IMAGINED BOUNDARIES: THE NATION AND THE CONTINENT
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH NARRATIVES OF EUROPEAN TRAVEL

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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The Ohio State University
2003

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation contributes to the project of re-mapping British national literature inspired by postcolonial theory. I argue that the representations of Britain as an imperial center draw on internal divisions between Western Europe and the southern and eastern peripheries of the continent. As European borders solidified in the long nineteenth century (1789-1914), I analyze the generic intersections of fictional and non-fictional travel narratives to examine how nineteenth-century British writers conceived the imagined boundaries between Britain and the Continent. While the fictional and non-fictional accounts of Europe share representative strategies such as the Picturesque or Orientalism, fictional settings adapt particular features of continental locations to accommodate plots of British national consolidation.

In order to illustrate the ideological functions of fictional travel narratives, I distinguish between two kinds of settings. Writers such as Ann Radcliffe and Bram Stoker, whose Gothic settings are based on existing travel narratives, displace British ideological struggles onto European peripheries to contain foreign threats. These Gothic, or synthetic, settings blur the boundaries between home and abroad, reminding readers of the sometimes terrifying fact that Britain is a part of Europe. On the other hand, writers such as Lord Byron, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Charles Dickens, who draw on their own travel experience and travel writing in constructing their satirical or realist
settings, attack British complacency in periods of relative stability and prosperity.

Although synthetic settings are conventionally considered to be instances of “othering,” it is the mimetic settings that absorb the travel writers’ opposition of home and abroad and thus highlight the isolation of Britain from the Continent. My research on the “literariness” of travel writing and its construction of European peripheries brings a new perspective to the study of genre and nationalism in the field of nineteenth-century British literature. As I demonstrate how cross-cultural contact may sharpen rather than bridge the boundaries among Europeans, my dissertation also helps explain the persistence of imaginative geographies in our age of global communication and travel.
Dedicated to the Polakovič family
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation was made possible by the support of the Department of English at The Ohio State University. First of all, I thank my advisers, Marlene Longenecker and Clare Simmons, whose teaching and scholarship shaped the seminal ideas of this project. Marlene sparked my interest in landscape aesthetics and the Gothic novel and Clare influenced my thinking about historical and cultural representation. They both encouraged my inquiry by their sustained interest in my work, and I could not have completed this project without their support. David Riede generously contributed his considerable expertise in nineteenth-century British literature as a third reader. Nicholas Howe’s erudition and enthusiasm for travel writing helped shaped my project in its initial stages. I also thank other faculty members at the Department, who provided inspiration and feedback at the various stages of my graduate studies, particularly Linda Mizejewski, Chad Allen, James Phelan, Susan Williams, Debra Moddelmog, Beverly Moss, Kitty Locker, Andrea Lunsford, Lewis Ulman, Christopher Highley, and others. I owe my survival and success in graduate school to the collegiality and friendship of fellow graduate students: Rebecca Dingo, Lisa Tatonetti, Molly Youngkin, Kristin Risley, Tara Pauliny, Emma Loss, Scott Banville, Kyoung-Min Han, Akhila Ramnarayan, Haivan Hoang, Doug Dangler, Kate Gillespie, Chris Vials, and others. The Ohio State University, especially the Department of English, supported my research and writing with
generous fellowships and grants: the Robert Estrich Dissertation Fellowship, the Summer Fellowship, the Corbett/Blickle Research Award, and the Presidential Dissertation Fellowship.

I am also grateful to those who helped start my academic journey in the United States ten years ago. David Klooster and his family provided intellectual, moral, and material sustenance during my difficult first years in Cleveland. Members of the English Department at John Carroll University taught me a great deal about literature and encouraged me to continue my studies. Father Gerald J. Sabo helped make my stay at John Carroll possible. The Open Society Institute and John Carroll University provided grants and scholarships that first enabled me to study in the United States. My grandmother, Květa Polakovičová, and my uncle, Peter Polakovič, also generously supported my study abroad.

My transatlantic family was a source of inspiration and support in the long dissertation writing process. My husband Peter helped me see this project through to its end by providing continual encouragement, thoughtful comments, and patient computer advice. My son Tobias daily cheered me up and reminded me why I needed to write my dissertation. My parents more than in law, Suzanne and Gordon Gephardt, made me feel at home in the States—their wonderful house is a haven for reading— and their help gave me extra time for my studies. My parents, Milan and Kornélia Polakovič, were the ones who first encouraged me to travel, indulged my fascination with books, and taught me to think critically about life on both sides of the Iron Curtain.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: BORDERS AND BOUNDARIES

This dissertation would have been unimaginable without the events preceding a gloomy November day in 1989, when the border between Czechoslovakia and Austria reopened. As a teenager, I took part in the triumphant march from Bratislava to Hainburg and watched my ecstatic compatriots run back and forth over the border line to celebrate their new mobility. The “Iron Curtain” that had lined the Danube river for fifty years was dismantled and people took the pieces home as mementos. Bratislava, my native city, is located at the crossroads of Central Europe and has changed names and functions through successive invasions. Now the capital of Slovakia, a nation invented in the nineteenth century, the city is the successor of Posonium, a defense point on the northern frontier of the Roman Empire; Breslav, an early medieval Slavonic settlement; Pressburg, the capital of Austria; and Pozsony-Prešporok, a multi-ethnic provincial town of upper Hungary. Between 1948 and 1989, the “natural frontier” of the Danube was reinforced with barbed-wire fencing and armed sentinels who were prepared to shoot any would-be swimmers. As a child, I would look at the distant and mysterious Austrian hills from the window of my parents’ house and piece together a mythical land out of random images from Western movies and catalogues, or second-hand accounts by the few relatives or friends
who had been lucky enough to travel to the West. My imaginative geography was confronted with tangible differences when the fortified border between Slovakia and Austria, which had marked the limit of our world, became a permeable boundary.

Both literally and metaphorically, the momentous events of that autumn gave us an opportunity to view ourselves from the other bank, and the picture was not always flattering. On Vienna’s fashionable Kärntner Strasse, we could identify each other by shabby, colorless clothes. Upon returning from the picturesque, manicured Austrian countryside, the first view of Slovakia was a desert of gray concrete apartment blocks that the Communist regime, with unconscious irony, had spawned on the southwestern periphery of the city. The reopening of the border thus sharpened the boundary between fantasy and reality, second-hand accounts and first-hand experience.

One of the by-products of this confrontation was the resurgence of nineteenth-century forms of nationalism. When the projected economic miracle failed to happen overnight, the mass appeal of nationalist parties and political opportunism divided Czechoslovakia in what was described as a “velvet divorce,” in contrast with bloodier breakups in other Post-Communist countries. Borders proliferated and imagined boundaries, apparently frustrating Western European attempts at European unification.

Bringing my “extra-European” perspective to British studies, I examine the imagined boundaries that British travel narratives constructed in response to the development of continental geopolitical borders in the nineteenth-century. Britain and Slovakia represent the western-most and eastern-most peripheries of European Union expansion and two distinct stages of nation formation in Europe. Although politicians
present the unification of Europe as a progressive and profitable endeavor, the prospect of erasing boundaries revives fears of invasion, genocide, and totalitarianism, the nightmares of European history. In 1992, Jacques Derrida envisioned the dilemma of the “new” Europe in the aftermath of the Cold War and the Gulf War. His essay “The Other Heading” calls on Europeans to embrace difference, but also reflects an anxiety about the decline of Western Mediterranean civilization, the source of “universal” European culture. The two areas of tension that he articulates allude to Eastern European ethnic conflict and Anglo-American cultural imperialism:

European cultural identity…cannot and must not be dispersed into a myriad of provinces, into a multiplicity of self-enclosed idioms or petty little nationalisms, each one jealous and untranslatable. … But, on the other hand, it cannot and must not accept the capital of a centralizing authority that, by means of trans-European cultural mechanisms… would establish a hegemonic center…the medium center or central switchboard [le central] of the new imperium: remote control as one says in English for the TV….(38)

By pointing to internal divisions, Derrida’s lecture indicates that the concept of Europe as a post-colonial center cannot hold. On one hand, Derrida realizes the rivalry between the French and Anglo-American (formerly English) cultures when he observes that his audience is composed of male Western European scholars excluding the English. On the other hand, Derrida’s comment also assumes that both Britain and France, as “old” Western European nations, predate nationalism, a phenomenon they attribute to the parvenu “petty little” nations of Eastern Europe.
Derrida’s implicit distinction echoes a nineteenth-century lecture addressing similar concerns, which suggests a continuity between nineteenth and twentieth-century concepts of European civilization and its constituents. In 1882, Ernest Renan addressed the question “What is a Nation?” to contest racialist and essentialist concepts of national difference that were emerging in reaction to a wave of immigration to the Western metropolis and to the claims of small ethnic groups in Eastern Europe. Renan’s lecture is considered one of the first definitions of the modern nation as a cultural construct. Renan prophetically warns about the dangers of nation formation on ethnic—whether linguistic or racial—principles, and maintains that nations are formed in a centuries-long and long-forgotten process of “fusion of their component populations” (10). Renan manages to incorporate Italy and Germany, recently unified by “the work of a general consciousness, belatedly victorious over the caprices of feudalism,” into the group of “old” Western nations:

Thus, in our own day, we have seen Italy unified through its defeats and Turkey destroyed by its victories. Each defeat advanced the cause of Italy; each victory spelled doom for Turkey; for Italy is a nation, and Turkey, outside of Asia Minor, is not one. France can claim the glory for having, through the French Revolution, proclaimed that the nation exists of itself. We should not be displeased if others imitate us in this. It was we who founded the principle of nationality. But what is a nation? … In what ways does the principle of nationality differ from that of races? (12)

Realizing the urgency of these questions for the fate of Europe, Renan contradicts
himself. Finding shortcomings in both the resurgent ethnic and the revolutionary political models of nationhood, he attempts a cultural definition and arrives at a quasi-religious one: “A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. … Man, Gentlemen, does not improvise. The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavors, sacrifice, and devotion” (19). The concept of soul is both universal and exclusive, as the appeal to “Gentlemen” indicates, and is elusive enough to be attributed or denied at will, allowing Renan to draw the line between nations and ethnic groups.

Representing a country that is both a part of and apart from Europe, Britain’s literary production—and, as I demonstrate, particularly its travel narratives—reveals an ambivalence about national and European affiliations. For an island nation, natural borders are both more and less confining than for land-locked nations. The boundaries with other nations can be directly experienced only by travelers, or imagined through their accounts. Of course, the English Channel takes on an important function of as both a “natural border” and an imagined boundary with France, but my project is to rethink the function of European peripheries and the British literary map of the Continent as it developed in the long nineteenth century.

My methodology is based on a comparative analysis of fictional and non-fictional travel narratives and each chapter examines a cluster of related fictional and non-fictional texts written within a given decade. Although authors of travelogues are more likely than novel writers to make more or less explicit truth-claims about representing actual places, my comparative analysis of non-fictional and fictional travel narratives reveals significant overlaps in the coverage of topographical and cultural information in the two genres.
Recent criticism has discussed the role of the novel in the making of nations. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, which has attained orthodox status in literary studies, emphasizes the role of print, particularly of the novel and the newspaper, in the construction of Latin American nations:

[W]e see the ‘national imagination’ at work in the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside. This picaresque *tour d’horison* – hospitals, prisons, remote villages, monasteries, Indians, Negroes – is nonetheless a *tour du monde*. The horizon is clearly bounded: it is that of colonial Mexico. Nothing assures us of this sociological solidity more than the succession of plurals. For they conjure up a social space full of *comparable* prisons, none in itself of any unique importance, but all representative (in their simultaneous, separate existence) of the oppressiveness of this colony. (Contrast prisons in the Bible. They are never imagined as typical of this or that society. ...). (30)

Drawing a connection between nation and narration, Anderson describes how the novel—by constructing a setting that is both universal and national—homogenizes the diversity of space, blurs the boundaries between the imagined and the real, and, consequently, appears mimetic to its readers. Anderson contrasts the type of national novel he describes in the above quotation with an example of a “prenational novel” that uses a “fabulous mediaeval Albania” that is “utterly removed in time and space” from the nineteenth-century Philippines (28). Anderson does not address how the novel treats foreign settings, nor whether a novel set abroad can play a similar role in the construction of the nation.
As he pursues the question of “what is a nation,” Anderson analyzes the novel as a product of national consciousness rather than analyzing the process of constructing a national space through narration. In order to highlight but also problematize this process, I examine the intersections of fictional and non-fictional travel narratives. These overlaps suggest that the national space of the novel (or the narrative poem) tends to be more heterogenous and permeable than Anderson proposes and that the national imagination of the novel draws on the representations of foreign countries in non-fictional travelogues.

The word “imagined” in my title refers to the process of constructing continental settings rather than suggesting that nations or places are purely cultural constructs. Dennis Porter draws on an analysis of travel accounts to challenge Said’s central methodological assumption based on “the opposition between truth and ideology” (151). Although Said acknowledges that all cultural representations filter “raw reality,” he also posits a possibility of truth or of “a ‘real’ and consequently knowable Orient” (Porter 151). As I deal with historical representations, the “real” nineteenth-century places are no longer accessible, but the texts I analyze nevertheless point to actual, material dimensions of continental locations. Anthony Smith offers an alternative concept of nationalism and national space that describes how natural features of the landscape take on ethno-symbolic meanings. Smith argues that Anderson, along with other Marxist historians such as Eric Hobsbawm, insist on the modernity of the nation and underestimate the primordial attributes of the ethnie, such as attachment to the soil and ancestry. Smith’s concept of the ethnoscape helps explain the widespread emotional appeal of nationalism among the members of the nation, as well as the outsiders’ recognition of the landscape
as national: “What is at stake is the idea of an historic and poetic landscape, one imbued with the culture and the history of a group, and vice versa, a group part of whose character is felt by themselves and outsiders to derive from the particular landscape they inhabit, and commemorated as such in verse and song”(150). Although I do not attempt to answer “what is a nation,” I assume that the nation is both primordial and modern, real and imagined, and “there is indeed more to the formations of nations than nationalist fabrication, and ‘invention’ must be understood in its other sense of a novel recombination of existing elements” (Smith, “Nationalism and the Historians” 72). I argue that travel writing functions as one of these elements, for the national consciousness is shaped by a sense of distinction from other nations as well as by stereotypes imposed by other nations.

Revisiting theories of national personality, Philippe Claret points out that sociological research indicates that “national hetero-images”—the images of other peoples including representations in travel narratives—“can be more instructive about the personality of the people concerned” than collective self-representations (67). Homi Bhabha makes a similar point when he reminds us that nations are defined by an “international dimension both within the margins of the nation-space and in the boundaries in-between nations and peoples,” or that the nation is also constituted by what lies outside of its boundaries and by the infiltration of foreign elements: “The ‘locality’ of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as ‘other’ to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity…”(4). Travel
narratives provide access to this in-between space on the boundary of the nation. In a rare theoretical discussion of the relationship between fiction and non-fiction, Thomas Pavel, writing in the 1980s, sets up a simile between literary and geographical boundaries:

Most contemporary readers are indeed institutionally aware of the difference between fact and fiction, but this is by no means the universal pattern. To use a geographic simile, the fact that the contemporary world has been carefully divided into territories does not mean that our institution of well-defined international boundaries has always been in place. Even today, border crossing can take various forms, some borders are mutually permeable (United States and Canada), others are highly selective (Russia and China) or asymmetric (Austria and Czechoslovakia), or even impenetrable (Israel and Syria). These examples involve differences of mutual accessibility…[b]ut consider societies without sharp boundaries: village groups confined to clearings of the primitive forest…maritime empires under Japan or Great Britain, built along trade arteries. …In 1789, the year of the French Revolution, it was still impossible to determine the limits of France, in the modern sense of the term. … The modern concept of rigid boundary was developed only after the Napoleonic wars and culminated with the redrawing of the European map after the First World War. In a similar fashion, the strict delimitation of boundaries between fictional and nonfictional territories is not a universal phenomenon. Fictional domains have undergone a long process of structuring, ossification, and delimitation. (76)

Although Pavel primarily considers the conceptual affinities between the two kinds of
boundaries, my project also assumes a historical correlation between a sharper
delineation of fictional domains (particularly in the novel) and the consolidation of
European nations. Drawing on four case studies focusing on different moments in the
long nineteenth century (1789-1914), I argue that while fictional and non-fictional British
narratives of European travel share certain modes of representation—such as the Gothic
or the picturesque—and strategies of identification—such as nationalism or
cosmopolitanism—that recur in the course of the century, the fictional representations
erase or enhance certain features of continental settings circulating in travel narratives to
accommodate plots of British national consolidation. Thus, the boundaries between
fiction and non-fiction, which I analyze in four distinct historical configurations, help
illustrate how British writers conceived the boundaries between the nation and the
Continent.

By focusing on the qualitative distinctions between two types of representation,
fictional and non-fictional, instead of the discrepancy between representation and reality,
I counter the homogenizing tendencies of discourse analysis and describe the processes as
well as the products of the British literary imagination.\textsuperscript{5} James Phelan uses the terms
synthetic, thematic, and mimetic to describe the dimensions and functions of character in
\textit{Reading People, Reading Plots}:

The distinction between dimensions and functions is based on the principle that
the fundamental unit of character is neither the trait nor the idea, neither the role
nor the word, but rather what I will call the \textit{attribute}, something that participates
at least in potential form in the mimetic, thematic, and synthetic spheres of
meaning simultaneously. Thus, the rhetorical theorist need not stipulate in advance that the characters in a given work will be represented people, or themes with legs, or obvious artificial constructs. The theorist only commits himself to the position that a character may come to perform any of these functions or indeed all three of them to varying degrees within the same narrative. (9)

I adapt these terms to distinguish between synthetic and mimetic settings and to describe how the novel makes use of non-fictional travel writing in constructing its settings. Because I analyze specific continental settings instead of theorizing settings in general, I slightly adapt the terms for the purposes of my analysis. I assume that the settings I discuss are always both mimetic in that they refer to specific European locations and synthetic in that they are constructs. The mimetic or the synthetic functions of the setting, however, depend on the way writers employ elements of travel writing. For the purposes of my argument, the specific thematic function I identify in each case study is related to the consolidation of British national identity. Ann Radcliffe and Bram Stoker construct their synthetic settings based on existing travel accounts, because they did not visit the actual locations that bear nominal resemblance to their fictional spaces. The settings of Byron, Thackeray, Dickens, and Ruffini, on the other hand, were produced by writers familiar with the Continent who had (except for Ruffini) also produced travel accounts. What I suggest by the distinction is the particular way each type of setting draws on travel writing in the process of its construction to fulfill a historically specific nation-building function.

Extending the findings of postcolonial criticism, I examine the function of
continental (as opposed to non-European) settings to show that the concept of the
colonial center in British literature depends on the internal polarization of Europe.
Edward Said contrasts the detailed representation of Britain with the “poor”
representations of the colonies, which are usually pushed to the margins of the English
realist novel: “What we have here is a slowly built up picture with England—socially,
politically, morally charted and differentiated in immensely fine detail—at the centre and
a series of overseas territories connected to it at the peripheries” (Culture and
Imperialism 88). In his interpretation of Mansfield Park, Said argues that the Bertrams’
Antigua estate sustains the life at Mansfield Park, and thus the novel disguises the
colonial underpinnings of the British moral and social order. However, Said also notes
that the novel overlooks the British rivalry with Napoleonic France in Europe and in the
Carribean, and thus exemplifies how continental and colonial settings are similarly
underrepresented or misrepresented in the domestic novel.

The concepts of the center and the periphery, much debated in postcolonial
criticism of the colonial novel, have rarely been applied to the internal polarization of
Europe. However, historians of British nationalism describe its rise and development in
relation to various continental outsiders. Gerald Newman reminds us that “England’s
legendary ‘uniqueness,’ her ‘differentness’ from Continental society arose from her very
commonness with it,” even though scholars tend to reproduce the myth of English
nationalism, or this sense of separateness of English culture from the Continent (xxii).
Newman argues that the rise of English nationalism drew on middle-class ideology that
exploited national difference in opposition to the frenchified aristocracy. In Newman’s
view, religious difference was secondary to the internal class struggle between the aristocracy and the middle class that took place in the last decades of the eighteenth century and was more or less decided by 1789. Linda Colley, who dates the key developments in the forging of Britain between the Act of Union with Scotland and the beginning of the Victorian age in 1837, maintains that British (as opposed to English) national identity was based on shared Protestant values and shaped in response to military and cultural rivalry with France. Katie Trumpener describes how Romantic nationalism in Britain incorporated the alterity of the “Celtic Fringe,” including Ireland as well as Wales and Scotland. Newman’s, Colley’s, and Trumpener’s work informs my understanding of the ways British fiction writers exploit the alterity of the Continent to draw the internal British boundaries of class, religion, gender and ethnicity.

The four periods I focus on in this project, 1790s, 1810s-1820s, 1850s, and 1890s, registered significant shifts in the development of English (and British) nationalism. Following the counter-revolutionary reaction of the 1790s, nationalism comes to be associated with radicalism and the novel focuses on representing domestic rather than foreign settings. Reacting against this trend and the division of Europe according to monarchical principles at the Congress of Vienna (1814-15), the younger generation of British Romantic poets associates the cause of nationalism with oppressed nations like Greece, a cause made legitimate by ancient history. For instance, Lord Byron’s affiliation with Greek nationalism in spite of his contempt for the modern Greeks is fueled by his resistance to the solidification of English middle-class values. On the other hand, the evolution of British nationalism in the Victorian period, when the middle class was well
established and France and Protestantism became less essential to British national identity, is not as well documented as Romantic nationalism. For example, Eric Hobsbawm, who addresses questions of national identity in the later nineteenth-century, focuses either on the British Empire or on continental national movements, and offers virtually no discussion of British nationalism in relation to the Continent. Mid-Victorians tend to attribute nationalism to oppressed continental nations, because they usually aspire to alternative modes of affiliation such as provincialism or cosmopolitanism in their travel narratives. As Amanda Anderson argues in *The Powers of Distance*, mid-Victorians adopted objectively distanced cosmopolitan views from their position at the pinnacle of civilization. Liberal Victorians become sympathetic to national movements and identify with continental nations, particularly Italy, in the wake of the revolutions of 1848. On the other hand, class issues overshadow national difference in the travel narratives of the 1850s, and writers such as Charles Dickens juxtapose the oppression of European nations with the condition of the working class at home. In the late nineteenth century, Wester European cosmopolitan attitudes give way to xenophobia in reaction to immigration and the destabilization of the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires by nationalist claims of small ethnic groups.

Whereas Newman and other historians of nationalism predominantly focus on Britain’s “twin” France or on the Empire, I am interested in the historical continuities and geographical parallels in the way British writers imagine the European peripheries, a process that shares some of the modes of representation characteristic of colonial discourse. In the course of the century, the geopolitical as well as imaginative
polarization of Europe gradually shifts from the North/South to the West/East axis, and so Chapters Two and Four focus on representations of Italy, or the Southern periphery, and Chapters Three and Five focus on constructions of the Eastern periphery. Although representations of Europeans and non-Europeans are driven by similar ideologies, relying on landscape aesthetics in the Romantic period and ethnography in the Victorian period, the stronger sense of kinship with the Continent complicates the oppositional structures in European travel narratives. Unlike non-European settings, the representations of the Continent are more often complicated by a sense of shared history, which reminds the British of other centers of civilization—particularly ancient Greece and Rome—and puts the narrators of travel narratives alternatively in positions of inferiority and superiority, centrality and marginality, in the literary construction of the Southern periphery. The representation of the Eastern periphery, which British travelers perceive as a culturally blank space—with the problematic exception of Greece—draws more directly on colonial discourses, particularly the tropes of Orientalism. Edward Said posits a monolithic Europe as the basis for the discourse:

Orientalism is never far from …a collective notion identifying ‘us’ Europeans as against all ‘those’ non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. (Orientalism 134)

However, I also argue that Lord Byron’s and Bram Stoker’s constructions of Eastern Europe destabilize the boundary between the Occident and the Orient, Europe and non-
Europe, by drawing on the alternative discourse of balkanism, often produced by travel writers who strongly identify with the “extra-Europeans.”

In spite of the increased critical interest in travel writing, there have been few systematic attempts to chart the genre and even fewer studies that point to intersections of fictional and non-fictional travel narratives. However, several key critical studies inform my approach to the genre. Percy Adams’s pioneering *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* offers an erudite and encyclopedic overview of the overlapping development of both genres and argues that “[o]ne of the most important and most neglected of the forms that fed [the] ‘insatiable organism’ of the novel was the literature of travel, which could be either literary or nonliterary or both” (24). Along with James Buzard’s *The Beaten Track*, which focuses on the role of literature in the development of tourism in the Victorian period, Adams’s study is one of the few critical works that discuss the correlation between the two genres. Barbara Korte’s emphasis on the literariness of travel writing and its evolution from “object orientated” to “subject-orientated” forms helps me compare representations of continental locations in fictional and non-fictional narratives. (116). Both Barbara Korte and Katherine Turner maintain that travel writing had reached a significant point of development by the end of the eighteenth century, which is the beginning point of this study. While Korte believes that with the discovery of the “paths to the self,” travel writing was consolidated as a genre by 1800, Turner concludes that the same year marked the “vanishing point of the genre in its eighteenth-century formulation” and the beginning of the dominance of poetry in the Romantic period. To illustrate her conclusion, Turner observes that prose travelogue was delegated to “the
conscious handmaidens of the great” such as Dorothy Wordsworth, John Cam Hobhouse, and Mary Shelley (226). In contrast to most cultural historians, who date the end of the Grand Tour with Napoleon’s invasion of Italy in 1796 (which is close to the beginning point of this project), Chloe Chard extends the period of the Grand Tour to 1830, which marks the advent of tourism that “keeps the destabilizing aspects of the encounter with the foreign at bay” (11). Chard’s *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour* uses literary analysis to identify the tropes from which Grand Tour travel writing constructs an imaginative geography of the foreign, and therefore her work provides a methodological model for my project. I point to continuities between Romantic and Victorian travel narratives, drawing on what Chard identifies as the trope of opposition, “one of the most common strategies for translating foreignness into discourse—both in accounts of the imaginative geography of the Grand Tour and in writings concerned with other domains of alterity” (40).

I argue that the relative presence or absence of tropes of opposition signals whether the construction of a fictional setting is mimetic or synthetic, and thus provides clues to the ideological function of the given setting. In constructing their continental settings in narrative poems and novels, fiction writers transform the trope of opposition that dominates continental representations in travel writing and represent home and abroad in ideologically functional and historically specific configurations. Although Gothic novels are conventionally considered examples of “othering,” their synthetic settings in fact blur the boundary between Britain and the Continent – in relationships I describe as superimposition (Radcliffe) and transposition (Stoker) – because they lack the
stable point of reference that structures the opposition of home and abroad in travel writing. They also tend to absorb second-hand information indiscriminately, which results in an excess of topographical and ethnographic information. When the alterity of the foreign in a synthetic setting lacks specificity, it becomes absorbed in the domestic space of the novel. As Radcliffe’s and Stoker’s revisions of their settings indicate, the Gothic then performs an ideological function of national or imperial consolidation similar to that of the domestic and colonial novels. Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope is particularly useful in describing the temporal and spatial displacements of the Gothic novel in relation to its ideological function:

A literary work’s artistic unity in relationship to an actual reality is defined by its chronotope. Therefore the chronotope in a work always contains within it an evaluating aspect that can be isolated from the whole artistic chronotope only in abstract analysis. In literature and art itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always colored by emotions and values. (243)

Bakhtin observes that the chronotopes of the “‘road’ and ‘encounter’ in the history of the novel” are always based on a “familiar territory,” not an “alien world”; even foreign settings are “artificial,” not “exotic,” and “it is the sociohistorical heterogeneity of one’s own country that is revealed and depicted” (245). Bakhtin uses the term broadly to stand for all representation, but also isolates specific instances such as the “chronotope of the road associated with encounter” (244). I draw on the concept of chronotope in both senses, and I find it especially useful because it points to the spatial and temporal
configurations of settings and circumvents the dichotomy between the imagined and the real inherent in any discussion of literary representation.

The mimetic settings in satirical and realist novels exploit the potential of what Bakhtin describes as the chronotope of the road or encounter to represent a “collapse of social distances” and these continental settings thus negotiate British hierarchies of class (Bakhtin 243). Writers who draw on their own travel experience and travel writing structure their fictional narratives around the trope of opposition that uses “the native region as a constant point of reference” (Chard 40), highlighting the boundary between the nation and the Continent in apparently reciprocal relationships that I describe as apposition (Byron) and juxtaposition (Dickens). Because they are keenly aware of competing representations of the Continent in the era of tourism, mid-Victorian writers select the dimensions of their continental settings economically to accommodate the functions of the plot. Although these writers aspire to cosmopolitan attitudes that transcend national difference, they in fact displace British class tensions onto continental settings and foreign characters play marginal roles in their narratives.

My four case studies suggest that modes of representation and the strategies of identification in both fictional and non-fictional travel narratives recur in historically specific configurations, even as the thematic focus on travel writing shifts from antiquities and landscape to people in the course of the century. In terms of modes of representation, I pay particular attention to correlation of description and narration (or lyric and epic as well as prose and poetry in the case of Lord Byron), reflection and dialogue, the respective functions of narrators and characters, and, wherever possible, of
the text and the illustration. The predominant thematic foci of travel writing shift from cultural history to natural properties of the landscape and the material conditions of the people in relation to corresponding types of collective, class-inflected ideologies of identification such as cosmopolitanism, provincialism, nationalism and racialism that compete in travel narratives in the long nineteenth-century. I use the concept of “distance” to combine formal, ideological, and thematic analysis. The category of “distance” can be used to measure what Dennis Porter calls “ideological distanciation within the works of the Western literary canon” and to describe a narrative vantage point, a subject position, a geographical/topographical correlation, or a cross-cultural relationship (Porter 153). The category of “distance” thus helps me describe configurations of the dominant mode of representation, strategy of identification, and thematic focus in a travel narrative. An example of such an overdetermined play of distance is Jonathan Harker’s journey to Castle Dracula and his encounter with the Count. On the road, Harker writes a first-person diary from the distanced point of view of a Western (not just an English) observer (strategy of identification), uses the distancing conventions of Orientalism (strategy of representation) to represent the natives from a comfortable distance (thematic focus). In his encounter with the vampire, all three types of distance collapse—the Count talks back in English and disrupts Harker’s narrative by long monologues and inexplicable actions, turns out to be thoroughly Westernized, and comes so uncomfortably close to Harker that he can smell his foul breath. I argue that the nightmarish encounter in Dracula is partly inspired by dialogues with Eastern European nationalists recorded in Stoker’s sources. As the century progresses, travel writing
reflects an increased interest in and opportunity for such exchanges with the European “other.” Although this project is confined to the area of British studies and does not extend to comparative literature, I strive to take into account what Mary Louise Pratt calls reciprocity, or “a dialogue that would cause subject/object relations to alternate” that Dennis Porter misses in Said’s work (Porter 153). In some cases, I trace foreign voices recorded in non-fictional travel writing that surface in fictional travel narratives—as for example in Charles Boner’s conversations with Hungarian nationalists that affect the characterization of Dracula. I also refer to novels by continental authors that portray British travelers from the point of view of European cultures—as, for example, Lord Nevil in Madame de Staël’s Corinne and Sir John Davenne in Giovanni Ruffini’s Doctor Antonio.

Although attitudes toward the Continent are triggered by historical events ranging from the French Revolution to the Balkan Wars in my four case studies, the representations of the European peripheries in British travel narratives rely on a limited and recycled repertoire, as evidenced by the continued popularity of the Gothic representations of Eastern Europe in film and tourist industries. Bakhtin’s description of the relationship between the “represented world” of the text and the “real world” of the readers suggests how chronotopes—or continental settings considered in this project—survive their historical milieu and get recycled: “The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as a part of the process of its creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers” (254).
Although the form and ideology of the travel narrative undergo a certain degree of
evolution in the course of the century, I ultimately argue that the cyclical recurrence and
adaptability of available modes of representation and strategies of identification in
nineteenth-century travel narratives help explain the persistence of imagined boundaries
in the era of European integration.

In Chapter Two, I analyze the Mediterranean settings in two of Ann Radcliffe’s
Gothic novels, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), in the context of
women’s travel writing of the 1790s. The increase in the number of women travelers and
travel writers in the revolutionary decade coincides with the consolidation of middle-
class ideology and English nationalism. In response to these developments, Radcliffe
revises her Mediterranean “chronotopes” to focus first on class and later on national
consolidation. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, in which the heroine is nominally French but
mimetically English and the villain is Italian, Radcliffe draws on landscape aesthetics to
distinguish home from abroad and uses national difference to differentiate between
middle-class and aristocratic values. The identification of Frenchness and Englishness
would have been unthinkable before the French Revolution and indicates a concept of
nationality as a political choice, which links the preoccupations of *The Mysteries* with
both the domestic novel and a woman travelers’ accounts of the French Revolution, as I
illustrate with reference to Jane Austen’s novels and the travel letters by Helen Maria
Williams and Mary Wollstonecraft. After traveling to the Continent and publishing a
travelogue, Radcliffe revises her uses of the continental setting in *The Italian*. The frame
narrative is presented as a travelogue that explicitly contrasts English and Italian cultures,
whereas the main narrative suggests that nationality is a matter of degree. Although all
the characters are nominally Italian, their Italianness or Englishness depends on their
respective reliance on institutions or conscience. Although the plot ostensibly hinges on a
resolution of class difference through marriage, what is ultimately at stake is the
consolidation of the national elite—English but superimposed onto an Italian setting –
which brings Radcliffe’s Gothic close to the preoccupations of Jane Austen’s domestic
novel.

Next I turn to the narrative poetry of Lord Byron, an author writing from a
different gender, class, and geographical position from Ann Radcliffe’s. As an exiled
aristocrat critiquing the oppression of European people abroad and the ascendancy of the
middle class at home, I argue that Byron represents both Britain and the Continent from a
position off center, apposing rather than opposing them. In Chapter Three, I explore Lord
Byron’s negotiation of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and Romantic nationalism in his
representations of the European East and argue that his idiosyncratic strategies of
identification alternate between local attachment and ec-centricity. Although Byron
contributed to the regional polarization of Europe into the East and the West, and in his
early poetry exploited what Edward Said identifies as the discourse of Orientalism, his
satirical works, footnote asides, and travel letters playfully reverse the subject/object
positions of the Orient and the Occident, the center and the periphery.

Class tensions continue to shape continental representations in the 1850s, a
decade of relative prosperity, when hosts of middle-class British tourists retraced Byron’s
steps and imitated his mode of travel. In Chapter Four, I compare the mid-Victorian
Italian settings of William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, and Giovanni Ruffini. These authors’ travel narratives were published at a time of relative stability and prosperity in Britain. Coming respectively from the lower and upper middle classes, Thackeray and Dickens are both preoccupied with class hierarchies and their novels are focused on social critique of the British establishment and its perpetuation of snobbery and poverty. Whereas Thackeray’s and Dickens’s travel writing indicates a desire for contact with Italians and both writers had opportunities for dialogue with Italian exiles of the Risorgimento, their fictional settings in *The Newcomes* and *Little Dorrit* mirror British tourists’ attitudes to Italy by focusing on the resolution of British class conflicts and selectively erasing the specifics of Italy’s politics and culture. Thackeray and Dickens write both against and within the dominant mid-Victorian mode of representing both working class and foreign others, the “new” picturesque, and are inspired by the ideal of cosmopolitanism that reflects the liberal Victorian’s aspiration for an objective but also reciprocal strategy of identification. Although both the mode of representation and the strategy of identification were intended to diminish the distance between the British and the continentals, I argue that they in fact highlight the isolation of Britain from the Continent by juxtaposing foreign and working class “others” as figures rather than as protagonists. I conclude the Chapter with an analysis of *Doctor Antonio* by Giovanni Ruffini, an exiled Italian patriot who wrote in English imitating Dickens and Thackeray. Although Ruffini stereotypes both his English and his Italian characters, his fictional vision includes a cross-cultural dialogue in an Anglo-Italian romance unimaginable in the work of British mid-Victorians.
While mid-Victorians sympathized with continental nationalisms, by the 1890s Eastern European secessionist nationalisms posed a threat to Britain’s position as an imperial power. In Chapter Five, I examine Bram Stoker’s revision of Eastern European settings in *Dracula* (1896) and *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909) and argue that Stoker’s Gothic adjusts the available information about Transylvania and the Balkans to imagine and contain the threat of Eastern European nationalism. I investigate why and how the Gothic mode of representing the continent returns as so-called Imperial Gothic at the turn of the twentieth century. The Imperial Gothic is a genre that combines the attention to geopolitical specificity characteristic of imperialism with the imaginary terrors of the traditional Gothic novel. As Stoker never visited Eastern Europe and drew exclusively on travel writing to construct his settings, I refer to travelogues that served Stoker’s as sources or were potentially available to him, primarily Charles Boner’s *Transylvania* and Mary Durham’s *Through the Land of the Serb*, to demonstrate how Stoker erases or enhances the cultural and geopolitical information available in contemporary travel writing to imaginatively resolve the problem of nationalism. I argue that *Dracula* exaggerates the threat of Hungarian nationalism through identification with Irishness, while in *Lady of the Shroud*, Stoker stabilizes the Balkans by colonizing a Ruritanian fantasyland by Highlanders in an allegorical reenactment of the Union of 1707. The parallel with the Celtic fringe resolves the problem of communication by overcoming the barriers of language and culture that hamper the dialogue between the British and the Eastern Europeans in contemporary travel writing.

In a brief Postscript (Chapter Six), I revisit two British representations of
Southern and Eastern European peripheries by writers famous for their colonial novels: E.M. Forster and Joseph Conrad. Their continental novels are focalized through “dense” intellectual Northeners and Westerners who vainly strive to overcome the cognitive and emotional confinements of national stereotypes. In E.M. Forster’s *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, a disastrous Anglo-Italian marriage leads to a series of cross-cultural conflicts, and even the allegorical death of the child of the union fails to transform the xenophobic Englishwoman who causes it. Joseph Conrad’s *Under Western Eyes* involves an aging English teacher in a Russian revolutionary plot, and the “dense Westerner” vainly strives to grasp the quintessence of the Russian soul. The verbal and physical violence that accompanies the cross-cultural encounters in each novel seems to foreshadow the irreconcilable differences that led to bloodshed in World War I. These novels provide an apt postscript for my project because they offer a valuable lesson, reminding us that the increased contact afforded by global communication may connect the center and its peripheries, increase our consciousness of cross-cultural differences, but not necessarily lead to the kind of understanding that could bridge our imagined boundaries.

Since Austria entered the European Union, strict regulations have forced cars to wait in endless lines at the border crossing with Slovakia that opened in 1989. The delays at the actual border indicate that imaginary boundaries between the Eastern and the Western parts of Europe persist and the continent seems disturbingly fragmented at the prospect of homogenization into the European Union. In light of globalization, nationalist movements appear impractical, irrational, and incomprehensible to Western observers. Anglo-American academics and journalists writing on Post-Soviet Eastern Europe draw
on nineteenth-century stereotypes that are suggestive, but not explanatory and their books sport Gothic titles such as *Balkan Ghosts*, *Lenin’s Tomb*, or *The Haunted Land*.9 These images are not merely imposed by the West; they are internalized and even exploited by Eastern Europeans themselves. For example, in a recent PBS documentary, Andrei Codrescu interviews fellow Romanians who seize on the myth of Dracula in an attempt at national re-invention that circles back to a stereotype.10 As I conclude this project, both the Czech and Slovak Republics, along with eight other “peripheral” countries ranging from Estonia to Cyprus, are lined up for entry into the European Union in 2004, and, once again, the future of the enlarged “Europe” appears to depend on the relations between the “old” Western headland and its “new” Eastern and Southern peripheries. By analyzing how the literary construction of Britain relies on a polarized imaginative geography of Europe, this project suggests that although the borders of nations and continents are determined by historical, economic and political factors, their imagined dimensions, albeit less visible, can be all the more compelling.
NOTES

1 In 1882, Ernest Renan observes that “Europe is so divided that any bid for universal
domination would very rapidly give rise to a coalition, which would drive any too
ambitious nation back to its natural frontiers” (9). According to Martin Thom’s
commentary on Ernest Renan’s “What is a Nation?”, [t]he doctrine of natural frontiers
was given its definitive formulation in the course of the French Revolution, and was
subsequently applied to other European countries, such as Germany and Italy; it was this
document that fuelled the irredentist movements of the second half of the nineteenth
century. Justification of territorial claims often rested upon the interpretation of classical
texts, such as Tacitus’s *Germania* or Dante’s *Commedia*” (21). See Bhabha, *Nation and
Narration*, p. 21.

2 Franco Moretti’s *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* literally maps the correlations
between nineteenth-century European fictional settings and geopolitical borders.

3 Gerald Newman points out that even theorists of nationalism like Anthony Smith
suggest that the “English attained nationhood without nationalism” (160). To correct this
assumption, Newman makes a distinction between “Secession” (typically in Eastern
Europe), “Renewal” (France and England) and “Territorial” (Post-colonial) nationalist
movements (160). Anthony Smith cites Hans Kohn’s distinction between Western and
Eastern European nationalisms: “For Kohn, nationalism in England, France and America
is rationalist, optimistic and pluralist. Couched in the terms of social contract, it answered
to the aspirations for political community of the rising middle classes with their ideal of
social progress. Across the Rhine, however, and eastwards into Russia and Asia, social
backwardness and the weakness of the middle classes produced a much more emotional
and authoritarian nationalism, based on the lower aristocracy and intelligentsia, and
appealing to the folk instincts of the masses. Later, Kohn subdivided his Western type
into ‘individualist’ and ‘collectivist’ subcategories, found respectively in Anglo-Saxon
countries and France” (qtd. “Nationalism and the Historians” 65).

4 See Clare Simmons, *Eyes Across the Channel* for a discussion of nineteenth-century
meanings of the English Channel and Anglo-French relations in the context of
nineteenth-century British responses to the French Revolution.

5 See, for example, Amanda Gilroy’s Introduction to *Romantic Geographies*. 
Dennis Porter critiques Said’s excessive reliance on “Foucault’s strategy of making no qualitative distinctions between a variety of texts produced under a variety of historical conjunctures for a variety of audiences” (153). By highlighting the differences between the fictional and non-fictional genres, I try to counter such a homogenizing tendency of discourse.

For a discussion of how the 1790s transformed English nationalism, see Gerald Newman, Chapter 8 (pp. 227-240) and Katie Trumpener, pp. 12-14. Trumpener’s observation, which is also applicable to the cultural differences between the British and the_continents, is particularly relevant to my discussion of the Gothic novel: “Throughout the 1790s, novelists become obsessed with the formal problem of how to represent the differences between European and non-European cultures (the mental, geographical, and political distances that separate them, their incommensurability and simultaneity) and the political problem of how to use the vantage point and perspective of the colonies to reassess and criticize British society. When the novelists return, after 1800, to regional topics and to the problem of British nationalities, the change of direction represents both an attempt to examine Britain, along Jacobin lines, as an imperial state, and an attempt to retreat completely from such radical analysis back into the smaller, ostensibly intact world of Britain itself” (15).

In Imagining the Balkans, Maria Todorova distinguishes between Orientalism, “a discourse about an imputed opposition,” and “balkanism,” a discourse about an imputed ambiguity” (17), pointing out that the Balkans are constructed “not as an other but as incomplete self” (18).


The documentary, titled “Romania, My Old Haunts: A native son returns to the land of Dracula,” aired as a part of the FRONTLINE/World series on PBS on October 31 (Halloween), 2002, along with another “haunting” documentary on the Khmer Rouge.
CHAPTER 2

CHANGING HATS: ANN RADCLIFFE’S GOTHIC ITALIES AND WOMEN’S TRAVEL WRITING OF THE 1790s

As she escapes from the castle of Udolpho in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Emily St. Aubert loses her hat, which functions as a marker of her gender, class, and nationality: “Her appearance excited some surprise; for she was without a hat, having had time only to throw on her veil before she left the castle, a circumstance, that compelled her to regret again the want of money, without which it was impossible to procure this necessary article of dress” (454). The importance of the hat as a marker of identity in the context of the novel is highlighted earlier, when the Italian villain Montoni and his accomplices change their head covers:

On entering the Milanese, the gentlemen exchanged their French hats for the Italian cap of scarlet cloth, embroidered; and Emily was somewhat surprised to observe, that Montoni added to this the military plume, while Cavigni retained only the feather, which was usually worn with such caps: but she at length
concluded, that Montoni assumed this ensign of a soldier for convenience, as a means of passing with more safety through a country over-run with parties of the military. (172)

In contrast to Montoni’s ostentatious display of “scarlet cloth,” embroidery and “plume,” disguises based on “convenience” and indicating the villain’s insincerity, Emily eventually replaces her lost hat with a modest “little straw hat, such as was worn by the peasant girls of Tuscany.” Unlike Montoni’s showy hats, Emily’s head cover is dictated by the requirements of necessity and feminine propriety. Even though the substitute hat alters the perception of her nationality, she appears locally Tuscan and unassumingly lower class. The fictional episode reflects the problematic position of the traveling woman in the 1790s. Although Emily is nominally French, her concern with propriety is typical of the English domestic woman, a product of the conduct books written in reaction to the social turmoil following the French Revolution. The revolutionary decade produced clashing women ideologues such as Hannah More and Mary Wollstonecraft, the former promoting the related virtues of femininity and values of domesticity, the latter travelling unchaperoned on the Continent and defending the rights of woman. Radcliffe’s Gothic fiction responds to such ideological struggles over the mobility of women. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, in which the heroine is nominally French but ideologically English and the villain is Italian, Radcliffe draws on landscape aesthetics to distinguish home from abroad and uses national stereotypes to differentiate between middle class and aristocratic values. After traveling to the Continent and publishing *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794 through Holland and the Western Frontier of*
Germany, with a Return Down the Rhine (1795), Radcliffe revises her continental setting in The Italian (1797) to explore the boundaries of the English national identity, framing the novel, which is set exclusively in Italy, as a travel narrative. While Udolpho is narrated through the perspective of Emily St. Aubert, a paragon of middle-class femininity, The Italian is partially focalized through the “feminised hero,” Vivaldi (Keane 32). I argue that Radcliffe revises her continental settings in response to an important ideological development of the 1790s, the adaptation of middle-class ideology—and its use of landscape aesthetics and domestic ideology—for nationalist purposes, a process also reflected in the changing focus of women’s travel writing of this period. As I demonstrate later in this Chapter, Radcliffe’s own travelogue, A Journey, plays a pivotal role in her reconceptualization of the continental setting and turns her attention to national, as opposed to class, difference.

Recent studies of travel writing have shown that women travel writers played a distinct role in the transformation of the genre in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Chloe Chard shows that continental travel acquired new meanings and functions radically different from the purposes of the Grand Tour, carving a space for “feminine” emotional responsiveness which supplemented “the authority of the eye-witness” in the mid-eighteenth century (202). Elizabeth Bohls argues that as “[t]he travel writer, like the aesthetic subject, was normatively male in an age when home was literally a woman’s place,” eighteenth-century women travel writers were “forced to experiment with unconventional modes of travel,” writing themselves into the male-dominated discourse of aesthetics (17). In her recent study of British travel writing, Katherine Turner devotes a
separate chapter to the rise of the woman travel writer, arguing that although “the years between 1770 and 1800 see the publication of [only] about twenty travelogues by women,” these texts contributed to the formulation of “some key notions concerning femininity, class, and national identity which emerged forcefully within travel writing and other cultural forms (in particular, conduct literature) in the pre-Revolutionary era, and which crucially informed British responses to developments in France” (126). Turner argues that women travel writers found a common ground between xenophobic and sentimental travel writing by promoting “the increasingly potent and gendered myth of Britain’s superior moral virtue” (132), emphasizing conjugal or family-based travel, and offering “novel perspectives on well-worn itineraries” (128-129). At the same time, conduct books promote a “female ideal” to which “the woman traveller and travel writer is antithetical” (139) and which makes women travel writers apologetic and contributes to the “mixture of diffident [feminine] modesty and quiet [national] superiority” found in women’s travel writing of the 1780s and 1790s (170).

The case of Hester Lynch Piozzi, who published her *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy and Germany* in 1789, illustrates the circumstances of the rising English woman travel writer on the eve of the French Revolution. Katherine Turner reports that when Piozzi, aged forty-three, married an Italian musician and accompanied him to Italy, there was a “Gothic rumour of her having been ‘locked in a convent’” and so her sympathetic portrayal of Italians in the travelogue is “an implicit rebuke to the cruelty and rejection of her friends and family in England” (174). Piozzi apologetically prefaces her travelogue with a distinction between
recording and publishing: “That I should make some reflections, or write down some observations, in the course of a long journey, is not strange; that I should present them before the public is I hope not too daring…” (5). While she patiently catalogues art works seen in Italian galleries, Piozzi also remarks that excessive attention to antiquities can reach a point “when one is tired of one’s own pedantry and everyone else’s”(5). Instead, she focuses her attention on human subjects, relying on her feminine empathy while also preserving picturesque distance: “I will tell nothing that I did not see; and among the objects one would certainly avoid feeling if it were possible, is the deformity of the poor” (17-18). A non-fictional episode in Piozzi’s Observations represents an interesting precedent for Emily’s concern with dress, illustrating the parallel anxieties of actual women travelers and Gothic heroines. When Piozzi attempts to see a painting of “Cana in Galilee” by Tintoretto in a Venetian monastery, she is forbidden access because she is a woman, or, as her male companions suggest, because she is dressed as a woman:

If such slight gratification however as seeing a favorite picture can be purchased no cheaper than by violating truth in one’s own person, and encouraging the violation of it in others, it were better surely die without having ever procured to one’s self such frivolous enjoyments; and I hope always to reject the temptation of deceiving mistaken piety, or insulting harmless error. (172)

Piozzi’s vehement reaction to the situation reflects her cultural concept of femininity, as well as a degree of sympathy for the local culture. Like the Gothic heroine in the Mysteries of Udolpho, Piozzi needs to assert her sincerity and moral integrity against arbitrary patriarchal and foreign power. However, Piozzi seems less annoyed with the
Italian monks who bar her from their monastery than with her male companions, because their suggestion exposes the artificiality of femininity, or of the link between sex and gender, nature and culture. After transgressing the boundaries of class, Hester Thrale Piozzi, the former Bluestocking and a friend of Samuel Johnson, seems to rely on gender as a marker of her personal as well as national identity.

Piozzi’s assertion of essential identity is a manifestation of sincerity, which Gerald Newman describes as the central virtue emphasized by English bourgeois nationalists in the second half of the eighteenth century (127). Pitted against the cosmopolitanism of the aristocracy, Newman argues, sincerity combined the promotion of National Character and personal character (144). Thus, “being English meant being oneself” (Newman 143). Gerald Newman argues that the growing middle-class nationalist reaction against cosmopolitanism was based on the ideal of sincerity: “The self-promotion of the new elites would therefore wait upon the repudiation of ‘Fashion’, the destruction of cosmopolitanism, and the elaboration of nationalist ideology” (47). The rejection of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism was accompanied by denunciations of the Grand Tour and its frenchifying impact on English young men, especially as an increasing number of middle-class youth undertook the Tour in the second half of the eighteenth century (Newman 43). Although middle-class Whigs initially sympathized with the French Revolution and its masculinizing impact on the French, the second-hand accounts of revolutionary Terror focused the British reaction on the domestic woman, and “[t]he idealized position of women [became] a central theme in nationalistic claims to English superiority advanced by radicals and conservatives alike” (Hall and Davidoff...
In the 1790s, the gendered discourse of English nationalism competed with other concepts of nationhood generated by the ideological struggle following the French Revolution. As Ronald Paulson points out, English writers reacting to the French Revolution “were writing about England; the French Revolution was only one foreign ingredient in a pie of their own making” (37). This problem of national identity surfaces in the conflicted attitudes of women travel writers, who justify their positions on nationality to their unspecified addressees. Helen Maria Williams realizes that her enthusiastic participation in the events such as the feast of the Federation at the Champ de Mars or the sessions of the National Assembly obliterates class as well as national difference, making her a “citizen of the world,” but is nevertheless anxious to justify her revolutionary patriotism (14). She anticipates that her addressee may “suspect that [she is] not all the while a good Englishwoman,” and attributes her revolutionary zeal to her feminine predilection for sympathy rather than reason (65). Charting the Northern peripheries of Europe, Mary Wollstonecraft rethinks her concept of national character and revises the purposes and the destinations of the Grand Tour:

I do not pretend to sketch national character; but merely to note the present state of morals and manners, as I trace the progress of world’s improvement. Because, during my residence in different countries, my principal object has been to take such a dispassionate view of men as will lead me to form a just ideal of the nature of man. And, to deal ingenuously with you, I believe I should have been less severe in the remarks I have made on the vanity and depravity of the French, had I
travelled towards the north before I visited France. …If travelling, as the
completion of a liberal education, were to be adopted on rational grounds, the
northern states ought to be visited before the more polished parts of Europe, to
serve as the elements even of the knowledge of manners, only to be acquired by
tracing the various shades in different countries. (326-27)²

Even though they later qualified their sympathetic responses to the French Revolution
and their flexible, gradualist concepts of national character, women travel writers of the
1790s, such as Helen Maria Williams or Mary Wollstonecraft, were suspect for their
politics as much as for their mobility and unstable affiliation with home. Angela Keane
summarizes the “proliferating” discourses of nationhood and modes of “belonging” that
circulate in women’s writing of the 1790s:

In the 1790s, the discourse of patriotism itself fragmented, divided between an
inward looking loyalism and internationalism, as radical dissenters championed
universal civil liberties and embraced the intellectual strand of Enlightenment
cosmopolitanism. These various languages of citizenship—commercial
humanism, loyalist patriotism and cosmopolitan patriotism—depend on different
conceptualizations of the progress, origins and wealth of nations. (7)

Travel forced women writers to adopt various modes of “belonging,” to use Keane’s
term, and exposed them to different concepts of nationhood. Keane catalogues the models
of citizenship, or political allegiance, but the 1790s also produced conflicting
representations of national difference as both natural (given by environment) and cultural
(conditioned by historical/institutional development). Katherine Turner argues that
British travel writers ranging from Arthur Young to William Wordsworth responded to the unfolding events of the French Revolution by revising their representations of the Continent: “This motif of revision is increasingly deployed by writers, allowing them to describe not only changes in authorial opinion, but also more profound reconstitutions of personal and national identity” (182). Travel writers increasingly insist on “British difference [that] both justifies and demands a renewed alienation” and “moral insularity” (Turner 206). Ann Radcliffe’s *A Journey* exults in such salutary isolation of the British Isles from the Continent:

> Englishmen, who feel, as they always must, the love of their own country much increased by the view of others, should be induced, at every step, to wish, that there may be as little political intercourse as possible, either of friendship or enmity, between the blessings of their island and the wretchedness of the Continent. (qtd. Turner 108)

As Ronald Paulson observes, the principal threat of the French Revolution was the elision of difference, which led to the anxious redefinition of gender, class, and nationality across the Channel: “Undifferentiation is a characteristic shared by the gothic and the grotesque. They also share the expression of the radical alienness of an experience, in this case the French Revolution as seen by nonparticipants” (237). Radcliffe’s Gothic employs its continental settings, particularly the Italian ones, to redraw the boundaries between Britain and the Continent by simulating the alternative experiences of undifferentiation and alienation.

> Although Radcliffe’s continental settings appear both temporally and
geographically displaced, I argue that they reflect the shifts in the genre of travel writing due to the rise of the woman travel writer and the impact of revolutionary events on continental travel. As Elizabeth Bohls puts it, Radcliffe “takes advantage of the novel’s formal potential for incorporating and critiquing socially situated languages to dramatize the insights won by women travel writers”(16). I focus on the Italian settings, because they show how the well-charted privileged destination, “the farthest point in the Tour,” serves to illustrate—at least ostensibly—the polar opposite of Englishness in Radcliffe’s Gothic novel (Newman 44). However, the Italy of The Mysteries of Udolpho is very different from that of The Italian. Gothic fiction typically adapts the Enlightenment environmental model of national difference, the contrast between the luxury and slavery of South and the industry and liberty of the North that Montesquieu elaborated in The Spirit of Laws. ³ The Mysteries of Udolpho draws loosely on Montesquieu’s distinction, linking the environment—particularly the landscape—to moral values rather than to political systems in a way that resembles Hester Lynch Piozzi’s distinction between English and Italian national characters in her Observations (1789): “The mind of an Italian is commonly like his country, extensive, warm, and beautiful from the irregular diversification of its ideas; an ardent character, a glowing landscape. That of an Englishman is cultivated, rich, and regularly disposed; a steady character, a delicious landscape” (qtd. Chard 42). The French Revolution disrupted such symmetrical oppositions between the English and the continents by highlighting the historical dimension of nationhood.

Radcliffe’s Mediterranean settings function as “chronotopic experiments” and
differ in their respective foci on the class and the national consolidation. Adapting Bakhtin’s term, Katie Trumpener uses the term “chronotopic experiments” to describe the spatial and temporal incorporation of the “Celtic fringe” and to thus explain the workings of national imagination in British Romantic fiction (xii). Radcliffe’s Gothic performs a similar function in relation to the Continent, mirroring the conflicted attitude to the past that Gerald Newman attributes to the English nationalist of this period: “He must cherish ancestral characteristics as marks of national identity, yet he must also reject much of the past because it holds progress in chains” (165). The dilemma that gave birth to the Gothic novel was caused by “[t]he epistemic uncertainty of the late eighteenth century [which] disturbed the confidence of the progressive novelists’ claims to truth in representation” and undermined the assumption that “[n]ovels stood to Protestant, Whiggish progressivism as romance stood to regressive, Catholic feudalism” (Keane 24). The foreign settings of Radcliffe’s fiction resolve this dilemma by drawing on continental rather than English history, and by blurring the boundary between the novel and the romance, the nation and the Continent. Reworking the oppositional relationship between England and the Continent characteristic of eighteenth-century travel literature, Radcliffe’s Gothic superimposes English values onto foreign settings, eliding or relativizing the difference between Englishness and Frenchness, or Englishness and Italianness. Both novels are set in Southern Europe and published in a decade when the Grand Tour was disrupted and access to the Continent limited by revolutionary turmoil. Whereas Southern France and Northern Italy, the settings for The Mysteries of Udolpho, are geographically closer to Britain (although less accessible due to revolutionary wars)
and historically removed to the sixteenth century, the setting for *The Italian* is geographically more distant but almost contemporary. Radcliffe’s adjustment of the Mediterranean chronotope fulfills distinct ideological functions: in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the foreign is associated with class difference, and the difference between aristocratic and middle-class values articulated in the language of landscape aesthetics. *The Italian* is more directly preoccupied with national difference. Englishness and Italianness are opposed in the narrative frame, but nationality becomes a matter of degree in the main narrative, for all the characters are nominally Italian. While settings in both novels are synthetic in the sense that Radcliffe never visited Italy, *The Italian* was written after Radcliffe wrote *A Journey* (1795) and I argue that the later novel internalizes the preoccupations typical of women’s travel writing of the 1790s. After she explores the oppositions between home and abroad in *A Journey* (1795), Radcliffe focuses on national character in *The Italian*, adopting the Whiggish concept of national identity as a function of progress, or culture, rather than of environmental, or natural difference. Thus, the setting for *The Italian* is distinctly foreign, although not authentically Italian. Instead of middle-class ideology based on proper femininity, *The Italian* focuses on the moral consolidation of the nation’s elites—embodied in the novel’s effeminate hero Vivaldi—in the face of foreign threat. In both novels, Italian settings serve as imagined spaces onto which Radcliffe superimposes the plots of English middle-class and national consolidation. To accommodate these distinct ideological functions, the two novels rely on corresponding strategies of representation – the discourse of landscape aesthetics focused on the picturesque that dominates in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and the
comparative cultural analysis of the relationships between individuals and institutions, which is the thematic preoccupation of The Italian.

In spite of, or perhaps due to, the geographical and historical displacement of her fictional settings, the ideological indeterminacy of Radcliffe’s construction of national character may have “provoked The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine to exile Radcliffe from their lists of English fiction writers in 1801, claiming that her sensibility was ‘rather German than English’” (Keane 19). Like her fellow women travel writers in the 1790s, Radcliffe could not escape the assumption that a woman familiar with the Continent could not be properly English.

Aesthetic Distinctions: Picturesque Appropriation and Middle-Class Consolidation in The Mysteries of Udolpho

In Jane Austen’s Northanger Abbey, Catherine Moreland judges English countryside by the standards of continental travel: “‘I never look at it [Beechen Cliff near Bath]…without thinking of the south of France. ‘You have been abroad then?’ said Henry, a little surprized. ‘Oh! No, I only mean what I have read about. It always puts me in the mind of the country that Emily and her father travelled through, in the “Mysteries of Udolpho”'(82).4 As Catherine’s comparison elides the difference between England and France, the young people’s discussion of landscape aesthetics evolves into a debate on politics, during which Catherine “solemnly” proclaims: “I have heard that something very shocking indeed, will soon come out in London” (87). Of course, Catherine means a new
Gothic novel, but the ambiguity of her statement gives Henry Tilney an opportunity to ridicule the parallel between the revolutionary potential of a new novel and that of a “dreadful riot” (88). The Gordon riots of 1780, to which Austen alludes, “reflected the sharpening contradiction in values between the continuing (in some respects even deliberately accentuated) cosmopolitanism of Quality and the aggressive nationalism emerging in opposition to it” (Newman 209). Austen’s parody, which imaginatively consolidates the nation in a marriage plot that crosses such class boundaries, exploits the assumption that the readers of Radcliffe’s novels substitute fiction for travel as well as historical experience. In Austen’s retrospective view, Radcliffe’s fiction is disruptive because it pits the middle class against the aristocracy instead of England against France.

On the other hand, Henry Tilney’s jokes at the expense of Gothic fiction devotee Catherine Moreland and Jane Austen’s larger parody of The Mysteries of Udolpho exploit the transgressive potential of Radcliffe’s novel, which elides differences between Italian banditti and London rioters, a General Tilney and a Signor Montoni, or home and abroad.

In the The Mysteries of Udolpho, published before Radcliffe traveled to the Continent, landscape aesthetics represent middle-class values instead differentiating England from the Continent. The story is set in Southern France and Northern Italy around 1584, a period of turbulent religious conflict in France. The historical setting functions as an oblique reference to internal cultural war between Catholicism and Protestantism, but it does not play any explicit role in the text. The values of Emily and her father St. Aubert, who advocates sensibility tempered by reason, are anachronistically more characteristic of the late eighteenth than of the sixteenth century. Thus, Emily St.
Aubert, although nominally French and Catholic, can represent a model domestic
Englishwoman:

Radcliffe presents her glimpses into the feudal lore of a vaguely historicised
Catholic Europe through the lens of that distinctly English, Whig aesthetic, the
picturesque. Her fictions forged imagined communities that take pleasure in this
restrained aesthetic and its association with the private property of the ‘middling
classes.’ (Keane 9)

Even the aristocratic aspirations of the Italian villain Montoni represent values alien to
the heroine’s sensibility, rather than a specific foreign culture. The foreign is more
ambiguous in *Udolpho* than in *The Romance of the Forest*, which explicitly contrasts
English and French cultures (Keane 22). Instead, *Udolpho* draws on the eighteenth-
century middle-class ideological contrast between the pastoral and the urban as sources of
bourgeois virtue and aristocratic vice.

In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, imaginative appropriation of the landscape through
the discourse of the picturesque represents the hallmark of middle-class taste. The
aesthetic principles of the picturesque govern the composition of Radcliffe’s settings,
while also representing a type of taste that separates worthy characters from villains.
When Emily contemplates a landscape, her aesthetic and ethical perspective is regulated
by the omniscient narrator. Applying the principles of picturesque composition, Radcliffe
layers the foreground and the background, privileging atmosphere over authenticity and
topographical verisimilitude. The following passages from *Udolpho* and *A Journey*
illustrate that Radcliffe employes similar principles in composing both actual and
fictional scenes:

On every side appeared the majestic summits of the Pyrenées, some exhibiting tremendous crags of marble, whose appearance was changing every instant, as the varying lights fell upon their surface; others, still higher, displaying only snowy points, while their lower steeps were covered almost invariably with forests of pine, larch, and oak, that stretched to the vale…Through a vista of the mountains appeared the lowlands of Rousillon, tinted with the blue haze of distance, as they united with the waters of the Mediterranean… (*Udolpho* 54)

Bounding the low country to the north, the wide Solway Firth, with its indented shores, looked like a gray horizon, and the double range of Scottish mountains, seen dimly through mist beyond, like lines of dark clouds above it…We now spanned the narrowest part of England, looking from the Irish Channel, on one side, to the German Ocean on the other, which latter was, however, so far off as to be discernible only like a mist. (*A Journey* 457-8)

Radcliffe’s descriptions appropriate both continental and British landscapes in similar ways. In each case, the panorama appears to exceed the scope of human vision, resembling what Mary Louise Pratt describes in *Imperial Eyes* as the European traveler’s colonial gaze, which masters a newly discovered landscape by aestheticizing it and emptying it of human presence (209). Although Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* is set in artificial landscapes inspired by painters such as Claude Lorraine and Salvator Rosa as well as in a superficially sketched past, it appears credible and contemporary to readers
such as Catherine Morland because it also draws on the picturesque conventions of travel writing. J.M.S. Tomkins, who traces Radcliffe’s landscape descriptions to Piozzi and other eighteenth-century travel writers, describes how Radcliffe exploits the illusion of topographical verisimilitude:

Thus she builds a firm threshold to her story to beguile us of our poetic faith, and halting-places to re-establish it when shaken; for it is to be noted that her local colour occurs in solid blocks as a prelude to adventure, while, when we are staggering under her wilder enchantments, a few authentic place-names are deftly interjected to restore our confidence. (294)

The “local colour,” derived from landscape painting and travel writing, is “solid,” while her “place-names” are haphazard, reflecting “Mrs Radcliffe’s imagination in selecting, expurgating and enhancing the authentic travel records” (Tomkins 295). The selective process of Radcliffe’s imagination is based on the principles of landscape aesthetics—the interplay between the picturesque and the sublime that easily slips into politics in Catherine Moreland’s and Henry Tilney’s conversation.

The French Revolution caused a shift in the focus of picturesque discourse, which I argue also affects the construction and the function of Radcliffe’s Mediterranean settings. Malcolm Andrews traces the evolution of the Picturesque from a standard of taste that reflected “a growing impatience with the English neo-classical veneration of foreign cultures” (11), and observes that “the improbable Italian light was fading from British landscapes as the [eighteenth century] neared its close” (36). Andrews traces the evolution of the Picturesque from artistic expressions in poetry and landscape painting to
more practical applications in gardening and tourism. He argues that in the 1790s, the Picturesque theory becomes more politicized in reaction to the “terrifying ‘levelling’ influences from across the Channel,” distinguishing the picturesque more sharply from the sublime and the beautiful (66). Richard Payne Knight’s poem *The Landscape* illustrates the contemporary association of the sublime and the French Revolution, which the poet compares to a natural cycle that first destroys (levels) and then regenerates a cultivated, picturesque estate:

> In calm and peaceful torpor sleep mankind;  
> Unfelt the rays of genius, that inflame  
> The free-born soul, and bid it pant for fame  
> But break the mound, and let the waters flow;  
> Headlong and fierce their turbid currents go;  
> Sweep down the fences, and tear up the soil;  
> And roar along, ‘midst havoc, waste, and spoil;  
> Till spent their fury: -- then their moisture feeds  
> The deepening verdure of the fertile meads  
> So when rebellion breaks the despot’s chain,  
> First wasteful ruin marks the rabble’s reign;  
> Till tired their fury, and their vengeance spent,  
> Then temperate order from confusion springs… (91-2, ll. 387-399)

Knight’s poem was published in 1794, the year Radcliffe published *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, in which she draws both on the aesthetic (utilitarian) and the political
connotations of the picturesque to create continental settings that imaginatively insulate
the middle class from aristocratic corruption as well as mob violence.

The political resonance of Radcliffe’s and Knight’s picturesque is based on
Edmund Burke’s adaptation of his categories from *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin
of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) in his *Reflections on the Revolution
in France* (1790). In *A Philosophical Inquiry*, Burke associates the beautiful with the
female body that resembles a landscape, exposed to and appropriated by a scrutinizing
male gaze:

Observe that part of a beautiful woman where she is perhaps the most beautiful,
about the neck and breasts; the smoothness; the softness; the easy and insensible
swell; the variety of the surface, which is never for the smallest space the same;
the deceitful maze, through which the unsteady eye slides giddily, without
knowing where to fix, or whither it is carried. (105)

In the *Reflections*, on the other hand, Burke’s exaggerated depiction of “cruel ruffians
and assassins, reeking with blood,” invading the private space of Marie Antoinette,
denounces the male usurpation that forces the queen to “fly almost naked” (71). Building
on the rhetorical power of this famous theatrical scene, Burke comes to associate clothed
femininity with culture, tradition and institutional order – particularly in its English form;
by stripping the queen, the revolutionaries reduce humanity to its natural state:

All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the superadded ideas,
furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and
the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our naked shivering
nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation, are to be exploded as a ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated fashion.

On this scheme of things, a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order. (77)

As Ronald Paulson points out, Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Man* denounces the draped vices of Marie Antoinette and upholds the maternal potential of the females of the mob, whom Burke designates as “the abused shape of the vilest of women” (*Reflections* 72).5

If the beautiful comes to be associated with cultured femininity and, by extension, domesticity, the sublime takes on a alien dimension in light of the French Revolution. Paulson suggests that in his reaction to the revolutionary events in France, Burke reevaluates his concept of the sublime, “now saying that the true sublime in government is a mixture of fear and awe or admiration, whereas the false sublime [of the Revolution], a perversion of this…, generates only fear and a grotesque energy” (66). In his initial formulation of the categories, Burke clearly values the effect of the masculine sublime over that of the feminine beautiful:

> There is a wide difference between admiration and love. The sublime, which is the cause of the former, always dwells on great objects, and terrible; the latter on small ones, and pleasing; we submit to what we admire, but we love what submits to us; in one case we are forced, in the other we are flattered into compliance. (*Philosophical Inquiry* 103)

After he revised his aesthetics in the *Reflections* “Burke’s imagery of the revolution…
was the terrible of his sublime, with precisely the aesthetic distancing implied in
[Burke’s] formulation that pain and danger ‘are simply painful when their causes
immediately affect us [i.e. if we were in France]; they are delightful when we have an
idea of pain and danger, without being actually in such circumstances’”(Paulson 67).

In light of the Revolution, the traveling woman on the Continent has subversive
potential—travel threatens to strip her of cultural femininity and involve her in
revolutionary politics, or to transform the beautiful object into a sublime agent. Emily St.
Aubert’s and Hester Lynch Piozzi’s preoccupation with appearance indicates their self-
consciousness as objects or spectacles that prevents them functioning as subjects or
spectators – both Emily’s incarceration in the castle and Piozzi’s exclusion from the
monastery are reminders of male hegemony:

The tourist became a disinterested aesthetic subject by eliding the traces of the
practical relation between a place and its inhabitants. Human figures in the
picturesque scene were reduced to faceless ornaments, like Gilpin’s ubiquitous
banditti… In such a symbolic economy it is no wonder if a woman, who both was
and was not ‘Vulgar’, had trouble occupying a position of the aesthetic subject.
(Bohls 13)

As Bohls points out, the woman traveler is “entitled by her class, but not by gender, to the
authority of the aesthetic subject,” through participation in picturesque viewing (19).

The plot of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* revolves around several contrasted settings:
the pastoral, picturesque La Vallée and Tuscany; the half-ruined, sublime castle of
Udolpho; the opulent Venice; and the corrupt Paris that remains off stage.6 In
constructing the French settings, Radcliffe applies the picturesque in its more utilitarian function, differentiating between bourgeois and aristocratic tastes. On the other hand, the Italian settings more dramatically juxtapose the picturesque and the sublime, when Emily travels to Udolpho and is threatened by mob violence. In the French setting, the differences between the individual places are not national or cultural, but associated with clashing aristocratic and middle-class values. The opening chapters contrast the improvements made in La Vallée, St. Aubert’s chateau and in the residence of his brother-in-law, Monsieur Quesnel. St. Aubert’s taste is simple and respects nature and tradition:

The front of the chateau, which, having a southern aspect, opened upon the grandeur of the mountains, was occupied on the ground floor by a rustic hall, and two excellent sitting rooms. …In the surrounding ground, St. Aubert had made very tasteful improvements; yet, such was his attachment to objects he had remembered from his boyish days, that he had in some instances sacrificed taste to sentiments. There were two old larches that shaded the building, and interrupted the prospect; St. Aubert had sometimes declared that he believed he should have been weak enough to weep at their fall. (4)

St. Aubert is dismayed when his wealthy, fashionable relative Quesnel decides to fell an ancient oak because it interrupts his prospect and replace it with poplars (14). Although he had sold his ancestral estate to Quesnel, St. Aubert’s still perceives the tree as the property of his imagination, recollecting the days of his youth when he had “climbed among its broad branches, and sat embowered amidst a world of leaves” (13). The
opening scenes establish a correlation between social and spatial order in the novel. As Angela Keane observes, “Radcliffe presents choice of environment, where choice is possible (for the middle classes and nobility), as an obvious outward sign of moral disposition, and she establishes a formulaic shorthand of interior décor, external improvements and prospect as an index of the proprietors’ sensibility and moral worth” (30). St. Aubert’s pastoral ideal is foundational to middle-class ideology: “The longing for rural tranquility versus urban restlessness and corruption closely followed the dichotomy between Home and the World, both associated with the overarching categories of the masculine and the feminine” (Hall and Davidoff 28). Carole Fabricant discusses the influence of the growing preoccupation with estate improvement and touring on the eighteenth-century “body of literature that regularly strove to establish an equation between private property and public virtue,” and in which “the great conflicts were frequently, on one level or another, battles over real estate” (274). The training in the principles of the picturesque, provided by both St. Aubert and Valancourt, equips Emily for survival in a fictional world were “property relations [are] at the heart of proper relations” (Fabricant 268).

The emphasis on domestic virtues in Emily’s upbringing in salutary isolation from the corrupt metropolis distinguish the heroine from other Frenchwomen, for “she [knows] nothing of Parisian fashions or Parisian operas; and her modesty, simplicity, and correct manners formed decided contrast to those of her female companions” (24). What constitutes virtue in the heroine is presented as a weakness in her lover Valancourt, whom Emily meets during a therapeutic tour of the Pyrenees intended to improve her
father’s health. St. Aubert approves of Valancourt’s “frank and generous nature, full of ardour, highly susceptible to whatever is grand and beautiful,” but also notices that his daughter’s suitor is “impetuous, wild and somewhat romantic” and repeatedly reminds himself that “this young man has never seen Paris” (41). After her father’s death, Emily helps rehabilitate Valancourt from the corrupting influence of Paris – his regains his status as an eligible husband when Emily learns that his transgressions involved gambling, but not womanizing. The final challenge for Emily is to reassess Valancourt’s Parisian transgressions – the true reports of his gambling are redeemed by his charitable intentions, while the false rumors of sexual scandal are refuted. Emily’s and Valancourt’s marriage needs to preserve middle class values, which depend on proper conduct as well as the preservation of property.

Even Emily St. Aubert’s journeys fall in the category of “domestic tourism [that] reinforces class hegemony” rather than “foreign travel [that] reinforces the ethnocentricity of English culture” (Fabricant 257). The synthetic foreign settings provide an opportunity for the traveling heroine to discipline her own judgement in face of unfamiliar phenomena. Emily faces disorienting situations that involve threats to virtue or property as well as the explained supernatural, but not culture shock. Emily interprets signs in the landscape as vestiges of past tragedies and potential future calamities:

Here no sign of cultivation appeared… Sometimes, a gigantic larch threw its long shade over the precipice, and here and there a cliff reared on its brow a monumental cross, to tell the traveller the fate of him who ventured thither before. This spot seemed the very haunt of banditti; and Emily, as she looked down upon
it, almost expected to see them stealing out from some hollow cave to look for their prey. Soon after an object not less terrific struck her—a gibbet standing on a point of rock near the entrance of the pass, and immediately over one of the crosses she had before observed. These were hieroglyphics that told a plain and dreadful story. (34)

The reference to “hieroglyphics” suggests that objects in the landscape are legible as signs but also potentially misleading—although the place “seemed the very haunt of banditti,” they never appear (34). Elizabeth Manwaring identifies the “gibbet” as “particularly Salvatorial” and thus suggesting the derivative quality of Radcliffe’s landscapes (216). As Manwaring points out, the distinct styles of Salvator Rosa and Claude Lorraine represented “two sorts of scenery which had most impressed the English visitor in Italy” (v). Emily’s experience of Italy is composed of the sublime, Salvatorian scene of Udopho and the picturesque, Claudian vision of Tuscany (See Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). The contrast between these aesthetic realms mirrors the one between the pastoral La Vallée and the urban Paris.

Emily’s journey to Italy highlights the importance of picturesque appropriation as a mark of class and character. When her aunt marries Signor Montoni, who is to be her guardian, Emily repeatedly contemplates Italy in terms of distance and fragmentation threatening her sense of identity:

The prospect of going to Italy was still rendered darker, when she considered the tumultuous situation of that country, then torn by civil commotion, where every petty state was at war with its neighbour, and even every castle liable to the attack
Figure 1: Salvator Rosa, Landscape with Armed Men. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
Figure 2: Claude Lorrain, *Landscape with Dancing Figures (The Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah or The Mill)*, 1648. National Gallery, London.
of an invader. She considered the person [Montoni], to whose immediate
guidance she would be committed, and the vast distance, that was to separate her
from Valancourt…(145)

The dread of distance intensifies with the approaching day of departure: “How dreadful
to her imagination, too, was the distance that would separate them—the Alps, those
tremendous bariers would rise, and whole countries extend between the regions where
each must exist! To live in adjoining provinces, to live even in the same country, though
without seeing him, was comparative happiness to the conviction of this dreadful length
of distance” (51). When she arrives in Italy, Emily supplies the concept of distance with
the contrast between the sublime and the beautiful, which encompasses the whole country
in a set of picturesque contrasts:

The solitary grandeur of objects that immediately surrounded her, the mountain-
region towering above, the deep precipices that fell beneath…the headlong
torrents, dashing among cliffs… these features which received a higher character
of sublimity from the reposing beauty of the Italian landscape below, stretching to
the wide horizon, where the same melting blue tint seemed to unite earth and sky.

(166)

Emily’s sensitive response to scenery differentiates her from the less “English” and
middle-class Signor Montoni. Emily’s “patriotism” and preference for La Vallée are also
contrasted with her aunts’ attitudes toward home, which are more relative as in the case
of Mary Wollstonecraft: “Madame Quesnel, who, when she was in France, talked with
rapture of Italy, now, that she was in Italy, talked with equal praise of France…” (211).
Her other aunt, Montoni’s wife, “shudder[s] as she look[s] down precipices” (166) and hopes soon “to be beyond the view of these horrid mountains” (169). Instead of contemplating the sublime Alps, Montoni disputes the details of Hannibal’s crossing of the Alps. His classical interests link him with conventional male Grand Tour travelers who were only interested in objective, scholarly facts, but also suggests his future “behavioral transgression.” In Radcliffe’s world, the complete lack of aesthetic sensibility marks characters as essentially foreign. Montoni introduces his property as if it were a painting in his collection: “‘There,’ said Montoni, speaking for the first time in several hours, ‘is Udolpho’” (226). Montoni himself is a sublime object in the eyes of Emily, who scrutinizes him as much as she does the landscape:

Emily observed that at the mention of any daring exploit, Montoni’s eyes lost their sullenness and seemed instantaneously to gleam with fire; yet they still retained somewhat of a lurking cunning, and she sometimes thought that their fire partook more of the glare of malice than the brightness of valour, though the latter would have well harmonized with the high chivalric air of his figure, in which Cavigni, with all his gay and gallant manners, was his inferior. (172)

Like the banditti in Salvator Rosa’s paintings, Montoni and his companions appear integral to the sublime landscapes of Udolpho. (Fig. 1) Emily’s equally appreciative response to the view of the castle indicates a retreat into subjective vision, as the atmosphere of the scene dominates her mood: “Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni’s; for, though it was now lighted up by
the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone rendered it a gloomy and sublime object” (227).

The construction of the idyllic Tuscan setting uses perspective in a similar way, representing peasants as components of the picturesque, usually depicted at their leisure rather than labor:

Emily quickened her steps, and, winding round the rock, saw, within the sweeping bay, beyond, which was hung with woods from the borders of the beach to the very summit of the cliffs, two groups of peasants, one seated beneath the shades, and the other standing on the edge of the sea, round the girl, who was singing, and who held in her hand a chaplet of flowers, which she seemed about to drop into the waves. (420)

This scene closely resembles Claude Lorraine’s painting of a Landscape with Dancing Figures (The Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah or The Mill)” (Fig. 2), which Helen Langdon describes as a prime example of the painter’s “visionary landscapes, suspended in space and conveying, for a sophisticated city dweller, that nostalgia for the irrecoverable simplicity of an earlier rustic life” (158).9 Whereas in travelogues – including A Journey – these types of landscape description tend to put a distance between the traveler and landscape as well as the local population, representing cultural difference in aesthetic terms, in the novel Emily approaches the peasants and, surprised by the classical contents of their song, addresses one of them:

‘But they talked of a sea-nymph,’ said Emily: ‘how came these good people to think of a sea nymph?’
‘Oh, Signora,’ rejoined Maddelina,; mistaking the reason of Emily’s surprise, ‘nobody believes in such things, but our old songs tell of them…’

Emily had been early taught to venerate Florence as the seat of literature and the fine arts; but, that its taste for classic story should descend to the peasants of the country, occasioned her surprise and admiration. The Arcadian air of the girls next attracted her attention…Their hair, falling in ringlets on their necks, was also ornamented with flowers, and with a small straw hat, which, set rather backward and on one side of the head, gave an impression of gaiety and smartness to the whole figure. (421)

Although it takes place in Italy, the encounter appears inter-cultural rather than cross-cultural, for it highlights Emily’s class rather than nationality. Although she differs from the peasant girls by virtue of her education, she shares their heritage, or second-hand vernacular versions of classical stories, and—in the episode involving the hat—even adopts their customs. Emily is at home in Tuscany as much as in La Vallée.

Landscape description appears to structure not only the plot, but also characterization in The Mysteries of Udolpho. Although Montoni is clearly driven by will to power and greed, we do not get access to his consciousness or underlying motives. Emily steadfastly resists Montoni’s attempts to take over her property, because the possession of La Vallée represents her class status and the possibility of marrying Valancourt. Montoni imprisons Madame Montoni and then Emily in the castle of Udolpho because he wishes to take over their property. During the confrontations in the castle of Udolpho, the conflict of interests makes both the heroine and the villain rather
one-dimensional, as reflected in Montoni’s ironic comment: “You speak like a heroine,’ said Montoni, contemptuously; ‘we shall see whether you can suffer like one’” (381). Finally, Emily succumbs and gives up her property in order to avoid being raped by Montoni’s accomplices. However, Montoni’s death in the end of the novel rewards her virtuous resistance. Her adherence to St. Aubert’s teaching that poverty is immaterial if one possesses the means of imaginatively appropriating landscapes not only restores La Vallée to her possession, but also helps her inherit Udolpho after the death of Montoni.

Structures of Opposition:

Home and Abroad in *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*

Radcliffe took her only trip to the continent in the company of her husband after the publication of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794. The published account of *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794 through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return Down the Rhine* also included Radcliffe’s *Observations during a Tour of the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland*. Radcliffe’s continental itinerary is derouted by revolutionary wars, and of necessity avoids the typical Grand Tour paths through France and Italy, the settings of her Gothic novels. Like *Udolpho*, Radcliffe’s *A Journey* is not written in the first-person or epistolary form, which came to be associated with Jacobinism. Unlike the more radical women travel writers of the 1790s, Radcliffe uses “we” rather than “I” in her travel narrative, stressing her marital status and the division of gender roles in marriage and in writing, and explains that her
husband supplies the political commentary, while she focuses on aesthetics. Radcliffe is concerned about her use of cultural comparisons, a strategy which “has been sometimes blamed for its apparent nationality, by writers of the most respectable authority” (vi). She justifies the practice as a way of educating the reader: “The references to England, which frequently occur during the foreign part of the tour, are made because it has seemed that one of the best modes of describing to any class of readers what they may not know, is by comparing it with what they do” (vi). The cultural comparison shapes the rhetorical strategies of Radcliffe’s travelogue, and the two-partite structure of the publication establishes a boundary between the Continent and England, presenting them as aesthetic and cultural opposites.

Not only the narrative structure, but also the thematic preoccupations of *A Journey* provide important clues to what constitutes the domestic and foreign spheres, or to the way projection and distancing function in her novels. In differentiating between the Netherlands and Germany, Radcliffe points to the contrast between middle-class commerce and feudal stagnation. Whereas in *Udolpho* real estate transactions are essential but monied interest somewhat suspect, in a *A Journey* Radcliffe upholds the civilizing influence of commerce, which underscores British superiority, diminishing the industry of the Protestant Dutch and describing them as somewhat jealous of the English. The state of civilization progressively deteriorates as the Radcliffes proceed into the German territories, and their travel in space resembles time travel. In more commercial (and metropolitan) places such as Frankfurt, the Germans resemble the English, but in the rest of Germany a majority of the inhabitants, sluggish due to excessive consumption of
beer, treat the travelers with “sullenness, frequently approaching to malignity” (141).

Nevertheless, Radcliffe recognizes the kinship between the German and English languages, suggesting that German resembles the dialects of British peripheries and favoring the Saxon over the Norman (French) influence on the English language. Although Radcliffe views national character as somewhat contingent on historical and commercial development, she ultimately emphasizes the “superior appearance and manners of the people” in England over their continental counterparts “of the countries we have been lately accustomed to,” whether Catholic or Protestant (370). Besides the occasional national stereotyping, A Journey does not represent the strongest contrast between England and the Continent by comparing cultures, but by comparing landscapes.

The Observations during a Tour of the Lakes, although designated by a separate title on the title page, are merely set off by a typographical dividing line in the text, which implies some continuity between the two travel narratives. Radcliffe dramatizes the ship’s approach to Dover across the English Channel, identifying “the bolder features of the English coast,” “the sweeping bay of Dover,” “the grandeur” of Shakespeare’s cliff, and experiencing relief from “the monotonous flatness of Dutch landscapes,” “the joy of an escape from districts where there was scarcely a home for the natives,” [my emphasis] and “the love of our own country, greatly enhanced by all that had been seen of others” (370). Her sentiments at the approach to Dover are usefully contrasted with those of Mary Wollstonecraft, for whom English landscape does not necessarily represent a superior civilization or home and “at the sight of Dover cliffs” wonders “how any body could term them grand…after those [she] had seen in Sweden and Norway” (345). While
Wollstonecraft uses landscape description to evoke her subjective impressions, landscape does not affect her concept of home or cultural difference. On the other hand, Radcliffe applies Burke’s revised aesthetic categories to continental and English landscapes, and the small, the feminine attribute of the beautiful in Burkean aesthetics, has decisive advantage: “English landscapes can be compared to cabinet pictures, delicately beautiful and highly finished; German scenery to paintings for a vestibule, of bold outline and often sublime, but coarse and to be viewed with advantage only from a distance” (371).

The contrast between a “cabinet” and a “vestibule,” the beautiful and the sublime, establishes a distinction between harmonious domesticity, which stands for Englishness, and a potentially volatile public sphere, which is represented as a foreign space.

Radcliffe’s symmetrical opposition of home and abroad draws on the conventions of the Grand Tour travel writing:

> For much of the eighteenth century, this device of constructing binary oppositions between the familiar and the foreign constitutes one of the most common strategies for translating foreignness into discourse—both in accounts of the imaginative geography of the Grand Tour and in writings concerned with other domains of alterity. (Chard 40)

As Chard points out, this strategy uses the “native region as a constant point of reference” (29).

Although the continental section of *A Journey* is focused on specific indicators of commercial activity, it also contains descriptive passages that incorporate local inhabitants as decorative figures rather than economic agents. According to the division
of labor that Radcliffe announces in the introduction to her travel book, her woman’s role is to draw on the picturesque, which “translate[s] the political and social into the decorative…[and deploys] motifs for aesthetic effect which in other circumstances are the indicators of poverty or social deprivation” (Copley and Garside 6). The following passage appears to exemplify Radcliffe’s “feminine,” or picturesque contribution to the representation of the Continent in *A Journey*:

> These circumstances of scenery, with the tall masts of vessels lying below the shrubby bank, on which the village stands, and seeming to heighten by comparison the stupendous rocks, that rose around them; the moving figures of boatmen and horses employed in towing a barge against the stream, in the bay beyond; and a group of peasants on the high quay, in the foreground, watching their progress; the ancient castle of Hammerstein, overlooking the whole – these formed one of the most interesting pictures we have seen. (157)

By the time she reaches England, however, Radcliffe doubts the effectiveness of landscape description: “It is difficult to spread varied pictures of such scenes before the imagination. A repetition of the same images of rock, wood and water, and the same epithets of grand, vast and sublime, which necessarily occur, must appear tautologous on paper…”(419). While in the continental section *A Journey*, Radcliffe preserves a narrative distance from the peasants, in the English tour she—like Emily in Tuscany—pays particular attention to the local inhabitants. In the Lake District, she is particularly “struck by the superior simplicity and modesty of the people” (*A Journey* 397). In her domestic tour, Radcliffe relies on the urban rather than the foreign as a point of reference,
and observes that unlike country people in Germany, whose landscape is hardly domestic and whose remoteness deprives them of the civilizing influence of commerce, the inhabitants of the Lake District benefit from their natural isolation in narrow valleys: “Seclusion from great towns and from examples of selfish splendour, their minds seem to act freely in the sphere of their own affairs, without interruption from envy or triumph, as to those of others” (397). At the crossing of the Channel, Radcliffe draws the boundary that separates the British Isles and the Continent according to the “natural” properties of landscape, but on the English tour, she locates the properties of the nation in the character of its inhabitants, whose “superior simplicity and modesty” (sincerity) and independence “without the hope of more than ordinary gain” (disinterestedness) assimilate the provincial peasants of the Lake District into the ascendant model of middle-class Englishness. As Dorothy McMillan puts it,

The local people, indeed, come alive in ways which will surprise those familiar only with the operatic peasants of her novels. Some of her remarks are in a conventional eighteenth-century moralising strain about the virtues of simplicity and independence…, but she is also sensible of the difficulties that impressive landscapes put in the way of the ‘intercourse and business of ordinary life’. More tellingly she is moved by the genuine good will and friendliness of the local people; records the voices of the singing children; the farmer working side by side with his hands… . (Mcmillan 60)

Dorothy McMillan argues that “the processes of travel, the observation of actual landscape and the effort to render it and its effects, worked toward a loss of conviction in
the landscape strategies of [Radcliffe’s] novels,” which accounts for the diminished proportion and importance of landscape descriptions in *The Italian* (52). Moreover, Radcliffe writes in the context of a “twist in the etymology of the word ‘home’ which occurred late in the eighteenth century, enabling it to mean not just a country of nativity or residence, but England above all other countries” (Mackenzie 410). The foreign and domestic sections of *A Journey* reflect these shifts in Radcliffe’s aesthetics and politics, explaining why her focus changes from the opposition between the middle class and the aristocracy, or the private and public spheres, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* to the national difference between the English and the continentals in *The Italian.*

The Anglo-Italian Garden: National Character and Institutions in *The Italian*

*The Italian* is framed as an authentic eighteenth-century travel account. The contemporary point of reference diminishes both the geographical and the temporal displacement of its Gothic setting, explicitly linking England and Italy through a cross-cultural dialogue: “About the year 1764, some English travelers in Italy, during one of their excursions in the environs of Naples, happened to stop before the portico of the Santa Maria del Pianto, a church belonging to a very ancient convent of the order of the Black Penitents.” The travelers spot an assassin seeking asylum in the church, and an Englishman exclaims in self-righteous astonishment: “Do your altars, then, protect the murderer?…of what avail are your laws, if the most atrocious criminal may thus find
shelter from them?”(1). The self-righteous English traveler seems to replace the function of Emily St. Aubert as a moral center or benchmark of The Italian, but he is marginalized by the narrative, only appearing in the introductory frame, and silenced by the pragmatic reply of his Italian friend, according to which institutions administer justice in response to national character: “Why, my friend…if we were to shew no mercy to such unfortunate persons, assassinations are so frequent, that our cities would be half depopulated” (3). Even though this conclusion is not favorable to Italian character, the unfinished conversation decenters the Englishman and suggests that cultural boundaries are relative. The incident in the frame appears to be based on Piozzi’s Observations, in which she tells the story of a Neapolitan friar who killed a woman, yet he was merely castigated by the Church, not punished by civil power.11 Although outraged by the incident, Piozzi is able to turn her observation into positive reflection on the Italian character. Given that high birth and religious vows protect the criminal from law, only the “perfect sobriety and great goodness of disposition can be alleged as a reason why worse is not done every day”(II, 31). Piozzi’s and Radcliffe’s observations on the same institutional peculiarity reflect different kinds of cultural relativism. In the case of Piozzi, who writes on the eve of the French Revolution, the state of the institutions is considered fixed and national character variable. Writing her Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark in 1796, Wollstonecraft registers the tension between the natural and cultural definitions of national character:

All are eager to give a national character; which is rarely just, because they do not discriminate the natural from the acquired difference. The natural, I believe, on
due consideration, will be found to consist merely in the degree of vivacity or
thoughtfulness, pleasure, or pain, inspired by the climate, whilst the varieties
which the forms of government, including religion, produce, are much more
numerous and unstable…Others have been brought forward as brutes, having no
aptitude for the arts and sciences, only because the progress of improvement had
not reached the stage which produces them….Travellers who require that every
nation should resemble their native country, had better stay at home. … (266)

Wollstonecraft believes that national stereotypes which “gird the human mind round with
imaginary circles” can be eradicated by progress, yet she also continues to believe in the
eighteenth-century concepts of national temperament based on environmental conditions.

Radcliffe’s *The Italian* shares the tendency of more radical women’s travel writing of the
1790s, which, under the influence of the French Revolution, comes to a relativistic
understanding of cultural difference as a function of progress but also assesses national
character according to perceived natural properties. Radcliffe’s opening scene, which was
written after the reign of terror in France, suggests that institutions are shaped by national
character.

*The Italian*, as its title indicates, is preoccupied with the relationship between
institutional and individual forms of Italian-ness (and, by implication, English-ness), or
the cultural boundaries between England and the Continent. Because Radcliffe wrote her
major novels in the 1790s, a time of strong political affiliations, critics have debated the
degrees of her radicalism or conservativism.¹² As Cannon Schmitt puts it:

The simultaneous presence of this intransient otherness and domestic sameness
in *The Italian* provides but one example of the multifarious and often conflicting allegiances in Radcliffe’s fiction. Her novels resist being read monologically: they promote aristocratic as well as bourgeois values, demonstrate both progressive and conservative values… (855)

The dialogic nature of Radcliffe’s Gothic also manifests itself in Radcliffe’s representation of national difference. Contemporary radical women’s travel writing shows that independently of political affiliations, the concept of national character becomes increasingly defined by culture (institutions) rather than nature (landscape). The narrative frame of *The Italian*, in contrast with *Udolpho*, is set up as a dialogue that interrogates cultural boundaries instead of making the text, as Cannon Schmidt proposes, “emblematic of Italianness, Catholicism, a mysterious and un-English way of life” (853). The frame of the novel describes an architectural monument or a vestige of culture, the church of Santa Maria del Pianto, instead of a landscape. While *Udolpho*, the bulk of which consists of landscape descriptions, is based on a set of aesthetic differences between the picturesque/beautiful and the sublime and employs national difference to delineate the boundaries of the middle class, the more plot-driven *The Italian: Or, the Confessional of the Black Penitents*, as its full title suggests, complicates the concept of cultural difference by focusing on the interdependence of national character and its institutional context.

The figure of the traveler in the frame narrative implies that the novel responds to the French Revolution, for even armchair travel required an understanding of unprecedented phenomena taking place across the Channel. Travel writers had the
tendency to impose narrative order on the apparently chaotic revolutionary events. Helen Maria Williams’s *Letters Written in France* is a prime example of this tendency, for it presents the early stages of the Revolution as a romance. Both the theme and the plot of *The Italian* resemble the du Fossé narrative in Williams’s *Letters*. Williams was reared in the Dissenting tradition and her poetry promoted the ideal of sensibility and liberal causes, so she was—at least initially—enthusiastically supportive of the Revolution. Williams’s purpose for including the story of her friends in the first volume of her report from France is to break through national boundaries, to appeal to “the common feelings of humanity” in her readers: “This was not a time in which the distinctions of country were remembered. It was the triumph of human kind; it was man asserting the noble privilege of his nature; and it required but the common feelings of humanity, to become in that moment a citizen of the world” (14). In order to elicit these “common feelings” in her readers and provide them with insight into the workings of *ancien régime*, or, metaphorically, with access into the walls of the Bastille, she introduces a sentimental story into her travel narrative. The primary purpose for inserting the du Fossé “history” in *The Letters* is to vindicate the author’s political and national affiliation, but the story is also intended to help English readers identify with the Revolution, “since the old constitution is connected in my mind with the image of a friend confined in the gloomy recesses of a dungeon, and pining in hopeless captivity” (72). Williams tells the story in straightforward, apparently objective terms:

Augustin Francois Thomas du F—, eldest son of the Baron du F—, Counsellor of the Parliament of Normandy, was born on the fifteenth of July, 1750. His early
years were embittered by the severity of his father, who was of a disposition that preferred the exercise of domestic tyranny to the blessings of social happiness, and chose rather to be dreaded than beloved. (123)

The narrative shares the elements of Ann Radcliffe’s plots, featuring parental tyranny, virtue in distress, clandestine marriage, and incarceration. Mons. du F— falls in love with Monique Coquerel, “the youngest of eight children, of a respectable family of Bourgeois at Rouen” (125). In spite of the possibility that “her father was descended from the younger branch of a noble family,” Baron du F— resolutely opposes the match and wields his legal authority to persecute his son. The couple and their infant daughter seek refuge in England, but Baron du F— uses subterfuge to lure his son back to France, where he issues a lettre de cachet for his arrest. Williams reports that when Mons. du F— finally returned to England to be reunited with his family, “he knelt down, and, in a transport of joy, kissed the earth of that dear country which had twice provided his asylum” (180). For Williams, class affiliations supercede nationality as a mark of identification, and, moreover, politics function as a basis for national affiliation for they can be grounds for alienation, not only from one’s family, but also from one’s country. When Mons. du F—, who has converted to Protestantism, suffers from fever upon his return to London, he cries “with utmost vehemence, “Qu’on fasse sortir tous les Francois!” [Make all the French go out.] (185). Williams herself compares her story to a work of fiction, exclaiming: “Has it not the air of romance? And are you not glad that the denouement is happy?—Does not the old Baron die exactly in the right place; at the very page one would choose?” (193). Williams’s meta-comment implies that her story is
authentic but also constructed. Although the Baron’s death may be based on fact, it is in Williams’s power to tell the readers about it “exactly in the right place.”

In *The Italian*, Radcliffe also blurs the boundary between fiction and non-fiction, presenting the story of Schedoni, Ellena di Rosalba, and Vincentio Vivaldi as an authentic document illustrating the history of the confessional in Santa Maria del Pianto in particular and the workings of Italian ecclesiastical justice in general to the chauvinistic English traveler. Unlike in *Udolpho*, Radcliffe highlights the importance of historical and geographical context and the very first sentence of the novel precisely determines its setting: “It was in the church of San Lorenzo at Naples, in the year 1758, that Vincentio di Vivaldi first saw Ellena Rosalba” (5). The story is set at the height of the Grand Tour era, and Vivaldi’s pursuit of Ellena and her aunt through the streets of Naples provides a guidebook-like map of the streets of Naples: “[A]s they turned into the Strada di Toledo he had nearly lost them; but quickening his pace, and relinquishing the cautious distance he had hitherto kept, he overtook them as they entered on the Terrazzo Nuovo, which runs along the bay of Naples and leads toward the Gran Corso” (5). The settings are more specific than those in *Udolpho*; in the opening pages the readers are treated to views of the Bay of Naples, “the hollow murmurs of Vesuvius, which threw up, at intervals its sudden flame on the horizon” (11), and “the whole sweep of its rising shores, the stately city of Naples on the strand below, and, spreading far among the hills, its terraced roofs crowded with spectators, and the Corso tumultuous with carriages and blazing with torches” (16). The reader’s position mirrors that of the traveler in the opening frame. The sites of Naples represent only the tourist’s surface view of Italy, but entering
the story of Ellena, Vincentio and Schedoni through the purported manuscript, or the plot of *The Italian*, promises a deeper insight into the workings of Italian culture.

The romance plot of the novel is quite conventional. Vivaldi’s mother and father resent their son’s interest in a lower class woman and try to prevent him from marrying Ellena. More explicitly than *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the plot of *The Italian* foregrounds the issue of class difference. Ellena di Rosalba appears to be middle class, although she is in fact of noble birth. Whereas the identity and the fate of Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* depends on proper conduct, the fate of Ellena, along with the plot of *The Italian*, hinges on the secret of her descent. The convoluted plot that involves the kidnapping of Ellena respectively by Schedoni and Vivaldi, and Vivaldi and Schedoni’s encounter in the dungeons of the Inquisition would be futile if Ellena’s aristocratic birth were revealed in the opening pages. The couple is reunited and allowed to get married when it turns out that Ellena is in fact a daughter of the nun Olivia and Schedoni’s brother and therefore of noble parentage.

The respective roles of the heroine, the hero, and the villain are different from those in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, as characterization serves to illustrate the subtleties of national rather than class difference in *The Italian*. Although the generic title singles out monk Schedoni as a quintessential example of national character from a host of Italian characters, Schedoni is a more complex or at least a less stereotypical villain than Montoni. While Montoni in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is a figure integral to the sublime landscape, devoid of deep-seated motives or any type of psychological complexity, Schedoni is presented as a conflicted product of social forces. Schedoni stands in a
synechdochic rather than metonymic relation to Italy. He is the Italian rather than an Italian. He does not represent Italy in general, but embodies the extreme possibilities of its culture, such as the excessive reliance on an institutional framework instead of conscience. Adopting the cultural definition of national difference, Radcliffe also makes Englishness possible within Italian institutions. However, such English potential appears more explicitly in minor characters such as a Protestant-like abbess or a just inquisitor rather than in the hero or the heroine. The role of the heroine is diminished and the narration focuses on the emotional states of the feminized hero: “The expectation of seeing Ellena agitated him with impatient joy and trembling hope, which still increased as he approached her residence, till, having reached the garden-gate, he was obliged to rest for a few moments to recover breath and composure” (8). When the narrative is occasionally focalized through her, Ellena of The Italian is much less self-assured than Emily of Udolpho. The heroine no longer represents the moral center of the novel, and the narration does not provide much access into her thoughts, suggesting that the ideals of sincerity and domesticity need not be anchored in femininity because they have become part of the English national character by the time Radcliffe wrote the latter novel. This change in the character of the protagonist and the increased reluctance on the part of the narrator to provide didactic guidance forces the readers to draw their own cultural boundaries by assessing and identifying with the characters.

Vivaldi’s story bears a strong resemblance to that of Mons. du F—, as his parents also persecute him for attempting to marry a presumably middle-class woman. However, the main agent of oppression is his mother, which leaves space for the restoration of
patriarchal rule at the end of the novel. Although nominally Catholic, Vivaldi behaves as a Protestant, observing the rites of Catholicism only when forced by the circumstances: “The steps of the shrine were thronged with kneeling pilgrims, and Vivaldi, to avoid singularity, kneeled also…” [my emphasis](117). As Robert Miles points out, both Vivaldi and Ellena employ the revolutionary language of rights in their defense, which makes them similar to Mons. du F— and Monique Coquerel (161). However, the right they struggle for is defined negatively; it is the right to personal autonomy rather than the right to cross class boundaries.

The character of Schedoni, who, unlike Montoni in *Udolpho*, is invested with complex motives, constitutes the major difference between Radcliffe’s and Williams’s plots. Radcliffe’s Schedoni is a more complicated villain than Williams’s Baron du Fossé, because the enemy comes to be defined not only in terms of class, but also in terms of national character. In contrast to Williams, Radcliffe’s villain in *The Italian* is not a parent, or an integral part of the domestic circle. He is in fact a product of patriarchal society, a younger son victimized by primogeniture, one of the principal social institutions under attack during the French Revolution. (Mons. du F— in Helen Maria Williams’s account suffers from the same system, though as the oldest son.) In a confrontation with Vivaldi over a drawing of a ruin, which was presumably authored by Ellena and displayed in Marchesa Vivaldi’s closet, Schedoni resists stereotypical representation:

‘That arch,’ resumed Vivaldi, his eye still fixed on Schedoni, ‘that arch suspended between two rocks, the one overtopped by the towers of the fortress, the other
shadowed with pine and broad oak, has a fine effect. But a picture of it would want human figures. …Now either the grotesque shapes of banditti lurking within the ruin, as if ready to start upon the traveller, or a friar rolled up in his black garments, just stealing forth from under the shade of the arch, and looking like some supernatural messenger of evil, would finish the piece.

The features of Schedoni suffered no change during this speech.

‘Your picture is complete,’ said he, ‘and I cannot but admire the facility with which you have classed the monks together with banditti.’ (50)

The dialogue serves as an ironic commentary on, or even a dismissal of Radcliffe’s own verbal sketches of foreigners as integral to the landscape in *Udolpho* and *A Journey.*

Drawing on Alan Liu’s work, Angela Keane characterizes the picturesque as a manifestation of English Protestant culture, “a landscape version of the panopticon through which the Whig state supervised, regulated, and encouraged the productivity of its subjects” (Keane 37). Schedoni’s reply suggests that by categorizing monks as picturesque, “Protestant” Vivaldi lacks an insider perspective of institutions such as the confessional. As Diego Saglia points out, Schedoni is a figure who returns the gaze and resists othering when “(English) subject and (Italian) object confront each other” (15):

An habitual gloom and severity prevailed over the deep lines of his countenance; and his eyes were so piercing that they seemed to penetrate, at a single glance, into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts; few persons could support their scrutiny, or even endure to meet them twice. (35)

Religious habit cloaks Schedoni’s true, civilian character, which Vivaldi threatens to
expose in another confrontation: “I know and will proclaim you to the world. I will strip you of your holy hypocrisy in which you shroud yourself; announce to all your society the despicable artifices you have employed, and the misery you have occasioned. Your character shall be announced aloud” (104). Even though Schedoni’s murder is a part of his civilian past, his present motives are based on ecclesiastical ambitions. At the critical moment when he is about to kill Ellena, Schedoni asks himself: “Have I already forgotten the church of Spirito Santo?” (234) However, as the title of the novel indicates, being Italian is equated not with Schedoni’s institutional affiliation to the Dominican Order or the Catholic Church, but with the confessional of Black Penitents at Santa Maria del Pianto. Other Catholic institutions such as convents can represent civilization and a connection to the rest of the world:

He now passed through some of the wildest tracts of the Apennine, among scenes, which seemed abandoned by civilized society to the banditti who haunted their recesses. Yet even here amidst wilds that were nearly inaccessible, convents, with each its small dependent hamlet, were scattered, and, shrouded from the world by woods and mountains, enjoyed unsuspectedly many of its luxuries, and displayed, unnoticed, some of its elegance. Vivaldi, who had visited several of these in search of Ellena, had been surprized at the refined courtesy and hospitality, with which he was received. (113)

Ellena takes refuge in Our Lady of Pity, a harmonious religious “society …a convent does not often shroud” (299). This rare instance of a sympathetically portrayed convent in Radcliffe’s fiction is made possible by its exceptional Protestant-like abbess:
This lady was a shining example to governesses of religious houses, and a striking instance of the influence, which a virtuous mind may acquire over others, as well as of the extensive good that it may thus diffuse. …Her religion was neither gloomy, nor bigotted; it was the sentiment of a grateful heart offering itself up to a Deity, who delights in the happiness of his creatures; and she conformed to the customs of the Roman church, without supposing a faith in all of them to be necessary to salvation. This opinion, however, she was obliged to conceal, lest her very virtue should draw upon her the punishment of a crime, from some fierce ecclesiastics, who contradicted in their practice the very essential principles, which the christianity they professed would have taught them. (300)

Both the abbess and Schedoni are “observers of outward forms” (227), but Schedoni lacks the foundation of (Protestant) faith that the abbess is “obliged to conceal.” As he strives to convince the Marchesa that Ellena needs to be killed, he adapts the teaching of the Catholic Church to his purposes. On the other hand, Englishness in the novel is based on moral self-scrutiny and self-reliance. Unlike Ellena, whose inner conflict is represented as a struggle between individual desire and social rules, Schedoni’s ambivalence stems from conflicting roles (priesthood vs. fatherhood) and inadequate rules:

He knew not by what doctrine to explain the inconsistencies, the contradictions, he experienced, and perhaps, it was not one of the least that in these moments of direful and conflicting passions, his reason could still look down upon their operations and lead him to a cool, though brief examination of his own nature.
Schedoni’s dependence on doctrines rather than an individual conscience makes him more Italian than Ellena, or the Protestant abbess. The Catholic Church is instrumental not only in the concealment, but also in the exposure of Schedoni’s “holy hypocrisy” through the confessional. It is not the Catholic Church as such, then, but an excessive dependence on an institutional framework that represents the condition of being Italian.

Travel writers to the Continent during the revolutionary years assessed the relative merit of nations according to the state of their institutions. For Mary Wollstonecraft, national character is a product of specific institutions, such as the feudal system, rather than vice versa. Radcliffe’s portrait of Schedoni is reminiscent of Wollstonecraft’s concept of national character when it suggests that Schedoni, an emblematic Italian, is a product of the Catholic Church, but the figures of the just inquisitor and the Protestant Abbess suggest that in the long run institutions as well as nations are shaped by individuals. These exceptions imply that nations as well as institutions are built on the characters of their constituents, which supports the conservative argument that the French Revolution failed because of the weaknesses of the French while the Glorious Revolution succeeded in England thanks to the virtues of the English. The guide’s reply to the patronizing Englishman in the frame of the novel implies an argument opposite to Wollstonecraft’s. National character, in its extreme forms, produces institutional practices such as providing asylum for murderers. Radcliffe represents national character in *The Italian* as a spectrum ranging from typically more English individualism to typically more Italian dependence on “outward forms.”
Nevertheless, \textit{The Italian} appears more preoccupied with the consolidation of
Englishness than with the othering of Italianness, although undesirable institutional
practices are marked as foreign.

Whereas Williams celebrates the French Revolution as a victory for the du
Fosses’ bridging of social class, Radcliffe reveals that Ellena is in fact of noble birth and
therefore eligible to marry Vivaldi, reinforcing the importance of class as a marker of
identity. Women travel writers’ identified with foreigners on the basis of the political
allegiances created by the French Revolution, which complicates both class and national
affiliations. Class can therefore function as grounds for a change of nationality, as in the
case of the du Fosses who are exiled for crossing class divides. Radcliffe both questions
the tyranny of the past (represented by the conspiracy between the church/ Schedoni and
the aristocracy/Marchesa di Vivaldi) and reinforces the ancien regime of aristocratic rule
by making Ellena conform to Marchese di Vivaldi’s requirement of noble birth for his
son’s bride. Imaginatively eliminating the possibility of revolution in her Italian setting,
Radcliffe’s happy ending requires that once Ellena Rosalba demonstrates the individual
virtues of a bourgeois English subject, she still needs prove her aristocratic birth in order
to be accepted by Vivaldi’s father. The ending of \textit{The Italian} reflects contradictory
politics of Radcliffean Gothic – it vacillates between the conservatism of Edmund Burke
and the radicalism of Mary Wollstonecraft, for while her characters may rebel against
feudal institutions, they are also defined by them. As a result, Radcliffe’s Italy is not
simply an instance of “othering;” it serves as a venue for reconciling the vestiges of
feudal institutions with bourgeois Protestant values and thereby mirrors the complicated
position of England in the wake of the French Revolution.

The task of national consolidation is apparent in Radcliffe’s modified use of landscape description in the novel. Although landscape or place plays a smaller role in differentiating home from abroad than in Udolfo, the characters’ degrees of nationality in The Italian are shaded according to the way they relate to home, or to the environs of Naples. As an indicator of his extraordinary national status, Schedoni, who appears to be the most Italian character, is least patriotic. In fact, Schedoni is a seasoned, cosmopolitan traveler whose movements encompass Italy and his scope of operation reaches as far as a “lone dwelling on the beach, and concealed from travellers” located far “on the shore of the Adriatic, in the province of Apulia, not far from Manfredonia” (175). Schedoni does not share Ellena’s gush of feelings upon her return to Naples: “…how affecting, how overwhelming… Every object seemed to speak of her home, of Vivaldi, and of happiness that has passed!” Schedoni cannot comprehend her emotions, because “having never in any degree experienced them, he really understood nothing”(289). Ellena and Vivaldi, on the other hand, are less provincial than the servant Paulo, who is characterized as “a true Neapolitan, shrewd, inquisitive, insinuating, adroit; possessing much of the spirit of intrigue … which displayed itself not so much in words, as…in the exquisite adaptation of his gesture to his idea” (70). A conversation among the Neapolitans at the view of the lake of Celano shows a marked difference in landscape appreciation:

Ah, Signor!, ‘what a prospect is here! It reminds me of home; it is almost as pleasant as the bay of Naples! I should never love it like that though, if it were a hundred times finer.’
‘See,’ said Vivaldi, ‘where Monte-Corno stands like a ruffian, huge, scared, threatening, and horrid! – and in the south, where the sullen mountain of San Nicolo shoots up, barren and rocky! ….

‘Mark too,’ said Ellena, ‘how sweetly the banks and undulating plains repose at the feet of the mountains; what an image of beauty and elegance they oppose to the awful grandeur that overlooks and guards them!….’

‘Ay, Signora!’ exclaimed Paulo, ‘and have the goodness to observe how like are the fishing boats, that sail towards the hamlet below, to those one sees upon the bay of Naples. They are worth all the rest of the prospect, except indeed this fine sheet of water, which is almost as good as the bay, and that mountain, with its sharp head, which is almost as good as Vesuvius – if it would throw out fire!’

While the hero and the heroine conventionally notice the sublime and the beautiful aspects of the view, the servant evaluates the landscape by comparison to home. Paulo also assesses the landscape according to its function; even the mountain is judged according to its failure to perform. Paulo’s manner of appreciating the landscape makes Vivaldi smile at “this stroke of nationality,” which suggests that the hero and the heroine are of a middling class, poised someplace between Paulo’s provincialism and Schedoni’s cosmopolitanism. Characterized by their ability to find objective value in any landscape, Ellena and Vivaldi, unlike Schedoni or Paulo, possess the capacity to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of home as well as abroad while also culturally differentiating between the two categories.11
When Henry Tilney upbraids Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* for her inability to distinguish between reality and fiction, he also formulates the distinction as a boundary between home and abroad:

Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your observation of what is passing around you – Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing; where every man is surrounded by a neighborhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay every thing open? (159)

Without the experience of travel, Catherine Morland applies the characteristics of the Radcliffean world to England. Whereas Catherine’s original parallel between home and abroad was based on landscape aesthetics, or natural similarities, Henry, who is presumably more travel savvy, reinforces the importance of cultural differences. He represents England as a sort of a panopticon, a form of mastery of the human element in which mutual scrutiny rather than self-regulation replaces the function of the confessional. The fact that Radcliffe’s *The Italian* conveys a similar message as Austen’s parody of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* suggests that like her contemporary travel writers, Radcliffe grafted middle class values onto national character in the wake of the French Revolution and came to recognize the importance of differentiating between home and abroad.

If the picturesque comes to function as “an imaginative form of social control,” as
suggested by Liu and Keane, the picturesque estate of the united elites at the conclusion of *The Italian* represents the new social order (Keane 37). Ellena di Rosalba and Vincentio Vivaldi set up house in the midst of an English garden overlooking Naples, a cultural hybrid that reflects a heightened consciousness of English national culture. Whereas in Radcliffe’s *Udolpho* and *A Journey*, landscape features serve to distinguish home from abroad, in *The Italian*, home can be recreated even in the Neapolitan residence of its quasi-English protagonists: “The style of the gardens, where lawns and groves, and woods varied the undulating surface, was that of England, and of the present day, rather than of Italy…” (412) On the other hand, Radcliffe’s superimposition of an English garden unto an Italian landscape indicates that it is impossible to insulate Englishness from European culture. Elizabeth Manwarring reminds us “that Italian landscape [was] the inspiration of English gardening. … the English first copied Italian scenes, with much use of temples, ruins, and statues, but later arrived at more correct imitation of natural scenes, in the spirit of the painters” (162). The English garden was then exported to the Continent, and “Italy was late in taking over the taste, but partly adopted it in the last decade of the [eighteenth] century” (166).

References to gardens in travel writing had national as well as political resonance, suggesting, as a footnote to *The Italian* points out, “a ‘liberal’ refinement of nature, in contrast to the regimented design of Continental Europe, connoting autocracy” (423). Passing through the Netherlands, Ann Radcliffe denounces Dutch gardens as “curiosities [rather] than luxuries,” both in the aesthetic sense – due to the “ill taste of their ornaments”—and the utilitarian sense—for their fruit has “no fragrance …and …
scarcely any flavour” (18). The English garden is characterized by a synthesis of nature and culture so unique that it is difficult to imitate on the Continent. Mary Wollstonecraft dismisses an English garden she finds in the north of Europe:

> From the fortress I returned to my lodging, and quickly was taken out of town to be shewn a pretty villa, and english garden. To a norwegian both might have been objects of curiosity, and of use, by exciting to the comparison which leads to improvement. / But whilst I gazed, I was employed in restoring the place to nature, or taste, by giving it the character of the surrounding scene. Serpentine walks, and flowering shrubs, looked trifling in the grand recess of the rocks, shaded by towering pines.(306)

As the quotation indicates, Wollstonecraft believes that “improvement,” or progress, will eventually bring Norway closer to England and erase national boundaries. At the same time, she sees that an English garden, which also represents English civilization, cannot be simply superimposed on a foreign landscape. Unlike Wollstonecraft, who posits a future erasure of national boundaries, Radcliffe locates her Italy in the past, opposing Italy to both England and “the present day” in her description of Ellena’s and Vivaldi’s garden. On the other hand, the possibility of cultivating an English garden in Italy points to the capacity of individuals to transform Italian culture and landscape according to the English model.

*The Italian* was published in 1797, in the wake of Napoleon’s invasion of Italy, which is sometimes considered the end of the Grand Tour (Hornsby 25). In another curious instance of superimposition, the painter William Marlow exhibited a painting
called *Capriccio of St. Paul’s Cathedral on the Grand Canal* (Fig. 3). The painting is dated around 1795, the same year when Radcliffe published her travelogue. M.H.J. Liversidge points out that Canaletto’s capriccios, which influenced Marlow’s painting, “resemble eighteenth-century English landscaped gardens in which nature, artifice, and architecture invoke pleasurable connotations in scenes informed by referential meaning,”(27) which further suggests that Marlow’s capriccio is ideologically analogous to Radcliffe’s Anglo-Italian garden in *The Italian*. The capriccio genre, made popular by Canaletto, was unusual in the painter’s ouvre: “Marlow’s apparently inexplicable venture into capriccio painting might be explained, however, if it is considered in the context of the events which occurred on the Continent in 1797. On 16 May in that year the French entered Venice and proclaimed the end of the Republic…”(Liversidge and Farrington 146).¹⁹ The superimposition of London and Venice symbolically links the destinies of the expanding British Empire and the declining Venetian one, eliciting sympathy for the fate of Italy. At the same time, like Radcliffe’s garden, the image appears incongruous, suggesting the irreconcilability of English and Italian cultures. The Napoleonic wars and the Congress of Vienna that concluded them sacrificed national self-determination to the monarchic principle, and the sympathies of English and French artists and intellectuals focused on the liberation of oppressed nations. At the conclusion of *The Italian*, it is the provincial Paulo who recapitulates and interprets the story as a struggle of individual liberty against institutional oppression, emphasizing the common interest of the elite and the folk:

‘Yet here we are all *abroad* once more! *All* at liberty! And may run, if we will,
straight forward, from one end of the earth to the other, and back again without being stopped! May fly in the sea, or swim in the sky, or tumble over head and heels into the moon! For remember, my good friends, we have no lead on our consciences to keep us down!’ (415)

Paulo’s use of “abroad” translates liberty into spatial terms, realizing the expansive tendencies of nationalist ideology in an imaginary appropriation of the universe. Although the resolution of Radcliffe’s plot supresses the revolutionary sublime, it returns in the collective eruption of the last lines, when a “chorus” of Italian voices shouts “O! giorno felice!”(415). Radcliffe rarely acknowledges the existence of foreign languages in her fiction, and thus the repetition of the Italian words in the last pages of the novel reflects her increased awareness of the Continent.

In response to Napoleon’s military and cultural conquest of Europe, the next generation of writers pays increased attention to the often conflicting voices of European nations. Germaine de Staël’s Corinne (1807) constitutes a significant link between the conformity of Ann Radcliffe’s heroines and the rebellion of Lord Byron’s heroes, as well as between their respective representations of Britain and the Continent. As Joanne Wilkes points out, Madame de Staël and Lord Byron shared “what was for the period an unusual mixture of nationalism and cosmopolitanism,” which is particularly evident in their treatments of Italy (16). Germaine de Staël was not only a novelist, but also an important theorist of national character, who formulated how the interplay of natural and institutional environments shaped the nations of Northern and Southern of Europe in The Influence of Literature Upon Society (1800) and Germany (1810; 1813).
Figure 3: William Marlow, *Capriccio of St Paul’s Cathedral on the Grand Canal* (c. 1797). Tate Gallery, London.
De Staël’s work provides an example of a flattering but also critical representation of British national character from the perspective of a foreign writer. Although a fuller discussion of de Staël’s work is beyond the scope of this project, a brief example from *Corinne* indicates how the middle-class domestic ideal of femininity had become so thoroughly nationalized as to constitute stereotypical Englishness by the turn of the century. Significantly, the time of action in *Corinne* roughly coincides with the publication of Radcliffe’s *Udolpho*. De Staël’s heroine is an Anglo-Italian woman who rebels against the stifling constraints of English domesticity. Corinne leads an independent life of an artist in Italy until she meets and falls in love with the Scottish Lord Nevil. Attracted by Corinne but unable to imagine her in the role of an English wife, Oswald Nevil eventually abandons her for her half-sister Lucile Edgermond, a virtuous, domesticated Englishwoman who resembles Radcliffe’s heroines. Corinne and Oswald strive to resolve their cultural differences, which revolve around the respective roles of men and women. In a letter exchange, Corinne counters Oswald’s charge that “infidelity itself is more moral in England than marriage in Italy”(95), arguing that Italians can serve as a moral standard for both the English and the French: “It is their very sincerity which is the source of the scandal you complain of … Believe me, the virtuous reserve of Englishwomen and the graceful artfulness of French women often serve to conceal half of what is going on in their hearts”(92, 99). Corinne also echoes the message of Radcliffe’s *The Italian* in acknowledging that “governments make the character of nations”(99) and that “the peoples of the South are more easily moulded by their
institutions than are the peoples in the North”(100). Both Corinne and Nevil are aristocrats by birth and the divide between them is based on cultural values rather than class positions, which indicates that to a foreign observer such as Madame de Staël, middle-class ideology had become an integral part of British identity. However, Corinne’s paradoxical assertion that Italian convents are “full of life” in comparison to English domestic circles goes beyond Radcliffe’s relativistic treatment of Catholicism and Protestantism as well as English and Italian national characters in *The Italian* (Corinne 248). De Staël’s novel reevaluates the distinctions between English and Italian national characters that frame *The Italian* and voices the tension between environmentally and culturally based concepts of national difference which is only implied in the main narrative of Radcliffe’s novel. The reason why Corinne chooses Italy over England is individual preference rather than participation in a collective quest for identity: “You do not find here the blasé imagination, the discouraging mentality, or the tyrannical mediocrity which elsewhere are able to torment or stifle natural genius so effectively” (102). Corinne’s assertion of individual autonomy, support for oppressed nations, rejection of middle-class cant, and emphasis on exile as a personal rather than a political choice anticipates Lord Byron’s œuvre, which radically reimagines the boundaries between Britain and the Continent.
NOTES

1 Katherine Turner cites English travel writers who observed that the Revolution made French men more masculine, bring the French national character closer to that of the English (187).

2 In *A Historical and Moral View on the Origins of the French Revolution* (1794), Wollstonecraft ascribes the excesses of the French Revolution to the French national character: “These sudden transitions from one extreme to another, without leaving any settled conviction behind, to confirm or eradicate the corroding distrust, could not be seen in such a strong light any where as at Paris, because there a variety of causes have so effeminated reason, that the french may be considered as a nation of women…” (121).

3 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, vol. II, pp. 22-23: “In Europe there is a kind of balance between the southern and northern nations. The first have every convenience of life, and few of its wants: the last have many wants, and few conveniences. To one, nature has given much, and demands but little; to the others, she has given little, and demands a great deal. The equilibrium is maintained by the laziness of the southern nations, and by the industry and activity which she has given to those in the north. The latter are obliged to undergo excessive labour, without which they would want everything, and degenerate into barbarians. This has naturalized slavery to the people of the south: as they can easily dispense with riches, they can more easily dispense with liberty. But the people of the north have need of liberty, which alone can procure them the means of satisfying all those wants which they have received from nature. The people of the north, then, are in a forced state, if they are not either free or barbarians. Almost all the people of the south are in a state of violence, if they are not slaves” (qtd. Chard 41).

4 Dorothy McMillan cites examples of reviewers who were also “fooled by [Radcliffe’s] second-hand pictorialism,” and attributed her landscape descriptions to personal travel experience (53).

5 See Ronald Paulson’s discussion of Wollstonecraft’s reply to Burke in *Representations of Revolution*, pp. 86-89.

6 Gerald Newman points out that the capitals of France and England were both considered sources of corruption in the middle-class “critique of not only Paris as the principal source of foreign pollution but London itself, the domestic capital, as the beachhead and entrepôt of alien cultural influence and the associated moral disease” (69).
7 St. Aubert’s domestic ideals, resemble those of William Cowper, the leading poet promoting the middle-class ideal of domesticity: “The decline of paternalism combined with the growth of a cash economy was at the root of most evils for Cowper. Landed estates were turning into landscapes to be sold, and ‘improved’ to the detriment of landlord and tenant. The greed of the opulent, displayed in London and fashionable watering places, was contaminating all classes.” (Hall and Davidoff 165)

8 Chloe Chard suggests that the story of Hannibal’s crossing was linked with “the inclination to traverse behavioural limits and geographical boundaries” in accounts of travel writers: “Hannibal is often introduced to travel writings, from the beginning of the Grand Tour onwards, as a figure whose story anticipates the dangers that the contemporary traveller may encounter: having crossed the Alps, according to the established narrative, the Carthaginian fails to march on Rome, despite a series of victories, and he and his army fall victim to the effeminating pleasures of the warm South. A number of eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century writings remind the reader of the narrative of behavioural transgression that is to follow the traversal of the Alps by assigning a prominent place to the moment when the general revives the spirit of his troops by pausing on a piece of high ground to point out to them ‘the rich and beautiful plains of Italy’ below” (178).

9 Langdon’s description of the painting also captures the properties of Radcliffe’s Tuscan scenery: “Here the earth pours forth an easy livelihood for its inhabitants, who harness and gather its riches; an aqueduct brings water to the mill; fishermen draw in their nets; huntsmen pause to take refreshment. The landscape implies travel: herdsmen wander through the pastures; loaded pack mules cross the bridge in the distance; a small waterfall, a distant bridge, plot out a journey for the eye from place to plane. The soldiers entering on the left perhaps suggest the invasion of the pastoral world by the world of the court… The infinite beauties of this picture draw the eye to a distant space. This picture is in a sense a catalogue of Italy’s beauties…[and] recalls many seventeenth-century descriptions of landscape, which create a sense of universality by listing, or enumerating, those objects which together make up the perfect landscape” (159).

10 In Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825, Nicola Watson discusses the association between sentimental fiction and radical politics, and argues that in response to developments in France, the epistolary form, which involved multiple perspectives, was replaced, or “disciplined” by omniscient narration.

11 Radcliffe’s biographer Clara Frances McIntyre traces the source of Radcliffe’s descriptions of Brenta and Venice in Udolpho to Piozzi’s Journey. Given that The Italian adopts a more cultural concept of national difference, it is significant that Radcliffe adopts this anecdote.

12 Representative of the variety of critical perspectives on Radcliffe’s politics, David
Durant, in an article titled “Radcliffe’s Conservative Gothic,” argues that her popularity lies in “the general conformity of her myth to a frightened, reactionary impulse” (530). On the other end of the spectrum, Robert Miles uses Foucault and Bakhtin to read Radcliffe against “the grain of Radcliffe’s apparent intentions” (156) and argue that “during this period of reactionary hysteria,” Radcliffe’s adherence to sensibility and even her vacillation “took real courage” (164).

13 In “Looking at the Other: Cultural Difference and the Traveller’s Gaze in The Italian,” Diego Saglia argues that the novel combines images of landscape and culture “to create a cumulative image of difference” (13). However, there is also a marked shift from the attention to landscape to a cultural focus in The Italian.

14 As Marilyn Butler puts it, “If it is always true that we understand our world less as discrete signs than as narrative, the generation of 1789 put the truism to particularly knowledgeable use. Partisans of one side accused the other side of plots, but at a more fundamental level the French Revolution was indeed plotted before it happened. Through the medium of plot it could be discussed, interpreted, received by contemporaries virtually at once, as manifestly and hugely significant” (“The French Revolution as Narrative” 348).

15 In “Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality: Ann Radcliffe’s The Italian,” Canon Schmidt reads Ellena as “an incarnation of Englishness” and claims that foreign villains including Schedoni function as “anti-types, exempla of otherness” (855). I would argue that this is much less the case in The Italian than in Udolpho, because the later novel is more preoccupied with Schedoni’s problematic personal and institutional affiliations than with the “formation…of that gendered national subject known as the “Englishwoman” (856).

16 In A Journey, Radcliffe offers a picturesque description of local monks that may have, as McIntyre suggests, shaped the portrait of Schedoni: “Here two Capuchins, belonging probably to the convent above, as they walked along the shore, beneath the dark cliffs of Boppart, wrapt in the long black drapery of their order, and their heads shrowded in cowls, that half concealed their faces, were interesting figures in a picture, always gloomily sublime” [my emphasis] (310).

17 In “‘Holy Hypocrisy’ and the Government of Belief: Religion and Nationalism in the Gothic,” Mark Canuel offers an interesting account of the role of monasticism, arguing that it plays a major role in the Gothic novel “not because [it] could be separated from British customs…, but because it represented a form of government in Britain itself” (508). Canuel sees monasticism as representative of “a confessional society – one that continually demanded a consensus among its members,” which was also characteristic of the British establishment before the Test and Corporation Acts and Catholic Emancipation.
Diego Saglia distinguishes between the “inherently foreign (the other, The Italian, Schedoni) and apparently foreign (the familiar disguised as alien, the hero/ine couple)” characters in the novel, suggesting that the latter are endowed with a traveler’s perspective on Italy. While this useful distinction applies to Ellena and Vivaldi, this division does not take into account the distinction between Schedoni’s cosmopolitanism and Paulo’s local patriotism.

In her recent study of British travel writing, Katherine Turner argues that in the 1790s, “the motif of revision is increasingly employed by [not only travel] writers, allowing them to describe not only changes in authorial opinion, but also more profound reconstitutions of personal and national identity” (182). Turner suggests that these developments in travel writing may have served as “an influential paradigm” for Wordsworth’s revisions of the self in *The Prelude*. Through this process, she argues, “a Romantic hierarchy of genres is being firmly established, which displaces the travelogue from the heart of eighteenth-century literary culture” (224).

See Joane Wilkes, particularly Chapter 3, “Citizens of the World,” pp.96-156, for a detailed comparison of de Staël’s and Byron’s “mobile” protagonists and continental settings.
In the last unfinished “English” cantos of *Don Juan*, Byron describes a ruined mansion that could have furnished the setting for one of Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic novels:

The mansion’s self was vast and venerable
With more of the monastic than has been
Elsewhere preserved. The cloisters still were stable,
The cells too and refectory, I ween. …
The rest had been reformed, replaced, or sunk,
And spoke more of the baron than the monk. (*DJ*, XIII: 66)

The ruin of the mansion mirrors the dissolution of its owner’s self, whether he be a baron or a monk, Gothic villain or a Byronic hero. The resemblance to Radcliffe’s Gothic is not accidental, and the channels of influence are not as direct or merely literary as it may seem, for allegedly Newstead Abbey, the ancestral residence of the Byrons, inspired the villain and the setting of *The Romance of the Forest*.¹ In Byron’s narratives of the
Continent, strongly autobiographic characters are fashioned as Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic villains, compelled by secret guilt to wander aimlessly in Europe’s remotest peripheries or brood in their ruined ancestral abodes. As a young aristocrat with the privilege of classical education, Byron was in a more powerful position to challenge the tradition of classical Grand Tour writing from within. While the women writers of the 1790s attempt subjective representation of continental places and peoples only sporadically and apologetically, Byron seamlessly integrates facts and impressions, eliminating the need to record classical minutiae and apologize for bias. As Caroline Franklin puts it, Byron was “an insider in the Establishment through birth and education, yet emotionally as well as geographically detached,” embodying both Augustan and Romantic attitudes to travel (57). Like Radcliffe’s novels, Byron’s major work was also set on the Continent, but the significance of the European settings is different for an exiled aristocrat of the Napoleonic era than for a reclusive middle-class woman writer. While readers tended to draw on Radcliffe’s fiction to fashion her biography, circulating rumors that she had gone mad after she stopped publishing, they read Byron’s narrative poems biographically, identifying the infamous Lord with his heroes.

As I argue in Chapter One, Radcliffe’s continental settings mirror the subjective observations and the preoccupation with the French Revolution in women’s travel writing, but they dispense with the appearance of specificity and authenticity. Radcliffe relies on strategies of representation such as the picturesque, which serves to consolidate collective identities. Byron’s innovative approach to the construction of place, on the other hand, is not merely subjective. In early lyrics and Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage,
Byron presents the setting as an aspect of self, authenticated by his first-hand experience, but in his later work he exploits or exposes such egocentric strategies of representation by introducing what I call eccentric—multiple or reciprocal—perspectives on a given place in the Oriental tales and Don Juan. As a result, I argue that the nation and the Continent are apposed rather than opposed in Byron’s fictional travel narratives. Jerome Christensen uses the term “apposition” to describe Byron’s politics, complicating the word’s OED definition as “the placing of things [substantives] in close superficial contact; the putting of distinct things side by side in close proximity” by the notion of contamination, “a kind of differential linkage between things that likens them together without producing a new unity or fabricating a synthetic identity” (219). According to Christensen, “[t]o appose is to move off the place where one ‘is’ … by the application of a parallel that touches the dominant” (219). By using the term in a more geopolitical sense, I suggest how Byron reimagines the position of Britain in relation to the Continent. By adapting the oppositional representation of home and abroad that structures eighteenth-century travel writing for the purposes of self-representation, Byron’s continental settings create an illusion of proximity to and possession of the foreign that influenced both Victorian tourism and European nationalism.

Lord Byron’s representations of the nation and the Continent draw on his atypical status as an aristocrat. George Gordon grew up with his Scottish mother in relatively humble circumstances in Aberdeen, and it was only at the age of ten, after the death of his uncle, that he became Lord Byron. Unable to come to terms with the newly acquired prestige and the promise of future wealth, Byron accumulated a debt during his
Cambridge years and was eventually forced to sell Newstead, becoming a nineteenth-century British anomaly, a landless Lord, whose death in exile served the cause of another nation. This Chapter does not take a biographical approach and attempts to circumvent the problematic relationship among the author, narrator and character in Byron’s work by focusing on the construction of place. On the other hand, biographical context is essential, because the representations of continental settings reflect Byron’s attachment to his ancestral estate, his exile, and his affiliation with the Greek cause, even as the poet’s lyrical egocentrism gives way to increasingly self-conscious eccentricity.\(^2\)

The trope of the ruin exemplifies Byron’s strategy of constructing his settings by adapting conventional tropes of nationalism for the purposes of self-representation. He uses the ruin, which served the Augustans as a metaphor for the universal human predicament and was exploited by Romantics as a collective sign of the nation, to express his shifting position on and in European spaces. In *England’s Ruins*, Anne Janowitz argues that the popularity of ruin poetry coincided with the rise of Britain, for the ruin conveniently symbolized the blending of “country” as rural terrain and “country” as nation (4). The ruins, Janowitz contends, served as a convenient setting for what she calls the “immortality-of-poetry topos” (6). In eighteenth-century topographical poetry, the ruin threatens to diminish the significance of temporal difference between places—the time lag perceived by British travelers to the classical ruins and the still feudal parts of Europe—for it suggests that the past will recur, in Britain and elsewhere. As Janowitz points out, by the late eighteenth century, the ruin becomes naturalized as a sign of the nation’s permanence. Unlike Wordsworth, for whom Tintern Abbey and the Lake District
stand for the wholeness of England, Byron presents ruins, whether of Newstead, Italy, or Greece as shifting vantage points for being European as well as being English.

Newstead and Scotland provide the focal points for Byron’s early lyrics, which appropriate the trope of the ruin and participate in the form of Romantic nationalism that Katie Trumpener describes as bardic. Trumpener contends that the early nineteenth-century conservative (Romantic) nationalism resorts to “a prerevolutionary antiquarian rhetoric” to obscure “the parallel between nationalist and class struggles” that became evident in the 1790s (14). Byron’s lyrics on Newstead also hark back to an eighteenth-century version of patriotism connected with the land, espoused by landowners who viewed the country as “a glorified private estate owned by themselves and their friends” (Newman 53). In “On Leaving Newstead Abbey,” Byron celebrates the “hall of [his] fathers, …gone to decay,” a crumbling symbol of his line’s past glory, extolling the heroics of his ancestors and promising to follow in their footsteps: “Shades of heroes, farewell! Your descendant departing/From the seat of his ancestors, bids you, adieu! Abroad or at home, your remembrance imparting/ New courage, he’ll think upon glory and you” (l. 21-24). As Caroline Franklin reminds us, the catalogue glosses over rumors and records of his ancestors’ infamy, madness, and murder (19). Byron’s mystification of his family history is analogous to the strategy of nineteenth-century cultural nationalism that invents a glorious past, except that in Byron’s case the destiny is personal rather than collective: “Far distant he goes, with the same emulation, /The fame of his fathers he ne’er can forget. / That fame, and that memory, still will he cherish, /He vows, that he ne’er will disgrace your renown; /Like you will he live, or like you will he perish; /When
decay’d, may he mingle his dust with your own” [my emphasis](l. 27-32). Although the closing of the poem emphasizes abstract “fame” or “renown,” in the end the narrator hopes only for equality in death and unity in dust. This obsession with internment on the ancestral estate turns into a preoccupation with the atemporal ancestral name in the aptly named “A Fragment” written in the same year:

When, to their airy hall, my fathers’ voice,
Shall call my spirit…
Oh! may my shade behold no sculptur’d urns,
To mark the spot, where earth to earth returns:
No lengthen’d scroll, no praise encumber’d stone;
My epitaph shall be, my name alone:
...That, only that, shall single out the spot,
By that remember’d, or with that forgot. (1-12)

Like fame in the previous poem, the highlighted and repeated “that” is an empty signifier, an urn not yet filled with deeds, standing for the unspoken name “Byron.” In her recent biography of Byron, Caroline Franklin points out that like the male authors of the Gothic novel, Beckford and Walpole, Byron was “inspired by his own picturesque mansion,” but he did not build it, he inherited it (6). And by the time Byron inherited Newstead, it had almost been ruined by his great uncle, who ravaged the estate, as some biographers suggest, out of spite for the obscure Scottish heir. Unlike “Gordon,” the name “Byron,” inherited without strong childhood associations, becomes a place of its own, a space open for self-fashioned identities.
The memory of the Gordons, Byron’s maternal ancestors, infused the poet’s early lyrics with the rhetoric, if not the politics, of Scottish nationalism. Andrew Noble places Byron in a group of “Scottish writers [who] seem to be subconsciously driven into a displaced nationalism, which asserts its inauthenticity by degenerating into a kind of costume melodrama”[my emphasis] (39) (see Fig.4). After the death of his uncle, young Byron visited Newstead Abbey and planted an oak on the estate, but in the poetic record of his visit titled “On Leaving Newstead Abbey,” the “hemlock and thistle/ Have choak’d up the rose” (l. 3-4). These botanical references have nationalistic connotations.

In an early Ossianic lyric, “Lachin Y Gair,” Byron celebrates the Scottish part of his heritage, the martial feats of his maternal ancestors and the Scottish landscape that directly shaped his childhood. In the first line of the poem, the narrator conventionally prefers the rugged Caledonian hills to “the tame and domestic” beauties of the English “gay landscapes! [and]… gardens of roses” (l.1). Unlike Newstead, the Highlands are connected with personal history, so vague childhood memories blend with invented traditions conventionalized as Wordsworthian tropes and converted into a naïve Romanticism of the Highlands: “Ah! there my young footsteps, in infancy, wander’d, / My cap was the bonnet, my cloak was the plaid;/ On chieftains, long perish’d, my memory ponder’d;/ As daily I strode through the pine-cover’d glade…” (l. 9-12). This early phase of “displaced” Romantic nationalism was cut short by critical rejection and continental travel, but both Newstead and the Highlands resonate in Byron’s later poetry as modes of relating to and representing continental places and nations.4

After his aristocratic pretensions in Hours of Idleness were ridiculed by an
anonymous critic of the Edinburgh Review, Byron renounced his Scottish affiliations and determined to continue the English poetic tradition in the savage and satirical English Bards and Scottish Reviewers. Byron’s poetical exile can be understood in terms of Katie Trumpener’s distinction between the bards of the Celtic fringe and English poets:

For nationalist antiquaries, the bard is the mouthpiece of a whole society, articulating its values, chronicling its history, and mourning the inconsolable tragedy of its collapse. English poets, in contrast, imagine the bard (and the minstrel after him) as an inspired, isolated, and peripatetic figure.

Byron’s uneasy affiliation with English nationalism relegates him to a marginal position in the Romantic canon that is incongruous with his contemporary popularity. In the eyes of William Hazlitt, Byron was, as one critic puts it, “perpetually shoring up his ruined poetic worlds with other men’s fragments” (Noble 28). For Hazlitt, the ruin becomes an emblem for the topical and immanent quality of Byron’s narrative poetry and his exotic settings fall short of Wordsworth’s microscopic domestic focus: “The author of the Lyrical Ballads described the lichen on the rock, the withered fern, with some peculiar feeling that he has about them: the author of Childe Harold describes the stately cypress, or the fallen column, with the feeling that every schoolboy has about them” (qtd. Noble 27). Diego Saglia succinctly compares Wordworth’s and Byron’s constructions of place, suggesting that both poets are interested in representing “ec-centric places at the margins of the metropolis,” and their settings are typically recreated real locales and imagined spaces (13). Unlike Wordsworth, however, Byron finds a source of authenticity in narratives of European travel, which ultimately leads to his affiliation with foreign
Figure 4: A nineteenth-century print popularizing Byron’s childhood in the Highlands. Nottingham Library.
nationalist movements.

Under the influence of his aristocratic and Scottish background, Byron’s concept of place and space vacillates between eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism, the ideal of the Grand Tour, and Romantic nationalism, which validates the margins in order to empower the center of the nation. In this Chapter, I modify the epithet “eccentric,” often used by Byron’s contemporaries as well as current critics to label the Lord’s aberrant sexual conduct or idiosyncratic political attitudes. My argument adapts the concept of eccentricity to describe the Byronic way of relating to a place from a position that is perpetually off center and yet rooted in an awareness of local attachments.6 “Local attachment” is a concept that predates nationalism, which was opposed to cosmopolitanism and considered more of an encumbrance than a positive trait by eighteenth-century philosophers. The concepts of “ec-centricity” (I use this term in its literal sense to refer to Byron’s off-center perspective on the British Isles and Europe) and local attachment describe Byron’s conflicted affiliations with Britain and the Continent more aptly than the more conventional terms of cosmopolitanism and nationalism.

In Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, a poetic record of what Rosemary Bechler calls his “grander tour,” Byron puts the trope of the ruin in the service of more cosmopolitan sentiments, particularly in the ruminations on the ruins of Rome in Canto IV.7 Byron wrote Canto IV after his first visit to Rome, and, as he reports in his letter, he made his stay brief in order to preserve the first impressions. His travel companion John Cam
Hobhouse meticulously documented the poet’s stops at Italian ruins in footnotes that proliferated into a separate companion volume, *Historical Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold*. While Hobhouse’s volume functioned as a proto-guidebook, Byron’s narrative persona, now explicitly linking Childe Harold and the author, sketches a series of attitudes that had an enormous influence on Victorian tourists who followed Byron to “meditate amongst decay, and stand a ruin amidst ruins; there to track/ Fallen states and buried greatness” (Canto IV, 218-220). The most intriguing site of ruin in Italy, however, is not classical. In Venice, Byron finds a reflection of England’s empire and an inspiration for English literature, an “Ocean queen” (l. 151) betrayed by Albion, and “a fairy city of the heart… and Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare’s art” (l. 157-8). Like his English literary ancestors, Byron appropriates Venice and Italy to fulfill his literary ambitions, but in contrast with them, his image of the country stems from *personal* travel experience, a selection of images rather than allusions. Byron’s presentation of the self as “a ruin amidst ruins” transforms the popular trope of Romantic nationalism into a shifting term reflecting the (up)rooted mobility of an exile.

The scope of my analysis in this Chapter is of necessity limited due to the range and complexity of Byron’s engagement with continental Europe. Although I do not cover the whole continental territory of Byron’s opus, I strive to cover spots or moments that register a shift in the conception of European peripheries, with a particular focus on Eastern Europe and Britain. The narrative poems I discuss here represent a range of mimetic and synthetic modes of representing the Continent. While Byron’s continental settings are mimetic to the extent that they are anchored in the poet’s personal
experience, they also tend to highlight—to varying degrees—the syntheticity of their construction, or their situatedness. Canto II of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* is groundbreaking both in its alternative coverage of territory, which extends the Grand Tour, and its use of representative strategies. My analyses of passages on Albania and Greece in contrast to Byron’s anecdotal footnotes and Hobhouse’s *A Journey through Albania*, a more traditional travel account with an antiquarian focus, shows how Byron personalizes the representation of travel by combining familiar images with new impressions. Recent historicist criticism has made attempts to fill the gaps in our understanding of Byron’s politics and, often anachronistically, attributes various –isms to his poetic voice. In my discussion of Canto II of the Pilgrimage, I analyze how Byron exploits but also relativizes “othering” discourses used to distance foreign cultures in time and space, medievalism and Orientalism.

I continue with a close analysis of two Oriental tales, *The Giaour: A Fragment of a Turkish Tale* (1813) and *Lara* (1814). I argue that in *The Giaour* Byron fully exploits his travel experience, not for mimetic purposes, or in order to achieve a faithful representation of the East of Europe, but to highlight the inevitable syntheticity and situatedness of any cultural representation. I counter critics who have discussed the poem in terms of Edward Said’s monolithic concept of Orientalism, arguing instead that Byron participates in an emerging balkanist discourse and reflects the region’s multiple ethnic perspectives. In contrast to *The Giaour*, I show that *Lara* is a fully synthetic representation and relies on the traditional connotations of the East and West, reproducing them merely as abstract categories and blurring the boundaries between
them. The absence of footnotes anchored in travel experience leads to reviewers’
disappointment and Byron’s own dissatisfaction with the poem. Finally, I focus on the
Russian and “English” cantos of Don Juan—respectively synthetic and mimetic in terms
of their construction—to show how Byron parodies the representational strategies of
British (including his own) continental travel narratives to situate the British Isles as a
peripheral setting for a Gothic story, a place of local attachment depicted through the
eccentric perspective of an exile rather than the center of civilization it represented for
British imperialists.

After Byron’s death, Newstead was gradually converted into a museum while the
Greek landscape, with British support, was revived by revolutionary turmoil. Byron’s
poetry had created the imaginative space for both of these transformations, both in the
professions of local attachment in his lyrics and in the eccentric movements of his
narratives. The poetry fossilizes the English abbey and populates the Greek landscape in
the British imagination, shattering the petrified subject-object relationship between
Britain and the Continent, which Byron rewrites as appositional rather than oppositional.

Adapting the Travel Narrative, Adopting Greece in Canto II of Childe Harold’s
Pilgrimage

Cantos I and II of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage record Byron’s first continental
journey, which he took in the company of a Cambridge friend, John Cam Hobhouse in
1809-11. Byron came of age, was dissatisfied with England, and possibly feared the
consequences of a homosexual affair with John Edleston (Massie 27). His financial affairs were precarious, for although he had substantial landed property, it did not yield enough cash. Byron’s longer, anecdotal travel letters to his friends and his mother, were punctuated by short and often sharp business-like notes to his estate manager, John Hanson, in which he was either requesting remittances or refusing to sell Newstead. As the Napoleonic Wars did not allow for a traditional Grand Tour, Byron and Hobhouse embarked in Falmouth, passed through Spain and Portugal and then continued via Malta to Albania, Greece and Turkey. Conscious of the demand for exotic tales of adventure, Byron had plans to travel farther East, to Persia, or even to India, but a dire shortage of funds forced him to return to England.

The return home, however, is not recorded in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*. The poem is ironically prefaced with an epigraph by Fougeret de Monbron (1753) on the benefits of travel, which leads to greater appreciation of one’s native country:

> The universe is a kind of book from which you have read but one page when you have seen only your own country. I have leafed through a sufficient number to have found them equally bad. This study has not been unprofitable to me. I hated my country. All the peculiarities of the different people among whom I have lived have reconciled me to it. Even though I should have gained no other benefit from my voyages than this one, I should never regret the pains, and the fatigues.

(Mc Gann 19)

De Monbron’s ideal of travel is cosmopolitan, in accordance with the ideology of the Enlightenment that sent privileged young men on the Grand Tour after completing their
formal classical education. The universe, which consisted of Europe and the Middle East for most Grand Tour travelers, is described as a book, for in the eighteenth century book learning was the prerequisite for such enlightened travel. De Monbron’s purpose for travel is to establish a hierarchy in which one’s home country—whether France or England—ranks first, but not necessarily because it is more civilized. According to de Monbron’s limited cosmopolitanism, other peoples are distinguished merely by “peculiarities” that are “equally bad.” Romantic nationalism introduces the strategy of temporal distancing in describing other cultures. In Time and the Other, Johannes Fabian suggests that that temporal perception of the other was changing in the first third of the nineteenth century in a contest between romantic historicism, which insisted on the uniqueness of all cultures—a type of relativism; and natural history, which anticipated the evolutionary model—“a temporal grading of societies…according to postulated general laws” (19). Byron’s representation of the Albanians and the Greeks is ambivalent because it occurs at the cusp of the change described by Fabian.

In his original Preface to Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, Byron emphasizes that the poem “was written, for the most part, amidst the scenes which it attempts to describe,” except for “the parts relative to Spain and Portugal,” which, although composed in Greece, were nevertheless “composed from the author’s observations” [my emphasis] (19). In the Preface, Byron also needs to justify the “fictitious character [of Childe Harold, originally Burun] … introduced for the sake of giving some connexion to the piece” (19). In popularizing the strategy of representing travel experience through a subjective lens, Byron adopted and adapted the strategies of the women travel writers of
the 1790s. The “feminine” quality of the poem was registered by Byron’s contemporary critics. According to Hazlitt, “his Lordship’s Muse spurns the olden time, and affects all the supercilious airs of a modern fine lady and an upstart” (qtd. Butler 78). In other words, when fictionalizing his travel narratives, Byron chose to highlight contemporary Europe, or what a young British lady without classical education would observe. This strategy was, as Jerome Christensen and Phillip Martin point out in different ways, driven by the forces of the market, which had been saturated with descriptive travelogues, particularly on Italy and Greece, and its growing demand for sensational accounts of living cultures rather than landscapes or antiquities. In his letters and footnotes on Greece, Byron points out that classical education in Britain is ill timed, for one cannot appreciate its relevance before traveling to the sites. The “here-and-now” focus of the poem frustrated the expectations of Romantic medievalists as well as Romantic hellenists.

Byron’s labeling of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* as a “Romaunt” confused the reviewers accustomed to the ideological, if not formal, adherence to medievalism in the Gothic novel. Byron’s insecurity about the reception of the first two cantos was, as Peter Manning suggests, related to the “properties of genre” in the use of the romance tradition (173). The representations of the Continent in Gothic novels reacted to or elaborated on Edmund Burke’s conservative nostalgia for chivalry in *Reflections on the French Revolution*. On the other hand, the continental settings of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* appeared so contemporary that Canto I on Spain and Portugal can be considered a feat of journalistic war reporting (Bechler 50). According to Peter Manning, the reviewers
complained about the unheroic solipsism of Childe and contended that “there could be no such thing as a contemporary romaunt and Byron’s poem was a monstrous impossibility,” yet “no reviewer objected to the travelogue qualities” of the poem (172-3). Manning argues that because the ideology driving the romance revival (as in Edmund Burke or Sir Walter Scott) was nationalism, “Byron emptied out the romaunt, …depriving it of its sustaining ideology” (179). As Manning argues, the romaunt eventually became a handbook, serving not as the ideological paradigm for imagining Britain as a nation by locating the Continent in the past, but as a practical guide for travel and conduct on the Continent. The Gothic novel displaces its continental settings in vaguely medieval times to boost the image of the nation. Byron’s work, on the other hand, reconceptualizes the Continent’s peripheries to include Greece as well as the British Isles.

At the opening of the poem, Childe Harold severs his feudal tie or local attachment to England. In Canto I, Childe “[departs] from his father’s hall: …a vast and venerable pile” (l. 55-56), and abandons “his house, his home, his heritage, his lands” [my emphasis] (l. 91). The alliteration and repetition emphasize individual ownership and ancestry, not affiliation with a living family or community. In contrast to Harold, his page and yeoman both miss their kin, who “dwell near [his] hall, along the bordering lake” [my emphasis](l. 167). For those of lower birth, a single place is just an approximation of home, a set of coordinates for locating loved ones. In contrast to his page’s sense of kinship, Harold’s local attachment is limited to his ancestral estate. Again, the mansion resembles Newstead, Lord Byron’s only link to England. In his letters from the Levant,
Byron threatens that he would never return to England if the estate were sold.\textsuperscript{10} Newstead Abbey is no longer idealized as a monument to feudal glory; it is a “Monastic dome! condemn’d to uses vile!” (l. 59). Byron fashions Harold as a figure of declining English aristocracy, pointing to the irrelevance of the ideal of chivalry as well as the medievalist distancing of the Continent in the Gothic novel.

As the contemporary reviewers observed, \textit{Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage} was more palatable as a travelogue than a romaunt, and their responses also suggest that it attracted attention by exploiting the generic tension between traditional and contemporary forms, the familiar and the new. Greece was a particularly suitable subject for Byron’s innovative method of travel writing. The reviewers praised Byron for conveying in verse “a good deal of \textit{curious information} concerning the \textit{present} state of language and literature in \textit{modern} Greece” [my emphasis] (qtd. in Manning 172). The classicist travelers were not interested in the present state of Greece and Italy, but in the ruins of their empires, and Byron’s major contribution to the Greek revolution was not his ironically unheroic death at Missolonghi, but his dynamic portrayal of the Greek people at a time when Lord Elgin’s agents were busy collecting and transporting fragmented Greek antiquities to London. Early nineteenth-century British travelers were visiting an ideal realm, not an actual place. As Fani-Maria Tsigakou illustrates in \textit{The Rediscovery of Greece}, traveling painters were not interested in the landscape and people of Greece, and classical sites were set in recycled and depopulated backgrounds. If noticed at all, contemporary Greeks were depicted in contrast to the vanished golden age of their ancient ancestors. However, in the wake of the French Revolution, the prosperous Greek
merchants, aided by the western Philhellenes, were already conceptualizing the possibility of national independence and sponsoring a revival of the Hellenic ideal in national literature and letters. In *The Broken Column*, Harry Levin lucidly captures the distinction between Romantic Hellenism and the rise of Philhellenism:

> From Schiller to Spengler, the romanticists show increasing dissatisfaction with the complacency which they find in the Greeks, and growing appreciation of the infinite longings which they discover in themselves. Victor Hugo, for whom traditional Greece lacks in color, is forced to turn to the oriental elements in modern Greece. The sentimental travellers have come across the modern Hellenes and tricked Greece out in a new nationalism and a colorful orientalism. At this point, romantic Hellenism coalesces with the romantic passion for liberty, and we have philhellenism. (33)

As a historical figure, Lord Byron served as a catalyst in both the intellectual and the revolutionary phases of Greek liberation. His poetry, on the other hand, registers both boundless enthusiasm and grave doubts about the possibility of reviving Greece. The symbiosis of verse and footnotes in Canto II of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, drawing on both Byron’s observations and Hobhouse’s travel writing, participates in the often conflicting discourses of “new nationalism” and “colorful orientalism” that contribute to the rise of Philhellenism.

Byron’s and Hobhouse’s travel writing is both collaborative and competitive. In Byron’s letters from this journey, Hobhouse cuts a rather comical figure as a conventional scribbling “brother author,” who is inclined to journalizing and
antiquarianism. Byron repeatedly rejects the role of the conventional travel writer, refusing to describe things. In a letter to his mother, he indicates that encyclopedic coverage is simply not feasible, for there are “1000 things I have no time or space to describe” (BLJ, i 229). In a letter to Henry Drury, he contends that others have already covered the ground: “But why should I say more of these things? Are they not written in the Boke of Gell [William Gell’s “Itinerary in Greece,” published in 1808]? And has not Holly got a journal? I keep none and have renounced scribbling” (BLJ, i 238). Or, he simply leaves the task to Hobhouse, as he suggests in a letter to Francis Hodgson: “Hobhouse rhymes and journalizes. I stare and do nothing” (BLJ, i: 241), or in a letter to his mother: “I keep no journal, but my friend Hobhouse scribbles incessantly.”(BLJ, i: 235). A letter exchange between Hobhouse and Byron reflects their different approaches to travel narrative, both in terms of the fitness and the authenticity of its contents. Scrambling for material for his travelogue that “Cawthorne has made of such an unreasonable size,” Hobhouse complains that his “Athenian tale is quite stopped for want of [Demetrius’s] information; I could put down something from my own journal if I chose but I prefer having the ipse dixit of a native –“ (Graham 93). After highlighting the shortcomings of his appendices, he laments that “Clarke’s book will completely overwhelm everything I can say about the Greeks – the world will be glutted with his quartoes – how can I find a crevice or a corner for my book…?” (Graham 93). As originality is impossible because others have already covered a part of the territory, Hobhouse strives obsessively for correctness and comprehensiveness, which makes his account detailed, objective, and tedious, especially when describing the nationalities of
the Levant and their customs.

Both Hobhouse and Byron betray an anxiety of influence in their accounts of the Levant, and they respond by staking out a new territory for exploration in Albania. Byron describes selectively, fictionalizing the “European Turkey,” or the “East of Europe” in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and Oriental tales. However, Byron is also conscious of a potential market demand for a travel narrative of Albania, where the “scene was savage, but the scene was new” (*CHP*, l. 386). Although in his letters, Byron already sneers at Hobhouse’s material preparations for travel writing in Falmouth, Hobhouse’s published travelogue actually starts in Albania. Seeking a niche for the publication of his two-volume *A Journey through Albania and other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia to Constantinople during the Years 1809 and 1810* (1813), Hobhouse’s title highlights a province largely unexplored by Englishmen, which “has not infrequently been confounded with Greece,” “has never been accurately described,” and “the topography of the interior country has been scarcely attempted” (6). Byron cites Gibbon in his footnote to Canto II to point out “that a country ‘within sight of Italy is less known than the interior of America.’” (McGann 87). Equipped as explorers, Byron and Hobhouse take along everything that represents British civilization. Both *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and *A Journey through Albania* focus on the Albanian experience; in Byron’s Canto II Albania takes more space than Greece or Turkey and the account of Albania opens the two-volume *A Journey*.

For both Byron and Hobhouse, the Albanian experience provides a perspective on the ethnic diversity of modern Greece. Maria Todorova contends that the biases
underpinning the project of *Imagining the Balkans*, which is the title of her book on the construction of the region in travel writing, is more properly described as balkanism than orientalism. Whereas the East in orientalist discourse according to Edward Said functions as a monolith opposed to the West, balkanism exaggerates and perpetuates the “parcelization” of the “East of Europe” (Todorova 3). An important component of balkanization is the so-called “denial of coevalness,” a term used by Johannes Fabian to describe the anthropologist strategy of distancing the other in time, as well as space (31). Byron and Hobhouse participate, or even inaugurate balkanism in their distinctions between the Albanians, the Greeks, and the Turks.11

Byron’s and Hobhouse’s attitudes to Orientalism are evident in a comparison of their accounts of the visit to Ali Pasha’s court. In *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, Byron draws on orientalist tropes in describing a magnificent Eastern scene:

Childe Harold saw, like meteors in the sky,
The glittering minarets of Tepalen,
Whose walls o’erlook the stream…
He pass’d the sacred Haram’s silent tower,
And underneath the wide o’erarching gate
Survey’d the dwelling of this chief of power,
Where all around proclaim’d his high estate.
Amidst no common pomp the despot sate,
While busy preparations shook the court,
Slaves, eunuchs, soldiers, guests, and santons wait… (*CHP*, II: 491-502)
Byron is dazzled by the spectacle of the court that brings to his “recollection (with some change of dress however) Scott’s description of Branksome Castle in his lay, & the feudal system” (BLJ, i: 227). He is particularly fascinated by the opulence of Albanian dress, “(most magnificent in the world, consisting of a long white kilt, gold worked cloak, crimson velvet gold laced jacket & waistcoat, silver mounted pistols & daggers)” (BLJ, i, 227). In the letter to his mother, Byron also dwells on Ali’s compliment correlating his appearance and birth. After conveying Ali Pasha’s compliments to his mother, he tells her that the Pasha also said “he was certain I was a man of birth because I had small hands, curling hair, & little white hands, and expressed himself pleased with my appearance and garb” (BLJ, i: 227). To reiterate the compliment, he facetiously remarks that the Pasha’s “ideas of judging of a man’s birth from ears, hands, & c. were curious enough” (BLJ, i: 228) While he identifies with the aristocratic pretensions of Ali, Byron also reminds his mother that Ali is a “remorseless tyrant, guilty of the most horrible cruelties, very brave & so good a general that they call him the Mahometan Bonaparte” (BLJ, i: 31). Byron’s description of the court and Ali draws on the distancing discourses of medievalism and orientalism. The Pasha is presented as both a Gothic villain and an Oriental despot, yet Byron identifies with his aristocratic pretensions. In the Postscript to the same letter to his mother, Byron reports that he bought “some very ‘magnifique’ Albanian dresses the only expensive articles in this country they cost 50 guineas each & have so much gold they would cost in England two hundred” (BLJ, i, 231). Although the famous portrait of Byron in the Albanian dress is often used to illustrate Romantic orientalism, the primary reason for Byron’s identification is the life of feudal privilege
still affordable in the East: “Competence in your country is ample wealth in the East such is the difference in the value of money & the abundance of the necessities of life, & I feel myself so much a citizen of the world, that the spot where I can enjoy a delicious climate & every luxury at a less expense than a common college life in England, will always be a country to me” (BLJ, i, 41) (Fig. 5).

In contrast to the grand orientalized palace of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, Hobhouse reports that “leading us through some rubbish where a room had fallen in, and through some shabby apartments, [the attendant] ushered us into the chamber in which was Ali himself” (109). Hobhouse represents himself and his fellow-traveler as the flatterers: “He asked us, what had made us travel in Albania? We told him, the desire to see so great a man as himself. ‘Aye,’ returned he, ‘did you ever hear of me in England?’ We, of course, assured him, that he was a very common subject of conversation in our country; and he seemed by no means inaccessible to flattery” (112). What Byron mistakes for appreciation of class is in fact ignorance of what constitutes class difference in an Englishman like Byron, whose aristocracy is somewhat degenerate in his compatriots’ eyes. The Pasha himself is not of high birth, nor does class matter in Turkey as it does in England, for Hobhouse reports that “the Turkish oppression, and the want of hereditary dignities, occasions a kind of equality amongst them, and does away with all those distinctions of rank which are so rigorously observed in England—I say in England, because I believe there is no country in the world, where all the gradations of rank are so uniformly observed and kept separate as amongst ourselves” (510). Where Byron focuses on privilege, Hobhouse emphasizes equality. However, Byron’s perception of Albania,
Figure 5: *Byron in Albanian Dress*. By Thomas Phillips. 1835. National Portrait Gallery.
although less liberal, is based on the proximity of identification, whereas Hobhouse maintains objective distance. The following description of the Albanians illustrates the pitfalls of Hobhouse’s quest for objectivity:

The Albanians are generally of middle stature, about five feet six inches in height. They are muscular and straight … Their chests are full and broad, and their necks long. Their faces are of a long and oval shape, with prominent cheek bones, and a flat but raised forehead. The expression of their eyes, which are blue and hazel, but seldom quite black, is very lively. Their mouths are small, and their teeth of a good colour, and well formed. Their noses are, for most part, high and straight, with thin but open nostrils. Their eye-brows are arched. They wear no hair on the fore part of their heads, but suffer it to flow down in large quantities from the top of the crown…. The colour of the Albanians, when they are young, is a pure white, with a tinge of vermillion on their cheeks; but labour, and exposure to heat and cold, gives a dusky hue to the skin of their bodies…” (133)

This composite portrait of the Albanian type turns out flat both in the text and in the accompanying illustration, which is, even according to Hobhouse, “ill done, and … only introduced as a specimen of the Albanian dress” (133) (Fig.6). The contrast between this sketch and Byron’s portrait in the Albanian dress captures the different impact of the two travel writer’s methods (See Fig. 6 and Fig. 5). In his footnote to Canto II of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, Byron points out that Albania and its inhabitants will be described “much better by my fellow-traveller, in a work which may probably precede this in publication, that I as little wish to follow as I would to anticipate him” (McGann 870).
Figure 6: Drawing of an Albanian soldier by John Cam Hobhouse.
Nevertheless, he continues with a few “necessary” observations. Byron is not interested so much in “Albanians in general (…not … the cultivators of the earth…but the mountaineers),” and just remarks that they have a “fine cast of countenance” and that “[t]heir long hair reminds you of the Spartans” (89). 12 He focuses on associations that he shares with his readers, on the connection between the new and the familiar:

The Arnauts, or Albanese, struck me forcibly by their resemblance to the Highlanders of Scotland, in dress, figure, and manner of living. Their very mountains seemed Caledonian with a kinder climate. The kilt, though white; the spare, active form; their dialect, Celtic in its sound; and their hardy habits, all carried me back to Morven. No nation is so detested and dreaded by their neighbors as the Albanese: the Greeks hardly regard them as Christians, or the Turks as Moslems; and in fact they are a mixture of both, and sometimes neither.

(McGann 88)

After this brief description, Byron exemplifies his observations with reference to his Albanian servant Basili, a contradictory individual, “a remarkably handsome [and womanizing] man” and an (un)orthodox Christian with “the greatest veneration for the church, mixed with the highest contempt of churchmen” (88). Byron’s account of Basili animates Hobhouse’s Albanian, diminishing the distance between the traveling subject and the observed object.

As opposed to the footnotes to Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, which testify to the author’s travel experience, in the verses Childe Harold assumes positions of subjective distance. The Albanians are sympathetic as noble savages, for they are free of civilized
corruption “kinder than polish’d slaves though not so bland” (l. 606) and help “when less barbarian, would have cheered [Childe Harold] less,/And fellow-countrymen have stood aloof” (CHP II, l. 592-3). At the same time, they are represented as children and their country as a “rugged nurse of savage men”: “Fierce are Albania’s children, yet they lack/Not virtues, were those virtues more mature” (l. 878). Relying on Byron’s own footnotes and Hobhouse’s exhaustive account, the verses of Canto II condense the images of nationalities at Ali Pasha’s court in a single stanza, characterizing each with selective detail: “[t]he wild Albanian kirtled to his knee,” “the lively, supple Greek”; the swarth[y] Nubia’s mutilated son,” and “the bearded Turk” [my emphasis] (l. 514-521). The narrator’s descriptive adjectives in this stanza turn into evaluative attributes when court festivities are conveyed through the prism of Childe’s mood. The subjectivity of the impressions is highlighted by images of whimsical fire light:

Childe Harold at a little distance stood
And view’d, not displeas’d, the revelrie,
Nor hated harmless mirth, however rude:
In sooth, it was no vulgar sight to see
Their barbarous, yet their not indecent glee,
And, as the flames along their faces gleem’d
Their gestures nimble, dark eyes flashing free,
The long wild locks that to their girdles stream’d
While thus in concert they this lay half sang, half scream’d:
Tambourgi! Tambourgi! thy ‘larum afar
Gives hope to the valiant, and promise of war…[my emphasis](l. 640-50)

The unfamiliar words in the song signal that the footnote will contain ethnographic information, and Byron includes “as a specimen of the Albanian or Arnaout dialect of the Illyric…two of their most popular choral songs” (McGann 90). Unlike Lord Elgin and a host of other collectors of antiquities, Byron collects images of Greece and specimens of its modern languages, Romaic (modern Greek) and Arnaut (Albanian). In a letter notifying Byron of having mailed upon his request “oriental treasures” consisting of “all your Greek letters, the Romaic and three Turkish epistles” and profusely apologizing for keeping them so long, Hobhouse subtly reproaches Byron for duplicating the labor of his text, or taking over his niche: “…[I]t never entered into my head that you were going to annex any Romaic specimens to your poem—so far from it, indeed, that it is my present opinion, that had you expressed the intention of giving the public any detail or comment concerning the Levant, I should have declin’d all publication on the subject of the tour in Turkey, or, at least…should have left out…all opinions concerning the emancipation, and, indeed, the comparative merits of the Modern Greeks” (90).

While Hobhouse focuses on the content of the coverage, the territories to be charted, Byron is more interested in the manner of reporting and selecting pertinent information. Although Byron continually refers his correspondents to Hobhouse for descriptive detail, he also promises to contradict him on important points, presumably personal anecdotes and political issues: “But of these and other sundries let H[obhouse] relate, with this proviso, that I am to be referred to for *authenticity*; and I beg leave to contradict all those things whereon he lays particular stress. But, if he soars, at any time,
into wit, I give you leave to applaud, because that is necessarily stolen from his fellow-pilgrim”[my emphasis](BLJ, 246). As Hobhouse’s reproach reveals, he was particularly invested in his account of modern Greeks, which was a novel subject for travel writers, who had previously been interested solely in antiquities. Before launching his tedious account of the “shape and make of the modern Greeks,” Hobhouse betrays anxiety about the reception of his work among the Greeks and fellow travelers: “Travel writers are in one respect the very reverse of Prophets, for whatever honour they gain is in their own country” (495). The truly risky, adventurous aspect of travel writing is not “tracing [one’s] routes and narrating [one’s] adventures,” for that can be done “without fear of contradiction,” but “quitting the safe track, …launch[ing] into general description or disquisition,” because then they may be “repeatedly accused, and, indeed, convicted, of error, and more especially by those who have made the same journey with themselves” (495). Echoing the letter exchange with Byron, this disclaimer reflects Hobhouse’s misconception of Byron as a competing travel writer. He is not concerned that Byron will appropriate the authentic material of personal adventure, but that he will provide conflicting information on the same territory.

In their contest for authoring Greece, Byron and Hobhouse are conscious of their differing perspectives on Greek emancipation, an issue connected with the shifting concept of civilization. The travel narratives of Byron and Hobhouse participate in both the discourse of degeneration and of revival, while also placing the Greeks in the context of the Balkans. Hobhouse’s cosmopolitanism in relation to the Levant conforms to the standard of de Monbron’s epigraph that Byron used for the Pilgrimage; travel leads to a
greater appreciation of home. His measure of civilization is staunchly English: “Properly speaking, the word comfort could not be applied to any thing I ever saw out of England, which any one in my place, who was not afraid of being charged with foolish nationality, would be ready to confess” (40). Hobhouse’s emphasis here is on the present bourgeois English comfort, or domesticity—Hobhouse and Byron lugged English beds on their journey through Albania\(^{13}\)—because he realizes the temporal contingency of the English civilization: “Before we set down the Turks as cruel, savage people,…we should recollect that a stranger passing through Temple-Bar fifty years ago, might have concluded the English to be of the same character” (52). The Turks are closer to the English than the Greeks, whom Hobhouse tends to view as Orientals rather than as debased descendants of the ancient Greeks: “The manners of the barbarous people of West and North, seems less objectionable in most points that those of the Orientals; amongst which the Greeks, and in some measure even the Romans may be classed, and the modern Franks may reckon themselves to be better, if not wiser men, than the boasted nations of antiquity” (539). Thus, according to Hobhouse, as Greeks are irredeemably barbarous, it is only with foreign aid that they can be emancipated.\(^{14}\) Byron, on the other hand, popularizes the modern Greek identification with their ancient ancestors in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, measuring Greece [not the Greeks] against the standard of its own glorious past, not that of contemporary Britain:

Fair Greece! sad relic of departed worth!
Immortal, though no more! though fallen, great!
Who now shall lead thy scatter’d children forth,
And long accustom’d bondage uncreate? (CHP, II: 693-96)

According to this rhetoric of national revival, exemplified by the unusual prefix of uncreate that suggests its utopian nature, only the Greeks themselves, perhaps with British help, can restore their past: “Hereditary bondsmen! know ye not/ Who would be free themselves must strike the blow?…Will Gaul or Muscovite redress ye? No!” (l. 720-723). The verses also dictate the melancholy that a “true-born son of Greece,” a patriot, must feel under Turkish tyranny, for “Greece! they love thee least who owe thee most; /Their birth, their blood, and that sublime record/Of hero sires, who shame thy now degenerate horde!” (l. 789-791).

The verses and the footnotes of Canto II serve as parallel discourses, enabling Byron to voice contradictory attitudes to nationalist ideology. Although the poem utilizes the rallying force of the modern Greek claim to an ancient pedigree, Byron dismisses the importance of national descent—the central tenet of Romantic nationalism that he embraces in his early poetry—in the footnotes: “As to the question of their descent, what can it import whether…the Athenians are indigenous as the bees of Hymettus, or as the grasshoppers…? What Englishman cares if he be of a Danish, Saxon, Norman, or Trojan blood?” (97). The footnotes also include a spirited although reserved defense of the Greeks, condemning the foreign “fixtures” who maintain that “Greeks do not deserve to be emancipated…on the grounds of their ‘national and individual depravity’” (95). Through a reversed, reciprocal perspective, he compares such reasoning to “that [of] a Turk in England [who] would condemn the nation by wholesale, because he was wronged by his lacquey, and overcharged by his washerwomen” (95). On the other hand, although
Byron posits the possibility of a revival of ancient democracy, he can conceive of Greek emancipation only in imperialistic, or at least monarchical terms: “The Greeks will never be independent [Byron goes on to compare them to the Irish];…but they may be subjects without being slaves. Our colonies are not independent, but they are free and industrious, and such may Greece be hereafter” (95). Thus, the apparatus of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage combines fiction and non-fiction, Realpolitik and utopia, to satisfy the expectations of European intellectual audiences and not just a cross-section of British classes, as most critical discussions of Byron’s reading public suggest. In assessing the ideological message of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, the Greeks (or other oppressed peoples of Europe) may put more weight on the emancipatory rhetoric of the verses, whereas the English readers may privilege the footnotes as an authentic record of travel.

Balkanism and Orientalism in The Giaour and Lara

Byron’s last footnote to The Giaour, the first of his wildly popular Oriental tales, is an ironic tribute to Beckford, the author of the quintessentially Orientalist Vathek. Whereas he apologizes for the “want of Eastern imagery” in the poem—the most strikingly Orientalist passage is the description of Leila attributed to a Turkish narrator—Byron ostentatiously compliments Beckford on the “correctness of costume, beauty of description, and power of imagination …[that]…bears such marks of originality, that those who have visited the East will find some difficulty in believing it to be more than a translation” (247). This praise of Vathek, a composite of Beckford’s imagination and
reading, as a translation, implies that *The Giaour*, with its “want of Eastern imagery,” is *not* an Orientalist work but an authentic product of travel experience and direct knowledge of the Levant.

The layering of verses and footnotes in representing modern Greece is complicated by multiple narrative voices and disrupted chronology in the fragment poem *The Giaour*. In his account of Byron’s Orientalism, Nigel Leask acknowledges that the “tales are far more self-conscious than has hitherto been recognized,” showing how Byron complicates, yet ultimately sustains the binary of the East and the West. On one hand, Leask contends that in Byron’s Oriental tales, [in contrast to *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*] the “[d]ifferences between European national cultures (other than the French, which has ‘gone over to the other side’) are suspended by consideraton of the difference between Europe and its Others” while the same tales also “elegize the contact of modern European civilization with its classical, Hellenistic source” (8). Leask’s task of evaluating Byron’s Orientalism is problematized by the poet’s reliance on travel experience in a predominantly *European* East. Given the variety of nationalities in the Levant, the preoccupation of Byron’s travel narratives (including *The Giaour*, if not the other Oriental tales) is to formulate or help invent the distinctions among the Albanians, the modern Greeks and the Turks, who are at the initial stages of forming what Leask terms “European national cultures.” Hence, *The Giaour*, because it relies more heavily on travel narrative in its footnotes than the other Oriental tales, participates in the parcelization of the Balkans, or what Maria Todorova calls balkanism, not Orientalism. Extending the work of the *Pilgrimage*, *The Giaour* shifts focus from a chronologically
and topographically defined “other,” the ancient Greece, to represent modern Greece as an intersection of clashing narratives and multiple perspectives, including those of the Greeks, Turks, as well as the Westerners.

The original version of *The Giaour* consisted of only about four hundred lines, which simply and directly outlined the story of the mysterious infidel who revenges the death of his beloved, Leila, drowned for her infidelity to her master, Hassan. Later Byron developed the “snake of a poem” and added an Advertisement that presented it as “disjointed fragments...founded upon circumstances less common in the East than formerly” (McGann 207). The plot of the poem is presented in one sentence: “The story, when entire, contained the adventures of a female slave, who was thrown, in the Mussulman manner, into the sea for infidelity, and avenged by a young Venetian, her lover, at the time the Seven Islands were possessed by the Republic of Venice, and soon after the Arnauts were beaten back to Morea, which they had ravaged for some time subsequent to the Russian invasion” (McGann 207). Only the first part of this outline, intended to help readers piece the fragments together, concerns the actual plot of *The Giaour*; the rest provides historical context for a modern setting in 1799. The protagonist of the poem is a Venetian, which makes the fortunes of Venice, a historical counterpart of Britain as a maritime power, clearly relevant to the plot. On the other hand, the mention of Arnaut looting and Russian invasion obliquely refers to the historical pressures suffered by the Giaour’s antagonist, the Turk. Frederick Garber suggests that the Advertisement functions as a type of bait, or an unfulfilled promise to the reader, similar to de Monbron’s epigraph in the *Pilgrimage*. Although he focuses on the representation
of the self, not the nation, in Byron’s canon, Garber points out that both works are
preoccupied with the question of origin and the “fictions of continuity and wholeness,
which are relevant to both individual and collective identities” (21). The problem of origin
is reflected in the form of the *Pilgrimage* and *The Giaour*, and self-consciously
highlighted by the epigraph and the Advertisement. De Monbron’s epigraph describes a
circuitous journey with a goal of returning home and the Advertisement offers historical
context that has no obvious connection to the origin of the story. As Garber puts it, while
the *Pilgrimage* is “open-ended,” *The Giaour* has no beginning, or is “open-fronted” (32,
33).

The mystery surrounding the origins of the story made *The Giaour* a sensational
success. As Jerome McGann points out, the success of the poem “rested on the belief,
which Byron himself did not discourage, that the narrative was based upon events in
which Byron himself took part” (1035). Given Byron’s tendency to boast of his most
daring exploits, such as swimming across the Hellespont, the absence of the story in his
letters from the Levant confirms that it was based on rumours, overheard “by accident
recited by one of the coffee-house story-tellers who abound in the Levant,” as Byron
points out in a footnote to *The Giaour* (246). The fact that Byron does not include this
information in The Advertisement, where it would more conventionally offer the origin
of the story, suggests that he underplays, if not denies, the non-fictional status of the story
as a second-hand traveler’s anecdote for the sake of its fictional historicity as a set of
“circumstances” effectively illustrating the fortunes of Greece (McGann 207).

Hobhouse’s *A Journey* “relate[s] two melancholy tales, which are very well
known, and are secretly talked of at Ioannina” as examples of “Turkish ferocity, rather than of a savage disposition peculiar to Ali,” not Greek subjection (123). According to one of the stories, the wife of Ali Pasha’s son complained to his father about his infidelity. The Pasha asked her to name the women admired by his son, and she “(quite at random, it is said) wrote down the name of fifteen of the most beautiful women, some Greeks some Turkish, in the city of Ioannina” (122). Hobhouse asserts that “there is no doubt of the truth of this story,” for he confirmed it with Vasily, the Albanian attendant Byron describes in the footnote to Canto II of the Pilgrimage, who claims, to Hobhouse’s indignation, that he helped in the drowning of these women. The other story concerns only one seventeen-year-old Greek woman, “a subject of a lamentable ditty,” which can be heard not only in Ioannina, but also in Athens: “The story goes, that it was the misfortune of Frozeni, a Greek lady..., the most lovely of her sex, to be admired at the same time by Ali and by one of his sons” (123). She is drowned when Ali finds out about “this double attachment” (123). The second story resembles Byron’s poetic version more closely, but it does not include the Giaour, who supplies the perspective of a Western outsider.

The “Giaour” is a label used by Turks to distinguish those who are not Muslims. Similarly, the Greeks use “Frank” to describe Christians who are not Orthodox. Hobhouse reports that according to the Greeks the Franks “possess a preternatural, by no means an enviable degree of knowledge, communicated to them by the Evil Principle, their master and guide” and “the children in the streets, when one of them is passing, call out: ‘Franco di Dio!’” By which, though I know not how the sentence is supplied, they
mean ‘Godless Frank!’” (532). Like Catholics such as the Venetians, the English are the most alien group on the scale of difference, for the Greeks “contend that they are not Christians at all” and the “Turks have nearly the same opinion of us; and, seeing that we show none of the external signs of reverence for the Panagia, or other pictures, conclude us to be altogether such infidels as themselves” (532). In the Quarterly Review, George Ellis commented on the confusing effect of Byron’s title:

No one, we are convinced, not even the author himself, can tell us why, instead of the good old English term of Infidel, this Turkish tale is called by such an odd, outlandish epithet as Giaour, unless it be intended that Giaour should be received into the language as expressive of the character which the Mahometans apply to the Christians and then infidel should continue to retain its ancient signification of the character which the Christian apply to the Mahometans.

(RR, V, B, 1933)

The reviewer notes that his “whimsical Lordship” plays with the relativity of the title, offering multiple perspectives on the concept of infidelity and its sexual, religious and national manifestations. Ellis relies on the Enlightenment mode of comparing cultures as symmetrically opposed, and so he fails to comprehend the reciprocal reversal of perspective that gives meaning to The Giaour.

Although The Giaour does lend itself to an allegorical reading, its fragmented structure and layered narration also disrupt a facile, albeit tempting, identification of Hassan with Islam, the Giaour with Christianity and Leila with Greece. “The desolation of the Morea, during which the cruelty exercised on all sides,” Byron concludes in the
Advertisement, “was unparalleled even in the annals of the faithful” (207). The indictment of “all sides” parallels the multiple perspectives on the atrocious act committed in The Giaour. The “annals of the faithful” point to an alternative, Muslim version of history that the poem strives to take into consideration. Marilyn Butler maintains that “Byron plainly saw mostly disadvantages in representing Greek liberation as a Christian struggle,” both because of the history of Orthodox loyalty to the Ottoman empire and because of the potential of Christian European powers to use religion as an excuse to annex Greece” (83). Butler suggests that Byron wrote The Giaour with an awareness of the clash of ideologies in the colonization of India, where Evangelicals were pushing out secular Enlightenment intellectuals, and continues to argue that “[t]he poem’s villains are the two great monotheistic codes, Christianity and Islam” (83). Although Butler’s argument on Orientalism in The Giaour provides a helpful context for our understanding of Byron’s attitude to institutional religion in the Levant, it fails to account for the transition from religious to national identification that was just beginning to emerge in the Balkans, particularly Greece.

The narrator who opens the poem is English and contemporary, encouraging a Philhellenic attitude to Greek subjection. He starts with a description of “the Athenian’s grave,” presumably the sepulchre of Themistocles, and asks: “When shall such hero live again?” (l. 6). The question is rhetorical and the stanza breaks off into another fragment, celebrating the charms of modern Greece, “the blessed isles” (l. 8) that are “[f]ar from the winters of the west” (l. 28). At the close of the poem, the Giaour expresses his wish for a humble, unmarked grave with only “the cross above [his] head” (l. 1325). The two tombs
contrast ancient and modern Greek history, Themistocles, the defender of Athens against
the Persians, and a Venetian, the avenger of the death of a Greek woman at the hands of a
Turk. The third image of death in the poem also contrasts modern and ancient Greece,
which is depicted as a beautiful face “‘ere the first day of death is fled” (l. 69):

So fair – so calm – so softly seal’d
The first – last look – by death reveal’d!
Such is the aspect of this shore
‘Tis Greece – but living Greece no more!
So coldly sweet, so deadly fair,

We start – for soul is wanting there. (l. 87-93)

The dashes highlight the moments of recognition, hesitation, and disbelief, during which
the narrator appears inarticulate, emphasizing the discrepancy between the form and its
departed soul, the embodiment and the vanished ideal. In contrast to Themistocles, the
contemporary “subtle Greek[s]” (l. 159) are “callous, save to crime/ Stain’d with each
evil that pollutes/Mankind, where least above the brutes; /Without even savage virtue
blest,/Without one free or valiant breast” (l. 52-56). Hobhouse mentions the satirical
attacks on the unfaithful Greek leaders, illustrating them with the following example:

My fellow-traveller [Byron] received as a present a long paper of verses to this
import, which, in a dramatic colloquy between a Greek patriot, an Englishman,
Frenchman, and Russian, a Metropolitan, a Waiwode of Wallachia, a Merchant
and a Primate, and by the introduction of Greece, personified as a desolate female
in tears, displays the apathy of the privileged classes, and concludes with this
assertion of the Frank strangers: “We have found a Metropolitan, and a Bey of Wallachia, and Merchant and a Primate, all friends to tyranny.” (597)

This anecdote suggests that Byron’s contemporary perspective contains that of “a Greek patriot,” even though it is the Frank strangers who ultimately accuse the privileged Greeks of complicity with the Turks. Hence the attack on modern Greeks refers to those who have the potential for leadership and heroism. In introducing the “mournful tale” (l. 5) of the Giaour, Hassan and Leila, an allegorical representation of Greece as a dead female, the contemporary narrator draws on the images circulating in the allied Philhellenist discourse of Greek patriots and Frank liberals.

The Turkish point of view is included in the poem, but also disrupted by Byron’s humorous, Orientalist notes. For example, at the climactic moment preceding the fatal encounter between the foes, Byron undercuts the terror of Hassan’s fury that “curl’d his very beard with ire, / And glared his eye with fiercer fire” (l. 591-2). In footnoting these lines, Byron offers an anecdotal parallel:

A phenomenon not uncommon with an angry Mussulman. In 1809, the Captain Pasha’s whiskers at a diplomatic audience were no less lively with indignation than a tiger cat’s… the portentious mustachios twisted, they stood erect of their own accord, and were expected every moment to change their colour, but at last condescended to subside… (l. 593)

A contemporary reviewer complained about the jarring contrast between the verses and the footnotes, which he observes “were written in a manner the most opposite to that in which he has composed the poem” and “aim at flippant wit, and careless indifference”
that “interrupt completely that tone of deep solemnity which reigns unbroken through the poetry” [my emphasis] (RR, B, V, 2149). The dramatic tone of the poetry compensates for the broken chronology, but the footnotes insist on ironic indifference, a manifestation of cultural relativism.

The reciprocal perspectives on the Giaour are conveyed through visual metaphors. The tale is partly related from the perspective of a Muslim fisherman, for whom the very act of introducing the Giaour expresses his prejudice in terms of visible racial, not cultural or religious difference: “I know thee not, I loathe thy race” (l. 191). The fisherman describes the Giaour’s flight after killing Hassan, and focuses on the effects and purposes of the reciprocal, although not mutual gaze, including the Giaour’s “evil eye” (l. 196), “[the fisherman’s] gaze of wonder” (l. 201), “unwelcome glance…fixed on those that flee,” (213), as well as the “[o]ne glance [the Giaour] snatched” (l. 217).

The fisherman’s view of Hassan also reverses the Western hierarchy of cultures. The ruined hall, the place of “Hassan’s Childhood” and “Hassan’s Youth” is reminiscent of Byron’s descriptions of Newstead rather than classical ruins. It is a human artifact overtaken by nature, as “in the fortress of [Hassan’s] power/ The Owl usurps the beacon tower; The wild-dog howls o’er the fountain’s brim” (l. 293-5). While conventionally English ruins are overgrown by vegetation, Hassan’s hall is more ignobly occupied by animals. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the fisherman, Hassan’s hall was the seat of feudal patronage and hospitality and now “[h]is roof – that refuge unto men – is Desolation’s hungry den. --/ The guest flies the hall, and the vassal from labour,/ Since his turban was cleft by the infidel's sabre!” (l. 350-51). From the perspective of the
fisherman, Hassan’s hall, not ancient Greece, represents civilization.

The fisherman’s feudal, unquestioning loyalty to Hassan’s establishment makes him an accessory in the drowning of Leila. The act is described without a direct reference to her, and the text breaks just before the fisherman describes how he watched the burden sink into the sea: “I gaz’d, till vanishing from view, Like lessening pebble it withdrew;/Still less and less, a speck of white/That gemm’d the tide, then mock’d the sight” (l. 379-383). The disruption of chronology and gaps in the narrative point to the conjectural nature of storytelling and reading. After the similes of an “insect queen” (lines 387-421) and “the Scorpion girt by fire (l. 4224-38), which point respectively to Leila’s fate and the Giaour’s predicament, the fisherman relates versions, both official and rumored, of Leila’s transgression. Leila is described through animal similes that compare her eyes to those of a gazelle and her posture to that of a swan, and her beauty is celebrated in Oriental commonplaces and epithets that compare her eyes to “the jewel of Giamschid” (l. 479) her cheeks to “pomegranate’s blossoms” (l. 494) and her hair to “hyacinthine flow.” (l. 496). In a typical blazon fashion, the woman who represents Greece is dismembered, and her inexpressible beauty substitutes for her living presence. (She appears only as a ghost in the Giaour’s part of the account.) Yet, even the Muslim narrator finds it difficult to adhere to “that portion of his creed/Which saith, that woman is but dust” (l. 488-9) and to believe she has no soul. Because Leila is virtually absent from the narrative, it is tempting to interpret her allegorically or symbolically representing the irretrievable classical Greece or the fate of modern Greece at the hands of the Turk.
Both Byron’s *Letters* and Hobhouse’s *A Journey* describe the national character of the modern Greeks through gender difference. Infamously, Byron’s travels in Greece were actuated as much by curiosity about Greek love as Greek antiquities. After the departure of Hobhouse, whose insistence on outward decorum restrained Byron’s explorations in this area, Byron writes to him about his exploits. In a letter from July 29, 1810, Byron describes his Greek companion, “dearly beloved Eusthatius” – ready to follow [him] not only to England, but to Terra Incognita: “I found the dear soul upon horseback clothed very sprucely in Greek garments, with those ambrosial curls hanging down his amiable back, and to my utter astonishment and the abomination of Fletcher, a parasol in his hand to save his complexion from heat” (*BLJ*, ii, 6). Eustathius’s distance from the English standard of masculinity is marked by the “astonishment” of Byron, who is critical of but also rooted in the English gender norms, and the “abomination” of Fletcher, who represents provincial Englishness throughout Byron’s letters.

Nevertheless, Eusthatius’s “spruce Greek garments” and “ambrosial curls” approximate the ancient, statuesque ideal of masculinity. In his description of modern Greeks, the section of his travelogue where he most feared Byron’s competition, Hobhouse describes the physiognomy of the Greek in a similar, albeit more self-conscious terms: “Their faces are just such as served for models to the ancient sculptors, and their young men in particular, are of that perfect beauty, which we should perhaps consider too soft and effeminate in those of that age in our more northern climate” (495). For Hobhouse, ancient and modern Greeks are equally “other” or barbarian. While Greek men of Eusthatius’s beauty are exposed to admiration, Hobhouse points out that “[a] man may
travel through Greece, and, unless at his particular desire, not see a single Greek lady” (506) yet he maintains that Greek women have fallen from the classical ideal: “An author of Observations on the Levant, thinks that the Venetians and the Turks have adulterated the Grecian blood; but if that were the case, the degeneracy would be seen in the males, as well as in the females; which is far from being the case.” (498). According to this logic, only the Greek women bear the physical signs of degeneration and Hobhouse voyeuristically imagines Greek femininity in terms of its drapery rather than body parts:

When in the interior apartments, a young woman divests herself of her outer robes, and, in the summer season, may sometimes be surprised reclining on a rich carpet or sofa, with her feet bare, and her whole form rather shaded than concealed by trowsers of gauze, and a thin muslin cymarr. (502)

In her clandestine affair with the Giaour, Leila flees “her master’s rage/In likeness of a Georgian page” (l. 456) anticipating the cross-dressing of Kaled in Lara and of the hero of Don Juan. Byron used “hyacinth” as an oblique reference to his homosexual desire for boys (Christensen 62). The fact that he uses the epithet “hyacinthine” in his description of Leila points to her ambiguous gender, which in turn mirrors the formulation of national-as-gender difference in Byron’s and Hobhouse’s travel narratives. In The Giaour, Leila serves as a figure of difference, the focal point of clashing patriarchal cultural perspectives that constitute modern Greece.

The last section of the poem is narrated from the perspective of a friar, in whose monastery the Giaour, who “seems … not of Othman race,/ But only Christian in his face” (l. 810-11), takes refuge. The Giaour is marked by what Maria Todorova calls the
“in-between” predicament of the Balkans, which becomes evident as he processes the visions of his personal history:

Of maiden ‘whelmed beneath the sea;
Of sabres clashing – foemen flying,
Wrongs aveng’d – and Moslem dying.
On cliff he hath been known to stand,
And rave as to some bloody hand
Fresh sever’d from its parent limb,
Invisible to all but him… . (l. 823-831)

As other commentators have remarked, the Giaour and Hassan function as doubles, both in their attitudes to religion and to women. Fulfilling the fisherman’s curse, the Giaour is a living dead, and the friar describes his body through an extended metaphor of a ruin:

“It was no vulgar tenement…The roofless cot decayed and rent,…The tower by war or tempest bent,/. Each ivied arch – and pillar lone/Pleads haughtily for glories gone! (l. 872-882). In his confession, which closes the poem, the Giaour admits his responsibility for the death of Leila:

Not mine the act, though I the cause;
Yet did he but what I had done
Had she been false to more than one;
Faithless to him – he gave the blow,
But true to me – I laid him low… .(l. 1061-1065)

As Marilyn Butler argues, this confession suggests that Christianity is equally
problematic as Islam in *The Giaour*. However, Byron also portrays the Giaour as equally eccentric to Christianity as Islam and adhering merely to the outward forms of Catholicism. For the Giaour, the experience of Leila, or Greece, may point to the relativity of faith, and for the reader, the self-consciously fragmented tale of *The Giaour* exposes the conjectural nature of nation building as storytelling. As the friar’s concluding words suggest: “This broken tale was all we knew/ Of her he lov’d, or him he slew” (l. 1223-4). The disjointed and complex structure of the narrative disrupts the possibility of an allegorical reading that would equate the protagonists with the nations about to clash in the liberation of Greece. More than a figure standing for Greece, Leila seems to function as the suppressed center of the narrative, which, in its fragmented totality represents Greece better than the female character. After all, the tale is subtitled “A Fragment of a Turkish Tale,” which seems to validate Janowitz’s argument that the fragment poem serves a form of Romantic nationalism, except in this case the nation is not England but Greece, as perceived by Western Philhellenes and Turkish oppressors.

*Lara* (1814) differs from *The Giaour* in three important aspects: the bare, chronologically narrated plot, the Western setting and the absence of footnotes. The ambiguous location and lack of topical references made the reviewers of the poem accuse Byron of recycling the elements of other Oriental tales. They note the absence of topical references in the poem: “Lord Byron is peculiarly remarkable for his strict adherence to local customs, both in his descriptions and allusions. This poem, on the contrary, presents but a vague picture of the feudal times, without affording any means to refer it to any particular place or era” (*RR*, B, IV, 1724). The reviewer goes so far as to deny Byron’s
authorship and to argue that *Lara* was a product of an imitator, based on “evidence” from the poem such as the use of the pronoun “we,” that presumably substitutes for Byron’s habitual “I.” Although the Eastern imagery in the poem is scarcer than in *The Giaour*, I would argue that in fact *Lara* exploits the conventions of Orientalism in a more sophisticated fashion. While Todorova’s concept of balkanism proves useful in reading *The Giaour*, *Lara* is more readily described by what Naji B. Oueijan distinguishes as “exoticism.” Whereas Orientalism is characterized by the pursuit of scholarly knowledge according to Edward Said’s definition, exoticism is “an interest stimulated by ignorance and illusions” (Oueijan 30). Exoticism is sustained by distance from its object of interest and is not based on close scrutiny, which Oueijan illustrates with examples from the Turkish tales:

Byron’s Western readers were like tourists in foreign lands; they would enjoy the most repellent spectacles (the drowning of Leila, the killing of Hassan, the burning of Seyd’s harem, etc.) as long as they were not participants. Exotic pleasure is based… on the separation of the spectator from the spectacle. (Oueijan 32)

Oueijan’s concept of exoticism as an interest in the surface of the Orient (veil) as opposed to Orientalism’s study of deep structure (ideas and traditions) is useful in interpreting *Lara*. In *Lara*, Byron suppresses the Oriental subtext completely, frustrating his readers’ voracious exoticism, for the “subtler” orientalism of the tale converts the concepts of the East and the West from geographical entities into abstract signifiers.

The plot (surface) of the tale is relatively simple. Count Lara, a typical Byronic
hero, returns to his domain after years of wandering in “another clime” (Canto I: 50).

Neither the location of Lara’s domain nor the setting of Lara’s Eastern travel is specified, although Lara’s ancestral mansion is clearly Western: the Gothic ruin of Newstead resurfaces once again in “the dark gallery, where his fathers frown’d” (l. 138). Even as Lara returns to the West, he is described as a “self-exiled chieftain,” which prefigures the tribal, internecine war that breaks out later in the poem (l. 4). Upon his return home, Lara is accompanied by a single page named Kaled, who is depicted as dark and vaguely feminine. Unlike the typical Westerner returning from the Orient, Lara refuses to supply a travel narrative, and his servants, peers and serfs spend most of Canto I trying to pry his secret:

Not much he lov’d long question of the past,
Nor told of wondrous wilds and deserts vast
In those far lands where he had wandered lone… (l. 85-88)

One night, as Lara paces in “his solitary hall,/ and his high shadow [shoots] along the wall” (l. 181-2), he suddenly shrieks and ends up “cold as marble where his length was laid” (l. 211). Again, he does not offer any explanation to his servants, but murmurs something in a strange tongue that only Kaled seems to understand. His servants’ fear increases, and they avoid the haunted hall.

The complication of the plot occurs when Lara visits his neighbor, Sir Otho, and is recognized by a stranger, Sir Ezzelin, who insinuates that Lara had committed some dark and ignoble deeds in the East. To avoid public confrontation, the host suggests that the adversaries meet the next day, but the stranger fails to appear. A duel ensues, in
which Lara almost kills Otho in a moment of demonic rage, but the onlookers prevent him: “Then all was stern collectedness and art, / Now rose the unleavened hatred to his heart; / So little sparing to the foe he fell’d;/That’s when the approaching crowd his arm withheld…”(l. 71-77). As Otho recovers, he accuses Lara of murdering Sir Ezzelin. Lara uses the peasants’ unrest and his affinity with the people (the trait of a Romantic hero) to secure popular support. He abolishes serfdom on his property and leads a peasant rebellion, in which he is killed and the serfs are defeated. The dying Lara rejects the solace of religion and accepts only the consolation of Kaled, to whom he speaks in the strange language. When he expires, Kaled faints and as the onlookers revive him, they discover he is a woman.

At first glance, the story seems an archetypal tale of love with gothic and oriental elements, reminiscent of Scott’s *Marmion*. However, it is not the plot, but the theme that provides the key to the orientalist subtext of *Lara*. This theme of the narrative revolves around Lara’s unfathomable secret. In the opening of the poem, the narrator asks a rhetorical question: “The chief of Lara is returned again /And why had Lara cross’d the bounding main? (Canto I: 11-12) Why does the Byronic hero return home from the Orient? One answer to this question is the political context of the Oriental tales, which were written during Byron’s short career in Parliament. If Byron was sharpening his political satire, returning Conrad/Lara to his ancestral estate could have been a way to make the veiled attack on Regency England hit closer home.

However, the tale poses a more puzzling question: why does the Orient follow the Byronic hero home? Nigel Leask attributes Lara’s oriental fatalism and unrestrained
passions to the Western fears of infection from the East: “Byron’s tales are subversive of orientalist discourse only in so far as the qualities attached by the West to the oriental (fatalism, eroticism, intoxication) are now shown to be the characteristics of the European imperialist” (61). What makes Lara more interesting, though, is that the source of the infection is not specified and the reader is implicated in diagnosing the Eastern provenance of its plague.

The geographical and historical displacement of Byron’s unspecified setting, enhanced by an air of mystery and supernatural elements, resembles the representational strategies of the Gothic novel. As Nigel Leask puts it: “The stripping away of the oriental ‘material’ here does reveal the debt of all Byron’s Tales to the Gothic milieu of Mrs. Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis…, [as Byron] substitut[es] for a ‘Gothic’ Giaour in an oriental setting an ‘orientalized’ hero in a Gothic/European setting” (55). The boundaries between Britain and the rest of Europe are blurred; the nation and the Continent are consolidated as the West. Although the tale is set in feudal times, it does not hark back to an ideal of chivalry—in fact, Lara’s participation in a revolt of the serfs undermines the stability of the system. The estate appears to be haunted as much by the spirits of Lara’s ancestors as by Oriental ghosts, and Lara’s secret seems to conceal both the deeds of his ancestry (a type of “original” sin) and the “deeds” he committed in the Orient.

Significantly, in Ezzelin’s accusation, the blank represents both action and place to be filled by the reader’s imagination: “Art thou not he? Whose deeds –. ” The dash is parallel to Lara’s ambiguous gesture that appears to be pointing to the East and substitutes for his deathbed confession is open to interpretation:
Rose Lara’s hand, and pointed to the East:
Whether (as then the breaking sun from high
Roll’d back the clouds) the morrow caught his eye,
Or that ‘twas chance, or some remember’d scene
That rais’d his arm to point where such had been,
Scarce Kaled seem’d to know… (l. 466-72)

The protagonist’s refusal to speak about the Orient corresponds with Byron’s reluctance
to furnish the tale with an exotic spectacle, even at the expense of its popularity. Lara’s
adventures are suggested in the negative terms of what is being withheld:

In those far lands, where he had wandered lone…
But what he had beheld he shunned to show,
As hardly worth a stranger’s care to know;
If still more prying such enquiry grew,

His brow fell darker, and his words more few. (Canto I: 85-95)

In critical moments, Lara’s complexion turns dark “almost to blackness in its demon hue”
(Canto II: 74), but for most part he is able to suppress his emotions, not to “offend the
view” (Canto I: 360). Lara’s darkening countenance is reminiscent of the eloquent
physiognomy of Radcliffe’s villains, but it also suggests a racial mutation, the
orientalization of the protagonist. On the other hand, Kaled’s complexion is described as
“darkly delicate,” yet “femininely white” (Canto I: 534, 576). She is more vulnerable to
the interpretive gaze because of her blush, “a hectic tint of secret care” (Canto I: 534).
The emphasis on visual interpretation of Lara’s and Kaled’s secret by spectators reading
their body language resembles the composition of *The Giaour* through the perspectives of multiple observers. Paradoxically, Lara turns darker and Kaled whiter under the public gaze. In the end, it is only the visual secret of Kaled’s body that is exposed; she shrouds the other unspeakable secret in silence. The unresolved tension between the surface of the plot and the impenetrable depth of its underlying secret, “something more beneath/ than glance could well reveal, or accent breath,” shapes both the theme and the form of the tale (Canto I: 76-7). The East functions simultaneously as the center around which the plot of *Lara* revolves and the periphery of the poem’s Western setting.

**From the Center to the Periphery: The “English” Cantos of *Don Juan***

In *Lara* Lord Byron layers the Western setting and its Eastern subtext, converting the geography of the Continent into a pair of symbolic, almost interchangeable commonplaces. *Don Juan*, and particularly its “English cantos,” on the other hand, is Byron’s last contribution to a larger project of exposing contemporary British cant as a system of such commonplaces, which include the “othering” tropes of medievalism and orientalism. My discussion of the “English” cantos suggests that the targets of Byron’s satire include his own earlier, much more popular works, including *Childe Harold* and the Oriental tales, especially the mannerism of *Lara*. For example, as Juan revisits Greece in Canto III, Byron puts a mock elegy on “The Isles of Greece” in the mouth of an opportunistic bard, who sings to flatter “the self loves of the different nations” (*DJ*, III, 84). By echoing his earlier elegiac verses on Greece in *The Giaour*, Byron highlights the synthetic aspects of
national affiliations as well as cultural representations. The “Isles of Greece” provide the occasion for the narrator’s famous accusation that poets are “such liars /And take all colours – like the hands of dyers,” and yet their “small drop of ink…makes thousands, perhaps millions think” (DJ, III: 87-88). As this revised representation of Greece illustrates, Don Juan self-consciously exposes the fictionality of narrative poetry, while also testifying to the power of fiction in (self-)representation.

In terms of literary tradition, Don Juan was inspired by Byron’s immersion in Italian literature and conceived as an attack on the insularity of the Laker School of poetry.19 The structure of the poem is that of a travel narrative covering almost the whole map of Europe, including places that Byron had not visited and ostensibly excluding Italy, which serves as the exiled author’s vantage point. While ottava rima allows Byron to shift between expressions of local attachment and eccentric attitudes in the representations of European cultures, incorporating the jarring subtext of footnotes used in Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage and The Giaour in the travel narrative allows Byron to include episodes from various European microcosms. Russia and Britain, countries apposed in the last part of the poem, respectively represent the locations least and most familiar to Byron. Jerome Christensen uses the word “apposition” to characterize Byron’s “position … to have no position” in contrast to Southey’s apostasy, or change of political convictions (218). While Christensen uses the term “apposition” to characterize Byron’s politics and narrative strategies in Don Juan, it also illustrates how Byron subjects both Britain and the Continent to reciprocal scrutiny in the poem.

Don Juan, the Spanish hero of the poem, arrives in England from Russia,
undertaking a journey that spans the Eastern and Western extremities of the European Continent. In a parody of an eighteenth-century travel writing convention, the progress of civilization in European countries is marked by the state of the transportation and infrastructure. Don Juan passes through Russia in a “kibitka…a curs(e)d sort of carriage without springs,/ Which rough roads leaves scarcely a whole bone” (DJ, IX: 30, 1-3). He travels to England as a Russian diplomat with a Turkish orphan named Leila (a counterpart to the Greek Leila drowned in *The Giaour*), whom he saved from the savage Cossacks during the Siege of Ishmail. Turkey, not Greece, now represents a civilization besieged by the Russian barbarians:20

The villainous Cossacks pursued the child
With flashing eyes and weapons. Matched with them
The rudest brute that roams Siberia’s wild
Has feelings pure and polished as a gem –
The bear is civilized, the wolf is mild.
And whom for this at last must we condemn?
Their natures? Or their sovereigns? (DJ, VIII: 92)

Don Juan’s heroic recklessness during the siege earns him the favors of Catherine the Great, who serves Byron as a target for attacking Continental autocracy. The account of the Siege of Ishmael best represents the layering of time schemes in *Don Juan* that Caroline Franklin identifies as (pre-)revolutionary period (from mid-1780s-1793), which supplies the historical material; the narrator’s time of composition (1818-24), which informs the political agenda; and the author’s memories of 1808-16, which account for
the sympathetic portrayal of the besieged Turks in this section (136). The Russians are
led to victory over the Turks by Suwarrow, “a hero, buffoon, half-demon and half-dirt”
(IX: 55:5), who embodies the same mixture of civilization and barbarism, a more
Orientalist version of the “in-betweenness” that characterizes the Balkan Albanians in
Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage. Unlike the Albanians, who are less degenerate than both the
ruling Turks and the oppressed Greeks, the Russians are opposed to the implicitly more
“original” forms of civilization that exist in Turkey and Britain. The Russian civilization
is portrayed as derivative, the land of “the immortal Peter’s polished boors” (DJ, VII: 17:
1-2) with alien, tongue-twisting, transcription-resistant names such as “Scherematoff and
Chrematoff, Koklophiti/ Koklobski, Kourakin, and Mouskin Pouskin” (DJ, VII: 17:1).
Jerome McGann considers the account of Juan’s affair with Catherine “the poem’s least
interesting episode” and suggests that the abrupt decision to take Don Juan to England,
gives new energy to the verse, making the “English” cantos “the longest and the most
complete episode” of Don Juan (65).

Drawing on biographical context, Cecil Lang argues that Don Juan is “a work of
unmythmaking,” in which Byron revises Childe’s Harold Pilgrimage (153). This process
of “unmythmaking,” according to Lang, starts with the account of the Russo-Turkish war
in Canto 7, which satirically rewrites the romanticized account of the Penninsular War in
Canto 1 of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage. Lang then continues to suggests that “the real
memoir begins, not with Canto 10 and the visit to England, but with Canto 9 and Juan’s
visit to the court of Catherine the Great” (155). Lang suggests that in Juan’s affair with
Catherine, Byron revisits his supposedly homosexual encounter with Ali Pasha (a
proposition that Lang quite convincingly supports with textual evidence). If this is the case, then Byron displaces his personal experience onto an artificial setting, replicating the strategies of Gothic fiction. As Lang points out, the trajectory of Juan’s journey across Europe reverses the course of Childe Harold’s tour, but not completely; the characters, so to speak, “meet” in the Rhineland (166). I would argue that Juan’s return “home”—in contrast to Childe’s failure to return—is possible because the setting for the Russian cantos is—uncharacteristically for Byron—synthetic, or based on reading rather than first-hand experience.21 Whereas Byron’s knowledge of Russia, a place that he never visited and imagined based on his reading of Voltaire,22 was superficial, Byron’s intimate knowledge of Regency society does not require footnotes and peoples the “English” cantos with a multitude of multi-dimensional characters unprecedented in the poem or in his previous poetry. The synthetic composition of the Russian setting is significant, because it enables Byron to blur actual differences between the East and the West, creating an imaginative geography of the Continent in which the British Isles are as peripheral as Russia.

Don Juan’s “return” to England initially draws on the conventional eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism and its a topsy-turvy, mock-Occidentalist, reciprocal representations of the West from the point of view of a typically Oriental outsider, most famously represented by Montesquieu’s Persian Letters. However, the narrator’s perspective strongly inflects the outsider’s perspective on Britain from the moment of arrival:

At length they rose, like a white wall along
The blue sea’s border; and Don Juan felt –
What even young strangers feel a little strong
At the first sight of Albion’s chalky belt –
A kind of pride that he should be among
Those haughty shopkeepers, who sternly dealt
Their goods and edicts out from pole to pole
And made the very billows pay them toll. (DJ, X: 65)

Dover presents a reminder of local attachment to the narrator, which is projected unto
“even young strangers” such as Don Juan. Don Juan’s “pride” of appropriating British
civilization is undercut by his eccentric—presumably Napoleonic—view of the British
as “haughty shopkeepers,” exposing the ruthless commercial and imperialist practices
that underpin the patriotic “pride” of the locals. Juan’s enjoyment of “Albion’s earlier
beauties” is spoiled by Dover’s “long, long bills where nothing is deducted” (DJ X:
69:8). As Jerome Christensen observes, Britain in the “English” cantos is the land where
all social relations are reduced to what Thomas Carlyle later describes as the cash nexus:
“Money is integrally the being of the England to which Don Juan returns, a country
where, it would seem, only cash matters” (302). However, other phenomena might also
appear alien to an outsider. Leila’s perspective defamiliarizes Canterbury Cathedral:

And being told it was a ‘God’s house,’ she said
He was well lodged, but only wondered how
He suffered infidels in his homestead,
The cruel Nazarenes, who had laid low
His holy temples in the lands which bred
The true believers; and her infant brow
Was bent with grief that Mahomet should resign
A mosque so noble, flung like pearls to swine. (DJ X: 75)

When Juan and Leila arrive at Dover accompanied by the narrator, the perspectives of major European cultures and religions converge in the poem: Catholicism and Spain, Islam and Turkey, Orthodox Christianity and Russia, Protestantism and England. Leila’s perspective illustrates how the eighteenth-century Occidentalist accounts bolstered cultural relativism and cosmopolitanism by highlighting the ideological cohesion of European civilization. Whereas for Leila the English appear indistinguishable from the barbaric Russians, the Christian and Western European Juan views the cathedral as “of course sublime” (DJ, X: 74,1). In Leila’s imaginative geography, England and Canterbury represent the West and are peripheral to civilization, whereas in Juan’s Spanish-Russian perspective from the vantage point of European peripheries—continually undermined by the narrator’s ec-centric perspective on British civilization—they are central. Leila’s and Juan’s varying responses suggest that the concept of Britain as a center of civilization is a construct that relies on the validation from Europe’s own peripheries rather than from its Oriental other.

This appositional relationship between Britain and the Continent becomes increasingly complicated as Don Juan, the “young stranger,” arrives in London. Byron’s friends, apprehensive about the moral influence of Don Juan, suggested that he send him to hell, while Byron considered having him guillotined in the French Revolution instead.
Although critics agree that Byron did not have any definitive plan for the poem, it is ironic that the last finished cantos attack the moralistic critics on their own soil. When Don Juan enters London, he gets out of his carriage on Shooter’s hill and “lost in wonder of so great a nation,” relaxes the vigilance essential for the tourist’s survival on the Continent:

‘And here,’ he cried,’ is Freedom’s chosen station.
Here peals the people’s voice, nor can entomb it
Racks, prisons, inquisitions…
‘Here are chaste wives, pure lives. Here people pay
But what they please…
Here laws are all inviolate; none lay
Traps for the traveller; every highway’s clear.
Here’—interrupted by a knife,
With ‘Damn your eyes! Your money or your life!’

(DJ, XI: 9-10)

Juan’s praise of Britain mirrors the middle-class ideology that produces the images of the Continent in Gothic novels; the nation is free of inquisition, dungeons, illicit love, and banditti. The attack of highway robbers, who consider Juan an “‘ere bloody Frenchman,” or a generic foreigner, materially shatters Juan’s illusion (DJ, XI: 13, 8), yet he makes a comical attempt to account for the discrepancy through cultural relativism: “‘Perhaps,’ thought he, ‘it is the country’s wont to welcome foreigners in this way…”(DJ, XI: 15:1-2). Juan successfully defends himself, shooting one of the robbers with his pistol. The
dying Tom “from his swelling throat untie[s]/ A kerchief, crying ‘Give Sal that!’” (DJ XI: 401, 8), a legacy missed by Juan who “did not understand a word/ Of English, save their shibboleth ‘God Damn!’”(DJ, XI: 12, 1-2). The narrator’s eulogy to Tom is written in the flash dialect of London underworld, which suggests that even if Juan had understood English, the communication would have failed:

Poor Tom was once a kiddy upon town,  
A thorough varmint and a real swell,  
Full flash, all fancy, until fairly diddled,  
His pockets first and then his body riddled. …

He [Juan] from the world had cut off a great man,  
Who in his time had made heroic bustle.  
Who in a row like Tom could lead the van,  
Booze in the ken or at the spellken hustle?  
Who queer a flat? Who (spite of Bow Street’s ban)  
On the high toby spice so flash the muzzle?  
Who on the lark with black-eyed Sal (his blowing)  
So prime, so swell, so nutty, and so knowing?

(DJ, XI: 17:5-8; XI: 19: 1-8).

The defamiliarizing critique of Britain from a foreigner’s perspective is undercut by the complicity between the knowing British narrator and his reading public. The ironic edge of the “eulogy” is not aimed at Tom and characters like him, but at the circumscribed environment that produces them. Jerome Christensen suggests that the encounter with the
highwayman reflects the exiled aristocrat’s affiliation with the uprooted folk, a group, like nobility, marginalized by the solidifying middle class ideology:

Tom is an example of the folk already uprooted, of those urban dispossessed who will later be named the proletariat. … Byron’s linkages with the folk, first forged in his maiden speech in the House of Lords, designates a mutual degradation by contemporaneity that leaves them equally unfit to face the future grasped by the novel and by political economy. (309)

While pointing to the problems of the British class system, Byron’s use of flash dialect also fragments the imaginative linguistic unity of the nation. Byron’s “[h]opes of being remembered in his line/ With [his] land’s language,” requires him to prove himself an insider familiar with its myriad of local forms (CH, IV: 76-78). Byron’s apparent facility in using the dialect proves his local attachment to England, which is untroubled by linguistic variety.24 While in Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage and The Giaour the idiosyncracies of foreign languages were relegated to the footnotes as eccentric information, slang, the proof of Byron’s local attachment to England, is “at home” in the text of Don Juan.

When Juan, a character of mobility, becomes an insider in Regency high society, the setting relocates from London to a Norman Abbey (Cantos XIII-XVII), while the mode of critiquing the British establishment shifts from eighteenth-century mock-Occidentalism to a parody of the Gothic novel akin to Jane Austen’s Northanger Abbey. The gothic mansion discussed in the introduction to this Chapter is the summer residence of the Amundevilles, an “old, old monastery once, and now/ Still older mansion of rich
and rare/ Mixed Gothic” that “lies perhaps a little low” but embosomed in a happy valley,/Crowned by high woodlands” (DJ, XIII: 55-56). This “Gothic pile,” complete with a “Druid oak” and a “lucid lake” is also a replica of Newstead Abbey, so the poem literally revisits Byron’s home in Cantos XIII-VI (DJ, XIII: 56, 57, 59).

The “English” cantos are framed with reflection on the substance of things, and the narrator’s irony attacks the discrepancy between Juan’s illusion and British reality. In the close-knit society at the Abbey, Don Juan gets entangled in the amorous plotting of Adeline Amundeville, charmed by the cold beauty of Catholic Aurora Raby, and ultimately, just before the poem breaks off, ensnared in the embrace of the Duchess of Fitz-Fulke. The narrator proceeds through detailed descriptions of social intrigues and dinners to explained supernatural in the style of Ann Radcliffe: “Besides my business is to dress society/ And stuff with sage that very verdant goose./ And now that we may furnish with some matter all/ Tastes we are going to try the supernatural” (DJ, XV: 5-8). In comparison with his Romantic contemporaries, Byron’s poetry has a materialist bent, and his mockery of supernaturalism helps keep him out of Abrams’s canon of British Romanticism. Radcliffe’s explained supernatural suits Byron’s purposes in satirizing medievalism as an instrument of Romantic nationalism and attacking middle-class morality as a basis of British imperialism. In a final return to the ancestral hall, Juan encounters a ghost of a monk:

[He] went forth

Into a gallery of sombre hue,

Long, furnished with old pictures of great worth,
Of knights and dames heroic and chaste too,
As doubtless should be people of great birth.
But by dim lights the portraits of the dead
Have something ghastly, desolate, and dread. (DJ, XVI: 17)
When suddenly he heard, or thought so, nigh,
A supernatural agent or a mouse,
Whose little nibbling rustle will embarrass
Most people as it plays along the arras.
It was no mouse, but lo! A monk arrayed
In cowl and beads and dusky garb appeared,
Now in the moonlight and now lapsed in shade,
With steps that trod as heavy, yet unheard;
His garments only a slight murmur made.
He moved as shadowy as the sisters weird,
But slowly, and as he passed Juan by,
Glanced, without pausing, on him a bright eye. (DJ, XVI: 20, 21)

Juan is terrified, “[feels] his hair/ Twine like a knot of snakes around his face,” and loses his appetite for food and romance (DJ, XVI: 23, 5-6). After the sighting of the monk, the shaken Juan picks up a newspaper and peruses “an article the king attacking,” which “savour[s] of this world” (DJ, XVI: 26, 27). The company vainly questions him the next day, and teasingly, Adeline sings the tale of the Black Friar with the accompaniment of her harp. The opening of the song echoes the exoticism of Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan*:
Beware! Beware of the Black Friar!

Who sitteth by Norman stone,

For he mutters his prayer in the midnight air

And his mass of the days that are gone.

When the Lord of Amundeville,

Made Norman Church his prey

And expelled the friars, one friar still

Would not be driven away.

(DJ, XVI: 40, 9-16)

Whereas the newspaper anchors Juan in contemporary England, the ballad invents a past that solidifies the nation. 26 Contrasted with the Swiss “calentures of music,” which echo Romantic nationalism in Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, the narrator’s ironic comparison to the “[h]eart ballads of green Erin or grey Highlands” exposes Adeline’s ballad as a construct and an appropriation, which links Adeline with other harpists who exploit the past, as in the case of Madame de Staël’s Corinne, or the peasantry, as in the case of Austen’s Mary Crawford in Mansfield Park, for the purposes of self-representation. In Northanger Abbey, Austen ridicules the idea that a Gothic villain could get away with murder in the civilized English countryside. Byron also parodies Radcliffe, but by realizing, not undercutting the subversive potential of her Gothic novel, which encourages readers like Catherine Moreland to assume a link between the social abuses taking place on the Continent and in Britain. Juan’s ghost is exposed as a lady who uses the disguise in search of sexual adventure: “Back fell the sable frock and dreary cowl/
And they revealed, alas, that ere they should/ In full, voluptuous, but not o’ergrown bulk,/ The phantom of her frolic Grace – Fitz-Fulke!” (DJ XVI: 123, 5-8). As Jerome Christensen points out, the “o’ergrown bulk” of the Duchess is a reflection of the “double figure” of a peasant girl earlier in the Canto, a connection that subverts the middle class ideology that leads Juan to equate Englishness with chaste women (350). Byron adapts the explained supernatural to a domestic setting, using a replica of his own ancestral residence, his former place of local attachment, to show that General Tilneys and promiscuous wives may also lurk in the English countryside.

The “English” cantos of Don Juan fulfill the promise of return, if not the ideological message of the epigraph to Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage. Byron employs the othering discourses of British travelers, orientalism and medievalism, to parody the complacencies of his native island. This feat of Romantic irony strives for results akin to those Byron attributes to Cervantes, who “smiled Spain’s chivalry away;/ a single laugh demolished the right arm/ Of his country” (DJ, XIII, 11, 1-3). Unlike de Monbron’s cosmopolitan, whose travel leads to an imperialist sense of superiority, the eccentric narrator of Don Juan returns to laugh at the discrepancies between Romantic nationalism and the local cultures that it consumes, between the perceived moral centrality of Britain and the actual peripheral position of the British Isles.
Nationalists, Tourists, and Satirists:
The Conflicted Legacy of Byron’s Continental Settings

In the final entry of his journal written shortly before his death in Greece, Byron returns to themes of heroism and fame that preoccupied him in his early lyrics in a poem titled “On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year”:

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some Volcanic Isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze
A funeral pile!

…

But ‘tis not thus – and ‘tis not here
Such thoughts should shake my Soul, nor now
Where Glory decks the hero’s bier

Or binds his brow.
The Sword, the Banner, and the Field,
Glory and Greece around us see!
The Spartan borne upon his shield
Was not more free!

…
Awake (not Greece – she is awake!)

Awake my Spirit!

Think through whom

Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake

And then strike home!

...

Seek out – less often sought than found –

A Soldier’s Grave, for thee the best;

Then look around, and choose thy Ground,

And take thy Rest!

After the eccentric search for the “here” and “now,” Byron’s poetry finds a resting place and a local attachment in Greece, a new object of Romantic nationalism. Byron’s opus moves between the categories of local attachment and eccentricity, nationalism and cosmopolitanism, instead of evolving from one type of affiliation into the other, as we could conclude by comparing Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage and Don Juan. This mobility between the two different attitudes to place affects the legacy of Byron’s continental settings. The attitudes of local attachment are appropriated by continental nationalists, particularly in Eastern Europe, and Victorian tourists, whereas the eccentric, satirical critique of Britain from continental vantage points continues in the literary tradition, particularly in the work of William Makepeace Thackeray.

In his Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Cairo, a title that associates domestic preoccupations and exotic locations like Don Juan, William Makepeace Thackeray
retraces Byron’s “grander tour” with a group of British tourists. When the tour makes a
stop at Athens, Thackeray, disgusted with the filth and vermin of the liberated Greek
capital, accuses Lord Byron of insincerity:

That man never wrote from his heart. He got up rapture and enthusiasm with an
eye to the public; -- but this is dangerous ground, even more dangerous than to
look Athens full in the face, and say that your eyes are not dazzled by its beauty.
The Great Public admires Greece and Byron; the public knows best, Murray’s
‘Guide Book’ calls the latter ‘our native bard.’ Our native bard! (76).

Paradoxically, Byron’s quest for authenticity spawned Murray’s guidebooks, which were
peppered with quotations from Byron’s poetry, making originality of perception and
representation increasingly unattainable for mid-Victorian tourists as well as travel
writers. Regardless of his dismissal of Byron, Thackeray is indebted to the poet in his use
of two-pronged satire that simultaneously attacks the British and the continentals, his
experimentation with narratorial personae, and his representation of the Continent as a
stage for resolving British class issues.27 Thackeray’s acrimony in Athens is fueled by the
Victorian tourists’ appropriation of Byronic attitudes rather than by Byron’s own politics,
for in fact the mid-Victorians inherited Byron’s sympathy with continental nationalist
movements.
NOTES

1 Caroline Franklin informs us that “Ann Radcliffe…had been staying in the Nottingham area when she was writing The Romance of the Forest (1791). She had been inspired by Newstead and the stories she heard about the ‘Wicked Lord’ in depicting the ruined abbey and its libertine proprietor which feature in one of her most popular Gothic novels. The local people told tales of the old lord practising Satanism in the miniature castle; that he had once thrown his wife into the lake; that he had shot his own coachman and put the corpse inside the coach with his wife and driven it off himself. … Byron probably did not know that Newstead had provided the model for Radcliffe’s haunted abbey. So it is doubly ironic that he viewed his family heritage through a gothic lens”(6).

2 In “Narcissus Jilted: Byron, Don Juan, and the Biographical Imperative,” Cecil Y. Lang’s reading of Byron’s poetry highlights the importance of biographical context and traces Byron’s “love affair with himself that began with Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage [and] ended with his jilting in Don Juan” (176).

3 For a discussion of Byron’s complex affiliations with Scotland, see Byron and Scotland: Radical or Dandy?, edited by Angus Calder (Edinburgh University Press, 1989).

4 Andrew Noble sums up how class and national affiliations complicated Byron’s politics: “If…Byron was rendered impotent as a revolutionary by his bonds of birth and ideology to the Whig elitist cause, it is also true that his problem of class was intensified by his Scottishness. …It is not the least of the successes of the imperial enterprise: to convert their most feared eighteenth-century adversaries into the sharpest cutting edge of its nineteenth century overseas conquests. It is extraordinary to find Byron lending his name to the cause [by taking a pro-Unionist position]. It is absurd when we consider that in Italy, Albania and Greece he lent his name, money and energies to succouring European national movements not his own. …”(37-38).

5 In the review of Hours of Idleness, published in January 1808, Henry Brougham ridicules Byron’s artistic aspiration, aristocratic pretension, and Scottish affiliation: “It is a sort of privilege of poets to be egotists; but they should ‘use it as not abusing it;’ and particularly one who piques himself…of being ‘an infant bard’…should either not know, or should seem not to know so much about his ancestry. Besides a poem above cited on
the family seat of the Byrons, we have another of eleven pages on the self-same subject...There is a good deal also about his maternal ancestors, in a poem on Lachin-y-gair, a mountain where he spent part of his youth, and might have learned that *pibroch* is not a bagpipe, any more than duet means a fiddle. ...We are well off to have got so much from a man of this Lord’s station, who does not live in a garret, but ‘has the sway’ of Newstead Abbey” (*RR*, B, II: 835).

6 I borrow the term “local attachment” from Alan D. McKillop’s essay on “Local Attachment and Cosmopolitanism: The Eighteenth-Century Pattern.” The manifestations of local attachment include *heimweh*, the nostalgia suffered by Swiss troops when hearing the tunes of their home country, which came to be identified with simple virtue by the end of the eighteenth century when the ideal of cosmopolitanism meant appreciation for the varieties of local attachment (203).

7 Bechler discusses the motivations for Byron’s first continental journey in terms of his insecure status as an aristocrat. As a result, the noble traveler aims at self-aggrandizement through travel writing: “What then follows is the conversion of a vast range of cultural reference into a single biography”(52). Bechler suggests that Byron’s travel writing produces a type of hero: “Byron, a total stranger, rather than the modern inhabitant of that land, is the ‘true-born son of Greece.’ It is this heroic figure that announces himself in the portraits of Byron in Suliot dress, or Byron landing from a boat as sublime as the mountains in the backdrop”(59).

8 See James Buzard’s *The Beaten Track*, pp. 115-130, for an account of Byron’s impact on Victorian tourism.

9 Martin suggests that the demand for Byron’s poetry was driven by the needs of the expanding reading public: “[T]hrough the demands of a society obsessed by fashion and under the influence of the newspapers and reviews, it was a public accustomed to granting an implicit value to novelty...[W]e can conclude that this [middle-class] readership was predominantly uninformed, or voluntarily undiscriminating” (39).

10 On February 28, 1811, Byron writes to Hanson: “I beg leave to repeat my negative to your proposal about Newstead.—If we must sell, sell Rochdale.—I have no opinion of funded property, admitting that there were no other reasons against selling. – One thing is certain, if I should ever be induced to sell N— I will pass my life abroad.—If I retain it, I return, if not, I stay where I am” (*BLJ*, ii: 41).

11 According to Maria Todorova, the term “Balkan Penninsula” was first coined by the German geographer August Zeune in his 1808 work “Goea” and first used by a British traveler named Walsh, who, writing in 1827, mentioned that the bishops in this region were always Greeks, and used their own language as the liturgical language ‘in the Balkans” (25). It is significant that Byron’s travel to the region took place between 1808 and 1827, which indicates his contribution to the naming of the Balkans.
It is remarkable that Byron considers the Albanian women “the most beautiful women [he] ever beheld,” drawing on the example of ones “[they saw levelling the road broken down by the torrents between Delvinachi and Libochabo” (McGann 89). Byron’s example of hard-working women seems to both illustrate and reevaluate Hobhouse’s description of Albanian women as “tall and strong, and not ill looking; but bearing in their countenances all the marks of wretchedness, of bad treatment, and hard labour” (133).

Hobhouse describes the whole inventory of their baggage, which suggests that he and Byron were less adventurous than some other travelers and that the European East was in some ways considered less civilized than Asia Minor: “Besides four large leathern trunks, we had a canteen, which is quite indispensable; three beds, with bedding, and two light wooden bedsteads. The latter article some travellers do not carry with them; but it contributes to so much comfort and health, as to be very recommendable. We heard, indeed, that in Asiatic Turkey you cannot make use of bedsteads, being always lodged in the hans or inns; but in Europe, where you put up in cottages and private houses, they are always serviceable, preserving you from vermin, and the damp of mud floors, and possessing advantages which overbalance the evils caused by the delays of half an hour in packing and taking them to pieces” (27).

“Any general revolution of the Greeks, independent of foreign aid, is quite impracticable…most of the higher classes...[are] willing to acquiesce…” (597) Or elsewhere he writes on the character of the modern Greeks: “The Greeks have in many instances shown a desperate frenzy in distress, and a sanguinary ferocity in prosperity, but are certainly not at all notorious for that cool, determined courage, which is necessary for the accomplishment of any great action. They are light, inconstant, and treacherous, exceedingly subtle in all their dealings, and remarkable for a total ignorance of the propriety of adhering to truth” (598).

See, for example, Phillip W. Martin, A Poet Before His Public (1982).

As Jerome Christensen points out, Hobhouse’s departure “is ultimately less important for allowing Byron to have the [homosexual experience] than it is enabling Byron to represent the experience” (59).

Jerome Christensen’s commentary on the Eusthatius episode suggests that Byron equates political and sexual liberation/repression: “In Lord Byron’s eyes it is that repression, not some intrinsic desire of his own, that constitutes Eusthatius as an equivocal being – Greek and boy, male and female, political victim and sexual object – of novel allure. The Turkish occupation of Greek soil is homologous with the parasol covering Eustathius’s fair skin…” (55). Thus, Christensen argues that Byron’s liberation is a type of colonization (57).
For example, in a letter to his mother, Byron writes: “Besides the perpetual lamentations after beef and beer, the stupid bigoted contempt for every thing foreign, and insurmountable incapacity of acquiring even a few words of any language, rendered him like all other English servants, an incumbrance” (*BLJ*, i: 34).

Jerome McGann discusses the impact of Italian poetry in the conception of the poem in *Don Juan in Context*.

Jerome Christensen considers the Siege of Ishmail episode of *Don Juan* the ultimate “Orientalist vision of the Westerner” and the “attribution of the power to the West and virtue to the East” (315). Given Byron’s characterization of Russia, I would argue that this section juxtaposes two versions of the East, suggesting the relativity of the concept of Orient.

Cecil Lang traces Byron’s literary sources for the Russian setting, see pp. 162-163.


Yet, Byron’s use of the slang is parodic, and hence of necessity derivative or imitative. Caroline Franklin points out that “it is difficult not to imagine” that Byron had not read radical Hone’s “spoof cantos” of *Don Juan* and “was riposting when he did eventually bring Juan to London and revelled in concocting an elegy for a dead highwayman in Regency flash slang” (139). Franklin also points out that thanks to the circulation of pirated editions, the poem found “a new readership of working-class and lower-middle class readers avid for Byron’s poetry at an affordable price” (139) and “signal[ed] its affinity with the radicals in its very textual devices,” including the “criminal argot” of Canto XI (141).

In *Don Juan in Context*, Jerome McGann suggests that Byron’s version of the explained supernatural illustrates the poet’s philosophy of knowledge, which I believe also applies to his approach to understanding cultures and constructing settings: “The beginning of any answer to uncertainty is not the construction of a total and encompassing systematic but the careful examination of all the contradictory evidence. …For Byron, fictional resources are the means for constructing designs which can manipulate varieties of material in order to clarify relationships. Imagination is Byron’s way to ‘take it to pieces,’ in order to see *(a)* what there is to be seen (all or as much as possible); *(b)* what there is that you see, and *(c)* what there is that you think you see. What you do not see emerges from the praxis of these encounters, and then itself becomes subject to the scrutinizing understanding” (138).

The two textual products are integral to two major theories of nationalism. Benedict Anderson, who views nations as modern, privileges the newspaper as a means of connecting a nation, whereas Katie Trumpener puts emphasis on the efforts of antiquarians, who, among other things, collected folk ballads. See Trumpener’s
“Introduction” for her discussion of the origins of nationalism, pp. 19-34.

27 As James Buzard points out, “once the scandalous embodiment of anti-British cosmopolitanism, Byron had attained the station of an inescapable British stereotype,” helping self-designated, sophisticated travelers to distinguish themselves from their tourist compatriots (Buzard 129).
In mid-Victorian travel narratives of European travel, domestic problems tend to cloud continental vistas, and the more socially sensitive writers call attention to the parallels between home and abroad. Irritated by the callous responses of his fellow tourists to the conditions of Italy’s most scenic but also most despotically ruled places, Dickens calls for a “new picturesque” in his *Pictures from Italy* (1846). Both in his travel book and in his letter to John Forster, Dickens juxtaposes continental social phenomena with British ones, linking St. Giles’s and Porta Capuana, or the English “lower orders” and the Neapolitan lazzaroni:

[Lovers] and hunters of the picturesque, let us not keep too studiously in view, the miserable depravity, degradation, and wretchedness, with which this gay Neapolitan life is inseparably associated! It is not so well to find Saint Giles’s so repulsive and the Porta Capuana so attractive. A pair of naked legs and a ragged red scarf, do not make *all* the difference between what is interesting and what is coarse and odious? Painting and poetising forever, if you will, the beauties of this
most beautiful and lovely spot of earth, let us, as our duty, try to associate a new picturesque with some faint recognition of man’s destiny and capabilities; more hopeful, I believe, among the ice and snow of the North pole, than in the sun and bloom of Naples. (219)¹

The mid-Victorians are sensitive to the exploitation of human as well as architectural ruins. Dickens’s allusion to “a pair of naked legs and a ragged red scarf” associates the picturesque with the sowing of wild oats typical of Grand Tour travelers and made infamous by Lord Byron’s libertinism in the Romantic period, but also possibly with contemporary prostitution, which was so rampant in Victorian London.² Joseph Phelan characterizes the “new picturesque” as reflecting “new visual technologies,” being “linked to tourism rather than land ownership,” and “gravit[ating] towards urban settings rather than rural ones” (135). Malcolm Andrews observes that the Victorians also faced the ethical dilemmas of picturesque representation at home, in the slums of London: “At the end of the eighteenth century, the Picturesque was founded largely on the aesthetics of poverty, neglect and decay. By the middle of the nineteenth century, in the great cities, such a taste was hard to indulge. Poverty was at one’s doorstep, not loitering at the boundary of one’s country estate…” (288). In his novel *Sibyl: Or The Two Nations* (1845), Disraeli describes the barrier between the rich and the poor as a cross-cultural divide between “[t]wo nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other’s habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets…” (qtd. Smith 6). This acute sense of internal class division affects the British experience of continental travel.
According to the theorists of the new picturesque, a traveler observing continental cultures should not dwell on classical or medieval ruins only as signs of past glory, but also as vestiges of present social wrongs. In *Modern Painters*, John Ruskin makes a famous distinction between the treatment of architectural ruins in England and on the Continent:

We, in England, have our new street, our new inn, our green shaven lawn, and our piece of ruin emergent from it,— a mere specimen of the Middle Ages put on a bit of velvet carpet to be shown…But, on the Continent, the links are unbroken between the past and present, and, in such use as they can serve for, the grey-headed wrecks are suffered to stay with men; while, in unbroken line, the generations of spared buildings are seen succeeding each in its place. (12)

Ruskin denounces modern detachment, the English tendency to sanitize the human elements of the Picturesque, which is based on “the entire denial of all human calamity and care” and fails to recognize “the picturesqueness in […] unconscious suffering,— the look that an old labourer has, not knowing that there is anything pathetic in his grey hair, and withered arms, and sunburnt chest…”(15). In spite of Ruskin’s emphasis on the human element of the “noble” Picturesque, human figures are equally marginal in his examples of the “modern” and the “Turnerian” Picturesque (Fig. 7). In his verbal contrast of the two mills, Ruskin focuses on the emotional involvement of the artists rather than the presence of human agents in their paintings.³ Although Ruskin is more concerned with the architectural than the human ruin, his formulation of the “noble” picturesque informs mid-Victorian responses to continental travel. The quintessential ruin that
inspired Lord Byron’s egocentric self-designation as a “ruin amidst ruins” in Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage leads Charles Dickens to sigh with relief that the Coliseum is “GOD be thanked, a ruin!” (Pictures 164). It is not merely anti-Catholicism that makes Dickens wish that the Palace of the Inquisition in Avignon – visited on the way to Italy – disappear off the face of the earth: “If I had seen it [the Palace of the Inquisition] in a blaze from ditch to rampart, I should have felt that not that light, nor all the light in all the fire that burns, could waste it, like the sunbeams in its secret council-chamber, and its prisons” (Pictures 60). Dickens associates the Papal Palace with the Bastille, drawing on recognizably Gothic imagery reminiscent of the commentaries on the French Revolution by travel writers such as Helen Maria Williams. However, the crucial difference between the radicals of the 1790s and Dickens is that for the latter the light of the purifying fire is not that of revolution but of the more gradually transforming power of progress. Continental ruins come to represent the old order, and so middle class writers like Dickens turn their attention to living cultures—at least in their travel writing.

The realist novel reflects a similar trend, but it focuses primarily on domestic life. In “The Natural History of German Life” (1856), George Eliot reviews the ethnographical studies of the German scholar Wilhelm Riehl to formulate the ideal of “pedestrian” or participant observation, which she considers a prerequisite for writing a realist novel: “[O]ur social novels profess to represent the people as they are, and the unreality of their representations is a grave evil. The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension our sympathies”(263). At the same time, Eliot praises Goethe’s “lofty point of observation” as opposed to the attitudes of the
Figure 7: "The Picturesque of Windmills: Pure Modern and Turnerian." From John Ruskin's *Modern Painters*.
“Philister,” “who judges the affairs of the nation from the parochial point of view, and does not hesitate to measure the merits of the universe from the human point of view” (292). Eliot’s essay shows how the mid-Victorian ideal of social critique combines situatedness and detachment—conflicting attitudes that also vex the ideal of cosmopolitanism. In theory, travel provides opportunities for the new picturesque as well as for participant observation, but the conditions of continental tourism thwart the mid-Victorian writers’ aspirations to sympathetic representation. Participant observation of a foreign culture is virtually impossible because the writers are besieged by crowds of British tourists. In practice, the “new” or “noble” picturesque requires cosmopolitan detachment that enables the traveler to recognize parallels or contrasts between home and abroad. Such comparisons, however, inevitably use England as a constant point of reference, frustrating the desire for sympathetic identification required for a departure from the “old” or “surface” picturesque. This paradox is more pronounced in fictional than in non-fictional narratives, for the realist novel traditionally focuses on nation building and the condition of England. In my comparative analysis of non-fictional travel narratives and fictional settings by William Makepeace Thackeray and Charles Dickens, I examine the writers’ attempts at resolving the paradox of the new picturesque in their novels. In their non-fictional accounts of Italy, both Thackeray and Dickens voice their frustrations about the impossibility of representing Italy and making contact with the Italians. To imaginatively escape the constraints of the tourist experience, they create
characters who are capable of “innocent” travel, which, however, does not point to a more cosmopolitan future, but harkens back to the more xenophobic and nationalist past.

In *The Newcomes*, Thackeray’s Clive Newcome takes a conventional Grand Tour and comfortably settles in a circle of British artists who paint Italians as figures rather than characters. In Dickens’s *Little Dorrit*, Amy Dorrit’s experience of the debtors’ prison enables her to function as a sympathetic observer of the Italian poor, but also as a solitary Romantic traveler in the midst of the tourist crowd. I argue that the aspiration to new picturesque cosmopolitanism, already problematic in the writers’ non-fiction, completely fails in the novels, which highlight the fundamental insulation of Britain from the Continent. To illustrate the limits of mid-Victorian cosmopolitanism, I analyze a novel by Giovanni Ruffini, an exiled Italian patriot who wrote in English imitating Dickens and Thackeray. Although Ruffini stereotypes both his English and his Italian characters, his fictional vision includes a cross-cultural dialogue in an Anglo-Italian romance unimaginable in the work of British mid-Victorians.

The combination of cosmopolitan aspirations and insular attitudes in mid-Victorian travel narratives is conditioned by British foreign policy as well as by the economic and political relations between Britain and the Continent. The rise of mass tourism, accelerated by the expansion of the railway system on the Continent, brought the British and the continentals into closer contact. At the same time, the British were increasingly conscious of their distinction from the continentals. Whereas continental systems were shaken by the revolutionary events of 1848, Britain emerged comparatively unscathed. Britons were further reassured in the prosperity of their economy and the
stability of their social institutions by the success of the Great Exhibition of 1851, which, in spite of concerns in the wake of 1848, peacefully brought together visitors from all corners of Europe. Bernard Porter argues that the mid-Victorians attributed the superiority of Britain over continental countries to the “spirit and principle of [their] social institutions” rather than to any racial or cultural differences (1). Porter points out that in the mid-Victorian period, British foreign policy in Europe was dominated by aristocrats, who protested the introduction of middle-class meritocracy into the delicate “game” of diplomacy. Whereas the middle classes were contemptuous of the bureaucratic “functionarism” they encountered on the Continent, the nobility maintained affinities with the old order still lingering on the Continent. For the British aristocrats, “[n]owhere in the world was more important than Europe. Europe was the world. The rest was periphery” (Porter 8). Nevertheless, Britain’s trade interests required the preservation of peace in Europe and thus isolationism in relation to continental countries with territorial aspirations and larger standing armies. Even the Crimean War of 1854, which interrupted forty years of peace in Europe, was, as Porter argues, “not European from Britain’s point of view,” because the only possible motivation for Britain’s involvement was to “check Russian expansion toward Asia” (26). In contrast, foreign policy towards the rest of the world was characterized by a sort of internationalism, “dedicated to eroding the barriers between all nations” for the sake of free trade (17). The predominantly complacent British attitudes toward the Continent and the non-European world were thus also divided according to class affiliations or aspirations in the 1850s.

This chapter focuses on narratives of Italy, the country which, once accessible
only to the most privileged Grand Tour travelers, became the most popular destination of Victorian tourists. James Buzard succinctly describes the class solidifying function of travel in the Victorian period:

Whereas the Grand Tour had identified its participant with the world-historical destinies of his class, modern tourism would have to aid its new practitioners in an effort to transcend—imaginarily, at least—the limits of class identification altogether… Where the Grand Tourist had enacted a repetitive ritual of classicism and class solidarity, his nineteenth-century counterpart, self-consciously treading the Grand Tourist’s well-beaten path in the midst of inevitable compatriots, would lay claim to an aristocracy of feeling, the projection of an ideology of originality and difference. (121-122)⁸

The accounts of Italy best demonstrate the shift in the predominant ideologies of identification and modes of representation that had taken place in fictional travel narratives since Ann Radcliffe and Lord Byron. For Radcliffe the Continent was virtually inaccessible and she based her imaginary Italy on travel accounts and paintings. Lord Byron, at least in his initial post-Waterloo contact with the Continent, assumed the position of an explorer, which allowed him to invest his continental settings with an illusion of authenticity. In contrast, mid-Victorian writers in Italy, keenly aware of their belatedness and beleaguered by crowds of compatriots who follow Murray and ape Byron, adopt a more contemporary focus and embrace a semblance of realism. Thackeray, tongue firmly planted in his cheek, hails Murray’s guidebook as “[his] guide, philosopher, and friend” (203) in Little Travels and Roadside Sketches, while Dickens
refers his readers for information to Mr. Murray’s “Guidebook” with ironic appreciation in *Pictures from Italy* (50). In spite of the extensive guidebook coverage and the mass tourism, travel books on Italy continued to be written, published and read. According to John Pemble the lasting appeal of the Mediterranean, which the Victorians inherited from previous generations, promised more than a pleasant climate or spiritual renewal; it represented a return to the center of civilization:

> The Mediterranean afflatus was inexhaustible, and the reason was that the journey south was a rite of passage. At the limit of olive cultivation the British traveller was conscious of crossing a frontier whose significance was far deeper than that of the Channel or the Rhine. On the threshold of the South he experienced an apotheosis. He passed from the circumference to the centre of things, and his thoughts dwelt on roots, origins, essentials and ultimate affinities. (Pemble 8)

It is true that the Victorians continued to view Italy as a stage for an individual “rite of passage” and occasionally as a center of European civilization which put Britain in a peripheral position (8). However, the concept of Italy as a stage for personal and national self-actualization for the British is also continually tested or even contested in the travel writing of the 1850s, and Italian settings are pushed to the margins of major Victorian novels. While in *The Newcomes*, Clive’s travel to Italy highlights his failure to mature, in *Little Dorrit*, Amy remains morally superior to the other characters because Italy does not change her. In both novels, the Italian setting functions as a backdrop and the characters’ perception of the natives as figures rather than agents falls short of new picturesque cosmopolitanism. This fictional erasure of Italians as agents is significant, because the
publication of these realist novels coincides with dramatic developments in the Italian nationalist movement.

The “Risorgimento,” or the movement for “resurgent” Italy, originated in the same late eighteenth-century crisis of the ancien régime that sparked the French Revolution. The nationalist movement grew stronger during the French invasions and occupations of the 1790s and 1800s, and gained wider support after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, which established the so-called Restoration governments dominated by Austria. In the British public opinion of the 1850s, the Italian Question invests the country with contemporary significance, leading to increased contact between British intellectuals and Italian exiles in London, culminating in the British support for Italian unification in 1859-60. Continental nationalist movements were supported by the British, particularly the liberals, because they opposed autocratic regimes. Mazzini, the founder of the “Young Italy” movement that “gave romantic nationalism a concrete political agenda,” was driven to exile in London after a series of failed uprisings in 1848-9 (Riall 67). Mazzini’s republicanism appeared subversive to British authorities, and he gained great publicity and won influential friends when he found that the Home Office opened his letters in 1844.10 In Britain as well as elsewhere in Europe, national self-determination was supported by liberal public opinion and “became associated with political stability rather than with revolutionary upheaval” in the 1850s (Riall 68). The liberation of Italy became a “gospel of a generation” in Britain, leading to the establishment of The People’s International League in 1847, the Society of the Friends of Italy in 1851, and the celebration of Garibaldi as a hero in Britain (Pemble 10). Any assessment of the mid-
Victorian representations of Italy in travel and novel writing must therefore take into account the increased intensity and frequency of Anglo-Italian encounters.

Dickens’s writing on Italy illustrates the evolving awareness of Italian culture and politics among Victorian intellectuals and the general public in the 1840-50s, while also suggesting how and why fictional and non-fictional representations generate different Italies. Through both his contacts with Italian exiles in England and his journey to Italy, Dickens came to sympathize with the Italian Risorgimento, or the cause of Italian nationalism. In 1842, Dickens met Antonio Gallenga, who sparked his interest in Italian culture and became his Italian tutor. In 1855, he hired another patriot, Daniele Manin as a tutor for his daughters. Manin was the founder of the Italian National Society (1857), which played a crucial role in shifting nationalist politics from revolutionary conspiracy “toward the respectability of ‘public’ parliamentary and journalistic debate” (Riall 72).

Dickens’s travels in Italy in 1844-45 and 1853 were actuated by the conventional desire for a leisurely escape from the pressures of productivity in Britain, but also by the promise of inspiration. In the introduction to his *Pictures from Italy*, he expects the reader to attribute the “fanciful and idle air” of his travelogue to its having been “written in the shade of a Sunny Day” (36). The travel book is rabidly anti-Catholic, and Dickens blames Italy’s social problems on the oppression of the Catholic Church (Phelan 132). Dickens chooses to avoid explicit commentary on Italian politics in his travelogue, although he acknowledges “[n]o visiter of that beautiful land can fail to have strong conviction on the subject” (36). Among the hypothetical reasons for this strategic omission, critics have cited the adverse reaction to the previously published *American
Notes and the general fear of revolution and anarchy in the 1840s.\textsuperscript{12} In spite of the attack on the picturesque, Dickens nevertheless adheres to conventionally picturesque modes of representation in *Pictures from Italy*. In his examination of Dickens’s employment of the “new picturesque” in the travel book, Joseph Phelan suggests that the discourse enables the conscientious intellectuals, including George Eliot and John Ruskin, to report on social problems without offering any solutions. This use of the new picturesque is more evident in Dickens’s creative writing than in his journalistic work, *Daily News* and *Household Words*, where Dickens made more overtly political attempts to educate the public on foreign affairs, including the Italian Question. In 1860, Dickens finally represented the sufferings of Italian patriots in a more literary form in an essay titled “The Italian Prisoner” included in *The Uncommercial Traveller*. A blend of fact and fiction, this travel sketch distills the stories of the Italian patriots and celebrates British intervention as much as the Italians’ martyrdom in the dungeons of despotic governments. In light of this context, it appears significant that the only prisons in *Pictures from Italy* are the historical dungeons of the Inquisition in Avignon and the innocuous “Pink Jail,” the original residence of the Dickens family in Genoa.

In *Little Dorrit*, the only novel that draws on Dickens’s experience of Italy, the prison confines the British national imagination rather than Italian patriots, functioning as an organizing metaphor in the novel, linking the Marseilles jail and the Marshalsea prison, travel and imprisonment, the nation and the Continent. As Hilary Schor observes, “systems of reference that rely less on reported fact than on a metaphor” are typical of mid-nineteenth-century novels. (65) *Little Dorrit* is typical of Victorian fiction in that the
Continent and the non-European world remain on its margins as symbolic spaces, despite the increased internationalism of Victorian culture and politics. Whereas Amanda Anderson argues that Dickens’s *Little Dorrit* “goes some way toward advancing a radical cosmopolitanism over and against European perceptions of the cultivated traveler and the Grand Tour,” my discussion of the novel in the context of mid-Victorian travel writing highlights how it also reflects the limits of mid-Victorian cosmopolitanism (21). Free of the conventions of education but also lacking fluency in continental languages or cultures, Amy Dorrit’s cosmopolitanism is based on self-centered integrity maintained independently of location. Such an ideal of cosmopolitanism, based on the Enlightenment concept of universal humanity slightly enhanced by a feminine capacity for sympathetic identification, fails to take into account the opportunities for contact with exiles and locals available to the mid-Victorians.

As this brief account suggests, Dickens’s treatment of Italian settings varies across genres, and the narrative distance from the Continent increases with narrative and creative distance in his letters, travel writing, and fiction. The reasons for this variation may include audience awareness, as reflected in Dickens’s concern about Italian readers’ reception of *Pictures from Italy*, as well the pressure of generic conventions, intensified by the proliferation of guidebooks. More importantly though, the increasing distance from the continental realities in Dickens’s journal articles, the travelogue, and the novel reflects the discrepancy between the mid-Victorian ideal of cosmopolitanism and the growing sense of distinction from the continentals. Embracing the “new picturesque” as a focus of observation and a mode of representation is symptomatic of the travel writers’
conflicted position in relation to Britain as much as Italy.

In this chapter, I analyze *Little Dorrit*, a novel that typifies the marginal position of the Continent in mid-Victorian novels, in the context of other fictional and non-fictional representations of Italy in the 1850s. I start with a discussion of William Makepeace Thackeray’s *The Newcomes*, a novel that treats the Continent as a stage for resolving British class differences, in light of Thackeray’s accounts of the Continent in his travel letters and *The Book of Snobs*. Thackeray’s non-fictional and fictional worlds are apparently more cosmopolitan than those of Dickens, for they are replete with European characters of all classes. However, Thackeray’s predilection for caricature leads him to rely heavily on national types and cast European characters, with some exceptions, in auxiliary roles. The Orientalism of *The Newcomes*, in which the hero’s Grand Tour is supported by the earnings of his father, a Colonel who serves in India, also reveals the parallel meanings of the Continent and the non-European world in mid-Victorian fiction. My examination of *Pictures from Italy* and *Little Dorrit* suggests that as Italy comes to function more as a window onto British social issues than Britain’s continental “other” in the 1850s, both non-fictional and fictional accounts of this decade ignore the transformations of the country brought on by the Risorgimento. Thus, the Italian settings primarily serve as a backdrop for the failed *Buildungs* of their protagonists. In order to place Clive Newcome’s and Amy Dorrit’s detachment from Italian life in a broader European perspective, I conclude the Chapter with a discussion of Giovanni Ruffini’s *Doctor Antonio*, a complex response of an Italian intellectual to British tourism in Italy, which portrays a romantic Anglo-Italian encounter, which is
unimaginable in the fictional worlds of *The Newcomes* and *Little Dorrit*. Ruffini, an exiled Italian revolutionary and a follower of Mazzini, wrote in English and modeled his narrative technique on Dickens and Thackeray’s work. He offers a more cosmopolitan vision of Europe that presents an illuminating counterpart to *Little Dorrit* and *The Newcomes*. Ruffini’s novel envisions a reciprocity in inter-European relations that shows how mid-Victorian literary representations of Italy, although they question national stereotypes, fall short of their own cosmopolitan ideal.

**The Snobs and the Continent in Thackeray’s *The Newcomes***

Like Lord Byron, William Makepeace Thackeray was concerned about the social status of the professional writer and gained the reputation of a gentleman author among his contemporaries. In *The Book of Snobs* (1848) he explores “the fictional possibilities of the conflict between the aristocracy and the middle classes,” or what later became the dominant preoccupation of his major fictional works, particularly *The Newcomes* (Gilmour 37). *The Book of Snobs* includes three chapters on the British snobs on the Continent, but already in the prefatory remarks, the narrator relates how the inspiration for the book came to him in Italy:

> I have long gone about with a conviction in my mind that I had a work to do – [it] followed me in Far Lands, on Brighton’s shingly beach, or Margate’s Sand. The Voice outpiped the roaring of the Sea; it Nestles in my Nightcap, And IT Whispers, ‘Wake, Slumberer, they Work Is Not Yet Done.’ Last Year, By
Figure 8: “Wiggins at home,” “Wiggins at Boulogne,” and “Wiggins at Sea.” From W.M. Thackeray’s *The Book of Snobs*.
Moonlight, in the Colosseum, the Little Sedulous Voice Came To Me and Said,

“SMITH or JONES (The Writer’s Name is Neither Here Nor There) “SMITH, or
JONES, my fine fellow, this is all very well, but you ought to be at home writing
your great work ON SNOBS.” (4)

The fact that the presumably bourgeois muse confuses the upper-middle class Thackeray
with a SMITH or a JONES points to the pitfalls of class mobility, which are more
pronounced on the Continent, especially in Italy, a tourist destination particularly
attractive to snobs. The definition of snobbery in the book is vague, but what the
individual snobs seem to share is that they cultivate the appearance of a gentleman. In the
three chapters on Continental Snobs, Thackeray works to present continental travel as a
symptom of undesirable class mobility. “What is it that gives a traveling snob such a
marvelous propensity to rush into costume?” (107), the narrator asks after recalling
“Snobs, in pink coats and hunting boots, scouring over the Campagna in Rome; and
…their oaths and their well-known slang in the galleries of the Vatican, and under the
shadowy arches of the Colosseum” (106). An accompanying illustration juxtaposes
“Wiggins at Home,” a shopkeeper humbly serving his genteel customers, with a
bohemian “Wiggins at Boulogne” striking a Byronic pose, and the seasick “Wiggins at
Sea” (Fig. 8). The Book of Snobs is, however, narrated anonymously “By One of
Themselves” and also contains redeeming moments of self-reflection, or, more broadly,
national introspection. Thackeray distinguishes between a French nationalist, who “brags
with so much fury” that he is “at the head of civilization, the center of thought, etc.” but
all the while “has a lurking doubt in his mind that he is not the wonder he professes to
be,” and a British Snob who believes to be “the first chop of the world” with “the calmness of profound conviction” (110). The Book of Snobs exemplifies the dual effect of continental travel in Thackeray’s work of “starting off from the sense of community then rebounding upon it,” a dynamic that reflects Thackeray’s ambiguous class position (McMaster108). Robin Gilmour points out that the middle decades of the nineteenth-century were marked by a transition from the deference of “rank” to “class” as “a number of mutually antagonistic groups” (8). Mid-Victorian travelers on the Continent were propelled by the centripetal forces of nationality, clustering together in insular societies abroad, as well as by the centrifugal forces of class, contemptuously avoiding compatriots suspected of class aspirations.

Thackeray’s fiction is peopled not only with British snobs and aristocrats, but also with European characters of all classes. S.S. Prawer observes that no Victorian novelist “assembled as large a cast of foreign nationals”(2), drawing heavily on national stereotypes while also subverting them “by putting them into mouths and pens of invented characters,” “by combining them with a critique of nineteenth-century British – predominantly English – attitudes,” and by confronting them with the “spirit” of the countries observed while traveling or contemplating works of art (3-4). Thackeray’s travel writing consists of series of sketches, a mode which, as Prawer observes, “established itself as a literary form in Britain in much the same manner in which the Fragment had enthralled the German Romantics” (4). As the fragment points to a missing whole, the sketch signals the incompletion and situatedness of the artist’s perspective, revealing that the observer is “limited by his own ethnicity, upbringing, social class, and
Thackeray’s Victorian contemporaries sometimes perceived such situatedness as moral indifference—Dickens both accuses and excuses Thackeray of “having feigned a want of earnestness” (qtd. Smith 16). Thus, my reading of Thackeray’s stereotypical representations of races and nations, including the British, shows that they are both steeped in and transcend the conceptualizations of cultural difference current in his time. It is more useful to read such sketchy portraits as revealing the mid-Victorians’ failed attempts at intimacy with foreign “others” rather than directly reflecting Thackeray’s prejudices.

*The Newcomes: Memoirs of a Most Respectable Family*, published serially in 1853-55 and largely overlooked by recent criticism, achieved more popularity and critical praise among the Victorians than *Vanity Fair*. The Victorians considered the novel a successful example of domestic realism. As its title and subtitle suggest, it explores the tensions between the upper-middle class and the aristocracy, focusing its critique on the marriage of convenience. Robin Gilmour contrasts the novel with *Vanity Fair*, pointing out that it focuses less on the Regency dandy and more on social climbing (77). Although in a sense it can be considered a historical novel, for it chronicles several generations of the Newcomes, it is also a novel of domestic realism set close to the time of writing. The main plot roughly corresponds with the biography of Colonel Newcome, whose name marks both him and his more pretentious relatives as first-generation gentlemen. Besides spanning the period from the Colonel’s birth to his death, the novel also covers his genealogy, the career of his father Thomas Newcome. The founder of the line was a weaver from the North, who made his fortune in London, married his poor childhood
sweetheart, the Colonel’s mother, and, after her death, married a wealthy Evangelical widow from Clapham. As a youth, the Colonel rebels against the starchy confinements of his stepmother’s house and, after his first love affair is thwarted, escapes to India. His son is named after Lord Clive, one of the heroes of the Colonel’s favorite book on eighteenth-century British conquests in India. Although Pendennis, the narrator, declares his friend Clive Newcome, the Colonel’s son, to be the hero of the novel, Victorian readers tended to focus on the Colonel as an instance of a proper gentleman and “a triumph of characterization” (Gilmour 81). As Gilmour points out, the Colonel may well be “the most memorable last English gentleman in the literature,” illustrating the strengths and weaknesses of the “old” idea of gentleman that was under transition in the 1850s and 1860s (79). The Colonel is chivalrously pure of heart, quixotic, honest about his humble origins—in contrast to his banker brothers Hobson and Barnes—but also naïve and prejudiced.

The Newcomes, as its title indicates, is a novel about class mobility, which scrutinizes the British class system in a larger European context. The nation and the Continent come into superficial contact, both in the London society of exiles and in the Roman society of artists and tourists. In Thackeray’s satirical representation, the exiles expose the exclusiveness but also the cultural relativity of the British class hierarchy. The representation of continental travel in The Newcomes serves as a vehicle for resolving British class differences as much as for consolidating the nation in the novel. The Newcomes is sometimes described as a Buildungsroman without Buildung, which also affects the role of the Grand Tour in the novel. The Colonel dreams of his son’s Grand
Tour, to which he nostalgically attributes a class-solidifying function. However, Clive’s journey to Italy illustrates how the Grand Tour lost its educational value and prestige in the mid-Victorian period, when continental travel becomes a fundamentally alienating and insulating experience.

The Colonel’s reception in London illustrates the insularity of the capital, which excludes both continental Europeans and non-Europeans from its social hierarchy. The Anglo-Indian Colonel returns to England as an outsider – both out of place and outdated, ridiculous in his loose-fitting clothes and with his enormous mustachios – to reunite with his son Clive. Upon his arrival, he is invited to a party given by his sister-in-law Mrs. Newcome, the leading snob of the novel, intended “to bring men of genius [rather than of rank] together – mind associate with mind – men of all nations to mingle in friendly unison” (I, 75). In Mrs. Newcome’s parlor, the Colonel is perceived as another, albeit superior, exotic foreigner:

…Count Poski, and all the lions present at Mrs. Newcome’s réunion that evening, were completely eclipsed by Colonel Newcome. The worthy soul, who cared not the least about adorning himself, had a handsome diamond brooch of the year 1801, given him by poor Jack Cutler, who was knocked over by his side at Argaum, and wore this ornament in his desk for a thousand days and nights at a time; in his shirt-frill, on such parade evenings, as he considered Mrs. Newcome’s to be. The splendor of this jewel, and of his flashing buttons, caused all eyes to turn to him. There were many pairs of mustachios present; those of Professor Schmurr, a very corpulent martyr just escaped from Spandau, and of Maximilien
Tranchard, French exile and apostle of liberty, were the only whiskers in the room capable of vying with Colonel Newcomes. …The general opinion was, that the stranger was a Wallachian Boyar, whose arrival…the Morning Post had just announced. (I, 69)

The anticipated arrival of the Boyar makes “Mira Miles [wish] she knew a little Moldavian…not so much that she might speak it, but that she might be heard to speak it” (69-70). The Victorians were suspicious of foreign aristocrats, and in The Book of Snobs, Thackeray ridicules the middle class for dismissing continental aristocracy as “a pack of beggarly German and Italian Fuersten and Principi” and worshipping “OUR aristocracy…the real leaders of the world” (117). Mrs. Newcome’s naïve admiration of outlandish notables and her perpetually dirty gloves indicate her snobbery, social marginality, and futile social climbing, for even young Clive senses that she is not quite a lady in comparison with his other aunt, Lady Ann. She invites exiled European aristocrats because she does not get invited by her upper-middle class relatives.

Besides establishing the Colonel’s social position, Mrs. Newcome’s party also reflects, albeit in the form of satire, the actual cosmopolitanism of London and exemplifies how foreign references help establish British class distinctions in the mid-Victorian novel. Although the party showcases a diverse mix of Europeans and non-Europeans, both groups play similarly marginal roles in the novel. Among the guests, there is also “the celebrated Indian merchant, otherwise his Excellency Rummun Lall, otherwise His Highness Rummun Lall, the chief proprietor of the diamond mines in Golconda, with a claim of three millions and a half upon the East India Company, who
smoked his hookah after dinner…and in whose honor many English gentlemen made themselves sick, while trying to emulate the same practice” (70). The encounter between Rummun and the Colonel reverses their social positions, reflecting the racially inflected social hierarchy of British India:

As soon as his Excellency saw the Colonel, whom he perfectly well knew, his Highness’s princely air was exchanged for one of the deepest humility. He bowed his head and put his two hands before his eyes, and came creeping towards him submissively, to the wonderment of Mrs. Miles; who was yet more astonished when the Moldavian magnate exclaimed in perfectly good English, “What Rummun, you here?” (70)

The Colonel is chivalrously outraged when he observes the “Indian Prince” “seated by one of the handsomest young women in the room, whose fair face was turned towards him, whose blond ringlets touched his shoulder, and who was listening to him as eagerly as Desdemona listened to Othello” (70). Later in the novel, Colonel comes to approve of Rummun and invests his property in the doomed speculation of his Bundelcund Bank, a change of outlook that points to a flaw in the Colonel’s character. From the perspective of the implied author, the Colonel’s increasing snobbery leads to his downfall as much as “Jewish money-lenders and the Indian villain Rummun Lall,” whose influence Russell J. Perkin highlights in his article on Orientalism in *The Newcomes* (304). In fact, Rummun Lall is not an agent in the plot but an accessory, as India remains behind the scenes rather than furnishing a setting for any part of the plot. An illustration titled “A Letter from Clive” (Fig. 9) shows the Colonel reading his son’s letter to an audience of Anglo-Indian
ladies with only a blurry sketch of an unidentifiable Indian landscape with palms, palaces and mountains visible through the window in the background. The servant fanning the company is a part of the local color, a statuesque accessory rather than a breathing native. (The Italian setting of the novel serves as a similar backdrop for the story of Clive, accompanied by a parallel illustration called “Letters from England”—Fig. 10).

Mrs. Newcome’s party also features an Italian exile, whose caricature, albeit irreverent, points to a political reality that is completely absent in the narrative of Clive’s journey to Italy later in the novel. In addition to the more traditional Doctor McGuffog, “who is called in his native country the Ezekiel of Clackmannan” and Mr. Shaloo, “the great Irish patriot” (66), Mrs. Newcome’s party also features a “Dr. Ettore, who lately escaped from the Inquisition at Rome in the disguise of a washerwoman” (74), and whose wild story is somewhat validated by the appearance Count Ketterheimer, a torturer of Italian patriots, later in the novel. Thackeray was an admirer of Mazzini and protested when the Home Secretary authorized the Post Office to open letters to Mazzini during his exile in England by satirizing despotic regimes in his contributions to *Punch*. He was also a supporter of Garibaldi and cultivated friendships with Italians in London (Prawer 337). Very little of such immediate knowledge of foreign nationals, however, makes its way into Thackeray’s fiction. While the continentals may be an integral part of the stage, it is not their plots that we follow, and so they functions as props, similar to the native servant in Figure 9. “Natives” are also scarce in Thackeray’s non-fictional accounts of the Continent.

In some respects, Clive Newcome’s Grand Tour reproduces Thackeray’s own
Figure 9: “A Letter from Clive.” From W.M. Thackeray’s *The Newcomes*. 
Figure 10: “Letters from England.” From W.M. Thackeray’s *The Newcomes*. 
experience of Italy, where he wrote a substantial part of *The Newcomes*. Thackeray stayed in Rome and Naples with his daughters, “never going out for sight seeing until the day’s work [was] done” (Ray 346). The limitations of Thackeray’s travel experience are typical of the “family-abroad plot,” which James Buzard identifies as a typical feature of Victorian travel narratives: “When I wasn’t ill I had to write and I did not see a penny worth of the jolly artist’s life [which] I went expressly to look for. Having to be with the ladies is very moral right paternal & so forth: but, having to dine with my little women at home, I couldn’t go to Bohemia” (Ray 350). As Prawer puts it, Thackeray “abominated descriptions of landscapes and ‘interesting sights’ that smacked of the guidebook” (8). Due to a string of illnesses and the company of his daughters not yet of age, Thackeray was confined to his residence and the Anglo-Italian circles: “I did not meet a single Roman while I was in Rome. I don’t believe that there are any except the models, dressed for the artists” (Ray 351). Thackeray uses both the label “Roman” with deliberate ambiguity here. On one hand, he suggests that although he encountered and communicated with ordinary Italians, he did not speak to an upper-class Roman. On the other hand, his statement also indicates that the actual Romans do not meet his expectations, which are shaped by classical and modern accounts of Rome. Without the landscape or the natives, the representations of Italy in Thackeray’s letters as well as in *The Newcomes* are blurry. The only distinct image of the country that emerges from Thackeray’s letters is the symbolic spectacle of the sunset over Saint Peter’s: “The best
thing in Rome is the sunset over St. Peter’s every evening. … Shall I ever see it again I wonder? The grand Old Usurper who trampled the Pagan tyrant down, and has had his own reign of nigh 1500 years barbarous and bloody and splendid” (Ray 341,348).

Thackeray also appreciatively nods in the direction of the new picturesque as a phenomenon worth observing but perhaps not describing: “[T]he street is always the best sight in Rome: it is always bright new and nobly picturesque – more to my taste than churches smelling of stale perfumes, and statued all over with lies” (Ray 334). As an inspiration for a guidebook or the novel, the Italian sojourn turns out a complete failure: “If I had to write a book about Rome, what on earth should I say? I might as well be at Jericho or Islington. What will happen when Mr. Clive Newcome comes here?”(Ray 337).

In The Newcomes, as in many other mid-Victorian novels, characters are sent to the Continent or to the colonies to be disposed of, not only in the interest of verisimilitude, but also for the sake of narrative convenience. The Colonel returns from India with somewhat old-fashioned designs for Clive’s Grand Tour and career:

I know there is nothing like a knowledge of the classics to give a man good breeding -- … I shall be able to help him with my knowledge of the world…And we will travel together, first through England, Scotland, and Ireland, for every man should know his own country, and then we will take the grand tour. Then, by the time he is eighteen, he will be able to choose his profession. He can go into the army, and emulate the glorious man after whom I named him...(51)

In a letter to a friend, Thackeray anticipates his readers’ sigh of relief as he plans to send
the Colonel off to India the second time and clear the stage for Clive, the hero proper, allowing him to undertake his own version of the Grand Tour: “The Colonel is going to India the day after tomorrow. You’ll be glad to hear that I know. He is a dear old boy but confess you think he is rather a twaddler?” (Ray 341). Clive, a fledgling artist rather than a military man who has studied modern languages rather than the classics, runs into his uncle’s family in the Rhineland and accompanies them to Baden, “the prettiest booth in Vanity Fair” (293). Clive himself is a part of the scene, dressed for the part of a bohemian traveler—to the dismay of his respectable relatives—as a more elegant and handsome version of Mr. Wiggins in The Book of Snobs (Fig. 8): “Clive in his youth was of the ornamental class of mankind – a customer of tailors, a wearer of handsome rings, shirt-studs, mustachios, long hair, and the like; nor could he help, in his costume or his nature, being picturesque and splendid” (227). Clive is a more updated version of his father, oblivious of snobbery although a bit of a snob himself, posing as a Romantic artist rather than as an eighteenth-century warrior hero, but also wearing the wrong clothes and inappropriate mustachios.

Baden, a “place of rebels and repealers of the law” and veteran Regency cosmopolitans, plays a similar function in the novel as the German settings do in Vanity Fair and serves as the stage for the Congress of Baden, where the upper-middle class Newcomes and the aristocratic Kews congregate to plot marriages of convenience. Only after Clive realizes the futility of courting Ethel Newcome, his wealthy cousin betrothed by family agreement to her maternal cousin Lord Kew, he reluctantly heads for Italy to pursue his chosen profession, describing his retreat in mock-classical terms: “We have
dallied at Capua long enough,” says Clive, “and the legions have the route for Rome. So
wills Hannibal the son of Hasdrubal” (282). And he takes along Jack Belsize, a similarly
thwarted suitor, to “put the Alps between him and this confounded business” (285).

In Rome, the plot comes to a halt, as Clive expects the development of affairs in
London and anxiously awaits letters from Ethel. In an illustration titled “Letters from
England” (Fig. 10), the Italian landscape, again visible through a window behind the
figure of Clive reading the letter to his friend J.J. with the Bay of Naples identifiable by
Vesuvius smoking in the background, is only slightly more particularized than the Indian
backdrop of “A Letter from Clive” (Fig. 9). The affinity of the settings is remarkable,
illustrating how British characters and the narratives of their lives are foregrounded in
mid-Victorian travel narratives. There is a virtual absence of natives in the illustrations as
well as in the text; the only exception is the vignette that opens Chapter I of Volume II of
an artist sketching an incongruous Italian family of models (Fig. 11). As the plot stalls,
the chapters set in Rome take on the character of mock-travelogue as Clive
communicates his impressions of Italy in his correspondence with Pendennis in England
and with the Colonel in India.

Clive’s letters from Italy provide a way for Thackeray to satirize his tourist
experience of the country, and thus the relationship between the implied author and the
character resembles the one between Charles Dickens and Amy Dorrit. Although at
times presented directly, for The Newcomes is both structurally and thematically
preoccupied with documents, Clive’s views are mostly filtered through Pendennis. He
reports on the “long letters from Mr. Clive, written during his youthful tour, every step of

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which, from the departure at Baden, to the gate of Milan, he describes as beautiful” (I, 335). Pendennis interprets Clive’s impressions of the Alps romantically, although he acknowledges he was “ignorant of Clive’s private cares” when he received the letters (I, 334): “O, sweet peaceful scene of azure lake, and snow-crowned mountain, so wonderfully lovely is your aspect, that it seems like Heaven almost, and as if grief and care could not enter it!” (335). In a double distance from Thackeray’s own abomination of landscapes, the narrative subtly parodies both the Radcliffean and Byronic perceptions of Italy. The description of Rome is condensed in a couple of paragraphs. One of them catalogues the places gazed at and frequented by “the polite English society, the society that flocks to see the Colosseum, lighted up with blue fire, that flocks to the Vatican to behold the statues by torchlight, that hustles into the churches on public festivals in black veils and deputy lieutenants’ uniforms, and stares, and talks, and uses opera glasses…[and that] has its club, its hunt, and its Hyde Park on the Pincio…” (II, 336). As in Thackeray’s letters, the proliferation of guidebooks and tourists reduces the account of Rome’s topography and architecture to a sketch.

After reminiscing about the “delightful shock” that Clive experiences upon entering the city where Augustus ruled when Jesus was born, Pendennis disciplines his reveries and reminds the reader that “[t]he present business is neither with priest nor pagan, but with Mr. Clive Newcome, and his affairs and his companions at this period of his life” (I, 336). In Rome, Clive happily exists in the “little England” and “[does] at Rome as the English do” (I, 336), mingling with both the cosmopolitan circles of artists and the Anglo-Roman society:
Figure 11: Vignette to Vol. II, Chapter I of W.M. Thackeray’s *The Newcomes*. 
The truth is, our countrymen are pleasanter abroad than at home; most hospitable, kindly, and eager to be pleased and to please. You see a family half a dozen times in a week in the little Roman circle, whom you shall not meet twice in a season afterwards in the enormous London round. When Easter is over and everybody is going away at Rome, you and your neighbor shake hands, sincerely sorry to part: in London we are obliged to dilute our kindness so that there is hardly any smack of the original milk. (II, 5)

Pendennis reports that, Clive “used jocularly to say, he believed there were no Romans,” echoing Thackeray’s letter from Rome (I, 336). Besides the humbug Prince Polonia, whose “footmen wear the liveries of the English Royal family,” who graciously admits Clive, and gives “gentlemen and even painters good letters of credit”(I, 336), the only Roman Clive gets to know is Terribile:

When he hasn’t blacked our boots and has got our breakfast, Terribile the valet-de-chambre becomes Terribile the model. He has figured on a hundred canvases ere this, and almost ever since he was born. All his family were models. His mother having been a Venus, is now a Witch of Endor. His father is in the patriarchal line: he has himself done the cherubs, the shepherd-boys, and now is a grown man, and ready as a warrior, a pifferaro, a Capuchin, or what you will. (I, 341)

The case of Terribile provides Clive with an occasion for a joke, but Pendennis is more earnestly critical about the preference of the foreign painters, if not about the predicament of the Italian models: “In every street there were scores of pictures of the graceful
characteristic Italian life, which our painters seem one and all to reject, preferring to
depict their quack brigands…” (337). Pendennis’s catalogue of Roman street life, which
Thackeray admires but does not describe in his letters, is picturesque without the
sympathetic element of social critique characteristic of the new picturesque: “There were
children at play, the women huddled round the steps of the open doorways, in the kindly
Roman winter; grim portentous old hags, such as Michael Angelo painted, draped in
majestic raggery; mothers and swarming bambins; slouching countrymen, dark of beard
and noble of countenance, posed in superb attitudes, lazy, tattered, and majestic” (337).
In the course of a year in Rome, Clive’s sketchbook is filled with more imagined than
actual Roman scenes: “[r]uins, imperial and mediæval; peasants and bagpipemen;
Passionists with shaven polls; Capuchins and the equally hairy frequenters of the Café
Greco; painters of all nations who resort there; Cardinals and their queer equipages and
attendants; the Holy Father himself…; the dandified English on the Pincio and the
wonderful Roman members of the hunt….” (II, 5). Clive is unfashionable in his
predilection for portraits rather than historical paintings or landscapes, and his sketches,
unlike his friend J.J.’s, do not yield paintings or income. As in the case of Thackeray’s
novel writing, Rome does not prove a successful source of inspiration to Clive Newcome.

There is one important exception to the ostensibly conventional account of Rome
in The Newcomes that reveals an emerging self-consciousness of English travelers in
Italy. Clive’s response to the art and architecture of the Catholic Church, if not its
ceremonies, is more ambivalent than Thackeray’s:

There must be moments, in Rome especially, when every man of friendly heart,
who writes himself English and Protestant, must feel a pang at thinking that he
and countrymen are insulated from European Christendom. An ocean separates
us. From one shore or the other one can see the neighbor cliffs on clear days: one
must wish sometimes there were no stormy gulf between us; and from Canterbury
to Rome a pilgrim could pass, and not drown beyond Dover. I believe among us
many people have no idea: we think of lazy friars, of pining cloistered virgins, of
ignorant peasants worshipping wood… (338)

Clive’s comment on Catholicism reveals an element of sympathy, which is missing in the
novel’s depiction of Rome’s poor. The protagonist momentarily realizes the existence of
a gulf between British and continental cultures, but, like the author, cannot imagine a way
of bridging it. Clive undercuts his earnestness by his invitation to Pendennis to “go and
kiss the toe of St. Peter’s,” reverting to the conventional Protestant representation of
Catholic ritual as a superficial spectacle rather than as a manifestation of spirituality
(339).

Like the heroines of Radcliffe’s novels and Dickens’s Amy Dorrit, Clive is
untouched by continental vice even though he associates with “lawless people” on the
Continent, particularly in Baden: “He did not know in the first place the mystery of their
iniquities; and his sunny kindly spirit, undimmed by any of the cares which clouded it
subsequently, was disposed to shine upon all people alike” (I, 262). He only improves his
dancing and his ability to recognize a snob in his future mother-in-law, Mrs. Mackenzie,
which, however, does not prevent him from marrying the weak-spirited Rosie Mackenzie.
Hence, it remains a question whether the Grand Tour has changed Clive: “Had Clive

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become more knowing in his travels, had Love or Experience opened his eyes, that they looked so differently now upon objects which before used well enough to please him?” (I, 45). After the Colonel’s plan to marry Clive to Ethel Newcome is thwarted by the treachery of her snobbish brother Barnes, the Colonel’s Grand Tour with his son falls short of his original vision:

Thomas Newcome had the chance of making that tour with his son, which in early days had been such a favourite project with the good man. They travelled Rhineland and Switzerland together – they crossed into Italy – went from Milan to Venice …, they went to Trieste and over the beautiful Styrian Alps to Vienna… They travelled at a prodigious fast pace. They did not speak much to one another. They were a pattern pair of English travellers. I daresay many persons whom they met smiled to observe them; and shrugged their shoulders at the aspect of *ces Anglais*. They did not know the care in the young traveller’s mind; and the deep tenderness and solicitude of the elder. (II, 168)

Rather than bringing the father and the son, Britain and the Continent closer, continental travel sharpens inter-personal and inter-national boundaries. Far from attaining a greater knowledge of the world or self-knowledge, the continental tourists are conscious of the gulf separating them from the continentals and of a loss of individuality. Clive is more substantially transformed by another sojourn on the Continent when his family is forced to live in poverty in Boulogne—“the refuge of how many thousands of other unfortunate Britons”—after the Colonel loses his fortune invested in the doomed Bundelcund Bank (302).
As this final continental episode of *The Newcomes* illustrates, characters move easily between London and Paris in Thackeray’s fiction, reflecting the increasing speed of transportation as well as Thackeray’s frequent travel to visit his family abroad. Whereas Paris represents a parallel world, the more culturally and geographically distant Rome—both as a former heart of an empire and the current center of Catholicism—puts Britain in the position of a periphery, and is more likely to inspire moments of self-consciousness. In non-fictional travel writing, Thackeray or his narrator Michael Angelo Titmarsh occasionally interrupt the mode of detached satire with a self-conscious reflection on how the British are perceived abroad. The following outburst in *Little Travels and Roadside Sketches* is the most radical example of such self-consciousness:

“How they hate us, these foreigners in Belgium as much as in France! What lies they tell of *us*; how gladly they would see us humiliated…They hate *you* because you are stupid, insolent, hard to please, and intolerably insolent and air-giving… This is why we are hated, for pride” (196). The speaker alternate use of “*us*” and “*you*” is symptomatic of Thackeray’s dual identification as an Englishman and a would-be cosmopolitan. The repetition is a sign of genuine frustration in this invective, in spite of or perhaps due to the fact that Thackeray was more likely to communicate with the French speaking peoples than with the Italians. The narrator identifies British snobbery as the cause of the alienation, pointing out that “in these benighted lands one man is as good as another”(196). However, Thackeray, who describes himself as “one of themselves” in *The Book of Snobs*, does not attempt to bridge the gulf between Britain and the Continent nor does he express any desire to communicate with the continentals. In his travel
writing, Thackeray is aware of the growing isolation of Britain from the Continent and responds by satirizing both the British and the continentals, but his fiction also nostalgically harks back to the class-solidifying function of the Grand Tour and furnishes his imagined Continent as a stage where the British upper-middle class and aristocracy negotiate their roles and resolve their conflicts.

Mobility of Misfits: The Limits of “New Picturesque”

Cosmopolitanism in *Pictures from Italy* and *Little Dorrit*

Continental settings are rare in Dickens’s fiction, playing an important role only in *Little Dorrit*, published serially from 1855 and 1857, and in the historical novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. The representation of Italy in *Little Dorrit* is based on Dickens’s stay in Italy with his family in 1844-45 and a later journey in 1853. Dickens described both stays in Italy in his letters, mainly to John Forster, and drew on the letters from the former trip in writing the non-fictional *Pictures from Italy* (1846). The non-fictional record indicates that both visits influenced Dickens’s representation of Italian settings in *Little Dorrit* and that he created his fictional protagonist, the non-traditional tourist Amy Dorrit, to imagine a perspective on Italy unburdened by literary tradition and tourism. Amy’s experience of incarceration puts her at a distance from her snobbish compatriots, and her sympathetic but also egocentric response to Italy represents a return to Romantic modes of travel. However, Amy’s perspective is radically provincial rather than cosmopolitan, and thus national and class imagination functions as a sort of a cognitive prison in the novel,
highlighting the imagined boundaries among various classes of Britons as well as between the British and the continentals (4). While Amanda Anderson maintains that in its suspicious reading of both provincialism and nationalism, the novel is productively “cosmopolitan,” I argue that because it focuses exclusively on British provincialism and nationalism in spite of the extent of its Italian setting, it falls short of its own implicit cosmopolitan ideal of sympathetic understanding (89).

In his *Pictures from Italy*, Dickens is aware of the difficulties of offering his readers a satisfactory account of Italy. In the introductory section titled “The Reader’s Passport,” he apprehensively strives to imagine a favorable audience for his book in a “reader’s portrait” of a person with fair complexion and an extremely agreeable general expression (38). When describing the most overrepresented site in Italy—Venice—Dickens uses a defamiliarizing strategy, reporting his impressions of the city as a dream sequence: “I found that we were gliding up a street – a phantom street; the houses rising on both sides, from the water, and the black boat gliding on beneath their windows” (119). Even a well-traveled reader can experience the pleasure of recognition while reading the scene, for the name of the city is mentioned only in the last sentence of the chapter.

Dickens disclaims any effort at providing facts about the history or politics of Italy, but offers “a series of faint reflections—mere shadows in the water” instead (36). A page-long sentence in Dickens’s sketch of his favorite Genoa illustrates the two dominant descriptive strategies that exemplify Dickens’s use of the new picturesque—a sense of motion and the erasure of particularity in “the rapid passage from a street of stately edifices, into a maze of the vilest squalor, steaming with unwholesome stenches, and
swarming with half-naked children and whole worlds of dirty people – [which] make up, altogether, such a scene of wonder” (75). Dickens’s travel book swarms with a cast of memorable minor characters, such as the Jesuits “slinking noiselessly about, like black cats,” nameless although vivid human figures that constitute his “pictures” of Italian cities (79). Although Dickens showed interest in Italian culture, learned Italian, was sympathetic to Italian nationalism, and his travel book reflects his preference for Italian street life over the art world or English society, there are virtually no identifiable Italians in *Pictures from Italy* or *Little Dorrit*.

Like other Victorians, Dickens observes that the class hierarchy is more pronounced in Britain than on the Continent, and so his representations of continental travel focus on class rather than national differences. Even Arthur Clennam, the most cosmopolitan character in *Little Dorrit*, strives to bridge the boundaries of class rather than nationality. A *Household Words* editorial titled “Insularities” from January 1856, a date that roughly falls in the middle of the serial publication of *Little Dorrit*, reveals why the continental settings in the novel are integral to its message. In this article, Dickens defines “insularity” as the opposite of cosmopolitanism, yet an attitude shaped by distinctions of class rather than nationality. He attacks xenophobia and classism as a two-pronged social evil:

We, English people, owing in a great deal to our insular position, and in a small degree to the facility with which we have permitted electioneering lords and gentlemen to pretend to think for us, and to represent our weaknesses to us as our strengths, have been in particular danger of contracting habits which we will call
As in Thackeray’s *The Newcomes*, the continental setting of *Little Dorrit* intensifies class tensions among British characters, but Dickens is concerned about different social strata than Thackeray. As Robin Gilmour puts it,

> Thackeray’s province is in ‘that debatable land between the aristocracy and the middle classes’… and his gentlemen for the most part have a public school education which qualifies them, whatever their origins, for the entry to the traditional gentleman’s world of the club and the fashionable regiment. Dickens is concerned with the lower reaches of the middle class in its most anxious phase of self-definition, struggling out of trade and domestic service and clerical work into the sunshine of respectability. (Gilmour 106)

In his article on the way Dickens’s shifting views of class relations affect characterization in *Little Dorrit*, Trey Philpotts analyzes Dickens’s contribution to the public discussion attempting to assign the blame for the outbreak of the cholera epidemic of 1854 and 1856, which highlighted the conflicting uses of the word “people” in contemporary political discourse:

> Hence, “the people” served a strategic function, a way to embrace or not embrace particular portions of the population. In the nineteenth century this meant determining the relative position of the middle class, vis-à-vis the aristocracy and the working class. …One, therefore, could define “the people” as … the middle class in implicit relation to the aristocracy – or as many working class radicals insisted – the commonality comprised of both the middle and working class set in
opposition to the vested interests of the aristocracy. Dickens most often adopts the second interpretation… (267)

In “Insularities,” however, Dickens does not use merely “the people” but “we, English people,” suggesting that the aristocratic “lords and gentlemen” foil not only the interests of class, but also the interests of the nation. To illustrate what he calls “insularities,” Dickens uses examples that appear to comment on Thackeray’s *Book of Snobs*. He draws on the world of fashion, pointing out that “idiosyncracies of dress are much more tolerated abroad,” where “people dress according to their personal convenience and inclinations” rather than to signal their class status (304). He tells the story of a “sensible” but unfashionable “great coat,” wearing which he was regarded as “a sort of Spectre, eliciting wonder and terror” in London, but went completely unnoticed in Switzerland, “although it was perfectly new there” (304). The contrast in the perceptions of dress is parallel to the contrast between class relations in England and on the Continent: “We apprehend that few persons are disposed to contend that Rank does not receive its due share of homage on the continent of Europe; but, between the homage it receives there, and the homage it receives in our island, there is an immense difference. … It is one of our Insularities, if we have a royal or titled visitor among us, to use expressions of slavish adulation in our public addresses that have no response in the heart of any breathing creature…” (3). Dickens concludes that the most notable insularity of the English is a lack of self respect in deference to rank (4). Interestingly, Dickens maintains that “the great numbers of English people got scared into being dull” by “the old school Tory writers,” which he illustrates with Mr. Macaulay’s contempt for lower-middle class
travelers, or “clerks and milliners visiting Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond” (3). While both Thackeray and Dickens condemn snobbery, one attributes it to individual ambition assailing the system from below and the other to external, group pressure from above. Philpotts argues that Dickens’s use of “the people” deemphasized the tensions between the working and middle classes by focusing on the gulf separating both groups from the aristocracy (271). Although in “Insularities” Dickens suggests that “[o]ur strong English prejudice” may be “disappearing before the extended knowledge of other countries consequent upon steam and electricity” and may help the English to import self respect “[t]hrough intercourse with other nations,” in *Little Dorrit* travel does not contribute to the “extended knowledge” of or the “intercourse” with Europeans but to a sense of isolation from the Continent (4).

Given its continued preoccupation with middle-class self-definition, *Little Dorrit* employs some features of Ann Radcliffe’s fiction in its use of continental travel. Dickens’s novel maintains the importance of femininity in its traveling heroine Amy Dorrit; employs picturesque modes of description; revolves around the favorite Gothic trope of the prison; and features a continental Gothic villain, Rigaud-Lagnier-Blandois. The role of Blandois in *Little Dorrit* exemplifies how Dickens adapts Gothic motifs. The character is not integral to the plot, as his omission from Christine Edzard’s 1987 film adaptation of the novel indicates, but his symbolic significance in Dickens’s design is apparent in the opening chapters of each of the Books, respectively titled “Poverty” and “Riches.” The first chapter of the novel, “Sun and Shadow” is set in the cosmopolitan port of Marseilles – whose name echoes “Marshalsea” – where “Hindoos, Russians,
Chinese, Spaniards, Portuguese, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Genoese, Neapolitans, Venetians, Greeks, Turks, descendants from all the builders of Babel, come to trade” (15). The opening paragraph establishes the importance of the visual in the novel, but the blazing sun reverses the usual direction of the tourist gaze, where “[s]trangers [are] stared out of countenance by staring white houses, staring white walls, staring white streets, staring tracts of arid road, staring hills from which verdure has burned away” (15). The contrasting image of shadow is supplied by “a villainous prison,” where we first meet Rigaud, jailed for a suspected murder of his wife, and Cavaletto, a “sunburnt, quick, lithe, little” Italian smuggler (18). Cavaletto traces on the prison pavement a reversed trajectory of the Grand Tour as a way of orienting the map of Marseilles, prefiguring the association of travel and imprisonment for the novel’s protagonists:

‘See here! Marseilles Harbor; …Toulon (where the galleys are), Spain over there, Algiers over there. Creeping to the left here, Nice. Round by the Cornice to Genoa. Genoa Mole and Harbor. Quarantine Ground. City there; terrace-gardens blushing with bella donna. Here, Porto Fino. Stand out for Leghorn. Out again for Civita Vecchia. So away to – hey! there’s no room for Naples;’ he had got to the wall by this time; but it’s all one; its in there! (18)

It is significant that Cavaletto outlines Italy in the opening chapters, for he is the only Italian character in the novel. Although a substantial part of Little Dorrit is set in Italy, we encounter the only three-dimensional Italian in France or England. On the other hand, he represents both the Italian exile and the native Italian, for Dickens christens Cavaletto Giovanni Battista, which signals that the character was inspired by Dickens’s contact
with common Italians in Genoa—in *Pictures from Italy* Dickens reports that the frequent use of that name in that town is bewildering to strangers (*Pictures* 68). Presumably forced into the role of a petty criminal by the autocratic systems of government on the Continent, Cavalletto makes an honest living as a working man in England. After arriving in London, the working class Bleeding Heart Yard receives him first with suspicion and then with condescension, although he is a hard-working and warm-hearted man.

Although he learns English, his neighbor Mrs. Plornish insists on addressing him in a child’s version of English that she considers to be Italian: “Why, enquired Mrs. Plornish, reverting to the Italian language, “why ope bad man no see?” (554). In contrast, Blandois easily deceives the English characters about his nationality and insinuates himself into English society, winning the favor of both Mr. Dorrit and Henry Gowan. To instinctively recoil from Blandois is a mark of an unusual disregard for the conventions of gentility, and reserved only to heroes and heroines such as Arthur Clennam and Amy Dorrit. Like the foreigners in Thackeray’s fiction, Blandois and Cavalletto are marginal to the plot, but, especially in the case of Cavalletto, more individualized than Thackeray’s Europeans.

The relationship between Rigaud and Cavalletto points to the discrepancy between the popular imagination of Europeans as stereotypical Gothic villains and the Victorians’ direct experience of Europeans as accommodating hosts and guides, or adaptable exiles or immigrants. Cavalletto, “in his submission…a true son of the land that gave him birth,” defers to Blandois, who behaves as his patron, although they are both prisoners (28):

’Cavalletto,’ said Monsieur Rigaud…,’you know me for a gentleman?’

‘Surely, surely!’...
‘Have I ever done anything here? Ever touched the broom, or spread the mats, or rolled them up, or found the draughts, or collected the dominoes, or put my hand to any kind of work?’…

‘ALTRO!’ returned John Baptist, closing his eyes and giving his head a most vehement toss. The word being, according to its Genoese emphasis, a confirmation, a contradiction, an assertion, a denial, a taunt, a compliment, a joke, and fifty other things…

‘I am a’ – Monsieur Rigaud stood up to say it – ‘I am a cosmopolitan gentleman. I own no particular country. My father was Swiss – Canton de Vaud. My mother was French by blood, English by birth. I myself was born in Belgium. I am a citizen of the world.’ (23)

A worthy son of a woman with the background of Thackeray’s Becky Sharp, Rigaud continues to assert his identity as a “cosmopolitan gentleman” throughout the novel, and, in contrast with Cavalletto, easily passes for an Englishman. He also presents himself both as a lover of the picturesque and a picturesque object, posing as an all-purpose model of an Italian “in a great coat and a furtive slouched hat” for the superficial artist Henry Gowan and bragging that he has been “called picturesque,” an ironic commentary on the role of such figures in Gothic fiction and popular imagination (472, 349). The respective arrogance and submission of the two foreigners foreshadows the class tensions that beset Dickens at the time of writing Little Dorrit and were heightened by his experience of the Continent.

The structurally parallel “Fellow Travellers” chapters, which open the two
volumes of the novel, bring together a group of English characters to illustrate various ways of relating to the nation and to the Continent within the British middle classes. As Brian Rosenberg observes, the word “character” is used more often in Little Dorrit than in Dickens’s other works in “ironic, hesitant or unreliable ways” (46). The English characters are always measured against one another; the merits of their class and national affiliations are relative. In the narrator’s assessment, Mr. Meagles is somewhat akin to Colonel Newcome. As a solid, hard-working, practical middle-class Englishman in his idyllic suburban home, he merits the narrator’s and the reader’s approval, but he is less attractive as a philistine and xenophobic traveler, who, in spite of his “whimsical good humour,” maintains a “national objection” to “cocked hats” (28, 34). We are introduced to him through a dialogue with the more cosmopolitan Clennam, who is returning home after twenty years spent trading in China:

‘Ah, but these people are always howling. Never happy otherwise.’
‘Do you mean the Marseilles people?’
‘I mean the French people. They are always at it. As to Marseilles, we know what Marseilles is. It set the most insurrectionary tune into the world that was ever composed. It couldn’t exist without allonging and marshoning to something or other – victory or death, or blazes, or something.’ (28)

Mr. Meagles’s irritation with the French is aggravated by his detainment in a quarantine, which creates an early association of travel and imprisonment. Foreshadowing Mr. Dorrit’s predicament later in the novel, Mr. Meagles remarks that “a prisoner begins to relent towards his prison, after he is let out” (34). As an ideal of domestic ideology, the
Meagles family is flawed in spite of their mutual affection. Their condescending patronage of their adopted orphan maid, Harriet or Tattycoram, makes her susceptible to the influence of Miss Wade, a “permanent exile,” whose continual travel is driven by her “refusal to dwell” (Anderson 81). Clennam, Mrs. Wade and the Meagles family are types representative of the “usual materials” of a Marseilles quarantine, including

- Travellers on business, and travellers for pleasure; officers from India on leave;
- Merchants in the Greek and Turkey trades; a clerical English husband in a meek strait-waistcoat, on a wedding trip with his young wife; a majestic English mama and papa, of the patrician order, with a family of three growing up daughters, who were keeping a journal for the confusion of their fellow creatures; and a deaf old English mother, with a very decidedly grown up daughter indeed, which daughter went sketching about the universe in expectation of ultimately toning herself off into the married state.(35)

As Amanda Anderson points out, the Marseilles setting is as much a link in the Eastern trade as a juncture in the Grand Tour, and, more consciously than Thackeray in *The Newcomes*, Dickens exposes the connection between business and leisure travel, “the unholy alliance between British nationalism and global capitalism” (66).

Little Dorrit is the only traveling character in the novel who merits the unreserved approval of the narrator, the implied author and, presumably, Dickens himself. Reading Little Dorrit’s response to Italy in comparison with Dickens’s non-fictional records of Italy in his letters and *Pictures from Italy*, suggests that Dickens uses her character to push the limits of the new picturesque beyond the potential afforded by his own class and
gender. After the account of the Dorrit family life in the Marshalsea debtors’ prison and of their release after unexpectedly inheriting a fortune in Book One, Book Two opens with another “Fellow Travelers” chapter, set at the Pass of the Great Saint Bernard, the threshold of Italy. The opening paragraphs of the chapter describe an ascent from the Lake of Geneva to the Pass without specifying the observer or mentioning the travelers. The disembodied eye records a scene of the vintage, and an “idiot sunning his big goître under the eaves of the wooden chalet by the way to the waterfall,… munching grapes” a synthesized image of the Romantic and the Victorian picturesque (417). Before the introduction of the living travelers, the narrator offers a macabre glimpse of the frozen “dead travelers found upon the mountain,” whose bodies were never identified and reclaimed (419). Similarly, the living travelers are introduced by their properties rather than by their names as the “insinuating traveler” or “lofty gentleman” (Blandois), the “artist traveller” (Gowan) and the Chief or the “head of the large retinue” (Mr. Dorrit), or by their affiliation with a particular gentleman in the case of the ladies (421,424). The only exception is Mrs. General, an elderly lady hired by Mr. Dorrit to assist with the “formation” of his daughters’ “surface” and “demeanor,” who makes her first appearance in this chapter when she remarks that the Pass of the Great Saint Bernard “like other inconvenient places…must be seen. As a place much spoken of, it is necessary to see it” (459, 457, 422). A proper lady, “[s]he might have been taken – had been taken—to the top of the Alps and the bottom of the Herculaneum, without disarranging a fold in her dress” and without opinions of her own, travels in the footsteps of “Mr. Eustace, the classical tourist” (435, 457).15
The Dorrit family travels not only for a change of scene but also to acquire the polish necessary to pass in English society. However, Amy, the youngest child who was born in the prison, and Mr. Dorrit, who spent half of his life there, both find it impossible to leave the Marshalsea behind; while the daughter clings to the memory of it, the father wishes to forget it. Marshalsea colors Mr. Dorrit’s perceptions of the Continent, and the initial repression of his Marshalsea experience at the Convent of Saint Bernard, where travelers also have their “allotted [cells],” leads to his ultimate breakdown at Rome (432):

Monsieur [Mr. Dorrit] still urged…that the space was so – ha – hum – so very contracted. More than that. It was the same, always the same.

With a deprecating smile, the host [monk] gently raised and lowered his shoulders. That was true, he remarked, but permit him to say that almost all objects had their various points of view. Monsieur was not used to confinement.

‘I – ha – yes, very true,’ said the grey-haired gentleman. He seemed to receive quite a shock from the force of the argument. (426)

At the Convent, Mr. Dorrit first meets Blandois, another ex-prisoner who fashions himself as a gentleman and proudly refuses to work. When Blandois signs the guest book, his signature encircles the names of the other characters “like a lasso” (423). Amy Dorrit recognizes the taint of the prison in his appearance, “imagining what he would have been in the scenes and places within her experience” (430), but “refrain[s] from expressing any distrust of him, lest it should prove to be a new blemish derived from her prison-birth.” (440). Amy cannot help “recalling the old Marshalsea room, [and thinking] her present existence was a dream. All that she saw was new and wonderful, but it was not real; it
seemed to her as if those visions of mountains and picturesque countries might melt away at any moment, and the carriage, turning some abrupt corner, bring up with a jolt at the old Marshalsea gate” (447). Whereas in the Marshalsea, Amy performed a number of chores for her father, she must now “scrupulously exact respect from her dependents,” which she could not in “performing the functions of … [her father’s] valet (447). The “respect” exacted by a gentleman mindful of class proprieties contrasts with the “self-respect” that Dickens found wanting among the English in “Insularities” (447). While the narrative denounces her relatives’ egoistic demands for respect, it values a type of egocentric self-respect in Little Dorrit.

Described through the “unreality of [Little Dorrit’s] inner life” (448), the Italian setting of the novel serves as a symbolic landscape. Although “the descent into Italy, the opening of that beautiful land” appears liberating, as if “the rugged mountain-chasm widened and let them out from a gloomy and dark imprisonment,” the new picturesque combination of “misery and magnificence” in “white villages and towns on hill-sides, lovely without, but frightful in their dirt and poverty within” that Amy witnesses at each step continues to remind her of the Marshalsea (448, 449). Through Amy’s capacity for sympathy and identification with the beggars of Italy, the narrative strives to overcome the limitations of the new picturesque: “[T]hese miserable creatures would appear to her as the only realities of the day; and many a time, when the money she had brought to give them was all given away, she would sit with her folded hands, thoughtfully looking after some diminutive girl leading her grey father, as if the sight reminded her of something in the days that were gone” (449). As the Grand Tour travelers identified with Italy as the
past of their civilization, Amy Dorrit relates to it solely through her personal past.

Although Amy’s general tendency during her travel in Italy is to dismiss its landscape and architecture as a dream while acknowledging the reality of its poor, there is a marked difference in her experience of Venice and Rome. Venice represents a “crowning unreality” that is more difficult to connect with the Marshalsea and so she imagines herself apart from the Anglo-Italian society. Little Dorrit spends her time alone in a gondola, where she escapes from “that oppressive maid, who was her mistress,” or standing on the “balcony of her own room,” where she is more of an object of observation than an observer: “[S]he soon began to be watched for, and many eyes in passing gondolas were raised, and many people said, There was the little figure of the English girl who was always alone” (450). The Anglo-Italians, the narrator remarks, are “not realities to the little English girl” (450), and “this same society in which they lived, greatly resembled a superior sort of Marshalsea”:

Numbers of people seemed to come abroad, pretty much as people had come into the prison; through debt, through idleness, relationship, curiosity and general unfitness for getting on at home. They were brought into these foreign towns in the custody of couriers and local followers, just as the debtors had been brought into the prison. They prowled about the churches and picture-galleries, much in the old, dreary, prison-yard manner. (491)

Even in the brilliant light of a bright Italian day, “the wonderful city without and the splendors of an old palace within” Little Dorrit sees her father “in the long-familiar gloom of his Marshalsea lodging” (460). The metaphor of the prison is ubiquitous in the
Italian setting of the novel; only the modes of confinement change as the family moves from Venice to Rome. Amy’s self-imposed confinement in an imaginative Marshalsea of her mind during the family’s stay in Venice earns her the rebuke of her haughty sister Fanny, who spends her time socializing and hunting down a wealthy husband; her father, concerned about keeping appearances for the sake of Society; and Mrs. General, who points out to Amy that “it is scarcely delicate to look at vagrants” (459). Whereas in Venice, the Anglo-Italians seem preoccupied with one another in a limited circle connected by gondolas and consisting of the Dorrits, the Gowans, and Fanny’s suitor Edmund Sparkler, the Anglo-Italian society in Rome is more overbearing and confined to the proprieties of Mrs. General:

    Here, it seemed to Little Dorrit that a change came over the Marshalsea spirit of their society, and that Prunes and Prism got the upper hand. Everybody was walking about St. Peter’s and the Vatican on somebody else’s cork legs, and straining every visible object through somebody else’s sieve. Nobody said what anything was, but everybody said what the Mrs Generals, Mr Eustace, or somebody else said it was. The whole body of travellers seemed to be a collection of human sacrifices… Through the rugged remains of temples and tombs and amphitheatres of ancient days, hosts of tongue-tied and blindfolded moderns were carefully feeling their way… [my emphasis] (492)

After Fanny’s wedding, Mr. Dorrit briefly returns to London, only to be haunted by the Marshalsea. On his journey back to Rome, he spins a “castle in the air,” planning to marry Mrs. General:
No fortified town that they passed in all their journey was as strong, not a Cathedral summit was so high, as Mr. Dorrit’s castle… nor was the Mediterranean deeper than its foundations; nor were the distant landscapes on the Cornice road, nor the hills and bay of Genoa the Superb, more beautiful. Mr. Dorrit and his matchless castle were disembarked among the dirty white houses and dirtier felons of Civita Vecchia, and thence scrambled on to Rome as they could, through the filth that festered on the way. (610)

As Mr. Dorrit travels back from Britain, “(like Goths reversed) beating at the gates of Rome,” in a carriage loaded with “luxuries from the two great capitals of Europe” through the Roman Campagna, he encounters a funeral procession. The scene is the occasion for the only one-to-one Anglo-Italian encounter of the novel between Mr. Dorrit and a priest, whose “eyes met those of Mr. Dorrit, looking bareheaded out of the carriage, his lips, moving as they chaunted, seemed to threaten that important traveler; likewise the action of his hand, which was in fact his manner of returning the traveller’s salutation, seemed to come with the aid of that menace” (611). The failed communication in this scene indicates the character’s increasing isolation and foreshadows his mental breakdown at Mrs. Merdle’s party, where he addresses the expatriate company as the inmates of the Marshalsea. Mr.Dorrit’s experience of Italy is based on the same foundation of memory and prejudice as Little Dorrit’s, but her self-conscious detachment – at times implausible given her lack of education and experience – suggests the potential for what Amanda Anderson calls considers productive cosmopolitanism.

Amy Dorrit’s impressions of Rome filter Charles Dickens’s non-fictional record
of his compatriots’ conduct in the city, although Amy’s lack of sophistication and her family’s purposes for travel in Italy make her a more likely member of the tourist circles than their critical observer. Dickens also maintains a sense of superiority over his tourist compatriots:

We often encountered, in these expeditions, a company of English Tourists, with whom I had an ardent, but ungratified longing to establish a speaking acquaintance. They were one Mr. Davis, and a small circle of friends …Deep under-ground, high up in St. Peter’s, out on the Campagna, and stifling in the Jews’ quarter, Mrs. Davis turned up, just the same. I don’t think she ever saw anything, or looked at anything… There was a professional Cicerone always attached to the party (which had been brought over from London, fifteen or twenty strong, by contract), and if he so much as looked at Mrs. Davis, she invariably cut him short by saying, ‘There, God bless the man, don’t worrit me! I don’t understand a word you say, and shouldn’t if you was to talk ‘till you was black in the face!’ (Pictures 177)

Travel resembles imprisonment, for it is no longer possible to contemplate the ancient ruins in the manner of solitary wanderers in Romantic landscapes. Dickens is equally ambivalent about his compatriots and the Romans, reacting to them with a mixture of attraction and repulsion characteristic of the new picturesque, for while he admires the “unbroken good humour of all concerned [in the Carnival], down to the very lowest,” he also observes that “[t]he Italian face changes as the visiter approaches the city; its beauty becomes more devilish; and there is scarcely one countenance in a hundred, among the
common people in the street, that would not be happy in a renovated Coliseum tomorrow” (Pictures 164). Fond of the Coliseum as a ruin, Dickens relishes the landscape that appears “as if the sun would never rise again, but looked its last, that night, upon a ruined world” (200). Pictures from Italy gravitates toward the old Rome, because the more contemporary part of “the Eternal City appear[s]…it look[s] like LONDON!!!” with its one Dome and haze and “long streets of commonplace shops and houses” (Pictures 160). Travel no longer offers exotic places for escape, as it did for Romantic travelers, for Italy and the Continent appear shockingly similar to home.

Discarding both the British tourists and the Romans, Dickens vacates the stage for his Little Dorrit in the depopulated old Rome and the Campagna. William Burgan argues that the difference between Venice and Rome as settings in the novel “is significant, for in Rome the Marshalsea no longer threatens Little Dorrit’s enjoyment of her surroundings. It has become visibly incarnate in them, she goes out seeking it” (406). Whereas in Venice Amy retreated into her room, in Rome she is drawn outside:

She would often ride out in a hired carriage that was left them, and alight alone and wander among the ruins of old Rome. The ruins of the vast amphitheatre, of the old Temples, of the old commemorative Arches, of the old trodden highways, of the old tombs, besides being what they were, to her, were ruins of the Marshalsea – ruins of her own old life – ruins of the faces and forms that of old peopled it – ruins of its loves, hopes, cares, and joys. Two ruined spheres of action and suffering were before the solitary girl often sitting on some broken fragment; and in the lonely places, under the blue sky, she saw them both
Given her lack of classical education, Amy is not distracted by the historical perspective, and so she clearly sees the parallel between “[t]two ruined spheres of action and suffering,” Marshalsea and the present state of Italy. However, the scene is curiously empty of human presence. The incongruity points to the limits of the character’s potential to bridge the rift within the nation as well as between Britain and the Continent. Without the constraints of education, her mind is meant to be free to transcend the distinctions between travelers such as Dickens and tourists such as the Davises (to use James Buzard’s distinction), while her memory of poverty should facilitate her sympathy with the destitute Italians suffering under autocratic governments. However, the Byronic echoes of the passage and the absence of both tourists and natives in the scene indicate that the narrator (if not Little Dorrit) can only capture fragments of Italy, and the past and the present, the people and the landscape hardly meet in the fictional or non-fictional pictures. Both *Pictures of Italy* and *Little Dorrit* use catalogues in describing Italian scenes, and their length approaches Flora Finching’s satirized version of Italy as an endless train of associations of “the grapes and figs growing everywhere and lava necklaces and bracelets too that land of poetry with burning mountains picturesque beyond belief though if the organ boys come away from the neighborhood not to be scorched nobody can wonder being so young and bringing their white mice with them most humane, … with nothing but blue about…and dying gladiators and Belvederas…[and] the extremes of rich and poor…” (514).

Little Dorrit’s naïve letters to Arthur Clennam contrast with the sophistication of
the narrator’s descriptions and of Dickens’s letters, apparently freeing her perceptions of
Italy from the constraints of tourist conventions. Her letter from Rome includes much less
information on sights than the letter from Venice, not because Amy is aware of
guidebooks and travel books on Italy, but because she defers to Clennam’s superior
experience as a traveler: “I don’t know what to tell you… But you could tell me so much
more about them than I can tell you, that why should I tire you with my accounts and
descriptions?” (531). Instead, Amy confesses the “difficulties in [her] travelling mind” of
processing the impressions of Italian cities:

    Old as these cities are, their age itself is hardly so curious, to my reflections, as
    they should have been in their places all through those days when I did not even
    know of the existence of more than two or three of them, and when I scarcely
    knew of anything outside our old walls. There is something melancholy in it, and
    I don’t know why. When we went to see the famous leaning tower in Pisa, it was
    a bright sunny day, and it and the buildings near it looked so old, and the earth
    and sky looked so young, and its shadow on the ground was so soft and retired. I
    could not at first think how beautiful it was, or how curious, but I thought, ‘O how
    many times when the shadow of the wall was falling on our room, and when that
    weary tread of feet was going up and down the yard – Oh how many times this
    place was just as quiet and lovely as it is to-day!’ (531)

When the narrator reports Amy’s impressions of Italy, she persistently associates
continental places with the Marshalsea, focusing on the misery instead of the
magnificence, and insisting on the parallels between Britain and Italy. Amy’s direct
Figure 12: “Mr. Sparkler under a reverse of circumstances.” From Charles Dickens’s *Little Dorrit*.
statement is much less transparent or logical. As the square in Pisa is beautiful and free of any elements of the human picturesque, Amy identifies it with her Marshalsea experience through its coexistence in time rather than its spatial resemblance, underscoring the fundamental separation between Britain and Italy. Whereas Amy is free to contemplate the unreality of the beautiful Pisa, Dickens comments on the jarring discrepancy between the actual scale of the Pisan square and the reproduced visual images he saw at the shop of Mr. Harris, bookseller: “[The] beauties of the Cathedral and the Baptistry need no recapitulation from me; though in this case, as in a hundred others, I find it difficult to separate my own delight in recalling them, from your own weariness in having them recollected” (Tillotson 153). Through the character of Amy Dorrit, Dickens can describe the beauty of Pisa without the keen awareness of belatedness, for his ostensible narrative purpose is not to describe the place as it is, but to illustrate Amy’s state of mind.

Although the Italian settings occupy a significant portion of the novel, only one illustration suggests an actual location, showing the comical fall of Edmund Sparkler into his gondola as he attempts to pursue Fanny Dorrit with typical Venetian architecture in the background (Fig. 12). Commenting on Phiz’s illustrations for *Little Dorrit*, Brian Rosenberg observes that they “do not succeed because they cannot succeed, that any attempt to translate into visual form so unvisualizable a text is doomed to failure, or at least to creating a sense of disjunction between linguistic and pictorial images” (49). Because the setting is subservient to character in the novel, “the disparity between aesthetic and moral judgments looms larger in *Little Dorrit* than in [Dickens’s] non-fictional accounts of Italy” (Burgan 294). The novel defamiliarizes the Italian experience
not so much by striving for a new picturesque, but by fragmenting the shop-worn images of Italian cities as they impress themselves on a mind just emerged out of a prison. When Arthur Clennam realizes his love for Little Dorrit, he refers to her as the “vanishing point” of “his own poor story” and “the centre of the interest of his life” (702). She “plays a similar role in the novel, serving as its moral center, and the Italian setting provides a backdrop rather than a catalyst for the plot. However, as Burgan points out, Little Dorrit lacks a “center of consciousness,” and Amy’s character is only a “doubtful exception” (98). Like Clive Newcome, Amy Dorrit is not fundamentally affected by Italian travel, except for the “ripening touch of Italian sun” (724). Although Little Dorrit reflects Dickens’s direct experience of Italy, employing some of the strategies of the “new picturesque” he calls for in Pictures from Italy and offering a diversified representation of the British travel on the Continent, the function of the Italian setting in the novel is ideologically similar to that of The Newcomes, serving to illustrate the “impact on English minds”—or rather complexions— “of a radically un-English environment” (Burgan 393).

Anglo-Italian Romance and Cosmopolitan Reciprocity in

Giovanni Ruffini’s Doctor Antonio

In the 1850s, Italian exiles supplied the British public with an image of Italy that countered the tourist and anti-tourist representations of the country in British travel narratives. Giovanni Ruffini, a follower of the Italian nationalist leader Mazzini, realized
the impact of novel writers on British public opinion and consciously imitated Thackeray and Dickens to create an alternative version of Italy as a living country, struggling for freedom and unity. Ruffini’s *Doctor Antonio* was published in 1855, the year that Thackeray finished writing *The Newcomes* and Dickens started working on *Little Dorrit*. Allan Christensen succinctly characterizes the novel as “a familiar story of an English heart captivated by the beauty of Italy and its inhabitants… from the unaccustomed viewpoint of an Italian protagonist” (133). Ruffini’s cosmopolitan vision explores the possibility of an Anglo-Italian romance but leaves it suspended in its doomed platonic form, asserting the primacy of the national cause over foreign affiliation. Both the narrator and the protagonist alternately express admiration for British freedom and reservations about British pride, affection for the Italian people and detestation for the corruption of the autocratic systems. The novel’s ambivalence about both Britain and Italy reflects the predicament of exile that the protagonist shares with the author.

Ruffini not only reworks the Romantic “myth of exile” in light of his experience as a failed Italian revolutionary and a disenchanted ex-follower of Mazzini, but also explores the “interestingly international dimensions of the European literary enterprise in the middle of nineteenth century” in his fiction (Christensen A.135). Ruffini spent most of his life in exile, mainly in London and Paris. After rejecting Mazzini’s republican ideals as impracticable and coming to consider constitutional monarchy as the solution to the Italian question, he turned his attention from politics to novel writing. He chose to write his novels in English, although he was more fluent in French. Driven to succeed in the British literary marketplace by both need and ambition, he realized that he needed to
adjust his rhetoric and style to the taste of the English audience: “Until one is resigned to
acting like an Englishman oneself with respect to the English and so tones down the
emotionality of one’s ideas and style, which jars on their nerves, one will accomplish
nothing” (qtd. Christensen 138). Ruffini consciously wrote in the English literary
tradition, modeling his work on writers including Shakespeare, Sterne, Smollett,
Radcliffe, Dickens, and Thackeray (Christensen 139). In England, he found a
benefactress in Jane Welsh Carlyle, and, although he pitied the wife, he was inspired by
her husband’s ideas (Christensen 142). He wrote his novels in collaboration with two
divorced literary English women, Cornelia Turner and Henrietta Jenkin, who helped him
as editors, translators, or perhaps even co-writers, and with whom he lived in Paris in an
unorthodox household. Unlike his first autobiographical Lorenzo Benoni (1853), Doctor
Antonio was composed directly in English. Although, as Christensen suggests, there is no
definitive answer to why Ruffini chose to write in English, Ruffini’s directly stated
explanation is most plausible in the case of Doctor Antonio: “It being my purpose to
correct the scarcely favorable opinion of us [Italians] prevalent in France and England, it
was natural that I should make use of the language of one of the two countries which I
was addressing” (qtd. Christensen 144). The novel is both nationalistic and cosmopolitan,
for Ruffini realizes that the national cause requires international support. However, it
seems that it was a success in England thanks to its romantic appeal as much as due to the
increased interest in Italian Risorgimento in the 1850s. Christensen reports that Dickens
“not surprisingly found the figure of the heroine perfect” and “attempted twice –
unsuccessfully – to look Ruffini up in Paris” (148). The only critical controversy in
Britain concerned the congruence and the respective merits of the idyllic or picturesque first part and historical or political second part of the novel. This concern—Christensen tells us that Ruffini later came to regret the inclusion of the political sections—offers a revealing parallel to Dickens’s circumspection about political issues in *Pictures from Italy* (Christensen 148). Although the actual political appeal or influence of *Doctor Antonio* is difficult to determine, the fact that Ruffini chose to use a fictional travel narrative to counter the English stereotype of Italians attests to the perceived influence of fictional representations on international relations. Ruffini’s choice shows that European nationalists keenly realized the power of literature—in this particular case the British novel—to not only to forge British identity, but also to shape the destiny of particular nations on the Continent.

The first idyllic part of the story of *Doctor Antonio* is set in the obscure villages of the Riviera along the Cornice Road between Genoa and Nice. Ruffini’s fictional Italy is based on childhood memories, but he imaginatively transforms his personal past for nationalist purposes. Murray’s *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* (1852) describes the scenic Ligurian coast in typically conventional terms with a focus on the aesthetic merits of the landscape:

> The route presents some of the most beautiful scenery in Italy. Upon the sides of the hills sloping to the Mediterranean grow olives, oranges, cypresses, and the stone-pine, so frequent in the landscapes of Claude Lorraine. Then successive indentations of the shore, larger bays, including smaller bights, headlands advancing and closing in the prospect, and the blue sea, constitute the main
features of this most favored tract, in which alpine heights and maritime scenes
are conjoined to the ornaments given by human art… The towns and villages,
thickly studded along the coast, and glittering upon the sides of the hills,
sometimes placed at a great height, wear a gay aspect. (*Handbook* 71)

Dickens’s account of the Cornice road modifies the landscape by including the human element of the new picturesque:

Much of the romance of the beautiful towns and villages on this beautiful road,
disappears when they are entered, for many of them are very miserable. The streets are narrow, dark and dirty; the inhabitants are lean and squalid; and the withered old women, with their wiry grey hair twisted up into a knot on the top of the head, like a pad to carry loads on, are intensely ugly…they are like a population of Witches – except they certainly are not to be suspected of brooms or any other instrument of cleanliness. (*Pictures* 99)

Murray’s *Handbook* comments on the human element more moderately, if not more favorably: “The people of the Riviera are the least beautiful of its objects: still they are a stout, active, and hardy race, generally well-clothed and fed; and the road always exhibits much animation” [my emphasis] (72). As much as they can be considered representative of the British perceptions of the Riviera and its people, the *Pictures* and the *Handbook* reflect a range of moral and aesthetic attitudes Ruffini attempts to adapt or uproot in writing *Doctor Antonio*.

Ruffini’s description of the Cornice road, which opens the novel, shares but also contests the picturesque conventions of Murray’s *Handbook* and the premises of Ruskin’s
“noble” picturesque. The idyllic dimension of Ruffini’s picturesque embraces the local inhabitants, whose labor is in harmony with the landscape:

Few of the public highways of Europe are more favoured than this – few, at any rate, combine in themselves three such elements of natural beauty as the Mediterranean on one side, the Apennines on the other, and overhead the splendours of an Italian sky. The industry of man has done what it could, if not to vie with, at least not to disparage Nature. Numerous towns and villages, some gracefully seated on the shore, … or thrown picturesquely astride a lofty ridge…

(Doctor Antonio 1)

Ruffini’s description includes signs of human industry that contradict Dickens’s impression of decay, such as “white casini with green jalousies scattered all over hills, once sterile, but now, their scanty soil propped up by terrace shelving above terrace, clothed to the top with olive-trees, -- all and everything, in short, of man’s handiwork, [which] betokens the activity and ingenuity of a tasteful and richly-endowed race” (2). Departing from the English Picturesque tradition, Ruffini’s employment of picturesque description divorces it from its origins in landownership – as well as its connotations rooted in British property relations and connected with estate improvement – and attributes it to the local people who transform the land with their own hands.18

The English protagonists of the novel, Sir John Davenne and his consumptive daughter Lucy, enter this idyllic setting in “an elegant travelling carriage” with “the appendages that bespeak rank and wealth,” merely rushing along the coast in the manner typical of English tourists returning from Rome to Nice, Paris and London (DA 1). Sir
John Davenne communicates with the postilion through his conventionally English servants: “Each party repeated his own words over and over again, without conveying any idea to the other; English John insisting on the restive horse being put into the traces…; while the postilion, with native fluency, persisted in asseverating that there was no danger,” which leads to a road accident (8). The English travelers are rescued by the local Doctor Antonio, “a tall, dark, black-bearded man, wearing a broad-brimmed conical hat – in short, just such a figure as, met by Sir John under any other circumstances, would have made him cock the two pistols he had invariably carried about him since travelling in the classical land of the banditti” (14). On the other hand, Sir John is such a stereotypical Englishman that to Doctor Antonio it appears “as if in the Baronet’s face he had seen the flag of Great Britain hoisted” (14). The resourceful doctor treats Lucy’s broken foot and houses the travelers in the isolated and shabby Osteria del Mattone run by the obliging Rosa and her daughter Speranza, whose compassion for Lucy illustrates “the strength of the social bonds felt by the olive-skinned passionate children of Italy” (21). 

Whereas Thackeray’s and Dickens’s fictional settings and their new picturesque focus on urban environments, Ruffini’s English travelers are stranded in the obscure Bordighera—near Taggia where Ruffini spent part of his childhood—and forced into contact with Italians because Lucy gets injured and cannot be transported. In fear of being stranded among foreigners, the suspicious Sir John unsuccessfully attempts to replace Doctor Antonio with an English doctor from Nice, but the properly close-shaved, black-clad Doctor Yorke cannot afford to desert his affluent clientele in Nice and
commute to the remote Bordighera. The following excerpt from the 1852 edition of Murray’s *Handbook* constitutes the complete entry on Bordighera and reflects the relative unimportance of the village to British tourists:

The Jesu Maria, the best inn, is detestable. A small ancient castello, finely situated under olive-clad mountains. The road from Ventimiglia, through Bordighera and San Remo, runs mostly low (at least comparatively so), and sometimes quite near the sea-shore. Here the palm-trees become more and more numerous, giving an oriental aspect to the scenery. Many of these are swathed round, in order to improve the growth of the branches used in processions, which gives them a very singular appearance. (76)

The narrator of *Doctor Antonio* remarks that “[h]ad Sir John Davenne kept a note-book, he would probably have made a “new-picturesque” entry of this sort,—‘San Remo, a queer-looking place, narrow, ill-paved streets, high, irregular houses, ragged people, swarms of beggars,’ and so forth for a whole page” (6). Sir John was prevented from taking the Grand Tour in his youth by the Napoleonic wars and his belated exposure to Italy only solidifies in “a cell of his brains a tapestry of notions about Italy, on which stilettos, banditti and vendette, figured in juxtaposition with solitary inns, or gaunt houses by the seashore, where travelers were enticed, murdered and plundered” (39). The Baronet’s forced stay in Bordighera and his conversations with Doctor Antonio gradually dispel “the spider’s web of prejudice spread over his intellect,” which was reinforced during his earlier experience of Italian cities (46).

As an exiled Sicilian patriot and a cosmopolitan with English relations, Doctor
Antonio serves as a convenient mouthpiece for Ruffini as well as a cross-cultural mediator for the Davennes. Although Sir John voices his reservations about the doctor’s attire and his readiness for any type of service including fixing windows and churning butter, Antonio proves a proper, disinterested gentleman. James Buzard observes that the British perceived the transformations of the country associated with the Risorgimento as a “sex-change,” a departure from the earlier feminized image of Italy (133). In this sense, Doctor Antonio is a type of a masculine Corinne, standing for the revolutionary potential of the country while also retaining the aesthetic sensibilities of de Staël’s heroine – the Doctor claims that “Mrs. Radcliffe’s romances are nothing to those [he] created in [his] own fancy” (108). Thus he can serve as a guide for Lucy, giving her lessons in landscape aesthetics and remarking, with the eye of an outsider, that “[f]igures are so picturesque in Italy, it is almost a matter of duty to copy them” (168). However, as an insider he also appreciates the natives’ natural taste as “a race of unconscious artists”: “Perhaps Nature has so ordained it, that men’s works should not be at odds with her in this privileged land” (206). In Doctor Antonio’s conception, Italian peasants are consciously and artfully picturesque, not natural components of the landscape as in conventional picturesque discourse. He uproots Lucy’s unfavorable preconceptions of the Italian national character: “To say the least, they have many good points…they are sober, independent and warm-hearted; there is a native mildness in their blood; and when they quarrel – for where is it that men are always at peace with one another? – the quarrel rarely ends in blows” (168). When Lucy assumes that skillful workmen would like to seek better remuneration in England, Doctor Antonio reminds her of the local attachment of the
people, who prefer their scenery, “their homes and quiet habits” to the promise of prosperity abroad (166).

Conversations with Lucy also offer an occasion for extended sections on Italian politics – Ruffini advises “the reader who objects to history in a work of fiction [to] slip over” Chapter XIV on Sicily (216). Antonio highlights the role of Britain in drafting the Sicilian constitution and reproaches the Tory Baronet, who defends British freedom along with continental autocracy, for his double standard in politics:

‘Is a nation to be allowed no right in protecting and defending its liberties and independence?’

‘Certainly,’ said the Baronet; ‘but you go too far, too far by a great deal; if kings are sometimes driven to extremities, whose fault is it but that of the party with whom there is no possible transaction. I mean the ultra-democratic party, that will be satisfied with nothing short of implanting republics on the ruins of every throne?’

‘Ultra-democratic party! republics!’ exclaimed Antonio, in unfeigned amazement.

‘Who ever dreamed of a republic in Sicily? If we ever come to that, and it may be the case some day, it will be the Bourbons’ own doing. The Sicilians are an essentially monarchical people; their traditions, habits, and customs are deeply rooted in monarchy.’ (215)

The continual contact with Italians mitigates Sir John’s prejudices: “Sir John had heard before of government courts-martial for trying, shooting, or hanging Italian patriots by the score, of thousands languishing in prison, or wandering homeless through the world,
but none of these collective misfortunes in Naples had awakened his sympathies or aroused his indignation” as the individual stories he hears in encounters with actual Italians of the Riviera (288).

When the initial “magnetic current [that passed] between the young people” is about to blossom into a romance (21), Antonio tests Sir John’s attitude by showing him a newspaper column announcing a scandalous Anglo-Italian marriage:

‘Romance in high life. – We entertained our readers not long ago with the account of a silly scene enacted at Florence, and in which Miss Fanny Carnifex, youngest daughter of the noble Lord of that name, and a young Roman painter, played the principal parts. The scene we related has lengthened into a two-act comedy…

Eluding the strictest vigilance, Miss Fanny succeeded in joining her rash young lover, who had followed her to Rome. This deplorable dénouement has created a painful excitement throughout the English colony at Rome and Florence. …’

(297)

Indignant, Sir John instantly forgets the lessons of his friendship with Antonio and exclaims: “They only marry for money, these – a – confounded Italian adventurers” (298). When Lucy’s brother Aubrey returns from India and scents the danger, he whisks father and his sister back to London. Aubrey, whose “tiger-hunting stories,” acute sense of place in the British class system, and passive aggression suggest how imperialism affects British attitudes to continental Europeans, cynically tells Lucy that he wished Doctor Antonio “were an English Duke” [my emphasis] (310). Aubrey turns out more prejudiced than his old-fashioned, xenophobic father, for he immediately recognizes the
human value of the doctor and yet dismisses him due to his “wrong” class and nationality.

Aubrey’s violent interruption of the pastoral idyll at Bordighera foreshadows the representation of autocratic oppression in the last part of the novel, which is set mostly in Naples eight years later. Lucy returns to Italy as a widow, her health broken by an unhappy marriage, and reunites with Antonio, now a Sicilian politician advocating peace at the Court of Naples. After Lucy’s forced departure from Bordighera, Antonio denounces love to serve his country: “Viva l’Italia! My first and last love!” (299). This vow leads him to leave Lucy and get arrested as he attempts to aid the wounded during a revolt that breaks out in Naples. In the last section of the novel, the narrator uses the readers’ sympathy for Doctor Antonio to help us relate to the “[t]he number of the imprisoned, for political offences, in the happy Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, in [the] year of grace 1850,” who were in the public eye in Britain (388).

In 1860, Dickens published a travel sketch titled “The Italian Prisoner,” finally putting his political stand on the Risorgimento in a literary form after the unification of Italy: “The rising of the Italian people from under their unutterable wrongs and the tardy burst of day upon them after the long long night of oppression that has darkened their beautiful country, have naturally caused my mind to dwell often of late on my own small wanderings in Italy” (168). In this sketch, Dickens tells the story of a type of politically motivated face-to-face encounter between the English and the Italians that constitutes the bulk of Doctor Antonio, but is left out of Pictures from Italy and Little Dorrit. The piece was first published in 1860 in All the Year Round and later reprinted in The
Uncommercial Traveller, among other essays of social exploration predominantly focused on London and England. John M.L. Drew points out that the three essays in the collection that are set on the Continent “give the impression that they could be incorporated seamlessly into the text of Pictures from Italy…but [these later essays display] a more intimate knowledge of foreign customs, language and atmosphere, and [conceal] more under the mask of a literary persona” (84). The essay describes “the strictly true story” of Dickens’s visit to former Italian political prisoner, Sanvanero, whose release was arranged by Lord Dudley Coutts Stuart, a Mazzini supporter (Flint xxiv). The ex-prisoner in the story is named Carlavero, echoing the name of Cavaletto in Little Dorrit, who also finds an English benefactor in Arthur Clennam. Dickens finds Carlavero operating an inferior wine shop and recalls the man’s emotion: “[H]ere was the man, this sultry night, on his knees at my feet, because I was the English man’s friend; here were his tears upon my dress; here were his sobs choking his utterance; here were his kisses on my hands, because they had touched the hands that had worked out his release” (174). Carlavero gives Dickens a large bottle of wine for his benefactor, which Dickens vows to deliver to the last drop at the cost of comical skirmishes with continental authorities: “It was characteristic that while this innocent Bottle had such immense difficulty in getting from little town to town, Signor Mazzini and the fiery cross were traversing Italy from end to end” (177). Ruffini’s fictional story of an Italian prisoner elicits a different kind of emotion – frustrated admiration rather than gratifying pity. When Lucy concocts an elaborate plan to aid Antonio’s escape from the Bourbon prison, he chooses martyrdom of a type that satisfies his personal integrity rather than serving the
cause of the nation: “‘There are five here besides myself, all noble fellows, the least of
them worth ten of me. I cannot desert them. You cannot save us all; leave me to my fate.
Providence has assigned me my place among the sufferers. Perhaps our trials will be
reckoned to our country. Pray that it may be so. Pray for Italy’” (425). Although Ruffini’s
prisoner is a fictional creation and Dickens’s prisoner is at least presented as an actual
person, the contrast between the two characters points to a cultural clash between the
Italian patriots and their British supporters and shows the Italian self-image in conflict
with even the most benevolent projection by the British. The increased contact between
the English and the Italians and among European nations in general did not necessarily
lead to cross-cultural understanding. In its attempt to counteract the influence of the
conventional accounts of Italians in British travel narratives, a fictional representation of
the cross-cultural encounter such as Doctor Antonio, albeit idealized, reveals the
discrepancy between the mid-Victorian novelists’ cosmopolitan ideal and their inability
to imagine reciprocal encounters between the British and the continental.
NOTES

1 Dickens’s critique of picturesque observation and his account of the misery of Naples are more direct and scathing in a letter to John Forster from February 22, 1845: “What would I give that you should see the lazzaroni as they really are – mere squalid, abject, miserable animals for vermin to batten on; slouching, slinking, ugly, shabby, scavenging scarecrows! And of the raffish counts and more than doubtful countesses, the noodles and the blacklegs, the good society! And oh the miles of miserable streets and wretched occupants, to which Saffron-hill or the Borough-mint is a kind of small gentility, which are found to be so picturesque by English lords and ladies; to whom the wretchedness left behind at home is lowest of the low, and vilest of the vile, and commonest of all common things. … what would you say to these people, milady and milord, if they spoke out of the homely dictionary of your own ‘lower orders’” (Tillotson 272).

2 Sheila Smith’s The Other Nation: The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s, examines how novelistic representations convey “the truth” about the poor to the middle-class readers.

3 “Observe though, that though all this ruin has befallen Stanfield’s mill, Standfield is not in the least sorry for it. On the contrary, he is delighted, and evidently thinks it the most fortunate thing possible. The owner is ruined, doubtless, or dead; but his mill forms an admirable object in our view of Brittany… Not so Turner. His mill is servicable; but, for all that, he feels somewhat pensive about it. It is a poor property, and evidently the owner of it has enough to do to get his own bread from between its stones. Moreover, there is a dim type of all melancholy labour in it, -- catching the free winds, and setting them to turn grindstones” (Modern Painters, vol. V 18).

4 Joseph Phelan aptly describes the Victorians’ uneasy inheritance of the “old” picturesque of landscape aesthetics: “For the Victorians, the picturesque connotes detachment, connoisseurship, fixed habits of vision, and a lack of sympathy with human suffering: it is an aridly intellectual and aristocratic way of viewing the world. In its place they want to see a new picturesque, one that combines receptivity to the beauty and charm of the rugged, the timeworn, the irregular with a refusal to reduce human beings to mere objects for picturesque study”(120).

5 My interpretation of Eliot’s essay is indebted to Amanda Anderson’s The Powers of
To illustrate his distinction between England and Continent, Ruskin tells how upon returning from the Continent, he saw a sign advertising “a genteel house to let”: “And it struck me forcibly, for I had not come across the idea of gentility, among the upper limestones of the Alps, for seven months; nor do I think that the Continental nations in general have the idea” (12). Instead, a continental house would be advertised by its properties, as either “pretty,” “large,” or “convenient.” This comparison, like parallels between home and abroad in mid-Victorian novels, serves Ruskin for the purposes of critiquing English culture rather than interpreting the culture of any particular continental nation.

According to Amanda Anderson, representations of continental settings are affected by the cultivation of detachment, or “aspiration to distanced views” in Victorian intellectual circles, including John Stuart Mill and George Eliot, but not Thomas Carlyle or John Ruskin (6). Unlike current critical theory, Anderson points out, the Victorians valued critical distance that effaced individuality for the sake of objectivity and in the interest of reaching wider audiences. Such ideal detachment, Anderson argues, applies to both intellectual and moral practices, including modes of representation and “practices of the self” such as realism and cosmopolitanism (7).

In their appropriation of Byron and other Romantics, Murray’s guidebooks relied on what Buzard calls the “‘ethnographic principle’, placing premium on the different-from-home in search for “alterity and ‘authenticity.’”(175). The impressionistic travel account was conditioned by the Victorian travelers’ “Romantic response to industrialization and capitalist expansion” at home (175). For further discussion of how the Victorian tourists’ use of Byron relies on “[t]he abstracting of the Byronic spirit from the political and historical contexts,” see James Buzard, The Beaten Track, pp. 123-127.

This is not the case in the representations of Italy in contemporary Victorian poetry, such as Arthur Hugh Clough’s Amours de Voyage (1849) or Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Casa Guidi Windows (1851).

For an account of this scandal, see Harry W. Rudman, particularly Chapter VI: Lord Aberdeen Spies on Mazzini’s Letters, pp. 58-79.

For a more detailed account of Dickens’s political involvement in the cause of Italian nationalism, see Caponi-Doherty, “Charles Dickens and the Italian Risorgimento,” Dickens Quarterly 1996 September, 13:3, 151-163.

For a more detailed account of Dickens’s involvement with Italian exiles and the Risorgimento, see Parossien’s Introduction to Pictures from Italy and Caponi-Doherty’s article.
Patrick Brantlinger’s seminal study Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914 focuses on the 1850s as “a turning point in imperialistic ideology” (14). Brantinger acknowledges the relative marginality of the Empire in mid-Victorian fiction, but notes that non-European settings, albeit off stage, nevertheless persistently appear in novels of domestic realism as well as in adventure tales: “Adventure and domesticity, romance and realism, are the seemingly opposite poles of a single system of discourse, the literary equivalents of imperial domination abroad and liberal reform at home. In the middle of the most serious domestic concerns, often in the most unlikely texts, the Empire may intrude as a shadowy realm of escape, renewal, banishment, or return for characters who for one reason or another need to enter or exit from scenes of domestic conflict” (12). The Continent functions in similar ways, although the phenomenon of mass tourism makes continental settings slightly more vivid and the contact with Europeans makes the descriptions of the natives somewhat more self-conscious in mid-Victorian fiction.

The Stones of Venice, Ruskin’s erudite three-volume masterpiece on Venitian art and architecture, was published from 1851-53. Ruskin surveys the city’s Byzantine, Gothic and Renaissance architecture to illustrate the principles he formulated in "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," while also covering the history of Venice.

In a footnote to the Penguin edition of the novel, Steven Wall and Helen Small identify Mr. Eustace as John Chetwode Eustace, author of A Classical Tour through Italy (1741). “Dickens owned a copy of the three-volume edition of 1841, and considered Eustace ‘a solemn humbug’ (L, VIII, 196)”(873). Given the fact that the novel is set about thirty years before its publication, Eustace’s Tour represents an earlier version of Murray’s guidebooks.

William Burgan argues that “[b]ecause [Little Dorrit’s] letter carries little trace of Dickens’s descriptive skill, it provides a rare opportunity to study his sense of place in what might be called its pure state, as the exercise of an intuitive faculty almost independent of words” (404). Although Burgan is correct in suggesting that the fictional character is ostensibly free of the burdens of travel narrative conventions, it is impossible for Dickens to convey his sense of place in “its pure state” and “almost independent of words” (404). On the contrary, the economy of language in the novel makes the place even more abstract than the non-fictional record of Dickens’s Italian travel.

Allan Conrad Christensen reports that Ruffini’s childhood was not always idyllic. In Taggia, which is close to the villages described in Doctor Antonio, he suffered in the household of his clerical uncle. He was reluctant to return to Liguria after the unification of Italy and chose to live in exile. See A European version of Victorian Fiction: The Novels of Giovanni Ruffini (1996), pp. 46, 31-32, 36-37.

The idealization of the peasants in Doctor Antonio is typical of European Romantic nationalism. Allan Christensen points out that Ruffini belongs to a strand of continental
Romanticism in the vein of Goethe rather than of the more skeptical British Byronism.
CHAPTER 5

REVAMPING THE IMPERIAL GOTHIC:

BRAM STOKER’S EASTERN EUROPE AND THE THREAT OF NATIONALISM

As he reviewed the events leading to World War I in 1917, Robert Seton-Watson, a renowned British historian, used a curious image to describe the operating principle of an Eastern European power: “Like a vampire, the Ottoman state could only flourish by draining the life blood of its victims, until at length the overgrown body fell an easy prey to decay and corruption”(10). While Seaton-Watson, a liberal advocate of nations struggling for independence from Eastern European empires uses the metaphor of vampirism to indict imperialism, travel writers who inspired Stoker’s novels associate vampirism with distinctly Eastern European forms of nationalism. Stoker’s vampire partakes of the ambiguities of such geopolitical uses of the term, which results in a variety of conflicting interpretations of the novel. Many critics have pointed out that Bram Stoker’s Dracula reflects the British anxieties about the decline of the empire and the related discourses of national and racial degeneration.¹ On the other hand, the
character of the vampire has been also associated with Irish nationalism, and the imperial
order interpreted as its victim. In this Chapter, I supplement but also contest the
historicist readings of Stoker’s Imperial Gothic by focusing not so much on the British
dempire-building or Anglo-Celtic nation-making, but on Britain’s conflicted attitude to the
Eastern Question.

*Dracula* (1897) and *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909) belong to the genre of Imperial
Gothic, which is based on an inherent contradiction: the word “imperial” refers to actual
events and places, whereas the term “gothic” points to imaginary histories and
geographies. According to Judith Wilt, the legacy of the Romantic gothic is an encounter
with the dark aspects of the self, but Stoker’s late Victorian (imperial) gothic also
portrays “a real going out, and a real encounter with something alien, not the self” (Wilt
621). Representing such a “real encounter” in an Eastern European setting requires even
a fiction writer to take into account the problem of nationality. The Imperial Gothic novel
typically explores and exploits remote corners or hearts of darkness of the non-European
world to project anxieties about the moral and racial decline the British Empire. In his
definition of the Imperial Gothic, Patrick Brantlinger maintains that the genre originated
from fears of invasion and regression, but also in response to a perceived “decline of
exploration into mere tourism” (238). Unlike Sir Rider Haggard in his representations of
Africa, Stoker cannot completely obliterate the cultural specifics of his Eastern European
settings because they already harbor particular tensions between ethnic groups, nations,
and empires. As Larry Wolff puts it in *Inventing Eastern Europe*, “the adjacency of
Eastern Europe, its relative accessibility compared to the remoteness of the South Pacific,
rendered it particularly susceptible to a cultural construction that partook of both fact and fantasy” (359). Vesna Goldsworthy compellingly links the process of “literary colonisation” and “real colonisation”:

It begins with travel writers, explorers, and adventurers, undertaking reconnaissance missions into an unknown area. They are gradually followed by novelists, playwrights and poets who, in their quest for new plots and settings, rely just as frequently on research through atlases and timetables as on direct experience. … Once ‘mapped’, new territories are further appropriated by the writers of popular fiction, who delineate the final shape of the imaginary map and secure their stakes as surely as European colonists secured newly surveyed parcels of land in America, Australia, or New Zealand. Their need to visit or know the area they describe is, at this stage, relatively remote, and the ‘authenticity’ they aim to achieve is one which fulfills the desires and fantasies of the reader. (3)

The focus of Goldsworthy’s study, *Inventing Ruritania*, is not remote colonies, but the Balkans. She argues that at the ebb of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century, the Balkan Penninsula provided both the raw material and the unmapped territory required by British popular fiction. Adapting the geopolitical specifics of actual Eastern European locations, Stoker represents his fictional settings as *chronotopes* distinct from British (and Western) civilization; in a temporal displacement characteristic of late nineteenth-century anthropology, he emphasizes the feudal remoteness of both Transylvania and Montenegro from contemporary reality. On the other hand, the
boundaries between Britain and Eastern Europe, the past and modernity also become blurred as Stoker revises his Imperial Gothic in response to the increased urgency of the Eastern Question.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, British continental foreign policy faced the problems that the declining Ottoman Empire posed to the balance of power in Europe. As Stephen Arata points out, the outlandish adventures and settings of popular fiction of the fin de siècle were offered as imaginary solutions to pressing contemporary issues. According to Arata, “to a greater extent than on the Continent, public discussion in Britain about social problems was carried on through the medium of mass market texts” (4). I argue that Stoker’s novels offer imaginative answers to the “Eastern Question,” which threatens to place Britain back on the geopolitical periphery of Europe and forces it to compete for prestige with continental powers. Although a sequence of Eastern crises brought Britain closer to Europe in the late nineteenth century, British foreign policy resisted involvement in continental affairs because it was incompatible with the country’s imperial interests. Such “extra-European” foreign policy generated fears of invasion by one or all of the European powers. Although Britain had defended the integrity of the Ottoman empire as a buffer against Russia and to protect the route to India, after the death of Disraeli, who intervened in continental affairs to make the Queen the “arbitress of Europe,” Turkey-in-Europe was getting harder to defend, “morally as well as materially” in the 1880s and 1890s (Porter 78-9). During Disraeli’s last period as Prime Minister, he was determined to assert British interests against the Dreikaiserbund of Germany, Austria, and Russia, which dominated continental affairs as the French
influence was weakening and the position of Italy was not yet very strong. During the 1875 war scare, Disraeli famously proclaimed that the *Dreikaiserbund* was beginning to treat England “as if we were Montenegro or Bosnia.”⁵ Given that Lord Derby, the head of the Foreign Office described Montenegro as “petit peuple à demi barbare,”⁶ it is evident that British politicians were anxious about the peripheral status of Britain in continental affairs as well as about the claims of small nations and ethnic groups on continental empires.

This Chapter examines Stoker’s Eastern European settings in light of contemporary travel writing on the region in order to show that the fin-de-siècle Eastern Europe did not merely furnish but also shaped the settings for Stoker’s Imperial Gothic in *Dracula* (1897) and a later, lesser known novel, *Lady of the Shroud* (1909). In constructing his synthetic settings, Stoker draws on travel writers who record actual encounters with Eastern European nationalists who struggle with other imperial powers—Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. The controversy and confusion about the problem of nationality in Austria-Hungary and the Balkans is more resistant to binary oppositions than the problem of race in typical Imperial Gothic novels, and so the discourse of balkanism supplements but also supercedes Orientalist assumptions about Eastern Europe. The settings of the two novels, Transylvania and The Land of the Blue Mountains (Montenegro), territories dominated by the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, function as doubles rather than “Others” of the British Isles, as Stoker imaginatively transposes the inhabitants of the two European peripheries—first westward in the invasion of *Dracula* and then eastward in the imperialist fantasy of *The Lady of the*
Nationalism became a sufficiently prominent force that prompted the first academic attempts to describe the process of nation formation in the last decades of the nineteenth-century. Walter Bagehot’s and Ernest Renan’s nineteenth-century definitions of the nation shed light on Stoker’s representation of nationalism. In *Physics and Politics* (1872), Walter Bagehot describes nation-building as an evolutionary process:

> I think there will be a disinclination to attribute so marked, fixed, almost physical a thing as national character to causes so evanescent as the imitation of appreciated habit and the persecution of detested habit. But after all, national character is but a name for a collection of habits more or less universal. And this imitation and this persecution in long generations have vast physical effects. The mind of the parent (as we speak) passes somehow into the body of the child … In time an ingrained type is sure to be formed, and sure to be passed on…(96)

According to Bagehot, savages have a greater propensity to mimicry and adhere more rigidly to habits than civilized peoples. As Bagehot’s language reveals, the late nineteenth-century concepts of national character hovered uneasily between physical (biological) and psychological (cultural) categories, although Bagehot completely dismisses theories about the role of climate (and presumably environment) in nation-making. Ernest Renan’s lecture, “What is a Nation?”(1882), offers a less universal description of nation formation that is strictly based on the Western European model. He claims that “nation is a soul, a spiritual principle,” for “it is no more soil than it is race which makes a nation” (18). Instead of material factors such as natural frontiers, the
nation is constituted by two things—a common store of memories (or forgotten origins) and the will to live together (19). Both early theorists of nationhood posit forms of continuity, but also emphasize how nations change over time. They also distinguish between highly and less evolved nations (Bagehot), or nations and ethnic groups (Renan). Renan warns that if “an ethnographic principle is substituted for the national one” it could “destroy European civilization”(13). Both Stoker’s novels are set in Eastern European spaces of great ethnic diversity, and thus these concepts of nationhood help explain Stoker’s different treatments of the ethnie, a “lower” form of collective identity that the West attributes to Asia and Eastern Europe.7

The publication of Stoker’s Eastern European Imperial Gothic novels falls in the period when the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires vainly struggled to contain national revival movements, and increased migration was contributing to growing xenophobia in the West.8 The liberal Victorians’ sympathy with nationalism, in the sense of “nations struggling to be free,” was brought to test by waves of immigrants from Eastern Europe. Although Britain resisted being drawn into the vortex of European alliances, the gap between the British establishment and more authoritative continental systems of government was gradually closing. As Bernard Porter points out, a special branch of police was established in England to deal with Irish nationalism, bringing the British policing methods closer to continental ones and signaling the “Europeanisation” of Britain (53). On the other hand, liberals and conservatives alike were incensed by the Turkish oppression of Southern Slavs, particularly after the so-called “Bulgarian atrocities” galvanized British public opinion in favor of the small Balkan nations. After
the Turks massacred over 10,000 Bulgarians (the number was part of the controversy), Disraeli dismissed the news as “coffee-house babble,” provoking Gladstone to write a pamphlet titled *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (1876) and draw popular support for the national struggle in the Balkans. The British public realized the importance of first-hand reporting, and several travelers and journalists traveled to the sites of the massacres to sort out the conflicting information on the scope of the Bulgarian atrocities.9

The series of late-nineteenth-century crises caused by the Eastern Question highlighted the problem of representing Eastern Europe, a region that appeared removed in time as well as space from the perspective of Western Europe. By the turn of the century, the European continent had polarized along the East-West axis, both materially, due to uneven economic development, and ideologically, based on the Enlightenment concept of civilization that used Western Europe as a benchmark for progress.10 Jósef Böröcz analyzes contemporary guidebooks to show how they constructed “mental maps” of Europe in the period of 1870-1925. He observes that “the imaginary itinerary of the guidebook proceeds from the west toward the east of the continent,” privileging Western destinations (particularly Britain and Italy) over Eastern ones (717). This results in “the underrepresentation or complete absence of at least half of the continent’s countries and surely more than half its population”(723). In the absence of adequate guidebooks and hence an established body of facts on the region, travel writers tend to use their fantasy to embellish their accounts of “exploration” in the region.11 On the other hand, late Victorian travel writing on Eastern Europe also provides a wealth of ethnographic detail.
In *Culture and Anomie*, Christopher Herbert builds on Raymond Williams’s account of the changing significance of “culture” in the nineteenth century. Williams posits a development from the concept of culture as “an ideal of harmonious personal and collective perfectibility”—elaborated by writers such as Edmund Burke and Matthew Arnold—to an ethnographic concept of culture as “a whole way of life”(22), which interprets disparate elements as intelligible wholes. Herbert argues that this shift in the concept of culture transforms ethnographic discourse— the view that primitive peoples are unrestrained in their desires (an idea based on the Methodist concept of original sin) is modified by a recognition that even apparently savage behavior is bound by a system of customs: “What we see, then, is a broad reversal of assumptions in which ‘savage’ society is transformed from a void of institutional control where desire is rampant to a spectacle of controls exerted systematically upon the smallest details of daily life”(65).

Stoker’s re-presentation of Count Dracula embodies both concepts of nineteenth-century ethnographic discourse—the first one in his voracious appetite for English bodies and the second one in his ritualistic conformity to customs. The more relativistic concept of culture also makes Britain subject to fictional foreign ethnographers such as Count Dracula, who can master the whole culture by studying its parts.

Stoker’s revision of the relation between home and abroad in his Eastern European settings indicates that the Imperial Gothic adjusts the proportion of the imagined elements in response to current events. Gothic plots thrive in continental settings that are perceived as a source of threat rather than a place of refuge. As the threat of nationalism and accompanying border disputes intensify on the eve of World War I, Stoker adapts the
available travel writing information to contain the threat of nationalism in his
collection of the Eastern European periphery. At the same time, Stoker’s cautionary
tales remind British readers that isolation from the Continent is no longer possible and
promote masculine resistance to continental ethnies and empires. While in *Dracula*
Stoker exaggerates the cultural differences between Britain and Transylvania to create an
alien presence and points to the threat of transposition, in *The Lady of the Shroud* he
erases the same cultural differences to imagine a solution to the increasingly vexed
Eastern Question. Stoker adopts Radcliffe’s strategy of explained supernatural to mitigate
the threat posed by Dracula. In *The Lady of the Shroud*, vampirism is used as mere
mimicry, for the heroine (aptly named “Teuta,” which indicates her teutonic ties to
Englishness) poses as a vampire in defense against a collectivized villain, the declining
Ottoman empire. Thanks to the relative inaccessibility of Eastern Europe, Stoker can
adapt available information about the region into exaggerated terrors of nationalism or a
tame imperialist fantasy. The Land of the Blue Mountains is located in the Adriatic, not
far from Radcliffe’s Neapolitan English garden. It is significant that while Stoker’s
“Transylvanians” (or as I argue, Hungarians) are reminiscent of the Irish, the Blue
Mountaineers resemble the Scots. Britain’s internal borders, or the “Celtic Fringe”
provide a model for imagining larger European boundaries. The Imperial Gothic,
traditionally set in the non-European world, becomes a vehicle for delineating European
boundaries and resolving the conflicted relationship between the nation and the empire
according to the British precedent.
Transporting the Soil, Transposing the East and the West:

Vampirism and Nationalism in *Dracula*

Upon visiting Poenari, one of the several Romanian sites competing for the title “Castle Dracula,” Devendra P. Varma, a pioneering scholar of Gothic fiction, experiences Transylvanian landscape through the medium of Stoker’s fiction:

In the spirit-haunted wild Carpathian mountains still stand, gaunt and lonely, the ruins of Castle Dracula….I stood in trance-like fashion in a cold, eerie mood; remembered the vampire count and felt as if he had been waiting for us. A curious unease pervaded my soul as I gazed at the relic…Stoker had already captured the atmosphere: “The shadows are many and the wind breathes cold through the broken battlements, from whose tall windows came no ray of light.” (43)

The deliberate fallacy of Varma’s travel narrative, which ignores the fact that Stoker never visited Eastern Europe and pretends that *Dracula* is a non-fictional travel account rather than a novel, attests to the power of Stoker’s imperial gothic to distort not only the twentieth-century tourist perceptions of Eastern Europe, but also the critical reception of *Dracula*. The desolate, depopulated landscape in Varma’s description is emblematic of the proliferating body of *Dracula* criticism that privileges psychoanalytical interpretations and dismisses the Transylvanian setting as Europe’s unconscious. However, Stoker’s story is compelling because it takes on the form of a travel narrative and because its setting overlaps with actual Eastern European locations.

Stoker’s settings exploit the tropes of conventional, surface Orientalism while
also absorbing the complex cultural information of contemporary travel writing on Eastern Europe. Crossing a bridge in Budapest in Dracula, Stoker’s narrator Jonathan Harker feels he is crossing a divide between civilizations, a boundary rendered in temporal terms. “The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East,” he writes, and observes that the trains get slower as he travels on (7). As he continues his journey to Dracula’s Castle, Harker surveys a country that is teeming with ethnic groups, which he carefully and dutifully classifies, collecting their recipes and describing their costumes:

The strangest figures we saw were the Slovaks, who are more barbarian than the rest with their big cowboy hats, great baggy dirty-white trousers, white linen shirts, and enormous heavy belts, nearly a foot wide, studded with brass nails…They are very picturesque, but do not look prepossessing. On the stage, they would be set down at once as some old Oriental band of brigands. They are, however, I am told, very harmless and rather wanting in natural self-assertion. (3)

The Orientalist tropes of the above description are derived from Charles Boner’s Transylvania: Its Products and Its People (1865), one of Stoker’s principal sources for Dracula. Nineteenth-century travelers in Transylvania became entangled in conflicting ethnic perspectives because the population consisted of Saxons, Hungarians (and Szekelys), Romanians (or Wallachians), Gypsies (Tzigane or Szgany), and Armenians. The differences between these groups were dramatic and even a traveler unfamiliar with the local languages could easily recognize their distinct material cultures. The frontispiece of Charles Boner’s book features a magnificent etching of a Wallach woman
Figure 13: Wallachian Woman. Frontispiece from Charles Boner's *Transylvania.*
Figure 14: Wallachian and Gypsy earrings. Illustration from Charles Boner's *Transylvania*. 
clad in traditional costume, which is captured in colorful detail (Fig. 13), and Boner’s descriptions and illustrations reflect an obsession with ethnographic data, as he catalogues minute differences in material culture, as for example in an etching comparing Gypsy and Wallachian earrings (Fig. 14). Boner’s appendix contains charts of Transylvania’s products and natural resources to give the British an impetus to civilize and possibly colonize Transylvania, which could supply “products for potential export” and “potential market for wares which our factories produce” (186). Although he initially resorts to such habitually imperialist attitudes, Boner gradually absorbs the more complex cultural information gathered through conversations with the natives and becomes preoccupied with the fraught question of nationality in Austria. Transylvania was a part of Austria (Austria-Hungary after 1867), an empire that was confronted with the rise of nationalist movements among its diverse ethnic groups in the second half of the nineteenth century. Boner takes the Hungarian perspective on other nationalities, even though he views the Hungarians as a nation in “transition between the inhabitant of the West and an Oriental” and critiques their resistance to Austria (439). Harker’s comment that the Slovaks are “wanting in natural self-assertion” is based on the attitudes of the Hungarians who populate Boner’s narrative (3). Boner’s ambivalent representation of the Hungarians demonstrates how the evolving ethnic conflicts in Transylvania forced travel writers to sympathize with the grievances of particular ethnic groups and adopt the perspective of their human informers, not just their textual sources.

Written about twenty years later after Boner’s travelogue and ten years after the shift in British public opinion in the wake of the Bulgarian atrocities, Stoker’s other
major source for the Transylvanian setting offers a different position on the problem of nationality. In her *The Land Beyond the Forest: Facts, Figures and Fancies from Transylvania* (1888), Emily Gerard, who also supplied most of the fabulous ingredients of *Dracula*, especially the particulars of vampirism, explicitly critiques Charles Boner for showing “what the Roumanians are utterly unlike” (4). Although Gerard claims to remain objective, she takes most interest in the cause of the Roumanians, whose national revival movement had grown stronger by the 1880s than it was at the time of Boner’s stay in Transylvania. According to Gerard, Austro-Hungary’s “curious ethnographical problems” are caused by Hungary’s inflexible policy against the other nationalities, particularly the Roumanians (11). She echoes Bagehot in describing the three major “races” of Austria-Hungary in terms of historical development suggesting that nations evolve and can become extinct in the manner of Darwin’s species—a thesis that could potentially also apply England:

The Saxons *have been* men, and right good men, too, in their day; but that long day has gone by, and they are now rapidly degenerating into mere fossil antiquities, physically deteriorated from constant intermarriage, and morally opposed to any sort of progress involving amalgamation with the surrounding races.

The Hungarians are men in the full sense of the word, perhaps all the more so that they are a nation of soldiers rather than men of science and letters.

The Romanians will be men a few generations hence, when they have had the time to shake off the habits of slavery and have learned to recognize their own
value… . (122)

Even more importantly than providing Orientalist modes of description or information on vampirism, Boner and Gerard apply the contradictory imperialist theories of national progress and degeneration to Eastern Europe and thus supply important ideological components for the character of Dracula.

Jonathan Harker’s opening journal replicates the descriptive strategies of travel writers, even to the point of parody. His typical comments on Transylvanian roads, inns, food, and natives reflect Western superiority and tourist eagerness to collect local knowledge in the form of text for future consumption: “I had for dinner, or rather supper, a chicken done up some way with red pepper, which was very good but thirsty. (Mem., get recipe for Mina.)” (1). Harker’s previous reading contributes to his sense of distance based on superior knowledge: “I read that every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool; if so my stay may be very interesting. (Mem., I must ask the Count all about them.)” (2). Harker’s objectivity, or his sense of what constitutes factual information, breaks down when he boards Dracula’s carriage at Borgo Pass and embarks on an “unknown night journey.” The path of the carriage seems aimless, as Harker observes that “we were simply going over and over the same ground again” (11). Harker no longer perceives his travel in terms of direction, but in terms of motion, as the carriage ascends, descends and makes sharp turns. Harker’s travel narrative becomes increasingly subjective, and its non-fictional form heightens the effect of fiction in the scenes at Castle Dracula. In Jonathan Harker’s journal entries on Transylvania in Dracula, the natives are
observed from a distance, as a part of the landscape, with a detached focus of physiognomy and dress: “Here and there we passed Csezks and Slovaks, all in picturesque attire, but I noticed that goitre was painfully prevalent”(7). Homi Bhabha draws on Lévi-Strauss in describing the simultaneous detachment and participation of the observer in an ethnographic act, which complicates the cultural oppositions typical of travel writing:

The subject is graspable only in the passage between telling/told, between ‘here’ and ‘somewhere else’, and in this double scene the very condition of cultural knowledge is the alienation of the subject. … The ethnographic demands that the field of knowledge—the total social fact—must be appropriated from the outside like a thing, but like a thing which comprises within itself the subjective understanding of the indigenous. The transposition of this process into the language of the outsider’s grasp—then makes the social fact ‘three-dimensional’.

For ethnography demands that the subject has to split itself into object and subject in the process of identifying its field of knowledge; the ethnographic object is constituted ‘by dint of the subject’s capacity for indefinite self-objectification (without ever quite abolishing itself as a subject) for projecting outside itself ever-diminishing fragments of itself.’(301)

Harker’s encounter with the Count not only collapses the safe distance between the travel writing subject and the observed object, but also confounds the distinction between the ethnographic subject and object.

When Harker arrives at the Castle, he finds himself under scrutiny as the
Count aims for a textual mastery of all things English in preparation for his trip to England. The weakness of the heart of Empire is that it provides its own ethnography:

The books were of the most varied kind – history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law – all relating to England and English life and customs and manners. There were even such books of reference as the London Directory, the ‘Red’ and ‘Blue’ books, Whitaker’s Almanack, the Army and Navy Lists, and – it somehow gladdened my heart to see it – the law list.(19)

One day Harker finds “the Count lying on the sofa, reading, of all things in the world, an English Bradshaw’s Guide”(22). Another time Harker finds an atlas “opened naturally on England” with little rings marked…one was near London, on the east side…; the other two were in Exeter, and Whitby on the Yorkshire coast” (24). The Western failure to adequately map the region is self-defeating. While Harker cannot find Castle Dracula on any map, the Count takes advantage of the Western project of mapping to plan his invasion of England. Stephen Arata argues that Dracula’s threat is that of the “reverse colonization,” which is aided by his uncanny ability to pass for an Englishman.15 While previous textual knowledge of Transylvania helps Harker distance himself from what he observes, the Count is aiming for a mastery that would approximate native behavior and patterns of speech: “Well, I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me. Here I am noble; I am a boyar; the common people know me, and I am master. … I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man stops if he sees me, or pause in his speaking if he hear my words…” (20). The Count’s statement is contradictory; while at home he claims the
distinction of a nobleman, he desires to be anonymous in London. His objective as a traveler is opposite to the aspirations of most English tourists, for whom one of the major attractions of continental travel was a temporary rise in social status. For example, Charles Boner tells how during a visit to a Hungarian family in Transylvania, his host repeatedly addressed him as “Herr Lord.” This seems to both disconcert and flatter Boner, for he is not satisfied when the host explains that that he simply meant “gentleman” by the appellation (304). Given that the average British travelers insisted on their distinction from the local population, the Count’s readiness to shed his identity and assume English manners seems uncanny. The vampire threatens British identity, which is based on clear distinction from foreigners, by aspiring to cosmopolitanism. However, it turns out that the logic of the novel does not allow for such passing, as foreign characters are marked by heavy accents and Dracula fails to pass for an Englishman in London. Dracula is therefore most threatening when he confronts Jonathan Harker on his home turf, or his historical territory.

Given the preoccupation with the question of nationality and the wealth of information about the nationalities of Transylvania in his sources, it is significant that Stoker changed his character’s nationality to a Szekely, a member of the small a member of a small branch of the Hungarian nation that claimed to have descended from Atilla the Hun. (In contrast, Vlad Tepes, the fifteenth-century ruler on whom the character of Dracula is possibly based, was Wallachian.). Emily Gerard categorizes the Szekelys as a distilled, pure form of the Hungarian nationality. Because the group remained in relative isolation on the frontiers of Transylvania, its relationship
to the Hungarians was like that of a “man and his grandson” (Gerard 282). Unlike the picturesque Transylvanian peasants in Harker’s descriptions, Dracula is given a voice to introduce himself:

We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship…What devil was ever so great as Attila, whose blood is in these veins?…Ah, young sir, the Szekelys – and the Dracula as their heart’s blood, their brains, and their swords – can boast a record that the mushroom growths like the Hapsburgs and the Romanoffs can never reach.(29)

At home, Dracula’s position is defensive rather than aggressive, as he implicitly critiques the expansion of Austrian and Russian empires. According to his autobiography, Dracula is not an imperialist but a patriot, or, in the context of nineteenth-century Austria-Hungary, a nationalist. While Dracula’s statement expresses his blood ties to the soil of his homeland, a sign of what Anthony Smith calls ethnic nationalism, his “boast” about autochthonous ancestry also displays signs of linguistic nationalism, which was typical of Austrian minorities, particularly of the Hungarians. Dracula is confident of his ability to pass for an Englishman in everything but speech. Both ethnic and linguistic nationalism bind individuals to a given territory. Dracula’s scheme of reverse colonization fails, partly due to his heavy accent and broken syntax and partly due to the limited portability of his native soil.16

The imagery of blood and soil characteristic of ethnic nationalism conveniently translates into vampiric traits, which Charles Boner attributes to small nationalities that
sought autonomy within the Austrian empire. When describing the atrocities of the 1848 revolution, in which Romanian peasants, instigated by the Austrian government, massacred Hungarian nobles and pillaged their estates, Charles Boner characterizes the attackers in the following terms: “I am not sure if the Wallack is naturally cruel … But once aroused – the devil that is in us once awakened, -- he becomes another being altogether. Thus, in the revolution, having once smelt blood, he never lost its scent; and hunted down his victims with a ferocious longing for its savour” (229). This statement suggests that vampirism is explicitly linked to ethnic conflict as well as class struggle, but not necessarily to a particular group, because the Hungarian landowners were also preying on their Wallachian serfs. Boner focuses on the bloody acts of nationalists to dismiss the rights of small nationalities. While he critiques the Hungarians’ subsequent boycott of the Austrian Imperial Parliament and their stubborn resistance to compromise on their demands as politically immature, Boner also commends them for their love of liberty and political abilities. Stoker’s characterization of Dracula as assertive, resourceful and eloquent, but also childishly selfish, resembles Boner’s portrayal of the Hungarians.

Criticism that has addressed the theme of nationalism in Dracula has mostly focused on the Irish Question, which was under debate in the British Parliament throughout the 1880s and 1890s, interpreting Dracula’s threat as symbolic of Irishness and expressive of Stoker’s Anglo-Irish anxiety; or explaining Dracula’s affinity for the soil in the context of the Irish Land Acts. The peculiarities of the Transylvanian setting can help explain, but not justify the critical identification of Dracula with the Irish. In
1867, the Hungarians, as the most powerful nationality in the monarchy, achieved the so-called “Ausgleich,” with Austria, which put a hyphen in Austria-Hungary, allowing Hungarians to manage their own affairs as well as those of the other nationalities residing on the territory of Hungary. The fact that the Hungarians managed to “hyphenate” the monarchy and could represent both the colonizer and the colonized makes them similar to the Anglo-Irish. On the other hand, as Dracula is a Szekely, a “purer” and less civilized Hungarian, he resembles an “unhyphenated” Irishman. In order to account for the complexity of the national question in the Transylvanian setting, travel writers tend to splinter the monolithic “English” identity, which was the preferred self-identification of British tourists in Western Europe. Instead of simply delineating differences between the British and the Transylvanians, the travel writers tend to compare, for example, Romanian squalor with that of the Irish, or Saxon industry with that of the English. The treatment of nationalism in travel narratives on Eastern Europe also affected political discourse on the question of nationality in Britain. The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland, a pamphlet published in 1904, argues that Ireland should pursue the path of the Hungarians, who have been much more successful in the national struggle thanks to their passive resistance to Austrian rule. The author, Arthur Griffith, includes a long-winded attack on Charles Boner’s Transylvania:

Boner was not a fool. He was a shrewd Englishman. He wished for the defeat of the Hungarians, because he apprehended that if they succeeded in beating down Austria, Ireland would imitate the Hungarian tactics and paralyze England. “What I saw and heard,” he wrote, “continually reminded me of Ireland … it is exactly
Whereas Boner criticizes the Hungarians for refusing to attend the Imperial Parliament, the pamphlet writer indicts the Irish for participating in British Parliamentarism. However, the pamphlet author simplifies the opposition of Austria and Hungary, refusing to acknowledge that the Hungarians adopted the Austrian policies of official nationalism such as Magyarization, which imposed the Hungarian language and administration on other minorities that constituted the complex ethnic makeup of Hungary.

Characteristically, Count Dracula fights the Turks while also preying on the local population. Whether he represents the Hungarians or Anglo-Irish, the vampire is not quite the colonizer or the colonized, but a nationalist entangled in a chain of domination characteristic of declining empires. While the Count employs printed text for his invasion scheme (for example when Harker finds him reading the Bradshaw railway guide), his identity and survival are connected to the soil permeated with historical memory: “Why, there is hardly a foot of soil in all this region that has not been enriched by the blood of men, patriots or invaders” (21). This attachment to the soil, an attribute of ethnic nationalism, forces Dracula to leave England. When his persecutors led by Doctor Van Helsing “sterilize” his earth boxes by inserting the Host in each, they deprive the vampire of his strategically located places of refuge in London, “[f]or it is not the least of its terrors that this evil thing is rooted deep in all good; in soil barren of holy memories it cannot rest” (241). Significantly, in eyes of a Western community, Dracula (and his nationalism) is reduced to a mute “it,” a phenomenon rather than an individual.
The novel highlights the problems of narrating an encounter between modern nations, such as Britain, whose history is recorded in print, and ethnic groups, such as the Szekelys, whose annals are part of the ethnoscape. The last section of the novel, in which an Anglo-American-Dutch league (a limited Protestant alliance) pursues the Count to Transylvania is presented as another record of travel, this time mostly written on Mina’s traveler’s typewriter. The pursuers catch up with Dracula just before he reaches his castle and the vampire is killed in a rather unorthodox fashion with Harker’s kukri and Morris’s bowie knives. Dracula crumbles to dust, but Quincey Morris also sustains a fatal wound in the battle with the gypsies. In compensation for his heroism, Mina and Jonathan name their son Quincey, which is just the first of “his bundle of names [that] links our little band of men together” (378). When the Harkers revisit Transylvania, they find it “almost impossible to believe that the things which we had seen with our own eyes and heard with our own ears were living truths” (378). The “collective record” of the novel questions the very possibility of recording one’s experience of the foreign. In the concluding Note of the novel, Harker acknowledges the failure of print to contain the threat of Dracula as he questions the authenticity of the collective record: “We were struck with the fact that, in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document!” (378). Because this record is largely composed of travel narratives, Harker’s statement also implies that travel writing fails to account for the experience of Transylvania. The Western visitors encounter phenomena that are beyond their recording capacity. During the pursuit of Dracula, Mina Harker admires the Transylvanian landscape that she observes “gets wilder as we go” and longs for a time
when she and Jonathan will enjoy it as tourists: “The country is lovely, and most interesting, if only we were under different conditions, how delightful it would be to see it all!” (360). However, Harker’s account of their return to Transylvania problematizes the tourist experience:

In the summer of this year we made a journey to Transylvania, and went over the old ground which was, and is, to us so full of vivid and terrible memories…It was almost impossible to believe that the things which we had seen with our own eyes and heard with our own ears were living truths. Every trace of what had been was blotted out. The castle stood as before, reared high above a waste of desolation. (378)

Harker’s concluding statements imply that although the threat of Dracula can be remembered in the oral tradition, but cannot be contained in print. Instead of acquiring the validity of a printed record in Western history, the experience of the Van Helsing league is absorbed by the Eastern European ethnoscape in the myth of Dracula.

With Dracula, Stoker reaches the highest potential of Gothic terror – unlike Radcliffe’s Gothic villains, Dracula continues to be scary to twenty-first century readers because the villain, while representing an alien culture, is given a fluent English voice to defend his motives. Travel writing contributes to the building of national identity by confronting difference, or by delineating boundaries of what constitutes the national and the foreign in character, culture, or landscape. Stoker’s fictional exploration of Transylvania through travel writing discovers a defiant presence—one that not only resists colonization, but also tourist experience and travel writing conventions. Political
readings of Count Dracula’s monstrous subjectivity interpret it as a threat to Englishness or Western values, focusing on Dracula’s invasion of England as an attack on British (or Western) imperialism. However, it is Dracula’s dependence on his national roots and customs that leads to his failure as a cosmopolitan and an imperialist. My interpretation of Dracula’s vampirism in light of travel writers’ accounts suggests that the terrors of Stoker’s imperial gothic may exploit the threat of Eastern European nationalism as much as, or even more so, than reflect the anxieties of Western imperialism.

Montenegro as The Land of the Blue Mountains:

The Marriage of Nation and Empire in The Lady of the Shroud

In The Lady of the Shroud, a novel more imperial and less gothic than Dracula, Rupert Sent Leger sets out on a journey to the fictional Land of the Blue Mountains whose topography resembles Montenegro, while its inhabitants bear the stereotypical features of the Serbs, the first Balkan nation to gain independence. The topical relevance of the novel is signaled by the precision of its historical setting in the years 1907-8, a time when the Young Turkish revolution, which raised British hopes that the Ottoman Empire would be modernized on Western European lines, and the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Hercegovina increased British concerns about the influence of the Central Powers in the Balkans. The Lady of the Shroud erases the records of Western civilization and ethnic strife available in contemporary travel writing to imagine a solution to the increasingly vexed problem of nationality, or the Eastern Question. Although Stoker’s sources for The
Lady of the Shroud are not documented as well as those for Dracula, contemporary accounts of the Balkans help explain how Stoker located and constructed his fictional setting. While the portrayal of the mountaineers resembles the characteristics of Balkan nations, particularly the Montenegrins, found in travel writing, Stoker also simplifies the ethnic makeup of the region in order to offer his imaginary solution to the “Eastern Question” in a reconciliation of the ethnic and imperial principles of nation-building. Stoker’s erasure of Montenegro’s geopolitical features replicates the frequent strategy of British (and Western) diplomacy to solve the Eastern Question by redrawing the map from afar. 20

Other critics have discussed the Land of the Blue Mountains in the Balkan context. 21 Victor Sage offers a compelling interpretation of the novel in light of the Bosnian crisis, suggesting that the imperialistic plot of the novel is an expression of British support for Greater Serbia to counterbalance Austrian expansion to the Balkans. Sage has little to say about the parallels between the Blue Mountaineers and the contemporary Serbs as he focuses on Britain’s support for Greater Serbia from the perspective of British imperial ambitions. Jimmie E. Cain, Jr. pays closer attention to the novel’s Balkan context, locating Stoker’s setting on the western-most fringe of the Adriatic (Pula near Italy), as he argues that the novel “demonstrates an unflinching derogation of Slavic culture and institutions and makes quite evident that for Stoker the only trustworthy Slav is a thoroughly Anglicized one” (22). The novel does not provide sufficient evidence for Cain’s claim, for the culture and the institutions of the Blue Mountaineers prove superior to that of the British at least in some respects, particularly
with regard to concepts of honor and military valor. As Clare Simmons suggests, *The Lady of the Shroud* differs from *Dracula* in its “more pronounced” medievalism, as it emphasizes the retrieval of positive values from the past: “In *Dracula* the medieval is transplanted into modern English society and has to be eradicated; in *The Lady of the Shroud*, by contrast, when a modern-day Englishman, albeit one of lengthy descent, is transplanted into a medieval society, the effect is a positive one”(35). Both the Mountaineers’ feudal social structures and their Balkan cultural heritage help invigorate the declining British civilization. By contrasting the non-fictional representations of Montenegro with Stoker’s the Land of the Blue Mountains, I demonstrate how Stoker’s imperial fantasy readjusted the geopolitical realities of the Balkans, while my cross-reading of *Dracula* and *The Lady of the Shroud* suggests that the later novel is less ideologically transparent than it appears, as Stoker consciously revises his Imperial Gothic in response to the development of the Eastern Question.

The structure of *The Lady of the Shroud* resembles that of *Dracula* in its use of multiple narrators, whose letters, reports and diaries constitute the story. After the introductory report on the appearance of the mysterious lady ghost floating in a coffin off the Adriatic coast, the first fifty pages of the novel consist of legal documents, which legitimate Rupert Sent Leger’s sojourn in the Balkans, as well as family correspondence that reveals his character. Besides establishing Sent Leger’s inheritance of the Castle of Vissarion in the Land of the Blue Mountains from his uncle Roger Melton, the opening account also suggests that Sent Leger possesses the necessary credentials for exploring an unknown and dangerous Balkan territory. In the Gothic tradition, the opening accounts
trace Rupert’s pedigree. Various members of his family are involved in British imperial affairs; his uncle Geoffrey was killed in the Indian Mutiny of 1857, his father won the Victoria Cross at the Battle of Amoeful in the Ashantee Campaign, his distant but friendliest relative General McKelpie also fought in India, and his uncle Roger Melton earned his fortune in “the Eastern trade.” Rupert himself is a professional adventurer, who explores and reports on the most obscure corners of the earth. Melton establishes that the condition of Rupert’s inheritance is a six-month residence in the Land of the Blue Mountains, because he believes that “[it] is only in a small nation that great ambitions can be achieved” (39). The paradox of Melton’s career is that he invests the fortune acquired in the subjected colonies in the national independence of small countries such as the Land of the Blue Mountains.

Rupert’s background facilitates his colonization of the Land of the Blue Mountains, and so in Book II, we find him already settled at Castle Vissarion and writing instructions to his aunt, Janet McKelpie, to hire Scottish servants and procure British home furnishings for the establishment. There is no further reference to Roger Melton’s provision that Rupert give up the estates if their original owner, the Voivode, is still alive, nor do we hear of Vissarion’s death. It is easier for Rupert to assume ownership than leadership, for the Blue Mountaineers are a suspicious and warlike people. Also, Rupert is preoccupied with the mysterious night visits of a lady in a shroud, whom he suspects of vampirism. He falls in love and marries her even before he finds out that the lady is not a vampire, but the heiress Teuta Vissarion, who vows to play ghost for vague political reasons. The ruse fails to protect her from being kidnapped by the Turks, which gives
Rupert opportunity to prove a superior mountaineer in his pursuit of the perpetrators. This feat of the “gallant Englisher,” along with an airplane rescue of Teuta’s father, earns Rupert the loyalty of the mountaineers and the kingship of the Land of the Blue Mountains. The last third of the novel does not really contribute to the plot, but depicts the transformation of the Land into a militaristic ally of Britain under Rupert’s rule. The closing reports of foreign correspondents on Rupert’s coronation and the summit of Balkan nations at Vissarion legitimate Rupert’s rule in a similar way that the opening documents legitimated his exploration of the land. These accounts also contribute to the topical resonance of Stoker’s fictional country.

The fact that Stoker opted for a fictional setting is probably connected with the controversy surrounding British involvement in the region. As I pointed out in the introduction to this section, British foreign policy traditionally supported the Ottoman State in order to preserve it as a buffer against Russian ambitions in the East. This policy was not without opposition; for example, after the so-called “Bulgarian atrocities,” Gladstone criticized Disraeli’s government for favoring the Asiatic over the Christian element in the Balkans. At the time of the publication of *The Lady of the Shroud*, the encroachments of Austria-Hungary on the independent Serbs, particularly the annexation of Bosnia-Hercegovina in 1908, increased the sympathy for the national struggles of the Slavs among the British public. Contemporary travel narratives give conflicting reports on the state of the region, describing it alternately as oriental or westernized, civilized or savage, or as a site for tourist travel or adventurous exploration. Mary Edith Durham’s *Through the Lands of the Serb* (1904) and Major Percy Henderson’s *A British Officer in
the Balkans (1909) exemplify such contradictory representations of the Adriatic coast and the Serbs (including the Montenegrins). The two authors demonstrate radically different approaches to travel in the Balkans. Major Henderson, whose title page identifies him as “late of the Indian army” confines himself to the more beaten tourist paths and provides guidebook information for potential tourists. In fact, his introductory chapter is an extended advertisement for Balkan tourism: “To those on the look-out for a new field for a holiday, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Dalmatia and Montenegro, have much to offer. They possess the attraction and glamour of the East, its gorgeous colouring, its brilliant costumes, sense of mystery; and yet are within easy reach of London and offer few difficulties in the way of transport and accommodation” (15).

Mary E. Durham, as self-described diplomat, geographer and archeologist, is prepared to explore the less frequented parts of Serbia and, equipped with a rudimentary knowledge of Serbian, is keenly interested in a dialogue with the locals. Durham also draws on travel writing conventions and Orientalism, but her division of the map of Europe is more tentative and relative than Boner’s (Harker’s): “I do not really know where the East proper begins, nor does it greatly matter, but it is somewhere on the farther side of the Adriatic, the island-studded coast which the Venetians once beheld” (1). When Durham emerges from the mountains of Montenegro, what she previously described as the “kindergarten capital” of the country, Cetinje, seems a part of Western civilization: “A carriage and a road were strange enough experiences, and as for Montenegro’s joy, the only motorcar, I admired it almost as much as do the Montenegrins. Once at Cetinje the spell was broken, and from Cetinje to London one
whirls in a few days in the lap of luxury, second class” (344). Both Durham and Henderson express their belief in the potential of the region to be further civilized on Western European principles, and their vision of the future confirms Stoker’s imperialistic fantasy in *The Lady of the Shroud*. However, Stoker describes the initial state of the Land of the Blue Mountains as much less civilized and receptive to foreign influence than is warranted by the contemporary travel accounts of the region.

Henderson’s and Durham’s accounts of Montenegro correspond with the descriptions of Stoker’s fictional Land of the Blue Mountains. Landscape descriptions like the following one in Durham’s account could have inspired Stoker’s name for his fictional country: “Across the gold-brown plain rise the blue mountains where lies that invisible line the frontier” (Durham 21). Along with the city of Dubrovnik, Montenegro was the only Balkan country that managed to defend its frontiers from Turk invasion during centuries of Ottoman occupation of the Balkans. At the time of the novel’s publication, Montenegro was a relatively stable country united by loyalty to Prince Nicholas. Stoker’s Blue Mountaineers are similarly loyal to their Voivodes, and their system of government is on the verge of kingship, for “it was always taken for granted that if the principles of the Constitution would change to a more personal rule, [Vissarion’s] family would be regarded as the Most Noble” (33). This imperfection in the constitution allows Stoker to crown an Englishman as the first king of the Land of the Blue Mountains. In *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*, Seton-Watson attributes Montenegro’s independence to the mountaineers’ warlike spirit. Stoker credits his Blue Mountaineers with similar resilience:
On every side other Powers, great and small, pressed the land, anxious to acquire its suzerainty by any means – fraud or force. Greece, Turkey, Austria, Russia, Italy, France, had all tried in vain. … Other Balkan States, too, were not lacking in desire to add the little territory of the Blue Mountains to their more ample possessions. Albania, Dalmatia, Herzegovina, Servia, Bulgaria, looked with lustful eyes on the land, which was in itself a vast natural fortress, having close under its shelter perhaps the finest harbour between Gibraltar and the Dardanelles… But the fierce, hardy mountaineers were unconquerable. For centuries they had fought, with fervour and fury that nothing could withstand or abate, attacks on their independence. (33)

Stoker’s characterization of the Blue Mountaineers echoes Durham’s and Henderson’s descriptions of the Montenegrins. Henderson emphasizes the Montenegrins’ fighting prowess: “Every man you meet is a born fighter. You can see it in his eyes, in his independent bearing, and in the habit he has of carrying arms” (52). He also suggests the potential value of the Montenegrin “fighting contingent” for the Powers in resolving the Eastern Question. In Durham’s account, the character of the Montenegrins becomes clearer in contrast with that of the Serbs, as she wonders “whether the very dark, short people who crowded the trams of Belgrade, for lack of energy to walk up the street, were really blood-relations of the long-legged giants who stride tirelessly over the crags of Montenegro with never a sob” (144). While Henderson attributes the extraordinary character of the Montenegrins to their landscape, Durham speculates that it may be to “a considerable intermixture of the aboriginal Illyrian blood that the Montenegrins owe their
superiority to the other Serbs” (52). As the Montenegrins in Henderson’s and Durhams’s accounts, Stoker’s mountaineers are unspoiled by civilization, because their present is still firmly rooted in the past:

For a few weeks I had looked at civilization across a gap of centuries from the ‘back of beyond,’ and things look different from that point of view, more different than anyone who has lived at one end of Europe can ever realise… . (Durham 344)

They are in reality the most primitive people I have ever met – most fixed to their own ideas, which belong to centuries back. I can understand now what people were like in England – not in Queen Elizabeth’s time, for that was a civilized time, but in the time of Coeur-de-Lion, or even earlier… . (The Lady of the Shroud 59)

Both passages employ historical distancing to characterize the native people. However, while Durham adopts the mountaineers’ point of view, Sent Leger’s vantage point is unequivocally western and modern. Also, Sent Leger’s (and his uncle’s) exploits are presented as the first British presence on the country, whereas Durham’s account suggests an already strong investment of British capital in Montenegro, exemplified by the Anglo-Montenegrin Trading company dealing in Manchester cottons. Stoker constructs the Land of the Blue Mountains as a place that is more peripheral, less ethnically diverse and wilder than the contemporary Montenegro. Even before Durham arrives in Montenegro, she realizes the existing variety of perspectives on the Eastern
Figure 15: *Baker's Shop, Rijeka.—Albanian and Two Montenegrins*. Illustration from Mary Durham's *Through the Lands of the Serb*. 
Question, which shift as she interacts with various passengers she meets on the boat: “He [the stranger] seldom needs to complain that he has heard one side only; but there is a Catholic side, an Orthodox side, a Mohammedan side, there are German, Slav, Italian, Turkish, and Albanian sides… (3). Durham’s illustrations visually confirm the easily recognizable differences among the region’s ethnic groups (see Fig. 15). While Durham represents Montenegrin borders as diverse in nationalities and creeds, mainly because of the presence of Muslim Albanians, Stoker chooses to describe the mountaineers as exclusively Orthodox and impermeably divided from the Turks. Whereas Stoker’s protagonist Rupert Sent Leger and Mary Durham employ similar modes of categorizing the natives, the novel erases the ethnic diversity of Montenegro and eliminates the competing perspectives of official and ethnic nationalisms, constructing the Land of the Blue Mountains as a culturally monolithic and therefore more manageable territory.

Although Durham essentially advocates the freedom of the Christians in the face of the Turkish threat, she presents the situation as complex and multifaceted. Stoker replicates the characteristics of Montenegrins as frontiersmen, more united, courteous and fierce than other Serbs, but he imaginatively insulates them from the rest of the Balkans.

Like Dracula, the vampire in The Lady of the Shroud is an aristocrat descended from a warlike race that defends its territory against the Turks. In Dracula, the vampire’s origin becomes a basis of ethnic nationalism that poses a threat to the Western allies. On the other hand, in The Lady of the Shroud, Stoker creates a situation in which identification with official nationalism guarantees Rupert the unanimous loyalty of all subjects. Durham’s reports on the Montenegrins’ own political visions of ‘the great
Servian empire that is to be, where everyone will be free and happy” (334). While the Montenegrins’ hope of reunion with Serbia is based on blood ties, Stoker’s imaginary alliance of the Land of the Blue Mountains with Britain requires the mountaineers to transcend the limits of ethnic nationalism that defines the nation by shared ancestry and birth and accept citizenship as a basis of national identification.

Sent Leger, who is partly Scottish and partly English, incorporates the mountaineers into his heritage by attributing them the characteristics of Scottish Highlanders. Such a parallel may also be based on travel accounts. Major Henderson points out several similarities in the appearance of Montenegrins and Highlanders. For example, their national costume consists of “knee breeches so baggy as to be almost like short skirts” and “the national shawl, the struka, … worn exactly as a Highlander wears his plaid” (54). Like Highlanders, the Montenegrins are fond of the bagpipe. Both nations are known for their past savagery: “Forty or fifty years ago Montenegrins seemed to have characteristics like those of the Highland caterans of a century ago” (56). Sent Leger’s uncle, General McKelpie, who trains a troop of Highlanders to reinforce the defense of the Land of the Blue Mountains, envisions “a little colony of his own people” that may be of “some service to the nation and the King” (64). The identification of the mountaineers with Scots is not accidental. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson points out the essential incompatibility of the nation and the empire, suggesting that the case of Scotland represented an exceptionally unproblematic case of a nation’s assimilation into the British Empire. Because of Scotland’s relative proximity to the center and the early hegemony of the English language in the large part of its territory, the Anglicizing policy
“effectively eliminated, ‘before’ the age of nationalism, any possibility of a vernacular-specific nationalist movement” (Anderson 90). By projecting the Highlander characteristics on the mountaineers, Stoker attempts an imaginary reconciliation of two contradictory concepts of statehood: the national and the imperial principles. In this sense, Stoker’s dream exceeds the limits of contemporary geopolitical reality, as it suggests an imaginary colonial extension, rather than just diplomatic intervention of the British Empire within Europe.

The reconciliation of the nation and the empire is allegorically represented by the union of Teuta, the counterfeit vampire, and Rupert Sent Leger. Rupert’s efforts to win the favor of the mountaineers are parallel, both chronologically and psychologically, with his courtship of Teuta. During his first meeting with the mountaineers, Rupert wins some respect by keeping his composure at gun point. Reporting the incident to his aunt, he uses terms that resemble those of courtship:

They were amazingly civil, almost deferential. But, all the same, they were more distant than ever, and all the time I was there I could not get a whit closer to them. They seemed in a sort of way to be afraid or in awe of me. No doubt that will soon pass away, and when we know one another better we shall become close friends. They are too fine fellows not to be worth a little waiting for. (61)

At the second meeting, Rupert is welcomed in warmer, familial terms: “My brothers, our newest brother comes to us from the Great Nation which amongst the nations has been our only friend, and which has ere now helped us in our direst need—that mighty Britain whose hand has ever been raised in the cause of freedom” (81). Stoker’s version of
Britain’s reputation in the Balkans contradicts the accounts of travel writers on this point. For example, Durham reports that while the Montenegrins are amazed and flattered by her visit in such a remote country, they also reproach her for the British support of Turkey in the Crimean War and at the Berlin Congress. Paradoxically, Rupert’s “courtship” of the Blue Mountaineers is accepted on the basis of British imperial policy, which explains Stoker’s need for a fictional setting for his utopian marriage of nation and empire.

The key element of both courtships is Rupert’s aspiration to ethnographic knowledge; he cannot assume control over Teuta or the mountaineers while their actions remain secret to him. He knows about the mountaineers’ preparations against Ottoman attack, but he is not acquainted with their plans. Therefore, their nocturnal activity appears supernatural: “They went secretly and in silence, stealing through the forests like ghosts…Their coming and going was more than ghostly. It was, indeed, the outward manifestation of an inward spirit—a whole nation dominated by one common purpose” (116). Rupert does not yet know that the lady of the shroud is a part of this endeavor and that her apparent vampirism is in fact a demonstration of nationalism. Teuta’s charade is effective due to folk belief, or local knowledge, which is a component of ethnic nationalism. Durham’s travel narrative refers to Montenegrin traditions concerning the cult of the dead, for example the local custom of open coffin burials, which were introduced because the Montenegrins once used coffins to smuggle weapons. She also mentions how that the veneration of saints such as St. Sava sustained the Montenegrins in their struggle against the Turks.
The exposure of Teuta as a counterfeit vampire paves Rupert’s access to dynastic power. As in Seton-Watson’s metaphor that introduced this Chapter, the real vampires turn out to be the Ottoman State and Austria-Hungary, Britain’s imperial rivals. Therefore, the novel is both imperialistic and anti-imperial. Rupert pulls the vampire’s teeth by incorporating Teuta as a native wife, who, “regarding the custom of [her] nation that women owe to men,” becomes a convenient model for the comportment of the loyal subject (249). Teuta’s vampirism is converted into a sign of the country’s official nationalism when the shroud is adopted as the national costume for women. Instead of being threatened by potential miscegenation through a marriage with a vampire, Rupert assumes power over the country based on the Salic law, to which Teuta appeals during the coronation ceremony:

My lord does not, I fear, know as you do, and as I do too, that of old, in the history of this land, when Kingship was existent, that it was ruled by the law of masculine supremacy which, centuries after, became known as the Lex Salica. Lords of the Council of the Blue Mountains, I am a wife of the Blue Mountains – a wife young as yet, but with the blood of many generations of loyal women in my veins. And ill it would become me, whom my husband honours … to take a part in changing the custom which has been held in honour of Blue Mountain womanhood. What an example such would be in an age when self-seeking women of other nations seek to forget their womanhood in the struggle to vie in equality with men. (224)

The rebellious “New Woman” and the resurgent ethnie are both contained by Rupert’s
patriarchal line. Like Dracula, Teuta stresses the antiquity of her lineage. However, in her case the “vampire” heritage of ethnic nationalism dictates submission rather than resistance, or aggression. While Teuta renounces her share in power, Rupert gives up his British citizenship, which according to Roger Melton’s will can happen only with the approval of the Privy Council. He is naturalized to the Land of the Blue Mountains, but as the king of his adopted country he does not thereby become the subject of another ruler.

Under Rupert’s rule, the newly established nation is incorporated into the British Empire. Significantly, the defense of the country is coordinated by British officials; Admiral Rooke commands the navy and General McKelpie organizes the army. Rupert himself contributes to the development of the country’s airforce, “the empire in the air.” In 1909, the year of the novel’s publication, the first airplane successfully crossed the English Channel, so Stoker’s imaginative vision points to a future in which the command of airspace would compensate for the small size of a country, whether it is Britain or Montenegro. The Land of the Blue Mountains undergoes rapid industrialization, which exploits the natural resources for the production of weapons. Also, the constitution of the country is revised according to the British model of government.

In its last part, the novel takes on the character of propaganda, as Stoker uses diplomatic and journalistic jargon to describe constitutional developments and official ceremonies in the Land of the Blue Mountains. As Vesna Goldsworthy points out, the novel belongs to a line of novels set in imaginary Balkan kingdoms, in which “the Byronic hero progressed naturally towards occupying a Balkan throne” (43). These
fantasies reflect the actual state formation in new Balkan countries:

The emergence of new kingdoms in the south-eastern corner of Europe drew attention to far-away lands of which the British public hitherto knew little. The newly established courts and royal families offered an easily comprehensible set of icons. In the Balkan lands, the introduction of a monarchy was seen as a way of securing ‘Europeanisation’ and European support. (Godsworthy 43)

The coronation ceremony consists of religious and civil components, and the latter is important in synthesizing the dynastic and national principles of statehood. The special correspondent from Britain is impressed by the display, proposing that such a ceremony “might well find a place in our Western countries”:

Then suddenly, without, so far as I could see, any fuggleman or word or command, the handjars of all that mighty array of men flashed upward as one, and like thunder pealed the National cry:

‘The Blue Mountains and Duty!’

After the cry there was a strange subsidence which made the onlooker rub his eyes. It seemed as though the whole mass of fighting men had partially sunk into the ground. Then the splendid truth burst upon us—the whole nation was kneeling at the feet of their chosen King, who stood upright. (231)

The ”mighty array of men” represents the whole male population of the country, and meanwhile, the frontier is reportedly defended by women, which shows that women play a secondary role in the country’s nationalism. The flashing of the handjar, the national weapon, represents the Blue Mountaineers spontaneous unity in accordance with the
national principle, their prostration to Rupert their loyalty to the dynastic principle. Both of these principles, often irreconcilable in the practice of contemporary Balkan policy, are seamlessly combined in the coronation ceremony.

After his coronation, Rupert dreams of establishing the Balkan Federation or Balka, mainly in defense against the encroachments of Austria and Germany. The meeting of its prospective members, which at this point include Turkey, takes place under the supervision of the Western (or British) King. The encounter between the British king and his former subject is described as a ritual parallel to the coronation ceremony. This time, the correspondents are from *Free America*, providing less partial yet authoritative perspective on the dynastic union of Britain and the Land of the Blue Mountains:

> For myself, I can never forget that wonderful scene of the nation’s enthusiasm, and the core of it is engraven in my memory. … The King and the Queen of the greatest nation of the earth * [footnote correction at the bottom of the page says Greatest *Kingdom*] received by the newest King and Queen – a king and Queen who won empire for themselves, so that the former subject of another King received him as a brother-monarch on a history-making occasion, when a new world-power was, under his tutelage, springing into existence. (255)

The emphasis on the encounter between the British King and Rupert suggests that the alliance with Britain is more important than the Balkan federation itself. In the wake of the annexation of Bosnia-Hercegovina, it was Russia, Britain’s imperial rival, who plotted an alliance between Turkey and Balkan Slavonic states against Austria-Hungary in 1909. The actual Balkan League of 1912 waged a war against Turkey, Britain’s buffer
against Russia in the Balkans, not Austria-Hungary. Whereas in reality a country culturally resembling Montenegro would seek alliance with Russia, Stoker’s fiction carves a space for a British sphere on the map of the Balkans and contains the threat of nationalism by imaginatively reconciling the national (democratic) and dynastic principles of statehood.
NOTES

1 See Stephen Arata’s *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin De Siècle*, particularly Chapter 5, pp. 107-132.

2 See, for example, Cannon Schmitt’s “Mother Dracula: Orientalism, Degeneration, and Anglo-Irish National Subjectivity at the Fin de Siécle” (1994).

3 According to Patrick Brantlinger’s definition of imperial gothic, adventure novels that belong to this category combine expressions of military aggression, racial superiority and the responsibility to illuminate the dark places of the earth, which are typically non-European. Stoker’s imperial gothic adapts these characteristics to European settings.

4 This situation inspired a number of invasion narratives, as for example G. T. Chesney, *The Battle of Dorking* (1871), William le Queux, *The Great War in England in 1897* (1894), Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903).


6 Ibid., p. 22.

7 Anthony Smith echoes Renan in making the following, somewhat schematic distinction between the Western nation and the Eastern European or Asian *ethnie*, which is essential to my interpretation of *Dracula*: “We can term this non-Western model an ‘ethnic’ conception of the nation. Its distinguishing features is its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture. Whereas the Western concept laid down that an individual had to belong to some nation but could choose to which he or she belonged, the non-Western or ethnic concept allowed no such latitude. Whether you stayed in your community or emigrated to another, you remained ineluctably, organically, a member of the community of your birth and were for ever stamped by it. A nation, in other words, was first and foremost a community of common descent.” (*National Identity* 11).

8 Eric Hobsbawm argues that the period of 1880-1914 was a distinct phase in the
development of nationalism characterized by the “ethno-linguistic criterion” as well as by
“influential theories or pseudo-theories identifying nations with genetic descent” (104).

9 Vesna Goldsworthy surveys the frantic coverage of the crisis by British travelers,
journalists, and even poets: “The crisis nurtured an exceptional generation of journalists
and foreign correspondents who together pioneered the techniques of popular newspaper
coverage of a foreign policy issue. W. T. Stead, who, as the editor of Northern Echo,
came to prominence as one of the leading supporters of Gladstone’s Bulgarian campaign,
was later to inaugurate the ‘new journalism’ as the editor of the Pall Mall Gazette. The
future archeologist and discoverer of the Palace of Minos at Knossos, Arthur Evans,
wrote for The Manchester Guardian and published several books on Bosnia-Herzegovina
during the insurrection. W.J. Stillman of The Times wrote an important eye-witness
account of the same insurrection, while the ‘boys’ Dumas’— the novelist G.A. Henty—
reported from the Balkans for the Standard. It was through this debate that the wider
British public was beginning to acquire ideas of the Balkans which were to feed the
popular literature produced by future generations of writers. The idea of a vast, but rather
amorphous, sea of Christians ruled by the Turks…was, by the 1870s, being replaced by
more sharply focused national Balkan stereotypes. (31).

10 Larry Wolff argues that the genealogy of “Eastern Europe” as a concept originated in
the age of Enlightenment and traces the ideological division of the continent to Voltaire,
who wrote when the cultural geography of Europe, which had previously been based on
the North-South axis (the vantage point of Renaissance Italy), shifted to the East/West
axis (the perspective of France and England) in the eighteenth century. Voltaire’s
Orientalist concept of Eastern Europe as a less civilized counterpart to the West.

11 In English Travel Writing: From Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations (2000),
Barbara Korte uses the terms “object-orientated” and “subject-orientated” to chart the
history of travel writing, defining the terms as follows: “The relation, in an account,
between references to travelling subject and travelled world can vary to a great extent.
Where an account is object orientated, that is where the imparting of geographical and
anthropological knowledge is foregrounded, the subjectivity of the traveller will often be
hardly discernible. On the other end of the spectrum, the travelling subject is firmly at
centre stage” (6). As Korte shows, the advent of guidebooks makes travel writing
increasingly subject-orientated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Given the
absence of guidebook information on Transylvania, Stoker’s sources combine the two
approaches.

12 For a discussion of the fallacies associated with the interpretation of Dracula, see
Elizabeth Miller’s “Back to Basics: Re-Examining Stoker’s Sources for Dracula” (1999).
Based on Stoker’s working notes, she questions the extent to which Count Dracula is
based on the historical Vlad Tepes. Also, she discusses the difficulty of locating Castle
Dracula: “As there is no castle in the Borgo Pass (where Stoker places it), the search has
been extended elsewhere. … The ruins of the fortress of Vlad the Impaler, located in the
Arges valley, are far from the Borgo Pass. That Stoker knew about this site is close to impossible as it was virtually unknown outside of Romania until Florescu and McNally rediscovered it and presented it to the world In Search for Dracula (1972). Even though they made no claim that Stoker knew about its locale, others have taken the incredulous leap. …Poenari is not the only candidate for the esteemed title ‘Castle Dracula’. For years, Romanian authorities have promoted another castle – Bran, which is located in Southern Transylvania near Brasov – as Dracula’s Castle. Europe 96: The Berkeley Guides claims that this is where Count Dracula earned his reputation as ‘Vlad the Impaler’ (745), while Let’s Go: The Budget Guide to Eastern Europe (1996) says that ‘Stoker was impressed enough to base his bat-filled fortress on this model’ (506). …There is no evidence connecting this castle with Stoker and very little to connect it with Vlad (who at most, may have spent a night or two there while passing through)”(99-100).

13 For examples of such psychoanalytical interpretations, see Geoffrey Wall (“Different from Writing’: Dracula in 1897,” Literature and History 10 [1984], 20), or Allan Johnson (“Bent and Broken Necks: Signs of Design in Stoker’s Dracula,” Victorian Newsletter 72 [1987], 21, 23).

14 According to Edward Said, Orientalism is a primarily textual construct, “less a place than a topos, a set of references… that seems to have its origin in quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone else’s work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these” (177). My argument is that both Dracula and its travel sources reflect an actual encounter with the local culture in the manner of what Marie Louise Pratt calls the “contact zone.”

15 Stephen Arata suggestively interprets Dracula in the context of fin-de-siècle invasion scares as a tale of reverse colonization, claiming that the Count functions as an Occidentalist, first acquiring English culture and then invading English bodies.

16 Linda Dowling argues that the English literary tradition adopted Herder’s notion that language, particularly spoken language embodies the essence of a nation. English became a sign of superior culture justifying the English rule of the world in the high Victorian period, but by the fin-de-siècle such linking of language and national destiny contains the seeds of decline based on the precedent of the Roman Empire. Dracula’s mastery of English poses a threat of barbarian invasion because corrupts the English language before English bodies, but his foreign accent and faulty grammar also doom his attempt at assimilating English culture.

17 See Cannon Schmidt: “Mother Dracula: Orientalism, Degeneration, and Anglo-Irish National Subjectivity at the Fin de Siecle” (1994): “Dracula and its precursors powerfully evoke the extreme isolation of the Anglo-Irish as representatives of a conquering race surrounded by dispossessed natives. These novels evoke as well the fear that those natives will repossess, by outright violence or some more subtle form of bloodletting, what was once theirs” (35).
Based on her analysis of a variety of European travel accounts, Marjorie Morgan claims that the British were lumped together as English on the Continent and the Scots identified themselves as English in response to this “imprecise usage of national identity terminology.” On the other hand, the label “British” was used in “political, military, commercial and imperial” contexts (195-6).

For a discussion of ethnic nationalism, see Anthony D. Smith’s *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (1999). Smith distinguishes ethnic nationalism from the more recent phenomenon of state nationalism. Among other characteristics, ethnic nationalism is based on a strong attachment to the landscape and an emphasis on the importance of blood ties and ethnic descent. Smith also uses the term “ethnoscape” to describe a landscape saturated with historical significance. Dracula’s self-identification fits all of these characteristics.

See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*: “Diplomatic operations from afar upon the map of Eastern Europe became standard practice in the nineteenth century, and reached their culmination at Versailles after World War I, when the political geography of Eastern Europe was revised and recast from top to bottom. It should be noted that such practice was far from altogether negative in its significance for the lands and peoples affected….What remained constant was the fundamental imbalance in the conception of subject and object, of who operated upon whom and from what philosophical and geographical perspective.”(364).

Vesna Goldsworthy, who also identifies the Land of the Blue Mountains as contemporary Montenegro, relates a curious instance of political and poetic collaboration. In 1877, Gladstone encouraged Tennyson to write a sonnet celebrating the national self-determination of Montenegro. Gladstone supplied Tennyson’s sonnet, *Montenegro*, in which the poet praises “Great Tsernogora!,” with historical and political context (34-35). This incident shows the continued importance of literary endeavors to Balkan politics in the Byronic tradition.
In his uncannily prophetic essay on “Autocracy and War,” Joseph Conrad voices concerns about the capacity of print, and particularly of the press, to convey the images of the Russo-Japanese War to Western audiences:

We have seen these things, though we have seen them only in the cold, silent, colourless print of books and newspapers. …Direct vision of the fact [of war], or the stimulus of great art, can alone make it turn and open its eyes heavy with blessed sleep; and even there, as against the testimony of the senses and the stirring up of emotion, that saving callousness which reconciles us to the conditions of our existence, will assert itself under the guise of assent to fatal necessity. In this age of knowledge our sympathetic imagination, to which alone we can look for the ultimate triumph of concord and justice, remains strangely impervious to information. [my emphases](83-84)

In light of poststructuralism and modernism, today we would perhaps scrutinize Conrad’s suggestion that “direct vision” and “the stimulus of great art” may enhance “sympathetic imagination.” As Paul Fussell puts it, in our age of “post-touristic travel and
deconstruction,” we share a degree of “scepticism about deriving meaningful humanistic instruction from either physical settings or literary texts” (169). However, we still face the same challenge of imagining foreign realities in the age of visual media and jet travel.

In a retrospective view of the long nineteenth century, Conrad continues to contrast his callous age with that of early Victorian “sentimentalists” (84) and mid-Victorian “sanguine humanitarians” (106), who possessed an abundance of “sympathetic imagination.” As I concluded in my discussion of William Makepeace Thackeray and Charles Dickens in Chapter Three, the mid-Victorian writers, although alert to the plight of the poor in Italy, were also concerned about the lack of communication with the continentals. In this Postscript, I will briefly turn to two novels, E.M. Forster’s *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and Joseph Conrad’s *Under Western Eyes*, which typify Western perceptions of the Southern and the Eastern peripheries of Europe on the eve of World War I. Although these novels replicate the mid-Victorian strategy of treating the foreign setting thematically or metaphorically, they also differ from mid-Victorian novels in that their protagonists, the “dense” Northerners and Westerners, are free of language barriers and yet struggle for a “sympathetic understanding” of peripheral Europeans.

In *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), E.M. Forsterimaginatively transforms his early, first off-putting and then exhilarating, experience of the “orthodox Baedeker-bestarred Italy,” where he traveled accompanied by his mother and stayed in pensions full of old English ladies (Furbank 51). Writing to a friend from wintry Perugia, Forster wrestles with the problem of realism:

I’m very discontented with the novel. I’ve tried to *invent realism*, if you see what
I mean: instead of copying incidents & characters that I have come across, I have tried to imagine others equally commonplace, being under the impression that this was art, and by mixing two methods have produced nothing. I think I shall have a try at imagination pure & simple… [my emphasis] (Lago and Furbank 51)

P.N. Furbank, Forster’s biographer, attributes the writer’s creative transformation to the muse of Italy: “Italy, which he had been slow to love, had at last done a great thing for him. It had told him that one could live in the imagination…” (93). The inspiration for Forster’s first published novel did not come from the Italy of Baedeker, but from the “Italian Italy” off the beaten track. One of these genuinely Italian places, “San Gimignano,” becomes the model for the world of “Monteriano” in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*.

The narrative is focalized through Philip Herrington, who thinks that he is “fated to pass through the world without colliding with it or moving it,” for “life to [him is just a spectacle” (17). Philip enthusiastically supports and vicariously anticipates his widowed sister-in-law’s trip to Italy, the country he believes “really purifies and ennobles all who visit her,” “the school as well as the playground of the world” (6). In spite of his unconventional appreciation for the by-ways of Italy, Philip remains a tourist – both in his attitude to life and to travel. His tells Lilia to “[l]ove and understand the Italians, for the people are more marvellous than the land,” a piece of advice that she, as it turns out, takes too literally (2). Lilia, his vulgar sister-in-law, like countless other characters in English fiction, travels to escape, to break away from the oppressive life of Sawston and her husband’s family, a sanctuary of middle-class domesticity. Yet she departs with the
Herritons’ support, guaranteed by a suitable chaperon, the “charming, sober” and younger
Caroline Abbott (9). While Lilia’s letters home signal “improvement” while she remains
with the tourist crowd, her sojourn in the “Italian Italy” brings a troubling piece of news
from Monteriano, announcing that Lilia is engaged to be married to an Italian. As Mrs.
Herriton plans her counterattack, she vainly tries to find guidance in an atlas:

The name was in the smallest print, in the midst of a woolly-brown tangle of hills
which were called the ‘Sub-Apennines.’ It was not very far from Siena, which she
had learnt at school. Past it there wandered a thin black line, notched at intervals
like a saw, and she knew that this was a railway. But the map left a good deal to
imagination, and she had not got any. She looked up the place in Childe Harold,
but Byron had not been there. … The resources of literature were exhausted: she
must wait till Phillip came home. And the thought of Philip made her try Philip’s
room, and there she found Central Italy, by Baedeker….Mrs. Herriton did not
proceed. She was not one to detect the hidden charms of Baedeker. Some of the
information seemed to her unnecessary. All of it was dull. Whereas Philip could
never read ‘The view from the Rocca (small gratuity) is finest at sunset’ without
catching at the heart. (17)

After the map—the instrument of the empire—fails her, Mrs. Herriton’s search rehearses
the nineteenth-century British tourist’s engagement with Italy, fuelled by Childe Harold
and consummated by the Baedeker. Although Philip’s sentimental appreciation for
Baedeker’s faded phrases is presented through his mother’s point of view and thus may
be exaggerated, his ownership of the guidebook as the sole source on Italy betrays that in
spite of his sophistication, he is essentially a tourist. As James Buzard points out, Forster does not merely ridicule tourists, but unravels the complex impulses that drive their behavior: “Forster’s texts strive to comprehend more serious truths about tourism’s banal, easily satirizable cultural practices, representing tourism as both a struggle for cultural credentials and a sometimes imaginary, sometimes real act of violence” (288). In mid-Victorian fiction, the protagonists are travelers and the antagonists are tourists—as, for example, Dorrit and Mrs. General in Dickens’s *Little Dorrit*. In *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Philip’s transformation involves a move from appreciative tourism to a more engaged form of existence.

When his mother sends him to Italy to prevent Lilia’s marriage, Philip painfully realizes that “[f]or three years he had sung the praises of the Italians, but he had never contemplated having one as a relative” (19) and “depart[s] for Italy reluctantly, as for something commonplace and dull” (20). Once Philip is forced into a personal involvement with Italy and learns from Mrs. Abbot that Gino Carrella is not, as her telegram earlier reported, of “Italian nobility,” but the son of the local dentist, “[h]e fears that Romance might die” (28). After the turn of the century, an English writer produces a plot and a setting similar to Giovanni Ruffini’s *Doctor Antonio* and the consequences of the romance, which can now be consummated, are equally tragic. The mode of representation, however, is quite different in Forster’s and Ruffini’s novels, for Italy serves as a setting for a moral crisis of an Englishman rather than for proving the moral value of an Italian.

In spite of himself, Philip discovers a certain charm in Gino when they sit down
to dinner at Monteriano, but also realizes that the tourist’s collective ideal of Italian
people does not enhance a personal encounter with an ordinary Italian: “Philip had seen
that face before in Italy a hundred times – seen it and loved it, for it was not merely
beautiful, but had the charm which is the rightful heritage of all who are born on that soil.
But he did not want to see it opposite him at dinner. It was not the face of a gentleman”
(33). When Philip confronts Gino, the Italian merely laughs at him, for he and Lilia are
already married: “He gasped and exploded and crammed his hands into his mouth and
spat them out in another explosion, and gave Philip an aimless push, which toppled him
on to the bed” (42). The harmless push, which insults but does not harm, foreshadows a
more violent encounter later in the novel that follows the “brief and inevitable tragedy of
Lilia’s married life”(44).

The Anglo-Italian marriage illustrates the incompatibility of civilizations, and
the outcome eventually validates the prejudice of Sawston. Given that she repulses the
advances of Gino’s family and fails to learn Italian, Lilia soon finds that “Continental
society is not the go-as-you-please thing she had expected” and that in Italy “the
brotherhood of man” is “accomplished at the expense of the sisterhood of women” (51).
Although Gino is familiar with “that privileged maniac, the lady tourist”(52), he refuses
to allow his wife to take solitary walks or, jealously protecting his “precious possession”
of a blonde (60), invite strangers to tea parties. Gino’s infidelities ensue in a marital
conflict in which “more than personalities were engaged; …the struggle was national;
…generations of ancestors, good, bad, or indifferent, forbade the Latin man to be
chivalrous to the northern woman, the northern woman to forgive the Latin man”(72). In
the end, Lilia dies in childbirth, after giving Gino a son, the fulfillment of his “divine hope of immortality” (74).

As in later Forster’s novels, the heterosexual love affair symbolizes the sometimes intransigent inter-class and international relations, suggesting that the possibility of true communion rests in male friendship. The course of Lilia’s marriage intensifies Philip’s disenchantment with Italy: “She [Italy], too could produce avarice, brutality, stupidity – and what was worse, vulgarity. It was on her soil and through her influence that a silly woman had married a cad” (79). Lilia’s death arouses “pangs, not of sympathy, but of final disillusion” (79). Under the pressure of Sawston and the contrite Miss Abbot, Mrs. Herriton arranges another campaign to save the baby, this time sending both Philip and his evangelical sister Harriet to Italy. Miss Abbot and Philip fail in their competing designs to purchase the baby; instead they are drawn closer through attraction to Gino and fascination with the Italian “tangle” of “[b]eauty, evil, charm, vulgarity, mystery” (126). They defy convention and attend Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*, a symbolic synthesis of British and Italian cultures, which provides a perfect occasion for Philip’s and Gino’s brotherly reunion.

When they first visit Gino’s house, both Miss Abbot and Philip are struck with the father’s physical tenderness and the material reality of the child, of whom they “had only thought of…as a word”:

The real thing, lying asleep on a dirty rug, disconcerted her. It did not stand for a principle any longer. It was so much flesh and blood, so many inches and ounces of life—a glorious, unquestionable fact, which a man and another woman had
given to the world. You could talk to it; in time it would answer you; in time it
would not answer you unless it chose, but would secrete, within the compass of its
body, thoughts and wonderful passions of its own. And this was the machine on
which she and Mrs. Herriton and Philip and Harriet had for the last month been
exercising their various ideals… .(147)

Tempted to abandon her design by the embodied child and the genius loci, Miss Abbot
“[tries] to imagine that she [is] in her own district, and to behave accordingly,” but even
her “patronizing words” come across as “gracious and sincere” in Italian (147). Caroline
Abbot succumbs after witnessing the physical bond between the father and the son, and
Philip Herriton finds her helping Gino wash “his kicking little image of bronze”(156)
until it “[seems] to reflect light, like a copper vessel” (158). Where Caroline’s and
Philip’s imaginative sympathy fails—because it causes Caroline to change her mind and
Philip to waiver—Harriet succeeds thanks to her dogmatism and xenophobia. She
kidnaps the baby, but it is killed when the carriage is overturned on the way to the train
station.

The encounter between the traveler and the native in Where Angels Fear to
Tread, is more material and embodied than the cross-cultural encounters in earlier,
nineteenth-century British fiction. When Philip breaks the tragic news to Gino, taking the
guilt on himself, he is finally cured of his detachment:

The left hand came forward, slowly this time. It hovered before Philip like an
insect. Then it descended and gripped him by his broken elbow.

Philip struck out with all the strength of his other arm. Gino fell to the blow
without a cry or a word.

‘You brute!’ exclaimed the Englishman. ‘Kill me if you like! But leave my broken arm alone.’

… His whole arm seemed red-hot, and the broken bone grated in the joint, sending out shoots of the essence of pain. His other arm was pinioned against the wall, and Gino had trampled in behind the stove and was kneeling on his legs. For the space of a minute he yelled and yelled with all the force of his lungs. Then this solace was denied him. The other hand, moist and strong, began to close round his throat.

At first he was glad, for here, he thought, was death at last. But it was only a new torture; perhaps Gino had inherited the skill of his ancestors… (193)

Philip is both physically saved through the intervention of Miss Abbot and spiritually converted through his platonic love for her, for she “assure[s] him that there is greatness in the world” (196). Under the same influence, Gino completely forgives Philip. The two men remain “bound by ties of almost alarming intimacy” and Philip plans to return to Monteriano the following spring. Caroline Abbot, on the other hand, claims she will never visit Italy again, for she now understands it “perfectly” and also, as she confides to the astonished Philip, because she finds herself physically attracted to Gino (199).

Although she crushes Philip’s hope that “the South had brought them together in the end,” he “manage[s] to think not of himself but of her” (205). All that remains to look forward to is “London and work” (200) for him and “Sawston and work” (201) for her.

As James Buzard points out, Forster dispels the notion that a tourist can
observe a place without touching it. Philip Herriton is more self-conscious about cultural differences than his literary predecessors, but that is also why he fails to take a position. As Caroline Abbot puts it, it is better to kidnap the baby or leave Monteriano than wait to see how things turn out: “Do you want the child to stop with his father, who loves him and will bring him up badly, or do you want him to come to Sawston, where no one loves him, but where he will be brought up well?” [my emphasis](169). Although Caroline does not realize—as Philip might—that bad and good upbringing are culturally relative categories, she takes a stand and adopts love as the standard to assess the situation. Through Caroline’s influence, Philip achieves a sort of transcendence that is better than detachment, and a sense of beauty that is above mere aestheticism. Yet, both are separated by “an immense distance” from the world of Monteriano (207), and Caroline remains painfully conscious that Gino is “not a gentleman, nor a Christian, nor good in any way”(205).

After his early focus on European tourism, E.M. Forster’s settings follow the eastward path of imperial expansion in *A Passage to India* (1924), a novel that explores the same theme of cross-cultural communication as *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. Joseph Conrad’s opus, on the other hand, registers an opposite shift from *The Heart of Darkness* (1899) to *Under Western Eyes* (1911). The movement between Europe and the Empire in the work of both authors reflects what Christopher Gogwilt describes as the “double-mapping of Europe and Empire,” or the rhetorical invention of the West that anticipated revolution in Eastern Europe and decolonization in the non-European East before World War I. (25-26). In “Autocracy and War,” Conrad anticipates that the
defeat of Russia by Japan and the subsequent revolutionary turmoil in Russia would precipitate major shifts in the world order. Conrad believes that the end of Russian autocracy is inevitable, and yet it “haunts” Europe as “the phantom, part ghoul, part Djinn, part Old Man of the Sea, with beak and claws and a double head, looking greedily both east and west on the confines of two continents” (93). Conrad represents Russian autocracy as a “black abyss,” a “Néant,” “a thing apart” that is not “Asiatic” and yet is “un-European”:

This pitiful state of a country held by an evil spell, suffering from an awful visitation for which the responsibility cannot be traced either to her sins or her follies, had made Russia as a nation so difficult to understand by Europe.

…Hence arises her impenetrability to whatever is true in Western thought.

Western thought, when it crosses her frontier, falls under the spell of her autocracy and becomes a noxious parody of itself. … The curse had entered her very soul; autocracy, and nothing else in the world, has moulded her institutions, and with the poison of slavery drugged the national temperament into the apathy of a hopeless fatalism. [my emphasis](98)

In “Autocracy and War,” Conrad overcomes his usual political equivocation and responds to contemporary geopolitical issues that were entangled with his personal past. Although he formerly identified himself as a Slav, Conrad later reacts against reviewers who label his work as a product of the Slavic soul and reminds them that he is a Pole (Gogwilt 133). Conrad competes with Russian writers, particularly Dostoyevski, who begin to influence the British literary scene after the turn of the century and adapts the
terms of the Westerner-Slav debate among Russian intellectuals, who opposed Russian tradition to “the superficial manifestation of nineteenth-century European history and culture—Herzen’s ‘the modern Western system’” (Gogwilt 162). In response, Gogwilt compellingly argues, Conrad transfers the racial stereotypes of Slavs to the “Russian soul” in *Under Western Eyes* but also produces “the West” as a cliché (162).

*Under Western Eyes* is not a conventional travel narrative because the characters’ movements are mostly confined to the urban spaces of St. Petersburg and Geneva, which are linked by revolutionary plots. Unlike Forster’s *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, the novel portrays the world of expatriates and exiles, although a tourist occasionally flits across the horizon as a spectator, reflecting the narrator’s spectral role: “Removed by difference of age and nationality as if into the sphere of another existence, I produced, even upon myself, the effect of a dumb, helpless ghost, of an anxious, immaterial thing that could only hover about without the power to protect or guide by as much as a whisper” (91). Like Philip Herriton, Conrad’s narrator poses as a mere “helpless spectator,” an aging English teacher who observes the revolutionary plotting in Geneva’s “La Petite Russie,” where he feels “like a traveller in a strange country” (121). Throughout the novel, the narrator stresses his poor qualifications for interpreting Russia:

> I confess that I have no comprehension of the Russian character. The illogicality of their attitude, the arbitrariness of their conclusions, the frequency of the exceptional, should present no difficulty to a student of many grammars, but there must be something else in the way, some special human trait—one of those subtle differences that are beyond the ken of mere professors. (6)
Instead of the role of the interpreter, he adopts the more “neutral” one as the “translator” of the St. Petersburg journal of Kirylo Sidorovich Razumov, an exiled Russian student. The task is difficult, though, because the “very handwriting seem[s] cabalistic, incomprehensible to the experience of Western Europe” (96). Ironically, Razumov also claims to be rational, and his friend perceives him to be “cool as a cucumber,” a “regular Englishman” (17), which indicates that the Russian protagonist is not so different from the Western narrator. Critics have argued that Conrad’s story rewrites Dostoyevski’s Crime and Punishment, turning the antagonist of Dostoyevski’s novel, Razumishkin into the protagonist with a similar name, derived from the Russian word for “reason.”

Razumov’s fate illustrates that it is impossible for a rational person to thrive under an autocratic regime. An illegitimate son of Prince K— and the pretty daughter of an archpriest, Razumov is a hard-working conformist who hopes for a career in the tzarist bureaucracy. His dreams are shattered by a fellow-student called Haldin (probably derived from the German word “Held,” or “hero”), an enthusiastic revolutionary terrorist and, as critics argue, a character based on Dostoyevski’s Raskolnikov. Haldin misreads Razumov’s character, and requests his help in escaping from the police after he assassinates Minister de P—. Razumov betrays Haldin, and is caught up in a tangle of lies as he tries to protect himself first from Russian authorities, and later, while operating abroad as a spy, from Russian revolutionaries in Geneva.

As Gene Moore points out, the St. Petersburg and Geneva settings constitute distinct narrative “chronotopes” that the narrator’s Western eyes fail to reconcile, because the two places are remote “not only geographically, but also temporally, or rather
temporo-spatially”(10):

Razumov’s ‘Petersburg chronotope,’ his typically Russian sense of time and space, is characterized by cramped enclosed spaces and by a minute attention to the passage of precisely registered units of time. … By contrast, the ‘Genevan chronotope’ of the narrator offers too much empty time and space, a leisurely openness in which everything is decompressed, given ‘all the time in the world.’ As against Razumov’s conspiratorial attention to clocks and calendars and anniversaries, the narrator pays time only the vaguest attention… .(15-16)

As Moore’s distinction between the Western and Eastern European chronotopes indicates, Conrad’s temporal representation of the East of Europe is different from typical Orientalist or anthropological discourse, in which the “other” is temporally arrested and measured against Western time. Instead, Conrad’s Geneva and St. Petersburg are incommensurable worlds. In “Autocracy and War,” Conrad strives to negate the existence of Russia, its historical and geographical reality, reducing it to “immense plains of forest and steppe lying dumbly on the confines of two continents: a true desert harboring the Spirit either the East or of the West” (98). In contrast to the “forlorn and dazed” Russian soldiers, the Japanese army possesses “a full knowledge of its past and future” (88). Conrad’s direct experience of Russia was limited to an obscure village near Moscow, where he stayed as a child with his exiled parents without ever visiting St. Petersburg. On the other hand, he was familiar with Geneva, where he stayed as an adult several times, in 1891, 1894, 1895, and 1907, for a period amounting to a total of 168 days (Kirschner 224). Thus, the St. Petersburg and Geneva settings are respectively synthetic and
mimetic, serving contradictory functions that suit Conrad’s characteristic political equivocation.

The claustrophobic indoor spaces that Gene Moore identifies as characteristic of the St. Petersburg chronotope are not set in specific public urban spaces, but in the “immense, wintry Russia, which, somehow, [Razumov’s] view could embrace in all its enormous expanse as if it were a map” (49). As an illegitimate child and a ward of an attorney, Razumov identifies with the whole Russia as a motherland. When Haldin mentions that one of the reasons why he turned to Razumov is because he does not have a family, Razumov tells him: “You come from the province, but all this land is mine—or I have nothing” (45). In the Genevan exile, he more emphatically identifies with the land: “But Russia can’t disown me. …I am it!” (148). However, when he falls under the suspicion of the tsarist bureaucracy, Razumov finds “no material refuge” in “the hard ground of Russia, inanimate, cold, inert, like a sullen and tragic mother hiding her face under a winding sheet” (25). Once there is no personal connection to the land, Russia appears empty of history, underscoring Conrad’s thesis in “Autocracy and War.”

Razumov received an almost physical impression of endless space and countless millions. He responded to it with the readiness of a Russian who is born to an inheritance of space and numbers. Under the sumptuous immensity of the sky, the snow covered the endless forests, the frozen rivers, the plains of an immense country, obliterating the landmarks, the accidents of the ground, levelling everything under its uniform whiteness, like a monstrous blank page awaiting the record of an inconceivable history. (25)
The meta-commentary on Razumov as a “typical” Russian, however, is conveyed through the “Western eyes” of the narrator, who translates Razumov’s cabalistic writing into “a monstrous blank page” because he imagines Russia as an abstract principle, a void. The “double narration” of Under Western Eyes, in which the narrator does not quite represent the implied author’s views, blunts the ideological edge of the views on Russia that Conrad voiced in “Autocracy and War.”  

In contrast to the Russian chronotope, the Genevan setting is painstakingly detailed. The time of writing, if not the actually setting of the novel, corresponds with the period when famous Russian revolutionaries, including Lenin and his wife, lived in Geneva near Razumov’s lodging on Rue de Carouge. Under Western Eyes is a new type of travel narrative, for Geneva is a multi-national metropolis and thus cross-cultural encounters take place within the city. Paul Kirschner literally maps the characters’ movements around the city, arguing that the narrative is “topodialogic,” meaning that each dialogue is firmly set in the cityscape of Geneva “and place is emphasized: the decisive compositional elements are not love interest and plot but conflicting ideas and places for discussing and debating them” (230). For example, the Château Borel, the center of aristocratic revolutionaries and revolutionary feminists whom both Razumov and the narrator despise, is an appropriately Gothic space: “With its grimy, weather-stained walls and all the windows shattered from top to bottom, it looked damp and gloomy and deserted. It might very well have been haunted in traditional style by some doleful, groaning, futile ghost of a middle-class order” (150). Although it “offer[s] no sign of being inhabited,” it is in fact the residence of the revolutionaries’ “ghoulish”
sponsor, Madame de S—, the “Egeria of the ‘Russian Mazzini’”(153) and a degenerate version of “that other dangerous and exiled woman, Madame de Staël”(102). In spite of all the detail, none of the characters appreciate or relate to Geneva, which is repeatedly dismissed by both the English expatriate and the Russian exiles as a town of “prosaic virtues” (236) that is “comely without grace, and hospitable without sympathy” and “indifferent…in its cold, almost scornful toleration” (238). It is also decidedly anti-picturesque, “the very perfection of mediocrity” with “the sky of a land without horizons” (102) and surrounded with “all the marvellous banality of the picturesque made of painted cardboard” (204). The characters contempt for or indifference to Geneva are ideologically inflected; Razumov calls it “the heart of democracy” that is “no bigger than a parched pea and about as much value”(146).

Conrad’s Geneva represents the idea of the “West” that Christopher Gogwilt argues was first formulated in the Russian Slav-Westerner debates and appropriated by Western Europeans to distance themselves from the East of the Continent. Representing the Slav side of the Russian debate, Razumov complains that he has been “stuffed with indigestible foreign concoctions of the most nauseating kind” (14), summarily rejects “[f]oreign bred doctrines” as “dregs”(150), and contemptuously dismisses the narrator as “that meddlesome old Englishman” (141). When Haldin’s sister Natalia tells the narrator that he “belong[s] to a people which has made a bargain with fate…so much liberty for so much hard cash” and “shrinks from the idea of revolutionary action…as if it were…not quite decent,” he merely bows his head in tacit acknowledgement (97). The dialogues among the characters in Under Western Eyes
illustrate that the consolidation of the “West” is a reciprocal process, in which both the
Russians and the Westerners internalize their labels and painfully realize their
differences.

The narrator is in love with Natalia, who resides in Geneva with her mother,
but, insisting on his “European remoteness,” “play[s] the part of a helpless spectator to
the end,” while also coming to realize the limitations of such detachment (236). The
Haldin ladies are concerned about Victor Haldin’s silence and eagerly anticipate news
from Russia. When Razumov, whom Victor had described in a letter to Natalia as a rare
exemplar of “unstained, lofty, and solitary existences” (121), appears in Geneva, Natalia
hopes he will have “something authentic to tell” about the fate of her brother, an
expectation that ultimately leads him to confess his crime to her (136). Acknowledging
that the “[d]ifference of nationality is a terrible obstacle for our complex Western
natures,” the narrator is content to observe the unfolding relationship between Razumov
and Miss Haldin and imagine a blossoming romance (84). Sensing his projection,
Razumov retors that he is “not a young man in a novel” (132). As the narrator witnesses
the scene of Razumov’s confession, the young people “[seem] brought out from the
confused immensity of the Eastern borders to be exposed cruelly to the observation of
[his] Western eyes” (243). Through increased repetition in the last part of the novel, the
“western eyes” of the narrator turn into a cliché—a trope signifying helplessness rather
than incomprehension, as the narrator comes to recognize the fundamental affinities
between Russia and the West, pointing out that “the savage autocracy, any more than the
divine democracy, does not limit its diet exclusively to the bodies of its enemies” (215).
Razumov, who is driven to confess not only to Natalia but also to the revolutionaries, is deafened by the assassin Nikita Necator, who bursts his ear drums to prevent him from spying for anybody in the future. The disability only undercores Razumov’s inability to communicate with compatriots or foreigners. It is the women of the novel, and particularly Natalia, who retain faith in the future, even in the face of Western scepticism and Eastern cynicism. Like Caroline Abbot in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Natalie Haldin engages in social work to hasten the advent of loving concord in the world. While E.M. Forster’s and Joseph Conrad’s male protagonists are preoccupied with the painfully self-conscious stage of liberal understanding of national difference, their female characters promise the utopian possibility of universal love and, in order to help bring it about, start with remedying social issues at home. In the end, the novel shows the insubstantiality of stereotypes; there is no “Russian soul” to bind the exiles—they all return to Russia to struggle in different ways—nor is the narrator a mere “dense” Westerner.

Both *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *Under Western Eyes* are creative attempts to imagine the possibility of sympathetic understanding among Europeans, even though their authors represent a continent deeply divided both along the North/South and the West/East axes. Unlike the works of Romantic and Victorian fiction that are at the focus of this project, Conrad’s and Forster’s novels are Modernist in their attention to the complicated relationship between psychology and place as well as in their scepticism about the possibility of inter-European understanding on the eve of World War I. Paul Fussell, who designates the period of 1918 and 1939 as “the final age of travel” during which British literary traveling loses the nineteenth-century sense of place, also reflects
on the quest for “international understanding” in our age of “post-touristic travel”: 

[W]e may perceive that understanding can betoken at least three quite different things. First, there is sentimental or social understanding, as when we note that someone is very sympathetic, and nice. That clearly is not the sort of understanding that results from wandering amidst the foreign. Nor is the second meaning of understanding very useful in gauging the benefits of travel. This second meaning takes understanding in a commercial or utilitarian sense, the sort of goal encouraged by the Business Council for International Understanding in Washington, D.C. Utilitarian understanding requires a businessman or international traveling salesman to know enough about the social customs of a foreign place not to jeopardize a deal by ignorance or clumsiness. … These forms of sentimental and utilitarian understanding are to be distinguished from liberal understanding, where liberal has the same by now hackneyed meaning it has in the phrase liberal arts. The liberal principle of disinterested or nonutilitarian perception and contemplation is now as often honored in public as ignored in private. … You pursue liberal understanding to deepen your sensitivity to ideas and images and not least to sharpen your sense of humility as you come to realize that your country is not the “standard” for the rest of the world but is just as odd as all the others. (“Travel, Tourism and ‘International Understanding’” 163-164) 

By comparing the representations of the Continent written by actual and armchair travelers, this dissertation suggests that such “liberal understanding” can be derived from a critical reading of books, particularly travel narratives, as much as from travel
experience, which is also constrained by identification with home culture. *Under Western Eyes*, which is more a European than a British novel, failed or refused to provide such a point for identification, and in his “Note” to the 1920 edition, Joseph Conrad observed that the novel “in England was a failure with the public, perhaps because of [my] detachment. I obtained my reward some six years later when I first heard that the book had found universal recognition in Russia and had been re-published there in many editions” (lxxxiv). The Russians’ favorable reception of Conrad’s often unfavorable but also sympathetic representation of their country points to a territory that this project, which is confined to English Studies, does not fully explore: the lines of resistance and complicity, appropriation and counterattack, along which the peripheral Europeans draw their own imagined boundaries.
NOTES

1 See The Beaten Track, Chapter 5: Forster’s Tresspasses: Tourism and Cultural Politics, pp. 285-331.

2 Carola Kaplan argues that Conrad challenges Tolstoy and Dostoyevski and “attempts to undermine their claims to speak for Russia and envision her future.” (98)


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