

## *Italia Mia: Irish-European Entanglements in the Nineteenth Century*

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How entangled was Ireland with Europe in the nineteenth century? What dialogues existed between Ireland and the Continent? What was the movement of people and ideas between countries? The transnational dimension of the Irish story is an important element in the history of the country and it is an aspect which has garnered much attention in recent years. The current collection of essays seeks to advance this dialogue by exploring Ireland's relationship with Italy in the nineteenth century. The contributions chart this relationship by examining the experiences in Italy of a wide cross-section of Irish men and women such as John Hogan, Charles Lever, Albert de la Hoyde, Michael Balfe, Lady Morgan and Paul Cullen. The essays pay attention to the different modes of exchange between the two countries and the linguistic, cultural, social, political and religious entanglements that followed.

*Italia Mia* highlights the importance of recognising alternative dimensions to the lives of important figures of the nineteenth century and promotes an understanding of the transnational world inhabited by many Irish people in this period. The mobility of Irish men and women in Anglophone worlds has been the study of much attention recently but interactions with non-Anglophone countries have received considerably less consideration. This volume focuses on the lives and activities of some of the Irish visitors to Italy and thus concentrates on micro-history, in other words on the study of the undertakings and lifestyles of single individuals rather than on generalizations about the two nations and the ties between them. The individual experience is examined in detail while locating such an experience in the overall context of the Irish community abroad. For many of the individuals discussed in this collection, their Italian experience has often been relegated to a few lines in biographical notes: "the individual spent x amount of time in Italy and then returned". By investigating in more detail their Italian stay, and furthermore, by placing a variety of these experiences side by side, the research highlights the importance of the Italian sojourn in their lives and also places it in the context of similar activities by contemporaries. The main focus of this collection is therefore to look at a selection of transnational

lives in the nineteenth century and to examine how movement across borders created transcultural communities, histories and discourses.

By bringing together the many stories and interactions with Italy, the collection will show how these were not isolated adventurers but rather people who formed part of an extensive network of a transnational Ireland. Some of those discussed in these articles are indeed exceptional figures but nonetheless for each person chosen, there were others who could have taken their place. For certain idiosyncratic figures such as Charles Lever and Francis Mahony, this might seem a challenge, but nonetheless, when placed side-by-side with contemporaries who also spent time in Italy, they can be seen to be part of a cosmopolitan Irishness which was hybrid and open to influence. Indeed, the lives of the Irish people discussed in this issue of *Studi irlandesi* provide an insight into transnational lives in this period and how many people found themselves caught between countries. For example, as discussed by John McCourt in this collection, Charles Lever was a composite figure who spent much of his adult life “dislocated” in Europe, always negotiating between “home” and “away”, between “here” (mostly Dublin) and a sprawling, variegated European “elsewhere”. These figures challenge our discussions of ‘Irishness’, particularly at a time of growing nationalism throughout Europe. Francis Mahony is a similarly elusive character whose ‘doubleness’ in most aspects of his life subverts discussion of nationality, religion and authorship. The interaction of Lever and Mahony with Europe underlines the value of examining Ireland’s entanglement with the continent and of looking at their work not merely through an Irish, but also through a European lens. These articles are not intended as an advertisement for the value of travel to broaden one’s mind, nor do they intend to contrast the cosmopolitan traveller with the insular native. Indeed, as some of these essays illustrate, travel to Italy did not necessarily improve the individual’s fortunes, indeed some, after many years spent abroad, found themselves in an in-between state. Rather than chart a narrative of improvement through travel, these essays note the impact of travel to Italy on individual lives, on how people changed as a result of their time spent in Italy.

This collection of articles is entitled *Italia Mia* [*My Italy*] thus drawing attention to the individual experience of Italy which forms the focus of each essay. However, when we speak about ‘Italia Mia’, we could, for a variety of reasons, also use the plural form, ‘My Italies’. In the first instance, the plural form is appropriate because for most of the nineteenth century, Italy was a divided country, made up of many states. The Italian peninsula experienced huge upheavals between 1800 and 1880 as the forces of Italian nationalism struggled against the established strongholds of the Papal States, Austrian domination and entrenched royalties. Various uprisings throughout the century, but particularly in 1821, 1830, 1848 and 1859/1860 sent shockwaves throughout Europe as revolutionary ideas became reality in Italy. Irish people were present in Italy during these times, both as participants and as observers

and were influenced by their experiences in Italy. Some were forever turned against revolutionary nationalism, others were encouraged and motivated by the Italian example. Ireland's interaction with Italy in this period was complex as many reactions were mediated by Catholicism which viewed Italian unification as an attack on the position of the Catholic Church (Barr, Finelli, and O'Connor 2014; Carter 2015). A second reason why the plural form 'My Italies' could be contextually correct is that for Irish travellers, their experiences of Italy and subsequent reactions were very diverse. As mentioned above, many had different reactions to Italian nationalism and the area of religion divided some of the individuals discussed in the articles. Paul Cullen despised Francis Mahony; Francis Mahony regularly attacked the work of Lady Morgan; Lady Morgan's view of the Vatican was diametrically opposed to that of Paul Cullen. There is no homogeneous Irish view of Italy that emerges in these pages. There are however many areas of overlap and connections between the individuals mentioned: they range from the relationship of influence between Paul Cullen and John Hogan; to the mutual devotion to Roman Catholicism in De La Hoyde and John Hogan; to the spirit of artistic adventure and discovery in Michael Balfe and Richard Rothwell.

Studies of travel writing have contributed much in recent time to our understanding of cultural encounters. However, such studies, by necessity, only capture that portion of travellers who put pen to paper to record their experiences. This collection aims to take a broad conception of travel which includes travel writing but also encompasses travellers who did not go to Italy for tourism and who did not publish travel accounts. Articles therefore range from the published impressions of Italy by Lady Morgan to unpublished correspondence by Paul Cullen to travellers such as Richard Rothwell who left no written traces of their time in Italy. Research in Irish travel literature has been dominated by travel *to* Ireland and apart from some ground-breaking studies by scholars such as Joachim Fischer on German travel (Fischer 2000), Irish interactions with Europe and the cultural encounters which such connections generated have largely been ignored. Therefore, although the importance of travel *into* Ireland and the impact of such intercultural interactions have been examined (Hooper 2005), it is indeed surprising how little attention has been paid to Irish travellers going in the opposite direction. Recently, a rising interest in transnational Irish studies has increased the scholarly attention to Irish connections with other countries (Whelehan 2015) but this development has been dominated by considerations of Anglophone links. The dominance of Anglophone countries in the studies of Irish travel needs to be counterbalanced with an understanding of the impact of key European countries such as Italy in fundamental periods of Irish identity formation. Studies of European entanglements break the English-Irish binary which has so dominated Irish discourse. The special issue on Irish travel writing in the journal *Studies in Travel Writing* (2016); the forthcoming book *Irish Cultures of Travel: Writing on the*

*Continent, 1829-1914* by Raphaël Ingelbien (2016), and the current collection of articles all serve to rebalance this dialogue and to emphasise the importance of travel to Europe in the Irish national story.

Although we cannot talk about an Irish diaspora in Italy, over the span of the long century there was a varied, productive and at times well-integrated presence of Irish people on the peninsula, reflecting the various dimensions of Italy through their activities and ways of life. This led to a flow of ideas, connections and influences between the two countries and by focusing on individuals in this collection, we can see the agency of this transfer and how the movement of people was crucial to the movement of ideas. The length of stays in Italy varied greatly in the people discussed in these articles, from a few months to almost thirty years. The time spent in Italy allowed for the formation of social, political and pictorial impressions of the country, even on the basis of relatively short stays. Long-time Irish residents were, as Barbara Schaff says of exiles and émigrés in general, “capable of surveying society from a broader perspective” (Schaff 2010, 10). Although suffering from “dislocation [...] fragmentation of identity [...] linguistic hybridity” (Schaff 2010, 9), Irish expatriates were able to integrate into Italian society, participate in historic events and become familiar with the Italian language, culture and institutions. It is important however, that all of the people at one stage returned to Ireland and so brought their experiences back with them. In contrast to studies of Irish emigration in the nineteenth century, where the emigrant to, say America or Australia, rarely returned to Ireland, the travellers to Italy were mobile individuals who moved between countries and were agents of transnational cultures. These intermediaries can often have a particularly valuable contribution to make to research which seeks to engage with transnational perspectives, addressing questions of cultural interaction, communication, and exchange across national boundaries. The condition of the displaced person is a special one which can lead to a particular dynamic and creative power which is in turn linked to the critical perspective of the outsider.

Across the articles, some important trends in Irish travel to Italy emerge. Firstly, the centrality of the Catholic Church in mediating the Irish experience of the country cannot be underestimated. Italy was at the centre of the Roman Catholic world and religion was often the motivating reason for travel (O'Connor 2016). Colin Barr's article on Paul Cullen charts the experiences of the young Irish priest who was to become the most influential figure in Irish Catholicism in the nineteenth century. The article shows how Cullen's time in Rome shaped his ideas about theology, politics, church organisation and devotional practice. It gave him a global outlook, skills and connections which allowed him to forge transnational links that would serve him well in later life when he returned to Ireland. Probably the largest number of Irish expatriates in Italy was constituted by members of the clergy, principally based in Rome whether at the Irish Colleges or as part of the Vatican entourage. Colin Barr's article emphasizes the overall influence of Cullen's long stay in Italy on his

theological views, on his distrust of secular education and on his strong opposition to nationalism.

The significance of Italy to Ireland as the centre of Roman Catholicism, especially when Rome was threatened in the nineteenth century by the forces of Italian unification, is highlighted in Florry O'Driscoll's article on the soldier Albert De La Hoyde. O'Driscoll's contribution documents how the Pope's Irish Battalion brought ordinary Irishmen to Italy to become participants in some of the most momentous developments in Europe in the nineteenth century. Italy was seen as the focal point for Irish Catholics and the Roman Catholic Church was the fulcrum of Irish attention whether it provided education, career or was in need of protection. Through the hitherto unpublished letters of one of the soldiers of the Papal Battalion of St. Patrick, Florry O'Driscoll's article documents the career of a die-hard Papal supporter but he also gives an interesting account of how the Irish viewed Italians thus contributing to the transnational perspective *Italia Mia* intends to offer.

In the nineteenth century the arts continued to attract resident painters, sculptors and architects to Italy especially in the first half of the century when the neoclassical revival that had been stimulated by the discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum, was consolidated by the genius of Antonio Canova. Irish artists, like their British and American counterparts, travelled to Italy so they could visit galleries and museums and learn from the new and old Masters. A period of work in one of the Academies or in the studios of Italian painters or sculptors was still considered essential for the development of an artist. Several Irish artists had made their careers in Italy, because, as Lady Morgan comments about an engraver, "in Ireland, even talents like his might perish in oblivion, or wither in neglect: for hapless Ireland, however she may originate talent for foreign markets, has no home consumption for its produce" (Morgan 1862, II, 58). The trend, however, was reversed as many artists did return and influenced the aesthetic tastes of the public and of their Irish patrons. John Turpin's article illustrates the positive influence Italy had on John Hogan's art and, through him, on the development of the arts in Ireland. A well-established sculptor in Rome, under the influence of Canova, Thorvaldsen and the neo-classical school, Hogan obtained most of his commissions from Ireland, producing statues, reliefs, memorials and busts which applied, as Turpin argues, a severe but sensitive style, inspired by neoclassical ideals of purity and simplicity to subjects relating to contemporary religious and political ideals. Nationalism as well as religion were inspiring forces as may be witnessed in his heroic image of O'Connell and in many sculptures representing the idealised female figure of Hibernia or Erin. In his article, John Turpin explores how John Hogan was able to happily combine his artistry and his religious beliefs to mutual benefit in Rome and how through Hogan, Irish religious sculpture bore the imprint of Italian art.

Another Irish artist who visited Rome and now rests in the so-called 'Protestant' Cemetery in that city was the painter Richard Rothwell who sojourned

in Italy three times, in the nineteenth century. While Italy was probably the reason for Hogan's success (his career, in fact, declined after his return to Ireland), in the case of Rothwell it appears from Catherine O'Brien's analysis that the style he elaborated during his relatively short stays in Italy did not encounter the applause his earlier portraits had earned him in Dublin and London. Historical romanticism and sentimentalised domestic scenes dominated Italian painting around the mid-century and O'Brien suggests that Rothwell's pictures of peasants or beggars recalling scenes which he might have seen in Italy were not appreciated by the Royal Academy. Persisting with Italianate themes which were unpopular at home and in which he did not excel was to be his artistic ruin but demonstrates how important it was felt for Irish artists to study art in Italy at all costs.

The flourishing of musical arts and, especially of the opera and the *bel canto*, attracted several Irish musicians to Italy who hoped to make their fortune either as composers or performers of classical music. Michael W. Balfe and Catherine Hayes are two prominent examples of musicians who were stars in Italy and brought back an Italianate fashion to Ireland. The great Romantic burst of operatic music dominated by Verdi and with such iconic figures as Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini and, later in the century, Puccini, made a stay in Italy compulsory for composers and singers alike. Basil Walsh's article on Michael Balfe traces the fortunes of the young Irishman in Italy as he negotiated a musical career both as a performer and as a composer in a pivotal moment for the development of opera not only in Italy but internationally.

Many Irish literary figures spent a considerable amount of time in Italy and, from Thomas Moore to Oscar Wilde, the country featured in and influenced Irish literary works throughout the nineteenth century. This collection of articles features the writings of the diplomat and author, Charles Lever, who lived in several Italian cities for over twenty years until his death in 1872, acting as British vice-consul in La Spezia and consul in Trieste. As John McCourt argues in his article on this hitherto neglected aspect of Lever's writings, it is essential to look at Lever's work through a European lens, to see Ireland side by side with other countries, and also to break the English-Irish binary. Even in his late works where Italy rather than Ireland features prominently, the events he observes and describes (Garibaldi's feats, Cavour's "wily" political action, brigandage), induce him to foresee "change for [Ireland] on a par with the big changes he had witnessed throughout a lifetime in Italy". McCourt in this article highlights the literary works by Lever which are rich with continental connections and parallels and which emphasize the necessity for a transnational approach to Lever's writing.

A further Irish literary figure who had a prolonged relationship with Italy was Francis Sylvester Mahony who, in his literary career, crossed between countries and cultures and adopted a variety of identities (for example Father Prout and Don Savonarola). Fergus Dunne traces an intriguing portrait of the

idiosyncratic personality of the Cork-born writer, indeed an eccentric, who mixed bona-fide journalism with satire, parody, mock scholarship and a celebration of the riches of Italian song. His off-centre stance is apparent both in his reporting on Italian and, especially, Roman events, and in the way his commentaries on Italian affairs allowed him to view contemporary Ireland from a new perspective. By tracing the development of Mahony's thoughts on Catholic identity and nationalist politics in his Italian writings, Fergus Dunne highlights the "doubleness" of the Irish writer. Mahony's publication of *Facts and Figures from Italy* (1847), despite the seemingly empirical title, gave a very personal and subjective account of the momentous developments on the Italian Peninsula and this writing allows Dunne to examine Mahony's provocative and seemingly opposed viewpoints.

Mahony regularly delighted in attacking the work of another Irish writer featured in this collection, Lady Morgan, although the extent of the attacks on the Irish woman's work is a testament to the high profile her writing enjoyed in the nineteenth century. Donatella Abbate Badin looks at Lady Morgan as an example of a 'professional traveller', someone who came to Italy with the purpose of writing a topographical, antiquarian or artistic account of the country in order to instruct, amuse or influence an audience. This approach is captured in Lady Morgan's *Italy* (1821) her account of a year-long stay which did not have leisure and sight-seeing as its only aim. She argues that Lady Morgan (née Sydney Owenson) was a reporter whose purpose was to raise her readers' consciousness about present political and economic injustice and foster support for the national cause in Italy whose first stirrings she witnessed. Lady Morgan's nationalist orientation, her contacts with the Italian intelligentsia at the dawn of the upheavals that would bring about the unification of Italy, and her drawing parallels between the Italian and Irish situations made her book instrumental in influencing political thought at home and in England and forwarding the understanding of the Italian cause.

From the music of Michael William Balfe and Catherine Hayes to the art of John Hogan and Richard Fagan, to the literature of Thomas Moore and Charles Lever, to the political and religious manoeuvring of Paul Cullen and Daniel O'Connell, to the travels of Countess Blessington and Lady Morgan, the nineteenth-century Irish experience of Italy was wide and varied. It extended from volunteers in the Pontifical Army to aristocratic travellers, from religious novices to flamboyant aesthetes. Research into the Italian stay of these people covers a wide cross-section of Irish society and places their lives and their experiences in a European context. While this collection of essays looks at a wide cross-section of Irish society and examines transnational lives in a variety of arenas, it is not, of course, exhaustive in its scope. Irish travellers may have been in the minority compared to other nationalities, but nonetheless travel in the nineteenth century was becoming increasingly part of Irish people's experience. In the words of Raphael Ingelbien, the nineteenth century saw "the rise

of a powerful and economically resilient [Irish] middle class who could afford to travel” (2010, 102). The personalities considered in *Italia Mia* thus represent a fraction of the Irish diasporic community in Italy in the nineteenth century, modest though it was and tangled with the British. Much research remains to be done on the more obscure Irish people who were also living or circulating in Italy in those days but whose traces are not so obvious in published works: tradesmen, businessmen, scholars, sailors, priests, nuns, governesses and so forth. Wherever Irish people rubbed elbow with Italians was a workshop in transnational living. Besides focusing on what the visitors brought back to Ireland, whether a sketch book, a different artistic style or a better understanding of the political situation in Italy, more investigation is needed to discover also what of Ireland was brought to Italy and remained permanently there; the presence of a foreigner, whether a traveller, a migrant or an émigré, always represents an occasion of cross-fertilization and exchange. In conclusion, the travellers to Italy in the nineteenth century were cultural mediators, agents of change moving between the two cultures, fostering the circulation of ideas. Relocation throughout Europe in the nineteenth century and the transnational legacies of the travelling distort the national story, and the accounts of Irish travellers to Italy in the collection of essays *Italia Mia* contribute to our understanding of the nature and extent of Ireland's entanglement with Europe in this period.

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