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British Romanticism and Italian Renaissance Art

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1

Table of Contents

Abstract

This study examines British Romantic responses to Italian Renaissance art and argues that Italian art was a key force in shaping Romantic-period culture and aesthetic thought. Italian Renaissance art, which was at once familiar and unknown, provided an avenue through which Romantic writers could explore a wide range of issues. Napoleon's looting of Italy made this art central to contemporary politics, but it also provided the British with their first real chance to own Italian Old Master art. The period's interest in biography and genius led to the development of an aesthetic vocabulary that might be applied equally to literature and visual art. Chapter One discusses the place of Italian art in Post-Waterloo Britain and how the influx of Old Master art impacted on Britain's exhibition and print culture. While Italian art was appropriated as a symbol of British national prestige, Catholic iconography could be difficult to reconcile with Protestant taste. Furthermore, Old Master art challenged both eighteenth-century aesthetic philosophy and the Royal Academy's standing, while simultaneously creating opportunities for new viewers and new patrons to participate in the cultural discourse. Chapter Two builds on these ideas by exploring the idea of connoisseurship in the period. As art became increasingly democratized, a cacophony of voices competed to claim aesthetic authority. While the chapter examines a range of competing discourses, it culminates in a discussion of what I have termed the 'Poetic Connoisseur'. Through a discussion of the work of Lord Byron, Percy Shelley and William Hazlitt, I argue that Romantic writers created an exclusive aristocracy of taste which demanded that the viewer be able to read the 'poetry of painting'. Chapter Three focuses on the ways in which Romantic writers used art to produce literature rather than criticism. In this chapter, I argue that writers such as Byron, Shelley, Lady Morgan, Anna Jameson and Madame de Staël, created an imaginative vocabulary which lent itself equally to literature and visual art. Chapter Four uses Samuel Rogers's *Italy* as a case study. It traces how the themes discussed in the previous chapters shaped the production of one of the nineteenth century's most popular illustrated books, how British art began to appropriate Italian subjects and how deeply intertwined visual and literary culture were in the period. Finally, this discussion of *Italy* demonstrates how Romantic values were passed to a Victorian readership. Through an appreciation of how the Romantics understood Italian Renaissance art we can better understand their experience and understanding of Italy, British and European visual culture and the Imagination.

Acknowledgements

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature   _____

Printed name   Maureen Clare McCue

List of Figures

6

Note on Texts Used

All references to the work of William Hazlitt are to *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London: J. M. Dent, 1930-1934).

All references to Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV* are to '*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt*', in *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980-93), II, pp. 120-186. Line numbers are included within the text. Other works of Byron's will be cited individually.

Introduction

In the October 1826 issue of the *Westminster Review*, Mary Shelley reviewed three books concerned with Italy: Lord Normanby's *The English in Italy* (1825), Charlotte Eaton's novel *Continental Adventures* (1826) and *Diary of an Ennuyée* (1826) by Anna Jameson. Mary Shelley offers contemporary readers not only insight into the special qualities of each book, but also into Italy itself. Her representation of Italy is a useful starting point in any attempt to understand the multiplicity of meanings Italy held for the British in the early nineteenth century. She writes,

> We fly to Italy; we eat the lotus; we cannot tear ourselves away. It is the land of romance, and therefore pleases the young; of classic lore, and thus possesses charms for the learned. Its pretty states and tiny courts, with all the numerous titles enjoyed by their frequenters, gild it for the worldly. The man of peace and domesticity finds in its fertile soil, and the happiness of its peasantry, an ameliorated likeness of beloved but starving England. The society is facile; the towns illustrious by the reliques [sic] they contain of the arts of ancient times, or the middle ages; while its rural districts attach us, through the prosperity they exhibit, their plenteous harvests, the picturesque arrangement of their farms, the active life every where apparent, the novelty of their modes of culture, the grace which a sunny sky sheds over labours which in this country are toilsome and unproductive.[1]

The British enchantment with Italy traverses differences of class, gender, age and education. Although Italy, its culture and its past offer an escape for the traveller, importantly Shelley also characterizes the peninsula as a kind of prelapsarian England. Above all, however, Italy is presented by her as a land of the imagination, as a country which has all but become in itself a work of art.

The tradition of cultural and mercantile exchange between Britain and Italy was already well-established. British literature had long been indebted to the works of Dante and Petrarch. Furthermore, an imagined Italy had been central to the work of a host of writers, from Shakespeare to Ann Radcliffe and Horace Walpole, and it would continue to be so throughout the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, the cultural value of Italy was most securely located in its classical past. The principles of taste, refinement and order were embodied in their ideal forms in classical architecture, art and literature. The neoclassical ideal continued to inform the work of Romantic writers, though many became increasingly interested in the classical past as embodied in ruins and other visible traces of

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[1] Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 'The English in Italy', in *The Mary Shelley Reader: Containing Frankenstein, Mathilda, Tales and Stories, Essays and Reviews, and Letters*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett and Charles E. Robinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 341- 357 (pp. 342-343).

historic destruction so much in evidence in modern-day Rome. However, the present reality of the Italian peninsula was very different from the ideal Italy that could be encountered only in the imagination. The Napoleonic Campaigns throughout the Italian peninsula, and Napoleon's power throughout the European continent cut off the British for more than a decade from freely travelling to Italy and to much of Europe. The golden age of the Grand Tour came to an end, and the internal borders of an Italy which had long consisted of numerous governments and principalities were repeatedly drawn and re-drawn. When the war finally ended, the British flooded into Italy. '[I]n their numbers, and their eagerness to proceed forward,' Mary Shelley writes, the new tourists,

> might be compared to the Norwegian rats, who always go right on, and when they come to an opposing stream, still pursue their route, till a bridge is formed of the bodies of the drowned, over which the living pass in safety.[2]

When it was no longer the privilege of a select few, travel to Italy and the place of Italy in the British imagination changed their character in a manner that this whole thesis will attempt to define.

The post-Waterloo fever for Italy had been fuelled during the war by the political and cultural outrage prompted in many Britons by Napoleon's campaigns on the peninsula. Though the governing classes had long considered themselves as true inheritors of classical civilizations, Italy became central to the nation's collective imagination in new ways as travel to the continent became increasingly difficult and as a growing bourgeois middle class sought to better itself by increasing its cultural knowledge. The study of the Italian language and its literature became popular, and a plethora of books on Italian subjects were published, including biographies, romances and histories. Exiled Italian writers, artists and musicians, were given a warm welcome in the upper echelons of London society. One of the most significant aspects of Napoleon's campaigns in Italy was that they were designed not only to acquire land and power, but also to appropriate Italy's cultural relics, which he brought back to Paris in huge caravans and displayed in the Louvre, renamed the Musée Napoleon. Because of this loot, Paris was able to replace Rome as the European capital of culture, as many British visitors discovered during the short-lived Peace of Amiens in 1802. The growing interest in historic and modern Italian culture, coupled with war-time sentiments against the French, strengthened the long-standing bond between Britain and the Italian peninsula.

The consequences of creating the Musée Napoleon were profound and long-lasting. Besides exerting an impact on the political climate in Europe, it also had more local

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2   Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 'The English in Italy', p. 341.

effects. It influenced, for example, the burgeoning discipline of curatorship, and art was now cast as belonging to the people, rather than the privileged few. For other commentators, however, the culture and art of Italy was the victim of the French and their predatory leader. Italy was feminised, cast as a mother who had lost her children to brutal barbarians. Though classical works were highly prized by Napoleon, he also carried away to Paris many paintings from the late medieval and early Renaissance periods, which had earlier often been overlooked in favour of works from what is now called the High Renaissance. But it was not only the French Emperor who was taking advantage of the politically weak Italian states. British diplomats and artists who had managed to stay on in Italy despite Bonaparte's invasion soon became art dealers and Italian art from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries flowed into London, changing the cultural landscape. This profound cultural transformation is the subject of the present study.

This art landed on fertile ground. Since the latter half of the eighteenth century, Britain had been undergoing a visual revolution. In order to compete with the popular and powerful French school, a British school of painting had been inaugurated and visual entertainments, including portrait galleries and other types of exhibitions, were increasingly available. Despite the efforts of both schools, however, Italy remained the land of the arts and the Italian school of the sixteenth century was still considered supreme. The Italian art that entered Britain as a direct result of the war with France reached an eager audience. The British began to consider themselves as protectors and true appreciators of this art, even above the Italians themselves, an issue I address more fully in the first chapter.

Art which had once been accessible only to a privileged few – whether they be British Grand Tourists or Italian aristocrats – was becoming available to a new audience, who viewed them in exhibition galleries, auction houses and print shops, and read about them in poems, pamphlets and periodicals. A familiarity with Italian art became an important marker of one's taste and standing in society. The connoisseur claimed a high cultural standing, and individuals and groups competed for recognition as authorities. The post-Waterloo rush to the continent was in a large part brought on by a desire not only to see the art which was returning from France, but also for the chance to display one's knowledge of such works to one's friends and relatives back home and to one's fellow tourists abroad. Mary Shelley even goes so far as to say that this deep cultural connection between the British and the Italians led some to develop a new hybrid nationality:

> This preference accorded to Italy by the greater part of the emigrant English
> has given rise to a new race or sect among our countrymen, who have lately

been dubbed Anglo-Italian. The Anglo-Italian has many peculiar marks which distinguish him from the mere travellers, or true John Bull. First, he understands Italian, and thus rescues himself from a thousand ludicrous mishaps which occur to those who fancy that a little Anglo-French will suffice to convey intelligence of their wants and wishes to the natives of Italy; the record of his travels is no longer confined, according to Lord Normanby's vivid description, to how he had been "starved here, upset there, and robbed every where". Your Anglo-Italian ceases to visit the churches and palaces, guide-book in hand; anxious, not to see, but to say that he has seen. Without attempting to adopt the customs of the natives, he attaches himself to some of the most refined among them, and appreciates their native talent and simple manners; he has lost the critical mania in a real taste for the beautiful, acquired by a frequent sight of the best models of ancient and modern art.[3]

A proper appreciation of Italian art is essential to the 'Anglo-Italian' identity that Shelley describes. She claims that the true appreciator of art, the individual who 'has lost the critical mania in a real taste for the beautiful, acquired by a frequent sight of the best models of ancient and modern art', is distinct from other tourists. Clearly, the 'emigrant English' that she describes are epitomised for her by the select Pisa Circle surrounding the Shelleys and Lord Byron. Yet Mary Shelley's desire to separate herself and the 'Anglo-Italians' from the great sea of other viewers and tourists is a typical, if perhaps extreme, example of positioning one's self as the ultimate authority on art, a position which was practised increasingly by a variety of writers in the period. However, it is just as interesting to note that for Shelley 'real taste' is not simply derived from an appreciation of the classical, but from the 'frequent sight of the best models of ancient and modern art' and 'the reliques [… of] the middle ages', an aspect which has often been overlooked by scholars. One of the most important effects of the Napoleonic Wars was to make medieval and Renaissance works, not only more accessible, but more culturally and politically important. While Mary Shelley's review essay is one testament to this newly increased importance, the present study engages with a wide range of texts from the 1790s through the 1830s in order to uncover the ways in which such art works impacted the literary and wider culture of early nineteenth-century Britain.

This study examines the ways in which a widespread interest in Italian Renaissance art manifests itself throughout the period in a variety of texts. Moving progressively from the interwar years to the 1830s, and from the international, national and collective level to the impact it had on individual writers and texts, this thesis argues that Italian Renaissance art was an essential ingredient in the formation of Britain's cultural landscape. I will demonstrate how an interest in Italian art might signal imaginative individuality, but also

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3   Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 'The English in Italy', p. 343.

how it reveals itself in the formation of private coteries, and how it had a political dimension, affecting in particular national self-definition. Ownership and appreciation of Italian art had the power to confer a highly desirable cultural standing, both for the individual and the state. In an age when Britain was struggling to prove the value of its own visual culture, particularly against the contemporary French school, the suddenly increased importation of Italian art works was one means by which Britain identified itself as a strong contender to be recognised as the leader of European culture and the country best equipped to protect Italy against French despotism. For conservative and radical writers alike, Italian art offered one of the means by which they sought to place themselves and Britain within a wider cultural, historical and political framework.

This is a story partly about what happens when markers of high culture become available to a wider public; this study traces the shift from the elite eighteenth-century ambition to be recognised as a man of taste to a nineteenth-century democratization of art. Italian art was at once familiar and unknown, and its presence on British soil proved unsettling for long-established hierarchies of art discourse. As the audience for art grew, so too did the ways in which it was replicated in verbal form and this study examines the ways in which Italian art not only flooded the art market, but infiltrated the publishing market as well. In order to reflect the charged atmosphere surrounding Italian art, this thesis represents a wide variety of literary genres, including poetry, drama, travel writing, gallery guides and periodical essays. Like Mary Shelley, writers of such works sought for a variety of reasons to become an acknowledged authority on art. While some of these writers were primarily poets, others were first and foremost artists, connoisseurs, dealers or travellers, who turned to writing in order to reach an eager audience, and thus become established as a recognised authority on art. This issue runs throughout my study and manifests itself in various ways. It is explored, for example, in Chapter Two's treatment of Connoisseurship, while more direct and commercial consequences of the craze for Italianate visual and verbal texts is tracked in the final chapter's examination of the decade-long publishing process of Samuel Rogers's *Italy*. This examination of how Italian Renaissance art is addressed in Romantic-period writing offers insight not only into the period's visual and poetic culture, but also developments in publishing practices and the changing characteristics of the literary market-place.

Most importantly, however, this thesis argues that the interest and investment in Italian Renaissance art shaped the Romantic aesthetic and linked such seemingly disparate factors as politics, history, biography, religion, travel and the ideal of the aesthetic life.

Through their encounters with Italian Renaissance art, Romantic writers developed a wide-ranging aesthetic vocabulary that they then deployed in discussions of visual art *and* poetry, a topic which is treated in Chapter Three. Italian art was an important factor in prompting both the imaginative and the aesthetic or critical writing of the Romantic period, and this study situates the work of canonical writers such as Lord Byron and the Shelleys within the wider setting of this cultural discourse. By situating such writers within this wider context, this thesis provides new insight into the work and aesthetic concerns of much-studied writers, while understanding their work as participating in the creation of a new aesthetic discourse, whose reverberations can still be felt today.

This study challenges the unspoken assumption that the art of the Renaissance was uncontroversial simply because it was, and has remained, part of the Western canon. One of the reasons the Romantic experience of Italian Renaissance art has been insufficiently studied is precisely because that experience is so pervasive that it is easily overlooked. Importantly, the term 'Renaissance' did not come into general usage until the middle of the nineteenth century and our own conception of how these works were perceived earlier in the century often has much to do with an inherited Victorian understanding of them.[4] As the studies of J.B. Bullen, J.R. Hale and Francis Haskell demonstrate, and as this work makes clear, the nineteenth-century British understanding of the Renaissance period differed markedly from the modern understanding, one crucial difference being the effect of the term 'Renaissance' itself in fashioning the understanding of the period.[5] In the early nineteenth century, the terms most often used to describe Renaissance art were 'Old Master' or 'modern', while the period studied most often extended from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. Such terms are much vaguer than the term that replaced them, and the Romantic conception of this period in Italy's history is therefore much more fluid than our modern understanding. Artistic genius was often thought of as transcending history, so that one often finds Dante, Petrarch, Raphael and Michelangelo being discussed as if they

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4 Jules Michelet's 1855 *Histoire de France* is commonly credited with originating the term "Renaissance", and Jacob Burckhardt *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860) with shifting the focus away from France to Italy [see for example, Hilary Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 1]. However, in *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing* (1994), J.B. Bullen argues that it was Jean Baptiste Seroux d'Agincourt who was actually the first person who 'chose to divide the dark ages from the modern period by a third period which he called "La Renaissance"', and though Bullen recognizes Michelet's promotion of 'a very special and powerful view of the Renaissance', his discovery of Agincourt's use of the term demonstrates how 'the nature of the Renaissance was already a much discussed and controversial issue' from the very first [see, J.B. Bullen, *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 8-9].

5 Bullen, *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing*, pp. 10-11; J.R. Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance: The Growth of Interest in History and Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), pp. 60-63; and, Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 3-4.

were contemporaries. Importantly, this ensured that Italian art as much as Italian literature was seen as a precursor to the rich literary tradition of Britain. Reading Romantic responses to Italian Old Master art, therefore, does not solely help us understand their conception of visual art, but gives us a deeper understanding of the ways in which Romantic writers viewed their Italian literary inheritance as well.

Throughout this study, I use the terms 'Renaissance' and 'Old Master' interchangeably, with the understanding that, like the Romantics, my use of these terms may include the medieval period, its artists, writers and other historical figures. It is a period that for most early nineteenth-century commentators was inaugurated by Giotto and ends with Guido Reni. Towards the end of the period considered in this thesis, the term 'primitives' also began to be used more frequently, a development which anticipates the Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite interest in such works. My own use of the term will be used to comment specifically on artists such as Giotto and Cimabue.[6] In *The Ephemeral Museum*, Haskell maintains that the idea of the 'Old Master' was conceived in Italy during the late sixteenth century to discuss the Tuscan masters who exemplified Vasari's *terza maniera*, but that it only came into wide circulation in the 1790s. As Haskell notes, it 'gradually came to embrace all those artists who had lived before the French Revolution'. Haskell writes,

> [i]t is, however, ironical that in England, where the term has most readily been adopted, it has been possible to apply it almost exclusively to painters of foreign birth, because it was not considered very appropriate for Hogarth, Reynolds and their contemporaries, who alone seemed worthy of being remembered – or at least exhibited.[7]

Although northern artists such as Rembrandt and French artists such as Claude and Poussin (who were often thought of as Italians by adoption) were also often referred to as 'Old Masters', they fall outwith the bounds of this study.[8] By focusing on the impact of Italian

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6 In *Rediscoveries in Art*, Haskell writes, 'the vast upheavals in Europe between 1793 and 1815 encouraged, and, above all, enabled both the English and the French to acquire, either privately or publicly and on a massive scale, pictures whose status had already been consecrated by centuries of praise. The budding interest in earlier – or remoter – art which had developed slowly but fairly steadily in the 1780s and early 90s was submerged by the sudden and unexpected availability of so many great and established masterpieces' [*Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France* (London: Phaidon, 1976), p. 37]. I wish to stress however, that by the 1820s, Italian Primitives were on the radar of collectors and poets alike, as I demonstrate in my treatment of Samuel Rogers in Chapter Four. On the reception of Italian Primitives, see also, for example, J.B. Bullen's first chapter in his *Continental Crosscurrents: British Criticism and European Art 1810-1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

7 Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 3-4.

8 For the impact of these artists, see for example, Ian Jack's *Keats and the Mirror of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

art specifically on the literary and artistic productions of early nineteenth-century Britain, this study articulates the ways in which the British were consciously delineating themselves against a French other, fashioning themselves as protectors of art and engaging with the long-standing Anglo-Italian relationship in new and innovative ways.

Recently Bullen has argued that Romantic writers were not engaging with the *concept* of a 'Renaissance', and therefore had a different historical viewpoint when they discussed the 'revival of letters'.[9] However, as I demonstrate in the ensuing chapters, in their reactions to this art Romantic-period writers did much to make such conceptual development possible, as did other cultural developments which were deeply entwined with the place of Italian Renaissance art in Britain, such as the creation of public museums, the advancements in steel engraving and the growing interest in the personal lives of artistic and political figures. Furthermore, while the Romantics may not have used the term 'Renaissance', the events, people and culture of the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries in Italy were very much alive in Britain's public imagination. During the eighteenth and increasingly in the nineteenth century, various studies on these subjects were published throughout Europe, including Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman* Empire (1776-88), Tiraboschi's *Storia della Letterature Italiana* (1772-95) and Luigi Lanzi's *Storia Pittorica della Italia* (1796).[10] Francis Haskell, who argues for the currency of the *idea* of the Renaissance before Michelet, points to banker William Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (1795), a work which is addressed in Chapter One, as crucial in bringing Renaissance scholarship to a wide audience.[11] This was shortly followed by J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi's sixteen-volume *Histoire des Républiques Italiennes au Moyen Âge* (1807-1826), which was also significantly influential in spurring interest in this epoch in Italian history, as Marilyn Butler and others have recognized.[12] Although such works filled a large and unexplored gulf in the West's understanding of its past, and opened up periods previously consigned to oblivion, by far the most important source of information on the Renaissance remained Giorgio Vasari's *Le Vite de' piu Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori, e Architettori* (1550), which through its celebration of individual artists did more than any other single work to fashion the myth of the Renaissance. As J.R. Hale has demonstrated,

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9   Bullen, *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing*, pp. 9-10.
10 For more on the studies written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Kenneth Churchill, *Italy and English Literature* (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Nobles Books, 1980), pp. 116-128 (p. 116); and Bullen, *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing,* 26.
11 Haskell, *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 210.
12 Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 119.

the influence of Vasari's account of how painting emerged in Florence from the Dark Ages can be registered as early as the seventeenth century in works such as Henry Peacham's *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622) and Richard Lassels's *Voyage in Italy* (1670).[13] In the nineteenth century, Vasari's account not only continued to guide art lovers in their appreciation and understanding of Old Masters, but also came to inspire or be directly translated into poetry and prose, as my treatment of the poet, banker and connoisseur Samuel Rogers demonstrates in the fourth chapter. Indeed, Rogers's translation of Vasari solidified his own authority as a connoisseur and *cicerone* for his increasingly diverse audience. The steady growth in importance of medieval and Renaissance art resonated with and influenced an already established literary interest throughout the century.

In order to productively engage with several types of primary sources and a range of literary, art historical, social, cultural and historical scholarship, I have used Pierre Bourdieu's theory of 'cultural' and 'symbolic' capital as a loose framework throughout my study. In the eighteenth century, an appreciation of art, was the exclusive preserve of the aristocracy. As the nineteenth century progressed and art became more widely available, so too did the prestige conferred by artistic expertise. Bourdieu's theories are helpful in exploring this transfer of prestige. As Randal Johnson explains, '[s]ymbolic capital refers to degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (connaissance) and recognition (reconnaissance). Cultural capital concerns forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions'.[14] Bourdieu's theory of the 'accumulation of symbolic capital' shows how powerful a display of one's cultural capital could be. Bourdieu argues that

> "Symbolic capital" is to be understood as economic or political capital that is disavowed, misrecognized and thereby recognized, hence legitimate, a "credit" [...] In short, when only the usable, effective capital is the (mis)recognized, legitimate capital called "prestige" or "authority", the economic capital that cultural undertakings generally require cannot secure the specific profits produced by the field – not the "economic" profits they always imply – unless it is reconverted into symbolic capital. For the author, the critic, the art dealer, the publisher or the theatre manager, the only legitimate accumulation consists in making a name for oneself, a known, recognized name, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects (with a trademark or signature) or persons (through publication, exhibition, etc.) and therefore to give value, and to appropriate the profits from this operation.[15]

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13 J.R. Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance: The Growth of Interest in History and Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), pp. 60-63.

14 See Randal Johnson, editor's introduction, 'Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture', in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. by Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 1-25 (p. 7).

15 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 75.

In the eighteenth century, when travel and art were more exclusive, it was possible to display various signs in various ways which attested to one's prestige. Nigel Llewellyn uses the example of the typical Grand Tour portrait which displays the sitter's taste by incorporating accoutrements and settings which 'invariably intermingle the male discourses on art and military prowess, or depict the kinds of public spaces which simply excluded female company', thereby defining both a general cultural context and asserting the individual's place within it.[16] In the nineteenth century, as more people gained access to art – either on the continent or at home – the ways to assert and confirm one's cultural capital became more diverse. Writing became a key avenue for expressing this cultural capital and, as this thesis shows, this discourse infiltrated all genres. According to Laurie Kane Lew, writing about art itself 'becomes a generically transgressive and ambivalently gendered medium for working out the relations between the public sphere and the private one, between a public culture and personal cultivation'.[17] Bourdieu's work has provided a broad framework to explore these issues. However, while my project has been informed by these concepts, it has not used Bourdieu's work exclusively, nor has it sought to test his theories. Rather, I have chosen to use the concept of 'cultural capital' to understand the different ways a variety of people – from various class, social and gender backgrounds – used their knowledge of Italian art to shape their own personal, social and national identities.

As I have argued and as this thesis demonstrates throughout, the drive to assert one's cultural capital can be seen in the variety of types of texts, including poetry, novels and short stories, travel writing, gallery guides, treatises on taste and aesthetics, histories, biographies and periodical essays, as well as private manuscripts. This study draws on a variety of primary sources by a diverse group of writers in order to adequately reflect the importance of Italian art in the cultural life of Britain in the early nineteenth century. Importantly, these texts often cut across generic boundaries. While Italian art was a prolific subject throughout the period, it has not received as much scholarly attention as it warrants. I have therefore drawn from a wide array of current scholarship, in order to give a more complete view of Romantic reactions to Old Master art. The Romantic engagement with Italian Renaissance art lies on the cross-grain of several key concerns of the period, including questions of Genius, an interest in biography, visual and verbal aesthetics, an

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16 Nigel Llewellyn, '"Those loose and immodest pieces": Italian art and the British point of view', in *Italian Culture in Northern Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Shearer West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; repr. 2001), pp. 67-100 (pp. 70-71).

17 Laurie Kane Lew, 'Cultural Anxiety in Anna Jameson's Art Criticism' in *Studies in English Literature*, 36.4 (1996), 829-856 (p. 830).

understanding of history and the Imagination. As such, this study hopes to contribute to the rich and recent scholarship on the aesthetics and visual culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the importance of travel writing, the centrality of print culture and other cultural studies.

As we saw in the extract from Mary Shelley's review article which opened this Introduction, Italian culture was deeply embedded in the Romantic imagination and, as I will discuss throughout this study, the long-standing Anglo-Italian relationship defined Britain's sense of itself. This relationship, whether manifested in literature, literary criticism, travel writing or art history, has long interested scholars. Kenneth Churchill's *Italy and English Literature 1764-1930* traces the literary impact of Italy on England from the golden years of the Grand Tour through the nineteenth century and beyond, while C.P. Brand's classic study *Italy and the English Romantics* (1957) offers a good overview of how an interest in Italy and its culture shaped the social climate, both in Britain and within the expatriate community in Italy in the Romantic period.[18] The relationship with Italy and Italian culture of the younger generation of Romantic writers has attracted many scholars, especially after Marilyn Butler's posited a 'Cult of the South' in her *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* (1981).[19] While several studies, such as Alan Weinberg's *Shelley's Italian Experience* (1991) and Edoardo Zuccato's *Coleridge in Italy* (1996), have focused primarily on how British authors have been influenced by Italian literary culture, I have found studies such Elizabeth Fay's *Romantic Medievalism* (2002) and Antonella Braida's *Dante and the Romantics* (2004), helpful in contextualizing how the Romantics interpreted medieval and Renaissance Italy.[20] Though she does not offer an extensive study of the cultural significance of Italian art, Maria Schoina's excellent study *Romantic 'Anglo-Italians'* explores the ways in which the Byron-Shelley circle used Italian culture to create a hybrid identity.[21] While the Romantic interest in (medieval) Italian literature and the centrality of both a real and an imagined Italy in nineteenth-century travel writing are increasingly recognised, there is still no full-length study of how the Romantics reacted to and assimilated the visual and plastic arts of Italy's medieval and Renaissance periods. Many of the critical works which have offered some account of the response to the Old

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18 C.P. Brand, *Italy and the English Romantics: The Italianate Fashion in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

19 See especially chapter five of Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*, pp. 116-136.

20 Edoardo Zuccato, *Coleridge in Italy* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996); Alan M. Weinberg, *Shelley's Italian Experience* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, 1991); Elizabeth Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); and, Antonella Braida, *Dante and the Romantics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

21 Maria Schoina, *Romantic 'Anglo-Italians': Configurations of Identity in Byron, the Shelleys, and the Pisan Circle* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

Masters, although excellent, have been limited in their scope. I have, for example, profited from Edoardo Zuccato's *Coleridge in Italy*, with its treatment of Coleridge's response to Pisa's Campo Santo frescoes, and from Jane Stabler's insightful work, but here I offer a more comprehensive view of the response to Italian art work in early nineteenth-century British writings.[22]

The dominant trend in scholarship has been to focus on how British literature has incorporated Italian literature; this study adds an essential element to understanding Italy's deep importance for Romantic literature, and more broadly, British culture. My study includes a selection of novels, poetry and drama to show how deeply ingrained a concern for art was in many of the most important and most popular writers of the period. Madame de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), which addresses many of the themes central to this study, figures prominently throughout. Not only does it function as an unconventional tourist guide, offering detailed accounts of Renaissance as well as classical painting, statuary and architecture, it addresses in the hybrid identity of its eponymous heroine the North-South divide which was believed to determine national and personal characteristics, it incorporates contemporary ideas on history, and it raises key questions to do with the gendering of art discourse. As well as exercising a direct influence on many of the authors I discuss, *Corinne* influenced viewing and travel practices more generally. While several scholars have examined the ways in which *Corinne* explores the question of the North-South divide and its place as a travel guide, no extensive study has been made of its use of specific Renaissance works and how this contributed to, or indeed confused, the reception of Old Master art. Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV* (1818) was equally influential, and has long been central to the scholarly understanding of post-Waterloo travel practices and the centrality of classical statues and ruins to the Romantic imagination. By contrast, this study examines the poet's exploration of Renaissance spaces, including the Medici tomb in Florence and St Peter's Basilica in Rome. In Chapter Three, his treatment of the Greco-Roman statue, the Venus de' Medici, is read as one episode in a long tradition of fascination with this statue, and contrasted with the new tendency to recognise in Raphael's painting of his mistress, *The Fornarina*, an alternative ideal of feminine beauty. Though not as popular as *Corinne* or the final canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Percy Shelley's controversial *The Cenci* (1819) is important to this study because it pivots around the portrait of Beatrice Cenci attributed to Guido Reni. I read *The Cenci* against the wider concern evident in the writing of the period with expression and moral character. I argue

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22 Jane Stabler, 'Subduing the Senses? British Romantic Period Travelers and Italian art', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 26.4 (2004), 320- 327.

that Shelley's work attempts, like the portrait, to preserve the purity of Beatrice's character in the face of her father's desire to deface and destroy his daughter's physical and emotional character. Among other works to be considered are Felicia Hemans's *The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy: A Poem* (1816), Anna Jameson's novel *Diary of an Ennuyée* (1826), Byron's *Beppo* (1818) and Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821). This broad range of texts is necessary to convey how reactions to Italian Renaissance art informed a variety of imaginative texts, addressed to both elite and mass audiences, and how this in turn, encouraged a growth in reader-viewers.

While the British relationship to Italy has been extensively studied, much recent scholarly attention which accounts for a visual aspect to this relationship has focused on Romantic responses to either classical works or ruins. While I began my research planning to study how Italian art of all kinds, including classical, Greco-Roman and Renaissance works, was treated in British writing, I soon realized that this topic was too broad, and that British reactions to Renaissance art, in Britain, Italy and in the Musée Napoleon, deserved more attention. However, my work on the Romantic responses to classical art work has left its mark on this study throughout. The Romantics after all shared the eighteenth-century confidence that the British were the true inheritors of classical civilization. This belief shaped the aristocratic educational system, eighteenth-century aesthetic philosophy and even impacted on governmental policy. British identity, the British educational system, and the British notion of European civilization all need to be understood in relation to the classical past, while Romantic reactions to Old Master art often had to incorporate these earlier discourses. Furthermore, having or not having a classical education influenced how this Old Master art was read and how the viewer created an identity of him or herself. Timothy Webb has mapped the critical importance of Greek Hellenism for both radicals and conservatives.[23] Webb points out that for many, such as Percy Shelley, who had never travelled to Greece and yet were not only classically trained but deeply committed to the value of Greek culture, the imagined landscape of Greece was often mapped onto Italy, or vice-versa. However, as Jeffrey Cox argues, 'Romantic classicism was not [...] merely an aesthetic doctrine; it was also a practical project, perhaps best represented by Wedgwood's factory, Etruria, which had a classicizing – and romantic – name but made useful household products'.[24] As I demonstrate in the ensuing chapters, the British self-identification as the true inheritors of classical civilization would be a major component in

23 Timothy Webb, 'Romantic Hellenism', *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 148-176 (p. 163).
24 Jeffrey Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and Their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), p. 149. On "Cockney Classicism", see pp. 146-186.

ideologically protecting Italy from their common enemy France, while this dual aspect of high versus low culture infused the debates surrounding Old Master art

Throughout this study, I highlight the ways in which the Romantics use, re-shape and sometimes challenge this classical inheritance. Indeed, this inheritance in large part directed their response to Renaissance art, while at the same time Renaissance art, literature and philosophy influenced the way in which classical antiquity was understood, an aspect which has hitherto been neglected. Several studies focusing on the eighteenth-century discourse of Taste, Civic Humanism, the Grand Tour and the development of the Royal Academy were particularly important in tracing the impact of this classical inheritance on the manner in which art of later periods was viewed. John Barrell's work, especially *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* (1986) and *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (1992), maps out what was at stake politically and culturally in eighteenth-century disquisitions on taste.[25] Complementing Barrell's work, is David Solkin's *Painting for Money* (1993) which discusses the dialectical relationship between the Royal Academy's official stance as endorsers of history painting, and the popularity of portraiture on which most Academicians relied for their commercial success.[26] My own study seeks to add another strand to this rich tapestry by articulating how the importation of Old Master works fundamentally changed the art world in Britain both aesthetically and socially by widening the circle of discourse on art, and fused the visual and verbal worlds of nineteenth-century Britain.

The move from neoclassical standards to an aesthetic discourse which began to incorporate and value the work of Italian primitives and Old Masters, not only changed the art world's discourse, but also transferred Britain's national self-identification from Rome's classical past to Florence's republican past, a theme I discuss throughout the thesis. Such a shift reflected and encouraged Britain's rising merchant class to participate in its cultural discourse, a move which would have been inconceivable only a few decades earlier when the Royal Academy had been created. Furthermore, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the art, patronage and politics of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in Italy became increasingly a focus of scholarly and popular attention. While scholars have recognised especially the younger Romantics' fascination with the south, they have undervalued the importance of Italy's medieval and Renaissance past, and how this was

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25 John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: 'The Body of the Public'* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986) and *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1992).
26 David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

fostered by texts which were available to a wide audience. By examining a variety of primary material and current nineteenth-century scholarship from a range of disciplines, this study articulates the subtle transitions in the Romantic period's understanding of Old Master works, its reliance on older aesthetic and philosophical models, and the ways in which they would come to rewrite the rules of taste and the experience of art that so fascinated future generations. My study also demonstrates how Tuscany was becoming imaginatively potent for Romantic writers. Although the Victorian visual and literary interest in Tuscany has been much more fully documented, I argue that the Romantic experience of Tuscany was equally interesting. As I will show, Tuscany for many writers offered a representative of the whole of Italy. In their responses to medieval and Renaissance Florence they reveal the ideological tensions that informed their own writing. In particular, they were obliged to confront in Florence under the rule of the Medici questions of patronage, politics, liberty and genius that led them to investigate the connection between artistic production and the political organization of the society within which that production takes place, questions which resonated with the current climate in Britain and in wider Europe. Furthermore, Florence, unlike ruined, classical Rome, could be read as a complete, whole or unified city, which offered an attractive model for the state, coteries and individuals. The shift in focus from Rome to Florence, together with the shift in interest from classical statues to Renaissance painting, were both a cause and an effect of a new sort of travel and a new kind of traveller, and began much earlier than scholarship of Victorian attitudes to Italy suggests. As I argue throughout this thesis, the individual and collective experience of Old Master art, particularly as it was connected to Florence specifically, had wide-reaching effects.

Travel literature was a growing and popular genre in the nineteenth century and has been increasingly studied by scholars in recent years. Modern studies of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel writing and tourism, such as *Italian Culture in Northern Europe in the Eighteenth Century* (1999; reprint 2001), *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century* (1996), and *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond* (2000), have presented Italy and its place in British culture and the Grand Tour tradition in a new light.[27] Chloe Chard's excellent and wide-ranging study, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour* (1999), addresses the language that Grand Tourists developed in an attempt to

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27 *Italian Culture in Northern Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Shearer West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; repr. 2001); *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignamini (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1996); and, *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond*, ed. by Clare Hornsby (London: The British School at Rome, 2000).

accommodate their experience.[28] While this and other studies of the Grand Tour have helped me establish the long-standing cultural importance of Italy and identify the dynamic, and often subtle, transformations which characterised the Romantic experience of Italian art, the post-Waterloo experience of the Continent was markedly different from the Grand Tourist model. Studies focusing specifically on nineteenth-century responses to Italy, such as *Imagining Rome: British Artists and Rome in the Nineteenth Century* (1996) and Hilary Fraser's *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (1992), offer much to consider in the process of remapping Italy in a post-Grand Tour world.[29] While Fraser's book made an important contribution to the understanding of Renaissance Italy's impact on British culture, I argue that many of the aspects that Fraser thinks of as Victorian or as part of the Pre-Raphaelite movement were, in fact, anticipated by the Romantics. I am substantially indebted to James Buzard's *The Beaten Track* (1993), which looks at European tourism and tourist literature from the beginning of the nineteenth century till the start of World War One, particularly to his idea of the 'anti-tourist'.[30] This idea resonates with Bourdieu's theories and Buzard's work has been most helpful in registering how profoundly Romantic responses to Italy and its culture shaped Anglo-American attitudes to the Land of the Arts.

While travel writing is now receiving much scholarly focus, travellers' reactions to Italian Old Master art has not received extensive attention in its own right; this study seeks to address this imbalance. As I will demonstrate throughout my study, travel literature, by mediating between Italian art and its viewers, greatly influenced the ways in which Renaissance art was read. The nature of travel writing was changing in the period, and although works in the Grand Tour tradition would remain important, contemporary guides were often concerned to register the political, social and cultural atmosphere of Italy, alongside the supreme value of Italy's art. Bridging the gap between Grand Tour and mass tourism, the popular guides by John Chetwode Eustace and Joseph Forsyth reflect the changing nature of foreign travel that first became evident during the Peace of Amiens. Both were published shortly before Waterloo and became extremely popular with the new generation of travellers, including writers such as Byron and the Shelleys. Literary works, such as Byron's Fourth Canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and Jameson's *Diary of an Ennuyée* like *Corinne* often shared elements with travel literature, while many guides used

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28 Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).
29 *Imagining Rome: British Artists and Rome in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Michael Liversidge and Catharine Edwards (London: Merrell Holberton, 1996); and, Hilary Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992).
30 James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

the journey as a framework within which to discuss the history, politics or culture of Italy, Britain or a wider Europe. As we shall see in Chapters One and Two, Henry Sass's *A Journey to Rome and Naples* (1818), to give just one example, is as much an endorsement of the Royal Academy and British contemporary art, as it is an account of his travels in Italy.[31] The art student asserts his disgust at the present state of the arts in Italy and his confidence that it is British artists who have replaced the Italian masters of the past. As James Buzard and others have shown, it was only after the publication of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage IV*, that the guidebook as we now know it, came into existence.[32] Indeed, many travel books were effectively gallery guides. While this study does include guides to galleries in Britain, it will only treat travel literature that deals with Italy. Central works include, Lady Morgan's *Italy* (1821) and Mariana Starke's *Letters from Italy* (1815).

Gallery guides were essential in transferring 'culture' across class and gender lines and have much in common with travel writing. They may record the writers' own responses to the paintings on display, but they often also offer information on how to obtain access to the gallery, and on what recompense should be offered to guides. As this study is chiefly concerned with placing the Romantic discourse on Italian Renaissance art in both its national and European context, it has been necessary to include guides to the private galleries of Britain. However, except for a brief treatment of a guide to Norfolk's Holkham Hall in Chapter Four, I have limited myself to the guides to private homes in or around London. Although internal tourism to stately homes such as Chatsworth and Blenheim was an important aspect of the social and cultural dynamics during the war with France, it was the metropolitan experience that produced the new aesthetic discourse that was later disseminated throughout Britain. Importantly, several of the guides I have included, such as William Hazlitt's S*ketches of the Picture Galleries of England* (1824), first appeared as periodical articles before being published as separate volumes. I have also included gallery guides such as those by Charles Westmacott and William Young Ottley, which are explicitly addressed to a readership anxious to educate its taste for Italian art. These are texts which anticipate the Victorian concern with self-improvement.

Italian Renaissance artists and their art offered material eagerly seized on by an expanding print market. Central to this study, therefore, are histories, biographies, books on aesthetics and art history. I have already noted the importance of William Roscoe's *Life*

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31 Henry Sass, *A Journey to Rome and Naples, Performed in 1817: Giving an Account of the Present State of Society in Italy; and Containing Observations on the Fine Arts* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1818).

32 James Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, pp. 66-69; and more recently, Barbara Schaff, 'John Murray's Handbooks to Italy: Making Tourism Literary', in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, ed. by Nicola J. Watson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 106-118.

of Lorenzo de' Medici in shaping the period's understanding of fifteenth-century Tuscany, but there were other biographies and histories which helped to shape the British experience of Renaissance art. As recent scholarship has demonstrated, biography was becoming increasingly popular and the Romantic fascination with the nature of Genius served to establish the Old Masters as compelling biographical subjects. The biographies of the Old Masters which were published in the second decade of the century, amongst them William Coxe's *Sketches of the Lives of Correggio and Parmegiano* (1823), Richard Duppa's *The Life of Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino* (1816) and Abraham Hume's *Notices of the Life and Works of Titian* (1829), had a strong impact on the ways in which their works were read and helped to shift the focus away from classical sculpture and onto Renaissance painting, as I shall demonstrate in Chapter Three. There were also more general histories of art, aesthetics and collecting. Though the 'history of art' had yet to become a discipline in its own right, in the early nineteenth century it was beginning to emerge in response to the central role that Britain was assuming in the European art scene. William Buchanan's *Memoirs of Painting, with a Chronological History of the Importation of Pictures by the Great Masters into England since the French Revolution* (1824), explains the development of British art as a response to a wider access to Old Master works. The Reverend John Thomas James's *Italian Schools of Painting with Observations on the Present State of the Art* (1820) also places the work of the Italian schools within a contemporary European framework. I have also included Lady Maria Callcott's progressive *Essays towards the History of Painting* (1836), though this falls outside my period, 1795-1830, because her comments on her predecessors, particularly Sir Joshua Reynolds, shed light on the earlier period. Works on aesthetics have also been considered where they seem directly to illuminate the reception of Italian painting. I include, for example, Percy Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* (1821) and a number of Hazlitt's periodical essays, apparently very different texts, but texts which nevertheless engage with the experience of Italian Renaissance Art in early nineteenth-century Britain.

While much of this study is concerned with tracking the impact of Italian art on a national and public level, I also strive to register its impact on the individual and private level. As such, this study includes various 'private writings', by which I mean journals, letters and notes, some of which were addressed only to a small group of family and friends. Once again, the generic boundaries are sometimes unclear. Anna Jameson, for example, published her account of Italy and its art as a fictionalized diary, while Mariana Starke's *Letters* were clearly written for publication rather than for private circulation. The

private writings of Percy Shelley, Lord Byron and Samuel Rogers are not only interesting in themselves, but significant because they shed light on the understanding of visual culture and artefacts evident in the published work. I run the risk of sacrificing depth for breadth, but it is a risk worth running because the Romantic experience of Italian Renaissance art was deeply connected to the wider British and European culture and political climate. Furthermore, the Romantic response to this art was often felt to be, or at least presented as, deeply personal. Moving between literary texts, travel writing, guides, biographies, histories, works on aesthetics and private accounts, has allowed me to accommodate the multifarious ways in which Romantic writers and their contemporaries encountered Italian Renaissance art. It has also enabled me to participate fully in the rich discussion of contemporary scholarship on nineteenth-century British culture.

This wide variety of material studied has enabled me to contribute to the understanding of the period's conception of 'Genius', 'history' and the new power attributed to biography. As I show throughout this study, the work of art became in this period valuable not so much in itself but as a testament to the genius of the artist, and critics demonstrated their expertise by their ability to respond to such genius. History, an essential concept for the Romantics, was also understood as leaving its mark on the visual text. These marks can be as varied as the expression on the sitter's face, a tear in the canvas made by a French bayonette or even a surface made grimy by incense. As my thesis argues, works of art were examined as texts that allowed the viewer to read an artist's biography, character and particular genius. In their response to Renaissance works, much more clearly than in their response to classical works, writers of the period at once reveal and develop the mode of critical attention that has long been recognised as distinctively Romantic.

Part of the reason that Romantic reactions to Italian Renaissance art have not been thoroughly studied by scholars is because traditionally scholarship has emphasised the visionary qualities of Romantic poetry, over the visual experience. Recently however, there has been a surge of interest in the interconnected nature of early nineteenth-century Britain's visual and verbal culture, challenging the traditional view, established by M. H. Abrams and others, of Romantic writers as iconoclastic visionaries.[33] Richard Altick's

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33 M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 50: 'The uses of painting to illuminate the essential character of poetry – *ut pictura poesis* – so widespread in the eighteenth century, almost disappears in the major criticism of the romantic period; the comparisons between poetry and painting that survive are casual, or, as in the instance of the mirror, show the canvas reversed in order to image the inner substance of the poet. In place of painting, music becomes the art frequently pointed to as having a profound affinity with poetry. For if a picture seems the nearest thing to a mirror-image of the external world, music of all the arts, is the

ground-breaking work, *The Shows of London* (1978), encouraged scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to take account of the wealth of (popular) visual spectacles and exhibitions available in the Romantic metropolis. Altick's work has been influential on literary critics and students of cultural studies, as on art historians, and has initiated two distinct, though overlapping, strains in the study of nineteenth-century, British culture. One focuses on the exhibition culture, particularly of London. These studies examine the materiality of visual culture: the fashion for the Picturesque, the development of the museum, the rich exhibition culture of Georgian Britain, as well as the popularity of drawing manuals, print-shops and other printed material. The second strand, which includes works such as Wood's *The Shock of the Real* (2001), Galperin's *The Return of the Visible* (1993), Sophie Thomas's *Romanticism and Visuality* (2008), Simonsen's *Wordsworth and Word-Preserving Arts: Typographic Inscription, Ekphrasis and Posterity in the Later Works* (2007) and Rovee's *Imagining the Gallery* (2006), deals with the relationship between the visual and verbal arts. I have benefited from the studies of both kinds in reaching my understanding of how Old Master art might be at once familiar, and excitingly unknown. The present study rests in the centre of these overlapping strands of scholarship, while linking shared questions with broader concerns in the period.

Ekphrasis (or ecphrasis), from the Greek ek, 'out' and phrazein 'to speak', has become a key term for a number of critics in the last twenty years and studies on ekphrasis have been instrumental in creating a space in which to discuss the visual-verbal culture of the Romantic period. The term has been deployed by scholars in a variety of fields, but it was James Heffernan's *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (1993) which offered the most influential definition of the term. Starting, as many studies do, with Homer's description of Achilles's shield in the *Illiad*, Heffernan defines ekphrasis as a 'verbal representation of a visual representation'. This is the working definition which has been adopted by a variety of works, including Romantic-period specific studies such as Bruce Haley's *Living Forms: Romantics and the Monumental Figure* (2003), Stephen Cheeke's *Writing for Art: the Aesthetics of Ekphrasis* (2008) and Peter Simonsen's *Wordsworth and Word-Preserving Arts*.

Helpful to this study are the ways in which many of the studies of 'ekphrasis' engage with the relationship between the 'sister arts', which began to shift in the late eighteenth

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most remote: except in the trivial echoism of programmatic passages, it does not duplicate aspects of sensible nature, nor can it be said, in any obvious sense, to refer to any state of affairs outside itself. As a result music was the first of the arts to be generally regarded as non-mimetic in nature; and in the theory of German writers of the 1790s, music came to be the art most immediately expressive of spirit and emotion, constituting the very pulse and quiddity of passion made public'.

century and therefore add a key, though secondary, background concern to the present study. Horace's aphorism *ut pictura poesis*, from *Ars Poetica*, had fostered the idea of poetry as a speaking painting and of painting as a silent poem. The comparability of poetry and painting, writes Adele Holcomb, 'was predicated on the relative capabilities of the arts to imitate nature according to an Aristotelian conception'.[34] While a display of *enargeia* was valued equally in verbal and visual texts throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the dominant discourse in the eighteenth century increasingly insisted on fixing boundaries between the arts.[35] In particular, Lessing's *Laocoon* (1766), as Barbara Stafford explains,

> exerted powerful pressures to define picture-making as an art independent of architecture, sculpture, and literature. This paradigm-shifting book also established a hierarchy that set temporal genres like drama and poetry above spatialized media. Consequently, Lessing overturned a line of argument – stretching from Roger de Piles to Locke, Addison, and especially Berkeley – extolling the communicative potential of painting's iconic signs and predicting the advent of a universal "mother tongue" of synergistic appearances.[36]

Though both of the sister arts were said to imitate nature, Lessing was concerned that they created an illusion of reality, by interfering with the audience's conception of space and time. For Lessing, poetry is the higher art because it 'materializes in time', unlike a statue which is frozen in time. As Chapter One shows, this argument and the impact it had on defining what was a proper or appropriate subject for the arts continued to exert a strong influence on post-Waterloo audiences. Yet, as the latter chapters demonstrate, these strict boundaries between the arts would collapse as Romantic writers pulled inspiration from the arts in various ways, and as the publishing markets and practices for visual and verbal texts became integrated and interdependent.

While Heffernan's work has been instrumental in bringing a new awareness of the relationship between verbal and visual texts throughout history, not everyone has adopted his definition of ekphrasis. This thesis seeks to engage with a wide range of cultural, social, historical and literary questions, which otherwise would be excluded if I were to limit myself solely to 'verbal representation[s] of a visual representation'. Studies, such as Ruth Webb's article '*Ekphrasis* Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre' (1999) and

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34 Adele M. Holcomb, 'Turner and Rogers' "Italy" Revisited', *Studies in Romanticism*, 27.1 (1988), 63-95 (p. 63).
35 Jean H. Hagstrum, *Eros and Vision: The Restoration to Romanticism* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1989), p. 30. See also his *Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialsm and Enlgish Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 136-137.
36 Barbara Maria Stafford, *Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999), p. 55. See also, Moshe Barasch, *Modern Theories of Art, 1: From Winckelmann to Baudelaire* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), pp. 149-164.

Janice Hewlett Koelb's *The Poetics of Description: Imagined Places in European Literature* (2006), have begun to question why most modern scholars focus so exclusively on the double representations produced by literary texts that offer to represent visual objects, and the scholarly value of a term which can be used in so many ways.[37] Webb points out that the view of ekphrasis as a description of an art object is a mid-twentieth century construction.[38] Two examples she cites are important in the context of my own study. First, she points to the use of the term by the anonymous author of an 1814 *Edinburgh Review* article, which is discussed in Grant Scott's work and cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as one of the earliest uses of the word in English. The author writes of the '"florid effeminancies of style [...] in a love-letter of Philostratus, or ecphrasis of Libanius"'. Webb asks,

> can one be sure that the modern sense of "description of a work of art" was in his mind? Or was he using the term in something closer to the ancient sense, in which case the quotation is only tangentially relevant to the relationship between art and literature (though highly revealing of nineteenth-century attitudes towards rhetoric and description)?

Secondly, she points out that Lessing, for example, did not use the term in the *Laokoön*.[39] Webb's account of ekphrasis has proved more germane to my purposes than Heffernan's, especially in the fourth chapter in which the difference between the modern use of the term and Webb's is used to explore Samuel Rogers's description of a lost cartoon by Michelangelo. 'The most recent attempts to define *ekphrasis*', writes Mario Klarer,

> foreground the notion of a double representation and therefore echo these dominant theoretical trends in contemporary literary and cultural studies. [...] *Ekphrasis* as a seemingly postmodern word-and-image hybrid, therefore, needs to be wrenched away from the conceptual frameworks of late twentieth-century theorizing and examined, instead, as a vehicle through which we can reconstruct the dominant concepts of representation in specific cultures and historical periods.[40]

None of the writers I have examined use the term in the texts that I have studied. While many of them would argue, as Percy Shelley does in the *Defence*, that poetry is the highest form of art, I have found that they tend to present visual and verbal art forms as having a symbiotic relationship.[41] Indeed, as we shall see, Romantic writers develop a critical

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37 Ruth Webb, '*Ekphrasis* Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre', *Word & Image*, 15.1 (1999), 7-18; and, Janice Hewlett Koelb, *The Poetics of Description: Imagined Places in European Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
38 Webb, 'Ekphrasis', pp. 9-10.
39 Webb, 'Ekphrasis', pp. 9-10.
40 Martin Klarer, 'Ekphrasis (Special Issue): Introduction", *Word & Image*, 15.1 (1999), 1-4 (p. 2).
41 Certain tropes, most strikingly the picturesque ruin, might be typical of both visual and verbal texts of the period. See, for example, Anne F. Janowitz, *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 55. This of course is intricately linked with developments in

vocabulary which they employ to discuss both poetry and painting. Many contemporary studies of ekphrasis have focused on poetic descriptions of art works, but I have been more interested in how ekphrasis cuts across genres. Webb's emphasis on 'enargeia', that is the vividness of description that Hazlitt terms 'gusto', is central to my study and to Romantic-period writings on art.

Though I have not dealt extensively with contemporary British art, recent scholarship has informed my understanding of the manner in which the visual culture of the period moved between the private and public spheres, as well as the ideological debates precipitated by the founding of the Royal Academy. *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836* (2001) is an important collection of essays, edited by David Solkin, which explores the aesthetics of the Royal Academy's hang, the social dynamics at play both on the floor and on the walls of these exhibitions and the dichotomy between the RA's endorsement of history paintings as the highest form of painting and the overwhelming preponderance of portraits amongst the paintings on display.[42] My work resonates with studies of London's exhibition culture, such as those by Altick and Solkin, and studies which deal with the history of curatorship and the development of the museum and the galleries of Europe, as it deepens our understanding of how visual culture was conceived by writers and the public alike. Some of these studies also engage to some extent with tourism and travel writing, while others focus on the changing face of galleries in the wake of the Napoleonic wars. The work of Francis Haskell, particularly *Rediscoveries in Art* (1976) and *The Ephemeral Museum* (2000), has been especially informative. However, Haskell's studies are predominately art historical and primarily concerned with patrons, dealers and the development of the modern museum. My study, in contrast, tries to incorporate a wider group of viewers into this discussion, particularly the writer-viewers who responded imaginatively to their experience of new museums. Andrew McClellan's *Inventing the Louvre* (1994) and Cecil Gould's *Trophy of Conquest* (1965) were essential resources in situating British visual culture within a European framework.[43] This study hopes to add to such discussions by exploring the ways in which Britain's verbal culture make this participation possible.

What my research has made abundantly clear to me is that there are a myriad of ways in which the expanding print culture in the nineteenth century marries literature and art

internal and international travel, as well as the ongoing construction of Anglo-Italian relations.

42 *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836*, ed. by David H. Solkin (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

43 Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and, Cecil Gould, *Trophy of Conquest: The Musée Napoléon and the Creation of the Louvre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).

together. Some ways are perhaps more obvious than others, as is the case with the illustrated Keepsakes and Annuals that I discuss in Chapter Four. Others are perhaps less obvious, or are simply understudied. Biographies, particularly lives of artistic geniuses sometimes operated powerfully to bring the visual and verbal together. Recent critics have challenged W.J.T Mitchell's insistence that the Romantics were 'antipictorialists', that 'images, pictures, and visual perception were highly problematic issues for many romantic writers' and that 'pictures and vision frequently play a negative role in romantic poetic theory'.[44] Peter Simonsen, for example, reads Wordsworth and his contemporary culture in terms of the visual. He argues that,

> Wordsworth in the course of his career gradually came to treat writing and print, the page and the book, less as necessary evils than as indispensable communicative tools, whose visual properties might in certain instances be utilised to achieve special effects of meaning. In the meeting of poetic word and the materialities of the medium, Wordsworth and his age came to recognise, new communicative and aesthetic possibilities are released even as this presupposes a more than linguistic understanding of what constitutes "the poem" or "poetry".[45]

By acknowledging the importance of Romantic-period visual culture, and the centrality of the Italian Renaissance in the formation of that culture, a more coherent picture of early nineteenth-century British culture becomes visible. By pursuing an interdisciplinary approach, I have been able to show how deeply intertwined the verbal and visual arts were in the early nineteenth century.

As my thesis will demonstrate, the British Romantic experience of viewing Italian Old Master art is multi-faceted and pervades a number of issues central to our understanding of the period as a whole. Chapter One examines the impact of Italian art in Britain during the war years. It begins with an overview of the eighteenth-century discourse on art, placing such concerns within the wider European competition for cultural supremacy and academic art production. One of the main themes tackled in this chapter is the ways in which Britain sought national prestige through the acquisition of Italian art, even as the question of art's progressiveness became more complex and less determinable. Although many radical writers opposed such acquisitions, others believed them essential both to Britain's cultural standing and its artistic production. By tracing both Britain's sense of national identity, particularly against the French, and developments in its

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44 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1994), pp. 114-115.

45 Peter Simonsen, *Wordsworth and Word-preserving Arts: Typographic Inscription, Ekphrasis, and Posterity in the Later Work* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 56. See also, Morris Eaves, 'The Sister Arts in British Romanticism', *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 236-269.

metropolitan art world, this chapter also examines the difficulty experienced in assimilating Italian and Catholic art into existing British taste and the ways in which authors working in a variety of genres accommodated such works. While this chapter explores imaginative texts such as Felicia Hemans's 'The Restoration of the Art Works to Italy' and Staël's *Corinne,* it also relies on examples of the bourgeoning growth of factual prose on Italian art, such as William Buchanan's *Memoirs of Painting* and Henry Sass's *A Journey to Rome and Naples*. Ultimately, this chapter argues that for a variety of people, Italian art offered a means to participate in wider British culture.

Chapter Two pivots around the idea of Connoisseurship and explores the various ways in which a knowledge of Italian art became a key marker of cultural standing. It argues that while in the eighteenth century, the debate on who could claim true taste had been limited to artists and aristocrats, in the early nineteenth century a much wider group of individuals competed to secure their own claims to cultural capital. Fashioning one's self as a 'connoisseur' was certainly not the only posture commentators on art assumed, but it was one of the most effective ways to distinguish one's self as an authority to the new gallery-going public. This chapter explores a variety of gallery spaces, from inter-war London auction houses and the yearly Royal Academy exhibitions as seen in Pierce Egan's *Life in London*, to post-Waterloo travel in Europe, and examines the plethora of voices which competed to be the supreme authority on art. As we shall see, viewers continually asserted their own claims to true and exclusive taste by insisting on their difference from those whose experience of art they dismissed as inauthentic. This chapter culminates in the emergence of a new figure that I term the Romantic or poetic connoisseur. I argue that writers such as Byron, Percy Shelley and, perhaps surprisingly, William Hazlitt, argue for an aristocracy of taste, membership of which is conferred not by social rank but by the quality of one's aesthetic response. The image of the true viewer having a private and emotionally charged response to art is one of the markers of 'Romantic' discourse and as such is central to any study of Romantic aesthetic philosophy. However, the poetic connoisseur is offered as one example of the many ways in which writer-viewers invoked the cultural capital of Italian Renaissance art in order to endow themselves with the symbolic capital of the critic. Ironically, the poetic connoisseur offered a model of connoisseurship that a new mass audience of tourists and gallery-goers, the very people these writers sought to exclude from their elite circle of Taste, might seek to emulate.

The third chapter is grounded in the literary production of post-Waterloo Britain and focuses on how Romantic writers used Italian art to produce imaginative literature,

rather than criticism. It is especially concerned with the ways in which Romantic writers viewed Italian art as multi-dimensional, as historical works that might still claim contemporary importance. This chapter connects wider literary trends, such as biography and ideas of Genius, with Romantic responses to the art of the Renaissance. In pushing the study forward chronologically, this chapter explores the development of a critical vocabulary equally applicable to the visual arts and literature. As we shall see, this vocabulary locates the value of a work of art in the physical, emotional and sexual responses that it invites, and hence it minimises the difference between text and image. One consequence of this, I argue, is the tendency displayed by many writers of the period to 'novelize' the work of art, responding to it as if it were a fictional or autobiographical narrative. Furthermore these responses became increasingly divided along gender lines, which in turn defined new reasons for viewing art. Such visceral responses to art, across a range of genres, led Romantic writers to forge new links between the visual and verbal arts which would continue to be explored by their Victorian inheritors.

The final chapter uses Samuel Rogers's *Italy* as a case study for understanding the close relationship between Italian art and the production of a British best-seller. It traces the history of the development of Rogers's text from the 1820s to the 1830s, from recalled flop to cultural icon, in order to demonstrate just how powerfully Italian art and culture had impacted nineteenth-century publishing practices. This in-depth analysis of *Italy* brings together many of the issues engaged with in the earlier chapters of the thesis, while its discussion of the contemporary literary market and growing demand for British-made prints demonstrates how interconnected the visual and verbal arts had become in mid-nineteenth century Britain. My study has focused on the ways Italian art infiltrated a variety of genres, which is itself reflected in Rogers's work, which is part poetry, prose and commonplace book. As such, *Italy* proves to be a valuable tool for understanding a broadly defined publishing market. This chapter ends by looking forward to the ways in which Romantic values and responses to Italian Old Master art were passed on to a Victorian audience.

By studying a wide range of texts, by a variety of writers, this study argues that Italian art was a key force in shaping Romantic-period culture and aesthetic thought. Italian Renaissance art, which was at once familiar and unknown, provided an avenue through which Romantic writers could explore a wide range of issues and is reflected in private writings and publication practices alike. This thesis registers the impact of Old Master art on an international, national and individual level, in order to demonstrate how pervasively

its influence was felt. By appreciating how the Romantics understood Italian Renaissance art we can better understand their aesthetic values, their concept of the Imagination and their experience of Italy, British and European visual culture.

Chapter One

'To engraft Italian art on English nature'

When I was young, I made one or two studies of strong contrasts of light and shade in the manner of Rembrandt with great care and (as it was thought) with some success. But after I had once copied some of Titian's portraits in the Louvre, my ambition took a higher flight. Nothing would serve my turn but heads like Titian – Titian expressions, Titian complexions, Titian dresses; and as I could not find these where I was, after one or two abortive attempts to engraft Italian art on English nature, I flung away my pencil in disgust and despair. Otherwise I might have done as well as others, I dare say, but from a desire to do too well.[1]

Before the 1790s, the opportunity to see original Italian Old Master art works was largely confined to those with the means to embark on a "Grand Tour". The expression, first used in Richard Lassel's *Voyage in Italy* (1670), describes a leisurely journey whose ultimate destination was Rome. By the seventeenth century, and as an answer to Protestant demands for 'a non-superstitious justification for travel', the Grand Tour, according to Edward Chaney, began to operate as an 'exclusively educational phenomenon'.[2] Lasting several years, the Grand Tour was a finishing school for Britain's aristocrats and landed gentry, grooming them to rule Britain and to protect British values. The future leaders of Britain, accompanied by their tutors, set off to perfect their knowledge of foreign languages, circulate in the courts of Europe, practise their sporting skills and learn humanistic virtue through an acquaintance with art. Although there were concerns that foreign luxuries and other temptations could corrupt or effeminize these young men, the art, sciences and antiquities of Italy consolidated the Tour's educational importance. Champions of the Tour's educational benefits argued that by studying the arts and sciences abroad a young aristocrat became 'not merely a "virtuoso", but *virtuous* in the modern sense of the word also'.[3] One of the major supporters of these benefits was Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury. Through his influential *Essays* (1710), art criticism adopted the republican terms associated with civic humanism, and although much of Shaftesbury's work became outmoded by mid-century, the idea that art was only available to ruling-class citizens conferred a cultural capital on art which would have long-standing consequences. According to Shaftesbury, knowledge of the fine arts would encourage the citizen-viewer

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1 Hazlitt, XVII, 139.
2 Edward Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations since the Renaissance* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 203.
3 Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour*, pp. 86-87.

to perform virtuous acts which would protect and strengthen the political republic. As John Barrell has documented in *The Birth of Pandora* (1992), only when the arts successfully strengthened the civic spectator's sense of duty to the republic could they present him 'with images of ideal beauty by which he might be *polished* as well as politicised'.[4] If the arts were viewed by those incapable of exercising civic virtue, they would reinforce the viewers' 'taste for luxury', and by thus effeminizing them, put society at risk.[5] For this socially elite group of men, the main purpose of art was didactic, not aesthetic.

The viewer was trained in the mechanical aspects of art, such as perspective and composition, and also acquired the literary or historical knowledge required to understand the subject matter of a painting or statue. By understanding the cultural apparatus behind the painting – including classical myth, religion, literature and history – the connoisseur was able to fully "read" the painting, able most importantly, to extract its moral lesson. However, one of the greatest challenges for citizen-viewers was to be confronted with an image of a naked woman. In order to maintain their authority and masculine virtue, viewers developed a language which enabled them to maintain a proper distance while still freely gazing. This discourse, Barrell argues,

> represented civic freedom not only as an emancipation from servility and dependence, but as an emancipation from desire. [...] To enable the citizen to triumph over his own sexuality was thus a primary object of civic education, and was to be a primary objective of the fine arts.[6]

Throughout the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century such connoisseurs would be mocked for the contrast between their dry, pedantic criticism and their lecherous, microscopic gazes. Ultimately, as Barrell has shown, this desire to view a compromising object without being compromised, broke down the discourse of civic humanism, until the terms were reversed and the contemplation of art became an assertion of virility rather than an exercise in self-discipline. Increasingly, connoisseurs focused on the aesthetic rather than moral qualities of a work. This emphasis on art's aesthetic value prefigured the changes to British art discourse and travel which would occur during and after the Napoleonic War. Both Chaney and Ilaria Bignamini identify the 'Golden Years' of the Grand Tour as the period from 1764 to 1796, a period of relative peace between the end of the Seven Years' War in February 1763 and Napoleon's invasion of the Italian peninsula in 1796.[7] As James Buzard has shown in his ground-breaking book, *The Beaten Track* (1993),

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4 John Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1992), p. 63.
5 Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora*, p. 64.
6 Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora*, pp. 64-65.
7 Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour,* p. 114. See also, Ilaria Bignamini, 'The Grand Tour: Open

the face of continental travel and travellers would change radically in the years following Waterloo,[8] yet art and the prestige which familiarity with it conferred, remained a central reason for venturing to Italy.

Despite the confidence embodied in the ideal of civic humanism, throughout the eighteenth century Britain felt culturally poor next to its continental neighbours, a sentiment reinforced by foreign visitors' accounts of Britain.[9] In *Art for the Nation* (1999), Brandon Taylor argues that the desire for art excited by the Grand Tour, 'fed the expansion of a market for Italian and continental paintings and so stimulated patriotic anxieties about the relative invisibility of a British "school"'.[10] Although Charles I had been a great collector, most of his collection was sold off by Cromwell's parliament between 1649 and 1653. The eighteenth century saw a growth of interest in and the accessibility of all aspects of the fine arts.[11] Groups such as the Society of Artists (1761) and its more successful offshoot, the Royal Academy of Arts (1768) sought to address this issue by officially creating a national school. With its emphasis on developing public taste, the Royal Academy, backed by George III, soon became the pre-eminent exhibiting society in London. The Royal Academy's annual exhibition, begun in 1769, was an extremely popular event in the London season and cost a shilling entrance fee. As David Solkin and John Brewer have stressed, exhibition galleries were overwhelmingly social spaces, a place to see and be seen, to be entertained rather than educated.[12] And as the terms of civic humanism gave way to an increased appreciation for the aesthetic merits of art, the ability

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Issues', in *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignamini (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1996), pp. 31-36. Bignamini bases this assertion on factors such as the number of travellers, the quantity and type of tourist portraits produced, excavations throughout the Italian peninsula and export licences granted to British citizens, especially after the rediscovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum (pp. 31-36).

8 James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). While this theme runs throughout Buzard's study, see for example, pp. 86-110.

9 See for example, John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth-Century* (London: Harper Collins, 1997). Brewer writes, 'It was a constant source of puzzlement and wonder to foreign visitors to England that the monarch of such a powerful nation should live in such low circumstances' (p. 12).

10 Brandon Taylor, *Art for the Nation*: *Exhibitions and the London Public 1747-2001* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 1.

11 See Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknapp Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 100.

12 *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836*, ed. by David H. Solkin (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 4. In his introduction to this wonderful collection of essays, Solkin asserts that eighteenth-century 'Englishmen and women went to galleries and exhibitions to look at the pictures on the walls, but for much else besides: to see other people, to be seen by them and to talk with one another. [...T]here was a general expectation, to the despair of certain professional critics, that conversations in front of paintings should range freely over a wide spectrum of issues, exploiting the latitude that was implicit in the very nature of the hang' (p. 4). See also, Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 69.

to discuss such merits constituted the viewer's own authority.[13] Art appreciation, Barrell writes, became a matter of prestige:

> [a]s long as the possibility of appreciating the higher genres of art was thought of as available only to the aristocracy, it was certainly imagined that an informed concern with painting and sculpture conferred status on the noble or gentle connoisseur; it confirmed his standing as a patrician in the fullest sense of the word, as someone not only born to exercise power, but fit to exercise it. As a result, a form of prestige became attached to the ability to articulate the civic discourse, and that ability could remain to some extent a source of prestige when the discourse came to be spoken by, and addressed to, those with no claim to be regarded as patricians.[14]

The developing interest in the arts was part of the wider movement of sociability, taste and refinement which characterized late eighteenth-century British culture and which manifested itself in literary output and in philosophy.[15] Exhibition galleries, coffee houses, exclusive clubs, theatres and an active periodical press were all public spaces that encouraged the acquisition of taste that defined the polite man or woman.[16]

One major issue in the development of the arts in Britain, was its reliance on the growth of trade. While officially the Royal Academy endorsed history painting as the ideal art, many of its members were financially dependent on the popularity of portraiture and prints.[17] As Nigel Llewellyn has argued, the fact that the eighteenth century

> is presented historiographically both as an age of elegance and the moment when Britain becomes a major commercial nation, when reactions to art itself become commodified, established a recurrent paradox in the very heart of the context within which British reactions to Italian art have to be understood.[18]

Although Italian art was viewed as the highest ideal of painting, originals, unlike their Dutch and Flemish counterparts, were not easily accessible until the importation of a huge number of them as a consequence of the French Revolution.[19] Recent studies have

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13 Barrell, *Birth of Pandora*, p. 70.

14 Barrell, *Birth of Pandora*, pp. 68-70.

15 See Eric Gidal, *Poetic Exhibitions: Romantic Aesthetics and the Pleasures of the British Museum* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001), pp. 21-22.

16 Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 59. Brewer stresses that this public dissemination of culture was matched by a concern for the private cultivation of taste and skills such as writing, drawing and music. These, he writes, 'were the two contexts – one public, the other private, yet intertwined – for the emergence of a new identity as a public person of taste and refinement' (p. 59).

17 On the commercial and popular value of portraiture see, David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993). For information on the period's print trade see Gillian D'Arcy Wood, *The Shock of the Real: Romanticism and Visual Culture, 1760-1860* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), especially pp. 70- 76.

18 Nigel Llewellyn, '"Those loose and immodest pieces": Italian art and the British point of view', in *Italian Culture in Northern Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Shearer West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; repr. 2001), pp. 67-100 (p. 99).

19 See Richard C. Sha, *The Visual and Verbal Sketch in British Romanticism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p. 52.

rediscovered the centrality of visual culture to our understanding of London society in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism* (1993), William Galperin examines the importance and popularity of the Diorama and the Panorama, while Francis Haskell's *History and its Images* (1993) shows how the popular study of physiognomy informed the interpretation and understanding of Old Master artworks.[20] While prints, engravings and casts of Italian Renaissance art works had always been popular souvenirs from the Grand Tour, other kinds of reproduction, according to Richard Altick's influential study *The Shows of London* (1978), circulated as popular commodities throughout the metropolis. These included, among much else, glass copies, wax models of portraits and sculpture, cork models of the most important churches and ruins of Italy, and needlework copies of paintings by Raphael and others. Despite their very different nature, these objects and the venues associated with them were manifestations of the cultural prestige attached to Old Masters. Altick writes,

> The reasons for this abiding enthusiasm for works of art portrayed in extraneous materials lay deep in the collective aesthetic sense of the British public, which was as yet almost totally inexperienced in the appreciation of original art. [...] It was accepted as a matter of genteel dogma that Old Masters, as well as the most popular recent and contemporary British artists, were "great". […] It was the subject of the picture, enveloped in the vague aura of its "greatness", not its artistry, that counted, and this could be preserved in copies in whatever substance was chosen, no matter how cruelly the original's inimitable qualities were sacrificed. [...] However misguided the impulse was, these crude imitations of pictures catered to a subliminal craving for aesthetic experience. Corrupted though the average onlooker's response was by sentimental or moral considerations and by admiration for mere mechanical skill, these copies (along with increasingly accessible engravings) represented for a long time the limits of most Londoners' experience of art.[21]

These copies of Old Masters, displayed in the many new kinds of venues, stimulated, rather than satisfied, the desire for visual culture. Yet original artwork would soon become more widely accessible as a direct result of the ensuing wars with France.[22]

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20 William H. Galperin, *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins Press, 1993), pp. 34-71. Francis Haskell, *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 60-67 and pp. 144-155.

21 Altick, *The Shows of London*, pp. 400-403.

22 See, Ann Bermingham, 'Urbanity and the Spectacle of Art' in *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840*, ed. by James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.151-176 (p. 166); and, C.P. Brand, *Italy and the English Romantics: The Italianate Fashion in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 138.

Art, Napoleon and National Prestige

In the aftershock of the French Revolution, French aristocrats came to London, many of them bringing their art with them. Although there were many commercially successful displays of high quality Old Masters throughout the 1790s, the Duc d'Orléans's collection was by far the most important. In his *Rediscoveries in Art* (1976), Haskell states that this was 'the finest collection in private hands anywhere in the world at the time'[23] and the British acquisition of it meant that they were finally able to culturally compete with the rest of Europe. With hopes of restoring the French crown, the Duc d'Orléans sold his collection to English buyers in two parts. The Northern School was bought by Thomas Moore Slade and displayed in Pall Mall for several months in 1793. The Italian and French Schools however were to have the most impact. These were sold in 1798 to a syndicate of three English noblemen – Lord Carlisle, Lord Gower and the Duke of Bridgewater – for £43,000. Each chose some works for himself, while the rest were auctioned for a profit. However, before they were dispersed, the most significant pictures were displayed together from Boxing Day 1798 until the end of the following July. The London dealer who had negotiated the sale, Michael Bryan, displayed 138 out of 296 pictures in his chambers in Pall Mall. A lack of space forced him to rent an additional hall in the Strand. This highly successful commercial enterprise included separate catalogues issued for each hang, an admission price of half a crown and a series of commissioned engravings available for purchase. Although there were some negative reactions to the exhibitions – including complaints that the pictures were dirty or appeared cold, and that the Lyceum lacked good near-by shopping venues – the Orleans collection radically altered the experience of art and collecting in Britain, for aristocrats and bourgeois viewers alike. In *Rediscoveries in Art*, Haskell explains,

> The impact of the Orleans sale – and of many similar ones in London during this unsettled period – was dazzling in the possibilities it opened up [...]. That

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23 Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France* (London: Phaidon, 1976), pp. 24-26 (p. 25). For more information on the history and impact of the Orleans and similar collections, see the following: Altick, *The Shows of London*, pp. 103-105; Cecil Gould, *Trophy of Conquest: The Musée Napoléon and the Creation of the Louvre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), pp. 16-17; Bruce Haley, *Living Forms: Romantics and the Monumental Figure* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003), pp. 84-85; Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 22-29; and Jonah Siegel, *Desire and Excess: The Nineteenth-Century Culture of Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 168-169. For the price fluctuations of Old Masters, see Volume Two of Gerald Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste: the Rise and Fall of Picture Prices, 1760-1960*, 3 vols (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1961-1970).

the nobility and gentry could now decorate their houses in the same style as the aristocrats of Rome, Venice, and Genoa on whom they had called during their Grand Tours would have seemed unimaginable only ten years earlier. Suddenly it became possible – almost easy if the money was available – and as the meal was digested the appetite grew. Flocks of agents, dealers, unsuccessful artists, and adventurers of all kinds descended like vultures on Italy to take their pickings from the resident nobility [...]. For more than a decade it seemed as if the whole of Europe [...] was involved in a single vast campaign of speculative art dealing. [...] Masterpiece after masterpiece arrived in London in an apparently endless flow, and the process came to be looked on as natural.[24]

Suddenly, instead of only viewing embroidered or engraved copies of famous works, eager audiences were exposed to a large number of original works. Although many were at first displayed in auction houses, which like the Royal Academy charged an admission, connoisseurship, curatorship and criticism developed rapidly. Within a few decades, Britain moved from having virtually no visual culture to becoming a world leader in the arts, with a free national gallery. Especially important is the fact that what had been impossible even for aristocrats before the French Revolution, was now available to the middle classes. Although not everyone could afford to buy an original painting, both men and women could now participate in the culture of art in a variety of ways, including print collecting, gallery-going, drawing classes and by consuming the new critical essays in periodicals.[25]

Across the Channel, in August 1793, the Louvre Palace was opened as a museum, displaying works from what had been the royal collection. Due to structural problems it was closed from 1796 until 1801. When it re-opened, it was re-named the Musée Napoleon and exhibited the spoils of Napoleon's campaigns abroad, including his Belgian Campaign of 1794 and his Italian Campaigns, begun in 1796.[26] Hale writes that, through a combination of illegal political treaties and private bargaining, 'the wars sliced through the roots of nearly every collection on the Continent'.[27] While Belgium suffered great losses through random confiscation, Napoleon's looting of the Italian states was intensively planned and thoroughly executed. As Christopher Johns and others have documented, during Napoleon's first campaign in Italy in the late spring of 1796, at least twenty paintings were included in the armistice terms with Parma and Modena. More art was demanded in Milan, Bologna and Cento. By the Treaty of Tolentino, which was signed by Pope Pius VI on 19 February 1797, Napoleon was allowed to take over a hundred

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24 Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art*, p. 26. See also Haskell, *Ephemeral Museum*, pp. 28-29.
25 In *The Shows of London*, Altick argues that the exhibitions of the Orleans collection 'were a major milestone in the art education of the upper- and middle- class public, who now could steep themselves as had never been possible in the idiom of schools other than the native one' (p. 103).
26 For more on Napoleon's Belgian Campaigns see Gould, *Trophy of Conquest*, pp. 30-42.
27 J.R. Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance: The Growth of Interest in History and Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 114.

paintings, busts, vases and statues from Rome, along with five hundred manuscripts from the Vatican vault. Under the direction of hand-picked connoisseurs, the Napoleonic army took well over one thousand paintings, statues and other cultural objects, and until Waterloo, Napoleon continued intermittently to take art works from Italy.[28] Napoleon's Musée project made previously private paintings known and available to the whole of Europe. During the short-lived Peace of Amiens (1802-1803), there was, according to Gould, a 'general exodus' from London. Fashionable visitors to the Louvre included artists, writers and politicians, amongst them Benjamin West, Henry Fuseli, Turner, Flaxman, Samuel Rogers, Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Charles James Fox.[29] Many, however, disheartened by the state of Paris and its citizens, were shocked that Italian art was now in French hands. When the war started again, the art became a central, ideological issue. After Napoleon's 1814 abdication, the Treaty of Tolentino would become, according to Johns, 'the greatest obstacle to the repatriation' of these art works. It was felt that overturning the treaty would jeopardize the allies' chances of getting the French people to accept the re-appointed Bourbon monarchy. Yet Napoleon's return and the victory at Waterloo, Johns argues, turned the British and Prussian 'attitude from persuasion to vindictiveness'.[30] The most important diplomatic and foreign support for the repatriation process, which was led by Canova, came from the British sponsors, including William Hamilton, Wellington, Castlereagh and the Prince Regent.[31] Although much of the work did not return to Italy and can still be seen in the Louvre's collection today, the ties between the British and the Italians were strengthened.

The Royal Academy actively sought to challenge the French School's position as contemporary leader of European art and the importation of bona fide works made London the European capital of culture. William Buchanan (1777-1864), a London-based Scottish lawyer turned art dealer and collector, was keenly interested in the private art collections of Britain and how they had been acquired. Writing a decade after Waterloo, his *Memoirs of Painting* (1824) describes the importation of the Orleans collection as a major 'era' in Britain's history.[32] Through his descriptions of art, Buchanan celebrates Britain's political

28 Christopher M.S. Johns, *Antonio Canova and the Politics of Patronage in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 40. See also Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance*, pp. 112-117; Gould, *Trophy of Conquest*, pp. 46-48; and, Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth- Century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 116-123.
29 Gould, *Trophy of Conquest*, pp. 80-85.
30 Johns, *Canova and the Politics of Patronage*, p. 172.
31 Johns, *Canova and the Politics of Patronage*, p. 176.
32 William Buchanan, *Memoirs of Painting, with a Chronological History of the Importation of Pictures by the Great Masters into England since the French Revolution* (London: Ackermann, 1824), p. 11.

standing in Europe and the opportunities this has provided for its citizens. 'During the conflicting storms which ravaged the continent of Europe', he writes,

> Great Britain alone presented a bulwark to which foreign nations looked with awe and respect; and although at war with her politically, they still confided in her honour and in her strength: they transmitted their moneyed wealth to her public funds, and their collections of art to private individuals, either for protection, or to be disposed of for their use. The collections of Monsieur de Calonne, and of the Duke of Orleans, with many selections of the highest importance from the palaces of Rome, Florence, Bologna, and Genoa, which had escaped the plunder of an invading army, were imported into this country, and roused an emulation and a taste for the acquisition of works of Art, which had been almost dormant in England since the days of its illustrious patron and protector, Charles the First.[33]

Instead of France's parasitic plundering of art works and destruction of nations, Britain had been entrusted with the care of Italy's material and cultural wealth. Buchanan presents these national characteristics as the primary reasons why Britain is entitled to care for the shared cultural productions of Europe. In the face of France's rash wars, Britain's steadfastness and honour has won the respect and trust of its European neighbours as well as its art.

One important means by which a knowledge of art was disseminated throughout the nation was the number and popularity of guides to private galleries. Often the guides present these collections as belonging to the nation or as attesting to the national character or standing. In his illustrated *British Galleries of Painting and Sculpture* (1824), Charles Westmacott argues that the fine arts are as essential to the nation's honour as the martial victories at Trafalgar and Waterloo, and that individual collectors bring prestige to the whole nation:

> Not the luxuriant crown of victory, studded with ten thousand budding honours, the grateful tribute of a nation's voice, can reflect more lustre on the name of a Nelson or a Wellington, than does the enviable laurel wreath, breathing a balmy odour and brightening in perpetual freshness, which decorates the revered recollections of those who have contributed to the glory, and elevated character of their country, by a liberal advancement and promotion of the fine arts. Such is the halo that must ever illumine the name of Angerstein—the man whose correct judgment and exquisite taste brought together the admirable selection before us, to the entire exclusion of inferior productions.[34]

The immigrant-entrepreneur, John Julius Angerstein, whose collection would form the nucleus of the National Gallery, is celebrated among important martial heroes. As a self-

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33 Buchanan, *Memoirs of Painting*, pp. xiii-xv.
34 Charles Molloy Westmacott, *British Galleries of Painting and Sculpture, Comprising a General Historical and Critical Catalogue with Separate Notices of Every Work of Fine Art in the Principal Collections* (London: Sherwood, Hones & Co, 1824), p. 65.

made man, well-known and respected for his art store and publications, Angerstein provided an ideal model for middle-class viewers, both for his personal prestige and his national standing. Westmacott's grouping of Nelson, Wellington and Angerstein highlights the deeply held belief that the arts conferred glory on a nation, while raising the character of its individual citizens. Increasingly throughout the nineteenth century, British national confidence relied on this association of cultural and military prestige.

The British School of Art

It was widely believed that the presence in Britain of fine examples of Italian art would help to foster the native, British school of art with the result that the British school would reach new levels of achievement and equal or surpass what other Europeans schools had managed to accomplish. The question of whether the arts were progressive sparked a fierce debate and was closely linked to the question of the relationship between the acquisition of technical skill and the acquisition of taste; yet even those who denied that the British school would be improved by the presence in the country of examples of the finest Italian achievement still insisted on the importance of Italian art in Britain. It is of paramount importance that the debate as to whether or not the arts were progressive pivoted on the Italian school which was considered to have reached the pinnacle of perfection.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the British were interested in the artefacts of lost or primitive cultures. In his *A Journey to Rome and Naples* (1818), the then RA-student Henry Sass, stresses that the fine arts are markers for future generations of the greatness of a civilisation. Yet, he asks, '[t]ake these away, and what knowledge should we have of them, farther than what we have of the Scythians, Huns, or any other race of barbarians?'.[35] Throughout his travel narrative, Sass continually asserts that Britain is the contemporary leader of Europe, commercially, politically, militarily and artistically. Yet, there is still something lacking:

> I again repeat, the English school is superior, in every branch of the Fine Arts, to any now in existence, and that it has all the sterling requisites to make it really great. With the cartoons of Raffaelle, and the Elgin marbles, we may defy the world, having in them every thing necessary for the formation of our taste, and for the correction of our judgment.[36]

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35 Henry Sass, *A Journey to Rome and Naples, Performed in 1817: Giving an Account of the Present State of Society in Italy; and Containing Observations on the Fine Arts* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1818), p. xxix.
36 Sass, *A Journey to Rome and Naples*, p. lv.

Sass asserts that the British school is the highest *contemporary* European school of art, yet admits, somewhat reluctantly, that to reach and surpass the heights of the Italian school, it must take as its models the highest examples of art in existence – the Elgin Marbles and Raphael's *Cartoons*. Luckily for Britain, it owned these pre-eminent works, which, Sass insists, 'are models for our imitation, superior to any that Italy or France possesses'.[37] It was hoped that the acquisition of authentic, original pieces of art – including the Elgin Marbles, the Orleans and similar collections – would provide the best models for British students to work from, thereby strengthening Britain's native school. Indeed, the British Institute, also called the British Gallery, was founded on this very idea, and provided young artists and the British public with two annual hangs of both British and Italian art (lent by private connoisseurs). Importantly, Sass minimizes the foreign influence by stressing the natural talent, the 'sterling requisites' and the thinking qualities of Britain's artists and increasingly discerning public.

While Sass was particularly interested in the advancement of the British School, other writers stressed that art improved the nation through improving its citizens' collective taste. Buchanan, for example, writes that before the Orleans Collection,

> the prevailing taste and fashion had been for the acquisition of pictures of the Flemish and Dutch schools; this likewise had for a long period been the rage in France. These were much more easily to be acquired, and came more frequently before the eye of the public than works of the Italian masters; it might, therefore, be deemed somewhat singular to see with what avidity the present collection was seized on by the amateurs of painting in general; and it will not be deemed surprising, that, from that time, a new turn was given to the taste for collecting in this country. Subsequent importation of the works of the Italian masters, gave an opportunity of improving that taste, and brought the English collections, generally, to a standard of consequence, which they could not boast of before that period.[38]

Importantly, Buchanan distinguishes Britain's citizens from their French counterparts, whose taste stagnated after the Revolution despite their acquisition of Italian art. In the span of a few decades, Britain had become the European leader in taste. It had moved away from following French fashions and collecting based on convenience, to confidently amassing the highest quality art available. Yet other writers were not so sure, and only had to look across the Channel to see that perhaps the most glorious days in the production of the Fine Arts had passed. In his *Italian Schools of Painting with Observations on the Present State of the Art* (1820), the Rev. John Thomas James argues that, despite a

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37 Sass, *A Journey to Rome and Naples,* p. li.
38 Buchanan, *Memoirs of Painting*, p. 22.

widespread increase in state patronage throughout Europe,

> the produce of the modern school has been uniformly meagre of talent, and void of any power of exciting interest. We see, indeed, with surprise, that even the French school, who had for many years the pillage of Italy and Germany at their command, have fallen far short of the expectation that was formed of them, and appear to have been encumbered rather than assisted by their treasure. So far from improving the standard of national taste, they certainly have not equalled the merits of their immediate predecessors; and the connoisseur discovers a degree of excellence in the day of Louis XIV., that will in vain be sought for among the best works of the *siècle de Napoleon*. On every side to which we turn our eyes, the same unvarying stamp of mediocrity is apparent: the blaze of genius has shone forth in ages past, to re-appear no more; and we are left to bewail, in true Homeric guise, the lost power and strength of our forefathers.[39]

Although James laments the current mediocrity of the European school, he implicitly endorses the idea of a shared European culture and cultural past. Access to Italian masters might not produce or improve the quality of contemporary painters, but it did make possible the practice of self-cultivation. It might not produce a new generation of artists, but it could produce a new generation of connoisseurs.

The essayist William Hazlitt, ever loyal to Napoleon, and, more ardently, to his own memory of visiting the Musée Napoléon as a young artist, viewed the Italian campaigns and their after-effects as both a confirmation of the Revolution's promise of Liberty and a testament to the power of the highest art. In his *Life of Napoleon* (1828)*,* Hazlitt describes Bonaparte's dealings with the Parma States:

> It was on this occasion also that Napoleon exacted a contribution of works of art to be sent to the Museum at Paris, being the first instance of the kind that occurs in modern history. Parma furnished twenty pictures chosen by the French commissioners, among others the famous St. Jerome of Correggio. The Duke offered 80,000*l.* to be allowed to keep this picture; the opinion of the army-agents was decidedly in favour of acceptance of the money. The General-in-Chief said, there would very soon be an end of the two millions of francs; while the possession of such a masterpiece by the city of Paris would remain a proud distinction to that capital, and would produce other *chefs-d'oeuvre* of the same kind.[40]

Unlike his more worldly military advisors, Bonaparte valued the painting more than cash. By creating a public museum for the world, Hazlitt argues that Napoleon recognized the importance of art in elevating the minds of individual men and for the prestige it granted Paris. Most importantly, Napoleon argued that making such masterpieces available to artists would allow the French school to will create its own works of genius. The power of

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39 John Thomas James, *Italian Schools of Painting with Observations on the Present State of the Art* (London: John Murray, 1820), pp. 2-3.
40 William Hazlitt, XIII, 210.

Italian art lay in the perception that it constituted the highest expression of humanity's creative genius. While the acquisition of Correggio's *St. Jerome* was a well-chosen addition to the Emperor's museum, Hazlitt argues that it had not inspired the production of paintings of equal merit. He writes,

> Vain hope! Not a ray of the sentiment or beauty contained in this picture dawned upon a French canvas during the twenty years it remained there, nor ever would to the end of time. A collection of works of art is a noble ornament to a city, and attracts strangers; but works of genius do not beget other works of genius, however they may inspire a taste for them and furnish objects for curiosity and admiration. Correggio, it is said, the author of this inimitable performance, scarcely ever saw a picture. Parma, where his works had been treasured up and regarded with idolatry for nearly three hundred years, had produced no other painter like him.[41]

Neither Paris nor Parma would produce another Correggio, despite his work conferring a 'noble ornament' on both. By extension, it is a vain hope that London or its provinces would produce any rival to the great Italian masters. While optimistic supporters of the Royal Academy would oppose Hazlitt's sentiments, and individual artists, such as Benjamin Robert Haydon, would strive to emulate Italian Renaissance art and Greek models, Hazlitt asserts that Genius is naturally occurring and cannot be cultivated. Yet Hazlitt's continued admiration for Napoleon's Louvre project and his acknowledgement of the potential effects art had on contemporary and future audiences, demonstrate how vitally important Italian art was in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century, even for those who did not believe that it would help foster a British school.

The Ownership of Italian Art

Whether or not the acquisition of Italian Renaissance art might foster a native school, many people believed that Britain and France were best equipped to preserve the Italian artistic heritage. Although curating practices remained relatively undeveloped, Italy was seen by many as far too unstable to properly care for, restore or protect Italy's national treasures. According to Johns, throughout Napoleon's campaigns in Italy and the later repatriation process, French propagandists claimed that art was either being neglected or actively abused in Italy.[42] Furthermore, the treatment of Italy by the French during Napoleon's Empire, led the rest of Europe to view the peninsula 'as a political pawn and a

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41 Hazlitt, xiii, 210.
42 See Johns, *Canova and the Politics of Patronage*, pp. 4-6.

helpless victim to be fleeced without scruples'.[43] After Waterloo, a similar claim would be made by some British collectors who benefited from such a climate. Yet, despite the commodification of art and the commercial nature of these transactions, many honoured those engaged in the trafficking of these works. Henry Sass, for example, chose to characterize people like Lord Elgin and Napoleon as preservers of art:

> We speak of the plunderers of the works of art of the present day,—Elgin, Bonaparte, and others, if plunderers they can be justly called, who only took to preserve, who rescued the finest works of art from the spoliation of barbarians, or the indifference of ignorance, and placed them where they would be valued according to their worth.[44]

Because of the formation of a new coterie of concerned European citizens, Sass can represent the preservation of works of art as an international issue in which all nations share a concern. He urges those who claim to be truly interested in safeguarding the European artistic heritage to recognize the efforts of Elgin and Bonaparte as a necessary step in the process of preserving this fragile heritage. In their degraded political state, Greece and Italy expose art to both active (barbaric attacks) and passive (negligence) forms of destruction. France and Britain, on the other hand, are capable of housing, protecting and truly valuing these works.

In the two decades that Britain was virtually cut off from Italy, both cultures experienced major changes in their social, cultural and political fabric. The political boundaries of the Italian nations were re-drawn again and again, and while the population of major cities like Rome was thinned, and the peninsula's cultural heritage was increasingly despoiled, Britain's own artistic heritage and political identity were strengthened. Protecting Italian art, often from the Italians themselves, became an essential aspect of the British identity as protectors of Liberty. Sass for example, represents contemporary Italians as negligent of these treasures, except when they promise to yield political or monetary benefits. Evidence of negligence even diverts his attention from Raphael's *Stanze* frescoes in the Vatican:

> The chambers of Raffaelle next occupied my attention; and days, weeks, and years, might be advantageously employed in their contemplation and study. But what a lamentable account am I to give of their present state! The most culpable negligence, the blindest indifference, seem to pervade the Papal government. While an outcry has been raised at the statues being removed to France, where they were better seen, and while, with much affected feeling, they have been calling for their restitution, they are permitting such injuries to those fine works which could not be removed, as nothing will repair. The

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43 Johns, *Canova and the Politics of Patronage*, p. 69.
44 Sass, *A Journey to Rome and Naples*, pp. 107-108.

paintings of Raffaelle from the Bible in the Corridore [sic] are almost destroyed by the damp; those in the chambers, from the same cause, are bulged, and project from the walls, (they who know what fresco-painting is, will tremble at this relation;) [...]. The care of such works, is not merely a national concern, but the whole world and posterity are interested in the preservation of these divine performances.[45]

Sass's assertion that his attention might be employed for years in the contemplation of these works contradicts his lament at their neglect. In their present state he cannot comment on their merits, only their deficiencies, or rather the deficiencies of those charged with their upkeep. Sass aligns himself, and by extension the British, with the French: those works that had been removed 'were better seen' in Paris, while those that were allowed to remain in Italy have been 'almost destroyed' by the the papacy's mismanagement. While the Papacy has presented itself as a victim, the true victims were the art works that remained in its care and could not be removed.

Not everyone agreed with Sass's judgment that Britain should assume a role as the disinterested preserver of Italian art. For many, the ideological investment they held in Italy as the land of arts, and the drive to assert a cultural superiority over the French, meant that they continued to celebrate Italy's artistic achievements and to align themselves with this heritage in various ways. One of the highest values of travel was that it allowed the viewer to see art works and ruins in their native habitat. Importantly though, art works, as Jonah Siegel points out, were becoming less closely bound to the specific places they were once created for – whether that be a church, palace or a specific location.[46] A prime argument, used by Byron and others, against buying the Elgin Marbles was that doing so decreased the value of these artefacts whose worth was intrinsically linked with the setting and culture from which they came.[47] Indeed, for those who viewed people like Bonaparte and Elgin as plunderers rather than preservers, the value and power of an art object was largely determined by its organic history. In the age of museums cultural artefacts' ties to their places of origin were being loosened, but a counter-argument claimed that those truly interested in the preservation of works of art would actively resist their removal from the places and countries for which they were designed. The true preserver of art recognizes that art is an essential aspect of the production of national and cultural identity, so that the removal of works of art from Italy diminishes Italy's sense of its own nationhood. Although Felicia Hemans never travelled to Italy, she celebrates the return of art to Italy as

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45 Sass, *A Journey to Rome and Naples*, pp. 119-120.
46 Jonah Siegel, *Desire and Excess*, pp. 173- 175.
47 Lord Byron, 'Letter to John Murray, Esq.' in *The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. by Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 120-183.

the means to reclaim art's full power. In her poem, 'The Restoration of the Art Works to Italy' (1816), Hemans declares that these divinely inspired paintings and statues 'shall restore/ One beam of splendour to [their] native shore'.[48] Unlike Sass who felt that the Louvre had presented Italy's treasures to their best advantage Hemans strikingly argues that Italian art's power to inspire viewers had faded on foreign shores:

> Oh! ne'er, in other climes, though many an eye
> Dwelt on your charms, in beaming ecstasy;
> Ne'er was it yours to bid the soul expand
> With thoughts so mighty, dreams so boldly grand,
> As in that realm, where each faint breeze's moan
> Seems a low dirge for glorious ages gone (105-110).

In a foreign land the works of art appealed only to the eyes, but seen in their native land they appeal to the soul. Oddly, Hemans suggests that Italy's decay serves only to increase the aesthetic quality of its works of art, by casting their beauty as elegiac. But her insistence is clear that to truly appreciate the highest manifestations of art, the British viewer must make a pilgrimage to Italy.

Britain and the Catholicism of Italian Art

Despite the insatiable desire to *possess* Italian Renaissance art, and regardless of whether the art was viewed in Italy, Britain or France, there were some aspects of the Italian school which were difficult to accommodate within British culture, most especially the depiction of physical suffering so central to a Catholic aesthetic. The depiction of bodily suffering seemed incongruous with the principles of ideal beauty that defined Enlightenment taste. The emphasis in Italian art on the representation of the Virgin and of saints was also antipathetic to a Protestant sensibility. The unease that British, Protestant viewers felt in front of these sorts of paintings needs to be understood within a wider context. British national identity in the eighteenth century was forged through a dialectical engagement with the Catholic (often Italian) other. Responses to all things Italian in the period were deeply rooted in the long-standing rhetoric of the north-south divide and in the Protestant fear of becoming corrupted by Catholicism. This dialectic, played out in the poetry, fiction

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48 Felicia Hemans, 'The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy', *The Works of Mrs. Hemans; With a Memoir of Her Life, by her Sister,* 7 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood; London: Thomas Cadell, 1839), II, 148-166 in *Literature Online* <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk> [accessed 25 April 2009], lines 101-102. Future line numbers quoted directly in text.

and travel writing of the period, gave readers a literary framework within which to encounter Italian visual texts. British encounters with Italian art were inevitably inflected, for example, by a familiarity with the Italian villains of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of the Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797). Yet the tension between Catholic art and Protestant sensibility was not usually resolved by a simple appeal to the religious faith of the viewer.

Although not written by a British author, Germaine de Staël's *Corinne, ou l'Italie* (1807) pivots around the Anglo-Italian relationship, and became immensely popular in Britain. The novel made a strong impact on the manner in which British writers, readers, travellers and art viewers reacted to Italy, its people, and its culture. The novel remained strongly influential for several decades. Set between 1794 and 1803, it was also marvellously current. Staël's readers first see the improvisatrice as she is walking up the steps to be crowned at the Capitol. She is dressed like Domenichino's Sibyl while her pleasingly plump figure is likened to a Greek statue.[49] As the novel progresses, readers realize that Corinne's life, like Italy, is infused with art. Both her homes – in Rome and nearby Tivoli – are filled with paintings, musical instruments and statues. While her sitting room in Rome has more contemporary art work, her larger country house is filled with works by Old Masters, the names and descriptions of which are included in the author's accompanying notes. The novel was avidly read and quoted by many; Mary Shelley, for instance, read the book three times between 1815 and 1818. Most importantly, it was recommended by John Chetwode Eustace in his extremely popular travel guide, *A Classical Tour Through Italy* (1813). He writes,

> The best guide or rather companion which the traveller can take with him, is *Corinne ou l'Italie*, a work of singular ingenuity and eloquence. In it *Madame de Staël* does ample justice to the Italian character; though a Protestant she speaks of the religion of Italy with reverence, and treats even superstition itself with indulgence. She describes the climate, the beauties, the monuments of that privileged country with glowing animation, Musæo contingens cuncta lepore; she raises the reader above the common level of thought, and inspires him with that lofty temper of mind, without which we can neither discover nor relish the great and the beautiful in art or in nature.[50]

Corinne is not only a guide, but a sympathetic and knowledgeable travel companion. The *improvisatrice* provided an important, yet difficult and often contradictory template for

49 Germaine de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, trans. and ed. by Sylvia Raphael (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 23.
50 John Chetwode Eustace, *A Classical Tour Through Italy. An. MDCCCII*, 3rd edn, 4 vols (London: J. Mawman, 1815), I, 30-31n. This was originally published in 1813 as a two-volume work called *Tour through Italy*.

later, especially female, writers, such as L.E.L and Hemans.[51] In a lengthy section, Corinne and her lover Oswald, Lord Nelvil debate what subjects are appropriate in painting, and Staël attributes their disagreement to 'the differences between nations, climates, and religions'.[52] Corinne argues that religious themes are the most appropriate subjects for painting because the medium 'indicates the mysteries of reflection and resignation, and gives voice to the immortal soul through transient colour' (143), while Oswald believes that paintings should only depict 'tragic scenes or [...] the most touching poetic fictions so that all the pleasures of the imagination and the heart might be combined' (145). He fervently denies the propriety of graphic scenes of martyrdom and moments of excessive rapture. He argues,

> I cannot bear to see in [the visual arts] the portrayal of physical suffering. My strongest objection to Christian subjects in painting [...] is the painful feeling aroused by the depiction of blood, wounds, and torture, even though the victims are inspired by the noblest enthusiasms. Philoctetes is perhaps the only tragic subject in which physical ills may be allowed. But those cruel ills are surrounded by so many poetic situations! They are caused by Hercules' arrows; Aesculapius' son is to cure them. Indeed, this wound is almost inseparable from the moral resentment it creates in the person afflicted, and cannot arouse any feeling of disgust. But in Raphael's superb picture of the Transfiguration, the possessed boy's face is an unpleasant image, with none of the dignity of the arts. They ought to reveal to us the charm of grief and the melancholy of prosperity; they ought to portray the ideal of human destiny in every individual situation. Nothing torments the imagination more than bleeding words or nervous convulsions. In such pictures it is impossible not to look for, and at the same time not to fear, the exact imitation of reality. What pleasure would we derive from art which consists solely of this imitation? From the moment it aspires only to resemble nature, such art is either more horrible or less beautiful than nature itself. (146)

Oswald approves of tragic subjects because they make a direct appeal to the viewer's moral sense. Given Oswald's education it is unsurprising that he finds classical suffering more acceptable than Catholic suffering. Philoctetes is an acceptable artistic subject because representations of Philoctetes can claim the authority of Sophocles. On the other hand, Raphael's too accurate depiction of 'nervous compulsions' is inconsistent with a properly ideal representation of a divine miracle. In *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour* (1999), Chloe Chard demonstrates that the aversion to scenes depicting physical suffering was a characteristic component of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel writing. From the late eighteenth century, writers deplored 'the narratives of blood and suffering that such works represent', locating in these paintings an 'excess of effect' which 'impinges too

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51 'Improvisation' as an ideal and a practice was not solely a female pursuit. See Angela Esterhammer, *Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
52 Staël, *Corinne*, pp.143-147 (p. 143). Page numbers will hereafter be given in the text.

uncomfortably on the imagination of the beholder'.[53] Oswald maintains that the Raphael is a 'superb picture', but the boy's face physically contorted with pain hinders Oswald from experiencing it in the state of mind which *should* come from viewing such a work. A painting on a classical or literary theme that prompts ennobling moral reflections such as James Barry's *Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos* (1770) which is housed in Bologna's *Pinacoteca* is, by contrast, a safely pleasurable experience that does not threaten to prompt in its viewer an uncomfortably physical response.[54]

Behind this passage, lies Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's influential essay *Laocoon, or On the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766), which separates the sister arts by distinguishing the ways in which each expresses pain, beauty and ugliness most appropriately.[55] He begins his essay by taking issue with Winckelmann's idea that the facial expressions of statues should always be depicted as calm if they are to impart to the viewer a sense of the figure's soul and character. Lessing quotes Winckelmann's opening paragraphs to the fourth section ('Expression') of *Thoughts on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* (1755), which, like *Corinne*, invokes the story of Philoctetes to argue that representations of a suffering hero will inspire the viewer to imagine himself enduring pain in a similarly noble way. Yet it is precisely Winckelmann's use of Philoctetes which Lessing takes issue with. He argues that Sophocles's *verbal* depiction of Philoctetes's cries of pain resounds throughout the theatre, as the cries themselves would have on the desert island, while the sculptor of the Laocoon in the Vatican had to modify the priest's expression in order for it to become consistent with the aesthetic demands of sculpture. The sculptor cannot imitate the cries of bodily pain in the same way that the poet dramatizes these cries.[56] The sculptor of the Laocoon, Lessing argues,

> was striving after the highest beauty, under the given circumstances of bodily pain. This, in its full deforming violence, it was not possible to unite with that. He was obliged, therefore, to abate, to lower it, to tone down cries to sighing; not because cries betrayed an ignoble soul, but because they disfigure the face in an unpleasing manner. Let one only, in imagination, open wide the mouth in Laocoon, and judge! Let him shriek, and see! It was a form that inspired pity because it showed beauty and pain together; now it has become an ugly, a loathsome form, from which one gladly turns away one's face, because the aspect of pain excites discomfort without

53 Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 93-95.
54 For more on physical sensations associated with viewing paintings, see Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour*, p. 164.
55 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, 'Laocoon or On the Limits of Painting and Poetry', in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, Goethe*, ed. by H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 58-133.
56 Lessing, 'Laocoon', p. 63.

the beauty of the suffering subject changing this discomfort into the sweet feeling of compassion.[57]

In order to gain the viewer's sympathy, the sculptor must make the decision not to express the full extent of the pain that Laocoon is experiencing. Yet the poet, having already established the noble character of Laocoon in the course of his narrative, is able to depict Laocoon's cries of pain because they speak not to his character 'but purely to his unendurable suffering'.[58] The face of the possessed boy in the *Transfiguration* commands disproportionate attention, disrupting Lord Nelvil's ability to appreciate the painting and its meaning. The connection between the young victim and his experience of 'the noblest enthusiasms' is broken by the disgust his face inspires in the viewer, and the *Transfiguration*, at least for Oswald, is reduced to that one expression. Staël had a first-hand knowledge of Lessing's essay that few British connoisseurs could claim, but by lending Lessing's arguments to Nelvil, Staël suggests, it is possible to understand Lessing as exploring an unease characteristic of northern Protestant responses to the art of the Catholic south.

The otherness of many Catholic paintings had to be overcome or avoided by invoking aesthetic criteria that allowed art a value independent of its content. On his visit to Bologna's Pinacoteca in 1818, Percy Bysshe Shelley viewed many of the finest works of the Bologna School, including those by artists such as Guido Reni and the Caracci brothers which had only recently been returned. Shelley enjoyed many paintings or aspects of paintings by Reni, but he found one painting difficult to contemplate. He writes to fellow classicist Thomas Love Peacock,

> There was a "Murder of the Innocents" also by Guido finely coloured & with much fine expression, but the subject is very horrible & it seemed deficient in strength – at least you require the highest ideal energy, the most poetical & exalted conception of the subject to reconcile you to such a contemplation.[59]

Unlike the Laocoon's creator, Reni has not lessened the physical pain or emotional suffering of either the children or the mothers depicted. There is nothing which mediates between the viewer and the subject to enable the viewer to safely engage with the painting. Without the 'highest ideal energy', that is without the ability to see through the representation of the bodies to the painting's ideal significance, the viewer must turn away in pain and disgust. In an attempt to reconcile the artist's fame with the painting's

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57 Lessing, 'Laocoon', pp. 65-66.
58 Lessing, 'Laocoon', p. 69.
59 *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), ɪɪ, 50.

distasteful subject, Shelley inhabits simultaneously an iconoclastic and iconolatrous stance. On the one hand he notes the 'fine expression' and colouring; on the other, he is disgusted by both the subject and its execution. He is caught between looking and not being able to look.

For Shelley, the artist and the viewer might together generate an ideal energy that has the power to break through the barriers set up by religion, culture and historical period. In the Pinacoteca, Shelley also saw a striking painting by Guercino:

> We saw Domenichino, Albano, Guercino, Elizabetta Sarranni. The two former – remember I dont [sic] pretend to taste – I cannot admire, of the latter there are some beautiful Madonnas; Guercino had many pictures which they said were very fine, I dare say it was true for the strength & complication of his figures made my head turn round. One indeed was certainly powerful. It was the representation of the founder of the Carthusians exercising his austerities in the desart with a child as his attendant kneeling beside him at the altar. On another altar stood a skull and a crucifix, and around were the rocks & trees of the wilderness. I never saw such a figure as this fellow. His face was wrinkled like a dried snakes skin & drawn in long hard lines. His very hands were wrinkled. He looked like an animated mummy. He was clothed in a loose dress of death-coloured flannel, such as you might fancy a shroud might be after it had wrapt a corpse a month or two. It had a yellow putrified ghastly hue which it cast on all the objects around, so that the hands & face of the Carthusian & his companion were jaundiced in this sepulchral glimmer. Why write books against religion, when one may hang up such pictures – but the world either will not or cannot see. [*In Mary's copy and hand only*: The gloomy effect of this was softened and at the same time its sublimity diminished by the figure of the Virgin and child in the sky looking down with approbation on the monk and a beautiful flying figure of an angel.].[60]

Shelley's description of the near-rotting San Bruno also recalls Lessing's essay, in which he uses the Resurrections of Christ and Lazarus to register the potential of art works to arouse disgust.[61] Shelley's verbal rendition of his experience conveys the intensity of his disgust. For the atheist Shelley the saint's 'putrified ghastly hue' should warn viewers against the inherent dangers of organized religion. His assertion that the world is blind to this warning would seem to suggest that, contrary to Corinne's argument, religious paintings also require verbal explanations. Mary Shelley's additional note to her husband's description, further demonstrates that the appreciation of Italian Catholic art required the northern, non-Catholic viewer to cultivate a particular, even a selective, mode of looking at the painting. In particular it required an attention to aesthetic value that displaced or subordinated the painting's religious content.

The popularity of *Corinne* amongst novel readers, and amongst female readers in

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60 Shelley, *Letters*, II, 52.
61 Lessing, 'Laocoon', pp. 132-133.

particular, is one indication of how in these years an interest in Italian art spread beyond the aristocratic class. Art was beginning to be seen to belong to the world, not to belong behind the closed cabinet doors of aristocrats. In her visit to Palazzo Pitti, the narrator of Anna Jameson's *Diary of an Ennuyée* (1826) displays her expertise both as a traveller and as a connoisseur of art:

> Every good catholic has a portrait of the Virgin hung at the head of his bed; partly as an object of devotion, and partly to scare away the powers of evil: and for this purpose the Grand Duke has suspended by his bed-side one of the most beautiful of Raffaelle's Madonnas. Truly, I admire the good taste of his piety, though it is rather selfish thus to appropriate such a gem, when the merest daub would answer the same purpose. It was only by secret bribery, I obtained a peep at this picture; as the room is not publicly shewn.[62]

In Jameson's estimation, even the Grand Duke of Tuscany is blindly devoted to his superstitious religion. He is only distinguished from every other 'good catholic' because his rank allows him to own a Raphael rather than the 'merest daub'. The painting would of course have been a family inheritance rather than a purchase. The Duke's possession of it is a mark of his aristocratic status. But Jameson opens up an additional question about the nature of the value that the painting can claim. Does its value come from depicting the mother of God or because it is from the hand of Raphael? Jameson asserts her own authority by her knowledge of the painting's whereabouts (the room is not 'publicly shewn'); through the dryly ironic commentary on the Duke's own claims to artistic knowledge ('Truly, I admire the good taste of his piety'); by her ability to successfully bribe her way into the room; and by the manner in which, engrossed by the painting, she ignores all the other furnishings of the bedroom. Jameson is only able to 'peep' at the painting yet in doing so she triumphs over the *ancien regime*. Her entry into the room is itself a miniature demonstration of the displacement of the aristocracy by the middle class as the authoritative custodians of aesthetic value. Although she cannot discuss the painting at length, her promise that the Duke's bedroom contains one of Raphael's best pictures *and* that it is possible to view it if one is willing to follow her example, provides a model for her female readers which encourages them to exercise their right and desire to view art. Jameson's view that for the Duke himself 'the merest daub would answer the same purpose' refuses to grant art the instrumental value as an aid to devotion that it is still granted by a Catholic such as the Duke. For her, the value of the painting is not as a representation of the Madonna but as a demonstration of the genius of the artist. As Jane Stabler has suggested, a

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62 Anna Jameson, *Diary of an Ennuyée* (London: Henry Colburn, 1826), p. 126.

troubled response to the restoration of the Bourbons and the new empire
building of the Holy Alliance may be seen to be influencing the aesthetic
perception of the liberal intellectuals in exile in Italy. As they stand before
Catholic depictions of the universe and human history, [...] they depose the
image of [God] for more sympathetic and affective forms of creative power.[63]

According to Stabler, this creative potential endows writers who would otherwise be
excluded from the nation state on the basis of gender or radical politics with a new
language in which to overcome these barriers.[64]

Florence, Liverpool, and the Merchant Prince

The desire to view and discuss Italian Renaissance art despite a Protestant resistance to
many of its favourite topics attests to the cultural prestige that a familiarity with Italian art
conferred. The popularity of exhibitions of Renaissance art and the flood of post-Waterloo
tourists travelling to Italy demonstrate how significant this art had become, not just for the
nation and its aristocrats, but increasingly for the middle class. Possession of examples of
Italian art had until recently been a means of asserting national prestige or aristocratic
status. Expertise in Italian art, or what we might call connoisseurship, was increasingly
recognised as an avenue that allowed the middle class to partake in and modify existing
social structures. Literature played a major role in disseminating art to this wider public,
often providing templates for its assimilation.[65] In their accounts of their encounters with
Italian Renaissance art, writers, regardless of their own background, began to claim an
intellectual, rather than social, superiority.

    Although he never travelled to Italy, the radical, writer, historian, and lawyer turned
banker, William Roscoe (1753- 1831) set a precedent for the way in which Italian art and
culture could be used to create a public persona. While this Liverpool native is perhaps

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63 Jane Stabler, 'Subduing the Senses? British Romantic Period Travelers and Italian art', *Nineteenth-
Century Contexts*, 26.4 (2004), 320- 327 (p. 324).

64 Stabler, 'Subduing the Senses', p. 321. A similar point is made by Christopher Rovee, who highlights the
tensions between the 'increased social inclusivity of cultural institutions such as the gallery, the theater,
and the novel' and an 'ongoing lack of middle-class political representation' [*Imagining the Gallery: The
Social Body of British Romanticism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 4].

65 See for example, James Buzard, who argues that literature injected 'a much-needed charge of novelty and
excitement in the European tour. Scenes, situations, and characters from these texts became the
appropriatable, exchangeable markers in a cultural economy in which "travellers" competed for pre-
eminence by displaying their imaginative capacities and by attacking that always available enemy, the
lowly tourist. The new models were well suited to a competitive cultural market. By emphasizing the
inchoate standard of "enthusiasm" or power of feeling, they made travel seem at once open and exclusive:
those who felt they had satisfactorily demonstrated their responsive capacities would also feel they had
earned their place among the enthusiasts' (*The Beaten Track*, p. 114).

best remembered now for his work as an abolitionist in the first decades of the nineteenth century, his early life and interests exemplified the ways in which the bourgeois encountered Italian art, language and culture. The son of an innkeeper, the young Roscoe, while an apprentice to a lawyer, began studying French, Latin and Italian with a group of friends in the early mornings before work. A keen reader, he also began writing at this time. After becoming a lawyer, Roscoe maintained his literary interests and in 1773 he and his friends founded a Society for the Encouragement of the Arts of Painting and Design, which held the first public exhibition of painting outside of London. His interest in Italian art and literature was spurred by a chance meeting with the artist Henry Fuseli. The two became close friends; Roscoe learned much from Fuseli and became his patron. After this meeting, Roscoe wrote the poem 'The Art of Engraving' in which he praises Lorenzo de' Medici for the revival of learning and arts in Florence. He spent the following ten years writing the first English biography of the Duke. *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, called the Magnificent* was published in 1796, its remarkable success winning Roscoe international fame as a scholar and historian. The book went through seven editions in his lifetime and another six after his death. This biography shaped the British understanding of Tuscany and the Medici family, conferring a new glamour on the medieval and early Renaissance city-states of Italy. Butler, Haskell and Bullen have argued that this biography, along with J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi's later sixteen volume *Histoire des Républiques Italiennes au Moyen Âge* (1807-1826), was instrumental in 'the subsequent evolution of the idea of the Renaissance in the nineteenth century' throughout Europe. In particular 'they were both strongly myth-making texts' presenting a 'convincing picture of Italy in the fifteenth century; they each dramatized their history in the form of narrative, and they were both highly polemical'.[66] While Roscoe celebrated the philanthropic impulse of the Medici as merchants-turned-princes, Sismondi focused on their harsh governing practices. However, it was Roscoe who decisively shaped the bourgeois experience of Italian Renaissance art, history and culture.[67]

Roscoe's biography of Lorenzo was one expression of his ambition to establish himself as a Lorenzo for Liverpool, and also served to advertise his belief that the new cultural aristocracy in Britain, as in renaissance Florence, would be constituted by those

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66 J.B. Bullen, *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 39. See also Haskell, *History and its Images*, p. 210; and Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 119.

67 I will not discuss Roscoe's *Life of Pope Leo X, Son of Lorenzo de' Medici* (1805). Though critically this book was not well received, it did go through six editions, was read internationally and was translated into French, German and Italian.

who had earned rather than inherited their wealth. He wanted to make Liverpool the new Florence, a centre for learning and the arts. He continued his work with the Institute for the Advancement of the Arts, and would later establish, among other things, the Royal Institution for adult learning. Perhaps most importantly, he postulated the possibility of a British Renaissance rather than a British Augustan Age, implicitly shifting the focus away from classical Rome to Republican Florence. His work influenced the British understanding of Italy, but, just as importantly, it also challenged the statue quo in Britain. He did this both through his writings, but also more locally through the coterie that gathered at the Athenaeum, a merchants' reading and conversation room which opened in 1799. Jeffrey Cox's influential book, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and Their Circle* (1998), has helped to re-frame our understanding of the Romantic period and its writers. Though Cox focuses on the so-called "Cockney School" of writers surrounding Leigh Hunt, his example has encouraged scholars to become increasingly aware of collaborative efforts throughout the century.[68] While many scholars have stressed the importance of the Pisan circle, Nanora Sweet has examined the effect of disestablishment salons, such as Roscoe's coterie in Liverpool and Staël's in Coppet. These salon-coteries, which have affinities with the Pisan Circle, were 'premier sites of the Italian culture that served disestablishment and gave nineteenth-century culture an international project of Romantic education'.[69] Like the Dissenting academies, they stressed the importance of learning modern languages, rather than classical Greek or Latin. According to Sweet, these 'bourgeois, vernacular, and cosmopolitan institution[s]' were unusually accommodating to differences of class and gender and were most successful away from the central metropolis. Lorenzo de' Medici's humble background as a wool-carder had a special appeal for Roscoe, the self-made autodidact, who saw his city's wealth as a means to create a high, liberal culture. Roscoe, by now nicknamed Lorenzo, hoped to transplant the civic values of the Italian Renaissance to Liverpool.[70]

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68 Jeffrey Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and Their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 4-5.

69 Nanora Sweet, '"Lorenzo's" Liverpool and "Corinne's" Coppet: The Italianate Salon and Romantic Education' in *Lessons in Romanticism, A Critical Companion*, ed. by Thomas Pfau and Robert F. Gleckner (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 244-260 (p. 245).

70 Sweet writes, '[t]o supply this higher culture, Roscoe undertook the education of his fellow Liverpool bourgeois in the civic values of the Italian Renaissance. Like Lorenzo de' Medici, Roscoe became an energetic cultural founder, spear-heading a series of mostly transitory yet somehow recurring "institutions": an Academy of Painting and Sculpture, a Botanic Garden, again an art gallery, and Liverpool's Royal Institution. The history of Roscoe's cultural foundations as they disperse and re-form offers a prototype of the culture of dis-and re-establishment. Most enduring of Roscoe's foundations was his Athenaeum (opened in 1799), a merchants' reading and conversation room where Roscoe gently held court as if he were in a male salon. [...] Ironically, the Athenaeum was most richly underwritten when Roscoe's own investments failed and his Italianate library and artwork were auctioned and repurchased by friends for the reading room and (later) Liverpool's Walker Gallery of Art. Roscoe's cultural designs

The Athenaeum's educational focus took its place within the wider movement for self-cultivation, especially the drive for young women to become 'accomplished' through the study of modern languages, music, drawing and watercolour painting.[71] The increasing popularity of the Italian language naturally shifted the focus from Rome to Florence, from Virgil and Cicero to Dante and Petrarch. The musicality of Italian was celebrated but was usually 'confined to the Tuscan dialect of Dante'.[72] Italian Renaissance art was more accessible than classical art to middle-class viewers, because they were more likely to be educated in modern European languages, rather than ancient Greek or Latin. While a public school and university education was required to read Virgil, Pliny and Cicero, the Italian language could be learned in the comfort of one's own home or through the many translations becoming increasingly available.[73] In a similar way, Florence could be appreciated more easily by more people than Rome. Rome was full of ruins, while Florence was picturesquely unified and pleasing.[74] It offered many equivalents to Rome's attractions- the Campagna, literature, history, republicanism- without its chaos of ruins, contemporary poverty or degradation, and its inhabitants were less likely to be characterized in the same dark terms as the banditti of Rome and Naples. Indeed, when Mary Shelley talks about Italy in her review essay, 'The English in Italy', she specifically means Tuscany: 'in thus eulogizing the country of Italy, our remarks must be understood as being principally confined to Tuscany'.[75] Maura O'Connor has pointed out that the growing interest in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, encouraged by works such as Roscoe's biography of Lorenzo and Leo X and Rogers's *Italy* points as well to 'an aesthetic, psychological, and political move away from Rome to Florence'.[76] She writes, that as Florence was rediscovered by English tourists, they 'projected more positive gendered attributes onto the city to elicit greater sympathy and adulation'. Furthermore, Florence's beauty 'charmed the more self-righteous Romantic traveller and Victorian

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became part of national culture were his protégé, the émigré Anthony Pannizzi, became principal librarian for the British Museum and originated its great reading room' ('"Lorenzo's" Liverpool and "Corinne's" Coppet', pp. 250-251).

71 Ann Pullan, '"Conversations on the arts": Writing a Space for the Female Viewer in the *Repository of Arts*, 1809-15', *Oxford Art Journal*, 15.2 (1992), 15-26 (pp. 20-21).

72 See editors' introduction, *Unfolding the South, Nineteenth-century British Women Writers and Artists in Italy*, ed. by Alison Chapman and Jane Stabler (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 7.

73 See for example, Edoardo Zuccato, *Petrarch in Romantic England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

74 Maura O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Imagination* (Houndsmills and London: Macmillan Press, 1998), p. 37.

75 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 'The English in Italy', *The Mary Shelley Reader: Containing Frankenstein, Mathilda, Tales and Stories, Essays and Reviews, and Letters*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett and Charles E. Robinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 341- 357 (p. 351).

76 O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Imagination*, p. 51.

tourist who read independence and virtue more easily on the face of this Renaissance city'.[77]

Florence and its Medician past showed that works of art might be accommodated within a commercial society without compromising their aesthetic value. The model of republican Florence encouraged the individual collector's or viewer's desire to increase their cultural capital by suggesting how the collection and consumption of art might become a legitimate civic duty. Indeed, this was the moment for commercial, not civic, humanism. The Medici's use of wealth derived from banking in the promotion of the arts offered a model to the wealthy merchants of the early nineteenth century such as Roscoe. Buchanan too, like Roscoe, paints the Medici family as encouraging and nurturing art, not just for their own benefit, but for the world's:

> To Cosmo and to Lorenzo de Medici the world was first indebted for that general stimulus which was given to learning, and for that patronage which was afforded to Art; which they nursed in its cradle, reared to maturity, and ultimately raised to a degree of strength and splendour, which, in the Art of Painting in particular, eclipsed all preceding ages.[78]

Buchanan's use of words such as 'indebted' and 'afforded', gently reminds the reader that Cosmo and Lorenzo were merchant-bankers turned patrons, an identity eagerly seized upon by British banker-collectors such as Roscoe and Samuel Rogers. Yet, the Medici and the rest of Renaissance Italy had a dark side, as is clear from their representation in Ann Radcliffe's popular gothic novels. Chloe Chard has argued that part of the appeal of Renaissance Italy and its art was its exciting capacity for darkness: 'the tranquil past is rediscovered in classical sculpture, and the turbulent past in Renaissance and Baroque painting'.[79] In *Italy* (1821), Lady Morgan distinguishes the art project of Lorenzo il Magnifico from that of his offspring. While Lorenzo's 'love for the arts was pure, innate, and enthusiastic', his son's Pietro's patronage in the aftermath of the family's exile was frankly Machiavellian. These later Medicis, writes Morgan,

> felt that the arts were the sole medium by which they could acquire a consideration more durable than that which their crimes had procured them. All that money could recover of the collections of LORENZO was re-purchased; and the Duke Cosimo the First raised that vast edifice, called the UFFIZII, destined to receive the Medici Gallery, which the pride, rather than the taste of the successors of LORENZO, continued yearly to increase and to enrich.[80]

It is in the conflicting literary depictions of the Medici family tomb in the church of San

77 O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Imagination*, p. 37.
78 Buchanan, *Memoirs of Painting*, pp. x-xiii (p. xi).
79 Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour*, p. 235.
80 Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, *Italy*, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn and Co, 1821), II, 60-61 (p. 61).

Lorenzo that these issues are most decisively raised. Attached to the basilica is the Capella dei Principi, where most of the family is buried. Off this is La Sagrestia Nuova (begun in 1521). Designed by Michelangelo, it contains some of the artist's most important work: the paired sculptures of Night and Day, and, Dawn and Dusk, which recline, respectively, on the tombs of Giuliano, Duke of Nemours, and Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino. Life-size statues of the two dukes sit in niches above their tombs. Staël misrepresented these works as the tombs of Lorenzo il Magnifico and his brother Giuliano, an error which produced much confusion.[81] Ironically these more important Medici are interred together in an unfinished tomb near the entrance.[82] But the mistake ensured that the conflicting views of Medici patronage, or liberty, and governance are clearly evident in the literary depictions of these statues. The fourth canto of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* has been most celebrated for its depiction of classical ruins in Italy, and more recently its ekphrastic passages on classical sculpture.[83] Byron's engagement with Italy's medieval and Renaissance history which is manifested in his reverence for Italian literature has been almost overlooked. He describes, for example, his visit to Petrarch's tomb and his house in Arqua. Though most of his evocation of Florence focuses on the classical statue of the Venus de' Medici and on Santa Croce, he does briefly mention the Medici chapel in San Lorenzo. Importantly, this occurs directly after his description of Santa Croce (478-531), which is both the burial place of several celebrated figures, including Michelangelo, Alfieri, Galileo and Machiavelli, and a reminder of those great exiles, Petrarch, Dante and Boccaccio who sleep in 'immortal exile [...] While Florence vainly begs her banish'd dead and weeps'. The very place where 'learning rose to a new morn' has also suffered under and perpetuated tyranny. Byron describes San Lorenzo as a 'pyramid of precious stones' which 'encrust the bones of merchant-dukes':

> What is her pyramid of precious stones?
> Of porphyry, jaspar, agate, and all hues
> Of gems and marble, to encrust the bones
> Of merchant-dukes? the momentary dews
> Which, sparkling to the twilight stars, infuse
> Freshness in the green turf that wraps the dead
> Whose names are mausoleums of the Muse,
> Are gently prest with far more reverent tread
> Than ever paced the slab which paves the princely head. (532-540)

81 Staël, *Corinne*, pp. 352-353.
82 See William E. Wallace, *Michaelangelo at San Lorenzo: The Genius as Entrepreneur* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p 75. See also, Antonio Paolucci, *Il Museo delle Cappelle Medicee e San Lorenzo* (Livorno: Sillabe, 1999), pp 61-89; and Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. by Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 453-462.
83 See for example, Bruce Haley, 'The Sculptural Aesthetics of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimgae IV*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 44 (1983), 251-66.

The sparkling dews which naturally adorn the resting places of the famed poets are more precious than the jewels encrusting the tombs of the Medici family. Furthermore, those such as Dante whose names are in themselves 'mausoleums of the Muse' are not bound by time or place; unlike the Medici tomb, which is fixed in Florence, these names can be passed on and shared by all of humanity. The point of the stanza is enforced in Hobhouse's notes which echo Lady Morgan's sentiments. Hobhouse writes,

> Our veneration for the Medici begins with Cosmo and expires with his grandson; that stream is pure only at the source; and it is in search of some memorial of the virtuous republicans of the family, that we visit the church of St. Lorenzo at Florence. The tawdry, glaring, unfinished chapel in that church, designed for the mausoleum of the Dukes of Tuscany, set round with crowns and coffins, gives birth to no emotions but those of contempt for the lavish vanity of a race of despots, whilst the pavement slab simply inscribed to the Father of his Country, reconciles us to the name of Medici. It was very natural for Corinna to suppose that the statue raised to the Duke of Urbino in the *capella de' depositi* was intended for his great namesake; but the magnificent Lorenzo is only the sharer of a coffin half hidden in a niche of the sacristy. The decay of Tuscany dates from the sovereignty of the Medici.[84]

Byron's brief description of the Chapel is far more accurate than Staël's. The only Medici family members Byron sees fit to refer to are those buried below the simple slab, i.e. Guiliano and Lorenzo. Byron and Hobhouse visit the Chapel in search of 'virtuous republicans' but instead find the grandiose and unfinished mausoleum. That the tomb is unfinished makes the space akin to viewing ruins or 'seeing' Ozymandias's visage. It too speaks of fallen cultures, civilizations and tyrants, while the names of Dante and Petrarch still retain their authority. Importantly, Hobhouse's note corrects *Corinne*, thereby responding to and refining the wider construction of a literary Italy. Later writers, including Rogers whom I discuss in Chapter Four and Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her *Casa Guidi Windows*, will treat both the effigies of the princes and the figures of 'Night', 'Day', 'Dawn' and 'Dusk', as important art works in their own right.

Italian Art and the New Journalism

In *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (1992), Hilary Fraser writes,

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84 Byron and Hobhouse, 'Notes to Canto IV', *The Complete Poetical Works*, II, 218-264 (p. 244). The notes accompanying *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* were written by both Byron and Hobhouse; exclusive authorship is indicated by their initials. These should not be confused with Hobhouse's *Historical Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold: Containing Dissertations on the Ruins of Rome; and An Essay on Italian Literature*, 2nd edn (London: John Murray, 1818).

> [t]he century which separated the publication of William Roscoe's pioneering *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici* in 1795 and that of Vernon Lee's *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* in 1895 witnessed a tremendous growth of interest in Italian Renaissance history and art in England, and not only among the *cognoscenti*. Modern editions and translations of Italian texts made them accessible for the first time to non-Italian speakers, and modern writers appropriated and subverted Renaissance literary forms and themes.[85]

William Roscoe in his biography of Lorenzo and in his establishment of the Athenaeum is representative of a much wider middle-class fascination with the art of the Italian Renaissance. The interest manifested itself in all areas of literary output. It was, for example, a key feature of the new literary magazines, such as *The New Monthly* and *The London*, that became such an important aspect of the literary culture of the 1820s. Some of the most important writers for the magazines such as Hazlitt, Patmore and Wainewright presented themselves as connoisseurs of art in general and of Italian art in particular. Like the members of the Athenaeum, these writers were non-university educated, but Italian art offered them a field of expertise in which their lack of a university education was no disadvantage. They came to the art work that they discussed as thinking and feeling viewers. Because, with the exception of Hazlitt, they were not themselves practitioners, they tended to stress art's intellectual and imaginative elements over its mechanical merits.

In presenting themselves as connoisseurs, they radically reconfigured the art world. They asserted an intellectual, rather than social, ownership of the pictures that they discussed. In the new dispensation that they helped to institute a painting 'belonged' to the viewers best able to appreciate it. These new journalists changed the way in which art was discussed. Rather than directing reader-viewers, as in a catalogue raisonné, to the specific merits of a select group of pictures, art essays guided the feelings and thoughts of their readers, evoking an aesthetic experience in which their readers were invited to participate. P.G. Patmore, the son of a silversmith and jeweller, wrote for many of the well-known journals of the nineteenth century and later in life would edit the *New Monthly Magazine* (1841-1853). His *British Galleries*, published not long before the National Gallery's opening in 1824, originally appeared as a series of articles in the *New Monthly*. His account of the arts in Britain and his advice to the novice viewer, as well as advocating the establishment of a programme of art education, wonderfully illuminates the manner in which art had become implicated in questions of national identity and cultural status. He writes,

> If the searcher after the riches of art expects to find, in every British Gallery, a

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85 Hilary Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), pp. 1-2.

storehouse like some of those which we have had occasion to explore [...] he will be grievously disappointed;– and moreover his *being* disappointed will prove that he deserves to be so. The votarist who is not content to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of *one* saint, but must have a whole calendar to attract him, has mistaken his calling, and may turn critic as soon as he pleases – for he has no true love for that about which he professes to concern himself. Those who are accustomed to lament that the battle of Waterloo ever took place, either forget, or do not attach a proper value to the fact, that it caused to be dispersed all over the civilized world those miracles of art which were collected within the walls of the Louvre: and if it did no other good but this, it was worth all that it cost. It is not in human nature duly to appreciate that which it obtains with ease, or can have by asking for; or that which it cannot help seeing if it would. This is one reason why the French artists and critics have not made one progressive step in art during the last five-and-twenty years. Not that they did not sufficiently *admire* the works of the old masters that were collected in the Louvre; for they thought many of them nearly equal to their own David's! They admired, without being able to *appreciate* them.[86]

The reference to Waterloo appeals to national pride, but that pride, as the paragraph develops, is not a pride in military glory so much as in a society in which a newly prosperous and aesthetically ambitious class signal their new status by displaying both the means and the desire to travel around the great houses of Britain to view the works of art that are displayed in them. Patmore celebrates the dissolution of the Louvre for the same reasons Hazlitt gave in support of its creation: that it challenged the right to claim exclusive ownership of a work of art. He offers the French, individually and nationally, as a warning to the British. Patmore argues that they proved incapable of improving either their taste or their performance, because the construction of a great national museum made the greatest art in the world available to them without asking of them the effort that would have established its true value.

Periodicals continued to bring the art world to the connoisseur, and the difference between the British and Italian nations and their art remained at the heart of such texts. A satire in the *Annals of the Fine Art* chronicles a day in the life of a young artist who is trying to finish his canvas for the next exhibition at the British Institute. The island nation is exemplified by a thick fog which literally blocks out inspiration, narrowing the minds of the inhabitants. Entitled 'The Miseries of an Artist', it opens,

> Wake at half past seven;—remember this is the day you are to paint the head of your principal figure!—hope, in the name of Raffaelle, the day may be a fine one; hope there may be a good light; hope it may not rain; hope there may be no fog; lie still for five or ten minutes, afraid to look out your window, for fear of the consequences; at last seize the window curtain,— take a sort of a peep with a beating heart, but no light appearing, fancy you have not moved the

86 P.G. Patmore, *British Galleries of Art* (London: G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1824), pp. 143-144.

blind;— grapple for the blind,—find you have moved it; and what you mistake for an obstruction of the light *inside* your window, find to be a thorough-bred dark, dingy, heavy, wet, muggy, smoky, greasy, filthy, yellow London fog, of the true sort *outside*![87]

No 'warmth of temperament', patronage, public enthusiasm or understanding is seen in this story. Instead the fog blocks out light so the artist cannot tell what colour paint he is mixing. The weather furnishes his model with an excuse for day-long drinking and exacerbates the disorientating and unhealthy effects of urbanization. Periodicals created a space which mimicked London's art scene. This satire depicts the effects of the climate on individuals and large societal institutions (pubs, patrons and politics).

The Anglo-Italian

As we have seen, various types of people and groups used Italian Renaissance art and subjects connected with it in order to forge national, personal or collective identities. Some, like artist Henry Sass, forged a national identity for Britain as a protector of art, while people like William Roscoe and William Buchanan, legitimised their own monetary and ideological investment in art through a characterisation of the early Medici family as patrons of the arts, learning and liberty. Italy and its art were used to create a myriad of identities in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century the most dramatic of which was the production of the 'Anglo-Italian' identity I referred to in the introductory chapter. The desire to hybridise British and Italian characteristics goes a step further than many of the more binary relational identities we have examined so far. Italian Renaissance art was a major component in creating the 'Anglo-Italian' because familiarity with that art produced a 'real taste for the beautiful'.[88] Despite her account of Mary Shelley's enumeration of the qualities of the Anglo-Italian and despite her own discussion of the importance of eighteenth-century *Capriccio* paintings in the creation of a British National identity, Maria Schoina's recent book does not treat the important place that the discussion of Renaissance art had in the creation of an Anglo-Italian identity (especially the identity of the members of the Pisan Circle).[89] A knowledge of Italian art influenced the way in which they viewed

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87 A, 'The Miseries of an Artist', in *Annals of the Fine Arts, for MDCCCXX* (London: Hurst, Robinson and Co, 1820), 5 (1820), 76-84 (p. 76).

88 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 'The English in Italy', p. 343.

89 Maria Schoina, *Romantic 'Anglo-Italians': Configurations of Identity in Byron, the Shelleys, and the Pisan Circle* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

Italy and their view of Italy framed the way in which they experienced Italian art. This in turn informed, formed and reformed their understanding of the literature of both nations, and indeed their understanding of their own creative process.

As Schoina has argued elsewhere, although Leigh Hunt never fully integrated into Italian life, he writes enthusiastically about the effects of the Italian climate on the minds of inhabitants and visitors alike.[90] In *The Liberal* he writes,

> You cannot look at the elevation of the commonest door-way, or the ceiling of a room appropriated to the humblest purposes, but you recognize the land of the fine arts. You think Michael Angelo has been at the turning of those arches,—at the harmonizing of those beautiful varieties of shape, which by the secret principles common to all the arts and sciences, affect the mind like a sort of inaudible music.[91]

Nature, art, architecture, music and even science harmonize with each other. Nature and its governing principles are made manifest in the most mundane and domestic of spaces, in a manner that is both mysterious (those secret principles) and knowable (scientific rules). Though music is commonly invoked to describe the most sublime aspects of nature – as in descriptions of the Alps – this 'inaudible music' shapes and harmonizes the mind of the observer with all of the fine arts. Even in the most mundane of circumstances, Hunt's mind (and by extension the mind of his reader or any traveller) is opened and enriched. That all levels of life are infused with the best instances of art or have been touched by the greatest artists affects common Italians as powerfully as the smiling skies and verdant landscape. In his preface to *The Cenci*, Percy Shelley seems almost surprised that Italians of all levels are familiar with the story he is about to tell:

> All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci*.[92]

Shelley notices the interest in and knowledge of this story 'among all ranks of people in a great City [Rome], where the imagination is kept for ever active and awake'. In his *Defence of Poetry* (1821), Shelley extends the meaning of the word "poet" to refer to anyone who creates art, whether that be in poetry, painting, sculpture or music. For him, Italian and British cultures are *inextricably* linked. As we have seen in my discussion of

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90 Maria Schoina, 'Leigh Hunt's "Letters from Abroad" and the "Anglo-Italian" Discourse of *The Liberal*', *Romanticism*, 12 (July 2006), 115-125.
91 Leigh Hunt, "Letters from Abroad", *The Liberal*, 1 (1822), 97- 120 (p. 102).
92 Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'The Cenci' in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2002), pp.140-202 (p. 141).

Florence and the Medici, the revival of the arts was closely linked with the revival of letters. He writes, 'The age immediately succeeding to that of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, was characterized by a revival of painting, sculpture, music and architecture. Chaucer caught the sacred inspiration, and the superstructure of English literature is based upon the material of Italian invention'.[93] British literature becomes a by-product of Italian cultural production. Importantly, there are no clear boundaries between the fine arts and they all originate from the same source. By returning to Italian art, these writers are in a profound sense returning to the source. The predilection for Italian art, both at home and abroad, is represented by the Romantic writers as a return to the source of their tradition, which includes Dante and his contemporaries as much as it includes Chaucer, Milton and Shakespeare.

Italian Renaissance art and the exclusivity of taste allowed Anglo-Italians to distance themselves, both personally and in their writings, from the hordes of tourists that flooded the Continent after Waterloo. Presenting oneself as having extensive knowledge of Italian Renaissance art was an essential element in the 'anti-tourist' stance that Buzard describes. These same art works were made available to bourgeois tourists through the mediation of works such as Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage IV* and Staël's *Corinne.* As James Buzard argues, Romantic period literature injected

> a much-needed charge of novelty and excitement in the European tour. Scenes, situations, and characters from these texts became the appropriatable, exchangeable markers in a cultural economy in which "travellers" competed for pre-eminence by displaying their imaginative capacities and by attacking that always available enemy, the lowly tourist. The new models were well suited to a competitive cultural market. By emphasizing the inchoate standard of "enthusiasm" or power of feeling, they made travel seem at once open and exclusive: those who felt they had satisfactorily demonstrated their responsive capacities would also feel they had earned their place among the enthusiasts.[94]

Though Anglo-Italians despised the mass of travellers in Italy, the fact that these tourists were their readers, complicates their own relationship with Italian art.

The Anglo-Italian claims an identity between the cultures and in doing so creates a new non-national variety of English literature. However, the 'Anglo-Italian' identity was just the most striking of many ways in which the cultural importance of Italy was used to construct a definition of the self. Many writers, particularly in the years between Waterloo and the opening of the National Gallery, exploited the special cultural power and prestige

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93 Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry; or, Remarks Suggested by an Essay Entitled "The Four Ages of Poetry"', in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and N. Fraistat, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2002), pp. 510- 535 (p. 529).
94 Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, p. 114.

traditionally associated with Italian Renaissance art to define a variety of identities, both positive and negative, for themselves and others. These identities are produced within a variety of texts and on a variety of levels, amongst them the national, the group and the individual. This rhetoric of identity shows how profoundly Italian Renaissance art shaped nineteenth-century British culture. Though Mary Shelley continued to celebrate Italy throughout her life, her husband's letters reveal that it was not always easy to be on the cusp of two cultures:

> It will be difficult however to live contentedly in England again after the daily contemplation of the sublimest objects of ancient art, and the sensations inspired by the enchanting atmosphere which envelopes these tranquil seas and majestic mountains in its radiance. In Italy it is impossible to live contented; for the filthy modern inhabitants of what aught [*sic*] to be a desart sacred to days whose glory is extinguished, thrust themselves before you forever.[95]

Though Percy Shelley's disgust is disturbing in one so committed to the culture of Italy, it demonstrates how difficult it could be to come to terms with the discrepancy between the nobility of Italian culture and the degradation of its inhabitants. Even those most committed to what Italy had been and who most strongly empathized with its political condition, found it difficult to integrate.

Conclusion

Altick argues, that at the turn of the nineteenth century the galleries in the nation's capital functioned as public versions of the virtuoso's cabinet,[96] but by the 1820s, the public had become so cultivated that liberal opinion started to protest the shilling entrance fee required by many establishments.[97] The public appetite for art had grown so large that it could afford to support annual shows such as those of the Royal Academy, the British Institute, and the Society of Painters in Water Colour, displays of engravings, the Egyptian Hall, the private collections of Stafford, Angerstein and others, and several auction houses, all in one season.[98] In this chapter, we have discussed how the cultural capital once confined to the elite began to be claimed by the growing middle class. While Britain's aristocracy retained much of its political importance in the aftermath of the Napoleonic

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95 *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, II, 69.
96 Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 33.
97 Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 408.
98 Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 404.

Wars, its cultural authority was diluted by the growing middle classes, as well as by liberals and radicals. The overthrow of the French aristocracy and Napoleon's Italian Campaigns were directly responsible for the vast quantities of Italian art that became available on British soil, as the Orleans sale and exhibition attest. This art endowed Britain and its citizens with a sense of national and personal prestige, while simultaneously shaping British perceptions of Italy and Italians. The ideological investment in the intrinsic value of Italian art would continue to shape British attitudes towards Italy during the Risorgimento. Furthermore, it shaped and nurtured opposing views of Britain's national school and the question of whether or not the arts were progressive. Yet despite this investment in the Italian school, its art was not always easily assimilated with British taste. However, the attempts to overcome this barrier, attest in themselves to the cultural importance attributed to this art. In the next chapter, I address the ways in which various writers claimed an authority derived from an expertise most clearly displayed in their knowledge of and familiarity with Italian art.

Chapter Two

Connoisseurship

The nineteenth century, often called the 'age of the museum', witnessed a fierce competition between individuals and groups who demanded to be recognised as the authoritative guides to this new museum culture. In the drive to establish their possession of symbolic cultural capital, individual voices created and competed against various 'others'. In the chapter that follows I will explore the development in the period of the idea of cultural connoisseurship.

Artists and Aristocrats

Throughout the later eighteenth century, the effort made by professional institutions to raise the status of the artist from mechanical craftsman to inspired creator threatened the aristocratic claim that only educated, philosophically literate gentlemen were capable of appreciating art and cultivating taste. As we saw in the previous chapter, the tenets of civic humanism and other philosophies of taste contended that only the leisured ruling class could offer authoritative judgement on the value of a work of art. The right to make aesthetic judgement could be claimed only by those who had benefited from an appropriate education, in particular from an education in philosophy, history and literature, especially as they were embodied in classical texts. It was because they shared this education that gentlemanly viewers could fully appreciate the various qualities of high art. Unlike the artist, whose expertise extended only to the material or mechanical aspects of artistic creation, the aristocratic connoisseur trained his eye to understand both the visual taxonomy of painting and what Ann Bermingham calls 'art's philosophical character'.[1] The development of institutions such as the Royal Academy led inevitably to this gentlemanly claim to authority in cultural matters being challenged by professional artists who were increasingly likely to claim themselves to be of gentlemanly rank. The struggle between artists and connoisseurs to be the ultimate authority on art would continue throughout the nineteenth century. In her *Essays Towards the History of Painting* (1836), art historian and world traveller Maria Graham Callcott (1785-1842), whose second husband was the

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1   Ann Bermingham, 'The Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the Age of Connoisseurship', *Oxford Art Journal*, 16.2 (1993), 3-20 (p.13). See also Peter de Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

painter and Royal Academician, Augustus Wall Callcott (1779-1844), dismisses the idea that only connoisseurs and not practising artists can properly claim to judge the merits of a work of art. She writes,

> I am aware that a certain class of connoisseurs, amateurs, or enthusiasts have lately put forth, perhaps I should say revived, the strange opinion that a practical artist is of all men the least fit to judge of art, and that it belongs to *them*, that is the connoisseurs only, to judge of his work. I believe this notion to have lurked in secret in the bosom of many an amateur for centuries back; but it required the fostering hand of German enthusiasm to publish it, as an axiom, to the world; and to write books upon the absurd notion, that those who know nothing practically of a subject, are the best judges and instructors concerning it.[2]

Callcott offers as synonyms for the gentlemanly connoisseur the enthusiast and the amateur, both of them pointed choices. The term enthusiast registers and discounts the claim to philosophical expertise on which the gentlemanly claim rested most strongly by associating philosophy with the German idealism that was regularly dismissed in Britain as amounting to little more than irrational mysticism. She chooses the term amateur because the word that had once suggested the disinterested lover of art was by 1836 decisively changing its meaning, now signifying more often the dabbler, the individual for whom a subject was a pastime rather than a matter of professional interest. For Callcott it is the 'practical artist' who is best qualified to judge even the highest works of art. Implicitly, Callcott is defending the status of her landscape artist husband and in addition claiming a particular authority for the productions in which husband and wife collaborated, such as their illustrated book *A Description of the Chapel of the Annuziata dell'Arena, or Giotto's Chapel in Padua* (1835). Ultimately, however, her comments can be seen in the context of the long campaign to elevate the artist's status from that of an artisan to artistic creator and rightful authority on matters of art and taste. Through the efforts of individuals such as Maria Callcott, of institutions such as the Royal Academy and of its first President, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and as an inevitable consequence of an increasingly dominant cult of Genius, artists were coming to be thought of as inspired creators whose special authority extended from the production to the appreciation of the work of art.

Although both artists and connoisseurs continued to engage in a competition as to which should be recognised as the final authority on art, they were able to find some common ground, and a common language, in the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792). The Royal Academy's first president delivered his *Discourses* from 1769-1790, and they were published collectively in 1797. In the *Discourses*, Reynolds maintained a

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2   Maria Callcott, *Essays Towards the History of Painting* (London: Edward Moxon, 1836), pp. 3-4.

hierarchy of styles in which history painting and the grand styles of Raphael and Michelangelo occupied the summit, and developed a theory of 'ideal beauty', which encouraged artists to imitate the general principles of nature, rather than copy specific, and therefore 'deformed' examples taken directly from nature. This distinction between general and particular nature on which the notion of ideal beauty depended acted as the foundation of good taste and good art for decades, influencing artists and connoisseurs alike. Its authority depended greatly on Reynolds's success in establishing himself at the head at once of the artistic profession and of the class of philosophically trained connoisseurs. Although Reynolds's *Discourses* were originally written as lectures to be delivered to his colleagues and students, on their publication they soon attracted a large and varied audience. Though the neoclassical ideal would begin to lose the almost uncontested authority it had enjoyed since the Renaissance, Reynolds's work continued to be read throughout the nineteenth century. More than sixty years after Reynolds inaugurated his lecture series, Callcott explains their popularity and accessibility:

> The lectures of Sir Joshua Reynolds made art popular in this country, less because they contained excellent precepts and well-chosen examples, than because, like Johnson's criticism in the Lives of the Poets, they laid open the general principles applicable to all the arts. Poetry and music, painting and sculpture, architecture and landscape-gardening, may equally profit by them, the passages peculiarly appropriated to painters being far from the most numerous, though such as none but a painter could have written.[3]

By blending the connoisseur's understanding of the philosophical principles that all arts have in common with the practical considerations of the artist, Reynolds provided a language which had the power to heal, or at least soften, the division between connoisseurs and artists. Reynolds's work offered a unifying framework for all those who wished to be seen to have good taste and judgment, although it was not long before Reynolds's principles themselves came to be contested.

The possibility of achieving a single standard of taste and even the importance of 'ideal beauty' was, for example, powerfully called into question by the controversial importation of the Elgin Marbles (1801-1812), which provoked a debate that was conclusively decided only in 1816 with the unprecedented decision that they be purchased on behalf of the nation. The Marbles' depiction of veins, muscles and other bodily details, challenged the art world's long-held belief in a single standard of generalized beauty. Furthermore, the weather-beaten features of the horses and other figures contrasted sharply with the highly polished and restored surfaces of canonical masterworks and their casts,

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3   Callcott, *Essays*, p. 2.

such as the Apollo Belvedere, the Venus de' Medici and even the expressive Laocoön. Indeed, as Jonah Siegel has pointed out, the 'most pressing aesthetic challenge offered by the Elgin Marbles, [...] was their actual condition. [Richard Payne] Knight and other lovers of antiquity were accustomed to the smooth finish and complete form of restored statues such as those in the Townley Gallery'.[4] In its attempts to determine the authenticity, aesthetic merits and monetary worth of the statues, the parliamentary purchasing committee relied on the often contradictory testimonies of artists like Henry Fuseli and connoisseurs such as Richard Payne Knight. It was hoped that the national purchase of the Marbles would inspire a new era in British arts, one which would repeat the effects that the discovery of classical statues in Italy had on artists such as Michelangelo and Raphael. However, as Rochelle Gurstein has argued, the practical effect of the Elgin Marbles, their particularities and their details, was to steer the nation's art and taste away from neoclassicism. Instead of ushering in a new era of neoclassical art, 'the purchase marked the end of a tradition – *their* tradition – which, beginning in the Renaissance and culminating in Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses on Art* (1797), had made a cult of the "ideal beauty" of ancient sculpture'.[5] According to Gurstein, the phrase 'ideal beauty' had by this time begun to function as 'a fixed, knowable, and increasingly banal standard' in both the appreciation and practice of painting, as becomes strikingly evident from the formulaic questions of the Select Committee established to report on the cultural value of the Marbles.[6] Though the antique would continue to occupy a central place in the minds of cultivated people throughout the nineteenth century, the particularities of the Elgin Marbles would push artists and writers to discover and celebrate the variety found in authentic nature and to demand diversity in painting. Reynolds's *Discourses*, as we have seen in Callcott's remarks, retained a central place in artistic discourse, and although few artists or even writers, would wholeheartedly contradict Reynolds, the debate on the Marbles had a prominent place in the development of a new, distinctively Romantic, aesthetic. This aesthetic valued power and genius as the defining characteristics of beauty, and rejected the idea that there could be a single standard of taste. Through their display of natural variations and details, the Elgin Marbles offered a challenge to both artists and connoisseurs that paved the way for a new Romantic vision of art.

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4   Jonah Siegel, *Desire and Excess: The Nineteenth-Century Culture of Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 61.
5   Rochelle Gurstein, 'The Elgin Marbles, Romanticism and the waning of "ideal beauty"', *Dædalus*, 131.4 (2002), 88-100 (p. 89).
6   Gurstein, 'The Elgin Mables', p. 90.

The Growing Audience for Art

As we have seen in Chapter One, Italian Renaissance art flowed into Britain as a result of the Napoleonic Wars. Exhibitions at galleries and auction houses, a boom in the print trade and an increase in disposable income, meant that art circulated among an ever-growing audience. Direct acquaintance with Italian Renaissance art was no longer confined to the landed gentry or to practising artists. Increasingly, the middle class was able to view and to read about the works of the Italian masters and even to purchase prints of their most famed works, allowing them to participate in, and eventually come to dominate, the once exclusive discourse of art appreciation. As art became more commercially available to a greater number of people in the nineteenth century, the 'role of art', as Ann Bermingham argues,

> was a matter of some debate. For many, like the businessman and cultural entrepreneur Rudolph Ackermann, it signalled that England had arrived at the pinnacle of cultural sophistication and refinement while for others, like the critic William Hazlitt, those same signs of triumph were interpreted as evidence of art's fall and disgrace.[7]

From the late eighteenth century, the metropolis had offered a seemingly endless variety of visual spectacles. One result of the increasing complexity of Britain's visual culture was that a single standard of taste, whether it be located in a system of values such as Civic Humanism or an aesthetic system such as neoclassicism no longer seemed able to accommodate all the aesthetic experiences with which the citizen of London was tempted. The connoisseur was becoming a consumer, and consumers are less willing than connoisseurs to conform to a single standard of taste. Increasingly, London's art scene was an 'undistinguished mass' of professional, amateur and commercial artistic interests, blending serious and novel art, which eventually extended to the provinces through exhibiting societies, artist manuals and supply catalogues and periodicals.[8] More people could afford to go to exhibitions more often; they could afford to take drawing classes and buy prints; they could afford to buy periodicals which reviewed and described private galleries; and they engaged in all these activities with great enthusiasm. Despite the variousness of visual culture in the early nineteenth century, the works of the Old Masters retained a high cultural prestige, but, as the century went on, it was a prestige to which an

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7   Ann Bermingham, 'Urbanity and the Spectacle of Art', in *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840*, ed. by James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 151-176 (p. 151).
8   Ann Bermingham, 'Urbanity and the Spectacle of Art', in *Romantic Metropolis*, pp. 156-158.

increasingly wide social spectrum began to lay claim.

In the decades following Waterloo, travel to Europe become more available to more people. Even moderately wealthy art lovers could now travel to Italy to view the works of European masters *in situ*. During the war period, and partly as a result of industrialization, this shopkeeping nation's wealth increased, and one result was the development of an upwardly mobile middle class. Unlike previous generations, the wealth of the new industrial and mercantile class was no longer land-locked, which meant that they had the means to travel to the continent without the need and insurance of the old aristocratic networks.[9] While many lacked the classical education of the Grand Tourists, they still tended to follow the Grand Tour itinerary which was now made easily accessible by contemporary guides such as John Chetwode Eustace's *A Classical Tour Through Italy* and Joseph Forsyth's *Remarks on Antiquities, Arts, and Letters, During an Excursion in Italy in the Years 1802 and 1803*.[10] Furthermore, the exposure to Italian art at home – whether through the Orleans collection or the widely circulated art catalogues and periodicals – equipped them with an aesthetic vocabulary. As James Buzard has demonstrated, the years following Waterloo mark the beginning of tourism as we know it today. Indeed there was such a demand, that previously fragmentary and costly travel networks became efficient, reliable and affordable by the end of the century.[11] According to the *Edinburgh Review*'s article on Byron's Fourth Canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the 'general motion of the [British] mind' in the years after Waterloo turned to Italy, which was 'like a world opening upon us with fresh and novel beauty, and our souls have enjoyed themselves there, of late years, with a sort of romantic pleasure'.[12] Post-Waterloo tourists and fireside travellers alike devoured guidebooks, travel literature and imaginary texts set in Italy. Art, and the cultural prestige attached to it, was at the heart of people's desire to travel to the continent.

Whether viewed in a London gallery or in Florence's Uffizi, art was always viewed within a social space, a space in which all those who entered were anxious to secure their social position. This anxiety to lay claim to a high social standing led to a demand for new

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9   James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 19.

10   John Chetwode Eustace, *A Classical Tour Through Italy. An. MDCCCII*, 3rd edn, 4 vols (London: J. Mawman, 1815); and, Joseph Forsyth, *Remarks on Antiquities, Arts, and Letters, During an Excursion in Italy in the Years 1802 and 1803*, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1816).

11   Buzard writes, 'the first cross-Channel passenger service had begun in 1816 (between Brighton and Le Havre), but steam-driven vessels began regular operation between Dover and Calais in 1821, soon cutting the transit down to about three hours at a fare of 8 to 10 shillings; it has been estimated that by 1840 a hundred thousand people were crossing the Channel annually' (*The Beaten Track*, p. 41).

12   'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. Canto the Fourth. By Lord Byron', *Edinburgh Review*, 30:59 (1818), 87-120 (p. 99), in *Periodicals Archive Online* <http://pao.chadwyck.co.uk> [accessed 18 January 2011]. Andrew Rutherford has identified the author of this review as John Wilson; see *Byron: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Andrew Rutherford (London: Routledge, 1970; repr. 1995), pp. 147-154.

authorities to follow and postures to mimic. The period's prolific publication of guides and manuals, along with literary works which pivoted around art and travel, provided just this service. Guidebooks, or 'handbooks', to Italy would become standardized by the late 1830s, while literary works gave readers a template for fashioning themselves as sophisticated and informed travellers and art lovers.[13] Travel writing, guides and literary works informed taste and offered novice viewers instruction on how to encounter art works, which as Stabler has pointed out, gave readers something more than was provided by the various histories of art available or the reports of the debates of the Royal Academy.[14] Furthermore, unlike earlier novels set in Italy, such as Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) whose author had relied 'upon travel books for descriptions of settings and costume', many contemporary works of fiction, such as *Corinne*, began, according to Buzard, 'incorporating details actually gathered on tours into their stories'.[15]

Even as interest in neoclassical aesthetics began to wane, the period's earliest and most popular guidebooks to Italy, namely those by Eustace and Forsyth, helped bridge the gap between the Grand Tour tradition, and the new kind of tourist who may not have enjoyed a classical education and was unlikely to be accompanied by a personal tutor. One important intermediary between these guides and the standardized handbook of the 1830s and later, were books such as Mariana Starke's *Letters from Italy* (1800), which emphasized practical considerations and social graces. Starke gives her readers precise information as to whether or not tipping is permitted, acceptable or expected in virtually every chapel, museum, and room she visits, and suggests an appropriate amount. In the Vatican Library, for example, she suggests giving five pauls to the attendant, while in the Museo Pio-Clementino, one need only tip two or three pauls.[16] In an acknowledgement of the changing face of travel, Starke also includes footnotes on Raphael's *Stanze* which extend over several pages, for the benefit of those '[p]ersons who are not accompanied to

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13 According to Buzard, by the late 1830s, John Murray, Byron's publisher, and his rival Baedeker, had standardized travel 'handbooks' (a term coined by John Murray II) to the Continent. Through standardization, these 'handbooks' brought accessibility and reliability to Continental travel, and would soon lead to other innovations such as Thomas Cook's guided tour packages. On the development of and distinction between 'handbooks' and 'guidebooks', see *The Beaten Track*, pp.66-69.
14 Jane Stabler, 'Subduing the Senses? British Romantic Period Travelers and Italian Art', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 26.4 (2004), 320- 327 (p. 323).
15 Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, p. 69.
16 Mariana Starke, *Letters from Italy, Containing a View of the Revolutions in that Country, from the Capture of Nice, by the French Republic, to the Expulsion of Pius VI. From the Ecclesiastical State: Likewise Pointing out the Matchless Works of Art which still Embellish Pisa, Florence, Siena, Rome, Naples, Bologna, Venice, &c. Also Specifying The Expense Incurred by Residing in Various Parts of Italy, France &c. so that Persons who visit the Continent from Economical Motives may Select the most Eligible Places for Permanent Residence. With Instructions For the Use of Invalids and Families who may wish to avoid the Expense Attendant upon Travelling with a Courier*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: G. and S. Robinson, 1815), I, 324-325.

the Vatican by a Cicerone'.[17] Her book is designed to help her reader to travel throughout Italy without being shamed by embarrassing displays of ignorance whether the ignorance be of social forms or of aesthetic values, and it simultaneously supports Starke's position by insisting on her authority both as a seasoned traveller and as an informed connoisseur. The middle-class traveller used such practical information to navigate unfamiliar social structures abroad. Equipped with the knowledge of both Raphael's masterpiece and the social forms that obtain in a foreign country, Starke's readers were given the opportunity to secure their status in the eyes of fellow British travellers abroad and eventually, on their return, of others at home.

Manuals, guides and literature which dealt with galleries and other aspects of visual culture closer to home experienced a similar growth in publication. Although Reynolds's *Discourses* maintained a key position for several decades in British aesthetic discourse, the increased access and desire for art created a new market for various forms of art manuals, including guidebooks. At home, periodicals such as the *New Monthly Magazine* featured essays on British galleries of art. Often these essays were so popular that they were collected and re-issued as books, as was P.G. Patmore's *British Galleries of Art* (1824).[18] However, there was no standard format for guides or manuals; some were predominately practical, giving readers information on opening times and other customary practices, while others focused on aesthetic matters, emphasising how certain works should most appropriately be viewed. The Reverend James's *Italian Schools of Painting with Observations on the Present State of the Art*, which we discussed in Chapter One, for example, sought to help his readers acquire a sort of layman's technical knowledge and the ability to compare the contemporary British school with Italian masters. While most included basic information about a painting, such as the title, date and the name of the artist, as the catalogues raisonnés had done before them, these guidebooks increasingly focused on what the reader-viewer should experience while viewing a great masterpiece. For authors and readers alike, these manuals and guides proved to be a vital means of securing a position in the fashionable art world.

With class boundaries blurring with regards to who was admitted to galleries, the practical benefits these manuals afforded were not confined solely to information about opening times, but also included information as to social customs and expectations. Though art was becoming more accessible to middle-class viewers, the great majority of works of art continued to be owned by the aristocracy. Without the benefit of a public

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17 Starke, *Letters from Italy*, I, 317.
18 P.G. Patmore, *British Galleries of Art* (London: G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1824).

school education, with the thorough grounding in social expectations that it offered together with the knowledge of Latin, the middle-class viewer who wished to become both accomplished and fashionable relied on this supplementary material in order to know how to behave, what to say and even who to know. The middle-class person who aspired to become knowledgeable in the visual arts was engaged on a journey that was fraught with social, as well as aesthetic difficulties. While many privately owned collections in England were supposedly open to the public, they often had very specific definitions of who constituted an acceptable member of that public. Furthermore, the most popular works displayed in Britain, and perhaps the more accessible exhibitions, still consisted of contemporary portraits and domestic scenes, which were more readily understandable than the works of the Italian Old Masters. In order to gain the elite prestige associated with Old Master works, middle-class viewers needed guides to help them make the transition from the familiar to the unknown and often perplexing subjects of Old Master works. Guides could also help middle-class visitors to avoid social embarrassments. Journalist Charles Molloy Westmacott, who vehemently denied any association with Hazlitt's or Patmore's contemporaneous gallery guides, included information about regulations for his readers' benefit. To visit the Marquess of Stafford's Cleveland House, for instance, one had to abide by the following rules:

> REGULATIONS: The visitors are admitted on the Wednesday in each week, during the months of May, June, and July, between the hours of twelve and five o'clock. Applications for tickets, are inserted in a book, kept by the porter, at the door of Cleveland-house, any day, (except Tuesday,) when the tickets are issued for admission on the following day. The applicants should be known to some member of the family, or otherwise produce a recommendation from some distinguished person, either of noble family or of known taste in the arts. Artists desirous of tickets for the season, will obtain them on the recommendation of any member of the Royal Academy. In wet weather, it is suggested, that all visitors will proceed thither in carriages.[19]

Westmacott offers his readers practical information concerning opening hours and how to obtain tickets. He also gives the necessary social guidance. One must secure an acquaintance with the family or some 'distinguished person', and must have access to a carriage in wet weather. Regulations of both these kinds demonstrate how aristocratic privilege remained a major factor in the consumption of art in Britain, at least until the opening of the National Gallery in 1824. Westmacott's text implicitly identifies one major driving force in the interest in Italian art as the desire to attain a level of social prestige.

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19 Charles Molloy Westmacott, *British Galleries of Painting and Sculpture, Comprising a General Historical and Critical Catalogue, with Separate Notices of Every Work of Fine Art in the Principal Collections* (London: Sherwood, Hones and Co., 1824), p. 176.

The demand for manuals provided an excellent opportunity for artists or collectors to achieve recognition by fellow professionals and amateurs alike as authorities on art. Often, the author's ambition is evident in the way that the author prefaces his work. William Young Ottley (1771- 1836), who would become the British Museum's Keeper of Prints in 1833, was an artist and a well-known collector of Old Master drawings. In his *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures in the National Gallery* (1826), Ottley expresses the wish that his knowledge 'prove to be of some utility to the public'. Indeed it seems that public desire for this type of study aid, saved his manuscript from the waste basket. Ottley relates how the manuscript, originally commissioned as a catalogue of Angerstein's collection, seemed to have become redundant when the government decided to purchase the collection. In his introduction, Ottley explains what persuaded him to rewrite and ultimately to publish his manuscript:

> What I had written was now no longer wanted for the purpose originally intended, and I probably should have thought no more of it, but for a conversation upon painting which took place, in my presence, a few weeks ago; upon which occasion several gentlemen of the company, although admirers of pictures, very ingenuously confessed that they were often greatly at a loss to discover in what consisted the peculiar merit of this or that performance, when viewing it, and that in fact they very much wanted a guide. Upon inquiry, I found that others were willing to make the same admissions. It then occurred to me that these remarks might prove to be of some utility to the public; and after further consideration I resolved to print them.[20]

This preface clearly identifies the social-aesthetic framework which Ottley identifies as giving him his opportunity. He identifies a social embarrassment to which he wishes his is clearly sympathetic although it is an embarrassment from which his own expertise protects him. He invites his readers to recognise their own desire to understand the 'peculiar merits' of Old Master works reflected in the gentlemen's conversation and the many other viewers who, Ottley claims, willingly admitted that they also were in need of guidance. Ottley carefully positions himself as at once the social equal of his intended audience (he mixes with them on terms of easy social familiarity) and as distinguished from them by his professional expertise. He is a man in possession of a prized cultural capital, and it is this capital that he promises to share with his readers.

Ottley's preface identifies a characteristic discrepancy that his book promises to address. The gentlemen that he describes are 'admirers of pictures' and yet 'at a loss to discover […] the peculiar merit of this or that performance'. While Ottley asserts his

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20 William Young Ottley, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures in the National Gallery, with Critical Remarks on their Merits. Part 1, The Angerstein Collection* (London: John Murray, 1826), pp. vi-vii.

authority over the anonymous gentlemen, he also makes sure not to alienate them by suggesting that this is a common feeling, even among respectable viewers. How to position one's self within this social setting, including how to hide one's ignorance, was clearly a concern. While guidebooks helped gallery-goers with their practical concerns, literary texts provided a model as to how appropriately to register an emotional responsiveness to important visual works. Furthermore, they invite their readers to register disgust with other, and inherently vulgar viewers, in a way that was not possible or acceptable in the average guidebook or manual. This literature often invited its readers to assume a dignified social posture by satirizing those viewers who affectedly parrot connoisseurial language. Such texts seem to replicate the distinction common in the eighteenth century between the gentlemanly viewer and the pedantic scholar but they reproduce that distinction for the new type of middle-class consumer of art. Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1823) follows the adventures of the Corinthian Tom as he displays the sights of London to his country-bumpkin cousin Jerry Hawthorn. Tom is a Corinthian because of the breadth of his social sympathies: he is equally at home in conversation with a costermonger and a countess. His cultural interests are equally broad, extending from a lecture by Coleridge to a dog fight and the Royal Academy's Exhibition. At the Exhibition Tom instructs his uninitiated cousin in the behaviour that is required, informing him that the true lover of art visits the exhibition at least four times in order to truly understand all the subtleties of what is on display. On their visit, Jerry observes that visiting the exhibition is a wonderful opportunity to become acquainted with all the best British artists, and to learn from fellow visitors:

> It also appears to me that we are surrounded with a host of critics; as I have heard no other remarks, but, 'What a shocking daub; —a most miserable likeness, indeed! —it is as coarse as sign-painting,' accompanied with grimaces and shrugs of the shoulders; —contrasted with 'The execution is fine! —full of character! —it is positively life itself! —what exquisite touches! — the colouring is delicious! —the drapery is delightful! —but, my dear Madam, only look at the beauty of the frames!'—
> 'Not *critics*, my Coz,' answered TOM, with much severity of manner; 'I had rather you had called them flippant *soi-disant* judges'.[21]

New to the capital and its art world, Jerry is dependent on Tom to teach him how to assume a posture of superiority. Jerry's naïve belief that he is surrounded by connoisseurs betrays his lack of experience, while Egan clearly pokes fun at the would-be critics' attempts to claim authority and even possibly at Tom's own carefully cultivated pseudo-aristocratic disdain. While Tom quickly corrects Jerry's foolishness and is even able to protect their

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21 Pierce Egan, *Life in London; or, the Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn, Esq. and his Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom, Accompanied by Bob Logic, the Oxonian, in their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis* (London: Sherwood, Jones and Co., 1823), p. 341.

social positions through his haughtiness, Jerry's ignorance has brought him dangerously close to identifying himself with rather than distinguishing himself from the promiscuous crowd that attended the Royal Academy Exhibitions. Tom's labelling of the other viewers as 'soi-distant judges', or 'self-styled' judges accomplishes the crucial device of defining himself in opposition to the common run of spectators who are categorised as vulgar (self-educated and middle-class) viewers.

Tom must correct his cousin because Jerry's mistaken identification of the vulgar viewers as connoisseurs threatens the masculine ease and authority on which Tom's claim to be a Corinthian rests. To regard another as one's superior is to occupy a feminine space that is inappropriate to Jerry's status as a member of the landed gentry. Tom's identification of the other visitors as self-educated bourgeois viewers, as well as the passage's emphasis on the viewers' hyperbolic exclamations, safeguards the masculinity on which he founds his sense of his own self-worth by characterising the 'soi-disant judges' as effeminate in their deployment of an affected connoisseurial language. In her essay, 'Aesthetics of Ignorance', which examines the eighteenth-century dialectic between 'accomplished women' and 'gentlemen connoisseurs', Ann Bermingham maps out the ways in which the male connoisseur's gaze traversed the aesthetic space of the 'accomplished woman'. Although the connotations of and possibilities for connoisseurship were broadening in post-Waterloo Britain, the role of women viewers remained circumscribed by the social nature of the art discourse. To become 'accomplished' was as desired an attribute in the nineteenth century as it had been for the previous generation. The possibility was no longer confined to the daughters of gentlemen, and the social extension of the ambition to become cultured had deep commercial implications for the art world. Bermingham argues that

> since women were taught to appreciate the visual arts only through copying drawings, prints, and engravings, they were placed in somewhat the same position as the artists *vis à vis* the connoisseurs, for it was through their mechanical skills not their intellectual abilities that they managed in only a partial and imperfect way to access high culture. Thus it is in the context of the rise of connoisseurship at the end of the century that the increasing stress placed on feminine accomplishments must be understood in all its exclusionary power. Women's lack of reason and originality was manifested in the accomplishment and rehearsed and reconfirmed every time they sketched, or painted, or played. The accomplished woman not only performed her femininity but her 'natural' inferiority as well. Not only did her accomplishments invite the gaze they also justified her exclusion from public life and from the connoisseur's republic of taste. The trope of lack used to differentiate the accomplished woman from the gentleman connoisseur is symptomatic of the patriarchal subtext contained within the discourses of

connoisseurship and civic humanism.[22]

As aesthetic and social boundaries were redrawn, the exclusion of women became at once more subtle and increasingly pervasive. Remnants from the earlier discourse of civic humanism and connoisseurship mark Tom's attitude. The women that Jerry mistakes for critics are able to mimic the language of the connoisseurs, yet are unable to establish their authority in the eyes of their social superior, Tom. Even their friends, the Misses Trifle, who greet them just after Tom has made his remark, and amuse the gentlemen with 'their trite and elegant remarks on the paintings and various characters they accidentally mixed with in their walk through the Exhibition', betray how the period's gender-based social hierarchy is manifested in its art discourse.[23] As a gentleman, Tom establishes his own authority through the confident expression of his scorn of others. Female viewers, however, navigated a more complex avenue towards connoisseurship.

Despite the challenges faced by women in this social-aesthetic space, they were able to establish themselves as a major force in the art discourse throughout the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the century it remained problematic for women to engage in commercial publishing, but the increasing demand for cultural guides offered important opportunities for female writers, critics and art historians. Anna Jameson, whose travel novel *Diary of an Ennuyée* I discussed in the first chapter, became a prolific writer on art. Her later works, especially, were a useful resource for later Victorian critics, most notably Ruskin. However, her early novel provides an interesting case study for the ways in which women could rhetorically assert their connoisseurial knowledge of art in post-Waterloo Britain. In *Diary of an Ennuyée*, Jameson's narrator uses three tactics in order to assert this authority. First, she displays a technical knowledge which establishes her position of equality both with artists and with the more conventional, male connoisseurs. Second, and paradoxically, she establishes a sympathetic intimacy with her untutored reader by downplaying her knowledge and suggesting that her own expertise is the product of a process of unassisted learning. Finally, she mocks as unfeeling the connoisseur's reliance on technical terms, intimating that feminine intuition represents a way of knowing and responding to art that is more creative, and hence more in sympathy with the genius of the painter. By adopting these various stances within the one text, Jameson both indicates how complex a business it was for a woman to establish a place for herself in the art discourse of the early nineteenth century, and offers a revealing example of how indirectly a writer

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22 Bermingham, 'Aesthetics of Ignorance', p. 14.
23 Egan, *Life in London*, p. 342.

might develop a claim to aesthetic authority.

Throughout this travel narrative, Jameson's narrator insists on her dedication to art and specifically to learning about art. In the section on Florence, Jameson describes her 'favourite occupation' as visiting and studying in the Uffizi and the Palazzo Pitti. Instead of just describing her favourite paintings or enumerating the contents of the gallery, as earlier travel writers and contemporary guides tended to do, she proceeds to define what she means when she speaks of the 'styles' of different painters. The following excerpt in which scholarly instruction is framed by emotional responses, reveals what kind of readership the 'diary' is meant for, while it also characterizes both its author and its heroine as serious students of art. 'By the style of any particular painter,' she writes,

> I presume we mean to express the combination of two separate essentials—
> first, his peculiar conception of his subject; secondly, his peculiar method of
> executing that conception, with regard to colouring, drawing, and what artists
> call handling. The former department of style, lies in the mind, and will vary
> according to the feelings, the temper, the personal habits and previous
> education of the painter: the latter is merely mechanical, and is technically
> termed the *manner* of a painter; it may be cold or warm, hard, dry, free, strong,
> tender: as we say the cold manner of Sasso Ferrato, the warm manner of
> Giorgione, the hard manner of Holbein, the dry manner of Perugino, the free
> manner of Rubens, the strong manner of Carravaggio, and so forth; I heard an
> amateur once observe, that one of Morland's Pigsties was painted with great
> *feeling*: all this refers merely to mechanical execution.[24]

This deliberate and detailed definition of a painter's 'style' characterises the narrator as a serious and thoughtful person, despite the novel's predominantly melancholic tone. Furthermore, Jameson provides her readers with a precise vocabulary, which her readers are implicitly invited to deploy in descriptions of their own experiences of works of art. By commenting on an anonymous amateur's remarks on Morland, the narrator implicitly warns her readers from making a similar mistake. In the process, she confirms her own authority.

Throughout the novel, Jameson's narrator emphasizes the learning process that she has herself gone through, as a result of which she has gained confidence in the use of her own intuition. While this mode of assessment might seem stereotypically feminine and hence open to criticism by male connoisseurs, Jameson uses it to empower herself by stressing the correct conclusions it has led her to draw. The role that she arrives at is one in which she mediates between the connoisseur and the uninformed general public, and that intermediary role allows her at once the humility that is still more acceptable in the woman critic, and the special authority that derives from an intimacy with the experience of her

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24 Anna Jameson, *Diary of an Ennuyée* (London: Henry Colburn, 1826), p. 330.

readers from which the connoisseur is excluded precisely because of his specialist knowledge. She writes,

> I am no connoisseur; and I should have lamented as a misfortune, the want of some fixed principles of taste and criticism to guide my judgment; some nomenclature by which to express certain effects, peculiarities, and excellencies which I felt, rather than understood; if my own ignorance had not afforded considerable amusement to myself and perhaps to others. I have derived some gratification from observing the gradual improvement of my own taste; and from comparing the decisions of my own unassisted judgment and natural feelings, with the fiat of profound critics and connoisseurs: the result has been sometimes mortifying, sometimes pleasing.[25]

Though she lacks a connoisseur's technical vocabulary, her intuition allows her to recognize, in some small way, the 'effects, peculiarities, and excellencies' of various works. She allows that her reliance on her own intuitions has sometimes resulted in embarrassment, and she admits that her taste has improved as her experience has become wider, but she is also making a quiet claim to the possession of an instinctive taste, that, given the prevailing aesthetic of the period, might be thought more essential to right judgement than a familiarity with a particular 'nomenclature'. Jameson's quiet authority derives from her claim to a natural sensitivity to art. Although she retains a degree of humbleness by laughing at herself and her mistakes, she deploys a rhetoric that scarcely convinces the reader that she regards her 'own unassisted judgment and natural feelings' as inferior to the work of 'profound critics and connoisseurs'.

The narrator, whose art education has been based almost entirely on the work of Old Masters, has gained her authority by association, as it were, with these highest examples of art. It seems that true taste can only be learned on a steady diet of works by Italian Old Masters. Indeed, the authority of the Old Masters, coupled with her confidence in her intuitive understanding of art, enables the narrator on occasion to mock so-called connoisseurs who substitute an array of technical terms for any genuine response by suggesting that their appreciation of works of art is performed rather than felt:

> Here comes a connoisseur, who has found his way, good man! from Somerset House, to the Tribune at Florence: See him with one hand passed across his brow, to shade the light, while the other extended forwards, describes certain indescribable circumvolutions in the air, and now he retires, now advances, now recedes again, till he has hit the exact distance from which every point of beauty is displayed to the best possible advantage, and there he stands— gazing, as never gazed the moon upon the waters, or love-sick maiden upon the moon! We take him perhaps for another Pygmalion? We imagine that it is those parted and half-breathing lips, those eyes that *seem* to float in light; the pictured majesty of suffering virtue, or the tears of repenting loveliness; the

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25 Jameson, *Diary of an Ennuyée*, pp. 330-331.

divinity of beauty, or the "*the beauty of holiness*," which have thus transfixed him. No such thing: it is the *fleshiness* of the tints, the *vaghezza* of the colouring, the brilliance of the carnations, the fold of a robe, or the foreshortening of a little finger. O! whip me such connoisseurs! the critic's stop-watch was nothing to this.[26]

In a reversal of Egan's scene, Jameson attributes aesthetic affectation not to the ill-informed general public, but to the acknowledged expert. It is the gentleman connoisseur's posturing which renders him amateurish, his movements predetermined, his interests and opinions merely conventional in comparison with those of the authentic viewer who has a good taste that is at once innate and acquired. However, this passage also betrays that Jameson's celebration of 'natural', 'spontaneous' responsiveness is itself literary. Her language and the incident that she describes mimic Byron's passage on the Uffizi and the Venus de' Medici in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which we will discuss in the next chapter. Yet, it is through this passage and others like it that Jameson establishes her claim to be a trustworthy guide in the appreciation of the high art of the Old Masters for the inexperienced reader.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the appreciation of art was no longer a skill confined to the aristocrats or to practising artists. Instead, art was now available to a wide and diverse public. As we saw in the first chapter, this public was acquainted with a richly various visual culture amongst which Italian Old Master works, on display in the metropolis, in the country seats of aristocrats and dispersed in the form of engravings throughout Britain, retained their preeminent position. In addition, in the years following Waterloo, an unprecedented number of British art enthusiasts were able to travel to Italy to view the artworks and ruins long revered by the Grand Tourists. This led to the production of new kinds of guidebook that soon began to resemble the guidebooks we are familiar with today. It also led to a demand for other kinds of instruction on art appreciation and practices, which might equally well be published in periodicals or in book form. There were an increasing number of guides to galleries at home and abroad that furnished their readers with practical information, such as opening times and tipping practices, as well as comments on the merits of individual works. Literary texts also offered their readers help in navigating the social space of art appreciation. Despite its satirical manner, Pierce Egan's *Life in London*, for instance, still has a pedagogical function in instructing the inexperienced visitor how to behave, and how to avoid embarrassment when visiting the Royal Academy exhibition. Anna Jameson's work reveals how a cunning writer might even

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26 Jameson, *Diary of an Ennuyée*, pp. 331-332.

offer her own feminine lack of learning as the ground of a new authority rather than as a disability that disqualified her from the exercise of proper authority. As the early decades of the century progressed, access to the best examples of art came to be seen as a right that ought to be extended to the entire population, a recognition that culminated in the creation of the National Gallery. The process of democratization brought with it a new understanding of what it meant to own a work of art. Increasingly, guidebooks and literary works that dwelt on the experience of works of art began to suggest that a work of art belonged to all those who were capable of rightly appreciating it. In his guide to Britain's private art galleries, Patmore writes,

> The true lover of art cares not to whom a fine picture may *belong*; he, and he alone, is the *possessor* of it, who is sufficiently impressed with its beauties to be able to enjoy the memory of them; and he sees no difference in those beauties, whether they look upon him from the walls of a palace or of a picture-dealer's shop; —nay, he scarcely thinks the worse of them for having an auctioneer's lot-mark in the corner—since this does not oblige him to read the *description* appertaining to it![27]

Patmore's examples of where art can be accessed – palaces, shops and auctions – shows how diverse the venues for art appreciation had become. Wandering through these venues, the art lover sees works that belong to other people, or, if the works are in picture shops or auction houses, works offered for sale to those with the money to purchase them. But Patmore suggests that memory allows the art lover to possess a work of art once seen in a more authentic sense than the work is possessed by the individual who has purchased or inherited it. Patmore is briefly indicating in such passages the development of a new type of connoisseur.

Poetic Connoisseurs

While many writers, such as Ottley, welcomed the social aspect of art discourse, others like Egan, suggested that precisely because the appreciation of art always takes place in a social space it is always competitive. The art lover is always attempting to distinguish his own authentic appreciation of the work from the inauthentic appreciation that defines the vulgar spectator. With the large increase in British tourists on the continent, for example, an increasingly urgent need developed to distinguish, to use James Buzard's terms, the authentic traveller from the inauthentic tourist. In her *Westminster Review* (October, 1826)

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27 Patmore, *British Galleries of Art*, pp. 120-121.

article which we discussed in the introduction, Mary Shelley conveys the sense that travellers to the continent had become a vulgar mob rather than an exclusive group of the wealthy or of the cultured. She writes,

> When peace came after many long years of war, when our island prison was opened to us, and our watery exit from it was declared practicable, it was the paramount wish of every English heart, ever addicted to vagabondizing, to hasten to the continent, and to imitate our forefathers in their almost forgotten custom, of spending the greater part of their lives and fortunes in their carriages on the post-roads of the continent. With the brief and luckless exception of the peace of Amiens, the continent had not been open for the space of more than one-and-twenty years; a new generation had sprung up, and the whole of this, who had money and time at command, poured, in one vast stream, across the Pas de Calais into France: in their numbers, and their eagerness to proceed forward, they might be compared to the Norwegian rats, who always go right on, and when they come to an opposing stream, still pursue their route, till a bridge is formed of the bodies of the drowned, over which the living pass in safety.[28]

The hyperbolic image of British tourists as rats infesting the continent was a common trope in the travel literature of the period, and a symptom of the distinction between the tourist and the true traveller that Buzard has so incisively identified.[29] In his pioneering work on this topic, Buzard deems the traveller who positions him or herself against the tourist, as an 'anti-tourist'. This self-identification, he argues,

> offered an important, even exemplary way of regarding one's own cultural experiences as authentic and unique, setting them against a backdrop of always assumed tourist vulgarity, repetition, and ignorance. The experiences and performative opportunities provided on tour have contributed vitally to the lasting conceptions tourists (travellers?) build about themselves and the societies they inhabit and tour – images of self and setting reciprocally reinforcing one another.[30]

Similar distinctions were made in much of the travel writing of the nineteenth century. The desire to accumulate cultural capital by establishing an intimate acquaintance with Italian Renaissance art was one strong incentive to assume this 'anti-tourist' stance. Indeed, the various notions of connoisseurship examined in this chapter are intimately linked with the development of this rhetoric. 'For the practitioner', Buzard writes, 'the objects viewed and savoured on tour represent "positional good" in a cultural market-place – that is to say, goods whose consumption is either valuable or not, depending upon how commonly others

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28 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 'The English in Italy', in *The Mary Shelley Reader: Containing Frankenstein, Mathilda, Tales and Stories, Essays and Reviews, and Letters*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett and Charles E. Robinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 341- 357 (p. 341).
29 Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, p. 83.
30 Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, p. 5.

consume them too'.[31] When a larger and more diverse social group were able to travel in Europe there was the danger that these 'goods' would lose their value by becoming over-consumed, and the rhetoric of the anti-tourist developed as a means of maintaining their value, by distinguishing an exclusive set of authentic viewers from the large group of inauthentic viewers. Connoisseurship was no longer best demonstrated by filling up curiosity cabinets or even by writing treatises on art. Rather an appreciation of art was demonstrated to one's fellow viewers through an active engagement with art, which might include attending lectures on art, visiting galleries, collecting and displaying prints in one's home, buying and reading books and periodicals on the subject, and travelling to Italy to visit the most highly regarded works. The acquisition of a knowledge of Italian Renaissance art became a means by which viewers of a new kind might lay claim to a once exclusive prestige.

The Romantic or poetic, connoisseur began to claim, I shall argue, membership in a new aristocracy. This aristocracy was not founded on the privilege of wealth or birth. It was an aristocracy of taste, based on a refined sensibility and an innate ability to perceive and respond to beauty and genius. The poetic connoisseur's own genius was, as it were, ratified in a recognition of the genius of the artist. The authentic response manifested itself in an appreciation that was itself creative, and its authenticity was most powerfully demonstrated when the response was not simply intellectual but felt throughout the body. Unlike the social scenes depicted by Pierce Egan or the socially conscious narrator of Anna Jameson's text, the Romantic viewer's experience of art tended to be inward, personal and solitary. The literature of the period repeatedly introduces inauthentic connoisseurs, connoisseurs whose passionate appreciation of works of art whether written or performed, are inauthentic precisely because they are intended for the eyes of others. The Romantic connoisseur's intense physical, emotional and imaginative reaction to a work of art is presented by contrast as private (a presentation that in a published text involves obvious paradoxes), and its privacy is presented as a necessary condition of its authenticity.

Jameson and Egan both write on the assumption that the viewing of paintings is a social experience, but this is precisely what the Romantic connoisseur denies. For the Romantic viewer, art offers an experience in which privacy speaks to privacy. Genius is a characteristic of the individual and it can only be recognized by the individuality of the viewer. Just as beauty is the product of the imagination of the artist, it is perceptible only by means of the imagination of the viewer. The poetic connoisseur has no need for

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31 Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, p. 153.

guidebooks: his refined sensibility give him the only tools needed for discernment. In January 1819, Shelley wrote to his friend Thomas Love Peacock, responding to Peacock's suggestion that he publish his remarks on the Italian galleries: '[a] perception of the beautiful charact[er]izes those who differ from ordinary men; & those who can perceive it would not buy enough to pay the printer'.[32] The rare ability to perceive beauty sets the poetic connoisseur apart from the general run of gallery visitors. Those who can recognize beauty are, according to Shelley, form a class as exclusive as those who can produce it. In other words, the process of democratization that I have been tracing, a process evident in the increased amount of foreign travel, increased access to exhibitions and private and public galleries, increased access to engravings, and so on, in itself generated a reaction. Shelley defines true appreciation by its difference from the appreciation of the many.

Much recent scholarship on Romantic reactions to the art of Italy has focused on the classical period, and particularly on the ruins of Rome. Although medieval and Renaissance Italy offered different imaginative possibilities to Romantic writers, there is some common ground in responses to classical ruins and Old Master art. Recently, Stephen Cheeke has argued that Romantic reactions to Rome's ruins were often characterized as spontaneous and emotionally charged in self-conscious resistance to the responses of previous travellers. He writes, '[h]ostility to connoisseurship, anti-antiquarianism, and scorn for archaeological knowledge, were important parts of the sensibility of visitors such as Byron and Shelley in Rome'.[33] This hostility is also evident in Romantic writings on Italian Renaissance art. While Romantic or poetic connoisseurs, like Byron and Shelley, might be familiar with the scholarship pertaining to Old Master works, their writings on art tends to offer an exclusively emotional understanding of the works. In his letter to Peacock, Shelley implies that the ability to perceive beauty, unlike the technical connoisseur's knowledge of conventional standards of beauty, let alone the bourgeois tourist's knowledge gained from guidebooks, cannot be learned nor can it be faked. Cheeke argues that Shelley identifies conventional classical tourists as the primary sources of a "shew-knowledge" that demonstrates both an intellectual and social inferiority. This type of knowledge lies exterior to the "inexhaustible mine of thought and feeling," to the profound depths of which the poet responds, and is tainted for Shelley by the very fact that it could be commonly possessed.[34]

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32 *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), II, p. 70.
33 Stephen Cheeke, '"What so many have told, who would tell again?" Romanticism and the Commonplaces of Rome', *European Romantic Review*, 17.5 (2006), 521-541 (p. 526).
34 Cheeke, 'Commonplaces of Rome', p. 533.

The ability to perceive beauty is a rare gift and one, the poetic connoisseur argues, that aligns its exponent with the similarly rare gift of artistic genius itself. Clearly there is an implication that those like Byron and Shelley possessed of poetic genius, are, precisely because of that, better equipped than those not so possessed to fully appreciate a similar genius displayed in a different medium. Proper appreciation requires that the viewer respond with genius to the painter's genius, although it was widely accepted that the viewer's sensibility was also capable of growth and improvement. By attending carefully to his own responses, the poetic connoisseur improves his mind and strengthens his faculties. In his *Defence of Poetry*, Shelley offers a definition of poetry broad enough to include all branches of the fine arts. Importantly, he also takes as a premise that everything exists as it is perceived. Yet, the mind in Shelley's account is both supremely powerful and painfully limited. For those fortunate enough to perceive beauty, art can lift 'life's dark veil', freeing the perceiver from the banal cares of the world, and more importantly, redeeming the world of its stale familiarity. Shelley writes,

> poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. And whether it spreads its own figured curtain or withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being. It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are the portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration. It justifies that bold and true word of Tasso—*Non merita nome di creatore, se non Iddio ed il Poeta*.[35]

Poetry, and art more generally, enable the reader or viewer to see the world afresh and to wonder at even the most familiar objects. Art 'purges' the 'film of familiarity' that veils the viewer or reader's imagination, and in so doing gives the viewer space for creative thought, the space to 'imagine that which we know'. In his book *Poetic Exhibitions* (2001), Eric Gidal places Shelley's *Defence* in the context of other critical art historiographies which emerged at the same period:

> Shelley's manifesto likewise synthesizes the opposition between a contemplative and an active role for art and thereby offers a model for retrieving the productions of the past without either effacing their alterity through idealization or reducing them to archaeological artifacts.[36]

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35 Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry; or, Remarks Suggested by an Essay Entitled "The Four Ages of Poetry"', in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and N. Fraistat, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2002), pp. 510- 535 (p. 533).
36 Eric Gidal, *Poetic Exhibitions: Romantic Aesthetics and the Pleasures of the British Museum* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001), p. 230.

Shelley celebrates the manner in which art differs from normal life, because doing so alters the nature of the most familiar object. The things which are taken for granted thus regain their aesthetic value as they become unfamiliar and alive. In his creative response to art and the genius which created it, the poetic connoisseur reveals his own creativity.

Shelley's assertion that art cleanses the perceiver's imagination, allowing him to experience a new reality, underwrites the poetic mind's capacity for growth and enrichment. The poetic connoisseur's mind grows as it encounters new art works and as it forges links between different works of art and literature. This was as possible in the response to architectural spaces as it was in the response to individual paintings or poems. Although some anti-Catholic writers viewed the church as overly ornate, St Peter's Basilica in Rome was often viewed as a whole and coherent work of art, one which had the potential to expand the visitor's mind. Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, IV* contains one of the period's most surprising, and under-appreciated, depictions of St Peter's (1369-1431). The extensive scholarship that has focused on the presentation of works of art in Canto IV, with its primary focus on the ekphrastic passages in which Byron re-creates ancient sculpture and Rome's ruins, has often overlooked the long descriptive passage in which Byron contemplates one of the supreme examples of Renaissance and Baroque architecture. The narrator first refers to the building in a picturesque and somewhat hyperbolic description of it as seen from Hadrian's Mausoleum, Castel Sant'Angelo. After this enthusiastic invocation of the building, the first imaginative moments inside the Basilica are somewhat anti-climactic. However, Byron uses this tonal shift to map the growth of the poetic connoisseur's mind within this aesthetic space. He writes,

> Enter: its grandeur overwhelms thee not;
> And why? it is not lessened; but thy mind,
> Expanded by the genius of the spot,
> Has grown colossal, and can only find
> A fit abode wherein appear enshrined
> Thy hopes of immortality. (1387- 1392)

In Byron's description, the pilgrim's mind grows to fill the artistic space it has entered. Upon closer inspection, the Basilica reveals how elements are harmoniously blended and layered, one upon the other. Byron's narrator asserts that it is by examining and absorbing these elements of St Peter's that 'growing with its growth, we thus dilate/ Our spirits to the size of that they contemplate' (1421-1422). In many ways, Byron's treatment of St Peter's was not new. Addison, for example, wrote,

> *St. Peters* seldom answers Expectation at first entering it, but enlarges it self on

all Sides insensibly, and mends upon the Eye every Moment. The Proportions are so very well observ'd, that nothing appears to an Advantage, or distinguishes itself above the rest. It seems neither extremely high, nor long, nor broad, because it is all of them in a just Equality.[37]

At first glance, it seems that Byron and Addison are both articulating a common feeling of disappointment upon first entering the building, which is surprisingly created by the perfect proportions of the architecture. However it is important to note that Addison's narrator maintains his distance throughout. His 'Eye' has been trained to analyse how the failure of any single aspect of the building to impress itself upon the spectator is a demonstration of the 'just Equality' of the whole. Yet this is merely a starting point for Byron. He demands that the connoisseur respond to the building with an effort of his own imagination:

> Then pause, and be enlightened; there is more
> In such a survey than the sating gaze
> Of wonder pleased, or awe which would adore
> The worship of the place, or the mere praise
> Of art and its great masters, who could raise
> What former time, nor skill, nor thought could plan;
> The fountain of sublimity displays
> Its depth, and thence may draw the mind of man
> Its golden sands, and learn what great conceptions can. (1423-1431)

Byron separates the poetic connoisseur from the run-of-the-mill tourists and pedantic antiquarians alike. The Basilica is not a curiosity cabinet, and the viewer's ability simply to share the thoughts with which all Grand Tourists were invited to respond to the building is not enough. Similarly, the poetic connoisseur is distinguished from superficial tourists who merely gape at the magnificence of St Peter's. For the poetic connoisseur, to contemplate the building is at once to meditate on and to participate in humanity's creative genius.

Although the first two stanzas which invoke St Peter's Basilica seem to be concerned with Western, Christian culture, Byron's emphasis on the human mind's capabilities, raises the poetic connoisseur above the confines of his specific time, place and ideological position. Byron suggests that the power of the poetic experience offers a unique form of understanding, quite different from and far superior to the kind of knowledge claimed by the cognoscenti. Yet the passage, on close inspection, is found to incorporate precisely the times, the places and the ideologies that it claims to transcend. Inherent in St Peter's mausoleum is the notion that Papal Rome has superseded Republican Rome. In his

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37 Joseph Addison, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, &c. in the years 1701, 1702, 1703*, 2nd edn (London: J. Tonson, 1718), p. 132, in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO> [accessed 26 July 2009].

first stanza on the Basilica, Byron underlines this notion by moving from East to West, from 'Diana's marvel' to 'Sophia's bright roofs' and finally to St Peter's. In naming these churches, Byron also mimics the space's physical construction: the pavement of the central aisle lists the world's largest churches in order, with St Peter's forming the climax of the list. The narrator's assertion that 'nothing [is] like to thee [St Peter's]' (1379) is also directed at those of Byron's contemporaries who patriotically placed it second to London's St Paul, in overall effect or design, despite it being a good 30 metres higher.

Byron and Shelley both wrote from the perspective of what I have called the Romantic connoisseur, but the contemporary who best embodied the type and did most to define it was William Hazlitt. Throughout his life, Hazlitt celebrated Napoleon's museum project as the liberation of art from the hands of the *ancien regime*. Yet he also insisted that art can only truly be appreciated by a select handful of viewers. Although he does not share the aristocratic background of Shelley and Byron, Hazlitt maintains that true taste is the exclusive ability of a privileged few. Throughout his prolific career, Hazlitt would, seemingly in contradiction with his liberal, democratic ideals, espouse an elitist notion of art. Yet this apparent contradiction at the heart of Hazlitt's writing offers in itself a revealing insight into the two opposing impulses that together characterise Britain's art world at the turn of the nineteenth century. Importantly, Hazlitt defines the authentic viewer of art by his distance from both the commercially-driven contemporary art scene inhabited by fashionable audiences and popular painters and the kind of appreciation dependent on the use of a specialized technical language on which another kind of expert founded his claim to authority.

Hazlitt celebrates the Louvre for placing art in its proper place, that is, available to all rather than restricted to the kings and aristocrats of Europe. Collecting the finest works of art together in one space was a crowning tribute to art, human genius and liberty: '[t]he crown she wore was brighter than that of kings. Where the triumphs of human liberty had been, there were the triumphs of human genius'.[38] The *ancien regime*'s claim to the ownership of art was arbitrary, but almost all standards of taste are likely to become entangled with notions of class. At the turn of the nineteenth century, as it was becoming easier to view private collections, Hazlitt finds ample opportunity for mocking the assumed privilege of the upper classes. In his three-part essay, 'Fine Arts. Whether They are Promoted by Academies and Public Institutions', which ran from August through October 1814 in *The Champion*, Hazlitt writes,

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38 Hazlitt, XVIII, 102.

> Come, then, ye banks of Wapping, and classic haunts of Ratcliffe-highway, and join thy fields, blithe Tothill—let the postchaises, gay with oaken boughs, be put in requisition for school-boys from Eton and Harrow, and school-girls from Hackney and Mile-end,—and let a jury be empanelled to decide on the merits of Raphael, and——. The verdict will be infallible.[39]

Hazlitt creates a kind of miniature and internal version of the Grand Tour, yet the future MPs at Eton and Harrow are not inherently more capable of judging Raphael, despite coming from a privileged background. This passage follows directly after a section where Hazlitt describes the gaping visitors staring at the 'the wide dazzling waste of colour' at Somerset House's exhibition. Aristocratic privilege and vulgar fashion are thus conflated and found to be equally incapable of truly appreciating art.

Hazlitt values the Louvre for deeply personal reasons as well. Having started studying painting in 1798, he was commissioned to make copies in the Louvre from October 1802 until the following February. The memory of viewing and copying these works stayed with him throughout his life and he retained many of his own copies. Though he would later quit painting, he always maintained a sympathy with artists and the act of creating. In his two-part *Table-Talk* essay, 'On the Pleasure of Painting' (1821), Hazlitt praised artists and the physical and pleasurable act of painting. According to Hazlitt, the 'humblest painter is a true scholar; and the best of scholars—the scholar of nature. […] He perceives form; he distinguishes character. He reads men and books with an intuitive glance. He is a critic as well as connoisseur'.[40] Hazlitt also argues that painting is a 'mechanical as well as a liberal art'; indeed it is the very fact that painting 'exercises the body' that makes it so valuable and pleasing.[41] Its very physicality leads to a discovery of truth. Though, as we have seen, gentlemen connoisseurs objected to the 'painful or disgusting' instruments of painting – i.e. brushes, oils, paints – the artist embraces the material conditions of his art in the 'pursuit of a higher object'.[42] However, as a trained painter who abandoned the profession because he came to feel that he would never reach the standards of the Old Masters, Hazlitt is careful to distinguish the works of the Old Masters from other examples of painting or sculpture. In his essay, 'Judging of Pictures', which first appeared in *The Literary Examiner*,, Hazlitt focuses on the 'higher branches' of painting, or what he calls the 'poetry of painting'. It is an expression that works to deny both painters and connoisseurs the exclusive authority of judging a painting's worth. 'No man', writes Hazlitt, 'can judge of poetry without possessing in some measure a poetical

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39 Hazlitt, xviii, 47.
40 Hazlitt, viii, 10.
41 Hazlitt, viii, 11.
42 Hazlitt, viii, 17.

mind. It need not be of that degree necessary to create, but it must be equal to taste and to analyse'.[43] Just as it is not necessary for a reader or an audience member to be able to write poetry or drama in order to enjoy a poem or a play, neither need an art-lover be able to paint a picture in order to enjoy or understand viewing one. The qualifications necessary are not technical but mental. Hazlitt continues,

> I am far from saying that *any* one is capable of duly judging pictures of the higher class. It requires a mind capable of estimating the noble, or touching, or terrible, or sublime subjects which they present—but there is no sort of necessity that we should be able to put them upon the canvas ourselves.[44]

Importantly, the only pictures really worth judging are of this higher class, by which Hazlitt means primarily the Old Masters. Hazlitt does not require his viewer to understand the mechanical aspects of a work's composition, its historical context, or even its iconographical significance. Rather, the ideal viewer must have a certain type of mind which can read the emotional tenor of the painting. Hazlitt's emphasis on the viewer's poetic mind shifts authority away from both the professional artist and the learned connoisseur. The new authority is a poetic connoisseur whose intuitive and emotional understanding of the work makes possible a true knowledge of genius.

The elitism that Hazlitt recommends is not at all an elitism of birth, which is why it is entirely consistent with his insistence that art should be open to the general public. Although modern artists can create art (even if they will never be able to rival the work of the Old Masters), their technical knowledge is not necessary to the proper understanding and appreciation of art. Connoisseurs may know the names, biographies and supposed characteristics of particular works and artists, and yet may be blind to the energy or gusto inherent in their work which makes it alive. But while art should be accessible to those of common birth, its excellence can be apprehended only by those with far from common ability. As Ann Pullan writes, even 'if art was "accessible" to all, Hazlitt was equally insistent that only the "few" could feel the power of art and respond with true understanding'.[45] Hazlitt's inconsistencies arise from the need he feels to attack various groups, each of which claims an exclusive authority to speak on aesthetic matters. He refuses to grant artists the sole power of understanding the meaning of paintings and in doing so may sometimes write as if he is concerned to democratize the experience of art. He denies

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43 Hazlitt, XVIII, pp. 182-183.
44 Hazlitt, XVIII, 183.
45 Ann Pullan, '"Conversations on the Arts": Writing a Space for the Female Viewer in the *Repository of Arts*, 1809-15', *Oxford Art Journal*, 15.2 (1992), pp. 15-26 (p.15).

> *in toto* and at once the exclusive right and power of painters to judge of pictures. What is a picture meant for? To convey certain ideas to the mind of painters? that is, of one man in ten thousand?—No, but to make them apparent to the eye and mind of all. […] All that the painter can do more than the *lay* spectator, is to tell *why* and *how* the merits and defects of a picture are produced.[46]

Similarly Hazlitt supported the Louvre in part because it embodied for him a democratic principle, that the greatest works of art should be accessible to all no matter their wealth or birth. But he also vehemently denied that the Louvre or any similar institution might function to improve contemporary schools of art by offering artists easy access to the finest work of the past, or even that it might function to enhance the appreciation of the greatest works of art. He insisted that neither taste nor standards in the fine arts could become progressive by the operation of institutions such as the Louvre or the Royal Academy. Hazlitt argues,

> The principle of universal suffrage, however applicable to matters of government, which concern the common feelings and common interests of society, is by no means applicable to matters of taste, which can only be decided upon by the most refined understandings. It is throwing down the barriers which separate knowledge and feeling from ignorance and vulgarity, and proclaiming a Bartholomew-fair-show of the fine arts—
>
> 'And fools rush in where angels fear to tread.'
>
> The public taste is, therefore, necessarily vitiated, in proportion as it is public; it is lowered with every infusion it receives of common opinion. The greater number of judges, the less capable must they be of judging, for the addition to the number of good ones will always be small, while the multitude of bad ones is endless, and thus the decay of art may be said to be the necessary consequence of its progress.[47]

Here he denies absolutely the claim of the Royal Academy to function as a public promoter of art and taste, in favour of the position that neither the production nor the appreciation of works of art can be fostered within the public realm. While some 'good' judges may emerge (like Hazlitt himself), the number of bad judges is 'endless'. Furthermore, Hazlitt argues that art's decay is only accelerated by any attempt to improve it. Art has already reached its pinnacle. Hazlitt thought his own age an age of criticism rather than an age of creation, but even criticism is defined by Hazlitt as an individual rather than a social activity. Matters of taste, Hazlitt argues, require 'the most refined understandings'. It is a heightened sensibility which leads to an authentic understanding and appreciation of art.

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46 Hazlitt, xviii, 182.
47 Hazlitt, xviii, 46.

Yet Hazlitt's audience, the readers of the *London Magazine*, *Morning Chronicle*, and the *Monthly Magazine*, among others, was principally composed of just that general public that Hazlitt judged incapable of authentic appreciation of the fine arts. In her *Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London* (1844), Anna Jameson gives an idea of how influential the familiar style of Hazlitt's writings was for this periodical readership that was eager to learn about art. Hazlitt, whom she calls a '*poetical critic*', is

> about as bad a *guide* in a picture gallery as it is possible to have, but he is a delightful companion; and when he discourses of Rubens or of Titian, it is as one intoxicated with colour, drunk with beauty.[48]

Yet despite the readership to which his essays are addressed- and in some ways because of it – Hazlitt ultimately argues for an aristocracy of taste. At the heart of all of Hazlitt's writing is his *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1805). As the recent collection of essays, *Metaphysical Hazlitt* (2005), argues, this philosophical treatise informed all his subsequent writings and criticism.[49] Again and again, he refers back to the *Essay*, even while he recognizes it has had little recognition. 'The only thing I ever piqued myself upon,' writes Hazlitt in his *Table-Talk* essay, 'On Great and Little Things', 'was writing the *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*'.[50] While Hazlitt allows the physical or mechanical aspects of creating art a proper place and while he argues that anyone can potentially have taste regardless of class or circumstances, he does not waver in his assertion that aesthetic judgment must ultimately be philosophical rather than mechanical.

In the first chapter we discussed the plethora of venues in London that offered access to visual culture of one kind or another during and after the war with France. Despite this development, access to art, particularly to the work of Old Masters, was not taken for granted. As has already been noted, it was not until after the founding of the National Gallery, and as a consequence of it, that there began to be protests against the shilling entrance fee. Hazlitt's *Sketches of the Principal Picture Galleries in England* (1824) opens with an account of Angerstein's collection, which had just been purchased by the government to start the National Gallery. He writes,

> A visit to a genuine Collection is like going a pilgrimage—it is an act of

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48 Anna Jameson, *Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1844), p. 236.

49 *Metaphysical Hazlitt: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. by Uttara Natarajan, Tom Paulin and Duncan Wu (London: Routledge, 2005).

50 Hazlitt, VIII, 237. Elsewhere he writes, 'the only pretension, of which I am tenacious is that of being a metaphysician' (XII, 98); and again in his Letter to William Gifford (1819): 'I have been called "a writer of third-rate books." For myself, there is no work of mine which I should rate so high, except one, which I dare say you never heard of – *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action*' (IX, 51)

> devotion performed at the shrine of Art! It is as if there were but one copy of a book in the world, locked up in some curious casket, which, by special favour, we had been permitted to open, and peruse (as we must) with unaccustomed relish. The words would in that case leave stings in the mind of the reader, and every letter appear of gold. The ancients, before the invention of printing, were nearly in the same situation with respect to books, that we are with regard to pictures; and at the revival of letters, we find the same unmingled satisfaction, or fervid enthusiasm, manifested in the pursuit or the discovery of an old manuscript, that connoisseurs still feel in the purchase and possession of an antique cameo, or a fine specimen of the Italian school of painting. Literature was not then cheap and vulgar, nor was there what is called a *reading public*; and the pride of intellect, like the pride of art, or the pride of birth, was confined to the privileged few![51]

Art and the pleasure it brings belong to the select few who can fully comprehend its meanings and the truths it contains. The Old Masters have reached the pinnacle of art, and true pilgrims to the shrine of art bring to it a philosophical understanding. Indeed, one of the most important characteristics of the Romantic or poetic connoisseur is his insistence that his appreciation is grounded on his own possession, if only in a limited sense, of the artistic genius by means of which the art work was created. Criticism, in this view of things, is continuous with creation. The average viewer and even the most learned connoisseur cannot harness, nor can they learn to harness, this knowledge. When he is anxious to emphasise this point, Hazlitt writes as if the experience offered by art is defined by its lack of connection with all other experiences. 'We are', Hazlitt writes,

> abstracted to another sphere: we breathe empyrean air; we enter into the minds of Raphael, of Titian, or Poussin, of the Caracci, and look at nature with their eyes; we live in time past, and seem identified with the permanent forms of things. The business of the world at large, and even its pleasures, appear like a vanity and an impertinence. What signify the hubbub, the shifting scenery, the fantoccini figures, the folly, the ideal fashions without, when compared with the solitude, the silence, the speaking looks, the unfading forms within?—Here is the mind's true home. The contemplation of truth and beauty is the proper object for which we were created, which calls forth the most intense desires of the soul, and of which it never tires.[52]

The poetic connoisseur raises himself above the fashionable world at large and views art as the expression of universal and timeless truths. It is a view of things entirely at odds with positions that Hazlitt adopts elsewhere, as when he celebrates Wordsworth's achievement as deriving directly from 'the revolutionary movement of our age: the political changes of the day were the model on which he formed and conducted his poetical experiments'.[53] Hazlitt is so anxious to defend an aristocracy of taste that he is prepared, at least for the

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51 Hazlitt, x, 8.
52 Hazlitt, x, 7-8.
53 Hazlitt, xi, 87.

moment, to allow art independence of all the ordinary 'business of life'.

Although Hazlitt often contradicts himself, his contradictions reveal how fervently he, like Byron and Shelley, is committed to the defence of an exclusive aristocracy of taste, defined by its independence from and superiority to the merely mechanical knowledge of the practising artist, the technical knowledge of the scholar and the fashionable tastes of the general public. Authentic appreciation becomes a lonely meeting between the genius of the artist and the corresponding genius that the artist elicits in his critic. This kind of authority would come to dominate the art discourse of the early nineteenth century by its claim to an exclusive claim to the authentic appreciation of Italian Renaissance art, but in doing so, however paradoxically, it offered a model for the appreciation of that art that more and more gallery visitors and tourists in Europe began to emulate. In the next chapter, I turn from the appreciation of Italian Renaissance art and artists to consider the significance of that art to those Romantic writers intent on producing literature rather than criticism.

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Chapter Three

Making Literature

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Italian Renaissance art informed Romantic writings in a number of ways. The eighteenth-century debates concerning the sister arts had shaped much of the century's literary output but had often been reduced to a simple contest as to whether the visual or verbal arts could claim superiority. Much recent scholarship has focused on ekphrastic descriptions in nineteenth-century literature. Rather than looking at ekphrastic texts which seek to recreate the visual work in verbal form, however, I propose in this chapter to examine the ways in which visual art acted in the nineteenth century as a springboard for the production of literature in a variety of genres. Romantic writers viewed art works as multi-dimensional objects, which attested to the artistic genius of their producers, to their historical circumstances and which could also be regarded as autonomous objects. In all of these aspects they prompted Romantic writers to produce literature.

Artistic Genius

Recent scholarship has highlighted two important, inter-related aspects of Romantic-period literary culture: an increased interest in biography and in artistic genius. As David Higgins has pointed out, early nineteenth-century audiences 'were generally more interested in the private lives of "public characters" than their eighteenth-century forebears had been'.[1] The focus on biography and on individual genius inevitably resulted in the development of a critical language that might apply equally to visual and verbal art, to artist and to poet. Biography had been an essential element of art appreciation from the start. The Old Master canon, as well as the theory of art's progressive development, beginning with Giotto and culminating in the powerful triumvirate of Michelangelo, Raphael and Leonardo, was first established in Giorgio Vasari's *Le Vite de' piu Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori, e Architettori* (1550). The rivalry between Raphael and Michelangelo in their own lifetimes was extended by artists and connoisseurs for hundreds of years after their deaths. Although several factors helped to establish a hierarchy of artists, by the eighteenth century, Raphael's classical style was favoured by the academies of Europe, particularly in France.

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1   David Higgins, *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, Celebrity and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 46.

Raphael's superiority had, according to Moshe Barasch, 'become a matter of cardinal significance, almost an article of faith'. His style became 'the ultimate authority and source of the legitimacy of the academies' teaching'.[2] In particular, Raphael's ideal style was favoured over Michelangelo's muscular forms. Although Michelangelo was still recognized as a genius, his style was less easily fitted into the neoclassical mould favoured by the academies. However, at the end of the eighteenth century, this ranking was called into question in Britain, as Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his final presidential lecture, declared Michelangelo to be the pinnacle of artistic genius. Reynolds's declaration of Michelangelo's superiority destabilized received academic authority, opening the way for Romantic writers to focus on the genius of the individual artist, who was freed from the static hierarchy that the canons of neoclassical taste had so painstakingly established.

As we saw in the discussion of the Elgin Marbles in the previous chapter, the neoclassical ideals which had guided most eighteenth-century discourse on the arts, were gradually losing their influence. Between 1784 and 1807 each successive President of the Royal Academy, as Jane Stabler has documented, took up a different position in the contest between Michelangelo and Raphael: James Barry was for Raphael, Henry Fuseli, like Reynolds, supported Michelangelo, while the diplomatic John Opie focused on the distinctive merits which characterized the work of each.[3] The days of a single standard of taste were over; canonical artists were reinterpreted in new ways. This was especially true for the Romantic poets, who, although many had read widely in aesthetic philosophy, had no professional stake in the question at issue. While a practising artist might find it necessary, as Benjamin Robert Haydon did, to bring into harmony his aesthetic principles and his painterly practice, the Romantic poet was able to interpret individual Old Masters and their works more freely. Furthermore, it was possible for Romantic poets to regard the Old Masters, if they were distinguished by their possession of genius rather than by their technical abilities, as fellow poets. The Academy had overlooked some of Raphael's more innovatory qualities – which according to Francis Haskell were charged with having issued in the 'pedantic and heartless' art of seventeenth-century Bologna[4] – in favour of his traditional strengths, but Romantic writers were free to celebrate the imagination of the

2   Moshe Barasch, *Modern Theories of Art, 1: From Winckelmann to Baudelaire* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), p. 137. For the eighteenth-century reception of Raphael, see also Jean H. Hagstrum, *Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 163-165.
3   Jane Stabler, 'Subduing the Senses? British Romantic Period Travelers and Italian art', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 26.4 (2004), 320- 327 (p. 322).
4   Francis Haskell, *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 402-403.

individual artist that might be as powerfully revealed in the life as the work. Reynolds's endorsement of Michelangelo, together with the recently discovered private letters and poems of the artist, moved 'the debate about the nature of Michelangelo's artistic genius [...] into circles far wider than those of the Royal Academy and its fuorusciti'.[5] Discussion of Michelangelo's genius came to focus increasingly on the artist's private life and character. But this was still a transitional period. By holding on to the 'classical' ideals which Raphael epitomized, the Romantics retained some eighteenth-century standards of taste.[6] Yet they also opened up a space within which they could celebrate Michelangelo's explosive genius, thereby creating new possibilities for the 'Artist' and new standards of taste.

As we saw in the first chapter, Raphael's cartoons were a source of national pride. For the Romantic connoisseur the cartoons, precisely because they were not finished works of art, might be regarded as an immediate manifestation of the artist's mind. The Romantic response to the cartoons is typified by Hazlitt's treatment of them in his collection of essays, *The Picture Galleries of England* (1824), where he devotes six pages of his description of Hampton Court to 'shew [sic] the spirit that breathes through' them.[7] While the value of most works was traditionally determined by their fulfilment of certain technical criteria, Hazlitt argues that it is impossible to arrive at a proper estimate of the cartoons by the same method, because Raphael has 'flung his *mind* upon the canvas'.[8] Indeed, the cartoons are the '*visible abstractions* of truth and nature. Every where else we see the means; here we arrive at the end apparently without any means'.[9] Hazlitt claims that Raphael's art is so complete that the individual elements which have created the whole are no longer perceptible. In this way, it is Raphael's artistic genius rather than the work that is offered for the admiration of the poetic connoisseur. Since it is no longer bound to the conditions of a particular discipline, the artist's genius is freed directly to inspire the poet-viewer's creativity.

Raphael's genius prompts the Romantic viewer not so much to admire it, as to

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5   Lene Østermark-Johansen, *Sweetness and Strength: The Reception of Michelangelo in Late Victorian England* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1998), pp. 16-17. For the reception of Michelangelo in eighteenth-century Britain, see Giorgio Melchiori, *Michelangelo nel Settecento Inglese: Un Capitolo di Storia del Gusto in Inghiliterra* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1950).

6   It was in the Romantic period, according to Marcia B. Hall, that the word 'classical' was first attached to the period we now call the High Renaissance. The 'classicism' of the Carracci and Guido Reni distinguished them from the 'baroque' movement, though both of these terms, like 'Renaissance', were applied retrospectively. See, Marcia B. Hall, 'Classicism, Mannerism, and the Relieflike Style', in *The Cambridge Companion to Raphael*, ed. by Marcia B. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 223- 236 (p. 228).

7   Hazlitt, x, 49.

8   Hazlitt, x, 44.

9   Hazlitt, x, 44.

aspire to share it. Raphael's complete grasp of his subject makes the creation of the cartoons seem effortless, yet the poet's experience of the cartoons stretches his powers of perception. The cartoons communicate a sense of power that make the scenes depicted come alive, according to Hazlitt: 'we look through a frame, and see scripture-histories, and are made actual spectators of miraculous events'.[10]

> It is like a waking dream, vivid, but undistinguishable in member, joint, or limb; or it is as if we had ourselves seen the persons and things at some former period of our being, and that the drawing certain dotted lines upon coarse paper, by some unknown spell, brought back the entire and living images, and made them pass before us, palpable to thought, to feeling, and to sight.[11]

Hazlitt describes viewing Raphael's cartoons as a dream or memory. The experience is of apprehending something already known, a sentiment which we will return to when discussing Byron's "Beppo". Hazlitt presents the cartoons in a complex way: they manifest the highest ideal of human genius, yet seem familiar to the viewer; their material existence as mere 'dotted lines upon coarse paper' has a magical power that enables the poetic viewer to (re)produce 'living images'. Raphael presents a living scene to the viewer's mind, emotions and sight. By conflating dream and memory, Hazlitt signals that this experience is not simply the product of creative expression: it has the power to produce creative expression in the viewer.

Whereas the Academy had characterized Raphael's work as the embodiment of an 'ideal' standard that painters should strive towards, Romantic writers looked for ways in which Raphael's genius could be translated into literary texts. Hazlitt examines Raphael's 'natural style,' which combines elements in a way appropriate to the artist's subject matter. In his analysis of the *Death of Ananias*, Hazlitt notes that Ananias

> falls so naturally, that it seems as if a person could fall in no other way; and yet of all the ways in which a human figure could fall, it is probably the most expressive of a person overwhelmed by and in the grasp of Divine vengeance.[12]

In depicting this moment, Raphael has succeeded by not thinking like a painter. Instead of concerning himself with what would be most picturesquely pleasing, Hazlitt argues, Raphael 'only thought how a person would stand or fall naturally in such or such circumstances, and the *picturesque* and the *fine* followed as matters of course'. Unlike many contemporary painters, Raphael's style is unaffected, natural; he is able to communicate 'truth and nature under impressive and momentous circumstances'. Hazlitt enlists Raphael as a witness against the Royal Academy's standard of generalized beauty

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10 Hazlitt, x, 44.
11 Hazlitt, x, 44.
12 Hazlitt, x, 45.

that his work had conventionally been used to support. Though the cartoon is essentially a history painting, Hazlitt suggests that Raphael succeeds in expressing the divine, but he does so simply by staying true to nature. This leads Hazlitt to make a daring link between Raphael and Hogarth, one which must have shocked the Royal Academy. Raphael and Hogarth

> are equally *intense*; but the one is intense littleness, meanness, vulgarity; the other is intense grandeur, refinement, and sublimity. [...] We have not thought it beneath the dignity of the subject to make this comparison between two of the most extraordinary and highly gifted persons that the world ever saw. If Raphael had seen Hogarth's pictures, *he* would not have despised them. Those only can do it (and they are welcome!) who, wanting all that he had, can do nothing that he could not, or that they themselves pretend to accomplish by affectation and bombast.[13]

This passage – which places the two artists on an equal standing – challenges the Royal Academy's most deeply held beliefs. Hogarth, one remembers, had been opposed to the Academy from the first as a royally funded national institution. The main difference between the two artists, Hazlitt argues, is that Raphael painted scenes which depicted humanity's dignity, while Hogarth painted its degradation. Nature however, was faithfully adhered to by both, the highest praise for any artist.

In their emphasis on artistic genius, Romantic writers often overlooked all the mechanical aspects of artistic production. Hazlitt in his comments on the *Miraculous Draught of Fishes* addresses the well-worn argument that the boat is too small when compared to the figures of Christ and his disciples. For Hazlitt however this 'enhance[s] the value of the miracle'. For the true poetic connoisseur, this work is sacred and alive. Those viewers who apply merely mechanical standards miss the artist's genius by becoming lost in the minutiae. P.G. Patmore responds to the incongruity very similarly:

> the littleness of the boat in this picture (which has, I believe, been remarked on as preposterously *out of keeping* with the persons whom it contains) is so contrived purposely, in order to give a grandeur to the figures and an expansion to the sea, that they could have acquired by no other means. Let the pseudo-critic, who objects to this fine application of poetical license, calculate the size that the boat in question ought to have been, on *his* principle—the figures being nearly as large as life; and then, if he happens to be an artist, let him paint a picture on the same subject accordingly—his canvas being the size of that we are speaking of: Alas! his picture will be *all boat*,—figures, storks, fishes, sea, miracle and all, going for nothing. Is *this* what he would have, in place of the magnificent work before us?[14]

By focusing on the supposed mechanical faults of the cartoons, artists and connoisseurs

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13 Hazlitt, x, pp. 45-46.
14 P.G. Patmore, *British Galleries of Art* (London: G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1824), pp. 41-42.

have overlooked the very essence of what Raphael was trying to achieve. The poetic connoisseur on the other hand properly recognizes Raphael's achievement, because that achievement is itself poetic rather than a matter of keeping true perspective.

While Raphael's art embodied classical beauty, Michelangelo's embodied the sublime. His reception in Britain was more complex. Without a work in Britain equivalent to Raphael's cartoons, most knowledge of Michelangelo's work, unless one was fortunate enough to have visited Italy, came from prints, engravings and casts of his work. Yet, at the turn of the nineteenth century, Michelangelo defined the type of the artistic genius perhaps even more than Raphael. His career was well-known and there was a growing interest in his private life. In *Sweetness and Strength* (1998), Lene Østermark-Johansen traces the British reception of Michelangelo in the late nineteenth century. Though she briefly treats the changes in the reception of Michelangelo from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century and the growth of interest in the artist in the Romantic period is treated still more briefly, she does show that Michelangelo's appeal in the late eighteenth century was 'deeply rooted in Romantic introspection' and that the story of his own struggle for recognition and patronage helped to establish 'the cult of the agonized artistic genius'.[15] Her focus is on Michelangelo's influence on the practising artists of the period. However, the Romantic literary treatment of Michelangelo deserves more attention, particularly because this *literary* tradition shaped both British painting and literature throughout the nineteenth century. Though sometimes fraught with contradictions, the Romantic image of Michelangelo as an artist and a genius, not bound by a single art form, created the possibility of an unprecedentedly close association between art and literature, as well as the production of an aesthetic vocabulary that might be shared between the visual and verbal arts.

Reynolds's endorsement of Michelangelo as the pinnacle of art re-established his reputation in the Academy, and prepared the way when the full range of his achievement was soon afterwards revealed. The Casa Buonarroti manuscript holding, which included sketches, notes, letters and poems, had passed more or less intact through the artist's family until 1800. After the French confiscation (1799) and the subsequent restoration of the collection in 1801, Filippo Buonarroti divided the collection between his four sons, each of whom then disposed of his share as he saw fit. As a result of this, Michelangelo's sketches, letters and early poems were divided between various private European collections.[16] English collectors, such as William Young Ottley, Thomas Lawrence and others, began

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15 Østermark-Johansen, *Sweetness and Strength*, p. 12.
16 Østermark-Johansen, *Sweetness and Strength*, p. 27.

searching out Michelangelo's drawings, while his poetry became increasingly available throughout Europe.[17] The popularity of Italian literature and biographies of Italian figures, such as Petrarch and Lorenzo de' Medici (whose own poetic output was gaining attention), created the perfect setting in which to conceive of Michelangelo as an artist whose genius manifested itself regardless of the medium in which he chose to work. Østermark-Johansen points to William Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo il Magnifico* (1795) as claiming 'the fourth wreath of poetry for Michelangelo' and observes that it was Richard Duppa's *The Life and Literary Works of Michel Angelo Buonarroti* (1806) that first brought the *Rime* 'into focus'.[18] The fascination with the Medici court under Lorenzo il Magnifico, the parallels between the *Rime* and the poems of Petrarch (who, as Edoardo Zuccato has shown, was more influential on Romantic poetry that has hitherto been acknowledged),[19] and the analogies that were repeatedly made between Michelangelo's powerful visual works and the literary works of Dante and Shakespeare, led to a new fascination with Michelangelo.

Despite this, Michelangelo's art remained difficult to accommodate within literary texts. Michelangelo's most controversial work was *The Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel. Mariana Starke reveals the difficulties that she encountered when she attempts to give an impression of the painting. In the main body of the text she writes,

> Cappella Sistina contains some of the finest frescoes in the world, namely, the last judgment, by Buonarotti, immediately behind the altar; and, on the ceiling, God dividing the light from the darkness, together with the prophets and sibyls, stupendous works by the same great master!!!!!.

Although she names *The Last Judgment* as one of the finest frescoes in the world, an accompanying footnote reads,

> The following lines contain a fair comment on this picture:—
> *"Good Michael Angelo, I do not jest,*
> *"Thy pencil a great judgment hath exprest;*
> *"But in that judgment thou, alas, has shown*
> *"A very little judgment of thy own!"*.[20]

This is a translation of Salvator Rosa's well-known satire, *La Pittura*. The dichotomy

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17 For a brief history of the publication of Michelangelo's poetry from the seventeenth century to the present day, see Østermark-Johansen, *Sweetness and Strength*, pp. 28-33.

18 Østermark-Johansen, *Sweetness and Strength*, pp. 34- 35.

19 Edoardo Zuccato, *Petrarch in Romantic England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

20 Mariana Starke, *Letters from Italy, Containing a View of the Revolutions in that Country, from the Capture of Nice, by the French Republic, to the Expulsion of Pius VI. From the Ecclesiastical State: Likewise Pointing out the Matchless Works of Art which still Embellish Pisa, Florence, Siena, Rome, Naples, Bologna, Venice, &c. Also Specifying The Expense Incurred by Residing in Various Parts of Italy, France &c. so that Persons who visit the Continent from Economical Motives may Select the most Eligible Places for Permanent Residence. With Instructions For the Use of Invalids and Families who may wish to avoid the Expense Attendant upon Travelling with a Courier*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: G. and S. Robinson, 1815), I, 315-316.

between her identification of *The Last Judgement* as one of the 'finest' of frescos and of her description of Salvator's satire as a 'fair comment' reveals how Michelangelo's reputation at this period remained in flux. Starke feels the need to acknowledge his status as an Old Master genius, and yet also to register the discomfort that his work produces. She uses a footnote to cancel the admiration that she so freely expresses in her text.

Starke's treatment of Michelangelo is perhaps typical of a kind of travel writing, whose chief purpose is to guide its reader through the physical and cultural landscape of Italy. In such guides, it is less important that the author assert her own opinion than relay established judgments, place cultural monuments within their historical contexts and furnish her readers with striking anecdotes. However, as Michelangelo begins to be seen in a more literary light, through an engagement with his biography and poetry, it became essential to characterize the artist's genius. Wordsworth, for example, does so by insisting on the similarity between Michelangelo and Dante. In a letter to Sir George Beaumont, Wordsworth wrote that Michelangelo's poetry

> is the most difficult to construe I ever met with, but just what you would expect from such a man, shewing abundantly how conversant his soul was with great things. There is a mistake in the world concerning the Italian language; the Poetry of Dante and Michael Angelo proves, that if there be little majesty and strength in Italian verse, the fault is in the Authors, and not in the tongue. I can translate, and have translated, two Books of Ariosto at the rate nearly of 100 lines a day, but so much meaning has been put by Michael Angelo into so little room, and that meaning sometimes so excellent in itself that I confess the difficulty of translating him insurmountable. I attempted at least fifteen of the sonnets, but could not any where succeed. I have sent you the only one I was able to finish, it is far from being the best or most characteristic, but the others were too much for me.[21]

The difficulty of Michelangelo's poetry becomes for Wordsworth in itself an expression of his genius. His soul, revealed in his painting, sculpture, poetry and architecture, is 'conversant' with the highest truths. The difficulty Wordsworth encounters is to be expected, and though Wordsworth himself is able to grasp the meaning of the original work, his inability to transfer Michelangelo's powerful meaning into English is a proof not only of Michelangelo's genius but of the genius of the Italian language itself. It is significant that the qualities that Wordsworth locates in the poetry, majesty and strength, are precisely those that were commonly identified in the paintings. The correspondence between the qualities of Michelangelo's poetry and his visual art again suggests that genius manifests itself similarly no matter what the chosen medium may be.

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21 William Wordsworth, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt, 2nd edn, 8 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967-1993), I, 628-629.

Michelangelo's visual art did not meet with universal approval, however. Percy Shelley thought Michelangelo's genius was 'highly overrated'. In a letter to Thomas Love Peacock describing *The Last Judgment*, Shelley writes that the artist

> has not only no temperance no modesty no feeling for the just boundaries of art, (and in these respects an admirable genius may err) but he has no sense of beauty, and to want this is to want the essence of the creative power of mind. What is terror without a contrast with & a connection with loveliness?[22]

Michelangelo offends against Shelley's neoclassical aesthetic principles and he offends too against his religious views: Michelangelo's God is 'leaning out of Heaven as it were eagerly enjoying the final scene of the infernal tragedy he set the Universe to act', while Jesus, who should have a 'terrible yet lovely' presence, is rather in 'an attitude of haranguing the assembly'. Hell and death are, Shelley insists, Michelangelo's 'real sphere' and show his 'exclusive power', because they allow the sublime depictions of 'hideous forms' in 'every variety of torture' in which Michelangelo excelled. *The Last Judgement* is 'a kind of Titus Andronicus in painting—but the author surely no Shakspeare [sic]'. The heavy subject matter is not relieved by beauty in Christ's countenance or by an intelligent majesty in God's expression, and the full weight of the tragedy is lost without these redemptive qualities. Though the painting is a failure in Shelley's eyes, his comparison with Shakespeare and his numeration of the qualities which he believes are missing, preserve the notion that the visual arts and literature are informed by identical principles. The mind should be able to discern what any given subject demands whether the subject be realised in words or in paint.

Literary texts played a key role in re-establishing Michelangelo's standing. By linking Michelangelo's artistic genius with literature, writers were able to create a view of the solitary Genius as independent of the medium in which it worked. In *Corinne*, when the heroine visits the statues which adorn the Medici tombs in the church of San Lorenzo, she remembers the biographical anecdotes related by Vasari and Michelangelo's use of poetry to defend the value of his sculptures. The narrator writes that Michaelangelo 'cultivated literature, without which imagination of all kinds quickly withers'. All his work, it seems, is informed by a literary sensibility, which is the essential prerequisite for an imaginative mind. The narrator comments,

> Michelangelo is the only sculptor of modern times who has given the human face a personality which is unlike either the beauty of the ancients or the affectation of our day. You think you see in it the spirit of the Middle Ages, an

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22 Percy Shelley, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), II, 80.

energetic, gloomy soul, ceaseless activity, very pronounced features which bear the stamp of the passions but do not remind you of the ideal of beauty. Michelangelo is a genius of his own school, for he has imitated no one, not even the ancients.[23]

Michelangelo may be imbued with the 'spirit of the Middle Ages', which includes, it seems, the liberty of Lorenzo il Magnifico's court, and yet he remains for Staël, however paradoxically, a solitary artist whose greatness is dependent on nothing but his own genius. This was to become the dominant Romantic image of the artist.

For Romantic writers interest in the work of Italian Renaissance artists became inseparable from their preoccupation with genius. They viewed the Old Masters as their direct predecessors, and developed in consequence an aesthetic vocabulary that served equally to discuss literature and the visual arts. To encounter works by such artists was to meet the artists themselves. For Romantic writers, these works were alive and were the embodiment of human, artistic genius. Remembering his time in the Louvre, Hazlitt, writes,

> [w]e had all heard of the names of Titian, Raphael, Guido, Domenichino, the Caracci—but to see them face to face, to be in the same room with their deathless productions, was like breaking some mighty spell—was almost an effect of necromancy![24]

The viewer is able to divine the artist's genius regardless, it seems, of the form through which that genius is manifested. By viewing the Old Master primarily as an artistic genius, writers opened up the possibility of representing their own writing as in some sense continuous with the visual art of the Old Masters.

The Real and Ideal in the Romantic Literary Experience of Art

As we saw in the last chapter, a celebration of particulars began to replace the desire for a single standard of ideal beauty. However, ideal beauty was not abandoned, but redefined. The mind might conceive ideal beauty but that beauty could only be expressed through the particular. By valuing both the real and the ideal, particularly as they converge in 'expression', Romantic writers created a vocabulary which lent itself to both art and literature.

Many Romantic writers, especially those with an interest in the classics, were

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23 Germaine de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, trans. and ed. by Sylvia Raphael (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 353.
24 Hazlitt, VIII, 14.

familiar with the work of aesthetic philosophers such as Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Reynolds, even though they adopted a different approach. In particular, Romantic writers were interested in how an art work visually manifested the genius of the artist or the mind of the figure represented. In his 'Thoughts on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks', Winckelmann stresses how the quality of the soul may be expressed through the body:

> The calmer the state of a body, the fitter it is to express the true character of the soul: in all physical postures too far removed from the state of rest, the soul is not in the condition most proper to it, but subject to violence and constraint. The soul becomes more expressive and recognisable in powerful passions: but it is great and noble only in the state of unity, the state of rest.[25]

In chapter one, we discussed the ways in which the Laocoön's creator balanced the expression of physical pain with the need to retain the calmness of feature appropriate to the priest's noble soul. Here, Winckelmann argues that a calm face, like a still sea, conveys a depth of soul. Similar notions might be used by Protestant critics to justify their appreciation of Catholic painting. The divine rapture depicted on a saint's face might easily be understood as a representation of the poetic feeling and inspiration associated with genius, both the genius of the painter and of his subject. Raphael's painting of *St. Cecilia*, housed in Bologna's Pinacoteca, overwhelmed Percy Shelley. He writes to Peacock:

> You forget that it is a picture as you look at it, and yet it is most unlike any of those things which we call reality. It is of the inspired and ideal kind, and seems to have been conceived & executed in a similar state of feeling to that which produced among the antients those perfect specimens of poetry & sculpture which are the baffling models of suc[c]eeding generations. There is an unity & perfection in it of an incommunicable kind. The central figure St. Cæcilia seems rapt in such inspiration as produced her image in the painter's mind, her deep dark eloquent eyes lifted up, her chesnut hair flung back from her forehead, one hand upon her bosom, her countenance as it were calmed by the depth of its passion & rapture, & penetrated throughout with the warm & radiant light of life. She is listening to the music of Heaven, & I imagine has just ceased to sing for the three figures that surround her evidently point by their attitudes towards [her], particularly St. John who with tender yet impassioned gesture bends his countenance towards her languid with the depth of his emotion. At her feet lie instruments of music broken & unstrung. Of the colouring I do not speak, it eclipses nature, yet it has all its truth & softness.[26]

The rapture on her face mirrors Raphael's moment of inspiration. The details – her hair, stance, eyes and even her companion's gestures – all communicate this ideal. Like

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25 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 'Thoughts on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks', in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, Goethe*, ed. by H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 32- 54 (p. 43).
26 Shelley, *Letters*, ii, 51- 52.

Winckelmann, Shelley argues that the saint's calm countenance speaks the 'depth of its passion'. But for Shelley Raphael's is not so much a picture of a saint as a self-portrait of Raphael's own genius.

The Romantic ideal is based on the imagination, yet it allows for particulars such as 'character' and 'expression'. Hazlitt, like many Romantic-period writers, was familiar with Reynolds's *Discourses*, but he was vehemently opposed to Reynolds's principles. In his *Table-Talk* essay, 'On Certain Inconsistencies in Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*', he argues that although Reynolds tries to distinguish between high and low subjects, it is impossible to do so according to the rules of the *Discourses*. If the first principle of art is to convey a sense of general beauty, regardless of the subject matter, then, Hazlitt reasons, still-life painters are on a par with Michaelangelo and Raphael. Hazlitt argues that something besides 'the central or customary form' must create the distinction between the high and low in art. He writes

> Character and expression are still less included in the present theory [i.e. Reynolds's *Discourses*]. All character is a departure from the common-place form; and Sir Joshua makes no scruple to declare that expression destroys beauty.[27]

It is Hazlitt's consistent practice to use one art to illustrate another. Character is a term closely associated with the drama and the novel, and expression too is a term that more often refers to literary than pictiorial composition. But Hazlitt's point is that Reynolds's mistakes are a product of his wilful separation one from another of the creative arts.

As we saw in Shelley's description of Raphael's *St. Cecilia*, 'expression' was important because it conveyed the inner sense of both the artist and his subject to the viewer. In *The Plain Speaker* (1826)**,** Hazlitt argues that 'expression' is a major element in what constitutes the new ideal in painting. 'Expression'

> is the great test and measure of a genius for painting, and the fine arts. The mere imitation of *still-life*, however perfect, can never furnish proofs of the highest skill or talent; for there is an inner sense, a deeper intuition into nature that is never unfolded by merely mechanical objects, and which if it were called out by a new soul being suddenly infused into an inanimate substance, would make the former unconscious representation appear crude and vapid.[28]

Expression is what conveys the personality of the artist and of his subject to the viewer. Furthermore, it is the quality that separates mechanical artists from artists of true genius. Unlike a mere copyist, the artistic genius sympathizes with whatever he is trying to represent. The artist and his subject enter into a sympathetic communion in which the

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27 Hazlitt, VIII, 138.
28 Hazlitt, XII, 290.

viewer, too, may participate. In his article, 'The Vatican', Hazlitt's ability to judge Michelangelo's frescoes on the Sistine Chapel's ceiling is hindered by his inability to see the figures' expressions clearly. To Hazlitt they seem only 'half-informed':

> nothing can be finer as to form, attitude, and outline. The whole conception is so far inimitably noble and just; and all that is felt as wanting, is a proportionable degree of expression in the countenances, though of this I am not sure, for the height [...] baffles a nice scrutiny. They look to me unfinished, vague, and general.[29]

Without a clear perception of the figures' facial expressions, Hazlitt cannot make a firm judgment of the quality of the work. 'Expression' became a key term in bringing the different arts together because it denoted the point at which mind and body met. Expression was the gateway through which a mental idea might be realised whether in language or in paint.

Romantic writers also read the expression of the painting's subject in order to understand the historical period, or, in the case of portraits, the mind of the subject. It was the 'expression' of a painting, which gave access at once to the genius of the artist, the creative process and the personality of the painter's subject, to which the imagination of the writer most easily responded. In his essay 'On the Pleasure of Painting', Hazlitt describes his 'initiation' into the art world. His first gallery experience was a visit to the Orleans Gallery and it led to his forming his taste exclusively in relation to the Old Masters. The experience was a revelation: 'A mist passed away from my sight: the scales fell off. A new sense came upon me, a new heaven and a new earth stood before me. I saw the soul speaking in the face'.[30] That final phrase, 'the soul speaking in the face', offers the best possible brief definition of what Hazlitt means by the term 'expression'.

The Royal Academy's official stance endorsed history painting over portraiture, despite many artists' financial dependence on portraiture.[31] By history painting, the RA broadly meant the representation of historical events, biblical scenes or images taken from literature. Despite this official position, portraits were the most popular type of painting in Britain. Hence, it is unsurprising that Romantic writers should show so much interest in Italian Renaissance portraits. The Romantic interest in expression was closely associated with the Romantic interest in biography, and in biographical history. In his notebook entry for 24 July 1831, Coleridge observed,

> [t]he more I see of pictures the more I am convinced that the ancient art of

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29 Hazlitt, XVII, 145.
30 Hazlitt, VIII, 14.
31 For more on this, see, David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

painting is gone and something substituted for it very pleasing, but different and that in kind not in degree only. Portraits by the old masters [...] fill not merely occupy a space - they represent individuals: - modern portraits ... give you not the man – not the inward humanity, but merely the external mask.[32]

The Royal Academy distinguished between the real and ideal, high art and portraits, and Coleridge finds that distinction reproduced in modern portraiture. Old Master portraits represent at once the outward appearance and the 'inner man', but contemporary portraits depict only an 'external mask'. 'Expression', the term that denotes a vital connection between the inner and external, is absent. To view an Old Master portrait is an imaginative act that can be likened to a reading experience in which characters, the characters of Shakespeare's plays, for example, are brought to life. It is no longer a question of distinguishing high and low art, or between the ideal and mundane, but rather of finding a means of expressing the inward through the outward, and hence expressing force of personality.

'Expression' communicates the inner life of the character depicted. Hazlitt's comments on the 'natural' styles of Hogarth and Raphael, and Coleridge's desire to be confronted with the presence of the individual subject of a painting, both indicate a desire to bridge the differences between the literary and visual arts. The Romantic interest in biography and in the history of Medieval and Renaissance Italy prepared the way for a distinctively literary appreciation of painting. The Romantics read and wrote art, as much as they viewed it. In reading art, they watch history unfold. Not content to simply describe the composition of a painting, the Romantic critic directs attention to the mind that can be glimpsed beneath the surface of the paint. Hazlitt's description of Titian's portrait of himself and two friends dressed as Venetian senators, insists that in the painting the figures are brought to life:

> the head of the Senator is as fine as anything that ever proceeded from the hand of man. The expression is a lambent flame, a soul of fire dimmed, not quenched by age. The flesh *is* flesh. If Ruben's pencil fed upon roses, Titian's was *carnivorous*. The tone is betwixt a gold and silver hue. The texture and pencilling are marrowy. The dress is a rich crimson, which seems to have been growing deeper ever since it was painted. It is a front view. As far as attitude or action is concerned, it is mere *still-life*; but the look is of that kind that goes through you at a single glance. Let any one look well at this portrait, and if he then sees nothing in it, or in the portraits of this painter in general, let him give up *virtù* and criticism in despair.[33]

The deepening colour of the robes is the only thing which marks the passing of time; the

32 Quoted in Edoardo Zuccato, *Coleridge in Italy* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), p. 78.
33 Hazlitt, x, 40.

rest of the description gives the sense that the figures are standing before the viewer, if slightly removed. Indeed, the painting is less an object in itself than a conduit for the genius of Titian, which 'goes through [the viewer] at a single glance'.

The development of a critical vocabulary that was shared between painting and literature allowed writers and painters to help each other describe and evaluate their aesthetic endeavours. The collaborative culture of artists in the Romantic period, which has been increasingly studied in recent years, brought together exponents of different arts. A shared interest in Italian culture was a key factor in creating a network of writers, visual artists, connoisseurs, actors and musicians. The private letters circulated within this network demonstrate how seriously they valued each other's aesthetic opinions. In a letter to Benjamin Robert Haydon, Wordsworth discusses the delicate balance between general effects and particular features. He writes,

> Dramatic diversities aid discrimination, [and] should never be produced upon sublime subjects by the sacrifice of sublime effect. And it is better that expression should give way to beauty than beauty be banished by expression. Happy is he who can hit the exact point where grandeur is not lowered but heightened by detail, and beauty not impaired, but rendered more touching and exquisite by Passion.—This has been done by the great artists of antiquity, but not frequently in modern times; yet much as I admire those productions I would on no account discourage your efforts to introduce more of the diversities of actual humanity into the management of sublime and pathetic subjects. Much of what Garrick is reported to have done for the stage, may by your Genius be effected for the Picture Gallery.—But in aiming at this object, proceed with reflection, and if you are in *doubt*—decide in favour of the course which Raphael pursued [i.e. err upon the safer side].[34]

Wordsworth encourages Haydon to cultivate his talent for realism, for the telling detail, but warns that it is difficult to achieve a balance between particularity and the harmony of the whole. Wordsworth's reference to Garrick implicitly shows how the vocabularies of artistic genres were becoming more fluid, so that it seemed entirely appropriate to refer a painter to the example of an actor. Furthermore Wordsworth recognizes the power of details and the importance of introducing 'humanity into the management of sublime and pathetic subjects'. This of course is deeply tied to his own project of bringing the vocabulary and rhythms of natural speech into poetry, and investing everyday objects with deep emotional resonance. The new Romantic ideal then is a recognition of how the imagination (the ideal) might express itself through particular details. In his guide to British galleries, Patmore offers a new definition for ideal beauty:

> Parts of these pictures [in the Titian Gallery at Blenheim] are the most eloquent

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34 Wordsworth, *Letters*, III, 274.

commentary that ever was written on the maxim that "Beauty is Truth—Truth Beauty." They put to flight in a moment the endless jargon about the *ideal*, and leave nothing to be said on the subject. The ideal, if it has any meaning at all, means the perfection of the *true*. It is, not what *may be*, but what *has been,* or what *is*. And it may safely be said to have never yet equalled its prototype. Probably there are existing at present, and have been at any given time, forms and faces that are more beautiful than any the pencil or the chisel ever produced.[35]

Patmore denies that there is any necessary opposition between the real and the ideal, and, tellingly, he supports his claim not with reference to any particular painting or sculpture but by a quotation from a poem, Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn.' 'It is not,' according to Hazlitt, 'the addition of individual circumstances, but the omission of general truth, that makes the little, the deformed, and the short-lived in art'.[36] Striving for truth, rather than avoiding particularity, was the goal that Romantic writers set themselves, and they subscribed the same aesthetic to the Italian painters that they admired.

Expression in Percy Shelley's *The Cenci*

In Percy Shelley's *The Cenci* (1819) the development of the drama is charted through Beatrice's changing expression.[37] In the play's preface, Shelley acknowledges three sources on which he has based his tragic drama about a young noble woman, who, having been raped repeatedly by her father, is sentenced to death for parricide. These sources include a manuscript entitled "Relation of the Death of the Family of the Cenci," which Shelley read the previous year in Livorno; the medieval Cenci Palace, whose 'gloomy pile of feudal architecture' is a material manifestation of the horrors which played out inside its walls; and most significantly, the portrait supposed to be of Beatrice attributed to Guido Reni, which legend has it was painted in the prison on the morning of her execution. In his *Shelley's Cenci: Scorpions Ringed with Fire* (1970), Stuart Curran devotes much attention to Shelley's use of the manuscript, which had been derived from Muratori's *Annali d'Italia* (1749). Curran notes that though Shelley for the most part remained true to his source material, he did not realize how the source itself 'was already something of an idealization of the legend, prejudiced in favor of the oppressed family and against an unchallenged Papal authority', and shows how Shelley took that process of idealization still further.

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35 Patmore, *British Galleries of Art*, p. 71.
36 Hazlitt, x, 20.
37 Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'The Cenci' in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2002), pp.140-202.

Indeed Muratori's *Annali d'Italia* was itself an attack on the Papacy and the Roman aristocracy.[38] However, in his short introduction, Curran rather hastily dismisses the portrait as being neither of Beatrice nor painted by Guido Reni. Though Curran acknowledges the fame of the portrait in the nineteenth century, as evidenced, for example in the writings of Dickens, Hawthorne and Melville, Shelley's use of the portrait in both his preface and, silently, throughout the play, deserves closer scrutiny. The portrait of Beatrice anchors the play, providing a stable point of reference in an otherwise tortuous plot. In fact, the struggle for power between father and daughter pivots around the image of Beatrice's face.

Beatrice's expression in the portrait is both the beginning and culmination of Shelley's tragedy. Though the artist of the portrait is unknown, the fame of Reni and the biographical legend attached to it, that is, that Reni painted it in the prison on the day of the sitter's execution, ensured its fame in the early nineteenth century. For the Romantics, Reni's genius expressed itself most fully in the countenances of his female subjects: Reni's achievement was to represent real individual faces while at the same time communicating the mind, and in this way he reconciled in his art the real and the ideal. Shelley's preface clearly shows the importance of recognizing this portrait as a key source for the play. The portrait, writes Shelley,

> is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features: she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape, and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate; the eye brows are distinct and arched: the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear; her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another: her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.[39]

Beatrice's face expresses both her ideal spirit and also bears witness to the effects of an imperfect world on that spirit. The portrait and the person are scarcely distinguished; her

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38 Stuart Curran, *Shelley's Cenci: Scorpions Ringed with Fire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 40-46 (p. 42).
39 Shelley, *The Cenci*, p. 144. Hereafter all references will be given within the text.

face – both in life and as painted by Reni – is a true testament to the 'workmanship of Nature'. Indeed it seems as if her face in the portrait is the only natural thing in this play. Although Shelley is ostensibly describing the portrait/woman, it is important to remember that the Shelleys were well versed in the theories of physiognomy. Despite the horrific circumstances she finds herself in, circumstances which Shelley traces throughout the play to the corruption of Papal Rome and to a lesser extent to the general Italian character, Beatrice's features – particularly her large, clear forehead, her lips and her eyes – communicate her simple, profound nature in its 'exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow'. The *Preface*, although it is a part of the play as it was presented to the reader, would not have been placed before the audience had it, as Shelley wished, been acted, but in the text of the play itself Shelley found ways to recreate the portrait and its meaning on stage.

Throughout the play, Beatrice's father expresses a strong desire to deface Beatrice. Of course, the language in which he reveals this suggests how he needs to depersonalise her in order to make possible his violent rape of her body, and it is also an aspect of the struggle for power between father and daughter that is enacted in the dramatic language of Shelley's play. Beatrice's eyes and her gaze, as Curran and Young-Ok An have argued, are prominent features throughout the play and are remarked on by most characters.[40] Shelley constantly registers how the sight of Beatrice impacts on her father, in order to highlight, in contrast with the final image of Beatrice, his horrific crimes against her. In Act I, Beatrice confronts her father while he is entertaining friends. He excuses her actions as symptoms of her insanity but nevertheless asks his guests to leave, until only Beatrice and Cenci remain on stage. His address to her is frenzied:

> Thou painted viper!
> Beast that thou art! Fair and yet terrible!
> I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,
> Now get thee from my sight! (I.3.165-168)

Her father sees her in a manner that recalls Shelley's "On the Medusa of Leonardo Da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery". Beatrice's face, which typifies what scholars have called the female sublime, horrifies Cenci by its duality, by being at once fair and terrible.[41] According to An, this Medusan gaze runs counter to

> the prevalent representation of woman as a fixed, framed, and still image, a spectacle, object, and fetish, [it] evokes an unappropriable realm of female power. Medusa's petrifying gaze monstrously disrupts any narrative, bringing

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40 Curran, pp. 108-109. Young-Ok An, 'Beatrice's Gaze Revisited: Anatomizing *The Cenci*', in *Criticism*, 38.1 (1996), 27-68.

41 See for example, Carol Jacobs, 'On Looking at Shelley's Medusa', *Yale French Studies* 69 (1985), 163-79.

to a standstill the time-honoured expectation of the virtuous damsel, saintly-martyr, maternal or sisterly muse, despite all the patriarchal apparatuses of appropriation, containment, or "othering".[42]

Interestingly, Beatrice is at her most powerful when she is most oppressed. Shelley's preface and the final scene represent her, like the portrait, as an object which invites one's gaze and one's sympathy.

The power play between father and daughter pivots on Cenci's reaction to his daughter's face. In the second act, Cenci walks in suddenly while Lucretia, Beatrice and Bernardo are talking:

> CENCI   What, Beatrice here!
> Come hither!   [*She shrinks back, and covers her face.*]
>   Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair;
> Look up! Why, yesternight you dared to look
> With disobedient insolence upon me,
> Bending a stern and an inquiring brow
> On what I meant; whilst I then sought to hide
> That which I came to tell you—but in vain.
>
> BEATRICE   (*wildly, staggering towards the door*)
> Oh, that the earth would gape! Hide me, O God!
>
> CENCI   Then it was I whose inarticulate words
> Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
> Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
> Stay, I command you—from this day and hour
> Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
> And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
> And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
> Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind;
> Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber! (II.1.105-122)

When Cenci's masculine authority is threatened by his daughter, her features begin to resemble Medusa's; yet when he regains his power, he commands her not to hide her fair face. However, Cenci most often describes his daughter as Janus-faced: her lips are 'made for tenderness or scorn'. Cenci's changing views of his daughter's features are an index that very precisely registers the struggle for power between them.

Cenci's desire to deface Beatrice is one important way in which Shelley articulates the crime of which Beatrice is the victim, the unmentionable act of incestual rape. In the penultimate act, Cenci pleads with God, asking for vengeance on Beatrice, whom he describes as if she had been incorporated into his own body as his 'bane' and 'disease'. He says that the sight of the 'devil' Beatrice 'infects and poisons' him. He pleads,

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42 An, 'Beatrice's Gaze Revisited', pp. 52-53.

>   let her food be
> Poison, until she be encrusted round
> With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head
> The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
> Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
> Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
> To loathed lameness! All-beholding sun,
> Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes
> With thine own blinding beams! (IV.1.119-136)

His wish to destroy his daughter's beauty and goodness is the only way in which he is able to recognise that she possesses these qualities. Ultimately, his wish to deface her is expressed most powerfully by his desire that she should become the mirror image of himself. Cenci imagines the 'horrible thought' of Beatrice having a [i.e. his] child in a manner that recalls the ghastly Miltonic triangular relationship between Lucifer, Sin, and Death, an Unholy Family that functions as a grotesque parody of the Holy Family. He commands Nature to 'be fruitful in her', hoping that the offspring be

> a hideous likeness of herself, that as
> From a distorting mirror, she may see
> Her image mixed with what she most abhors,
> Smiling upon her from her nursing breast.
> And that the child may from its infancy
> Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,
> Turning her mother's love to misery:
> And that both she and it may live until
> It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
> Or what may else be more unnatural. (IV.1.145-167)

What Beatrice 'most abhors' is her father and because of this any child that was produced from their union would at once distort her likeness into the hateful image of her father, and change his image into something that she could love, because of its resemblance to her innocent child. Shelley's use of the word 'likeness' inevitably recalls portraiture, in particular the portrait of Beatrice, and the tradition of passing portraits down through the generations. The child's face would tell the family history and because of its conception the child would inevitably grow up to be 'wicked and deformed'. Of course, Beatrice does not fall pregnant, so that she is not given a portrait of herself in the form of a child. Instead it is Shelley who paints her portrait verbally in the play's final scene. On the day of her execution, Shelley's audience is presented with a fully realised image of Beatrice. In the closing lines, Beatrice fashions a self-portrait. She asks her step-mother to 'tie/ My girdle for me, and bind up this hair/ In any simple knot; aye, that does well' (V.4.159-161). She is self-consciously fashioning the image of herself that Guido's portrait had made famous. In

his *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley argues that historic or social circumstances may disguise, but cannot obliterate or successfully hide internal beauty. He writes,

> [t]he beauty of the internal nature cannot be so far concealed by its accidental vesture, but that the spirit of its form shall communicate itself to the very disguise, and indicate the shape it hides from the manner in which it is worn. A majestic form and graceful motions will express themselves through the most barbarous and tasteless costume.[43]

When she dresses herself in the final scene, Beatrice assumes an outward dress that conforms fully with her inner nature. In this dress her inner qualities, the beauty of her soul, becomes fully visible, stamped on her brow and shining through her eyes. Even had her father's prayers succeeded, even had she been defaced by the pestilent rains of Maremma or had borne his child, her expression would still somehow communicate the truth of her soul, but Beatrice assumes a dress in which that truth is revealed to the audience undisguised. Informed by contemporary interest in the relationship between the real and the ideal and by the concentration on expression in the visual arts of the Italian Renaissance that that interest prompted, Shelley's play pivots on how the inviolable goodness of Beatrice manifested in Reni's painting managed to survive the corrupting influence of tyrannical power.

A Taste for Art: Gusto and the Romantic Viewer's Physical Sensations

'Expression' is at once sensual and spiritual; it is primarily emotional in its appeal and because of that it is apprehended both in the body and in the spirit. The viewer's taste for a particular artist or work is the result, it began to be suggested, of an emotional kinship. Hazlitt suggests that the viewer comes to understand and sympathize with the artist through emotionally experiencing or sympathizing with a work. Hazlitt stresses,

> We not only *see*, but *feel* expression, by the help of the finest of all our senses, the sense of pleasure and pain. He then is the greatest painter who can put the greatest quantity of expression into his works [...]. To see or imitate any given sensible object is one thing, the effect of attention and practice; but to give expression to a face is to collect its meaning from a thousand other sources, is to bring into play the observation and feeling of one's whole life, or an infinity of knowledge bearing upon a single object in different degrees and manners, and implying a loftiness and refinement of character proportioned to the loftiness and refinement of expression delineated. Expression is of all things

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43 Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry; or, Remarks Suggested by an Essay Entitled "The Four Ages of Poetry"', in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and N. Fraistat, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2002), pp. 510- 535 (p. 516).

the least to be mistaken, and the most evanescent in its manifestations.[44]

Hazlitt's is very far from a purely intellectual understanding of art. The sense of pleasure or pain that expression prompts in the viewer is a physical response, a response of the body. Locke, and later philosophers such as Hume and Hartley, developed a dialectic of pleasure and pain to describe the mental activity that attended sensory perception. This approach was developed in the aesthetic writings of philosophers such as Edmund Burke in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). The artist's ability to create a true expression, Hazlitt argues, is dependent on his ability to extract meaning from 'a thousand other sources'. This openness to life suggests that the artist, and by extension the poetic connoisseur, have a sympathy both with the subject and the object of the painting. This is one reason why Hazlitt can make the connection between Hogarth and Raphael, which we discussed earlier. The expression must be in proportion to what is being depicted. The response to expression is a physio-emotional reaction, resulting in sensations of pleasure and pain. It is a quality equally necessary to navigate through the world and through art.

The artist's manifestation of 'expression' must be appropriate to the painting's subject. This requires the ability to read Nature, rather than subscribe to conventional rules for composition. The viewer who finds the key to an artwork, that is, the reader who can understand 'expression', reveals an understanding of Nature which corresponds with the understanding of the artist. This shared sympathy between artist and viewer results, in Hazlitt's analysis, from an accord between the viewer's taste and the artist's "Gusto". As Uttara Natarajan explains,

> The distinction in the essay "On *Gusto*" between "the objects themselves in nature" and "the objects in the picture" is not the conventional distinction between nature and art, but between the imaginative perception of nature and the imaginative expression of nature in art; the imagination is the source of "something divine" in both. This "something divine", then, that is expressed in the pictorial arts, is the manifestation, not of deity, but of what Hazlitt calls "gusto" in the artistic imagination.[45]

Titian's 'gusto' is for Hazlitt most fully expressed in his colouring. Hazlitt writes,

> There is a gusto in the colouring of Titian. Not only do his heads seem to think —his bodies seem to feel. This is what the Italians mean by the *morbidezza* of his flesh-colour. It seems sensitive and alive all over; not merely to have the look and texture of flesh, but the feeling in itself. For example, the limbs of his female figures have a luxurious softness and delicacy, which appears conscious

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44 Hazlitt, XII, 290.
45 Uttara Natarajan, *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense: Criticism, Morals, and the Metaphysics of Power* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 47.

of the pleasure of the beholder. As objects themselves in nature would produce an impression on the sense, distinct from every other object, and having something divine in it, which the heart owns and the imagination consecrates, the objects in the picture preserve the same impression, absolute, unimpaired, stamped with all the truth of passion, the pride of eye, and the charm of beauty. Rubens makes his flesh-colour like flowers; Albano's is like ivory; Titian's is like flesh, and like nothing else. It is as different from that of other painters, as the skin is from a piece of white or red drapery thrown over it. The blood circulates here and there, the blue veins just appear, the rest is distinguished throughout only by that sort of tingling sensation to the eye, which the body feels within itself. This is gusto. Vandyke's flesh-colour, though it has great truth and purity, wants gusto. It has not the internal character, the living principle in it. It is a smooth surface, not a warm moving mass. It is painted without passion, with indifference. The hand only has been concerned. The impression slides off from the eye, and does not, like the tones of Titian's pencil, leave a sting behind it in the mind of the spectator. The eye does not acquire a taste or appetite for what it sees. In a word, gusto in painting is where the impression made on one sense excites by affinity those of another.[46]

Here again Hazlitt dramatizes the achievement of sympathetic understanding between the artist and viewer. The painting's subject seems alive and 'conscious' of the viewer's pleasure in looking at her flesh. Details like the blood circulating might be registered on the surface of the painting, realised in paint, but the recognition of the painting's life is a 'tingling sensation to the eye' which only the viewer's body can feel. Titian's ability to translate the truth of human flesh onto the canvas, and give it the very warmth of life, *stings* the viewer's mind. The viewer's eye becomes voracious, hungrier through each successive affinity it finds between the paintings and the world outside. Vandyke is cold and does not bring warmth or mind to his flesh; though he may have 'truth and purity', he leaves no lasting impression on the eye. The body in the painting by Titian, with its blood circulating, has a vitality that is reproduced in the body and the stung mind of the viewer of the painting.

The creative potential contained within a painting does not appeal to the imagination alone. For poetic connoisseurs, the physical reaction to a painting was an important form of knowledge. A physical reaction informed the reading of the visual text and determined in its turn how the visual experience should be represented in writing. One of the most important consequences of an acknowledgement of a physical reaction to painting is the impact that it had on the understanding of the relationship between the ideal and the natural. In the Royal Gallery at Windsor Castle, Patmore describes Guido Reni's 'Venus attired by the Graces', which hung in the King's State Bed-Chamber:

Each of the attendant Graces might be a Venus, if the Venus were away; yet

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46 Hazlitt, IV, pp. 77-78.

there is a high and ethereal air thrown over *her*, which by contrasts sinks them into comparatively inferior beings. It is evidently, also, the *celestial* Venus that Guido is picturing; this ideal purity of his mind could conceive of no other; and in this respect his pictures, even when their subject is of the most voluptuous kind, as in the one before us, may be looked at almost as pieces of sculpture. Nothing can be more striking in this way than the contrast between his females and those of Titian. The colouring, too, of his flesh is as ideal as the expression of his forms and faces. The flesh of the Venus, in this picture, is nearly equal to Titian's; and yet you feel no disposition to *touch* it—as you do Titian's.[47]

In this comparison between Titian and Reni, Patmore relies on the conventional distinction between the heavenly or celestial Venus and the earthly Venus. Patmore's Graces are only the attendant figures to his Venus, and yet any one of them would be thought a Venus in the work of an inferior artist. Reni's success in representing the celestial Venus reflects the particular quality of his mind. However, Patmore stresses Reni's limitations at least as strongly as his abilities. His inability to conceive of anything other than celestial Venuses is an impediment when he attempts paintings of a more 'voluptuous kind'. Reni's Venuses have a cold, sculptural quality which does not invite active participation even though it fascinates the viewer. The real weakness, at least when one compares Reni to Titian, is revealed in the colouring of his subject's flesh. Face, form, flesh are all ideal and, hence, slightly removed from the viewer. Although Titian was most celebrated for his unique handling of colour, Patmore's description betrays a wider interest in the physicality of responses to art. The taste for the ideal, once expressed in the conventional preference for a celestial rather than an earthly Venus, is no longer enough. The ideal flesh of this Venus is not equal to that of Titian. The distant quality of Reni's Venus is not as compelling as Titian's, and as evidence of this Patmore offers the physical response that Titian's painting extorts, the desire that it prompts in the viewer to touch.

The viewer's desire to touch the Titian painting is one of many bodily sensations that began to be associated with viewing and understanding a work of art. The language of taste and tasting, particularly when writers used Italian terms such as gusto or gustare, morbidezza and burroso, were also commonly used to describe the viewing experience. Titian's work, which was not ideal but seemed to come directly from Nature, created in the viewer a desire to touch his fleshy subjects. Describing Titian's *Diana and Calisto* and *Diana and Actæon* at Cleveland House as 'unrivalled pieces of colouring', Patmore writes,

[i]n those pictures the expression goes for almost nothing. They are appeals to the senses alone. You can actually, as it were, *taste* the flavour of them on the palate. And if you remember them at all in absence, it is as a kind of harmonious chaos of colour, "without form and void;" or like a chord in music

47 Patmore, *British Galleries of Art*, p. 110.

—one sweet sound made up of many—harmony without melody.[48]

Rather than prompting the viewer to imaginative or associative thoughts, these paintings seem purely sensual, and the intensity of their appeal is registered by the claim that the viewer seems to taste rather than to see them. They are remembered as a 'chaos' of colour, as if in memory the colours are released from the representative function that they serve in the painting and relished simply in themselves. The passage climaxes when the painting is remembered as 'a chord in music', when its appeal is to the ear, as if it had the power to transform itself into a different, and importantly non-representational artistic medium. Hazlitt also gave an account of the Marquis of Stafford's Gallery at Cleveland House, and described himself as overwhelmed by both of these works. Like Patmore, Hazlitt focuses on the richness of Titian's colouring, and, also like Patmore, compares it to a 'divine piece of music'. The colouring is both 'true' and 'dazzling'. He offers an extensive description of the landscape and the figure of Diana, in which he seems to mimic the artist's skill at blending colours. He notes the

> tints of flesh colour, as if you saw the blood circling beneath the pearly skin; clouds empurpled with setting suns [...]. The figures seem grouped for the effect of colour. [...] Every colour is melted, *impasted* into every other, with fine keeping and bold diversity. Look at that indignant, queen-like figure of Diana [...] and see the snowy, ermine-like skin [...]. The forms of some of the female figures are elegant enough [...] but it is the texture of the flesh that is throughout delicious, unrivalled, surpassingly fair. [...] Every where tone, not form, predominates—there is not a direct line in the picture—but a gusto, a rich taste of colour is left upon the eye as if it were the palate, and the diapason of picturesque harmony is full to overflowing. "Oh Titian and Nature! which of you copied the other?".[49]

Patmore and Hazlitt may well have discussed these paintings and they certainly read each other's work. The similarity of their descriptions is striking, but Hazlitt is more anxious than Patmore to insist that the painting brings its subject to life, and to insist too that the vitality of the painting demands a similar vitality in the viewer's response to it. He is not so much concerned to describe Titian's painting as to produce a dramatic sketch of his own response to it.

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48 Patmore, *British Galleries of Art*, p. 72.
49 Hazlitt, x, pp. 32-33.

'The Sexual Imagination of the Descriptive Poet'

The sensuality that writers like Hazlitt and Patmore insisted on in Titian's art represented a reaction against a neoclassical tradition that denied the sexual element of art. Jonah Siegel has explored the sexual element in the writings of artists and collectors such as Fuseli and Richard Payne Knight, but Knight and Fuseli were both resisting an official discourse that represented as one of the characteristics of high art its power to disable sensual responses. A crucial test of whether a nude belonged to the tradition of high art was its failure to arouse the viewer's desires.[50] In the nineteenth century, acknowledging art's sexual element becomes more acceptable, at least for some commentators. However, this resulted in the development of gendered discourses that distinguished between the appreciation appropriate to a male viewer and the appreciation appropriate to a female.

In Chapter One, I discussed how the Napoleonic Wars and Bonaparte's campaigns in Italy had a dramatic impact on the British and European art scene. The changes that resulted are perhaps best exemplified in the contrasting responses to the Venus de' Medici. The Venus de' Medici, along with the Laocoön and the Apollo Belvedere had been recognized as one of the most important classical statues throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During the Napoleonic Wars, the statue was sent from Florence's Uffizi to Palermo for safe-keeping; but this plan was thwarted and the statue became one of the Musée Napoleon's crowning glories. After Waterloo, and despite decades of fighting between the British, French and various Italian governments for the rights to this marmoreal embodiment of both earthly and divine beauty, the Venus de' Medici's status began to be challenged. Although the statue remained important throughout the nineteenth century, it was no longer considered the crowning achievement of art.[51] That the Venus de' Medici had a central role in shaping eighteenth-century aesthetic discourse is evidenced by the plethora of eighteenth-century copies that still litter the picturesque gardens and great houses of Britain.[52] The Venus de' Medici was considered the pinnacle of perfection throughout the eighteenth century. Prints and casts were extremely common, and the statue featured in all attempts to exemplify good taste, including, for example, Johann Zoffany's *The Tribuna* (1772-8). The statue is also commonly to be found in the artist's manuals, such as Gérard Audran's *Bowles's Proportions of the Human Body* (1718), that were used

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50 See for example, Jonah Siegel, *Desire and Excess: The Nineteenth-Century Culture of Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 64-72.

51 *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture*, ed. by Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 325- 328.

52 Wendy Frith, 'Sex, Gender, Politics: The Venus de Medici in the Eighteenth-Century Landscape', in *Sculpture and the Garden*, ed. by Patrick Eyres and Fiona Russell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 71-84.

by artists and connoisseurs alike to calculate the correct proportions of beauty.[53] It takes centre stage in Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* (1753) print, and was also evoked in many pastoral poems. However, the Venus de' Medici's status was problematic from the beginning. Her suggestive stance, 'peculiar fleshiness' and the lack of a clear narrative to explain these peculiarities, caused philosophers and connoisseurs to struggle to incorporate her safely into the canon. Indeed, the Venus was sometimes perceived as a threat to the masculine virtue so highly prized by the tenets of Civic Humanism. In an attempt to deny their sexual attraction to this enchantress, eighteenth-century connoisseurs and Grand Tourists were forced to justify their gaze. John Barrell, who has written extensively on the attraction of the Venus, explains the need

> to distinguish the aesthetic gaze from the scopophiliac stare, one which seems always to issue in the sensualization of that gaze, as an unacknowledged sexuality finds eager expression in a concern for the aesthetic, a concern which itself seems to exceed the space it can legitimately occupy by virtue of a prior renunciation of the sexual. The critic who, before he begins to describe the Venus de' Medici, makes a display of his civic credentials, announces himself as one whose aesthetic interest in Venus's body is made possible by virtue of his emancipation from her sexual potency. He is then free to gaze, and gaze, and gaze again; and if he can get close enough to the original, he evinces the innocence of his pleasure by getting out his callipers and footrule.[54]

The contest between the Venus's sensual allure and the connoisseur's virtue shaped written accounts of the statue.

Whereas the literary, philosophical and artistic texts of the eighteenth century sought to place the statue within a safe framework of aesthetic principles, thereby safeguarding their virtue/virtù, and maintaining a distinction between the intellectual and sensual appeal of art, Byron's treatment of this statue in the fourth canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* represents the statue's sexual power as both disorientating and creatively inspiring for the poetic viewer. Byron occupies a dual-position, particularly in this poem: he is both the last Grand Tourist and, as Mary Shelley called him, the father of Anglo-Italian literature. The places and art he engages with in Canto IV are, for the most part, canonical sites and works, but his response to them is explosively Romantic. Byron's treatment of the Venus de' Medici relies on earlier textual models and takes for granted the statue's place within the aesthetic canon, yet his description clearly departs from the

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53 Gérard Audran, *Bowles's Proportions of the Human Body, Measured from the Most Beautiful Antique Statues; by Monsieur Audran, Engraver to the late King of France; done from the Originals Engraved at Paris* (London: Carington Bowles, 1785), in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO> [accessed 21 July 2009].
54 John Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1992), p. 84.

conventions established by his literary and connoisseurial precursors. From the moment the

Pilgrim arrives in Florence, the sexually potent statue claims his full attention:

> There, too, the Goddess loves in stone, and fills
> The air around with beauty; we inhale
> The ambrosial aspect, which, beheld, instils
> Part of its immortality; the veil
> Of heaven is half undrawn; within the pale
> We stand, and in that form and face behold
> What Mind can make, when Nature's self would fail;
> And to the fond idolaters of old
> Envy the innate flash which such a soul could mould. (433-441)

The beauty of the statue is released into the air so that it can be inhaled by the viewer and

incorporated into his body.[55] The most important literary predecessor for Byron was James

Thomson. Hobhouse's accompanying note points to Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726-

1728).[56] Hobhouse writes that the 'comparison of the object with the description proves,

not only the correctness of the portrait, but the peculiar turn of thought, and, if the term

many be used, the sexual imagination of the descriptive poet'.[57] The passage Hobhouse

refers to comes in 'Summer', when Damon watches Musidora bathing.[58] William Kent's

accompanying engraving (1730) of the scene follows the text in placing Musidora in the

exact attitude of the statue. Thomson also depicts the statue in Canto IV of *Liberty*.[59] While

the passage in *The Seasons* seems most closely to anticipate the character of Byron's gaze,

Byron echoes *Liberty*'s language more closely. In the Romantic imagination Byron's

depiction of the Venus de' Medici would supersede all others, even as commentators began

to focus more and more on the statue's shortcomings.

> We gaze and turn away, and know not where,
> Dazzled and drunk with beauty, till the heart
> Reels with its fullness; there—forever there—
> Chain'd to the chariot of triumphal Art,
> We stand as captives, and would not depart.
> Away!—there need no words, nor terms precise,
> The paltry jargon of the marble mart,
> Where Pedantry gulls Folly—we have eyes:

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55 See also, Bruce Haley, *Living Forms: Romantics and the Monumental Figure* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003), pp. 179-180.

56 James Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. by James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

57 Byron and Hobhouse, 'Notes to Canto IV', The Complete Poetical Works, II, 218-264 (pp. 234-235).

58 Thomson, 'Summer', in *The Seasons*, pp. 58- 143. For the Bathing scene, see lines 1269-1370.

59 In some ways, Canto IV of Thomson's *Liberty* seems a more appropriate source for Byron. See lines 175-84: 'The *Queen of Love* arose, as from the Deep/ She spring in all the melting Pomp of Charms./ Bashful she bends, her well-taught Look aside/ Turns in enchanting guise, where dubious mix/ Vain conscious Beauty, a dissemmbled Sense/ Of modest Shame, and slippery Looks of Love. / The Gazer grows enamour'd, and the Stone,/ As if exulting in its Conquest, smiles./ So turn'd each Limb, so swell'd with softening Art,/ That the deluded Eye the Marble doubts.' Thomson, 'Liberty', in *Liberty, The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems*, ed. by James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 31-147.

Blood—pulse—and breast, confirm the Dardan Shepherd's prize. (442-450)

Just as Byron inhales the statue's beauty, that beauty is ratified not in language, which is dismissed as 'paltry jargon, but by the body, in the response of 'Blood—pulse—and breast'. Even in memory the beauty of the statue retains its potency, acting as a spur to the viewer to match it in creations of his own:

> We can recal such visions, and create,
> From what has been, or might be, things which grow
> Into thy statue's form, and look like gods below.
>
> I leave to learned fingers, and wise hands,
> The artist and his ape, to teach and tell
> How well his connoisseurship understands
> The graceful bend, and the voluptuous swell:
> Let these describe the indescribable:
> I would not their vile breath should crisp the stream
> Wherein that image shall for ever dwell;
> The unruffled mirror of the loveliest dream
> That ever left the sky on the deep soul to beam. (466-477)

The divine spark passes, as it were, from the sculptor, through the statue, to the poet-viewer, informing his future creative acts and feeding his imagination. These lines recall Book IV of Pope's *The Dunciad*:

> The critic Eye, that microscope of Wit,
> Sees hairs and pores, examines bit by bit:
> How parts relate to parts, or they to whole,
> The body's harmony, the beaming soul,
> Are things which Kuster, Burman, Wasse shall see,
> When Man's whole frame is obvious to a *Flea*.[60]

The change in taste allowed men to be more open about the sexual aspect of art viewing, even as it made women choose carefully how they represented themselves in this once wholly masculine aesthetic realm. In Hazlitt's assessment of the Hampton Court Collection, he singles out one figure in Tintoret's *Nine Muses*. The figure is not central, but is in the right-hand corner, facing away from the audience. It is, he writes, 'the figure of a Goddess, or of a woman in shape equal to a Goddess'. Because this one figure is superior to the others in the picture, technically the composition's balance is destroyed. Like Byron, Hazlitt asserts the authenticity of his own response to the painting by distinguishing it from the merely technical appreciation he associates with 'critics':

> there are certain critics who could probably maintain that the picture would be

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60 Alexander Pope, 'The Dunciad', in *Poetical Works*, ed. by Herbert Davis (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 425- 619 (lines 233-238).

better, if this capital excellence in it had been deliberately left out: the picture would, indeed, have been more according to rule, and to the taste of those who judge, feel, and see by rule only![61]

As in Byron, Hazlitt needs 'no terms, nor words precise' to express his admiration of this female form; indeed he scoffs at those who cannot appreciate 'this capital excellence' because they remain trapped within conventional standards of taste. One indication of the new tolerance for the fleshly is the increasing preference for Raphael's *Fornarina* over the Venus de' Medici.

Novelizing Art

It is clear from Byron's and his predecessors' literary invocations of the statue, that the Venus de' Medici resists narrative; she is indescribable and hence she never functions to suggest a story in which she is a prime actor. Though Byron wonders if the goddess Venus appeared to Mars or Paris in such a way as she appears to him, he is only capable of asking these questions and describing his own emotions. Any narrative into which the statue might be incorporated remains a secondary concern to his description and the act of viewing. However, a shift was beginning to take place in responses to art that would most prize art that supplied some kind of narrative appeal. Italian Renaissance art especially lends itself to narrative and that is one reason why it was so easily incorporated into Romantic literary culture. The interest in medieval and Renaissance history, and Renaissance biography is inseparable in Romantic writings from an interest in Renaissance visual culture. This development is particularly evident in the Romantic treatment of Raphael's *Fornarina*. The *Fornarina*, for the Romantic viewers who were fascinated by it, was not so much a painting as a narrative that showed the power of love to transcend class, significantly a plot that is endlessly replayed in the novels of the period. The painting becomes an occasion to rehearse the story of Raphael's love for the baker's daughter. Picture and narrative become inseparable.

In 1803, the French, Italian and British fought desperately for custody of the Venus de' Medici; a little more than a decade later, when the statue returned to the Uffizi, visitors tended to either neglect or abuse it. Hazlitt, for instance, said it looked 'a little too much like an exquisite marble doll'.[62] This cold reception may be partly attributed to the

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61 Hazlitt, x, 43.
62 Hazlitt, x, 222.

purchase of the Elgin Marbles (i.e. a true piece of antiquity rather than a Greco-Roman copy). What is really fascinating however, is that many visitors and viewers began to compare the Venus de' Medici to more earthly representations of the female form, and to prefer them. Although the statue had often been compared to other Venuses in the Tribuna, most notably Titian's painting *Venus and Cupid*, it was more and more often compared with Raphael's *Fornarina*. This suggests that the taste for Old Master painting rather than for classical artefacts corresponded with a growing taste for 'real' rather than ideal figures. However, though the biographical anecdote of Raphael and his lower-class mistress was incorporated into descriptions of this painting, female and male viewers treated it very differently. Lady Morgan's travel book, for example, illustrates a duality in the Venus's and Fornarina's reception in the post-Waterloo years, suggesting that women tended to stay loyal to the statue while men were diverted to a new shrine.

Morgan sets the rejection of the Venus de' Medici in the wider context of mass tourism and post-revolutionary European culture. The area outside the Uffizi, which was designed by Vasari, had been turned into a market place with

> small traders, whose gay stalls are filled exclusively with French and English merchandize. The contrast these display, with surrounding objects [i.e. the Loggia and the Palazzo Vecchio], is extremely pleasant: the produce of the Manchester looms attracts the eye from the *Perseus* of Cellini and the *David* of Buonarotti — Birmingham blades dispute attention in the mind occupied with the *Knife-grinder* of antiquity— garters and French fans are purchased by votarists on their pilgrimage to the Niobe— and *pomade divine*, Whitechapel needles, and Swansea flannels, are ordered home by the English Corinna as she ascends the stairs which lead to the Tribune of the VENUS DE MEDICIS.[63]

The figure of the English Corinna is as conspicuous as all the other items displayed on the market stalls and Morgan's text presents this figure as equally consuming trade goods and canonical art works. Much of both travel and art appreciation is about consumption, and display. Despite Morgan's depiction of the marketplace *outside* the walls of the Uffizi, inside she celebrates the

> re-union of superior intellect, severed by the lapse of ages; the adaptation of high conceptions, over which time has no power—the Faun of Praxiteles restored by Buonarroti—the Ganymede of Scopas completed by Cellini! But best of all is the conviction that these splendid creations of human effort were produced under the influence of liberty, and that the artists of Greece and Italy, like the Miltons and Lockes of England, belonged to the highest state of political freedom that the world was then acquainted with.[64]

She describes the main corridor and rooms, filled with images of human faces that in her

63 Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, *Italy*, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn and Co, 1821), ɪɪ, pp. 61-62.
64 Morgan, *Italy*, ɪɪ, 62.

account implicitly trace the pages of a Whig history of western Europe. Yet the main attraction of the Uffizi for Lady Morgan is still the Venus de' Medici, on which she quotes Thomson and Byron. Morgan, who herself was extremely short, jokes that the 'tiny goddess' is especially worshipped by 'short ladies and "dumpy women"', who say *ave*s before 'the "*Madonna della Conforta*" of all who have "Found the blessedness of being little"'.[65] While men had worshipped her sexual powers for centuries, these women are worshipping her as ideal manifestations of themselves. At the same time as she describes the 'English Corinna' visiting the Tribuna, Morgan stresses that the Venus is being neglected. She explains why, in 'this age of anti-beau-idealism', such a long-worshipped goddess-statue should fall out of favour. The 'unsparing hands of science' have deemed that her head belongs to 'a Becky' rather than a goddess, while contemporary sceptics have judged the statue not to be an authentic specimen of antiquity at all. Most damaging however is that

> like other long-revered antiquities, [the Venus de' Medici] has felt the blighting breath of revolutionary change; and daily sees her shrine deserted for that of a rival beauty, who is no goddess, and still less a saint; who is after all, but a mere woman; but who was at once the model and the inspiration of Raphael—his own Fornarina.[66]

Not only has the Venus fallen from goddess to the status of a coarse, servant-girl ('a Becky'), with unknown origins, but in so doing has lost all her charm. The Fornarina may have come from the lower classes, yet she is protected by the aura of Raphael. Though the women in the statue and the painting assume similar postures – both half-cover their breasts in a similar way, despite the Fornarina being seated – Raphael's painting and its biographical origins invite a narrative appreciation that the Venus de' Medici cannot compete with. Interestingly, Morgan does not describe the painting. She does however offer an extensive footnote, which relates the legend of Raphael's passion for the baker's daughter, who appeared in many of his works. Morgan quotes Vasari and gives biographical details of Raphael's short life. Morgan, as a woman, is more anxious than her male contemporaries to establish her authority. She stresses not only her knowledge of art history, but her deep awareness of contemporary political events. Before leaving the Tribuna, she again discusses the decline in the reputation of the Venus. When the art work was returned, the intended 'triumphal entry' proved a disappointment. Very few people showed up to the public display, because the 'lapse of near a quarter of a century had

65 Morgan, *Italy*, ɪɪ, pp. 63-64.
66 Morgan, *Italy*, ɪɪ, pp. 64-65.

changed their tastes, and dulled their apprehensions. They wanted *statutes*, not statues'.[67]
Though the Florentines remained proud of their gallery, Morgan demonstrates how
radically the wars throughout Europe had changed people's expectations.

Unlike Morgan who carefully avoided describing either of these nude or nearly
nude figures, Hazlitt, in his characteristic style, focuses on their bodily appeal.
Complaining that the Venus de' Medici disappoints by not rising 'to an equality of style
with modern poetry or painting', he immediately launches into a description of Raphael's
Fornarina, which 'is a downright, point-blank contrast to' the Venus de' Medici.[68] This
intimate portrait of Raphael's mistress is

> robust, full to bursting, coarse, luxurious, hardened, but wrought up to an
> infinite degree of exactness and beauty in details. It is the perfection of
> vulgarity and refinement together. The Fornarina is a bouncing, buxom, sullen,
> saucy baker's daughter—but painted, idolized, immortalized by Raphael!
> Nothing can be more homely and repulsive than the original; you see her
> bosom swelling like the dough rising in the oven; the tightness of her skin puts
> you in mind of Trim's story of the sausage-maker's wife—nothing can be much
> more enchanting than the picture—than the care and delight with which the
> artist has seized the lurking glances of the eye, curved the corners of the mouth,
> smoothed the forehead, dimpled the chin, rounded the neck, till by innumerable
> delicate touches, and the 'labour of love,' he has converted a coarse, rude mass
> into a miracle of art.[69]

Hazlitt's description of the painting is fully informed by the story he tells of the young
Raphael pulling a lower class girl up to the very heights of art. The picture is for him
oxymoronic, combining coarseness and luxury, vulgarity and refinement, in order to mimic
the oxymoronic pairing of Raphael and his 'baker's daughter'. A 'Sullen', 'saucy' girl has
been immortalized by artistic genius. It is obviously to the point that Hazlitt attempted
similarly to immortalize his own love for his landlady's daughter, Sarah Waters, in his
Liber Amoris (1823). Hazlitt's description is focused less on the portrait than on the story
of its creation, and is itself as bouncing as the portrait, as he follows Raphael's eye as it
passes from one bodily excellence of his mistress to another, her expression, her mouth,
her dimpled chin. Hazlitt places his readers in Raphael's studio so that the portrait becomes
not just a great work by a great artist, but a love story between a great man and the baker's
daughter.

Hazlitt's description is lively and sexually charged. As we saw in Chapter Two, the
young Anna Jameson represents herself as a student of art rather than an authority. In her
entry for the twenty-second of November, the narrator of *A Diary of an Ennuyée* visits the

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67 Morgan, *Italy*, ɪɪ, p. 72.
68 Hazlitt, x, 223.
69 Hazlitt, x, 223. 'Trim's story' refers to Book II, chapter 17 of *Tristram Shandy*.

Uffizi and decides,

> I admire Titian's taste much more than Raffaelle's, *en fait de maitresse*. The Fornarina is a mere *femme de peuple*, a coarse virago, compared to the refined, the exquisite La Manto, in the Pitti Palace. I think the Flora must have been painted from the same lovely model, as far as I can judge from compared recollections, for I have no authority to refer to. The former is the most elegant, and the latter the most poetical female portrait I ever saw. At Titian's Venus in the Tribune, one hardly ventures to look up; it is the perfection of earthly loveliness, as the Venus de' Medici is all ideal— all celestial beauty.[70]

Perhaps because of her own precarious social position (Jameson acted as a governess in Italy), Jameson rejects the Fornarina as a common and low-born woman, refusing to enter into the biographical narrative which so fascinated many of her contemporaries. By keeping clear boundaries between art and her writing, and by offering purely aesthetic readings of the paintings, she protects her status as a knowledgeable and respectable viewer. She also maintains the Venus de' Medici's standing as the embodiment of the ideal. The preference she maintains for idealized rather than realistic portraits indicates divergences between female and male viewers of art.

Writing Italian and English Women

Responses to Italian art became a means of defining both Italian and British national characteristics. Partly this was done through the sort of engagement we have just been discussing with those paintings that lent themselves to be novelized. As several critics have argued, travellers in Italy often viewed the Italians and Italy as a spectacle. Engagements with Italian art became an important vehicle for discussing political and cultural issues within a literary text, especially in the travel literature that blurred the distinction between art and life. In particular, Romantic literature's engagement with Italian art, helped to shape views of both Italian and British women.

As many critics have noted, the intellectual and cultural divisions between the North (Britain and Germany) and the South (Italy) of Europe was a major theme in Madame de Staël's *Corinne*. These differences are illustrated in Staël's use of specific works of art to establish the identities of both Corinne and her half-sister, and Lord Nelvil's bride, Lucile. Staël's discussion of art was a key ingredient in the novel's success. Corinne's houses are filled with objects of art, music and literature, while the novel itself

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70 Anna Jameson, *Diary of an Ennuyée* (London: Henry Colburn, 1826), pp. 113-114.

became a sort of sentimental guidebook, offering its readers at once a love story and the kind of information normally found in a travel book. Both Corinne and Lucile are described as bearing remarkable resemblances to specific Renaissance paintings, resemblances that Staël uses to comment on national and female identity. Corinne's likeness to Domenichino's Cumaean Sibyl establishes her character as a prophetess and indicates, too, her exotic character. Despite being half English, Corinne is described as having a dark, Italian beauty, with a Grecian figure. Corinne's half-sister, on the other hand, is purely English. On Lord Nelvil's second trip to Italy, with Lucile and their daughter, the couple visits the gallery of Parma, to view Correggio's *Madonna della Scala*. The fair Lucile lifts their daughter up to see the picture and at that moment

> the attitude of the mother and child happened to be almost the same as the Virgin's and her son's. Lucile's face was so like the ideal of modesty and grace painted by Correggio that Oswald [Lord Nelvil] turned his gaze alternately from the picture towards Lucile and from Lucile towards the picture. She noticed this, lowered her eyes, and the resemblance became even more striking, for Correggio is perhaps the only painter who can give lowered eyes as penetrating an expression as if they were lifted towards heaven.[71]

This is one of the few tender moments shared between husband and wife. Lucile, whose very name implies light and purity, is the unblemished and perhaps untouchable Madonna. Despite Corinne's fame as an improvisatrice in her own culture, in Oswald's eyes she seems a more earthly and sensual Venus. Lucile's personality and Oswald's choice of her as his wife in obedience to his late father's wishes establish Lucile as a heavenly and de-sexualized Madonna. At this point, Oswald is still obsessed with Corinne, and while Lucile hopes that she can begin to trust her husband, her English pride hinders her from openly displaying her affection for him. Both Oswald and Lucile then feel obliged by a sense of duty and honour to present unnatural versions of themselves to each other, a trait that Staël represents as inherent in the British character.

Domenichino's Sibyl and Correggio's Madonna provide an opportunity for Oswald and Lucile to discuss his past history with Corinne. In Bologna, when they encounter the painting of Domenichino's Sibyl, Oswald gazes at it for a long time. Lucile was bold enough to

> ask him shyly if Domenichino's Sibyl appealed to him more than Correggio's Madonna. Oswald understood Lucile and was surprised at the full meaning of these words. For some time he looked at her without replying, and then said, "The Sibyl no longer utters oracles; all her genius and talent are no more. But the angelic face painted by Correggio has lost none of its charming features,

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71 Germaine de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, trans. and ed. by Sylvia Raphael (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 384.

> and the unhappy man who caused the one so much pain will never betray the other." As he finished speaking, he went out in order to conceal his distress.[72]

In his guilt-ridden devotion to Corinne, Oswald has overlooked his wife's finer qualities. His surprise when he registers the full implication of her words reveals that he has discovered that she is more intelligent and more perceptive than he had taken her for, and suggests that he is beginning to see her with new eyes. His answer even offers an indirect insight into the nature of Anglo-Italian relations, and the north's fascination with the south. The Sibyl was a popular figure at the turn of the century. Mary Shelley opens her *The Last Man* (1826) with a visit to the Sibyl's cave and the discovery of the Sibylline leaves. Madame de Staël even commissioned a painting of herself dressed as the Sibyl. Oswald's answer suggests that the attraction of the creative genius of the south is passing, while the quiet, reflective nature of a woman devoted to hearth and home secures long-lasting affection. The sisters embody the characteristics of their home countries. The contrast between the warm south and the cold north was not simply a matter of climate: it registered differences in conduct, frame of mind, and values. It also had sexual implications, especially for women. The figure of the mother and the great importance the British placed on the idea of 'home' desexualized the genteel women of Britain. On the other hand, the sensuality so closely associated with Italy and the view of the Italian genius as expansive and passionate, meant that there was always an underlying sexual element in the appeal of Italy to the British male gaze, a sexuality that was expressed most powerfully in the representation of Italian women.

In his essay treating Van Dyke's *The Portrait of an English Lady*, Hazlitt contrasts English beauty as it is displayed in Van Dyke's work with Titian's *Mistress*. Significantly, Hazlitt chooses to contrast a portrait of an English *lady* with the Italian master's portrait of his *mistress*. The chief ingredient in English beauty is '[g]oodness of disposition, with a clear complexion and handsome features', all of which Lucile, as a typical English gentlewoman, has in abundance.[73] Though Van Dyke is not British, his northern roots make him sympathetic to the English character. In Titian's work, and in the Italian character in general, there is none 'of that retired and shrinking character, that modesty of demeanour, that sensitive delicacy, that starts even at the shadow of evil'. Instead Titian depicts a woman in a 'tight boddice [sic]' whose tucker

> in part conceals and almost clasps the snowy bosom. But you never think of any thing beyond the personal attractions, and a certain sparkling intelligence.

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72 Staël, *Corinne*, p. 386.
73 Hazlitt, XII, 281.

> She is not marble, but a fine piece of animated clay. [...] [T]here is no positive vice, no meanness, no hypocrisy, but an unconstrained elastic spirit of self-enjoyment, more bent on the end than scrupulous about the means; with firmly braced nerves, and a tincture of vulgarity. She is not like an English lady, nor like a lady at all; but she is a very fine servant girl, conscious of her advantages, and willing to make the most of them. In fact, Titian's *Mistress* answers exactly, I conceive, to the idea conveyed by the English word, *sweetheart*.[74]

As in Patmore's distinction between Reni's marble-like Venus and Titian's earthly and touchable Venus, Hazlitt uses different mediums – marble and clay – to distinguish between the physical and emotional characteristics of these two portraits. While the English lady is essentially unreadable and therefore indescribable, there is an expansive quality in Titian's *Mistress* to which Hazlitt responds both in the substance of his prose and in its manner. In describing the portrait, Hazlitt writes of the woman as if she were alive, describing not only the composition of the painting, but imagining her personality and temperament. He supposes her to be free of normal social restraints, which when coupled with her 'sparkling intelligence' and her happy awareness of her own physical charms, places her firmly in the social position with which Hazlitt's own most intense erotic feelings were associated . As Hazlitt's description of the painting gives way to a lively discussion of the woman's character, Titian's portrait is subordinated to the literary text that Hazlitt himself is producing. It is Hazlitt, after all, rather than Van Dyke and Titian who offers the portraits as representative of the respective characteristics of British and Italian women as much as they are of the characteristics of Van Dyke and Titian as painters.

This passage also, of course, brings to mind Hazlitt's Sarah Walker. Titian's mistress merges with the woman that Hazlitt had hoped would be his. Instead of novelizing the painting by understanding it in terms of Titian's biography, Hazlitt understands it in relation to his own life story. His anonymous account of the affair, *Liber Amoris; Or, The New Pygmalion*, repeatedly introduces the visual arts into the written text. The sub-title itself refers to the classical myth of the sculptor who, falling in love with his marble creation, brings her to life; yet in Hazlitt's text it is unclear who is the artist and who is the animated statue. Though the myth was well-known, it was Rousseau's one-act play *Pygmalion* (1770), which, according to Essaka Joshua, 'inspired the British Romantics to tackle the theme'.[75] Joshua argues that there is a 'community of interest' between

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74 Hazlitt, XII, pp. 281-282.
75 Essaka Joshua, *Pygmalion and Galatea: The History of a Narrative in English literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2001), p. 37.

Rousseau's suggestion

> that the artist's work is his re-creation of himself and is not an object that can be properly distinguished from the artist, and Hazlitt's account of the breakdown of a real distinction between subject and object in his concept of 'gusto'. 'Gusto' is an aesthetic which synthesizes the subject and the object, preserving the individuality or essence of both entities, and at the same time using the nature of one to reveal the nature of the other; the artist's imagination, then, is responsible for combining the internal image and the external world.[76]

In life and in the literary text Hazlitt attemps to deny the difference between the young woman that he imagines and the real Sarah Walker, but *Liber Amoris* traces the history of his failure. *Liber Amoris* opens with a dialogue between 'H' and 'S', where H shows S a copy of a painting, an engraving of which was used as the book's frontispiece. After arguing about whether or not S actually resembles the portrait and a lengthy declaration of his love, S asks H to tell her about the portrait:

> S. Do not, I beg, talk in that manner, but tell me what this is a picture of.
> H. I hardly know; but it is a very small and delicate copy (painted in oil on a gold ground) of some fine old Italian picture, Guido's or Raphael's, but I think Raphael's. Some say it is a Madona [sic]; others call it a Magdalen, and say you may distinguish the tear upon the cheek, though no tear is there. But it seems to me more like Raphael's St. Cecilia, 'with looks commercing with the skies,' than anything else.—See, Sarah, how beautiful it is! Ah! dear girl, these are the ideas I have cherished in my heart, and in my brain; and I never found any thing to realise them on earth till I met with thee, my love! While thou didst seem sensible of my kindness, I was but too happy: but now thou hast cruelly cast me off.
> S. You have no reason to say so: you are the same to me as ever.
> H. That is, nothing. You are to me everything, and I am nothing to you. Is it not too true?
> S. No.
> H. Then kiss me, my sweetest. Oh! could you see your face now—your mouth full of suppressed sensibility, your downcast eyes, the soft blush upon that cheek, you would not say the picture is not like because it is too handsome, or because you want complexion. Thou art heavenly-fair, my love—like her from whom the picture was taken—the idol of the painter's heart, as thou art of mine! Shall I make a drawing of it, altering the dress a little, to shew you how like it is?
> S. As you please.—[77]

Hazlitt's narrative mimics his description of how Raphael had painted the Fornarina. He ultimately names the portrait as St Cecilia, raising Sarah, through her likeness to it, to an ideal or heavenly beauty. This likeness also legitimizes H's own feelings, demonstrating that his intentions are honourable. He shifts from describing the painting to describing

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76 Joshua, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, p. 45.
77 Hazlitt, IX, 99-100.

Sarah, and in doing so he becomes himself her portraitist. In this anonymous autobiography, Hazlitt tells his own story, but that story is from its outset inseparable from his response to an Italian painting. He uses an ideal Renaissance portrait of an Italian saint to indicate the character of his own achievement in elevating the lowly born Sarah until she becomes herself a work of art.

In English responses to Italy Italian art becomes all but interchangeable with living Italians, and in particular with Italian women. In the poem that Mary Shelley identified as founding the 'Anglo-Italian literary tradition', famous paintings are used to intimate the dangerous beauty of ordinary Italian women.[78] 'Beppo, A Venetian Story' (1818) features Italian women as breathing artworks and Venice as a living theatre.[79] The women in Venice are

> Such as of old were copied from the Grecians,
> […]
> And like so many Venuses of Titian's
> (The best's at Florence—see it, if ye will)
> They look when leaning over the balcony,
> Or stepp'd from out a picture by Giorgione (83-88)

The reader familiar with Italian painting and Grecian sculpture can imagine the typical Venetian beauty, while the English traveller in Venice is invited to witness how the living originals outdo the painted copies. Byron sets these women up to be gazed at, framing them against a balcony and door way. Venice becomes a gallery of living pictures and living statues. The narrator acts like a tour guide, identifying important art works and encouraging his readers to visit Florence's gallery and Venice's Manfrini palace, where

> Giorgione's picture hangs. This picture
> Is loveliest to my mind of all the show
> […]
> 'Tis but a portrait of his son, and wife,
> And self; but *such* a woman! love in life! (93-97)

As in Hazlitt's description of Raphael's *Fornarina*, Byron takes this woman out of the painting so that she becomes something like a character in a novel. Importantly, Giorgione's wife and the other Venetian women, despite looking as if they have been 'copied from the Grecians', are earthly creatures, not the untouchable statues described by Patmore or the Madonna figure typified by Lucile.

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78 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 'The English in Italy', *The Mary Shelley Reader: Containing Frankenstein, Mathilda, Tales and Stories, Essays and Reviews, and Letters*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett and Charles E. Robinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 341- 357 (p. 343).

79 Byron, 'Beppo, A Venetian Story', in *The Major Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986; repr. 2000), pp. 316-341. Line numbers cited within the text.

Venice's women are the living originals, while the famous paintings are merely copies. The distinction between the real and the ideal disappears when one frames Italian women as living art works and Italy itself becomes a gallery. As a real woman, Giorgione's wife is superior to Venus and even to the Madonna:

> Love in full life and length, not love ideal,
>> No, nor ideal beauty, that fine name,
> But something better still, so very real,
>> That the sweet model must have been the same;
> A thing that you would purchase, beg or steal,
>> Wer't not impossible, besides a shame (98-102)

The narrator prizes the reality of the woman above the 'fine name' or empty promise of ideal beauty, yet she does not inflame desire so much as acquisitiveness. If it were possible, anyone would 'purchase, beg or steal' her. Despite Byron's insistence that this portrait depicts a real woman, he is of course treating both the painting and the woman imaginatively. Importantly, the narrator likens the portrait to a distant memory of his own. Her face reminds him of an unrequited and fleeting love from his youth:

> The face recalls some face, as 'twere with pain,
> You once have seen, but ne'er will see again;
>
> One of those forms which flit by us, when we
>> Are young, and fix our eyes on every face;
> And, oh! the loveliness at times we see
>> In momentary gliding, the soft grace,
> The youth, the bloom, the beauty which agree,
>> In many a nameless being we retrace,
> Whose course and home we knew not, nor shall know,
> Like the lost Pleiad seen no more below. (103-112)

This art work and the woman it represents, remind the narrator of his own youthful sexual awakening. Though the woman in the portrait seems 'so very real,' the memory of disappointed love works to establish a distance between the narrator and the portrait. Distance almost always becomes a feature in the story of English male encounters with Italian women. Framed by their high balconies, the women remain unknowable, while the viewer gazes from below. However, this distance in itself allows Byron to convert a visual experience into a literary experience, in which the women emerge from their frames but emerge onto a stage in which they become the typical characters of an Italian drama:

> I said that like a picture by Giorgione
>> Venetian women were, and so they *are*,
> Particularly seen from a balcony,
>> (For beauty's sometimes best set off afar)
> And there, just like a heroine of Goldoni,

> They peep from out the blind, or o'er the bar;
> And, truth to say, they're mostly very pretty,
> And rather like to show it, more's the pity!
>
> For glances beget ogles, ogles sighs,
> Sighs wishes, wishes words, and words a letter,
> Which flies on wings of light-heeled Mercuries,
> Who do such things because they know no better;
> And then, God knows, what mischief may arise,
> When love links two young people in one fetter,
> Vile assignations, and adulterous beds,
> Elopements, broken vows, and hearts, and heads. (113-128)

That Venetian women are equally like Giorgione's paintings and Goldoni's heroines, both of which are effortlessly accommodated within the fluid ottava rima of Byron's verse. The reference to the Venetian playwright, Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793) enables Byron to characterize Venetian women as coquettish. Unlike earlier Italian drama, Goldoni's plays offered rich roles for women, who are most often represented as deviously resourceful. Byron's Venetian women, like Goldoni's characters, 'peep from out the blind, or o'er the bar' as if they are actresses on the stage of Venice. Venice was, after all, better known for its theatre than any other Italian city. In *Gender and the Italian Stage*, Maggie Günsberg notes that at this time more indoor scenes were being represented on stage, which allowed for the inclusion of more middle- and upper-class characters. Regardless of class, women always needed to have a chaperone when they went outside, which

> meant that the traditional patriarchal alignment of inside, private space with femininity, and outside, public space with masculinity, continued to be reinforced. Moreover, it is not always only middle- or upper-class female characters who have this inbuilt restriction, as one might perhaps expect. *La putta onorata* (1748) shows the "modest" and "chaste" lower-class Bettina justifying her presence alone on the roof terrace, where she is hanging out the washing, but where she is visible from the street (I, 5). She is subsequently scolded by Pasqualino for appearing in public view, when he catches sight of her from down below. Rooftops, balconies, doorways and even windows, are all classed as public space in Goldoni's plays, in that they are all visible from the street.[80]

Street appearances, in life and on the stage, suggested a loss of virtue, a convention that Byron capitalizes on. In his poem the dangerous beauty of Venetian women will lead to 'adulterous beds' and 'broken vows, and hearts, and heads'. Byron consistently represents Venice and Venetian women (and by extension Italian women) by reference to painting and to the theatre, and the effect is to represent them as living and dangerous art works.

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80 Maggie Günsberg, *Gender and the Italian Stage: From the Renaissance to the present day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 90.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the use by Romantic writers of Italian art in the production of their own writing. The approach to painting was almost never narrowly formal. It was inflected by a knowledge of the artist's biography, and his historical circumstances, by the known or imagined personality of the painter's subject, and by the writer's own mood or temperament. The critical vocabulary that they developed typically, as in terms such as expression and gusto, identified qualities that might be attached either to painting or to a written text, and might also be shared between them. An interest in biography and an increasing focus on the genius of the individual artist also worked to minimise the distinction between visual and written works of art, as did the new insistence that ideal beauty express itself through the particular. A growing insistence on the sensuality of the experience of art led to an increasing separation of female and male discourses. One instance of several of these changes was the growing tendency to favour Raphael's *Fornarina* over the *Venus de' Medici.* Another consequence was the growth of narrative responses to paintings, responses which read the painting as novelistic or as offering an insight into the artist's life. Finally Italian art offered a vehicle through which writers were able to define the English national character in its difference from the Italian, a procedure which most commonly took the form of a contrast between English and Italian women.

Chapter Four

Samuel Rogers's *Italy*

As we have seen, in the mid-eighteenth century, Britain's relationship with art and literature began to change.[1] By the 1830s, the visual and the verbal arts were becoming increasingly interdependent, and they were also becoming widely available to a growing middle class. The demands of the middle class, who used both literature and the arts as signifiers of their cultural and social standing, shaped how and what was produced. We began this study with Hazlitt despairing over his inability to 'engraft Italian art on English nature' and went on to explore the complex relationship between British viewers and Italian art. This argument was developed in the second chapter through a discussion of the ways in which various groups and individuals competed for recognition as authoritative guides to this new visual culture. Various forms of authority were claimed, each of which defined itself in opposition to some supposedly vulgar 'other'. Perhaps most influential for later reader-viewers was the figure of the poetic connoisseur that can be traced in the writings of Byron, Shelley and Hazlitt. In the last chapter, we examined the ways in which Romantic writers used Italian art to stimulate literary works of their own. In this final chapter the themes of the first three chapters will be brought together, and some new issues will be engaged. The central figure in this chapter will be Samuel Rogers, and I will focus in particular on his poem *Italy*, arguing that this popular and important book reflects how interdependent the literary and visual arts had become. The demand of readers for pictorial satisfaction came to shape not only the visual culture of Britain but also its literature and its perception of Italy. While Rogers may not have engrafted Italian art on English nature, he successfully adapted Italian subjects to the two most important British arts of the nineteenth century, literature and engraving.

Scholars have tended to overlook the centrality of Rogers's career and his writings to the Romantic period. Partly this is because his poetry seems weak when compared, as it usually is, with the poetry of Byron, the Shelleys and Wordsworth. *Italy* is likely to seem a version of *Childe Harold* diluted to accord with the taste of a middle-class readership that might find Byron's aristocratic pretensions antipathetic. The neglect of Rogers may also have to do with the fact that he was so long-lived, forfeiting the glamour that attends the early deaths of Keats, Shelley and Byron. Is he the last Augustan or a Victorian?

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1   See for example, Gerard Curtis, *Visual Words: Art and the Material Book in Victorian England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 217.

Interestingly, a similar indecision is evident in many responses to *Italy*. Some scholars date it as published in 1822, others as published in 1830. In fact, both dates are, in a way, correct. Part the First (1822) of *Italy* is a slim work that did not find favour with the reading public but developed into a much longer poem that was produced in a number of versions, in a variety of formats, many of them richly illustrated, from 1830 to the turn of the century. The 1822 edition, for example, contained eighteen sections plus endnotes, but this had grown to fifty sections with additional endnotes by 1830. Two further sections were added in 1834. The engravings expanded from illustrations inset into the text to full plates interleaved between the text's pages.[2] Though the illustrations were essential to *Italy*'s success, Rogers's presentation of the text and notes also offers clues as to what was attractive to a mid-nineteenth-century readership. By examining the extended publication history of *Italy*, its use of illustrations, its miscellany-like nature and its presentation of the history and the art of medieval and Renaissance Tuscany, I will argue that Rogers's *Italy* both shaped and reflected the developments in Romantic-period visual and verbal culture.

In *Italy and English Literature*, Kenneth Churchill argues that Rogers's work is surprisingly progressive:

> Rogers has often been reproached for being old-fashioned in his attitudes to Italy; but though he was born in 1763 and thus in his fifties when he first went to Italy, the reproach is more justly applicable to some younger poets than to Rogers. On the contrary, his *Italy* is a significant growth-point of feeling, since it applies the viewpoint of the wealthy, cultivated Grand Tourist not to Classical but to Renaissance Italy. The eighteenth century had found inspiration for its self-confidence in the grandeur of ancient Rome; the nineteenth would seek refuge from the ugliness of the new industrial society in the beauty of Italian culture. Rogers' *Italy* is the pleasant link between two quite different attitudes: a more interesting link between two ages than the better-known one that in his youth he almost met Dr Johnson and in old age he blessed the infant Swinburne.[3]

It is not my intention in this chapter to argue for Rogers's inclusion within the Romantic

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2   Recording all of theses changes is beyond the scope of this chapter, and I have limited myself to four texts: the anonymous first part (1822), the first illustrated edition of 1830, the 1838 edition with its full-sized plates, and the text of the poem included in the 1856 edition of Rogers's works. For purely practical reasons the latter is my working copy of the poem. The anonymous editor of this volume explains that Rogers felt that the 1834 edition was the 'first complete Edition' (p. 211), though he uses the 1839 edition as his copy text (p. 406). By using the 1856 edition as my primary text, I have been able to address the various additions to and modifications of the text of *Italy* in order to explore how Rogers responded to the demands of a market place already flooded with images of Italy and Italianate literature. All quotations are taken from this edition. As *Italy* is a combination of poetry and prose, I will identify quotations by page numbers. The illustrations referred to throughout this chapter, however, are taken from the 1838 edition, in which the reproduction of the engravings is of superior quality. See, Rogers Samuel, *The Poetical Works of Samuel Rogers* (London: Edward Moxon, 1856); and, *Italy, a Poem* (London: Edward Moxon, 1838).

3   Kenneth Churchill, *Italy and English Literature* (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Nobles Books, 1980), p. 51.

canon. However, Rogers's *Italy* provides the best available route to an understanding of how various topics – such as Italian culture, developments in British literature and art and the growing popularity of foreign travel – were bound up with one another in the period. *Italy* and its author offered readers a template for leading an aesthetically centred life: it offered its readers an aesthetic training the desire for which later in the century was supplied by figues such as Ruskin and Walter Pater.

Like William 'Lorenzo' Roscoe, Rogers was a banker, poet and connoisseur. He was born in 1763 into a self-made, Dissenting family. His father was a glass-manufacturer turned banker while his mother was related to the connoisseur Richard Payne Knight. In 1792, Rogers won literary fame on the publication of his poem *Pleasures of Memory.* The following year, he inherited a banking fortune worth £5,000 per annum, allowing him to become a full-time man of letters and affording him the luxury of publishing his own poetry.[4] Rogers soon became as famous for his sumptuous breakfasts, sarcastic wit and generous nature, as he was for his poetry; these activities maintained his standing in the public eye even as taste for his works waned. Literary versions and invocations of Rogers appear in Byron's poems, Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* (1816), Anna Jameson's *Diary of an Ennuyée* (1826) and even in Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-53) in which the character of Grandfather Smallweed has been thought to have been modelled on Rogers.[5]

As a well-known connoisseur, Rogers secured a reputation not only for the vastness and diversity of his collection, but also for the distinctiveness of his taste, which extended to previously overlooked artists such as Giotto and Parmigianino. His house at 22, St James' Place was a purpose-built sanctuary for art.[6] Though knowledgeable in the classics, he was a pioneer in recognizing the value of medieval and Etruscan works. He was the National Gallery's first non-titled board member and at his death donated paintings by Titian, Guido and Domenichino to the young gallery. His progressive taste, evidence of which appears throughout *Italy*, spurred the growing interest in Florence and its history that began to challenge the interest in classical Roman antiquity. Rogers's house was included in Anna Jameson's guide, the *Private Galleries of Art in London* (1844). By this time, Jameson was a well-known and popular art historian, who shared with Rogers the taste for earlier artists that she may in fact have learned from him. For her Rogers is the exemplary art-collector:

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4   Richard Garnett, 'Rogers, Samuel (1763-1855)', rev. Paul Baines, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <http://www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 8 October 2007].

5   Patricia L. Skarda, 'Samuel Rogers', *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 375 vols to date (Detroit: Gale Research, 1978-), xciii, 224- 235 (p. 225).

6   Donald Weeks, 'Samuel Rogers: Man of Taste', in *PMLA*, 62.2 (1947), pp. 472-486, in *JSTOR* <http://www.jstor.org> [accessed 8 November 2007].

> Pictures are for use, for solace, for ornament, for parade;—as invested wealth, as an appendage of rank. Some people love pictures as they love friends; some, as they love music; some, as they love money. There are those who collect them for instruction, as a student collects grammars, dictionaries, and commentaries;— these are artists; such were the collections of Rubens, of Sir Peter Lely, of the President West, of Lawrence, of Sir Joshua Reynolds. There are those who collect pictures around them as a king assembles his court—as significant of state, as subservient to ornament or pride; such were Buckingham and Talleyrand. There are those who collect pictures as a man speculates in the funds;—picture-fanciers, like bird-fanciers, or flower-fanciers—amateur picture-dealers, who buy, sell, exchange, bargain; with whom a glorious Cuyp represents 800*l.* sterling, and a celebrated Claude is 3000*l.* securely invested— safe as in a bank; and his is not the right spirit, surely. Lastly, there are those who collect pictures for love, for companionship, for communion; to whom each picture, well-chosen at first, unfolds new beauties—becomes dearer every day; such a one was Sir George Beaumont—such a one is Mr. Rogers.[7]

Jameson contrasts Rogers's personal taste and emotional investment in his private collection with the cold 'getting and spending' of auction houses and speculators.[8] His pure taste and emotionally-informed choice of paintings exemplify the morally sound relationship with art that Jameson's middle-class readers are invited to emulate. Using Rogers as a template, Jameson guides her readers to develop their taste for and understanding of art. As a highly visible member of London society and a renowned connoisseur, this best-selling poet came to represent for Jameson, and through Jameson for her readers, the ideal of a personal life constructed along aesthetic lines.

Rogers's audience

The first edition of *Italy* was not very successful; its eventual success was the product of years of effort, heavy financial investment, and a shrewd understanding of developments in the literary marketplace. However, before examining the various devices by which Rogers made *Italy* into a remarkable publishing success, it is important to understand Rogers's target audience, which was an audience at once of readers and of art-lovers. Although this thesis is primarily concerned with nineteenth-century responses to Italian Renaissance art, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which links between British art and literature were being developed in the period if we are to understand this unique text. Rogers's text marries the literary galleries of the late eighteenth century with the keepsakes of the

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7   Anna Jameson, *Private Galleries of Art in London* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1844), p. 385.
8   William Wordsworth, 'The World is too Much with us; late and soon' in *The Poems*, ed. by John O. Hayden, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), I, 568.

nineteenth century, to create a personal gallery of cultural significant images. The engravings illustrate a contemporary poem rather than a classical or canonical British text such as Shakespeare or Milton and this in itself was a factor in securing the appeal of *Italy* to a wide audience. Yet the materiality of the book – its binding and illustrations – maintained the exclusivity that secured its cultural significance.

By the 1830s, the audience for art and literature was highly sophisticated and the two arts, even in the commercial practices that they fostered, were virtually inseparable. In *Fuseli's Milton Gallery* (2006), Luisa Calè studies London's exhibition culture in the late eighteenth century, in order to understand 'how this culture of exhibitions redefines visual and verbal interactions, and ways of reading and viewing'.[9] Calè traces how readers were transformed into spectators (and vice-versa) by visiting galleries which displayed images taken from British literary works. She argues,

> [t]he reconstitution of great British literature in the form of galleries of paintings had a dual cultural function. The galleries made a claim to be a new, narrative form of high art, yet they also circulated celebrated examples of the national literature in the commercial form of visual attractions. Indeed, the galleries were commercial outlets for the sale of illustrated books and prints, offering readers a visual entertainment for advertising and marketing purposes. Material conditions such as the galleries' mode of production, circulation, and marketing suggest the mutual influence of reading practices and ways of seeing.[10]

Unlike the Royal Academy, which was dependent on aristocratic patronage, literary galleries, such as Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, were dependent on a less exclusive audience. Besides selling admission tickets and illustrated editions of the poets' works, the literary galleries, taking inspiration from the book trade, published engravings through subscription.[11] These galleries created a new space within which art became available to a significantly wider public. The literary galleries also worked to raise the status of British literature. Though, as we saw in the first chapter, it was still possible to argue that climate determined a country's artistic genius, and that Great Britain was by virtue of its climate inhibited from the development of visual art fit to rival Italy's, Calè argues that literature, which had long been recognised as the medium in which British genius was best displayed, began itself to be thought of as offering inspiration for the visual arts. Shakespeare and Milton offered a treasure trove of materials for artists, and subjects taken from Shakespeare and Milton had the advantage of being familiar to a much wider audience than could be

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9   Luisa Calè, *Fuseli's Milton Gallery: 'Turning Readers into Spectators'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), p. 5.
10 Calè, *Fuseli's Milton Gallery*, p. 6.
11 Calè, *Fuseli's Milton Gallery*, p. 17.

engaged by the Royal Academy's preferred subjects which were drawn from classical antiquity.[12] Through the publication of exhibition catalogues, and of paintings presented as illustrations of literary texts, links were forged, Calè argues,

> between gallery-going and reading: as '"gallery" increasingly came to identify both the architectural repository of paintings and the book of prints, this virtual paper surrogate further brought home the similarity between series of pictures and poems.[13]

Rogers's text took this one step further: his *Italy* came to be thought of as a gallery that buyers of the book could enjoy in their own home.

In breaking away from the Society of Artists in a bid to raise the status of the arts above the mechanical, the fledgling Royal Academy decided to omit engravers from its ranks. Yet, as Gillian D'Arcy Wood has shown, prints, like portraits, were one of the most profitable art forms and many academicians were financially dependent on the sale of engraved prints made from their paintings.[14] The establishment's ideological values were at odds with the powerful commercial forces which dictated the character of the contemporary art world. Furthermore, the technological advances in printmaking and the popularity of prints at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, gave contemporary British art a prominent standing in the international arena, a reputation which, ironically, the Royal Academy had failed to achieve. Indeed, for continental connoisseurs 'the print was the British School', Wood argues.[15] At the beginning of the eighteenth century, collectors had relied on Paris and Amsterdam for engravings of the Old Masters. But by the end of the century, thanks in part to William Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress* series (1732), British engravers were winning recognition on the international stage, while the currency of engravings was transforming the nature of art discourse at home.[16]

Despite the high financial risk involved, the production of prints shaped exhibition

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12 Calè, *Fuseli's Milton Gallery*, pp. 16-17.
13 Calè, *Fuseli's Milton Gallery*, p. 113.
14 Gillian D'Arcy Wood, *The Shock of the Real: Romanticism and Visual Culture, 1760-1860* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 80-83.
15 Wood writes that the 'mass production of copies of British paintings served [...] to create a fashion for British art inspired not by the originals themselves, but a cult of prints only', and argues against 'Benjamin's influential notion of the decay of the Romantic "aura" under the conditions of mechanical reproduction. For connoisseurs on the Continent, the print was the British School' (*The Shock of the Real*, p. 182).
16 Throughout the eighteenth century, Wood writes, '[t]he popular audience for fine art prints continued to expand rapidly. By the beginning of the Academy's second decade, the British export market in prints was worth two hundred thousand pounds a year. Increasingly therefore, the Royal Academy came to embody an ideal of state patronage entirely at odds with the reality of the new bourgeois market for fine art. Furthermore, the opening of this market was less use to English artists themselves than to those engravers and print-sellers who had improved their skill and adapted workshop technologies to better compete internationally' (*The Shock of the Real*, p. 75).

culture and literary publishing practices in profound ways. Ventures such as Thomas Macklin's Poet's Gallery and John Boydell's Shakespeare and Milton galleries are good examples of these cross-overs. Thomas Macklin's popular gallery was a portrait collection of the nation's most celebrated poets.[17] Boydell's galleries, on the other hand, displayed contemporary paintings depicting scenes and characters from Britain's canonical literature, as Simonsen and Calè have discussed.[18] Boydell, a former artist, was well-known, both at home and abroad, for his own reproductions of Old Master works. His enterprise was multifaceted: the gallery displayed the original paintings; engraved prints of the paintings could be bought individually, either by subscription or on demand; and illustrated editions of the literary works were issued at the same time. As Altick has documented, from 1790 to 1800,

> the popularity of engravings made from paintings as well as the growing demand for illustrated books resulted in a new genre in publishing, books composed of a large series of specially commissioned pictures and advertised by a long-term exhibition of those paintings. It was then that the potentialities of the exhibition as the chief way of promoting the sale of engravings were first realized by the projectors of various "galleries".[19]

The distinction between the verbal and the visual arts was blurred when they became commodified in similar ways. Cultural fashions, such as the strong interest in genius and biography, combined with the technological advances of steel engraving in the production of objects which served as markers of the taste and sophistication of their owners.

In many ways, literary galleries achieved what the Royal Academy had set out to do. 'In an important sense,' writes Wood, 'late eighteenth-century British art was the age of Boydell, not Reynolds or Gainsborough'.[20] While the Royal Academy officially endorsed history painting as the highest genre, their yearly exhibitions were crowded with portraits. Furthermore, by choosing scenes from British literature and history, literary galleries redefined the boundaries of who could be spectators. Reading, argues Calè,

> functioned as an invisible barrier, which defined the social and cultural boundaries of taste. Indeed, if the spectator untutored in the formal qualities of painting would enjoy a picture because of its story, choosing the story entailed choosing a public, because not everybody would know and recognize the plot. For Reynolds, the subject for painters should be sought in "the great events of Greek and Roman fable and history, which early education, and the usual

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17 Bruce Haley, *Living Forms: Romantics and the Monumental Figure* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003), p. 87.
18 Peter Simonsen, *Wordsworth and Word-preserving Arts: Typographic Inscription, Ekphrasis, and Posterity in the Later Work* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 19.
19 Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknapp Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 106.
20 Wood, *The Shock of the Real*, pp. 72-73.

course of reading, have made familiar and interesting to all of Europe". Such a course of reading circumscribed the space of the exhibition through a set of inclusions and exclusions. To define the public as a public of readers and the shared culture as classical is to restrict access to the visual sphere, a cultural analogue of the fee levied at the entrance of the Royal Academy exhibition.[21]

As we saw in Chapter One, many groups of people, in particular dissenters and women, were beginning to reject a classical education, embracing instead modern European languages and British literature. Many readers-turned-spectators were thus more comfortable with paintings based on literary subjects and with Renaissance paintings, which often portrayed familiar historic personages, or Biblical scenes.

The fascination with medieval and Renaissance Italy had an evident impact on developments in British art and its audience. As we have already seen, William Roscoe was compared to Lorenzo de' Medici, not solely because of Roscoe's biography of the merchant prince, but also because his own patronage of the arts, including Fuseli's Milton Gallery, and his banking fortune made Roscoe himself a British equivalent of a merchant prince. Boydell was also compared with the Medici and 'celebrated as a "commercial Maecenas". Taken together, these references imply a claim that the artistic centre has migrated in the beginning of the nineteenth century from Italy and France to Britain, from nations ruled by despotic governments, to a nation in which freedoms were constitutionally guaranteed, 'from royal and aristocratic patronage to the patronage of the people under the aegis of Commerce'.[22] The growing popularity of paintings illustrating British literature and the increased access to Old Master works worked together to free British painters from the heavy yoke of classicism, giving them confidence to tackle new subjects. This confidence was not just limited to the artists, but also influenced the taste of the contemporary audience. London could be seen as a new Florence, a city which had strong associations with commerce and trade, and was free from the pejorative associations prompted by a comparison with Venice or even Rome. Rogers, as a banker, connoisseur and poet, fitted perfectly into this exciting new art world. *Italy* widened the audience for art even more by offering an English text by a poet who had already secured a high literary reputation, combined with illustrations carried out by leading contemporary British artists, that frequently advertised Rogers's own admiration for Italian art, even the earlier art that had been slow to win admirers in Britain.

Just as it was a period in which the visual arts were developing in a myriad of ways, it was a period of rapid change for the literary market as well. In *Visual Words* (2002),

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21 Calè, *Fuseli's Milton Gallery*, pp. 61-62.
22 Calè, *Fuseli's Milton Gallery*, p. 19.

Gerard Curtis explores the materiality of the book in the Victorian period. He argues that, particularly from the beginning of the nineteenth century, literature was at the heart of 'the nation's cultural, educational, and political life, markedly so since the beginning of the nineteenth century'.[23] 'Literary culture had become for some', Curtis writes,

> not so much textual culture, but rather iconic culture, a culture in which the book carried monetary and social value. Between the early nineteenth century, when literacy began to increase in the general populace, and the late nineteenth century, when it was firmly established throughout the population, the book had become a cultural signifier that existed well beyond textual contents.[24]

The prestige attached to being able to own books was long established, but the 'iconography' of the book was established as the visual arts were more completely incorporated into verbal texts, through illustrations and ornate bookbindings. In *The Economy of Literary Form* (1996), Lee Erickson traces the shift in demand away from poetry, which had been popular from the French Revolution to Waterloo, to fiction which dominated the marketplace after 1820. In the interim, there was a growth in periodicals, essay writing and literary biography. These genres, argues Erickson, provided a forum to discuss art, culture and politics, mimicking the arenas that the public sphere had traditionally occupied, such as the drawing room, the coffee house, gallery, library, debating chambers, and ultimately the nation.[25] Both home-grown and foreign visual arts became increasingly integral to this space, and in 1816 the first periodical devoted to the fine arts was published. The *Annals of the Fine Arts*, which we encountered briefly in the first chapter, reflected, according to Ian Jack, the 'extraordinary ferment of excitement about painting and sculpture in England at this time'.[26] The relationship between the sister Arts had never been closer.

The dramatic increase in the number of titles published, especially when the popularity of the print and illustrated books is taken into account, led to a demand for new types of books. The 'eclectic character of the magazines and the weekly literary papers', Erickson argues, 'inspired the lighter and more fashionable potpourri of album verse, essays, travelogues, and short stories in the richly bound and lavishly illustrated literary Annals and gift books'.[27] All of these factors can be seen to operate in *Italy*'s

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23 Curtis, *Visual Word*, p. 217.
24 Curtis, *Visual Word*, p. 207.
25 Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800-1850* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p.103. On the popularity of poetry, the affect of the war and the later rise in the general standard of living and its affect see pages 20-26.
26 Ian Jack, *Keats and the Mirror of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. xvii.
27 Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form*, pp. 28-29.

development, and help to explain Rogers's choice of subject matter, the illustrations, bindings and the balance between poetry, informative prose, travelogue, translations, antiquarian tidbits and short stories. Indeed, *Italy*'s kinship with the 'fashionable potpourri' offered in the magazines and annuals of the period was a major factor in its success.

The Austrian immigrant Rudolph Ackermann was a highly innovative entrepreneur in the visual arts market. Perhaps best remembered as the creator of the shop and periodical (in print from 1809-1828), the *Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions and Politics*, Ackermann began publishing annuals in 1822. He was adapting a continental tradition which allowed him to make abundant use of Britain's highly developed art of steel engraving. These gift-books 'fully exploited' the recent developments in steel-engraving technology and had a profound effect on book making.[28] Annuals, argues Peter Simonsen in *Wordsworth and the Words-Preserving Arts* (2007), were 'highly conscious of their use of word-image constellations' and above all targeted female readers:

> The annuals were hotbeds for the development of Romantic and later Victorian ekphrasis and more than the museum and other exhibitions of original art, they were both cause and effect of the dramatic upsurge in interest in visual art in the later Romantic period.[29]

Steel engraving could produce high-quality images many times over, making it superior to copper or other types of engravings whose plates wore down quickly. As Basil Hunnisett and others have documented, literary texts were among the first to use steel engravings. While books like Rogers's *Italy* included the illustrations as part of the text, extra-illustrations, that is engravings which could be pasted into unillustrated texts or could accompany several similarly themed texts, were also extremely popular. The fashion for Italianate subjects sustained and was promoted by this relationship. While keepsakes and annuals played a vital role in making art and literature available to the middle classes, their bindings became more sumptuous as the century progressed, helping them retain their status as fashionable cultural capital.[30]

As the topography of books evolved, Romantic writers became more aware of the page as a space for self-presentation. Recent scholarship has tried to place Romantic

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28 See for example, Basil Hunnisett, *An Illustrated Dictionary of British Steel Engravers* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1989); Bernard Denvir, *The Early Nineteenth Century: Art, Design and Society, 1789-1852* (London and New York: Longman, 1984); Anne Renier, *Friendship's Offering: An Essay on the Annuals and Gift Books of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Private Library Association, 1964); and, Jan Piggot, *Turner's Vignettes: 29 September 1993 - 13 February 1994* (London: Tate Gallery, 1993).
29 Simonsen, *Wordsworth and Word-preserving Arts*, p. 14. Here, Simonsen uses 'ekphraisis' in much the same way as Heffernan, which was addressed in the introduction.
30 Renier, *Friendship's Offering*, p. 12.

writers' literary output within a wider context of print culture and advances in print technology. Simonsen argues that

> Romantic poets were the first to fully experience and exploit the fact that literature had assumed the fixed condition often associated with print. With the coming of Romanticism, England had emerged as a full-fledged print society and print had lost what remained of its "stigma", the aristocratic and gentlemanly ideas of earlier ages about print as a less prestigious medium for poetry [...]. The Romantics came to accept print as a proper medium for poets aiming to achieve secular immortality and posterior recognition.[31]

Changing attitudes towards print are intimately linked with the development of the visual arts in Britain, which, as I will discuss below, relied much more heavily on engravings than the Royal Academy would have liked to admit. Furthermore, Simonsen argues, Romantic-period writers had an

> awareness of the page as a space where meanings that are incommunicable in speech may be made and displayed, and an awareness of the importance of the physical eye and of visual perception for the act of reading.[32]

This awareness of the page and of the importance of the eye in the reading process is closely linked with the development of gallery culture and the physical responsiveness to art, which we discussed in Chapter Two, that the gallery culture promoted. Calè has stressed that '[i]n order for the pictures and space of the exhibition to become a whole visual narrative, the movements of the viewer' eyes and bodies must be factored in'.[33] By linking the physical and mental processes undertaken in visiting a gallery, Calè shows how late eighteenth-century viewers created 'cinematic links' and montages of moving pictures. By combining an account of a physical journey through Italy with illustrative vignettes, Rogers creates an imaginative journey that allows his reader-viewer to accompany him on his travels. He was producing for a readership that had become used to travelling through galleries a gallery-like book that offered them an analogous experience.

Rogers's work offers a useful mark of how publishing and reading habits were becoming increasingly market driven. Rogers' audience was made up of both spectators and readers. In *Visual Words*, Curtis traces the history of decorative literary taste from Renaissance Italy to nineteenth-century Britain and shows that as 'literature became a more accessible, but still highly valued commodity, value was mirrored in the objectness of the book'.[34] Just as cultural capital was displayed and gained through one's relationship with

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31 Simonsen, *Wordsworth and Word-preserving Arts*, p. 53. See also, David Higgins, *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, Celebrity and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 65-66.
32 Simonsen, *Wordsworth and Word-preserving Arts*, p. 55.
33 Calè, *Fuseli's Milton Gallery*, p. 114.
34 Curtis, *Visual Words*, pp. 216-217.

Old Master art, so too '[t]he materialism of capital culture could be realized through the book', both through reading and possession.[35] By the end of the nineteenth century, he argues, 'books had become explicitly decorative objects for an ever-widening class of readers'.[36] Rogers's *Italy* was a key text in this development, as it assumed a myriad of shapes depending on the needs of its buyer. This malleable book changed its shape and its character as engraving and bookbinding technologies developed.

The galleries, illustrated literary texts and individual engravings offered simultaneously private and collective experiences. The experience in the public gallery was later reproduced in private spaces through the sharing of engraved texts, in public arenas such as the print-shop and in the reviews of the exhibitions that appeared in most periodicals. Though the importance of such exhibitions for contemporary painters and engravers is self-evident, the wider market for prints transformed the book trade and influenced literary practices. 'Viewing' and 'reading', art and literature, began to merge in a variety of activities and formats, including the practices of picturesque landscape drawing, the fashion for travel both within Britain and beyond it, the desire to read Old Master portraits with the help of critics, and the popularity of portraits of contemporary writers.

The Development of *Italy*

Integral to the development of *Italy* was the timing of Rogers's trips to the peninsula. He first travelled to Italy in October of 1814 and he returned in the Fall of 1821. Rogers's first trip was cut unexpectedly short by Napoleon's escape from Elba and he left just six weeks before Waterloo. His return in 1821 was more leisurely, but somewhat disappointing because of the crowds and cold weather. He kept a commonplace book during his first trip which records in detail his epicurean adventures, his art purchases and his encounters with other, socially elite travellers. This journal, not published until 1956, became the basis for *Italy*, and the work's combination of poetry and prose retains the character of its commonplace book origins.[37] The anonymous (and little noticed), Part the First of *Italy* was already at the publisher's when Rogers embarked on his second journey.

For over a decade, Rogers added and edited various sections, repeatedly

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35 Curtis, *Visual Words*, p. 226.
36 Curtis, *Visual Words*, p. 206.
37 Samuel Rogers, *The Italian Journals of Samuel Rogers*, ed. by J.R. Hale (London: Faber and Faber, 1956).

republishing the work in its changing forms. Surprisingly, considering the market for all things Italian, the work did not sell well at first. The first part was printed anonymously in 1822, 1823 and 1824; the second part was added in 1828. Still struggling to reach an audience, Rogers bought back and destroyed all of the unsold copies of the earlier editions, and in 1830, at his own expense, published another edition of *Italy*. This time however, the book included steel-engraved vignettes designed predominantly by J.M.W Turner (*c.* 1775-1851) and Thomas Stothard (1755-1834). This edition was a success and continued to be printed throughout the nineteenth century, at home, on the Continent and in North America. Towards the later half of the century, selections were often reprinted in anthologies, or, especially in the United States, used as the basis for dramatic works or became the inspiration for new poetry.[38] J.R. Hale has documented that the 1830 edition sold 'four thousand copies [...] before the end of the year. Another three thousand went in the next eighteen months'.[39] Rogers collaborated closely with Turner and Stothard in the production of the engravings, and the result was a text that had a decisive effect on Ruskin (who received an illustrated edition for his thirteenth birthday) and the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

Though *Italy* became a major success, making it popular was costly. J.R. Hale puts the cost of publishing the illustrated editions of *Italy* and Rogers's collected *Poems* at £15,000. As Lady Blessington punningly observed of *Italy*, it 'would have been dished if it had not been for the plates'.[40] Though several critics, including Hale and Adele Holcomb, point out that Blessington overstates the case, they do acknowledge that the illustrations were essential to the work's success.[41] Hale argues that Rogers exploited the new technology of steel engraving, which was able to mass produce high-quality prints, and the fashionable practice of displaying elegant verse collections in one's drawing room. Though the poet had used illustrations, especially by his friend Stothard, as early as the 1793 edition of *Pleasures of Memory*, the new visual technology gave a depth and an atmospheric quality to the poetry through its ability to accommodate minute details. Hale

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38 Rogers's tale "Ginevra", for example, was quite popular and was reproduced in a number of texts, ways and countries throughout the nineteenth century. See for example, James Hedderwick, *The English Orator: A Selection of Pieces for Reading & Recitation* (Glasgow: Hedderwick and Sons, 1833), pp. 169-171; A young gentleman of Philadelphia, *Lucrezia, or, The Bag of Gold: a Dramatic Sketch in Five Acts Founded on a Story in Rogers' Poem of Italy* (Philadelphia: Turner & Fisher, 1848); Susan E. Wallace, *Ginèvra; or, The old oak chest: A Christmas story* (New York: H.W. Hagemann publishing, 1894). [This includes both Rogers's "Ginevra" and Thomas Haynes Bayley's 1830 ballad rendition, "The Mistletoe Bough"].
39 J.R. Hale, 'Samuel Rogers the Perfectionist', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 25.1 (1961), pp. 61-67 (p. 61). Quoted as 'Perfectionist' afterwards.
40 Quoted in Hale, 'Perfectionist', p. 63.
41 Hale, 'Perfectionist', p. 63; and, Adele M. Holcomb, 'Turner and Rogers' Italy Revisited', *Studies in Romanticism*, 27.1 (1988) 63-95 (p. 84).

explains the shift in illustrating practices:

> [w]hereas he had used illustration to decorate the surface of the paper, now the page was to contain a peephole, as it were, through which the reader could glimpse the sun rising mistily among the Alps, or a gondola moving over the lagoon toward the Doge's Palace.[42]

Like the popular camera obscura and raree shows in London, Turner's illustrations of landscape and architecture condensed Rogers's loco-descriptive passages into intense single-frame celebrations, while Stothard's vignettes of paintings and local characters, instantly gratified the quest for Old Master works and Italian spectacles. Rogers oversaw all aspects of the design and publication of his own verbal text and the illustrations. Hale, with the help of various manuscripts and proofs held in the Huntington Library, demonstrates how Rogers's 'vigilant eye' overlooked all stages of the production of the illustrations, from design to engraving. He edited the proof sheets again and again, as minutely as he worked on his own writing.

The visual and textual developments *Italy* went through were markedly geared towards a female audience. It proved to be a popular gift item and became an essential adornment in fashionable drawing rooms. Rogers drew on the centrality of Italian culture and landscape to British identity and to contemporary literary and artistic fashions to create this attractive commodity. Over the course of a decade Rogers edited both his text and the work's illustrations in response to the new publishing market. The work expanded to accommodate more short stories and longer prose sections. Like the annuals and other gift-books, *Italy* offers an array of subjects and genres. Particularly popular were Rogers's Gothic stories and the travelogue that he incorporated into his verse. Rogers's readers were simultaneously educated by Rogers's own antiquarian knowledge and thrilled by his rehearsals of 'local legends'. Italy became a stage set and spectacle, both for Rogers's reader abroad, but also, with the help of such high-quality and detailed illustrations, for fire-side travellers. As we have seen, Italian art was used to establish one's social standing and provided inspiration for a variety of literary texts. Staël's *Corinne* and Canto Four of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* were the most influential Italianate, literary texts in the period preceding and following Waterloo. However, Rogers's *Italy* marks several key changes in the literary and cultural market place of Britain, most notably the growing economic power of a female readership. By using illustrated annuals as a template, Rogers successfully navigated the complex demands of the publishing market.

Italy's miscellaneous nature and its predominantly medieval and Renaissance

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42 Hale, 'Perfectionist', pp. 62-63.

subject matter were mutually enriching. Instructive passages on Italian literature and art slipped easily into accounts of the dark intrigues of the Medici court. In addition to historical episodes, *Italy*, like the annuals, contains various vignettes sprinkled throughout the story. Many of these tales are dark in nature, and key vignettes pivot around the theme of female captivity. They are often represented as local legends which gives the narrator the powerful authority which comes from his intimate knowledge of the 'other' and they serve often to emphasise, even to exaggerate, the cultural distinctions between British readers and Rogers's Italian subjects. Ian Duncan has argued that gothic tales tend to be set in Catholic countries, such as France, Italy or Spain, figuring them as an oriental other to the British Protestant imagination.[43] This gothic flavour appealed to Rogers's readers because it offered them an exciting, dangerous and aesthetically intriguing image of Italy. Most of the accompanying illustrated vignettes to these gothic tales are by Stothard and often portray the heroine in Renaissance-style garb. Such stories, which were expanded and their number increased in later editions, reflect the ways in which Rogers consciously tried to meet his audience's expectations. Avery Gaskins points out that the 'interest in medieval times as a period of superstition, mysticism, and violence' makes this work stand out from the rest of Rogers's oeuvre because the legends are 'of a different order and of stronger emotional impact than his earlier work'.[44] This added intensity recommended Rogers's work to contemporary taste, while his cultural authority and the antiquarian interest prompted by Italian history and Italian art grounded the work in respectability.

Such gothic tales, especially when combined with the engravings, encouraged readers to dip in and out of *Italy*, consuming a poem almost as if it were a literary magazine. "Coll'Alto", added in the 1830 edition, tells the legend of the young Cristine (named 'Cristina' on the print), who has been wrongly accused of having an affair with her mistress's husband. The narrator visits an old villa and, as the sun begins to set, the steward tells the story of the Madonna Bianca. According to the steward, Cristine was 'Fair as a lily, and as spotless too;/ None so admired, beloved'. In language reminiscent of Coleridge's *Christabel* (1797), Rogers describes how the bewitched and jealous Countess sentenced Cristine to "*Murato*" (a punishment which Rogers describes in a footnote). In a vault beneath the family chapel, a wall was hollowed out and the innocent woman buried alive: 'Fresh as a flower just blown,/ And warm with life, her youthful pulses playing' (247). The wall was then 'closed up again, and done to line and rule', but every night her

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43 Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, and Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 24.
44 Avery F. Gaskins, 'Samuel Rogers: A Revaluation', *Wordsworth Circle*, 16.3 (1985), 146-149 (pp. 147-148).

soul bursts from the tomb and 'flies o'er the wood and mountains' (248). Hunters and shepherds no longer stay in the woods at night, and locally, the ghost still bears the name 'The White Lady'. Rogers's footnotes give credence to this story by relating how a local and seasoned hunter came across her in the woods one day and never left his house again. The illustration depicts the falsely accused Cristina, her eyes heavenwards, in the process of being interred. Her stance and clothing invoke Raphael's well-known painting of Santa Cecilia, which had so impressed Shelley. Cristina elicits the audience's sympathy, both because of the townspeople's love for her and by the innocent expression on her face in the illustration. This sympathy is strengthened by the disgust readers must have felt over the ancient punishment of 'murato'.

These gothic tales are one way in which Rogers framed Italy as simultaneously foreign and familiar, making it more accessible than a classical Italy. Though British engraving was beginning to establish its dominance, Italian prints and engravings were still highly valued by connoisseurs and heavily influenced British literature as well as British art. Italian prints were reproduced by British engravers and so became available to a wider audience. Italian engravings widened the scope of what the Italian peninsula could imaginatively offer to writers, readers, travellers and spectators. Both Kenneth Churchill and E.S. Shaffer have noted the impact of Piranesi's Roman engravings on writers such as Ann Radcliffe and Horace Walpole, as well as the wider 'rediscovery of the Gothic or Northern European art'.[45] The picturesque and the sublime descriptions of nature and of ruins so common in the literature of the period all have a pictorial quality.[46] James Buzard has shown how the eighteenth-century idea of the 'picturesque' was widened as a by-product of post-Waterloo travel to include cities, ruins, natives and extended its range of metaphors to accommodate drama, the visual arts and *tableaux vivantes*.[47] Furthermore, according to Stephen Cheeke, Piranesi's engravings of scenes such as Rome's overgrown ruins, increased the popularity of 'locodescriptive poetry' by providing a tangible image of the ruins that so often prompted moralising meditations in verse.[48] *Italy* was directed towards a reading culture in which the close associations between text and image were

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45 Churchill, *Italy and English Literature*, p. 5; and, E. S. Shaffer, 'Coleridge and the Object of Art', *Wordsworth Circle*, 24.2 (1993), 117- 128 (p. 122). Shaffer examines the connections between Coleridge's understanding of engravings by Piranesi and his experience of the frescoes in Pisa's Campo Santo.

46 Jean Hagstrum, *Eros and Vision: the Restoration to Romanticism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1989), p. 171.

47 James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 187.

48 Stephen Cheeke, '"What so many have told, who would tell again?" Romanticism and the Commonplaces of Rome', *European Romantic Review*, 17.5 (2006), 521-541 (p. 522).
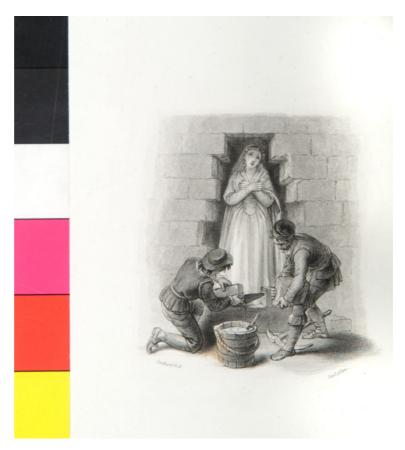
already well recognised.

Fig. 1: *Cristina*

Italian prints allowed access not only to Old Masters, but to the earlier 'Primitives' as well. Though Piranesi was important in the process of visualizing a gothic Italy, engravings of little known artists also encouraged the growing interest in medieval and Renaissance Italy. While his knowledge of Piranesi's engravings may have influenced Samuel Coleridge's understanding of Pisa's Campo Santo frescoes, for example, it was, according to Shaffer, Giovanni Rosini's *Descrizione delle Pitture del Campo Santo Di Pisa* (1816), with its nine copper engravings by Giovanni Paolo Lasinio (created about 1808), which brought the Campo Santo to 'general notice throughout the nineteenth century'.[49] Although he does not acknowledge Shaffer's scholarly work, J.B. Bullen has also highlighted the growing interest in the Campo Santo frescoes. In *Continental Crosscurrents* (2005), Bullen traces the growing aesthetic, rather than historical, interest in early Italian art in the Romantic period, focusing primarily on reactions to these frescoes. He cites Carlo Lasinio's *Pitture a Fresco del Campo Santo di Pisa* (1812), the accompanying text to which was written by

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49 E.S. Shaffer,'"Infernal Dreams" and Romantic Art Criticism: Coleridge on the Campo Santo, Pisa', *Wordsworth Circle*, 20.1 (1989), 9-19 (p. 12).

Pompilio Tanzini, as the 'catalyst for this process'.[50] Carlo Lasinio was the father of Giovanni Paolo Lasinio, and both books of engravings were central to the understanding and growing popularity of the frescoes, and consequently of early Italian art. Though Bullen notes earlier eighteenth-century interest in the frescoes, he stresses that it was in the post-Waterloo period when people began to read these and other primitivist works aesthetically in their own right, instead of valuing them only as precursors to the works of Michelangelo and Raphael. He finds it surprising that this interest should have been manifested first by imaginative writers rather than by scholars or critics:

> One might have expected primitivist impulses from historians or professional critics, but this was not so. Instead the imaginative leap took place amongst Keats, Coleridge, and Leigh Hunt, each of whom underwent "conversions" to the work of the early masters as the result of their direct or indirect experience of the frescoes of the Campo Santo.[51]

However, as this thesis has shown, Romantic writers were a key instrument in directing the period's taste in and experience of art. Whilst Keats, Coleridge and Hunt were undoubtedly unusual in their serious and whole-hearted appreciation of these frescoes, Rogers, whom Bullen mentions four times in his short chapter on this subject but does not treat extensively, brought his personal interest in early Italian art to a wide audience. Although he does not treat the Campo Santo frescoes in *Italy*, Rogers, an early collector of primitive works, encourages his readers to visit works that were not yet generally appreciated, such as Masaccio's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine. As we shall see, he also adapts and translates Vasari and other source material for his readers. Rogers's verbal accounts of such works, were as important in generating interest in them as the Italian prints Shaffer and Bullen have studied. Rogers's work is more various and wide-ranging than has been acknowledged. Most important, however, is how completely *Italy* reflects the period's own knowledge and interests. Viewers were becoming more aware of medieval works, but they were simultaneously drawing on a number of sources, including British and Italian prints, translations of Italian literature, access to Old Master works, biographies of artists, British literary texts, and travel writing, to inform their understanding of canonical and non-canonical works. Rogers's work facilitated this learning process.

Italian prints, such as those by Piranesi and the Lasini, as well as the increasing interest in early Italian art, redrew the contours of the Italian peninsula. Calè argues that

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50 J.B. Bullen, *Continental Crosscurrents: British Criticism and European Art 1810-1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 14. Rogers owned a copy of the first edition of this book.
51 Bullen, *Continental Crosscurrents*, p. 17.

written guides to the literary galleries, engravings of pictures exhibited in the galleries and the many poems in which poets responded to the paintings, gave a cinematic quality to the galleries. She writes, '[s]ubjected to the temporal apprehension of the viewer, visual and verbal arts are transformed into still and moving images'.[52] Rogers's *Italy* even more clearly offers its readers a cinematic experience, as it follows Rogers on his journey and includes illustrations for virtually every subsection. *Italy* replaces and supplements the experience of travel, as it invites its readers to travel imaginatively through both the text and illustrations. In this way it can be seen as a private gallery in which the theme of the exhibition is the wider cultural phenomenon of travel. As Rogers's narrator crosses the Alps and travels down the length of the country, meeting pilgrims and banditti along the way, his stories are punctuated by their illustrations. This cinematic feature was essential to the book's success, distinguishing it from the multitude of popular travel texts. Adele Holcomb suggests an important impetus for the 'incessant reworking of *Italy* over more than a decade'. She argues,

> the character and conventions of travel literature were changing substantially and rapidly. In 1814-15, when Rogers kept the journal on which his poem was based, the antiquarian framework of a Eustace was unchallenged. By the 1820s it was no longer possible to command an audience by organizing the Italian tour principally in terms of classical associations (though these would still hold interest); in important ways the subject had been redefined. Rather than functioning as negative foil to antique paradigms, medieval, Renaissance and modern periods of Italian civilization claimed attention in their own right and on a wider scale. So, too, was notice directed to the art and architecture of post-classical Italy, a requirement that taxed the prevailing poverty of resources for analyzing works of art. Finally, there was the demand for colorful and evocative scenic description, better still when accompanied by engravings. The mounting ascendancy of the illustrated travel book in the decade since Rogers' first tour, joined by the popularity of landscape engravings in other forms asserted pressure on the verbal description of scenery.[53]

By commissioning illustrations and reworking his text, Rogers set out to create a text that could function as a gallery of Italy. As in the literary galleries that had proved so popular, his audience's encounters with images of landscapes and portraits of heroines are supplemented by text, and vice-versa. Through illustration readers were allowed a more vivid and a more direct relationship with the physical landscape of Italy.

Though the leather-bound editions of *Italy* remained costly, *Italy* was accessible to a wide audience. Both James Buzard and Maura O'Connor have noted the ways in which Rogers self-consciously built on the extraordinary popularity of Byron's *Childe Harold* and

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52 Calè, *Fuseli's Milton Gallery*, pp. 110-111.
53 Holcomb, 'Turner and Rogers' Italy Revisited', p. 84.

Staël's *Corinne* by making their themes more accessible to a middle-class audience.[54] The democratizing character of the book is especially evident in Rogers's treatment of travel. Buzard argues that Rogers's *Italy* represents travel as

> open to every class of English society. Rogers then proposes an explanation of motive that embraces that entire nation of travellers. […] They go, Rogers says, to revivify themselves, to recover that direct and joyous sense of life which their routine existence at home has nearly extinguished.[55]

Even for those who did not travel, *Italy*, with it beautiful illustrations, offered a respite from everyday concerns. Though many scholars tend to characterize Rogers as a Victorian, Buzard insists on Rogers's association with the 'Romantic theories of his day. Like the visionary moments of Romantic poetry, the enchantments of travel, as he sees it, can retrieve for us our childlike sense of wonder at the world, feeding the life of the imagination'.[56]

The illustrations offered in Rogers's text in association with the Keepsake-like verbal vignettes, singled *Italy* out from a glut of poems, travel writing, guides and narratives about Italy. Parallels can be made between the publishing field and what Buzard calls 'the competitive, market-like atmosphere of post-1815 touring'.[57] The book trade, engravings and travel were all informed by consumers' desires, and promised a return on cultural capital. One of *Italy*'s biggest selling points was that it functioned effectively as an informative and authoritative travel guide. Rogers delivers the high cultural experience of Italian art to a middle-class market. He offers the textual equivalent of a Grand Tour, but replaces the classical with the medieval. In particular, Rogers's travelogue capitalizes on the recent development of literary tourism, which Nicola J. Watson defines as 'the interconnected practices of visiting and marking sites associated with writers and their work'.[58] In the long section "The Campagna of Florence", which was added in 1830, Rogers dons his *cicerone* cap and leads his readers on a tour through Tuscany's landscape, its sordid history, its literature and its art. Like the *New Monthly*'s popular literary guides of London, this tour is compressed into a single day, beginning with the morning sunrise and ending with a 'celestial red' sunset. Tuscany is represented predominantly in literary terms and populated with culturally significant characters, both fictional and historical. Yet, as Rogers's treatment of Milton's journey to Tuscany demonstrates, these moments are

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54 Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, p. 102; and, Maura O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Imagination*, (Bloomsburg, PA and London: Macmillan Press, 1998), p. 33.
55 Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, pp. 100-101.
56 Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, p. 101.
57 Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, pp. 103-104.
58 *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-century Culture*, ed. by Nicola J. Watson (Basingstoke: Plagrave Macmillian, 2009), p. 2.

shown to be culturally relevant to the English traveller, who is the lucky recipient of this heritage. Just like Mary Shelley in her review essay *The English in Italy*, Rogers condenses all of Italy into the space of the increasingly popular Tuscany.[59] Tuscany becomes a three-dimensional story book in which history and legend are difficult to distinguish. Indeed, Rogers presents history *as* legend, and vice-versa. From this fertile earth, full of gardens and picturesque objects, grow artistic genius, literary men and scientific advancements. But Tuscany has also witnessed the dark intrigues of the Medici court, war and plague. This heavily footnoted section invites readers to explore Tuscany's complex past in a literary way. Importantly, however, Rogers always positions himself as an authority. He is simultaneously narrator, travel companion, connoisseur, *cicerone* and interpreter. As Buzard has pointed out, *Italy* stresses 'the poet's personal impressions' and yet also provides guidebook-like instructions.[60] Although an emphasis on Renaissance Florence rather than on classical Rome can be seen to democratize the experience of Italy, Rogers's constant use of scholarly works and primary sources could be seen as both excluding and complimenting his readers. By distilling and translating a variety of source material, Rogers educates his readers and asserts his own authority.

As we saw in Chapter Three, Vasari's *Le Vite* was an important source for understanding Renaissance artists and their works. However, in *Italy* Rogers makes more extensive use of Vasari than had any of his predecessors. Not only is he familiar with Vasari, but several parts of "The Campagna of Florence" and other sections throughout the work are direct translations or adaptations of *Le Vite*. While Hilary Fraser has noted how central Vasari was to Victorian connoisseurs, artists and writers, she fails to recognize that Rogers played a key role in bringing the art historian to a large audience, some of whom may not have known Italian.[61] Rogers uses scenes from Vasari to construct the Tuscan landscape, thereby forging a link between artistic genius and place and extending Tuscany's landscape so that it accommodates the temporal or historical as well as the spatial. Vasari is also the source of some of the book's illustrations. I will return to *Italy*'s visual constructions of Vasari in a moment, but first I will examine the way Rogers uses Vasari to establish Tuscany as a stage-set that he expects will absorb his readers in the same way that stage sets absorbed contemporary theatre-goers.

Rogers opens "The Campagana of Florence" by rehearsing in English verse

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59 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 'The English in Italy', *The Mary Shelley Reader: Containing Frankenstein, Mathilda, Tales and Stories, Essays and Reviews, and Letters*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett and Charles E. Robinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 341- 357 (p. 349).
60 Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, pp. 167-168.
61 Hilary Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 45.

Vasari's account of Cimabuè's encounter with the young Giotto. In the accompanying footnotes, Rogers includes an extensive quotation from *Le Vite* describing the little-known Cimabuè, whom, in true Vasarian style, he names as the 'father of modern painting'. Like his celebration of the Masaccio frescoes in the Carmine Chapel, Rogers's inclusion of Cimabuè and Giotto, reveals that his taste was unusually independent and advanced. As Churchill points out, such works 'hold a crucial place in the history of art, but [...] were almost totally ignored by travellers of the time'.[62] In a footnote, Rogers directs his readers to Santa Maria Novella to view Cimabuè's painting of the 'Madonna' and paraphrases Vasari's account of the celebration that occurred when it was installed:

> [i]t was painted, according to Vasari, in a garden near Porta S. Piero, and, when finished, was carried to the church in solemn procession with trumpets before it. The garden lay without the walls; and such was the rejoicing there on the occasion, such the feasting, that the suburb received the name of Borgo Allegri, a name it still bears, though now a part of the city. (302-303n)

In such passages Rogers revises the standard Giro d'Italia for a new generation of travellers by offering them new cultural sites, new sacred places to be visited in an aesthetic pilgrimage. Readers could be confident in Rogers's taste because he had already established himself as a well-respected connoisseur.[63]

The addition to the poetic text, a scholarly paratext adds another role to Rogers's repertoire, that of educator. Though some of Rogers's information is inaccurate, his interest in early artists like Cimabuè and Giotto was advanced for an age, which, as we have seen, still celebrated Raphael and Michelangelo above all others. Rogers's work was one of the earliest to bring early Italian art to a non-specialist audience. *Italy* not only informed the taste of lay readers, it also had a great impact on a new generation of critics and, both through them and directly, on the British school of painting throughout the nineteenth century. While Hilary Fraser acknowledges how important *Italy* was as a fashionable travel text, she fails to recognize how influential it was in shaping the art world of the mid-nineteenth century. She writes,

> [a]s well as the formal guidebooks there were any number of anecdotal and impressionistic personal accounts of travel in Italy. [...] The most enduringly popular of such volumes was Samuel Rogers's long poem *Italy*, the 1830 edition of which, beautifully illustrated by Turner, Prout, and Stothard, became

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62 Churchill, *Italy and English Literature*, p. 51. See also Charles Hobday, *A Golden Ring: English Poets in Florence from 1373 to the present day* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 1997), p. 307.

63 In his journal, Rogers notes how this Madonna is very much like the one he owns (*Italian Journal*, p. 198). In his introductory chapters, editor J.R. Hale notes two paintings by Cimabue in the Sale Catalogue of Rogers estate: *The Virgin Enthroned with the Infant in her lap* and *An Evangelist Writing* (*Italian Journal*, p. 198.n1).

required reading for anyone contemplating a visit to Italy.[64]

Yet as other critics, such as Adele Holcomb**,** have noted Rogers's text left its impact on some of the key figures in the art world. Holcomb has demonstrated how Turner's style developed through his work on this project, while others have noted how Ruskin's understanding of Italian art was thoroughly informed by *Italy*. By treating Rogers's works simply as a travel guide, Fraser overlooks, for example, Rogers's role in bringing Vasari to the attention of Victorian readers. She writes, 'Vasari's *Lives*, and the numerous anecdotic biographical chronicles of Renaissance artists which it spawned, provided an immense fund of subject material for painters at a time when history painting and narrative painting were still very popular'.[65] Most of the 'biographical chronicles' Fraser mentions are from the 1850s onwards, and I would like to suggest that Rogers's use of Vasari influenced the way late Romantics and the Victorians read the art historian. Rogers's selection of the scene in which Cimabue recognizes Giotto as his successor was a radical choice which in time became a crucial determinant of the British understanding of the early history of Italian art. Rogers's interest in the Primitives and his references to and translations from Vasari, helped make scenes from Vasari popular subjects for paintings, as the success of Frederic Leighton's paintings *Cimabue Finding Giotto in the Fields of Florence* (1850) and *Cimabue's Celebrated Madonna is Carried in Procession Through Florence* (1855) demonstrates.

Italy is the culmination of much that is distinctive in the Romantic representation of Italy and its art, and yet it also prefigures the ways in which Victorian artists and writers would treat the same subjects. The relationship between this text and its illustrations is key to any understanding of the extraordinary influence of the volume. By writing an English poem on Italy, illustrated by the foremost British artists, and by prose notes that drew heavily on Italian historians, *Italy* became an authoritative guide to Italian Renaissance art. Yet the text also functioned as an alternative, a complement and even a substitute for direct experience of Italy and its art. Rogers's treatment of Raphael's funeral and Stothard's illustration depicting the scene, provides an example of Rogers's procedure. In a rather awkward section, the narrator gawks at a public funeral procession. He is disconcerted by the ritual because the dead woman that is being carried looks only asleep, while those carrying her have dressed up in masks and ghostly apparel. The procession leads him to ponder on the contrast between human mortality and the everlasting life embodied in art

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64 Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy*, p. 51.
65 Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy*, p. 45.

works. He describes the moment of Raphael's death:

> When RAPHAEL went,
> His heavenly face the mirror of his mind,
> His mind a temple for all lovely things
> To flock to and inhabit—when He went,
> Wrapt in his sable cloak, the cloak he wore,
> To sleep beneath the venerable Dome,
> By those attended, who in life had loved,
> Had worshipped, following in his steps to Fame,
> ('Twas on an April-day, when Nature smiles)
> All Rome was there. But, ere the march began,
> Ere to receive their charge the bearers came,
> Who had not sought him? And when all beheld
> Him, where he lay, how changed from yesterday,
> Him in that hour cut off, and at his head
> His last great work; when, entering in, they looked
> Now on the dead, then on that master-piece,
> Now on his face, lifeless and colourless,
> Then on those forms divine that lived and breathed,
> And would live on for ages—all were moved;
> And sighs burst forth, and loudest lamentations (335).

Once again, Rogers's verse is an adaptation from Vasari. The reader enters the story and witnesses the events unfold by means of markers such as the reference to the time of year. The accompanying footnotes explain the Pantheon and the *Transfiguration* and the special fame of the *Transfiguration* as Raphael's last great work. Fraser notes,

> [d]ecorative Venetian subjects and High Renaissance death scenes based on Vasari became popular in the 1850s and 1860s. Frederic Leighton memorialized both *The Death of Brunelleschi* (1852) and *Michael Angelo Nursing his Dying Servant* (1862), for example, while Henry O'Neil produced paintings of Titian, Michelangelo and, most famously, Raphael. The popularity of his rendition of *The Last Moments of Raphael* suggests the extent of Vasari's aesthetic authority even in the later nineteenth century. […] The subject is loosely based on Vasari's account of the artist's death [which stresses that Raphael died in the room where he was working on the *Transfiguration*, a depiction of which can be seen in O'Neil's work].[66]

Italy anticipates this by twenty years. Rogers's text is beautifully complemented by Stothard's engraving, which is dome-shaped and features Raphael and his mourners at the foot of the *Transfiguration*. *Italy*'s audience simultaneously reads and witnesses the scene. By owning Rogers's work, his readers achieved a detailed and wide familiarity with Italy, its art, and the history of its artists. As this passage and its illustration show, the desire to experience the works and genius of Old Masters was an important component of wider verbal and visual projects in the Romantic period. By encouraging British artists to

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66 Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy*, p. 46.

reproduce literary and historical Italian scenes, *Italy* shaped the nature of British artistic output throughout the century.

Fig. 2: *The Death of Raphael*

Rogers uses other sources besides Vasari to annotate his tour of Italy. As Rogers's narrative moves away from the city of Florence to the surrounding countryside, Rogers leaves Vasari behind in favour of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The path the narrator takes leads up to Fiesole, the traditional viewing station for Florence. As in Mary Shelley's narrative essay, *Recollections of Italy* (1824), Florence is described in picturesque and pastoral terms, with peasants, beasts (such as the appealing 'dove-coloured steer'), wild nature, gardens, sung language and architecture 'filling the air with sweetness' (303). Following the advice of his good friend and the founding father of the picturesque movement, William Gilpin, Rogers – in the text, paratext and illustrations – incorporates significant aspects of Tuscany, including towns, people, landmarks and literature, within one surveying gaze. The move from Vasari to Boccaccio is a shift away from historical personages to literary characters and events. Though recent scholarship has explored various aspects of Romantic Medievalism, very little attention has been given to

Boccaccio's place in the development of Romanticism.[67] Rogers's invocation of Boccaccio seems to be at once specialized and indicative of the increasing popularity in Britain of early Italian texts. From his viewing station in Fiesole, Rogers points out Santa Maria Novella and suggests to his reader-companion '[l]et us in thought pursue (what can we better?)/ Those who assembled there at matin-time' (303), referring to the Brigata party. Rogers 'pursues' the party through the landscape below, so that the countryside becomes at once real and literary. He maps out a circuit from Santa Maria Novella 'Round the green hill [...]/ Then to the Ladies' Vale', which he adds in a footnote was a 'delightful' and favourite walk of his own. Again Rogers is constructing a new tour for his audience, including those who would never themselves travel to Italy. Perhaps as an aid or an enticement to his readers, this section is heavily illustrated. Interestingly, the plate which accompanies the "Florence" section and which is placed near the start of "The Campagna of Florence", portrays the city and valley in much the same terms as Rogers's verbal description. Furthermore, there is an accompanying illustration by Stothard, entitled "A Rural Entertainment", which depicts a lovely grouping of youths in period costume picnicking in the woods, all of which reinforces the romantic air of Rogers's poetic scenery.

Although this section begins as a brief gloss or invocation of Bocaccio's text, Rogers finds space for a longer and more subtle rendition of the story of how the *Decameron* came to be written and of Boccaccio's biography. Factual and literary elements are blended to create a new kind of landscape. Using basic elements from the tale, the narrator and his readers journey, like the Brigata party, through Tuscany. However, when they reach the top of a hill, Rogers invokes the tenth story of day six to bring Boccaccio's life and genius more directly to the attention of his audience. He retells the story of Frate Cipolla, describing the fate of San Lorenzo and the relic of the Angel Gabriel's feather. This quickly becomes a tale about Boccaccio himself and the nature of his poetic inspiration. Rogers invokes Certaldo, Boccaccio's hometown and the place of his burial, which is also the town that provides the setting for the story of Frate Cipolla. Rogers's Boccaccio 'sleeps' in Certaldo's church, dreaming the tale (305), as Frate Cipolla pours his 'wondrous catalogue' into Boccaccio's ear. Historical and fictional characters both come alive, and they lend that life to the Tuscany that Rogers is presenting to his British readers. Like Byron, Rogers is 'peopling' Italy with historical and fictional characters, especially

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67 See for example, Elizabeth Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); and, Edoardo Zuccato, *Petrarch in Romantic England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

medieval and Renaissance figures. Indeed, his tour is propelled by such associations. Like some powerful camera lens, Rogers sweeps through the landscape and then focuses in on minute particulars. From Certaldo, he shifts to another valley, in order to re-animate Machiavelli. The survey continues with a celebration of Arcetri (the home of Galileo), Galileo himself and his encounter with and influence on Milton. Many of these scenes are illustrated. In 'Galileo's Villa', for example, Turner depicts a night scene with a waxing moon dominating atmospheric clouds; Galileo's house is set back on the left, while a telescope and globe are foregrounded, and cypresses, acacias, and vineyards balance the right side of the engraving. Although such landscape compositions were not unusual, Rogers reads the landscape through the lives and works of historical figures. Landscape and legend, fact and fiction bleed into one another in the poem, as they do, in Rogers's perception, in Italy itself. Rogers constructs Tuscany through its literature, though it is a landscape and a literature to which, as his footnotes insist, he remains the authoritative guide.

As we have seen, Italian literature – written by Tuscan authors such Vasari, Boccaccio, Petrarch, Machiavelli and Dante – was a key component in shifting the focus of English interest in Italy away from Rome. By populating Tuscany with such figures, Rogers produces a new type of temporal landscape, and this in its turn affected how Italian art was viewed. Although Bullen identifies the beginning of a trend to look at earlier medieval art works in an aesthetic, rather than historical, manner, he fails to recognize that even works by Renaissance masters were beginning to be valued in more emotionally charged and aesthetic terms as well.[68] Rogers's treatment of Michelangelo's effigy of Lorenzo, the Duke of Urbino provides a good example. Rogers's private and public encounters with Michelangelo's effigy of the Duke enact a struggle between the extremes of idolatry and iconoclasm, an experience which separates Rogers from contemporaries such as Byron and Staël. As we saw earlier, Byron and Hobhouse, concerned with history, were disgusted by the building's vulgar show of princely wealth, while Staël mistakes this Lorenzo, for 'Il Magnifico' during Corinne's visit to Florence. Rogers, who owned Michelangelo's terra-cotta study for the Lorenzo figure, has a very different relationship with this statue.[69] His journal records not only Vasari's description of the 'due capitani' and how Rogers visited them at least six times during his tour, but also his emotional feeling of helplessness as he stood at the statue's feet.[70]

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68 Bullen, *Continental Crosscurrents*, p. 14.
69 'The Collection of the Late Samuel Rogers', *Art Journal*, 18 (1856), 188-189 (p. 189). During the Christie's auction of Rogers's estate, this piece sold for 28 guineas.
70 Rogers, *Italian Journal*, pp. 188-189.

Rogers first visited the chapel on the eve of the Day of the Dead and again the next day. He attended the church services on both days. His second visit is described as if it were a continuation of the Mass. After the celebration in the main church, the priest, choir and congregation, including Rogers, went into the Cappella dei Depositi with candles. The way that these candles cast their light controls how Rogers reads the statues. In his journal, he describes his struggle to release himself from the demonic power of the statue of Lorenzo, and some of that power can still be felt in Rogers's poetic description:

> Nor then forget that Chamber of the Dead,
> Where the gigantic shapes of Night and Day,
> Turned into stone, rest everlastingly;
> Yet still are breathing, and shed round at noon
> A two-fold influence—only to be felt—
> A light, a darkness, mingling each with each;
> Both and yet neither. There, from age to age,
> Two Ghosts are sitting on their sepulchres.
> That is the Duke LORENZO. Mark him well.
> He meditates, his head upon his hand.
> What from beneath his helm-like bonnet scowls?
> Is it a face, or but an eyeless skull?
> 'Tis lost in shade; yet, like the basilisk,
> It fascinates, and is intolerable.
> His mien is noble, most majestical!
> Then most so, when the distant choir is heard
> At morn or eve—nor fail thou to attend
> On that thrice-hallowed day, when all are there;
> When all, propitiating with solemn songs,
> Visit the Dead. Then wilt though feel his Power! (297-298)

This section has three important footnotes. First Rogers tells his reader that the 'Chamber of the Dead' is in the 'Chapel de' Depositi; in which are the tombs of the Medici, by Michelangelo' (297n). Second, Rogers gives a brief biographical account of Lorenzo, which bleeds into a further description of the statue:

> He died early; living only to become the father of Catherine de Medicis. Had an Evil Spirit assumed the human shape to propagate mischief, he could not have done better. The statue is larger than the life, but not so large as to shock belief. It is the most real and unreal thing that ever came from the chisel. (298n)

Finally, Rogers explains that the 'thrice-hallowed day' is All Soul's day, or 'Il di de' Morti'. While Byron had invoked the chapel and its contents in *Childe Harold* and Hobhouse had explained them and their history more fully in his notes, neither treats the work aesthetically. Rogers, on the other hand, focuses primarily on the aesthetic qualities of the work and only briefly mentions the historical background. The paratext points his readers

to the chapel and identifies the best time to go, while the main text focuses on the statue's power.

Rogers's treatment of the statue in his journal and in *Italy*, are important and early examples of the literary treatment of statues for purely aesthetic purposes. As we saw with Byron's description, the Medici tomb was an overwhelmingly political space, a fact which often overshadowed Michelangelo's work. Viewing statues by candlelight, the better to appreciate the subtle nuances of the form, was a long established practice for both artists and connoisseurs. The mystique of these statues is lost in modern photographs which aspire to a clarity of reproduction that eliminates the shadows which made them so powerful for Rogers.[71] The entire space is constructed around the idea of time; each of the Medici princes is flanked by figures of night, day, dawn and dusk. A modern critic describes the space of the Sacristy thus:

> [a] gloom rules the realm of the dead. Light is pervasive but muted, as if diffused through tissue. If one is fortunate to have shared the chapel with Michelangelo's sculptures through the full course of a day and without electric light, then one begins to fully appreciate the allegories of time. The light waxes and wanes as it shifts from one part of the chapel to another. The sculptures awaken in turn, then return to stone. For brief moments in a chapel dedicated to the Resurrection, light becomes the agent of resurrection, beckoning the dead to rise.[72]

Although Rogers visited the statues on several occasions, at different times of the day, in his poem, he chooses to present the statues at noon. Graham Smith argues that Rogers's journal description of the statues, when coupled with an awareness of how natural light works in this space, gives an insight into Michelangelo's intentions:

> Michelangelo's tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici is set into the west wall of the Medici Chapel, and so its principal source of light is the window at the centre of the south pendentive supporting the dome. The light from this window is naturally strongest in the late morning, "round at noon", as Rogers mentioned, when the sun is in the south.
>
> It was customary in Florence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for artists to make the painted light in their frescoes and altarpieces cohere with the actual light in the chapel. It was also the case that sculptors from Donatello to Michelangelo himself took into account the visual effect their work would have when *in situ*. This being the case – and bearing in mind that Michelangelo was responsible also for the architecture of the Medici Chapel – it is reasonable to assume that he intended to portray Lorenzo 'with everlasting shadow on his face'. In short, Michelangelo worked creatively and positively with the physical position of his sculpture and the actual light conditions in the chapel

71 Graham Smith, 'Illustrious shades', *History of Photography*, 28.3 (2004), 216-225 (p. 224).
72 William E. Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo: The Genius as Entrepreneur* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 188-189.

to create a particular effect.[73]

Rogers's sensitivity to these elements, which were often overlooked by contemporaries, attests to his feeling for Renaissance sculpture and is one of reasons he could represent them in predominantly aesthetic terms. Doing so, signals a major shift in the British discourse on Italian Renaissance art.

Though his poem reflects his own personal taste, Rogers was also acutely aware of the changes in popular taste and used this as a means for careful self-marketing. Image, text and Rogers's self-presentation are carefully crafted to meet the demands of a fashionable, middle-class audience. Though the poetic version of his visit to the Medici tomb evokes the power of the statue, he does not rehearse the account of his own strange psychic struggle with the demonic statue that he recorded in his journal. Clearly this was material that he could not adapt to the expectations of the readership that *Italy* was designed to address. His treatment of the Venus de' Medici is rather similar. As we have seen, by 1830 the Venus de' Medici had fallen out of favour. However it was acceptable, if only out of habit, to briefly mention the statue. After Rogers's narrator pulls himself away from the Lorenzo statue, he goes from San Lorenzo to the Uffizi. He writes,

> We may return, and once more give loose
> To the delighted spirit—worshipping,
> In her small temple of rich workmanship,
> VENUS herself, who, when she left the skies,
>   Came hither. (298-299)

As we saw in Chapter Three, interest in this statue, which had once been regarded as the embodiment of perfection, was beginning to wane. While Byron devoted at least five stanzas in Canto IV to the 'Goddess [who] loves in stone', Rogers gives only a few lines to this dangerous goddess who had so threatened patrician European masculinity for generations. Considering how radically taste had changed in the decade or so since the publication of Byron's poem, Rogers's cursory treatment of the Venus might have been easily overlooked, had the extraordinary intensity of his response to the statue not been recorded in Anna Jameson's semi-fictional *Diary of an Ennuyée*. Jameson and Rogers met during his second trip to Italy and she often recalls in the novel their discussions regarding works of art. However, in the following passage, she recounts witnessing Rogers obsessively gaze at the Venus. Jameson converts Rogers himself into a spectacle. She writes,

Rogers may be seen every day about eleven or twelve in the Tribune, seated

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73 Smith, 'Illustrious Shades', *History of Photography*, p. 224.

opposite to the Venus, which appears to be the exclusive object of his adoration; and gazing, as if he hoped like another Pygmalion, to animate the statue; or rather perhaps that the statue might animate *him*. A young Englishman of fashion with as much talent as espiéglerie, placed an epistle in verse between the fingers of the statue, addressed to Rogers; in which the goddess entreats him not to come there *ogling* her every day; — for though "partial friends might deem him still alive," she knew by his looks he had come from the other side of the Styx; and retained her *antique* abhorrence of the spectral dead, &c. &c. She concluded by beseeching him, if he could not desist from haunting her with his *ghostly* presence, at least to spare her the added misfortune of being be-rhymed by his muse.

Rogers, with equal good nature and good sense, neither noticed these lines, nor withdrew his friendship and intimacy from the writer.[74]

Here, Jameson is playing on the many squibs, both in word and picture, that ridiculed Rogers for his corpse-like appearance. Rogers was a much sought-after guest at the soirèes of the Holland House set, but his cadaverous appearance also made him a favourite subject for satire. Even in the correspondence of mutual friends, references to "zombie Rogers" became an easily circulated social currency.[75] Jameson begins by imagining that Rogers will still be ogling the statue when her reader arrives in Florence. Rogers is revealed in a typically eighteenth-century and male posture. He theatrically performs, through his homage to the statue, his devotion to the classical ideal of beauty. But it was precisely this attitude, exclusive both in its masculinity and in its aristocratic manner, which he sought to avoid in *Italy* by allowing the Venus only a cursory treatment. As we saw in the previous chapter, the sexual attraction of the Venus had been a major component in all interactions with the statue since the sixteenth century and led to various textual and practical contortions on the part of the viewer.[76] Yet, as Adele Holcomb argues, the importance of Italy's classical past had been 'redefined' by the 1830s.[77] This was in part due to the growth in travel literature written by women, such as Jameson and Lady Morgan. While Jameson had demonstrated her ability to appreciate the Venus in an earlier passage, she uses Rogers to develop in her most extended account of it a humorous presentation of the statue that deflects the need for a serious or lengthy critique of a work most often celebrated for its sexual appeal. The sexual element remains present but it is displaced into Rogers's gaze. In *Italy*, however, Rogers insists on the spiritual rather than bodily beauty of the statue, an

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74 Anna Jameson, *Diary of an Ennuyée* (London: Henry Colburn, 1826), pp. 98-99.

75 For example, on 20 February 1818, Byron wrote to his publisher John Murray from Rome, 'in three months I could restore him [Rogers] to the Catacombs' [*Byron's Letters and Journals,* ed. by Leslie A. Marchand, 12 vols and supplement (London: John Murray, 1973-94), VI, 13.

76 *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture*, ed. by Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 325-328; and John Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1992), p. 84.

77 Holcomb, 'Turner and Rogers' Italy Revisited', pp. 80-84.

adjustment necessary if the poem is to remain marketable to its target, female audience.

As Rogers's treatment of the Venus de' Medici shows, nineteenth-century British literature often both reflected and informed the aesthetic taste of its readership. British art, the influx of Old Master works, the discovery of the 'Primitives', and literature, whether Italian or British, were not mutually exclusive. Rogers used Italian literature and the work of Vasari to shape his textual journey through the Italian peninsula and especially to render Tuscany a literary as well as geographical space. He guides his reader through both the physical and the cultural landscape of Italy, which is rendered equally by the verse and by the illustrations. Although *Italy* contained several visual depictions of Old Master works, such as the *Transfiguration* and a portrait by Domenichino, Rogers only offers verbal renditions of other important works. His description of Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina* is particularly interesting for the light that it throws on the relationship between poetry and painting and on British interest in Italian art.

'The Campagna of Florence' section begins with art and literature, but ends with the murders of the Medician princesses, Eleonora di Toledo and Isabella de' Medici. The transition from one topic to the other is marked by the narrator's evocation of the Arno river, which runs from the Apennines Mountains through Florence, Pisa and out to the Ligurian Sea. The river has been a constant and silent witness to the region's history. From the meandering retelling of Boccaccio's tale and the wide expanses of the countryside, Rogers shifts to a scene in which the narrator, reader and Michelangelo appear as eye witnesses to a battle:

> Oft, as that great Artist saw,
> Whose pencil had a voice, the cry 'To arms!'
> And the shrill trumpet hurried up the bank
> Those who had stolen an hour to breast the tide,
> And wash from their unharnessed limbs the blood
> And sweat of battle. Sudden was the rush,
> Violent the tumult; for, already in sight,
> Nearer and nearer yet the danger drew;
> Each every sinew straining, every nerve,
> Each snatching up, and girding, buckling on
> Morion and greave and shirt of twisted mail,
> As for his life—no more perchance to taste,
> ARNO, the grateful freshness of thy glades,
> Thy waters—where, exulting, he had felt
> A swimmer's transport, there, alas, to float
> And welter. (308)

Sight and sound are conflated in this description of Michelangelo's cartoon, the *Battaglia di Cascina* (which is footnoted as the *Cartoon of Pisa*). Michelangelo himself is depicted

as *seeing* the battlecry, and watching, from a distance, soldiers preparing for battle. At first sight, this appears like a typical ekphrastic description. Yet the picture that Rogers describes so vigorously is a lost work.

Though celebrated as one of Michelangelo's finest works, the cartoon seems to have survived only ten years and the painting it was a template for never materialized. Together with Leonardo da Vinci's *Battaglia di Anghiari* (which has also been lost), this important commission was to be the largest battle scene in Italy; the murals were commissioned during the temporary overthrow of the Medici government and were to be painted in the Sala del Gran Consiglio at Palazzo Vecchio. Michelangelo's mural was to depict the turning point of the long-standing war between Florence and Pisa. In 1364, the Pisani attacked bathing Florentine soldiers on the shores of the Arno at Cascina, near Pisa. Despite the surprise attack, the Florentines successfully defeated their opponents. Cecil Gould points out that this subject was particularly relevant when Michelangelo began his work in 1504, as the cities were at war again. Although evidence suggests that there were originally three sections to this project (the central depiction of the bathers, the battle on the right hand side and the Florentine encampment in the far left corner), the bathers scene is the most important as it was best documented through copies made from the original. By 1515 or 1516, the cartoon, which had received much praise, had been torn apart and sections of it were moved to separate places until it was eventually lost or destroyed. Guido Rebecchini has recently confirmed Vasari's dates for when large sections of the *Battaglia di Cascina*, specifically the Bathers scene which Rogers depicts, were incorporated into the collection of the Strozzi family in Mantua, but maintains that it is difficult to date exactly when and how they were subsequently lost. However, by tracking various paintings which clearly adapted Michelangelo's work and with the help of the Strozzi family archives, Rebecchini concludes that they were lost sometime during the seventeenth century.[78]

Rogers's description of the painting is, like many similar passages in *Italy*, closely modelled on a passage in Vasari. Vasari describes the scene thus:

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78 Cecil Gould, *Michelangelo: Battle of Cascina* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1966), pp. 1-2. As this slim volume is based on the Charlton Lecture series at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, it does not have page numbers; however I have added them, for ease in future referencing. Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. by Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 431 and note. Guido Rebecchini, *Private collectors in Mantua 1500-1630* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2002), pp. 141-147. Rebecchini argues that around 1530 it seems that Guilio Romano adapted the cartoons 'in a sketch which served as a model for the frieze in [Mantua's] Palazzo Te's *Sala degli Stucchi*' (p. 146). More conclusively, he argues that in the early seventeenth century, while working in Mantua, Rubens freely, but clearly adapted a figure from the cartoon for his *Baptism of Christ* (1604-1606). This was once in Mantua's church of the Trinità, but is now in Antwerp (p. 146). Rebecchini also points to a figure in Titian's *Andrians* (1523-1525) now in the Prado and Giulio Romano's copy of the bearded figure in the middle of the cartoon which is now in the Royal collections at Windsor Castle (pp. 145- 147).

[Michelangelo] filled [the Cartoon] with nudes bathing during the heat in the river Arno, imagining the moment when the alarm is sounded in the camp at the assault of the enemy, and while the soldiers emerge from the water to dress, the divinely inspired hands of Michelangelo depicted some hurrying to take up their arms to help their comrades, while others buckle on their cuirasses, and many put on other kinds of armour, with countless men fighting on horseback to start the scuffle. Among the other figures is an old man wearing a garland of ivy to shade his head; he has sat himself down to put on his stockings but is unable to do so because his legs are wet from the water and hearing the tumult of the soldiers and the cries and the rolls of the drums, he hurriedly forces his foot into a stocking; besides the fact that all the muscles and nerves in this figure can be seen, Michelangelo gave him a contorted mouth, using it to show that he was suffering and exerting himself down to the very tips of his toes.[79]

Rogers describes Michelangelo witnessing a contemporary battle, while Vasari has the artist 'imagining the moment when the alarm is sounded'; Rogers describes 'every sinew straining' while Vasari emphasizes the 'tumult', the urgency of the scene and the old man in particular straining with a 'contorted mouth' to get dressed while still wet from bathing. Yet there is enough difference in tone to suggest that Rogers is not simply copying Vasari's description.

What makes this such a powerful example of ekphrasis – but one which perhaps falls outside of the current scholarly understanding of ekphrasis – is that Rogers offers his account not as a description of a painting but as a substitute for a painting that has been lost. Vasari was an important source for Rogers, but, as Gould stresses, Vasari himself never actually saw the cartoon, so that Rogers's description is doubly removed from Michelangelo's cartoon. Vasari relied on verbal and visual accounts of it supplied by the work's 'most devoted student', his friend, Aristotile de Sangallo.[80] Rogers's treatment of Michelangelo's work perhaps accords better with the definition of ekphrasis given by ancient rhetoricians rather than their modern counterparts. Ruth Webb argues that '[w]hat distinguishes *ekphrasis*' for the ancient rhetoricians, 'is its quality of vividness, *enargeia*, its impact on the mind's eye of the listener. […] A successful orator must move his audiences, must make them feel as if they were present at the events described'.[81] This is clearly the effect that both Vasari and Rogers are aiming for. Though Vasari's description is important, most of what is known about the cartoon is derived from copies made by Michelangelo's contemporaries, such as Sangallo. By looking at the various sources Rogers had available to him, we begin to see how art was read differently in the first half

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79 Vasari, *Lives*, p. 430.
80   Gould, *Battle of Cascina*, p. 3.
81 Ruth Webb, '*Ekphrasis* Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre', *Word & Image*, 15.1 (1999), 7-18 (p. 13).

of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, we see that Rogers's inclusion of the cartoon reflects developments in British taste that had occurred over a century.

In 1542, at the request of Vasari, Sangallo painted a copy of the Cartoon, using sketches he had made of the original. This painting appears in the 1626 and 1633 inventories of Cardinal Francesco Barberini and was eventually bought by the first Earl of Leicester, Thomas Coke (1697-1759) for his magnificent estate, Holkham Hall.[82] Though it is difficult to pinpoint precisely when the Earl of Leicester bought this painting, he began to assemble his vast collection at the tender age of fifteen, when he embarked on his Grand Tour in 1712. Almost immediately, Coke started amassing manuscripts, Old Master and contemporary paintings, drawings, sculpture and rare books. In 1714, while he was in Rome, Coke took lessons in draughtsmanship from the architect Giacomo Matiari.[83] It was in Rome that he met the British architect, William Kent, who, as we saw in the third chapter, would later engrave scenes from Thomson's *The Seasons.* Coke is best remembered for the architectural gem of Holkham Hall (completed 1765), which remains to this day one of the best examples of eighteenth-century neo-Palladian buildings in Britain.

Holkham Hall was designed by Coke, William Kent and Matthew Brettingham. In 1761, Brettingham published a short companion book documenting this massive undertaking. Though reference is made to some of Leicester's art collection, there is no mention of Sangallo's *Battle of Cascina.* However, in 1773, an expanded version of the book was produced by the author's son, also called Matthew. Brettingham the younger describes Holkham Hall room by room, noting architectural features, furnishings, special details and artefacts, including paintings, family portraits, curiosities, books and statuary. In the 'Blue Satin Dressing Room' there is an entry for and a description of Sangallo's painting, which includes an untranslated quotation from Vasari's biography of Michelangelo and the information that it was purchased from the Barberini collection.[84] Through the boom in domestic travel, particularly the fashion for visiting country estates,

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82 Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *Seventeenth-Century Barberini Documents and Inventories of Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 499; James Lees-Milne, *Earls of Creation: Five Great Patrons of Eighteenth-Century Art* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962), p. 224. Lees-Milne does not discuss this particular purchase but rather explains the development of Holkham Hall.
83 A. A. Hanham, 'Coke, Thomas, Earl of Leicester (1697–1759)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 27 May 2009].
84 Matthew Brettingham, *The plans, elevations and sections, of Holkham in Norfolk, the seat of the late Earl of Leicester. To which are added, the ceilings and chimney-pieces; and also a descriptive account of the statutes, pictures, and drawings; not in the former edition* (London: T. Spilsbury, 1773), p. 17, in in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO> [accessed 31 May 2009]. Also interesting to note is that Brettingham includes an explanation of the house and garden designs in Italian.

Sangallo's painting became widely known. In John Dawson's *The Stranger's Guide to Holkham* (1817), the visitor – who may visit on Tuesdays or by appointment only – is guided through each room and informed of the principal objects of interest, including furnishings, statues, family portraits and Old Master works. This guide focuses on the life-style and taste of the gentry. Dawson also includes an account of Sangallo's painting. While much of Dawson's material comes from Brettingham's earlier account, there are several key additions. A larger extract from Vasari's life of Michelangelo is included, much of it untranslated. The account of the painting in English seems to assume a knowledge of Vasari's description. The inclusion of a lengthy passage in Italian suggests in itself that Dawson's readership consisted of the gentry and upper-middle-class readers. Brettingham's eighteenth-century account is clearly addressed to the family and descendants of the Earl of Leicester, whereas Dawson's is directed to a rather more general audience and an audience with a particular interest in art.

However, most of Rogers's readers would not have visited Norfolk. Yet there was another visual source that would have made the work familiar to them. The painting was reproduced in a number of engravings. Several of these engravings became widely available with the publication of Adam von Bartsch's (1757-1821) *Le Peintre Graveur*. Between 1803 and 1821, the Viennese engraver and principal keeper of the Imperial and Royal Gallery of Vienna, published a twenty-one volume, unillustrated catalogue of Old Master prints. *La Peintre Graveur*, according to Michael Bryan's (1757-1821) contemporary *Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*, 'may be safely pronounced the best account of prints ever published'.[85] Bartsch's work remains an authority in the history of art and has gone through five editions, including an illustrated edition in 1978 and a more recent digital edition. Several of the engravings which depict or adapt the Bathers Scene from the cartoon listed in Bartsch's catalogue were made by or attributed to Michelangelo's contemporaries Agostino Veneziano (1509-1536) and Marcantonio (c. 1480-before 1534), two of the most celebrated Italian Renaissance print-makers. Prints of Old Masters were highly valued and made up an important part of a connoisseur's collection. The British Museum owns several examples of these prints, as well as some drawings by Michelangelo and others, many of which were bought from or bequeathed by Rogers's contemporaries. Illustrious previous owners include the President of the Royal Academy Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830) and his son, Sir Thomas Phillips (1792-1872); the solicitor and collector Felix Slade (1790-1868); and Turner's friend Henry

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85 Michael Bryan, *Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*, revd. By George C. Williamson, 5 vols (London: G. Bell, 1926-1934), I, 91.

Vaughn (1809-1899).[86] One particularly interesting entry in the British Museum catalogue is Michelangelo's study for a seated, turning nude, which was a popular figure to copy because of its strange attitude and displayed muscles. This sketch passed from the Casa Buonarroti in Florence, to Thomas Lawrence, to the French Collector and Napoleonic agent for looting, Jean-Baptiste Wicar (1762-1834), to the English Dealer Samuel Woodburn (1786-1853), and eventually to Henry Vaughn, who bequeathed it to the Museum in 1887. This string of owners exemplifies the dynamics of collecting in the nineteenth century. My point is that one of the works widely recognised in the nineteenth century as a masterpiece was never encountered as a unique work of the kind that, according to Walter Benjamin, is distinguished by its aura. Instead it existed only in the form of copies, and circulated still more widely in the form of engravings. For Rogers's readers, the social currency of the cartoon was as much established by its connection with Holkham Hall and one of the country's greatest collectors as it was by the aura of Michelangelo's genius.

Yet most of Rogers's audience would not have seen, let alone owned rare or early prints of the kind that Rogers himself, Thomas Lawrence, William Ottley or Felix Slade collected. How then could Rogers assume that his readers who numbered in their thousands would be familiar with this work? Print collecting became a means by which those who were not themselves wealthy might take an active part in the visual culture of the nineteenth century. The market for prints and the literary market were so closely associated as to be scarcely separable, because so many printmakers specialised in prints illustrating literary works. Luigi [sometimes called Lewis] Schiavonetti (1765-1810), was one such printmaker. Born in Bassano del Grappo near Venice, he studied drawing and engraving for several years, before working for the publisher Remordini, who specialized in illustrated books. Schiavonetti moved to London in 1790 to work under the well-respected engraver Francesco Bartolozzi (1728-1815).[87] Working with the famous Bartolozzi, who had worked with Piranesi in Rome, put Schiavonetti at the centre of London's art and publishing scene. Eventually Schiavonetti and his brother Niccolo set up a successful engraving business of their own. Some of Schiavonetti's best known works include illustrations for Francis Wheatley's *Cries of London* (1793-7), Boydell's *The Dramatic Works of Shakespeare* (1802-3), Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1808 edition), etchings of which came from Blake's original designs, the British Museum's illustrated

86 See for example, the British Museum's Catalogue Collection: H,3.71; 1946, 0713.593; 1868, 0822.55; 1868, 0822.1757; and, 1895, 0915.135.
87 Vivienne W. Painting, 'Schiavonetti, Luigi (1765–1810)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 24 May 2009].

catalogue of its ancient terracotta collection (1810) and Stothard's edition of *Canterbury Tales* (work for which had not been completed at Schiavonetti's death). According to Michael Bryan, 'from his infancy,' Schiavonetti 'displayed a taste for drawing'. Bryan names 'The cartoon of Pisa; *after Michel-Angelo Buonarroti*' as one of Schiavonetti's 'principal works'.[88] In 1808, working from a sketch by Henry Howard, Schiavonetti engraved (Sangallo's copy of) Michelangelo's cartoon. Schiavonetti was well-known and particularly admired for his stipple engravings, a technique he learned from the 'chief exponent of the style', Bartolozzi. With stipple engraving, which was the offspring of crayon manner engraving, the artist was able to represent an oil painting's full tonal range. This technique was popular with artists such as Angelica Kauffmann and G. B. Cipriani, who used it when adapting scenes from classical and contemporary mythology, history and literature.[89] Rogers was aware of Schiavonetti and owned his prints for Stothard's *Canterbury Tales*. This brief account of print-making in the early nineteenth century clearly indicates how in that period the literary market and the market for fine art, specifically for Italian art, were interconnected. A cultural guide such as Jameson might produce a text that offered its readers a verbal initiation into Italian artistic culture. An engraver such as Schiavonetti produced prints that offered to a similar audience a pictorial initiation into that same culture. In *Italy* Rogers showed how it was possible to unify these two publishing trends.

Although Rogers may not have succeeded in grafting 'Italian art on to English nature', *Italy* successfully adapted Italian subjects to the two most important British arts in the early nineteenth century, literature and engraving. As a passionate collector, Rogers had a different relationship with art than most of the authors explored in the previous chapters. As my thesis has established, the turn of the nineteenth century was a pivotal and complex moment in the discourse of fine arts in Britain, a moment best examined through the treatment of Italy and its art in a variety of forms and media. Radcliffe's Gothic tales, Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*, Napoleon's systematic rape of Italy's art collections, the growing availability of Italian literature, the development of guidebooks to Italy and the various types of texts on Italian art that we have so far discussed, were all part of the same social and cultural engagement with and construction of a real and an imagined Italy. Rogers's neglected text deserves more recognition for the ways in which it reflects how the Romantic experience of Italian Renaissance art would come to shape the taste of

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88 *Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*, IV, 38.
89 Ian Mackenzie, *British Prints: Dictionary and Price Guide* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1987), pp. 23-24.

succeeding generations. The various versions of *Italy* that continued to be produced throughout the nineteenth century offer the most powerful demonstration of how completely Italian art, Italian landscape, and Italian history were assimilated by a British culture that had once regarded Italianate taste with suspicion as aristocratic, Catholic, and Gothic.

Conclusion

The knowledge of beauty is not a simple perception gained by the eyes; it requires refinement and education merely to perceive the intention of an artist, to pass judgment; we must not only, as it were, turn over the leaves hastily, reading merely the heads of the chapters, and table of contents, we must scan each page, peruse each line. A good picture requires at least as much time for its perusal as the volume of a novel.[1]

This thesis has investigated the ways in which the experience of viewing Italian Old Master art informs British Romantic-period writings. With the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, art treasures which had once been the sole property of the aristocracy, became accessible to a larger European community. This, coupled with developments in print technology, made available originals and facsimiles of long-respected and much cherished art to a growing audience. As I have shown, the 'experience' of viewing these works was multifaceted. It was as much about being within the public spaces of the gallery, auction house and print-shop, as it was about having a private and imaginative experience. It was marked by current understandings of Genius as well as the contemporary political and social conditions of Britain, France and a fractured Italian peninsula. The experience of Italian Old Master works was conditioned both by inherited aesthetic discourses from the eighteenth century, such as Civic Humanism and the desire for a single, universal 'standard' of taste, ideals which were given their most influential expression in Reynolds's lectures, and by contemporary happenings in the wider art world, including the acquisition of the Elgin Marbles, developments in the technology of engraving, the increasing popularity of drawing and the desire for and eventual institution of a National Gallery. The response to Italian art in post-Waterloo Britain was also affected by the increased ability to travel and a growing interest in Italian literature. In an attempt to demonstrate this complex set of factors, I have studied a variety of texts which together would give an adequate representation of the period's intense response to Italy's medieval and Renaissance art. Drawing from sources such as guides to the private galleries of Britain, eighteenth-and nineteenth-century travel writings about Italy and various imaginative texts, I have demonstrated how widespread and multi-faceted the discourse on visual and plastic art

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1   Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 'Modern Italy', *The Mary Shelley Reader: Containing Frankenstein, Mathilda, Tales and Stories, Essays and Reviews, and Letters*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett and Charles E. Robinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 358-364 (p. 364).

works became in the period.

My study opened with a discussion of how the cultural capital represented by Italian Old Master works that could once be claimed only by an aristocratic elite became available to an expanding bourgeois public. Central to this discussion was the transformation Britain's art world underwent from the mid-eighteenth century to early nineteenth century, owing to factors such as the Napoleonic Wars, the purchase of the Orleans collection, and the development especially in London of a vibrant exhibition culture. The first chapter establishes that this is a topic that needs to be understood in a European rather than simply a British context through an examination of texts such as Felicia Hemans's 'The Restoration of the Art Works to Italy', Staël's *Corinne* and Buchanan's *Memoirs of Painting*. The difficulty of 'engrafting' Italian art onto British nature was explored through close readings of works such as Henry Sass's *A Journey to Rome and Naples*, Lady Morgan's *Italy*, Anna Jameson's *Diary of an Ennuyée* and Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage Canto IV*. The diversity of this material was necessary to establish the social and cultural context within which art was viewed and discussed in the period. The experience offered by art works was increasingly understood as taking place within a framework of intensely private emotional responses. While the art which became available on British soil endowed Britain and its citizens with a sense of national and personal prestige, it was not always easily assimilated with existing British taste, nor was it easily accommodated by Protestant sensibilities. However, the ideological investment in the intrinsic value of Italian art continued to shape British attitudes towards Italy throughout the century in a way that provided new imaginative possibilities.

The second chapter explored the figure of the 'connoisseur', whether that figure was attended by positive or negative connotations. The connoisseur was just one, though the most central, of the guises assumed by commentators competing to be recognised as authorities by the new gallery-going public. What was to become the 'age of the museum', had at its heart a fierce competition between individuals and groups all of them demanding to be recognised as the authoritative guides to this new culture. What had once been simply a competition for authority between artists and their aristocratic patrons became far more complex when a wider and more diverse public entered the debate. Important to the discussion of connoisseurship were the spaces in which viewers and writers constructed their authoritative personae. The 'museum' was not yet a clearly established institution. Therefore, in discussing gallery spaces, I included the exhibition rooms of the Royal Academy and British Institute, the auction houses of Pall Mall, the private galleries of Italy

and Britain, St Peter's in Rome and, of course, the private galleries that, in contemporary opinion, all art lovers established in their minds. Again, I used a wide variety sources, including Pierce Egan's *Life in London*, Hazlitt's *Sketches of the Principal Picture Galleries in England*, and Ottley's *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures in the National Gallery*. The vivid descriptions in these texts of exhibitions were helpful in understanding the social stakes that were being played for in gallery spaces and in the exercise of connoisseurship. Chapter Two ends with a discussion of the Romantic, or poetic, connoisseur, who claimed a place at the head of a new aristocracy, the aristocracy of taste. By focusing specifically on 'Romantic' writers, I have tried to show how the Romantic experience of Italian Renaissance art was part of a wider cultural discourse, even as it made claims for its own separateness.

The third chapter discussed several ways in which Romantic writers used Italian art to make literature. Rather than keeping the sister arts separate, Romantic writers created a vocabulary which was equally appropriate in describing responses to literature and to Old Master art. This vocabulary was wide-ranging and incorporated ideas of Genius, an interest in the artist's biography and his historical circumstances, the sitter's personality and the viewer's own mental, emotional and physical responses to a work. Perhaps most revolutionary, was the insistence by Romantic critics that the value both of literature and fine art derived from its location of the ideal in the particular. The experience of viewing art began to be described in openly sensual and even sexual terms, one consequence of which was that responses to art in the period became increasingly divided along gender lines. Some of these issues were explored in my treatment of how writers began to favour Raphael's *Fornarina* over the *Venus de' Medici*. Fuelling this interest was an intense curiosity about Raphael's life. This interest in biography prompted Romantic writers to 'novelize' art. The chapter ended by discussing the ways in which male writers, in particular, established the differences between Italy and Britain by embodying them in a contrast between the ways in which British and Italian women were represented in painting. This is just one of the ways in which the experience of Italian art began to prompt the production of British writing, which might take the form of travelogues, critical essays, works of scholarship or poetry. Romantic writers forged creative links between literature and visual art which would be taken up by their Victorian successors.

The fourth and final chapter brings together the themes addressed in the first three chapters through a reading of Samuel Rogers's *Italy*. Rogers's text demonstrates how the British investment in Italy's cultural currency became a crucial factor in the contemporary

competitive publishing and print markets. Rogers developed his text for over a decade before he discovered a way to make it profitable. Because of this, *Italy* is an especially important tool for understanding both the literary market of the day and the market for prints and engravings with which it was so closely connected. This chapter, especially, showed how travel, art and literature were interconnected and dependent on each other. *Italy* is also important as a text that moves between two periods, becoming, as it did so, one of the most important conduits by which Romantic values were passed to a Victorian readership. Although often overlooked, *Italy* has much to offer scholars, not least because its material embodiments demonstrate crucial developments in the publishing market. *Italy* adapted Italian subjects to the British arts of literature and engraving in a groundbreaking way.

Italian art was, in many ways, both familiar and unknown to British viewers at the turn of the nineteenth century. The more privileged viewers might own a work or an engraving, or have direct experience of important works through their travels. Some may have become familiar with Old Master painting by visiting private, aristocratic homes. Still others may have become familiar with them in embroidered or other material forms. However, the importation of Old Master and earlier art work profoundly shaped British culture in ways that persist to this day. Though endowed with high cultural capital, the experience of Old Master paintings at the turn of the century did not issue in a blind acquiescence in their greatness. There were those who complained that the paintings were too dark or dirty, and as we have seen, British writer-viewers often struggled to appreciate Catholic subjects. But there was an excitement and enthusiasm aroused by these works which was infectious. In previous decades, the public had been becoming more art-literate and so these works arrived before an audience already primed to appreciate them. The audience for such works was no longer restricted to connoisseurs or trained artists, but included a wider public, and this led inevitably to a different understanding of what constituted the value of these works of genius. Aesthetic value could no longer simply be explained by reference to compositional merits or to the tenets of Civic Humanism. Viewers began to react emotionally and imaginatively, to engage with such works historically, but also creatively. The reactions of Romantic writers shaped not only their own writings and aesthetics, but also influenced the way in which their readers responded to the works of art.

Although there has been much excellent and exciting scholarship in the last few decades on Romantic-period visual culture, the question of how Romantic writers

experienced Italian Renaissance art has rarely been studied in depth. Perhaps, by a strange paradox, its very pervasiveness has made it easy to overlook. Scholars interested in curatorship and the development of the modern museum have registered the impact of the importation of so many Old Masters on nineteenth-century culture in general and on the creation of the National Gallery in London in particular. Art historians have documented how Victorian writers and artists were inspired by Raphael, Michelangelo and, increasingly, the Primitives, but have often overlooked the impact of these artists on an earlier generation of British writers. Historians and literary critics have recently come to insist on the importance of travel writing, but have not always been sufficiently attentive to the importance in such writing of the works of art which were so central to most itineraries. Luisa Calè argues that to 'divide up the history of visual media into disciplinary enclaves means to lose out on the integrated intermedial experience that defined a particular culture'.[2] This thesis has tried to avoid that danger.

Many visual culture studies tend to focus on the eighteenth century, on early nineteenth-century contemporary visual culture, on the engagement of late-eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century culture with the Greek or Roman classical past, or on the Victorian interest in medieval and Renaissance Italy. My study focuses on how the Renaissance was conceived of before the Victorian period. I have argued that the displacement of classical Rome by Renaissance Florence as the focus of cultural interest was one indication of a democratisation of culture in the early nineteenth century, but it was a development in which even aristocratic writers like Shelley and Byron took part. As we have seen, even a classicist like Shelley was inspired by Renaissance art, as my analysis of his treatment of the portrait of Beatrice Cenci shows. Indeed it was the Romantic interest in medieval and Renaissance Tuscany which prepared the way for such writers as the Brownings and Ruskin.

Studying how the Romantics understood Italian Renaissance art has forced me to bring together key aspects of the Romantic period which are often treated separately. Recent scholarship on the Romantic idea of Genius, the growing importance of biography, the creation of a new cultural identity identified by Mary Shelley when she described herself as an 'Anglo-Italian', the development of tourism, the fashion for learning the Italian language, the popularity of Italian literature, the use of Italian settings by Gothic novelists and their illustrators, the increasing number of galleries and exhibition spaces in which Italian art and art inspired by Italy might be encountered, and radical developments

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2 Luisa Calè, *Fuseli's Milton Gallery: 'Turning Readers into Spectators'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), p. 126.

in the publishing market are all topics that have informed my thesis. The idea of cultural capital has been central to my understanding of the experience of Old Master art. An appreciation of art became an essential attribute for all those who wished to claim that they lived a cultured life, and although this was perhaps most visible in the social-climbing middle class, my thesis has demonstrated that it was equally important to those in high society and writers whom we still tend to view as somehow separated from their cultural surroundings. Although I have not offered a feminist reading of the period's experience of Old Master art, many important gender issues have been raised and addressed, for example in my examination of the growing preference for Raphael's *Fornarina* rather than the *Venus de' Medici*. While male viewers were more willing to admit their sexual response to an art object, female viewers felt they had to emphasise the purely aesthetic qualities of a work.

I had originally hoped to include in my thesis the Romantic response to the Greco-Roman art as well as Renaissance art encountered in Italy, but I found that this double-focus became unwieldy. However, the time I spent researching the influence of the classical on Romantic writers has informed my understanding of the impact of Renaissance visual culture in the period. Except in the fourth chapter, I have not addressed responses to contemporary British art, or the impact of these responses on the understanding of Italian works. Furthermore, I have not taken into account how the understanding of the French and Northern schools was affected by the increased familiarity with Italian Old Masters. However, I hope by focusing solely on reactions to the Italian school, I have highlighted the differences and similarities between the Romantic-period experience of art and our own.

I have focused on reactions to Italian art from the end of the eighteenth century to the early 1830s, because it seemed to me a story that still needed to be told. Although I have taken into account how an eighteenth-century art discourse informed Romantic reactions to Old Master art and have tried to point out some of the ways in which the post-Romantics were indebted to their predecessors, future research might consider these issues more fully. It remains to be determined, for example, to what extent the high value attached to Italian art of the Renaissance shaped British involvement in the Risorgimento. It also remains to be explored how poets such as Byron and Shelley were able to harmonise their admiration of classical with their admiration for Renaissance art. It is a topic that would have allowed me to discuss Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV* and Percy Shelley's letters and journals in more depth. I am especially interested in Shelley's

upaithric philosophy, which brings together art, architecture, the natural world and philosophy in one harmonic system. His writings from the Greek colonies in the south of Italy are particularly relevant to this matter. Indeed they help explain much of his reaction to Renaissance art. I have started a personal database which digitally links Shelley's descriptions in letters of the art work in Bologna's Pinacoteca with images of the works themselves; I would like to incorporate in the database his sketches in prose and verse of southern Italy's Greek settlements. Hopefully this will lead to a deeper understanding of Shelley's progressive aesthetic philosophy.

One avenue for future research would be to look at how writers at the turn of the century contrasted Medieval and Renaissance Florence (and Tuscany more broadly) with Republican Rome. A study like this would necessitate examining how the popular biographies of Renaissance artists, patrons and writers, shaped writers' understanding of Florence as fully as the understanding of Greece and Rome was shaped by Plutarch's *Lives*. Such a study would contribute to an understanding of the nature of Anglo-Italian cultural relations from the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century. Mary Shelley's works, especially *Valperga* (1823), *The Last Man* (1826) and her short biographical sketches of important Italian figures, would prove central to such an undertaking.

Another aspect to explore would be the particular role played by Dissenters in the popularization of Italian Old Master art. Hazlitt, Rogers and Roscoe all came from Dissenting families, and all three were immensely influential in shaping public responses to Italian art. It would be interesting to examine how the Dissenting educational system with its emphasis on the learning of modern European languages rather than classical learning fostered a new understanding of visual culture. Were the Dissenters crucial in the shift of attention away from Classical Rome to Republican Florence? I regard this thesis not as the end but as the beginning of a research project that will engage me all through my life.

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