

Open Inquiry Archive

Volume 3, Number 1 (2014)

Cosmopolitan Florence: The Legacy of Nineteenth-Century Travelers

Open Inquiry Archive

An independent journal of scholarly papers on culture. ISSN 2167-8812

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ISSN 2167-8812

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Cosmopolitan Florence: The Legacy of Nineteenth-Century Travelers

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Photo: Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence (circa 1890). Library of Congress, LOT 13434, no. 028

Introduction

These multidisciplinary essays give a new perspective on the Anglo-American presence in Florence during the long nineteenth century. As is well known, throughout the century Florence was an important cosmopolitan hub of Europe, and the presence of Anglo-American visitors in the city has already been examined in numerous publications. The essays collected here present a new angle by examining the relationship and interaction that Americans, in particular, had with Florentines and other foreigners visiting or residing there. The essays provide a different reading and interpretation of American presence in Italy, one that replaces the idea that insists on their socio-cultural isolation into English-speaking colonies detached from Florentine society, which, without a doubt, provides the opposing reality of their Florentine experience. These essays, instead, look at the intellectual and cultural exchange that occurred in the cosmopolitan social circles,

where class-conscious Americans found their place among foreign and Florentine nobility. Thematically the essays cover such topics as exchange of ideas and politics; the inspiration for the creation of American art works; the attending and hosting of cosmopolitan *salons*; and the renewed sense of identity that Americans reassessed through participation in nineteenth-century cosmopolitan life in Florence.

The original idea for an essay collection that would focus on British and American interaction with Florentine realities stemmed from discussions with Professor Valeria Bruni, to whom we are grateful for the initial participation and contribution to the original conception of the project; we regret that she was unable to continue working on the project. Since then, the idea has matured and undergone many changes before it found its final expression through these essays that offer testimonies of the depth of American, and British, involvement in Florentine society. The essays provide a fresh approach and include new material on nineteenth-century transatlantic dialogue between Italy and the United States.

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Contributors

Cultivating Cosmopolitanism: Nineteenth-Century Americans in Florence

Sirpa Salenius

Sirpa Salenius, native of Finland, has been teaching English and American literature at American University study abroad programs in Florence and Rome—at the University of New Haven in Florence (CEA) and Richmond University Rome Program (AIFS). She received her Ph.D. from the University of Eastern Finland (Joensuu, Finland) where she taught English language and culture in 2012. Many of her publications, such as *Florence, Italy: Images of the City in Nineteenth-Century American Writing* (2007) and essay collection *Sculptors, Painters, and Italy: Italian Influence on Nineteenth-Century American Art* (2009) deal with nineteenth-century American writers and artists in Italy. Her other research interests include travel writing and African American Studies.

An Intellectual Life: Horatio Greenough and his Florentine Circle

Elise Madeleine Ciregna

Elise Madeleine Ciregna, ALM, MA has researched and written extensively on the life of Horatio Greenough. She holds degrees in Art History (Harvard) and History (University of Delaware) and is currently completing her doctorate in history, material culture and the decorative arts. Her research interests include the cemetery movement in America, and white marble funerary monuments. She has taught, lectured and published widely on these topics in the United States and Europe.

"Isolated from any village": Vernon Lee's Florence and Villa il Palmerino

Crystal Hall and Stefano Vincieri

Crystal Hall is Assistant Professor of Italian at the University of Kansas. She is a specialist in Renaissance and Early Modern Italian literature and culture. She has published articles, book chapters, and a monograph on the relationship between science and literature in this period. As a frequent resident at the Villa il Palmerino (and as a member *Associazione Culturale del Palmerino*), she has participated in many of the events related to Vernon Lee's influence on, and adoption of, Florentine culture at the turn of the twentieth century.

Stefano Vincieri, Italian poet born in Padua, is resident in Emilia Romagna where he carried out his Art and Classical studies. He has published three books of poetry and his writings have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies both in Italy and abroad. His research interests deal with the Anglo-American milieu in Florence and the community's interaction with Italians at the turn of the twentieth century. He is a founding member of the *Associazione Culturale il Palmerino* dedicated to promoting the works of the English author Vernon Lee, pseudonym for Violet Paget, who was active in Florence in 1887-1935. The association is based in the Villa il Palmerino where Violet Paget lived most of her life.