Lord Byron, Count Daru, and anglophone myths of Venice in the nineteenth century

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ABSTRACT *During the century between 1815 and 1915, Anglophone travellers to Venice were often reluctant to engage with the realities they encountered in the city. In this essay, with particular emphasis on the decades before 1848, I explore the impact of the poet Lord Byron and the historian and apologist for Napoleon Count Daru in perpetuating myths about the city's past and present. I examine the reasons for the durability of this Venetian imaginary, and in particular the persistence of distortions of the Venetian past. I then argue that such views came to be challenged, both from the perspective of more sensitive, informed, and scholarly engagement with the city, and as a consequence of markedly changed notions about its population, born of the dramatic events of the Risorgimento.*

Henry James began his much quoted and often republished 1882 essay *Venice* by wondering whether there was not «a certain impudence» in attempting to say anything new about the city.

> Venice has been painted and described many thousands of times, and of all the cities of the world it is the easiest to visit without going there. […] There is nothing new to be said about her certainly, but the old is better than any novelty. It would be a sad day indeed when there should be something new to say. I write these lines with the full consciousness of having no information whatever to offer. I do not pretend to enlighten the reader; I pretend only to give a fillip to his memory (H. James, *Italian hours*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1909, p. 1).

The extreme familiarity with Venice, which James here assumes of an educated North American or British readership, was in many senses completely justified. By the mid nineteenth century, Venice had become the object of legion articles published every year on both sides of the Atlantic, and increasingly a common destination for the well-travelled and well-educated man or woman. The roll-call of those who wrote about or produced images of the city in the hundred years from the Congress of Vienna was vast: poets such as Wordsworth, Rogers, Byron, Shelley, Clough and Browning; novelists such as Fenimore Cooper, Dickens, Howells, Wilkie Collins; journalists and travel writers from Fanny Trollope to George Augustus Sala; artists such as William Collins, Turner, Etty, Sargent, Maurice Brazil Prendergast; scholars such as Ruskin, Thomas Adolphus Trollope, Rawdon Brown, Horatio Brown, John Addington Symonds, and many others. The list is long and distinguished. Yet despite their enthusiasm for the former *dominante*, at least until the later stages of the century, both British and American observers of the city overwhelmingly and dramatically failed to engage with the modern realities of Venice. Perhaps underpinned by an embarrassment at the failure of the English-speaking world to make any attempt to defend the longest-lived republic in human history in the face of French and Austrian domination, Venice – often seen as the laboratory for the development of modern historical studies – existed as a peculiar repository of myth and anti-myth. I would argue that in large part this was because the city was seen through the distorting lens of certain key cultural figures, perhaps most notably Byron, Turner and Ruskin, but also through the work of the French historian, Count Daru, and the Genevan, Sismondi. Only gradually and in response both to the changing political situation of Venice – shaped by the dramatic events of 1848-1849, the war of 1859, the so-called liberation of 1866, and the sometimes uncomfortable process of integration into the young Italian state –, and to the growing transnational scholarship on the city (driven in large part both by resident Venetian historians and by the new rigour and methodologies that came from Germanophone culture), educated British (and Americans) began

slowly to recognize that a modern Venice existed that was neither purely a cultural construct of the imaginary, nor a historical fantasy, but a living city with a living population facing similar problems and demands – economic, political, social, cultural – as those of Italy's other «cento città». It is not my aim in this article to examine the changing nature of British views of Venice across the whole century. Rather my goal is less ambitious. On the one hand, I wish to unpick the particular part played by Byron and Daru in creating a narrative of Venice, and how this created a twisted British vision of the city as deserving of its fate; on the other hand, I hope to provide a tentative explanation for why this picture was ultimately challenged by Britons (and transatlantic anglophones) visiting, studying and imagining the city.

An unknown Italy

It is a banal but important point to remember that, in the aftermath of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, much of Italy was relatively unknown to the British. For over twenty years, due to the disruptions wrought by international conflict, travel to and trade with Italy were diminished, and often quite impossible. Even in those areas held by Britain's allies – and that included Venice during the first Austrian domination –, the threat of French attack made visits unappealing. During the final years of the Napoleonic Empire, Britons were almost entirely excluded from the mainland: only Sardinia and Sicily remained freely open to British subjects. In the lustrum before the Congress of Vienna, the *only* Britons to have regular contact with the mainland of the peninsula were smugglers breaking the Continental Blockade or soldiers and sailors fighting against Napoleonic imperialism. When the war ended, the British began to flock once more to continental Europe; as in the days before the French Revolution, Italy continued to exercise a particular fascination.[1] As an article in the progressive «Westminster Review» of 1826 humorously expressed it:

> When peace came, after many long years of war, when our island prison was opened to us, and our watery exit from it was declared practicable, it was the paramount wish of every English heart, ever addicted to vagabondizing, to hasten to the continent, and to imitate our forefathers in their almost forgotten custom, of spending the greater part of their lives and fortunes in their carriages on the post-roads of the continent. With the brief and luckless exception of the peace of Amiens, the continent had not been open for the space of more than one-and-twenty years; a new generation had sprung up, and the whole of this, who had money and time at command, poured in one vast stream across the *Pas de Calais* into France […]. When France palled on out travelled appetites, which always crave for something new, Italy came into vogue (*The English in Italy*, «Westminster Review», 12, October, 1826, pp. 325-327).

Yet the eager encounter with lands to which they had been so long denied access meant that the British often arrived in the early days of the Restoration with perspectives overly shaped by earlier accounts and expectations. Recollections of the era of the *Grand Tour*, a strong emphasis on Italy's literary and classical heritage, and the tendency of the few new guide books to recycle descriptions from pre-revolutionary travellers, meant that Britons who arrived in Venice imagined that they were to encounter the city described by Arthur Young (Young 1792, pp. 215-223) and William Beckford (Beckford 1786), or at best that of John Chetwode Eustace, whose description of his *tour* to Italy in 1802 was published only in 1813 (Eustace 1813).[2]

The two key guide books to Italy were those of Richard Colt Hoare (who also added a third volume to Eustace's account: Hoare 1815a), a laconic volume that despatched Venice in under two pages (Hoare 1815b), and Henry Coxe's rather fuller work (Coxe 1815).[3] It is instructive to compare the approaches of these two works, which would have been used by some, maybe many, of the early Restoration visitors to Venice. Hoare stressed the need for his *Hints* as necessary following «a war of plunder and desolation, which has pervaded Europe for

1. On the difficulty of gaining access to Italy see Black 1985, p. 96; Colbert 2005, p. 13. On the fate of Britons in Venetian territory see Laven 2011; id. 2008.

2. The many later editions of the book went by the title of *A classical tour through Italy*. Eustace's work was a thoughtful and well-informed account of his travels with three young gentlemen of whom he was both companion and tutor. A Catholic cleric, he was the first member of his Church to study at Cambridge since the Reformation. His Catholicism made him much more sympathetic to Italians, and to their plight at the hands of the anticlerical French than were most of his countrymen. His pro-Catholic sympathies did not prevent his book from being a success, going through eight editions until 1841.

3. Henry Coxe was a *nom de plume* of John Millard.

the last twenty years, the gates of IMPERIAL ROME are again opened to the traveller» (HOARE 1815b, p. vii). The enthusiasm for such travels he saw as arising from a number of motives:

> Many of my countrymen will go thither; some from motives of novelty and information, and others who have visited Rome and Italy in the days of their prosperity, from a desire of seeing how far the system of spoliation has carried out by order of the modern VERRES (HOARE 1815b, p. vii).[4]

Hoare continued to point out that he was in essence writing from memory:

> As I can scarcely flatter myself with the hopes of being an eye witness of the present condition of Italy or Rome, and must probably be contented with the recollection of those happy years which I devoted to the contemplation of the numerous objects of attraction, both natural and artificial, with which that once powerful country abounds: I have ventured to put some of those recollections to press; hoping that they may contribute, in some degree, to the information of the inexperienced tourist, or at least tend to smooth this rugged way, and alleviate some of the difficulties which he would unavoidably experience in so long and distant an expedition (pp. viii-ix).

The extent to which Hoare was out of date in his knowledge of Italy was clear not only from this confession, but also from his suggested bibliography, which included nothing later than Eustace's *Tour*, and was essentially a list of eighteenth-century texts, some of them the best part of a century old. His account of Venice «a fine city rising out of the waters, streets converted into canals, and carriages into gondolas [...] pretty women *habillées en hommes*» suggests an essentially pre-Napoleonic vision of the former *dominante*. Above all, though, Hoare – having no up-to-date information and counselling a local guide as the best means of understanding the place – is exceptionally brief: two pages suffice to guide the traveller during their time in one of Europe's greatest cultural capitals.

Coxe, like Hoare, also stressed the need for an up-to-date guide book to the peninsula, «The returning peace having induced so many persons again to visit Italy» (COXE 1815, p. iv). Coxe's work – despite vaunting the fact that it is sufficiently small to be happily carried by the tourist, «one volume of portable size» (*ibid*.) – is a good deal richer in his accounts of Italy than Hoare's slim book. However, the text is almost entirely unoriginal. As Coxe admitted in his preface, «The author has not always trusted to his own personal observations, but has availed himself of every light which he could derive from men as well as books», continuing to acknowledge his debt both to Eustace's *Classical tour* and the work of the eminent French surgeon, Philippe Petit-Radel (p. vi; PETIT-RADEL 1815). When Coxe came to deal with Venice, his debt to Petit-Radel was perhaps even greater than he suggested, since the vast bulk of what he tells the reader is no more than a slightly abbreviated translation of the Frenchman's work. This explains some of the emphasis – for example, a lengthy passage on the quality of medical practitioners in Venice and the presence of a handful of superior, Paris-educated doctors – which might seem strange in a general guide of this nature intended for the British traveller (COXE 1815, p. 454; PETIT-RADEL 1815, p. 202). More significantly the derivative nature of Coxe's work highlights both the absence of well-informed British observers of Venice, and a readiness to describe conditions that not longer persisted. His picture of Venice bears little resemblance to that provided, for example, in the correspondence of British representatives. Thus, Coxe describes a city in which there is no shortage of food, and trade is often brisk (COXE 1815, pp. 151-153); the reality of the situation at the end of hostilities, following a siege and the outbreak of famine, was very different. As the acting consul, Cooper, wrote to Castlereagh in June 1814, «the people here are all stagnated and in a very poor way – no mercantile business done here whatever» (Venice, 22 June 1814, National Archives, FO7.112); Cooper's successor Hoppner would write in November of 1816 – a week after Byron first arrived in Venice – of the «truly deplorable state» of the region, of «the general suffering», and the complete absence of trade (Hoppner to Hamilton, 15 November 1816, National Archives, FO7.130). The reality of Restoration Venice's economic plight would gradually penetrate the awareness of the better-educated among the British public, but in the immediate aftermath of the Congress of Vienna, this was not the image of «this extraordinary city» (HOARE 1815b, p. 71) that was widely held.

Byron's literary and historical Venice

If the image of Restoration Venice in the English-speaking world risked to be immediately distorted

4. Verres was a later Roman Republican governor of Sicily, notorious for corruption, embezzlement and tyranny.

by books written by those who had either never set foot in the city, or who had not done so since the days of the *ancien régime* or, at best, the *prima dominazione austriaca*, then this was not to be the most enduring image generated in the first decade of restored Austrian rule. It was instead principally a literary creation, emerging from the works of a small group of poets, principally Byron, Shelley, Rogers, and Moore. The dominant force within this group was undoubtedly Byron himself, in part because he spent over three years more-or-less permanently resident in the city, but also simply because of his unrivalled status as a poet of international standing.[5] It was above all through Byron's eyes, or rather through his plays and poems, and then, after his death in Greece, his biographies, that the British public came to know Venice. I have not the space here to tease out in detail how his *Ode to Venice*, *Canto IV* of *Childe Harold's pilgrimage*, his comic experiment with *ottava rima*, the humorous *Beppo*, and his two historic plays – *Marino Faliero* and *The two Foscari* – written in Ravenna after he departed the former Serenissima, represented the city and its past, but it strikes me as important both to stress the essentially literary nature of Byron's relationship with Venice, and to highlight the extent to which he systematically distorted perceptions of it.

It has become a commonplace to stress how, in *Canto IV* of *Childe Harold*, Byron emphasised the extent to which he arrived in the city with his ideas already shaped by its place in the literary imagination: «I loved her from my boyhood – she to me | Was as a fairy city of the heart […] | And Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller Shakespeare's art | Had stamped her image in me» (*The complete works of Lord Byron*, Paris, Baudray's European Library/Galignani, 1837, p. 134).[6] Of course, as literary critics have suggested, and as one of their number writes, «Byron recognize[d] that there is a necessary difference between the enchanted and enchanting literally received and literally bequeathed image, and the experienced reality, no matter to what extent the former will inform and predetermine the latter» (Tanner 1992, p. 20). I would argue that in fact the striking thing about Byron's Venice is how utterly he failed to take an interest in or respond to the here and now. It is true that, with reference to his composition of his historical Venetian dramas, he boasted of possessing the advantage over Shakespeare and Otway, «of having been at Venice – and entered into the local Spirit»,[7] but, in general, when one reads Bryon's letters from his Venetian period it is shockingly evident how utterly uninterested he was in the city around him: Venice may be «the greenest island of my imagination»[8] or, as he wrote in *Canto IV*, «a fairy city», but it is so precisely because of the literary tradition that surrounded it.

Byron was perfectly well aware that the four writers he cites in *Childe Harold* as having shaped his image of the city had never set foot there. His remark that «Shylock and the Moor, | And Pierre, can not be swept or worn away – | The keystones of the arch» (*The complete works of Lord Byron*, p. 133) underscores his belief not only in the greater durability but also of the greater worth of the literary over the physical, just as he valued the past of the city over its present. In *Canto IV*, Venice is timeless, mythologised, a symbol of decay: bar a mention of «Austrian tyranny» and a comment about the fate of the Bucintoro, there is nothing to locate Venice in the present. Moreover, to the extent it has a very real historical significance, Venice is more important to the British as an implicit warning about the death of Empire («in the fall | Of Venice think of thine, despite thy watery wall») than because of its own past (*ibid.*, p. 134; a similar warning is to be found in Byron's *Ode on Venice*, *ibid.*, pp. 378-379). Byron's other major Venetian works deal with a deliberately historicised city: *Faliero* is set in the fourteenth century; *The two Foscari* is set in the fifteenth; *Beppo* in the eighteenth. Both of the mediaeval dramas, especially *Faliero*, were based on a fair amount of historical reading, including the works of Laugier, Sismondi and Daru (to whom I shall return later),[9] but this did not prevent Byron perverting his-

5. As the reviewer remarked in the «Westminster Review» «Lord Byron may be considered the father of the Anglo-Italian literature» (*The English in Italy*, p. 328).

6. For discussion of this passage see, for example, Beatty 2012, pp. 11-26, p. 13; Tanner 1992, p. 20.

7. Byron to Murray, Ravenna, 8 October 1820. Marchand 1977, p. 194. On Byron's «sense of place» and how he was prepared to overlay it «with the heightened colours of literary tradition» see Cheeke 2003, p. 57.

8. Byron to Moore, Venice, 17 November 1816. Marchand 1976, p. 129.

9. «History is closely followed. […] I have consulted Sanuto – Sandi – Navagero – & an anonymous siege of Zara – besides

torical accounts for dramatic effect: in *Faliero*, for example, he has Act III, Scene I played out beneath the Verrocchio monument to Bartolomeo Colleoni, which even someone as insensitive to the visual arts as Byron must have realised was not erected until the early 1480s, almost 130 years after Marin Faliero's execution.[10] Meanwhile, *Beppo*, which in some senses should be seen as a poem that deals in large part with absence from Britain rather than with life in Venice,[11] addressed a mythically decadent *Settecento*, celebrating an era of loose-living libertinage, and a society dedicated to *cicisbeismo* and pleasure, which had little in common with the city of the *seconda dominazione austriaca* in which Byron lived, notwithstanding the poet's own hedonistic pursuits.

While it is heresy to suggest it amongst Byronists, Byron was almost completely uninterested in the Venice in which he lived. Reading his correspondence carefully, it is quite remarkable how utterly he fails to engage with the city. While he initially announced that he took pleasure in it («I do not even dislike the evident decay of the city»; Byron to Murray, Venice, 25 November 1816; Marchand 1976a, p. 132), and seemed to have relished the absence of his compatriots,[12] he nevertheless sought and wrote almost obsessively to his British friends; bar the odd reference to gondolas, the Rialto and St. Mark's, there is no sense of place in any of his letters. Indeed, it is striking the degree to which Byron also sought out the periphery of the city: studying, or rather failing to study, Armenian – he probably never mastered the alphabet – with the Mekhitarist monks on the island of San Lazzaro, riding on the Lido, swimming, or enjoying his *villeggiatura* on the Brenta. Byron's Venice shows no sensitivity to its urban fabric, to the varieties of its architecture, to the greatness of its paintings. Nor does Byron show respect or affection for its population. To Byron, Venetian women were all «whores», happy to take his money.[13] Even his longstanding *amiche* were «animalised», and treated in his letters with less respect than his dog Mutz.[14] (It should be stressed that this

the histories of Laugier Daru – Sismondi &c.»: Byron to Murray, Ravenna, 17 July 1820 (Marchand 1977, pp. 131-132). *The two Foscari* while clearly less assiduously researched is peppered with footnotes, such as «An historical fact. See Daru. tom. ii.» (*The complete works of Lord Byron*, p. 71). The works to which Byron referred were Marin Sanudo's *Vite dei Dogi*; Navagero, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia*; Vettor Sandi, *Principi di storia civile della Repubblica di Venezia*, 6 vols, Venezia, Coleti, 1755; Laugier, *Istoria della Repubblica di Venezia*, Venezia, 1778; Pierre Antoine Noël Bruno Daru, *Histoire de la République de Venise*, 8 vols, Paris, Didot, 1819; Jean Charles Léonard Simonde de Sismondi, *Histoire des Républiques Italiennes du Moyen Âge*, Paris, H. Nicolle; Treutel & Würtz, 1809-1818.

10. Perhaps the most brilliant de(con)struction of Byron in and on Venice was written by François-René Chateaubriand. In a sparkling, mischievous, and slightly hypocritical comparison of Rousseau and Byron, the great French romantic (who had himself famously attacked Venice on his first visit, before warming to the city's beauty later) remarked that «Rousseau et Byron ont eu à Venise un trait de ressemblance: ni l'un ni l'autre n'a senti les arts» (Chateaubriand 1850, vol. III, p. 631).

11. Malcolm Kelsall has suggested that *Marino Faliero* is also essentially concerned with British politics, and that it «represents and enacts Byron's ambivalence about his own social status and the possibility for effective political action in contemporary England» (Kelsall 1987, p. 118).

12. Byron to Moore, Venice, 5 December 1816 (Marchand 1976a, p. 132). «I am not sure that the English in general would like it – I am sure that I should not, if *they* did – but by the benevolence of God – they prefer Florence and Naples – and do not infest us greatly here»: Byron to James Wedderburn Webster, Venice, 31 May 1818 (Marchand 1976b, p. 92).

13. In mocking James Maitland, Eighth Earl of Lauderdale, for gossiping about one of his conquests, Byron boasted in a vocabulary of pure misogyny of the huge numbers of women he had bedded in Venice over the previous twelve months: «some of them are Countesses – & some of them Cobblers [sic] wives – some noble – some middling – some low – & all whores – which does the damned old "Ladro – & porco fottuto" mean? I have had them all & thrice as many to boot since 1817» Byron to Hobhouse and Kinnaird, Venice, 19 January 1819 (Merchand 1976b, p. 92). Similarly, he had written to another friend, James Wedderburn Webster, in the autumn of 1818, speaking of his financial situation and the joys of cheap living in Venice: «I have spent about *five* thousand pounds – & I needed not have spent one third of this – had it not been that I have a passion for women which is expensive in it's [sic] variety every where but less so in Venice than in other cities […] the sum of five thousand pounds sterling is no great deal – particularly when I tell you that more than half was laid out for Sex – to be sure I have had plenty for the money – that's certain – I think at least two hundred of one sort or another – perhaps more – for I have not lately kept count» (*ibid*., p. 66).

14. Byron described Marianna Segati as an «antelope» and an «antilope» (sic). Before he tired of the fiery peasant, Margherita Cogni («La Fornarina»), and passed her on to his fellow resident Alexander Scott, Byron wrote of her as «a fine animal», «quite untamable», «a very fine animal», «a tigress over her recovered cubs». There is a sense in which Byron's Venetian mistresses become simply extensions of his menagerie, to be numbered alongside his dogs, horses and apes.

was not the way in which Byron normally wrote of women in either his correspondence or his poetry, nor the way in which he subsequently engaged with Teresa Guiccioli).[15] Venetian males scarcely enter Byron's letters, except for the occasional servant (treated with some mocking affection, perhaps on a par with Mutz), or as wittols and cuckolds.

Perhaps most striking of all, Byron seems to have taken virtually no notice of either the political or the economic situation of Venice and its *terraferma*. Money, sex and alcohol, his English friends, his growing menagerie, and, of course, writing and reading widely: these things all mattered to Byron, but he was strangely unpolitical during his period in Venice. Perhaps this reflected his awkward relationship, as a Foxite Whig, with Napoleon, the man who had brought an end to the independence of the most durable republic in human history.[16] This might, too, have encouraged him to blacken the reputation of Austrian rule by way of excusing French aggression. Such an outlook was possibly reinforced by his earlier encounters in Milan with the likes of the De Breme brothers and Henri Beyle (apologists for and former servants of the Napoleonic state, the latter the *protégé* of Daru), as well as with Silvio Pellico and Federico Confalonieri (who while no friends of the Napoleonic *régime*, had rapidly grown hostile to that of the Habsburgs when it became clear that Lombard autonomy would not be forthcoming). Byron arrived in Venice with his views of the Austrian government already coloured, and, despite the hospitality of Count Goess, the Austrian governor, he fell easily into casual sniping at rule from Vienna. The rather hostile – and largely unfair – manner in which the British Consul (whom Byron seems to have met first in the summer of 1817, and who became his regular riding companion on the Lido from early 1818) vilified the Austrians and blamed them for Venetian poverty (itself principally a legacy of Napoleonic misrule) may also have had an influence on Byron's view of the *dominazione austriaca*.[17] Yet the substance of Byron's criticisms – and it should be recalled that his politics could at times be immensely contradictory and inconsistent –, while sometimes bitter, was never supported with anything so tiresome as example or evidence.[18] Indeed, Byron made no comment on a port without trade, a population dependent in large part on charity (poverty that almost certainly facilitated his predatory sexual habits), or the appalling famine that raged during much of his time in Venice.[19]

Indeed, when it was occasionally expressed, Byron's hostility to Austrian rule of Lombardy-Venetia never rose above the extremely generalised. Thus, on Christmas Eve 1816, he wrote to Thomas Moore calling the Vienna settlement «the Definitive Treaty of Peace (and tyranny)». He took up the theme of Venetian oppression at the hands of the Austrians in *Childe Harold* and, albeit more obliquely, his *Ode on Venice* (a poem that he himself confessed to being «not very intelligible» – Marchand 1976a, p. 129). However, the only substantive criticism he made of Austrian rule while still resident in Habsburg lands was when he wrote to Moore lamenting the difficulty – indeed, downright impossibility – of procuring English newspapers, announcing that «nothing of the kind reaches the Veneto-Lombardo public, who are perhaps the most oppressed in Europe» (Byron to Moore, Venice, 18 September 1818 – Marchand 1976b, p. 66). In fact, the Austrian regulations were

15. Caroline Franklin has pointed out the many and varied ways in which Byron described women «from the eroticized passive victim of patriarchal force to the masculinized woman-warrior, from the romantic heroine of sentiment to the sexually voracious virago or the chaste republican matron, and so the list goes on» (Franklin 1992, p. 1).

16. For the best study of the English romantics and the French emperor see Bainbridge 1995.

17. Hoppner's intolerance of the Austrians and readiness to blame them for all Venice's ills and misfortunes is evident throughout his official correspondence. National Archives, FO7: 130, 139, 145, 155, 165.

18. As Malcolm Kelsall has pointed out, at much the same time as Byron was flirting with the Carbonari in Italy, he was waxing lyrical about his hatred for radicals in England, writing to Hobhouse from Ravenna, on 29 March and 22 April 1820, in defence of cutting down the radical demagogue Hunt at Peterloo (August 1819). According to Kelsall, Byron simply liked to posture as the friend of insurrection – for a man of his fame and connections it was a relatively risk free activity in restoration Italy – while adopting a very simplified notion of politics: «In Italy (and Greece) politics could be "simplified" to a "detestation" of the government. "Austrians out!" ("Turks out!") is a slogan which does not demand much thought» (Kelsall 1987, p. 85). For attacks on English radicals see Marchand 1977, pp. 62-63, pp. 80-81.

19. Some historians have actually seen the famine as an example of the benevolent nature of Austrian rule (Rath 1941). For a more critical account see Monteleone 1969, pp. 23-86. On connections between the famine and longer term economic problems see Zalin 1969, pp. 99-119. On British consular views of the Venetian economy in the restoration era, which until the 1830s were generally very critical of the Austrians, see Laven 1991, pp. 93-114.

such that, despite a degree of control by the police and censors, Byron, with a minimum of application, could easily have secured regular access to such English papers as he wished.[20] It was only when he left Venice for Ravenna in the Papal States, and began to mix with secret societies plotting to overturn the restoration order (and for the first time came under occasional observation by the Habsburg police) that he began to adopt a more openly hostile position. Thus, for example, he wrote to Murray in April 1820 that «no Italian can hate an Austrian more than I do […] the Austrians seem to me the most obnoxious race under the sky» (Byron to Murray, Ravenna, 16 April 1820 – Marchand 1977, p. 77). Similarly in the notes for *Marino Faliero*, the draft of which he completed in July 1820, he remarked that «few individuals can conceive, and none could describe, the actual state into which the more than infernal tyranny of Austria has plunged this city [Venice]» (*The complete works of Lord Byron*, p. 460).

Byron's contemporaries

Byron's comments on the Austrians in Venice are always exaggerated; sometimes they are plainly silly. They stand in stark contrast with those of many of his contemporaries. This was not because his anti-Habsburg sentiments were not shared, but because most other critics chose to substantiate their critique of Austrian rule by pointing to specific shortcomings of the Habsburg machinery of government. Some of these shortcomings were genuine, some imagined, and, on occasions, some appear to have been quite wilfully invented, but in general they were backed up with some sort of «evidence», however spurious or unreliable. Thus Shelley, during his relatively brief visit to Venice in the autumn of 1818, wrote to Thomas Love Peacock that «The Austrians take sixty per cent in taxes and impose free quarters on the inhabitants. A horde of German soldiers as vicious and more disgusting than the Venetians themselves insult these miserable people» (Jones 1964, vol. II, p. 41). Shelley was grotesquely misrepresenting the reality, but, although intemperate, he gave some reason for his condemnation of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia; all that Byron could come up with was the difficulty of buying a newspaper![21] Another acquaintance of Byron, William Rose – who deserves recognition if only as the figure probably responsible for introducing Byron to *ottava rima*, which he would first use in *Beppo* – was a more judicious and less splenetic critic of the Austrians in his *Letters from the North of Italy*: he identified problems with the fiscal and judicial systems, commented on preferences for employing German-speakers within the administration, identified the negative impact on industry of tariff policies, lamented the consequences of overly-rigorous censorship.[22] Rose – who was married to a Venetian, and famous for his translations of Ariosto – constructed in his letters, which were originally directed to Henry Hallam, the eminent mediaevalist and constitutional historian, a reasoned case against the Austrian presence in Venice and elsewhere in northern Italy. Rose was also extremely sensitive to Venice and well-informed: one learns vastly more about the fabric of city, the customs and beliefs of its inhabitants, or the nature of its government past and present, or the functioning of its economy from a single paragraph or two of Rose's letters than from Byron's entire *œuvre* (Rose 1819, vol. II, passim).

The richly detailed picture painted by Rose had little impact on the British public. Let me give just one example, that of Hallam himself to whom the letters were apparently directed in late 1817. By the time Hallam came to publish his *View of the state of Europe in the Middle Ages* of 1818, he had presumably received these letters (Hallam 1818). It is just possible, although unlikely, that Rose had not in fact written regularly to his friend in 1817 and that *Letters* is misleading in suggesting such a correspondence had taken place. But it would seem highly improbable, indeed virtually impossible, that Hallam was unaware of the content of the two volumes of which he was the dedicatee. Moreover, even if Hallam was reluctant to rewrite his history,

20. On censorship under the Austrians see Laven 2002, pp. 175-192.

21. It is curious how many Byron scholars still seem to go to great lengths to attach the poet to the cause of Italian unification, despite the slight energy he showed in supporting such a cause. Notwithstanding his involvement with the *carbonari* during his stay in Ravenna his commitment to any genuine struggle for independence seems to have been rather half-hearted. Michael Foot's assertion that Byron sought «with all his might, to rouse the English people from their intellectual and political torpor on the great question of Italian freedom» seems a gross exaggeration. Foot 1986, pp. 11-20, p. 11.

22. For a judicious assessment of Venice and the *terraferma*'s economic climate see Rose 1819, vol. I, pp. 136-137.

subsequent editions could have taken into account the tenor of his friend's correspondence. Yet the picture Hallam offers of contemporary Venice – and it is striking that of all the cities in Europe it is only Venice that merits any discussion of its current situation in a book otherwise limited to the middle ages – most certainly does not reflect anything that Rose says. Instead, it fails, in Byronic fashion, to take into account available descriptions that were informed, balanced and first-hand; instead he preferred to regurgitate the prejudices of Amelot de la Houssaye and Daru. Like the seventeenth-century translator of Machiavelli and the Napoleonic civil servant and historian (the latter of whom we have already encountered as the chief source for Byron's historical dramas), Hallam made much of the evils of the Council of Ten and of the Venetian constitution more widely;[23] perhaps more interestingly he saw fit both to lambast – without any supporting evidence – the evil nature of Austrian rule, and to blame that rule on the Venetians' own inadequacies.

> Experience has recently shown that a worse calamity than domestic tyranny might befall the queen of the Adriatic. In the Place of St. Mark, among the monuments of extinguished greatness, a traveller may regret to think that an insolent German soldiery has replaced even the senators of Venice […]. In the ultimate crisis, at least, of Venetian liberty, that solemn mockery of statesmanship was exhibited to contempt; too blind to avert danger, too cowardly to withstand it, the most ancient government of Europe made not an instant's resistance; the peasants of Underwald died upon their mountains; the nobles of Venice clung only to their lives. (Hallam 1840, vol. I, p. 241-242)

Hallam's slightly puritanical reflections on the Venetians, whose decadence in his account made them deserving of their loss of independence, thus fused with his picture of the city as victim of Austrian aggression and misrule (*ibid*., pp. 239-242). It is interesting that, according to one account at least, Byron seems to have been happy to repeat Hallam's opinions. In the *Conversations of Lord Byron* by the literary beauty Marguerite Gardiner (*née* Power), Countess of Blessington, the author recounts how Byron had waxed lyrical about Hallam's *View of the state of Europe*.

> Do you know Hallam? (said Byron). Of course I need not ask if you have read his « Middle Ages »: it is an admirable work, full of research, and does Hallam honour. I know no one capable of having written it except him; for, admitting that a writer could be found who could bring to task his knowledge and talents, it would be difficult to find one who united to these his research, and perspicuity of style » (Gardiner 1834, p. 212).

The passage of Hallam's *View* that Byron (allegedly) went on to quote in his conversation with Blessington was the unfavourable comparison of the Venetian nobles with the Swiss peasants of the Underwald, which I have just cited above. Whether Byron actually did quote this section of Hallam, or whether he even talked about Hallam with Blessington at all is, of course, by no means certain.[24] Blessington's account of her discussions with Byron was almost certainly embellished; it is surprising too that she could remember exactly which passage of Hallam he quoted a decade after the event (she had known him in 1823). It is also quite possible, given Blessington's self-aggrandising literary aims, that she recounted Byron's admiration of Hallam as a means of further adding lustre to her own brilliance, since Hallam was also a personal friend of the countess (Gardiner 1839, pp. 385-387, p. 389). Nevertheless, Blessington's account is significant, even if it may not be strictly true. Indeed, whether or not it is a fiction is not ultimately of much interest. Its importance is rather that it highlights the extent to which Hallam's beliefs fitted in with a wider literary construct of Venice's decline, of its fall, and of its present « infamous repose » under foreign rule.

If the texts of Hallam and Byron were mutually supportive in their view of Venice, then they were additionally reinforced by the city's representation in the works of other historians and travellers, poets and novelists. Percy Bysshe Shelley, for example, had fleetingly described the city before he had even set foot there in his juvenile Gothic work *Zastrozzi: A romance of 1810* (London, G. Wilkie and J. Robinson).[25]

23. « a practical system of government that made vice the ally of tyranny, and sought impunity for its own assassinations by encouraging dissoluteness of private life » Hallam 1840, vol. I, p. 241. See more generally pp. 239-242.

24. On Blessington's narrative of her friendship with Byron and her literary self-fashioning see Sonderholn 1996.

25. For another similar Gothic work that engaged with Venice without any apparent first-hand knowledge of the city see Rosa Matilda (Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya, or the Moor: a romance of the fifteenth century*, 2 vols, London, Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1806). On Shelley's engagement with Italy see Weiberg 1991.

In this he echoed the approach of the still popular Gothic work of Anne Radcliffe, *The mysteries of Udolpho* (London, G.G. and J. Robinson, 1794), which was reliant for its portrayal of sixteenth-century Venice on Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi's descriptions of the late Republic (*Observations and reflections made in the course of a journey through France, Italy, and Germany*, London, A. Strahan & T. Cadell, 1789), and of Matthew Gregory «Monk» Lewis, whose loose translation of Heinrich Zschokke's *Abällino der grosse Bandit* (Leipzig & Frankfurt an der Oder, Christian Ludwig Friederich Apitz, 1795), was published as *The Bravo of Venice* (London, Hughes, 1805); it was subsequently adapted and abridged as the popular Covent Garden play, *Rugantino* (1807).[26] But Shelley did write about the city from first-hand experience. In *Lines written among the Euganean Hills* Venice becomes «a peopled labyrinth of walls», «a corpse of greatness […] mouldering» – «Ocean's child, and then his queen; | Now is come a darker day, | And thou soon must be his prey». In this he echoes both Byron and Wordsworth's earlier *Lines on the extinction of the Venetian Republic* (*Wordsworth's Poems*, London, Longman & Co., 1807; the poem was probably composed in August 1802); meanwhile *Julian and Maddalo* is essentially a poem about Byron *in* Venice (*The poetical works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, London, E. Moxon, 1871, pp. 415-436). To the extent that it engages with space it focuses on interiors and gondolas, and on the lagoon and the Lido, not on the city and its inhabitants. In this it is essentially Byronic as well as being recognisably *about Byron*.

Meanwhile, in the early years of the Restoration, among the many poems inspired by Italian travel (Brand 1957, p. 17; see also especially Bandiera, Saglia 2005, pp. 1-25), the only work that treated Venice that began to rival those of Byron in popularity was Samuel Rogers's *Italy* (Rogers 1822).[27] Even this had little immediate impact. The first part of this poem, composed between Rogers's first trip to Italy in 1814 and his second in 1821-1822, and published anonymously in 1822, was moderately well-received at least by critics; the second part, published in 1828 under Rogers's own name, was a complete disaster, prompting the poet to make a bonfire of the unsold copies of both parts (Clayden 1889, vol. II, p. 2). Rogers set about the task of producing a revised and illustrated edition of the whole poem, which was published on New Year's Eve 1830. This new version of *Italy* – which included plates by Turner, the commission for which prompted his first trip to Venice – proved a huge success, the extreme cost of production notwithstanding; by mid May 1832 it had sold some 6.800 copies (vol. II, p. 7). But despite the commercial success of *Italy*, Rogers still played second fiddle to Byron. And, like his more famous and fêted friend and rival, Rogers was far more engaged with a romanticised Venetian past than with the present state of the city. Even the inclusion of Turner's illustrations gave Rogers's *Italy* something of a Byronic tinge, underlining Byron's status as *the* describer of Venice if not the whole of the peninsula: for, as Ruskin observed in his *Modern painters*, Turner – who occasionally attempted to write Byronic poetry[28] – largely derived his vision of Italy from *Childe Harold*, and eventually painting *Childe Harold's pilgrimage, Italy* as a sort of homage to *Canto IV*.[29] Turner was not alone amongst artists in perpetuating and reinforcing a skewed Byronic image of Venice in particular and Italy in general. How far this stemmed from his own preconceptions, and how much it came from a wish to appeal to a «Byronised» audience remains harder to establish.

Other travellers and poets were sometimes more sensitive to Venice and its conditions (whether hostile or sympathetic) than either Rogers or Byron, but they still often managed to stress the latter's significance for the city.[30] Sometimes this was be-

26. On these transformations and on the works of Shelley and Radcliffe see Churchill 1980, pp. 21-45.

27. On the original anonymous publication of the first part of *Italy*, the best account remains Clayden 1889, vol. I, pp. 316-345. On the publication of the second part of the poem in 1828, see vol. II, pp. 1-2.

28. Turner's poem *The fallacies of Hope* was Byronic in inspiration; so too were many of his canvases even if only six were on explicitly Byronic themes (Landsown 2012, p. 149).

29. On the influence of Byron on Turner see Brown 1992.

30. Exceptions, of course, exist. A judicious and lively account of the position of Venice, albeit perhaps overly indulgent to Napoleonic rule, and unfair on that of the restored Habsburgs, is to be found in the anonymously-published work by James Sloan, *Rambles in Italy in the Years 1816 … 17. By an American*, Baltimore, Maxwell, 1818, pp. 134-217. This work warned of the difficulty of competing with greater writers, pointing to the «brilliant eloquence of De Staël» and how the peninsula had been «fully and faithfully described by the classic pen of Eustace», but that this imposed «the difficulty of saying anything new on the subject of Italy», ibid., pp.5–6. No mention at all is made of Byron in the polemical and also

cause of direct contact. Thomas Moore, Byron's subsequent biographer and a well-known poet in his own right,[31] was a close friend and briefly a guest of the English lord in Venice. It is clear from Moore's correspondence that he neither liked nor cared to make the effort to understand the city, writing of the «most barbaric appearance» of the Piazza, and «The disenchantment one meets with at Venice, – the Rialto so mean – the canals so stinking!» (Moore, 8 October 1819, in QUENNELL 1964, p. 35). For Moore the place was only bearable viewed from a gondola in the small hours of the morning: «a beautiful moonlight, and the reflecting of the palaces in the water, and the stillness and grandeur of the whole scene (deprived as it was of the deformities by the dimness of the light) gave a nobler idea of Venice than I had yet had» (Moore, 10 October 1819, ibid., p. 36).

Moore's *Rhymes of the road* outdid even Byron's more ferocious criticisms of the city's Republican past, attributing the city's fall to the viciousness of its own oligarchy and institutions. In his most hostile raging against the «Gehana of the waters!», Byron was never so venomous.

> Mourn not for VENICE – let her rest
> In ruin, 'mong those States unblest,
> Beneath whose gilded hoofs of pride,
> Wherever they trampled, freedom died
>
> Mourn not for VENICE; though her fall
> Be awful, as if Ocean's wave
> Swept o'er her, she deserves it all
> And Justice triumphs o'er her grave.
> Thus perish ev'ry King and State,
> That run the guilty race she ran,
> Strong but in ill, and only great,
> By outrage against God and man!
>
> […]
>
> I feel the moral vengeance sweet,
> And smiling o'er the wreck, repeat
> «Thus perish ev'ry King and State,
> «That tread the steps which VENICE trod,
> Strong but in ill, and only great,
> By outrage against man and God!».
>
> (MOORE 1841, pp. 294-300).

But despite his intense dislike for Venice, Moore's principal legacy to the anglophone world's perception of a place with which he had only the scantiest personal association lay in his famous *Life* of Byron: in its detailed treatment of the Venetian period Byron's first English biography cemented the association between poet and *città lagunare* firmly in the public imagination (MOORE 1830-1831). John Galt's biography of Byron, first published in 1830 (GALT 1830), confirmed uncritically Byron's judgement on the city, and his life within it: thus Galt maintained the fiction that he «avoided as much as possible any intercourse with his countrymen», stressed the sheer tedium and monotony of life in Venice, and emphasised that Byron «was never much attached to it. […] He became tired and disgusted with the life he led at Venice, and was glad to turn his back on it» (pp. 219-220; p. 225; GALT 1835, p. 212; p. 217). Once again Venice was at fault.

At this point it is worth stressing that Byron's influence was not limited to anglophones. Widely translated and hailed as perhaps the greatest living poet across Europe (CARDWELL 2004), the French, Italian, and German publics were especially enthusiastic for his works. If one takes just the French example, it is worth stressing that the life of Byron penned by the Franco-Irish beauty, Louise Swanton Belloc, even before the publication of Moore's or Galt's lives, was just as hostile to Venice – presumably echoing the myths carefully cultivated by Bonaparte, his officers and his officials (including Daru) – as Byron had been himself. For Belloc the climate was in part to blame for Venice's status as «la patrie de la mollesse et de l'oisiveté» – a Montesquieu-esque piece of geographical and climatic determinism that failed to explain the *Serenissima*'s former glories. According to the famed *salonnière*, any failings on Byron's part were entirely due to place rather than his own moral weaknesses or shortcomings.

> On tombe dans l'apathie. Ces palais majestueux dont les habitans déchus de leur grandeur passée, ne sont plus que les ombres des anciens nobles Vénitiens; les gondoles qui glissent mystérieusement sur les canaux; cette population qui se meut sans bruit: tout réduit l'existence à

anonymously-published work of Catherine H. Govion Boglio Solari, *Venice under the yoke of France and Austria with memoirs of the Court, Government & People of Italy […] by a Lady of Rank*, 2 vols, London, G. & W. B. Whittaker, 1824. Similarly Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, made only the most passing reference to Byron in her *Italy*, 3 vols, London, Henry Colburn, 1821, althought the work was admired by Byron himself.

31. Moore's *Venetian air* is a poem of no merit except for a complete failure to pull off a rhyme of Byronic daring, when attempting to match «silent lagoon» with «o'er the moon» (GOODLEY 1910, p. 245).

un demi sommeil. La contagion des mauvaises habitudes, des mauvaises mœurs, de l'indolence et de la volupté, y est insensible et rapide (Belloc 1824, p. 287).

French interest in Byron grew dramatically throughout the 1810s and 1820s, and his Venetian episode was picked up upon both by a public eager to read his work, and by biographers.[32] The extent of the enthusiasm for Byron can be judged by the numerous translations of his work. Following the Amédée Pichot *Œuvres complètes* of 1819-1821 (Pichot, de Salle 1819-1821), several other more-or-less comprehensive editions were published, most notably the Paulin Paris editions of 1830-1831 (Paris 1830-1831), until the definitive Benjamin Laroche of 1836-1837 (Laroche 1836-1837).[33] What is striking is not that Byron's work was so eagerly purchased (albeit it in the case of Laroche in prose form),[34] and presumably on occasion actually read by a Francophone audience, but the degree to which that audience seemed to be just as interested in the poet's life as in his actual literary production. Not only were French editions of his work often accompanied by selections from his letters and/or extended biographical notes, but there was also a significant production of free-standing lives (often simply translations) or commentaries on the poet himself. Thus, for example, Amédée Pichot wrote an *Essai sur le génie et le caractère de lord Byron* (Pichot 1824). Most of these works gave a more or less prominent space to Byron's Venetian episode, although generally in a rather derivative fashion.[35] The widespread interest in this stage of Byron's life was sufficient to tempt François Ancelot to write a three act play entitled *Lord Byron à Venise* (Ancelot 1834). The significance of these French narratives is that they speak of the transnational nature of European culture in the restoration period:[36] it was not just that Byron had a powerful influence on the way in which the French viewed the peninsula, which they had until so recently dominated, but that French views of Byron (including Byron's representation of Italy) were part of a broader dialogue in which French, Italian, German, and English views of Byron and Venice could cross-fertilise, clash, and blend. Christopher Duggan has quite rightly suggested that *Canto IV* constituted a *vademecum* for British readers (Duggan 2007, p. 784); it is perhaps more surprising that it seems to have assumed the same status in France, where there lived tens of thousands of men who had served there as soldiers, gendarmes, and bureaucrats in the years before 1814. But it would be a mistake to consider that the exchange of ideas on Byron (and « Byronised » Venice) was ever one way: the British responded to views of their most famous poet from across the Channel. This did not necessarily operate at a particularly high-brow level: thus, for example, in « The Ladies Pocket Magazine » of 1834, Parisian correspondence dealt with Ancelot's play. The remarks of « Emily B_ » that « It has turned out to be a miserable failure, deficient in every requisite for the theatre. He [Ancelot] has transformed the noble Lord into a good, quiet, moral sort of person, and quite a pattern, father, and husband » highlight the extent to which the image of Byron the charismatic writer and debauched seducer had come to dominate British expectations. This image had not only become widespread but was also so closely identified with Venice that the two had become almost inseparable in the popular imagination. For the British reading public, by the 1820s and 1830s, Venice had essentially become little more than a stage for Byron.

32. Wilkes 2004; Cochran 2004. On the massive enthusiasm for Byron in France see also Gardiner 2008.

33. For a fuller sense of the extent of publications see Meyvis 1996, pp. 773-774. On Byron's dissatisfaction with translations and piracy of his work see Cochran 2004, p. 43.

34. On the phenomenon of Byron's celebrity see Wilson 1999. See especially ibid. Ghislaine McDayter, *Conjuring Lord Byron. Byronmania, literary commodification and the birth of celebrity*, pp. 43-62.

35. Pichot's account was very heavily dependent on quoting the Countess Albrizzi. It included very little about Venice itself, and was in essence an apology for Byron's behaviour, suggesting his womanising was simply a product of his enslavement to the opposite sex (Pichot 1824, p. 141), and that his reputation for debauchery was merely the invention of fellow Britons who had been snubbed when they sought him out in Venice. « Lord Byron, aimable et gai avec ses amis évitait autant qu'il pouvait de nouvelles liaisons, et n'était pas toujours prêt à satisfaire une indiscrète curiosité. Le dépit de ses compatriotes qui n'ont pu parvenir à l'être introduits chez lui, a seul répandu les fables de ses goûts dépravés. Lord Byron a pu être parfois ce que les Anglais appellent homme excentrique (un homme fantastique et original); mais fallait-il en faire un ogre cruel, comme on a souvent voulu le représenter à l'Europe? » (p. 134).

36. On Byron's reception in Italy see Zuccato 2004, pp. 80-97. For a discussion of the significance of Byron to Italian patriots see Ginsborg 2007, pp. 14-18. For the manner in which a reactionary and conservative Italian readership also engaged with him, see Laven 2009, p. 425.

Francophone historians and British views of Venetian decadence

Paradoxically, one of the reasons that the British were so prepared to adopt a Byronic version of Venice was because Byron's attitudes to the city matched a process of historicising the city that was already widespread in the public imagination. Byron, as we have already seen, located Venice within a fundamentally literary space; but whether he was denouncing it as «Sea Sodom» or praising it as the product of some Radcliffean «Enchanter's wand» (Tanner 1992, pp. 19-20), it also existed for him – as we have already seen – within the realm of mythologised past. Heavily dependent on both Daru and Sismondi as sources for his historical plays, *Faliero* and the *Two Foscari*, Byron both shared and buttressed a view of the pre-1797 Venetian state as a corrupt and tyrannical oligarchy. These views were widespread, not least because British historians of the Restoration period – reluctant or unable to engage with Venetian archives or more obscure chronicles – were, like Byron himself, heavily dependent on both the Genevan economist and the former Napoleonic servant. Indeed, although Daru in particular generated ferocious critiques from within Italy,[37] his work remained the standard text – apparently comprehensive and based on exhaustive research – for the overwhelming majority of those who sought to write on the *Serenissima*. Typical was the anonymous reviewer of Giovanni Galliciolli's *Memorie venete* of 1826 in the prestigious «Edinburgh Review», who praised Daru fulsomely for his «laborious researches», «his industry, learning, and sagacity», proclaiming with authority that «no one laboured with so much zeal and discernment as M. Daru» (*History of the democratical constitution of Venice*, «The Edinburgh Review», 46, June 1827, pp. 76-79). In reality, Daru's text was deeply flawed; but there was no other modern work to which those who would inform themselves of Venice's history could readily turn. As John Martin and Dennis Romano have observed, «It was not until the mid-nineteenth century, with the publication of Samuele Romanin's *Storia documentata di Venezia* (10 vols, Venezia, Naratovich, 1853-1861), that modern historians effectively resurrected the positive myth of the Republic» (Martin, Romano 2000, p. 4). Prior, therefore, to the publication of Romanin's work between 1853 and 1861, Daru remained the main authority on Venice, and one who was, for the most part, critical of the Republic, at least in the final five hundred years of its existence.[38]

Byron's vision of Venice's history not only chimed with older English literary versions of the republican city in Jonson's *Volpone*, in Shakespeare's *Merchant*, and in Otway's *Venice preserv'd* as well as in Radcliffe and other Gothic authors, but it also fitted neatly with what seems to have been a widespread British élite reluctance to acknowledge that Britain had done nothing to defend a state with which it had so much in common – mercantile, constitutional, oligarchic, imperial – from foreign aggression. In stanza xvii of *Canto iv* of *Childe Harold's pilgrimage*, Byron actually went much further than most of his contemporaries in acknowledging that Britain needed both to be ashamed at, and to take warning from, the collapse of Venice: «and thy lot | Is shameful to the nations, – most of all, | Albion! to thee: the Ocean Queen should not | Abandon Ocean's children» (*The complete works of Lord Byron*, p. 134). Nevertheless, to be able to put distance between Venice and «the Ocean Queen» had an obvious appeal to the British, and it is striking how readily historians and travel writers alike subscribed to the commonplace that the Venetian Republic had simply got its just desserts at the hands of the young Bonaparte. It was appealing to build on the ideas of decadence and decay, of moral corruption and cowardice, of tyranny and misrule, in order to avoid establishing parallels that were too close for comfort between the once great Venetian state and the modern British constitutional monarchy. Daru's version of events was extremely helpful in such a task. We have already

37. The angry attempt of Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo to rectify Daru's «errors» appeared as *Discorsi sulla storia veneta, cioè rettificazioni di alcuni equivoci riscontrati nella storia di Venezia di sig. Daru*, 2 vols, Udine, Mattiuzzi, 1828; see also the edited versions of Tiepolo's comments together with the observations of the Lombard translator Aurelio Bianchi Giovini in his abridged Italian version of Daru's *Histoire*, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia di P. Daru … con note e osservazioni*, Capolago, Tipografia Elvetica, 1832, and the full translated version under the same title, 11 vols, Capolago, Tipografia Elvetica, 1832-1834. For a discussion of Daru and his Italian critics see Povolo 2000.

38. The extent to which Daru was fundamentally unsympathetic to the Venetians and the institutions of the Republic has perhaps been overstated, as Elsa Damien and I argue, in our unpublished monograph, *Venice remembered*. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that, on balance, he was hostile to the *Serenissima*, if not completely blind to the virtues and successes of some of its servants.

encountered how he was used in Hallam's account, but such an approach was also to be found in the works of other British writers. Thus, for example, in his generally perceptive *An Autumn in Italy*, J.D. Sinclair suddenly launched into a denunciation of the Venetian Republic, which is striking as a perfect blend of Byron (albeit not actually named) and Daru:

> […] but the sight of the «Bridge of Sighs», its neighbouring dungeon and towers, serve to recal [sic] to mind the arbitrary and despotic Council of Ten, which overawed the Republic and its *Doge*. The scene of *Marino Faliero*'s punishment was pointed out to me. It reminds me of the power of the aristocracy, and their summary mode of exercising it. Count Daru, in his *History of Venice*, has unravelled the dark and fearful labyrinth of that oligarchical tyranny with laborious attention; and so infamous were the institutes of that Council, that assassination and poisoning were enjoined by one of its ordinances (Sinclair 1827, p. 77).

Such an image of Venice was not purely confined to print: in 1836 William Etty – best known for his controversial nudes at a time when such canvases were unusual in British art – exhibited *The Bridge of Sighs, Venice*. The mysterious night scene – now in the York Art Gallery – shows two sinister figures disposing of a body (whether the victim of state assassins or the Council of Ten's torturers is unclear), but the echoes of Daru and Byron again resonate. Indeed, even among critics of Austrian rule, the sentiment was widespread that the Venetian Republic had been long doomed, and that the Venetians, dissolute and idle, deserved their fate. An absolute conviction that the Venetian state had been unloved, unrepresentative, and repressive was, without question, the orthodoxy. John Cam Hobhouse, Byron's devoted travelling companion and a considerably more astute observer of what was around him, acknowledged that the Venetians regretted their «vanished independence» (Hobhouse 1859, vol. I, p. 132), but was convinced that «The present race cannot be thought to regret the loss of aristocratical forms, and too despotic of government», citing «the appendix of Daru's *History*» to defend the actions of the French, from whom he sought to shift the blame for the Venetian loss of liberty (p. 122). Sentiments such as those of Hobhouse were repeatedly echoed, becoming a standard trope in Anglophone accounts of Venice. When Henry Matthews, a fellow of King's College Cambridge, wrote of his visit to Venice as part of a lengthy European trip, he was sceptical of any nostalgia for the pre-1797 order: Napoleon had simply delivered the *coup de grâce* to a commonwealth that «was already expiring». Echoing Byron, Matthews suggested that, when visiting the Doge's Palace, «I thought more of Shakespeare and Otway – Othello and Shylock – Pierre and Jaffier – than of Dandolo and all his victories»; echoing Daru he remarked on the fall of Venice as easy to predict:

> The government had degenerated into an oligarchical tyranny, of all tyrannies the most detestable; and the people had nothing left to fight for. It is ever thus; for it seems, that there is in all governments a tendency to abuse, and it ought perhaps rather to excite surprise that Venice endured so long, than that she fell so fast (Matthews 1824, vol. I, p. 23; p. 25).[39]

Similar sentiments were to be found in many other works. The Rev. Benjamin Webb in his *Sketches of continental ecclesiology* published in 1848, an exhaustive study of hundreds of churches across a swathe of Europe, expressed much the same opinion. Webb ended his section on Venice with a particularly beautiful and lyrical description of the pleasures of travelling by *gondola*, and of the sheer beauty of the Lido (without for once feeling the need to mention Byron's equine pursuits), but his final reflections on the city are worth quoting as demonstrative of how far Daru's vision of Venice had penetrated the anglophone world:

> Venice is a bewitching city […]. Few cities are so rich in churches as Venice is now; what it must have been in its palmy days, can only be guessed. It now bears the aspect of a crushed and fallen city. One cannot wisely regret, indeed, the extinction of its wicked Republic, but one could wish that it were a thriving seaport of free Italy, instead of being oppressed and crippled by foreign and uncongenial domination (Webb 1848, pp. 267-300, but esp. pp. 299-300).

Blaming the Austrians for all that was wrong with Venice's current state chimed with Byron; but the notion of the «wicked Republic» matched Daru more closely. Another example is to be found in Charles Henry Jones, *Recollections of Venice*, written significantly later in the century, and describing a trip made in 1858 (Jones 1862). Of a Venetian woman who had hurried past the Austrian military bands playing in the Piazza, Jones remarks that she has an expression of «deep mourning for her nation's lost liberties; forgetting that when Venice lost those liberties

39. The work was originally published as a single volume in 1820; subsequent single volume editions were printed in 1822 and 1825.

she was unworthy to be free» (pp. 22-23). He then launches a damning attack on the Council of Ten:

> Under continued extension of its power the Lion's mouth was instituted; and it soon became the terror of all Venice as the patron of the assassin's stiletto, and the invader of the their most sacred rights. So aggravated did this tyranny become, that any Venetian who believed his own selfish interests would be promoted by the disappearance of some rival in his way, but framed a false accusation, which made him an enemy of state, and disguising himself deposited it in the Lion's mouth; and when that rival was gone, it was criminal, even to *inquire* after his fate. Such was Venice five centuries before she fell (p. 27).

By the time Jones was writing, Daru's version of Venice's past was slowly being eroded. Romanin's growing readership, or, at the very least, an awareness of his work, was one reason; another was the changed British perception of Venice following the 1848 revolution and the dramatic events of 1859-1861, which encouraged British commentators to reconsider the character of Venetians within the wider context of a transformed Italy. However, in the years before the revolutions of 1848, the dominant narratives continued to draw principally on Sismondi and Daru, and/or Byron. This, for example, was true of Edward Smedley's *Sketches from Venetian history* of 1831, which openly acknowledged its debt to the Frenchman:

> The copious use made in these volumes of the great works of M. Simonde de Sismondi, and the late Comte Daru, will be apparent in almost every page; and, indeed, no approach to Venetian History can be fittingly attempted save under their guidance. Nevertheless, in truth, it is much rather from the authorities to which those distinguished writers point, than from themselves, that the following narrative has been framed. All such of those authorities as were accessible have been diligently and accurately consulted; and it is hoped that a gleaning of characteristic incidents had occasionally been found among them, which may still be new to all excepting those who have explored for themselves the treasures of the Italian chroniclers (Smedley 1831).[40]

It is important to remember, in reflecting on the impact of Daru and others, that books have long shelf-lives, that they are not necessarily read in order of publication, and that when readers pick up a text they do not also immediately jettison the baggage of learning and prejudices derived from works read at an earlier date.[41] Moreover, many volumes went through numerous editions; in judging the historical place of a book we must not just think in terms of the first edition. For example, Hallam's *View of the state of Europe* was in print into the twentieth century; and while it may not have been the first work to which readers turned to learn about Venice, it remained without doubt *a* if not *the* standard work on mediaeval Europe in English for almost a century. Any reader not aware of the growing specialist literature would have been exposed to Hallam's prejudices about the Serenissima. Similarly, Smedley continued to be read long after the historiography on which he had based his lively narrative had been subjected to challenges from historians significantly less *parti pris* and vastly more rigorous in their methodology than Sismondi and Daru. Thus Smedley's American publishers, Harper and Brothers, were still advertising the book in their April 1859 catalogue, commenting that, while few English-speaking readers had «the knowledge, the time, and means to explore for themselves the treasures of the Italian Chronicles», Smedley had not only done so, but had gleaned from these sources «the most characteristic incidents and amusing stories and anecdotes» (*Harpers and brothers list of publications. April 1859*, New York, Harper, 1859, p. 9).[42]

Despite the longevity of works such as those by Hallam and Smedley, the views they expressed on Venice were subjected to increasing scrutiny. Indeed, even before Romanin had begun to challenge the hegemonic position within Venetian historiography of Sismondi and Daru, gauntlets were being thrown down and warnings issued to the English reader about the reliability of the latter two authors. The very first edition of the Murray *Handbook for*

40. I have used the single volume American edition of the following year. Smedley, *Sketches* (New York, Harper, 1832), p. iii. As John Pemble has remarked, Smedley's work «was for almost half a century the only synoptic narrative in English» (Pemble 1995, p. 89).

41. St. Clair 2004, pp. 1-7. St. Clair correctly criticises two models of engaging with the history of publications. The first he calls the «parade» model in which historians view texts deemed significant in succession, following chronological order determined by their first publication date. The second he calls the «parliament» approach «which present[s] the printed texts of a particular historical period as debating and negotiating with one another in a kind of open parliament with all the members participating and listening» (p. 2).

42. Significantly the list also included both John Galt's and Thomas Moore's biographies of Byron.

travellers in northern Italy of 1842, the work of the mediaevalist and anthologist, Sir Francis Palgrave, advised that «Daru's history is very entertaining and clear, but must be read with caution, for it was written with the feeling of placing the extinct Republic in an unfavourable light, and thus justifying the faithless conduct of Napoleon in subverting it, and delivering it over to Austria» (*Handbook for travellers in northern Italy*, London, John Murray, 1842, p. xviii). By the third edition of 1847, the wording of this caveat had been slightly changed, but the notion that Daru was no more than a propagandist seeking to legitimate the youthful conduct of his former imperial master was still forcefully articulated, remarking that the *Histoire* «was written with the express intention of placing the extinct republic in an unfavourable light, and thus justifying the faithless conduct of Napoleon in subverting it» (*Handbook for travellers in northern Italy*, London, John Murray, 1847, p. xviii). Yet discussing Sismondi, who, within his broader treatment of the whole peninsula, was equally uncharitable towards the Venetian Republic, the *Handbook* is much more indulgent, praising it as «the very pith of Italian history for modern times» (*Handbook*, 1842, p. xviii). This endorsement of one mediaevalist by another gave a worth to a work that continued to intrigue, and was also, through a very heavily abridged and rather staccato English translation, widely available to a British audience (De Sismondi 1832). Sismondi's influence also persisted through Ruskin, whose works – despite their sometimes bizarre historical perspective – would gradually come to exert enormous influence over some British readers.[43]

From the late 1850s, as ever more volumes of Romanin's great *Storia documentata* became available, the Triestine's great labour increasingly ousted both Sismondi's *Histoire des Républiques italiennes* and Daru's *Histoire de la République de Venise* as the first point of call for anyone wishing to study the city's past. Romanin's work, with its fundamentally positive view of the defunct Serenissima, became the standard text for any serious student of Venetian history. Its views simultaneously filtered into the less specialist literature, resulting in an increasingly marginalised *rôle* for Daru. This did not, however, prevent Daru's own version of the «black myth» of the tyrannical republic from continuing to lurk in the background. This was in part because authors felt the obligation still to rebuff him. So influential had the *Histoire* been, the authors of new works of history felt the need to use Daru as a pivotal *punto di riferimento* against which to define their position. Daru's name and, in a sense his views, thus continued to have a presence in the Anglophone literature. This was not simply true of those producing purely historical works. For example, William Dean Howells, the American man of letters – novelist and biographer of Abraham Lincoln – who wrote an engaging account of his experiences living in the city as the United States consul in the 1860s, was utterly damning of Daru, blaming him outright for many of the falsehoods and prejudices that surrounded the history of the Venetian Republic, and clearly identifying the French historian as quite as responsible for distorting the public image of Venice as were writers of poetry and fiction.

> […] if the reader care to follow me to my stagebox, I think he will hardly see the curtain rise upon just the Venice of his dreams – the Venice of Byron, of Rogers, and Cooper; nor upon the Venice of his prejudices – the merciless Venice of Darù [sic], and the historians who follow him.[44]

In stark contrast to his obvious dislike for Daru (and, indeed, Byron), Howells hailed Romanin «the

43. Ruskin unreasonably requested of his young bride Effie not only that she plough through Sismondi's history, but also that she note down for him every passage that dealt with Venice. Clegg 1981, p. 73; Lutyens 1965; Hardy, Walton 2010, p. 39; Bullen 1992, p. 75.

44. Howells is here making reference to James Fenimore Cooper's 1831 novel, *The Bravo* (Cooper 1831). The early pages of this book reflect both the power of Daru and Byron. In the preface, Cooper, who makes no claims to absolute historical verisimilitude, nevertheless appeals to Daru as a historical authority legitimating his description of Venice. Meanwhile, at the head of his very first chapter, he quotes the opening stanza of *Canto IV* of *Childe Harold*. *The Bravo* is yet another example of the durability of ideas: long after Daru's interpretation of the Venetian Republic had been discredited amongst historians, it persisted in literature. Cooper's novel continued to be published. For example, the New York publishing house Stringer & Townsend produced editions in 1849, 1856, 1859; James & Gregory of New York produced an edition in 1864; the Aldine Press in 1880. Fenimore Cooper's work was also, it should be stressed, international. It appeared in German as part of *Coopers sämtliche Werke*, Frankfurt, Sauerländer, 1832, under the auspices of the Sauerländer publishing house, which specialised in producing translations, including those of the American writers, Cooper and Washington Irving. Three years later a French translation appeared in the *Œuvres de Fenimore Cooper*, Paris, Furne, 1834.

last great name in Venetian literature », and, while the *Storia documentata* is not otherwise cited by name, it is clear that Romanin's version of Venice's past underpins most of Howells's treatment of matters historical (Howells 1866, p. 197).[45]

In the years immediately before and after Venice's incorporation into a united Italy, attacks on Daru became a staple of British writing about Venice. The first volume of the 1860 edition of William Carew Hazlitt's *History of the Venetian Republic* revealed a similar dislike for Daru, albeit in part veiled by the historian's not mentioning him by name: « The French school of writers has had its day, and truth may now be allowed to prevail ». For Hazlitt, it was quite clear that the origin of this truth lay in « the *Documentary History* of Romanin », which « has not only thrown an entirely new light on the Annals of Venice, but has imparted an entirely new character to her policy and civilization ». So strongly did he feel this that he reiterated almost exactly the same point a mere two pages later (Hazlitt 1860, vol. I, p. viii and p. x).[46] Likewise in the shared preface to the third and fourth volumes of the 1860 edition, Hazlitt again lambasted Daru, who, on topics such as the Venetian *Inquisitori di stato*, was « monstrously and utterly false »; to make his point, Hazlitt turned directly to Romanin, who, he explained, had utterly refuted the Frenchmen; only then did Hazlitt invoke earlier critics: Carlo Botta, Giandomenico Tiepolo and Aurelio Bianchi Giovini (vol. III, IV, pp. iii-vii). Despite the rapid expansion of available literature on the Republic during the final decades of the nineteenth century, Hazlitt's revised 1900 edition still emphasised Romanin's ten volumes as central to any study (Hazlitt 1900, vol. I, p. x).

By the late nineteenth century, contempt for and anger towards Daru had become the default position of anglophone histories of Venice. In 1877 Elizabeth Eastlake, *née* Rigby, who combined the professions of art historian and travel writer, journalist and novelist, wrote of Daru with particular disdain:

> To the modern historian of Venice, Count Daru, are traceable the chief source and spread of the generally received ideas regarding the hideous nature of Venetian laws [...] at the same time it is notorious that Daru was strongly biased against the Venetians. A devoted adherent of the « empire » he felt that the more he dwelt on the wickedness of Venice the better he vindicated Bonaparte's unscrupulous conduct towards her (*Venice defended*, « Edinburgh Review », July 1877, p. 193).

Historians, indeed, began to become slightly embarrassed to acknowledge that they had used Daru at all. The Cambridge historian Francis Cotterell Hodgson emphasised in his introduction to his *Early history of Venice* that « I have used Daru very little », quoting in a footnote a German scholar's judgement that the Frenchman was « Napoleon I's creature » who in his eight volumes « had distorted and falsified ».[47] If such hostility to Daru had become standard, so too had the automatic endorsement of Romanin as the great historian of Venice. Elsewhere in his introduction, not to mention in the preface to his companion volume on Venice in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Hodgson emphasised the enormous importance of Romanin's ten volume work to any serious study of the history of the Republic (Hodgson 1901, p. xv; Hodgson 1910, p. x). In the « brief bibliography » of Horatio Brown's concise *Venetian Republic* of 1902 Romanin's *Storia* appeared prominently, first in his list of « General Histories » (although it should be noted that the 1837 Italian edition of Daru was placed directly below it, before works by Muratti, Capelletti, Mutinelli, Ha-

45. On Howells and history, see also Pullan 1993, pp. 227-228.

46. Hazlitt 1860, vol. I, p. viii and p. x. There were in all four versions of the book, published in 1858, 1860, 1900, and 1915.

47. Hodgson 1901, p. xviii. The historian Heinrich Kretschmayr had much less time for Romanin. This was made frighteningly clear in a review of the *Early history*, in which the Austrian damned Hodgson and his compatriots because they either could not or would not read German scholarship. Kretschmayr considered the British generally to be shockingly incompetent historians, lacking in historical method, archival skills and palaeography (« den Mangel an hilfwissenschaftlicher Schulung »), ignorant of both the German language literature and of the more detailed Italian monographic works. Hodgson he considered too anxious about appearing old-fashioned (« zopfig »), so that he eschewed « dry » Germanic practices such as proper scholarship and scientific treatment of sources. Kretschmayr ended his review by calling rhetorically for « Less reasoning, and more research! » (« Weniger Raisonnement, mehr Forschung! »), and stressing Hodgson's over-reliance on secondary sources in general. However, from the body of the review it would appear that it was in large part Hodgson's particular dependence on Romanin, and his replication of Romanin's errors, that he seems to have found especially irksome (H. Kretschmayr, « Mitteilungen des Instituts für Osterreichische Geschichtsforschung », 25, 1904, pp. 146-154). Kretschmayr's major work is his *Geschichte von Venedig*, 3 vols, Gotha, Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1905, 1920, 1934. The third volume should have been published in 1928, but the fire in the Vienna Justizpalast of July 1927 destroyed Kretschmayr's manuscripts and notes, so he had to start again virtually from scratch. See vol. III, pp. vii-viii.

zlitt, Wiel and Oliphant) (Brown 1902, pp. 185-186). In 1903, Thomas Okey, in his *Venice and its story* – a work of which the lavish illustrations indicate a popular rather than scholarly market – added his praise to that of his peers in identifying Romanin as his key contemporary influence:

> In the course of our story we have freely drawn from the old chronicles, while not neglecting modern historians, chiefest of whom is the Triestine Hebrew scholar, Samuele Romanin. Indeed, all that has been written on Venetian history during the past forty years does but increase our admiration for the imperturbable industry and sagacious judgement of the author of the *Storia Documentata di Venezia*, to whom our heaviest debt is due (Okey 1904, p. v).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Daru had been reduced to a little more than a footnote in the anglophone historiography of the Venetian Republic. Popular and scholarly authors alike had little or no time for him. His rôle became that of a foil to set off the more positive image of the Serenissima, which came to dominate the historiography, an image sustained not only by the assiduous labours of the «Triestine Hebrew», but also of growing numbers of foreign scholars whose works in the state archives had turned them into the laboratory of «scientific», empirical research. As one reviewer wrote in a piece on Hazlitt's expanded and final version of his Venetian Republic in praise of the author's scholarly judgement:

> Since 1860 the Venetian State Papers – there are said to be fourteen million in the archives in the Frari alone – have become more and more accessible. Mr. Rawdon Brown's Calendar is well known. Romanin has completed his *Storia Documentata*. The *Diaries* of Marino Sanuto are nearly all in type. And Count Papadopoli is printing his great work on the money of Venice. Over and above these enormous stacks of paper, we see rising the ornamental fretwork, signed by Ruskin, Ferguson, Howells, H.F. Brown, Addington Symonds – to mention no others – who have described the architecture, paintings, customs old and new, of this unparalleled city. Mr. Hazlitt appears to have read everything, forgotten nothing, and used his own judgement to very good purpose (B. William, *Venetian history and manners*, «The Bookman», June 1901, pp. 90-91).

The resilience of the Byronic vision of Venice

It was harder to throw off the Byronic vision of Venice in the anglophone world than it was to jettison that of Daru. One reason for this was that there was no single challenger to Byron's view of the city, to unseat him as Romanin had the French historian: Daru in a sense was not so much refuted as superseded, almost over-painted, by the more assiduous and judicious, if in his own way no less *parti pris*, Romanin. As we have seen, elements of Daru's interpretation of Venice's past persisted, especially in mediated form (including through the works of Byron himself), but, in general, he came to be disregarded as an authority among British scholars. Byron had penetrated deeper. If there was a literary challenge, it came from Ruskin, but even he was, as we shall see, in some senses still Byronic in his perspective. Moreover, despite his relative popularity, Ruskin's scholarly yet simultaneously moralising prose never had the easy accessibility of Byron's poetry even for the educated Victorian middle classes. The enormous power of the Byronic Venetian imaginary was not just because Byron had offered a distinctly anglophone engagement with the city. Long residence gave him the status of «expert». But his narcissistic distance from the local – it would be hard to find a more systematically solipsistic literary offering than his letters during the Venetian period – meant he offered an attractively simplistic version of Venice for consumption by his compatriots. Byron's position may have swung wildly from noisily proclaimed affection to outspoken contempt and hostility, but it was possible to bet that it would almost always occupy the extremes of the *spectrum*. One of the principal attractions of Byron as a reference point is that he offered readers a Venice untroubled by any hint of nuance or involved narratives. Byron offered ready support both for those who loved the city, and for those who hated it. He occupied no middle ground, but provided a set of readily applicable templates into which an individual could slot his or her own (often superficial) experiences. Yet such was Byron's reputation in general, and so closely was he associated with Venice, that, for much of the nineteenth century, the casual traveller to or commentator on Venice, needed merely to cite him to attain the status of «expert»: quotation from Byron's works, but above all *Canto IV*, gave automatic authority to any description or discussion of the former *dominante*.

Given the close public association between Byron and Venice, it is perhaps unsurprising that, even as he began posthumously to lose some of his popularity and fame in a prissier late Georgian and Victorian society, articles on Venice in periodicals, popular and scholarly, often focused on him directly. In February 1831, for example, «The Mirror of Litera-

ture, Amusement and Instruction» carried an article based around a picture of Lord Byron's Palace, at Venice, asserting that «Scores of readers who have been journeying through Mr. Moore's concluding portion of the *Life of Lord Byron*, will thank us for this illustration» («The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction», 476, 12 February 1831, pp. 113-115). In the same month, «The Kaleidoscope; or Literary and Scientific Mirror» printed lengthy *Extracts from Moore's Life of Byron* (p. 254), focused on the Venetian episode, without actually saying anything about Venice (save to stress the comfort of Byron's living quarters). During the mid-nineteenth century vast numbers of other articles and essays addressed the great man's Venetian period directly. But he was also invoked simply when Venice and things Venetian were mentioned. In June 1834, the «Imperial Magazine» opened its *Topographical and Historical Account of Venice* with the first four stanzas of *Canto IV* of *Childe Harold*.[48] *Canto IV* also figured prominently in an article on the *gondola* in the «Penny Magazine» of April 1834. The piece actually began with a line from Rogers's *Italy* – «There is a glorious city in the sea» –, but *Childe Harold* was quoted at much greater length, notwithstanding the author's virtual acknowledgement of its irrelevance to the topic in hand: «It is not […] our present intention to describe Venice; but we have quoted these passages as suitably introducing an account of the gondola, or boat, employed in traversing the marine streets or canals of that city» (*The gondola*, «Penny Magazine for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge», 26 April 1834, pp. 159-160). In short it became absolutely standard on both sides of the Atlantic to quote Byron and/or to allude to him whenever mentioning the city in print. Let me offer some further examples from later in the century.

The extremes to which an enchanted, oneiric, Byronic perspective could dominate literary engagement with Venice is well-illustrated in Charles Dickens's *Pictures from Italy*, in the chapter *An Italian dream* (Dickens 1846, pp. 107-119). Elsewhere in this work, based on extensive Italian travels undertaken in 1843, Dickens was at pains to talk of the often harsh realities he had witnessed across the peninsula, and of the unusual incidents he had experienced. For example, when he described Rome, he stressed his earnest desire to deal with its varied past, but he engaged above all with the present, with his immediate encounters with Romans: thus in his long chapter on the Papal capital, he discusses the awfulness of the choir of St Peter's; he vividly describes the chaos of Carnival; he tells the reader of the familiarity of the faces of artists' models from actual paintings he has seen; he relates an incident in a church, when a man desists from prayer to beat his yapping dog; and he narrates the tale of a brutal highway murder, and of the public execution of the guilty party (pp. 165-232). Dickens's treatment of Venice is utterly different: he gives only hints at what he saw during his trip there. Instead he describes «this ghostly city», «this strange place», and imagines he encounters Shylock; if Dickens admittedly displayed more sense of place than Byron when writing on Venice (it would be hard not to do so), the Victorian novelist's account of «this strange Dream upon the water» has nonetheless much more than a touch of *Childe Harold* about it.

My second example of the persistent Byronic vision is an 1858 review in an American journal dealing with a number of works on Italy. These include the histories of Daru and Sismondi, Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, Lady Montague's *Letters*, and Beckford's *Travels*. The author, apparently unaware of the volumes of the *Storia documentata*, which had been appearing over the previous lustrum, sought rather tardily, and derivatively, to praise Daru's *Histoire* as the definitive work on the Republic.[49] But it was Byron who framed this piece: at the outset the reviewer remarked «although thousands of intelligent travellers have visited the "City of the Sea", scarce one, with the exception of Byron, has left a record of enduring value» (*Venice*, «The North American Review», January 1858, p. 83). And at the end of the article it is Byron who once more assumes the position of dominant authority on Venice:

> Fallen, but majestic still, she yet has, for lovers of her romantic story, an unparalleled fascination, so happily described by that great poet who more than any other, with the exception of Tasso, has entwined his name with the memories of Venice (p. 120).

48. *Topographical and Historical Account of Venice*, «Imperial Magazine», 2nd series, 42/10, June 1834, pp. 249-255. The article's treatment of the Council of Ten owed much to the narrative of Daru.

49. «[…] the scholar desiring the most accurate as well as the most extended converse with her [Venice's] annals, must for the present seek it in the pages of Daru». *Venice*, «The North American Review», January 1858, pp. 83-120, p. 84.

My final example is Ruskin. Ruskin's love for Venice is beyond question, but he did not like the modern city. Not only did he affect to despise most of its architecture that dated from after the fifteenth century, but he also loathed any indication of modernity, for example completely failing to acknowledge the benefits brought to the population by the construction of the railway causeway, and celebrating, on personal aesthetic grounds, the damage done to it during the events of 1848-1849.[50] He was particularly splenetic in his contempt for *modern* Venetians, praising the Austrians («temperate – thoughtful – well trained – well taught»), befriending the young Austrian officer Paulizza, who had subjected the city to artillery bombardment during its siege of 1849, expressing his admiration for Radetzky, and damning the Italian population of the city as «now slothful – ignorant – incapable of such a thing as Truth or Honesty – Blasphemous – Murderous – Sensual – Cowardly […] – Governed severely because they can be no otherwise governed» (Ruskin to Rev. William Brown, cited Clegg 1981, p. 83). By his own confession, however, Ruskin – and it would be hard to find an individual who was *less* Byronic in his own life (and perhaps especially in his conduct when in Venice) saw Venice in essentially Byronic terms. There can be no doubt that their encounters with Venice were so different as to make comparison seem absurd: Ruskin visited Venice a dozen times, most famously on honeymoon, while Byron stayed longer, essentially in single stint, and arrived in flight from a disastrous marriage; Ruskin famously refused to consummate his marriage in the city, while Byron pursued sexual gratification compulsively; Ruskin indulged his interest in art and architecture with almost equal obsession, while Byron was largely ignorant and almost entirely uninterested in the visual arts; Byron professed himself an enemy of Vienna, while, with few reservations, Ruskin endorsed Habsburg rule (although neither was shy of accepting hospitality from high-ranking Austrians). Yet despite these differences, and despite the fact that, on occasion, Ruskin took issue with «the Byronic ideal of Venice» –[51] he reproached the poet for his cavalier and indolent attitude to the city, which meant he often did not even «*approach* accuracy» – (the quotation come from a letter from Ruskin to his father, dated 12 September 1853; J. Ruskin, *The stones of Venice*, vol. II, in Cook, Wedderburn 1903-1910, vol. 10, p. 10), the author of *The stones of Venice* still confessed in later life, in a passage as revealing as it was grammatically awkward, that «My Venice, like Turner's, has been chiefly created for us by Byron».[52]

The similarity between Byron and Ruskin lay above all in their rejection of Venice as «a city of men». This phrase was used in 1888, in a review of Margaret Oliphant's *The makers of Venice* (Oliphant 1888), in «Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine» (143/1, 1888, pp. 185-192, republished in «The Living Age», vol. 176, 10 March 1888, pp. 557-559). The anonymous author, who wrote a glowing review (perhaps unsurprising given that Margaret Oliphant was both a regular contributor to the journal, and sufficiently thick with its owners to write the authorised history of the publishing house) (Oliphant 1897), quoted Oliphant in defence both of Byron personally («it is presently the fashion to disparage not only his life but his poetry») and the picture of Venice given in *Childe Harold* (while also citing Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo*); the reviewer had a quite different target in his sights: Ruskin.

> It might have been thought that since Mr. Ruskin wrote the Stones of Venice, there was no room for a fresh history. But it is not so. The moderation and sobriety of Mrs. Oliphant's narrative will be welcome relief to many exasperated readers of a gospel which, when not absolutely fantastic, is bewilderingly fanciful and florid. The truth is that Mr. Ruskin – as the world is beginning to learn – asks too much of art.
>
> Venice to Mr. Ruskin is a city of art; to Mrs. Oliphant it is a city of men. Mr. Ruskin does not care much for the Venetians except in so far as they were painters or sculptors, or the patrons of painters or sculptors; Mrs. Oliphant delights to record how the great doges and admirals and captains prosecuted their work by sea and by land until they had made their strange and beautiful city the mistress of the Adriatic […] The painters are not neglected – nor the builders either; but they are treated rather as notable Venetians than as notable artists («Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine», 143/1, 1888, pp. 187-189).

50. For Ruskin on arrival in Venice by *gondola* as superior to train, see Ruskin 1851-1853, vol. II, pp. 1-2.

51. J. Ruskin, *The stones of Venice*, vol. II, in Cook, Wedderburn 1903-1910, vol. 10, p. 8. It is striking that Howells thought it appropriate to cite Ruskin in dismissing Byron and the romantics.

52. J. Ruskin, *Praeterita. The autobiography of John Ruskin*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 268. *Praeterita* was first published in twenty-eight separate sections between 1885 and 1889. The OUP edition is a version of the 1899 three-volume edition. The fullest discussion of Ruskin and Venice is Hewison 2010.

Ruskin's underlying ambivalence to Byron's Venice – on the one hand, critical, on the other hand, seduced – was not altogether untypical of the way in which anglophones increasingly negotiated Byron's poetry and legacy. A more robust dismissal of Byron on Venice can be found in Frances Milton Trollope's account of the city in her 1842 travelogue (Trollope 1842). A lively, observant, and spirited writer, the mother of the novelist Anthony, Fanny Trollope was not scared of challenging established opinion. In writing about Venice she professed her personal preference for the descriptions of Richard Monckton Milnes (whose name she systematically misspelt) over those of Byron: the former's poetry about Venice she provocatively announced «worth a thousand of those in which *Childe Harold* groans in lamentation over her decline». Byron, in her opinion, may have «gone nearest to preparing me for its visible aspect» but it is «Milne» (sic) who captures «the feelings it inspires» (p. 67). Professing to find any analysis of «the numbers of vessels that have entered, or left the city» likely to lead a visitor to «find yourself pathetically mourning with Byron», she openly mocked the poet for stressing the natural when dealing with city: «if there be a spot on God's lovely earth which does not owe its charm to Nature, it is Venice» (p. 68). Refusing to mourn the «once rich and powerful, but greedy and tyrannical republic» (and it is hard not to see some shades of Daru in her comments), Trollope confidently predicted a rosier economic future, a position she shared with more serious British observers of the same period (Laven 1991, pp. 119-120).

If Fanny Trollope adopted a tone of faint mockery towards Byron, and hinted at exasperation towards those who looked to him as their guide, William Howells, during his long residence in Venice, developed a more intense annoyance at the poet's continued intrusion. Lamenting the «cheap sentimentalism of Byron's life» as the sole reason for interest in the Armenian monastery of San Lazzaro, and implying that the only reason that anyone should take any interest in the badly-restored and ugly Palazzo Mocenigo was because of a misplaced fascination with the dead poet, he was scathing of the way in which Byron still haunted the city, both for English-speaking visitors and the Venetians who would willingly exploit them.[53]

> […] the noble bard's memory is not a presence which I approach with pleasure, and indeed I had most enjoyment in the place [the Palazzo Mocenigo] when I thought of good-natured little Thomas Moore, who once visited his lordship there. Byron himself hated the recollection of his life in Venice, and I am sure no one else need like it. But he is become *una cosa di Venezia*, and you cannot pass his palace without having it pointed out to you by the gondolier (Howells 1866, vol. I, p. 223).[54]

Howell's irritation with the perpetual Byronic presence, and the apparent readiness of Venetians to allege connection with the former resident decades after his death, was by no means unique. But visitors began too to treat the local associations with Byron with increasing amusement, humour, and scepticism. Thus, while Pichot had written in 1830 of Byron's horse-riding on the Lido as attracting crowds of admiring Venetians (Pichot 1824, p. 133), twenty years later, the poet Arthur Hugh Clough adopted a rather more ironic tone in his unfinished work *Dipsychus*. In scene five, of the dialogue he has one of his interlocutors, the «Spirit», twice remark on the Lido's association with Byron in an almost mocking fashion (the tone and rhymes echoing those that Byron might himself have used):

> Spirit: What now? The Lido shall it be?
> That none may say we didn't see,
> The ground which Byron used to ride on,
> And do I don't know what beside on.
>
> […] And on the island's other side
> The place where Murray's faithful Guide
> Informs us Byron used to ride.
>
> (*The poems and prose remains of Arthur Hugh Clough*, 1869, pp. 123-128).

At much the same time the posthumously-published *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* of Chateaubriand – who had always regarded Byron as a rival, and seems to have been annoyed that the Englishman did not see fit to reciprocate – observed (not without a hint of glee) that, as early as 1822, Byron had already been forgotten in Venice and that his fame was already waning in London.

53. In the introduction to the revised 1897 edition, Howells remarked that «from the first I had set my face against that romantic Venice which Byron, and the Byronic poets and novelists, had invented for the easy emotioning of the newcomer. I was tremendously severe with the sentimental legends […]. But that to which I was genuinely affectioned was the real life of the place, as I saw it in the present and read of it in the past»; Howells, *Venetian life* (1897), pp. xvi–xvii.

54. Howells's views clearly found a wide audience. By 1867 his work had already gone through four editions.

> Cependant Byron n'est plus ce qu'il a été; je l'avais trouvé de touts parts vivants à Venise; au bout de quelques années, dans cette même ville où je trouvais son nom partout, je l'ai trouvé effacé et inconnu partout. Les échos du Lido ne le répètent plus, et si vous le demandez à des Vénitiens, il ne savent plus de qui vous parlez. Lord Byron est entièrement mort pour eux; ils n'entendent plus le hennissements de son cheval: il en est de même à Londres, où sa mémoire périt. Voilà ce que nous devenons (Chateaubriand 1852, p. 252).

Leaving aside Chateaubriand's possible motives for dwelling on Byron's having been forgotten (rivalry, speculation on the transitory nature of literary grandeur), and the fact that canny Venetians might have recognised that they would keep this particular Frenchman happy by pretending not to have heard of the great English romantic, it is quite clear that the Breton was mistaken. As far as Venetians were concerned the memory of Byron continued to live. For the poet Luigi Carrer, the local fascination with the poet was part and parcel of a wider Italian «anglomania» built upon «l'odio di Bonaparte, e più tardi le poesie di lord Byron, i romanzi di Walter-Scott [sic], e il bisogno di mutar tipo» (Carrer 1838, p. 51), a strange combination given Byron's own readiness to act as an apologist for the ousted French Emperor. But there were also numerous Venetians eager to claim that they had been Byron's gondolier, servant, lover, as there were Britons who were happy to report their tales in the belief that such local colour, invoking the name of the author of *Beppo* and *Marino Faliero*, made their narrative of their trip to the city sound more authentic.[55]

New views of Venice

Yet as the century wore on, not only did Byron's erstwhile Venetian acquaintances begin to die off, but they also increasingly assumed the status of curiosities on which to remark, rather than keys to understanding the city. Increasingly, too, British and American visitors began to engage more directly with the city as it actually was: Byron's «fairy city» or «Gehenna of the Waters» and Daru's sinister oligarchy began to be replaced by a rather different picture of Venice as a living city. What lay behind this?

British responses both to Venice's history and to its current state were in large part a product of a more rigorous, critical, and regular engagement both with the archives, and with continental European historiography, then they also reflected a changed attitude to contemporary Venice and its inhabitants. In part this was a product of the growing numbers of travellers and tourists who reached the city: as the success of Murray's *Handbook* and the wealth of travellers' accounts indicate, Victorian Britons were no strangers to Habsburg Venice by the 1840s. Even before the 1848 revolutions, commentators were beginning to acknowledge that Venice's loss of independence was not simply a product of Venetian decadence, nor even that its current sad state was necessarily the consequence of Austrian misrule; rather the fall of Venice was a direct result of the French aggression, which Daru had tried to justify, «by perverting facts, so as to justify the perfidious conduct of the conqueror towards the Republic». Thus Murray's *Handbook* points out that

> whilst poetry and prose charge the blame upon the Austrians [...] people quite forget that the real ruin of Venice was occasioned by the seizure of the property and the political annihilation of the aristocracy [...] The French absolutely *hated* Venice; they pillaged Venice, they crushed Venice, and incessantly laboured, and, alas! but too successfully, to blot out the vestiges of her ancient grandeur (*Handbook* 1842, p. 328).

As we have seen in the case of Ruskin, not all British visitors were especially sympathetic to the locals. Nevertheless, a growing resident anglophone population, including the literary figures of likes of Rawdon Brown (Griffiths, Law 2005), the

55. It is clear not only that Byron had become a celebrity while still living in Venice, but that Venetians expected his compatriots to be interested in his behaviour. See, for example, Shelley's meeting with a Venetian with whom he was unacquainted in a Milan post office; on the final stretch of his journey to Venice, Shelley was also regaled by a gondolier with accounts of the extravagant and eccentric young English lord resident in the city, unaware that Shelley was an intimate of Byron. Clarke 1934, p. 102; p. 108. For other examples of Venetians who had (allegedly) been Byron's servants or who had (allegedly) otherwise known him personally, see Wilkie Collins's account of his father's time in Venice, and use of Byron's erstwhile cook, Beppo, as a guide, an account for the Armenian monastery, and an article on Italian dialects, which included reference to the verses of Byron's erstwhile gondolier, Toni Toscan. See respectively: W. Wilkie Collins, *Memoirs of the life of William Collins, esq. R.A. with selections from his journals and correspondence*, 2 vols, London, Longman, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1848; *The Armenians of Venice*, «Bentley's Miscellany», 5, 1839, pp. 257-262; *History of the Italian language and dialect*, «The North American Review», 35, October 1832, pp. 283-342 , pp. 323-325.

Brownings, Howells, and, as the century wore on Horatio Brown, John Addington Symonds, and others, was increasingly happy to establish friendships with Venetians, and to write of them with a respect and affection not demonstrated by the Shelleys or Byron.[56] Modern Venetians began to enter literature, too, not as the romanticised or caricatured characters of Fenimore Cooper's *Bravo* or Byron's *Beppo*, but as more rounded and less fantastical figures such as the albeit sentimentalised protagonists of Anthony Trollope's «The last Austrian who left Venice» (Trollope 1867).

Trollope's story of an Austrian officer in love with a patriotic Venetian woman during the 1866 war lacks the erotic charge or literary merit of Camillo Boito's *Senso*, but it reflected the growing readiness of British to weave the Venetians more tightly within the fabric of the Italian struggle for unification and independence. If it is a commonplace that the Risorgimento seized the British imagination, prior to 1848, the Venetians had been something of an embarrassment to those British who had sympathised with Italian nationalism (more generally on this topic see Laven 2000; also useful for a wider perspective is O'Connor 1998). After 1848, British opinion radically changed. For many British observers, Venetian resistance to the Austrians in the face of incredible odds probably outstripped the defence of the Roman Republic as the epitome of Italian heroism.[57] False reports circulated from France that Garibaldi had reached Venice, been welcomed by Manin, made an admiral by popular acclamation, and had started to wage war on the Habsburg fleet. While these were rapidly proved fiction, not least because of the capitulation of the Republic itself, the idea of Garibaldi and Manin in tow clearly excited the imagination of editors and readers alike.[58] Defeat did not, as it had done in 1797, lead to a condemnation of the Venetians, despite the occasional disapproving murmur about the «licentious» nature of republican soldiery.[59] Rather there was an outpouring of admiration for Venetian gallantry, fused with enormous respect for Manin, who became something of a darling of the British press. On 1 September, «The Times» – scarcely a paper renowned for support of insurrection – published an editorial, which sums up the changed British attitude to Venice and its population.

> The heroic defence of the Venetians, the good use they made of their liberty, and the manner of their yielding, when it would have been madness to prolong the struggle against an overwhelming force, cannot but excite a strong sympathy and interest throughout Europe. From February, 1848, till the present hour, there has been no popular movement conducted with so much dignity and maintained with such unswerving decision as that of Venice. The recent defence of the Queen of the Adriatic may add another page to a history in which many gallant deeds of war and many results of prudent policy are chronicled to the admiration of posterity. We know of no example in the history of a State – for Venice isolated among her lagunes [sic] *is* a State – which after so long a period of prostration, and as it were extinction of the national spirit, has risen from its torpor with such good effect. Venice and its inhabitants had almost become a byword in Italy for softness and effeminacy. The Venetians were tacitly assumed to be the men that Beckford in his travels described some half a century ago. But never did a people vindicate their claim to be enrolled among the virile populations of Europe with a more determined spirit, or in a more effective way. […] their defence will not be without its fruits. It is impossible that Austria can deal hardly with such a city and such a population. They have proved their right to the title and privileges of political freemen too well ever again to be treated as political slaves («The Times», 1 September 1849).[60]

56. Venice for many of its residents was attractive for financial as well as cultural, aesthetic or, for many of the British visitors, sexual reasons. On the lure of Venice's cheapness after 1866 see Pemble 1995, pp. 1-29. For an engaging, but not especially scholarly or original, account of some of the British residents in Venice in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see Norwich 2003.

57. For examples of descriptions of Venetian heroism in attacking Austrian forces on the mainland, or breaking the blockade by sea see «Manchester Examiner» and «Times», 15 August 1849, and «The Bury and Norwich Post», 15 August 1849.

58. «Dundee Courier», 15 August 1849; «The Morning Chronicle», 16 August 1849; «The Standard», 17 August 1849; «The Nottinghamshire Guardian and Midland Advertiser», 23 August 1849; «The Morning Post», 23 August 1849; «The Derby Mercury», 29 August 1849; «Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle», 1 September 1849.

59. «The Morning Chronicle», 1 September 1849. The same article ended speculation that Garibaldi was in Venice and operating against Austrian shipping.

60. This editorial was quite widely reprinted verbatim in the provincial press. See, for example, «The Preston Guardian», 8 September 1849; «Liverpool Mercury», 7 September 1849.

Comparable sentiments, albeit less eloquently expressed, were to be found in «The Aberdeen Journal» of 5 September:

> Italy is now wholly subdued. The last and the purest of the revolutionary fires with which Europe lately blazed has been trampled out within the time-honoured walls of Venice. The city has surrendered after a siege of six months, during which the whole of every article of provision had to be smuggled past the gun-boats of the enemy.

Such Venetian heroism during a prolonged and increasingly desperate siege turned the reputation of the city's inhabitants from Byronic «infamous repose» into models of gallant resistance. And especially prominent in this narrative was Daniele Manin himself, who was held up as an object lesson in good sense and wise leadership. Subsequently assisted in this by his clash with Mazzini over the wisdom of political violence, and by his readiness, like Garibaldi, to move during the 1850s into the pro-Piedmontese, moderate camp, widely favoured by British supporters of Italian unification (Laven 2003, pp. 276-279), Manin was hugely praised – even after his death in the autumn of 1857 – as the sort of political leader needed by the Italians. Thus in the «Observer» of 4 January 1863, a review of the translation of Henri Martin's *Daniel Manin* (Martin 1859; Martel 1862), held up Manin as the great hero of the *Quarantotto* and the defence of Venice against the Austrians as «forever memorable in the annals of history» («The Observer», 4 January 1863). In assuming this position regarding both Venetian bravery in 1848-1849 and Manin himself, the review closely followed the introduction to the translated edition of Henri's work, which had been written by Isaac Butt, the Irish Member of Parliament who would increasingly become a champion of federal solutions to the Irish question.[61] Butt was passionate and lyrical in his discussion of the «short but glorious struggle» in which «the Venetian people displayed those qualities of moderation and self-command which have in the last two years attracted to the Italian cause the astonished admiration of Europe», remarking that «the latter months of that struggle were made memorable by a resistance as heroic as any which the annals of history record». Butt's picture of Venice in 1848-1849 stressed not so much the redemption of the inhabitants as the strong lines of continuity with the city's glorious past: in 1849 Venetians were acting within a tradition that went back over a thousand years. Meanwhile Manin was both the embodiment of all that was fine about Venice and, more generally, about Italians (Butt 1862, pp. xiv-xix). Such views, in sharp contrast to Ruskin's sneering at modern Venetians, were widespread. Thus an editorial in «The Manchester Guardian» in the summer of 1856 spoke of how Manin «ruled over his native city for many months with a wisdom, firmness, and statesmanlike sagacity, which nobly justified the choice of his fellow countrymen when they placed the care of their interests in his hands» («The Manchester Guardian», 8 July 1856). Meanwhile, another article in the same paper, two years after Venice was finally liberated from Austrian rule, pointed not only to Manin's great virtues, but to the fact that even Disraeli «who has nothing but contempt for what he calls "the outbreak of the destructive principle in Europe"» had been forced grudgingly to acknowledge «"the insurrection, and defence, and administration of Venice, which from the resource and statesmanlike moderation displayed, commanded almost the respect and sympathy of Europe"» (ibid., 9 April 1868).

The enormous affection, esteem, even hero-worship afforded Manin by a British reading public, albeit a British public heavily indebted to French chroniclers of 1848-1849, and the reconfiguring of Venice as absolutely central to the Italian question, completely changed the way in which the city and its inhabitants were viewed. This was intensified both when Venice was not liberated in 1859 (and continued to languish under Austrian rule), and again with Venice's actual unification with the rest of the peninsula in 1866. During the war against the Austrians (which scarcely showered the newly-established Italian state with glory), the Florence-based correspondent of London's «Morning Post» observed with satisfaction of the Italians' crossing of the River Mincio that: «First to cross the stream was a battalion of riflemen commanded by a Venetian major, so that it was the privilege of a son of Venice to lead the way in this campaign for the liberation of his hearth and home» («The Morning Post», 3 July 1866).

Of course, unification did not entirely kill all the old myths. Dickens's close collaborator, the flamboyant, quarrelsome, and frequently drunk «Daily Telegraph» journalist, George Augustus Sala, who had been summoned to cover the war of 1866, wrote

61. Butt was also the author of a history of modern Italy (Butt 1860).

in his introduction to the book that came out of his experiences during and after immediately the conflict, that there was a need for a good book on modern Italy, and that it was a great shame that the best-qualified of Englishmen had never written one:

> Byron gushes tremendously in *Childe Harold* [...]. In his letters, however, to Murray, and in his conversations with his friends, Byron showed that he had a very shrewd, practical, and even humorous appreciation of Italy as a land inhabited, not by poetical abstractions, but by substantial human beings; and there can be little doubt that, had Lord Byron chosen to do so, he might have written one of the best prose works on Italy or the Italians which it was possible to endow his country's literature (Sala 1869, p. 22).

But despite lauding Byron, Sala – quite unlike Dickens twenty years earlier – was not Byronic in his approach to writing about Venice. Sala engaged directly with the city around him, and the people who resided there. In his opening chapter he offers both acerbic, if far from polemical, description of the problems of Austrain rule, and an entertaining discussion of the boorish and insensitive nature of British tourists (from Eustace onwards) (pp. 27-45); his touching description of a disorientated Austrian officer wandering about the city, or the Venetian crowd's refusal to jeer the departing Austrian governor, or its readiness to torment and abuse Habsburg police (pp. 210-225), his brilliant contrast of the Piazza under Austrian occupation, and then filled «with real Italian people, enjoying themselves to their heart's content» (pp. 232-233), his description of the plebiscite on unification (pp. 236-246), and his discussion of the Fenice (pp. 246-266), all offer polished reportage. Sala's concern is the vibrant, living city of the here-and-now, and with its inhabitants.

It was, I would argue, as much the political events of 1848-1849 and 1866 as the experience of visiting or residing in Venice that enabled the anglophone world to reinvent the city. British and American were still fascinated with its intriguing past; they were happy to use it as a mysterious or «Gothic» setting for fiction. But equally they began to think increasingly about the city's population as a body with which they could engage intellectually and artistically. This trend was obvious in the visual arts too. Paintings and prints by British artists ceased to resemble the historicised oils of Richard Parkes Bonnington,[62] or the works of Turner, which preferred to reference Shakespeare, to shroud the city in ghostly mists and spectres, or to pay homage to Canaletto.[63] This does not mean that art suddenly concerned itself with a realistic rendition of the city. The works of Luke Fildes, for example, were deeply sentimentalised pictures, dominated by pretty red- or dark-haired Venetian girls. These canvases purported to deal with contemporary Venetian life, portraying the popular classes going about their daily tasks or gossiping with their friends and neighbours. In many senses they too remained works of fantasy: thus, for example, Fildes's 1885 *Venetians* (owned, but for some years no longer displayed, by Manchester Art Gallery) shows one young woman of an improbably good-looking group, even more improbably laundering a pale pink shawl in a canal. The work is above all kitsch but it is, at least, not historicised kitsch. The American John Singer Sargent's street scenes offered more convincing portrayals of ordinary Venetians. To a lesser or greater degree so too did his those of his compatriots Maurice Prendergast, Frank Duveneck, Robert Frederick Blum, Charles Frederick Ulrich, and James McNeill Whistler, but, in common with Fildes, they were interested in the Venice of the *fin-de-siècle*, not in a historicised space or a dreamlike fantasy. Thus in a brief spell in the 1880s, Duveneck painted Venetian water carriers, and Blum painted large canvases of lace-makers and bead-stringers; Ulrich depicted glassblowers. In many ways these paintings are unremarkable, reflecting

62. For the historicised nature of Bonington's Venetian paintings see Noon, Bonington 2009. It is worth noting that Bonington's sketch books are full of detailed pictures of contemporary Venice and Venetians; it is the major paintings he produced for sale that see figures dressed in mediaeval, renaissance, or Settecento costume. This desire either to people Venice with figures from the past, with Shakespearean characters, or simply with vague blurs was shared by other artists such as Samuel Prout, James Duffield Harding and Clarkson Stanfield.

63. Turner's first major Venetian canvas was entitled *Bridge of Sighs, Ducal Palace and Custom House, Venice: Canaletti* [sic] *painting*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1833. The work not only shows a scene that does not exist because it cannot be observed from the point in which he has located Canaletto, but it also shows the artist improbably painting directly onto a canvas already placed in an elaborate gilt frame. Turner's work is not only an arch homage to Canaletto and the other eighteenth-century *vedutisti*, but also a statement of the primacy of art over nature that ranks with Byron's reflections on the power of the literary in *Canto IV* of *Childe Harold*. On Turner's relationship with Canaletto see, for example, Links 1999, p. 240.

changes in taste that could also be seen influencing Venetian artists, such as the young Ettore Tito. But these paintings would simply not have been made, still loss sold in the first two thirds of the nineteenth century. In a way they represented the rejection of a Byronic image of the city – although some of the artists not only clearly shared Byron's taste in attractive Venetian women, but also his readiness to render them more attractive than they were in reality – and of the sense that the daily life of the modern city was a fit subject for literature or art.

A similar trend could be seen in histories of the city. If it was the Republic of Venice that still attracted most scholarly attention, historians – especially those writing for a popular market – began to recognise that the appeal of Venice lay in large part in the way in which the present interacted with the past. Thus, for example, Thomas Okey's gorgeously illustrated *Venice and its story* included not only reproductions of historical works, but lively pastels, engravings, and drawings. Some of these – *Bead-threaders in Castello* might be a poor preliminary, coloured sketch for a Blum; *A fisherman and the fish market* could be from a Tito canvas; *The clock tower* a rather uncluttered Prendergast – quite clearly serve little or no serious historical purpose. They show the Venice the readers of the book will encounter when they visit the city. Others are rather more arch: the picture of the Colleoni statue (p. 145) might almost be seen as a dig at Byron's want of historical knowledge, as an Edwardian couple stand by the railings at its base. Alethea Wiel, writing a decade earlier, also sought to stress the links between Venice past and present: «The pride of the Republic is over, her glory departed, but Venice herself still remains a lovely record of stirring times and events, and one of the fairest jewels in the Kingdom of United Italy» (Wiel 1894, p. 465). No longer did stirring times have to be consciously mythologised.

Conclusion

In 1831, Richard Hollier, in an account of his continental travels, remarked that «Venice and the Venetians, but for Shakespeare, Lord Byron and a few eminent native painters would, long ere this, have been all but forgotten» (Hollier 1831, p. 97). These views could exist because British, and, to a lesser extent, American commentators were for the most part happy to engage with a Byronic vision of the city, which was in turn rooted both in Francophone historiography and the British literary imagination. Such a vision of the city continued to have a long afterlife. But as the nineteenth century progressed it came increasingly to be challenged, especially by two related forces: on the one hand, by a new historiography championed first by Romanin, and then turned into orthodoxy by the likes of Pompeo Molmenti, and on the other hand, by a changing political situation, which – at least in the eyes of outsiders – gave Venetians independence and agency to determine their own destiny for the first time since 1797. At the tail end of the nineteenth century, the resident British historian, Horatio Brown, dedicated a work to his gondolier, Antonio Salin. *Life on the lagoons* combined history with ethnography in a lyrical fashion. Above all the book recorded the author's love for Venice *and* Venetians. The penultimate paragraph speaks of the transformation of British writing on the city. No longer historicised nor oneiric, it is the relationship between its past and present, its fabric and its population that has assumed central position in the educated anglophone engagement with the city by the late nineteenth century.

> It is the people and the place, the union and interpenetration of the two, the sea life of these dwellers in the city that is always «just putting out to sea», which constitutes for many the peculiar and enduring charm of Venice. The people and the place so intimately intermingled through all their long history, have grown into a single life charged with the richness of sea-nature and the warmth of human emotion. From both together escapes this essence or soul of Venice which we would clasp with all the ardour of a lover. Venice, her lagoons, her seafaring folk, become the object of a passionate idolatry which admits no other allegiance in the hearts that have known her power (Brown 1894, pp. 296-297).

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