

Reanimating Scenes of History:
The Treatment of Italy in the Writings of Mary Shelley

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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November 2001

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Abstract

The mediation through history of Shelley's treatment of Italy is the central theme of this thesis. My analysis of her oeuvre participates in the ongoing critical re-evaluation of Shelley, and emphasises her sophisticated treatment of civic, social, and national identity through history.

The opening two chapters discuss influential texts that prefigure Shelley's treatment of Italy and history. My discussion of J. C. L. Sismondi's *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge* (1807–09, 1818) foregrounds the historical significance of the medieval Italian republics. Consideration of Lady Morgan's *Italy* (1821) and Germaine de Staël's *Corinne* (1807) further explores the political resonance of the historical past in the present. The shaping of Shelley's historical aesthetic is traced through William Godwin's *Essay of History and Romance* and *Essay on Sepulchres*, uncovering Shelley's strong emphasis on place. The compass of these generically diverse texts accentuates a thematic concern with Shelley's own versatile use of genre.

The chapter on *Valperga* (1823) addresses the generic hybridity of fiction that incorporates history and biography. Additionally, it connects Shelley's representation of the North Italian landscape to political liberty through Sismondi's Tuscan landscapes in his *Tableau sur l'agriculture toscane* (1801). Shelley's historical aesthetic unites reanimation of the past with a sensitivity to Italy's civic and rural topoi, as the chapter on *The Last Man* (1826) shows.

The two concluding chapters interpret Shelley's later writings about Italy as an integration of civic identity, memory, and history. Her biographical project *Lives* (1835–39) invests the individual aesthetic responses to Italy with a cultural heritage. This is then further developed in her travel memoir *Rambles in Germany and Italy* (1844), which evaluates Italy's emergent nationalism through its past.

Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	5
List of Abbreviations	6
Introduction	8
Italy	13
History	17
Chapter 1 Influential Models for Mary Shelley's Treatment of Italy: Sismondi, Staël, and Morgan	23
Sismondi's <i>Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge</i>	27
Sismondi's <i>Tableau de l'agriculture toscane</i>	35
Germaine de Staël's <i>Corinne</i>	41
Lady Morgan's <i>Italy</i>	50
Chapter 2 Reanimation, Matter, and Imagination from <i>Frankenstein</i> to 'Roger Dodsworth'	64
<i>Frankenstein</i> : Reanimating Matter	68
Godwin, The Past, and Matter	73
Reanimating the Past: 'Valerius' and 'Roger Dodsworth'	80
Reanimation and Civic Identity	89
Chapter 3 'The soul and living spark of virtue': History and Civic Identity in Mary Shelley's <i>Valperga</i>	97
History, Narrative, Genre	101
Civic Identity I: Individual History, Public History	106
Civic Identity II: Virtue, Sentiment, and the Self in the World	113

	Civic Identity III: Narratives of Time and Place	119
Chapter 4	'The threshold of unborn time': Anatomising History in Mary Shelley's <i>The Last Man</i>	131
	Gender, Civic Identity, and Republican Space	137
	Sublime Places: Society, History, and Civilisation	147
	Narratives of the Past and Reanimating History	152
Chapter 5	Italy's 'shifting scenes': Narratives of Displacement and Renewal, 1826-1838	161
	'The English in Italy' and 'Modern Italy'	163
	<i>The Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain, and Portugal</i>	171
	'Modern Italian Romances'	185
Chapter 6	'A joy to return': Mary Shelley's <i>Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843</i>	191
	Civic Identity through the polis and across the peninsula	197
	The Carbonari, Nationalism, Genre	208
	Personal Recollection in <i>Rambles</i>	216
	Conclusion	227
	Bibliography	234

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the financial assistance of the Research Committee of the University of Newcastle for funding the PhD studentship for research into British Romanticism and Europe.

My first thanks must go to those directly connected with this project, in particular to my supervisor Dr. Michael Rossington. Professor Brian Stimpson, University of Newcastle, and Dr. Jonathan Long, University of Durham, kindly offered advice on my translations. The librarians of the Robinson Library, University of Newcastle, the Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle, the Durham University Library, and the British Library all helpfully responded to my requests.

Amongst others upon whom I have also made demands, I thank especially Janice Burrow, Marita Grimwood, Simon Tibbs, and Anne Whitehead for their friendship; James Widden for his perspicacity and common sense; and Maureen Woolley, to whom, once more, I am deeply grateful.

Note

Throughout the thesis Mary Shelley is referred to as Shelley. Percy Bysshe Shelley is referred to as P. B. Shelley.

Parts of chapters one and three appear in *Silence, Sublimity and Censorship in the Romantic Period*, ed. by Fiona Price and others (Edwin Mellen, forthcoming).

List of Abbreviations

Primary sources referred to in this thesis are listed below.

Mary Shelley

- NSW *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, ed. by Nora Crook with Pamela Clemit, 8 vols (London: Pickering, 1996), I: *Frankenstein*, ed. by Nora Crook; II: *Matilda, Dramas, Reviews & Essays, Prefaces & Notes*, ed. by Pamela Clemit; III: *Valperga: or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio Castracani, Prince of Lucca*, ed. by Nora Crook; IV: *The Last Man*, ed. by Jane Blumberg with Nora Crook; V: *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*, ed. by Doucet Devin Fischer; VI: *Lodore*, ed. by Fiona Stafford; VII: *Falkner*, ed. by Pamela Clemit; VIII: *Travel Writing*, ed. by Jeanne Moskal
- MWSJ *The Journals of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 1814–1844*, ed. by Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987)
- MWSL *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett, 3 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980–88)
- F NSW, I: *Frankenstein*, ed. by Nora Crook
- VRR ‘Valerius the Reanimated Roman’, in *Mary Shelley: Collected Tales and Stories*, ed. by Charles E. Robinson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 332–44
- RD ‘Roger Dodsworth the Reanimated Englishman’, in *Mary Shelley: Collected Tales and Stories*, ed. by Charles E. Robinson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 43–50
- V NSW, III: *Valperga: or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio Castracani, Prince of Lucca*, ed. by Nora Crook
- LM NSW, IV: *The Last Man*, ed. by Jane Blumberg with Nora Crook
- EI ‘The English in Italy’, in NSW, II: *Matilda, Dramas, Reviews & Essays, Prefaces & Notes*, ed. by Pamela Clemit, pp. 147–63
- MI ‘Modern Italy’, in NSW, II: *Matilda, Dramas, Reviews & Essays, Prefaces & Notes*, ed. by Pamela Clemit, pp. 182–94
- LI *The Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain, and Portugal*, 3 vols, LXXXVI–LXXXVIII, of *The Cabinet of Biography, Conducted by the Rev. Dionysius Lardner* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1835–37)
- MIR ‘Modern Italian Romances’, in *The Monthly Chronicle*, 2 (1838), 415–28, 547–57

- R *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, in *NSW*, VIII: *Travel Writing*, ed. by Jeanne Moskal, pp. 49–386
- PN ‘Prefaces and Notes’, in *NSW*, II: *Matilda, Dramas, Reviews & Essays, Prefaces & Notes*, ed. by Pamela Clemit, pp. 231–348
- Sismondi**
- HRI *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge*, 16 vols (Paris: Nicolle, 1807–09, 1818)
- T *Tableau de l’agriculture toscane* (Geneva: J. J. Paschoud, 1801)
- LME *De la Littérature du Midi de l’Europe*, 4 vols, 2nd edn (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1819)
- Staël**
- C *Corinne, or Italy*, trans. with introd. by Avriel H. Goldberger (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987)
- Morgan**
- I *Italy*, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1821)
- Godwin**
- H&R ‘Essay of History and Romance’, in *The Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, ed. by Mark Philp, 7 vols (London: Pickering, 1993), v: *Educational and Literary Writings*, ed. by Pamela Clemit, pp. 290–301
- S ‘Essay on Sepulchres’, in *The Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, ed. by Mark Philp, 7 vols (London: Pickering, 1993), VI: *Essays*, ed. by Mark Philp, pp. 1–30

Introduction

Italy is suffused with historical associations in Shelley's work, and these associations have acquired wider cultural and political nuances. This thesis examines how Shelley's treatment of Italy is fundamentally shaped by a historicising tendency. The two key elements under investigation, history and Italy, circulate in a dynamic and reciprocal exchange. Shelley's use of history generates a construction of Italy consonant with her political sympathies and intellectual interests but, in spite of this fashioning, aporia remain through which further portrayals of Italy emerge. History shapes Italy, but Shelley's ensuing version of Italy also works its own power on her treatment of history. This thesis explores the fruitful symbiosis of these two concepts in her writings.

A defining characteristic of Shelley's historical aesthetic is reanimation, and this crystallises her treatment of the geographical space of Italy into a trope holding meanings which are culturally resonant, nostalgic and intimate. Reanimated history signals the specificity of locales and energises the Italian scenes which appear throughout Shelley's work. Her use of history frames these scenes, assimilating them into the present and awakening their force through reanimation. By infusing locales or historic sites with a living force Shelley creates an arresting, sometimes disruptive and overwhelming, sense of the past. Reanimation delineates both a spatial conceptualisation of the land and a temporal one to provide 'scenes of history'. James Chandler has identified historic scenes as clarifying the 'crucial relationship' between the 'inner subjectivity of character and the external objectivity of culture'.¹ Shelley's treatment of Italy depends on character for the force of its past to be recognised, but additionally the place of Italy is shaped by history. Specific places within Italy participate in reconfigurations of the past, of Europe's present, and Italy's future. In the light of this, Shelley's use of history is considered in relation to temporality. The reanimation of Shelley's Italian scenes provide openings into the cultural past and personal memory. The convergence of history and memory in order to understand further Shelley's treatment of Italy is another concern of this

¹ James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 501.

thesis. Shelley places the treatment of landscape, and Italy, within historical and imaginative contemporary discourses in which she participates, and which sometimes she challenges thus establishing a distinctive and authoritative voice on the subject of Italy. Italy is defined as a rhetorical trope, saturated in cultural, historical and political resonances thrust upon it by European ideologues and a travelling English public. Metternich's dismissive assessment of Italy as a 'geographical expression' is thus recuperated but also refigured in relation to Shelley's representation of the peninsula.

This thesis assesses the politicisation of Shelley's historical imagination, examines the European intellectual context which informed the aesthetics of Shelley's writing about Italy, and addresses the role of temporality in her notions of the past. My evaluation of Shelley participates in a widening understanding of her oeuvre, and in part responds to Betty T. Bennett's assertion that 'Shelley cannot be properly read or understood without recognising the pivotal role that politics plays in all her novels'.² That Shelley's political awareness definitively shaped her treatment of Italy and history, is the central argument underpinning this thesis.

The thesis does not address Shelley's treatment of Italy derived from primary Italian sources on which she drew, as this research has already been undertaken.³ This narrower perspective would not have adequately encompassed Shelley's configuration of Italy through the past, and the interrelationships between history, biography, and fiction which characterise much of her writing. Instead, I have situated Shelley's treatment of Italy within the wider context of European cultural debate which influenced British responses to Italy, using works by J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi, Germaine de Staël, and Sydney Owenson, *Lady Morgan*, works which themselves participated in a critique of the political transformations of the Continent during the Romantic era. Shelley's works treating Italy position its history within a wider European framework, and in so doing they comment on Continental

² Betty T. Bennett, 'Feminism and Editing Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: The Editor And? / Or? The Text', in *Palimpsest: Editorial Theory in the Humanities*, ed. by George Bornstein and Ralph G. Williams (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 67-97 (p. 90). See also Betty T. Bennett, *Mary Shelley: An Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 73.

³ Jean de Palacio, *Mary Shelley dans son oeuvre: Contributions aux études Shelleyennes* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1969) addresses the question of the literary influences of Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, Monti and Alfieri, pp. 23-75.

geopolitics. Her treatment of the peninsula amplifies the tensions between cultures, and the conflicts between imperial desires and national self-determination, which are defining themes of her influential models for narrating the Italian past.

Even now over two hundred years after Shelley's birth, critics have not understood fully her major contribution to literary culture in the Romantic Era; this thesis contributes to the current reappraisal of her work. Moreover, my discussion of her preoccupations with individual history and genre challenges the disconcerting prevalence of critical readings of Shelley's oeuvre through her life.⁴ My consideration of her treatment of the individual in history does not yoke Shelley's fiction to the circumstances of her life, as earlier critics did to the detriment of their insight into her works.⁵ In examining the relationship between biography and fiction in Shelley's work, rather than between her life and her work, I offer a more productive synthesis of the two.

The focus on Italy reveals the significance that it acquired for Shelley as a trope through which she could articulate political and aesthetic concerns, as she connected history and place to the process of writing. My argument here expands and develops the contributions made by Jean de Palacio, in his discussion of Shelley's relationship to Italy, and Betty T. Bennett's assessment of Shelley's political agenda in her fiction.⁶ Palacio's insights into the influence of Italian literature, politics, and history on Shelley's writing usefully orient its aesthetic configurations but his reading focuses extensively on the literary influence of Dante.⁷ While Palacio discusses

⁴ Literary biographies of Mary Shelley have yet to provide Shelley scholarship with a definitive study of her works and a balanced account of her life despite her obvious popularity as a subject: Mrs. Julian Marshall, *The Life and Letters of Mary Shelley*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1889); Rosalie Glynn Grylls, *Mary Shelley: A Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938); Elizabeth Nitchie, *Mary Shelley: Author of 'Frankenstein'* (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953); Muriel Spark, *Mary Shelley: Child of Light*, 2nd edn (London: Constable, 1988), 1st edn 1951; Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 1988); Emily Sunstein, *Mary Shelley: Romance and Reality* (Baltimore: Little and Brown, 1989); and, Miranda Seymour, *Mary Shelley* (London: John Murray, 2000).

⁵ Bonnie Neumann, *The Lonely Muse: A Critical Biography of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, Romantic Reassessment 85 (Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1979) and Safaa El-Shater, *The Novels of Mary Shelley* Romantic Reassessment 59 (Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1977).

⁶ Palacio, pp. 45-90; and Betty T. Bennett, 'The Political Philosophy of Mary Shelley's Historical Novels: *Valperga* and *Perkin Warbeck*', in *The Evidence of the Imagination*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and others (New York: New York University Press, 1978), pp. 354-371.

⁷ Palacio, pp. 47-64.

Shelley's representation of the land, he does so through the filter of Dante's influence, or Shelley's purely personal attachment, without including her deeper interest in the political fate of Italy.⁸ My interest lies in drawing out the historical and temporal dimensions of Shelley's relationship to Italy, a further aspect that Palacio does not discuss in detail. My work participates in the sustained re-evaluation of Shelley that has resulted from modern scholarly editions of letters, journals, and, most recently, her works.⁹ This project expands the redefinition of Shelley as a scholar, writer, and critic, and liberates her from the enduring trend towards psycho-biographical interpretations of her works.

Landmark studies which challenged Shelley's subordinated place in literary history brought problems of their own to Mary Shelley scholarship by emphasising a cultural and emotional victimhood.¹⁰ Such interpretations have survived with surprising longevity, perpetuating a misrepresentation of Shelley. Jane Blumberg began to develop a broader understanding of Shelley's intellectual and political interests, yet she traces the 'bitter realism' and pessimism of Shelley's fiction to a disempowered femininity that first surfaced in Mary Poovey's seminal work.¹¹ Pamela Clemit departed from earlier interpretations by situating Shelley in a tradition of 'rational fiction', and highlighting the philosophical and political alignment of the genre of Shelley's novels.¹² My thesis has built on these contributions by integrating Shelley's political awareness into my assessment of her

⁸ Palacio, pp. 83, 78.

⁹ *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett, 3 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980-88), hereafter cited as *MWSL*; further references appear after quotations in the text; *The Journals of Mary Shelley, 1814-1844*, ed. by Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), hereafter cited as *MWSJ*; further references appear after quotations in the text; *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, Nora Crook, gen. ed., with Pamela Clemit, 8 vols (London: Pickering, 1996), hereafter cited as *NSW*.

¹⁰ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) and Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

¹¹ Jane Blumberg, *Mary Shelley's Early Novels: 'This Child of Misery and Imagination'* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1993), p. 76; Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Jane Austen, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

¹² Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of William Godwin, Brockden Brown and Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

treatment of Italy, and extends this line of critical enquiry by examining non-fictional works as well as her fiction.

The influential collection of essays *The Other Mary Shelley* established the 'complex and varied values' and the 'impressive breadth of concerns and topics' evident in Shelley's writing.¹³ Uncovering these, and incorporating them into critical readings of Shelley broadens the understanding of her place in nineteenth-century literary culture, supplying proof of her sophisticated thought, and the multivalency of her authorial voice. Moreover, new insights have contributed to the momentum generated by this reappraisal through exploring the philosophical background informing Shelley's approach to genre, or by situating Shelley within a historical context emphasising her shrewd interventions in the literary marketplace.¹⁴ Jeanne Moskal has initiated investigation into the extent to which Shelley's travel writing was itself a complex engagement with cultural practices, writerly conventions, and configurations of national manners.¹⁵ While recent collections of essays indicate the breadth of research which the reappraised Shelley oeuvre yields, they have also exposed the need for sustained and more detailed analyses of her writings, which has not yet been met.¹⁶ As Michael O'Neill has remarked, these are 'exciting times for the study of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley' as critics embrace the complexity and intricacy of Shelley's oeuvre and uncover new fields of enquiry.¹⁷

¹³ Bennett, 'Feminism and Editing', p. 88.

¹⁴ Mary Shelley, *Valperga: or, the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 1998) pp. 18–22; Mary Shelley, *Lodore*, ed. by Lisa Vargo (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 1997), pp. 12–13, 15–18; Pamela Clemit, 'Mary Shelley and William Godwin: a literary political partnership', *Women's Writing*, 6 (1999), 285–93 (p. 290).

¹⁵ NSW, VIII: *Travel Writing*, ed. by Jeanne Moskal; Jeanne Moskal, 'Gender and Italian Nationalism in Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy*', *Romanticism*, 5 (1999), 188–201; Jeanne Moskal 'Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy* and the Discourses of Race and National Manners', *La Questione Romantica*, 3/4 (Spring 1997), 205–12.

¹⁶ *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); *Mary Shelley's Fictions from 'Frankenstein' to 'Falkner'*, ed. by Michael Eberle-Sinatra with introd. by Nora Crook (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000); *Iconoclastic Departures*, ed. by Syndy M. Conger and others (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997); *Romanticism*, 3 (1997), and *Women's Writing*, 6 (1999).

¹⁷ Michael O'Neill, 'Review of *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction* by Betty T. Bennett and *Valperga*, ed. by Stuart Curran', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 49 (2000), 195–98 (p. 195).

Italy

Critical attention given to the relationship between Italy and English Romanticism has focused particularly on the traveller's response to Italy, or studies which are preoccupied with Rome and its historical significance for literary representation, or biographical treatments of the Shelley circle. Helen Angeli Rossetti's early study, *Shelley and his Friends in Italy*, relates the Shelleys' encounters with friends, Italians and expatriates, and provides occasional political contexts without offering any literary analysis of either P. B. Shelley's or Shelley's writings during their period in Italy. Similarly, C. L. Cline's study offers little of use to the critic whose interest lies beyond biographical narration.¹⁸ These works do not conceptualise Italy in a way which incorporates a cultural past of the peninsula, or seek to explain the allure of Italy, or the political and historical resonances of its representation in Romantic writing, or in Shelley's work in particular as this study does. More recently, Alan Weinberg has produced an assessment of Italy and British Romanticism in his study of the influence of Italian poetic forms on P. B. Shelley. He acknowledges the political sympathy that P. B. Shelley developed for Italy and the inspiration he found there, yet Weinberg's argument excludes any consideration of Shelley's work or responses to Italy.¹⁹

The treatment of Italy in the Romantic period has also been subsumed into a wider discourse about travel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This has allowed cultural ideologies of travellers and their societies to be exposed. Most importantly for the purposes of my argument, although I do not situate Shelley's treatment of Italy solely through the literature of travel, such work has revealed the potent projections that travellers map onto the countries they visit. James Buzard has identified these projections as having 'more to do with the society and culture that produce the tourist' than with the foreign culture visited.²⁰ Furthermore, he observes the search for unity or wholeness in the images the traveller seeks, noting its dependence both on place and history.²¹ Buzard also notes the influence of painters

¹⁸ C. L. Cline, *Byron, Shelley and their Pisan Circle* (London: John Murray, 1952).

¹⁹ Alan M. Weinberg, *Shelley's Italian Experience* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 14, 8.

²⁰ James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture', 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 5.

²¹ Buzard, pp. 10-11.

associated with the Italian scenery of the Grand Tour on viewing conventions of the Picturesque, and the way that the itinerary of the tour was shaped by knowledge of classical texts.²²

Chloe Chard connects place to imagined cultural projections by identifying the Alps as a 'symbolic boundary' between North and South.²³ While exploring the transgressive possibilities offered to the traveller by crossing geographical boundaries, Chard is also sensitive to the traveller's preoccupations with the past. Versions of the past are juxtaposed with contemporary Italy, and 'no chronological dividing line' is ever established between Italy's classical history and its 'turbulent "Gothic" past'.²⁴ A return to the cultural past is generated by locale for travellers throughout the history of the Grand Tour, but John Pemble also includes British attitudes to Italy in his explanation for the popularity of Italy on the Grand Tour. The ambivalent response of the English to the political situation of Italy was set against a supposition that the tourist would 'rediscover his instinctual humanity' there.²⁵ Each of these studies shows how history connects place and individual. They also explore how cultural projections from the homeland attempt to engage with a foreign culture through awareness of its past. Shelley's treatment of Italy draws on all these but incorporates such aspects into genres less self-conscious than travel-writing.

The legacy of Italian culture and history, and its impact on the Romantics, has been most thoroughly developed by C. P. Brand in *Italy and the English Romantics*. He places the focus on the personal liberation which Italy offers and suggests that travel is the medium which most obviously allows comment on the Italian people and culture.²⁶ However, Shelley's treatment of Italy is characterised by an imaginative and fictive potential that is evident in a range of other genres, as well as travel, but which still offers insights into Italian history and culture. The endurance of Italy as a literary trope for Shelley is revised and reworked into a travel narrative at

²² Buzard, pp. 20–21; p. 109.

²³ Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography, 1600–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 177.

²⁴ Chard, pp. 235, 234.

²⁵ John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 155.

²⁶ C. P. Brand, *Italy and the English Romantics The Italianate Fashion in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. 11, 17.

the end of her career, even though Brand identifies the vogue waning after 1830.²⁷ Shelley is still using Italy to make sublimated comment about European political relations after this. She is continuing to participate in contemporary debate about European cultural history and the national historicising moment of British Romanticism, the demise of which she witnessed. Her treatment of Italy contains a temporal dimension, thus requiring any interpretation to be conscious of its nostalgic nuances.

The history of Italy plays a central part in Shelley's representation of the European past. Enlightenment narrativisation of European cultures engenders a comparative analysis of nations, in which the role of arts is foregrounded by political systems. One of the legacies of Italy's history of European cultural influence was the idealisation of the Italian city-republics, celebrated for having cultivated strong civic identity within their citizens and a flourishing artistic heritage. This provided a counterpoint to Napoleon's expansion into Europe. The cosmopolitan idealisation of the Italian past accentuates the importance of geographical location to Italy's history. Fernand Braudel has also identified the Mediterranean as 'one of the great sites of history'. Its geography 'helps us to discover the almost imperceptible movement of history', and this is brought about through his division of 'historical time' into various planes of 'geographical time, social time, and individual time'.²⁸ Shelley's representation of Italy incorporates such divisions through the land, custom and society, and the mediation of the past through the subject experiencing it.

Travel narratives bring to the representation of the past a momentum generated by movement. Travel writing is able to represent the past specifically through present experience of place. John Frow has emphasised the awareness of place and of the *sight* of the place, in the traveller's perception.²⁹ He takes account of the ideality of the tourist's experience and the incorporation of real events as part of the aesthetic formulation of travel narratives:

²⁷ Brand, p. 131.

²⁸ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. by Sian Reynolds, 2 vols, 2nd edn (London: Collins, 1972), I: 18, 23, 21.

²⁹ John Frow, 'Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia', *October*, 57 (1991), 123-51 (p. 124).

A place, a gesture, a use of language are understood not as given bits of the real but as suffused with ideality, giving on to the type of the beautiful, the extraordinary, or the culturally authentic.³⁰

The merging of sight with the aesthetics of travel narratives is, for Frow, a characteristic of the Romantic traveller, making travel ‘ “a more effusively passionate activity and a more private one” ’.³¹ The travel narratives of Morgan, Staël, and Shelley use aesthetic experience to inform their knowledge of the place and use aestheticised representations to political effect exploiting the generic versatility of their medium.

My interest lies in the ability of the authors under discussion to represent history within genres where its political force is shaped to aesthetic effect. The tropes and strategies that Shelley uses to represent Italy also acquire a layered temporality. While consistently appearing in her representations of Italian landscape, past or present, fictional or not, certain figures, such as the Virgilian Georgic mode, represent the continuity of the Italian past itself. Pierre Nora’s theorisation of cultural memory and history, through *lieux de mémoire*, clarifies the complex processes at work in Shelley’s conflated depictions of individual and public histories using place. *Lieux de mémoire* come into being at a ‘particular historical moment’ where:

consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn – but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists.³²

Shelley’s troping of Italy converges the legacy of its role in European culture in the past, with European politics of the present. Italy becomes a *lieu de mémoire* for its own people as momentum for unification increases, to reclaim the past for its own future as a nation. The Risorgimento was both a point of departure from Napoleonic and Austrian government and from the history of the city-republics of the Middle Ages. A cause in which she took a lifelong interest, Italy became for

³⁰ Frow, p. 125, original emphasis.

³¹ Frow, p. 143, quoting from James Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London: Sage, 1990), p. 82.

³² Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, *Representations*, 26 (1989), 7–25 (p. 7).

Shelley an integrated embodiment of political liberty with emotional and intellectual liberty and creativity.

History

My focus on Shelley's historicising consciousness participates in a preoccupation with historicism that continues to dominate Romanticist criticism and which uses the past as a 'heuristic measure'.³³ Such an approach reveals as much about the contemporary need to continue to re-evaluate Shelley as about her own conflicted position in Romantic literary culture, the ambivalence of her treatment of Italy, and the symbiosis she cultivates between memory, history, and a reanimated past. The newly emerging critical portrait of Shelley can be situated within a discourse which itself reflects upon the many permutations of Romanticism.

Clifford Siskin's investigation of Romantic culture concludes that it underwent a 'reorganisation of knowledge'.³⁴ He connects a multiplicity of genres within writing to the disseminated influence of the Scottish Enlightenment after the 1707 Act of Union. Shelley's work participates in the interdisciplinarity of letters through her use of genre, particularly the incorporation of history into her work. Shelley also establishes a discursive community in her address to the English public when writing about Italy. Thus she communicates a mediated version of Italy as a corrective to prevailing prejudices. Shelley's embeddedness in the cultural discourse of her time can also be traced through the importance Siskin attaches to the Georgic mode, itself influential on her and Sismondi's configurations of civic identity.³⁵

Chandler argues that cultural consciousness in the Romantic era was shaped by a finely attuned historical awareness that contributed to a collective national self-fashioning. This 'national operation of self-dating, or re-dating' was strongly tied to the manner in which 'political activity' 'takes place in literary representation itself'.³⁶ What I am emphasising in Chandler's work, in relation to Shelley, is the

³³ Jerome J. McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 13.

³⁴ Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 81.

³⁵ Siskin, pp. 119-20.

³⁶ Chandler, pp. 5-6.

transformative quality that arises in literature with its increasing interdisciplinarity and historical self-consciousness. There is a sense of transition, 'an awareness of the conditions of movement from one historical epoch to the next', which reverberates through genres and ideology, as well as through literary representation in Romantic-era writing, and results in a specifically British historicism.³⁷ I argue that Shelley uses the particularity of the British Romantic historicist approach to delineate a European parallel and alternative. Shelley's approach manifests itself in the literary sphere through a preoccupation with civic virtue as a more contained form of national identity.

The relationship between place and time, land and history, can be seen in the works of Chandler and Siskin in the interrelatedness of nationhood and letters. Siskin and Chandler identify the historical specificity of Romantic discourse as central to any understanding of Romantic culture. Yet Shelley challenges the national aspect of British Romanticism's historicising project, for the nation of Shelley's works is sometimes Britain, and sometimes Italy. My thesis also shows the close interrelationship between memory and history in Shelley's historicising gestures, whereas Siskin and Chandler each focus exclusively on the relationship between history and culture.

The relationship between temporality and place in Shelley's treatment of Italy looks to the past, deploying the language of nostalgia to represent the construct of Italy. Additionally, as Shelley reclaims the national past for the Italian peoples, her language turns to that of prophecy. Capturing in language the temporal dimensions of the past (nostalgia) and the future (prophecy), Shelley formulates a trope that has no place in the present.

The following chapters set out the temporal and memorial aspects of Shelley's treatment of Italy and argue that they are articulated through the delineation of place. The first chapter examines influential treatments of Italy by J. C. L. Sismondi, Germaine de Staël and Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan. Selected for the impact they had on cultural attitudes to Italy generally, and on Shelley's own treatment, each contributes to Shelley's narrativisation of Italy through its treatment of the landscape,

³⁷ Chandler, p. 24.

politics, identity, and history. This chapter also focuses on the construction of the Italian genius, and the inflections of civic identity within each text. Sismondi's *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge*, a source for Shelley's *Valperga*, shows the formative treatment of urban civic identity through the Italian city-republics. The *Histoire* also charts the development of a distinctively Italian spirit arising from systems of government and expressed in cultivation of the arts. Discussion of the *Tableau de l'agriculture toscane* shows Sismondi's integrated historical method through his association of abundant landscapes with political liberty. The fascination with the Tuscan landscape is extended into a more individualised narration of Italian history in Staël's *Corinne; ou l'Italie*. Her fictional treatment of improvisation allegorises Corinne and provides a template for associating improvisation with modes of narrating Italian national history. Sismondi and Staël attribute its existence to the fusion of Northern and Southern peoples, and credit Italy with a central role in European culture. Sismondi's and Staël's works look back to the Middle Ages as an inspirational period for the cultivation of civic virtue, and as a way of implicitly criticising Napoleon. Morgan's *Italy* contrasts with this by drawing on the immediate past of the Napoleonic era, adopting a provocatively republican stance. Putting a more positive, though still ambivalent, gloss on the French presence in the Italian peninsula, she emphasises the technological, rather than cultural, advance that directs *Italy's* narrative towards national self-determination.

The second chapter focuses on Shelley's early representations of Rome, looking at 'Valerius the Reanimated Roman' and Euthanasia's excursion to the Eternal City in *Valperga*. Discussion is included of how the reanimated body generates sensations of anachronism and dislocation through its relationship to place, as shown in 'Roger Dodsworth the Reanimated Englishman'. The chapter opens with Shelley's earliest representation of reanimation, *Frankenstein*, and argues that Victor Frankenstein's impression of cultural history draws out the theme of civic identity, thus compounding the revolutionary associations of reanimation embedded within the text. This is followed by a consideration of the connection between the body and place, and the manner in which such a link intensifies historical consciousness in the subject. Godwin's 'Essay of History and Romance' and 'Essav

on Sepulchres' are central to establishing the integration between reanimation, matter, and historical continuity. These essays show the ways in which imaginative remembrance uses history to promote civic identity and to personalise cultural inheritance through the use of place and biography. These two chapters contextualise the foundations of Shelley's treatment of Italy and history.

Chapter 3 assesses Shelley's interactions between civic identity and history using place. The equation of contingency with fortune shows that Shelley's reanimation of history depends on the development of civic virtue. Individual history becomes a way to explain national history. The association of Italy with republican civic identity is compounded by Shelley's portrayal of an active civic virtue that is susceptible to the force of the past, and by the temporal limitations of the republic. Shelley's representation of Italy in *Valperga* expresses civic identity through the cultural past of great cities like Rome and Florence, and also through the abundant rural Tuscan landscapes. Shelley's construction of civic identity draws on biographical portraits, such as the lives of Castruccio Castracani and Dante, to communicate the theme of national history. Shelley connects cultural development with political liberty in her treatment of Italy's past. The historical sense with which this infuses her fiction is evidence of Shelley's participation in a British Romantic scene dominated by interdisciplinarity. A central theme of the chapter is that to unlock the possibilities of genre offered by *Valperga*, the text's transformativeness must be appreciated.

The manner in which place and temporality affect Shelley's historical aesthetic are the subject of Chapter 4. This chapter's themes revisit civic identity and provide sustained discussion on how reanimation emphasises the layered temporality of cultural memory. Shelley's treatment of Italy is oriented through the twenty-first-century English republic, the temporal consciousness of Lionel Verney, the last man, and the fragmentation of his social identity. *The Last Man* is read as a cultural biography taking as a starting point, Lionel's journey from savagery in the Cumberland hills to civility, realised early, but finally frustrated in Rome. This enables Shelley to fuse culture and nature, a trait which also occurs in later travel writing. Both are used to demonstrate the investment of the individual in history.

Returning from the profound questioning of historical representation undertaken in *The Last Man*, Chapter 5 examines the transforming status of Italy in Shelley's writing. The chronological span of this chapter (1826–38) shows how her treatment of Italy begins to anticipate Italian nationalism. Looking at essays about Italy and her major biographical project, *The Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain, and Portugal* (1835–37), I show how the intersection of biography and history still determines Shelley's treatment of history, but acquires new direction. Shelley's reanimation is no longer sourced in the ancient Italian past, but in the landscape itself, and the national character of the people. This new nuance is then connected to literary development and a spirit of creativity inherent in Italians, which Shelley traces to political liberty and projects metaphorically onto the landscape. *Lives* examines how the presence of place interweaves public and personal narratives, connecting the individual to the wider national history of the peninsula. This reading provides an alternative to the limiting interpretation of *Lives* as a feminist revision of masculinized historical narrative. Later sections assess the relationship between localised patriotism and literary and national identity. Language and landscape play an important role in cohering identities, civic and creative, in the peninsula. Literature, patriotism, language, and landscape reanimate a collective national identity, and Shelley's 1838 article, 'Modern Italian Romances' is used to demonstrate this.

Finally, Chapter 6 discusses the political use of life-writing in Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, and argues for an integration of the narratives of personal recollection and political comment. Shelley's sensitivity to place and the manner in which literary and cultural history informs her response to Italian locales integrates nature and culture in Shelley's conceptualisation of Italy. The chapter considers Italy's city-republic heritage as part of a national re-making. This civic tradition is a way of reworking national identity without the territorial overtones of Romantic-era nationalism. Consideration of the manner in which biographical sketches of prominent Italian figures express a national spirit unifies earlier preoccupations about biography more explicitly to the political stridency of *Rambles*. Shelley's emphasis on the distinctively Italian mode of narration used to articulate

the national literary resurgence is also discussed. Her observations of the presence of improvisation within the texts she discusses implement a final transformation in her reanimation of Italian history, and in this way she achieves a textual animation of national self-determination. Patriotism becomes a reanimating principle. Shelley's revisiting of the national past is articulated through literary history and her own responses to the landscape connect personal memory to a politicised landscape aesthetics. Rejecting the linear narrative commonly associated with travel, this chapter, as does Shelley's own narrative, returns to her past in Italy to revisit the foundations of her treatment of Italy. In this way, memory links the land to Shelley's present while disrupting the temporal order, but returns to the origins of her longstanding preoccupation with Italy and reflects upon its perpetual transformations.

Chapter 1

Influential Models for Mary Shelley's Treatment of Italy: Sismondi, Staël, and Morgan

From a literary perspective, this chapter is concerned with the aesthetic structures through which Italian history is mediated. My discussion examines the intellectual influence of J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi, Germaine de Staël, and Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan upon Shelley's formulations of Italy in both her fictional and non-fictional writing. I argue that Shelley's own representation of Italy acquired its particular identity by incorporating key elements from these writers. Constructions of the Italian medieval past, and of the Tuscan landscape, are drawn from Sismondi. In Staël, Shelley finds depictions of specifically Italian culture situated within a European political context articulated through improvisation as a mode of narrating national history. The political dimensions of travel-writing are derived from the example of Lady Morgan. Sismondi's *Histoire*, Staël's *Corinne*, and Morgan's *Italy*, were all hugely popular works which helped to embed the literary associations of Italy in European Romantic culture.¹

Aside from the deep cultural engagement with Italy, its importance for these three writers, and for Shelley, is connected to a fascination with the historicity of place. As Peter J. Taylor has pointed out, time has the capacity to effect 'the transformation of space into place'.² The great historical examples of Italy originate in specific places, regions, or cities, and define a cultural consciousness underpinned by the notion of civilisation's progress. The city of Rome, the city-states of northern Italy, or the short-lived Napoleonic republics that strove to improve regional infrastructures run down by earlier regimes, had a cultural or political significance that impacted upon the nineteenth-century present and its notions of the past. This symbolic framework engages with the aesthetic debate about Romantic and classical

¹ C. P. Brand, *Italy and The English Romantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957) notes Sismondi's 'large number of readers' (p. 20), and that *Corinne* benefited from two English translations the year it was published (p. 226); James Buzard, *The Beaten Track* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) acknowledges *Corinne*'s 'great authority as a guide' (p. 111); Mary Campbell, *Lady Morgan* (London: Pandora, 1988) notes that *Italy* (1821) was 'an even greater success than *France*', stating that Morgan's 1817 publication passed through ten editions in Britain, America, and France (p. 178).

² Peter J. Taylor, *Modernities* (Oxford: Polity, 1999), p. 98.

forms, and the emergence of modernity in cultural consciousness. The complex role of classical civilisation evokes both the value of the past, but is also associated with an enforced reconstruction of civic identity in Revolutionary France. While classical forms were not something that Staël wholly rejected, as Madelyn Gutwirth has shown, the possibilities offered by a Romantic mode of representation enabled her to accentuate the political aspect of the aesthetic opposition between classical and Romantic.³ Susan Tenenbaum has examined the intellectual trends at Coppet as a 'struggle against Napoleon', through their use of 'the cross-relationship of politics and aesthetics', drawing out the covert nature of Staël's criticism of Napoleon.⁴ Tenenbaum's attention to the use of the medieval in Coppet thought indicates the temporal aspect of the debate about the past and the present in the nineteenth-century present.⁵ The Coppet circle's attention to temporally specific historical examples relates social progress and enlightenment to political contexts using the aesthetic. The works of Shelley reveal an interest in the temporal trace in the construction of history, that is first given prominence by the Coppet circle.

Valperga's medieval setting points as much to its Romantic modernity as to Italy's historical past. *The Last Man* reassesses the cultural value of the past when political and social structures have been removed, and poses questions about how to preserve the past when it ceases to retain any collective cultural significance. Shelley's *Lives* investigate transformations in representing the public past through biography, to re-invest history with its political and sentimental potential. The portrayal of Italy in *Rambles* is situated within a climate of oppression and the need for liberation, similar to the way that Morgan orients *Italy*. Shelley's focus on the cultural history of Italy, alongside the political forces that shape national identity, contrasts with Morgan's preoccupation with the social profile of her own tour. In each of Shelley's texts, Italy plays a central role in any conception of the past, as it responds to English history (as in *The Last Man*), or to the bygone ages of Italy itself, or to those of Europe (as in *Valperga*, *Lives* and *Rambles*). Italy operated as a space

³ Madelyn Gutwirth, 'Germaine de Staël's debt to *Phèdre*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 3 (1964), 161-76 (p. 175).

⁴ Susan Tenenbaum, 'The Coppet Circle: Literary Criticism as Political Discourse', *History of Political Thought*, 1 (1980), 453-74 (p. 456).

⁵ Tenenbaum, pp. 468-71.

within which Sismondi and Staël could play out the classical-Romantic debate because its history allowed them to combine a cultural past which supported their ideas about aesthetics, with a politically unstable present. Shelley's own treatment of Italy has much in common with this, as is particularly apparent when considering the specificity of Italy itself, and what it stands for in her work.

From Staël, Shelley derives her interest in the social and political relevance of a national past and a national literature to a people. First and foremost in this Shelley uses improvisation as a strategy for narrating national history. Initially explored through Beatrice in *Valperga*, Shelley embellishes this in later essays which discuss the phenomenon of the *improvvisatore* Tommaso Sgricci. The *Lives* highlight the importance of improvisation as an Italian national tradition through the biographies of poets and dramatists. The seminal influence of *Corinne* as a figure able to articulate national history through improvisation redefines bardic narration. Staël presents *Corinne* as an improvisatrice alongside the masculine bardic tradition of Ossian. *Corinne's* gender disrupts the continuity of bardic narration to articulate the representation of the past in a way that engages more forcefully with the present, addressing the past through speech and silence. Improvisation in *Corinne* is associated with the narration of national histories, and the national character and literary traditions that influence bardic narration. *Corinne's* improvisations reanimate historical resonances and awaken a historical consciousness in others, as Jerome McGann has noted.⁶

Associations of place can also augment the importance of improvisation. Cape Miseno is the site of *Corinne's* last improvisation before her lover, Oswald, returns to England. Close to Vesuvius and Pompeii, it is also a site that holds ancient history preserved in animated form, in the ruins, and is a site of remarkable natural beauty. The ruins of Pompeii are also near the site at which the prophetic fragments that comprise Shelley's *The Last Man* were found. 'Valerius the Reanimated Roman' opens at Cape Miseno, and departing from the beauty and history the scene suggests, Valerius considers the change between ancient Rome and

⁶ Jerome J. McGann, 'Rome and its Romantic Significance', in *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 313-33 (p. 323).

modern Italy. Cape Miseno signifies memory through geographical location, for example Corinne's audience select '*the memories recalled by these places*' (original emphasis) as the topic for her improvisation. Staël has identified the area as 'the land most abundantly marked of the whole universe by volcanos, history, and poetry'.⁷ The subject of this improvisation centres around the impressive natural landscape surrounding them, and suggests not just its historical and mythical legacy, but its fertility too. This is demonstrated in Corinne's improvisation:

"oh! earth all bathed in blood and tears, thou hast never ceased producing both fruits and flowers!" (C, p. 243)

The historical resonances and natural abundance of the land are precisely the qualities that Shelley notices as distinctive on her own trip to Miseno, with which she concludes her tour of Italy in *Rambles in Germany and Italy* (1844). The fertile landscape reveals to her a different, more authentic side to Italy which she associates with the natural genius of some of its greatest national poets because they originated from that region. Although the South of Italy is seen as more abundant, Shelley's portrayal of Tuscany, where *Valperga* is set, is also fertile and bountiful.

Sismondi also delineated the relationship between history and fertile landscapes, even more emphatically than did Staël in Corinne's improvisation. Sismondi's depiction of Tuscany can be compared profitably with Shelley's, particularly given the strong influence of Virgil's *Georgics* on each. Sismondi's treatment of Tuscany, like Shelley's, explores questions of national character and systems of government through the representation of the land. In Sismondi's 1801 *Tableau de l'agriculture toscane*, the fertile Italian landscape helps to define the national character. A latent critique of Napoleonic rule in Europe is also contained within Sismondi's *Tableau*, politicising the representation of the landscape and simultaneously imbuing it with a sense of the continuity with the past. The continuity of Italian traditions evident in Sismondi's historical writing links politico-religious conflict and territorial acquisition. The history of perpetual factionalism

⁷ Germaine de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, trans. and ed. with introd. by Avriel H. Goldberger (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), p. 241. Hereafter cited as C; further references appear after quotations in the text.

between the Guelph and the Ghibelline parties during the medieval period destabilised territorial boundaries in Italy, and left a lasting legacy for Italian national unity that was picked up by Gioberti and the Neo-Guelph movement in the mid-nineteenth century.

In *Italy*, Morgan formulates notions of civic identity to accentuate the need for autonomy. However, the most important aspect of civic identity for the purposes of this thesis is her overtly political, retrospective engagement with the Napoleonic regime in the Italian peninsula. This is in stark contrast to the work of Staël and Sismondi. Written during her travels of 1819–20, Morgan often praises the improvements commissioned under Napoleon, while being critical of foreign tyranny and oppressive systems of social control, such as religion. In part, Morgan's concerns are harmonised with those echoed in *France*, and play out political themes of longstanding interest, such as the emancipation of Catholic Ireland from English rule. Likewise, Shelley's *Rambles* details her own objections to oppressive and despotic regimes, particularly Austria in its relations with Italy. *Rambles* is the culmination of Shelley's political and personal interest in Italy and its past and future. Shelley's debt to Morgan can be seen in the representation of Italy as a country engaged in its struggle for a nationally self-determined future.

The writers discussed in this chapter are examined primarily for the different aspects that they have imparted to Shelley's representation of Italy, but they also share thematic and ideological similarities to each other and to Shelley. Each communicates a central awareness about Italian history, and within that, cultural and social movements which have shaped the Italian present. This is mapped onto a topographical identity of Italy that, in its abundance and beauty and historicity, is linked to political liberty and to enlightenment.

Sismondi's *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge*

This section outlines the development of Sismondi's historical aesthetic by examining the relationship of landscape and of the individual to cultural identity using two texts, *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge* (1807–09, 1818) and

Tableau de l'agriculture toscane (1801).⁸ *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge* constructs an integrated cultural narrative that contextualises Shelley's representation of Italy.⁹ The preliminary work of documenting Shelley's sources has yet to yield sustained debate about the undoubted and considerable influence that Sismondi's work exercised over her intellectual engagement with the political and cultural role of history.¹⁰ My discussion of Sismondi is defined within these parameters, and is concerned with the aesthetic structures of his writing. The consideration of Sismondi in relation to the history of ideas or economics, for which he is now most often remembered, is not the remit of this thesis. Instead, the focus is placed on the historical construction of civic and national identity through the landscape and the polis.

Understanding the significance of geographical factors, agricultural and economic principles, and the influence of religion and national identity in the construction of civic identity is essential for a fuller comprehension of Sismondi's *Histoire*, as with the *Tableau*.¹¹ This construction of history narrates Italian experience by making it specific to the geography of the Italian peninsula, and by highlighting the specifically Italian phenomenon of the city-states. The chronological outline of Sismondi's *Histoire* measures the progressive development of civilisation charted through Italian polities. It produces a model that adheres to a political aesthetic (the representation of liberty) and a historical one (the representation of a social world in time).

⁸ All translations for these texts are my own.

⁹ J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi, *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge*, 16 vols (Paris: Nicolle, 1807–09, 1818). Hereafter cited as HRI; further references appear after quotations in the text.

¹⁰ Nora Crook's annotation of *Valperga* details the precise manner in which Shelley drew on the *Histoire* for her reconstruction of historical events. See NSW, III: *Valperga: or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio Castracani, Prince of Lucca*, ed. by Nora Crook. Entries in Shelley's journal show that she read Sismondi's *Histoire* in January and February 1819, at one stage alongside Virgil's *Georgics*, and again in late September and early October 1820 (MWSJ, pp. 246–48, 333–34, 337). MWSL, I: 85 also notes reading the *Histoire*, an 'exceedingly interesting' work 'since we have visited many of the towns' to which the history refers. In her contributions to Dionysius Lardner's *Cabinet of Biography*, LXXXVI–LXXXVIII, Shelley refers to Sismondi's *De la Littérature du Midi de l'Europe* at least four times. See *The Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain, and Portugal*, 3 vols (London: Longman, 1835–37), III: 36n, 253–54 (noted by Fiona Stafford in NSW, VI: 94n), 280, and 289n.

¹¹ J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi, *Tableau de l'agriculture toscane* (Geneva: J. J. Paschoud, 1801). Hereafter cited as T; further references appear after quotations in the text.

The *Tableau* integrates historiography and politics into richly detailed representations of the Tuscan landscape. It is not clear if Shelley read the *Tableau* but Sismondi certainly refers to it in the *Histoire*. In directing the reader to this work, he also reveals the influence of Italian history on much of his thought. The *Tableau*, the economic treatise *La Richesse Commerciale*, and his literary criticism, *De la Littérature du Midi de l'Europe*, all emerged, he says, as a consequence of his study of Italian history.¹² Both the *Histoire* and the *Tableau* reveal that in any historical interpretation he is committed to the specificity of place. Sismondi's discussion of Florence in the *Histoire* is an example of this. He alludes to the republic's ideal location in the Val d'Arno, surrounded by fertile plains, where mulberry bushes (for silk), wheat, and vines are grown. The surrounding hills and mountains are abundant with olive and chestnut trees. Proximity to the Arno facilitates maritime trade and commerce by easy access to ports and the sea (*HRI*, II: ch. 13). All this is mentioned in the context of the Tuscan city-states, increasing independence from German Imperial influence. The *Tableau* also provides a justification for writing about Tuscany (*T*, xi). In a similar way, Shelley's attentiveness to place destabilises *Valperga's* temporality (offered by Castruccio's narrative), and enables the spectre of Napoleonic expansion to be summoned by the politically astute reader.¹³ For both Shelley and Sismondi, history becomes not only a narrative, but a kind of consciousness that is defined by multiple layers of temporal and geographical specificity. The *Tableau's* depiction of rural plenitude as it relates to civic and cultural identity emphasises the manner in which place affects narrative and history, and accentuates past civic traditions of liberty.

¹² This statement is found in the expanded introduction to the revised second edition of the *Histoire* which appeared in 1818, and in the 1826 edition. See *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge*, 16 vols (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1818), I: xvi and I: xx in 1826. Research by Nora Crook suggests that the Shelley's read the second 1818 Paris edition; see *Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts XII: The 'Charles the First' Draft Notebook A Facsimile of Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e. 17*, ed. by Nora Crook (London: Garland, 1991), xlix, xviii.

¹³ Crook interprets the political topicality of *Valperga* as part of the Shelleys' response to the failed revolutions in Naples and Piedmont in 1820–21 (*V*, xii). An early reviewer of *Valperga*, J. G. Lockhart, also identified in Castruccio a voguish sketch of Napoleon: 'Wherever one turns, he is sure to be met by the same sort of lame, impotent, and abortive attempts to shadow out Napoleon under the guise and semblance of some greater or smaller usurper of ancient days', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 13 (March 1823), 283–93 (p. 284).

Early in the Introduction to the *Histoire*, Sismondi states that government is one of the most effective determinants of a people's character ('la cause première du caractère des peuples'), and that the attributes of a particular race are the work of laws ('l'ouvrage des lois' *HRI*, I: i) rather than climate. Sismondi himself pinpoints the origin of liberty, and civilisation, in the mingling of Northern barbarians and the Roman South. The fusion of these two very different but established cultures resulted in the emergence of the Italian city-republics. These small urban states emphasise the role of the individual in politics.

By mixing their free spirit, 'esprit de liberté' (*HRI*, I: xiii), with that of the existing inhabitants, the Northern peoples brought new energy to Italy. The effect of this mingling of peoples was not to create a new nation, but a nursery for nations, 'une pépinière de nations', which included all the free republican towns (*HRI*, I: xiii). Sismondi locates the medieval era, rather than the classical, as the true source of European civilisation. Northern and central Italy becomes a site of origin for the whole of European civilisation. In this sense, Italy is the heart of Europe, its birthplace. The time of its birth, the medieval era, is also essential to Sismondi's understanding of the emergence of liberty. The common origin of Romance cultures is outlined in *De la Littérature du Midi*, and anticipates a unified European republic, as in the introduction to the *Histoire*:

All the states of Europe have formed something like a vast republic, whose individual parts are so linked together, that one is no longer able to separate them in order to identify a single people, and as each man learns the history of his nation, he learns that of the area of governance (*HRI*, I: x).¹⁴

The idea of a European republic is explicitly connected both to the common identity that Romance peoples have formed over time and civilisation. The notion of a united European republic represents a continuity of thought for Sismondi. It proliferated during the medieval age partly because of the systems of government fostered by the spirit of liberty in the peoples of the South.

¹⁴ 'Tous les États de l'Europe ont formé comme une vaste république, dont les parties sont tellement liées entr'elles, qu'on ne peut plus les séparer pour s'attacher à un seul peuple; et que chaque homme, en apprenant l'histoire de sa nation, apprend celle du monde policé.'

In the *Histoire*, civic identity results from a combination of the 'force sociale' and the 'force individuelle'. The former is a kind of socialised political consciousness, that keeps the latter in check. While the 'force sociale' regulates civic conduct and community behaviour, the 'force individuelle' is needed by all to confront personal danger, and foreign invasion (*HRI*, I: 418). What takes place is a 'remarkable' exchange. Sismondi attributes the awakening sense of liberty in the Southern peoples to the independent spirit of the Northern peoples. The development of republicanism, however, also occurred from South to North:

The first liberal institutions had been brought from the North to the degenerate Romans. This developing of the republican system shows that the reverse movement, from South to North, has also been an abiding and very remarkable phenomenon (*HRI*, I: 416).¹⁵

Sismondi also points out the benefits of wide participation in liberal and free government, characteristic of the city-republics:

This manner of giving up one's autonomy in order to live communally, in order to feel communally, in order to be one part of a great whole, raises man up, and makes him capable of greater things. Political passions make more heroes than individual feeling; and although the connection may not be immediately apparent, these passions also make more artists, more poets, more philosophers and more scholars (*HRI*, IV: 173).¹⁶

The nature of a people and the location of that people's community are central to the development of liberty in Sismondi's *Histoire*. The form of the city-state confers liberty as well as being derived from characteristics of the urban population. Of the city-states in Shelley's *Valperga*, Florence acquires the most significance because of the tradition of liberty that accompanies it. Sismondi, too, gives prominence to the city in the *Histoire*. Florentine liberty is also read in the context of the landscape. In Sismondi's *Histoire*, the Lombardy plains allow easy sighting of hostile advances (*HRI*, IV: 421). Castruccio's eventual conquest of Florence was only possible because of a

¹⁵ 'Les premières institutions libérales avoient été apportées du Nord aux Romains dégénérés. Ce mouvement rétrograde, du midi au nord, dans le développement du système républicain, est aussi un phénomène constant et très remarquable.'

¹⁶ 'Cette manière de sortir de soi pour vivre en commun, pour sentir en commun, pour faire partie d'un grand tout, élève l'homme, et le rend capable des plus grandes choses. Les passions politiques font plus de héros que les passions individuelles; et quoique la connexion ne paroisse point immédiate, elles font aussi plus d'artistes, plus de poètes, plus de philosophes, plus de savans.'

series of battles which were won by making advantageous strategic use of natural features of the land as at Altopascio.¹⁷ The Val di Nievole, the valley in which Altopascio is situated, terminates by a river separating the Lucchese plains and state from the Val d'Arno and Florence (*HRI*, v: 79).

Sismondi's treatment of Florence in the *Histoire* alludes to other cities' image of it as pre-eminent among Italian city-republics. He suggests that history itself contributed to Florence's image as a great republic. The interest generated by Florentine historians, as well as the Florentine character and the ever-increasing political influence of the republic:

placed Florence at the forefront of the scene, in all histories of the peoples of Italy (*HRI*, IV: 209).¹⁸

Sismondi seeks to unite both the character of the people and the form of government to show its eminence. He builds up a detailed profile of Florentine civic life that reveals the necessity of integrating civic identity, character and systems of government. A detailed history of each town in Italy reveals to the reader:

the secret of each character, the particular motive that makes him act; it [the history of Florence] elaborates kind feelings, deep thoughts, noble projects (*HRI*, IV: 210).

The reader is then able to see:

The universal stirring, the vivacity of feelings, the importance of each individual, that has made the history of Italy an inexhaustible source of instruction for scholars (*HRI*, IV: 211).¹⁹

This perspective explains the convoluted intricacies of the period's history, and helps to connect character to system. While the image of Florence as an exemplary republic captured the nineteenth-century imagination as much as it had the twelfth-century Italian republics, it contained within it the seed of its own destruction.

¹⁷ Louis Green, *Castruccio Castracani: A Study on the Origins of a Fourteenth-Century Italian Despotism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 167.

¹⁸ 'placent Florence sur le devant de la scène, dans toute histoire des peuples d'Italie.'

¹⁹ 'le secret de chaque caractère; le motif particulier qui le fait agir; elle développe des passions généreuses, des pensées profondes, des projets élevés.' 'Cette agitation universelle, cette vivacité des passions, cette importance de chaque individu, ont fait de l'histoire de l'Italie une source inépuisable d'instruction pour les érudits.'

Liberty, war, and factionalism became closely linked in the construction of civic identity in the Italian city-republics. As Sismondi says, 'the cause of the Guelph party appeared in Tuscany to be the same as that of liberty' (*HRI*, v: 74-75).²⁰ The rise of this factionalism threatened the liberty and independence of the Italian city-republics, making the medieval period one that was held permanently in transition between progress and decline, for the nineteenth-century historical imagination. Tilottama Rajan notes that this is one aspect of Sismondi that Shelley incorporates into *Valperga*, situating her story 'at the precise point when the republics were in decline' to thus enter a 'complex debate on questions of localism versus national power'.²¹

Increased liberty is an advance for civilisation, but it is also part of a cycle of change. As Sismondi says, 'despotism brought back barbarism; but barbarism revived in its turn virtue and liberty' (*HRI*, I: viii).²² This cyclical notion of history also has a bearing, for Sismondi, on the way medieval Italy comments upon contemporary events in Europe. Idealisations of medieval Italy presented an unfulfilled promise of liberty in the early nineteenth century. For Staël, Napoleonic foreign policy interfered with the freedom to develop individual civic and cultural identity. This interference demonstrates how the representation of the Middle Ages became politicised, situated between contemporary despotism and classical republicanism. Norman King has outlined how the Middle Ages became polarised between two factions. For the conservative traditionalist, they evoked the model of a stable and harmonious society. In response, supporters of *laissez-faire* condemned the period as superstitious and tyrannical.²³ Thomas Sowell points to greater flexibility on Sismondi's part, stating that he disputed *laissez-faire* as 'dogma' but not as a principle.²⁴ Giovanni Tabacco suggests that any unified notion of the Middle Ages is fundamentally misrepresentative, conferring unity where little exists. For him, the Middle Ages is a representational continuity that disguises 'the reality of the great

²⁰ 'La cause du parti guelfe paroisoit en Toscane la même que celle de la liberté'.

²¹ Mary Shelley, *Valperga*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 1998), p. 26.

²² 'Le despotisme ramena la barbarie, mais la barbarie fit renaître à son tour les vertus et la liberté.'

²³ Norman King, 'Chevalerie et liberté', in *Sismondi européen*, Actes du Colloque international tenu à Genève le 14 et 15 septembre 1973 (Geneva: Slatkine, 1976), pp. 241-258 (p. 248).

²⁴ Thomas Sowell, 'Sismondi: A Neglected Pioneer', *History of Political Economy*, 4 (1972), 62-88 (p. 75).

migrations which threw into confusion' Mediterranean communities.²⁵ Sismondi's history of the Middle Ages presumes unity in order to promote the origin of liberty at that time, and its relationship to the growth of the arts.

Sismondi's process of historical narrativisation explores the social condition, as well as the political condition of the state, and the individual condition of the human spirit. Ranging from the Etruscans to the Romans and the Lombards, and the debasement of Italians in his own day, Sismondi provides a continuum in which to prove his theory that character is principally shaped by government. In doing this, Sismondi implies that the medieval period is historically connected to the present. Yet for all the broad scope of Sismondi's history, the panorama is always complemented by localised detail. An example of this is Sismondi's comparison of historical perspective with that gained by an observer standing at a great height, watching the crowd bustling on the plain. The eye can see them moving, and interweaving, but cannot distinguish them individually. This is the effect generated by preliminary knowledge of the Italian city-states in medieval Italy (*HRI*, IV: 210). The only way to resolve this incomplete picture is to focus on various sites in detail, each of which will yield similar conclusions. This in itself is a characteristic of Italian history which obstructs the reader's historical understanding. The detailed picture is one of turbulence and revolution, and the key to Italy's history is in understanding the modulation of the balance of power:

It is in the efforts of the republics to maintain the political balance of Italy, in the efforts of the prince to overturn it, that the key to all affairs in the fourteenth century is to be found.

It is this which prevents the reader from being able 'to grasp the whole picture at first glance' (*HRI*, v: 8).²⁶

Sismondi reveals his integrated thinking about the past through his own cross-referencing in the *Histoire*. In volume II, in a discursive paragraph about the supreme fertility of the Val di Nievole, he refers the reader to the *Tableau* (*HRI*, II:

²⁵ Giovanni Tabacco, *The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy: Structures of Political Rule*, trans. by Rosalind Brown Jensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 2.

²⁶ 'C'est dans les efforts des républiques pour maintenir la balance politique de l'Italie, dans les efforts des prince pour la renverser, qu'il faut chercher la clef de toutes les negociations du quatorzième siècle.' 'qui empêche peut-être la lecteur d'en savoir l'ensemble à la première vue.'

342n.). Later in the same volume of the *Histoire*, in his discussion of Dante and the origin of the Italian language, Sismondi includes a fragment of a poem by the troubadour Sordello to compare the Italian of Dante with the Provençal of Sordello. In the second 1818 edition, he footnotes his account of the troubadours' contribution to Italian in *De la Littérature du Midi*, describing this latter work as a supplement to the *Histoire* (HRI, II: 475). In volume IV, he explicitly connects the good management of the fertile Tuscan land to republican government, while referring once more to the *Tableau* (HRI, IV: 169n). The emphasis on history reveals the importance of cultural identity. The development of the arts and letters, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the development of a language are all distinguished as cultural markers that differentiate Italians from other nations. This is also a strategy Sismondi uses in *De la Littérature du Midi*. By asserting a distinctive tradition specific to Italian history, he is able to forge a new identity for the Italians which overcomes Germanic imperial influence, and is also independent of that of other Romance peoples. This initiating act of imperial colonisation, too, seems to be at the heart of Sismondi's historical narrativisation, binding the individual and the state through cultural experience.

Sismondi's *Tableau*

In the *Tableau*, cultivated landscapes provide Sismondi with a further dimension in which to articulate the relation between the individual and the nation. Similarly, in the medieval context of *Valperga*, Shelley's aesthetic use of the landscape offers a vision of political liberty that moves away from the factionalism endemic in the city-republics, establishing an opposition between urban and rural. Moreover, land use provokes contemporary issues, for the early nineteenth-century reader, about the productivity and use of colonised land. Northern Italy, the landscape of *Valperga*, was subjected to the imperial caprice of both Austria and France during the early nineteenth century, with unstable and remote centres of power imposing authority on the provinces. Sismondi, in the *Tableau*, was keen to examine the relationship between productivity and the system by which the land was governed.

He stressed the exemplary nature of Tuscan agriculture, and the benefits that France could reap from the land, if it adopted Tuscan techniques of husbandry:

At the moment when the eyes of France are turned towards her new colony, fertile Egypt, which promises to enrich France both with the treasures produced by its soil and with those which its favourable location will enable to be exported from one coast to the other, it is useful to look attentively at a system to perfect agriculture in a climate which acts as a middle ground between that of France and that of Egypt (T, xiv).²⁷

The structural divisions of the *Tableau* are governed by place, as Sismondi categorises distinct changes in the landscape, the people, and the farming in three locations: plains, hills, and mountains (T, p. 7). While the *Tableau* is ostensibly a work about farming in Tuscany, Sismondi's project is one that seeks to unite national character with place and with history. In the case of northern Italy, the tradition of liberty from the Italian republics proves to be central to the system of farming:

As long as the republics of Italy conserved their liberty, commerce and agriculture marched in equal step towards an ever-increasing prosperity (T, p. 288).²⁸

Published in 1801, the *Tableau* pre-empted the first four volumes of his *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge*, and constructed an integrated concept of history incorporating economics, national culture, location, and principles of government (T, vi). These connections are deployed in Sismondi's aesthetic representation of the landscape of northern Italy.

This process highlights the particularity of place in aesthetic judgement. In order to represent a bountiful landscape, Sismondi first has to set the scene by sensitising the reader to the visual splendour of the Val di Nievole, his chosen location, and the most fertile region of Tuscany. The farmer, casting his eye over the valley, is astonished 'to see from there neither meadows nor pasture, and almost

²⁷ 'C'est qu'au moment où les yeux de la France sont tournés sur sa nouvelle Colonie, sur cette fertile Egypte, qui promet de l'enrichir et des trésors que produit son sol et de ceux que son heureuse situation fera circuler d'une mer à l'autre, il est utile de fixer ses regards sur un système pour perfectionner d'agriculture, dans un climat qui sert de moyen terme entre celui de la France et entre celui de l'Egypte'.

²⁸ 'Aussi long-temps que les républiques d'Italie conservèrent leur liberté, le commerce et l'agriculture marchèrent d'un pas égal vers un prospérité toujours croissante.'

none of the harvest destined for animal feed'.²⁹ This valley does not make productive use of its land; Sismondi asks the spectator/farmer to think not in terms of productivity, but of aesthetics. He must extend his perceptual experience beyond professional parameters:

His attention is carried along, his admiration is commanded by the picture of abundance that the countryside spreads around him, by the astonishing variety of produce and harvests which catches his eye in every place (T, p. 36).³⁰

Now that the spectator's vision is sensitised to the plenteous variety, Sismondi reveals the whole scene. This revelation comes neither in an agricultural context, nor even in a framed picturesque vision, but in an analytical detail that cumulatively accrues profusion. Sismondi's farmer is able to see the whole and the part at the same moment:

Wherever he stops, whatever smallholding he observes, he sees spread out before him: the vine, elegantly suspended against the trellis around each field, surrounds it with festoons; the poplars close to one another lend the vine the support of their trunks, and their tops rise above the vines; grass grows at the foot of these elegant trellises (T, pp. 36-37).³¹

The descriptions which follow delineate an inescapable plenitude, and one that is realised in the mind of Sismondi's reader as much as in the landscape, and in the appreciation of detail. The clearest idea of how appealing the Tuscan landscape can be, will come 'if he rests his eyes on one small object, instead of embracing several of them at once, and of generalising his ideas' (T, p. 219).³² Sismondi's preoccupation with the spectator summons up the prospect view of the English country gentleman,

²⁹ 'de n'y voir ni prés, ni pâturages, ni presque aucune récolte destinée à la nourriture du bétail'.

³⁰ 'Son attention est entraînée, son admiration est commandée par le tableau d'abondance que la campagne étale autour de lui, par l'étonnante variété de productions et de récoltes qui frappe ses yeux de toutes parts'.

³¹ 'En quelque lieu qu'il s'arrête, sur quelque métairie qu'il porte ses regards, il voit tout ensemble devant lui, la vigne qui élégamment suspendue en contr'espallier autour de chaque champ, l'environne de ses festons; les peupliers rapprochés les un des autres, qui lui prêtent l'appui de leur troncs, et dont les cimes s'élèvent au-dessus d'elle; l'herbe qui croit au pied de ces elegans contr'espalliers.'

³² 's'il arrête ses regards sur un seul petit objet, au lieu d'en embrasser plusieurs à la fois, et de généraliser ses idées.'

as discussed by John Barrell.³³ Sismondi's spectator is distinct from the English gentleman in that he scrutinises the detail of the prospect rather than its general aspect. The similarity with the gentleman's prospect lies in the debt to the Georgic mode they both share as they represent landscapes. The importance of agriculture and of labour are essential components of the Georgic because of the deep connection between the social fabric and agriculture. Other characteristics of the Georgic, noted by Barrell, are the legitimate inclusion of a 'proliferation of local detail' and the 'fairly detailed description of, in particular, rural labours, and a view of modern society as progressive by its labour'.³⁴ The Georgic writer's vision, argues Barrell, is 'founded on a permanent agricultural base, as the Roman Empire is in Virgil's *Georgics*'.³⁵ Virgil's influence represents a relevant synthesis of the rural and the urban, and of the past and the present. Through the landscape, Sismondi promotes a vision of a classical past that supports liberty and offers an alternative interpretation creating tension between itself and the French Revolutionary neo-classical model.

Sismondi's representation of the landscape focuses on the northern provinces of Italy thereby resisting the cultural and historical hegemony of Rome as the centre of Italian national identity. He sees the freedom which originated in Italy as the stimulus both for enlightenment and the innovations of agriculture:

The Italians, educated several centuries ago in the school of liberty, have preceded us along the road to fine arts, sciences, industry and wealth (T, xi).³⁶

Thus, northern Italy becomes an important founding centre for European culture, and Italian identity. Northern Italy is particularly significant because of the unique development of the city-republics. The introduction to the *Histoire* states Sismondi's conviction that systems of government are one of the most important aspects that define a people:

³³ See John Barrell, *English Literature in History, 1730–80: An Equal, Wide Survey* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), ch. 1. See also John Barrell, *Poetry, Language, and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), ch. 4.

³⁴ Barrell, *Survey*, p. 90.

³⁵ Barrell, *Survey*, p. 104.

³⁶ 'Les italiens formés, il y a plusieurs siècles, à l'école de la liberté, nous ont précédés dans la route des beaux-arts, des sciences, de l'industrie et des richesses.'

Government is the primary factor in forming the character of peoples. [. . .] [A]ll that has been given to everyone comes from nature, but government removes or secures, for all its subjects, the heritage of the human race (*HRI*, I: i).³⁷

Sismondi thus connects systems of government to history and to national character. Culture and agriculture flourish where there is political liberty, and a sense of activity or engagement within the world. Sismondi demonstrates, too, a synthesis between labour in the world and perceptual experience of it, which occurs in agricultural husbandry:

It is pointless for a man who has experience of it to demonstrate to me that a new form of cultivation is possible; until I have tried it out for myself I will still be able to doubt its benefit to me (*T*, p. 3).³⁸

The scale of his argument is then increased to demonstrate that national examples carry even more weight than the experience of the individual:

There is a type of experience that appears surer and more instructive, which is that, not of men, but of nations. For every state, every province, every small district, often has a system of agriculture particular to itself (*T*, pp. 3-4).³⁹

Sismondi uses agriculture to demonstrate how national identity is defined by specificity of place, not just through broad national boundaries, but also by region and district. This emphasis on the regional, using the Val di Nievole as a specific example may seem paradoxical after stating that it is more instructive to learn from nations. For Sismondi, the Italian republics of the Middle Ages occupy the midpoint of a long cultural and national history from the early Etruscans to nineteenth-century Italians. The Middle Ages are attributed with fostering an incipient national identity in the peninsula, which by the 1820s seemed on the verge of coming into being. Sismondi's preoccupation with regionalism can also be seen as a

³⁷ 'C'est que le gouvernement est la cause première du caractère des peuples [. . .] tout fut donné à tous par la nature, mais que le gouvernement enlève ou garantit aux hommes qui lui sont soumis l'héritage de l'espèce humaine.'

³⁸ 'un homme à expériences à beau m'avoir démontré qu'une nouvelle culture est possible, jusqu'à ce que je l'aie éprouvée moi-même je puis douter encore si elle me sera avantageuse.'

³⁹ 'il y a un genre d'expérience qui paraît plus sûr et plus instructif, celui non point des hommes, mais des nations. Puisque chaque Etat, chaque province, chaque petit district a souvent un système d'agriculture qui lui est particulier.'

corrective to Napoleonic imperialism.⁴⁰ This historical parallel is complemented by his focus on northern Italy. The concentration on this area during two epochs (the Middle Ages and the Napoleonic era) allows Sismondi to posit changes in government as the only variable in national identity. After summarising various Italian peoples from ancient times to his present, he states:

The same soil has fed these peoples, so different in nature, and the same blood circulates in their veins. The mingling of some barbarian peoples, lost in the flood of indigenous peoples was not enough to change the physical constitution of men to whom the same region gave birth. Nature has stayed the same for Italians through the ages: only the government has changed: its revolutions have always preceded or accompanied an alteration in the national character. Never have the causes and effects been so clearly linked (*HRI*, I: ii).⁴¹

The same connection between national identity and historical narrative can be identified in *Valperga*, given Shelley's conflation of medieval Italy and nineteenth-century nationalism. Failed revolutions in Naples and Piedmont made liberty, civil discord, and national self-determination timely themes. Sismondi's discussion of national and civic identity in the *Tableau* situates the debate firmly in locale, in sites of origin from which social identity can be built, but only because place, the Tuscan landscape, establishes a continuity in geo-historical identity.

Sismondi's *Histoire* expounds the promotion of liberty to attain individual and collective freedom, and autonomy for citizens in the polity. In *De la Littérature du Midi*, Sismondi directly relates the arts to cultural development and civilisation, and appropriates to the individual an intrinsic spirit of liberty that provides creative impulse. It is in literary history that Shelley and Sismondi narrate a common Italian experience. Through the influence of classical and Renaissance authors, both construct an image of Italy, and mediate it to their readers. Each representation is

⁴⁰ Adrian Lyttelton, 'The National Question in Italy', in *The National Question in Europe in Historical Context*, ed. by Mikuláš Teich and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 63-106 (p. 74).

⁴¹ 'Le même sol a nourri ces êtres de nature si différente; et le même sang circule dans leurs veines. Le mélange de quelques peuplades barbares, perdues au milieu des flots indigènes, n'a point suffi pour changer la constitution physique des hommes qu'enfantoit la même région. La nature est restée la même pour les Italiens de tous les âges: le gouvernement seul a changé: ses révolutions ont toujours précédé ou accompagné l'altération du caractère national. Jamais les causes n'ont été liées aux effets d'une manière plus évidente.'

mediated by the author's own particular experience of Italy as a land with a cultural history of libertarian struggle.

In the *Histoire*, there is an integration of character, and experience, to provide a representation of national relevance with European perspective. Sismondi's representation of Italy locates civic identity in the urban cosmopolitan space that establishes a reciprocal relationship with the non-urban landscape surrounding it. A construction of civic identity which functions in this manner has running through it strands of liberty as a representation determined by locale, either the polity or external neighbouring territories. The chronology of Sismondi's *Histoire* is complicated by the resonances of the Middle Ages in the nineteenth century. As with *Valperga* and *The Last Man*, the temporal situation looks back to the ancient past, and forward to contemporary events (and with *The Last Man*, to the future). The representation of liberty is woven into historical or temporal narratives by more fully representing culture, civilisation, society, and the individual. Liberty finds its expression through political systems, as Sismondi shows in the *Histoire*, but it can also be defeated by them, as *Valperga* demonstrates. The individual impulse to freedom and to creativity can overcome this to represent liberty in a cultural form that provides the legacy for a nation. In the following section, I discuss how *Corinne* captures the individual inspiration to improvise a nation's legacy. This is considered in relation to Staël's own conception of national character. In representing a European and a national past, Staël draws literary, symbolic figures into a sentimental narrative. She thus establishes a complex dialogue between the past and the present through action and feeling.

Germaine de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy*

Shortly after Napoleon was crowned Emperor in 1804, Staël left Switzerland for Italy with A. W. Schlegel, to be joined later by Sismondi. She was still in Italy in 1805 when Napoleon was crowned King of Italy in Milan. The coronation occasioned a strong reaction in both Staël and Morgan. While Morgan was to disparage Napoleon's supreme abilities to display power in *Italy* (1821), Staël set to work on *Corinne* the month following his coronation. Passing over him in silence,

the text plays out cultural dynamics through fictional representation and Italy's national past.

The quest for national identity, the essence of literary characteristics that distinguish Northern and Southern Europe, and the gendering of the artist are central to *Corinne*. The novel continues Staël's preoccupation with the role of the arts in society, and in European civilisation; themes which are also addressed in *De la Littérature* (1800) and *De l'Allemagne* (1813). Each work orients its ideas through meditations on liberty. In particular, Martin Thom has noted that a neglected aspect of Staël's thought, in both *De la Littérature* and *De l'Allemagne*, is 'the barbarian invasions' which, he suggests, 'supply the key to the puzzle'.⁴² Thom sees the invasions as part of Staël's construction of civic identity which is promoted through private individual liberty and its relation to government.⁴³ Staël defines her ideas about liberty in relation to classical republicanism, and thus incorporates the polis into her thinking about national cultures. This, in turn, is a way for Staël to position herself in relation to her age. In Thom's view, all Staël's writings:

derive some of their meaning from their immediate occasion and context, and even when apparently purely literary in scope are invariably political also.⁴⁴

Simone Balayé also stresses the importance of literary and political contexts by highlighting Staël's involvement with French and Swiss intellectuals.⁴⁵ Alongside this contextualisation, Marie-Claire Vallois focuses on the problematic nature of representation in *Corinne* by revealing the use of 'voice' in the text. Corinne's improvisations, the topography of the novel, and its political background, all combine to accentuate the metaphorical and allegorical resonance of the characters which destabilises their presentation in the novel. While Madelyn Gutwirth argues convincingly for the interpretation of the figure of Corinne as a neoclassical object, Doris Kadish suggests that the narrative can figure Corinne as either an 'allegory for

⁴² Martin Thom, *Republics, Nations and Tribes* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 208.

⁴³ Thom, p. 93.

⁴⁴ Thom, p. 49.

⁴⁵ See Simone Balayé, *Madame de Staël: Lumières et Liberté* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1979).

the republic', or 'as an analogue for Italy'.⁴⁶ This section discusses Staël's use of improvisation as means to articulate Italian national politics. The particularity of her treatment of Italy both as an identifiably familiar cultural site for the reader, and as a trope to debate European intellectual relations, are central to my argument.

The guidebook-style accounts of landscapes and tourist sites, noted by Simone Balayé, give prominence to understanding the cultural legacy of the Italian past.⁴⁷ Corinne as an improvisatrice sustains the representation of the national past to her audience by linking history, landscape and the present and future concerns of her nation. Katie Trumpener's observation about 'bardic performance' suggests a similarity between the improvisatrice, a specifically Italian, and therefore authentic, guardian of Italy's past, and that of the Celtic bard, the subject of her study. Bardic performance:

binds the nation together across time and social divides; it reanimates a national landscape made desolate first by conquest and then by modernisation, infusing it with historical memory.⁴⁸

In an age self-conscious about nationalism, accessing the past acquires urgent significance amid anxiety about the preservation and formation of national identity. Most communities attempt to internalise national identity through the past, seeking, in the words of Martin Thom, 'an aboriginal authority, be it the ancestral dead, the native land or the mother tongue'.⁴⁹ Corinne fulfils this desire by unifying Italy with a voice sensitive to the past. Notions of the past are embedded deeply in the consciousness of the Grand Tourist, and *Corinne* explores them in relation to the European present.

Staël omits any overt criticism of the First Consul or French expansion into Italy in *Corinne*, but her emphasis on nationalism in literature contributes to the text's political orientation. In *De la Littérature*, Staël says she intends to:

⁴⁶ Madelyn Gutwirth, *Madame de Staël Novelist: The Emergence of the Artist as a Woman* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), pp. 175–81; and, Doris Y. Kadish, 'Narrating the French Revolution: The Example of *Corinne*', in *Germaine de Staël: Crossing the Borders*, ed. by Madelyn Gutwirth and others (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 113–21 (pp. 117–18).

⁴⁷ Simon Balayé is cited in Marie-Claire Vallois, 'Old Idols, New Subject: Germaine de Staël and Romanticism', in Gutwirth, ed., *Crossing the Borders*, pp. 82–97 (p. 87).

⁴⁸ Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xii.

⁴⁹ Thom, p. 9.

examine the influence of religion, customs, and laws on literature, and the influence of literature on religion, customs, and laws [. . . and] to give an account of the slow but steady march of the human mind in philosophy, and its quick but intermittent triumphs in the arts.⁵⁰

Such a statement outlines the causal relationship between the development of a national cultural heritage and a nation's social and political structure. Susan Tenenbaum makes this point:

Sismondi, Mme de Staël, Constant, and Barante conceived of society in terms of causal relationships [. . . and along with A.W. Schlegel put] their common emphasis on the complex of physical, spiritual, and social forces which bear upon aesthetic creation.⁵¹

Tenenbaum's observation applies equally to the mode in which the content is expressed, as to the content itself. Oral improvisation, written verse, travel narrative and sentimental romance all contribute to debates about freedom, nationality, culture and the endurance of the past, and the current state of subjection of the Italian peoples. These themselves lead on to a consideration of differences in national character. This takes place partly in relation to civic virtue expressed through artistic creativity.

In Staël's distinction between Northern and Southern literature, she isolates two representative figures: Homer and Ossian. For Corinne, the voice of the South finds its expression in her own poetry but Ossian comes to symbolise a northern type of sensibility. She articulates this in Book XIV when she says:

Your [i.e. English] poets' depth of thought and feeling had strengthened my mind and soul without at all weakening the liveliness imagination seems to take on among people of our southern lands alone. Thanks to the rare combination of circumstances that had given me a dual education and if you will, two nationalities, I could think myself destined for special privileges (C, pp. 264-65).

⁵⁰ *Major Writings of Germaine de Staël*, ed. and trans. by Vivian Folkenflik (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 173. 'Je me suis proposé quelle est l'influence de la religion, des moeurs et des lois sur la littérature. [. . .] 'J'ai essayé de rendre compte de la marche lente, mais continuelle, de l'esprit humain dans la philosophie, et de succès rapides, mais interrompus, dans les arts.' Germaine de Staël, *De la Littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*, 2nd edn (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, n. d.), p. 4.

⁵¹ Susan Tenenbaum, 'The Coppet Circle: Literary Criticism as Political Discourse', *History of Political Thought*, 1 (Autumn 1980), 453-74 (p. 463).

The synthesis of each culture in Corinne's accomplishments shapes her destiny, and therefore the representation of the Italian past. The Italy of Corinne's present is perceived as being in a transitional phase between two eras of liberty, the past and the future. At her coronation at the Capitol, Prince Castel-Forte notes, Corinne is 'the image of our beautiful Italy', 'an admirable product of our climate and of our arts' as well as 'an offspring of the past' and a 'prophet of the future' (C, p. 25). In *De la Littérature*, Staël acknowledges the melancholy evocation of a transient past and the endurance of cultural memory through living commemoration:

the most characteristic images and ideas in Ossian are those recalling the brevity of life, respect for the dead, celebration of their memory, and worship of those who are gone by those who remain.⁵²

The connection between national identity and literary tradition can be understood in the respect for the past consolidating the sense of the nation. To maintain successfully this sense of a nation, remembrance of the past must be observed. It is precisely this that made Ossian's songs so poignant, but also, crucially, that associated them with loss. The association of national history with loss and remembrance can also be seen in the politicisation of space and cultural artefacts, as when Corinne and Oswald pause at Castel Sant'Angelo, the site of Hadrian's tomb and a fortress for the Goths. Corinne observes that:

From Hadrian's day to our own, all the events of Roman history are connected to this monument. [. . .] Crescentius, Arnoult de Brescia, Nicolas Rienzi, those friends of Roman freedom who so often took memories for hopes, held out for a long time in an emperor's tomb. I love these stones that are linked to so many glorious deeds (C, p. 56).

Staël further embeds this in a republican framework by acknowledging Sismondi's *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge* as her source for Crescentius, Arnoult de Brescia and Nicolas Rienzi. These references accentuate the significance of the monument and enact Staël's connection between literature and culture through topography and textuality, and stone itself. The place is so significant because of past

⁵² Folkenflik, p. 175. The original French reads: 'les images et les pensées les plus habituelles, dans Ossian, sont celles qui rappellent la brièveté de la vie, le respect pour les morts, l'illustration de leur mémoire, le culte de ceux qui restent envers ceux qui ne sont plus' (*De la Littérature*, Charpentier, p. 164).

events which have occurred there; but as a site, its meaning is recuperated through Sismondi's documented history, then mediated via Staël into the words of Corinne. As guide, Corinne stands for a voice of Italy that bridges past and future, mythology, fiction and materiality. Corinne reanimates, and commemorates, the past through her genius for improvisation, but her lingering over Hadrian's tomb also reveals how feeling and sentiment are used to inspire civic virtue.

The figure of Ossian is absorbed into the historiographical analysis of national identity. This is made apparent when Oswald and Corinne visit Tivoli, and Corinne interprets paintings as representing an Italian national tradition. The viewing culminates in Corinne playing her Aeolian harp, and singing Scottish bardic songs. Significantly this occurs under a landscape painting depicting the son of Ossian's enemy, Cairbar, waiting for the bard to come and sing a final eulogy to Cairbar so that his soul can rest in peace. As a site of filial mourning, this picture resonates with Oswald's own bereavement, but Corinne's songs are those which appeal to civic virtue: 'She sang a warrior's farewells as he left the land of his fathers and the woman he loved' (C, p. 157) and Oswald identifies a surge of patriotic nostalgia, a 'native land', 'a refuge peopled with my memories' (C, p. 158). This crucial moment for Oswald and Corinne constitutes a tacit acknowledgement that their relationship is bound to fail. Their divergence, and eventual separation, accommodates the metaphorical nature of Staël's characterisation, to represent the estrangement of two traditions of North and South. This brings to mind Sismondi's analysis of the transmission of the 'force individuelle' from the North and the 'force sociale' which spread up through Europe from the South. Oswald chooses to respond to the pictures with sentimental nostalgia, rather than Corinne's sense of civic duty. Before she played her harp in front of the Ossian landscape, she showed Oswald one depicting:

The moment when the consuls invite Cincinnatus to leave his plough and take command of the Roman armies. In this landscape, you will see the luxuriance of the south, its plentiful vegetation, its burning sky, all nature's smiling aspect found in the very appearance of plant life (C, p. 157).

Like Guinigi in *Valperga*, Cincinnatus prioritises civic and martial duty, and each are promoted as exemplary figures in an abundant, fertile landscape. Cincinnatus serves

to counterpoint the melancholy of the Ossian landscape by his strident action and continues the presentation of a historical tradition that strengthens the notion of Italian nationhood. Corinne's engagement with the image also connects her sentimental capacity with that for action, synthesising them into civic duty in narrating the Italian past.

Corinne narrates this past through Italian national tradition, acting as the voice of the arts by her public improvisation, most cogently in the frequently cited passage of her coronation at the Capitol. The theme of her improvisations derives from Italian history and the greatness of ancient Italy: '*the Glory and Bliss of Italy*' (C, p. 26, original emphasis). Corinne connects this to literary tradition by alluding to Dante, a citizen 'inspired by the spirit of the Republic, [a] warrior as well as [a] poet' (C, p. 27), Tasso, and Petrarch, who 'like Dante, was the poet of Italian independence' (C, p. 28). From the poets who were concerned for their nations' political fate, she moves onto the climate itself:

The subtle pleasures tended by nature are relished by a nation worthy of appreciating them. [. . .] Here sense impressions blend with ideas, all life is drawn from the same well-spring, and the soul – like the air – fills space to the outer limits of heaven and earth. Genius feels at home because revery is so sweet here (C, p. 29).

Corinne is able to mediate this to her audience by matching nation to nature, and linking the poetic inspiration to the propitious climate, forming a bridge between nature and art, as well as the past and the present. As Katie Trumpener notes:

Bardic nationalism insists on the rich fullness of national knowledge, on the anchoring of discursive traditions in landscape, in a way of life, in custom.⁵³

Corinne made a timely contribution to the genre of the national tale. While the acknowledged innovator of the genre, Sydney Owenson, claimed authenticity by accentuating her own Irish heritage, Staël's own claim was that of the cosmopolitan European. Her interest in European political and intellectual relations structure the

⁵³ Trumpener, p. 34.

text, rather than reclaim a nation's past. Nevertheless, Trumpener's statement about Sydney Owenson can be applied equally to Staël:

The sense of national landscape as a site simultaneously of historical plenitude and historical loss becomes a crucial commonplace, the primary touchstone of character, the ground of narrative perspectives and the central philosophical insight around which plot, themes, and descriptive passages are built.⁵⁴

Corinne's public duty leads her, through her natural genius, to a bardic celebration and commemoration of her country and its past. Corinne's public and private uses of sentiment have resisted integration, but in both she demonstrates the power of constructing an enduring, animated memory of the past, either national or individual. In this way, she differs from the incipient anachronism of which Ossian, as the last of his race, is an emblem. Corinne does not become an example of a vanished, irrecoverable culture, but of an active culture that has become displaced. Corinne secures her remembrance in others through a kind of deferred audibility and visibility by her final recital, performed by another (C, p. 415), and by her education of Juliette, Oswald and Lucile's daughter. Indeed, Juliette's learning to play the 'Scottish air that Corinne had sung to Nelvil at Tivoli while they stood before a painting of Ossian' is exactly that (C, p. 411). This strategy is the culmination of 'an anxiety about transmission' that ensures that Oswald may never forget her.⁵⁵

The identification of Corinne as a national type is augmented by a mythological framework. Corinne's connections with Sappho and with the Sibyl give her an authority that further enables the transition between narrative action and her presence as a voice for Italy. It also achieves a temporal disruption that allows Corinne to be the artistic voice of the past, the voice of the present, and the future. The displacement of Corinne's narration into other genres accounts for the expansive and various modes in which the national genius of Italy needs to be

⁵⁴ Trumpener, p. 45-46.

⁵⁵ Nancy Miller, 'Performances of the Gaze: Staël's *Corinne*', in *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 162-203 (p. 185).

expressed, while simultaneously identifying the disenfranchisement of the woman artist, and thus politicising Corinne's genius.

This discussion of *Corinne* has emphasised the role of place in the novel, acknowledging the enigmatic coupling of name and place in the title, *Corinne, or Italy*. This points to the crucial issue of representation, and the translatable, transformative function that the figure of Corinne brings to the text. Through this manipulation of the figure of Corinne, Staël absorbs and conflates notions of alterity: gender difference becomes integrated into the embodying of national genius. Furthermore, national oppositions between North and South initiate the novel's action and contribute to its form. Ideas of national character inform the central debates of *Corinne*, but theories of genre also reinforced a growing sense of national difference.⁵⁶ The figure of Corinne is endowed with powers of speech, of poetry and of improvisation in a way that constructs national identity. The voices of Sappho, the Sibyl, and Nike all give voice to the oppositions in the text, and give alterity its expression through gender, but also through national historical symbolism.

The preoccupation with establishing a national history dominates the text; Staël uses the notion of cultural evolution to demonstrate this. Her treatment of this theme incorporates the distinction she identifies between Northern and Southern literature and peoples in *De la Littérature* and *De l'Allemagne*. In *Corinne*, the presence of conventions more commonly associated with travel writing establishes a connection between history, origins, nations and custom. It is a connection which also comments on political aspects of Napoleonic Italy, and provides an example of how republican historiography contributes to the representation of Italy in the Romantic period. The topography of *Corinne* positions the Italian past in relation to Staël's intellectual concern with the intersection between genre, national identity and politics. In this way, the past and the present converge. Lady Morgan's *Italy* also takes up sites of republican historiography in relation to the present, using the past to highlight the degradation of modern Italy, connecting it to debates about European political systems, rather than aesthetics and politics.

⁵⁶ Tilottama Rajan, 'Theories of Genre', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, 9 vols, ed. by H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989-), v: *Romanticism*, ed. by Marshall Brown (2000), pp. 226-49 (p. 231-33).

Lady Morgan's *Italy*

Central to the aesthetic and political agenda of *Italy* is the attention to the topography of Italy and Europe, both in the past and the future. This topography is mapped through a republican history of Italy. Morgan sets out a political agenda that includes: liberty and despotism; the emergence of national identity; institutions that support or destroy cultural individuality; a cosmopolitan understanding of the political balance of early nineteenth-century Europe; and finally, republican sympathy for Napoleonic revolutionary governments. Morgan's use of republican historiography and topography differs from that of Sismondi and Staël, in that the latter two use it to comment on political affairs obliquely. Morgan, by contrast, uses it to emphasise her own republican sympathies and the need for Italian unity. Additionally, *Italy* displays an overt engagement with the present and recent past of Italy, incorporating into this an assessment of places that signify the past, such as Rome. Morgan's ambivalent treatment of Napoleon also departs from both Sismondi's and Staël's engagement with the First Consul. Morgan contrasts with them most strongly in her perception of the benefits of the Napoleonic regime, and the credit Morgan gives this in the creation of national identity.

In *Italy*, Morgan's portrayal of the country utilises the past to convey its ancient republican heritage. Here, as with Sismondi, the influence of early Etruscan civilisation contextualises the liberty of the Tuscan Florentines, although they are not linked explicitly. Her representation of Florence begins with the Middle Ages, and the republican architectural style evoking civic virtue. Staël by contrast empties the Tuscan landscape of any trace of the past, because the Romans:

so effectively erased the original institutions of the people who once inhabited Tuscany that there remain almost no vestiges of the antiquity that prompts so much interest in Naples and Rome (C, p. 362).

What is left, and this is what Staël builds on, are 'Tuscan cities, bearing the stamp of the republican genius of the Middle Ages' (C, pp. 362-63). The resurgence of a republican spirit coincides with the evolution of the Italian language and prominent Florentine artists. Earlier, in the Pantheon, Corinne reminds Oswald that since the

destruction of the Roman Empire there had been hardly any political independence for Italy, but the very appearance of Florence ‘reminds us of her history before the Medicis came to power’ (C, p. 363). Morgan, as Staël did, cites Sismondi as ‘one, who in the present day has written like a true Italian of the best days of Italy’.⁵⁷

Morgan’s focus on Italy makes apparent her own authenticity as a travel writer, which, as Jeanne Moskal has pointed out, is central to any understanding of her writing.⁵⁸ Authorial authenticity in *Italy* is shaped by self-representation within the text. Morgan’s portrayal of Italy responds to a particular cultural construction which seems to her to be a misrepresentation. Her reader depends on the knowledge of the author, and the impressions she collects while touring Italy, rather than the fictional, but naturalistic, creation of Italy which Staël achieved. At times, Morgan casts herself as provocatively republican; a position which challenges conservative expectations of an Italian tour.⁵⁹ James Buzard argues that if tourists can say:

“Yes, that’s Italy” or “yes, that’s Paris”, or even, “that’s Europe” [. . .] when valued signs of these cultural entities gathered from books, pictures, conversations [. . .] matched with scenes before them, they could feel they had achieved meaningful contact with the places.⁶⁰

Conversely, Morgan attempts to capture the customs, culture, society, and history of Italy as well as its sights, in what Buzard terms ‘symbols that would express the essence of “whole” places’. Although he is not referring to Morgan, Buzard’s argument suggests that in so doing, she has ‘furnished a new set of conventions for registering the authentic and the “whole”’.⁶¹

The political and historical content of *Italy*, which provides a socio-cultural overview, establishes a ‘present sense’ of the country, and of the topicality of Morgan’s text. This immediacy endorses Morgan’s own authenticity as a travel-writer

⁵⁷ Lady Morgan, *Italy*, 2 vols (London: Colburn, 1821), II: 78n. Hereafter cited as *I*; further references appear after quotations in the text.

⁵⁸ Jeanne Moskal, ‘Gender, Nationality, and Textual Authority in Lady Morgan’s Travel Books’, in *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices*, ed. by Paula R. Feldman and Theresa M. Kelley. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1995), pp. 171-93 (p. 175).

⁵⁹ When viewing a printing press on a visit to the Armenian monastery at Isola San Lazzaro, Morgan asks if their guide the monk would print a book in which she chose to ‘speak ill of the Emperor of Austria’ or of the ‘terrible Turk [. . .] committing the most atrocious horrors against the Greeks’ (*I*, I: 465).

⁶⁰ James Buzard, *The Beaten Track* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 10.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

and simultaneously discredits the more common, idealised narratives of the Grand Tour that are formulated on classical lines. This authenticity challenges and subverts Grand Tour standard classics like John Chetwode Eustace's *A Classical Tour Through Italy* (1813) with which Morgan is in acerbic dialogue, constantly deriding Eustace's ignorance.⁶² The understanding of Italy derived from a classical education was, for Morgan, disappointingly narrow:

While the classical annals of Italy, with all their vices and crimes, make a part of the established education of England, the far nobler history of the Italian Republics, *les siècles de mérites ignorées*, remain but little known, not withstanding the analogy of the freedom of political institutions to our own (I, I: 17, original emphasis).

The sense of Italy as a country shaped by its literary history and classical legacy is suggested by Denis Mack Smith, who points out the cross-party support for such a version of Italy and its appeal to varying political sympathies.⁶³ The republican history of Italy appeals to liberals and radicals, while, as Napoleon demonstrated, imperial Rome held its inspiration for the coloniser. Morgan's mention of the invasion of Italy by the Goths foreshadows Austrian occupation of the Italian regions in Morgan's own time. This reworks the more positive re-energising legacy that Sismondi and Staël derive from the barbarian invasions. Morgan returns to the past to seek the present, and in so doing reveals the cynical political interests of contemporary European powers in Italy. She consistently dissents from British foreign policy with regard to its interventions in Italy, and the hypocrisy involved in such self-interested pragmatism.⁶⁴ By contrast, Morgan sees travellers to Rome as:

influenced by associations imbibed by early lore, incorporated with youthful prepossession, and connected with childhood's first dream of something which existed beyond its own sunny sphere and span of being (I, II: 173).

⁶² Morgan describes his work as 'false, flimsy, and pompous' and talks of his 'utter ignorance of Italy' (I, I: 57n). Morgan also takes issue with him at I: 171n; II: 178; II: 423n. P. B. Shelley's opinion of him is also low: 'Read Eustace if you want to know nothing about Italy', *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), II: 54.

⁶³ Denis Mack Smith, 'Britain and the Italian Risorgimento', *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies*, 5 (1997), 83-102 (pp. 83, 92).

⁶⁴ For discussions of the motives behind British foreign policy in Italy, see Mack Smith, pp. 83-84; and Lyttelton, p. 76.

Morgan explodes this artificial notion of Italy when she visits Rome and finds only 'successive evidences of undue power and anti-social force' (I, II: 185). Her representation of Italy, and of Rome, attempts to reposition both in a contemporary political context that she thinks tourists often fail to see. In so doing, Morgan's republican tone rings out, recognisable to her readers after the notoriety of *France*. This distinctiveness fulfils the criteria of originality that is required by travel writers, as Jeanne Moskal and James Buzard have pointed out, but it also generates a sense of disruption between the travel-guide reader's image of Italy and its materiality.⁶⁵ The chronology of *Italy*'s composition adds a temporal disjunction, to the narrative. It was based on travels made in 1819–1820, and thus her observations about Napoleonic government pre-1814 are made retrospectively, unlike those of Staël and Sismondi. Her sense of the present state of Italy is shaped by the recent past, even as Morgan tries to reassess the ancient history and cultural legacy of Italy.

If Shelley uses an aesthetic that idealises and historicises the past, Morgan's aesthetic departs from the notion of a sacred past, displaying an irreverence for authority coupled with an outspoken commitment to liberty and freedom. Morgan's strong focus on the contemporary allows her to explore Italy thoroughly; unity, genius and literary tradition are integral to this. By expressing approbation for the improvements of the Napoleonic revolutionary regime, Morgan offers a controversial insight into the Italian states she visits. She identifies a collective national identity, which exists despite the lack of federal unity and oppressive government measures to perpetuate degradation in society.

In her treatment of systems of government, Morgan's anti-despotic tone is ambivalent despite her sympathy towards the Napoleonic regime. As Lyttelton points out, 'in reaction to Napoleon's identification with Imperial Rome, Italian writers could only express their opposition by repudiating Roman heritage'.⁶⁶ This causes tension between conceptions of Rome as a founding place of European republicanism, and Napoleon's tyranny. Early on in *Italy*, Morgan writes that with the coming of the Romans, Europe was 'subjugated to slavery' (I, I: 1). Such a

⁶⁵ Jeanne Moskal, 'Gender and Italian Nationalism in Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy*', *Romanticism*, 5 (1999), 188–201 (p. 188), and Buzard, *Beaten Track*, p. 82.

⁶⁶ Lyttelton, p. 74.

statement modifies the relatively favourable light in which the benevolence of the Napoleonic regime is seen in relation to the despotic Austrian government. Morgan's responses to French and Austrian rule are then relativised alongside free government and intellectual enlightenment:

Knowledge, when confined to a few, produces tyranny and oppression, with all their train of crimes and suffering; diffused among the many, it gives birth to social and political independence, with all their blessed consequences, of liberty, letters, and commerce (I, II: 243).

The Napoleonic government has partly facilitated political independence for Italian patriots and nation states in Italy. In fact, Napoleonic regimes receive less than Morgan's full endorsement, and this is displayed by her distaste for the 'true *stage effect*' achieved at Napoleon's coronation in Milan (I, I: 130, original emphasis).

When Napoleon founded the Cisalpine Republic, and even when it became the Kingdom of Italy, a course of 'considerable improvement' was embarked upon. Morgan attributes the cause of these improvements to:

the public functionaries, almost exclusively natives who were animated by an enthusiastic impulse of genuine patriotism (I, I: 73).

One of the most impressive feats of the revolutionary regime was the road-building programme in an attempt to 'facilitate communication between cities which had so many hereditary causes of estrangement' (I, I: 219). It could be argued that when Napoleon united the Cispadane and Transpadane Republics, he created a national identity where one did not previously exist; his renovation of the national infrastructure was an important strategy for unity. Michael Broers has shown how Napoleonic government in Piedmont granted municipal autonomy to the Patriots, and supported their political vendetta with the royalists.⁶⁷ Napoleonic innovation, and the installation of the revolutionary regime, disrupt conventional associations of the past. Despite being 'splendid despotisms' (I, I: 148), the Napoleonic states did offer a degree of autonomy that allowed national characteristics to sustain themselves, and questioned the repressiveness of the Austrian regime. The

⁶⁷ Michael Broers, 'Revolution as Vendetta: Napoleonic Piedmont 1801-1814', *The Historical Journal*, 33 (1990), 787-809 (pp. 788-92).

production of modern technologies also depended, for Morgan, upon a free constitution:

England has the best locks and hinges, as she has the best steam-engines, and the best navies, because she has long enjoyed the most perfect of any known political constitution (*I, I: 119*).

The example of Britain shows that such innovations are not simply a manifestation of revolutionary vigour sweeping away an *ancien régime*. In fact, Morgan links innovation to an Italian national identity and republican traditions when she mentions the canal between Pavia and Milan. This ‘great work of inland navigation’ is indebted to ‘the first mechanicien of his age,’ Leonardo da Vinci, whose ‘genius lent itself to every art and science’ at the demand of ‘one of the usurping Sforzas’ (*I, I: 190*). Morgan implies that this was one of the final opportunities for genius to flourish as ‘the decline of [Italy’s] freedom and prosperity’ had begun. Under Italy’s ‘foreign tyranny’, all the ‘great works declined with its liberties’ and the work was never completed, until an 1805 directive ordered work to be resumed (*I, I: 191*). It is at this point that the medieval republican technology becomes integrated with Napoleonic innovation. Morgan’s complex transition between images of tyranny and the genius that flourishes through liberty, articulates the manner of reform. Public works allowed technical genius to flourish because it was enforced:

Another Sforza appeared in Bonaparte, another Leonardo started forth in Parea: in a space of time inconceivably short, the intentions of successive ages were nobly and munificently realized (*I, I: 191*).

The transition in Morgan’s image, between genius and tyranny, arises from the heritage of genius that was fostered by republics, and the evolution of the republics into signoria, while still appearing to preserve the forms of liberty. An implicit comparison is made, in this quotation, between Morgan’s scorn for Napoleon and her praise for the engineer Parea; but each links genius and public innovation. As a ‘native artist’, Parea is an ‘instance of how much great public works, such as his canal, and the route over the Simplon’ succeed in ‘nurturing and bringing out talent’ (*I, I: 191n*). Morgan concludes her note by observing that the resulting irrigations and

ease of transport have 'doubled the value of the land' and 'greatly enriched the farmers'. The focus on the present condition of the inhabitants establishes the daily benefit that is reaped from the canal. The continuity of historical tradition is revealed here as twice-displaced: firstly by a history of despotism that oppresses its subjects, by halting works on the canal; and, secondly, by the Revolutionary government taking up the true, prior phase of history, to complete the works. The first may be perceived as continual decline; and the second as an attempt to identify a fitting historical moment from which to move forward again, having sought an exemplary inspirational precursor (in this case the medieval Italian republics).

Morgan makes it plain that the Napoleonic programme was closer to empowerment than degradation. The autocracy of his rule was used 'to best educate the people for freedom' (I, 1: 148). There is, however, considerable ambivalence in Morgan's attitude to Napoleon. Moskal suggests that Morgan's ambivalence is decisively counterweighted by representing him as 'another example of the patriarchal figure who resists the enemies of liberty, in Ireland or Italy'.⁶⁸ Despite this, the patriotic desire of the *people*, still discernible under the Napoleonic regime, makes this government more successful than its Austrian equivalent:

Many were reconciled to a comparative liberty, and to a degree of prosperity which far exceeded their best experience under their Austrian masters (I, 1: 147).

It is through the quotidian that people measure their sense of liberty and maintain their sense of agency. Morgan's analysis of Napoleonic innovation in Italy, then, depends on achievements of the past, upon which new regimes can build. This continuity of cultural history, collectively valued and understood, generates patriotism in the people. The connection between popular patriotism and history forges a national identity that uses the past to look forward to the future. Morgan's achievement in *Italy* is that she communicates this without overt idealisation of the land or its people. Her pragmatic delineation of contemporary Italian attitudes incorporates historical identity, but also accommodates the expression of genius in the people.

⁶⁸ Moskal, 'Textual Authority', p. 191.

Rome is the location that offers the greatest opportunity to revise ideas about history. The tourist's classical tradition of Rome is undermined by its Papal domination, but more subversively by the foundation of a new Roman republic in 1798, which, as Lyttelton points out, 'revived revolutionary hopes for national unity'.⁶⁹ The ancient founding is variously attributed to Aeneas, Romulus, and the Jews, according to Melchiorre Delfico, one of the 'most spirited and independent inquirers of the age'.⁷⁰ This is partly an attempt to reauthenticate a city spoiled by travellers who 'affect to revive recollections which they never cherished' (I, II: 173).

Representation of Rome is Morgan's greatest challenge as she reveals the artificiality of its classical idealisation. This is most acutely manifested in her contempt for the antique ruins:

Brutus, and his patriot steel; – rise on the imagination, together with the Scipios, and the Catos, Pompey, Antony, Caesar, and Cicero, and hover over the dreams of antiquarian anticipation. Of these men, however, no trace in stone or tower, not a wreck, remains except some formless masses and disputed sites, to commemorate the fact of their existence. Nothing in Rome recalls the days of her barbarous freedom or splendid independence: her antiquities are all of comparatively modern date (I, II: 173-74).

Morgan identifies a fundamentally anti-humanitarian aspect in Rome's system of government, naming the 'boasted patricians of Rome' a 'scourge on their country, and the enemies of humanity' because the 'inherent principle' of Roman government was 'power, privilege and knowledge for the few – slavery the most abject for the many' (I, II: 175 and n). Morgan's disillusion with Rome confronts the classical tourist's view in such a way as to distance Morgan from conventional travel writers. Her representation of Rome reveals not just a new perspective, but actually a more accurate portrayal of its reality.

Morgan rebuilds Rome in a historical context that draws on the rise of the Papacy and its ensuing corruption and uses the domination of the Papacy to emphasise the enlightenment of the republics that emerged after the dark ages. She argues that during the period from the sixth to the tenth centuries, the clergy were

⁶⁹ Lyttelton, p. 67.

⁷⁰ This quotation appears in a footnote to the 1821 three volume octavo reprint of *Italy*, and not in the first edition. Lady Morgan, *Italy*, 3 vols, 2nd edn (London: Colburn, 1821), III: 282n.

‘against enlightening the minds of the laity’ (I, II: 240n). In the midst of a papal or imperial stranglehold over Italy, Morgan isolates Rome itself as containing a sufficiently strong population to offer ‘instances of resistance’ to the See when ‘the rest of Christendom lay subdued at the feet of the Papal throne’ (I, II: 254n), because they could create schism and dissent. ‘Alternately opposing the foreign sway of German potentates, and the home despotism of the Pontiffs’ gave the patricians and people greater political manoeuvrability. Morgan footnotes instances where the citizens brought down the Popes (I, II: 254n), and credits ‘Castruccio (a citizen of Lucca)’, ‘one of the greatest captains and greatest geniuses of the age,’ with setting up an ‘Anti-Pope and Anti-Emperor in opposition to the Ghibiline or German party’ (I, II: 255). This again removes from Rome the burden of antiquity, and shows the extent of the degradation of the people in a city that ‘appears obviously to have undergone fewer changes by the Revolution, than any other city in Italy’ (I, II: 263). If the legacy of the Papal domination of government is the most important aspect of modern Rome, it is because this domination allowed an easy re-instigation of monarchical power at the Restoration, when Rome ‘seemed, by a stroke of magic, to go back to the sixteenth century’ (I, II: 250). Once again Morgan manipulates the reader’s notion of time by aligning the contemporary with the Early Modern. She then credits the ancient Romans with exactly the improvements for which she praised the revolutionary government. Confidently pronouncing the power of the Papacy at a permanent ebb due to the study of history and the fact that ‘illumination spread’ (I, II: 252), Morgan draws parallels between the Papacy and the British government. While in its time and at its height, Papal rule in Italy resulted in subjection, Morgan recasts contemporary Rome as less malign than the English government in its treatment of Irish Catholics:

While the bench of English Bishops, to the disgrace of Christianity, (if Christianity were answerable for the conduct of those who affect to profess it,) are voting against the rights of their fellow Christians, the Irish Catholics in the British Senate, – the Roman Cardinals, with the Pope at their head, are breaking through the old prejudices of their church, to favour the Protestant worship (I, II: 267n).

Instead of using Rome's imperial past to signify glory and vigour, Morgan translates the emphasis onto the evolving civilisations of even more ancient cultures. In doing so, she privileges non-expansionist cultures, and thus she favours sites of origin as optimum locations for the development of civilisations. The Etruscans:

flourished by their unity, and fell by their divisions: but they were still to the peninsula, what the Athenians long were to Greece (*I*, 1: 1).

Here, Northern Italy is esteemed as a locale of archetypal independence and liberty. The problematic temporal structure of Morgan's *Italy* is stabilised by places whose history Morgan understands as differently constructed from that of the history understood by conventional travellers. Her representations of Italian places create tension between the present and the past to politicise contemporary European relations. A favourite cause in *France* makes sporadic appearances in *Italy* – that of Ireland. Morgan's stand against imperialism and her outrage at England's self-interested intervention in European affairs, at home (Ireland) and abroad (the Napoleonic Wars and the Holy Alliance) neatly dovetail with her Italian focus. Dialogue with the present contextualises the recent (Napoleonic) past, and Morgan's attention to the historicity of place refracts localised sites of tension, like Ireland, or northern Italy, into the general debate about universal liberty, freedom and systems of government. An example of this is her treatment of Piedmont.

Morgan highlights the strategic territorial importance of Piedmont and links political power to imperial expansion and pragmatism:

The great source [. . .] of the grandeur of the house of Savoy was the position of its little territory, that rendered it the guardian, or the gaoler of the Alps, and which by enabling it to shut or open this important passage, according to the exigency of the day, made its alliance an object with both Guelph and Ghibeline, French or Burgundians; with whom its chiefs connected themselves, as interest decided, or necessity urged (*I*, 1: 47).

Piedmont becomes the state from which Italian unification is possible, because of its power and wealth, but also because of its repressive and backward regime. A strong and unified Piedmontese state can defend itself more successfully than the 'petty principalities' 'separated from common terms', and who 'purchased their peace as

Parmesans, or Florentines'. That Piedmont, then, was able to 'maintain its integrity' by yielding in its entirety to the French becomes a redeeming aspect of its conduct. Morgan rationalises the annexation by linking the surrender of the Piedmontese to the French with a shared national identity. When Piedmont yielded:

it gave up, from ancient prepossession, in favour of France, and the conviction, that "the ills it knew not," could scarcely be worse than "the ills it had" (*I*, 1: 51).

It is this complicated relationship between despotism and republicanism that is made most explicit in the Piedmont chapter. Piedmont has suffered 'Ages of tyranny' and yet developed a degree of national sympathy with a now republican France. Tyranny had smothered the flourishing of Piedmontese genius of artists like Alfieri, who, for Morgan, characterised republican ideals and independence, as they did for Shelley. The advent of the revolutionary republic offers reform and 'measures most judicious' to heal 'wounds the sword of victory inflicted in the heart of national self-love' (*I*, 1: 51). Conquest brings with it the opportunity to rebuild national identity, even though it has been damaged. With the representation of Piedmont embroiled in a complicated struggle between republicanism and despotism, coupled with a thriving society in Turin, the reader understands that this, the 'threshold of Italy', can 'shed the light of promise on the rest of our journey' (*I*, 1: 59) and prepare the reader for Morgan's agenda to revise the representation of Italy.

Morgan uses history to re-establish a tradition of national identity that is integrated with the modernising project of Napoleonic government, and the increasing sympathy for national unity. *Italy* seeks to bring out the systematic modernisation implemented by the Italian people linking patriotism and genius to historical tradition and place. Morgan's representation of the Italian condition and her reworked notions of progressive history expose political injustice present and past. It is an aesthetic of exposure and authenticity that resists classical idealisation and the artifice of the tour. In focusing on a country that has been unceasingly represented and idealised, Morgan subverts its use finally to seek common liberation for all peoples. *Italy* contains a subtext about nationalism and identity, and about

hypocrisy and authority that may be implemented as easily at home, for Ireland and the British Government, as abroad on the Italian peninsula.

Using the conventions of the travel-writer Morgan recontextualises Italy. Still depicted through place, Morgan uses locale to historicise Italy, rather than idealise it. In so doing, as with her treatment of Rome or Piedmont, ambiguities become apparent about the implementation of authority and how to maintain liberty. A crucial aspect to the development of a collective future for Italy is the stimulation of genius through liberty. This can be furthered only through systems of government that can accommodate the free expression of the individual. In this, Morgan sees Italy as a universal example for European governments.

Conclusion

Consideration of the three writers in this chapter has shown how both history and place are integral to any understanding of Italy in the Romantic period. Sismondi and Staël articulate the historical identity of Italy through its relationship to the European present and past, but also by identifying in Italian history specifically Italian characteristics, such as the republican communes, or with Staël, the importance of improvisation. Each of these characteristics is credited, by Sismondi and Staël, with making a long term contribution to Italian cultural tradition. Morgan, by contrast, integrates the present, and the recent past into a political consideration of Italian history. In an aesthetics of pragmatism, Morgan draws out the patriotism of the people, and the complexity of internal Italian politics and their relationship to the present. Sismondi's more methodical analysis of history and culture presents a unified Italy, but it is a vision which depends upon an aestheticised version of the past which links nationality and genius through government. Staël's *Corinne* roots its presentation of Italy in the past in order to communicate a specificity of place from which to build up theories about nationhood.

Sismondi, Staël, and Morgan all point to an Italian legacy of greatness that influences nineteenth-century conceptions of Italy, politicised by its relation to the present. Additionally, each aestheticises their representation of history by

incorporating the notion of national genius. While this is variously associated with individual character in history, systems of government, literary nationalism, and political tyranny, it distinguishes Italy. The continuity of national genius is expressed in response to place, whether it be a description of the landscape, as in *Corinne* at Naples, or Morgan's *Italy* in Rome, or the Val di Nievole in Sismondi's *Tableau*. Alternatively, the specific characteristics of the Italian nation are articulated through a theorisation of civic places, and the construction of civic and cultural identity which ensues from that.

Shelley deploys similar strategies in her representation of Italy, both in her fiction and her non-fiction. Landscape representations play an important part in the emergence of civic identity, and also in defining the distinctiveness of Italy when it is juxtaposed with other European nations, as with England in *The Last Man*, or with Austria in *Rambles*. *Valperga* balances an exploration of character with consideration of the relationship between urban and rural landscapes, to communicate the force of the past. The traditions of literary nationalism are explored more fully in Shelley's *Lives*. In each of the works which I argue influenced Shelley, a unifying presence is the role that the barbarian invasions played in the history of Italy. The invasions add a distinctive element to the Italian character, but also serve to compare moments of Italy's past. Sismondi contrasts the 'spirit of liberty' they bring to the South with the movement northwards of republicanism. For Morgan, the comparison is between past invasion and current colonisation. Along with Staël, they both look back to early eras in the history of Italy to construct a historical tradition of liberty that offsets the contemporary subjection of Italy. Staël's *Corinne* emphasises, through its opposition of North and South, the differences between cultures. In trying to remember the past, to identify what the present can retain of it, and how the present is shaped by it, Staël uses the division between North and South to initiate commemoration through place.

William Godwin's 'Essay of History and Romance' and 'Essay on Sepulchres' unite the role of the individual in history to the stimulus imagination derives from place. As a consequence the past is reanimated and accessed through imagined evocations of intimacy with individuals at specific and particular places. The

association between memory and place, and between history and locale, underpins my investigation into the representation of Italy in Shelley's work. Preliminary discussion of the works of Sismondi, Staël, and Morgan sheds light on how Italy was conceived within the Romantic era as an originating site of liberty, republicanism and civilisation. Further reflection on Shelley's work in relation to these authors reveals her own historicising mediation of Italy. Her construction of Italy responds to a politicised aesthetics that both idealised the past and reinforced the subjected state of nineteenth-century Italy. While Shelley clearly draws much from the resonance of Italy in Europe's cultural memory, her own representation is distinctive for its complex engagement with the Italian past across a variety of genres, and as it pervades the present, in history, imagination, and memory.

Chapter 2

Reanimation, Matter, and Imagination from *Frankenstein* to 'Roger Dodsworth'

Reanimating the past is a consistent feature of Shelley's work from *Frankenstein* to *Rambles*. This chapter explores the relationship of Shelley's earliest treatment of reanimation in *Frankenstein* (1818) to later works. This chapter argues that her uses of reanimation rework negative associations of the phenomenon with revolutionary radicalism fashioned by the reactionary right. Reanimation in Shelley's writing offers an alternative way of reading the past. It is integrated into an aestheticised representation of a republican past that is neither threatening nor monstrous. The aestheticisation of the past occurs through reanimation, sensation, and place, and this chapter shows the close relation between Shelley's tales, 'Valerius' (1819) and 'Roger Dodsworth' (1826), and two essays by Godwin, the 'Essay of History and Romance' (1797) and 'Essay on Sepulchres' (1809).¹ Both Shelley and Godwin revise the revolutionary association of animation by changing the formula in which a revolutionary and republican past can be seen as inspirational to the present without overpowering it. Central to the success of such a revisionary approach is a sense of anachronism in Shelley, and an active imagination and sense of place in Godwin. Each component incorporates a difference between the subject from the past and the subject in the present, which dissociates and distances the past. Anachronism derives from the cultural perception of what is contemporary. At the same time, imagination and place provide crucial links between the past and the individual. In the works of Shelley and Godwin, the past seems to be activated most fruitfully by incorporating a consideration of matter into any transmission of the past to create a stable centre from which the past can be identified.

My particular interests lie in exploring the evolution of Shelley's treatment of reanimation as it is used to aestheticise the past, and reanimation's role in civic

¹ These dates refer to composition for the first three titles. Shelley's tales were published posthumously in 1976 and 1863 respectively (*NSW*, 1: *Frankenstein*, ed. by Nora Crook: lxxxv, lxxxvi), and Godwin's 'Essay of History and Romance' remained unpublished until 1988; see William Godwin, *Caleb Williams or Things as They Are*, ed. by Maurice Hindle (London: Penguin, 1988), pp. 359-73.

identity. 'Valerius' and 'Roger Dodsworth' focus on the reanimated body, as *Frankenstein* does, but the tales retain the pristine identity of the reanimated subject, so that anachronism and memory are central to the representation of the past. In these tales, Shelley redevelops her vision of the dislocated, reanimated body in *Frankenstein*, which excludes the past, and familial and civic identity, each of which the Creature has been denied since his creation. Reanimation in *Frankenstein* contrasts with Shelley's later depictions which construct a more integrated binarism between past and present than the myth-making scope of *Frankenstein* allows. The Creature's presence politicises Shelley's representation of domestic affection and individual identity, but his own reanimated existence contests an aesthetics of the body (politic) in history. Ronald Paulson has noted how *Frankenstein* contains a critique of Burkean responses to history and the French Revolution by incorporating the imagery of revolutionary optimism along with reanimation. He identifies such an instance during Victor's recovery ('rebirth') from prolonged illness following the animation of the Creature and its subsequent disappearance. As Paulson observes:

The irony is that Victor fails to recognise the connection between his production of the monster and this rebirth and the conventional imagery going back to Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft of the Revolution seen from a positive point of view as the beautiful. Victor sees it instead as the terrible, the sublime, the threatening, and the tragedy of his reaction is that, like Burke, he turns the creature into the sublime destructive force he reads into his aesthetic response to it.²

The reanimation of the Creature then is surrounded by a discourse of the immediate history of the European political past and is couched in a language of aesthetics. As modern editors of *Frankenstein* have noted, the Creature's engagement with the European cultural past is manifest more in his education than his bodily reanimation.³ However, as it is primarily the phenomenon of reanimation in

² Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution (1789–1820)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 246. Paulson also sees the oak struck by lightning as 'a final echo of the vocabulary in which Shelley's mother and her opponents (in particular Burke with his British oak) had described the Revolution' (p. 245).

³ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ed. by D. L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 1994), pp. 24–30.

relation to the past and to matter with which I am concerned, it is in this latter aspect that I shall be looking at *Frankenstein*.

The nature of matter and its ability to endure is integral to commemorating the past. The presence of matter represents a physical continuity with the past that allows it to be experienced in the present. This focus on matter complements the exchange between present and past that both 'Valerius' and 'Roger Dodsworth' depict in terms of the progress and perfectibility of society. As John Whale has noted, the 'historical dislocation' of these tales is part of a 'conflict which is present in much of Shelley's fiction, between utopian optimism of perfectibility and amelioration, and a cyclical, non-progressive vision of history'.⁴ Reanimation is a means to achieving this sense of historical dislocation and contributes to the political dimension of Shelley's historical view.

Closely associated with nineteenth-century progress in science and anatomy, the principle of reanimating matter was also allied to alchemy and the pursuit of immortality. Marie Roberts has identified a revolutionary impulse behind this, asserting that 'the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life contain a revolutionary message urging social, political and spiritual change'.⁵ She illustrates this by outlining Godwin's belief that increasing longevity could be brought about gradually by reason and perfectibility. Lee Sterrenburg acknowledges the revolutionary potential of Godwin's vision in *Political Justice* of a human race that 'will perhaps be immortal'.⁶ Godwin's ideas were part of an Enlightenment 'revisionist teleology', according to Roberts, and 'the expectation that immortality would materialise into scientific reality was in circulation when Godwin started writing *St Leon*'.⁷ Victor Frankenstein's own attraction to alchemical science is of course cited as the reason

⁴ John Whale, 'The Wreck of Hope: Mary Shelley and Romantic History', in *Shelley 1792-1822*, ed. by James Hogg, Salzburg Studies in English Literature Romantic Reassessment 112 (Universität Salzburg: Edwin Mellen, 1993), pp. 97-109 (pp. 100, 101).

⁵ Marie Roberts, *Gothic Immortals: The Fiction of the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 6.

⁶ Lee Sterrenburg, 'Mary Shelley's Monster: Politics and Psyche in *Frankenstein*', in *The Endurance of 'Frankenstein': Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel*, ed. by George Levine and U. C. Knoepfelmacher (London: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 143-71 (p. 148). The relevant passage can be found in *The Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, ed. by Mark Philp, 7 vols (London: Pickering, 1993), III: *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. by Mark Philp, Book VIII: 'Of Property' (p. 465).

⁷ Roberts, p. 27.

for his interest in new sciences. Roberts is able to link the two as she traces the similarity between Victor Frankenstein and the alchemist Johann Konrad Dippel when she states that 'both were body snatchers drawn to the quest for the philosopher's stone and elixir of life'.⁸ Sterrenburg notes, too, that grave-robbing, reviving the dead, and monsters who destroy their own creators were 'standard anti-Jacobin motifs' with which the conservative right denounced, amongst others, Godwin's theories.⁹ Tim Marshall has, moreover, outlined how grave-robbing and the passage of the controversial 1832 Anatomy Act was to increase the significance of the body in *Frankenstein* and give it a new dimension after 1831, 'which could not have been fully present in the first edition'.¹⁰ These arguments demonstrate how the idea of the reanimated body is connected to that of matter, and thus associated with transmutation and with longevity but in a discourse which recognises the revolutionary potential of these themes. The body in such cases is a politicised metaphor responding to the state of the body politic. Such a representation of the body is reappropriated through sensation. In *Frankenstein*, the Creature learns about the world and his exclusion from it through his experience and sensations. In the later tales of reanimation, and in Godwin's 'Essay on Sepulchres', sensation is redirected from the reanimated body into the imagination of the subject experiencing the force of the past. In the first section, which examines *Frankenstein*, I discuss the relationship between matter and reanimation, while the section on Godwin's essays looks at the role of sensation in representing the past. The final section on Shelley's tales integrates matter and sensation to generate a representation of the past which includes its material endurance alongside its metaphysical traces.

Frankenstein: Reanimating Matter

The theme of reanimating matter possesses a double temporal sense in *Frankenstein*: it both alludes to nineteenth-century technological and scientific

⁸ Roberts, p. 99. See Mary Shelley, *NSW*, 1: *Frankenstein*, ed. by Nora Crook, p. 32 for Victor's encounter with new science and his alchemical sympathies. Hereafter cited as *F*; further references appear after quotations in the text.

⁹ Sterrenburg, p. 145 and p. 150.

¹⁰ Tim Marshall, *Murdering to Dissect: Grave-Robbing, 'Frankenstein' and the Anatomy Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 2.

innovation, and also to the mystical secrets of medieval alchemy. Through this, the reanimated body of Frankenstein's Creature suggests historical continuity between classical and medieval natural philosophy and the advances made in Shelley's era. The Creature is, for Victor Frankenstein, the manifestation of a marriage between the imaginative potential of alchemy from the past and the present progress of science. The Creature's reanimated body stimulates a consciousness of the past which impacts upon Victor's sense of individual responsibility, and is derived from Victor's knowledge that he animated dead matter to make life.

The Creature is old matter made anew from dead body parts that have existed severally in a previous incarnation. The Creature becomes an anachronism in the nineteenth-century present because he embodies for the reader a potential which modern science has not yet realised: the reanimation of dead matter. Marilyn Butler recognises Frankenstein's attempt to animate matter through electricity as 'archaic', when compared to Walton's 'contemporary' project of polar exploration. In so doing she brings out the sceptical nuances of Shelley's treatment of galvanic animation, which she derived from the lectures of surgeon and physiologist William Lawrence.¹¹ Butler's reading inadvertently reveals the temporal condition of reanimation. The science of *Frankenstein* looks to the past (alchemy) and the future (modern science).

George Levine emphasises the imaginative possibilities of *Frankenstein* rather than its debt to contemporary science, describing Victor's 'attempt to transcend time, chance, death and mutability by means of matter – the materials of time', as 'literally chimerical'.¹² Such a view does not give adequate prominence to the materialism of Shelley's science, which depends on the central importance of a verifiable relation between life and death in the material world: 'To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death' (*F*, p. 35). Embedded within this is the acknowledgement of the historical continuity of matter. Implicitly, this concern with materialism lies within a narrative which itself reflects a wider historical

¹¹ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ed. with introd. by Marilyn Butler (London: Pickering, 1993), xxxii, and xix-xxi.

¹² George Levine, 'The Ambiguous Heritage of *Frankenstein*', in Levine and Knoepfelmacher, eds., pp. 3-30 (p. 6).

consciousness. This can be most easily identified in the internal chronology of the novel, with the action taking place in the 1790s (F, p. 9n).¹³

The focus of Victor Frankenstein's project is the relationship between dead and animate matter. It differs significantly from 'Valerius' and 'Roger Dodsworth' where the individual is valued because of the cultural identity contained within him, rather than in the acquisition of identity. Neither the body, nor the notion of place can stimulate an imagined present sensation of the past until Frankenstein has realised the error he made by reanimating the Creature's dead body parts. All Frankenstein is interested in is the reproduction of bodily sensation itself in a reanimated corpse:

I became acquainted with the science of anatomy: but this was not sufficient; I must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body. [. . .] Now I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay, and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel-houses. [. . .] I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analysing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life (F, pp. 35-36).

Frankenstein's narration reveals a cycle in which life gives way to death only to give way to life again echoing Humphry Davy's belief in the ' "conversion of dead matter to living matter," ' as Macdonald and Scherf point out.¹⁴

Shelley's narrative of reanimation ensures an exchange not between the past and the present, as we see in 'Valerius' and 'Roger Dodsworth', but between the living and the dead. Victor's health weakens because of the energy he is devoting to animating the being. As Mary Favret has noted, 'animation flows from him', but the reader is only made aware of it when Clerval's arrival in Ingolstadt brings 'healthy humanity'.¹⁵ This reversal continues until Victor imagines that he sees the Creature

¹³ Maurice Hindle argues that the novel was set in the year 1799, on account of Walton's references to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and Frankenstein's to *Tintern Abbey*; see Maurice Hindle, 'Vital Matters: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Romantic Science', *Critical Survey*, 2 (1990), 29-35 (p. 31).

¹⁴ Macdonald and Scherf, eds., p. 23.

¹⁵ Mary A. Favret, 'A Woman Writes the Fiction of Science: The Body in *Frankenstein*', *Genders*, 14 (1992), 50-65 (p. 52). Crook states in her note about the significance of Ingolstadt as home to the Illuminati that '[c]ommunicating with the dead was among its aims' (F, p. 29n); see also Roberts, pp. 105-06, and Sterrenburg, pp. 155-57 for Barruel's association of the Illuminati with the French

and is seized by him. Afterwards he was 'lifeless, and did not recover [his] senses for a long time' (F, p. 43). Here it is not matter and science that overwhelm Victor's life, as they did with his quest to discover the 'principle of life' (F, p. 35). Instead his imagination vividly conjures up a scene in the present that renders him lifeless: a vision of the 'dreaded spectre'. During the worst stage of his illness, the 'form of the monster on whom I had bestowed existence was for ever before my eyes' (F, p. 43). The vision of the Creature is continually in his mind's eye while Victor is dead to the world, unconscious of the passage of time. The Creature's image acts as a subliminal reminder of the present.

Victor's later move to England to construct the Creature's mate is foregrounded by his misery at consenting to undertake the task, as when he invokes the stars, clouds and wind to 'crush sensation and memory; let me become as nought' (F, p. 111), in an attempt to dissociate himself from the present. Victor pursues scientific enquiry, but it also leads to an unexpected confrontation with the past. When they visit Oxford, Victor and Clerval's minds are stimulated by the history that surrounds them. Visiting ancient places, Victor 'delighted to trace [the] footsteps' of the 'spirit of elder days', remembering Charles I's civil war connections with the city (F, p. 123). Victor feels a peculiar sense of historical dislocation, even as he endeavoured 'to identify every spot which might relate to the most animating epoch of English history'. His attempts to empathise with the sense of history stimulated by place are 'embittered both by the memory of the past, and the anticipation of the future' (F, p. 124).

Victor's impression of English cultural history brings to the fore *Frankenstein's* theme of civic identity, which is articulated throughout by Shelley's critique of Rousseau using the Creature, as Paul Cantor has shown.¹⁶ Active civic identity is also present in the Frankenstein family in Alphonse Frankenstein, Victor's father. The visit to Hampden's tomb can be pinpointed as a moment in which civic identity is awakened in Victor Frankenstein through the past. The effect of the visit to the sepulchre is rearticulated in more personal terms when Frankenstein visits the tomb

Revolution.

¹⁶ Paul A. Cantor, *Creature and Creator: Myth-making and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 119-32.

of his own family before he quits Geneva to pursue the Creature. It is at this moment of departure that the loss of his familial and civic identity impresses itself on Victor. The scene reworks Frankenstein's visit to Hampden's tomb, and enacts the kind of observance of the dead proposed by Godwin's 'Sepulchres'. At the site of the family grave, the 'spirits of the departed seemed to flit around, and to cast a shadow, which was felt but seen not' by Frankenstein. The connection between sense-experience and sensibility is established by Frankenstein's acknowledgement that 'the scene would have been solemn and affecting even to an uninterested observer' (*F*, p. 154). In a reverential act Frankenstein kneels on the 'sacred earth' by the grave to swear an oath of vengeance on his creation calling on the 'spirits of the dead' to aid him in his work (*F*, pp. 154-55). During his pursuit of the Creature, Victor reanimates his personal past, articulated as a contrast with his present so stark that the reanimated past appears to be more real than the present:

During the day I was sustained and inspirited by the hope of night: for in sleep I saw my friends, my wife, and my beloved country; again I saw the benevolent countenance of my father, heard the silver tones of my Elizabeth's voice, and beheld Clerval enjoying health and youth. [. . .] I persuaded myself that I was dreaming until night should come, and that I should then enjoy reality in the arms of my dearest friends. What agonizing fondness did I feel for them! how did I cling to their dear forms! (*F*, p. 156)

The past returns to Frankenstein as the imagined presence of the dead in his dreams. While he finds reality in their physical presence, he realises that such an understanding of reality dislocates him from the present.

The transmission of the past in this final stage of the narrative acquires a layered irony that interweaves the vocal narration of history with the reanimated presence of the dead. The figures from Victor's past strengthen his resolve in the pursuit of the Creature, and these scenes of reanimation form the final part of the narration to Walton. Walton concludes Frankenstein's narration in a letter to his sister Margaret Saville, as though the epistolary conversation mirrors and preserves the past in the same way that the voices of Elizabeth and Clerval did for Frankenstein, voices which 'will be ever whispered in my ear' (*F*, p. 161). Paul Cantor sees Frankenstein's illusory reanimation of his dead relatives as evidence of

the 'solipsism of Frankenstein's imagination',¹⁷ but reanimation also structures the novel's temporal disjunctions between past and present, yoking them together. Comments from Walton to his sister suggest that reanimation contributes to the unreliability of narrating the past. Paradoxically, it is the implausibility of reanimation that in some way moves Walton to give more credence to Frankenstein's story. The 'one comfort' for Victor from 'solitude and delirium' is that:

he believes, that, when in dreams he holds converse with his friends, and [. . .] that they are not the creations of his fancy, but the real beings who visit him from the regions of a remote world. This faith gives a solemnity to his reveries that render them to me almost as imposing and interesting as the truth (F, p. 160).

The narration of the past is strengthened when accompanied by an emotive aspect that expands the dimensions through which the past is transmitted. The voice of the past, as Godwin shows in 'Sepulchres', can be superseded by material factors, like place, if the imagination of the experiencing subject is compliant.

The reanimated past in *Frankenstein* gives an insight into later aestheticisations of the past using reanimation. The inspiration Frankenstein feels at the site of Hampden's tomb liberates his imagination. The experience at Hampden's tomb prefigures Frankenstein's integration of civic and familial identity in his remembrance of the past as it haunts him during his pursuit. The visit to Oxford effected a double dislocation. Firstly, Frankenstein's response to the English national past is disrupted by his own sense of temporal suspension between his own past and future. Secondly, the time scheme for the novel locates it in the 1790s, yet 'refers to a revolution that occurred "more than a century and a half before" rather than to the most important event of contemporary history'.¹⁸ The implicit revolutionary backdrop of *Frankenstein* meets its own past in Victor's imagination as he visits sites in Oxford invoking England's own revolutionary heritage.

Hampden's tomb is a site through which sensitivity to the past is expressed through place for both Shelley and Godwin. Crook notes that the Shelleys and

¹⁷ Cantor, p. 124n.

¹⁸ Warren Montag, ' "The Workshop of Filthy Creation": A Marxist Reading of *Frankenstein*', in *Frankenstein*, ed. by Johanna M. Smith, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 300-11 (p. 301).

Godwin visited Hampden's tomb in 1817 (F, p. 124n), and Godwin uses it in 'Sepulchres' to convey the importance of place in accessing the past. Frankenstein is only able to achieve a temporary sympathy with the past, but Godwin's essays and Shelley's tales seek a more enduring connection between the past and the present through imagination, sensation, and place. The next section turns to Godwin's essays to show how the generation of a physical manifestation of the past is central to the success of his project.

Godwin, The Past, and Matter

In this section I propose that distinctive features of Godwin's conception of the past, as developed in 'Essay on Sepulchres' and 'Essay of History and Romance', prefigure Shelley's own treatment of the past in 'Valerius' and 'Roger Dodsworth'. I argue that Godwin's attachment to place in the commemorative process derives from his ideas about the enduring presence of matter. While it would be hard to describe 'Essay on Sepulchres' and 'Essay of History and Romance' as typical of Godwin's thinking, they each bear great relevance to Shelley's representation of the past in her writing. Tim Marshall, following William St Clair, points out that 'Sepulchres' was a 'favourite book which Mary Shelley "would take with her to her mother's grave"'.¹⁹ The gesture resonates in harmony with Godwin's precepts in the essay. Furthermore, St Clair suggests that Godwin may have presented his daughter with 'Essay on Sepulchres' 'to prepare her for the day when he too would lie in St Pancras Churchyard'.²⁰ The intellectual legacy of Godwin's writing is more clearly ascertained, however, not from biography, but from Shelley's treatment of the past in her own writing.

Recurrent themes in this thesis are the representation of republican civic identity and the role of the individual in historical narrative. Both are elements that Shelley derives from Godwin. Additionally, Godwin's 'Essay of History and Romance' significantly enriches an understanding of Shelley's sophisticated use of genre. As a consequence of this, my treatment of Godwin focuses on his aesthetic

¹⁹ Marshall, p. 179.

²⁰ William St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: The Biography of A Family* (London: Faber, 1989), p. 358n.

representation of the past; an extensive discussion of the political dimension of his works is beyond the scope of my project. In 'History and Romance', Godwin incorporates biography into a schema which demands a synthesis of knowledge and imagination to create meaningful historical narrative. In 'Sepulchres', Godwin explores the contribution that conversation, and the imagined presence of historical figures can make to commemoration by stimulating imagination in a particular place. Furthermore, 'Sepulchres' addresses the need for society to commemorate its past through place. In 'Sepulchres', Godwin states that 'the place of a person's burial is one part of [a person's] biography'. Further to this, he suggests compiling an 'Atlas of those who Have Lived, for the Use of Men Hereafter to be Born' to catalogue the burial places of eminent historical figures.²¹ This suggestion indicates that place unites biography with historical record. Place locates narratives of past lives in the present by providing a gateway from which to access history in the future.

Mark Salber Phillips has argued that the 'emotional resonances of historical places' emphasise the introspective aspect of commemoration. This is an attempt by Godwin to redefine history outside its more usual boundaries of the public voice.²² Andrew Smith has noted the 'importance of the function of subjectivity in the interpretive process' in Shelley's tales.²³ This point also holds true for the role of the individual in commemorating a cultural past for both Shelley and Godwin. An active imaginative engagement with the past allows the individual to interpret the past meaningfully, through sympathetic identification and the reanimation of historical scenes.

Marking burial sites is a public commemoration of the 'Illustrious Dead', and visitors are thus able to interiorise the cultural importance of them. Place, for Godwin, stimulates a reanimation of scenes from the past in the individual's

²¹ William Godwin, 'Essay on Sepulchres' in *The Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, ed. by Mark Philp, 7 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1993), vi: *Essays*, ed. by Mark Philp, pp. 1-30 (p. 29). Hereafter cited as S; further references appear after quotations in the text.

²² Mark Salber Phillips, 'William Godwin and the Idea of Historical Commemoration: History as Public Memory and Private Sentiment', in *Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1995), pp. 196-219 (p. 197).

²³ Andrew Smith, *Gothic Radicalism: Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis in the Nineteenth Century* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), p. 61.

imagination. A further connection to place for Godwin is the presence of the material remains of the person evoking a historical sense of their presence:

Let us mark the spot, whenever it can be ascertained, hallowed by the reception of all that was mortal of these glorious beings; let us erect a shrine to their memory; let us visit their tombs; let us indulge all the reality we can now have, of a sort of conference with these men, by repairing to the scene which, as far as they are at all on earth, *they still inhabit!* (S, p. 12, original emphasis)

Godwin's argument accepts the stable cycle inherent within the disintegration of matter: 'the dust that is covered by his tomb, is simply and literally *the great man himself!*' (S, p. 20, original emphasis). The decomposition of matter provides the material continuity from which the imagination can make the leap to reanimating, and accessing, the past. I differ from Salber Phillips on this issue. I propose that Godwin's imaginative attachment derives from a belief that the site contains the matter of the person buried there. Salber Phillips argues instead that the attachment originates purely from conceptual association.²⁴ Godwin does attempt to establish a conceptual association – a metaphysical sense-experience – of the past but this occurs through imaginative physical engagement with the actual material remains of the past.

The physical trace of the deceased injects a more personal dimension into a public cultural inheritance. This extends into the physical as well as the metaphysical realm, an idea expressed earlier in 'History and Romance'. In this essay, Godwin examines how the study of history can be invigorated with biography by scrutinising the 'nature of man':

Laying aside the generalities of historical abstraction, we must mark the operation of human passions; must observe the empire of motives whether groveling or elevated; and must note the influence that one human being exercises over another, and the ascendancy of the daring and wise over the vulgar multitude. It is thus, and thus only, that we shall be enabled to add, to the knowledge of the past, a sagacity that can penetrate into the depths of futurity.²⁵

²⁴ Salber Phillips, pp. 198-99.

²⁵ William Godwin, 'Essay of History and Romance' in *The Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, ed. by Mark Philp, 7 vols (London: Pickering, 1993), v: *Educational and Literary Writings*, ed. by Pamela Clemit, pp. 290-301 (p. 293). Hereafter cited as *H&R*; further references

Knowledge of the past brings wisdom to the present which can endure into the future. Godwin's statements are infused with his notions of perfectibility, which disenfranchises the 'vulgar multitude' for the present until reason has extended its influence over the entire human race. Control of history is devolved through class, judgement and intellect, as Salber Phillips points out:

the emotions of history are the possession of men of the political class, who share the reading and travel that give resonance to historical events and places.²⁶

This exclusivity is similar to Morgan's understanding of the general perception of the past seen by the Grand Tourist, but it also connects public history to personal memory. He explores constructions of history through the acquisition of personal information, and by focusing on the detail, as Sismondi does in the *Histoire* and the *Tableau*, rather than on its broad sweep.

Attention given to the individual emphasises another important aspect of preserving the past. For Godwin, awareness of the past is a way to measure the progress civilisation has made from ancient cultures to the present. Connection between the past and the present occurs in the mind of the historian or reader, i.e. the person who is engaging with the past. Godwin relates imagination to history through feelings such as civic virtue or noble sentiment which help to reanimate the past. In this manner, the appeal to biography reactivates a national past as it creates insight into the individual subject:

He who would study the history of nations abstracted from individuals whose passions and peculiarities are interesting to our minds, will find it a dry and frigid science. It will supply him with no clear ideas. [. . .] The study of individual man can never fail to be an object of the highest importance. It is only by comparison that we come to know anything of mind or of ourselves (*H&R*, p. 292).

Godwin's concept of biography also comes with an aspect of civic virtue which reinforces the importance of remembrance for the polity. Knowledge of history

appear after quotations in the text.

²⁶ Salber Phillips, p. 204.

through the individual gives 'energy and utility to the records of our social existence'. The individual facilitates understanding of national and social history. In this research, the individual being investigated by the historian can be explored in all aspects, 'the friend and the father of the family, as well as the patriot' (*H&R*, p. 294). Godwin's construction of the past depends for its social and cultural progress on a psychological premise about the power of genius. Godwin, like Morgan in *Italy*, suggests that genius would benefit from the support of political systems: 'there was something in the nature of the Greek and Roman republics that expanded and fired the soul' (*H&R*, p. 295). In trying to capture the history of the nation through the individual, Godwin is forced to define historical narrative as the 'mere chronicle of facts, places and dates. But this in reality is no history' (*H&R*, p. 297). Conscious that narrative, and even testimony, can only reveal the 'broken fragments and scattered ruins of evidence' (*H&R*, p. 297), the sensitive reader must have recourse to imagination to access the past, stimulated by the very 'facts, places and dates' that Godwin defines as history.

Place anchors the imagination and sentiment to history. These two prioritise place and a material experience of history over textual narration. A walk round Kenilworth Castle resulted in Godwin's declaration that he 'had never understood the annals of chivalry so well' as then:

I no longer trusted to the tale of the historian, the cold and uncertain record of words, formed upon paper (S, p. 21).

In setting aside historical narration, Godwin turns to a more empirical experience of the past through place. This furthers the individual's experience of the past by an imagined, reanimated representation of it. As with Kenilworth Castle, so with the Houses of Parliament, where Godwin, upon his first visit, had an impression of political figures, amongst them Cromwell, 'present before me'. Their imagined appearance suggests a kind of historical veracity, ambiguously described as the 'tale of truth' (S, p. 20). The transmission of the past is effected through imaginative experience and through conversation. It is through sustained transmission that the truth or authenticity of historical narration can be maintained, even if such history is

fictionalised. The importance of the past is only made apparent to the individual in the present through imagined conversation and the imagined presence of historical figures in a site or ruin associated with the past. The potential benefit of using conversation and sites or ruins to access history points to a more fulfilled present, which is sensitive to the cultural and social value of the past. Conversation educates and promotes understanding, but it is also significant for what it does not reveal:

You might converse with this man incessantly for a year, and might learn something from him every day. After that, let us consider how many parts of his skill never came forward as topics of conversation, and what extensive portions of learning and observation existed in him, that were never poured out upon you. It is impossible to calculate how much of good perishes, when a great and excellent man dies (S, p. 8).

Godwin relates individual access to the past to wider social progress. This approach integrates the individual aspect of historical representation with the cultural value of the past.

Godwin's primary concern is the remembrance of the dead. Full access to the past for the individual enriches both the present and the future legacy of culture:

The affectionate recollection and admiration of the dead will act gently upon our spirits, and fill us with a composed seriousness, favourable to the best and most honourable contemplations. [. . .] I am not satisfied to converse only with the generation of men that now happens to subsist; I wish to live in intercourse with the Illustrious Dead of All Ages (S, p. 12 and p. 22).

The idea of accessing the 'Illustrious Dead of All Ages' reflects the temporal dimension of Godwin's perfectibility, itself a system bounded by the progress of time. Godwin's wish also suggests the timelessness of imaginative reanimation of the past, so that to seek intercourse with the Dead of All Ages is to commune with the deceased of any era. Men of the past are described as shadows 'no more than we are' and this points to a metaphysical enrichment of the material world that defines experience of the present. Shadows are not a sign of the diminished past but, in the

Lucretian tradition, the shadow is a 'further perfection of the original, a sign of its productivity and increase rather than pale imitation'.²⁷

The exchange between the present and the past, in order to gain access to the past, manifests itself through a relationship between matter and insubstantiality. It is as though materiality can be sought in the evocation of the words and thoughts of the Illustrious Dead of All Ages to reveal the limitations of the present:

The men that have lived, are they less important than the men of the present day? Had their thoughts less sinew and substance; were their passions less earnest, their conceptions less vigorous, their speech less fervent, or their deeds less lofty and less real than ours? [. . .] I pity the being of slender comprehension, who lives only with George the Third, and Alexander of Russia, and Wieland, and Schiller, and Kant, and Jeremy Bentham, and John Horne Tooke, when if the grosser film were removed from his eyes, he might live and sensibly mingle with Socrates, and Plato, and the Decii, and the Catos, with Chaucer and Milton, and Thomas Aquinas, and Thomas à Becket, and all the stars that gild our mortal sphere. They are not dead. They are still with us in their stories, in their words, in their writings, in the consequences that do not cease to flow fresh from what they did: they still have their place, where we may visit them, and where, if we dwell in a composed and a quiet spirit, we shall not fail to be conscious of their presence (S, p, 23).

Godwin envisages an active, conscious summoning of the past so that it participates in the present, and forms part of a man's present existence. The past also lends itself to the temporal elasticity of perfectibility. This is part of the radical discourse of longevity and immortality that Godwin proposed in *Political Justice*, and which seeks to unite the value of the past and optimism for the future through sensation of it in the present. The instances of Valerius and Euthanasia at the Tiber, discussed in the next section, represent the interplay of the dialogue between the past and the present stimulated by places of great cultural resonance. They also represent more forceful intrusions by the past than Godwin's depictions, so that its presence cannot be denied, and even overwhelms the subject experiencing it. Not so, Godwin's conceptualisation of the presence of the past to the individual. Godwin contains the past in material commemoration, though books, or writings, or the memorial plaques he suggests in his essay.

²⁷ Paul Hamilton, *Percy Bysshe Shelley*, (Devon: Northcote, 2000), p. 29.

Reanimating the Past: 'Valerius The Reanimated Roman' and 'Roger Dodsworth The Reanimated Englishman'

The previous two sections have examined how the past is conceptualised in *Frankenstein* and in Godwin's essays. 'Sepulchres' in particular highlights the importance of place as a facilitator to consciousness of the past in the individual. The phenomenon of reanimation has been shown to be associated with radical thought and is coupled with a complex treatment of temporality. The temporal aspect incorporated into aestheticising the past causes dislocation by unifying the past and the future to understand culture's legacy in the present. This section explores how Shelley uses these ideas in relation to Italy.

Shelley's preoccupation with reanimation was most overtly developed in writing composed during her stay in Italy. This was a period that enabled her to develop ideas about the past, specifically the republican Italian past in a way that explored its beauty and not its monstrosity. This is interwoven with a representation of Italy that participates in the discourse of the Grand Tour which reveres the past. During the year in which 'Valerius' was composed, Shelley herself visited ancient sites in the Eternal City and Naples, and Palacio argues that it was at this time that the fragment was written.²⁸ While Palacio notes the strong correlation between her journal entries and descriptions of Roman sites in 'Valerius', he does not mention that her son William accompanied her. His presence among the sites generates a sense of a past constructed through cultural and personal experience for Shelley, as her letters show.²⁹ William's death, in June 1819, mingled grief with the antique sense evoked by the ruins in Shelley's recollection of Rome. Shelley's 1823 poem 'The Choice' recalls William among the ruins and statues and describes Italy as 'a tomb'.³⁰

As *Rambles in Germany and Italy* shows, Italy was a potent site for evoking the past. The celebrated circumstances of *Frankenstein's* composition resurfaced when she

²⁸ Jean de Palacio, *Mary Shelley dans son oeuvre: Contributions aux études Shelleyennes* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1969), p. 189n.

²⁹ MWSJ, p. 239 (24 November 1818), and MWSL 1: 91 and 1: 93, letters to Leigh Hunt and Maria Gisborne (6 April 1819 and 9 April 1819).

³⁰ See MWSJ, pp. 492-93 for the relevant passages of the poem.

revisited Villa Diodati in 1840. One of the organising principles of *Rambles* is memory, precisely the faculty which is denied to *Frankenstein's* Creature. My focus here is on how the disjunction between past and present highlights the politics of reanimation. In 'Valerius' and 'Roger Dodsworth', revived characters relate to a politicised representation of temporality that moves between past, present and future. 'Valerius' anticipates *Valperga's* negotiation of the past, summoning a particular sense of place significant to an individual. The engagement with history defines the subjectivity of the individual in relation to his or her present. The lessons of the past are communicated through an evocation of it as a once-peopled place, an aspect derived from Godwin.

'Valerius' mediates the past to expose the incompleteness of the present. This juxtaposition highlights the dynamic nature of change, and how attempts to aestheticise the past distort its authenticity. 'Valerius' gauges the advances of the present against the fall of Rome and the degradation of modern Italians. This is part of Shelley's political vision, as Palacio has stated,³¹ which also conveys a sense of historical flux. 'Roger Dodsworth', however, subverts this historical cycle by playfully turning to the beneficial insights gleaned in the present from the reanimated Englishman. Historical representation itself may cause a disjunction between past and present and also between the lost, material past, and the images generated from it. Valerius' delight in the Coliseum, built after his death by the emperor Vespasian, and his abhorrence of the Christian iconography in the Pantheon exemplify this.³² However, Andrew Smith argues that in 'Valerius', 'the resurrected past' 'undermin[es] the present'.³³ The complexity of Shelley's engagement with the past needs to be explored more fully than Smith's analysis of it in relation to the sublime allows. Reanimation emphasises the positive virtues of the past while establishing its pastness as a barrier which the present cannot cross. The scene at the Pantheon is perhaps the most obvious example of this as Isabell tries to 'forge a continuity with

³¹ Palacio, pp. 190-91.

³² 'Valerius The Reanimated Roman', in *Mary Shelley: Collected Tales and Stories*, ed. by Charles E. Robinson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 332-44 (pp. 335, 343). Hereafter cited as *VRR*; further references appear after quotations in the text.

³³ Smith, p. 61.

the past by trying to reinsert Valerius into the modern world'.³⁴ The past can only be a metaphysical presence until the present, in the form of another consciousness, can activate or reanimate it. The forward momentum of time towards the future effects a disjunction between the past and the present, so that each can be recognised because distinct from one another. Once animated, the past is subordinated to the present in terms of materiality, but the past retains an imaginative and inspirational power over the present consciousness. Shelley's reanimated past presents a more ambiguous version of republican pasts than one which simply undermines the present. Dislocation and anachronism prevent the reanimated past from being integrated into the present, but reanimation inflames the individual imagination with the wider cultural value of the past in such a way as to ensure continual renewal of the past in the present.

Rather than offering continuity with humanity's notion of the past, as Godwin suggests (S, p. 12), Shelley's material world fragments continuity into the constant change of a perpetual natural cycle. In 'Roger Dodsworth', she asserts the possibility of the pristine preservation of a body frozen in suspended animation. It is only in this manner that mutability can be held at bay:

That which is totally secluded from the action of external agency, can neither have any thing added to nor taken away from it: no decay can take place, for something can never become nothing; under the influence of that state of being which we call death, change but not annihilation removes from our sight the corporeal atoms; the earth receives sustenance from them, the air is fed by them, each element takes its own, thus seizing forcible repayment for what it had lent.³⁵

Shelley's perception of the natural process of decay and renewal is constructed within a cycle which, in reality, reveals the permanence of matter in its various forms. Roger Dodsworth's body has escaped decomposition, but the process, seemingly, has been a natural and accidental preservation, unlike the Creature's reanimation in *Frankenstein*. Shelley's observation of the relationship between matter and corporeal

³⁴ Smith, p. 64.

³⁵ 'Roger Dodsworth the Reanimated Englishman', in *Mary Shelley: Collected Tales and Stories*, ed. by Charles E. Robinson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 43-50 (p. 44). Hereafter cited as *RD*; further references appear after quotations in the text.

decomposition is remarked only in passing, as the Dodsworth hoax was widely known at the time of Shelley's writing the tale.³⁶ The revelation about the 'apparent impossibilities' of reanimating matter, however, is something 'to which the imagination must cling with delight' (*RD*, p. 44). The connection between matter and the past exists in the imagination. For Shelley and Godwin, this imagination must perceive, also, the need for social good for it to activate the past successfully.

Nineteenth-century perspectives on the past are also communicated through the narrator's description of the Cape Miseno in 'Valerius the Reanimated Roman'. The reader is instantly alerted to temporal peculiarity in the opening sentence:

About eleven o'clock before noon in the month of September, two strangers landed in the little bay formed by the extreme point of Cape Miseno and promontory of Bauli (*VRR*, p. 332).

This description of the location is further embellished. The time, conversely, lingers between the specific and the too general. Shelley omits the date of the September day, when it should logically follow the time, 'eleven o' clock'. This lapse in the specification of time prefigures the temporal disjunction pervading the whole tale. The disparity between the present in which Valerius lived (which has become the ancient past), and the nineteenth-century present which attempts to conserve that ancient past through idealised (mis)representation is also conveyed through the sense of place at Cape Miseno. The site is familiar both to the general Grand Tourist, the reader, and to Valerius, but Shelley represents it as a place made unfamiliar to Valerius because of the intrusive signs of the nineteenth-century present. Beginning with the infinitude of the sea and the sky, the only two things which Valerius later identifies as unchanged (*VRR*, p. 333 and p. 341), Shelley 'ruins' a natural scene that Valerius could theoretically perceive as unchanged by the passage of time. The 'remnants of palaces' initiate Valerius' prospect of ruin by indicating material dilapidation. Shelley then connects the inanimate ruins of buildings with the buried bodies of Valerius' contemporaries at the site. This joins matter to the metaphysical

³⁶ Charles E. Robinson, 'Mary Shelley and the Roger Dodsworth Hoax', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 23 (1974), 20-28 (pp. 20-21).

projection of history – the voice of the past (either Valerius or the ruins in the landscape) which communicates with the nineteenth-century present.

‘Roger Dodsworth’ also begins with a temporal slippage. On the ‘fourth of July last’, news coverage reported the discovery of Roger Dodsworth. In the same sentence, the reader learns that Dodsworth was actually discovered ‘a score or two of years ago’ (*RD*, p. 43), thus undermining the immediacy of the tale. It also defers Shelley’s narration into conjecture, enabling her to meditate imaginatively on the phenomenon. This allows the ‘gaps left in the story’ to be filled by ‘editorial reconstruction’.³⁷ Throughout the story, this temporal discrepancy permits only the possibility of Dodsworth’s existence without it ever being verified. The epitaph at the end of the tale commemorates a death, which, like his existence, cannot be certain, except through the text. Even the text lends itself to misinterpretation, for the epitaph of Dodsworth would create a misleading impression of the ‘early nineteenth-century norm’ of the average male life-span for future generations.³⁸

In ‘Valerius’ and ‘Roger Dodsworth’, the past resurfaces to reshape nineteenth-century engagement with its history. Shelley constructs the past as a disjunction from the present through the personal experiences of her improbable characters. As Katie Trumpener has noted, ‘the effects of an epoch are most legible in the shape of an individual consciousness’.³⁹ Shelley’s interest in temporality and its expression through individual experience is similarly emphasised by Godwin in ‘History and Romance’.

Conversation commemorates the past by signalling individual engagement with it. This is expressed through a dynamic exchange between the spirit, or voice, of the past, and the bodily engagement of the subject with the past (‘Man is a creature who depends for his feeling upon the operation of sense’ (*S*, p. 20)). Valerius is well aware of the ‘inexhaustible source of conversation’ that his experiences provide (*VRR*, p. 333), but on approach to Rome he imagines declaring a ‘last lament’ to ‘awaken the dead to listen to me’. This direct address, seeming to anticipate a response, continues up to his sighting of the Tiber. Valerius speaks to the river directly, seeing

³⁷ Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 114.

³⁸ Trumpener, p. 115.

³⁹ Trumpener, p. 114.

continuity in its 'eternal waters'. This leads him to invoke Jupiter, Pallas and Minerva to protect the fate of his country, as though he were transported back to before its fall and it could still be averted. Valerius 'could not believe that all that is great and good had departed' (*VRR*, p. 334).⁴⁰ A similar situation is played out in *Valperga* when Euthanasia approaches Rome. Whereas the Tiber evokes the past for Valerius, for Euthanasia it typifies change in the world, anticipating the dynamic exchange between the past and her sensation of it:

When I descended the hills of the Abruzzi, and first saw the Tiber rolling its tranquil waters glistening under the morning sun; I wept; – why did not Cato live? – why was I not going to see her consuls, her heroes, and her poets? Alas! I was about to approach the shadow of Rome, the inanimate corse, the broken image of what was once great beyond all power of speech to express. My enthusiasm again changed; and I felt a kind of sacred horror run through my veins. Thou, oh! Tiber, ever rollest, ever and for ever the same! yet are not thy waters those which flowed here when the Scipios and the Fabii lived on thy shores; the grass and the herbage which adorn thy banks have many thousand times been renewed since it was pressed on by their feet; all is changed, even thou art not the same! (V, p. 84)

The moment dominates Euthanasia's perspective, even while she is sensitive to the legacy of the past and the passage of time. The Tiber itself is a transitional locale, marking the entrance to Rome. It is also a point of psychic access for Valerius and Euthanasia. It allows Valerius to conceive of a time before Rome's fall, and before the degraded present in which he finds himself. Euthanasia, with the changing emotions she undergoes at the river, is able to engage actively with the reanimated historical scene she perceives when she reaches the Pantheon.

Euthanasia looks toward the future for Italy, rather than comparing the past negatively with the present. In the Pantheon in the moonlight, she appears to be 'a wandering shade of ancient times, rather than a modern Italian' and able to call on 'the shadows of the departed to converse with me and prophesy the fortunes of awakening Italy' (V, p. 84). Clearly connecting with a metaphysical universe, the sensations that she feels also reaffirm her material vitality:

⁴⁰ In *Valperga*, the 'vestiges' of Rome increase Euthanasia's realisation of all the 'great, and good, and wise' that had 'breathed and acted' there, *NSW*, III: *Valperga*, ed. by Nora Crook, p. 83. Hereafter cited as V; further references appear after quotations in the text.

such as was the light of the moon to the dark temple in which I stood – the whole world would stand and listen: but fainter than the moon-beams and more evanescent are those deep thoughts; my eyes glisten, my cheeks glow, but words are denied me. I feel as it were my own soul at work within me, and surely, if I could disclose its secret operations, and lay bare the vitals of my being, in that moment, which would be one of overwhelming extacy – in that moment I should die (V, p. 85).

The proximity of metaphysical spirits awakens Euthanasia's civic identity through conversation, but the spirits also confirm her materiality by stimulating her soul. Though Euthanasia cannot explain its 'secret operations', she perceives the all-consuming wholeness that such enquiry holds. This looks back to the 'uneasiness' of Valerius' companion Isabell when he touches her, and she becomes aware of the physical presence of the past. For Euthanasia and Isabell, the metaphysical sensation of the past initiates awareness of the individual's corporeality, and then a tangible sensation of the past through bodily experience.

'Valerius' plays out the transmission of a past which is perceived to be a universal cultural legacy through narration. This strategy problematises the representation of the past through using the very device Godwin suggests will help to access it. Individual consciousness in 'Valerius' serves to accentuate the painful anachronism between the protagonist and his new present. He knows that his narration and conversation will provide information about his past, but seeing how that past has changed leaves him speechless. Two central issues that mute Valerius' response to the past are firstly, the notion of a national past, and secondly, a strong civic identity. These are made apparent by a sense of anachronism established through Valerius' link between biography and civic identity:

I need not trouble you with the history of my life – in modern times, domestic circumstances appear to be that part of a man's history most worth enquiring into. In Rome, the history of the individual was that of his country (VRR, p. 333).

Valerius notes the emphasis on individual history but cannot identify with its separation from national history. The very thing that defined Rome as great to Valerius, Roman citizens, has now perished and Rome is 'degraded in the dust' and peopled by 'strangers [. . . who] have lost all the characteristics of Romans' (VRR, p.

337). Andrew Smith argues that the 'moral decline' of Rome is 'revealed by the presence of Christianity', but does not connect it to a positive commitment to republicanism as Palacio does.⁴¹ Palacio identifies the link in Shelley's thought between moral decline and despotic government, and to this extent 'Valerius' demonstrates Shelley's ideal, theoretical and fragile republicanism.⁴²

Valerius' visit to the Pantheon is an emotive depiction of disillusion and anachronism culminating in Isabell Harley pointing out the cross (VRR, p. 343). The record of Valerius' impressions also relate his sense of anachronism to notions of progress and to the present decline of Italy. This aspect of the tale politicises the representation of the past to accentuate the optimistic promise Italian history offers for the future, despite present degradation and despotism. As earlier reference to Godwin's 'Essay of History and Romance' has shown, individual responses to the past help to construct a sense of national history. The discussion of Valerius' sense of his own anachronism has demonstrated how Shelley also deployed this to convey a sense of the Italian national past. In order to capture truly individual anachronism Shelley further develops the individual response through sustained engagement with sites that stimulate a universal response. The ruins of Rome would have been familiar to Shelley's readers and the Grand Tourist's aestheticisation of them emphasises the discrepancy between ruins as an object for cultural observation and the ruins as the material residue of a distinctively Roman spirit. In the former, the ruins are a sign, a trace, of former greatness; in the latter, they signify the loss of what was great, rather than alluding to it.

Ruins create, for Valerius, an image of a fallen, corrupt Rome. His nocturnal visit to the Coliseum makes this clear, but his response to the site is ambivalent. It inspires within him 'holy awe' and awakens glory, stimulated by the moonlight shining through the broken arches. Valerius perceives the 'Seal of Eternity' upon the building despite its ruined condition. Summoning up sentiments of the greatness of Rome precipitates a sense of crisis that leaves him mute, in much the same manner as Euthanasia at the Pantheon in *Valperga* (V, pp. 84-85). Euthanasia's silence

⁴¹ Smith, p. 63.

⁴² Palacio, p. 191.

derives from her elation at being amidst the ruins, and understanding the greatness of Rome's past. It is this, too, which silently impresses Valerius, but his speech combines this with Rome's fall:

Such is the image of Rome fallen, torn, degraded by a hateful superstition; yet still commanding love – honour; and still awakening in the imaginations of men all that can purify and ennoble the mind. The Coliseum is the Type of Rome. Its arches – its marbles – its noble aspect which must inspire all with awe, which, in the mind of man, is akin to adoration – its wonderful, its inexpressible beauty – all tell of its greatness. Its fallen walls – its weed-covered buttresses – and more than all, the insulting images with which it is filled tell its fall (VRR, p. 335).

This response, combining pleasure and sorrow at the sight of the Coliseum, is part of the assimilation of Valerius' sense of anachronism. Smith reads this as a failure of sublimity within Valerius through which he acknowledges 'historical and cultural displacement'.⁴³ This diminishes the productive ambiguity of Valerius' dislocation, and the positive legacy of the Roman republic. Occurring after his first sight of the Coliseum, his speech accommodates the knowledge that Rome was an empire but that it retained the greatness of spirit cultivated by the republics, and the present sense of Italy's degradation. This awareness comprises Valerius' past (the republic), a future he never experienced (Imperial Rome) and the present in which he now finds himself (degraded modern Italy). Within that, Valerius is able to identify with the Coliseum because it is still recognisably Roman to him, 'the only worthy asylum for an antient Roman' (VRR, p. 336).

Shelley's tale of the reanimated Roman incorporates the power of the imagination to identify with the past by utilising the disembodied voice. Valerius' rejection of the present and his overwhelming, irreconcilable sense of anachronism suggest to Isabell an all-too-real corporeality. His inability to sympathise with the cultural history she shares with him emphasises his anachronism, making him seem more of the past than the present, even though he lives in her present: 'His semblance was that of life, yet he belonged to the dead' (VRR, p. 343). Anachronism is expressed through physical sensation when he ceases to respond to cultural

⁴³ Smith, p. 62.

artefacts which could diminish his sense of anachronism. His touch induced a 'shudder' and a something 'slightly allied' to dread in Isabell. His bodily presence communicated the temporal disjunction. Isabell's uneasiness signifies the displacement of the imagination into the bodily, and in sensing her difference from Valerius, she seeks all the more strongly to transcend the 'earthly barrier' by 'interest and intellectual sympathy' (*VRR*, p. 344). At the beginning, Valerius' narration was a disembodied voice, whereas at the end, his disengaged body and mind draw Isabell to closer engagement with his past, not through narration, but through imaginative identification and actual bodily sensation. The reanimated body stirs the animate one into an active understanding of the past, through silence rather than speech.

Reanimation and Civic Identity

As with 'Valerius', civic identity helps to construct the effect of Roger Dodsworth's anachronism. The disjunction between modern Italy and the ancient Roman republic defined Valerius' perception of the modern world, and also connected the narration of his life to that of his country. What Shelley offers in this portrait is the effect of a single perception broadening out to refer generally to culture, and the loss and alienation that Valerius feels in modern time. 'Roger Dodsworth' scrutinises the individual more concertedly, and emphasises the effect of the present on him. The power of the present on Dodsworth's consciousness is evident in his own attempts to overcome his anachronism.

Anachronism is made most immediately apparent by the reference to the civil war as 'the most interesting period of English history' (*RD*, p. 44). Katie Trumpener argues that Shelley's decision to anachronise Dodsworth using the Civil War era suggests that English history has been 'one of repetition and reversal'.⁴⁴ The historicity of Roger Dodsworth's circumstances shows how history has become spectacle, a pastime, an investment, and a commodity. Shelley wittily remarks that:

The antiquarian society had eaten their way to several votes for medals, and had already begun, in idea, to consider what prices it could afford to offer for Mr. Dodsworth's old clothes (*RD*, p. 43).

⁴⁴ Trumpener, p. 114.

Shelley states too, that Godwin has 'suspended for the sake of authentic information the history of the Commonwealth' (*RD*, p. 43), as Roberts has noted, and we have seen how he values the past for its capacity to instruct the present.⁴⁵ In 'Sepulchres', Godwin singles out individuals for the benefit their several contributions can make to the present. In 'Roger Dodsworth', Shelley conceives of the past as making a more abstract, interactive contribution to the present, through the existence of Roger Dodsworth. He presents 'a new subject of romantic wonder and scientific interest' (*RD*, p. 43), and coming from the past, he also has the potential to shape future enquiry about the past. In fact, Roger Dodsworth only appears in the text as conjecture. This makes the supposed transmission of the past even more ironic. The absence of Roger Dodsworth from the text makes his a reanimation from which the past cannot be accessed, until he appears in the flesh. In this instance Roger Dodsworth's own past is conjectured, and transmitted through the historical resonance of the Civil War and the notion of antiquarianism (*RD*, pp. 47-48). The Civil War provides the structure upon which Roger Dodsworth's civic identity is built, and his anachronism is made apparent to the reader through this.

Shelley finds a socially beneficial dimension to the remembrance of past lives. Accessing the past becomes a source for good, rather than merely an aestheticised construction to perpetuate culture. Shelley uses Virgil's idea of the dead being returned to life every thousand years, and she endows them with the ability 'to remember what they had been' (*RD*, p. 49). This connects the revolutionary association of *St Leon* and longevity, using it for a social context that *St Leon* never achieved. Character and past knowledge of achievement merge to govern conduct in the present and 'prove an instructive school for kings and statesmen' (*RD*, p. 49). 'Anterior memories' act as a check on behaviour:

While the love of glory and posthumous reputation is as natural to man as his attachment to life itself, he must be, under such a state of things, tremblingly alive to the historic records of his honour and shame. The mild spirit of Fox would have been soothed by the recollection that he had played a worthy part as Marcus Antoninus – the former experiences of Alcibiades or even of the emasculated Steeny of James I. might have caused Sheridan to have refused to tread over again the same path of dazzling but

⁴⁵ Roberts, p. 93.

fleeting brilliancy. The soul of our modern Corinna would have been purified and exalted by a consciousness that once it had given life to the form of Sappho (*RD*, p. 49).

The genius, or spirit, of the past, represented by a prominent historical figure, conveys to the individual what has already been achieved. It also invites them to appreciate cultural achievement that has already formed a standard. In this, antiquity is favoured over the present, but as the comments about Corinna demonstrate, this can be harnessed to benefit the present. At the Pantheon Euthanasia has her soul overwhelmed by the shadows of the departed. The modern Corinna can perfect her art through her soul's consciousness of Sappho, so instead of overwhelming Corinna's identity, it can augment its achievements.

'Anterior memories' strengthen the purity and integrity of the judgement which leads to action in the present. The presence of the past is not commemorative, but functional. The tangibility of the past initiates a modification of conduct so that there is an internal engagement with the past within the subject, and an external manifestation in the individual's action from which society can reap benefit. This is a lasting, active legacy of the past which Shelley translates into 'benevolent actions and real goodness' (*RD*, p. 49).

Godwin's notion of commemorating the past through plaques initiates individual engagement with the past to effect social good. However, it seeks to stimulate the imagination, rather than 'anterior memories', as Shelley conjectures. The use of memory, for Shelley, makes the past active in the present. Dodsworth's absence from the text forces a commemoration of him via place, through a 'simple tablet over his twice-buried remains' (*RD*, p. 50). In so doing, the temporal slippage introduced at the opening resurfaces. His age at death is 209. This simple record of his life, containing only the simplest information, creates an anomaly that would lead to future misinterpretations, unable to anticipate the extraordinary circumstances of his life and death. The passage of time contributes to a textual construction of the past, and ultimately reinforces Dodsworth's sense of anachronism. Again, this precipitates a sense of his mortality. His awareness of his body forces him to confront the temporal relationship he has with the world:

After a little wonder; a little shuddering to find himself the dead alive – finding no affinity between himself and the present state of things – he has bidden once more an eternal farewell to the sun (*RD*, p. 50).

Roger Dodsworth's burial returns him to the soil, 'seizing forcible repayment for what it had lent' (*RD*, p. 44). As Godwin pointed out in 'Sepulchres', the very dust of a buried corpse is the man himself. The transmission of the past occurs through place because the originating matter, that gives the site its resonance, is the person.

Godwin's sense of place affirms a collective cultural identity rather than a specific one relating to a particular group. In 'Roger Dodsworth', Shelley uses the land to ironise the way people associate land inheritance with a lasting legacy. Ownership of the land and its relationship to perceptions of the landscape appear in *Valperga*, *The Last Man*, and *Rambles* in a similar way to this. The narrator of 'Roger Dodsworth' conjectures that Dodsworth was returning home to claim his patrimony. Although this is perceived to be a long-term preservation of ancestral ownership, it is 'short-lived' in reality. In fact, the transmission of the past has been disrupted once more by Dodsworth's failure to materialise to claim the estate. Instead, the land has been passed onto the present possessors, and thus has initiated a new inheritance, as their burial renews the soil. Their active engagement with the land has renewed it, not just through farming, but through their burial on that land, replenishing it:

The world's chronology is an hundred and seventy years older since he [Roger Dodsworth] seceded from the busy scene, hands after hands have tilled his acres, and then become clods beneath them; we may be permitted to doubt whether one single particle of their surface is individually the same as those which were to have been his – the youthful soil would of itself reject the antique clay of its claimant (*RD*, p. 45).

This quotation presents an organic and mutable image of the soil as having a past which has created its own heritage of transmission and which excludes Roger Dodsworth because he never established a relationship to the land. Dodsworth's absence broke the historical continuity of his estate, and the land of the estate embarked on a course of change and renewal leading to Dodsworth's possible exclusion from the soil. This exclusion reworks the anachronistic condition that

leaves him rootless, and unable to transmit anything of use from the past to the present.

In 'Sepulchres', Godwin states clearly the original connection between human beings and the earth:

Every particle of mould which now exists, was once kneaded up into man, and thought and felt and spoke as I do now (S, p. 18).

The land, however, must be of 'conscious utility' to those in the present. The soil:

that we know formerly to have been a part of the excellent of the earth, is of the most admirable fertility. It bears, not perhaps flowers, and vegetable perfume, the corn of the granary, and the fruits of the orchard; but it is fruitful of sentiments and virtues, of those thoughts which make man the brother of them "that have none to help them" (S, pp. 18-19).

Godwin's sentiments and virtues, his fruits of the earth, can be harvested to diminish the distance of present man from his past. This kind of earth brings the individual closer to the greatness of ancient historical figures, through the sense of greatness generated by the place in which the particles of their beings remain. In Shelley's *The Last Man*, this is styled as a kind of return, when Verney, the last man, reaches Rome:

I am in Rome! I behold, and as it were, familiarly converse with the wonder of the world, sovereign mistress of the imagination, majestic and eternal survivor of millions of generations of extinct men.⁴⁶

The site of Rome contains for Verney signs of life that he can no longer find in an unpeopled world. Among the ruins of Rome 'the voice of dead time, in still vibrations, is breathed from these dumb things, animated and glorified as they were by man' (LM, p. 357). This sense of life endowed in the ruins differs greatly from Valerius' perception of them as 'nothing but destruction', and in seeing life, and imagining animated scenes among the ruins, Verney finds 'a medicine for my many and vital wounds' (LM, p. 358). The historicity of Rome finally reawakens Verney to his condition of solitude simply because of the richness of the past. The ease with

⁴⁶ NSW, IV: *The Last Man*, ed. by Jane Blumberg with Nora Crook, p. 357. Hereafter cited as LM; further references appear after quotations in the text.

which Verney conjures it up is finally stifled by the experience of Rome in the present. This silencing of the past reverses the intensity of Euthanasia's silence at the Pantheon. Verney's soul 'fell [. . .] into self-knowledge – into tenfold sadness' (LM, p. 359). Thus he was able to 'cast off [his] waking dreams':

I was alone in the Forum; alone in Rome; alone in the world. Would not one living man – one companion in my weary solitude, be worth all the glory and remembered power of this time-honoured city? [. . .] The generations I had conjured up to my fancy, contrasted more strongly with the end of all – the single point in which, as a pyramid, the mighty fabric of society had ended, while I, on the giddy height, saw vacant space around me (LM, p. 359).

At this moment in Rome, Lionel senses the anachronism of his own existence. It is at the moment when his solitude becomes unbearable that he finds part of a manuscript and decides to record his own tale for posterity, and to commemorate the human race by dedicating the work to them (LM, p. 362):

DEDICATION
TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS DEAD.
SHADOWS, ARISE, AND READ YOUR FALL!
BEHOLD THE HISTORY OF THE
LAST MAN

The 'Illustrious Dead' is a phrase from 'Sepulchres', yet Verney seems to be including within its remit the whole of the human race, the 'ante-pestilential race' 'wondrous in their achievements' with 'imagination infinite' (LM, p. 362). Godwin's 'Illustrious Dead' quite distinctly appeals to great historical figures, but here Verney uses 'matchless Rome' (LM, p. 364) to stand for the human race, in order that they will be remembered. In summoning their shadows, Verney may hope for a material reminder of their presence, and of his text. Just as Roger Dodsworth's epitaph reveals his anachronism in a way that destabilises the interpretation of history, so Verney's narration, begun with a dedication to the 'Illustrious Dead', resists historical and temporal fixity. The absence of Roger Dodsworth from the tale bearing his name means that the past cannot be fully accessed. In *The Last Man*, the only sense of a reanimated past we have is through an absent narrative, but it is a past which has not yet occurred, and is itself absent. This narrative of a future past is transmitted by

the author to the reader's imagination and evokes the ancient genius of Italy in order to prophesy the future. The metaphysical is combined with the material to animate the narrative by reconstructing the fragments that the author retrieved from the Sibyl's cave on Lake Avernus, close to where Valerius began his narrative. It is only through returning to place that imagination and memory can be stimulated through sentiment to recall the past. That past operates through the individual mind, integrating history into the present and future by placing the material experience of the past alongside the textual representation that exists to commemorate and preserve. The emphasising of place, sensation, and imagination creates, in the work of Shelley and Godwin, a dialogue between the present and the past that becomes a kind of living history.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Shelley's engagement with republican ideas was refracted through a historical aesthetic in her writing. Shelley's use of reanimation anchors the general cultural legacy of the past by relating it specifically to locale, and then internalising it into individual consciousness through imagination and sensation in the present. The complex temporality of Shelley's writing is part of the generic hybridity of her work which addresses political and historical change. The various uses to which the body has been put in reanimation can be connected to genre through sensation. Mary Favret has argued that Gothic writing induces physiological responses in the reader and Ronald Paulson connects the Gothic to French Revolutionary discourses, and following on from that, its relationship to history and time.

The body as represented in Shelley's work provides a thread of continuity between the monster of revolution, the reader, and revolutionary optimism through the notions of longevity and the disembodied voice of anachronism. The reader's body provides the link between text and the world, while the reanimated bodies in the text gain aesthetic currency in the way they are used to represent the past. The words of *Frankenstein* 'produce sensation' and the novel is 'proved upon our pulses

and registered upon our bodies'.⁴⁷ It is also physiological sensation within Shelley's narrative that generates sensitivity to the past evoking superseded sites of cultural memory, like Oxford or Republican Rome. The presence of the body exerts a pressure on genre to include the past through the actual experience of the reader. This can be linked to biography and national history, both in Godwin's work, and Shelley's larger project *Valperga*, the subject of the next chapter. This carves out a central role for the individual in history, and commemoration is also given prominence through individual engagement by means of voice, which allows the past to be narrated and reanimated in the individual imagination. None of this, however, can be done without a historical continuity present through the endurance of matter. While matter is acknowledged to be physically present indefinitely, its endurance reformulates the aesthetics of the past typified by the Romantic ruin. The connection between matter, place, and individual sensation synthesise the past into active lived history in the present. This type of reanimated history, however, is governed in Shelley's writing by anachronism and limits the radical revisions which reanimating the past attempts.

⁴⁷ Favret, p. 53.

Chapter 3

'The soul and living spark of virtue': History and Civic Identity in Mary Shelley's *Valperga*

Recent criticism has explored the complexity of Shelley's *Valperga* by relating it to historicist discourses in British Romanticism, as well as by responding to its generic richness and political engagement. This latter-day attention to *Valperga* revisits contemporary approbation that the novel received from its nineteenth-century readers.¹ Nora Crook's scholarly examination of Shelley's 'judicious [. . .] collation' of 'well-chosen' source texts has initiated a critical fascination with the intertextuality and generic fluidity of *Valperga*.² The attentiveness to Italian history and custom, and the thoroughness with which Shelley researched this novel have now become more widely appreciated as a consequence of Crook's work on the surviving research notes for *Valperga*.³

Two strands of criticism have emerged from a wider understanding of Shelley's engagement with Italy and were originally identified by P. B. Shelley in letters to first Thomas Love Peacock and later to Ollier. Percy's jocular claim that *Valperga* was 'raked' out of 'fifty old books' is complemented by a description of the novel as 'wholly original' and by Shelley's own claim that she 'consulted a great many books' during *Valperga*'s genesis.⁴ Percy's summary in his letter to Ollier, dated 25 September 1821, may indeed be 'unremarkable',⁵ but he notes in particular the 'beauty and sublimity' of Shelley's characterisation alongside her

¹ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 13 (March 1823), 283–93, sums it up as 'on the whole a clever novel' (p. 285); the *Literary Register of the Fine Arts and Sciences*, 36 (March 1823), 151–53 thought that *Valperga* would 'ensure' for Mary Shelley 'the reputation in the literary world to which she has a right to aspire' (p. 152); the *Ladies Monthly*, 17 (1823), 216–18 commended the 'vigorous imagination' and 'cultivated talents' of the author (p. 216); and *The Examiner*, 826 (30 November 1823), 775, said of *Valperga* that it 'clings to the memory' (p. 775).

² NSW, III: *Valperga: or, the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*, ed. by Nora Crook, xi. Hereafter cited as V; further references appear after quotations in the text.

³ *Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts XII: The 'Charles the First' Draft Notebook A Facsimile of Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e. 17*, ed. by Nora Crook (London: Garland, 1991), pp. 396–424.

⁴ *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), II: 245 (8 November 1820 to Thomas Love Peacock). Hereafter cited as PBSL; further references appear after quotations in the text. MWSL, I: 203 (30 June 1821 to Maria Gisborne).

⁵ Michael Rossington, 'Future Uncertain: The Republican Tradition and Its Destiny in *Valperga*', in *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 103–18 (p. 104).

assiduous portrayal of 'the minutest circumstances of Italian manners' (PBSL, II: 353). In this 'puff' to Ollier, Percy recognises the 'conflict between [. . .] passions and [. . .] principles' but the letter also alludes to the centrality of political themes and the perpetuating characteristics of Italian national identity. Percy writes that from Shelley's 'own observation' the 'national character shows itself still [. . .] under the same forms it wore in the time of Dante' (PBSL, II: 354), and this foregrounds Shelley's use of Dante to bring out the national element of the plot.

The identification of these themes anticipates the complex historicity of *Valperga* that has come to dominate contemporary criticism. Shelley's Italian focus intervenes in Romantic historicism with a European perspective that is sustained in later works, particularly *The Last Man* and *Rambles*. Acknowledgement of the national and cosmopolitan character of Shelley's writing has established *Valperga* as a central text in any interpretation of relations between British and European Romanticism in the early nineteenth century. Most notably Pamela Clemit and Tilottama Rajan have explored Shelley's treatment of history in relation to genre.⁶ Choosing different emphases, criticism by James Carson and by Michael Rossington has examined the political dimension of Shelley's historical engagement through *Valperga*'s republican signs.⁷ Each of the works by these critics participates in a wider debate within Romanticism about the problematic representation of history, the complex parameters of which have been set out recently in James Chandler's *England in 1819*.

Chandler's interest in the place, and placing, of literary writing within British Romantic culture is expressed when he identifies 'comparative contemporaneities' and anachronism, understood as a 'measurable form of dislocation'. Chandler then proceeds to connect anachronism to anachronism.⁸ My discussion of 'Valerius' and 'Roger Dodsworth' in the previous chapter suggested

⁶ Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of William Godwin, Mary Shelley and Charles Brockden Brown* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), especially chapter six; and, Mary Shelley, *Valperga: or, the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*, ed. with introd. by Tilottama Rajan, (Peterborough Ontario: Broadview, 1998).

⁷ James Carson, ' "A Sigh of Many Hearts": History, Humanity, and Popular Culture in *Valperga*', in *Iconoclastic Departures: Mary Shelley after 'Frankenstein'*, ed. by Conger and others (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1997), pp. 167-92 and Rossington in Bennett and Curran, eds.

⁸ James Chandler, *England in 1819* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 107.

that the temporally transcendent associations of place initiate the sense of anachronism within the individual. In *Valperga* in particular, Italy functions not to precipitate historical dislocation but to provide a transformative dialectic that refigures history and national self-image within the unstable European geopolitics of the nineteenth century.

A key feature of Chandler's thesis is that a system of manners within society is necessarily linked to the historical progress of a civilisation. Chandler points, too, to the effect of this on genre:

The historical novel is not only a form that attempts to fictionalise the past as it really was, but also a form self-aware of its own historicity along two axes: its participation in a contemporary and historically specific system of manners [. . .] and in a generic evolution of narrative modes that in turn participated in their *own*, now residual, system of manners.⁹

Italy offers anachronism and anachronism initiated by a culturally-constructed individual subjectivity. A comparison is forced within individual consciousness of the perceived progress of the contemporary present and the decline of ancient civilisations. Shelley's exploration of this cultural anachronism in her oeuvre, using a variety of genres (and in *Valperga* mixing two genres), reflects her profound engagement with Italy and its past. Italy figures as a physical site, and as a trope deployed to offer a critique of European and British politics. It is simultaneously invested with an imaginative and creative power that perpetuates Shelley's own engagement with the past. Italy, then, as a dynamic presence in her work has a transformative power in her writing which situates the reader firmly in a geographical space, while proffering an intellectual space for her to articulate political ideas.

The hybrid nature of Shelley's novel is directly related to the historical consciousness of the Romantic era, and is structured through Italian republican history. Building on recent thinking about the temporality of *Valperga*, my discussion shows how Shelley's representation of history and her treatment of time are connected to the republican identity of *Valperga* and are strongly shaped by a

⁹ Chandler, p. 146, original emphasis.

sensitivity to place. This is borne out by Shelley's detailed and eloquent descriptions of the Tuscan landscape which carry within them a silent history. She superimposes onto this her own contemporary response to the Italian landscape from 1818 to 1823, as in her letter to Leigh Hunt of 7 August 1823:

Passing through the plain of Lucca & the Val di Nievole you will see much of the scenery of Valperga – If you stay to rinfrescare there, my dear friend – go to the top of the tower of the palace of Guinigi an old tower as ancient as those times – look towards the opening of the hills, on the road to the Baths of Lucca, & on the banks of the Serchio & you will see the site of Valperga (MWSL, I: 364).

Through this layering Shelley adds a further dimension to Sismondi's representation of the landscape as a repository for republican history in the *Tableau*. Shelley's amalgamation of the personal present with the public past constructs an interrelationship, in *Valperga*, between an individual's consciousness of the passage of time and history.

As the preceding chapter suggested, Shelley shares Godwin's emphasis on the imaginative identification with historical figures when reading the past, yet her conviction of the need to situate the romance in historically verifiable facts is also evident. This is not a departure from Godwin's ideas, but a historically-grounded implementation of them which accentuates the complex exchange between history and the individual. Drawing extensively on Sismondi's *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge*, Shelley incorporated into *Valperga* not only historical narrative, but an aesthetic that sought to place history and the individual in a dynamic relationship. The importance of the active citizen can be seen in Sismondi's *Histoire* through the presence of biography in his historical narrative. This must be interpreted in part as a consequence of the political philosophy underpinning the republican city-states, namely, the need for an active civic identity to ensure the well-being of the republic. Sismondi's *Histoire*, then, unifies the individual and history through the city. This unity is reflected in microcosm in *Valperga* through the factional rivalry that exists between Lucca and Florence, matching Shelley's representation of the landscape with that of the polis. Civic identity is located in both urban and rural contexts, as is suggested by the effect of

landscape's plenitude. Place, whether it be the abundant estates of Valperga or the imperial ruins of Rome, signifies a republican heritage. Shelley activates this sensitivity to place in the biographical progress of Castruccio as he advances through Tuscany in martial action through the landscape to reach urban centres, and so the biography of an individual is traceable over the land. The city and the landscape are founding sites for the awakening of civic identity, and this chapter argues that while the city demands active involvement from its citizens to sustain its present standing, rural landscapes articulate a plenitude and fruitfulness which tacitly express Italy's history of civic liberty.

The discussion of *Valperga* is divided into four sections. The first deals with genre's engagement with history as it redefines notions of civic identity in historical narrative. The three subsequent sections look at the synthesis between the individual in history, subjectivity, and the shaping and experience of the (reanimated) past, and finally how associations of place contribute to the historicity of place.

History, Narrative, and Genre

This section begins by examining how history is reconfigured into romance, starting from Tilottama Rajan's definition of fictionalised historical narrative in *Valperga*. Rajan problematises the notion of history by drawing on Hans Kellner's suggestion that history is 'based on the destruction or forgetting of information'. History should 'include not only what is "unrecorded" but also "information non-existent in time and space" '.¹⁰ Further work on *Valperga* by Rajan suggests the conceptual resistance to such a definition can be overcome through the genre of romance. Romance can record what history omits because it is able to accommodate 'counterfactual history'. Rajan identifies *Valperga* as one of 'the earliest examples' of counterfactual history because the narratives within it contain a fictionalised, alternative version of conventional historical events.¹¹

¹⁰ *Valperga*, Rajan, ed., p. 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

The contingent plays a crucial role in modifying the relationship between history and invention. Jon Klancher, writing on Godwin and narrative theory, suggests that:

to become fascinated by the contingent was also to imagine that, in some unforeseen way, “everything is connected in the universe” since “every one of these incidents, when it occurred, grew out of a series of incidents that had previously taken place”. [. . .] Central to the problem of contingency is the question of whether it is seen as an epistemological or an ontological category.¹²

Contingency connects events and incidents, thus instigating a philosophy of causation, but full expression of this is only possible through the ability to imagine or foresee the unforeseen in a way that is consistent with veridical experience. Rajan uses Leibniz’s theory of possible worlds to combine the contingent with the counterfactual. Counterfactual history ‘cannot develop fantastically, but must unfold necessarily’. All possibilities can exist, and ‘“everything that can ever happen” ’ to an individual is ‘necessarily includ[ed]’ in the concept of each individual.¹³ Possible worlds have an ‘existence in logic’, so long as they are free from internal conflict.¹⁴ In my view, Shelley’s transitions between historical narrative, invention, and representations of the Italian landscape in *Valperga* are optimum conditions in which the notion of possible worlds can be sustained and in which the evocation of the ‘lost republican moment’ can be physically articulated, although Rajan does not make this point.¹⁵ The complexity of Shelley’s text lies in its transformativeness. This is most immediately obvious in its hybrid form of biography, fiction, and history.

A notion of place is able to unify the theoretically possible with the actual because the natural intransigence or longevity of the landscape establishes

¹² Jon Klancher, ‘Godwin and the Genre-reformers: On Necessity and Contingency in Romantic Narrative Theory’, in *Romanticism and the Possibilities of Genre: Re-forming Literature 1789–1837*, ed. by Tilotama Rajan and Julia Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 21–35 (pp. 27–28).

¹³ *Valperga*, Rajan, ed., p. 20. Rajan is quoting from Leibniz’s ‘Discourse on Metaphysics’. Rajan also aligns Leibnizian contingency with Godwinian Necessity. See Tilotama Rajan, ‘Between Romance and History: Possibility and Contingency in Godwin, Leibniz, and Mary Shelley’s *Valperga*’, in Bennett and Curran, eds., pp. 88–102 (p. 92).

¹⁴ Rajan, ‘Between Romance’, p. 93.

¹⁵ Rajan, ‘Between Romance’, p. 89.

continuity between the past, the present, and the future. Place relates to historical space in a way that permits the existence of theoretical possibility. Imagined, plausible alternatives to historical narrative are projected into the text through romance and are communicated through place. Theoretical possibility also imbues geography with an expansive utopian potential and infuses the landscape with associations of republicanism and liberty. The text invites the reader to look for the concealed, silent narrative that coexists with the written one, within and beyond the historicity of the landscape, and to imagine the 'unforeseen ways' of contingency. Rajan's inclusive definition of history (incorporating the forgotten and the non-existent) attempts to widen the definition of history and simultaneously destabilise it as a fixed category. The narratives of Beatrice and Euthanasia transform the biographical element derived from Castruccio Castracani into a fictional romance but one grounded in history.

Shelley's adaptation of *Valperga's* sources is another demonstration of the transformativeness of a text which intervenes in debates about British and European republican history, past and present. The transformations of Shelley's text also point to the presence of contingency in historical narrative. Pocock's inclusion of irony in history builds into my reading of *Valperga* a parallel between Rajan's contingency, embedded in a Romantic framework, and the Enlightenment origins of historical cosmopolitan narratives which use irony. It seems almost as though irony is the 'rhetorical performance'¹⁶ of contingency. For Pocock, history is an 'exercise of political ironies – an intelligible story of how men's actions produce results other than they intended'.¹⁷ It is also a fitting summary of the historical narrative of *Valperga*. Such a reading of *Valperga* must itself be read ironically to accommodate Shelley's own self-conscious manipulation of fact. In producing 'results other than they intended', a key attribute in this type of history reveals itself: its organic transformativeness.

¹⁶ Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 7.

¹⁷ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 6.

Clifford Siskin and James Chandler have shown that history as a cultural narrative must be related to other cultural discourses, and both identify the Romantic movement as one that was increasingly interdisciplinary. They attribute this to the dissemination of theories of uneven development in Scottish Enlightenment thought, which acknowledged the importance of the imagination in reconstructing a past from which cultures could form themselves. History, in a sense, becomes a kind of imaginative reconstruction so that the present can contextualise itself.

The prevalence of debate about history as a discipline in Shelley's immediate circle is documented by Betty Bennett.¹⁸ A letter from Godwin to P. B. Shelley states that:

History, in its most comprehensive sense, is a detail of all that man has done in solitude or in society, so far as can be rendered matter of record. It is our own fault, therefore, if we do not select or dwell upon the best.¹⁹

Godwin's sense of the moral and public utility of historical awareness, evident in the quotation above, promotes notions of cultural progress which, Chandler would perhaps suggest, are characteristic of Romantic writers' preoccupation with history and ages. He quotes James Mill to illustrate the point:

As Mill put it, "The idea of comparing one's own age with former ages, or with our notion of those which are yet to come, had occurred to philosophers; but it never before was itself the dominant idea of any age".²⁰

Siskin defines a particular type of history that influenced the interdisciplinary trend: it was history 'in the form of developmental narratives – natural histories' which became 'a central feature of the experimental philosophy we know as political economy'.²¹ Rajan and Wright contest the power that Siskin seems to attribute to history over culture:

¹⁸ Betty T. Bennett, 'The Political Philosophy of Mary Shelley's Historical Novels: *Valperga* and *Perkin Warbeck*', in *The Evidence of the Imagination: Studies of Interaction between Life and Art in English Romantic Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), pp. 354–71 (p. 356).

¹⁹ PBSL, I: 340n, quoted in Bennett, 'Political', p. 356.

²⁰ Chandler, p. 107.

²¹ Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 47.

Eighteenth century and Romantic attempts to produce conservative narratives of cultural evolution used genre to plot stages in that progress, rendering genre culturally determined rather than culturally determining.²²

A similar sentiment is apparent in Godwin's 'Essay Of History and Romance', when he meditates on the purpose of history:

We must not then rest contented with considering society in a mass, but must analyse the materials of which it is composed. It will be necessary for us to scrutinise the nature of man, before we can pronounce what it is of which social man is capable (*H&R*, p. 293).

The historical representation of the individual then assumes a significant role in Godwin's re-evaluation of genres. Chandler identifies the prioritising of the individual as arising out of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy and interprets generic re-evaluation as further evidence of the interdisciplinarity of literature during this period. The central themes of *Valperga* reflect the interdisciplinary approach to writing history in fictionalised form, and Rajan also considers genre in relation to gender.

Gender implicitly informs the political and civic identities in the novel. The gendering of history in *Valperga*, is represented through a response to classical republican notions of virtue and fortune. Shelley's portrayals of civic virtue transform and embellish the *virtù* that Quentin Skinner identifies in Machiavelli's works.²³ Nevertheless, Pocock makes it clear that any notion of virtue ought to remain within the realm of the individual's civic activity. Virtue is 'a synonym for autonomy in action'. Additionally, this form of independent civic activity was seen as 'not merely a moral abstraction, but was declared a human necessity'.²⁴ While it seems that Shelley's concept of virtue offers transformative alternatives to Castruccio's *virtù* through Euthanasia and Guinigi, Rajan identifies the dominance of masculine narratives of history. The past in which Shelley locates *Valperga* reveals the connections between genre, gender and history: Castruccio's past; the historical

²² Rajan and Wright, eds., p. 6.

²³ Skinner defines *virtù* as the 'quality which enables a prince to withstand the blows of fortune [. . .] and to rise in consequence to the height of princely fame, winning honour and glory for himself and security for his government'. Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 35.

²⁴ J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 122.

tradition of Florentine republicanism; and the Enlightenment theories that influenced her historical narrative. All these draw attention to the dialectical structure of the novel, and the cyclical perpetuation of humanity's own (incomplete) record of history, culture, and philosophy. In this, Shelley's text rejects the linearity of cultural development and historical record. By presenting Euthanasia's views as an idealistic perfectibility, Shelley can also promote a view of history that incorporates the imaginative possibilities of a new political order.

Civic Identity I: Individual History, Public History

Crook's annotation in *Valperga* has shown the extent to which Shelley drew on Sismondi's *Histoire* and Bennett's 1997 article has examined the influence of Machiavelli's biography.²⁵ My discussion of Sismondi and Machiavelli develops the contribution each made to Shelley's construction of civic identity. With the latter, civic identity is modulated through the relationship of virtue and fortune and Shelley integrates this into the dialectic between public chronicle and individual narrative as she shapes historical representation in the novel. Sismondi's presentation of familial politics is central to the specific circumstances of the Italian republics in the fourteenth century. In my view, the prominence Shelley gives to familial politics and to the individual in history is consonant with her liberal republican ideology and not the emblem of bourgeois conservatism that Anne Mellor suggests.²⁶

Shelley's narrative is shaped by a style of historical narration that depends on the relationship between individual virtue and public life. Godwin's directives specify that "true history consists in a delineation of consistent, human character."²⁷ Virtue provides the link between public chronicle and the individual, particularly in Machiavelli's *Life of Castruccio*. This connection can be more strongly expressed through a cultural perception of contingency within history and temporality. Pocock argues that contingency and continuity are two ways in which 'people order

²⁵ Betty T. Bennett, 'Machiavelli's and Mary Shelley's Castruccio: Biography as Metaphor', *Romanticism*, 3 (1997), Mary Shelley Bicentenary Issue, ed. by Pamela Clemit, 139-51.

²⁶ See also Shelley's description in *Rambles of the Italian family* as a 'little republic', *NSW*, VIII: 286.

²⁷ The quotation is taken from Siskin, p. 170.

their consciousness of public time'.²⁸ Continuity can be understood as a notion that society uses to 'describ[e] itself as perpetuating its usages and practices' to transmit its authority and maintain its legitimacy. When contingency is incorporated into history:

We are in the domain of fortune, as it used to be called: of the unpredictable contingencies and emergencies which challenge the human capacity to apprehend and to act, and which may appear either exterior or interior to the institutional structure of society.²⁹

Continuity offers a temporal model in which 'no future ever comes into existence'.

In a society that understands time as possessing a contingent element:

the structure is seen as striving to maintain itself in a time not created by it [i.e. the social structure], but rather given to it by some agency, purposive or purposeless, not yet defined.³⁰

Thus, virtue and civic action are bound up with social perceptions of time and history. As this view subscribes to an idea of history that is fundamentally unstable, precisely because the individual and society determine it, the emphasis Bennett places on the veracity of Shelley's biographical sources for *Castruccio* misses the point.³¹

Bennett's interpretation of biography in *Valperga* as a metaphor for history offers Shelley's imaginative innovations to the source text as a critique of Machiavelli's political philosophy. The presumption that biography needs to be 'true to life' in a factual sense overlooks the particular kind of truth that the Romantic writer seeks in historical representation.³² Rajan's use of the theory of possible worlds transcends history's claim for veracity, and her reading shows the importance of the logical possibility of alternatives. Rajan's interpretation of history can be discerned in miniature, though she does not point this out, by a semantic twist in the full title of Shelley's novel: *Valperga: or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*. For Bennett, the 'or' which connects *Valperga* to the

²⁸ Pocock, *Virtue*, p. 91.

²⁹ Pocock, *Virtue*, p. 92

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ 'Machiavelli's *Castruccio*, ostensibly a biography, is no more true to Castruccio's life than is Mary Shelley's novel', Bennett, 'Metaphor,' p. 139.

³² Rossington, p. 104.

Castruccio part of the title is an exclusive and negating one: 'The two cannot coexist'.³³ Rajan's argument suggests that at a theoretical level the two can co-exist. A tantalising ambiguity resides, without ever being fulfilled, within the title's conjunction if the 'or' is understood to be a philosophical, and therefore inclusive, one. Trying to pin down a definitive selection in historical representation accentuates the transformative potential of the romance genre. As Godwin points out, the 'noblest and most excellent species of history' is:

a composition in which, with a scanty substratum of facts and dates, the writer interweaves a number of happy, ingenious and instructive inventions, blending them into one continuous and indiscernible mass (*H&R*, p. 298).

Godwin acknowledges the impossibility of reaching historical truth, and thus attempts to re-prioritise the agenda of reading:

I ask not, as a principal point, whether it be true or false? My first enquiry is, 'Can I derive instruction from it? [. . .] It must be admitted indeed that all history bears too near a resemblance to fable. Nothing is more uncertain, more contradictory, more unsatisfying, than the evidence of facts (*H&R*, p. 297).

If the chronicle of facts and places does not suggest history (as Godwin suggests it does in *Sepulchres*), then the "knowledge of the individual" can develop in a manner which acquires national significance. As Klancher notes, Godwin's 'biographically focused historicism':

would shift from the abstract subject of the emergent nation to the individual subjects whose public and private acts connive to produce "things as they are".³⁴

Machiavelli and Shelley achieve this by drawing out broader themes in the narrative such as the cyclical nature and the national dimension of history. Bennett makes this observation in both her 1978 and her 1997 essays on *Valperga*.³⁵ Cyclical or

³³ Bennett, 'Political', p. 358. Stuart Curran also sees the title as comprising 'sharply contrasting' emphases; see Mary Shelley, *Valperga*, ed. by Stuart Curran (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), xii.

³⁴ Klancher, p. 30.

³⁵ Bennett, 'Political', p. 363 and Bennett, 'Metaphor', p. 143.

national frameworks for history enable republican theory to liberate itself from its particular connection to a specific place and time in a civilisation's history. In the fourteenth century, the republic as a state is conceived of as being peculiar to a particular place and time, and conceptualised in the same manner as an individual. To 'assert the particularity of the republic':

was to assert that it existed in time, not eternity, and was therefore transitory and doomed to impermanence, for this was the condition of the particular being.³⁶

The transient temporality of the republic reveals the connection between Castruccio's role in the novel and the innovations that Shelley introduced to her source materials. Castruccio's corruption and conquest of Lucca and Florence show the Italian city-republics to be finite in their life-span. Representing the republic as an impermanent system allowed Shelley to combine two aspects of republican theory: the republic as the ideal form of government; and the inevitability of a republic's demise. This approach emphasises the idealism underlying republican forms of government.

Shelley's representation of political authority also takes account of the virtuous citizen's responsibility to ensure the well-being of the city, and its citizens, in a reciprocal dynamic. We turn to Pocock again:

[T]he good of citizenship – of ruling and being ruled – consisted in a relationship between one's own virtue and that of another. It was in this sense of the mutual and relational character of virtue that only the political animal could be a truly good man.³⁷

While it may seem in *Valperga* that no-one reciprocates Euthanasia's virtue, the sense of active civic identities is more subtly refracted through the complex interdependency of character relations. Castruccio's active martial virtue and proto-Machiavellian ideology finally destroy Euthanasia's idealism. Early scenes of Beatrice present an alternative, if misguided, participation in the civic realm, as she improvises to the crowd on their 'want of fervour in the just cause, that stamped

³⁶ Pocock, *Machiavellian*, p. 53.

³⁷ Pocock, *Machiavellian*, p. 74.

them as the slaves of foreigners and tyrants' (V, p. 137). The three principal characters of *Valperga* share interconnected fates governed by national and politico-cultural concerns.

Sismondi's attention to individual character and civic identity reveals the importance of biography in historical narratives that interweave national identity and political systems. Without the study of the individual man, the history of nations becomes, what Godwin calls, a 'dry and frigid science' (*H&R*, p. 292). Similarly, Sismondi integrates biography and history in the *Histoire* in order to construct a coherent narrative that encompasses cultural history and political history. The inclusion of historical characters to emphasise the political awakening of medieval Italy, such as Dante, both in Shelley's *Valperga* and Sismondi's *Histoire*, reveals the importance of character. In terms of actual events, Dante is credited with creating Italian language and literature by Sismondi (*HRI*, IV: 188) and by Shelley (V, p. 7). Without him, the arts in Italy would not have flourished, nor established its literary reputation in Europe. Dante stands for a developmental phase in Italian national history. Like Staël in *Corinne*, and Shelley in *Valperga*, Sismondi fully delineates an active civic identity, stating that while writing and studying, Dante also undertook the 'political and military career, that all citizens of a free state must chart in common' (*HRI*, IV: 186).³⁸ Dante's national significance resides, too, in the achievement of innovating a poetic form for a contemporary narrative content. Sismondi synthesises poetic culture and historical narrative into a politically-motivated unity, accentuating the development of a new cultural identity, which he connects to independence and liberty. His description of the battle for Monte Aperto in 1260, which led eventually to the occupation of Florence by Ghibelline forces is such an example (*HRI*, III: 236-39).

In his historical capacity, Dante stands for the ancient and celebrated republican tradition. He championed the cause of the Florentine republic, at a time when factionalism between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines was particularly bitter:

³⁸ 'la carrière politique et militaire, que tous les citoyens d'un état libre doivent parcourir en commun'.

[Dante] saw the delivery of Florence from faction rule as part of the restoration of Italy to political and spiritual health within a universal empire.³⁹

Dante lends historical influence to the republican cause, but significantly only in retrospect, after history has established his reputation as a seminal figure in Italian Renaissance culture. The use of Dante, and of Machiavelli, sophisticate the complexity of the representation of political authority in *Valperga*, as both, while sympathetic to the idea of the republic, advocated strong leadership in order to restore a corrupt nation to greatness.⁴⁰

Shelley uses Dante as a literary figure to introduce ideas about an independent Italy that resonate in her period.⁴¹ Dante's composition of *The Divine Comedy* in vernacular Tuscan was an important step in developing a national language in Italy, which at that time was characterised by regional dialects. Shelley herself quotes P. B. Shelley's *Defence* to make this point in *Rambles*.⁴² The significance of Dante's presence in the novel is apparent in the opening paragraph:

At the beginning of the fourteenth century Dante had already given a permanent form to the language which was the offspring of this revolution [i.e. the re-emergence of learning in literature and the sciences]; he was personally engaged in those political struggles, in which the elements of the good and evil that have since assumed more permanent form were contending; his disappointment and exile gave him leisure to meditate, and produced his *Divina Commedia* (V, p. 7).

Dante's text becomes a focus for the fusion of literature and politics, and a text that symbolises the idea of Italy as a unified nation-state. Chandler convincingly argues that this is a genuine concern of early-nineteenth-century writers when he describes

³⁹ Pocock, *Machiavellian*, p. 50.

⁴⁰ Dante, *On World-Government (De Monarchia)*, trans. by Herbert W. Schneider (Indianapolis: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), p. 9. For Quentin Skinner's discussion of Machiavelli and strong leadership see *Machiavelli*, pp. 55-56; for his consideration of Dante's *De Monarchia*, see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 1: *The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 16-22.

⁴¹ Jean de Palacio, *Mary Shelley dans son oeuvre* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1969), p. 61, emphasises that Dante was a 'figurehead' for nascent Italian nationalism and Mary Shelley's composition of *Valperga* was contemporary with 'the first signs of the Risorgimento', an allusion by Palacio to the uprisings in Naples in 1820-21.

⁴² *NSW*, VIII: 295.

Romantic historicism as 'the interrelation of literature, politics and culture'.⁴³ Rajan and Wright attribute to this interrelation a more structured evolution, connected to national ideology, with its ultimate aim being to support:

the aims of the hegemony by validating the present culture as the epitome of civilisation and providing a heritage in support of national identity.⁴⁴

The interdisciplinary nature of letters reaffirmed the spirit of the Renaissance, which prioritised artistic cultural development: 'such civic, if not directly political excellences, such as the arts and letters, could flourish only under conditions of liberty'.⁴⁵ The cultural development that played upon the refinement of man's sensibilities was attributed to the unique political system of the Italian states. Promoting an egalitarian, meritocratic, representative, and above all, participatory system of government was understood to have provided the creative stimulus from which the Renaissance germinated.

Valperga's opening eulogises the 'light of civilisation' illuminating Italy while 'other nations of Europe were yet immersed in barbarism'. Dante is used to support Shelley's representation of medieval Italy as associating liberty with wisdom (V, pp. 7, 82). Despite the positive endorsement of emergent enlightenment, however, the first chapter's emphasis is on the deep division and conflict that exists in the region caused by an active civic familial identity. Lombardy and Tuscany, 'the most civilised districts of Italy', display only the beginnings of progress (V, p. 7). Any liberty and enlightenment they support is eclipsed by hostile factionalism between Guelphs and Ghibellines, and the exile of the Antelminelli is evidence of this (V, p. 11).

Factional division existed throughout the Italian peninsula between the Papacy and the Empire, and in extreme cases contributed to the destruction of a town, as with Cremona in the summer of 1315. It is insufficient to attribute foreign policy alone as the reason for factionalism. Daniel Waley suggests that it was 'family and party allegiances' which 'served first of all to promote the polarisation of noble

⁴³ Chandler, p. 264.

⁴⁴ Rajan and Wright, eds., p. 7.

⁴⁵ Pocock, *Machiavellian*, p. 88.

factions into two opposing systems'.⁴⁶ Most families were either Guelph or Ghibelline, and factional allegiance became 'a basic component of the particular traditions of a family or a city.'⁴⁷ However, the practice of exiling families because of their political sympathies brings out the relationship between the individual and the state. Close family kinship provided evidence of a worthy and active citizen in the city-state.⁴⁸ Banishment dealt a severe blow to civic identity, and fictionalisations of this appear in *Valperga* first when Castruccio's family is exiled, and then later when he banishes over three hundred families from Lucca (V, pp. 174-75).⁴⁹

Shelley's narrative builds parallels between ancient civilisation and her contemporary situation, while remaining located in fourteenth-century Italy, and thus centring political consciousness within the geography of Italy. Jane Blumberg points out that the Shelleys' removal to Italy 'placed them at the epicentre of a new pan-European revolution in ferment.' This makes explicit the Shelleys' awareness of the European political situation and their understanding of the 'comparative progressiveness of the Napoleonic regimes'.⁵⁰ Shelley's use of Sismondi and Dante as standard-bearers for the republican cause in early nineteenth-century history compounds this subtle sense of political radicalism.

Civic Identity II: Virtue, Sentiment, and the Self in the World

The division between public history and private chronicle implies that gendered readings of history are at the heart of *Valperga*, and consequently masculine narratives of history eclipse feminine ones. This is reinforced by Pocock's and Skinner's gendered readings of virtue, in which Roman *virtù* is diminished because it is in thrall to Fortune, represented as a Goddess. As later parts of this chapter show, James Carson also puts forward a reading of sentimentalism in *Valperga* informed by gender. Euthanasia's engagement with ancient learning, and

⁴⁶ Daniel Waley, *The Italian City-Republics* (London: Longman, 1988), p. 147.

⁴⁷ Giovanni Tabacco, *The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy: Structures of Political Rule*, trans. by Rosalind Brown Jensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 261.

⁴⁸ Carol G. Thomas, 'The Greek Polis' in *The City-State in Five Cultures*, ed. by Robert Griffith and Carol G. Thomas (Oxford: ABC-Clio, 1981), pp. 31-69 (p. 47).

⁴⁹ Waley, p. 154.

⁵⁰ Jane Blumberg, *Mary Shelley's Early Novels: 'This Child of Misery and Imagination'* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1993), p. 76.

its uses in the present, creates a potential for virtuous action. In *Valperga*, the moral capacity of individual characters directly impacts on the political state. Euthanasia's state flourishes because of virtue exercised in her rule; Castruccio's state emerges through his ambition, rather than virtue. Euthanasia's virtue is destined to be unsuccessful because she alone practises her idea(l)s, as can be seen from her treatment of the villainous Tripalda: 'she believed him to be honest' (V, p. 208) despite his 'deep insight into artful and artificial character' (V, p. 207), and the 'accusations advanced against him' (V, p. 208).

Carson argues that Castruccio displays sentimental characteristics.⁵¹ He interprets this 'sentimentalism' as entailing 'a new conception of masculinity' that had previously been defined by public virtue, evident in Castruccio's desire to follow in his father's footsteps and pursue martial virtue. Sentiment becomes crucial in shaping the individual, and therefore, his or her role in public life. The presence of sentiment in the novel, Carson argues, reflects its concern 'with the epistemological question of the relationship between language and truth', an interest of 'historical novelists in particular'.⁵² The 'relationship between language and truth' re-orientates the problem of gender relations and the representation of history in the novel. If sentimentalism is prioritised, as Carson suggests, then masculinity, so strongly associated with virtue and thus with fortune, is undermined by sentiment.⁵³ In such an instance, the relationship of civic virtue to fortune must be lessened, because sentiment 'limit[s] the power of fortune by reducing external events to accidents'.⁵⁴ In Euthanasia's narrative, sentiment verifies her experience of the world ('What is the world, except that which we feel?' (V, p. 80)).

What Carson does not account for is that Euthanasia is also determined to understand and rationalise all that she feels. She says that from her education she acquired the ability:

⁵¹ James Carson, p. 171; the importance of Castruccio's sentimental capacity is described during his visit to Euthanasia in prison, where he sheds a single, but meaningful, tear (V, p. 318). Compare also another single tear that Lord Raymond sheds in *The Last Man* during a confrontation with Verney (LM, p. 53).

⁵² Carson, p. 171.

⁵³ See Pocock, *Machiavellian*, p. 37, for the etymological and ideological links between virtue and virility.

⁵⁴ Carson, p. 172.

to fathom my sensations, and discipline my mind; to understand what my feelings were, and whether they arose from a good or evil source. [. . .] I have been so accustomed to use the frank language of a knowledge drawn from fixed principles, and to weigh my actions and thoughts in those scales which my reason and my religion afforded me (V, p. 81).

Euthanasia understands the importance of sentiment, and its relationship to the world of knowledge and to the past allows her 'whole soul to be filled with the beauty of action' (V, p. 81). Euthanasia identifies freedom and intellectual power as empowering agents which can further human progress. She attaches to them an imperative for advancement in the form of regenerative change:

[T]he essence of freedom is that clash and struggle which awaken the energies of our nature, and that operation of the elements of our mind, which as it were gives us the force and power that hinder us from degenerating, as they say all things earthly do when not regenerated by change (V, p. 82).⁵⁵

Euthanasia attempts to establish a relationship between sentiment and knowledge that allows her to make sense of the world through her individual experience of it. In part, she uses systems she identifies in the material world, but she has to use her imagination to realise abstract concepts like freedom, which are partly articulated through place, such as her attachment to Florence. Euthanasia's understanding of freedom and history is predicated on the interaction between imagination and the material world. Paul Hamilton addresses this dilemma of empiricism by exploring Enlightenment influences on the Shelleys. Discerning a similarity between their writings and *La Mettrie's*, he suggests that the conception of the soul is:

something we deduce retrospectively from the rational organisation of the body to discernible purposes. This immanence of reasoning in the world is the result of imagination.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Bennett, 'Political', p. 360, Emily Sunstein, *Mary Shelley Romance and Reality* (Baltimore: Little and Brown, 1989) pp. 4, 188; and Mary Shelley, *Valperga*, ed. by Michael Rossington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xxiv, all give weight to this quotation.

⁵⁶ Paul Hamilton, 'From Empiricism to Materialism in Writings by the Shelleys', *Colloquium Helveticum*, 25 (1997), 171-93 (p. 175).

This suggests a meeting of materialist ideas and Wollstonecraftian philosophy in Euthanasia who seems so dependent on reason and imagination. Hamilton stresses that La Mettrie's understanding of experience only becomes 'intelligible' when it is 'perceived to be made up of signs given in imagination'. The impressions that the individual consciousness has of external reality could only make an impact if 'such elements of knowledge [. . .] came to us already organised as forms of signification'.⁵⁷

Sentiment confirms Euthanasia's experience of the world, and is verified by intellectual examination of those feelings, because it is already a coherent framework for ordering her world. Sentiment stimulates civic identity as it orders her world so that civic identity becomes a material experience for her. In awakening political consciousness through sentiment, history is infused with the physicality and materiality of the body, and a national and cosmopolitan heritage. Sentiment is an epistemological opening into political and civic awakening. Euthanasia's intellectual awakening elucidates the relationship between world, society, and Necessity, anatomising the individual responses to public history and the polis through sentiment. By contrast, Castruccio mistakes his body and persona for that of the state. An instance of this occurs when we learn that he is 'supporting the state, a fiction' and shows Euthanasia the 'falseness of his apotheosis' when he punishes those citizens of Lucca who participated in an unsuccessful coup (V, p. 176). Euthanasia's ability to perceive this and to see the disparity between her own state and Castruccio's threatens to undermine her integrated system ('unsettled the whole frame of her mind' (V, p. 176)). As Pocock states, 'when men are not virtuous, the world becomes problematic, even unintelligible'.⁵⁸ Yet knowledge and sentiment recover it: Castruccio's treachery 'forced her to use her faculties to dislodge him from the seat he had usurped' (V, p. 176).

While Euthanasia communicates in the sentimental mode, her virtue concurs with a Ciceronian definition of the *vir virtutis*: a man of wisdom, who is also 'capable of putting his wisdom to use, relating his philosophy to his life and fulfilling himself as a citizen'.⁵⁹ The language of sentiment, in which Euthanasia is

⁵⁷ Hamilton, p. 176.

⁵⁸ Pocock, *Machiavellian*, p. 95.

⁵⁹ Skinner, *Foundations*, p. 87.

fully conversant, enables the emotional crises in the novel to be articulated outside the gender politics that inform the treatment of public history. Shelley is critical of some aspects that characterise 'masculine' Romanticism, but she does not reject entirely a tradition that offers the possibility of political and social reform through sympathy and compassion. These are not to be identified as 'domestic affections' and therefore typically 'feminine,' but as Enlightenment doctrines that were the fruit of 'masculine' intellectual rigour. This is followed through in Shelley's charting of Euthanasia's education. William Brewer reads Euthanasia's education as modelled on Wollstonecraftian principles, "best calculated to [. . .] enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent".⁶⁰ By giving Euthanasia by far the most comprehensive education of all the characters, Shelley combines her heroine's enthusiasm with a governing rationality. While Jane Blumberg sees in Euthanasia ' "masculine" integrity', she argues that it manifests itself in her 'inflexible idealism'.⁶¹ In my view, her idealism is neither destructive nor disastrous. Although frustrated by the course of events, it supplies the moral centre of the novel. Euthanasia implements philosophical praxis by ruling her estate as she does, yet the world around Valperga is subject to the caprice of Castruccio's ambition, rather than enlightened government. Euthanasia's idealism is a product of, and produces, the sentiment and virtue that constitute her civic intervention in the world.

Both Castruccio and Euthanasia are active in the public domain, and both display sentiment. Sentiment then acquires a transformative power that allows active civic identity and history to be re-valued. For Carson, sentiments become 'internal events.' In becoming events they establish a relationship with the events of the outside world and set up a system of exchange between the individual's sentiments and public life, that constantly changes with every new sentiment expressed. Shelley describes Euthanasia as possessing 'a wildness tempered by self-command that filled every look and every motion with eternal change' (V, p. 78). The sense of perpetual decline of the state may be halted, but only by replacing

⁶⁰ Quoted in William D. Brewer, 'Mary Shelley's *Valperga*: The Triumph of Euthanasia's Mind', *European Romantic Review*, 5 (1995), 133-48 (p. 139).

⁶¹ Blumberg, *Early*, p. 91.

decline with an equally destabilising sense of flux. As Carson suggests, 'liberty is a condition of instability, change, conflict, and energy'.⁶²

Euthanasia is susceptible to the force of the cultural past during a particular moment in Rome. Shelley's representation establishes continuity with treatments of the same theme in 'Valerius'. The end of Euthanasia's narrative relates her sensation of 'mute extacy' when she visited the Pantheon by moonlight, which is discussed in more detail in the final section of this chapter. Rome's historicity stimulates reflection because Euthanasia's soul is 'active' (V, p. 85). Agitated by the grief caused by her brother's illness, Euthanasia enjoys the 'consolation' of animated wanderings around the ruins ('I was never so much alive as then' (V, p. 85)) and this strengthens her civic identity.

The Pantheon itself plays a crucial role in Euthanasia's awakening and this is derived from the impression it made on the Shelleys when they visited it in 1819. Mary, after relating this visit to Marianne Hunt, confessed in her letter of 12 March 1819 that it 'would never be at an end' if she were to try to 'tell a millionth part of the delights of Rome' (MWSL, I: 89). Percy for his part, in a letter to Peacock of 23 March 1819, described Rome itself as 'a scene by which all expression is overpowered: which words cannot convey', and of the Pantheon wrote, 'it is as it were the visible image of the universe' (PBSL, II: 85, 87). The 'mute extacy' and 'sacred horror' Euthanasia experiences map her reverence for the Pantheon onto her veneration of wisdom, because it is a sacred site, not only in religious terms, but because it stands as a testament to Roman culture (V, p. 84).

The Pantheon is also archaeological evidence of civilisation(s) in conflict, for example when Valerius sees its Christianisation as an assault upon ancient Roman beliefs. The Pantheon inspires within Euthanasia the magnitude of the legacy of the past. The dialogue with the past is reworked later in the novel to reveal the fragility of cultural and historical memory. Shortly before her death Beatrice tirades against evil in the world. Railing against the 'societies of men', war-torn and 'hard-hearted', Athens becomes the locus for evil decisively overcoming good. In a dramatic juxtaposition with Euthanasia's response to Rome, the cultural legacy of ancient

⁶² Carson, p. 181.

Greece is rendered meaningless by time's power to erase it completely. The paradox here is that in Beatrice's example, it is the caprice of an individual tyrant, Philip V of Macedon, who razes all the temples and sculptures, and thus 'the produce of ages is the harvest of a moment' (V, p. 245). The destruction of Athens confirms Beatrice's faith in the existence of evil. It also demonstrates exactly how the land remains unrecorded – the legend of the city in its greatness endures, even though no physical remains exist. This too demonstrates Rajan's conception of "the unrecorded" being recorded in *Valperga*. The destruction of Athens is not a theoretical possibility but a historical reality that no longer exists.

This section has traced the construction of civic identity through republican ideas of virtue. An essential part of active civic intervention in the public sphere is sentiment, and its awakening through history and place. This section has also shown how individual portrayals of civic virtue relate to the thematic discussion of public history and genre in the previous section. The next section builds on this to examine in more detail examples in *Valperga* where place and temporality impact upon the consciousness of Euthanasia, and how place includes the past as it draws out the representation of civic identity.

Civic Identity III: Narratives of Time and Place

In *Valperga*, ideas of historical progress are consistently set in opposition to a fascination with the present, seen as only 'a point of rest from which time was to renew his flight, scattering change as he went' (V, p. 18). This section focuses on how the meaning of history is articulated through cultural centres, such as Rome, and through Euthanasia's perception of the moment. Further to this, I discuss how representations of the Tuscan landscape relate to temporality and the individual's consciousness of it. In Euthanasia's visit to Rome, and again after her castle is overrun by Lucchese forces, the meaning of time and history becomes destabilised for her. Following her impressions at the Tiber, discussed in the previous chapter, locales in Rome continue to engage Euthanasia with the past:

[I]t was to Rome I journeyed, to see the vestiges of the mistress of the world, within whose walls all I could conceive of great, and good, and wise, had

breathed and acted: I should draw in the sacred air which had vivified the heroes of Rome; their shades would surround me; and the very stones that I should tread were marked by their footsteps. Can you conceive what I felt? You have not studied the histories of ancient times, and perhaps know not the life that breathes in them; a soul of beauty and wisdom which penetrated my heart of hearts (V, pp. 83–84).

Although Euthanasia is susceptible to, and silenced by, the sublime effect of the fragment, or ruin, her silence emphasises the historicity of place. Rome is, for Euthanasia, ‘the inanimate corse, the broken image of what was once great beyond all power of speech to express’ (V, p. 84). While Godwin emphasises conversation as a way to access the past, Shelley constructs Euthanasia’s moment in Rome to encompass conversation and silence, conjuring, as she does so, a temporal instability. The silent plenitude of the ruins synthesises history and experience into cultural knowledge. Experiencing the past in this way strengthens civic identity in the polis, in the same way that, as will be seen, plenitude in the landscape rouses individual awareness of civic identity. Euthanasia’s experience of Rome’s ruins is the internalised manifestation of this engaged civic identity.

In the Pantheon, Euthanasia appreciates the beneficial legacy of Roman culture, remaining speechless from the sensation she feels and the understanding she derives from it: ‘amidst a dead race, and an extinguished empire, what individual sorrow would dare raise its voice?’. When the force of Rome’s history asserts itself over Euthanasia, the narrative of her own life is erased. The result of that moment, however, is the synthesis of psyche and polis, and of abstraction and materiality:

It seemed as if the spirit of beauty descended on my soul, as I sat there in mute extacy; never had I before so felt the universal graspings of my own mind, or the sure tokens of other spiritual existences, as at that moment (V, pp. 84–85).

Rome, Euthanasia’s ‘city of my soul’, becomes a memory she recalls as an abstract natural image (‘a burning cloud of sunset in the deep azure of the sky’), on which her ‘intellectual eye rests with emotion’ (V, p. 85). The cultural history of a city suspends itself in Euthanasia’s memory as an abstract image rather than a

geographical site. What seems most to overwhelm Euthanasia in her 'mute extacy' is the temporal exchange between her consciousness and historical presences of the past. The opposition of the moment to the sequential narrative of history acquires an important role in the construction of Euthanasia's civic identity.

Euthanasia's silence suppresses her own identity, allowing her to assume a tenuous sympathy with the past. Silent communion between the modern and the ancient manifests itself in Euthanasia's reanimation of history, as when she calls on 'the shadows of the departed to converse with me,' (V, p. 84) and she 'appeared to be', not a 'modern Italian', but 'a wandering shade of ancient times' who is overcome with 'mute extacy'. Her understanding of the past has become silently internalised through reanimation of the dead. Thus, Euthanasia can converse with the ancient past and remain silent simultaneously in a moment where she enacts comparative contemporaneities. The silence Euthanasia experiences in Rome, is determined by place and by perceptual sensitivity. Silence is initiated by the confrontation between past and present, is caused, in other words, by a complicated exchange between the dead and the living. Reanimation also forces Euthanasia to confront the near future at a critical point in the narrative, prior to her sailing for Sicily. When she knows her co-conspirators are to die, 'her imagination made present to her all that they thought, and all that they were to suffer' (V, p. 319).

Euthanasia's 'mute extacy' affirms the noble beauty of ancient Rome, but is mediated in the present, and forcefully conveyed in a single moment. A still greater emphasis is placed on the moment when Euthanasia meditates on the impact of time, relative to subjective experience, just before Lucchese troops storm her fortress. Temporal disruption precipitates a more urgent sense of the moment here than when Euthanasia was in Rome. This hiatus is caused by Castruccio's military advance across the state and finally results in the violation of Euthanasia's territorial space. Recognising the transience of time, Euthanasia concludes that:

[A]ll changes, all passes – nothing is stable, nothing for one moment the same. [. . .] Why do our minds, grasping all, feel as if eternity and immeasurable space were kernelled up in one instantaneous sensation? [. . .] We think of a small motion of the dial as of an eternity; yet ages have past, and they are but hours; the present moment will soon be only a

memory, an unseen atom in the night of by-gone time. [. . .] [Y]et this moment, this point of time, during which the sun makes but one round amidst the many millions it has made, and the many millions it will make, this moment is all to me (V, pp. 212-13).

In this realisation of the intensity of the moment, concepts of history are fractured; and sensory, cultural and moral understandings are thrown into disarray. Within *Valperga*, Castruccio's rise to power becomes meaningless for the instant in which Euthanasia can see beyond history and can transcend time.

Rome's historical associations with both republicanism and tyranny make it an apposite point of reference, given the novel's themes of liberty and conquest. The founding of the city of Rome marks the beginning of its history, and provides Euthanasia with the history of citizens that she seeks to revivify.⁶³ When attention in *Valperga* is turned away from the cosmopolitan centre, to the areas surrounding Florence and Lucca, Shelley's representations of the rural periphery also construct a civic, cultural, and national identity.

Shelley offsets urban representations of civic identity with depictions of the landscape that provide an alternative model for civic virtue. The example of Guinigi offers a model of pastoral civic virtue that is rejected by Castruccio. The detail with which Guinigi's existence is documented shows his virtue and independence. The abundant landscape in which he is situated emphasises, through place and nationhood, how his virtue and duty are fulfilled. Carson links Shelley's representation of the independent landowner not only to classical republican ideas about liberty, but also to the supporters of 'radical agrarianism' by whom she was influenced: Wollstonecraft, Godwin and Sismondi.⁶⁴ Ideological values are partly responsible for the relationship that Euthanasia has with her estate, as they are with Guinigi and his smallholding. Both, too, derive knowledge of the world from experiences stimulated by a close relationship to place, as Euthanasia's experience in Rome, and Guinigi's in the Euganean Hills, demonstrate. In educating Castruccio, Guinigi speaks of 'the duty of man to man, laying aside the distinction of society,' and how, with 'exalted virtues', he 'dignified what the vulgar would term ignoble'

⁶³ For the importance of the founding origins of Rome, see Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (London: Faber, 1961), p. 121.

⁶⁴ Carson, p. 170.

(V, p. 25). If he had not been exiled from his native city, agricultural endeavour would never have effected this change in his philosophy.

The figure of Guinigi as an alternative model of civic virtue is so strongly connected to the landscape as to reinforce a sense of egalitarianism and nationhood. His presence also links popular traditions and virtue to the land:

Guinigi and his fellow-labourers rose with the sun. [. . .] The most beautiful vegetation luxuriated around them: the strips of land were planted with Indian corn, wheat and beans; they were divided, in some places by rows of olives, in others by elms or Lombardy poplars, to which the vines clung. The hedges were of myrtle, whose aromatic perfume weighed upon the sluggish air of noon. [. . .]

Their harvests were plenteous and frequent [. . .] and the well-trodden threshing floor, such as Virgil describes it, received the grain; then came the harvest of the Indian corn; and last [came] the glorious vintage, when the beautiful dove-coloured oxen of Lombardy could hardly drag the creaking wains laden with the fruit (V, p. 28).

While exile seems only to have fuelled Castruccio's ambition for glory, Guinigi embraces his new role. He tells Castruccio:

"The sight of the bounties of nature, and of harmless peasants who cultivate the earth, is far more pleasant than an army of knights hasting in brilliant array to deluge the fields with blood, and to destroy the beneficial hopes of the husbandman" (V, p. 25).

The land, for Guinigi, has a civilising influence over those who are sensitive to its beauty and bounty. It is the abundance around him, combined with the work of human hands, which has led him to reject military society. As Guinigi works, his toil enables him to appreciate and to anatomise the detail of his agricultural surroundings:

He knew the form and the life of every little being of that peopled region, where the sun seems to quicken every atom into life; and that which was insignificant to common eyes appeared to him to be invested with strange attributes and uncommon loveliness (V, p. 28).

Shelley's Guinigi is a substantially reworked version of the Guinigi who tutors the young Castruccio in the arts of warfare in Machiavelli's *Life*.⁶⁵ Shelley rejects Machiavelli's warring in order to establish a viable alternative for Castruccio which operates within an egalitarian system, rather than a factional one. Carson identifies land ownership with independence, and Guinigi's status as an 'autonomous farmer/soldier' with 'the classical republican model of masculine virtue'.⁶⁶ Carson's gender specificity is, however, unnecessary: classical republican influences also define Euthanasia's civic identity. Roman writers are the origin of Euthanasia's commitment to republicanism and though she is never represented working the land, she oversees an abundant estate. It is replete with 'myrtle flowers', 'fresh-looking evergreens', 'fruit-burthened olive' trees, 'chestnut-woods', and peasants 'busy among the vines' (V, p. 170).

The descriptions of Guinigi's smallholding and Euthanasia's estate bear similarity to Shelley's letter to Marianne Hunt of 28 August 1819, commenting on the 'beautiful fertility of Italy'. The *podere* are abundant with 'rows of grapes festooned on their supporters' and:

filled with olive, fig, and peach trees and the hedges are of myrtle which have just ceased to flower. [. . .] green grassy walks lead you through the vines – the people are always busy – and it {is} pleasant to see three or four of them transform in one day a bed of indian corn to one of celery – they work in this hot weather in their shirts or smock frocks (but their breasts are bare) their brown legs nearly the colour only with a rich tinge of red in it with the earth they turn up – They sing not very melodiously but very loud (MWSL, I: 102).⁶⁷

It is not simply the landscape that suggests the rich potential of the land. The use to which it has been put, and the industry with which it is worked, makes Italy's fertility so significant. The presence of people in such a picturesque landscape

⁶⁵ Sunstein suggests that another possible inspiration for Guinigi could be George Tighe, agronomist and partner of Mrs. Mason, with both of whom the Shelleys were familiar during their stay in Italy (p. 186).

⁶⁶ Carson, p. 169.

⁶⁷ {word} denotes editorial conjecture. In V, Crook notes the influence of Virgil's *Georgics* on Mary Shelley's landscape representations (p. 28n). See also Clemit, *Godwinian*, for the 'contrast' of peaceful cultivation with the devastation of military conquest' that Shelley derives from the *Georgics* (p. 178).

undermines its purely aesthetic function.⁶⁸ Indeed, both in this letter to Marianne Hunt, and in *Valperga*, Shelley's fashioning of the agricultural scene emphasises the liberty and moral integrity of those who have a close relationship with the land. Shelley's sensitivity to agricultural abundance and civilisation in her aesthetic use of landscapes shows the connection between productively farmed land and political enlightenment. It is here that the representation of landscape intersects with the historical vision of *Valperga*. Guinigi's farm, and the scenes on Euthanasia's estate, are indicative of political enlightenment and civic duty.

These representations of active civic engagement are undermined by Castruccio's treachery in his storming of Euthanasia's estate, in which the landscape plays a crucial part. The Italian landscape reinforces the factional warring around which the novel centres. The mountainous and densely-foliaged region is often described in detail, creating a sense of territory and ownership. This constant presence of the land mediates between the consciousness of the subjects in the narrative, and the environment outside of the text upon which *Valperga* draws. When Castruccio visited Valperga for the first time he: 'looked on nature with a soldier's eye [and] remarked what an excellent defence Valperga might make' (V, p. 76). This follows a passage detailing the difficult access to Valperga:

The road that led from Lucca to Valperga struck directly across the plain to the foot of the rock on which the castle was built. This rock overhung the road, casting a deep shade; and projected, forming a precipice on three sides; the northern side, at the foot of which the Serchio flowed, was disjoined from the mountain by a ravine, and a torrent struggled in the depth, among loose stones, and the gnarled and naked roots of trees that shaded the side of the cleft (V, p. 76).

While the representation of the land conditions military conduct, such locations are also imbued for Castruccio with his childhood memories. The concealed route to Euthanasia's castle becomes the site of treachery when he gains access by it to take Valperga. This description places emphasis on the impregnability of Valperga that is harshly ironised by Castruccio's later conquest of the castle, and it is this

⁶⁸ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism 30 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 62, 92.

'metaphorical and actual violation' that destroys Euthanasia.⁶⁹ The representation of the storming of the castle is consistent with descriptions of the land in battles that Castruccio wages, and consistent also, with the historical Castruccio Castracani's military tactics. Louis Green, in his study of Castruccio's rule over Lucca, more than once notes that 'exploitation of a terrain of hills, marshes, and streams' was 'characteristic' of his offensive strategy of 'attacking downhill from strong defensive positions'.⁷⁰ That warfare was dependent on territory is also further highlighted by Shelley when she states again, after the Florentines realise the strategic value of Valperga, that:

The castle of Valperga was situated on a rock, among the mountains that bound the pass through which the Serchio flows, and commanded the northern entrance to the Lucchese territory. It was a place of great strength, and in the hands of an enemy might afford an easy entrance for an hostile army into the plain of Lucca itself (V, p. 195).⁷¹

In a novel the central theme of which is liberty, Valperga's location takes on increased significance, as does its conquest. Fernand Braudel points out that 'the hills were the refuge of liberty democracy and peasant "republics" ' as well as being a 'world apart', isolated and independent from the emergent cities of lowland culture.⁷² In this sense we can see how history is written in and through the land. The land provides a bridging mechanism between history as it can be traced through historical and geographical sources, and the landscape of the fictional *Valperga*, precisely because the geography of Italy remains unchanged in its form and in its represented image. The land remains constant through Shelley's reworking of history in *Valperga*, but it also disrupts history's temporality.

Perhaps the most critical siting in *Valperga* is Euthanasia's castle.⁷³ It becomes a place of silenced memory for Castruccio, as it is reappropriated as a site

⁶⁹ Blumberg, *Early*, p. 88.

⁷⁰ Louis Green, *Castruccio Castracani: A Study on the Origins of a Fourteenth-Century Italian Despotism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 71; see also p. 182.

⁷¹ Palacio, p. 84, attributes a personal significance to the Serchio for the Shelleys, a river in which their son William bathed.

⁷² Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. by Sian Reynolds, 2 vols, 2nd edn (London: Collins, 1972), 1: 40, 34, 53.

⁷³ Palacio, p. 82, notes the 'very special importance' ('une importance toute speciale') of the location.

of conquest (V, p. 75). The reader is equally susceptible to this treachery as this site has also been a place of festivity when Euthanasia holds court (V, pp. 110–11). Castruccio, in fact, refers to this memory when revealing the location to his troop in order to capture the castle (V, p. 203). As they proceed to the concealed entrance, an image of Euthanasia appears to Castruccio:

[I]t was she, the beautiful, who had lived on earth as the enshrined statue of a divinity, adorning all places where she appeared, and adored by all who saw her; it was she, whose castle he was about to take and raze, it was against her that he now warred with a fixed resolution to conquer. [. . .] It was here, that in their childish days Castruccio and Euthanasia often played; their names were carved on the rough bark of the cypress, and here, in memory of their infantine friendship, they had since met, to renew the vows they had formerly made, vows now broken, scattered to the winds, more worthless than the fallen leaves on which he then trod (V, p. 204–05).

The projection of Euthanasia's image as a divinity mirrors her own identification of wisdom as 'the pure emanation of the Deity, the divine light of the world' (V, p. 81). Euthanasia's presence unifies 'all places' and 'all who saw her'. This transcendent wholeness which mediates the world and the beings in it by its insubstantiality is renounced by Castruccio at the place where her presence and their shared past is evoked most strongly. Castruccio's vision of Euthanasia, and his understanding of her evanescence lingers on through broken vows, once signifying a permanence of intention but which have since acquired a degraded transience, mutable and worthless.

The moment at this site encapsulates the themes that I have been arguing are central to *Valperga*. Euthanasia's embodiment in Castruccio's imagination personifies her allegorical potential, while at the same time reflecting her transient, barely tangible role in the historical narrative, with her erasure a certainty. The outcome of this scene also hinges on the logical necessity of Castruccio's decision to conquer Valperga. Thus, political and specifically individual interventions in the narrative propel the action forward. They occur, too, at a site that is associated with Castruccio's warfare, with Euthanasia's festival (itself an account of the cultural custom of the time), with their shared personal past, and with the abundance of the

Tuscan landscape. Each of these are permutations of Shelley's representation of liberty that shape civic identity. The diverse influences that construct the political, personal, and cultural self contribute to the transformative capabilities promised by the genre of romance. By mediating between history and romance, Shelley charts the evolution of statecraft through the individual using the land. This mapping is related to national and European cultural narratives to incorporate a kind of fictionalised representation that demarcates the possibilities and limitations of gendered discourses of history.

Conclusion

Just as the Sibylline leaves of *The Last Man* represent only a partial narration of the future's history, so the image of Castruccio's broken vows, 'more worthless than the fallen leaves', hints at the impossibility of complete historical narrative. Neither Shelley's genre of historical romance, nor the heroine's gender, complete or rectify history's partiality. However, discussion in the first section of this chapter demonstrated that Shelley's innovative approach to historical sources participates in wider Romantic-era practice pertaining to its own historicising consciousness and the increasing interdisciplinarity of letters. This interdisciplinarity allows the Romantic writer to make explicit the association between literature and history, art and politics. In the instance of Italy, political systems which nurtured liberty also contributed to the development of the arts. Shelley is able to assert that by the nineteenth century a cultural tradition still exists while political liberty has diminished. To this end, literature and the arts can help to reinvigorate an oppressed nation. Shelley's temporal exchange between the medieval period and the present is secured by a Romantic preoccupation with character in history that is integrated into the medieval setting. Historical narrative is determined through individual narrative firmly situated within the landscape.

This integrated conception of history relates national narratives to individual ones, evident in Shelley's emphasis on Castruccio and, within his narrative, other individual stories. An unstable notion of history and temporality is given coherence by establishing the relationship of the individual to the whole. The theoretical

possibilities offered through Shelley's transformation of history into historical romance also depend on an ideological and intellectual attachment to place. Italy, in such an instance, connects idealised associations with individual histories because of the priority given to civic virtue within republican frameworks. Sismondi also places considerable emphasis on the individual in the progress of national history and the effect of political events on the individual.

Place and historical experience are synthesised through individual consciousness and its understanding of civic virtue. The third section, 'Virtue, Sentiment, and the Self in the World' showed how this is achieved for Euthanasia through education and through understanding the republican legacy left to culture. The role of the individual in the material world, and their ability to access the past, is central to *Valperga's* historical vision. The final section shows that place and time come together to epiphanise this historical consciousness.

Shelley's dark vision in *Valperga* is one that limits, while exploring, the possibilities of republican liberty. *Valperga* is of such importance in Shelley's oeuvre and marked such a critical defining point in her artistic development, that its influence can be overtly traced in her treatment of history in *The Last Man*, *Lives*, and *Rambles*. In particular, her development of historical vision that absorbs the individual within the republic is symptomatic of a longstanding intellectual engagement with the politics of liberty. Yet the unique and imaginative voice embarks in her next work, *The Last Man*, on a journey of republican self-fashioning that redeems anachronistic and anatomic vision from political failure to human endurance. The individual assumes a place in a history which remains unvoiced and a future which is never attained.

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Chapter 4

The 'threshold of unborn time': Anatomising history in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*

Shelley's *The Last Man* continues the exploration of civic identity, cultural history, and the incompleteness of historical narration that preoccupies *Valperga*. Shelley's acute consciousness of temporality in historical representation is evident in both novels but with quite different results. Her factual research undertaken for *Valperga* focuses on a particular epoch, and positions the novel within the historical context of medieval Italy. From this the reader is encouraged to read across time, and see within it resonances with Shelley's own nineteenth-century present. *The Last Man*, by contrast, encourages the reader to read the span of time within a narrative. As Shelley herself realised, the success of such a strategy was not, as with *Valperga*, dependent on the authentic depiction of a particular age. Instead, she understood 'the necessity of making the scene <general> universal to all mankind' (MWSL, 1: 510).¹

The Last Man is singular in bringing together the themes linking the individual to political culture through history and temporality with a forceful pessimism. The novel's unifying metaphor of the plague depends on the vulnerability of the animated body and the commemoration of its mutability, themes discussed in chapter two. The plague's progress is marked by destruction and remembrance, the fragile transmission of the past, and the similarly fragile bonds of social community. Shelley's portrayal of the eradication of the human race has dominated critical responses to *The Last Man*. From Lee Sterrenburg's reading of the plague as a metaphor for the French Revolution to Mary Jacobus's interpretation of it as a figure for AIDS, critics have attuned themselves to the resonances of *The Last Man*, while succumbing to the tendency to read the novel as Shelley's fictionalised autobiography.² By teasing out the novel's timeliness and its personal elements, critics have acknowledged, without exploring thoroughly, other important themes.

¹ Letter to John Howard Payne (7 February 1826). <word> denotes a deletion.

² Lee Sterrenburg, 'The Last Man: Anatomy of Failed Revolutions', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 33 (1978), 324–47 (p. 327), and Mary Jacobus, 'Replacing the Race of Mothers: AIDS and *The Last Man*', in Mary Jacobus, *First Things: The Maternal Imaginary in Literature, Art and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 105–25 (p. 107).

Interpretations redressing this distortion, alongside Sterrenburg and Jacobus, turn insightfully to the colonial ideologies underpinning the novel, or its rich intertextuality, or its intriguing temporal framework. Readings such as those of Joseph Lew, Gregory O'Dea, and Anne McWhir have arisen through a greater appreciation of Shelley's embracing of diverse generic styles.³ Her use of genre in *The Last Man* makes the novel difficult to situate within a critical or generic framework, and her conception of it as a romance once more provides a creative, transformative space in which her fiction can evolve.⁴ Perhaps this difficulty explains the tendency towards biographical interpretation. Shelley's biographical clues, which lie studded in the 'Author's Introduction', beckon the critic to history, and properly read, take the interpreter beyond Shelley's life, and into the broader questions about history which the novel provokes.⁵ If there is still a point to be made about the biographical background to *The Last Man*, surely it must be that prior to and during its composition, Shelley exhibited an acute temporal awareness. Her journal entries between 1822–25 show how profoundly conscious she was of the changes wrought over time. Constantly looking both forward and back, she was ambivalent towards her future in England and nostalgic about Italy.⁶ These connections of time and place also have a wider cultural relationship, which is reflected in the future destiny of *The Last Man's* last man as Lionel Verney embarks on his journey from Cumberland to Rome. Shelley's association of the passage of time with the development of civilisations is illustrated in a later part of the same letter cited above

³ See Joseph W. Lew, 'The Plague of Imperial Desire: Montesquieu, Gibbon, Brougham and Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*', in *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire, 1780–1830*, ed. by Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 261–78; Gregory O'Dea, 'Prophetic History and Textuality in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 28 (1992), 283–304; and *The Last Man*, ed. by Anne McWhir (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 1996).

⁴ See also Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) for Shelley's generic proximity to Godwin's fiction through its 'innovative blend of philosophy and fiction' (p. 1) and 'progressively deepening cultural revaluation' (p. 2). Shelley's imaginative exploration of the relationship between temporality and cultural history derive from these Godwinian conventions.

⁵ Audrey Fisch, 'Plaguing Politics: AIDS, Deconstruction and *The Last Man*', *The Other Mary Shelley*, ed. by Fisch and others (New York, 1993), pp. 267–86 (pp. 279–80), contextualises Shelley's use of the frame narrative and the political associations of the Sibyl. See also Clemit, *Godwinian*, for the cave as a 'Platonic allegory' (p. 190), and Jane Blumberg, *Mary Shelley's Early Novels* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1993), for the cave as a metaphor for Shelley's own 'creative faculty' (p. 149).

⁶ *MWSJ*, pp. 430, 469–70, 480 and 484–86.

when she discusses the relative virtues of England and America:

My own feeling (being European) makes me think that having once realized your prospects there [America], you would hasten back here [England] – thinking (as I do with regard to human beings,) that a middle aged country – more fertile in memories, associations, & human relics than in natural productions is to be preferred to the savage untutored & selfwilled though beauteous vigor of a land just springing from infancy to youth (MWSL 1: 511).

Shelley's connection between place and past in this letter hints at a central theme in *The Last Man*: the memorialisation of civilisation through cultural and civic identity. Clemit concludes that the Sibylline leaves 'evoke Mary Shelley's inclusive vision of past, present, and future cultural traditions'.⁷ This chapter argues that Shelley integrates an active civic identity with an understanding of the wider world. Such an epistemology situates subjectivity using place, particularly through natural landscapes and the cultural past in a way which effects a re-enactment, or reanimation of the past while acknowledging the material transience of humanity. To this end, the preservation of history through learning, and through the written word, has obvious import for *The Last Man*.

Fiona Stafford and Mary Jacobus have, in separate interpretations, uncovered the generic richness of *The Last Man*, while simultaneously locating Shelley's novel within contemporary or political contexts. Fiona Stafford's study of the literary trend of 'lastness' allows Shelley's novel to be situated within a genre stimulated by the instability and change arising from the recent history of European revolutions and increasing industrialisation.⁸ Shelley's emphasis on the cultural legacy of the more distant past enriches such a reading. The connection between 'lastness' and social change also responds to Shelley's historical moment and to historicist criticism by accentuating the presence of epoch-making moments within a more prolonged historical period. Stafford's reading goes some way to contextualising the peculiar temporal positioning of the novel.

Other critics have also concentrated on the novel's temporal peculiarity as a

⁷ Clemit, *Godwinian*, p. 190.

⁸ Fiona J. Stafford, *The Last of the Race: The Growth of A Myth from Milton to Darwin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 112 and p. 205.

way to debate issues of feminine creativity and authorship, as well as a method of autobiographical reworking of Shelley's own history.⁹ My reading departs from a debate about the phenomenon of lastness as a figure for the novel's theme about civilisation and decline, and examines how Shelley's characterisation of Lionel Verney is instrumental to the novel's preoccupation with cultural identity. Mary Jacobus argues that Shelley's deep engagement in political debate in *The Last Man* is a contribution to the debate on population that arose between Godwin and Malthus.¹⁰ Jacobus' argument implies a close relationship between the individual and history, and this is crucial to an understanding of *The Last Man*, as Shelley's covert political critique manifests itself through representations of society and culture.¹¹ This chapter turns to the individual's understanding of a common human heritage, examining how it is shaped by a sense of history. We have seen how Shelley deploys this relationship to political effect in *Valperga*, but the dynamics of the relationship are also shaped by her interest in national histories.¹² In this respect, *The Last Man*'s historicity relates to English national identity, but also embraces a cosmopolitan European republicanism. This latter is accentuated by a sensitivity to the topography of revolution and liberty, as the narrative moves from England to Greece, and again from England to Italy through France and Switzerland.

Part of my discussion focuses on the way place repositions the site of civic identity from subjection to enlightened patriotic loyalty and active participation in the social order.¹³ This interpretation differs from Sterrenburg's argument that the organic chaos of the plague results in, or is a metaphor for, social disruption. While havoc is wreaked by the plague, the survivors make strenuous efforts to retain social cohesiveness. Shelley's narration of acts of individual good which benefit society

⁹ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1979), pp. 97–104; see also Samantha Webb, 'Reading the End of the World: *The Last Man*, History, and the Agency of Romantic Authorship' in Bennett and Curran, eds., pp. 119–33.

¹⁰ Jacobus, p. 106.

¹¹ Jacobus, p. 109.

¹² Shelley's journal lists her reading of works such as Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Hume's *History of England*, Villani's *History of Italy* and Virgil's *Aeneid* (MWSJ, pp. 654, 648, 681).

¹³ The construction of politically engaged subjectivity is separate from later representations of England in *The Last Man*, which Blumberg identifies as 'strikingly subversive and unpatriotic' (*Early*, p. 135).

echoes a preoccupation in *Valperga*. She uses history to communicate the exchange between individual and society.

The representation of place in *The Last Man* is consistently politicised and aestheticised in recognition of its historical significance. The topography of *The Last Man* is intricately connected to the novel's temporal matrix. The Sibylline framework routes the narration through Italy in a multi-layered way. For example, the location of the Sibyl's cave is near Naples, and the closing scenes of the narrative occur in Rome. These two loci are temporally distinct, separated by millennia, but meet through the author's experiences of Italy and England in the nineteenth century and the literary resonances of Rome and Naples which associate them to the Sibyl's cave.¹⁴ Although the 'Author's Introduction' has been traced by critics back to the Shelleys' 1818 visit to the Sibyl's cave, the extent to which Italy informed Shelley's creativity and her intellectual responses to contemporary English culture and the European political climate is not widely appreciated. The range of Shelley's response can only be hinted at in identifying the idea for the Sibyl's cave to have originated in this visit. Sophie Thomas acknowledges the complexity of the cave framework by arguing that the problematic relationship between preface and text is 'arguably the most central aspect' of *The Last Man* and its temporal ambiguities.¹⁵ The relationship between England, and its republican heritage, and Italy, informs Shelley's construction of civic identity, and the transmission of history in *The Last Man*. The movement between the two within the text is initiated by the plague's destruction, but each signifies a cultural ideal. The temporal disjunction effected by Shelley's twenty-first-century setting still retrospectively alludes to England's own moment of republican crisis in the seventeenth century. Projecting parts of it into the future operates as an act of remembrance.

The representation of place in *The Last Man* participates in a formulation of

¹⁴ McWhir includes the relevant extract from Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book 6, where he writes at the Cave and in which Aeneas prays for a new homeland and prophetic knowledge of his people's fate (McWhir, ed., p. 378).

¹⁵ Sophie Thomas, 'The Ends of the Fragment, the Problem of the Preface: Proliferation and Finality in *The Last Man*', in *Mary Shelley's Fictions*, ed. by Michael Eberle-Sinatra (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 22-38 (p. 22). See also Julia Wright, ' "Little England": Anxieties of Space in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*', Eberle-Sinatra, ed., pp. 129-49, who interprets the relationship as an ironic one.

the aesthetic category that Elizabeth Bohls argues is particular to women writers of this era:

Their revisionary treatments of landscape aesthetics point to the often inhumane consequences of denying the connection between the aesthetic practices and the material, social, and political conditions of human existence.¹⁶

In *The Last Man*, Shelley achieves a reintegration of aesthetics and experience within the world by connecting her treatment of place to cultural and social consciousness. Individual responses to place are filtered through a language of aesthetics which is then translated to the public sphere. Civic identity is articulated through an aesthetic framework.

The first section brings together both place and civic identity in a discussion of the evolution of Lionel Verney's character, and argues that notions of the past and of place construct civic identity. Furthermore, representations of the landscape and its fertility work against the destructiveness of the plague to show the mutability of man. The English landscape anchors an active sense of civic identity which is then transformed into a more abstract and cosmopolitan attachment to the universal past of humanity, as the narrative moves south to Italy. The representation of place undergoes a fundamental revision while civic identity remains intact, as the coming of the plague disrupts the natural environment and the temporal consciousness of Lionel Verney. The transformation from a national past to a cosmopolitan, European one evolves through the aesthetic category of the sublime, and this is discussed in the middle section. Shelley's use of the sublime is related to landscape aesthetics and to conventions for representing sites of a European cultural past that have emerged from travel narratives. The preservation of the past depends upon the value Lionel attaches to it, and upon his sense of the symbolic magnitude of Rome, and this is discussed in the final section of the chapter.

Gender, Civic Identity, and Republican Space

Representations of the landscape and urban metropolises are central to the

¹⁶ Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716–1818*, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism 13, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 10.

formulation of civic identity in *The Last Man*. This section establishes how the landscape interacts with gender in the formation of civic identity. Masculine civic identity is depicted in Lionel as originating from the Cumberland landscape. Common markers for civic identity in *The Last Man*, as with *Valperga*, are activity within the public sphere, and a notion of virtue informed by the past. Each of these hones perceptual sensibilities which are first awakened through engagement with the natural world. Siting experience and feeling in relation to place opens up civic identity and individual subjectivity.

Shelley locates the republican space of *The Last Man* with particular specificity: Westminster and Windsor from 2073 onwards; Adrian's education in republican texts; the transformative space of the Alps; and then later, the aestheticised representations of traditionally great republics, such as Venice and Rome. The places of *The Last Man* operate as meaningful historical references and as personal memories. *The Last Man* also revises and experiments with representations of republicanism, particularly in relation to the landscape. Elizabeth Bohls suggests that such experimentation is a critique of traditional masculine approaches to sites of tourism, popular for their political and aesthetic qualities.¹⁷ However, when considering Shelley's intellectual approach to *The Last Man*, I have emphasised the role of subjectivity in the individual's responses to place, culture, and the natural world.

The relationship between the physical world and subjectivity is connected by Shelley to the political and civic spheres. My focus on the relationship between sublime landscapes, and an active, masculinized, civic virtue contextualises the presence of Burke's influence in *The Last Man* within Shelley's aesthetic framework. Shelley's representations of republicanism, of the landscape, and of the past, reappraise Burke's defence of constitutional stability, set out in *Reflections*, by embedding civic and social order within the reality of a mutable material world. Part of Shelley's revision of Burke is her construction of a republican literary and political past absorbing both ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome, and also more

¹⁷ Bohls argues such a case while highlighting the complex and paradoxical response of middle-class women writers to the aesthetics of representation (pp. 66–107).

recently, the English Civil War, as her use of quotations from Cleveland's *Poems* show.¹⁸ The republic of *The Last Man* enters literary and political discourse as part of a debate about the origins of British government, and engages with Edmund Burke, and Thomas Malthus, as well as a republican literary tradition spanning from Lucan to Milton. Gary Kelly has shown how republican thought in England during the Romantic period was shaped significantly by the English Civil War, and literary discourse about it drew inspiration from classical sources, as well as contemporary examples of despotism and revolution.¹⁹ In *The Last Man* the contribution of individual civic virtue shapes the maintenance of order in civil society. This is demonstrated in the interrelationship between the English republic and the allure of Greek independence, a cause for which Adrian and Raymond fight, and culminates in Verney's residence in Rome as the last man.

Lionel's fate as a man of noble birth forced by penury into shepherding and poaching initiates the theme of civilisation's demise. The role of the individual contributes to the perpetuation of civilisation, as he continually binds himself to the society of others. The diminishing remnant of humankind, and Lionel, the last man, increasingly seek out civilisation in its past glory to provide solace for their melancholy predicament. In an example of the novel's complexity, however, Lionel's journey from savagery to civilisation is also a return to his aristocratic origins. This return is also repeated as Lionel approaches Rome, when he reverts to savagery, distraught at the loss of human companionship. This too results in a final conclusive return to civility and civilisation.

Lionel's introduction heralds the stability both of the political structures in the novel and of civic identity. Both his shepherding and his Lakeland home exclude him from participating in civil society. He:

cannot say much in praise of such a life; and its pains far exceeded its pleasures. There was freedom in it, a companionship with nature, and a reckless loneliness; but these, romantic as they were, did not accord with the love of action and desire of human sympathy, characteristic of youth (LM, p.

¹⁸ Blumberg and Crook's annotation reveals how Shelley 'diverts Cavalier martyrology to other purposes', NSW, IV: *The Last Man*, ed. by Jane Blumberg with Nora Crook, p. 254n; see also p. 244n. Hereafter cited as LM; further references appear after quotations in the text.

¹⁹ Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel, 1780-1805* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 9.

14).

Lionel finds his state of nature unfulfilling. He is neither nurtured nor favoured by Nature, but feels already possessed of talents fit for social interaction. Unable to express them, he falls into 'lawless habits', leading a band of other shepherd youths. As leader, Lionel becomes 'rugged, but firm [. . .] daring and reckless' (LM, p. 15). He thus possesses the masculine qualities of martial virtue and anticipates a central component of gendered civic identity within *The Last Man*. Lionel's unruly adolescent masculinity is later transformed into civic virtue cultivated by sentiment and learning, from which he is able to meaningfully contribute to the society of which he becomes a part.

The construction of Lionel's social identity begins through the Lakeland landscape where he acquires 'the first real knowledge of myself' (LM, p. 14). His actions, while beholden to a farmer, formulate the first idea of his freedom and alongside that, he associates with others like himself. This independence is internalised in Perdita. In a description of her eyes, which is reminiscent of Euthanasia's in *Valperga*, her 'impenetrably deep' gaze allowed one:

to discover space after space [. . .] and to feel that the soul which was their soul, comprehended an universe of thought in its ken (LM, p. 15).²⁰

Lionel's overt challenge to society and Perdita's internalised withdrawal emphasise the importance of landscape, and the Cumberland hills were most politically resonant with Wordsworth's portrait of that landscape. At the time of *The Last Man*'s publication, the Lake District was associated with the rural communities that Wordsworth wrote about, but for tourists it was the 'definitively sublime English landscape'.²¹ Aesthetic strategies for viewing of this region were nevertheless 'composed from a deliberately "Italian" viewpoint' and derived from Poussin, Claude Lorrain, and Salvator Rosa.²² Shelley's landscape aesthetics generates an exchange between England and Italy energised by sublimated political comment. Her

²⁰ Compare the 'pure and unfathomable brilliance' of Euthanasia's eyes and her expression that 'seemed to require ages to read and understand' in *NSW*, III: *Valperga*, p. 77. Rajan notes in her edition of *Valperga* the similarity of this last phrase to *Prometheus Unbound*, II: ii, l. 56 (p. 142n).

²¹ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage, 1995), p. 471.

²² James Buzard, *The Beaten Track* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 20.

treatment of the Lakeland landscape reformulates her treatment of Italian landscapes, and anticipates later configurations of politicised landscape representation, most notably in *Rambles*.

Lionel's and Perdita's engagement with the land refigures Wordsworth's Romantic landscape into a site of subversion. Lionel's actively anti-social behaviour is a rejection of the rustic lifestyle, throwing away 'in contempt our peasant fare' to cook stolen game (*LM*, p. 17). Perdita wanders off to 'unfrequented places' to indulge her 'active fancy' (*LM*, p. 16). The development of these two contrasting identities is catalysed by gender. For Perdita, sensation and sentiment become synthesised so that perception of the interior world is 'mingled' with the 'native growth of her own mind' (*LM*, p. 17), but she is aligned with the ideal, the solitary, and a particularly feminised Nature, as in the following simile:

She was like a fruitful soil that imbibed the airs and dews of heaven, and gave them forth again to light in loveliest forms of fruits and flowers; but then she was often dark and rugged as that soil, raked up, and new sown with unseen seed (*LM*, p. 17).

Lionel's interaction with the natural world is one of toil, and the hardship that causes his poaching implicates him in a society riven with 'class conflicts' as Timothy Morton has observed.²³ Lionel's incipient manliness is composed of a physical strength and 'hardy virtues' (*LM*, p. 18). At the formative moment when Lionel's attitude to society is at its most ambivalent, his self-awareness increases. The irony of his hostility to civilisation and society is apparent once the reader learns of his loneliness and his attempts to recreate civilisation in Rome. Yet Lionel's status as the last man also removes the pleasure of society in which he actively participated, and in which he could assert his masculinity. Once he circulates in the aristocratic society of Adrian and beyond the unruly landscapes of Cumberland, Lionel never seems so conscious of his masculine power. In fact, the opposite is the case. When he returns to Versailles to seek out Adrian, he must repress his 'girlish extacies' (*LM*, p. 314). Another example occurs as the Verneys are packing to leave Windsor, and

²³ Timothy Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste: The Body and the Natural World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 52.

consoling a despairing Idris, Lionel too, begins to weep: 'yes my masculine firmness dissolved' (*LM*, p. 257, original emphasis).

Morton connects, through vegetarianism, the body's mutability to political identity and the social body and 'refigures the sublime body of the Burkean state'.²⁴ In giving prominence to the political agenda of *The Last Man*, Morton links the plague and mutability to civic and social and political awareness. A further extension of this argument, which Morton does not explore, is the presence of civilisation in this debate. Morton's 'noble savage' is also, by Lionel's own description, an 'unlettered one' (*LM*, p. 27).²⁵ Lionel's association with Rome, and his understanding of the need to acquire knowledge, emphasises the novel's critique of the preservation of society and civilisation. Lionel's education is complicit with the anachronism upon which the existence of the narrative is built. Lionel's battle with civilisation is a struggle for self-realisation, which later is an attempt to preserve and record civilisation itself, and this depends upon his understanding of Rome as a culturally symbolic site. This is figured in Lionel's own journey from the Cumberland hills to Rome, but it is also embedded in the circulation of narratives begun through the Sibylline leaves framework.²⁶ Shelley delineates Lionel's consciousness of authorship throughout the novel, as Samantha Webb has shown, but this is foregrounded by his acknowledgement of the power that mutability possesses over men's lives.²⁷ Lionel's embracing of the history of civilisation can only attempt to overcome this even though he understands the futility of his actions.

The past is central in raising Lionel's consciousness about his recovered social identity. Taking the narrative as a whole, Lionel and Adrian are associated with Rome and Greece respectively, and play out a memorialisation of national culture which is part of a wider cosmopolitan understanding of civilisation. From the first association of Lionel with Romulus (*LM*, p. 15) to Adrian's interest in Greece ancient and modern, the formative role of culture in national and individual identity connects civilisation to the political themes of *The Last Man*. The associations of

²⁴ Morton, p. 54.

²⁵ Morton, p. 52.

²⁶ McWhir, ed., connects the Sibyl to the novel's circulating intertexts and to narration and history, xxii-xxiii, xxvi, and xxxv-xxxvi.

²⁷ Webb, pp. 121, 125, 128, and 132.

ancient civilisations with republicanism are effected by Shelley's temporal juxtapositioning. Lionel and Adrian identify with the ideals of Rome and Greece, absorbed from ancient history, yet their immediate past is a pre-Revolutionary court-culture. This is further reinforced by Lionel's journey to Vienna, which refers the reader back to Shelley's present as a symbol of the restoration in Europe of a courtly culture after 1815, opposing the republican impulses of Italian and Greek nationalism.

Lionel's posting to Vienna as a 'diplomatist' marks the fruition of his civic identity and ambivalent insight into the social world. Before he leaves for Vienna, he observes that:

life and the system of social intercourse were a wilderness, a tiger-haunted jungle! Through the midst of its errors, in the depths of its savage recesses, there was a disentangled and flowery pathway (LM, p. 29).

The 'demesne of civilisation' conflicts with Lionel's former state and results in an ambivalent view of society. His past state is now viewed as a 'wild jungle', and is distanced from his new self by a different, ancient past animated for him by busts depicting Greek sages. The artifice of society at Vienna reveals to Lionel a society that is false and corrupt, thus contrasting with the ancient republican past he has learnt and the republican present from which he arrived. Social interaction is mediated by the past, and this redefines the relationship between society and the individual. As a consequence, it destabilises the position of society in relation to conceptions of history and the physical world. The past to be remembered needs to be reanimated, but this reanimation needs to be stimulated by physical forms, art or ruins, and the presence of society. This development initiates a preoccupation that emerges more forcefully later in *The Last Man*: the need to memorialise culture.

Lionel's wish to make an active contribution to society is expressed within a temporal framework, while seeming to animate and invigorate his person. While 'hope, glory, love, and blameless ambition' guide him, Lionel thinks on the future:

What has been, though sweet, is gone; the present is good only because it is about to change, and the to come is all my own. Do I fear, that my heart palpitates? high aspirations cause the flow of my blood; my eyes seem to

penetrate the cloudy midnight of time, and to discern within the depths of its darkness, the fruition of all my soul desires (*LM*, p. 32).

The centrality of temporal consciousness to civic identity in *The Last Man* telescopes Shelley's future perspective and the present into a narrative that suggests the proximity of savagery to civilisation, as Lionel's ambivalence to society shows. Raymond's Castruccian ambition brings to the Protectorship a dynamic action which shapes the national landscape. Raymond's enactment of civic identity is defined by a relationship to English national space which connects political enlightenment and civic virtue to the fertility of the land. The outcome of Raymond's civic projects is part of a paradoxical reversal of the idyll inhabited at Windsor.

Lionel has already noted the 'fertility and beauty' of the environs of the estate (*LM*, p. 35), but Windsor is a problematic site. It operates as a place of republican equality yet it obviously connotes the Royal Family and rigorously enforces a gendered division of public and private spheres. Adrian, in nominating Raymond for the Protectorship, suggests that as the most suitable candidate, he was 'never born to be a drone in the hive' and would never find contentment in the 'pastoral life' they enjoy in Windsor (*LM*, p. 77). Raymond's qualities of martial virtue, 'the noble, the war-like, the great in every quality that can adorn the mind and person of man' (*LM*, p. 77), contrast with Adrian's civic virtue. Adrian's absence from public life is 'Cincinnatus-like' (*LM*, p. 78); the 'wise of the land', like Guinigi in *Valperga*, realise the altogether different virtue reaped from the land.²⁸ Ryland's civic identity is also connected to pastoral virtue and physical vigour. He had:

something the appearance of a farmer; of a man whose muscles and full grown stature had been developed under the influence of vigorous exercise and exposure to the elements. [. . .] [B]eing a projector, and of an ardent and industrious disposition, he had on his own estate given himself up to agricultural labours (*LM*, p. 190).

Work on the land connects active civic virtue with the productivity of the soil. Despite this, Shelley's characterisation of Ryland does not exemplify the republican heroism depicted in Adrian and Raymond. Raymond's urban and martial virtue

²⁸ Compare also Staël's use of a picture of Cincinnatus leaving his plough to lead the Roman armies in *Corinne* (p. 157).

does not admit of the organic cycle of this order of things. Instead, his vision, confined to the present, revolves around the mechanistic and the artificial.

His protectorship implements 'a thousand beneficial schemes' with the aim of creating abundance and grandeur, rather than working with the fruits of the earth:

Canals, aqueducts, bridges, stately buildings, and various edifices for public utility, were entered upon; he was continually surrounded by projectors and projects, which were to render England one scene of fertility and magnificence; the state of poverty was to be abolished (*LM*, p. 85).

Shelley has Raymond preside over a utopian future state where 'disease was to be banished' and labour minimised to preserve order:

The arts of life, and the discoveries of science had augmented in a ratio which left all calculation behind; food sprung up, so to say, spontaneously – machines existed to supply with facility every want of the population. [. . .] Raymond was to inspire them with his beneficial will, and the mechanism of society, once systematised according to faultless rules, would never again swerve into disorder (*LM*, p. 85).

Ryland's earlier speech against hereditary monarchy demonstrated how 'England has become powerful, and its inhabitants wise, by means of the freedom' each enjoyed in the republic (*LM*, p. 49). From such a manifesto, Raymond's glory and ambition is re-channelled so that he now covets the title 'benefactor of his country'. His capriciousness highlights a central conflicting dynamic in Shelley's conception of public life and history.

Adrian's benevolence remodels Raymond's protectorship, despite Ryland's criticisms. Raymond made civic improvements to the land to increase its fertility, but Adrian puts the land to use to support the people. His petitions to the wealthy, marking a shift of emphasis from the aesthetic to the utilitarian, result in a voluntary redistribution of wealth to aid plague refugees flooding into England; and estates are ploughed up in order to supply food (*LM*, p. 187). Adrian's re-assignment of land for agricultural use influenced the 'wealthy of the land' to convert their 'pleasure-grounds' to alleviate the 'misery of their fellow creatures' (*LM*, p. 187). Parts of Windsor had been given over to cultivation and 'strips of potatoe-land and corn were scattered here and there' (*LM*, p. 189). This is part of a regime instigated by

Adrian to maintain stability and order in society.

Personal crisis forces Raymond to reassert his former masculine virtue, not in the civic sphere, but in martial virtue by returning to Greece. Greece also becomes a site of revision for Adrian. While Raymond can 'contemplate the ideal of war', Adrian comes to realise that in war the individual 'may be overlooked, so that the muster roll contain its full numbers' (*LM*, p. 126). This conflict of experience recalls again Ryland's earlier speech in which he showed how the republic 'gave privilege to each individual in the state'; the speech in which he 'tore from reality the mask with which she had been clothed' (*LM*, pp. 49, 50). The republican civic focus is re-emphasised by the episodes in Greece, and the wars there precipitate this reorientation. The enduring cultural legacy of Greece as a centre of ancient civilisation excites a sense of the past in its civic structures:

To our right the Acropolis rose high, spectatress of a thousand changes, of ancient glory, Turkish slavery, and the restoration of dear-bought liberty; tombs and cenotaphs were strewed thick around, adorned by ever renewing vegetation; the mighty dead hovered over their monuments, and beheld in our enthusiasm and congregated numbers a renewal of the scenes in which they had been the actors (*LM*, p. 136).

The association of Greece and Rome with civic honour is apparent in Godwin's 'Essay on Sepulchres' when he states:

How delightful must it be, to wander among the scenes of ancient Greece and Rome! Is it possible for a man who has contemplated the history of these states, not to be lifted out of himself, when he stands on the soil where Sophocles thought, and Demosthenes spoke, and Themistocles and Aristides contended for the palm of public virtue? (*S*, p. 19).

While Godwin alludes to the possibility of being elevated by a physical sense of the past, tangible in the soil, Shelley embeds her memorialisation of Greek culture within European civilisation and a perpetual historical cycle, as Athenian well-wishers greet Raymond on his release from Turkish captivity. Shelley also connects liberty to fertility, as with her representations of Italy. For Lionel, the 'living map' of Greece was a 'fertile land' and 'splendid landscape' (*LM*, p. 141). This sense of memorialising culture reflects a strong subtextual engagement with Godwin's

Sepulchres. In attributing a positive influence of this work on Shelley, I differ from McWhir who suggests that Shelley 'gently mocks' Godwin in her reference to the 'Illustrious Dead'.²⁹

The experience of war in Greece generates disillusion for Lionel after the battle of Marmora, amongst the dead, he 'felt ashamed of my species' (*LM*, p. 143). It is an experience which redefines his aesthetic vision through the suffering he has endured:

How unwise had the wanderers been, who had deserted [Windsor's] shelter, entangled themselves in the web of society, and entered on what men of the world call "life", – that labyrinth of evil, that scheme of mutual torture. To live, according to this sense of the word, we must not only observe and learn, we must also feel; we must not be mere spectators of action, we must act; we must not describe, but be subjects of description. Deep sorrow must have been the inmate of our bosoms; fraud must have lain in wait for us; the artful must have deceived us; sickening doubt and false hope chequered our days. [. . .] Let us live for each other and for happiness; let us seek peace in our dear home, near the inland murmur of streams, and the gracious waving of trees, the beauteous vesture of earth, and sublime pageantry of the skies. Let us leave "life", that we may live (*LM*, p. 172).

The above quotation offers a form of identity that integrates sensation and experience. The operation of civic duty in the physical world expands Lionel's understanding of subjectivity and its relationship to society.

The distinction that Lionel is making between "life", the 'web of society', and the life of material experience and sensation alienates him from the society that created within him the high degree of sensibility he exhibits. This preoccupation with an aestheticised natural world offers relief from the plague, but the ambivalent representation of sublime antiquity, and the force of nature at the novel's close, unearths the limitations of a retreat into the natural world. Such aestheticisation creates a distance from the social world, and from the aesthetic objects themselves. While appreciating the greatness of Rome at the end of the novel, Lionel also comes to acknowledge the loss of society, and his need for it.

²⁹ McWhir, ed., xxxiv.

This section has demonstrated how civic identity is situated in the land, and how the landscape sustains a civic identity rooted in representations of the landscape amid the chaos caused by the plague. The discussion of Lionel's socialisation shows his transition from nature to culture once he becomes aware of civilisation's past. The section has also emphasised the landscapes of England and Greece so that the final section in Rome can be contextualised through an English national past and a European, republican one. The idea of the continuation of civil society dominates the representation of the travellers as they cross to the Continent. The following section examines the pressure exerted on civic identity by an inexplicably capricious natural world and the increasing prominence of aesthetics to counteract this.

Sublime Places: Society, History, and Civilisation

This section examines how place acquires its significance during the exodus of the last remnant of mankind. Cultural sites such as Versailles, or landscapes such as the Vale of Chamounix, shore up community identity but this is undermined by the fragmentation of temporal perception. The presence of the plague and the imminence of death require a level of introspection that begins to fracture notions of time. Among philosophers, the religious, and the benevolent:

the present, as an unalienable possession, became all of time to which they dared commit the precious freight of their hopes (*LM*, p. 214).

Lionel turns to a metaphor to express the conceptual rupture. The past, as was understood before the plague, is figured as a long road, encapsulating not just the individual's life path, but also resonating with the progressive development of societies. Another apt metaphor chiming in with Enlightenment theories which seek to connect civil society and the material world explodes this notion of indefinite linear progress:

an earthquake had changed the scene – under our very feet the earth yawned – deep and precipitous the gulph below opened to receive us, while the hours charioted us towards the chasm (*LM*, p. 214).

Fiona Stafford has outlined the relationship between geological theories that refute biblical estimates of the world's age, and also how an increased understanding of the physical world fuelled a sense of catastrophism that secularised Apocalyptic traditions.³⁰ The understanding of place, or landscape image, in relation to time connects aesthetics to a kind of social epistemology. The sublime 'deep and precipitous gulph' reverses the confrontation of mortality that one experiences on looking at the mountainous sublime. It is not the vision of the 'gulph' that causes the sensation of awe and terror, but the prospect of mortality itself, and the extinction of civilisation that conjures up the image of the sublime 'gulph'. Conceptual terror takes on an imagined form that allows the magnitude to be rationalised. This sublime is generated in terror by the imagination, but such terror is deflected by the deceptively picturesque surroundings of Windsor:

[R]eason told us that care and sorrow would grow with the opening year – but how to believe the ominous voice breathed up with pestiferous vapours from fear's dim cavern, while nature, laughing and scattering from her green lap flowers, and fruits, and sparkling waters, invited us to join the gay masque of young life she led upon the scene? (*LM*, p. 215)

This deceptive picturesque situates the destruction within civilisation and society. It is not the natural world that is ravaged by the plague, but man, his effects, and his creations, as Pamela Clemit has observed. It is the 'overwhelming profusion of the natural world which threatens to displace the edifices of man-made civilisation'.³¹

The plague, a 'metaphor for political disorder', initiates a critique of the worth attached to sites of cultural value, and necessitates the movement of people towards these sites.³² Threatened with their own extinction, the visitors to the sites can ascertain their true value, and the value of human life without society, as Lionel laments in his valediction to humanity:

Alas! to enumerate the adornments of humanity, shews, by what we have lost, how supremely great man was. It is all over now. He is solitary [. . .] [u]nsupported and weak. [. . .] O deserted one, lie down at evening-tide

³⁰ Stafford, p. 208–11.

³¹ Clemit, *Godwinian*, p. 185.

³² Clemit, *Godwinian*, p. 194.

unknowing of the past, careless of the future, for from such fond ignorance alone canst thou hope for ease! (LM, pp. 252-53)

Yet these sites also reveal the relationship of man to power in civil society. Confronted with disintegrating society, the places that are sought out are sites of political power, sites of government and society. Tracing the presence of politically significant places in the route of the last survivors concurs with Fiona Stafford's suggestion that the myth of lastness is also a 'myth of revolution: a form through which to express the conflicting emotions provoked by great change'.³³

At Paris, the Place Vendôme, the Tuileries, and Versailles have strong associations with the Revolution. These sites historically reflect the courtly influence of the French *ancien régime*, and the power of the populace, as the society of *The Last Man* seeks to construct a sense of order. For Adrian, and for Lionel, obedience becomes a crucial issue in the preservation of the surviving society. Adrian's troop 'kept him in full occupation to ensure their fidelity and safety' (LM, p. 301). Lionel, not possessing Adrian's benevolence, has a more problematic task in awakening a collective sense of civic identity:

My people demanded to be led forward – rebellion, if so we might call what was the mere casting away of straw-formed shackles, appeared manifestly among them. [. . .] The only chance of safety, the only hope of preservation from every form of indescribable suffering, was our keeping together (LM, p. 311).

These eruptions of civil disorder as the bands of survivors move away from Paris mark a transformation from community to individualism. The 'straw-formed shackles' that serve to cohere the group are easily broken in an attempt to preserve their own lives. On their approach to Switzerland, Lionel reinforces this:

We first had bidden adieu to the state of things which having existed many thousand years, seemed eternal; such a state of government, obedience, traffic, and domestic intercourse, as had moulded our hearts and capacities, as far back as memory could reach. Then to patriotic zeal, to the arts, to reputation, to enduring fame, to the name of country, we had bidden farewell. We saw depart all hope of retrieving our ancient state – all

³³ Stafford, p. 162.

expectation, except the feeble one of saving our individual lives from the wreck of the past (*LM*, p. 319).

This individualism is ironically fulfilled in the sublime consciousness aroused by the survivors' passage through the Alps. The Alps become a site of crisis and of transformation in which civic identity begins to fragment. Verification of the material world through the senses is set in opposition to the power of the imagination. Superstitious terror is proven groundless on each occasion as a rational explanation is provided for the seeming mysteries of the 'more than human' operadancer, and the 'Black Spectre', 'token of inevitable death' (*LM*, p. 318).

These epistemological conflicts suggest the disintegration of coherence between social identity and the individual as it is forced to confront mass extinction. In this context, the sublime of the alpine landscape offers not terror but an intoxicating wonder, self-affirming to the spectator of the mountainous view. On seeing the Alps and their reflection in Lake Geneva, Lionel is '[c]arried away by wonder' (*LM*, p. 324) and the whole party 'remained awhile' at the scene, 'lightened of the pressing burthen of fate, forgetful of death' (*LM*, p. 325). They experienced:

an enthusiastic transport, akin to happiness, [which] burst, like a sudden ray from the sun, on our darkened life (*LM*, p. 325).

As they approach the Vale of Chamounix and plague kills the last of the party, Nature, 'consoled us in the very heart of misery'. The '[s]ublime grandeur of outward objects' was 'in harmony' with their 'desolation' and their 'hapless hearts' (*LM*, p. 328). These representations are a synthesis between the perception of the material world, and its wonder, and the individual's internal pain of existing in a world without humanity. As this synthesis occurs, it removes the pain, but does not diminish the magnitude of the landscape's sublime capacity:

Our misery took majestic shape and colouring from the vast ruin [Chamounix], that accompanied and made one with it. Thus on lovely earth, many a dark ravine contains a brawling stream, shadowed by romantic rocks, threaded by mossy paths – but all, except this, wanted the mighty back-ground, the towering Alps, whose snowy capes, or bared ridges, lifted us from our dull mortal abode, to the palaces of Nature's own (*LM*, p. 329).

This sense of unity of the self with the sublime is identifiable with the 'transgressive' sublime of early-nineteenth-century travel commentaries. Using the Alps as a model, Chloe Chard suggests that:

the crossing of geographical boundaries [can be seen] as an activity which merges with the sublime aspiration precisely because it is prompted by a passionate need for self-realization.³⁴

This self-realisation must acknowledge the primacy and freedom of the individual because society has vanished. Chard also points out that in Shelley's journal we can find evidence of a sublime that:

supplies a metaphor for the impulse towards freedom and self-realization [in which] the experience of sublimity is elided with the expression of a sense of liberation from the oppressive limits of the familiar.³⁵

Chard's observations about the sublime are pertinent to *The Last Man* by highlighting both the significance of the landscape, and of movement through it, which induces personal self-realization. Further to this, an awareness of the boundary that is crossed physically and metaphorically in (the figure of) the Alps resonates ironically through the last stages of the novel. Chard's interpretation of the transgressive rests on the interaction between travel's sense of adventure, the traveller's point of origin, and then destination. The Grand Tour improves the traveller's knowledge, or social cultivation; essentially, it relies on the society of others for its effect. The positive associations of travel are neutralised in *The Last Man* by the burial of the final victims of the plague in the Alps, signifying the last of society. Rome is no longer a 'social' destination, but acquires a transcendent significance. The element of travel writing in *The Last Man* facilitates its concerns with history and civilisation. Crossing the Alps to unpeopled places allows history to emerge more forcefully.

³⁴ Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography 1600-1830* (Manchester: MUP, 1999), p. 183.

³⁵ Chard, p. 185.

Narratives of the Past and Reanimating History in Italy

The previous section showed how the aesthetic of sublime landscapes initiates a transformation of identity from the social to the individual. This section examines how the individual becomes dependent on the past for her or his personal, human identity. In particular, I focus on Lionel's continued fragmentation of social concepts, such as time, and the development of his civic identity from a national, English one to a cosmopolitan, European one. This occurs in Italy through visits to Venice and finally Rome. Arrival at Venice marks the final stage of the extinction of humanity, but also evokes the beginnings of the novel, in its praise of England as a 'sea-surrounded nook' (*LM*, p. 11). 'There was something to the English peculiarly attractive in the idea of this wave-encircled, island-enthroned city' (*LM*, p. 339). Adrian's admiration for the ancient classical world helped to educate Lionel, and here in Venice Clara listened to him as he 'discoursed on the glorious nations of the dead, of the beauteous earth and the fate of man' (*LM*, p. 339). Venice becomes a site politicised by its resonance with the English republic, and by its own republican history now in ruins.

Once again the reanimating of history amongst ruins surfaces in Adrian's discourse. Venice too, as they leave, is a city of ruin. Shelley's portrayal of it as a ruin presumes a mode of representation familiar to her contemporaries. Nature's supremacy over man inverts the pastoral images of fertility that typified Lionel's elegy for England upon his departure. The aesthetic resonances of Venice merge with its political significance, a ruin itself after Napoleon abolished the oligarchic republic in 1797. Venice consequently becomes a pivotal point in the novel where the focus shifts from the political to the aesthetic.³⁶ Venice, unpeopled and politically inactive, serves to remind the survivors of what has been lost. The city itself acts as a memorial and an unbearable reminder:

In the midst of this appalling ruin of the monuments of man's power, nature asserted her ascendancy. [. . .] We saw the ruins of this hapless city from the height of the tower of San Marco, immediately under us, and

³⁶ Bohls documents the popularity of Venice on the Grand Tour, and cites Shaftesbury's allusion to the nuptial ceremony between the Doge and the sea as a politically-inspired gendering of aesthetics (pp. 8–9).

turned with sickening hearts to the sea, which, though it be a grave, rears no monument, discloses no ruin (LM, p. 340).

The ruins of the city become a symbol of the ruin of the polis and its community. Lionel attempts to recapture a sense of the polis prior to its ruin in his journey to Rome. He is not seeking an evocation of sublime antiquity in the ruins; his journey to Rome attempts to recapture the society of his fellow beings:

I will seek the towns – Rome, the capital of the world, the crown of man's achievements. Among its storied streets, hallowed ruins, and stupendous remains of human exertion, I shall not, as here, find every thing forgetful of man; trampling on his memory, defacing his works (LM, p. 356).

He sets himself against nature, whereas before it helped him realise his civic identity.

Lionel's focus on Rome combines a present need for society with a strong sense of the regenerative possibilities of history and ancient civilisation. The return to Rome initiates a process of immortalisation for the human race, both in the place itself and in Lionel's narrative. Hannah Arendt defines one of the processes of immortalisation as 'the addition to the human artifice of something more permanent than we ourselves'.³⁷ Lionel's reanimation of historical figures in Rome internalises this process. He adds the 'human artifice' of the past to his present, in an attempt to revivify himself and make the prospect of human life seem more permanent in the 'haunted cell' of his brain (LM, p. 357).

Arendt finds expression of the Roman attachment to human artifice in the founding myth of the city. It is crucial to structuring the civic identity of the citizens because the founding is connected to political authority:

The foundation of a new body politic [. . .] became to the Romans the central decisive unrepeatable beginning of their whole history, a unique event. And the most deeply revered Roman divinities were Janus, the god of beginning [. . .] and Minerva, the goddess of remembrance.³⁸

The historical centrality of Rome is figured in Lionel's return to it as a site of ending, as though derived from this sense of authority that the Roman past maintains. It

³⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (London: Faber, 1961), p. 71.

³⁸ Arendt, p. 121.

concurr with Lionel's retrospective relation of the demise of humanity, 'binding every act back to the sacred beginning of Roman history, adding, as it were, to every single moment the whole weight of the past'.³⁹

Thomas McFarland sees this seeking out of the 'hallowed ruins, and stupendous remains' of human exertion as a defining part of Romanticism, connecting early nineteenth-century preoccupations with it to a 'pervasive longing of the Romantics for an absent reality'.⁴⁰ He associates the evocative particularity of the symbol, the fragment, or the ruin, with the sublime. In so doing, he discusses the conceptual implications of this on the individual. Recognition of the sublime is:

the perception of very large fragments, such as mountains, with the accompanying awareness that this largeness implies still larger conceptions that can have no such objectivisation.⁴¹

The power of the sublime, both in the landscapes of the natural world and in the cosmopolitan context of the city, represents the incomprehensible reality of humankind's eradication, and serves as a continual reminder of it. Fiona Stafford explores the psychical impact of the conceptual immensity of 'lastness' as a 'personal myth', but as a consequence, narrows its resonance. Lastness generates:

a sense of expectation, as if an explanation will be forthcoming to justify its [the race's] disappearance and very often the last survivor feels compelled to memorialize the vanished group.⁴²

The ruin, in tandem with lastness, is a kind of sublime expression of the conflict between incomprehensibility, concept, and reality. McFarland interprets the sublimity of ruins as a fractured unity of symbol and organism. This 'diasparactive realisation', as McFarland terms it, becomes implicated in the perception and understanding of the world.⁴³

For *The Last Man* the experience of the wider world, and the natural world, is related to a sense of community and a sense of race. The weight of the past burdens

³⁹ Arendt, p. 123.

⁴⁰ Thomas McFarland, *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Modalities of Fragmentation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 11.

⁴¹ McFarland, p. 29.

⁴² Stafford, pp. 161-62; p. 3.

⁴³ McFarland, p. 4.

any attempt to define the present, or the future. The act of remembering, and later of recording, become for Lionel acts which shape his perception of the world because he increasingly seeks to define himself in relation to the lost community of humankind. As he becomes more aware of the surrounding material world, through his 'anatomised' senses, he becomes more conscious of the loss of community. Such a representation of memory, which establishes a relationship between social identity and individual perceptions of the wider world, functions 'not as remembrance but as the overall structure of the past within the present'.⁴⁴ Yet in attempting to reanimate Rome, Lionel tries to integrate his experience into history, a history which 'dwells exclusively on temporal continuities, on changes in things and in the relations among things'.⁴⁵ The compound mixture of memory, place, and history produces a highly aestheticised representation of the past, contained within the novel by its imaginative structural constraints (the Sibyl's prophecy and the notion of lastness).

The aesthetic capabilities of memory emphasise the relationship of place to the past in *The Last Man* through Lionel. This relationship is also structured through political awareness. Elizabeth Bohls has asserted that for Edmund Burke and his contemporaries, 'aesthetic response is an integral and desirable component of political life'.⁴⁶ In *The Last Man*, Shelley quotes from Burke's *Reflections* on two occasions in a fashion which suggests an aestheticising of Lionel's world-view.⁴⁷ Shelley's use of Burke shows the conflict between the acknowledgement of humanity's extinction and the desire to memorialise. This desire, which Lionel himself accepts as futile, is symptomatic of the disruption of time and society by which Lionel's solitude is marked. The grandeur of the civilisation in the 'time-honoured space' of 'Eternal Rome' (LM, p. 356), and an incomplete fragment, stimulate Lionel to write his 'monument of the existence of Verney, the Last Man' (LM, p. 362). The city itself becomes a memorial to the achievements of humanity

⁴⁴ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 3 vols, ed. by Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1: xxiv.

⁴⁵ Nora, 1: 3.

⁴⁶ Bohls, p. 109.

⁴⁷ Blumberg and Crook note four references to *Reflections*: pp. 126, 176, 180, and 319. Of these, only p. 180 and p. 319 are footnoted by Shelley herself.

and a way to preserve himself. His 'eternal burning' is quelled by the stillness of the city, and he connects Rome's power of imagination with extinction and survival:

I am in Rome! I behold, and as it were, familiarly converse with the wonder of the world, sovereign mistress of the imagination, majestic and eternal survivor of millions of generations of extinct men (LM, p. 357).

The significance of Lionel's visit to Rome highlights *The Last Man's* historicist concerns. Lionel's experience of Rome is a supremely aesthetic one, as he documents his 'pauseless flight' round the sights of Rome (LM, p. 359), recalling Euthanasia's visit to Rome in *Valperga*. Lionel's tour enables him to forget his own situation, and also to reanimate history. The spirit of Rome, with its power over imagination can call forth history and present itself to Lionel, who recreates moments from Rome's past and experiences them as present, actual time. As Rome operates as one vast receptacle for memory, Lionel creates memories from historical facts, or from classical literature:

I tried to lose the sense of present misery and present desertion, by recalling to the haunted cell of my brain vivid memories of times gone by. I rejoiced at my success, as I figured Camillus, the Gracchi, Cato, and last the heroes of Tacitus (LM, p. 357).

This serves as a point of origin for a 'Diorama of ages' that takes Lionel up to his actual present. Even as this reflects Rome's idealised capacity to create human history and withstand its own destruction, there is an ambiguity in this vision of Rome's history. Lionel's version of this vision is subject to the transformations of representation as he moves forward in time:

The romance with which, dipping our pencils in the rainbow hues of sky and transcendent nature, we to a degree gratuitously endow the Italians, replaced the solemn grandeur of antiquity (LM, p. 358).

The 'romance' of the Italian landscape distances the observer from the historical might of ancient Rome which Lionel must sustain if he is to remain inspired by Rome's timelessness. Rome's endurance, and its ability to revivify those it extinguishes, imbue the 'Eternal City' with transcendence.

Lionel's excessive sensibility in Rome invites parallels with travel commentaries which serve to undermine representation of place and experience. Chloe Chard identifies excessive sensibility as a characteristic of early nineteenth-century travel writing. She argues that it is adopted by writers as a strategy to rework and make original descriptions of place that have been commented on time and again.⁴⁸ In writing the fiction of *The Last Man*, however, Shelley relates excessive sensibility to temporality and the perception of time and society. Some of Lionel's most vehement outbursts are against time and his solitude, as when he sits down to a repast of perished foods. Having searched the house in the hope of finding a survivor, he is overwhelmed and outraged at his circumstance:

This vacant cottage revealed no new sorrow – the world was empty; mankind was dead – I knew it well – why quarrel with an acknowledged and stale truth? Yet, as I said, I had hoped in the very heart of despair, so that every new impression of the hard-cut reality on my soul brought with it a fresh pang, telling me the yet unstudied lesson, that neither change of place nor time could bring alleviation to my misery (*LM*, p. 351).

He is governed by 'tenacious' reason (*LM*, p. 348), yet seeks to break down the concepts that socialised him, in order to dull his sense of the world.

Lionel's attempt to document history is dominated by generic concerns of history-writing. He relates civil unrest, war, political battles, and believes in celebrating the achievements of mankind, yet draws into this a domestic life that turns this history into a memoir. The individual remains a dominant force in the representation of history in the novel. As in *Valperga*, it is the position of the character in relation to the historical theme of the narrative, that motivates the action. Both Lionel and Euthanasia are subject to historical movement that is beyond their control despite attempts to resist it.

The Last Man departs from *Valperga* in its treatment of history, by identifying a specific final phase through which to relate a course of events that directly comment on previous history. *Valperga's* setting of medieval Italy suggests continuity of the ancient past with the medieval past, partly by the resurgence of classical republican texts revived by Machiavelli among others. The republican vision in

⁴⁸ Chard, pp. 99-100.

The Last Man reworks the history of the English Civil War, in the context of the French Revolution, and ancient history offers an aesthetic reformation of civic identity, in the face of revolution, and European conflict. *Valperga* focuses in detail on a particular instance of Italian republicanism, and its failure. *The Last Man* distances the republican failure of the English Commonwealth, and the French Revolution by seeking a universal history of civilisation.

The only way Shelley's vision of a universal history can be achieved is through the extermination of humanity. Rome cannot receive its last citizen until he is truly alone to view the city's ruins in solitude. Only at this time can Rome present its history as spectacle. Lionel goes to see the spectacle of Rome to glean from its ruins a sense of history. The self-consciousness of the narrative demands that Lionel too becomes the spectacle being viewed. This strategy of narration results in the spectacle of Lionel as the last man, and history becomes a man-made construct aestheticised in the natural world. The forms of ruin, whether mountains, ancient monuments, or cities, create a sense of history within the subject through its sense of self and its human predecessors. The human presence in the mountains, or in the ruins, creates the sense of humanity's achievements but also of its extinction. Thus, Lionel's narrative of history is undermined by his own destabilised perception of the world, and history itself can only reveal the uniqueness of the past in a state of silence, without civilisation or a notion of time.

Lionel's increasing reluctance to chart time negates the temporality of history. In so doing, it reflects the aesthetic project of Romanticism. Lionel's frustration at marking time is profoundly destabilising:

I needed no recorder of the inch and barley-corn growth of my life, while my unquiet thoughts created other divisions, than those ruled over by the planets – and, in looking back on the age that had elapsed since I had been alone, I disdained to give the name of days and hours to the throes of agony which had in truth portioned it out (*LM*, p. 354).

It leaves him to conclude that 'this is the earth; there is no change – no ruin – no rent made in her verdurous expanse' (*LM*, p. 355). This statement emphasises the relationship of place to history, as it supersedes time in its ability to contain history.

This is not solely a rejection of linear time, or linear narratives of history ('looking back on the age that had elapsed') but of the notion of societal time governing history.

Place itself, is also complicated by this assertion. Place and the natural landscape offer an alternative method of aestheticising history outside of narrative. Rome in *The Last Man* symbolises the interaction between culture and the individual. Shelley's closing cosmopolitan image of the past contrasts with and subverts the notion of English identity informed by landscape aesthetics. The novel's intriguing temporal framework disrupts the narrative, as do the associations connoted by representations of the landscape or the polis. The culmination of these representations is Rome itself. Its own legacy offering up a way to transcend the limitations of representation by integrating the modes of time, history, and place, and transcending each of them.

Conclusion

The plague provides a powerful and imaginative frame for the discussion of politics and history, and the relationship of these to place and time. It also initiates exploration into the individual's awakening to civic and social identity and the role of aesthetics in the individual's response to history and civilisation. The role of civic identity becomes plain through the modes of republicanism that are represented in Adrian, Ryland, Raymond, and Lionel himself. Place becomes crucial to this with its joint associations of public history and personal memory. Confronting the natural world, the versions of the sublime it offers, emphasise a sense of self that is transformed through the fragmentation of collective cultural identity. An appreciation of aesthetics then reconstructs civic identity into notions of history on a more individual level. It is from this integration that the individual can reanimate history and claim it as a collective memory for the last representative of humanity. The framework of the Sibylline leaves adds a rich complexity to the temporal aspect of *The Last Man*, distancing the reader from the spectacle of the last man and refracting Shelley's critique of Romantic aesthetics, the sublime, and republicanism.

The Last Man presents a vision of republicanism that defines itself in relation to the aesthetics of history and to the physical world. The instability and fragmentariness of this republican vision is mediated through explorations of character that emphasise the individual's engagement with civic identity. History is dissociated from time and place to produce an aestheticised representation of its significance in the individual's consciousness, and its relationship to society and the material world.

Finally, what is striking about *The Last Man* is Shelley's narrative voice. Perpetually transforming itself through temporal displacement and gender perspectives, Shelley's voice remains constant in order to accommodate the text's multiple generic characteristics. A story of the life of a man, and the story of the bleak possibility of a lost civilisation, *The Last Man* journeys through time, and through urban and rural landscapes of Europe to understand its narrative as cultural biography.

Chapter 5

Italy's 'shifting scenes': Narratives of Displacement and Renewal, 1826–1838

By the mid-1830s, the generic versatility of Shelley's writing, evident in *Valperga* and *The Last Man*, developed into more explicitly biographical contributions to Dionysius Lardner's *Cabinet of Biography*. In this chapter, Shelley's *Lives* are read in conjunction with three of Shelley's reviews about Italy and literature to illustrate the connection between Italian landscapes, their historical resonance and their political potential. Shelley's biographies, neglected by critics, constitute an important strand in understanding her conceptualisation of the past. The imaginative engagement with which Shelley looks back to Italy incorporates past intellectual interests (Italian history), but also looks towards contemporary debate about patriotism and Italian self-determination. Shelley explores these themes in her review 'Modern Italian Romances' published in *The Monthly Chronicle* (1838), and gives them more sustained treatment in *Rambles in Germany and Italy* (1844). Yet the convergence of biographical and geographical spheres can be seen as early as 'Giovanni Villani' which appeared in *The Liberal* in 1823. Two other reviews, which are also discussed in this chapter, focus on the distinctive characteristics of the Italian nation. From this we can trace a connection between individual history and national culture, as Johanna M. Smith has noted.¹ Smith's consideration of *Lives* overlooks Shelley's central imaginative and historical engagement with Italy in her broader delineation of Shelley's 'biographical method'.²

Placing *Lives* alongside 'The English in Italy', 'Modern Italy' and 'Modern Italian Romances', shows that the representation of Italy is a central but unexamined element in Shelley's treatment of biography and history. This chapter explores how Shelley's treatment of Italy informs her writing for her contributions to *The Lives of Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain, and Portugal*, and asserts that Shelley uses the Italian past and landscape to promote the cause of Italian freedom. She

¹ Johanna M. Smith, *Mary Shelley* (New York: Twayne, 1996), Twayne English Authors Series 526, p. 137.

² Smith, p. 136.

identifies a sense of liberty generated by the abundant Italian landscape and cultural traits of the nation. This liberty, naturally on display, as it were, is associated with Italian republican political history and Shelley interprets this as an influential factor in the shaping of national identity for nineteenth-century Italians.

The temporal sophistication of Shelley's treatment of Italy is once more apparent in this negotiation of the past and the present. Her route to the past, life-writing, depends upon historical knowledge, but also takes her into the present. The past's relation to the present of her own time, provides an explanation for the current state of things. In 'Giovanni Villani', Shelley suggests that Villani 'grows more interesting and more authentic' through his insight into human experience of the times, as 'nine-tenths of his book are occupied by the narration of events which occurred during the course of his own life.'³ Shelley's sympathy with her subject underpins her approach to biography, providing an imaginative link to the past. However, Italy's topography, and Shelley's sensitivity to the spatial, awaken her historical engagement. Her historical aesthetic is formulated within a framework influenced by aesthetics of the picturesque and the sublime, the language of landscape aesthetics, as her opening to 'Giovanni Villani' shows (GV, p. 128).

Shelley's treatment of time is articulated in relation to place. This facilitates the transition between the past and the present. The first section of this chapter traces her treatment of Italy through landscape representation. The second section dealing with the *Lives* focuses on her use of temporality. A trajectory can be traced in this treatment from the individual narratives of the past to the communication of a general picture of contemporary Italy through the individual, such as the sketches of Alfieri and Foscolo. Finally, the brief section on 'Modern Italian Romances' clarifies the relationship between localised patriotism and Shelley's understanding of national unity by attaching great importance to the political impact of contemporary literature. Taken as a whole the three reviews and Shelley's work on *Lives* mark a transitional period in her treatment of Italy, admitting into her highly aestheticised representation a more overtly political tone.

³ NSW, II: *Matilda, Dramas, Reviews & Essays, Prefaces & Notes*, ed. by Pamela Clemit, 'Giovanni Villani', pp. 128-39 (pp. 133, 134). Hereafter cited as GV; further references appear after quotations in the text.

The English in Italy and Modern Italy

Just as *The Last Man*'s final phase parodically traces the Grand Tourist's journey to Rome, Shelley's 1826 *Westminster Review* article opens with the strong attraction Italy holds for the English traveller.⁴ Shelley deftly penetrates the false veils shrouding Italy by mocking the same construction of Italy through classical education that Morgan undertook more caustically.⁵ Like Morgan, she displays her own knowledge and experience of Italy to assert her authorial superiority over the books she is reviewing and acknowledges the present political climate. This is evident in her references to the uprising in Piedmont in 1820–21 (*EI*, p. 151), and the 'blow to Italian superstition' dealt by Napoleon (*EI*, p. 152). Yet Shelley still acknowledges the allure of Italy, 'land of romance' (*EI*, p. 148).

In her list of the attractions of Italy, Shelley yokes together society, culture, and its agricultural abundance:

The society is facile; the towns illustrious by the reliques they contain of the arts of ancient times, or the middle ages; while its rural districts attach us, through the prosperity they exhibit, their plenteous harvests, the picturesque arrangement of their farms, [and] the active life every where apparent (*EI*, p. 149).

By threading together this integrated picture, Shelley implicitly criticises the reception of Italy by 'Anglo-Italians'. Their image of Italy reflects the limited cultural contact that this class of expatriate English has with Italy, only seeing 'the surface of the country' (*EI*, p. 154). This strengthens Shelley's authority in the article by accentuating her own sensitivity to place in establishing a meaningful, authentic relationship between Italy and those experiencing it. She argues that to obtain an unmediated knowledge of the Italians, one must look beyond the conventional images and associations that the Anglo-Italians circulate. It is in the 'country life of Italy' (*EI*, p. 154) that one discerns the 'true Italian character' (*EI*, p. 155). Shelley freely admits to 'eulogizing' about Italy, and her lyrical descriptions of rural life in

⁴ 'The English in Italy', in *NSW*, II: 147–63. Hereafter cited as *EI*; further references appear after quotations in the text.

⁵ Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, *Italy*, I: 50n and I: 204n.

Italy have a timeless quality about them; for example, the peasants working in the fields following the oxen-plough, 'whose rough mechanism is such as Virgil describes' (*EI*, p. 155).⁶ Constructing a picture of the landscape from literary history enables Shelley to idealise a particular version of rural life, while acknowledging its hardship (*EI*, pp. 152, 156). Most nineteenth-century expatriates (Shelley's 'Anglo-Italians') do not appreciate the 'other-worldliness' of the scenes, taking from them only the spectacle that increases their pleasure.

Shelley's sketch of a rural Italian scene, while incorporating ancient traces, also reveals a detailed knowledge of agriculture in Tuscany. Such awareness reflects the temporal transitions of Shelley's representation from the past to the present. Her informed treatment of the landholding system communicates Shelley's first-hand experience of the Italian countryside and its people. The representation of the landscape is related directly to thoughts on Italian 'native genius' (*EI*, p. 152) from which Italian 'natural talent' arises. This 'great and immoveable foundation-stone, the boundary mark of Italian liberty' (*EI*, p. 152), is attributed to the climate. 'Native genius' prevents the inhabitants from becoming 'brutified' (*EI*, p. 152), and furnishes Italians with the seeds of their own redemption. Through characteristics, such as their 'untaught courtesy' and their 'love for the fine arts' (*EI*, p. 152) and climate, Italians possess in their 'own bosom the germs of regeneration' which will 'in the end give birth to their emancipation' (*EI*, p. 152). The landscape, and the aesthetic potential with which it is associated, provide Shelley with her opening into native genius and the liberty associated with Italian literary, scholarly creativity to which she returns in *Lives*.

Shelley's understanding of native genius is primarily articulated in response to Lord Normanby's representation of the unsuccessful uprising in Piedmont in his book *The English in Italy*. Her alignment of patriotism to native genius and natural talent strengthens the cause for Italian emancipation (*EI*, p. 152). She constructs a comprehensive picture of a politically active population deprived of a liberty they prize, but who are also inextricably linked to the land. For Italians, the land is a

⁶ Compare this with the threshing-floor Guinigi uses in *V*, p. 28, and with *EI*, p. 156, which Clemit identifies as an allusion to Virgil's *Georgics*.

source of creative inspiration which channels patriotic feeling in a specifically Italian manner, as Shelley demonstrates in her discussion of the *improvisatore* Tommaso Sgricci. Lindsay Waters asserts that improvisation is 'an exclusively Italian phenomenon' defining it as 'a type of easy, yet authentic speech'.⁷ Caroline Gonda interprets it as articulating a particular phase in Italian national identity prior to the Risorgimento.⁸ A sense of place and patriotism, in this instance, is not only connected to the representation of an individual (Sgricci), it is also articulated through genre (improvisation).

Sgricci's 'native genius' is a manifestation of the close relationship that the people have to the land because of its abundance. His presence in 'The English in Italy' arises from Shelley's demonstration of the strong link between the superabundance of the land and the active labouring of the peasants. The Tuscan peasants amuse each other with an improvisatory game whilst working. These 'rich stores of talent', 'displayed to the delight of their countrymen' (*EI*, p. 157), is symptomatic of the natural profusion of Italy. This talent, itself a kind of abundance, is 'not displayed alone in animate nature but among the Italians themselves' as part of their character. She writes:

We cannot give a better idea of what we mean than by instancing their improvisatori, who pour out, as a cataract does water, poetic imagery and language (*EI*, p. 157).

Caroline Gonda cites this quotation as evidence of the 'evanescence of improvised poetry' but does not explore the strong association between landscape and improvisation in Shelley's work.⁹ In the quotation above Italian abundance is figured through a man who is renowned for his ability to improvise impromptu performances, a superabundance of the 'exhaustless delights' of Italy (*EI*, p. 155). Using Sgricci, Shelley forms a connection between improvisation and the abundance afforded by the landscape. Her image of the cataract evokes this and recalls a journal

⁷ Lindsay Waters, 'The "Desultory Rhyme" of *Don Juan*: Byron, Pulci and the Improvisatory Style', *English Literary History*, 45 (1978), 429-42 (p. 431).

⁸ Caroline Gonda, 'The Rise and Fall of the Improvisatore, 1753-1845', *Romanticism*, 6 (2000), 195-210 (p. 195) describes improvisation as a 'peculiarly Italian phenomenon'.

⁹ Gonda, p. 203.

entry Shelley recorded after seeing Sgricci improvise, where she described him as having 'poured forth a torrent of poetry clothed in the most beautiful language' (MWSJ, p. 343). Genius is thus represented as specific to place, and intrinsic to the people who quantify their relationship to that place in tangible ways. As Shelley states in her 29 December 1820 letter to Leigh Hunt:

I have now an account to give you of a wonderful and beautiful exhibition of talent which we have been witnesses of. An exhibition peculiar to the Italians and like their climate – their vegetation and their country fervent fertile and mixing in wondrous proportions the picturesque the cultivated & the wild until they [. . .] mingle and form a spectacle new and beautiful. We were the other night at the theatre where the Improvisatore whom I mentioned in my last letter [Sgricci] delivered an extempore tragedy (MWSL, I: 171).

For Shelley there is an associative link between the abundant landscape and the native genius of Italians. Peasants working the land, or poetic artists proclaiming liberty for their native country, like Sgricci or the fictional Corinne, demonstrate Italian native genius as well as their patriotism.

Claire Clairmont's Journal for the 1 December 1820 connects Sgricci's native genius to national concerns through improvisation, noting that 'Sgricci improvisava upon the future independance of Italy'.¹⁰ Shelley's 3 December 1820 letter to Leigh Hunt embellishes this with a description of Sgricci's artistry. This man of 'incomparable poetic genius' improvised with 'admirable fire and precision' on 'the future destiny of Italy' invoking Petrarch in an attempt to 'defend this unsteady and aged country from its foreign masters' (MWSL, I: 165). The example of Petrarch, crowned with laurels at the Capitol to honour his poetic achievement, forges a sense of Italian cultural identity through historical awareness, an awareness Petrarch himself demonstrated in his own collecting of ancient manuscripts. The landscape is linked to patriotism, and the expression of patriotism is achieved most successfully in the local dialect of a place which Shelley associates with liberty, Tuscany.

¹⁰ *The Journals of Claire Clairmont*, ed. by Marion Kingston Stocking (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 190.

Significantly, Gonda locates the origins of improvisation in Tuscany and notes a similar identification in *Corinne*.¹¹

Shelley privileges spoken Tuscan dialects, whose beauty elevates classes of Italians on whom English travellers would look down. The description of the lyrical and 'beautiful' singing of the peasants prompts Shelley to remind her readers and herself that her remarks are 'principally confined to Tuscany' (*EI*, p. 156). Such comments recall *Valperga's* tribute to the 'soft accents and expressive phrases' spoken by Euthanasia and her 'uncouth' guide as she is despatched for Sicily. Shelley emphatically notes her compulsion to include an authentic quotation: 'I could not refrain from recording in their original language the words of a Florentine peasant. A poet might well envy the vivacity of this man's imagination' (*V*, p. 320n). Palacio also notes this as an example of Shelley's 'deep love' for the Italian language.¹² He also establishes a connection between Italian dialect and class by citing a passage from *Rambles* in which Shelley states that it was 'more natural to me to speak to common people in that language [Italian] than in my own'.¹³ The connection between the guide's beautiful accent and the meaning of his words elevates him, creating a parity of sorts with Euthanasia, and with poets. The point is perhaps made more forcefully in *Corinne*, after Corinne's decision to reside in Florence, where the republican history of the Middle Ages inspires her. This is reflected in the language:

There is a true delight in listening to Tuscans, even of the lowest class. Their imaginative, elegant expressions suggest the pleasure that must have been tasted in the city of Athens, when the people spoke the harmonious Greek that was like continual music. It is a very strange sensation to think that you are in the midst of a nation where all individuals were equally cultivated, where they all seemed like members of the upper class: such is the illusion offered, for a few moments at least, by their purity of language (*C*, p. 363).

The use of Tuscan connects democratic institutions (Tuscany specifically, and Greece), language as poetry or music, and the people.¹⁴ Both Staël and Shelley

¹¹ Gonda, p. 196 and p. 199.

¹² 'ardent amour', Palacio, pp. 26–27.

¹³ Palacio, p. 27. The relevant passage *Rambles* appears in *NSW*, VIII: 104.

¹⁴ Compare also *Rambles*, 'Alfieri makes his Lombard princesses express themselves like Grecian heroines', *NSW*, VII: 332.

elevate the lowest classes in social terms on the grounds of the superiority of their use of language. The emphasis on the beauty of the Tuscan dialect has attached the notion of Italy's 'exhaustless fertility' to a specific place.

In her *Lives*, Shelley notes that Boccaccio's *Decameron* is 'a model of the Tuscan dialect' and 'infinitely superior' to all other Italian spoken dialects, 'in grace, energy and conciseness'.¹⁵ In the *Decameron*, the specific characteristics of the landscape provide Boccaccio with inspiration manifest in the purity of Tuscan. He describes 'in particular, the pleasant uplands and fertile valleys of the hills around Fiesole', and the style with which he does this is 'inimitable in delicacy and tenderness of feeling' and bears the 'undoubted stamp of genius' (*LI*, I: 129):

His language is a "well of Tuscan undefiled", whence, as from its purest source, all future writers have drawn the rules and examples which form the correct and elegant Italian style. It possesses, to an extraordinary degree, the charm of eloquence (*LI*, I: 129–30).

Italy's dimensions are confined to the geographic space in the north of the peninsula, and the land acquires an atemporality that matches *The Last Man* and complements the anachronism of 'Roger Dodsworth'. Geographic space becomes a site which can be invested with futurity as well as history because its abundance signifies the possibility of creativity.

By 1829, Shelley's article 'Modern Italy', reviewing more travel writing about Italy, turns to chronological disjunction in urban space.¹⁶ Consideration of the impact of increased tourism on Rome leaves Shelley with a darker sense of Italy. This dystopic vision issues from the typically picturesque scene opening out from the Alps. After the fertile beauty of Tuscany, the view of Rome is constructed bathetically. The majesty of the ancient city, cursorily acknowledged, is eclipsed by the jostling additions of the modern town. Generating a sense of anachronism, the 'confused mixture of monuments of all ages disturbs the imagination' (*MI*, p. 183).

¹⁵]Mary Shelley] *The Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain, and Portugal*, 3 vols, LXXXVI–LXXXVIII of *The Cabinet of Biography, Conducted by the Rev. Dionysius Lardner* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown Green, and Longman, 1835–37), I: 125. Hereafter cited as *LI*; further references appear after quotations in the text.

¹⁶ 'Modern Italy', in *NSW*, II: 182–94. Hereafter cited as *MI*; further references appear after quotations in the text.

Deluding the imagination and the senses, the architectural mix disrupts the temporal continuity between the ancient past and the imaginative experience of it for the visitor to Rome. A sense of the multiplicity of place only detracts from and alienates Rome's ancient historical resonance:

Modern Rome is the lineal descendant of the ancient city, yet it is impossible to trace the slightest likeness of one to the other; and they form a contrast rendered more striking by their being forcibly brought into comparison (*MI*, p. 183).

Shelley's sidelong glance at the political consequence of Papal authority in Rome acknowledges a more liberated past, one capable of reanimation and rejuvenation to divest mortality of its finitude. As a corrective to the 'austere self-denying precepts of Catholicism', the pagan tombs of the ancients are 'adorned by images of living grace, and the sculptured resemblance of all that is jocund' (*MI*, p. 183). The spirit seemingly captured on the sides of Roman sarcophagi beckon the spectator to a past that a tour of the sights of Rome cannot offer because of the disruptive intrusion of the modern. To return to the past, the traveller must suppress temporal awareness by viewing 'time-eaten ruins' only at night. To make Rome truly the ruin it needs to be to evoke the past, the imagination must project onto depopulated territory, until 'Rome grows out of Rome' (*MI*, p. 184).

This dystopic and anachronised view of Rome, so dependent upon imaginative engagement with the city itself, is itself framed by indulgent descriptions of idyllic landscapes. Shelley's portrayal reinvigorates the spectator's sense of place after the 'sepulchre of antiquity' that Rome became (*MI*, p. 184). The intricacies of Shelley's treatment of place indicate a relational dependence between urban and rural spaces that signify a distinctive Italian past. Her concerted attention to the country's scenery is essential in the attempt to (re)create a sense of Italy. It was precisely this, a singular absence of descriptions of the environment, that Shelley identified as the major failing of Beste's *Italy as it Is*, one of the books she was reviewing. The focus on natural abundance, and on natural places, and the loss of ancient civic monuments is a manifestation of her hostility to Beste's vigorous Catholicism. A source of great provocation is the Pantheon, the consecration of

which caused Valerius so much chagrin. The Pantheon's consecration amounts to a displacement of history and a turning away from it. The convert (to Catholicism) 'exult[s] in the overthrow of the magnificent, the intellectual, soul-stirring times of the Scipios and Catos' (MI, p. 186). Shelley reinvests history with the past Beste suppresses by accentuating Italy's natural fertility and implicitly aligning it with paganism (MI, p. 183).¹⁷

Shelley's sensitivity to the past feeds into a politicised interaction with the present. Such a relationship builds continuities between the past and the present, rather than using one to displace the other. This can be seen in Shelley's final consideration of the contrast between Rome and Tuscany made in another book treated in the review, Simond's *A Tour in Italy and Sicily*. Responding to Simond's comparison of the beggars and robbers of the Abruzzi with the cleanliness and gentle manners of the Tuscans, Shelley acknowledges the historical legacy of the region. The long tradition of liberty that was fostered in the Tuscan republics has made them more civilised than their Southern counterparts. Shelley opened her 'English in Italy' review understanding that the Italian people held within themselves the key to their own liberation. She ends the 'Modern Italy' review on an ambivalent note, tempering the overflowing abundance of her landscape representations. Just as the people hold in their bosom the germ of emancipation, so the 'long freedom and consequent civilisation enjoyed by the Tuscan republics' has softened them, and led to their degradation. The Tuscans, too, are now in a 'state of absolute slavery' (MI, p. 194) as a result of their system of government and the manner in which it shaped them.

Shelley's treatment of Italy in these two reviews connects place to the character of the people, and to the past. The representation of place is central to Shelley's imaginative engagement with Italy, but it must also be a lived place, one that is regenerative and reanimating. While this is achieved by climate, the characteristics of the Italian peoples bring an energising capacity to narratives of place and the past. In these two reviews, Shelley has sketched an aesthetic outline of

¹⁷ See also Marilyn Butler's discussion of paganism associated with politically radical Romantic writers through 'the cult of the South' in *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 122-25.

the Italian landscape and the people within it. In the *Lives*, she begins a more sustained treatment of the biographical narratives that animate the Italian scenes she records, and imbues Italy's cultural narrative with the living force of its patriots past and present.

The Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain, and Portugal

In Shelley's description of scenery in the two reviews discussed above, she uses landscape aesthetics and her sensitivity to place to distance herself from the travel-writing crowd. Shelley's *Lives* express both her own voice and that of her subjects. Her skill lies in her ability to situate both of these within the cultural milieu of the period about which she is writing. Eliciting the significance of Italian political history from the lives of her subjects, Shelley once more relates civic identity to place. This section examines how her biographical method draws together the individual life with political and civic history to produce a reading of the past which acknowledges the topographical importance of Tuscany in the development of national patriotism. Shelley interweaves individual histories with each other to present a unified historical portrait of the era, sketched through political events which have seen patriotic figures either shape or witness the future of the Italian nation.

Greg Kucich has recently argued for Shelley's *Lives* as a 'compelling type of historical revisionism' and as 'one of Mary Shelley's most substantial interventions in the gender ideologies of her time'.¹⁸ Kucich is right to acknowledge the political sophistication of Shelley's treatment of history, and the 'crisp, intellectually spirited quality' of Shelley's prose, as previous critics have done.¹⁹ He is also sensitive to Shelley's persistent fascination with biography and history as 'interrelated modes of

¹⁸ Greg Kucich, 'Mary Shelley's *Lives* and the Reengineering of History', in *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 198-213 (p. 199).

¹⁹ Kucich, p. 198; Smith, p. 134-35, Bennett, *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 109, comments on the 'political agenda' and the quality of *Lives*, as do Jane Blumberg, *Mary Shelley's Early Novels* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 138, 150, and Emily Sunstein, *Mary Shelley* (Baltimore: Little and Brown, 1989), p. 328.

applying the life of the past to the politics of the present'.²⁰ Kucich reads biography as technique to formulate an 'interiorized history'.²¹ He argues that Shelley's orientation towards 'the *hearts* of her subjects' (original emphasis) is the strategy used by the female historiographer to 'alter the fundamental structures of historical representation in patriarchal versions of the past'.²² The new framework is thus structured of emotional sympathies and personal or social relations.

Kucich's argument suggests that Shelley anticipates twentieth-century forms of feminist historiography, but his strong alignment with revisionism provides a one-sided and misleading impression of the *Lives*.²³ By 'reengendering' the *Lives* in the context of its interior histories, and positing this as Shelley's primary concern, Shelley's historical aesthetic is stabilised and limited. He leaves no place for Shelley's prevalent interest in the history of public events, such as her comments about Guicciardini:

No historian surpasses Guicciardini when the subject is worthy of his pen. His animated descriptions of battles, the chances of war, and conduct of princes and leaders; his delineations of character, and masterly views of the course of events, all claim the highest admiration (*LI*, II: 72).

'Reengendering' Shelley's biographical histories shifts to the 'foreground' sentimental introspection.²⁴ Such a reading fails to account for the increasing general tendency in historical narrative to incorporate sentiment, which Karen O'Brien has shown to be evident in the works of Hume and Gibbon.²⁵

Shelley's *Lives* do consciously appeal to sentiment, but this is not a specific attempt to reformulate historical discourse solely along gendered lines. Shelley's sympathetic engagement in the *Lives* also includes the conventional markers of history, such as the public service undertaken by her subjects.²⁶ *Lives* does not revise the content of history, as Kucich suggests. Instead, Shelley's strategy favours

²⁰ Kucich, p. 199.

²¹ Kucich, p. 206.

²² Kucich, p. 201.

²³ Kucich, p. 199.

²⁴ Kucich, p. 206.

²⁵ Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 60-64.

²⁶ See 'Lorenzo De' Medici', *LI*, I: 153, 'Guicciardini', *LI*, II: 65-66, 'Guarini' *LI*, II: 83.

multiplicity and interweaving, to incorporate the voices and sources of her subjects into the narrative. This is still an approach which reinterprets historical narration to include peripheral perspectives. Shelley constructs her biographies to represent the individual existing within history but does not necessarily depict the individual life of her subjects. Her portraits are politicised, and sentimental in parts, but reveal individual perspectives of the broader historical picture. Shelley's historical aesthetic is, therefore, much wider than Kucich's analysis supposes. Her cosmopolitan remit incorporates the individual, but does not prioritise domestic, personal narrative.

My discussion of the *Lives* focuses on how Shelley constructs an Italian cultural past through biographical narration. An essential aspect of this, ignored by other critics, is the relationship between the biographies in *Lives*, and the coherent picture of the past which can be read across the individual stories, most explicitly with Petrarch and Boccaccio. Shelley's insight into the dynamic instabilities within historical narrative is also discussed in her treatment of Machiavelli's observations on Cesare Borgia's plot to execute two nobles, Vitellozzo Vitelli and Paolo Orsino, and their co-conspirators. These preliminary remarks on *Lives* have concentrated on the relationship between biography and history, and the critical response to it. The following section turns to *Lives* to explore how biography and history connect to place in Shelley's treatment of Italy.

'Petrarch', 'Boccaccio', and 'Machiavelli'

The biography of Petrarch opens Shelley's contribution to the *Lives* and plunges straight into the civil strife of Italian political history. Petrarch's birth coincided with his Ghibeline-sympathizing family's exile from Florence, and provides Shelley with an opportunity to articulate the intersection of the individual life with politics. Shelley situates the beginning of her biography in a climate of civil conflict:

The Ghibeline exiles endeavoured to reinstate themselves in their native city by force of arms, but they failed in their enterprise, and were forced to retreat. [. . .] On returning discomfited on the morrow, Petraccolo found that during the intervening hours his wife had, after a period of great difficulty and danger, given birth to a son (*LI*, I: 61).

The narrative of Petrarch's life, a new beginning for the reader, cuts across a historical narrative already occurring: the factional division of the Italian medieval city-republics. Petrarch's birth does not permanently reorient the narrative onto a domestic trajectory, for the party politics that beset his birth continue to loom. Uprooted from his native city before his birth by his father's political persuasion, it persists in displacing him from Florence. The family moved to Pisa when Petrarch was eight, and then emigrated to Avignon to follow the papal court (*LI*, 1: 62). Petrarch's familiarity with 'the stately cities of his native country', and his disappointment at 'squalid' and 'ill-built' Avignon cultivated within him:

that veneration for Italy, and contempt for transalpine countries, which exercised a great influence over his future life (*LI*, 1: 62).

This early emphasis on Petrarch's love of country anticipates his attempts at reconciliation in conflicts at Rome and Venice later in his life (*LI*, 1: 89, 99), even though he also settled happily at Vacluse. The imaginative space of Italy is associated with the liberty and independence of which Petrarch is deprived in Avignon because of his emotional tie to the place through Laura. His love of 'Italy and all things Italian' (*LI*, 1: 71-72) instilled within him a sense of his cultural heritage co-existent with his passion for Laura. It was 'the language of his native Florence' in which he wrote the sonnets to his beloved. Although Shelley acknowledges the centrality of Petrarch's passion for Laura to his life, she assesses the significance of the resulting poetry for Italian letters as equally as she treats their personal aspect. While it is possible to date Petrarch's 'poetic life' (*LI*, 1: 71) from his love for Laura, the passage of Petrarch's scholarly and clerical career is determined by the political unrest of the period.

In the cultural investment Petrarch makes in the past, by collecting manuscripts and by esteeming Rome, his personal history offsets the turbulent sixteenth-century present.²⁷ On his first visit to Rome, the danger of unrest in the present is deferred by the prominence of the past in Petrarch's imagination, and its

²⁷ Sismondi also notes Petrarch's collecting of manuscripts, in *De la Littérature du Midi de l'Europe*. 4 vols, 2nd edn (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1819), 1st edn 1813, 1: 403. Hereafter cited as *LME*; further references appear after quotations in the text.

realisation among the ruins of Rome. His imagination is surpassed by the 'mighty and beautiful remains' making the Eternal City 'greater and more majestic' than he had previously anticipated (*LI*, I: 75-76). Shelley links the historical resonances of Rome with its political importance. In opting to have his laurels awarded at Rome, Petrarch attached himself to Robert, King of Naples, himself a man of 'literary tastes and liberal disposition' (*LI*, I: 86). Shelley gives Petrarch the benefit of the doubt in asserting that Robert was 'more illustrious in his eyes for his learning than his crown' (*LI*, I: 86), yet after Robert's death Petrarch is sent to the Neapolitan court to represent papal interests. Petrarch's own literary progress falls between political machinations of papacy and monarchy.

The cultural heritage of Rome generates a sense of patriotism that leads Petrarch to conflict with the Church. The absence of the Papacy from Rome has resulted in the 'domestic faction and lawlessness' that tore Italy apart:

Petrarch saw in the secession of the popes to Avignon the cause of these disasters. His patriotic spirit kindled with indignation, that the head of the church and the world should desert the queen of cities (*LI*, I: 89).

This statement is the beginning of a cumulative disillusion with the Papal court at Avignon which allows Shelley subtly to give vent to her own anti-clericalism. She achieves this by identifying Rienzi's uprising at Rome as a critical turning point in Petrarch's attitude. Effecting a 'miraculous' change in the state of the country, Rienzi ensured that '[o]rder and plenty reigned through the land' causing alarm to the pope and cardinals (*LI*, I: 92-93). This event fills Petrarch with a desire to 'abandon Avignon for Italy' while his heart 'swelled with delight at the prospect of the renewed glories of Rome' (*LI*, I: 93). If Petrarch's first hopes for the new polity of Rome were to be disappointed by Rienzi's fall, his faith in the greatness of Rome sustained his desire to bring peace to the Italian peninsula, as with his 'long and eloquent' letter to Louis of Bavaria and Emperor of Germany, imploring him to deliver Italy from 'the disasters that oppressed it' (*LI*, I: 102).

Petrarch's concern for the future of Italy is bound up with its past. His collecting of classical texts is a demonstration of his attachment to the ancient past and its gift to the present. His library is a material (re-)embodiment of the past: a

sign of the preciousness of the past. The cultural past is connected to the political opportunities realised in urban space, through Rome and its historic associations. Urban space situates Petrarch's civic identity, as when Boccaccio informs him of the decree issued by Florence to restore his paternal inheritance (*LI*, 1: 99), and despite his desire for recognition and glory (*LI*, 1: 85), Petrarch rejects it. The past evoked through great Italian cities like Rome and Florence tapped into a vein of patriotism in Petrarch, but it is in the Tuscan landscapes that Shelley twice notes his poetic inspiration (*LI*, 1: 87). Towards the end of his life, Petrarch settled in Arquà for the sake of his health:

A village situated north of Padua, among the Euganean hills, not far from the ancient and picturesque town of Este. The country around, presenting the vast plains of Lombardy in prospect, and the dells and acclivities of the hills in the immediate vicinity, is charming beyond description. There is a luxuriance of vegetation, a richness of produce, which belongs to Italy, while the climate affords a perpetual spring (*LI*, 1: 111).

In this place, Petrarch returns to another work 'begun three years before', as though Shelley equates the landscape's 'richness of produce' with Petrarch's own literary output, though her opinion of the work, 'On my own Ignorance and that of Others', is low. Petrarch's tranquillity, found in the Italian landscape also stimulates productivity just as it did in 'The English in Italy'. Shelley promotes most effectively the interaction of political contexts with the individual life and the manner in which these were played out in and inspired by the landscapes of Italy.

Shelley's literary portrait of Boccaccio springs from the significance of a place which she has revisited in 'Valerius' and *The Last Man*, and to which Staël's *Corinne* attached importance: Virgil's tomb at Pausilippo, in the Bay of Naples. Here, Boccaccio is first struck with the inspiration to become a writer. As Shelley describes the scene, she animates an already abundant landscape with Virgil's literary spirit, enacting remembrance in the style of Godwin's 'Sepulchres'. Shelley narrates Boccaccio's observance at Virgil's tomb, but the reader's imagination is arrested by the 'exceeding beauty of the scene' which 'fills every gazer with delight' from the 'picturesque promontories' to the 'serenely' blue sky and the 'matchless hues' of the 'elements beneath' it:

Nature presents her most enchanting aspect; and the voice of human genius breathing from the silent tomb speaks of the influence of the imagination of man, and of the power which he possesses to communicate his ideas in all their warmth and beauty to his fellow creatures. Such is the tomb of Virgil now – such was it five hundred years ago, when Boccaccio's heart glowed with new-born enthusiasm as he gazed upon it. He remained long contemplating the spot, and calling to mind with admiration the fame of him whose ashes reposed in the structure before him (*LI*, I: 119).

Alongside nature, Boccaccio hears the 'voice of human genius' emanating from the tomb, as though nature has reanimated it despite the material decay of Virgil's body. Just as nature took on a reinvigorating dimension in *Frankenstein*, so Boccaccio experiences a rejuvenating awakening for his very heart 'glowed' as he stood before the tomb. From this sensation, Boccaccio is '[t]ouched suddenly and deeply by an ardent desire of cultivating poetry', and devotes himself to his new found art with great energy (*LI*, I: 119–20). The associations of a great cultural past inspire Boccaccio to write poetry, because he is sensitive to their impact in a specific place. In this instance, the effect of the natural profusion of the region, and the cultural symbolism of the place impresses itself on Boccaccio's heart.

Having crafted this artistic awakening for Boccaccio using the Bay of Naples, Shelley strategically reorients its focus. The site of Virgil's tomb gives the narrative a direct link to the ancient past of the peninsula. The presence of Boccaccio at the court of the Neapolitan king adds a contemporary political context to the literary associations of the Bay of Naples in the biographical sketch. As a native citizen of Florence, Boccaccio's own conduct with the Neapolitan court depends upon him retaining his independence (*LI*, I: 118). Shelley's under-stated representation of the politics of the court marks a characteristic trend evident in 'Boccaccio' as a whole. Her aim is to present Italian cultural history alongside its political and individual narratives, and this is begun by fashioning the Neapolitan court as one at which 'the most illustrious men of the age' congregate (*LI*, I: 120). The court thus offers Boccaccio a place where he was able to cultivate his 'literary tastes' (*LI*, I: 121), as well as a place in which his civic identity was clearly defined. Shelley comments that:

he was proud, taking his origin from a republic where equality of rank prevailed; but, frequenting the society of the Neapolitan nobility, he preserved a dignified independence and courteous reserve (*LI*, I: 122-23).

Boccaccio's courtly experience contrasts with the factionalism to which Petrarch was so averse. The Neapolitan court's 'profligacy' (*LI*, I: 130) is accentuated by the virtue attributed to Petrarch, and later by Boccaccio's active citizenship upon returning to Florence 'to fulfil the duties of a citizen' (*LI*, I: 131). Through this affirmation of civic identity Shelley interweaves politics and the individual lives of Petrarch and Boccaccio.

Shelley captures the dynamism and fervour of the Florentines to accentuate the extent of the intense enmity between Florence and the Visconti of Milan. Boccaccio, petitioning Louis of Bavaria to assist Florence in the war, succumbs to 'violent party feelings', and is shocked to hear of Petrarch's residence under the protection of the Visconti, 'tyrants' and 'disturbers of peace' (*LI*, I: 133). It is only after Boccaccio has taken up civic employment that political sympathies impact upon their friendship. Here Shelley's narrative technique liberates the voices of the protagonists, as she reproduces the incident by quoting the correspondence between the two. Passing over this incident briefly in 'Petrarch', Shelley reworks it in 'Boccaccio' and emphasises the shifting sands of historical narrative as she does so. Rather than condemn Petrarch, she expands the debate about patriotism from local factionalism to a wider, national cause. Permitting herself the commentary only after Petrarch and Boccaccio have had their say, she writes:

Petrarch was a patriot in an elevated sense of the word: he exerted himself to civilise his country, and to spread abroad the blessings of knowledge; peace was his perpetual cry; but in the various tyrannies that distracted Italy, he saw the same ambition under different forms (*LI*, I: 134).

Kucich suggests that Shelley prioritises the interior lives of her subjects, but the complex exchange between the local political vision and Petrarch's cosmopolitan understanding refutes that argument. Petrarch realises that political factionalism achieves little, and diminishes the capability for acquiring knowledge. In this sense, the future preservation of cultural identity is derived from the past. Shelley gives

equal weight to Boccaccio's contribution to preserving the past, and thus to Italian history aside from his political involvement (*LI*, I: 135), yet her closing assessment of him praises precisely this aspect of a life 'devoted to the cultivation of literature and religion, and the duties of a citizen' (*LI*, I: 150).

The examples of Petrarch and Boccaccio show the intratextuality of Shelley's historical narration as it tries to represent the preservation of the past. While these are examples of Shelley transforming historical narrative to rework versions of events, 'Machiavelli' narrates the experience of not witnessing events. Additionally, Shelley inverts the usual course of the narrative, so that political events embed themselves within the narrative of a life. This challenges Kucich's view that Shelley's biographical techniques disrupt the broad sweep of a masculinized historical narrative. The inescapable impact of political events within individual lives is exemplified in Shelley's treatment of the rise of Cesare Borgia in 'Machiavelli'. To contextualise the need for Machiavelli's visit to Borgia at Imola, Shelley narrates at length the political rise of the Duke (*LI*, I: 264–84). Within Machiavelli's biography Shelley includes the biography of another man and heightens the intersection between individuals in the course of history.

In hijacking the narrative, the story of Borgia's intrigue sidelines Machiavelli and recasts him as a peripheral figure in the unfolding of events. Machiavelli's difficulty in obtaining an audience with Borgia allows him only to speculate in his despatches back to Florence. Shelley's confident rebuttal of any suggestion that Machiavelli had inside information of Borgia's revenge plot is an element of narrative technique that she states in the biography's opening:

There is no more delightful literary task than the justifying [of] a hero or writer, who has been misrepresented and reviled (*LI*, I: 256).

Shelley's aim in defending Machiavelli is to dispel 'the great doubt' about 'the spirit in which he wrote "The Prince"' (*LI*, I: 263). The use of Machiavelli's letters is 'indispensable to the forming a just notion of his character' (*LI*, I: 262), and an explanation of his and Borgia's actions. Machiavelli's partial witnessing of them gives further insight into the political philosophy of *The Prince*. Shelley's account

thus uses the lives of two men to shed more light on a political treatise. Her commentary on *The Prince* leads back to a central concern running through the *Lives* which is the national heritage and its use for the political future of Italy. Machiavelli's work, composed to gain him employment with the Medici (*LI*, 1: 297), is also an argument for the creation of peace in the Italian peninsula, as Shelley notes in her discussion of the 'patriotic and praiseworthy' conclusion to the work (*LI*, 1: 303). The biography is used to analyse a text that itself centres on the future political health of the Italian states, but the life-narratives of Machiavelli and Borgia are also brief civic histories shaped by the turbulent politics of the time. For example, Shelley's attempt to return to Machiavelli after the Borgia episode digresses into an update on Florentine foreign policy in order to clarify the purposes of Machiavelli's employment (*LI*, 1: 286–87).

The intersecting narratives of Shelley's *Lives* reveal a breadth of vision glossed over by Kucich. Additionally, Shelley's treatment of place further integrates the narrative strands of her various biographies. The significant locales around which the biographies are centred provide Italian history with connecting points. The narrative weaves through these to incorporate civic, literary, and individual history. Shelley's trajectory in the two volumes devoted to Italy is chronological, and the examples I have discussed have shown how history is used to invest place with a sense of the past. The next section dwells on the manner in which Italian patriotism exemplifies the national potential that the peninsula holds within itself.

'Foscolo' and 'Alfieri'

Johanna Smith identifies 'politico-literary criticism' as being most strongly evident in the last four lives of volume two, those of Goldoni, Monti, Alfieri and Foscolo.²⁸ Shelley's preoccupations accrue throughout *Lives* but these last four articulate them more forcefully because the narrative is brought into the nineteenth-century present. The attention to landscape that was noted in 'Petrarch', her concern with the development of language that was discussed in 'Boccaccio', and the interweaving of individual civic life with political history pictured in 'Machiavelli', all

²⁸ Smith, p. 134.

return in 'Alfieri' and 'Foscolo'. Each theme is brought together in these last two, as it was in the previous biographies, through a patriotism that is localised in expression but national in its potential. This bi-partite notion of unity is a consequence of the regional fragmentation of Italy and the frequency with which surrounding powers colonised the peninsula.

The sense of localised patriotism is drawn out particularly in 'Foscolo', a narrative that charts his love of country through a continual sense of displacement caused by political upheaval. Foscolo himself, like Petrarch previously, is constantly displaced because of political change. It is European war, rather than urban factionalism, that deprives Foscolo of his homeland. The 'voluntary exile' (*LI*, II: 357) left Venice for Milan, and then Tuscany, when publication of his tragedy *Ajax* attracted unfavourable comment from Napoleon (*LI*, II: 379–80). The intersection of art and politics necessitates Foscolo's exile, but Shelley also suggests that his literary identity is formed through his civic contribution and national pride.

Foscolo's *Letters of Jacopo Ortis* were the cause of his first exile (*LI*, II: 357) and his letters reveal how 'passionately attached' to liberty he was (*LI*, II: 359). Stung by the ratification of the treaty of Campo Formio, which ceded Venice to Austria, Foscolo headed for Tuscany in an attempted return to his cultural heritage. Shelley cites from his letters that 'in this blessed land [i.e. Tuscany] poetry and letters first awoke from barbarism':

I behold the houses where were born, and the turf that covers, those renowned Tuscans; and I fear at every step to tread on their remains. Tuscany is a garden, its inhabitants are naturally courteous, the sky serene, and the air full of life and health (*LI*, II: 360).

Paradoxically, this sense of the past and of integrated order and harmony reinforced his sense of alienation. He continues:

We Italians are foreigners and exiles even in Italy; and scarcely do we leave our little native territory, than neither understanding, nor fame, nor blameless habits can shelter us. [. . .] Our very fellow-citizens look upon all Italians who are not natives of their own town, and on whose limbs the same chains do not hang, as strangers (*LI*, II: 360).

While this sense (or absence) of place exacerbates Foscolo's exile, the *Letters of Jacopo Ortis* use the endowments of the Tuscan locality to develop a particularly Italian aspect of his writing: his style. This development occurs because of the manner in which Foscolo expresses his love of nature. The 'pure, elegant and forcible' style which describes 'the rambles of Ortis midst the Euganean hills' created a language 'hitherto unknown to his countrymen, uniting the familiar and colloquial with the tasteful and the expressive' (LI, II: 368-69). Shelley's reference to Foscolo rejuvenating Italian through 'an animated, simple, living language' (LI, II: 356) echoes her concept of improvisation, and is emphasised at the beginning of 'Foscolo' in a general comment about authorship. On reading an author's work, 'we ought to feel that he puts down the overflowing of his mind':

ideas and notions which, springing up spontaneously, force a birth for themselves from the womb of silence, and acquire an existence through their own native energy and vitality (LI, II: 353).

The process of composition acquires a dual creativity. The land animates, or breathes life into, a language formerly uninspired. This conception of composition is similar to Shelley's treatment of improvisation, referred to above in the discussion of 'The English in Italy'. There, a connection between improvisation as a mode of national expression and the landscapes of Tuscany was established.

The theme of patriotism and artistic expression runs through Shelley *Lives*. Identifying improvisation as a national mode, Shelley enlists the arguments of a source already tried and trusted for her earlier novel *Valperga*. Shelley read J. C. L. Sismondi's *De La Littérature du Midi de L'Europe* for her research for *Lives*, in which he too associates improvisation specifically with Italian culture.²⁹ Sismondi saw Madame Mazzei, a famous improvisatrice, improvising 'in terza rima over the past glory of Florence and its destroyed liberty' (LME, III: 97).³⁰ Alongside this patriotic aspect, Sismondi notes other central features of improvisation, including: a 'fertile imagination'; the 'natural harmony' and the 'gaiety and childish naïveté' of the

²⁹ NSW, VI: *Lodore*, ed. by Fiona Stafford, p. 94n.

³⁰ 'pleurer en rime tierce la gloire passé de Florence et sa liberté détruite'.

Italians; and, the 'poetic' and 'sonorous' Italian language which allows inspiration to shine forth (*LME*, III: 51).³¹

Shelley picks up improvisation's themes of nationalism and history in her biographies of literary men, and in her description of Mirandola she uses similar terms to the theme of Corinne's first improvisation: 'the glory and admiration of Italy' (*LI*, I: 161).³² In detailing the traits of the improvisatore in Italian writers, Shelley shows the centrality of language in defining poetic and national identity in literature. Her description of Metastasio's poetry retains the idiom of improvisation, and a patriotic element that was lacking when he was improvising. The 'flow and clearness' of his written verse 'so excite our sympathy, as to make us feel as if the thought and sentiments which we find in his pages were the spontaneous growth of our own minds' (*LI*, II: 200). The national characteristic of improvisation is also evident in Shelley's treatment of Goldoni and the origins of Italian drama. There is, she states, 'in the Italian character something peculiarly adapted to extempore exercises of the intellect' (*LI*, II: 234).

Shelley's discussion of Goldoni takes her survey up to Alfieri, and in this biography the relationship between literary history and patriotism is clearly delineated. Establishing a tradition of literary patriotism from Dante forwards, and taking up Alfieri's inclusion of Roman greatness in the historical overview, Shelley can diagnose a continuous 'national spirit' that arose through Italian geographical characteristics. This national spirit's diminution is caused by the perpetual warring on the peninsula through the ages, thus giving Shelley the opportunity to incorporate a survey of Italian political history into the biography of Alfieri, strategically emphasising his nationalist cause. The literary tradition stemming from the Middle Ages allowed Italian men of letters to be 'proud of the past' even as they 'despaired of the present' (*LI*, II: 249). Again, literature is used as a way to construct a historical record that helps the nation build a sense of its own collective identity. Within this, Shelley emphasises, too, that Alfieri exhibits the traits of the

³¹ For a more sceptical response to improvisation, see Morgan, *Italy*, II: 105n and II: 179.

³² The subject for Corinne is 'The Glory and Bliss of Italy', C, p. 26.

improvvisatore in his dramatic compositions. After drafting prose notes, if his imagination was captured upon rereading them and:

he felt his imagination warmed and excited, and the ideas renew themselves in his mind vividly and forcibly, then he completed his work by versifying it. This is not the routine which a genuine poet follows: something of the improvvisatore's art is inherent in him (*LI*, II: 284).

The qualities of the improvvisatore strengthen the patriotic credentials of writers who are associated with the national cause. Despite this, Shelley retains a degree of scepticism about Alfieri's talent, after she has shown the high degree of political interaction between his work and recent Italian and European history. Her dissatisfaction with what she describes as the 'ideal poetry' of Alfieri's later oeuvre is unambiguously expressed. In comparing him to Dante and Petrarch, Shelley states that the last two:

possessed a quality of which not one glimmering ray is to be found in the whole course of the flood of rhymes to the composition of which he alludes frequently as being the overflowings of poetic inspiration (*LI*, II: 295).

The literary-historical connection implied between Petrarch, Dante, and Alfieri generates historical continuity within the *Lives* to read across time a narrative of patriotic self-determination and drives it towards the future of Italy. Alfieri's biography reveals the complexity of the task of the national poet and highlights the necessary relationship between genius, literature and nationalism. Such a connection must be established for the writer's impact to be made on popular consciousness, and it is clearly the earlier, more patriotic Alfieri that made the greater impression on the Italian nation. As Adrian Lyttelton has observed:

It was not the second, reactionary, Alfieri who inspired the next generation. In spite of his current views, Alfieri's tragedies were the focus of patriotic enthusiasm during the *triennio giacobino*; they were the model of a new national, civic drama. It was the patriotic rebel and not the reactionary who became the object of a cult. However, at a later date his warnings against the French and his claims for the vitality of the Italian national character

were congenial to those who saw in national independence a third way which could avoid both revolution and reaction.³³

The intersection of history and character is a defining characteristic of many of Shelley's *Lives* written for Lardner's *Cabinet of Biography*. One of the important causes of this is the primary role that the Italian language occupied in the development of literary traditions and nationalism. The ongoing debate about whether Machiavelli's *The Prince* should be read ironically or not, and its 'patriotic' content demonstrate the close relationship between politics, letters, and the individual (*LI*, I: 303–04). Biographies earlier in volume one emphasise language in construction of national identity. This ranges from the importance of composing in Italian in 'Politian' (*LI*, I: 163) to the loss of the extensive libraries of Petrarch and Boccaccio, and to the choice of language in which to write in 'Boccaccio'. These themes refer to a preservation of the past through language, and an understanding of the link between culture and politics. In tracing the routes of the past Shelley's narratives also draw in the scenery against which such narratives are played out. In acknowledging the importance of place, and its role in orienting Italian patriotism, Shelley erects a comprehensive framework for reading and responding to Italy. She continues to articulate themes of language and patriotism, through the intersection of politics and literature in her 1838 article 'Modern Italian Romances'.

Modern Italian Romances

Consideration of this work is included following Nora Crook's convincing case for firm attribution, as 'a link between her Lardner *Italian Lives* and her travel book, *Rambles in Germany and Italy* (1844)'.³⁴ My discussion focuses on the development of Shelley's ideas about the use of localised patriotism to rally national sentiments. Her representation of Italy has extended beyond the imaginative site of identification that was characterised in 'The English in Italy' and prior to 1826. The progression includes an intricate relationship between Italy as a land and the people

³³ Adrian Lyttelton, 'The National Question in Italy', in *The National Question in Europe in Historical Context*, ed. by Mikuláš Teich and Roy Porter, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 63–106 (p. 73).

³⁴ Nora Crook, 'Sleuthing towards a Mary Shelley Canon', *Women's Writing*, 6 (1999), 413–24 (p. 417).

who inhabit its peninsula. The interference in this relationship by foreign powers resulted in the degradation of Italy's peoples. Shelley incorporates this into her later representations of Italy, such as the one in 'Modern Italian Romances', acknowledging the 'pernicious effects of slavery and superstition in debasing the national character.'³⁵ While the desperate state of the people makes the attainment of freedom both difficult and necessary, Shelley finds one redemptive aspect, the 'quick and clear understanding' of the people unmatched by other nations (*MIR*, p. 415). Shelley makes brief comparisons: in 'unfrequented parts' of England, the people are 'stupid and savage'; in France, the people's minds are 'shrunk and shrivelled'. When she comes to the Italians, their attributes derive from the climate. She continues:

In Italy, the peasant of its remotest regions is a conversable being. He has intelligence, imagination, and the power of expression. He has fewer prejudices in favour of old habits, a greater reverence for knowledge in others: it is easy, therefore, to teach him. While the same divine bounty that has gifted him with a capacity to understand, has also been extended to his instructors; and the educated men of Italy are singularly able, laborious, and enlightened. Italians are found to excel in every province of literature (*MIR*, pp. 415-16).

The mention of peasants as 'conversable beings' and 'divine bounty' also suggests that their character is shaped by and derived from the land. This recalls a similar link Shelley makes in 'The English in Italy' when she compares the outpourings of improvisatori to a flowing cataract. Additionally, her opening paragraph to 'Modern Italian Romances' orients the reader to the topographical nuance of Shelley's argument by criticising the behaviour of 'Anglo-Italians', who first made their appearance in 'The English in Italy':

None are more acrimonious in their censures [of Italians] than the Anglo-Italians – a race which, while forgetting their patriotic duties in the delights of that paradisaical climate – while availing themselves of the benevolence and courtesy of the inhabitants – and while eating the fruits of that fertile land – without care or annoyance, repay the advantages they enjoy by abusing the natives (*MIR*, p. 415).

³⁵ 'Modern Italian Romances', *The Monthly Chronicle*, 2 (1838), 415-28, 547-57 (p. 415). Hereafter cited as *MIR*; further references appear after quotations in the text.

Shelley's contempt for the Anglo-Italians contains an appreciation of the benefits of Italy and a swipe at the unpatriotic conduct of the Anglo-Italians. Both these ideas provide her with the point of departure from which she embellishes her arguments of 'Modern Italian Romances'.

Crook asserts that the review is 'uncompromisingly political in its selection of fictions which recall the heroic Italian past', thus allowing a connection between literature, history, and nationalism to be inferred.³⁶ Before Shelley includes the fictional extracts, she delineates a crucial relationship between language and patriotism. This is achieved partly through a summary of the debate about the "Della Crusca" academy's survey of modern Italian. Her analysis of the dispute gravitates towards Tuscany, associating the region with an ability to preserve its past, and a purity of expression in its dialect. The Tuscans, seeing the Della Crusca as an attack on their own culture and language contested its principles, but in Shelley's view this was a waste of time. She suggests that those who participated in the debate may now feel that:

had one among them written a book, in which genius and power had been clothed in elegant and forcible language, drawn either from the purest Tuscan source, or mingled with modes of speech deemed less classical, yet not less true to feeling, it had been a far better answer than volumes of verbal dispute (MIR, p. 416).

Shelley's preoccupation with style conveys the unique characteristic of Italian, its simplicity, as capable of 'ris[ing] into dignity' (MIR, p. 424).³⁷ She is sensitive to literary treatments which emphasise the condition and character of the Italians when language and literature come together to animate the textual representation, as with her praise for Manzoni's *The Betrothed*. She writes:

It yields to no romance of any country in graphic descriptions – in eloquence – in touching incident and forcible reflection. It is, however, so entirely Italian in all its parts, that it can only be truly relished in its native guise. It has seized and individualised, as it were, various species of human beings,

³⁶ Crook, 'Sleuthing', p. 418.

³⁷ Shelley also make reference to 'the purity and elegant simplicity of style' (MIR, p. 420) and to 'the purity of style, and the artless simplicity' of narrative (MIR, p. 427).

specimens of which can be found only in that soil. [. . .] The excellence of this work consists, in the first place, in its admirable discrimination and representation of character. Its personages are not shadows and vague generalities, but men and women stamped with individuality. They all live and move before us – we feel as if we should recognise if we saw them – and those who have been in Italy have seen such, and perceive not portraits, but vivid resemblances (*MIR*, p. 417).

Shelley combines Manzoni's characterisation with the power of his language ('its native guise'), emphasising the distinctiveness of the Italian character. In the second part of the essay, Shelley turns to more strident articulations of patriotism, through historical examples that unite it with place. This can be seen in her discussion of Guerazzi's *The Siege of Florence*.

This more upbeat discussion of patriotism is one in which Shelley turns to genre to express 'a love of freedom among the Italians'. Categorising romances as a 'distinctively national class of fictions', she understands them to be 'dictated by hatred of the oppressor' (*MIR*, p. 547). Tracing the impulse to freedom back through the past, Shelley examines how Guerazzi's work achieves its effect. Shelley is drawn to the heritage of Tuscany associating local characteristics with the past and with the land. Firstly, the author views the slavery of the Italians 'with more impatience' than Manzoni because he is a Tuscan (*MIR*, p. 547). This arises out of traditions of freedom to which the Milanese and the Neapolitans have little claim, whereas:

The Florentine, the countryman of Petrarch and Dante, sees around him at every step the monuments of the freedom of his country – a stormy liberty it is true, but, even thus, being, as liberty ever is, the parent of high virtues, memorable deeds, and immortal works of art. He feels that the soil of Tuscany might again be prolific of such (*MIR*, p. 547).

The connection to the Florentine past, articulated through literary history and through topography, distinguishes the region from other Italian states aside from its locality. To express this, Shelley draws on the technique favoured in *Lives* of intersecting individual events with political ones. When she discusses the fall of Ferruccio in *The Siege of Florence*, Shelley unites two different narratives and then raises the question of the role of religion in patriotism through this. The historical

truth of Ferruccio's desire to ' "liberate Italy at once from her spiritual and temporal yoke" ' (MIR, p. 554) is confirmed in Shelley's analysis, and 'had Luther's doctrine triumphed in Italy' it would have been 'raised to independence instead of falling a slave' (MIR, p. 554).

Shelley's negotiation of religion constitutes a significant element in her conceptualisation of Italian nationalism, but recognising that it cannot regenerate Italy, she finds 'another hope' in an active civic identity localised in specific places. 'Modern Italian Romances' closes with her alternative for resurgence. The citizens of Ancona 'having thrown off their obedience to the pope, govern themselves' (MIR, p. 557). This looks back to the autonomy of the medieval city-states, but Shelley is also perceptive to its potential modernity. If the planned railway between Leghorn and Ancona is constructed, 'the spirit of liberty' will diffuse through Italy. In this final example she defeats the insularity of localised patriotism that confronted Foscolo, to affirm a deep bond between Italians through their land. Ancona will become a beacon, and 'its walls will at least afford a refuge to those Italians who love their native soil, and yet yearn for the rights of freemen' (MIR, p. 557).

Conclusion

From 'The English in Italy' to 'Modern Italian Romances' the thread of regeneration can be traced through Shelley's own conceptualisation of Italy in transition. The abundance of the Italian landscape is associated with linguistic creativity through improvisation. The association between language and landscape is lent to interpretations of Italian patriotic literature because of Italy's invigorating language. Thus we have moved from the reanimation of place, as at Rome in 'Modern Italy' and Virgil's tomb in 'Boccaccio', to the reanimation of textual representation, as in 'Modern Italian Romances' on Manzoni's *The Betrothed*. In each, the importance of individual narrative, or character, is central to the historical vision in Shelley's writing. Narratives reach out, from each individual voice, and speak of the interconnectedness of civic and domestic history, of culture and politics, and of literature and the preservation of the past. Shelley's treatment of Italy feeds into the past, but situates itself in the present with an optimism for the future. Her

representations are informed by the response of Europe to Italy, particularly European powers in a political context. Additionally, Shelley includes British, or 'Anglo-Italian', responses from travel writers over whom she can assert her authority and experience.

Shelley aestheticises her representation of Italy as part of an endeavour to rectify other false impressions. Conceptualising Italy from afar, she accesses past memories and knowledge to configure a new image of Italy and its people. Integral to this is Shelley's animation of her landscapes in the sense that they are peopled, and in the sense that the linguistic representation of them has been generated through the climate's development of national characteristics. Increasingly, Shelley's treatment of Italy is not an imaginative retreat from England or her present, but an advance into a national cause, the freedom of the Italian people. To achieve this, Shelley focuses on the particular locale of Tuscany and its historical legacy. Tuscany's manifest, ever-present abundance offers a glimpse of future unity through its influence on language and genre and through its continuity with the past. Affirmations of civic identity, the reanimation of literary identity through place, and an imaginative expansiveness regarding Italian nationalism through localised patriotism, ensure that Shelley's conception of Italy continually builds on its own past to celebrate the advancing future.

Chapter 6

'A Joy to Return': Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*

Shelley's final publication, *Rambles in Germany and Italy* (1844), infuses the topography of her tour with political and personal resonances. Biographical sketches accentuate particular historical sites, as with Capo Bianco, or generate individualised proximity to political trends, as with her treatment of Niccolini and Manzoni. This indicates an underlying political use of the genre of life-writing that Shelley grafts onto her travel memoir. The dominant presence of biography is strengthened by its double nuance. Firstly, Shelley uses biography to create awareness about Italian history, people, and customs. Secondly, she includes poignant recollections that define her text as memoir rather than guidebook. This chapter explores Shelley's connections between the political and the personal, and their configuration in the landscape. The balance of contemporary patriotic themes and Shelley's intimate memories concentrates the effect of her representation of Italy, urging a sympathetic response from the reader, as Esther Schor has noted.¹ Shelley's engagement with place also establishes her authority as a travel writer, and her depth of knowledge is demonstrated in the diverse range of genres she embraces in *Rambles* alongside life-writing.

The use of genres becomes increasingly multifaceted by the incorporation into *Rambles* of literary and art criticism, historical narrative, and sustained meditations on the landscape. Although Shelley's debt to John Murray, publisher of the standard range of nineteenth-century guidebooks, has been scrupulously documented by *Rambles*' recent editor,² Jeanne Moskal has also emphasised the work's uniquely political aspect which distinguishes Shelley's memoir from the 'emerging genre of the tourist handbook'.³ This observation about Shelley's original

¹ Esther H. Schor, 'Mary Shelley in Transit', in *The Other Mary Shelley*, ed. by Fisch and others (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 235–57 (p. 239).

² Mary Shelley, *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843*, in *NSW, VIII: Travel Writing*, ed. by Jeanne Moskal, pp. 49–386. Hereafter cited as *R*; further references appear after quotations in the text.

³ Jeanne Moskal, 'Gender and Italian Nationalism in Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy*', *Romanticism*, 5 (1999), 188–201 (p. 188).

contribution to travel writing on Italy eclipses her psychical engagement with culture and nature. This chapter argues that Shelley's treatment of the land, the reanimation of the past, and historical explanations of nationalism also contribute to *Rambles*' status as travel memoir.

My emphasis on place reorients critical discussion about *Rambles* away from Shelley's authorial persona, and focuses on how locale affects her treatment of history. This approach was stimulated by criticism that connects *Rambles*' genre-hybridity to Shelley's literary and personal identity. Clarissa Campbell Orr defines *Rambles* as 'philosophical travel', reading it as a 'personal journey through [Shelley's] interior landscape'.⁴ Campbell Orr rightly acknowledges the intellectual framework of history and politics that constitutes Shelley's interior landscape, but her interpretation dwells too exclusively on its interiority. The projection of her cultural and historical awareness about Italy onto actual sites is precisely what brings out the permutations of genre in the text. Shelley's externalisation of history and politics brings place to the fore in *Rambles*, rather than her authorial persona.

Earlier chapters have focused on civic identity and Shelley's attention to aestheticised landscape representation. The previous chapter showed how her treatment of the landscape of Italy includes the people and develops into an equally sustained meditation on Italian nationalism in the 1830s while she remained in England. *Rambles* offers the most detailed consideration by Shelley of the collective expression of patriotism by the Italian people. Chapters on *Valperga* and *The Last Man* concentrated on reanimation of the past as it related to specific historical sites, such as with Lionel in Rome, or the abundant Tuscan landscapes in *Valperga* which indicate political liberty. This chapter interprets the reanimating scenes of history more figuratively, as did the previous chapter, and examines Shelley's characterisation of the Italian people through the national historical narrative that she constructs. In this sense, Shelley's reflections on national character reanimate the past by projecting the cultural biography of a people onto resonant historical sites. This reoriented definition of 'reanimating the past' reflects a less self-conscious engagement with the

⁴ Clarissa Campbell Orr, 'Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, the Celebrity Author, and the undiscovered country of the human heart', *Romanticism on the Net*, 11 (August 1998), [25/10/00]. <http://www.users.ox.ac.uk/~scar0385/rambles.html>, n. pag.

land than appeared in earlier writings but it is still typified by the persistent interchange between biography and history in Shelley's work.

Shelley's cultural response to Italy, figured through history and republican nationalism, is complemented by a more intimate narrative that memorialises Italy through personal recollection. These recollections are stimulated by the places Shelley visits and are an intrinsic part of the travel narrative. The combination of her broad socio-historical vision and intimate recollection derives from her imaginative engagement with cultural and natural sites. These discrete narratives within *Rambles* are brought together by a highly-wrought response to specific places which are then configured into a wider treatment of Italy as a whole.

The treatment of culture and nature in *Rambles* owes a debt to landscape aesthetics. Shelley is conversant throughout with the discourse of the sublime and the picturesque, and she mocks its conventions by, for example, tiring of the sublime mountains (*R*, p. 261). In part, *Rambles*' aesthetic treatment of the landscape derives from Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, as other critics have noted.⁵ Shelley also reworks a therapeutic and active engagement with natural beauty which allows her to 'break' the 'picturesque frame', as Beth Dolan Kautz has demonstrated.⁶ While Jeanne Moskal explores the suppressed elements of Shelley's autobiography through the art criticism in *Rambles*, I focus on the temporal disparity that Shelley experiences when she revisits familiar places.⁷ Alongside personal anachronism, Shelley generates historical continuity through her knowledge of the cultural history of the land.

Shelley emphasises the historical importance of particular cities, such as Florence, Venice, or Amalfi. By so doing, she integrates a tradition of republican liberty, civic duty, and political consciousness into the representation of a people

⁵ Campbell Orr, n. pag.; Beth Dolan Kautz, 'Spas and Salutory Landscapes: The Geography of Health in Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy*', in *Romantic Geographies*, ed. by Amanda Gilroy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 165–81 (p. 175); and, Schor, pp. 235–36 and 238–39.

⁶ Dolan Kautz, pp. 176, 177.

⁷ Jeanne Moskal, 'Speaking the Unspeakable: Art Criticism as Life-Writing in Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy*', *Mary Wollstonecraft/Mary Shelley: Writing Lives*, ed. by Helen Buss and others (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), pp. 189–216. I am grateful to Professor Moskal for making this available to me in typescript. Unfortunately, the publication of *Writing Lives* came too late to benefit this thesis.

stereotyped as oppressed, indolent, and helpless. Shelley invests the people with her own sense of Italy and sees the Italian cause as a renewal of spirit for the Italian people, a return to a former state that was not constrained by political oppression or marred by the inertia of subjection. The sites of cities saturated with history have passed into a collective European aesthetic discourse of travel writing.⁸ Shelley realigns their significance to the specific importance that they now hold for Italian nationhood. In the cases of Florence and Amalfi, civic consciousness flourishes to produce a healthy commercial economy, learning, and artistic excellence, or genius. This incorporates biography into the politico-historical narrative, again indicating Shelley's propensity to generic diversity. The role of biography in history thus accommodates the necessity of depicting national character in Shelley's travel memoir. The characteristics she identified as typical of Italians generally emerge from Italy's city-state history, and are consequently related to Shelley's concern with place.

The focus on place provides a means to explore her treatment of history and its relationship to memory. The allure of Italy lay for Shelley not simply in her love of travelling, but in the opportunity to revisit places familiar from her first stay (1818-23). On a number of occasions, *Rambles* assimilates Shelley's recollection of times past into the narrative of her travel memoir. The dynamic interchange between history and memory derives from the temporal matrix of *Rambles*. Shelley's interest in the contemporary condition of Italy is also apparent. The sense of present change, which her commitment to Italian nationalism generates, contrasts with the personal agenda of her memoir. Shelley's journey to Italy is a *return*, and this aspect of her narrative has not, hitherto, been explored by critics. She talks of wanting to see Italy with new eyes, as when she visits the countryside surrounding Naples in summertime. Her last visit took place in winter, and the countryside then lacked its summer plenty (*R*, p. 368).

Personal memoir, the intimate tone of the epistolary travel memoir, and the sense of her own return exert conflicting tensions within the narrative to write

⁸ John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 116; James Buzard, *The Beaten Track* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 109.

something new, but also to retain essences of the past. Esther Schor has noted Shelley's confrontation of unhappy memories, yet to dwell on 'psychological trauma' overlooks Shelley's reconfiguration of Italy as a place that recalls and reawakens her own happiness as well as sadness.⁹ Shelley also combines this with a forceful political dimension that itself is a renewal of an ongoing commitment to the process of national self-determination for Italy.

Shelley's use of the Italian past in explaining the current state of the peninsula situates her memoir within a historical framework, but time also provides a structural dynamic. For the travel-writing genre, the narrative is dependent upon the forward progress of time which the traveller has set aside for her or his journey. Consequently, travel achieves an 'integration of time and space through the linearities of motion':

The inner durations of consciousness we know as time are, through motion, mapped upon space and integrated into our experience of it. In passage, the future becomes that which is feeding in through the aiming point, becoming larger as the passenger approaches. The present is that which is flowing by. The past is the other half of the optical array into which things diminish and disappear, to persist in the memory of forms and relations.¹⁰

This suggests a straightforward linear model of temporal experience that is not replicated in *Rambles*. Leed's reading also fails to account for travel writers, like Shelley and Morgan, who contextualise their travel with resonances generated from works by other writers, such as Samuel Rogers or John Eustace. Shelley's narrative is a return to Italy, but it also rewrites the country out of its received image.

Shelley's return is an act of continuity. Her love of the land, her memories, and her political sympathies of 1818-1823 are re-expressed in 1840-43, disrupting the trajectory of *Rambles* and blurring the 'linearities of motion'. *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. In moving further away from England, she returns 'home'

⁹ Schor, p. 243.

¹⁰ Eric J. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), p. 75.

to Italy, to a country and a liberal national politics with which she sympathised. The connection with Italy is itself perpetuated by a temporal dimension: the importance of a historically constructed national identity for Italy.

The dynamism of Shelley's travel narrative is augmented by her reanimation of the past, and this suggests the instability of temporality. *Rambles* is a narrative which tells of a becoming, a nostalgic return that is not fully a return, and a history that is never fully past. The charting of Shelley's emotional territory is blended with the political progress of Italy. The peninsula is at a liminal stage in its development at the time of her visit, and this phase of change is incorporated into her own understanding of Italy's historiography. In her Preface to *Rambles*, Shelley suggests that:

Italy is, indeed, much changed. Their historians no longer limit themselves to disputing dates, but burn with enthusiasm for liberty. [. . . Italy] 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 (R, pp. 66–67).

The recording of the Italian present (its future history) is no longer defined by strictly temporal limits ('disputing dates') but by the pursuit of a common national cause ('enthusiasm for liberty'). In this extract, Shelley implicitly connects overt political oppression with a psychological oppression. The tension between history and the present is maintained by Shelley's own topical references to the 1834 Calabrian revolution, as Moskal notes, understood by her readers because of the 'sensational dispute' about it in the press (R, p. 67n). The method of composition of *Rambles* itself points to Shelley's personal investment in contemporary politics and Italy's future. Editing and translating some letters and papers belonging to Italian exile Ferdinando Gatteschi, Shelley undertook to write the *Rambles* to help finance his exile, and incorporated the material into the narrative.¹¹

This chapter focuses on *Rambles* treatment of the past to signal a rejuvenation of the people and Shelley's reanimating memory. The investment in the past

¹¹ For details of Gatteschi's contributions to *Rambles*, see Sunstein, *Mary Shelley* (Baltimore: Little and Brown, 1989), pp. 360, 362, 365. For a relation of the personal impact of Gatteschi's blackmail attempt on Mary Shelley, see Miranda Seymour, *Mary Shelley* (London: John Murray, 2000), pp. 487–89 and pp. 505–07.

through place pinpoints her sense of a national genius to the indigenous origins of Italian patriotic sentiment. Thus the interest in landscape aesthetics forms a connection between place and civic identity, and the latter's growth into national patriotism. This argument draws on the relationship between cultural history and place through the treatment of particular cities. Shelley contrasts Italian manners with English customs and her treatment of the Carbonari is discussed in the context of growing sense of national patriotism. The final section assesses how the associations of memory and place shape Shelley's treatment of Italy, constituting it as an imaginative and political trope, but one also bound up with the past. Mediating the past into the present furnishes Shelley's treatment of Italy with an optimism for the future that combines with the consolations for the lost past she finds in her metaphorical homecoming to Italy.

Civic identity through the polis and across the peninsula

This section articulates Shelley's cultural engagement with the cosmopolitan past. The polis is a space where Shelley reformulates Italy's Romantic-era 'age of nations' using the enlightenment and classical republican legacy of the city. She includes a treatment of Florence and Tuscany, but also incorporates the South by establishing continuity between Ancient Greek traditions and the Italian character, as with Amalfi, and the absorption of the ruins into the present, as at Rome. Shelley's aesthetic engagement with the polis is underpinned by political ideas, including national character, which are then used to reflect on the character of the peoples of the peninsula.

The influence of city-state republicanism on the Italian character has been established in earlier discussions of Sismondi's *Histoire* and of *Valperga* focusing on Tuscany. In *Rambles*, Shelley also extends her treatment of civic identity and republicanism to the Southern Italian republic of Amalfi. Connecting the 'benignant nature' (R, p. 325) of the Southern climate to the imagination of Italian writers such as Berni, Ariosto, and Tasso (R, p. 368), Shelley develops a synthesis between culture and nature. In this 'joining' of culture to nature, the South represents for her a single unified line of cultural descent from Ancient Greece to

republican Italy. 'Magna Grecia' was the 'mother of many philosophers' and 'the richest portion of Italy' (R, p. 377). Shelley argues that Amalfi 'preserved and extended' trade and science rather than originating them, so the ancient cultural tradition in the South of Italy has descended from Grecian expansion. The early culture that Amalfi fostered as a consequence of this was then disseminated. Shelley's attention is first drawn to this because the 'joining' of culture to nature appeals to a particularly gendered imagination. The investigative imagination searches for a cultural history in the immediate surroundings:

If I were a man, I know of no enterprise that would please my imagination more than seeking, in this district, for the traces of lost wealth, science, and civilisation (R, p. 377).

Shelley's brief history of Amalfi, like Gibbon's and Sismondi's, emphasises its peace-loving character in order to contrast its tradition with the rest of the conflict-ridden history of the Italian peninsula.¹² The absorption of Amalfi by Naples in 1137 indicates a national instability caused by 'municipal rivalry, the bane of Italy' (R, p. 378). Amalfi's subjection results in a loss of regional identity and cultural decline into obscurity: 'What are they now?' asks Shelley of the 'free, intelligent and courageous' citizens of ancient Amalfi:

Must we not seek in their political history for the causes wherefore superstition and vice have replaced ardour for science and the virtues of industrious and brave citizens? (R, p. 378)

The principles underpinning this statement enable Shelley to diagnose the state of Italy through its political history and social customs. Such a principle opens up the question of nationality and rule, and the power of the invaded nation to liberate themselves.

The case of Amalfi gives prominence, in the republican historiography of Italy, to the interwoven factionalism that characterises Italian history in the Middle Ages. Shelley's sensitivity to the relevance of Amalfi's past to the history of Italy is part of a continuous engagement with contemporary Italian culture as she draws her

¹² R, p. 378n.

representation into the present. Once she has traced Amalfi's heritage, she comments on the active economy and 'considerable' prosperity of Amalfi's citizens, observing the 'large manufacture' of 'maccaroni', 'paper' and 'iron': 'living is cheap and want is happily unknown' (R, p. 380). Paper-mills, iron foundries, and a thriving tourist industry paint a quintessentially modern picture of Amalfi on top of the more symbolic historic construction.

Upon reaching the South Shelley experiences a more highly-attuned reality, and is deeply responsive to the 'enchanted scenes' she beholds and which make her 'senses ache' (R, p. 370). The natural landscape becomes a touchstone for reality and creative imagination and this engagement derives from sensitivity to the detail of the landscape surrounding her, and the narrative of the region's cultural past with which she intersperses her descriptions. The new vision of the South, which makes Shelley feel 'as if I had never before visited Italy' (R, p. 368), establishes an authentic continuity between the past and Italy's political future. This connection occurs through the heightened sensibility that Shelley garners from the landscape and its past.

Shelley herself seems reluctant to forsake the virtues of the city-state that were outlined in *Valperga*, and which drew on Sismondi's *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge*. The city-state and the nation are not mutually exclusive in the case of Italy. The continuity between nationhood and language was articulated from Dante onwards, and the republican city-state had become a political tradition endemic in the north of Italy. While the general trend in Europe after the French Revolution was towards larger and more authoritarian states, Martin Thom observes that 'the image of the city, like that of tribal lands in dissidence, persisted as a source of value'.¹³ The Romantic Era's trend towards nationalism constructed social character by establishing cultural and linguistic traditions across a much larger geographical area than that of the city-state.¹⁴ The existence of a national character is predicated on such an understanding of nationalism; one which Benedict Anderson has

¹³ Martin Thom, *Republics, Nations and Tribes*, (London: Verso, 1995), pp. 5-6.

¹⁴ Thom, pp. 2, 5

suggested is imagined.¹⁵ The sharing of a common language is central to Shelley's conception of Italian nationhood, yet she also defines national character according to region and applies it to the whole of the peninsula thus connecting history to place through national character.

For Shelley, the city's prominence in the Italian national landscape occupies a special role. Thom has examined the preoccupation with the city as an Enlightenment trope, but Shelley uses discourses about the city as a consolidation of Italian national identity. The city is both an incipient part of national identity in Italy, and a figure of resistance to the expansion that marked nineteenth-century Europe. This unstable union between the two, tentatively harnessed in an attempt to unite the diverse identities of the Italian peninsula emerged from an intellectual circle located in the heart of Europe rather than Italy. However, Staël's Coppet group originated in a confederation of republics which had a stronger, more united collective identity than those of the Italian peninsula. Martin Thom notes that:

When *Corinne* and the *History of the Medieval Italian Republics*, at last, in 1807, offered patriots an image of the whole land mass and therefore, by implication, of a united Italy, it was from Geneva or Coppet that the muffled exhortation came.¹⁶

Shelley's treatment of the past is routed through a history that is subtly place-specific. It unites the peninsula by drawing on its civic republican tradition. Observing that there is an impulse through the whole of Italy for improvement, Shelley juxtaposes the present situation of Florence with a heritage that she has shown elsewhere to be at the forefront of development. Nevertheless, the impetus for change derives from Tuscany, '[p]olitically and materially considered' to be 'the best governed and happiest Italian state' (R, p. 314), compared with the 'misrule' of the Papal states further south. Foreign rule for Italy by the French united the northern half of the peninsula (R, p. 314). This removed, to some extent, the divisions that beset Italian, and European, politics at the time, precisely because the French government had a tendency 'always to destroy the nationality of any people subdued by them' (R, p.

¹⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, Verso, 1983), pp. 15–16.

¹⁶ Thom, p. 182.

314). The primary motive behind French moves towards unification in the Italian peninsula may have been for 'municipal' convenience and ease of government, with an additional consequence of a more cohesive sense of national identity. By the time the Austrians assumed control over the northern part of the peninsula, the regime 'was well aware of the benefit to be derived from disunion, and it stirred up the spirit of discord' (R, pp. 314-15).

Shelley's focus on the civic history of the polis evokes her biographical work from *Lives* and the connection between history and place that was established in *Valperga*. In *Rambles*, her historical understanding in relation to place is demonstrated by her trip to Florence. Here, she says that if she were able, she would:

visit every spot mentioned in Florentine history – visit its towns of old renown; and ramble amid scenes familiar to Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Machiavelli (R, p. 300).

In associating geographical sites with historical figures, and their experiences of the land, Shelley's narrative resounds with the voice of an authoritative traveller. History connects the land to a people which has its own peculiar identity, and gives specific focus to the general civic traditions, such as those she traces in Amalfi. Shelley's knowledge of Italy stimulates a further desire to uncover knowledge about Italy that is denied to the 'usual tourist':

I look on those glorious hills, and turn to a map of Italy, and long to lose myself in their depths; and to visit every portion of Tuscany; every smaller town and secluded nook of which, is illustrious through historical association. It is my dream to set out some day on this ramble, and see places untrod by the usual tourist (R, p. 301).

Shelley's geographical and historical orientation of Italy reworks Godwin's 'Sepulchres' by identifying history as the stimulus for visiting particular places. Her formulation suggests that a thorough historiography of place will yield up territory uncharted by the tourist, thus providing a more authentic experience of Italy. Shelley achieves this by integrating the historical into her immediate experience of Italy and responding to its civic heritage.

In Rome, her view of the city's ruins is fused into the present. Here, for Shelley, 'the treasures of my youth lie buried' (R, p. 348) but the ruins around which she wanders do not awaken melancholy recollections. Instead, Shelley focuses on the civic use and rejuvenation of the ruins. One of her favourite views is that from the east door of the Basilica of St. John Lateran:

You see nothing of the city, for your back is turned on it; [. . .] the Campagna at your feet, spanned by a number of ruined aqueducts, whose grandeur and extent impress the mind, more than any other object, with a sense of Roman greatness (R, p. 349-50).

Further down, Shelley spies *poderi*, or smallholdings amidst the ruins in the old quarter of town running down to the Coliseum. The ruins are transformed into cultivated land but their historical resonance remains. The ruins are symbolic of the greatness of ancient Roman, but the land is farmed by 'the peasantry' who 'came with the plough, and sowed seed and reaped corn' (R, p. 350). Shelley depicts a transition between the ancient past and the present by the renewal of the land through agriculture. Rather than 'masking' the historical, as Anne Janowitz suggests of the picturesque in Romantic poetry, Shelley's use of the picturesque has a utilitarian and contemporary capacity.¹⁷ She underpins this synthesis with a historical context that explains how the land came to be farmed. Rome was sacked in the eleventh century by the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV after Pope Gregory VII's supporters drove him from the city. Even within Shelley's picturesque representation of the ruins, she incorporates a political history that returns to the question of national unity. The cultivated ruins become an echo of the fragmentation in Italy's long history of factionalism. Political factionalism is redeemed through the fragment, and Shelley's historical aesthetic reformulates the fragment, the ruin, fixed in an abundant and cultivated landscape to signal a new age of national unity.

Shelley depicts the national character in a manner which consolidates her representation of Italy as originating from the Italian peoples themselves. In *Rambles*,

¹⁷ Anne Janowitz, *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 57.

the relationship between England and Italy articulates the plight of Italy. Constructing a relationship between the English at home and the Italians develops Shelley's configuration of Italy imagined from afar that she used in the mid-1820s and the 1830s. The representation of English traditions, as when she claims that England 'in particular' ought to have sympathy for Italy, appeals to a nostalgic evocation of the homeland for the English armchair traveller. Shelley states that 'the aspiration for free institutions all over the world has its source in England' (*R*, p. 67). Moskal has discussed how this is a strategy to elicit sympathy from a British audience.¹⁸ By comparing indigenous perspectives of the English and Italian, Shelley illustrates the Italian's lack of freedom:

The swarms of English that overrun Italy keep the feeling alive. An Italian gentleman naturally envies an Englishman, hereditary or elective legislator. He envies him his pride of country, in which he himself can in no way indulge. He knows, at best, that his sovereign is a weak tool in the hands of a foreign potentate; and that all that is aimed at by the governments that rule him, is to benefit Austria – not Italy (*R*, p. 67).

This large-scale perspective is then compounded by connecting it to individual civil liberties which the Italian is denied, such as reading a book or expressing an opinion.

Italy as experienced by the traveller is understood as a land of liberated awakening, a natural consequence of travel. The contrast between the experience of the traveller and the experience of the indigenous inhabitant is clear in these reconfigured otherings. A similar exchange between English and Italian national identity also reveals the instability of the traveller's identity while also simultaneously transforming the conventionally received view of the Italians. When the English visit Italy, they:

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 (*R*, p. 69).

In assuming the character traits that she has identified as particular to Italians, the English will recognise the implicit strengths of Italian civilisation. Shelley forces this

¹⁸ Moskal, 'Italian Nationalism', p. 194.

assumption to reverse the unfortunate image of Italians that many English hold, and to which she alludes earlier in the Preface (*R*, p. 66).

Throughout *Rambles* there is an attempt to rehabilitate the Italian national character. Shelley attributes their shortcomings to the system of government they endure, and the energy and potential that Shelley sees in the people will lead to their rejuvenation. The Italians, she writes, have 'many' faults, but all are superficial and caused by oppression. Under free institutions, their 'love of pleasure' would be:

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. [. . .] [T]he 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 Michael Angelo and Raphael still exists (*R*, p. 119).

In a comparison with other European nations, the Italians emerge favourably, distinct from the 'doltish ignorance' of the English and the 'dogged sullenness' of the German (*R*, p. 306) by their politeness. The recent history of subjection has left the Italian peoples 'demoralised and degenerate' (*R*, p. 367), but their rehabilitation, although deferred, seems certain:

The present affords no glimmering light by which we may perceive how the regeneration of Italy will be effected. It is one of the secrets of futurity at which it is vain to guess. Yet the hour must and will come (*R*, p. 367).

This final sentence reveals the paradox of Shelley's thought. It is the spirit of the people which feels oppression keenly and which will be the liberating impulse for the nation. Yet the acceptance of a notion of a national character that was nurtured by liberty and republicanism establishes historical continuity that has otherwise been interrupted by Napoleonic and then Austrian regimes. Although Moskal notes that Morgan and Sismondi credited the Napoleonic government with resurrecting Italian patriotism, she carefully distinguishes Shelley's emphatic argument in *Rambles* that 'the roots of Italian nationalism' arose 'in opposition to the Napoleonic regime, rather than as derivative from it'.¹⁹ Moskal does not suggest Shelley's reasoning

¹⁹ Moskal, 'Italian Nationalism', p. 194.

behind the inherent nature of the growth of patriotism. In my view, Shelley's constant recourse to the Italian republican past, and her connection between character and the land intimate that she attributes the upsurge in patriotic sentiment to the collective character of the Italian peoples.

The Italian desire for freedom is cultivated as a consequence of the climate, as well as from systems of government. This is acknowledged by a North-South divide, which Shelley articulates after enjoying a balmy Italian evening on the lake of Lecco. These 'delights':

come to us so naturally as our due birthright, that we do not feel their full value till returned to a northern clime; when, all at once, we wonder at the change come over the earth, and feel disinherited of, and exiled from its fairest gifts (R, p. 118).

In this quotation, Italy is represented as a place of sympathetic origin for Shelley. The South, or Italy, offers tranquillity and abundance that stimulate the spirit. The Italian peoples possess an internal capacity, or spirit, for beauty, for moral good and for nature. This kind of natural genius becomes for Shelley the liberating principle for the Italians. The intensity of her particular attachment to Italy is evident here, and as Shirley Foster argues, reflects a preoccupation of the 'age as a whole'.²⁰ Firmly situated in aesthetic attraction of visual 'splendours of a past-haunted land' filled with a 'Mediterranean spirit of freedom', Italy becomes a destination for individual optimism and hope for many English tourists.²¹ Shelley channels this personal aspect into optimism for the Italian nation.

When Shelley reaches Italy, she uses her knowledge of Italian custom to criticise English practice. In an extended discussion on Italian family structures, Shelley notes the inequality of the system of land inheritance. The English system preserves the wealth and influence of a family through primogeniture. This upholds the connection between wealth, power, and influence and thus social class:

²⁰ Shirley Foster, *Across New Worlds: Nineteenth-Century Women Travellers and their Writings* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), p. 30.

²¹ *Ibid.*

In England, a peer is an hereditary legislator, he is certain to possess a comparatively large fortune; so that, to be a noble with us, is to be in the possession of power and influence (*R*, p. 288).

Whereas only the first-born sons of English nobles can inherit this, in Italy, 'the descendants of a noble are also noble to the end of time'. The outcome of this is a nobility so large as to constitute 'a numerous class, wholly apart' (*R*, p. 288). However, this expansion means that 'the respect in which titles are held is greatly diminished, as power and fortune by no means constantly attend them' (*R*, p. 288).

Shelley discerns 'the appearance of ease and equality' (*R*, p. 324) in Tuscany, and attributes this to the abolition of primogeniture and the ancient constitution of Florence that excluded aristocrats from high civic office. Consequently, the country is divided into 'small farms (*podere*), cultivated by the family of the countryman (*contadino*) who holds them' (*R*, p. 325). Those who work the land may have to 'labour hard – very hard – and live poorly, but they do not suffer want'. Shelley narrates an agricultural system that divides profits between the farmer and the owner, citing payment in kind as 'a circumstance which aids the farmer, and limits the fortune of the owner' (*R*, p. 325). This discussion is hinged on the liberty and freedom of the people. The bountifulness of the fertile Italian landscape throws into relief the civic want and political disenfranchisement of the people:

[A]n English person, accustomed to heart-piercing accounts of suffering, hard labour, and starvation among our poor, gladly hails a sort of golden age in this happy country. We must look on the state of society from a wholly different point of view – we must think of the hunger of the mind; of the nobler aspirations of the soul, held in check and blighted – of the tendency of man to improve, here held down – of the peculiar and surpassing gifts of genius appertaining to this people, who are crushed and trod under foot by the jealousy of government (*R*, pp. 325–26).

The fertility of the land is connected by a contrast to the oppression caused by an authoritarian government. While the land can provide for them, without political liberty the spirit of the people cannot be nurtured. This extends the association Shelley made in 'The English in Italy' between the land and political freedom, but in this instance the natural genius of the people dwindles because of the unjust system of government.

This section has explained the strategies by which Shelley sought to reclaim from the discourse of tourism the landscapes and cultural sites of Italy and to reappropriate them into a discourse of patriotism which resisted the homogenising tendency of Romantic nationhood and the misconceived projections of the tourist. She achieves this by articulating the unifying relationship between culture and nature and emphasising its distinctive characteristics which have shaped Italian letters. Additionally, the civic traditions of the city-state are identified as defining national character. The detail and imagination incorporated into Shelley's use of the picturesque imbues it with a temporal and civic dimension by relating it to historical continuity. Her treatment of the subjection of the Italian people is figured through a comparison of English and Italian systems of landholding. The paradox that English liberal traditions should be propped up by social hierarchies while Italian egalitarian tendencies are not allowed to flourish because of an oppressive regime is expressed through this comparison. Shelley's extension of the representation of the land breaks out of the picturesque frame in a way which challenges Dolan Kautz's therapeutic model. Shelley shifts the picturesque into the domain of social reality, and not only aesthetic beauty. The existence of social reality within the picturesque construction of Italian landscapes allows her to integrate Italian genius with its climate and environs.

The Carbonari, Nationalism, Genre

Images of the city articulate civic virtue and individual action for Shelley. The historical contexts she sets out in her discussion of the Carbonari (Letter XIV) extend individual civic action onto a national scale: 'the real interests of the country must result from the improvement of the moral sense' (*R*, p. 367). As with Sismondi, for Shelley, the individual effort is situated not just in national context but within the framework of European relations. As a caveat to this, she writes:

It cannot be expected that Italy should be able to liberate itself in a time of lethargic peace like the present. And the attempts of the few who, from

time to time, are driven by indignation and shame to take up arms, are but the occasion of tears and grief. [. . .] It may even be doubted whether an European commotion would give an occasion favourable to Italy (R, p. 367).

Shelley's integration of wider European politics into the construction of national identity ensures that her observations of the customs and culture of Italy have an underlying political emphasis. This can be seen following her visit to Amalfi and her praise of it as one of the earliest republics, and committed to peaceful trade rather than war. Shelley's tracing of the republican past leads to a temporal disjunction based on the difference between the past and the present. Amalfi, like Venice, has declined immeasurably from its former greatness. The historical continuity Shelley establishes with the past dissociates Italian nationalism from the Napoleonic Era and foregrounds her sympathetic representation of the Carbonari.

The political engagement of the Carbonari is determined by the presence of foreign power in their homeland. While Shelley hints at the mysterious and secret nature of the Carbonari, her actual representation of it is situated in the context of current events of the time. The anonymously published *Memoirs of the Secret Societies of the South of Italy, particularly the Carbonari* gives more details of the ritual element involved in Carbonarism, and its membership profile, than Shelley's letter.²² It seems unlikely that her relation of the Carbonari was simply uninformed, although there is no evidence of her ever having read Murray's publication. Her earlier connections with Byron and the family of Teresa Guiccioli point to a long-standing awareness of the movement from the summer of 1821 (MWSJ, 357n. and 376n. and MWSL I: 209). Her letter to Leigh Hunt dated 29 December 1821 dismisses as implausible the allegations about Tommaso Sgricci, the improvvisatore, and 'carbonarism' (MWSL, I: 172). Shelley's depiction of the Carbonari captures a collective response to foreign invasion and indicates her complex engagement with the Napoleonic presence in Italy. Support for Carbonarism, increased by the

²² [Anonymous] *Memoirs of the Secret Societies of the South of Italy, particularly the Carbonari* (London: John Murray, 1821). For a profile of the membership of the Carbonari, see p. 10; for ceremonial rituals and their explanations, see pp. 23-28 and 32-33.

growing nationalist movement, was occasioned by Napoleonic expansion into Naples.

Another striking aspect of Shelley's treatment of the Carbonari is the inclusion of a short biography of Capo Bianco, the founder of Carbonarism, in which Shelley plays out national patriotism through the individual. The republican intention of a band of exiles is strengthened into the founding of the Carbonari and given emphatic augmentation by Shelley's sketch of the leader. The densely-packed biography reveals his moral integrity ('gentle and kind to the inoffensive'), his authority (a 'bold leader'), and his devoted commitment to the republican liberation of Italy. It is, however, in staunch republicanism that he is most uncompromising:

He abhorred the name of king – not because he had been persecuted by his sovereign, but because the power of royalty was detestable in his eyes [. . .]. He would consent only to republican institutions for his country; he desired the same government to prevail all over Italy, and argued warmly in favour of Italian union and independence (*R*, p. 316).

The portrait of Capo Bianco communicates sympathy with the Carbonari's aims at all levels of society, from the highest level of government, as indicated by their liaison with Prince Moliterno. Its first members were 'appertaining to the lower classes' and the 'religious and mystic colouring' of the society ensured its wide appeal to a pious people (*R*, p. 318). Shelley's defence of the Carbonari after factionalism 'degenerated' the movement (*R*, p. 321) implicitly blames the Napoleonic government for the Carbonari's corruption, and not the 'honourable and honest men' who were members. Shelley argues that the Carbonari's original motives, a 'deep-rooted love of their country, and detestation of the vice, ignorance, and slavery into which Italy had fallen' (*R*, p. 322) were never overcome. The patriotic aim of national self-determination is the most important legacy of Carbonarism, despite its achievement of a constitution shortly before the Austrian invasion of 1820–21. The perpetuation of this spirit of Carbonarism fuels the 'spirit of national union' to 'carry on the regeneration of their country' (*R*, p. 323). Shelley acknowledges the faults of the Carbonari, notably the descent into violence, but is unrestrainedly optimistic in her assessment of their achievement. The Carbonari were able to:

destroy the anti-social municipal prejudices, and the narrow spirit of local attachment, which was long a serious obstacle to the union of a country divided as Italy is into many states, and subject to the stranger. The Carbonari first taught the Italians to consider themselves as forming a nation (R, p. 323).

Their legacy of a sense of national unity transcends regional difference and rejects foreign rule and achieves an autonomy for the people that appeals to the development of virtue and truth, rather than secrecy and crime. At its height, the most beneficent aspect of Carbonarism has led Italian peoples to unite as a nation in their similarities to stave off foreign invasion:

When the Roman considers himself, in his heart, the countryman of the Milanese – when the Tuscan looks upon Naples as also his country – then the power of the Austrian will receive a blow, which it has hitherto warded off, from which it will never recover (R, p. 323).

Republicanism is associated with unity and independence, and national self-determination is configured through indigenous and just rule, as well as through the ability of individuals, such as Capo Bianco, to participate in history. The integration of genres characterises Shelley's treatment of history. Her inclusion of biography in history furthers the construction of national character. Giving due prominence to the presence and function of biography in historical representation helps us understand the particular focus of Shelley's writing in regard to Italy. The sketch of Capo Bianco reveals the intersection between life, politics, and history in a similar way to the *Lives*. The delineation of his character contributes to the political representation that Shelley establishes. Bianco's importance as a character in the founding myths of the Carbonari occupies a similar position to the founders of Rome or Greece, such as Numa or Lycurgus, in that they are able to cohere an otherwise unstable collective through the implementation of personal vision.²³ Through Bianco, Carbonarism was to 'mingle mystic tenets with political opinions; in short to erect a *political religion*' (R, p. 318, original emphasis). Bianco's leadership manifests, and incites in others through genius or spirit, an essential aspect of nationalism for Shelley. The appeal to mysticism and national genius is a re-

²³ Thom, p. 70.

appropriated form of religion, one which reaches out to the true inclinations of the people. In Bianco Shelley finds a genius which is 'the soul of all' and which 'inflamed their zeal by his eloquence' (R, p. 319).

The constant emphasis Shelley places on individual moral improvement is shaped by the historical precedent of predominant Italian cultural development during the Middle Ages. The examination of this is undertaken in Letter XVI where Shelley connects the past and the present through literature. Through the resurgence of nineteenth-century Italian letters, Shelley establishes continuity between the past and the present, marking the return of the Italian spirit which originated through past systems of government. After acknowledging the expertise and repute of Italian history-writing, Shelley comments that there has been 'a great revolution in Italian poetry of late years' (R, p. 329). The yoking of literature and history is important for Shelley's representation because poetry has 'returned to the nature and character that marked its outset' (R, p. 329). Thus, literature becomes the historical record of the customs of the people, and their character and genius. Cultural development becomes a sign of historical progress and national literature becomes its historical residue. The literature of the past is treated not as an end in itself but as a means to historical interpretation. As Shelley states, in the Italy of the Middle Ages: 'The character of the youth of modern European civilisation, with all its defects and all its charms, is indelibly impressed on the literature of that age' (R, p. 329). The history of Italian literature from this period reveals political motivations, individual development, and it also reveals the spirit that connects national identity and artistic creativity through patriotism. In Shelley's view:

Dante, the greatest of all – Petrarch and Ariosto, abandoned themselves to the genuine impulse of their minds, and were great; – great, because free. The history of Italian poetry confirms the truth, that the poet follows the real and the sublimest scope of art when he keeps in mind the character of his country and of his age. The highest Italian poetry is truly national (R, p. 329).

Throughout *Rambles*, political freedom fosters intellectual freedom and the two have a symbiotic relationship. Sismondi also makes this point, by way of negative example, in his *Histoire* (HRI, IV: 430). He notes that the courts of the princes

remunerate poets more generously than the republics. He matches this with a diminution of artistic talent, stating that poets were able to have been born only as long as the spirit of liberty continued to animate the 'sacred earth of Italy', but this spirit was eroded by the patronage of the signoria. Shelley sees the history of Italian poetry as most realistically representing the fate of the nation. Poetry acquires a greater immediacy than historical representation because Dante's art arises only from the particular combination of his individual character and his national spirit. His poetry is at its most effective when it most truly reflects Italy rather than his own genius. The work of Dante, Petrarch, and Ariosto proves the success of genius or spirit, but the sixteenth century reveals its flip-side:

The creations of genius and the inventions of the imagination are derived from, and depend on, the moral culture of the intellect, and this culture was shackled. After the sixteenth century Italy never enjoyed political liberty, and the intellect of the country was unable to develop itself with freedom (R, p. 329).

Cultural and artistic improvement is linked to political liberty. Literature, imagination and genius foundered because political oppression led to a propensity to imitate. The regeneration of letters occurs in Shelley's present with the advent of contemporary Italian writers, such as Manzoni and Niccolini. They mark the beginning of a regeneration towards the end of the eighteenth century, the 'dawn of a reform in every branch of human knowledge' that allowed 'the national spirit of the age' to rise again (R, p. 330).

Shelley's consideration of these writers hinges on the relationship between patriotism and literature. As with her biography of Capo Bianco, nationalism is represented by mediating it through another channel. The patriotism of the nation is embodied through Capo Bianco's life. In her discussion of Italian literature, patriotism is associated with the genre of poetry, and in part with improvisation. Genre conveys the urgency of the Italian national cause. Shelley alludes repeatedly to the improvisatory tendency of history, fiction, and poetry, but she also emphasises the significance of the patriotic themes of contemporary literature (R, p. 330). Manzoni and Niccolini are significant because the patriotic character of their writings

is implicated in generic considerations. This connection between literature and patriotism (R, p. 331) has already been established in relation to Italian literature in general, but Shelley's specification is that Romantic writing, that is, the contemporary writing for the reader of Shelley's day, must be poetic and patriotic. The writing must be 'founded on national faith, chronicles, and sympathies' (R, p. 331). Such writing incorporates specifically Italian themes, exciting emotional and imaginative involvement in the reader, and is often historical, as Shelley demonstrates, citing examples from Berchet, Grossi and Manzoni. The literary articulation of nationalism is specific to the Italian present, in the form of the reader's sympathetic engagement with it. It is also specific to the Italian past through narration of a particular subject chosen by the writer, so that literature reanimates the past by representing for the present. Silvio Pellico, renowned for establishing the journal, *Il Conciliatore*, which championed free speech and freedom of the press, wrote on Italian historical subjects *Francesca da Rimini* and *Eufemio da Messina* alongside political commentary on the Carbonari uprisings in Naples, Alessandria, and Piedmont in 1820-21. This demonstrates the interdependent representation of the past and the present in Italian nationalist literature.

Shelley describes Manzoni's drama *Adelchi* as a work where 'the veil is for the first time lifted' from the intrigues of the Popes and their desire for temporal power. Using the classical model, the chorus in *Carmagnola* draws in the reader to the past of the subject matter but also into an identification with nineteenth-century responses to foreign rule. Shelley states that:

No reader can fail of being carried away by the pathos and fire of the chorus in *Carmagnola*, describing the horrors of the wars of invasion in Italy, which became civil contests, as the various states adhered to one or other of the foreign powers, who poured down from the Alps for their destruction (R, pp. 332-33).

This imaginatively engaged account of war mediates a cosmopolitan interest in civic identity, quantifying the struggle for national liberty through 'civil contests'. Local civic identities can only be resolved by involvement on a wider European scale,

connecting the fate of individual identities and communities to foreign national powers.

In her discussion of the *Promessi Sposi*, Shelley returns to the idea of inspiration within the writer as distinctive. Firstly, by using material from the 'historian Ripamonti', Manzoni 'rises above' the works of Walter Scott 'in grandeur of description and in unity and nobility of purpose' (R, p. 333). Secondly, his representation, 'though suggested by history' is 'treated with a poetic fire, an originality of idea, and a vitality, which belongs entirely to Manzoni himself' (R, p. 333). This description summons up the techniques of the Italian improvvisatore and the characteristics which Shelley associates with Italian genius.²⁴

The similarities to the improvvisatore emphasise the temporal ambiguity of historical representation through fiction. Patriotism is also an essential part of the successful effect of the improvvisatore, but Shelley chooses not to draw similarities between the historical writer and the improvvisatore; instead she reveals the commitment of each to patriotism. Not only is this found in Manzoni, and Grossi, a 'man of genius' who is inspired by an 'almost frantic love of liberty' (R, p. 335), but also in Niccolini, the 'tragic and lyric poet' who 'commenced his career, as a dramatist, by tragedies on Greek and mythological subjects' (R, p. 335). From this, he moved on to national subjects such as the 'dark tyranny of Venice' and the Sicilian Vespers, a work received with 'transports of enthusiasm' (R, p. 336) by the reading public. Shelley connects all these themes, which manifest themselves in improvisation and patriotism alike, by reverting to national character:

[T]he Italians appear to inherit the art of narrating events, and describing men and countries, as well as of deducing philosophical conclusions from the experience of past ages (R, p. 337).

When she moves onto Colletta, Shelley casts his historical writing almost as a kind of performed improvisation:

²⁴ Jean de Palacio, *Mary Shelley dans son oeuvre* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1969), notes that Manzoni was an admirer of Sgricci (p. 534).

The vigour of his style, the truth that reigned in his narrative, and the warmth of enthusiasm that animated his pen, attracted attention, and received applause (*R*, p. 337).

His ability as a narrator has resulted in his composing 'one of the finest pieces of writing in the world – full of a mournful dignity, that renders its pathos touching, and gives grandeur to its scorn' (*R*, p. 337). As with her brief discussions of other nineteenth-century historians, Shelley suggests that the link between improvisation and historical narration lies in its representation by the narrator. She discerns Amari to be '[f]ired with a generous sympathy' for an oppressed people, and he recounts their history with 'glowing eloquence' (*R*, p. 339). She thinks highly of his treatment of the Sicilian Vespers a highly symbolic and inflammatory topic for Italian patriots: 'You will scarcely find in any historian a more animated and graphic narration' (*R*, p. 339). While the obvious discrepancy between the improvvisatore and the historian is the medium of their work (one speaks, the other writes), they are united by the common cause of Italy and the ability to move their audience into an understanding of their work which yields a political meaning and which, on an individual level, seeks to liberate the intellect and the heart of the patriot.

This section has shown how Shelley incorporated cultural movements into her representation of Italy to show the extent of animation that patriotism generated in a supposedly indolent people. Through her sketch of the Carbonari and her discussion of Italian literature, Shelley identifies patriotism as the energising force that rejuvenates the spirit and culture of Italy. She states that all Italian writers of her day are 'animated by a patriotic feeling' (*R*, p. 335). Partially due to the constraints imposed on women writers, and the subtlety with which Shelley narrates her politics, her picture of Italy portrays the Italian spirit in sublimated ways. In her writing, it occurs through Shelley's combining biography and history to communicate the Italian spirit. In contemporary Italian letters the patriotic impulse is also expressed across genres but with the distinctively Italian trait of improvisation. Through these techniques Shelley conveys the beginnings of national rejuvenation, but leaves its legacy to be realised through the agency of the Italian peoples themselves.

Personal Recollection in *Rambles*

Tracing a genealogy of Italy through Shelley's memories of 1818-1823 in *Rambles* alongside her political engagement with history, culture, and nature, reveals her psychic investment in Italian landscapes. Italy as a locus for the founding of European culture is represented in a landscape aesthetics that prioritises the cultural importance of cities and the climatic influence upon a people. Shelley's recollections emphasise that her journey to Italy is a return. In subsequent pages, I argue that this relationship between memory and history is facilitated by a spatial orientation that stimulates Shelley's temporal and historical consciousness.

She explicitly negotiates the role of memory in the representation of the present when she returns to Villa Diodati, departing Italy via Geneva to return home from the first tour in 1840. Clarissa Campbell Orr and Esther Schor have each noted how Shelley is struck by the force of the past when she revisits the site of *Frankenstein's* inception in Geneva in the summer of 1816. The 'scene' around her contained within it 'realities' that made her life since seem 'an unreal phantasmagoria' (R, p. 148).²⁵ Campbell Orr and Schor both use this incident to argue that Shelley's recollections separate her cultural and political travelogue from the personal authorial voice of *Rambles*. This section challenges that argument by examining Shelley's journal entries in the ensuing years after P. B. Shelley's death to provide insights into her conception of Italy. The treatment of memory and place in *Rambles* can be traced back to Shelley's journal where she explicitly identifies imagination with Italy, and Italy with the spirit of P. B. Shelley's memory. Reading the journal entries in the context of Shelley's oeuvre, and particularly *Rambles*, enables much greater integration between the cultural and political treatment of Italy and her intimate recollections and psychical engagement with the Italian landscape.

Looking back to Shelley's early imaginative memorialisation of Italy clarifies its treatment by her through recollection. *Rambles* reconnects with the past but also reinforces distance from it. Shelley's return to Italy in the 1840s is a partial one, but the psychic engagement with nature and culture enables her to acknowledge incompleteness as part of her narrative. Her journal for the mid-1820s, often read as an expression of her acute grief at P. B. Shelley's death, complements the

²⁵ Quoted by Campbell Orr, n. pag.; Schor, p. 242.

fragments of recollection included in *Rambles*. My discussion establishes the relationship between the journal entries and *Rambles* and demonstrates the imaginative consolation that Shelley derived from her treatment of Italy during this period. Chloe Chard has demonstrated how Italy represents both 'imaginative freedom' and 'a greater possibility of self-fulfilment' for Shelley in the mid-1820s, and finds it articulated in her deployment of the 'aesthetic pleasures of sublime infinitude'.²⁶ Chard identifies the liberation and self-fulfilment Shelley associates with Italy as characteristic of travel writers of the era. Such a context, although insightful, overlooks Shelley's unique configuration of association between Italy, imagination, and her personal past.

Shelley's description of Genoa with its 'promontories clothed in purple light' and 'starry heavens' prompts Chard to her observations. The self-fulfilment that she locates in Shelley's nostalgia for Italy contrasts with a sense of imprisonment in London, and at a time when she felt bereft of creative inspiration.²⁷ Her 'best inspirers' were the 'lovely and sublime objects of nature' that she encountered in Italy, in which her imagination could 'invent & combine, and self become absorbed in the grandeur of the universe I created' (MWSJ, p. 476). By contrast, in England her 'mind is a blank – a gulph filled with formless mist'. Chard also articulates Shelley's treatment of Italy solely within the 'domain of personal liberty' but given Shelley's extensive knowledge of the history and politics of the peninsula past and present, this is a reductive interpretation. The emotional, the intellectual, and the spatial all seek resolution in the (imaginative) site of Italy.

The positive associations Shelley retains of Italy invite a re-assessment of perhaps the most frequently cited entry of her journal. Chard quotes from this journal entry to support her argument but does not allude to the famous 'last man' passage. On 14 May 1824, less than a year after her return to England following P. B. Shelley's drowning, Shelley identifies with 'The last man', herself a 'solitary being' whose 'companions are extinct before me' (MWSJ, pp. 476, 477). This is generally treated as an outpouring of Shelley's grief, and as evidence of the autobiographical

²⁶ Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 185, 186.

²⁷ Chard, p. 185.

qualities of *The Last Man*. The journal extract invoking 'the last man' ought properly to be read in the context of a much longer entry which itself is part of a more sustained mood of yearning, not only for her life with P. B. Shelley, but for her life in Italy.

The 'last man' extract appears directly after the description of her mind as 'a blank – a gulph filled with formless mist' and the nostalgic reminiscence of Genoa. Shelley's identification with the last man is thus associated with personal loss and also with creative and intellectual atrophy. Her sentiments about the 'last man' are the result of 'the accumulating sorrows of days and weeks'. The identification was triggered by the sight of a perversely ordinary word, *lucerna*, a type of Italian lamp, and thus 'the idea of lost Italy sprung in my mind'. She writes:

I will go back only to have a *lucerna* – if I told people so they would think me mad – & yet not madder than they seem to do now when I say that the blue skies and verdure clad earth of that dear land is necessary to my existence (MWSJ, p. 477).

Shelley associates Italy with a life of emotional fulfilment and intellectual creativity that is inspired by Italy itself. To be without Italy is to alienate her self from her imagination, and from its source. The journal entry continues:

If there be a kind of spirit attendant on me, in compensation for these miserable days, let me only dream to night that I am in Italy! Mine own Shelley – what a horror you had (fully sympathized by me) of returning to this miserable country – To be here without you is to be doubly exiled – to be away from Italy is to lose you twice (MWSJ, p. 477).

Italy is not only a site for Shelley's productive imagination, it is inextricably associated in her memory with P. B. Shelley. In the Preface to her 1824 edition of his *Posthumous Poems*, Shelley states that P. B. Shelley's death made 'loved and lovely Italy appear as a tomb'.²⁸ The conflation of P. B. Shelley and Italy responds to the social and intellectual disenfranchisement Shelley felt upon her return to England. Even by the end of 1824, the 'but one idea' Shelley wishes to associate with England is 'immeasurable distance, & insurmountable barriers'. In this context, 'Beloved

²⁸ 'Prefaces and Notes', in *NSW*, II: 240.

Italy' becomes 'my country, my hope – my haven!' (MWSJ, p. 486). Exile and disempowerment shape Shelley's sense of her present at this time, as Victoria Middleton has pointed out.²⁹ Middleton, however, fails to identify the imaginative inspiration Shelley derives from recollections of Italy and does not acknowledge this period of mourning as formative in Shelley's later response to Italy in *Rambles*.

The conceptualisation of her mourning in a dynamic paradigm of 'active, striving ~~hopeful~~ expectant!' grief (MWSJ, p. 471) is possible because of the sense of liberated self-fulfilment she finds in Italy, and the authentication of her 'interior landscape' through nature.³⁰ Enforced residence in England exiles her from the land that provides the crucial synthesis of P. B. Shelley and Italy animated in her memory. This is apparent as Shelley meditates on her departure from Italy. On an evening walk, she finds the bay at Genoa imbued with his presence:

But he is still there. He claims his unalienable right to his share in the loveliness of the scenes he worshipped – he still [. . .] enjoys with unalloyed delight the rapturous sensations that an intimate sympathy with Nature affords. [. . . then addressing Percy Shelley directly] [W]hen looking on what was your chief enjoyment on earth, I am filled with your idea – filled until the sensation becomes painful from its intensity (MWSJ, p. 464-65).

Shelley feels her being filled with him.³¹ His 'idea' becomes a sensation of 'painful intensity' which confirms the 'dreary and bitterly disappointing' reality of his absence. It points, additionally, to the synchronic temporality within which Shelley exists as she recalls, and reinscribes her memories of him.

When Shelley revisits Italy in the early 1840s, it becomes a double return to the place from which she felt doubly exiled. The sensations of her memories are both synchronised and anachronised by what she sees, and what she feels – the difference and the sameness of the past. This is the culmination of a preoccupation with the representation of history that has characterised her writing since *Valperga* in 1823.

²⁹ Victoria Middleton, *Elektra in Exile: Women Writers and Political Fiction* (New York: Garland, 1988), p. 41.

³⁰ ~~Word~~ denotes authorial deletion; ~~word~~ denotes authorial substitute written above the deletion.

³¹ Compare Panthea's dream of Prometheus in P. B. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, II. i. 80-82: 'I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt / His presence flow and mingle through my blood / Till it became his life, and his grew mine.' *The Poems of Shelley*, ed. by Everest and Matthews, 2 vols (Harlow: Longman, 2000), II: 1817-1819.

Autobiography and history meet in memory and in the land through Shelley's reanimation of the past. Memory links land to the present but also disrupts temporal order. Shelley seems conscious of this in her representation of memory, and her recollections show a temporal consciousness that has assimilated the past into the present. For this reason, I reject Schor's reading of Shelley's treatment of place as 'traumatic disorientation', as in Shelley's remembrance of her 1818 journey along the Brenta with her dying child (R, p. 269-70).³² Schor's focus on the traumatising cause of Shelley's recollection diminishes her engagement with the land. Shelley's 1842 trip along the Brenta follows a day in which she delighted to be in Italy, finding the 'richly cultivated' and 'wide expanse of fertile Lombardy' 'so refreshing, so new, and so enchanting' (R, p. 267). Additionally, Shelley frames the incident with implicit acknowledgement of temporal transformation since last she was there by using the partial illumination of the moonlight to inaugurate and to conclude the recollection as she travels from Vicenza to Venice. This partial illumination opens up an aporia in the narrative through which Shelley can recollect the circumstances of 1818 and this allows the past and present to co-exist momentarily. In Vicenza, Shelley's observation emphasises firstly the partial and distorting transformation the moonlight brings to objects it illuminates, and secondly, the brilliance of the moonlight itself. She observes that:

The charm of autumnal vegetation, in a rich vine country, adorned the road, and a distant view of the Alps bounded the scene. We arrived at Vicenza at eleven o'clock, by a bright moonlight. I was sorry to see no more of these Palladian palaces than the glimpses we caught from our carriage-windows. Architecture shows to peculiar advantage by the silver radiance of a full moon: its partial white light throws portions into strong relief, and the polished marble reflects its, so to speak, icy radiance (R, p. 269).

The transition from rural nature to man-made landmarks demonstrates Shelley's psychological engagement with both culture and nature, and her description uses the moonlight to incorporate a temporal disjunction between past and present. Partially

³² Schor, p. 243. Shelley's Journal briefly notes the circumstances of Clara Everina's death in its 24 September 1818 entry (MWSJ, p. 227). Shelley first represents this unfortunate journey to Venice in her preface to Percy's 'Poems Written in 1818', *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Mrs. Shelley (London: Moxon, 1840), p. 229; see also PN, p. 304n29.

illuminating the actual buildings, the light of the moon creates a space, an incompleteness, in both the image itself and the narrative, and this allows the emotional subtext of Shelley's reverie to surface. The moonlight, by representing the buildings imperfectly, throws only 'portions into strong relief', deflecting the impact of the image back onto the moon itself. The transformative quality of its light facilitates access to the past.

A common activity for sightseers, visiting ruins in the moonlight was often seen as a way to empty the scene of any contemporary distractions so to summon up more easily a sense of the past.³³ The Pantheon at Rome is a notable example (MWSJ, p. 251), and such circumstances are crucial to Valerius's own ability to access the past. The moon itself also has direct resonances for Shelley as a coded self-representation originating from P. B. Shelley's identification of her as the 'cold chaste Moon' of *Epipsychidion* (l. 281).³⁴ Nora Crook hints at the association of the moon and Shelley situating it within Gothic conventions of haunting and the uncanny.³⁵ The lunar imagery of *Rambles* exploits the association of the moon with temporal transformation by using it to rework representations of the past.

Shelley's framing of her memory on the Brenta also marks resolution of the past by acknowledging the fragmented emotional ruins of her memories and identifying them with cultural ruins, as at Venice, which concludes the recollection. In Verona, before the journey proper began and Shelley was revelling in her arrival in Italy, the present makes a 'startling' impact on her. Walking around the town in the moonlit evening, she comes across the amphitheatre being 'used as a circus, and horsemanship was going on, and music filled the air' (R, p. 267). The spectacle effects a sense of anachronism because the 'building of ancient days' was being used for its 'original purpose'. The present and the past fleetingly interchange. The return to Italy has asserted the passage and progress of present time alongside an

³³ Chard, pp. 226-29.

³⁴ *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: Norton, 1977) ll. 277-294 contain the full description of the moon's 'icy flame / Which ever is transformed, yet still the same' (ll. 283-84), a moon that 'warms not but illumines' (l. 285) and 'may hide the night / From its own darkness, until all was bright / Between the Heaven and Earth of my calm mind' (ll. 287-89).

³⁵ Nora Crook, 'Mary Shelley, Author of *Frankenstein*', *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 58-69 (p. 66).

antiquity too often aestheticised by the traveller, and alongside Shelley's own memories. Shelley acknowledges this latter in the following passage:

Many a scene, which I have since visited and admired, has faded in my mind, as a painting in the Diorama melts away, and another struggles into the changing canvass (R, p. 269).

Even as Shelley narrates the memory of her journey along the Brenta, the narrative leads her back to 1842 Venice. The 'majesty unrivalled' she finds there and the 'vociferations' of a 'storm of *gondolieri*' ensure that her earlier agitation at recalling the death of Clara 'subsided into instant calm' (R, p. 270). Shelley's personal recollection is embedded in a cultural experience of the present which she identifies as return, although a transformed one. Letter VI emphasises the differences between her recollection and the present, stimulated by an interaction between temporal and spatial awareness. In particular, the sameness of the places in which memories were formed impresses itself upon her as she acknowledges other transformations wrought by time. Again, the moonlight crucially highlights the dislocation. At her hotel Shelley looks out over the Grand Canal:

Evening has come, and the moon, so often friendly to me, now at its full, rises over the city. Often, when here before, I looked on this scene, at this hour, or later, for often I expected S.'s return from Palazzo Mocenigo, till two or three in the morning; I watched the glancing of the oars of the gondolas, and heard the far song, and saw the palaces sleeping in the light of the moon, which veils by its deep shadows all that grieved the eye and heart in the decaying palaces of Venice. Then I saw, as now I see, the bridge of the Rialto spanning the canal. All, all is the same; but as the Poet says –
 "The difference to me!" (R, p. 271).

Shelley emphasises here the difference in representation caused by time. She can fix the landscape both in the present and the past by identifying similitude between memory and actuality, in this case the Rialto bridge. She understands the geography of the city as being 'the same' in the present as in the past, in a manner which simultaneously addresses the difference between her memory of the past and her experience of the present. The contrast for Shelley of her radically altered circumstances since last she was there, impresses itself upon her because of the

familiar sight of the bridge. Her initial impression of Venice, upon return, foregrounds the disparity between memory and the present because it evokes within her a consciousness of the passage of time. She writes that Venice's 'dilapidated,' 'weather-worn,' and 'neglected' palaces 'struck me forcibly' and 'diminished the beauty' of the city. This is a visible manifestation of the gradual passage of time. Later that evening, the full moon triggers her memory of waiting for Percy Shelley to return from a visit to Byron. The moonlight has partially concealed the 'decaying palaces' that 'grieved the eye and heart', with the architectural ruins themselves obscuring a more unspeakable melancholy that hauntingly lies within. The light of the moon which partially reveals and conceals, evokes an idealised past when Venice was a greater city, and Shelley had not yet lost those closest to her. The slow, mournful passage of time leaves its traces on the material world without obliterating it, and Shelley's observation of this in the moonlight relumes her memory.

Rambles' final and most resonant image of the moon embeds in the Italian landscape Shelley's sign for herself. In the treatments of Venice and Verona, the moonlight signalled a temporal disjunction between the past and the present. In a self-referential gesture, the image of the moon also indicates Shelley's authorial hand transforming representations of the past and the present. The final image of the moon absorbs Shelley's past into the present. Eric Leed has shown the extent to which travel writing is dependent upon the passage of time as well as motion. Jane Robinson's distinction between the kinds of homecoming that women travellers narrate suggests the importance of the return journey back to England.³⁶ While these may be helpful for other travel accounts, the thoughtful conclusion to *Rambles* sets Shelley's writing apart from such formulations. Her narrative departs from each. Her account has fragmented a linear notion of travel in order to return to Italy and once this has come about Shelley is liberated from the 'linearities of motion', and the need to describe a journey home, or even make one, is obviated. Shelley defies both of those travel-writing conventions through the illuminating image she sees as she

³⁶ Jane Robinson, *Unsuitable for Ladies: An Anthology of Women Travellers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 446. The three categories of homecoming are, firstly women who are pleased to return home; secondly, those who are extremely pleased to return, wishing that they had never left; and, thirdly, those who return wishing they could set off again immediately.

looks out from Sorrento to the Bay of Naples. High in the night sky 'the moon hangs luminous, a pendant sphere of silver fire' (*R*, p. 386).³⁷ These final words, this concluding image, of *Rambles* suspend eternally the prospect of Shelley returning to England; the journey back is never narrated. Shelley implies that the real return was the one she made to Italy, and this return endures, is embodied and revived through the image of the moon.

Conclusion

Rambles concludes with an image that refers to the interior landscape of Shelley's memory but which also extends out into the landscape. She is looking out over the Bay of Naples, a locale that her earlier treatments in *Rambles* have defined as authentically Italian. The closing image historicises her past while superimposing it onto Italy's cultural past. Additionally, this region incorporates Amalfi. At the beginning of this chapter, I showed how Shelley's discussion of Amalfi was integral to her construction of an Italian national identity. Amalfi is also an example of her expansive picturesque vision in which the detail of nature and the sweep of history converge. The bustle of contemporary Italian life has echoes the commerce of the 'first republic of Modern Italy' (*R*, p. 377) and energises the residues Shelley detects in Amalfi's ancient history. Her narrative of return leads to new beginnings in the rejuvenation of the past.

Rambles contains sustained continuities in Shelley's thought about Italian history and nationalism. Her treatment of the landscape politicises space in a local context through debate about rank and popular entitlement to the produce of the land. In addition to this, space is politicised through gender and history. The shifting persona that Shelley adopts within *Rambles* encompasses the limitations of the female traveller, and redefines its relation to nature and the conventions of landscape representation through history. The relationship Shelley establishes between topography and history generates connections to more abstract conceptions of liberty. This occurs in the integration of the city into the representation of the

³⁷ Crook, 'Mary Shelley', p. 66 and Schor, p. 253 cite this image, each giving weight to its association of selfhood.

land. Shelley's incorporation of the cityscape into national consciousness resonates with a greater Italian glory that is part of the unification project for Italy.

The establishment of the Italian city-states that fostered liberty and enlightenment are part of the history of the nation. In part, they aided the formation of the Italian people, because systems of government allowed spirit or genius to flourish. Shelley's representation of Italy takes account of this, and positions the national character in relation to that of other nations, such as Germany or England. This draws in a wider debate about the difference between peoples of northern and southern climates, which was so influential in Staël's *Corinne*. Representations of national character attempt to redeem the factionalism which is posited by Shelley as the phenomenon that historically fragmented Italy, but her understanding of the national character includes the historical legacy of Ancient Rome in its spirit.

The portrayal of a unified national character occurs through Shelley's treatment of Italy. Improvisation plays a crucial role in the dissemination of national self-image through the arts. The inclusion of an improvisatory element in historical representation, as with Manzoni, demands from the reader a critical engagement with history as a genre and its content. The instability of representation, while, at times, threatening subjectivity and genre, also provides sufficient elasticity for national and historical images of the Italian people to embody diverse regional identities within Italy, and to symbolise a national struggle for liberty to other countries in Europe.

Shelley has sought to articulate her perception of national character through a strategy of representation that integrates landscape aesthetics into the mediation of history, as well as memory. Each exposes the historical consciousness and the perceptual susceptibility of the writer as she undertakes to represent, and redefine to her reading public, a more accurate picture of Italy. Her strategic aesthetic topography links political history and systems of government to social and cultural observations which represent the Italian cause. This characterisation of the political consciousness of a people indicates her own sense of a historical continuity between national past and an independent future. By integrating her own recollections into this, her return to Italy revivifies sites of personal memory while simultaneously

liberating her political imagination. The 'return to a familiar scene' (*R*, p. 386) situates her in a landscape in which she can activate an imaginative sense of the past which is 'peculiarly [her] own' but which is imbued with an animating patriotic spirit that beckons the Italian peoples towards their own future.

Conclusion

This thesis establishes a previously unexplored link between Shelley's treatment of Italy and history and that of her precursors. It also demonstrates Shelley's long-standing preoccupation with republicanism by considering her late and middle career publications. This analysis has proved that far from the conservative quietism ascribed to her later works by critics such as Mellor, there is a broad consistency between her early and late published work in respect of its republican sympathies. My analysis of Italy and history has situated Shelley's work in a cosmopolitan intellectual context and assessed the essential roles that Morgan, Staël and Sismondi play in her work. Additionally, exploration of these two components has yielded insights into the consistency of Shelley's republican politics, the significance of reanimation and place in her work, and the innovatory nature of her writings. The enduring sympathy Shelley expressed for republican ideology recontextualises her oeuvre by prioritising both her political motives for writing, and the scholarly intellectual endeavour her works exhibit. The cosmopolitan influences identified in her thought demonstrate Shelley's understanding of European political relations and further emphasise the underlying republican tenor of her writing. The thesis also emphasises Shelley's use of place as a means of reconnecting with suppressed historical narratives and this is central to her representations of Italy and cultural memory. Shelley's treatment of Italy displays an integration of intellectual knowledge and empirical experience of the peninsula, which other influential treatments share, particularly Sismondi.

This thesis characterises Shelley's writing as identifiably and consistently republican, cosmopolitan and European in ideological perspective, scholarly in its approach, and innovative in its representation of Italy. Shelley owes a debt, in each of these respects, to her precursors who themselves represented Italy and its history in ground-breaking ways. Moreover, the innovations she brings to her representation of Italy imbue it with a strategic value. Through this, Shelley is able to articulate criticisms of English custom and culture within a framework of European cultural history. Her sophisticated reworking of a technique deployed by Sismondi, Staël and Morgan provides further evidence of her politically oriented approach. Shelley's politically-infused literary representations are more commonly cited as examples of

conservatism or snobbery. This thesis challenges such interpretations by situating her within a republican context and in so doing addresses the neglected question of her intellectual influences. The study has focused on Italy but by discussing her precursors and the variety of genres in which Shelley wrote, the thesis shows how her treatment of Italy, and her politics, participate in the burgeoning interdisciplinarity of historical discourse in the Romantic era.

This thesis resituates Mary Shelley scholarship within an intellectual milieu consonant with her enduring, if not always overt, republican ideology. Shelley's problematic and selective representation of Italy replicates an idealising tendency apparent in Sismondi's and Staël's treatments of the peninsula. The manner in which Shelley represents the Italian past through the polis, the landscape and the construction of civic identity, creates a particular historical aesthetic. This aesthetic freezes its scene of representation preserving a lost republican ideal in the present moment of Italy's history. Sismondi and Staël portray the republican Italian past by adopting a strategy of nostalgia and loss that Shelley also incorporates. Civic identity is located within the polis or the landscape and Shelley uses this to challenge to the prevailing European climate of conservatism.

My assessment of Shelley's work in relation to Italy identifies her political sympathy as one which is written out of a radical tradition. The preoccupation with republican historiography is apparent in Shelley's treatment of civic identity throughout her oeuvre. The idealism evident in her representation of history generates conflict and juxtaposition between the ancient and the medieval pasts and the present. Nevertheless, this idealism confirms a deep-seated principle of republicanism intriguingly problematised by an equally deep-seated class consciousness. Incorporating the centrality of Shelley's republican ideology, and the intellectual influences with which she engaged, refutes the prevalent misconception that after the 1820s Shelley's politics became conservative. This thesis shows that such a view, expounded by Anne Mellor in her interpretation of Shelley as a bourgeois conservative, is no longer tenable. The signs and traces of republican ideology in Shelley's oeuvre, from *Frankenstein* to *Rambles*, demonstrate Mellor's stance to be an inaccurate and reductive formulation of Shelley's politics. *Lives and*

Rambles and other writings from the 1830s are shown to be linked to her early treatments of reanimation. In each case reanimation is connected to republicanism through an ability to regenerate the past through individual experience.

The works of Sismondi, Staël and Morgan, which this thesis examines in relation to Shelley, were all landmark treatments of Italy and readily identified by contemporaries as distinctly republican in outlook. Until now, a similar understanding of Shelley's political sympathies has not been forthcoming. Additionally, these writers promote an aesthetic that demands an integration of art and politics with a cosmopolitan perspective. This thesis shows how Shelley's own explorations of cosmopolitan history integrate art and politics using republicanism, another previously overlooked aspect of her writing.

The investigation of Shelley's treatment of Italy has shown her long-standing republican sympathies to be enmeshed within a complex and ambivalent mode of representation. This, too, has enabled new insights to be gleaned into the innovatory nature of Shelley's writings. The preceding chapters have explored her republican influences and her departures from influential models. By understanding these departures as an essential part of Shelley's own craftsmanship, this thesis further contributes to the reappraisal of her as a literary innovator extending new genres, such as the historical novel, or reinventing more clichéd ones, such as narratives of lastness and travel writing about Italy.

My assessment of Shelley's treatment of Italy reveals a complex ambivalence in her expressions of republican ideology. This complexity obscures the deep-rooted adherence to radical politics but my exploration of her political consciousness has also brought forth Shelley's own profound sensitivity to form. Shelley's artistic restlessness results in perpetual transformation and innovation throughout her career. Her ability to re-energise republican spaces in the past pushes forward the boundaries of literary representation in a way that suspends the project of reanimating the past and presents a highly selective, particular view of Italy and historical change.

The innovatory nature of Shelley's writing uncovers hitherto ignored connections with her precursors while testifying to her originality as a writer. This

can be seen particularly in her engagement with Godwin's treatment of reanimation which she develops while still maintaining its politically radical associations. By connecting place to cultural memory, and history to the individual, Godwin constructed a framework which Shelley developed to provide her own reanimating scenes of history, specific to the Italian peninsula but resonant with English and European history. Constructions of civic identity provide a vital part of Shelley's historical aesthetic and this thesis has shown how sites of cultural memory render the individual susceptible to the past. Imagination and reanimation combine to amplify the effect of place on the historicising consciousness of the individual. Italy in general, and Rome in particular, offered Shelley especially productive loci in which to achieve this, as my discussion of 'Valerius', *Valperga*, and *The Last Man* has demonstrated. These fictionalised representations are refigured in later works, such as Shelley's *Lives* and her review essays 'The English in Italy', 'Modern Italy' and 'Modern Italian Romances'. Rather than the individual assuming prominence, the Italian landscape itself acquires potent significance when Shelley represents it from afar, imbuing it with an abundance that shapes artistic creativity.

Shelley's representation of Italy participates in a discourse of national manners, yet Shelley is keen to highlight the distinctiveness of the Italian character and the potential contribution it could make to European culture if the nation were liberated. Shelley's reanimation of the national landscape, infused with Italian genius, looks back to Sismondi's and Staël's configurations of Italy. However, while they used genius to distinguish between northern and southern temperaments, Shelley delineates the Italian character as a means to further the political cause of Italian unity and independence, marking a new departure for the history of the Italian peninsula. The problematic question of Romantic attitudes to national character, and Shelley's own contribution to this has emerged as a subtheme of this thesis. This debate arises partly from the connection between genre, by connecting improvisation to Italian genius. At times, Shelley's attitude to Italians is reductive and simplistic, at others sympathetic and insightful. This inconsistency perhaps returns to the manner in which Shelley situates herself and Italy in the minds of the British reading public. Shelley's formulation of national character nevertheless

builds on Sismondi's notion of character being shaped by systems of government and the land. An important sub-theme of this thesis as it charted the treatment of civic identity was its essentially republican character. This once more articulates Shelley's treatment of Italy and history back through English contexts. From *Frankenstein* to *Rambles*, notions of the English republican past have informed Shelley's conceptualisation of cultural memory and national self-determination in Italy.

The celebration of political advancement in *Rambles* marks a return for Shelley to a personal past as well, but this is still bound up with her political aspirations for Italy. Tracing the progress of Shelley's treatment of Italy identifies the interconnection between her intellectual troping of Italy, her intimate recollection of it, and the historical and political European contexts of the representation of Italy in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. These connections and contexts interweave through each other circulating within the framework of European history, yet conveying that history in an imaginative and empirically validated way, through experience of the landscape and the polis. The emphasis placed on the entwining political and personal themes of *Rambles* presents new insights into how autobiography operates in Shelley's oeuvre.

While the thesis addressed specific themes, it has also yielded up other contexts and new directions for further research into Shelley's writings. Shelley's configuration of Italy is determined by the relationship of Italy to Europe and to Britain. Her treatment of Italy depended in part on her attitude to England, and Shelley's observations about Italy betray an idiosyncratic condescension towards lower orders of society, also evident in her representations of British society, as in *Lodore*. The complex presence of class structures in Shelley's work is as yet under-researched. A comparison with Morgan's own conflicted social position articulated in *Italy* would offer a productive point of departure.

A full discussion of genre in Shelley's work has not been possible within the remit of this thesis, but by identifying the interdisciplinary nature of Shelley's works this study has begun to explore Shelley's imaginative use of form. Critical enquiry into this theme would extend insights into the scholarly aspect that Shelley brought to her writing. An examination of Shelley's fictionalisation of a moment of crisis in

England's history, in *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*, would expand and diversify work on the relationship between history and fiction in her oeuvre.

In many ways, this thesis has been about returns. Most notably, Shelley's return to Italy in the early 1840s revisits a personal past and re-energises political sympathies, but it also draws on Shelley's sense of literary past being preserved in locales, for example Lake Sirmio in *Rambles*. The power of literary creativity and the tacit suggestiveness of the landscape are able to shape representations of the present. Historical continuity realised in the present through modes such as improvisation is subverted in *The Last Man's* profound questioning of history itself. Verney's journey from savagery to savagery is embedded within a return from a lost, then recovered, nobility to a redundant one in abandoned Rome. With his own civility recovered, the temporal paradox of the novel's framing Sibylline prophecy locates Verney within an unreachable narrative of mythic civilisation, over before it has even begun. Shelley uses Italy's ancient past to question modes of representing the past. The site of Rome stands for historical and material continuity outlasting transient human forms of record. The pessimism of *The Last Man's* historical vision is comically explored in 'Roger Dodsworth' where the reanimated body returns to the soil, transmuting the body into a physical trace in the land. Its presence can create the potent historical resonances that make sites sacred. This circulation of matter, springing from Godwin's attachment to individual history, reorients the focus back to the land, to the alternative narratives offered by the geography of the natural world; a world which yielded the counterfactual history of *Valperga*. These thematic returns are reworked in later works by Shelley as the land becomes a way to articulate national sentiment or cultural and artistic traditions and to reanimate the patriotism of Italian peoples.

This complexity, the endless circularity of contexts, produced by Shelley's work shows that it resists attempts to fit a particular model. While reading Shelley's work in the light of recent developments about historicist practices and the historicist consciousness of the Romantic era itself, and while we can see how the critical advances reveal much about Shelley's work, there are always new beginnings that seek to reinvent Shelley and her place in Romantic literary culture. The thesis has shown

that the transformations in Shelley's writing counter an interpretation of her as something of a literary hack in the later phases of her career. Charting a subtle reinvention of the republican spirit as Shelley recreates and reanimates it through her treatment of Italy, this thesis has also shown the transformative nature of her writing in the selection of works in which Italy features. From fiction to biography, through short stories, poems, review essays, life-writing and autobiography, it demands that the reappraisal of Shelley must continue in a way which incorporates her republican ideology and the innovatory nature of her writings. Selecting ground-breaking representations of Italy and its past with which to work, Shelley finds a republican affinity with writers who are themselves creating new representations of Italy. She relocates representations of Italy through her experience of the landscape and through knowledge of its intellectual traditions. Concerned to situate her representation historically, Shelley introduces a selectivity which divests it of dynamism and uses place to achieve a suspended, but energised, animation.

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