

**“There Was Never an Is Without a Where”: Northern Italy and Venice in
Four Twentieth-Century Fictions**

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	iii
Abstract	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
Primary Sources Abbreviations and Note on Style	viii
Introduction	1
State of Research	1
Research Questions	6
Methodology	8
Introducing the Novels	12
Chapter One: Venice, Imagination and Transgression	18
Part One: Venice as an Exceptional Setting	18
Introduction	18
Historical and Political Transgressions	24
Venice, a Safe Place	31
“Eastern” Venice	37
Part Two: Analysing Transgression Comparatively in the Four Novels	43
“Italiam Non Sponte Sequor”	43
Linguistic and Stylistic Transgressions	48
Social Transgressions	54
Venice, or “Sea Sodom”	62
Death, the Ultimate Transgression	73
Fictional Transgressions	78
Conclusion	83

Chapter Two: Minor Works in a Major Location: Publication, Reception and Selection Mechanisms **85**

Introduction: Defining “Major” and “Minor” 85

Selecting the Canon 87

Part One: Forster’s *Arctic Summer* 90

Genesis and Publication 90

Multiplicities of Meanings 96

Reception and Damon Galgut’s *Arctic Summer* 100

Tensions Surrounding a Transitional Writer 103

Part Two: Wharton’s *The Glimpses of the Moon* 108

Publication and Reception 108

“A Happy Whimsical Ending” 113

“No More War Stories!” 121

Part Three: Hemingway’s *Across the River and Into the Trees* 126

A “Has-Been” Writer? 126

Reactions from Critics, Scholars and Hemingway 129

A Sequel to *A Farewell to Arms*? 136

Part Four: Rolfe’s *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* 146

Genesis and Publication of the Novel 146

An “Undistinguished Minor Writer”? 153

Experimenting with Posterity 158

Conclusion 160

Chapter Three: “The Damned Beautiful”: Venetian and Northern Italian Environments **164**

Introduction: “Crumbling to the Shore” 164

Contextualising the Novels within Environmental Studies 170

Part One: The Venetian Environment in Rolfe’s *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* and Hemingway’s *Across the River and Into the Trees* 174

“Com’era, Dov’era” in <i>DPOW</i>	174
Belonging to the Environment	174
Porous Boundaries	183
“I Know the Place Very Well”: <i>ARIT</i> and the Environment	187
Masculinity and the Environment	187
Ecofeminist Discourses	191
Tourism Damage and the Picturesque	196
Eco-anxiety and Solastalgia	199
Part Two: Comparing the Northern Italian Environment to Home in Forster’s <i>Arctic Summer</i> and Wharton’s <i>The Glimpses of the Moon</i>	206
<i>AS</i> : “The Last Moment of Greenwood”	206
The “Bastard Country”	207
Perspectives on Tourism	210
Belonging to the Environment	213
Queer Masculinity and the Environment	219
Wharton’s Locations in <i>GM</i>	224
An Ecosystem of Relations	225
The Urban Environment: a “Site of Desolation”?	228
(Dys)utopian Environments	233
Conclusion	238
Final Conclusion	241
Appendix	245
Figure A: The Financial Success of <i>The Glimpses of the Moon</i>	245
Figure B: The Initial Outline of <i>The Glimpses of the Moon</i>	246
Figure C: Rolfe’s Answer to James Walsh	248
Works Cited	250

“There was never an is without a where”: Northern Italy and Venice in Four Twentieth-Century Fictions

Laëtitia Nebot-Deneuville

Abstract

The following thesis proposes analysing the literary representation of Northern Italy and Venice in four twentieth-century novels: *The Desire and the Pursuit of the Whole* (written in 1908, published in 1934) by Frederick Rolfe, *Arctic Summer* (started in 1911, published in 1980) by E.M. Forster, *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) by Edith Wharton and *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950) by Ernest Hemingway. Both Venice and Northern Italy are traditionally associated with literature; both have been abundantly studied and written, so much so that the subject seems to have been exhausted. The porous aspect of the city, which is halfway between water and land, makes a clear distinction between what is Venice and what is not Venice impossible. Facing this multiplicity of cultural representations and writings, James Buzard identifies the emergence of a sense of belatedness felt among writers writing about Venice in the nineteenth century: “For the nineteenth-century (anti-) tourist, to the problem of being one of a crowd was added that of being late on the scene” (107). While there is a well-established canon of twentieth-century writing on Venice from the perspective of visitors to the city in a range of fictional registers, (Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*, Patricia Highsmith’s *The Talented Mr Ripley*), none of the selected works have been extensively studied, unlike some other works written by the same writers. This thesis aims to augment scholarship on this period of time with the works under consideration; it also hopes to do justice to the complexity and originality of the chosen novels. Through different theoretical lenses, this thesis employs a method of close comparative and analytical readings to allow the recovery of the texts not as single entities but as works already part of a canon. Such a reading created unexpected points of encounter and disjunctions between writers and texts that have not, or rarely, been studied together.

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A special thank you to the help and guidance I received in accessing the Edith Wharton's collection at the Beinecke Library (Yale University), the papers of E.M. Forster's at the archive centre at King's College (Cambridge University), the Ernest Hemingway's papers at the JFK Presidential Library (Boston) and the Rocco Verrilli Collection of Frederick Rolfe Correspondence and Manuscripts at the Gay and Lesbian Center (San Francisco Public Library).

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Primary Source Abbreviations and Note on Style

The following abbreviations indicate the titles of the four primary sources.

DPOW: The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole, Frederick Rolfe.

AS: Arctic Summer, E.M. Forster.

GM: The Glimpses of the Moon, Edith Wharton.

ARIT: Across the River and Into the Trees, Ernest Hemingway.

This thesis follows the most recent guidelines of the edition of the Modern Language Association (MLA) Handbook for Referencing and Style, the 9th edition.

Introduction

State of Research

It is hard to capture the “real” Italy, not least because it is a country that needs to be apprehended through different layers of representations. It is even more difficult to understand the city of Venice for the same reasons. As Stephanie Malia Hom contends, Italy is encountered as much in Las Vegas as it is in the country itself: “Italy is equally constituted by the real and the fake, and indeed more people encounter Italy at its copies like the Venetian¹ than by actually visiting Italy” (216). According to Tony Tanner, paradoxically, the specificity of Venice resides in this multiplicity of representations. As a consequence, Venice does not have one local writer associated with the city (London has Dickens; Paris, Balzac; Dublin, Joyce), but rather a myriad of international writers: “Venice became an important, I would say central, site (a topos, a topic) for the European imagination” (4). Tanner seems to suggest that the “European imagination” has different needs in its various regenerations of Venice. As a result, the city escapes a dominant representation through being imagined in different ways. Unlike other European cities, Tanner also implies that the European imagination always seems to return to Venice. This is perhaps explained by Venice being one of the most - if not the most - visited places in Northern Italy during the Grand Tour. And yet, not all writings about Venice result from visitors of the city. Some, such as William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* (1598) and *Othello* (1603), or Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), famously take place in Venice while their authors never set foot there. Furthermore, Venice also took hold of the American imagination in modernity with Henry James, Edith Wharton, Patricia Highsmith, Donna Leon, to name a few. Therefore, Venice takes a particular form according

¹ By the “Venetian,” Hom refers to the Venetian Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

to particular writers, both within and beyond Europe; yet all of these various imaginings reveal similarities.

To explore this capacity for confluence, the following thesis proposes analysing the literary representation of Northern Italy and Venice in four twentieth-century novels, listed here in order of their composition: *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* (written in 1908, published in 1934) by Frederick Rolfe, *Arctic Summer* (begun in 1911, revised in 1951, then left incomplete and published in 1980) by E.M. Forster, *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) by Edith Wharton and *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950) by Ernest Hemingway. Venice conjures images of canals, *piazze*, bridges and art; conversely, Northern Italy does not signify the same series of images but is usually associated with other major cities such as Milan and Turin, or to more natural spaces like the Great Lakes. And yet, writing about Northern Italy often means writing about Venice, at least to some degree. This paradox led me to question the specificities and similarities of both designation of places, one being a region and the other one a city. Both are traditionally associated with literature, and both have been abundantly studied and written about, so much so that the subject seems to have been exhausted, especially Venice. The porous aspect of the city, a precarious phenomenon of water and land, makes impossible any clarity of distinction between what is Venice and what is not Venice. As Italo Calvino mentioned: “Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice” (87). Venice is therefore everywhere and nowhere at the same time, struggling to find its singularity and meaning amidst the abundance of representations and the never-ending flow of tourists. Facing this multiplicity of cultural representations and writings, James Buzard identifies the emergence of a sense of belatedness tangible in nineteenth-century writing about Venice: “For the nineteenth-century (anti-) tourist, to the problem of being one of a crowd was added that of being late on the scene” (107). That sense of belatedness is even more present in twentieth-century writing about the city.

There is therefore an intrinsic connection with Venice and literature, as the city is an arrangement of canons, which “has been constructed in and by various writings” (Tanner vi). Consequently, “the city cannot be ‘read’ until it has been ‘written’” (Tanner vi), and this polyphony of writing shapes our relation to the city just like architecture guides the way we move through it: “we inhabit the city as it has been written and rewritten as well as the city as it has been built and rebuilt” (vii). Tanner goes further in his analysis by theorising that the pleasure of writing about Venice can even replace the pleasure of travelling for some writers: “It is possible to think that for [Henry] James there was by now more pleasure in writing the word, *writing* Venice, than visiting it” (171). This polyphony, however, is not limited to Venice but also extends to other parts of Northern Italy. On a trip in the Euganean hills in the Veneto, John Addington Symonds mentions the difficulty of not thinking of Percy Shelley, who lived in the city of Este on the verge of that hill-range, and subsequently wrote the poem “Lines Written among the Euganean Hills” in 1818: “It would be impossible to spend some hours upon the crest of Venda, and not to think of Shelley’s poem. As a boy, I had those lines by heart, and used to wonder dreamily about the memorable landscape they describe” (Symonds 31).

Referencing previous literature is also a pattern in the novels under study. In Wharton’s *GM*, the narrator reminds us that Northern Italy never ceases to be palimpsestic: “It rose for them - their honey-moon - over the waters of a lake so famed as the scene of romantic raptures that they were rather proud of not having been afraid to choose it as the setting of their own” (9). The various ironies at work in this quote summon the weight of previous literary representations, the expectations of such a “romantic” setting, and the characters’ attempt to make this place their own. In her analysis of six American female writers writing about Italy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Helen Barolini explains the influence of Milanese writer Alessandro Manzoni, and in particular of his most famous

novel *I Promessi Sposi* (1827), on Emily Dickinson. The American poet built an image of Italy without ever setting foot there, using a combination of her reading on the subject and her imagination to do so. In the same way, it seems that Manzoni's aforementioned novel influenced the opening of *GM*, as Wharton's familiarity with Manzoni's work has been ascertained.² The opening of *I Promessi Sposi*, "*Quel ramo del lago di Como che si svolge verso il mezzogiorno*," which Barolini translates as "This branch of the Como Lake that unfolds towards noon" (55), precisely indicates the kind of poetic and grandiloquent opening that Wharton subverts in the opening of her own novel, suggesting the palimpsestic nature of *GM*.

Likewise, Andrew S. Keener reminds us of the references to canonical Italian literature in Hemingway's *ARIT*, as protagonist Richard Cantwell identifies himself as "Mister Dante" (Hemingway 246), therefore making Renata, the main female character, a Beatrice: "Despite Cantwell's courtly flourishes, however, the reader encounters a Renata who is not solely a celestial Beatrice or a virtuous Laura, but also a young woman motivated by sensual pleasure. She is a contessa, so she comes from a respectable, aristocratic background" (Keener 49). Both Mark Cirino and Lisa Tyler also emphasise the many references to Shakespeare's *Othello* in the novel, "thus linking Cantwell and Renata to the tragic couple in Shakespeare's play and underscoring the novel's themes of war stories, race, passion, and sexual jealousy" (Tyler 30).

Giulio Mozzi and Dario Voltolini suggest that previous literature can also add to our own perception of a city, taking us back to our own senses and subjective impressions of it: "literature is able not only to refer to but actually to restore our perception of space" (7). Calvino, for instance, chooses to write about Venice without naming it, and that cities

² George Ramsden, in his catalogue of Wharton's library, lists two copies of Manzoni's novel, one being a 1869 edition inscribed by her childhood friend Emelyn Washburn, and the other a 1925 Italian reissue (82-83). Wharton also depicts *I Promessi Sposi* as "the one great Italian novel" in the closing pages of her volume *Italian Backgrounds* (237).

primarily exist in subjectivity. Although they have one name, they have a plural existence, which goes back to the idea expressed by Tanner about Venice being built on a complex set of folklores, one that all imaginings and writings participate in. While acknowledging the legacy of the Grand Tour, my analysis evaluates the main shifts in the literary representations of tourism and travel in the early to mid-twentieth century. According to Roland Barthes, the twentieth century was a new travelling era in which the numerative and efficient logic of travel guides were no longer relevant. Travelling had turned into a more passive tourism, and the excitement that characterised the Grand Tour had diminished. John Ruskin's desire to "prepare us, educate us, train us" (Tanner 82) thus becomes obsolete as artistic and historical discoveries that have turned into common knowledge.

The problem of encountering Italy as a tourist is an abiding subject in the fiction of Forster. Kenneth Churchill comments that "the confrontation of the Anglo-Saxon with Italy is for Forster a re-enactment of the Romantic dilemma" (179). While this is especially true in *A Room With a View* (1908), such an interpretation suggests an endless rehash of Romantic themes in literary tourism. This thesis wants to explore new ways of thinking about Northern Italy in the twentieth century through a comparative approach, in the alignment of recent scholarship such as Alexandra Peat's *Travel and Modernist Literature: Sacred and Ethical Journeys* (2010) or John Champagne's works such as "Floating Call Boys and Agile Homosexuals: Homophobia/Venice/History" (2012). Some studies of tourism in fiction with a comparative approach exist, but often centre on the Mediterranean to the degree that they do not think of Italy as a phenomenon in itself. This might be because Italy is understood as only partially Mediterranean, given its Adriatic Sea coastline, unlike the South of France or Northern Africa (*The Mediterranean Passion, Victorians and Edwardians in the South*, John Pemble, 1987; *The Seduction of the Mediterranean, Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy*, Robert Aldrich, 1993). More importantly, studies that have

adopted an Italian focus tend to centre their analysis in the aftermath of the Grand Tour (*The Beaten Track European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918*, James Buzard, 1993; *The Italian Idea: Anglo-Italian Radical Literary Culture, 1815-1823*, Will Bowers, 2020).

Research Questions

There is a well-established canon of twentieth-century writing on Venice from the perspective of visitors to the city, and in a range of fictional registers. One can think of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912), D.H. Lawrence's *Twilight in Italy* (1916), but also Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1955) or Daphne Du Maurier's "Don't Look Now" (1971). This thesis will address novels that are less celebrated as representations of Venice, but hopes to use them to establish a new groundwork for the analysis of the literary representations of Northern Italy and Venice in the twentieth century. It also seeks to do justice to the complexity and originality of the chosen novels, despite the limited academic traction they created. Although they were given more recent attention, these works have been relatively disregarded by critics, despite encountering degrees of commercial success. As such, these texts are connected by location but also by their relative lack of canonical reputation. By looking at them in combination, this work sought to explore not only how they represent Venice and Northern Italy but also why they were relatively disregarded. Engaging critically with lesser-known novels written by "major" writers such as Forster, Wharton and Hemingway unveils richer ways of understanding their work; engaging with lesser-known writers such as Rolfe allows us to get a better understanding of a specific literary landscape, and to question the meaning of "canonical." This thesis therefore aims to expand and query the canon as it exists, as well as add to it through different research lenses.

It has to be noted that in the first half of the 2020s, there has been significant renewal of interest in some of them, both from the academic world and from a broader audience. In

2024, *GM* was re-edited by Pushkin Press, adapted into an eponymous audiobook by Tavi Gevinson, and Francis Ford Coppola announced his plan to adapt the novel for the cinema.³ Hemingway's *ARIT* was also adapted for the big screen in 2022 by Paola Ortiz. From a more academic point of view, Champagne's recent work on Rolfe⁴ also suggests a revival of interest in the writer, and so does the first translation of Forster's *AS* in Italian in 2021 by Edizioni Croce. The contemporary interest in these works might indicate that these fictions speak to the current audience more than they did in their own time.

At first, the four texts appeared to be at odds with each other because of their varied literary contexts, the difference in status of their writers, and because of their textual history. Forster's *AS*, for instance, was left incomplete and published posthumously almost seventy-years after the writer's first draft. Rolfe's *DPOW* was finished but also published posthumously, two decades after the writer's death. This leaves us with only two novels with a more conventional writing and publication history, Wharton's *GM* and Hemingway's *ARIT*. However, despite these divergences, adopting a comparative approach created a rich analysis and uncovered a multiplicity of networks between the novels. Each of these fictions takes the reader to Venice and Northern Italy, and features protagonists doing the same. These characters commonly do not think of themselves as tourists, and demonstrate different degrees of sensitivity to the porosity of their environment. This thesis reads across fictions to reflect the action of going across boundaries. The time frame of the novels, which encompasses the early twentieth century up to the mid twentieth century, allowed me to grasp the complexity inherent to Northern Italy and Venice in fifty years of major historical, social and political upheavals. All four novels are unclear about their time frame, perhaps indicating a desire to escape the contemporary affairs of the time. In addition to this, each author wrote and engaged with the historical context in different ways. Rolfe, for instance,

³ "Then he's moving to London to make his next film, a "'30s-style strange musical" based on the 1922 Edith Wharton novel *Glimpses of the Moon*" (Yuan, 2024).

⁴ See "Baron Corvo's *Venice Letters* and Modern Male Homosexuality" (Champagne, 2024).

wrote his novel entirely in a pre-war context. Forster started his novel before World War I, and continued it during, in 1912; he then paused it and came back to it after World War II, in 1951. Wharton's writing of *GM* took place between the two World Wars, at the dawn of Fascist Italy; Hemingway wrote his novel after the end of both conflicts and the fall of the fascist regime in Italy. All these contextual differences are key in understanding the writers' experiences of Northern Italy and Venice.

Methodology

My methodological approach is founded on three main principles: close textual analysis, theoretical and comparative readings. Each chapter highlights a particular conceptual engagement and involves each of the fictions in that. This methodological approach necessarily makes longer chapters, which I mitigated by creating different sections and subsections. Instead of dedicating each chapter to one particular writer and text, I chose to make a comparative literary analysis of the four texts in each chapter to generate unexpected points of encounter and discussions between the four texts. By reading them not as single entities but analysing them simultaneously, the objective was to bring them into a more fruitful conversation, as if they were already part of a canon. My knowledge of French and Italian enabled me to read existing studies by Italian or French scholars not yet translated in English and which I have translated in this thesis.⁵

That said, Rolfe presented particular difficulties, both ethical and material. His sexually exploitative actions on Venetian boys, which he openly wrote about in *The Venice Letters*, (1909-1910, published in 1974) are equally obvious in *DPOW*. While these actions signify a pederastic trope in writing about Venice, and more generally Italy,⁶ they also speak to the phenomenon of oversexualisation that happens in Venice, which I further expand on in Chapter One. Besides, working on Rolfe presented material difficulties because of a lack

⁵ See in Chapter Two translations for articles and essays written by Hanquart, Asaro and Lombardo.

⁶ One can think of Oscar Wilde's and Mann's writings.

of resources. Unlike the three other writers of this thesis, Rolfe's personal writings are scattered in international archival centers, which also contributed to complexifying the research process. The scarce publication and distribution of his works made research fragmented and sometimes inconclusive.⁷

As Peat puts it: "To write about travel is always an act of imaginative engagement with another; it is a way of reaching out across boundaries" (170). This idea of "reaching out across boundaries" is similar to the definition of transgression, which comes from the latin 'transgredi' and means the act of going beyond something. Therefore, the act of travelling and of writing about travelling can be interpreted as inherently transgressive, connecting the two concepts. Hence, Chapter One of this thesis firstly analyses the different types of transgressions at play in Northern Italy and Venice, and then in the novels. Building on Michael Foucault's definition of the transgression which he defines as a "play of limits" (33), and on previous studies with a main focus on the nineteenth century (Ian Littlewood's *Sultry Climates: Travel and Sex since the Grand Tour*, 2001), the first aim of this chapter is to understand why transgression is an integral part of these locations, and explained by historical, social and economical decisions that go beyond their representation in fiction. The second aim of this chapter is to show how this phenomenon of transgression impacted the four novels. The status of the characters as foreigners temporarily staying in Venice and Northern Italy allows them to be read in a series of transgressive contexts, whether linguistic, social, sexual, economical and fictional. Yet, the necessary partaking in transgressive practices is at odds with the very definition of transgression. Therefore, the chapter argues that going beyond the binarity of transgressive and non-transgressive is necessary in Venice, especially as the city makes different realities coexist at the same time.

⁷ For instance, several books were privately owned privately and untraceable; others were listed on a specific collection or website but then not found.

Perishability, for instance, cohabits with the idea that Venice is also a “safe place” as theorised by Didier Eribon.

Discussing transgression was also a gateway to discuss Rolfe and Forster’s queer identity and the impact it had on their writings. I chose to use ‘queer’ and not ‘homosexual’ or ‘gay’ to refer to both authors because, as Dominic Janes pointed out, queerness is “generally understood to exist in relation to the transgression of categories” (109). Building upon Leo Bersani’s *Homos* (1995), Janes asserts that ‘queer’ “does more work than the terms ‘homosexual’ or ‘gay.’ The main problem with these latter terms is that they are largely defined negatively by ‘not being sexually straight’ and operate through the assertion of a new oppositional category, whereas ‘queer’ can be seen as that which sets itself up against the normative” (Janes 109). As such, queerness plays with the concept of limits and encourages to go beyond predefined categories, which is a shared characteristic of the notion of transgression but also of the city of Venice.

After looking into different themes connected by transgression, Chapter Two uses original material collected during archival research to retrace the genesis, writing and publication processes of the four novels, in order to query and expand the notion of canonicity. Correspondence between Wharton and her editors, for instance, revealed the pressure the writer was on after the publication of *The Age of Innocence* and in a post-war world; similarly, Hemingway’s exchanges with his family and friends emphasised how ill-equipped the writer was at the time for an expected literary comeback. Rolfe’s correspondence highlighted his conflictual positions with his editors and friends, and Forster’s notes and diaries unveiled his layered writing process. In addition to this, and based on close readings of correspondences and diaries, the chapter argues that Forster, Wharton and Hemingway all showcase original decisions, in terms of plots, themes and tone, which seemed to have destabilised critics and readers. Rolfe is the exception, as he

was already considered to be a “marginal” writer during his lifetime. The unfinished nature of *AS*, which stops after Lance’s death, shows Forster’s frustration with tragic endings for queer characters, and perhaps suggests his desire to break away from this trope - which he does in *Maurice*. *GM*’s light satire and happy ending seemed to have prompted critics to be wary about the work’s value; *ARIT* contradicts ideas about Hemingway’s all-potent masculinity. Rolfe’s case illustrates Franco Moretti’s “blind spot” (211) in the selection of canonical works as there is no apparent reason why his work is lesser-known than other experimental writers. The chapter theorises that it is the unmistakably queer aspect of *DPOW*, combined with Rolfe’s poorly informed choices about publishing, that caused his minor status as a writer. Finally, and adding to the idea previously expressed about the overwritten status of Venice and of Northern Italy, this chapter asks whether the four fictions might be victims of Venice fatigue.

Applying Foucault’s definition of transgression to the environment, Chapter Three examines the different environments coexisting in Venice and in Northern Italy, and ties together all themes analysed in previous chapters. Adding to the idea that the transgressive nature of Northern Italy and Venice relies on ephemerality and porosity, this chapter explores these two notions from an environmental perspective, and looks into the relations between the novels’ characters and their environment. The first section of this chapter discusses exclusively the Venetian environment and analyses Rolfe’s *DPOW* and Hemingway’s *ARIT*. Because Forster’s *AS* and Wharton’s *GM* are located in Northern Italy but also in other European countries like France and the United Kingdom, the second section is centered on a broader analysis of the foreign environment as opposed to the one considered to be “home.” Despite the different impact of the Venetian environment on the characters, section one shows that both Rolfe and Hemingway’s novels embody the exploitative mechanisms present in Venice, in addition to highlighting the ecological

transgressiveness of the city. The second section argues that in both texts, the Northern Italian environment acts as a decisive point of comparison for the characters of each fiction.

Introducing the Novels

The four narratives under study offer different perceptions of Northern Italy and Venice as they cover a broad historical period. Hemingway and Rolfe's novels exclusively take place in Venice; Wharton's novel also takes place in other parts of Northern Italy such as Milan and Lake Como, before moving on to Paris and its suburbs. Forster's text explores Northern Italian settings such as Milan and Tramonta, an imaginary town said to be in Lombardy, as well as the British countryside. By omitting to mention Venice and imagining a new town, Forster perhaps indicates a desire to evade the weight of previous literature. All works, however, situate themselves within or after of a significant period in modern tourism:

Other significant historical precursors that paved the way for the modern tourism industry include: the emergence of the guidebook industry in the mid - to late nineteenth century, the development of international shipping lines in the 1830s and the subsequent reign of the ocean liner in the early twentieth century, the consolidation and spread of the railway network, the creation of an international network of telegraph wires and submarine cables and the beginning of commercial aviation in the 1920s. (Peat 4)

Forster's *AS* in particular testifies to the changes brought by industrialisation and modernisation of transports and cities. Wharton's main conflict in *GM* is based on exchanges of telegrams and letters. Rolfe's novel, similarly to Hemingway's, despises the flow of tourists and their use of guidebooks. In addition to this, the four texts share a literary continuity as they each portray protagonists seeking refuge in Northern Italy to escape social entrapment. Wharton's *GM* defies the idea that Venice was mostly written by male writers, making her novel transgressive in terms of gendered expectations. As analysed previously, the incipit of the novel suggests that she is aware of the implications of writing about Venice, but chooses to tell that story

nevertheless. Besides the setting, the four novels share another theme: love affairs that should not happen in the first place or that were not meant to happen because of love and marriage conventions which were observed at the time.

Historicity also makes the texts distinct as all of them offer a specific account of Venice, and Northern Italy, from the protagonists' point of view. With the exception of *AS*, the other three novels all feature penniless main characters, which goes against the traditional idea of wealthy foreigners tourists visiting Italy. The novels also reveal the linguistic, social, sexual and economical implications of temporarily staying in Venice, from a British or an American perspective. Interestingly, most of these novels were not received positively by critics, for different reasons. It is also fair to say that all novels, although to varying degrees, are not the most well-known out of their writers' work. Some, however, as mentioned previously, have been given more public attention recently.

DPOW was written at a time when Rolfe was on the verge of homelessness and living in dire conditions in Venice. As Victor Hall expresses:

The city to which he had come for a brief holiday, and in order to remain in which he had suffered privation, hardships, and humiliation for more than five years, now affords permanent shelter to the mortal remains of Frederick William Rolfe. Homeless so often in life, he sleeps, at peace at last, in a *loculus* set high in a wall of the island cemetery of San Michele, overlooking the Venice which, it may truly be said, cost him his life. (64)

From priest to school master, Rolfe practiced several professions before being a writer; his writing career never met the success he expected. According to A.J.A Symons in his biography of Rolfe, the writer attempted to reinvent himself his entire life, which is why he used many pseudonyms for the different stages and jobs of his life, such as Baron Corvo, Austin White and Francis Eagle. Rolfe also built his career on lies or fantasies: he pretended he was an Oxford student when he was mainly self-taught; he also liked to say he mastered Latin, Greek, Italian,

French and German when his letters reveal he exaggerated his linguistic knowledge (Symons 134). Characteristically to Rolfe's writings, the plot and characters of *DPOW* are inspired by the writer's life: "The boys in the *Venice Letters* are obviously drawn from life, and provide models for boys in *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*: Gildo Vianello becoming Zildo, Bettamio (who appears in Letters 5 and 7) becoming the Ghezzo" (Burne 488-89). The main protagonist, Nicholas Crabbe, is a writer who lives on a boat and travels around the Italian peninsula. Before going to Venice, he stops on an island, La Tasca, that was destroyed by an earthquake. Among corpses, he sees a young teenage girl who is still alive, Zilda. Crabbe carries her to his boat and takes care of her until she gets better. Realising his desire for her, he wants her to leave but she insists on staying and working for him. Crabbe finally accepts on one condition: she is to be renamed Zildo and treated like a boy. Zilda/o accepts this condition as her/his father also used to refer to her as a boy. The rest of the novel is dedicated to their queer relationship. To remain faithful to this undifferentiated integration of pronouns, I will interchangeably use she/he/they when referring to Zildo/a in the thesis. This openly paedophilic and queer relationship might explain why Rolfe decided to make some significant cuts. According to Philip Healy in his foreword of the 1986 edition of the novel:

Unlike Forster's *Maurice*, Rolfe's novel finally evades a full engagement with its homosexual theme. This is the more disappointing since it was written concurrently with a series of letters, which have come to be known as the *Venice Letters*, and which describe, occasionally in graphic detail, Rolfe's relationships with a small group of Venetian youths, including the original Zildo . . . But, like Forster, Rolfe knew that such a book would be unpublishable, and while Forster was prepared to accept posthumous publication, Rolfe's poverty needed an immediate return, and he trimmed his story accordingly. (xi)

Despite the cuts, Rolfe did not manage to publish the novel in his lifetime. *DPOW* was published posthumously by his biographer Symons in 1934. Later attention was then given by scholars such as Cecil Woolf, Edward Ned Hoopes, Sergio Perosa, Allen Hibbard, Robert Aldrich, Garry Wotherspoon and John Champagne. Rolfe also inspired Pamela Hansford Johnson's main character Daniel Skipton in *The Unspeakable Skipton* (1959), as acknowledged by Johnson in the preface of her novel.

The publication of *AS* went relatively unnoticed, perhaps due to its incomplete and posthumous status. Similarly to one of Forster's most famous novels set in Tuscany written a few years before, *A Room With a View* (1908), *AS* is a meticulous study of British customs when staying abroad. It tells the story of British characters vacationing in Northern Italy for the summer, and features some of their reactions to Italian people and culture. The plot is centred around three main characters: Martin Whitby and his wife, Venetia, and Lieutenant C.P. March, or Clesant. The first two characters are especially present in part one of the fragment, and C.P. March is more present in part two. The latter is, however, often mentioned and referred to by Martin who believes he saved his life at the train station by preventing him from falling under the train. As a matter of fact, Martin becomes obsessed with him and tries to meet him again to express his gratitude, but March seems reluctant to meet Martin again. Secondary characters include Lady Borlase, Venetia's mother; Dorothy, Venetia's sister; and Lance, March's brother. Through different characters, *AS* explores the next stage of the characters' lives in *A Room With a View*: the married stage. The chaperone in *A Room With a View* now takes the form of Martin's mother-in-law in *AS*. No matter the marital status, different opinions on how travelling should be executed are also mentioned, as well as the quirkiness of British people staying abroad. Finally, both *A Room With a View* and *AS* are divided into two parts, the first one being set in Italy, and the second one being set in the United Kingdom. Similarly, the first part offers events considered to be unusual in their Italian setting, and the second part narrates the return to

the protagonists' homeland, and the impact their journey had on them. Because of its late publication and its unfinishedness, *AS* is not largely known and was not translated in other languages until 2021, unlike Forster's other works.

Unlike *AS*, Wharton's *GM* was a best-selling novel as soon as it was published, in 1922, although the reviews were not as positive as Wharton's other novels. She was already a well-established writer at the time, who had written, to only cite a few, *The House of Mirth* (1905), *Ethan Frome* (1911), and the novel that made her the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in Literature, *The Age of Innocence* (1920). *GM* was therefore her highly expected next novel after the award-winning one. *GM* is set in Northern Italy and in France, Wharton's adoptive second home where she spent most of her time after World War I. More specifically, it takes place in Lake Como, Venice, Paris and its surroundings. The protagonists of the novel are Susy Branch and Nick Lansing, two young Americans with no money but connections. They strike an unusual agreement to enter into a pretend marriage for only a year to be hosted around Europe for their honeymoon by rich acquaintances: "People were always glad to lend their house to a newly-married couple" (Wharton 26). Their journey gives them access to a temporary social status and lifestyle that matches their social-climbing ambitions. Susy and Nick's union, however, does not go as planned when they become unintentionally involved in the personal life of the family that hosts them, the Vanderlyns, which leads them to have their first real disagreement. They decide to go their separate ways for an uncertain amount of time. Susy stays with friends in Paris and Nick on a cruise on the Aegean Sea with some of his connections. Both receive romantic interest from richer parties that they turn down. In an unexpected turn of events, they eventually reconcile and change their lifestyle by deciding to work to support themselves.

Hemingway's *ARIT* was also eagerly awaited by the reading public, given that the last novel he had written, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, dated back to 1940. Similarly to *GM*, it was also

a best-selling novel soon after it was published, despite its mixed reception. In 1951, for instance, literary critic Rosenfeld claims that it is Hemingway's worst novel: "It is not enough to say that *Across the River and Into the Trees* is a bad novel, which nearly everyone has said (the fact is, a good deal of it is trash), or to ascribe its failure to Hemingway's playing Hemingway . . . It seems to me that no writer of comparable stature has ever expressed in his work so false an attitude toward life" (2). Critics seem to have attributed the novel's mixed reception to Hemingway's various health issues during the writing process, therefore implying that these issues impacted the quality of the novel. In any case, and similarly to *DPOW*, *ARIT* shares strong similarities with Hemingway's life. Fifty-year old American Colonel Richard Cantwell faces all sorts of health issues, and comes back to Venice after more than thirty years of absence. The last time he was in Northern Italy was when he was a soldier in Italy during WWI. Calvino's description of Marco Polo's return to Italy after his travels matches Richard's experience too: "the dreamed-of city contained him as a young man; he arrives at Isidora in his old age" (8). The novel is punctuated by re-experiences he has from the war and other somatic issues we could now interpret as symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. The other main event of the novel is that Richard has an affair with a Venetian woman, Renata, who is barely nineteen years old. Because of their age and health gap, both know that their relationship is not meant to last long. *ARIT* ends with Richard's death, making the novel a part of the literary tradition that associates Venice with death because the city itself (famously) is dying.

Chapter One

Venice, Imagination and Transgression

Part One: Venice as an Exceptional Setting

Introduction

Venice's identity is shaped by its constant state of mobility, which participates in its cultural and literary representations:

A Western city saturated with the East; a city of land and stone everywhere penetrated by water; a city of great piety and ruthless mercantilism; a city where enlightenment and licentiousness, reason and desire, indeed art and nature flow and flower together - Venice is indeed the surpassing-all-other embodiment of that 'absolute ambiguity' which is radiant life containing certain death. (Tanner 368)

This state of mobility, also added to by the people who visit Venice, also comes from the history of the city. Throughout centuries and despite countless invasion attempts, Venice remained independent from the rest of Italy until Napoleon conquered it. This independence was greatly facilitated by Venice's "geographical isolation" (John Julius Norwich 6). Despite this isolation, the city was shaped by Eastern influences as thanks to its Adriatic coastline, it is a place where the Western and the Eastern meet. As mentioned by Tanner, it is the complex and mobile geography of the city that testifies to this unique identity: "Despite Venice's commonalities with other Italian cities, it is important to underline at the outset that Venice's aquatic environment, and associations with foreign lands via the sea, inevitably endowed it with a uniqueness all its own" (Joanne M. Ferraro 9). Venice, therefore, seems to stand apart from the rest of Italy because of its environment; its aquatic side opens the city to the "foreign." In addition to its specific environment, Venice's

uniqueness also resides in the city's architecture. For Mary McCarthy, the architecture of the city even impacts the Venetian dialect:

Their dialect has its own peculiar music, high and sweet, like the chirping of birds. It has the same lively rhythm as the quick, tapping step, up-and-down, that the Venetians have developed to match the form of their multitudinous bridges, which are seldom thrown straight across the water, but arched, with flights of stairs up and down. The Venetians, when giving directions, do not say 'Across the bridge' but '*Giù il ponte*' ('Down the bridge'). (273)

The impact of Venice's architecture on art is equally visible in James' *The Aspern Papers*, which ends with a description of the dramatic landscape of Venice: "As you sit in your gondola the footways that in certain parts edge the canals assume to the eye the importance of a stage, meeting it at the same angle, and the Venetian figures, moving to and fro against the battered scenery of their little houses of comedy, strike you as members of an endless dramatic group" (86). Similarly to McCarthy's suggestion that the Venetian dialect reflects the architecture of the city, the irregular punctuation gives the impression that James is sketching Venice in words. The passage also underlines the theatricality of the city.

Hemingway, in *ARIT*, also discusses the uniqueness of Venice's geography: "It's a strange, tricky town and to walk from any part to any other given part of it is better than working cross-word puzzles" (32-33). This citation reveals the uncanny aspect of the city, which is one of the common ideas associated with the city by the reader: "Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else" (Calvino 44). Pemble adds to this idea that Venice is a phantasmatic place, where norms are inverted:

Writers and artists visualized a fantastic city where artifice was natural and nature artificial; where the exception was normal and the norm exceptional. The legend took root of the apotheosis of pleasure; of unending carnivals, fêtes, masquerades, and song; of immunity from what Barrès called ‘the hypocrisy of prudes, the narrowness of fanatics, and all the banalities of the majority’ (‘l’hypocrisie des austères, l’étroitesse des fanatiques, et toutes les banalités de la majorité’). (108)

Calvino and Pemble’s readings of the city are reminiscent of James’ previously mentioned quote on the dramatic potentiality of Venice. It also introduces the idea of transgression, which is a popular trope in literature and subsequent cinematic adaptations set in the city: Mann’s *Death in Venice*, adapted in 1971 by Luchino Visconti; *The Comfort of Strangers* by Ian McEwan (1981), adapted in 1990 by Paul Schrader, and also set in Northern Italy; *Call Me by Your Name*, written by André Aciman, (2007) and adapted in 2017 by Luca Guadagnino. Often widely acclaimed, these cinematic adaptations testify to the still ongoing interest in Venice and in Northern Italy as a place of transgression.

Jennifer Scappettone identifies some of the main tropes associated with Venice, such as the different realities that make the city, as well as its scandalous aspects:

Successive generations of visitors—from James to Winterson, Le Corbusier to Fellini—arrived with distinct agendas, inflected by individual and collective exigencies. Nevertheless, certain attractions of Venice, which may be identified as obsessions, pervade these textual genealogies: its fluidity; its decadence and ephemerality; its obscurity and resistance to synoptic views; the residue of Romanticism; the discrepant copresence of epochs; its non-Euclidean geometry; its aperture to global networks that are intellectual, commercial, and aesthetic; its “internal otherness” (feminine, Eastern, Jewish, and/or cosmopolitan); and its distinct vernacular, both spatial and linguistic. (41)

Scappettone's reference to "decadence and ephemerality" touches upon the concept of transgression that is a fundamental aspect of literature about Venice. Decadence, however, is only a part of transgression. Transgression, which comes from the latin 'transgredi' means the act of passing over, of crossing, of going beyond something. According to Foucault, transgression is ephemeral, otherwise it would become the norm. Additionally, and as mentioned previously, it does not simply cross a limit but plays with the concept of the limit. Therefore, transgression is not the result of an action but the action in itself. It resides in the balance between what is forbidden and what is tolerated:

Transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin; it is likely that transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses. The play of limits and transgression seems to be regulated by a simple obstinacy: transgression incessantly crosses and recrosses a line which closes up behind it in a wave of extremely short duration, and thus it is made to return once more right to the horizon of the uncrossable.

(Foucault 33-34)

This definition of transgression and of its ephemerality works particularly well for the selected texts, as many of their characters are staying temporarily in Northern Italy. The different categories of visitors will be explored later in this thesis but Susy and Nick, for instance, are only there for their honeymoon; Martin and his family are vacationing in Switzerland and Milan; Richard is staying in Venice to await death, and Venice is merely a halt for Crabbe, who travels around Italy in his boat. Their paradoxically ephemeral stays lead the characters to experience an equally ephemeral range of transgressions, whether linguistic, social, sexual or economic. Foucault adds to the idea of limitlessness and ephemerality by showing the paradoxical aspect of transgression: "Transgression contains nothing negative, but affirms limited being - affirms the limitlessness into which it leaps as it opens this zone to existence for

the first time. But correspondingly, this affirmation contains nothing positive: no content can bind it, since, by definition, no limit can possibly restrict it” (35-36). Transgression, therefore, is at the same time limitative and freeing, and is not formed in opposition to something but in relation to something else, adds James Eli Adams: “Transgression, in other words, is not a radically alien or “unimaginable” phenomenon, but is a constant, central presence of our imaginative lives, whose authority can be felt in the intensity with which it is resisted and regulated both by individual agents and by larger social and discursive structures” (208). This is particularly applicable to Venice: by pushing the limits between water and land, the city creates a constant state of crossing over that is also built in its imagination and representations.

Similarly, Georges Bataille analyses closely the relations of taboo and transgression and contends that “transgression does not deny the taboo but transcends it and completes it” (63). Most importantly, for him, ritualised transgression is necessary for maintaining social order: “Organised transgression together with the taboo makes social life what it is. The frequency – and the regularity – of transgressions do not affect the intangible stability of the prohibition since they are its expected complement – just as the diastolic movement completes a systolic one, or just as explosion follows upon compression” (65). This, again, works particularly well for Venice, especially as the city is associated with the Carnival, which is the epitome of an “organised transgression.”

Finally, another idea that is constitutive of Venice and connected to the idea of transgression, is the environmental aspect of the city. By being between water and land, the urban and the rural, the city is an environmental anomaly. Serenella Iovino observes that from an ecological point of view, the city should not exist:

As the perfect epitome of this fact, Venice represents the discordant harmony of elements upon which human civilization lies. Even more so, it challenges the very possibility of such a harmony. To create a city suspended on a lagoon, the Faustian

dream of turning sea into solid ground, is an exercise in hybridity not only because it mixes water and land into a new elemental combination, but above all because it is an act of *hubris*, a violation of ontological pacts. Certainly, *hubris* may have a creative function, and Venice stays as the luminous splendor of this assumption. (2-3).

By insisting on the “hubris” and the “violation of ontological pacts” that created the city, Iovino suggests that Venice is environmentally extraordinary and bound to disappear. In Foucauldian terms, Venice resides in an ephemeral balance between two realities ready to take over the other at any given moment, thus creating this constant state of tension and porosity.

The idea of porosity has been much commented upon by Walter Benjamin. Following his journey to Italy, Benjamin writes about Naples and defines the city with one main characteristic, porosity, which he defines as: “The stamp of the definitive is avoided. No situation otherwise appears intended forever, no figure asserts its ‘this and not otherwise’” (169). He applies this definition first to the architecture of the city: “As porous as this stone is the architecture. Building and action interpenetrate in the courtyards, arcades, and stairways. In everything they preserve the scope to become a theatre of new, unforeseen constellations” (169), then to other aspects of life in Naples: “In such corners one can scarcely discern where building is still in progress and where dilapidation has already set in. For nothing is included. Porosity results not only from the indolence of the Southern artisan, but also, above all, from the passion for improvisation, which demands that space and opportunity be at any price preserved” (170). Therefore, porosity resides where it is impossible to distinguish one reality from another. Everything exists in a continuity such as the church and other buildings, the old and the new, private and public life, work days and Sundays. Benjamin’s neapolitan porosity also seems particularly relevant for understanding the city of Venice. Both port cities, the coexistence of different realities within the city make it a porous environment. Similarly to Naples, the very architecture of the city is perhaps the most important porous feature, and

perhaps even more striking than Naples, as porous architecture in Venice takes the form of sinking, blurring any divide between the buildings and the sea. Therefore, the porosity of the city participates both in its ephemeral and transgressive aspect.

Historical and Political Transgressions

Coined by Roderick Cavaliero as “an icon of freedom” (132), Venice was historically seen as transgressive because of a series of events that provided the city with a decadent reputation. This includes the depenalisation of prostitution in the early Renaissance (making Venice one of the first European cities to legalise prostitution for almost a century, until it was abolished again in 1460), the masquerades in the eighteenth centuries, and the Carnival, established in the twelfth century, abolished in 1797 by Francis II, and revived in 1979. The first event has shaped the perception of visitors to Venice, since, as Scappettone puts it, Venice is seen as having an “‘internal otherness’ (feminine, Eastern, Jewish, and/or cosmopolitan)” (41). By “feminine,” she means that there is a tradition of seeing the city as a woman and referring to it as a “she,” in the same way there is a tradition of referring to Italy as a “she”. This association with femininity is visible in the city’s title, La Serenissima, which means the most serene.

However, there are usually two clear and polar tendencies: one is to refer to the city as a “maiden,” and the other is to refer to it as a prostitute. As Cirino puts it: “The city is specified to be ‘maiden’ because it was never invaded or conquered before” (49). In ‘The Business of Prostitution in Early Venice,’ Paula C. Clarke explains how legalised prostitution in certain areas of the city between 1360 and 1460 impacted the sixteenth century: “in the period from the legalization of prostitution in 1358 to the sixteenth century, government policy in general tended toward an increasing, if often unofficial, toleration” (461). This resulted in the city being associated with prostitution: “sixteenth-century Venice became noted for the relative freedom it granted its sex workers, and visitors regarded its

famed courtesans as one of the most noteworthy sights of the city” (Clarke 461). Tanner, however, nuances the idea that the city as a “she” only refers to a maiden or a prostitute. He reminds us that Venice is seen as a goddess in Pound’s writings, who associates the city with gems, precious stones, but also cultural wealth: “Trade and riches from every quarter, every culture, every clime, came to and through Venice, and just so all goddesses converge on and in her” (309). As a matter of fact: “Effectively, all goddesses come, rise from the sea - as did Venice - and ultimately they are inscrutable, un-probeable. Venus, or Circe? Artemis, or Zothar? Aletha, or Persephone? You cannot know. The eyes are stone; but they forget nothing” (Tanner 309).

Brigitte Bailey gives a gender-based understanding of referring to Italy as a “she” in the nineteenth century: “In this period Anglo-American tourists approached the difference that Italy represented quite consistently through the terms and ideology of gender; they constructed a feminine Italy as a counterpoint to the normative and masculine world identified with Britain or the U.S” (67). Italy, and in particular Venice, embodies a feminine fantasy for Anglo-American tourists, a place to escape that warms up the body and the soul, which is part of a wider discourse in relation to how the ‘heat’ of places such as Italy affected behaviours. The analogy between the warmth of Italy and the warmth of a woman has also been abundantly written about.⁸ Barolini identifies that both Margaret Fuller and Emily Dickinson in their fiction and letters associate Switzerland with Calvinism and bland routine, as opposed to Italy, associated with excitement and freedom: “One would decamp a ‘Swiss’ life, with its clockwork precision and predictability, for the seductive exuberance of its opposite—‘Italy’” (58).

Throughout the following centuries, the idea of sexual freedom will remain in the minds of visitors to Venice, and repeatedly surface in its literature. In addition to this, one

⁸ D.H. Lawrence, for instance, in *Twilight in Italy* (1916), draws parallels between warm and cold places in Italy and how, according to him, it impacts Italian women’s personalities.

could also mention that the reputation of Venice as a place of sexual licence is analogous to its status as a place of trade. And yet it is hard to think about any type of stability in Venice, which makes it a curious place to make trade. Its perishability animates desire and the pursuit of capital. Norwich enhances how Venice's location made it a place of trade very early on. Although the city underwent many invasion attempts, it tried to stay out of conflicts as much as it could for commercial purposes: "One of the secrets of Venice's rise to power lay in the fact that she never saw the twin necessities of defence and commerce altogether separate" (Norwich 85). Although what is referred to is the twelfth century, it is an idea about Venice that persists. The city also tried to benefit from the Crusades without taking part in it, thus confirming its commercial reputation:

The Venetians had many qualities but, as they had already demonstrated, crusading in fervour was not one of them. They were interested in the Crusade only insofar as it opened up new commercial possibilities; it mattered a little, if at all, to them whether their trading partners were Christian or Muslim so long as goods were delivered at the right prices and bills paid on time. (Norwich 87)

Since everything is in motion, then everything is tradable. Therefore, transgression in Venice might also be explained by the transgressive power of Capital, where the libidinal economy meets the real economy:

Venice has always been *accommodating* sexually, catering to all tastes, like the great hotel it is, with signs in French, German, English and Italian ('Petit déjeuner', 'Frühstück', 'Breakfast', 'Prima colazione') advertising the mixture-as-before. The Italian institution of the cicisbeo (sometimes a lover, sometimes a gigolo, sometimes a mere escort, to a married woman) was perfected, if not invented, in Venice. (McCarthy 271)

According to Tanner, the “accommodating” aspect of Italy is what makes it so attractive for British travellers in the nineteenth century: “By contrast England - and English - is all darkness and dissonance, associated with dung, dust, and, indeed, death . . . Where Italy offers constant consummation, this England is a place of negation and repression, and, where all in Italy seems to ‘glow’, in England you have to borrow ‘farthing candlelight’” (53). Tanner’s description of England and Italy emphasises the repressed nature of England and the accommodating nature of Italy. By offering “constant consummation,” Italy satisfies desires repressed in England, but also the U.S., which explains why Italy attracts more “sexually conservative” Anglo-American tourists (Ann Laura Stoler 172). In addition to this, Hiram Pérez reminds us that trade not only alludes to sex work but to queer relations: “Although usage can be traced back to seventeenth-century England in the context of prostitution, a specifically homosexual context emerges from exchanges among merchant marines, actors, fairground workers, and criminal subcultures” (6). This trade of queer relations is particularly visible in Rolfe’s *The Venice Letters*, which Champagne connects to the aquatic aspect of Venice:

Corvo’s letters provide clear evidence of the way the economy of a port city might foster homoerotic encounters. That Venetian gondoliers supplemented their income with sex work, either procuring for others or offering their own bodies, is well known . . . The short distance of water separating Venice from Burano made it a convenient place for covert sexual liaisons. Even a boat itself might serve as a handy ‘space’ in which to have sex.” (318)

As we will analyse later, Hemingway in *ARIT* queries the idea that the gondola is a space that welcomes libidinal exchanges.

The other historical event that marked Venice’s reputation is the Carnival, part of a very long tradition dating back to the eleventh century. However, after the fall of the

Republic of Venice in 1797, and until 1979, the Carnival of Venice was paused. Significantly, all four fictions take place during this break, as if the cessation of Carnival had to be supplemented by imagination. Mikhail Bakhtin defines notions of Carnival and carnivalesque, as Carnivals were very popular during mediaeval times:

Carnival is a well-known festivity that has often been described throughout many centuries. Even during its later development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it still preserved certain fundamental traits in a quite clear, though reduced, form. Carnival discloses these traits as the best preserved fragments of an immense, infinitely rich world. This permits us to use precisely the epithet 'carnavalesque' in that broad sense of the word. We interpret it not only as carnival per se in its limited form but also as the varied popular-festive life of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; all the peculiarities of this life have been preserved in carnival, while the other forms of this life have deteriorated and vanished. (218)

Although not specifically discussing the Venice Carnival, but other carnivals in Europe, Bakhtin establishes how eighteenth and nineteenth centuries carnivals preserved aspects of mediaeval and Renaissance life. As a result: "The suspension of all hierarchical precedence during carnival time was of particular significance. Rank was especially evident during official feasts; everyone was expected to appear in the full regalia of his calling, rank, and merits and to take the place corresponding to his position. It was a consecration of inequality. On the contrary, all were considered equal during carnival" (10). By taking the example of Beolco, a playwright and comedian of the time, Linda L. Carroll reveals that: "Beolco used the tradition of anti-establishment criticism and obscenity associated with Carnival as a vehicle for protest against his exclusion and the greed and hypocrisy of the ruling class which he felt lay at its root" (5). The following incident reveals the difference between life during the Carnival and the rigidity of everyday life outside it:

A profound change occurred in 1523. Beolco had presented at Carnival a scurrilous play (probably the Betia or a version of it, filled with violent obscenities and ending with a pact of open marriage). Being appropriate to the season, it excited no comment. However, he had the temerity to stage it again in May at the wedding of the Doge's grandson in the ducal palace, thus crossing the boundaries of time and space set about Carnival. Marin Sanudo reacted to the break with tradition by condemning Beolco for his lack of respect. (Carroll 13)

The Venetian Carnival gave to the city and its participants another identity for a temporary period of time, which lasted approximately three months, from the end of December to Shrove Tuesday. During this period of time, “The city was a theatre of masks and *maquillage*; a temple of the abnormal and the perverse; a hospital of pathological process” states Pemble (2). Gambling in public was illegal except during the Carnival. One could dress freely, regardless of one’s social class. The mask in particular allowed this freedom as one could create a completely different identity and “signified a certain physical detachment from the situation, and by implication a moral detachment also” (Terry Castle 39). Bowers also illustrates this idea: “For centuries, Britons and Europeans had come to the Venetian Carnival to spend a few weeks not being themselves” (95). Bowers is specifically referring to Lord Byron, who “indulged his appetites in the more sexually liberal society of his adopted country” as Cavaliero puts it (8).

Also considering the eighteenth century, Castle emphasises how the masquerade blurs the distinctions between different categories, as it is based on the idea of an upside-down world: “At the masquerade, however, counterposed institutions everywhere collapsed into one another, as did ideological categories: masculinity into femininity, ‘Englishness’ into exoticism, humanity into bestiality” (78). Castle highlights that masquerades were seen as disrupting the official power, and reminds us that the Lisbon

earthquake was blamed on masquerades. She also reminds us that many European cities celebrated carnivals, thus inscribing it into a European tradition and questioning the exceptionalism of the Venetian version of it, at least from mediaeval times and up to the eighteenth century. However, the Venetian Carnival stands out in comparison to others because of its recent revival. Despite centuries of absence (from Napoleon's invasion in 1797 to 1979), the Carnival in Venice is still celebrated annually to this day, unlike other European carnivals. Mainly for tourism purposes, it became an essential part of the identity of Venice, with an emphasis on the masking tradition.

Bakhtin, Carroll and Castle all imply that transgression becomes the norm during Carnival, as the ephemeral nature of Carnival allows its excesses. However, as mentioned previously, if transgression becomes the norm, even for a temporary period of time, then it defeats the purpose of transgression. Besides, it is debatable whether an event happening every year at the same period of time, for a period of nearly three months, can be considered ephemeral. Despite the fact that none of the four fictions are set during the official Venice Carnival times, there are still traces of carnival and carnivalesque. In fact, one might notice that the characteristics and effects of the masquerade are very similar to the characteristics and effects of travelling in Venice. The masquerade provides a limited licence to people from Venice; travelling to Venice provides licence to people from elsewhere. In many aspects, the analogy seems accurate since, as previously discussed, both travelling and masquerading allow for temporary transgressions. Furthermore, the traveller wears a type of mask as they have the possibility to reinvent themselves abroad. People travelling to a masquerade are thus defined and transformed by the very act of travelling and, by going to the masquerade, they are already performing as part of their journey. The blurriness of identity is a pattern in the four novels examined in this study: in *GM*, Susy's married friend, Ellie Vanderlyn, reinvents herself by having an affair in a hidden villa in Venice; Susy and

Nick perform a very particular version of themselves – a wealthy married couple - in Northern Italy, before the masquerade ends in France. Renata, in *ARIT*, becomes a daughter in her temporary relationship with Richard; Zilda, in *DPOW*, a son. Martin, in *AS*, would like to reinvent himself as a brave man, but does not manage to do so: “He was still the same person, and what was sound in him must set the work and fill up this flaw” (44).

Finally, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, the architecture of Venice seems to reflect - or add - to the theatrical and transgressive aspect of the city. Tanner observes that the narrow and dark streets call for decadent behaviours. McCarthy reads the Venetian architecture as: “a stage architecture, caring little (up to Palladio) for principles and concerned mainly with ‘effects’” (245). The reference to the ‘stage’ is reminiscent of James’s observation, quoted before, that Venetians appear to be “members of an endless dramatic group” (86). There is something intrinsically transgressive and dramatic about Venice’s architecture being similar to a ‘stage architecture,’ as the implication of this is ephemerality and perishability. McCarthy exemplifies the idea of a dramatic Venice, “concerned mainly with ‘effects’”: “St Mark’s Church is a (literally) shining example of this spirit of initiative, this gift for improvisation, for turning everything to account. It is made of bricks, like most Venetian churches, since brick was the easiest material to come by. Its external beauty comes from the thin marble veneers with which the brick surface is coated, just as though it were a piece of furniture” (194). Venice, therefore, is a simulation of reality, just like during carnival.

Venice, a Safe Place

The main historical events that gave Venice its licentious reputation at the beginning of the twentieth-century have been explored. But there is also one political reason not yet mentioned, which is the reputation of the city as a safe place for homosexuality. Venice represented a refuge in a time when unprecedented legal measures were enforced on queer

people in the United Kingdom: in 1885, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, or the Labouchere Amendment, was voted on. Buggery was already illegal, but the amendment condemned more broadly any sexual act between two men. Because of the Labouchere Amendment, Oscar Wilde, among others, was sentenced to two years in jail in 1895. His trial remains infamous as it was covered in the press for months and destroyed the writer's reputation. Wilde came out of prison ruined, weakened and cut-off from everyone. He moved to Paris and died there a few years later in poverty and loneliness. According to Pemble, the amendment and Wilde's trial had traumatic impact on the "collective psychology":

An atmosphere of guilt, shame, and fear was created by legislation such as the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, and by agencies such as the National Vigilance Association and the National Council for Public Morals. All registered a growing determination to counteract degeneration by traumatizing the collective psychology. Pornography, prostitution, and homosexuality were suppressed, and after the ritual destruction of Oscar Wilde any idea of comparability between Britain and Venice again seemed impossibly far-fetched. The laws and taboos that gagged John Addington Symonds and obliterated the memory of half his life were symptoms of an attitude that had no currency in the city of Tiepolo and Casanova. (109)

Pemble's extract meets French philosopher Didier Eribon's exploration of how gay literature was represented in the late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century. Eribon too sees Wilde's trial as a fundamental event in gay literary history: "Oscar Wilde's condemnation shook up people's minds. For many gay people, especially men, his name quickly became the symbol both of gay culture and of the repression it inevitably calls down on itself whenever it goes too far in the direction of making itself public" (145). A similar idea is expressed by Wendy Moffat in her biography on Forster, as for her, Wilde's trial affected

Forster's personality: "Forster came of age sexually in the shadow of the 1895 Wilde trials, and he learned their lessons well. Naturally quite shy, he consciously inverted Wilde's boldly effeminate persona" (11). Wilde's trial also impacted the other side of the Atlantic. Harold Loeb, founder of the literary magazine *Broom* in 1921, notes that: "after the days of 'Oscar Wilde and his lily,' it boded well that men like Hemingway had become writers, freeing the profession from any 'taint' of femininity, homosexuality, and decadence" (Mary Dearborn 165). Loeb's comment illustrates how Wilde's trial impacted generations of writers, and might explain why writers in the next generations, even transatlantic ones such as Hemingway, performed potent masculinity. Modellmog reminds us of the historical context Hemingway grew up in, and how "in 1911, the Chicago Vice Commission 'referred to homosexuality as among the worst social ills afflicting the city'" (360).

As a result, Wilde's trial explains the presence of British homosexual tourists in Italy at this period of time and in literature: "The advice of Maurice's psychologists, and the real-life exile of Wilde, provided the pragmatic legal and social reasons for English homosexual to go south" (Aldrich 99). By mentioning "legal" reasons, Eribon refers to the Code Napoleon adopted in 1804, and which legalised sexual acts between consenting adults. This code made continental European countries such as Italy or France an eldorado for British homosexuals, being close enough from the United Kingdom. In Forster's *Maurice*, the eponymous character is recommended by a doctor to go "live in some country that has adopted the Code Napoleon" where "homosexuality is no longer criminal" (188).

Escaping England to these countries, however, is reserved to the financially privileged part of a gay cosmopolitanism: "a white, urban, leisure-class gay male whose desire becomes globalized at the close of the nineteenth century" (Pérez 27). For those who could afford travelling, Italy, and especially Venice, became a safe place, as theorised by Eribon:

This mythology of the big city - and of migration to it - coexisted for a long time with a more general mythology of travel and exile, not to the city in this case, but to a foreign country, another country. There was - and doubtless still is - a phantasmagoric 'elsewhere' for gays, an 'elsewhere' that offered the possibility of realizing your hopes and dreams - ones that seemed impossible for so many reasons, unthinkable even, in your land of origin. Among possible examples, one might mention the appeal of Italy at the end of the nineteenth-century and the beginning of the twentieth . . . (165)

Churchill expresses a similar interpretation of Rolfe's journey to Venice: "In Britain he felt persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church's treatment of him, particularly by its refusal to recognise his vocation, and was obviously made something of a social outsider by his homosexuality" (172). The "elsewhere" that Eribon mentions also matches the characteristics of the masquerade: "hopes and dreams - that seemed impossible for so many reasons, unthinkable even." This observation is also reminiscent of Foucault's concept of heterotopia, which he describes as: "an effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (167). Among the few examples he gives for "counter sites," Foucault mentions the carnivals, thus making us wonder whether Venice is a heterotopia. It has been established that the city does not follow other cities' norms, and that it was a refuge for some Anglo-American tourists. In this sense, it is a heterotopia; however, it is only truly accessible through financial privilege; Rolfe's case reveals that going to Venice without financial capital is not enough to attain this heterotopia.

There seems to be a continuity between the tradition of the Grand Tour as an initiatory journey and the journey between England and Italy at the beginning of the twentieth-century: "Britons, just like other northern Europeans, visited the South, particularly Italy, for varied purposes - to tour classical ruins, study Renaissance art, bask in

the sun, experience exotic lands or escape from their homeland. For some there was also a sexual, or homosexual, purpose in the voyage” (Aldrich 69). Wilde spent time in Italy in the 1870s and in the 1880s with his lover, Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas, and later in his life in 1900. About his trip in 1877, the poet wrote “Sonnet on Approaching Italy”: “I reached the Alps: the soul within me burned/ Italia, my Italia, at thy name:/ And when from out the mountain’s heart I came / And saw the land for which my life had yearned” (710). The last sentence reveals how Italy was a spiritual homeland for the poet. This idea of a safe place, a refuge, is not new in novels taking place in Venice. Pemble notes how James expressed a similar idea: “He perceived the city as ‘the refuge of endless strange secrets, broken fortunes, and wounded hearts’, and in his fiction it became a metaphor for the hidden life” (50). By referring to “the hidden life,” Pemble includes all types of oppressed minorities in search for a breath of freedom in Venice during the nineteenth and twentieth-century, including women.

Thus, by being associated with a “phantasmagoric ‘elsewhere’” (Eribon 165), Venice also becomes a safe place for transgression. However, this reveals that Venice is especially transgressive from an outsider perspective, thus showing that the fantasy provided by La Serenissima is primarily confined to foreigners. This trope certainly seems to have encouraged a reading of the city as a more tolerant place paving the way to modernity. As a matter of fact, there are many accounts of queer sexual awakening with (and thanks to) Italian men, such as James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* (1956), which focuses on an expatriate American man having an affair with an Italian man - an affair that as per usual, does not end happily. Similarly, Aciman’s *Call Me By Your Name* (2007) tells the story of a seventeen year-old teenager, Elio, in the 1980s. While on holiday with his parents in Northern Italy, he falls in love with an American student in his twenties, Oliver, that Elio’s parents host in their Italian villa that summer. This coming of age story is at the same time a

coming out story as Elio and Oliver quickly become lovers for the summer. The novel establishes Northern Italy as a site of queer sexual awakening in the European-American imagination and summons the spectre of the fictions of the preceding century that have contributed to the trepidation of this site. Significantly, in 2017, it is James Ivory, known for his adaptations and directions of Forster's novels such as *A Room With a View* in 1987, *Maurice* in 1987 and *Howards End* in 1992, who wrote the screenplay for the cinematic adaptation of *Call Me By Your Name*. The success of the adaptation reveals that choosing Northern Italy as the setting of a queer coming of age is a trope in literature and in subsequent adaptations. It also poses the question of what Anglo-Americans did and do with their desires when they are elsewhere, as opposed to where the characters live when not on holiday - in the movie, London and Rhode Island - and where they are not fulfilling their sexuality.

Similarly, for Linda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst, space is inevitably erotic: "Place and sexuality are mutually constituted. Sexuality has a profound effect on the way people live in, and interact with, space and place. In turn, space and place affect people's sexuality" (3). Tanner also expresses this idea, but more specifically related to Venice: "And more than any other city it is inextricably associated with desire. Desire of Venice, desire for Venice, desire in Venice - this is a crucial force and feature in European literature from Byron to Sartre" (4). Hansford also notices this phenomenon in Rolfe's novel: "And there are a few passages of descriptive splendour as fine as anything in *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*, where the physical beauty of Venice is expressed as no one else ever did it, before Rolfe or after him" (8). Venice, therefore, seems to be characterised by writings that merge different forms of desire. As Hansford evidenced, this is particularly visible in Rolfe's novel but also in Wharton's and Hemingway's, which will be further discussed in this chapter.

“Eastern” Venice

It is worth remarking that Shakespeare’s Venice is a notably liberal place in *Othello*, allowing transracial marriage. Along with historical and political reasons that have been explored, the idea of Eastern Venice also makes Venice a transgressive city at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century:

Liminal Venice is, in turn, stamped with any number of characteristics vilified by heroic modernism at the turn of the twentieth century, in a metonymically linked chain of associations—as fluid, feminine, ‘Oriental,’ irrational, decadent (of the ‘moon’) — and therefore cast rhetorically outside of the modern moment and terrain, outside of the dominant historical record. (Scappettone 32)

By including “Oriental” in the “chain of associations” that comes along with Venice in the twentieth century, Scappettone reveals that “Oriental” was considered to be a transgressive-loaded adjective, just as “irrational” and “decadent.” Her choice of inserting it in inverted commas suggests that she is quoting from recurrent descriptions about Venice, but also that she is aware of the problematic aspect of the word, as it implies inferiority from the Western point of view. The adjective “decadent” is also reminiscent of the idea that race and sexuality are interconnected in the nineteenth and late nineteenth century (Pérez), an idea also expressed by Edward Said, who views the Orient as a “place where one could look for sexual experiences unobtainable in Europe” (190). And yet, this idea of “Oriental” Venice seems to be applied not only to Venetians but to Italian people in general, as shown by Lady Borlase in *AS*. Her description of the rural population of Northern Italy brings to mind colonialist and imperialist discourses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and also reveals Forster’s position on race and desire:

‘Now the people - Nettie, look at those children. How beautiful! They seem to be another race,’ cried Lady Borlase, struck with the change from the town. Instead of the

pasty Milanese workmen, she saw men walking as kings, and treating her like a queen. They were brown and happy and frank; some of them drove their families in carts, on the eastern sides of which green boughs were fixed, for the sun was fierce. (Forster 26-27)

This description echoes Montesquieu's meteorological climate theory, according to which the climate influences the nature of man, which intersects with Victorian notions of effects of the environment on people. Indeed, according to Lady Borlase, the men are "brown and happy and frank" because they live in the countryside and work outside. Interestingly, Lady Borlase does not make the comparison between Italian and English men but between "Milanese workmen," therefore associating whiteness with the middle and upper classes working in cities. But the choice of the three adjectives "brown", "happy" and "frank" is far from being arbitrary and reveals how "bourgeois identity has been tied to notions of being 'European' and being 'white' and how sexual prescriptions served to secure and delineate the authentic, first-class citizens of the nation-state" (Stoler 11). While Stoler is referring to Dutch bourgeois identity in the Indies, associating whiteness with bourgeois identity is still very much relevant here. By insisting on their other "race," Lady Borlase exoticises these workmen, whom she sees as primitive. She emphasises the power dynamics between them and her ("treating her like a queen") and reminds us of imperial dynamics in British colonies through her use of the adjective "eastern." On the whole, the effect of this description is to show that Italian men are seen as "Orientalized," (Champagne 327) and second-class citizens. Her choice of associating "brown" with "happy" and "frank" shows Forster's idealised "object of desire" - Italian men from the working class, which meets what was previously said about Rolfe's sexual relations with Venetian boys often working as gondolieri.

The idea of Italian “brownness” needs to be given more attention. For Champagne, the rise of fascism and colonisation coded the Italian body as white: “the colonization of East Africa, the brutal conquest of Ethiopia, and the 1938 anti-Jewish laws were all moments in fabricating for Italians an Arian heritage” (8). Yet the Italian body, especially male, was characterised by a constant racial ambiguity, and related to Italian queer identity: “While the product of a racist logic, Italian’s brownness opens up a however problematic and contradictory space for a queer Italian identity, an identity distinct from late Victorian white homosexuality, to historically emerge” (Champagne 16). Rolfe shows his white supremacist obsession in different writings, in particular when describing the body of his lovers. In *DPOW*, Zildo/a’s body is praised for being white as “ivory” and “milk” (10). In *The Venice Letters*, Rolfe sees the value of his sexual partner according to his whiteness: “Never have I seen anything like the eyes of Gildo or a skin as white” (24). Such observations make Champagne conclude that in Rolfe’s *The Venice Letters* “masculinity, skin color, and homosexuality are constituted alongside one another, an instance of the “categorical miscegenation” of modern conceptions of race and sexuality” (327). As a result:

One of the consequences of this categorical miscegenation is that Italy is ‘Orientalized,’ treated by northern Europeans as a once-great civilization ‘frozen in time’ — an attitude that renders Italians if not brown or black then at least the ‘different kind of white’ represented by ambiguous racial categories such as ‘Arab’ and even ‘Latinx.’ (Champagne 327)

The idea of racial ambiguity is further commented upon by Pérez, who discusses the idea of the “primitive” in his definition of a brown body:

I refer to the ‘brown’ body in order, among other reasons, to signal the fluidity and racial ambiguity at work in the way a gay cosmopolitan imagines an idealized primitive

figure that functions both as an object of desire and as the repository of disowned projections cast temporally and spatially backward. (25)

Although Pérez is not referring specifically to Italian bodies, his definition of “racial ambiguity” works particularly well for exposing the racial mechanisms of bodies coded as brown. As seen through Lady Borlase’s description and Rolfe’s obsession with whiteness, it is “fluidity” and “racial ambiguity” that characterises Italians from the working class from an Anglo-American point of view in the late nineteenth-century. In the passage above, Pérez suggests that brown bodies are idealised, and “the repository of disowned projections cast temporally and spatially backward.” This description is very similar to Champagne’s previous citation about Italy being treated as “frozen in time” by the rest of Europe, and idealised for a past that has no longer anything to do with its present. It also echoes Aldrich’s statement that northern Europeans came to Italy to “tour classical ruins, study Renaissance art” (69) - activities turned backward and that value stasis. Venice, paradoxically, is therefore both associated with mobility and fluidity, while also being idealised for its past.

It has been argued that the racial ambiguity present in *AS* and *DPOW* is also a trope in the rest of the writers’ works. In *GM*, there is no mention of race and racial difference between Americans and Italians. However, the absence of race might suggest a form of ignorance, or escapism, on the matter. In *ARIT*, through Renata’s descriptions that continuously connect whiteness and beauty (“Then she came into the room, shining in her youth and tall striding beauty . . . She had a pale, almost olive colored skin” 57), Hemingway shows that he paradoxically sees the Italian body as white. In addition to this, the only non-white character is visible on a blackamoor brooch Cantwell offers to Renata, which “features a heavily jeweled male figure with an ebony complexion” (Tyler 29), a symbol of slavery “celebrat[ing] the victory of whiteness and the defeat of blackness” (Tyler

47). Brown bodies are invisible, but nevertheless mentioned through unreliable stories conveyed by Jackson: “When the Moroccans came through here they raped both his wife and his daughters” (Hemingway 216), therefore promoting racist and supremacist ideas, according to Tyler.

Pemble suggests that references to “Eastern” Venice come from the fact that “for 400 years ‘the East’ had meant east of the Adriatic, and Venice had become, like Constantinople in Byzantine days, a great frontier city. It belonged to two geopolitical hemispheres and it represented racial and cultural heterogeneity” (118). Adding to this idea, Roberto M. Dainotto reminds us that: “In 1538, the complete Koran was published in Venice, a city tied by an age-long commercial relationship to the Orient” (176). It seems that with its geographical proximity to the Orient, Venice became associated with some Orientalist characteristics such as sensuality, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: “It bordered the Orient, and its civilization carried the stigma of miscegenation. The work of the most prolific and famous Venetian painters was tainted by sensuality” (Pemble 10). Venice is indeed often seen as the first step towards the East. In *GM*, Coral Hicks, a wealthy acquaintance of Nick and Susy, goes for a cruise in Italy first and then intends to: “go to Bagdad next spring, and back by the Persian plateau and Turkestan” (Wharton 59). This first step towards the East is also particularly evident in Forster’s life and fiction. Anita Desai argues that by passing from the writing of *Arctic Summer* to *A Passage to India*, Forster associates one continent with another: “It is not that he abandoned the faltering *Arctic Summer* and so freed himself to write his masterpiece, *A Passage to India*, but, in continuing to play with those initial ideas that were somehow not coming right, he was able to channel them into a magnificently wider, deeper river” (Desai ix). She adds: “on that Indian visit, he discovered the setting in which he could fully and expansively explore the importance of the heroic act, performed in *A Passage to India* by Adela Quested and Fielding, who go against

the rigidly regulated system of a colonial society and break through to another - and are saved” (ix).

As discussed previously, there is a tendency to feminise Italy in literature. Such a tendency is also present in literature about the East, further connecting both in literary imagination:

Despite Said’s insistence on the hermeneutics of this trope, the tendency of subsequent criticism frequently fails to register the implications of his reading: instead, current discourse – in its often unscrupulous conflation of the issues of race, class, and gender – tends to replicate the Orientalist desire to shroud the East in a ‘female’ mystery. (Sara Sulari 15-16)

Sulari’s passage corroborates what was discussed about “race, class, and gender,” thus confirming the perception of Venice as part of the East. However, Venice’s Orientalisation leads to an even more stereotypical representation of the East: “In fact, in British and in French estimation Venice was more Oriental than much of the Orient . . . Venice more fully matched preconceptions about how Eastern cities should look than did the ancient cities of the Levant, whose domestic architecture was almost invariably nondescript or modern” (Pemble 119).

Yet, despite Venice’s Orientalisation, it does not quite belong to the East, nor to Europe. In *A Passage to India*, Forster presents the city as an in-between space:

The city was now approached as often from Asia as from Europe, and on the passage from India, as Forster’s Cyril Fielding discovers, its Orientalism could not but seem diminished. To the eye accustomed to the chaos of the East, Venice had shape, as well as sumptuousness. ‘And though’, wrote Forster, ‘Venice was not Europe, it was part of the Mediterranean harmony’ (Pemble 141).

Forster's comment is rather paradoxical as it is based on the idea that he considered Venice to be only Mediterranean when the city is in reality on the Adriatic side. He also seems to imply that Mediterranean countries have similar characteristics because of their shared Mediterranean coast, which narrows the specificity of each country and conveys preconceived ideas on what "Mediterranean" means. Dainotto, for instance, argues that Mediterranean countries, specifically southern European, have often been defined in opposition to other European countries such as Belgium, Germany or France, and considered to be inferior to them, reminding Said's concepts on imperialism and colonialism: "southern Europeanists seem to have found in Said a new lexicon to discuss the old facts of Europe's internal colonialism" (Dainotto 172). Forster's mention of the "Mediterranean harmony" therefore reveals the different status of these countries compared to continental Europe, foreshadowing debates about the entry of these countries into the European Union decades later. It also reveals that Venice always has a different and liminal status built on imagination, confirming its status as a porous city.

Part Two: Analysing Transgression Comparatively in the Four Novels

"Italiam Non Sponte Sequor"

Forster's text starts with its main character, Martin Whitby, taking the train from Basle station to go to Milan: "It was early on an August morning, and the passengers from the Boulogne train, mostly English, were trying to decant themselves into the train for Lucerne and the south" (3). Significantly, although the characters do not go to Venice, Martin's wife is called Venetia, suggesting that one cannot really escape writing about Venice. In comparison, in *GM* and *ARIT*, the plot starts *in media res*, since the characters have already arrived in Como for the former, and in Venice for the latter. The settings are not mentioned right away but there are hints about the locations of the novels, although nothing directly points out to Venice, as in the Hemingway novel: "They started two hours

before daylight, and at first, it was not necessary to break the ice across the canal as other boats had gone on ahead” (1). It seems that such hints are enough for the reader to infer the novels are taking place in Venice, although this scene could well be situated in Milan for all the reader knows so far. Soon after, the narrator mentions “the lagoon” (3) but he only refers to Venice by name at the beginning of the third chapter.

Wharton’s novel begins ambiguously with an enumeration of European and American cities: “Chicago”; “Versailles”; “Monte Carlo” (9), before Nick Lansing explicitly mentions where he and his wife Susy are located: “Versailles in May would have been impossible: all our Paris crowd would have run us down within twenty-four hours. And Monte Carlo is ruled out because it’s exactly the kind of place everybody expected us to go. So - with all your respect - it wasn’t much of a mental strain to decide on Como!” (10). This quotation reveals that despite their lack of money, Susy and Nick master the cosmopolitan codes of their wealthy acquaintances.

In *DPOW*, the main character, Nicholas Crabbe, differs from the protagonists in the other novels as he does not merely travel in Italy, he lives there. Yet, he is not a resident as such since he lives in a boat and travels around the peninsula. Interestingly, Crabbe experiences boredom in Venice: “Nicholas Crabbe, being bored . . . departed from Venice at the end of November. He went alone in his topo of six tons burden; and sailed southward along the Italian coast” (Rolfe 1-2). Boredom is perhaps what differentiates travellers in Italy from residents in Italy. In the three other novels, the characters are often idle, but not bored, which brings them to reinvent themselves and act differently than in their homeland: “Lady Borlase never planned her holidays. She took plenty of money to a likely place, and then saw what happened” (Forster 39). In *GM*, Susy watches the sunset every day from her balcony, but Nick feels very productive in his writing: “She was almost always alone at that hour. Nick had taken to writing in the afternoons - he had been as good as his word, and so,

apparently, had the Muse - and it was his habit to join his wife only at sunset, for a late row on the lagoon” (Wharton 46). Richard, in *ARIT*, equally tries to create new habits for himself to escape idleness: “I think it would be better to have lunch out and get some exercise walking. It’s a good town to walk in. I guess the best, probably. I never walked in it that it wasn’t fun. I could learn it really well, he thought, and then I’d have that” (32). Idleness, in the selected texts, encourages new possibilities and sparks creativity.

Crossing a border, whether it is temporary or not, therefore means challenging one’s own culture, language and social norms all at once. Etymologically, transgression and travel are connected as transgression comes from “transgredi” in Latin, which means to go beyond, to step over. As mentioned in the introduction: “To write about travel is always an act of imaginative engagement with another; it is a way of reaching out across boundaries” (Peat 170). For Rolfe and Forster, the spatial transgression takes a double meaning, as:

Whether in the South Seas of William Stoddard’s Victorian travel writing or New York City’s Chelsea or anywhere other than the heteronormative confines of the traditionally defined ‘home’ and ‘family,’ being ‘gay’ requires some kind of travel, actual or imagined. The most canonical expression of being gay, ‘coming out of the closet,’ is a quintessential articulation of the link between identity and travel. (Pérez 106)

As indicated previously, writings of relocation are frequent in queer literature, although reserved to a specific social class. In any case, in the four narratives, the characters are frequently observing Italian culture and comparing it to their own one. Forster’s Martin Whitby, for example, has very strong opinions about Italy, especially its politics: “Italy has produced the worst bourgeoisie in Europe. There is no doubt of it. And yet, from his point of view, it was an advance on anything she had produced before” (Forster 23); “In what other country could three gentlefolk, a bailiff, a farm-labourer, and a smartish chauffeur, eat the bread of angels together? Will not Italy solve every problem if she has solved this?” (Forster

29). These witty and cynical aphorisms on Italy do not, in fact, say much about Italian politics, except revealing Martin's sense of superiority to Italians, which goes back to the now familiar idea that Italy is idealised and seen as stuck in the past. In fact, "anti-tourist Italian scenes" (Cecilia Macheski 104) are present in each of the novels under consideration.

In his preface of *DPOW*, Healy suggests that Rolfe tends to condemn his fellow citizens' behaviours instead of allowing a comparison between the two cultures: "And Rolfe's hatred of the expatriate English colony in Italy is characterized by the absence of the sort of mediating irony we find in Forster" (viii). Rolfe's main protagonist condemns Germans even more than British men, to the point of sounding xenophobic: "Venice is infested by Germans. That would be bad enough, if they were not detested" (Rolfe 42). In fact, one could think that Nicholas Crabbe emphasises his irritation for tourists, because the fact of mentioning this proves, to his eyes, that he is a true Venetian. Whenever an opportunity arises, Crabbe mentions that he lives in Venice like a Venetian man: "He was English, living in Venice, liked to be useful, didn't like seeing women at rough work, would row convalescents by sunny afternoons, run errands, and do anything which a brain and two strong arms and oars and the fastest bark in Venice could do" (Rolfe 56). Similarly to the narrator in *AS*, who expresses his political views on the bourgeoisie and working class in Northern Italy, Crabbe seems to demonstrate here a fantasy of the working class, although the difference with Forster's character is that he himself takes part in that physical labour. In *ARIT*, anti-tourism is visible when Richard lectures a younger soldier on Italian architecture (11). In *GM*, it is visible in the first lines of the novel when Nick and Susy make fun of the well frequented location that is Lake Como. The characters' desire to show that they know better than most tourists, and also more than most Italians, is therefore a way for them to show their disapproval of Italian politics; it is also a way of asserting their Anglo-American sense of superiority.

However, although travelling challenges one's norms, it also means entering another set of conventions. And yet, the characters of the selected novels sometimes refuse to do so, and prefer to stay with their own fellow citizens. Wharton especially explored this theme throughout her work. In *GM*, Susy and Nick do not behave much differently than they do at home because they only stay with their wealthy American connections. In *The Age of Innocence*: "Mrs Archer and Janey, in the course of their visits to Europe, had so unflinchingly lived up to this principle, and met the friendly advances of their fellow-travellers with an air of such impenetrable reserve, that they had almost achieved the record of never having exchanged a word with a 'foreigner' other than those employed in hotels and railway-stations" (Wharton 121). The last sentence indicates how travelling can only be a statement of wealth, and an experience during which one remains with what they know. There is therefore no point of travelling, as the following discussion between the two main protagonists of *The Age of Innocence*, Countess Ellen Olenska and Archer Newland, reveals:

'I want - I want somehow to get away with you into a world where words like that - categories like that - won't exist. Where we shall be simply two human beings who love each other, who are the whole of life to each other; and nothing else on earth will matter.'

She drew a deep sigh that ended in another laugh. 'Oh, my dear - where is that country? Have you ever been there?' she asked; and as he remained sullenly dumb she went on: 'I know so many who've tried to find it; and, believe me, they all got out by mistake at wayside stations: at places like Boulogne, or Pisa, or Monte Carlo - and it wasn't at all different from the old world they'd left, but only rather smaller and dingier and more promiscuous.' (Wharton 183)

In this passage, Newland tries to persuade Olenska to flee with him abroad, in order to have a fresh start and live together despite their marital status. It is interesting to note that he does not mention Europe in particular, but that the examples given by Olenska are exclusively set in Europe, and mostly in Mediterranean Europe, revealing how the fantasy of a safe place is associated with the Mediterranean. However, although the Countess associates this certain location with the fantasy of a safe place, she also makes it clear that she does not believe another location can change one's life, thus reinforcing the idea that transgression and the impact travelling can have are relative. Transgression depends on what you do in a location rather than the location itself.

Linguistic and Stylistic Transgressions

The novels under consideration aim to represent 'Italianity' by including Italian language and cultural differences. Most of the characters say they are able to speak Italian, although the truth is often different: "'You talk Italian very - badly, I think,'" (Forster 21) says an Italian woman to Martin Whitby in *AS*. In *ARIT*, Richard Cantwell speaks Italian, but the narrator chooses not to transcribe his words in Italian, perhaps so that there is no gap between the reader and the narrator: "'It was easy,' the Colonel told her in Italian" (Hemingway 144). However, there are multiple passages in Italian, French and Spanish in Hemingway's novel: "Good-bye and *bonne chance and hasta la vista*. We always just say *merde* and let it go at that" (191); "We will say good-bye and I will get into the *motoscafo* with Jackson" (179), which indicates a more nuanced view on bridging a linguistic gap between the reader and the narrator. In *GM*, the characters do not speak Italian or French but do occasionally use a few words in Italian or French that remain untranslated such as "*piano nobile*" (29), "*bonne*" (308), "*pension*" (319) and "*charcuterie*" (321). The use of italics signals to the reader Susy and Nick's cosmopolitanism. Rolfe also refers to several European languages, as in addition to Italian and Venetian, he quotes from Dutch "Kyrie

eleèson” (286), French “qui dort dine” (269), and Latin “persona ingratisissima” (60). Unlike the other texts, Rolfe does not italicise any of the foreign expressions. By using different languages and blending them into his everyday conversations, Crabbe shows the extent of his linguistic knowledge, but also creates his own European dialect.

Theodor W. Adorno contends that his preference to use words and expressions in their original language is due to the fact that some words are untranslatable from one language to another. Adorno elaborates on this idea by giving the example of the French word “rancoeur,” “a word that has no proper native equivalent in German, unless one were to confuse it with the word *Ressentiment* [resentment], a word currently enjoying an unfortunate popularity in Germany but which was likewise imported rather than invented by Nietzsche” (186). Translating everything can therefore lead to confusion, which could explain why in *ARIT*, Hemingway perhaps keeps the “*motoscafo*” untranslated, as it is connected to a Venetian reality that cannot be entirely rendered in another language. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari also explore the idea that each language has its own characteristics and functions, that cannot be rendered into another language:

One tongue can fulfill such and such a function in such and such a matter and another function in another matter. Each language function in turn is divided and involves multiple power centres. A mishmash of tongues. Not a system of language at all. We can understand the indignation purists feel as they weep because the mass is said in French and Latin has been stripped of its mythic function. (24)

In addition to that, Adorno identifies another reason not to translate a word, which is the pleasure of saying or writing untranslated words:

Rather, since language is erotically charged in its words, at least for the kind of person who is capable of expression, love drives us to foreign words. In reality, it is that love that sets off the indignation over their use. The early craving for foreign words is like

the craving for foreign and if possible exotic girls; what lures us is a kind of exogamy of language, which would like to escape from the sphere of what is always the same, the spell of what one is and knows anyway. At that time foreign words made us blush, like saying the name of a secret love. (186)

By bringing the concept of exogamy and eros to language, Adorno shows how desire pervades words. His observation on the erotical aspect of language is reminiscent of Tanner's understanding of the Italian language: "Everything is made to seem to contribute to the unashamed arousal and satisfaction of desire, including the language, indeed particularly the language, with its 'gentle liquids gliding all so pat in' - which could hardly be more frankly lubricious" (53). When mentioning the drive to "escape from the sphere of what is always the same" Adorno also suggests that the appeal for a foreign language resides in its difference, thus connecting language with travelling, pleasure, and necessarily, transgression. By using expressions in different European languages, the four writers discover different types of pleasures through different languages. Yet, when using different languages, the writer obviously risks losing a monolingual readership. This may explain why Hemingway chose to directly translate Richard's sentences into English, and to use other languages only when the expressions or words are easily comprehended.

In addition to linguistic transgressions, the four texts also offer stylistic and literary transgressions. For instance, in *DPOW*, there is a notably large presence of compound adjectives and complexly arranged language. Symons' stylistic analysis of Rolfe's first novel, *Hadrian the Seventh*, proves helpful here:

Fr. Rolfe shares his hero's liking for compound words; and his pages are studded with such inventions or adaptations as 'tolutiloquence', 'contortuplicate', 'incoronation', 'noncurant', 'occession', and 'digladiator'. In constructing his sentences he sets his adverbs as far before both parts of the verb as he can; and though he often lapses into

learning and Latin, the most homely expressions are not disdained in his elaborate paragraph. (10)

This passage shows Rolfe's playfulness with language, and positions him as the most literary transgressive writer among the three others studied.

Hemingway plays differently with language in *ARIT*. For instance, the description of Cantwell's death shows a reluctance to specify the situation: "The Colonel started to speak but he stopped while it hit him the third time and gripped him so he knew he could not live" (Hemingway 219); "That was the last thing the Colonel ever said. But he made the back seat all right and he shut the door. He shut it carefully as well" (219). The reader is not given any more detail about what "it" is, although it probably refers to a heart-attack. In the next pages, Jackson, Richard's friend, finds his last note, written in a telegraphic style: "IN THE EVENT OF MY DEATH THE WRAPPED PAINTING AND THE TWO SHOTGUNS IN THIS CAR WILL BE RETURNED TO THE HOTEL GRITTI VENICE WHERE THEY WILL BE CLAIMED BY THEIR RIGHTFUL OWNER SIGNED RICHARD CANTWELL, COL., INFANTRY, U.S.A" (220) but his reaction is notably unexpected: "'They'll return them all right, through channels,' Jackson thought, and he put the car in gear" (220). The fact that the denouement of the novel is written telegraphically is significant as it cuts off any sort of emotion or empathy the reader could feel for Richard's passing. Moreover, the act of writing with an economy of words but still in capital letters is paradoxical as it simultaneously synthesises and dramatises the Colonel's death. In this sense, it can be read as a form of affront against the reader, especially as the novel ends on that note.

In Wharton's *GM*, language is what fails the transgressive union wanted by Susy and Nick - a union considered transgressive by them as it is non-binding and first based on companionship. Language reveals how they truly feel about each other, despite their desires

on what their union should be. The following extract takes place when Nick realises Susy facilitated their friends' affair, without telling him about it:

“When our being together depended on it? Oh, Nick, how could you think I’d give you up?”

“Give me up?” he echoed.

“Well - doesn’t our being together depend on - on what we can get out of people? And hasn’t there always got to be some give-and-take? Did you ever in your life get anything for nothing?” she cried with sudden exasperation.

“You’ve lived among those people as long as I have; I suppose it’s not the first time -”

“By god, but it is,” he exclaimed, flushing. “And that’s the difference - the fundamental difference.”

“The difference?”

“Between you and me. I’ve never in my life done people’s dirty work for them - least of all favors in return. I suppose you guessed it, or you wouldn’t have hidden this beastly business from me.” (Wharton 103)

This highly dramatised scene reveals Nick’s exasperation at Susy’s behaviour. The exclamation marks, the interrogative marks, the several epanadiplosis, such as: “I’d give you up?”; “Give me up?” and “fundamental difference”; “The difference?” and the derogatory adjectives Nick uses to describe Susy’s behaviour such as “dirty” and “beastly” all participate in this dramatisation. Nick blames Susy’s dishonest behaviour for his outburst, yet the first part of their argument indicates that what triggers him is the fact that Susy chose to keep him in the dark. Moreover, at this point in the novel, Nick feels threatened by Susy’s friendship with a wealthy friend of theirs, Strefford. This quarrel is therefore the catalyst of built resentment and contradicts the initial discussion of the couple about their union, which is supposed to be open and “honourable” (Wharton 26). This

passage is therefore an example of Nick's first romantic resentment towards Susy, which Barthes elaborates on in his categorisation of romantic language and feelings:

How to repulse a demon (an old problem)? The demons, especially if they are demons of language (and what else could they be?) are fought by language. Hence I can hope to exorcise the demonic word which is breathed into my ears (by myself) if I substitute for it (if I have the gifts of language for doing so) another, calmer word (I yield to euphemism). Thus: I imagined I had escaped from the crisis at last, when behold - favored by a long car trip - a flood of language sweeps me away, I keep tormenting myself with the thought, desire, regret, and rage of the other; and I add to these wounds the discouragement of having to acknowledge that I am falling *back*, relapsing . . . (81)

"The old problem," in Susy and Nick's relationship, is that the principle of their union does not work, as it entails that they can only care for each other until they find a better match, which can but only bring feelings of jealousy and resentment. Later on in *Fragments of a Lover's Discourse* (1977), Barthes offers several examples of jealous encounters. One of them is inspired by Freud: "'When I love, I am very exclusive,' Freud says (whom we shall take here for the paragon of normality). To be jealous is to conform. To reject jealousy ('to be perfect') is therefore to transgress a law" (145). As mentioned previously, Nick and Susy's union oscillates between transgression and tradition, yet they both fight jealousy throughout the novel, especially Nick, as he feels threatened by Strefford. By trying to "reject jealousy," Nick tries to stick to the union defined by him and Susy, however he is quickly caught up by jealousy. This is another example of how their relationship eventually fails at being transgressive, in spite of them trying to make it so.

In addition to spoken language, writing also fails both the characters and the readers in *GM*. As Dianne L. Chambers identifies: "in Wharton's text, writing is never a reliable form of communication. Characters intend to write then fail to finish the letter. Telegrams

are missed. Received letters require careful interpretation to arrive at even an ambiguous meaning” (128). The writer, in fact, seems to be deliberately playing on the unreliable aspect of both written and spoken communication: “In demonstrating the instability of language and the ambiguity inherent in reading, Wharton, the author, invites her reader to question the form, function, and possibilities of narrative” (Chambers 128). As a result, the transgressive aspect of language in the novel is due to its absence or failings.

Social Transgressions

So far, spatial, linguistic and stylistic transgressions have been examined. Let us now discuss social and sexual transgressions, since as discussed previously, Venice is traditionally associated with both. In *ARIT*, social and sexual transgressions are mostly present through Richard and Renata’s relationship. For example, despite her relationship with a much older man than she is, which could suggest unequal power dynamics, Renata is described as a free-spirited woman. Her description is always associated with the wind: “Then she came into the room, shining in her youth and tall and striding beauty, and the carelessness the wind had made of her hair” (Hemingway 7); “The wind was in their backs and it blew the girl’s hair forward. The wind parted her hair in the back and blew it forward about her face” (72). These romantic descriptions of her clash with descriptions in which she conforms to male stereotypical views of the female: “She had used lipstick to make the sort of mouth she knew he most desired, and she had said to herself, making the mouth correctly, ‘Don’t think at all. Don’t think. Above all don’t be sad because he is going now’” (191). These opposite descriptions reveal that Renata and Richard’s relationship relies both on conventional and unconventional tropes, mirroring the state of contradictions present in Venice.

Wharton’s *GM* also explores the tension between conventional and unconventional, as the plot is centred around a non-traditional couple. Despite the title and the first sentence

of the novel that starts like the epitome of a love story (“her sleeping head on his knee, clasped in his joy as the hushed world was clasped in moonlight” 28), it is made clear that their marriage is based on nothing romantic. Susy is willing to get married to gain material comfort and security:

In spite of her past, Susy had preserved enough inner independence to detect the latent signs of it in others, and also to ascribe it impulsively to those of the opposite sex who happened to interest her. She had a natural contempt for people who gloried in what they need only have endured. She herself meant eventually to marry, because one couldn’t forever hang on to rich people; but she was going to wait till she found some one who combined the maximum of wealth with at least a minimum of companionableness. (Wharton 14)

It is made clear that love in a marriage is not important for Susy. However, her view of marriage changes with Nick, since they are getting along enough to elaborate a one-year plan about their union: “Why shouldn’t they marry; belong to each other openly and honourably, if for ever so short a time, and with the definite understanding that whenever either of them got the chance to do better he or she be immediately released?” (Wharton 26). This definition of their union is based on a tension between honourable and transgressive attitudes. There are parts of their union that are traditional and based on commitment (“belong to each other openly and honourably”), but the union is not meant to be lasting. Just like Foucault’s initial quotation on transgression that emphasises the ephemeral nature of it, here the transgressive aspect of Nick and Susy’s relationship is designed on its ephemerality. The verb “release” indicates that they favour commitment over possession - although the difference between these two concepts becomes thinner as the novel progresses. In fact, this idea of possession will be challenged in the novel by Susy’s friendship with Strefford, as Nick feels threatened by it. In any case, with their union, Nick

and Susy have found access to a temporary social status and lifestyle that matches their social-climbing ambitions. Here again, the line between their lives and social reality becomes blurrier. Strefford, for instance, notices that Susy is turning into a cosmopolitan person herself:

Susy had always lived among people so denationalized that those one took for Russians generally turned out to be American, and those one was inclined to ascribe to New York proved to have originated in Rome or Bucharest. These cosmopolitan people who, in countries not their own, lived in houses as big as hotels, or in hotels where the guests were as international as the waiters, had inter-married, inter-loved and inter-divorced each other over the whole face of Europe, and according to every code that attempts to regulate human ties. (Wharton 48)

Wharton's use of the verb "denationalize" is quite revealing of her own status as an expatriate American woman living in France, as it comes from the French verb "dénationaliser"⁹ and means removing someone's citizenship. By using it here, Wharton signifies that she is immersed in French culture and language. This verb was most likely not commonly used in English, which echoes some criticisms that were made by critics who felt that Wharton's English was at times unnatural and inauthentic as she was, as R.W.B. Lewis puts it: "loosening grip upon the American idiom" (446). Additionally, the use of this verb indicates that she voluntarily distances herself with these so-called "cosmopolitan people" who have as little connection as they can with countries they travel in. The above quotation gives an ironic and well-detailed insight into travelling with money, which is probably not too surprising since Wharton travelled the same way: "she travelled farther, faster, and in greater luxury than most women (or men) of her generation" (Sarah Bird Wright xx).

⁹ "Dénationalisation" being one of the measures enforced by the French Revolution, it is a rather new word even in the French language.

Many of Wharton's writings, whether fictional or not, take place in Europe, particularly in Italy or France. To only cite a few, *The Valley of Decision* (1902), for example, takes place in Northern Italy, *The Reef* (1912) in Paris, and the short-story "Roman Fever" (1934) in Rome. *GM* thus blends two of her favourite countries in Europe. On the non-fictional side, Wharton also wrote numerous non-fictional accounts of her travels in Europe such as *Italian Villas and Their Gardens* (1904), *Italian Backgrounds* (1905) and *A Motor-Flight Through France* (1908). Meredith L. Goldsmith and Emily J. Orlando analyse Wharton's way of travelling by drawing on Montgomery's work: "Maureen Montgomery explores the relationship of Wharton's Italian writings to the discourse of travel writing in the late nineteenth century, demonstrating how she carved out a position contrary to the naïve American tourists embarking on the Grand Tour" (12). If Susy and Nick's plan reveals their unconventional personalities, it is facilitated by the fact that they are travelling in Italy and France, far from their families and friends who might express a disapproving opinion on the matter.

Since the Romantic period, Italy was associated with freedom, especially for women: "It [Italy] was, moreover, a suitable place for women to visit and, to their surprise, English women visitors found that their own sex was, in Italy, in many ways more liberated than at home" (Cavaliero 10). Barolini, although writing about twentieth-century women, expresses a similar idea to Cavaliero: "In different ways and to different degrees, to many thinking women Italy came to signify release from some control, a transforming catalyst (liberating or dooming, but always powerfully shaping) from what Dickinson called the Swissness of lives—so clockwork, orderly, and bland as the national cheese" (xv). However, Barolini also reminds us of the double-standard of life in Italy, which remains a man's country and a "man's dream" (xiv). Forster mentioned this inequality in his novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, in which he mentions twice that "Italy is such a delightful place to

live in if you happen to be a man” (37) and that “life is very pleasant in Italy if you are a man” (38). The idea of a female being defined by a male writer is also present in Forster’s *Arctic Summer* through the two main female characters: Venetia, Martin’s wife, and Lady Borlase, Martin’s mother-in-law. Their connections to Martin are in brackets in the text, which suggests that they are secondary characters, and only defined by their relationships to him: “Telling Venetia (his wife) and Lady Borlase (his mother-in-law) to keep out of the crowd, he had slipped past the others, and laid a gloved hand on the door” (3-4). Indeed, neither Venetia nor Lady Borlase are described with much detail, or described physically at all, unlike C.P. March, who is described by Martin as having: “the look and gesture of a warrior” (Forster 4). Although this is not a detailed physical description either, it indicates that March is appealing to Martin. Refusing to describe precisely what he looks like might be a narrative strategy as the reader can shape March’s appearance according to their own beauty standards. In any case, it is the only physical description in the novel and it does not concern Martin’s wife.

However, if Martin’s wife’s physical appearance is not commented upon, the reader is given more insight into her personality. When Martin tells her he almost died by slipping under the train, she does not worry about it: “Venetia made no comment. The might-have-been never disturbed her. She did not see herself as a widow, for she never saw herself other than as she was” (Forster 6), which makes us think that Martin seems to have an inclination to dramatise things when she does not, or that she does not see herself primarily as Martin’s wife. For instance, Venetia seems to be more pragmatic and independent than her husband, and refuses to nurse him: “She had no use for coaxing, deeming it a waste of the world’s energy; her husband knew the food was there, and he could eat it if he’d liked” (8). It becomes clear that Martin likes her not in spite of this but because of this: “Martin looked down at her, and the bitterness died out of his smile. He was

filled with thankfulness because he had not married a womanly woman” (46). This way of categorising women in two, “womanly” and “not womanly” reveals Martin’s stereotypical views on women. It also reveals misogynistic tendencies as Martin appreciates his wife’s company because she reminds him of a man, thus manifesting his queerness. A “womanly woman” could also mean a sentimental woman, which Sedgwick defines as: “a derogatory code name for female bodies and the female domestic and “reproductive” preoccupations of birth, socialization, illness, and death” (144). Venetia performs a rejection of sentimentality to avoid being associated with any of these preoccupations - and therefore, implicitly, to be coded as a masculine man. However, in an exchange with her mother, she complexifies her character by mentioning her disbelief in gender and binary categories:

‘Whether Martin is equally lucky, I doubt,’ she continued.

‘I wish he had a man to go about with.’

‘What could a man do that we don’t do?’

‘He could be a man, my dear.’

‘Well, as you know, I don’t agree at all, and no more does Martin. He hates what we call “smoking-room civilization.” He’s as anxious as I am that Hugo shouldn’t be taught at all the rubbish about “little girls do this” and “little boys do that.” If he likes people - that’s all he cares about.’ (Forster 40)

Paradoxically, Venetia seems to think that Martin does not believe in gender categories, which indicates that Martin did not share his thoughts about women to her. Because of the novel’s unfinishedness, we are not given an evolution of Venetia when she and her husband come back to England, so it is difficult to say whether, like Lucy Honeycomb in *A Room With a View*, travelling has helped her become more independent.

In addition to the social transgressions mentioned, there are queer and gender-fluid elements in the four novels. We can also understand Forster’s previously mentioned

statement that “life is very pleasant in Italy if you are a man” (38) as a double-entendre that implies that there might be more sexual possibilities for men than for women in Italy. This is hardly surprising as Venice is the setting of many camp stories, such as Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, Symonds’s *In the Key of Blue*, or Mann’s *Death in Venice*. Rolfe’s novel in particular seems to embody the camp aesthetic, defined by Susan Sontag as a “love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration” (1), which matches Rolfe’s experimental and almost baroque style. Although neither *AS* nor *DPOW* were published during the writers’ lifetimes, their content can still be seen as transgressive at the time of their publication, especially in terms of gender performance. After insisting on Zilda’s androgynous features, which is “certainly one of the great images of Camp sensibility” (Sontag 8), Crabbe renames Zilda Zildo, and passes from the pronoun she/her to the pronoun he/him freely: “He laid the boy flat” (297) the boy being Zildo, to: “She looked straight into his eyes. What she saw sent her right arm shyly round him” (298). This gender-fluidity leads to a constant blurring of Zildo/a’s identity: “But, after all, Zildo was not Zildo - not-Zildo” (178); “She was simply a splendid strapping boy - excepting for the single fact that she was not a boy, but a girl. Crabbe pondered the problem of her future, absolutely without reference to codes, morals, or conventions” (44-45). The sentence “lips clung to lips, and eyes looked into eyes, long. Breast pressed breast and heart beat unto heart” (298) significantly concludes the novel, as the humanity and love Zilda/o and Crabbe have for each other goes beyond their gender. Decades after the publication of the novel, Judith Butler would theorise that gender is unreachable: “Because there is neither an ‘essence’ that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all” (903). In this regard, *DPOW* can be read as one of the first gender-fluid novels of the twentieth-century, written twenty-one years before Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* (1928).

In *AS*, the fluidity is not as radical as in Rolfe's novel. However, as mentioned earlier, Martin Whitby does not see his wife as a female: "'Venetia, you're a female really, though you mayn't sound like one'" (45). Interestingly, the modal "mayn't" suggests that Martin does not allow Venetia to sound like a female, perhaps because he enjoys the idea that she does not sound like one. While the narrator describes Martin as a delicate and artistic person: "His mind had been prepared for beauty, and as soon as books and pictures and music touched it, it flowered" (14), Venetia's description is the opposite of Martin: "'Art and literature are mere untidiness,' cried Venetia. Dorothea corrected her: 'True art and literature will only spring from tidiness.' She had the finer mind, but Martin preferred Venetia. Her crudity inspired him" (15).

According to Debra A. Modellmog, the interpretation of Hemingway was shaped by critics who refused the idea of queerness in Hemingway's work and life, even among critics considered to be more revisionist (35). This refusal to acknowledge queerness in the writer's work bears political responsibilities as it "has influenced how millions of people think about American individuality, masculinity, and heterosexuality" (49). Yet, Modellmog identifies queer elements in Hemingway's fiction. For instance, she observes that the writer's fiction is mostly centred around a dysfunctional heterosexual couple, in which most masculine characters are wounded. *ARIT* is no exception to the rule, as Richard Cantwell has a wounded hand and other health-related issues: "the colonel extended his own hand, which had been shot through twice, and was slightly misshapen" (Hemingway 40); "But he was not a boy. He was fifty and a Colonel of Infantry in the Army of the United States and to pass a physical examination that he had to take the day before he came down to Venice for this shoot, he had taken enough mannitol hexanitate to, well he did not quite know what to - to pass, he said to himself" (6). Furthermore, Modellmog notes how male bodies are strikingly opposed to the description of female bodies: "the other way that Hemingway's

female protagonists are marked as female is through the “perfection” of their bodies, the complete absence of physical scarring or wounds” (128). This is also visible in *ARIT*, as Renata is described as healthy and young, everything that Richard is not: “She had pale, almost olive colored skin, a profile that could break your, or anyone else’s heart, and her dark hair, of an alive texture, hung down over her shoulders” (Hemingway 57). For Modellmog, the fact that women are generally healthy and perfect looking in Hemingway’s writing, hence embodying unattainable feminine stereotypes, while male bodies are often wounded, suggests a queer approach to heteromascularity, as: “The metonymic substitution of the wound for white heteromascularity inevitably suggests that this particular form of masculinity is in itself a wound, a disabling of the man who possesses it” (130). Other contemporary critics share a similar interpretation of Hemingway’s sexuality, such as Eby and Burwell, who “have pointed out that Hemingway was hardly conventional in his sexuality, opening up an aspect of his life that directly touches on the work of many contemporary scholars, particularly those engaged in feminist and queer studies” (Dearborn 136). Therefore, it is fair to say that Hemingway is part of the camp tradition of writing about Venice. The city is the perfect setting for Hemingway’s exploration of a non-traditional sexuality.

Venice, or “Sea Sodom”

Unlike Healy who thinks that “Rolfe’s novel finally evades a full engagement with its homosexual theme” (xi), Aldrich believes that *DPOW* “becomes a homosexual love story” (92), therefore implying that Rolfe chooses a feminine character to deflect the accusation of expressing explicit homosexual preferences. The novel goes beyond expressing queer desire, however, as it also implies pedophilia, which is especially visible when Crabbe describes Zildo/a:

It was not mere everyday lust: his admiration was as great for the naïve spring-like soul, for the mind as gently and firmly bright as a star, as for the long lithe limbs, the soft firm fragrant flesh, the noble features, the stalwart grace, the virginal freshness (all once seen, and never for a moment forgotten); and his admiration (for beauty pure and simple) was refrained by impregnable virtue proclaiming its object sacrosanct and inviolable. (Rolfe 177)

As in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Crabbe associates beauty with youth and temptation, and signifies it to the reader. This description of Zildo/a indicates that Crabbe is attracted to their youth: "spring-like soul," "lithe," "firm," and "virginal freshness." Symons suggests that Rolfe's sexual preferences impacted his professional choices, although most critics would agree that he did not satisfy them until he lived in Venice: "His temperament instinctively prompted the choice of schoolmastership as a career. By proximity he could satisfy his interest in masculine youth, which (again, probably) he did not yet recognize as a form of sexual sensitiveness" (250). When Rolfe moved to Venice in 1908, however, he undertook extensive sexual encounters with young men or boys, whom he paid, and which he described disturbingly in his letters to Charles Masson Fox, a British friend and former lover: "There are shoals of boys *simply starving for any kind of job*. I could put my hand on eleven at this moment, glad enough to do anything" (Rolfe 56). This passage echoes the now familiar aspect of Venice as a place where all trade takes place, while also showing Rolfe's lack of empathy and enjoyment of sexual exploitation: "With their often-glib discussions of sex with boys, Corvo's letters might strike a modern reader as endorsing pedophilia; his lack of concern for any harm is troubling" (Champagne 317). This explains Aldrich's statement that: "Italy for Corvo is little more than a picturesque bordello" (93). Pemble further contextualises prostitution in Venice during Rolfe's lifetime:

Furthermore, homosexual activity like Rolfe's, which involved youths under the age of consent, attracted verbal if not physical hostility . . . Both heterosexual and homosexual prostitution was tolerated and, provided their liaisons were discreet and legal, British homosexuals were able to live there with little fear of harassment or disapproval. Venice welcomed its Anglo-Saxon residents, whatever their sexual orientation, and the colony became accepted as something authentically Venetian. (49)

In this passage, Pemble corroborates the idea of a Venetian open-mindedness regarding the "sexual orientation" of Anglo-Saxons residents and tourists, while also insisting on the fact that having sexual encounters with minors was never publicly accepted.

Forster's fiction often praises youth and young men, even when the plot centres around (or seems to centre around), female characters. In *AS* for instance, the second chapter starts with Martin's definition of beauty, which he associated with the athletic young male body, reflective of a kind of masculinity that was praised in Antiquity and then in the late 1800s: "When beauty flowered, the wonder of life so dazzled him that he saw nothing else, and the world appeared as a gymnasium in which fine fellows develop their muscles and swing from rope to rope" (Forster 14). Besides that, there is a scene in *AS* that is yet reminiscent of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and which takes place when Martin, his wife and mother-in-law go to Tramonta to see frescoes. Martin sees a portrait that strikes him as looking very similar to C.P. March: "Martin at the first glance cried out excitedly. 'What's wrong?' asked his wife. 'It's extraordinary - it's that man - he; that man in the train who wouldn't come with us'" (31). However, Martin is the only one who sees the resemblance: "'Do you see any likeness, Nettie?' 'They both have fair hair, but I should have said that's all.' 'No, no, the spirit, the expression...' 'The expression is quite different, my dear Martin'" (32). As often in Forster's fiction, the real emotion of the scene is conveyed through the mediation of art. Seeing the portrait makes Martin fully aware that C.P. March

disconcerts him more than he wants to admit: “He saw neither the man nor the picture but a power behind both, to which he could give no name” (33). Mediating desire with art is also connected to a long tradition of homosexuality in classical Greece or Rome. Aldrich clarifies this analogy: “Homosexuals rarely could conceive of themselves outside art and literature, outside the culture created by the Greeks and which appeared still discernible (and could be experienced) in the Mediterranean. For those in the cultured classes, homosexuality was literature and art; sex was transformed into an aesthetic act” (222).

In *ARIT*, Renata also refers to pederasty in Venice: ““He is a very good painter, but he has false teeth in front because he was a little bit pédéraste once and other pédérastes attacked him one night on the Lido when there was a full moon”” (68). Her repetition of “he is a very good painter” shows her nonchalant attitude towards pederasty; her use of the French word (“pédéraste”) instead of the English one seems to indicate that she considers pederasty to be a cultural phenomenon rather than an ethical issue, and refers to the “exogamy” (Adorno 186) phenomenon previously discussed. Besides, the important age gap between her and Richard replicates a long-established stereotype of a relationship between an older man and a younger woman. In this archetype of relationship, the younger woman occupies a “passive” position, thus echoing Foucault’s theory that passivity in sexual intercourses is connected to power dynamics predominant in pederasty: “And this suggests that in sexual behavior there was one role that was intrinsically honorable and valorized without question: the one that consisted in being active, in dominating, in penetrating, in asserting one’s superiority” (215). This trope of passivity therefore linkens Renata and Richard’s relationship to a pederastic one, especially because although Renata is not a child, she is nonetheless under age. Her and Richard, however, are perfectly aware of this fact, and play with social norms by referring to their relationship as incestuous. The young woman, for instance, suggests being called ‘daughter’ by Richard: “I can be your daughter as well

as everything else.’ ‘That would be incest.’ ‘I don’t think that would be possible in a city as old as this and that has seen what this city has seen’” (69). This quotation implies that Renata fully embraces the trope of Venice as a place of commodified sexualisation, where all types of desire are catered for. Richard, however, feels guilty about their relationship: “And look at Renata’s eyes, he thought. They are probably the most beautiful things she has, and the longest honest lashes I have ever seen and she never uses them for anything except to look at you honestly and straight. What a damn wonderful girl and what am I doing here anyway? It is wicked” (61). As in the extract of *GM* in which the tension between honourable and transgressive was analysed (Wharton 26), the repetition of “honest” here equally relies on the same tension. By emphasising the honest features of Renata’s eyes, as eyes are known to reflect someone’s soul, Richard insists on the fact that Renata is not the one to blame for their transgressive relationship, but he is. And yet, he often mentally compares Renata to prostitutes: “His true love was sleeping again. She slept in a different way than his career girl had slept. He did not like to remember how the career girl slept, yet he did” (178). Analysing Renata and Cantwell’s discourse in the novel, Keener reveals their oscillation between “carnal” and “courtly” language and concludes that: “Such rapid inversions between carnal and courtly language maintain both the attraction and the distance between the two principal characters and help sustain readers’ ambivalence about Renata’s moral character” (50). The playful nature of language between Renata and Richard highlights the ambivalence of their relationship.

There is also a reference to an incestuous relationship between Crabbe and Zildo/a in *DPOW*, as Crabbe calls Zildo his son: “He always called her ‘Zildo’ or ‘fio mio’: because he preferred making her a son rather than a daughter. That was why she never wore any but boy’s clothes during her father’s life-time; and, in Venice, she always passed for a boy” (26). Interestingly, both Zilda’s father and Crabbe, the only two male figures in her life, treat her

as a boy. Zilda's mother passed away so she is left with these two male authorities, passing from one to the other. There is a power dynamic in both relationships, as she has served and obeyed both her father and Crabbe: "She should be a boy. She should be a servant. She should serve, serve only - oh yes, but she should surely serve" (46). Here, Rolfe seems to be very much inspired by the male ethics of Antiquity, a period during which women were seen "as partners that one had best train, educate, and watch over when one had them under one's power, but stay away from when they were under the power of someone else (father, husband, tutor)" (Foucault 22-23). Stoler adds to this idea of servants: "Represented as both devotional and devious, trustworthy and lascivious, native servants occupied and constituted a dangerous sexual terrain, a pivotal moral role" (150). While Stoler is here referring to servants in colonial settings, her idea works particularly well with the coding of Italian bodies as brown and lascivious, as previously analysed. Zildo/a is therefore Crabbe's servant not only because of their social status and initial gender but also because of them being Italian. Unlike the Colonel in *ARIT*, Crabbe calls Zildo his son to normalise his relationship with them in public, not to emphasise its transgressive aspect.

Finally, there is also an implicit reference to incest between March and his brother Lance in *AS*. The incestuous aspect of their relationship, however, is only made possible in the brothers' English countryhouse. A number of queer references hint to physical attraction between them: when they first meet after Clesant's trip, Lance, who "was reading for the Classical Tripos" imitates antique figures and refers to his brother as a "gladiator" (49). Clesant mentions his lack of classical knowledge but "he was still laughing too much to have any effect; and he knew that his brother really behaved thus because he was glad to see him again: they were devoted to each other" (49). The two brothers then proceed to go to their shared bathroom, where Clesant takes a bath with his brother in the same room: "the bathroom was dedicated to the boys by their mother's decree, and they met in it almost daily

when they were at home” (51). Lance, in fact, strongly impacts Clesant: “When Lance was with him, he lost self-consciousness, and those who are inclined to criticize the quality of Lance’s orison, may reflect on this. He rose full of thankfulness and gratitude, and better able to play his part in the world” (52). Unlike his sisters, whom he finds “in every respect inferior to the men” of the family (53), Clesant admires his brother, and describes as a man with “so many assets” (53) among which his charm, beauty and humour, which differentiates him from the rest of the family: “It wasn’t a keen sense of humour - none of the Marches had that: it was something more profound, akin to passion” (53). Lance stirs in March a sense of freedom, even in his reckless actions: “But Lance’s actions were attractive. Clesant found that he wanted to sprawl in the heather too. He did not do so, for the yoke of the public school was still heavy on him” (60). Clesant concludes his brother’s description by: “Lance alone had the key to men’s hearts” (53). Additionally, he uses words of infatuation to describe their relationship:

During that happy September Clesant developed quickly. It was the luckiest thing that could have happened to him. His need all through life was an idol, and he found one in the moment in his own brother . . . Consequently they had escaped all that makes brotherhood hard and banal, and came to each other with a touch of romance. (67)

“Romance” leaves no room for doubts about Clesant’s feelings, even though he does not admit it to himself. The idea that they “escaped” brotherhood and the adjective “hard” leaves doubts, however, on what happened between them during that month, especially as Clesant mentions that he resisted to get closer to Lance, until “he yielded, and a lump of ice melted that he might have carried with him till death” (67). Unlike the dons in *Maurice* who “exercised a certain amount of watchfulness, and felt it right to spoil a love affair when they could” (68), not even Lance and Clesant’s uncle sees their relationship clearly: “the only thing that he did not see was the warmth of the intimacy between the two young men” (67).

Their relationship, however, only exists when in the country house. Before Clesant's departure, Lance tries to have a discussion with him, which he avoids: "he always snubbed him, for if one begins one might never stop" (68). Nevertheless, Lance asks him about his love interests:

Presently Lance said, 'Do you go falling in love, Cles?'

Cautious at once he replied, 'How? Do you?'

'Yes. Off and on.'

Attempting the sort of chaff he had read in books, Clesant said: 'And who's the happy damsel? Ena Robins? One of the Brett girls.'

'You've not understood,' said his brother, whipping up the horse. 'I don't mean anything decent. It's getting a damned nuisance.'

Clesant felt miserably unhappy. He changed the conversation. (Forster 68-69)

This passage underscores the unspeakable queer tension between the two brothers, as both know their incapacity to fall in love "decently." Clesant pretends he does not understand what Lance is suggesting, by performing a heteromasculine behaviour he only encountered in books ("the sort of chaff he had read in books"), but the feeling of sadness that overcomes him reveals his understanding of the situation. This incestuous desire might explain why Clesant reacted so strongly when he heard of Lance's expulsion from Cambridge. There is in fact no clear explanation as to why Lance was expelled, only vague statements, such as: "my brother couldn't act dishonourably" (76); "someone has not behaved like a gentleman" (77); "he has disgraced the college and himself" (81). Clesant, in his rage, does mention him going with "women" (83) but there is no real indication of what Lance did to deserve such a treatment. Either Lance did go away with women, which would cause Clesant anger; or he

did go with men, which would equally cause Clesant feelings of betrayal. Either way, Clesant and Lance's feelings for each other go beyond brotherly love.¹⁰

All four novels are centred around notions of desire, which is expected in literature taking place in Northern Italy or Venice, as the city is “inextricably associated with desire” (Tanner 4). But it is interesting to note that if Venice is synonymous with desire, it does not necessarily mean the fulfilment of it. As pointed out by Richard Ellmann and J.B. Bullen, Ruskin's unhappy marriage during the writing of *The Stones of Venice* indicates a displacement of sexual desire from Ruskin's wife to Venice (Ellman 46; Bullen 505). Tanner notices a similar phenomenon about Henry James and Venice: “The fact, as it seems, that the greatest eye of the century belonged to a man who was, if not impotent, then sexually dormant and inactive has not only a poignancy but even perhaps a parabolic aptness” (113). None of the four novels under consideration graphically recount sexual encounters although some, such as Rolfe's, are more suggestive than others. Some, like *GM*, carry a sexual subtext. For instance, Jennifer Haytock reads Susy and Nick's marriage as based on sex more than on a financial agreement: “While the marriage allows the characters short-term economic luxury, it is inspired by sexual passion” (40), which explains why both characters refuse their other wealthy potential love interests, Strefford and Coral. Susy, for instance, never finds Strefford attractive: “he slipped his arm around her and bent his keen ugly melting face to hers” (Wharton 203), and neither does Nick for Coral. He always describes her as a less interesting version of Susy: “If she was not pretty, she was well-dressed; and if she was over-educated, she seemed capable, as Strefford had suggested, of carrying off even this crowning disadvantage” (Wharton 58). As Haytock suggests, it is Nick and Susy's

¹⁰ Incest is absent from *GM*, although not from Wharton's later works. One can think of the relationship between forty-six-year old Martin Boyne and fifteen-year old Judith Wheeler in Wharton's later novel *The Children* (1928). Although Judith is not his child, Martin becomes the caretaker of the Wheeler family and positions himself as a fatherly figure for Judith and her siblings. The novel relies on the tension between his attraction for Judith and desire to protect the children from their family issues: “But during their walk in the mountain dusk, while she hung on his arm, pressed close by the intruding fir-branches, he needed more and more to think of her as a child, and, thinking thus, to treat her as one” (188). The short-story “Beatrice Palmato” (1935) also deals with incest in a more explicit manner, and will be discussed later on in this chapter.

sexual attraction for each other that make them go back together, which is visible when Nick sees Susy for the first time after their separation: “His eyes were still absorbing her, finding again the familiar curves of her light body, noting the thinness of the lifted arm that upheld the little boy, the droop of her shoulder he weighed on, the brooding way in which her cheek leaned to his even while she looked away” (Wharton 288). This description of Susy by Nick clashes with Coral’s, whose body is characterised by a “blunt primitive build” (Wharton 171). The references to physical attributes traditionally associated with womanhood and motherhood also express the physical attraction Nick has for Susy.

Other texts, such as Hemingway’s, have become famous because of their vagueness surrounding physical intimacy. There are some hints, however, of a want for physical intimacy in *ARIT*. For instance, Renata insists on taking the elevator to go to Richard’s room: “It was a good ride with a slight bump, and a rectification at the end, and the Colonel thought: Checked out, eh? You better be checked out again. The corridor was not simply beautiful but exciting, and putting the key into the lock was not a simple process, but a rite” (77). The comparison to the “key into the lock” as a rite of passage indicates the expected aspect of physical proximity. And yet, a few lines later, it is made clear that nothing sexual will happen between Renata and Richard: “They kissed for a long time, standing straight, and kissing true, in the cold of the open windows that were onto the Grand Canal. ‘Oh,’ she said. ‘Oh.’ ‘We owe nothing,’ the Colonel said. ‘Not a thing.’” (77), statement quickly followed by: “They stood there and kissed each other true. ‘I have a disappointment for you, Richard,’ she said. ‘I have a disappointment about everything’” (78). It is unclear whether the “disappointment” comes from Renata, who refuses to have sexual intercourse, or from Richard. Cirino and Amanda Kay Oaks interpret it as coming from Renata, who is menstruating and refuses to mention it: “The taboo of discussing menstruation, or of

Hemingway's characters even mentioning it by name, evokes the larger taboo of engaging in sexual intercourse during a woman's monthly period" (59).

The other scene during which Renata and Richard have intimacy is when they take a gondola ride - but there again, what happens is most unclear: "The Colonel, lying under the blanket in the wind, knowing it is only what man does for woman he retains, except what he does for his fatherland or his motherland, however you get the reading, proceeded" (109). This metaphor of discovery and "unknown country" (110) most likely refers to their first physical encounter. It then becomes apparent that Richard is using his hand to please Renata, therefore partaking in a sexuality not phallus centred: "'Please put it where it should be,' she said. 'Your hand.'" (109). There is no mention that Renata actively takes part in lovemaking with Richard, although the omission "But then he stopped thinking and he did not think for a long time" (110) might allude to that. After this scene, Renata resorts to two ways to keep Richard sexually satisfied. She lets him have a portrait of her, to which he talks and compliments when she is absent: "'But last night, and at first light, I talked to the portrait as though it were you'" says Richard to Renata (148). She also gives him her family's "square emeralds" (72) for him to keep in his pockets: "'Richard', the girl said. 'Put your hand in your pocket to please me and feel them.' The Colonel did. 'They feel wonderful, he said.'" (73). Renata's family jewels become both a thinly veiled sexual game between them and the surrogate for their physical intimacy, as Richard can touch them whenever he wants. On other occasions, silence replaces expected scenes of intercourse: "They lay together now and did not speak and the Colonel felt her heart beat" (153); "The Colonel and the girl lay quietly on the bed and the Colonel tried to think of nothing; as he had thought of nothing so many times in so many places" (163). Perhaps this vagueness surrounding any act of intimacy between the characters expresses Hemingway's internalised reprobation concerning a relationship between him and Adriana Ivancich in real life;

perhaps he also did not wish to raise suspicion on Adriana's honour, making this self-censorship an act of chivalry.

Therefore, desire permeates all narratives but is often connected to guilt. As Foucault indicated, there is a shift in the perception of transgression in the nineteenth century. Before this period, the carnal act in itself was considered to be transgressive; after, desire becomes the transgressive act: "A twofold evolution tended to make the flesh into the root of all evil, shifting the most important moment of transgression from the act itself to the stirrings - so difficult to perceive and formulate - of desire" (19-20). This is visible in the selected novels: Richard recognises his desire for a much younger woman is "wicked" (61); Clesant March inflicts guilt on both his brother Lance and Martin; Crabbe tries to get rid of Zilda/o because of his immediate desire for them; Susy and Nick both desire each other but refuse to admit it. And in fact, guilt makes the social order return to normal in most of the novels. In *DPOW*, transgression is only temporary since Crabbe marries Zilda and not Zildo. In *GM*, the wed couple reconciles. In *ARIT*, transgression is also only temporary as death separates Richard and Renata. The two characters knew that their relationship would not last, which is probably why their relationship happened in the first place, as Renata mentions to Richard: "That is the good thing about you going to die that you can't leave me" (150).

Death, the Ultimate Transgression

According to Scappettone, there is a "viral recurrence of Venice as a locus of expiration, or perpetual twilight, in intellectual and artistic culture since Romanticism" (27). It is Madame de Staël in *Corinne* (1806) who notes the similarities between gondolas and coffins, "the first and last receptacles of man," reminds us Tanner (48). Although gondolas were only painted black after 1633 "in a measure by the Venetian government to restrain excessive ostentation" (Ferraro 8), this connection with death was especially adopted in Romantic writings, presumably influenced by De Staël's writings. According to Tanner,

gondolas also carry a sexual connotation, on the verge of necrophilia: “They look like death and yet may be enabling vehicles of the compulsive sexual activity their very movement seem to imitate” (49). This idea explains why Venice is such a popular setting for the thriller and horror genre, such as Du Maurier’s *Don’t Look Now* and McEwan’s *The Comfort of Strangers*, both of which were cinematically adapted in a way that enhances the inherent dread associated with Venice.

In *ARIT*, Richard sees death everywhere, even at the market, a place where the abundance of food is usually linked with life: “In the market, spread on the slippery stone floor, or in their baskets, or their rope-handled boxes, were the heavy, gray-green lobsters with their magenta overtones that presaged their death in boiling water” (Hemingway 135). According to Bataille, this is not an unusual phenomenon: “On a comprehensive view, human life strives towards prodigality to the point of anguish, to the point where the anguish becomes unbearable” (60). “Prodigality” is precisely what Richard Cantwell tries to achieve during his stay in Venice through different ways: food, walks in the city, his relationship with Renata. In an attempt to forget about his ill-health conditions, and more broadly to forget about looming death, Richard distracts himself. His endeavours to generate appetite sustains his fantasy of Italy but prove inconclusive as when one distraction comes to an end, the anguish of death reappears more vividly.

Death, however, is also present in the other narratives set in Northern Italy. *AS* is framed by death, as it starts with Martin’s near death experience, and ends with Lance’s death. Martin’s near death is described with much irony, however: “Telling Venetia (his wife) and Lady Borlase (his mother-in-law) to keep out of the crowd, he had slipped past the others, and laid a gloved hand on the door. The rush followed. He was swept sideways by the train and off his legs by the crowd, and it was he who was nearly killed. The man who saved him had the look and gesture of a warrior” (4). Martin’s saviour does not seem to

know he saved his life, implying that Martin might have exaggerated the potential impact of his fall: “‘Excuse me, sir,’ said Martin, lifting his hat; ‘I think you saved me from going under the train. I am very grateful to you.’ ‘Oh, it was you?’ said the other awkwardly; he was with friends, and they all seemed offended” (4). Contrasting with the irony of Martin’s near death is the end of the fragment, which mentions Lance’s death in a more serious way: “The boy has shot himself” (84), ending the story in a dramatic cliff-hanger.

DPOW also starts with death, as Crabbe he rescues Zilda from an earthquake at La Tasca, a place said to be close to the Venetian lagoon, and where her entire family brutally perished:

All the flesh was shredded in gobbets, as though it had been bitten by beasts. Round another corner was an irregular stack of beams and broken planks, piled up higgledy-piggledy amid heaps of dust and the handles of saucepans. Emerging from an interstice of this lumber was the whole length of a girl, excepting the head in a bundle of shreds (once a chemise) which remained in the shadow of a gable of beams. Nicholas took her by the feet, and dragged her gently out, uncovering her head. (8)

The preposterous and voyeuristic aspect of Rolfe’s description of the earthquake is manifest in this extract. Zilda is strangely untouched by it, for the exception of a bruise on her shoulder, when her family was “shredded” to pieces. Crabbe’s initial response is one of care for Zilda, as he “gently” carries her out to try and save her. Crabbe’s arousal at the sight of Zilda is also visible through the mention of Zilda’s shredded clothes (“once a chemise”).

Therefore, Venice is a paradoxical place of romance and decay, of Eros and Thanatos. In *GM*, Como and Venice prove to be the places where Susy and Nick’s union metaphorically starts dying: “It was a trifling enough sign, but it had remained in Susy’s mind: that first morning in Venice Nick had gone out without first coming in to see her” (Wharton 45). *ARIT* is as much a novel about death as it is about love: “But the core of the

novel is his [Richard] infatuation with Renata. It is, as Hemingway himself remarked, a story of death - but also of love” (Richard Owen 139). This transcendence of death by love is facilitated by the novel’s Venetian setting, reminding us of Freud’s theory that fantasies of death are connected to fantasies of orgasm. It is not by chance that Richard and Renata’s only sexual encounter takes place in the coffin-like space of a gondola. Owen theorises that Venice is a mortal place in literature:

Venice and the Veneto have always held a fatal fascination for writers, from Lord Byron and Henry James to Thomas Mann and Oscar Wilde - and . . . Ernest Hemingway. All of them were enchanted and exhilarated by the lagoon city - yet it also (sometimes later, sometimes at the same moment) aroused in them feelings of sadness and melancholy.

(122)

The perishable aspect of the city makes Venice a place where novels about decay and decaying characters blossom, revealing the impact of the environment on bodies. Howard J. Booth also mentions a similar idea about Symonds’ stay in Venice: “Symonds seems to have been thinking about his own death. Rowing out into the lagoon in the afternoon he positions himself at another point of transition, one neither land nor open sea” (183-184). Venice inspires existential reflections in Richard Cantwell: “In Venice, with its thousand rivulets, where the palaces themselves seem to come to life in their gently moving reflections, a man can look back upon his life, reflect, and finally accept death not as a tragic event but as an acceptance of life” (Cirino 159). In addition to reinforcing the idea that Venice is always in a state of mobility, this quotation emphasises how death is always present when in Venice.

Venice’s perishability makes it a place where imagination and fantasies come to an end, as Symonds suggested about Rolfe: “But, on the horizon, there were looming new quarrels and a new friend: a combination which, within a few months, was to transport him to Italy, to Venice, and death: to the beginning of his last ‘new life’” (188). It is perhaps

because Venice allows fantasies to materialise that the experience in the city becomes disappointing:

In decay and decline (particularly in decay and decline), falling or sinking to ruins and fragments, yet saturated with secretive sexuality - thus emanating or suggesting a heady compound of death and desire - Venice becomes for many writers what it was, in anticipation, for Byron: 'the greenest island of my imagination.' When Byron left Venice two years later, it had become a 'sea Sodom'. Venice has a way of turning on her writerly admirers as no other city does. (5)

This is particularly true in *ARIT*, as Richard comes for a distraction from his ill-health but is brought back to it more vividly, compared to young and healthy Renata. Finally, and connected with this idea of health, or more precisely of ill-health, is another trope associated with death and Venice, which is the spreading of diseases. Champagne, in his analysis of Mann's *Death in Venice*, explains why sickness is constitutive of queer writings set in Venice in the 19th century:

In other words, given in particular 19th-century sexological discourse's construction of the homosexual as a 'sick' sexual subject, as well as the tendency in some quarters to see Venice as decadent, promiscuous, 'in decline' since, in some historical accounts, as early as the 16th-century shift in the center of maritime trade from the Mediterranean to the North Atlantic, it is no coincidence that Aschenbach should choose *La Serenissima* for his final spring vacation. (924)

This passage encapsulates Venice's reputation from the 16th century to the 19th century as a city of trade, decadence and sickness, all motivated by its ephemeral and perishable aspect. The sickness of the city made it the perfect setting to welcome others constructed as sick, and literally so in *Death in Venice*.

Fictional Transgressions

We know that Wharton travelled extensively in Europe, especially in France and Italy, which is reflected in her fiction. Forster also travelled in Italy, especially from 1904 to 1911. About the second trip that Forster undertook with his mother in Italy, Moffat observes that he “began to sketch essays of his impressions of Italy. He channelled his damnable self-consciousness into a virtue. Now each destination became food for future writing” (60). However, if Wharton and Forster were inspired by their own lives and perhaps recognised similar aspects between themselves and their protagonists, the influence is not as direct as in Rolfe’s *DPOW* and Hemingway’s *ARIT*. In these two novels, there are obvious similarities with the writers’ lives. As mentioned, in *DPOW*, Crabbe is a British man living in Venice and attracted to boys. He aspires to be a writer but his precarious living situation prevents him from fully committing to his writing. The strong similarities do not stop there, however, as Rolfe’s unflattering characters were mostly based on his hosts in Venice, the van Somerens. Their description in the novel resulted in him being asked to either change the novel or leave their house:

With perverse and brilliant ingenuity, Rolfe had woven his life and letters into this story of himself (as Nicholas Crabbe, the hero) pursued and thwarted by the members of the English colony. The book was not completed; and, rancid with libel as it was, might never be published; but it was clearly impossible for the friend of Lady Layard, Canon Ragg, Horatio Brown and the rest of the English residents to share responsibility for it by sheltering the author while he finished it. So Mrs. van Someren instantly told Rolfe, adding that she must let her husband decide what action should be taken. The Doctor, when he learned how his long hospitality had been requited, issued an ultimatum: the manuscript must be abandoned, or its author must leave the house. (Symons 234)

Rolfe, as we know, decided not to abandon the manuscript and consequently to leave the van Somerens house to “starve on the streets of Venice” (Ivy van Someren to Rolfe, February 1947). *DPOW* is not the only novel showcasing strong autobiographical similarities. In *Hadrian the Seventh*, main character George Arthur Rose explains the different pseudonyms he adopted, which are the same ones Rolfe took during his life: “In fact I split up my personality. As Rose I was a tonsured clerk: as King Clement, I wrote and painted and photographed: as Austin White, I designed decorations: as Francis Eagle, I did journalism. There were four of me at least” (302). Using elements of his own life is therefore a characteristic of Rolfe’s writing, and which will be further elaborated on in the next chapter. Rolfe also used his writings to settle his scores with people and explain his actions, turning his fiction into a confessional, as evidenced by Cecil Woolf and Sewell Brocard: “Twenty years later, in *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*, Rolfe offered another explanation of the Scots College affair” (23). Woolf and Sewell refer here to the College that expelled Rolfe from their ranks in 1890. This quotation evidences how Rolfe enjoyed creating a grey area through his blending of his fiction and his life.

The similarities with Hemingway’s life are also striking in *ARIT*, as he wrote it when he was himself in his fifties and in ill-health. The writer had also participated in the war effort during WWI in Northern Italy, although he was not a soldier in Venice: “Carlos Baker points out that in his several stays in northern Italy Ernest came to love Venice so much that he sometimes imagined that he had defended the city during the First World War” (Dearborn 508). Nevertheless, Hemingway felt connected to Northern Italy and enjoyed going back there for the rest of his life. Another main feature of *ARIT*, which is Richard calling Renata “Daughter,” also seems to be stemming from the writer’s life. Dearborn connects Hemingway’s tradition of calling women “Daughter” to when he was married to his second wife and mimicking his friend Gerald Murphy’s habit of calling his own wife “Daughter”:

“Gerald Murphy was in the habit of calling younger women ‘Daughter,’ using it more often for the diminutive Pauline [Ernest’s second wife] than the more maternal Hadley [Ernest’s first wife]. Ernest picked up the nickname as well, and Pauline entered into the spirit of things by using the name ‘Papa,’ first for Gerald and then for Ernest” (223). Hemingway will then keep this tradition and address most of his female friends, including Marlene Dietrich, with “Daughter,” and sign to all of his other friends and acquaintances with “Papa.” While “Daughter” was most likely used in a patriarchal way to designate female friends (attractive most often than not), the recurrence of it throughout his life shows that there is no other connotation to it. By being called “Papa,” Hemingway wanted to be seen and addressed as a stable and fatherly figure, who would always be happy to help others and provide advice - which he did.

Last but not least, Renata was largely inspired from Adriana Ivancich, a Venetian young woman whom Hemingway met in 1948, when he was married to his last wife. Dearborn describes Ivancich in a way that cannot but remind us of Renata: “Her clear green eyes set off her black hair, flawless olive skin, and prominent cheekbones, and her proportions were lovely. Her English was fair, but Ernest’s eccentric speech patterns confused her, and his tourist’s Italian, while better than average, remained rusty” (511). The alliterative names in *ARIT* (Renata and Richard) might suggest that the narrator believed the two characters were meant to be with each other. A similar fictional transgression took place in *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) in which real-life nurse Agnes von Kurowsky becomes protagonist Catherine Barkley, the main character’s lover, when in real life Agnes made clear that she was not interested in a relationship with Hemingway. *ARIT* is also the fictional representation of Hemingway’s love for Adriana, although it is extremely unlikely that a love relationship ever happened between them, seemingly because Ivancich was not interested in him romantically, suggests Dearborn: “long used to desirable women becoming

attracted to him, he was to have a very rude awakening, and one that deeply marked him” (509).

In addition to referring to Ivancich, Hemingway makes several references to his previous wife in the novel, although she remains unnamed. When Renata asks what happened between her and Richard, he answers: ‘She was an ambitious woman and I was away too much’ (150). He then talks more freely about his ex-wife:

‘She had more ambition than Napoleon and about the talent of the average High School Valedictorian.’

‘Whatever that is,’ the girl said. ‘But let’s not speak about her. I’m sorry I asked the question. She must be sad that she is not with you.’

‘No. She is too conceited ever to be sad, and she married me to advance herself in Army circles, and have better contacts for what she considered her profession, or her art. She was a journalist.’

‘But they are dreadful,’ the girl said.

‘I agree.’ (Hemingway 150)

This description brings, for a reader familiar enough with Hemingway’s life, the image of Martha Gellhorn, who was married to Hemingway from 1940 and 1945. Gellhorn was a war correspondent and they both covered the Spanish Civil War; Hemingway dedicated *For Whom the Bells Toll* to her. After promising Renata that he forgot about his ex-wife, the two lovers, quite macabrely, wish for her death: “‘Maybe she will take a good look at herself in the mirror sometime and hang herself.’ ‘Now that she is out of the room we should wish her no bad luck. But, as a good Venetian, I wish that she were dead’” (152). Later in the novel, when reflecting on his life, the Colonel thinks of his previous wife with bitterness too: “The wind is from the wrong direction and how lucky I would have been to have had this girl [Renata], instead of the woman that I pay alimony to, who could not even make a child”

(194). It is unclear whether such a statement is founded on any of his other marriages, but it is enough to cause speculations.

There is something transgressive about rewriting episodes of one's own life, inasmuch as it means shaping them into one's own fantasies and desires. By using real episodes as a basis for the plot of the novel, the writer also chooses to cast doubt on what happened in real life. Yet, and this is the case in *DPOW* and *ARIT*, blending real and fictional elements can have an impact on other people's lives. This obviously can lead to conflict in real life when the way characters are portrayed displeases them or their immediate circle. Slavoj Žižek exemplifies this idea by analysing an unfinished and posthumously published story written by Wharton entitled "Beatrice Palmato," a title which, according to Žižek,

derives from Beatrice Cenci, the tragic heroine of a real-life drama of incest and murder in sixteenth-century Rome; Shelley, who held that incest was the most poetic of motifs, based a verse play upon the story. 'Palmato' is related to the Italian words for 'muscle' and 'hand,' and constitutes a discreet pun upon the male member, as metaphorically described in the fragment. (525)

The story radically breaks from Wharton's typical writings as it graphically describes an incestuous sexual encounter between a daughter and a father. As argued before, Wharton does not mention incest or pederasty in *GM*, but her later works such as *The Children* and "Beatrice Palmato" show Wharton's interest in writing about such transgressive themes. For Žižek, this account narrates the sexual abuse by Wharton's father when she was a child, although such an allegation was never clearly made by Wharton:

In Wharton's nuclear family it was her mother who acted as the agent of prohibition, while her father embodied a kind of prohibited knowledge, permeated with enjoyment. Furthermore, it is easy to play here the game of child sexual abuse, and to point out that

sufficient ‘circumstantial evidence’ suggests that Wharton’s childhood sexual abuse by her father as the traumatic event which marked the ambiguity between fantasy and ‘reality’: it is practically impossible clearly to discern their respective parts (was paternal incest just her fantasy, or was this fantasizing triggered by ‘real’ sexual abuse?). In any case, this vicious circle bears witness to the fact that Edith is not ‘innocent’: she participated in incest at the level of fantasy. (19-20)

In this paragraph, Žižek does not confirm or deny the fact that Wharton was sexually abused by her father. However, he reads ‘Beatrice Palmato’ as Wharton’s fictional participation in incest, by disturbingly adding that she is not “innocent”. Although this is a reference to the title of her novel *The Age of Innocence*, such a statement gives the impression that she was complicit in the supposed incest, when there is an obvious difference between being inspired by a personal event and enduring one in real life. Žižek is not the only one to theorise on the unpublished short-story. According to Lewis, the short-story reveals that Wharton became more in touch with her sensual side by the end of her life, and that “she could finally acknowledge and give fantasy form to the strong physical attraction she had once felt for her own father” (525). It seems that like Žižek, Lewis confuses sensuality with incest, thus taking away from the assault it consists in. These examples taken from the selected novels reveal the power of fiction and the implications it can have on real life. They also underscore how transgression is perhaps more impactful when it casts a doubt on real life events.

Conclusion

This chapter first investigated ways to think about transgression in Venice, before examining different transgressive aspects of the novels under analysis. All of these novels centre on transitory characters, whose stays in the city and in Northern Italy are mainly temporary. This temporariness leads the characters to experience a range of transgressions,

whether linguistic, social, sexual, economical. The many similarities between the novels in terms of transgression lead us to think that there is a pattern of transgression in Venice, yet such a statement questions the very nature of transgression, as something cannot be transgressive if it is expected to be so. Therefore, going beyond the binarity of transgressive and non-transgressive proves necessary in Venice. In addition to this, it was argued that the foreign characters, although not necessarily wealthy, often convey imperialist and supremacist ideas through a paradoxically idealised vision of Italy and Italians. This makes Venice a place where, perhaps more than anywhere else, power dynamics are at stake, and where conflicting realities coexist.

It is worth returning to one final thing about Venice that also explains its transgressive aspect: its perishability. Venice, more than any other city, embodies perishability as the city is bound to disappear one day. Additionally, the city is also transgressive as it is built like a stage, an ephemeral place that is more concerned with appearances than with truthfulness. Therefore, decay and perishability, both components of transgression, are intrinsically part of Venice. In *GM*, Venice is more than a place facilitating transgression for Susy. Its decaying state and surreal beauty make it unique: “It was something, after all, to be with people who did not regard Venice simply as affording exceptional opportunities for bathing and adultery, but who were reverently if confusedly aware that they were in the presence of something unique and ineffable, and determined to make the utmost of their privilege” (Wharton 69). Writing about Venice is one way to “make the utmost” of the city to move beyond “bathing and adultery.”

Chapter Two

Minor Works in a Major Location: Publication, Reception and Selection Mechanisms

Introduction: Defining “Major” and “Minor”

As established, Venice and Northern Italy are unique settings in literature. Perishability in particular motivates writings about Venice as it creates a feeling of urgency to write about these locations before they disappear, either symbolically because of the overflow of tourists that threatens its uniqueness, or literally because of environmental damage. There is a canon of writing about Venice and Northern Italy that all four of the writers under consideration participate in; at present, however, they perform a relatively minor role within that canon. In addition to this, three of the four novels could be regarded as minor works by major authors (Forster, Wharton, Hemingway) while that of *DPOW* might be regarded as the most significant work of a relatively minor author. This section will retrace the writing, publication and reception processes of the four novels, and highlight the original status of these works. It will seek to find alternative paths apprehending a place that is apparently so assured in its representation, and pose the question of whether the status of the fictions is affected negatively by the assured cultural status of Venice and Northern Italy. By engaging with the “major” cultural location, are the fictions inevitably consigned to a kind of “minority” status?

Both T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis see the canon as necessary for literary tradition. For Eliot, the evaluation of canonical works necessarily involves comparison: “No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead” (37). This act of comparison equally requires acknowledging previous influence, according to Leavis: “What one great

original artist learns from another, whose genius and problems are necessarily very different, is the hardest kind of ‘influence’ to define, even when we see it to have been of the profoundest importance” (18-19).

Facing these observations, one could argue, like David Lodge, that minor works exist for a practical reason, which is the impossibility for “collective consciousness” to remember everything that was written and created, because “the collective consciousness can store only a finite number of texts; when one is added, another must drop out to make room for it” (11). The selection process of these works is complex:

This critical activity also had an ideological function, seldom overtly acknowledged, namely, the maintenance of a canon. The storehouse of fiction has many floors, but it is shaped like a ziggurat, or pyramid. There is a lot of space on the ground floor for contemporary work, but much of it is speedily dumped in the trash cans outside the back door, without ever having been shelved upstairs in the storeys reserved for ‘serious’ writing. (Lodge 11)

This citation not only reveals the time gap between the selection of a canon, but also the arbitrariness of this selection. This idea of having a lot of space for “contemporary work” but much of it being quickly forgotten is particularly evident for Wharton’s works. During the war years only, and in addition to *GM*, the writer was working on *Summer, French Ways and their Meaning*, “The Marne,” *A Son at the Front* and *Old New York*, shortly renamed as *The Age of Innocence*. While most of these writings were well received and eagerly awaited for by readers, most would agree that only one post-war novel worked its way up to the top of the pyramid: *The Age of Innocence*. Cirino also divides Hemingway’s novels according to their canonicity: “Three are masterpieces: *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). The two others, *To Have and Have Not* (1937) and the concern of this book, *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950), are considered

minor, flawed, or even failures” (Introduction, xi). Cirino ultimately refers to the novel as an “inferior work ” (xi) that still deserves to be known to enhance our understanding of his other “enduring masterpieces” (xvi).

In addition to this, Lodge’s idea is reminiscent of Harold Bloom, who connects the canon with anxiety: “Contingency governs literature as it does every cognitive enterprise, and the contingency constituted by the Western literature Canon is primarily manifested as the anxiety of influence that forms and malforms each new writing that aspires to permanence” (12). As a result: “Overpopulation, Malthusian repletion, is the authentic context for canonical anxieties” (15). The canon is therefore built from a selection that is necessary but, seemingly, arbitrary.

Selecting the Canon

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick elaborates on the idea of minor and major canons, and refutes the idea that they are opposed. She identifies a “master-canon, whose fracture would produce, or at least leave room for, a potentially infinite plurality of mini-canons” (49-50). Although interconnected, the second category is barely comparable in its impact and accessibility to the first one, but is equally important:

In this interaction the new pluralized mini-canons have largely failed to dislodge the master-canon from its empirical centrality in such institutional practices as publishing and teaching, although they have made certain specific works and authors newly available for inclusion in the master-canon. Their more important effect, however, has been to challenge, if not the empirical centrality, then the conceptual anonymity of the master-canon. (Sedgwick 50)

Sedgwick proceeds to give examples of a mini-canon that challenged “empirical centrality”: women’s literature, or feminist studies. For her: “with feminist studies in literature, which by on the one hand confronting the master-canon with alternative canons of women’s

literature, and on the other hand reading rebelliously within the master-canon, has not only somewhat rearranged the table of contents for the master-canon but, more important, given it a title” (50). One can for instance think of Wharton’s works, often compared to the master-canonical figure of Henry James during her lifetime, until more recognition came after her death, giving a life for her work on its own.

Canonicity is also on Hemingway’s mind, as evidenced by his preface for his collection of short-stories *The First Forty-Nine Stories*:

There are many kinds of stories in this book. I hope that you will find some that you like. Reading them over, the ones I liked the best, outside of those that have achieved some notoriety so that school teachers include them in story collections that their pupils have to buy in story courses, and you are always faintly embarrassed to read them and wonder whether you really wrote them or did you maybe hear them somewhere, are *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*, *In Another Country*, *Hills Like White Elephants*, *A Way You’ll Never Be*, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, *A Clean Well-Lighted Place*, and a story called *The Light of the World* which nobody else ever liked. There are some others too. Because if you did not like them you would not publish them. (Preface v-vi)

This passage insists on the difference between a writer’s personal preferences and those of a reader and a critic. According to Hemingway, a writer’s objective is always to please the reader (“I hope that you find some that you like”). That being said, he then acknowledges that his short-stories that “have achieved notoriety” are not necessarily his favourites, and that he even feels detached from them as they grew canonical. Most importantly, he shows that he does not understand the popularity of the stories and the academic selection that followed it. He asserts that his judgement on his work is not necessarily influenced by their reception - although such a

statement will be nuanced in the section dedicated to *ARIT*. In any case, this passage from his collection of short-stories is an example of Bloom's "canonical anxieties" (15).

Addressing the critical reputation of Hemingway, Susan F. Beegel asks whether a major work is necessarily a canonical work, and vice versa. She also reminds us of the etymology of the word "canon":

An author of great critical reputation is an author whose work is widely believed to be of permanent value in changing times, an author likely to be read by future generations yet unborn. We call the process of attaining such a critical reputation 'canonization,' after the process the Roman Catholic Church uses to decide whether an individual deserves public veneration and may be included in the calendar of saints. (269)

Similarly to Lodge, Beegel highlights here the hierarchical and mystical aspect of selecting the canon. Franco Moretti adds some nuance to this definition. For him, there are two types of canon: "Conan Doyle is a perfect case in point: *socially* supercanonical right away, but *academically* canonical only a hundred years later. And the same happened to Cervantes, Defoe, Austen, Balzac, Tolstoy. . ." (208). This is also reminiscent of Beegel's theory that death is the "truest test of a writer's critical reputation" (Beegel 270). Using scientific methods (graphs, trees, and so forth), Moretti investigates why Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* is considered to be canonical, unlike other detective novels written at the same period of time. Moretti comes to a similar conclusion to Hemingway in his preface of *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, and which is that there is a "Darwinian feature of literary history" (215): "But why is Conan Doyle selected in the first place? Why him, and not others? Here the economic model has a blind spot: the event that starts the "information cascade" is unknowable" (211). Knowing why an author or a novel was preferred over another is therefore impossible, especially before publication; one can only analyse a posteriori the mechanisms of the selection:

What the tree says is that literary history *could be different from what it is*. Different: not necessarily better. And there are strong reasons for its being what it is; most of my article tries precisely to explain why Conan Doyle's selection makes sense. But 'explaining' means organizing the evidence we have so as to account for a given result: it doesn't mean maintaining that that result was inevitable. That's not history; that's theodicy. Inevitable was *the tree*, not the success of this or that branch: in fact, we have seen how *unlikely* the branch of clues was in the 1890s. (Moretti 227)

This notion of arbitrariness should be nuanced, however, as what we consider as canonical is influenced by different biases, such as race, gender and sexuality. Sedgwick reminds us that most canonical works are written by Euro-American white (and often heterosexual, or at least considered as such) males, often excluding "the context of oral and written cultures; of the colonized or the colonizing; or cultures that have had both experiences; of peoples concentrated or in diaspora; of traditions partially internal or largely external to a dominant culture of the latter twentieth century" (Sedgwick 51). It becomes clear that the canon should be questioned, and seen as a porous notion rather than a fixed one, similarly to the Venetian environment. Based on the definitions, and in an attempt to question "pedagogic relations within and around the canon" (Sedgwick 54), the following chapter will investigate why Forster's *AS*, Wharton's *GM* and Hemingway's *ARIT* are considered to be minor works within their canon, before moving on to discussing the "minor" status of Rolfe's *DPOW*.

Part One: Forster's *Arctic Summer*

Genesis and Publication

AS was a work in progress for several decades. Although Forster never sent it to publishers, he tried finishing it several times in his life. He started writing it in the summer of 1911, when vacationing in Northern Italy, and the version we have now was published posthumously in 1980. Similarly to *GM* and *ARIT*, the novel is inspired by biographical

elements. In a letter written on September 24, 1911 to his friend Jessica Darling, Forster mentioned an event that occurred when he was in Basle station:

I had a glorious time in Italy - such weather water and woods. I was in the Lakes all the time, except for excursions to Milan and Bergamo, and managed to keep clean of 'resorts'. . . . Much did I bathe, much eat, and lived in a dream till I fell suddenly into England on Basle station - hundreds of tourists struggling for half that number of seats on the midnight train, and shouting that all would be well if the others would behave like Gentlemen. The sacred word re-echoed loudly. Eight in a carriage, still chanting it, we started, our legs intertwined like spillikins, so that if one gentleman moved in the night, all the other seven woke up. The train was two hours late, the boat later. I returned a little discontented to Albion, and still long for the beautiful forms of the Italian hills.

(Forster, quoted by Mary Lago and P. N. Furbank 125)

This letter is in agreement with Forster's other fiction set in Italy, namely the contempt for British travellers and for British people's conformism (expressed through the capitalisation of "Gentlemen," and through the irony of "sacred word"). This letter also reads very similarly to the storyline of *GM* as we understand that Forster stayed with wealthy friends in the Northern Lakes. More importantly, it becomes clear that the chaos from Basle station strongly inspired the opening of *AS*, as the scenes are almost identical. Additionally, the emphasis on physical pleasures occurring in Italy ("much did I bathe, much eat") echoes other writings of Forster, such as *A Room With a View*, and might suggest that *AS* also features these themes.

After analysing the compositional process of the novel, S.P. Rosenbaum reminds us that many of Forster's novels were all written in very short periods of time, between 1905 and 1910: *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room With a View*, (1908) and *Howards End* (1910). However:

With the success of *Howards End* in 1910, Forster reached a dead end. He had written four novels in six years. Between its publication in 1910 and the First World War he began four or five more books, only one of which he was able to complete, and it was unpublishable. Only once before Forster had been unable to complete a novel, but that was at the beginning of his career. (Rosenbaum 62)

The apparent frustration that emerged when writing *AS* seems to be a precedent for Forster for the rest of his creative life. *A Passage to India* would take him over ten years to complete, and the novel Rosenbaum describes as “unpublishable” in the previous citation is *Maurice*, which Forster wrote between 1913 and 1914 - after his first attempt at writing *AS*. Lago and Furbank describe this period of Forster’s life as “writer’s block” (42) - although that is not exactly correct. Writing novels proved more difficult for Forster after 1910, but he was experimenting with other forms of writing: “In 1911 and 1912 Forster also finished two plays that further illustrate his attempts to write without writing novels” (Rosenbaum 67). Lago and Furbank connect Forster’s anxiety to write to his growing popularity:

At all events, the happiness came to an end rather suddenly and in a curious manner - to a considerable extent, because of the great success of *Howards End*. The success seems to have paralysed him. Perhaps this puts it too strongly; nevertheless, almost immediately afterwards, he became convinced that he was ‘dried up’ as a writer. (Introduction, x)

In addition to this, Forster faced family issues at the time, with his grandmother’s passing in 1911, which greatly affected his mother and “caused a permanent embittering of her temper” (Lago and Furbank x). The writer seized the opportunity to escape his mother by going to India in 1912 and 1913, which prompted his work on *A Passage to India*.

However, even if he abandoned other projects, Forster kept working on *AS*. He drafted four different versions of it, before deciding on one final version, the one we have

now, a version he read during a lecture in June 1951 at the Aldeburgh Festival. This reveals that forty years after his first draft, the writer was still trying to assemble his novel:

Yet Forster never gave up on *Arctic Summer*. In June 1951, when he read it at the Aldeburgh Festival, he revised the first five chapters, turning it into the text we now have, the first half of which sets out the ‘antithesis’ that provides the necessary tension, and the second half exploring the directions into which such opposing beliefs and natures may lead. (Desai x)

By showing that Forster had designed a conventional plot for the novel, Desai touches upon another question, which is why *AS* was so important for him to finish. Did Forster feel compelled to finish it so that it could also access to canonicity and to the top of the “pyramid” (Lodge 11), just like his other texts? One other interpretation is also possible, and connected to Forster’s contemporary work when he gave his Aldeburgh lecture. At that time, the writer was working, along with composer Benjamin Britten and director Eric Crozier, on a libretto based on Herman Melville’s posthumous novella *Billy Budd* (1924). The opera had its premiere in London in December 1951, and was “an eagerly awaited revival” of the text, according to journalist Farnsworth Fowle. Perhaps working on the implicitly queer content of *Billy Budd* rekindled a desire for Forster to revisit *AS*. In any case, Forster eventually chose to give up on the novel after reading it at the Aldeburgh Festival.

For Rosenbaum, the main issue was that he himself did not know what he wanted to write about: “As with *Arctic Summer*, he had his structural antithesis but could not determine what was going to happen – sexually and otherwise” (78). The same idea is expressed by Forster himself in unpublished notes at the end of the manuscript of *AS*:

But whether their problems are solved or not, there remains a still graver one: what is going to happen? . . . I cannot tell you what happened in *Arctic Summer*, and even the First Great War, which broke out the next year, did not tell me. It seems I see much

clearly today, for I have lived on to an age where not only March can't sit where he wants but Martin can't get it either. The novel might have ended with the two as companions in defeat, but such an ending doesn't interest me. (Forster, 1910-1914)

The fate of the two main characters of the novel, March and Martin, seems in particular to be an issue for Forster. The mention of "companions in defeat" indicates that Forster was not interested in a novel that would end tragically - a trope especially associated with queer literature, which often ends in tragic circumstances (Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; Mann's *Death in Venice*; Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, etc). Lance's death (C.P. March's brother) ends the fragment that we have now. And yet, "companions in defeat" also shows that Forster could not find a way to end the novel differently, and this dissatisfaction perhaps led him to leave *AS* unfinished. A few years later, he would, however, end his novel *Maurice* happily, and mention in the novel's appendix that: "A happy ending was imperative. I shouldn't have bothered to write otherwise" (220), revealing that *AS* was a transitional work and period in Forster's life. Journalist Siddhartha Deb suggests another reason that explains the unfinishedness of the account: "But *Arctic Summer* would never be finished, its mysterious, moody title evoking instead the uncertainties about writing, sexuality, relationships and empire that racked Forster's life, especially during the long stretch between *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* ("*Arctic Summer* by Dalmon Galgut", 2014). This is not a new idea as Lago and Furbank also remind us that contemporary critics to Forster noticed his sexual frustration, and thought it might impact his work:

It is from this moment, perhaps, that we should date that 'cramp' that many observers, among them D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, perceived in him. An important element in it, of course, was his growing sense of sexual frustration. Thus the leading events of his next few years may be said to have been, first, his encounter with Edward Carpenter and its sequel, the writing of his homosexual novel *Maurice* - a gesture that

for a moment, but only a moment, seemed to spell liberation. Secondly, the coming of the war, which, or so he decided, made creation impossible for him. And thirdly, his achievement in war-time Egypt of a physical love-affair, with the young Egyptian Mohammed el Adl. Even this was not the emancipation that, at the time, he imagined it. (Introduction, x)

Ellem retraces all the different versions of *AS*, and explains that “the manuscripts total approximately 56,000 words” (1087), revealing that there is much more to the text published in 1980 and studied in this dissertation. She also identifies four main versions of *AS*, that she chronologically names the “Cyril version,” the “Tramonta version,” the “Radipole version,” and the “Aldeburgh version”, specifying that the Tramonta version is the longest and that the Aldeburgh version is based on this one. While the Tramonta and Aldeburgh versions are very similar to the version that we now have, the Cyril and Radipole versions deserve more attention. The Cyril version starts in Italy as well, but the setting does not seem to be as important as in the Tramonta and Aldeburgh versions:

The Cyril Version - fragmentary and antedating the above - also begins on Basle station and proceeds to Milan and Castelnuovo di Sotto (alias Tramonta). Cyril is again a soldier, but with an ambiguous background - at least Martin finds his lemon-coloured Norfolk suit not quite the thing, and half wishes him out of sight when they go to get the permessi. Cyril also has a brother, Robin, at Cambridge (a more serious personality than Lance), who intends taking Orders as a means of fighting the evils of the world. But something happens to Robin (the relevant part of the manuscript is missing), and the disaster - for which Cyril blames himself - brings him and Martin together. Cyril has already influenced Martin's way of thinking, and he speaks to his wife with regret of the passing of Crusades, of Odysseys. (Ellem 1088)

In this version, it is Cyril who becomes attached to Martin because of an external event, therefore revealing a shift in the characters' dynamics. Cyril's brother also seems to be a more important character than in the Tramonta and Aldeburgh versions. More generally, this version reads more dramatically, with Cyril's brother disappearing. The Radipole version also has different features as it does not start in Italy, but in England:

The early chapters of the Radipole Version are set in England, not Italy. Martin Whitby and Cleasant March meet at Radipole, an anti-scholastic, athletics-orientated public school, where Martin is substituting for his father-in-law, Sir Hugh Borlase (an eminent scholar and a man of letters), at the Michaelmas term presentation of prizes. Martin is not a public-school mind (a fact he does not mind), but he is a successful civil servant (not sufficient compensation to the snobbish schoolmasters), and has Cambridge connexions - possibly the same as in the Tramonta Version, perhaps only his relationship to Sir Hugh . . . Nevertheless, Martin is attracted to Lance, who has an outgoing, friendly nature, vastly different from Cleasant's, who soon appears, and again shows inadequately motivated hostility towards Martin. (Ellem 1088)

Through the references to two male students coming from different social backgrounds, and with opposite social beliefs, who meet in Italy, the storyline of this version appears to be a blend of *AS* and *Maurice*, indicating that Forster probably started thinking about *Maurice* during his writing process of *AS*.

Multiplicities of Meanings

The different versions of *AS* shed light on a major aspect of Forster's writing process, which is that Forster was used to creating in fragments, in a very modernist way. This fragmentary process is especially visible in *AS*, but such a process is present in many of his other writings, including some that were already published. Ellem reveals that many

different versions of manuscripts were discovered after Forster's death, including fragments from the "Lucy Novel" and the "New Lucy Novel":

After the death of E.M. Forster, on 7 June 1970, a number of fragments of what he called the LUCY NOVEL (until December 1903) and the NEW LUCY NOVEL (thereafter, until it became *A Room With a View* in mid 1907 - published 1908) were found in different places among his papers. Examination proved that lacunae in some of the 'chapters' pinned together could be filled with pages from other caches. (Ellem, 1971)

Forster's editor, Oliver Stallybrass, also mentions the profusion of unpublished writings found after Forster's death:

It was found - to a few people it had long been known - that Forster had written much more than had ever been published. The unpublished material included a novel, a dozen short stories, two substantial chunks of novels, various shorter fictional fragments, several plays complete and incomplete, a film script, some verse (mostly pornographic), broadcasts and other occasional pieces - to say nothing of letters, diaries, notebooks, and other personalia. (Stallybrass, 1973)

Despite Rosenbaum's claim, Forster's writing was not at a "dead end" (62), because the author wrote consistently throughout his life, although not necessarily novels. However, Forster perhaps suffered from a publisher's block due to different factors - lack of confidence, the political context, the inability to write about homosexuality openly, to cite a few. Secondly, Forster wrote different versions of many, if not all, his writings. Ellem's previous anecdote about *A Room With a View* reveals that extra fragments were found after Forster's death and added to the novel we have now. The fact that *AS* remained out of Forster's control despite his efforts to finish it, is reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari's definition of the rhizome:

But a rhizome or multiplicity never allows itself to be overcoded, never disposes of a dimension supplementary to the number of its lines, that is, to the multiplicity of numbers attached to these lines. All multiplicities are flat, insofar as they fill up or occupy all their dimensions; we will speak of a plane of consistency of multiplicities, although this 'plane' increases in dimensions according to the number of connections that are established on it. (16)

By consciously or unconsciously refusing to select one fragment and finish it, Forster's *AS* becomes a work of endless possibilities and multiple entrances, made of "units but of dimensions, or rather of shifting directions. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle, through which it pushes and overflows" (Deleuze and Guattari 47). There is no culmination point, the fragments are simply existing. It is up to the reader to decide which entrance to choose and what to make of it, and to accept that "it will often be necessary to go down dead ends" (Deleuze and Guattari 31). With its four versions, *AS* creates multiple paths to the understanding and interpretation of the fragment. This approach is reminiscent of the section "Prophecy" Forster wrote in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), and in which he explains his fascination about Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851): "*Moby Dick* is full of meanings: its meaning is a different problem" (143-144). Just like in *AS*, looking for one meaning is pointless; meanings, on the other hand, can emerge at any given moment: "The essential in *Moby Dick*, its prophetic song, flows athwart the action and the surface morality like an undercurrent. It lies outside words" (142).

This rhizomatic read on Forster's work was not adopted by his editor Stallybrass, who made the decision to select one of the versions of *AS*, instead of publishing all of them. Stallybrass explained his process of selection, and mentions how the different versions of Forster's works made posthumous editing difficult: "the biggest problem of all, in several of

the stories, is to determine which of two or more versions is intended as a replacement of which” (1973). He also emphasises the fact that editorial choices were entirely up to him:

Nevertheless, although no simple formula was available, I had from the outset a reasonably clear view of what was appropriate; Establishing the text . . . I have constantly to weigh the theoretical desirability of any piece of collation against the likelihood or otherwise of its producing significant results, a large proportion of my work on the Abinger Edition has consisted, and will continue to consist, of a sustained and serious attempt to establish proper texts. (Stallybrass, 1973)

It has to be mentioned here that Forster’s will indicates that he allowed any form of posthumous publications of his work, thus insisting on the idea that his unfinished writings are simply existing, without a beginning or end. There is no doubt Stallybrass did his best to sensibly select Forster’s works. However, his editorial choices remain arbitrary, and question the legitimacy and authenticity of Forster’s posthumous unpublished works, and especially of *AS*, which remains unmentioned in Stallybrass’ notes. Furthermore, Forster’s large number of unfinished writings questions whether incomplete pieces should necessarily be associated with minor ones. Booth, however, shares a more positive interpretation of writings left incomplete:

Such moments where meaning and possibility emerge from the local and uncertain are not confined to texts that Forster published. We can examine surviving manuscript material with a wider set of questions in mind than how these effects and strategies were created; more can be gleaned from alterations made on the page, the changes found in successive drafts, and the differences between manuscript material and published versions. That is not to say that we have an extensive body of manuscript material for Forster’s fiction; what survives is limited and often incomplete. (17)

The idea that, through incomplete writings, possibilities can be opened for editors and scholars will be further discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Reception and Damon Galgut's *Arctic Summer*

There is very little information on the reception of *AS* when it was published in 1973, as the version we have now. Until 2021, it was not translated into other languages, which also had reduced its readership. In addition to that, the text is not included in the first wave of publication of Forster's unpublished works, unlike *Maurice* or *The Life to Come*, a collection of his unpublished short stories dealing with homosexuality, and respectively published in 1971 and 1972 (right after Forster's death in 1970). The fragment, along with other writings such as *Nottingham Lace*, will in fact not be published by Stallybrass but by editor Elizabeth Heine in *Arctic Summer and other Fiction*, still by the Abinger edition. For some scholars, this second wave of unpublished writings, and in particular *AS*, shed a different light on Forster's work:

Without trying to magnify their importance, it seems to me that Fosterian researchers will now have to take into account these two fragments within their appreciation of the writer's work, if only, for example, to notice the progress made between Nottingham Lace and 'Old Lucy' or *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, or to read *Howards End* in light of *Arctic Summer*." (Hanquart 5)¹¹

The difference of opinion between the academic world and the social world (Moretti 208), proves particularly accurate for these posthumous writings. Some critics defined these short-stories as pornographic, an overstatement to say the least, and refused to see the works as valuable because of their homosexual content, such as journalist Ferdinand Mount in a review entitled "Awkward Pieces":¹²

¹¹"Sans vouloir magnifier leur importance, il me semble toutefois que tout chercheur fostérien devra désormais tenir compte de ces deux ébauches dans son appréciation de l'oeuvre du romancier, ne serait-ce, par exemple, que pour mesurer la distance parcourue entre Nottingham Lace et "Old Lucy" ou *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, ou pour lire *Howards End* à la lumière d'*Arctic Summer*."

¹² The title of the review is in itself quite telling of Mount's opinion on Forster's posthumous works.

In *The Life to Come* there is a good ghost story and a nice literary squib but in the other stories long and short, the homosexual elements swamps everything. The theme - repeated ad nauseam as is usually the case in the never-never land of porn - is Forster's favourite: the puritan prig (a missionary, soldier or squire, some bourgeois dumbcluck in other words) is seduced by his smiling guilt-free child of nature. (Mount, 1972)

These homophobic reviews released after Forster's first wave of publication prove that his fear about publishing them during his lifetime was accurate, and explain why the second part of his unpublished work was not as advertised as the first one.

Interestingly, Forster's text was given more attention when the eponymous novel by South African writer Damon Galgut was published in 2014. Galgut's *Arctic Summer* is not a sequel to Forster's but rather a fictional biography of Forster and focusing on his homosexual experiences throughout the years he spent in Egypt and in India. The novel relates his actual relationships with friend Syed Ross Masood in India, and with Mohammed el Adl in Alexandria.¹³ Galgut's choice of referencing Forster's title in a fictional text centred on Forster's homosexuality confirms the idea that *AS* has the potential to be a queer novel. It also reinforces the idea that Forster was aware of the queer content of his work, and that perhaps it contributed to him not finishing it. Given that Forster wrote *Maurice* two years after starting *AS*, it seems reasonable to suggest that the text might have been the starting point for *Maurice*, and more generally a draft of future themes and characters to be developed later on in *Maurice* but also in *A Passage to India*. Some of Forster's correspondence and diaries communicate that interpretation: "Analysing the sources of his sterility in June 1911, Forster wrote in his diary that he was weary of 'the only subject that I both can and may treat – the love of men for women & vice versa'" (Rosenbaum 62). Galgut develops a similar reading of the novel:

¹³ Similarly, *Greenland* by David Santos Donaldson (2022) blends fictional and biographical elements on Forster's liaison with Mohammed el-Adl.

Shame and secret excitement: they had been the stuff of so much of his [E.M. Forster] life, and they appeared now to have infected his words. He had started a new novel, too, which he called *Arctic Summer*, but he felt its emptiness, its diminishing momentum. The idea for it had seeded itself in him at Basle station, on his way back from Italy, when he had found himself in a horrible tangle of British tourists on the platform, and had almost been flung beneath a train. But part of the problem was that he had written about these people before. Hapless English travellers, finding or losing themselves in Italy - what more could he say about them? He knew them too well; he wanted to leave them behind. (65-66)

This is the only metafictional and intertextual moment in the novel during which Galgut explicitly references Forster's book. There are two main ideas in this extract: firstly, Galgut traces back the genesis of Forster's *AS* to Forster's life events (slipping beneath a train on his way to Italy, which is also the starting point of Forster's *AS*). Secondly, Galgut makes it clear that for him, there is a shift in Forster's writing interests from Italy to India, and Forster's *AS* creates this shift. Galgut therefore wants the reader to understand that *AS* is a breaking point for Forster, that will make him try something new in terms of writing (visible in his later novels *Maurice* and *A Passage to India*), although Galgut skips the frustration Forster seemed to have experienced from 1911 to 1951, when he could not finish the fragment. Galgut's interpretation is shared by Rosenbaum, who also sees *AS* as a transitional work for Forster:

But before leaving for India he began the novel again [*Arctic Summer*] - in a different way, reassuring his publishers that he was still interested in the work's ideas and characters. Six months later, however, he explained to Forrest Reid from India that his novel about work and battle was too much like *Howards End*. Was it the antitheses that resembled the prose and passion of his previous novel, or perhaps the similarity of two

sisters to the Schlegels? At any rate the soldier had now become the frustrated central character who could find no straightforward cause to fight for. What Forster wanted to write instead, he told Reid from India early in 1913, was ‘something beyond the field of action and behaviour’. . . Forster thus marked his transition as a novelist from England to India. *Arctic Summer* was abandoned for *A Passage to India*, which he began on his return to England. (Rosenbaum 68)

The idea of transition, and consequently of Forster being a transitional writer, also echoes Forster’s own position at the intersection of Edwardian literature and Modernism. Significantly, the idea of a transitional writer, while necessary in literary history and bringing dynamism, is also often associated with minor works and authors.

Tensions Surrounding a Transitional Writer

Forster’s fiction is not known to be particularly socially and politically engaged, with the exception of *A Passage to India*, which echoes India’s desire for independence. However, none of his other four novels, written between 1905 and 1910, voice a strong political message. Booth reminds us that not taking clear political positions was more common in Edwardian England, but “by the 1930s writers had to ‘take sides’ and act” (112). This image of Forster prompted one of the foundational waves of criticisms on the writer that came from the United States in the mid 1940s, and that positioned him as a “liberal,” defined by Booth as an emphasis on “the individual over state action” (111-112). Jefferson Hunter also comments on this idea of liberalism:

Forster’s personal connection with Liberalism, especially political Liberalism, are important but not very distinct. On the one hand, he was an early contributor to the *Independent Review*, a Liberal journal, and Cambridge and the Apostles introduced him to such thinkers as Dickinson and G.M. Trevelyan; but on the other hand he liked to

keep aloof from party affairs and was not greatly interested in political theory. Yet

Forster's work is unquestionably engaged by Liberal problems. (241)

One can query whether the lack of reference to the international conflict that would be World War I might explain why Forster did not finish the novel: "The ironies of its pre-war optimism extend beyond the novel's apparent plot to Forster's own crisis of creativity – and to the impending fate of his civilisation" (Rosenbaum 62). However, Lago and Furbank suggest that despite Forster's dislike of taking strong positions, the writer was well aware of the international conflict, and that this participated in his inability to write:

War came in August 1914, and with it for Forster the realisation that to have written an unpublishable novel had not, as he had hoped, helped him toward writing a publishable one. He was thus plunged into gloom, for both public and private reasons, and decided that for the moment creation was impossible. (205)

It should be noted here that Forster took action during WWI by becoming a hospital searcher in Alexandria, although just like Hemingway as an ambulance-driver, he judged such a position "easy" and incomparable to soldier work (Booth 113):

As a gesture toward war-work, he took a part-time job as cataloguer at the National Gallery, and when G. M. Trevelyan invited him to join an Ambulance Unit in Italy, he was tempted to accept. Eventually, he refused, out of concern for his mother. Then, in the autumn 1915, came the idea of going to Alexandria as a hospital searcher, in the newly-formed Wounded and Missing Bureau of the Red Cross. ('Searching' meant interrogating wounded soldiers and sailors for details of missing comrades). (Lago and Furbank 204)

After the end of the war, Forster waited six years before publishing another piece of writing. However, if war is not explicitly present in Forster's novels, it was still a factor in his writings, as his essay entitled "English Literature since the War" presumably written in

1914-1915, proves - although it was, too, not published. In this essay, Forster lists different forms of authors writing about the war, and establishes three different categories. The first two are those who praise the war, and write about it, and those who are against the war, whom he calls “pacifists”. Unsurprisingly, the writer disliked any form of extreme position: “Neither pacifism or militarism has any necessary connection with genius” (169). The third category of war writing is when “a war is neither good nor bad in its literary effects, but negligible” (170) or in other words, when “the years 1914-1918 have left no special mark” (170). For Forster, war had no literary effect on Conrad, Strachey, Beerbohm or Shaw. However, he suggests that, these writers aside, the landscape of English literature was considerably changed by the war:

The change had begun before 1914, as those four years accelerated it. We were already stepping out of the 19th century - the Victorian era, as we call it - but now we have jumped, and the break is exhibited in our literature. For what did the Victorian era stand? For aspiration. That was its great characteristic. The Victorian writer believed that the works could be perfected, either through God, or through science, whom he accepted as a beneficent lover. The individual might doubt or fail, but the goal, though he might not see or reach it, remained, and would be achieved by his successors. But aspirations do not exist today, at least for the younger generation. (Forster 171-172)

According to his essay, there is a rupture between literature pre-WWI and post-WWI that centres on aspiration, which no longer exists after the conflict. Forster’s modernist disillusionment and cynical attitude towards any form of beliefs also highlights his transitionality. Wharton’s post-war correspondence expresses a similar disillusionment, as will be seen later on in the chapter.

The omission of war and the mention of other themes usually present in Forster’s fiction (British people travelling in Italy and enacting chivalrous behaviours), prompted

scholars to ask the question of relevance in *AS*. In other words: did Forster leave the novel unfinished because he thought it was irrelevant in the historical context of the time? Galgut certainly seems to think that Forster felt it irrelevant to write on British tourists in Italy when he had already done so in his previous works: “Hapless English travellers, finding or losing themselves in Italy - what more could he say about them? He knew them too well; he wanted to leave them behind” (65-66). Additionally, it is true that chivalry, a central theme in *AS*, was a traditional theme in pre WWI literature. It could be argued, in fact, that one of the more evident casualties of WWI was chivalry - it is purposefully absent from Hemingway’s *ARIT*, and it causes Susy and Nick’s fight in Wharton’s *GM*. And yet, it is present in all different versions of *AS*, in varying intensity. As discussed, the novel begins with Martin who slips because he tries to act in a chivalrous manner to his wife and mother-in-law. In other scenes of the novel, Martin equally fails to be chivalrous, such as when he runs away when there is a fire in a movie theatre. Venetia’s depiction also reveals that she does not look for any chivalry in her relationship with Martin, but for equality, making her a “caricature of the high-minded, liberal, emancipated young woman of the Edwardian era” for whom “civilization consists of ignoring the old-fashioned ‘mediaeval’ idea that men and women are different, and asserts that they are partners, equals” argues Ellem (1087). Contrastingly, the other main male character of *AS*, March, is described as chivalrous: “The man who saved him had the look and gesture of a warrior” (Forster 4). He also acts in a chivalrous manner later in the novel, when the two men ask for permessi to visit a castle in Tramonta:

‘I must point out,’ he said, ‘that we have left that girl in the lurch.’

‘Bettina? Have we?’

‘We have not done as she asked us. We came out of the room when she told us not to, and now her father will be angry.’

‘I couldn’t do as she told me,’ said Martin. ‘It was too silly; and I only hope he will be angry with her.’

‘Excuse me - we have not behaved like gentlemen.’ . . .

‘Gentlemanly behaviour has usually another side to it.’

He cried, ‘You twist everything round,’ and left the tram, red as fire.

‘Unlike me that,’ was Martin’s reflection, ‘I don’t generally cross swords, least of all with a boy. But I do hate that pseudo-chivalry so - Venetia does so hate it. It’s against all true intercourse with women, and all progress.’ (Forster 24)

Martin here clearly associates “mediaeval” ideas (Ellem 1087) with chivalry. Ironically, in this passage, Martin positions himself as a man who does not care about gentlemanly ideals, when the opening scene shows that such a statement is untrue. For Ellem, Forster could not help resorting to chivalrous ideals in his writings: “He is trying to escape from the suburbia of the earlier novels, to become more fictional, and at the same time be more explicit about things that he feels deeply about. His choice of ‘mediaeval’ and ‘chivalric’ trappings was not a happy one” (1088). Ellem’s comment that Forster wanted to “become more fictional” is not entirely convincing, as blending social commentary and fiction is Forster’s trademark; however, the idea that he was always coming back to chivalric “trappings” because he did not know otherwise is proved by the different versions of *AS. Howards End*, for instance, discusses social classes and the emergence of suburbs, and is arguably one of his most “realist” works. Similarly, *A Room With a View*, *The Longest Journey* and *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, although not explicitly about the development of suburban areas, also offer acute comments on social classes - and so do *A Passage to India* and *Maurice*.

As mentioned, *AS* was Forster’s only novel not to have been translated into other languages until 2021, when the fragment was translated for the first time in Italian by translator Salvatore Asaro for Edizioni Croce. In their catalogue, the novel’s summary is

centred around the main characters' relationship, and is described as follows: "Despite the wide abyss that exists between them, Martin feels deeply grateful and immediately, although unspeakably, attracted to him. Although at first, their relation appears to be purely circumstantial, it will become more ambiguous."¹⁴ Similarly to Galgut's fictional biography, Edizioni Croce chose to focus on the queer aspect of the novel. The emphasis on the "ambiguous" nature of the characters is also close to the idea of transition expressed by Rosenbaum, as it suggests that the novel relies on possibilities and ambiguities.

Part Two: Wharton's *The Glimpses of the Moon*

Publication and Reception of the Novel

Despite selling more than 60,000 copies in three weeks and being turned into a movie within the first year of its publication, *GM* largely went unnoticed within Wharton's scholarship for quite some time. Unlike *The House of Mirth*, *The Custom of the Country* or *The Age of Innocence*, *GM* does not have an edition on its own in the Library of America's collection of Wharton's novels, but features in their anthology of "four novels of the 1920s" along with three other lesser-known novels, respectively *A Son at the Front*, *Twilight Sleep*, and *The Children*. Interestingly, all these lesser-known works come from a later stage within Wharton's career, perhaps indicating a decrease in interest in Wharton's readership in the late 1920s.

Recent scholarship on Wharton has undertaken an reevaluation on the writer's canon. As Mary A. Carney notes in her retrospective on Wharton studies from 2014 to 2020, the recent interest given to "lesser-studied genres" (3) within Wharton's scholarship also opens research possibilities for some of her lesser-studied works. Janet Beer and Avril Horner, in their analysis of *Twilight Sleep*, exemplify this movement of new research, and suggest that: "far from evidencing a decline from the three most valorized of her novels *The House of Mirth* (1905), *The Custom of the Country* (1913), *The Age of Innocence* (1920), *Twilight Sleep* shows

¹⁴ Original text: "Nonostante il profondo abisso che li divide, Martin prova per lui un sentimento di gratitudine e al tempo stesso un'immediata quanto indicibile attrazione. Se in un primo momento il rapporto tra i due appare solo circostanziale, più tardi assumerà una sfumatura di ambiguità."

Wharton deliberately dissolving generic boundaries in order to produce a new form of writing” (178). A similar observation could also be made for *GM*, which is also part of her later and less-studied work.

Although analyses focusing exclusively on *GM* are still rare, there has been increasing attention to it in the twenty-first century. Chambers, in a collection of essays on Wharton and feminism discusses gender and performance in *GM*, and indicates that “a careful reading of this novel within the context of Wharton’s ongoing exploration of gender and narrative suggests that this novel is much more carefully crafted and more deserving of critical attention than previous readers have accorded it” (126). More recently, articles by Clare Virginia Eby and Haytock have highlighted the influence of marital reforms and of the free love movement on the novel. Margarida Cadima’s ecocritical approach to Wharton’s works also features insights on the French environment in the novel. A new edition of *GM* was published in 2024 by Pushkin Press, and in the same year, the novel was turned into an audiobook by Tavi Gevinson, and announced to be adapted into a musical by Francis Ford Coppola, indicating a renewal of interest for the novel.

Similarly to Forster’s text, *GM* was not an easy writing process. It took Wharton a few years to finish it, as she was working on other fictions, which was typical of her: “‘I have never been able to write one novel without having another one going on at the same time,’ she explained to the somewhat dazed Rutger Jewett” (Lewis 427). She started writing it during WWI, in 1916, simultaneously with *Summer, French Ways and their Meaning*, “The Marne” and *A Son at the Front*. Wharton offered both *GM* and *A Son at the Front* for publication at the same time, but her publishers encouraged her not to publish war writings in the aftermath of WWI. Wharton then paused *GM* and started working on a new project, *Old New York*, which would become *The Age of Innocence*. Her prolificacy led to miscomprehensions from her editors at times: “I understand that this contract applies to the

book which was originally to be called *Glimpses of the Moon*, but which you are now calling *A Son at the Front*” (J.H. Sears to Wharton, 27 August 1918). The intersection of these works in Wharton’s writing process, on top of showing her proficiency as a writer, also emphasises the unpredictable aspect of publishing. Additionally, *GM* was interrupted by health complications: “When I wrote you on August 27th I was still feeling extremely tired and could not foresee when I should be able to take up *The Glimpses of the Moon* again” (Wharton to Jewett, 4 October 1920). Despite all of these issues, the novel was eventually completed in September 1921 (Lewis 439).

Like many of her other novels, *GM* was intended to be published as a serial first, then as a novel. Exchanges between Wharton and her publishers, especially Rutger B. Jewett, reveal how Wharton tried to answer the various requests she received from D. Appleton & Company, such as formal requests (length of the novel, minimum number of words, number of chapters) but also requests on the content, most likely to satisfy her serial readers. For instance, it seems that Jewett encouraged Wharton to extend the actions and plot of the novel for commercial reasons: “You will notice that the ninth chapter of *The Glimpses of the Moon* ends in a real feuilleton climax, and perhaps I shall be able to produce others at the same time” (Wharton to Jewett, 5 November 1920). He also encouraged the happy resolution of the novel: “The happy whimsical ending of ‘The Glimpses of the Moon’ was of especial value in serial form” (Jewett to Wharton, 6 June 1922). Although this was typical for writers as successful as Wharton and publishing in serialised forms, the commercial aspect of writing her novels is important to keep in mind, and we will see it also influenced the publication of the novel.

The success of *The Age of Innocence*, which made her the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in Literature, significantly changed the publication context of *GM*. It became highly anticipated as it was her next novel, which added pressure on Wharton and her

editors: “Our salesman started out in January and are selling the *GM* from an advanced sample copy. We feel that this book will repeat and perhaps surpass the success of the *Age of Innocence*. It will be our leading novel of the year and we shall do everything in our power to make a big success of it” (Jewett to Wharton, 6 February 1922). Most likely benefiting from the success of her previous award-winning novel, *GM*, in fact, sold more and faster than *The Age of Innocence*¹⁵. Wharton was aware of her popular status and made financial claims she found fair at the time: she received a generous \$5000 advance payment, and when asked to sell the film rights of the novel, she asked for \$18,000 before settling on \$15,000. Despite its mixed reviews, the novel was a commercial success, according to biographer Hermione Lee: “Aggressively advertised, it was a huge best-seller, as big as *The House of Mirth*, selling 60,000 copies in three weeks and 100,000 within a few months. The film-rights were sold to Paramount for \$15,000 and the film was made within a year” (626). Dialogues in the movie version were written by F. Scott Fitzgerald, confirming the popularity of the novel (Lewis 444). There was discussion about writing a sequel to the novel (which would have been entitled *Love Among the Ruins*), suggesting again the inevitably incomplete aspect of some writings. Interestingly, a few months later, Wharton would sell the film rights of *The Age of Innocence* for \$9000, a less generous offer than *GM*, which emphasises the idea that market success is not synonymous with canonicity (Lodge 11).

Attesting to this gap between market success and canonicity are the mixed reviews of the novel. Contemporary critic Lewis Worthington Smith argues that the novel was not as good as her other works: “‘*The Glimpses of the Moon*’ is perhaps not Mrs. Wharton’s greatest novel. ‘*The House of Mirth*’ and ‘*Ethan Frome*,’ to speak of no others, have set a high mark for any writer to surpass” (“An Important Novel,” undated). Wilson Follett, in a

¹⁵ See Figure A in the Appendix section.

review of the novel by *The Atlantic's Bookshelf*, contends that the novel has unfulfilled potential:

The trouble is, Mrs. Wharton cannot seem to clinch her thesis - which is, in effect, that even in this materialistic world it is possible for the spoiled children of unearned luxury to sacrifice material values to spiritual and count the bargain a good one - without somewhat altering and denaturing her characters . . . In the end, she has but got to the beginning of this particular story. But even that is an altogether surprising quarter in which to find her. As for the story, it is a glorious one; and gloriously, one must have faith, she will yet tell it.

Mixed reviews are also shared by recent scholarship. Lee, for instance, mentions how “Wharton generates some flashes of her power in this uneven book” (626). Campbell describes the novel as “a relatively obscure work in her canon” (1154) while Chambers also attests to its tepid reception: “Contemporary reviews of the novel, however, were mixed. Some reviewers argued that the work was better than either *The Age of Innocence* or *The House of Mirth* in its analysis of the corruption of the wealthy class in America; other reviewers found the plot disconnected, the characters unbelievable, and the writing slick . . . More recent criticism has also tended to dismiss the narrative as an inferior work” (125). For Lewis, the novel failed to stand out because it was too conventional in the literary landscape at the time - for context, Joyce’s *Ulysses* was published in 1920, and T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* in 1922. And yet, similar comments were also made for *The Age of Innocence*, but the novel did not suffer from its literary conventionality: “Indeed, when viewed in the context of its time, *The Age of Innocence* published midway between *Ulysses* and *Jacob’s Room*, and the same year as *Women in Love*, seems out of place among its contemporaries — like some well-bred Victorian who has accidentally crossed paths with a procession of wild-haired

radicals crying revolution” (Nir Evron 41). Lewis and Lewis suggest that it is not only *GM*, but Wharton’s post-war fiction, that was characterised by mixed reviews:

The Age of Innocence was widely acclaimed, though one critic (Vernon L. Parrington) thought it irrelevant to the political and social issues of the day. *The Glimpses of the Moon*, a light-fingered work at best, aroused hostility in high critical places; *A Son at the Front* was deemed extraordinarily powerful by one reviewer, and the most distasteful war story that another reviewer had ever read. *A Mother’s Recompense* (1925) was clearly misread by some commentators, and unintelligently praised by others. (418)

Yet the Pulitzer Prize, first destined for Sinclair Lewis but then given to Wharton, the honorary doctorate of Letters awarded to her by Yale in 1923, and her financial earnings prove that the writer was nonetheless encountering undeniable financial and popular success during this period of time. “To give some sense of her earnings: during the five years of 1920 to 1924, as best one can calculate, Edith Wharton’s work brought in about \$250,000, not much less than \$3,000,000 before taxes today”¹⁶ (Lewis 418). It is worth noticing that with the exception of *The Age of Innocence*, all the works cited above by Lewis are considered to be lesser-known novels.

“A Happy Whimsical Ending”

Wharton is an example of Moretti’s claim that there is a delay between social and academic reception, as the writer’s scholarship significantly increased after the release of her papers by the Beinecke Library at Yale University in 1968, thirty years after her death, and after the publication of *The Letters of Edith Wharton* by Lewis and Lewis in 1988. For other scholars such as Jessica Schubert McCarthy, it is only in the early 1990s that Wharton’s scholarship took a turn: “The 1995 publication of the *Cambridge Companion to*

¹⁶ In 2024, this would be around \$8,000,000.

Edith Wharton, edited by Millicent Bell and including essays written by a range of established Wharton scholars, might be seen as Wharton scholarship's coming of age" (105). The writer was often considered to be a mere observer of New York society, but the transgressive aspect of her work emerged with twenty-first century scholarship. According to Laura Rattray, "Wharton was superb at exploring contested sites of acceptable behavior for both sexes, the straitjackets confining both women *and* men, often exposing the performativity of gender" (Foreword, ix). For Peter Hays, Wharton "discussed euthanasia, prostitution, and abortion in her fiction, at a time when male writers did not" (26). Parley Ann Boswell observes that her fiction is centred on morally questionable behaviours detrimental to women:

Wharton was indeed a keen observer of society, if that society included powerful middle-aged men who lust after young women (*Summer*, *The Children*, *The Reef*), lonely middle-aged women who wander around looking for love (*The Reef*, *A Mother's Recompense*, *Twilight Sleep*, *The Children*), young men who become paid companions of said women (*A Mother's Recompense*), young women who use sex to worm their ways into society (*The Custom of the Country*, *The Reef*, among others), idle rich men who spend most of their time thinking about whom they have slept with and whom they want to sleep with (almost every novel and short-story), and men - like Newland Archer - who feel so trapped that they daydream about their young wives' deaths (*The Age of Innocence*). This is just the short list. (237)

This extensive list of Wharton's fiction proves that the author was not afraid of writing about taboo issues, although the absence of *GM* among these works seems to indicate that the novel is not a part of this transgressive canon. However, unlike Boswell's list seems to indicate, *GM* bears similar transgressive characteristics to Wharton's other works. Similarly to *The House of Mirth*, *The Custom of the Country* and *The Age of Innocence*, the novel

offers nuanced visions on notions of cosmopolitanism, marriage and money within the American bourgeoisie. Like *The Reef*, the novel also takes place in Europe and deals with the idea of belonging. In a letter addressed to Sears at D. Appleton & Company, in February 1918, Wharton compared *GM* to one of her other novels: “The novel would be on the lines of the *House of Mirth*, and of about the same length.” Such a comparison is unsurprising as Lily Bart embodies the poor American socialite before the Lansings, always condemned to access rich circles without belonging to them: “Her whole being dilated in an atmosphere of luxury; it was the background she required, the only climate she could breathe in. But the luxury of others was not what she wanted” (Wharton 27). This comparison also explains why despite the lighter tone of the novel, Wharton still considered *GM* to be dramatic: “The book is turning out to be a bigger and more dramatic thing than I had foreseen, and I think you will like it” (Wharton to Jewett, June 16, 1921).

In the original outline, the novel reads more as a continuity of Wharton’s previous novels set in America, and there are in fact no mentions of Italy, but only of Paris, Fontainebleau and New York - where the novel was first supposed to end: “They come together again, and settle down in Nick’s old quarters in New York. He will take a job on a newspaper, and she will be a ‘social secretary’ (Wharton, non-dated, but probably circa 1919).¹⁷ In this outline, Wharton also makes the title choice clear, as “glimpses” here mean Susy and Nick’s hope for reconciliation throughout the novel: “Fontainebleau? The second ‘glimpse.’ They decide not to divorce”; “The third glimpse. They cannot give each other up”¹⁸. The storyline is similar but some time in the writing process, Wharton decided to compare a working European lifestyle to an American bourgeois lifestyle, and to set the novel in Europe.

¹⁷ In a letter to Rutger Jewett, on 16 March 1919, Wharton wrote: “I have not forgotten your request for a short scenario of this novel and I enclose it herewith. You will remember, please, that it is not to be ready for two years, but should it be possible for me to take it up sooner I will let you know at once.”

¹⁸ See Figure B in the Appendix section.

However, unlike Wharton's previous novels, the female heroine of *GM* finds an escape and is not crushed by social expectations. As Chambers puts it:

Within the story of Wharton's continuing fascination with women trying to tell their own stories, *The Glimpses of the Moon* marks a turning point. Earlier novels such as *The House of Mirth*, *The Reef*, and *Summer* demonstrate multiple ways in which her female characters fail to control their stories; these novels can also be read as efforts by Wharton to explore her own struggles with telling the story and her own uncertainties about writing. (126)

After turning down a money marriage with wealthy Strefford, Susy's life radically changes, as she yearns for independence: "She met work-girls streaming out under a doorway, and scattering to catch trams and omnibuses; and she looked with newly-wakened interest at their tired independent faces. 'Why shouldn't I earn my living as well as they do?' she thought" (245). Her idle and materialistic life becomes no longer desirable to her: "The artificiality and unreality of her life overcame her as with stifling fumes" (246), and she decides to work as a governess for her friends' four children. Both she and Nick give up on social privileges for a more honest and quiet life, in which they both work to support themselves.

The ending of the novel reconciles love and marriage, which is most unusual in Wharton's writings. The novel also testifies of a trust in men not present before, as Nick eventually acknowledges his wrongs and goes back to Susy. As Harriet Gold puts it: "Nick becomes Wharton's first 'positive hero' who not only shares her philosophy, as a writer, of integrating life into art, but who shares her need for love and companionship in marriage, and her desire to have a home of her own" (13). Contrastingly, *The Age of Innocence*, published right before *GM*, shows a husband hoping for his wife to die so that he can remarry. *Summer*, which Wharton wrote during the war and published in 1917, is a dark tale

reminiscent of *Ethan Frome*, and ends with a forced marriage because of an undesired pregnancy. Ironically, it is the romantic and happy ending of *GM* that constitutes its transgressiveness compared to Wharton's other works. Having her main character in charge and deserving of her own happiness might have appeared as unsettling compared to Wharton's other novels, although the happy ending was encouraged by her editors: "Congratulations, not only upon finishing the work but upon its triumphant conclusion. For once the high note of happiness was inevitable, and I believe the story will equal in popularity in *The Age of Innocence*" (Jewett to Wharton, 8 October 1921). For critic Edward Wilson Junior, the happy ending of the story was a failed attempt at trying something new, which does not make the novel unworthy of interest: "This unaccustomed happy ending is almost the only feature of novelty or interest; and it is interesting only because it is unsuccessful" ("Mrs Wharton in Eclipse"). This citation reflects how a light or happy ending can make critics question a work's merit, and consider it worthy of interest. It seems like this was certainly the case for *GM*.

Wharton's ill-intended male characters in her fiction was connected by many to Wharton's disastrous marriage with Teddy Wharton, whom she divorced in 1913, as well as her disappointing affair with Morton Fullerton: "Edith must have reflected, with what bitterness one can only guess at from later evidence, upon the ironic possibility that the start of Teddy's affair in Boston had coincided with her nights together with Fullerton in London" (Lewis 278). However, it seems that it is only almost ten years later in *GM* that Wharton shows hope for her male characters and for human nature in general by expressing that love can be stronger than money. Analysing more of the biographical context of her life at that time might also give some interpretation paths for the overall positive tone of the novel. By the end of the Great War, "she was aware of a need to restore both continuity and rootedness to her existence" (Lewis 419), and found a home in Saint-Brice-sous-Forêt, a

small town a dozen miles away from Paris, which would be, along with her property in Hyères, where she mostly spent her life until her death in 1937. Whether a more positive outlook in representing human nature as due to her own settling and to the end of World War I can be surmised from Wharton's belief in social continuity, *GM* does testify to a stronger and more optimistic belief in human connection in comparison to her other writings.

In addition to a happy resolution in which both romantic parties end up together and choose a simpler lifestyle, *GM*'s lightness and comic overtones also seem to increase the marginal status of the novel within Wharton's work, as if it was insufficiently serious. Yet parody, irony and satire are essential components of Wharton's fiction that have been abundantly commented upon.¹⁹ Chambers underscores the presence of all of these devices in *GM*, as she reads the onset of the novel as both ironical and as "a parodic re-presentation of romance and sentimental writing" (130): "It rose for them - their honey-moon - over the waters of a lake so famed as the scene of romantic raptures that they were rather proud of not having been afraid to choose it as the setting of their own" (Wharton 9). As discussed in the introduction, I would add to Chambers' analysis that this opening scene not only parodies romantic writing but also enhances the palimpsestic aspect of writing about Italy in the twentieth century. The novel, however, goes beyond the use of irony, parody and satire and explores other forms of comic devices. A discussion between Nick and Susy at the beginning of the novel shows them laughing about their honeymoon ploy:

"It required a total lack of humour, or as great a gift as ours, to risk the experiment,"

Susy Lansing opined, as they hung over the inevitable marble balustrade and watched their tutelary orb roll its magic carpet across the waters to their feet.

¹⁹ On the gothic and parody, see Beer and Horner's "'This Isn't Exactly a Ghost Story'" and "Wharton the 'Renovator.'" On irony as a modernist feature in Wharton's short stories, see Whitehead's "Make It Short." On *The Age of Innocence* being an intrinsically ironic work purposefully ill-fitted to the writing landscape of the time, see Evron's "Realism, Irony and Morality."

“Yes - or the loan of Strefford’s villa,” her husband amended . . . “Oh, come - when we’d five to choose from. At least if you count the Chicago flat.”

“So we had - you wonder!” He laid his hands on hers, and his touch renewed the sense of marvelling exaltation which the deliberate survey of their adventure always roused in her... It was characteristic that she added, in her steady laughing tone: “Or, not counting the flat - for I hate the brag - just consider the others: Violet Melrose’s place at Versailles, your aunt’s villa at Monte Carlo - and a moor!” (Wharton 9)

The listing of all of Nick and Susy’s possible hosts reveals their positioning as masterminds laughing about their wealthy connections: “Poor old Fred!” he merely remarked; and she breathed out carelessly: “Oh, well -” (Wharton 9-10). Going back to one crucial theorist about minor and major literature, Mikhail Bakhtin, might prove useful. Through the analysis of Rabelais’s work, Bakhtin’s objective was to rehabilitate him as one of the main writers in “modern European writing” (2). For this, he discusses Rabelais’s main themes, including the idea of the carnivalesque and carnival laughter. The Carnival was a place for relieving the frustrations of common life, making it a moment when the major becomes the minor and a place of comic relief. Carnival and laughter are therefore necessarily intertwined, although carnival laughter is different from regular laughter:

Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival’s participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity. Third, this laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives. Such is the laughter of carnival. (Bakhtin 11-12)

This definition highlights *GM*’s common features with carnival laughter. The previous discussion between the characters seems to indicate that laughter is orchestrated by Nick and Susy, and therefore not directed at them. And yet, Susy and Nick’s connections are not

as naive as they think. According to Cecilia Macheski, the lending of their properties is part of a trade well-known by their wealthy connections, although perhaps not by Susy and Nick: “Instead of time alone with Nick, Suzy finds herself among their curious acquaintances who, like Strefford, are arriving to watch the spectacle of their experiment. The marriage experiment puts the Lansings on stage; their wealthy friends have paid the price of admission to watch the unfolding of the plot” (98). Macheski emphasises that the Lansings are trapped in their own scheme, and no longer in control of the situation they created. Her comment also evidences the idea of theatricality present in Venice at any time, but especially during the Carnival, thus connecting it further with Bakhtin’s statement. Therefore, laughter is not only directed at Susy and Nick’s connections, but also towards them. There is certainly a “mocking” and “deriding” (Bakhtin 11-12) aspect to it, especially in relation to the Lansings’ friends.

In addition to carnival laughter, there is also a more lighthearted, and almost vaudevillian²⁰ type of humour in *GM*. The dramatic aspect of the novel resides more in its entertaining twists and turns, changes of hearts and locations, than in its themes, therefore being closer to a piece of vaudeville than to a tragedy. *GM* is also centred on a key characteristic of American vaudeville, which is “dreams of escape and renewal” (Nicholas Gebhardt 8), as Susy and Nick embrace a new lifestyle, far from their social-climbing tendencies. The novel’s similarity with this form of entertainment perhaps also contributed to it being seen as less worthy of academic interest, as vaudeville in itself is associated with “cheap amusement[s]” (Gebhardt 13). Campbell, for instance, reads the novel as a comedy that cannot escape a tragic ending, which is symptomatic of Wharton’s critics discriminating against comedy: “In *Glimpses*, as in other comedies of remarriage, the last scene of the two together is a tacitly ironic acknowledgement that the old conflicts will surface once more

²⁰ The connection between the novel and vaudeville is especially worth mentioning as *GM* was written during the golden days of vaudevillian theatre: “from the mid 1800 to late 1930s, vaudeville was an American institution” (Anthony Slide, xii).

after the curtain drops on the happy scene” (1165). And yet, everything in the novel points to a happy resolution. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the characters’ other potential love interests are not actual threats to Susy and Nick’s union because of their strong physical attraction to each other (Haytock 40). *GM* is therefore an example of lighter satire that differs from Wharton’s usual harsh and biting one. Acknowledging the light aspect of *GM*, while also recognising that it touches upon important questions on marriage and materialism, does not take away from the novel but adds a richer dimension to it.

All of these changes make the novel an experiment, and perhaps even an anomaly, within Wharton’s work. Unlike Forster who did not want *AS* to have a tragic ending but did not know how to escape it, Wharton embraced the light and escapist tone of *GM*. Its unpredictability reminds us of the “lines of flight” mentioned earlier by Deleuze and Guattari: “In a book, as in everything else, there are lines of articulation or segmentation, strata, territorialities; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and of destratification” (2). By breaking away from her usual tone and characters, Wharton breaks down the layers that usually make her other novels.

“No More War Stories!”

Similarly to Forster’s text, *GM* strikingly bears no references to the historical, social and political context of its time. Such an absence is even more manifest as Wharton’s support for France was always expressed, and her positions against the war aligned with her “leisure-class tradition of philanthropy and civic action” (Rattray 123). Unlike Forster, however, Wharton did write about the living conditions at the front, whether in fictional form (“The Marne”, *A Son at the Front*), or in non-fictional form. Peter Buitenhuis reminds us of the extent of her war effort: “She organized the Franco-Belgian Relief committee, plunged into fund-raising and, in a tremendous burst of effort on behalf of the Flanders refugees, put together a volume called *The Book of the Homeless*” (494). Wharton’s

dedication in helping the war effort was also physical as in order to write these reports, she made a trip to the front: “Early in 1915, the French Red Cross, in order to publicize its needs, asked her to report on the conditions at some military hospitals near the front . . . In a car laden with medical supplies, she set out for the Marne” (Buitenhuis 495). Finally, she also helped the war effort financially, by donating money and using her American connections to raise funds in the U.S. to help the French army: “Mrs. Wharton’s name became a legend in connection with her war charities work. In several eastern American cities Edith Wharton Committees were formed to collect funds and supplies” (Buitenhuis 495). It also seems that Wharton was aware of the impact of war on her writings, as she mentioned in a letter to her friend Bernard Berenson:

Before the war you could write fiction without indicating the period, the present being assumed. The war has put an end to that for a long time, and everything will soon have to be timed with reference to it. In other words, the historical novel with all its vices will be the only possible form of fiction. (quoted in Lewis 424)

And yet, it should be noted that *GM* lacks any given dates and objective time frame. Her publishers perhaps influenced her not to apply her claims in the above letter to *GM*, as in the immediate post-war context, they favoured the publication of writings unrelated to war. In April 1919, publisher Sears from D. Appleton & Company expressed his reluctance to publish Wharton’s short-story “The Marne” in post-war time:

“The Marne” made a very marked impression and would, of course, have sold much better if we could have published it earlier or later. The truth of the matter is, however, that owing to the fact that we could not publish it in book form until after publication of the magazine, we were not able to issue it until about December 10th . . . It would have been folly, however, to have held it over until January or February, because immediately upon the declaring of the armistice books which had to do particularly with the war

began to fall off. This demand will come back some day, after three or four years, but in the month immediately following the armistice it was almost grotesque to see the aversion which the American public had for purely war literature. (Sears to Wharton, 11 April 1919)

Sears justifies pushing away the publication of Wharton's short-story "The Marne" by saying that the American public did not want to read anything connected to the war. In a letter addressed to Wharton in 1919,²¹ Jewett expresses a similar opinion about *A Son at the Front*:

The retail bookseller is gun shy and runs like a rabbit if you mention a war book to him or try to sell him anything that even suggests war in its title or subject matter . . . It is for this reason that I believe your *Son at the Front* would have a much better chance in the future than it could hope to have today . . . Would it not be a wise move to offer the Pictorial Review your novel of *Old New York* as a substitute for *A Son at the Front*, and lay this book aside until the magazine market is ready for it? Personally I believe that this would be wise. You have two good serials under way, *Glimpses of the Moon* and *Old New York*. (Jewett, 1919)

This letter conveys an idea that Jewett will also repeat in November 1921, and which is: "No More War Stories!" a slogan taken from American publishers. The letter also reveals Jewett's urge to publish either *GM* or *The Age of Innocence* to replace *A Son at the Front*, therefore indicating a desire to publish lighter and escapist works - which also explains the literary conventionality of both *The Age of Innocence* and *GM*. Wharton expressed her disagreement with both Sears and Jewett on the matter, as she believed publishing *A Son at the Front* later would condemn it to invisibility. She tried to have the novel published nonetheless, under a different title (*Their Son*, and not *A Son at the Front*), to make the war

²¹ The month is not indicated on the letter, but it was most likely written between April 1919 and June 1919.

aspect less visible, but eventually accepted their offer in exchange of a generous compensation: “I think myself justified in making these demands as I could certainly sell *The Glimpses of the Moon* for \$18,000 to another publisher, and I am voluntarily giving up my claim for \$18,000 for *Their Son* (Wharton to Jewett, 27 August 1920). *Their Son* will eventually be published years later after the initial date, in 1922, and will be mostly ignored by the public, confirming Wharton’s intuitions.

Following these negotiations, Wharton paused previews of both *GM* and *A Son at the Front* and started working on a new project, *The Age of Innocence* - which was symptomatic, according to Buitenhuis, of her desire to write about what she knew best and escape the war: “Immediately after the war, she sought escape from the burden of her recent experience by plunging into her memories of a long-vanished New York” (497). Although the idea that she tried to escape war in her writings does not align with the fact that she submitted works on war, it is understandable that after a period of writing uncertainty, Wharton came back to writing about familiar topics like the American bourgeoisie.

One last thing could be added to the idea of mentioning, or not mentioning, contemporary historical events. Hom observes that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Italian politics was often omitted in guidebooks because of its ever-changing landscape. Hom also reminds us that traditionally, Italian guidebooks such as the Baedeker and Murray always limited references to Italian politics:

Interestingly, there is little mention of Italian politics in either Murray’s or Baedeker’s guidebooks, even those published during the Risorgimento. In such ways these texts confirm the observation of Roland Barthes that guidebooks erase political landscapes and empty out organic society so that ‘the human life of a country disappears to the exclusive benefit of its monuments.’ (44)

Although Wharton's novel is not a guidebook, the idea of "erasing political landscapes" of the visited country, i.e Italy, works well for *GM* - although it might also have resulted, as mentioned previously, from pressure from her editors. Macheski, through a comparative approach of Wharton and Hemingway's works, discusses the absence of Italian politics in *GM* and in Hemingway's *ARIT*. For her, such an omission of fascism might be explained with the attachment both writers had for Italy during their lifetime, although interestingly, neither Wharton nor Hemingway ever became permanent Italian residents: "What explains this contradiction? One likelihood is the very threatening political climate of Italy in the 1920s" (104). Macheski evidently alludes here to fascism, but also to Marinetti's futurist movement, as both ideologies shared the desire to get rid of the past to build a new nation. Perhaps both writers chose not to mention politics because they were dreading the consequences of fascism, although not for the good of Italy but for more selfish motives related to their own enjoyment of Italy's beauty and architecture:

Both Wharton and Hemingway were drawn to Italy by the visible past preserved in the very architecture and literature Marinetti attacked, and both writers became critically concerned about the vision of the country's future called for in emerging voices like Marinetti's and, soon, Mussolini's . . . Italy provided an archive of the historical past as well as opportunities for health cures and recuperation. Both restless, each chose to live an expatriate life, but not in Italy, resisting the rising fascism to which each would have been attuned by their wartime experiences. (Macheski 90)

This passage makes clear how Wharton and Hemingway chose to only write about the Italy they knew and loved outside of fascism, which aligns with the idea that for Wharton, her immediate post-war fiction was paradoxically one of escapism through a return to literary conventionality. As much as both writers enjoyed vacationing in Italy, they never felt at home, unlike other countries such as France for Wharton and Spain for Hemingway, and on

which they did address directly social and political issues. Significantly, in *GM*, it is the simplicity and stability of the Parisian suburbs that is preferred over the beauty of Lake Como and Venice. Northern Italy proves to be the land of fantasies, while France, or at least Paris and its surroundings, is where Nick and Susy's union develops on trust and honesty.

Therefore, *GM* appears as a turning point in Wharton's writing career. Despite the apparent similarities to her other works in its themes and settings, the novel is a complex and original work. It showcases Wharton's search for a happier lifestyle by interrogating marriage conditions and materialism, confirming her status as an engaged writer who questioned fundamental social issues. In addition to that, the novel tackles all these themes very differently from what her readers were used to. Similarly to the Carnival tradition in Venice, the novel turns upside down norms usually associated with Wharton's previous writings. Her biting satire turns into a lighter one and the novel ends happily, which seemed to have prompted critics to question the text's worth. Such a change in tone appears to be connected to Wharton's craving for stability and desire to escape the political climate of the time through returning to what she knew best, the American bourgeoisie in Europe. Finally, the novel also proves to be a turning point in her writing career as it marks the beginning of her biggest commercial and popular successes, yet rarely followed by academic attention.

Part Three: Hemingway's *Across the River and Into the Trees*

A "Has-Been" Writer?

Hemingway produced *ARIT* in a particularly dark moment in his life. He most likely suffered from severe depression, manifesting in anxious and manic episodes, and accentuated by the fact that he had not written a novel in almost a decade. As Dearborn puts it: "The novel that came out of Ernest's long manic period was *Across the River and Into the Trees*, born, without a doubt, from Ernest's deep fears about his writing and his reputation. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* had appeared almost ten years before; he had not published a book

since” (522). For Cirino, the pressure Hemingway was under for this book is unlike anything the contemporary reader has ever experienced: “The reading world awaits no novel and demands excellence from no writer to the extent that it did of Hemingway. If Cormac McCarthy or Philip Roth writes a bad novel, it is a minor hiccup in an otherwise splendid career, not an international scandal” (Introduction, xi). The pressure the writer felt is also visible in his correspondence: “Have to finish this book, which am trying to make better than *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. That is probably impossible but I work hard at it and in some places I have a feeling that am writing better than I ever did or that I can” (Hemingway to Miss Brochoff, 1 August 1949). The novel was originally intended to be a short-story and was begun in March 1949 in Cortina d’Ampezzo, a town in the Veneto in Italy, and was eventually published in September 1950 (Cirino xiii).

Not only was Hemingway struggling with mental health and writing anxiety, he was also suffering from alcoholism and physical injuries. He had had several head concussions, mostly caused by accidents when he was under the influence: “Alcohol played a part in almost all of Ernest’s many accidents, from pulling the chain that brought a skylight down on his head, scarring his face for life, to his next-to-last concussion, sustained when he slipped aboard the *Pilar*, gashing open his head” (Dearborn 568). In addition to this, Hemingway struggled with financial issues. In September 1949, he wrote to his editor Charles Scribner and asked for a loan of \$10,000 as an advance for the novel and “at the usual 2% or any other interest rate in this damned devaluation business” (Hemingway, 1949). Hemingway’s correspondence from 1949 offers us a glimpse into his arduous writing process for the novel:

Am working good and maybe better than I ever did. It is a big relief to work without always getting hit on the head with more or less blunt instruments. Never realized until I got a break that was probably one of the things that was slowing me up. Seven

concussions in three years is probably more than you should give the average writer except perhaps Mr. Andre Gide. (Hemingway, 1949)

This letter, addressed to John Dos Passos, corroborates Hemingway's precarious physical state and its impact on his writing. In other exchanges, however, the writer reveals a strong literary ego and confidence in the novel, such as when he specifically told his editor: "We do not need any publicity on this book because we have the book" (Hemingway to Scribner, 12 October 1949). To his wife, Hemingway stated that he wanted *ARIT* to compete with Shakespeare's work: "Also, in the stretch have decided to try and beat Mr. Shakespeare. After all, shit, he never was in Verona nor in Venice. So he gives me some weight there. On the other hand he was awfully good anywhere. Whether he had been there or not" (Hemingway to his wife Mary Hemingway, 2 October 1949). He makes the same comparison to his friend Al Horwits one day later: "It is a fine book and have 43,476 words done on it now. Wrote it to knock Shakespeare on his ass when the doctors told me that I could not make it." These comments on competing with Shakespeare suggest a desire on his behalf to fit in the canon of authors writing about Italy.

His hyper confidence, however, hid literary doubts. In several letters to his friends, Hemingway reveals his ambivalent feelings about the novel: "It is the saddest and most awful book I ever wrote; and at the last it becomes sort of unbearable" (Hemingway to Lillian Ross, 11 May 1950), as well as his doubts about its reception: "I have a book published today. But I do not think many people will understand it. Maybe they will" (Hemingway to Wolfgang Klinker, 7 August 1950). The cohabitation of these two extreme feelings (hyper confidence and hyper distrust in the novel) corroborates Dearborn's statement that Hemingway's grasp on reality was diminished when he was writing the novel:

Those in the grip of mania often lose a sense of proportion, becoming grandiose and making poor choices. Perhaps worst of all, Ernest lost all critical judgement when it came to writing. And he was writing poorly, his words powered by his manic delusions rather than any real inspiration or even storytelling impulse. *Across the River and Into the Trees* is riddled with flaws, from the colonel's fundamental unlikability to the unreality of a young, lovely, nobly born woman having fallen in love with a cantankerous and garrulous fifty-year-old whose only subjects are war, food, and their very dubious love affair. Mostly, the writing is repetitious and indulgent . . . (523)

The loss of proportion and “grandiose” choices that Hemingway made for the novel could be a reference to the previously mentioned writer's exchanges about the novel, and his sense of rivalry with Shakespeare. However, it could be argued that the repetitions in *ARIT* reflect Richard's state of mind, whose heavy medication makes him incoherent at times. In any case, that *ARIT* is written “poorly” and with an “indulgent” style is quite subjective, but reflects many critics' opinion on the novel.

Reactions from Critics, Scholars and Hemingway

Dearborn is not the only one to consider *ARIT* as disappointing. According to Beegel, the novel was the culmination of years of mediocre writings. For her, Hemingway's critical reputation would have been different had he not published *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) after *ARIT*:

Publication of *The Old Man and the Sea* in 1952 played a crucial role in the development of Hemingway's critical reputation. Prior to the appearance of this crisp and lyrical novella about an old Cuban fisherman's struggle with a titanic fish, Hemingway had published nothing of distinction during the twelve years since *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). The early promise of the brilliant short story collection, *In Our Time* (1925), and his finest novels, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *A Farewell to*

Arms (1929), seemed distant and unfulfilled. Hemingway's nonfiction of the 1930s, *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) and *Green Hills of Africa* (1935), had been disappointing by comparison, and a 'novel' like *To Have and Have Not* (1937), two previously published short stories hastily cobbled together, seemed a shocking performance from a craftsman once so exacting. *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950) had been savaged by the critics, and Hemingway was widely considered to be a has-been. (Beegel 2)

Following the publication of the novel, the general reception was conflicted: "*Across the River and Into the Trees* is not a great novel. It is not a good novel. It is one of the most beautiful novels, written, I think, recently. It is a true book" (*The Bulletin*, 1957). Literary critic Isaac Rosenfeld embodies the public's mixed reception:

It is not enough to say that *Across the River and Into the Trees* is a bad novel, which nearly everyone has said (the fact is, a good deal of it is trash), or to ascribe its failure to Hemingway's playing Hemingway . . . It seems to me that no writer of comparable stature has ever expressed in his work so false an attitude toward life. (147)

Despite starting off by criticising the novel, Rosenfeld then proceeds to nuance his interpretation by mentioning that *ARIT* rectifies some of the writer's flaws present in his other works: "The curious thing about *Across the River* is that while it is his worst novel, in one respect - but only in this respect - it is an improvement over all the earlier work. For once the severed halves of the characterization are joined, and the conscious and unconscious images of the hero closely resemble each other" (153). Finally, the critic ends his review by praising Richard Cantwell's honesty:

For once the hero, a man of the same cut and cloth as all the rest, is identified for what he is. The claims to universality are abandoned: Cantwell is not a figure of the lost generation, he is not the representative of something going on in our time, he is not

learning through fatal experience what everyone with natural feeling knows to begin with, that no man is an island . . . The defenses are down, the myth is overthrown. (Rosenfeld 154)

By his declaration that the “myth is overthrown,” Rosenfeld references the myth of an all-potent man who glorifies war, such as Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*. Rosenfeld’s multi-layered review reveals the mixed opinion of the novel, as it contains both the praise and the blame that were made against it.

Similarly to Wharton’s novel, *ARIT* was published in serialised form first, “over five issues from February through June 1950” (Cirino xiv). Despite this mixed critical reception, the novel was nevertheless a best-seller for several weeks, even though it was not aggressively advertised upon Hemingway’s request: “The novel was on the best-seller list for twenty-one weeks, in first place for seven. Ernest made about \$136,000, or over a million dollars today, including \$85,000 paid by *Cosmopolitan* for the serialization, according to Robert Trogdon” (Dearborn 536). Interestingly, criticism was less harsh from outside the U.S., and especially from Italy. Italian scholar Sergio Perosa reads *ARIT* as “a novel full of sensitivity toward Venice which skilfully uses the city and the lagoon as settings for introspection on love and death” (Owen 142). For another Italian scholar Agostino Lombardo, *ARIT* is:

. . . a novel in my opinion completely undervalued, in which what is more important than the personal elements abundantly written about by newspapers, is the representation of a melancholic and secret Venetian landscape - very far away from the splendour of Venice - from which the remembering of the war, a war that is at the same time distant and close, comes back.²² (10)

²² Original text: “... romanzo a mio parere assai sottovalutato, dove quel che è più importante degli elementi personali di cui hanno abbondantemente scritto i giornali è la rappresentazione di un malinconico e segreto paesaggio veneto - assai lontano dallo splendore di Venezia - in cui torna a vivere la memoria di quella guerre remota eppure ancora vicina.”

By mentioning a “secret” landscape that is different “from the splendour of Venice,” Lombardo suggests that Hemingway took a different approach, or line of flight, in Guattari and Deleuze’s words, to writing about Venice. This extract also alludes to the multiplicities of meanings made possible thanks to, and within, the Venetian environment. For Lombardo, Venice in the novel becomes synonymous with melancholy and traumatic memories. The reference to a “secret Venetian landscape” recalls the multiple canals and entryways that make the city.

Hemingway’s own reaction to the critics is to be noted, as his discourse about the novel changed after reading the first reviews. The writer emphasised the idea that the novel cannot be understood by everyone, and is not meant to: “All sorts of fighting guys write in and tell me what it means to them. Non-fighting guys write in and say what is this nonsense and why am I prostituting myself to Cosmo” (Hemingway to Seward, 31 May 1950). In another letter to Seward, Hemingway insisted on his painful physical state during the writing process:

We all get bad reviews and you have to take them just as a fighter has to take a punch. I used to get angry when they were stupid; or untrue, or unjust or envious. I know what I have, now, pretty well and what I will try to do with it if there is time. If I don’t have time, I know I have done as well as I could, given the circumstances and the interruptions of the different wars, wounds, accidents, and the problems a man has in his life. Or I have tried to; and tried as hard as a man could. Well the hell with it. If they don’t understand this book that’s their hard luck. You’ve understood it and some one else will. (Hemingway to Seward, 6 August 1950)

After expressing the physical pain he was in, the writer adopted a reaction not shared by any of the other writers studied: writing to journalists or individuals who expressed a negative review of *ARIT*. In a letter addressed to Cyril Connolly on 24 September 1950, Hemingway

wrote: “It has been brought to my attention that you consider my book to be lamentable. My poor Cirył (new spelling). Do you not know how lamentable you have been since birth with the snobbery of the ill-born, your grossness, gluttony and basic cheapness; disguised as some form of integrity?” Hemingway continues the letter by making more fun of the detractor’s name and by criticising the only book Connolly had written. In another letter addressed to Miss Sproul, who did not express a negative opinion about the novel in itself but about the reviews, Hemingway wrote on 15 October 1950: “A bit of advice: do not be ‘stricken’ so easily. It sounds like Victorian times. And read more books and fewer reviews.” Besides pointing out to Hemingway’s excessive behaviour, most likely connected to his mental state at the time, these letters show the attention Hemingway gave to the reception of his work, although he suggested otherwise in his preface of *The First Forty-Nine Stories*.

Finally, because of the similarities between her and main female character Renata, Adriana Ivancich’s reaction to the novel also deserves attention. In letters addressed to Hemingway from 1950 to 1954, Ivancich’s reactions are ambivalent, as she sometimes reassures him: “Here, there is no news: the pigeons continue to fly, the water is too wet and people too gossipy...” (1st July 1949), but also seems affected by external opinions. In addition to being accused of having an affair with him, she was also accused of befriending him out of self-interest, which she vehemently denied:

The other day I screamed with all my might (and I almost cried) when a stupid person accused me of being self-interested in your regard and said that between a man and a woman there cannot be true friendship²³... Oh Papa, tell me that you believe me if I tell you that I truly love you, that I trust you and that whatever might happen I will remain

²³ This sentence is almost a direct quote from Wilde’s *Lady Windermere’s Fan* (1893): “Between men and women there is no friendship possible. There is passion, enmity, worship, love, but no friendship” (57). Whether this quote comes from a third-party addressing Ivancich or from Ivancich herself is unclear, but in any case, this reference to Wilde emphasises the dramatic aspect of her relationship with Hemingway.

deeply friendly to you, if this can please you... that everything you do for me directly or indirectly I recognize that it is because of your goodness and not my because of my own merit. (Ivancich to Hemingway, 1950)

This extract from her letter highlights the professional aspect of Ivancich and Hemingway's relationship, although her detractors accused her of dishonest motives. The writer, in fact, insisted that she illustrated the cover of *ARIT*; he also acted as a writing mentor and provided her with writing recommendations. Finally, and just like with her brother Gianfranco, Hemingway financially helped both of them on various occasions. In September 1950, Adriana mentioned how she was treated differently by people because of the novel:

For two days my friends were mad because they have put me together with Afdera who, instead, is very proud of it and, having been put ahead of me, she feels important. In fact she is much more affectionate lately. My photo they have cut from a magazine of last summer. How they have decided this I don't know. Of you I never talk, because you well know how it is in Venice. At any rate, it is a thing which everybody must have forgotten for the dresses of next season or a cocktail are for them much more important.

Therefore do not worry about it. (Ivancich to Hemingway, 1950)

While shortly after the publication of *ARIT* in 1950, Ivancich seems not to worry about what people said about her reputation, in 1953, she seems to have changed her opinion on the matter. During that year, she refused to meet with Hemingway when he was in France, for the sake of her reputation. She explains to Hemingway that she obeyed the following instructions, most likely given by her mother:

How much I would want to come to Le Havre. But I followed the orders 'like a good girl'. 'It is inconceivable that you travel across the entire France in order to meet with him. It wouldn't appear to be logical and normal, as it really would be. The right

moment will soon come and then you will be able to meet him with simplicity. Everyone must have his own world and his own rules, and who is the strongest of all can make his own ones. You are not at that point, not yet.’ (Ivancich to Hemingway, 1953)

By quoting from her family members and friends who expressed their opinion about her meeting with Hemingway in France, Ivancich’s letter reveals two main ideas. The first is that the novel impacted her reputation more than she wanted to admit. The second is that there was an undeniable double-standard, visible in how the allegations impacted Ivancich and Hemingway. Indeed, Hemingway, often compared to Byron, was used to having rumours circulating about him. These rumours, if anything, added to his popularity; this was not Ivancich’s case, however, whose reputation was tainted after the publication of *ARIT*. And yet, it seems that Hemingway’s reputation suffered too. In a letter addressed to Marlene Dietrich on 26 September 1949, the writer insisted that the female character of *ARIT* was “all made up”:

Daughter, please try to keep contact from now on because I am finishing a book and should be through in around three weeks. I think that you will like it very much. Will give you carbon or manuscript if you like. You aren’t in it and nobody else is in it because it is all made up. But it is made up as well as I can make it. (Hemingway to Dietrich, 1949)

As often in Hemingway’s correspondence, the writer proceeds to blur his statement that it was “all made up” by instilling doubt with “as well as I can make it”, which suggests that the writer might have enjoyed the ambiguity of the situation: “There aren’t any such girls as Renata (and I hope she’s sleeping well in Venice tonight)” (Hemingway to Breit, 14 August 1950). In any case, it is certain that the novel impacted both Adriana and Hemingway’s lives and reputations, although to varying degrees.

A Sequel to *A Farewell to Arms*?

Readers of Hemingway will know that the storyline of *A Farewell to Arms* is considered a sublimated version of his WWI experience. The writer served in Northern Italy and met nurse Agnes Von Kurowsky, with whom he fell in love, although the seriousness of their relationship from both parties is unclear. The storyline of *A Farewell to Arms* follows young American soldier Frederic Henry working as an ambulance driver in Northern Italy during WWI. After meeting nurse Catherine Barkley, he gets wounded on a battlefield and has to spend time recovering in a hospital, where he falls even more deeply in love with her. This is very similar to the love story of *ARIT*, with Renata being inspired by real-life Adriana Ivancich. In addition to that, both novels characteristically centre around love and war. Facing such strong similarities in themes, one can therefore wonder why the first war novel is considered canonical within Hemingway's work, when the second is not. Both incipits start rather similarly:

In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels. Troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees. The trunks of the trees too were dusty and the leaves fell early that year and we saw the troops marching along the road and the dust rising and leaves, stirred by the breeze, falling and the soldiers marching and afterward the road bare and white except for the leaves. The plain was rich with crops; there were many orchards of fruit trees and beyond the plain the mountains were brown	They started two hours before daylight, and at first, it was not necessary to break the ice across the canal as other boats had gone on ahead. In each boat, in the darkness, so you could not see, but only hear him, the poler stood in the stern, with his long oar. The shooter sat on a shooting stool fastened to the top of a box that contained his lunch and shells, and the shooter's two, or more, guns were propped against the load of wooden decoys. Somewhere, in each boat, there was a shack with one or two live mallard hens, or a hen and a drake, and in each boat there was a dog who shifted and shivered uneasily at the sound of the wings of the ducks that passed overhead in the darkness. Four of the boats went on up the main canal toward the big lagoon to the north. A fifth boat had already turned off into a
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and bare. There was fighting in the mountains and at night we could see the flashes from the artillery. In the dark it was like summer lightning, but the nights were cool and there was not the feeling of a storm coming (Hemingway, <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> 3).	side canal. Now, the sixth boat turned south into a shallow lagoon, and there was no broken water. It was all ice, new-frozen during the sudden, windless cold of the night (Hemingway, <i>Across the River and Into the Trees</i> 1).
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In a traditional Hemingway fashion, natural elements dominate the scene, whether it is “mountains” or “the big lagoon.” The key difference between both descriptions is that *ARIT* takes place in the lagoon and features a tamed nature with “canals” and “boats,” whereas in *A Farewell to Arms*, nature is kept wild but still used by men (“There was fighting in the mountains”). The harshness and coldness in *ARIT* (“it was all ice”) contrasts with the bountiful nature of *A Farewell to Arms* (“The plain was rich with crops”) and perhaps symbolises the passage from youth and health to old age and sickness. Finally, it is difficult not to notice the almost first similar sentence to *A Farewell to Arms* to *ARIT*’s title: “we lived in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains.” It is probably not incidental as two chapters later in *ARIT*, the same landscape is visited by Richard: “When I came back to the front we still lived in that town. There were many more guns in the country around and there were small green shoots on the vines, the trees along the road had small leaves and a breeze came from the sea. I saw the town with the hill and the old castle above it in a cup of the hills with the mountains beyond, brown mountains with a little green on their slopes” (Hemingway 10). This description clearly alludes to the intertextual relationship of *ARIT* to Hemingway’s other work. The main stylistic difference between the two incipits is the use of “we” in *A Farewell to Arms*, and the use of the “I” in *ARIT*, showing that the narrator moved from a collective approach to an individual one in the twenty years that separate both stories.

Similarly to Wharton's *GM*, it seems that *ARIT* was seen as too different by its readership from Hemingway's other works, especially as the writer produced little on WWII, compared to WWI. The writer, however, did cover some aspects of WWII, and in particular the battle of the Hürtgen Forest, as Frederic J. Svoboda points out:

The Second World War also provided material for Hemingway, but less satisfyingly so. His *Across the River* proved a disappointment to most readers. Unlike *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, it was not set in the midst of war, but in the recollection of war by an embittered and ageing American infantry colonel, veteran of the grinding Hurtgen Forest battles that Hemingway covered as war correspondent in 1944. (166)

According to Eileen Martin and Greer Rising, another lesser-known aspect of *ARIT* is that it was strongly inspired by Hemingway's experience of the battle and by his friendship with Colonel Charles T. "Buck" Lanham, on whom he based character Richard Cantwell: "They exchanged hundreds of intimate letters, and Hemingway channeled Lanham's biography in shaping infantry Col. Richard Cantwell, the cynical protagonist in his 1950 novel *Across the River and Into the Trees*" (9). Martin and Rising go further into their analysis by seeing Cantwell as Lanham's alter ego: "A deep dive into Lanham's personal letters and military 201 (personnel) file reveals Lanham's extensive influence on Hemingway's study of the military and war, and spotlights Cantwell as Lanham's doppelgänger more than generally acknowledged" (12). Therefore, *ARIT* is also strongly based on real-life events, although unlike *A Farewell to Arms*, it does not offer a sublimated version of his characters.

Macheski identifies references to a post-world war in Wharton's *GM* and in Hemingway's *ARIT*, as well as "subtexts on the rise of fascism" (96). In *ARIT*, WWII is embodied by Jackson, a younger American soldier who drives the Colonel around. In one of the driving scenes, he claims that his war experience was more difficult than Richard's:

'Did you fight here, too, sir?'

‘Yeah,’ the Colonel said.

‘Who had Trieste in that war?’

‘The Krauts. The Austrians, I mean.’

‘Did we ever get it?’

‘Not till the end when it was over.’

‘Who had Florence and Rome?’

‘We did.’

‘Well, I guess you weren’t so damned bad off then.’

‘Sir,’ the Colonel said gently. (Hemingway 12)

Despite the use of the pronoun “we,” Jackson indicates that his war experience is different to the Colonel’s. The Colonel fails to reconcile their experiences when Jackson refers to the Rapido battle: “‘I was thinking about the Rapido, sir, I didn’t mean to be insolent or lacking in respect.’ ‘You weren’t’, the Colonel said. ‘You were just thinking about the Rapido. Listen, Jackson, everybody who’s soldiered a long time has had their Rapidos more than one.’ ‘I couldn’t have taken more than one, sir’” (12).²⁴ The Colonel then decides not to talk about his war experiences to Jackson anymore: “He knew how boring any man’s war is to any other man, and he stopped talking about it” (16).

The novel also refers to fascism more than once. When conversing with a boatman, Richard asks him how many children he has. The boatman replies that he has six, to which Richard ironically responds: “‘Hell, you mustn’t have believed in the Regime. Only six’ (32), a reference to the pressure exerted on Italian citizens to have many children during the fascist regime. Richard also mentions fascist writer Gabriele D’Annunzio, and defines him in contradictory terms as a: “writer, poet, national hero, phraser of the dialectic of Fascism, macabre egotist, aviator, commander, or rider, in the first of the fast torpedo attacks,

²⁴ The Rapido battle is “one of the costliest failed attacks made by American forces during World War II” (Beranty, 2003).

Lieutenant Colonel of Infantry without knowing how to command a company, nor a platoon properly, the great, lovely writer of Notturmo who we respect, and jerk” (37). This description seems to express Richard’s dislike of D’Annunzio, although later in the novel, he paradoxically claims: “I can’t hate Fascists, he thought. Nor Krauts either, since unfortunately, I am a soldier” (124). This contradictory statement indicates Richard’s awareness that soldiers have no real power and can end up fighting for the wrong cause, a statement Frederic comes to understand too in the end of *A Farewell to Arms*.

In addition to this, the city of Venice, still in the process of being restored, shows the impact of WWII: “The blown bridge was being repaired . . . and what was now a ruined country house once built by Longhena showed where the mediums had dropped their loads” (9). Macheski reminds us that the main character Richard Cantwell compares the church of Santa Maria del Giglio “to a P47, a World War II bomber, imagining it airborne” (Macheski 100). The association between the church and the bomber reveals that WWII lies everywhere in the city, even in the invisible and unexpected. Macheski concludes: “Venice proves to be the site not of tourist romance, but of a war-torn world where churches are militarized and miracles are needed to save even holy shrines from advancing armies, whether Saracen or Fascist” (100). Therefore, although *ARIT* revolves around the impacts of WWI on the main character, it still abundantly refers to the fascist regime and to WWII. The lesser-known status of the novel, combined with Hemingway’s lesser-known engagement in WWII, perhaps indicates that Hemingway’s readership associated him with WWI and was not as interested in his writings about that conflict.

As established, there are some strong similarities between *A Farewell to Arms* and *ARIT*, but the novels differ on important points. Symptomatic to the humid Northern Italian environment, Frederic cannot get dry in *A Farewell to Arms* (“I took off my coat, took my wallet with my papers and my money all wet in it out of the inside pocket and wrung the

coat too” 202), and neither does Richard (“You could not get dry and it was better to get wet quickly and stay wet” 23). Both novels conclude with the death of a significant character (Catherine in *A Farewell to Arms*, and Richard in *ARIT*). The novels diverge on health, however, as unlike Richard, who is too medicated to drink in excess, Frederic is often intoxicated and suffers from jaundice, provoking comments from a nurse: ““But I should think you would try something more intelligent than producing jaundice with alcoholism”” (129). His friends, such as Rinaldi, encourage him to drink nonetheless and normalise alcoholism: ““This war is terrible,’ Rinaldi said. ‘Come on. We’ll both get drunk and be cheerful. Then we’ll go get the ashes dragged. Then we’ll be fine”” (151). Unbalanced sleep is another common point in the novels. Renata sleeps a lot in *ARIT*, while Richard suffers from insomnia, a typical post-traumatic stress disorder symptom. Frederic sleeps often in *A Farewell to Arms*, but during daytime: “I went to sleep again in the morning when it was light and when I was awake I found she was gone again” (92), unlike Catherine who works endless shifts. In consequence to these broken sleeping patterns, the characters evolve in a constant narcoleptic haze.

After getting wounded, Frederic in *A Farewell to Arms* wants to go back to the battlefield, with little regard for his convalescence or for his physical pain. Cantwell’s health issues can be seen as the result of similarly reckless behaviour. The brokenness of their bodies define the existence of both of the characters. In both novels, male bodies are integrated through uncomfortable medication or physical treatment, such as the one Richard takes in *ARIT*: “That much mannitol hexanitrate produced a certain amount of nausea, sometimes, and he was anxious for the interview to terminate” (7). In *A Farewell to Arms*, Frederic is passive in regard to his surgeon, who decides to intervene without consulting Frederic: “He used a local anaesthetic called something or other ‘snow’, which froze the tissue and avoided the pain until the probe, the scalpel or the forceps got below the frozen

portion” (86). These mediations only accentuate the characters’ brokenness. Similarly, Cantwell claims that he integrates people into his life under the condition that they are broken too: “He only loved people, he thought, who had fought or been mutilated” (50), which questions his love for Renata. Yet, Renata does not like Richard in spite of, but because of his wounds: “‘I love you,’ the girl said. ‘You can publish it in the Gazzettino if you like. I love your hard, flat body and your strange eyes that frighten me when they become wicked. I love your hand and all your other wounded places’” (100).

Sexuality also defines these male characters in terms of potency or its failure. On the one hand, Frederic is healthy and fertile, and so is Catherine, which leads her to get pregnant and to plan to have more children “‘Don’t worry, darling. We may have several babies before the war is over’” (139). On the other hand, Renata is quite possibly the only fertile one in the couple. Yet, she does not seem to want children, as when Richard mentions it, she remains very evasive on the subject: “‘I don’t know . . . But I would have to marry someone, I suppose. I don’t really want to’” (66). One of the main differences between both novels is the descriptions of scenes of sexual nature. In *A Farewell to Arms*, physical desire is expressed clearly: “I was experiencing the masculine difficulty of making love very long standing up” (29), mentions Frederic Henry when he kisses Catherine Barkley. In comparison, the vagueness around physical intimacy in *ARIT* leaves the reader unsure of what has, or has not, happened. Sexuality is still present but in non-traditional ways, such as with Richard’s keeping Renata’s family emeralds in his pockets to touch (73), or with Renata’s portrait, who becomes the girl’s double, always accessible to the Colonel (148).

Additionally, both novels are equally centred on notions of war and love. Love, however, is expressed in very different ways. While Frederic and Catherine embody a young and reckless couple unbothered by issues of status and money, Richard and Renata are struggling with these issues, as Renata is wealthier and younger than Richard, which makes

Richard more aware of, and sometimes obsessed with, money issues. Both couples invent an arguable fantasised reality of their relationship: Frederic and Catherine refer to themselves as “husband” and wife” although they are not married, which reveals their desire to become part of the norm as Catherine is expecting; Renata and Richard Cantwell, however, break from conformism by referring to themselves as a daughter and a father, emphasising the age gap between them. Additionally, both novels feature “beautiful” and “lovely” women (84), but deprived of any real agency and complexity. Similarly to Renata, Catherine is most and foremost described by her hair: “She had wonderfully beautiful hair and I would lie sometimes and watch her twisting it up in the light that came in the open door and it shone even in the night as water shines sometimes just before it is really daylight” (103). As mentioned earlier, the male characters only exist through their brokenness, and neither Frederic nor Richard are given any physical descriptions beyond their injuries.

Connected to the notion of brokenness is the notion of trauma, visible in both novels. Once again, we can see an evolution, in different ways, in which trauma is manifested in the novels. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Frederic refuses to mention his war experiences and remains in a state of dissociation and forgetfulness. In *ARIT*, Richard suffers from what we would now refer to as post traumatic stress disorder, defined by Ruth Leys as: “nightmares and other reexperiences, emotional numbing, depression, guilt, autonomic arousal, explosive violence or tendency to hypervigilance-are thought to be the result of this fundamental mental dissociation” (2). In the novel, Richard has trouble sleeping, experiences existential dread, and reexperiences. His past memories mingle with present ones, becoming “perpetually re-experienced as a painful, dissociated, traumatic present” (Leys 2). Richard is in fact constantly switching from the present to the past:

They crossed the bridge and were on the Italian side of the river and he saw the old sunken road again. It was as smooth and undistinguished now, as it was all along the

river. But he could see the old positions. And now, along each side of the straight, flat, canal-bordered road they were making time on, were the willows of the two canals that had contained the dead. (Hemingway 15)

The adverb “now” indicates the different time, but this passage shows how Richard is unable to see one reality without seeing the other. His mind always sees two landscapes at the same time. He is also fighting the resilience of nature, which by essence always tries to go back to its initial state (“smooth and undistinguished”). The place given to women and the way they are included in the war experience of their lovers is also significant, especially for the American context. As Annessa C. Stagner: “American women played the most central and crucial role. The wife, or mother, or sister had to realize the soldier’s suffering, dedicate herself to his care, and maintain a ‘cheerful expectation’ that he would recover. Recovery necessitated ‘a special gentleness,’ which only women possessed” (263). Although Frederic does not share any of his war experiences with Catherine, she still takes care of him, as his partner but also literally as his nurse, although she continues to nurse him when he is not her patient anymore. The case is slightly different for Richard and Renata as she is not explicitly his nurse, yet she still, willingly, acts like one: “‘Shouldn’t you take the medicine?’ ‘Yes,’ the Colonel said. ‘I should take the medicine.’ ‘May I give it to you?’ ‘Yes,’ the Colonel said. ‘You may give it to me’” (65). Besides, she acts as a *confidante* and listens to his traumatic war stories. It should be noted that her curiosity, on the verge of obsession, is questionable because omnipresent: “‘Tell me about the last war,’ the girl said” (Hemingway 94). It is unclear whether Renata simply wants to learn more about Richard or whether she wants to satisfy a morbid curiosity about a war she was too young to remember. However, no matter what her motives are, the result is positive for Richard: by relating his war experiences to Renata, he manages to break his traumatic cycle by narrating the past as the past. Katherine K. Robinson elaborates on this idea:

As Hemingway's character development progresses in correspondence with the evolution of his narrative structures, the protagonists shift from being objects experiencing trauma to being subjects creating trauma. Richard Cantwell, as one of the late Hemingway protagonists, engages these two aspects in the narrative. In *ARIT*, Cantwell is subjected to trauma, but he also objects others to trauma. Cantwell, as a protagonist, is compelled to fill both roles. Cantwell represents a progression for the Hemingway hero, as he is not only an object or subject of trauma in the structure of the narrative. (Robinson, 2010)

For Robinson, *ARIT* received mixed reviews because it drastically broke away from the usual powerful male characters one can find in Hemingway's other novels. The novel replaced these strong male characters with vulnerable ones, particularly aware of their own mortality and limitations. This idea adds to Margaret R. Higonnet's theory that war trauma, and in particular PTSD, "was understood by the military as a failure of masculinity: a failure of hardness, courage and willpower" (93), and to Milena Radeva-Costello's that "the stories of shell-shocked soldiers, in the hands of contemporary readers, often provoked condemnation, and at best invited pity" (80). The last quote summarises the American reception of *ARIT*, since the shattering of "white American heteromascularity" (Moddelmog 49) may explain why most of its critics did not enjoy the novel as much as his others. Nonetheless, some enjoyed the novel not in spite of its awkward rhythm and vulnerability, but because of it, such as the writer Tennessee Williams, who mentioned, in an article entitled "A Writer's Quest for a Parnassus":

I could not go to Venice, now, without hearing the haunted cadences of Hemingway's new novel. It is the saddest novel in the world about the saddest city, and when I say I think it is the best and most honest work that Hemingway has done, you may think me crazy. (Williams, 1950)

Similarly to Symonds who cannot but think of Shelley's "Lines Written among the Euganean Hills" when visiting Northern Italy, Williams' perception of Venice is changed because of Hemingway's novel. By mentioning the impact of *ARIT* on his experience of Venice, Williams positions Hemingway's work among the literary canon of writing about Venice, and further corroborates Lodge and Moretti's claims about the subjectivity of a canon.

Like Forster's *AS* and Wharton's *GM*, the novel goes against the usual "lines of articulation" (Deleuze and Guattari 2) present in Hemingway's fiction, which evidently disturbed its readership and critics. It is not, however, Hemingway's only piece of fiction to do so. The short-story "In Another Country," for example, published in 1927, two years before *A Farewell to Arms*, also features a man of the army showing his vulnerability by crying over his wife's passing: "He looked straight past me and out through the window. Then he began to cry. 'I am utterly unable to resign myself,' he said and choked. And then crying, his head up looking at nothing, carrying himself straight and soldierly, with tears on both cheeks and biting his lips, he walked past the machines and out of the door" (258-259). These passages reveal that the breaking down of potent masculinity has long been present in Hemingway's writings, although his contemporary readership and reception overlooked this aspect of his fiction - until *ARIT*. It was perhaps easier to overlook a collection of short stories, in which a reader can select what they want to read, rather than a novel which entirely revolves around the notion of vulnerability and brokenness.

Part Four: Rolfe's *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*

Genesis and Publication of the Novel

At first glance, the question of canonicity in Rolfe's *DPOW* has fewer connecting points to the other novels previously mentioned, given the writer's lesser-known status, both during his lifetime and posthumously. For Bertram W. Korn, "Rolfe-Corvo will never

achieve major status in any history or literature” (66), because “Corvo’s life must always occupy the centre of stage” (66), therefore suggesting that the writer’s works lose value without biographical knowledge. Such a claim, however, takes away from Rolfe’s writing, especially as the author wrote prolifically during his entire life, and was a man of many talents, according to Woolf: “Gifted at many points - Rolfe excelled as a swimmer, sculler, musician, photographer, painter and scribe - his best medium of self-expression he found in books and letters, although these brought him little success. Rolfe was a man obsessed and his works bear an impression of the energy with which he persisted, vainly seeking a way out of his self-imposed martyrdom” (10). Another difference is that when Forster, Wharton and Hemingway wrote their novels, they were already established writers, and consequently had financial means to write and live in comfortable conditions. This was not the case for Rolfe, who wrote and survived on very little, if any, money for most of his life. Letters written in 1904, for instance, show him guiltily his friends and acquaintances to send him money: “It is good of you to ask me to come and see you. But you know how I am, I have not had new clothes since 1899, and I cannot pay the fare” (Rolfe, 1904). Scholar Andrew E. Burne connects Rolfe’s intense periods of writing to financial necessity: “Rolfe’s productivity as a writer was always acutely linked to his financial condition, if not entirely driven by it” (486). In that respect, poverty appears to be a fueling agent for the writer:

That Rolfe began *Amico di Sandro* in the summer of 1910, for example - still recuperating from near-fatal illness, and having completed the first four drafts of *Desire* at an almost incredible speed - can be explained by the fact that Rolfe was destitute as he had not been since his stay in the Holywell workhouse, eleven years previously. His necessity is reflected in the form he adopted for the new book: a fictional life of Botticelli, no doubt derived from Charles Reade’s portrait of Erasmus, *The Cloister and*

the Hearth (a favourite of Rolfe's), and hoping for the same popular success. (Burne 486)

Although the above passage refers to the writing of later work *Amico di Sandro*, Rolfe's correspondence when he was writing *DPOW* in 1909, one year after his arrival in Venice, reveals a similar writing context:

My life during the summer and autumn of 1909 was lived chiefly in a small open boat on the Venetian lagoon. I frequently was without food for six days and nights consecutively. I passed the winter of 1909 and the spring of 1910 on the open landing of a servant's staircase in an old Venetian palace, chopping and carrying fire-logs, lighting fires, filling boilers, and working a cream-separator for my living. This period culminated in pneumonia and the last Sacraments in April - May 1910. But I continued to write another novel, a satire of *Modern Venice*, called *The Desire and the Pursuit of the Whole*. I have written it six times over, and four copies of it are in existence. (Rolfe, 1910)

This extract shows the overlap between Rolfe's constant financial struggles and his literary tenacity. Despite the writer's tendencies to amplify real life events, he does not exaggerate his financial and health condition in the passage above. The writer contracted pneumonia, bronchitis and heart disease in April 1910, and was given the Last Sacraments in May 1910, before his health miraculously improved. In letters written to Charles Masson Fox, Rolfe stressed the extreme squalid conditions he lived in: "I trapped the *fifty-fourth* rat in my room since June yesterday" (Rolfe to Fox, 1 August 1910, 68), as well as his gradual social ostracisation: "And you must also take into consideration at this point, that the life which I lead here becomes day by day more unbearable. The tale of rats which I have trapped in my room amounts to *61*. I am served after the servants. I'm snubbed and insulted by the servants because I can't tip them and because the landlord and his secretary don't even say

good morning to me. And so on” (Rolfe to Fox, 21 August 1910, 73). Interestingly, and as pointed out by Sylvester Houédard O.S.B., the writing period of *DPOW* was one of the less productive in Rolfe’s literary career, perhaps because of his health issues: “After 1907 . . . he wrote less and less, finishing some things (e.g. *Hubert’s Arthur*) but creating only one new novel, *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*” (121).

As Rolfe grew poorer and poorer, so did his circle of friends and benefactors. The writer’s incessant requests for money and confrontational personality seem to have estranged him from many. Exchanges between him and Fox reveal, however, that the writer was aware of his outcast status, and growing loneliness: “Why is it that I have had so many friends in this past, and now have lost all of them? The reason is simple. They got tired. They liked me; and they pitied my penury; and they gave me a little teaspoonful of help. But friendship is only possible among equals” (Rolfe to Fox, 11 December, 1909). Rolfe knew that his constant asking for money from his friends was detrimental to him maintaining friendships.

Despite all the monetary, publishing and health hurdles he came across during the writing of *DPOW*, at no point did Rolfe decide to give up on the novel. The writer’s insistence on his dedication to writing the novel in awful conditions meets Perosa’s observation that:

In constant peregrination, afflicted by debts, often living from day to day and from hand to mouth, trying without success a variety of activities—teacher, private secretary, photographer, painter and eventually writer—obsessively looking for ‘divine friends’ who invariably turned into ‘despoilers,’ Rolfe created with objective facts leavened by an enormous amount of resentment the mythology of the outcast. Violently attacked by the Catholic press, at war with everything and with everyone and above all with himself, at the turn of the century Rolfe courted literary, as well as human, martyrdom. (112)

“Self-imposed martyrdom” was already an idea expressed by Woolf in the opening quote of this section. In the extract above, Perosa highlights the ambiguous aspect of Rolfe’s career and literary persona. The various rejections and setbacks he experienced seemed to have shaped a sense of “martyrdom” and a “mythology of the outcast,” which was not unfounded but was amplified by the writer himself, and which seemed to have participated in him making questionable literary decisions. For instance, his many feuds with his publishers prevented him from gaining any form of stability, as he often refused deals that did not match his expectations:

Barnard & Taylor persuaded me before I left England to assign to them my life-policy worth four-hundred and fifty sterling. By stopping my supplies, and by allying with Benson & Pirie Gordon to prevent me from using my own productions, they are taking one way of procuring the realization of this sum . . . To skew what business-like management could make of my productions, I secretly submitted *The Weird of the Wanderer* to an English publisher, who offered me 4s a copy royally. I advised B&T and P&G, who said nothing. I refused 4s. The publisher offered 6s, and 8s. I advised B&T and P&Q, who said nothing. I refused 6s & 8s. The head of the firm wrote personally asking me to name my own terms. I advised B&T, & P&Q, who said nothing. I refused to name terms, and reclaimed my own manuscript. (Rolfe, 1910)

It seems unrealistic that the firm “wrote personally” to Rolfe and asked for his own terms given his lack of recognition, which might suggest that the writer distorted some facts in his correspondence. However, it is clear that Rolfe was often in conflict with his publishers, and that he spent his life asking for money to pursue his literary career, pushing him to an extreme precarity. What also transpires from this letter is that Rolfe had high hopes for his works, and believed in his writing skills despite very little appreciation. Symons argues that Rolfe’s constant feuding participated in his lesser-known status: “I began to see why he was

not remembered: apparently he had passed through life in a state of opposition and exasperation, giving and taking offense without case or scruple, until even his friends feared and avoided him” (16). Woolf suggests that there was nothing Rolfe “liked better than a good row” (75). Perosa also has a similar interpretation of Rolfe’s disproportionate reactions to people who sometimes had done nothing but help him: “Claiming for the artist the right to be supported by others, he sees enemies wherever someone gives him a hand; breaks with society, but seeks its comforts; turns private resentments into metaphysical hatreds; and strikes back in retaliation” (112). Rolfe’s personal and professional volatility was perhaps a symptom of paranoia, from which he suffered, and certainly itself fed by his precarity and loneliness. In any case, his mental and physical help did not help him during the writing stage of *DPOW*. Faced with his unsuccessful rows with publishers and friends, Rolfe concludes: “I don’t claim particular commercial smartness. But I think I’ve got ordinary common sense. Facts are facts, and the fact is that I am the only person in the world who has ever sold my books. I sold *Toto*, *In His Own*, *Rubaiyat*, *Borgia*, *Hadrian*, *Tarquinio*, all by myself. First wrote ‘em: then hawked ‘em. No agent ever did a thing” (Rolfe to Fox, 11 July 1910).

It is interesting to note that similarly to *AS*, although for different reasons, *DPOW* was published after Rolfe’s death, in 1934. The posthumous publication of the novel is mostly due to the many difficulties Rolfe encountered, but it also shows that Rolfe’s continuous efforts to have the novel published eventually paid off: “it should be noted that Rolfe was pushing for the publication of Hubert’s *Arthur* and *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* throughout 1912 and up to the last weeks before his death in 1913” (Burne 486). A telegram addressed to the writer in 1910 and written by James Walsh, a friend of Rolfe, gives us more information on the publishing issues encountered for *DPOW*:

My Dear Mr. Rolfe,

. . . I fear that it will be difficult to find a publisher here in America for while it contains an excellent bit of love story quite unusual in its way and with the absolutely essential quality of a happy ending, there is so much besides that publishers hesitate. One of the friends who read it was himself familiar with the publication business in America and was doubtful about its acceptance . . . May I add that personally I have been a little hesitant about pressing the matter in any way because the book contains so many personalities. These are quite obviously hidden beneath masks that make them easily recognizable. I should feel that if the manuscript went through my hands to an agent I should have to tell him that though it is probable that the disguise is so thin that he would recognise that real persons are involved. (Walsh, 1910)

As identified in Chapter One, similarly to Hemingway, Rolfe based the novel very closely on real people who were easily identifiable through the novel, which caused issues in terms of publishing. Similarly to Wharton's publishers, Walsh praises the happy ending of the novel, although his general sentiment is that the novel is considered too risky to publish because of the obvious references to "personalities." In addition to that, Walsh suggests that the unusual aspect of the novel also creates uncertainty from the publishers' behalf ("there is so much besides that publishers hesitate"). Walsh probably refers here to the complex side storylines and baroque writing. The original telegram is annotated by Rolfe's direct answers to Walsh and shows Rolfe's disagreement with him.²⁵

The novel was eventually given more attention when British author and biographer A.J.A. Symons published a bibliography on Rolfe entitled *The Quest for Corvo: an Experiment in Bibliography* (1934). Following the publication of the biography, Symons also published for the first time the incomplete novel, as well as another medieval novel by Rolfe entitled *Hubert's Arthur* (1935). Despite the original aspect of the biography, which is,

²⁵ See Figure C in the Appendix for a copy of the telegram and its annotations.

according to Ned Edward Hoopes: “a kind of autobiographical biography, concerned as much with Symons, the biographer, as much as with the life and works of Corvo” (Hoopes 6), its importance in giving Rolfe more attention is acknowledged: “*The Quest for Corvo*, however, was responsible for rescuing the man from obscurity. If Corvo’s name is known at all today, it is because of the biography” (6). For Dominic Janes: “The publication of A.J.A. Symons’s *The Quest for Corvo* (1934) brought Rolfe to the attention of a wider public, and critical estimation of him rose through the middle of the twentieth century” (107). Korn asserts that Symons’s biography positioned Rolfe among other mythical literary figures, thus attracting attention: “No title of a book was ever better calculated than this to attract attention and arouse curiosity. The idea of a ‘quest’ is always intriguing, conveying thoughts of adventures, exploration, discovery, and the solving of puzzles. ‘Corvo’ could be a man or place, reality or dream, but the name had something about it of the romantic aura of Monte Cristo” (65). Connected to this idea of making Rolfe a fictional literary figure is Johnson’s *The Unspeakable Skipton*, which tells the story of a novelist in Bruges working on an experimental manuscript. Johnson, in her note prefacing the novel, mentioned the influence of Symons’s biography on the novel.²⁶ Two years later, in 1961, a collection of essays, including one by Hansford, entitled *New Quests for Corvo*, was published by Woolf and Sewell, showing the desire to keep exploring Rolfe’s life and works in the wake of Symons’s biography.

“An Undistinguished Minor Writer”?

The many rejections that Rolfe experienced shaped his writing career. As Hoopes suggests: “Each time a work was rejected, Corvo seems to have revised it and added to it” (v). A similar idea is also expressed by Burne: “He was less fond of writing than of re-writing” (485). Similarly to Wharton, who also worked on many projects at the same

²⁶ “I have always wanted to write a study of an artist’s paranoia. This is a state which is, of course, not true to all artists, and very rarely of the greatest: but it is true of a certain number. Anyone familiar with the life of Frederick Rolfe will detect some of my sources ...” (Johnson, Note).

time, Rolfe wrote lengthily and repetitively: “Far from spontaneous, Corvo’s method was, in fact, extremely laborious. Every page of almost every book was re-written, and he was often working on several literary projects simultaneously” (Hoopes iii-iv). As Rolfe indicated himself about the writing process of *DPOW*: “I have written it six times over, and four copies of it are in existence” (Rolfe, 1910). The author’s compulsive writing method resulted in a compost of his favourite themes, stories and plots:

Ransacking his earlier works and his personal storehouse of information, favorite phrases and literary tricks, Corvo used many parts of them in his later works, constantly returning to the same material, situations and themes and employing the same images and characters again and again. His fiction, consequently, is a kind of complicated mosaic built from numerous fragments. (Hoopes iv)

Rolfe’s composting of his previous works is reminiscent of Hemingway’s incipits of *A Farewell to Arms* and *ARIT*, whose intertextual similarities are familiar to us by now, therefore further suggesting the “blind spot” in literary canon (Moretti 232). Unlike Hemingway, however, the idea of a “complicated mosaic” also suggests that Rolfe’s work is better understood not on its own, but compared to his other works. This “complicated mosaic” thus complexifies the accessibility to his work, which might explain the marginal attention given to them.

On Rolfe’s writing of *DPOW*, Burne contends that the author oscillated between two narrative techniques:

In *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* on the other hand (as in *Nicholas Crabbe*) we find an autobiographical fantasy whereby a quasi-historical element (the story of Rolfe’s life) is provided with a powerful fantastic narrative extension (whether overtly or otherwise). The story itself, however, remains rooted in Rolfe’s own life, in the Venice of 1909 or the London of 1901; and Rolfe is always anxious to provide a

“very-well-might-have-done” justification for even the most startling narrative developments. Hence for example Zildo’s somewhat longwinded explanation for his rescue of Crabbe in *Desire*, which provides a basis for the joyous union between the two at the novel’s close. (487-488)

Burne articulates here Rolfe’s typical blend of autobiography and fictional history, which meets Rolfe’s own statement that “[h]e was not a born creator”; he preferred to think of himself as a historian rather than as a novelist” (485). Rolfe’s increased interest in history, then, explains why the author wrote less fiction after the completion of *DPOW*:

These inclinations, and the labour they involved, help to explain the dearth of new writing on Rolfe’s part between the completion of *Desire* in 1910 and his death in October 1913. Only two, incomplete, pieces of fiction have survived from this period: *Amico di Sandro*, begun in 1910 and first published by G. F. Sims privately in 1950; and a later fragment, dating from 1912, which is given the alternative titles in Rolfe’s notebook of *The Freeing of the Soul* or *The Seven Degrees*. (Burne 485)

The hybrid status of *DPOW* can appear as unsettling for the reader. The “powerful fantastic narrative extension” Burne mentions (487-488) is exemplified in the following passage, which sets the background of Zilda/o’s, whose real name is Ermenegilda, storyline:

‘MARIN FALIER’ happens to have been the name of that Venetian Doge, who (despite his Serene Principate) was beheaded as a traitor to the Republic in the year of the Admirable Parturition of Madonna Saint Mary the Virgin 1354.

Before precipitately plunging into the bog of superior (but fatuous) sneers concerning the progeny of traitors, visiting (like Yahveh) the sins of the fathers upon the children, it may be wise, o most affable reader, to remember that your successful traitor is a laurelled patriot, and his treachery the purest Amor Patriae. As a matter of fact there was

nothing particularly disgraceful about the treachery for which Duke Marin Falier paid the price with his hot head . . . Ermenegilda, daughter of Bastian son of Marin son of Bastian son of Marin, called herself Falier by cognomen no doubt for the best of all reasons. A person who (in these days) actually knows the name of father and grandfather and great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather, all in the male line - names which ascend alternately in the same (but ancient) fashion of the steps of a ladder - may safely be suspected of possessing a notable ancestry. (Rolfe 24)

In this extract, the narrator addresses the reader directly (“o, most affable reader”) in order to capture the reader’s attention. By doing so, the fourth wall breaks down, which emphasises the absurd nature of the storyline. The narrator seems to deliberately enjoy using confusing sentences and adding extra detail, seemingly irrelevant to the description, with the use of several parentheses (five in total only in this extract). It is also significant that when retracing Zilda/o’s genealogy, the narrator only mentions men (“daughter of Bastian son of Marin son of Bastian son of Marin”), giving the impression that only men were involved in the growth and birth of Zildo/a’s family members and invisibilising women. Finally, one can notice the blending of personal and historical facts, and more specifically the blending of personal facts with Venetian historical facts, which meets Burne’s previous statement. And yet, one can wonder whether this interconnection between the personal and the historical, and between imagination and reality, is not a necessary system of growth for novels taking place in Venice and in Northern Italy.

Therefore, Rolfe’s unconventional play with gender and social norms, complex structures and blending of different languages, reveal a desire on the writer’s behalf to create a different reading experience - and in doing so, to disorient the reader. This writing strategy reveals Rolfe’s innovative vision as blending English and different languages will become an important feature of Modernist literature, although it is unclear whether the author

wanted to create a different language or show his European erudition. Deleuze and Guattari connect the idea of minor literature with minor language, and emphasise the shifting status of major and minor: “What remains interesting is the possibility of making one’s own tongue, supposing it unique, or, if a major tongue now or in the past, then supposing the possibility of a minor use” (26). By creating his own language, Rolfe shows his unconventional literary vision, but also his faith that his work would eventually find his audience.

Despite the innovative aspect of the author’s work, Perosa highlights how Rolfe was nonetheless part of a literary continuity: “The peak of Rolfe’s artificiality, in this sense, is to be found in his pseudo-historical narratives, which also present revealing coincidences with two other aspects of Decadent literature: a peculiar interest in particular periods of the past, rediscovered and re-experienced in contemporary terms, and an avowed preference for romantic modes of expressing them” (117). Perosa expands on the influence of the Decadentist movement on Rolfe’s works:

A further link with Decadentism lies in the adoption of fluid and narrative forms, of artificial structures and frames, in the use of an elaborate, overly refined kind of language. Structural and linguistic artifice is a distinctive trait in Rolfe’s autobiographical fiction. It becomes a supporting element and sometimes a central concern in his pseudo-historical narratives, which are indeed qualified by its presence both in a Decadent, and in a purely experimental way. In all these works, moreover, we are confronted by colorful and impressionistic renderings, and these aspects must be further explored in order to grasp the real significance of Rolfe’s fiction. (116)

This passage resonates with the previous portrayal of Zildo/a’s family, fraught with “elaborate” and “artificial structures and frames.” By insisting on his Decadentist influence

and rich style (“impressionistic renderings”), Perosa does not take away from Rolfe’s linguistic originality, but recontextualises his works.

Experimenting with Posterity

Rolfe’s decisions, whether in the writing process or in the publishing process of his works, infallibly positions himself as a minor writer. Certainly, the posthumous publication of the novel did not help its reception. While Bloom considers unsettling works that “make you feel strange at home” (3) as a key component of canonicity, Lodge disagrees with the idea that radicality should be an effective criteria to select minor and major literature: “I am dissatisfied with maps of contemporary fiction which take into account only the most deviant and marginal kinds of writing, leaving all the rest white space” (26). Although Lodge discusses contemporary fiction, this observation can make one think of Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1920) or Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), whose radicality certainly played an important role in their later selection, although both writers already had established audiences that allowed a better reception of their literary experiments. Janes observed that such a comparison between *DPOW* and *Ulysses* was made by Joyce scholar Gilbert: “For instance, he [Rolfe] goes unmentioned in the first edition from 1930 of Stuart Gilbert’s influential study of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*; but in the revised edition from the 1950s, referencing Symons, Gilbert remarks that ‘had the Fates been kinder, that unhappy genius [Rolfe] might have moved parallel, if on a somewhat lower plane, to Joyce’ (Gilbert 1955, 92)” (107). Radicality has not worked in favour of *DPOW*; arguably, it is perhaps Rolfe’s many attempts to differentiate his work that condemned him to being a minor writer. The transgressive nature of desires expressed in Rolfe’s novel does not explain the novel’s oversight either as many other works have expressed transgressive desires and are considered to be part of a literary canon (Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*) is a prime example of that. While one could argue that such an impasse could be justified by Moretti’s

initial comment that there is a “blind spot” (211) in the literary canon, there is more to be said about Rolfe’s case. Furthermore, the novel was not as innovative when it was published in 1934, although scholars such as Perosa nuanced the writer’s innovativity by positioning him within a broader literary context.

Going back to Sedgwick might prove useful here, as she notices that many of the canonical writers one can think of (Shakespeare, Wilde, Melville, Proust) were queer men, and quite obviously so in their writings, although the queer aspect of their works was often omitted in their analysis. The difference with Rolfe, however, is that their writings resided in a tension that is “neither quite exploded nor . . . quite stable” (Sedgwick 54). This tension is what characterises the Euro-American canon, reminding us of Foucault’s idea that transgression only resides in tension, too: “A canon seen to be genuinely unified by the maintenance of a particular tension of homo/heterosexual definition can scarcely be dismantled; but neither can it ever be treated as the repository of reassuring ‘traditional’ truths that could be made matter for any settled consolidation or congratulation” (Sedgwick 54). *DPOW*, with the fluidity and liminality that permeates its language, plot, genre, characters, and setting, abolishes any type of tension. Not even the attempt for a conventional ending, with Zildo becoming Zilda again, and professing her love to Crabbe, is enough to instil a tension between homo/heterosexual. The novel’s attempt to represent anything and everything, and to explode any form of categories, gives it an experimental status easy to dismantle. It is perhaps what Rolfe’s friend Walsh was alluding to, consciously or not, by warning Rolfe on the fact that: “the book contains so many personalities” (Walsh to Rolfe, 1910), therefore condemning it to marginal readership.

However, the first issue of the novel by Oxford University Press in its 20th century classics series in 1986 marks a first step towards its rehabilitation. This series features, among others, Wharton’s *Ethan Frome* and Leonard Woolf’s *The Village in the Jungle*.

While the requirements for a work to be classified as “classic” are quite vague, by placing Rolfe in such a reputable series, and among such canonical writers, Oxford University Press rehabilitates Rolfe not as a canonical writer himself, but as a vital element of a canon; or to quote Sedgwick one last time, as a “mini-canon” among “master-canons” (49-50). While Oxford University Press most likely decided to take over on the previous publisher of the novel because of Rolfe’s connection to Oxford University,²⁷ such action is significant as it rehabilitates Rolfe not only as an Oxford man but as a part of a larger institution he strived to be accepted by for many years.

Conclusion

Like the Venetian environment, the canon is a porous notion. Through the close analysis of the writing and publication processes of these four “minor” books, this section has attempted to understand the mechanisms of canonical selection at play with relation to them. Despite the apparent ruptures between the novels, they are part of the same literary tradition of writing about Venice and Northern Italy. The three first texts, written by “major” writers Forster, Wharton and Hemingway, broke away from conventional critical expectations about their work, whether in terms of theme, character or structure. All three writers took different “lines of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari 2), which evidently disturbed those readers and critics’ expectations. Yet all three texts offer a more nuanced vision of the works of Forster, Wharton and Hemingway. They also show a distinguishable evolution of the authors in their writing and in their personal life. The different versions of *AS*, for instance, highlight Forster’s creative process and transform his work into a text with “multiple entrances.” Wharton’s *GM* reveals a desire to experiment with lighter forms of satire in the aftermath of WWI. Hemingway’s descriptions of post-traumatic stress disorder

²⁷ Rolfe, although not an Oxford student, pretended to be one in 1906, and attended several classes before being casted out. For Symons: “At Oxford he [Rolfe] flouted the authorities in acts of noisy folly” (4).

symptoms in *ARIT* reveal his evolution on the matter and on masculinity, especially in comparison to *A Farewell to Arms*.

Rolfe is a separate case, as he is not considered to be a canonical writer, yet his writing and publication processes share similarities with the three other writers. Disagreements, sometimes leading to conflict with his publishers, put in light once again the importance of publishers and editors in the making and in the reception of a literary work. Although the plot and language of *DPOW* challenge the reader, and although Rolfe wrote the novel in extremely precarious physical and mental health, the chapter argued that it is the unmistakably queer aspect of his novel - here I mean queer both in the sexual sense and also in refusing any categorisation - combined with ill-advised decisions that caused his minor status as a writer. He thus became a part of the vast majority of writers, as most writers become minor writers (Lodge 11). And yet, his presence among the “20th century novels” published by Oxford University Press in 1984 rehabilitates him as a “mini-canon” (Sedgwick 49).

Yet Rolfe was like Forster, Wharton and Hemingway, at least in his impulse to make Venice or Northern Italy his subject. A final question needs to be addressed before concluding this chapter: does the fact that the novels are set in Northern Italy, and Venice, somehow participate with the unpopularity of these works in subsequent criticism? As established in the beginning of this chapter, it seems almost absurd to claim that such a setting could explain the fall into oblivion of these novels, given that Northern Italy and Venice are very popular literary settings in Shakespeare’s works (*The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*), Gothic literature (Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*) and Romanticism (Byron’s “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage”), to name a few. More broadly, the practice of the Grand Tour, from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, led to countless writings set in Italy. One could therefore hypothesise that readers might have experienced Italy-fatigue at

the beginning of the twentieth century, after over two decades of literary profusion. The location, however, certainly seems to have inspired Forster, Rolfe, Wharton and Hemingway to attempt something new.

However, collective interest did not stop after the Grand Tour, but went on at the beginning of the twentieth-century, as the successes of Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912), D.H. Lawrence's *Twilight in Italy* (1916), and Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927) reveal. Furthermore, this argument does not prove to be accurate as Mann's and Proust's works were written about the same time as Rolfe's *DPOW*, and even as Wharton's *GM* if we compare it with Proust's last novel. The context is different for *ARIT* and *AS* as they were published significantly later. And yet, literature taking place in Northern Italy was still successful at the middle and late twentieth-century, as the success and cinematic adaptations of the following works show: Highsmith's *The Talented Mr Ripley*, Du Maurier's *Don't Look Now* (first published in the collection *Not After Midnight, and Other Stories*), and McEwan's *The Comfort of Strangers*. It is interesting to note that these successful works and adaptations set in Venice explore the idea of transgression in Venice, but in a much more dramatic way than the four selected texts. The thriller *The Talented Mr Ripley* centres on eponymous character, an obsessive young homosexual man who becomes trapped in a cycle of murders from which he has trouble getting out of; in *Don't Look Now*, we follow a couple vacationing in Venice and realising that the city is cursed, as murders and unsettling encounters become more frequent; *The Comfort of Strangers* also features a bored couple vacationing in Venice who meet an Italian man taking pleasure in torturing his partner. All of these writings explore themes of transgression more explicitly than in the four texts under study, and with an emphasis on horror and suspense. This is not to claim that all writings set in Venice from the mid twentieth century are necessarily horror or thriller accounts, but to notice that it is a popular tendency that encountered critical success. Therefore, the mixed

reception of *DPOW*, *AS*, *GM* and *ARIT* perhaps has more to do with the fact that they were ill-suited to the readership's expectations at the mid and late twentieth century. As Alastair Fowler expresses: "Each age has a fairly small repertoire of genres that its readers and critics can respond to with enthusiasm, and the repertoire easily available to its writers is smaller still: the temporary canon is fixed for all but the greatest or strongest or most arcane writers. Each age makes deletions from the repertoire" (21-22).

There is little to suggest that writing about Venice and Northern Italy is doomed to critical failure. And yet, as mentioned throughout the thesis, the uniqueness of the Venetian environment and of Northern Italy is a necessary part of the works under analysis, fostering dialogues and points of encounter. In fact, all the themes analysed so far in this thesis stem from this particular ecosystem. One of the issues with the critical reception of these works is perhaps that they set aside how these texts were a product of their environment.

Chapter Three : “The Damned Beautiful”

Venetian and Northern Italian environments

In Venice Tasso’s echoes are no more,

And silent rows the songless gondolier;

Her palaces are crumbling to the shore,

And music meets not always now the ear:

Those days are gone--but Beauty still is here;

States fall, arts fade--but Nature doth not die,

Nor yet forget how Venice once was dear,

The pleasant place of all festivity,

The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy! (Byron, 19-27)

Introduction: “Crumbling to the Shore”

The above passage from Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* makes clear that precarity is Venice’s most canonical property, which in turn makes the status of writings located in Venice unstable and suggests an intrinsic connection between writing and the environment. By commenting on its disintegrative and fading aspect, Byron suggests that the city is ecologically transgressive, battling a fight against nature that is impossible to win. For the poet, Venice is bound to disappear and go back to its natural state at some point: water (“Nature doth not die”). The passage also highlights that concepts such as urban and rural do not make much sense in Venice, as the porous aspect of the city prevents a clear distinction between the two. Because “palaces are crumbling to the shore,” there is no clear divide between the buildings and the sea, which is reminiscent of Benjamin’s discussion of Naples and porosity; even the water in Venice is a mix of salty and fresh water. Remembering the Euganean hills, poet Symonds also observes that different types of rural landscapes surround the Venetian environment: “Their purple pyramids, lifted against the

orange of the western sky, form an indispensable ingredient of the orthodox Venetian sunset. Their reflections in the blue mirror of the lagoons, although they are so far away, count as one of the chief wonders of the beautiful Venetian mornings” (18-19). This passage shows how the precariousness of the city is not only due to its built environment, but also to its coexisting natural environments.

As mentioned in Chapter One, from an ecological point of view, the city should not exist: “the Faustian dream of turning sea into solid ground, is an exercise in hybridity not only because it mixes water and land into a new elemental combination, but above all because it is an act of *hubris*, a violation of ontological pacts” (Iovino 2-3). The city is always in a state of in-betweenness because of its porous simultaneities: “hybridity” and “hubris,” beauty and death, human and non-human. In addition to this, the city also allows the cohabitation of the East and the West. Venice exists in the balance of two coexisting realities ready to take over at any moment, just like, according to Foucault, transgression resides in the balance between what is forbidden and accepted. As argued, the contemporary reviews of *ARIT* elaborate on the contradictions present in the book and in Venice:

It is not a good novel. It is one of the most beautiful novels, written, I think, recently. It is a true book. And it is very much like the canals that flow through it. You begin nowhere, end nowhere, and in the middle you have a whole world, that the Hemingway reader knows. It is a story of death. It is a story of nonsuccess. Hemingway knows he is not a great writer. He has tried, but did not make it. (Bulletin, 1957)

The use of language associated with canonicity (“good” and “great”) and the series of contradictions in the citation reveal the divergent realities associated with Venice and with writings taking place there; it also emphasises how stable concepts such like canonicity become unsteady in La Serenissima. This state of porosity between two realities shapes the experience of someone who lives or passes through Venice, since according to Lawrence

Buell: “There never was an is without a where. Both the bad things and the good that happen to human beings and other life-forms self-evidently occur when their bodies are physically located somewhere, in particular locations” (55). Bodies and their environment therefore go hand in hand, which explains why the endangered city often creates a sense of danger and anxiety in people staying in Venice. Going back to Booth’s description of Symonds in Venice might prove useful, as it expresses how Venice is the perfect setting for transitioning towards death: “Symonds seems to have been thinking about his own death. Rowing out into the lagoon in the afternoon he positions himself at another point of transition, one neither land nor open sea” (183-184).

R.J.B. Bosworth notices that this feeling of anxiety experienced when travelling in Venice is connected to ideas of mortality. The sinking, and therefore dying, city seems to attract fictional accounts of death, such as Mann’s *Death in Venice*, Hemingway’s *ARIT* or McEwan’s *The Comfort of Strangers*. For other writers, perishability animates desire and the pursuit of capital: “Ruskin declares, right at the start, that he wants to try somehow to catch Venice before it disappears” (81). These observations come to the conclusion, by now familiar: Venice is synonymous with danger and death and attracts writings on that subject because of that. Iovino explains how death is constitutive of Venice:

A recurrent trope among artists and writers long before Thomas Mann, death in Venice is much more than a fictional theme. It has indeed concrete faces, which come into sight with very recognizable features. These faces are the menacing waters and fluxes of energy generated by global warming; unsustainable tourism and gigantic cruise ships; the anti-ecological engineering systems carried out to control the increasing high tides; or common human activities, interfering day by day with the delicate ecosystem of the lagoon. (30)

By alluding to Mann, Iovino refers to the tradition of associating illnesses with Venice, but she insists on the fact that death is not only a literary reality in Venice. The city struggled with cholera due to unsanitary and damp houses until the twentieth century, when Mussolini's government completed most of the sanitising and modernising work in Venice. Significantly, quarantine comes from the Italian "quaranta" and alludes to the forty days of separating infected people. According to Eugenia Tognotti, "the first city to perfect a system of maritime quarantine was Venice, which because of its particular geographic configuration and its prominence as a commercial center, was dangerously exposed" (254). Facing these unsanitary conditions, Bosworth claims that there was a fear of travelling to Venice because of the cholera pandemic, especially as the government tried to hide it to maintain income from tourism, which Mann's novel depicts very well: "Although the novel's focus was more on bourgeois sexuality than on the poor Venetians who perished in the epidemic, the fame won by *Death in Venice* left a memory of the shameless lies of government announcements about the outbreak, the USA, whose citizens now arrived in Venice in considerable numbers, and other nations colluding 'with the Italian policy of concealment'" (Bosworth 64). Such an attempt to maintain tourism can be explained by the fact that as much as it massively damages the environment, it also enables the financing of projects to make the city sink slower. As Dario Bertocchio and Francesco Visentin put it: "Tourism has a Janus-faced character; indeed, for many destinations, tourism has become the most important economic development vehicle, yet it is also the most problematic and complex to tackle and come to terms with" (4). Facing this, locals, but also at times other travellers, can feel contempt and even hatred for tourists, also known nowadays as "tourismophobia." By stressing Venice's overuse and over-exploitation, Iovino practically positions Venice as a previously colonised space now suffering from global warming and facing serious environmental issues.

Although such an argument has its limitations, it highlights the intricate problematic relationship between tourism and imperialism discussed in Chapter One.

Another way to see the pandemic in Mann's *Death in Venice* is not as a tragedy for tourism, but as a convenient way to get rid of tourists. While Iovino insists on environmental challenges faced at the end of the 20th century to recent days in Venice, the idea of "common human-activities interfering day by day with the delicate ecosystem of the lagoon" (30) is far from being new. Rolfe in *DPOW* mentions how the main character Crabbe refuses to stay in an overheated hotel room in Venice, unlike most tourists who try to avoid the damp and cold: "The first thing which flapped his return in his face was the hellish access of temperature" (50). Such complex relationships with tourism in Venice have long been expressed. For instance, tourism became possible thanks to the modernisation of the city, such as efficient railways to make it more accessible, and yet to some this modernisation of the city denatured it:

Despite his exquisite sensibility, Ruskin preserved the most vulgar tourist habit of regularly comparing the 'foreign' to 'home'. Even today, those who, with or without the Englishman's refinement, fear Venice's imminent environmental death date the city's decline from the opening of the railway connection to the mainland (and bewail the allure and sins of foreign modernity imported from there). (Bosworth 9)

Bosworth points out Ruskin's conflictual position on modernity, as the writer appreciated modern things but not when applied to Venice. Bosworth discusses in depth the idea that Venice should stay "com'era, dov'era" (as and where it was, usually referring to the period before Napoleon's invasion in 1797) and concludes that such an idea is detrimental to the city as it prevents improvements. This fear of denaturing places makes us wonder whether mass tourism raises concern because of ecological reasons or because of aesthetic reasons:

Is it a problem that much popular environmentalism is primarily or ‘merely’ aesthetic in motivation, the defence of pretty woodland from new housing, or of a charismatic animal from extinction? The limiting association of environmental politics with the ‘merely aesthetic’ is reinforced by ever more beautifully filmed nature programmes based on the old scenic categories of the beautiful, sublime or picturesque. (Timothy Clark 80)

Clark here explains in other terms the idea of “com’era, dov’era,” and shows that it is in fact applicable not only to Venice, but to “popular environmentalism” in general. Questions of aestheticism and the environment are particularly crucial to twentieth-century Italy, as Binde mentions: “In sharp contrast to the Romantic devotion, pervasive in Northern Europe, to ‘genuine’ nature and unspoilt wild landscapes, imbuing nature with transcendental and spiritual qualities, in Italy undomesticated nature has commonly been viewed as something uninteresting or disagreeable, which cannot be truly appreciated unless it is transformed by man” (767-68). In any case, to come back to Clark’s idea, valuing aesthetic concerns more than ecological ones can be an issue as it forces things to remain how they were, thus denying the value of change. Moreover, aesthetic concerns and ecological ones do not necessarily go hand in hand. These pessimistic observations on the environment should not, however, discourage the reader from taking action, mentions Buell. According to him, literature has a role to play in environmental studies, and it is to reveal future ecological possibilities: “From these chapters I hope the reader will come to share my sense both of the power of environmental influences as a shaping force in works of creative imagination and of the power of those works, contending against the foreshortened vision that afflicts us all, to articulate what ‘environment’ is and might be” (Buell 28). The following chapter will investigate the idea of environmental possibilities in the four novels.

Contextualising the Novels within Environmental Studies

DPOW was written in 1909 and the first draft of *AS* in 1911, positioning both Rolfe and Forster as Edwardian writers. Jesse Oak Taylor, in an article entitled “Where is Victorian Ecocriticism?” (2015), observes the scarcity of environmentally-conscious studies of Victorian texts; it must also be noted that there are even fewer such studies of Edwardian literature.²⁸ Even in comparative studies of the two periods, the Edwardian environment is often not given as much importance as in Victorian studies. Notably, the few articles relating to the environment in *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens* focus almost exclusively on Victorian writers such as Hardy, Ruskin, the Brontë sisters, with the one exception of H.G. Wells. Some studies focus on the environment in both eras without specifically distinguishing the two. According to Melissa S. Van Vuuren, this dearth of interest is symptomatic of Edwardian studies:

As a literary era, the Edwardian age is frequently tacked onto the end of the Victorian age or considered a mere transitional phase between Victorianism and Modernism, without being a significant era in its own right. As such, scholarship on the Edwardian age is sparse at best or frequently buried within Victorian sources. (ix Van Vuuren)

Yet, in spite of such limitations, Jonathan Wild reminds us of the transitional aspect of the period, as well as its environmental impact: “The Great War, while confirming that centrality in comprehensive and devastating terms, also brought to a conclusive end the dreams of England that were kept alive in the country-house novel and fostered more generally by Edwardian writers” (184). Dennis Denisoff also reminds us that the first official laws against animal abuse were voted on during that time: “The 1900 Wild Animals in Captivity Protection Act extended rights further and all were repealed when consolidated under the 1911 Protection of Animals Act” (65). Both these studies reveal that the

²⁸ For studies on both Victorian and Edwardian times, see Echterling’s dissertation “Degeneration and the Environment in Victorian and Edwardian Fiction” (2018), and the scholarly journals *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens*.

Edwardian era was very much concerned with ecology, and deserves more attention in the ecocritical field.

There has been an increasing interest in the environment in recent Wharton scholarship. Marilyn McEntyre's analysis of *The House of Mirth* and Rita Bode's of "Bunner Sisters" examine the urban environment within Wharton's works. Other studies conducted by Gary Totten and Julie Olin-Ammentorp explore the writer's relationship with the natural world and indicate that Wharton positions herself in a transitional period, and draws from different literary influences, which is especially visible in her description of the American city:

This indictment of the American city is not peculiar to Wharton; her vision participates in a general disenchantment with the simplistic extremities of American life and culture articulated in their various ways by James, Dreiser, Sinclair, and Norris. Like them, she is an uncomfortable heir of a romantic tradition that glorifies and sentimentalizes the pastoral and the rural, aligning rusticity with innocence and the natural world with spiritual purity. (McEntyre 84)

Both Bode and Olin-Ammentorp insist on Wharton's interest in the interconnection of the urban and natural environments: "If Wharton's work is generally categorized as 'social,' it is equally, and often unquestioningly, categorized as 'urban,' and in this too her attachment to nature has been underappreciated. In spite of her association with cities, Wharton was deeply attuned to the natural world, even within urban environments" (102). For Olin-Ammentorp, Wharton's absence in the ecocritical field is not a new phenomenon within her works: "Wharton's incorporation of nature in so much of her *oeuvre* seems invisible to most environmental writers, as her First World War writings seemed invisible to scholars of the Great War for many years" (103). Margarida Cadima's ecocritical approach

to Wharton's works also features insights on the environment in *GM*, although it focuses more on the French environment than on the Italian one.

There are more studies on Hemingway and the environment than any of the other writers, perhaps because Hemingway's relationship with it is foregrounded in his writings, if not only in his titles of short-stories and novels ("Snows of the Kilimanjaro"; *ARIT*; *The Old Man and the Sea*; *Islands in the Stream*, etc). Beegel clarifies her understanding of Hemingway and the environment:

Hemingway *was* a superb naturalist – a description he chose for himself and wore as a badge of honor. His knowledge of the animals he hunted and fished was beyond compare. . . . He was also an ethical and mindful sportsman, dedicated to giving the animals and fish their chance, to killing cleanly and humanely, and to not wasting lives taken, but always eating or distributing meat and fish . . . Hemingway *was not* an ecologist. During the Roosevelt era, this science of the relationships between organisms and their environment was the province of a handful of academic botanists. Conservation biology, the application of ecological science to preserving species and their habitats, did not yet exist. Nor was there much understanding of evolutionary biology. Although Hemingway's knowledge as a naturalist grew exponentially over the course of his lifetime, he did not think in terms of ecological communities or webs. (242)

Beegel expresses here that Hemingway's relationship with nature and animals changed over his lifetime as he became more considerate of both, although being considerate does not equal being an ecologist. And yet, according to Bosworth: "In the 1950s the greatest novelty in urban politics was the rise of environmentalist concerns about the city, especially as marshalled by an organisation that called itself Italia Nostra (IN, Our Italy) and published a monthly magazine under the same name" (201). *ARIT* was published in 1950, and *The Old*

Man and the Sea in 1952. It is therefore factually possible that Hemingway heard of “environmentalist concerns,” especially as he spent time in Venice when writing *ARIT*. To nuance Beegel’s statement, it is not anachronistic to say that Hemingway might have been aware of ecological issues; however, Beegel is right when she mentions it does not mean he thought “in terms of ecological communities or webs”, or at least not consciously. Glen A. Love suggests that Hemingway’s evolution in regard to nature seems to indicate he would have written more obviously about environmentalism, had he still been alive in the 1960s:

The right relationships between self and earth were of such crucial importance to Hemingway - and to those readers who, like me, have been deeply influenced by his depictions of the individual in nature - that it seems likely that they would have continued to engross him, had his life and career carried forward into the environmental awareness of the late 1960s and beyond. (133-134)

This speculation establishes the importance of the environment, and especially of natural spaces, in Hemingway’s fiction. Both Beegel and Love seem to refer to the environment only in the natural sense - as in, excluding the “human-built” (Buell 3).

Drawing from these observations, this fourth chapter will compare discourses on the environment in Rolfe’s *DPOW*, Forster’s *AS*, Wharton’s *GM* and Hemingway’s *ARIT*. By environment, I refer to “the entirety of the physical and nonphysical conditions in which humans, animals, and characters live and that influence their behavior, choices, and decisions; it may consist of natural entities (plants, weather) as well as human-made ones (buildings, roads, social conventions)” (Melanie Dawson and Haytock 89), therefore following Buell’s definition that the environment is both “natural” and “human-built” because the “human transformations of physical nature have made the two realms increasingly indistinguishable” (3), particularly in Venice. As this dissertation has been

focusing on a very specific environment and its impacts on writers and literary imagination, I will be mainly using the term environmental instead of ecological.

As *DPOW* and *ARIT* entirely take place in Venice, they will be examined in the same section focusing on the environment and Venice. *AS* and *GM* will be discussed in the second section of the chapter and with a broader environmental lens. Both fictions mention the relation between the environment and the characters, not only in Northern Italy but in relation to another country which represents home; respectively, France in Wharton's novel and England in Forster's fragment. Therefore, this chapter will explore how the Venetian, and Northern Italian environments are represented, and whether Venice in particular only spark ideas of death and danger, thus corroborating Iovino's claim that "landscapes of crisis are also powerfully interlaced with landscapes of imagination" (3).

Part One: The Venetian Environment in Rolfe's *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* and Hemingway's *Across the River and Into the Trees*

"Com'era, dov'era" in *DPOW*

Belonging to the Environment

Venice takes on different meanings in *DPOW*, as its main character Crabbe associates it interchangeably with pleasure, creativity, poverty, pain and death. As Pemble puts it: "Venice enhanced the extremes of Rolfe's divided psyche" (34). The narrator pays close attention to the environmental surroundings of the city, and in particular to the very harsh weather conditions, especially as the novel takes place during winter time: "The weather was horrible: a gusty south wind blew, laden with the tepid stench of African enormities: rain poured incessantly" (4). The reference to "African enormities" reveals Rolfe's obsession with race and indicates how in his imagination, the African continent feels like a threat, meeting ideas of imperialism and colonialism expressed previously. Often, the landscape is associated with danger because of its extreme wind and torrential rain, which

affects Crabbe directly as he moves around in his boat: “But, meanwhile, in the steady pouring rain and the warm gusts from southward, he anchored at a fair distance from the shore. It was not an ideally safe anchorage” (4). It is after a violent tempest that he meets Zildo/a. The narrator emphasises the dangerous aspect of the city by blending realistic and monstrous descriptions:

All the shore-lights in sight went out, as though blown by a gust. Silence heavily fell. He stood, alone, in impenetrable obscurity, waiting. The rain stopped, as though turned off at a tap. He counted his heart-beats. Some enormous mouth beneath the whole world seemed to suck at him. (Rolfe 5)

Rolfe creates an uncanny atmosphere here rather than a realistic description, capturing the difficulty to write about Venice. The comparisons and metaphors to objects and body parts such as “a tap” and “a mouth” convey the sense of a relentless outpouring. And yet, by being unrelated to natural elements, these comparisons create confusion and horror and leave the reader questioning the narrator’s reliability.

Despite the dangers encountered, Crabbe somehow manages to manoeuvre his way around the city, although he is not from Venice. Similarly to Cantwell in *ARIT*, he asserts statements about how one should live in Venice: “He rowed inshore; and moored the bark to her own oar stuck in the mud, as one does on the Venetian lagoon” (8). Crabbe also refers to the inhabitants of Venice as Venetians, never as Italians. There is a clear sense of pride resulting from him behaving like a Venetian, according to his standards. Crabbe consequently prides himself on how he eats: “polenta and cheese” (16, 43) polenta being a typical Venetian meal, and on how little comfort he needs, unlike his fellow British citizens. He also shows his knowledge not only of Italian but of the Venetian dialect: “he found that he had tipped the hooker of the gondola a halfpenny (‘xinqe xentesimi’) instead of two-fifths of a halfpenny (‘do schei’ in Venetian)” (41). When he stays in a hotel for a few

nights, he refuses to benefit from the same comfort as the other people staying in the hotel, most likely because he wants to differentiate himself from other tourists:

The plump little proprietor feared that he would be cold. ‘Nonsense,’ Crabbe snapped, ‘we shall be out all day, and only use the rooms for sleeping; and we shall sleep with wide windows: so just give us four blankets apiece, and a couple of hot-water bottles in each bed every evening at 20 o’clock punctually; and I don’t want to hear any more about pulmonitis. (Rolfe 50-51)

Neither the harsh weather nor the possible illness seems to scare Crabbe. Comfort here is seen as a luxury that proves whether you are a tourist or a resident. This corresponds with Paul Fussell’s suggestion that degrees of discomfort provides an index for distinguishing between the explorer, the traveller and the tourist. According to him, the main difference between the explorer and the tourist is that: “the explorer moves toward the risks of the formless and the unknown, the tourist moves toward the security of pure cliché” (49). The traveller finds itself in between these two categories, but the main difference between a traveller and a tourist is the notion of pain:

But travel is work. Etymologically a traveler is one who suffers travail, a word deriving in its turn from Latin tripallium, a torture instrument consisting of three stakes designed to rack the body. Before the development of tourism, travel was conceived to be like study, and its fruits were considered to be the adornment of the mind and the formation of the judgement. (49)

Tourists seek leisure, travellers pain. Travellers will therefore distance themselves from tourists as they consider themselves to be “superior by reason of intellect, education, and spirit” (50). In light of this definition, Crabbe in *DPOW* belongs to the traveller category, as he relentlessly shows his knowledge of the Venetian language and culture to prove his superiority over tourists. One could argue that in addition to pain, another

difference between a tourist and a traveller is transgression: travellers like Crabbe see themselves as transgressive, as they think they contradict what is expected from them, while tourists see themselves as normative by following norms, “security” (Fussell 49) and guidebooks. And yet, the main difference between them is the fact that travellers are negatively preoccupied with tourists, while tourists accept their foreign status fully. This competition among foreigners visiting a country is not only based on the status of visitors, but also on international rivalry:

Victorians and Edwardians who observed the behavior of tourists abroad realised that modern facilities for travel were increasing contact in the quantitative, but not in the qualitative sense. More people visited foreign countries; but there was no evidence of more understanding and less suspicion between nations. In fact it seemed that national self-consciousness and jealousy were enhanced, rather than diminished, as a result. (Pemble 260)

The rivalry between nations, in particular between British and German citizens, but also between British and Italian people, is one of Rolfe’s main themes. Despite craving Venetian validation, Rolfe remains attached to his British imperial complex of superiority. Such an idea is also present in the writer’s previous novel *Hadrian the Seventh*: “Italy was not the first in the heart of Hadrian. She was third. He served Her, because He saw Her instant need. The second of his loved lands did not know Herself to be in need of Him: hence, He offered Her no more than courtesy. He did not want America to tell Him not to monkey with the buzz-saw. And England was first” (249). Crabbe expresses disdain for Venetians, who take advantage of the credulity of non-Venetians: “He could not sit meekly while foreigners, specially such childish ones as Venetians, nourished evil notions of the English nation” (42). And yet, when one of his fellow citizen is greedy with other gondeliori, he feels he has to make up for it:

And, because the creature treated so many amiable gondolieri as though they were the basest slaves, half-starving and quarter-paying them, leaving vile impressions as well as debts of honour behind him, Crabbe felt bound in honour to extend his holiday, and pay, and otherwise do what he could do to remove the abominable stigma from his race. (Rolfe 41)

Similarly to Venice, Crabbe's sense of identity makes several realities coexist. He feels he has to be redeemed for the "vile" behaviour of a British man to avoid derogatory generalisation on Englishmen, but he also tries to distance himself from English tourists. Crabbe ends up behaving in a very imperial manner in his quest to "remove the abominable stigma from his race":

So he bought a pupparin and a barcheta-a-vele while his topo was being built at Castello, employed half a dozen gondolieri, fraternized with them, fed them and paid them munificently, and explored the whole lagoon. And then, in late autumn, he left the pupparin at a squero to be repainted and stored, sold the barcheta, and fled away in his new topo to cultivate the garden of his soul in the loneliness of sea and sky, amid the sweet salt air, where the winds were as a quire of singers. (Rolfe 42)

By being able to buy two types of small boats (a "pupparin" and a "barcheta," usually spelled barchetta) and to pay six gondolieri, Crabbe asserts his financial superiority over other Venetian gondolieri. Although the passage insists on Crabbe's benevolence towards the gondolieri ("paid them munificently"), it also reveals the mechanisms of British imperialism and more generally of colonisation. Indeed, Crabbe believes he has to support the Italian boatmen because of his Englishness. Yet, him buying two boats and employing several boatmen seems surprising as it contradicts the idea that he lives frugally, and points out to the idea that he owns more than he wants to admit. It also seems contradictory that

Crabbe criticises Englishmen for making money in Venice when he makes money from the city by working there and having employees.

Similar ideas of imperialism and ambivalence towards Englishmen are expressed in Rolfe's short-story "An Ossuary of the North Lagoon" (1913). In this short-story, the narrator distances himself from his fellow citizens openly again: "On the chart, my island ossuary (which is unknown by all the Englishmen I ever met in Venice) is most distinctly denominated Santariano" (27); "I fancy that I am the only Englishman in Venice who never, by any chance, permits his gondolieri to dictate his course for him" (23). The main character of the story finds human remains on an island close to Venice, and eventually learns from a local that the skeletons were German soldiers who tried to invade Venice. This short-story encapsulates Rolfe's fabric of anti-German discourse and disapproval for those who unsuccessfully attempted to colonise Venice throughout the centuries.

Venice is therefore associated with intricate notions of belonging and danger. And yet, the narrator also embraces the environment in a pastoral way: "He was for fresh air, and open skies, and lovely loneliness. He wished and intended himself to breathe cleanly and freely, to hear no bestially blatant voices, to sleep, to think, all in the absolute liberty of wide horizons" (3). This passage in particular highlights Crabbe's alignment with nature, as well as how he adapts his days according to it, distancing himself from a human centred approach. Even the narrator's writing process follows the rhythm of nature:

Have you ever considered, o most affable reader, Nature's slow, slow, sure process of making a flower, her long preparation of the ground, fallowing, manuring, digging, harrowing, irrigating it, setting it and its circumstances in order, before the sown seed will peep out, and shoot to growth and leaf and bloom and flower? I ask, in case your perspicacity has not perceived that I follow Nature's method here. (Rolfe 91)

This apostrophe is typical of Rolfe's writing style - full of details, "artificial structures and frames, in the use of an elaborate, overly refined kind of language" (Perosa 116). By emphasising the demanding aspects of "making a flower," Rolfe both compares his creative process to that of nature but also positions nature as its main inspiration. Going back to the previous citation, not only does nature answer his physical needs, it also answers his spiritual needs ("to sleep, to think"). Nature is seen as a cure for the narrator, who favours its company instead of human company: "The cure which he had proposed to himself for his soul's acidity had been three months or four months' abstention from human society in favour of Mother Nature's" (15). The mention of the soul reveals the narrator's classical values. Spirituality is in fact often referenced by the narrator, who often blends the natural and the cosmic world, in a similar fashion with movements from the early twentieth century such as the Cosmic Movement, for which art is "spiritually uplifting" and can "reveal the hidden divine realms" (Boaz Huss 103):

Have you, o most affable reader, ever dissected a crab? If not, pray do so at once, if possible, plunging him first into boiling water to boil for five whole minutes and evitate unnecessary barbarity . . . Under his shell, in fact, your crab is as soft as butter, and just one labyrinthine mass of the most sensitive of nerves. From which pleasing experiment you should learn to be as merciful as God to all poor sinners born between the twenty-first of June and the twenty-fourth of July: for they are born under the constellation Cancer; and their nature is the nature of a crab. They are the cleverest, tenderest, unhappiest, most dreadful of all men. (Rolfe 11-12)

In this passage, Rolfe goes from analysing a boiled crab to comparing crabs to people born under the Cancer constellation, which means crab in Latin, and represented as such in astrology. Such an obsession with the cancer zodiac sign is also present in *Hadrian the Seventh*: "Thank the Lord I'm English, born under Cancer, tenacious, slow and sure.

Naturally I persist” (31) says priest George Arthur Rose. It is also visible in a later passage of *DPOW*:

Clever men and dreadful men and clever dreadful men are not invariably unhappy: but crab-men are all three - excepting on a sole condition. That condition is their union with a Saturnian, born between the twentieth of December and the twenty-first of January, who is their diametrical opposite and complement, soft outside, hard within. Thus are things blended and balanced - at least, as far as we know. (Rolfe 15)

By mentioning people “born between the twentieth of December and the twenty-first of January”, Rolfe refers here to another astrological sign, that of the Capricorn. Said to be the exact opposite of Cancers in terms of personality (“soft outside, hard within”), Rolfe exemplifies here the need for different people to achieve balance. With the neologism “crab-men”, the narrator therefore connects animal and human lives, making one the reflection of the other, as he compares the inside of a crab with the personality of Cancer people - “soft” and “sensitive.” This reference to crabs explains the main protagonist’s name, Crabbe, who “discovers the natural habitat of the Venetian lagoon and the labyrinthine city into which to retreat, according to the inborn habit of the crab” (Perosa 114), but could also be read through a biographical lens, according to Brian Fothergill: “Underneath the outside appearance of a hard, almost bitter, reserve, and the aggressive manner . . . Rolfe strikes one as a deeply emotional man who thoroughly feared and distrusted emotion” (47). Lodge observes how Rolfe’s use of animal imagery expresses his psyche:

But Rolfe’s use of zoological imagery is most elaborate and most interesting in his semi-autobiographical trilogy comprising *Hadrian the Seventh*, *Nicholas Crabbe*, and *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*. In these novels Rolfe projected his experiences, obsessions, dreams and philosophy in the form of a public and a private myth. *Hadrian*

the Seventh embodies the public myth; *Nicholas Crabbe* and *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* the private myth. The controlling image is the cat in the former case, the crab in the latter. (70)

In addition to revealing “the private myth,” there is another possible interpretation to the novel’s abundance of crabs and cancers, which relates to illness. Sontag reminds us of the etymology of cancer, and identifies similarities between the descriptions of tuberculosis and cancer:

The earliest literal definition of cancer is a growth, lump, or protuberance, and the disease’s name — from the Greek *karkinos* and the Latin *cancer*, both meaning crab—was inspired, according to Galen, by the resemblance of an external tumor’s swollen veins to a crab’s legs; not, as many people think, because a metastatic disease crawls or creeps like a crab. But etymology indicates that tuberculosis was also once considered a type of abnormal extrusion: the word tuberculosis—from the Latin *tuberculum*, the diminutive of *tuber*, bump, swelling—means a morbid swelling, protuberance, projection, or growth. (10)

While there is no clear mention of diseases in *DPOW*, the multiple references to crabs, cancer and “crab-men” (Rolfe 39) might suggest the spreading of a disease, especially given Venice’s inhospitable and very humid environment. Sontag identifies diseases such as tuberculosis predominantly during the 18th and 19th centuries, and nowadays cancer, as partially caused by “repressed feelings [that] were sexual” (22). As mentioned previously, Champagne also connects Venice’s history with the figure of the sick homosexual in the 19th century, and associates the city with a sick body in a slow state of decay. While Champagne analyses Mann’s *Death in Venice*, the idea that Venice’s decadence makes it the perfect location for writings about “infected” characters can also be applied to *DPOW*. The

figures of the crab and of cancer convey the idea of an invisible contamination process, a metaphor for Crabbe's growing queer desire for Zildo/a.

Porous Boundaries

Porosity is visible in the title of *DPOW*, but also in the way the environment and the characters' identities are blurred. Crabbe's permanent experience of different realities mirrors the precarious state of Venice. For instance, his fragile mental state brings moments of extreme admiration and trust for someone: "Consider people like the Wardens, chorus-masters of resident aliens in Venice - benign gods had shewn him their notion of treatment due to disaster" quickly followed by paranoia and distrust for the same person: "They behaved like bullocks who stamp on the fallen" (91). Crabbe is also torn between living among wealthy people or in extreme poverty: "'Lady Pash - God knows why - asked me to her party. I said I couldn't come because I hadn't the proper clothes'" (92). He also has a very high opinion of himself: "Only Domeniddio knows why so many proposers of propositions floated along by Crabbe his crevice. My own idea is that they couldn't help themselves. He was the most frantically interesting man alive" (38). This opinion does not match his recognition as a writer, nor the multiple lawsuits he takes on because of dishonest coworkers: "His lawsuit came on; and of course he lost it, owing to his solicitors' portentous imbecility in representing him as a mere hack whose brains anyone can plunder with impunity, and in omitting to call for production in court of the documents reciting and confirming terms of contract" (36). Similarly to Rolfe's exchanges with his publishers during the writing of the novel, Crabbe's inability to question his actions reveals his porous mental state. The blurring of the characters' identities is perhaps even more visible with Zildo/a, who is exclusively compared to non-human elements by Crabbe:

He convicted himself of error in one particular, at least: He had been guilty of platitudinarianism in his mental description of his guest, comparing her with ivory and

honey and milk and coral, pretty enough things in their place, but inanimate, and (therefore) unjustified here. To spatter with unjust epithets was, for a writer of his exacting taste, the sin unpardonable: for it signified that the user had let himself become too indolent for precise thinking. To what, then, should he liken her? Ivory, honey, milk, coral, forsooth! (Rolfe 10)

Crabbe's struggle with giving a specific description of Zildo/a, as shown with his use of the neologism "platitudinarianism," most likely coming from platitude, which means a trivial matter. Therefore, he finds it easier to compare them to "inanimate" objects such as "ivory", "honey," "milk" and "coral" - all objects traditionally associated with femininity, sweetness, racial whiteness and passivity, in an attempt to express his desire for Zildo/a. The question "To what, then, should he liken her?" reveals Crabbe's impossibility to think of his desire in other terms. Sedgwick's queer reading of Melville's *Billy Budd* analyses the idea of the natural. By observing that one of the characters, Claggart, is referred to as "natural depravity," Sedgwick suggests that it could mean two things: "something that is depraved against nature" or "something whose proper nature is to be depraved" (95). As a result: "all the definition accomplishes here is to carry the damning ethical sanctions already accumulated into a new semantic field, that of nature and the contra naturam—a field already entangled for centuries with proto-forms of the struggles around homosexual definition" (Sedgwick 95). Through the many references to the environment, Rolfe certainly plays with ideas of nature and "contra naturam." Crabbe's desire is therefore not a deprivation against nature, nor in need to be depraved, but is merely seen as a part of nature. He continues his efforts to describe Zildo/a a few lines later:

She was like a flower. She was like a flower fragrant in vigorous serenity. She was like those marvellous Ghent-azaleas on the pleasaunce of Uskvale. In early summer, they offered huge tables of blossom quite comparable with her flesh, firm blossoming tables

blooming with soft petals which could go black with decay on being touched or taken,
soft pure petals flushing in the sun like the rich, sweet, wholesome flesh of a maid.

(Rolfe 11)

Here again, Zildo/a is compared to a non-human being: a pink flower, also traditionally associated with femininity. Through the direct comparison of Zildo/a's flesh to flower petals, Crabbe's desire to deflower her becomes apparent. The flower also becomes a metaphor for Zildo/a's youthful appearance, visible through adjectives such as "firm" and "soft." The mention of "maid" adds to the idea that Zilda's youth sexually excites Crabbe. The way in which Zilda, referred to as a woman here, is simultaneously compared to natural elements and sexualised reveals the mingling of desire and the environment. Yet Crabbe goes beyond this idea of associating femininity with nature as he proceeds to pass from the pronoun she/her to the pronoun he/him when describing Zildo/a: "He laid the boy flat" (297) the boy being Zildo, to: "She looked straight into his eyes. What she saw sent her right arm shyly round him" (298). To quote from Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, nature thus becomes a site of "resistance and exploration" (22) for Rolfe, where the "unremitting emphasis in queer theoretical work on fluidity, uber-inclusivity, indeterminacy, indefinability, unknowability, the preposterous, impossibility, unthinkability, unintelligibility, meaninglessness and that which is unrepresentable [as] an attempt to undo normative entanglements and fashion alternative imaginaries" (Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird 4). Undoing normative entanglements is precisely what the novel does as it simultaneously pushes the boundaries of gender, sexuality, human and non-human by letting fluidity and porosity pervade the novel. A similar idea is expressed by Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson:

Gay men, lesbians, and others identified as "against nature" have historically used ideas of nature, natural spaces, and ecological practices as sites of resistance and exploration.

In literature alone, one can find numerous examples of authors who have self-consciously deployed dominant nature discourses in the service of queer possibilities, who have brought conventions of nature writing to celebrate sexual diversity, who have taken dominant narratives of nature to task to create space for non-heterosexual possibilities, and who have written in new ways to reflect their views of the commingling of queer and ecological possibilities. (22-23)

Rural spaces were long seen as heterosexual and masculine, while queer spaces were often reduced to urban spaces, especially in the mid to late nineteenth century. Queering natural spaces is therefore an act of resistance but also an opening of possibilities, and makes us reconsider Rolfe's novel as an innovative example of queer ecology. As Nicole Seymour put it: "if even mainstream environmentalist groups ask us to put the ecosystem ahead of individual human desires, might environmentalism as an impulse then be queer at its very core?" (6). This deconstruction of hierarchy between the human and the non-human has been previously analysed in Rolfe's novel, which further positions the writer as ecologically conscious. Additionally, *DPOW* is an example of how the environment becomes part of the body, and the body a part of the environment: "Young Venice has as superb a physique as can be found anywhere" (Rolfe 94). Iovino elaborates on the corporalisation of the environment, and in particular of Venice:

There is a subtle but clear interdependence between the city and the bodies that inhabit it. This interdependence appears in the novel as a veiled mirroring game, in which Venice, like the protagonists' bodies, is at once bloom and withering, youth and decline. And, like in the city, these aspects are interlaced also in those very bodies. Venice's body is indeed Aschenbach's body, an elegant but also aging, decaying, unquiet, embellished body—a dirty, sweating, sublimely dying artist's body. But Venice's body is also Tadzio's body, an ineffably beautiful young body in which, however, the germ of

decay resides for the very fact that this is a living body, a biologically determined *matter*. The only possibility for this body to stay beautiful would be to have its *form* frozen in time, to die. (16)

While Iovino discusses here the main characters of Mann's *Death in Venice*, there are similarities with *DPOW*. Venice, too, is seen as a sensual city for Crabbe, mirroring his desire for Zildo/a, but also his mental fragility. Moreover, the dichotomy between the characters' age, one embodying "youth" and the other "decline," is also present in *DPOW* and emphasised many times by Crabbe himself. From the other side of the Atlantic, Hemingway's *ARIT* equally centres on porous and corporal relations between the city and the characters. Through the exploration of environmental decay and its impact on the characters, Hemingway's novel inscribed itself in the tradition of *Death in Venice* and *DPOW*.

"I Know the Place Very Well": *ARIT* and the Environment

Masculinity and the Environment

According to Love, "Nature exists in Hemingway's work and life primarily as a backdrop for aggressive and destructive individualism, the same individualism which, written large, has authored ecological devastation and poisoned the organic origins of the contemporary society that Hemingway turned to nature to escape" (123). Kevin Maier nuances the popular trope expressed by Love that hunting, for Hemingway, "serves as a key rhetorical device to signal his desire to conquer the natural world" (4):

Although many of us teach 'Big Two-hearted River' and *The Old Man and the Sea* in our surveys of environmental literature, my hunch is that when we think of Hemingway, we do not think of overtly environmental sentiments like those expressed in these two passages. Rather, I suspect that the popular images come to mind much more readily.

We think, that is, of ‘Papa’ - the hyper-masculine, marlin-chasing, big-game hunting man of action. (Maier 3)

By “popular images” Maier refers to what was discussed in Chapter One about Hemingway’s public figure, namely that he enjoyed women and the environment recklessly. Such an interpretation is reminiscent of Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson’s claim that “since the early twentieth century, wild spaces have been understood and organized in a way that presents nature — and its personal domination in the guise of hunting, fishing, climbing, and other outdoor activities — as a site for the enactment of a specific heteromascularity” (3). And yet, this interpretation oversimplifies Hemingway’s writings and his relation with nature. The second trope within environmental and Hemingway studies is that the writer grew more respectful of nature as he got older, which was visible in him partaking in less fishing and hunting, but neither activities are less present in Hemingway’s later writings. *ARIT* begins and ends with a duck hunting scene in the Venetian lagoon:

He watched the sky lightening beyond the long point of marsh, and turning in the sunken barrel, he looked out across the frozen lagoon, and the marsh, and saw the snow-covered mountains a long way off. Low as he was, no foothills showed, and the mountains rose abruptly from the plain. As he looked toward the mountains he could feel a breeze on his face and he knew, then, the wind would come for here, rising with the sun, and that some birds would surely come flying in from the sea when the wind disturbed them. (Hemingway 5)

This detailed description shows an awareness of the narrator’s surroundings and an understanding of how humans and wildlife impact each other (“he knew, then, the wind would come for here, rising with the sun, and that some birds would surely come flying in from the sea when the wind disturbed them”), therefore revealing that environmental awareness and appreciation for fishing and hunting are reconcilable. Maier supports this

idea by comparing Hemingway's depiction of his first safari in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (1936) to a later account in 1953-54 from *Under Kilimanjaro*:

Hemingway attempts to escape the problems of promoting the well-being of animals by directly adopting local subsistence patterns. This is marked most clearly when we consider his activities on the second safari in relation to the first. Where he ate shipped food on his first safari, for example, Hemingway eats locally grown vegetables on his return trip to Africa . . . (14)

Hemingway's development of a more local environmental awareness, even if contradictory at times, leads Maier to conclude that: "I would like to suggest that what emerges in the late work is not an anti-hunting Hemingway, nor an animal-loving Hemingway. What we get, instead, is what we might call an ethical Hemingway" (8). By "ethical" Maier signifies that the writer attempted to be more responsible in his use of the environment; this does not mean he stopped using its resources. This meets Beegel's now familiar claim that "Hemingway's knowledge as a naturalist grew exponentially over the course of his lifetime, he did not think in terms of ecological communities or webs" (242). This idea is present in another duck-hunting scene in *ARIT*:

His head low, he swung the gun on a long slant, down, well and ahead of the second duck, then without looking at the result of his shot he raised the gun smoothly, up, up ahead and to the left of the other duck that was climbing to the left and as he pulled, saw it fold in flight and drop among the decoys in the broken ice. He looked to his right and saw the first duck a black patch on the same ice. He knew he had shot carefully on the first duck, far to the right of where the boat was and on the second, high out and to the left, letting the duck climb far up and to the left to be sure the boat was out of any line of fire. It was a lovely double, shot exactly as he should have shot, with complete

consideration and respect for the position of the boat and he felt very good as he reloaded. (Hemingway 4)

The vocabulary of precaution (“smoothly”; “carefully”; “consideration” and “respect”) in this extract corroborates Maier’s previous statement: Cantwell enjoys shooting, but he enjoys shooting responsibly. A few pages later, Cantwell explains that duck-shooting is a nostalgic practice for him: ““Want to go on a duck shoot down in the marshes at the mouth of the Tagliamento? Wonderful shoot. Real ducks. Mallard, pin-tail, widgeon. Some geese. Just as good as at home when we were kids”” (7). From this extract, it seems that the Colonel derives more pleasure from the idea of hunting than from the practice itself. As Love mentioned: “The great power of much of his work arises from the tensions between the competing pulls of defiant individualism and the abiding earth” (133). Such tensions are also visible in the last duck-hunting scenes of the novel:

A pair of pin-tails came, suddenly, from nowhere, slanting down fast in a dive no airplane ever made, and the Colonel heard their feathered trajectory and swung and killed the drake. He lay on the ice, hitting it as solid as a duck can hit ice, and, before he was down, the Colonel had killed his mate, who was climbing, long-necked and fast. She fell alongside the drake.

So it is murder, the Colonel thought. And what isn’t nowadays? But, boy, you can still shoot.

Boy, hell, he thought. You beat-up old bastard. But look at them come now. (Hemingway 200)

This scene highlights the Colonel’s ambivalent feelings towards hunting, emphasised by the coordinating conjunction “but”. On one hand, he undeniably enjoys it (“But look at them come now”) and is proud for being a skilled hunter (“boy, you can still shoot”). On the other hand, the mention of “murder” reveals the unnecessary aspect of the hunt, while the short

sentence “she fell alongside the drake” dramatises the direct impact of hunting. In this scene, Richard allows himself to shoot without limits because he knows it is his last hunting trip.

Ecofeminist Discourses

Despite a spark of interest in the last fifteen years (Tyler, Beegel), ecofeminism remains a lesser subject of interest within Hemingway’s scholarship, perhaps because of the writer’s ambivalence on the subject. Yet, his fiction is centred around women and nature in crisis, which makes us question whether he “was more eco-feminist in his sympathies than his readers have yet acknowledged” (Hemingway 70). But what does an ecofeminist analysis add to *ARIT*?

In the novel, Venice is as important as Renata, the main female figure of the novel. This idea meets the definition of ecofeminism expressed by Alice Curry, which is: “‘feminised’ peoples and spatialities” (1). As established in Chapter One, feminising Italy and in particular Venice comes from a long literary tradition, which explains why Venice is often referred to as a ‘she.’ Cirino expresses a similar interpretation: “When Cantwell aligns himself with Torcello, then, he inserts himself in Venice’s classical symbolic system as the masculine admirer of the feminine city, and the embodiment of that city, Renata” (154). Robert E. Fleming adds to this idea: “It is appropriate that the encounter takes place in Venice, for Cantwell’s love affair with that city predates his metaphor-laden love affair with Renata by nearly thirty years” (2). In other words, Venice is personified by Renata, who is not supposed to be seen as a relatable character but as a symbolic one. The symbolic nature of her name (reborn) is also reminiscent of Venice’s surname, La Serenissima, therefore further connecting the two.

Venice is always associated with wind by Richard. He connects the wind with the city’s architecture, as if one enhanced the other: “The Colonel and the driver walked over to

the Venice side of the road and looked across the lagoon that was whipped by the strong, cold wind from the mountains that sharpened all the outlines of buildings so that they were geometrically clear” (Hemingway 20). Richard also repeatedly associates the city with the adjective “wind-swept”: “He could see the big black hitching post for the gondolas and the late afternoon winter light on the wind-swept water” (39); “There was still sunlight on the opposite side of the Square but the gondoliers preferred to be sheltered from the cold wind by lounging in the lee of the Gritti, than to use the last remaining heat of the sun on the wind-swept side of the Square” (55); “they walked into the Piazzetta and then across the great, cold, wind-swept square” (114). Richard then proceeds to associate Renata with the wind too, in a rather human-centred approach: “Then she came into the room, shining in her youth and tall and striding beauty, and the carelessness the wind had made of her hair” (57); “The wind was in their backs and it blew the girl’s hair forward. The wind parted her hair in the back and blew it forward about her face” (72). When she leaves, the wind reminds Richard of her, indicating that she is always metaphorically with him: “Then she was gone and the Colonel was alone, with the worn pavement, the wind, which still held in the north, and the shadows from where a light went on” (115). By equally describing Renata and Venice, Richard reveals that he does not make a distinction between the two.

As discussed previously, the comparison with the wind also emphasises Renata’s free-spiritedness, as well as the idea that she does not care about her looks, an idea that she gives voice to a few chapters later: “‘The mirror bores me,’ she said” (84). Even when she combs her hair, it is not by coquetry but by necessity: “She was not combing it for vanity, nor to do to the Colonel what she knew it could and would do. She was combing it with difficulty and without respect, and, since it was very heavy hair and as alive as the hair of peasants, or the hair of the beauties of the great nobility, it was resistant to the comb” (79). While Hemingway’s fascination for hair and the sexual connotation he attaches to it is

visible here²⁹ (“what she knew it could and would do”), what transpires in this passage is the association between ruralness and Renata (“peasants” ; “heavy”; “resistant”). In another passage, however, Richard praises her simplicity. Renata does not wear perfume but still smells nice (116); she also does not obey to fashion dictates: “I see her in the street with the lovely long-legged stride and the wind doing anything it wants to her hair, and her true breasts under the sweater, and then I see the nights in Texas with the pin curls; tight and subjected to metallic instruments” (126-127). Renata differentiates herself from other women by her simplicity and closeness to nature, which makes her superior in Richard’s eyes: “her natural beauty out-matches the American girl’s artificial beauty” (Keener 55).

As mentioned by Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, “there is an ongoing relationship between sex and nature that exists institutionally, discursively, scientifically, spatially, politically, poetically, and ethically, and it is our task to interrogate that relationship in order to arrive at a more nuanced and effective sexual and environmental understanding” (4-5). This interconnection of sex and nature is visible in the sexual scene between the two characters, as Renata’s crotch is compared to an island, first implicitly: “The wind was very cold and lashed their faces but under the blanket there was no wind nor nothing; only his ruined hand that searched for the island in the great river with the high steep banks” (108), and then more explicitly: “He kissed her then and and he searched for the island, finding it and losing it, and then finding it for good” (108). Renata makes the sexual nature of the scene clear by mentioning a few lines later: “‘Please don’t move,’ the girl said. ‘Then move a great amount’” (108). Similarly to previous natural wind metaphor, islands and rivers become the characters’ way of expressing their sexual desires: “‘Where is the island now and in what river?’” says Richard, to which Renata answers: “‘You are making the discovery. I am only the unknown country’” (110). The metaphor of the land

²⁹ For more on Hemingway’s fetishisms, see *Hemingway’s Fetishism* by Eby (1998) and *Ernest Hemingway: Machismo and Masochism* by Fantina (2006).

reveals the colonising and exploitation of Renata's body by Richard. Her emphasis on the "unknown" aspect of it suggests that she might be a maiden, a statement Richard disagrees with: "'Not too unknown', the Colonel said" (110). In any case, by referring to an "island" in that context, Richard shows again that Renata and Venice are one entity.

Catherine Roach underscores how often "nature is perceived as female, as a virgin resource to be exploited or raped" (46). There is no mention of Renata being a virgin, but it is possible as she is underaged, and referred to as Richard's "daughter." Thus, Richard's motives could be questioned, as he could be using Renata for purely selfish purposes. His tourist status could also be interpreted as a man taking advantage of a significantly younger woman for a short period of time, which is reminiscent of Iovino's statement that tourism in Venice exploits the resources of the city. This connects to Curry's definition of ecofeminism as "comparable mechanisms of exploitation that affect women and the environment" (1). Additionally, there are often connections between "how one treats women, people of color, and the underclass on one hand, and how one treats the nonhuman natural environment on the other" (Karen J. Warren 31). Based on the Colonel's white supremacist tendencies mentioned before, it seems reasonable to suggest that the exploitative mechanisms at play between Renata and the Colonel echo those present in Venice.

Additionally, their relationship reveals power dynamics on many levels. Although much younger than him, Renata seems to exert more power than Richard. Her good health drastically clashes with the Colonel's ailments. Their health difference is visible by the fact Renata sleeps very well, which is a sign of good-health, whereas Richard, constantly in pain, does not. Renata is aware of this and seems to enjoy it as she acts as Richard's caretaker (65). She also has beauty privilege, being described several times as beautiful without the use of artifice (126-127), which prompts a Dorian Gray impulse in Richard, as he orders a portrait of her to capture her beauty (80). Her youth and health make her more

powerful than Richard, who feels inadequate in front of her: “Then he looked at his great beauty, with her strange, dark, grown-up child’s face that broke his heart” (166). Finally, and perhaps more importantly, Renata possesses financial and social privilege, as she comes from a wealthy Venetian family, unlike the Colonel. He repeatedly shows how uncomfortable he is by the financial inequality of their relationship:

‘Is there anything you really want? I could get it in the morning. Cipriani would loan me the money.’

‘No,’ she said. ‘I do not want anything but I notice that you never give me presents.’

‘You are much richer than I am. I bring you small things from the PX and I buy you drinks and meals.’

‘And take me in gondolas and to lovely places in the country.’

‘I never thought you wanted presents of hard stones.’ (Hemingway 72)

By offering her gifts, but immediately telling her he cannot afford them, Richard shows his discomfort in their financial gap. This also echoes the now familiar idea that Richard goes against the traditional idea of wealthy foreigners tourists visiting Italy. As a result of his lack of money, Richard tries and shifts the power dynamics. He uses, for example, their age gap to portray himself as a wiser man whose numerous life experiences allow him not to be questioned: ““Can you tell me about that and why?”” asks Renata about Richard’s life decisions, to which Richard answers bluntly: ““No,’ the Colonel said. And that was the end of that” (67). He also uses their linguistic gap to assert his paternalism: ““I must learn to use the term properly.’ ‘Don’t use it,’ the Colonel says” (69). These two exchanges reveal that Richard enjoys the impact he has on Renata, especially cultural: ““But you will never see trees, Daughter, until we go to America” (145). Renata, however, encourages him to do so (“I am still quite uneducated” 145), therefore positioning herself as Richard’s student. Both characters mutually benefit from this relationship. Thus, it would be unfair to picture Richard as a misogynistic

villain given that Renata knows their relationship is doomed. She was not played or exploited by Richard as he communicated his health state, and was always transparent about his financial situation. The two characters knew that their relationship would not last, which is probably why their relationship happened in the first place. Besides, there is no doubt Renata also had her selfish motives for this relationship, as she mentions to Richard: ““That is the good thing about you going to die that you can’t leave me”” (150). The novel speaks to the possibility of ecofeminism by celebrating ephemerality and death in both the city and the Colonel’s relationship.

Tourism Damage and the Picturesque

As mentioned before, although not an ecologist, Hemingway was particularly aware of the impact of tourism on the environment, contends Andrew Bishop: “I certainly don’t want to argue that Hemingway was an ecologist, but I do want to concur with Susan Beegel that anyone who paid such extraordinarily close attention to nature as Hemingway did during the first half of the twentieth century would inevitably notice environmental damage” (48). Bishop discusses *The Sun Also Rises* but a similar comment could be applied to Venice in *ARIT*, as correlations between tourism and “environmental damage” are especially true in Venice. To some extent, Hemingway shared Ruskin’s idea that places are denatured because of tourism: “Hemingway was aware of the negative effects of tourism on local ecosystems. Given this awareness, it is only logical that Hemingway, who, of course, did a great deal of traveling himself, would seek some way of differentiating himself from the other tourists he encountered on his adventures abroad” (Bishop 4). By mentioning Hemingway’s awareness to “the negative effects of tourism”, Bishop builds here on Maier’s idea that Hemingway grew an understanding of local environmental issues throughout his life, which led him to travel in a more responsible manner.

Travelling in a way more respectful of local customs is also connected to Richard’s obsession of not being seen as a tourist. With his many travels around the world, it is fair to

say that Hemingway developed a sense of superiority towards other tourists. Hemingway shares with Rolfe the ability to stay somewhere with little comfort, especially during hunting or fishing trips, which meets the idea that travelling has to “rack the body” (Fussell 49). Outside of his gaming trips, however, Cantwell prefers comfort, as he stays at the Gritti Palace, like Hemingway did in the 1940s and 1950s:

The Colonel indicated the three story, rose colored, small, pleasant palace abutting on the Canal. It had been a dependent of the Grand Hotel - but now it was its own hotel and a very good one. It was probably the best hotel, if you did not wish to be fawned on, or fussed over, or over-flunkied, in a city of great hotels, and the Colonel loved it. (Hemingway 37)

The accumulation of similar adjectives conveying special treatment such as “fawned on,” “fussed over” and “over-flunkied” emphasises Cantwell’s disdain for being treated as a tourist. However, this clashes against the description of the high-end hotel, which is ideally situated, and where one would expect customers to be pampered. The Colonel is perhaps insinuating that in order to not feel like a tourist, and break from the “security of pure cliché” (Fussell 49), one needs to pay a high price. And yet, the Colonel is certainly not an explorer as he does not move “toward the risks of the formless and the unknown” (Fussell 49), but returns to familiar places and people.

One can ask whether Hemingway’s “ethical” (Maier 8) approach to tourism can cohabit with the quest for picturesque. In *ARIT*, the Colonel makes fun of this notion when he describes fishing boats in Venice: “It’s not that they are picturesque. The hell with picturesque. They are just damned beautiful” (25). Cantwell suggests here that looking for “picturesque” is a quest created by tourists who have a prefabricated, and most likely aesthetically pleasing conception, of what they are looking for when visiting a foreign country. Unlike the other American soldier who drives him around, Jackson, Richard is

familiar with the Italian culture and respects it: “Well, if he painted any pictures of that country up around there, with those sunset color rocks and the pines and the snow and all the pointed steeples -’ ‘Campaniles,’ the Colonel said. ‘Like that one ahead at Ceggia. It means bell tower’” (11). By distancing himself from picturesque and showing his knowledge of Italian culture, Richard shows once again his desire to not be seen as a tourist. Similarly to Wharton’s *GM*, Venice and Paris seem to compete with each other in Hemingway’s novel. A discourse about the picturesque is performed in the novel, as Renata asks Richard for picturesque details about his time in Paris: ““Please tell me some picturesque’” (154). As a Venetian, Venice does not impress her like Paris: ““Tell me something about Paris because I love to think of you and Paris in the week’” (154). After asking Richard if they can go to Paris, to which Richard answers ““Daughter, why don’t you lay off Paris?’” (154) Renata again states her adoration of Paris: ““But I’ve been in Paris, and I will go back there again, and I want to know. It is the loveliest city in the world, next to our own, and I want to know some things truly to take with me’” (154). The meaning of picturesque becomes less clearly associated with travelling but with vivid accounts of local experiences. As such, Renata asks the Colonel to give a “picturesque” description of wartime later on in the novel:

‘O.K.,’ the Colonel said. ‘I’ll tell you any God-damn thing you want to know.’

‘Just something picturesque. As bad or worse than in the illustrated papers.’

‘*Domenica del Corriere* or *Tribuna Illustrata*?’

‘Worse if possible.’

‘Kiss me first.’

She kissed him kind, and hard, and desperately, and the Colonel could not think about any fights or any picturesque or strange incidents.’ (Hemingway 155)

The Colonel's reluctance to talk about "something picturesque" is obvious in this scene, but more so because he does not want to talk about war. Renata's version of the picturesque differs from Clark's picturesque, which he associates with aestheticism. Yet, and similarly to Clark, she shows that searching for environmental picturesque can lead to political issues, because "a sustained concern with protecting the environment has often been associated with a simplistically conservative or sometimes nationalist politics, defending some place or way of life as an icon of a cultural identity or as an image of once traditional ways of life" (Clark 96). As such, the environment became an instrument for fascist Italy and Germany that "all had in common a search for sources of continuity, which would restore order and purpose to life and recreate a bygone and 'good' society" (Binde 762). Such a conservative vision of the environment is present in the novel, as Richard despises the changes that happened in Venice and its surroundings during his absence: "They were up on the causeway from Mestre to Venice now with the ugly Breda works that might have been Hammond, Indiana" (26), therefore indicating that the Colonel is not, in fact, indifferent to notions of picturesque.

Eco-anxiety and Solastalgia

Similarly to *A Farewell to Arms*, *ARIT* starts with a detailed description of the main characters' surroundings. Let us go back to both incipits previously mentioned in Chapter Two, but this time analyse the relationship with the environment in both novels:

In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels. Troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees. The trunks of the trees too	They started two hours before daylight, and at first, it was not necessary to break the ice across the canal as other boats had gone on ahead. In each boat, in the darkness, so you could not see, but only hear him, the poler stood in the stern, with his long oar. The shooter sat on a shooting stool fastened to the top of a box that contained his lunch and shells, and the shooter's two, or more, guns were propped against the load of
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were dusty and the leaves fell early that year and we saw the troops marching along the road and the dust rising and leaves, stirred by the breeze, falling and the soldiers marching and afterward the road bare and white except for the leaves. The plain was rich with crops; there were many orchards of fruit trees and beyond the plain the mountains were brown and bare. There was fighting in the mountains and at night we could see the flashes from the artillery. In the dark it was like summer lightning, but the nights were cool and there was not the feeling of a storm coming (Hemingway, <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> 3).	wooden decoys. Somewhere, in each boat, there was a shack with one or two live mallard hens, or a hen and a drake, and in each boat there was a dog who shifted and shivered uneasily at the sound of the wings of the ducks that passed overhead in the darkness. Four of the boats went on up the main canal toward the big lagoon to the north. A fifth boat had already turned off into a side canal. Now, the sixth boat turned south into a shallow lagoon, and there was no broken water. It was all ice, new-frozen during the sudden, windless cold of the night (Hemingway, <i>ARIT</i> 1).
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As mentioned before, natural elements dominate both opening scenes (“mountains” ; “the big lagoon”). The descriptions are diametrically opposed, as we have dryness caused by the heat and the “sun” on one hand, and “ice” and “darkness” on the other, expressing the passage of time. Food is immediately accessible in one (“fruit”) but requires hunting in the other. Perhaps more importantly, the opening of *A Farewell to Arms*, despite its bountiful description of nature, also reflects the impact of men on the environment. The clear distinction between the plain with the orchards and the mountains “brown and bare” shows that war creates environmental trauma. The dichotomy between the two illustrates Buell’s idea that bodies always go hand in hand with their environment, and vice versa. One final difference between the two extracts is the “breeze” in *A Farewell to Arms* that becomes a “windless cold” in *ARIT*, and which alludes to Cantwell’s imminent death. There are in fact many other descriptions in the novel about the harsh weather that emphasise Venice’s inhospitality in winter time: “The wind was still blowing hard and he went to the open windows to check the weather. There was no light as yet in the east across the Grand Canal, but his eyes could see how rough the water was. Be a hell of a tide today, he thought.

Probably flood the square” (118). The dampness of the city echoes the Colonel’s memories of war in the Veneto, equally damp and cold: “You could not get dry and it was better to get wet quickly and stay wet” (23). The narrator also imitates the sinking city when he hunts ducks, as he goes into a sunk hogshead, which is mentioned at the very beginning of the novel: “It was daylight before they reached the oaken staved hogshead sunk in the bottom of the lagoon” (2) and at the end, thus framing the narrative with this idea of sinking: “He was in the sunken oak hogshead that they used in the Veneto for blinds. A blind is any artifice you use to hide the shooter from that which he is attempting to shoot, which, in this case, were ducks” (199). The various mentions of the bad weather insists on the Colonel’s awareness about the inhospitable and porous Venetian environment, revealing that the city is particularly ecologically vulnerable.

Venice’s environment therefore becomes the metaphor of the passage of time, or as Scappettone puts it, a “locus of expiration” (27) because of Richard’s dying. He turns the city into a place of nostalgia, his memories as a young man during the war juxtaposing with his vision of the city as an older man: “It looks quite different now, he thought. I suppose it is because the distances are all changed. Everything is much smaller when you are older” (9). In his personal letters after the publication of *ARIT*, Hemingway associated Venice with existential dread: “Venice was sort of rough. Rougher than anything I’ve ever known and we have not finished counting our deads yet. All I know about life is that I don’t do it as I should” (Hemingway to Jige Vientel, 11 May 1950). Significantly, the idea that Venice creates feelings of dread, depression and death is reminiscent of the concept of eco-anxiety. Panu Pihkala reminds us that the eco-anxiety emerged as a concept after 2007. It is therefore fairly recent, which does not mean that the feeling at the root of it was not present before its conceptualisation. Pihkala observes that the definition of eco-anxiety differs according to scholars. In a special report dedicated to eco-anxiety and published in 2017, The American

Psychological Association defines it as: “a chronic fear of environmental doom” (68). Environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht defines it as: “the generalized sense that the ecological foundations of existence are in the process of collapse” (250). The report leans towards defining eco-anxiety as one of the consequences of climate change, whereas scholars such as Albrecht and Pihkala have a broader definition of the term as they include not only climate change, but also environmental uncertainty to it. Pihkala notes the difficulty of defining eco-anxiety because it intersects with complex notions from different fields. For instance, its definition is similar to that of existentialism: “eco-anxiety often manifests in forms which can be understood by old definitions of existential anxiety, which in themselves usually did not yet discuss ecological concerns” (Pihkala 7), but also to that of depression or trauma: “After all, when we say the words ‘climate change,’ are we not talking about a pervasive, continual assault on the global biosphere? One that threatens mass extinction and overwhelms our emotional capacity?” (Zhiwa Woodbury 1).

This intersection explains the emergence of other concepts related to eco-anxiety, such as solastalgia, a concept defined by Albrecht, and which he describes as the loss of a beloved place, usually associated with home, because of a destruction or transformation of its environment “by forces that undermine a personal and community sense of identity and control” (46). One could also think of eco-grief, which is defined as “the grief and sadness felt in response to the loss of beloved places, ecosystems, and species” by Maria Ojala et al (37). In addition to these concepts, Woodbury theorised the notion of “eco-trauma,” which considers the climate crisis as a form of trauma itself. To these existing concepts, one can also think of other terms such as existential anxiety, eco-anger and eco-guilt. All these adjacent, and evolving, concepts lead Pihkala to suggest that defining eco-anxiety is yet impossible. One can, however, establish its main characteristics: “The key roles of uncertainty, unpredictability and uncontrollability in general anxiety tell also of the

fundamental characteristics of eco-anxiety. Overwhelm seems also a major factor” (Pihkala 12). These intersecting terms are a network of multiplicities sharing the same centre (environmental damage and its impacts on the human mind) but developing it in different ways. Similarly to Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome, which “never allows itself to be overcoded” (16), the eco concepts are not evolving hierarchically or in opposition to each other, but help our understanding of eco-anxiety through different perspectives.

Building on these definitions, how is eco-anxiety manifest in *ARIT*? Is there another term more adequate to describe Richard’s feelings in Venice? Firstly, the Colonel is, as mentioned previously, at a particularly vulnerable stage in his life, being weakened both physically and mentally. He cannot, for instance, use his hand (70); he underwent at least ten concussions (7), which leads him to self-medicate with “mannitol hexantrate” (6). He is also struggling mentally with his PTSD symptoms, manifesting in disrupted sleep, hypervigilance (81) and random flashbacks (120). Cantwell therefore seems to be the ideal candidate for eco-anxiety, as according to the American Psychological Association, eco-anxiety is often felt more acutely when someone already suffers from other forms of mental or physical health issues, such as depression: “Although everyone is able to cope with a certain amount of stress, the accumulated effects of compound stress can tip a person from mentally healthy to mentally ill” (14). While Richard’s health issues are certainly not enough to claim his eco-anxiety, he certainly is predisposed to it.

Additionally, Richard sees the Venetian environment through his experience as a younger man of Venice. He mourns the man that he was, uses different coping mechanisms (eating, his relationship with Renata, hunting) and experiences acute nostalgia blended with traumatic memories. This results in a strong attachment to Venice, but also to the Venetian environment, and Northern Italy in general: “‘You’re a Torcello boy.’ ‘Yes. I’m a Basso Piave boy and a Grappa boy straight here from Pertica” (115). Although it is not the

Colonel's home, Venice is nevertheless a place that he loves and that mattered in his life: "But he continued to look at it and it was all wonderful to him and it moved him as it had when he was eighteen years old and had seen it first, understanding nothing of it and only knowing that it was beautiful" (23); "This country meant very much to him, more than he could, or would ever tell anyone and now he sat in the car happy that in another half hour they would be in Venice" (25). Richard feels a sense of entitlement and patriotism because he was a soldier there: "It is my city, though, because I fought for it when I was a boy, and now that I am half a hundred years old, they know I fought for it and am a part owner and they treat me well" (19) - although several scenes with the shooter (2), the boatman (32) and other Italians he encounters in the novel, reveal the Colonel's detachment from reality in Venice. Nevertheless, his attachment to the city is such that he even wants to be buried there: "They passed the long line of boats in the slow canal that carried water from the Brenta, and he thought about the long stretch of the Brenta where the great villas were, with their lawns and their gardens and the plane trees and the cypresses. I'd like to be buried out there, he thought. I know the place very well" (25).

Richard does notice changes in Venice, however, and his feeling of nostalgia is increased by the transformations of the city. He sees Venice's industrialisation as the death of the city: "They were up on the causeway from Mestre to Venice now with the ugly Breda works that might have been Hammond, Indiana" (26).³⁰ The other main transformations observable in the city are the war destructions that happened during WWII: "The blown bridge was being repaired with a snarl of riveting hammers, and eight hundred yards away the smashed buildings and outbuildings of what was now a ruined country house once built by Longhena showed where the mediums has dropped their loads" (9). Cantwell's sadness about the destroyed buildings is made clear: "what was now a ruined country house." The

³⁰ Breda is an Italian manufacturing company that specialised in building railway machinery.

reference to the baroque Italian architect Longhena shows Richard's grief for Venice. This attachment to the land and feeling of loss are similar to that of solastalgia or eco-grief, a feeling of sadness caused by the loss of a beloved place because of a destruction or transformation outside of one's control. In the novel, this loss is due to war, industrialisation and the ever-deteriorating Venetian environment.

Besides, and as explored before, the city in winter-time reflects the Colonel's death. Venice makes Richard very aware of his mortality. His existential thoughts blend with the environment, leaving no room for escaping. In that sense, the Colonel experiences environmental existentialism: "They were on a straight stretch of road now and were making time so that one farm blended, almost blurred, into another farm and you could only see what was far ahead and moving towards you. Lateral vision was just a condensation of flat, low country in the winter. I'm not sure I like speed, the Colonel thought" (10). The monotonous rural landscape blends into "what was far ahead and moving towards you" - most likely symbolising Richard's death. A fundamental part of the novel is therefore based on the unpredictability of Cantwell's death, which is reminiscent of Pihkala's conclusion that the main mechanisms of eco-anxiety rely on "uncertainty, unpredictability and uncontrollability" (12). And yet, the novel's uncertainty is partial, because it only exists in relation to how, and when, Richard will die. There is no real sense of hope in the novel, whereas the uncertainty at the root of eco-anxiety sometimes turns into "practical anxiety" (Pihkala 2), which means trying to find solutions to escape the dooming future. In the novel, Richard knows there is no escape for him, and repeatedly expresses this idea: "No one of his other wounds had ever done to him what the first big one did. I suppose it is just the loss of immortality, he thought" (24); "I'm getting awfully slow, he thought. Somebody will take me down any day now" (30). His relationship with Renata is based on this idea, too: 'I am not, really. I am happy as I ever am. Truly. Please believe me, Richard. But how would you

like to be a girl nineteen years old in love with a man over fifty years old that you knew was going to die?” (65). Therefore, Richard’s love and attachment for the city, the sadness he experiences when noticing its transformations, and the fact that his future does not spark any practical solutions to get better, all suggest that eco-anxiety does not seem to be the most precise way to describe Richard’s relation with the Venetian environment, but solastalgia or eco-grief might be.

Part Two: Comparing the Northern Italian Environment to Home in Forster’s *Arctic Summer* and Wharton’s *The Glimpses of the Moon*

***AS*: “The Last Moment of Greenwood”**

AS does not take place in Venice. The first part of the novel begins in Switzerland and then unfolds in Milan and its surroundings. The second part of the novel is located in the English countryside, no location is precisely given but the proximity to London and Cambridge points to the South of England.

It is not lost on Forster’s readers that most of his works offer a comparison of the foreign environment and the English one. In fact, according to Paul Peppis, there are two main strands in Forster’s writings. Both can be described in terms of “national allegories” as they “function in two ways: as parables of Englishness enlivened and as fantasies of England reconciled” (47). Therefore, one could situate *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, *A Room with a View*, *A Passage for India*, and *AS* in the first category while *Howards End*, *The Longest Journey* and *Maurice* belong in the latter. According to Wild, these comparative or purely English environments often reflect Forster’s ambivalent views on urban sprawl and modernity. And yet, as Peat indicates: “The discrete separation between ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ that structures the novel collapses . . .” (49). Although Peat discusses *A Room With a View*, the similar structure of *AS* asks whether such a blurring between the English and the foreign environment is also at play in the fragment.

The emergence of queer ecology discussed in Rolfe's section, and in which Mortimer-Sandiland and Erickson directly refers to *Maurice*, seems to have opened up a different way of considering Forster's relation with both queerness and the environment. Studies such as Benjamin Bateman's³¹ highlight the importance of ecology in *Maurice*, but also in *A Passage to India*. Based on these observations, the following section will analyse *AS* from an ecocritical perspective, and interrogate the notion of queer ecology.

The "Bastard Country"

Martin's description in *AS* of the Swiss landscape, on his way to Milan and after his fright at Basle station, is rather unexpected:

The train was steaming through industrial Switzerland. Martin looked tolerantly at the scene, admiring it where possible, leaving it without regret. The morning was grey, the hills very green, with battalions of larch and pine advancing between them. In the valleys lay villages and little towns busy making useful articles and joined by greasy white roads. It was a bastard country, forgotten as soon as seen, and grievous to the aesthetic eye. But our tourist had long since taken himself in hand. He knew that much of the earth must be dull and commercial, and that to revolt against her is ridiculous.

(Forster 5)

The "industrial" landscape that Martin observes goes against readerly and touristic expectations of a more rural representation of Switzerland. Similarly to Venice's state of in-betweenness, there is no more distinction between the rural and the urban; the "hills," "villages" and "towns" are interconnected thanks to "greasy white roads." This patchwork of landscapes, previously well-divided, leads Martin to define it as "a bastard country" which cannot satisfy either the countryside lover, or the city lover. Martin, however, chooses acceptance - resignation even - facing this capitalistic landscape: "much of the earth must be

³¹ For more on *Maurice* and ecology, see Bateman's "Avian, Anal, Outlaw: Queer Ecology in E.M. Forster's *Maurice*" (2021).

dull and commercial.” Urbanisation is the price to pay for modernity, and Martin is happy to accept that reality of the early twentieth-century. This acceptance is not entirely natural for him, but required some sort of control: “had long since taken himself in hand.”

While such a perspective on the environment leaves no room for disappointment, it also leaves no room for excitement. When Martin gets to Milan, he: “noted the chaos, he noted everything, and was thrilled by nothing” (17). Martin finds nothing admirable in Milan, however he seems to approve of its modernity: “There he is, standing in the heart of modern Italy, where the two tunnels of the Galleria intersect” (17). His description of the city to C.P. March reflects the same sentiment about the city: ““It’s just a great modern city, but well worth a visit”” (10). He equally praises Lombardy for its modernity and urbanisation to an unconvinced March: ““I went up the first time I came to Italy - nearly ten years ago. Then there was more green, but Lombardy has come on wonderfully. There’s a lot of new stuff - factories, workmen’s flats, if such things interest you. The plain’s speeding up. In another ten years it will be white all over with houses”” (18). Reflecting Wild’s statement that “Edwardian writers from across a number of different literary fields were keen to incorporate the latest tangible incarnations of modernity in their work” (5), Martin is enthusiastic about the modern features of the city, such as the “convenient electric tram” (11), which he mentions several times: ““We take the Porta Magenta tram, and it will be done in ten minutes” (18). He even goes to the cinema, although less enthusiastically: “The art of the future! He honestly did not love it” (41), and brings his driver with him: “When it was over he announced that he should take Aristide to a cinematograph entertainment” (41).

Martin’s apparent anti-ecological discourse, however, does not prevent him from appreciating landscapes. When he visits Tramonta with Venetia and Lady Borlase, he describes the countryside vividly, as though he was painting a picture:

The Alps broke and regrouped as they approached; the sense of a crystalline wall had gone, and they proved to be earth like the plain. But earth most delicately coloured - greys and browns, quiet purples and greens - and the plain with its cabbages of maize and rice-fields and its poplars and plantations of oak, carried on the colouring. Here and there, whatever the crop, rose trellised columns of iron and steel, taller than any tree, and joined at the summits by wires. They were part of the electric light installation system for Milan, and a reminder for Martin, had he needed one, that man will utilize nature in the future as he has in the past. They stretched direct from the mountains to the city. (Forster 27)

The association of the colourful depiction of the different shades of the earth, with active verbs such as “broke,” “regrouping” and “colouring” turns the passage into an ekphrasis. As Dawson and Haytock suggest, “landscape” in itself typically has “an implication that there is an observer who orders these features, scientifically or aesthetically” (91). In *AS*, Martin’s aestheticisation of the landscape is also present earlier on in the novel:

Only the shapes of the mountains had altered, as if a soothing hand had been laid on the earth. The tortured strata sank to peace, the vegetation, the waterfalls, the buildings - all began to harmonize instead of startle. The train ran downward into a beauty that admits romance but is independent of it. Youth demands colour and blue sky, but Martin, turned thirty, longed for Form. (Forster 12)

The capitalisation of “Form” conveys the idea that Martin is an artist, and sees the landscape as an artwork. In both descriptions, the categories of rural and urban become one, which is visible through the use of vocabulary traditionally associated with rural areas to describe the electric light system: “rose trellised columns of iron and steel . . . joined at the summits by wire.” The “bastard country . . . grievous to the aesthetic eye” that was the Swiss landscape is here replaced by a continuous beauty between both the urban and the rural. Such a vision

of the environment nuances Martin's ideals about the city and about modernity. In a quite innovative way, Forster indicates here that there are ways to interact with a transformed environment positively, an idea also voiced by Buell decades later: "I hope the reader will come to share my sense both of the power of environmental influences as a shaping force in works of creative imagination and of the power of those works, contending against the foreshortened vision that afflicts us all, to articulate what 'environment' is and might be" (28). Unlike Richard's expression of devastation towards the transformation of Venice in *ARIT*, there is no sense of fatalism in Martin's depictions, nor a sense that one has to give up on beauty to appreciate the transformed environment. And yet, Martin shows his disdain for rural inhabitants right after this passage: "Other labourers gathered round the car, and Aristide selected the cleanest of these for a guide" (28). This reveals that Martin enjoys the blending of the urban and the rural, but disdains the rural on its own.

Perspectives on Tourism

Martin and C.P. March have radically opposite visions on tourism. As a result, both interact with the Italian environment in a different way. Martin's praise of modernity leads him to value efficiency in tourism. He describes Milan to March as: "more what I call a place to see than to stop in" (10), and measures his enjoyment for the excursion to Tramonta by its effectiveness: "Everything went right from the first - a perfect car and a perfect chauffeur" (26). In the opening pages of the novel, a personified description of the train station at Basle precedes Martin's description, thus linking both:

The station, immense and modern, paid no heed. Not even the daily transit of the Island Race was an event to her, the changing-house of Europe. Trains ran into her from four or five countries, washed and shaved themselves, ate in her refreshment rooms, and rebooked when necessary; she thought in terms of trains. Behind her lay a town on a swift green river, but she only served the town as an afterthought. Its needs were little to

her, its memories of a Medieval Council nothing; she was indifferent to Cardinals and Kings, and to all but efficiency. (Forster 3)

The feminised station, perhaps suggesting that women embody efficiency, reflects Martin's views on tourism: detached from the past ("she was indifferent to Cardinals and Kings") and focused on service and rapidity. Such a vision of tourism, however, does not seem to co-exist with the notion of holiday, which would imply rest. As a matter of fact, Martin is anxious to not be working, and suggests that holidays are a chore for him:

He was a clerk in the Treasury, and had had a very hard time of it since the beginning of the year. Night after night he stopped late, or had taken masses of papers back to their little flat. Fagged out, he had come perilously near the state in which a holiday ceases to be attractive. Would everything go right in his absence? Would his little place be adequately filled? . . . His head had remained in communication with those files: it telephoned to them all night, and they replied, 'We cannot do without you; we are being misunderstood: we, the country, the Empire, will be ruined, all on account of your holiday.' (Forster 5)

Martin's overthinking about work and inability to take a proper break is perhaps what influences his productive vision of tourism. In a dystopian way, the telephone, symbol of modernity, here becomes an animated instrument that makes Martin feel guilty for taking time off. This resonates with Forster's short-story 'The Machine Stops' (1909), in which so-called progress takes over humanity: "But Humanity, in its desire for comfort, had overreached itself. It had exploited the riches of nature too far. Quietly and complacently, it was sinking into decadence, and progress had come to mean the progress of the Machine" (116). In Catherine Lanone's words: "the mechanized world of the near future creates a kind of hyper-reality which isolates people" (6). Similarly, in *AS*, the telephone does not connect people but isolates Martin in his anxiety and guilt. Martin sees his environment through the

filter of work: “He had linked himself again to the files in Whitehall, and had been writing a telling letter in his mind while his eyes had rested on the incomparable menagerie of stone lions that crouch round the portals of Modena Cathedral” (41). For Wild, Forster’s criticism of the endless cycle of modern jobs is visible in his other fictions as well: “The revolt expressed here against modern life directly echoes and anticipates that evinced in E.M. Forster’s *Howards End*. Here the Schlegel sisters’ critique of the modern life is focused on individuals such as the Wilcox family who, Margaret Schlegel claims, live ‘a life in which telegrams and anger count’ (Forster 1910/1989: 41)” (168).

Martin is perhaps the only character in the selected novels who proudly embodies Fussell’s definition of the tourist. By praising a form of tourism that keeps his body still (he only travels by train or car), he unashamedly shows his search for comfort and security. His broken Italian and limited understanding of Italian politics reveal that he does not try to understand or immerse himself in Italian culture. C.P. March, however, seems to also be the only explorer in the four novels, as “he moves toward the risks of the formless and the unknown” (Fussell 49). He does not obey strict schedules and is happy to adapt his travel plans. For instance, he initially came to Switzerland for climbing, and it is the weather that made him go to Milan: “I’ve been climbing, but it’s been a rotten summer” (10). He therefore agrees with his uncle’s view that tourism implies exploring, not following guidebooks: “It’ll be a bad day for England when men of your age give up the mountains, and take to vagabondage, walking tours, that rot” (54). Just like Martin’s static lifestyle reflects his tourism practices, March’s tourism echoes his active lifestyle back in England: “They liked the bright colouring and felt it to be a reward for taking proper exercise, as perhaps it was” (60). The “bright colouring” refers to the sky and shows that March sees nature as a rewarding space for physical activity.

The other reason that brings March to Northern Italy is to visit Tramonta. According to him, the frescoes might represent one of his ancestors: ““They are making a genealogical tree of our family and wanted me to go and Kodak that picture,’ he said” (36) - the mention of the “Kodak” indicating the commodification of tourism. In any case, Venetia welcomes with disdain his desire to go to Tramonta: ““A genealogical tree that is genealogical would be valuable,’ said Venetia severely. ‘But people are so apt to make a fuss about their eminent ancestors, if they have any, and to hush up those who aren’t”” (36). This exchange between March and Venetia underlines their differences in thinking about the past and about tourism. While March is ready to travel to photograph a possible ancestor, Venetia finds the process lacking tangible proof. By expressing her incomprehension, she reveals the gap that separates both families - March’s, turned towards the past, and hers, towards the future. This echoes Wild’s statement that Edwardian literature relies on the tension “between an antique world of stasis and tradition, and an evolving modern world in which custom and heritage appeared little valued” (175-76). March’s quest for his ancestors in Tramonta reflects his search for “stasis and tradition” in a transitional era. Venetia’s reaction embodies the “evolving modern world in which custom and heritage” are overlooked. By questioning March’s core values, Venetia impacts him more than she realises, as he decides not to go to Tramonta in the end.

Belonging to the Environment

C.P. March’s strong attachment to his family (or Clesant, as he is called by his family) goes with a strong attachment to his country, England. In fact: “He liked home the better for his absence” (49). After his return, March finds everything that he left behind with joy: “He felt quite happy. A warmer greeting would have disturbed him, for he disliked anything unusual” (48), except for the bath water that turns warm instead of cold, and which he is greatly upset at: ““A hot bath in summer...’ The new idea burst on him with painful

suddenness: he was shocked” (50). Nevertheless, he meets his beloved English environment with devotion. He compares his mother to an “Abbess” (47), and as if he needed purification before entering a sacred space, he decides to take a bath to “wash(ed) off the stains of travel. It was delicious: none of the baths he had commanded in foreign hotels could touch it, for the supply here came from their own river” (51). The bath scene could also embody a desire of renewal and rebirth from March’s behalf after his travels, before his experience in Italy catches up with him and blurs the distinction between home and the foreign. March’s sense of belonging in that environment is an idea also embodied by Ruth Wilcox in *Howards End*, who, according to Wild:

With her instinctive wisdom, innate nobility and, crucially, the sense that she *belongs* to her environment, Ruth Wilcox offers the perfect complement to the house and its surroundings. Far from the dislocation from the land evident in the characterisation of her husband and children (members of the Wilcox social grouping), she provides a vital continuum with earlier generations who were attuned to, and formed by, their natural environment. (179)

Similarly to Ruth Wilcox, Clesant positions himself between his brother, who welcomes change, and his more radical uncle who believes that life should be disciplined by religion and war:

All the middle classes needed was the discipline of war. It is true that they had had South Africa, but South Africa was too far away and against too small a foe. They needed Armageddon. His opinions were consistent: the belief of the coexistence of good and evil underlay his religious life as well as his political. Good would ultimately prevail, but the struggle is all that a man dare fix on. And pending the actual arrival of the enemy, he reserved his bitterest wrath for men like young Whitby, who prepared the way for they knew not what. (Forster 66)

The reference to South Africa is expected, as: “The outside world reflected in the texts of this decade was a decidedly unsettled one, with the beginning of the century coinciding with war in South Africa, and ending with anticipation of the Great War to come” (Wild 4). Mr Vullamy’s understanding of the world was formed by wars abroad, which explains his belligerent behaviour. According to him, war now takes place within England, not abroad, and between men such as Whitby and himself. He sees the world in a both manichean and religious way (“good and evil” ; “Armageddon”), leaving no room for disagreement. Interestingly, in a prophetic way, his vision on the world is very similar to that of the Italian and German fascism in the 1920s: “In particular, they were many among the middle classes in Italy and Germany who had almost religious visions of national unification leading to a wonderful rebirth of social life, creating a strong and harmonious nation” (Binde 762). Vullamy’s views on family foretells darker times that would happen a few years after the first draft of *AS*:

When his brother-in-law died, he also took in hand the boys’ careers. Lance should have gone into the Army, but his sight was bad, so Clesant went instead; and had just passed out of Sandhurst without discredit. Lance was entering on his last year at Cambridge and then would be ready for the bar. As for the girls, they would marry. They were both stupid, and in any case a woman’s true career is motherhood. He was married himself, but had no children, and perhaps his continual exhortations to increase and multiply were due to his private disappointment. (Forster 66)

The urge to “increase and multiply,” the fact that men should defend their country either physically by being part of the Army (Sandhurst is a British military academy) or mentally (being a lawyer), and that women’s only duty is to have children were all praised fascist values. The necessity for men to be physically strong is perhaps one the main elements that is missing, but it is brought up at another time in the novel, when Vullamy praises climbing,

a sport for “those who are obliged to command” (Forster 54) and strongly associated with fascism, both because of its connection with the environment and, which “was always presented as a challenge, as an obstacle to be defeated, as an object to be conquered, and as a territory to be defended from external enemies” (Patrizia Dogliani 256), and because: “A body trained by physical activity gave the impression of vigor, movement, tenacity, in sum fascist virtues” (Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi 361). Clesant’s uncle, therefore, clearly embodies fascist values before the official rise of fascism in Europe.

Mr Vullamy’s tyrannic opinions are nowhere near Clesant’s, although he respects his uncle’s indications. His brother Lance, however, is quite different, as he is willing to accept modernity. For instance, he teases Clesant for not liking hot baths: ““Only kids take cold tubs now. Of course you wouldn’t have heard”” (50). Although Lance is the eldest, he points out that only March knows how to run the estate: ““I say, Cles,’ he remarked, as he sponged himself, ‘don’t do this again, I mean don’t go again next vac. For instance I didn’t know whether to cut down the ash trees in the drive’” (50). As a matter of fact, Lance seems to disappoint his family, and remains in March’s shadow: “Lance should have gone into the Army, but his sight was bad, so Clesant went instead” (66). Lance also does not seem to enjoy his day-to-day life in the countryside like Clesant, and seems happy to leave the countryside when he goes to Cambridge: ““I’ve secrets I don’t even tell you,’ said Lance happily. ‘It’s natural now we’re men’” (62); “Dismounting suddenly, Lance flung himself down full length. His horse looked at him with mild disapproval, as did his brother. ‘Stiff?’ he suggested; he was not always sure that Lance’s actions were in good form” (60). Lance’s final disappointment for his family is getting expelled from Cambridge: “You have disgraced us. We can never lift our heads again” says Clesant after learning the news, before adding: “I curse you in the name of our mother” (83), an angry statement which surprises his uncle: “Steady on,’ said Mr Vullamy” (83). Lance’s suicide right after this incident

shows that both the pressure from his family, combined with disappointing his brother, proved unbearable for him.

Thus, and although Clesant is less radical than his uncle, his conservatism is too strong for him to be the Ruth Wilcox of *AS*. There is another secondary character who mediates two worlds in crisis: Dorothy, also called Dorothea, Venetia's sister. Dorothy is mentioned for the first time after Venetia's argument with March about genealogy: "“Most work is done indirectly. Educationalists like Dorothy admit as much. They try to drop knowledge into the subconscious stratum of the child's mind”" (37). When Martin confesses his cowardice after not helping his driver escape the fire at the cinema, Venetia answers that Dorothy warned her of this personality trait:

‘You're no good at an emergency, Martin. You never were. I don't see the use of worrying.’ ‘Never was? Do you mean you knew?’

‘Oh yes. Dorothy pointed it out to me years ago. When a thing comes suddenly you start back. You can't help it. It's ridiculous to call it cowardice.’ (Forster 45)

Venetia positions her sister as a part of her relationship with Martin. While Dorothy's opinions are valued by Venetia, they are opposed to Martin's:

Dorothea asked him why he did not call himself a pessimist and have done with it. He answered, quite simply: ‘Because I retain this vision of Form. Put that in your pipe and smoke it. You and Nettie showed it to me years ago.’

‘Form and civilization as it is, or as it will be?’

‘As it will be. What I do in my little cell at the Treasury, helps to build it up.’

‘And how if what you build up, I in my little cell at the Conservatoire or elsewhere pull down?’

‘You don't. I've a vision you don't.’ (Forster 72)

The banter between Dorothy and Martin (“put that in your pipe and smoke it”; “my little cell”) is also tainted by Martin’s sense of superiority on his occupation (“I’ve a vision and you don’t). The repetition of his so-called “Form,” already discussed previously, reveals that he believes he is an artist using his talents to better society. More importantly, by insinuating that she will “pull down” what Martin is doing, Dorothy shows that she does not believe in Martin’s modern society, therefore meeting Clesant’s ideals of reviving England. Indeed, Dorothy believes in “the revival of English folk traditions, including Morris dancing and folk music” (Wild 167), as she spends her days collecting folk songs:

Dorothea opened her notebook, the companion of many a country tramp. In it were her gleanings of English song . . . In other words, the songs could be taught back in schools to the grandchildren of those who had known them instinctively. This was Miss Borlase’s work, and she meant to give up her life to it. For the next four years she would collect: there would be less to collect each year, partly because the field was being worked by her colleagues, partly because the old people were dying out. When the four years were up, she would teach, or press the claims of teaching. At present folksong and Morris were fashionable - London ladies liked them At Homes - but in four years she expected the ebb, and must work through it, and save the moment from death and vulgarity. (Forster 73)

Dorothy’s determination to keep alive folk songs (“she meant to give up her life to it”) meets Clesant’s determination to keep alive rural English traditions, although “the fact that this ‘authentic’ England had never existed in the first place failed to trouble the majority of writers and readers” (Wild 167). Similarly to Clesant, Dorothy idealises the past and the English countryside. By recording folk songs for the future generations, she gives “the sense that she *belongs* to her environment” (Wild 179), similarly to Ruth Wilcox in *Howards End*. It is therefore not surprising that Dorothy is the only one in the Borlase’s family to get along

with the March's, and takes Clesant and Lance's side when the former asks for help: "Clesant was too much moved to speak. He had never met with such sympathy from a woman" (77). Unlike Clesant, however, she accepts modernity and uses it to help her and others: "Dorothea was again at the telephone, and in a minute had made all the arrangements" (77). In that way, she "provides a vital continuum with earlier generations who were attuned to, and formed by, their natural environment" (Wild 179).

As observed, and quite typically in Forster's writings, there is a sense of nostalgia and of anxiety associated with the English environment. Just like in *ARIT*, *AS* shows how transformed environments impact the characters' lives. Albrecht's solastalgia, therefore, is perhaps a more adequate concept than nostalgia in Forster's writings. Some characters, such as Venetia and Martin, embrace this change with a resigned acceptance; some others, like Mr Vullamy and Clesant, refuse this transformation, and modernity in general; some, like Lance and Dorothy, do their best to keep the traditions alive while still accepting their environment changing. Forster's opinion on the matter seems far from optimistic, as Lance's suicide proves: "Despite their pastoral-idealistic conclusions, their fantasies of national reconciliation, Forster's English novels are riddled with anxiety, violence, and death" (Peppis 58). *AS* captures this moment of crisis.

Queer Masculinity and the Environment

Returning to the British environment means several things for March: being back to his family; his country and countryside; his outdoor hobbies. The environment is thus for March mostly understood as the "natural" world (Buell 3). The "human-built" (Buell 3) environment relies in a tangible tension with the natural world, which seems ready to take over at any moment:

The house was small but remarkable. It stood in a ravine, where a trout stream forced its way between two hills. The hill behind was heavily wooded, and down it wound the

carriage's drive, with dangerous corners that made Mrs March's infrequent garden parties things of terror. The hill in front - over the stream - was a genuine precipice, with rocky facets and birch trees in the clefts, and below the stables and the little meadow the ravine closed in and the stream cried and pounded at its barriers as though strong enough to ruin the world. (Forster 64)

This passage underscores the power of natural elements against human-built elements. Nature, here, is personified and forceful: "forced its way," "cried and pounded." In a gothic-like description, nature is represented as an ominous figure: it is dark ("heavily wooded") and "dangerous" with its corners and precipices, sparking "terrors" among party guests. And yet, it also provides for its inhabitants ("trout stream"). Such a description of nature explains why March and his brother see it as a conquest: "They conquered the steep ascent out of Monkswear, and half a dozen miles of road and moor" (59). Their bodies and environment blend, echoing Buell's "there never was an is without a where" (55) but also their uncle's view on life being a conquest (66). Wilderness is also praised by Forster in *Maurice*'s terminal note, written in 1960, and in which he reflects on the specific context the novel belonged to:

It belongs to the last moment of the greenwood. *The Longest Journey* belongs there too, and has similarities of atmosphere. Our greenwood ended catastrophically and inevitably. Two great wars demanded and bequeathed regimentation which the public services adopted and extended, science lent her aid, and the wildness of our island, never extensive, was stamped upon and built over and patrolled in no time. There is no forest or fell to escape to today, no cave in which to curl up, no deserted valley for those who wish neither to reform nor corrupt society but to be left alone. (224)

In a solastalgic tone, this passage reveals Forster's fantasised "wildness". Although he compares *Maurice* to *The Longest Journey* in terms of atmosphere, one can also think of *AS*.

All three novels take place before the two great wars; all mourn an England now changed by modernisation and urbanisation. In addition to that, and similarly to Richard in *ARIT*, hunting also expresses a sense of belonging to the environment:

Another horseman was seen in the distance. It was necessary to outstrip him and then race one another. It was necessary to gallop against the wind. Presently they heard the beautiful cry of otter hounds, and saw the hunt in the bend of the river below them. Down they went. They were lucky enough to come in for a kill, which seemed to be a pleasant spectacle. When the corpse had been torn to pieces, and they had helped to blood the rector's little boy, who had not been present at a kill before, they proceeded on their ride.

'I'm glad we happened on that,' said Clesant. I hate wasting a morning.' (Forster 60)

The repetition of "it was necessary" reveals that hunting - or here, helping someone hunt - is a second nature to Clesant and his brother. As with Richard Cantwell, hunting is partaken in with consideration: "Its death stamped the morning with peculiar splendour, and was recalled by Clesant in after years" (60). The description of the two brothers hunting, combined with their other physical activities (climbing, horse-riding), is reminiscent of Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson's statement that "at least since the early twentieth century, wild spaces have been understood and organized in a way that presents nature—and its personal domination in the guise of hunting, fishing, climbing, and other outdoor activities— as a site for the enactment of a specific heteromascularity" (3). Following that logic, March and his brother are performing heteromascularity through hunting.

And yet, if such a statement seems fairly accurate for Hemingway's fiction, it is less so for Forster's novel. Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson nuance their argument by explaining the influence of pastoralism on queer literature. They directly connect Forster to this trend: "Rural spaces in particular have served, in a wide range of literatures, as places of

freedom for male homoerotic encounters (famously, in Forster's *Maurice* [1971], which was not published until after his death)" (23). According to them, Forster was inspired by "pastoral sentiments" and by his friendship with Edward Carpenter:

In the early twentieth century and influenced by strongly pastoral sentiments, English gay activist and utopian socialist Edward Carpenter was strongly committed to a rural socialist project of vegetarianism, voluntary simplicity, and manual agricultural labor; he also considered rural natures suitable places for what he called the "Uranian" temperament (indeed, it was a visit to Carpenter that inspired Forster to write *Maurice*). (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 27-28)

The term "Uranians" or intermediate sex, which comes from the Greek uranos and means "heaven," refers to men attracted to the male sex, and is an English translation of Austrian writer K.H. Ulrichs's "Urnings." Carpenter uses it to refer to homosexuality in general. In *The Intermediate Sex* (1908), he demonstrates how Uranians have always bettered society and defends the accusations made against their "unnatural" character:

In one form, as the mere semi-conscious Sex-love, which runs through creation and is common to the lowest animals and plants, it appears as a kind of organic basis for the unity of all creatures; in another, as the love of the mother for her offspring - which may also be termed a passion - it seems to pledge itself to the care and guardianship of the future race; in another, as the marriage of man and woman, it becomes the very foundation of human society. (35)

Far from being "unnatural," the "intermediate sex" is part of nature because it is based on love, an idea at the core of *Maurice*. In the appendix of that novel, Forster explains the different ways Carpenter and his friends enabled him to write this book, and mentions that the novel is: "the direct result of a visit to Edward Carpenter" (219). Carpenter is described as a "saviour" (219) for Forster, who, as discussed in Chapter Two, was feeling literarily

uninspired at that time. His tentative drafts of *AS* indicate a willingness to explore new directions, which he was not able to do before his encounter with Carpenter.

Carpenter's idea of "the intermediate sex" can be understood as something in the process of being, in transition. Significantly, in *AS*, the intermediate environment brings to mind the Swiss periurban landscape, which Martin refers to as "a bastard country" (5) because of its in-between aspect, which merges the urban and the rural. Martin's repetitive praise for this intermediate environment could signify his "intermediate sex." And yet, Forster decided not to connect Martin's state of transition to the city that best embodies this concept in Northern Italy: Venice. Despite naming Martin's wife Venetia, there is no other mention of the city. Such a choice to carefully avoid Venice in the story might be coincidental, but might also reflect a careful decision on the writer's behalf. By choosing to discuss main themes related to Venice in other spaces less explored, Forster displaces the norms of canonicity, thus exemplifying Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson's idea of taking "dominant narratives of nature to task to create space for non-heterosexual possibilities" (22-23), which, as Bateman puts it, shows "a queer hope that these locations can be reclaimed, eroticized, and made the scenes of different sorts of flourishing" (28).

Rural spaces open several queer possibilities in *AS*, which are made more visible in the relationship between Clesant and his brother Lance. As explored in Chapter Two, their relationship is kept under a silent agreement between them, and only exists when in the country house. Before Clesant's departure, Lance tries to have a discussion with him, which Clesant avoids: "he always snubbed him, for if one begins one might never stop" (68). The conversation culminates in both brothers knowing they cannot love in a "decent" manner (69), which makes Clesant "miserably unhappy" (69). In any case, and whether it is unclear if their relationship was consummated or not, Clesant and Lance's feelings for each other cannot be classified as brotherly. While *Maurice* presents many common features with

Arctic Summer in regard to the environment and sexuality, it differs on one major point: while “home emasculated everything” for Maurice (43), it is the place where Clesant and Lance’s relationships is made possible in the first place, thus making the English environment a queer one. The unfinished nature of the fragment can only allow hypothetical interpretations, but based on Forster’s other writings, it is possible that Martin and March’s reunion in Cambridge, despite their opposite personalities, brings a possible collapse of oppositions such as home and the foreign, modernity and the past, industrialisation and the rural.

Wharton’s Locations in *GM*

In a comparable fashion to *AS*, *GM* takes place in two different settings, one of them being Northern Italy, and the other one, France - Wharton’s second home. The shift from one location to the other reveals a clear change in the characters and in the plot. *GM* alternates between natural environments, such as Lake Como, urban ones, such as Venice and Paris, and semi-urban ones, such as Passy, in the suburbs of Paris. As McEntyre puts it in her analysis of *The House of Mirth*’s environment, “As an American writer she [Wharton] is compelled to reckon with the mythology of romanticism and its nostalgia for a “simpler” life that never was, and to consider city and countryside as value-laden environments whose values appear to be profoundly at odds” (85). Such a tendency is close to Forster’s idealisation of the English countryside. And yet, in Wharton’s fiction, a “simpler” and rural life does not always go well with her characters - one can think of Ethan Frome in the eponymous novella, who becomes trapped in deprivation in a rural area of New England, or of Charity Royall in *Summer*, who also tries to escape rural New England because of its stricken poverty. As Olin-Ammentorp mentions: “In spite of her association with cities, Wharton was deeply attuned to the natural world, even within urban environments” (102).

On this basis, the following section will analyse the different types of environments - Italian and French, rural and urban - described in *GM*.

An Ecosystem of Relations

It is no secret that Wharton was an expert in gardening. Her interest on the subject is visible in her non-fiction *Italian Villas and their Gardens* (1904), “her only extended treatise on gardening” (Olin-Ammentorp 104). Yet, her love for gardening and for nature in general is to be found in many of her other works. In *GM*, Susy and Nick attempt to recognise their natural surroundings in Lake Como:

‘Smell that guinea-a-bottle stuff over there: what is it? Stephanotis?’

‘Y-yes... I suppose so. Or gardenias... Oh, the fireflies! Look... there, against the splash of moonlight on the water. Apples of silver in a network of gold...’

They leaned together, one flesh from shoulder to finger-tips, their eyes held by the snared glitter of the ripples.

‘I could bear,’ Lansing remarked, ‘even a nightingale at this moment...’

A faint gurgle shook the magnolias behind them, and a long liquid whisper answered it from the thicket of laurel above their heads. (Wharton 10-11)

The uncertainty of Nick and Susy about their environment (“stuff”; “I suppose”) is evidenced here, as well as Wharton’s tongue-in-cheek towards her urban characters (“I could bear . . . even a nightingale”). The flower Susy and Nick attempt to identify (“stephanotis” and “gardenia”) is not similar but often white in both cases, which indicates the limitations of their knowledge in this area. As Chambers indicates, “Unable to identify the flowers giving off the rich fragrance earlier alluded to, Nick resorts to monetary terms in describing “that guinea-a-bottle stuff” (3)” (131). The narrator then proceeds to clarify the natural surroundings (“magnolias” ; “thicket of laurel”).

Wharton's interest in the natural environment, however, goes beyond the demonstration of a mere encyclopaedic knowledge. The last passage of the extract above shows the interconnection between living beings through pathetic fallacy ("whisper"; "gurgles"), meeting Olin-Ammentorp's idea that: "Wharton's works depict both the natural and the social, and often assume that there is no sharp divide between the two; instead, the human environment exists always in a larger natural ecosystem" (117). As a matter of fact, in *GM*, the environment is always interconnected with Susy and Nick's relationship. Nick, for instance, assigns his relationship with Susy to a "stream," that of his "lively imagination, of his inexhaustible interest in every form of beauty and strangeness and folly" (20), and Susy's spirit to "the tartness at the core of a sweet fruit" (93). The moon is associated with the couple several times, and its changing aspect communicates the different stages of their relationship, from their honeymoon bliss ("the moon was turning to gold" 11) to their first couple struggle ("the late moon - theirs again - rounded its orange-coloured glory" 59), to their separation: "There was no moon - thank heaven there was no moon! - but the stars hung over them as close as fruit, and secret fragrances dropped on them from garden-walls. Susy's heart tightened with memories of Como" (111). The synesthesia expressed by Susy communicates the idea of an interconnection between her relationship with Nick and the natural world. After Nick's comment on the nightingale, he adds that: "It's a little late in the year for them: they're ending just as we begin" (11), to which Susy replies: "I hope when our turn comes we shall say goodbye to each other as sweetly." Their bittersweet conversation is echoed by their surrounding environment:

The spring night drew them into its deepening embrace. The ripples of the lake had gradually widened and faded into a silken smoothness, and high above the mountains the moon was turning from gold to white in a sky powdered with vanishing stars. Across the lake the lights of a little town went out, one after another, and the distant

shore became a floating blackness. A breeze that rose and sank brushed their faces with the scents of the garden; once it blew out over the water a great white moth like a drifting magnolia petal. The nightingales had paused and the trickle of the fountain behind the house grew suddenly insistent.

When Susy spoke it was with a voice languid with visions. 'I have been thinking,' she said, 'that we ought to be able to make it last at least a year longer.' (Wharton 11)

The ekphrastic aspect of this extract insists on the notion of movement and transience ("gradually widened and faded" ; "turning from gold to white"; "became"), reflecting Nick and Susy's temporary stay at the Lake Como. When they leave it, Nick realises that the remote and rare beauty of the lake echoes his relationship with Susy:

Lansing, leaving Susy's side at dawn, had gone down to the lake for a last plunge; and swimming homeward through the crystal light he looked up at the garden brimming with flowers, the long low house with the cypress wood above it, and the window behind which his wife still slept. The month had been exquisite, and their happiness as rare, as fantastically complete, as the scene before him. (Wharton 29)

The rarity of his union with Susy, conceived as a partnership and based on the idea that "whenever either of them got the chance to do better he or she should be immediately released" (26), is indeed tested once they leave Como for Venice. Nick senses this upcoming change in their relationship: "Venice would be delicious, of course; but nothing would ever again be as sweet as this" (32). Shortly after, the couple have their first fight and "haunting scents of the garden blew in on him with the breeze from the lake" (35), announcing the end of their carefree honeymoon. Additionally, the fragile aspect of their relationship is corroborated by the Como villa, described as "a nest in a rosebush" (36) in comparison to the vast Venetian palace, which "called for loftier analogies" (36).

The Urban Environment: “a Site of Desolation”?

Although signs keep pointing at an ominous event for the couple, the Lansings were originally picturing a different experience in La Serenissima: “She and Lansing, in their endless talks, had so lived themselves into the vision of indolent summer days in the lagoon, of flaming hours on the beach of the Lido, and evenings of music and dreams on their broad balcony above the Giudecca” (40). And yet, as soon as they arrive, things go awry for them. The carnivalesque aspect of their relationship, based on a “suspension of all hierarchical precedence” (Bakhtin 10) when it was only the two of them, collapses when they are with their wealthier acquaintances. Their environment reflects this change: Susy’s room is “tapestried and vaulted” (36), just like her emotions after her fight with Nick, and she realises she has to facilitate her hostess’ love affair in order to stay in the palace. Venice, then, stands in stark contrast to the quiet Lake Como: “Nick was not surprised to learn that it was becoming the fashion, that summer, to pop down to Venice and take a look at the Lansings . . . Before June was over a band of friends were basking with the Lansings on the Lido” (66). The couple unwillingly becomes the centre of attention and entertainment because of their unusual union. Unlike in Como, Venice is fraught with visitors who they are required to entertain, such as Susy’s friend Strefford, the Hickses, the Vanderlyns, and their hostess’ child, Clarissa Vandelryn, whom Susy dedicates her time to:

It was a trifling enough sign, but it had remained in Susy’s mind: that first morning in Venice Nick had gone out without first coming in to see her. She had stayed in bed late, chatting with Clarissa, and expecting to see the door open and her husband appear; and when the child left, and she had jumped up and looked into Nick’s room, she found it empty, and a line on his dressing table informed her that he had gone out to send a telegram. (Wharton 45)

Susy's connection with Clarissa, as well as her relationships with her other friends, affects her relationship with Nick. The city inevitably impacts their ecosystem as a couple, and reveals their differences. Wharton's interest in how the environment "shapes characters and in the psychological consequences of disengagement from nature" (85), as McEntyre puts it, seems particularly accurate here, and prefigures Buell's idea that bodies and their environment blend. One character in particular embodies the disguise and temptation synonymous in the American imagination of Venice: Ellie Vanderlyn, Nick and Susy's hostess in Como, who uses Susy to send letters to her lover. Her appearance reflects her deceptive nature: "In her dark travelling dress and hat, so discreetly conspicuous, so negligent and so studied, with a veil masking her paint, and gloves hiding her rings" (94). With the "gloves," "veil" and "paint," she becomes the embodiment of deceit, in a city where such pretences are welcome. Unlike Miss Hicks' secretary who thinks that "if Miss Hicks chooses to surrender herself momentarily to the unwholesome spell of the Italian decadence is not for me to protest or criticize" (119), Nick disapproves of the tempting Venetian environment. Susy goes out more often with her friend Strefford and the Hickses, which upsets Nick, who hoped that "when they were quietly settled in Venice he "meant to write"" (40). While Susy only does her best to "defend her husband's privacy and facilitate his encounters with the Muse" (40), she is also aware of her social duties with their hostess and friends to allow them to keep travelling. Nick, however, dislikes her socialite behaviour, and "perceived with annoyance that the arrival of their friends heightened her animation" (67). Although McEntyre suggests that "urban life itself seems to foster small-mindedness, petty ambition, aesthetic sterility, and more myopia" (84), it is not Venice as such that causes issues in Susy and Nick's couple, but the people that come with the city. Nick's opinion of Susy changes as she spends more time with their American acquaintances: "the inward glow which had given her a new beauty were now refracted upon her by the

presence of the very people they had come to Venice to avoid” (Wharton 67). Despite Nick’s failure to be part of the masquerade in Venice, he joins another one after his separation with Susy, as he goes on a cruise with the Hickses “in the Aegean and the Black Sea” (209). He therefore remains in a state of transience and escapism until he returns to Susy at the end of the novel.

And yet, as Bode points out in her analysis of Wharton’s “Bunner Sisters,” urban places can “represent sites of desolation, but the cities in Wharton’s novels also vibrate with excitement” (168). Although Bode refers to New York in her essay, this urban analysis also questions the implications of staying in Venice in *GM*. As much as Venice is a place of temptations, where the wealthy American community brings along with them “a communal life characterized by exhaustion, ennui, and institutionalized falsehood” (84), it is also a place of creativity for Nick. After a few weeks of experiencing writer’s block, “he had returned to it with fresh energy after his few weeks of holiday-making, and was determined to finish it quickly” (88). The Venetian urban landscape feeds his imagination and hopes as a writer:

Later in the afternoon he laid down his pen and wandered out of doors. He loved the increasing heat of the Venetian summer, the bruised peach-tints of worn house-fronts, the enamelling of sunlight on dark green canals, the smell of half-decayed fruits and flowers thickening the languid air. What visions he could build, if he dared, of being tucked away with Susy in the attic of some tumble-down palace, above a jade-green waterway, with a terrace overhanging a scrap of neglected garden - and cheques from the publishers dropping in at convenient intervals! Why should they not settle in Venice if he pulled it off? (Wharton 88)

This ekphrastic and synaesthetic passage conveys Wharton’s attention to detail, corroborated by the numerous compound adjectives (“peach-tints”; “half-decayed”;

“jade-green”). Writing in Venice allows Nick to imagine a different life for them, one in which they could live from his art, meeting a typical Anglo-American fantasy about writing in Venice. Significantly, he is no longer inspired to write when he leaves Venice: “He had thrust *The Pageant of Alexander* into his handbag on the night of his flight from Venice; but since then he had never looked at it” (172). He therefore connects the city to art, and it is unsurprising that his stroll eventually takes him to the “church of the Scalzi” (89). For Olin-Ammentorp, Wharton’s later novel *Hudson River Bracketed* (1929) suggests that: “the ability to appreciate natural beauty and to create literature are related” (113). The previous passage of *GM* adds another dimension to Olin-Ammentorp’s statement: the environment, whether urban or rural, can create literature. Therefore, as Bode suggests, Wharton’s interconnection with the environment is not limited to the natural world, but also includes the human-built one. The city echoes Nick’s thoughts, such as when the port of Genoa is as loud as his thoughts: “The noises of a hot summer night in the port of Genoa would have kept the most care-free from slumber; but though Nick lay awake he did not notice them, for the tumult in his brain was more deafening” (123).

This interconnection does not mean that the environment constantly echoes the characters. On the contrary, it can at times contrast sharply with the characters’ emotions: “All about them breathed of peace and beauty and stability, and her happiness was so acute that it was almost a relief to remember the stormy background of bills and borrowing against which its frail structure had been reared” (12). This passage is taken from the onset of the novel, when Susy and Nick are in Lake Como. The peacefulness of the surroundings stands in opposition to their chaotic financial situation, and emphasises their precariousness. A similar process is visible when Susy leaves “the mocking radiance of late summer on the lagoon” (134) for Versailles, where she wants “to be alone somewhere in a setting as unlike as possible to the sensual splendours of Venice, under skies as unlike its azure roof” (134).

Because of her separation with Nick, the beautiful and sunny surroundings of Venice in summertime appears to be mocking Susy's sadness. She craves an environment that will reflect her emotions: "Thank God it was raining in Versailles!" (135). On the one hand, Italy seems to be the land of beauty and fantasies, suited for holiday-making; on the other hand, France seems like a more reasonable option, suited for everyday life.

None of Fussell's categories, familiar to us by now, seems to apply to Susy and Nick. They are certainly not travellers or explorers, as they are not willing to suffer for traveling, and care little for "the formless and the unknown" (Fussell 49). They can hardly be defined as tourists either as they do not follow any guidelines, and there is in fact a surprisingly low amount of visiting done in the novel. Yet, both characters seem to have a preconceived idea of Italy. Nick dreams of "some tumble-down palace, above a jade-green waterway, with a terrace overhanging a scrap of neglected garden" (88) and Susy of "frescoed ceilings" (177), which reveals the weight of tourist expectations. This refusal to belong to any of the categories is perhaps due to the fact that Susy and Nick mirror the cosmopolitan and translational lifestyle of their friends, such as the Fulmers and the Vanderlyns. These friends, however, own houses in France and Italy, therefore positioning themselves as residents rather than visitors. Susy and Nick's only friends to act as tourists are the Hickses, with whom Nick embarks on a cruise, an activity which encapsulates tourism in itself :

The Mortimer Hickses were in Rome; not, as they would in former times have been, in one of the antiquated hostelries of the Piazza di Spagna or the Porta del Popolo, where of old they had so gaily defied fever and nourished themselves on local colour; but spread out, with all the ostentation of philistine millionaires, under the *piano nobile* ceilings of one of the high-perched "Palaces," where, as Mrs Hicks shamelessly declared, they could "rely on the plumbing," and "have the privilege of over-looking the Queen Mother's Gardens." (Wharton 210)

The Hickses' priorities when travelling is based on comfort and safety, with very little reference to the local specificity of the place they stay in. Through the reference to "local colour" and to Mrs Hicks' fixation on the "plumbing", Wharton parodies the ostentatiousness and imperialist beliefs of American foreigners visiting Italy. The mentions of different Roman areas, however, also suggests that despite their limited approach to Italy, the Hickses know the city well, hence also hinting at their cosmopolitan status.

(Dys)utopian Environments

By insisting on the interconnection with the environment and living beings, Wharton seems to suggest that both equally work together - or should equally work together. And yet, Susy and Nick's lack of social status reflects how the environment belongs more to certain people than to others. As Totten puts it: "Wharton's work encourages us to consider the positive continuities of nature and culture as well as the ways in which nature intersects with dominant ideologies and institutional power, revealing her diverse approach to and representation of women's relationship with the natural world" (187). It is true that it is Susy, more than Nick, who correlates the different access to the environment with "dominant ideologies and institutional power." She knew of their privileges all along but realises them more acutely when she is no longer enjoying them:

What a sham she and Nick had lived in during their few months together! What right had either of them to those exquisite settings of the life of leisure: the long white house hidden in camellias and cypresses above the lake, or the great rooms on the Giudecca with the shimmer of the canal always playing over their frescoed ceilings? Yes she had come to imagine that these places really belonged to them, that they would always go on living, fondly and irreproachably, in the frame of other people's wealth... That, again, was the curse of her love of beauty, the way she always took to it as if it belonged to her! (Wharton 177)

Susy associates social and financial privileges with different rights to access the environment, and her vision of nature is very much commodified. Although the house and the rooms are private, they give them a special access to their surrounding environment, such as a “long white house hidden in camellias and cypresses above the lake,” or frescoed rooms facing the canal in Venice. Wealth allows more access to art, beauty and the environment, an idea also expressed by Nick later in the novel: “It was the latest whim of the wealthy to establish themselves on these outskirts of Paris, where there was still space for verdure” (287). In a very Whartonian way, the passage asks whether the environment, and beauty, should not belong to everyone. Just like McEntyre sees Lily Bart in *The House of Mirth* as a “product of her environment” (94), the passage also suggests that Susy is a product of hers, because her connections got her used to a certain lifestyle that she cannot afford for herself. Although she blames it on her “love of beauty” in this passage, the rest of her actions in the novel shows her understanding that beauty can be found in simpler ways of living: “That had been Susy’s discovery: for the first time she was among minds awakening which had been wakened only to beauty. From their cramped and uncomfortable household Grace and Nat Fulmer had managed to keep out mean envies, vulgar admirations, shabby discontents; above all the din and confusion the great images of beauty had brooded, like those ancestral figures that stood apart on their shelf in the poorest Roman households” (269). Such a change in her is visible when she considers marrying Strefford, who inherited a large fortune. His grand familial house is not appealing to Susy at all:

Sometimes she thought it was the sight of that great house which had overwhelmed her: it was too vast, too venerable, too like a huge monument built of ancient territorial traditions and obligations. Perhaps it had been lived in for too long by too many serious-minded and conscientious women: somehow she could not picture it invaded by bridge and debts and adultery. And yet that was what would have to be, of course... she

could hardly picture either Strefford or herself continuing there the life of heavy county responsibilities, dull parties, laborious duties, weekly church-going, and presiding over local committees... What a pity they couldn't sell it and have a little house on the Thames! (Wharton 191)

This passage prefigures Susy's rejection of this lifestyle, as she realises the weight of expectations and conventions that comes with Strefford's house. The reference to "bridge and debts and adultery" in the above extract also reveals a change in her, as she does not participate in immoral behaviours to please her wealthy acquaintances anymore, unlike at the beginning of the novel. Giorgos Kallis' work on limits and their connection to the environment proves useful here, as it is after being given the option of having a limitless lifestyle that Susy conversely decides to live within limits. She yearns for independence: "She met work-girls streaming out under a doorway, and scattering to catch trams and omnibuses; and she looked with newly-wakened interest at their tired independent faces. 'Why shouldn't I earn my living as well as they do?' she thought" (245), and her idle life becomes no longer desirable to her: "The artificiality and unreality of her life overcame her as with stifling fumes" (246).

Quite innovatively, Susy's refusal to marry Strefford testifies to her understanding that "in this limited world of limitless wants, there will never be a break, no paradise" (Kallis 37). Subsequently, she takes on a childcarer role for her children's friends the Fulmers, and moves to their house in Passy, a Parisian suburb, where she "turns her back on social glory" (Jewett to Wharton, 7 July 1921): "In the persistent drizzle of a Paris winter morning Susy Lansing walked back alone from the school at which she had just deposited the four eldest Fulmers to the little house in Passy where, for the last two months, she had been living with them" (Wharton 267). Despite the dreary weather and intense workload, Susy seems happy with her new lifestyle, and appears to be learning from the children. She

admires, for instance, their predilection for books over toys, unlike the previous child she minded, Clarissa Vanderlyn: “She had never before known children who cared to be read aloud to; she remembered with a shiver her attempts to interest Clarissa in anything but gossip and the fashions, and the tone in which the child had said, showing Strefford’s trinket to her father: ‘Because I said I’d rather have it than a book’” (272). Just like the Fulmer children, Susy also moves away from materialistic concerns: “She had on ready-made boots, an old waterproof and a last year’s hat; but none of these facts disturbed her, though she took no particular pride in them. The truth was that she was too busy to think much about them” (267). McEntyre’s idea of being a “product of her environment” (94) is also applicable for the Fulmer children and the Vanderlyn child, in as much as the environment they grew up in shaped their characters. Clarissa reflects the environment she was brought up in, which values possessions and shallow mundanities; the Fulmer children reflect the quiet suburban environment of Passy, which makes space for creativity and imagination.

This new found simplicity for Susy is facilitated by her environment, the suburbs of Paris, which Nick describes as “so far off” (285), and which reduces the distractions of Parisian life. Nick is surprised by the simplicity of the house Susy stays in:

A thin rain was beginning to fall, and it was already night in this inadequately lit suburban quarter. Lansing walked down the empty street. The houses stood a few yards apart, with bare-twiggged shrubs between, and gates and railings dividing them from the pavement. He could not, at first, distinguish their numbers; but presently, coming abreast of a street lamp, he discovered that the small shabby facade it illuminated was precisely the one he sought. The discovery surprised him. He had imagined that, as frequently happened in the outlying quarters of Passy and La Muette, the mean street would lead to a stately private hotel, built upon some bowery fragment of an old

countryplace . . . Instead, he saw a six-windowed house, huddled among neighbours of its kind, with the family wash fluttering between meagre bushes. (Wharton 287)

Nothing is particularly remarkable about the Fulmer's house, which is "shabby" and unoriginal, or about the surroundings of the house, which are ill-lit, empty, and where nature is scarce ("meagre bushes"). This description is similar to the "deserted hotel reading-room insufficiently heated by a sulky stove" (323) Nick and Susy go to after their reconciliation, which is in Fontainebleau, a rural area also in the outskirts of Paris. Both of these places stand in contrast to the initial descriptions of their honeymoon houses in Como and Venice. There are no lush flowers or painted ceilings, and yet Nick and Susy are infinitely happier: "For a long time she continued to lean against him, her head on his knees, as she had done on the terrace of Como on the last night of their honeymoon. She had ceased to talk, and he sat silent also, passing his hand quietly to and fro over her hair. The first rapture had been succeeded by soberer feelings" (327). Through their more sober, and limited, lifestyle, both Nick and Susy are happier because limits allow "to be at peace with what we have" (Kallis 38). Once again, Northern Italy proves to be the land of fantasies, while France - at least, Paris and its surroundings - is where their union develops on solid and true grounds. One cannot hide their real feelings in Paris, notices Nick: "In Paris, it instantly became the thinnest of unrealities. Not because Paris was not Rome, nor because it was Paris; but because hidden away somewhere in that vast unheeding labyrinth was the half-forgotten part of himself that was Susy..." (281-282). Unlike Venice, feelings resurface and must be heard in Paris, connecting Nick and Susy's relationship to the city.

Both Totten and McEntyre see the natural environment as a key component of Wharton's characters' evolution, either as a "positive potential as a setting for women's introspection or renewal" (Totten 175), or as a failed potential: "For Lily Bart as for Newland Archer the rural retreat provides a moment of awakening to possibilities they sadly

lack imagination or skill to grasp” (McEntyre 89). From a bourgeois perspective (after all, Susy goes back to her own social class, which could indicate Wharton’s prejudice on disrupting social classes), *GM* escapes both of these tropes: it is not nature as such that allows Susy’s introspection, but a simpler suburban lifestyle, and unlike Lily Bart and Newland Archer, her suburban “retreat” allows her and Nick to reconcile. In a rather utopian, and certainly bourgeois manner, Wharton nevertheless imagines the working class and the suburbs as possible remedies against carnivalesque relationships, languid cities and impoverished rural spaces. This anti-materialistic ending received some criticism from readers: “We’ve all “Glimpsed the Moon” I suppose - and as for me - Susy’s banner floats over mine! (She had the help of a strong man). What troubles me is - are they keeping it up or are old habits and circumstances stronger than their love-born white ideals. Somehow I close the book without perfect faith - but perhaps - that is my cloud floating over me and my moon is not over them at all” (Addison Mitchell to Jewett, 6 August 1922). But what if the novel was precisely meant to be a utopian story, evading social habits, and exploring different lifestyles in relation to their environment? As Mitchell puts it, it is up to the reader to prevent their doubt in human faith to cloud the novel’s ending. Discussing her French fiction, this is what Carney suggests: “Wharton’s public voice on France is shaped, in part, by her desire to convey an aspirational way of life” (9). In *GM*, all these questions are made possible through the exploration of France and Northern Italy. In that way, Wharton prefigured Buell’s idea that literature should highlight possibilities for the environment.

Conclusion

Similarly to Foucault’s definition of transgression, which resides in the tension between two realities, the idea of environmental in-betweenness is a characteristic of the four fictions. It goes, however, beyond a mere environmental perspective as it is also found in the characters and their visitor status. For instance, the four fictions all tend to blend

Fussell's categories and the difference between tourists, travellers and explorers - with the exception of Martin in *AS*, who is described as the essence of a tourist. *DPOW* and *ARIT* suggest a desire to escape the tourist category and its normativity, but further blur the distinction between the tourist and the traveller. *GM* also makes these categories unclear by adding another one, which is the one of being resident in one country.

Despite these similarities, the four novels take two main different directions. In Rolfe's *DPOW* and Hemingway's *ARIT*, Venice is personified and becomes the city where desire is materialised and embodied. The two novels differ, however, on the impact the environment has on the characters. In *DPOW*, the environment mirrors Crabbe's philosophical belief that everything works in union. In *ARIT*, Venice in wintertime not only echoes Cantwell's ill-health, but highlights his sadness and solastalgia about the city's transformations that took place during his twenty years of absence. Written from the perspectives of two foreigners, both novels embody imperialism and exploitative mechanisms that highlight the ecological transgressiveness of Venice.

Forster's *AS* and Wharton's *GM* offer limited perspectives on the Northern Italian environment, as the main sections of both novels take place in the writers' real or adoptive homes, namely England and France. The Northern Italian environments act as a decisive point of comparison for the characters of each fiction. In *AS*, the ever-changing Italian landscapes are a reminder that the English countryside will not remain untouched for much longer at the dawn of the twentieth century. The fragment is centred around issues of aestheticism and environmentalism, as Clesant's approach to the British environment is similar to the "com'era, dov'era" approach felt in Venice, and which is also reminiscent of feelings of solastalgia. In *GM*, Northern Italy is more of an idealised place, where no real life or feelings can take root. The simplicity and stability of the Parisian suburbs is preferred

over the beauty of the Northern Italian environment such as Como or Venice, as if one could not really live in the latter.

Final Conclusion

The foundational aim of this thesis has been to re-examine four fictional works taking place in Venice and in Northern Italy, in the early to mid twentieth century, by writers Frederick Rolfe, E.M. Forster, Edith Wharton, and Ernest Hemingway. In doing so, this work has sought to add to the existing scholarship about Northern Italy and Venice in the twentieth century literary imagination. From this foundation emerged the research questions: how are Venice and Northern Italy represented in the works and by themselves at this period of time? What is left to say about the city? What happens when you put in conversation four texts that are considered “minor”? Is the representation of Venice and Northern Italy a factor in that minority status? How does the real Venice come to view? To achieve such an aim, this thesis employed a method of close comparative and analytical readings through a sequence of conceptual lenses. Adopting a comparative reading allowed the recovery of the texts not as single entities but as works already part of a canon - the canon of writing about Venice and Northern Italy. Such a reading also created unexpected points of encounter and tropes such as transgression, ephemerality, porosity and eco-discourses, between writers and texts that have not, or rarely, been studied together.

The multiple possibilities of themes and connecting points between the four texts cannot be covered within one dissertation, nor can everything be said about literary representations of Northern Italy and Venice in the twentieth century. However, this dissertation opened up new research directions for writing about Northern Italy, and renewed interest in some lesser-known works and writers. The richness and complexity of *DPOW* alone deserves studies focusing solely on it, or perhaps putting it into relationship with Rolfe’s other writings about Venice. His short-stories *An Ossuary of the North Lagoon and Other Stories*, for example, could be compared to his correspondence in *The Venice Letters* and put in relation with *DPOW*. The established twentieth-century texts about

Venice and Northern Italy can offer more angles of approach for thinking about the texts that I have promoted into consideration. Wharton's novel, for instance, could be read in comparison with the representation of rich (and pretending to be rich) Americans abroad in Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr Ripley*. Hemingway's *ARIT* could be read in comparison with the representation of idle couples vacationing in Venice and drawn to death in *The Comfort of Strangers* by Ian McEwan.

More generally, there is a need to reconsider works considered to be "canonical" or written by "major" writers. After *GM* and *ARIT*, Wharton and Hemingway continued to explore themes in a way that their readers were not familiar with in works that have also not caused much academic or popular traction. For instance, Wharton's *The Children* (1928), which intermittently takes place in Venice and in other parts of Northern Italy such as the Dolomites, explores further the idea of broken marriages and its impact on children, through the lens of an older man attracted to the oldest of his friends' children. Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden* and *Islands in the Stream* (both published posthumously in 1986 and 1970) keep exploring sexual and environmental transgression. Analyses that focus individually or comparatively on these later works would add to the conversation within Wharton and Hemingway's scholarships.

The abundance of fictional writings, not limited to Anglo-American writers, set in Northern Italy and Venice in the last few years shows the evergoing interest in this location and the need for more academic research, beyond a transatlantic reading. One can think for instance of Donna Leon's series of detective books that starts with *Death at La Fenice* (1992); of Robert Coover's *Pinocchio in Venice* (1997); of Geoff Dyer's *Jeff in Venice, Death in Varanasi* (2005); of André Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name* (2007); of Christine Mangan's *Palace of the Drowned* (2021) and of William Boyd's *The Romantic* (2022), to only cite a few. All of these novels participate in the idea that it is possible, if not necessary,

to participate in the creation of new entryways to Venice and Northern Italy, therefore questioning the idea that some places are overwritten.

The thesis established Venice as a place where different realities coexist and merge: it is perishable and yet safe, inspires desire and death, creativity and anxiety. All these realities participate both in the abundance of representations and in the difficulty to perceive the city without filters. Besides, as argued, it is pointless to think singularly about Venice or, as Calvino's initial quote indicates, to think of Northern Italy without thinking of Venice. In the thesis, this is shown by the fact that the only novel that does not refer to Venice, Forster's *AS*, still indirectly refers to the city through one of the characters, whose name is Venetia. Like any other ecosystem, the city is part of a larger environment that is Northern Italy. Thinking of Venice as completely detached from anything else turns the city into an empty vessel that welcomes feelings of anxiety and death.

In the introduction, I referred to Hom's comment about the postmodern nature of Venice, often perceived through the lens of different representations. Yet, as mentioned in this thesis, Venice is equally seen as postmodern, as "a place fixed into the realm of the ruin and the picturesque, a locus of tradition and authenticity invented and staged for tourists. The destination welcomes this contradiction . . ." (Hom 215). Both of these perspectives, however, position the city as a place detached from reality, not as a living and inhabited city facing environmental damage. Moving from a "pre and postmodern" (Hom 215) approach when thinking about Venice, to a more environmentally conscious one, might help reconcile the idea of Venice as an imaginary place with the reality of Venice as an inhabited place, one that people depend on for their livelihood. This goes back to Buell's statement that thinking of an environment bears ecological responsibilities: "I hope the reader will come to share my sense both of the power of environmental influences as a shaping force in works of creative imagination and of the power of those works, contending against the foreshortened

vision that afflicts us all, to articulate what “environment” is and might be” (28). As I write this conclusion in a world where natural disasters in all parts of the world succeed one another without yet causing much collective change,³² it seems that today more than before, it is not only important to keep writing about Venice, but to see that writing about it is necessarily a part of its ecology.

³² When writing these lines, at the beginning of 2025, the Los Angeles fires are yet to be stopped; Mayotte and Valencia are still recovering from hurricane Chido and devastating floods.

Appendix

Figure A: The Financial Success of *The Glimpses of the Moon*

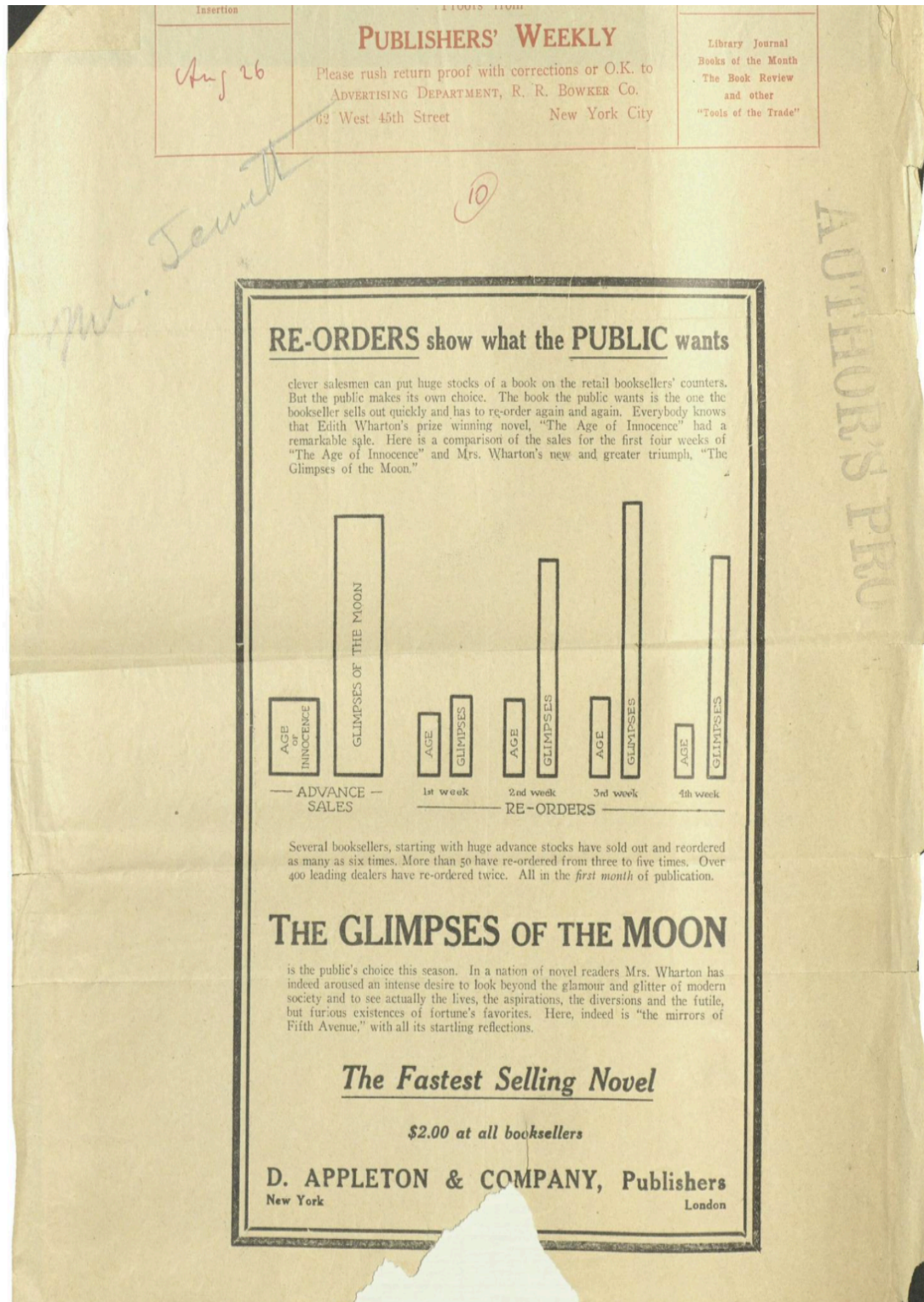
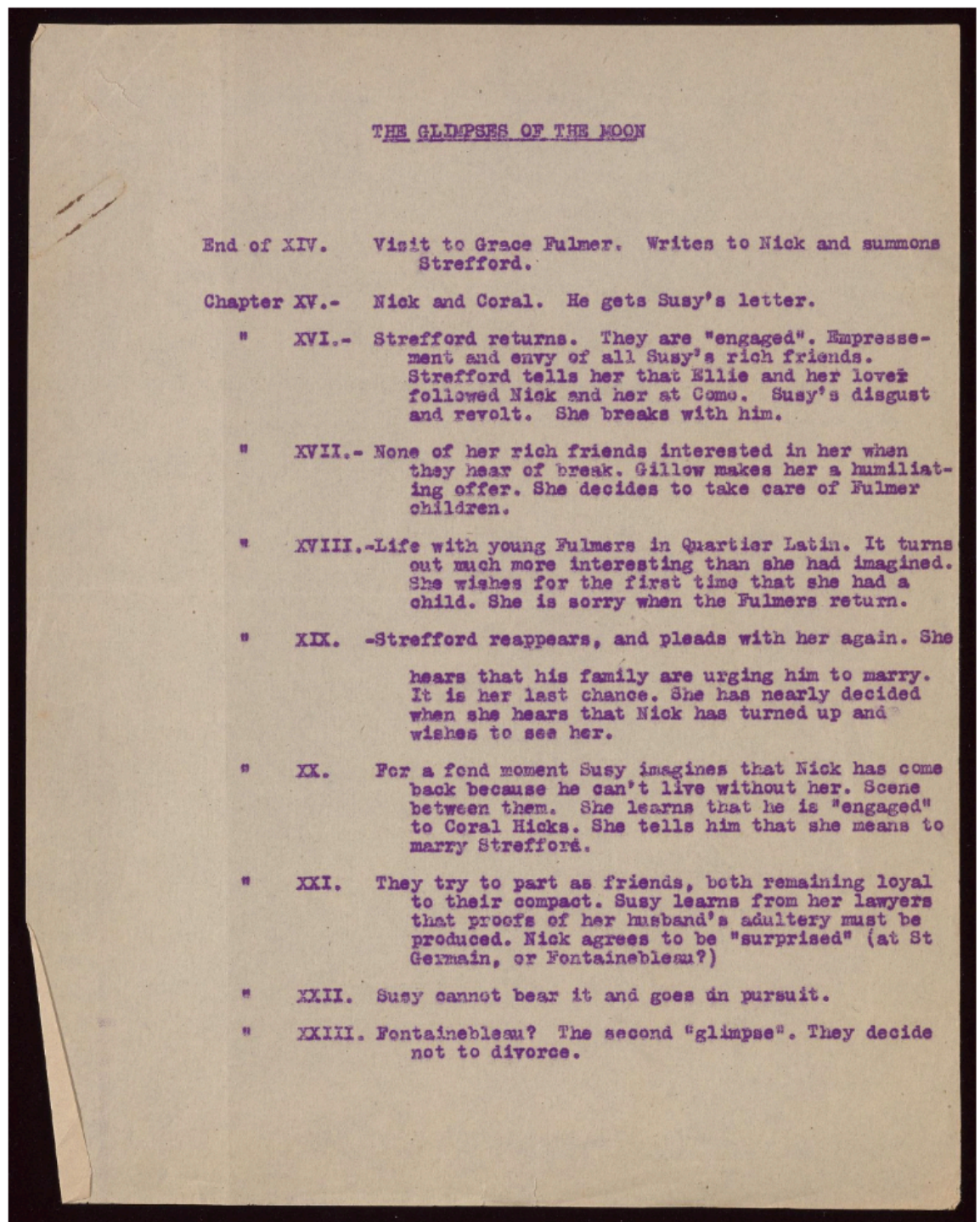


Figure B: The Initial Outline of *The Glimpses of the Moon*



THE GLIMPSES OF THE MOON?

III.

Chapter XXIV. - They realize that they cannot afford to live together. Each takes a job separately, but they remain on good terms.

" XXV. - Nick's job.

" XXVI.- Susy's job.

" XXVII.- They are too unhappy apart, yet they find no occupation which enables them to live together, and they decide eventually that the situation is intolerable, and that it would be much wiser to divorce. They return to America in order to get a quick divorce in a western state.

" XXVIII.- Grace Fulmer is dead, and Susy considers the possibility of marrying Fulmer. She longs for a home, and has grown attached to the Fulmer children, and she knows that Fulmer would gladly marry her.

" XXIX. - Nick and Coral Hicks. Last attempt on her part. He knows she will never love anyone else.

" XXX. - He meets Susy in the western town where they are to get their divorce.

" XXXI. - The third glimpse. They cannot give each other up.

" XXXII.- They come together again, and settle down in Nick's old quarters in New York. He will take a job on a newspaper, and she will be a "social secretary".

Figure C: Rolfe's Answer to James Walsh

xxviii Aug. 1910. I answer on this, not out of disrespect or lack of love, but just because you will get my points more nearly this way. - June 6th I sent you The Desire in 2 vols ms. June 8th qth I sent 2 vols typescript Nicholas Crabbe & The One & The Many. June 10th - 20th I sent you 8 Reviews of Unwritten Books, 2 short stories, 2 Venetian essays, all serial manuscript & all registered. Your letter only speaks of The Desire & fills me with the awful thought that the rest of my work is lost.

August 16, 1910.

WEST SEVENTY-FOURTH STREET
NEW YORK

ROLFE, F.W. ALS 8.28.10.

750 My dear Mr. Rolfe:-

I left for the West shortly after the arrival of your manuscript. The delay is terrible. I have been quite alone, powerless, living only on hope. I made inquiries for Mr. Paul Revell, but could find only Mr. Paul Revere Reynolds, and he was out of town so that it was not for some time, I found that you had not communicated with him. Then I took the liberty of reading the manuscript myself so as to be able to tell the Literary Agent something about it and had two friends read it. I fear that it will be difficult to find a publisher for it here in America, for while it contains an excellent bit of love story quite unusual in its way and with the absolutely essential quality of a happy ending, there is so much besides that publishers hesitate. One of the friends who read it was himself familiar with the publication business in America and was doubtful about its acceptance. When Mr. Reynolds returned I communicated with him, but I have hesitated because of the name that you mentioned. Is there another Paul Revell?

Here we are then with nothing done formally and only discouragement with regard to the outlook. Yes; I see. And it has taken my breath away.

May I add that personally I have been a little hesitant about pressing the matter in any way because the book contains so many personalities. These are quite obviously hidden beneath masks that make them easily recognizable. I should feel that if the manuscript went through my hands to an agent I should have to tell him that, though it is probable that the disguise is so thin that he would recognize that real persons are involved. So much the better from a commercial point of view. I know no risk: but I take all responsibility. Am I to be killed without defending myself? Or gagged? You see what a case of conscience I have. So tell me what I shall do. Is it fair to ask me this?

I am just going up to read a paper at the Eucharistic Congress at Montreal and I shall not be back for twenty days, and I here. It hovers howl day & night under my window. I have not bathed since last November, nor changed my clothes since August 1908.

science when I come back. Ought you to put it on me to solve your case of conscience?

I am very sorry indeed to seem to have been neglectful of you. It has not been neglect, but the feeling that a little waiting might mean much as regards your state of mind to ards some of your quondam English friends. After all Father Benson is a correspondent of mine almost as you are and besides we have met and have had three precious hours of converse on all sorts of subjects in The Borderland Between Spirit and Matter. Now tell me if friends of yours of whom you thought much were thus fallen out what would you do if some public expression of their animosity were passing through your hands? If he happens to be wrong, that puts him right. But I instinctively prefer the One to the Many. He has always been my Master. I know that you will not misunderstand me. Do command me still and believe me,

implore you not to give the work of my unspeakable sufferings to my enemies. If your conscience will not let you keep me to live, or to defend me, at least don't do anything else. Your letter has knocked me flat & gasping. If it had contained one word of encouragement it would have extended my credit, on which alone I have kept alive so long. But now that is gone. I do not know how much more endurance I shall be able to scratch together when I have posted this letter. But I see that I must go adrift again at once. Luckily the weather is not inclement. But the city & the Lido swarm with summer visitors; & it will be a frightful task to hide my misery. If you answer me at all, only a cable 40 English Consul. is likely to find me. But I have no hope that I actually can last out twenty days. Of course I shall try: but I wish I could be with you for a bit to make you understand.

Yours very sincerely,

Jas J Walsh

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