Open Inquiry Archive

ISSN 2167-8812
http://openinquiryarchive.net
Volume 3, No. 1 (2014)

Cultivating Cosmopolitanism
Nineteenth-Century Americans in Florence

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At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Americans embarked on their Grand Tour of Europe with Italy as their final destination. The first transatlantic travelers were artist and writers who belonged to the intellectual elite of their country. Therefore, it is no surprise that they were drawn to such cities as Florence, which in the general notion was associated not only with Renaissance art and culture in general, but also with intellectuality. The Tuscan capital was a cosmopolitan center that attracted nobility from all over Europe, thus providing an opportunity for the superior classes to cultivate what has been defined as "trans-European class consciousness" (Buzard 41). Americans in Florence on the one hand tended to gravitate towards the English-speaking communities established in such isolated areas as the Bellosguardo hill, detached from Florentine realities, but on the other hand, their class-conscious desire was to connect and communicate with the international society gathered in the city. In local hotels, restaurants and the Gabinetto Vieusseux reading room and lending library, transatlantic visitors had an opportunity to socialize with Italians and foreigners, to dine or read books and newspapers sitting next to foreign counts and countesses. Moreover, the aristocracy in Florence had an active social life consisting of dinners, *dansantes*, masked balls, and private theatricals, where they welcomed visiting foreigners. Ex-ambassadors, politicians, notables, and people of fashion from Holland, Prussia, Hayti [*sic*], England, and other nations gathered at the Pergola theater, which was the principal opera-house, to enjoy the latest Italian operas (Cooper, *Excursions* 27). The novelist and travel writer, James Fenimore Cooper, who was famous in Europe for his novel *The Last of the Mohicans*

(1826), can be cited as an example of one of the first Americans to reside in the cosmopolitan hub in the early nineteenth century, in 1828-29. He arrived in Florence with his family with the intention of finding a publisher for his novels abroad and with the goal to have his children learn Italian and French. Like others after him, he arrived carrying letters of introduction so he could enter the British and American colony and mingle with cosmopolites arriving from all over the world. In Florence, the social ambition of Americans, who came from what can be defined a classless society, was to reinvent themselves as members of the cosmopolitan high society.

The concept of cosmopolitanism, which originally referred to a world-citizen, is closely linked to the Emersonian idea of American self-reliance: the American visitors in Florence relied on their initiative, creativity and intelligence when constructing a comfortable space for themselves within the society. The aim of their cosmopolitanism was to create a home where they could share a feeling of citizenship and belonging with others. The desire to be included in the Florentine social circles, however, was a class-conscious aspiration that excluded the lower classes and was defined on the basis of aristocratic titles, wealth, and intellectuality. Moreover, often the cosmopolitan space was one of tension and contrasts. For instance, if on the one hand the term "cosmopolitanism" translates into "a citizen of the world," a state in which a foreigner is expected to feel comfortably at home in any given nation, country or culture, at the same time it denotes a condition of alienation, of no longer belonging anywhere, even at one's own nation of origin (see, for example, Plug). Thus cosmopolitanism simultaneously denotes inclusion and exclusion, two opposing conditions that create a tension that becomes a fundamental feature in defining cosmopolitan space. In the case of Americans in Italy, cosmopolitanism was a voluntary and legitimated state of expatriation, a departure from one's country of origin, a going away triggered by the desire for acculturation. The aim was to obtain cultural citizenship in an international milieu. Americans, in particular, wished to use their stay in Italy to become sufficiently sophisticated to be able to feel at home in the Old World, and comfortably interact with others, to engage in conversation on any given topic—be it cultural, social or political—without the limitation of national boundaries that would restrict the sphere of interest or knowledge of topics they could relate to.

The desire for acculturation was strong in Americans, who arrived in Florence in search of history, culture and aristocratic sophistication that the young American nation was perceived to lack. As Cooper pointed out, "We have arts to acquire, and tastes to form, before we could enter at all into the enjoyments of these [Italian] people" (*Excursions* 21). Indeed, the underlying aspiration of the nineteenth-century privileged white upper-class Americans who were able to travel was to belong to the cultured society. They often wished to underscore their privileged status of world travelers, but the challenge, as scholar Foster Rhea Dulles argues, "to their own self-confidence in being confronted by an older, more polished civilization than their own, has until very recent times placed traveling Americans on the defensive, led them to seek reassurance in noisy braggadocio" (5). Connecting with the nobility residing in Florence offered them an opportunity to cultivate their taste, become more refined, and take part in aristocratic entertainments where specific etiquette of behavior united the participants.

At Florence, the *omnium gatherum par excellence*, foreigners moved with relative ease within the society and culture different from their own. What was striking in the early nineteenth-century gatherings was the blending of nations. An evident and valuable consequence of the "commingling," as Cooper pointed out, was "the general advancement of intelligence, the wearing down of prejudices, and the prevalence of a more philosophic spirit than of old. In a society," he continued, "where representatives from all the enlightened nations of the world are assembled, a man must be worse than a block if he do not acquire materials worth retaining; for no people is so civilized as to be perfect, and few so degraded as not to possess something worthy to be imported to others" (*Excursions* 49). His was an enlightened view of cosmopolitanism and an idealized image of a society that found its expression in a peaceful congregation of representatives of various nations, cultures, and perhaps even races, gathered together without prejudices to exchange ideas and experiences. Cooper's idealized cosmopolite approached the foreign and the different with a positive attitude and open mind, with the intention of learning and sharing.

Although Florence attracted representatives of all nationalities, according to Cooper, the English and Russians predominated among the strangers in general, whereas the *chargés d'affaires* and ministers came from such countries as France, Russia, England, Austria, and Prussia (*Excursions* 22). The international circles also included Swiss, Greek, Dutch, Algerian, Egyptian, and Turkish dignitaries who attended the Florentine receptions, as Cooper informed in his travel book (*Excursions* 23). At the local festivities, he wrote, "everybody sees everybody,—and pretty often the somebodies see nobodies" (*Excursions* 78). "So many people travel," he mused, "that one is apt to ask who can be left at home" (*Excursions* 23). These travelers were the proof that nineteenth century was an era of migration and "the age of cosmopolitism [*sic*], real or pretended;" and Florence, Cooper wrote, "just at this moment, is an epitome both of its spirit and of its representatives" (*Excursions* 23).

Letters of introduction and local contacts served to enter the society. James Ombrosi, the first United States consul in Florence from 1823 to 1842, introduced such Americans as the author and dandy Nathaniel Parker Willis, the writer Cooper, the author George Ticknor, and the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow into local high society. At this time, aristocrats of all nationalities gathered at the Grand Duchess Elisa's or Countess of Albany's receptions, where, as Willis informed: "one-third may be Florentine, one-third English, and the remaining part equally divided between Russians, Germans, French, Poles, and Americans" (17). Ticknor was among the regular guests at the *salon* of the Countess of Albany as well as the gatherings at Marchesa Lenzoni's, where he met, among many other well-known intellectuals, the Italian tragedian Giovanni Battista Niccolini, who through his works influenced such Italian poets as Ugo Foscolo. During his stay in Florence in 1836, Ticknor became acquainted with the French Bonaparte family, the Italian sculptor Lorenzo Bartolini, and the politician and writer Marquis Gino Capponi. The marchese, one of the most important figures in Tuscany at the time, was a historian, Tuscan prime minister in 1848, and an Italian senator. Approximately two decades later, in 1856-57, Ticknor was again in Florence, this time purchasing books for the newly-established Boston Public Library (Dentler 15). Willis, instead, became friends with the former king Jerome Bonaparte, and he also received a permanent invitation to the grand duke's Tuesday evening receptions; he was a regular guest at Princes Poniatowski's mid-week festivities, whereas Saturdays he attended the banker Fenzi's evening parties

(Dentler 26). The banker Emanuele Fenzi, who was one of the wealthy Florentines, was a central figure for Americans in Florence because his services covered money transfers and *poste restante*.

The prominent figures with their ancient family histories and aristocratic titles were a novelty to visiting Americans. Polyglot Americans joined counts and princesses at receptions held in central gathering places belonging to such prominent figures as Princess Charlotte Bonaparte or the Russian Count Nikolai Nikitich Demidoff, who hosted social events at their Florentine residences. Especially during the first part of the nineteenth century, it was quite common to see lords, princes and princesses, or the Grand Duke, later also the king of Italy, the prince of Naples, and Queen Victoria strolling or riding in their carriages in the Cascine Park. Around mid-century, the international society attended Leopold II, the Austrian Grand Duke of Tuscany's balls held at the Pitti Palace, whereas the British poets Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett welcomed American intellectuals to their Victorian home, Casa Guidi, where the visitors gathered for afternoon teas served with fresh strawberries. Many Anglo-Americans passing through the city were also invited by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Adolphus Trollope to their "Villino," where they entertained such visitors as the celebrated American author Harriet Beecher Stowe and journalist Kate Field.

For those whose objective was merely a short stay in the city, local accommodation options provided another sophisticated venue for social interaction. Hotel owners were attentive in selecting names for their establishments that would appeal to the cosmopolitan globetrotters. The majority of local hotels, especially those recommended in such authorative guidebooks as John Murray's *A Hand-Book for Travellers in Central Italy* carried designations in French: Hotel de la Grande Bretagne, Hotel de New York, Hotel du Nord, Hotel de la Paix, Hotel d'Italie, Hotel de l'Europe, and even Hotel de l'Univers (77-80). The names were geared towards visitors who could feel at home in seemingly familiar-sounding lodgings. Many of the "noble" hotels, as Cooper defined them, were located in "palaces," close to English-speaking services and near the news-room and principal bankers (*Excursions* 18).

During the century, Florence became one of the most popular choices among the British and American travelers also as a permanent residence in continental Europe. The formation of the Anglo-Florentine colony contributed to the construction of Florence as the ideal landing place of world-exploring aristocrats, artists, and authors. The economy was quite thriving, begging was at a minimum, the city's streets were safe, the press had relative freedom, and on the whole, the atmosphere was considered liberal (Baker 96, 185). Especially during the reign of Leopold II, from 1824 to 1859, Tuscany, in general, was considered the most enlightened state of Italy. Indeed, many foreigners perceived it as an idealized Arcadia, and its capital, Florence, the most desirable place to visit or live in. In addition to its cultural riches, its role as one of Europe's most important intellectual gathering places for world-exploring nobility added to its attraction.

If Florence was the prime example of cosmopolitanism, the reading room and library of Gabinetto di Giovan Pietro Vieusseux, with its foreign language journals and books, epitomized the nineteenth-century cosmopolite's world within the city; it was a cosmopolitan cosmos, both literally and symbolically. It was first established in 1819 in the Palazzo Buondelmonti located in Piazza Santa Trinita, which remained its home until 1873. After that, it moved to other locations, always, however, remaining in the area centrally located to hotels and services that catered to English-speaking

visitors. According to one of the most influential travel guides of the period, Murray's *Hand-Book* from 1867, the Gabinetto Vieusseux was excellent "both for its reading-room and lending-library" and, as Murray added, the "collection of journals and newspapers of every country is extensive and well chosen" (85). The library, which offered an ideal setting for cultivating contacts, had a vast collection of recently published books, of all genres and in several languages, including Italian, English, and French. In its reading room visitors could read newspapers and converse with others. Cooper, for one, not only signed up for a membership but also became a friend of the founder, Jean Pierre Vieusseux, with whom he corresponded in French. Vieusseux, who was a distinguished literary man, an editor of the liberal journal *Antologia Italiana*, was known for the hospitality he extended to foreign visitors. He not only invited Cooper to his *soirées* but he also helped the American author find a Florentine publisher to print an edition of his *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* in English (Cooper, *Letters* 353).

The interaction and intercultural relationships that were formed between Florentines like Vieusseux and visiting Americans like Cooper, contradict the idea of the socio-cultural isolation of Americans into English-speaking colonies that were detached from Florentine reality. Instead, the American encounter with Florence was also characterized by intellectual and cultural exchange that occurred in the cosmopolitan social circles, where Americans found their place among nobility. The Vieusseux library and reading room register, which is a testimony of the cultural mixing, includes the names of such aristocrats as Principessa Strozzi, Marchesa Strozzi, Marchesa Chigi, and the well-known historian, senator Pasquale Villari, whose subscriptions appear among those of such visitors as the Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky, American travel writer Bayard Taylor, American sculptor Hiram Powers, American artist Elihu Vedder, African American antislavery lecturer Sarah Remond, the American author Constance Fenimore Woolson, and the American novelist Henry James, to name just a few. The possibility for artists and writers to mingle with dukes and lords forged strong social and cultural ties that were international and transatlantic in nature.

At the library, literary professionals and intellectual Americans visiting Italy could consult a variety of books that ranged from histories to guidebooks to fictional works. Americans usually were familiar with Italian classics that were widely studied in the United States as a part of the education of the white upper-class men, sometimes also women. They used their familiarity with Italian literature as a preparation for entrance into international society. The names of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio formed the background knowledge of Italy for many Americans, whose reading lists included the most widely known classics. Others, such as the author William Dean Howells, were familiar with a vaster variety of literary works that covered also the publications of more contemporary Italian writers. For instance, in his letters and articles he mentioned such works as Torquato Tasso's play *Aminta* (1573), Luigi Pulci's *Il Morgante* (1478), and Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516/1532), whereas the more recent works included Alessandro Manzoni's *I Promessi sposi* (1827), and Giovanni Verga's *I Malavoglia* (1881). In his *Modern Italian Poets* (1887), Howells introduced literature by other contemporary writers, many of whom had participated in the national unification movement, the Risorgimento, such as the patriotic poets Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837), Ugo Foscolo (1778-1827), and Silvio Pellico (1789-1854) (see Woodress Jr. 99, 115-6, 149). In addition to literature, many

cultured Americans had also familiarized themselves with Italian history and art, and they knew the paintings and sculptures of such renowned artists as Raphael and Michelangelo (see, for example, Jarves, "Writings"). Thus, their interests covered history, literature, visual arts, and politics, which enabled them to discuss on a range of topics with both Florentines and foreigners.

Communication with foreigners was facilitated by the American visitors' knowledge of French and Italian. For instance, Cooper conversed in French, the official language among European aristocracy at the time in the multinational society of dukes, princes and lords. His friends and acquaintances included such Florentine notables as the already mentioned Vieusseux, Marquis Gino Capponi, Marquis Giuseppe Pucci, the Grand Duke Leopold II, the French Minister M. de Vitrolles, Count St. Leu (the former king of Holland), the diplomat-writer Lord Normanby, Prince Canino (the younger son of Napoleon I), the young American sculptor Horatio Greenough, and many others. Cooper, who diligently followed the formalities set by prevailing social etiquette, noticed a difference "in the breeding of the English and of other people" that became manifest in the failure of the English to answer visiting cards or to be civil like gentlemen of other nations. In addition, they seemed too serious: "I never knew an Englishman who could joke on etiquette!" (*Letters* 354-56). The English, according to Cooper, also differed from others by their constant use of addressing others with their titles and ranks: "my Lord," "your grace," and "my Lady" marked the *hauteur* of the English. Cooper's comments attest to the rivalry that existed between the English and the Americans, who were eager to distance themselves from their earlier oppressors. The ambiguity that characterized the relationship between the representatives of the two nations became manifest in their eagerness to connect with each other in the English-speaking communities, follow the trends set in their respective nations, participate in the events of the Anglo-Florentine colony, and yet, criticize and treat each other with disrespect. Americans often perceived themselves as superior to their English ancestors. Their superiority, in Cooper's testimony, came across in their rigorous respect for social rules and knowledge of languages.

The American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was also fluent in French when he arrived in Florence around the same time as Cooper, in January 1828. The main purpose of his visit to Europe was to learn foreign languages as a preparation for his position as the professor of modern languages at Bowdoin College. He soon mastered not only French but also Spanish and Italian without any formal education. In Florence he read the works of Dante and subsequently practiced his skills by talking with local people. As he wrote to his father, he had become so fluent in Italian that, according to him, Florentines thought he was a native speaker: "—and with regard to my proficiency in the Italian, I have only to say, that when I came to this city, all at the Hotel where I lodge took me for an Italian, until I gave them my passport, and told them I was an American" (qtd. in Arvin 25). He may well have been exaggerating but his knowledge of Italian enabled him to prepare a translation of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, which continues to be one of the most widely used English-language translations. Longfellow was among those foreigners who were entertained both at Bonaparte and Demidoff's magnificent Florentine villas. Also the Countess of Survilliers invited him for dinner where the high society gathered afterwards to hear princess Bonaparte play "Yankee Doodle" in honor of the American guest.

In the following decades, as mentioned earlier, such Americans as Ticknor arrived in Florence where (in 1836 and 1856) he had an opportunity to join the international circles: he also met the Bonapartes, Marquis Gino Capponi, and the American artist Horatio Greenough, who made a bust of Capponi. Greenough, instead, met other Florentine intellectuals and society's leaders such as Baron Ricasoli, the poet Giuseppe Giusti, and the dramatist Niccolini (Baker 59; Soria 34). He established himself in Florence in 1828 and remained there nearly the rest of his life, until 1851. His friends included Italians as well as members of the foreign colonies (Dentler 17). To be able to converse with others, Greenough knew both French and Italian.

Others, like the philosopher and writer Ralph Waldo Emerson, the journalist Margaret Fuller, travel writer Bayard Taylor, and novelist Edith Wharton all knew Italian, and the author Mark Twain claims that he (unsuccessfully) tried to practice Italian with his servants. With the help of his phrase book, Twain claims to have written messages to his friends in a combination of Italian and English. Others knew Latin, which was part of the established curriculum of the period in American higher education, while still others took private language lessons. The language studies demonstrate a desire for interaction and ability to function in the foreign environment as well as within the cosmopolitan society. In addition, many—such as James and Fuller—explicitly stated their desire for reciprocity and yearning to connect with local people. For instance, Fuller confided to Emerson that "to know the common people, and to feel truly in Italy, I ought to speak and understand the spoken Italian well, and I am now cultivating this sedulously" (Emerson et al. 210). Similarly, James' correspondence with the American artist Elizabeth Boott Duveneck from 1875 demonstrates his eagerness to practice Italian after his private lessons in Florence a year earlier (see *Letters* 1: 473-4).

In March 1874, James started to learn colloquial Italian in the evenings with the assistance of a Roman gentleman. James explained that his tutor was "a very pretty talker. I expect in a few weeks to rattle the divine tongue like an angel, if we don't exhaust our list of topics *en attendant*" (*Letters* 1: 434). His continuous use of French and Italian expressions in his letters, travel pieces, and fictional works served to underscore his internationalism and *savoir faire*. He was eager to practice his language skills and hence, corresponded in Italian with friends like Elizabeth Boott Duveneck, who was permanently residing in Florence. She occupied the Villa Mercedes—which appears in James' novels *Roderick Hudson* (1875) and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881)—that she shared with her father the composer Francis Boott, a regular member at the Vieusseux library and reading room. Already in November 1873, James' brother William reported to their parents from Florence that not only did Henry know Italian fluently but he had even absorbed the accompanying gestures: "He speaks Italian with wonderful fluency and skill as it seems to me; accompanying his words with many stampings of the foot, shakings of the head and rollings of the eye sideways" (Edel 158). For James, as for many other Americans, a proficiency in Italian served as a tangible evidence of his acculturation and expertise of Italian life.

Despite the desire to approach and communicate with Florentines, the American visitors were uninterested in fully assuming European identities. They preferred to use European culture for their individual and collective education and enrichment. Many of them, despite decades of permanently living in Florence, remained fundamentally American in their behavior and worldviews. The American sculptor

Hiram Powers can be cited as an example of such American expatriatism that remained anchored in American nation and national identity. According to the American novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne, Powers was "[l]ike most twenty-year exiles, he has lost his native country without finding another," as he seemed to be "hermetically sealed in a foreign substance," just like other Americans in Italy who "retain all their homely characteristics, losing nothing homelike, and taking nothing from the manners around them" (280-2). In other words, on the one hand Americans held tight to their sense of identity, their "Americanness," but on the other hand, they were eager to share a sense of belonging with locals, in particular representatives of the upper classes.

Integration into foreign society at times failed, either due to intentional or involuntary incapacity or unwillingness to let go of one's own national traits, like in the case of Powers, or due to the society's deliberate rejection. An example of the latter was the Russian author "Mr Theodore Dostoievsky" (as he wrote his name in the Vieusseux register), who became a member of the library in December 1868. He had arrived in Florence a month earlier together with his wife Anna, with whom he had secured a lodging in Via Guiccardini, close to the Pitti Palace. Dostoevsky, however, complained about the lack of company, and according to his wife, they "did not know a single soul in Florence with whom we could talk, argue, joke, exchange reactions. Around us all were strangers, and sometimes hostile ones; and this total isolation from people was sometimes difficult to bear" (qtd. in King 36). Moreover, the great Russian novelist, who initially was enthusiastically writing his masterpiece, *The Idiot*, soon found it difficult to continue his creative work because he felt he should be in Russia, to be directly participating in Russian life. In Florence, instead, he lacked the reality of his native country, which formed the setting of his novel. He spent most of his time alone or in the company of his wife. He borrowed books from the Vieusseux library, including works by Voltaire and Diderot, which he read in the original French (King 36). The other Russians who at the time were in Florence, were either wealthy or members of the nobility, whereas the novelist was neither. Thus, he was socially marginalized from the cosmopolitan circles. In addition, because of his poverty, he was forced to move to a small room—located in the Mercato Nuovo, close to the wild boar statue—where he greatly suffered from the heat during the summer months. However, despite the strained financial circumstances and the "real hell-heat," as he defined the summer weather in a letter to his niece Sonya, he found Florence, "almost Paradise. Impossible to imagine anything more beautiful than this sky, this air, this light," he wrote to his niece (qtd. in King 38). Perhaps, in the end, his social marginalization became his personal benefit because he was very productive; he was successful in nearly completing *The Idiot* and to begin writing *The Possessed* and *The Brothers Karamazov* (King 38).

Similarly, many nineteenth-century American artists and writers were productive in Florence, a city that often seemed to them like Paradise. They continued to depend on Italy for their education and own artistic production as late as in 1873 when both Bayard Taylor and Elihu Vedder were in Florence, both renting Casa Guidi, the former residence of the Brownings. Taylor, one of America's first professional travel writers who toured the world for the specific reason of writing about his travels, paid the reading room membership for one month on 29 March, whereas Vedder was interested in the library collection for three months, starting from 12 July. The latter formed lasting friendships with the Tuscan Macchiaoli

painters with whom he worked on his landscapes (see, for example, McGuigan). During that time, Marchese Paolo Rucellai, a member of one of the prominent Florentine families, joined the Vieusseux on 22 April; on 12 May the English revolutionist and writer Jessie White Mario, who the Italian press called "Hurricane Jessie," paid her membership fee; and others who signed the register around the same time included the great Italian photographer Nunes Vais (29 May) and the American artist Thomas Ball (18 July), who was famous for his portrait busts and historical compositions. He recorded his Florentine experience in his memoirs, *My Three Score Years and Ten: An Autobiography* (1891). Mr. T. Ball's name appears again on 20 January 1875, right before that of Contessa Tolstoy, who paid for the library membership for three months. In 1873, the writer Henry James visited Gabinetto Vieusseux to sign up for the services on October 16 (2 weeks reading room) and 18 (1 week library), and the Princess Pandolfina, the cousin of the English painter Edwyn Temple, on 20 October; they were followed by the American artist Thomas Ridgeway Gould (11 November), again Henry James (15 January 1874), and Jessie White Mario (23 January), just to mention a few of the numerous illustrious international figures who took advantage of the library and reading room.

Among the names that frequently appear towards the end of the nineteenth century is that of Henry James. He signed the reading room register for the first time on 6 October 1869, when he paid for a two-week membership. It was his first time in Florence, after which he visited Italy repeatedly, making his last journey from England, by then his permanent residence, in 1907. He entered the Florentine polyglot society especially on his third Florentine visit that took place in the winter of 1886-87. It was then that he became acquainted with the Scottish author Janet Ross, the sculptor Adolf Hildebrand, Enrico Nencioni who translated his books into Italian, and the poet Giuseppe Giusti. He also met Mme de Tchiatchef and Marchesa Incontri. The "former," he explained in a letter, was

> a remarkably nice and sympathetic Englishwoman married to a rich and retired Russian diplomat; the latter a singularly clever and easy Russian (with a beautiful villa outside of Porta S. Gallo) who, divorced from her first husband, Prince Galitzin, married a Florentine and became his widow. Mme de T. is very good (and yet not dull) and Mme Incontri I suspect of being *bad*—though not dull either. The latter receives both the serious and the "smart" people, is literary (writes poorish novels, under false names, in English, which she speaks in absolute perfection) and also, I think, rather dangerous. (James, *Letters,* 3:165; italics original)

The two women, then, were representatives of the cosmopolitan reality of Florence. The excerpt testifies to the American novelist's curiosity towards the life, characters, and relationships of people he met, who often became characters in his fictional stories, many of them set in Italy. James also formed lasting friendships with Doctor Baldwin who took care of Americans passing through the city, and countess Edith Peruzzi de Medici, the daughter of the American sculptor William Wetmore Story. The author Violet Paget (Vernon Lee), according to James, was the most intelligent person he met in Florence. She attracted "all the world to her drawing room" where she discussed "all things in *any* language" (James, *Letters,* 3:166; italics original). Hence, Paget was a true polyglot who gathered intellectually stimulating locals and

foreigners together at her social events. It was during a weekly reception at Paget's home on Via Garibaldi 5 that James heard the anecdote concerning Byron and his mistress, Claire Clairmont, resident in Florence on Via Romana and a member at the Vieusseux library. The story he heard from Paget's half-brother, Eugene Lee Hamilton, also a subscriber to the Vieusseux, led to the writing of one of James' masterly novellas, *The Aspern Papers*.

The cosmopolitan milieu and international society became the themes of Jamesian stories in which the author questioned moral attitudes, values, and the complexities of nineteenth-century society. Scholar Malcolm Bradbury identifies James as the writer to

> take furthest the many dramas, moral and social and artistic, that came out of the now complex transatlantic reflection: the angular relations of innocence and experience, past and present, nationality and cosmopolitanism, historical stasis and historical change, social reality and social unreality […] James is the great teaser of transatlantic vocabulary, the great explorer of all the mythic underpinnings that the western traffic had developed. (186-87)

The polarities identified by Bradbury found their expression within novels and short stories built around the Jamesian international theme that contrasts Europe (usually France or Italy) with the United States.

In fact, Italy offered social and cultural complexity that was unavailable in what many considered the plain, materialistic United States. Americans perceived Europe in general, Italy in particular, to be characterized by romance, shadows, the past; America by "commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight" (Hawthorne, *Marble* 3). The abundance of material American writers located in cosmopolitan centers of Europe found expression in travel writing and fictional works. The American author Constance Fenimore Woolson, the grandniece of James Fenimore Cooper, who became James' friend in Florence, applied the international theme and cosmopolitan inquiry into her fictional short stories set in Italy. They were collected and published posthumously in two volumes: *The Front Yard and Other Italian Stories* (1895) and *Dorothy and Other Italian Stories* (1896). In many of the stories, her fictional characters try to come to terms with the conflict of their American worldviews that clash with the Old World culture. Woolson's Italian short stories were complex social studies that centered around women and addressed many contemporary issues such as gender roles, the "marriage question," and definitions of home.

The centrality of domestic realities in American fiction created in Italy contrasts the feelings of rootlesness often so common among expatriates. The social activities and casual meetings at hotels and libraries also served to connect them with a community of like-minded people to provide relief from feelings of aloneness. Like many others, Woolson joined the Gabinetto Vieusseux in 1880 upon her arrival in Florence, taking up a two-month membership starting from 24 March, whereas her sister, Mrs. Ugo Benedict, joined only for a month. Woolson's name appears again on 20 November linked to that of Miss E. V. Clark, her childhood friend Emily Vernon Clark with whom she traveled in Europe. With James, Woolson toured Florentine museums and discussed art works that subsequently appeared in both authors' fictional works. James' brother William, who was an established psychologist famous

for his invention of the concept of stream of consciousness, often joined Henry in Florence. William formed his own friendships during his stay in Italy, for example with Count Giovanni Gigliucci, who was a senator in the Parliament of unified Italy. His wife was an English soprano, Clara Novello, whom he married in England against the wishes of both families in 1843. In February 1893, when William James was in Florence, staying at 16 Piazza dell'Indipendenza, he wrote to Count Gigliucci thanking him for a dinner invitation, which he, unfortunately had to decline because he was leaving for Germany (see manuscript letter at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, C.V. 484.35). He wrote the reply in French.

Knowledge of foreign languages was not the privilege of representatives of the white intellectual elite of the United States alone but also the few African American residents in Florence were fluent in Italian. For instance, the anti-slavery lecturer Sarah Parker Remond was conducting her studies in Italian at the Santa Maria Nuova hospital medical school, where she had enrolled to obtain a degree in obstetrics. Prior to her arrival in Florence, she had taken courses in French and Latin at the Bedford College in London.

Remond, together with her sister Caroline Remond Putnam and nephew Edmund Putnam, joined the cosmopolitan community and became members at the Gabinetto Vieusseux at various times. Consequently, not only was the library and reading room an ideal setting for cosmopolitan mingling but it was also a multiracial environment where no discrimination was made based on gender or color prejudice. In August 1866, Remond, who had been disseminating her anti-slavery views on an extensive lecture tour in Great Britain, established herself in Florence where she arrived from Switzerland. She found accommodation, as she wrote in a letter published in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, in "a hotel which had been highly recommended to me" (Remond qtd. in Reyes 159). It was the pension Casa Iandelli (also spelled Jandelli), as she indicated in the Vieusseux register. It was one of the boarding houses recommended by the earlier mentioned Murray's *Hand-Book*. Casa Iandelli was centrally located near the Ponte alla Carraja and across the river from the Vieusseux, where Remond took up a one-month membership on 29 August. Perhaps she was studying there in preparation for her entrance into the medical school. At the time of her subscription, such Americans as Hiram Powers (who renewed his annual membership in May) and Francis Boott had also paid their membership fees. In January 1874, a few days after Henry James signed up for a two-week membership at the Vieusseux, Remond's nephew Edmund joined, followed on 2 February by Remond's sister Caroline. They both gave their address for the three-month memberships as 5 Via Garibaldi, P.P. (*primo piano*), whereas Remond occupied the second floor (*2 piano*; corresponds to American third floor). In 1875, Mrs. Putnam together with her artist friend Miss Sargent were members of the Vieusseux again for three months, and their address was the same 5 Via Garibaldi that appeared next to Sarah Remond's name in May 1877. At the time, the latter was married and she signed the register accordingly as Madame Remond Pintor. Although she had pursued a professional career in obstetrics, in April 1877, when she married the Italian Lazzaro Pintor, Remond was no longer working.[1]

In these decades after the Civil War, Americans started to travel abroad again, now on board steamships and trains that replaced the less comfortable slow carriages. For the post-bellum *nouveaux riches*, the tour of Italy became a sign of social distinction and a means for self-definition as they continued to search for

acculturation. The newly rich, socially insecure, yet exclusive, extravagant and snobbish Americans used the trip to Europe to claim membership in a cultured upper class. As scholar William W. Stowe has pointed out, the "trip to Europe, a luxury made possible by the accumulation of excess capital, became a token of bourgeois respectability" (162). European aristocracy mingled with the American wealthy in countries like France and Italy, where the social climbers used foreign society as a stepping-stone to enter that of their own country (Dulles 128-9). Indeed, Americans traveled abroad to meet the "right" people. It was easier to meet the prominent figures of American society—the Vanderbilts, Astors, Andrew Carnegie, John Pierpont Morgan—in places like Italy where they could be seen visiting museums, mingling with local representatives of titled upper-classes, or dining in the company of other foreigners (Dulles 136). For Americans in general, the aim of the overseas tour was to improve oneself socially, culturally and intellectually, while the general idea, especially for art collectors, was to "bring culture home" (Strouse 17).

Years later, the Boston sculptor William Wetmore Story paid homage to the early explorers of the world, who returned home to their native America bringing culture and taste with them. As Story explained, he perceived the cosmopolitan tradition thus:

> there are occasions on which it comes home to us that, so far as we are contentedly cosmopolite to-day and move about in a world that has been made for us both larger and more amusing, we owe much of our extension and diversion to those comparative few who, amid difficulties and dangers, set the example and made out the road."(qtd. in James, *Story* 3)

He, obviously, refers to the world travelers of the early nineteenth century, who lacked the comfort of fast and luxurious travel in trains and transatlantic steamers, those who confronted the fears and anxieties associated with foreign travel with the spirit of adventure, ready to affront the challenges of overseas travel, including the bandits lurking along Italian roads. They enlarged the world for those who followed, both literally and metaphorically. For the Anglo-American intellectual who embarked on the Grand Tour later in the century, instead, a visit to Florence often served as a confirmation of the traveler's pertinence to a specific social group while it consolidated the social stratification of the travelers' home society that by then had been established.

Although most Americans returned home feeling socially and culturally improved, some chose Europe as their permanent home. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, many Americans visiting Florence were invited to the home of Edith Bronson, who had married the Florentine Count Rucellai in 1895. She was the daughter of one of the few true cosmopolites of American origins, Katherine De Kay Bronson, who was deeply rooted on Italian soil and had entertained British and American writers and artists in Venice, providing them an ideal setting for creating art. The intermarriage between a European aristocrat and American upper-class woman had become fashionable during the 1880s. It was a tangible demonstration of international social success, of national and cultural mixing, and of cosmopolitanism.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a new generation of cosmopolites was growing up in Italy, born to American parents residing in Europe. For instance,

James Jackson Jarves was among those whose child, also named James Jackson, was born in Florence. At the time of his birth, in March 1869, their neighbor, the poet P. Pietrocola Rossetti, the cousin of the Pre-Raphaelite painter and writer Dante Rossetti, gave him his nickname Pepero (Jarves, *Pepero* 18). Also the American painter John Singer Sargent, who would become the leading portraitist of his time, was born in Florence in 1856 to American parents. This new generation of internationally oriented American-Italians expanded the concept of cosmopolitanism to embrace a multi-cultural and multi-national identity. Born of cosmopolitan parents, having traveled and lived abroad for their entire lives, these Americans carried American, Italian, and international traits that smoothly fused together in their personalities. The education that they received socially and culturally through personal experience of expatriation formed the basis of their international identities. Often the European traits of their personalities and preference of things European dominated over those characteristic of the United States. Like their parents, they chose Florence/Italy, or other parts of Europe, as their permanent residence.

While some Americans established themselves permanently in Europe, others returned to their native America with a new, improved sense of self. They had acquired skills, mastered languages, and learnt a different way of living during their stay among the fashionable world explorers. Florence had offered a training ground for nineteenth-century cosmopolitanism; it had offered culture, sophistication, and a past that Americans lacked. A visit to Florence had led to self-improvement and refinement that facilitated ascending the social hierarchy of the travelers' own nation. Assimilation into the ranks of citizens of the world and representatives of international nobility, became a form of reinvention of the self through association that underlined the privileged status of American intellectual elite. For nineteenth-century Americans, being acquainted with Florentine high society and socio-cultural reality, then, served for acculturation but also for the consolidation of class divisions and reassessment of national identity.

Note

1. I discuss Sarah Remond's stay in Florence in a different full-length article that includes more material (see, Salenius, Sirpa A. "negra d'America Remond and Her Journeys." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 14.5 (2012): <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2156>.

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