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Travel and Transgression in Northern Italy in *Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) by Edith Wharton and *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950) by Ernest Hemingway

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Abstract

In what ways do the experiences of travel and transgression converge? This question acquires particular focus in the fiction of both Edith Wharton and Ernest Hemingway when they contemplate their experience of Northern Italy and in particular Venice. This paper will offer an analysis of the pattern of transgressions in *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) by Wharton and *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950) by Hemingway. Although the novels are separated by thirty years around World War II, they are nevertheless bound by their setting and fundamental theme of seeking refuge in Northern Italy to escape social entrapment. In different ways, both novels reveal how crossing one's border is transgressive as it means challenging one's own culture, language, social and sexual norms. This is particularly true in Venice and in the area surrounding Lake Como in the twentieth-century, because Northern Italy proves to be a liberating place for all genders and sexual inclinations at that time. However, transgression is only temporary as the protagonists in the novels eventually return to their homeland. The temporariness of their journey is what makes it transgressive in the first place, just like the Carnival of Venice that allows all sorts of transgressions once a year.

Keywords: Literary Venice, transgression, travel, Northern Italy, American tourists, ephemerality

Edith Wharton'un *Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) *ve* Ernest Hemingway'in *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950) Eserlerinde Kuzey İtalya Gezileri ve İhlal

Öz

Gezi ve ihlal deneyimleri hangi durumlarda kesişir? Bu soru, Edith Wharton ve Ernest Hemingway'in Kuzey İtalya ve özellikle Venedik'teki deneyimlerini ele alan kurgularına odaklanmayı gerektirir. Bu makale *Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) ve *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950) adlı eserlerde ihlal örüntülerini analiz edecektir. Bu romanlar, aralarında Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nı da içine alan otuz yıllık bir zaman farkı olmasına rağmen, hikayelerin geçtiği yer ve toplumsal sıkışmışlıktan kaçıp Kuzey İtalya'da sığınak arama ana temaları ile benzeşmektedir. Her iki roman da başka bir ülkenin sınırlarına girmenin bireyin kültürel, dilsel, sosyal ve seksüel normlarının ihlali anlamına gelebileceğini gösterir. Bu durum, yirminci yüzyıl Kuzey İtalya'sının farklı cinsel kimlik ve yönelimlere sahip insanların özgürlüklerine alan açan Venedik'i ve özellikle Como Gölü'nü çevreleyen bölgesi için geçerlidir. Ancak, ihlal, ana karakterler sonunda kendi ülkelerine geri döndüğünden, geçici niteliktedir. Nasıl yılda bir kez gerçekleşen Venedik Karnavalı geçiciliği sayesinde her türlü ihlale mahal veriyorsa, bu gezilerin geçiciliği de, ana karakterler için ihlalleri beraberinde getirir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Edebiyatta Venedik, gezi, ihlal, Kuzey İtalya, Amerikalı turistler, geçicilik

Introduction

The following analysis focuses on Northern Italy and especially Venice. Being one of the most visited cities in the world, it is consequently one of the most written-about places in Italy. Its geography, history, architecture and dialect throughout centuries make it a unique place, always in a state of mobility, which constantly inspires cultural and literary representations.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were prolific in terms of Anglo-American literature set in Northern Italy and extensive studies have been conducted on this period of time. Part of this canon

were, to cite only a few, the works of Lord Byron, Hester Piozzi, John Ruskin, Margaret Fuller, Henry James, Emily Dickinson and Constance Fenimore Woolson. The interest in literature set in Venice continued at the beginning of the twentieth-century, as revealed in the fiction of E.M Forster, Frederick Rolfe, and on continental Europe, Thomas Mann and Marcel Proust for example. However, the phenomenon continued well into the twentieth century with far less critical attention. There is in fact a gap in literary tourism studies in twentieth-century Italy because most of them stop their analysis in the aftermath of the Grand Tour, but literary tourism does not disappear. According to John Pemble, there is a multiplicity of cultural representations and a sense of belatedness felt among early twentieth-century writers writing about Italy (28). Recent works have shown that writing about a city does not necessarily mean being daunted by previous literature: it can also add to our own perception of the city (Mozzi and Voltolini 7). As readers, literature can take us back to our own subjective impressions of a city. Although they have one name, they have a plurality of existences: "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). Similarly, other critics similarly read the city as a place where norms and codes are inverted: "The legend took root of the apotheosis of pleasure; of unending carnivals, fêtes, masquerades, and song" (Pemble 108).

Calvino's and Pemble's musings cast light on Venice's dramatic potentiality, especially since the city has a theatrical aspect as it is built like a stage, that is to say like an ephemeral place that is more concerned with appearances than with truthfulness. They also introduce the idea of transgression, a popular trope in literature set in Venice. Transgression, which comes from the latin 'transgredi', etymologically means the act of passing over, of crossing, of going beyond something. According to Michel Foucault, transgression is ephemeral. Additionally, it does not simply cross a limit but plays with the concept of limits. Therefore, transgression is not the result of an action but the action in itself:

> 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. (33-34)

This definition of transgression and of its ephemerality is applicable to Anglo-American literature taking place in Venice as usually the plot is centerd around characters who are travelling in Venice, but not staying there permanently. Their ephemeral stay in Venice leads them to experience an ephemeral range of transgressions, such as linguistic, social, sexual and economical ones. Foucault adds to the idea of limitlessness and ephemerality by showing the paradoxical aspect of transgression: transgression is at the same time restrictive and freeing. It is not formed in opposition to something but in relation to something else. James Eli Adams adds to this idea: "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).

Building on these definitions, this article will attempt to explain why transgression is constitutive of literary Venice in Anglo-American fiction at the beginning of the twentieth century. It will give examples of transgressions in two American novels set in Venice in this period of time: *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) by Edith Wharton, and *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950) by Ernest Hemingway. These two novels have been selected in an attempt to re-establish them as they both suffered from a lack of public and scholarly recognition, although they were both best-sellers when they were published. Both narratives also offer different perceptions of Venice as they cover a broad historical period, since *The Glimpses of the Moon* was written after World War I, and *Across the River and into the Trees* was written after World War II. Yet, they both share a literary Venetian continuity as they each portray protagonists seeking refuge in Northern Italy to escape social entrapment, and they both shed new light on Venetian literary tourism. Wharton's novel defies the idea that Venice was mostly written by male writers, making her novel transgressive in this regard.

Contexts of the Novels

Wharton's *The Glimpses of the Moon* was a best-selling novel soon after it was published, in 1922, although the reviews were not as positive as Wharton's other novels. She was already a very popular and prolific writer at the time: she had written *The House of Mirth* (1905), *Ethan Frome* (1911), and the novel that made her become the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in Literature, *The Age of Innocence* (1920). *The Glimpses of the Moon* was therefore a highly anticipated novel after the last one. According to Hermione Lee, Wharton's biographer: "Badly reviewed as it was, *Glimpses* fitted the 1922 market very well (...). 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). The novel is set in Northern Italy and in France, where Wharton spent a lot of her time after World War I. Its main protagonists are Susy Branch and Nick Lansing, two young Americans with no money but connections. They strike an unusual agreement: a pretend marriage for only a year to be hosted around Europe for their honeymoon by family's friends: "People were always glad to lend their house to a newly-married couple" (Wharton 27). Their journey gives them access to a temporary social status and lifestyle that matches their social-climbing ambitions, but their union does not go as planned.

Ernest Hemingway's *Across the River and into the Trees* (1951) was also eagerly awaited by the reading public, given that the last one he had written, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, dated back to 1940. Similar to *Glimpses*, it was also a best-selling novel soon after it was published, although its reception was negative. The literary critic Isaac Rosenfeld from *The Kenyon Review*, in 1951, 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). The novel was written at a dark time in Hemingway's life, as he suffered from many health issues at the time, both physical and mental (Dearborn 522). The novel follows a fifty-year old American Colonel named Richard Cantwell who 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 there during WWI. The novel is punctuated by flashbacks he has from the war, flashbacks we could now interpret as symptoms of PTSD. The other main event of the novel is that Richard is secretly having an affair with Renata, the other protagonist, a nineteen-year old Venetian woman. Both *Glimpses* and *Across the River and into the Trees* have been overlooked in academic curricula, yet they have been given more attention recently: Paula Ortiz adapted and directed the eponymous movie *Across the River and into the Trees* in 2022, and a re-edition of *The Glimpses of the Moon* is in progress. As previously mentioned, Northern Italy and particularly Venice are places where transgressions take place. This first section will attempt to explain why Venice is such a transgressive place, especially for tourists, from a historical point of view.

An Icon of (Sexual) Freedom

Firstly, Venice was seen as being transgressive because of two major historical events: the depenalization of prostitution in the sixteenth-century and the Carnival. The first event shaped the perception of visitors to Venice, since, as Jennifer Scappettone puts it, the city 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". However, there seems to be two clear and polar tendencies. One is to refer to the city as a maiden "because it was never invaded or conquered before" (Cirino 49), the other is to refer to it as a prostitute. Paula C. Clarke explains how "Between 1360 and 1460 the Venetian government established a system of legalized prostitution under the supervision of government officials and confined, in theory, to a limited area of the city" (419), which impacted the sixteenth century:

> Thus, 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. This resulted in giving the city a certain reputation: "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. (461)

Brigitte Bailey puts forward 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, thus embodies a feminine fantasy for Anglo-American tourists, a place to escape that warms up the body and the soul. The analogy between the warmth of Italy and the warmth of a woman has also been written about extensively, in relation to how the 'heat' of places such as Italy affected both attitudes and behaviors.

Throughout the following centuries, the idea of sexual freedom remained in the minds of visitors, and repeatedly surfaced in literature. From the nineteenth-century, the city also gained the reputation of a safe place for homosexual people. Indeed, in 1885, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, or the Labouchere Amendment, was voted on in the United Kingdom. The Amendment condemned any sexual act between two men and sentenced Oscar Wilde, among others, to two years in jail in 1895. Wilde's trial remains infamous as it was covered in the press for months and destroyed Wilde's reputation. The amendment and Wilde's trial had a collective negative impact on the next generations of writers (Pemble 109). The glorification of masculine and heterosexual men is visible in Harold Loeb's comment about Hemingway, founder of the literary magazine *Broom* in 1921: "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" (Dearborn 109). For Robert Aldrich, the presence of British homosexual tourists in Italy is logical: "British homosexuals had an especially pragmatic reason for going to the Mediterranean: persecution of homosexuals in Britain" (69). As Italy did not have anti-homosexuals laws, it quickly became an eldorado for British homosexuals as it was not too remote from the United Kingdom, but also for Americans. French philosopher Didier Eribon theorizes how some cities are safe places for queer people, like Venice:

> 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. (20)

This idea of a safe place, a refuge, is not new in novels taking place in Venice. Pemble notes how Henry 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" (Pemble 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. Bailey explains why Italy was liberating for American women at the time: "Accepting, for the most part, the coding of Italy as feminine, women writers found that inhabiting the gap between a tourist - an aesthetic subject - and being an aesthetic subject (themselves objects of a similar gaze) could become intellectually productive" (Bailey 5). Although Bailey studies the mid nineteenth-century, Mark Cirino develops a similar interpretation when analyzing Renata in *Across the River*: "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" (Cirino 154). Bailey's theory is particularly accurate for Wharton's *Glimpses*, whose main character is Susy, as she is seen as an aesthetic subject by her second wooer, Strefford. For instance, when she breaks off her engagement with him, she knows that what upset Strefford was not the fact that she broke their engagement but the fact that she did so right before they were supposed to go to a dinner: "She had an idea that what he had most minded was her dropping so unceremoniously out of the Embassy Dinner" (Wharton 252), thus conveying the idea that Strefford saw her as an aesthetic prop he took pride in.

A Notorious Place of Trade Connected to the East

In addition to this, one could also mention that the reputation of Venice as a place of sexual license is analogous to its status as a place of trade. Therefore, transgression in Venice might also be explained by the transgressive power of Capital, where the libidinal economy meets the real economy. Mary McCarthy expresses this idea as well: "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" (271). Venice's status as a place of trade is connected to another trope often found in literature set in the city: the idea of Eastern Venice. As Jennifer Scappettone describes: "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" (32). Venice and Constantinople were connected for many centuries, more than Venice and the rest of Europe. Pemble also summarizes the fact that: "for 400 years 'the East' had meant east of the Adriatic, and Venice had become, like Constantinople in Byzantine days, the great frontier city. It belonged to two geopolitical hemispheres and it represented racial and cultural heterogeneity" (118). 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 to the Orient: in *The Glimpses of the Moon*, Italy is also the first step towards the East as 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). However, the 'Orientalization' of Venice leads to an even more stereotyped and inaccurate representation of the East, as Pemble explains: "In fact, in British and in French estimation Venice was more Oriental than much of the Orient. Samuel Rogers's reference to 'many a pile in more than Eastern pride' was no casual comparison. 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" (119).

The Carnival Tradition

The last, and perhaps the main historical event that marked Venice's reputation, is its Carnival. Dating back to the tenth century,

the Carnival tradition transforms the city, which becomes "a theatre of masks and *maquillage*; a temple of the abnormal and the perverse; a hospital of pathological process" (Pemble 2). The Carnival gave to the city and its participants another identity for a temporary period of time, from December 26 to Shrove Tuesday (which can take place from February 3 to March 9). For Linda L. Carroll, the Carnival encouraged political and social transgressions from the Renaissance period. She takes the example of Beolco, a playwright and comedian of the time, treated differently during and after the Carnival. 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)

"Crossing the boundaries of time and space" is probably one of the most accurate ways to describe the Carnival as it is its ephemerality that allows its excesses. 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" (Castle 39). Will Bowers adds to this idea: "For centuries, Britons and Europeans had come to the Venetian Carnival to spend a few weeks not being themselves" (95). Terry Castle emphasizes how the masquerades blur the distinctions between different categories, as it is based on the idea of an upside-down world, where transgression becomes the norm: "At the masquerade, however, counterpozed institutions everywhere collapsed into one another, as did ideological categories: masculinity into femininity, "Englishness" into exoticism, humanity into bestiality" (78).

The main historical and political events that gave Venice its reputation at the beginning of the twentieth-century have been explored. It should be noted that the characteristics and effects of the masquerade

are very similar to the characteristics and effects of travelling in Venice: both travelling and masquerading allow temporary transgressions. Furthermore, the traveler wears a type of mask as his or her identity does not have to remain the same as the one he/she has at home. The blurriness of identity is a pattern in both novels examined in this study: in *Glimpses*, Susy's married friend, Ellie Vanderlyn, reinvents herself by having an affair in a hidden villa in Venice and Susy and Nick perform a very particular version of themselves – a married couple - in the city. Renata, in *Across the River*, becomes a daughter because of her young age compared to the Colonel. 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. One can also notice that the "elsewhere" mentioned by Eribon also matches the characteristics of the masquerade: "hopes and dreams - that seemed impossible for so many reasons, unthinkable even" (Eribon 20).

Because of all these reasons, Venice is seen as a place to escape social entrapment, and therefore a place where all kinds of transgressions happen - social, economic and sexual ones. Paradoxically, because transgressions are welcome in Venice, they also become banalised, thus questioning, as Foucault and Adams pointed out, the transgressive nature of transgression. The following section will look more closely at the thematic and linguistic transgressions in the novels *The Glimpses of the Moon* by Wharton (*Glimpses*) and *Across the River and into the Trees* by Hemingway (*Across the River*).

Travelling and Transgression

The initial transgression inherent to both novels is travelling. Crossing one's border, whether it is temporary or not, is transgressive because it means challenging one's own culture, language and social norms. In *Glimpses* and *Across the River* the plot starts *in media res*, since the characters have already arrived in Como for the former, and in Venice for the latter. While the settings are not mentioned right away, there are hints about the locations of the novels: "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" (Hemingway 1). Soon after, the narrator mentions "the lagoon" (Hemingway 3),

but he only refers to Venice at the beginning of the third chapter. The reader seems to inevitably infer it is Venice, although it could be Milan for instance. *Glimpses* begins ambiguously with an enumeration of European and American cities ("Chicago"; "Versailles"; "Monte Carlo"), before Nick finally explains where he and his wife Susy are, thus emphasizing their cosmopolitanism: "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!" (Wharton 9). Once in Italy, the characters are confronted with linguistic challenges, since if tourism, and especially Anglo-American tourism, is well-established in Italy at the beginning of the twentieth-century, there are often remaining linguistic gaps from both the American and the Italian sides. In *Across the River*, 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" (Hemingway 191); "We will say good-bye and I will get into the *motoscafo* with Jackson" (Hemingway 179). Theodor W. Adorno explains why he prefers using words and expressions in their original language, and one of the main reasons he mentions is that there is often no real alternative because some words are untranslatable from one language to another. Trying to translate everything can lead to confusion. This could explain why in *Across the River*, Hemingway keeps the "*motoscafo*" untranslated as it is connected to a Venetian reality that cannot be entirely rendered in another language. Hemingway may also choose not to translate the word for another reason that Adorno identifies: 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. (Adorno 187)

However, when using different languages in one's novels, the writer 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 inferred.

Travelling also allows the characters of each novel to lead an unconventional way of life, at least for the duration of their trip. *Glimpses* is centered around a non-traditional couple. It is made clear that Susy's and Nick's marriage is based on nothing romantic: "Why shouldn't they marry; belong to each other openly and honorably, if for ever so short a time, and with the definite understanding that whenever either of them got the chance to do better her or she be immediately released?" (Wharton 28). If Susy's 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 disapprove of their relationship. Indeed, the novel takes place in the 1920s, a period of social change that was still influenced by the rigidity of Victorian and Edwardian social norms in relation to gender and sexual liberation. Similarly, *Across the River* features a union that would be disapproved outside of Venice, because of the age gap between the characters but also because of their different social status, as Renata comes from a very wealthy Venetian family, unlike Richard.

Women in Literary Venice

These considerations on unconventional unions lead us to the idea of social freedom previously mentioned in section one, and more specifically to how women seem to be represented as free-spirited in literature taking place in Venice. Roderick Cavaliero reminds us that since the Romantic period, Italy was a well-known place for free living, 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" (10). In *Across the River*, Renata is also described as a free-spirited woman. First of all, she is nineteen and her lover, Richard

Cantwell, is in his fifties. Her description is often 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 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" (Hemingway 72). The wind motif emphasizes Renata's free-spiritedness and is reminiscent of her name, which means "reborn" in Italian. It also emphasizes 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. 'Putting on lipstick and moving your mouths over each other to get it spread properly and combing your too heavy hair is not a life for a woman, or even a girl alone, who loves someone'" (Hemingway 84). However, paradoxically, she also 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'" (Hemingway 84).

Additionally, not only are female characters breaking social expectations in literature set in Venice, but so are female writers writing about Venice. Wharton's *Glimpses* breaks with the male gaze approach by placing a woman at the center of her novel, and by writing from a female point of view. Although male writers writing about Venice are a part of a long literary tradition, there is also in fact a tradition of women writing about Venice, which includes among others, Hester Piozzi and Ann Radcliffe. Wharton is part of this tradition. *Glimpses* participates in the transgression of writing as a female writer, transgression expressed fifty-years later by Hélène Cixous, in *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975). Although she was a successful writer, Wharton's writings were often compared to her friend Henry James', especially the ones set in Italy, when he was never compared to her.

Sexual Transgressions

The place of the Carnival, also referred to as masquerade, has been mentioned in section one and established as a moment featuring all sorts of transgressions, including the most prominent ones, sexual transgressions. Castle points out that during the masquerade, Venice is a place where incest can happen, in real life and in literature: "The masquerade was to blame for inciting a host of tabooed physical

contacts: between married women and men not their husbands, single women and men in general, members of the same sex, members of the same family" (81). References to incest are not visible in Wharton's novel but are in Hemingway's. Indeed, incest is mentioned by Renata, when she playfully 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'" (Hemingway 69). Incest is therefore not real but an acknowledgement that Richard could be Renata's father. Renata's last sentence corroborates the idea that Venice has known many vices, including an incestuous relationship. This reveals that she knows Venice's reputation as a city allowing sexual freedom. It could also be interpreted as an acknowledgement that she would not be able to live her relationship with Richard freely elsewhere. Finally, it also reveals that Renata and Richard might want to imply that their relationship is taboo by emphasizing the age gap and tenderness they have for each other so much that they become related. This idea meets Foucault's previously mentioned quote on transgression, because masquerade does not signify absolute transgression, but a managed and circumscribed version of it.

Finally, a last type of sexual transgression that meets social transgression can be mentioned concerning *Across the River*. According to Debra A. Moddelmog, most of Hemingway's fiction is centered around a dysfunctional heterosexual couple, and most of Hemingway's masculine characters are wounded. *Across the River* is no exception to the rule, as Richard Cantwell has a wounded hand and other health-related issues. For Moddelmog, the wounded male body suggests Hemingway's ambivalence concerning heterosexuality and heteromasculinity: "The metonymic substitution of the wound for white heteromasculinity inevitably suggests that this particular form of masculinity is in itself a wound, a disabling of the man who possesses it" (130). Furthermore, Moddelmog notices that the men in Hemingway's fiction are not only wounded but also that their physical descriptions are never detailed or thorough, unlike the feminine characters: "(…) 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" (Moddelmog 128). Renata is described as being beautiful and a picture of health several times in the novel: "Then she came into the room, shining in her youth

and tall striding beauty, and the carelessness the wind had made of her hair. 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). This description aligns with the beauty standards of the time, yet we are not given any detail about what Renata truly looks like, such as the color of her eyes, the shape of her nose, lips, and the like. As Moddelmog points out, women are generally healthy and perfect looking in Hemingway's writing, yet they embody feminine stereotypes.

(Re) Writing One's Life

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, therefore taking the risk of creating conflict with their immediate circle (if the way they are described displeases them for instance).

As discussed, both novels shared a mediocre reception, yet were both best-sellers. This leads us to another transgressive element that connects both novels and writers: drawing upon episodes of their own lives to write their novels. It is known that Wharton travelled extensively. Her fiction provides an ironic and meticulous insight into travelling with means, which is probably not too surprising since she travelled the same way: "At all times, travel was for Edith Wharton a means of pushing outward the boundaries of her universe. She travelled farther, faster, and in greater luxury than most women (or men) of her generation" (Wright, xx). Many of her writings, whether fictional or not, take place in Europe, particularly in Italy or France. Meredith L.Goldsmith and Emily J.Orlando analyze Wharton's way of travelling and draw on Maureen 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). However, if Wharton was inspired by her own life, the influence was not as direct as in *Across the River* as Hemingway wrote it when he was himself in his fifties and in ill-health. He, too, was a soldier in Italy during WWI, and enjoyed going

back there in later life: "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). Dearborn also connects Hemingway's tradition of calling women whom he liked "Daughter" to when he was married to his second wife, a long time before he wrote the novel. She also points out that Renata was largely inspired by Adriana Ivancich, a Venetian young woman whom Hemingway met and fell in love with in 1948, when he was married to his last wife. Dearborn describes Ivancich in a way that is reminiscent 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 *Across the River* (Richard and Renata) might suggest that the narrator believed the two characters were meant to be with each other. *Across the River* is therefore the fictional representation of Hemingway's love for Adriana, although it is unlikely that a love relationship ever happened between them. *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) is also about the fictional representation of Hemingway's love for real-life nurse Agnes von Kurowsky, who 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.

Death, the Ultimate Transgression

This leads us to the last transgression about literature set in Venice: death. According to Richard Owen: "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). More than any other city, Venice embodies perishability as the city is not only sinking but also rotting, which makes it bound to disappear one day. Therefore, decay and perishability, both components of transgression, are intrinsically part of Venice.

This makes Venice a place where novels about decay or decaying characters blossom: "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). For other scholars, the "viral recurrence of Venice as a locus of expiration, or perpetual twilight, in intellectual and artistic culture since Romanticism" (Scappettone 27). In *Across the River*, the Colonel is about to die, and the city reflects this stage of his life. The idea of decay is also conveyed by the season as the novel takes place in winter time. Venice's coldness, dampness and darkness is emphasized by the Colonel's descriptions of the city: "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." (Hemingway 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." (Hemingway 23). The numerous mentions of bad weather seem to insist on the Colonel's awareness about natural elements in Venice, revealing that the city is particularly vulnerable to it given its topography. In *Glimpses*, although Como and then Venice are described as the epitomes of *romantic loci*, they prove to be the places where Susy and Nick's union dissolves - until the end of the novel at least, when they are not in Northern Italy anymore.

Conclusion

Unlike the Grand Tour tradition that marked the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, Anglo-American literature set in Northern Italy in the twentieth-century received considerably less scholarly attention. This article attempted to re-establish this period of time as being part of the Anglo-American literary tourism tradition, through the analysis of two American novels forgotten after their publication, yet equally part of this literary Venetian continuity. Both *The Glimpses of the Moon* and *Across the River and into the Trees* are centered on travelers in Northern Italy, whose stays are by definition temporary. This temporariness leads the characters to experience a range of transgressions, whether linguistic, social, sexual, economical. The travelling experience in Venice proves

to be similar in many aspects to the Carnival experience, as in both cases norms are inverted and identities blurred for a temporary period of time. Venice is a place that allows all sorts of transgressions, yet such a statement questions the nature of transgression. Perhaps going beyond the binary of transgressive/ non-transgressive is necessary in Venice. Susy, in *Glimpses*, seems to believe that the city's values resides elsewhere: "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).

Notes

[1] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, 1957.

[2] For example: Kenneth Churchill, *Italy and English Literature 1764-1930*, 1980; James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture', 1800-1918*, 1993; John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion, Victorians and Edwardians in the South*, 1987.

[3] For instance, in *Twilight in Italy* (1916), D.H. Lawrence draws parallels between warm and cold places in Italy and how, according to him, it impacts Italian women's personalities.

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