Strange approximations

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DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199590247.003.0006

Abstract and Keywords

Chapter 5 continues the discussion of narrative art by examining the way in which exiled writers turn to history, especially the life-writing of Plutarch, as a way of fathoming the distance that exists between them and their estranged English audiences. Romantic-period debates about the role of the historian in re-animating the past and producing imaginative affect in the reader, as recently discussed by Mark Salber Phillips, are seen to have a correlative in the hybrid historical and dramatic forms of Byron’s Venetian plays Percy Shelley’s The Cenci and Charles the First, and Mary Shelley’s historiography in the Liberal, The chapter reconsiders the way the Pisan Circle draws on the Civil War period as a model of political and legal corruption, particularly in the shape of the infamous Star Chamber and the process of ‘the Question’

Keywords: History, Plutarch, Hume, doubles, Byron, Shelley, distance
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Boccaccio’s *Decameron* engenders a spirit of receptiveness to transition and what Said calls ‘a double perspective’, in which ‘an idea or experience is always counterposed with another, sometimes making them both appear in a new and unpredictable light’; this comparative awareness, Said suggests, enables a ‘more universal idea of how to think’.\(^1\) In this chapter, I want to look at history as another form of narrative that engages cultural binaries and the imaginative space between them. As well as a comparative awareness of before and after, exiled writers are concerned to find ways of bridging the gulf between themselves and their readers. We have seen how letters and stories shape chains of connection across the divide; narrative history offers a different form of restitution, a way of bringing the past alive.

Exiles in Italy read history for instruction and philosophical consolation, as Beethoven read Plutarch in 1801, when he first became aware that deafness was cutting him off from the world: ‘I have often cursed my Creator and my existence. *Plutarch* has shown me the path of resignation’.\(^2\) As well as being readers of history, 19th-century English exiles wrote their hybrid histories as a way of coming to terms with temporal, cultural, and geographical dislocation. Awareness of an outcast position significantly alters the history that is written not by victors, but by survivors. Tacitus’s bleak observation that those who endured the rule of Domitian outlived themselves and not merely other people (‘*non modo aliorum sed etiam nostri superstites sumus*’) sets the tone for the blend of historical and narrative lives we shall be considering.

Distance is realized in a peculiar way in exile when it becomes charged with a sense of necessity: to be exiled is to be banished a certain distance from one’s home, and geographical unfamiliarity makes an immediate impact on consciousness. Alan Weinberg suggests that the landscape of the Euganean Hills provided Shelley with a new variety of the aerial viewpoint he imagined in *Queen Mab*.\(^3\) Beyond a more elevated picturesque station, however, the spectacular Italian mountain ranges had a profound effect on the way in which Mary and Percy Shelley imagined the space that separated them from the rest of society.
In the ‘unfathomable deeps’ surrounding Mont Blanc in 1816, Percy Shelley and Mary Godwin had envisaged their alienation from their families in England. Byron, too, had used the Alps in the same year to imagine the distance between ‘lovers who have parted’, and to measure his separation from all other earthly things. One of the most famous prose notes to Childe Harold Canto III performs that compulsive mapping of the isolated self that we saw re-enacted by Anna Jameson when she visited Geneva in 1821 (see Figure 8):

This is written in the eye of Mont Blanc (June 3rd, 1816) which even at this distance (60 miles) dazzles mine.4

Degrees of separation are inscribed on this manuscript in more ways than one, as the fair copy of Canto III is in Claire Clairmont’s careful hand. Byron used both her and Mary as amanuenses in the summer of 1816, scrawling in additional prose notes afterwards.

In his final period of exile, Walter Savage Landor used the landscape around Florence to mark the earthly barriers between him and his friends. Landor’s verse, ‘Appendix to the Hellenics’ (1859), ponders the relative literary fame of Milton and Cowley, and concludes: ‘We upon earth/Have not our places and our distances/Assign’d, for many years’.5 Referring to the disastrous libel case that drove him abroad for a second time, Landor broods over his enemies:

However, from one crime they are exempt;  
They do not strike a brother, striking me.  
This breathes o’er me a cool serenity,  
O’er me divided from old friends, in lands  
Pleasant, if aught without old friends can please,  
Where round their lowly turf-built terraces  
Grey olives twinkle in the wintery sun,  
And crimson light invests yon quarried cliff,  
And central towers from distant villas peer  
Until Arezzo’s ridges intervene. (ll. 47–56)

(p.159)
Landor’s verse enacts a growing disengagement from the acrimony of the criminal courts. The heated underscoring of the first use of ‘me’ is softened in the following line, and the ‘o’er … o’er … old friends … old friends’ repetition gradually lengthens into a picture of the soft recession of Tuscan hills, and then the cerulean heights haunted by the Tuscan intelligentsia, Boccaccio, Galileo, and Milton.

For English writers in Italy, the sublimity of ‘Alps on Alps’ was more than a literary trope and a reference point for imaginative conquest. The (p.160) various parties who would conjoin as the Pisan circle had to traverse the distance between England and Italy in a variety of uncomfortable, accident-prone vehicles, and as well as acquiring a new sense of scale, they had to adjust to new living quarters on the other side of the crossing. Reading history was a way of imposing coherence on change and adapting to new locations and new perspectives. Writing history was more contentious: two versions of The Cenci by Percy Shelley and Walter Savage Landor, The Two Foscari by Byron, and The Ring and the Book by Browning all use historical Italian courtroom dramas to close the gap between past and present, and to confront the recent judgements of the English public.
Byron and Shelley produced their Italian history plays at a time when historians and dramatists were debating the critical issue of how the sympathy of the reader or the audience could be moved across the temporal distance of centuries, or across the physical space of a theatre auditorium. ‘Distance’ is, of course, a relative concept, and Mark Salber Phillips has recently investigated the shifting norms of distance in Enlightenment and 19th-century historiography. In one strand of 18th-century writing, he argues, distance was seen to add value to aesthetic experience, and was a sign of the detached or reflective judgement of the scholar and independent gentleman; at the same time, growing interest in the cognitive processes of sensibility allowed history to generate sympathy, rather than instilling cool reflection. Phillips foregrounds David Hume as the 18th-century historian who anticipated the romantic immediacy of Victorian history after Walter Scott. ‘Thinking about distance’, Phillips suggests, ‘involves a broad inquiry into the variety of features of historical accounts that shape the reader’s relationship to past events.’

Under the pressure of exile, English writers in Italy were preoccupied with distance, and the reader’s relationship with past representation in a uniquely concentrated way.

Plutarch, History, and Exile
The writers we are following read a wide variety of historical texts from Herodotus to Hume. Plutarch’s peculiar blend of history and biography, however, was a key model for the Pisan circle, Landor, and the Brownings, providing a form of ancient history that fostered the immediacy which Phillips discerns in Hume. Plutarch’s mode of analysis was important in three ways: he set up a pattern of binaries that appealed to the keenly honed comparative instincts of the Pisan circle; he argued for the significance of domestic detail in scenes of psychological revelation; and he encouraged a Platonic ethos, whereby readers might set their sights on what lay beyond the instability of an earthly home.
Treatises on the consolations of exile underlie many historical works in the ancient world, including Plutarch’s. Plutarch himself was never exiled, but he travelled as far as Alexandria, and was a citizen both of Greece and Rome (where he lectured), which gave him the dual perspective that he made into the formal principle of his life histories. The benefits flowing from ostracism are discussed in Plutarch’s essay, ‘De Exilo’, where he highlights the support of friends and the service of the Muses:

Indeed the Muses, it appears, called exile to their aid in perfecting for the ancients the finest and most esteemed of their writings. ‘Thucydidus of Athens composed the history of the war of the Peloponnesians and Athenians’ in Thrace at Scaptê Hylê; Xenophon wrote at Scillus in Elis, Philistus in Epeirus, Timaeus of Tauromenium at Athens, Andration of Athens at Megara, and the poet Bacchylides in the Peloponnesse. All these and many more, when driven from their country, did not despair or lie prostrate in grief, but put their native abilities to use, accepting their exile as a provision granted by Fortune for this end, an exile that has made them everywhere remembered even in death.9

Plutarch describes the concept of the homeland as a matter of choice, rather than a birthright that can be taken away, and he echoes the Neo-Platonic Christian view of human life as an exile upon earth: ‘[i]t is truest to say that the soul is an exile and a wanderer, driven forth by divine decrees and laws; and then, as on an island buffeted by the seas, imprisoned within the body’.10

As a fact of Greek and Roman life visited on many prominent citizens, exile was a significant topic for the ancient historians. In the Langhorne translation of Plutarch’s Lives, which Byron requested from Murray in 1821, Plutarch meditates on the ostracism of Aristides:

For the Ostracism was not a punishment for crimes and misdemeanors, but was, very decently, called a humbling and lessening of some excessive influence and power. In reality it was a mild gratification of envy; for by it (p. 162) whoever was offended at the growing greatness of another discharged his spleen, not in any irretrievable infliction, but only in voting for a ten-year banishment.11
The extent to which authorial envy forced Byron from England is open to question, but his exile saved bloodshed indirectly because, at a distance from England, Byron could not properly challenge Southey to a duel: instead, we have the Dedication to *Don Juan* and *The Vision of Judgment*, which make Southey into a target for all time.

The edition of Langhorne’s Plutarch that Byron wanted was edited by the Cambridge classicist, Francis Wrangham, who had shared the early republican ideals of William Wordsworth, and dedicated his volume to Viscount Milton, saluting ‘the sad and frequent spectacle of proscribed patriotism’:

> You have followed ARISTIDES in his exile from Athens; and CATO in his retreat to Utica. You have wept over the uncommemorated martyrdom of a DE WIT, and have witnessed the calamitous abandonment, even by the people whom he loved and whom he served, of a FOX.\(^\text{12}\)

In 1808, Wrangham had written to support Leigh Hunt in the context of likely prosecution. He told him that the safest course of action for the patriot in such times was ‘to dream’.\(^\text{13}\) Parallels between the patriots of earlier days and the reformists of the early 19th century become a stock feature of Hunt’s journalism and part of his martyred self-image. The founders of the English Commonwealth were invoked as guiding spirits of the *Liberal*, and the Pisan circle frequently discussed the English Civil Wars, or what Shelley called ‘the character of our calumniated Republicans’.\(^\text{14}\) His unfinished *Charles the First* breaks off as Hampden and Cromwell prepare to leave England for America, and Hampden asks for another paradise to receive ‘These exiles from the old and sinful world’.\(^\text{15}\) Landor, meanwhile, who regarded Oliver Cromwell as one of England’s greatest leaders, produced *Imaginary Conversations* between Milton and Marvell, William Penn and Lord Peterborough, and Walter Noble and Cromwell himself. Penn speaks for all republicans when he notes that English histories contain the names of fewer great men than ancient history, pointing out that if the Greeks and Romans had done the same, we would have lost the ‘renovating spirit’ that helps men to survive the worst (p.163) of times.\(^\text{16}\) Plutarch underpins this philosophy of endurance and the patient reignition of public good.
The point of the parallel lives was to examine the moral character of each subject, rather than a panorama of war and politics. According to Wrangham, Plutarch paired his subjects in order to bring out ‘strange approximations of men distant from each other in time and place’: in other words, Plutarch showed how history could abbreviate temporal and cultural distance.  

Wrangham also praised Plutarch for his ‘delicate particulars of private conduct’, which he gave in more detail than ‘illustrious exploits’: ‘[a] casual trait or expression often supplies a better knowledge of the heart, than volumes of state papers and gazettes’. Byron follows Plutarch’s intuition in recording the brief epitaph of Julia Alpinula in *Childe Harold* Canto III (see Figure 8), and commenting:

> I know of no … . history of deeper interest. These are the names and actions which ought not to perish, and to which we turn with a true and healthy tenderness, from the wretched and glittering detail of a confused mass of conquests and battles.

This interest in immediacy and small, revelatory, domestic detail characterizes the Pisan circle’s efforts to reanimate ‘sad realities’ from history, and the character studies from the past of Walter Savage Landor and Robert Browning. In *The Ring and the Book*, Browning uses the reading of Plutarch to project Giuseppe Caponsacchi’s imaginary life after the death of Pompilia, when his existence is reduced to that of a relegated priest:

> Just as a drudging student trims his lamp, 
> Opens his Plutarch, puts him in the place 
> Of Roman, Grecian; draws the patched gown close, 
> Dreams, ‘Thus should I fight, save or rule the world!’-- 
> Then smilingly, contentedly, awakes 
> To the old solitary nothingness.

Giuseppe’s short-lived participation in worldly affairs is poignantly envisaged as a schoolboy’s dream, a protective strategy of immersion in fictional heroism to fill the ‘nothingness’ of his existence.
The paradox of the Pisan circle’s use of Plutarch is that while they employ his homely focus to close the distance between reader and historical subject, they borrow his parallel structure to accentuate contrasts and point (p.164) to the alienating effect of historical judgements. Plutarch’s pantheon of twinned lives offers an array of heroic potential, but also an awareness of divergent routes. His narratives often pause to assess the motivations for action and the disagreements between different records, prompting Byron’s detached thought on the heroic status of Alcibiades:

Alcibiades is said to have been “successful in all his battles” – but what battles? … Yet on the whole it may be doubted whether there be a name in Antiquity which comes down with such a general charm as that of Alcibiades –– Why? I cannot answer – who can?21

The mystery and injustice of ‘general charm’ (or charisma) would feed into the thwarted attempts of Byron and Shelley to rewrite the versions of themselves that they encountered in reviews, the popular press, and the beginnings of the biography trade. ‘[F]ourteen shillings … is too much to pay for a libel on oneself’, Byron wrote when he saw Colburn’s advertisements for Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Right Honourable Lord Byron, with Anecdotes of Some of his Contemporaries in 1822.22 Nevertheless, he asked Murray if he should publish his own memoir to ‘counter’ this version of himself:23

The use of doubles in Romantic literature is usually associated with an 18th-century gothic inheritance, as in William Wordsworth’s presentation of childhood guilt in the ‘spots of time’ and his meditation on the distance between childhood and adulthood in the second book of The Prelude:

so wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days,
Which yet have such self-presence in my mind,
That, sometimes when I think of them I seem
Two consciousnesses – conscious of myself
And of some other being.24
The effect of the ‘two consciousnesses’ is intensified, as Said indicates, in the condition of exile, where the usual chasm between past and present is exacerbated by the awareness of a split in adult life between pre- and post-exile. There is something natural in growing up and away from one’s childhood self, but the separation between the exile’s home and his new (p.165) existence is forced. In many cases, we can see that a memory of ‘some other being’ who was not sent away persists in the exile’s imagination. All histories are documents of survival, but Plutarch fostered the comparative dynamic latent in those who felt they had left behind a more popular or successful version of themselves.

Plutarch was not only used by exiles, of course: generations of English writers followed Shakespeare in borrowing character studies and sententiae from the Lives.\(^{25}\) John Keats turned to Plutarch in April 1818 to particularize an abstract sense of heroism: ‘somewhat like the feel I have of Anthony and Cleopatra. Or of Alcibiades, leaning on his Crimson Couch in his Galley, his broad shoulders imperceptibly heaving with the Sea.’\(^{26}\) In Tristam Shandy, Sterne mocks the customary form of citation when he tells his reader that it is ‘either Plato, or Plutarch, or Seneca, or Xenophon, or Epictetus, or Theophrastus, or Lucian ... who affirms that it is an irresistible and natural passion to weep for the loss of our friends or children.’\(^{27}\) But however commonplace, the moral sentiments of Plutarch helped to qualify the traditional celebration of heroic endeavour with an awareness of collateral damage. Plutarch’s Lives is one of the crucial, formative texts discovered by Mary Shelley’s creature in \textit{Frankenstein}, and she explores the effects of this particular work at length and in detail (the italics below represent Percy’s manuscript additions):
The volume of ‘Plutarch’s Lives’ which I possessed contained the histories of the first founders of the ancient republics. This book had a far different effect upon me from the letters of Werter. I learnt from Werter’s imaginations despondency and gloom; but Plutarch taught me high thoughts: he elevated me above the wretched sphere of my own reflections to admire and love the heroes of past ages. Many things I read surpassed my understanding and experience. I had a very confused knowledge of kingdoms and wide extents of country, mighty rivers, and boundless seas. But I was perfectly unacquainted with towns and large assemblages of men. The cottage of my protectors had been the only school in which I had studied human nature. But this book (p.166) developed new and mightier scenes of action. I read of men concerned in public affairs governing or massacring their species. I felt the greatest ardour for virtue rise within me and abhorrence for vice, as far as I understood the signification of those terms, relative as they were, as I applied them, to pleasure and pain alone. Induced by these feelings, I was of course led to admire peaceable lawgivers, Numa, Solon, and Lycurgus, more than Romulus and Theseus. The patriarchal lives of my protectors caused these impressions to take a firm hold on my mind; perhaps, if my first introduction to humanity had been made by a young soldier burning for glory and slaughter, I should have been imbued with different sensations.28
Walter Scott found this episode ‘improbable and overstrained’, and suggested that it was as likely that the monster had taught himself Euclidian geometry or the art of bookkeeping by listening through a hole in the wall. But Scott missed the point: rather than being instructed about a universe of ordered perfection, the monster acquires an education in the falling-away of political idealism and the rise of social injustice. When we think about the monster receiving a version of an exile’s education, we can also appreciate Shelley’s insight about the serendipity of available books: if he had not picked up the first volume of Plutarch’s *Lives*, the monster would have missed the history of early republican ideals. Turned away by his creator and forced to fend for himself, the creature’s acquisition of culture becomes a haphazard mosaic of quotations, as it is for all exiles.

The ‘parallel’ structure of Plutarch’s biographical writing appealed to Romantic writers in exile because they were driven into comparative assessments of their lives—never very stoically: ‘Alas I have not hope nor health’, Shelley laments in ‘Stanzas Written in Dejection’, ‘Nor fame nor power nor love nor leisure—/Others I see whom these surround,/Smiling they live and call life pleasure:/To me that cup has been dealt in another measure’ (ll. 19–27). The comparative mode is evinced metrically in these lines, as the iambic mournfulness of the poet runs into the dactylic prominence of his adversaries.

‘Julian and Maddalo’ is not about adversaries as such, but it depicts two rival sensibilities, and the word ‘between’ becomes part of the grammar of exile, indicating an indeterminate point in relation to two other places or times. The relationship between Byron and Shelley is articulated in their sparring conversation, and projected onto a landscape which repeatedly gauges the distance between two points in the opening description of the poem: ‘between the city and the shore’, ‘between the East and West’, ‘between us and the sun’, ‘and all between/The churches, ships and palaces’ (ll. 66, 70, 98, 135). The wary, relative positioning of elements in the landscape is informed by Shelley’s scrupulous attention to his own powers in relation to Byron, and is underwritten by Plutarch’s approach to biography, whereby one life is always ghosted by another.
Looking over one’s shoulder takes a slightly different form with Byron, who begins his ‘Detached Thoughts’ on 15 October 1821, ‘thinking over ... the various comparisons good or evil which I have seen published of myself in different journals English and foreign’.\(^{31}\) The point of likening one figure to another is usually to reduce strangeness; contrast works in the other direction, but they are both ways of measuring distance. Plagued with a sense of the ‘lion’ he used to be, Byron contemplates the long list of various fictional and historical persons with whom he has been compared, and concludes: ‘The object of so many contradictory comparisons must probably be like something different from them all’.\(^{32}\)

Byron’s most pronounced use of doubles comes in his late drama, *The Deformed Transformed*, in which the hunchback, Arnold, is invited by a Lucifer-like ‘Stranger’ to choose a new identity from an array of high Greeks and Romans—Julius Cesar, Alcibiades, Socrates, Mark Anthony, Demetrius the Macedonian, and Achilles. Having chosen his new appearance, and leaving his old form to be assumed by the Stranger, Arnold participates as a hero in the sacking of Rome, and intervenes in one of the scenes that Landor also recreates: the massacre of civilians and the attempted suicide of a woman to avoid rape. The play breaks off as Arnold appears to realize that the woman he rescued prefers his old form. Byron’s note on the manuscript reads, ‘thus Arnold jealous of himself under his former figure’.\(^{33}\) It is generally acknowledged that Byron took some of the details of the physical appearance of each heroic model from sources like Plutarch and Suetonius, but it is equally apparent that the doubled-plot structure follows Plutarch’s invention, with its even-handed portrayal of different heroic modes.\(^{34}\) These heroic shadowings allow space (p.168) for contemplation and objective distance, even as they invite the reader to inhabit another life.
Byron’s obsessive tracking of potential historical patterns and similarities is a feature of his post-1816 writing about political events. In his Ravenna journal (4 January–27 February 1821), he searches for a parallel for the events of the Italian uprising against the Austrians. Throughout this period he reads Mitford’s History of Greece, returning to ‘Xenophon’s Retreat of the Ten Thousand’; he also records a day reading ‘Roman History’.\(^\text{35}\) ‘The best Prophets of the future is the Past’, he ponders on 28 January 1821.\(^\text{36}\) More hopeful still, on 19 February, as the ‘war approaches nearer and nearer’, Byron looks for reasons that the Neapolitans might succeed:

\begin{quote}
Let the Neapolitans but have the pluck of the Dutch of old, or the Spaniards of now, or of the Germans protestants, the Scotch Presbyterians, the Swiss under Tell, or the Greeks under Themistocles - all small and solitary nations … and there is yet a resurrection for Italy, and a hope for the world.\(^\text{37}\)
\end{quote}

Within a matter of days, however, the Neapolitan uprising had failed and Byron was thrown back on a different comparative dynamic.

Ever mindful of his own role in posterity, Byron had also been turning over literary history in the shape of Ginguené’s History of Italian Literature, Spence’s Anecdotes of Pope, Roscoe, Maria Edgeworth’s biography of her father, and ‘different Lives of the Poets’.\(^\text{38}\) Works of biography and literary history fuelled Byron’s participation in the Pope-Bowles controversy, which was conducted, as Jonathan Sachs observes, very much in terms of the relative decline of republican virtue between two ages: ‘depend upon it [it] is all Horace then, and Claudian now amongst us’.\(^\text{39}\) In January 1821, Byron recorded his intention to produce four tragedies on the subjects of Sardanapalus, Cain, Francesca of Rimini, and Tiberius—the last figure being one of the people with whom he found himself compared ‘personally or poetically’.\(^\text{40}\) Byron’s letters and journals indicate the almost daily jostling of literary and historical forms of heroism in his consciousness. Plutarch’s narratives met the need for a hybrid form that would combine classical discipline and emotional empathy.
The failure of the Neapolitan uprising is the context for Byron’s request to Murray in May 1821: ‘I pray you to send me a copy of “Wrangham’s” reformation of “Langhorne’s Plutarch”—I have the Greek which (p.169) is somewhat small of print—and the Italian which is too heavy in style—and false as a Neapolitan patriot proclamation’. Byron needed Plutarch for the notes to Sardanapalus, but Plutarch also contributes to the digressive texture of Don Juan when, following a meditation on ‘That suit in Chancery’ (XII, 18), Byron considers the inaccuracy of history and of written records generally:

> Why, I’m Posterity – and so are you;  
> And whom do we remember? Not a hundred.  
> Were every memory written down all true,  
> The tenth or twentieth name would be but blundered:  
> Even Plutarch’s lives have but picked out a few,  
> And ’gainst those few your annalists have thundered;  
> And Mitford in the nineteenth century  
> Gives, with Greek truth, the good old Greek the lie. (XII, 19)

This pun encapsulates Byron’s bleak view of the fallible, but extremely competitive, world of the professional hack. Written crosswise and upside down on the manuscript, Byron’s prose note allows Mitford some power as a writer, notwithstanding his factual unreliability:

> See Mitford’s Greece, – ‘Graecia Mendax.’ – His great pleasure consists in (calling) praising tyrants – abusing Plutarch – (and) spelling badly – (&) & writing worse. – and what is strange after all His is the best modern History of Greece in any language and he is perhaps the best of modern Histori(es)ans – having named his sins – it is but fair to state his virtues – Learning – Labour – Research (Accuracy) Wrath – and Partiality. I call the latter virtues in a writer because they make him write in earnest.  

Byron’s reluctant esteem for Mitford’s ‘wrath and partiality’, despite the political and ethical difference between them, takes us to the heart of a debate in the Romantic period about the desirability, or not, of historical objectivity. As usual, the question revolves around affective impact on the reader.
In *Rights of Man*, Tom Paine had upbraided Edmund Burke for trying to produce ‘a weeping effect’ on the imaginations of his readers: ‘Mr Burke should recollect that he is writing History, and not *Plays*; and that his readers will expect truth, and not the spouting rant of high-toned exclamation.’ But history was not always so far from theatrical representation. If the historian has an ethical role in preserving and transmitting (p. 170) memory, an affective mode of communication might be justifiable. Mark Salber Phillips has argued that David Hume’s histories use proximity—bringing the past alive as an unmediated presence—as a valid form of historical distance and intellectual coherence.

Gibbon emerges from Phillips’s study as one of the ‘cold and stately’ Enlightenment historians, but we can see his interest in affect in one of Gibbon’s digressions about Plutarch. Discussing Hurd’s commentary on the *Ars poetica*, Gibbon moves to a consideration of the workings of passion, and the way that the immediate effect of mental agitation ‘baffles all description’, but ‘when this storm subsides, passion is as fertile in ideas, as it was first barren. ... The past, the present, the future, our misfortunes, those of other men, our friends, our enemies, our ancestors, our posterity, form within us numberless combinations of ideas’. Gibbon’s example of this associative process is drawn from Plutarch’s account of the exile of Marius:

> When Marius, proscribed by the party of Sylla, was obliged, after a thousand dangers, to take refuge on the coast of Africa, the praetor of that province sent him an order to leave it immediately: the lictor found him plunged in thought, and sitting on some stones on the beach. When he asked him what answer he should carry back to the praetor, ‘Tell him, (replied Marius) that thou has seen Marius sitting upon the ruins of Carthage.’

This implied comparison between his fall, and that of a once powerful city, displayed on the same spot, is poetically bold. Yet passion and real misfortune, joined to the coincidency of place, could suggest it to Marius, a rough illiterate soldier. Is this not a striking illustration of Mr. Hurd’s theory?
Gibbon’s digression shows the currency of Plutarch as a fertile source for analogy and example, but it also reveals late-18th-century interest in the power of emotional ‘coincidency’. The associative triggers that remind one of home generate the collisions of different frames of reference and Italian and English scenery which we find in Percy Shelley’s poetry, and the allusive compounds of Byron and Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

For the Shelleys and Byron, Plutarch provided evocative portraits of human defeat. The Shelleys read Plutarch’s Lives in the run-up to the composition of Frankenstein in 1815–16, and later in 1819, when Percy turned to the Life of Marius while they were sight-seeing in Rome. He started The Cenci two months later, and the play reconfigures a number of scenes from Plutarch’s narrative of tyranny and corruption. The description of Marius sitting among the ruins of Carthage (see Figure 9) was an archetypal image of exile, which Byron used in Don Juan to define the exclusion from society visited upon him and all fallen women:

Society, that china without flaw,
(The hypocrite!) will banish them like Marius,
To sit amidst the ruins of their guilt:
For Fame’s a Carthage not so soon rebuilt. (XII, 78)

By the end of the stanza, Byron has grafted classical history on to other literary sources to lend a more heroic tone to the plight of the fallen woman (and himself). The image of the poet as a ruin amidst ruins appears most famously in Childe Harold Canto IV; its recurrence here reveals the sensitive chameleon instinct Byron shared with Plutarch to
explore the psychological trials of people at their lowest ebb, banished, and sitting ‘amidst the ruins’ of themselves. Plutarch’s interest in human responses to political falls and his questions about historical judgement inform the Romantic rewriting of history in Italy as the Pisan circle sought to overcome their ‘scorn, mutilation, and imprisonment’ at the hands of the British public and the periodical press. Mary Shelley and Plutarch

Figure 9. Robert Blyth, *Caius Marius sitting on the Ruins of Carthage* © Trustees of The British Museum.
Mary Shelley’s use of Plutarch is most obvious in Frankenstein, but we can also see a more general questioning of the construction of Lives of great men in her subsequent historiography. As she joined in the Liberal’s aims of trying to convince English readers that an enlargement of cultural and political sympathy was necessary, she inevitably confronted the subtle textual manifestations of bias. In the fourth issue of the Liberal, Mary Shelley produced an article on Giovanni Villani, whose histories of the 13th and 14th centuries she read between September 1820 and May 1821. Her essay makes an eloquent case for the value of writing non-fiction in the first person, beginning with a defence of ‘this I, this sensitive, imaginative, suffering, enthusiastic pronoun’, which, she said, could be found in Burton’s The Anatomy of Melancholy, Rousseau’s Confessions, Spence’s Anecdotes, Boswell’s Life of Johnson, Lady Mary Montague’s Letters, and Mary Wollstonecraft’s Letters from Norway. Having established her preference for subjective narration, Shelley turns to consider the specific demands of history:

An historian is perhaps to be held the least excusable, if he intrude personally on his readers. Yet they might well follow the example of Gibbon, who, while he left the pages of his Decline and Fall unstained by any thing that is not applicable to the times of which he treated, has yet, through the medium of his Life and Letters, given a double interest to his history and opinions. Yet an author of Memoirs, or a History of his own Times, must necessarily appear sometimes upon the scene. Mr. Hyde gives greater interest to Lord Clarendon’s History of the Rebellion, though I have often regretted that a quiet I had not been inserted in its room.

Shelley values Villani because of his ‘rambling’ style, and the way in which he makes ‘the persons of Dante’s Spirits familiar to us’, and ‘transports us (p.173) back to the superstitions, party spirit, companionship, and wars of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries’. The use of the verb ‘transport’ conveys the kinship that might exist between the readerly affect of poetry and non-fictional prose. Villani’s own violent party spirit is acknowledged and (like Byron) Shelley savours the partiality of an account that is wholly opposed to her own political stance, but compelling for its ability to recreate for the reader the presence of the historical figures.
Mary Shelley’s evolving focus on an exiled historical voice is evident in the biography of Madame Sophie d’Houdetôt (the model for Rousseau’s Julie), which she wrote for the third issue of the *Liberal*. This essay begins with a Plutarchian reflection on the enigmas of human nature:

We delight to unravel a knotty point, and we study with the greatest pleasure those characters, whose ruling feeling we do not entirely comprehend. They oblige us to disentangle our ideas with delicate precision, and to make subtle differences ... It is for this reason ... that so many books have been written about Rousseau ... the misrepresentations of his enemies have given a spur to our researches: and we may safely assert that we know more of his character and his actions than his contemporaries: just as we are better acquainted with the course of a river, looking down on it from a distant eminence, than sitting on its banks, listening to the murmur of its waters.\(^\text{51}\)

Immediately after this measured ideal of research, withdrawal from the scene, and the cultivation of a vantage point of ‘distant eminence’, Shelley describes the task of the historian in more urgent tones:

The present moment passes with the sun that hastens to its repose in the deep; and oblivion, like night, descends upon its world of suffering, enjoyment, or thought, did not genius prolong it to an eternity. The wisest hand down to us the actions of the best. When the chain of such spirits is snapt we emphatically call those times the ‘Dark Ages:’ we turn shuddering from a time when men acted, but were unable to record their acts, and we seek with fresh avidity those remains of our fellow creatures which are more lasting than regal mausoleums, and more akin to our nature than the very body, preserved in a thousand folds of the embalmer’s cloth.\(^\text{52}\)
The vitality of history as a ‘chain’ of connection with the dead is poignantly realized and has a clear personal relevance: the Liberal was put together in the aftermath of Percy Shelley’s drowning and Mary reaches urgently for an art form that might restore the dead to the living. Mary Shelley’s biographer, Miranda Seymour, points out the way in which, within weeks of Percy’s death, Mary decided that the ‘task of defending (p.174) and enhancing her husband’s reputation would be her great work for the future’. This role was a recasting of the vocation of republican historian that Godwin had been recommending so that Mary could support herself (and him) when Percy’s income was no longer at his disposal.

The desire for a proximity that is even more intimate than ‘the very body’ speaks movingly of Mary’s efforts to preserve the spirit of her dead husband. History, in this form, acquires the quality of republican virtù, in that it is the only medium that can hold the memory of those without ‘regal mausoleums’. As a historian, Mary Shelley is drawn to the memory of those who ‘rest in unvisited tombs’, the silent lives recognized in lyric and novel form in Thomas Gray’s Elegy and George Eliot’s Middlemarch. In particular, Mary turns to the memory of the ‘unpretending and unnoticed’ woman, whose existence ‘we should probably never have heard of but for the passionate remembrance of Rousseau’: no one, she says, ‘more excites our sympathy’. Mary Shelley is acutely aware of the expanse of time that separates her from Madame d’Houdetôt, and the obscurity that closes over the lives of women in particular:

It would have given us great pleasure if we could have traced Madame d’Houdetôt through the remaining years of her long life, but we know of no record that can aid us in this research … The last years of her life were spent at Eaubonne. Her husband and her lover were both dead; all that before had lent life and interest to the Vale of Montmorenci had passed away. The Hermitage was gone, Rousseau was no more. She remained the sole land-mark of a strange country, which the waves of time had washed over even to obliteration. The hearts that had beat for her were cold, but hers was yet warm.
Strange approximations

Sophie is here a version of Mary Shelley herself, outliving the era that had defined her life. In envisioning Madame d’Houdetot as a ‘relic’, Shelley invokes the precise Catholic sense of a physical object that is the remaining trace of a lost, venerated person. Surviving as the last vestige of Rousseau’s presence, the aged Sophie predicts Mary Shelley’s own future, but also highlights her need to forge a sympathetic connection with the past. Shelley clings on to the ‘sole land-mark’, the thing that survived the ‘earthquake’ of ‘those tremendous vicissitudes that shook out moral world’. Themes that would later emerge in *The Last Man* are apparent in this biography, and we can see Shelley continuing to work over different historical studies of displacement and alienation in the Italian tales that she published after her return to England.

* (p.175) Mary Shelley uses history to explore the condition of exile in her short story, ‘Valerius: The Reanimated Roman’, which dates from 1819. As Charles Robinson points out, Shelley’s focus is not the phenomenon of reanimation, but Valerius’s sense of dislocation: ‘he chose to relate neither the history of his life nor the actions of the great men during the fall of the Roman republic; instead he related what he “felt and saw” upon revisiting Rome nearly nineteen hundred years after his death’. Valerius knows that ‘even at this distance of time’, his listener will be intimately acquainted ‘with the actions of great men’, so he defers a discussion of Roman history and concentrates instead on the shock of the new. The story shows Shelley developing Plutarch’s emphasis on the private sphere, rather than the public event: ‘in modern times’, Valerius tells us, ‘domestic circumstances appear to be that part of a man’s history most worth enquiring into’.

Valerius carries the political ideals of the republic within him, and his questions to his interlocutor reveal the same mordant concern with lost liberty that Byron and Percy Shelley read in the palimpsest of Italy:

‘Pardon me – you are an Englishmen, and they say you are free in your country – a country unknown when I lived – but the wretched Italians, who usurp the soil once trod by heroes, fill me with bitter disdain’.
We can catch Shelley’s quiet interrogation of contemporary politics in ‘they say you are free’. Valerius’s description of his journey to Rome makes him the double of Romantic liberals who travelled to Italy, but found themselves shattered by the decay of republican ideals, and separated from fellow travellers:

Mute in the corner of the carriage, I hoarded my thoughts … I refused to speak to those we met on the road, lest their altered dialect should crush my last hope … I was in a strange city with unknown customs. I hardly understood their language, and the recollections of my former life would only cast me into ridiculous mistakes.\(^{62}\)

Shelley captures all the antisocial self-absorption, the ‘utter solitude’ of the lone exile, and that peculiar sensitivity to the sound of speech which most exiled writers seem to share. In the clash between pronouns: ‘in my native Rome … I hardly understood their language’,\(^ {63}\) she draws the exile’s sense of belonging, and yet not belonging, to the culture of his or her country. Above all, Mary Shelley’s attention is on the exile’s experience of ‘tremendous change’ and a seismic shift in perception:

\textbf{(p.176)} But human language sinks under the endeavour to describe the tremendous change operated in the world … I cannot recollect the agony of those moments – without shuddering. It was not a train of bitter thought; it was not a despair that ate into the nerves but shewed no outward sign; it was not the first pang of grief for the loss of those we love. It was a fierce fire that enveloped forests and cities in its flame; it was a tremendous avalanche that bore down with it trees and rocks and turned the course of rivers; it was an earthquake that shakes the seas and overturns mountains and threatens to shew to the eyes of man the mysteries of the internal earth.\(^ {64}\)
Outdoing the calamitous analogies of Byron in the third canto of *Childe Harold*, Mary Shelley here elaborates the violence of exile’s rupture with the past, and its potential to expose the secret interior of things. She conflates the passage of historical time with catastrophic geology to comprehend the absolute alienation of her temporal castaway. And yet, in the recurring paradox of exiled relationships, the inveterate outcast is driven to seek the company of another human. However hopeless the prospect of a fully reciprocal response, Valerius looks for a companion to replace ‘Country, Friends—all, all that I had lost’, just as Walton looks for a man ‘whose eyes would reply to mine’ at the beginning of *Frankenstein*. In the Valerius draft, Isabell Harley proposes a form of conversational exchange:

> I come from a distant country and am, therefore, unknowing in your language and laws. You shall teach me to know all that was great and worthy in your days, and I will teach you the manners and customs of ours.

‘Language and law’ form a nexus of strangeness for all travellers. Isabell tells us that ‘I wished to interest the feelings of Valerius and not so much to shew him all the remains of his country as to awaken in him by their sight a sentiment that he was in some degree linked to the world’. At the point at which the story breaks off, Shelley is articulating the battle of sympathy to overcome ‘the earthly barrier there seemed placed between us’. Valerius is present but, in a curious way, unreachable; Isabell’s attempts to overcome the blockage of sympathy, and make a connection with someone who ‘belonged to the dead’ duplicate the efforts of the Romantic poets to use history to speak to their contemporary audiences. Painfully aware of its own investment in the past, Mary’s prose is a metaleptic critique of the Pisan circle’s disinterment and reanimation of history.

*(p.177)* Byron and Percy Shelley: Law, History, and the Readership
For 19th-century writers living in Italy, the historian’s ideal of overcoming the distance of centuries echoed their own desire to overlap geographical separation and communicate with their readers as directly as if they were still part of the English literary scene. In a letter to Peacock of November 1818 about pictures in Bologna, Shelley describes the way that the ‘material part’ of art must perish, but paintings survive ‘in the mind of man, & the remembrances connected with them are transmitted from generation to generation’. Books, Percy decides, ‘are perhaps the only productions of man coeval with the human race. Sophocles & Shakespeare can be produced & reproduced forever.’ Despite his conviction when defending poetry to Peacock, Shelley’s detachment from his English audience, while he was in Italy, imparts to his idea of transmission a newly perilous edge.

In the prefaces to *Marino Faliero*, *Cain*, *The Cenci*, and *Prometheus Unbound*, we can hear Byron and Shelley debating the critical issue of their distance from present and future readers. Shelley pursues the philosophical ramifications of the same issue in his fragment ‘On Love’:

> I know not the internal constitution of other men, or even of thine whom I now address. I see that in some external attributes they resemble me, but when misled by that appearance I have thought to appeal to something in common and unburden my inmost soul to them, I have found my language misunderstood like one in a distant and savage land. The more opportunities they have afforded me for experience, the wider has appeared the interval between us, and to a greater distance have the points of sympathy been withdrawn.

Writing in Bagni di Lucca in July 1818, where he found the modern Italians ‘a miserable people—without sensibility or imagination or understanding’, Shelley envisages the problem of communication in anthropological terms. The experience of being in a ‘distant land’ provides the metaphor for his sensation of a gap between himself and other men. Drama was an attempt to bridge this interval.
The Prefaces written by Byron and Shelley in the early 1820s display the same sense of writing from a beleaguered authorial position that David Hume had earlier experienced. Hume’s *History of England* formed part of the Shelleys’ evening reading material between June and August of 1818 and, as Mark Salber Phillips observes, Hume framed his work by (p. 178) soliciting sympathy for his isolated opposition to the crowd. It might even have been Hume’s controversial sympathy for Charles I, as much as Godwin’s and Peacock’s interest in the Commonwealth, that led Shelley to consider that subject for a drama before he put it aside to help Williams with the reworking of Boccaccio. Before we examine the historical dramas of Byron and Shelley as articulations of exile, we need to see how their relationships with the English readership modified their understanding of historical sympathy and distance.

Like Byron, Shelley was extremely sensitive about his treatment by the English public. He anticipates that Byron would not return to Switzerland as Teresa wished in 1821, because ‘the gossip & the cabals of those anglicised coteries would torment him as they did before’. For the same reason, Florence is rejected as a place to settle because it is too full of English people (as the Brownings found 30 years later). From 1818 until his death in 1822, Shelley experienced a fluctuating sense of English identity, complacently assured, for example, that ‘the character of our nation’ allowed him to cross the border checkpoints unmolested, but avoiding English tourists, while lamenting the fate of ‘our unhappy country’. Perhaps because of Peacock’s reservations about Italians, Percy never seems quite as at home among them as either Byron or Mary Shelley, despite an occasional playful identification of himself as ‘we Catholics’. 
From Rome in 1819, Shelley asked Peacock to convey his greetings to Mrs Boinville: ‘I desire such remembrances to her as an exile & a Pariah may be permitted to address to an acknowledged member of the community of mankind’. ⁷⁸ A little later in the same letter, he questioned Peacock’s idea that they might return to England: ‘I am regarded by all those who know or hear of me … as a rare prodigy of crime & pollution, whose look even might infect … Such is the spirit of the English abroad, as well as at home’. ⁷⁹ Shelley’s bifurcated identity led him to make constant comparisons between England and Italy, but his preferred place of abode kept changing: he would exhort English friends to ‘stray to this Elysian climate, and, like the sailors of Ulysses, eat the lotus and remain as I have done’, but he also wishes:

that I were living near London … . What are mountains, trees, heaths, or even the glorious & ever beautiful sky with sunsets as I have seen at Hampstead to (p.179) friends? Social enjoyment, in some form or other, is the alpha & the omega of existence. All that I see in Italy – and from my tower window I now see the magnificent peaks of the Apennine half enclosing the plain – is nothing – it dwindles to smoke in the mind, when I think of some familiar forms of scenery little perhaps in themselves over which old remembrances have thrown a delightful colour.⁸⁰

In the question, ‘What are mountains, trees, heaths …?’, we hear the faintest echo of ‘Mont Blanc’ (‘And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea …’), reminding us of how imaginative associations shape perception. Shelley was haunted by the persistence of the mental world of memory, set against the apparent evanescence of sensations in the present.
Shelley’s letters are momentary crossings of the distance that separated him from friends like Peacock: ‘What pleasure would it have given me if the wings of imagination could have divided the space which divides us, and I could have been of your party’, he wrote from Bagni di Lucca in 1818, ‘my thoughts for ever cling to Windsor Forest, and the copses of Marlow, like the clouds which hang upon the woods of the mountains’. Meanwhile, his other writings maintain what he calls ‘a safe distance’ between himself and English calumny: ‘I enjoy & am amused with the turmoil of these poor people’, he wrote of the abusive reviews of the pirated Queen Mab, ‘but perhaps it is well for me that the Alps & the Ocean are between us’. Fantasies of controlling distance are evident in his desire ‘utterly to desert all human society’ and to find a solitary island for himself and Mary and their remaining child, or to create a more select community and ‘form for ourselves a society of our own class’: ‘People who lead the lives which we led’, he tells Mary, ‘are like a family of Wahabee Arabs, pitching their tent in the midst of London’. This sense of enforced distance is complicated by his awareness that, within the group of people ‘of our own class’, there were personalities that needed to be kept apart such as Byron and Claire, and Claire and Mary. But it was in his relationship with English readers that Shelley’s notion of distance came to a crisis.

Stephen Behrendt has written of Shelley’s continuous effort to find a mode of address that would enable him to connect with a public. He focuses on Shelley’s experiments with multiple genres, but the common element in all Shelley’s strategies is the desire to overcome the space between things, to make two elements so close that they can mingle with and interpenetrate one another. In July 1821, the gulf between Shelley and his audiences had never been wider. He wrote that he was amused now & then with news from England of the ridiculous violence of the prejudices which are conceived against me – and as I am interested by the sight of a thunderstorm as a grand tragic ballet of the Heavens; so, at a safe distance, I laugh at this comic pantomime which the good people in London exhibit, with my shadow for their Harlequin.
By laughing, Shelley attempts to hold himself apart, rather than being held at a distance. His use of a dramatic metaphor alerts us to the aesthetic form that was preoccupying him. Shelley envisaged his relationship with the English public as a theatrical spectacle. A desire to correct the reviewers’ biographical misrepresentations of their lives impelled Romantic exiles to autobiography, while the writing of historical drama became a method of putting the public record on trial.

Shelley claimed to be ‘little skilled in English history’. He made some effort to get hold of Bishop Burnet’s work on the Civil Wars and the Commonwealth, the *History of His Own Time*, from the Gisbornes in the summer of 1820 and, when it was not forthcoming, from Ollier in February 1821. In the meantime, he was studying Greek history; just as he found the perfect place to read Dante behind the altar of the cathedral in Milan, his reading of Herodotus was associated with a mountain stream outside Bagni di Lucca:

> My custom is to undress, and sit on the rocks, reading Herodotus, until the perspiration has subsided, and then to leap from the edge of the rock into this fountain - a practice in the hot weather excessively refreshing. This torrent is composed, as it were, of a succession of pools and waterfalls, up which I sometimes amuse myself by climbing when I bathe, and receiving the spray over all my body, whilst I clamber up the moist crags with difficulty.

The custom of reading Herodotus on the rocks locates Shelley in a space that is both elevated and poised. His reading spot is a version of the retired position we have identified with Boccaccio’s company and with the little community Lady Blessington fosters above Genoa. At the very end of his life, when he abandoned the composition of *Charles the First*, Shelley expressed his inability to hold on to a secure historical vantage point through the metaphor of a difficult climb:
I do not go on with ‘Charles the First.’ I feel too little certainty of the future, and too little satisfaction with regard to the past, to undertake any subject seriously and deeply. I stand, as it were, upon a precipice, which I have ascended with great, and cannot descend without greater, peril, and I am content if the heaven above me is calm for the passing moment.

The reading of history in exile is a necessarily fragmented experience because—as all exiles found—it is harder to get hold of the books one needs. ‘[B]y an unfortunate mistake I left behind me the 2nd part of the “Voyage to Corea”, and a poem called “Beppo”’, Shelley confesses to Lord Byron in April 1818; ‘I cannot get the book here’, he tells Peacock regretfully about Forsyth’s guide; and he asks Gisborne to bring ‘the two last of Herodotus’. There is a sense of triumph each time he announces that he has assembled a temporary study, accompanied by a wistful plan to ‘get all my books out’. Although Shelley’s time in Italy appears retrospectively as a period of prolific creativity, his letters and journals often record his sense of sterility and persecution. He was looking for a way to escape the causality that history represented, a route that would free him from the consequences of his actions to Harriet, and release all enslaved people from the dead hand of the past.

Bruce Haley argues convincingly that the reading of history is at the heart of Shelley’s debate with Peacock: ‘[Shelley] challenges assumptions determining the very plan of Peacock’s essay, one of which is that historical events and situations should be evaluated with regard to their effect on future events and situations’. In place of the standard analytical logic of cause and effect, Haley suggests that Shelley pioneers ‘the possibility of a reader centred history’ because ‘direct aesthetic effect on persons has its particular kind of historical value’. Haley’s argument is focused on literary history, but it throws light on the reasons why Percy and Mary continued to read history in Italy, and why, in A Defence of Poetry, Shelley believed that ‘all the great historians, Herodotus, Plutarch, Livy, were poets’ because they ‘[filled] all the interstices of their subjects with living images’.
Shelley sees Dante as a writer with the power to short-circuit history. Dante’s poetry, he argues, ‘may be considered as the bridge thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and the antient world’, and this immediate sympathetic connection overlaps sequential logic.93 Desperate to reach his audience and be free of the hyperbolic rhetoric which criminalized him, Shelley needed a mode of communication that was both instantaneous and timeless. In drama, he found the locus of ‘the connexion of beauty and social good’; historical drama offered a means of bridging the distance between different times, and also between the outcast and his audience.94

The Cenci was dedicated to Leigh Hunt ‘from a distant country’.95 But after foregrounding his exiled circumstances, Shelley goes on to discuss the ways in which his new work might overcome the divisions of time and space. Beatrice Cenci, we are told, has been ‘mingled two centuries with the common dust’, yet her story was ‘not to be mentioned … without awakening a deep and breathless interest’: ‘All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart’.96 The story, therefore, has already passed the test of ‘awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men’ across time, and all that remained for Shelley was to ‘clothe it to the apprehensions of my country men in such a language and action as would bring to home to their hearts’.97

One of the main draws of the story is the ‘restless and anatomizing casuistry’ that the readers of the narrative feel compelled to exercise on Beatrice’s behalf.98 This mental activity is a development of the challenge to ‘ready made’ systems of morals that we found in the Pisan circle’s deployment of Boccaccio’s lore. In this play, Shelley has adopted a subject that is guaranteed to challenge orthodox moral certainty. As ‘my countrymen’ indicates, Shelley is here writing as an Englishman who has come across the story ‘during my travels in Italy’, rather than ‘during my exile’, or ‘from my new home in Italy’. He writes between two places.
For Shelley, there is bitter irony in the way that 16th-century Papal corruption serves as a mirror for the suffocating repression of the Tory government in England in 1819, confirming his sense that there is nothing to choose between the established church and what it usurped. This likeness extends to the Vatican’s attempts to stop the story circulating, ‘so that the communication of the MS had become, until, very lately, a matter of some difficulty’. The play uses Count Cenci’s rape of his daughter as an embodiment of the obscene invasiveness of tyranny. The father’s presence in person, and in Beatrice’s imagination, materializes the contaminating influence of all oppressive regimes. We can also hear Shelley’s preoccupation with the ‘keen-judging world’, ‘trampled laws’, and the ‘severest forms of law’ in the play’s scenes of crime and punishment (IV.4.115; V.2.73; V.2.135). As the drama commences, Count Cenci reviews his corrupt purchase of pardons from the Pope who, in the final scenes of the play, will dispense partial, retributive justice on Cenci’s victims. The ‘Pope’s (p.183) pleasure’ (V.2.189), in the sense of command, is a disturbing echo of the ‘pleasure’ (I.1.104; IV.1.164) that Cenci boasts of in his sadistic treatment of other people.

The play’s oscillation between images of unhealthy physical proximity and vast distance charts Shelley’s concerns with the simultaneous experiences of being subject to tyrannical government and being an outcast. In the final act, Orsino contemplates the possibility that, under a changed identity, he would be able to pass through the ‘misdeeming crowd/Which judges by what seems’:

’Tis easy then  
For a new name and for a country new,  
And a new life, fashioned on old desires,  
To change the honours of abandoned Rome.  
And these must be the masks of that within,  
Which must remain unaltered ... Oh, I fear  
That what is past will never let me rest! (V.1.87–94).
Strange approximations

His scepticism about the judgement of the crowd echoes the recorded conversations of Byron and Shelley about their compatriots. The fear of ‘misdeeming’ spectators (including God) also preoccupies Beatrice, and her trial replicates the exile’s fate of speaking words that cannot be understood. The immense loneliness of ‘enmity with domestic and political tyranny’ (as Shelley described Hunt’s journalistic role) is envisaged in the play in terms of a strange landscape.  

Dark ravines are a standard trope in Italian travelogues, but Shelley consciously employs the work of Calderón that he had been reading with Maria Gisborne to draw an interiorized landscape. Throughout The Cenci, Shelley uses the ‘gulf of hell’ and ‘A gulf of obscure hatred’ (IV.4.96, 99) to image the distance that isolates Beatrice. Vertiginous despair appears as another mountain precipice in the last act: ‘the giddy, sharp and narrow hour/Tottering beneath us ... Now stench and blackness yawns, like death’ (V.4.100–1, 105). In her response to the proximity of her father, Beatrice describes ‘A changing, black, contaminating mist/About me ... substantial, heavy, thick’ (III.1.12–18). The clotted air that Beatrice evokes links gothic fiction with Plutarch’s accounts of the nightmares that unfolded during consular reigns of terror. By blending the resources of history and drama, Shelley gives a double interest to his picture of ‘enormous guilt’. 

101 The clotted air that Beatrice evokes links gothic fiction with Plutarch’s accounts of the nightmares that unfolded during consular reigns of terror. By blending the resources of history and drama, Shelley gives a double interest to his picture of ‘enormous guilt’. 

102
The Life of Marius that Shelley was reading just before he composed The Cenci illustrates the brutalization of a whole society: Plutarch remarks that ‘when maimed and headless carcasses were now frequently thrown about and trampled in the streets, people were not so much moved with compassion ... as struck into a kind of horror’. In his account of the military campaigns of Marius, Plutarch includes contemporary observations on the way that ‘moist and heavy evaporations, streaming forth from the blood and corruption, thicken the air'; then, when Fortune turns against the general, Plutarch tells how, ‘deserted by all’, Marius sought to evade capture by wading into the boggy fen country outside Minturnæ, from where he was dragged out, naked and ‘covered with mire ... and delivered to the magistrates’. Byron uses the same scene in The Prophecy of Dante: ('Though, like old Marius from Minturnæ’s marsh/And Carthage ruins, my lone breast may burn/At times with evil feelings hot and harsh' (I, 104–6)). In the combination of images of nakedness, persecution, and immersion in filth and darkness, we can locate a classical historical source for Beatrice’s hatred and self-loathing. As with Mary’s portrait of Matilda, the unspeakable nature of incest makes its victims into internal exiles even before punishment occurs.

The play’s force as a critique of ‘sad reality’ is inseparable from its wounded feelings as a document of banishment. Percy Shelley’s sense of injustice and revulsion at the intransigent society that had ejected him marks the social criticism of The Cenci. The inflexible operation of the law that dominates the final act is summarized in Camillo’s image of the Pope:

The Pope is stern; not to be moved or bent.  
He looked as calm and keen as is the engine  
Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself  
From aught that it inflicts; a marble form,  
A rite, a law, a custom: not a man. (V.4.1–5)

The Pope’s inhuman remoteness is replicated by the operation of the engines of torture that literally impose a stretching of the human form:

Judge: Drag him away to torments; let them be  
Subtle and drawn out, to tear the folds  
Of the heart’s inmost cell. Unbind him not  
Till he confess. (V.2.160–3)
'Inmost cells’ abound in the poetry of Thomas Warton, early William Wordsworth, Felicia Hemans, and Ann Radcliffe. By forcing a medieval \( \text{(p.}\text{185}) \) punishment into that register of sensibility, Shelley allows us to hear the full violence of legal process against all that is tender and intimate. Many critics have discussed the network of Shakespearean allusion that lies so heavily on the surface of the play, but this is only one aspect of a fractured recollection of English culture. Richard Lansdown links Shelley’s failure to find a ‘natural voice’ in \textit{The Cenci} with the dramatic weakness of William Wordsworth and John Keats, but the Romantic ‘brooding on the past’ of Elizabethan drama is not as unified an enterprise as he suggests.\(^{105}\) The dramas of Byron and Shelley stand apart from the plays of their English contemporaries as embittered attempts to appeal to a public that had condemned them.

The plots of Byron’s Venetian plays, and Shelley’s \textit{The Cenci} and the unfinished \textit{Charles the First} turn on unappealable judicial process. In \textit{Charles the First}, Leighton appears on stage after being branded in the face by Laud. He is barely recognized by the other characters on the stage, but responds to a question about his identity with: ‘\textit{I was Leighton: what/I am thou seest. And yet turn thine eyes,/And with thy memory look on thy friend’s mind,/Which is unchanged, and where is written deep/The sentence of my judge.}\(^{106}\) Beatrice’s last words to her brother turn the branded face into a metaphor for the blackened name, and rehearse the exile’s plea to those remaining at home to ‘forbear’ and preserve a different kind of record from the official verdict:

\begin{quote}
And though
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common
name
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind
Of those, who perhaps love thee in their graves.
\end{quote}

(V.4.149–54)
Beatrice’s delicate ‘perhaps’, with all its hesitancy about the existence of an afterlife, is mixed with the certainty of the mark of Cain, or Othello’s conviction that he is a ‘fixed figure for the time of scorn/To point his slow and moving finger at’ (IV.2.56–7). Following the Shakespearean tragic hero’s desire to have his name cleared, the exile in Byron’s play *The Two Foscari* begs his next of kin to ‘tell my tale’, and overcome the ‘tyranny of silence’ (III.1.76). The ‘tyranny of silence’ is manifest both in the material obstacles to staging *The Cenci*, but also the internalized censorship that we shall see Byron wielding over his own writing in the Dedication to *Don Juan*.

**(p.186)** Byron and Historical Distance

A note in the lengthy appendices to *Marino Faliero* is insultingly clear about Byron’s desire to avoid ‘any kind of intercourse’ with his countrymen:

The fact is, that I hold in utter abhorrence any contact with the travelling English … I was persecuted by these tourists even to my riding ground at Lido, and reduced to the most disagreeable circuits to avoid them. … Except Lords Lansdowne, Jersey, and Lauderdale; Messrs. Scott, Hammond, Sir Humphrey Davy, the late M. Lewis, W. Bankes, Mr. Hoppner, Thomas Moore, Lord Kinnaird, his brother, Mr. Joy, and Mr. Hobhouse, I do not recollect to have exchanged a word with another Englishman since I left their country; and almost all these I had known before. The other, – and God knows there were some hundred, who bored me with letters or visits, I refused to have any communication with, and shall be proud and happy when that wish becomes mutual.107

In the list of Englishmen with whom he has spoken, Byron omits P. B. Shelley, who is only mentioned in the appendix to *The Two Foscari*, and then only as another poet, rather than as a friend. Referring to the claim in the *Literary Gazette* that he was responsible for the prose notes to *Queen Mab*, Byron retorts:
I never wrote a line of the notes, nor ever saw them except in their published form. No one knows better than their real author, that his opinions and mine differ materially upon the metaphysical portion of that work; though in common with all those who are not blinded by baseness and bigotry, I highly admire the poetry of that and his other publications.\textsuperscript{108}

The appendix to a play about Venetian history might seem an odd place for Byron to conduct a defence of Shelley against the accusations of Robert Southey, but that is the main aim of the notes that are in English, rather than French. Southey had called on the legislature to ‘look to’ \textit{Queen Mab} because, he alleged, the toleration of such free thought led to the French Revolution. ‘This is not true’, Byron asserts, on the legalistic grounds that free thought had \textit{not} been tolerated, so ‘the French Revolution was \textit{not} occasioned by any writings whatsoever’:

Every French writer of any freedom was persecuted; Voltaire and Rousseau were exiles, Marmontel and Diderot were sent to the Bastille, and a perpetual war was waged with the whole class by the existing despotism.\textsuperscript{109}
The claim about the political impotence of print would be revoked in *Don Juan* Canto III, but in the immediate context, Byron’s rhetoric is designed to exaggerate the distance between the reaction of book-burning oppressors and the actual threat posed by persecuted literary outcasts. That there were many obstacles to publishing liberal texts in the early 19th century is true, and English orthodox Tories were not the only authorities to treat books as enemies. In 1800, Pope Pius VII, speaking in Venice, had reaffirmed the Church’s determination that books which openly opposed the teaching of Christ were to be burned. For different ideological reasons, the Austrians were also avid confiscators of books. Lady Morgan’s *Italy* was one of their proscribed items, and it is the work that Byron praises as ‘fearless and excellent’ in the appendix to *The Two Foscari*. Lady Morgan is brought in to highlight the ‘cowardly ferocity’ of ‘Mr S’, who sits down ‘to deal damnation and destruction upon his fellow creatures, with Wat Tyler, the Apotheosis of George the Third, and the Elegy on Martin the Regicide, all shuffled together in his writing desk.’ That Byron undercuts Southey’s credentials as a writer of *Lives* or history in this appendix and in the later *Vision of Judgment* is undisputed now, but at the time, both Byron and Shelley doubted their ability to stop the ‘calumnies of a hireling’.

Byron’s portrait of the Southey figure, who sings the rously patriotic ‘Isles of Greece’ lyric in *Don Juan* Canto III, quickly turns into a contemplation of the fickle distribution of posthumous fame:

> And glory long has made the sages smile;  
> ‘Tis something, nothing, words, illusion, wind –  
> Depending more upon the historian’s style  
> Than on the name a person leaves behind:  
> Troy owes to Homer what whist owes to Hoyle;  
> The present century was growing blind  
> To the great Marlborough’s skill in giving knocks,  
> Until his late Life by Archdeacon Coxe. (III.88–90)
The deft introduction of Iago’s disingenuous protestation about the value of his good name, compared with cash, which is ‘something, nothing,/’Twas mine, ‘tis his’ (III.3.161–2), brilliantly unsettles stanza 90, implying that ‘the name a person leaves behind’ is also subject to ‘the historian’s style’ and is as much a matter of chance as the game of ‘whist’.

These stanzas were written in the autumn of 1819, around the time that Byron entrusted the first part of his memoirs to Moore. Two years later, Byron’s worries about his reputation had, if anything, increased, and the Europe-wide victimization (p.188) of liberal writers that informs the appendix of The Two Foscari means that Byron’s exploration of ostracism is tied to a critique of the kind of history that blots out the lives of the unjustly accused. The spectre of misrepresentation, which dogs the exile, heightens habitual poetic anxiety about posterity’s post-obits.

As with all his verse compositions, Byron is keen to display the effort to get at the truth that has gone into The Two Foscari. Richard Lansdown points out that ‘Byron knew the historical past to be in fact a mapless and confused thing, subject to the differing interpretations even of its contemporaries—let alone its inheritors’, and he suggests that in his Italian plays, Byron attempts to recreate the consciousness of his historical protagonists, rather than the more mechanical ‘checking of sources [and] marshalling of facts into a narrative shape’. 111 That The Two Foscari is about exile has always been known, although McGann and Weller warn against a simplistic identification of Foscari’s expressions of an exile’s longing with Byron’s own situation. Likewise, many critics have noted the play’s preoccupation with history and historiography, but not, I think, that it is a clew through Byron’s labyrinthine fixation on unjust visions of judgement. 112
Attention to legal process in *The Two Foscari* is exacting and goes beyond Byron’s usual respect for the factual. Beginning with Loredano’s strict adherence to the set time for the resumption of the trial in the first moments of the play, the first scene presents a succession of reminders and enforcements of judicial probity: Barbarigo cautions Loredano that the council is not quorate, ‘two are wanting ere we can/Proceed’ (I.1.21–2); Barbarigo must not speak with the accused, ‘I have transgressed my duty/In this brief parley’ (I.1.90–1); only one officer is permitted to touch the prisoner: ‘tis my duty to/Be nearest to your person’ (I.1.149–50); and Memmo reminds Marina that he ‘must not answer’ her, that she should not question procedure, and that ‘Ingress is given to none within those chambers,/Except “the Ten” ’ (I.1.202; 204–5, 254–5). These rules are delivered across lines so that the minute pauses of the line breaks emphasize the power of the law to chop up human ties.113

In the lengthy extract from Count Darù’s *Histoire de la république de Venise*, which Byron insisted should be printed with his play, there is a footnote reference to an incident in Plutarch’s life of Valerius Publicola. It comes at the moment that Darù contemplates public reaction to the spectacle of a father condemning his son and the question of what this reveals of human nature: ‘*Elle hésita pour qualifier de vertu sublime ou de férocité cet effort qui paraît au-dessus de la nature humaine*.114 The reference directs the reader to Plutarch’s account of the treachery of the Vitellii, in which two sons of the consul, Lucius Brutus, were involved. When the plot to assassinate the consuls was discovered and the sons brought to the forum, Brutus questioned them, then ordered the lictors to do their duty, which was to scourge and behead the traitors:
Brutus, however, is said not to have turned aside his face, not allowed the least glance of pity to soften and smooth his aspect of rigour and austerity, but sternly watched his children suffer … An action truly open alike to the highest commendation and the strongest censure; for either then greatness of his virtue raised him above the impressions of sorrow, or the extravagance of misery took away all sense of it; but neither seemed common, or the result of humanity, but either divine or brutish. Yet it is more reasonable that our judgment should yield to his reputation, than that his merit should suffer detraction by the weakness of our judgment. ¹¹⁵

Omitting Plutarch’s discussion of the development of Roman law, Darù then gives the response of the immediate crowd: ‘Upon Brutus’s departure out of the forum, consternation, horror, and silence for some time possessed all that reflected on what was done’. Jerome McGann is troubled by the obscurity of Byron’s intentions regarding mental theatre, remarking that ‘we do not know what his purposes were other than to get people to think while at the theatre’, but the aftermath of ‘consternation, horror and silence’ seems exactly what Byron was aiming at.¹¹⁶ Byron wants his audience to realize with nerves and stomach, throat and pulse, the personal cost that is left out of most history of retributive justice when a crime is perceived as being against the state; and to register the impossibility of restorative justice when crime occurs against a person, as in his own case.

When we first encounter Jacopo alone, he is tracing the ‘chronicle’ of prisoners’ names on his dungeon wall: ‘This stone page/Holds like an epitaph their history’ (III.1.18–20). Byron reworks the metaphor in the scene when Jacopo tells Marina that his request for reading matter from Venetian annals was refused:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(p.190)</th>
<th>With all their blank, or dismal stains,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>so these walls have been my study,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More faithful pictures of Venetian story,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hall not far from hence, which bears on high</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundreds of doges, and their deeds and dates.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(III.1.119–21)
As Caroline Franklin points out, an oral account of the prisoners’ history is provided in Marina’s passionate denunciation of the ‘mysterious meetings ... unknown dooms, and sudden executions’ that constitute Venetian justice.\footnote{117} The discussion of history introduces Jacopo’s dread of the sentence of banishment:

But there, afar
In that accursed isle of slaves, and captives,
And unbelievers, like a stranded wreck,
My very soul seem’d mouldering in my bosom
And piecemeal I shall perish, if remanded. (II. 1.132–6)

He has, in Marina’s eyes, very nearly perished piecemeal in Venice and she attempts to reason with him as one would soothe a child, by trying to talk down the value of the object that is lost. Venice, she tells him, ‘is not/A paradise; its first inhabitants/Were wretched exiles’ (III.1.147–9), but Jacopo draws a distinction between different sorts of exile:

\begin{quote}
Jacopo Foscari

Had I gone forth
From my own land, like the old patriarchs, seeking
Another region, with their flocks and herds;
Had I been cast out like the Jews from Zion,
Or like our fathers, driven by Attila
From fertile Italy, to barren islets,
I would have given some tears to my late country,
And many thoughts; but afterwards address’d
Myself, with those about me, to create
A new home and fresh state: perhaps I could
Have borne this—though I know not.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Marina

Wherefore not?
It was the lot of millions, and must be
The fate of myriads more.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Jacopo Foscari

Aye—we but hear
Of the survivors’ toil in their new lands,
Their numbers and success; but who can number
\footnote{(p.191)} The hearts which broke in silence of that parting;
Or after their departure; of that malady
Which calls up green and native fields to view
From the rough deep, with such identity
To the poor exile’s fever’d eye, that he
Can scarcely be restrain’d from treading them?
That melody, which out of tones and tunes
Collects such pasture for the longing sorrow
Of the sad mountaineer, when far away
From his snow canopy of cliffs and clouds,
That he feeds on the sweet, but poisonous thought,
And dies. You call this weakness! It is strength,
I say,—the parent of all honest feeling.
He who loves not his country, can love nothing. III.I.156–84)

The tension between the sound and the silence of exile is rendered with acute care in this passage, together with the contrasts between ‘herds’ of displaced persons and the solitary ‘poor exile’ or ‘sad mountaineer’. The sound of ‘barren islets’ leads to ‘tears’, and the phrase ‘out of tones and tunes’ suggests the unspoken disharmony of exile as a state which is ‘out of tune’. Byron allows Jacopo to trace the contours of exile in its sights, mis-seeings, noise (or noiselessness), touch, and taste. Although Jacopo makes much of the dramatic manifestation of maladie du pays prompted by music, his key insight is the recognition of a lost or silent history of feeling.

Ignoring (like all the men in this play) the voice of Marina, Foscari likens himself to Cain without Adah:

Aye, there it is; ‘tis like a mother’s curse
Upon my soul – the mark is set upon me.
The exiles you speak of went forth by nations,
Their hands upheld each other by the way,
Their tents were pitch’d together – I’m alone.
(III.I.186–90)

Jacopo was not driven out as part of a mass exodus, nor by open military engagement, but is the victim of a secretive and unaccountable process.
Byron uses the English formulation, ‘undergoing the Question’, for the torture of Jacopo imposed by the Ten. This form of interrogation was not part of English Common Law, but was deployed in the Star Chamber, the court that was notoriously above the law in England between the Middle Ages and the Civil War period, reaching the zenith of its coercive power with Archbishop William Laud in the reign of Charles I. David Hume, Bishop Burnet, Catharine Macaulay, and William Godwin all approved of the abolition of the Star Chamber in 1641, which they saw as the removal of a foreign—virtually papist—blemish on English liberty. Byron, Shelley, Landor, and Browning, however, were enthralled by this tribunal, in which (p.192) they saw the type of current abuses of arbitrary power: ‘I like the Habeas Corpus (when we’ve got it)’, Byron points out in Beppo (st. 47). The Star Chamber was thought to have been so called because, following the Italianate style of buildings such as the Cappella degli Scrovegni, the ceiling of the original room was painted blue, with an image of the heavens in gilded stars. As a court that asserted royal prerogative above everything else, the divine right of kings was even stamped in its architectural design. The threat of the Star Chamber hangs over Landor’s imaginary conversation between Oliver Cromwell and William Nobel, and over Browning’s tragedy, Strafford; Shelley sets some of the action of Charles the First in the Star Chamber, and Byron refers to the ‘Star-Chamber’ (XVII, 4) of Chancery (another court, like the Ecclesiastical courts, outside English Common Law) in the English Cantos of Don Juan, as well as the stronger traces of ‘“Star Chamber” than of “Habeas Corpus”’ (XIII, 69) in the portraits that adorn Norman Abbey. In the Venetian world of The Two Foscari, the off-stage presence of ‘the Question’ helps to make the point neatly summarized by Caroline Franklin: ‘For Venice read Britain’. 118

Byron had turned to images of the ‘heart’s quick throb upon the mental rack’ since the separation scandal. 119 Exile sharpened his interest in victims of a lethally silent and relentless process, which is the way he imagines the punishment of Prometheus:

Between the suffering and the will,
Which torture where they cannot kill;
And the inexorable Heaven,
And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
The ruling principle of Hate. (ll. 15–20)
The images of alienation that Byron invokes for his own condition, ‘between’ infinities of pain, are less like Jacopo’s babble of green fields, and closer to the images of vast distance envisaged in *Cain, The Prophecy of Dante*, or ‘Prometheus’, where the speaker hangs in the vault of space watched by an unresponsive heaven, remote, and indifferent to mortal suffering.

Metaphors of cosmic distance appear in *The Two Foscari* when Jacopo describes the ‘moted rays of light/Peopled with dusty atoms’ that travel down from his father’s apartment to his dungeon (III.1.101–2); and in the appendix to *The Two Foscari*, when Byron discusses the general human instinct for self-preservation:

> The church of England, if overthrown, will be swept away by the sectarians and not by the sceptics. People are too wise, too well-informed, too certain (p.193) of their own immense importance in the realms of space, ever to submit to the impiety of doubt. There may be a few such diffident speculators, like motes in the pale sunbeam of human reason, but they are very few.¹²⁰

Although it anticipates the argumentative drive of the mystery plays in a remarkable way, this section of *The Two Foscari* is rarely discussed. It suggests that Byron regarded himself as one of the ‘diffident speculators’ and envisaged his intense loneliness in ‘the realms of space’. The image of drifting motes may have been drawn from Dante’s *Paradiso* XIV, where he sees ‘le minuzie de’corpi, lunghe e corte,/moversi per lo raggio’ (ll. 1145–6), the ray of light which cuts across the shadow of human ignorance. Byron’s ‘moted’ is the first use of the word recorded by the *OED*, and Tennyson surely borrows Byron’s compressed image of Jacopo’s suspension in time to convey Mariana’s imprisonment, watching the ‘thick-moted sunbeam’ within the ‘moated grange’ and waiting for a deliverance that will never come.¹²¹
Strange approximations

Byron’s apparently digressive appendix fuses Old Testament law, ancient history, and contemporary politics in a matrix that also holds the Venetian plays, The Prophecy of Dante, Sardanapalus, and Cain. These works are diverse forms of exploration of the sentence of exile and the exile’s role in revolution. Byron and Shelley’s frustrated contest with Robert Southey led them to align the operation of fate as enforced by human lawgivers and historians, and the entirely imaginary decree of exile that they felt they had received from the English public—all of which antipathy was, of course, concentrated by the immediate experience of life in Italy under the Austrians. ‘God is not an Austrian’, Byron told John Murray in November 1820, subtly nuancing this belief in February 1821: ‘God will not always be a Tory’.\(^1\)\(^2\) McGann and Weller point out that ‘to imagine The Two Foscari read or performed in Verdi’s Italy … is more fully to recognize its outcry against government by secret deliberations and arbitrary decree’.\(^3\) But we also need to embrace the prior experience of feeling branded by scandal in England to grasp the full horror of the endogenous coercion that drives these visions of crimes and misdemeanours in Renaissance Italy.

Notes:

\(^{(1)}\) Said, ‘Intellectual Exile’.


\(^{(3)}\) Alan M. Weinberg, Shelley’s Italian Experience (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1991), p. 40

\(^{(4)}\) NLS MS 43326, folios 70–1. Quoted by permission of The National Library of Scotland.


\(^{(8)}\) Phillips, Society and Sentiment, p. 27.
Strange approximations


(14) *PBSL* II, 21.


(19) *CPW* II, 308.


(21) *BLJ* IX, 48.


(23) *BLJ* IX, 191.


(26) *The Letters of John Keats*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), II, 265. Plutarch’s description of Alcibiades’s versatility might have influenced Keats’s theory of the poet as chameleon: ‘For he had, as it was observed, this peculiar talent and artifice for gaining men’s affections, that he could at once comply with and really embrace and enter into their habits and ways of life, and change faster than the chameleon. One colour, indeed, they say the chameleon cannot assume: it cannot itself appear white; but Alcibiades, whether with good men or with bad, could adapt himself to his company, and equally wear the appearance of virtue or vice’ (A. H. Clough [ed.], *Plutarch’s Lives*, 3 vols [London: J. M. Dent, 1910; repr. 1948], I, 309–10).


(30) *The Sorrows of Werther* and Plutarch’s *Lives* are also blended together in the *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (1802), which was reissued by the exiled Ugo Foscolo in Zurich in 1816, and with which the Byron-Shelley circle became familiar after moving to Italy.

(31) *BLJ* IX, 11.

(32) *BLJ* IX, 11.

(33) *CPW* VI, 574.

(34) Editors have linked use of the doppleganger in this play to Goethe, M. G. Lewis, and Joshua Pickersgill’s *The Three Brothers*, as well as a Calderón play that Shelley had been studying. See *CPW* VI, 728–34.

(35) *BLJ* VIII, 13, 14, 15, 18, 26–7, 49.
Strange approximations

(36) BLJ VIII, 37.
(37) BLJ VIII, 48.
(38) BLJ VIII, 21.
(40) BLJ IX, 11.
(41) BLJ VIII, 127.
(44) Phillips, Society and Sentiment, p. 61.
(45) Phillips, Society and Sentiment, p. 201.
(47) Ingpen and Peck (eds), The Complete Works, IV, 161.
(50) Byron [with Hunt and Shelley], Liberal, II, 285.
(51) Byron [with Hunt and Shelley], Liberal, II, 67.
(52) Byron [with Hunt and Shelley], Liberal, II, 68.
(54) PBSL II, 21n.
(55) Byron [with Hunt and Shelley], Liberal, II, 67, 68.
(56) Byron [with Hunt and Shelley], Liberal, II, 82–3.
Strange approximations

(57) Byron [with Hunt and Shelley], *Liberal*, II, 83.

(58) Byron [with Hunt and Shelley], *Liberal*, II, 82.


(60) Shelley, *Collected Tales*, p. 333.


(64) Shelley, *Collected Tales*, p. 337.

(65) Shelley, *Collected Tales*, p. 339

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(68) Shelley, *Collected Tales*, p. 344.


(70) *PBSL* II, 53.

(71) *PBSMW*, p. 631.

(72) *PBSL* II, 22.


(75) *PBSL* II, 322.

(76) *PBSL* II, 179; *PBSMW* IX, 292.

(77) *PBSL* II, 219.

(78) *PBSL* II, 92.

(79) *PBSL* II, 94.

(80) *PBSL* II, 114, 187.
Strange approximations

(81) PBSL II, 26–7.

(82) PBSL II, 302.

(83) PBSL II, 339.

(84) Stephen C. Behrendt, Shelley and His Audiences (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989)

(85) PBSL II, 307.

(86) PBSL II, 21.

(87) PBSL II, 26.

(88) PBSL II, 436.

(89) PBSL II, 13, 89, 120.

(90) PBSL II, 363.


(92) PBSMW, p. 680.

(93) PBSMW, p. 691.

(94) PBSMW, p. 686.

(95) PBSMW, p. 314.

(96) PBSMW, pp. 315–16.

(97) PBSMW, p. 316.

(98) PBSMW, p. 317.

(99) PBSMW, p. 754.

(100) PBSMW, p. 314.

(101) But see ‘clinging’ for ‘changing’ in the editions by Reiman and Powers, and Everest and Matthews.

(102) PBSMW, p. 317.


Strange approximations


(106) Ingpen and Peck (eds), The Complete Works, IV, 143. coup de théâtre

(107) CPW IV, 544.

(108) CPW VI, 222–3.

(109) CPW VI, 223.

(110) CPW VI, 224–5.

(111) Lansdown, Byron’s Historical Dramas, pp. 73, 104.

(112) CPW VI, 632.

(113) Making a slightly different point about Loredano’s and the Doge’s shared dependence on the law, Lansdown notes their attention to procedure throughout the play (Lansdown, Byron’s Historical Dramas, p. 196.).

(114) CPW VI, 212.


(117) Caroline Franklin, ‘“My Hope Was to Bring Forth Heroes”: The Two Foscari and the Fostering of Masculine Virtù by [a] Stoical Heroine’, in Gleckner and Beatty (eds), The Plays of Lord Byron, pp. 163–80 (p. 171).

(118) Franklin, ‘My Hope Was to Bring Forth Heroes’, p. 171.

(119) The Prophecy of Dante, I, 133.

(120) CPW VI, 224


(122) BLJ VII, 239; VIII, 74.

(123) CPW VI, 631.
Strange approximations

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