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Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* in the Light of Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem*, and Previous Women's Travelogues

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Abstract

Mary Shelley's last work is a travelogue about her return to Italy with her son and the latter's Cambridge friends, seventeen years after Percy Bysshe Shelley's death. This thesis aims to investigate part of *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* in relation to the illustrated *Italy, A Poem* by Samuel Rogers, to whom Mary Shelley's travelogue is dedicated, and previous female travel accounts, especially those by Lady Morgan, and Frances Trollope. First, British travel writing is introduced, with a focus on the nineteenth century. Then, the recounting of Mary Shelley's route from the Alps to Milan in 1840, and her stay in Venice in 1843, is associated with Rogers's *Italy*, J.M.W. Turner's vignettes of the places featuring in the poem, and the aforementioned women's travel accounts. Finally, Shelley's, Rogers's, and Trollope's possible 'gendered' view of Italians and Italian women is examined. What emerges is an attempt to shed further light on the pictorial quality of *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, and its unexplored links with Mary Shelley's predecessors in travel writing.

Introduction

> My home is the readiest means of conveyance I can command, or the inn at which I shall remain at night — my only acquaintances the companions of my wanderings — the single business of my life to enjoy the passing scene. (Mary Shelley, *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, 1844)

The nineteenth century gave new rise to travel and travel writing for British culture, redefining both activities toward innovative perspectives. The end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 allowed the re-opening of the borders of Europe, thus the reprise of circulation on the Continent for English travellers, marking the birth of a middle-class mass tourism, guidebooks, and an increased production of travel accounts by male and female authors, in prose and poetry. Although travelogues at the time did not include illustrations, two notable exceptions to this convention became crucial 'guides' for nineteenth-century British travellers abroad, especially for those who visited Italy: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1818) by Lord Byron, whose Canto IV is centred around Venice, and *Italy, A Poem* (originally published in 1822 but it gained success only with the 1830 edition) by Samuel Rogers; both poetic works were illustrated by Joseph Mallord William Turner. In addition, John Murray's series of practical guidebooks, inaugurated in 1836 with *A Hand-book for Travellers on the Continent*, was a turning point for the rising middle classes who travelled for leisure, in contrast with the Grand Tour of the previous centuries, destined to young aristocrats to complete their formal education accompanied by private tutors. Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley[1] (1797-1851) witnessed, experienced, and recorded this process of transformation of travel and travel writing throughout her life. Indeed,

[1] She was born Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, taking the surname of both her parents, the radical philosophers Mary Wollstonecraft, who died in childbirth, and William Godwin. Shelley is her married name, after her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley. Hereafter, she will be referred to as Mary Shelley, albeit she used to sign her name as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley even after her marriage, proud of her illustrious mother. The initials M.S. and P.B.S. will also be used in the footnotes to indicate Mary and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

she spent a large part of her life travelling abroad, from her youthful tour across the Continent in 1814-1815, when she eloped with her future husband Percy Bysshe Shelley — a leading figure of the "second generation" of Romantic poets, along with Lord Byron and Keats —, and their subsequent stay in Italy (1818-1822), to maturity as a widow in the early 1840s with her only surviving son Percy Florence. The result of such experiences can be found in Mary Shelley's fictional and non-fictional works, albeit the boundaries between the two genres are sometimes blurred, as it is the case with travel writing itself, which «borrows freely from the memoir, journalism, letters, guidebooks, confessional narrative, and, *most important*, fiction».[2]

The present thesis focuses on Mary Shelley's last work to be written and published before her death, *Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, and 1843* (1844), an epistolary account in two volumes of the Continental journeys she undertook with her son and a few Cambridge friends of his. This travelogue was published under the name of «Mrs. Shelley», a significant choice since it records the author's journeys to the same places that she had visited almost twenty years before with Percy Bysshe Shelley, marking Mary Shelley's first return to them as a widow after his tragic drowning in the Gulf of La Spezia in 1822 (the current year, 2022, marks the bicentenary of Shelley's death), and her «final tribute to Italy».[3] Whereas Mary Shelley's first novel *Frankenstein* — famously ideated on a stormy night near the Lake of Geneva when she was only eighteen years old — is widely considered a milestone of English literature, her peculiar travelogue has by no means gained the same popularity. Interestingly enough, however, the first work that the young Mary Shelley published (anonymously) was not *Frankenstein* but a travel book about her Continental tour with Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland* (1817), attributed for the most part to her right from its publication. Thus, Mary Shelley's first and last public creation is a travel account, proving not only her deep love for travelling but also her inclination

[2] M. Kowaleski (ed.), *Temperamental Journeys: Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992, p. 7.
[3] E.W. Sunstein, *Mary Shelley: Romance and Reality*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989, p. 366.

to write about it, and to present a personal record of her 'rambles' to the general audience.

This dissertation attempts to analyse part of Mary Shelley's route in the light of *Italy, A Poem* by Samuel Rogers, to whom *Rambles in Germany and Italy* is dedicated, with reference to some of Turner's illustrations to the poem, and of Shelley's female predecessors in travel writing. In particular, the central part of the thesis investigates Mary Shelley's description of her journey from the Alps to Milan in 1840, and her one-month stay in Venice in 1843. The thesis is structured as follows. The first chapter aims to provide an overview of the contextual and stylistic background of travel writing as a genre, by discussing its origins, the debated definition(s) of 'travelogue', and a brief history of British travel and travel writing with a focus on the nineteenth-century. Hence, Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem*, and Mary Shelley's female precursors, from her own mother Mary Wollstonecraft to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Mariana Starke, Lady Sydney Morgan (née Owenson), and Frances Milton Trollope, will be introduced in connection with her. Apart from Wollstonecraft, all these women recorded their visits to Italy in travel accounts written in epistolary form. Thus, the second and central chapter intends to analyse the selected route undertaken by Mary Shelley in relation to Rogers's poem and with some of the previous female travelogues, namely Lady Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* (published posthumously in 1763) and Lady Morgan's *Italy* (1821) with regard to the crossing of the Alps, and Frances Trollope's *A Visit to Italy* (1842) as concerns Milan and Venice. Finally, the third chapter will discuss Mary Shelley's opinion about Italian people rather than places, since the declared aim of *Rambles in Germany and Italy* is to portray the Italians' «real character»[4] and convince the British public to support the *Risorgimento* cause, by providing a socio-political commentary on the state of the country at the time. This last section aims to investigate Mary Shelley's perspective on Italian people in general, and Italian women in particular. The latter will be compared with Rogers's and Trollope's own views, addressing the possible influence of gender in the expression of these authors' judgements.

[4] M. Shelley, *Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, and 1843,* London: Edward Moxon, 1844, vol. 1, p. VIII.

The relationship between *Rambles*, Rogers's *Italy*, and the previous female travel accounts, namely those by Mary Wollstonecraft, Lady Morgan, and Frances Trollope, has not gone unnoticed: an article by Clarissa Campbell Orr has reflected upon these authors' status of 'literary celebrity' as travel writers, and compared their style and themes. However, Campbell Orr has not specifically examined side by side the selected route that Shelley and Rogers partially shared on their way to Italy, nor provided textual references to the passages of Rogers's poem regarding this itinerary. Moreover, not only was *Italy, A Poem* extremely influential for all British travellers to Italy, but personal connections also link Mary Shelley to Rogers, an estimated elderly friend of hers and of both her parents, as he — like Turner and Lady Morgan — was part of the circle who visited her father's house when she was a child and knew her late mother too. In addition, and most significantly, the 1830 edition of *Italy, A Poem* and *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* share the same publisher, Edward Moxon: this can be regarded as key evidence of the continuity between the two works. As far as the association between Turner and *Rambles in Germany and Italy* is concerned, Campbell Orr has in fact underlined that Shelley's «father knew Turner», and that «in order to describe her Italian experiences better, she twice refers her reader to the Turner vignettes of Rogers' poem: once to conjure up the atmosphere of Venice, and once in connection […] to Amalfi».[5]

The pictorial quality of *Rambles* is confirmed by the numerous references that Mary Shelley makes to painting as the best way to convey the beauty and the sublimity of the scenery when (her) words fail to express them. Indeed, *Rambles in Germany and Italy* is «a complex aesthetic experience that unifies travel writing, autobiography, and art criticism», seeking «a balance between an eighteenth-century aesthetic appreciation of landscape based on the pictorial categories of the sublime and the beautiful, and a modern, cultivated sensibility».[6] Moving from this assumption, several lines from Rogers's poem and Turner's illustrations to it will be compared and contrasted with Shelley's impressions of the crossing of the Alps,

[5] C. Campbell Orr, "Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, the Celebrity Author, and the Undiscovered Country of the Human Heart", in *Romanticism on the Net*, n. 11, 1998, accessible in: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/005813ar (Last Accessed: August 2022).

[6] A. Braida, "Nature, the Picturesque, and the Sublime in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's Travel Narratives", *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, vol. 24, n. 2, 2018, pp. 415-430, p. 427.

Lake Como, Bergamo, and Venice, in order to assess whether and to which extent their representation of these places is similar or differs.

As far as the critical reception to Mary Shelley's last work is concerned, Emily W. Sunstein claimed in the first complete biography of hers that, as late as in 1989, «neither her formative girlhood […] nor, most important, her years from the age of twenty-five to fifty-three, have ever been thoroughly explored».[7] Indeed, the beginning of a series of critical studies about Mary Shelley's less known but equally important literary works apart from *Frankenstein*, including *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, can be attributed to the publication of *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein* in 1993. Since then, scholarly attention has evolved in this respect: recent critical studies testify to a growing interest in the latter part of Mary Shelley's life and works. Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that the studies devoted exclusively to *Rambles in Germany and Italy* and those centred upon Mary Shelley's representation of Italy have been written only in the last two decades, in a time span that goes from 2001 to 2020. These critical studies, as much as the biography of Mary Shelley by Sunstein, constitute the secondary sources of the present dissertation. The primary sources are *Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, Mary and Percy Bysshe Shelley's letters and journals, their *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, along with the above-mentioned travelogues by Samuel Rogers, Lady Montagu, Lady Morgan, and Frances Trollope. The selected vignettes by J.M.W. Turner that figure in Rogers's *Italy, A Poem*, presented in the Appendix, have instead been taken from the official website of the Tate Gallery, since all of Turner's works were donated to the Tate by John Ruskin after the painter's death in 1856. Albeit the illustrations are exactly the same as those contained in Rogers's poem, the ones here included derive from an 1829 volume which published them separately on the full page, before the publication of *Italy* in 1830: in the poem, they appeared as headpieces.

Considering the recency of the renewed critical and academic attention to it, *Rambles in Germany and Italy* still offers much potential to be explored, not unlike Mary Shelley's own remark about her wish «to linger longer on her way and visit a

[7] Sunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

thousand places left unvisited»[8] during her second journey to Italy, as it always happens to travellers, regardless of the duration of their 'rambles'. Therefore, this dissertation is an attempt to shed further light on the relationship between *Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, 1844*, Samuel Rogers's *Italy, a Poem*, and Mary Shelley's precursors in travel writing about Italy from a woman's point of view.

[8] M. Shelley, *Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, and 1843,* London: Edward Moxon, 1844, vol. 1., p. 161.

1. «These volumes were thus originated»: Contextual and Stylistic Background

The origins of travel narrative can be traced back to the time before it started to be actually written down, when stories about imaginary journeys and adventures in foreign lands were transmitted orally. For instance, Homer's *Odyssey*, whose written version is dated between the eighth and the seventh century BCE, can be considered one of the earliest travel narratives in Western culture. However, criticism about travel writing started only in the 1980s. There is no unique definition of travel writing nor of 'travelogues' (i.e., what can be considered a travel book) amongst critics: some regard as travelogues only autobiographical, first-person accounts of the authors' own journey(s), written from the nineteenth century onwards; others extend the definition also to fictional and non-fictional works such as poems, novels, essays, and guidebooks. This first chapter presents the necessary terminology, the main critical theories, and a brief history of travel writing with a focus on England, along with an overview of British travel and travel writing in the nineteenth century: the transition from the Grand Tour to mass tourism, *Italy, A Poem* by Samuel Rogers, women's travelogues preceding Mary Shelley, her own *History of a Six Weeks' Tour Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland*, and an introduction to *Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, 1844*.

1.1 Defining Travel Writing and its History

Travel writing is possibly the most difficult literary genre to define, assuming it is a genre: its very nature eludes any distinct or single definition, as much as travelling itself is a multifaceted and dynamic experience that involves numerous different factors, acquiring a relevance that is both personal and social. The same applies to travel writing. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as «a genre of writing in which authors describe places they have visited and their experiences while travelling»,[9] and dates the first appearance of the compound in English to 1776, in an anonymous article of *The London Review of English and Foreign Literature*, while 'travel-writer' was used for the first time in 1711 by the Earl of Shaftesbury in his

[9] "Travel writing", in Compounds of "travel, n.", *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (Last Accessed: July 2022).

Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times.[10] Despite the seemingly straightforward given definition, delineating travel writing is actually more complex than it might appear: as previously anticipated, it is «dauntingly heterogeneous» and «borrows freely from the memoir, journalism, letters, guidebooks, confessional narrative, and, *most important*, fiction»,[11] according to Michael Kowaleski. On account of the intrinsic heterogeneity and hybridity of travel writing, resulted from its intertwining with various literary forms, even its status as a genre is much debated by critics, and to this day there is no agreement among them. Before discussing the main scholarly theories about travel writing and its history, however, it is necessary to briefly assess the development of serious critical studies about it, together with travel literature as an independent object of analysis.

Criticism about travel writing started in the 1980s stemming from the field of post-colonial studies, with their ongoing reflections on the concepts of 'otherness', cultural differentiation, the relationship between colonizers and colonized, displacement, and the perception of places in the collective imagination of each culture. The interest in these issues was prompted by the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which «generated a wave of studies that looked at the ways in which travel writing, particularly of the nineteenth century, represented other cultures»,[12] beyond Said's focus on the Middle East area. His ground-breaking study revealed that «travel writing does not consist simply of individual or disinterested factual accounts» but

> travellers have already been influenced, before they travel, by previous cultural representations that they have encountered. Thus, they never look on places anew or completely independently but perceive them instead through an accretion of others' accounts.[13]

As will be demonstrated in the following chapters of the present dissertation, this is true also for Mary Shelley's perception of the places she re-visited in the early 1840s, especially with respect to her representation of Italy, deeply influenced by literary

[10] "Travel writing" and "travel writer", in ibid.
[11] M. Kowaleski (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 7.
[12] T. Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 9.
[13] Ibid.

associations and previous travel accounts, whilst at the same time maintaining her strongly individual point of view. First of all, the origins and a brief history of British travel writing up to the nineteenth century, along with the debated definition(s) of 'travelogue', will be presented in order to understand the contextual background against which Mary Shelley wrote her *Rambles from Germany to Italy, in 1840, 1842, 1844.*

1.1.1 The Origins and British Travel Literature

Albeit studies about travel writing started in the 1980s, travel books have been regarded as either a non-existing genre or unworthy of attention until the four last decades. Therefore, criticism about them is fairly recent, and extremely so if we consider that the origins of travel narrative are traceable back to the beginning of human civilisation. At first, tales about epic journeys and adventures in mythical or imaginary foreign lands were transmitted orally from generation to generation by means of storytelling, directed to a community that shared the same cultural roots. Subsequently, these stories began to be recorded in written form. The *Odyssey*, attributed to the Greek poet Homer and composed around the eighth and the seventh century BCE, can be considered one of the earliest travel narratives, if not *the* earliest remaining travel narrative in the history of Western culture. Its hero, Odysseus, recounts the (mis)adventures he experienced on his ten-year journey back to his homeland, Ithaca, by narrating them at the court of Alcinous and his daughter Nausicaa but also to the audience who listened to the poem being chanted: ancient Greek poetry was originally sung, and accompanied by the lyre. Mary Shelley was very familiar with the *Odyssey*, as she read and even translated part of it during her stay at Pisa with Percy Bysshe Shelley from 1820 to 1822, possibly linking Odysseus's frantic journeys with her own 'wanderings' while translating them.[14]

[14] The theme of the journey is introduced at the very beginning of the poem: «Tell me, O Muse, of the man of many / devices, who *wandered full many ways* after he had sacked the sacred citadel of / Troy. *Many were the men whose cities he / saw and whose mind he learned*, aye, *and* / *many the woes he suffered in his heart* / upon the sea, seeking to win his own life / and the *return* of his comrades» (Homer, *The Odyssey with an English Translation by A.T. Murray*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, London: William Heinemann Ldt., 1919, emphasis mine). M.S.'s translation of more than 250 lines of the poem is attested by a notebook in which she annotated her study of Greek, along with a transcription from an Italian guidebook to Florence and some sketches, e.g., of trees and foliage. Part of the notebook is supposedly lost, as the first lines of the poem are missing: see W.

As far as England is concerned, the most celebrated literary work by the so-called 'father of English literature' is in fact a travel narrative: the *Canterbury Tales* (c. 1400) by Geoffrey Chaucer is about a pilgrimage from London to Canterbury, written in a London vernacular rather than in French or in Latin, which at the time were the official languages of the court and of culture, respectively. The *Canterbury Tales* even contains a 'proto-feminist' character, the Wife of Bath, who may be considered the first woman traveller in a British fictional work. Notwithstanding this exception, in male travel narratives — the only ones to be written for centuries, as men dominated the social, professional and, thus, the literary scene in all fields — women did not move but were relegated to being «objects of desire or destination points rather than active co-travellers».[15] Even in the *Odyssey*, despite all its modernity, Penelope is a faithful wife who stays in Ithaca, and the powerful Circe and Calypso never move from their islands. In England, women's travel writing started only in the eighteenth century (cf. 1.2), while women's studies, i.e., «originally U.S. academic courses in sociology, history, literature, and psychology which focus on the roles, experiences, and achievements of women in society»,[16] were prompted by the 'second feminist wave' of the 1970s (the first being the original suffragette movement of the early nineteenth century), and intersected with travel criticism in a still-expanding literature.

British travel writing about distant foreign lands officially began in the early modern period: it was connected both to trade and to the discovery, exploration, and colonisation of the New World in Elizabethan times, obviously undertaken by male explorers and colonisers[17]. For instance, Walter Raleigh's autobiographic *Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* (1595) was one of the most

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Bowers, "On First Looking into Mary Shelley's Homer", in *The Review of English Studies*, n. 69, vol. 290, pp. 510-531.

[15] S. Bassnett, "Travel Writing and Gender", in P. Hulme and T. Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 225.

[16] "Women's studies", in *OED online*, cit. (Last Accessed: June 2022).

[17] As Susan Bassnett noted, «the adventure quest in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when men journeyed in search of fortune and renown to the new worlds that were opening up beyond the frontiers of Europe, was explicitly gendered» (Bassnett, *op. cit.* p. 225), in favour of the male sex. Moreover, she also significantly assesses that «the early history of colonialism is one in which new territories were metaphorised as female, as virgin lands waiting to be penetrated, ploughed, and husbanded by male explorers. The overt sexualisation of the language of territorial expansion quickly became commonplace», in ibid., p. 231.

complete and innovative travel accounts of the time.[18] The last period of the Renaissance marked the emergence of the 'Grand Tour' across the Continent for young British male aristocrats to complete their formal education, accompanied by a private tutor. The Grand Tour became a social institution from the sixteenth century until the end of the eighteenth century, with the aim of visiting the main European landmarks, courts, and notable people in view of a future diplomatic career. Italy was the preferred destination for its ancient ruins, thus for its historical and literary associations with the classics, i.e., the Greek and Roman civilization, along with all the ancient authors who were studied and imitated during the English Renaissance.

At the same time, though, Rome and Venice in particular were viewed by British intellectuals as a cradle of vices and corruption, very dangerous for the moral integrity of the young Englishmen who travelled and spent some time in the country. Hence, alongside ambassadors' reports of foreign countries, essays in the form of advice to travellers started to be published, such as, among others, *The Schoolmaster* [the original spelling was *Scholemaster*] (1570) by Roger Ascham, himself a private tutor and master of Queen Elizabeth I, and "On Travel" (1625) by the influential philosopher Francis Bacon. Both works warned English travellers and/or their tutors against the dangers derived from an experience abroad, and the risk of forgetting their English customs or their Protestant education. Ascham reminded his readers of a popular Italian saying in the Renaissance, *"Inglese Italianato, è un diabolo incarnato*", as well as of the dichotomy between Italy's ancient illustrious past and its corrupt present. The latter juxtaposition between past and present would become a common literary trope in the following centuries, and the persistent view of most British intellectuals and nineteenth-century Romantic authors, such as the poets Samuel Rogers, Lord Byron, and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Mary Shelley herself partially shared such view in *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, albeit she was considerably less harsh in her judgement of Italians than her husband, and she

[18] W.H. Sherman, "Stirrings and Searchings (1500-1720)", in Hulme and Youngs (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

imputed the present degradation of the country and its people to the Italians' lack of freedom under the Austrian rule.[19]

The sixteenth and seventeenth-century tradition of the Grand Tour came to a halt and then officially ended with the advent of the Napoleonic Wars (1790-1815), which caused the closing off of the Continent for the Britons. After the peace of 1815, when the Britons could finally reach Europe, the Grand Tour was substituted by mass tourism carried out by the middle-classes. This new kind of travellers visited the Continent for leisure but lacked a formal education and the assistance of a private tutor serving as a guide to instruct them on the history of the places, sites, or monuments of interest they encountered during their journeys. As will be discussed more in depth in the following paragraphs, the middle-class travellers' necessity to be instructed on what to see, why, and even how to see or judge the main foreign landmarks, led to the diffusion of guidebooks, and to the publication of a consistent number of travelogues by English authors, both male and female, about their experiences abroad. It the first place, the possible meanings of the term 'travelogue' need to be examined, before turning our attention to the most relevant travelogues for the purposes of this dissertation.

1.1.2 What is a Travelogue?

Interestingly enough, according to the OED, the original meaning of 'travelogue' (originated in the US in 1898) indicated an illustrated account of the places visited during a journey, usually presented in the form of film. Thus, illustrations have been a fundamental part of travelogues since the very origins of the term, which acquired

[19] Ascham stated that «vertue [virtue] once made that contrie [country] Mistres over all the worlde. Vice now maketh that contrie slave to them, that before, were glad to serve it. All man seeth it […] namelie soch [such] as be best and wisest amongest them» (R. Ascham, *The Scholemaster, Written between 1563-8. Posthumously published* (1570), edited by E. Arber, Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1898, p. 148). On Ascham and his role of tutor, cf. A. Locatelli, "Landscaping Literature in Modern England: Praxis, Gnosis, and the Shifting Knowledge of Literature", in E.W. Nivre, B. Schirrmacher, and C. Egerer (eds.), *(Re-)Contextualising Literary and Cultural History. The Representation of the Past in Literary and Material Culture*, Stockholm: Stockholm University Library, 2013. Almost three centuries later, P.B. Shelley was of the same opinion: on his first arrival to Italy, he wrote in a letter from Milan that Italians seemed to him «a miserable race […] a tribe of stupid and shriveled slaves» — P.B.S., letter to Thomas Love Peacock (20th April 1818), in F. Lafayette Jones (ed.), *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley: Shelley in Italy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, p. 9. On Mary Shelley's *Rambles* and her view of Italians, see section 1.4 and chapter 3 of the present dissertation.

the current literary meaning only later on. The dictionary entry defines 'travelogue' as follows:

> A lecture or presentation, usually accompanied by the showing of slides or a film, in which a traveller talks about the places he or she visited on a particular journey and describes the experiences he or she had while travelling. Later more generally: any account of or documentary about a person's travels, now typically in the form of a film, television programme, or book. [20]

However, as previously anticipated, critics that study travel writing are divided on what should be considered a travelogue in its literary meaning. Two main scholarly theories can be identified with respect to this issue. The first regards as travelogues only the travel accounts that describe the author's own journey, which must have really taken place and be reported in the first person singular. In this case, travelogues constitute a specific genre developed in the nineteenth century, therefore only the travel accounts written from this period onwards pertain to the term. Conversely, according to the second point of view, travelogues are not a genre but a broader category including both fictional and non-fictional works, such as poems, novels and short stories, essays, and, not least, guidebooks.

Scholars Tim Youngs and Peter Hulme, among others, support the first view by arguing that «travel writing consists of predominantly factual, first-person prose accounts of travels that have been undertaken by the author-narrator», including for instance memoirs, travel and war journalism, ethnographies, and maritime narratives, but excluding «other types of narrative in which travel is narrated by a third party or is imagined».[21] Yet, Youngs recognises that «travel writers draw on the techniques of fiction to tell their stories»,[22] not strictly in the sense that they recur to inventions regarding their journeys, but in a more poignant and deeper connotation. Indeed, every travel account inevitably undergoes a process of re-elaboration, selection, and retrospective redefinition of the journey(s) that is reported in it, even when it has been really undertaken by the author, in a process that goes from the actual act of

[20] "Travelogue, n.", *OED online*, cit. (Last Accessed: July 2022).
[21] Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, cit., pp. 3-4.
[22] Ibid., p. 4.

travelling to that of writing and editing the finished product with a publication in mind.

Jan Borm, in turn, suggests a distinction in the terminology concerning travel writing, on the model of the French and German words related to the topic. If 'travel book' or 'travelogue' are specific terms that indicate a predominantly non-fictional genre, 'travel writing' or 'travel literature' according to Borm could be a broader, «overall heading for texts whose main theme is travel. Thus, one may consider Raleigh's *Discovery* as part of the same group of texts dealing principally with travel as the *Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, […] *Robinson Crusoe*, or, in more recent times, some of Jack London's stories and books».[23] The list of fictional works centred around one or more travel experiences can be extended to Jonathan Swift's *Travel into Several Remote Nations of the World. By Lemuel Gulliver* (1726), commonly known as *Gulliver's Travels*, several works written by the first and second generation of Romantic poets William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, and Percy Bysshe Shelley, up to the twentieth century 'proto-modernist' novels, such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), and Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915) or *To the Lighthouse* (1927). The non-fictional category, instead, comprises guidebooks or advice to travellers regarding the preferred routes, destinations, accommodations, costs in the foreign countries, and so on.

Whilst is not within the purposes of this dissertation to address the issue, it must be underlined that Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1834* (1844) stands in-between the aforementioned two categories. On the one hand, Shelley recounts her authentic, autobiographical journeys in the first person, in epistolary form. On the other hand, her travelogue is imbued with literary quotations or allusions, especially to poetry, practical advice about the route and the means of transportation, which is characteristic of guidebooks, and socio-political statements about the places she visited, with a strong emphasis on the condition of Italy at the time which mirrors the essay. Hence, *Rambles in Germany and Italy* reflects the extremely hybrid nature of travel writing itself, which makes it so

[23] J. Borm, "Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology", in G. Hooper and T. Youngs (eds.), *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, 2004, p. 18. The French and German terms quoted by Borm are, for 'travel book' or 'travelogue', *récite de voyage* and *Reisebuch* respectively, for 'travel literature' *la litérature de voyage* and *Reiseliteratur*.

difficult — if not altogether impossible — for critics to label travelogues with precision, since they are the products of an intertextual and interdisciplinary merged whole. The same can be said of Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem*, a travel account in poetic form based on the authors' real travel experiences in Italy, and also of most of the travelogues written in the nineteenth century, the object of analysis of the ensuing paragraphs.

1.1.3 Tourism and Travel Writing in Nineteenth Century England

The nineteenth century may be considered a turning point for the development of both travel and travel writing from an English point of view. Two crucial and mutually interdependent elements marked a profound change in travelling from the Grand Tour of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to nineteenth-century British mass tourism, prompted by the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the re-opening of the Continent for the Britons. Firstly, post 1815, the kind of tourists shifted from the young aristocratic gentlemen to middle-class families or 'self-made' individuals, who obtained their money and their social position from industry or commerce after the Industrial Revolution and travelled mainly for leisure. Secondly, travelling on the Continent became easier and more affordable in the nineteenth century, because the travel conditions were greatly improved after the Napoleonic Wars by the construction of transalpine roads and, towards mid-century, by the new railways and steamboats. As for the latter, «steam vessels began crossing the English Channel in 1821: estimates suggest that as many as 100,000 people a year were availing themselves of the service by 1840»,[24] including Mary Shelley, her son, and his university friends in the early 1840s. Whereas she was sea-sick and terrified of any kind of boat since the drowning of her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley during a boat trip towards Lerici («a morbid horror of my sea-voyage comes over me which I cannot control»[25], she states in Letter I of *Rambles*), Mary Shelley praised the railroads, «to which, whatever their faults may be», she «felt eternally grateful; for many a scene have they enabled me to visit, and much of the honey of delightful

[24] J. Buzard, "The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840)", in Hulme and Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, cit., p. 47.
[25] M. Shelley, Letter I (13th June 1840), in *Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, cit., Part I, vol 1, p. 2.

recollections have I, by their means, brough back to my hive».[26] Such improvements enabled travellers to proceed quickly and relatively at ease, and to reach the major European cities in a much shorter amount of time if compared to the previous centuries.

All these elements prompted what has been defined at the time as an «inundation of Britons», who «like a second irruption of the Goths, poured down upon Italy…».[27] Indeed, although the Napoleonic Wars determined the end of the Grand Tour, and Britons could reprise travelling on the Continent only after 1815, the typical itinerary remained practically the same as the one that was previously undertaken by the young aristocrats, even if in different circumstances. The route involved France, Switzerland, the crossing of the Alps towards Italy, the main Italian cities, Austria, the German university towns, and occasionally Holland on the way back, or the other way round — from Germany to Italy and France. James Buzard summarised the itinerary of the Grand Tour and after thus:

> After crossing the Channel, the Tourist, having acquired a coach in Calais, would often proceed to the Loire Valley […]. A lengthy stay in the French capital might be followed by a visit to Geneva (and even, if one had the right connections, to Voltaire at his villa in the outskirts). One would then cross the Alps, as expeditiously as possible, proceeding via Turin or Milan down to Florence, to stay probably for some months. Venice might be next, then Rome, or vice versa. The Tourist might go as far as Naples. The return journey northward might include stays in Austria, the German university towns, Berlin, and Amsterdam. Sometimes the trip went the other way around, this latter arrangement having the advantage of saving what were seen as the more challenging parts of the travelling education – Italy and socially brilliant Paris – until later in the process. […] The most important destinations, without which the entire enterprise would lose its purpose, were Paris and Italy (especially Rome, Florence, and Venice).[28]

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[26] Ibid., pp. 5-6. This quotation refers to Shelley's lamented discomfort of having to go from Paris to Calais by diligence, to which she was no longer used because of the spread of railways lines in England: «we have forgotten night-travelling […] thanks to the railroads […] a pleasant day it will be when there is one from Calais to Paris», in ibid. As concerns the railroads in Italy, when Mary Shelley first returned to the country in 1840 the bridge that links Venice to the mainland and the consequent railroad were still under construction: «a railroad is projected to Venice — a portion of it is already constructed», M.S., Letter XI (23rd Sept. 1840), in *Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, cit., vol. 1, p. 121. The works were completed only in 1846, therefore Shelley never saw the finished railway. Yet, in this case, as she declares in the second volume of *Rambles* when describing her journey to Venice in 1843, she shared John Ruskin's opinion that this railroad ruined the view of the lagoon by depriving it from its romance. Cf. section 2.4.3 of the present dissertation.

[27] *Westminster Review*, 1826, quoted in J. Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture', 1800-1918*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 80.

[28] Buzard, "The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840)", cit., p. 39.

Mary Shelley herself followed these very same routes in her travels on the Continent, and in her journeys to Italy. In fact, she and Percy Bysshe Shelley were among the first British travellers to visit the Continent as soon as it was possible after the peace, during their tour across France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland in 1814 and afterwards, and they also settled in Italy from 1818 until Shelley's death in 1822. In Florence, testifying to the above-quoted «inundation of Britons», a young Mary Shelley lamented: «we see none but English, we hear nothing but English spoken — The walks are filled with English Nurserymaids, a kind of animal I by no means like, & dashing, staring Englishwomen…».[29] Furthermore, in *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, she recounted her Continental journeys in the early 1840s from Calais to Germany towards Italy and then Paris, following precisely the second route described by Buzard («sometimes the trip went the other way around, […] saving […] Italy and socially brilliant Paris until later in the process»).

If the route followed by British travellers throughout Europe did not change, their status certainly did: an important consequence of mass tourism undertaken by the middle classes was the emergence of guidebooks. The latter were required not only for practical advice about the costs, the means of transportation, and the best accommodations in the foreign countries, but also to meet the educational needs of the new travellers, who did not have the advantage of a private tutor to rely on for historical and aesthetic guidance regarding their destinations. Mariana Starke was a pioneer of serialised 'travel guides' inspired by her journeys to Italy, at first in the form of letters, mixing an account of her personal experiences and detailed information on the costs of food, recommended lodgings, and other useful advice (cf. the following sections 1.2, and 1.2.2). Her travel books about the Continent, and Italy in particular, started to be published in 1800. They later underwent several reprintings and additions until 1839, due to their enormous success. The publisher himself, John Murray III, became an institution for Victorian travellers as he wrote and edited his own series of guidebooks from 1836 onwards: Murray's editions were an indispensable aid to all the Britons who crossed the Channel with his distinctive

[29] M. Shelley, letter to Maria Gisborne (2nd July 1818), in B.T. Bennett (ed.), *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1980, vol. 1, p. 74, quoted in Sunstein, op. cit., p. 155.

red handbooks in their luggage. The ones that had been published by the time Mary Shelley wrote *Rambles*, and that she used as aid throughout her journeys from Germany to Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843 are the following: *A Hand-book for Travellers on the Continent* (published in three editions: 1836, 1838, 1839), revised in the second edition as *Hand-Book for Travellers on the Continent: Being a Guide through Holland, Belgium, Prussia and Northern Germany, and Along the Rhine, from Holland to Switzerland* (1838), *Handbook for Travellers in North Italy* (1842), and *Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy* (1843).[30] As can be inferred from this essential list, Murray's guidebooks were extremely popular in their time, and constantly revised in new enlarged editions up to the 1910s, covering more and more destinations as the British Empire expanded: they would result in travel guides for Africa, Asia, India, Japan, and Great Britain itself from the last decades of the nineteenth century. With regard to the route selected for this dissertation, *A Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* amounted to a total of sixteen up-to-date editions published from 1842 to 1897, comprising, as to the focus of the present thesis, Milan, the Italian Lakes, Bergamo, and Venice. Murray's handbook was revised parallelly to another influential guidebook, *A Classical Tour Through Italy* (1815, amounting to seven posthumous editions up to 1841) by Reverend John Chetwode Eustace. Eustace's travel guide focused on the architectural and artistic landmarks of Italy, following the classical tradition as a measure of judgement for the good and the bad taste in architecture.

As a reaction to the aforementioned «inundation of the Britons» on the Continent after 1815, travel writers, i.e., the authors of travelogues or narrative and/or poetic compositions inspired by or directly regarding their journeys, prided themselves on being anti-tourists, as Buzard points out: «on the increasingly beaten path of Continental travelling, self-differentiation […] became a guiding purpose. Romantic authors such as Germaine de Staël, Lord Byron, William Hazlitt, and

[30] In Part II of the first volume of *Rambles*, devoted to Mary Shelley's journey throughout Germany, Shelley reveals: «Murray's Hand-book was our guide: usually an admirable one. Among other useful information, none is more satisfactory to the traveller than to know the best hotel in a town», in M. Shelley, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

Samuel Rogers provided prototypes and models for these efforts».[31] In particular, Madame de Staël's novel *Corinne, ou l'Italie* (1807), Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1811-1818), especially its fourth and last Canto devoted to Venice, Ferrara, Florence and Rome, and later Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem* (1822, 1830) not only shaped the imagined and the actual representation of Italy for all British travellers to the *Bel Paese* in the nineteenth century, who carried these works with them along with their handbooks, but also became hugely influential literary paradigms and were always quoted as reference in the subsequent travel accounts.

Lord Byron's poetic travel narrative, the first of its kind, served as a model for Rogers's autobiographical poem, and the latter in turn inspired the juvenile *Account of a Tour of the Continent* (1833-1834) by the future Victorian art critic and author John Ruskin, who was to become the main supporter and patron of J.M.W. Turner, after having eulogised his talent in the first volume of *Modern Painters* (1843). Indeed, both *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Italy, A Poem* were illustrated by Turner (cf. 1.1.4 for a complete description of Roger's poem, his illustrations, and reception). Mary Shelley may be regarded as a privileged connoisseur of Byron's work because she and her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley knew Lord Byron himself, and witnessed the publication of Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* during their stay in Italy in 1818, while Byron was living in Venice: Mary Shelley read it just before she visited the city, thus mentally envisioning «her [Venice's] structures rise / as from the stroke of the enchanter's wand»,[32] the enchanter being Lord Byron, in this case, the author of these lines. As a matter of fact, Byron's description of Venice soon assumed the same relevance as Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* in the English collective imaginary of the city (cf. section 2.4.3 of this thesis). Likewise, the annual reading lists that the Shelleys included in their shared journals attest that Mary Shelley read Madame de Staël's *Corinne* in 1815, 1818, and 1820, the latter two years referring to the time when she and P.B. Shelley were in

[31] Buzard, "The Grand Tour and After", cit., p. 49. For a detailed analysis of post Napoleonic Wars English mass tourism and the influence of Romantic authors and their travel writing on British travellers to the Continent, see also the chapters "II. Tourism and Anti-Tourism: Conventions and Strategies" and "III. The Uses of Romanticism", in J. Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture', 1800-1918*, cit., pp. 81-130.

[32] G.G. Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. Canto the Fourth*, Stanza I, London: John Murray, 1818, p. 3.

Naples and in Pisa, respectively.[33] Albeit the present thesis will not deal with Madame de Staël's novel, it is worth mentioning that her personification of Italy as a gifted and attractive but at the same time illiterate and subjected woman became a common literary trope in the context of the French and then Austrian rule of the country from 1797 to 1861. This vision was partially challenged by Mary Shelley in *Rambles in Germany and Italy*: as Katheryne Walchester has observed, «where Italy is frequently described as female, her population and […] government are masculine. Both Shelley and [Lady] Morgan call for the Italian people to become more manly and fight the oppressive […] foreign governments».[34]

Finally, on a conceptual and aesthetic level, nineteenth-century British travel writing — including the aforementioned poetic works, and Mary Shelley's travelogues — cannot be understood without the notions of the 'sublime', the 'beautiful', and the 'picturesque', all developed in England at the end of the eighteenth century and here briefly presented. These concepts were central for the English Romantic poets, whose second generation comprises Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron, and for Mary Shelley too. The idea of the sublime was codified in England by Edmund Burke in his essay *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), inspired by an ancient Greek treatise by Pseudo Longinus, dating back to the first century BCE but discovered only in the sixteenth century and later translated into English. According to Burke, 'sublime' is «whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible […], productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling». Such sensations are always provoked by «greatness of dimension»,[35] e.g., mountains, waterfalls, the ocean, which, due to the perception of their infinity, cause in the beholder «astonishment, […] that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror»[36]. The latter,

[33] P.R. Feldman and D. Scott-Kilvert (eds.), *The Journals of Mary Shelley. 1814-1844*, Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987, pp. 67, 243, 340 on Mme de Staël's *Corinne*; pp. 227-28, 235 on Byron's Canto IV. Cf. also Sunstein, *op. cit*., pp. 97, 162, 189, 192, 344 for all the references to *Corinne*.

[34] K. Walchester, *Our Own Fair Italy: Nineteenth Century Women's Travel Writing and Italy 1800-1844*, Germany: Peter Lang, 2007, p. 36-37.

[35] E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1757, p. 51.

[36] Ibid., p. 41.

however, is a «delightful horror», provoked by perceive boundlessness of its objects[37]: the beholder is equally attracted to and terrified of a sublime view, and even revels in it when he/she is able to admire the vast and staggering scenery from a position of safety. Conversely, the 'beautiful' is comparatively small and, for Burke, is characterised by balance, smoothness, and delicacy. For nineteenth-century English travellers and authors, the Alps constituted the supreme example of the sublime, while the beautiful could be exemplified by gardens or limited natural spots.

The 'picturesque' is another aesthetic concept that deeply influenced English nineteenth-century travel on national and international grounds, giving rise to the exploration of Great Britain, such as the Lake District, the Wye Valley in Wales, or the Scottish Highlands when the Napoleonic Wars prevented British travellers from going abroad, and then applied to the Italian scenery from 1815 onwards. It was introduced by Reverend William Gilpin in *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape* (1772) as «a kind of mediator between these opposed ideas [the sublime and the beautiful]»[38]. Gilpin associated the British landscapes with the paintings by Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa, who became the standards of beauty and sublimity respectively, albeit the distinction between the two is not always well-marked and for Gilpin each must comprehend some characteristics of the other. These two seventeenth-century painters in turn were influenced by the Italian countryside and scenery, re-searched in British landscapes[39] (and, later on, in Italy itself). According to Gilpin, travellers could find and enjoy picturesque scenes in the pleasant simplicity of nature, e.g., in trees, rocks, woods, rivers, lakes, valleys, mountains, and distances,[40] in «the relics of ancient architecture; the ruined tower, the Gothic arch, the remains of castles, and abbeys»,[41] as well as in groups of animals or people, provided that they were regarded «merely as the ornament of scenes […] general shapes, dresses, groups, and

[37] Ibid., pp. 129-130.
[38] Buzard, "The Grand Tour and After", cit., p. 45.
[39] On the relationship between Gilpin's Picturesque, its Italian models, and British national tourism, see M. Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque. Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989.
[40] W. Gilpin, "On Picturesque Travel", in *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape: to Which Is Added a Poem, On Landscape Painting*, London: R. Blamire, 1792, p. 42.
[41] Ibid., p. 46.

occupations».[42] Furthermore, Gilpin inaugurated the fashion and the habit of sketching the scenery whilst travelling. This is the reason why most nineteenth century British travellers carried a sketchbook with them, in order to draw the landscapes on the spot.

Buzard argues that several women travel writers, among whom he includes Mary Shelley and her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, opposed to the above-quoted picturesque view and its aestheticizing of poverty in favour of a socio-political engagement and a strong attention to the moral issues at stake, rather than viewing people merely as picturesque ornamental objects.[43] While this is true, it is also worth emphasising, as the very Buzard does in the ensuing paragraph of his essay, that the notion of the picturesque did exert a lasting influence on British male and female travellers to Italy in relation both to its landscapes and its people, as for Frances Trollope (cf. 1.2.2 and 3.2), but also for Mary Shelley (cf. 2.4 and the following sections). In *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, as will be clarified in the following chapters of this thesis, Mary Shelley employs the term both in the common primary sense of «having the elements or qualities of a picture; suitable for a picture; *spec.* (of a view, landscape, etc.) pleasing or striking in appearance; scenic»,[44] largely derived from Gilpin, and to stress the complementary strong relationship between the art and the act of writing and that of painting, as modes of representation of the scenery admired in one's travels.

1.1.4 Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem*

Under the entry dedicated to the poet and banker Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), the *Dictionary of National Biography* reconstructs the genesis and the curiously mixed reception of his masterpiece *Italy, A Poem*. As regards the genesis of the poem, «a visit to Italy in 1815 had suggested to him the idea of a poem descriptive of that country, which Byron had not then handled in the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*».[45]

[42] Ibid., pp. 44-45.
[43] Buzard, "The Grand Tour and After", cit., p. 46.
[44] "Picturesque, n.", in *OED Online*, cit. (Last Accessed: June 2022).
[45] "Rogers, Samuel", in Sidney Lee (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, London: Elder Smith & Co., 1897, vol. 49, p. 141.

Actually, Rogers first visited Italy in 1814, just before the battle of Waterloo,[46] and then returned to it after the peace of 1815. Therefore, the poet can be counted among the Britons who 'inundated' the Continent after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, himself belonging to the middle class (he inherited the banking business from his father), unlike Lord Byron, an aristocrat by birth. Samuel Rogers travelled from Switzerland to Italy, where he embarked on an Italian tour of the country's major cities with historical and literary ties, from the northern ones such as Como, Mantua, Ferrara, Verona, and Venice, to Florence, Rome, and Naples. Contrary to Byron's poem, however, the first edition of Rogers's *Italy* was a failure, and it led him to destroy all its copies. On the other hand, the second edition of the poem was such a success that it repaid Rogers for the previous financial losses (and for those in self-esteem too):

> It [the poem] appeared anonymously in 1822; the secret was kept even from the publisher, and the author took care to be out of the country. No such mystery, however, attended the publication of the second part in 1828. The book did not take. Rogers destroyed the unsold copies, revised it carefully, engaged Turner and Stothard to illustrate it, and republished it in a handsome edition in 1830. The success of this edition […] was unequivocal, and he soon recovered the 7,000*l*. he had expended upon them.[47]

Indeed, the 1830 edition of *Italy, A Poem*, published by Cadell and Davies, and by a young Edward Moxon, turned Rogers into an authority in regard to the portrayal of the country, and shaped the British visitors' view of it as much as Byron's poetic travelogue. It is probably not a chance that Rogers's own poem gained such popularity only when the vignettes by J.M.W. Turner were added to it, considering that the fourth Canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1818), illustrated by the very Turner, had by then become even more successful after Byron's premature death in Greece in 1824, which sparked his reputation of a histrionic hero, or anti-hero, and — albeit considerably softened, especially in the Victorian age — model of traveller for the British public.[48] The painters Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) and Thomas Stothard (1755-1834) illustrated *Italy, A Poem*'s second edition by

[46] M. McCue, "Reverse Pygmalionism. Art and Samuel Rogers' Italy", in *Romantic Textualities. Literature and Print Culture, 1780-1840*, vol. 21, 2013, pp. 108-123, p. 110.
[47] Ibid.
[48] See "The Uses of Romanticism", in Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture', 1800-1918*, cit., pp. 107-130.

means of the innovative technique of steel-engraving,[49] under the close supervision of Rogers, resulting in a total of fifty-five wondrous black-and-white vignettes. The vignettes by Turner were even published separately in 1829, thus before Rogers's poem came out. As attested by the catalogue entry devoted to any of Turner's vignettes for *Italy* on the official website on the Tate Gallery, «those [Turner's illustrations] that appeared in the 1830 volume were by then in the fourth published state. The plates for *Italy* were sold in a portfolio, with prices ranging from £2.12s. 6d. for proofs, imperial quarto, to £4.4s». Moreover, due to the great costs of printing, the original watercolours to be stamped in the poem were not acquired but «loaned by Turner at five guineas each and returned to him after the engraving was complete. As a result, all except one of his illustrations to *Italy* have survived in the Turner Bequest»,[50] donated to the Tate Gallery by John Ruskin, Turner's patron, after the painter's death in 1856. As anticipated in the Introduction of the present thesis, the illustrations contained in the Appendix and cited as reference in the text are taken from the official website of the Tate Gallery, as published separately in 1829: they are the same as those printed in Rogers's *Italy*, with the exception of the titles written below, which do not figure in the poem. All the selected vignettes were inserted as headpieces in *Italy*, as will be specified in the sections of the dissertation devoted to the places represented in them.

The 1830 edition of *Italy, A Poem* is an elegantly bounded octave (a 'pocketbook') with a frame of gilded foliage in its cover and spine, which renders it a precious book and still valuable today on the market for its visual presentation. Yet, the reason behind its current value lies more in the fine object itself, carefully crafted, than to its place in the literary environment: the notoriety of Samuel Rogers, a celebrated poet in his time, has since declined, and he is neither known to the general public nor much studied in the literary and academic field, despite the fact that the crucial influence of *Italy, A Poem* on British travellers to the country and on the successive authors (especially on John Ruskin) has been widely recognised by

[49] The publication of this edition of the poem was made possible by the advancements in print culture, with regard both to steel-engraving and to mass production, cf. McCue, *op. cit*., pp. 112-113.
[50] This catalogue entry applies to any of Turner's vignettes for *Italy, A Poem*, all included in the collection of the Tate Gallery, accessible from this hyperlink, and the following pages: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-hospice-of-the-great-st-bernard-ii-the-dead-house-t04637 (Last Accessed: August 2022).

critics.[51] Nonetheless, to this day there is no contemporary annotated edition of *Italy*, apart from the endnotes provided by Rogers himself, which however do not cover the entire work, and several passages of the poem quoted in this thesis, e.g., that devoted to the latter part of the section entitled "Como", have to be interpreted in the light of the context or inferred from the hints that can be found in the text. For instance, when Rogers describes an 'enchanted palace' in «Tramezzine», on the banks of Lake Como, he actually means Tremezzina, and he is possibly referring to Villa Sommariva, albeit he never names it (cf. 2.4.1). Contrarily to his present neglect, when Rogers published *Italy* he had already obtained fame with the neoclassical poem *Pleasures of Memory* (1792), he was a renown patron of artists and collector of paintings by modern English and Renaissance Italian painters alike, as well as the host of famous breakfasts in his London house, attended, among other literary celebrities of the time, also by Lady Morgan and Mary Shelley (cf. section 2.1 of this dissertation).

Italy, A Poem (1830) is composed of a brief Preface, fifty sections into which the poem is divided, each devoted to a particular place usually introduced by the homonymous title of the section (e.g., "Venice"), and interposed by Turner's and Stothard's illustrations. After the poem itself, the author's endnotes conclude the travelogue. As for the vignettes, they can be classified as follows: «the headpieces typically feature Turner's landscapes, and the tailpieces illustrate narrative episodes with Stothard's figures»,[52] therefore Turner depicted the places described in poetic form by Rogers, and Stothard the people. As assessed by McCue, Samuel Rogers's

[51] James Buzard asserts that «after *Childe Harold*, the best-known entrant in this genre [the nineteenth-century poetic travel book] was Rogers's Italy (in the 1830 edition containing illustrations by Turner), which became one of the most popular books of the 1830s and 1840s. Like Byron's poetry — and like *Corinne* — these works were often carried as guides to the sentiments of the tour», meaning the so-called 'Italian tour' (Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, cit., p. 118). Furthermore, according to Buzard, Rogers is to be credited for having stated, in a prose section present in the 1822 original edition of *Italy*, that «ours [Great Britain] is a nation of travellers», and for having introduced the idea of travel as the best medicine, «when the blood slumbers in the veins […]. In travelling we multiply the events, and innocently. We set out, as it were, on our adventures» (S. Rogers, *Italy*, 1822, quoted in ibid., pp. 101-102). The notion of travel (specifically to Italy) as a medicine is often reiterated in Mary Shelley's *Rambles*. For instance, in Part II, at the beginning of her second journey in 1842-1843, she states: «travelling is occupation as well as amusement, and I firmly believe that renewed health will be the result of frequent change of place» (M. Shelley, Letter I (June 1842), in *op. cit.*, Part II, vol. 1, p. 158).

[52] "Samuel Rogers (1763-1855)", in David C. Hanson (ed.), *The Early Ruskin Manuscripts, 1826-1842 (ERM)*, http://english.selu.edu/humanitiesonline/ruskin_dev/notes/rogers_samuel_note.php (Last Accessed: July 2022).

Italy is «a key text in understanding the symbiotic relationship between literature and the visual arts during the nineteenth century», a «highly visual age»,[53] which re-innovated Gilpin's picturesque tradition. In fact, Rogers's poem can be regarded as a prototype of the combined verbal and visual representation of Italy that Mary Shelley will later frequently evoke in her travelogue, even though *Rambles in Germany and Italy* (1844) — significantly published by Edward Moxon, one of the editors of *Italy, A Poem* — is not illustrated.

Rogers starts the Preface with a sort of declaration of modesty, imputable more to the fate of the previous edition, than to the convention of beginning travelogues and literary works in general in this way, and with a declaration of his love for Italy. He also addresses his ideal audience, consisting of cultivated minds familiar with the glorious past history of Italy and, possibly, with its present state:

> Whatever be the fate of this Poem, it had led the Author in many an after-dream through a beautiful country; and may not perhaps be uninteresting to those who have learnt to live in Past times as well as Present, and whose minds are familiar with the Events and the People that have rendered Italy so illustrious.[54]

The poem, however, was mainly meant to be read by the new middle-class travellers who needed to become acquainted with the history and the landmarks of the country, presented in a captivating manner. «The Author» then proceeds to introduce his work, by underling that this new edition was revised since the original one, whose lines had been composed in Italy: «much of it was originally published as it was written on the spot». Hence, Rogers emphasises the authenticity of his poem by revealing to his readers that it was composed on the Italian ground, almost as if it had absorbed the Italian atmosphere and air, but he also clarifies that «he has since revised it throughout», with the addition of «many stories from the old Chroniclers», and his final «notes illustrative of the manners, customs, and superstitions» of the Italians.[55] Furthermore, the new volume contains «embellishments» that «require no

[53] McCue, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
[54] S. Rogers, *Italy, A Poem*, London: T. Cadell & E. Moxon, 1830, p. III.
[55] Ibid.

praise», as «the two Artists [Turner and Stothard], who have contributed so much to give it a value, would have done honour to any age or country».[56]

As previously stated, Rogers's poem had an enormous influence both on British travellers to Italy and on the successive authors. In particular, John Ruskin received it as a gift for his thirteen birthday and, as he would claim, it changed the course of his life: *Italy* marked his first encounter with the illustrations by J.M.W. Turner, and inspired him to write the first (out of five) volume of *Modern Painters* (1843), which consecrated Turner in the pantheon of the most talented painters of his time — superior to the Old Masters, i.e., the seventeenth-century painters Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin and Salvator Rosa, according to Ruskin —, and the latter's own reputation as an art critic and author at the age of twenty-five.[57] Additionally, *Italy* prompted Ruskin's lifelong interest in and study of Italian architecture, in particular the Venetian one, before his journeys to Italy and to Venice in 1833 with Rogers's travelogue as guide, and then in 1835, 1840-41, 1845, 1849-50. These journeys to Venice were also to inspire Ruskin's later work, *The Stones of Venice*, whose first volume was published in 1851 — the year of Mary Shelley's death. Volumes II-III were published in 1853. Besides, *Italy, A Poem* was not appealing only to the male readership but also to the female one, since its publication coincided with the improvement of women's economic power,[58] and with the rapid development of a female authorship in the field of travel writing too. This is epitomised by Lady Morgan's *Italy* (1821), almost contemporary of the first unsuccessful edition of Rogers's poem, Frances Trollope's *A Visit to Italy* (1842), and Mary Shelley's own *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, published only two years after Trollope's travelogue. Trollope's and Shelley's travel accounts were indebted to the 1830 edition of Rogers's poem and, in a way, followed its author's footsteps in their highly aesthetic rendering of Italy, and the emphasis they placed on the 'picturesque' quality of both its landscapes and its people. The ensuing paragraph investigates the origins and the advancement of such female authorship in the English cultural and literary scene.

[56] Ibid., p. IV.
[57] "Samuel Rogers (1763-1855)", in Hanson (ed.), *op. cit.*
[58] McCue, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

1.2 Female Travelogues: Mary Shelley's Predecessors

At the end of the eighteenth century, English women started to write and to obtain fame, but most importantly to plant the seeds of a greater independence and self-consciousness. Under these circumstances, travel writing too began to be explored and innovated by the female perspective. Indeed, women started to perceive themselves not merely as companions of their male counterparts, i.e., their husbands or lovers, following them in their journeys in distant lands, usually motivated by work, but as subjects whose impressions and memoirs of their travels were worthy of consideration. In the pivotal essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Virginia Woolf poignantly stated with regard to this momentous change in the history of English literature, that is, women starting to write:

> The extreme activity of mind which showed itself in the later eighteenth century among women […] was founded on the solid facts that women could make money by writing. Money dignifies what is frivolous if unpaid for […]. Thus, towards the end of the eighteenth century a change came about which, if I were rewriting history, I should describe more fully and think of greater importance than the Crusades or the Wars of the Roses.
>
> The middle-class woman began to write […] Here, then, one had reached the early nineteenth century. And here, for the first time, I found several shelves given up entirely to the works of women.[59]

According to Woolf, these late eighteenth-century women, at first aristocratic, then belonging also to the middle-classes, paved the way for nineteenth-century women writers, including herself, and many others before her. Albeit Virginia Woolf claimed that in the first half of the nineteenth century women wrote mainly novels, ignoring their original vocation towards poetry, travelogues belonged to those «very few exceptions»[60] that she mentioned but did not dwell upon. In fact, Mary Shelley's female predecessors and inspirers in travel writing included her own mother, Mary

[59] V. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, London: Collector's Library, 2014, pp. 91-92. This essay, originally entitled *Women and Fiction* and still to this day regarded as a key feminist text by women and critics alike, derives from two lectures that Virginia Woolf delivered in 1928 at Newnham College and Girton College, two women's colleges at the University of Cambridge. It was then revised and published in 1929. Woolf's main claim is that women must have money and a room of their own in order to be able to write. To support her argument, Woolf retraces the condition of women throughout the centuries up to her times, famously imagining what would have happened if Shakespeare had had a sister: she concludes that a hypothetical Judith Shakespeare would not have been in the conditions to write, unlike modern women, who owe their possibility to do so only to those who paved the way before them.

[60] Ibid., p. 92.

Wollstonecraft, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in the eighteenth century, followed by Mariana Starke, Lady Sydney Morgan (née Owenson), and Frances Milton Trollope in the nineteenth century up to Shelley's times, that is, the first half of the nineteenth century. Apart from Wollstonecraft, who never visited Italy, all the aforementioned women wrote epistolary travelogues about their lives or visits in this country and significantly contributed to the sub-genre of travel writing on the 'Italian tour' from a woman's perspective, among which Mary Shelley was to be included a few years later.[61]

These women were selected for the purposes of this dissertation according to two *criteria*: their predominant role in the construction and development of female travel writing about Italy, and their literary and/or personal connections to Mary Shelley's life and travelogue(s). Sometimes the boundary between Shelley and these authors' personal lives and literary production is almost undistinguishable, as for Mary Wollstonecraft or Lady Morgan, a friend of both the latter and Mary Shelley; sometimes it is much subtler, as for Frances Trollope, whose life briefly intersected with Shelley's one in a crucial moment for Trollope's own future career as a writer and status as a traveller, without their ever meeting each other. Besides Shelley's personal acquaintance with these authors, as will be discussed in the last part of this chapter and in the following ones, the focus of the present study lies in the relationship between Shelley's *Rambles* and their representation of the selected Italian places and people, with an emphasis on women, compared to Rogers's poem.

If the British Lady Montagu and Mariana Starke, and the Irish Lady Morgan were upper-class women who either married important men (the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Edward Wortley Montagu, and the physician and philosopher Sir Thomas Charles Morgan, respectively) or came from a distinguished albeit less wealthy family (Mariana Starke's father was governor to a British colony in India), Frances Trollope belonged to the middle-class and managed to live by her pen. The earnings of their successful travel accounts enabled both Starke and Trollope to

[61] On Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy* as representative of the sub-genre of travel writing about the so-called 'Italian Tour', see M. Ożarska, "Mary Shelley's 'Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843' as a Digressional Specimen of the Italian Tour Sub-Genre", in *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, vol. 60, n. 5, 2012, pp. 244-259; par. 1.3 and 1.4, and chapters 2 and 3 of the present dissertation.

travel throughout the Continent — as declared by Woolf in the above-quoted passage of a *Room of One's Own*, now «women could make money by writing».

Lady Montagu was a notable exception to the 'blue stockings', that is, the eighteenth-century upper-class women writers who rebelled against the conventions of the time: she was «not merely the lonely aristocrat shut up in her country house among her folios and her flatterers» that Woolf envisioned as the prototype of the eighteenth-century female author,[62] but travelled around the world and was the first woman to write about it with a possible publication in mind, albeit posthumous. Indeed, the genre of female letter writing about one's travel experiences was inaugurated by Lady Montagu with her *Turkish Embassy Letters*, published posthumously in 1763. Until then, travel writing (both in general and in epistolary form, real or fictional) and letter writing were relegated only to male authors. These can be exemplified, among many others, by Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721), Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Letters* (1762) or Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World, or Letters from a Chinese Philosopher* (1762), to quote three epistolary works dealing with travel, published prior to Lady Montagu's travelogue, that figure on the reading lists of the Shelleys and had all been read by Mary Shelley during her Continental Tour with P.B. Shelley.[63] With regard to Italy, for instance, Joseph Addison wrote *Letters from Italy* (1705). The proto-feminist philosopher and author Mary Wollstonecraft followed Lady Montagu's example as a woman travel writer, which in turn was to be followed by her daughter Mary Shelley in both her travelogues. The ensuing paragraphs illustrate the travel accounts by all the aforementioned women, in order to better understand the stylistic background upon which Shelley based *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*.

1.2.1 Lady Montagu and Mary Wollstonecraft

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1679-1762) was the first woman traveller to write a detailed epistolary account of her travels across Europe, Turkey (from Constantinople, where she lived for two years after her husband was appointed

[62] Ibid.

[63] Cf. "The Shelley's Reading List", in P.R. Feldman and D. Scott-Kilvert (eds.), *The Journals of Mary Shelley. 1814-1844*, cit., 1987, pp. 650, 670, 672, with references to the journal entries by the Shelleys in which these works are cited or listed.

ambassador there in 1716), and Italy, providing the first report about the latter country from a female point of view. She also spent the last twenty years of her life in northern Italy and died near Lake Iseo. The fifty-two letters that Lady Montagu wrote to her family or to her aristocratic English friends during the two years of travels to and from the Ottoman Empire, and through Europe, were not published during her lifetime, although they circulated in manuscript form: Lady Montagu then handed them to Reverend Benjamin Snowden with the instructions either to publish or burn them after her death. The first option was chosen, and the letters were published posthumously in 1763, in three volumes. The lengthy but accurate original title reads as follows: *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M—y W---y M-----e: Written During her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa, to Persons of Distinction, Men of Letters, &c., in Different Parts of Europe. Which Contain, Among Other Curious Relations, Accounts of the Policy and Manners of the Turks; Drawn from Sources that have been inaccessible to other Travellers.* The collection is commonly known as *Turkish Embassy Letters*, albeit this title may be misleading since the volume does not contain only the letters from Turkey but also those written from the Continent, including Italy, as noted also by the scholar Sukanya Banerjee. According to Banerjee, Lady Montagu's letters from the Continent have been overlooked in favour of those devoted to the Ottoman Empire; however, the latter should be read in a comparative perspective to understand her re-assessment or breaking of the 'boundaries' between Europe and the Middle East.[64] As far as female travel writing is concerned, the "Preface" to the 1763 edition, signed M.A. (identified as the proto-feminist writer Mary Astell), presents the novelty of this volume both in style and content: whereas male travelogues were «all in the same tone», Lady Montagu discloses «a new path […] to embellish a worn-out subject with variety of fresh and elegant entertainment», by giving a «more true and accurate account of the customs and manners of the several nations with whom this lady conversed», without being too strongly judgemental towards «the inmost follies of the heart»,[65] unlike men, and like Mary Shelley in *Rambles*. This dissertation will examine part of a letter written

[64] S. Banerjee, "Lady Montagu and the 'Boundaries' of Europe", in Kristi Siegel (ed.), *Gender, Genre, and Identity in Women's Travel Writing*, New York: Peter Lang, 2004, pp. 32-33.
[65] M. Astell, in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M__y W___y M_____e*, London: T. Beckett & P.A. De Hondt, 1763, vol. 1., pp. VIII-IX.

from Turin and one from Lyon concerning Lady Montagu's report about the crossing of the Alps in 1718, to compare it with the post Napoleonic Wars accounts of such passage in the travelogues by Rogers, Lady Morgan, and Mary Shelley.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), the illustrious author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1790) and mother of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, published *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* in 1796, after a trip in Scandinavia with her lover Gilbert Imlay (the year before she married Mary's father, William Godwin, and gave birth to her). Wollstonecraft's travelogue is «a poignant, lovable, and masterful travel memoir based on her letters to Imlay from Scandinavia, her first appearance as a Romantic feminist»,[66] and, in a way, anticipates her daughter's travel accounts. Interestingly enough, it is also the last work published during Wollstonecraft's lifetime, because she died the following year of puerperal fever soon after giving birth to Mary. This is a curious parallel between mother and daughter, considering that *Rambles in Germany and Italy* is Mary Shelley's last work, too. She and Percy Bysshe Shelley read Wollstonecraft's letters from Sweden during the Continental Tour that marked their elopement away from Mary's father and Shelley's wife respectively, accompanied by Mary's stepsister Jane (later known as Claire) Clairmont. This journey, which started in 1814, was to produce *History of a Six Weeks' Tour Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland* (1817), based on Mary's journal and letters to her and Shelley's English friends. Her mother's exemplary travelogue certainly inspired her to write this travel book, since «throughout their tour they [Mary and P.B. Shelley] read enhancing works aloud: Wollstonecraft's *Mary* on a castled hilltop, her *Letters from Sweden* while boating down the Rhine».[67] Indeed, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* mirrors Wollstonecraft's travelogue both in the form of letters and the varied content; the same applies to the later *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, as will be shown in the following sections (cf. section 1.4). The twenty-five letters that compose *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* discuss political, philosophical, aesthetic, and personal matters, resulting in a hybrid work that encompasses different genres at once, as if often happens with travelogues (cf. 1.1).

[66] Sunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
[67] Ibid., p. 84.

Moreover, as noted by Jeanne Moskal, both Lady Montagu and Mary Wollstonecraft are explicitly quoted as references in *History of a Six Week's Tour*, an evidence of Mary Shelley's debt towards them as travel writers which will be more implicitly reconfirmed in *Rambles in Germany and Italy*.[68] As noted by Emily W. Sunstein in her biography of Mary Shelley and further developed by Camilla Campbell Orr, M. Shelley viewed both Lady Montagu and Wollstonecraft's *Letters* as models to be followed for their personal, 'Romantic' style, stating that the two women were among those authors, like Milton, Sterne, Montaigne and Rousseau, «who turn to the human heart as the undiscovered country… visit and revisit their own; endeavour […] to fathom its depths, and to leave no lurking thought or disguised feeling [hidden] for fear of shocking the tender conscience… The science of self-knowledge is key».[69] Thus, while following the typical Romantic tendency for the free expression of one's feelings and emotions, and the identification between the author and the narrative voice, Mary Shelley also manifested a psychological and even proto-psychoanalytical attitude towards her literary creations (for instance, *Frankenstein* has been read by several critics in a psychoanalytical light, but it is beyond the purposes of this dissertation to further explore the topic). The metaphor of the heart as an «undiscovered country» is particularly significant if applied to Lady Montagu's and Mary Wollstonecraft's travelogues, considering that both works are as imbued with the personal circumstances and feelings of the two women, as with broader reflections upon the places they visited.

1.2.2 Mariana Starke, Lady Morgan, and Frances Trollope

«Here, then, one had reached the early nineteenth century», Woolf noted in the extract quoted above (cf. 1.2), and «for the first time, I found several shelves given up entirely to the works of women». If one were looking at the shelf devoted to early nineteenth-century travel writing, he/she would find, among the first «works of women», the travel guides by Mariana Starke, followed by Lady Morgan's and Frances Trollope's series of travelogues placed further on.

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[68] J. Moskal, "Travel Writing", in Esther Schor (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 242, 249.
[69] Ibid., p. 235; see also Campbell Orr, *op. cit.* The quotation by M. Shelley comes from her essay about the Italian chronicler Giovanni Villani, published in the magazine *The Liberal*, 4 (1823).

Mariana Starke (1762-1838) was renowned for her series of guidebooks about the Continent and Italy in particular: she lived there from 1792 to 1798 to nurse a sick relative, visited it again from 1817 to 1819, and died in Milan aged 76 while travelling back home from Naples. Daughter of the governor of Fort St George in Madras, India, where she spent the early years of her life, Mariana Starke started her literary career by writing plays such as *The Sword of Peace; or, a Voyage of Love* (1789), whose title already contains the theme of a voyage, inspired by Starke's Indian experience.[70] However, she achieved fame as a travel writer when her first travel account, widely regarded as the first proper travel guide, *Letters from Italy, between the years 1792 and 1798 containing a view of the Revolutions in that country, from the Capture of Nice by the French Republic to the Expulsion of Pious VI* — known simply as *Letters from Italy* — was published in 1800, in two volumes. It was subsequently reprinted as *Travels in Italy* and translated into German in 1802; a second edition came out in 1815, a crucial date for British travellers to Italy, as discussed in the previous paragraphs. The immediate success of this travelogue prompted Starke to write *Travels on the Continent* (1820), published by John Murray III and followed by an augmented version, *Information and Directions for Travellers on the Continent* (1824). The latter was then re-edited in three more updated editions (1828, 1829, 1832), including a French translation.

The travel guides by «Mrs. Starke» — as Mariana Starke was generally known to the public, even though she never married — just like the later guidebooks written and edited by Murray, were an indispensable aid to British travellers in Europe: they provided useful information about the costs, accommodations, and even a system of rating with exclamation marks, the forerunners of the modern star system. Mary and Percy Bysshe Shelley used *Travels on the Continent* as a reference guide for their journey to Chamounix, as attested by their shared journals of the time, and Mary Shelley also recommended *Information and Directions for Travellers on the Continent* in *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, defining it «an excellent guide» for

[70] All the biographical information about Mariana Starke, including the exposition of her major works, are taken from the entry "Starke, Mariana", in Lee (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, cit., 1898, vol. 54, p. 107, and from the homonymous entry in B. Colbert, *Women's Travel Writing, 1780-1840: A Biographical Database*, University of Wolverhampton, 2014, https://btw.wlv.ac.uk/authors/1135 (Last Accessed: June 2022).

Sorrento and that part of Italy (not covered in the present dissertation).[71] Interestingly, *Rambles* mirrors the style of Mariana Stake: in fact, the latter travel writer «intersperses the personal with the descriptive and informative, and juxtaposes past and present», resulting in a sort of prototype of the nineteenth-century travel book that is both a guide and a mediated private journal.[72] Likewise, Mary Shelley in *Rambles* constantly reminisces her own past memories of the Italian places she re-visited after almost twenty years since the last time she saw them, and for the first time as a widow, albeit her late husband is a constantly evoked or perceived presence. This is perhaps most manifestly epitomised by Mary Shelley's description of Lake Como, as will be discussed in the second chapter of this study (see section 2.4.1, devoted to the lake).

If Mariana Starke is one of Mary Shelley's models as concerns the intertwining between the guidebook and the personal memoir in her travel books, not devoid of references to the contemporary political uproars leading to the Austrian rule in Italy, Lady Morgan is Shelley's direct precursor for the overt socio-political engagement and commentary on the state of the country. The born Dubliner Sydney Owenson (1781-1859), alias Lady Morgan, was actually part of the circle that frequented William Godwin's house since Mary was a child, like Rogers and Turner. Many years later, she became a close friend of Mary Shelley too, inviting the latter to join her own social circle of literary celebrities and notable people, and enjoying her company after the death of her husband, when both women were widows.[73] A well-known and declared revolutionary, she was a supporter of the Irish nationalism, the French Revolution, and the Italian revolts for the liberation from the Napoleonic and the Austro-Hungarian governments, admired and defended for this by the fellow revolutionaries Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron (the latter died of fever in Greece, during his active support of the Greek liberation war against the Turks, and deplored the decay of Italy, Venice in particular, under the Austrian domination). In

[71] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., p. 266.
[72] K. Walchester, *Our Own Fair Italy: Nineteenth Century Women's Travel Writing and Italy 1800-1844*, Peter Lang, 2007, p. 76.
[73] See Sunstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 41, 328, 337-38, 378. Emily Sunstein noted that «she [M.S.] had a great deal to offer her son [Percy Florence Shelley] in *her own contacts with Rogers, Lady Morgan* […], Fanny Butler, and Milnes, *who* among them *entertained everybody of intellectual note*», in ibid., p. 355, emphasis mine.

addition to writing poems and novels, Lady Morgan established her literary reputation as a travel writer with the publication of her epistolary travelogues *France* (1817) and *Italy* (1821). Both were extremely popular as well as debated for the authors' outspoken political views, even more so because it was considered 'unfeminine' for a woman to express such stances in the first place, let alone in a printed book.[74] At the same time, despite the fact that Lady Morgan was considerably more tolerant towards the Catholic religion than other women travel writers, in contrast with the common Protestant harsh critiques, *Italy* was proscribed by the King of Sardinia and Duke of Savoy, the Emperor of Austria, and the Pope, who included the travelogue on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* of the Roman Catholic Church.[75] Most significantly, the epigraph in the title page of *Italy* is a quotation from Lady Montagu's *Letters* which perfectly summarises Lady Morgan's and all women travel writers' position, torn between the apparently «worn out subject» of Italy, and the freshness of their opinions:

> We travellers are in verry hard circumstances. If we say nothing but what has been said before us, we are dull and we have observed nothing. If we tell anything new, we are laughed at as fabulous and romantic; not allowing either […] more curiosity, or change of customs, than happen every twenty years in every country.[76]

Italy, in three volumes, is based on the journals that Lady Morgan kept during her stay in Italy from 1819 to 1820. The travelogue is opened with 'Historical Sketches' on the state of Italy from the Roman Empire up to the period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic conquest, while as far as the topographical aspect is concerned, the first volume (the one that is of interest for the present dissertation) focuses on the descent to Italy and its northern territories by describing the passage of the Alps, Piedmont, Lombardy, and then the cities of Genoa, Piacenza, Parma, and Modena. The beginning of each chapter, below the title, contains a list of the places

[74] Kathryn Walchester argues that «women travel writers undermined the notion of 'separate spheres' by including in their accounts of Italy topics which were deemed 'unfeminine' […] writing about the particularly unseemly topic of politics». According to Walchester, M.S. in *Rambles in Germany and Italy* protected herself against criticism of this kind «by presenting her carefully-stated political viewpoints alongside various allusions to her 'domestic' status» (Walchester, *op. cit*., p. 29).
[75] Ibid., pp. 29-30; cf. also the *Dictionary of National Biography*, cit., vol. 39, p. 28.
[76] Lady Wortley Montagu, quoted in Lady Morgan, *Italy*, London: Henry Colburn & Co., 1821, vol. 1, title page.

and/or the arguments that will be dealt with in the section, in order to prepare and facilitate the reader's comprehension. This structure, typical of travelogues, will be maintained by all the successive women travel writers, including Frances Trollope and Mary Shelley.

Frances Milton Trollope (1780-1863), the last woman traveller here presented, thoroughly embodies the middle-class woman writer who was able to live on her writing, thanks to the earnings of her travelogues. A born-Londoner, married to a barrister and mother of seven children (amongst whom the future celebrated Victorian novelist Anthony Trollope), her first experience abroad — and turning point for her future literary career — curiously crossed paths with Mary Shelley's life, albeit the two women never officially met each other. In fact, in 1827 Trollope and her family moved to the United States to join a Utopian anarchic community in Nashoba (Tennessee). It was led by the writer and abolitionist Frances 'Fanny' Wright, inspired by the ideas of moral, social, and political reform expressed in William Godwin (the father of Mary Shelley)'s *Political Justice* (17), a seminal philosophical work that attracted numerous 'adepts', including Percy Bysshe Shelley when he first met Mary. Wright, who also founded a colony of former slaves to support the cause of their liberation, contacted Mary Shelley to persuade her to join the community of Nashoba, hoping that she had inherited the radical inclinations that characterised both her parents (and her late husband), but Mary refused on account of her worry for her son's health/life in such a distant and wild place, together with her strong reservations on the possibility of applying her father's ideas in the real world. Nonetheless, she «went to Harrow, where Fanny was staying with Thomas Anthony and Frances Trollope […], until the Wright party, including Mrs. Trollope and three of her children, embarked […]. She went out by lighter to see them aboard ship».[77] The project, ultimately disastrous, left Frances Trollope profoundly disappointed by the primitive conditions of the United States, the American way of life, and its people, in particular women, and led her to denounce these in her first literary work, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), which raised public debates on the positions of women in the States. In the same period, when Trollope was fifty years

[77] Sunstein, *op. cit*., p. 285; the information about Frances Wrights's Utopian projects here expounded and M. Shelley's response to them are taken from pp. 283-284, in ibid.

old, she also started travelling throughout Europe and writing a prolific and very successful series of travelogues about her experiences in the countries she visited, published as follows: *Belgium and Western Germany in 1833* (1834), *Paris and the Parisians in 1835* (1836), *Vienna and the Austrians* (1838), and *A Visit to Italy* (1842), along with *Travel and Travelers: A Series of Sketches* (1846). As can be noted from the titles of her travelogues, Trollope focuses on the people as well as on the places, and does so from her own British perspective, in epistolary form. Unlike Lady Montagu and Lady Morgan, however, her letters are not addressed to a specific person, thus widening her audience as they could be directed to anyone of her contemporaries and compatriots, but especially to the middle-class travellers to which she herself belonged. *A Visit to Italy*, published only two years prior *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, similarly consists of two volumes. The first volume describes Frances Trollope's journey from Liguria to Tuscany, the second that from Florence to Venice (the visit to Venice is recounted in Letters III-VIII) and to Rome, terminating with Milan on the way back to Paris and England. The present thesis will analyse part of the second volume in comparison with *Rambles*, from the letters of the two travelogues concerning Milan and Venice.

Frances Trollope's first letter functions as a Preface to the whole travelogue, and starts in a similar way to the opening of Lady Montagu's and Lady Morgan's travel accounts in epistolary form:

> How, my dear friend, can I hope to make letters from Italy interesting to you? *How do I venture to attempt it after the rich multitude of descriptive travellers who have gone before me?* […] It must be *a bold donkey* […] who, after this, shall venture to bray about Italy; and a bolder one still, perhaps, who shall venture to differ from one whose judgment ever carries weight with it. *But, despite the host of observers who have preceded me, I still feel a longing to gossip a little about this Italy* […]. So much by way of prefatory apology, dear friend, for writing to you from Italy at all; *but as to all the heterodoxy which may follow, I shall make no apology*.[78]

Such «prefatory apology» is partly a formal understatement of Trollope's own writing, associated to the common male expectations and prejudices regarding women writers («a bold donkey», «I feel a longing to *gossip* a little»), and partly an

[78] F. Milton Trollope, Letter I (Turin, 13th April 1841), in *A Visit to Italy*, London: R. Bentley, 1842, vol. 1, pp. 2-3.

anticipation of the thematic, stylistic, and linguistic «heterodoxy» that characterises *A Visit to Italy*. The first was customary for women travel writers, who felt the need to justify their 'enterprise', i.e., travelling *and* writing about it, to their readership: «most early [female] travel writing began with an apology (e.g., for […] bothering the readers with their trivial endeavours, and so forth) that […] affirmed their status as ladies and […] reassure readers they would not be competing with men».[79]

Trollope «makes no apology», instead, for the «heterodoxy which may follow». The term heterodoxy may refer both to the style and the content of her travelogue. Indeed, it is relevant to underline that Trollope frequently employs Italian terms to describe particular *phenomena*, e.g., the *tramontana*, and makes frequent allusions to paintings in order to express her aesthetic impressions of Italian places and people, e.g., she compares the 'picturesque' Italian women inside a Genoese church to a painting by Veronese, and Genoa at sunset to the paintings of Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin.[80] These stylistic choices enabled Trollope to overcome the difficulty in describing what she saw, by referencing pictorial works that were familiar to the British public and could help them envisioning the scenes, since travelogues — apart from Byron's and Rogers' poetic ones, which set the example for such an intertwining of writing and painting, albeit only through words — did not include illustrations. Finally, despite Trollope's claim about her «longing to gossip a little about this Italy», her work is actually imbued with a socio-political commentary on the state of the country, like Lady Morgan's *Italy* and Mary Shelley's *Rambles*. For example, Trollope comments upon the degraded conditions of the Italian roads and rivers, such as the Arno in Florence, but also upon the responsibility of the Austrian government as regards the general indigence and neglect of the Italians, unable to be in a position to provide for themselves.

It seems appropriate to conclude this introductory paragraph on women's travel writing as it has been opened, with a final quotation from *A Room of One's Own*, applied to «those forerunners» of Mary Shelley in the genre, «for masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in

[79] Siegel (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 3.
[80] Trollope, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42, 45.

common, of thinking by the body of people, so that the experience of the mass in behind the single voice».[81]

1.3 From *History of a Six Weeks' Tour Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland* to *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*

Travel and travel writing have been a fundamental part of Mary Shelley's life ever since she was about seventeen years old, and they continued to be so until her death. Against a common critical misconception that viewed her as entirely dependent upon her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, both in her literary enterprises and in her personal life, inasmuch as being subjected to his frequent changes of place, Emily W. Sunstein argues that «rather than being victimised by [P.B.] Shelley's restlessness, […] travel was not only one of her ways to escape unpleasant situations, she craved new impressions and equated change with growth». According to Mary Shelley' biographer, it was instead the other way round: «he would propose putting down roots between their continual moves; until she was fifty she had no permanent home and few possessions».[82] Indeed, Mary Shelley herself, or rather the narrative voice who coincides with her like, following the consolidated Romantic tradition, proudly declares in *Rambles*, in a sort of *manifesto* of her «passionate love for travelling», which is «occupation as well as amusement»[83]: «my home is the readiest means of conveyance I can command, or the inn at which I shall remain at night — my only acquaintances the companions of my wanderings — the single business of my life to enjoy the passing scene».[84]

Indeed, Mary Shelley's first published literary work is the travelogue *History of a Six Weeks' Tour Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland* (1817), based on hers and Shelley's shared journal and on the letters that they wrote to their friends during their Continental Tour in 1814 and their stay at Geneva in 1816. These two travel experiences were a turning point in Mary's life, as they marked not only her first time outside England, but also the beginning of a whole new existence away from her father's house with her then lover, later husband, Percy

[81] Woolf, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
[82] Sunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
[83] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., vol. 1, p. 158.
[84] Ibid., Letter I (Brighton, 13th June 1840), p. 10.

Bysshe Shelley (and her step-sister Claire Clairmont): the journeys on the Continent are the concrete symbol of their elopement, the first of a long series of wanderings or 'rambles' that never ceased until the year of Mary's death, and her initiation as a writer. In fact, it was during the Shelleys' stay at Geneva with Lord Byron and his physician and friend John Polidori that Mary Shelley ideated *Frankenstein*, and Byron the third Canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*: both literary works include Geneva and the Alps as their main settings. In the light of Mary Shelley's inclination to travel not merely out of necessity but for a genuine passion, it is not coincidental that her first and last work is a travelogue, nor that the theme of the journey, both physical and metaphorical, plays a central role in all her fictional works, as observed by Antonella Braida. For instance, Mary Shelley's celebrated masterpiece *Frankenstein* (first published anonymously in 1818, then in a second and a third edition in 1822 and in 1831, respectively) narrates Captain Walton's exploratory voyage to the North Pole, which he reports to his sister in letters that constitute the first narrative frame of the novel — structured like a Chinese box with different layers — and Dr. Frankenstein's and his creature's reciprocal chase in the Alps, Geneva, and throughout the globe.[85]

History of a Six's Weeks Tour consists of a preface by Percy Bysshe Shelley, a journal of the tour through the countries listed in the complete title of the travelogue, entirely edited by Mary, four letters (two of which had been written by her, two by Shelley), and Shelley's poem "Mont Blanc", placed at the end. Even if the book was published anonymously, it soon appeared clear that the author was 'a lady', considering that Shelley's preface stated that the tour was undertaken «by a party of young people»: «the author, with her husband and sister» (albeit his name was later added to the title page).[86] The book received positive reviews: one, appeared in the

[85] «Travelling is a central trope in Mary Shelley's works in general: from *Frankenstein* through *The Last Man* to *Lodore*, part of the plot revolves around a number of journeys, in spatial terms, as characters "ramble" all over the western world, including North America and the North Pole, and in time, with the metanarrative device of the letter or the memorial left for posterity», anticipating *Rambles* (Braida, *op. cit.*, p. 423).

[86] M. and P.B. Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tor Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland*, London: T. Hookham, 1817, pp. III-IV. Moreover, Sunstein argues that the Shelleys were rather recognisable also because Mary signed the letters from Geneva with her initials, and «everyone knew they had been to Geneva, scandalously unmarried, with Clare», in Sunstein, *op. cit*., p. 432.

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, praised «the writer of this little volume, […] a Lady», for «there is something truly delightful in the colour of her stockings; they are of the purest white, and much more becoming than the brightest blue».[87] As underlined by Moskal, this is a clear, albeit oblique, reference to the 'bluestockings', i.e., the revolutionary women writers like Lady Montagu and Lady Morgan, whose travelogue *France* had been published the previous year (cf. 1.2). Ironically, *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* is on the contrary Mary Shelley's most overtly political work, in which she expresses right from the beginning her support for the Italian *Risorgimento* cause against the Austrian 'invaders' and for the secret society of the Carbonari, invoking the liberation of Italy from the foreigners. Yet, Mary Shelley probably would not have written this travelogue if it had not been for the favourable reception of *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, which prompted her to propose a new travel account to her publisher Edward Moxon, in 1843.[88] In addition, *Rambles in Germany and Italy* is written in epistolary form, already employed by Mary Shelley's letters from Geneva in *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, and the letters that constitute the two volumes of *Rambles* were also originally addressed to her stepsister Claire Clairmont, who shared the 1814's Continental Tour of the Shelleys.

Much had changed since then, though, when Mary wrote her latest travelogue (and last book) in 1843: two of her children, Clara and William, had died in infancy in Italy (in Venice and Rome, respectively) between 1818 and 1819; her beloved husband Percy Bysshe Shelley had tragically drowned in 1822 in a boating accident caused by a storm in the Gulf of La Spezia, and she was accompanied in her 1840s journeys on the Continent by her only surviving son Percy Florence and a few university friends of him. Thus, while *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* is the direct antecedent of *Rambles in Germany and Italy* as regards the genre of travel writing and partially the style, Mary Shelley's last work was also deeply influenced by the events that intercurred between the publication of her first travel account and 1844, when *Rambles* was published.

[87] Quoted in J. Moskal, "Introductory Note", in B.T. Bennett, N. Crook, P. Clemit, J. Moskal (eds.), *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley. Volume 8. Travel Writing*, London: Pickering & Chatto, 1996.
[88] Ibid.

Unlike the itinerary upon which *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* is based, Italy — not covered in the latter, as the Shelleys had not visited it yet — was the main destination of the two journeys that Mary Shelley and her travel companions undertook in 1840 and in 1842-1843, related in *Rambles*. The first journey was directed towards Lake Como, with a final stop at Milan before returning home via Paris, the second to a German spa to cure Mary's headaches (actually the first symptoms of a brain tumour that ultimately killed her in 1851), followed by a "pilgrimage" to Rome, where Percy Bysshe Shelley and little William were buried, and a journey to Sorrento, Amalfi, and Naples. As previously anticipated, these two occasions marked Mary Shelley's first return to Italy after seventeen years. Besides, the publication of *Rambles* was motivated by her desire to help financially the Italian aristocratic Ferdinando Luigi Gatteschi, a thirty-years old exile and Italian nationalist (member of Giuseppe Mazzini's *Giovine Italia*), by means of the proceeds from the book: Mary Shelley had become infatuated with Gatteschi after meeting him in Paris, and thus decided to include in the travelogue also his essay/memoir about the failed insurrection against the Austrian government for the liberation of Italy, in which he took part in 1830-1831 (this essay is contained in the second volume of *Rambles*).

According to Jeanne Moskal, Mary Shelley's «attraction to Gatteschi may be explained, in part, by his resemblance to her husband, an aristocratic writer disowned by his parents for espousing liberal causes», and her infatuation with him was so fervent that «the strength of her devotion overturned her previous resolve not to publish again», marking her return to the literary scene despite her reluctance to get out of her mostly secluded life.[89] While this is accurate, it would be arguably reductive to attribute the publication of *Rambles in Germany and Italy* solely to a love interest, however attractive, or to economic circumstances, however certainly

[89] Moskal, "Travel Writing", cit., p. 247. Mary Shelley's noble intentions of helping Gatteschi, however, were not repaid with gratitude, on the contrary: «Gatteschi, despite having received the £60 fee for Rambles, tried to blackmail Mary Shelley, threatening to expose her letters to him. The contents of the letters are not known: her thoughts of marrying Gatteschi? Indiscreet details of her relations with Shelley? Either would damage the respectability she was trying to forge for her son. In the end, a friend bribed the Paris police to raid Gatteschi's apartment and seize all of his papers, which he then destroyed», in ibid., p. 250. Actually, the "friend" was Alexander Andrew Knox, one of Percy Florence's Cambridge associates who had travelled with Mary Shelley and her son in their second journey from Germany to Italy, in 1842-43. Cf. Sunstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 356-357 on Knox and this journey; pp. 360-371 on Knox, Gatteschi and the blackmail issue.

impellent. Nonetheless, taking into account that *Rambles* is not only Mary Shelley's last travelogue but also — and perhaps more importantly — her last published book, written during a rapidly declining health and the advancement of the illness that would cause Shelley's death seven years later, it can be considered as a sort of testament or legacy to her readers, and it is in fact her «final tribute to Italy».[90]

1.4 Introducing *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*

Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843 (1844) was published in two volumes as written «by Mrs. Shelley»: contrary to her previous travelogue, and for the first time in a printed book, Mary Shelley signed this work with her married name, not the usual «by the author of Frankenstein» with which she had signed all her other works (apart from *History of a Six Week's Tour* and the first two editions of *Frankenstein*, published anonymously). She was now able to do so because her father-in-law, Sir Timothy Shelley, had died in that same year, and his prohibition to her ever mentioning the Shelley name in any publication had finally come to an end[91]. Mary's decision to sign herself as Mrs. Shelley is also particularly relevant to the content of her travelogue, though, since *Rambles in Germany and Italy* recounts her first return, and as a widow, to the places she had visited seventeen years before with Percy Bysshe Shelley, resulting in an autobiographical memoir, as well as a very peculiar guidebook and a travel account partly inspired by Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem*, and by Mary Shelley's female predecessors in travel writing.

Scholars have not failed to notice nor to underline that *Rambles* crosses the 'boundaries' of genres. In highlighting its correlation with Rogers's *Italy*, Camilla Campbell Orr maintained that *Rambles* «is a collection that has a poetic unity, which shared some characteristics of Rogers's esteemed poem on Italy» and argued that Shelley's travelogue could be significantly defined as «a prose-poem».[92] On the other hand, Antonella Braida has recently deemed it «a complex aesthetic experience that unifies travel writing, autobiography, and art criticism», combining the «eighteenth-century aesthetic appreciation of landscape based on the pictorial

[90] Sunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 366.
[91] Cf. Moskal, Travel Writing", cit., p. 251.
[92] Campbell Orr, op. cit., n. pag.

categories of the sublime and the beautiful» with «a modern, cultivated sensibility nourished by Murray's guidebooks and art history manuals».[93] Similarly, Emily Sunstein in her biography of Mary Shelley has noticed the mixed nature of Shelley's last travel narrative, which she presented as «a semi-epistolary account of her travels and her states of mind, interwoven with recollections of the past, commentary on history, social issues, politics and art, and useful information».[94]

As far as the title of *Rambles in Germany and Italy* is concerned, according to Magdalena Ożarska it is indicative of both the content and the style of Shelley's travel account, characterised by a variety and unpredictability that can literally (given the subject of the journey) and conceptually (for the digressional mode of the travelogue) be associated to the very meaning of the term "ramble(s)":

> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, since the seventeenth century, "a ramble" has denoted "an act of rambling; a walk (formerly any excursion or journey) without definite route or other aim than recreation or pleasure", as well as an act of "wander[ing] in discourse (spoken or written) […]". If both of these meanings are taken into consideration, it appears that — besides defining the written product as one of the travel genre — the author also undertakes to accommodate a certain amount of irregularity in the arrangement and presentation of her material. It is easy to list the major topoi: politics — as the writer argues for the cause of Italian liberation from Austria; travel and sightseeing — with the knowledgeable narrator always ready to add extra historical or cultural information to the accounts of the places visited; and autobiography — which is best seen in the narrator's attempts to relive her past through present experiences.[95]

Although *Rambles* was one of Mary Shelley's «most favourably reviewed works»[96] in her time and is still an invaluable source for both its place in and contribution to the genre of travel writing, and to Shelley's own literary production, it has been virtually neglected until recently, i.e., the last three decades. In fact, the book was not reprinted in an English edition (let alone in translations into other languages) until as late as 1975, a century and a half after its first publication in 1844, and then in the 1990s along with the complete works by Mary Shelley, edited by Betty T. Bennett *et*

[93] Braida, *op. cit*., p. 427.
[94] Sunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 366.
[95] M. Ożarska, "Mary Shelley's 'Rambles in Germany and in Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843' as a Digressional Specimen of the Italian Tour Sub-Genre", in *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, vol. 60, 2012, pp. 263-277, p. 266.
[96] Sunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

al.[97] As stated in the Introduction to the ground-breaking critical study *The Other Mary Shelley. Beyond Frankenstein* (1993), this is imputable both to Mary Shelley's own reputation as a writer, generally known only for her masterpiece *Frankenstein* (still attributed for a large part to Percy Bysshe Shelley until recently), whose astounding success overshadowed all her other literary works, and to the greater literary reputation of/critical consideration to her husband and parents, especially Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft. Serious critical studies about Mary Shelley and her literary works, including *Frankenstein*, started in the 1970s within the field of women's studies and feminist criticism, and were further developed in the 1980s also owing to the publication of Shelley's letters and journals, edited for the very first time by Betty T. Bennett, and Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert respectively.[98] Albeit critical studies on travel writing originated in these same years (cf. section 1.1 of this thesis), *Rambles in Germany and Italy* did not receive scholarly attention until the 1990s — apart from Emily Sunstein's 1989 biography of Mary Shelley which discusses its genesis and publication among the later years of her life — and in the 2000s, with a renewed academic/critical interest in the travelogue from the 2010s to 2020. Parallelly, as can be verified by a rapid search in the library catalogues or on the net, *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* has been reprinted several times in the second half of the last decade, for instance in 2015, 2017, and 2020.

Considering that Italy is the main theme and destination of Mary Shelley's last travelogue, it seems appropriate to briefly assess its translations into Italian and thus its reception in the country. Oddly enough yet not unsurprisingly, given the aforementioned long-standing disregard for Mary Shelley's literary works with the only exception of *Frankenstein*, *Rambles* had never been translated into Italian until the twenty-first century, when two separate editions covered either exclusively the second volume of *Rambles*, or the first. Thus, at the time of writing, there is no

[97] Cf. B.T. Bennett, C.E. Robinson (eds.), *The Mary Shelley Reader*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, which contains Mary Shelley's essays "The English in Italy", "Modern Italy", and only the Preface to *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, and B.T. Bennett, N. Crook, P. Clemit, J. Moskal (eds.), *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*. *Volume 8. Travel Writing*, London: Pickering & Chatto, 1996, containing the whole travelogue.

[98] A.A. Fisch, A.K. Mellor, E.H Schor (eds.), *The Other Mary Shelley*. *Beyond Frankenstein*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 3-13.

existing complete translation of the travelogue as published by Mary Shelley, translated and edited by the same person in a unifying vision. Yet, both these editions reflect the original title: the first is entitled *A zonzo per la Germania e l'Italia* (2004), and the title of the latest one emulates the previous Italian edition: *A zonzo sul lago di Como. Con una guida ai luoghi degli Shelley sul Lario* (2020). The locution "*a zonzo*" is untranslatable literally because there is no English complement that expresses the idea of "strolling/wandering/rambling aimlessly", but its meaning can indeed be regarded as the Italian equivalent of "rambles". The first Italian edition of Shelley's travelogue, translated and edited by Simonetta Berbeglia, comprises only the second volume of *Rambles*, concerning Mary Shelley's 1842 and 1843 journeys across the Continent up to Naples. Conversely, the second Italian edition, published only two years ago, comprises only its first volume, and is specifically centred around Shelley's representation of Lake Como: in 2020 (in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, when travelling was not possible/permitted due to the lockdown), the volume, edited by Claudia Cantaluppi and Pietro Berra, was translated into Italian by a group of high school students under the supervision of professor Cantaluppi, within the project "Mary Shelley a zonzo sul lago di Como", promoted by the association "Sentiero dei Sogni" that Berra ideated to valorise the Italian landscape in connection with literary and poetic associations. The project on Lake Como also includes a series of videos structured like 'episodes' or 'pills', realised by several of these high school students, with their translations of the letters contained in Part I of *Rambles* regarding the lake and its surroundings towns and villas, along with some pictures of these places. Moreover, part of the students created an itinerary of the destinations described by Mary Shelley in the first volume of her travelogue, from Como to the Splügen Alp.[99]

The epigraph that Mary Shelley chose as opening for both the volumes of *Rambles* immediately inserts her travelogue in the sub-genre of travel writing about

[99] The interesting project, realised in collaboration with liceo "Teresa Ciceri", l'istituto tecnico economico "Caio Plinio" with the support of Regione Lombardia and Arci Como, as stated in the official website of the association Sentiero dei sogni (*sentierodeisogni.it*), is presented here: https://sentierodeisogni.it/project/a-zonzo-per-la-germania-e-litalia/. The website also provides the hyperlinks to the videos and to the detailed itinerary made by the students, complete with information about Como and the nearby villages, the lake, and the selected extracts from *Rambles*. The itinerary, consisting of a PowerPoint presentation, can be seen and downloaded as well from the website.

Italy. Indeed, it is a quotation from the tragedy *Arnaldo da Brescia* by the nineteenth-century Italian poet Giovanni Battista Niccolini: published in 1834, thus contemporary to Mary Shelley's travelogue, the tragedy is about the homonymous anti-papal and nationalistic religious reformer who was burned at the stake by the Roman Catholic Church for his revolutionary ideas and inspired the Risorgimental values. The lines quoted as epigraph in Shelley's travelogue convey the sudden joy at the sight of the 'heavenly' landscape of the *Bel Paese*: «questo petto anelo / Scosse di gioia un palpito improvviso, / Quando il Tiranno splendido del cielo / Mi rivelò d'Italia il paradiso».[100] Furthermore, *Rambles in Germany and Italy* is — not coincidentally — dedicated «to Samuel Rogers, author of "The Pleasures of Memory", "Italy", etc, […] as a slight token of respect, gratitude, and affection».[101]

The relationship between Rogers, his *Italy, A Poem*, Mary Shelley, and her *Rambles* will be thoroughly explored in the second chapter of this dissertation (cf. 2.1, 2.2). The last two sub-paragraphs of this first chapter, instead, illustrate the structure and the preface of *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*.

1.4.1 The Structure of Shelley's Travelogue

Rambles in Germany and Italy is divided into three parts: Part I and II cover the first volume, while the second volume comprises the entire Part II. These three parts are devoted to the journeys undertaken by Mary Shelley, her son, and a few university friends of him in 1840 and in 1842-1843. They are divided as follows:

- Part I, Letters I-XII contained in vol. 1: it recounts the journey of the summer and beginning of autumn (June-September) 1840, starting from the planning, the departure from Dover towards Calais, the arrival in Italy via Switzerland and the crossing of the Alps, the stay at Lake Como, Bergamo, and Milan, and ending with Mary Shelley's route to Paris, plus an additional report of Percy Florence's and his friends' 'eventful' crossing of Mont St. Gothard on the way back.
- Part II, Letters I-XI contained in vol. 1: it recounts the journey of the summer (June-August) 1842 from Amsterdam to Prague, across the German cities

[100] M. Shelley, *op. cit.*, vol. 1.
[101] Ibid.

with a period of time at the baths of Kissingen for Mary's medical treatment, and at various art galleries throughout the route.

- Part III, Letters I-XXIII contained in vol. 2: it reprises the account of the above-mentioned journey, covering the autumn (September-October) 1842 from Prague to Venice via Salzburg and the Tyrol, the one-month stay at Venice, and the subsequent journey (October 1842-July 1843) to Central and Southern Italy, i.e., Florence, Rome, Sorrento, Amalfi, the newly discovered Pompeii, and Naples, where the travelogue ends. This part also includes a digression on the Carbonari, one on Italian Literature with a focus on nineteenth-century authors such as Manzoni and Niccolini, and the essay by Ferdinando Gatteschi on the insurrection of 1830-1831 against the Austrian government.

The first volume starts with a Preface that presents the themes and aims of the travelogue, both centred around the representation of Italy and the Italians. The Preface is followed by a list of the 'Contents', i.e., the parts of the volume and, as the conventions of the genre of travel writing dictated, the detailed arguments of each letter provided under their number, and next to the page numbers, so that readers could orientate themselves and eventually choose the topics or the route of most interest to them. The same arguments are then listed at the beginning of each letter; for instance, Letter I was summarised thus: «Project for spending the Summer on the Banks of the Lake of Como — Fine Spring — Stormy Weather — Passage from Dover to Calais — The Diligence — Paris — Plan of our Route». These summaries have been defined "synoptic titles" and, as Magdalena Ożarska asserts, they «are, for the most part, precise records of her geographical transitions»,[102] based on the journal that Mary Shelley kept during her journeys abroad, and the letters she wrote to her stepsister Claire Clairmont.

1.4.2 The Preface

At the very beginning of the Preface, Mary Shelley acknowledges her debt towards her predecessors in travel writing about Italy («the works of those who have passed

[102] Ożarska, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

through the same country»), which she declares to have carried with her during her journeys as a source of information, inspiration, and companionship. Moreover, she recognises the popularity of both the subject and the route:

> I found it a pleasant thing while travelling to have in carriage the works of those who have passed through the same country. Sometimes they inform, sometimes they excite curiosity. If alone, they serve as society; if with others, they suggest matter for conversation.
>
> These Volumes were thus originated. Visiting spots often described, pursuing a route such as form for the most part the common range of the tourist — I could tell nothing new, except as each individual's experience possesses novelty. While I passed in haste from city to city; as I travelled through mountain-passes or over vast extents of country, I put down the daily occurrences […] for those who came after me.[103]

The first sentences illustrate the aims of a good travelogue, which correspond to the classical principles of a valid and persuasive rhetoric discourse illustrated by Cicero in *De Orator*, applicable to travel writing as well, since the genre originated in the Renaissance from a branch of rhetoric or *ars retorica*, namely from *ars apodemica*. Thus, its aims are to «inform», that is *docere* (the Latin verb for 'to teach'), linked to *probare* ('to prove, to provide evidence'), and to «excite curiosity», that is both *delectare* ('to give delight') and *movere* ('to move, to touch one's feelings')[104]. Then, like all her female predecessors (cf. 1.2), Shelley declares that the subject, i.e., Italy, is not new, nor the route is unbeaten but, on the contrary, it is «part of the common range of the tourist», meaning the British mass tourists. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the previous paragraphs of this thesis, not only was Italy an established topic at the time of Mary Shelley's writing in the early 1840s but also the epistolary form written by women travellers. In particular, Lady Morgan is explicitly mentioned further on as a rare example of foreign (from the Italian perspective) writer «whose book is dear to the Italians», an exception opposed to the common prejudices of English travellers and authors regarding for example «the effeminacy

[103] Ibid., pp. VII-VIII.

[104] In her essay on the construction and re-definition of a cultural/literary canon in the English Renaissance, including Roger Ascham's *The Schoolmaster* (1570) — one of the first advice to travellers (cf. section 1.1.1 of this dissertation) — and its stressing the connection between wisdom and good rhetoric, Angela Locatelli argues that «in early-modernity, literature itself is undergoing an epistemic re-assessment, and it is re-negotiating its traditional tasks (*docere*, *delectare*, *movere*), by expressing specific "conjunctural" attitudes and appealing to new interlocutors and protagonists of the social scene» (Locatelli, *op. cit.*, p. 91). This is obviously the case for travel writing, inaugurated in England by Ascham's and Bacon's essays on the matter.

of the Italians» or «the vice and cowardice of the nobles»: «contempt was the general tone».[105] Indeed, Mary Shelley states that *her* letters address «subjects that I had not found mentioned elsewhere», such as «the people, especially in a political point of view»: her aim, «in addition, therefore, to being a mere gossiping companion to a traveller», is to portray the Italians' «real character», together with «the state of Italy»[106], and to convince the Englishmen to support the *Risorgimento* cause against the Austrian dominion of the country. Frances Trollope too, in the first letter of *A Visit to Italy* (1842), claimed that «despite the host of observers who have preceded» her, she felt «a longing to gossip a little about Italy» (cf. 1.2.2), as it was expected from a female writer, but her work is actually imbued with a socio-political commentary on the conditions of Italy, like Lady Morgan's and Mary Shelley's own travelogues. Shelley also specifies that she «could only sketch facts, guess at causes, hope for results»[107]: it worth noticing that she uses a pictorial term, *sketch*, which is interesting because it testifies to the strongly visual, aesthetic quality of *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, regarding both the descriptions of places and of people, as will be discussed in the following chapter of the present dissertation.

To conclude, in the last paragraph of the Preface Mary Shelley eulogises the virtues of the Italians and consequently also the beauty of Italy by declaring that she herself felt like one of them whilst she was in the country, as it often happens when visiting it:

> When we visit Italy, we become what the Italians were censured for being, — enjoyers of the beauties of nature, the elegance of art, the delights of climate, the recollections of the past, and the pleasures of society, without a thought beyond. Such to a great degree was I while there.[108]

Considering Shelley's previous remark on the common British view of Italians as 'effeminates', Moskal argues that by associating the Britons to them in this paragraph («we become what the Italians were censured for being»), she implicitly undermines «the usual assumption of travel and sexual adventure as male prerogatives». Thus, «the hint that femininity characterizes the superior traveller,

[105] M. Shelley, *op. cit.*, p. X.
[106] Ibid., pp. VIII-IX.
[107] Ibid., p. IX.
[108] Ibid., p. XVI.

along with the praise of Lady Morgan, consolidates the sense that Mary Shelley saw herself joining a tradition of women travel writers, including Wollstonecraft and Montagu».[109] Moreover, albeit Mary Shelley here uses the collective 'we' and identifies herself with the audience, that is, the British public and fellow visitors to Italy, it should be emphasised that she is not a common tourist but an authentic traveller, according to the distinction made by James Buzard between British mass-tourism to the Continent and those Romantic authors like Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Madame De Staël, and Samuel Rogers, who offered a personal view of the places they visited (cf. 1.1.3). Mary Shelley also lived in Italy from 1818 to 1823 with Percy Bysshe Shelley, and soon after his death (occurred in 1822) but, as she clarified in the Preface of *Rambles*, «Italy is, indeed, much changed […] The country wears a new aspect; it is struggling with its fetters»[110], from a political and moral point of view — according to Shelley, the second is the direct consequence of the first. At the same time, her «book does not pretend to be a political history or a dissertation. I give fragments — not a whole», in the hope of persuading «some among my countrymen […] to sympathise in the struggles of a country, the most illustrious and the most unfortunate in the world».[111]

[109] Moskal, Travel Writing", cit., p. 249.
[110] Ibid., p. X.
[111] Ibid., p. XVI.

2. Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843,* Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem,* and Previous Women's Travelogues

The second and central section of this study analyses a selection of the route followed by Mary Shelley and her travel companions in 1840 and in 1843, namely their journey from the crossing of the Swiss Alps to Milan, and her stay in Venice three years later. In particular, Shelley's descriptions and impressions of such itinerary will be investigated in comparison with those recounted in Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem* (1830), some of its illustrations by Turner representing the selected landscapes and cities, and the female travelogues previously introduced, especially the ones by Lady Montagu, Lady Morgan, and Frances Trollope. First of all, the relationship between Mary Shelley, the poet Samuel Rogers and the painter J.M.W. Turner is explored from a personal as well as literary perspective, by sounding Shelley's biographical connections with both figures, and her debt towards *Italy, A Poem* (1830) as far as *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* (1844) is concerned. Then, the part of her route selected for the purposes of this dissertation will be presented alongside that of Rogers's *Italy* concerning almost or entirely the same itinerary. The ensuing paragraphs are devoted to Mary Shelley's report and representation of such route, compared and/or contrasted with the travelogues by the aforementioned authors and the illustrations by Turner, in order to assess the extent to which these are similar or differ. Hence, the crossing of the Alps will be examined in the light of the aesthetic category of the sublime, codified by Edmund Burke, and of the changes in the travelling conditions from 1815 to 1840 — reflected in the travelogues by Lady Montagu, Lady Morgan, and Rogers; the arrival in Italy as a former Paradise Lost, now apparently regained, with respect to Lake Como, Bergamo, Milan, and Venice, with the latter two destinations investigated in comparison with Frances Trollope's *A Visit to Italy* (1842).

2.1 Mary Shelley, Samuel Rogers, and J.M.W. Turner

The connections between Mary Shelley, Samuel Rogers, and Joseph Mallord William Turner have personal and biographical roots: in fact, they are traceable back to Shelley's father, the radical philosopher and novelist William Godwin (1756-1836). Godwin was a prominent intellectual figure of his time, albeit ostracised by

the British common opinion and the members of the conventional *intelligentsia* alike for his and his late wife Mary Wollstonecraft's revolutionary views. Nonetheless, Godwin's social circle comprised a substantial number of the greatest artists and literates of the time as his friends and visitors of his house in Somers Town, a suburb of London. There, they were also introduced to Godwin's family, composed of his daughter Mary, his stepdaughter Fanny from Wollstonecraft's former liaison with Imlay, his second wife and her daughter Jane (who later changed her name to Claire) Clairmont, and Godwin's son with his new wife, William. Amongst the notable people who visited Godwin's house can be counted, when Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (not yet Shelley) was still a child, both Samuel Rogers and J.M.W. Turner, together with the "first generation" of Romantic poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and even Lady Morgan before she assumed this pseudonym (Morgan is her married name, but she was born Sydney Owenson). Moreover, «as Godwin wished the children to emulate achievers, they dined with his guests».[112] Therefore, little Mary grew surrounded by the people who were to influence her as a writer later in life, both in her novels and in *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*.

As far as the poet Samuel Rogers is concerned, Mary Shelley maintained a solid personal relationship with him that would last throughout her life, even after her father's death, based on a bond of reciprocal affection and admiration. In fact, in the later part of her life, in the 1830s and 1840s, she regularly attended the famous breakfasts that Rogers hosted at his London house, St. James's Place, where, similarly to Godwin but without the social stigma attached to him by unconventional ideas, he invited the main literary celebrities of the time. In 1838, Mary Shelley annotated in her journal, after having attended one of these occasions: «Rogers' breakfasts are delightful — of such intellectual fascinating society I have had too little in my day — I highly I enjoy them when they fall in my share».[113] Her close

[112] Sunstein, *op. cit*., p. 41. As the biographer of Mary Shelley observes, «Godwin's callers included the poets Wordsworth and Samuel Rogers, the painters Thomas Lawrence and James Northcote, […] the Irish authors Sydney Owenson (later Lady Morgan) and Maria Edgeworth – and this is only a minuscule sample», in ibid., pp. 40-41.

[113] P.R. Feldman and D. Scott-Kilvert (eds.), *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, cit., pp. 552-53. The editors of Mary Shelley's journals further noted that William Godwin's relationship with Samuel

friendship with the elderly poet, attested in her journals and private correspondence, was particularly important to her not only because she enjoyed the company of the same intellectual society that had attended her father's house since her infancy but also because it allowed her to retrieve from the isolation she suffered after Percy Bysshe Shelley's death, which mostly excluded her from his privileged circle of friends and acquaintances. Indeed, in 1842 she affirmed in a letter to Claire Clairmont that «Rogers was very kind — He is the *only* person in London who shews me any attention. He invited Wordsworth to meet me at breakfast».[114] Even the *Dictionary of National Biography* describes Rogers as very kind-hearted, even though biting, and asserts that besides his «exquisite taste, artistic and social», he was known for «the bitterness of his tongue and the kindness of his heart. Everybody dreaded his mordant sarcasm; but everybody thought first of him when either pecuniary or personal aid was to be invoked». Besides, Rogers had also been a friend of the late Percy Bysshe Shelley himself and of Lord Bryon, who both shared his love for Italy and even met him there at Pisa in 1822, when the Shelleys lived there. As the *Dictionary of National Biography* further relates, «while Shelley he respected; Byron fell in his esteem»,[115] and it was actually through Rogers that Mary and Percy Bysshe Shelley learned that Byron had moved to Venice in 1817,[116] where he composed the celebrated Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, illustrated by Turner.

With regard to the literary connections between Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy* and Rogers' *Italy, A Poem*, it is noteworthy that these two works share the same publisher, Edward Moxon. When he was young, Moxon had been one of the publishers of the 1830 edition of Rogers's poem, the first to be illustrated with the vignettes by Turner and Stothard and a great success which repaid Rogers' investment on it, given the high cost of printing with the innovative technology of steel-engravings for the illustrations (cf. section 1.1.4). Hence, when thirteen years

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Rogers was motivated also by the latter's capacity as banker, who had helped him during some of his frequent financial difficulties.

[114] F.L. Jones (ed.), *The Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1947, 2 vols, vol. 2, p. 157, quoted in Feldman and Scott-Kilvert (eds.), *op. cit*., p. 552.

[115] "Rogers, Samuel", in Lee (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, cit., vol. 49, p. 140.

[116] «Shelley had […] obtained some news of Byron, and knew that he was now in Venice after visiting Rome during May [1817]», in Feldman and Scott-Kilvert (ed.), *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, cit., p. 175.

later Mary Shelley proposed Moxon a travelogue as new book to be published, he immediately accepted despite his initial intention of requesting a novel from her. He did so both because of Mary Shelley's own status as an extremely successful and influential writer and also, most likely, on account of the success of his previous travel publication by Rogers. Whilst there is no mention of *Italy, A Poem* in any of Shelley's journals, she certainly read Rogers's illustrated poetic travelogue: she refers to it both in the dedication to Samuel Rogers in *Rambles*, and in text itself by quoting some extracts from it twice, from instance when she visits Venice. Moreover, she refers to the poem in a letter to hers and Rogers's publisher Edward Moxon during her stay near Lake Como in 1840, which she would later recount in *Rambles*: «I was very happy during my two months residence at Canedabbia — on the shores of the lake of Como — […] close neighbour to Tremezzo names rendered classical by our dear Rogers»[117] in *Italy*, that served all British travellers, including Mary Shelley herself, faithfully throughout their journeys to the *Bel Paese*. Indeed, as a biographer of Samuel Rogers observed in 1910 referring to the poem, «though it is probable that only lovers of Italy ever read it through, […] unlike most guide-books or descriptive writing, it is rendered not less but more interesting to those familiar with the places described».[118]

Most significantly, Mary Shelley also mentioned Rogers in two more letters addressed in 1843 to Moxon, responding to the latter's desire of publishing a new book by her. The first letter was written from Rome during Shelley's second journey to Italy: in it, she revealed to Moxon that she was unable to write because of her bad health but assured him, in a hopeful note, that «nothing can be so delightful or inspirating as this divine country», referring obviously to Italy. In the next sentence she adds «give my love to Mr. Rogers»[119], who had introduced her to his friends staying at Rome. In the second letter to Moxon, written soon after Mary Shelley's return to England, she addressed again the topic of his request of a book by her, which she now felt urged to write for money in order to help the exile Gatteschi (cf. 1.4), and asked the publisher: «is it a novel or a romance you want? — I should

[117] M. Shelley, letter to E. Moxon (26 October 1840), in B.T. Bennett (ed.), *Selected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995, p. 300.
[118] R.E. Roberts, *Samuel Rogers and his Circle*, London: Methuen & Co., 1910, p. 87.
[119] M. Shelley, letter to E. Moxon (7 May 1843), in Bennett (ed.), *op. cit*., p. 323.

prefer quieter work, *to be gathered from other works* — such as my lives for the Cyclopedia — & *which I think I do much better than romancing*». Immediately after, she enquires: «*where is Mr. Rogers*? I will visit town to see him *though for no one else*».[120] Presumably, the mention of Rogers, author of *Italy* published by the very Moxon, together with the association with the country provided by Mary Shelley's recent journeys there and her previous remark about its inspiring power, prompted the editor to hint at the possibility of publishing something related to Italy. In fact, Shelley's next letter to him starts thus, and relates her intention to work on, and beginning of, a travelogue about Italy:

> A few words you let fall made me reflect and look over some notes I made. And the spirit moves me to put together a journal of my late tour — which long and varied affords scope […] but above all, my 6 weeks tour [i.e., *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*] brought me many compliments & my present Twelvemonths tour will, I feel sure, procure me many more. This sounds vain, but is not. I mean therefore to make my present work as light — as personal to myself — […] as I can, I think you will like it as a reader — as a publisher I hope it will meet your approbation. I am working fast […] from the inspiration and pleasure I take in the subject.[121]

«The subject» Shelley refers to may be both the theme of travel — already proven to be attractive by the favourable reception of her previous travelogue, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* —, and that of her beloved Italy, which she must have had in mind when she stated her intention of making her newest travel account «as personal to myself as I can», given the emotional relevance of the country for her Mary Shelley, owing to her own past memories of her life there with the late Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Italy, A Poem was not a common travelogue, but an illustrated one. As it had been with Rogers, Mary Shelley's first meetings with Turner too were induced by her father. Emily Sunstein mentions the painter in the very first chapter of her biography of Mary Shelley, noticing that Godwin referred to him and his early landscape paintings in a story he wrote for Mary when she was nine years old to comfort her for Wollstonecraft's premature death: «suppose your pencil was in the hand of Mr. Turner, the great landscape painter that we dined with… The world is all

[120] M. Shelley, letter to E. Moxon (20 September 1843), in ibid., pp. 324-25, emphasis mine; cf. also V Feldman and Scott-Kilvert (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 552.
[121] M. Shelley, letter to E. Moxon (26/27 September 1843), in Bennett (ed.), *op. cit*., p. 325.

like Mr. Turner's landscape: all is order, and regularity, and beauty».[122] Furthermore, «at art exhibitions, Godwin introduced his family to painters like John Flaxman and J.M.W. Turner, to whom he referred in his story for "My dear child"»[123]. Thus, Mary Shelley was familiar with the painter since her childhood. Although she never mentions him in her journals nor in her correspondence, a few years later she encountered his illustrations in Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*: considering that she read it in 1816, 1817 and twice in 1818, it is reasonable to suppose that she was familiar not only with the poem but also with the illustrations by Turner, as much as she was familiar with the ones contained in Rogers's *Italy, A Poem*. In light of the above-quoted connections between the latter and *Rambles*, Camilla Campbell Orr contends that, since «travel books were not commonly illustrated», «the writer had to rely on her or his skill in constructing word-pictures […]. Shelley had an acute eye; she had from a child been taken to see exhibited pictures and her father knew Turner»; indeed, in *Rambles* «her scenic descriptions of natural landscape are often very successful […] to describe her Italian experiences better, she twice refers her reader to the Turner vignettes of Rogers' poem: once to conjure up the atmosphere of Venice, and once in connection […] to Amalfi».[124]

Finally, but not less importantly, Magdalena Ożarska has even theorised that Rogers himself may be the (ideal) addressee to the letters that compose *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, since in the travelogue there is no specific reference to the person to whom they are written. Albeit they are generally believed to derive from the letters that Mary Shelley wrote to her stepsister Claire, and the epistolary form itself is but a literary construction to address the readers, Ożarska supports her theory by reason of «the introductory dedication […] as an indicator», and Shelley's "delightful" breakfasts at Rogers" […], so this does not seem implausible». As a matter of fact, in *Rambles* «the figure of the narratee, presented as a male friend of the female narrator, invites familial forms of address, assuming both the narratee's general familiarity with certain facts from her life and his readiness to mentally follow her itinerary».[125]

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[122] Sunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
[123] Ibid., p. 41.
[124] Campbell Orr, *op. cit.*, accessible in: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/005813ar.
[125] Ożarska, *op. cit.*, p. 271. The valid and interesting theory expounded by Ożarska further reinforces the general idea behind this dissertation, i.e., the close links between Shelley's *Rambles* and Rogers's

The ensuing paragraph illustrates the selected route undertaken by the lyrical voice (identifiable with Samuel Rogers) of *Italy, A Poem*, and the narrative voice (corresponding to Mary Shelley) of *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*.

2.2 The selected route of *Italy, A Poem*, and Mary Shelley's journeys

The present study follows the 'rambles' that Mary Shelley and her travel companions, i.e., her son and a few of his Cambridge friends, undertook in the summer of 1840 from Switzerland through the Alps, the Italian town of Chiavenna, the lakes of Lecco and of Como, to Milan via Bergamo, and their one-month stay in Venice in 1843, as these travel experiences are recounted in *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*. In particular, they are described in Letters V-XII of the first volume of *Rambles*, and in Letters VI-X of the second volume as regards Venice. The route of the first journey under analysis in these pages, undertaken by Mary Shelley, Percy Florence, the latter's two Cambridge friends Julian Robinson and George Deffell, and Shelley's maid Mary Ann Henry,[126] comprises the following stages: the passage of the Alps through the Via Mala and the Splügen Pass, the crossing of the border of Italy and the arrival at Chiavenna, the eight-weeks stay near the Lake of Como at the Albergo Grande of Canedabbia and the excursions on the Lake, a brief visit to Bergamo, and a final stay at Milan for a few days. With respect to Shelley's stay in Venice in 1843, she and her travel companions, i.e., Percy Florence with his university friends Alexander Knox and Henry Pearson, visited the main attractions of the city, as well as its islands (these pages will analyse her impressions of Venice itself). The complete route of Mary Shelley's 1840 journey is traced in blue on the map in fig. 1 of the Appendix, that of the second journey in red.

Not only do all the aforementioned places figure in Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem* too, but they are also presented in the same order as that specifically selected from Mary Shelley's travelogue for the purposes of this dissertation: the above-

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Italy, A Poem. Nonetheless, while I support the claim that the identity of the addressee may be constituted by Samuel Rogers, undoubtedly a more ideal and attached narratee than Claire Clairmont in Mary Shelley's viewpoint, it might be argued that in the text there is actually no indication of the addressee's sex, thus it cannot be inferred with certainty that this person is a man.

[126] Sunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

quoted route described in *Rambles in Germany and Italy* reminds the reader of the itinerary illustrated (both in the literal sense of the term and in poetic form) in Rogers's celebrated travelogue, as the two are very similar in most points, albeit not identical. *Italy, A Poem* begins with the recounting of the lyrical voice's journey in Switzerland, that is, in Geneva and its lakes, (which Mary Shelley visited on her way back towards Paris), followed by St. Maurice, the Great St. Bernard Pass and the descent, with a detailed description of the crossing of the Alps and a mention of the Simplon and the Splügen (traversed by Mary Shelley), Lake Como and its surroundings, and Bergamo. After a homage to Italy, the constatation of its present decayed state in contrast with the illustrious past, and yet its everlasting «splendour like the day»,[127] the poet continues to recount his visit to Collalto (Treviso) and to the «glorious City in the Sea»,[128] i.e., Venice. The lyrical voice then proceeds from Padua to Central and Southern Italy (Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, Paestum, Amalfi, exactly like in Mary Shelley's second journey to Italy), but this part of the route is not covered in the present dissertation, which analyses the journey from the descent through the Alps to Venice. Thus, the route followed by Mary Shelley and her travel companions in 1840 and in 1842-1843, reported in *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, and that undertaken by Rogers in 1814-15, reported in *Italy, A Poem*, partially overlap. Whereas their journey from Switzerland through the Alps do not cover the same destinations at the same time (Mary Shelley travelled through a different part of Switzerland on her way to Italy in 1840, and did not cross the Alps via the Great St Bernard but via the Splügen Pass — the latter, however, is cited in Rogers's poem), the route from Como to Bergamo and Venice is identical for both authors, with the only exception that Milan is not present in *Italy*.

2.3 The Crossing of the Alps and the Sublime

The crossing of the Alps was a momentous experience from an emotional, aesthetic, literary, at times spiritual, and not least practical point of view for all British travellers in general, and especially for those directed to Italy. It assumed such

[127] Rogers, *op. cit*., p. 42.
[128] Ibid., p. 47. Hereafter, the page numbers of all the quotations from *Italy, A Poem* will be indicated parenthetically in the text.

relevance from the English Romantic movement (conventionally dated 1780-1830) onwards, gaining a further impetus during the Victorian age (1837-1901) with the first climbing expeditions and the consequent opening of new routes in the 1840s and 1850s, the popularisation of the "mountain cult" among the middle-classes, and the birth of English alpinism in the middle of the nineteenth century (although the latter originated only after Mary Shelley's death). Mary Shelley's account of her crossing of the Alps towards Italy in *Rambles* refers to her 1840 journey, thus prior the majority of the events occurred in the Victorian age and to the "alpine watercolours" painted by Turner in the following years and praised by John Ruskin,[129] but it was deeply influenced by the Romantic vision of these mountains. The Romantic poets saw the Alps as the highest example of the sublime, codified by Edmund Burke in his 1757 treaty *A Philosophical Enquire into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (cf. 1.1.3). Consequently, the Romantics depicted the Alpine scenery in some of their most celebrated literary works, such as the poem "Mont Blanc: Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni" (1816) by Percy Bysshe Shelley, contained at the end of his and Mary Shelley's *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, or the drama *Manfred* (1817), set in the Swiss Alps, and Canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), both by Lord Byron.

The Napoleonic Wars can be considered a watershed with regard to the travelling conditions of the passage of the Alps, because after that timespan (c. 1790-1815), when travelling on Continent was again possible for the Britons, the crossing was greatly improved and facilitated by the construction of roads across the Alps. This novelty rendered the crossing of the Alps incomparably safer than the previous years, when travellers had to venture in the descent either on mule or on foot, with all

[129] See J. Ring, *How the English Made the Alps*, London: John Murray, 2000. As Ring has stated, the art critic John Ruskin prominently contributed to the diffusion of the "mountain cult" for the Alps both with his support of the alpine watercolours by J.M.W. Turner, painted or rather sketched in the 1840s and praised in the first volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (1843), and with the most influential chapter "On Mountain Beauty" in its fourth volume (1856). In the latter, Ruskin famously defined the Alps «the great cathedrals of the earth» (quoted in Ring, op. cit., p. 60). Amongst Turner's best Swiss watercolours there is *The Pass of Splugen* (1843), representing the very same pass that Mary Shelley described in aesthetic terms in *Rambles*, albeit it is unlikely that she saw it. As for the birth of alpinism, seen by Ruskin as a vulgarising of the Alps, the Victorian writer and literary critic Leslie Stephen — Virginia Woolf (née Stephen)'s father and renown as the first editor of the monumental *Dictionary of National Biography*, — was one of the first alpinists and passionate mountaineers.

the risks connected to the enterprise. Alternatively, but only for the travellers who could afford it (Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, for instance, was one of them), the passage could be traversed by means of 'portable chairs', which Lady Montagu described as «little seats of twisted osier fixed upon poles, upon men's shoulders».[130] It must be taken into consideration that the travelogues by Lady Montagu and Samuel Rogers recount the crossing the Alps before 1815 (the first in 1716, the second in 1814, just before the end of the Napoleonic Wars), while those by Lady Morgan and Mary Shelley were written and published after the Napoleonic period (in 1821 and 1844, respectively), a chronological gap that is reflected in all these authors' accounts of the experience.

The first mention of the crossing of the Alps in *Italy, A Poem* can be found in the section devoted to the Great St Bernand Pass. This section introduces the travel conditions at the time of Rogers's writing, and the lyrical voice's arrival at a sort of convent serving as a hospital, a rescue place, and a refuge:

> Night was again descending, when *my mule*,
> *That all day long had climbed among the clouds*,
> Higher and higher still, as by a stair
> Let down from Heaven itself, *transporting me*,
> Stopped […]
> And a lay-brother of the Hospital,
> Who, as we toiled below, had heard *by fits*
> The distant echoes gaining on his ear,
> Came and held fast my stirrup in his hand.
> (S. Rogers, *Italy, A Poem*, pp. 11-12, emphasis mine)

The dangers of the passage, which jeopardised even the «experienced traveller», are then presented when the members of the 'Hospital' rescued, with the help of two dogs, an old man and a boy who risked dying of hypothermia, because they had been caught by a snowstorm whilst crossing the Alps on foot. The scene is represented in the illustration by Turner (fig. 2 of the Appendix), depicting the rescue of one of the two travellers at the Great St Bernard Pass, and visually conveying to the readers of *Italy, A Poem* both the Alpine background and the risky undertaking.

[130] Lady M.W. Montagu, Letter XLVII (Lyons, 25th September 1718), in *op. cit.*, p. 97.

In the following section of the poem, entitled "the Descent" and opened with «Turner's vignette of Napoleon crossing the Alps […], portraying the general as heroic conqueror»[131] (see fig. 3 in the Appendix), the lyrical voice offers a detailed description of the descent on 'his' almost personified «patient, diligent, and sure of foot» mule, «shunning the loose stone of the precipice […] with deliberate courage» (p. 17). He was also accompanied by a guide, who explained to his assisted that he had seen Napoleon and his army passing across those spots to reach the town of Marengo, which he later conquered. In the section entitled "The Alps", Rogers expresses his awe before these mountains by employing the emotional and aesthetic imagery of the sublime, as well as the term itself:

> Who first beholds *those everlasting clouds*,
> Seed-time and harvest, morning noon and night,
> Still where they were, *steadfast, immovable*;
> *Those mighty hills, so shadowy, so sublime*,
> As rather belong to Heaven than Earth —
> But instantly receives into the soul
> A sense, a feeling that he loses not
> […]
> *To me they seemed the barriers of a World,*
> *Saying, Thus far, no farther!* […]
> *My wandering thoughts my only company*,
> And they before me still, oft as I looked,
> *A strange delight* was mine, *mingled with fear*,
> A *wonder* as at things I had not heard of!
> (pp. 29-30, emphasis mine)

The very first line seems to quote, and certainly mirrors, P.B. Shelley's poem "Mont Blanc", which begins thus: «the everlasting universe of things / flows through the mind»[132], before the sight of the alpine ravine, an «awful scene» (II, 4) provoking in the gazer «a trance sublime and strange» (II, 24). The influence of Burke is evident in the above-quoted lines from *Italy, A Poem* too: «those mighty hills», i.e., the Alps, are «so sublime», and the poet «receives into the soul a sense, a feeling» of «strange delight […] mingled with fear», and «wonder» — precisely the effects of the sublime according to Burke: «astonishment, that state of the soul in which all motions are

[131] Campbell Orr, *op. cit.* https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/005813ar (Last Accessed: July 2022).
[132] P.B. Shelley, "Mont Blanc: Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni" (1816), I, 1-2, in *History of a Six Weeks' Tour Through Part of France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland*, cit., p.

suspended», and «the tendency to fill the mind with that delightful horror».[133] After a brief historical digression about Hannibal crossing the Alps with his army of Carthaginians and the elephants towards Rome, the lyrical voices states, as he is finally descending:

> Now the scene is changed;
> And over the Simplon, o'er the Splugen winds
> A path of pleasure […]
> In many a turn and traverse as it glides
> […]
> Yet thro' its fairy-course, go where it will,
> The torrents stop it not, the rugged rock
> Opens and lets it in; and on it runs.
> (pp. 30-31)

Mary Shelley recounts her crossing of the Alps through the pass of the via Mala, that is the Splügen Pass, corresponding to the Splügen Alp of the above-quoted passage from Rogers's *Italy*, in Letter V of *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, after having described the Rhine Falls in the valley of the Rhine (Zurich), another sublime view. When Mary Shelley first approaches the mountains, she states: «it is here that *the giant wall of the Alps shuts out the Swiss from Italy*. Before the Alp itself (the Splugen) is reached, another huge mountain rises to divide the countries [Switzerland and Italy]»,[134] closely recalling Rogers's depiction of the Alps as «*the Barriers of a World*, saying, Thus far, no farther!» (p. 30, emphasis mine).

In the immediately succeeding sentence, Mary Shelley observes that the passage was much easier to cross in 1840 than in the pre–Napoleonic period thanks to the construction of a «new and most marvellous road»: before that, she remarks, the Splugen and the Alps in general could only be «traversed by shepherds and travellers of the country on mules or on foot», as Rogers poignantly showed in the above-cited stanzas from *Italy*, *A Poem*, and as can be seen in the illustration by Turner (Cf. fig. 2 of the Appendix). Shelley writes:

> A few years ago, there was no path except across this mountain, which being very exposed, and difficult even to danger, the Splugen was only traversed by shepherds and travellers of the country on mules or on foot. But now, a new and most marvellous road

[133] Burke, *op. cit*., p. 41.
[134] M. Shelley, Letter V (13th July 1840), in *op. cit*., p. 56.

> has been constructed […] on the face of the precipice, now cut into the side, now perforated through the living rock into galleries: it passes, at intervals, from one side of the ravine to the other, and bridges of a single arch span the chasm.[135]

Similarly, Lady Morgan in *Italy* (1821) declares that the travelling conditions related to the crossing of the Alps were improved after the end of the Napoleonic Wars by the construction of new roads to such extent that the passage across the mountains was not remotely comparable to how it had been in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's times. In fact, «Lady Mary Wortley's, and Horace Walpole's [journey over them] in the eighteenth [century], are all described in terms which seem to exhaust the details of possible danger».[136] To prove her point, Lady Morgan then quotes the two most significant extracts from Lady Montagu's *Letters* in this regard, as she was the first woman traveller to describe such experience in letters published in the form of epistolary travelogue in 1763 (cf. sections 1.2, 1.2.1 of this thesis). Indeed, Lady Morgan's and Mary Shelley's accounts of the crossing of the Alps, like those of all the authors whose travelogues were written after the Napoleonic Wars, greatly differ from Lady Montagu's and Rogers's ones. It is worth noticing that Lady Morgan refers to Lady Montagu as «the brilliant ambassadress», even if the role of British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire belonged to her husband (the profession was denied to women) but, at the time, the term 'ambassadress' was commonly used with the meaning of «the wife of an ambassador». Nevertheless, given the proto-feminist stances of Lady Morgan and of Lady Montagu herself, and the latter's role as cultural mediator between the Britons and 'the Other', it might be possible that Lady Morgan intended it even in the modern sense of «a female personal messenger or representative».[137] In any case, Lady Montagu's two letters to a friend concerning the Alps, written in 1716, are cited thus:

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[135] Ibid.

[136] Lady Morgan, *op. cit*., p. 34.

[137] Both meanings are taken from "ambassadress, n.", in *OED Online*, cit. (Last Accessed: July 2022). The *OED* dates the appearance of the term in the first connotation to 1598 but with reference to the dawn personified («Dame Aurora now faithfull Ambassadresse Of the new borne day», in R. Carew, Herrings Tayle, qtd in ibid.) or, later, used in ironical sense («This scrupulous lady again chuses to send her pretty ambassadress on private business to Montgomery», in E. Fenwick, *Secresy* III.xv.137, 1795, qtd in ibid.).

> I intend to set out tomorrow," says the brilliant ambassadress to the Ottoman Porte, "and pass those *dreadful* Alps so much talked of. If I come to the bottom, you shall hear of me." "We began to ascend Mount Cenis, being carried on little seats of twisted osier fixed upon poles, upon men's shoulders".[138]

When a frightened Lady Morgan reached the Alps, however, she found an entirely different situation than the one portrayed by Lady Montagu, resulting from a «broad, smooth, magnificent road […] carried over the mightiest acclivities of the mightiest regions» (cf. Mary Shelley's above-quoted description of the «most marvellous road […] on the face of a precipice»). Therefore, with Lady Morgan's great relief, «all that had been danger, difficulty, and suffering but twenty years back, was now safe, facile, enjoyable; secure beyond the chance of accident, sublime beyond the reach of thought».[139]

Notwithstanding the impact of the mutated practical travel conditions, the accounts by Lady Montagu, Samuel Rogers, Lady Morgan, and Mary Shelley all explicitly employ, in a very similar way, Edmund Burke's topical imagery and terminology of the sublime to present the Alps to their readers. In *Rambles*, Mary Shelley even compares the evocative scenery to a painting, testifying to the aesthetic quality of both the landscape and her own style of writing, which the scholar Camilla Campbell Orr has defined, in relation to Rogers's *Italy, A Poem*, a «skill in constructing word-pictures» (cf. 2.1). Shelley depicts the «*grandeur*» of the Splügen Alp, and the crossing of the border between Switzerland and Italy thus:

> It may be imagined *how singular and sublime this pass is*, in its naked simplicity. After proceeding about a mile, you look back and see the country you had left, through the narrow opening of the gigantic crags, *like a painting in this cloud-reaching frame*. *It is giddy work to look down over the parapet that protects the road* […].
>
> *It was a dreary-looking mountain that we had to cross, by zigzags*, at first long, then diminishing as we ascended […]; *we were immersed in a snow-storm* [sic] towards the summit. *Naked and sublime*, the mountain stretched out around; and dim mists, chilling blasts, and driving snow added to *its grandeur*. We reached the dogana at the top; and here our things were examined.[140]

This «naked and sublime» pass, that Mary Shelley, her son, and their travel companions «had to cross by zigzags», is comparable with Rogers's representation

[138] Lady M.W. Montagu, quoted in Lady Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
[139] Lady Morgan, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.
[140] M. Shelley, *op. cit.*, p. 56, emphasis mine.

of the Splügen in terms of «many a turn and traverse as it glides» in *Italy, A Poem* (p. 30). Moreover, the sensation of fear felt by Mary Shelley from the safety of the road protected by parapets, which overlooks the precipice («it is giddy work to look down over the parapet»; «it was a dreary-looking mountain that we had to cross»), recalls the «strange delight […], mingled with fear» (p. 30) experienced by the lyrical voice of Rogers's poem. Lady Morgan too, in *Italy*, recounts: «it is in vain that the precipice [is] skreened [*sic*] — still the […] the breath is suspended, while *danger, painted in the un-mastered savagery of remote scenes*, creates an ideal and proximate peril», and «*masses like these sublime deformities* […] in their contemplation *reduce man to what he is — an atom*»[141]. Interesting enough, like Mary Shelley, Lady Morgan also uses a metaphor and a terminology belonging to the pictorial field, to depict the idea of danger in front of «these sublime deformities», «painted in the un-mastered savagery of remote scenes»: in this extract from Lady Morgan's *Italy* we find a sort of Romantic personification of Nature, seen as a painter, though «un-mastered» — a term that, in its meaning "not mastered", can be interpreted in various ways, such as "uncontrolled, unrestrained",[142] related to the «savagery» of these scenes, but also as "without a master, untaught, naturally gifted", or unrivalled by human power, since such an overwhelming view «reduce man to what he is — an atom» according to Lady Morgan, and to Mary Shelley. Indeed, Shelley in the above-quoted passage from *Rambles* states that the sight of the Swiss landscape she is leaving behind, seen «through the narrow opening of the gigantic crags» of the mountain, looks «like a painting in this cloud-reaching frame».

All the reactions described in detail by Rogers, Lady Morgan, and Mary Shelley before the Alps evoke Burke's characterization of the sublime as «productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling»,[143] namely a mixture of extreme terror and extreme delight, provided that the object of the sublime is admired from a position of sufficient safety. As a matter of fact, according to Burke,

[141] Lady Morgan, *op. cit*., p 39, emphasis mine. Additionally, in Letter V, Mary Shelley echoes Lady Morgan's words and feelings just before reaching the Splügen Pass and the Alps, when she describes the cataract of the Rhine Falls in Zurich: «the sense of its power, that would dash us to atoms without altering the tenor of its way, [...] gives a shiver to the frame even while we gaze in security from its verge [...]. As painting cannot picture forth motion, so words are incapable of expressing commotion in the soul», in M. Shelley, *op. cit*., p. 51.
[142] "Unmastered, adj.", in *OED Online*, cit. (Last Accessed: July 2022).
[143] Burke, *op. cit*., p. 58.

«when danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are Amply terrible; but at certain distances, and with cert ain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful».[144]

A final point must be discussed in relation to the three authors here compared, and their descriptions of the crossing of the Alps. If their comments on the sublimity of «those mighty hills», in Rogers's words, are comparable and even almost analogous in several parts, an essential difference can be found between Rogers's and Lady Morgan's accounts, and that of Mary Shelley in *Rambles*: whereas both Rogers and Lady Morgan provide historical references to Hannibal and Napoleon Bonaparte, courageous men who faced the elements and the dangers of the passage by leading their armies across the perilous Alps, Mary Shelley's travelogue does not cite either of them on this occasion, not even with respect to the construction of the road. Instead, she uses an impersonal form: «the road *has been constructed*». In the essay "Nature, the Picturesque, and the Sublime in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's Travel Narratives", devoted to the representation of the aesthetic concepts of the sublime and the picturesque — codified by Burke and Gilpin respectively (cf. 1.1.3) — in Mary Shelley's *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* and *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, Antonella Braida has analysed Shelley's depiction of the Alps connected with the sublime, and her opinion of Napoleon in the first travel account, where «the narrator's descriptions of the sublime thus merge and acquire both a pictorial and a political dimension»[145]. Indeed, contrary to *Rambles*, in *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* Mary Shelley not only mentions Napoleon but also deplores the destruction of the northern territories of France and the ransacking of people's possessions carried out by him and his army, which led her to expresses the pacifist views that she would maintain throughout her life: «the distress of the inhabitants, whose houses had been burned, […] and all their wealth destroyed, has given a sting to my detestation of war, which none can feel who have not travelled through a country […] wasted by this plague, which, in his pride, man inflicts upon his fellow».[146] In the Preface of *Rambles*, despite her active support of the *Risorgimento* cause, Shelley employs

[144] Ibid., p. 60.
[145] Braida, *op. cit*., p. 418.
[146] M. and P.B. Shelley, *History of a Six Week's Tour*, cit., p. 19, quoted in ibid.

practically the same words when expressing her (vain) hope that a peaceful mediation could be found to avoid a conflict between Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire: «peace is a lovely thing. It is horrible to image the desolation of war; the cottage burnt, the labour of the husbandman destroyed — outrage and death».[147]

Alongside the aversion toward Napoleon, considered the incarnation of the "human sublime"[148] but in a most negative light, Mary and P.B. Shelley viewed the Swiss Alps as the utmost representation of the sublime in its philosophical and aesthetic meaning, theorised by Burke. As noted also by Jeanne Moskal, quoted in Braida, in Switzerland and its Alpine scenery «the Shelleys focus on the forms of sublimity and power that outlast Napoleon: the literary genius of Rousseau and the natural sublimity of Lake Geneva and Mont Blanc»,[149] depicted in pictorial and aesthetic terms inspired both by Gilpin's *Three Essays on the Picturesque* and Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. The Shelleys' view of Napoleon is rather the opposite of that expressed by Samuel Rogers and Lady Morgan when recounting their crossing of the Swiss Alps towards Italy: despite referring to England's enemy and not failing to mention his faults, both authors directly or indirectly also express admiration for his victories and military capacity, representative of the "human sublime". Lady Morgan, after having descended from the Alps and having reached the plains of Lombardy, the first sight of Italy, reminds her readers that Napoleon was directed there with his army to conquer the country, and compares his soldiers to «an Alpine torrent»:

> From such a site as this Napoleon Bonaparte, at the head of an ill-appointed, long suffering, and neglected army, pointed to the plains of Lombardy, and promised victory. His soldiers […] rushed like an Alpine torrent through crags and precipices […], and won […] Italy, in two briefs and splendid campaigns […]. Four armies, of the mightiest

[147] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., p. XIII. Moskal also claims that Mary Shelley, in the Preface of *Rambles*, purposely refrains to name Napoleon as «the source of the Italian, American, and even French "aspiration for free institutions"», presenting England instead as an example to be followed in this regard. According to Moskal, «many Britons particularly distrusted Italian nationalism because they loathed Napoleon, who in the judgment of many, had generated the Risorgimento by giving the Italians a taste of loyalties larger than regional ones» (Moskal, "Travel Writing", cit., pp. 247-248). However, I argue that the reason why Shelley did not mention Napoleon in *Rambles* is rather to be found in his having paved the way for the subsequent Austrian dominion of Italy, and in Shelley's above-quoted reminiscence of the devastation he caused to the French inhabitants, than to the supposed link between Napoleon and Italian nationalism for her British audience.
[148] Braida, *op. cit*., p. 418.
[149] Moskal, "Travel Writing", cit., p. 244, qtd in Braida, *op. cit*., p. 421.

> coalition the world had ever seen united against the independence of a single nation [Italy], were swept away, as the snows of Mont Blanc are scattered by its eddying whirlwinds, and the peace dictated at Leoben, attests the military genius of the young commander, who was one day to number […] greater triumphs achieved, than any captain of any age can boast since the time of Alexander.[150]

Rogers in turn gives voice to similar remarks by means of the lyrical voice's guide in *Italy, A Poem*, also during the descent from the Alps in the direction of Italy:

> […] Then my Guide,
> Lowering his voice, addressed me: "Thro' this Gap
> […] The armed files […], night and day, were seen
> Winding from cliff to cliff in loose array
> To conquer at Marengo. Tho' long since,
> Well I remember how I met them here,
> […] And how Napoleon, he himself, no less,
> Wrapt in his cloak — I could not be deceived —
> Reined in his horse, […]
> 'Twas there; and down along the brink he led
> To Victory!
> (p. 18)

This scene is visually portrayed by the already mentioned illustration by Turner, shown in fig. 3 of the Appendix. The vignette conveys both Napoleon in the foreground as he leads his army toward Marengo for the conquest of Italy — marking the beginning of the subjection of the country to the French and then Austrian rule —, and, in the background, the sublime natural scenery of the snowy Alps that Mary and Percy Bysshe Shelley regarded as «the solution to human destruction and war».[151] As previously stated, in Mary Shelley's account of the crossing of the Alps in *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, her sense of admiration and «delightful horror», in Burke's terms, are limited to the sublime in nature, without any political reference. Thus, if in *History of a Six Week's Tour* «the narrator's descriptions of the sublime […] merge and acquire both a pictorial and a political dimension»,[152] in *Rambles* only the pictorial one prevails in relation to the Alpine landscape.

To conclude, in the letter that relates her arrival in Italy, Mary Shelley depicts the crossing of the Alps by underlining the improved travel conditions of the

[150] Lady Morgan, *op. cit*., p. 45.
[151] Braida, *op. cit*., p. 421.
[152] Ibid., p. 418.

passage, like Lady Morgan did in *Italy* more than twenty years before: such conditions were undoubtedly very different from those experienced by Lady Montagu and the lyrical voice of Rogers's *Italy, A Poem* (identifiable with Rogers himself). At the same time, Mary Shelley shares with Rogers and Lady Morgan the aesthetic terminology of the sublime, codified in England by Edmund Burke, applied to their representation of the Alps. Two vignettes by Turner from Rogers's poem serve to the purpose of illustrating both the dangers of crossing the Alps prior the end of the Napoleonic Wars (cf. fig. 2), and the sublimity of the landscape. However, Napoleon — portrayed in the second vignette here included (fig. 3) — is mentioned by Rogers and Lady Morgan but not by Mary Shelley, who in the Preface of *Rambles in Germany and Italy* stresses her convinced opposition to war.

The remaining part of Letter V recounts Mary Shelley's and her travel companions' much-awaited arrival in Italy, after crossing the border of Switzerland. The scholar Giulia Bocchio, in her article about Mary Shelley's representation of Italy in *Rambles* (the object of analysis of the ensuing paragraphs), states:

> This sense of liberation and rebirth [upon Shelley's return to Italy after many years] becomes particularly manifest when she describes the crossing of the Alps. For all northern travellers who did not embark from Marseille or Nice, the Simplon Pass and the Mont Cenis were the only way to access the Peninsula. Therefore, symbolically the mountain range of the Alps represented the ultimate border between the cold, rigid, industrious North and the warm, sensuous, bucolic South.[153]

2.4 «Ever-vernal Italy»: Mary Shelley's Paradise Lost and Regained

Mary Shelley's account of her arrival in Italy and her journey from Chiavenna to Milan is contained from the last part of Letter V to Letter XII of the first volume of *Rambles in Germany and Italy*. Readers and critics alike cannot fail (and indeed have not failed) to notice that, in her representation of the country throughout the two volumes, Mary Shelley consistently draws from and contributes to the literary trope of Italy as a Paradise. All the scholars who have studied *Rambles* confirm this view, deeply rooted in the imaginary collective of British travellers/tourists to Italy and still

[153] G. Bocchio, "Going South: Mary Shelley's representation of Italy in *Rambles in Germany and Italy*", *de genere. Rivista di studi letterari, postcoloniali e di genere*, n. 21, 2021, pp. 11-22, p. 17.

very much alive today as a common idealised vision of the Italian *peninsula* from the perspective of English-speaking countries, especially that of Anglo-American society, who perceives Italy as a heavenly place for the climate, food, art, and not least for its beautiful landscapes. As discussed in 1.1.4, the nineteenth century was no exception to this common view, since «traditional representations of the *Bel paese* depicted Italy as an idealised place of safety and comfort, a remote spot untouched by the Industrial Revolution; […] in perfect harmony with nature».[154]

In the first letter of *Rambles*, Mary Shelley declares, anticipating the central theme of her travelogue: «I was about to break a chain that had long held me — cross the Channel — and wander far towards *a country which memory painted as a paradise*».[155] The wording of this statement («a country […] painted as a paradise») is emblematic and indeed carefully constructed: the nineteenth-century appreciation of Italy was fostered by the eighteenth-century Gilpian idea of the *picturesque*, and then significantly enhanced by several Romantic authors, such as Samuel Rogers and Lord Byron, who devoted their seminal literary works to the country. At the same time, both Rogers and Byron, among others, recognised the dichotomy between the glories of the past and Italy's present state, and that between the natural beauty of its landscape and the degraded conditions of its inhabitants or of some aspects of its cities. Ironically, as Malcom Andrews argues, Gilpin's picturesque gave a new impulse to inland British tourism during the years of the Napoleonic Wars, but it was actually based on «idealised *foreign* models — Roman pastoral poetry or the seventeenth-century paintings of Claude and Salvator Rosa».[156] The first refers, «in particular to the Roman Augustan poets, Virgil and Horace»[157] with their pastoral works composed in the I century BC: Virgil's *Eclogues* (also called *Bucolics*), especially the fourth one about a mythical Golden Age under the reign of Saturn, and the *Georgics*, and Horace's *Epodes*, to which must be added Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for its own detailed description of the Golden Age, devoid of old age, sickness, decay, and death. Virgil's *Bucolics* also contain another classical prototype of the

[154] Bocchio, *op. cit*., p. 18.
[155] M. Shelley, Letter I (13th June 1840), in *op. cit.*, p. 2, emphasis mine.
[156] M. Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque. Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989, p. 3.
[157] Ibid., p. 5.

locus amoenus: the Greek region called Arcadia, mythicised as a pastoral place of harmony between men and nature, governed by Pan.

This ideal of bliss is 'reversed' in a famous Latin phrase that gives the title to two sixteenth-century paintings, one by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, known as 'il Guercino', where the phrase figures for the first time, and the other by Nicolas Poussin — *Et in Arcadia Ego*. In both paintings, the phrase appears as an inscription in a tomb, read and pointed at by some shepherds. It can be translated either literally as "Even in Arcadia, there I am", in which case the "I" is believed to be Death personified, or roughly (albeit this not supported by the Latin formulation) as "I too was born/lived in Arcadia", meaning that the deceased too once was part of the pastoral idyll: in any case, the inscription has been interpreted as a *memento mori* or *vanitas*, reminding the spectators that death is present in Arcadia too, and cannot be escaped. In the seventeenth century, Goethe translated *Et in Arcadia Ego* into German ("Auch ich in Arkadien") to recall his journey to Italy, applying the "I" to himself, and Arcadia to Italy but without the disturbing presence of Death, meaning only "I, too, was in the land of joy and beauty".[158] As a matter of fact, the landscape paintings by Claude Lorrain, Salvator Rosa, and Nicolas Poussin, which served as a second model for Gilpin's idea of the picturesque, actually depict sublime or beautiful idealised views directly inspired by the Italian scenery, imitating its characteristics, atmosphere, and weather. Later on, John Milton also «contributed to the formation of the Picturesque tastes», and his «descriptions of Eden in *Paradise Lost* […] were highly influential».[159] All these models, besides being applied to the English countryside by British authors and travellers on a national level, came to be re-attributed to their original source, that is, Italy, from about the end of the Napoleonic Wars onwards. Samuel Rogers wrote *Italy, A Poem* in the wake of this literary and artistic canon.

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[158] The interpretations of *Et in Arcadia Ego* (both the locution and the homonymous paintings) can be found in any encyclopaedia or art history manual, but all the information here reported, including that about Goethe and his translation of the phrase, were taken from E. Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition", in Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1995, pp. 295-307. Moreover, according to Panofsky, Poussin could have been inspired by Jacopo Sannazzaro's *Arcadia*, set in Tuscany, for the setting of his painting, testifying to the close and consolidated link between Arcadia and Italy.

[159] Ibid., p. 12.

Mary Shelley herself was both indebted to the literary tradition of the aforementioned classical poets, and to that of the modern or contemporary English ones, from Milton to Rogers, as well as to Italian poetry, epitomised by her beloved Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Her view of Italy as a Paradise is evident from the very first page of *Rambles,* i.e., from the epigraph, consisting of a quotation from Gian Battista Niccolini's drama *Arnaldo da Brescia* (cf. 1.4) that immediately introduces the theme and the tone of Shelley's travel account about Italy. The complete epigraph reads as follows:

> O vedovate da perpetuo gelo
> Terre, e d'incerto dì il mesto sorriso
> Addio! *** Questo petto anelo
> Scosse di gioia un palpito improvviso,
> Quando il Tiranno splendido del cielo
> Mi rivelò d'Italia il paradiso — Niccolini

These lines describe the moment that immediately follows the crossing of the Alps and the arrival on the Italian ground, expressing the complete and sudden joy provoked by the change of scene, from the Alpine landscape "widowed by perennial frost" («vedovate da perpetuo gelo / Terre»), to the "heavenly sight" of Italy («d'Italia il paradiso»). Likewise, after the crossing of the Alps through the Splügen Pass, in Letter V Mary Shelley observes that «all Italian travellers know what it is, after toiling up the bleak, bare, northern, Swiss side of an Alp, to descend towards ever-vernal Italy».[160] Therefore, *il Bel Paese* is depicted as a mythical Golden Age in which *ver erat æternum* ("spring was eternal", the exact meaning of the compound adjective «ever-vernal», derived from *ver*, the Latin word for "spring"), in Ovid's words[161], as a pastoral Arcadia or an Edenic Paradise on earth, in line with the above-quoted epigraph. This view is further developed in the following description of the scenery before Mary Shelley upon her arrival in Italy, which conveys all the characteristics of the classical *locus amoenus* (a lush vegetation adorned with beautiful flowers, the water, clean air, and a general idyllic atmosphere of peacefulness and serenity):

[160] Shelley, *op. cit*., p. 60.
[161] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I, 107.

> The rhododendron, in thick bushes, in full bloom, first adorned the mountain sides; then, pine forests; then, chestnut groves; the mountain was cleft into woody ravishes; the waterfalls scattered their spray and their gracious melody; *flowery and green, and clothed in radiance, and gifted with plenty, Italy opened before us*. *Thus*, […] *after dreary old age and the sickening pass of death, does the saint open his eyes on Paradise*.[162]

Albeit the metaphor of Italy as a Paradise on earth was a literary *topos* at the time of Mary Shelley's writing, it also acquired a personal relevance for her as Italy was the place where she spent her youth with her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley from 1818 until his "death by water" in 1822 (cf. 1.4): in the above-quoted extract from Letter I of *Rambles*, she defined Italy as «a country that *memory* painted as a paradise». At the same time, it is the country where not only her husband died (in the Gulf of La Spezia) and was buried (in the "Cimitero Acattolico" in Rome, where Keats is also buried), but also two of their children, baby Clara of dysentery in 1818, in Venice, and little William of malaria at three years old in 1819, in Rome. Therefore, in the light of the classical association between Italy and Arcadia, the locution *Et in Arcadia Ego* of the paintings by Guercino and Poussin, a *memento mori*, might be applied to the (auto)biographical events that blighted Mary Shelley's youthful life in Italy, and that she herself frequently recalls in *Rambles*, as will be discussed in the following sections. Yet, in spite of these tragic deaths, when Mary Shelley first returns to Italy as a widow almost twenty years later she stills regards it as both a 'Paradise Lost' and a 'Paradise Regained". Indeed, her description of «ever-vernal Italy» echoes Milton's portrayal of Eden in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, a poem much loved by both the Shelleys, from Satan's point of view: «so on he fares, and to the border comes / of Eden, where delicious Paradise […] crowns with her enclosure green, / […] Insuperable height of loftiest shade, / Cedar, and pine, […] A sylvan scene».[163] Chiavenna, the first town that Mary Shelley, her son, and their travel

[162] Shelley, *op. cit*., p. 60, emphasis mine.

[163] J. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book IV, lines 131-140, in S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012, pp. 2005-2006. The connection between Rambles and Milton's Paradise Lost has been noticed by several critics. For instance, A. Braida contends, with particular ref. to the sublime, that in Shelley's travelogue «landscape is filtered through literature, particularly through an instance of poetry most often associated with the sublime: Milton's *Paradise Lost*. […]. In *Rambles*, the narrator chooses Satan's journey as a means to convey her feelings at being carried along the Danube on a steamboat, and on the Lake of Gmunden. […] The third section of Rambles, devoted for the most part to the journey through Italy, is characterized by an increased use of poetic references not only to Milton but also to Dante» (Braida, *op. cit.*, pp. 426-427).

companions encounter after crossing the border of Italy, is a picturesque 'sylvan scene': «situated in a fertile valley at the foot of the Splugen — it is growing in rich and sunny vegetation».[164] Furthermore, some scholars (amongst whom can be counted Antonella Braida and Giulia Bocchio) have compared Mary Shelley's journey from Germany to Italy to Dante's one from *Inferno* to *Paradiso* in *The Divine Comedy*, frequently quoted by Shelley in *Rambles* — «a redeeming path that could lead her from darkness to light, from illness to health and from desolation to peace»[165]. For instance, for her Lake Como is a personal Paradise Regained, and a Dantesque *Paradiso* imbued with her memories of Percy Bysshe Shelley and with the perceived presence of the spirits of the beloved dead (cf. 2.4.1). Dante was also a fundamental reference for Percy Bysshe Shelley, according to whom his poetry is a «bridge thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and the ancient world»,[166] and a traveller *par excellence*, since he journeyed into the three reigns of the afterlife (*Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*): as Gian Mario Anselmi contends in his article about the influence of Italian literature on P.B. Shelley, «il "poeta-profeta" [Shelley] è anche il "viaggiatore" per eccellenza, colui che, come già Dante […], sa penetrare nell'abisso dell'inferno umano per tentare di ritrovare il bandolo di una umanità redenta, […] nel segno e nel sogno di un Amore universale».[167]

Finally, Camilla Campbell Orr argues in relation to Naples, the final stage of Shelley's second journey, and the end of her travelogue, that «now Paradise has been regained, a paradise not so much like the one described not by Dante or Milton, but invoked by Tasso or Ariosto in their descriptions of earthly delight».[168] However, Shelley's account of her 1840 journey is on the contrary either directly inspired by or

[164] Shelley, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
[165] Bocchio, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
[166] P.B. Shelley, *Defence of Poetry*, quoted in G.M. Anselmi, "Shelley e la tradizione dell'umanesimo italiano", in L.M. Cristafulli Jones (ed.), *Shelley e l'Italia*, Napoli: Liguori editore, 1998, pp. 55-67, p. 57. On the relationship between the Shelleys and Dante, and Dante's presence in *Rambles*, cf. A. Braida, "Mary Shelley in Italy: Reading Dante and the Creation of an Anglo-Italian Identity", in *L'analisi linguistica e letteraria*, vol. 27, n. 3, 2019, pp. 107-118, and the following section 2.4.1 of this dissertation.
[167] Anselmi, *op. cit.*, p. 64. Anselmi also argues: «Shelley ha fatto proprio questo archetipo di "viaggio" dantesco che costantemente ne possiamo trovare tracce vigorose e geniali nelle sue poesie», among which he enumerates *Julian and Maddalo*, *The Sensitive Plant*, *Adonais*, and *Epipsychidion* (in ibid., pp. 64-65). The same applies to Mary Shelley and the vast majority of her literary works (novels, short stories, and obviously her two travelogues), imbued with the theme of the journey.
[168] Campbell Orr, *op. cit.*

closely evocative of Milton's Earthly Paradise in several points, and explicitly referring to Dante's heavenly *Paradiso* in others, as much as very similar to the accounts concerning the same subject by Samuel Rogers and Lady Morgan, among other authors.

In *Italy, A Poem*, the lyrical voice (a projection of Rogers himself) experiences the same sensations and impressions of Mary Shelley when she crossed the «bleak, bare, northern, Swiss side» the Alps and finally reached «ever-vernal Italy». The section entitled "The Alps", that has been analysed in the previous paragraph, is concluded with the lyrical voice's arrival in Italy after the perilous crossing of the Alps on foot. Following Rogers's digression about Hannibal, he exclaims:

> […] But now 'tis passed,
> That turbulent Chaos; and the promised land
> Lies at my feet is all its loveliness!
> To him who starts up from a terrible dream,
> And lo, the sun is shining, and the lark
> Singing around for joy, to him is not
> Such sudden ravishment as now I feel
> At the first glimpses of fair Italy.
> (p. 31)

The initial «but» signals a turning point and a change both in the rhythm of the narration, and in its theme. Then, the dichotomy between the landscape of the Alps and that of Italy is marked by a series of antitheses and contrasting images: «that turbulent Chaos» is juxtaposed with «the promised land», a clear biblical reference which confirms the vision of Italy as an Earthly Paradise for «its loveliness», thus the concept is reiterated in the ensuing line. Subsequently, a simile associates someone who has just awaken from a nightmare («a terrible dream») and finds «the sun shining, and the lark singing around for joy» to the lyrical voice's own joy upon the arrival in Italy, but this comparison is not sufficient to convey the «sudden ravishment» that he feels when he sees for the first time «fair Italy». Such sensation may instead be compared to the epigraph of *Rambles*, by Niccolini («questo petto [...] / Scosse di gioia un palpito improvviso» at the sight of Paradisiacal Italy), and to Mary Shelley's own account.

Further evidence of the trope of Italy as a Paradise, and in particular of its link with Milton's Eden, is provided by Lady Morgan: towards the end of the

section/letter entitled "Passage of the Alps", when she reaches the plains of Lombardy after the descent, she quotes precisely the lines from Book IV of *Paradise Lost* devoted to the depiction of the Earthly Paradise, seen for the first time by Satan in the form of a cormorant, sitting on the Tree of Life. Like Shelley and Rogers, Lady Morgan too proceeds gradually to picture the surrounding landscape:

> An undulating region of mountains spread round on every side […]; until gradually the tintless surface of the soil exhibited spots of black earth, a *patch of vegetation*, a clump of *underwood*, a tree putting forth its *nipped buds*, a hut, a sheepfold, a vine. Winter blasts softened into *vernal gales*, and the doubling of a bold projecting promontory revealed *the sunny plains of Italy*:
>
> *"To all delight of human sense exposed,*
> *Nature's whole wealth; nay, more — an [*sic*] heaven on earth."*[169]

The similarity with the already quoted passage from Letter V of *Rambles* is evident, and the very terms used by Lady Morgan in this extract from *Italy* recall those employed by Mary Shelley: Lady Morgan's «a patch of vegetation, a clump of underwood» call to mind Shelley's «pines forests» and «woody ravines», the «vernal gales» her «ever-vernal Italy», and «the sunny plains of Italy» are comparable to the «sunny vegetation» that Shelley admires at Chiavenna. While it is impossible to determine whether or not Mary Shelley had in mind or «in the carriage», as she stated in the Preface of *Rambles*, «the works of those who have passed through the same country», i.e., the travelogues by Rogers and Lady Morgan, it is certain that they all shared the same collective imagery about Italy: all three authors associated its landscape with the Golden Age, an Arcadian *locus amoenus* (cf. Lady Morgan's «a hut, a sheepfold, a vine») and an Edenic 'garden of delight': a «heaven on earth», in Milton's terms, adorned with «Nature's whole wealth».

Nevertheless, as argued by Giulia Bocchio, «the metaphorical representation of Italy as Paradise in *Rambles* is not limited to an aesthetic rendering of the landscape […]. For Mary Shelley, the symbolic association Italy = Paradise acquires a strong autobiographical meaning as […] her own private safe place»[170]. In fact, the arrival

[169] Lady Morgan, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44, emphasis mine. The quotation refers to J. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV, 206-207.
[170] Bocchio, *op. cit.*, p.

at the local inn at Chiavenna revives Mary Shelley's youthful memories of when she had stayed there many years ago, with P.B. Shelley. The room and its objects transport her into the past «by magic», like someone who wakes up in a room that is not his own at home but in a foreign setting, and is able to tell exactly where he is (cf. Rogers's above-cited simile about an analogous image concerning an awakening in the morning in a different context to the habitual one): «every traveller can tell how each country bears a distinctive mark in the mere setting out of the room of an inn, which would enable a man who had visited it before, if, transported by magic, he opened his eyes in the morning in a strange bed», to recognise «to what country he had been removed».[171] Shelley concludes her letter with the conflicting sensations aroused in her by the sight of the objects of the room at the inn, which evoke the recollection of her «young and happy days», producing «a mixture of pleasure and pain»:

> Window-curtains, the very wash-hand stands, they were all such as had been familiar to me in Italy long, long ago. I had not seen them since those young and happy days. Strange and indescribable emotions invaded me; recollections, long forgotten, arose fresh and strong by mere force of association, produced by those objects being presented to my eye, inspiring a mixture of pleasure and pain, almost amounting to agony.[172]

The next morning, Mary Shelley and her travel companions proceed toward Como, the official destination of their journey to Italy.

2.4.1 Lake Como

The very first argument of the letter that opens part I, vol. 1 of *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, dated 13th of June 1840, as indicated in the synoptic head titles, is the «project for spending the Summer on the Banks of the Lake of Como». Accordingly, Mary Shelley informs her unidentified addressee (any reader of the travelogue, thus the audience, and/or Samuel Rogers according to M. Ożarka: cf. 2.1): «my son and his two friends have decided on spending their summer vacation on the shores of the Lake of Como — there to study for their degree […]. They

[171] M. Shelley, Letter V (13th June 1840), in *op. cit*., p. 60.
[172] Ibid., pp. 60-61.

wish me to accompany them, and I gladly consent»[173]. A few pages later she repeats: «the lake of Como is our destination»[174] and illustrates the route that she and her travel companions are set to follow to reach it, planned by one of Percy Florence's Cambridge friends. As Shelley notices, the planned route is not the usual one for travellers directed to Northern Italy (Lombardy and Como/Milan in particular), that is, the itinerary via France and Switzerland across Geneva. Conversely, the project ideated by one of Percy's university friends consists of reaching Como via Germany down the Moselle and the Rhine by boat, arriving at Zurich by train, and then proceeding regularly by carriage across the Alps: «I was to reach Como via Franckfort [*sic*]; this is something like going to the Line by the North Pole; but I am assured that the journey will be the more delightful and novel», states Mary Shelley.[175]

The actual journey from Chiavenna to Como is related in the final part of Letter V: the descriptions of the stay at Albergo Grande at Cadenabbia, the surrounding scenery, and the excursions on the Lake are contained in Letters VI-VIII, while the visits to the villas overlooking it, e.g., Villa Serbelloni, Villa Giulia, and Villa Sommariva, in Letters VII-IX. Considering that the letters of Part I are twelve in total, and that the ones centred upon Lake Como are placed exactly in the middle, Mary Shelley's account of the lake may be regarded as the climax of both the 1840 journey, and Part I of the first volume — if not the climax of the whole volume. This is demonstrated by the title given to the Italian translation of the first volume, *A zonzo sul lago di Como*, part of a broader project dedicated to the lake and the places around it as seen and described by Mary Shelley (cf. 1.4). The latter, her son, and his two Cambridge friends spent there eight weeks, from the 14th of July to the 9th of September 1840.

The central position that Lake Como occupies in the travelogue reflects the importance it held for the narrator and author of *Rambles*: scholars Antonella Braida and Valentina Varinelli both claim that Lake Como was a special place for Mary Shelley, particularly dear to her because she had visited it with Percy Bysshe

[173] Ibid., p. 2.
[174] Ibid., p.8.
[175] Ibid., p. 9.

Shelley in 1818, after Milan, and in that occasion too it was the main destination of their journey to Italy (it is noteworthy that Mary Shelley's journey in 1840 followed the opposite route, from Como to Milan via Bergamo). According to Varinelli, the relevance of Lake Como in Mary Shelley's life is attested by the fact that the lake occurs in several of her fictional and non-fictional works, besides *Rambles in Germany and Italy*. For instance, in the 1831 and definitive edition of *Frankenstein*, Lake Como is the ideal but never-reached destination of Victor Frankenstein's and his bride Elizabeth Lavenza's honeymoon (Elizabeth is murdered by the creature on their wedding night). Conversely, in the dystopic and prophetic novel *The Last Man* (1826), set in the twenty-first century, the only survivors of a plague that killed the rest of mankind take refuge in a villa on the Lake, «a paradisial retreat» until the protagonist's son dies, a reminiscence of the death of Mary Shelley's son William in Italy.[176] These two representations symbolise Shelley's ambivalent attitude towards Lake Como: in her eyes, it is both a Dantesque Paradise, and a source of worry caused by her fear that during the excursions on the Lake a boat accident might prove fatal to her son as it happened to his father Percy Bysshe Shelley on board of his boat *Don Juan*. Indeed, Mary Shelley concludes Letter V with an invocation: «I pray that no ruin, arising from that fatal element [water], may befal [*sic*] me here», and the following letter by explicitly stating, in regard to her son Percy's little boat: «a tragedy has darkened my life: […] the fears which are its offspring […] haunt me perpetually […]. The arrival of the boat, you see, has dashed my spirits».[177]

The party of travellers reached their destination by steamer from Colico («it [the Lake of Como] is divided into two lakes — one taking a more eastern course to Lecco; the other, to Como»)[178] via Bellaggio and Cadenabbia, where they spent a few days. In Letter VI Shelley states her difficulty of putting into words her impressions of Lake Como, evoking the 'picturesque' — here not so much in the strict Gilpian sense of the term but in the broader connotation of painting as the preferred means of representing the landscape, for which words are unfit or

[176] V. Varinelli, "Return to Paradise: Lake Como in the Works of Mary Shelley", *L'analisi linguistica e letteraria*, vol. 3 (2019), pp. 71-80, pp. 75-76.
[177] M. Shelley, Letter V (14th July 1840), in *op. cit*., p. 63; Letter VI (17th July 1840), p. 74.
[178] Ibid., p. 62.

insufficient: «descriptions with difficulty convey definite impressions, and any picture or print of our part of the lake will better than my words describe the scenery around us».[179] The same applies to the view of the Alps in the morning:

> I wish I could by my imperfect words bring before you […] every minute peculiarity, every varying hue, of this matchless scene. […] When I rise in the morning and look out, our own side is bathed in sunshine, and we see the opposite mountains raising their black masses in sharp relief against the eastern sky, […] on the fair lake beneath […].
>
> Here then we are in peace, with a feeling of being settled for a year, instead of two months.[180]

Letters VII and VIII recount the excursions on «the divine lake»,[181] as Mary Shelley defined it, in a most significant way. In the first letter, Shelley depicts the scenery that surrounds Villa Serbelloni and Villa Sommariva, on the banks of Lake Como, by citing the 'picturesque' in Gilpin's terms, this time (for a more detailed explanation of Gilpin's picturesque, cf. section 1.1.3): in it, the sublime is intertwined with the beautiful, and nature presents all «the ingredients of landscape» quoted by Gilpin in his essay *On Picturesque Travel* (trees, rocks, broken-grounds, woods, rivers, lakes, plains, vallies, mountains, and distances), along with a «ruined tower» that indeed Gilpin listed as one of the epitomes of a picturesque landscape. To sum up his view, according to him the picturesque traveller «pursues beauty in every shape; through nature, through art; and all its various arrangements in form»[182]. Mary Shelley's description of the scenery around villa Serbelloni and Villa Sommariva conveys all these elements: «to the north, […] the descent is somewhat gradual to the *lake,* and *the hill is cut into terraces*, planted with vines and olives», «to the south, […] *crags and pinnacles*, crowned with rich vegetation, and adorned by *majestic trees*» — «these *picturesque* precipices and ravines; […] it is impossible to imagine anything more *beautiful* than the sight, looking down on the clear deep *lake*, and its high *rocky* barriers», a «*tower* […] *now in ruin*», a «graceful *wood*», «the huge *mountains* surmounting Varenna, and, softened by distance […] torrent falls», «a mysterious fountain,

[179] M. Shelley, Letter VI (17th July 1840), in ibid., p. 66.
[180] Ibid., pp. 67-68.
[181] Letter VII (3rd August 1840), in ibid., p. 76.
[182] Gilpin, "On Picturesque Travel", in *op. cit*., pp. 42, 46.

called […] *fiume latte*»: the sum of such views is defined «a picture, as it were, set in a frame».[183]

Letter VIII contains the account of Mary Shelley's return to the very same spots that she had visited in 1818 with Percy Bysshe Shelley, which provokes in her «a yearning after the past»,[184] mitigated only by her young travel companions. In fact, as noted by Rachel Woolley in her doctoral dissertation about the treatment of Italy in Mary Shelley's complete literary production, «*Rambles* is refracted by a larger timescale than that of the typical visit. In her return to Italy, the temporal limits of the travel period do not drive her forward to the next destination, but instead lead her to return»[185]. As if to better saviour this intimate return to the spatial but also temporal topography of her happy and youthful lost life, Mary Shelley used to spend the evenings alone on the banks of Lake Como, enjoying these private moments while the young students went into town. One evening in particular — recounted in the letter dated 30th of August: her forty-third birthday, albeit she makes no mention of it in the travelogue[186] — she relished a solitary, total and overwhelming 'communion' with Lake Como at sunset, «listening to the ripplet of the calm lake splashing at my feet; to the murmur of running streams». On this occasion, she experienced a rare and intense sense of rapture in spiritual/religious terms, provoked by the beauty of God's creation, seemingly an anticipation of the Beauty of Heaven: «my heart was elevated, purified, subdued. I prayed for peace to all; and still the supreme Beauty brooded over me, and promised peace; at least

[183] M. Shelley, Letter VII (5th July 1840), in *op. cit.*, pp.77-78, emphasis mine. The overt link between these and other extracts from *Rambles* and Gilpin's picturesque, as well as Shelley's inability to capture with words her visual experiences, has been noticed and analysed by A. Braida in "Nature, the Picturesque, and the Sublime in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's Travel Narratives", cit., pp. 423-424.
[184] M. Shelley, Letter VIII (15th August 1840), in *op. cit.*, p. 89.
[185] R. Woolley, *Reanimating Scenes of History: The Treatment of Italy in the Writings of Mary Shelley*, Newcastle: Newcastle University Library, 2001, p. 196.
[186] Shelley did mention that it was her birthday in the journal entry of that day, though. Valentina Varinelli observes that this occasion marks the first time she wrote a journal entry almost entirely in Italian, praying for the safety and wellbeing of her only son Percy Florence, likely prompted by her reminiscences of Percy Bysshe Shelley and his "death by water": «Mary Shelley's first unhibited journal entry in Italian was written in Cadenabbia on 30 August 1840. She began in English, but soon switched to the foreign tongue» (Varinelli, *op. cit.*, p. 78). The extract from Shelley's journal reads as follows: «my birthday — I have felt particularly happy & in good spirits today. Tanto è la paura che ispira l'incertezza della vita che si scrive tale parola temendo che il sentimento della felicita si cambiasse pur troppo presto in lutto — che siano salvi la vita — la salute — il benessere del mio amato figlio — che siano serbate p[er] me la fedeltà e l'affezzione [*sic*] di —— ah! se fosse adempita questa preghiera sarei felice pur troppo» (quoted in ibid., pp. 78-79).

there where […] love and enjoyment […] are one».[187] Uplifted by such ecstasy, she quotes a simile from Canto 33 of Dante's *Paradiso*, which conveys «the calm of Paradise» after Dante returned to earth, still enraptured by what he saw, reflecting Mary Shelley's own «rapt moods» in this dream-like atmosphere: «quale è colui, che sognando vede, / e dopo 'l sogno la passione impressa / rimane […] cotal son io, […]. / Nel cor il dolce, che nacque da essa».[188]

Corroborating Percy Bysshe Shelley's belief that the poetry of Dante is a «bridge thrown over the stream of time» (cf. 2.4) that unifies past and present, after this quotation the «elevated, purified, subdued» Mary Shelley even perceives the presence of «lovely spirits» around her — angels, or celestial beings similar to those belonging to Dante's *Paradiso*, but possibly also the spirits of «the beloved dead», such as Percy Bysshe Shelley, and his and Mary's deceased children Clara and her beloved William (the three of them all died in Italy), as if they had been evoked by the lake itself. If read in this light, the following passage may be considered the climatic moment of the whole section, as well as the symbol of the whole travelogue, a tribute to the memory of the past and the dead, intermingled with the present and Mary Shelley's renewed impressions of the well-known scenery surrounding her:

> It has seemed to me — and on such an evening, I have felt it, — that this world […] is *peopled* also in its spiritual life *by myriads of loving spirits*; from whom, unawares, we catch impressions […] Whether the beloved dead make a portion of this holy company, I dare not guess; but that such exists, I feel. *They* […] *draw near*, imparting the reward of *heaven-born joy*, when we are animated by noble thoughts […] *Surely such gather around me this night*, and make a part of that *atmosphere of peace and love which it is paradise to breathe*.[189]

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[187] M. Shelley, Letter VIII (30th August 1840), in *op. cit.*, p. 93.
[188] Quoted in Letter VIII (30th August 1840), in ibid.
[189] Ibid., p. 94, emphasis mine. Mary Shelley's sentence «this word […] is people by myriads of spirits» calls to mind Lord Byron's lines about Venice in Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, a sort of ghost city "repeopled" by the characters of the literary works that immortalised it with the power of poetry, like Shakespeare and Byron himself: «for us [visitors or British travellers according to some critics, but especially poets/literates] repeopled were the solitary shore» (stanza IV). Moreover, Venice is portrayed in terms of a vision or a dream resulting in an oneiric experience, like Mary Shelley's impressions of Lake Como epitomised by the above-cited quotation from Dante: «I saw or dream'd of such» (s. VII), in G.G. Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, London: John Murray, 1845, pp. 150-151. For the dream-like quality of Venice, denoted also by Rogers in *Italy, A Poem*, represented by J.M.W. in his paintings of the city (subsequent to the illustrations in Rogers' poem, albeit the latter and those in *Childe Harold* may be considered as a starting point for Turner's

It is worth noticing that this description mirrors Percy Bysshe Shelley's view of Dante's *Paradiso* — which he and Mary had read together (along with the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*) in September 1819, during their stay in Italy[190] — as he expressed it in his *Defence of Poetry*, not in a religious or Christian perspective, given his convinced atheism and aversion to any religion, Catholic and Protestant alike, but as «a perpetual hymn of everlasting love».[191] It is likely that Mary Shelley had this sentence in mind, because during the period of her journey(s) to Italy in 1840 and 1843, she was editing the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley for publication.

The connection between Mary Shelley's excursions on the lake and Samuel Rogers's depiction of Lake Como in *Italy, A Poem*, on the other hand, was provided by Shelley herself in the letter she wrote to hers and Rogers's publisher Edward Moxon, quoted in 2.1, in which she stated: «I was very happy during my two months residence at Cadenabbia — on the shores of the lake of Como — opposite to Bellaggio — close neighbour to Tremezzo names rendered classical by our dear Rogers».[192] The section of Rogers' poem entitled "Como" opens with a vignette by Turner representing the lake starts with a declaration that applies to Mary Shelley as well: «I love to sail along the Larian Lake / Under the shore» (p. 32); 'Larian' is another name for Lake Como (John Chetwode Eustace specified it in the 1837 revised edition of *A Classical Tour Through Italy*, published after Rogers's 1830

later watercolours on the subject of Venice, and of Italy in general), and consolidated as a literary trope in the Victorian age, cf. section 2.4.3 of the present dissertation.

[190] The Shelleys' shared reading of Dante's *Divine Comedy* is attested by the 'reading lists' contained in their journals of the Italian period, see *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, cit., p. 303. Cf. also N. Havely, "A Wreck of Paradise: *Epipsychidion* e l'Ulisse di Dante", in Cristafulli Jones, *op. cit*., p. 89.

[191] P.B. Shelley, *Defence of Poetry*, quoted in S. Curran, "'Figurando il Paradiso': Shelley e Dante", in ibid., p. 47. The similarity between P.B. Shelley's praise of Dante in the *Defence* and the references to *The Divine Comedy* in *Rambles* has been noticed also by A. Braida, who quotes Mary Shelley's Letter IX of Part I, written from Cadenabbia before leaving the town: «the soul is elevated and rapt by the sublime hymns to heavenly love, contained in the Paradiso. Nothing can be more beautiful than the closing lines, which I quoted in a late letter» (qtd in Braida, "Nature, the Picturesque, and the Sublime in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's Travel Narratives", cit., p. 427). For an in-depth analysis of Dante's influence on Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley, and her role on cultural mediator between the English and the Italian culture in *Rambles*, see also Braida, Mary Shelley in Italy: Reading Dante and the Creation of an Anglo-Italian Identity", cit.

[192] M. Shelley, letter to E. Moxon (26 October 1840), in Bennett (ed.), *Selected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, cit., p. 300.

edition of the poem, which may have been used as a guidebook by Mary Shelley).[193] These first two lines are followed by references to the ancient authors that lived in their villas on the banks of Lake Como or near it, such as Pliny the Younger in his villa Pliniana — re-visited by Mary Shelley in 1840, as she recounts in Letter VII of *Rambles* —, Catullus, or Virgil (Dante's guide on his journey to Inferno and Purgatorio, although not to Paradiso, where he is substituted by Beatrice), asserting the evocative power of the lake in 'bringing back' the past, and Mary Shelley's remark that the world (and the lake) is «*peopled* by myriads of loving spirits», hopefully including «the beloved dead». The lyrical voice of Rogers's poem, however, later dismisses similar impressions by commenting that «such things cannot be»:

> I love to sail along the Larian Lake
> Under the shore — though not to visit Pliny,
> To catch him musing in his plane tree-walk,
> […]
> Could I recall the ages past
> And play the fool with Time,
> I should perhaps reserve
> My leisure for Catullus on *his* Lake,
> or Virgil […] on the way to Mantua.
> (pp. 32-33)

The ensuing lines are devoted to the description of Lake Como and its surroundings in the morning, admired during a boat trip on the lake, similar to those undertaken by Mary Shelley and her son in *Rambles* but with the difference that, in the poem, the boat is led by a boatman, while in Shelley's travelogue by Percy himself. In spite of this detail, Rogers's depiction of the 'Larian Lake' was most influential and relevant for Shelley (and British travellers in general), as she acknowledged in her letter to Moxon, and is presented as follows:

> But such things cannot be. So I sit still,
> And let the boatman shift his little sail.
> […] The morning-air
> Plays on my cheek how gently, flinging round
> A silvery gleam: and now the purple mists

[193] «The lake of *Como*, or the *Larian* (for so it is still called, not unfrequently even by the common people», in J.C. Eustace, *A Classical Tour Through Italy*, 6th edition, Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1837, vol. 2, p. 268.

> Rise like a curtain; now the sun looks out,
> Filling, o'erflowing with his glorious light
> This noble amphitheatre of hills;
> And now appear as on a phosphor-sea
> Numberless barks, from Milan, from Pavia;
> […]
> A quay-like scene, glittering and full of life.
> And doubled by reflection.
> (p. 33)

The sight of the lake at dawn, with the «glorious light» of the sun «over'flowing» the «amphitheatre of hills», and the surface of the water appearing phosphor-like, recall Mary Shelley's own picturesque «side [of Lake Como] bathed in sunshine» in the morning, when she rose, with the masses of the mountains «against the eastern sky» (narrated in the already quoted Letter VII). Considering that hither Shelley remarked how she wished to bring before her reader «every minute peculiarity, every varying hue, of this matchless scene» by her «imperfect words», that she explicitly deemed «any picture or print […] better than my words» to «describe the scenery», and that she had in mind Rogers' poem during her stay at Cadenabbia on the shore of the lake, the illustration by Turner may be precisely the visual solution she was invoking in her letter.

As a matter of fact, Turner painted Lake Como in 1819, in 1841 and 1843, almost in the exact same years when Mary Shelley visited it (in 1818 with Percy Bysshe Shelley, in 1840 with her son and their travel companions; in 1843 she wrote *Rambles in Germany and Italy*). The preparatory sketches and watercolours on paper representing Lake Como, preceding the illustrations for Rogers's poem (c. 1826-1827), are datable back to 1819, during Turner's first Italian Tour in 1819-1820, a year later than the Shelleys' one. Actually, as we read on the website of the Tate Gallery, under the entry devoted to one of the 1819's watercolours depicting the lake, critics believe that these «Como views were likely to have been the first watercolours Turner made in Italy, although Warrell has suggested that they may have been preceded by a Milan subject»,[194] cf. the Shelleys' route from Milan to Como in 1818.

[194] M. Imms, "*Lake Como from Menaggio, Looking Towards Bellaggio* 1819 by Joseph Mallord William Turner", catalogue entry, March 2017, in David Blayney Brown (ed.), *J.M.W. Turner: Sketchbooks, Drawings and Watercolours*, Tate Research Publication, July 2017. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-lake-como-from-menaggio-looking-towards-bellagio-r1186391

Although Mary Shelley never saw these watercolours, as they were left to the Tate Gallery by John Ruskin after Turner's death in 1856 (Shelley died five years earlier), and exhibited only in the twentieth century (the first *Display of Watercolours from the Turner Bequest* in Tate Gallery was made in 1937), and there is no evidence that Shelley ever saw Turner's watercolours of the 1840s either, it is most likely that she first revived her impressions of those spots through *Italy, A Poem* before returning to Italy and to Como in 1840, and/or during her stay there, given her familiarity with the book. The catalogue entry of the original pencil and watercolour for the poem, then engraved and printed in black-and-white in it, suggests that Turner's illustration «shows both ancient villas and contemporary boating activity on the lake. In producing this tranquil and picturesque scene, Turner may well have referred to the many sketches he made of Como during his 1819 visit to Italy», and that, similarly to Mary Shelley's above-cited extracts from Letters VII-VIII, «the villas, skiffs, and majestic mountain scenery of these drawings reappear in idealised form in Turner's delicate vignette».[195] The vignette by Turner that serves as headpiece for the "Como" section of Rogers's poetic travelogue, once more testifying to the close links between *Rambles* and *Italy, A Poem*, and to the broader ones concerning the relationship between her writing and the visual arts, is shown in fig. 4 of the Appendix.

After a digression on the grape harvest carried out by local peasants and their idealised rural life which recall Virgil's *Bucolics* and *Georgics* (cf. 2.4), with the lyrical voice's delight at receiving some grape from the son of a peasant «as I *rambled* thro' thy vineyard-ground» (p. 34, emphasis mine), Rogers recounts his/the lyrical voice's departure from Como in the evening, crossing «the bay at Tramezzine [*sic*, i.e., Tremezzina] […] as a lonely traveller» and landing «where steps of purest marble met the wave» (p. 35), in what he defines as the palace of Armida, the beautiful Saracen sorceress of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, who seduces the Christian knight Rinaldo in her enchanted garden. This tale

(Last Accessed: August 2022).

[195] M. Garner, "*Lake of Como (I), for Rogers's 'Italy'* c. 1826-7 by Joseph Mallord William Turner", catalogue entry, August 2006, in ibid., December 2012. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-lake-of-como-i-for-rogerss-italy-r1133304 (Last Accessed: August 2022).

has been the subject of many paintings, amongst whom can be counted those by Tiepolo (1755), and Hayez (1812-1813). Although Rogers never mentions the actual place where he/the lyrical voice of the poem lands, it can be easily inferred that he is referring to one of the villas situated in the town of Tremezzina or the nearby Tremezzo, on the shores of Lake Como. In particular, on the basis of «the steps of purest marbles» on the water of the lake, he could be describing Villa Sommariva at Tremezzo (named after Giovanni Battista Sommariva, appointed secretary general of the Cisalpine Republic under Napoleon's rule in Northern Italy, patron of artists, and the owner of the villa until 1843), now called Villa Carlotta.[196] Also, Villa Sommariva is described in *Rambles* as an authentic *locus amoenus* and, in light of the 'picturesque' in the Gilpian sense of the concept, as «a picture set in a frame».

In the long passage devoted to this place, Rogers beholds the villa in celebration, albeit the occasion of the feast is not specified. He thus compares the dancing Italian women to a painting by «Paolo», that is, the Venetian Renaissance painter Paolo Veronese, renowned for his canvases and frescoes representing historical, mythological, and religious scenes, e.g., his famous oil of canvas *Trionfo di Venezia, incoronata dalla Vittoria* (1582), known in English as *Triumph of Venice*, held in Sala del Maggior Consiglio at the Ducal Palace, which depicts a personification of Venice as a crowned Queen on the throne — it is probably this painting that Rogers hints at in the following lines:

> Soft music came *as from Armida's palace,*
> *Breathing enchantment o'er the woods and waters*;
> And thro' a bright pavilion, bright as day,
> *Forms such as hers were flitting*, […]
> *Such as adorn the triumphs and the feasts*
> *By Paolo painted*; where *a Fairy-Queen,*
> That night her birth-night, *from her throne* received
> (Young as she was, no floweret in her crown,
> Hyacinth or rose, so fair and fresh as she)
> Our willing vows, and by the fountain-side
> *Led in the dance*, disporting as she pleased.
> *Under a starry sky* — while I looked on.

[196] The villa took its current name from 1850 onwards, since then it was donated to Princess Charlotte of Prussia and her husband Georg II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, after the heirs of Sommariva sold it to Charlotte's mother, Marianne of Prussia. For the complete history of the villa and several photographs, whence the «steps of purest marble» mentioned by Rogers in *Italy* are clearly visible, see the official website of Villa Carlotta, accessible in: https://www.villacarlotta.it/it/chi-siamo/ (Last Accessed: August 2022).

> […] And reading in the eyes that sparkled round,
> The *thousand love-adventures written there*.
> Can I forget — no never, such a scene
> So full of witchery.
> (pp. 35-36, emphasis mine)

Similarly, in Letter IX, written just before Shelley and her travel companions left Cadenabbia and thus Como, Mary Shelley affirms that during her stay there she read Italian literature, especially poetry (e.g., Dante and Tasso), in the original language, and she precisely mentions an episode of Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* concerning Rinaldo and the enchanted forest «by starlight», comparable to the scene envisioned by Rogers «under a starry sky». According to Mary Shelley, this episode in particular can be seen as an example of the «stanzas in Tasso that make themselves peculiarly felt here», i.e., in the areas surrounding the Lake of Como. Hence, Letter IX provides further evidence of the close links between Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* and Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem*, and of the strong (conscious and unconscious) influence that the latter exerted on Shelley's imaginary of both the country and the specific places she re-visited in the early 1840s. The only difference is that there are no references to religion in the "Como" section of *Italy*, whereas for Mary Shelley the lake is imbued with a strong sense of God's immanence, epitomised by her quotation from Dante's *Paradiso*. At the beginning of the penultimate letter from Cadenabbia, which according to Campbell Orr, along with all the letters that constitute the travelogue, may be addressed to Rogers himself, given that *Rambles* is dedicated to him (cf. 2.1), Shelley asserts:

> I read a great deal to beguile the time, chiefly in Italian; for it is pleasant to imbue one's mind with the language and literature of the country in which one is living: and poetry — *Italian poetry — is in harmony with these scenes. The elements of its inspiration are around me*. I breathe the air; *I am sheltered by the hills and woods* which give its balmy breath, which lend their glorious colouring to their various and sunny verse. *There are stanzas in Tasso that make themselves peculiarly felt here. One, when Rinaldo is setting out by starlight on the adventure of the enchanted forest*, full of the religion that wells up instinctively in the heart amidst these scenes, beneath this sky.[197]

Furthermore, Shelley's last letter from Cadenabbia before she (exactly like the lyrical voice of *Italy*) left Como for Bergamo, written the day after the above-quoted one,

[197] M. Shelley, Letter IX (7th September 1840), in *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96, emphasis mine.

seems to support the theory that the place described by Rogers is indeed Villa Sommariva. Indeed, the narrator of *Rambles in Germany and Italy* talks about «the hum of many thousand voices […] softened» on her ear, almost identical to Rogers's depiction of the «soft music» that came «as from Armida's palace, breathing enchantment o'er the woods and waters» (p. 35):

> I […] have retired to a shady bower of the gardens of the Villa Sommariva, *where the hum of many thousand voices falls softened and harmless on my ear*. "Eyes, look your last!" Soon the curtain of absence will be drawn before this surpassing scene. You are very hard-hearted, if you do not pity me.[198]

In the end, as they both head towards Bergamo, both the narrating voices of *Rambles* and of *Italy* look back to Lake Como, unwilling to leave it. The lyrical voice of the poem concludes thus, referring to one of the dancing girls he had seen in "Armida's palace":

> Night lingered still,
> When, with a dying breeze, I left Bellaggio;
> But the strain followed me; and still I saw
> Thy smile, Angelica; and still I heard
> Thy voice — *once and again bidding adieu*.
> (p. 36, emphasis mine)

Parallelly, the narrator of *Rambles* (corresponding to Mary Shelley), after having said «a last good-night to the lake» the night before, states with the very same expression as Rogers: «we quitted Cadenabbia […] at five in the morning. *Sadly I bade adieu to its romantic shores* and the calm retirement I had there enjoyed. […] We doubled the promontory of Bellaggio». However, Shelley and her travel companions found that, in the branch of the lake leading to Lecco rather than to Como — «*quel ramo del lago di Como*», where Alessandro Manzoni set the beginning of his *Promessi Sposi*, as Mary Shelley does not fail to notice — «the lake lost much of its picturesque beauty. Manzoni and Grossi have both chosen this branch of the lake for the scene of their romances; but it is certainly far, very far, inferior to the branch leading to Como».[199] As previously anticipated, the travellers' next destination is Bergamo, whence they will reach Milan — the objects of the ensuing paragraph.

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[198] Letter IX (8th September 1840), in ibid., p. 103, emphasis mine.
[199] Letter X (10th September 1840), in ibid., p. 105, emphasis mine.

2.4.2 Bergamo and Milan

On the 10th of September 1840, as recounted in Letter X of the first volume of *Rambles*, Mary Shelley, her son, and his two university friends crossed Lecco by boat, and «hired a *calèche* for Bergamo»,[200] that is a type of carriage with a folding top. Their visit to Bergamo was limited only to a single day before they left for Milan. Shelley declares that «it was a pleasant but warm drive» and does not miss the opportunity to remind her audience of her wish for a redeemed Italy: «Oh, how loth will the Austrian ever be to loosen his gripe of this fair province, fertile and abounding in its produce […] of this land of plenty». Moreover, the change of scene from the mountains and «the solitary lake», to the plains of Lombardy, its villages, and the «widespread landscape, raised» her «spirits to a very springtide of enjoyment. We were very merry as we drove along».[201]

Despite the disappointed that followed for the appalling conditions of the inn where the party of travellers stayed fortunately for only one night, its waiters («unwashed, uncouth animals, reminding one of a sort of human being to be met in the streets of London or Paris»), and the food («the dinner is uneatable from garlic»), Shelley reveals the main reason behind their brief permanence at Bergamo: «we have come to Bergamo chiefly for the sake of the opera, and to hear Marini, a basso».[202] She then remarks: «being fatigued, I did not go to the upper town to see the view, which is extensive […]. But to the opera we went» and goes on to describe the theatre and «the usual Italian custom of having little light in their theatres, except on the stage, to such an excess, that we […] could not read our libretto. The opera was the *Mosè*»[203] by Rossini. Curiously, this opera was first performed in Naples in 1818, precisely on the same year when Mary and Percy Bysshe Shelley came to Italy and visited Milan and Lake Como for the first time, although then they did not see Bergamo, and they certainly did not attend the opening of the *Mosè*. Mary immediately notices the cultural difference between Catholic Italy and Protestant England, explaining to her readers that what «is pious to a Catholic is blasphemous to a Protestant, and the *Mosè* is changed, when represented in England, to *Pietro*

[200] Ibid., p. 106.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid., p. 107.
[203] Ibid.

l'Eremita».[204] Mary Shelley's overall judgment of the *Mosè* is a positive one, and while listening to the music and to the *quartetto*, she experienced yet another (in addition to the previous one at Lake Como) metaphysical and emotional communion with the whole «till the theatre disappears», at once leading her imagination to relive the frightening scene of the opera as if it were real. The vocal effects of the singers are, as she defines it, «sublime», but sublime is also Shelley's very sensation:

> I listen breathlessly; a sort of holy awe thrills through the notes; the soul absorbs the sounds, till the theatre disappears; and the imagination, deeply moved, builds up a fitter scene — the fear, the darkness, the tremor, become real. The whole opera is rich in impressive and even sublime vocal effects.[205]

The letter from Bergamo terminates rather abruptly with a comment on «the light, graceful, sylphlike, and very pretty»[206] *ballerina* of the *opera*, without further remarks or the usual goodnight to the addressee, who according to Magdalena Ożarka could be the very Samuel Rogers. This is not an unnecessary reiteration, given that the section following "Lake Como" in *Italy, A Poem* is devoted to Bergamo and entitled after it, therefore Mary Shelley is retracing the steps undertaken by Rogers and his lyrical voice, possibly employing the poem as a proper guide, together with Murray's *Handbook for Travellers on the Continent*, as countless British travellers to Italy used to do when visiting the country. Whether she actually followed (part of) the same route of the poem on purpose or not, her recounting of the opera even presents a similarity with the content of the "Bergamo" section of *Italy*, albeit the circumstances are very different. Rogers in fact starts the section *in medias res* with a reference to music, in particular to a song: the song was one that I had heard before, / But where I knew not. It inclined to sadness. The lyrical voice soon discovers that it was sang by two poor boys performing on the street, in «the only universal tongue», that of music:

> With their small voices and an old guitar
> Winning their way to my unguarded heart
> In that, the only universal tongue.
> […] Twins they were,

[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid., p. 108.
[206] Ibid.

And orphans, as I learnt, cast on the world.
(pp. 37-38)

The scene was illustrated by Thomas Stothard: his vignette is placed at the end of the section, and it depicts the two boys singing, surrounded by a group of children listening to them. The section is concluded as suddenly as Letter X of *Rambles*, with the performance of a homeless and destitute man, who instead of singing or playing an instrument improvises a sonnet, after histrionically praising the poet himself and his supposed fame, obtaining for this a reward in money and in food from the lyrical voice/Rogers:

"The splendour of thy name has gone before thee;
And Italy from sea to sea exults,
[…]". Saying so, he laid
His sonnet, an impromptu, at my feet,
(If his, then Petrarch must have stolen it from him)
[…]
My omelet, and a flagon of hill-wine,
Pure as the virgin-spring, had happily
Fled from all eyes; or, in a waking dream,
I might have sat as many a great man has,
[…]
Bartering my bread and salt for empty praise.
(pp. 39-40)

Whereas both *Rambles* and *Italy* contain the description of a musical and artistic performance at Bergamo, although one is officially held at the theatre, the other improvised in the street, the poem does not include Milan. In the following section, entitled "Italy", the lyrical voice seems yet to realise that he is in the country, full of literary associations, such as Shakespeare's Verona from *Romeo and Juliet*, a fundamental part of the collective imagery of the *Bel Paese* from a British perspective — *Italy, A Poem* itself, and Lord Byron's Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* provided the same function as Shakespeare, for the next generation of English travellers and travel writers, as noted by Buzard.

Am I in Italy? Is this the Mincius?
Are those the distant turrets of Verona?
And shall I sup where Juliet at the Masque
Saw her loved Montague, and now sleeps by him?
Such questions hourly do I ask myself.

Italy, addressed in the ensuing lines with the second person pronoun "thou", hence personified, is deemed beautiful but equally dangerous for its «Beauty» and the consequent temptations it offers to the people who visit it, a consolidated view amongst the British intellectuals since the times of Roger Ascham's *The Schoolmaster*, written in the Elizabethan age (cf. 1.1.1), and maintained up to the nineteenth century, after the Napoleonic Wars, together with the other common image of Italy as dying and enslaved, strongly felt when Samuel Rogers and Mary Shelley wrote their travelogues. Nonetheless, the poet — as much as Mary Shelley in the above-quoted exclamation about a future liberation of the country from the Austrian rule («Oh, how loth will the Austrian ever be to loosen his gripe of this fair province») — expresses his conviction that «the hour shall come» when those who believe they can «bind» Italy's «ethereal spirit», i.e., the French and especially the Austrian, albeit Rogers does not mention them directly like Shelley, «shall confess their folly». Indeed, «even now», Rogers states, the ancient «flame» of freedom and of glory «bursts forth […], and, dying, left a splendour like the day»:

> O Italy, how beautiful thou art!
> Yet I could weep — for thou art lying, alas,
> Low in the dust; and we admire thee now
> As we admire the beautiful in death.
> Thine was a dangerous gift, when thou wast born,
> The gift of Beauty.
> […] The hour shall come,
> When they who think to bind the ethereal spirit,
> Who, like the eagle cowering o'ver his prey,
> Watch with quick eye, and strike and strike again
> If but a sinew vibrate, shall confess
> Their wisdom folly. Even now the flame
> Bursts forth where once it burnt so gloriously,
> And, dying, left a splendour like the day,
> […] — the light of genius, virtue,
> Greatness in thought and act, contempt of death,
> God-like example.
> (pp. 41-42)

As attested by the preceding lines («is this the Mincius?» — the Mincio, in Latin Mincius, is a river that crosses Lombardy and Veneto, flowing into the lakes at Mantua, and then into the main river Po), the lyrical voice of the poem is now headed towards the Veneto region, first to Coll'Alto (Treviso), and then to Venice. By contrast, Mary Shelley concludes her first letter from Milan, dated the day after her

visit to Bergamo (11th of September 1840), with a regretful note concerning her inability to visit Venice during that journey (she will visit it only in 1843, cf. section 2.4.3), since her young travel companions had to return home for their final terms at Cambridge, as they learned upon their arrival at Milan, and she was to follow them via Paris right after the arrival of some letters and «the remittance for the trip home»[207] that she was awaiting by post — «in vain I have debated and struggled, wishing to visit Florence or Venice. My son must return to England; and, though I shall not myself cross the Channel immediately, I do not like being separated by so great a distance».[208] Hence, «the capital of Lombardy»[209] was the last stage of Mary Shelley and her young travel companions' 1840 journey to Italy.

Reaching Milan was not as pleasant as with Bergamo but «a long and rather dreary drive […]. Our drive was uninteresting, and grew very tiresome», yet the hotel, «kept by a Swiss, with a pretty English wife», was «very comfortable in all its arrangements»,[210] contrarily to the Italian one at Bergamo. It was not the first time that Mary Shelley visited Milan (unlike her son and his university friends), either: she had been there in April 1818 with Percy Bysshe Shelley, and had never returned for seventeen years. As a consequence, she now saw some things with new eyes, found others changed, and others still quite the same, though devoid of the physical presence of her late husband — but not of the very same 'soothing' power that these spots exerted on him. Upon their arrival at Milan, the travellers immersed themselves in all the cultural and artistic landmarks that the city has to offer to those who visit it, even if for a limited period of time such as theirs: Mary Shelley and the Cambridge students saw «the fading inimitable fresco of Leonardo da Vinci»,[211] that is the *Cenacolo*, commonly known as *Ultima Cena* (*The Last Supper*) in the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, visited the Pinacoteca di Brera and the Ambrosian library, attended the opera at the theatre La Scala, and a mass at the Duomo, where Mary spent a great amount of time in the following days. Each of these experiences left either a very positive impact on Mary Shelley — such is the case of Leonardo's *The*

[207] Sunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 350.
[208] M. Shelley, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
[209] Ibid., p. 108.
[210] Ibid., p. 109.
[211] Ibid.

Last Supper, for instance, that words cannot convey according to her, and the Duomo — or on the contrary a very negative one. The evening at La Scala belongs to the latter, as Mary was greatly disappointed by it in comparison with the memories of her and Percy Bysshe Shelley's first night there in 1818 to see *Othello*[212] and in the Ambrosian library she discovered that visitors were prevented to see any manuscript, because someone had recently damaged some relics by Petrarch.

On the whole, Mary Shelley was not much impressed by Milan, as can be evinced by Letters XI-XII: she missed the mountains and her beloved Lake Como, which, in the light of what has been analysed in the previous section of this thesis, she remembered as «dreams sent from heaven, vanished for ever».[213] Compared to these landscapes, Milan was too much of an urban metropolis in her opinion, used as she was to her regenerating «solitary walks» and «country rambles», as she underlines in the following paragraph. Nevertheless, she still managed to take both refuge inside the Duomo, and long solitary walks through the main streets of the city up to the public gardens, established by the French after the Napoleonic conquest. In her opinion, however, these gardens were visibly inferior to the English ones, as she stresses by contrasting the two styles («their [the French's] notion of what is agreeable does not coincide with *ours*», she reveals to her British audience):

> Milan is not a pleasant town for one so strangely placed as I am, who would fain leave streets and houses to take refuge in solitary walks and country rambles […]. Still, you make sure I walk when I can; and when, on leaving the hotel, I do not turn to the left, towards the cathedral, I turn to the right, along a wide street, with the best shops, and where the shops cease there are some fine large palaces. The French have a laudable passion for public gardens; though their notion of what is agreeable in that respect does not coincide with ours; and grass and turf is, as I have before said, unknown out of England. They have laid out gardens in the outskirts of Milan, into which I turn.[214]

Although she does not explicitly name the public gardens, Mary Shelley here is certainly referring to the "Giardini Pubblici", or "Giardini di Porta Venezia" (now

[212] «Unfortunately, as is well known, the theatre of La Scala serves, not only as the universal drawing-room for all the society of Milan, but every sort of trading transaction, from horse-dealing to stock-jobbing, is carried on in the pit; so that brief and far between are the snatches of melody one can catch. […]. In this theatre I had seen *Othello* acted in *ballet*, with such mastery of pantomime, that words seemed superfluous for the expression of passion or incident; but no such good actors as were celebrated then, exist now», in ibid., pp. 111-112.
[213] Ibid., p. 117.
[214] Ibid., p. 118.

officially renamed "Giardini Pubblici Indro Montanelli"), the oldest city park in Milan, situated «in the outskirts» of the city. It was inaugurated in 1784 by the Austrian government under the viceroy of Milan, the Archduke Ferdinand: he assigned the project to the architect Giuseppe Piermanini, who designed and realised the new Milanese public gardens following the symmetrical and elaborate but overtly artificial French style, with its flowerbeds and tree-lined avenues, often adorned with classical statues. The 'French-style garden', or 'garden *à la française*', was actually inspired by the 'Italian garden', originated during the Renaissance in the villas in Florence and in Rome: their style became the prototype of the French gardens both in the private sphere of the court and the aristocrats, epitomised by Versailles, and in the public gardens for which, according to Shelley, «the French have a laudable passion». Mary Shelley critically opposed their formal style to the English landscape garden, ideated in the eighteenth century and characterised by a spontaneous nature, ponds or lakes, and rolling lawns designed with the purpose of concealing any trace of artifice (still present due to the gardener's intervention on the landscape, but undistinguishable to the eye), whilst for Mary Shelley «grass and turf are […] unknown out of England». The apparent simplicity of the English garden, crucial in Gilpin's definition of the picturesque, was a proper revolution in gardening that can be paralleled to the equivalent revolution in poetry of the Romantic authors, Wordsworth in particular, who privileged a simple language and subjects connected to the rural world. Yet, it must be emphasised that England was considered by all the Britons as «the garden of the world», as the metaphysical poet Andrew Marvell defined it in his lyric precisely entitled *The Garden*, ever since the sixteenth and the seventeenth century.[215] Ironically, the "Giardini Pubblici" of Milan will be expanded and partially redesigned on the model of the English landscape park from 1856 to 1862 by the landscape architect Giuseppe Balzaretto. However, since Mary Shelley last visited Milan in 1840 during the journey recounted in *Rambles*, and she died in 1851, not only was she unable to see and probably appreciate the new restyling of the

[215] For an in-depth analysis of the association between gardens and England, the construction of a national identity on the idea of England as a garden and a Paradise in English literature from William Shakespeare to John Milton, with a focus on the seventeenth century, see, among others, M. Romero Allué, *Quivi è l'inferno e quivi il paradiso. Giardini, paradisi e paradossi nella letteratura inglese del Seicento*, Udine, Forum, 2005.

Milanese public gardens — one of the earliest examples of Romantic gardens in Italy — but she also never witnessed the liberation of Italy from the Austro-Hungarian rule, and the Unification of the country in 1861, occurred exactly ten years after her death.

In addition to the public gardens, the other place where Mary Shelley could find solace and comfort during the days she spent alone at Milan, after her son and his two university friends had returned to England, was the Duomo. She concludes her first letter from Milan thus, with an evocative and strongly aesthetic description of the Duomo at dusk:

> To a passing stranger, the Duomo comprises so much of Milan. It is chiefly the outside, with its multitudinous and snow-white pinnacles, that arrests the attention and charms the eye; a moonlight hour passed in the Piazza del Duomo — now beneath the black shadow of the building, then emerging into the clear white light — and looking up to see the marble spires point glittering to the sky, is a pleasure never to be forgotten.[216]

These words recall the aesthetic of both the sublime (the «snow-white pinnacles» remind the reader of the snowy and immense Alps depicted in the previous letters of this first volume) and the picturesque (the interplay and the contrast between the «black shadow of the building» and «the clear white light» are portrayed as if they were the subject of a *chiaroscuro* in a painting). Furthermore, the above-quoted passage also echoes Percy Bysshe Shelley's first impression of the cathedral as he described it in 1818, in a letter to his friend Thomas Love Peacock, likewise poetic and imbued with emotion at the reminiscence of the sight before «the serene depth of this Italian Heaven, or by moonlight»:

> It is built of white marble & cut into pinnacles of immense height & the utmost delicacy of workmanship, & loaded with sculpture. The effect of it, piercing the solid blue with those groups of dazzling spires relieved by the serene depth of this Italian Heaven, or by moonlight when the stars seem gathered among those sculptured shapes is beyond anything I had imagined architecture capable of producing.[217]

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[216] Ibid., p. 118.

[217] P.B. Shelley, Letter to Thomas Love Peacock (20th of April 1818), in Jones (ed.), *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, vol. 2, cit., pp. 7-8. Cf. also Feldman and Scott-Kilvert (eds.), *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, cit., p. 203.

The very J.M.W. Turner portrayed the front of the Duomo in a pencil sketch entitled *The West End of Milan Cathedral from the Piazza del Duomo, 1819,* which he drew in his notebook the following year (this sketch is accessible from the online catalogue of the Tate Gallery, but neither Mary Shelley, nor anyone of her contemporaries but Turner's patron John Ruskin ever saw it).

The most striking parallel between the Shelleys and their relationship with the Duomo, however, is represented by a further passage that testifies to Mary Shelley's «reanimation of the past» and the consequent «instability of temporality» in *Rambles* according to Woolley, «a narrative which tells of a becoming, a nostalgic return that is not fully a return, and a history that is never fully past».[218] The past merges with the present, and the present is loaded with memories of the past inasmuch as with the almost concrete, physical attestation of the dead in the exact places they cherished: Percy Bysshe Shelley is never mentioned in *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, nor there is any indication of a late husband on the narrator's part, but his constant presence in Mary's thoughts and actions is immediately perceivable by the readers who are familiar with the personal history of the Shelleys and with the recounting of their life in Italy in their shared journals and private correspondence. Such «reanimation of the past» is once again inextricably connected with Dante's *Divine Comedy* and takes places inside the Duomo. Antonella Braida opens her essay on Mary Shelley's reading of Dante in Italy by quoting an extract from the aforementioned letter that Percy Bysshe Shelley addressed to Peacock in 1818, in which he also «wrote about reading the Divine Comedy in the Duomo in Milan in "one solitary spot among these aisles behind the altar"».[219] The complete quotation reads as follows: «*there is one solitary spot among these aisles behind the altar, where the light of days is dim* & yellow *under the storied window,* which I have chosen to visit and read Dante there».[220] But while Braida claims that «in *Rambles* the reader is confronted with a single, often nostalgic and elegiac voice», in «a dialogue with the reader» through the epistolary form, and that «as Dante the narrator has been abandoned by Beatrice, Mary Shelley has now been abandoned by Percy and has had to progress alone in her

[218] Woolley, *op. cit.*, p. 196.
[219] Braida, "Mary Shelley in Italy: Reading Dante and the Creation of an Anglo-Italian Identity", cit., p. 107.
[220] P.B. Shelley, Letter to Peacock, in *The Letters*, cit., p., emphasis mine.

career as a writer»,[221] an extract from Letter XI of *Rambles* undermines this assumption. Here, Mary Shelley is describing the interior of the Duomo. Significantly, for it shows her British point of view towards a prominent Italian building, and her role of cultural mediator between Italy and her English readers, Shelley regards the inside of the Milanese cathedral as inferior to Westminster Abbey: «the ceiling, for instance, is painted, not carved in fretwork; nor are there the solemn shadows, nor the antique venerable tombs; but on the other hand», the Duomo is not «kept in the same dirty state»[222] as London's cathedral. In the same passage, she writes:

> Each morning I pass a considerable time *in the aisles of the cathedral*. […] *My favourite haunt is behind the choir, where there is a magnificent painted window,* which throws rich and solemn shadows all around. *The influence of this spot soothes my mind*, and chases away a thousand grim shadows.[223]

If compared to the above-quoted letter by Percy Bysshe Shelley, it is evident not only that Mary chose to «pass a considerable time» in the very same spot where her late husband read Dante's *Purgatory*, his own «favourite haunt» in the cathedral, but also that she used almost Shelley's same words to describe it. Thus, rather than being abandoned by him as much as Dante had been abandoned by Beatrice, as Braida contends, Mary Shelley was «soothed» by the everlasting «influence» of the places that Percy touched and relished, as though he left a tangible mark on them. In this particular case, it was perhaps an unconscious process, although it is much more likely that Mary chose the spot near the storied window on purpose, possibly aware of Shelley's reading of Dante there: he must have told her of his impressions as well, since the place impressed him so much that he described it in a letter to his close friend Peacock. Hence, it seems reasonable to assume that he described them to his wife first, considering that Mary knew her husband was reading Dante's *Divine Comedy* during their stay at Milan.[224] As for the outside of the Duomo, in Letter XI

[221] Braida, "Mary Shelley in Italy: Reading Dante and the Creation of an Anglo-Italian Identity", cit., pp. 114-115.
[222] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., pp. 116.
[223] Ibid., pp. 116-117, emphasis mine.
[224] An entry written by Mary in shared journal of the Shelleys covering that period of time attests her knowledge of Percy Bysshe Shelley's reading of the *Purgatorio*, and of his writing the letter to Peacock where he described his experience inside the cathedral: «S. reads & finishes Dante's

she also affirms that «the exterior is covered by pinnacles and statues; many put up but yesterday, are snow-white and glittered in the sun»,[225] calling to mind Percy Bysshe Shelley's description of the cathedral's pinnacles and «dazzling spires relieved by the serene depth of this Italian Heaven».

Whereas Milan is never mentioned in *Italy, A Poem* by Samuel Rogers, the city is connected to at least two of the female travel writers selected for the purposes of this dissertation. The first is Mariana Starke, who died there in 1838, during her journey back from Naples to England, two years before Mary Shelley re-visited «the capital of Lombardy», as she first defined Milan in *Rambles*, in 1840. Furthermore, Mariana Starke included the latter in the second chapter of her celebrated travel guide *Travels on the Continent* (1820), published by John Murray III and devoted to Switzerland, the Simplon, and precisely Milan. This volume was used as guidebook by the Shelleys during their travels through France, Switzerland, and Germany (cf. 1.2.2), but it is unknown whether they consulted or considered it even for their first visit to Milan in 1818. The second association between the city and a female travel writer is represented by Frances Milton Trollope. Trollope visited Milan in January 1842, two years *after* Mary Shelley's return to it, and recounted the trip towards the end of the second volume of *A Visit to Italy*, also written in epistolary form and published that same year, whilst *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* was published later, in 1844. Moreover, Milan is actually the last Italian city described in Trollope's travelogue: its second and final volume is concluded with her return home via Paris, after the crossing of Mount Cenis from Turin (Trollope did not stop to visit the latter city but merely crossed it to reach the Alps): therefore, like Mary Shelley, and as intended by Mariana Starke before she died, Frances Trollope visited Milan just before crossing the Alps on the way back towards England. Indeed, Milan is the last Italian city described in Part I of the first volume of *Rambles*, and the last one that Shelley saw in her first journey to Italy in 1840. Unlike Mary Shelley, though, Trollope was headed northwards after visiting Rome, Florence,

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Purgatorio — write to Charles and Aunt Evelina — a letter from Peacock. S. write[s] to him. & to Albe [the nickname with which the Shelleys called Lord Byron]», in *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, cit., p. 205. In the notes, the editors Feldman and Scott-Kilvert precisely quoted the extract from the letter to Peacock describing the spot under the storied window where he read Dante and compared it with the above-quoted passage from *Rambles* about that very same spot.

[225] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., p. 117.

Bologna, and Piacenza, whereas Shelley was already in Lombardy, and she reached Milan from Bergamo. At the same time, though, Frances Trollope saw some of the landmarks visited by Mary Shelley, part of «the common range of the tourist», as Shelley generally stated in her Preface, introducing her route to Italy. These places are listed at the beginning of Letter XXIII of the second volume of *A Visit to Italy* as follows: «Milan. — The Duomo. — Its disfiguring Front. — Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper. — The Church of St. Ambrosio. — The Picture Gallery. […] — Theatre of La Scala».[226]

In the section of the letter devoted to Milan, Frances Trollope immediately mentions its symbol, the Duomo: «this Milano is a very fine city, and its Duomo deserving if not quite all, at least the major part of the boundless admiration which I have heard bestowed upon it».[227] However, she later deplores the «barbarous incongruity of its unworthy frontal» evident, in Trollope's view, at a first glance, and resulting from the recognisable combination of the work of different architects, to such a degree that in order to truly appreciate the building, according to Trollope, it would be «necessary […] to approach it from behind, or sideways, or to descend from a balloon upon its noble roof… or any way, in short, expect meeting it face to face».[228] This is the reason why «the more amiable anti-smellfungusites», as Trollope defined herself and her travel companions, carefully avoided focusing on the façade of the Duomo but instead decided to «either walk around the church, or into the church, or over the church». They were thus able to admire its beauty as it deserves, although Trollope claims that she personally prefers the Gothic cathedral in Cologne (Germany) to the Milanese one, in spite of the fact that «the marble wonder of Lombardy», as she defined the Duomo, is widely considered «the finest Gothic cathedral in the world», and that her subjective opinion would be regarded as an «egregious folly» by most, including herself, as she confesses:

> Anything, indeed, more noble than a well-chosen view of this [the Duomo's] dazzling marble structure, it is difficult to conceive. It is stupendous in size, peerlessly rich in detail, and most noble in effect… nor it is the fact that I like the minster at Cologne better any evidence that the Duomo at Milan is not (as it has repeatedly been called) the

[226] Trollope, *op. cit.*, p. 376.
[227] Ibid., p. 379.
[228] Ibid., pp. 379-380.

> finest Gothic cathedral in the world. […] Fancy, or perhaps, in plainer English still, *caprice*, has too much to do with it, I am afraid, to make my preference of any worth… It is egregious folly, I confess, at any rate, to stand before the marble wonder of Lombardy, and instead of enjoying it fully, wholly, and without permitting a thought to wander away from it, to […] doat upon its [Cologne Cathedral's] mouldering pinnacles instead.[229]

Frances Trollope's comparison of the Duomo with another cathedral in favour of the latter can be paralleled to Mary Shelley's own preference for Westminster Abbey, even if Mary Shelley's term of comparison is a British building that is very familiar to her readers, while Trollope's one is a foreign church, probably unknown to the most part of her English audience. What is even more striking is the two authors' identical judgement upon the ceiling of the Duomo, disliked by both women travellers for being painted rather than carved. In A *Visit to Italy*, in fact, Frances Trollope exclaims about the west-end side of the cathedral from within, though self-aware of the unpopularity and the «perversity» of her opinion: «how glorious would a church be that should be finish ed in stone! But here again I stand self-convinced of incorrigible perversity. To stand within the church of Milan and speculate what might be, instead of enjoying what was!».[230] Such reprobation recalls Mary Shelley's similar above-cited comment in *Rambles* on «the ceiling […] painted, not carved in fretwork». Notwithstanding this, both writers do not fail to recognise, as Trollope finally concedes at the end of the paragraph, that the Duomo is indeed «one of the finest churches in the world», nor to praise its «dazzling marble structure» (cf. Mary Shelley's «marble spires point glittering to the sky» as described in Letter XI of *Rambles*, and Percy Bysshe Shelley's «dazzling spires» in his letter to Peacock).

After visiting the cathedral, Frances Trollope and her travel companions saw Leonardo's «fast-fading fresco», the *Cenacolo*, at the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, and seemed to appreciate it as much as Mary Shelley did in 1840, albeit Trollope found it more «fading, fading, fading, vanishing away, as it is, and seeming like a ghost […]. All that can be now done to preserve the relic, Austria, the conservator, is doing… […] and it will yet be long ere the last traces of the expressive outlines are utterly extinct».[231] Trollope also lamented the fresco's

[229] Ibid., pp. 380-381.
[230] Ibid., p. 381.
[231] Ibid., p. 382.

unfortunate position, wondering «what sort of vengeance should one have been inclined to take upon the Vandal who cut a door through it, or upon the other Vandals who in 1800 made the walls […] a magazine for corn».[232] These «Vandals» were the Napoleonic troops. *L'Ultima Cena* has undergone delicate processes of restauration to prevent its fading away until recently — the last project having been carried out for over twenty years, from 1977 to 1999.

The last place that Frances Trollope described in her account of Milan is the theatre of La Scala. There, she saw and heard the performance of Mademoiselle Loowe, an actress and a singer admired by Trollope. Nevertheless, the latter's impressions of the opera-house are quite similar to those expressed in *Rambles* by Mary Shelley. Trollope was disappointed by the «poverty-stricken» Scala of Milan if compared to the San Carlo of Naples and annoyed by «the very loud chit chat of the audience», though common in the Italian opera-houses (she and her companions suffered from it as they «have repeatedly done before in Italy» but it annoyed her «considerably more on this occasion than on any other»).[233] Likewise, Shelley lamented that «brief and far between are the snatches of melody one can catch»,[234] due to the chatting and the trading transactions that occurred during the performances.

As previously anticipated, Frances Trollope left Milan for Turin after a few days of permanence in the city, in order to cross Mount Cenis and return home in England, via Paris. Mary Shelley too stopped at Paris before returning home, but she reached it by crossing the Simplon, Geneva, and Lyons. For both women writers, Milan was the last city of their journey to Italy in 1840 (for Shelley) and 1842 (for Trollope), and the last Italian one described in *A Visit to Italy* and in part I of *Rambles in Germany and Italy*. Thus, not only is Milan placed in a relevant position in both travelogues, but it also assumed a relevant place in their authors' memories as almost the last stage of their respective journeys to the *Bel Paese*. Albeit Mary Shelley was very disappointed for being unable to visit Venice or Florence as she would have wished, the already quoted image of the Duomo at dusk constitutes the

[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid., p. 388.
[234] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., vol. 1, p. 111.

most lasting picture of Milan in her mind, before her departure from it on the way back home, and the end of her 1840 journey: «looking up to see the marble spires point glittering to the sky, is a pleasure never to be forgotten»,[235] as much as her journey to Italy in itself.

2.4.3 Venice

Mary Shelley had to wait until 1843 to fulfil her wish to revisit Venice after more than twenty years since the last time she saw it, and the readers of *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* have to reach the second volume of the travelogue for an account of this journey. In particular, Shelley's stay at Venice with her son, and a few Cambridge friends of him (though different from the ones of the 1840 journey to Italy) is recounted from Letter VI to Letter X of Part III of *Rambles*, devoted to Mary Shelley's second journey to Italy via Salzburg, the Tyrol, and Prague, occurred in 1842 and 1843. As a matter of fact, Venice — reached from Verona — is the first major Italian city described in the final volume of *Rambles*, preceding Florence, Rome, Sorrento, Capri, Pompeii, Amalfi, and Naples. As mentioned in the previous section of this thesis, Mary Shelley had already expressed her desire to see Venice again in Part I of *Rambles*, and in her journal of the following year too,[236] but the party of travellers left only in June of 1842 for a new Continental tour through Germany, whence they were directed towards Italy.

At the beginning of Part II, Mary Shelley conveyed what travelling meant to her, in a very significant way:

> What can be so delightful as the perpetual novelty — the exhaustless current of new ideas suggested by travelling? […] travelling is a book of the Creator's own writing,

[235] Ibid., p. 113.

[236] M.S.'s journal entries of this period are full of agony for her deep isolation, the pressing economic difficulties, her deteriorating health, and her unhappiness in the English climate, relieved only by the hope of returning soon to Italy to enjoy its beauty and its society. Italy once again is M.S.'s *Paradise Lost*, and a sort of promised land where she placed the possibility of finding solace and peace. In the journal entry dated 26th of February 1841, she includes Venice amongst the Italian cities she most wished to revisit: «could I thus wander away with companions to join Percy in his pleasures & sympathize with them — & see those abroad whose society would be pleasing to me — by Lago Maggiore — in Venice — at Rome & Naples — what days might pass — what hours flow on, radiant with good spirits — teeming with glowing images — exalted above dull cares & gossip in the region of the beautiful. Then I might live — as once I lived — hoping — loving — aspiring enjoying — O Be it so — I pray!», in *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, cit., p. 572.

> and imparts sublime wisdom than the printed words of man. […] to fly abroad from the hive, like the bee, and return laden with the sweets of travel — scenes, which haunt the eye — wild adventures, that enliven the imagination — knowledge, that enliven and free the mind from clinging, deadening prejudices — a wider circle of sympathy with our fellow creatures; — these are the uses of travel, for which I am convinced everyone is the better and the happier.[237]

The same can be applied to her 1843 visit to Venice, which lasted a month. Yet, Camilla Campbell Orr underlined how the practical aspects of travelling for Mary Shelley differed from the economic security of Frances Trollope. Contrarily to Trollope, in fact, Shelley was grieved by the limitations of her finances: especially during her second journey to Italy, «she was constantly worried about money; every outing a pleasure had to be carefully managed. Unlike Fanny Trollope, she could not relax on outings and eat ices at will».[238] On the one hand, Mary Shelley herself admitted her economic difficulties a few pages after the above-quoted passage from Part II of the first volume of *Rambles*: «I am not sure that I am rich enough for such an enterprise»,[239] she declares whilst recounting her 1840 journey in Germany, but this is valid for her successive journeys in 1842 and 1843, too. On the other hand, she was also able to see the brighter side out of her condition: «I suspect much of the half eager, half timid feeling that urges me on, arises from our being comparatively poor, — all is so easy and same for the wealthy. As it is, there is the dangerous attraction of forbidden fruit in our wanderings».[240]

Venice holds a special place in English culture and literature, from Shakespeare's *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* to the first twenty-two lines of Lord Byron's Canto IV from his poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (the most influential among Byron's other works written and set in Venice, such as the poem *Beppo, a Venetian story*, and the drama *The Two Foscari: An Historical Tragedy*), and Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem*. Both *Childe Harold* and *Italy* were illustrated by J.M.W. Turner. Both Byron and Rogers were extremely influential for the British collective imaginary of Venice in the Victorian age, and Byron himself became a sort of myth associated to the city (not always in a positive light, given his scandalous

[237] Ibid., p. 158.
[238] Campbell Orr, *op. cit.*, accessible in: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/005813ar. (Last Accessed: August 2022).
[239] M. Shelley, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 177.
[240] Ibid.

and dissolute attitude according to the common opinion), as he spent the last part of his life there from 1817 to 1824, when he joined the Greek revolution and died in Greece. Venice was either the subject or an important part of a great number of fictional and non-fictional works towards the middle of the nineteenth century. Among these, apart from Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, can be counted her contemporary Frances Trollope's *A Visit to Italy* (Letter III-VIII), John Ruskin's short story *Velasquez the Novice* (1835), John Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* (1846), and the later —here only mentioned, as they were published after Shelley's travelogue — *Pictures from Italy* (1846) by Charles Dickens, in a chapter emblematically entitled "An Italian Dream", and the architectural treatise *The Stones of Venice* (1852-53) by Ruskin.

All these authors and travellers witnessed the Austrian rule in Venice: the Serenissima fell in 1797, when the city was occupied by Napoleon after ten centuries (1100 years) of independence and maritime/commercial power. That same year, Napoleon then ceded it to Austria with the Treaty of Campoformio. In the following decades, Venice was continually exchanged between the French and the Austrian governments, but in 1814 the Austrian established their dominion: this lasted until 1866, when the city joined the new Italian Kingdom, born in 1861. Whilst Lord Byron and Rogers saw Venice in the 1810s and 1820s (Rogers visited it in 1814 and in 1822), Frances Trollope and Mary Shelley visited it in October 1841, and from September to October 1843 respectively, hence twenty years after Byron and Rogers, but the city was still under the Austrian rule, like in the two poets' times. Each of these authors possessed a strongly personal point of view about Venice, its present decay compared to the glories of the past, when it was a living myth and a legend, and its future condition, as will be discussed in this section. Sometimes their visions are similar or coincide, sometimes they decidedly differ from one another, as is the case for instance of Frances Trollope's opinion.

In *Rambles*, Mary Shelley explicitly recalls Turner's vignettes of Venice in Rogers's poem, when she (re)visited the city in 1843, for the second time since 1818. As far as the pictorial quality of the Rogers's and Byron's poems is concerned, shared in the intentions by Mary Shelley, even if her travelogue was not illustrated, it is worth stressing that the vignettes contained in these poems were actually a starting

point for Turner's career as a painter: in his later, renown watercolours of Venice, he visually captured the dream-like, evanescent atmosphere of the city in the first half of the nineteenth century, as it was previously codified by Lord Byron and Samuel Rogers. It is very unlikely, however, that Mary Shelley saw such watercolours. Turner painted them in the early 1840s, including the very same period when Shelley herself visited Venice, and they were exhibited in 1843-1844 at the Royal Academy of London, precisely when *Rambles in Germany and Italy* was written and published, but there is no evidence that Shelley attended the exhibition neither in her journals nor in her private correspondence, also considering that she rarely went to London, if not to visit Samuel Rogers. Nevertheless, *Italy* and Turner's engravings to it constituted the cultural references through which Mary Shelley saw Venice for the second time of her life, in the autumn of 1843. Besides this, the «sea Cybele»[241], as Byron famously defined Venice in the second stanza of *Childe Harold*'s Canto IV, was also loaded for Mary Shelley with the terrible reminiscence of the death of hers and Shelley's baby daughter Clara, occurred in 1818, the very first time that Mary visited the city, precisely to seek a doctor to cure the ill baby, on Byron's suggestion. Moreover, on her way there, Mary read his newly published Canto IV of *Childe Harold*, as attested by her journal (cf. 1.1.4), therefore the image of Venice for her was also probably associated with Byron's depiction of it, for more personal reasons that any other British traveller to the city with Byron's poem as handbook could claim.

The tragic event of her daughter's death was the first thought that crossed Mary Shelley's mind when she was *en route* towards Venice in September 1843, by «*veturino*» (the correct Italian spelling is *vetturino*, i.e., a carriage) along the banks of the river Brenta up to Fusina, on the mainland,[242] and then by boat to reach «the queen of the Ocean», as she later called Venice.[243] As Braida has noticed, «Mary Shelley engages in a revision of her former experiences when traversing the same roads — often choosing even the same means of transport — by recuperating her

[241] Byron, *op. cit.*, Stanza II, p. 4.
[242] At Padua, Shelley and her travel companions discovered that the railroad from Padua to Mestre was not open, hence they had to change their plan to reach Mestre by train, and decided to hire a *vetturino* for Fusina, instead.
[243] Ibid., Letter VI (19th of September 1843), vol. 2, p. 79.

earlier classifications of sublime or picturesque scenery».[244] Indeed, whereas Shelley emblematically compared her memories of many scenery to a faded painting — testifying to the close relationship between her feelings, her writing, and the visual arts —, the road towards Venice was on the contrary still extremely vivid in her mind:

> Many a scene, […] has faded in my mind […], and another struggles into the changing canvass; but this road was as distinct in my mind as if traversed yesterday. I will not dwell on the sad circumstances here that clouded my first visit to Venice. Death hovered over the scene. Gathered into myself, with my "mind's eye" I saw those before me long departed; and I was agitated by emotions — by passions — and those the deepest a woman's heart can harbour — a dread to see her child even at that instant expire — which then occupied me.[245]

Indeed, she then compares her grief to that of Shakespeare's Queen Constance from *King John*, the widow of John's elder brother and the mother of Prince Arthur, who ultimately dies. Similarly, Mary Shelley is reminded of her late husband, their daughter, and undoubtedly also of their late friend Lord Byron (who died in Greece in 1824), inextricably connected with the memory of Clara's death, because he was present to the scene. Thus, the journey to Venice after at least two decades revives Mary Shelley's memories of the dead, easily identifiable by any reader acquainted with her personal history: although the narrating voice of *Rambles* never explicitly names «those long departed», Mary Shelley did sign the travelogue as "Mrs. Shelley", hence disclosing her identity to the British audience, and facilitating their deduction of whom she was referring to in the passages such as the above-cited one. Moreover, it is worth noticing that, in the letters devoted to her 'rambles' in Venice, she occasionally mentions both Shelley and Byron. For instance, she quotes from Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo* at the sight of the madhouse where the poem is set, on the way to the Lido, or his *Defence of Poesy* when praising Dante, and she addresses Shelley's letters and poems concerning his judgement of Italians, without a specific reference. Her intention was also to promote Shelley's works, which she was then editing, to the general public and thus increase his fame as a poet. As regards Lord

[244] Braida, "Nature, the Picturesque, and the Sublime in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's Travel Narratives", cit., p. 422.
[245] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

Byron, Mary Shelley briefly mentions him when she lists Palazzo Mocenigo among the palaces containing the paintings by Titian, stating that it was inhabited by the poet.

In addition to Shakespeare's tragedy, Mary Shelley's feelings on her way to Venice can perhaps more aptly be paralleled to Lord Byron's Canto IV, where «the dogeless city» is portrayed as an enchanting dream-like place and a sort of 'ghost city', filled with «mighty shadows» and «dim forms» (stanza IV). Yet, her «solitary shore» is repeopled by the characters of William Shakespeare's and Thomas Otway's plays — «Shylock and the Moor, / And Pierre» from *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *Venice Preserved*, respectively These dramatic works, and Byron's own lines, symbolise the immortalising power of poetry and of art in general, in contrast to the decadence and the slavery which history seems to have condemned the once glorious Venice to endure («ours is a trophy which will not decay»).[246] This vision was shared by Mary Shelley as well, who likewise associated Venice with the characters of Shakespeare, along with the illustrated poetry of Rogers and Byron himself, but also in the sense that she imagined Venice, with her "mind's eye", as «repeopled» by «those before her long departed». Nonetheless, as claimed by Campbell Orr, Shelley is «resolutely non-biographical», and from now on her letters are «elegant essays of cultural criticism, […] almost entirely philosophical travel. The thinking and knowledgeable woman predominates over personal memory of Venice, Florence, or Rome». Indeed, as Campbell Orr further points out, Mary Shelley herself declared in Letter VI: «I dwell on the beauty, the majesty, the dreamy enjoyments of Venice» — «had she wished to pose as a celebrity author», Campbell remarks, «she might have elaborated on her acquaintance with Byron».[247]

When Mary Shelley first saw the personified «queen of the Ocean» at a distance, she beheld her «domes and towers arise from the waves with a majesty unrivalled upon the earth»,[248] almost quoting the opening lines of Byron's Stanza II from Canto IV of *Childe Harold*, referring to Venice in the same tones, as a goddess

[246] «But unto us she hath a spell beyond / Her name in story, and her long array / Of mighty shadows, whose dim forms despond / Above the dogeless city's vanish'd sway; / Ours is a trophy which will not decay / With the Rialto; Shylock and the Moor, / And Pierre, can not be swept or worn away — / […] For us repeopled were the solitary shore», in Byron, *op. cit.*, Stanza IV, p. 5.
[247] Campbell Orr, *op. cit.*
[248] M. Shelley, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 79.

and a queen: «she looks a sea Cybele, fresh from ocean, / Rising with her tiara of proud towers / At airy distance, with majestic motion»[249]. As soon as Shelley, Percy Florence, and his Cambridge friends landed in Venice, they were «hailed by a storm of *gondolieri*; their vociferation […] indescribable, so loud, so vehement, so reiterated, till we had chosen a boat, and then all subsided into instant calm».[250] Reality replaced her 'living' memories, which, similarly to Byron's «phantasies», «came like truth, and disappear'd like dreams […] / And other voices speak, and other sights surround».[251] Yet, while Byron's Canto IV begins in *medias res*, being immediately set in Venice (its famous lines, quoted by any Victorian British visitor to Venice, are: «I stood on the Bridge of Sights, a prison and a palace at each hand»)[252], both Letter VI in *Rambles* and the thirteenth section of Rogers's *Italy*, entitled "Venice" — with Turner's engraving of Saint Mark's Place as headpiece — report the journey there by boat, and the arrival at the city as the narrating voices slowly approach it.

The opening lines of Rogers's "Venice" are equally impactful, and, in Rogers's times, they were as famous and frequently quoted as those of Byron's Canto IV, though. The true protagonist of this and the following sections is introduced right away:

> *There is a glorious City in the sea.*
> The sea is in the broad, the narrow streets,
> Ebbing and flowing; and the salt sea-weed
> Clings to the marble of her palaces.
> *No track of men, no footsteps to and fro,*
> *Lead to her gates*. The path lies o'er the Sea,
> Invisible; and from the land we went,
> *As to a floating City* […]
> And gliding up her streets *as in a dream*,
> So smoothly, *silently* — by many a dome
> Mosque-like, and many a stately portico,
> The statues ranged along an azure sky.
> (pp. 47-48, emphasis mine)

This depiction recalls Byron's one of Venice as a dreamlike and a ghost city («no track of men, no footsteps», «a floating City», «as in a dream»), and Mary Shelley's

[249] Byron, *op. cit.*, Stanza II, p. 4.
[250] M. Shelley, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 79.
[251] Byron, *op. cit.*, Stanza VII, p. 6.
[252] Ibid., Stanza I, p. 3.

first impact with the scenery leading to it, as though she were immersed in a living dream or rather a nightmare, considering her sad memories linked to the route, but not to Venice itself — majestic like a queen. Parallelly, this impression is affected by the immediate realisation of the present decayed state of her noble palaces, now ruined, once Shelley landed: «I confess that on […] my second entrance into Venice, the dilapidated appearance of the palaces, […] weather-worn and neglected, […] struck me forcibly, and diminished the beauty of the city in my eyes».[253] Rogers remarked upon the decay of Venice's palaces too, in the following lines, but at the time of his writing, i.e., 1814/1815 and the early 1820s, he found that the fronts of the Venetian palaces were «still glowing with the richest hues of art»:

> By many a pile in more than Eastern splendour,
> *Of old the residence of merchant-kings*;
> *The fronts of some, tho' Time had shattered them,*
> *Still glowing with the richest hues of art*,
> As though the wealth within them had run o'er.
> (p. 48)

Furthermore, Rogers too, like Mary Shelley, reached Venice from Padua, along an unspecified river, in what he defined as «a wondrous Ark» (ibid.), together with a merry company of actors directed back to Venice. Rogers subsequently recalls the origins of Venice, built by the people who flew away from Attila like the water-fowl building their nests, and Venice

> rose, like an exhalation from the deep,
> A vast Metropolis, with glistering spires,
> With theatres, basilicas adorned;
> A scene of light and glory, a dominion,
> That has endured longest among men.
> (p. 50)

As soon as Shelley and her travel companions arrived in the city, their first preoccupation was to find a lodging for their one-month stay there: after renouncing to the hotel Leone Bianco on the Canal Grande because it was too expensive for them, they settled, with the help of some Venetians, to a more convenient hotel in a

[253] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., p. 79.

canal, regrettably for Shelley without a view of the Canal Grande from the window, but «within three minutes' walk of the Place of Saint Mark».[254]

In Letter VII, Mary Shelley affirms the uniqueness and the enchantment of Venice, still felt by all who visit it but particularly codified by the English-speaking authors in the expression of the city's magic "spell" on them (cf. Byron's «unto us she hath a spell», «as from the stroke of the enchanter's wand»): according to Shelley as well, «there is something so different in Venice from any other place in the world, that you leave at once all accustomed habits and everyday sights to enter enchanted ground».[255] Shelley subsequently quotes two lines from Rogers's *Italy* to express the still living history of the city, embodied by the accents of its gondoliers, rendering it apparently «uninjured», despite the fact that her former glory had 'sinked' under water:

> [Venice] has floated down, amid a thousand wrecks
> Uninjured, from the Old World to the New.
> (Quoted in Shelley, *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, vol. 2, p. 83)

Frances Trollope too, though openly in disagreement with Byron's melancholic portrayal of Venice as a dying city, claimed that «Venice […] may be called ex-earthly»,[256] that is, supernatural and ineffable in its own singular way, in beauty and splendour, beyond what can be found on earth. She also opposed to the common lamentations over Venice's decline, expressed in *Childe Harold*'s Canto IV, and seems to agree instead with the above-quoted lines from Rogers's *Italy*, cited by Mary Shelley, about its apparently «uninjured» state:

> But for those who will permit themselves to live for the present hour, and be contented to say, sufficient to the day is the beauty thereof, there is still more glory left in Venice, and a richer treasury of the products of human genius, than on any spot of earth

[254] Ibid., p. 80.
[255] Ibid., p. 82.
[256] Trollope, Letter III (October 1841), in *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 66. A few pages later, Trollope remarks, recalling Rogers's description of Venice: «there is a freshness of wonder that attends every part of the progress through *this floating world* […], that can only be described by comparing it with what we may presume might be the *effect of magic, if some great enchanter took possession of us*, and carried us through a world of unknown and unimagined loveliness, […] taking care to show us *nothing that we had ever seen before*», in ibid., p. 69, emphasis mine. In the same letter, when describing the setting of the sun, she defined «her majestic structures, such as might float […] in a dream» (p. 74), and the serpentine course of the Grand Canal «through the fairy city» (ibid.).

> beside.... Rome, I suppose, excepted. […] Instead of sinking, she floats so […] beautifully, that, to my eye, she still looks triumphant. […] even though she neither buys nor sells so largely as formerly… and that her doge, her Council of Ten, and her lion's mouth are no more.[257]

As regards the representation of Venice, Trollope believes that, albeit Canaletto accurately depicted some of «its particular points of view», «nothing that can either be said or painted can possibly convey any full, adequate idea of what one must feel on approaching Venice».[258] Mary Shelley expresses a similar opinion in *Rambles*, when she reached Saint Mark's Place, but with an important difference. At "Piazza San Marco", she saw the Ducal Palace, «the Lion-crowded column», «the tower of St. Mark», the «*piazzetta*», and the «larger piazza».[259] However, she does not attempt to describe her impressions of St. Mark's in her letter, justifying this choice by reminding her readers that any picture by Canaletto can convey these spots better than she could do with words: «but I spare description of a spot, of which there are so many thousand — besides numerous pictures by Cannaletti [Canaletto] and his imitators, which tell all that can be told — show all that can be shown».[260] Yet even more significantly, immediately after, Shelley goes beyond the judgement expressed by Frances Trollope as well. In fact, she further states that the vignettes by Turner illustrating Rogers's *Italy, A Poem* are possibly the best way to capture St. Mark's Place, better than any description in words or representation in paintings, thus surpassing the virtually 'photographic' pictures by Canaletto: according to Mary Shelley, indeed, «perhaps the vignettes to Mr. Roger's *Italy*, by Turner, better than any other description or representation, can impart this».[261]

Turner's evocative vignette of Saint Mark's Place is shown in the Appendix of this dissertation (cf. fig. 5) and featured as headpiece in the original 1830 edition of *Italy*, at the beginning of the "Venice" section. The vignette depicts the *piazza* seen from the Canal Grande, filled with *gondolas*, and the Bucentaur, i.e., "Il Bucintoro" (the official barge of the Doge, when Venice extended her dominion over the sea), advancing on the right, before the overall sight of the Ducal Palace and the prison,

[257] Ibid., p. 71.
[258] Ibid.
[259] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., vol. 2, p. 83.
[260] Ibid., p. 84.
[261] Ibid.

the tower of Saint Mark, the two columns (one with the winged lion on top of it, the other with St. Theodor, the first patron saint of the city) in the middle, and the *cupolas* of Saint Mark's church in the background, with the sky 'dissolving' in the page. As with the other illustrations by Turner in *Italy*, this black-and-white steel-engraving as it appeared in Rogers's poem was based on an original watercolour, dated 1826/1827. The catalogue entry for the latter, from the official website of the Tate Gallery, notices that «the inclusion of the Doge's barge dates the scene to before the French invasion of 1797 when Venice was still a proud and thriving republic».[262] Moreover, as the catalogue entry underlines, given the enormous popularity of Rogers's poem, comparable to that of Lord Byron's Canto IV and attested by Mary Shelley's quotation from it in her own travelogue, «it seems safe to assume that *Venice* was among the best known of Turner's *Italy* designs», and that «the engraved version of Venice is considered to be one of the most superb in the Italy series».[263]

In the remaining part of the letter, Mary Shelley recounts her visits to the Ducal palace, the prisons, the adjacent Doge's palace, and to the Academia delle Belle Arti (all places visited by Frances Trollope too, as she thoroughly recounts in epistolary form in A *Visit to Italy*). In the empty rooms of the Ducal palace, Shelley and her travel companions admired the paintings by Tintoretto and Veronese, recording «the history, the glories, and even the legends of Venice».[264] At the Accademia delle Belle Arti, instead, they could relish the works of Titian depicting biblical episodes such as Mary visiting the tomb of Jesus, and the Assumption, Mary Shelley's favourite painting by Titian. She associates it to Dante's "Paradiso" («such a picture, and the "Paradiso" of Dante as a commentary, is the sublimest achievement of Catholicism»[265]), a *leitmotiv* in *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, as it has been

[262] Meredith Gamer, '*Venice, for Rogers's 'Italy'* c.1826–7 by Joseph Mallord William Turner', catalogue entry, August 2006, in David Blayney Brown (ed.), *J.M.W. Turner: Sketchbooks, Drawings and Watercolours*, Tate Research Publication, December 2012, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-venice-for-rogerss-italy-r1133305 (Last Accessed: August 2022).
[263] Ibid.
[264] M. Shelley, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 85.
[265] Ibid., p. 91. Similarly, Frances Trollope claims: «I think that Titian must have dreamed the composition, and so caught a glimpse, as does sometimes happen in dreams, of more heaven-like beauty and glory than can be suggested by what we see on earth. […] The pure mother [i.e., the Virgin] […] is herself so visibly putting on immortality, that it is necessary to be a good Protestant, not to fall down and worship», in Trollope, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 99-100.

discussed in the previous sections of the present dissertation. Campbell Orr maintains that Shelley's appreciation of this painting in particular, and her more general preference for the paintings representing the Virgin, is not coincidental: according to the scholar, Mary Shelley identifies with the grieving Virgin, who reminds her of her own grief for the loss of her daughter in Venice in 1818, and that of her son William in Rome the following year: «the pictures that move her most are those depicting the Virgin, that is to say, a mother».[266] Thus, she does not present herself to the audience as a 'celebrity author' who was closely acquainted with the iconic Lord Byron, but instead simply as a mother, both grieving for her late children, and accompanying her only surviving son Percy Florence in a sort of 'Grand Tour' across her beloved Italian cities, and the backdrop of her youth with Percy Bysshe Shelley. According to Campbell Orr, «what is new for Shelley in revisiting Venice, Florence and Rome is her consistent study of art». This is evident in all her letters from the first city from Shelley's long digressions on the painting she saw in every palace visited by her and her travel companions, imbued with personal judgements, observations, or advice to her readers on where to see the finest works of the renown Venetian painters, such as Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto, Giorgione, or Bellini. Such a pervasive attention to the visual arts confirms Antonella Braida's assumption about the strong pictorial and aesthetic quality of *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, which the scholar defined «a complex aesthetic experience that unifies travel writing, autobiography, and art criticism».[267]

The ensuing letters (from Letter VIII to Letter XI) are devoted to the party of travellers' 'rambles' — a term that Shelley employs very frequently, both as a noun and as a verb, to define their peregrinations — around the city throughout the month. Among the numerous places they visited, there are the main churches (Chiesa de' Frari, San Giorgio Maggiore, Santa Maria della Salute, St. Sebastiano), the arsenal, the theatre of La Fenice, along with the Lido, the Giudecca, and the islands (Murano, Mazzorbo, Burano, Torcello). Interestingly enough, while Mary Shelley considered the Duomo at Milan incomparable to Westminster Abbey, here, conversely, she

[266] Campbell Orr, *op. cit.*
[267] Braida, "Nature, the Picturesque, and the Sublime in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's Travel Narratives", cit., p. 427.

defined the church of Santa Maria de' Frari, where many Doges and Titian are buried, as «the Westminster Abbey of Venice»,[268] once again presenting a familiar term of comparison to make her readers better understand what she was seeing.

To conclude, the last part of this section concerning Venice discusses Mary Shelley's perspective on the Austrian dominion of the city, the latter's condition when she revisited it after many years, and the projected construction of a bridge to link Venice to the mainland through the railroad, which caused mixed reactions in Mary Shelley herself, and her contemporaries. All these topics will be analysed in the light of Frances Trollope's own opinions upon them, expressed in *A Visit to Italy*, to investigate the extent to which hers and Mary Shelley's views differ.

First of all, Letter IX of the second volume of *Rambles*, dated October 1843, starts with Mary Shelley's commentary on the state of the Venetian trade under the Austrian rule, compared to 1818: «when I was here last, the duties on all imports to Venice were high […], and the city languished; — it is now a free port […], with the exception of tobacco», cultivated by the Emperor of Austria. Shelley admits that «the free port gives a far greater appearance of life and activity to the city than it formerly had», but also that, in her view, the Austrian government is «doing what he can to revive trade, so to increase his store; for two thirds of the taxes of the Regno Lombardo-Veneto go to Vienna».[269] This opinion is in line with Mary Shelley's support of the *Risorgimento* cause and the liberation of Italy from the yoke of the Austro-Hungarian government, influenced by the exile Ferdinando Gatteschi's fight for this very cause — it is worth emphasising that the writing and the publication of *Rambles* were motivated by Shelley's desire to help Gatteschi financially (cf. section 1.3 of the present dissertation). In *A Visit to Italy*, Frances Trollope noticed the same change when she visited Venice two years before Mary Shelley, in October 1841, but Trollope's opinion is diametrically opposed to hers. Indeed, Frances Trollope regarded the Austrian's revival of trade as a positive boast for the future economy of the city, rather than merely for the personal benefit of the Austrian Empire, thus refuting the common idea of the imminent destruction of Venice. On the contrary, Frances Trollope voiced what can be now considered a prophecy: her «comfortable

[268] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., p. 92.
[269] Ibid., pp. 103-104.

prediction» about Venice becoming an open «museum of art» (albeit it is debatable whether this prediction is truly «comfortable») in fact really happened in the immediately ensuing years, especially in the late nineteenth century, and is still happening nowadays, considering its 'status' as a mainstream touristic attraction or, indeed, «a favourite resort for the curious and intelligent of all countries»:

> Venice is not likely to be ever again the heart and the head of a great maritime empire; but in all human probability she will again become a flourishing commercial city, and still remain a magnificent museum of art, and a favourite resort of the curious and intelligent of all countries.... and I think we may say to her, not as a threat, but as a very comfortable prediction.[270]

Besides the revival of trade, mentioned also by Mary Shelley, the transformation of Venice into an 'open museum' was deliberately planned and carried out by the French and then the Austrian government, with their works of restoration of the Venetian buildings, i.e., the degraded palaces and the churches, and the re-assignation of new functions to them. For instance, the current seat of the Accademia delle Belle Arti was formerly a church and a convent, replaced by Napoleon with a museum and an art school in 1807. Conversely, several buildings were occupied by the Austrian soldiers, turned into military barracks, or acquired a state function. For instance, in the 1840s Austrian soldiers occupied the base of the Ca' Foscari palace, formerly belonging to the impoverished two Foscari sisters, Laura and Marianna Foscari.[271]

The other innovation established by the Austrian government was the construction of the bridge and the railway to connect Venice to the mainland and facilitate the reaching of the island. After her remarks about the conditions of trade under the Austrian dominion, Mary Shelley commented upon this project, already began when she was in Venice in 1843. Shelley's feelings are mixed, but she was definitely much more pessimistic than Frances Trollope and her «comfortable

[270] Trollope, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

[271] On the history of the building and John Ruskin's important role in recording the state of the Ca' Foscari palace through daguerrotypes and his own drawings, see Clegg, Jeanne; Sdegno, Emma, "Le pietre di Ca' Foscari: Ruskin e il Palazzo", in Anna Cardinaletti, Laura Cerasi, and Patrizio Rigobon (eds.), *Le lingue occidentali nei 150 anni di storia di Ca' Foscari*, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2018.

prediction» on the future of the city: although Mary Shelley recognises the convenience of the bridge, she feels like it will rob Venice of its romance, as John Ruskin felt in 1845 before the finished railway bridge, inaugurated that same year. Shelley expressed her view thus:

> He [the Austrian government] desires that railroads should be made, and one is being constructed from Milan to Venice. Nay, they are in the act of building a bridge for the railroad carriages from Mestre to the centre of the city; however convenient, it is impossible not to repine at this innovation; the power, the commerce, the arts of Venice are gone, the bridge will rob it of its romance.[272]

Nevertheless, in the light of what Mary Shelley wrote about Venice in the previous letters of *Rambles*, and of what this unique and enchanting city personally meant to her, it is perhaps not inappropriate to conclude this section and the chapter by evoking J.M.W. Turner's vignette of Saint Mark's Place before the Canal Grande (see figure 5 of the Appendix) from Rogers's *Italy*, *A Poem*: according to Mary Shelley, and this is valid still to this day for all of Turner's depictions of the city and its dreamy atmosphere, this illustration can convey the 'romance' of Venice «better than any other description or representation».

[272] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., p. 104.

3. The Italians' «real character»

In the biography *Mary Shelley: Romance and Reality*, Emily W. Sunstein claims that in 1818 the young Mary Shelley fell in love with the Italian ground — its cities, towns, and territories —, rather than with its inhabitants: «it was the land Mary loved at first, not its people».[273] Her diffidence and ambiguous attitude towards Italians at the time was shared by Percy Bysshe Shelley, who judged them as «morally degenerating though artistically great ever since they submitted to the empire, Catholicism, authoritarian princes, and foreign domination»,[274] in contrast with the virtuous *mores* of the Roman Republic: Shelley irrevocably defined Italians «a tribe of stupid and shriveled slaves»[275] upon his arrival in Milan in 1818. This view was quite common among British intellectuals, from Roger Ascham in the sixteenth century to Samuel Rogers in the nineteenth century, contemporary of the Shelleys (cf. 1.1.1). Nevertheless, Mary Shelley gradually developed her own point of view on the matter, so much so that in the Preface of *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* she declared her intention to portray the Italians' «real character» for the British audience. Moving from this assumption, the last chapter of the present dissertation investigates Mary Shelley's view of Italian people and of Italian women. Her depiction of Italian women will be then analysed in relation to how they are represented in Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem* and in Frances Trollope's *A Visit to Italy*. Hence, the final part of the chapter aims to assess whether these authors' representations of Italian women can be considered as 'gendered', thus influenced by their male or female perspective, in addition to — or apart from — their common British nationality.

3.1 Mary Shelley's Perspective on Italians

In the Preface of *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, Mary Shelley presents the novelty of her epistolary travelogue: «it was otherwise as regarded the people, especially in a political point of view; and in treating them my

[273] Sunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
[274] Ibid., p. 152.
[275] Ibid., p. 153.

scope grew more serious».[276] Mary Shelley then expresses her favourable opinion of the Italian people right from the beginning of her travelogue, by indirectly stating her familiarity with Italians, as well as her attachment to them, and listing their good qualities, regardless of their class:

> I believe that no one can mingle much with the Italians without becoming attached to them. Their faults injure each other; their good qualities make them agreeable to strangers. Their courtesy, their simplicity of manner, their evident desire to serve, their rare and exceeding intelligence, give to the better specimens among the higher classes, and to many among the lower, a charm all their own.[277]

Subsequently, she declares the main aim of *Rambles in Germany and Italy*: «I would fain say something that may incite others to regard them [Italians] favourably; something explanatory of their real character».[278] Thus, the novelty of *Rambles* is also that this travelogue intends to portray the Italian people in a positive light, rather than focusing only on their weak and negative side, as it often happened in the travel accounts about Italy written by Mary Shelley's compatriots — without giving voice to the prejudices towards Italians fostered by the majority of the British travellers to Italy.

Mary Shelley is aware that this is not an easy task. Indeed, she underlines: «I could only sketch facts, guess at causes, hope for results. I have said little, therefore; but what I have said, I believe that I may safely declare, may be depended upon».[279] Whereas the first statement communicates a real uncertainty on what would happen to the country in the following years, and at the same time a vivid hope in the *Risorgimento* cause, in the last part of the sentence the author attests that she is a reliable source of knowledge as regards the state of Italy and its inhabitants, upon which her British readers can be assured. This knowledge derives not only from Mary Shelley's stay in the country during her journeys in the early 1840s but also from her life there in 1818-1822, albeit «Italy is, indeed, much changed»[280] since then. On both occasions, Shelley «mingled» with the Italians, therefore she now feels

[276] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., vol. 1, p. VIII.
[277] Ibid., p. VIII.
[278] Ibid., pp. VIII-IX.
[279] Ibid., p. IX.
[280] Ibid., p. X.

able to give a faithful account on their «real character» to the English audience, while maintaining her own Britishness to the extent of being a bridge between the two nationalities and cultures. For instance, in a footnote to «their [the Italians'] real character», she acknowledges the existence of violence in Italy, always deplored by shocked English travellers there, but she explains the differences between assassination occurring in Italy and the premeditated murders in England and in France. Shelley thus presents the opposition between *us* (the British) and *them* (the Italians) in a sort of neutral and softened way. In fact, she takes into account the most common crimes associated with the Italians, i.e., assassination and cheating or robbery, and stresses that the other European citizens are not blameless:

> Assassination is of frequent occurrence in Italy: these are perpetrated chiefly from jealousy. There are crimes frequent with us and the French of which they are never guilty. Brutal murders committed for "filthy lucre" do not occur among them. We never hear of hospitality violated […]. Their acts of violence are, indeed, assassinations, committed in the heat of the moment — never cold-blooded. […] There is plenty of cheating in Italy — not more, perhaps, than elsewhere, only the system is more artfully arranged; but there is no domestic robbery. I lived four years in Tuscany. I was told that the servant who managed my expenditure cheated me dreadfully […] but I never at any time, when stationary or travelling, was robbed of the smallest coin or the most trifling article of property. On the contrary, instances of scrupulous honesty are familiar to all travellers in Italy, as practised among the poorest peasantry.[281]

This passage follows a linear structure. Mary Shelley «sketches facts», by first recognising the existence of such crimes («assassination is of frequent occurrence in Italy», «there is plenty of cheating in Italy»), and then by examining their causes and peculiarities in contrast with the crimes committed by the English, the French, or «elsewhere». Some of these are unknown to the Italians, according to her («there are crimes frequent with us and the French of which they are never guilty», «there is no domestic robbery», «on the contrary, instances of scrupulous honesty are familiar to all travellers in Italy»). Here, albeit in a footnote, Mary Shelley is striving to defend or vindicate the Italians from the typical misconceptions against them in the English public opinion, taking advantage of her position of 'insider' and 'outsider' at the same time: she refers to her compatriots using «us», thus enabling the readers to identify with her own British point of view, and she mentions «all travellers to Italy»,

[281] Ibid., p. IX.

counting herself amongst them, but she also declares that she «lived four years in Tuscany», thus presenting herself as more reliable than a common visitor to Italy. Indeed, according to Rachel Woolley, «Shelley uses biography to create awareness about Italian history, people, and customs».[282]

The immediately ensuing paragraphs of the Preface state that travellers to the country, both in the past and at the time of Mary Shelley's writing, condemned «with contemptuous censures the effeminacy of the Italians», along with «the vice and cowardice of the nobles»: «contempt [towards Italians] was the general tone» of all British travellers and travel writers, with the exception of Lady Morgan's *Italy*. Jeanne Moskal argues that

> *Rambles* comes to terms not only with Mary Shelley's personal losses, but also with the political losses she shared with a generation of English liberals, […] by proposing for them a more limited scope (and a more distant one) by directing attention to the nascent nationalist movement in Italy. She speaks for the Risorgimento ("resurgence"), Italy's nationalist movement, and defends the rebellious Carbonari who took their name from the charcoal-pits where they secretly convened.[283]

The very nature of *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, and its author's above-quoted words demonstrate that Mary Shelley regarded the Italian people «in a political point of view», as Lady Morgan did in her travel account on the country. Indeed, it must be emphasised that Mary Shelley's personal acquaintance with the exiled nationalist Ferdinando Luigi Gatteschi played a significant role both in the writing of *Rambles*, prompted by Shelley's desire to help him financially, and in her explicit support of the *Risorgimento* movement, through her sympathies for the secret society of the *Carbonari*, to which Gatteschi belonged. Therefore, Mary Shelley's opinion of the Italians in general cannot be separated from her political stance in favour of the liberation of Italy from the Austrian invaders. Moskal further claims that these sympathies for the *Carbonari*, which Shelley herself confessed in her letters to Claire Clairmont at the time, «prompted the Austrian authorities to intercept her mail in Milan, as part of their ongoing surveillance of nationalist sympathizers».[284] This is the reason behind the delay of the letters Mary Shelley was awaiting in Milan before

[282] Woolley, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
[283] Moskal, "Travel Writing", cit., p. 247.
[284] Ibid., pp. 247-248.

returning home in 1840 (cf. section 2.4.2 of the present dissertation), although it is not clear whether she knew its cause, and she certainly does not mention it in *Rambles*. If Mary Shelley was a suspected dangerous revolutionary for the Austrian government, seen as potentially secretly plotting with the Carbonari (actually, she never saw them in person), she was not afraid of overtly voicing her opinions of Italians to the British public, mostly addressing, as argued by Moskal, the English liberals thus: «Englishmen, in particular, ought to sympathise in their struggles; for the aspiration for free institutions all over the world has its source in England».[285]

Moreover, she recounts that the Italian intellectuals «burn[ed] with enthusiasm for liberty»[286], and mentions the poets Alessandro Manzoni and Gian Battista Niccolini, the celebrated authors of the novel *I promessi sposi* [*The Betrothed*] and the tragedy *Arnaldo da Brescia*, respectively. A decisive point must be discussed concerning Shelley's depiction of Italians in the Preface of *Rambles*, which concentrates all her views on the matter in a few pages. According to her, the existing vices of Italians are a direct consequence of their forced submission to the Austrians, and of their lack of freedom. Hence, rather than seeing the Italian people merely as 'slaves,' which was her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley's harsh opinion of them («a tribe of stupid and shriveled slaves»)[287], Mary openly regarded them as 'victims':

> [the country] is struggling with its fetters, — not only with the material ones that weigh on it so heavily, and which they endure with a keen sense of shame, but with those that have entered into and bind the soul — superstition, luxury, servility, indolence, violence, vice. […] or, if they escape this evil, and preserve the ingenuousness of a free and noble nature, they are victims.[288]

[285] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., vol. 1, p. XI.
[286] Ibid., p. X.
[287] P.B. Shelley, letter to Thomas Love Peacock (20th April 1818), in Lafayette Jones (ed.), *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, cit., p. 9. In the second volume of Rambles, when describing her one-month stay in Venice and examining the Venetians' character, Mary Shelley mentions her late husband's opinion of them, and possibly of Italians in general: «when I was last at Venice, many many years ago, I knew no Venetians, and it so happened that the English whom I saw chose to erect themselves into censors of this people, and to speak of them in unmeasured terms of censure. New to Italy, we believed those who had lived there long. Shelley, in his letters and poems, echoes these impressions. I cannot pretend to say with what justice such opinions were formed: I do not know whether the Venetians are improved», in M. Shelley, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 107.
[288] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., p. XIII.

As can be inferred from the above-quoted extracts, the Preface already presents a clear picture of Mary Shelley's opinion of Italians, and similar digressions on this topic are scattered throughout the two volumes of *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*. Woolley has noted that the whole travelogue is «an attempt to rehabilitate the Italian national character […], and the energy and the potential that Shelley sees in the people will lead to their rejuvenation».[289]

One of the most significant passages of *Rambles* concerning the Italians is contained in a letter from Cadenabbia, on the shore of the Lake of Como, in Part I of the first volume. The last part of this letter perfectly summarises Shelley's view of the Italian people in the light of what has been discussed in this chapter. First, Shelley reports her impressions of Manzoni's poem *Il cinque Maggio* (1821), which she heard for the first time, and considered as a demonstration that

> the genius of the Italians survives the blighting influence of misrule and oppression. The more I see of the inhabitants of this country, the more I feel convinced that they are highly gifted with intellectual powers, and possess all the elements of greatness. […] But […] they must tread to earth the vices that cling to them as the ivy around their ruins. They must do this to be free; yet without freedom how can they?[290]

In the concluding paragraph of the letter, Shelley declares her love for the Italians. She does not fail to recognise their faults, but, in her opinion, these are imputable to their state of oppression, and she is convinced that their numerous good qualities («life, energy, and talent») would be 'ennobled' if the Italians lived in a free country, worthy of the greatest national artists and minds:

> I love the Italians. It is impossible to live among them and not love them. Their faults are many — the faults of the oppressed — love of pleasure, disregard of truth, indolence, and violence of temper. But their falsehood is on the surface — it is not deceit. Under free institutions, […] their love of pleasure were readily ennobled into intellectual activity. They are affectionate, simple, and earnestly desirous to please. There is life, energy, and talent in every look and word; grace and refinement in every act and gesture. They are a noble race of men — a beautiful race of women; the time must come when again they will take a high place among nations. Their habits, fostered by their governments, alone are degraded and degrading; alter these, and the country of Dante and Michel Angelo and Raphael still exists.[291]

[289] Woolley, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
[290] M. Shelley, Letter VII (10th of August 1840), in *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 86.
[291] Ibid., p. 87.

3.2 Italian Women According to Mary Shelley, Samuel Rogers, and Frances Trollope

Whilst the previous paragraph has analysed Mary Shelley's view of Italians in general, this one concerns her view of Italian women, in relation to Samuel Rogers's *Italy* and Frances Trollope's *A Visit to Italy*. Some relevant excerpts on the topic have been selected from each of these travelogues, without pretentions of exhaustiveness.

In the above-cited conclusion of Letter VII in *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, Mary Shelley defined the Italians as «a noble race of men — a beautiful race of women». The previous letter from Cadenabbia, recounting Mary Shelley's and her travel companions' arrival at the "Albergo Grande", where they spent six weeks, includes the first description of Italian women in *Rambles*, however brief. Shelley is introducing the patriarchal family who keeps the hotel, formed by the five brothers Brentani, their old mother, and the wife of the eldest brother. As concerns the elderly woman, Shelley merely acknowledges that «there is, in the first place, an old mother, who evidently possesses great sway in the family, and a loud voice, but with whom we have nothing to do».[292] The eldest brother's wife, on the contrary, is presented in a more detailed way. According to Shelley, this young woman possesses all the good qualities that constitute «the charm of the Italians»: «Peppina […] is hard-working, good-humoured, and endowed with all the innate courtesy which forms, together with their simplicity of manner, the charm of the Italians».[293] As discussed in the previous section, in the Preface Shelley employed the very same words to describe the Italian people in general («their courtesy, their simplicity of manner, their evident desire to serve, […] give to the better specimens among the higher classes, and to many among the lower, a charm all their own»).[294] Thus, the first example of Italian woman that we find in Part I of *Rambles* seems to confirm these impressions.

Letter VII, written from Cadenabbia on a Saturday in August, contains Mary Shelley's first depiction of a group of Italian girls. The weather is warm, and Shelley describes the girls coming home from the silk mill where they work, passing the "Albergo Grande":

[292] Letter VI (17th of July 1840), in ibid., p. 68.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid., p. p. VIII.

> Each evening, too, at dusk, the girls from the silk mill close by, pass our inn on their way from work to their own village; they sing as they go, and look happy: some of them are very beautiful. They are all well conducted, I am told, keeping sharp watch on one another. The unmarried in Italy are usually of good conduct, while marriage is the prelude to a fearful liberty.[295]

Here, once again, Shelley associates these specific silk mill girls to a more general category, namely «the unmarried in Italy», as if to show her English readers the peculiarities or the differences between the English and the Italian girls/women. The final remark about marriage being «the prelude to a fearful liberty» seems in contrast with the previous portrayal of Peppina as a faithful and hard-working wife. Actually, these two instances convey Mary Shelley's ambiguous and at times conflicted view of Italians in general, reflected in her opinions about Italian women.

In a letter from Venice, contained in the second volume of *Rambles*, Mary Shelley illustrates the condition of married and unmarried women in Italy, comparing it with those of English women. First of all, the structure of the family differs in the two countries and cultures. In fact, while the married couples in England are generally "self-centred" («our family affections centre in the small focus of the married pair»; «we […] consider it a necessity of life to have a *menage* to ourselves — each couple in its nest»)[296], Italian families form a harmonious and loving

> little republic often consisting of grandfather and grandmother, […] their days not counted and grudged, as with us too frequently the case: then comes father and mother, respected and loved — and then brothers and sisters. If a sister marries, she becomes part of another family, and goes away. The son brings his wife under his father's roof; but the size of their houses renders them independent in their daily life.[297]

As regards unmarried women, conversely, Mary Shelley remarks that their undesirable condition is the same across the Continent. At the time of her writing, it was still universally acknowledged that marriage was still the best, if not the only solution for a woman to obtain economic security and protection, regardless of her social status. However, Shelley notices that there are more unmarried women in England than in Italy, albeit she admits not knowing how the Italians disposed of

[295] Letter VII (3rd of August 1840), in ibid., pp. 76-77.
[296] Letter IX (October 1843), in M. Shelley, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 108.
[297] Ibid.

them, considering that the custom of sending one's unmarried daughters to a convent for them to become nuns was no longer as common as in the past. Another difference between the British and the Italian women is that, unsurprisingly according to Shelley, the daughters surviving their parents in England are better equipped to face life alone, but she does not further elaborate this statement. Shelley expresses her overall impressions concerning unmarried women in Italy thus, by means of the characteristic opposition between *us* (the British, including herself and also her readers) and *them* (the Italians with whom she 'mingled'):

> unmarried women all over the Continent have so much the worst of it, that few remain single. How they contrive to dispose of their girls, now convents are in disuse, I cannot tell; but […] there are not so many as with us, and they usually contrive to marry. At times you may find a maiden aunt, given up to devotion, who sheds a gentle and kindly influence over the house. It does not strike me that, as regards daughters who survive their parents, things are much better managed with us.

In *A Visit to Italy* (1842), Mary Shelley's contemporary Frances Milton Trollope too shares with the British audience her own view of Italian women right from the first volume of the travelogue, in a letter from Genoa. In fact, in Letter III she describes a group of Italian women inside a church during the Sunday mass, by noticing the richness of their coloured dresses, unusual for Protestant women, and by comparing their 'picturesque' appearance to a painting by the Italian artist Paolo Veronese:

> On first entering the Duomo, I was quite startled by what seemed to me the most exceeding richness of the female dresses which crowded the aisle. [...] The general effect [...] was singularly brilliant and picturesque. Every female head is enveloped, ranger coquettishly, [...] in these large, square, gaudly draperies, which, falling low over the figure, produced [...] one of the most richly-coloured living pictures that I ever saw — a first rate Paul Veronese.[298]

Trollope seems to use the term 'picturesque' more or less as it was originally codified by William Gilpin in *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape* (1772). According to Reverend Gilpin, the concept of the 'picturesque' could be applied to groups of people, besides landscapes, meaning that human beings were seen as having the features to be found

[298] Trollope, Letter III, in *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 41-42.

in a picture or a painting (cf. 1.1.3), similarly to Trollope's comparison between the women's dresses and a work of art by Veronese. James Buzard argues that

> the very imprecision of the term seems to have aided its dissemination, and the cessation of hostilities on the Continent in 1815 opened up a host of fresh fields, especially Italian ones, for its development. Thus we find, for example, […] Frances Trollope remarking in the 1840s on the 'air of *historique* picturesque perfection' she detected in some Tuscan peasant women.[299]

In Letter XV, written from Florence in May 1841, thus only a year after Mary Shelley's first journey to Italy, Frances Trollope once more recurs to the term 'picturesque' and to Italian art to describe Italian women, knowing that her British public was familiar with both these references. Hence, Trollope follows the same pattern she had already inaugurated in the above-quoted letter from Genoa, to help her readers visually picture the scene in their minds, in particular the appearance of some strikingly beautiful peasant Italian women. Indeed, in this letter the travel writer thoroughly recounts a «popular Tuscan fête»,[300] as she defines it, attended by a crowd of artisans and peasants. The women are represented as follows:

> Among the women, there were some *exquisitely* lovely, and certainly more perfectly beautiful, both as to form and features, than I remember anywhere in the same rank. For it is rarely, I think, that the form of a hard-working woman, in any country, reaches its full perfection of growth, without losing some portion of its grace [...]. But this was not the case of the beauties I am now speaking of, who had several of them an air of *historique* picturesque perfection that really approached very nearly to the *beau idéal* of beauty as can be seen in the Madonnas of Raphael.[301]

On this occasion, Trollope associates the ideal beauty of several Italian women from the low class to the Madonnas of Raphael, as well-known to the Victorians as the paintings by Veronese. Both painters are representative of the Italian Renaissance, which at the time was considered as a model and a standard reference of perfection, combined with the "picturesque" in the Gilpian sense of the term, as a pleasing instance of characteristic beauty among the poorest peasants, seen as a part of the landscape (cf. 1.1.2). However, Trollope further specifies that only few women

[299] Buzard, "The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)", cit., p. 47.
[300] Trollope, Letter XV (May 1841), in *op. cit.*, p. 244.
[301] Ibid., pp. 245-246.

corresponded to these impressions, and that «the rest [...] they were not superior in average beauty to our own peasantry».[302]

It is noteworthy that both Frances Trollope and Mary Shelley directed their attention to young hard-working women from the lowest classes, whom they deemed as remarkably beautiful and graceful. Yet, the two authors observed Italian women in different contexts: Shelley witnessed their daily life, such as the girls' way home from the silk factory, or Peppina in the "Albergo Grande", whereas Trollope saw them on special occasions such as the Sunday mass or a popular feast. Furthermore, Mary Shelley does not refer to Italian girls/women by citing the picturesque or Italian paintings like Trollope, but she dwells more on their general condition almost from a sociological or anthropological point of view, rather than focusing on their aesthetic appearance. Nonetheless, Shelley's and Trollope's descriptions are linked by their comparisons or contrasts between the Italian and the British women, in both cases expressed through the pronouns "us", or "our" to indicate the second, whom they belonged to, and "them" to address the first.

Finally, Samuel Rogers too, in *Italy, A Poem*, presents some instances of Italian girls and women. For example, in the already quoted section about Lake Como, he depicts a group of young women dancing during a popular feast in a villa on the shore of the lake (see 2.4.1). A girl in particular is not coincidentally called Angelica, like one of the main characters in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, the prototype of the standard but unattainable beauty, and the cause of the knight Orlando's madness. Moreover, this «Fairy-Queen» who leads the dance is compared to a painting by «Paolo», i.e., Paolo Veronese. The scene is portrayed thus:

> Forms such as hers were flitting, […]
> Such as adorn the triumphs and the feasts
> By Paolo painted; where a Fairy-Queen,
> That night her birth-night, from her throne received
> (Young as she was, no floweret in her crown,
> Hyacinth or rose, so fair and fresh as she)
> […]
> Led in the dance, disporting as she pleased.
> […] and still I saw
> Thy smile, Angelica; and still I heard
> Thy voice — once and again biding adieu.

[302] Ibid., p. 246.

(pp. 35-36)

Here, the young woman, and all the dancing girls in general, are idealised. Rogers also describes them through literary as well as artistic references to Italian works, such as Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, and a painting by Paolo Veronese, together with an indirect but clear reference to the Fairy Queen, i.e., Titania from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The cultivated British readers of the poem were obviously acquainted with all these references, and the latter were also probably not unheard of by the emerging middle-classes who tried to educate themselves and followed Rogers's book as a travel guide to Italy. A young woman identified by the lyrical voice as Angelica appears in another section of the poem, this time during a hunt in the woods: she is a Lady on a horse, visually portrayed in the headpiece of the section entitled "An Interview". Once again, the atmosphere is dreamy and fairy-tale-like; the Lady is presented as a delicate and unreal vision, Ariosto's Angelica, or another or as a young woman emerging from a painting by Raphael, like Frances Trollope's Tuscan «Madonnas»:

A lady young and graceful, […]
Fairy vision, such as feigned of old,
[…]
Who but Angelica? — That day we gave
To Pleasure […]
With many a labyrinth of sylphs and flowers,
When Raphael and his school from Florence came,
Filling the land with splendour — nor less oft
Watched her, […]
Tasso, Guarini, waved their wizard-wands,
Peopling the groves of Arcady, and lo,
Fair forms appeared, murmuring melodious verse.
(pp. 134-135)

Thus, it can be concluded that Shelley, Trollope, and Rogers all presented Italian women from their own perspective, as these women appeared to them, according to each author's sensibility. They also maintained an established pattern in their descriptions throughout their travelogues, in terms of style, wording, and content, focusing on a particular aspect concerning women: Shelley sounded the state of married and unmarried women in Italy, Trollope the physical appearance of 'picturesque' common women, Rogers their evocative, dream-like, and enchanting qualities.

3.3 A 'Gendered' Point of View?

After having examined some instances of how Mary Shelley, Frances Trollope, and Samuel Rogers represented Italian girls/women, we now briefly discuss whether these authors' points of view may be regarded as 'gendered'. In other words, does their male or female sex influence the way they portrayed Italian women, and if so, in what ways?

To begin with, the literary genre — prose and poetry — differentiates the two women writers' travelogues from Samuel Rogers's one, in terms of form, style, and length. Besides, not only Mary Shelley and Frances Trollope wrote their travelogues in prose, but they also both employed the form of letter writing, like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Lady Sydney Morgan before them. According to some critics, travel accounts written in epistolary form are distinctive of female authors, and letter writing is a women's genre: women are believed to be more sensible, sympathetic, and sincere than men, reflecting these qualities in the spontaneity of the letter, which is therefore particularly apt to them.[303] The Preface to Lady Montagu's *Letters*, written by the proto-feminist writer and philosopher Mary Astell, seems to confirm this assumption (cf. 1.2.1). Indeed, Astell states that male travelogues are «all in the same tone», while Lady Montagu's one discloses «a new path […] to embellish a worn-out subject with variety of fresh and elegant entertainment», a «more true and accurate account of the customs and manners of the several nations with whom this lady conversed», without judging «the inmost follies of the heart».[304] Consequently, women writers are considered to be more precise, realistic, and to pay more attention to details in their descriptions, compared to male authors. In "Travel Writing and Gender", Susan Bassnett argues that Lady Montagu's «down-to-earth […] accounts of the living conditions of Turkish […] women […] are in sharp contrast to the more fantastical accounts of veiled women, repressed sexuality […] that appear in many male writers' accounts of their travels».[305] This assumption can be applied to the accounts of the living conditions of Italian women by Mary Shelley and Frances

[303] «Parce qu'on les juge moins intellectuelles mais plus sensibles que les hommes, moins réfléchies mais plus sincères, moins savants mais plus inventives, on leur décerne un prix d'eccellence en art épistolaire», Brigitte Diaz, "Les femmes à l'école des lettres. La letter et l'éducation des femmes au XVIIIe siècle", in Christine Plante (ed.), *L'épistolaire, un genre féminin?*, Paris, 1998, p. 135.
[304] Astell, in Lady Montagu, *op. cit.*, pp. VIII-IX.
[305] Bassnett, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

Trollope, in contrast with the certainly «more fantastical account» of Italian girls provided by Samuel Rogers in *Italy, A Poem*. The question of a possibly 'gendered' point of view, therefore, comprises both the form and the content of these authors' travelogues — in particular, the epistolary form chosen by the two women writers, potentially connected to their sex, and the actual descriptions of Italian women.

As previously anticipated, Shelley, Trollope, and Rogers depicted Italian women by focusing on different aspects, in a very coherent and cohesive way throughout their travel accounts. The common ground is that all of them noted Italian women's beauty and grace, even if the occasions in which the authors encountered or observed them at a distance were rather distinct. Whereas Mary Shelley, with the advantage of having lived some years in Italy when she was younger, could witness their everyday life as married or unmarried women, Frances Trollope was more of a traveller or a visitor to Italy, and was impressed by the young women's physical appearance in their fine, elaborate dresses for the Sunday mass or during a popular Tuscan feast. Like Frances Trollope, Samuel Rogers too experienced unique and unusual events attended by young Italian women. At a first sight, Rogers and Trollope might appear very similar in their depictions of the latter, and they could indeed be compared, as both authors associated the women they saw to a painting by Paolo Veronese or by Raphael. On a closer examination, however, Frances Trollope is much more detailed and truthful in her descriptions of the Genoese and the Tuscan women, than Rogers in his portrayal of the two unidentified 'Angelicas' from a villa on the shore of the Lake of Como, and the woods in the Tuscan countryside. In fact, both Shelley and Trollope could be interpreted as more objective: while it is true that they deem some Italian women extraordinarily beautiful and admirable, they also do not fail to notice that this is not valid for *all* Italian women, and they both acknowledge the similarities and the differences between the Italian and the English women. For instance, in the above-quoted extracts from her letters from Cadenabbia, Mary Shelley claimed that «unmarried women all over the Continent have so much the worst of it, that few remain single» — albeit in Italy there are not so many [unmarried women] as with us, and they usually contrive to marry» — and that «the unmarried […] are usually of good conduct, while marriage is the prelude to a fearful liberty». Frances Trollope, on the other hand, remarked that «among the women,

there were some *exquisitely* lovely, and certainly more perfectly beautiful, both as to form and features, than I remember anywhere in the same rank», but also that the rest of them were «not superior in average beauty to our own peasantry». These cultural evaluations and comparisons concerning women are totally absent in Rogers's *Italy*. In Rogers's poetic travelogue, on the contrary, young Italian women are idealised and presented mostly, if not only, by means of literary and artistic allusions — to the chivalric poems by Ariosto and Tasso, or to the paintings by Veronese. The two 'Angelicas' of the poem are also interchangeable, or perhaps they are merged into the same person in the lyrical voice's mind: they are certainly described in the same tones as intangible visions, or forms, immersed in a fairy-tale or fantastic atmosphere («forms such as hers were flitting», «a Fairy-Queen», «fairy vision, such as feigned from old», «fair forms appeared, murmuring melodious verse»).

To conclude, the representation of Italian women by the three authors under analysis could be read as 'gendered', in that Mary Shelley and Frances Trollope seem to depict them in a more detail-oriented, realistic, and comparative perspective in *Rambles* and in *A Visit to Italy*, respectively. Both women travel writers compare and contrast the English and the Italian way of life concerning women; Samuel Rogers, instead, presents them from an idealised point of view. This could be determined by the fact that he is a male author, thus he is less focused on the practical aspects or conditions of women's lives, and more inclined to see them from a literary perspective, as if they were fictional characters, and not real people. Such difference is also imputable to the genres of these travelogues: Rogers's *Italy, A Poem* is, in fact, a poetic travel account, whilst *Rambles* and *A Visit to Italy* are both written in epistolary form, which is regarded by some as a female genre precisely for its authenticity, spontaneity, and freshness.

Conclusions

The present dissertation has investigated Mary Shelley's last work, the travelogue *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* (1844), in relation to Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem* (1830), illustrated by J.M.W. Turner, and previous women's travel accounts, especially those by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Lady Sydney Morgan, and Frances Trollope. More specifically, this thesis has focused on the way these nineteenth-century British authors recounted (verbally, and visually in the case of Rogers's *Italy*) their journeys to the *Bel Paese*, the subject of all their travel narratives. Hence, the research question concerned these travel writers' depiction of a selected route of their itinerary, namely that from the Alps to Venice, and that of Italian people and women. This final chapter will conclude the dissertation by summarising the main findings in the light of the projected aims and research questions.

First of all, a brief introduction to the field of travel writing and its terminology has assessed the difficulty of providing a clear definition of both the genre and its objects of analysis, that is, travelogues. If criticism about travel writing is fairly recent and datable back to the 1980s, scholars are notably still divided on what should be considered as such, and there are different schools of thought on the matter. Undoubtedly, a 'travelogue' must be centred around the theme of the journey, and the latter should possibly have been really undertaken by the author, as it happened to all the aforementioned travel writers. Equally important, travel accounts are characterized by a hybrid and intertextual nature, as they are a mixture of numerous literary genres, spanning from – among others – the *memoir*, letter writing, the journal, the travel guide, and also fiction. Mary Shelley's own travelogue is no exception: it may be regarded as a personal *memoir* of her first return to Italy since the death of Percy Bysshe Shelley, occurred seventeen years before, accompanied by their son Percy Florence and a few of his Cambridge friends. At the same time, *Rambles in Germany and Italy* is also an epistolary account, partly a guidebook, and partly a collection of essays or digressions on the state of Italy and the Italians under the Austrian rule, deplored by Mary Shelley in favour of her outspoken support for the *Risorgimento* cause. The strong aesthetic and pictorial quality of *Rambles* also

connects it with Rogers's illustrated travelogue, in addition to the fact that Shelley's travel account is dedicated to the elderly poet, an acquaintance and dear friend of hers since she was little, as Rogers attended her father's house (like the very Turner and Lady Morgan). The two works also share the same publisher, Edward Moxon, and it has even been theorised that Samuel Rogers could be the addressee of the letters that form *Rambles in Germany and Italy*. The travel account in the epistolary form was inaugurated by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu with her posthumous *Letters*, commonly known as the *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763). This publication paved the way for the following women's travel writing, such as Mary Wollstonecraft (the mother of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley)'s *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), Lady Morgan's *Italy* (1821), Frances Trollope's *A Visit to Italy* (1842), and Mary Shelley's own first and last travelogue: *History of a Six Weeks' Tour Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland*, and *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* (1844). Parallelly, Mariana Starke was a pioneer in the genre of the travel guide, lately established by her editor John Murray III's guidebooks. These were addressed to middle-class travellers, who lacked a formal education and, unlike the young aristocrats embarking on a Grand Tour in the previous centuries, needed to be instructed on what to see abroad, where to find accommodation, and in certain cases even on how to judge the landmarks of the foreign countries. Moreover, two crucial eighteenth-century essays deeply influenced nineteenth-century travel writing: Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), and William Gilpin's *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape* (1772). These works codified the concepts of the 'sublime' and the 'picturesque', frequently employed in Mary Shelley's *Rambles* and in the other travelogues under analysis.

The central part of the dissertation has analysed Mary Shelley's route from the Alps to Milan in 1840, and her one-month stay in Venice in 1843, in the light of Rogers's *Italy, A Poem*, and of Shelley's female predecessors in travel writing. Mary Shelley's impressions of Milan and Venice have been compared with Frances Trollope's ones, as she visited the two cities almost in the same years. For all the British travellers to Italy, including the authors here examined, Italy is a Paradise.

For Mary Shelley in particular, it is both the 'Paradise Lost' of her youth with Shelley from 1818 to his death by water in 1822, and a 'Paradise Regained'. What emerged from the second chapter of this thesis is that the crossing of the Alps greatly changed from Lady Montagu's and Rogers's times prior the end of the Napoleonic wars, and Lady Morgan's and Mary Shelley's ones, thanks to the construction of roads across the Alps linking Switzerland and Italy. Thus, these travel writers' recounting of the experience differs in this respect, but it is also similar in that the Alps are described in terms of the 'sublime', as codified by Edmund Burke. Mary Shelley and the lyrical voice of Rogers's *Italy* also follow the same route from the Alps to Lake Como and Bergamo. For both authors, the lake — evocatively painted by Turner — is imbued with literary associations to the past, to Pliny, Catullus, and Virgil for Rogers, and to Dante's *Paradiso* for Mary Shelley. Indeed, for her Lake Como is intertwined with the recollections of her first visit there with her late husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, and before it she felt the benevolent, divine, and dream-like presence of the beloved spirits of the dead. At Bergamo, she attends the *opera*, namely the *Mosé* by Rossini, and is enraptured by the music. Similarly, the lyrical voice of *Italy* is impressed by the musical performance of two orphans in the streets of Bergamo. Milan, conversely, is not mentioned in *Italy*. Both Mary Shelley and Frances Trollope are conflicted about the Duomo: on the one hand, they deem it inferior to Westminster Abbey and the Duomo of Cologne respectively; on the other hand, they are both impressed by its magnificence. Moreover, Mary takes refuge in the same spot behind the altar where Shelley used to read Dante — once more, the past coincides with the present, and the two are inextricably tied throughout *Rambles*. Finally, Mary Shelley's long desired journey to Venice revives her memories of the death of her baby daughter Clara, but she finds the «queen of the Ocean»[306] itself enchanting and impossible to describe: according to her, the «glorious City in the sea»,[307] as Rogers defined it, is best represented precisely by Turner's vignette of Piazza San Marco seen from the Canal Grande in *Italy, A Poem*. Likewise, Frances Trollope in *A Visit to Italy* defines Venice as «ex-earthly»[308] and

[306] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., vol. 2, p. 79.
[307] Rogers, *op. cit*., p. 47.
[308] Trollope, *op. cit*., vol. 2, p. 66.

magical. The two travel writers, however, have radically different views on the future of the city. Mary Shelley deplores the construction of the bridge and the railroad across the lagoon, feeling that Venice is bound to lose its romance because of this innovation, projected by the Austrians. Frances Trollope believes that the city could flourish again under the Austrian rule, and still remain «a magnificent museum of art […], not as a threat, but as a very comfortable prediction».[309]

The last chapter of this dissertation has been devoted to Mary Shelley's perspective on Italians and of Italian women. Her view of Italian women has been investigated in comparison with Samuel Rogers's and Frances Trollope's descriptions of them, in order to assess whether their perspectives can be regarded as 'gendered'. As far as the Italian people are concerned, Mary Shelley's travelogue aims to be «explanatory of their real character»[310], by emphasising their good qualities and defending them against the common prejudices of British travellers to Italy. Indeed, according to Mary Shelley the vices of Italians are imputable to their lack of freedom due to the Austrian domination of the country, and she expresses her fervent hope for a future liberation of Italy and its inhabitants. Lastly, the ways in which Mary Shelley, Frances Trollope, and Samuel Rogers represented Italian women in their travelogues may be interpreted as 'gendered' both in terms of form and of content, despite their common admiration of the beauty of Italian women. Not only these authors' travel accounts are written in prose and poetry respectively, but both women writers also chose the epistolary form, inaugurated by Lady Montagu, and employed by female travel authors ever since. According to some critics, letter writing is a women's genre for its spontaneity, sincerity, sensibility, and freshness, in contrast with male travelogues. Furthermore, while Shelley focused on the living conditions of Italian married and unmarried girls/women, and Trollope on women's 'picturesque' physical appearance, Rogers idealised young Italian women through a series of literary and artistic associations, such as to Ariosto's Angelica, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, or a painting by Veronese, in a fairy-tale like atmosphere. The two women writers also examined Italian women in

[309] Ibid., p. 122.
[310] M. Shelley, *op. cit*., vol. 1, p. VIII.

comparison with the English ones, to which they belonged, by juxtaposing "us" (British women) and "them" (Italian women).

In conclusion, this dissertation constitutes a first attempt to examine *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1834* in the light of Samuel Rogers's *Italy* and its illustrations by Turner, together with Mary Shelley's female precursors in the genre. The theme of travel and travel writing is certainly topical. Considering the latest resurgence of critical studies about Mary Shelley's last work, her perspective on Italy and the Italians in *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1834* deserves to be further explored in relation to Shelley's predecessors and contemporaries. A quotation from the second volume of *Rambles* seems particularly appropriate to summarise the meaning and the benefits of travel, and consequently of travel writing, for Mary Shelley:

> to fly abroad from the hive, like the bee, and return laden with the sweets of travel — scenes, which haunt the eye — wild adventures, that enliven the imagination — knowledge, that enliven and free the mind from clinging, deadening prejudices — a wider circle of sympathy with our fellow creatures; — these are the uses of travel, for which I am convinced everyone is the better and the happier.[311]

[311] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 158.

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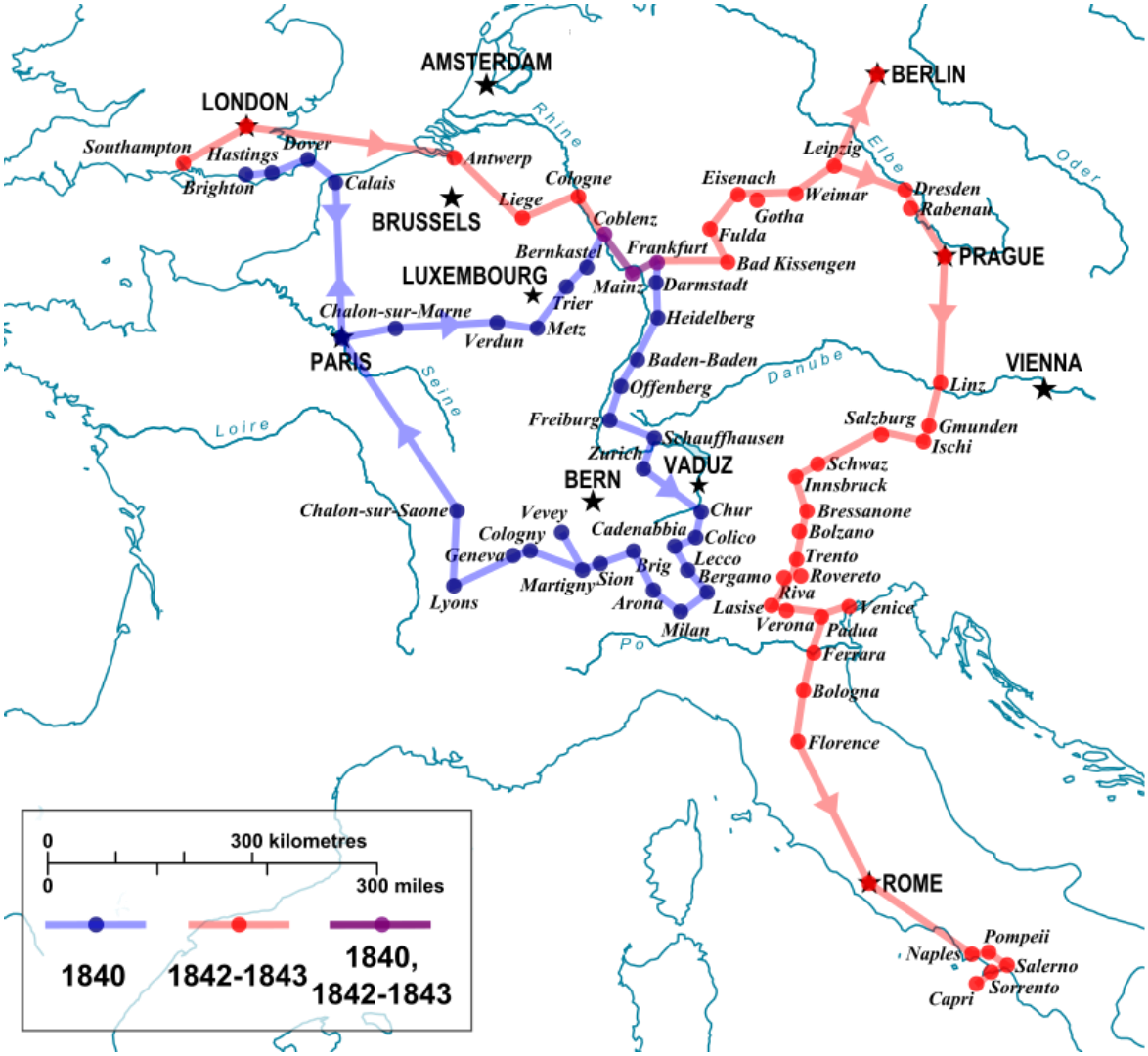

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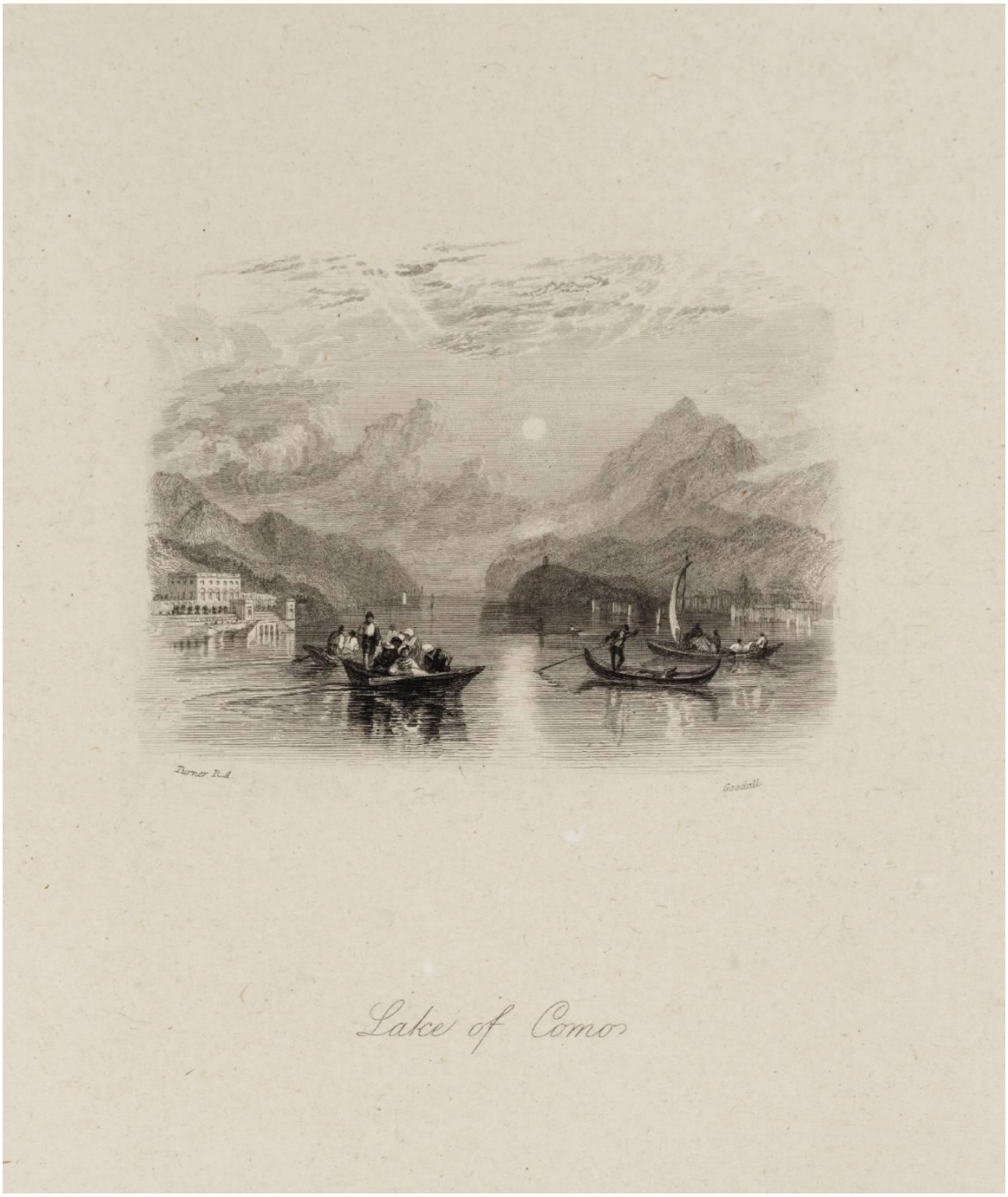

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