British Women Translating Italy, 1750-1860

by

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ABSTRACT

Much has been written about the representation of Italy and Italianness by British women writers between 1750 and 1860, but a significant gap exists regarding their role as linguistic and cultural translators. This dissertation not only addresses that gap, it also does so through a gendered perspective, examining the "translation" of femininity across cultures. I establish a lineage of eighteenth and nineteenth-century British women translators of Italy by bringing together a selection of authors such as Charlotte Lennox, Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte Dacre, George Eliot and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. This selection both uncovers the work of "lost" women translators such as Lennox and Dacre as well as brings forth new understandings of the translation work of well-known authors such as Radcliffe, Eliot and Barrett Browning to shed new light on their cross-cultural influence. Furthermore, it demonstrates the shift in British women's representations of Italy both as a result of the increase in sympathies for the Italian unification movement, or the Risorgimento, as well as their increased exposure to the country through travel. My study spans across linguistic translations, literary/cultural criticism, the novel, the short story, travel writing, poetry and personal letters, thus showing how the translation of Italian culture reverberates across genres. This multi-genre focus also widens the scope of translation beyond linguistic translation to cultural translation/cultural mediation to explore the plurality of the agential roles that historical women authors played in the process of cultural transmission. Ultimately, at this project's foundation is the argument of translation's role in establishing national identities and power relations between countries, and how British women's translations of Italian femininity both reinforce and push back against British ideologies regarding womanhood and the nation.

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Introduction

How deeply rooted in man is the desire to generalize about individuals or national characteristics. - Friedrich Schlegel, *Critical Fragments* (1798-1800)[1]

British literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was deeply entangled with xenophobic roots, at the center of which lay Italy. Richard Castillo writes in his book *Empire of Stereotypes* that "there is no European country that has been written about so extensively over so long and continuous a period and around which such a wealth of clichés and commonplaces, often contradictory and hyperbolic, have come to accumulate" (83). Yet despite Italy's central role in the history and criticism of British literature, there is a significant lack of scholarship that focuses on the characterization of Italian femininity and its connection to the shaping of the "national characteristics" to which Schlegel refers in my epigraph. Therefore, this dissertation will distance itself from the generalized representation of British attitudes towards Italy and Italianness as represented in British literature of the time and will put both women authors *and* women characters at center stage. Through the framework of translation theory and feminist/gender studies, I put the work of women "translators" of Italy in conversation with one another to examine how themes of femininity, identity, and nationalism in their works influence the history of Anglo-Italian relations. The work begins in the eighteenth century and extends through the mid-nineteenth century, examining works by Charlotte Lennox, Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte

[1] I pull this quote from Castillo, 1.

Dacre, George Eliot, Germaine de Staël and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. This selection of authors serves this project in two primary ways: to encourage a new reading of their renowned (and in most cases, canonized) works through positioning them as cultural translators and mediators, and to demonstrate how British representations of Italy are impacted by the shift in British attitudes towards Italy which gained traction with the rise of the Italian unification movement, or the Risorgimento. In addition, examining these authors alongside one another show how these deeply rooted (mis)conceptions of Italy reverberate across genres. My study spans across translations and literary/cultural criticism (Lennox); the gothic novel (Radcliffe and Dacre); the mid-Victorian novel, short story, and travel writing (Eliot); and poetry and letters (Barrett Browning). In analyzing the work of these women as acts of both cultural translation and mediation, I aim to demonstrate the ways in which they both manipulated and adjusted perspectives as they filtered representations of Italianness to their English audiences. Central to my argument is also the physical relationship - or lack thereof - that each author had with Italy and how this impacted their characterization of Italian womanhood. Their exposure to Italy and its culture varied greatly, from merely being acquainted with it through written accounts to travelling and living in the *bel paese*[2]; yet there are common threads across their writing which give insight into how British women authors conceived of Italian femininity in relation to national identity and the status of womanhood in Britain.

This project considers translation as both a linguistic and cultural phenomenon. While the work of analyzing linguistic translations is crucial in examining cross-cultural

[2] Literally meaning "beautiful country." The term is the well-known name given to Italy, dating back to Dante and Petrarch.

relations and is too often undervalued in academia, I aim to expand my research beyond the limits of interlinguistic relations in the hopes of demonstrating how a shift in our perspective on translation can bring forth new ways of understanding and conceptualizing the texts that we read, study, and teach. In fact, recent scholarship in Translation Studies discourse has begun to call attention to the necessity of expanding our conception of translation practices. Various studies have introduced terms that encompass the complexity of translation, such as intralingual/interlingual translation, cultural translation, cultural transfer, cultural mediation, among others, although the application of these terms in analyses of historical works are still few and far between. In their introduction to *Cultural Mediation in Europe 1800-1950*, Reine Meylaerts, Lieven D'Hulst, and Tom Verschaffel address the tendency of scholars in Translation Studies to focus their attention on the "traditional" translation: "Concentrating on the translator role mainly, they do however rarely take into consideration the versatile nature and overlap of agent roles that crucially characterize mediators, as we understand them here. As such, they only partly grasp the complex transfer processes that make up cultural history" (8).[3] Therefore, the selection of authors that I have chosen encourages the reexamination of the history of Anglo-Italian relations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as the role of the woman writer as translator and mediator in these multiply translatable relations. While Chapter 1 begins with a more "traditional" linguistic analysis of Charlotte Lennox's translations, the argument then expands in the following chapters by using this anchor as a means to trace translated conceptions of Italian femininity across genres, thus bringing the

[3] The differentiation between "translator" and "cultural mediator" will be further explored in Chapter 4 in discussing the work of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

act of cultural translation to the forefront. This shift in focus also calls for a reformulation of the term translation, for, as D'Hulst states, it does "not simply encompass the literary and technical *translatio* (the act of transferring meaning from one specific culture-bearing language to another), but also all individual and collective negotiations and influences between different cultures (which also involves the ways of producing meaning)."[4] Furthermore, Kate Sturge refers to cultural translation as "a metaphor that radically questions translation's traditional parameters…" one that is "counterposed to a 'linguistic' or 'grammatical' translation that is limited in scope to the sentences on the page."[5][6] My engagement with the word translation throughout this work will thus stem from this understanding of the term.

Using this framework, I add another layer to the concept of translation by examining the act of cultural translation through a gender-oriented lens. This focus stems from the necessity to fill the significant gap in scholarship that engages with the work of historical women as translators.[7] As Luise Von Flotow states, this research is "made more urgent by the fact that translation has historically been described in gendered terms, closely and negatively associated with women."[8] Take, for example, the case of translation in

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[4] D'Hulst, Lieven. "Cultural Translation: A problematic concept?" pg. 224.

[5] Sturge, 67.

[6] To show just how recent the term "cultural translation" has come to be studied within Translations Studies discourse, it is interesting to note that it was absent from the first edition of this encyclopedia published in 1998 and 2001. It makes its first appearance in this second edition, published in 2011.

[7] This has been addressed by scholars such as Mary Helen McMurran, Mirella Agorni, Luise Von Flotow, Gillian Dow and Kate Parker.

[8] Von Flotow, Louise. *Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'Era' of Feminism,* pg. 75

eighteenth-century England: translation was at the forefront of the literary mind, with translations from classical and modern languages being mass produced and circulated.[9] Despite the popularity of translation amongst women writers at the time, eighteenth-century scholarship has tended to focus on women as novelists rather than translators, likely because of the originality of the novel and its representation of female positionality in society. This lack of scholarship focusing on women as translators is unsurprising; as Agorni notes, it likely stems from the derivative nature of translation, always looming as a shadow underneath the original text. Given that translation has for so long been deemed an inferior practice against original scholarship, it may not initially appear as an emancipatory practice for women writers. Yet with the rise of Lawrence Venuti's theory of the "translator's invisibility," which recognizes the historical erasure of the translator's authenticity, scholarship on translation has shifted towards calling attention to the individuality of the translator by considering the time period in which they are writing as well as the domestic and cultural values that implicitly factor into the process of transmitting a source text into its target culture. And while this shift in thinking about translation has changed the way we understand and address the relationship between the original author/source culture and translator/target culture, there remains a lack of critical attention towards women translators. In fact, Kate Parker notes that in the *Oxford History of Literary Translations in English (Volume 3: 1660-1790)*[10], only nine of the six hundred

[9] Translation from the classical languages was still considered an activity of male scholars, while women were commonly translated from modern European languages; however, this allowed them to demonstrate their literary and intellectual capabilities as analogous to male translators. For more, see: Staves, Susan. *A Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1660-1789.*

[10] This is the most recent anthology on literary translation into English, published in 2005.

pages discuss women translators, "in spite of the editor's assurance that women played active and significant roles in the history of eighteenth-century translation" (131). As translation is undergoing a process of demarginalization, it is essential that more effort is put into unearthing the work of "silent" women translators who were active participants in cross-cultural relations, using their art to showcase their voice and their perceptions of the world. Taking this into consideration, the objective of this dissertation is to become a part of the scholarly conversation that works to dismantle the longstanding notion that women and translation are subordinate in literary history. Furthermore, I hope that the broad lens through which I am examining translation ultimately propels our understanding of the work of women authors into a more intellectual and political context, considering how their translative acts are integral not only to the conceptualization of Italy and femininity, but also the construction of a national British identity at a time in which Britain was seeking to assert global power.

My engagement with the selected works is situated within the larger historical context in which Britain was undergoing rapid change through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the rise of both Empire and nationalism, which further complicates Anglo-Italian relations and representations of Italy. Given the extensive history of Italian stereotypes in Britain, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provide a fruitful ground for exploration of cultural translation and mediation, as the representation of Italy undergoes accelerated changes during this period. Between the cultural and artistic importance of Italy in the Grand Tour era, the rise of nationalism in England, and Italian Risorgimento politics, Italy comes to the forefront of the literary mind. The Italy of the British imagination is rampant with contradictions and hyperbolic stereotypes, for British

authors seem to seldom have made up their mind regarding their thoughts about the country and its people. It was simultaneously seen, on the one hand, as a land of "beauty, instinct, and spontaneity,"[11] or of "warmth and relaxation, sensual delight, sunshine strong and guaranteed,"[12] and, on the other, as "oppressive, violent, horrific," full of ruin and decay.[13] Despite their contradictions, this fixation on establishing widespread characteristics of Italy and its culture is unsurprising, for it had been known and respected for centuries as a cultural epicenter within Europe. The shift here stems from Britain's changing conceptions of itself in relation to Italy's legacy, which became a primary concern in the eighteenth century as Britain was not only establishing a nation but asserting itself as the center of civilization[14] and the rightful heir of the "former greatness of Rome" (1).[15] As the representation of foreign cultures was essential in maintaining a "culturally English and imperially British"[16] identity in the process of nation-building, the circulation of literature depicting life beyond the British border carried a great deal of significance. As Rajani Sudan states, "these formation of national and imperial identity within Britain often seemed to depend on representations of the foreign and the feminine" (101). Given the integral role of these representations, it is surprising that such little attention has been paid

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[11] Gundle, Stephen. "The 'Bella Italiana' and the 'English Rose': Reflections on Two National Typologies of Feminine Beauty." *Performing National Identity: Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions,* edited by Manfred Pfister and Ralf Hertel. Amsterdam, Rodopi B.V., 2008, pp. 137-158.

[12] Churchill, Kenneth. *Italy and English Literature, 1764-1930,* pp. 6-7.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation,* p. 1.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Sudan, Rajani. *Fair Exotics: Xenophobic Subjects in English Literature, 1720-1850,* p. 101.

to the role that translation's various forms play in Britain's literary and imperial history. Some scholars have indeed begun to explore this relationship, such as Edwin Gentzler and Maria Tymoczko in their book *Translation and Power.* Their introduction states:

> Colonialism and imperialism were and are made possible not just by military might or economic advantage but by knowledge as well; knowledge and the representations thus configured are coming to be understood as a central aspect of power. Translation has been a key tool in the production of such knowledge and representations. ...translators, as much as creative writers and politicians, participate in the powerful acts that create knowledge and shape culture (xxi).[17]

In thinking about translation's role in expanding imperial power, it is useful to note that the construction of Italy as Britain's Other is reminiscent of Edward Said's consideration of Orientalism in that the Occident's construction of the Orient results not only from military conquest, but from scholarship and literature as well. As he states: "I study Orientalism as a dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by three great empires--British, French, American--in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced" (14-15). Scholars have indeed explored the dynamics of these power relations within Continental Europe, between the north and the south. For instance, in Piya Pal-Lapinski's work *The Exotic Woman in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction and Culture* she draws distinctions between what she terms the "near" as well as the "remote" exotic, stating that "the near exotic could be mapped as Italy, Spain, Greece and parts of Eastern Europe" (2). Mary Louise Pratt also addresses travel writing in both non-

[17] Gentzler, Edwin and Maria Tymoczko. *Translation and Power.* p. xxi.

European and intra-European places in her work *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, indicating that given the fact that Northern Europe asserted itself as the center of civilization in the eighteenth century, "it is not surprising then, to find German or British accounts of Italy sounding like German or British accounts of Brazil" (10). The translation of Italian femininity as "exotic" and "sensual" is particularly present in the Gothic novel, which will be explored in depth in my second chapter.

My project expands upon this understanding of translation by exploring the role of gender, for there has hitherto been a lack of scholarship that examines how the entanglement of the foreign and the feminine extends to women writers themselves, both in how it informed their representation of Italian femininity and how their own role in the act of translation and mediation was integral to the upholding of the idea of the nation. Taking this into consideration, the following chapters consider Lennox, Radcliffe, Dacre, Staël, Eliot and Barrett Browning as cultural translators and mediators and their individual works as active participants in a larger cultural system that was working to establish superiority on a global scale. Furthermore, I interrogate how their acts of translation blur the boundaries between support of British national ideology and resistance towards it; for within the hyperbolized representations of Italian femininity lies imagined liberation for British women from the stringent societal expectations of their time. In doing so, I center the voices of women writers in this reconfiguration of translation history and bring forth their influential participation in cross-cultural exchange at a crucial turning point in British literary history.

My study looks at the relationship between each woman author and Italy across a spectrum of "closeness" to the culture, considering how the proximity between author and

culture informs the way in which Italianness is transmitted to British audiences. Chapter One begins with a more "traditional" examination of linguistic translation with an author who we can consider the *furthest* from Italy and its culture, Charlotte Lennox. The text under consideration is Lennox's multivolume critical work *Shakespeare Illustrated* (1753) in which she documents the sources which inspired Shakespeare's plays, providing her own translations of Italian and French sources alongside summaries of the plays and her own critical commentary. The reason that I place Lennox as the furthest from Italy is that her relationship to Italy is rooted in her scholarly interests rather than in a personal connection to the country. Lennox only immersed herself in studying Italian under her tutor Giuseppe Baretti so that she could quickly learn the language well enough to be able to translate texts from the Italian. Whereas her cultural knowledge is shown to affirm long standing stereotypes of malignant Italianness through her representation of Italian masculinity, her translations of women characters show how she uses Italian women as vehicles through which to challenge eighteenth-century conceptions of femininity. This chapter foregrounds the predominance of women translators in the eighteenth century as well as the ongoing critical neglect of their work, despite translation being a known medium through which women could express their own political voices. Lesa Scholl states that "Ideas of foreignness are central to the ways these women learned to redefine themselves and the roles available to them. Indeed, they can be said to translate and rewrite female identity through the way they speak of the position of women within other cultural contexts" (129). With the subtle, yet targeted modifications Lennox makes in her translations of classic Italian texts, her focus on highlighting feminine subjectivity serves as

a great starting point to further explore the role of Italian femininity in reimagining British womanhood.

Chapter Two moves forward from Lennox's reproduction of the Italian world of Boccaccio and Cinthio to an imaginary Italy overrun by murder, sensationalism, threatening castles and, most of all, dangerous women. This is the Italy of the Gothic novel, a fictional world which thrived on the reinforcement of xenophobic stereotypes and hyperbolized representations of Italianness. Yet, whereas the relationship between Italy and the repetitive conventions of the Gothic novel have been examined at length in scholarship, my chapter seeks to fill a gap in the research which considers the importance of "dangerous" Italian femininity in upholding these conventions. To do so, I analyze the works of one of the most influential Gothic novelists, Ann Radcliffe, as well as those of the lesser-known writer Charlotte Dacre. Their relationships to Italy are *distant*, for neither of the two authors actually traveled there during their lifetimes, yet they partook in the British Italophilia of their time and played an integral part in the construction of a distinctly Gothic Italian world. Given that their exposure to Italian culture was not firsthand, their works also perpetuate the image of an unruly Italy in total opposition to Britain's civility. The Italian world presented in Radcliffe's novels stems from a complex mixture of interpretation (of Italian landscape through travel writing), reproduction (of Italian cultural tropes already dominant in the English literary tradition), and creation (of her very own image of Italy), which makes her work a useful transition between linguistic and cultural translation. Cultural translation demonstrates, after all, as Mirella Agorni terms it, "the complex process of transformation foreign images are subject to when they are transported across different cultures" (2). Using Radcliffe's minor and massively

undervalued character from *Mysteries of Udolpho*, Signora Laurentini, as a starting point, I analyze the significant legacy that she left behind, which influenced future representations of Italian women, particularly those of Charlotte Dacre, whose female characters echo Signora Laurentini's distinctly Italian characteristics and take central roles in her works. In my reading of Dacre, I draw from her wide selection of female characters from two of her works, *Zofloya, or the Moor* and *The Libertine,* to trace the connections between their malevolent characterizations and predominant British (mis)perceptions of Italian womanhood. In Radcliffe and Dacre, we encounter a new translation of Italian femininity that greatly differs from the feminine virtue encountered in Lennox's works: we are confronted with *anti*heroines embodying female wantonness. I draw upon these differences to argue that female libertinism was central to the representations of Italian women in the Gothic and that it not only supported nationalist ideologies but also allowed women writers to rebel against the constraints of "respectable" British womanhood.

While the first two chapters explore a *rewritten* or *imagined* Italy, the women authors of Chapter Three embody an entirely new relationship with the country — one of firsthand travel experience. As travel to Italy became more widely accessible for middle-class British women in the late eighteenth century, written accounts of the *bel paese* began to shift as these women travelers began to experience a culture that liberated rather than restricted them. While women writers were gaining a newfound sense of independence through travel, Italy was simultaneously fighting for its own right to independent nationhood. This brought about a massive cultural shift in the way that Italy was written about and perceived by the British, and this chapter begins the exploration of the integral role of women writers in this transformation. While I begin with an analysis of Germaine de

Staël's infamous and influential Italian novel *Corinne*, George Eliot is the central focus of this chapter. Eliot is the most cosmopolitan author explored in this dissertation; John Rignall claims that she is "the most knowledgeable European of English novelists," given her vast familiarity with Continental classical texts, knowledge of multiple languages (Italian included), her work as a German translator, and her various and lengthy visits to the Continent throughout her lifetime.[18] However, this is not to suggest that Eliot's work was free from nationalistic stereotypes; in fact, my chapter traces how representations of Italy and Italian femininity shift before and after she began to travel extensively to the country in the 1860s. Before her travels to Italy, Eliot published "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" in *Scenes of a Clerical Life* (1857), at the center of which is the ill-fortuned Italian heroine Caterina whose character embodies the Gothic feminine traits explored in the second chapter. However, after spending an extensive period of time traveling and living around Italy, Eliot undertook her most arduous literary project in the construction of her Italian historical novel *Romola* (1863), and her creation of the intelligent and altruistic Romola presents a completely different image of Italian femininity than that of Caterina. Furthermore, whereas Radcliffe and Dacre's texts presented Italian heroines as libertines, Staël and Eliot introduced a new type of heroine — the Anglo-Italian hybrid. I contend that hybridity is the aspect which releases the fictional Italian women from the shackles which tethered them to historical stereotypes of Italian femininity; although, as we will see, this does not always happen without the heroine's sacrifice. Nevertheless, this chapter highlights the significant role of travel in this shift of representation with respect to

[18] For more on this, see: Rignall, John. *George Eliot and Europe.* Scolar Press, 1997.

femininity and culture. Scholl's work emphasizes that Eliot's journals exemplify that she likely found acceptance and liberation in her travels as an "outsider" whereas in England "her position as belonging to the nation caused discomfort and ambivalence" (152-3). Therefore, Eliot's positionality as a woman translating culture allowed her to bring home to her readers not only a revised interpretation of Italy, but also a newfound sense of femininity and national sensibility. Understanding Eliot's identity as a traveler is essential to my reading of the way in which she translates Italy; for rather than writing to distance the two cultures and establish power, she writes to connect them. In doing so, her translational activities work to embrace difference and promote sympathy. As Richard Bonifiglio points out, "The cultivation of cosmopolitan sympathies, according to Eliot, is made possible only through the recognition of national differences" (141). In fact, Eliot went to great lengths on her own to research Italian history and culture firsthand in order to most accurately translate these differences for her readers, which highlights her uniqueness as a cultural translator. It is precisely her diligence to *know* Italy, not for power but for understanding, which makes her work an impetus in the shifting of literary representations of Italian culture and femininity in the mid-nineteenth century.

Whereas Eliot's and Staël's works started the process of dismantling outdated stereotypes of Italian femininity, those of Elizabeth Barrett Browning brought the possibility of complete liberation for *both* the nineteenth-century woman *and* Italy to center stage. In my concluding chapter, I examine Barrett Browning's relationship with Italy during the fifteen years she lived there and how this informs the way she reckons with themes of femininity and nationalism across her writings. While the chapter traces the development of her relationship with Italy from her earlier poetry in *Sonnets from the*

Portuguese, unpublished fragments on Italy, and personal correspondences, it culminates in an analysis of her most well-known work *Aurora Leigh*, which confronts, as Avery notes, "many of the myths and associations which Italy held for Barrett Browning and her contemporaries" (157). I consider Barrett Browning's positionality as a woman Italophile who, having escaped the grasp of her stringent Victorian upbringing, achieved personal and professional liberation in Florence in order to argue for the significance of her role as a cultural mediator between Italy and Britain. Out of all of the women writers discussed in this dissertation, Barrett Browning is the *closest* to Italy and its culture; her intimacy with her adopted home is evident in both her poetry and personal correspondence, which demonstrate her allegiance to the Italian unification movement, known as the Risorgimento, which was coming to its climax during her time living there.[19] She develops a new lens through which Italy comes to be translated, shifting the way that Italian culture, femininity and status as a nation is imagined by English audiences. In doing so, Barrett Browning boldly asserts herself as a political voice in a male-dominated conversation, for as Simon Avery states, "politics was clearly an arena in which she felt the educated nineteenth-century woman had an important role to play, not least because politics and the oppressions of power so often began in the smallest of societal units, the family."[20] The time in which she was writing is significant: during the 1840s and 1850s the Risorgimento brought an increase in Britain's public sympathy towards Italy, as the momentum towards

[19] Interestingly, Italy finally achieved unification on March 17, 1861, just months before Barrett Browning's death on June 29th.

[20] Avery, 180.

unification gave the country the possibility to redeem itself for its "uncivilized" past.[21] While these changing sentiments and political relations are often discussed in relation to other influential mid-Victorian works such as in the (male) Italian characters that show up in the novels of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, my chapter attempts to do the much-needed work of centering the female voice in this conversation by examining Barrett Browning as an interlocutor moving between cultures.

Maura O'Connor states that English women "have left extensive records that help document their roles in creating the ideals, myths and representations that have circumscribed the borders of nations and nationalities in the first place. These writings bear witness to their very active participation in both traversing boundaries and establishing them" (2). The works of Lennox, Radcliffe, Dacre, Eliot and Barrett Browning have greatly impacted *both* the construction and the deconstruction of the "myth" of Italy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, yet their role as cultural translators has been mostly overlooked in scholarship. In examining the connection between the authors' exposure to Italy and their cultural translations, we are able to decipher the progressive impact that women travelers had on political relations at the height of nation-building for both Britain and Italy. Furthermore, the essential thread that spans across the hundred-year corpus of this project is how each translation of Italian femininity served an underlying transgressive function. Although the works of each author present vastly different characterizations of Italian women, from lovesick wantons to independent scholars and artists, their translated identities allow the woman writer to have more

[21] For more, see: Black, Jeremy. "Italy and the Grand Tour: The British Experience in the Eighteenth Century."

authorial agency and subvert masculine authority. Alison Chapman and Jane Stabler emphasize that "much is to be gained from a detailed reassessment of canonical and non-canonical nineteenth-century women writers and artists in Italy" (13). This dissertation is an attempt to show just how much we can gain from the reframing of historical women writers' work through the lens of translation studies.

Chapter One
Charlotte Lennox as Translator and Critic: *Shakespear Illustrated*

In mid-eighteenth-century England, Charlotte Lennox was a literary superstar. Over the span of a forty-three-year writing career, she produced novels, plays, poems, criticism, and translations, and became an active voice within Samuel Johnson's literary circle.[22] As her biographer Susan Carlile notes, Lennox "defies many commonly held beliefs about eighteenth-century women writers," for outside of her status as an esteemed novelist, she also became a prominent interlocutor in the critical conversations within the literary marketplace (18). Deciphering Lennox's professional and personal identity has proven to be an elusive task, for as Devony Looser points out, "critics have created many speculative portraits of the author, among them a proto-feminist, a coquette, a starving artist, a liar, a perpetrator of assault, a proper lady, a man's woman, and a doting mother" (93).[23] While these contradicting perceptions of her persona have been explored in relation to her life and reputation as an author and critic, her role as a translator is still massively underexplored.[24] This is surprising, considering that Lennox translated the same number of works as she wrote novels[25], elevating her reputation to that of an esteemed translator

[22] Samuel Johnson was also her patron. For more on their relationship, see: Susan Carlile's *Charlotte Lennox: An Independent Mind.*

[23] Looser, Devony. *British Women Writers and the Writing of History, 1670-1820.* John Hopkins University Press, 2000.

[24] This is reiterated by many scholars who have written on Lennox's work, such as Susan Carlile, Marianna D'Ezio, and Devony Looser.

[25] Looser, 95.

both at home and abroad.[26] Moreover, the little critical attention that Lennox's translations have received has focused only on those from *French.*[27] In fact, Carlile even notes that Lennox's translation *The Memoirs of Maximilian de Bethune, Duke of Sulley* from French greatly increased her popularity, as she became referred to as "the ingenious translator of *Sully"* rather than as the author of *The Female Quixote,* her most well-known novel.[28] Despite her prominence, Lennox's Italian work has never been explored.[29]

Her Italian translations are found in her groundbreaking work *Shakespear Illustrated*, published in 1753 and made up of three volumes that are composed of translations of the sources that inspired Shakespeare's plays, along with summaries of the plays and her own critical commentary. Even though her work has received a lack of critical attention over the centuries, *Shakespear Illustrated* was immensely popular in its time and is a notable text for a number of reasons. As is well known, Lennox was the first English woman to have published a critical text taking on Shakespeare's works, therefore making her work crucial to our understanding of the history of Shakespearean scholarship

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[26] Norbert Schurer discusses how Lennox's work--particularly her translations and *Shakespeare Illustrated*--achieved literary fame in Germany. For instance, he states: "Thus, a German would have known as much about Lennox as an English reader in 1819, including the fact that she was a prolific translator," (4). For more, see his work: "Charlotte Lennox in Germany: Female Intellectual Networks and Literary Success." *The Modern Language Review.* Vol. 15, no. 1, 2020.

[27] Even in Mirella Agorni's book *Translating Italy for the Eighteenth Century: British Women, Translation and Travel Writing (1739-1797)*--the only text solely dedicated to women translators of Italian literature, Lennox is only briefly acknowledged as a translator of French.

[28] Carlile, 149.

[29] I pull this claim from Susan Carlile, as noted in her 2015 ASECS (American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies) talk "(Re)Writing Authorial Persona: Charlotte Lennox Unapologetic and Admired."

and women's criticism.[30] Secondly, not only did Lennox identify new sources behind Shakespeare's plays, she also translated some of these original texts into English for the very first time.[31] Her translations include works by Giovanni Boccaccio, Ludovico Ariosto, Giraldi Cinthio, and Matteo Bandello--all major writers of the Italian Renaissance. These translations contributed to the knowledge and spread of Italian literature in England during a time in which Italy's popularity was increasing with the rise of the Grand tour.[32] More particularly, the modifications she makes in her translations focus on rewriting representations of femininity at a time in which the "cult of womanhood" was predominant in social discourse.[33] Despite this, her extensive engagement with translation and the Italian literary tradition has hitherto been neglected in Lennox scholarship.[34] This is

[30] It is important to mention that while Lennox was the first, she was not the only woman critic writing on Shakespeare in the eighteenth century. Fiona Ritche asserts that the rise of Shakespeare in the English literary canon opened up many possibilities for women to enter into the realm of literary criticism, largely because up to this point critical works had dealt with ancient languages which were seldom included in women's education. (1161)

[31] Ritchie, 1163.

[32] While most of these texts were already available to English readers through translation (for example, Sir John Harington's translation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* in 1591 and Herbert Wright's translation of the *Decameron* in 1620), Lennox's position as a woman translator and the fact that she was writing in a time in which mass attention was given to Italian culture makes the cultural impact of her work distinct.

[33] I pull this term from Marlene LeGates. For more, see her article "The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth-Century Thought."

[34] In Guyda Armstrong's 2013 text *The English Boccaccio: A History in Books*, he acknowledges Frances Winwar being the first woman translator of the *Decameron*: "At the start of this project I dreamed of discovering a hitherto-unknown female translator of Boccaccio, a proto-feminist woman of letters in a room of her own, keeping the wolf from the door with her artful rewriting of Boccaccio for Englishmen. [...] The shocking fact remains that, out of the ninety-odd translated books covered in this book, only *one* can be definitively attributed to a female author: the 1930 translation of the *Decameron* by Frances Winmar" (18). While Lennox did not translate the entirety of the *Decameron,* the work she has done is demonstrative of Armstrong's statement and can provoke new conversation about the English reception of Boccaccio in 18th-century England.

surprising given the claims that "Most Lennox scholarship has focused on *The Female Quixote* and *Shakespear Illustrated*,"[35] with the former being considered partly a translation of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and the majority of the latter containing her original translations from Italian and French. It is therefore my objective to shed new light on Lennox's identity as a translator by exploring the ways in which she (re)writes Italian women's stories for an English audience, and how the nuances of her translations both challenge and conform to dominant eighteenth-century ideologies of femininity and nationalism.

The first section provides a brief overview of Anglo-Italian relations in the eighteenth century, highlighting distinct aspects such as the figure of the Italianate villain, the Grand Tour and Briain's colonial pursuits in attempts to provide contextual background to the xenophobic prejudices encountered in *Shakespear Illustrated.* In the second section I explore what the eighteenth-century literary marketplace looked like for British women translators, calling attention to and interrogating the lack of critical attention given to their work by showcasing translation as a distinctly subjective and political act. In the third section I consider Lennox's unique position as a critic of Shakespeare by examining the qualities that made her stand out from her contemporaries and that were potentially a part of *Shakespear Illustrated*'s initial success. The last section of the introduction calls attention to the risk Lennox took in overtly critiquing Shakespeare, not only for her being a woman in a male-dominated space, but for the rise of Bardolatry which emphasized the importance of holding Shakespeare as a symbol of British national identity.

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[35] Bannet, Eve Taylor. "The Theater of Politeness in Charlotte Lennox's British-American Novels." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction.* Duke University Press, vo. 33, no. 1, 1999, pg. 73.

The chapter then moves into the analysis of three of Lennox's translations and commentary that engage with works written by Giraldi Cinthio and Giovanni Boccaccio and Shakespeare's theatrical adaptations of their stories, beginning with an overview of her translation method and the main themes that show up across her work, followed by close textual analyses of each translation. Lastly, beyond considering Lennox's translations from a linguistic perspective, I also consider her critical commentary a work of cultural translation that distinctly exemplifies her affinity to the English national identity. In the early modern era leading up to when Lennox was writing, cultural translation was defined as "when what is adopted from one culture is also adapted to suit the needs of the other…" (19).[36] What came from cross-cultural encounters was representative of the intersection of cultural belief systems and the English perceptions of identities of its "others," within and outside of Europe.[37] This becomes clear when considering Lennox's critical commentary as a form of cultural translation, as her extensive reflections on masculine and feminine Italian mannerisms coincide not with reality, but with the English fabrication of Italian identity. Lennox's translations were engaging with Shakespeare's Italy, and being an Italian in Shakespeare's plays came along with distinct expectations.[38]

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[36]Burke, Peter, Clossey, Luke, and Felipe Fernàndez-Armesto. "The Global Renaissance." *Journal of World History,* vol. 28, no. 1, 2017. pp. 1-30.

[37] Burke, Clossey and Fernández, 6.

[38] Italy and Italianness in Shakespeare's times was predominantly associated with negative qualities. As Manfred Pfister writes in his Introduction to *Performing National Identity: Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions*, "the mountebank theatricality, deceitfulness, and insubstantiality of the Italian--informed and infected much Elizabethan fiction and drama, not excluding Shakespeare's," (17). Also, in Ralf Hertel's article in the same anthology, "'Mine Italian brain 'gan in your duller Britain operate most vilely': *Cymbeline* and the Deconstruction of Anglo-Italian Differences," he discusses that "Italy, or to be precise: Italian behaviour, is like a virus, and as such all the more dangerous or it turns innocent Britons into hosts of disease, into enemies within. Italy

The Italianate villain[39] became a sort of stock character: cunning, wicked, with an unrestrained sexuality and loose morals. These figures make up a culture depicted as running on corruption and tyranny, and manifested within them are the domestic anxieties of an England whose main concern is the global spread of power. And so began the rise of what scholars have referred to as "italophobia," "malign Italicization," and the "deceptive nature of Italianness."[40] By the time that Lennox was writing, the English version of Italy hadn't ameliorated, but the power relations had shifted. Agorni notes that between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, England had reached a level of internal stability and France came to replace Italy as both a threat and a symbolic source for English culture.[41] That does not mean that England was no longer wrapped up in perpetuating hyperbolic representations of Italy and Italians; after all, the eighteenth century was the golden age for the Grand Tour, with Italy being the center stage of the traveler's experience. In fact, this only made the relationship increasingly contradictory. For the English, Italy was both an alluring place of high art and endless possibilities while also a morally corrupt land of unrestrained sexuality and tyranny. With an increase in tourism came the need to distinguish British identity in relation to other cultures. As Agorni notes, the rise of

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corrupts the blood, contaminates and poisons it," (47). For more on the English conceptions of Italy from the Early Modern era to present times, see this anthology.

[39] I pull this term form Barbara Majelli in her article "Riscrivendo 'l'alfieri': Cinthio, Greene e la figura di Iago in *Othello"* in *Intertestualità Shakespeariane: Il Cinquecento italiano e il Rinascimento inglese.* Another popular term for this figure is the Machiavellian Villain.

[40] See: Mahler, Andreas. "Italian Vices: cross-cultural constructions of temptation and desire in English Renaissance drama"; Brown, Pamela, "*Othello* italicized: xenophobia and the erosion of tragedy"; and Benson, Pamela Joseph. "The Stigma of Italy Undone: Aemilia Lanyer's Canonization of Lady Mary Sidney."

[41] Agorni, 105, 107.

"Britishness" as a cultural and political phenomenon brought about the creation of new textual identities and a redefinition of universal subjectivity in England, within which the ideology of femininity and a new ideal of national identity are intertwined.[42] Italy served as the ideal representation of the English "other" and posed as the binary opposite to England, particularly in terms of civility, temperament and femininity. It was precisely in comparisons to an "inferior"[43] culture such as Italy that dominant ideologies concerning domesticity and nationalism could be formed and perpetuated in Britain.

Discourses surrounding the temperament of Italians is concordant with climate theories, characterizing them as jealous, impassioned, and hot-tempered people as a result of the warm southern climate in which they live.[44] These representations of Italianness

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[42] Agorni, 21, 131.

[43] Italy's perceived inferiority came not only from cultural comparisons, but also national and political status. As Robert Castillo demonstrates, the English also exploited the differences in their identity as a nation leading up to the nineteenth century: "Northern Europe between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries underwent a 'civilizing process' characterized by the formation of national states and the creation of complex, coordinated, and geographically extensive economies within and among the individual states. … At the same time, and in inextricable connection with these developments, courtly and bourgeois society embraced and disseminated the ideals of civility and politeness, and these likewise demanded considerable drive-control insofar as they allowed no room for extreme emotionality or violent displays of speech, gesture, and action. During this period, however, Italy achieved neither national political unity under a state, nor a highly differentiated, interdependent, and cooperative society, nor a national standard of civility disseminated from either a single monarchical court or capital or the salons of an influential aristocracy and upper Bourgeoisie," (105).

[44] Montesquieu's influential *The Spirit of Laws* was being circulated in translation in England during the decade in which Lennox is working on *Shakespeare Illustrated*. It is telling to think about his descriptions of the people of southern climates alongside Lennox's characterization of Italians. For example, he states: "If we draw near the South, we fancy ourselves entirely removed from the verge of morality: here the strongest passions are productive of all manner of crimes, each man endeavouring, let the means be what they will, to indulge his inordinate desires," and "With respect to nations, we ought to distinguish between the passions of jealousy, and a jealousy arising from customs, manners, and laws. The one is a hot raging fever, the other, cold, but sometimes terrible, may be joined with indifference and contempt," (296, 343).

coincide with Lennox's investments in participating in the process of defining the English national identity. However, what is to be considered here is the fact that she is doing more than critiquing Shakespeare's decisions; the alterations she makes in her translation also work to redefine the Italian identity as written by Italian authors themselves, further legitimizing and solidifying the validity of the English characterization of Italian nature. As we will see, her translations take issue with and call attention to characterizations of feminine nature and Italian vices. While Lennox's work reflects progressive, proto-feminist strategies that break beyond the boundaries placed upon female representation in literature, her fabrications of the Italian identity adhere to the xenophobic prejudices by now solidified in the English mind. However we cannot fault her too much for the latter, since, as a starving author looking to make a living and enter into the realm of male-dominated Shakespearean criticism, she understood the importance of aligning herself with ideas of national identity and putting herself in conversation with the prominent concerns of her time.[45]

To understand the strategies Lennox adopted in her translations, it is necessary to first consider what the literary environment looked like for a woman translating in the eighteenth century. At the time that Lennox was writing, translation was at the forefront of the literary mind. As Carlile states, "at mid-century 20 to 30 percent of novels were translations," (141). Not only were translations from classical and modern languages being mass produced and circulated in England,[46] the eighteenth century is also the time in which

[45] Carlile, 113.

[46] Translation from the classical languages was still considered an activity of male scholars, while women were commonly translated from modern European languages; however, this allowed them

the earliest modern theoretical works on translation were being produced.[47] Indeed, it is often considered as the "dawn of the modern age in traditional approaches to the rise of phenomena such as the novel, the middle class, the woman writer, and the idea of the British nation," (7-8).[48] As Agorni further addresses in her book, scholarship has demonstrated that translation plays a crucial role at times of transition in cultural systems (33). Despite translation's foundational role in literary history, the works of eighteenth-century women translators have received very little acknowledgement or critical attention. Kate Parker notes that in the *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English (Volume 3: 1660-1790)*[49] only nine of the six hundred pages discuss women translators, "in spite of the editors' assurance that women played active and significant roles in the history of eighteenth-century translation" (131). This lack of scholarship focusing on women as translators is unsurprising; as Agorni notes, it likely stems from the derivative nature of translation, always looming as a shadow underneath the original text (45).[50] This reductive understanding of translation undermines what it meant to translate as a woman in the eighteenth century and the distinct opportunities it bestowed upon them. As translation

to demonstrate their literary and intellectual capabilities as analogous to male translators. For more, see: Staves, Susan. *A Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1660-1789.*

[47] Agorni, 46.

[48] Ibid.

[49] This is the most recent anthology on literary translation into English, published in 2005.

[50] It is also to be mentioned that texts translated by women in the eighteenth century have been notoriously hard to track down, for there are plenty of anonymous translations and as Michaela Wolf points out, "translations produced by women were exclusively distributed through men (editors, booksellers, etc.), (18). Nevertheless, while there are plenty of eighteenth-century translations by women that have been recovered, they are still underexplored in past and current scholarship.

was a prestigious activity in Britain in the eighteenth century[51] and in high demand, it gave women writers another way to expand their career, and, as Wolf states, it was a "form of emancipation of the typical female role in eighteenth-century society," (17).[52] Given that translation was considered to be less meritorious due to its presumed lack of originality,[53] the voices of women translators were masked behind that of the privileged (male) Author. This left open the possibility for women to express themselves more freely than they did when their name was on the front cover. Women translators were afforded the chance to be more inventive in their approach to writing, allowing them to find "creative ways to subvert the original, by inserting their literary, personal or political opinions (some of which went against the grain of prevailing ideologies) into their translations."[54] This is the case with Lennox's Italian translations, for she certainly does not let the original Italian stories travel to English audiences without leaving marks of her authorial investments.

Despite *Shakespear Illustrated* falling into obscurity for nearly two centuries, Lennox's identity as a critic deserves more scholarly attention. History has buried this seminal text underneath her more well-known work as a novelist, yet *Shakespear*

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[51] Agorni, 46.

[52] Wolf, Michaela. "The Creation of A 'Room of One's Own': Feminist Translators as Mediators Between Cultures and Genders." *Gender, Sex and Translation: The Manipulation of Identities,* edited by Jose Santaemilia, Taylor & Francis, 2015.

[53] By this point, there is an understanding that translations in the eighteenth century were in fact *very* original. Agorni calls attention to this when she states that in the eighteenth century, "we cannot assume that a translation came directly from an original, or suppose a translation provided a literal or complete rendering of its source, because it was common enough for translators not only to alter the text but also to add some original work to it," (5). Furthermore, Carlile states that "omitting large sections of the source text and inserting their own commentary without indication, translators often radically changed the meaning of a work and in effect acted as authors themselves," (141).

[54] Agorni, 46.

Illustrated is what brought Lennox to achieve celebrity status in her time. A significant reason for this is that she was able to do something that other Shakespearean critics could not, which was to call attention to his linguistic shortcomings--particularly his lack of knowledge of the Italian language. It is now known that Lennox employed Giuseppe Baretti, an influential Italian figure in the London literary scene, to teach her Italian in exchange for English lessons.[55] She acquired enough of the language in a few months to translate all seven Italian stories that appear in *Shakespear Illustrated.*[56] As we will see in examining her critical commentary, Lennox uses her Italian knowledge to position her judgement not only above Shakespeare's, but also that of contemporary male Shakespearean critics such as Thomas Rymer.[57] Her position as a woman working to make a name for herself in criticism, a male-dominated genre, made it even more essential to distinguish her expertise. Even though she was deemed "an inferior critic," a "mere lady advancing on Shakespeare,"[58] her ability to read and translate from the original Italian gained her undeniable credibility.

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[55] This had been a suspicion, but an uncertainty in Lennox scholarship until Carlile confirmed it in her biography of Lennox in 2018.

[56] Not to mention, Baretti and Lennox went on to have a lengthy professional relationship, Baretti holding her in high esteem. In 1754, shortly after *Shakespear Illustrated* was published, Baretti published "Ode to Charlotte Lennox," where he praises her "sublime mind" and discourages the restrictive influence of Samuel Johnson, which he claims keeps her from further exploring love and passion in her writing. Instead, he encourages her to "follow the Tuscan poet boldly and fearlessly" and to let her language be "equal to the language of Italy." To read more on their relationship and the English translation of "Ode to Charlotte Lennox," see Miriam Rossiter Small's *Charlotte Ramsay Lennox: An Eighteenth Century Lady of Letters*.

[57]This move was highly strategic, for, as Karen Bloom Gevirtz states, "Women as well as men understood the importance of creative an authoritative stance for presenting their ideas, and how the demonstration of critical acumen and the competition to present authoritative commentary became increasingly central to the work of Shakespeare criticism. At the most basic level, male and female authors ostentatiously display their educational credentials" (65).

[58] Doody, Margaret Anne. "Shakespeare's Novels: Charlotte Lennox Illustrated." *Studies in the Novel,* vol 19, no 3, 1987, pg. 297.

What sets Lennox apart from other critics was how overtly critical she was in her commentary on Shakespeare's adaptation of his sources. One of her primary complaints is linguistic: she argues Shakespeare often misread the original sources, an issue that stems from his ignorance of the Italian language. She claims, for instance: "It is very much to be doubted whether or not he understood the Italian and French Languages, since we find he made Use of Translations from both when he borrowed of their Authors" (240).[59] She also challenges his status as a genius by accusing him of lacking originality and bastardizing the (mostly female) characters he is drawing upon from his sources by stripping his heroines of the power, strength, and dignity that was visible in their original counterparts. This stance appears repeatedly throughout her work, some notable comments being: "I think, wherever Shakespeare has invented, he is greatly below the Novelist; since the Incidents he has added, are neither necessary nor probable" (24), "The Character of the Heroine is more exalted in the Original than the Copy" (191), and "But this Play is full of such Absurdities, which might have been avoided, had the Characters as well as the Action been the same with the Novel" (250). While her criticism often states the problems as being with "characters" more generally, it is in her translations that her protests against the mischaracterizations of women come to light.

Taking on the Bard in such a manner was a courageous risk, for even though commentators on Shakespeare's work were still debating his merits at the time she was writing,[60] his status was quickly rising to be emblematic of English literature and national

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[59] For more on Lennox's claims of his misreading of Shakespeare, see Margaret Anne Doody's work.

[60] Gevirtz, 62.

identity. As Bardolatry grew, criticizing Shakespeare was akin to attacking British national culture at the moment it was trying to establish itself and consolidate its imperial policies. Essentially, an attack on Shakespeare was an attack on England.[61] Moreover, in a time when literary judgment was believed to be a task suitable only for men,[62] Lennox's unapologetic critical work was bound to stir up attention in the literary scene. While national adoration of Shakespeare's works prevailed and ultimately impacted *Shakespear Illustrated*'s longevity,[63] not all of the initial attention that Lennox received was negative. In fact, she received a great deal of praise in the years following its publication. Carlile is the first to call attention to the momentary stardom that Lennox acquired after its publication. She states that Lennox's work was thought not only to be "responsible scholarship, but it was also praised for being 'entertaining,'" and that the *Monthly Review* found her "combination of intelligent content and biting criticism amusing and entertaining," (130). Her work also

[61] Carlile sums this up well: "At this moment in English history, there was a far greater need to promote this English genius than to attack him. Greece had Aristotle and Plato; France had Racine, Italy had Ariosto and Dante; Spain had Cervantes. These countries were all perceived as established cultures, whereas England had not yet achieved that status. At a moment when England's imperial ascendancy was making it urgent to establish cultural dominance, Shakespeare had to be without fault" (128).

[62] Terry Castle reflects on this in her article "Women and Literary Criticism," stating that in the eighteenth century "A woman who set forth literary opinions in public was exposed either for her folly or her presumption," (434). For more, see: *A Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (1997).

[63] Scholars note that Lennox's work disappeared from literary conversation in the mid-nineteenth century, not gaining traction again until the later 20th century. As Karen Bloom Gevirtz notes, "Lennox's groundbreaking archival study, for example, was routinely rejected. … Ultimately, eighteenth and nineteenth-century editors and commentators simply let it slip into obscurity, and the twentieth century has seconded the motion. When it is acknowledged, *Shakespear Illustrated* evidently offers proof only of dreadful literary judgment," (69). In the case of *Shakespear Illustrated*'s popularity, the fact that Shakespeare had, as Elizabeth Eger puts it, become "a definitive aspect of national identity" by the early nineteenth century, gives a likely indication as to why its popularity faded away.

captured the eye of various critics abroad--particularly in Germany--where it was better received than at home.[64] Thus, with contemporary Shakespeare critics discussing Lennox's work[65] and popular magazines such as *The Gentleman's Magazine* deeming her work "worthy of significant attention," Lennox had her moment: even for a short period of time, as Carlile notes, she "had made it intellectually acceptable to challenge the genius of a national hero."[66]

It is precisely for this reason that *Shakespear Illustrated* deserves more scholarly attention, not only to understand the work as an essential component of the history of women criticism, but as a complex cultural study. Within the context of this dissertation, Lennox's work sets a foundation for examining the *female* idea of Italy and Italian femininity in a time in which discourses concerning cross-cultural relations and women's' role in regard to nationhood were becoming increasingly central to colonial expansion. Sympathetic representations of women falling victim to the malevolent force of Italian nature will be encountered also in Radcliffe, Dacre, and Eliot; although what makes Lennox a good starting place for this conversation is that *Shakespear Illustrated* provides a meaningful blend of fact and fiction. Lennox's translations serve as a fictional representation of her critical standpoints, thus demonstrating how the positionality and

[64] Carlile, 130. For more information on Lennox's reputation in Germany, see Norbert Schürer's work.

[65] As Carlile notes, Lennox's work inspired Samuel Johnson (her patron) to jumpstart his career in Shakespeare criticism. David Garrick, while critical of her approach, took notes from her work and offered her professional advice. For more on this, see Carlile, 109-136.

[66] Carlile, 129, 130.

historical context of the translator is greatly intertwined with the ways in which the original work is moved across languages and cultures.

We turn to the translations themselves. Lennox translated seven Italian novellas for *Shakespear Illustrated*, and this chapter will be engaging with the three stories which received the most notable changes. There are common threads that run across each of the three stories: all of the main heroines are seriously wronged by men, all are found to be innocent, and all ultimately receive justice for the acts committed against them. However, the scale of these wrongs vary drastically, as well as the justice that the heroines receive, therefore, I will consider how the gravity of their misfortunes affects the way that Lennox translates their stories. Her translation method is subtle, yet meaningful. It consists of producing a mostly "faithful"[67] translation and choosing strategic moments to incorporate her modifications, all of which are consistent: they work to highlight the heroine's virtues[68], emphasize their intelligence, love and devotion, and showcase the depth of their thoughts and the savviness of their strategies in seeking to attain their desires. Simultaneously, she also makes modifications that are less progressive; for example, she censors sexually

[67] As "faithful" is a loaded term in translation studies discourse, I want to emphasize that I am using it to represent "word-for-word" translation.

[68] Clarification is needed on the way that I am invoking the term "virtue" in the context of my analysis. It is clearly loaded with connotations, often pertaining to domestic values and the oppressive masculine idea of how a woman *should* behave. However, I read the original Italian authors' usage of "virtue" aligned with chastity, and Lennox as transforming its meaning in her translation. Her consistent usage of the term for her own heroines throughout her literary career challenges this very conception of its relation to chastity, modesty, domesticity and instead makes it representative of women's intelligence, wit, and resourcefulness. I read her handling of "virtue" in her translation to be the same as how she writes it into her own original works.

explicit scenes, highlights libertinism[69] in the anti-heroine figure and reinforces Italian stereotypes in the original counterpart to the infamous Shakespearean villain, Iago from *Othello*. In considering the nuances of her translation approach, it is important to recall the pressures placed upon women critics trying to make a name for themselves in a patriarchal literary market that emphasized the importance of virtuous domestic womanhood as vital to the integrity of the English nation.[70] Women's criticism consistently conveyed a concern for the moral and social effects of literature on the reading public--as Terry Castle suggests, this could have been due to "lingering professional insecurities," and given the risk of venturing into a male-dominated genre, "women must have felt obliged to emphasize their moral conservatism as a counterbalance" (449).[71] Therefore, in order to gain respect in her already bold attempt at revealing Shakespeare's shortcomings, Lennox could have simply chosen to pick her battles wisely. The reasons behind her contradicting his treatment of female characters has long been debated in Lennox scholarship, the majority being critical. Devoney Looser for example claims that Lennox restricted the power she gave her heroines and that she "voiced frequently rehearsed ideologies of femininity" (92). Judith Hawley contends that "What Lennox means by a heroine is an extremely virtuous, chaste, faithful, loving woman who sticks by her man in accordance with the conventions of romance and

[69] This occurs in Lennox's translation of Matteo Bandello's thirty-sixth tale from his *Novelle*. Although it is not discussed in this chapter, I mention it here as I will explore how libertinism was negatively associated with Italian women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Chapter 2.

[70] For more, see Cohen, Michèle. *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century.* Routledge, 1996, pp. 77-78.

[71] Castle goes on to say that "female critics had also internalized the same sexual stereotypes that affected all women in the period: as members of the (supposedly) more delicate and refined sex, it was their duty, they believed, to uphold cultural standards of modesty and piety," (449).

the standards of proper behavior of the eighteenth century… she polices the maintenance of aesthetic and moral correctness" (296). Despite there being truth to these claims, my idea of Lennox's treatment of women in her translations and criticism aligns with Susan Carlile's claim that "Because of her moment in history, Lennox had to present more polite young women, yet these heroines--unlike many contemporaneous protagonists--were not victims" (7). When confronting *Shakespear Illustrated*, we must constantly remind ourselves of the text's subversive nature: in taking on not only the most idolized figure of English literature and culture, but also dominant male voices in the literary scene, Lennox does an artful job of treading the line between risk-taking and adhering to convention. In so doing, her text was able to achieve the widespread attention that it could not have otherwise drawn if she had taken a more radical stance against the predominant ideologies of her time. Therefore, I aim to demonstrate how we can find meaning and impact even in the subtleties of Lennox's translations, and how she managed to find ways to make her women defy the limitations previously placed upon them.

Lennox begins *Shakespear Illustrated* with her translation of Giraldi Cinthio's[72] "fifth Novel of the eighth Decad" from his collection of novelle, *Gli ecatommiti* (1565), *which* is the source for Shakespeare's play *Measure for Measure.* The original tale recounts the story of

[72] Giovanni Baptista Giraldi (1504-1573), more commonly known by his pen name Cinthio, was a distinguished novelist, poet, scholar, and dramatist of the Italian renaissance. *Gli ecatommiti* was his most well-known collection of works, and he is also recognized for having defined tragicomedy as its own genre. The tragicomedy, defined by Hugh Macrae Richmond as a genre that "tended to deal with serious subjects often based on realistic narratives set in contemporary society, and handled in a sentimental, even melodramatic way, but usually resolved by a happy ending," (468). This genre was widely used by Shakespeare, as we will see in the collection of translations in *Shakespear Illustrated.* For more, see: Richmond, Hugh Macrae. *Shakespeare's Theatre: A Dictionary of His Stage Context.* Continuum, 2002.

Epitia, whose brother Lodovico is sentenced to death for raping a young woman. Epitia tries to go to the Deputy of the city, Juriste, to convince him to spare her brother's life with the promise that he will marry the young woman to preserve her honor. Juriste, who is immediately attracted to Epitia, tells her that he will save her brother only if she sleeps with him. Epitia, initially horrified at the thought of losing her honor, eventually gives in as Lodovico tearfully beseeches her to sacrifice herself for his life with the hopes that Juriste will take her for a wife. She then goes to Juriste and on the condition that he will marry her and free her brother, she goes to bed with him. Upon achieving his desires, instead of abiding by his promises, Juriste sends his guard to murder Lodovico and send his body to Epitia's house. Mortified at the tragedy and betrayal, Epitia goes to the Emperor and demands justice for the loss of her brother and her honor at Juriste's hands. The Emperor sentences Juriste to first marry Epitia to restore her honor, then to lose his head to pay for the murder of Lodovico. However, Epitia, once married to Juriste, experiences a change of heart and begs the Emperor to spare the life of her new husband. Shocked by her compassion, the Emperor grants her wish and demands Juriste to spend his life repaying her goodness, and he lives "happily with her to the End of his Days" (20). Given the abusive treatment of women in the story, Lennox was bound to take issue with the sequence of events. Indeed, when looking at her criticism of Shakespeare's adaptation of the story, this is the only instance in which she expresses disapproval of the original story as well.[73] In fact, she does something which is unique to this particular story in the collection, and that

[73] Lennox does mention that the original story is still better than Shakespeare's version, stating that "the Fable in *Cinthio* is so much better contrived than that of *Measure for Measure*, on which it is founded, the Poet sure cannot be defended, for having altered it so much for the worse.." (27). Nevertheless, she takes issue with the handling of justice in both versions.

is that she writes her own ending to the story which she believes to be more of a "Moral" ending:

> The Lady having performed her Duty, in saving the Life of a Man, who, however unworthy, was still her Husband, should devote herself to a Cloister, for the remainder of her Life; and the wretched Juriste, deprived of his Dignity, in Disgrace with his Prince, and the Object of Universal Contempt and Hatred, to compleat his Miseries, he should feel all his former Violence of Passion for Epitia renewed, and falling into an Excess of Grief, for her Loss, (since the Practice is allowed by Christian Authors) stab himself in Despair. 26

In this version, Lennox restores Epitia's honor by sending her to a nunnery, and in so doing also saves her from the obligation of living the remainder of her life devoted to her abuser. Meanwhile, Juriste gets his just desserts to match his malevolent crimes: the loss of esteem, dignity, love, and ultimately his life. Lennox's alternative ending reveals her own concept of poetic justice: a system that better protects innocent women's reputations and rightfully prosecutes men for their criminal acts. The just treatment of women and condemnation of criminal men was often neglected in literature and critical discourse across Cinthio, Shakespeare, and Lennox's time. Laura Runge addresses this lack of justice in her book *Gender and Language in British Literary Criticism, 1660-1790*:

> Both Shakespeare and the eighteenth-century critical discourse that praised him reproduce interpretations of 'nature'--or justice--skewed to favor the male perspective. The pervasive double standard on sexual behavior for men and for women allows culture to turn a blind eye on male 'indescretion,' and eighteenth-

> century literature is replete with examples of abandoned women whose seducers eventually enter successful marriages (144).

Lennox's criticism challenges the hegemonic discourse of the masculine literary tradition. She gives readers the chance to re envision the story through the female perspective, confronting "male indiscretion" and calling attention to necessary consequences for unjust actions.

While Lennox could imagine changes that would give Epitia a more "suitable" ending, she could not make such drastic changes to the sequence of events within the translation itself. Therefore, her focus shifted to components where there was more room for manipulation: female characterization. Another aspect of this first story that makes it unique from the others that follow is that Lennox actually credits Shakespeare for his adaptation of the heroine of the story, Epitia (who becomes Isabella in *Measure for Measure*). She states:

> The Character of Isabella in the Play seems to be an Improvement upon that of Epitia in the Novel; for Isabella absolutely refuses, and persists in her Refusal, to give up her Honour to save her Brother's life; whereas Epitia, overcome by her own Tenderness of Nature, and the affecting Prayers of the unhappy Youth, yields to what her Soul abhors, to redeem him from a shameful Death. (32)

This condemnation of Epitia reveals Lennox as a product of her time, for she is conditioned by eighteenth-century ideologies of femininity which prioritize a woman's reputation over everything. Given that "the integrity of the English nation rests on *virtuous* domestic

womanhood,"[74] representation and recognition of women in literature who uphold these ideals was essential to maintaining the status quo. While a woman is expected to be tender and obedient, she should always be *more* solicitous to protect her honor. It is in the characterization of Epitia that Lennox finds agency in translating, for her modifications reflect a subtle process of anglicization as she makes Epitia more respectable and suitable for English (female) readers. And while she does elevate Epitia's concern for her virtue, she also makes her into a stronger, more learned heroine that one would expect from Lennox's own heroines. Her treatment of Epitia serves as a telling example of how her work as a translator consistently treads the line between progressiveness and conformity.

The first diversion that Lennox takes from the original is in the characterization of Epitia, which remains consistent throughout the entirety of her translation. Her introduction of Epitia places an emphasis on her intellect, bringing this element of her character to the center of the reader's attention. Cinthio's original reads:

> La quale, oltre ch'era ornata di estreme bellezza, haveva *una dolcissima maniera di favellare*, e portava seco una presenza amabile, accompagnata da donnesca honestà," (418, italics mine).[75]

Meanwhile, Lennox's version reads as follows:

> Nature had not only been lavish in the Graces she had bestowed on her Form, but endowed her also with *a most excellent Understanding*, which had been well

[74] Cohen, 78. Italics mine.

[75] "She, who besides being adorned with extraordinary beauty, had a very sweet manner of speaking and brought with her an amiable presence accompanied by womanly honesty."

> improved by the Study of Philosophy, her Father having spared no Experience in the Education of his Children. (4, italics mine)

In Lennox's translation, there is much less of a focus on Epitia's beauty and womanly nature than is emphasized in the original--rather, she removes the original Epitia's "sweet manner of speaking," "loveable presence," and "womanly honesty," and replaces it with "a most excellent Understanding." Right from the moment we meet Epitia, Lennox is conditioning readers to value her mind over all else. Another important modification that she makes which isn't evident in the passages above is her disruption of the original order of facts presented to the reader in the introduction of Epitia. The last portion of the sentence, mentioning Epitia's "Study of Philosophy '' and education is also present in the original version, only it is further down and placed after the explanation of her pain upon hearing her brother's sentence and her deliberation about how to help him. While Cinthio uses her philosophy education merely as a justification for her ability to stand up to Juriste, Lennox decides to incorporate it into the first sentence which introduces Epitia to readers. This placement is meaningful, for while Cinthio's version presents her studies as background knowledge, Lennox brings it to the forefront, establishing her status as a learned woman.

This distinct attention to her smarts does not end here; there are multiple other instances in Lennox's translation which distinguish Epitia from her original counterpart. For instance, when Epitia presents Juriste with various reasons for saving Lodovico's life, Cinthio's writes his reaction to her as:

> Onde se ne rimase, e dalla gratia del favellare di Epitia, e *dalla rara bellezza*, come vinto, e *tocco da libidinoso appetito*, voltò la mente à commettere in lei quello errore, per lo quale haveva condannato Vico alla morte (419, italics mine).[76]

Lennox translates this as follows:

> Juriste, whole subdued by the Charms of her Person, *and the uncommon Strength of her Understanding*, in a Youth so blooming, resolved, if possible, to win her to his Desires, and commit the same Fault with her, for which he had condemned her Brother to die," (6, italics mine).

The contrast between the two passages here is starker than the previous ones: Cinthio's passage contains greater sensual undertones, and the reader understands that Juriste is seduced by Epitia's beauty and graceful speech, which awakens his sexual appetite. Lennox removes the blatant sexual attraction in her version and instead writes that her Juriste is overtaken by her charms *and* her unexpected intelligence (unexpected due to her age and sex), and it is this that feeds his desire for her. Lennox is demonstrating that intelligence in a woman is more desirable than beauty and gracefulness, and the fact that she writes Epitia's mind as more impactful than a man's libidinous appetite gives her an intellectual agency that the original Epitia does not have.

Another instance where we see a male character reacting to her intelligence is in her conversation with her brother, when he is trying to convince her to sacrifice her honor in order to save him from the death penalty. Cinthio's version simply reads:

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[76] "And so, he remained overcome by the grace of Epitia's speech and her rare beauty, and touched by a lustful appetite, he turned his mind to committing the same error with her for which he had condemned Vico to death."

> ….hò errato, il confesso, *Tu Sorella mia*, che puoi correggere l'error mio… (433, italics mine).[77]

Rather in Lennox's translation, Lodovico first says to her:

> I have erred I confess; *you by your superior Wisdom* may correct my errors… (10, italics mine).

While Cinthio's text emphasizes familial attachment as a means to soften Epitia, Lennox rather chooses to focus on the crucial role of her intellect to the story, and she reminds readers that Lodovico's life is at its mercy. In the same moment, Lodovico goes on to shower his sister with more compliments; Cinthio's original reads:

> Tu bellissima sei, ornata di tutte quelle gratie, che à Gentildona può dar la Natura, sei gentilesca, e avenete, h*ai una mirabile maniera di favellare*, il che fà, che no pure tutte queste cose insieme, ma ciascuna per sè, ti può far cara… (422, italics mine).[78]

In Lennox's translation, he states:

> Nature has made your Person consummately beautiful, and *blessed you with an Understanding superior to all your Sex*; every female Grace is yours, and *every masculine Virtue*, tempered with a Sweetness which gives you irresistible Attractions, (10, italics mine).

Again, Lennox has replaced what was originally "an admirable manner of speaking" to "an Understanding," and she again emphasizes that the superiority of her mind distinguishes

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[77] "I have erred, I confess, you my sister who can correct my error…"

[78] "You are beautiful, adorned with all of those graces that Nature can give to a Lady. You are noble and charming, and you have an admirable manner of speaking, which means that not all of these things together, but each one for itself, can make you beloved."

her not only from her brother, but from all other women.[79] And while we see a description of her "female Grace" in both versions, Lennox chooses to add that Epitia also has "every masculine Virtue," which both elevates her reputation over the male characters and gives her a physical and moral prestige not usually afforded to female characters in Cinthio nor Shakespeare's time.[80] It is important to take notice of the moments in which these shifts of feminine characterization are happening in Lennox's translation: in both instances, Epitia is being pressured by men to sacrifice her body and honor for their benefit. Perhaps Lennox could not accept Epitia being a vehicle of male salvation and only accredited for her "womanly" beauty and charm; perhaps she thought that words could do her justice in a

[79] While this may seem counterproductive in that it singles out Epitia as an exceptional woman rather than elevating womanhood at large, I postulate that Lennox does so in consideration of her audience. In order to make Epitia more appealing of a heroine, she had to be distinguished from what might have been assumed about Italian femininity in order to better align with what Marlene LeGates has termed "the cult of the virtuous woman" or the "new heroine" which was dominant in eighteenth-century thought. LeGates states that "the idea of the morally superior woman contributed an ideological prop to the family seen as a means of social consolidation in an increasingly class-conscious society" and that the new heroine's "appeal and strength ostensibly lie in their virtue," (26, 29). Furthermore, this new characterization better reflected the trope often repeated throughout eighteenth-century novels, "the encounter between a sexually aggressive male and the innocent, superior female," (27). Lennox's additions were therefore likely to have made British audiences more sympathetic towards Epitia's actions and they would also have made her retreat to the nunnery at the tale's conclusion more believable.

[80] While this could suggest that the ideality of a woman is dependent on her having a masculine aspect, it should be considered that Lennox's characterizations depart from the cultural expectations of women in medieval and Renaissance Europe, which were more limiting. Carol Levin writes in her book *Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* that "the culture stereotyped women as inferior and childlike both in their intellect and their being, and consequently, as essentially different from men," (14). The aforementioned "Cult of Womanhood" in the eighteenth century brought about a shift in representations of women's intellectual capabilities; although LeGates states that "Traditional controls not only contribute to our heroines' virtue; they are strengthened by it. While the woman is allowed moral superiority … her virtue must be subordinate ultimately to male authority," (30). I would argue for a more optimistic reading of Lennox's emphasis on Epitia containing *also* masculine virtues: her alternate ending allows Epitia to escape the "traditional controls" that would have downplayed her intellectual abilities and returned the story to patriarchal order, for her decision to retire to a nunnery gives her agency over her future rather than being forced to live under Juriste's control.

way that the story does not. Doody discusses some of the problems that Lennox had with Shakespeare's characterization with women: "Charlotte Lennox's fervent favoring of 'poetical Justice' in *Shakespeare Illustrated* seems closely related to her feeling that Shakespeare sometimes lets the men off very lightly, whereas if anyone gets punished or hurt or pushed out of our view it is the woman, who should be the heroine but who is given such an unheroic part to play" (306). I add that her translations reveal that the issues she took with female characterization did not end with Shakespeare; despite her favoring of the way the original heroines were written, Lennox still clearly thought that there was work to be done to give the women in these original Italian stories the credit they deserve. These minute additions and modifications instill a greater sense of heroinism in the female characters that establishes their moral and intellectual superiority over the men who wrong them. Furthermore, it could be argued that the fact that she was translating from a different language and culture allowed her the space to take these creative liberties without the threat of further backlash against her name as an author.

Increasing Epitia's heroinism, however, also meant increasing her solicitude to protect her honor. For a British audience to admire Epitia and empathize with her pain, she had to exude the innate virtue expected of a woman in the eighteenth century. Lennox does this in her translation in two ways at the most crucial moment of the story when Epitia's honor is put to the test: by first exaggerating the manipulations of Juriste, then the reaction of Epitia to his words. When Epitia returns to Jursite to hear of his decision concerning Lodovico's sentence, in Cinthio's version Juriste tells her:

> Egli è vero, che quanto à te, alla quale *desidero di far cosa grata*, quando tu (poi che tanto ami tuo Fratello) vogli essere contenta di compiacermi di te, io son disposto di fargli gratia della vita, e mutare la morte in pena men grave," (421).[81]

In Lennox's translation, he tells her:

> There is indeed one Way, and but one way, by which you may save your Brother; *I love you, charming Epitia*, give me possession of your Person, and I will change your Brother's sentence to a Punishment less than Death; *if you love him you will not let scruple to make this small Sacrifice to save his Life, which I am resolved not to spare on any other Terms*, (8, italics mine).

In Lennox's version, Juriste expresses his love for her--this is not the case in the original version, in which he simply tells Epitia that he would like to do something to express his gratitude. Given that the terms on which Epitia was willing to give up her honor were that Juriste make her his wife, this expression of love is significant in giving Epitia more of a reason to believe he will follow through with his promise. Cinthio's version shows no inclination of Juriste's desire to be romantically involved with her outside of satisfying his sexual desire. Lennox has also added more manipulative language to Juriste's speech by challenging the quantity of Epitia's love for her brother, minimizing the pain of sacrificing her body to him, and emphasizing this as the only possibility for his salvation. In Cinthio, Juriste simply expresses that if she is willing to go to bed with him, he will lighten the punishment. Overall, it is clear that Lennox aggrandizes Juriste's manipulations to lighten

[81] "And it is true that as for you, to whom I wish to do something grateful, when you (since you love your brother very much) are willing to let me enjoy you, I am disposed to give him the grace of life, and change death to a punishment less severe."

the condemnation of Epitia's decision to sacrifice her honor. While she did condemn the "Tenderness" of Cinthio's Epitia in her decision to follow through with Juriste's wishes, she managed to build a case for her compliance to his wishes that increases the readers' understanding of her decision.

Even more telling is how Lennox translates Epitia's reaction to Juriste upon hearing his proposal. In Cinthio's original, it merely reads:

"Divenne tutta fuoco nel viso à queste parole Epitia," (421)[82].

Lennox's translation presents a great deal of elaboration:

> The fair Face of Epitia, which, at the Beginning of this Speech, had been overspread with a languid Paleness, glowed with a rosy Blush at the infamous Conclusion; her Eyes, which had been filled with Tears, now darted forth Rays of mingled Rage and Disdain, and that sweet Voice, that before only uttered the most persuasive Accents, was now changed to a severe and haughty Tone. (8)

This is the moment that Lennox diverges the most from the original text, adding a substantial selection of her own words. Instilling her heroine with a much greater passion in her reaction highlights two primary elements in Epitia's character: it demonstrates how highly she values her honor as well as her fearlessness in switching off the "womanly" facade to defend herself. Cinthio's Epitia does visibly get angry, but this is written more as an afterthought in the middle of the conversation. Meanwhile Lennox purposefully pauses to express the transformation in Epitia's demeanour to express the extent of her disapproval against his attack on her honor. The authorial liberties Lennox takes here are

[82] "Epitia became all fire in her face at these words." *Note about the translations*: All English translations from the original texts are my own.

unsurprising, given that, in the eighteenth century, women were considered a source of "moral authority and domestic peace."[83] Highlighting this assertiveness regarding Epitia's honor makes her sacrifice of it more digestible to her British readers, for while she couldn't change the outcome of Epitia's actions, she *could* instill her with a sense of familial duty and moral responsibility to elevate her respectability from the perspective of English readers. Overall, Lennox's first translation in *Shakespear Illustrated* establishes her presence and lays the groundwork for us to conceptualize her distinct investments in translating these classic tales. While she isn't able to shift the sequence of events within Epitia's tale, Lennox's modifications suggest she felt sympathy towards the heroine's unfortunate circumstances. This is reflected in her translations that follow, albeit to different extents, as her modifications encourage readers to consider the women's subjectivity as they navigate threatening circumstances imposed on them by lustful, power-hungry men.

In her translation of Boccaccio's "Ninth Novel of the Second Day" from the *Decameron*, the source story for Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, we encounter a new style of intervention in which Lennox takes more liberty in adding and removing content from the original tale. Much like Epitia's tale, her changes all work towards the same objective of enhancing the heroine's characterization. The novella recounts an unfortunate bet that an Italian merchant Bernabò makes with another merchant Ambrogiuolo. It begins when Bernabò overhears Ambrogiuolo stating that all women are unfaithful and incapable of resisting their desires. Bernabò, believing his own wife, Zinevra, to be loyal and virtuous, challenges Ambrogiuolo to try and tempt her into committing an act of infidelity. When

[83] Runge, 122.

Ambrogiuolo finds a way to cheat and deceive Bernabò in order to make him believe he succeeded, the poor merchant loses his money and orders his wife to be killed. Zinevra escapes, disguises herself as a man, and begins to serve the Sultan. One day, she comes across Ambrogiuolo and leads him to confess his devious act, thus condemning him to death and allowing her to return to her husband, where they live the rest of their lives in riches. If we focus on Zinevra, the story reflects upon the wit and virtue of a woman who is capable of overcoming the patriarchal hierarchy that forces her into such an unfortunate situation; however, in Boccaccio's version, her purpose remains that of a dutiful wife, and her story exists as a subplot in relation to the triumph of her husband. Despite her being the heroine of the tale and using her dexterity to trick Ambrogiuolo into confessing his wrongdoing, she is still overshadowed by her male counterparts. Lennox therefore sets out to increase her visibility and the readers' consideration of her success.

First, considering her critical commentary on how Shakespeare transforms the short story into his play *Cymbeline*, Lennox certainly does not begin her criticism with praise: "He copied all those Circumstances from Boccaccio, that were necessary to serve his Design; but he has entirely changed the Scene, the Characters, the Manners; and that he has done so greatly for the worse, is I think easy to prove," (155). Where we find her criticism to align with her modifications in her translation is yet again in Shakespeare's treatment of the "Character" and "Manner" of the heroine, in his version named Imogen. The first, most obvious change deals with her social status: Shakespeare has transformed the figure of a merchant's wife to a "great Princess" who marries the lowborn Posthumus (Bernabò) against her father's will. This shift changes the progression and the ultimate triumph of the original Zinevra, who gains riches and a respected reputation as a result of her

autonomous, courageous acts; instead, Imogen is reunited with Posthumus, forgiven by her father, and returned to her royal privilege. Lennox is particularly critical of Imogen's reactions to the threats and accusations against her:

> One would imagine, that full of a just Disdain for so vile and scandalous a Suspicion, the Pride of injured Virtue, affronted Dignity, and Rage of ill requited Love, would have carried her back to Court, there by disclaiming all future Faith and Tenderness for the unworthy Posthumus, restore herself to the Affection of her Father, and all the Rights of her royal Birth. No, she only weeps, complains, reproaches a little, and then resolves to dress herself in the Habit of a Boy, and wander a-foot to procure a Service (162-163).

According to Lennox, Shakespeare weakens the nature of his heroine. Given the chance to assert her positional power and requite the cruel accusations against her by leaving Posthumus and returning directly to the throne, she is overtaken by feminine sensibility. Lennox states that this drastic departure from Boccaccio's original plotline render these incidents "absurd, unnatural, and improbable," making the overall sequence of events "ridiculous to the last Degree" (163). She consistently takes issue with the blatant disregard for the reputation of his female characters across Shakespeare's renditions. As Doody writes, "He tends too often, in her opinion, to diminish women into lovesick minxes or neurotic weaklings, taking from them the power and the moral independence which the old romances had given them. His misreading of the stories means he tends to humiliate his women" (306). While I agree with Doody's contention, I would be hesitant to claim that Lennox entirely approved of the women's' representation in the original tales. The following modifications will prove that she was indeed not defending Boccaccio's version.

As Lennox did not find what she wanted as a reader in neither Shakespeare nor Boccaccio's versions, she set out to create a version of her own that achieves a high level of fidelity to the original Italian with only a slight shift of focus. To the knowledge of the critics and readers of her time, Lennox produced an accurate translation of Boccaccio's original tale, when in fact her subtle changes actively work against the hegemonic focus on the masculine and towards a new vision of the feminine. For the very first time, the courageous heroine is able to be seen as more than just a victim of Ambrogiuolo's machinations.

While Lennox makes less frequent modifications in this translation than the previous one, I postulate that they have a greater impact on shifting the meaning of the story as a whole. This could very well be the result of the fact that Zinevra experiences not only a threat against her honor like Epitia, but she is also almost murdered for a crime she did not commit and is forced into hiding in disguise to escape her husband's wrath. Given Lennox's tendency to "assume a close identification with the female characters throughout the text,"[84] it is unsurprising that the more wronged the heroine of the story, the more she inserts herself into her translation to work against what she perceives as unfair treatment of women characters. Considering the formal style of this translation in comparison with that of Cinthio's tale, Lennox stays more faithful to Boccaccio's original version when considering the structure and lexicality of her translation. Most of the text is translated word for word, with only stylistic changes made to transform the fourteenth-century Italian vernacular into the literary language of eighteenth-century England so as to render it clear and accessible for her audience. Her overall fidelity to the original is what would

[84] Runge, 147.

have made her alterations even more difficult to detect; however, there are two distinct instances which contain subtle, yet powerful tweaks in the translation which provide another window through which we can envision Boccaccio's original tale. The first moment to be taken into consideration is when Bernabò is trying to convince Ambrogiuolo of his wife's fidelity to defend her against the claim that all women succumb to their desires. The original text reads as follows:

> Io son mercatante e non filosofo, e come mercatante risponderò. E dico che io conosco ciò che tu dì potere avvenire alle stolte, nelle quali non è alcuna vergogna;ma quelle che savie sono hanno tanta sollecitudine dello onor loro, che elle diventan forti più che gli uomini, che di ciò non si curano, a guardarlo; e di queste così fatte è la mia. (186)[85]

Lennox's translation is notably longer, as she takes the liberty to include her own additions to the passage:

> I am a Merchant, and not a Philosopher, *therefore I will not pretend to reason with you*; but this I must say, that those Women who are unchaste, are so, because they have no Sense of Shame, and *are indifferent about the World's Opinion*; but Women *who are wise and virtuous*, are so sollicitous to preserve their Honour, that they become *stronger* than Men, who take no Care to restrain their *irregular Appetites*; and my Wife is of the Number of those Women who are *watchful over their Appetites; and sollicitous to preserve their Honour* (138, italics mine).

[85] "I am a merchant and not a philosopher, and I will give you a merchant's answer. I acknowledge that what you say can happen to foolish women who have no shame at all; but there are those who are wise and are so solicitous for their honor that they become stronger than men who do not care to look after their own; and this is what my wife is made of."

Generally, her translation contains a stronger focus on the perception of the female figure, and she highlights the feminine features that are most treasured in the eighteenth century. In the original text, Boccaccio only uses the word "honor" once to depict the idea of a pure woman; in Lennox's translation, there is a repetition of these empowering words such as "wise," "virtuous," and "Honor," therefore shifting the focus towards a stronger depiction of admirable feminine qualities. In the original, the comparison between female modesty and the lack of solicitude is subtle and brief; in Lennox's translation, her language regarding the comparison is much more compelling, as she refers to the honorable woman as stronger than a man, exemplifying her fortifying respectability. Lennox is also more critical towards the male figure: instead of simply stating that he has "no such solicitude," she further states that they have no care to restrain their "irregular appetites." We also see at the end of the passage that Lennox elongates Bernabò's reference to his own wife and reiterates her innate sense of virtue through highlighting her capability of watching over her appetite, and she ends the passage with the repetition of the key phrase describing Zinevra as one of the women who is "sollicitous to preserve their honor." Through modifying the language of this telling moment of the story, Lennox successfully shifts the focus away from Bernabò and Ambrogiuolo and characterizes the female figure in the story, thus giving Zinevra a sense of identity outside of her domestic role. It is also interesting that Lennox decided to translate the initial words of Bernabò in a way that demeans the character of Ambrogiuolo, as she writes "I will not pretend to reason with you" instead of simply "I give a merchant's answer." This suggests a preference to give Bernabò a sense of moral superiority over Ambrogiuolo, therefore placing the character who praises the figure of the strong woman above those who demean women through sexualizing them. These modifications are

demonstrative of what Antoine Berman[86] has termed ennoblement, which deals with making stylistic changes in the text in order to heighten its elegance and meaning. Lennox both expands on one of the most telling speeches in the short story on the defense of women and ennobles the language through rewriting a section to further idolize the figure of the virtuous women, which, according to the characteristics of ennoblement, enhances the overall "meaning" of Boccaccio's original text (Berman, 246). The fact that Lennox chose to elaborate on this specific passage gives a compelling message: she puts the praise of women in the mouth of the male protagonist of the story, as he is insulting masculine behavior in a way that strengthens the conception of the honor and ethics of women. Lennox's modifications bring the reader's focus to the importance of female agency in a patriarchal society, thus eloquently fitting in with eighteenth-century ideologies of femininity in Britain.

The other considerable change that Lennox makes to the original in her translation is the point at which she ends her version of the story. The end of Boccaccio's original story reads:

> Ambrogiuolo il dì medesimo che legato fu al palo e unto di mele, con sua grandissima angoscia dalle mosche e dalle vespe e da'tafani, de'quali quel paese è copioso molto, fu non solamente ucciso, ma infino all'ossa divorato; le quali bianche rimase e a'nervi appiccate, poi lungo tempo, senza esser mosse, della sua malvagità

[86] Antoine Berman's article "Translation and Trials of the Foreign" has become canonical in Translation Studies. In this article, he discusses what he terms "deforming tendencies" which bring the translated text closer to the receiving culture at the expense of the "foreign qualities" in the original version. The two tendencies that we see in Lennox's translation are expansion, referring to the tendency of translators to lengthen the text which translating from the source language, and ennoblement, which is discussed above.

> fecero a chiunque le vide testimonianza. E così rimase lo 'ngannatore a piè dello 'ngannato (196-197).[87]

This section is almost completely absent in Lennox's translation; instead, she dedicates one line to Ambrogiuolo's death and ends the story with the preceding paragraph, where it discusses the Sultan's gift to Zinevra and Bernabò:

> […] and making a magnificent Feast, he publicly bestowed the highest Honours and Applauses on Zinevra for her Courage and Virtue, and presented her Husband and her with ten thousand Pistoles more, giving them Leave to depart, and a Ship to carry them back to Genoa: where they soon after arrives, extremely rich, and were received with great Honours by their Citizens; especially Madonna Zinevra, who had been thought dead by every one, and who, from that Time till her Death, lived in the highest Reputation for Courage, Constancy, and *Virtue* (153-154, italics mine).

Lennox's decision to end the story at this point fits well with her other alterations. The last word--unsurprisingly--is "virtue," thus leaving the reader with the portrait of an exemplary woman who has overcome male superiority. Boccaccio's version ends by returning to the initial plot between Ambrogiuolo and Bernabò, making a point that the latter is the one who ends up victorious. In Lennox's version, the success of Bernabò and fate of Ambrogiuolo lose their importance; instead, it highlights Zinevra's ardent "courage" and "virtue," attributes that earn her a life of luxury. Her story ends with the female character's victory over the ignorance and deceitfulness of men, thus repositioning her to the center of

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[87] "On that same day Ambrogiuolo was tied to a pole and anointed with honey, greatly anguished by the flies, wasps and horseflies of which the country is very abundant. He was not only killed, but devoured to the bone; the white bones remained with the nerves stuck to them for a long time without being moved to serve as a testimony of his wickedness to all who saw them. And so remained the deceiver at the feet of the deceived."

attention and leaving readers to reconsider the role of the heroine in comparison to Shakespeare's rendition of the tale. Thinking back to Lennox's criticism of the way in which Shakespeare writes Imogen, this modification becomes even more meaningful. Given her insistence on the significance of the plot and its relation to the "way characters are handled and to their significance,"[88] we can interpret her decision to completely cut out the ending of the story as a strategy to increase the significance of Zinevra's role and ultimate success in the story. Furthermore, Susan Green writes that "unlike her male colleagues, Lennox's engagement with Shakespeare's text enacts a response to cultural authority that demonstrates her society's inability to recognize, identify, or discuss the cultural significance of female abjection" (228). While she is confronting this head on within her critical commentary, her translation of Zinevra also actively resists the female abjection to which she is calling attention. By shifting the focus from masculine to feminine triumph, she is rewriting women's' place in Italian literary history in order to push Britain to think about its own.

The last translation that I will consider in this chapter--that of Cinthio's "Novella VII, Deca III," from *Gli ecatommiti*, the source behind Shakespeare's *Othello*--is the most multi-faceted of the three, for it reflects not only Lennox's investment in female characterization but also eighteenth-century conceptions of Italianness. There are not many differences between Cinthio's original tale and Shakespeare's play, as Lennox states: "The Fable Shakespear found already formed to his Hands, some few Alterations he has made in it…" (125). Shakespeare keeps the actions of the original, yet adds some of his own and makes

[88] Doody, 302.

changes to the array of characters.[89] Othello is the one who is most transformed by Shakespeare, his character outline being "entirely the Poet's own," (Lennox, 133). Shakespeare takes the Moor who in Cinthio's text had no distinct ranking and was known to be a cruel and cunning person and turned him into his Othello, coming from a line of kings and of an amiable and charming disposition. This could have made him more adaptable for the stage; as Lennox postulates: "Such a Character married to the fair Desdemona must have given Disgust on the Stage; the Audience would have been his Enemies, and Desdemona herself would have sunk into Contempt for chusing him," (134). The other main characters are closer copies of their counterparts in Cinthio's original. In writing Iago's character, he takes closely from the original Lieutenant, only making his jealousy even more pertinent, which will be explored later in this chapter. Disdemona, besides a slight change in the spelling of her name, is also presented the same as she is in the original tale.

Disdemona clearly is the most wronged heroine of the three women examined in this chapter, for not only does she fall unknowingly into a man's scheme (like Epitia) and is wrongfully accused (like Zinevra), but she also becomes the ultimate victim as she loses her life at the hands of masculine pride and jealousy. Although she couldn't change Disdemona's fate, Lennox could make minute changes to give more voice to *her* story to offset the focus on the masculine perspective. Close textual analysis of Lennox's translation reveals the subtle, albeit meaningful modifications that she made that call attention to Disdemona's subjectivity, developing her character more than the original and showcasing

[89] While he also makes changes to Cassio and Emilia's characters, I only call attention to the main characters here as they are the ones with whom I engage throughout my analysis.

her interiority. Furthermore, I read Lennox's critical commentary of this story as the most overt act of cultural translation in *Shakespear Illustrated*, as she draws extensively on the topics of race and Italian identity in drawing comparisons between the original and Shakespeare's adaptation, which is reflected by her exaggeration of Italianness in her translation. Taking these tendencies into consideration, this section will examine the ways in which the characters of Disdemona and the Lieutenant both go against and are defined by their Italian nature as understood in English terms. Lennox's attention to Disdemona's individuality and Italian characterization of the Lieutenant work to enhance the female voice in Italian literature while also separating England from the perceived vices of Italian nature.

Lennox's work not only exemplifies the tensions between England and Italy, but how the specific role of Venice, despite it being a predominant European capital, is representative of the dangers of vicinity to the foreign, rendering it even more of a cultural "other" to the English nation. *La Serenissima*[90] was a distinct cultural entity in of itself as the cosmopolitan center of the Mediterranean for commercial trade and the European gateway to the East. By the time *Othello* was being performed, England was in the midst of a fierce economic rivalry with Venice in both shipping and the professional stage.[91] Not only was it the capital of pleasure and sexual desire, it was a place of cultural intersections where Christians, Turks, and Moors lived together.[92] John Drakakis states that "the public sphere

[90] La Serenissima, meaning "the most serene," was the name given to Venice when it was a large trading empire (which was declining at the time Lennox was writing).

[91] Brown, Pamela, 145.

[92] See Drakakis, John. "Shakespeare and Venice." in *Italian Culture in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries.*

in *Othello* is a projection of Venice's internal divisions; occupying, and threatening to expand, a contested geographical space, they also constitute an internalized threat to the psychic life of the republic itself" (185). With England's escalating suspicion towards foreigners, Venice served as the ideal backdrop for the English stage since it could be used to explore the characteristics of "others" while also representing the dangers of intercultural mingling.[93]

Taking all of this into account, we return to Lennox's work. The most frequent and substantial alterations that Lennox makes in her translation deal with the characterization of Disdemona and her interactions with other characters, most specifically the Moor. Interestingly, she is the only character in Cinthio's original who is named--the rest of the characters go by their position, with the exception of Othello who is referred to simply as "the Moor." Although while in Cinthio's version, she is more often referred to as "the woman" or "the wife," Lennox replaces all of the descriptive terms with her actual name for almost the entirety of the piece, calling attention to her individuality. From the moment we meet her, she is simultaneously marked as Italian and distinguished apart from this identity. When readers are initially introduced to Disdemona in Cinthio's original, it reads as follows:

> Avvenne che una virtuosa donna, di meravigliosa bellezza, Disdemona chiamata, tratta non da appetito donnesco, ma dalla virtù del Moro, s'innamorò di lui, ed egli,

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[93] Pamela Ann Brown nicely synthesizes this tension: "Hatred of outsiders was deep and abiding in England under Elizabeth and James. New reports of strange cultures over the seas led to an 'excess of distrust' of all foreigners, near or far, because they openly or covertly subverted 'the familiar symbolic universe.'" (146).

> vinto dalla bellezza e dal nobile pensiero della donna, similmente di lei si accese (572).[94]

Lennox's version of this passage reads:

> A Venetian Lady of wonderful Beauty, named Disdemona, not *subdued* by the *irregular* Sallies of a female Appetite, but struck with the great Qualities and noble Virtues of the Moor, became *violently* enamoured of him; and he, no less charmed with *the Greatness of her Mind,* than with the extreme Beauty of her Person, *burnt in the most ardent Flames for her* (101, italics mine).

The first thing to take notice of is how she ignites her language with the addition of impassioned words and emphasis, such as "violently," "burnt," and "most ardent flames," which approximates both Disdemona and the Moor by aligning them with the qualities of a warm southern temperament. Lennox has also distinctly marked Disdemona as Venetian, which could be understood to be simply for clarity, but then one must consider the first attribute mentioned in relation to her character, which has to do with her appetite. Cinthio's original does state that Disdemona is "not drawn by a female appetite"; however, Lennox differentiates her from qualities attributed to Italian femininity with her inclusion of the words "subdued" and "irregular." The reader is able to make this connection in her critical commentary, when she is discussing the nature of Disdemona's attraction to the Moor, she states:

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[94] "It happened that a virtuous lady of marvelous beauty, named Disdemona, drawn not by the female appetite but by the Moor's virtue, fell in love with him, and he who was overcome by the beauty and nobile character of the woman, similarly was ignited by love for her."

> Such affections are not very common indeed; but a few Instances of them prove that they are not impossible; and even in *England* we see some very handsome Women married to Blacks, where their Colour is less familiar than at *Venice;* besides the *Italian* Ladies are remarkable for such Sallies of irregular Passions. (131)

Thus, in Lennox's version, it is more than just a "female appetite"; it refers to the carnal attraction of Italian women towards Moors. While she does call attention to the possibility of interracial marriage in England, she juxtaposes this against the situation of Venice by alluding to its geographical position, since, being closer to foreign lands, it is a European capital defined in terms of its cross-cultural collisions. While she has clearly "othered" Italian women in terms of their sexuality, Lennox separates Disdemona from this characterization and adds layers of complexity to both her love for the Moor as well as her individual persona. This first becomes evident in the way she translates the Moor's love for her, as she inverts the order of her qualities and places her mind before her beauty, not only adding superlatives to emphasize her greatness, but also stating that they are of equal value in the Moor's eyes as she states that he is "no less" attracted to the greatness of her mind than her extreme beauty. The fact that the Moor is at the center of this introduction to Disdemona's character is exemplary of the norms of gender relations at play in early modern drama, as Gayle Greene states: "Defined by men and in relation to men, women's identity is precarious," (56). If this is the case in Shakespeare's version of the tragedy, it is only more drastic in Cinthio's novella, where Disdemona commonly falls into the background behind the Moor's emotional state. While Lennox's translation does not necessarily challenge this norm, she does put greater effort in inspiring readers' admiration

and sympathy for Disdemona by dissociating her from established stereotypes of Italian femininity and highlighting the "Greatness of her Mind."

As her translation continues, the precarity of Disdemona's situation is challenged by moments in which she speaks out in attempts to understand the Moor's behavior. A woman voicing her opinion to her husband was not readily accepted in early modern Europe. As Jerry Brotton states, the influential Renaissance author Leon Battista Alberti was "anxious at the thought of bold and forward females who try too hard to know about things outside the house and about the concerns of their husband and of men in general" (46).[95] In fact, a woman who publicly voiced her opinion was marked as sexually promiscuous and unchaste, and the idea that a woman could have the rational or creative capacity to partake in matters outside of the domestic environment was a matter of debate.[96] Thinking along these lines, the Disdemona of Cinthio's original novella is the ideal figure of femininity as the dutiful wife whose sole concern is the felicity of her husband. Given that Lennox's authorial investments deal with highlighting feminine resilience outside of the domestic sphere, it becomes clear that something had to be done about Disdemona's representation in her translation. This is elucidated in the moments of interaction between Disdemona and the Moor, where Lennox not only modifies word choices, but includes significant additions of her own creation. This first instance happens at the beginning of the tale, when the Moor is reluctant to leave for Cyprus due to the fact that he would either have to put Disdemona in danger by taking her with him, or else leave her behind in Venice. Over the course of

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[95] Brotton, Jerry. *The Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

[96] For more, see: Brotton, Jerry, pp. 46-47, Weisner-Hanks, Merry. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe,* pp. 176, 189.

their conversation, Lennox's alterations become increasingly apparent and purposeful. The changes begin not in the dialogue, but in the words of the narrator who highlights the internal state of husband and wife. Cinthio's original begins directly with Disdemona's feelings about seeing the Moor tormented:

> . . . ma le dava gran noia il vedere il Moro turbato. E non se sapendo la cagione, un giorno, mangiando, gli disse: . . . (573).[97]

Lennox's translation provides a significant addition to the original:

> The secret Grief which prey'd upon the Heart of the Moor, beginning, as the Time of parting approached nearer, to spread a Gloom on his Countenance, and give an Air of Restraint to his Behavior; Disdemona, extremely alarmed, entreated him to tell her the Cause of the Change *she observed* in him: . . . (102, italics mine).

Thus, she adds more complex layers to this scene by bringing out the Moor's internalized state, which in turn makes Disdemona not only a concerned wife, but an active observer of his behavior. While the original presents a more-or-less casual inquiry over dinner, Lennox creates a build-up of tension between husband and wife, and the focus shifts over to Disdemona imploring the Moor to provide her with an explanation for his behavior. Paolo Caponi comments on this scene being distinctly Italian: "Del suo turbamento per il viaggio egli fa parola alla moglie in un placido contesto conviviale e domestico, 'un giorno, mangiando,'" (140).[98] The placement of the couple inside the home over a meal situates

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[97] Here is my own translation of this passage: But it troubled her (Disdemona) greatly to see the Moor so distressed. And not knowing the cause, one day as they were eating, she said:

[98] "He discussed his restlessness over his journey with his wife in a calm, conjugal and domestic context, 'one day, as they were eating.'" While this scholar focuses on this being in fact a bidirectional conversation, I am pulling his emphasis on the domesticity of this moment rendering

Disdemona within the domestic environment, a place deemed acceptable for her to voice her devoted concern for her husband. Lennox's translation provides no situational context; instead, she constructs an image of the perturbed Moor, and the active language she includes at the end such as how Disdemona "entreated" the Moor to explain the change "*she observed* in him," suggests that this construction serves only to highlight Disdemona's intuition and level of command in their private conversations.

This only becomes more distinct as their interaction continues. Upon hearing the Moor's response to her question, Cinthio's original reads:

> Disdemona, ciò inteso: Deh, disse, marito mio, che pensieri son questi che vi vanno per l'animo? A che lasciate che cosa tal vi turbi? Voglio io venire con voi, ovunque anderete, sebbene così dovessi passare in camicia per lo fuoco . . . (573).[99]

Lennox's version again provides some new additions:

> Ah! My dearest Husband, said Disdemona, what Thoughts are these which you have suffered to afflict you? Did you imagine *I would consent* to a Separation from you? *How could you wrong my Love so much*? That Love, which, to be with you, would impel me to pass even through Flames (103, italics mine).

The addition of these questions is powerful: while Lennox is maintaining Disdemona's role of a fiercely devoted, dutiful wife, her interrogations show a demand to have her love both acknowledged and respected by her husband. Her voice exemplifies a resistance to the

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it specifically an Italian setting. For more, see: Caponi, Paolo. "La novella del moro: Cinthio e Shakespeare tra intertestualità e ideologia." in *Giovan Battista Giraldi Cinzio: gentiluomo ferrarese.*

[99] Here is my own translation of this passage: Disdemona, hearing this, said: My husband, what thoughts are these that are going through your mind? Why let such things as these disturb you? I want to come with you, anywhere you go, even if I were to have to pass through fire...

Moor taking charge of the decisions that are hers to make and is critical of his neglect in seeing her love as a force in of itself that instills her courage in the face of adversity. The language that Lennox employs here is strong: invoking the words "consent" and "wrong" in these contexts places Disdemona in a more agential position, for not only is she enforcing her right to choose to accompany the Moor on his voyage, she is also calling attention to their mutual responsibility to demonstrate their love for one another. While Cinthio's version expresses Disdemona's pure devotion to her husband, Lennox's translation demands that the emotional labor does not fall solely on the woman, and it becomes the Moor's duty to actively reciprocate her love by allowing her to have a voice in their conjugal decisions. This subtle shift that Lennox makes in Disdemona aligns with Weisner-Hanks' discussion of the way in which early modern women authors explored female subjecthood: "Along with revealing a more negative view of the effects of marriage on women, women also create heroic female characters more often than do male authors. Their female heroes do not challenge convention, however, for the virtues for which they are most praised are those that are culturally approved: constancy, modesty, patience, and chastity," (194).[100] I do not want to suggest that Lennox is making Disdemona a hero in the story; rather, I want to suggest that she is instilling her version of Disdemona with more heroic qualities within the context of her reality. And while she cannot rewrite her ill fate, she can work against her being the passive, submissive wife that falls into the background behind the men and in order to showcase the voice that deserves to be heard.

[100] Weisner-Hanks, Merry E. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe.* 3rd ed., New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

While Lennox distances Disdemona from the characteristics of an Italian identity, she brings them out of the Lieutenant so as to construct him as the quintessential figure of the "Italianate villain." His character gets the most attention in her critical commentary--although after reading the commentary, the slight alterations that she includes in her translation become apparent and attached to a deeper, nationalistic meaning. The first thing that is essential to note is that in Cinthio's original, the character of the Lieutenant is of ambiguous origins. There is no reference to him being Venetian, and in fact at the end of a story that is mostly set in Venice after the Lieutenant and the Moor's actions are put on trial in front of the Signoria of Venice, Cinthio writes: "Andò l'alfieri alla sua patria" (585).[101] This is never addressed in the translation or commentary, as Lennox states "Upon the whole, there is very little Difference between the Character of the Lieutenant as it is drawn in the Novel, and Iago as managed in the play," (131). It could be argued that this is an oversight on Lennox's part given that he is a character of Italian literature set in Venice and Shakespeare's characterization of him is so distinctly Italian--but Lennox was too conscientious of a translator to overlook this line. Calling attention to this moment of ambiguity in Cinthio's text could have undermined her attention to his Italianness, for her comments suggest that the Lieutenant's actions couldn't be anything *but* Italian. For example, in her discussion on the nature of his character, she states: "Iago was a Soldier, it is true, but he was also an *Italian*; he was born in a Country remarkable for the deep Art, Cruelty, and revengeful Temper of its inhabitants. To have painted an Italian injured, or under a Suspicion of being injured and not to have shewn him revengeful, would have been

[101] "The Ensign returned to his own country."

mistaking his character" (129).[102] Thus, the actions of Iago, which are also the actions of the original Lieutenant, are a result of his Italian nature, and to have it otherwise would render the innate maliciousness of his deeds inexplicable. Lennox is strategic about her use of language. Just as she inserts her commentary on the Italian female appetite into her translation in her introduction of Disdemona, she does something similar with the Lieutenant. Sprinkled throughout her translations are adjectives that accompany his title. She calls him "the villainous Lieutenant," "the Villain," "the remorseless Villain," and "the diabolical Villain." The original version mostly refers to him simply as the Lieutenant, with specific moments where the adjective "wicked" precedes it. In contrast, Lennox rarely calls him only by his title, but attention must be given to the adjectives themselves--the words artful, cruel, and remorseless align precisely with her explanation of the Italian temperament. This cannot be coincidental since the placement of each of these words was crafted in a way that works towards her characterization of the Lieutenant as a villainous Italian. The extensive variety of terms she employs not only highlights his evil, but it also Italianizes him so that his evil and his Italian nature become inseparable from one another.

Another moment in which she brings forth the Lieutenant's Italianness is in her praise of Shakespeare in his correct characterization of Iago. She states that Shakespeare "has greatly improved on the Novelist by making him jealous of the Moor with his own

[102] It is telling to note that Lennox's commentary engages with Thomas Ryder's *A Short View of Tragedy*, written in 1693 and considered the beginning of serious criticism of *Othello*. Ryder was infamous for claiming that Shakespeare's modifications being downright ridiculous--in the case of this quote, Lennox is responding to Ryder's critique of Shakespeare mischaracterizing the Lieutenant's character because he overlooks the noble qualities of soldiers. This further exemplifies how Lennox is shamelessly challenging the viewpoints of various esteemed male authors, inserting her critical opinions within a male-dominated conversation. To read Ryder's entire essay, see the Norton Critical Edition of *Othello* (full citation in bibliography).

Wife; this circumstance being sufficient, in an *Italian* especially, to account for the revenge he takes on Othello," (130). The concept of the jealous southerner was already well-established at the time Lennox was writing, and recalls the "hot" temperament that is at the core of the climate theory discourse of the period.[103] It is a term that was deemed foreign within English discourse: *The Ladies' Dictionary*, published in 1694, defines "jealousie" as "a fear of losing her favour, whom he [the jealous person] so earnestly Affects and Desires to have proper to himself only … It is condemned and wicked and monstrous by all civiliz'd Nations."[104] Therefore, jealousy becomes intertwined with the concept of national sensibility, a quality only capable of living within the foreign, uncivilized "other." By commending Shakespeare for modifying the Lieutenant's intentions to better coincide with the English understanding of Italian temperament, she aligns herself with the ideals of national identity and English subjectivity prevalent in eighteenth-century discourse. Scholarship highlights the fact that the "Italianate villain" was one of the most popular figures on the early modern English stage, and recognizes that this is an act of Shakespeare's creation and manipulation of source texts.[105] Lennox, on the other hand, is actively manipulating Italian literary history by imposing qualities on the original

[103] Refer back to note 72, in which I provide excerpts from Montesqueiu to illustrate these ideas.

[104] See Korda, Natasha. *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England.* pg. 130.

[105] For example, Barbara Majelli writes: "Pur se con diversi risultati, il metodo shakespeariano di rielaborare i testi altrui era molto comune tra i drammaturghi inglesi del periodo, i quali attingevano soprattutto dall'Italia le storie da portare in scena, e la figura dell'*Italianate villain* era uno dei personaggi più rappresentati sulla scena inglese," (262). Translation: "Albeit with different results, the Shakespearean method of reworking others' works was very common among the English dramatists of the period, those which drew stories from Italy to bring to the stage, and the figure of the Italianate villain was one of the most portrayed characters on the English stage."

characters that are deemed Italian to an English audience.[106] Her critical commentary furthers a distinct understanding and perception of Italians that exoticizes them as an "other" to the English, for it is the underpinnings of the Italian identity which drives the evildoing of the tale.

Merry Weisner-Hanks states: "Language is so powerful, that it determines, rather than simply describes, our understanding of the world; knowledge is passed down through language, and language is power," (6). *Shakespear Illustrated* demonstrates precisely how language is at the core of Lennox's craft, and her attention to it exceeds that of her contemporaries.[107] Oscillating between languages, traditions, genres, and forms, her lexical decisions as a translator and critic had the power to construct her readers' understanding of not only Shakespeare's authorial moves, but also the world of Italian literature and those who inhabit it. While problematic in her foreignization of the Italian "other," we can also see how it is more productive in its attempt to highlight feminine subjectivity and incorporate more layers of complexity to the heroine's identities as opposed to the classic

[106] Lennox's classification of Italian qualities resonated within the critical conversation surrounding Shakespeare's work. It is curious to look at the work of Samuel Johnson, whose work as a Shakespearean critic was initiated by his involvement in the production of *Shakespeare Illustrated*. In his 1756 essay "Shakespeare, the Rules, and *Othello"*, his comments on Iago's character mirror the language that Lennox invokes in her descriptions of Italian characteristics: "The cool malignity of Iago, silent in his resentment, subtle in his designs, and studious at once of his interest and his vengeance," and "The gradual progress which Iago makes in the Moor's conviction and the circumstances which he employs to inflame him are so artfully natural" (220). Carlile's biography illustrates how close Johnson was to Lennox's work and how he often engages with her criticism in his own, thus it would be unsurprising if the influence of her characterization found its way into his work. This just exemplifies how Lennox's ideas also could have had even an indirect impact on the English perception of Italian literature and culture through the tracers of her influence in other prominent and influential voices. To read Johnsons full essay, see the Norton Critical Edition of *Othello* (full citation in bibliography).

[107] As Carlile states, "In addition, rather than simply list source titles, Lennox studied them. She provided translations and indicated significant differences. She also showed how her work was distinct from that of previous Shakespeare scholars" (117).

tales which reduced them to little more than victims of a patriarchal system. Looking past her technical moves within her work, Lennox's legacy validates that translation for women was far from a silent form of writing--rather it was a medium through which women could subvert the male voice and challenge the patriarchal focus within literature. It also reveals a woman's capability of partaking in critical, nationalistic discourses regarding global identities and gender relations, perpetuating domestic understanding of the foreign and reinforcing conceptions of the English identity. The number of new perspectives that we can pull from only *three* of Lennox's pairs of translation and commentary elucidates the need for more critical attention not only to the rest of her work in *Shakespear Illustrated,* but to the work of the multiple other "silent" women translators of her time.

Chapter Two
The "Worthless Wantons" of the Gothic: Italian Femininity in Radcliffe and Dacre

The end of the eighteenth century brought about a genre in Britain in which Italian stereotypes came to be more condensed, frequent and sensational than ever before: the Gothic. Following the height of Italy's popularity in the mid-eighteenth century due to the Grand Tour and the vast amount of travel accounts that circulated at the time through various mediums such as narratives, letters and newspaper articles[108], the Gothic novel provided the ideal space to further explore its wonders. Although as Paula Findlen rightly notes, the Italy of English writers "existed to confirm assumptions and prejudices rather than to overturn them" (4). Gothic novels came to be marked by "the most virulent sorts of xenophobia,"[109] and representations of malign Italianization[110] were not an anomaly, but the *norm.* The combination of threatening Italian characters, mysterious landscapes and ruinous castles constructs a fictional world whose effects make for more than just a suspenseful read; it evokes a national and cultural otherness that emphasizes English civility as opposed to Italian backwardness. Given the mass popularity of Gothic novels at the time, their influence on the solidification of Italian stereotypes is undeniable. As explored in the previous chapter, hyperbolized representations of Italianness were already well established and replicated across various genres, thus the figure of the Italian villain

[108] Massimiliano Demata notes in his article "Italy and the Gothic" that by this time, "British readers certainly had an extensive familiarity (albeit often of a second-hand kind) with Italy." (n.p)

[109]Schmitt, Cannon. *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality.* University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

[110] I pull this term from Michele Marrapodi in his work *Shakespeare, Italy, and Intertextuality.* Manchester University Press, 2004.

was certainly not a novelty. However, the association between Italianness and the Gothic is prominent enough to suggest that the cultural assimilation of Italianness was colored by its Gothicism, specifically in the representation of Italian women as malevolent libertines. Furthermore, the placement of Gothic settings in Italy, which was already looked down upon by the British as an uncivilized, Southern land[111], reinforced its reputation as "a country of danger and sensation."[112] As Eve Sedgwick contends, there is no other literary form as influential and "pervasively conventional" as the Gothic novel, for readers can "predict its contents with an unnerving certainty" (9).[113] Therefore, while readers could open a Gothic novel and expect to enjoy the familiar nerve-wrenching terrors, they could also expect to often encounter Italian stereotypes, allowing them to observe and internalize the same uncivilized Italy from a safe distance. Whilst a plethora of Gothic conventions have been established by Sedgwick and explored by other scholars, the influence of Italianness, specifically the recurrence of "dangerous" Italian femininity, has been mostly overlooked. It is my intention in this chapter to explore the Italian antiheroines in Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* and Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* and *The Libertine* to argue that female libertinism plays an integral part in the translation of Italian femininity and that the cultural transfer of gendered Italianness in these texts is closely linked to English attempts to establish a superior nationalistic identity. Furthermore, I contest that the combination of Italy and the Gothic provided women authors a unique textual space to subvert the patriarchal limitations imposed upon them at the time.

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[111] At the time, Italy was still not a united nation and did not become so until 1861.

[112] Churchill, 58.

[113] Sedgwick, 9.

There are many historical, political and thematic layers that will be unraveled over the course of this chapter. The first section provides a brief introduction of the Gothic's representation of Italy, exploring Radcliffe's and Dacre's usage of established stereotypes in their construction of the Italian world that their characters inhabit. In the second section, I introduce the figure of the Italian woman and suggest how it is connected to the general 19th-century fear of women reading Gothic novels. The third section provides written accounts of Italian women by both male and female British travel writers in the 18th and 19th centuries to foreground the contemporary conceptions of Italian femininity at the time that Radcliffe and Dacre were writing. The fourth section then dives deeper into the definition of libertinism, establishing specifically what it means to be a female libertine and noting its specific significance in the context of Italianness. In the final section of the introduction, I present initial reasons for why the representation of libertinism in Radcliffe and Dacre demonstrates both their adherence to and subversion of gender conventions of the period. The first text I explore is Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, which sets the stage for my reading of Italian female libertinism as poison, but also shows how Radcliffe's engagement with transgressive femininity is more careful and instructive than the texts that follow. The chapter then moves into the works of Charlotte Dacre, beginning with *Zofloya* and ending with *The Libertine*, which demonstrate a shift in the representation of "bad" Italian women from being minor to major characters. My reading of Dacre further examines the consequences of Italian female libertinism, primarily the weakening of masculinity, homosocial competition, and the destruction of the domestic family unit. After having established the political valences of the female libertine, I end the chapter with a reflection on how the creation of these monstrous women demonstrates both women

authors' desire to express criticism about the strictly enforced gender conventions of their time as well as the complex power relations that are at play in the process of cultural translation.

Gothic novelists did not only hyperbolize Italian characteristics; they created a distinctly fictional Italian world, overrun by "wild banditti, degenerate monks, claustrophobic convents where female communities became threatening, 'savage' landscapes, decaying castles and homeless, wandering young women" (2).[114] This version, however, was an imaginary Italy, for despite its popularity as a backdrop for their thrilling tales, most Gothic writers never even visited the country themselves.[115] Rather, it was a common practice to draw upon the descriptions of previous authors in creating their own version of Italy. This is precisely the case with Radcliffe, whose travels never took her to the locations of her seminal novels such as *A Sicilian Romance, The Mysteries of Udolpho,* or *The Italian.* Rather, her knowledge of Italian landscape comes from her extensive reading of travel narratives, such as Pierre-Jean Grosley's *New Observations on Italy and Its Inhabitants* (1769) and Hester Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey Through France, Italy and Germany* (1789).[116] As Kim Micasiw notes in her Introduction to Zofloya, Dacre, despite being a well-known writer in her day, was "lost to literary history for many years, then, and not wholly regained yet," therefore not much is known about her life and there is hitherto no evidence that suggests that she traveled to

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[114] Pal-Lapinski, Piya. *The Exotic Woman in Nineteenth Century British Fiction and Culture.* University Press of New England, 2005.

[115] Churchill, 6.

[116] Radcliffe's vast knowledge of travel writing is acknowledged by many scholars, but I am pulling these two specific titles from Mirella Agorni's work (mentioned on page 29).

Italy during her lifetime (xiv). Despite the layers of interpretations that distorted the realities of Italian culture for the sake of satisfying the British taste for "exotic"[117] thrills, Gothic writers played an essential part in shaping and solidifying perceptions of Italian society in a crucial moment for Britain's reputation on the world stage. Not only were they writing in the midst of colonial expansion of the British empire, Gothic writers, as scholars note, became popular in the period during and immediately following the French Revolution, a time which brought about an intense struggle to separate "all that was 'English' from the French and their debacle."[118] Therefore, as Englishness became increasingly a core value, writing stories based on a turbulent, violent and threatening world such as Gothic Italy worked to reinforce a positive image of English national identity. While scholars have written extensively on Italy as a constructed *place*, I would like to call more attention to the construction of Italian *people*--particularly women--in British narratives, to demonstrate how their gendered otherness reinforces xenophobic attitudes towards Italy and thus glorifies English women.

As Pam Perkins points out, there is a "Gothic-inflicted literary expectation that a wicked Italian is going to be far more evil than a merely cruel or nasty Englishman" (39). However, there is another dangerous force lurking between the pages of these thrilling tales, more directly threatening to English values: an Italian libertine woman. The distinct

[117] To clarify the way that I am engaging with the word exotic in this dissertation, I align with Pal-Lapinski's usage of the term in relation to Italy: "Although the term exoticism might include the oriental, it was certainly not limited to it. By foregrounding "exotic" rather than "oriental," I play with the idea of intersections between female bodies that inhabited the near as well as the remote exotic. … By the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth, for the British Protestant imagination in particular, the near exotic could be mapped as Italy, Spain, Greece and parts of eastern Europe," (2).

[118] Schmitt, 13.

threat provoked by these female characters lies in the Gothic's connection to questions of nation and gender, given that these two unstable[119] identities were in the process of being constructed in the service of the expansion of the British Empire. The Gothic's construction of female subjectivity both reveals deep-rooted cultural anxieties about the consequences that unrestrained womanhood could have for English domesticity[120] as well as defines and redefines Englishness. The anxiety about English womanhood likely stems from the Gothic's readership. Adriana Craciun points out in her book *Fatal Women of Romanticism* that "Gothic literature was the focus of intense cultural monitoring, visible in the omnipresent turn-of-the-century debates about the socially subversive potential of women's reading, *especially their reading of Gothic romance*" (132, italics mine). Given its popularity amongst female audiences, the Gothic's violent and immoral content had to be balanced by the ultimate restoration of social order. More specifically, "bad" women had to pay the price for their moral digressions--often through death--and "proper" femininity had to be restored. In contrast, I postulate that Gothic representations of Italian women suggest that there was a cultural association in Britain between Italy and amorality. This is unsurprising, given that from the eighteenth century the English press "frequently pitted the 'Italian lady' against the 'English nightingale' in order to comment on the cultural and

[119] As Schmitt points out, nineteenth-century British literature brings about an "invocation of a constellation of unstable identities that had haunted Britain for well over a century: the nation, gender and the Gothic." (1)

[120] Scott Mackenzie's article about 18th/19th-century readers of the Gothic solidify the value of the Gothic novel not only as entertainment, but an instructive force: "Private homes themselves were increasingly guardians of the immanent British cultural frame, and novelists were busy establishing their art form as the only possible medium through which living domesticity could be represented" (411).

political enmity between England and its rivals" (78).[121] The liberation that Gothic women authors find in their writing becomes a form of imprisonment for the Italian women characters that exist in their imagined worlds, constrained by hyperbolic, essentialized representations of their cultural identity. They become *monsters*[122], existing often in the margins, yet bearing the most important purpose: the preservation of the "keeper of morality," or the "unsullied, desexualized, innocent" English woman.[123] However, there has been a lack in scholarship that explores how libertinism intersects with Italian femininity, and I aim to show how it can bring forth new ways of understanding how women authors both conformed to and pushed against the political atmosphere of their time.

Making this claim requires further context. Pal-Lapinski notes that representations of the "exotic"[124] woman are "deeply linked to the tensions arising from the encounter between cultures of female libertinism and emerging bourgeois ideologies of domesticity throughout the nineteenth century" (xvi). In the eighteenth century, libertinism was an

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[121] Desimone, Alison. "'Equally Charming, Equally Too Great': Female Rivalry, Politics, and Opera in Early Eighteenth-Century London." *Early Modern Women,* vo. 12, no. 1, pp. 73-102, 2017.

[122] In Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's renowned work which is considered a feminist classic, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, they define a women "monster" as: "Emblems of filthy materiality, committed only to their own private ends, these women are accidents of nature, deformities meant to repel, but in their very freakishness they possess unhealthy energies, powerful and dangerous arts" (29).

[123] Gilbert, M Sandra and Susan Gubar, xiii.

[124] This dissertation's engagement with the term "exotic" and its relation to gender reflects the eighteenth-century definition as presented by Pal-Lapinski in her work. Samuel Johnson in his Dictionary (1755) defines "'exotick' primarily in terms of what it was not: as 'foreign, not produced in our own country; not domestick." His dictionary also defines "domestick" as "belonging to the house; not relating to things publick; inhabiting the house, not wild." As Pal-Lapinski points out, "In this way the dictionary authorized the alliance of the domestic with appropriately socialized feminine energy" (1).

increasingly widespread practice within high society[125], and its representation was important in terms of salvaging the sexual morality of the nation. Italy was understood to have had a different, more *dangerous* understanding of a woman's role in society. Historically, Italian women enjoyed a higher status in society than their English counterparts, which seems to be a fact known by English authors. Jacob Burckhardt, one of the most renowned 19th-century European historians, speaks extensively of the social status of Italian women dating back to the Renaissance in his seminal work published in 1860 *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*: "The education given to women in the upper classes was essentially the same as that given to men. The Italian…felt no scruple in putting sons and daughters alike under the same course of literary and even philological instruction. … The same intellectual and emotional development which perfected the man, was demanded for the perfection of the woman" (318-319). This was contrary to the English belief of a woman's distinct role in society, which was rooted in subservience and whose purpose was the maintenance of stringent domestic morality. However, what was even more troubling to English sensibility was the perceived sexual freedom of Italian women. This is reflected in the works of Grand Tour travel accounts by men. For instance, Samuel Sharp notes in his *Letters From Italy* (1766) that "In Italy, a certain knowledge of every wife's attachment to a lover, extinguishes all social affection, and all fondness for the offspring; and it is only the eldest born, who the husband is sure belongs to him…" (74). He also draws comparisons between English and Italian women: "With us, a woman who is publicly criminal, usually becomes profligate and abandoned; here, almost every woman, of

[125] For more, see: Dawson, Ruth. "Eighteenth-Century Libertinism in a Time of Change: Representations of Catherine the Great." *Women in German Yearbook,* vo. 18, pp. 67-88, 2002.

however virtuous a disposition, falls into the general custom, and is equally criminal with the women of loose principles; so that the distinction of good and bad, I mean chaste and dissolute, is hardly known in Italy…" (254). Thomas Watkins after his travels to Italy writes that "before marriage their women are nuns, and after it libertines."[126] Lastly, Boswell wrote extensively on Italian women during his travel, stating that "the behaviour of Italian women epitomized 'the corruption of Italy.'"[127] In his travel account *On the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica and France 1765-1766*, he writes that "...the manners here were so openly debauched that adultery was carried on without the least disguise" and that the women "are so debauched that they are hardly to be considered as moral agents, but as inferior beings" (24, 28). These accounts demonstrate that Italian women were not only considered to be excessively unchaste; they also disparage the importance of domestic values such as marital and maternal devotion. Italian women, as perceived by the English, simply did not abide by societal rules nor did they distinguish between moral and immoral behavior[128]; in other words, they were the incarnation of everything that English bourgeois society was working so adamantly against.

However, this repugnance towards Italian femininity does not appear to be universal in Britain at the time, for Hester Piozzi's 1789 work *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey Through France, Italy, and Germany* demonstrates that women may have felt differently about cultural attitudes towards women in Italy. The majority of her text is set in Italy, where she comments that "national character is a great

[126] This quote is pulled from Findlen, 21.

[127] Ibid, 22.

[128] Ibid, 22-23.

matter: I did not know there had been such a difference in the ways of thinking, merely from custom and climate, as I see there is; though one has always read of it…" (74). The differences that she notes about Italian women can be separated into two primary categories: the role of a woman in society and the way in which that society views her. With regards to the former, she states that she is surprised to find that "the lady of every house as unacquainted with her own, and her husband's affairs, as I who apply to her for information" (49). She further observes that "Here is no struggle for female education as with us, no resources in study, no duties of family management; no bill of fare to be looked over in the morning, no account-book to be settled at noon; no necessity of reading, to supply without disgrace the evening's chat … A lady in Italy is sure of applause, so she takes little pains to obtain it" (127-8). Piozzi's observations suggest to readers that the external appearance of domesticity is not a central priority of Italian culture, and that women are not obliged by society to oversee all familial duties in order to be deemed "proper." This likely would have come as a shock, given that the family in Britain was understood to be at the core of national identity and imperial power.[129] To add to this, Piozzi finds that outside of their lack of duties women were more readily supported on a societal level. She states that "a woman here in every stage of life has really a degree of attention shewn her that is surprising; -- if conjugal disputes arise in a family… the public voice is sure to run against the husband's; if separation ensures, all possible countenance is given to the wife, while the

[129] Eve Tavor writes extensively about this in her book *The Domestic Revolution: Enlightenment Feminisms and the Novel.* For instance, she states, "Viewed as a microcosm of the state and as the polity's most fundamental component unit, as the guarantor of the nation's peace, order, and prosperity, and as the private origin of the 'public good,' yet widely held to be in disarray, the family of the eighteenth century was not yet conceived as secondary to the real business of society or to the serious concerns of men" (2).

gentleman is somewhat less willingly received…"[130] (74). This collective support for women in domestic disputes directly contradicts the moralizing messages incorporated within British eighteenth-century conduct books and novels, where a woman's fate is often driven by her willingness to abide by the societal expectations held over her. Piozzi emphasizes more than once in her writings that one's place in a society, regardless of whether they are a man or a woman, is ascertained at birth and is not determined by their actions. Therefore, her work represents Italy as a place in which women are not constrained by stringent moral standards that dictate their social standing, giving them freedom to explore their identities beyond these boundaries. While Sharp, Watkins and Boswell see the freedom of Italian women as shameful and threatening to society, Piozzi approaches her observations from a place of fascination and even admiration. She does not go to the extent of advocating for the implementation of these social norms in Britain, but she does encourage consideration of their benefits: "We will not send people to Milan to study delicacy or very refined morality to be sure, but were the crust of the British affectation lifted off many a character at home, I know not whether better, that is honester, hearts would be found under it…" (72). While literature in Britain often made a mockery of Italian culture, brushing it off as uncivilized and unworthy of its connection to the greatness of Roman civilization, Piozzi's writing suggests that there is indeed something to be learned from the humility and gender dynamics of Italian society. Given Piozzi's popularity and influence over Radcliffe and other writers at the time, I postulate that her

[130] The quote goes on to say: "...and all the stories of pasts disgusts are related to his prejudice: nor will the lady who he wishes to serve look very kindly on a man who treats his own wife with unpoliteness. Che cuore deve avere! Says she: What a heart he must have! Io non mene fiso sicuro: I shall take care not to trust him sure" (74).

work played an integral part in future representations of Italian femininity as will be explored in the next chapters.

The eighteenth-century's ground-breaking feminist work, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* further contextualizes the limits of "proper" British femininity. Published in 1792, Wollstonecraft's work was actually considered to be more radical and sexually progressive than deemed suitable in British society and was thus attacked by critics.[131] Nevertheless, these "progressive" views on womanhood and sexuality leave no room for libertinism; in fact, Wollstonecraft seems to be preaching directly against women obtaining this level of sexual freedom. Wollstonecraft advocates for women's education, although the primary purpose behind this stance is for the betterment of domestic life. She states:

> Were women more rationally educated, could they take a more comprehensive view of things, they would be contented to love but once in their lives; and after marriage calmly let passion subside into friendship … idle jealousies would not be allowed to disturb the discharge of sober duties of life, or to engross the thoughts that ought to be otherwise employed (195).

Thus, female liberation becomes a means to an end; one that maintains domestic values and upholds the integrity of the nation. Wollstonecraft's stance is even more telling when we examine her arguments next to the words of Burckhardt, Sharp, Watkins and Boswell, which seem to suggest that education does not have the same effect on *all* women. Italian women, with the same "intellectual and emotional development which perfected the man,"

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[131] For more on this, see Janet Todd's Introduction in the Oxford World Classics edition of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* See bibliography for full citation.

are indeed *more* sexual beings, prioritizing the satisfaction of their personal desires over protecting the family unit. It is to be deduced, then, that the influence of libertinism makes a telling difference.

But what did it mean to be a libertine *woman* in British literature and culture of the long nineteenth century? It is necessary to delineate her identity, given that the figure of the libertine at the time was predominantly male. Laura Linker provides the first in-depth examination of the female libertine in British literature in her book *Dangerous Women, Libertine Epicures, and the Rise of Sensibility, 1670-1730.* She calls attention to the fact that in the *OED*, "the term 'libertine' is 'rarely applied to a woman,'" and that even though various scholars[132] argue that "women helped to redefine libertinism" and that there is a need to "interrogate the essentialist assumptions attached to the libertine figure," there had not yet been a study concentrating solely on the female libertine figure before hers (1). While female libertines have existed as far back as ancient Greek literature, Linker contends that they really came to center stage in the seventeenth century as women authors began to write them into their novels of sensibility. While the libertine figure is commonly examined within the context of French libertinism or Sadean libertinage, containing strong political, religious and philosophical currents that associate it with a form of "liberty" against authority, the question of gender and culture must be taken into consideration. As Linker states, for a woman to be "free" "means something entirely different than it does for a man who may generally exercise legal and social liberties than those permitted to women in almost any time period or place" (2). In eighteenth-century

[132] She cites Warren Chernaik, Pat Gill, Janet Todd, James Turner and Harold Weber, to be exact.

Britain, the line between these liberties for men and women became particularly strong with the rise of domesticity as a core value of the nation. Jacqueline Pearson claims this period to be marked as a "major event in political history," and that the "entrenchment of domestic ideology shaped the feminine role and female subject in fundamental ways, with woman becoming the symbols and the guarantors of a secure, middle-class virtue" (2). This societal pressure placed on women at the time left little acceptable room for transgression from domestic expectation, or from their duty to serve the nation's reputation. Thus, in England discourses surrounding libertinism--and even more so female libertinism--became engrossed by the question of morality. At its foundation libertinism encompasses "an attempt to construct an authentic self on the basis of passions, a loosening of family bonds and respect for maternal authority," a "life of debauchery and licentiousness," accompanied by "an impertinence in language and expression, and the lack of submission to and respect for authority."[133] Thus, it is easy to see the threat that libertinism poses to the figure of the ideal British woman, for its very definition suggests to be the antithesis to domesticity. Libertine values destabilize the security of the family unit, which then threatens the very breakdown of British respectability at large. Taking this into consideration, this chapter will demonstrate how in the works of Radcliffe and Dacre, Italian female libertinism is a driving force in the novels that subverts the social order. The predominant threads that run through the three novels frame the libertine woman as a physical and moral contaminant

[133] I pull these definitions from Jean-Pierre Cavaillé's "Libertine and Libertinism: Polemic Uses of the Terms in 16th and 17th-Century English and Scottish Literature" and James Grantham Turner's *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics and Literary Culture, 1630-1685.*

as well as the deadly female rivalry and overall weakening and degeneracy of the male figure that are the consequences of her influence.

While it was common in eighteenth and nineteenth century novels to present a virtuous heroine alongside her foil, the femme fatale, Linker calls attention to the fact that women writers "often omitted or watered down female libertines in their works because of the danger to their reputation and place in the literary marketplace" (146). This, I argue, is where Italy plays an important role. While the female libertine has received some critical attention, there has yet to be an exploration of the intersection between gender and cultural identity. With that being said, I postulate that Italy presents Gothic women writers such as Radcliffe and Dacre with the opportunity to both conform to societal expectations while also challenging them. They are able to preserve their authorial reputation by making these *bad* women Italian and condemning them to terrible fates as a consequence of their actions, yet at the same time they are able to imagine a more subversive, liberated portrait of womanhood. While this alternative portrait is progressive in the context of English femininity, it also presents cultural tensions as it showcases prejudiced perceptions of Italian womanhood. On the one hand, as David Richter notes, a woman writing at all "is to be a rebel, for even the most docile woman author, even one who apparently accepts the image of woman imposed by patriarchal literature, has in creating for herself refused to allow men the exclusive right to create her… These strategies enable women to say what they need to say indirectly where it cannot be given direct exposition" (7). On the other hand, this rebellion comes at a cost, as Italian femininity becomes homogenized into a universal threatening force against the English nation. Radcliffe's and Dacre's monstrous Italian women provide them with the chance to reach beyond the limits of gender

constraints without compromising English domestic values, yet they also perpetuate Italy's hyperbolic reputation in England. Lawrence Venuti's work on the formation of cultural identities in translation calls attention to this exact tendency that we can trace in the Gothic: "Here a specific cultural constituency controls the representation of foreign literatures for other constituencies in the domestic culture, privileging certain domestic values to the exclusion of others and establishing a canon of foreign texts that is necessarily partial because it serves certain domestic interests" (71). The dominant idea in England at the time that Radcliffe and Dacre were writing was that Italy was a country completely devoid of respectable domestic values, and this became hyperbolized in the creation of the Italian woman in the Gothic. Gilbert and Gubar famously state that "It is debilitating to be any woman in a society where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters" (53). I contend that both the Gothic and Italian women provided Radcliffe and Dacre a cultural loophole through which they could explore "monstrous" femininity without forcing the figure of the virtuous British woman to teeter off her pedestal. Not only do their novels embody the cultural tensions between Italy and England at their peak, but they also exemplify the complexities of the relationship between women and the social constraints placed upon them.

I pause for a brief moment to further explore the figurative function of contamination/poison in these three works and clarify how I will be engaging with it throughout the course of this chapter. The theme of contamination becomes integral to the story of the Italian libertine woman, as it is a thread that continues not only through Signora Laurentini's life but also the antiheroines that inhabit Dacre's novels. In the three novels explored in this chapter, poison extends beyond the physical realm and becomes a

figurative symbol for social purity, which, as Mary Douglas explains, "had a more specific meaning as the guiding principle of a number of associations, societies, and vigilance committees founded in the nineteenth century, with the aim of policing sexual purity and morality" (8). Douglas contends that impurity stems from something that is out of place or does not fit within the social order. It was also believed that social impurities specifically linked to sexuality risked being spread, much like a poison or disease, causing complete disarray.[134] Libertine Italian women not only are outsiders from what is deemed "pure" British society, they threaten its very collapse. Douglas argues that "certain moral values are upheld and certain social rules defined by beliefs in dangerous contagion, as when the glance or touch of an adulterer is held to bring illness to his neighbors or his children" (3). Similarly, the Italian women in Radcliffe's and Dacre's novels seem to pass their contagion and wreak moral havoc upon the social world of the novel. In fact, tracing the way that contagion functions metaphorically elucidates character development in these three texts, demonstrating how the "impurity" of Italian libertine women slowly weakens and destroys those --particularly men--who come into contact with them. Contagion is the thread that runs through these novels, demonstrating the ways in which Radcliffe and Dacre utilize Italian femininity and libertinism to subvert convention and provide a critical commentary on social order.

We begin our textual exploration with Ann Radcliffe, considered by many to be the matriarch of the Gothic tradition. As Richard S. Albright notes, during the 1790s Radcliffe emerged "from anonymity to become one of the most successful novelists of her time," and

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[134] Mary Douglas cites Margaret Hunt in making this point. For more, see: *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, page 8.

that despite Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* being considered to have initiated the Gothic genre in 1764, "it was Radcliffe who really seemed to codify many of the characteristics that define the Gothic, and the term "Radcliffean Gothic" is almost a tautology" (49). Part of the reason for her success could be attributed to the time in which she was writing. While the French revolution wreaked havoc on the English public imagination, Radcliffe's thrilling continental stories horrified English private imaginations.[135] Nevertheless, her unique construction of a threatening and exoticized southern world earned her a place within the national canon and literary history. Radcliffe's personal writings reveal that her travels on the continent strengthened her affinity for her English identity. She states that she shares the views of "Englishmen, who feel, as they always must, the love of their own country much increased by the view of others," and she distinguishes the "blessings of their Island" from the "wretchedness of the Continent" (Radcliffe 1795: 108).[136] This very wretchedness gave Radcliffe the opportunity to explore the extremities of human passions and transgressive femininity without threatening England's reputation or its foundation, domestic womanhood. Her creation of Signora Laurentini--a minor character in her major novel *Mysteries of Udolpho*-- thoroughly encapsulates these attributes, establishing an archetype of an Italian libertine woman. Readers are not exposed to Signora Laurentini (also known as Sister Agnes) until the last thirty pages of the novel; however, her role is essential for the story to come to a close. It is the revelation of Signora Laurentini's truth that ultimately solves the "mystery of Udolpho"--that is, her culpability in the murder of the

[135] For more on this, see Scott Mackenzie's "Ann Radcliffe's Gothic Narrative and the Readers at Home."

[136] This quotation is taken from Dale Townshends and Angela Wright's "Gothic and Romantic engagements: The critical reception of Ann Radcliffe, 1789-1850."

Marchioness de Villeroi, who is also revealed to be Emily's late aunt. I argue that Laurentini's importance to the novel lies more in the lesson that her last confession offers to (female) readers. However, in order to decipher this, it is useful to begin by considering Laurentini's history, which is placed shortly after her confession and demise. Her past is presented as a brief biography which breaks the pace of the narrative, emphasizing how her history influences her criminal behavior. Readers immediately learn that she was previously the heiress of Udolpho and raised as an only child. The narrator states that "It was the first misfortune of her life, and that which led to all her succeeding misery, that the friends, who ought to have restrained her strong passions, and mildly instructed her in the art of governing them, nurtured them by early indulgence" (655). Her parents are described as being indulgent in gratifying their own passions and expressing them to the young Laurentini through both indulgence and violence, thus exasperating her spirit and molding her unrestrained character. It is also mentioned that her parents died while she was still young, leaving her to be guided "from the weakness of her principles and the strength of her passions" (656). Definitions of libertinism suggest the idea that it is indeed a consequence of inattentive upbringing. This is demonstrated by Wollstonecraft, who states that "The formation of the mind must begin very early, and the temper, in particular, requires the most judicious attention" (233). Wollstonecraft emphasizes the danger that could be imposed on children by their mother, their "first instructor," as "womanish follies will stick to the character throughout life. The weakness of the mother will be visited on the children!" (263). Hence, it becomes evident that the "dangerous traits" of Signora Laurentini's character serve as a direct result of not having received proper moral guidance

which would have subdued her innate Italianness. Rather, her libertine upbringing has encouraged the growth of these passions, which lead to disastrous consequences.

Signora Laurentini's fate is sealed upon her acquaintance with the Marquis de Villeroi, for whom, as the narrator states, "she suffered all the *delirium* of *Italian* love" (656, italics mine). I argue that the characterization of Italian love as a state of delirium presents a telling connection to the function of poison in Laurentini's story. The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s first definition of "delirium" is "A disordered state of mind or consciousness; an acute, transient condition associated with fever, *intoxication with alcohol or drugs, and various other physical disorders,* typically characterized by symptoms such as confusion, disorientation, agitation, hallucinations, and disturbances of thought, memory, and mood" (italics mine). Italian love, therefore, becomes an unnatural and altered state of being which prompts unruly behavior. It functions as a drug--or a poison--which resonates in the nervous system and threatens to have potentially irreversible effects. This is distinctly the case with Laurentini; her character was poisoned by her libertine upbringing, and as a result her ability to behave as a rational and moral being was hindered.

The poison of Signora Laurentini's "Italian love" quickly spreads, contaminating both the Marquis and the Marchioness de Villeroi. The Marquis falls madly in love with Signora Laurentini; however, as the status of his family would not allow him to marry her, he attempts to subdue his love by marrying the Marchioness, whom he initially loved with a "tempered and rational affection" (657). Signora Laurentini, mad with jealousy and rage, devises a plan to contaminate the Marquis's judgment, a "diabolical deed" that would lead to the death of the Marchioness and her impassioned reunion with the Marquis. Laurentini's influence becomes increasingly poisonous to the Marquis, as after she arrives

in Languedoc from Italy she sees she "had regained her influence over him" and slowly conducts her scheme "with deep dissimulation and patient perseverance," having "completely estranged the affections of the Marquis from his wife," who stood no chance in comparison to "the captivations of the Italian" (658). Gradually, his demeanor towards his wife becomes more neglectful and austere, causing the innocent Marchioness severe emotional grievance. Then, the poison of Laurentini's presence travels through the Marquis and physically materializes in the Marchioness, for "a slow poison was administered, and she fell a victim to the jealousy and subtlety of Laurentini and to the guilty weakness of her husband" (658). The death of the Marchioness, however, does not bring the anticipated happiness that Laurentini longed for; rather, it brings even more devastation in its wake. The Marquis immediately feels profound remorse for the murder of his innocent wife, which transforms into hatred towards Signora Laurentini. He threatens to kill her unless she retires to a convent to spend the rest of her life repenting her sin, which is what leads to her transformation into Sister Agnes. Unable to escape the consciousness of his crime, the Marquis eventually succumbs to his guilt and dies a horrific death, "with a degree of horror nearly equal to that, which Laurentini had suffered" (659).

Considering the description of Signora Laurentini throughout this biographical account, it is clear that her criminality is aligned with conventional stereotypes perpetuated in England of the Italian character. She is described as "the artful Italian," demonstrating "phrensy of passion," "extremes of love, jealousy and indignation," containing "evil passions" in her nature, and "weakness of her principles," all of which possess her and lead her to "attempting a deep revenge," (646, 656-58). When this revenge does not achieve the desired outcome, Laurentini becomes nothing more than "a dreadful

victim of unrestrained passion" (659). As Churchill points out in his book, Radcliffe developed her notions of Italian character through Shakespeare[137], which is also exemplified through the "Machiavellian" villain of the novel, Montoni: like Shakespeare's Iago as explored in the previous chapter, Montoni is tyrannical, remorseless, and oppressive, passionately fueled by his own greedy desires. However, the fiery passions and jealousy aroused from love is something that I argue as being distinct to the translation of Italian femininity, for as we have seen in the aforementioned travel accounts, Italian women were viewed and judged primarily through the expression of their sexuality and desire. *Mysteries of Udolpho,* as Diane Hoeveler points out, draws extensively upon stock character types, each being "a caricature of a caricature… a character writ large, a caricature of a caricature, almost cartoonish" (89). Even in her marginality, Signora Laurentini stands out from the rest as a hyperbolized portrait of Italian womanhood. Her exaggerated characterization encourages more consideration as to the significance of her brief appearance at the novel's close. On a textual level, Signora Laurentini's story provides the sensation provoked by exoticized villainesses to thrill audiences at a safe distance from the unruly Italian society. More importantly, her history is required in order to restore order; she unlocks the mystery of Emily's family lineage, and as she is the niece of the murdered Marchioness, she also leaves her inheritance as a means to make amends for her sinful crime. Emily's brief acquaintance with Laurentini as Sister Agnes and their final conversation before her death eases the looming anxiety that haunted Emily throughout the entirety of the text about her father's relationship with the late Marchioness.

[137] Churchill, 16.

Discovering they were siblings and not lovers, "she was released from an anxious and painful conjecture, occasioned by the rash assertion of Signora Laurentini, concerning her birth and the honour of her parents" (662). Therefore, her self-induced deterioration was necessary to secure Emily's future.

Outside of the text, Signora Laurentini's death is also meaningful in the message it is sending to the novel's readers. The fact that she joins the convent after her criminal deed to repent for her sins of lustful indulgence and murder, and then ends up dying in a state of agonized guilt, shows that her story is meant to set a moral example. As Mirella Agorni suggests, "Considerations about her target audience may have played a decisive influence on Radcliffe's decision to favour a specifically British literary tradition, especially considering that women were probably the largest part of her readership to benefit from this" (30). Through inventing the character of Signora Laurentini, Radcliffe illustrates to her (female) readers that a lack of astute parental guidance can prove lethal to the family and to the nation as a whole. What makes this message even stronger is that the warning does not come only from the knowledge of her criminality and its outcome, but also from Laurentini's own words. Her confession is riddled with instructive purpose as she warns Emily against the transgressions caused by her Italianness, which she is now able to reflect on after being displaced from both Italy and her Italian identity and having reinvented herself as Sister Agnes. Laurentini describes herself as being a victim of her own nature, for she tells Emily "I then was innocent, the evil passions of my nature slept," and "I had suffered the most agonizing pangs of human nature, in love, jealousy, and despair." (646-7). However, Laurentini's words also suggest that this unawakened nature did not come forth on its own, for her libertinism developed as a result of her immodest upbringing. As she

tells Emily: "Remember, sister, that the passions are the seeds of vices as well as of virtues, from which either may spring, accordingly as they are nurtured. Unhappy they who have never been taught to govern them!" (647). This declaration recalls Wollstonecraft's calling for a woman's education that encourages proper domesticity over the pursuit of passion,[138] for Laurentini's statement also suggests that if had she received a "proper" upbringing from her parents, her ill-intentioned passions might have remained dormant. Her language also recalls the idea of the unnurtured Italian character as poisonous, for she addresses Emily's youth and declares the abrupt loss of her own as a consequence of her crime. She laments, "My crime is but as yesterday. --Yet I am grown old beneath it," and "Look at me well, and see what my guilt has made me" (644, 646). Laurentini has been contaminated by her own *delirious* Italian love, the consequences of which amount to the physical deterioration of her body. Both body and mind become a reflection of the gross immorality of her crimes, and the only escape from her self-inflicted misery becomes death. Her warning also creates an image of Italian love as an altered state of being over which, once infected, one loses complete agency over their own actions. In speaking of the force of passion, she states:

> *Possessing* us like a fiend, it leads us on to the acts of a fiend, making us *insensible* to pity and to conscience. And, when its purpose is accomplished, like a fiend, it leaves us to the torture of those feelings, which its power had *suspended--not annihilated* … Then, *we awaken as from a dream*, and perceive a new world around us--we gaze in

[138] Another example from Wollstonecraft's text that demonstrates this idea is when she states "reason teach passion to submit to necessity; or, let the dignified pursuit of virtue and knowledge raise the mind above those emotions which rather imbitter than sweeten the cup of life, when they are not restrained within due bounds" (97).

> astonishment, and horror, but the deed is committed; not all the powers of heaven and earth united can undo it… (646, italics mine)

Italian love, then, is akin to a mind-altering contaminant which debilitates one's moral judgment and proves contagious to those who come into contact with it. In the case of Laurentini, the line of contagion is easily traced to her childhood, nurtured by her parents' encouragement of indulgent behavior. Once indulgence is introduced to the fervor of Italian love, the force becomes destructive and uncontrollable, thrusting the host into a dissociative state which poisons, both physically and figuratively, the innocent Marquis and Marchioness. This aligns with common British conceptions of Italian behavior as being the epitome of moral corruption, its virulent nature capable of staining the "innocent" Briton's character; as Ralf Hertel states, "Italy corrupts the blood, contaminates and poisons it" (47). On a macro level, the contagiousness of Italian behavior threatens the destabilization of British respectability.

While Laurentini's haunting words and the description of her fate serve as a chilling warning to (female) readers the consequences of unruly femininity, the novel's end provides reassurance that adherence to convention will always prosper. The penultimate sentence states, "Useful may it be to have shewn, that, though *the vicious* can sometimes pour affliction upon *the good*, their power is transient and *their punishment certain*; and that *innocence*, though oppressed by injustice, shall, supported by patience, finally triumph over misfortune!" (672, italics mine). Radcliffe distinctly constructs a world made up of binary character types that embody cultural tensions; "good/innocent" British respectability is terrorized by "bad/vicious" Italian licentiousness. While Gothic novels set out to thrill audiences in their depiction of threatening forces lurking beyond the British

Isles, its purpose in doing so was to strengthen the meaning of *home* and reinforce the status quo. Scott Mackenzie states that "reading Radcliffe has forever been an exegesis of domesticity, registering the tremors from across the channel as faintly felt behind closed doors" (410).[139] Given that the "exotic" locations and characters of the Gothic work to define Englishness by what it is *not*, the same can be assumed for respectable femininity. Through the character of Signora Laurentini, Radcliffe demonstrates the disastrous effects of feminine transgression both on the culprit and her victims. Laurentini's immediate physical and psychological deterioration shows that punishment is not only certain, but immediate, for a woman who veers from proper domesticity, as it is too great a threat to the purity of the nation for her to experience even fleeting success after her crimes.[140] Given that Radcliffe is said to have been the most popular novelist of the 1790s both in England and across Europe,[141] there was a greater possibility for her work to exert moral influence over her (primarily female) readers. This penultimate sentence, then, appears to speak directly to them, providing an emphatic reminder that proper woman/nationhood will always prosper over sexual deviance.

To further understand Radcliffe's legacy, it is important to contextualize the role of her minor characters, and Signora Laurentini in particular proves a fruitful study. She is

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[139] He further states that "Home is, above all, the narrative's destination" (416).

[140] This is also gendered in Radcliffe's novel. The novel's male criminal, Montoni, is allowed to persist and relish in his criminal acts (committed in pursuit of power and wealth) and exemplify even an enjoyment in doing so. Signora Laurentini, like other gothic antiheroines, commits her crime out of a fit of passion and is condemned to immediately suffer from debilitating guilt and eventual death.

[141] Robert Miles pointed this out in 1995, as cited by Lisa Vargo in her work "Women's Gothic Romance: Writers, Readers, and the Pleasures of the Form."

afforded minimal space in the narrative, taking up little more than two brief chapters of a nearly 700-page novel, yet her presence pervades through the heroine's haunting experiences at Udolpho. Radcliffe scholarship is overwhelmingly concerned with landscape and gothic tropes, such as vulnerable and orphaned young women, tyrannical villains, superstition, and entrapment, to name a few. Meanwhile, the vast array of characters--particularly minor characters--are seldom taken into consideration. Alex Woloch's book *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* provides a useful framework for making a closer examination of minor characters, asking questions such as: "How often, at what point, and for what duration does a character appear in the text? … How are her appearances positioned in relation to other characters and to the thematic and structural totality of the narrative?" (20). He also states that "The strange significance of minor characters, in other words, resides largely in the way that the character disappears, and in the tension or relief that results from this vanishing" (41). In the case of Signora Laurentini, the physical space she takes up in the novel may be minimal, but it is revealed just how much of a disastrous impact her impulsive decisions have on Emily's family with the murder of the marchioness. Her death and last confession are also necessary for the societal order of the narrative to be restored. Her meaning resides in the way she contaminates the lives around her, and her exit from the narrative is equally as brutal as the pain she inflicted, making her an embodied warning against the dangers of indulgence in a libertine lifestyle. However, I contend that Signora Laurentini's impact transcends beyond the space of the narrative and transforms her into a constructed archetype of an Italian libertine woman. Yet despite Radcliffe's exploration of transgressive

femininity, her work is still heavily attached to its moralistic stance; as Orianne Smith states:

> The story of the lunatic nun Agnes, formerly Signora Laurentini, mistress of Udolpho, and would-be love of Montoni, is a cautionary tale of the dangers of unchecked female sensibility … Laurentini, the heiress of Udolpho, lost her mother and father at an early age like Emily; however, unlike Emily, she was not schooled to restrain 'her strong passions,' which were nurtured instead by 'early indulgence' (146).

Thus, *Udolpho* is a text that is engrossed by the virtuous/femme fatale binary, containing a stronger focus on the righteous lesson to be learned from Signora Laurentini's tale. Dacre, on the other hand, more deeply explores a "darker" side of femininity. Her novels offer another version of the same mistranslation of Italianness, for her female characters echo Signora Laurentini's distinctly Italian characteristics and are even more menacing.

Although, as we will see, Dacre brings her antiheroines out from the background into the limelight, diving deeper into their actions and the consequences that come from them. Even though Dacre is not as well-known as Radcliffe, her work *Zofloya* has received some attention by critics due to its shockingly violent and subversive nature. Within this scholarship, the focus is almost exclusively on the main character, the ultimate libertine antiheroine, Victoria de Loredani. While my work will reference Victoria, I will mainly focus on the menacing Megalena Strozzi, considering how her remorseless aggression contaminates Victoria's brother, Leonardo. Lastly, I will look at Dacre's lesser-known novel, *The Libertine,* which is based on the story of a man whose life and family legacy is ultimately ruined by his libertinism. As Jennifer L. Airey points out, "The villainous women

who populate Dacre's other works are relegated to the background in *The Libertine*" (225).[142] I will engage with the main libertine villainess, Oriana, exploring both the effects and the consequences of her libertinism on the ill-fated family. Thus, while Dacre's novels do present character foils, the characterization of her antiheroines takes precedence over their comparison to the "proper" women of the narrative. The shift from minor to major presence afforded to libertine women demonstrates a rebellious authorial move on the part of Dacre, and I argue that Italy's role was crucial in allowing her the freedom to investigate more subversive forms of femininity without excessive backlash to her reputation.

Zofloya and *The Libertine* present a new form of a libertine women: they are not guilt-ridden penitents such as Signora Laurentini, but instead impassioned and remorseless criminals. They also all meet deaths that are equally as brutal as the crimes they commit.[143] In her book *Fatal Women of Romanticism*, Adriana Craciun states, "While such 'negative' female characters do exist in women's literature of the period, they are typically secondary characters, dark doubles of the central heroine whose destructiveness must be expelled from the text before the heroine can reach her desired goal" (145-6).[144] Even though Dacre does ultimately "expel" her gothic antiheroines from the text in brutal manners, she dedicates a substantial amount of textual space to the exploration of female criminality and its consequences. *Zofloya* is the strongest example of this. As Kim Ian

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[142] Airey, Jennifer L. "He Bears no rival near the throne": Male Narcissism and Early Feminism in the Works of Charlotte Dacre." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, vo. 30, no. 2, pp. 223-241, 2017-18.

[143] In his article "Charlotte Dacre and the Feminization of Violence," James A Dunn states, "Dacre's violent women always end tragically alone, cast out, spiteful, and often dead" (311).

[144] Cracium actually gives the example of Signora Laurentini after making this point.

Michasiw points out in her introduction to the novel, Victoria is "more efficient, more violent, and less conscience-stricken" than any of her female Gothic predecessors (x). Despite representations of such malevolent and destructive femininity being rare in women's writing of the period, Dacre's text experienced great success likely for, not despite, its "voluptuousness of language" and "exhibition of wantonness."[145] While Dacre's work has inspired scholarly conversation for these reasons, there has still been a lack of attention given to the connection between her antiheroines' criminality and their Italian and libertine identities.

Despite my greater focus on Megalena Strozzi, it would be an oversight to discuss female transgression in *Zofloya* without touching upon the novel's protagonist, Victoria, as she takes the figure of the threatening Italian woman to new heights. Lisa Vargo puts this nicely: "What is so daring about Zofloya is Dacre's attempt to make the heroine an anti-romance figure who embraces evil as she makes a pact with the devil and pursues a career of rape, kidnapping, murder, and, after joining a group of banditti led by her brother, descends to hell when the Moor reveals his identity as Satan" (244). As pointed out here, Victoria's criminal track record is shockingly extensive: her extramarital lust for Henriquez leads her to poison both an elderly maid and her husband Berenza, then to the gruesome stabbing of Henriquez's desired wife, the young orphan Lilla. In addition, she disguises herself as Lilla and sexually assaults the entranced Henriquez, which leads to his impulsive suicide. Again, we encounter poison as a motif driving the characterization of the Italian libertine woman as a threat to social order; not only does Victoria physically use poison to

[145] Craciun, 114, 134.

free herself from her marriage with Berenza[146], but she also herself sucks the life out of the courtship between Henriquez and Lilla through bewitchment and murder. Essentially, Victoria contaminates the lives of everyone who comes into immediate contact with her. However, the novel continuously suggests that Victoria's wickedness could have been avoided with a proper upbringing and that moral contamination is passed from parents to children. Both Victoria and the narrator continuously blame her mother, who left her family in a fit of passion after succumbing to the sexual temptations of Count Ardolph. Just like Signora Laurentini, in her youth Victoria was also given more freedom to indulge in the very passions that (English) women are expected to suppress. The marriage between her parents even came about "in the delirium of passion, concluded in the madness of youth!" (3). Their immaturity is also highlighted: "The youthful parents little comprehended the extent of the mischief they were doing: to see their wayward children happy, their infantine and lovely faces disfigured by tears or vexation, was a pleasure to great to be resigned, from the distant reflection of future evil possible to accrue from the indulgence" (4). Hence the beginning of the story sets up what is to come: all the horror of Victoria's later actions are fueled by passion stemming from a moral contamination embedded within the lineage of her family.

Dacre certainly shows the consequences of a lack in principled training for women, for Victoria "could not feel gratitude," "could inflict pain without remorse," "possessed an unshrinking relentless soul," with a mind that was "an eternal night which the broad beam of virtue never illuminated," and a brain that worked with "the wildest rage, producing

[146] It should be mentioned that she also poisons an elderly servant in the process of testing the poison intended to be used on Berenza.

almost instant madness!" (78, 133, 196). Victoria's merciless violence serves as an example of the most extreme consequences that come from parental neglect of instilling domestic virtues in young women.[147] Although her parents shared responsibility for raising her with limited moral values, the majority of the blame for her crimes falls on her mother. This echoes Wollstonecraft's argument for the mother's responsibility of instilling her children with proper values, for she states that unless a child's mind has "uncommon vigour, womanish follies will stick to the character throughout life. The weakness of the mother will be visited on the children!" (263). The strong emphasis on familial lineage presents Italianness as a contaminant which is passed down from one generation to the other, continuously infecting the population with malice and perpetuating the immorality of the Italian character. This is precisely what makes the role of the woman so central to this discussion of heredity, as she is the locus of the family, and as Andrew Maunder states, "a guardian of bourgeois propriety and the moral health of the nation" (69). This also recalls Wollstonecraft's emphasis of strong nationhood being closely connected with virtuous mothering; and even though *Zofloya* showcases female deviance, it protects the moral reputation of Britain by keeping the villainous women outside of its borders. The translation of Italian femininity as infectious to proper society continues to assert England as culturally superior in its domestic and familial values.

As scholarship on *Zofloya* overwhelmingly focuses on Victoria, the novel's other Italian libertine woman, Megalena Strozzi, is mostly overlooked. Despite being a minor

[147] These consequences are specifically gendered in the novel; for Victoria's brother, Lorenzo, is the exact opposite of his sister: "a warm impassioned soul, yielding easily to the seductions of the wild and beautiful, capable of sacrificing himself to a sentiment of gratitude" (4). The character profile of Lorenzo exemplifies that the libertine upbringing is not as threatening in the case of men as it is for women.

character, her role is crucial for the framing of the Italian libertine woman as poisonous to masculinity. She is essentially a new, more consciously manipulative iteration of Signora Laurentini, and this is shown primarily through the psychological havoc she wreaks on Victoria's brother, Leonardo. When readers are introduced to Megalena, there is no explanation of her upbringing besides her being "by birth a Florentine," although it is clear through descriptions of her behavior that she lives a libertine life, perpetually seeking indulgence, pleasure, and passion (73). Megalena is characterized in terms of her lustful appetite and ability to manipulate men in pursuit of her own pleasure. This is seen initially with Berenza's description of her as a seductress who uses "witcheries" and "blandishment" to allure men (73). References to her presence are also always accompanied by adjectives commonly associated with the Italian identity; she is referred to throughout the text as "the vindictive Florentine," "the artful Florentine," "the machinating Florentine," and "the unfeeling Florentine." These terms appear more than once, often replacing Megalena's name, thus emphasizing her distinctly Florentine identity and positioning her as a female version of the stereotypical Italianate villain.[148] This characterization of Megalena also subverts gender identification, highlighting her villainy over her womanhood. Adriana Craciun mentions that Dacre disrupts the idea of a stable subject/natural corporeal identity, presenting "women characters who systematically perform actions 'unnatural' for women (such as dominate, assert, desire, aggress, and kill), thereby destabilizing the categories 'feminine' and 'female'" (154). Despite Megalena's

[148] To further contextualize the figure of the Italianate villain, I recall what my definition of it in the previous chapter: "The Italianate villain became a sort of stock character: cunning, wicked, with an unrestrained sexuality and loose morals--they make up a culture that runs on corruption and tyranny, and manifested within them are the domestic anxieties of an England whose main concern is the global spread of power" (5)

actions being uncharacteristic of a "proper" woman, they reinforce conceptions of malign Italianness and highlight the fatal consequences of libertine impulses.

Megalena's character may only take up a small portion of the novel, but the amount of impassioned hatred, remorseless murder-plotting and manipulation packed into her scenes render her far from a marginal presence. Before she is physically introduced into the narrative, she is further described by Berenza as one whose "*undisciplined passions* hurry into the most *abject excesses*" (74, italics mine). This explanation of Megalena's behaviors recalls Signora Laurentini's "delirium of Italian love"; she, too, is driven by her unrestrained passions which lead her to commit heinous acts against those who reject her seductions. To be an Italian woman in love is again shown as a complete loss of control,[149] and her presence continues to disempower masculinity. In the case of Megalena, her acquaintance with the young and vulnerable Leonardo, Victoria's brother, is the impetus that sets off a chain of horrific crimes and brutal deaths. Megalena swiftly becomes fixated on Leonardo, devoting her entire being to "fascinate and seduce him" with her "wild unconquerable love." (105, 119). The gender dynamic between the two is also reversed, for Leonardo becomes effeminized in Megalena's presence with his passions being "innocent, peaceful and refined," and she expresses characteristically Italian masculine "turbulent, painful, and wild" sentiments (105). Given Megalena's unruly character, her masculinization is unsurprising; for instance, Gilbert and Gubar address the representation of "unconventional" women in the nineteenth century in these terms: "Assertiveness,

[149] Once again, I call attention to the words used to characterize Italian love; in Megalena's case, it defined by "frenzy," which is defined in the *OED* as "Mental derangement; delirium, or temporary insanity; in later use chiefly the uncontrollable rage or excitement of paroxysm of mania." This emphasizes yet again the unnatural state of Italian (feminine) love, as also described in Signora Laurentini's case with her being expressed as in a state of "delirium."

aggressiveness--all characteristics of a male life of 'significant action'--are 'monstrous' in women precisely because 'unfeminine' and therefore unsuited to a gentle life of 'contemplative purity'" (28). Megalena leads her life in an "unfeminine" manner, lusting after men, plotting murder (convincing her lover to commit the crimes for her), and experiencing pleasure in witnessing others' pain. Allowing her to just be a woman would have been dangerously subversive.[150]

It does not take long for Megalena's venomous influence to dominate Leonardo's judgment and cultivate an "unbounded passion" that had "bewitched and enslaved his heart" (106). The unrestrained dynamic between the two lovers is exacerbated when the "demon of jealousy" is awakened after another woman, Theresa, sets her eyes on Leonardo (111). Megalena's entire countenance takes a dark and threatening shift as she witnesses an interaction between the two; she is suddenly filled with "vengeance burning in her breast," and a look "wherein was depicted the blackest rage, the deepest vengeance, and the bitterest scorn" (111, 112). This rage immediately becomes deadly, as the moment the two of them are again alone Leonardo notices Megalena's anger and desperately tries to stab himself in attempts to show his devotion to her. In response, Megalena takes the stiletto from his hand and implores him to murder Theresa to prove his fidelity: "You consent then to let it shed the blood of the insolent Venetian. … And to bring it to me again, stained and dripping with her gore!" (114-115). This impulsive, homicidal urge brought on by jealousy is redolent of Signora Laurentini's hasty decision to orchestrate the Marchioness's murder. Only Megalena's masculinized rage inspires the more violent and

[150] For more on the masculinization of criminal women in *Zofloya,* see Craciun's book, pp. 149-155.

masculine death by stabbing rather than the more subtle, feminine death by poison, developing the Italian woman into a new, even more monstrous antiheroine.

The blood lust does not stop here; rather, it only becomes more acute when Megalena spots her previously beloved Berenza in the arms of Victoria at a party, and "with a basilisk's eye she gazed upon her, breathing destruction and revenge" (117). She demands Leonardo to kill Berenza for her, exclaiming, "...thou shalt execute my vengeance on him!" (117). While Leonardo at first is hesitant to kill a man unknown to him, Megalena is able to skillfully manipulate him into believing Berenza to be the "betrayer" and "deceiver" of her youth who has publicly shamed her. Leonardo, whose naïveté left him hanging on Megalena's every word and eager to defend her honor, immediately agrees to yet again kill on her behalf, passionately declaring: "He who offends thee, dies!" (118). Megalena, using her powers of seductive enchantment, establishes a pattern of female manipulation over men in Dacre's works, also seen in the behaviors of Victoria and Oriana. As James A Dunn states, "Feminine eros in Dacre's logic is an accelerator, energizing particles of desire and focusing them upon a male target" (308). The male character's powers are weakened by these particles which transforms them into both victims of the libertine woman and perpetrators on her behalf. Indeed, Leonardo becomes a puppet, with Megalena knowing exactly how and when to pull his strings in her favor.

The scene directly after his agreement to kill Berenza deserves a closer look, as it exemplifies the extent of Megalena's power over Leonardo. Nervous that his passion will wear off and that he will begin to reason with principle, Megalena gives him enough wine to ensure a steady level of drunkenness that will maintain his "delusions of fancy." She, however, attentively drinks very little of the "potent wine" so as to keep her senses and to

"preserve her empire over him" (119). Her scheming proves to be successful, for as the narrator states: "Megalena never appeared more beautiful to him than at those times when she was urging him to the commission of some horrible evil" (119). Megalena, cognizant of her ability to stupefy Leonardo's senses, shows theatrical gratitude for his willingness to avenge her, therefore removing his "power of refusing to do so" (119). Leonardo, horrified at the consequences of her rage and the possibility of her abandonment of him, continues to acquiesce even when he feels doubt, for "how to acknowledge to her, that his soul, shuddering, recoiled from the idea of murder, he knew not" (119). I contend that this scene reinforces the thread of contamination running through these novels, as Megalena uses liquor to poison the unsuspecting Leonardo's personal judgment and agency.[151] As "the fumes of the wine mounted to his brain," he becomes paralyzed in his inability to react of his own accord (119). The result of this encounter is Leonardo's immediate departure from the home to go and stab Berenza in the heart, in an attempt to kill an innocent man "who had never injured him--whom even he did not know" (120). This moment contextualizes Megalena's role as the metaphorical "poisoner" of Leonardo's mind. As Ian Burney notes in his book on poison in 19th century literature, poisoners "eschewed obvious, face-to-face conflict; their violence operated at a remove from the violated body; they never revealed their intentions, masking their murderous designs under precisely the opposite guise (as nurturers, or even healers)" (16). While Leonardo was aware of Megalena's homicidal plans, she maintains the ability to transform his vacillation into determination to fulfill her

[151] As Pal Lapinski notes, "The action of poison therefore remained invisible, covert and resistant to easy classification" (39). Leonardo's intoxicated love for Megalena keeps him from realizing her intentions to corrupt him in the pursuit of her own violent desires.

wishes, regardless of the innocent lives to be lost in the process. Megalena uses her desirability as psychological warfare, exploiting Leonardo's youthful innocence to satisfy her own murderous impulses.

Leonardo's transition to Megalena's murderous sidekick is correlated to the national idea of English character being contaminated by Italianness. As Findlen notes, dishonorable behavior in men was a "result of pernicious foreign influence," for "Italy had seduced and corrupted them" (30). The Gothic exacerbates this xenophobic superstition by making it gendered in its condemnation of Italian femininity. The novels in this chapter demonstrate that it is not just Italy, but transgressive Italian women who corrupt innocent men and lead them to committing immoral acts. Furthermore, as seen earlier in the discussion of Victoria, *Zofloya* strongly emphasizes the blame of "bad" mothers whose lack of attentive instruction becomes the impetus for criminality. This shows up again in this scene with Leonardo, for the narrator states:

> Such was the *fatal* empire that a worthless wanton had acquired over a young and susceptible heart, left it its wild energies, … and thus darkly coloured became the future character of one, yielding progressively to the most horrible crimes, which, if differently directed in early youth, might have become an honor and ornament to human nature (115).

Thus, in the Gothic novels of Radcliffe and Dacre, corruption traces back to Italian women. The seed of libertinism is planted by the mother and its poison is passed down to her children, determining their fate. The effects of libertinism do not resonate the same in both sexes; however, they remain dormant in men such as Leonardo, making him an honorable man until he is debased by Megalena. The combination of women and libertinism, however,

is shown to be a lethal one from the start. For as Gilbert and Gubar note, once the nineteenth century "angel of the house" topples off her pedestal, "she is transformed into a monster, a killer of men, a less than human creature with a fishy tale" (xxiii).

As is the case with most nineteenth-century novels, the monster is not allowed to survive the end of the tale. Much like Signora Laurentini, both Megalena and Victoria meet gruesome deaths. Although neither of these women ever experience remorse for their crimes; their deaths are the ultimate punishment for their criminal acts. Megalena dies by stabbing herself with a stiletto in the breast, her last words being directed to Leonardo: "*I* escape an ignominious death!" (263). Even her death is masculinized as she boldly commits upon herself the phallic act of stabbing, a job she had previously delegated to Leonardo. Unlike Signora Laurentini, Megalena dies remorseless for her sins; rather she boldly takes her own life so as to avoid the humiliation of judgment being enacted on her by others. Victoria, on the other hand, meets death unwillingly and filled with terror for when Zofloya leads her to a rocky precipice, she sees the figures of Lilla, Berenza and Henriquez, feeling no pity for killing Lilla, yet after seeing the figures of the two men "remorse filled her guilty soul, but filled it too late, for it came accompanied by *despair*!" (265-6). Once she declares Zofloya's possession of her soul, he reveals himself as Satan and condemns her sins before throwing her over the cliff to her death. The novel makes clear that its violent end contains instructive purpose, not just by the fate of the characters themselves but through the final reflections that the narration leaves for readers to ponder. The last sentence of the novel states: "Either we must suppose that the love of evil is born with us (which would be an insult to the Deity), or we must attribute them (as appears more consonant with reason) to the suggestions of infernal influence" (268). As the entirety of the novel makes very clear,

bad mothering opens the pathways for infernal influence to contaminate youthful souls. Evil in Dacre spawns from erring femininity, which is perceived to run rampant in Italian culture. With her ability to contaminate the population and the minds of men, seducing them to moral ruin, *Zofloya* demonstrates that there is no place in proper society for the Italian libertine woman.

Just one year after *Zofloya* was published in 1807, Dacre published another novel that explores the ramifications of libertinism more profoundly, *The Libertine.* Despite it being her least studied work, Jennifer Airey notes, "it offers unique insights into her ideological beliefs" (229). As we will see, it also overtly perpetuates anti-Italian sentiment given that the fatal impacts of libertinism are brought forth distinctly by the Italian characters. Composed of four volumes, the novel recounts the story of a libertine Italian-English man, Angelo D'Albini, and the lives that his debauched lifestyle ruins in its wake, particularly that of the innocent orphan Gabrielle. Early in the novel, Angelo impregnates Gabrielle in a fit of passion and promptly abandons her to continue his pursuit of pleasure in Naples. What follows is a long-winded account of their inconsistent and unstable union as they weave in and out of one another's lives, wreaking havoc on the livelihoods of those around them and ultimately barreling towards their own destruction. However, given my focus is not on male libertinism, I will push Angelo to the sidelines, despite him being the main character and libertine of the story, as suggested by the title.[152] In this section I will be

[152]It is to be noted that Angelo's hybrid identity, being half Italian and half English, is also demonstrative of the understanding of libertinism in connection to Italianness and climate theory. In speaking of Angelo, Fiorenza, Oriana's lover states: "Even this half Italian, if you do not turn him speedily to account, will find his English blood beginning to cool the half which is Italian, and soberly divesting himself of the mere atmospheric heat which influences him in this country, return to his own frigid clime, as indifferent as he left it" (223).

exploring the novel's scheming female libertine, the Genovese Oriana. While *Zofloya* brings female villainy to center stage with Victoria, *The Libertine* relegates it to the background; as Airey states, "their evil machinations are of interest primarily for their effects on Gabrielle and her family" (225). While this is true, I suggest that Oriana's character, like her gothic antiheroine predecessors, demonstrates Britain's paranoia towards disobedient women and the Italian influence over the "innocent" British character. Diane Hoeveler rightly points out that "All Italians, it seems, are coded as 'other' to the normative 'French' (read: English) characters" (90). *The Libertine* does just this, as it explores the threatening influence of Italianness on its non-Italian characters such as the Swiss Gabrielle[153] and even the half-Italian, half-English Angelo himself.[154]

Like Signora Laurentini and Victoria, it is clear that Oriana's libertine lifestyle is a result of a failed upbringing. It is stated that her biological parents left her to be nursed as a child by the wife of a poor fisherman; "but subsequently these parents, whose infamy and want of principle appeared to have been transmitted to their offspring, abandoned her to the mercy of poverty-struck wretches" (2: 145). Despite not being raised by her real parents, her later actions suggest that she has inherited their lack of concern for upholding domesticity and protecting the family unit. [155] Her actions throughout the novel are all

[153] Although he does not come up in my analysis, Angelo's libertinism is also what leads to the death of Gabrielle's father. Upon discovering that Angelo has impregnated Gabrielle before his prompt departure, her father is overtaken by grief over his daughter's ruin and dies shortly after.

[154] This is reminiscent of *Udolpho's* Signora Laurentini, whose Italianness corrupted and destroyed the lives of the French Marquis and Marchioness.

[155] This becomes especially clear when considering the fact that Gabrielle, too, is an orphan; yet her father raised her until his death with the utmost morality, shielding her (even too excessively) from threatening influences and the dangers that life poses to a young woman. Despite losing her honor, Gabrielle maintains her innocent, loyal and dutiful character until her death.

dictated by her tempestuous emotions, which, like all Italian women who show up in British novels of the period, are guided solely by her lustful passions. This becomes clear from the moment that Oriana is introduced, which happens when Gabrielle, after having given birth to Angelo's daughter, tracks him down in Naples and disguises herself as a page named Eugene to be close to him. Angelo discloses that he is in love with Oriana who is an orphan living with her brother in their late parents' estate. Through her visits to Oriana on Angelo's behalf, Gabrielle quickly makes a "discovery of a most gross imposture," a view of "human depravity"; Fiorenza, the man who was supposed to be her brother, was in fact Oriana's "favoured and most imperious lover" (1: 210). Even with her pursuit of Angelo alongside her love affair with Fiorenza, Oriana's attentions quickly turn to Eugene/Gabrielle, and after months of visits Oriana promptly declares her love: "I love you, Eugene, more than I can express! I love you better than D'Albini, better than Fiorenza -- my brother … in short, so much that I would sacrifice them both for you" (1: 233). Thus, Oriana is depicted as a woman utterly led by her own desires, constantly shifting as new men cross her path. This is directly opposed to the innocent, ideal feminine love represented by Gabrielle, who loyally and persistently pursues Angelo despite his consistent rejection of her for the experience of new pleasures. Gabrielle is a woman "whose soul knew not vice," one who "loved differently; her's was an ardent, pure, and unsophisticated passion, which, having taken root in a rich native soil, was calculated to exist, while she existed, strong and immutable" (1: 80). Her unfaltering loyalty only makes the differences between her womanhood and Oriana's more stark; they become the examples of what Stephen Gundle

refers to as the "English Rose" against the "Bella Italiana."[156] Oriana becomes the symbol of the women that British travel writers such as Sharpe, Watkins, Boswell and Piozzi harp on about in their works, expressing their sexual identity to be both enigmatic and disdainful. Findlen observes that "the fascination with--as well as fear of--sexual ambiguity lay at the heart of understanding Italy's alleged cultural difference. Many travelers observed that Italy was full of exceptional women who did not abide by the rules of society as many northern Europeans understood them" (17).[157] Out of the three novels discussed in this chapter, *The Libertine* is the one that most clearly presents these dichotomous conceptions of femininity. Although neither Gabrielle nor Oriana succeed in the libertine world of the novel, Oriana's femininity is shown to be *the* threatening force that destabilizes proper domesticity.

The first example of this is when Gabrielle discovers Oriana's plot alongside Fiorenza to poison Angelo in order for her to acquire all of his money and possessions, which he had ignorantly promised her. Gabrielle manages to interfere and prevent Angelo's impending death by causing commotion around the poisoned wine, leading to the glass

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[156] In his article "The 'Bella Italiana' and the 'English Rose': Reflections on Two National Typologies of Feminine Beauty," he draws upon the differences between the two drastically opposing types of women, emphasizing Italy's focus on physicality as opposed to England's idealisation of femininity. Notably, he quotes Guglielmo Ferrero from his work *L'Europa giovane* (1897), which shows his theory about England's ideologies of womanhood, a woman being not purely "uno strumento di piacere ardentemente desiderato… la donna è amata non solo perché è bella, ma anche perché è buona, dolce, pietosa, perché è una Venere non solo di corpo ma anche di anima." My translation: A woman is not purely "an ardently desired instrument of pleasure … a woman is loved not only because she is beautiful, but also because she is good, sweet, and pious, because she is a Venus not only through her body but also through her soul."

[157] This is also reminiscent of the comments made by Sharp and Boswell about their impressions of Italian women quoted in the introduction.

being broken and his life being spared[158], but this ultimately only strengthens Oriana's feelings towards the disguised page. The failed murder increases both her hatred of her co-conspirator Fiorenza and her indifference towards Angelo, which "left room in her heart for the indulgence of a warmer sentiment, or rather sensation, which she cherished, at once, for its novelty, and for the pleasure she derived from it … for the youthful Eugene" (2: 5). As her lust for Eugene/Gabrielle grows, so does her desire to rid herself of Fiorenza's control; thus, she plans for his murder by convincing Eugene/Gabrielle to interfere in the second attempt at Angelo's life in order to kill Fiorenza instead. Desperate yet again to protect Angelo at all costs, Gabrielle manages to trick the assassins into believing Fiorenza to be Angelo; although when they stab him and discover their mistake, one of them stabs Gabrielle and leaves her wounded. Once she is left alone under Angelo's care, Gabrielle finally reveals her identity to him, whose enamored sentiments are reawakened upon learning of Gabrielle's loyalty to him. The discovery of Gabrielle's true identity is a defining moment in the development of Oriana's character: up to this point in the novel, her libertinism has been showcased through her licentiousness and passive attempts at

[158] Despite Angelo's following suspicion of Oriana, he remains enamored by her. The narration therefore provides a reflection of the normalization of crime and murder in Italy, drawing a distinction between Italy and more "civil" countries, such as England: "In any other place than Italy, a circumstance like the once described here might have been sufficient ground for the deepest security of the law, for the disgrace or punishment of the persons convictied, and of course for a total and eternal breach between the part: but in this country the case is different; such occurrences are common, and a lover even ascertaining the intent of his mistress to poison him, not only would not feel himself induced to break with her, but he would even continue his visits to so dangerous an object. ---Picque, anger, jealously, will sometimes excited to this violent degree the resentment of the Italian fair, and if the venturous lover has reason to believe that either of these momentary sensations is the actuating impulse of his mistress's attempt, he can forgive her, and entertain no fears of future mischief: besides, the mode of thinking on this point is somewhat reciprocal; the lover indeed will not poison his fair one, if he suspects her fidelity, but he takes a shorter method; he plunges a stiletto in her breast, and often gives her no opportunity of vindication. Thus the country stamps the degree of crime, marks the criterion by which it is to be estimated, and gives the law to the opinions of the people" (1: 265).

murder. Learning of Gabrielle's deception and connection to Angelo brings forth the characteristic libertine monster hiding beneath her seductive facade. Not only is this representative of the stereotypical characterization of Italian jealousy, but it also recalls a common theme in women's writing that we find in both Wollstonecraft and Radcliffe: female rivalry. Maggie Kilgour elaborates on this theme in her book *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*: "Isolated in the domestic world, confined in the various spaces of the novel, women fight among themselves for male attention" (118). In all the texts explored in this chapter, we encounter women who are placed as rivals to one another: Signora Laurentini against the Marchioness, Victoria against Lilla, Megalena against Theresa and Victoria, and lastly Oriana against Gabrielle. On a broader scale, the animosity between binary female characters is representative of the patriarchal structures that dictate the lives and fates of *all* women, regardless of their place in society. The Gothic afforded a space for women writers such as Radcliffe and Dacre to subtly present a social critique that explores the vast consequences of a male-centric society; so subtle, in fact, that it has been largely overlooked by scholars. Jennifer Airey calls attention to this as she writes about Dacre's interest with "male narcissism and its consequences, woman-on-woman violence, and the destruction of innocent lives." She states that these themes are often "buried under layers of female self-condemnation or excessive gothic violence; as a result, modern critics have paid more attention to the villainy than to the male entitlement that motivates it" (229). However, something that has also been neglected in criticism is how the cultural identity of the villains provides women authors with the space to be bolder in their representation of these consequences, for the innate homosocial rivalry coupled with stereotypical Italian passion and libertinism leads to more extreme outcomes. Within the constructed Italian

world of their novels, Radcliffe and Dacre are able to more deeply explore the destruction of patriarchal social systems.

As Oriana's story continues down a darker path, female rivalry and the threat it poses becomes more central to the novel. Much like Signora Laurentini and Megalena, Oriana's monstrosity is awakened by the loss of a lover, or in her case, three lovers: the one that provided security (Fiorenza), the one that provided money (Angelo), and the one that provided youthful titillation (Eugene/Gabrielle). Given her orphaned, impoverished state before she met Fiorenza, the discovery of Gabrielle's identity causes her entire world to come crashing down, leaving her with nothing to lose. Left alone "humiliated, foiled, and entirely defeated, at once in her views and calculations, the rage of the abandoned Oriana knew no bounds; she breathed only death and vengeance; and her chiefest desire was to inflict the first with her own hand, upon the supposed Eugene" (81).[159] Again like our previous antiheroines, the rage becomes directed not at the male lover, but at the woman who has stolen his attention. Once again, the core of the domestic household is threatened by malign feminine Italianization. *The Libertine* is the novel in this chapter that demonstrates this most blatantly, as it poses the indecent Oriana against the innocent Gabrielle whose only focus is to protect her family unit by reuniting Angelo with her and their children. Oriana's identity in the novel becomes reduced entirely to that of a dark

[159] Further reading in this section is interesting as it provides a reflection upon the virtuous versus the "unprincipled mind": "Nothing so much excited the rage of an artful and unprincipled mind, as the idea of having been deceived, and of having betrayed its inmost guilty workings. The superiority of virtue never strikes them in a view so manifest, and so detested, as when it possesses the resolution and the power to frustrate their evil machinations. That virtue should be combined with policy, and be endowed, at once, with the energy and ingenuity to confound vice, and to entangle it in its own snares, seems to be a sort of supererogation, and a detraction from its own peculiar prerogative, as if it were incompatible with virtue and to be wise, and vice alone, from its superior cunning, should ever triumphantly bear off the palm" (81-82)

force in the background, living only to seek out any opportunity to drive Gabrielle and Angelo to ruin. The novel shows this with the passage of time, for years pass by and leave Oriana's objectives unaltered:

> …although upwards of two years had elapsed in fruitless machinations and vain attempts, Oriana was not to be thus baffled; obstacles which long since must have discouraged a less vindictive mind, seemed but to add fuel to the hate which burned in her; she still continued to watch every movement of the objects of her long-desired vengeance; the desire of vengeance was the predominant sensation of her soul, and for that she seemed to abandon every other consideration (142-3).[160]

This novel does not present readers with the excessive gothic violence seen in earlier texts; rather it shows what many would have considered to be even *more* unnerving: an unconstrained foreign woman's relentless persistence in destroying familial harmony. *The Libertine* presents a battle between narcissistic, amoral libertinism and domestic restoration, and everyone, even the libertine Angelo himself, becomes victimized by Oriana's villainy.

While there are no more instances of literal poisoning after the attempt on Angelo's life, Oriana's libertinism becomes the contaminant whose effects seep into the lives of those who come into contact with her. This actually begins even before she comes into contact with Fiorenza and Angelo; her innate libertinism first tainted the young Paulina, the daughter of the impoverished family that took her in as their own. The recollection of

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[160] Another quotation that demonstrates how Oriana's identity becomes consumed by revenge: "..for the continued contemplation of her desired and insatiate revenge, had literally deprived her of peace and rest; already she led the life of the tortured upon earth, racked with never-ceasing pain" (152-3).

Oriana's history provides the information that "frequent communication with Oriana had early corrupted her [Paulina's] principles. She had praised her exquisite beauty, and this had excited a confusion of ideas in her mind, which inevitably laid the foundation of her future depravity, from having taught her to value this cherished beauty, as her highest merit, and most valuable possession" (151). Oriana's corruption of Paulina's character quite literally demonstrates the destruction of "proper" femininity; the emphasis on her sexual desirability overtakes her concern for nurturing the domestic qualities essential for building a respectable home. This would have been massively unsettling for readers; as Cannon Schmitt notes, "Threatened femininity is central to the Gothic previously for its function as a crucial but contested site in discourses of identity, chief among them the discourse of the nation" (11). As we see with the case of Paulina, Oriana's libertine influence is the poison that infiltrates and slowly kills Gabrielle's family alongside their reputation. Thus, the destruction of the feminine ideal *and* the respectable family becomes the true horror of this novel, for it represents an enfeeblement of the foundation of British identity. In a period where novels had a constructive purpose of reinforcing gender codes, diversion from, or in the case of Radcliffe and Dacre, complete destruction of the norm transformed the works from being a source of entertainment to a societal threat. This is specifically true given the fact that the majority of the Gothic's readership consisted of women, who as Christopher Pittard states, were identified by critics and social commentators as "vulnerable readers" who were "at risk of becoming involved with contaminating narratives" and "susceptible to moral threat" (39). Reading was seen to be particularly linked to conceptions of sexuality. Jacqueline Pearson calls attention to this in her book *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation*, in which she

states that while reading "could figure the pleasures of virtuous sexuality, it could also threaten the dangers of corrupt sexuality" (105). Although with *The Libertine*, Italian libertine sexuality served as a safeguard for Dacre to be able to produce a text that explores the disintegration of the patriarchal family unit from a seductive, moral-bending perspective.

The unraveling of the novel's central family unit begins when Oriana decides to use Paulina as a pawn in her plan to destroy any chances of their familial restoration. After two years of persistent failed attempts, Oriana sends Paulina into Angelo's path to seduce him. Angelo, giving into his innately Italian libertine impulses[161], once again abandons Gabrielle and his family and moves to London with his new love interest. Although Oriana's scheme makes up a small portion of the four-volume novel, I argue that this is a significant turning point that sets off a domino effect of misfortune for Gabrielle and Angelo, which ultimately leads to the fate of them and their children. Once the plan has succeeded and she finds herself alone with Angelo in England, Paulina's Italianness is revealed as she becomes weary of his company: "Her modest deportment, bashful innocence, and timidity, gradually, nay quickly, vanished. She became bold, tyrannical, capricious, and, presuming on the misplaced fondness of Angelo, extravagant and ridiculous in her requests" (171). This is immediately juxtaposed against Gabrielle's innocence, for "Now then it was, that the ill-fated Gabrielle appeared before him in the full perfection of *her real beauty;* never, till this time, had he so fully appreciated her; she stood before him, decked in the bright glory of her various virtues; she held his forsaken child in her arms…" (171). Gabrielle thus

[161] Refer back to footnote 44 which addresses Angelo's juxtaposing Italian and English identities.

becomes enshrined as *the* ideal woman: not only is she gentle, maternal, and virtuous; her entire existence is engrossed by the feminine instinct of caring for her children and their father. Despite having had her virtue taken from Angelo at a young age and birthing two of his illegitimate children, her desire to fulfill her domestic duties becomes her reason for existing--until it literally sucks the life out of her. As Gilbert and Gubar affirm, "the arts of pleasing men … are not only angelic characteristics; in more worldly terms, they are the proper acts of a lady" (24). Unfortunately for Gabrielle, in the world of *The Libertine,* not even the "angel" stands a chance against the power of an Italian woman libertine's seductions. The emotional ramifications that follow Angelo's second departure set off the slow decline of Gabrielle's health which will eventually lead to her death.

Oriana's presence in the novel is brief, but intense. Much like a poison, Oriana's attacks remain invisible, persistent and gradual. Even having succeeded in her scheme to lead Angelo away from Gabrielle, she continues to exercise her control over them by seizing and destroying every letter Angelo writes to Gabrielle to keep her from obtaining any hope for their reunion. And when Paulina's own libertine impulses lead her to tire of Angelo's company and become eager to "quit him for one more suited to her taste," Oriana's obstinance persists: "Her mind became racked with jealous malice and corroding fear; she put in requisition every power of mischievous invention she possessed, determined, if possible, to prolong for ever the period of their mutual misery" (186).

Paulina's departure, however, marks the end of Oriana's direct reign over the lives of Angelo and Gabrielle, for they are reunited in England, far from her spiteful reach. While the impacts remain, Oriana herself mostly disappears from the remainder of the novel. The last scene in which she is physically present in the novel bursts with impassioned Italianate

jealousy. When she opens a letter from Angelo expressing his continuous affection for Gabrielle despite his abandonment, "Her *rage* and hatred increased at this discovery; bitter *envy*, and burning desire of redoubled *vengeance*, shook her breast," with "her *wild and ferocious sensations*" she destroyed the letter "with an *infuriate violence* and *malice truly infernal*" (187-8, italics mine). This last image of Oriana succinctly encapsulates the British conception of the Italian woman: ruled by her passions and driven by her libertinism, she is the monstrous opposite to the rising figure of what will become the "Victorian angel-woman."[162]

Following the well-established trend we have seen in the earlier texts, the monstrous woman must be eradicated before the novel reaches its conclusion. Angelo learns of Oriana's fate at the end of the novel when he returns to Naples after Gabrielle's death, and its explanation deserves to be quoted in full:

> The wretched Oriana … no longer existed on the face of the earth; she had paid the debt of her vices and profligacy in a premature death. Having met with a lover who proved a second Fiorenza … wearied by her stubborn perseverance, and impatient at her presumption, he one day, during a furious quarrel, plunged his stiletto in her breast: she languished for a time under the wound, and then expired in agony, while the bastard who had inflicted the blow hastily secured the whole of what she possessed, and fled. Such had been the fate of Oriana, who had ended her career of infamy by a miserable death, and whose dissolute life had merited no better catastrophe. (37-8)

[162] Gilbert and Guber, 24.

With Oriana's death, some level of moral order is achieved as the novel comes to a close. This passage presents its moral message fervently: being that the violence of Oriana's murder is justified by the extent of her malevolent transgressions. This exemplifies the extent to which threatened femininity was perceived as a danger to proper British society. Oriana may not have been a killer herself, but she could be considered as a murderer of the family in her persistent attempts to tear Angelo and Gabrielle apart. By the end of the story, Gabrielle dies as a result of her long-term decline due to stress and despair, their son Felix becomes a robber who is condemned to death for his crimes, their daughter Agnes goes mad in a nunnery after living most of her life as an orphan, and Angelo kills himself in guilt-ridden agony for the fate of his family. Oriana's wrath may not have been the sole reason for the family's fate, but her toxic influence certainly played an integral role in leading to their decline. The final reflections of the novel after Angelo's suicide solidify the importance of marriage and a united family for society: "Marriage became the bond of society--the strong, though imperceptible chain which linked mankind together… To outrage the sacred institution, entails misery and ruin upon unborn myriads… causes an unknown offspring to wander through the world unclaimed, and plunges them in a vortex of misfortune and crime" (223-4). In the case of Oriana, not only did she come from a broken family unit, she lives as an unmarried libertine woman and becomes consumed by keeping the possibility of marital harmony out of Gabrielle and Angelo's reach.[163] She is a living example of the novel's moral message, beginning as the victim of an assault against the "sacred institution"

[163] This is not to undermine the impact of Angelo's libertinism itself, for it is also greatly at fault. Given the focus on women libertinism, I emphasize Oriana's role in instigating Angelo's impulses, especially through her ultimate plot with Paulina.

and then becoming a perpetrator, with her actions playing a part in thrusting Paulina and ultimately even Felix into the "vortex of misfortune and crime." Her role in the novel serves as an example of how these "crimes" against domesticity infect the minds of future generations, thus threatening the moral reputation of a society. Oriana's death, like those of the antiheroines that came before her, affirm readers that this lifestyle cannot come without fatal consequences. However, it is also crucial to consider the intentions of the women authors who created such monstrous antiheroines and the larger cultural turn it is addressing. Gilbert and Gubar have called attention to how the nineteenth century brought about a fixation on the "paradigmatic polarities of angel and monster," which we see as present in the various women positioned against one another in the novels of Radcliffe and Dacre (77). The figure of the libertine antiheroine became crucial to their literary freedom, for "by projecting their rebellious impulses not into their heroines but into mad or monstrous women (who are suitably punished in the course of the novel or poem), female authors dramatize their own self-division, their desire to both accept the strictures of patriarchal society and to reject them" (78). Thus, each of these transgressive antiheroines are reflections of a repressed desire to escape the confinement of the strictly enforced gender conventions of their reality. The power they afford their authors lies distinctly in their creation, not their deaths.

Certainly, their Italian identity adds another layer of complexity to their characters. The threads that run through Oriana, Megalena and Signora Laurentini's stories are illustrative also of the cultural purpose they hold in the Gothic. Rather than being unique characters in their own right; they become stock figures, or caricatures of italianness and feminine libertinism, governed by lust, jealousy and their obsession with vengeance. Their

characterization is a reduction of Italian femininity; given that it is so closely associated with the sexual promiscuity that defines female libertinism, the Italian woman is thus little more than a cultural trope that jeopardizes the institution of marriage and "proper" domesticity. As Pal-Lapinski argues, the near exotic[164] was "a dangerously seductive, hybrid cultural space inhabited by erotic, transgressive and infected figures," and in the case of the Gothic, this figure often comes in the form of Italian female libertine. These demonized feminine figures cannot exist at the forefront; in the case of Signora Laurentini, Megalena and Oriana, the novels continuously delegate them to the background, their threats persistently looming over the lives of the innocent and even their crimes being carried out by others in their place. Like a slowly administered poison, their malice gradually contaminates the mind and morale of those around them until it reaches disastrous consequences. Each of the Italian women explored here, whether they be major or minor in the grand scheme of the novels' events, hold major significance. Each of them destabilizes conventional gender roles, the institution of marriage and the security of the family.[165] Their cultural otherness marks them as the antithesis to English domestic womanhood. Cannon Schmidt states that "Foreignness, so vociferously defended against, penetrates English domestic space literally and figuratively--a penetration that then serves as the rationale for still more urgent attempts to ensure national purity" (14). The Italian

[164] According to Pal-Lapinski, the "near exotic could be mapped as Italy, Spain, Greece and parts of eastern Europe (remote Turkey, India, North Africa and far East)" (2).

[165] These topics were a significant topic of discourse beginning in the eighteenth centuries and continued into the nineteenth; as Paula Findlen notes, "As a great deal of recent scholarship has shown, the eighteenth century was an especially important moment of the reassessment of traditional roles of men and women. It was also a critical period in the emergence of a new understanding of sexual behaviour and affective relations" (8).

libertine woman in the Gothic plays an essential role here, for it is her ultimate sacrifice that reinforces English "national purity," which is so deeply rooted in ideal femininity.

The traces left behind by the Italian libertine women of the Gothic are thus deserving of more critical attention, for their significance in the Anglo-Italian cultural conflict and the construction of Englishness and domestic womanhood is undeniable. As James Watt suggests, we can read Gothic fictions as "analogous nationalist products,"[166] basing their thrilling tales in faraway territories in attempts to both define a national identity and justify the continuance of British imperial aggression. Given that Italy was perceived as a place that breeds passion, violence and degeneracy, it provided the perfect environment to explore a deep-rooted English anxiety which dominates the Gothic: threatened femininity.[167] It is important to recall that the construction of Italian women is coming from female authors who never traveled to Italy nor had firsthand contact with the culture, yet their representations shape the way in which Italian femininity comes to be represented in subsequent literary works, as we will see in the work of George Eliot. In a time dominated by discourses surrounding Wollstonecraftian femininity, which preaches as Janet Todd notes that "sexuality depends on depravity of appetite that brings the sexes together, a distasteful activity that weakens the frame and coarsens the spirit," to be used for "procreation only,"[168] the "free" Italian woman was the perfect case study to exemplify

[166] Watt, 13.

[167] For more on this, see Watt's book. For example, he states that threatened femininity "comes to stand in metonymically for the English nation itself, a generalization of Gothic narrative with imperial as well as domestic consequences" (3).

[168] Todd, xxiii. This is taken from Janet Todd's Introduction to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* See bibliography for full citation.

the consequences of veering away from respectable sexuality. While female gothic writers, as Diane Hoeveler rightly notes, were revolutionary in their attempts at a "redefinition of sexuality and power in a gendered, patriarchal society," as well as reshaping the family and "deconstructing both patrimonialism and patrilineality," we must also consider the cultural cost that comes along with this new form of writing. Lesa Scholl notes in her book *Translation, Authorship and the Victorian Professional Woman* that "Ideas of foreignness are central to the ways these women learned to redefine themselves and the roles available to them. Indeed, they can be said to translate and rewrite female identity through the way they speak of the position of women within other cultural contexts" (129). However, in acknowledging this, we must confront the network of power relations existing within this process of cultural transfer. In the case of Gothic women writers translating Italian femininity, the revolutionary elements of their work also force us to reckon with the inherent xenophobic nationalism embedded within British works of the time and reconsider how systems of power have played a role in our understanding of femininity across cultures.

Chapter Three
Translation through Travel and Scholarship: The Evolution of Italian Representation in the Works of Germaine de Staël and George Eliot

At the height of the Gothic novel's popularity, there was simultaneously the rise of women's travel writing, a genre which made a significant impact in constructing the British imagination of Italy. Before the last phase of the Grand Tour, women rarely traveled for leisure or education given that it was unnecessary for preparation of a domestic life.[169] The wave of women travelers beginning in the late eighteenth century brought about a new identity for women writers, who were now instilled with a sense of literary authority through the interpretation of foreign cultures that they were not afforded at home. It also introduced new perspectives on Italy, for the experience of women travelers in Italy differed greatly from their male counterparts due to their social position. Arturo Tosi rightly states that "The fact that most British women travellers did not regard Italy as a museum of antiquities but rather as a hospitable land of refuge from domestic oppression and social ostracism, certainly encouraged them to analyse the nature of social relations more objectively" (244-245). Real, nonfiction accounts of Italy thus began to become more nuanced and sympathetic. However, outside of the literary realm, conceptions of Italy were also beginning to shift as the Risorgimento, or the nineteenth-century movement towards Italian unification, came to public attention.[170] Andrew Thompson notes that the political

[169] For more, see: Tosi, Arturo. "Language and the Grand Tour: Linguistic Experiences of Traveling in Early Modern Europe."

[170] The Risorgimento, or "Resurgence," is commonly acknowledged as the period between the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the Italian Unification in 1860-61 and the final inclusion of Rome as the capital in 1870. However, O.J. Wright argues that the movement to unify Italy actually began in 1713 or earlier with the grouping together of regions to make the Kingdom of Sardinia and the

situation in Italy combined with the "widespread poverty and degradation caused by oppression and misgovernment drew both sympathy for Italy and condemnation of the Austrians" (15). This investment in the Risorgimento, however, was largely self-serving, for it stemmed largely from the British attempts to forge their own national identity. As Patricia Cove states, the Risorgimento not only "reshaped Europe's geopolitical reality, but it also reframed how the British saw themselves, their politics and their place within Europe" (2). The prospects of Italy changing the geo-political structure of Europe combined with the romantic imaginings of its sublime landscape and the legacy of ancient Rome led to the British appropriation of the Italian cause in the interest of their own political projects. What the British saw in the Italian cause was an opportunity for self-definition: playing an integral role in the unification process would place Britain as a leader of European liberalism and, as O.J. Wright notes, pave the way towards "a new, more British World Order" (8). Thus, the Italian Risorgimento dominated the British political and cultural landscape throughout the nineteenth century, which also led to contradicting representations of Italian culture within the literary realm. Maura O'Connor's important work *The Romance of Italy and the English Political Imagination* calls attention to the role that British authors played in the process of cultural transfer: "English men and women have left extensive records that help document their roles in creating the ideals, myths, and representations that have circumscribed the borders of nations and nationalities in the first place. These writings bear witness to their very active participation in both traversing boundaries and establishing them" (2).

Kingdom of the Two Sicilie (4). The Risorgimento was led by three "founders" of modern Italy: Giuseppe Mazzini, Giuseppe Garibaldi and Count Camillo Benso.

This chapter proposes that women traveler writers were critical agents in the process of constructing and deconstructing the boundaries which determined the status of Anglo-Italian relations. In the previous chapter, we examined the works of women who only traveled to Italy through the imagination; this chapter explores the revisions of Italian representation that were brought about as a result of women's lived experiences within the *bel paese.*[171] Using Germaine de Staël's influential writings on Italy as a starting point, I will explore the works of George Eliot to trace the evolution of her cultural translations of Italy alongside her shifting identity as a traveler and emergent Italophile. Both Staël and Eliot experience a shift in their own relationship to Italian culture through their travels, and it is not until Eliot´s thorough cultural research during the composition of *Romola* that the possibilities of intermixing British and Italian femininities come to life. Thus, addressing the Italian female characters across their works, my chapter calls attention to an important shift in the translatability of Italian femininity in the nineteenth century; that is, from "otherness" to integration. As we saw in the works of Radcliffe and Dacre, Italian women were cast as menacing "others," embodying qualities considered threatening to respectable British womanhood. The Italian women of Staël's and Eliot's novels have greater access into British society largely due to their cultural hybridity, their presence introducing a new type of Anglo-Italian intermingled femininity into 19th-century British literature.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the travel writing of Hester Piozzi greatly influenced the construction of the Italian world encountered in Radcliffe's novels. Agorni notes that Piozzi's travel writing is often classified as part of the Grand Tour narrative

[171] Literally meaning "beautiful country." The term is the well-known name given to Italy, dating back to Dante and Petrarch.

tradition, thus cultivating an appropriative and negative image of Italy in order to highlight England as the "natural successor of the cultural prestige of Rome" (3). As relations shifted throughout the 19th century[172], a more diversified representation of Italy began to shine through the writing of women travelers recounting their experiences.[173] It is precisely here that we should be looking to find a deeper understanding of the role that Italy played in British literature of the time, for, as Agorni argues, including "'refracted' phenomena such as travel writing within our studies of translation clarifies how it also "creates new cultural meanings and relations" and "transforms existing ones," helping us to arrive "directly at the heart of cultural history" (2). Examining this phenomenon within the context of gender also reveals how women used travel writing as a medium through which they could imagine new realities beyond the social expectations of British femininity.[174] Furthermore, I suggest that we look at the fictional writings that come from women travelers in Italy as a form of travel writing, or rather as a form of the "translation-like phenomena" of which Agorni is speaking. Tosi refers to women travel writing as usually being in the form of correspondence, stating that it constitutes "letters to relatives or female friends, with a

[172] Travel to Italy also increased in popularity and became a subject of deep admiration. As Andrew Thompson states, "After 1815, and until about 1830, the British went to Italy in large numbers and the Italianate fashion became 'Italomania'" (14).

[173] Beyond George Eliot and Germaine de Staël other notable women travel writers included Margaret Fuller Ossoli, an American journalist, critic, editor, and translator (1810-1850), and English novelist Frances Milton Trollope (1779-1863).

[174] This wasn't the case with all Victorian women travelers; Lesa Scholl writes that there were many that brought the conventional characteristics of feminine domesticity to foreign lands, 'staunchly holding to the home culture (both in terms of the domestic sphere and home nation),' while others 'took advantage of the blurred boundaries of cultural expectations to explore other roles' (129-30). Given the more sympathetic sentiments towards Italy in the 19th century, it opened up the possibility to further explore cultural differences in regard to femininity and domesticity.

view to sharing personal information, observations and comments on the new realities they encountered abroad" (244). However, it is valuable to examine how the personal reflections of women travelers echo in the fictional worlds that they create, transforming them from the position of the observer to that of the guide. Their works present readers with a new vision of Italian culture and femininity that stems directly from the *lived* experiences of women writers themselves rather than being filtered through the perspectives of previous written accounts. In the case of Germaine de Staël and George Eliot, their Italian fiction is largely influenced by the accumulation of the observations they made before and during their travels in Italy. Both of these women expressed interest in Italy before ever visiting the country, and the classic Italian stereotypes can be found in their early works as a result. After extensive travels and research of Italian life and history, there is a drastic shift in the way they translate Italian culture for English and French-speaking[175] audiences. Despite the greater attempts to arrive at a deeper and more sympathetic understanding of Italy, many of their translations show that the discomfort surrounding Italian femininity is ever persistent. De Stael's *Corinne, or Italy,* and Eliot's "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" and *Romola* all present heroines who embody an Italian/English cultural hybridity. As I will show later, this also brings forth irreconcilable differences between

[175] In the case of Staël, it is important to keep in mind that her works are "double" translations, for they are filtered into English from the original French. From Staël's perspective, this translational relay would have only enriched the works; Françoise Massardier-Kenney states in his work "Staël, Translation, and Race" that Staël "is interested in the ways in which cultural hybridization can be apprehended as a gain for the culture that lets in influences from the outside" (4). Therefore, the translation from the original French both provides another layer of nuance to the British-Italian relay in Staël's works, as it also calls to attention how Staël uses the influence of foreign "discourses" to further question the values of French culture (Massardier-Kenney, 1).

British and Italian femininity which fail to be reckoned with until Eliot´s attempt in her writing of *Romola.*

Germaine de Staël's work serves as a meaningful bridge between the Italy we encounter in Gothic novels and the more nuanced version that develops in Victorian texts. As a cosmopolitan feminist "woman of letters" who was brave enough to publicly speak out against Napoleon's quest to conquer Europe, she became one of the most influential figures across the Continent.[176] Her writings on Italy paved the way for how it would be imagined by other writers of the nineteenth century. Both George Eliot[177] and Elizabeth Barrett Browning were familiar with her infamous[178] novel *Corinne, or Italy*. Eliot's Maggie Tulliver from *Mill on the Floss* reads and is unable to finish *Corinne* and Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* is known, as Patricia Cove asserts, as a "Victorian re-visioning" of Staël's Italian novel (19). I also argue that there is a significant proximity between Staël's Corinne and Eliot's first Italian heroine, Caterina, from her short story "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story," which demonstrates the ramifications of displaced Italian femininity. However, before unraveling the threads between Eliot and Staël's works, it is necessary to further decipher Staël's relationship to Italy, which shifted significantly after she traveled and spent time there

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[176] Robert Castillo states that Staël was "celebrated as a spellbinding conversationalist, political and social commentator, novelist and free spirit" and that "her role as a feminist woman of letters is acknowledged to be groundbreaking. As a writer she preferred to embrace large themes, taking all of Europe as her province" (1).

[177] In Andrew Thompson's *George Eliot and Italy,* he asserts that *Corinne* "had a tremendous influence, particularly on female readers, and Eliot knew the novel well" (52).

[178] *Corinne*'s popularity took off after it was translated for the first time in 1807 by Isabel Hill; as Robert Castillo notes, "... the novel had a powerful impact on Anglo-American and continental culture, influencing Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Sir Walter Scott, Charlotte Brontë, Benjamin Disraeli, George Eliot, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Felicia Hamans, Hannah More, Geraldine Jewsbury …" (2) To see the complete list of authors, refer to Castillo's text.

herself. Her comparative study of literature published in 1800, *On Literature, Considered in its Relationship to Social Institutions,* perpetuates the anti-Italian attitudes and stereotypes that persisted in eighteenth-century Grand Tour travel accounts. Staël's own cultural identity and language is important to take into account here; her French and Swiss background, as Castillo notes in his book *The Empire of Stereotypes: Germaine de Staël and the Idea of Italy*, situated her "at the crossroads of Northern and Southern currents of Europe" and "reinforced her cosmopolitan outlook" (1). Although she was writing in French, her writing is politically aligned with Northern European nations, regarding England as her "political ideal" and prescribing to the same prejudicial stereotypes of Italy that had reverberated before her time.[179] Castillo remarks that at this time Staël strongly held to the eighteenth-century concept of 'civilization,' meaning: "increasing civility and refinement of manners; a centralized, orderly, and responsible government; … a literature, mutually trusting, cooperative, law-abiding, and responsible public; … sobriety and neutrality in everyday affairs; and the control of extreme or enthusiastic behavior" (11-12). According to Staël at the time, Italy failed to meet any of these Northern standards. Yet at the same time it should be mentioned that in the years leading up to the publication of *On Literature* in 1800, Staël was developing her own theory of literature which, as Massardier-Kenney notes, "was grounded on the necessity of cross influences from foreign literatures" (3). She set an example of intralingual translation in her works, advocating for the movement between native and foreign cultures to both question and critique one's own

[179] For more, see Castillo, pages 10-15.

culture and language.[180] By the end of her life, she had finalized her own theory of translation which was published in her last work *The Spirit of Translation* (1816). In this work, she calls attention to the necessity of translation in the preservation of national literatures. Massardier-Kenney writes that "she perceives that translation is the agent of change which acknowledges that culture is determined by the society and the times in which it thrives, and that translation is sort of ideological distancing from and criticism of existing national modes of writing" (4). Staël's own translations of Italian culture are informed by time and shifting perceptions of Italianness; the more she becomes acquainted with Italy from an intimate perspective, the more she distances her own translations from the "existing national modes" of Italian representation. This shift becomes apparent when comparing Staël's approach to Italianness in *On Literature* and *Corinne.* In the former, Staël sets up Italy and England to be polar opposites, "inverted images" of each other: prosperous England, "where freedom, equality, commerce, and utility prevail," and impoverished Italy, "where a debased and enslaved people follows its trivially sensual and thoughtless pursuits amid political, economic and social disorder" (22). Having not yet traveled to the South, Staël's knowledge of Italian society and language was minimal. Therefore, her work can be seen as a continuation of the widely circulated images of the *bel paese* at the time. She did not travel to Italy until several years later; carrying with her all the negative preconceptions of Italianité, she set off on a seven month tour of the country between 1804-1805.[181] Over this period of time and the years that followed she made and

[180] For more on this, refer to Massardier-Kenney's work, pages 4-5.

[181] These ingrained stereotypes were not easily broken at first; Castillo states that at the time of her travels she still "identified the Italians with Machiavellian secrecy and dissimulation and even professed to fear for her safety at the hands of stiletto-bearing assassins.

cultivated many friendships with Italians, read Italian historical and literary texts and came to develop a love for the Italian art of improvisation.[182] This experience brought her to reckon with her dependency on Northern stereotypes of Italy, which marked the turn of Staël's work towards Italophilia and an attempt to reconcile with and correct the misconceptions of Italy that she had diffused through her earlier writings.

This was how *Corinne, or Italy*, Staël's "Romantic-era blockbuster,"[183] came into being. Whereas *On Literature* emphasized Italy's backwardness, *Corinne* uses its sympathetic representation of Italian culture to turn a critical eye towards Britain's prejudice. The Italy of *Corinne* encompasses a multifaceted culture that complicates its previous characterization as the pejorative half of the North-South divide presented in her earlier work. As Castillo states, it is "in many ways a personal utopia satisfying Staël's desire for a passionate and self-expressive existence beyond the constraints of the bourgeois North" (45).[184] Through *Corinne,* Staël attempts to convince her Northern audience of their own misconceptions, leading the first big shift in the imagining of Italy from the British perspective. Castillo further elaborates that "the importance of Staël as an

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[182] Castillo notes that among those she met are Ferdinando Marescalchi, Count Francesco Melzi d'Eril and Count Leopardo Cicognara, who were all "refugees from the Austrian regime that had briefly regained dominance in Northern Italy after the overthrow of Napoleon's Cisalpine Republic" (35). Among the authors she read are Parini, Monti, Manzoni, Alfieri, Dante and Roscoe (43).

[183] I take this characterization from Patricia Cove's work *Italian Politics and Nineteenth-Century British Literature.*

[184] Castillo calls attention to how strongly this was felt amongst women in Britain, noting that the famous example of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, "who at the age of fifty had boldly left England and settled in Italy in 1739, was later to claim that, whereas a learned woman in Italy is not only honored by also given academic employment, 'there is not part of the world where our sex is treated with so much contempt as England'" (138).

interpreter of Italy is that her highly popular novel fuses and synthesizes these sometimes contrary strings in travel writing and in this way bequeaths a new feeling for Italy to the entire nineteenth century" (43).[185] It is precisely within this contrastive space that I would like to remain within my reading of *Corinne,* for while there is much to be said about the progress the novel encourages in terms of Anglo-Italian relations, what has been less explored is where it remains stuck. Although Staël centers the voice of the unapologetically self-liberated Corinne, "the most famous woman in Italy, … poetess, writer, and improviser, and one of the most beautiful women in Rome,"[186] the novel is ultimately unable to reckon with the existence of alternative and unconventional femininity.

At the heart of *Corinne* is the great divide between a feminized, expressive Italy and a masculine, stringent Britain, with the novel's heroine being caught in the push and pull of nonconforming liberation versus submission to patriarchal expectation. This tension is materialized through the love story of Corinne and Oswald, themselves embodiments of the opposing forces of the North and South, as they try and fail to overcome their innate differences. However, not only is this reconciliation attempted between Corinne and Oswald; it is also present within Corinne herself, as she is of both Italian *and* English blood. Corinne, who as Castillo notes "inherits her father's English melancholy and her mother's Italian imagination," is thus biologically an Anglo-Italian hybrid (81). This duality is sensed

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[185] The sheer significance of *Corinne* cannot be emphasized enough. Castillo's book catalogs its influence to show just how much the novel "enjoyed wide readership and special notoriety in the nineteenth century" and "had a powerful impact on Anglo-American and continental culture." The list of writers it is known to have influenced is extensive, some being: Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Sir Walter Scott, Charlotte Bronte, Benjamin Disraeli, George Eliot, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Felicia Hemans, Hannah More, Geraldine Jewsbury, etc. (2)

[186] Staël, 21.

in Oswald's very first impression of her after hearing her improvisation: "Until that moment Corinne had delighted him as the most charming of foreign women, as one of the wonders of the country where he wanted to travel; but her English accent brought back all the memories of his native land, naturalizing all her charms" (34). Nevertheless, despite being of English blood, her cultural identity is so tethered to Italy that her Englishness is almost non-existent. In fact, despite Oswald's attraction to the nostalgia prompted by her English accent, through his eyes she carries all of the conventional traits that are so intertwined with the Italian feminine identity. Again, readers encounter a man who is weakened by his enchantment in the presence of an Italian woman. His interactions with her leave him feeling "charmed, uneasy and carried away," "dazzled"; he calls her a "sorceress," he feels that "she is the most entrancing of women" and that he is "too keenly attracted by her charm"; and once he even realizes that Corinne's charm had "set him on fire," as he "lost all control over his passion" (39, 40, 53, 75, 97, 190). Staël even instills Corinne with the cognizance of the danger provoked by her "Italianness," for the poetess herself claims, "my imagination is lively, but pain arouses in me an indefinable impetuosity which can disturb my reason and cause my death" (75). Thus, although Corinne is framed as the most beloved woman in the country, the genius "image of our beautiful Italy," she is unable to escape from the threateningly seductive traits which defined the Italian Gothic (anti)heroines which came before her. No matter the time spent within the domesticated walls of her stepmother's English home, or the stimulating love and partnership shared with Oswald, she remains an untranslatable figure in the eyes of the English people she encounters in the novel. Her life in the spotlight loses its magnificence as she comes to

realize that her inability to acclimate to English culture causes the loss of those closest to her, starting with her family and ending with Oswald.

Like Radcliffe's and Dacre's Italian women, it is indeed love that leads to Corinne's premature death. However, the consequence of her love is not a breakdown of social order through violence and sensation; rather, it is the breakdown of her body and spirit as a result of her exclusion from English society due to her Italianness. This begins far before we encounter Corinne in the novel, for when she recounts her history to Oswald it is revealed that, upon her mother's death, she was taken to England to live with her English father, stepmother and half sister, Lucille. It promptly became clear that the Italian qualities that were treasured in Italy were loathed by the English, her stepmother even implores Corinne to completely forget everything she once knew that was connected with Italy, telling her: "In our country women have no occupation but domestic duties. Your talents will relieve your boredom when you are alone… But in a little town like this, everything that attracts attention arouses envy, and you would not find it at all possible to get married if people thought you had tastes foreign to our ways" (245). Thus, in order to be welcomed into English society, her femininity must be translated into a form that is palatable to English taste. This unfortunately requires a censorship of her identity, thus masking the parts of herself that violate the terms of proper domesticity. After four "extremely tedious years," Corinne, feeling a complete skeleton of her original self, makes the courageous decision to risk her entire life and reputation in order to return to her native land, which embraced her talents. She thus lives the liberated life of an artist, rising to immense fame through her poetry and improvisations. However, her next encounter

with the English is the one that seals her fate, for it is the love of an Englishman which exposes her weakness.

Corinne is cognizant of the internal conflict that loving Oswald would inspire, for she tells him, "Yet I need my talents, my wit, and my imagination to sustain the brilliant life I have adopted, and it does me harm, much harm, to love as I love you" (89). Despite her strong intuition, she is incapable of resisting her feelings towards Oswald and continues to try and prove the worthiness of their union despite cultural differences. She does this at the risk of her own happiness and the freedom that she fought so hard to obtain by leaving England in the first place. As the narrator states, "Corinne was wrong to become attached to a man who was bound to oppose the life that was natural to her, and repress rather than stimulate her talents" (293). Oswald's profound opposition to the Italian qualities in Corinne stems largely from his father, a figure who remains ever existent in Oswald's conscience throughout the entirety of the novel. He is in a constant battle within himself between the life that he is drawn to with Corinne and the life that his father intended for him. This internal battle is best summed up in one of Oswald's moments of self-reflection, when he thinks to himself: "She is the most entrancing of women, but she is an Italian and she has not the innocent heart, unknown to itself, which, I am sure, belongs to the young Englishwoman whom my father intended for me" (53). Corinne and Oswald's father become the incarnations of Italy and England, respectively, with Oswald stuck in between the two and being pulled in opposite directions. The guilt that he carries over his father's death--which just so happened to occur while he was in France under the manipulations of Madame d'Arbigny, a young French woman with whom he had fallen in love-- feeds his sense of duty and dictates his actions. The culmination of this cultural conflict had actually

been set in stone before the events of the novel when Corinne still lived in England and was presented to Oswald's father as a potential wife. He instantly rejects Corinne on the basis of her Italian qualities which he describes as her "intellectual activity," "eager imagination" and "ardent nature," stating that "Italy alone will suit her" (318). However, his reasons for rejecting her as a wife for Oswald go beyond his repulsion towards her character, for he claims to Corinne's father that she would bring "foreign ways into his house," causing him to "lose the national spirit, the prejudices… which unite us and our nation" (318). Thus, what is more powerful than his disapproval of Corinne's womanhood is the fear of the threat that the foreign influence could bring at a time in which national patriotism is seen as crucial to England's expansion of power. Marina Schoina puts this nicely: "While Italy is called on to feed the English imagination with what it lacks and desires, it is always viewed as a potential menace, as the 'other' which undermines and threatens to eliminate the self" (38). This "potential menace" most frequently comes in the form of an enchanting Italian woman stealing the English man's attention from his nation, which provides, as Joseph Luzzi terms, "the true goods of life: independence, liberty, and security" (70). Thus, in Oswald's father's refusal of Corinne, the connection between England and Italy is severed.

Despite the intense, passionate love between Oswald and Corinne and her unchanging devotion towards him, this severance first manifests itself upon Oswald's return to England. Outside of her presence, Corinne, and by extension Italy, remain nothing but a brief and intoxicating dream that directly opposes the rigidity of his ideas, which have been deeply instilled within him by his father. Upon reuniting with Corinne's sister, Lucile, the "true" English woman whom his father had intended for him, his innate sense of duty towards proper domesticity is awakened, along with an immediate attraction to her, for he

was drawn to "the heavenly purity of a young girl who has never left her mother's side and whose only knowledge of life is filial affection," for "although Corinne charmed the imagination in a thousand ways, there was nevertheless a class of ideas, a musical note…which only harmonized with Lucile" (306, 310). And after a short period of time, Oswald realizes that he loves Lucile "almost without knowing her; for he had not heard her utter twenty words" (306, 337). Void of the impassioned voice and verve which emanates off of Corinne, Lucile is enshrined as the embodiment of pure English femininity. The internal voice of his father takes over Oswald's perception, veering him away from the dangers of cultural hybridity. Despite Corinne's mixed blood, her Italian half does not stand a chance against the promise of the security that Lucile's companionship would provide. Corinne then finds herself facing the British rejection of her Italianness a second time,[187] although now it proves to be deadly. Unlike Radcliffe's and Dacre's (anti)heroines whose failures in love lead to murder, the loss of Oswald's love to another woman does not inspire a violent reaction from Corinne; rather, it inspires her own self-sacrifice. When Corinne sees Oswald and Lucile together, she promptly decides to "free" Oswald from the constraint of their connection, for "Lucile's innocence, her youth, her purity, exalted Corine's imagination and, at least for a moment, she was proud to sacrifice herself so that Oswald could be at peace with his country, his family, and himself" (344). Displaced again in a land and a love that won't accept her, Corinne thus completely relinquishes the Italian identity she had grasped onto so tightly and slowly becomes yet again a skeleton of her former self.

[187] The premonition of this loss is instilled within Corinne well before her trip to England: "She had to fight against natural circumstances, the influence of the native land, a father's memory, the conspiracy of friends in favour of easy decisions and the usual road in life. She had to fight, too, the burgeoning charm of a young girl who seemed so well in tune with the pure, calm hopes of domestic life" (319).

She begins to sense her oncoming death and makes the return back to Italy; however, she decides to completely detach herself from her former life and the places that she had inhabited with Oswald. Never wanting to return into the spotlight in which she previously shined, she retreats into the darkness. She spends her days "in complete inactivity," with no longer "any interest in life"; now "absent-minded and silent," she becomes completely unrecognizable from what she once was (351, 352, 360). Although similar to the stories of her Gothic predecessors, the destruction of love becomes inextricably linked to the destruction of the Italian self. And while Corinne presents a more sympathetic, inspiring image of Italian womanhood, with her the idealization of Italian femininity dies as well. Her inability to translate her southern femininity in order to abide by the crucial codes of British domesticity condemns her to a life devoid of love and belonging; death becomes the only thing better than this fate. Before her death, the reflections that Corinne has around the cause of her demise are reminiscent of Signora Laurentini's penitence in *Mysteries of Udolpho*; she states: "If I had been happy, if the fever of love had not consumed me" and "My sins are those of passions" (357, 403). While Corinne's admirable character highlights the cultural beauty of Italy and criticizes the British prejudice against Italianness, the impassioned and liberated aspects of her Italian femininity still pose too much of an unsettling threat to imagine the possibility of Anglo-Italian love. Lori Marso rightly states that in *Corinne*:

> Staël shows us a new world, a new kind of politics, whereby women can be exalted for genius, can lead their countries to great destinies, and can recreate gender relationships in order to greater fulfill both men's and women's creative identities. However, Staël also shows us a world bound by patriarchal structures. These

> structures limit identity, strictly define male and female nature, and ultimately destroy women like Corinne. (Marso 657)

While Staël's creation of Corinne opens up new possibilities through which a more liberated femininity can be imagined, the dream is halted by its own self-destruction. The hegemonic masculine social structures ultimately overbear Corinne's willingness to live outside of the boundaries of respectable femininity. Corinne is also considered to be an alter ego of Staël, herself having led an exilic, nomadic life while also fighting for the right to have a political voice.[188] In translating Italianness into the British society of her novel, she is also translating a part of herself. England, as the hegemonic male Author of social convention, requires a complete erasure of the original traces of the woman translator; contrary to Italy, in England one cannot be both a woman and a public citizen. Rather than translating Corinne into a "proper" Englishwoman" in order to fulfill her love story with Oswald, Staël refuses this conformity to the masculine vision of the feminine and rather sentences her heroine to death.[189] Thus, while we encounter yet again the expulsion of an Italian woman from an English narrative, Corinne's death also presents an empowering act of rebellion. Furthermore, her cultural hybridity introduces a new sort of female "other" that paves the way for women to push back against dominant Anglocentric conventions. As a partially English woman, she is provided the opportunity to embrace "proper" English

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[188] Castillo elaborates on this nicely: "Italy appeals to Staël because its very lack of masculine superiority has supposedly permitted at least to its 'educated women' an unparalleled margin of social freedom while fostering among them those artistic and intellectual talents Staël sought to cultivate in herself" (78).

[189] This mirrors Staël's own life; as Marso states: "As a woman who sought to transform the model of femininity to include the participation of women in politics and the public sphere, Staël was faced with the problem of having to deny her femininity in order to participate like men (in public) or deny her identity as a writer and public figure in order to fulfill her desires as a woman (667).

femininity and it is in her refusal that she finds liberation. It is Corinne that brings forth a new iteration of the Italian woman as a simultaneous cultural insider and outsider. This allowed women authors to envision new realities for English womanhood. As Thompson states, *Corinne* "established the broad terms for the romantic engagement with Italian culture, and tenets which Barrett Browning and George Eliot could either follow or write against" (53).

Reading Eliot's Italian works, it becomes clear that she chose the former; this is unsurprising given she shared Staël's investments in gathering and sharing cultural knowledge as well as exploring new possibilities for women beyond the domestic sphere.[190] However, unlike Staël, Eliot already held a more optimistic vision of Italy prior to her first time traveling through the country. This was partially due to her partner Lewes's involvement in the group "The Society of the Friends of Italy," which was a group of leading liberals who publicly spoke in support of the Risorgimento and promoted their views of the "Italian Question" in England through propaganda and public meetings.[191] However, as Thompson notes, Eliot herself kept well-informed on the unraveling politics of the Risorgimento and expressed her views in her own journalism, which expressed anti-Austrian sentiment, admiration for Mazzini and Garibaldi, and an intolerance for British travelers' negative commentary about Italian culture.[192] There is even earlier evidence of

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[190] Eliot, like Staël, was renowned for her cosmopolitanism. As Hina Nazar states, she was "the nineteenth century's most learned autodidact, who read German, Italian, French, Greek, and Latin" and she "had wide-ranging cultural engagements with the Continent" (413).

[191] Andrew Thompson notes some of the most well-known members of the society besides Lewes: David Masson (the Milton Scholar), William Ashurst, Professor F.W. Newman, Arthur Trevelyan, Walter Savage Landor, and Peter Taylor. For more information, see pages 35-45.

[192] For more, see Thompson, pages 40-41.

her support of the Italian cause, such as in a letter she wrote to John Sibree in 1848, in which Eliot states, "I should not be sorry to hear that the Italians had risen en masse and chased the odious Austrians out of beautiful Lombardy."[193] This romanticization of Italy, as Thompson notes, demonstrates an attachment despite the fact that "she had not yet occasion to visit, and which was only really known to her through literature and the accounts of recent events in papers and journals" (32). Yet what is noteworthy is the trajectory of Italian representation within Eliot's fiction, for there is a significant shift to be explored between her 1857 novela "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" and her 1862 novel *Romola,* in between which she traveled throughout Italy and conducted extensive research on its culture and history. While "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" is still largely overtaken by common tropes that hyperbolize Italianness in its relation to Englishness, in *Romola* Eliot encourages more sympathy towards Italy through the historical comparisons she draws between Renaissance Florence and Victorian England as well as the Anglicized identity of her heroine.

"Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" was published two years before Eliot traveled to Italy, yet the story heavily emphasizes the juxtaposition of English vs. Italian cultures already seen in earlier works by other writers, especially in *Corinne*. There are multiple threads between Eliot's heroine of the story, the young Caterina Sarti, and Staël's Corinne: they are both cultural hybrids who are orphaned and brought from Italy to England where they fail to acclimate themselves; they are both embodiments of the feminine, artistic Italy; and they both fall desperately in love with English men, the loss of whom leads to their premature

[193] Quote comes from Thomspon, page 32.

deaths. The key difference between them lies in their relationship to their own Italian identity: while Staël's Corinne refuses to translate herself into a form more acceptable to British tastes, Caterina battles against her internal Italian nature, expressed as excessive love and passion. Furthermore, while Corinne is treasured in Italy for her artistic talents, Caterina is stuck inside of a world in which she becomes reduced to an object for entertainment. In their book *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar state that Caterina "picked up like an objet d'art to furnish a plain brick English family house that Sir Christopher is transforming into a Gothic mansion. She is one more foreign oddity among the clutter" (486). Beyond being a walking Gothic stereotype, Caterina´s relationship with her adoptive parents is exemplary of the British attempt at Anglicizing the Italian character. The anonymous author of "Notes and Notions from Italy" in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (1865) reflects the common idea that acknowledges the British as "the rightful educators of the Italians, so those that implant their national culture (social, political, or literary) in Italian 'nature.'[194] Although the British identify once more with their civilising mission, this time their aim is not to Italianize their (less refined) countrymen, but to Anglicise the Italians" (297). It is on one of these "civilising missions" that George Eliot's Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel bring the orphaned Caterina from Italy to their "Manor" in England. Readers learn that the aristocratic couple adopted the young Italian girl because it was considered "Christian work" to "graft as much English fruit as possible on the Italian stem" (88). Yet with that being said, the narrator states that neither of them "had any idea

[194] O'Connor elaborates on this in relation to Victorian travelers in her book: "No longer were they as preoccupies with what the Italians could teach them about art, painting, and the aesthetic, as well as about empires lost and won, but what they as cultivated English middle-class men and women could teach the Italians, even about civilization" (4).

of adopting her as their daughter, and giving her their own rank in life. They were much too English and aristocratic to think of anything so romantic" (88). Like Corinne, Caterina's fate is to live within a society that refuses to accept her and demands the subdual of her Italian nature.

However, in Caterina's case, Eliot incorporates a new dynamic into her story that not only calls attention to the stereotypes of Italians, but also that of English travelers in Italy. Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel become key agents in the process of translating the Italian woman for an English audience. Boris Buden and Stefan Nowotny call attention to the complexity of cultural translation, stating that translation also includes "human beings and their most important properties. They too can be moved across all sorts of differences and borders and so translated from one place to another, for instance from one cultural and political position to another. Thus, one can culturally translate people--for a political purpose and with existential consequences" (196). In the context of Eliot's story, Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel remove Caterina from her environment when she is only two years old and bring her to England where they suppress the less tasteful attributes of her character and encourage those innate artistic talents that are distinct to Italians, all to benefit their own social mobility. This reflects the longstanding tendency of English travelers to flood Italy in pursuit of its art and history, yet contemptuously maintain distance from modern Italian culture. Churchill notes this in his book *Italy and English Literature, 1764-1930*: "Never, perhaps, was any country so travelled over for so long a series of years as Italy has been by Englishmen, with so small a resulting knowledge of the people visited" (135). Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel have no interest in knowing

Caterina for who she is; rather, their only interest is how she can be useful to them.[195] She becomes their "pet of the household," occupying an exoticized, liminal position in which she is dehumanized for her "southern" physical appearance. She is always described in objectifying terms or according to her likening to various animals, to name a few: "black-eyed/little monkey," "little/unobtrusive/southern singing bird," "pale insignificant little thing," "the little grasshopper," and "the delicate tendrilled plant."[196] Eliot's translation of Italian feminine embodiment is significant, for language in this case holds the power to erect barriers between Caterina and the English and highlight her "othered" identity. Despite this, there is one thing that gives Caterina her "point of superiority" and gives her some respect within the English household: like Corinne, she is gifted with the art of singing. While Corinne was implored to subdue and hide her talents in English society, Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel exploit this innate Italian talent of Caterina's,[197] making her into a spectacle of entertainment for their guests. The relationship between Caterina and her adoptive guardians thus also becomes a reflection on the quintessential English traveler to Italy more widely. Thompson argues how this shows up in both Eliot and Barrett Browning's works: "in the space opened up by the transplantation of these heroines from Italian to English soil, their authors [Eliot and Barrett Browning] perceived potential

[195] This is also stated in the text: "...the child would be brought up at Cheverel Manor as a protoge, to be ultimately useful, perhaps, in sorting worsteds, keeping accounts, reading aloud, and otherwise supplying the places of spectacles when her ladyship's eyes should wax dim" (88).

[196] These names are distributed throughout the novela and not only repeated but used in different variations.

[197] This conception of Italians having an innate talent for singing is suggested by one of the guests, Lady Asher, who states: "All Italians sing so beautifully" (103).

for exploring contrasts between the two cultures and for gaining a critical vantage point from which to survey their own societies" (51). Eliot's translation of Caterina confronts the English travelers' perception of Italy as a place that would make them "cultured," yet would need to be tamed upon close contact. With her less-than-human body and operatic[198] Italian voice, Caterina's Italianness is reduced to its utility as a status symbol for Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel as they put her on display for wealthy English audiences.

When it comes to the characterization of Caterina, Eliot's depiction does not exaggerate her Italian femininity; rather, she depicts it as masked underneath a curated British facade. There are hints of her innate Italianness in early descriptions of her, with the repeated reference to her as a "little minx" and having a "certain ingenuity in vindictiveness" (92, 94). However, what dominates in the story is the censorship of Caterina's femininity; rather than being raised to resemble a domesticated[199] wife according to British standards, she becomes desexualized and infantilized both in body and mind. This comes forth at multiple points through the perspective of those around her, notably by her beloved Captain Wybrow, who states that "She is more child than woman. One thinks of her as a little girl to be petted and played with… One has a brotherly affection for such a woman as Tina; but it's another sort of woman that one loves" (115-116). Sheltered from her Italian womanhood and forbidden from becoming an English lady,

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[198] The Italian opera was a beloved art from in the 19th century. Piya Pal-Lapinski notes that "Throughout most of the early and mid-nineteenth century, Italian opera dominated the London operatic scene" (110). This clarifies how appealing it would have been for the upper-class English society to have a personal vessel of operatic entertainment brought home from Italy (Caterina).

[199] The usage of domesticated in reference to animals being tamed is intentional here, given the constant dehumanization of Caterina and likening her to various animals.

Caterina's maturity is stunted, and she is deemed to be dehumanized in the eyes of the British social circle around her. The forestalling of her feminine maturity materializes in her bodily form, for she is also depicted as physically *less* of a woman with her diminutive form and natural sickly appearance. She is referred to as a "pale insignificant little thing," with her delicate appearance and her "natural paleness and habitually quiet mouselike ways" making her "symptoms of fatigue and suffering less noticeable" (116, 121). Alongside her Italianness, her emotional suffering is also masked by her already fragile appearance, isolating Caterina from herself and others until she is needed for cultural exploitation.

As the novela progresses, Caterina's personality begins to adopt some of the attributes I isolated in my reading of Gothicism. Just as with the Gothic women I examined in a previous chapter and Corinne, it is again the intoxication[200] of love that reveals dangerous Italian characteristics. When Caterina falls in love with the young Captain Wybrow, she is flooded with new sensations never felt before, but those with which readers would be very familiar: "intense love," "fierce jealousy" and "mad passion" fills her feeble frame, especially when she realizes Captain Wybrow's intention to marry Lady Asher. Again, Italian disposition is referred to within the context of contamination: when Caterina hears Lady Asher speak, she feels her words as "poison stings inflaming her to madness," and her "peevish" nature is blamed on her "Italian blood," for "there's no knowing how she may take what one says" (120, 124). However, given her dissociation

[200] Even this text refers to Italian love as an "intoxicated" state: "she was still too intoxicated with that momentary revival of old emotions, too much agitated by the sudden return of tenderness in her lover, to know whether pain or pleasure predominated" (100).

from her Italianness, her love and nature instantly become a threat mostly to herself. The extreme sheltering of her upbringing makes her far too weak to endure the strong passions of Italian blood. We see this primarily in a scene in which she is juxtaposed with Lady Asher in a moment of intense jealousy: "As she stood nearly in the middle of the room, her little body trembling under the shock of passions too strong for it, her very lips pale, and her eyes gleaming, the door opened, and Miss Asher appeared, tall, blooming, and splendid" (124). Lady Asher is presented as both superior in stature and attractiveness: standing in all her Englishness, she incarnates the ideal wife. And while she "blooms," Caterina withers in the consciousness of her inferiority and inability to process the intensity of the Italian emotions moving through her.

With Lady Asher dominating the spotlight, Caterina's singing is the only action in which she is able to command presence; thus, she begins to indulge in the powers of her own art form: "her love, her jealousy, her pride, her rebellion against her destiny, made one stream of passion which welled for in the deep rich tones of her voice" (81). In her voice lies the essence of her true self, and through her singing she is able to fully embody Italian femininity. However, this voice is short-lived, for this fusion of newfound womanly desire with her innate Italian artistic talent gives rise to "ungovernable impulses of resentment and vindictiveness" and "scorching passion" for which Caterina's feeble frame is unprepared to hold. Once Lady Asher becomes the center of Captain Wybrow's affections and Caterina realizes that not even the power of her singing can make her romantically desirable in his eyes, her incessant jealousy becomes impossible to hide from external view. Upon hearing Captain Wybrow's confession that he never had romantic feelings towards her, Caterina falls into a fit of madness which leads to her impulsive decision to

stab him. The melodramatic intensity of her active pursuit of Captain Wybrow is recounted in the formulaic Gothic style, and Caterina becomes dehumanized in a manner similar to the villainous "wanton" women that came before her. The narrator states, "Those gleaming eyes, those bloodless lips, that swift silent tread, make her look like the incarnation of a fierce purpose, rather than a woman" (134). Once again, Caterina is envisioned as less-than-woman, only with the addition of Italian love has she gone from a sexless, infantile plaything to a bestialized, destructive force. Unlike her Gothic predecessors, Caterina was not destined to follow through with Captain Wybrow's vicious murder, for before she is able to carry out the attack, she finds him dead as a result of a sudden heart attack. Despite his death being sudden and ambiguous, the text suggests that it was hastened as a result of his interactions with Caterina: "...death had been imminent from a long-established disease of the heart, though it had probably been accelerated by some unusual emotion… Mr. Gilfil and Sir Christopher, however, knew enough to conjecture that the fatal agitation was due to an appointed meeting with Caterina" (147). Caterina's indirect culpability in Captain Wybrow's death satisfies the stereotype of Italian womanhood being poisonous and deadly to English masculinity. Furthermore, it suggests how the nurturing of foreign influence can unravel the safe haven that is the respectable English home from the inside out.

Despite not having followed through with her murderous act, once she returns to her senses Caterina is overtaken with guilt over her temptation. The remorse over her love spell is reminiscent of both Signora Laurentini's and Corinne's reactions to their own doomed love affairs, for Caterina's reaction is also to remove herself from public society. She becomes immediately determined to leave the Manor, for she could "not bear the sight of all these things that reminded her of Anthony and of her sin" (54). Like Corinne, she also

feels the oncoming of death and lack of vitality within her own body: “Perhaps she should die soon: she felt very feeble; there could not be much life left in her. She would go away and live humbly, and pray to God to pardon her, and let her die” (54). Caterina’s departure from the English aristocratic bubble that raised her yet denied her an autonomous identity leaves her as a culturally displaced figure, driven by shame and confusion over her actions. As Thompson states, she “moves uneasily between a liberating, feminine Italian and a constraining male-centered English culture” (65). Whereas Corinne was untranslatable to the English, Caterina is untranslatable to herself, for she is unable to reckon with the underlying forces of her Italian identity while also being forced to live on the outskirts of English society, stripped of humanity. However, the real tragedy of the story lies not in Caterina’s retreat, but in her marriage to Mr. Gilfil and subsequent surrender to the patriarchal system that refused her foreign womanhood. She is silenced, with no trace of her Italianness left in her; rather, she embodies “passiveness and acquiescence,” responding to the world around her with nothing but a “quiet grateful smile” (68). Just as Corinne, she becomes a motionless shell of her former self: while Corinne accepts her untranslatability and exiles herself from English society, Caterina goes through the motions to imitate proper domesticity. However, even in her attempts to Anglicize herself she is depicted as an exiled, “othered” figure, for when she attempts to do “woman’s work,” she is “too languid to persevere in it,” eventually leading her to relapse into “motionless reverie” (66). This very reference to her languid, southern demeanor recalls another trope in the depiction of exoticized women. As Pal-Lapinski argues, “The body of the exotic woman

(both visually and verbally) is inevitably marked with languor" (23).[201] Caterina's feebleness and indolence, qualities that I argue are exacerbated as a result of the barriers imposed on her in her upbringing, ultimately prevent her from completing the single most important act that would grant her entrance into English womanhood: childbirth. The narrator states: "...the prospect of her becoming a mother was a new ground for hoping the best. But the delicate plant had been too deeply bruised, and in the struggle to put forth a blossom it died" (160). Without access to the Italian art that instilled her with life, connection to her homeland and a method of escaping the rigidity of the British social structures that both isolated and imprisoned her, Caterina disintegrates into nothingness. Her attempt to bring forth new life, symbolically also giving birth to her own British femininity, ends only in death. Through Caterina's sacrifice, Eliot calls attention to an issue that extends beyond British Italophobia: she criticizes a cultural silencing of women's voices. Caterina's untranslatability is enforced by the British as a result of the deep discomfort surrounding a woman's ability to have creative autonomy that extends beyond her domestic role. For the first time, we are presented with an Italian woman who relinquishes her cultural identity in order to conform to the British standard. Nevertheless, she, too, is sacrificed, leaving in her wake a desolate and condemning image of the patriarchal codes assigned to British femininity.

Just three years after her creation of the quintessentially Italian Caterina, Eliot finally set foot in Italy herself. It was this trip that changed the trajectory of her literary

[201] Pal-Lapinski actually notes how languor shows up in Radcliffe and argues that in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* that "sensibility is aligned with disease and languor," stating that Radcliffe uses this concept "to give a fresh twist to a shared trope in the discourses of gothicism and exoticism" (23).

career, and it was exactly what Eliot anticipated and desired in traveling to Italy. She wanted not to merely visit the *bel paese* for enjoyment and to gain cultural capital; she wanted it to provoke change within her and diversify the lens through which she saw the world. This can be found in her letters and travel diaries written before, during and after her trip. For instance, directly before her trip she wrote a letter to her publisher John Blackwood telling him that the purpose of going to Italy was "to feed my mind with fresh thoughts."[202] Right after returning from her first trip, she wrote that it was the journey she had looked forward to for years "rather with the hope of the new elements it would bring to my culture, than with the hopes of immediate pleasure."[203] Unlike the many travel writers that came before her, Eliot explored Italy with the goal of self-discovery through her travels. Over the course of her six trips to the country, she engaged in a deep study of the language, its history and its people.[204] Traveling on the Continent also provided her with liberation from the harsh judgment she received in England for her extramarital companionship with George Lewes.[205] She, like Corinne and Caterina, was labeled as an

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[202]Eliot, George. *The George Eliot Letters, vol. 3: 1859-1861."* Edited by Gordon S. Haight. Yale University Press. *Alexander Street,* https://search-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/view/work/bibliographic_entity|bibliographic_details|4192128.

[203] Taken from the George Eliot archive online: https://georgeeliotarchive.org/files/original/432c7df7ead1a4142d4202869579e1e7.pdf.

[204] As Thomspon mentions, Eliot spent a total of over six months in Italy and traveled "at a time of national generation. She learned Italian in order to be able to read in the language and wrote about the country, first in her journalism and then in her fiction" (1).

[205] Lesa Scholl elaborates on this nicely: "This type of self-creation relates to Behdad's idea of the transformed status of the traveller, which is crucial for Eliot, especially because of the criticism she faced for living with Lewes. In the context of Victorian England, she was a fallen woman. She faced ostracism, even from Martineau, who believed her contemporary to write texts with more morality than she possessed in life …" (153).

outsider for her inability to conform to the stringent English moral codes dictating the gendered roles in romantic relationships. The acceptance she found in society on the Continent inspired the inclusion of foreign places within her literary work. As Lesa Scholl states Eliot's emphasis is "still on translating the foreign culture, first on her own sense of identification, and then for her home audience in a revised form" (152).[206] Eliot was not one for "idle traveling"[207]; she wanted to use exploration as a vehicle for understanding that would allow her to share cultural knowledge and shift the perspective of her compatriots. This intentional approach to travel is clear and consistent across the span of Eliot's personal writings. In her *Recollections of Italy* (1860) she writes that "Travelling can hardly be without a continual current of disappointment if the main object is not the enlargement of one's general life" (1). Over a decade later in a letter to John Blackwood (1876), Eliot writes: "A statesman who shall be nameless has said that I first opened to him a vision of Italian life, then of Spanish, and now I have kindled in him quite a new understanding of the Jewish people. This is what I wanted to do -- to widen the English vision a little in that direction and let in a little conscience and refinement" (302). Armed with her pen and the creative skills that had gained her respect both at home and abroad,

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[206] It is noteworthy to mention that by the time Eliot wrote her Italian works, she had already produced translations from German and reflected on the act of translation itself. In her short essay "Translations and Translators" (1855), she wrote: "Though a good translator is infinitely below the man who produces good original works, he is infinitely above the man who produces feeble original works. We had meant to say something of the moral qualities especially demanded in the translator -- the patience, the rigid fidelity, and the sense of responsibility in interpreting another man's mind" (1015).

[207] In a letter to her devoted friend Alexander Main in 1871, Eliot is critical of the typical English traveler: "The general ignorance of old Florentine literature, and the false conceptions of Italy bred by idle traveling (with the sort of culture which combines Shakespeare and the musical glasses), have caused many parts of 'Romola' to be entirely misunderstood" (172).

she set out to make a social impact through her craft. She immersed herself both body and spirit in cultural observation and historical study in order to get to the root of the *real* Italy hidden behind a British-imposed facade. Scholl states, "While Harris and Johnston argue that Eliot learns to read Italy through texts about the nation, it is her willingness to confront the difference in her physical encounter, and to have her preconceptions overturned, that define her as a true traveller" (161). Eliot approached Italy with a level of open-minded curiosity and attention that previous British tourists had neglected to give it.

The fact that Eliot's travels in Italy coincide with its movement towards political unity proves to be significant in the development of her writing, for it has been noted by scholars that the Risorgimento was the impetus for Eliot's creative rebirth.[208] Upon observing the public celebrations that took place upon Italian unification as they toured Rome, Naples and Florence, Lewes recommended Eliot to explore Girolamo Savonarola[209] as a fictional character, and so the idea of *Romola* was born.[210] Eliot knew that *Romola* would be different from anything she had written thus far and that its creation would be arduous.[211][212] The Lewes' second trip to Italy (Eliot's third time visiting the peninsula) was

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[208] For more on this, see Thompson, 46.

[209] Savonarola was a Christian preacher and reformer who ruled Florence after the fall of the Medici in 1494 until he was hanged and burned after being convicted of heresy in 1498.

[210] Andrew Thompson states in his book that observing these cultural celebrations served as a direct inspiration for *Romola*: "Eliot, then, creates a direct link across the centuries between the political struggles of fifteenth-century Florence and Risorgimento struggles for the Unification of Italy" (48).

[211] In a letter to John Blackwood on June 23rd, 1860, she expressed: "I don't think I can venture to tell you what my great project is by letter, for I am anxious to keep it a secret. It will require a great deal of study and labour, and I am athirst to begin" (247).

[212] Many of Eliot's letters and personal writings express the intense difficulty that came along with writing *Romola* -- in fact, there were times she set it aside and almost quit the project altogether. In

planned to give Eliot the time and space to complete all of the research that she would need in order to write her Italian novel. Her research spanned across Italy and London and covered a great deal of literary and historical ground. The vast amount of authors she covered during this time included not only the classics of Italian literature, but also later Italian authors, historical novels, art history, literary history, political discourses of Savonarola, contemporary biographies of Italian figures, modern histories and even period sources by Italian authors.[213] In the composition of *Romola*, Eliot's efforts went beyond the work of a historical novelist; she developed into a scholar, or as Fleishman states, "something of a historian" (112). Eliot herself felt transformed by the writing of *Romola*[214] and despite experiencing intense bouts of insecurity during the process, she was proud of the result. In 1877, she wrote to Blackwood: "...there is no book of mine about which I more thoroughly feel that I could swear by every sentence of having been written in my best blood, such as it is, and with the most ardent care for veracity of which my nature is capable."[215] In writing *Romola,* Eliot embodied the tedious and all-encompassing work of a

her journal on November 5th, 1861, she wrote: "Read Cicero de Officiis, and began Petrarch's letters. … Dreadfully depressed about myself and my work" and the day after she wrote "So utterly dejected that in walking with G. in the park, I almost resolved to give up my Italian novel."

[213] The extensive list of authors that Eliot read can be found in Avrom Fleishman's book *George Eliot's Intellectual Life* on page 113.

[214] Eliot told John Cross, who she married after Lewes's death and briefly before her own: "I began it (*Romola)* a young woman, and I finished it an old woman." This is pulled from Haight's biography of Eliot on page 362.

[215] This quote from Eliot's letters was noted in Peggy Fitzhugh Johnstone's book *Transformation of Rage: Mourning and Creativity in George Eliot's Fiction* on page 87.

translator, and as a result she became a direct bridge between the politically turbulent Renaissance Florence and the rigid social structures of Victorian England.[216]

The events of *Romola* deal largely with the political atmosphere in Florence during Savonarola's rule between 1492 until his death in 1498; however, in placing Romola and other female fictional characters at the core of the story, Eliot writes women's stories into a history that had largely suppressed them. The patriarchal control that Romola faces is reminiscent of the struggles that women were facing in the mid-Victorian era; the disenfranchisement that Romola experiences after marrying Tito particularly speaks to the Married Women's Property Acts which were not passed in England until 1882.[217] However, Renaissance Florence still provided Eliot with the ability to imagine more options for women than those afforded to the Victorians. Gail Turley Houston calls attention to this, stating that "the unique combination of fierce republicanism, Catholic worship of the Madonna, and Renaissance fervor for the scholarly and mystical achievements of the pagans gives a much higher horizon and opportunity in which Romola may attain political, intellectual, and spiritual autonomy of power" (128). It can be said that the act of translation is multi-layered in this text. At the macro level, Eliot is translating with great detail the socio-political atmosphere of Renaissance Florence to a form that is digestible and relatable to Victorian readers. At the sociocultural level, she is translating multiple types of femininity through her representation of the binary characters Romola and Tessa.

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[216] In the Introduction to *Romola,* Dorothea Barrett states: "For Victorian readers, then, there was an unspoken contemporary dimension to the story of Savonarola's struggle for republican government, a triangle of correspondences between Renaissance Florence, nineteenth-century Italy, and Victorian Britain" (xiv).

[217] As Dorothea Barrett sums up these Acts nicely as "the culmination of a long struggle by Victorian feminists to secure legal protection for the incomes and property of married women '' (xv).

Lastly, one can also argue that the representation of translation within the text is reading Romola herself as a translator of masculine discourse, who serves as her scholarly father's "amanuensis"[218] after he becomes estranged from his son until his death and continues to be entangled with patriarchal narratives until the novel's conclusion.[219] As Shona Elizabeth Simpson states, "Romola's work has until now rested with these symbols: reading, translating, transcribing, interpreting the texts for her father's fossil of great work; reading her father's every whim; interpreting her husband's every action and inflection…" (60). Romola's ability to carefully interpret her surroundings is what allows her to carve a path for herself that is no longer tethered to masculine control. Thus, translation is central to the novel and is part of the reason behind Romola's intellectual capabilities which make her as Szirotny states "the only fictitious learned woman in her (Eliot's) fiction" (89).

While Eliot's Caterina and Staël's Corinne serve as translations of Italian femininity into British culture, with Romola Eliot flips the narrative and Anglicizes her Italian heroine by instilling her with qualities that coincide with Victorian ideals of femininity. Thus, it is important to distinguish her not only as a transcultural figure, but as a transhistorical one as well. She excels in all of the roles that would have been interpreted as laudable forms of femininity: as an obedient daughter, adoring wife, devoted Catholic, charitable citizen, and loving caretaker. Scholars have argued that Eliot has created her to be a figure akin to Dante's Beatrice. With that being said, Romola does also have qualities that connect her with her Italian identity. John Huzzard points out that though Romola is "essentially an

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[218] I take this term from June Szirotny's *George Eliot's Feminism: "The Right to Rebellion,"* pg. 90.

[219] Szirotny quotes Homans who states that Romola "submissively bears the world of women's exclusion from and silencing within literature, which is the same as her being reduced to mere body or to the literal with respect to language" (201).

English woman," she is also "proud of her ancestry; she has a high, inborn sense of duty and loyalty to those she loves and to the ideas she knows to be worthy. She is warm and steadfast in her affections, deeply emotional in her love" (160). Essentially, Eliot has taken the most respectable qualities from both cultures and fused them together to make her idolized, benevolent heroine. This is a refreshing perspective for Italian womanhood particularly since, while the Gothic tradition had solidified the stereotype of the "wanton" and devilish Italian woman, Romola brings a selfless, Madonna-like figure to the forefront. Thus, Eliot uses both her historical and contemporary perspective of Italian and English femininity to enrich Romola's hybridity. While cultural hybridity had previously been considered to be a threat to the fashioning of a "pure" English identity, Eliot successfully creates an admirable feminine figure who stands between the Renaissance and Victorian worlds. Not to mention, exploring Italian femininity through the Renaissance gave Eliot a window through which to make Italian womanhood more palatable. Hilary Fraser states that "Renaissance Italy, as it was constructed by Victorian writers and artists, served as a historical locus for the exploration of the Victorians' own cultural identity" and that the Renaissance's "notable" women "gave Victorian women new perspectives on contemporary questions of sexual and gendered identity" (165).[220] Eliot uses this to her advantage as she

[220] Joan Kelly in her work "Did women have a Renaissance" has also shed light on how the Victorian romanticization of Italian women in the Renaissance does not represent the full reality of what it was like to live as a woman in Renaissance Italy. In her work, she acknowledges that Italy was considerably ahead of Europe in many means including social relations and cultural expression; however, she argues that "these same developments were detrimental to women, so much so that there was no Renaissance for women -- at least not during the Renaissance. The State, the birth of capitalism and the social relations that resulted from it has a contrasting impact on the daily lives of Renaissance women depending on their position in society. What is striking, however, is that women, understood as a group, particularly within the dominant categories of Italian urban society, saw their social and individual opportunities reduced" (1). She then states that this point "contradicts the widely held idea of equality between women and men in the Renaissance" (2).

delicately balances cultural qualities in Romola which are considered to be representative of Italianness and Englishness. This balance is established from the moment that readers are introduced to Romola, for her face, as Eliot writes, "in which pride and passion seemed to be quivering in the balance with native refinement and intelligence, was transfigured to the most lovable womanliness by mingled pity and affection" (50). Thus, as we will see, the "pride and passion" stemming from her innate Italianness will be what give her the strength to defy patriarchal control, while her more English "native refinement" is what will allow her to do so without being publicly scrutinized.

In fact, I contend that Romola's character arc is intricately intertwined with this balance of Englishness and Italianness in her character which shifts over the course of the novel. The key moments of shift in Romola's character - which are all connected to the loss of masculine and paternal figures - present an unveiling and intermixing of innate cultural qualities. When readers first encounter Romola, she is most akin to a subservient Victorian woman confined to the home. Eliot writes that Romola lived only with her blind and elderly scholarly father, and as a result she "was in a state of girlish simplicity and ignorance concerning the world outside her father's books" (58). Thus, Romola at the beginning of the narrative is void of autonomy, with an identity that is shaped by her father's patriarchal manipulation. In fact, her father Bardo even tells her, "It is true, I have been careful to keep thee aloof from the debasing influence of thy own sex, with their sparrow-like frivolity and their enslaving superstition…" (54).[221] He refuses Romola the opportunity to embrace her

[221]Bardo's self-serving praises are accompanied by a reminder of Romola's inferior womanly position; for instance, he tells her, "I cannot boat that thou art entirely lifted out of that lower category which Nature assigned thee" (54-5). And "thou art not destitute of gifts; rather, thou art endowed beyond the measure of women; but thou hast withal the woman's delicate frame, which ever craves repose and variety, and so begets a wandering imagination" (69).

innate femininity; instead, after he is abandoned by his only son he raises Romola as his replacement understudy. He instills her with an education but also with the knowledge that she can never step into the masculine role of a scholar.[222] Similar to Caterina, Romola lives a life of social imprisonment[223], with her purpose only being to serve the needs of her caretaker.[224] This tension between the paternal figure and feminine potential which Eliot uses to set the tone in *Romola* mirrors that of contemporary Victorian society, which as Sandra Zodiaco points out was "dominated by a sort of male cultural authority which seemed incompatible with female intellectual ambitions and desire for intellectual autonomy" (363). This was something that impacted Eliot's own literary career, and it is the reason behind her switching her name Mary Ann Evans to the masculine pseudonym George Eliot. Given that female authorship was seen as subordinate to the works of male authors, it was not uncommon for women authors to present themselves as men. Gilbert and Gubar mention in their work that this tendency was common by "the most rebellious" of nineteenth-century women authors who set out to "solve the literary problem of being female by presenting themselves as male" (65). As they go on to state, the decision of George Eliot and other authors such as George Sand to impersonate a man in their professional lives was an attempt to "gain male acceptance of their intellectual seriousness" (65). Therefore, Eliot represents this marginalized position of women scholars in *Romola*;

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[222] Romola internalizes this, as she tells Tito early in their union: "I am by no means sufficient to my father: I have not the gifts that are necessary for scholarship" (68).

[223] Allison Booth has even gone the extent of calling Romola a "kind of fairytale princess sealed up in an ancient house with a blind father, the impoverished scholar Bardo" (187).

[224] Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel use Caterina for cultural capital, while Bardo uses Romola for intellectual capital.

her heroine, like a Victorian woman, is also victim of this incompatibility between "male cultural authority" and "female intellectual ambitions," as she is fully shielded from the world outside of her father's home.

Once Romola encounters Tito, the second shift in her character takes root. As she experiences the sensations of love for the first time, we begin to see the innate passion associated with Italian femininity. Eliot makes clear that this version of Romola had been deprived of feeling such emotion prior to this moment, stating that she had hitherto lived a "self-repressing colourless young life, which had thrown all its passion into sympathy with aged sorrows, aged ambition, aged pride and indignation" (128). Her love for Tito becomes all-encompassing, her lack of an independent identity shifting from that of a daughter to that of a wife. Right before their betrothal, Romola declares to Tito, "How should I not care for you more than for everything else? Everything I had felt before in all my life -- about my father, and about my loneliness -- was a preparation to love you" (178). Yet while Romola's passion for Tito is deep and intense, it is not like the type of passion that is embodied by Caterina, or even the (anti)heroines of Radcliffe and Dacre, which is rooted in carnal desire. Rather Romola's hybridity formulates a passion that stems from adoration and devotion. Her love for Tito is persistent despite his character being questionable from the beginning. Whereas Eliot has toned down stereotypical Italian traits with Romola, she has installed them all in Tito. As Huzzard states, "[Tito] has both the temperament and the physical appearance of a true Latin; from the very beginning of the novel he is identifiable with the social and moral attitudes of his time and place" (162).[225] For the first phase of their

[225] Huzzard also calls attention to the fact that Tito is technically Greek, but presents as Italian: "Tito, on the other hand, is thoroughly Italian. Nominally, of course, he is a Greek. But what

courtship and marriage, Tito's Italian cunningness is able to successfully manipulate Romola's feelings towards him. When they meet, he recognizes the strength of her character, for Eliot writes that Tito "had an intimate sense that Romola was something very much *above* him" (95, italics mine). Nevertheless, he takes advantage of the self-repressive tendencies instilled in Romola's character by her father as he steps into his role as the next man to take control over her life. When Romola expresses suspicions towards his behavior, Tito utilizes familiar disempowering language in order to control her in the same way her father did. He tells her, "I am obliged to take care of you in opposition to your own will: if those dear eyes, that look so tender, see falsely, I must see for them, and save my wife from wasting her life in disappointing herself by impracticable dreams" (281-2). This external patriarchal conditioning puts Romola at odds with her internal potential, supporting Tito's attempts to keep her *below* him. Yet while at the beginning of their relationship she was happily in complete subservience to him, upon Bardo's death Romola's inner struggle begins to manifest itself as it severs the connection with the first major paternal figure of her life. The death of her father marks the first instance of Romola figuratively leaving the domestic hearth and the social standards it represents - and we begin to see the signs of her balancing two conflicting sides to her personality. Eliot marks this moment clearly:

> But it was in the nature of things -- she saw it clearly now -- … that no one but herself could go on month after month, and year after year, patiently fulfilling all her father's monotonous exacting demands. Even she, whose sympathy with her father

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precisely was the difference between a Greek and an Italian to George Eliot? We do not know for certain, but a reading of *Romola* would lead one to suspect that to her the two nationalities were without any noticeable distinctions" (162).

> had made all the passion and religion of her young years, had not always been patient, *had been inwardly very rebellious.* (Eliot, 243)

The entirety of the push-and-pull between feminine duty and liberation that carries Romola through the narrative is summed up within this realization. The death of her father brings about the beginning of a new type of life, one in which Romola is finally able to *see* pieces of her own identity which had been previously hidden from her. However, this sharpening of her intuition continues to be challenged by male figures that take her father's place, starting with Tito. There are many instances which show Romola's self-reflection coming forth only to be tainted by a stronger sense of duty to her husband, the most exemplary being at the beginning of her suspicion towards Tito's strange behavior: "Romola was labouring, as a loving women must, to subdue her nature to her husband's. The great need of her heart compelled her to strangle, with desperate resolution, every rising impulse of suspicion, pride, and resentment" (247).[226] Hence, as Tito both commits an extramarital affair and schemes to sell Bardo's library against his wife's will, Romola has to forcefully dissociate herself from her inner knowledge to continue to serve the husband that is betraying her. This form of psychological violence, which, as Nancy Paxton notes, "women experience in patriarchal societies where the maternal emotions are devalued or

[226] This is only one key instance in the novel, however there are many which demonstrate the consistency and intensity of Romola's internal struggle. Some other notable instances are: "Romola said to herself that she had been very foolish and ignorant in her girlish time: she was wiser now, and would make no unfair demands on the man to whom she had given her best woman's love and worship" (243); "But all the while inwardly her imagination was busy trying to see how Tito could be as good as she had thought he was, and yet find it impossible to sacrifice those pleasures of society which were necessarily more vivid to a bright creature like him than to the common run of men" (244); "The new sensibilities and questions which it had half awakened in her were quieted again by that subjection to her husband's mind which is felt by every wife who loves her husband with passionate devotedness and full reliance" (246).

repressed," further solidifies the parallel between the young Romola and Victorian wifehood.[227] This is where the significance of Eliot's choice in placing her heroine in Renaissance Florence comes to light - for Paxton further states that Florence provided Eliot with a "'wild zone' in the history of Western Culture" that was a "period in Renaissance history when 'maternal emotions' were a more visible and powerful force defining both private and public life" (122). The infusion of Renaissance Italian culture into Romola's character is essential to the possibility of exploring and challenging the prevailing ideas surrounding gender in Eliot's own time. However, Romola must simultaneously step into and let go of her Italian "maternal emotions" in order to achieve liberation from male control.

The moment that Romola discovers that Tito betrayed her by selling her father's library, she also sheds the submissive and repressed (Anglicized) identity and uncovers her innate and impassioned (Italianate) self. Her reaction to Tito's announcement clearly marks this shift and deserves quoting in full:

> Her eyes were flashing, and her whole frame seemed to be possessed by impetuous force that wanted to leap out in some deed. All the crushing pain of disappointment in her husband, which had made the strongest part of her consciousness a few minutes before, was annihilated by the vehemence of her indignation. … she could not care that he was her husband; she could only feel that

[227] Sandra Zodiaco reflects on this nicely: "In her historical reconstruction of the eccentric life of Romola, an educated woman in fifteenth-century Florence, and of utter subjugation to her husband, George Eliot seems to underline the remote origins of the state of complete subjugation to their husbands in which Victorian women, even intellectual women, were obliged to in marriage. … And Romola's helpless condition, which doesn't allow her to protect her father's library from Tito's greediness, seems the origin of a similar helpless condition, whereby Victorian married women were left vulnerable and unprotected by the restraining common law of property" (367).

> she despised him. *The pride and fierceness of the old Bardi blood had been thoroughly awakened in her for the first time.* (285, italics mine)

Romola's connection with her inner Italianate sensibilities is reminiscent of Caterina's awakening, for we can find parallels between their two trajectories. They are two women conditioned by their guardians to satisfy and perpetuate British domestic structures[228], and their Italianness threatens that social order. Both women are awakened as a result of their idolized love being tainted, and it ultimately proves to be destructive for the men as a result. In this brief scene Eliot once again recalls the hyperbolic language associated with the Italian (anti)heroines of the Gothic tradition: between the "flashing" eyes, "possessed, impetuous" force, "vehemence," and the "pride and fierceness," in her blood, readers are left to wonder if murderous rage will arise alongside the infamously dangerous Italian femininity. However, rather than subject her heroine to the exhausted and unrealistic stereotypes of her predecessors, Eliot breathes new life into the representation of Italian womanhood. She does this by striking a balance between the Anglicized and Italianized sides of Romola; by fusing her moral goodness and virtue with her passion and pride, Eliot instills Romola with the ability to find a way to find liberation from the patriarchal structures while also finding a respectable way to coexist with them. And it at the very moment in which Romola discovers Tito's betrayal that her new identity begins to take its shape, as it marks the beginning of her journey to find freedom from the same reality that

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[228] While this is not representative of the entirety of Romola's story, this is where we find her at the beginning, under the control of her patriarchal father whose misogynistic views about femininity are reminiscent of Victorian ideals prominent in Eliot's time.

made her, like her father's library, her husband's property.[229] She is the first Italian woman that we have encountered who doesn't run after a man's love; rather, she runs away from his control.

This inner awakening marks the beginning of Romola's winding journey towards self-realization, starting with the revolutionary decision to obey "the instinct to sever herself from the man she loved no longer" (321). However, in severing herself from love, we see a similar message that echoes the consequences seen in Corinne's and Caterina's stories: when a woman loses her love, she loses any chance at a happy life. Furthermore, given that Italian women are characterized by their amorous passion, they lack a sense of identity outside of their love. Initially, Eliot seems to be writing a similar fate for Romola, for, once she leaves Tito, the narrator states that "her life could never be happy any more," … "This poor Romola, who had found herself at the end of her joys," and Romola herself tells Tito "...my love for you is dead; and therefore, so far as I was yours, I too am dead" (322, 327). As opposed to Corinne or Caterina, Romola accepts the loss of joy as a result of severing herself from Tito and walks willingly into a life of solitude in order to achieve something she desires more: freedom.[230] And while she succeeds at first in escaping from Florence and distancing herself from the control of her husband, Romola finds herself

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[229] This moment also demonstrates the masculine weakness in front of feminine power that we encountered in Caterina's story as well as those explored in the previous chapter. When Romola stands up to Tito with her Italianate passion, Eliot writes: "This necessity nerved his courage; and his experience of her affectionateness and unexpected submissiveness, ever since their marriage until now, encouraged him to hope that, at last, she would accommodate herself to what had been his will" (284).

[230] When she finds herself outside of Florence for the first time, Eliot writes that Romola "would have entered in her new life -- a life of loneliness and endurance, but of freedom" … "She was free and alone" … "For the first time in her life she felt alone in the presence of the earth and the sky, with no human presence interposing and making a law for her" (329, 330, 355).

falling under the wing of yet another man - Savonarola. His words are what begins to connect Romola to the aforementioned repressed maternal emotions, as he reprimands her father for keeping her in complete isolation from her fellow Florentine citizens: "Your life has been spent in blindness, my daughter. You have lived with those who sit on a hill aloof, and look down on the life of their fellow men. … you have never felt that you, a Florentine woman, should live for Florence" (358). Savonarola's declaration influences Romola to follow a new path of "womanly" duty, for his words appear to her as divine law. His entrance into her life marks the next turning point in Romola's character arc in which she looks to the Church for guidance. While she finally begins to explore the social world outside the walls of her father's library, she remains tethered to the very influence of a paternal figure of the type she was trying to escape from. Thus, Savonarola assigns Romola to care for her fellow Florentines in need, a maternal role for which as Eliot writes "she had no innate taste," and for which "her early training had kept her aloof" (294-295).[231] Her early years had instilled her with a more "masculine" intellectualism and now during her years under Savonarola's tutelage she learns how to be a respectable woman in Florentine society.

Nancy Paxton states that "Romola assumes the role of the Madonna, then, because her culture offers it as the only admissible one which will allow her to move freely about the city and still be regarded with respect" (135). Romola therefore becomes the first representation of maternal Italian womanhood that we have seen thus far, for, while she is

[231] Szirotny is critical of this, stating, "Without any concern that a learned woman could be of more use to the state than by devoting herself to 'womanly labors' for the sick and hungry, Savonarola consigns her to menial labor" (97).

childless herself, she becomes a sort of "mother" to the people. She, like Corinne and Caterina, was set to be isolated from society due to her nonconformity to "traditional" femininity, only to return and find a place for herself without relinquishing her identity,

Before exploring the conclusion of Romola's story, it is important to call attention to the other significant female figure of the narrative, Tito's secret "other wife" and mother to his children. Tessa stands as Romola's direct opposite: whereas Romola is educated, refined and highly intelligent, Tessa is ignorant, emotional and childish. As Julia Straub writes, "Tessa embodies a different type of womanhood" (80). Eliot's characterization of Tessa mirrors that of Caterina, for she is infantilized, affectionate and fixated only on her profound love for Tito. She is dehumanized by Tito in the same way that Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel do with Caterina, referring to her as "pretty bird," "pretty pigeon," "little goose," "wicked pigeon," each time he speaks to her.[232] Tessa is indeed treated as Tito's pet, his attraction to her being carnal. Eliot writes that Tito's "kindness was manifested towards a pretty trusting *thing* whom it was impossible to be near without feeling inclined to caress and pet her…," yet "he was not in love with Tessa… his fibre was too fine, his intellect too bright, for him to be tempted into the habits of a gross pleasure-seeker" (299, italics mine). Between her "wild" femininity and, as Paxton terms it, her "spontaneous sexuality,"[233] Tessa becomes more quintessentially Italian than Romola. Yet like Corinne and Caterina, she is not permitted access to the social world of the novel. She lives a peasant life outside of Florence's city walls in the home that Tito bought for her in order to keep his hidden

[232] This happens throughout the entire novel, but you can find these terms at pages 109, 111, 147, 306, 309, 424.

[233] Paxton, 127.

family a secret and under his control.[234] In fact, her entire identity and livelihood is defined by Tito's control, for he fools her into believing they are married and then keeps her and their children holed up in a countryside home while he proceeds to live his double life. Paxton nicely exemplifies the relationship between Tito and Tessa's dynamic to the patriarchal system which Eliot is critiquing: "Thus, in exercising the same power to control women's access to knowledge that Bardo exerted in his tutorship of Romola, Tito shows how the institution of the family operates in Florentine society to promote male domination and enforce female submission by restricting women's knowledge about sexuality and power" (127). Tessa thus becomes a vehicle for Tito to carry out the power he is unable to maintain in his relationship with Romola. Furthermore, their fertile extramarital union provides him with the legacy that his childless marriage cannot. Tessa is the only female character who achieves the mark of ideal femininity through biological motherhood, yet her Italian pleasure-seeking mannerisms force her to the margins of society. Eliot reckons with Italian feminine sexuality in a more sympathetic manner than previous authors, yet there is still an evident discomfort at fully translating Italian womanhood for her British readership.

This brings us to the question of to what extent Eliot's translations of Italian femininity can be considered an improvement upon those encountered in earlier works. To fully discuss this, we must first examine the conclusion to Romola's story. Once Romola

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[234] For more on the relationship between space and femininity in *Romola,* see Shona Elizabeth Simpson's work. She has a lengthier discussion on the spaces that Romola and Tessa inhabit; for instance, she states that Tessa "is always outside because inside means inside the library, where women can show themselves intelligent and educated. In addition, class distinctions place her, as a peasant, squarely outside. … Tessa does eventually end up inside, but not in any space like that of the library. We see her only in the house Tito buys for her, only in the space he controls" (56).

grows disillusioned with Savonarola's increasing extremism and the increasing oppression in the city, her connection to Florence becomes yet again threatened. Then, when Tito's estranged father returns to Florence and discovers Tito's double life, he seeks revenge by trying to convince Romola to assist him in Tito's murder. It is then no coincidence that a potential murder plot recalls the second notable instance in which Eliot calls attention to Romola's Italian blood. In her description of Baldassare seeing Romola from afar, Eliot writes: "The tall wife was the noble and rightful wife; she had the blood in her that would be readily kindled to resentment; … She could believe him: she would be inclined to believe him, if he proved to her that her husband was unfaithful. Women cared about that: they would take vengeance for that" (432). Then, when convincing Romola to help him kill Tito, Baldassare tells her, "I know women can hate; and you have proud blood. You hate falseness, and you can love revenge" (449). The attention to Romola's stature and merit juxtaposed to her proud and vengeful blood calls attention yet again to the cultural split in her identity.[235] Yet while in previous iterations of Italian femininity Italian blood mixed with lust and betrayal always leads to death, in *Romola* it rather leads to rebirth. Her complete loss of faith in the remaining predominant male figures in her life leads Romola to flee Florence yet again. With a suicidal yearning, she departs on a small boat and finds freedom by relinquishing control and surrendering herself to the will of the ocean.[236]

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[235] We can recall Lady Asher's "tall and blooming" stature as opposed to Caterina's infantilized shape (return to page 21) and compare this now to the Anglicized Romola's height and nobility in comparison to Tessa's childish and ignorant characterization, described later as with "a pair of round brown legs," and "a short woman in the contadina dress" (566). "Contadina" translates as "peasant."

[236] The scene in the text reads: "She drew the cowl over her head again and covered her face, choosing darkness rather than the light of stars, which seemed to her like the hard light of eyes that looked at her without seeing her" (504).

Rather than take her under, Eliot writes that the waves "had been the gently lulling cradle of a new life" (551). Romola ends up on the shores of a plague-stricken community where she appears as an angel-like figure and again takes on the maternal care-taking role which nurses the community back to life. It is here, far from the patriarchal figures that previously governed her life, that Romola experiences her awakening - or as Eliot writes, "a new baptism" (560). She realizes the joy she holds in living so that "she could lighten sorrow," and she had "so energetic an impulse to share the life around her, to answer the call of need and do the work which cried aloud to be done" (560). This newfound sense of moral motherhood fills her again with the internal obligation to return to Florence and answer to her maternal duty to care for her fellow Florentines. Once she has nursed back the small community to health, she departs from them, leaving behind only the legend of the "Blessed Lady" who benevolently rescued those about to perish. As an incarnation of the Madonna, she returns to her city only to discover Tito's murder and Savonarola's death sentence. Now liberated from all three of the male figures that governed her life and repressed her intellectual potential, Romola is finally able to establish a path of her own.

What she decides to do next can be considered the feminist climax of the novel, although the extent to which it renders Romola a feminist figure has been the center of a major debate within scholarship. In setting up her newly independent life, she gathers her aunt, Monna Brigida as well as Tessa and her children with the intent of becoming their caretaker. Having a right to Tito´s inheritance but not trusting the "cleanness of that money," she gives all of her inheritance to the State and keeps only that which was equal to the cost of her father's library. With this money, she purchases a home for the mixed family and establishes a microcosmic matriarchy, with herself at the center. In this final scene, we

see Tessa and her daughter working on weaving wreaths while Romola is educating Tessa's son, Lillo. She is instructing Lillo on his future and how to be a great man while enjoying life's pleasures. She tells him: "We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts, and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves…" (582). This ending flips the power dynamic of the male-governed intellectual world which opens the novel, with Romola becoming a man's educator instead of his assistant. This also gives her the ability to combat against the ego-centric patriarchal model of society and bring in a more feminized, maternal focus on the collective. Furthermore, her instruction of Lillo shows rebellion against the patriarchal standards which had constricted her until now. As Szirotny states, in teaching Lillo, "Romola is eager to keep him from the wrongdoing that destroyed his father" (106). Therefore, liberated from the complete control that Tito obtained over her life and the property rights which carried her family legacy, the power over the only material remnants of Tito´s legacy is now in Romola´s hands. This power lies in her ability to educate the next generation of men and repair some of the social and political havoc wrought on Florence under patriarchal rule. However, on the other hand, Zodiaco calls attention to the fact that Romola "returns to the enclosed space of domesticity she had earlier escaped from" (374). Kelly E. Battles carries this line of thought even further by arguing that even if *Romola* introduces space for women to act as "historical actors," their agency "persists only for as long as they remain childless and active operators within the public sphere" (224). Thus, once Romola has elected to become the matriarch of a domestic household, she also removes herself from this "historical stage." The last debate is centered around the role of the family members in this newly created household. Scholars have pointed out that while Romola's home is

female dominated, the gendered narrative which subordinated Romola throughout her youth is being replicated on the next generation through the instruction of Tessa's children. Shona Elizabeth Simpson points out that quite simply when Romola teaches Lillo while Tessa´s daughter is doing "women's work," she "perpetuates a system in which boys learn while girls do not" (64).[237] In this sense, although Eliot has achieved the establishment of a new paradigm for women in the social world of the novel, it is not fully liberated from the influence of the patriarchal model.[238]

In returning to the hearth and being reborn as an "an earthly madonna" at the novel's conclusion,[239] Romola's character achieves a balance that satisfies the British standards for respectable womanhood.[240] In this new role, she no longer fits into the culture around her and therefore becomes an "outsider" much like Corinne and Caterina, residing within the space of the home and excluded from society. However, while in Corinne's and Caterina´s cases their "otherness" leads to their deaths, for Romola it empowers her to give a new life to other women who have also been cast on the margins.

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[237] Gail Turley Houston caps out the critique of other scholars, which provides even more context: "Homas argues that in the final scene, Eliot privileges a patriarchal writer (Petrarch) whom Bardo earlier in the narrative had used to rationalize the subordination of women. According to this interpretation, Romola is still the ´transmitter´ who ensures the textual transmission from one generation of men to the next´ that she was at the beginning of the tale (Homas 197). Lesa Scholl remarks, too, that the ending indicates that Romola has always been, and always will be, immersed in masculine ideologies, including those of Savonarola, Tito, and Bardo (17)." (137-38).

[238] In fact, Peggy Fitzhugh Johnstone points out that "Eliot´s excessive idealization of Romola has been criticized by Victorians and moderns alike" (90).

[239] I pull this characterization from Booth, 191.

[240] To further demonstrate this, I pull from Szirotny who states that Romola, "demonstrating that, in caring for Tito´s interests, she has, in a sense, not ceased to be a wife" (104). Furthermore, she "rebels without sacrificing her selflessness," for Romola "is thus ´noble´; and, as George Eliot´s most heroic and feminist character, she is also ´ideal´" (109).

From this perspective, my reading is more optimistic; rather than write a tragic end for "othered" women, Eliot brings them together and uses the different cultural facets of femininity which they represent to create a new imagined social structure. This could stem from Eliot's transhistorical approach to cultural translation, for *Romola's* ending is liberating for the Victorian woman reader who was accustomed to forcefully abide by the conventions of domestic femininity in order to maintain their social status. As Szirotny states, the establishment of this women-led community at *Romola*'s conclusion "encouraged the numerous ´redundant women´ in nineteenth-century England to form networks, in which they could learn to be self-sufficient" (105).[241] In the creation of this matriarchal home, Eliot has indeed achieved the ultimate balance of feminine cultures; bringing them together creates the power to stand up against patriarchal rule. Furthermore, Paxton points out that Eliot´s quest to create an "intellectually responsible definition of the ´moral evolution´" of society which recognizes "how historical forces and cultural ideologies had directed the interpretation of gender differences in the past and had consequently determined prevailing ideas about gender that found expression in the social arrangements of Eliot´s own time" (121). Eliot has created a translation of an Italian world not yet encountered in British literature, one that does not rely on established cultural stereotypes but rather nurtures hybridity. In exploring the possibilities of cultural proximity between both British and Italian femininities, Eliot encourages both a growth in cosmopolitan sympathies and a reformulation of gender differences.

[241] She further states "*Romola* is following nineteenth-century feminists, who, protesting against the conventional notion that ´to get married as the pinnacle of every girl´s ambition and the sooner it was reached the better´" (105).

The works of Staël and Eliot elucidate the impact of travel on translation and the power it holds in its ability to shift cultural perspectives. Tosi writes in regard to women travel writers that "[c]ontrasts and comparisons with foreign cultures became the single focus of their narratives, particularly with respect to the conditions of women in foreign societies with regard to marriage, sexuality and femininity (251)". At the center of both *Corinne* and "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" are talented Italian women characters who are victimized by their cultural hybridity and ultimately rejected by society for going against British social codes concerning marriage and sexuality. Meanwhile, *Romola*'s transposition of historical setting nurtures an ideal balance between Victorian British and Renaissance Italian femininity both within Romola´s character herself as well as in the utopic matriarchal microcosm she creates at the novel's end. While neither Staël nor Eliot´s work is completely devoid of inherent cultural biases within their translations of Italian women, it challenges the long-standing prejudiced and hyperbolic representations of Italian femininity and at last creates women who are sympathetic, not merely "wanton." Furthermore, the trajectory of Italian women´s stories in (cultural) translation are demonstrative of the impact that both travel and translation had on women's´ political status in the nineteenth century. While discourse of politics abroad had primarily been dominated by male voices, Tosi states that the rise of women travel writers "caused further transgressions of gender distinctions" and that there was an increase in "liberal-minded" British women who were "outspoken regarding individual rights and freedoms" (257). While British women authors like Staël and Eliot gave their Italian female characters a level of humanity they had not yet been granted in British literature, these characters in return empowered them with a stronger political voice. Thus, this climactic moment of shifting

relations between England and Italy marks a form of liberation both for the Italian fictional woman as well as the British travel writer herself.

Chapter Four
Cultural Mediation Across Genres: the Archive of Elizabeth Barrett Browning

A study of British women authors translating Italy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would be incomplete without the inclusion of one of *the* most iconic Victorian Italophiles: Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Whereas Staël and Eliot developed a deep-rooted connection with Italy through extensive travels and research, Barrett Browning (who I will henceforth refer to as EBB)[242] abandoned her life in England and moved to Italy after eloping with Robert Browning in 1846. She spent the last fifteen years of her life in Italy and became so intricately intertwined with the country and its politics that Italy was the driving force behind the majority of both her poetic and personal writing. In fact, it is the way in which EBB shares her passion for Italy across the different genres of her writing which makes her not only a cultural translator, but a cultural *mediator*. Yet before exploring the ways that EBB's texts classify her as a cultural mediator, the difference between cultural translation and cultural mediation must first be described. I will be examining cultural mediation through the framework delineated by Reine Meylaerts, Lieven D'hulst and Tom Verschaffel in *Cultural Mediation in Europe, 1800-1950*, who define the cultural mediator as "a cultural actor active across linguistic, artistic and geocultural borders and as such the central carrier of cultural transfer" (7). They further claim that the concept of the cultural mediator came from a fusion of translation studies and cultural transfer studies, developing out of greater attention to "the social and cultural agents who

[242] I follow the example of Marjorie Stone here who chooses to refer to her as EBB in her works in order to keep "with the signature practices reflected by her own self-archiving). See: "Constructing the Archive and the Nation in: "Italy" World's Italy!", "My Last Duchess," Aurora Leigh, and an Unpublished Manuscript by Elizabeth Barrett Browning."

are involved in the process of interlingual, intercultural, international and interdisciplinary action" (7).[243] Meylaerts, D'hulst and Verschaffel argue that despite being crucial agents in the construct of cultural history, cultural mediators are largely neglected in scholarship because they "transcend the traditional binary concepts of disciplines like translation studies or transfer studies," and that this narrow image of the mediator as solely a translator prevents the understanding of the complexity behind their roles and practices (14).[244] Furthermore, the scholarship that *does* focus on cultural mediation seems to largely be rooted in more contemporary works. The same effort put into unearthing the silenced voices of historical women translators should be applied to highlighting their work as mediators. Bringing historical *women* cultural mediators into scholarly discussion will further enrich our understanding of women writers' various roles in cultural transfer as well as their integration into political and cosmopolitan discussions of the time. EBB's acts of mediation across her sonnets, personal letters and her masterpiece *Aurora Leigh* reveal not only the way that Italy liberates both British and other expat women from restrictive patriarchal structures, but also how women artists can employ cultural translation to liberate Italy from long standing prejudices in its fight for nationhood.

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[243] Meylaerts, D'Hulst and Verschaffel cite Ronald Taft as the first scholar to introduce the term cultural mediator" in 1981, who invented the term to refer to a person "who facilitates communication, understanding, and action between persons or groups who differ with respect to language and culture" (Taft 1981, 53)" (8).

[244] They further explain how the term "mediator" has been used in Translation Studies and how it is different from the context in which it is examined in their study: "The very general view on the translator as a mediator between cultures became popular already in the 1980s when the so-called cultural turn put emphasis on the cultural context of the translated texts more than on the linguistic equivalence between source and target text (Katan 2013, 84). Again, this did not imply any conceptualization in terms of plural and overlapping transfer roles: mediators were reduced to their status as translators" (17).

This chapter will largely focus itself on the last 15 years of EBB's life, tracing how her escape from England to Italy and her deepening connection with her new home impacts the cultural themes that appear in her writings. The first section introduces the figure of the woman cultural mediator in the nineteenth century and considers the reasons for Italy's dominant role in the literary output of expat women artists. In the second section, I provide a brief history of EBB's life at Wimpole street and her elopement with Robert Browning to give context as to why her move to Italy profoundly changed the course of her life and writings. The third section examines *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and foregrounds the work as her first act of translation, demonstrating the ways in which she appropriates the Italian genre "fathered" by Petrarch and translates the formerly masculine tradition into a female voice. In section four, I present her early unpublished fragments on Italy and analyze how they demonstrate a major shift in EBB's own relationship with Italy and mark the beginning of her own work as cultural mediator. Section five explores how her acts of cultural mediation went beyond her work as a poet through the examination of her personal correspondences across her 15 years living in Italy. Lastly, the chapter culminates with an analysis of cultural hybridity in EBB's most well-known work, her semi-autobiographical novel-poem *Aurora Leigh*, tracing how Aurora diverges from previous representations of feminine cultural hybridity explored in Chapter 3 and establishes Italy as a force of liberation from the constraints of English culture. The chapter concludes by considering the importance of EBB's legacy and how it was pivotal in creating an image of Italy that was free from Anglocentric prejudices and that demonstrated to her compatriots that it was deserving of nationhood.

To further understand the position of historical women writers as cultural mediators, I turn to Sherry Simon's invaluable work *Gender in Translation*. She names Staël as an "influential" cultural mediator of the nineteenth century alongside Margaret Fuller and Eleanor Marx, stating that they all "used translation in the service of explicitly political causes" and "understood the acts of creating and transmitting literature as having political consequences" (61). Furthermore, Simon acknowledges that Staël did not actually publish literary translations herself, but that it was her fiction (such as *Corinne)* and theoretical writings which "initiated a new translational sensibility in European letters" (61). Staël envisioned literary exchange as a driving factor in the development of "political liberalization and national autonomy," and she used her influence to further the cause of Italian independence from Austrian control (64). To fully grasp the scope and impact stemming from cultural mediation, I reiterate the importance of extending beyond the linguistic or grammatical focus of translated words on the page to an observation of mediation as a holistic process combining, as Tom Toremans states, "paraphrase, translation, quotation and commentary" (80). It is only through this lens that we are able to decipher just how impactful British women's voices were in nation-building and the making of a *new* Italy which was free from foreign control. As Amy Tigner rightly notes, "The meaning and significance of nineteenth-century Italy relied upon the texts written about Italy" (3). However, this significance has been greatly tied to masculine voices such as Byron, Shelley, Dickens, Browning, Ruskin, James, Lawrence, Goethe, and Stendhal; Susan Cahill argues that "still to be heard are the stories of women's passion for Italy'

(xi).[245] While this dissertation has focused largely on women writers imagining Italy as a place which could liberate British femininity, this chapter will also consider the ways in which women use their cosmopolitan influence to liberate Italy. Alison Chapman calls attention to the community of nineteenth-century British women poets living in Florence campaigning for Italian unification, stating that they "placed themselves at the center of nation making, staked their careers on campaigning for Italy, and conceived their writing and professional selves as part of an explicitly female literary, political and social community" (275). The verve with which these women engaged in advocating for the Italian cause was fueled by the freedom that the *bel Paese* afforded them to live as respected artists in society. As Tigner rightly notes, in Italy "foreign women could live an emancipated life, would be treated as equals, and could produce art that would speak of their worth" (32). Thus, this expatriate community of women artists in Italy became a breeding ground for cultural mediation, for not only did Italy influence the art they created, the political developments of the Risorgimento would also become a dominant theme in their personal writings where they would describe the culture they were observing . Despite the Anglo-centricity present in their writings, their work still repairs some of the damage made by the mass stereotyping of Italian culture in the literature that precedes them. As Alison Chapman and Jane Stabler contend, "they frustrate any sense of static and monolithic 'Italy'" (11).

One can simply not discuss the influence of British women authors on the reception of Italy in England in the nineteenth century without mentioning EBB. Lana L. Dalley states

[245] Cahill, Susan, editor. *Desiring Italy: Women Writers Celebrate the Passions of a Country and Culture*. Ballantine Books, 1997.

that "[c]ritics have focused on Elizabeth Barrett Browning's tenuous position as a female poet in mid-Victorian England, her fruitless search for literary 'grandmothers,' and her work in the creation of a 'new poetry'" (525). In the last fifteen years of EBB's life, Italian culture and politics greatly influenced all of her writing; yet, while her fascination with Italy has been examined at length in scholarship, her identity as a cultural mediator is underexplored. Now that the conversation around historical women translators and cultural mediators is gaining more traction within academic discourse, it is important to revisit the work of even the most canonized authors so as to give greater nuance to our understanding of their cultural positioning. To grasp the relationship between EBB and Italy, one must address the conditions that led her to move there. It is widely known that until she fled to Italy upon eloping with Robert Browning at forty years old, she lived under the tyrannical rule of her father Edward Browning, who embodied the patriarchal rule of law which constricted the freedoms of Victorian women. Dorothy Mermin states that EBB's father "encouraged her ambition while she was a child, but although he showed her the path to glory he also blocked it" (724). EBB remained stuck under the control of her father who, as Sandra Gilbert states, "refused to send her south (significantly, to Italy) for her health." It is also important to mention, as EBB's letters express it, that she was unable to escape Barrett's authority due to financial dependence.[246] Therefore, the Barrett family residence at 50 Wimpole street became associated with feminine imprisonment, especially given that until she left in 1846, EBB spent most of her time locked in her room writing poetry. Marjorie Stone actually calls attention to her acclaimed literary status even before

[246] I pull this from Virginia Steinmetz's article "Beyond the Sun: Patriarchal Images in 'Aurora Leigh,'" page 19.

meeting Robert Browning, calling her the "legendary poet-recluse" who was "fighting for life and fame in the face of personal tragedy and broken health" (1, 15).[247] During this period, EBB's letters express her desperation to leave the life-threatening grasp that England (and her father) had on her. In a letter addressed to her friend and neighbor Mrs. Martin in October of 1845, EBB speaks of her intent to leave England for Italy: "...to escape the English winter will be *everything for me,* and that it involves the comfort and usefulness of the rest of my life, I have resolved to do it, let the circumstances of the doing be as painful as they may. …I am assured of permanent good if I leave England" (286). Not only is the departure from her *father*land[248] important for her health, EBB's usage of the word "usefulness" here suggests that she understood the move to Italy to be equally as important for her growth as a poet towards greater literary fame.

EBB's sudden elopement with Robert Browning and subsequent escape from the confines of her room at Wimpole Street to Florence, the heart of Italy, marked a significant transition that changed not only the trajectory of her poetic career; it also reformulated the way she saw and engaged with the world. While the story of the courtship between EBB and Robert Browning is widely known and spoken of, the framing of EBB as a sort of "damsel in distress" who was rescued from imprisonment by Browning and whisked away to Italy where she would finally achieve freedom and fame has been overplayed. In fact,

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[247] "Personal tragedy" would be referring to the death of her two brothers Samuel and Edward in February and July of 1840. "Broken health" refers to the lung disease she developed in 1837 as well as her general frail health stemming from illnesses affecting her spine and mobility which was unknown at the time.

[248] I emphasize *father* here to call attention to the interconnection between the control EBB is living under which stems from both the conventions of the *land* (Victorian England) and her *father* - this also sets up the binary presented in *Aurora Leigh* between the patriarchal fatherland (England) and nurturing/liberating motherland (Italy).

Stone contends that "[t]he romantic story of her elopement and marriage has become so much a part of our culture that we are collaborators in it against our will, just as we are complicit in the ideological forces that have nurtured it for over a century now" (1). I align with Stone's emphasis on Browning's role in their courtship not as being EBB's savior, but as an admirer of her poetic talents. Stone quotes the first letter sent to EBB by Browning in January 1845 which declared not his love for *her* but for her "great living poetry" with its "fresh music, the affluent language, the exquisite pathos and true new brave thought,"[249] stating that he first addressed her as "a peer and rival." According to Stone, it was actually scholars and biographers in the twentieth century "who transformed her into the muse who inspired his poems, the wife who confessed her chaste love in the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*" (30). Looking upon EBB's relationship with Browning as one that is rooted in mutual respect for each other's literary talents and in the desire to bridge the gap between England and Italy sets us on firmer footing for analyzing the major themes to appear in EBB's *capolavoro*, *Aurora Leigh.* Nevertheless, it is to be said that her elopement with Browning marked the dawn of a new era for EBB, one in which she could experience artistic liberation, immerse herself into Italian Risorgimento politics and amplify her voice in the name of its cause. Dorothy Mermin eloquently states as much:

> Love and marriage with a man who refused to play a conventionally authoritative masculine role removed her both psychologically and physically from her father's domination and enabled her to situate herself as a poet first in the rich tradition of the amatory lyric and then in the contemporary social and political world that

[249] Quoted in Stone, page 30.

> provided her most congenial subject-matter and gave the greatest scope for the distinctively zestful and confident voice that we hear more often in her letters than in her earlier poetry (734).

While her father kept her vision narrowed to the four walls of her bedroom on Wimpole Street, her relationship with Browning led to the expansion of her worldview and to her subsequent role as a mediator between British and Italian cultures.

It should nevertheless be stressed that EBB's translative acts began well before her relocation to Italy, for one of her most famous works, *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850), has the appearance of being a translation from an original foreign source. While it was actually a work stemming fully from EBB's own imagination, the positioning of the text as a translation actually allowed her more room to experiment with the hitherto masculine form of the sonnet. In order to understand this, it is generative to briefly consider EBB's thoughts on translation. In her preface to her translation from the Greek of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, she defends translation against attacks on its lack of originality that were prevalent in her time: "Surely (an age) may think its own thoughts and speak its own words, yet not turn away from those who *have* thought and spoken well."[250] Thus, translation for EBB is an imaginative act which takes from a work of art already in existence and breathes fresh life into it, welcoming self-expression. Marshall notes that it cannot be forgotten that *Sonnets from the Portuguese* is "ostensibly a translation," and that she transparently feigns the transmission of these poems from an original source (484). Furthermore, Marshall postulates that this approach perfectly mirrors her use of

[250] This is quoted in Marshall's work, page 484.

Shakespeare[251] in other works, "as she uses his words to voice her emotions and gives to those words a powerful nineteenth-century resonance while insisting on the persistent presence of the playwright" (484). Therefore, we can deduce that the connection to an earlier work, albeit imaginary, was a strategic decision by EBB to encourage the work was well received. *Sonnets from the Portuguese* is most acclaimed by critics for bringing women's voices into a poetic space that was previously exclusive to men. In a letter to her friend Henry Fothergill Chorley in 1845, EBB comments on the lack of female poets in Britain: "....Where were the poetesses? The divine breath which seemed to come and go, and, ere it went, filled the land with that crowd of true poets whom we call the old dramatists -- why did it never pass, even in the lyrical form, over the lips of a woman? … *I look everywhere for grandmothers and see none*" (231-2, emphasis mine). She was composing *Sonnets from the Portuguese* this same year, thus her decision to make her work a pseudo translation perhaps gave it the best possibility for the woman poet to share her "divine breath" without being ostracized for infringing upon a male-dominated realm. Scholarship on *Sonnets from the Portuguese* suggests that the inspiration behind the title of the work came from the Portuguese poet Luís de Camões (c. 1524-1580) who was famous for his love sonnets. Some scholars have also suggested that EBB's earlier poem "Caterina to Camoens," one of Browning's favorites, was the driving force behind the sonnets being "from the Portuguese"; for example, Dorothy Mermin states that the title is, "a cryptic allusion to the fancy that Catarina might have spoken them" (355). There is also

[251] While it is not the focus of my work, Marshall's article discusses the presence of Shakespeare in both *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and *Aurora Leigh*. For more, see full citation.

controversy around the reasoning behind this title, for many critics have stated its purpose as being the concealment of the collection's autobiographical nature. Barbara Neri argues against this reasoning by stating that it "contradicts and is uncharacteristic of the serious scholarship and creative process that EBB was devoted to and engaged in throughout her life" (66). In agreement with this stance, I contend that the reference to translation in the title calls our attention to the very act of translation that EBB is doing herself -- that is, translating the masculine tradition of sonnet writing into a feminine form.

Furthermore, EBB is translating the conventions of a genre originating in the 14th century into a feminized Victorian form. Marianne Van Remoortel claims that Petrarch was the "primary model" for *Sonnets from the Portuguese*[252], thus suggesting that she was already engaging with the translation of Italian culture and literary forms well before embarking on her new life in Florence. Looking at her work through the lens of literary translation actually helps to unveil some of its provocative tendencies; her appropriation of a masculine genre into the female voice and the centering of the woman as *subject* instead of *object* is less subversive under the guise of a translation. Van Remoortel states that in writing *Sonnets from the Portuguese* five centuries after Petrarch and his contemporaries solidified the key tenets of the sonnet, "she inherited a poetic genre governed by masculine principles that preserved the objectification of women as an essential part of its generic make-up" (252). Chapman's claim that EBB draws upon the Petrarchan tradition "in order

[252]Van Remoortel further states that EBB "made translations from Petrarch, used the Petrarchan rhyme scheme, and in a letter to her friend Mary Russell Mitford she wrote 'The sonnet structure is a very fine one, however imperios, and I never would believe that our language is unqualified for the very strictest Italian form. I have been exercising myself in it not infrequently of late'; 19 October 1842, *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford*, 1836-1854, ed. Meredith B. Raymond and Mary Rose Sullivan, 3 vols. (Waco: Armstrong Browning Library, 1983), II, 52" (264).

to express active female sexual desire" might make it appear as if *Sonnets from the Portuguese* was a blatantly subversive work; this is far from the case. In fact, the collection of sonnets was widely applauded by the Victorians, who believed the speaker represented the very feminine features that were cherished at the time, for she shows chastity, devotion, weakness, and humility. The outer appearance of prudent Victorian femininity has masked the artful, yet subtle subversive actions taken by EBB. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the text was received as EBB's girlish account of her impassioned courtship with Browning, an example of what Van Remoortel states is "a romanticized kind of Victorianism of crinolines and corsets, waiting women and conquering men, secret letters and stolen kisses" (248). However, from the 1980's there was an attempt to revitalize *Sonnets from the Portuguese* from a feminist perspective, highlighting the female speaker's subjectivity and innovative intentions. Considering this, Van Remoortel calls attention to the fact that *Sonnets from the Portuguese* "is either a Victorian woman's humble, norm-conforming chronicle of her growth towards marriage or a female poet's pioneering struggle to find her voice in a poetic genre that traditionally silenced its women in order to foreground the male poet's subjectivity" (259-60). Translation serves EBB's poetic genius in different ways: through the appropriation of the Petrarchan sonnet, she is able to feminize the genre without steering away from tradition, and through the guise of translation from the Portuguese she is able to distance herself from too much of an identification with the overtly Victorian subject.

What sets EBB's female subject apart from Petrarch's Laura and the other women figures that show up in the sonnet tradition is what gives *Sonnets from the Portuguese* its strongest subversive undertone; that is, the subjectivity and centering of the female poet

speaker. As Dorothy Mermin states, in love poetry "the man loves and speaks, the woman is beloved and silent" (352). Furthermore, Sarah Paul argues that neither Dante's Beatrice or Petrarch's Laura, nor any other heroine invented by male sonneteers, possess any quality outside of their beauty: "they are powerless and deprived of speech, intellect, and feeling -- fetishized, in fact, by the very adoration that, in a sense, brings them into being in the first place" (78). The heroine is thus reduced to an object, merely pretty works of art for the impassioned male lover to gaze upon; they are blank canvases on which male artists contrive their patriarchal fantasies. Despite the ways in which the *Sonnets* do present a woman who is often isolated, crying, physically faint and presenting numerous qualities which coincided with quintessential Victorian subdued femininity, I focus my reading on the moments that directly refute the female objectification which is at the core of the "traditional" sonnet's makeup. In the case of EBB's heroine, we witness actual developments in her character which evolves as each sonnet unfolds, centering her experience and focusing on the way that love manifests not only in her physical form, but her mind as well. The love of a man does not shrink her individuality; yet it reanimates and empowers her:

> I love thee! --in thy sight
>
> I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
>
> ……..
>
> And what I feel, across the inferior features
>
> Of what I am, doth flash itself, and show
>
> How that great work of Love enhances Nature's (sonnet X, 6-7, 12-14).

Throughout the sequence, love consistently gives the speaker the chance to speak boldly, and we see also how this manifests in her obtaining newfound confidence to take up physical space. This "enhanced" glory also affords her with moments of assertiveness as the poems progress. For example, in Sonnet XIV she demands that the love she receives is not rooted in physicality but indeed in admiration for her humanity: "If thou must love me, let it be for nought / except for love's sake only" (1-2). In Sonnet XXXIII, she takes charge of the very name by which she is referred: "Yes, call me by my pet-name! Let me hear / the name I used to run at, when a child" (1-2). In Sonnet XLII, she claims the writing of a new future for herself:

> My future will not copy fair my past --
>
> ……..
>
> I seek no copy now of life's first half:
>
> Leave here the pages with long musing curled,
>
> And write me new my future's epigraph (1, 11-13).

Rather than endorsing the longstanding tradition of the sonnet's male speaker to write the story for his silent, submissive beloved, EBB gives her heroine the ability to vocally express agency over both her identity as a lover and the manner by which she is loved. By the time she arrives at Sonnet XLII, the transformation into a more "glorified," self-certain version of herself has been complete and she looks towards a promising future with her betrothed. The frailty of her former self and the self-deprecation expressed in earlier sonnets is now irrelevant, for she is ready to write her story anew. I also look at these lines as reflecting a new era for poetry as a whole; perhaps EBB is subtly alluding to a necessary renewal of the sonnet tradition to include both female poets as well as stronger female *subjects* as

heroines. There is no need to "copy" the work of former sonneteers; rather, *Sonnets from the Portuguese* carves a new space for the entrance of women voices which will create a new future for the genre via the concept of "translation."

Another theme that appears in *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and that will resurface at the foundation of *Aurora Leigh* is reciprocity in love and commitment. This comes through most prominently in Sonnet XXXV, in which the speaker exclaims:

> If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
> And be all to me? Shall I never miss
> Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
> ……..
> Yet love me - wilt thou? Open thine heart wide" (1-3, 14).

EBB's heroine is willing to give her heart and home to marry her beloved, though she expects this sacrifice to be mutual *and* counts on him to improve her domestic life so that she does not long for what she once had. Paul argues that EBB's "chief purpose" in *Sonnets* is "to forestall covertly (that is without alienating her audience) that reduction of the female to the status of disempowered icon" (78). These lines show how EBB empowers her heroine to be an active participant rather than a passive object in a love story, just as she empowers her women readers to share their poetic voices. Moreover, it cannot be forgotten that EBB's heroine is also a poet who is sharing her experiences of love through the poetic form; her subjectivity speaks not just through her love, but also through her art. Mermin remarks on how the speaker's role as an artist impacts the relationship between her and her lover: "And so the sequence works out terms of reciprocity between two lovers who are both poets. His love calls forth her poems, but she writes them. He is the prince

whose magic kiss restores her beauty, which in turn increases her poetical power" (355). Rather than being silenced by the love of a man, the speaker is fueled by his affections and, through them, is able to find her poetic voice. The connection between male love, reciprocity and poetic genius is something that will be further developed in EBB's later masterpiece *Aurora Leigh,* which is discussed later in this chapter. Nevertheless, *Sonnets from the Portuguese* is a telling starting point to deciphering the interconnection between translation, femininity, the woman artist and Italy within EBB's works and how it informs her place as a cultural mediator.[253] While this collection of poems may have been written well before EBB left England, the significance of the Italian influence on her works is still present; in inheriting Petrarch's legacy, this was the first instance in which Italy acted as a source for her artistic liberation.

EBB's fascination with Italy began long before her courtship with Browning. Examining her early works provides useful insight into how her conceptions of the country evolved over the years. The archive has revealed two fragments dedicated to Italy which appear to be unfinished poems: "Italy! World's Italy!," written circa 1842, and "Italy - Italy - Is it but a name," written circa 1846-1847.[254] Marjorie Stone is the only source to have

[253] It is worth mentioning the general significance of the work on Victorian literature as a whole: Mermin, for example, states that *Sonnets from the Portuguese* "deserves much more attention from literary historians, however, both because of Barrett Browning's influence on later women poets and because it is the first of the semi-autobiographical, amatory, lyrical or partly lyrical sequences in modern settings that compromise one of the major innovations of Victorian literature" (351).

[254] In Sandra Donaldson's *The Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning,* she writes that "Italy! World's Italy!" is found in the source Berg Notebook IV (with a note on the partial penciled draft of the opening lines); and "Italy - Italy - is it but a name" is found in the source at Wellesley College, Pocket Notebook II. The text states that the fragment ends abruptly and is followed by a draft of stanzas 7 and 8.

examined EBB's fragments at length, and she states that "very few studies have drawn on the manuscript material relating to Italy and EBB's Italian works, even though several unpublished fragments speak to British cultural constructions of Italy in the early Victorian period, as well as to EBB's unfolding artistic aspirations as an increasingly cosmopolitan poet" (39). When examining the two fragments side by side, it seems as if EBB wrote the second in order to revise the way in which she desires to share Italy with the world. "Italy! World's Italy!" recounts EBB's imagined pilgrimage through the majestic Alps and into the heart of the *bel paese*, in the manner that many English poets had done before her. The fragment begins with the line "Italy! World's Italy! / Beautiful, though no more free - / Beautiful from age to age!" (1-3)[255], expressing sympathy with an Italy currently under foreign domination and acknowledging its everlasting allure. Chapman remarks that EBB is celebrating "in the style of Corinne at the Capitol Italy's beauties, which are evident despite the lack of political liberty" (70). Italy appears as a feminized figure in this fragment; much like Petrarch's Laura or the other classic heroines of the sonnet tradition, she is gazed upon and lauded for her external beauties, dispossessed of an identity outside of the story the "World" tells of her. In this case, the "World" becomes represented through the figure of English poet expatriates whose words have mythologized Italy's sublime landscapes and decaying ruins. The fragment is an apostrophe to Italy which calls for the praise of these poets, whose tongues:

> Which were blessed in their songs
> & which ceased upon thy shore

[255] All citations of these fragments come from Sandra Donaldson's collection of EBB's works.

From their English evermore.

For the sake of that green place

Which they lie in still of face -

Blind of eye & mute of mouth

Poets having died in youth.

In those names I draw anear

With a love beyond my fear -

Kiss the slab of either tomb

(One more ruin made for Rome) (61-71).

The meaning of Italy throughout this fragment is in fact a British cultural construction which was solidified by the romantic poets by the time that EBB was writing. Italy, as Stone notes, is shown as an "Anglocentric dead poet's society," the deaths of Romantic poets being as immortalized into Italy's history as the Roman ruins. Just as in *Corinne,* Italy's maternal presence nurtures the artists' creative imaginations and then cradles them in their deaths, themselves becoming a reflection of her beauty. EBB, having not yet traveled to this land which enthralled the fancies of the British population,[256] finds herself admiring it from a distance and thus replicating the same myths which reduce Italy to little more than what Stone refers to as an "overdetermined cultural signifier" (50).

The next fragment "Italy--Italy--is it but a name," represents the internal shift within EBB from a naive recipient and replicator of cultural mediation to the beginnings of her

[256] Stone further writes that "Italy! World's Italy" is a striking testament to the form that this "fascination" took in the 1830s and early 1840s, when British authors and readers were not yet swept up in the 'desire to create an Italian nation'" (45-6).

becoming one of *the* most significant cultural mediators between Italy and England in the nineteenth century. It was written shortly after she eloped with Browning and moved to Italy, thus recounting her impressions after her first months of actually *living* in the legendary place she had long been dreaming about. This fragment also showcases the beginnings of what would become EBB's deep political involvement with the "Italian Question," that is, the debate over Italy's right to nationhood. Dolores Rosenblum writes that "Browning's new life of freedom in Italy coincided with the Florentine's hope for a new era of political freedom and the eventual unification of Italy" (62). Therefore, EBB's liberation from her secluded life on Wimpole Street gave her a unique lens through which she would come to intimately identify with the Italian cause, this fragment marking the beginning of her evolving sympathy for her new home. The central focus of the poem is the superficiality behind the "world's" understanding of Italy:

> Italy -- Italy -- Is it but a name
> Which the singers softly sing then drop it with the song
> From their thoughts & had no blame
>
> Italy -- Italy -- is it a name?
> For the singers alone
> To be used for a sing & be dropt with the same
> ……..
> Enough -- oh -- enough … has been sung, has been dreamed
> Oh thou dream, oh thou song!
> Felicaja has led on the weepers & seemed

Some dead Juliet of nations to carry sadly along

……

Italy -- Italy -- is it but a name indeed

Does she sleep? is she dead? …

(1-6, 16-19, 30-31)

The tone of the poem directly opposes that of her previous fragment written roughly four to five years earlier to the extent that the version of EBB before she traveled to Italy was enchanted by the very "songs" which she now criticizes. She criticizes the artists who call upon Italy's appeal in order to enrich their work yet have no interest in standing in its defense. Italy, according to EBB, has grown to be an empty symbol that is used to give beauty to art, yet whose value beyond this is "dropt" and forgotten by the very people who capitalize on her glory. In invoking "Felicaja," the political message becomes more forthright, for Vincenzo da Filicaja (1642-1707) was a Florentine poet, patriot and administrator whose "lyric laments for the foreign domination of Italy" were cited by both Italian poets and European Romantic poets of EBB's time.[257] She makes a distinction between the "weepers," that is, those who are invested in serving the Italian cause, and the "singers," who are the artists singing Italy's glories but abandoning her in her time of need. This fragment can thus be seen as a call to action to her compatriots to see beyond the dream of Italy and stand by the Italian people in their fight for freedom. As Stone writes she "shifts from what Matthew Reynolds aptly terms 'Italianism' (82) to engagement with 'Italy as an articulate, national space,'" encouraging a vision of Italy not "as the world sees her,

[257] Donaldson, 698.

but Italy as a catalyst for a new world" (50, 52).[258] Her closing questions in the final lines of the fragment, "Does she sleep? is she dead?" ponders the potential future for Italy - will her liberty awaken from its slumber, or will the hope for a unified Italy die under Austrian rule? EBB leaves no room for doubt as to where she stands; in stating "enough…has been sung, has been dreamed," she demands a shift in the poetic and cultural representation of Italy. Just as Italy has allowed for her rebirth, EBB now commits herself to use her artistic work as a catalyst for Italy's resurgence from both literary appropriation and political domination.

EBB's work as a cultural mediator was not concentrated only in her literary work; her personal correspondences with friends and family showcase another side to her efforts to bridge the gap between England and Italy. The period between her move to Italy in 1846 and the publication of her two big Italian works, *Casa Guidi Windows* and *Aurora Leigh*, was filled with letters that depict the intensity of her growing sympathies with Italy. Simon Avery writes that "[c]ertainly her letters to Mary Russel Mitford and her sisters are crammed with depictions of her new world, its natural and artistic beauties, its costumes and ways of life, but possibly even more important for her future poetry was her increasing fascination with Italy's political situation and particularly the call for national unification" (158). Furthermore, Avery notes that EBB's believed that educated women serve an important purpose in political discussions, especially because "politics and the oppressions of power so often began in that smallest of societal units, the family" (180). Thus, the examination of EBB's letters illuminates the ways in which this more domesticated form of

[258] For more, see: Reynolds, Matthew. *The Realms of Verse, 1830-1870: English Poetry in a Time of Nation Building.* Oxford, 2001.

writing also becomes a political act. Her letters become increasingly focused on defending the Italian cause and more radical as the years go on, demonstrating the seriousness with which EBB envisioned her role as an educated, cosmopolitan woman. In her letters from her early years living in Italy, EBB openly shares the amazement of bearing witness to the historical events that took place in Florence. One of the first instances of this is when she writes to her friend Miss Mitford in October of 1847 detailing the procession that took place in Florence on her and Browning's first wedding anniversary, September 12, 1847. She and Browning watched thousands of people parade underneath their window at Casa Guidi[259] in a political demonstration in support of the Risorgimento. She wrote to Miss Mitford: "I am glad to have seen that sight, and to be in Italy at this moment, when such sights are to be seen. My wrist aches a little even now with the waving I gave to my handkerchief, I assure you, for Robert and I and Flush sat the whole sight out at the window, and would not be reserved with the tribute of our sympathy" (346).[260] EBB's words suggest an understanding that she was *living* history, this moment becoming so ingrained in her mind that she clearly took it as her duty to share the realities that she was witnessing on the ground with those at home. This duty spreads beyond the desire to share her experience of the procession with her intimate circle and becomes the central focus of her next big poetic work, *Casa Guidi Windows*, which she would publish four years later. The Browning's window at Casa Guidi thus becomes a window which symbolically

[259] This was their home in Florence, mostly known for its inspiration of EBB's *Casa Guidi Windows.*

[260] Florence: October 1st, 1847. All citations from EBB's letters can be found at the *Nineteenth Century Collections Online.* See bibliography.

represents EBB's view of the Italian world in which she is living, the place where she frames moments of history and shares them with her British readers.

As the years go on, the tone of EBB's letters shifts from an amicable sharing of her love for Florence, her impressions of the Italian people and the events that are unfolding to a radical defense of her devotion to the country and its right to be a nation. Throughout the years 1847-1848, her first years living in Italy, she wrote home often about her adoration of her new city and interest in its people. For instance, she writes to her friend Anna Brownell Jameson that "Florence 'holds us with a glittering eye;' there's a charm cast round us, and we can't get away."[261] To her longtime friend Julia Martin she writes: "We have grown to be Florentine citizens."[262] And to fellow scholar Hugh Stuart Boyd she writes: "but here we are at Florence, the most beautiful of the cities devised by man" and "Florence is beautiful, as I have said before, and must say it again and again, most beautiful."[263] Thus in these early years, her letters express a more naive, light-hearted passion for her new home and she speaks about its beauty as an English reader would expect. Her allusion to being enchanted with the prospect of remaining in Italy also adheres to the common (feminized) stereotype that Italy seduces English travelers, detaching them from their duty to their nation. In sharing her impressions of Italians and Florentines, she positions herself as a distanced observer: she writes to the poet and bibliographer, Thomas Westwood, that "[f]or what helps to charm here is the innocent gaiety of the people, who, for ever at feast day and holiday celebrations, come and go along the streets, the women in elegant dresses

[261] Palazzo Guidi, Via Maggio, Florence, August 7th, 1847, pp 332.

[262] Palazzo Guidi, June 20th, 1848, pp 371.

[263] Florence, May 26th, 1847, pp 331-332.

and with glittering fans, shining away every thought of Northern cares and taxes, such as people make grave in England"[264] and to Miss Mitford she writes "I love the Italians, too, and none the less that something of the triviality and innocent vanity of children abounds in them."[265] EBB's observations tread the line between glorification and infantilization; her multiple references to Italians' childishness recalls the sense of British superiority echoed by many travel writers, yet she also frames their playful naïveté as a cultural strength in comparison to the detached gravity of the British sentiment. It is well known that the Brownings did not mingle closely with Italians in their inner circle during their time living in Italy. Chapman and Stabler write that "although deeply committed to the cause of popular Italian liberation, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning had only a passing acquaintance with the few Italians who happened to work as their servants" (12). Therefore, EBB, during her early years living in Italy, is herself a sort of insider/outsider: she voraciously ingests all that she can learn about Italian culture and politics, but does it from behind the windows of Casa Guidi. This hybrid positioning enhances her credibility as a cultural mediator, for many of her early descriptions align with British expectations of Italy and its people.

Yet, as the years go by and EBB grows more deeply entrenched with Italian politics, her letters become more critical of England and its lack of support for the Risorgimento. She writes to Miss Mitford in 1853, "Ah, if the English press were in earnest in the cause of liberty, there would be something to say for our poor trampled-down Italy -- much to say, I

[264] Florence, September 1847, pg. 343.

[265] Florence, December 8th, 1847, pg. 351.

mean. Under my eyes is a people really oppressed, really groaning its heart out."[266] Again, we have an image of EBB placed above the Italian people, overlooking the impact of events taking place and recording what she sees. Given her discontent with the lack of earnest and sympathetic coverage of the Risorgimento in the English press, EBB herself becomes a sort of foreign correspondent within her own immediate circle. Years later, her complaints of Britain's lack of involvement have only grown stronger; she writes to Mr. Chorley in September 1859, "I have been living and dying for Italy lately. You don't know how vivid these things are to us, which serve for conversation at London dinner parties. … Florence forgets herself for Italy. This is grand. Would that England, that pattern of moral nations, would forget herself for the sake of something or someone beyond. That would be grand."[267] By this time, both EBB's major Italian works had been published and she was busy producing her next collection, *Poems Before Congress,* which, as Gilbert states, is a "frankly political collection of verses that was the culmination of her long commitment to Italy's arduous struggles for reunification…" (194). The liberation of Italy had become the focus of both her artistic and epistolary output. She was consumed by her involvement in Italian politics, and she expresses deep frustration that the realities which she is witnessing up close are reduced to mere table conversation in England. She is deeply critical of the moral facade that England puts forth, insinuating that it is rather a self-serving nation that ignores any fight for liberty that is not its own. One of the most critical examples of this is in

[266] Casa Guidi, Florence, February 1853.

[267] Villa Alberti, Siena: September 12th, 1859, pp 334, 336.

another letter that EBB writes to Mrs. Martin at the end of 1859, of which I will share fragments:

> So you and others upbraid me with having put myself out of my 'natural place.' … Still I do beg to say both to you and to others accusing that Italy is not my 'adopted country.' I love Italy, but I love France, too, and certainly I love England. Because I have broken through what seems to me the English 'Little Pedlingtonism," am I supposed to take up an Italian 'Little Pedlingtonism'? No, indeed. I love truth and justice … I certainly do not love the egotism of England, nor wish to love it. I class England as among the most immoral nations in respect to her foreign politics. And her 'National Defence' cry fills me with disgust. … In fact, patriotism in the narrow sense is a virtue which will wear out, sooner or later, everywhere (359).[268]

In this letter, it seems as though EBB is positioning herself as an educated, cosmopolitan woman who cannot be *fully* associated with one country. In responding to those at home who claim she has left her 'natural place' and given herself to Italy, she problematizes this narrow understanding of one's political identity by refusing to succumb to what she terms as 'Little Pedlingtonism.' In a collection of EBB's works, editors Marjorie Stone and Beverly Taylor write that this term comes from John Poole's work *Little Pedlington and the Pedlingtonians* (1839) in which he "satirized an imaginary village; 'little Pedlingtonism' became synonymous with quackery, cant, and humbug" (275). We can then infer that EBB

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[268] The large portion that was cut out of the in-text fragment deserves quoting in full: "The natural place of everybody, I believe, is within the crust of all manner of prejudices, social, religious, literary. That is as men conceive of 'natural places.' But, in the highest sense, I ask you, how can a man or a woman leave his or her natural place. Circumstances, the force of natural things, have brought me here and kept me; it is my natural place. And, intellectually speaking, having grown to a certain point by help of certain opportunities, my way of regarding the world is also natural to me, my opinions are the natural deductions of my mind. Isn't it so?" (359).

is sharing that "circumstances, the force of natural things," or her move to Italy, has brought her to realize England's sanctimonious hypocrisy when it comes to its political involvement with other nations, notably Italy. In mentioning this, she also makes clear that she is not naively falling into the same trap within Italy; she is doing her duty as a citizen of the world and is dedicating all of her efforts to pursue "truth and justice." In the case of Italy, this is shown through what Avery terms as "a body of people fighting for liberty from tyranny, attempting to claim independence and a right to govern themselves as they saw fit" (159). EBB witnessed "such systems of oppression" within Italy which she sought to "challenge, critique and deconstruct" throughout her poetry and letters (159, 180). Pushing back vehemently[269] against Anglocentric patriotism, EBB positions herself as an unprejudiced, intellectual woman of the world who relinquishes a nationalist tunnel vision for what is *right* -- in this case, supporting Italy's right to freedom and sovereignty.

It is important to also consider how her position as an expat woman in Italy helped her harness her political voice. Lesa Scholl contends that there is a "dominance of the traveller in interpreting the foreign culture; and for the female nineteenth-century traveller, this idea places her in a position of power that she would not necessarily be accustomed to at home" (131). For many years, EBB was confined to her room on Wimpole Street, writing from the perspective of her small and painful world. Her move to Italy not only drastically widened her worldview; it gave her artistic and personal writings a

[269] The editor of EBB's letter also writes on her physical state between 1859-1861: "It is also right to bear in mind the failing condition of Mrs. Browning's health. The strain of anxiety unquestionably overtaxed her strength, and probably told upon her mental tone in a way that may account for much that seems exaggerated, and at times even hysterical, in her expressions regarding those who did not share her views. Her errors were noble and arose from a passionate nobility of character, to which much might be forgiven, if there were much to forgive" (306).

newfound purpose that would follow her for the rest of her life. In addition, her letters show perhaps EBB's most direct and personal acts of cultural mediation and help us to better understand the implications of her role in the representation of Italy. Edwin Gentzler and Maria Tymoczko write in their introduction to *Translation and Power* that "knowledge and the representations thus configured are coming to be understood as a central aspect of power. Translation has been a key tool in the production of such knowledge and representations" (xxi). From the year 1846 until her death in 1861, EBB continuously gathered knowledge of and bore witness to the events that took place in Italy during the Risorgimento and communicated these realities in her correspondence. She became an "insider" representative of Italy and its people, challenging both the misconceptions and the hypocrisies circulating amongst the British. As a result, EBB's voice and her influence as a cultural mediator indeed played a part in shaping the evolving relationship between England and Italy just as the latter was at the cusp of its rebirth as a new, independent nation. For this reason, EBB's personal letters deserve more critical attention through the lens of translation studies and cultural transfer studies.[270]

Yet, to fully conceptualize the relationship that EBB had with Italy and the way in which she sought to represent the country she loved so dearly, we must turn to her most widely discussed work: her semi-autobiographical, "epic Künstlerroman,"[271] *Aurora Leigh.* Published in 1856, the text is considered a hybrid of an epic poem and verse novel and is

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[270] To distinguish "cultural transfer studies," Meylaerts, D'Hulst and Verschaffel define it as: "the literary, musical and artistic exchanges between two or more geo-cultural spaces in a specific historical context, playing large attention to the relation between cultural encounters and the construction of cultural identities" (9).

[271] Many scholars refer to *Aurora Leigh* as a Künstlerroman, but I take this directly from Marjorie Stone's "Genre Subversion and Gender Inversion: 'The Princess' and ''Aurora Leigh,' page 124.

made up of nine books. EBB tells the story of the Italian-English Aurora who becomes an orphan in childhood and is forced to move to England, her father's home country, where she pursues an artist's life with great resistance from her aunt and cousin/suitor, Romney Leigh. The central focus of the poem is Aurora's refusal to marry Romney and submit to a life as his traditional, domestic wife, which leads to her independent pursuit of artistic fame. The work follows Aurora's developing life in England as a woman artist and her eventual migration back to Italy, where she starts a "matriarchal" life and reunites with Romney, who finally agrees to respect her as an artist. The work doesn't only mirror EBB's own life trajectory in many instances; it also shares multiple similarities with Staël's *Corinne.* EBB's admiration of *Corinne* is well documented by scholars. When she finished reading the novel for a third time in June 1832, EBB famously wrote that it was an "immortal book" which "deserves to be read three score and ten times."[272] Chapman and Stabler state that *Corinne* "exerted a powerful hold on nineteenth-century women writers whether they traveled to Italy or … only imagined it" and that the novel pushes readers to "re-think their preconceptions about women, art, and the Italian peninsula" (1). Almost twenty-five years after declaring her love for the novel, EBB publishes the work that would breathe new life into Staël's legacy. It is likely that EBB identified with Corinne and her struggle to balance her identities as a woman, artist and lover in nineteenth-century society, and this is reflected through her creation of the semi-autobiographical Aurora. The similarities between the two heroines are undeniable: like Corinne, Aurora is an Italian-English hybrid who spends her early childhood in Italy and upon being orphaned is sent to

[272]MacCarthy, Barbara P, editor. *EBB: Unpublished Letters of EBB to Hugh Stuart Boyd.* London, John Murray, 1955.

live with family in England. Both heroines struggle assimilating into the frigid English culture and end up back in their motherland of Italy, and both ultimately achieve significant artistic fame. However, whereas cultural difference and independent womanhood destroy Corinne's love story with her British suitor Oswald and ultimately lead to her death, for Aurora these same qualities actually lead to success both in her artistic pursuits and her romantic relationship with her cousin Romney. Having found love and freedom in Italy herself, EBB essentially rewrites an alternative ending for women who choose a "Corinean" lifestyle; rather than disintegrating under the burden of failed Victorian womanhood, EBB's Aurora opens up a new realm of possibilities for women who refuse to conform to patriarchal limitations of femininity which dominate English society at the time.

Among the vast amount of praise that *Aurora Leigh* received in the nineteenth century came the admiration of none other than the previously discussed Italophile, George Eliot. In Kerry McSweeney's introduction to the text, she notes the "profound impression" that the text had on Eliot, who wrote in 1857:

> ...but no poem embraces so wide a range of thought and emotion, or takes such complete possession of our nature. Mrs. Browning is, perhaps, the first woman who has produced a work which exhibits all the peculiar powers without the negations of her sex; which superadds to masculine vigour, breadth, and culture, feminine subtlety of perception, feminine quickness of sensibility, and feminine tenderness (xxxv).[273]

[273] McSweeney pulls this commentary from Eliot's piece in the *Westminster Review,* published in 1857.

Eliot's words demonstrate that EBB's text was truly the first of its kind, one that takes women writers beyond the confines of the domestic novel and showcases their potential for poetic talent, political awareness and cultural mediation. I contend that it is indeed the emphasis on hybridity which makes *Aurora Leigh* masterful in its all-encompassing complexity. EBB balances both masculine and feminine qualities in her literary style, and then creates a heroine who does the same both in her professional and personal decisions throughout the text. Furthermore, Aurora navigates life while balancing between her two cultures, with her experiences serving to illuminate contrasts between Italy and England. This hybridity present in the author, heroine and text that exudes *both* masculine/English *and* feminine/Italian qualities gives a level of nuance that pushes against the rigidity of patriarchal and Italophobic structures prevalent in nineteenth-century England.

From Book I, EBB sets up the English/Italian binary by repeating circumstances which are already familiar to us through the works of Staël and Eliot: like Corinne and Caterina from Eliot's "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story," Aurora is orphaned in Italy at a young age and is brought to England where she is confronted with the austere and inflexible English culture. The entirety of this first book recounts Aurora's experiences leaving her motherland for the "frosty cliffs" of her father's England and the forced assimilation she undergoes under her aunt's care. EBB presents a description of English sentiment and societal codes from a third person perspective, mostly through the description of Aurora's aunt and her beliefs. When Aurora first catches sight of her father's sister, she notes that:

> She stood straight and calm,
> Her somewhat narrow forehead braided tight
> As if for taming accidental thoughts

From possible pulses; brown hair pricked with gray

By frigid use of life (Book I, 272-276).

Aurora states that her aunt had lived what "she called a virtuous life, / A quiet life, which was not life at all / … A sort of cage-bird life" (Book I, 288-289, 304). Thus, EBB inverts the traditional English observation of the Italians' exaggerated mannerisms and instead provides a critical reading of English austerity from the Italian perspective. This is embodied by Aurora's aunt whose physicality suggests repression of feeling that exceeds the dutiful behavior expected of women by British society. Furthermore, this very repression deprives her aunt of her humanity for she is envisioned as a bird "born in a cage"; and in submitting to the expectations of her aunt, Aurora imagines a similar fate for herself: "I, alas, / A wild bird scarcely fledged, was brought to her cage" (Book I, 304, 309-310). Therefore, from the beginning of her verse novel EBB represents England in a manner which rang true to her own experience: as a place that robs women of their freedom for the sake of living a "virtuous life."

Another theme that EBB presents in Book I is British xenophobia towards the Italian "other" and the desire to subdue Italian femininity. Just like Oswald's father in *Corinne*, Aurora's aunt shares the suspicion that Italian women lead English men astray. Aurora, who refers to her aunt as her "mother's hater," expresses that this woman:

… hated, with the gall of gentle souls,

My Tuscan mother who had fooled away

A wise man from wise courses, a good man

From obvious duties, and, depriving her,

His sister, of the household precedence,

Had wronged his tenants, robbed his native land,

And made him mad (Book I, 360, 341-347).

Yet again, we are confronted with the image of an Italian woman who enchants an Englishman into losing both his senses and his nationalism, thus reinforcing the internalized fear of the "other" who threatens England's global power. In order to prevent Aurora from performing the same seductions as her mother had done, her aunt then forces a complete assimilation into English society through the erasure of Aurora's Italianness. She is forced to change her appearance along with her language:

I broke the copious curls upon my head

In braids, because she liked smooth-ordered hair.

I left off saying my sweet Tuscan words

……

.As lilies (*Bene* or *Che Che*), because

She liked my father's child to speak his tongue (Book I, 384-386, 390-391).

The key aspects of Aurora's identity are thus colonized by the patriarchal culture of her fatherland, which replaces her Italianness with a physical presence that satisfies the expectations of English femininity. Then, her aunt replaces the education that Aurora has received from her father with topics that are suitable to a proper English woman. Aurora recounts:

I read a score of books on womanhood

……

… books that boldly assert

Their right of comprehending husband's talk

When not too deep, and even of answering
With pretty 'may it please you' or 'so it is'
……
As long as they keep quiet by the fire
And never say 'no' when the world says 'ay,
For that is fatal--their angelic reach
of virtue," and that her aunt "liked a woman to be womanly,
And English women, she thanked God and signed
(Some people always sigh in thanking God),
Were models to the universe (Book I, 427, 430-433, 436-439, 443-444, 446).

And so, Aurora becomes acquainted with the mythical figure of the Victorian "angel of the house," the epitome of pure womanhood which guides the nation from the home. Upon the realization that becoming an "angelic model to the universe" requires a complete loss of voice and submission to masculine control, Aurora's spirit begins to wither away. She visibly begins to deteriorate to the extent that visitors to her aunt's house note that her increasing pallor suggests her impending death. While this is reminiscent of Corinne's fate, EBB rather marks this as the *beginning* of Aurora's story. It is in this moment that she discovers poetry, which not only reinvigorates her spirit, but also ignites her ability to reject her domestic education and write her own story. Book I then shifts its focus to follow the progression of Aurora's awakening through poetry and her early resistance to "woman's work," which she "shook off as fire" upon completing (Book I, 545-546). She then plunges "soul-forward, headlong" into her books which filled her with passion and instilled

her with the hope[274] that she had lost upon arriving on England's shore. Despite her acquiescence to her aunt's education, Aurora writes:

> But I could not hide
>
> My quickening inner life from those at watch
>
> ……..
>
> My father's sister started when she caught
>
> My soul agaze in my eyes. She could not say
>
> I had no business with a sort of soul,
>
> But plainly she objected--and demurred
>
> That souls were dangerous things to carry straight
>
> Through all the spilt saltpetre of the world (Book I, 1026-1027, 1030-1031, 1033-1035).

Poetry reawakens the passion which connects Aurora to her motherland; despite her aunt insisting that inflamed femininity threatens the social order, Aurora's transition to independent artist becomes unstoppable.

What sets Aurora apart from Corinne and her other Italian predecessors is that she decidedly turns away from love in order to pursue her professional desires. When her cousin Romney proposes marriage to her, Aurora swiftly refuses his offer largely due to his sexist ideas that women's sensibilities make them unfit for poetic work. He tells Aurora:

> … this same world

---

[274] Aurora reflects on how poetry restored her health: "The inner life informed the outer life,/ Reduced the irregular blood to a settled rhythm,/ Made cool the forehead with fresh-sprinkling dreams,/ And, rounding to the spheric soul the thin,/ Pined body, struck a colour up the cheeks/ Though somewhat faint. I clenched my brows across/ My blue eyes greatening in the looking-glass,/ And said, 'We'll live, Aurora! We'll be strong" (1058-1064).

Uncomprehended by you, must remain

Uninfluenced by you. -- Women as you are,

Mere women, personal and passionate,

You give us doting mothers, and perfect wives,

Sublime Madonnas, and enduring saints!

……..

We shall not get a poet, in my mind (Book II, 218-223, 225).

Romney's words speak for the greater cultural ideals which serve as barriers for the aspiring woman poet in deeming her too naive and fragile to write about the world beyond the confines of her home. As Gilbert writes, Romney at the beginning of the narrative is "a symbolic father whose self-satisfied right and reason represent the masculine 'head' that inexorably strives to humble the feminine 'heart'" (201). However, Aurora's hybridity exemplifies a fusion of the "masculine head" and the "feminine heart," for, as she writes: "My heart beats in my brain" (961). Aurora is thus led by intellect rather than feeling, and her voracious ambition to become an independent poet[275] makes her reject Romney's every attempt to "humble" her "feminine heart." Dalley writes that Romney's marriage proposal "only serves to remind women of their inferior status and limited prospects,"[276] and Aurora calls direct attention to this in her refusal. Despite Romney and her aunt's

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[275] Aurora's determination to become a successful poet on her own terms, outside of the financial control of a man, is clear in her reflections on her rejection of Romney's proposal, one example being:
… If I married him,
I should not dare to call my soul my own
Which so he had bought and paid for: every thought
And every heart-beat down there in the bill (Book II, 785-788).

[276] Dalley, pg. 534.

insistence that she will not be able to survive without accepting Romney as her husband, Aurora insists: "For my part, I am scarcely meek enough / To be the handmaid of a lawful spouse" and firmly adds "But I am born … To walk another way than his, dear aunt" (Book II, 411-12, 580-81). In walking away from the constrictive, predetermined life that English society had planned for her, Aurora begins to write a story that is uniquely hers as she opens herself up to the passionate and artistic qualities instilled within her[277] in her Italian upbringing.[278]

Similar to earlier Italian heroines, such as Eliot's Caterina, Aurora's lack of Englishness impacts the representation of her humanity. In the eyes of the English, she becomes less than human and is referred to in animalistic terms; whereas she sees herself as a "caged bird," others in her social circle view her as a wild lion. This happens in multiple instances: Romney asks her:

> …Need you temple and pant
>
> Like a netted lioness? Isn't my fault, mine

---

[277] Sheila Cordner writes about Aurora's early education in Italy in her article "Radical Education in *Aurora Leigh*." She remarks, for instance, "As a young girl in Italy, Aurora listens first-hand to a critique of traditional schools from her father -- a critique that Barrett Browning maintains throughout *Aurora Leigh*" (235). " Her father encourages Aurora to read inquisitively instead of reading to master, laying the groundwork for the alternative educational approach she seeks later in life" (236).

[278] The response of Aurora's aunt suggests that her foreignness is at fault for her insistent refusal of accepting Romney's proposal and the promise and financial security of English domesticity:
...Ah my brother, here's
The fruit you planted in your foreign loves!
… ……
Your mother must have been a pretty thing,
For all the coarse Italian blacks and browns,
To make a good man, which my brother was,
Unchary of the duties of his house;
But so it fell indeed (Book II, 601-602, 619-623.

That you're a grand wild creature of the woods

And hate the stall built for you? (Book II, 1096-1099).

Her nemesis Lady Waldemar says:

… Well, naturally you think

I've come here, as the lion-hunters go

To deserts, to secure you with a trap

For exhibition in my drawing-rooms

On zoologic soireés? (Book III, 383-387)

Lastly, her aristocratic friend Lord Howe states: "I saw you across the room, and stayed, Miss Leigh / To keep a crowd of lion-hunters off, / With faces toward your jungle" (Book V, 818-818). The fact that EBB positions Aurora as a lioness, the lion being a symbol of England, could suggest that those around her are trying to "cage" her as a British subject. However, these different instances demonstrate how Aurora continuously evades British control, as well as the tension between the English desire to "trap" and "tame" errant femininity and Aurora's resistant foreignness. She isn't seen to inhabit the civilized cocoon of the city; rather, she runs free in the "wild" zone of her jungle, the roots of which are nurtured by her innate Italianness. Despite the English desire to either "tame" her or put her on display for spectators to observe her "unwomanly" ways, Aurora is able to both establish herself as a successful poet in London and assimilate within English social circles in order to build her professional reputation. However, doing so takes a significant toll, for upon returning from "lord and lady's company," she writes:

I breath large at home. I drop my cloak,

Unclasp my girdle, loose the band that ties

My hair…now I could but unloose my soul!

We are sepulchred alive in this close world,

And want more room (Book V, 1037-1041).

The physicality of this description exemplifies the extent to which English society has a hold over her individual liberation. In the public eye, Aurora is forced to maintain a level of performative femininity in order to survive and be respected as an artist. However, the pressure of social judgment forces her into isolation in order to feel any sense of freedom; out in English society the hybridity of her identity must be concealed, which to Aurora feels like a living death. Here, the heroine directly reflects her author: Aurora, like EBB, is also confined to a tiny room in London which is the only space that gives her the security to fully express herself through her passion for her art. The more alienated she becomes and the more established in her career, the more Aurora begins to long for her motherland of Italy, the nurturing land of her formative years. She reflects:

How dreary 'tis for women to sit still

On winter nights by solitary fires

And hear the nations praising them far off,

Too far! Ay, praising our quick sense of love,

Our very heart of passionate womanhood (Book V, 439-443).

The deep isolation that came along with her rise to literary fame in London thus awakens Aurora's shift towards embracing her hybridity and her desire to return to the culture which celebrates the impassioned femininity of women artists.

Before sending her heroine back to the motherland, however, EBB introduces another woman figure who is pivotal in shaping not only Aurora's destiny, but also the

depiction of femininity in the text. During her time in London, Aurora meets Marian Erle, a working-class woman who becomes one of the novel-poem's primary characters. Marian embodies the role of the "fallen woman": in her childhood she was abused by her parents and almost sold by her mother to a wealthy man, yet she escapes and survives on her own in London working as a seamstress until Romney and Aurora enter her life. Romney proposes marriage to Marian as an act of charity, yet the jealous Lady Waldemar who is in love with Romney herself schemes against their union and convinces Marian to flee to France. Here, Marian ends up in a brothel where she is drugged and raped by a stranger which causes her to become pregnant with an illegitimate child. Overall, her character stands as a victim of the social ostracization aimed towards working class women in the Victorian era and her representation demonstrates EBB's advocacy for marginalized members of English society.[279][280] The contrasts between Aurora and Marian are similar to those between Eliot's Romola and Tessa. As Sandra Donaldson states, "Aurora's father was apparently upper-middle class, and she received a carefully protected upbringing; whereas

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[279] Clearly, this representation of fallen womanhood caused significant backlash by Victorian readers who as McSweeney writes "judged the poem immoral and unfit for female perusal"; nevertheless EBB stood by her representation of Marian, her response to such criticism being: "But I am deeply convinced that the corruption of our society requires not shut doors and windows, but light and air: and that it is exactly because pure and prosperous women choose to ignore vice, that miserable women suffer wrong by it everywhere.'" I pull both of these quotations from the Introduction to *Aurora Leigh*, pgs. xxi-xxii.

[280] EBB was not shy in criticizing the critics of Marian's story- one of her letters to Mrs. Martin reads: "What has given most offense in the book, more than the story of Marian--far more! -- has been the reference to the condition of women in our cities, which a woman oughtn't refer to, by any manner of means, says the conventional tradition. … I am assured too, by a friend of my own, that the 'mamas of England' in a body refuse to let their daughters read it. … It's true that there is a quantity of hate to balance the love, only I think it chiefly seems to come from the less advanced part of society. (See how modest that sounds! But you will know what I mean). I mean, from persons whose opinions are not in a state of growth, and who do not like to be disturbed from a settled position" (254-55).

Marian … came from a family who 'tramped' around the country, working erratically" (57). Despite the stark differences in their childhoods, Aurora's and Marian's stories become woven together through their isolated state as outcasts in London's unforgiving society. EBB frames Marian as an idealized figure, for when she is introduced to Aurora she states that "She touched me with her face and with her voice, / This daughter of the people. Such soft flowers, / From such rough roots?" (Book III, 806-808). Despite her severely abusive upbringing, Marian is reminiscent of Eliot's Tessa in that she embodies pure and innocent femininity, which is accompanied by her child-like mannerisms and infantile appearance.[281] Yet whereas Tessa[282] served as Romola's foil, Marian reinforces some of the same qualities that Aurora stands for. Aside from the two women being outsiders within English culture -- Marian for her class and upbringing, Aurora for her Italianness and art -- Marian also insists on being self-sufficient. She is able to escape the shackles of her abusive childhood and after the trauma of her rape she fights to survive and provide for her newborn baby even against her own desire for death. Furthermore, she is initially hesitant to follow Aurora to Italy, and then turns down Romney's second marriage proposal that

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[281] Laura Faulk writes that Marian is "the most timid and child-like…her body is unassertive; her skin is neither "white nor brown," while her hair is "twixt dark and bright," and her figure is topped with "so small a head" (44).

[282] She is also similar to Tessa in her sacrificial womanhood: Marian states;
…I'm dead, I say
And if, to save the child from death as well,
The mother in me has survived the rest
……..
… I'm nothing more
But just a mother. Only for the child
I'm warm, and cold, and hungry, and afraid,
And smell the flowers a little and see the sun,
And speak still, and am silent--just for him! (Book VI, 819-821, 823-827).

would further protect her from social ruin, stating: “Here’s a hand shall keep / For ever clean without a marriage-ring, / To tend my boy until he cease to need” (Book IX, 431-433). Like Aurora, she is resilient in the face of grief and oppression and finds her path forwards despite all odds that society throws at her.

If their marginalized status bring Aurora and Marian together, Italy then becomes the glue that binds their destinies when they reunite on the road. Aurora begins her journey back to Italy with “the urgency and yearning” of her soul, which is:

> in haste to leap into the sun
> And scorch and seethe itself to a finer mood,
> Which here, in this chill north, is apt to stand
> Too stifly in former moulds (Book V, 1269, Book VI, 304-407).

Italy thus promises a rejuvenation of her soul and inspiration which has been stifled within the confines of English womanhood. When Aurora encounters Marian and her illegitimate son in France, she is compelled to rescue the two vulnerable beings and take them with her to her motherland. She urges Marian: “Come with me rather where we’ll talk and live / And none shall vex us,” (Book VI, 457-458) and then shortly later reiterates:

> … I am lonely in the world,
> And thou art lonely, and the child is half
> an orphan. Come--henceforth thou and I
> Being still together will not miss a friend,
> Nor he a father, since two mothers shall
> Make that up to him (Book VII, 120-125).

And when Marian agrees to join her, Aurora records that the three of them will "Pass onward, homeward, to *our* Italy" (Book VII, 142, emphasis mine). Italy thus becomes a safe haven for *all* women regardless of their nationality, social status or artistic pursuits. It promises liberation from the relentless social judgment that forced them both into isolation in England as well as the possibility to raise a non-normative family outside of the patriarchal domestic structure. Her final allusion to "our Italy" affirms that while England belongs to the English, Italy belongs to *everyone.* Richard Cronin states that "One reason that Aurora takes Marian Erle and her infant son to Italy is her desire to return to the country where she was born, but another is that Italy offers a less rigid, more yielding social space in which to establish a family consisting of a mother, a surrogate mother, and their child, who has no father" (39). In a sense, Aurora herself becomes a cultural mediator as she both convinces Marian of Italy's utopic reality and then rescues her by giving her the possibility of a new life within it. Her cultural hybridity becomes a feminine force which gives life and nurtures marginalized womanhood. Like Romola, Aurora builds a matriarchal home which frees women from what Gilbert terms "the rigid interventions and interdictions of the father" and establishes her own "matria."[283]

Notwithstanding the creation of this female-centric household, the conclusion of the novel-poem still brings a traditional marital union between Aurora and Romney. While in

[283] This term was coined by Gilbert, and here is her elaboration on her invention: "Even the word matria, moreover, which I have used throughout this essay to describe the visionary country sought by women like Fuller, Rossetti, Barrett Browning, and Dickinson, is nonexistent. The real Italian word for 'motherland' is madrepatria, a word whose literal meaning -- 'mother-fatherland' -- preserves an inexorably patriarchal etymology. In Italian linguistic reality, there is no matriarchal equivalent to patriarchal power: one can only imagine such an antithetical power in the 'nowhere' of a newly made vocabulary" (209).

England, Aurora repressed her romantic feelings for her cousin in favor of professional fulfillment. By the time she finds herself a successful poet reunited with the "Italian sun," serving as Virginia Steinmerz remarks "an intense pressure which consumes poetic ambition and individual identity," Aurora finds her thoughts of Romney "obsessively circular" (18).[284] Italy's heat awakens Aurora's sleeping passions; while England has allowed her the opportunity to achieve artistic success, her return to Italy opens her up to love.[285] The reunion between Aurora and Romney is prompted by their mutual admission of failure in the early days of their relationship[286]; but the driving force behind their rekindling is Romney's praise of Aurora as an artist and his admiration of her books. He exclaims, "I come to you -- to you, / My Italy of women, just to breathe / My soul out once before you," (Book VIII, 357-359) showing that Aurora's Italianness has also given Romney freedom the patriarchal prejudices that governed him in England. He humbly admits the power that Aurora's art has had over him:

> … Poet, doubt yourself,
>
> But never doubt that you're a poet to me
>
> From henceforth. You have written poems, sweet,

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[284] An example of this is when she finally vocalizes her longing for him: "I should certainly be glad,/ Except, God help me, that I'm sorrowful/ Because of Romney" (Book VII, 956-958).

[285] Tigner elaborates on this topic: "Only after she has obtained success in the world of art can Aurora re-enter the sphere of love and marriage. The novel-poem both begins and ends in Italy, Aurora's mother country, the country of her female side. For Aurora, Italy is encoded as female, making it the place where she can be fulfilled by the rediscovery of love" (58).

[286] When Romney tells Aurora "I've sorely failed, I've slipped the ends of life,/ I yield, you have conquered" (Book VIII, 467-468) she replies, "I've something for your hearing, also, I/ Have failed too" (Book VIII, 470-471). Aurora further states: "We were both wrong that June day--both as wrong/ As an east wind had been. I who talked of art, / And you who grieved for all men's griefs" (Book VIII, 552-554).

Which moved me in secret…

……

… But in this last book,

You showed me something separate from yourself,

Beyond you, and I bore to take it in

And let it draw me. You have shown me truths (Book VII, 590, 605-608).

Romney is finally able to acknowledge Aurora's talent and poetic authority. Now having proven that she can achieve economic independence without male dominance, she can finally fulfill her hunger for love and the desire to marry him. Whereas it can be argued that Aurora sacrifices her artistic freedom for the traditional marriage structure that she was seeking to escape from, their union still maintains a level of subtle subversion in the destruction of distinct gender-based hierarchies. As Tigner states: "Male and female, and life and art, merge into one another, rather than one being in a privileged position over the other" (64). As an "Italy of women," Aurora's innate Italianness has led her to defy the norm in a restrictive culture through her artistic success, but also to dismantle this norm through her influence over Romney's transformation. If Romney can be read as a symbol of England itself and its resistance to unconventional femininity and foreign women, his character's transformation exemplifies the possibility of a cultural shift.[287]

Italy by the end of *Aurora Leigh* has liberated three very different characters from the shackles that restrained them in England. It frees Marian from the social ostracization

[287] EBB doesn't fail to slip in a call for English support of the Italian cause in the final scenes with Romney, with Aurora stating: "And yet I did not think you'd leave the work/ In England, for so much even--though of course/ You'll make a work-day of your holiday,/ And turn it to our Tuscan people's use--/ Who much need helping since the Austrian boar" (264).

caused by her status and single motherhood; Romney from the necessity to abide by the misogynistic ideals which kept him from Aurora; and, lastly, the heroine herself from the culturally restrictive barriers which prevented her from achieving full selfhood. Gilbert writes that "In this fourth incarnation, however, Italy is not just a nurturing mother country, she is a utopian motherland whose glamour transforms all who cross her borders, empowering women, ennobling men, and -- most significantly-- annihilating national and sexual differences" (198). And whereas cultural hybridity in England is perceived as a threat to nationalism, in Italy it is a force that feeds the fight for nationhood. While the culturally hybrid women that we have previously discussed ultimately failed to survive the societies which rejected their "otherness," Aurora becomes the first Anglo-Italian heroine whose hybridity in fact *saves* her life and permits a new future for her new blended family. Furthermore, in Aurora we see the reflection of EBB's own cultural identity, which was hybrid not by birth but by choice, and therefore substantiates the promising ending of Aurora's own story. Aurora's story is the most vivid and promising example of EBB's work as a cultural mediator, leaving readers with an image that combats the ingrained anti-foreign biases of the time and imagines rather the possibilities of greater British sympathy towards the Italian cause.

EBB remained devoted to the Italian cause which consumed her poetry and letters all the way until her death in June of 1861, merely a few months after Italy succeeded in achieving nationhood. Her devotion did not go unnoticed by the Italians, for after her death the municipality of Florence placed a marble slab upon the walls of the Brownings' Casa Guidi inscribed with the message written by the Italian poet Niccolò Tommaseo: "Qui scrisse e morì Elisabetta Barrett Browning, che in cuore di donna conciliava scienza di

dotto e spirito di poeta e fece del suo verso aureo anello fra italia e inghilterra. Pone questa lapide firenze grata 1861."[288] Thus, in death EBB became immortalized as *the* cultural mediator of the Risorgimento, the scholar and poet who relentlessly used her voice to build a bridge between Italy and England. Stone writes: "One might argue that, to the end, she remained an English woman speaking for the "world" to which her Eurocentric perspective limited her. In interrogating the relationship between 'Italy' and 'the world,' however, she moved well beyond claiming an Italy for the world that is notable chiefly as the graveyard of English poets" (52). Her windows at Casa Guidi opened up the possibilities of a new world for EBB outside of the restrictive reality she faced in her first forty years of life; in return, she dedicated the remainder of her literary career to shifting political relations and dismantling the Anglo-centric narrative of Italian culture that circulated in England. Ultimately, Italy shaped EBB into the "literary grandmother,"[289] paving the way for future women poets and cultural mediators to follow in her footsteps.

[288] My translation: Here lived and died Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who with a woman's heart reconciled the science of a scholar and the spirit of a poet and with her verse made a golden ring between Italy and England. A grateful Florence placed this plaque in 1861."

[289] See EBB´s quote at the end of page 9.

Afterword
Towards a Demarginalized Future of Historical Women in Translation

Von Flotow states that the work being done to resurface 'lost' women translators "stems from the need to recognize the contributions that women have made to society in spite of enormous obstacles; it seeks to revamp and re-establish a lineage of intellectual women who, by dint of their persistence against substantial odds, managed to have an influence on their societies" (75). Each of the women explored in this dissertation made significant and hitherto undervalued contributions to the Anglo-Italian relations of their time. While each of them is known primarily for her work as a novelist and a poet, I have brought them together to reexamine their work through the lens of translation studies and begin to do the work of establishing a lineage of British women translators of Italy. While the themes of their work may differ, cultural translation builds a bridge between them, just as their work builds a bridge between England and Italy at a crucial turning point in European history. Furthermore, in dissecting the translations of Lennox, Radcliffe, Dacre, Eliot, and Barrett Browning, this dissertation elucidates not only the bridges spanning between the two countries, but also the interconnectedness between Italy and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women. In each of their stories, albeit in diverse ways, both the women authors and the women characters they created are moving outside of the constraints of English societal expectations. While the women authors begin to grow more intimately acquainted with Italian culture, their female characters also become the source of the evolution of British perceptions about Italy beyond the collection of stereotypes that had previously determined its representation. Their translations work in a subtle, yet powerful way to help women gain a more empowered authorial voice and Italy a more

nuanced cultural identity. By the mid-nineteenth century, both women and Italy were moving towards liberation from constraints enforced upon them, and translation became the medium which liberated them both.

The selection of authors chosen for this dissertation is only a starting point; there are many more 'lost' historical women translators whose resurfacing will give greater insight into the intersection between women writers and Anglo-Italian relations. Furthermore, the reexamination of canonical women authors through the framework of cultural mediation exemplifies the plurality of their authorial roles and how this factored into their cultural influence. If this work were to be expanded, my next focus would be to dive into the expansive and rich corpus of Vernon Lee. Following the spectrum of "closeness" between the women authors and Italy established in my work, Lee would naturally supersede Barrett Browning as the *closest* to Italy, both in terms of her physical proximity and cultural knowledge of the country. In fact, when it comes to closeness to Italy, Lee would be difficult to surpass: after an unusually cosmopolitan upbringing, Lee lived in Italy for more than half a century, became an expert in the language and an authority on the culture[290], and made it the center of the majority of her writing. In short, there was no other place in the world that she loved more than Italy, and her life's work is a testament to this fact.[291] Unlike Barrett Browning, Lee established and maintained close

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[290] In her literary biography of Vernon Lee, Vineta Colby states: "Her unchallenged authority as a writer on Italian culture allowed her to travel freely and unchaperoned, to mingle with artists and intellectuals, to assert herself (not always to her social advantage), and to demand recognition, not for the beauty and charm she conspicuously had, but for the intelligence and erudition she had in abundance" (1).

[291] Colby writes: "English by nationality, French by accident of birth, Vernon Lee was Italian by choice" and she then quotes Lee: "Had I ever really cared for any country except Italy?" (*Tower of the Mirrors*, 153) (1).

friendships with Italians[292] and established a reputation in Italy for her expertise in Italian history and culture through her extensive publications written *in* the Italian language. As Vineta Colby states, she was "the most knowledgeable and enthusiastic of Italophiles" (133).

Lee's work further enriches the discussion around the intersection of translation, gender identity and Italy. This begins with her own subjectivity as a lesbian woman who lived outside of the bondage of Victorian society on her own terms: physically residing in Italy, her country of refuge, she moved through social circles and published her scholarly and literary work claiming a masculinized authority. This is also shown through the translation of her own authorial identity when she replaced her name Violet Page with the pseudonym Vernon Lee, which was "born," as Colby noted, when she published a series of articles in the Italian journal *La Rivista Europea* in 1875.[293] Not only was Italy a safe and liberating refuge for Lee as a lesbian woman writer and scholar, it also introduced her to an openly queer community in which she played an important part. Ardel Haefele-Thomas writes about how Lee was introduced to this "overtly queer community" that was "unconventional and thriving in Italy" at the young age of twelve[294], and that she "may have

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[292] Colby writes: "On the whole her Italian friends--all of them highly cultivated, many of them titled and well-to-do--were more generous in overlooking her flaws than were the English. They tolerated her excesses as harmless eccentricity, a quality they had long associated with the English" (133).

[293] Colby further states that "Although she used both names interchangeably in her personal life, her use of the pseudonym thereafter in all her published work suggests that she preferred the strong masculine ring of Vernon to the flowery feminine Violet" (2).

[294] Haefele-Thomas writes that Lee was taken to parties with artists and writers during her family's European travels at a young age and at twelve years old she first met the "notorious lesbians" Harriet Hosmer and Charlotte Cushman. They also write that "Italy offered a richness of multicultural characters who chose to gravitate toward Rome … Compared to the mores of

first encountered a queer community-- specifically a lesbian community-- in Rome; and several of her friendships with other queer people were nurtured in various locations throughout Italy" (122). This early introduction naturally informed Lee's work as an author, for much of her work translates Italy as a queer space and encourages the representation of marginalized identities.[295] Furthermore, Lee is also known to be one of the most culturally and politically radical Victorian women writers, and this greatly impacted the popularity of her work. Colby writes that she "made no effort to conceal her attachments to women and her rejection of many of the values of conventional society, who openly deplored nationalism, colonialism, capitalism, communism, and fascism, and defied patriotic sentiment by advocating pacifism during World War I" (335). This, alongside her nomadic upbringing, her multinational affiliation[296] and lesbian identity, makes her an even more multifaceted *insider-outsider* than Staël and Eliot, her translations offering rich and complex layers to dissect. Lastly, returning to the emphasis on the plurality of cultural mediation, Lee's work stands out as the perfect subject to study to further this growing conversation. Meylaerts, D'hulst and Verschaffel write that we must approach cultural

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Victorian England, Italy must have felt like a very old, mystical and safe place full of colour and unusual people who meet up with one another" (122).

[295] Here are some examples of Lee's "queer" stories given by Haefele-Thomas: "'A Wicked Voice' (1889-90) explores an Italian, genderqueer, bisexual 'lower class' ghost who at times seduces and kills women but in the focus of this story seduces a man. 'The Image' (1896) offers us an overtly lesbian relationship in a small Italian village; however one of the dyad is a macabre stuffed doll. And finally, 'Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady' (1896), a lavish story that once again transports the reader to Italy, presents us with a queer heterosexual (albeit inter-species) relationship with the focus on a young hero adopted by a peasant family and a godmother/lover who is half woman, half snake" (121).

[296] Not only was she "French by accident of birth" and "Italian by choice," Colby further mentions that she mastered the Italian, French, as well as the German languages which made her "no longer the visiting Englishwoman but a familiar of the *genius loci* in each of those countries" (252).

mediators from a "plural methodological and disciplinary viewpoint, taking into account their plural activities and plural roles and the various ways in which these activities and roles interact and influence one another" (12). When it came to Italy, Lee performed multiple translative roles: she was a travel writer, cultural historian[297], essayist on Italian culture (both in English *and* Italian), translator of classic texts[298] and cultural translator of her imagined Italy within her novels and ghost stories. The examination of Lee's Italian oeuvre in relation to her own identity and lived experience would not only deepen the conversation around cultural hybridity and women writers; it would further highlight the visibility of the (woman) translator and how both the subjectivity of the translator and evolving cultural awareness produces a multiplicity of translations even of a single place/culture.[299]

As demonstrated throughout the course of this dissertation, the marginalized status of translation and women in literary history makes this research both timely and urgent. More work is needed that emphasizes the unquestionable impact that translation has had in the building of nations, cultures, and power relations between countries. Moreover, the unearthing and careful analyses of female-translated texts can help us push back against the notion that translation was a subordinate activity for women and instead bring to light

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[297] One of her most renowned texts is *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* (1880).

[298] For example, in her story "Ravenna and her Ghosts" she includes her translation of Boccaccio's "8th story, 5th day" from his *Decameron*.

[299] Colby notes the multiple Italys imagined by Lee: "There are in fact two Italys in Vernon Lee's life: the country in which she lived for more than half a century and the country she created in her imagination and **re-created in her work**" (1, emphasis mine). Thus, the Italy of her life was distinct from the Italy of her literary work - becoming a translation of reality into imagination, and then a re-translation of imagination to the Italian world of her literary works.

the ways in which it enabled their participation in curating cross-cultural encounters. More scholarship such as this has the potential to demarginalize the status of translation within academia, bringing it into the conversation in departments such as English which have consistently undervalued the study of "foreign" languages and examined translated texts from an English-dominant perspective. The neglect of translation in scholarly conversation not only does a disservice to our work as literary scholars and teachers; it is antithetical to the current work being done in our field to decolonize the Western canon and literary history as we know and teach it. As I gestured above, a productive step toward encouraging new perspectives and the reevaluation of the value of translation in our field would simply be to revisit the work of canonized authors whose works are heavily written about, and to consider their own engagement with translation. Susan Basnett addresses this in her work *Reflections on Translation*: "Choosing to remember only certain works by eminent writers while overlooking the importance of their translation activity skews the picture of their achievements. It is a historical distortion."[300] The undoing of this "distortion" is crucial to the continuing growth and evolution of our fields.[301]

[300] Basnett, 54.

[301] For more on this, see: Porter, Catherine. "Translation as Scholarship." *In Translation: Translators on Their Work and What it Means.* Edited by Esther Allen and Susan Bernofsky. Columbia University Press, 2013.

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