean queen should not
Abandon Ocean's children...."

[Stanza xvi]

Byron at this time shared the enthusiasm for modern Italy that thanks to the new English interest in Italian history and literature was found in a good number of his contemporaries. His acquaintance with the Italians, that is, the Venetians, had convinced him too that the people deserved Freedom, as we can see from the letter of dedication he prefixed to Canto IV. From the same letter it is clear that he entertained something of the extreme Whig views of the time which saw England as failing in her duty to the cause of Liberty, and Byron treats this particularly as it applies to Italy. But from poem, letter of dedication, and correspondence, it is clear that this championing Italy against /
against his own country was not something undertaken disinterestedly. Byron was still smarting from his last months in England. He had a score to settle with the English.

It would not be easy to say how much Byron exaggerated his real liking for the Venetians in writing of them to the English, either in his poems or private correspondence, and how much this derived from his wish to appear perfectly happy in "the South", with little regret for home. But certainly his first opinions of Venice and its inhabitants were tinged with a sort of infatuation, and certainly in no great time he had become far less enamoured of this foreign people and more reconciled to his own. It was almost as if after little more than a year in Italy he began to find that he did not need a second country to prefer to England,¹ that he could, after all, make terms with the English. Meantime his attitude to the question of Italian Freedom was undergoing a change.

In Canto IV of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Byron spoke of Italy, the Italians, the independence of the whole country and people, when he only knew Venice and the Venetians well. A year after his brief journey to Rome, he wrote a poem which dwelt instead upon the city. The tone has altered. Byron can still sing the praises of the Republic, but for the moderns, he can no longer make claims. They do not deserve Freedom who -

``
.....only murmur in their sleep.
In contrast with their fathers - as the slime,
The dull green ooze of the receding deep
Is with the dashing of the springtide foam
That /
``

¹. Even in Canto IV (1818), the text belies the hostility to his own country expressed in the letter of dedication, and does not show Byron as having found another homeland in Italy. See particularly Stanzas viii-x, where Britain is called "the inviolate island of the sages and free" and where too, Byron blames himself for the 1816 domestic trouble in a rare passage of self-accusation ("The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree/ I planted...")
That drives the sailor shipless to his home,
Are they to those that were; and thus they creep,
Crouching, and crab-like, through their sapping streets...."

Byron's position has changed. In writing Canto IV, he had let his enthusiasm for Venice and its people grow to one for Italy and the Italians. Now, a year later, he can no longer sympathise much with the Venetians for being oppressed. As a new 'Liberal', he expects them to act for their own Freedom. As an Englishman with a claim to ancient Classic Freedom, he contraste the moderns utterly with "those that were". Not long after this, Byron was to transfer his bad opinion of the people of Venice, his doubts about their valour, to the people of all Italy.

The Prophecy of Dante written in 1819 was conceived as the great poet's "foretelling the fortunes of Italy in general in the ensuing centuries" that is, in the ages after his death. Byron kept faithfully to his programme. He was not writing an interpretation of Italian history in terms of Liberty. This can be seen from the work itself, particularly the part upon the Middle Ages where he makes no mention of the Freedom enjoyed in Italy by cities in Tuscany and the Lombard plain which would have provided the most fruitful matter: and where he omits the great Republic of Venice altogether, perhaps because at this time he was already so disgusted with the modern city. But even as he is treating the period from the passing of the Romans to the Renaissance in arts as simply one in which Italy was prey to invasion by so many barbarian peoples, Byron suddenly addresses the modern Italians. They see the latest invaders about them - the Austrians. They can rid themselves of these by acting, by one single act -
"What is there wanting then to set thee free, Italy
And show thy beauty in its fullest light?
To make the Alps impassable; and we
Her sons may do this with one deed - Unite."

[Canto II, ll. 142-145]

but are they brave as their ancestors the Romans were brave, or have the Italians grown cowards?

"And you, ye men, Romans who dare not die....
Are ye not brave?"

Byron protests this cannot be -

"..... Yes, yet the Ausonian soil
Hath hearts, and hands, and arms, and hosts to bring
Against oppression....."

[Canto II, ll. 112 & 131-135]

This was Byron's last public statement, through his poetry, of the Italians and their hopes of independence, except for the fleeting mention of them in The Age of Bronze:-

"....the rolling tides(of Freedom) advance
... and would fain
Unite Ausonia to the mighty main;
But driven from thence awhile, but not for aye,
Break o'er th' Aegean....."

[Ill. 282 & 284-287]

With The Prophecy of Dante the poet had quite abandoned the position he had taken in Canto IV of Child's Harold. He no longer demanded Italy's liberation from the rest of Europe in payment of the cultural debt. He does not even charge the new age of Italian "slavery" upon the Congress of Vienna signatories, particularly England, as he was still doing in September of the previous year (1818) - see the introductory stanzas to Don Juan, Canto I. But by 1819 he had grown more concerned with the Italians.

1. "Italy!
Thy late reviving Roman soul despends
Beneath the lie this State-thing (Castlereagh) breath'd o'er thee -
Thy clanking chain, and Erin's yet green wounds,
Have voices - tongues to cry aloud for me".

(Don Juan, Canto I, Dedication, stanza xvi).
Italians' own efforts towards Freedom, and even in the excitement of the 1820 risings, when he could say:

"I shall think it the most interesting spectacle and moment in existence to see the Italians send the barbarians of all nations back to their own dens".

he was to add,

"but they want Union and...principle; and I doubt their success."

(Letter to J. Murray, 16/4/1820).

After 1819, then, Byron the poet was to keep silence upon the contemporary Italians and their hopes of Freedom, the Freedom which for him, as for the young Wordsworth, was classical in its inspiration, but he had not said his last word upon the Venetians, ancient and modern. Early in 1820 he left Venice, regretting the city, loathing the inhabitants. He was moving to Ravenna to live with Teresa Guiccioli, and begin another sort of Italian life, that of the 'oisibeo'. Venice was behind him once for all, but Byron's feelings had been too much inflamed by the latter part of his residence there to let him say a "good riddance" to the Venetians. Some six months after he had turned his back on them he produced Marino Faliero.2

It /

1. See the statements in Byron's correspondence from July 1819 to January 1820, for example: "...everything with me (is) indecisive and undecided, except the disgust which Venice excites when fairly compared with any other city in this part of Italy. When I say Venice, I mean the Venetians..." (Letter to R.B. Hopmer, 2/7/1819).

2. The question of any Alfierian inspiration in this play belongs rather to the discussion of Byron's poetry than of his Italian experience. Byron's admiration for Alfieri dates from his London days, from the 1813-14 period of Italian studies in fact; and although it came to a climax in 1820 in Italy /"Marino Faliero" is more like a play of Alfieri's... I say this humbly speaking of that great Man" (letter to J. Murray, 28/9/1827), it was later eclipsed by Byron's growing admiration for Goethe which finally brought him to see the "Tedeschi dramatistes" as superior to the "more regular" Italians - the complete reversal of the opinion he expressed early in 1814: see the Journal entry for 20th February.

It might be mentioned that Aurelio Zanoo who has closely studied l'"alfierismo" del Byron, finds little direct dramatic borrowings on the part of the English poet and quite rejects the suggestion that the concept of Liberty in Byron's plays is derived from Alfieri: see the study of the foregoing name in the collection Shakespeare in Russia. (Gheroni, Torino, 1945).
It is interesting to conjecture how Byron might have treated the story of Faliero's conspiracy against Venice, if he had made a drama of it when he thought of, early in 1817. Undoubtedly his enthusiasm for the living inhabitants of the place would have entered the work in some way. In 1820 his violent dislike of the Venetians seems to have influenced the design of the play itself. Throughout *Marino Faliero* there is no question of the rightness or wrongness of the conspiracy against the Venetian senators. The Doge is as convinced as any of his commoner associates that the leading class of the city deserves to be cast down, destroyed. The drama is in his feelings, for a patrician, he has lived, "broke their bread ...... shared their salt", with the patricians,¹ and all his education and life cry out against the shedding of their blood.

In representing Venetian society as declined from its original greatness, as forgetting Liberty, already in Faliero's day, Byron was suggesting by implication that the modern people were so much the more degenerate. But he was not content to leave it at this. He had to make his feelings about the Venetians he knew quite explicit. So in the last act of the play, Faliero, before he is executed, is made to pronounce a prophecy and a curse upon the future people, and, more specifically, the generations of those who surrendered to Napoleon in 1797, in the following words:-

"Yes, /

¹. See *Marino Faliero*, Act III, Scene 11, line 458 et seq.
"Yes, the hours
Are silently engendering of the day
When she, who built 'gainst Attila a bulwark,
Shall yield, and bloodlessly and basely yield,
Unto a bastard Attila, without
Shedding so much blood in her last defense,
As these old veins, oft drain'd in shielding her,
Shall pour in sacrifice. - She shall be bought
And sold, and be an appanage to those
Who shall despise her! - She shall stoop to be
A province for an empire, petty town
In lieu of capital, with slaves for senates,
Beggars for nobles, panders for a people!

.... - when
Thy sons are in the lowest scale of being,
Slaves turn'd o'er to the vanquish'd by the victors,
Despis'd by cowards for greater cowardice,
And scorn'd even by the vicious for such vices
As in the monstrous grasp of their conception
Defy all codes to image or to name them;
Then, when of Cyprus, now thy subject kingdom,
All thine inheritance shall be her shame
Entail'd on thy less virtuous daughters, grown
A wider proverb for worse prostitution; -
When all the ills of conquer'd states shall cling thee,
Vice without splendour, sin without relief
E'en from the gloss of love to smooth it o'er,
But in its stead, coarse lusts of habitue,
Prurient yet passionless, cold studied lewdness,
Depraving nature's frailty to an art;"

- the passage continues in this vein for nine lines more and ends:

"Thou den of drunkards with the blood of princes!
Gehenna of the waters! thou Sodom!
Thus I devote thee to the infernal gods!
Thee and thy serpent seed!"

[Act IV,Scene 111, ll. 45-101]

This could be taken as one more example of the Classical
Tourist's condemnation of the modern Italians in the name of the
ancients and ancient Liberty. Admittedly Byron is writing of the
Venetians specifically, but then they were the Italians he knew and
throughout his play he has developed the traditional belief that the
first/
first Venetians were "sprung from Roman sires"; or, as he was to say in The Two Foscari, Venice was the Ocean-Rome. So it would be possible to see this as a denunciation in the style of Addison or Wordsworth, especially the latter, because the Marino Faliero passage, like the passage in the 1805-6 Prelude, attacks the Italians all the more for not proving themselves in the recent struggles for Freedom. But in spite of likenesses, the circumstances of the Byronic outburst make it of another kind altogether. Byron was not the Classical Tourist who had been disgusted by the lack of freedom and love of pleasure that the Italians exhibited. He was not like Shelley, say, who from the moment he entered Italy found the people slavish, and when he came to Venice could announce:

"I had no conception of the excess to which avarice, cowardice, superstition, passionless lust, and all the inexpressible brutalities which degrade human nature, could be carried, until I had passed a few days at Venice." (Letter to T.L. Peacock, 8/10/1818).

Shelley had never lived among the Italians, and never did. He saw Venice for "a few days" in the autumn of 1818. By contrast, Byron's first impressions of the Italians were not that they were slavish. He had gone to Venice, and far from being disgusted, was delighted with the Venetians and their free ways, and had stayed with them for three years.

1. See Bertuccio's speech, Act II, Scene 11, 11. 93-109. Throughout Marino Faliero there are many touches that develop the parallel of Rome and its heroes with Venice and the conspirators who wish to restore her to her first glory. Faliero is proud of his name "noble and brave as aught of consul or Roman marbles..."; he refers to two fellow-conspirators as "the plebian Brutus and quick Cassius of the arsenal" (the likeness of this Venetian plot to that of Caesar's destroyers is several times hinted, a suggestion that is reinforced by one or two strong resemblances of Byron's play to Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: compare particularly the scene between Faliero and his wife (Act II, Scene 1) - in which he cannot unburden himself about the conspiracy - to the famous one between Brutus and Portia (Act II, Scene 1); Bertram's warning to the Senate is compared to that of the geese on the Capitol &c.
years. When he chose to denounce them, his lines have the ring of the sort of condemnation found commonly in tour-poems, but there was this difference. Byron is not attacking a foreign people that he has observed in passing, but a community in which he made one.

Byron's revulsion from Venice was to prove almost fatal to his first, exceptional regard for the Italians, and it is not difficult to see why. The good opinion of the Italians, the sympathy with oppressed Italy that are expressed in the text and dedicatory epistle of Canto IV of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage derived from a good opinion of the Venetians, a sympathy with the oppressed state of Venice. It was thanks to Byron's Venetian experience that he could concur with Alfieri's opinion of the "greater robustness" of the men of Italy. (See the letter of dedication). It was because he could say of Venice "thy lot is shameful to the nations" (Stanza xvii), that he could say of Italy "through every other land/ Thy wrongs should ring, and shall, from side to side" (Stanza xlvii). In 1820 he could call the Venetians "Slaves turn'd o'er to the vanquish'd by the victors,/ Despised by cowards for greater cowardice", and Venice "the last and worst of peopled deserts.... Gehenna of the waters!.... sea-Sodom!" (See the long passage from Marino Faliero already quoted). He had destroyed the Venetians, the living Venice, in his heart. Before he could reinstate the Italians in his favour, he would have had to find some other people who might win him. He never did. Living with

1. Byron liked the Romagnuoli; but his affection for them was no excited affair like his enthusiasm for the Venetians. At the beginning of the 1820-21 disturbances he could say "the Romagnules" were "by far the bravest and most original of the present Italians, though half savage" (Letter to J. Murray, 22/7/1820); but we hear no more of this, once Ravenna had followed Bologna in voting "no action". There was no revulsion from the Ravennati - Byron was still a Gamba - but he seems to have felt little regret for place and people when he left them in October, 1821.
the Gamba family kept his feelings for Italy from perishing, but they
could never go out to the country again, as they had done years
earlier when he "stood in Venice ....". Before we treat of Byron's
later years in Italy, however, we must return a moment to his Venetian
period to understand why it had produced so complete a disgust in him.

(iii) Byron's revulsion from his Venetian life

In talking of Byron's first year or so at Venice, it was
pointed out that his life had become more unified than it had been in
England - there was not the dualism of Byron the public figure, and
Byron as he was to his intimate friends - and, at the same time, more
makeshift - his chief companions, the conversazioni frequenters and
his mistresses, were of a casual sort. As time passed the poet ceased
to be delighted simply with the manner of Venetian life. In spite of
the number of his acquaintances, he found it lacking in the "human
part". The salons of the Albrizzi or the Benson were not as brilliant
as those of Regency London. They brought him no friendships, no con-
fidante such as he had possessed in Lady Melbourne, or his half-sister
Augusta. When he began to feel this lack of true society early in
1818, Byron might reasonably have decided to leave Venice. Instead he
made an unfortunate choice: to stay in Venice, to enjoy its modern
freedom to the full, that is, enjoy as many women as he could procure,
but otherwise to live to himself. In April, he moved to Palazzo
Mocenigo.

Byron's choice proved quite unfortunate, for not only did it
fail to keep him immediately contented but it spoilt, retrospectively,
the light-hearted year he had spent in revelling. His greatest
pleasure/
pleasure then had been his affairs with Venetian women. Everything—

his mistresses' "naivezé", the unusual circumstances, the surroundings
themselves had charmed him. After eighteen months, this novelty no
longer enchanted, and the move to Palazzo Mocenigo was to initiate a
period of:

"Vice without splendour, sin without relief
B'en without the gloss of love to smooth it o'er";

[Marino Faliero. Act V, Scene 111, 1. 35-36.]

Certainly, by Shelley's account and Moore's, and the figures Byron
quoted to Murray as expenditure upon "the sex", he had settled to a
brothel sort of existence. So when Teresa Giuccioli came after only a
year of the new regime and saved him, as Shelley would have it, from
the life he was leading, Byron had gone far in dissolution. "As to
libertinism, I have sickened myself of that, as was natural in the
way I went on", he admitted freely to Richard Belgrave Boppard, the
English Consul at Venice, "and I have at least derived that advantage
from vice, to love in the better sense of the word." ([Letter of
2/7/1819].)

What impelled Byron to a course that ended so miserably is a
matter for question, but from what records there are, it seems probable
that, even before the first enthusiasm for life at Venice had passed,
he was beset by a sort of mortal sickness. This was not simply an
attack of the melancholy he knew, but something more grave, the earnest
of his premature ageing.¹ We remember that after only six months he

¹. Here and elsewhere I have accepted the modern reconstruction of Byron's
later life - that, physically and emotionally, he had grown quite
old - a hypothesis which, apart from its extreme probability, is
borne out by many of his own statements - "I am worn out in feelings,
for, though thirty-six, I feel sixty in mind", as he told Lady
Blessington in 1824.
could write of Venice, "I like its marine melancholy", and it is almost as if the sadder, the decaying look of the city had grown an image for the stagnation he could already feel in himself. At this time, the idea of a gradual deadening did not appal him; he could acquiesce in it. But we can see by the Ode on Venice (1818) that hardly another year had passed before Byron came to hate the thought of a slow ebbing of life, and the Venice that symbolised it. In this poem he ends with the lines:

"Better though each man's life-blood were a river,
That it should flow, and overflow, than creep
Through thousand lazy channels in our veins,
Damn'd like the dull canal with locks and chains,
And moving, as a sick man in his sleep,
Three paces, and then faltering: better be
Where the extinguish'd Spartans still are free
In their proud channel of Thermopylae,
Than stagnate in our marsh - or o'er the deep Fly, and one current to the ocean add,
One spirit to the souls our fathers had,
One freeman more, America, to thee!

[Il. 149-160]

Byron is saying that rather than feel as dead as Venice, whose "lazy channels" and "dull canal" typify both the slowness in his own veins and the lifelessness of Europe's "stagnant marsh", the Europe where Freedom cannot come in one great wave as it had done in America, it were better for a man to lie in Greece, or emigrate across the Atlantic. But Byron had already chosen for himself. His way had not been not to take some extreme decision in the name of Freedom, and leave Venice. He had stayed, but not with the motives that had first brought him to reside there. Now it was not for pleasure so much as from a need to escape the weariness and indifference that was settling upon him, it was for this that he sought more violent stimulus in the freedom that he /

1. Compare statements in the letters, for example:- "Yet I want a country, and a home, - and if possible - a free one. There is no Freedom in Europe - that's certain; it is besides a worn-out portion of the globe." (Letter to J.C. Hobhouse of 3/10/1819).
he could enjoy among the Venetians, that of abandoned living. But the remedy had aided the disease. Already in July 1818, the time of the Ode on Venice's composition, Byron is writing obliquely of himself as a "sick man", not only in the passage quoted above, but in the earlier one where he speaks of:—

"The sick man's lightning half an hour ere death,
When Faintness, the last mortal breath of Pain,
And apathy of limb, the dull beginning
Of the cold staggering race that Death is winning,
Steals vein by vein and pulse by pulse away;...."  

Here again is a description of the deadliness to be felt at Venice, that Byron had felt in himself; and this almost a year before he was delivered from it.

When the Ode on Venice and Marino Faliero are considered together, Byron's later attitude to Venice shows quite clearly. It is obvious from the poem that he had begun to confuse his own life and state of being with the life and society of the city itself; so that the passage in the play attacking the viciousness and degeneracy of the modern Venetians is to be construed as nothing so much as a turning upon his private way of living there. Byron unfortunately could not see how much the revulsion he experienced in 1819 was revulsion /

1. Byron never pretended that the social life of Venice had degenerated in the three years he knew the place. Just how personal his latter detestation of the people was can be guessed from remarks that his friend, Belgrave, the English Consul at Venice, wrote in comment upon a letter Byron wrote to him on 25th October 1819, remarks which are given by Thomas Moore in his Life of Byron:— "This language is strong, but it was the language of prejudice merely because some people had disapproved of her (Teresa's) conduct, he declaimed...against the whole nation." Hoppner added:— "I never was partial to Venice..... Yet I experienced more kindness in that place than I ever met with in any other country, and witnessed acts of generosity and disinterested-ness such as rarely are met with elsewhere." In the letter referred to Byron had transferred his abhorrence of the Venetians to all the Italians, and spoke of "their long debased national character".
revulsion against a former self. He could not see that it had been
his personal choice to force the freedom of Venetian manners to the
point of being revolted, that this was not the Venetians' way. In
accusing the people, too, of forgetting the ancient liberties for the
immediate ones of pleasure, he did not seem to realise that it was
himself he condemned before anyone else. Who, after all, had
neglected to write a drama upon the Republican days while he debouched
in the present Venice?

It is not for us to consider here how far "Marino Faliero's"
curse was dictated by blind hypocrisy, how far by an egotistical con-
fusion. We can only observe that in the violence of his denunciation
Byron killed or maimed all the good things he had first said and thought
of Italy and the Italians. We remember the letter to Hobhouse dedicat-
ing Canto IV of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage to him. There Byron had said,
with fine tact:─

"It is also a delicate, and no very grateful task, to dissect
upon the literature and manners of a nation so dissimilar; and
requires an attention and impartiality which would induce us ....
to distrust, or at least defer our judgment...."

Now, he could say of the only Italians he had lived with:─

"the few who still retain a wreck/ Of their great father's
heritage (shall) fawn/ Round a barbarian Vice of Kings' Vice-
general/ ......./ Proud of some name they have disgraced, or
sprung/ From an adulteress boastful of her guilt ......"

and the rest of Faliero's "curse". Again in 1818, he had praised a
majority of Venetians - "Canova.... Morelli, Cicognara, Albrizzi, .......
Mastoxidii, Algietti" - among those who were the ornament of modern
Italy: in 1820, with a most unfortunate complacency, he exempted these
and a few other individuals from utter condemnation of the one Italian
society /
society he knew. 1 Byron's profligacy had brought unfortunate con-
sequences. Venice was damned in his regard; his good opinion of Italy
had suffered more than it could recover. It was a pathetic ending for
the Carnival days, a sad finish to Beppo.

(iv) After Venice

After Venice, Byron spent two years at Ravenna, from the end
of 1819 to the end of 1821, but this can hardly be described as his
"Ravennato" period. It was not simply that the first town of the
Romagna could not offer anything approaching the Venetian social life.
It could not, and Byron's assertion from his new place of residence -

"here (in Italy) all the cities are capitals and have not
the provincial tone" [Letter to J.W.Webster, 2/7/1819]

- carried truth in its second part, but was a great exaggeration in its
first. The pettiness of Ravenna was not, however, the only reason for
its not becoming another Venice for him. Byron's whole style of living
had altered. He was no longer the independent English noble whose
exchanges with the Italians were either public and formal, or a matter
of illicit love. Byron now lived with the Gambas, recognised socially
as Teresa Giusecoli's lover: he made one of an Italian household.
Here was how his experience of Italy had changed. After Venice he did
not see the country simply from a different town in a different part.

He /

1. See the note to Marino Faliero, Act V, Scene III, line 54, the part
of the Doge's curse that begins "Who shall despise her? - She shall
stoop to be". Byron, after giving the statistics for Venetian pros-
titutes, mentions the modern population without daring to describe
their "actual state" and then goes on - "From the present decay and
degeneracy of Venice under the Barbarians, there are some honourable
individual exceptions ....". Perhaps Byron imagined that his list
of names would make amends to the Venetians he had known, and forgot
they might still love Venice.
He saw it as a member of a family and not as a public member of a community.

The years of 1820 and 1821, then, were Byron's "Gamba" years. Much has been made of the part Teresa played in the new period in bringing the poet again to a better state, of body and of soul, in keeping the simple round of life at Ravenna, attractive for him; and the importance of this cannot be easily overstressed: still not enough attention has been given to her brother, Pietro Gamba's part. If his sister took care that Italy was still agreeable to Byron in the plain essentials of daily life, it was Pietro, the "very fine young fellow ... .... wild about Liberty" who had much to do with the poet's belief in immediate Freedom for Italy, in his willingness to support the 1820 rising itself, and his not yielding entirely to disgust after that had failed.\footnote{1} It is important to examine the way in which this time of unrest affected the Gamba household, and Byron in particular, as its details have been so often overpainted.\footnote{2}

Byron /

1. The possible influence of Teresa's father, Count Ruggero Gamba, by this time a veteran 'Liberal', has also to be reckoned, though Byron would undoubtedly have favoured Pietro's counsels of action rather than the older man's caution, when the failure of the Neapolitan rising was being discussed by "Gli Americani". - See Iris Origo's The Last Attachment, (Jonathan Cape - John Murray, 1949), pp.223-224.

2. If the period at Ravenna is taken by itself, it lends itself easily to a completely favourable account of Byron's feelings for Italy and the Italians; but when it is seen as coming after the poet's abuse of the Venetians, and before his preference for the English at Pisa and Genoa, it cannot argue a complete and lasting affection. See, in this connection, pp.292-293 of Marchesa Origo's The Last Attachment where the poet is not finally accounted a great lover of Italy and things Italian. It is interesting to note that while Italian studies have appeared which would make Byron completely Italian in sympathy (Giovanna Foa's Lord Byron, Poeta e Carbonaro, Firenze, 1935), Corrado Zaccchet's Lord Byron e l'Italia, Palermo, 1919, a recent third-page article in Il Messaggero (4/6/53), &c., others see him as the contemptuous Englishman (for example, Carlo Segrè in Relazioni letteararie fra Italia e Inghilterra, Firenze, 1911), or as a doubtful champion of Liberty altogether (A.Zano in l"alfierismo" del Byron from Shakespeare in Russia, Torino, 1945).
Byron had not been interested at Venice in the underground movements that were working for the independence of Italy. It was after he left the city that he could write:

"I suppose you know that they said at Venice, that I was arrested at Bologna as a Carbonaro - a story about as true as their usual conversation". (Letter to R.S. Hoppner, 22/10/1819).

At Ravenna in 1821, he did accept an invitation, made at the request of Pietro Gamba, to join "I Cacciatori Americani", which was the local Carbonari organisation. That this was not an extreme group of incendiaries, in Byron's opinion at any rate, can be seen by his describing it as a club comparable to the Whig Club that Hobhouse had formed at Cambridge.¹ Byron was regarded as one of the leading members of this association of Ravenna 'Liberals', but as for being its actual leader, he himself noted:

"Why they (the authorities) thought me their chief, I know not: their chiefs are like 'Legion, being many". (Letter to J. Murray, 4/9/1821).

When the news of the Neapolitan soldiers' revolt came to the Romagna, Byron was with his associates in being prepared to strike a blow at Ravenna. Arms were collected. Byron himself paid for some that were to be distributed among the 'Liberals' and was not really angry when these were returned to his apartment later, without his knowledge. Their possible discovery would mean trouble, but he could not, as an alien, be punished with the readiness that an Italian citizen might.

In the excitement of the moment, too, Byron had dispatched a note to the

---

¹. See entry "31" in Detached Thoughts, the commonplace book Byron kept at Ravenna from October 1821 (it is printed in Vol. V of the 1898-1901 John Murray edition of Byron's Letters and Journals) - "I belonged to or belong to the following Clubs or Societies:- to the Alfred, to the Cocoa Tree ... to the Cambridge Whig Club, to the Harrow Club ... to the Italian Carbonari, &c., &c., &c.,..."
the Neapolitans offering them a thousand louis and his services, though his only recommendation was as "un Inglese amico della libertà". But even at his most enthusiastic Byron was not acting entirely from his own interest in Italian independence, and he did not feel he had a definite personal role to play in achieving it, as he was soon to feel with Greece. Byron had been committed to any "Ravennato" insurrection as a Gamba. It had made part of his life in the Romagna. Once that was behind him, he thought little of immediate Freedom for Italy. Freedom now attracted him invincibly in another form, that of his beloved Greece.

The promise of events in 1820 and 1821 brought back something of Byron's first enthusiasm for Italy:

"I have lived long enough among (the Italians) to feel more for them as a nation than for any other people in existence .... No Italian can hate an Austriam more than I do" -

he wrote to John Murray on the 16th April, 1820: and in his Journal, the following February:

"Only think - a free Italy!!! Why there has been nothing like it since the days of Augustus". (Entry for 18/2/1821)

- but their sorry outcome left him with a contemptuous opinion of the Italians that had an even longer history. Long before Byron knew country and people he had written of Italy judged by opera:

"Then let Ansonia skill'd in every art
To soften manners but corrupt the heart,
Pour her exotic follies o'er the town ...."

\[English Bards and Scotch Reviewers (1809), 11.618-620\].

In 1819, writing to Hobhouse of the Italian passion for opera, and

1. This statement was certainly one written for the occasion. At this time Byron had turned completely against the Venetians, the only Italians he had lived with "long enough"; at Ravenna he had spent scarcely three months.
and particularly the composer Rossini, he had added:— "I doubt if they'll do much in the Liberty line". (Letter to J.C. Hobhouse, 17/5/1819). Now, after the failure of an attempt for Italian independency, Byron commented:—

"I fear (making operas) and masaroni are their forte, and 'motley their only wear'".  
(Letter to T. Moore, 28/4/1821).

From this time onwards he was definitely finished with the hope of immediate Freedom in Italy.¹ That had not been of constant importance to him anyway. It had not touched him closely at Venice, at Ravenna had possessed him for a moment; now it was formally banished from his life. In effect, Byron had seen from the beginning that the Italy he knew would be an unfree country; and it was because of this belief as much as any other consideration that he had never been reconciled to settling and dying there. This reluctance to accept the country as a second home gathered strength during 1818 when his Venetian life had degenerated to the ways of Palazzo Mocenigo, and Byron began thinking of a move to a part of the world where Freedom had been fought for, Washington's America, or Bolivar's, as his later preference became. In March of 1821, the Greeks rose. Byron hesitated, cherishing his American plan into the late summer of 1822,² but it was written that he should go to Greece.

Byron's interest in Greece and its right to Freedom is to be /

---

1. See the diary-entry for 23rd January, 1821:— "I think of retiring towards Ancona nearer the northern frontier; that is to say, if Teresa and her father are obliged to retire, which is most likely, as all the family are Liberals. If not, ... I shall stay. But my movements will depend upon the lady's wishes - for myself, it is much the same". See also the letters of the late autumn and summer of the same year in which Byron discusses leaving Italy with the Gambas, for example, that to T. Moore, 19/9/1821.

2. "I had, and still have, thoughts of South America, but am fluctuating between it and Greece ...."  
(Letter to T. Moore, 27/8/1822).
be seen already in the first two Cantos of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (1812) and The Curse of Minerva (written 1811; first published, Philadelphia 1815); and the same works tell his early obliviousness of Italy and her claims. The Venetian period had not altered his first allegiance. Nor did the Gambas. If Teresa could not win her Byron to accepting the quiet life of the provincial Italian noble, her brother could not persuade him to make the cause of Italy his cause, to serve it with patience, to work for the time of action. Byron had conducted himself in another spirit. If the Italians were suddenly to show themselves determined to fight, he would be with them. Otherwise he would retain his opinion that they could do little for their own Freedom. This was not real feeling for the Italian people, apart from being a quite unsympathetic reading of their history.

The last two years of Byron's stay in Italy are the story of his return to the English, the "travelling English" he had so strenuously avoided till then.

When the order of expulsion from Ravenna came in July 1821, Byron and the Gambas considered Switzerland as well as other parts of Italy. Byron declared himself indifferent, at first, and then remembered that he disliked the Swiss. When it was arranged that the new residence should be at Pisa, under the "very mild" Tuscan Government, and near to the English circle of the Shelleys, the Williamses, Trelawney, to be joined in time by the Hunts, Byron showed he was quite glad at the move. He no longer bore a universal grudge against his own countrymen and if he was not to enjoy the company of those at Pisa, it was because he did not find them Englishmen he liked. Shelley was one he willingly conversed with, but even Shelley had not known "the world"
of London. By chance, Byron was to encounter people of England's
"beau monde" once again before his death. After the tragic drowning
of the other poet, and the inevitable failure of collaboration with
Leigh Hunt, he moved to Genoa. Here he was even more prepared to mix
with the "Angles" - he went as far as to join the English Reading
Circle of the town - and here, for the last time, he came into his own
sort of society: he met the Countess of Blessington and the young
"lion", d'Orsay, both fresh from London. For almost a year Byron
relived his own years in "the world", by conversation, through the last
reminiscient part of Don Juan (Cantos X-XVI). But he had not come to
Genoa for this. In July 1823, he sailed for Greece, taking with him
Pietro Gamba and Trelawney. His departure does not mark the true end
of the Italian adventure. That had come much sooner; and ever since
he left Venice, his true affections had been turning from Italy.

Byron's change of feeling towards Italy is plainly to be
discerned from his works. After he left Venice the only two works of
Italian subject he wrote were the two plays from Venetian history, and
in these he showed the modern people most abject and vile compared to
their more than Roman ancestors. At Ravenna he found nothing else
that was Italian to celebrate in verse, and there are only occasional
hints in the Cantos of Don Juan of the country from which it was being
written, such as the passage about his usual evening ride through the
pine wood (Canto III, ss. cv-cviii), or the lines about the Commandant
shot dead at his door (Canto V, ss. xxxiii-xxxix), where it is noticeable
he does not touch the question of this being a possible instance of the
Italians' /
Italians' feelings about Liberty, the "immortal longing" as he had chosen to describe it once. At Pisa, at Genoa, there are hints in other works of a lingering interest in Italy: in Byron's fragment, The Deformed Transformed, the main scene of action is the Rome he had once visited, and the work ends in a "wild, but smiling Country" in the Apennines: in The Age of Bronze (1823), he affirmed that the waves of Freedom had not passed Italy "for aye". But it is from Don Juan that we can guess what place Italy and the Italians had taken in his life. This is the work in which the Byronic hero visits all the parts of the world important to his author, Spain and the Levant, London and the country about it - Juan even goes to Moscow, but Italy is still omitted. Byron's professed programme - to make his hero among other things, "a Cavalier Servente in Italy"¹ - had not simply been forgotten. Italy had enjoyed little part in his imaginative life since Venice had been blackened from his memory.² As for the Italians, they enter Don Juan simply /

1. See the letter to John Murray of 16/2/21.
2. Throughout this chapter, little direct reference has been made to Byron's feelings for Italian Nature and Italian Art, because in any account - and more so in a short one - this hardly merits a place beside his interest in Italy's people and history. To illustrate this contention - Canto IV of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage describes only one Italian landscape in detail that is not Roman - the view from the banks of the "deep-dyed Brenta" (ss. xxvii-xxix). Byron himself said Canto IV treated more of Art, but the works he describes are once again Classical, with the exception of Saint Peter's at Rome. In The Prophecy of Dante there is no immediate description of Italian scenes; and Michelangelo is taken to represent the whole of the Italian Renaissance, no other artist being referred to by name or work. The truth is, once again, that but for the short Ravenna passage in Don Juan, no Italian scene succeeded the Venetian ones of Canto IV of Childe Harold and the two plays on the Doges (see particularly in Marino Faliero, Act IV, Sc.1, Lionti's description of a Venetian night beginning "Around me are the stars and waters......") ; just as Byron's comparative indifference to Italian painting was only appreciably unsettled by the Venetian school. "I know nothing of pictures myself, and care almost as little; but to me there are none like the Venetian - above all, Giorgione" (letter to W. Bankes, 26/2/1820). The artist who drew his warmest praise, Antonio Canova, was also of Venice. "Such as the great of yore, Canova is today" - Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. Canto IV, stanza lv; see, too, the letter of dedication: the lines On the bust of Helen, by Canova (1816); and Beppo, stanza xlvi - "while yet Canova can create below"./
simply in the form of a rather ludicrous opera-company. This was consistent. The only other modern Italians Byron had ever recorded besides, were the Count, Laura, and the namesake of Beppo, who had all been operatic enough. Reading Don Juan, one might forget altogether that if Byron had never known the corner of Italy that is Venice, had never buffooned it himself through a Venetian Carnival, he would not have come to his own free octave-measure, and his own formidable humour might never have found its way into verse.

The experience of Byron's earlier years in Italy, that is his experience of Venice, reveals him as both the Classical Traveller, and the quite individual one, and so, bears out the present thesis. Venice, first of all, engaged his feelings in the way Rome did those of the usual Classical Tourist. It was in Venice, not Rome, that Byron stayed until he really felt and lived the ancient history of the place, its "thirteen hundred years of Freedom" (Child's Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV, stanza xiii). It was of the Doges that he wrote when he wished to illustrate the Republican virtues in drama: the story of Marino Faliero suggested a play to him, not a chance reminder of some Roman figure like Cato, as had been Addison's experience in Italy a few generations earlier. But Byron's predilection for Venice did not militate against an enthusiasm for Rome. He accepted the tradition that the first Venice had been the refuge of the Romans escaping from Attila, and could see the city in its later greatness as the second, the Ocean Rome. He could feel for both Rome and Venice, as Canto IV of Childe Harold testifies, but the implication of that work is to be rejected.
rejected. Byron, writing to the English, with the 'Romanist' Hobhouse at his elbow, made more of Rome in his poem, but we know from the records of his experience that it was Venice that he could rightly have called "my city."

The final likeness between Byron's regard for Venice and that of the Classical Traveller for Rome, is to be seen in the poet's extreme abuse of the modern Venetians in the name of their ancestors, which recalls the traditional way of contrasting the Italians with their Roman forefathers. It was noticed, however, that the Byronic accusations were not made simply from consideration of ideal Freedom, but were adulterated with strong personal feelings against the Venetian society he had known. Here we touch the other, the personal importance Venice had for Byron.

Without recapitulating altogether the part that Venice played in Byron's private life - for example, its being a place where he was accepted after the final hostility that he had known in London, where he could behave carelessly without suffering the cant that had so exasperated him, and so on - its lasting influences are to be briefly recalled. Firstly, his Venetian life issued poetically in the free style of Beppo, and continued in the earlier cantos of Don Juan. Canto I of the latter work is another "Venetian" tale. Byron's octave-rhyme manner, then, was a gift from Venice: for it was a complete style from the beginning, and although he found more themes for its employment and possibly became surer in its use, he did not change it from being "à la Beppo". The second chief effect of Byron's life in Venice, was that it produced so complete a revulsion in the end that the poet's regard not only for the Venetians, but for the Italians in general, suffered. After that, he could go to Ravenna, and enjoy life in the Gamba/
Gamba family, and willingly participate in their hopes for a 'Liberal' insurrection. But he was not acting from strong personal motives; he found nothing Italian in the new period, historical, literary, or more immediate, that excited him to a new interest in Italy; and when, after two years, the Gambas were forced to leave the Romagna, Byron agreed to Pisa as the next residence, quite pleased to know this meant his return to the English.

At Venice, Byron had been the English visitor with a strong interest in Italy of the Italians; at Ravenna, an ungrudging member of an Italian family; in the last twenty months at Pisa and Genoa, he lived extremely little to country and people. But even through the final un-Italian period Don Juan was still writing; and although the Byronic hero never favoured Italy in his wanderings, the vehicle of his story was still, in a sense, of Italian inspiration. Byron's Italian experiences, then, had been of great personal importance to him; and something lasting had grown from the turbid passage with the two Freedoms of Venice.

1. It is notable that Byron never completed The Prophecy of Dante (1819), although it was associated with both Teresa, at whose instance he attempted this "Dantesque" work, and Ravenna, where the tomb of the great poet was. In the Preface to the four completed cantos we read that "if they are understood and approved it is my purpose to continue the poem in various other cantos, to its natural conclusion in the present age". But Byron was never to take "Dante's" survey of Italian history beyond the Renaissance; or urge the modern Italians to independence again as he had done in 1819, in Canto II of The Prophecy.
CHAPTER IV: SHELLEY AND THE "TWO ITALIES"

With Shelley, unlike Byron, little consideration has to be given to the time before he visited Italy. The fact is that Shelley's experience of country and people embraced practically nothing of anticipation and was almost entirely a progress of discovery. His one definite interest in Italian things before 1818, the year in which he moved to Italy, was in its literature and, although that grew in the country itself, it was not remarkably quickened there. Nor had the poetry of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto and Tasso ever interested him notably in actual, living Italy, any more than admiration for the Romans and Greeks made him eager to see the real Rome, Pompeii or Paestum. The motives that issued in Shelley's Italian residence were, in reality, quite unimaginative.

1. Shelley's design of settling in Italy, 1812-1818

In March 1812, writing to his "soul's friend", Elizabeth Hitchener, Shelley suddenly asked: "What think you of a journey to Italy in the autumn?" (letter of 14/3/12). A month later he again wrote to this correspondent, inviting her now to Wales, to Nantgwillt in Radnorshire. The truth was that the poet was looking for a place of residence that would satisfy his requirements of "cheapness, beauty, and retirement". (Letter to W. Godwin, 25/4/12). Italy suggested itself as an airy possibility, but when he saw Nantgwillt for himself and was sure it offered "so eligible an opportunity for settling in a cheap, retired, romantic spot", (letter to T.C. Medwin, 25/4/1812), he spoke /
spoke no more of an Italian journey; and was not to speak of one seriously for another four years.

The Shelleys did not settle at Nantgwillt in 1812 because they could not "give satisfactory security". Upon this disappointment Harriet wrote to her friend, Catherine Nugent:-

"We have some thoughts of going to Italy until Percy is of age, as the same difficulty will attend us wherever we go. One very great inducement to go to Italy is the warmth of the climate, as Percy's health is so extremely delicate..."

[Letter of 7/6/1812].

Here, six years before Shelley moved to Italian parts, are the two most important considerations that took him there, clearly indicated, "cheapness" and health. When he came to reconsider the "design of settling in Italy" early in 1816, it was because of new and grave-seeming financial trouble; he had come to no agreement with his father on the question of how his inheritance should be paid. (Letter to W. Godwin, 16/2/1816). But even a cheaper way of living, and the welcome "retirement" that it would entail, did not necessarily mean Italy. Five days after the Italian plan was mentioned, Shelley announces:-

"I think ...., at present of settling in Cumberland or Scotland".

At last, towards the end of 1817, a deterioration in his health made Italy inevitable.

"...I have experienced a decisive pulmonary attack"
he wrote to Godwin.

"...In the event of its assuming any decided shape, it would be my duty to go to Italy without delay.... It is not health, but life I should seek in Italy." [Letter of 7/12/17].

Four months later, in April 1818, Shelley, with Mary and Jane Claire Clairmont, was at Milan.

From /
From the statements quoted above, it will appear that Italy did not attract the poet by its beauty, or by the promise of "romantic" scenery such as he had found in Wales. This indifference to the more poetic qualities of the Italian scene is not only found in Shelley's utterances, but is to be seen in his experience. When he first went abroad in 1814, like Wordsworth, he made straight for Switzerland, to see the famed Alps. But Shelley was also drawn there by "romantic" associations, that is, by its having provided a scene in one of his favourite works, William Godwin's Fleetwood, or the New Man of Feeling, (1806); and it was this, not a desire to look upon the great peaks, that attracted him specifically to the Canton of Uri. In 1814 the Swiss visit lasted three days, being cut short by the poet's discovering as soon as he arrived that he possessed just enough money to take himself and his two travelling companions, Mary Godwin and Jane Claire Clairmont back to England. But he had been tantalised by his experience. Two years later he returned, this time to the Geneva district (which once again interested him for "romantic" associations - it was the Rousseau country, the home of "Julie" and "St. Preux" - as well as for its scenery), and this time he stayed. The glaciers were visited. Shelley conducted Byron on a Rousseau pilgrimage around the Lake. Once in this latter journey, the two poets approached the Italian frontier. Shelley remarks:

"... we were asked for our passports on the supposition of our proceeding to Italy." \[Letter to T.L. Peacock of 12/7/1816\]

That is all. He was not in the least excited by the thought of Italy's nearness. The country had never brought him a strong sense of /
The last sentence above clearly hints the relation of Shelley's pre-Italian period to his actual time in the country. He was not attracted to Italy by the renown of its classical memorials or its natural beauty, yet when he arrived, he was more ravished by the first than Byron ever was, and more dominated by the second than Wordsworth. We find this same contrast throughout Shelley's experience - an unpreparedness for Italy's "pleasures and advantages", and a most vivid response when he encounters them; and it is illuminating to compare his character as an Italian traveller to Byron's. Byron was interested in the great cities of Italy, particularly Rome and Venice, before he travelled. As a poet he knew that an Italian journey would stimulate him to write, perhaps give him a background for new works. On the other hand, Shelley seems to have been barely aware of Italian places before he saw them, and never considered that experience of Italy might materially influence his poetry. Even the feeling that he was an "exile", did not possess him until after he had known Italy for a time - again unlike Byron, who knew himself to be "excommunicated" before he left England. It is because Shelley's Italian sojourn produced or developed in him a marked interest in some aspects of Italy, whereas his previous interest in Italian things /

1. Shelley did, for a moment during this 1816 Swiss visit, entertain a plan of travel that would have taken in Italy: "If possible, we think of descending the Danube in a boat, of visiting Constantinople and Athens, then Rome and the Tuscan cities, and returning by the south of France..." but the great recommendation in this project was that he would journey "always following great rivers": and, in any case, it was an "eastern scheme", not an Italian one, a circumstance which rather argues the influence of Byron, with whom Shelley was, at this time, in frequent contact. See letter to T.L. Peacock of 17/7/1816.
things had not led him to the country of their origin, that his actual experience of the country has to be treated with little preliminary discussion.

2. The Italy of Nature, Classical Remains, and Art

After Shelley had spent eight months in Italy, he wrote to his friend, Leigh Hunt:

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

[Letter of 22/12/1815] Four months later, addressing another correspondent, Thomas Love Peacock, he was to describe the convicts toiling before St. Peter's in Rome as

"the emblem of Italy - moral degradation contrasted with the glory of nature and the arts". 


This distinction that the poet made so quickly can be observed in considering his whole Italian experience. In Italy Shelley was fascinated in turn by Nature, Art, the classical remains, and was not interested in the "human part" of the country, except for the moment when he was concerned with Teresa Emilia Viviani. Accordingly, "the second Italy" can be ignored while we study Shelley's experience of "the first" which to him was one; for when he came to Pompeii, he realised that the Greeks, by nourishing themselves upon natural forms, produced an art that was "natural", and that the Italian art he admired most shared this character.

(1) /
"No sooner had we arrived in Italy than the loveliness of the earth and the serenity of the sky made the greatest difference in my sensations".

So wrote Shelley to Thomas Love Peacock from Milan, in April 1818. The poet had just entered Italy. He had experienced the full beauty of Italian nature first at Como, as Wordsworth had done almost thirty years before him, and Shelley's pleasure was not less than that of the earlier poet.

"This lake exceeds anything I ever beheld in beauty, with the exception of the arbutus islands of Killarney... The scene from the colonnade (of the Villa Fliniana) is the most extraordinary, at once, and the most lovely that eye ever beheld"

- Shelley told his correspondent in a paragraph on Como which rivals the passage in Wordsworth's Descriptive Sketches (1793) both for appreciation and excitement. Shelley even tried to rent a villa by the lakeside, but it proved too expensive and so, like Wordsworth, he had to relinquish dreams of the happiness he might have enjoyed in these lovely surroundings.

"You may easily imagine the motives which led us to forego the divine solitude of Como"

the next letter to Peacock runs.

"To me whose chief pleasure is the contemplation of nature, you may imagine how great is this loss".

From the Lombard countryside, Shelley soon moved to the Tuscan; and at Livorno and Bagna di Lucca during the summer months he found much again to delight in; but he did not begin the tranquil life which he felt from the first, Italian Nature had to offer him. Before he had quite settled to Tuscany, he was called away to Venice, journeying to discuss the wardship of Allegra, Jane Claire Clairmont's child,
child, with Lord Byron. A few stimulating inconclusive days together in a busy Italian city made Shelley quite glad to withdraw to 'I Capuccini' at Este, the villa which Byron generously put at his disposal. Here, for the first time since coming to Italy, Shelley found himself sufficiently at peace to write. He completed Rosalind and Helen, began Prometheus Unbound, produced Julian and Maddalo and the Lines written among the Euganean Hills.

Rosalind and Helen clearly foreshadows a new development in Shelley's poetry - a natural landscape, the Italian, was to enter it as a frequent ground upon which his fancy could work. In his earliest long poem, Queen Mab, Shelley's scene is quite visionary, the details from nature are brightened and refined to something quite ideal, or have been made precious in the Arabian-night style of Southey's Thalaba. Alastor (1816) showed that when Shelley discovered vivid landscapes, like those of Switzerland and the Rhine Valley, before him, he would so far abandon his own "silver vision" and begin to describe the external world: but The Revolt of Islam showed as clearly that when he found himself again in the unheughtened surroundings of England, the poet would not copy, but preferred to supply more intensely coloured scenes of his own creating. With the move to Italy in 1818, Shelley was to enter a last period of poetry in which the natural scene that stood before him each day was one in which light developed colour as strongly as he could wish. His poems were open to the sun of Italy and the Italian landscape.

Already in Rosalind and Helen, both the brilliance and the reality of Shelley's new background are to be seen. This poem had been conceived and virtually finished before the poet came to Italy, but after /
after he had experienced Italian nature, he decided to make the scene of his "Modern Bolognese", "the shore of the Lake of Como". This was to mean little difference to the tales of "Rosalind" and "Helen", except where they touch upon the surroundings. "Remember, this is Italy", says Helen; and in "these chestnut woods, these heathy paths that inland stream, / And the blue mountains", in the clean white house with vines about its windows -

"where the shore

Is shadowed with deep rocks and cypresses
Cleave with their dark green cones the silent skies,
And with their shades the clear depths below,
And where a little terrace from its bowers,
Of blooming myrtle and faint lemon flowers,
Scatters its sense-dissolving fragrance 'o'er
The liquid marble of the windless Lake"

[ll. 19, 23-25, & 1245-1252]

- in these lines we are by Como's side. In Italy Shelley had come upon a real landscape that equalled his own previous conceptions in vividness.

If the Italian scene had only struck Shelley as a beauty of light and colour, it could perhaps have represented a congenial reality to his eyes, but by its very realness it was to sadden him. So the earliest poems from Italy are not simply works that are permeated by a new and natural brightness. The work entitled Lines written among the Euganean Hills (October, 1818) embodies a description of "the radiant visions disclosed by the sudden burst of an Italian sunrise", but it begins "in a state of deep despondency",¹ nor does it end happily; and two months later, Shelley was to voice an even profounder despair with the Stanza written in Dejection, near Naples. Their tone was attributed /

---

¹. See the Advertisement to Rosalind and Helen (1819) which contains a reference in its second paragraph to Lines written among the Euganean Hills.
attributed by Mary Shelley simply to the ill health he suffered at this time, but Shelley had several times before been as tortured by his ailments. In Italy there was this difference. He could not call on any of his old, constant friends, Hogg, Peacock, Hunt, to sympathise, and he had found no new one who could bring him solace as they had often done when he was afflicted in England. Nor could he beguile himself with the promise of any revery when he was confronted by "blue isles and snowy mountains", or, "the lightning of the noon-tide ocean" - scenes that, bright as any of his visions, only deepened the sadness in his heart. In Italy there was nothing between him and the reality of his situation.

From the poems of the first half year in Italy, and the letters Shelley wrote at the time, this seems the likeliest account of the extreme in melancholy that he touched after he had reached Naples in December, 1818. His health had not yet improved. He greatly missed the little group of friends at home that it had taken so many years to gather. A short time before in Venice he had met Byron, and though he had felt exhilarated in the other's company, until he could declare -

"Thou Paradise of Exiles, Italy", this heartening had not endured. Byron was a different sort of exile. He was famed at home. What he wrote was still read by the English with the liveliest interest. Shelley, not generally known in his own country, did not envy Byron success so much as the fortune of being listened to. That was what Shelley had striven for - to be a prophet to his people of the coming age - and he had not been heard. When he realised this, looking back on his English period as a whole, his despair could not have been /
Shelley lost heart when from Italy he was given a bleak vision of his life in England, and saw it as almost fruitless. This might have happened to him in another country. But the natural Paradise of Italy was to add to his desolation in a more particular way. In its almost visionary beauty it was to remind Shelley that he had passed his life largely between two dreams of heavenly states; the personal one of childhood remembered, the universal one of future Freedom. From the beginning, the Italian scene seemed to mock him with the promise of these visions, and leave him to feel that in reality he had been deserted by both. So at Como he saw the "blue mountains" as

"shapes which seem Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream"

and in the Euganean hills, although he dreamed of a "healing Paradise", beautiful as the scene before him, and imagined that the world of men might "grow young again", as the world of nature did yearly, his hopes are tinged with a sad bitterness.1

In the first year of Shelley's Italian residence the natural beauty of the country made his own pure visions seem pale and baseless, but did not bring him any deep comfort. It was with the second spring, which /

1. Shelley no longer hopes simply for the advent of Liberty among men, but dreams of escaping from them to "a flowering isle" -

"There for me, and those I love,
May a windless bower be built
Far from passion, pain and guilt..."

This theme of finding a refuge from the world is heard again, in other forms, in the Letter to Maria Gisborne (1820) and Epipsychidion (1821). As for mankind at large, Shelley fears that "the polluting multitude" might find out "the healing Paradise", but insists -

"They, not it, would change".

(Lines written among the Euganean Hills, ll. 343-345, 355-356 & 370). That he has quite forgotten his usual ardent philanthropy in this poem, is some measure of his dispiritedness.
which he spent at Rome, that Italy was to make reparation, by taking
him into a Paradise such as he had glimpsed, on entering the country,
at Como. We have only to read the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound* (1820)
to see how much Shelley enjoyed the garden of sensual pleasure which
the southern warmth opened to him. He tells us the larger part of his
poem was written "among the flowery thickets of odoriferous blossoming
trees" upon the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. "The bright blue sky
of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest
climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirit even to
intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama". The poet had for-
gotten. He had conceived his play at Este near Venice, and in the
northern autumn had seen it as the story of a defiance and a struggle,
as its beginning indicates; but when he came to write the middle acts
in Rome, during March and April of 1819, the Roman spring had almost
transformed them into something like itself, a work of softness and
light.

At Rome, Shelley had not simply found the garden of sensual
pleasure: it was as if he had returned for a moment to the garden of
childhood.\(^1\) For two months he lived in a warm confusion of the senses,
in a gentle hurry of sensation, as his *Prometheus Unbound* reveals. But
this /

---

\(^1\) The image of childhood, or a possible "life-before-life", as a
garden where all the senses are delighted, is several times hinted
in Shelley's poetry, perhaps most strikingly in *The Triumph of Life*
(ll. 308-410). The wish to return to the simplicity of the child-
state was expressed in *Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples* (1818)
- "I could lie down like a tired child,
  And weep away the life of care...."
  (Stanza IV, ll. 2-3).
- a work that belongs to the period immediately before the Roman one,
  when Shelley felt warm and protected in Nature's presence, like an
  infant with his mother.
this poem declares, too, how in this child-like phase Shelley could not dominate his own impressions so as to use them in poetry. They enter not to further his purpose, but to distract him from it. The colour, the "sense-dissolving fragrance" that he had known almost as soon as he knew Italy, lull him from the conscious design. Shelley is here the subject, not the master of his own senses. He was possessed by, rather than possessing them.

Three months before Shelley came to Italy he had written to William Godwin:-

"Yet, after all, I cannot but be conscious, in much of what I write, of an absence of that tranquillity which is the attribute and accompaniment of power"

but, he assured his friend,

"in coming years I shall do something whatever it might be, which a serious and earnest estimate of my powers will suggest to me, and which will be in every respect accommodated to their utmost limits." [Letter of 11/12/177.

Shelley had not known true peace in himself during his English years, and realised, that until he did, he would not produce works that were equal to his gifts. When he came into Italy in the spring of 1818, he felt at once that there was a serenity in the sky and look of this country which he might take into his own being; but at the same time his senses had been put in an ecstasy by the brilliant varying impressions that played on them. After a year sensual excitement still forbade deeper calm in the poet, and with Prometheus Unbound (1820), it almost seems as if Shelley could not dominate his own sensations in the too stimulating Italian climate, far less his poetic works. In 1820, however, during his third Italian summer, the poet was suddenly to know a serenity in himself like the serenity of Italy, as we can see so /
so clearly from a work he wrote then, the Letter to Maria Gisborne.

In this poem Shelley is completely alone, but no longer oppressed by the sense of isolation, no longer feeling quite unloved. Instead, he can dwell upon the number of his friends, and describe each one affectionately in recommending them to his new acquaintance, Maria Gisborne. Again, he no longer looks out on things excitedly, animating them with his own desire, but can patiently and directly detail the objects that lie about him in the workshop from which he is writing, or the features of the surrounding Tuscan landscape. His tranquillity is so complete, here in Italy, that he feels the deepest peace even as the thunderstorm breaks outside -

"... the hill
Looks hoary through the white electric rain,
And from the glens beyond, in sullen strain,
The interrupted thunder howls; above
One chasm of Heaven smiles, like the eye of Love
On the unquiet world - while such things are,
How could one worthy of your friendship heed the jar
Of worms? The shriek of the world's carrion jays,
Their censure, or their wonder, or their praise..."

[ll. 123-131]

Even in the middle of the Italian thunderstorm some feature recalls smiling days; and soon this darkness and disturbance pass to be succeeded by an entrancing summer evening, with the fire-flies zig-zagging beyond the rich foliage about the window, and a song clear in the distance. Not simply the beauty, but the kindliness of the Italian seem has lifted Shelley from the vain, striving world to a heaven of peace; and it has made him feel the benevolence, the love that is in the universe.

The calm that Shelley had experienced at Livorno in July, 1820 did not dominate the last two years of his life. It did not even deliver him /
him for long from the bondage of the senses; and in his last summer he was more ravished by the natural world about him, than he had been during the Roman spring of 1819 - he had finally come into the earthly Paradise of his desire, that he had longed for since he wrote in Queen Mab years earlier - "O happy Earth! reality of Heaven!" At Rome Shelley had known the pleasure of his own being, but at Lerici, in 1822, his bliss was made complete by the presence of the Woman - Jane Williams. But while his ecstasy was renewed, Shelley could not, after the tranquil moment in the summer of 1820, be as subject to outward things as he had been when he first came into Italy. Admittedly, the last lyrics addressed to Jane as the one he is forbidden to love, have in them a melancholy, reproachful note, but the letters written then tell us that the time was so plunged in sunlight and pleasantness for Shelley that he could say with Faust to the fleeting moment - "Remain thou, thou art so beautiful".1 Shelley's death came just when his enjoyment of Italy that had been a "divine" place for him ever since he encountered its lovely Nature first at Como was supreme.

1. See the letters for the end of May, June and the first days of July, 1822. They tell Shelley's new-found happiness from the moment he could say - "I .... enjoy for the first time these ten years something like health", and had begun to notice Jane Williams - "It is a pity that any one so pretty should be so selfish" (letter to Clara Mary Jane Clairmont, 29/6/22); to the description of the evening sails "...we drive along this delightful bay in the evening wind under the summer moon until earth appears another world. Jane brings her guitar, and if the past and future could be obliterated, the present would content me so well that I could say with Faust to the passing moment 'Remain thou, thou art so beautiful'..." (letter to John Gisborne 18/6/22); to the last note to Jane written on 4th July which ends in a little paragraph that is like a poem "How soon those hours passed, and how slowly they return to pass so soon again, perhaps for ever, in which we have lived together so intimately, so happily! Adieu, my dearest friend! I only write these lines for the pleasure of tracing what will meet your eyes...".
From the middle of 1820 onwards, we can see a comparative equilibrium in Shelley the man; and in the poet there is a corresponding balance, a growing mastery. It was as he had guessed when he wrote to Godwin at the end of 1817: once he had known tranquillity, he would come to greater power in poetry. Not that all the works of the last two years exhibit a new sureness and control. Epipsychidion (1821), for example, reveals how far he could still wander in a piece of writing without finding a coherent subject for it. But poems like Adonais (1821) and The Triumph of Life (1822) tell of just such an increase of poetic skill, particularly in the way natural details are treated. In Adonais, Shelley introduces the Italian scene but never confuses it with the spiritual commotions that he sees the death of Keats exciting. In The Triumph of Life, Shelley's vision comes to him as he lies -

"...... beneath the hoary stem
Which an old chestnut flung athwart the steep
Of a green Apenine" [ll. 24-26]

but it is a vision, and not simply a toying with the natural details nearest to hand. The years in Italy had brought him "tranquillity which is the accompaniment of power", and brought works which had begun to accommodate his true powers as a poet.

It has been possible to consider the part Nature played in Shelley's Italian years by itself, and to trace out the personal significance it had for him, without reference to the country's classical or other attributes. Shelley's experience here is like Wordsworth's: he found Italy to be the Paradise of Nature, and he was excited to describe it.
But the only effect of his longer acquaintance with the natural beauty of Italy was not simply that he described it many times more, and more finely, than Wordsworth. Italian Nature had another and profounder influence upon Shelley which is comparable, oddly enough, to the influence that living in the Italian society of Venice had upon Byron. Through Italian Nature Shelley came to be at peace with himself, and his later works speak a more complete harmony of being; just as Byron in Italian society led a far more unified life than he had known, a change which we see reflected in the "total humour" of his Beppo and Don Juan.

We shall now consider Shelley's regard for the classical past and the art of Italy. For although, like Wordsworth, he saw Italian Nature bare of Classical associations, and though, like both Wordsworth and Byron, he did not visit Italy to see the ancient memorials or modern works, these were to occupy him considerably, certainly much more notably than either of the other Romantic poets who knew Italy.

(ii) Classical Remains and Art

Four months after arriving in Italy, Shelley wrote to William Godwin:

"We have, as yet, seen nothing of Italy which marks it to us as the habitation of departed greatness. The serene sky, the magnificent scenery, the delightful productions of the climate are known to us, indeed, as the same with those which the ancients enjoyed. But Rome and Naples - even Florence, are yet to see; and if we were to write you at present a history of our impressions, it would give you no idea that we lived in Italy."

[Letter of 25/7/1817].

From this it is clear that Shelley entering Italy loved the natural face of the country for its own sake, but at the same time was fully conscious that /
that the ancients had enjoyed this scenery and climate. The same
passage acknowledges Italy of the ancients as the essential one for
the Englishman, the poet asserting that, without notice of the classical,
Godwin would have no idea "we lived in Italy". Not long after this, in
November 1818, Shelley was to begin an orthodox Tour of the country,
starting from Venice as Byron had done some twenty months earlier.
Byron, however, had simply made a token pilgrimage to Rome, spent two
or three days at Florence, omitted Naples from his itinerary altogether,
and had arrived back in Venice six weeks after leaving it. Shelley's
was the thorough-going tour of the eighteenth century traveller, and he
was to stay three months each in the cities of Naples, Rome and Florence.

Shelley's journey recalls the earlier classical pilgrimages
not only in its outline, but in many of its details. At Bologna he
was given his first notable introduction to Italian art, and he quickly
decided for Raphael and Guido who had long been perhaps the greatest
favourites of the English. He was to retain a strict preference for
these two, except for the moment when his enthusiasm for Italian art
extended to Salvator Rosa, and the other one, when he seemed at last to
recognise Michelangelo, whose works had so repelled him, as one of the
greatest artists.¹ But it is not simply because he admired Raphael
and Guido that Shelley appears the traditional Tourist, but because his
notice /

¹ It is remarkable that whenever Shelley wishes to refer to Renaissance
painting in his Rome–Naples period, he adduces "Raphael and
Guido", except for the one occasion when he adds Salvator: "The
only things that sustain comparison (with antiquity) are Raphael,
Guido, and Salvator Rosa" — see the letter to T.L. Peacock of 23/3/19.
He did not appreciate Michelangelo greatly and upon a first en-
counter with his works at Naples said - "I think the genius of this
artist highly overrated" (letter to T.L. Peacock, 25/2/19). At
Florence, however, Shelley seems to have accepted the common verdict,
and couples his name with Raphael's. See the passage in the letter
to Leigh Hunt of 27/9/19, quoted below.
notice of Italian arts is limited to works of the Renaissance period, that is, to works that were considered to be of classical inspiration.

From Bologna Shelley travelled into the Roman country, where he was put in raptures by Spoleto ("the most romantic city I ever saw"), and the cataract of the Velino at Terni, which he described with an astonishment and pleasure excelling Addison's, equalling Byron's. ("Imagine a river....falling 300 feet into a sightless gulf of snow-white vapour. It comes in thick and tawny folds, flaking off like solid snow gliding down a mountain.... The very imagination is bewildered in it"). The poet even found that the much belied Campagna di Roma was "infinitely to my taste". After a few days at Rome itself, he decided that he would rather continue south to Naples, and then come back to appreciate "the capital of the vanished world". It was a familiar practice of classical tourists to visit the Virgilian region first, so as to have uninterrupted time for Rome itself. Addison had done this; but since Addison's day, the Divine Coast of Naples had gained in classical significance. Pompeii and Herculaneum had transformed it into a memorial of Greece, and although this had not transformed the classical Tour for most Englishmen, it was to make an inestimable difference for Shelley.

In going to Pompeii before he had made himself really familiar with Rome, Shelley was to come to his own quite individual view of Italy's classical memorials. The usual English traveller valued the Roman remains, before all, as testifying to a people who had possessed the manly Republican virtues in perfection. Even the often-recorded nobility of the Pantheon and other more fragmentary structures was not admired as a style of art so much as a reflection of the great spirit, the /
the moral worth of the Romans. This attitude was strengthened by the
realisation that Rome had not produced great artists like Greece, that
the famous statues, the Apollo Belvedere, the Venus dei Medici, the
Laocoon, and the others, witnessed to the Greek rather than the
"classical" genius. When Pompeii had been uncovered, and when in the
later eighteenth century a visit there had begun, for many, to make a
part of the classical Tour of Italy, the new Greek memorials might con-
ceivably have been admired for the art they embodied, for they were
without the moral associations that had consecrated those of Rome. But
few English travellers are found in the new period who evince sufficient
interest or power to appreciate the architecture, sculpture, painting
of Pompeii in themselves, free of any pre-established associations.
Shelley was one of the exceptions.

Shelley's enthusiasm for Pompeii resembles that of the other
Englishmen, his contemporaries or predecessors, who were comparably sen-
sitive to art;^ but it is still quite original in two points. Pompeii
led Shelley to a discovery of his own which he could hardly have made
at Rome. He was to see from the city and the way in which it had been
built, open to the surrounding country, that the Greeks "lived in a
perpetual commerce with external nature, and nourished themselves upon
the spirit of its forms". With this realisation came another one.
It was their intimacy with nature that had made the Greeks "such great
poets", that had produced "the harmony, the unity, the perfection, the
uniform excellence, of all their works of art". (Letter to T. L. Peacock,
26/1/1818)^ Experience of Pompeii, then, had given Shelley a subtler
understanding /

1. See, for example, the lively and appreciative notes in Joseph
Forsyth's Remarks on Antiquities, Arts, and Letters, during an
Excursion in Italy (London, second edition of 1816).
2. Shelley has come close to the position adopted by the third Earl
of Shaftesbury, that of regarding the ancients and Nature as the
surest guides in Art. See Shaftesbury's Soliloquy, or Advice to an
Author (1710).
understanding of Nature and its relationship with Art than most English
travellers could pretend to - the majority of them made the sort of
opposition between the two that is found in Byron and, to a lesser
degree, Wordsworth. This was the first consequence of Shelley's
admiration for the Greek memorials. The other was that when he returned
to Rome, he enjoyed this city also as one interpenetrated with nature -
"the grassy lanes and copses winding among the ruins"; but when he
began examining the works of men again, he came to an opinion already
shaping at Pompeii: what was great in ancient art was Greek, or of
Grecian inspiration. This finding was not new in 1819, but the conse-
quence in Shelley was. Taking art as the surest manifestation of
greatness, he saw the Greeks as superior to the Roman and other nations.

It was in refusing the attribution of the huge statues of
Castor and Pollux that stand upon Monte Cavallo to the sculptors Hidias
and Praxiteles, that Shelley commented:

"...perhaps the works of these were such as greatly surpass all
that we conceive of most perfect and admirable in what little has
escaped the deluge. If I am too jealous of the honour of the
Greeks, our masters and creators, the gods whom we should worship,
pardon me".  
[Letter to J.L.Peacock, 23/3/17]

This does not speak simply the poet's recognition of the Greeks as the
supreme people of history by virtue of their Art. It also gives some
measure of the importance Shelley now attached to the arts, of the
wonderfully quick development of his interest in them in the space of
four months.

From the moment at Bologna in November 1818, when Shelley saw
Raphael's St. Cecilia (which was, as it happened, the painting that had
moved Addison most)\(^1\), he had become interested in a deeper appreciation
of

\(^1\) It is a striking co-incidence that the one painting which excited
Addison to any remarkable enthusiasm ("There is something wonderfully
Divine in the Airs of this Picture..."), was also the one that touched
Shelley deepest ("There is a unity and perfection in it of an incomunicable
kind...She is listening to the music of heaven..." - see the
letter to Peacock, referred to overleaf).
of art. He found this work "in another and higher style" compared to
those surrounding it.

"It is of the inspired and ideal kind and seems to have been
conceived and executed in a similar state of feeling to that which
produced among the ancients those perfect specimens of poetry and
sculpture which are the baffling models of succeeding generations."


This notion of the oneness of artistic inspiration was strengthened in
him, as we saw, by his experience of Pompeii; and once he had left
the classical regions and had time to reflect, he developed it. The
spirit that animated works of art and literature was one emanation of
a greater power, Freedom itself -

"I consider (Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio) as the productions
of the vigour of the infancy of a new nation - as rivulets from
the same spring as that which fed the greatness of the republics
of Florence and Pisa, and which checked the influence of the German
emperors; and from which, through obscurer channels, Raphael and
Michelangelo drew the light and harmony of their inspiration",
he wrote to Leigh Hunt on 27th September, 1819.

In the same month Shelley moved to Florence. Here his
interest in art was to take a new and more systematic form. Writing
to Maria Gisborne soon after arriving, he announced:-

"The Gallery (of the Uffizi) I have a design of studying piece-
meal; one of my chief objects in Italy being the observing in
statuary and painting the degree in which, and the rules according
to which, that ideal beauty, of which we have so intense yet so
obscure an apprehension, is realised in external forms."

[Letter of 13/10/1819]

We know from a note of Mary Shelley's that he did "pass several hours
daily/"

---

1. Shelley had not thought of this occupation before the late months
of 1818, and he quite abandoned it some fifteen months later. When
he first entered Italy, he realised it had much to offer him, because
his "chief pleasure in life" was "the contemplation of nature" (letter
to T.L. Peacock of 30/4/1818): he was predisposed to admire Italy's
natural beauty. It was Italy itself that introduced him to the
other deity, Art, which he was so happy to contemplate for a while.
daily in the Gallery". In January, the Shelleys moved to Pisa, and here and on the nearby Tuscan coast the poet was to stay with one or two momentary interruptions until his death in the summer of 1822. So, for the last two and a half years in Italy, Shelley was to live away from the centres of ancient and modern art. We might expect, with this, a certain slackening of interest, but not the virtual obliviousness that did, in fact, succeed his new-found enthusiasm. To cite only two instances of this:— in the verse letter to Maria Gisborne (1820), the arts are not among the Italian pleasures that he holds out to his friends: again, although, in the Ode to Naples (1820), he describes Florence, "Of cities fairest one" (Antistrophe II B), there is no mention of the Tuscan art that he had seen as inspired by Freedom. Even before Shelley left Florence, he could say, in encouraging Thomas Medwin to come to Italy:—

"You used, I remember, to paint very well, and you were remarkable, if I do not mistake, for a peculiar taste in and knowledge of the belle arti. Italy is the place for you, the very place - the Paradise of exiles, the retreat of Pariahs. But I am thinking of myself rather than of you."


Already at the beginning of 1820, the Italian arts no longer seem to be a personal interest of Shelley's.

From Shelley's correspondence it would appear that the Art of Italy ceased to fascinate him after the beginning of 1820; and certainly his active preoccupation with it falls into the period from November 1818 to January 1820. But judging by Shelley's letters, his enthusiasm for Italian Nature, too, was contained by a similar interval, the last notable descriptive passage coming in a letter to Peacock in May 1820. This did not mean that he was dead to Italy's scenery after that time. His /
His feelings for that continued to express themselves, as we saw, in his poetic works, into which the Italian landscape entered more directly and consciously than ever. It can be said that, in the last months of all, Italian Art also came more forcibly into his poetry, not as a theme to be celebrated, but as an influence. Shelley, in his speculations on the Arts, had always counted poetry as one of them; and with his last work, The Triumph of Life, he has accepted the poetic art of the Italians as the one he can learn from, both by model and by master. He has modelled the structure and many circumstances of his work upon I Trionfi of Petrarch, and even as he does this, he aspires to the greatness of the master poet of Italy - Dante. The Triumph of Life is not a mere imitation, nor is it a poem inspired by poetry. What it declares is that Shelley's admiration for the art of Italy had ultimately come to deepen a longstanding regard he had for the poetic artistry of the Italians, and had permitted him to undertake a work which was not only "clothed in natural language", but illuminated by a true /

1. Shelley's poem has been considered as borrowing appreciably from the Petrarchan works of similar title by Professor Dowden and others: but after preliminary research, I am convinced that the outward imitation is much greater than has been imagined, and intend to devote a future work to demonstrating this. For Shelley's desire, in using terza-rima, to write something worthy of Dante and La Divina Commedia, see the lines in The Triumph of Life, beginning:

"Behold a wonder worthy of his rhyme
Of him who from the lowest depths of hell,
Through every paradise and through all glory,
Love led serene ......."

(11. 471-480).
true understanding of art. 1

Shelley's way of admiring the classical remains and art of Italy was almost as much an individual matter as his feelings for Italian Nature. The precise manner of his seeing these attributes of the country combined in an "Italy" that was to be sharply distinguished from the "Italy" of the contemporary Italians, is original. However, regarded broadly, these interests and this general attitude show him as nothing so much as a Classical Tourist of the new idiosyncratic kind. This will appear the more clearly when we now study Shelley's opinions of the Italian people. In these there is little newness, but rather the traditional English prejudices made more emphatic. We shall find, too, that his slight acquaintance with the "human part" of experience abroad did not issue in any notable work. It could not bring him any poem like The Triumph of Life, which is illuminated by the Italy of his devotion, the one of Nature and Art, from the first line in which the sun rises upon the Apennines -

"Swift /

1. The history of Shelley's attitude to imitating Italian poets, particularly in the matter of form, is a fairly long one. He changed the metre of Queen Mab (1813), when he recast parts of it as The Daemon of the World (1816), by adopting the "natural measure" of "Samson Agonistes and the Italian pastoral drama" (see last paragraph of the Preface to Alastor &c., 1816. Shelley had read Tasso's Aminta 1815; he attempted terza-rima for poems in his own manner in Prince Athanass (1817) and The Woodman and the Nightingale (1818), without bringing either to conclusion; he next used a perfect terza-rima "stanzas" of his own devising in the Ode to the West Wind (1819); but with The Triumph of Life, he returned to his early willingness to write "after the Italians", this time, Petrarch and Dante.

In deferring to Italian poetic example, Shelley appears to have relied on his own judgment, and not to have imitated the pre-Restoration English poets. Again, it seems that he favoured what Coleridge had recommended to young English poets in 1817 - the example of the poets in the Italian Renaissance who "placed the essence of poetry in the art" (see Biographia Literaria, Chapter XVI) - without having been directly encouraged by this suggestion.
"Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
Of glory and of good....."

3. The "Second Italy"

The first long letter that Shelley wrote from Italy gave his rapturous impressions of Nature and Art as these were manifested by the Lake of Como and Milan Cathedral, and then proceeded to his opinions of the Italians:

"The people here, though inoffensive enough, seem both in body and soul a miserable race. The men are hardly men; they look like a tribe of stupid and shrivelled slaves, and I do not think that I have seen a gleam of intelligence in the countenance of man since I passed the Alps. The women in enslaved countries are always better than the men... Everything but humanity is in much greater perfection here than in France".

[Letter to T.L Peacock, 20/4/1817]

Here Shelley is making the sort of observations about the "slavishness" of Italians that were repeated by so many English travellers throughout the eighteenth century, and particularly, by the poets in their tours-poems. In fact, the last sentence of the passage quoted could be taken as a variant of Goldsmith's line upon Italy in The Traveller (1764):

"Man seems the only growth that dwindles here". The difference is that Goldsmith had liked Italians as individuals, but felt in duty bound to condemn them as a nation for their Catholic malpractices and their degeneracy as "Romans"; and this was true of other poets, Wordsworth, for example, who preferred the Italians to the Swiss, but had to uphold the "free" national character of the latter. With Shelley, the matter lay another way. He instinctively disliked the Italians on first encountering them.

This opinion of a newly-met Continental people is not surprising in Shelley. He had never taken to foreigners. Admittedly, after his second /
second short experience of France he began to find something attractive in the people, but this was an exception. When he sailed down the Rhine in 1814, he had agreed with Mary and Jane Claire Clairmont in loathing the Germans who were their fellow-passengers. After more than two months in Switzerland in 1816, he could describe his guide as "the only tolerable person I have seen in this country". (Letter to T.L. Peacock, 22/7/1816). Part of Shelley's antipathy can be traced to his unfortunate experience of individuals of other countries, usually customs officials and aubergistes, who, if they were dishonest, recognised him as a man to be cheated. This particular bad luck followed him into Italy, plaguing him worst in the shape of the two servants he engaged for a time, Paolo and Elise Foggia, who spread the tale of his promiscuous life with Mary and Jane Claire Clairmont. Allowing for such mishaps, it has still to be seen that Shelley bore in himself a strong distaste for other races, and that this was quickly stirred when he arrived at Milan in April, 1818.

In June, Shelley was at Livorno where he was glad to find an Englishwoman, Mrs Gisborne, who could make "this most unattractive" place "even agreeable". He would "see something of Italian society" at Bagni di Lucca, he told Peacock in a letter he wrote at the time, (letter of 5/6/1818), but the next one to this correspondent from Bagni di Lucca itself announces: "We have spent a month here in our accustomed solitude, with the exception of one night at the Casino". (Letter of 10/7/1818). A weekly visit to the Casino on the occasion of the Sunday evening ball became Shelley's means of intercourse with the people of the town. In this way, his first opinions of the Italians remained virtually unchanged, until, in the fourth week of August, he made a move which /
which was to affect them. He went to Venice to discuss Allegra, Jane Claire Clairmont's child, with Byron, the father; and for three weeks he saw an Italian city from the side of the other poet.

It is difficult to judge how far Shelley was influenced by knowing the Venetians primarily as the whores and attendants of Palazzo Mosenigo, and how far by seeing them through Lord Byron's eyes, but it cannot be doubted that, acting together, his immediate surroundings and the presence of so commanding an Englishman largely determined his feelings towards the first Italian society that he had really approached. So his judgment:

"I had no conception of the excess to which avarice, cowardice, superstition, ignorance, passionless lust, and all the inexpressible brutalities which degrade human nature can be carried, until I had passed a few days at Venice", \textit{Letter to T.L. Peacock, 8/10/1818} is not to be taken as a plain observation any more than the Puritan outcry that Roger Ascham had raised against Italy two and a half centuries earlier:

"Vice now maketh that contrie slame to them, that before were glad to serve it".

Shelley was judging Venice not independently, but from the position that Byron had come to after almost two years there and his opinions had taken an ultra-Byronic colouring.

This last statement can be well illustrated from the "Venetian" passage in \textit{Lines written among the Euganean Hills}, composed in October 1818, when Shelley had retired a little way to Este. After a description of morning in Venice, he foretells the watery doom of the city, just /

---

1. The overpowering influence of Byron upon Shelley is well-known, see for example the latter's statement two months before his death: "I do not write; I have lived too long near Lord Byron, and the sun has extinguished the glow-worm..." \textit{Letter to Horace Smith, (no day) May, 1822}. 
just as Byron had done three months earlier in the opening lines of his Ode on Venice. The succeeding vision of the palaces upon the canals, as

"Sepulchres where human forms
Like pollution-nourished worms,
To the corpse of greatness cling
Murdered, and now mouldering"

(ll. 146-149)

is also paralleled in the Byronic poem where it speaks of -

"The weeds of nations in their last decay,
When Vice walks forth with her unsoften'd terrors,
And Mirth is madness, and but smiles to slay."

(ll. 33-36).

In both works, too, the hope is expressed of seeing the Austrian, "the Celtic Anarch", the "barbarian", driven from Venice, and Freedom return; but there is no real belief in the likelihood of this change. Byron ended by giving poetical form to his plan of leaving Venice to emigrate across the Atlantic, and adding: - "One freeman more, America, to thee!" The conclusion of Shelley's passage states that even if Venice should sink, unredeemed, into the waters, it would be remembered as having been once the abode of an English poet, Byron.

"Though thy sins and slaveries foul
Overcloud a sunlike soul..."

(ll. 192-193).

If Shelley had come to Byron at Venice when the other still loved the Venetians, still held the Alfieriian opinion that "the plant man grows more robustly in Italy than in any other land", 1 he might not have been confirmed in his bad opinion of the Italians. At any rate, Byron's light-hearted conduct would hardly have let him solemnise such /

1. This opinion, warmly seconded by Byron in the letter of dedication to Canto IV (1818) of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, is the exact opposite of the one that Shelley expressed: - "Everything but humanity is in much greater perfection here than in France", and Goldsmith's "Man seems the only growth that dwindles here"
such fancies as the one that Venice would be remembered in history as
Byron’s residence, or the other that Byron might, had he taken thought,
have led the Italians to Freedom.¹ But Shelley arrived during the
Palazzo Mocenigo period, and, from what he saw about him, felt his
initial disgust at the people of Italy justified. Confirmed as he was
about the “national character” six months after arriving in Italy, there
was still the possibility that he might find society or individuals
that were to his liking. He did, first in Signora Dionigi and her
friends at Rome, and then, more disturbingly, in “the noble and unfort-
unate lady”, Teresa Emilia Viviani, “imprisoned” in the convent of
St. Anna at Pisa.

"The Romans please me much, especially the women, who, though
totally devoid of every kind of information, or culture of the
imagination, or affections, or understanding - and, in this
respect, a kind of gentle savage - yet contrive to be interesting."

It will be seen from the way Shelley admitted his partiality for
“le Romains” to Peacock in April 1819, (letter of 6/4/19), that he had
not changed his opinion about the Italians. What pleased him was
the “naiveté” of the creatures. Byron had said as much about “le
Veneziane”, but Byron had grown enthusiastic about the Italians alto-
gether from his experience of these. Shelley, on the other hand, is
merely illustrating his own opinion that “the women in enslaved countries
are always better than the men”. That the Italians, in general, had
not been enhanced in his eyes, can be seen by a later passage in the
letter quoted which describes convicts at work against the background
of St. Peter’s and comments:

"It /

¹ See the Preface to Julian and Maddalo (1819) where Shelley says,
talking of Byron as “Count Maddalo”:- “He is a person of the most
consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to
such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country".
"It is the emblem of Italy - moral degradation, contrasted with the glory of nature and the arts."

The persistence of his first, adverse judgment is also to be noted in the preface to a "Roman" work that Shelley undertook soon after this, a play upon the Cenci family.

The precipitantly with which Shelley conceived and wrote his play The Cenci does not argue an interest in giving a picture of the society of Rome at the end of the sixteenth century, or even an exact transcription of events that then affected one of its noble houses. He did not question the authenticity of the "manuscript" that "was communicated" to him, did not search after other accounts of the story he was setting as a play, and, in short, exhibited little of the respect for the actual that is seen, for example, in Byron's thorough documentation of his historical drama Marino Faliero (1820). Shelley seems to have been excited by the story and setting of the Cenci tragedy, partly because the Italian background struck him as just right for such a horrible tale of crime, and partly because the situation of the beautiful young woman wronged beyond endurance had already fascinated him as a subject for literary work.2

If Shelley's play does not seriously treat of a historical Rome, it does not seem to have borrowed anything notable from the contemporary one either. "Beatrice Cenci" was /

1. Shelley was undoubtedly predisposed to accept Italian surroundings as the scene for the blackest deeds, not only by his acquaintance with "the older dramatists" the Elizabethans, on whose works The Cenci was expressly modelled, but also by his early passion for Mrs Radcliffe which had led him to write two "Italian" tales of seduction and murder, Zastrozzi (1810) and St. Irvyne (1811).

2. See Laon and Cythna (1817) which became in its expurgated edition of 1818, The Revolt of Islam - Cythna is raped by the Tyrant and becomes half mad (Canto VII, ss.iii-xxiv). The "very poetical circumstance" of incest, as Shelley described it, is not introduced here, but pervades the whole poem in the persons of Laon and Cythna themselves.
was not modelled on the beautiful, artless young women who pleased
the poet. He had, however, drawn on his experience of the modern
Italians for one most important element in his drama. All the chara-
acters were Italian and Catholics. In the Preface to The Cenci,
Shelley described "the mind of an Italian Catholic" as he understood,
and had represented it.

It might be asked on what grounds the English poet had
decided that religion in Italy was not "a rule for moral conduct":
that it had "no necessary connection with any one virtue": and that
"the most atrocious villain (might) be rigidly devout, and without any
shock to established faith, confess himself to be so". Shelley had
been hardly a year in Italy, and only about three months of that time
had been passed in contact with the Italians, and that far from intimate.
He had not yet met the girl he could describe as "the only Italian for
whom I ever felt any interest" — Teresa Emilia Viviani. Nonetheless
he could pronounce upon their most secret ways of thought and being.
There is no mystery in Shelley's presumption when we look back on the
records of the Classical Tourists of the eighteenth century. Most of
them claimed to understand the Italian Catholics from the moment they
entered a church, or saw a procession, and denounced them accordingly.
Such Englishmen made Joseph Baretti, the honoured Italian member of
Dr. Johnson's circle, exclaim that, while it might be a legitimate
occupation for travellers to "distribute proportionate portions of love
and hatred to the countries which have greater or smaller stock of
either wickedness or goodness", his powers had always been "too gross
for /

1. This description is to be found in the letter to T.L. Peacock,
dated 21/3/1821.
for this kind of moral arithmetic .... whatever rambling computers
may have done". BARETTI was hitting at the English travellers in
Italy. From his mention of "rambling computers" it might be imagined
that he was castigating, in particular, his friend Goldsmith for the
quite irresponsible attack upon Italian character in *The Traveller*
(1764). From the Preface to *The Cenci* it can be seen that the same
"kind of moral arithmetic" was still exercising Englishmen who could
claim little or no close experience of Italians.

Shelley's brief experience of Roman society in 1819 had not
materially affected his opinion of the Italians. Nor did the three
months' infatuation with Teresa Emilia Viviani, that dates from December,
1820. This excited him to the composition of *Epipsychidion*, but the
work was hardly completed before he could refer to it as -

"a production of a portion of me already dead"
(Letter to C. Collier, 16/2/21)

and a month before he died, he wrote:-

"The 'Epipsychidion' I cannot look at, the person whom it
celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno; and poor Ixion starts
from the centaur that was the offspring of his own embrace."
(Letter to J. Gisborne, 18/6/22).

Shelley had been mistaken in this Italian girl as he had been mistaken
in many another woman. But, from the beginning, there had been even
less chance than usual of a human meeting between the two, because
Shelley had involved Emilia Viviani so deeply in a phantasy of his own,
a daydream which other Englishmen would regard as a daydream,2 but which he /

---


2. Compare, for example, the dream-fancy, eighty years earlier, of the young painter, John Russell, on thinking of the young beauties shut up in the convents of Rome:- "And I often wish myself a real knight errand that I might deliver some of these distressed damsels out of their enchanted castles" (Letters from a Young Painter &c., 2nd ed., London, 1750, Vol.I, p.67).
he wished to carry into effect. She was imprisoned in a convent. She had been rescued. Once a conventional Italian marriage had liberated the girl, the charm fled; and she appeared to the poet what she had been all the time, a generous-hearted, imaginative young Italian. Shelley could no longer see her as a dream partner, and he found that her character "in this world which is the world of all of us", did not interest, but chilled him.

In the last eighteen months of his life Shelley was to be even less concerned with the inhabitants of Italy than before. The abundant English company at Pisa and Lerici more than satisfied him, and although Byron was to bring his Italian friends, the Gambas, with him when he joined the Pisan circle, Shelley seems to have regarded them very much as "Byron's friends". Even the impersonal way in which Shelley could always sympathise with the Italian people, that is, as a nation that had to be freed, finds little expression in his poetry after 1820. In August of that year, a month when the Neapolitan demonstrations for constitutional reform seemed to promise an insurrection, he had written his Ode to Naples calling not only on it, but upon Venice, Genoa, Milan, Florence, Rome, as well, to take up the cry of Freedom. This enthusiasm for Italian independence was a moment that came between two more important ones, when Shelley was greatly excited by the progress of Liberty, first, in the Spanish risings and then, in the Greek. Soon, like Byron, he had quite forgotten the possibility of Freedom for Italy in his enthusiasm for the new Greece which he wished for, rather than prophesied.

1. The element of sensual attraction had been strong in Shelley's regard for Emilia, as we can see from the last third of his Epipsychidion. It is this which negates the likening of his regard for her to the devotion to the Woman found in the poets of all dolce stil nuovo.
prophesied in his lyrical drama *Hellas* (1821). The Preface to this work contains the sentence -

"The seed of blood and misery has been sown in Italy, and a more vigorous race is arising to go forth to the harvest."

This is in keeping with Byron's last words upon Italian Freedom, and with Wordsworth's. Like the two other poets, Shelley recognises the Italians as a people who should be freed and, while he does not expect much from those he has observed, he wishes them well in future struggles.

Shelley's experience of Italy bears out the main contention of this thesis with particular emphasis, because, as an English traveller, he was at once the most conventional, and the most original of the three Romantic poets we are considering. Not long after crossing the Alps, he went on the traditional Tour to Rome and Naples, returning, as was usual, by way of Florence. This journey awoke his enthusiasm for the Classical Remains and Art of Italy, and added to his instant admiration of Italian Nature. Shelley could, in fact, be taken as a Classical Tourist of the older kind, if his praise of these much celebrated pleasures /

---

1. Shelley exhibits most clearly of all, how inconstant the interest of the new 'Liberal' could be. Early in 1820 he wrote his *Ode to Liberty* addressed to the revolutionary Spaniards, the "glorious people". In April, he even spoke of taking ship to Spain "on account of the glorious events of which it is the theatre" (letter to Leigh Hunt, 15/4/20). By August, he has been distracted by the newer unrest in Italy. Shelley continues to mention the possibility of a general Italian rising right till March 1821 ("We are surrounded here in Pisa by revolutionary volcanoes..." - Letter to T.L. Peacock, 20/3/21); but the joyous announcement, in the following month, that "Greece has declared its freedom!" (letter to C.M.J. Clairmont, 2/4/21) virtually marks the extinction of his immediate concern with Italian independence. It is notable that, at the height of his enthusiasm for a free Italy, he could say of the "tyrant" Austrians: "they may even have, as men, more individual excellency and perfection (not that I believe it) than the Neapolitans". (Letter to C.M.J. Clairmont, 18/2/21).
"pleasures and advantages" had not been so individual. Pompeii and Paestum impressed him so forcibly that he was to see the Greeks as greater than the Romans, by virtue of Art abstracted from considerations of moral worth. The "divine" scenery and climate of Italy which Shelley first encountered in their fullest power at Rome, did not recommend themselves to him simply as "the same with those which the ancients enjoyed". He was aware of this association, (the words are his own), but valued Nature in Italy primarily because each spring and summer brought him into an Earthly Paradise, brought an exquisite enjoyment of the senses, that is reflected in the poetry composed during the warm months: Prometheus Unbound in 1819, the Letter to Maria Gisborne in 1820, Adonais in 1821, and the lyrics to Jane Williams in the last summer of all. Shelley has something of both the Classical Tourist and the individual one, even in his attitude to the Italians; for, in the eighteenth century manner, he found them "slavish", as individuals, and yet, as a new 'Liberal', he could express sympathy for their national aspirations.
CONCLUSION

Examination of the Italian passages in the lives of Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley, has borne out the contention detailed in the first chapter of this thesis: the common characteristic of their experience is an interest in the classical remains and associations of Italy. To put it another way, Italy as the classic land is the one these Romantic poets all revere. In this they resemble their predecessors, the eighteenth century Englishmen who made the conventional Grand Tour. Like these earlier travellers, too, Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley appreciate, in their measure, the Nature and Art of Italy, but an interest in either of these does not inform, or dominate, their experience considered collectively. As we have seen, Nature in Italy acquired a particular importance for Wordsworth and Shelley, but not for Byron; and it was Shelley alone who gave a more than fitful attention to the arts.

As for the Romantic poets' interest in Italy's literature and their sympathy with the Italian's hopes of independence, it has been found that these did not issue in an understanding of the modern country and people that is remarkably profounder than that of earlier Englishmen who cared less for Italian letters and Italian Freedom. In the first instance, the literature that Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley admired constantly was the older poetry, the works of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto and Tasso, in fact, the Italian "classics", which did not, in their eyes, reflect any lustre upon contemporary Italy. Again, none of them proceeded from this to an appreciation of Italian culture that can compare with /
with that found in a good number of their English contemporaries, for
eexample, Coleridge who, through his philosophical and general interests,
came to study the thinkers Marsilio Ficino and Giordano Bruno, and
knew the Dante of the treatises; or Henry Hallam's friend, William
Stewart Rose, who addressed to him the well-informed _Letters from
North Italy_ (1819).

We noticed, as a reflection of this lack of interest, that
the value of Italian thought and literature in their contemporary
manifestations, the celebrated Romantici-Classicci controversy which
Byron so markedly ignored, which already in 1818 had moved Giacomo
Leopardi to declare himself, and the new poetry of Alfieri, Parini,
Monti, Foscolo, which was to be consummated in Leopardi's _Canti_, almost
entirely escaped our Romantics. They did not seek, or cultivate,
friendships with gifted Italians who were interested in literature as
they were, and who might have helped them to understand the modern
scene in Italy. Byron's brief meeting with Monti in the di Breme
circle at Milan, and shorter one with Findemonte at Verona, remain the
sole instances of an English Romantic poet meeting individuals of his
"own kind" while he was in the land of the Italians.

Again, being 'Liberal', Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley wanted
to see a free Italy, but only in Byron did this become a particular and
immediate desire, and this only for the two years when he was living
in Ravenna as a Camba. The failure of the 1820-21 agitation in Naples
to stir the whole peninsula to action reinforced an opinion that he
already held, the opinion that Wordsworth expressed so vehemently in
1814, and that Shelley entertained throughout his residence in Italy.
Little was to be expected from the modern Italians "in the Liberty line".

This /
This last persuasion indicates a resemblance between the Romantic attitude to the Italians and that of the eighteenth century travellers. In spite of being devoted to unlike principles of Liberty, these different generations of Englishmen agreed in thinking that this foreign people lacked manliness, did not really deserve to be free, that the "ancient valour" had perished. This conviction was fundamental in the eighteenth-century traveller's opinion, but it did not prevent him from mixing with his equals socially, accepting introductions from one city to the next, visiting the chief conversations, or discussing what interested him in Italy with the Italians. Shelley demonstrates truly, though extremely, what happened with the Romantics. Their contact with the Italians, their interest in them might be negligible; yet all the time they protested their sympathy with the aspirations of "the nation", and their desire to see a liberated country.

An ideal sympathy with the people of Italy, an ignoring as far as possible their immediate representatives - this Romantic preference is seen at its clearest in the celebrated Pisan circle dominated by the two poets, Byron and Shelley. For even Byron found the new English way to be the right one in the end. At Venice he had mixed with the Venetians in good eighteenth century style, at Ravenna, he had lived as an Italian, but when he took the Gambas with him to Pisa, and then to Genoa, they became the foreigners in little English societies. If a virtual indifference is to be discerned in Byron's last two years in Italy and the whole period of Shelley's residence, so, too, is it noticeable in Wordsworth's travelling experiences. The tour-poems /
tour-poems give a true impression in representing him as interested in a few individuals whom he saw on the way, and with whom he could hardly have conversed as equals.

The comparative obliviousness in the English Romantic poets to the social life of the Italians is not to be traced to any national animosity. If the relations between the two peoples had deteriorated with the French wars and the Congress of Vienna, Byron and Shelley were readier to take oppressed Italy’s part than England’s, as the young Wordsworth, too, would have been. They did not feel hostile towards the people either as the spiritual subjects of the Pope who had crowned Napoleon, or as the allies, willing or unwilling, of the French. Outward events did not determine the attitude of our Romantics here.

What effectively limited the interest of Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley in the people of Italy was an intense preoccupation with themselves, with their own intimate being, past and present.

When, in fact, the Romantic encounter with Italy is regarded, not only in this point, but altogether, we see that their individual, their 'inward' character determines separately the experience of Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley, and that this experience is not made uniform by the outward common character these poets share of being Classical Tourists in the English manner. So we find Wordsworth coming to Italy to discover another face of Nature, Byron, to live in exile, Shelley, to seek health, that is, each journeying for his own private ends, none, with the time-honoured motive. Only Shelley makes the traditional pilgrimage to Rome and Naples, once he arrives. Byron pays the Eternal City a visit of unprecedented briefness; and Wordsworth does not see it until his third trip, at an age when his enthusiasms had grown tame.

As /
As for the works of the Renaissance, the "Classical Revival", Shelley was again the one who attended to these notably, but with an interest which, being impulsive, soon passed, and left him free to enjoy Italian scenery and the Italian climate. It is the Romantic devotion to Nature in Italy which suggests their character as English visitors most eloquently. Wordsworth and Shelley show that when the known classical associations of Italian landscape were forgotten, there was no real community of sentiment in the Englishmen who surveyed them, far less between these Englishmen and the Italians themselves. The worship of Nature as our Romantic poets hymned it in Italy is something to be interpreted largely in terms of their own lives.

In Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley, we meet the first prominent Englishmen of culture whose experience of Italy is dominated by their "inward" character, that is, by arbitrary demands and responses of their own natures, as these are stimulated by Italy and the Italian people. As such demands and responses vary from individual to individual, they do not give these new "tourists" a definable common character, as experience dictated by a certain education and traditions - for example, the practice of the Classical Tour - does. Our Romantics demonstrate this. They also suggest the range of the new "inward" sort of experience. Italy can now have an extraordinary personal importance for the individual Englishman. In Wordsworth, this took the form of remembering Como as the Earthly Paradise. In Byron, it is to be seen as the exhilarating free life he knew at Venice: in Shelley, as the tranquillity he found in Italy. But these special parts that Italy played in the lives of our Romantics were not, we saw, present in all their experience of it, but rather revealed in moments. For the rest, the /
the 'inward' Italy was something far less remarkable. In fact, it proves to be largely a matter of the senses, an enjoyment of sun and colour, good weather and good food, pleasures which are also, in the subjective regard, unique and individual. Looking back on the history of the Englishman in Italy, we can see that the usual "tourist" attractions were first celebrated in notable verse by Byron in his Beppo (1817) - where he explains why "With all its sinful doings, I must say/ That Italy is a pleasant place to me" (stanzas xli-xlix) - by Shelley in the Letter to Maria Gisborne (1820) when he proposes the choice "Italy or London, which you will!" (l.258-291) - and even by Wordsworth, though less consciously, in the Descriptive Sketches (1793) with his praise of the "delicious lake" of Como.

The Romantics represent the second stage in a transition from Classical Tourist to modern tourist. By 1770, Englishmen visiting Italy were already being distracted from attending to the Roman memorials by interests that answered more exactly to their own personal tastes: they exhibit a duality. In the Romantics this double character has been practically resolved. Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley do retain something of the Classical Tourist, enough to give them a certain family resemblance to one another. For the rest, they are the first tourists in Italy of the peculiarly modern kind, individuals who do not travel primarily for improvement or curiosity, but rather to meet the demands of their own particular being, to satisfy appetites of a nature predominantly instinctive.

This last sentence suggests perhaps the most important single observation /
observation to be made on the Romantic experience of Italy. Although it marked a change in the general English experience, it did not open a period in which the culture of Italy gained significance for the educated Englishman, or preserved as much as it had already been allowed. This was a departure, for the country of the Italians, as ancient Rome, as Papal Rome, as the land of the Renaissance had symbolised government, religion, arts, for the English. It had always been more than just a foreign country with its differences. Even in the early eighteenth century, when the Miltonian enthusiasm for Italian achievements had been eclipsed by a general passion for the Roman that was not unrelated to the national feeling of the English, the adoration of Britannia, travellers were still finding value in the heritage of the country, Italy, and could, at least, meet the Italians on "classic ground". With the nineteenth century, this has changed. It is found that the Romantic poets, the individually determined tourists, do not esteem Italy for any one necessary import, spiritual or intellectual, except for its classical character; and that they find no new meaning in this, but praise it in the manner of their nationally determined predecessors, only with less conviction.

From the Romantic poets to our own day, the step is not long. Today the "Classical" part is dead, and the Englishman travels as a plain "tourist". Poets themselves have come to accept this character, as can be judged from tour-poems published in the last two years, Cecil Day Lewis's *An Italian Visit* and several of the pieces in W.H. Auden's *Notes*. Auden and Day Lewis are conscious strangers who have come to Italy with no more definite expectations than that it should provide a special /
special sort of holiday for them. What more there is, they are prepared to discover. Their experiences prove what Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley, and earlier English travellers demonstrate: that no man ever goes bare-handed from Italy, and the more resources he possesses in himself, the more will he take away with him.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

GENERAL

Oxford Univ. Press, 1925.
R. MARSHALL, Italy in English Literature, 1755-1815. Columbia Univ.
Press, 1934.

CHAPTER I

Joseph ADDISON, Remarks on Several Parts of Italy &c. London, 1705.
The Correspondence of THOMAS GRAY, ed. Toynbee and Whibley. Oxford Univ.
Press, 1935.
The Yale Edition of HORACE WALPOLE'S Correspondence, ed. by W. S. Lewis.
'Mann' and Manners at the Court of Florence (founded on the letters of HORACE MANN to HORACE WALPOLE) by Dr. Doran. 2 vols., London, 1876.
Joseph BARETTI, An Account of Manners and Customs in Italy. 2 vols., London, 1768.
Peter BECKFORD, Familiar Letters from Italy. 2 vols. London, 1787.
J. C. EUSTACE, Classical Tour through Italy. London, 1813.
W. S. ROSE, Letters from the North of Italy to Henry Hallam, Esq. London, 1819.

(Also other travel-books and poetical works as referred to in text).

CHAPTER II

The /

CHAPTER III

LORD BYRON'S Correspondence, ed. by J. Murray. John Murray, 1922.
Aurelio ZANCO, L'"alfieriismo" del Byron. (Shakespeare in Russia e altri saggi). Torino, 1945.
Giovambattista CASTI, Novelle Galanti.
Giovambattista CASTI, Il Poema Tartaro.

CHAPTER IV