

Beauty and the Beast: The construction of Italianness in *A Room With A View* and *Where Angels Fear To Tread*

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Abstract

This article focuses on the representation and function of Italianness in two British heritage films: A Room With A View (Ivory, 1985) and Where Angels Fear To Tread (Sturridge, 1991). In light of current debates on heritage cinema and on the filmic construction of national identities, the article argues that the films exploit their authoritative aura and privileged British positioning, to present a specifically stereotypical image of Italy. While the films' overt discourse celebrates Italy as seductive and life-enhancing, their subtexts validate the ultimate naturalness and desirability of the British subject; as an arbitrary creation, delimited by a fixed set of representations, this treatment of Italian Otherness is notable for its parallels with generic Western constructions of the Oriental. Confined to a restricted stock of identifications, Italianness emerges as an immutable foil to notions of Britishness, aiding the narratives' exploration of the possibilities and meanings of national self-definition.

Keywords

Italy
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Images of Italy and the Italians have populated British cinema since the 1940s, and British literature since the 1500s; as powerful signifiers of difference, they have held a significant place in British culture, functioning as a mirror in the negotiation and articulation of British self-definition. This paper explores the representation and function of Italianness in two heritage films: *A Room With A View* (Ivory, 1985) and *Where Angels Fear To Tread* (Sturridge, 1991). The 1980s and early 1990s were a period in which British cinema expressed an intense interest in the exploration of national identity: arguably, no genre was better suited to this task than the heritage film. 'Heritage' is a loose definition for a collection of films set in Britain's imperial past, often adaptations of classic literary works. Diverse as heritage productions are, they all have something in common: a pre-occupation with the conventions of late Victorian or Edwardian Britain (mostly England), a lavish *mise-en-scene*, and a middle-class, visually beautiful representation of national society. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these films have aroused great controversy among their critics. Despite its huge box-office appeal, heritage cinema has been often savagely attacked, accused of promoting a reactionary, celebratory version of national identity. Andrew Higson (1996: 233) expresses a still widespread view by stating that 'one

of the central pleasures of the heritage film is the artful and spectacular projection of an elite, conservative vision of the national past'. An opposite assessment of the heritage genre also finds currency, so that Jeffrey Richards (1997: 169), for example, insists that these films are 'profoundly subversive'.

Undoubtedly, in the case of literary adaptations, heritage films are often at odds with the sharp irony and social critique of the texts they are based on. Apparently minimising the original debate on class prejudice, gender roles, and national mores, the films focus spectacularly on outward dazzle; in doing so they capitalise on the nostalgic appeal of period properties, which include not just buildings and costumes, but the original novels themselves, as well as their authors. For the purpose of this paper, the portrayal of Britain thus presented has direct repercussions on the construction of spectatorship, of the national subject, and of Italianness. Insofar as the heritage project finds its place in a national cinema, in the sense of a cinema actively committed to represent the nation, it immediately encourages audience identification along predictable lines: guided through an allegedly authentic picture of their own 'heritage', British audiences may have difficulty in placing themselves outside the circle of the (British) protagonists, effectively allowing the film's notions of national identity to stand for them on the screen.

There are strong similarities between *A Room With A View* and *Where Angels Fear to Tread*: both films are based on homonymous novels by E.M. Forster, are largely set in Italy and even share some of their stars (Helena Bonham-Carter and Rupert Graves). Above all, the two films present parallel plots, featuring Italy as the catalyst for their development. In order to identify the films' formal organisation, it is useful to refer to the work of Edward Said: although focusing on Western representations of the Orient, Said's *Orientalism* (1995) highlights basic cultural patterns by which Self and Other are constructed, which can be usefully applied to British constructions of Italianness. Two concepts in *Orientalism* are particularly useful: the first is that geographical and national distinctions, with their derived attributes, are largely man-made, so that physical and theoretical boundaries are seen as circumscribing certain moral and mental characteristics. The second point is that the difference ascribed to a given social group is codified and organised, becoming a veritable system which frames the Other into a specific stereotyped vision. To apply these criteria to the films under discussion, is to recognise how their structure rests entirely on a primary division, the opposition between Italianness and Britishness; it is also to contrast the development of the British characters (and consequently the possibilities opened up for their national identity) with the immobility of the Italian ones, and the permanence of Italy as an unchangeable symbolic space. *A Room With A View* and *Where Angels Fear to Tread* trace what are essentially journeys of self-discovery for the British protagonists, characterised by a flight from an oppressive, hypocritical, and soul-numbing culture, to arrive at a new level of consciousness, 'revealed' to them through their Italian experience.

A Room With A View focuses on Lucy Honeychurch (Helena Bonham-Carter), a wealthy and naïve young woman; as the film opens, she has just embarked on an Italian tour, accompanied by her prim cousin Charlotte Bartlett (Maggie Smith). The impact of Italy on Lucy is nothing short of stunning, triggering sensual awakenings and undefined longings; a beautiful but alien environment, the country appears to overwhelm the heroine through its mixture of sun, heat, handsome men, and a staggering amount of nude statues. Lucy's conventional world is also challenged by a chance encounter at a Florence pension: the bohemian Emersons, father and son (Denholm Elliott and Julian Sands), whose unorthodox manners entice Lucy but alarm Charlotte. The Emersons adapt easily to Italy, for which they seem to feel an affinity, just like two other English tourists, the old and eccentric Miss Alans (Fabia Drake and Joan Henley). At the same time, Lucy sees the Italians being patronised or reviled by Miss Lavish (Judy Dench), a writer of romantic fiction, and Mr Eager (Patrick Godfrey), a zealously virtuous vicar. The film's dominant discourse is thus set in place, by outlining differences between Italianness and Englishness; characters are divided in two camps, with the heroine posed in the middle, facing a fundamentally moral choice. Motivation is then found in Lucy's struggle to find her own truth, and eventually to emerge on the other side of her native environment: the 'Italian' side. The plot moves forward as romance blossoms between Lucy and the young Emerson, George. Once back in England, though, conventions again take over, and Lucy gets engaged to Cecil (Daniel Day-Lewis), an eligible but pompous, unsexy fool, who peppers his speech with pretentious Italian phrases. This order is shattered when the Emersons reappear, renting a house in the neighbourhood; a crisis ensues, until Lucy understands that her happiness lies with George, and with the rejection of the arid conformity represented by Cecil.

Where Angels Fear to Tread is thematically and structurally close to *A Room*, but provides the added interest of a main Italian character. The film charts yet another Italian journey: this time the English, middle-class travellers are the widowed Lilia Herriton (Helen Mirren), and her friend Caroline Abbott (Helena Bonham-Carter). Opening with the two women's train departure, the film next shows Lilia's in-laws at home, receiving some shocking news: the impulsive Lilia has become engaged to Gino (Giovanni Guidelli), a younger man and the son of a local dentist. Outraged at the thought of Lilia marrying a lower-class foreigner, Mrs Herriton (Barbara Jefford) decides to send her son Philip (Rupert Graves) to Italy, to stop the wedding. On his arrival, though, Philip finds Lilia and Gino already married; a lover of Italy himself, he is nevertheless disgusted at the union, especially as the handsome but vulgar Gino seems to confirm his family's preconceptions. After Philip's return to England, the Herritons receive more distressing news: Lilia has died giving birth to a son. Immediate plans ensue, aimed at removing the baby from the corrupt Italian environment; Philip agrees once again to travel to Italy, to bring the child back. Things come to a head, however, when Philip and his bigoted sister Harriet (Judy

Davis) are joined by Caroline: initially meaning to 'rescue' the baby herself, as reparation for her complicity in Lilia's marriage, Caroline rapidly succumbs to Gino's charm, especially after witnessing the man's passionate love for his son. Meanwhile, the bewitching Italian atmosphere is working its magic on Philip. The three Britons attend an open-air opera concert, which fails to impress Harriet, but completes the Italian conversion of Philip and Caroline; moreover, Gino himself makes an appearance, unsuspecting of the baby-snatching plan, and greets them affectionately. Totally captivated, Philip and Caroline prepare to return to England empty-handed; at the last-minute, however, Harriet steals the baby, smuggling him onto the carriage that is taking them to the station. But the carriage is overturned in a sudden storm, and the baby is killed by the fall. Gino must be told: Philip brings him the news, and is viciously attacked by the other, driven crazy by grief and anger; Caroline's tempestive intervention avoids, perhaps, another death. The end sees Gino reconciled with his two English friends, who leave for England; the return home is very sombre, though lighted by the growing affection between Philip and Caroline.

Narrative similarities between *A Room With A View* and *Where Angels Fear to Tread* should be obvious, though a structural difference divides the films: while Italianness in *A Room* amounts to the influence and atmosphere emanated by Italy, *Where Angels* channels the Italian 'field' through a specific and highly visible character, Gino. Nonetheless, in relation to the protagonists' relation to Italy, the two films are identical. The main British subjects initially acquiesce in the views and expectations of the Grand Tour, content with ticking monuments off a list; however, they gradually undergo a shift in perspective, abandoning their emotional and moral atrophy, and choosing the path of truth to oneself which Italy has revealed. Although Forster's criticism of contemporary morals does not always make it onto the screen, the novels' exposure of a short-sighted reading of Italy is retained by the films. But, while denouncing traditional British notions of Italy as a fabrication, the narrative relies on an essential Italianness to provide a mirror for the problems of Britishness, effectively giving the films, like the novels, a double-shell structure: an unacknowledged construction within the construction. Moreover, one version is not so dissimilar from the other: what is really being discussed is not Italy, but rather the British approach to it. It is indeed their attitude towards Italy to distinguish 'good' characters from 'bad' ones: in *A Room*, the Emersons' and the Miss Alans' instinctive appreciation of the country is clearly privileged, and contrasted with Miss Lavish's exploitation of it, or with the condescension of Mr Eager. In leaving Cecil for George, Lucy swaps a pretentious intellectual, who fancies himself 'Italianate', for someone capable of blending in with Italians. Similarly, in *Where Angels*, it is Mrs Herriton's and Harriet's contempt for the Italians which marks them as representatives of Britishness at its worst. But, while appreciation of the 'real' Italy is the measure by which characters are assessed, the fallacy of the country as a knowable, qualifiable entity creates a paradox at the core of the narrative. Whether blinkered or enlightened,

British eyes are looking at the same object, an Italy which needs to be grasped in absolute terms for the process of British self-definition to take place. Choices made during script-writing and shooting are significant in this respect, as they aim at presenting a single, unambiguous meaning for Italy as a whole. In *A Room*, for instance, the early sequence entitled 'In Santa Croce Without Baedeker' establishes one of the film's major assumptions, the association of Italianness with art, sensuality, and danger. The camera leads the audience into the Santa Croce church, to show a disciplined group of British tourists listening to their guide, Mr Eager: the latter's commentary on Giotto's medieval frescoes stresses their lucky escape from the 'taint' of Renaissance, 'untroubled' as they are from 'the snares of anatomy and perspective'. By assigning this statement to an obviously dislikeable character, the script (here accurately reproducing Forster's text) achieves several objects: it reminds spectators of the traditional identification of Italy with the Renaissance, inviting them to prefer it to the medieval one, precisely because it is being dismissed by the voice of Anglo-Saxon Puritanism. It also introduces the theme of nudity, therefore of sensuality, in connection with Italy, which is reinforced in the next scene: here Miss Lavish shocks priggish Charlotte Bartlett, by declaring Italy the place to let oneself open to 'physical sensations'. A parallel shot shows again Santa Croce, where a panoramic view of the square is followed by a succession of close-ups of its statues: naked, contorted and menacing, they almost fill the frame, overwhelming Lucy as the camera takes up her gaze. At the same time, extra-diagetic music adds to the sense of threat exuded by the statues, and which finds its tangible culmination in the next scene, a messy and deadly fight between two Italian men. Witnessed by Lucy and George, the event violently shakes up the would-be lovers, who suddenly become aware of time, place, and their own feelings.

The film thus presents some British characters who find Italian physicality offensive (Mr Eager and Charlotte), one who is lured by it (Miss Lavish), another two, Lucy and George, who experience a shift in consciousness through it: this variety of reactions, however, is only relevant in terms of how Britishness is articulated and challenged. As far as the construction of Italianness is concerned, the film's message is unequivocal: Italy, unlike Britain, is the site of the body, with its implications of life, sex and death. In *Where Angels*, as the plot maps Philip's and Caroline's inner growth, the village setting of Monteriano ceases to be a postcard location, becoming the place to discover love and death; lust and grief come into the equation by association, making Italy a 'total experience', in contrast to England's emotional vacuity and physical inhibition. But, while the English characters are given a chance to develop, sustaining an implicit debate about the nature of Englishness, Italianness is forever cast in its given representation, without alternatives or indeed the need for any. This becomes obvious by comparing the films' beginnings with their endings: each plot completes its trajectory, a full circle is achieved, so that symmetry highlights the magnitude of the changes occurred. *A Room* departs

from the novel by introducing a new scene at the very end, in which a letter from Lucy on her Italian honeymoon tells Charlotte 'you'll be glad to hear that the Pensione Bartolini is its own dear self', adding that even the British guests are a replica of the previous ones, even including another Lucy and another Charlotte. The letter is read aloud by Lucy, who is shown with George having dinner at the Pensione: to symbolise her transformation from uninitiated maiden to knowing woman, she is now dressed in black, in contrast to the creams and pastels worn throughout the film. While Lucy has evolved, Italy has conveniently remained the same, ready to provide opportunities for another set of inexperienced British tourists. This idea is even more forcefully expressed in *Where Angels*, again by changing the original text. While Forster closes the novel with a train in motion through Italy, lending a transitory sense to the conversation between Philip and Caroline, the film transports this final scene to an English station platform, neatly recalling the opening shot of Lilia's and Caroline's departure. The audience knows that everything has changed for Caroline and Philip: they are back home, wiser and better, to start a new life. Even Harriet, the archetype of British self-delusion, has been affected by the Italian events, and returns in shock. But in Monteriano, for Gino, everything remains the same: neither friendship with Philip and Caroline, nor the death of his wife in childbirth, not even the virtual murder of his child, has failed to bring the slightest alteration to his carefree existence. As Philip explains, 'Gino knows that the things that have made him happy once will probably make him happy again'. A caricature more than a character, Gino is left as he was first found: in the eternal Italian world of pasta, opera and football, untouched by life's big questions. Introduced on the screen as a bad-mannered heart-throb, who eats spaghetti and plays ball with the same noisy energy, the film's only Italian character sails through tragedy by remaining always the same: he is ultimately defined not by his exceptionality (his extraordinary passion for his child has vanished with him), but by his sameness, his adherence to long-established standards of Italianness, which blur iconography and meaning into one. It is worth quoting in full what Said writes on the limits imposed on the Oriental by Western representations (1995: 102), as by substituting 'Italian' for 'Oriental' one has a fitting commentary on Gino's role in the film:

The general category in advance offers the specific instance a limited terrain in which to operate: no matter how deep the specific exception, no matter how much a single Oriental can escape the fences placed around him, he is *first* an Oriental, *second* a human being, and *last* again an Oriental.

Frozen indeed into a system of representations, Gino remains the custodian rather than the owner of the 'other' life, that alternative universe of the soul which Caroline and Philip have experienced, and profited from: the Italian, accidentally leading others to a higher level of perception, is himself too infantile and too elemental to be aware of it.

All this is not to deny Sturridge, or Forster, the right to depict Gino as a childish womaniser. What needs to be pointed out is the suggestive power of such a representation, its inscription in a long-established cultural tradition, and its parallels with Orientalist discourse, insofar as the Other is limited to a specific function (the unwitting catalyst for change), role (seductive villain), and appearance (dark, good-looking, and vulgar). In cinematic terms, the objectification of Gino is achieved by never letting the camera take up his point of view: like the Italian landscape, he is a spectacle, seen exclusively through British eyes. The same is not entirely true of *A Room*: in a scene featuring the British group being driven around Tuscany, Mr Eager decides to throw out the driver's girlfriend, as the two have dared to kiss. The unfortunate girl is then shot in medium close-up, left on the side of the track while the others drive on: by lingering on her, and on her evident resentment of Mr Eager, the camera allows the Italian gaze to take over briefly. Similarly, in the earlier sequence in Santa Croce, close-ups of the statues precede the shot of Lucy looking at them, giving the impression that they are actually observing her, initiating the exchange of looks. These shots, however, are rare interludes in a tightly-focused narrative, aimed at maintaining Italianness within certain specifications, and at letting British perceptions of it guide spectators through a preferred meaning. While both films follow the original texts in replacing the 'wrong' reading of Italy with the 'right' one, they totally lack the irony of Forster's novels, where the very condition of the tourist is problematised, and any version of Italy retains a self-conscious fragility. In the films, instead, the picturesque and the beautiful are foregrounded, inviting the audience to find satisfaction in aesthetic nostalgia. The presentation of Italy through the British gaze, the scarce subtitling of Italian speech (completely missing from *A Room*), together with a British-led narrative and a lavish visual style, define Italy as a perennially known, passive, splendid background: the space where Britishness, and its relationship to what Forster calls 'the inner life', are negotiated.

In both *A Room With A View* and *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, narrative structure and form are determined by the films' singling out of inhibition, hypocrisy and snobbery as the main British 'faults', as much as by symmetrical motivation: these traits require an antithetical double to set them off. Obligated to provide a contrast to emotional and physical restraint, Italianness embodies excess and lack of self-control, whether behavioural or artistic: in *Where Angels*, Gino's jealousy and violence, paternal obsessiveness and vengeful grief find a less dramatic parallel in the opera singer, whose massive (excessive) body size is matched by her over-the-top performance, as much as by the loud rapture of the audience. *A Room's* presentation of Italian art focuses exclusively on its presumed sexual license, first hinted at by Mr Eager, later displayed, somewhat grotesquely, in the shots of the Florentine nude statues.

While British inhibition finds its opposite in Italian excess, British hypocrisy is contrasted to Italian frankness, which is not the same as lack

of deceit. Gino fools Lilia into believing that he loves her, proceeding then to have affairs behind her back; when she confronts him with the truth, however, he good-humouredly admits everything, just as he later admits to Caroline his intention of remarrying for purely practical reasons. Similarly, the driver of *A Room* lies to Mr Eager, describing his girlfriend as his sister, only to give up the pretence as soon as it is challenged. Charming and open, but with a tendency to cheat and unleash upheaval, the Italian Other has an aura of danger, steeped in British traditional notions of treacherous dark strangers: while Gino is finally treasured as a friend by Philip and Caroline, he remains someone who has abused Lilia, tried to kill Philip, and cast his foreign spell on Caroline, who falls hopelessly in love with him despite herself. Philip's earlier comment on Caroline's proposed visit to Gino, that the latter 'will marry her, or murder her, or do for her somehow', retains a certain validity to the end.

It is on the issue of class prejudice that the films are perhaps most ambiguous. Ostensibly, *A Room* and *Where Angels* are at pains to condemn British snobbery towards the Italians, by making the least likeable characters patronising and arrogant in the extreme. Mr Eager's dismissal of Italy is such that he considers its history and art best studied by British scholars; Miss Lavish's infatuation with the country rests on its image as a primitive place, inhabited by child-like creatures. Before his 'awakening', Philip joins his mother and sister in tolerating Italians only if they are aristocrats: nothing less would be a match for the British middle class, while the notion of a dentist in Monteriano is enough to spoil Italy's appeal. Viewed from this angle, the films are exposing British attitudes as arrogant and bigoted; however, the films' own portrayal of Italy tells a different story.

The fight scene in *A Room*, depicting individual violence among an excitable mob, adds a working-class flavour to its evocation of primitive passions: in offering a spectacle of men let loose, Italy is bringing the lower classes closer to Lucy. In *Where Angels*, the casting of Gino as an unrefined gold-digger, with a stress on his bad table-manners and inaptitude for polite conversation, constructs an Italian 'good savage', making Italianness inherently low-class; thus British highly-civilised inhibition is tempered by Italian wildness, and Gino's brutality is forgiven in view of his genuine barbarity. While Philip and Caroline may dabble at 'going native' in Monteriano, their sombre return to Britain makes Italianisation an isolated event: useful as a life-changing experience, Italy remains outside the realm of the 'proper' world. Just like the Oriental, whose perceived difference is dismissed as archaic or alien, only to be idealised as an antidote to the West's spiritual crisis, the Italian is viewed through an ambivalent framework, which is patronising and myth-making at the same time.

Not all of the films' inconsistencies, however, result in the rigid delimitation of Italianness: paradoxically, the insistence on a certain view of Italy contains possibilities for its own subversion. While the films' overt structure relies on a distinction between Italian and British traits, the preoccupation with transforming British characters through immersion into Italianness

reveals a different subtext, in which national distinctions are subordinated to individual qualities and potentialities. This is clear if one considers *A Room*, where, through the Emersons, British tweedy quaintness is linked to Italian wildness: the eccentric father and son, country-loving, unruly and outspoken, are able to mingle with both groups. To discuss trespassing British characters, it is useful again to look at theoretical models of identity-construction: Robert Young's concept of the Oriental Other (1990: 139), seen as the externalisation of Western inner dislocation, bears directly on the films in question, where Italianness is the manifestation of latent qualities, excluded from dominant versions of British identity. Robin Cohen's theory of 'fuzziness' (1994: 18, 19), the idea of a flexible or permeable barrier between one's identity and that of others, is also enlightening: self-definition, built on a principle of innate separation, is in fact precariously achieved through constant negotiation. To apply this model to *A Room* and *Where Angels* is to uncover a paradox, by which Britishness and Italianness, supposedly antithetical poles of identity, serve as relative positions along the common, on-going path of self-discovery. In both films, when British characters infringe perceived rules of national conduct, they adopt Italian standards not to relinquish their identity, but to find it. Their successive return to Britain cannot alter what Italy has highlighted, the confluence of opposing qualities into a single individual: the frontier between two sets of values has, indeed, turned out to be fuzzy.

Viewed from this angle, the major difference between the various British characters is not the degree of their adherence to Britishness, but their interpretation of it: an interpretation which may incorporate, permanently or transitorily, some supposedly Italian characteristics. Paraphrasing Said once again, one can say that the reclamation of Italianness takes place when Italy is approached intuitively and not textually, when its qualities are felt and recognised, rather than detachedly known from a text: hence the difference between Cecil and George, the first vainly assuming the airs of an 'inglese italianato', the second never voicing a single comment on Italy, but instinctively being at one with the place. While Lucy's confused Italian experience remains characterised by the need for 'a view', the Emersons are the only British tourists not to endorse a textual attitude: as fuzzy in-betweens, they effectively expose the artificiality of national distinctions. This level of meaning is carefully underplayed by the film, which clings to its oppositional structure; the Emersons' difference, and to a lesser extent the Miss Alans', are contained under the catch-all, if vague, category of 'English eccentrics'. In *Where Angels*, on the other hand, trespassing British characters embrace Italianness having consciously renounced their textual baggage: Philip and Caroline lack the Emersons' radical philosophy, or the Miss Alans' child-like openness, so their Italianisation is more a course of action than a pre-existing condition.

Notwithstanding their token native transgressors, *A Room* and *Where Angels* leave little positional choice to British viewers, who are inserted in a

binary structure dividing the British protagonists (those 'like themselves') from the Italians (the Others). With the virtual absence of the Italian gaze, each film constructs subjectivity around its own, narrow notions of Britishness. This lack of alternatives results in the privileging of a specific national image, making the few available subject positions 'the only legitimate positions of the national subject' (Higson 1995: 275). While the films point to the fuzzy Emersons, or to the less fuzzy Philip and Caroline, as to preferable, gap-bridging positions, meaning remains ultimately based on the 'naturalness' of Britishness. As the self-doubt permeating the original texts is hidden from view, so the blurring between nationalities is unacknowledged, thanks to a visual and narrative pledge to 'national heritage'; the fact that the British premiere of *A Room* was in aid of the National Trust, and took place in the presence of the Queen Mother, leaves no illusion as to the intended presentation of the film.

Ultimately, the crucial factor in the reception of heritage cinema is the claim to authenticity of the whole heritage industry: films are implicitly given the reliable status ascribed to museums, listed buildings, classic literature, and other films. As authenticity lends authority, these films' representation of Britishness, or Italianness, reaches the screen already validated. In *A Room* and *Where Angels*, every narrative thread and subjective shot contributes to place authority with the British characters, albeit those who are able to see beyond the national 'muddle'. Mr Emerson, who guides Lucy and George out of their maze of self-delusion, or Philip and Caroline, who achieve their own self-awareness, are clearly representing moral authority; in particular, Caroline's authoritative aura gives her the last word on Italy, and her final position can be seen as symptomatic of both films. After playing a reconciliatory role, drawing Gino and Philip together after the child's death, Caroline stands for wisdom and 'true' knowledge; when she declares that she will never visit Italy again, she explains that she does not need to, because she understands Italy 'perfectly'. It is a statement which neatly closes the British journey of self-discovery: after knowing oneself through knowing Italy, the latter is no longer useful and is abandoned, to remain a distant Other with no place in 'real' life.

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