

English Literature I/II – Ma Degree
Prof. Roberta Gefter
Module II: Italy and English Literature: an introduction

This module aims to introduce students to explore the crucial role that Italy had for centuries in British cultural imagination, and specifically in English literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, where an extraordinary number of authors and works were inspired by Italian culture and landscape. A selection of texts from different genres and modes – novel, travelogue, poetry, Gothic, Romantic, mid-Victorian, Edwardian and contemporary - will consider how English writers responded to the aesthetic, artistic and intellectual stimulation exerted by Italy and its heritage in different ways over time and how they contributed to a long-lasting cultural construction of Italy through literature. The module will depart from Ann Radcliffe's influential stereotypical vision and word-painting of Italy, then consider examples of Romantic and Victorian Italy in Byron's construction of the myth of Venice, Dickens's perceptive travelogue and Browning's recreation of the Renaissance in his dramatic monologues. E.M. Forster's *A Room with a View* (1908) and Ian Mc Ewan's *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981) will be examined as two early and late twentieth-century novels that engage with two entirely different visions of Italian iconic cities (Florence and Venice) and with the complex the idea of the modern tourist.

Further critical references, also to figurative arts and cinema, may be provided during the course module.

Reading List:

Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian*, Oxford Classics (selected chapters)
G.Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV (excerpts)
C.Dickens, "An Italian Dream", in *Pictures from Italy* (1846) (moodle),
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Pictures_From_Italy/Chapter_8, pp107-119
R.Browning, "The Bishop Orders his Tomb at Santa Prassede", "A Toccata of Galuppi", in
R.Browning, *Selected Poems*, Penguin (photocopies) See also
<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/rb/bishop/index.html>
E.M.Forster, *A Room With A View*, Penguin Classics, ed. By M.Bradbury.
I.McEwan, *The Comfort of Strangers*, Vintage.

Critical Reading:

Kenneth Churchill *Italy and English Literature 1764-1930*, Macmillan, 1980 (1993). (Department library)
Annemarie MacAllister, "A Pair of Naked Legs and a Ragged Red Scarf": An Overview of Victorian Discourses on Italy", and "Introduction" in *The Victorians and Italy, Literature, Travel, Politics and Art*, ed. by A.Vescovi, L.Villa, P.Vita, Polimetrica, 2009, pp.9-44 (open access, moodle)
Virginia Richter, "Tourists lost in Venice". Daphne Du Maurier's *Don't Look Now* and Ian Mc Ewan's *The Comfort of Strangers*. In M.Pfister and B.Schaff, eds, *Venetian Views, Venetian Blinds. English Fantasies of Venice*, Amsterdam Rodopi (photocopies)
J.Scherer Herz, "A Room With A View" in *The Cambridge Companion to E.M.Forster*, ed. D.Bradshaw, pp. 138-150. (photocopies)