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SPECIAL ISSUE: TRAVEL WRITING

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Articles which cross conventional borders between academic disciplines are particularly welcome, as are comparative studies of American and other cultures. The journal also publishes notes, comments, book and film reviews. Details about the submission of manuscripts are provided on the back (inside) cover of this issue.

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Lisa Tuttle is an award-winning author of science fiction, fantasy and horror stories and novels. Her first novel, written in collaboration with George R.R. Martin, Windhaven, has been in print since 1981 and has been widely translated, and most recently she has adapted it as a graphic novel. Her non-fiction work includes *Encyclopedia of Feminism and Heroines: Women Inspired by Women*. Her most recent books are detective novels with supernatural elements, set in 1890s England: *The Curious Affair of the Somnambulist and the Psychic Thief* and *The Curious Affair of the Witch at Wayside Cross*. She has also written for children, taught creative writing, worked as a journalist and in public libraries.

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Transnational American Eyes: Examinations of Travel

Annessa Ann Babic

This special issue of the *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* examines reasons to travel—especially via the so-called wealthy American eye—with a focus on the gendered, romantic touch of the female. The women explored in this issue shape culture, craft products to bring home, and provide for family and community. Though, they are radicals by default, as they do not adhere to gender norms, but are still confined to gendered norms as their actions reinforce expectations. These pluralisms and theoretical contradictions are what shape these intertwined discussions.

Travel is frequently viewed as not only exotic, but also a sign of culture and display of disposable wealth. Travel, accordingly, performs a crucial act for the human psyche as a literal and figurative escape. This sense of escapism derives from the actual act of tourism as well as from the voyeurism of other's global footprints. The thrust of this issue examines tourism as a cultural ambassador. From Nathaniel Hawthorne's wife, to a wealthy Bostonian socialite, to Vietnamese immigrants the American eye of body performance, social standing and place within gendered binaries evolve. The interchange of peoples and spaces enables the blurring of lines.

The articles and essays in this issue work together to show, remind, and teach us that change occurs on a variety of levels. Yet, to be cliché, it begins on the smaller, personal level first. These explorations allow the reader, with a question and a smile, to probe

into how subgroups are disenfranchised from mainstream social designs. Borders are fluid as the interchange of peoples and monetary payments, connecting them to the global front, and—ironically—trapping them in a fixed space. The traverse and transnational landscape of tourism makes the interchange of land and space more fluid, erasing traditional boundaries. Imaginary markers erode as work, leisure, and study become more accessible and expected. The transnationality of space, the legacy of connection and disconnection within regions and between nation-states, and the ease of travel reinforce its place as a fertile ground for research.

Jenny Huberman, an anthropologist, provides us with an apt ethnographic study on children, tourism, and the place of power in working-class life; her study serves as a framework for this special *JAST* issue on travel writing. Her place of education is Banaras, India, where she attempted to immerse herself within the local community, ingraining herself in a social situation with the local children, and even having a teenaged girl become her translator/guide. Her book *Ambivalent Encounters: Childhood, Tourism, and Social Change in Banaras, India* focuses on the western eye examining the daily lives of locals. In short, the "tourist gaze" centers this study as it views these riverfront children—often peddlers of tea, postcards, and inexpensive souvenirs—as cultural ambassadors of sorts. The young girls sell these token goods, the young boys—given more freedom and leisure as boys—provide tours to eager tourists, and through these interactions a space of production and consumption arises. These children are actors within this global industry, and by default, they sell the atmosphere and the idea that the "tourist gaze" can be mutually beneficial for both parties (Hubberman).

Another example of the gaze as touristic voyeurism is Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul*. He paints the city, and perhaps the larger ideal of "the Turk," with romance and—in a roundabout way—splendor. His words seamlessly take the reader through his memories of the city, and the astute reader will note that his work is neither Middle Eastern, nor Asian, nor European. Perhaps, if it had to assume a category, it serves as a gaze into his *trompe l'oeil* of Istanbul.

The concept of travel also plays into the perception of locale, because no matter what a person's class is at home, at the destination, a tourist transforms into an "upper-crust traveler that is reminiscent of the grand tour" (Bloom 5). Travel provides a metaphorical and literal excursion into (and away from) a person's sense of status (Bloom 5). Unlike the city of light and love of Paris, Istanbul is not a long-celebrated stop on the Grand Tour. Sales pitches for Paris fall under a different category, as young women dream of going to the City of Light (as the stereotype suggests), and it consistently makes for one of the most popular honeymoon destinations for US travelers. Thus, Paris confident in its own identity, and firmly placed within the western mind of discourse, does not require a sales pitch, whereas Istanbul still does as implied by the extensive international advertising sponsored by the Turkish Ministry of Tourism.

The three academic articles in this issue masterfully fit within this spectrum of discourse. Nina Ha examines the feminine and transgender voices of Vietnamese immigrants to the United States. Ha dissects the value of place, language, and perceived culture as women undergo transformations from the natal country to the new world (i.e., the United States). Her study pays particular attention to people of color as their experiences routinely clash with the idealized white culture of America.

Elisabetta Marino's powerful examination of Sophia Peabody—Nathanial Hawthorne's wife—reinforces and expands our understanding of gendered and social binaries. Peabody edited and supported her famous husband from behind the scenes as a good and dutiful wife was expected to do. Yet, she kept detailed travel diaries she later published under her maiden name. Her dissemination of her own writing was "brazen" for her era, but her travel writing provided a safety net, as she showcased the luxuries of her social class while highlighting the stationary role of women.

Tanfer Emin Tunç follows Marino's piece with a thought-provoking study of women, wealth, health, and tourism. Here, Isabella

Stewart Gardner falls dreadfully ill and her doctor prescribes travel as a cure. When she embarked on her voyage to reclaim her health, she was bedridden and needed help boarding the ship, but upon arrival in Europe, she was walking on her own and eager to leave her sickbed. She then spent her life globetrotting and acquiring art, filling up a museum in Boston she named after herself. She was the pinnacle of Grand Tour and Victorian dreams, attaining stature not just via her social class and her husband's status, but through passport stamps, trinkets and mementos, and her life beyond Boston's rigid socialite culture. Most importantly, her non-tangible gains from travel—the memories penned in her journals and letters—add another layer to our understanding of the female tourist's gaze.

The articles are followed by two amusing, heartwarming, and powerful travel narratives by contemporary women. Christine Contrada, an academic and freelance writer, takes us on a journey to Florence. Here, she discusses the nuances and proclivities of the American eye in her ethnic homeland—and the land of her heart's desire—while also walking the balance beam of complex laws for visas and residency. Lisa Tuttle, a novelist and fiction writer, recounts the story of her familial lineage and, specifically, her great-grandmother who, according to family lore, crossed the Atlantic seventeen times. While, as Tuttle notes, that is highly unlikely, it is the romance of traveling the world by steamship that still makes us want to believe the veracity of the story. These two essays take our special issue to a place of popular discourse while still illustrating the value of academic debates.

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Articulating Identity: Vietnamese Diasporic Culture in Literature and Media

Nina Ha

Hanh (behavior or conduct), Ngon (speech), Cong (labor or industry), and Dung (appearance)

Ngo Thi Ngan Binh – "The Confucian Four Feminine Virtues [tu duc]"

Abstract

In her article "The Confucian Four Feminine Virtues," Ngo Thi Ngan Binh interviews contemporary Vietnamese women living in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly called Sai Gon) to highlight and analyze the contradictions and expectations of family members governing female behavior and actions. Binh's ethnographic research regarding how "modern" females--or contemporary young women--should follow tenets of societal expectations is significant when examining the stories of the two females I studied. These two individuals are Chi or Minh (the older sister nay transgender brother of the author) and Andrew Pham (the subject of Marlo Poras' documentary Mai's America). This essay explores the shifting identities of these Vietnamese females as they travel from their "home"--or natal country--of Vietnam to inhabit the borders of the US nation-state. In making this transnational move, they undergo a type of racialization familiar to travelers and those who relocate, but it plays a particular role for people of color, who have immigrated or have been part of a racial or ethnic group living in America. For example, people from the Caribbean, Latin America, or

Africa who are noticeably dark become grouped into the category of African Americans, though their migration histories and patterns may be quite different from African American counterparts (whose past is often connected to the former US slaves).

Moreover, these other groups may speak Spanish, Patois, Creole, as well as other languages. This racialization within the Black community is very similar to those in the Asian and Asian American communities living in the US nation-state. For example, Asians from countries as diverse as China, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, etc. are considered "all alike" by those unfamiliar with the heterogeneity of the Asian body. Also, like many other non-white groups, individuals are gendered and sexualized into designated subgroups. Thus, I intend to analyze and to interrogate how Chi/Minh and Mai complicate and challenge racial, gendered, and sexualized expectations of themselves by others. I will not address what their intentions for exploring and "performing" different gender paradigms means to them (because I really could not do so), but I will try to formulate the traces or remnants of how their performances of their gender and sexuality have affected those emotionally and physically close to them, not to mention to their audiences.

Keywords

Feminine Virtues, Vietnam, Travel Writing, Transgender, Transracial, Asia

Kimliğin Ortaya Konması:
Edebiyat ve Medyada Vietnam Kültürü

Öz

Ngo Thi Ngan Binh "The Confucian Four Feminine Virtues" ("Kadına Özgü Dört Konfüçyen Erdem") başlıklı makalesinde kadın davranış ve hareketlerini yöneten aile üyelerinin çelişkilerine ve beklentilerine ışık tutmak ve onları analiz etmek için günümüzde (eskiden Sai Gon olarak bilinen) Ho Chin Minh şehrinde yaşayan kadınlarla yaptığı röportajlara yer verir. Binh'in modern kadının ya da günümüz genç kadınlarının sosyal beklentileri karşılamaları konulu etnografik araştırması, bu makalenin konu edeceği iki kadının öykülerinin incelenmesinde önemli yere sahiptir. Bu iki kadın, Chi ya da Minh, (yazarın ablası/transseksüel ağabeyi) ve (Marlo Pora'nin *Mai'nin Amerikası* belgeselindeki baş kişi) Andrew Pham'dir. Bu çalışma adı geçen Vietnamlı bireylerin doğum yerleri olan, Vietnam'dan Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ne gelmeleriyle birlikte kimliklerinde meydana gelen değişimi inceleyecektir. İki kadın, ulus aşırı bu eylem ile, gezginlerin ve bir yerden bir yere taşınanların aşina olduğu ırk ayrımcılığına uğrar. Ancak bu deneyim, göçmenler veya Amerika'da var olan ırksal veya etnik bir gruba ait olan bireyler için daha farklıdır. Örneğin, Karayipler veya Latin Amerika'dan gelen koyu ten rengine sahip insanlar, göç tarihleri ve kalıpları kendilerininkinden oldukça farklı olan ve geçmişleri büyük oranda Amerika'daki köleliğe dayanan Afrikalı Amerikalı kategorisi altında gruplanmaktadır.

Buna ek olarak, bu gruplar diğer dillerin yanı sıra İspanyolca, Kreol ve Patois dillerinde konuşabilmektedir. Siyahilerin maruz kaldığı ırk ayrımı yoluyla sınıflandırma Asya ve Amerika'da yaşayan Asyalı Amerikalıların maruz kaldığı sınıflandırmaya benzer. Örneğin, Çin, Japonya, Malezya, Vietnam, Kamboçya gibi ülkelerden gelenlerin hepsi, Asyalı beden yapısının fiziki çeşitliliğine aşina olmayanlar tarafından "benzer" olarak görülmektedir. Beyaz olmayan birçok başka gruba olduğu gibi bu bireylere de cinsel özellikler atfedilmekte ve bireyler bu özelliklere göre alt-gruplara ayrılmaktadırlar. Bu çalışma, Chi/Minh ve Mai'nin başkalarının ırksal ve cinsel beklentilerini nasıl karmaşıklaştırdıklarını ve bu beklentilere nasıl meydan okuduklarını

inceler. Çalışma, Chi/Minh ve Mai'nin farklı cinsiyet paradigmalarının kendileri için ne ifade ettiğini keşfederken amaçlarının ne olduğunu açıklamaya çalışmayacak (çünkü bu pek de mümkün değildir), bunun yerine cinsiyet ve cinselliklerini yaşayış şekillerinin kendilerine duygusal veya fiziksel olarak yakın insanlar ve okuyucular üzerinde nasıl bir etki yarattığını ortaya koymaya çalışacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Kadın Erdemi, Vietnam, Gezi Edebiyatı, Trans Birey, Irk Çatışması, Asya

In Ngo Thi Ngan Binh's article "The Confucian Four Feminine Virtues (Tu Duc)," the author interviews young Vietnamese women living in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Sai Gon) to survey familial expectations of these young women in an urban setting. She frames her inquiry concerning Viet Nam's Confucian tradition, which holds that there are four preeminent categories of feminine virtue: Hanh (behavior or conduct), Ngon (speech), Cong (labor or industry), and Dung (appearance) (Binh, 47-49). Using these feminine virtues as a foundation, Binh framed her research around young metropolitan women's struggles to uphold or break with traditional familial expectations in an urban-modern setting. Binh's ethnographic research highlights several themes and tensions that are in evidence in other depictions of young Vietnamese women struggling with questions of family, identity, and modernity, including the negotiating of constraints of familial expectation and tradition. Two examples of young people's experiences resonating with these themes and tensions appear in Andrew Pham's memoir, *Catfish and Mandala*, and Marlo Poras' documentary, *Mai's America*. In Pham's narrative, he recalls the experiences of Chi (later known as Minh), his elder sister, who becomes his transgender brother. In Poras' *Mai's America*, a teenaged girl studying in the United States inclines toward flexibility in her gender performance. This paper explores the shifting identities of these two Vietnamese subjects as they try to adapt, through migration, from their "home" or natal country of Viet Nam to the United States.[1] Building upon Leslie Bow's analysis of the interstitial subject by applying to transgender theory to *Mai's America* in her essay, "Transracial/Transgender: Analogies of Difference in Mai's America, I argue that both Chi/Minh

and Mai occupy liminal spaces due to their "transracial" statuses of being neither black nor white and misread as either /or and neither/ nor female/male. As Bow highlights, "The condition of those who 'fall in the interstices of social structure' [Turner (1969, 125)] speaks to the cultural placement of transgender and transracial individuals: not female-not mail and not black – not white subjects" (89). This transnational transition, with its geographic, cultural, racial, and social dislocation, leads to a confrontation with familial and traditional gender and sexualized norms, which are accompanied—in each case—by a reconsideration of racial and gender identity/performance.[2]

The difficulties of Vietnamese women upholding traditional feminine virtues in an urban-modern context, similar to those examined in Binh's study, are identifiable among these young Vietnamese subjects of the diaspora. Yet, their diasporic experiences altered or intensified these difficulties in foundational ways. In the face of these pressures and tensions, Chi/Minh and Mai try out similar tactics to overcome gendered boundaries, adapting and improvising with (more or less) success.

In the cases of Chi/Minh and Mai, their transplantation into the American context leads to a new external identity that is a new way of being seen, adding another layer of complexity to the paradigm outlined by Binh in her ethnography about females in Ho Chi Minh City. Chi/Minh and Mai experience for the first time an American racial positionality ("Asian"), unlike anything they could have experienced in Viet Nam. Each subject undergoes a racialization that is specific to the experience of people of color who have immigrated to the United States, as the predominant racial categories of American social life lead to new ways of being seen, (mis)recognized, categorized, and associated. For example, people from the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa with darker skin tones become grouped as Black or African American in the United States even as personal histories diverge so radically as to be the difference between elective immigration and transportation-enslavement-disenfranchisement. The question of language identity—critical for experiencing as well as engaging the world—is similarly lost in racialization during the transition to the United States. This racialization, within the Black community, is similar to U.S. Asian and Asian-American communities. For example, Asians from countries as diverse as China, Japan, Malaysia, Viet Nam, and Cambodia often find themselves perceived as sharing some essential likeness, from the standpoint of those Americans who are either unfamiliar with

Asian heterogeneity or disregard that heterogeneity as expedient or advantageous. More specifically for Vietnamese Americans, racial identification stings more profoundly because of the failed American War in Viet Nam and the protesting at home.[3]

Refugees fleeing Communist violence, re-education camps, and even genocide may be conflated with either an old wartime foe or—no less stingingly—pitied for what Americans did to the Vietnamese upon their arrival to the United States. Thus, the racialization experienced by people with Vietnamese backgrounds is in some ways shared with other racialized peoples in the United States, but, in different ways, it is unique to people with Vietnamese backgrounds.[4]

Gendering and sexualizing associations accompany the phenomenon of racialization. How individuals react to these identity processes demonstrate the recourses that individuals have to this leveling power of racialization. The works of Pham and Poras offer vivid examples of young women responding to this process by altering their gender comportment to escape, not only the constraints of American racialization, but also familial pressures to fashion themselves as "traditional" women acceding to patriarchal authority. Chi/Minh and Mai, the young people depicted in the works of Pham and Poras, although experiencing the United States from very different geographic and socioeconomic locations, come to experiment with similar solutions in their negotiation of racial, gendered, and sexualized expectations.

To foreground Chi/Minh and Mai's experiences, I turn to Viet Nam's social policies focusing on reproductive health and population policy in the work of Daniele Belanger[5] who observes that state policies do not account for women, whether young or old, who are not of child-bearing age. Moreover, Belanger writes that "[f]emale sexuality not within the bonds of marriage is considered non-existent." Belanger argues that single, childless women living in Viet Nam face scrutiny about their sexual identities. Although Belanger alludes to women's sexual identities, nowhere in her research does she directly address Vietnamese women and homosexuality or queer identities. Yet, being queer in both Viet Nam and the United States could be another reason why some women choose neither to marry nor to have children. Belanger's work superficially approaches the subject of queer identity, but more direct research is needed to more fully understand how queer

Vietnamese women and queer Vietnamese subjects navigate realms of feminine virtue and identity in Viet Nam as well as within the United States. Through Pham's memoir and his recalling of Chi/Minh, and Poras' documentary film on Mai's journey in the United States, this understudied space of queer identity and familial duty can be observed and considered. Chi/Minh and Mai react to prescribed roles of gender and sexuality, exploring their genders and sexualities and transgressing certain "acceptable" norms and boundaries, while at the same time demonstrating concern and even despair about preserving familial and social acceptance. As they perform prospective identities, they are wary of straying too far and either breaking their community bonds or neglecting their familial duties.

Chi/Minh ultimately commits suicide, seemingly as a result of her excommunication from her family and inability to return to Viet Nam, where her grandmother shielded her from the bonds of familial—especially paternal—expectations. Old Quan, an elderly Vietnamese American man who articulates the patriarchal and heteronormative reaction to Chi/Minh's life and death, expressed the nature of the expectations imposed upon her/him pointedly. Quan addresses Andrew Pham after learning of Chi/Minh's suicide:

> She became too American….
>
> Your sister Chi - too selfish, too into herself. She wants to be herself.
> That's wrong. All wrong. To live a good life, you live for others, not for yourself. Your parents bring you into this world so you be what they want....
>
> Your sister, she not know how to ignore desire. Not know how to accept herself. She not see her duty to parents. To her, desire is above—higher—than duty to parents...She not know sacrifice. (184)

For Old Quan, and perhaps for many members of the Viet Kieu ["Overseas Vietnamese"] and Vietnamese communities, personal desires must be subsumed for the sake of the family, a concept that is Un-Vietnamese and "too American," as implied by Old Quan. Thus, Chi/Minh's actions could be interpreted as that of "willfulness," a consequence of living in the United States and being "too American"

or too "willful." I utilize this term, willfulness, in reference to Sara Ahmed's research about willful subjects, especially those subjects who are female and queer as presented in her 2014 book *Willful Subjects*. Also, Ahmed analyzes willing bodies while juxtaposing these subjects who are willful or unwilling. The willful subject, according to Ahmed, performs these actions because "[s]he wants to be herself" and to do so goes against not only the wishes of her parents but also of her community that no longer supports her. Further, Ahmed points out, "To be identified as willful is to become a problem. If to be willful is a problem, then willfulness can be understood as the problem of will… Even suicide is an expression of the will…" (Ahmed 3). This burden to sacrifice oneself for the family falls especially hard on women, who hold a proverbial duty to perform and adhere to the expectations of their families, lest they are identified as a problem, or, in Chi/Minh's situation, "too American" and are shunned or exiled by their cultural/racial community.

The legacy of Viet Nam's 6th-century religious prophet Không Tu exemplifies this familial pressure placed upon women to be willing subjects rather than willful.[6] The tenets Không Tu expressed are as follows:

> Tai Gia tòng Phu In childhood, a woman must obey her parents.
> Xuât Gia tòng Phu In marriage, a woman must obey her husband.
> Phu tòng tu tu In widowhood, a woman must obey her son.

The influence of Không Tu on Vietnamese women's roles and lives persists and pervades the households of many Vietnamese, whether they live in Viet Nam or overseas. Tu's words have been circulated and explored through various media, notably in Trinh T. Minh-ha's documentary *Sur Nam Viet Given Name Nam*, in which the Vietnamese and Francophone filmmaker explores the culture and society of Vietnamese women living in Viet Nam and the United States. Minh-ha presents the three tenets as the expectations that Vietnamese women are consciously or unconsciously obligated to fulfill. The feminine duty to abide by the three principles of Tu's doctrine instills a patriarchal control over women's bodies and choices, indicating what Adrienne Rich has termed a "compulsory heterosexuality,"[7] that openly declares that women must be heterosexual and reproductively active.

Nonetheless, filmmaker Minh-ha does not engage in questions of queer and/or transgender identity in her exploration of the roles of Vietnamese and Vietnamese diasporic women in connection to Tu's legacy. While filming a heterogeneous group of women from various generations, with a mixture of those living in the United States and abroad, Minh-ha does not interview queer women or transgender people. Although the documentary challenges the presupposition that these Vietnamese women should acquiesce to patriarchal norms, all the women who were interviewed addressed heteronormative attitudes relating to dating cis-gendered men or reflected concerns about dating or being married to these cis-gendered men. Their Vietnamese female identities were still intimately tied to the heterosexual, patriarchal familial structure.

While Minh-ha's documentary was produced in 1989, her film and Tu's words are embedded ten years later in Old Quan's conversation with Pham in Pham's 1999 memoir. Chi/Minh's "desire"—the word used by Old Quan in critique of Chi/Minh—is coded to mean sexual desire, perhaps even queer and transgressive desire. This desire, according to Old Quan, is "selfish" and "wrong," and thus an insult to the community, which is what caused Chi/Minh's excommunication from the family and subsequent suicide. The reality is much more tragic: it is the community's ostracism and punishment of the now "deformed" Chi/Minh that caused he/him to take her/his own life. It was her/his isolation through his family's inability to accept her/him that caused her/him to turn to the only form of a reprieve she/he could see for her/himself. Once again, Ahmed's work proves useful as she writes, "Willfulness is thus compromising; it compromises the capacity of the subject to survive, let alone flourish. The punishment for willfulness is a passive willing of death, an allowing of death" (1). Later on, in Pham's work, he notes that the youngest sister of the family did not even know that she had an older sister/brother. Thus, the family allowed Chi/Minh to die and, in fact, erased Chi/Minh's existence in life and in death, most likely due to Chi/Minh's willfulness or "Americanness" in not conforming to heterosexist, patriarchal and familial Vietnamese expectations.

In his search to understand Chi/Minh's death, Andrew Pham conveys the following:

> Chi was just never meant to be a girl. That simple. I had always known she was different. Unusual. An active,

> quiet, and thoughtful first-child, Chi carried herself in such an unassuming way that I instinctively looked to her as my oldest brother. Perhaps I even resented it as a child because I was the first son. While I reaped the prodigal privileges, I suspected they should have been her honor. (Pham 189)

Chi's "masculine abilities" faced a different interpretation when she/he lived in Viet Nam. While Pham's family was still living in Viet Nam, it was Chi who looked after the family, and it was Chi who taught her/his younger brothers how to swim and catch fish. It was also Chi who carried their brother Hien on her back for miles and held Andrew's hand as they waded into the water and onto the boat that would take them away from their homeland, Viet Nam. Chi's masculine strength was trusted and valued, and it had proved itself time and again, especially while living in Viet Nam.

This perceived strength becomes "willfulness" and changes through the family's transnational geographical migration. What was once an asset changes to a liability. As Pham describes, it is when the family moves to California that Chi fully transforms herself from female to male and becomes Minh. Pham explicates:

> The first thing Chi did when we moved to California was throw away all her dresses and skirts. From her first day at high school, she wore men's clothing. Her teachers, misled by her confident male body language, instinctively classified her as a boy.... Whether she wanted it or not, Chi had a new identity. At school, she was a he. And she used the boys' locker room and competed in boys' sports. She didn't speak much English then, but what friends she had were all boys. She was one of them. (Pham 195)

Although it may appear that Chi/Minh transformed, in Pham's eyes, the reality is that her/his subjectivity and "masculine" characteristics had always been present, both in Viet Nam and the U.S.; nevertheless, the transnational geographical migration highlighted and underscored this transgendered identity more forcefully, perhaps, than if Chi/Minh had stayed in Viet Nam.[8]

In addition to being misrecognized and read as male, Chi's/Minh's relationship with their father worsens when the Pham family

is living in the United States. Although Chi has always enacted and performed a masculine role--both in Viet Nam and the United States--at least in Viet Nam her grandmother, with whom she wanted to live even after Chi's father planned the family's escape from Viet Nam, mediated her interactions with her father.[9] Chi's grandmother encouraged Chi to be independent and act in whatever manner she wanted, while Chi's father disciplined and punished his children, obstructing their self-realization. Without Chi's grandmother to intervene, Chi's father would typically punish his children by beating them with a belt. In Chi's/Minh's final act of rebellion against her father, when they were living in the United States, she/he reported her/his father to the police, who came to the Pham's residence. Chi's/Minh's father was handcuffed in front of his wife, children, and community. It was in this act of shaming that Chi's/Minh's father finally disowned Chi/Minh and exiled her/him from the family. Might this final break have occurred because Chi/Minh was confronting her/his father as a man, holding Pham, the father, responsible for his actions and putting a check on his recourse to physical violence? Or was this break the result of Chi/Minh having outsiders intervene in familial matters, which thereby resulted in her father's emasculation in front of his family and the Viet Kieu community? There could be numerous reasons for Chi/Minh's exile, all befitting a heterosexist, racial, and patriarchal structure that punishes willful actions by queer and/or female subjects, highlighted notably in Ahmed's work on willful issues and exemplified by Chi/Minh.

Although her story is not so tragic as Chi's/Minh's, Mai in *Mai's America* also performs and plays with her gender and queer identity. The audience is introduced to Mai as she is walking in downtown Ha Noi, the capital, which is located in the north of Viet Nam. Mai, wearing glasses and sporting shaggy, bowl-cut, short hair, encounters two young shoeshine boys on the streets. Although she could be mistaken for a young boy herself, Mai is introduced as coming from an upper-class, wealthy Vietnamese family. Her family lives in one of a few hotels that her father owns, while her mother is a schoolteacher. As a former soldier who drove tanks for the North Vietnamese army, her family is politically well-connected, and through her father's political connections, the family enjoys a better life than most Vietnamese. This privilege is demonstrated narratively by the filmmaker through the depiction of Mai driving her motor scooter, and later playing the piano in the family's large living room. Mai's family are in such robust

economic circumstances that Mai has the opportunity to become a foreign exchange student in Meridian, Mississippi, where she at first lives with a white family and then a black Baptist one. *Mai's America* is well researched and analyzed in both Leslie Bow's article, Transracial/ Transgender: Analogies of Difference in Mai's America and Cynthia Wu's article, "Distanced from Dirt: Transnational Vietnam and the U.S. South," two works I have interspersed throughout this essay.

Cutting from the scenes in Viet Nam, the viewer is introduced to the opening of an American football game that begins with public prayer. Mai is in attendance. As the movie continues, the audience is brought into Mai's world, and the interactions between her and her host family are revealed. Mai is unhappy because her host family does not make her feel either accepted or welcomed, except the host parents' elderly parents, whom Mai refers to as "Grandpa" and "Grandma." They appear to enjoy her reference to them as being part of their family, and the viewer notices an instant bond that Mai has with her adopted grandparents. It is in one of these exchanges between Mai and her Grandpa, whom she visits when he is convalescing in the hospital that Mai tries out a novel performance of gender.[10]

Mai walks into the hospital room bearing gifts. Her hair is shaved close to her head, and Grandpa notices right away, stating: "I like your haircut. You look good but a girl ain't supposed to cut all her hair off." Mai replies, "I'm not a girl anymore," to which Grandpa responds, "Does your daddy know?" Mai answers, "My daddy doesn't know." Grandpa then adds, "Will you grow it out anymore?" In that last exchange, Mai does not answer [Film: 20:05]. This silence could be interpreted in multiple valences. As a willful subject in many scenes, Mai may not want to incur Grandpa's disapproval and thus stays silent to continue to be accepted by Grandpa and Grandma.

What is to be gleaned from these questions and answers between Grandpa and Mai? What are the implications of both the questions and the answers? Moreover, why did Mai get a "buzz-cut" and what was the cause for concern in Grandpa's tone and demeanor? The most natural response is that Grandpa, standing in for Mai's father, as the heterosexual, patriarchal authority figure, is concerned with Mai's lack of femininity (i.e., her hair). Since her hair was a symbol of her female gender, getting a buzz-cut made it harder to distinguish Mai as a "girl." It is more challenging to interpret Mai's response that she is no longer

a girl. Could it imply that she wants to be seen as a woman? If that is the case, then why did she not answer Grandpa when he asked her if she would grow her hair out? Significantly, she also refused to tell her "biological" Vietnamese father in Viet Nam that she had cut her hair. Thus, does the cutting of her hair symbolize her need to express her queerness and desire to be perceived as a boy? This concept, in fact, may be the case when it is juxtaposed with two previous scenes.

In one episode, Mai is in the bathroom, and her head is shaved. She is seen applying makeup, implying that she will be going out partying or socializing for the evening. While she is putting on her makeup, she provides a running monologue:

> All mothers in Viet Nam want their daughters to be charming and gentle. And a typical wife in Viet Nam, when a husband comes home, she should take off his jacket, prepare the meal, and never, ever talk back.... [pause]... I don't think I will ever be a typical wife. [Film: 18:02]

This scene in the bathroom reveals certain fissures in Mai's gender formation and sexual identity, the enactment of willfulness. Although she recites the traditional roles and customs that are expected of her as a dutiful Vietnamese daughter and obedient wife—referenced at the beginning of this essay—the person in front of the camera defies these categories, with her buzz-cut hair and face plastered with makeup. How would her gender and sexuality be experienced and perceived by others? To answer this question, the viewer can witness the interaction between Mai and Mai's gay friend Chris, whose other persona is Christy, who described his first meeting with Mai as follows: "The first time I met Mai, I thought she was a little boy. I said, 'Oh, Lord, not another little Oriental boy, not another one.' But, she turned out to be the perfect little young lady that you'll ever meet" [Film: 31:00].

Being mistaken as a boy was the reaction that Mai wanted from Chris/Christy when she showed him her new haircut.[11]

> She asked Chris, "Do I look like a boy now?" Chris replied, "You're more of a girl than me." [Film: 18:30]

What should be considered from this exchange is why Mai would want Chris/Christy to assume that she is a he. Is it because Mai is attracted to Chris/Christy and by making herself more like a man,

then Chris as Christy would desire Mai as male? Does Mai want a gay relationship with Chris or a lesbian relationship with Christy? These questions I raise are neither answered nor resolved because after Mai moves away to college, her relationship with Chris/Christy ends.

After all, it is only when the viewer is introduced to Chris/Christy and when their relationship blossoms that Mai fully enacts a confident "female masculinity." [12]

Throughout the film, particularly during the interactions between Mai and Chris/Christy, there is a definite shift in Mai's appearance. What is harder to understand are Mai's motivations behind her physical, transgendered metamorphosis. There are many scenes of men dressing up as women in the documentary, and Mai is enamored with Chris and the ways he prepares himself and transitions into Christy. In such situations, Mai is also in "costume" or "drag." Is she a woman who looks like a man who is dressed like a woman? What is reflected and represented to the viewers, and how much of it is Mai's active agency in performing in "ethnic drag," and what part may come with Mai not knowing the cultural referents relating to queer identity, mainly as it is presented in the United States?[13] Since it is evident throughout the film that Mai does not always understand the English that is spoken to her, would she then be able to catch the cultural signifiers that go along with language and social expression? Leslie Bow's analysis underscores my argument about trying to understand Mai's motives. Bow writes:

> Mai's inability to grasp the full meaning of those around her is a constant theme running across ethnic lines: she fails to appreciate the pun made by a white Mardi Gras reveler with a horned headdress who self-identifies as a 'horny beast.' She mistakes a Vietnamese American's view on the war when he attempts to inform her that 'not all Vietnamese wanted Communism.'… These repeated scenes of failed interpretation underscore her status as an outsider to American culture, its linguistic codes, its class and race associations, and its Cold War politics" (93).

How then, is one supposed to read Mai when she, intentionally or unintentionally, is marked as transgendered and/or queer? Do these codes even matter? But how could they not matter, especially to a marginalized and racialized group such as the queer Viet Kieu women,

who are typically forced to be silent and remain invisible, mainly if they are willful rather than willing to adhere to societal norms and pressures? Mai's friendship with Chris/Christy is driven at least in part by how enthralled Mai is by how Chris/Christy destabilizes gender. Chris/Christy may lead Mai to sense the possibility of liberation from gender norms, from the four feminine virtues and the three tenets of Không Tu. Chris/Christy, a friend who was older than Mai, seemed to have it figured out. If Chris/Christy could switch genders, perhaps Mai could escape the narrowness of that life outlined by the confines of patriarchal subordination. This tantalizing possibility Mai seems to experience has an echo in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*. Might this be an encounter with "the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power"? Mai seems to enjoy the "subversive confusion" of "troubling" gender normativity, and she unmistakably relishes Chris/Christy's ability to be who he/she wants to be.[14]

Chris/Christy gives Mai reason to hope that she can step out of unbearable feminine virtues/duties, and break with the limiting categories that frame her identity from the outside. Throughout this essay, I provided an alternative lens from which to articulate the circumstances of many Vietnamese diasporic, queer/transgendered, and female/male subjects whose voices have been either ignored, silenced, or even erased from their familial/national/transnational her/histories. I put female sexuality in the center, rather than at the periphery to show how vital it is to address how patriarchal and heterosexist expectations of Vietnamese females continue and perpetuate the oppression of these marginalized women who seek acceptance from the very people who are supposed to be their support structure and part of their families.

Notes

[1] In this paper, I will be building upon the works of both Leslie Bow's essay, "Transracial/Transgender: Analogies of Difference in Mai's America" and Cynthia Wu's article, "Distanced from Dirt: Transnational Vietnam in the U.S. South." Bow's framing of liminality is vital here: "Liminality is a 'midpoint of transition in a status-sequence between two positions' that attends the ritual processes of initiation [Turner (1974, 237)]. Those undergoing new status definition, liminal personae or 'threshold people,' are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space" (89).

[2] See Judith Bulter's *Gender Trouble* for a more comprehensive examination of gender performance.

[3] As Cynthia Wu, along with other Asian American scholars have noted, "The specter of the Vietnam War, along with the intraethnic conflicts it wrought, is never far from mind" (172).

[4] For a more comprehensive study about this topic, see Yen Le Espiritu's *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)* and Viet Thanh Nguyen's *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War.*

[5] See Daniel Belanger's chapter, "Single and Childless Women of Vietnam: Contesting and Negotiating Female Identity?" in *Gender Practices in Contemporary Vietnam* edited by Lisa Drummond and Helle Rydstrom.

[6] These tenets are presented in Trinh T. Minh-ha's documentary, *Sur Name Viet, Given Name Nam*.

[7] See Adrienne Rich's 1980 essay, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" located in the journal *Signs*.

[8] To better understand and contextualize Chi/Minh's interstitial and liminal identity, please read "Transracial/Transgender: Analogies of Difference in Mai's America," in which Leslie Bow

astutely describes the interplay between gender and race through a transgender lens that destabilizes what it means to be racialized and sexualized in the United States (75-77; 81-90).

[9] I deliberately choose to name Chi here and not Minh because in Viet Nam, that is how Chi was identified. It was only through immigration that Chi transitioned to Minh.

[10] I will discuss some earlier scenes between Mai and her gay friend Chris/Christy later on in the paper.

[11] Many of the scenes I have referenced, including this one, is analyzed at length in Leslie Bow's work, "Transracial/Transgender: Analogies of Difference in Mai's America."

[12] I use this term about Judith Halberstam's text *Female Masculinity* (Duke UP, 1998).

[13] Both Wu's and Bow's work situates Mai's America within the context of the U.S. South as well and thus, the Southern element, while not explored in this essay, is important to note.

[14] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 44.

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Telling Her Own Side of the Story: *Notes in England and Italy* by Sophia Peabody Hawthorne

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Abstract

While she is often regarded as merely Nathaniel Hawthorne's ailing wife—ignoring her careful (albeit secret) editing of his publications—Sophia Peabody Hawthorne nurtured artistic ambitions of her own. She was both a talented painter and writer. When she moved to Europe, with her family, she meticulously kept a journal and penned travel notes, which she later published as installments and then as a volume (in 1869), under the title *Notes in England and Italy*.

By focusing on the Italian part of her literary endeavor, this paper sets out to demonstrate that Sophia's experience abroad—especially in the Peninsula—enabled her to assert her identity as both a woman (beyond the customary depiction of a selfless and dutiful wife and mother) and an artist, capable of expressing her authoritative opinion, while sponsoring other fellow women artists based in Italy. As will be shown, Sophia Peabody's story narrated by Nathaniel Hawthorne—through the character of Hilda (a copyist) in *The Marble Faun* (a novel inspired by the same sojourn in Italy)—offers but a partial version of her life, which needs to be complemented with Sophia's own words.

Keywords

Sophia Peabody, Nathanial Hawthorne, Travel Writing, Gender, Women's Writings

Öyküyü Kendi Bakış Açısından Anlatmak: Sophia Peabody Hawthorne'nun *Notes in England and Italy* (İngiltere ve İtalya'dan Notlar) Adlı Kitabı

Öz

Çoğu zaman Nathaniel Hawthorne'un titizlikle çalışan gizli editörü olduğu göz ardı edilse ve yalnızca onun hasta eşi olarak anılsa da, Sophia Peabody Hawthorne kendi sanatsal tutkularını da besledi. O hem yetenekli bir ressam hem de yetenekli bir yazardı. Ailesiyle Avrupa'ya yerleştiğinde titizlikle kaleme aldığı günlüğü ve seyahat notları *Notes in England and Italy* (İngiltere ve İtalya'dan Notlar) başlığı altında önce bölümler halinde, 1869 yılında da kitap olarak basıldı.

Peabody'nin edebi uğraşının İtalya ayağına odaklanacak bu çalışma, onun ülkesi dışındaki, özellikte İtalya Yarımadası'ndaki, deneyimlerinin hem bir kadın (geleneksel kadın ve anne tanımının dışına çıkan) hem de İtalya'daki kadın sanatçılara maddi destek sağlayan bir sanatçı olarak kimliğini ortaya koymasını mümkün kıldığını göstermeye çalışacaktır. Bu çalışmadan da anlaşılacağı gibi, Sophia Peabody'nin Nathaniel Hawthorne'un İtalya'daki geçici ikametinden esinlenen *The Marble Faun* romanındaki kâtibe Hilda karakteri üzerinden anlatılan öyküsü, yalnızca onun hayatının kendisi tarafından tamamlanması gereken bir kısmını sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Sophia Peabody, Nathanial Hawthorne, Gezi Edebiyatı, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Kadın Yazını

Until recently, Sophia Peabody's artistic endeavors as a painter and a writer have received scant and cursory critical attention. Indeed, as Annamaria Formichella Elsden has elucidated, Peabody's large body of letters (more than 1,500), the surviving portions of her nineteen journals, her travelogue entitled *Notes in England and*

Italy, and even her numerous canvases have often been examined and investigated by scholars with the sole intention of unearthing references to the "activities, health, state of mind, social engagements and literary productivity" (Elsden, *Roman Fever* 71) of her renowned husband Nathaniel Hawthorne. Starting from *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife*[1] (1884), a joint biography in two volumes penned by their son Julian, the iconic portrait of Peabody as a dutiful, supportive, and self-effacing partner has been handed down to posterity, persistently repeated in a number of later biographical accounts.[2] More than a century later, for example, Edwin H. Miller[3] and by Luanne Jenkins Hurst voiced similar opinions. Hurst even asserts that Peabody willingly accepted the burden of household duties as well as her ancillary role as a mere facilitator in the crafting of Hawthorne's masterpieces.[4]

In the past three decades, however, a few scholarly efforts reassessed Sophia Peabody's position. Patricia Dunlavy Valenti believes she deserves to be ranked "among the earliest women in American painting" (1), while Annamaria Formichella Elsden laments that, to date, her promising career as an artist has been overshadowed by her husband's blazing fame. Furthermore, as she observes, the emphasis constantly placed on Peabody as an editor of Hawthorne's novels and travel notes[5] regrettably "continues a legacy of silencing begun during her marriage" (Elsden, "Watery Angels" 130).[6]

Against the background of the recent re-evaluation of Sophia Peabody's output, this essay sets out to explore the Italian chapters of her *Notes in England and Italy* (1869)[7] which, as argued here, proved essential to the assertion of her identity as both a woman and an artist. Following an introductory section aimed at casting light on the controversial part her husband played in the delayed development and the ambivalent expression of Sophia's creative drive, this essay aims at providing insight into the strategies she devised to establish her authoritative voice, thus finally managing, after Hawthorne's death, to tell *her own* side of the story. First of all, the writer daringly offered her personal, often challenging perspective on ancient and contemporary works of art, thus subtly unsettling stereotypical perceptions of women. Secondly, Peabody did not refrain from taking a keen and open interest in the contemporary historical juncture, traditionally regarded as an *unfeminine* concern; she even crafted a project of political and social reform, which could be carried out through the contemplation and the democratization of art.

Coming from a family of intellectuals and writers, Sophia was granted an uncommonly comprehensive education for a woman, which included the study of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French (Valenti 1). She started her career as a copyist and painter as a profitable alternative to marriage: she was firmly convinced that no man would ever tie the knot with an ailing lady, whose recurrent and disabling headaches had been worsened by mercury-based treatments during childhood (Vogelius 86). Hence, under the careful guidance of well-known painters, such as Chester Harding, Thomas Doughty, and Washington Allston, she soon distinguished herself as a gifted copyist, capable of earning a comfortable living with the proceeds of her sales. Her detailed and entertaining letters, especially those from Cuba (where she repaired in 1833-35, to recover from mental exhaustion), attracted the admiring attention of both her sister Elizabeth (who repeatedly prompted her to publish them) and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Given his close acquaintance with Elizabeth, in fact, the young writer was afforded the rare possibility to read the so-called *Cuba Journal*, a collection of manuscript letters in three-volumes that the Peabody family had eventually bound for private circulation. Hawthorne was so impressed by Sophia's talent that he decided to copy some passages of her outstanding *Journal* into his own notebooks (Vogelius 86).

Following their wedding and the birth of their first child, Una, Sophia stopped painting,[8] while she eagerly continued to write. When the family left for Liverpool, where Nathaniel held the position of consul for five years (between 1853 and 1858), Peabody wrote several journal entries and fascinating letters, which delighted her friends back home. The Hawthornes' prolonged stay in Rome, Florence, and the surrounding areas, in 1858-59, resulted in a series of insightful notes that she shared with Elizabeth. Sophia was immediately approached by James Fields (of Ticknor & Fields, her husband's publishers) to arrange for their serialized publication in the *Atlantic Monthly*, but she gracefully declined his flattering proposal:

> I am very sorry indeed that you should ask me to do any thing [sic] for you which I cannot possibly do. I assure you most earnestly that nothing less urgent and terrible than the immediate danger of starvation for my husband and children would induce me to put myself into a magazine or a pair of book covers. You forget that Mr. Hawthorne is the Belleslettres [sic] portion

> of my being, and besides that I have a repugnance to female authoresses in general, I have far more distaste for myself as a female authoress in particular. (qtd. in Hall 138)

In a letter she wrote to Elizabeth, however, the writer provided an alternative, probably more truthful version of the same story; in a laconic—albeit revealing—comment, she earnestly voiced her disappointment and frustration at missing such an extraordinary opportunity: "I see that it is my plain duty not to argue the matter any further with Mr. Hawthorne. […] You know I have to postpone all my own possibilities in the way of art" (qtd. in Hall 139). Even though Hawthorne greatly valued his wife's writing skills and openly praised her account of their experience in England and Italy,[9] he never wished her narratives to appear in print, since he equated women's violation of the domestic sphere through publication with prostitution (Vogelius 87). His most (in)famous remark on women writers is included in a 1855 letter he sent to William D. Ticknor, his friend, advisor, and publisher. As he spitefully wrote, "America is now wholly given over to a d—d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash−and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed" (Hawthorne, *Letters* 55). As Edwin H. Miller has noticed, the author "did not want [his spouse] to become a female scribbler: he preferred silent women and no competition" (202).[10] The scholar's words are strikingly reminiscent of another (ill-)famed letter that Hawthorne sent to his friend Francis Bennoch in November 1859, where his idea of Sophia as a meek and compliant angel in the house is markedly evident:

> Mrs. Hawthorne had a note from Fields, yesterday, requesting her to become a contributor to the Atlantic Monthly! I don't know whether I can tolerate a literary rival at bed and board; there would probably be a new chapter in the "Quarrel of Authors." However, I make myself at ease on that score, as she positively refuses to be famous, and contents herself with being the best wife and mother in the world. (qtd. in Homer 279)

Notes in England and Italy was eventually released five years after Hawthorne's death,[11] when Sophia and her children were residing in Dresden, a city where the family could enjoy a comparatively higher standard of living with the same income.[12] Nevertheless, Peabody's

decision to finally expose her account to the public gaze cannot be ascribed to mere financial straits, as Miller seems to believe (202). After all, her editorial work on Hawthorne's notebooks was already yielding good returns. On the other hand, as Julie E. Hall has underlined, "in coming to Europe, Sophia Hawthorne had come into herself" (149): her travel to Europe in the 1850s and the foreign context in which her notes were revised for publication had provided her with the distance necessary to emancipate herself from social constraints, thus recovering a significant part of her identity. Accordingly, it could be argued that far from simply gathering her memories and impressions of picturesque locations, museums, and art galleries, her travelogue actually chronicled her quest for self-fulfillment and personal (as well as collective) liberation.

In her essay on American women and travel writing, Susan L. Robertson has drawn attention to the domestic dimension of *Notes in England and Italy*: indeed, Sophia travelled through England and Italy with her husband (whom she obediently followed) and their three children (224). Moreover, the volume is dedicated to Elizabeth Peabody, identified as "her sister" (Peabody Hawthorne 1), and signed in the most conservative way, as "Mrs. Nathaniel Hawthorne." The short "Preface" to the text apparently confirms this perception. The author seems at pains to highlight her unwillingness to "appear before the public" (3): as she humbly confesses, she had reluctantly surrendered to the pressure of her friends who had "repeatedly urged [her] to print [her notes] from a too partial estimate of their value" (3). Nonetheless, a quick comparison between the original letters and journals and their published edition reveals that, in the latter, most passages portraying family scenes are entirely missing (Vogelius 100). In addition, in *Notes*, Hawthorne, Una, Julian and Rose are barely hinted at through their initials, while Sophia wonders unchaperoned through the new territories *she* discovers. The domestic aspects of her life abroad, therefore, are virtually absent from her account which, especially in the Italian section, is centered on the countless works of art Sophia Peabody, the painter and the writer, has the occasion to admire and describe for the benefit of her readers.

The choice of the masterpieces featured in her travelogue is never accidental. At Palazzo Barberini in Rome she is captivated by one of Domenichino's canvases entitled "Garden of Eden, after the Fall," which enables her to address the issue of women's original

sin and their subsequent sense of guilt and subjection to men. In her interpretive ekphrasis, she makes clever use of the painting to subvert the customary depiction of the scene, which epitomizes the asymmetric relation between the sexes. While Eve displays dignity and composure in pointing at the snake (truly responsible for their fall), Adam reveals his vile and cowardly nature in casting all the blame on his companion:

> Adam points to Eve to excuse himself for having disobeyed His commands with a pitiful air of unmanly cowardice, and actually shrugs his shoulders at the Almighty [the first shrug], as if he said, "Thou seest how it is−that woman tempted me." Eve is kneeling, and turns to the Creator with a much more dignified and respectable gesture of concern, and points to the serpent for her defence; and the serpent is wriggling away as fast as it can, perfectly conscious of its base purpose. All the grandeur of Adam has collapsed under that shrug and cringing look toward his Maker, though it is evident that his "front" has been "sublime." Self-respect having gone, however, and taken with it his self-possession, he is king no more. He is weak, and his scepter is taken from him. (Peabody Hawthorne 210-11)

In the same palace, she lingers on the famous portrait of Beatrice Cenci attributed to Guido Reni. The ambiguity of Beatrice's character (after years of sexual abuse, the young girl had murdered her father) is completely deconstructed by Sophia: the parricide, "a spotless lily of Eden" (213), is an innocent victim of a desecrating power exercised by a vicious and violent man. Hence, she is viewed as an untainted angel, who has simply defended her inalienable right to life:

> Extremest youth, with youth's virgin innocence and ignorance of all crime−an expression in the eyes as if they asked, "Oh what is it−what has happened−how am I involved?" […] The white, smooth brow is a throne of infantine, angelic purity, without a visible cloud or furrow of pain, yet a wild, endless despair hovers over it. […] If this be a portrait, and it surely is, then Beatrice Cenci must have been as free from crime as the blazing angel of Domenichino's picture opposite to it[.] (213-14)

Together with proud Zenobia[13] (the queen of Palmyra, an emblem of nobility and female empowerment, even when captive), Beatrice Cenci is once again mentioned in the travelogue as one of the subjects of Miss Hosmer's statues.[14] While in Rome and Florence, Sophia had the chance to visit the studios of a number of expatriate artists. In *Notes in England and Italy*, therefore, she included a rather complimentary portrayal of Harriet Hosmer, the first professional female sculptor in America, as well as being a role-model for many women, inspired by her self-confidence and independence, coupled with impeccable manners and womanly charms. As Sophia records,

> Her action was as bright, sprightly, and vivid as that of a bird: a small figure, round face, and tiny features, except large eyes; hair short, and curling up round a black velvet cap, planted directly upon the middle of her head, instead of jauntily on one side, as is usual with artists; her hands thrust into the pockets of a close-fitting cloth jacket−a collar and cravat like a young man's−and a snowy plaited chemisette, like a shirt-bosom. I liked her at once, she was so frank and cheerful, independent, honest, and sincere− wide awake, energetic, yet not ungentle. (265)

Interestingly enough, after her encounter with Hosmer (whose unusual garments and hair-style visibly betrayed her disregard for gender boundaries and prerogatives), Sophia becomes increasingly outspoken, as if encouraged by a kindred spirit to express her perceptive thoughts without restraints. Hosmer used to share her Roman studio with another artist, Mr. Gibson, whose marble Venus elicits Sophia's disappointment, caused by the painted details of the statue. Despite his protestations that the effect was surely richer, she is "not frightened out of [her] protest" (266); quite the opposite, she boldly "persist[s] that [she] wishe[s] for pure form, and not painting in sculpture" (267), while the baffled man vainly strives to divert the conversation to a different subject and, eventually, ends up agreeing with her. In the rest of the account, Sophia refuses to be silenced, even when her opinion clashes with the views of prominent authorities (invariably men). While in Florence, for example, she defends the neoclassical sculptor Hiram Powers against the accusations of "W.S.," who "had said that [he] had but one type, and there was no variety in his ideal faces and forms" (365). Through the close examination of four of his marble

creations (namely Proserpine, Diana, Psyche, and Eve), she succeeds in demonstrating that "there is an entire difference between them" (365) and that W.S.'s was "quite an unjust remark" (365).[15] All the same, Sophia is never partial: a few pages later, she harshly criticized Powers himself for censuring the head of "the lovely Venus de Medici" (373): "He says she has the face of an idiot! […] The profile view is sweet and delicate, and fitly surmounts the unsurpassed beauty of the form" (374). She even dares to disagree with Ralph Waldo Emerson in matters of travel and the benefits one can derive from visiting a different country. In his essay entitled "Self-Reliance," in fact, the leader of the Transcendentalist movement had ridiculed "the superstition of travelling, whose idols are Italy, England, Egypt" (35), adding that "the soul is no traveller; the wise man stays at home" (35), since "travelling is a fool's Paradise" (35). Conversely, as will be further discussed later on in this essay, Sophia believed in the enlightening potential of art, which could be better appreciated in the lands where "the Great Masters in Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting" (3) were born. Consequently, she thus comments, in a slightly teasing tone:

> How could wise and great Mr. E. say such a preposterous thing as that it was just as well *not* to travel as to travel! And that Each man has Europe in him, or something to that effect? No, indeed; it would be better if every man could look upon these wonders of genius, and grow thereby. Besides, Mr. E. had been to Europe himself, how could he tell? Would he willingly have foregone all he saw in Italy? It was mere transcendental nonsense– such a remark. (Peabody Hawthorne 326)

In *Notes in England and Italy*, Sophia ventures into another realm positively forbidden to women: the terrain of politics. The debased condition of Italy, subjugated by foreign tyrants and exploited by greedy, corrupted, and depraved rulers, is one of the recurring motifs of the travelogue. The writer never misses the opportunity to emphasize the crass ignorance (or the culpable carelessness) of the French sentinels scattered in every corner of the Eternal City. When asked where Palazzo Rospigliosi was, they replied they did not know, "though they were keeping guard just opposite to it, as it proved" (216). "Je ne sais pas" (242) is the only full sentence "these mean-looking, ugly, diminutive barbarians" (342) are capable of uttering, which corresponds "to the exact amount of their knowledge" (342). The Pope,

in his capacity as spiritual and political guide of the Papal States, and his plethora of cardinals, bishops, and priests are equally thoughtless, uncultivated, and vulgarly attached to material possessions, to such an extent that the ancient Roman relics are plundered to embellish their residences. As readers are informed, Pope Urban VIII (a Barberini) built his Barberini Palace "out of the Coliseum−daring to pull down that lordly ruin for materials for his house"[16] (208). The Mausoleum of Cecilia Metella, along the Appian Way, was pillaged over the centuries by "reprehensible Popes [who had] violently destroyed a great part, for the sake of robbing it of the slabs of fine marbles with which it was covered" (251). Paul V (a Borghese) removed Raphael's "Entombment" from the church of San Francesco dei Conventuali to adorn his palace: "why should a Pope steal any more than a private person?"—wonders the author—"Does his position as Head of the Church make the crime less? I should think he, of all persons, should obey the commandments" (324). While citizens languish and starve, priests ravenously devour: in Florence, their appearance is "invariably repulsive" (480): "they are mostly fat, with flabby cheeks, chins, and throats, of very earthly aspect. There is nothing to compare them but to hogs, and they merely need to stoop upon their hands to be perfect likeness of swine" (480). The Grand Duke of Tuscany is also metamorphosed into an animal to signify his inner degradation: he "looked like a monkey, with an evil disposition, most ugly and mean"[17] (411).

The Hawthornes' intimacy with the Brownings (amply documented in the travelogue[18]) must have contributed to the shaping of Sophia's political ideas. Both Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning were staunch supporters of the Italian cause in the years preceding the unification. Thus, after the initial enthusiasm for leaving the lands governed by Pope ("the Grand Duke will be quite a pleasant change after the Pontifex Maximus [341]), the writer soon discovers that, in truth, he is just as "treacherous" (399), and totally concurs with the negative judgment expressed by "Mrs. Browning [who had] deprived him of his princeliness by the deeds of his she ha[d] sung in 'Casa Guidi Windows'" (399). Peabody's political and artistic reflections once again merge in her description of illustrious Renaissance palaces, such as Palazzo Pitti, Palazzo Riccardi, and Palazzo Strozzi in Florence; those "dark, indestructible, gloomy" constructions frighten her with "a sense of hopelessness" (407): "they are defiant with strength, and like prisons

from which there is no escape" (407). Their thick, impenetrable, and immutable walls—curiously described as an "unsympathizing mass" (408)—cannot but instigate cruelty and other negative feelings in those who dwell between them: "when a prince gets inside those walls, can he feel any pity?" (408).

Oppressed by iniquitous governments, the Italians Sophia meets on the streets resemble "puppets galvanized into motion" (468), "empty chrysalids [*sic*]−deserted shells. Something has scared away souls−and only automatons remain" (468). The author regretfully contrasts those living ruins of men with the eminent figures of the past ("masters in Art, in State, in Science" [468]) whose marble effigies are still located in the court of the Uffizi: "they would be more fitting and proper to the place than those persons whom we meet to-day" (468). Nonetheless, despite the bleakness of the contemporary political and social scenario in Italy, "the land seems catching its breath. It is not dead, but oppressed and suffocated" (468). A few pages later Sophia Peabody reiterates that concept by stating that the country "is not dead−only faint, and Italy alone is thoroughly civilized through and through, since immemorial ages" (493). In her opinion, what may prompt the Italians to renew their eclipsed values, thus releasing themselves from the shackles of moral and physical servitude, is the redemptive power of ancient and pre-Raphaelite art, provided that it is adequately preserved and made available to all strata of society. Gazing at the magnificence of the Flaminian Way, "a masterpiece of human hands and heads" (296) with its large, flat stones skillfully joined together, the writer ponders on the empowering feelings inspired by the sight of such an astounding specimen of human craft:

> I look upon this road with absorbing interest. There is something that contents, or rather, that is satisfactory to man's right royal demand for incredible deeds, in these Roman relics. It is not the triumph of our pride, so much as the proof of our possibilities, that gratifies one. The Romans had the will and the might−*virtue*−as they understood it−according to their acceptation of the word. If there were will and might−virtue according to Christ, what could not be done? (297)

Sophia is just afraid that those "admirably fitted blocks" (296) might be foolishly removed by covetous and selfish Popes to build other

structures: "how impious in this way are the Piuses, how merciless the Clements, how unblest the Benedicts!" (297). When it comes to pre-Raphaelite art, the author, first of all, clarifies what she means by that term, thus rejecting the modern notion of Pre-Raphaelitism:

> what is called preraphaelite [*sic*] painting in England is not like this. Expression without beauty, to be sure, we see in modern English pictures, called by this name; but all the religion is left out, all the holy fervor, sincerity, and simplicity. Perhaps I should not say the *sincerity* is left out; but the simplicity is−the single thought−the unselfish aim. (312)

Indeed, the great masters of the past created their works of art "without a thought of earthly fame" (313); they are compared to "holy men [who] dedicated their genius to heaven" (328). Ample sections of the narrative are dedicated to the meticulous descriptions of altarpieces, frescoes, and canvases, as well as to the ennobling reactions they arouse in the viewer, somehow appeased and comforted by them. The illumined clouds painted by Pinturicchio, for example, are endowed with the faculty of restoring hope, since they "show that Our Father is present even in what seems to us to be shadows. What a tender manner of teaching this eternal truth!" (328), comments Sophia. Before the "Madonna and Child" by Fra' Angelico, she feels soothed by the baby Jesus, standing upon his mother's knees with both his arms stretched out in blessing: "he is the Sun of righteousness, delineated with the pencil of a mortal saint, and this Sun is all made up of Love−good will to man. How can one believe in an angry, avenging Deity who looks upon this true revelation of the Father?" (356-7). The invaluable treasures of Italian art, however, are being neglected by local authorities, who fail to acknowledge their real worth. In the church of Santa Croce, in Florence, frescoes by Giotto and Giottino have "all been whitewashed over" (405) and only recently restored (albeit poorly). In another church, in San Miniato, "ancient frescoes are fading and crumbling on the walls" (499): exceedingly dejected, the writer discerns "some great old saints fast vanishing away, alas! Alas! And alas!" (499). Sodoma's fresco of Christ bound to the column, in Siena, "is peeling off the wall, and is already very much injured" (504). Hence, Sophia Peabody, the engaged artist, offers her advice to the Pope, encouraging him to undertake major works of restoration for the sake of an improved society: "I should think Pio Nono would be better

employed in preserving such works from destruction than in writing encyclical letters; for I believe he would save more souls by it. If any visible thing can win a soul to heaven, it is this embodied worship in spirit and in truth" (312).

In the same passage, she also expresses the following, unusual wish, probably stemming from the feeling that her suggestions are doomed to remain within the confines of her account: "Oh, why does not some one [*sic*] draw and engrave the divine creations of the old masters in fresco, before they are all faded away!" (312). The abundant presence of copyists (mainly active in Rome and Florence) and the wide circulation of copies from ancient and famous paintings are among the most remarkable features of *Notes in England and Italy.*[19] Sophia even elucidates the qualities true copyists must possess, which are by no means limited to talent and skills: "they should be informed with the feeling and secret of the soul that wrought the wonder, or they only hide the masterpiece they pretend to repeat" (260). After introducing her readers to a long succession of mediocre artists,[20] at the Vatican Museums she eventually happens to notice a young painter, copying the groups and the single figures of a frescoed chapel "in an extraordinary manner and with the utmost fidelity" (320): "he, and others as accomplished and faithful, should be commissioned to save in imperishable lines the vanishing masterpieces of fresco-painting, so that at least the designs and expression may not be lost" (320-21). As mentioned before, the author herself was a fine copyist and, possibly, she felt entrusted with that very mission. Furthermore, as Christa Holm Vogelius has pointed out, her travelogue may be read as a spectacular series of ekphrases or word paintings, characterized by "the same preservationist function" (93) of visual copies. Still, it could be argued that the importance Peabody attached to the creative efforts of a copyist (and to the verbal copies she inserted in her narrative) is even greater than the sheer conservation of damaged masterpieces, vanishing repositories of forgotten but much needed values. Through the truthful duplication and the thorough dissemination of inspiring works, art ceases to be the privilege of a mean-spirited and egotistical elite; on the contrary, it can be democratically shared and universally enjoyed, thus enhancing the possibilities of an individual as well as a communal regeneration.

Sophia Peabody Hawthorne's gravestone bears the following inscription: "Sophia, Wife of Nathaniel Hawthorne." As this essay tried

to demonstrate, she cannot be simplistically identified as the spouse, the confidante, the editor, or the supporter of the celebrated writer. An artist herself, a tireless traveler, a spirited lady, an acute observer of contemporary phenomena and historical events, she certainly deserves the scholarly attention that, until the past three decades, she has been completely denied. Through her *Notes in England and Italy*, released five years after the death of her husband, she finally managed to recover her voice in order to tell, at least in part, *her own* side of the story.

Notes

[1] In the title, Sophia is merely identified with her role as a wife.

[2] Julian described his mother as an accomplished and learned lady; yet he could not refrain from infantilizing her, by adding that she was "always childlike in her modesty and simplicity" (vol. I 40). Seemingly unsure of her worth, she heavily relied on the superior judgment of her spouse, whom she loved and served with utmost devotion. As Julian observed, "her husband appreciated her, but she had no appreciation of herself. She only felt what a privilege it was to love and minister to such a man, and to be loved by him" (vol. I 41).

[3] Miller published a calendar of Sophia's letters preceded by a brief biographical sketch; as well as labeling her "the invalid of the [Peabody] family" (200), due to her persistent and debilitating migraines, he maintained that "her 'sphere', to use one of her favourite words, was the family, first the Peabody family and later her own as the wife of a man whom she ranked with Shakespeare and the classical gods, especially Apollo" (199).

[4] In her 1999 essay entitled "The Chief Employ of Her Life," Hurst acknowledged Sophia's major contribution to "the success of her husband's career as one of America's great men of letters" (46), namely "her concern for the sanctity of his study" (45), her almost religious respect for his intellectual activities.

[5] Sophia Peabody copy-edited most of her spouse's works; besides, she edited and published his travel notes and notebooks: *Passages from the American Notebooks* appeared in 1868; *Passages from the English Notebooks* was published in both England and the US in 1870 and *Passages from the French and Italian Notebooks* (in two volumes), in 1871-72 (Hall 141).

[6] Her opinion is also shared by Julie E. Hall, who forcefully rejects the general perception of Sophia "as the quintessential Victorian woman, contented to live her life within the confines of nineteenth century gender codes" (137); conversely, the artist deserves to be

recognized "as a creator and a word-crafter herself" (141), not just as Hawthorne's first audience, as the committed preserver of his manuscripts.

[7] Her travelogue was the only work she released during her lifetime. Sophia Peabody died in February 1871: she probably had no time to plan other publications.

[8] To increase the financial security of her family, she used to make "inlaid hand fire-screens and painted lampshades for five dollars each" (Valenti 15).

[9] In a letter to Ticknor he had candidly admitted that "Mrs. Hawthorne altogether excel[led him] as a writer of travels" (qtd. in Hall 138).

[10] Probably for this very reason Hawthorne decided to burn virtually all his wife's love letters before departing for Europe (Miller 201). Destroying her written words was a way of silencing Sophia.

[11] Some excerpts appeared in *Putnam's Magazine* in 1869; later that year, the entire travelogue was published in a book form in both the United States and England. The account proved to be quite successful, since it went into eight editions between 1869 and 1882 (Hall 137).

[12] The city was also chosen to give Julian the chance to study engineering at the prestigious Polytechnic.

[13] Elsewhere in the travelogue, the historical figure is described as "proud Zenobia" (250).

[14] In this case, the girl sleeps peacefully on a tomb.

[15] Many more examples could be quoted; in front of the "Gate of Paradise" sculpted by Ghiberti for the Florence Baptistery, she observes: "I wish Westmacott would not twaddle so about bas-reliefs as he does. I do not agree with him at all; but when Academicians get hold of a rule they stultify themselves by holding to it, against all the intuitions of genius" (388). Again, at the Uffizi Gallery, unlike

Mr. Ware, she is not particularly impressed by Michelangelo's "Holy Family:" "I wished to see Michel Angelo's Holy Family, after reading Mr. Ware's excessive eulogium of the Madonna. Mr. Ware has gone mad on that Madonna, I believe, for I am sure she is not what he describes her to be. With all my faith in and enthusiasm for the artist, I cannot see in it what he rages about" (422). Other times, she cannot refrain from exhibiting her singular talent as an art expert: "we saw a vase of marvelous beauty of design and execution−bronze, about two feet high. I exclaimed that it must be by Benvenuto Cellini, and the custode [*sic*] said it was so" (466). Given her vast experience of art galleries and her familiarity with the effects of light and darkness on a canvas, Sophia often blames the Italians for their poor arrangement of paintings and statues; for instance, Michelangelo's "Pietà" in the Florentine Duomo is in a "dark place, where it is nearly impossible ever to see it all" (425); in the Chapel of the Salviati, the beautiful bas-reliefs "are placed too high to be seen−how unaccountably foolish!" (450).

[16] Elsewhere in the narrative, Sophia informs that "four great palaces have already been built out of the Coliseum, and a dozen more would have been pulled out of it, if the Cross had not been set up in the arena" (232).

[17] In another passage of the travelogue, she thus remarks: "when a prince takes the form of a monkey, he ought to be deposed" (468).

[18] See, for example, pages 344, 345, 362, 393, 399, 409, and 424. Other writers committed to the cause of Italian independence are also mentioned: P.B. Shelley (282), Leigh Hunt (477) and, most of all, Lord Byron, whose lines are often quoted (301, 306, 332, 464, 473, 492, 533). Mazzini, the head of the Giovane Italia (a political movement founded to promote an insurrection in the reactionary states) is also featured in the travel account: "the city gate swung up in the air to let our carriage pass under, and we might have smuggled Mazzini into Florence; for though they asked us questions, they did not look into our midst, and the guard on duty quietly stood aside" (403).

[19] See, for example, pages 210, 212, 236, 238, 240, 258, 264, 312, 320, 323, 351, 354, 357, 369, 373, 456, 466, 479. Nathaniel

Hawthorne did not hold copies in particular esteem; in his last complete novel, *The Marble Faun*, also based on his experience in Italy, he included a copyist among the characters, Hilda, whose works are ironically considered "the counterpart, in picture, of so many feminine achievements in literature!" (*The Marble* 49). According to Louise Hall Tharp, Hilda was modeled on Sophia: "Hawthorne, seeing her perennially young as he always did, began to picture her as a young artist in Italy. 'I was *not* Mr. Hawthorne's Hilda', Sophia would declare again and again after *The Marble Faun* was finished. She would not have needed to deny it so often if those who knew her had not found her in the book (258).

[20] Here are some instances: "a young artist was copying one of the groups […] he had not succeeded in getting a single face right" (236); "this of Guilio [*sic*] Romano [*a copy of Raphael's portrait of Julius II*], though very splendid, has not the strength in the mouth that Raphael's has, and the artist who was copying it today failed still more in the same feature" (238); "the artist who was copying [the canvas] had entirely missed the face and the sway of the attitude" (258)."

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The Glamour of Exotica and Erotica: The Travel Writing of Isabella Stewart Gardner

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Abstract

This article explores the travel writing of Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840–1924), a Boston socialite who, over the course of nearly thirty years (1867–1895), toured the world and documented her trips through journals, albums and extensive correspondence with confidants such as novelist Henry James. It argues that because of its transgressive elements, specifically its depiction of nineteenth-century taboos such as the exotic, erotic and macabre, Gardner's travel writing provides significant, yet complex, insight into the art collector's life, even though like her museum, it is carefully curated. Moreover, this article underscores how, on one hand, such travel writing served as a counternarrative to rigid Victorian social and cultural codes, while on the other, it provided women like Gardner with a problematic discursive space to negotiate orientalist and imperialist authority and power.

Keywords

Isabel Stewart Garner, Nineteenth Century, Travel Writing, Counternarrative, Neurasthenia, United State

Egzotik ve Erotiğin Cazibesi: Isabella Stewart Gardner'ın Gezi Yazıları

Öz

Bu makale, neredeyse otuz yıl içerisinde (1867–1895) dünyayı dolaşan ve gezilerini günlükler, albümler ve romancı Henry James gibi sırdaşlarıyla gerçekleştirdiği yoğun yazışmalar biçiminde belgeleyen, aynı zamanda Boston sosyetesinin renkli simalarından biri olan, Isabella Stewart Gardner'ın (1840–1924) gezi yazılarını inceleyecektir. Makale, bir sanat koleksiyoneri de olan Gardner'ın gezi yazılarının özellikle 19. yüzyıl tabuları olan egzotik, erotik ve ürkütücü—alışılmışın dışında—öğeleri yüzünden onun yaşantısına dair karmaşık bir içgörü sağladıklarını ortaya koyar, tıpkı Gardner'ın titizlikle düzenlenmiş müzesi gibi. Buna ek olarak, yazarın eserlerinin katı Viktoryen sosyal ve kültürel kodlara bir karşı anlatı olarak hizmet ettiğinin ve kendi gibi kadınlara oryantalist ve emperyalist otorite ve gücü tartışabilecekleri sorunlu bir söylem sağladığının altını çizer.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Isabella Stewart Gardner, 19. Yüzyıl, Gezi Edebiyatı, Karşı Anlatı, Nevrasteni, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri

After the death of her only child, Jackie, from pneumonia on March 15, 1865—just a few months short of his second birthday—followed by a miscarriage that ended her hopes of having another child, and the death of her sister-in-law in childbirth, Isabella Stewart Gardner became seriously ill, delirious with fever for four days. It seemed like she would be the next Gardner casualty, but her husband, John "Jack" Lowell Gardner, Jr., the son of a prominent Boston Brahmin family, kept a constant vigil by his wife's bedside and, against the odds, Isabella Gardner pulled through. However, by the following year, she had not regained her strength, and her family and circle of friends feared that she would become a "sofa invalid" for the rest of her life (Tharp 37–38).

Dr. Henry Jacob Bigelow, a leading physician and professor of surgery at Harvard University, was summoned numerous times, expressing that he could not cure "Mrs. Jack," as Gardner was nicknamed by Boston society, because there was nothing "organically wrong with her" (Tharp 38). According to Bigelow, she was suffering from mental collapse with psychosomatic symptoms, or neurasthenia as the medical profession was beginning to call it in the post-Civil War era. A socialite himself—and one of Gardner's many admirers—he played to her vanity instead, teasing out the core of her psychological malaise. Rather than prescribing the "rest cure," which was becoming increasingly popular for women in Gardner's situation, Bigelow challenged prevailing medical therapeutics and tailored his treatment for this specific patient, whom he knew professionally and socially. As Louise Hall Tharp notes, "Reverting to a custom of previous generations, Dr. Bigelow prescribed a journey for health" (38). Desperate to try anything to bring his wife back to life, Jack Gardner took leave from the family business, thinking that a change of scenery would do them both good. He made all the arrangements, and "in the spring of 1867, an ambulance called at 152 Beacon Street [and] Mrs. Jack was brought downstairs on a mattress, placed in the ambulance, driven to the dock and carried on board ship" (Tharp 38).

Enfeebled, Gardner did not even have the strength to walk, let alone board a cruise ship. However, "there was drama in this departure and Isabella must have felt a stirring of interest and pleasure," suggesting that she may have, at least partially, been performing the role of the "sofa invalid" to her advantage (Tharp 39). When the Gardners arrived in Hamburg, Germany in June, neither a mattress nor an ambulance was required, as Gardner had regained her energy and enthusiasm. They traveled on to Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Russia, Austria and France, where she acquired extravagant gowns by Charles Worth in Paris, returning to Boston several months later, "effervescent, exuberant, reckless, witty," and doing "whatever she pleased," especially with members of the opposite sex (Fisher 140). On the trip, she even began keeping the journals, photograph albums, and extensive correspondence that would characterize her life almost as much as her obsessive art collecting, which transformed her into an internationally renowned figure in that world, and one of only a handful of women before Peggy Guggenheim to take a serious interest in it. Her life's work eventually culminated in the eponymous Isabella

Stewart Gardner Museum, which has been a Boston landmark for over 100 years.

As Rosemary Matthews has argued, Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840–1924) collected art during her extensive travels to Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, Asia and beyond as a way of "deferring her own death," after experiencing so many first hand, amassing objects "inextricably linked with her own life" that would eternally "stand in for her continued presence" (186). Ironically, for a woman whose personal motto was "*Pense moult, parle peu, écris rien*" (Think much, speak little, write nothing) (Holly 117), Gardner was a prolific letter and travel writer. As personal creations, this writing is just as much—if not more so—a physical manifestation, or extension, of herself as her art collection which, essentially, is an assembly of others' works. Gardner's travel writing is thus a crucial component of the narrative of this very complicated woman, who resisted being identified through men (Mrs. Jack), choosing, instead, to build a monument to herself.

Over the course of numerous domestic and international trips spanning almost thirty years (1867–1895), Gardner compiled twenty-eight journals, photo albums, and countless stacks of letters, corresponding with some of the most prominent intellectuals of her time, from novelist and close friend Henry James to art expert Bernard Berenson, who guided many of her most significant purchases (Lucey 187–188; Riley 49). Gardner spent her final years destroying much of this communication (i.e., "write nothing") in an attempt to curate the narrative she presented to the world after her death and, as biographers have speculated, to bury the skeletons of extramarital affairs and other scandals. However, her journals and albums, created as personal records and later shared with friends and the public, remain (today they are housed in the Gardner museum archive).[1]

As this article will argue, these travel journals and albums are a reflection of Gardner, both as a woman and as a historical actor vying with the various social threads of Gilded Age America, especially its rigid, prescribed gender roles, even for women of her social status. What emerges from the journals is a potent counternarrative of self-expression, self-construction, and self-representation created by an extravagant and sensual woman who was fascinated by the grotesque, macabre, and taboo—or what I call the glamour of exotica and erotica—particularly when it concerned orientalized others. Her journals and

albums not only chronicle her lavish transnational travels, but also exchange one politics of the body (her own) for another, allowing her to assert a level of control and power abroad—visually, aesthetically and discursively—that was inaccessible to a woman, even of her social standing, in the United States.

The World of Isabella Stewart Gardner

The daughter of David Stewart, a wealthy New York merchant and importer of linen and iron, Isabella Stewart Gardner was born into the privileged nineteenth-century American elite, but never entirely belonged. Rebellious, outspoken and always pushing the boundaries of traditional gender roles, she was educated by private tutors until her parents sent her to France and Italy in her teens to immerse herself in European languages and cultures. It was during her education abroad that she encountered other wealthy American families, including the Gardners, whose daughters Julia and Eliza she had befriended in Paris. During a trip to Boston to visit Julia, Isabella Stewart met John Lowell Gardner, Jr., or Jack, Julia's older brother, whom she married in 1860 (Mckinzie 10–12). After honeymooning in Washington, DC, they returned to Boston, and for the first two years of her marriage, Gardner lived with her in-laws. She became a shadow of her former self under the control of her mother-in-law, Catherine Peabody Gardner, who expected her daughter-in-law to follow in her footsteps. Adhering to such rigid social conventions and gender codes—which restricted her behavior and limited her activity to the private sphere and its endless domestic demands—became problematic for free-spirited Isabella Gardner, who began a gradual decline that left her incapacitated and unable to function. She tried to escape her situation by visiting family in New York as often as possible. However, this behavior pushed the boundaries of acceptable conduct for a married woman who, in the elite Boston world she inhabited, was merely considered an extension of her husband's family (Shand–Tucci 15).

As Rosemary Matthews explains, "The society that Gardner became part of when she married was ruled by conventions that she found hard to accept. She tried to subjugate herself to its demands and to fit into a conventional and submissive role, but her attempts failed partly because she was childless and partly because her complex character demanded some deeper fulfillment" (184). The losses she experienced in 1865 and 1866, in quick succession, only exacerbated

her underlying restlessness, which was eventually diagnosed as neurasthenia (Goldfarb 6), an ambiguous "catch-all" disorder that rose to prominence after the Civil War (1861–1865). Mostly affecting middle and upper-class Americans, it was allegedly caused by over-stimulation or "over-civilization" brought on by American social and cultural superiority, industrialization, urbanization, and the stimuli that accompanied them. Neurasthenia "had many names, among them 'nervous prostration,' 'nervous fatigue,' and 'nervous exhaustion,'" and was "a distinctly modern condition that occurred as Americans began to shed their traditional lifestyles," especially traditional gender roles (Schuster 696, 701). White Protestant men of the middle and upper classes who rejected the role of "breadwinner" and women, like Gardner, who did not adhere to what historian Barbara Welter calls the "cult of true womanhood"—purity, piety, domesticity, and subservience to the patriarchy—were often diagnosed as neurasthenic. Gender non-conformity purportedly led to the nervousness behind neurasthenia, which manifested itself through countless symptoms such as corporeal wasting, insomnia, lethargy, fatigue, headaches, hearing, speech and digestive problems, anxiety, palpitations, neuralgia, uterine irritability, nightmares and various obsessive, compulsive, phobic, manic and depressive states (Schuster 695–697, 701).

With all their suffering, neurasthenic women understandably "neglected" their domestic and marital duties, creating a chicken-and-egg scenario of which came first—their ailment, or a rejection of socially constructed expectations which precipitated their diagnosis. Treatment for neurasthenics such as Sarah Butler Wister (mother of author Owen Wister), Charlotte Perkins Gilman (feminist author and activist), Winifred Howells (daughter of author William Dean Howells), Alice James (sister of Henry James), Edith Wharton, and Jane Addams, among many others, came in the form of the "rest cure"—a therapeutic regimen that was devised and prescribed by American physicians Silas Weir Mitchell, Edwin H. Van Deusen, and George Miller Beard for "severe" cases: i.e., neurasthenic women who could not take care of themselves and their families. The rest cure involved weeks of bed rest, a "calming" dairy-based diet, and isolation from all stimuli—including visitors and anything remotely intellectual. In short, this "cure" involved constant monitoring to ensure complete obedience to physicians, nurses, and caretakers; in other words, it created a controlled domestic environment that would facilitate the relearning of female gender roles

(Schuster, 695–696, 700–702, 708–709). However, while neurasthenic women were told to rest, neurasthenic men such as Walt Whitman were told to "Go West": to "engage in prolonged periods of cattle roping, hunting, rough-riding and male bonding" in order to claim a rugged pioneering masculinity by rejecting the effeminizing forces of city life (Stiles 32). Male patients given the "West cure" included not only Whitman but Owen Wister, artists Frederic Remington and Thomas Eakins, and future president Theodore Roosevelt. Neurasthenic therapeutics were gendered, and "both cures existed to reinforce 'proper' sexual behavior," emphasizing the "biological differences between men and women" (Stiles 32).

According to the emerging medical wisdom of the time, Gardner's gendered loss (motherhood) required a gendered diagnosis (neurasthenia) and a gendered treatment (the rest cure). However, Gardner was not prescribed the rest cure, but rather the travel cure, which was becoming increasingly reserved for men. Biographers such as Louise Tharp and Stephen Birmingham have both written about the possible reasons for this. Tharp suggests that Dr. Bigelow's diagnosis and therapeutic course may have been the result of his personal knowledge of Gardner's proclivities (the rest cure would never work for restless person), and his status as a medical traditionalist who prioritized older treatments (travel for depression) over newer ones. In Chapter Six of *The Grandes Dames*, Birmingham argues that Gardner may have cultivated a neurasthenia diagnosis as a means of resisting the gendered expectations of Boston. In other words, she was resisting oppressive norms and codes through illness, which gave her a way to bypass rules and regulations. This, he speculates, may be the reason why she was prescribed the travel cure and was almost instantly cured when she left "stagnant" Boston for "passionate" Europe. She had grown tired of the never-ending doting and care showered on her as a "stylish invalid" and was ready for a new role—that of the moneyed aesthete bohemian. This would also allow her to negotiate power within her limited world, but in a much more entertaining and self-indulgent way; for example, treating seasickness with champagne and British biscuits rather than the harsh drugs of the period (Vigderman 11).

Interestingly enough, Birmingham's theory not only places Gardner's travels and travel writing into context—the glamour of the exotic and erotic always held sway with her, and therefore was not out of character in any way—but also reinforces observations made

by feminist historians such as Regina Morantz-Sanchez. As Morantz-Sanchez notes, in Gilded Age America, the "'medicalized body' allowed women a significant form of breathing space empathically sanctioned by the scientific authority of the physician" (299), which also explains the relationship between Gardner and Bigelow perfectly. "Although the doctor-patient relationship often appears imbalanced," she adds that "these women are never completely without agency…One form of resistance involved using the dominant medical culture's tendency to construct women as weak for purposes not originally intended." In other words, savvy women like Gardner "could use diagnosis and treatment to achieve respite from too much responsibility" (Morantz-Sanchez 303), even parlaying it into a lifestyle. Moreover, for Gardner, "invalidism resulting in tourism, expatriatism, or medical exile" (Fisher 140) was a liberating escape from everything she detested about her life in Boston.

For the next thirty years, Gardner would always be on the move, and after that, too consumed by her museum and her agenda to care about social expectations. That she could fund trips to Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, and beyond, and construct a monument to her extensive travels, was undoubtedly a function of her class status. That she was able to deploy the tools of the patriarchy (e.g., the medical profession) against the patriarchy itself, and thrive, is certainly remarkable. Within this context, her journals and albums function as a counternarrative to the prevailing medical discourses and practices of the time concerning the female body and its illnesses. They challenge masculinist authority, control, and therapeutic directives geared towards women that limited their physical mobility, intellectual freedom, and erotic desires.

Moreover, collectively, Gardner's journals and albums also advance specific personal and artistic goals, which in this case also includes subverting the norms and codes that governed travel and consumer acquisition for women. Her tourism and its documentation transcend the boundaries that inscribed the lives of elite women, opening up new worlds, both to Gardner and her circle of family and friends, who corresponded with her and reveled in the countless objects (e.g., artwork, photographs, books, musical scores, furniture, tapestries, textiles, ceramics, utensils, flowers, plants, silver, and decorative architectural elements) that she brought back from her travels. Her exotic travels and life writing made a powerful statement to members

of her world: that she refused to surrender to social, medical or cultural dictates, creating, instead, a life on her own terms, by taking her body and its future into her own hands.

Gardner's journals also serve a therapeutic function as "scriptotherapy" (Henke xii–xx), a form of life writing that allowed her to cope with trauma and make sense of it by endowing her travels, observations, and purchases with meaning that could heal and compensate for her losses. Her journeys, both literal and figurative, contributed to the reconstruction of her fragmented identity as a woman after motherhood had become impossible by providing her life with a new purpose: self-discovery through art collecting, and self-narration through curated storytelling. However, like Gardner herself, her travel writing is far more complicated, and by no means a simple (self-re) presentation of the image she wished to convey to the world. Instead, it is a reflection of its time that exposes an orientalist fascination with the exotic and the erotic, especially the body and skin. Through the course of her narratives, Gardner—the liberal, bohemian aesthete—develops her own imperialist corporeal politics, which involves exchanging the scrutinization, examination, and categorization of her own "civilized" upper-class white Anglo Saxon Protestant body—which was under the constant watchful surveillance and disciplinary gaze of elite Boston society—for that of non-white "uncivilized" others. In other words, in her journals and through their accompanying photographs, Gardner engages in the same oppressive practices to which she was subjected, and in the process, asserts social, cultural, racial, economic and gendered power to which, despite her privileged status, she had little access as a woman in the United States.

Isabella Stewart Gardner's Travel Writing

After returning from her 1867 trip to Europe, Gardner channeled her energies away from maintaining social conventions and towards pursuing her own pleasure, adopting the motto *C'est mon plaisir*, which is today inscribed over the entrance to her museum. As Fisher states, the motto "hinted at its embodiment of transgressive as well as innocent pleasures and desires—implying French-inflected willfulness, imperiousness, pleasure, and passion" (139–140), all of which seem to describe Gardner from this point onwards. Everything was now "of interest to her. She had an insatiable impulse to explore life," in all its taboo and grotesque forms, and "to curate beauty" (Lucey 188). Moreover, Gardner had "a forceful geographical imagination, in the

often imperialist modes of the late nineteenth century" (Fisher 133). As Anne McClintock explains,

> For centuries, the uncertain continents—Africa, the Americas, Asia—were figured in European lore as libidinously eroticized. Travelers' tales abounded with visions of the monstrous sexuality of far-off lands…. long before the era of high Victorian imperialism, Africa and the Americas had become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination—a fantastic magical lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears. (22)

Gardner, who spent part of her formative years in Europe, certainly operated in the European mindset when it came to the "porno-tropics." While the travel journals from her next trip in 1874 and 1875—this time to Egypt, the Holy Land, Turkey, and Greece—include sketches of architectural details and purchased photographs whose designs would eventually make their way into her Boston home Fenway Court (Tharp 47), they mostly focus on her "enchantment with the land of Cleopatra—its dreamlike colors, its silent desert, its camels and donkeys, its storied past, and its people who seemed to have [stepped] out of the 'Arabian Nights'" (Lucey 188). Her sensual and orientalist depiction of this part of the world becomes even more apparent when compared to the journals kept by her husband on the same trip. While Isabella Gardner wrote lush accounts of the distant lands she visited and the exotic people she encountered, conflating the "geographical and psychosexual in the predominant orientalist mode of the period" (Fisher 136), Jack Gardner inscribed line-a-day entries and other brief notes in his pocket diary, mostly concerning expenses, their itinerary, and other practicalities (Fisher 141; Tharp 48). "Convivial but hardly a romantic," he "focused on such things as the distances they covered each day on their Nile travels and the troublesome fleas in their hotel in Cairo" (Lucey 188).

It was during her visit to Egypt that Isabella Gardner started keeping a journal in earnest. She began her entries on December 10, 1874, off the coast of Alexandria, which was ablaze with the colors of the Egyptian sunrise. As she describes,

> When I went on deck in the morning…I knew it was a dream for never had I seen such color as was the sea.

> There was no word for it—and on the horizon was a low stretch of sand and moving palms. I felt that it was Africa and from that moment everything was interest and enjoyment…we lingered to watch the mass of screaming, scrambling Arabs, men, and boys, each more determined than the other to secure his prey. The next day we went to Cairo where the dream only became more colored with Eastern glow…The people had stepped out of the Arabian Nights which were no longer tales we had read…we had truly come aboard and forgot ourselves. (qtd. in Tharp 48)

As Gardner conveys, Egypt was an exotic land where one could "forget herself," which she increasingly did, on numerous levels, as she traveled around the world. No longer constrained by Bostonian social conventions, she was able to discover and explore new dimensions of life—from food to clothing, to artwork, to rituals—that would have normally been inaccessible and incomprehensible to most Americans. A few days later, she visited the pyramids, where she broke away from the group to, as she expresses in her journal, "lie on the sand near the Sphinx with the silent desert beyond and on every side—and the pyramids a little away from me—then solemnity and mystery took possession and my heart went out to the Sphinx" (qtd. in Tharp 49). The beauty of this overwhelming experience, however, did not prevent her from making one of the countless suggestive comments she would make about the attractiveness of the locals—especially the men and boys—who were always an essential part of the exotic backdrop. Always remarking on their physiques, clothing and general deportment, she adds, "The women are but rarely handsome, but the men almost always" (qtd. in Tharp 49).

They traveled south on the Nile onboard the *Ibis* which, as Gardner describes in her journal, was decorated with exotic "eastern rugs, couches, plants and awnings…The crew, with their turbans and many-colored robes, squatted in a circle around their lurid, flickering fire, cooked their coffee and chanted their low, weird songs to the tapping of the tarabooka [sic]" (qtd. in Tharp 49). Like an artist, she illustrated her journal with watercolor sketches of ancient ruins, lotus flowers, wind-blown moonlight palms, papyrus reeds, sailing ships, lavender skies, and reddish-gold water at sunset, often while sitting alone on deck where, as Gardner remarks, she allowed her "thoughts

[to] fly away with the many white-sailed caiques [sic] that floated out into the fading light" (qtd. in Tharp 49). The locals, who Gardner also describes in orientalist terms, contribute to her reverie. She comments that in Memphis, "the donkey boys seemed as happy as the most favored children of the sun could be," while, by the oases, "the graceful women came and went" with "water jars on their heads" (qtd. in Tharp 50).

In the 1870s, archeological excavation was emerging as a serious science, and the great finds of Ancient Egypt had yet to be discovered, let alone be organized and cataloged; thus, many sites were in a state of disarray. As Gardner conveys in her journal, it gave her "quite a dreadful feeling to see scraps of mummies lying about" among "old brick fortifications" (qtd. in Tharp 50). Nevertheless, she felt the need to include this disturbing scene in her journal, suggesting her fascination with the macabre, which will be discussed later. In this mysterious land, she even forgot Christmas Eve, which was perhaps part of the strategic self-forgetting, selective amnesia, and re-membering these exilic trips enabled. Instead, completely immersed in the foreign environment, she fantasizes about an alternative reality in her journal: "I lay upon the couch with the fragrance of frankincense stealing over me, the wake of the moon was a foot path by which my thoughts went straight to Cleopatra" (qtd. in Tharp 50). The day after Christmas, they "passed a curious old convent" but, as she notes, "long before we reached it, the monks swam out to us, begging. I hope they were as innocent of sin as of clothes," juxtaposing the sacred and the profane, which she did often, by stressing the eroticism of the scantily clad men, even in the context of a religious ritual (qtd. in Tharp 50).

In mid-January 1875, purchased photographs begin to appear in Gardner's journals, pasted alongside quotes from travel guidebooks, poems, watercolors, sketches, ticket stubs, pressed flowers and leaves, itineraries, invitations, pamphlets, paper flags, menus and other ephemera (Brister 16). Taken by professionals and procured by travelers like postcards, these commercial photographs complemented her journals, which were fast becoming cut-and-paste albums. As Fisher explains, "Gardner had a long history of fashioning scrapbooks—a medium common among genteel female Victorians—variously incorporating quotes, extracts, photographs, newspaper clippings, and other personal mementoes." However, in this context, Gardner deployed the journals/albums "to map intimate, emotional terrains" and to document her "imperialist exploration." Specifically,

she "melded emotional and erotic experience with ethnographic and geographic documentation, creating personal exilic geographies that she would eventually archive" at her museum (Fisher 141). Gardner particularly liked collecting photographs of art, architecture, and monuments—especially temples and other religious structures, once again contrasting the sacred and the profane in the process. She also favored natives in their everyday attire, such as a Hamburg flower girl, a Scandinavian peasant, or Asian aristocrats, reinforcing her interest in the intersection of local color and local bodies (Brister 220). Moreover, the pictures in Gardner's journals are unusual for yet another reason: they do not include any of the traveler herself in an age when a woman of her social status was expected to have at least one taken in every country she visited, usually in a studio and sometimes in indigenous clothing (Rhodes 83–84).

While, to a certain degree, commercial photographs render Gardner's journals less personal, as Anne McClintock argues, in the context of the era's colonial travel by white westerners to the East, these images represent an exotic, and erotic, intimacy—a type of panoptic surveillance that allowed outsiders to capture glimpses of individuals and events usually reserved for insiders (122). Fundamentally, such photographs transformed Gardner from spectacle into spectator, providing her with a gaze that changed her role from object to subject, and granted her "male" voyeuristic power which she did not have as an elite Bostonian woman. Whether they were images of nearly-nude sumo wrestlers in an embrace, tattooed natives, geishas in service, or of Burmese women smoking cigars—which Gardner was inspired to do later on in life—they were seductive souvenirs of cultural imperialism (McClintock 123).[2]

Such photographs were also consumer fetishes that granted westerners like Gardner the authority and ability to capture, define and categorize the East, especially "the secret interiors of the feminized Orient," which underscored the connection between mysterious lands and sex (McClintock 124–125). Most of the objects and people in these photographs were posed, so this alleged "authentic" art form was based on artifice and spectacle. Nevertheless, her authority was reinforced by the verbs of surveillance and voyeurism found in Gardner's journals, particularly in the captions that accompanied the images (she watched, saw, and looked). While money provided her with "economic mastery" over the native populations she visited, the photographs

gave her a voyeuristic control of spectacle, or what McClintock calls "pornographic mastery"—a "private" source of pleasure in her personal diary (126, 129). As Fisher speculates, Gardner's "aestheticism, orientalism, bohemianism, and exoticism" may have even "articulated thwarted sexual desires. Like other Gilded Age expatriates, migrants, and travelers, Gardner needed transnational exile to approximate and construct sociosexual freedom, to nourish unconventional desires" (140), and perhaps even to act on them.

At this point, their sightseeing—and Gardner's journals—became more intense, with, as Gardner describes, excursions via "felucca, *men's arms* [my emphasis], ferry boat and donkey" (qtd. in Tharp 50). They were trailed by little "Hassan, aged 4" and "little Fatima" to whom, as Gardner notes, she gave "a necklace of red and gilt beads and her eyes lighted and her teeth shone" (qtd. in Tharp 51), highlighting the "benevolence," or white woman's burden, that always accompanied the female colonial traveler. While visiting the town of Assouan (Aswan), Gardner does not remark on the antiquities or animal skins for sale, but instead is thrilled by the exotic "live, tiny monkeys," and grotesque "poisoned spear heads for sale" (qtd. in Tharp 51). As she recounts in her journal, the island of Philae is "entirely covered with the ruins of temples," and in the moonlight, she allegedly sees "the ghouls" of the Arabian Nights (qtd. in Tharp 51).

In the spring and early summer of 1875, the Gardners made their way across the Ottoman Empire, from Egypt, through the Holy Land, Lebanon, Syria and into Turkey. They disembarked in Smyrna (Izmir), where they waited for a ship bound for Piraeus, Greece. In her journal, Gardner describes Smyrna as "hot and dirty," where she was "wretchedly—not seasick." There, she indulged in her favorite dessert, vanilla ice cream, which was available in such an allegedly "uncivilized" place, and then headed to Greece. They toured Athens on foot, rising early to explore the ancient and modern sides of the city, which at times were difficult to disentwine, even in the nineteenth century. As she conveys, at the Temple of Theseus, they saw "coffee tables in the open air, clustered around the ruins," and workers eating breakfast sitting "between the pillars of Jupiter Olympus" (qtd. in Tharp 56). After their trip to Greece, they returned to Turkey. Gardner described Constantinople (Istanbul) as "beautiful and very like New York"—but only from a distance. She found Hagia Sophia (Ayasofya) disappointing and, as she articulates in her journal, many of the local

customs, such as putting her parasol down as a gesture of respect while passing the Sultan's palace, "strange" (qtd. in Tharp 57). She remarks that the Sultan's jewels—his diamonds, rubies, pearls and emeralds—were all she had "dreamed of," but adds that she was happy to be finally traveling home. On their return trip, the Gardners stopped off in Paris in mid-August to find the city greatly changed compared to their previous trip in 1867. Napoleon III was dead, Empress Eugénie was in exile in England, and their palace, the Tuileries, was in decay. Anyone with the means could haul away parts of the palace for personal use, and Charles Worth, the fashion designer who had designed gowns for Gardner during their last visit, and was a close confidante of the Empress, had absconded with wagons full of statuary for his garden—an activity that perhaps inspired Gardner to return to Europe and imperialistically loot its treasures for Fenway Court (Tharp 57–58).

In 1883 and 1884, the Gardners toured Asia, visiting Japan, China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma (Myanmar), Singapore, Indonesia, and India, among other locations. According to Mari Yoshihara, Gardner's interest in Asia "took place in the context of America's imperial enterprise in the Asia-Pacific." While she "was fascinated by the cultures and arts of each country she visited, to her Asia was clearly a spectacle" (21). In Osaka, Gardner attended a sumo wrestling match, where she was seated next to a Japanese man who, like the sensual flesh she witnessed during this display, was also a source of delight. As she expresses in a letter to Maud Howe written in Kyoto in August 1883, "I was immensely amused by a man in the box next to us—his beautiful clothes were carefully laid aside on account of the heat and there he sat, smoking a most beautiful pipe with nothing on but a waist cloth and a European straw hat…[but] we didn't even notice his want of clothes, as everybody is almost always in that undress" (qtd. in Goldfarb 10). She adds:

> This man [sitting next to me] was intensely interested to know which wrestlers I thought would win and asked me each time. Once I couldn't form any idea, so he coached me and said it was a sure thing for the small lithe man against a huge great fellow, so I interested myself properly in the little one—and when he threw the big one most cleverly and wonderfully…I clapped my hands and called out. Please don't be shocked, dear, at all these dreadful proceedings. (qtd. in Carter 62)

Gardner was clearly titillated and delighted by this David and Goliath battle, and especially by the sight of exotic flesh—that of the Japanese man sitting next to her as well as the sumo wrestlers themselves—who were subjects of her orientalist travel writing and "objects of her American gaze" (Yoshihara 21). Although her close friend novelist Henry James admired Gardner's travels in Japan and India, he also voiced disapproval in their correspondence, maintaining that she spent too much time "dallying with the Orientals" (qtd. in Fisher 138). At times, James objected to—as he put it—her "wild and wandering" travels (qtd. in Zorzi 247) and "subversive itineraries," which transgressed almost every social and cultural boundary imaginable (Fisher 134).

After three months in Japan, the Gardners traveled to Southeast Asia, spending most of their time in Cambodia and Indonesia. As Henry James and other correspondents suggest in their letters, "Gardner pushed the boundaries of nineteenth-century norms for women," especially in terms of geography: she was one of the first westerners—and perhaps the first western woman—to visit the ruins of Angkor Wat in 1883 (Fisher 133). The idea of visiting Angkor Wat first appears in a travel journal Gardner began in Shanghai. As Tharp elucidates, the ruins, "deep in the Cambodian jungle, had been only recently uncovered. Except for Siamese and Cambodians, very few people had even visited Angkor and some who went there never returned. Marco Polo mentioned the place but did not visit it," and Gardner was delighted by the idea that she would "surpass Marco Polo" (Tharp 90). On the way to Angkor Wat, she attended a royal boat race hosted by the Cambodian king, who made an appearance. "Small and nice-looking," Gardner notes in her journal, he wore "plain black clothes tight to his throat. A sort of Scotch cap of black silk with a diamond buckle on one side of it, a large emerald pendant and a belt with a diamond clasp. Also chains" (qtd. in Tharp 91). While the king stood in stark contrast to "the dreadful French women in cheap finery," Gardner was not particularly impressed, especially when he made a *faux pas* that even she, for all her open-mindedness, could not forgive. As someone who was unfamiliar with the American class structure, the king mistook Mary, Gardner's maid, for a dignitary—a mistake that the French women, gaudy or not, would have never made. Conflating all whites he met into one social category—much like Gardner did with the non-white locals she encountered—the king, as Gardner recounts

in her journal, "went up to [Mary], shook hands [and] invited her into the boat" (qtd. in Tharp 91). In the process, he engaged in a relatively innocent occidentalism that serves as an interesting counterpoint to Gardner's patronizing orientalism. Afterwards, they traveled to Angkor Wat on elephants, and dined on duck, pâté, and champagne. However, Gardner "almost became one of those who never return": she narrowly missed an elephant stampede that could have ended her life (Tharp 94). The next morning Gardner, while being fanned by a scantily clad Cambodian boy, celebrated their "narrow escape" with more champagne, this time at breakfast. The following day, she indulged in exotic activities within the safe confines of the palace of the French Protectorate, where she ate her first peacock and stroked a tiger cub (Tharp 95). Later in life, she would become (in)famous for such eccentric behavior, petting lion cubs at the Boston Zoo, taking them out for rides in her carriage and, decked out in fur, walking them on a leash (Tharp 197).

In Java, Indonesia, Gardner was particularly impressed by the semi-nude men, describing their torsos and sartorial choices in her journal. In the capital Jakarta, she witnessed a prince who, while visiting the emperor, stopped "at the door to take off his jacket" and, as she remarks, "was quite right, being much better looking in his brown skin" (qtd. in Goldfarb 11). Gardner's politics of skin did not stop with the locals, however. She even noted that the white imperialists who had settled in the region—namely the Dutch—had "gone native," appropriating indigenous clothing and blurring the lines between civilized/uncivilized, colonizer/colonized, and white/non-white. As she comments in her journal, they wore "the strangest clothes since Eden. The men in pajamas, the trousers made of fantastic sarongs and the women (ladies?) in sarongs, no-heeled slippers, loose white jackets (absolutely nothing else) and hair down their back" (qtd. in Tharp 96), all of which would have been a scandal in prim and proper Europe but acceptable in the exotic, erotic hinterlands. Always relishing any opportunity to participate in (either direction of) the fetishistic gaze, the following day, Gardner adopted this local custom, abandoning her layers of stifling clothing for a light wrap that would make the heat and humidity more tolerable. In fact, as she expresses in her journal, she visited some shops in a "white loose pongee wrapper and no hat! And it didn't seem at all strange" (qtd. in Tharp 96). She continued her racial, ethnic, and cultural cross-dressing at the opera, where she

wore a pongee wrapper and ornaments in her hair, which must have been particularly liberating to a nineteenth-century woman who was accustomed to restrictive corsets and form-fitting dresses.

As Fisher summarizes, in Gardner's travel journals, "geography more than personal reflection or confession catalyzed sexual exploration and resolution; transnational exile gave Gardner freedom to aestheticize and romanticize such urges, also keeping them safely ethnographic" (140). While in Egypt, Gardner wrote in her journal of the "beauty of the men and oh their gorgeous clothes!...What graceful languor and what perfect postures, as they lean against a deewan or a wall,'" gazing at their figures much like one would contemplate, and objectify, an ancient Greek or Roman marble statue of the male form in a museum (qtd. in Fisher 140). Moreover, while leaving Burma she suggestively comments: "Goodbye to the country of men with tattooed legs and with skirts open down the front" (qtd.in Lucey 199). This politics of the skin, with its "unabashed pleasure" for male bodies and voyeuristic power, continued in India, where the men were, as Gardner states, "as handsome as gods" (qtd. in Fisher 140). Although, we are to assume, such "encounters were romanticized, imaginary flings as opposed to actual sexual liaisons," in the Gilded Age, such "expression[s] of female desire" were "transgressive and disruptive," even in theory, in the safe confines of a travel journal. When the married, middle-aged Gardner flirted with young men in Boston, "dire social consequences often accumulated quickly." However, "when she traveled abroad, flirtation and erotic appreciation resulted in liberation" (Fisher 141).

Gardner was particularly interested in the way that women lived around the world, and was quick to compare and contrast their lives with her own, not out of feminist solidarity, but rather to underscore, fetishize and delight in the exotic and erotic transgressiveness of their physical appearance, traditions, rituals, and spiritual practices. She often noted the color and textures of their environments, their social and cultural roles, and how they were treated, especially by men. She was excited by the polyandry practiced in the Indian Himalayas, where women married multiple men. Aroused by the idea, she praises the practice in a letter written to a friend in Boston: polyandry "seems to have a glorious effect on the women. Such great strapping creatures, red cheeks, covered with silver and tourquoises [sic] and much painted, and as merry as larks. One splendid specimen sat, selling her wares, with four husbands in a row behind her" (qtd. in Lucey 198).

Gardner, on the other hand, was appalled by Indian arranged marriages because they contradicted her view of heterosexual romance. As Lucey conveys, "During the spring 'marrying season' [Gardner] encountered a score of newlyweds on the street in a single day. The husbands, in yellow, walked ahead of the brides, who wore red; their long gowns were tied together….[She] noted that some of the brides were 'small enough to be carried'" (198), suggesting that they might have been, at the very least, malnourished and underdeveloped, or possibly child brides.

Gardner also displayed a morbid fascination with the macabre and grotesque, especially funeral rituals, corporeal punishment, and executions. She derived voyeuristic pleasure and power out of many aspects of life abroad, including those that played with the boundaries of the sacred and profane and mortality and immortality. Moreover, she engaged in thanatourism, or dark tourism, long before it became an industry. While cruising the Nile, the Gardners stopped to watch a funeral procession. In her journal, Gardner notes "a superb looking woman at the funeral, who leaned on a long sword and was a very Judith," the "Old Testament widow who saved Israel by beheading their enemy's commanding general" (qtd. in Lucey 194). In India, she once again engaged in funereal voyeurism when she stood by the Ganges and witnessed the Hindu cremation ritual in its various stages. While, as Gardner describes, some "corpses [were] brought in on stretchers, toes sticking up cold and stiff," others came on the verge of death, for "It seems that to die in the Ganges ensures Paradise." Still others were waiting "for a disengaged funeral pyre," or already ablaze, "with Pariahs watching them and now and again shouting to the Hindu God" (qtd. in Lucey 199).

Observing grief and suffering, and the death and disposal of others, clearly calls one's own mortality into question. However, as Lucey suggests, in Gardner's case, it might have been a voyeuristic healing mechanism that allowed her to make sense of her own tragedies. It may have also reinforced her sense of power and superiority, for she sought immortality through the art she collected, which she believed would add beauty and purpose to her (after) life. Moreover, a notable hint of sadistic pleasure ran through Gardner's pursuit of the "exquisite forms of punishment meted out around the world," which included "hangings in the American West, whippings by policemen on the docks of Hong Kong, chaining criminals to ancient gates in China, and

crucifying those condemned to death in Canton." In fact, in China, the Gardners even "toured the 'Execution Ground,' saw crosses leaning up against a wall, and…met the executioner" (Lucey 191).

Gardner clearly challenged the biological determinism, separate spheres ideology, and severe gender and class restrictions that defined the Gilded Age, and in the process, proved to the medical profession and society at large that a woman could cure herself of neurasthenia not through the rest cure but, albeit with ample time and money, through traveling and writing about it. She saw more of the world than most women of her class, who would have traveled to Europe at least once in their lives, but hardly ever to Asia. Initially, Gardner journeyed with her husband, but she always determined the itinerary, especially what would be seen and purchased (Mckinzie 70–71). While this "rescued her from her depression, her various disappointments and scandals, and her social restrictions in Boston" (Fisher 139), her later solo international trips provoked criticism, even from the more liberal members of her social set. Gradually, Jack Gardner fades into the background of Isabella Gardner's travels abroad, becoming the mere financer of the network that she created. Eventually, she would eclipse him totally, achieving a measure of immortality through her museum as well as Henry James's novels: Isabella Gardner inspired Isabel, the protagonist of *Portrait of a Lady* (1881); Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove* (they even wore their long strand of pearls in the same way: twice around the neck and down the front); Mrs. Gareth in *The Spoils of Poynton*; and Charlotte Stant in *The Golden Bowl* (Mckinzie 19–20; Goldfarb 75). Others have claimed that *The Golden Bowl's* Adam Verver, "who greedily buys up all the great masters of Europe to fill his own museum in American City," represents Gardner (Brister 219). Moreover, a dahlia bears Isabella Gardner's name, and the "highest peak in Okanogan County, Washington [is] named Mount Gardner and the range extending north-northwest [is] called the Isabella Range" (Saarinen 55). In fact, she became so popular in Europe that newspapers prioritized the details of her trips over American presidential elections (Mckinzie 25).

However, Isabella Stewart Gardner was also a woman of contradictions. While on one hand she was a bohemian aesthete who flaunted convention and derived pleasure from the exotic, erotic, macabre and taboo, on the other she was a woman who demanded and exerted control, both at home and abroad (Lucey 178). She spent her later years burning her papers, selectively destroying chunks of

her correspondence with the intention of shaping her image from beyond the grave. Consequently, what remains today is at best the impression she wished to create. She relished shocking the world, yet she simultaneously curated her self-representation—that is, what future generations would know, and not know, about her. Over the years, her obsessive desire to be remembered on her own terms, and her very specific will, have invited speculation about whether or not she had something to hide (Vigderman 9–10). As her will stipulates, everything on display at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum must be an object Gardner herself collected; nothing can be added, and no elements of the collection can be changed or (re)moved. Any violations of the terms of her will initiates the self-destruction of her museum, forfeiting its contents to the Trustees of Harvard University for sale at auction (Tharp 312–313; Holly fn. 9, 159–160). Unlike Gardner, who thrived on travel, movement and reinvention, her museum is frozen in time, eternally static in form and content, for modifying it means destroying it and the legend of its creator.

Notes

[1] Significant portions of Gardner's travel writing (i.e., her journals and albums, as well as letters possessed by her correspondents which she could not destroy) have been transcribed from the original, handwritten primary sources and published in numerous secondary works for easier public access. I make use of some of these works, such as Tharp, Goldfarb, Carter, Lucey and Fisher, among others, in this article.

[2] Many of the photographs featured in Gardner's journals and albums can be accessed on the Internet. The most fascinating—of Burmese women seductively smoking cigars—can be seen here: http://archive.boston.com/ae/theater_arts/gallery/journeyseast?pg=3 Photographs of sumo wrestlers and teahouse women can be observed here: http://archive.boston.com/ae/theater_arts/gallery/journeyseast?pg=2

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Seventeen Years a Florentine

Christine Contrada

It is customary to learn the idiomatic expressions of a language last. After you are already dreaming in the language, they are typically the icing on the linguistic cake. But in Florence, Italy, these colorful, figurative phrases seem exceptionally important details to maintain the palpability of life in this city. To commiserate with Florentines daily, I had to learn these first. This romance and reality is the actuality of living in Italy.

I do finally dream in Italian, occasionally. But my subconscious mind is quick to judge; these dreams are poorly articulated nightmares. After a decade of studying Latin, I had been trained to navigate a complex language, but it is one of a robust framework of rules. Italian is a language with a small dictionary and infinite exceptions to its grammatical rules. Florentines tell me all the time that they cannot explain the conjunctive because they are not sure if they understand it themselves. While this confession is meant to be reassuring, I always catch a glimpse of the stark message of the Florentine poet Dante Alighieri's gates of hell: *abandon all hope, ye who enter here.* Falling unceremoniously through the gate of hell, I still trip over pronoun combinations because the chart is the size of the periodic table of the elements. Thus, I have a fiery relationship with the conditional clause because the New Yorker in me is bred to be far more certain that things *will* happen. I have also given up hope that my Italian *gli* will ever sound anything other than soul-crushing to native speakers. However, I am proud to say that I can wax idiomatic with the best of them.

The first string of words that struck me as an essential expression of Florentine life was *porca misera*. Pig misery. Best sent upwards to the heavens; it is as guttural as the sweet sound of Italian can be, and this phrase remains endlessly useful. For example, what do you mean there is a city rule that the heat can't be turned on until November 1 and I'm supposed to open my bathroom window to circulate the air in my flat when I can see the frost hanging in the morning fog?

Porca miseria! *La dolce vita* is idiomatic and offers memories of the timelessly beautiful black and white film actor Marcello Mastriani. He looks perfectly deshevelled in a cloud of tobacco smoke while wearing his sunglasses at night, as only Italians can master such pizzazz. However, such idiomatic beauty is far less useful. But by all means, if you want to be stereotypical, pass the bottle of fine chianti and a cigarette for this yarn.

A soft, gray cloud of smoke does seem like a fitting veil to soften Florence's hard stone exterior to tell you that Stendhal syndrome—the psychosomatic disorder that causes a person to feel faint when exposed to unfathomable beauty—is also called Florentine syndrome. Stendhal was the pen name used by the 18th century Frenchman, Marie-Henri Beyle. This author experienced such an onslaught of emotion inside of the Basilica of Santa Croce that he could not breathe. Being surrounded by the tombs of Machiavelli, Galileo, and Michelangelo—while gazing at Giotto's emotional frescos of the life of Saint Francis (the largest, most impressive Franciscan church in the world)—was too much for his heart to bear. It seemed to burst. An Italian doctor named this syndrome in 1979, the year of my birth, after noticing a pattern of tourists suffering this malady of being "struck by beauty" arriving in Florentine hospitals. It seems Stendhal syndrome and I were born twins.

While I am Italian by ancestry, it took many years of endless patience to become more of a Florentine than a New Yorker. These days I am quite sure that I bleed the violet of the ACF Fiorentina jersey. Living here was a far more complicated proposition than merely earning a Ph.D. in Florence's history. People earn terminal degrees for a myriad of reasons; my quest was always a labor of love. I am one of those many study abroad students who spent a spring semester at the British Institute and shamelessly fell in love with Florence. I fell so deeply into a Stendhal coma that I braved ten years of graduate school. I sifted, like a canary in a mine shaft, through the archives and libraries. I grew roots in Florence even though I feel like Sisyphus rolling a boulder up a hill only to have it come tumbling down every time my 90 days runs out, and my American tourist visa only lasts so long. If only the path to residency was fluid and straight, but like life itself it mimics the cobblestone streets running into alleys, leaving the tourist befuddled. Life in the States was far more relaxed, but that ease offered little consolation.

The duality of life in Florence has long been striking to many cultural commentators. Even in the post-war economic boom of the 1960s, it is evident that la dolce vitta was a stage show put on for the tourists. These foreigners longed for Italy, wanting to return, even though Luigi Barzini famously showed us clearly in his classic expose "The Italians" that the Italy they saw was a pretense, symbolic to fake towns seen in western movies. The piazza was—and is—a grand stage. And Fellini, the most celebrated Italian filmmaker, used "La Dolce Vita," to unravel the decadence of a morally adrift soulless modern age. Fifty years later, with the sordid economic troubles of Italy and social media chipping away at Italy's façade, one might think that Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook would be littered with reality checks. However, #Florence is a festival of gelato cones held up to the backdrop of Renaissance architectural masterpieces. No one seems to be complaining.

But I am complaining. The reality of living here has changed vastly in the last seventeen years because the tourists no longer go home even though Italy's most lucrative industry no longer rests on the purposefully depreciated Lira. It used to be that on a cold misty morning in February you could walk over a quiet Ponte Vecchio unmolested. Now, this reality is long gone. Last year I was sitting at a bar on Via de' Benci drinking Negroni with a Belgium friend who had to move back to Belgium due to the shortage of jobs in Florence for people with Ph.D.'s. Slurping high-octane cocktails—born thanks to the discerning taste of a Florentine count—we watched in horrified awe. We had long joked that this scene was the Via Americana, but it was deep into November, and it was not just the exchange students turning twenty-one again and again. We watched herds of tour groups bundled in puffy coats following limp, plastic flowers on sticks into the night. There is no longer any relief for those of us that live here.

Venice has gotten a great deal of press about how the cruise ships are destroying the city, both physically and metaphorically. The same thing is happening in Florence. You cannot see the towering ships looming on the horizon in Livorno, but they are insidiously destructive as they send bus after bus of tour groups forty people deep into Florence's fragile historic center. At the risk of sounding like Michael Corleone, every time an obscenely large group of people smash through Florence because they have been told that they have two hours to use the bathroom, buy a gelato, and take a picture with

the fake statue of David in front of Palazzo Vecchio, well Fredo, you broke my heart. I heard a guide turn to his charges with contempt and announce, in broken English, that Piazza Santa Croce is a shopping area. Abject horror. *Porca Miseria*.

Those on these shotgun tours are desperately in search of an authentic Florence during their minutes on the ground. I have been photographed dumping my trash, hanging clothes on the line outside my window, chatting with neighbors at the bus stop, waiting in the laundry mat. For some reason, everything here is seen as the old world. I am a historian, but I feel like I'm a historical actor on call every year since 2000. I can only hope that in forty years I'm a star on Instagram's "Not my Nonni" where adorable octogenarians are photographed sitting on benches talking with their hands and in various stages of plotting neighborhood domination.

Tourism in Florence is nothing new. Before it was photographed, the city was drawn and painted as part of the grand tour of Europe. This phenomenon was brought sweetly into the 20th century in the film *A Room with a View*. The film has long been a cult favorite for those of us who have Florence in our veins. A fiery Beethoven playing teenage Helena Bonham Carter goes to Florence with her spinster aunt who insists on a room with a view of the Arno river. That view is the backdrop of an Austenesque search for a suitable marriage. Recently, thirty years after the theatrical release of the film, the original cast gathered amidst great fanfare in Piazza Strozzi's Odeon theater to relish in the timeless appeal of the story and the city.

I may be alone in this belief, but my favorite part of the film is when Judy Dench—portraying a spunky novelist seeking stories—gets lost in the medieval alleys of Florence and tells a concerned Maggie Smith, matter-of-factly, that every city has a distinct smell. Upon taking a deep whiff, this rather proper British lady gags without saying a word: nail on the head. More than a 100-years after Foster's yarn hit the press, Florence still smells like a latrine. When I find myself assaulted with the stench of sulfur or sewage in other places, I miss her dearly. It simply smells like home.

I want to think that my wise and powerful dissertation advisor considered this smell when she suggested, many years ago, that I study the history of another city in the 15th century. Alas, I was young,

bright-eyed, and in love with the notion of being a Florentine. And I am still determined. Even as residents get priced out of the city center due to limited real estate that is shifting toward pricey tourist rentals and Airbnbs, I am a holdout. One day I may raise the white flag and take the *tramvia* to the burbs in Scandicci or Rifredi, but for now, I am content to hold on to my historically working-class neighborhood. If I don't, how will the tourists get their photos?

The neighborhood near the Basilica of Santa Croce has been working-class since the Medici family booted the tanners and wool makers off the Ponte Vecchio in the 15th century. The ruling family found the run-off of dyes and leather sludge unsightly, and as a collective decided to replace these artisans with goldsmiths. Renaissance gentrification at its finest; after all, gold weighed more—literally and figuratively—than a leather satchel or hank of red yarn. It is still a working-class neighborhood, and I revel in this reality daily. Nope, no palaces to see here. Oh, you must be lost! The laundry mat is more global than the ads at the United Colors of Benetton. Over the years, I have received marriage proposals from men hailing from all of the nations of the former Soviet Bloc while waiting out the dryer cycle.

To fortify one's attachment to an Italian neighborhood, there is a definitive bucket list of associations, which must be carefully established. I will offer a bit of advice and suggest always starting these relationships with a salve. The formal greeting, which is the same in Latin, will announce your humility. Italian freely uses a precise tense unknown to Americans. With patience, one day, this greeting will be changed to an informal *ciao*. It will not be changed by you. That ringing bell of a syllable will make you officially a Florentine. The euphoria of the first *ciao* is the same as the wave of heat that follows a first kiss.

I am seeking the *ciao*. I hide away from the tourist in the side streets, where I try my best to recede into the framework of my neighborhood without creating a wake in my path. Off the sun-soaked piazza, in dark alleys, I have a fruit and vegetable vendor who always presents me with the gift of herbs and explicit cooking instructions. If she cannot cure my maladies, I have a British doctor who will use his means of western medicine to cure my physical ailments. I have a bicycle repairman who sits on the curb every day, all day, patching old tires. Repair is at the core of life in Italy. And to this end I have a dentist who, although he is an Italian Edward Scissorhands and most

likely failed bed-side manner in dental school, saved a tooth that I shattered due to a futile fight with a stubborn chestnut. I might have eaten that nut, but it took my tooth. I have a baker who likes to slip cookies in my daily paper sacks of *schiacciata* with a wink. I have a hairdresser with whom I have such chemistry that we need to smoke cigarettes after he completes his latest masterpiece. I have a seamstress who can fix anything, even a five-euro disaster of find from the bins at the Sant'Ambrogio Market. And I now have a bookbinder who works, almost invisibly, in the window of a postage-stamp-sized shop. He creates such beauty that I am convinced he is not of this world, but I have yet to see his wings.

As a collected unit, my Italian neighbors know me better than I know myself. And this myriad of places, smells, and people is why—despite the relentless tide of the 90-day visas taking me in and out—Florence will always be my home. Life, on the other side of the ocean does nothing but remind me that absence *does* make the heart grow fonder. Seeing Dante every day in Santa Croce is a poignant reminder of the pain of exile. The difference is that, unlike Dante, I would come back here as a penitent, even if it meant my demise. I would not be able to breathe my last breath in Ravenna. Down here, in the Arno valley, there is Dante's Italian, and then there is the Tuscan "c." Once I hear the "c," which sounds more like a breathy "h" hissing like a stormy wind through an overgrown olive grove, I know I am home.

While the life of an expat in Florence is a mixed bag punctuated by moments of abject frustration and astonishing beauty, it is the only place on earth that I have found presentism. I can be nowhere other than right here, right now in the audience of Michelangelo's David. I have visited him more times than I can count. I still cry upon first seeing the soaring grace of what had once been a mutilated piece of marble. He emerged triumphantly into the gorgeous expression of humanism. David is now locked, in time immemorial, under the dome at the Academia where he sits atop an anti-seismic pedestal and is protected from pigeons, but not men wielding hammers. David, triumphant, was a favorite symbol of Florence during the Renaissance. This beautiful young adolescent had managed to defeat a giant. Little Florence was tiny and inexperienced, but firm, wealthy, and standing on the heads of the much larger nation-states North of the Alps. She is, at her core, a proud city. This stoic classical David gives me the hope, with every perfect ringlet of hair, that Florence will survive the

pressures of the 21st century. I saw an image of David in a shop in Florence recently reimagined as being covered in tattoos. It does not get any more boldly modern than taking a beloved Old Testament Jew and freely include him in tats. I smiled proudly at this latest effort to give little David some street cred, but I am afraid that even covered in tattoos, this David is a screaming reminder that Florence is in danger of becoming Renaissance Disneyland. If that happens, I volunteer to go down with the ship.

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Genie and Robert do Europe

Lisa Tuttle

Growing up, I was intrigued by the stories I heard about my great-grandmother, who died two years before I was born. About my grandfather's "natural father" (as they used to say) we knew almost nothing; he'd disappeared from the scene before my grandfather was five years old, and a few years later my grandfather was adopted by his mother's second husband and his name legally changed from Clarke to Tuttle. Family lore claimed Queen Victoria had appointed the elder Clarke as Physician to the Court of St James.

As for great-grandmother—Eugenia Tuttle (neé Ash)—she sounded like quite the character; glamorous, widely traveled, prone to premonitions (one of which saved her from taking the *Titanic*), and she burned through three husbands and appeared in (at least) three silent movies. The legacy of her stories, among family folklore, were more than enough to fire my imagination. But, there were more to come.

According to my aunt, who grew up hearing Genie's stories, she "crossed the Atlantic 17 times." That number doesn't make sense for someone who was born and died in the United States (unless she also traveled at least once around the world, but surely that would have been something to brag about?) but never mind. In my research into her life, I've found evidence of at least eight trips to Europe (sixteen Atlantic crossings between 1891 and 1913). There might have been more!

Between 1907 and 1913 these trips were paid for, and mostly made with, her second husband, Clarence Tuttle. They were luxurious holidays that allowed Genie to escape the worst of Chicago winters and enjoy breaks in Paris or Rome, once traveling as far as Egypt. But her first trip abroad, with her first husband and their infant son, was slightly different. He was on the lam.

My grandfather's father, Robert Elliott Clarke, was born in New York in 1855, the son of Anglo-Irish immigrants. After leaving

school (at about fourteen), he worked as a clerk in his father's dry goods store in Brooklyn until his father felt the call to become a lay Methodist preacher and moved the family to Kansas. The land of Toto and Oz stood starkly different from that of New York City with scores of immigrants and burgeoning city streets filled with unknown faces. But how long the teenaged Robert stuck around, or what he did through the 1870s, may never be known.

In 1880, a confident and charming young man turned up in Philadelphia, advertising himself as R. Elliott Clarke, a teacher of elocution and vocal culture. After a while, he promoted a new school, hired teachers, collected fees, then fled his creditors. He turned up later in Paris, attempting some similar scam, then back to New York as a student at Columbia College Law School. In Chicago, in 1886, aged thirty, he met and married twenty-year-old Eugenia Ash of Washington, D.C. (I have no idea what either of them were doing in Chicago.).

He was always on the move, and now Genie followed suit, venturing from Chicago to Missouri to San Francisco, to Baltimore, where my grandfather (their only child) was born in 1889, and then back to Genie's hometown of Washington, D.C.

These are some of the headlines from Washington and New York papers, February 20 and 21, 1891:

> *Robert E. Clarke Disappears / He Left Many Checks, but No Bank Account*
> *His Wildcat Schemes / They Were Many and Clever, and Their Promoter Has Skipped*
> *The Remarkable Career of a Daring Swindler / Police Looking For Him*
>
> *From The Washington Post, Feb. 21, 1891:*
> Robert E. Clarke left Washington Thursday for Baltimore, telling his wife he would be back that evening. He has not returned, and many people are anxious about him. Mrs. Clarke, who is a remarkably pretty little lady – not much more than a girl, although she and Mr. Clarke have been married three or four years, and have a handsome child—has been made dangerously ill by her husband's conduct.
> The name of Robert E. Clarke, of Robert E. Clarke & Co. 'investment and real estate brokers' is familiar to

> newspaper readers everywhere. For months past his advertisements have been among the most conspicuous in all the great newspapers of Northern cities, as well as those of Washington.
>
> He did an enormous business and must have made a great deal of money, for his office was crowded during the business hours.
> His pervasive advertising brought all sorts of people to him, and he had so many schemes for people to invest in that he was able to offer something to almost everybody's taste.

It is not clear how much money my ancestor made from his schemes. I can find no reports of individuals reporting his deception or trying to sue him to regain their losses, suggesting that, individually, they were small. His bigger problem was debt. He owed the New York Sun alone $1,501; the New York Press and New York News also sent representatives to make claims; Washington daily papers—and the Sunday Herald which carried a full-page ad for Robert E. Clarke & Co. two days after his disappearance—kept quiet about the extent of their losses.

There was speculation that he had escaped to Canada, but in fact, a few weeks later he was, along with Genie and little Robbie, aboard the *Rugia*, a steamship on the Hamburg-American Packet Company which boasted the fastest times between New York and Hamburg. For $45 the little family could travel first class to Europe and remain safely out of reach of American creditors.

From Hamburg, they went to Berlin, 178 miles away. Americans did not generally need passports, but the situation in Germany at that time required all foreigners to register with the police within six days of arrival, presenting valid I.D. Thus, Robert Elliott Clarke applied for a passport (which also covered his wife and child) at the US Legation on April 6th.

Berlin was a popular destination for budget-conscious Americans, with an "American colony" of close to 2,000 expatriates. It was a clean, modern city, and much cheaper than London. Mark Twain, who lived in Berlin with his family in 1891-92, compared it to Chicago, although he didn't care for German bureaucracy or the fact

that the Germans taxed his American income.

If the Clarkes were on a budget, Berlin must have seemed a solid choice; the presence of other Americans was a requirement for Robert to earn a living, either legally as a voice instructor, or through some variety of confidence trick. No foreigner could expect to successfully con the locals, especially not in Berlin, where all aspects of life were highly regulated. Even the law-abiding Mark Twain had a run-in with the police for not filling in all the proper forms.

But if he could stay on the right side of the law, there was much to interest Robert. Berlin was the home of a medical school attracting American students. It is possible that Robert, a former law student, now toyed with the idea of becoming a physician, and attended lectures (which were free to audit). If the language defeated him, he might have hung out with English-speaking students.

I don't know when they left Berlin, but at some point, they moved to Paris. Family lore regarding their lifestyle there suggests they weren't broke: Genie had her French maid, and Robbie, a nanny who taught him French, so Robert must have found some way to make money. Possibly his new scheme blew up in his face. In 1894 Genie left her husband, took their son back to America, and managed to get a quickie divorce.

But because she stayed with her mother in Washington, Robert was able to find her and talked her into taking him back. They were re-united in Holy Matrimony by a Methodist minister in Boston on December 3rd, 1894, before sailing back to Europe.

I don't know what happened there, but a few months later the Clarkes headed for New York again, departing Southampton on April 4, 1895, onboard the *Manitoba*. One single page—the customs list of passengers, filed by the ship's master, R. Griffith, on April 16, 1895—is a gold-mine in comparison to what I know about the previous four months. Finally, the facts!

The *Manitoba*, built by Harland & Wolff of Belfast, was launched on 28 January 1892. She was a 5,670 gross ton ship, with one funnel (red with a black top), four masts, and a single screw engine. Speed: 13 knots.

The *Manitoba* was owned by the Atlantic Transport Line, which offered only first-class accommodation on the London-New York run. It wasn't cheap – one-way fare between $50 and $85 per adult – but it had an excellent reputation for a high standard of service, food, and comfort. Passengers were expected to enjoy each other's company as if they were at a country house party. In 1898, Mrs. Julia Potwin, who kept a diary of her first voyage abroad, described passengers and crew together as resembling one big, happy family with the Captain as "Papa." Richard Griffith, an experienced seaman who played "Papa" on the April 1895 voyage, was described a few years later (when he went down with a different ship) as "a capable man, of good nerve and not excitable."

In all, there were twenty-six passengers – fourteen from England, twelve Americans, pretty evenly divided between male and female. Robbie, at five, was not the youngest – Harold Churchill was only two years old. Apart from two teenagers, Eugenia at twenty-eight was the youngest of the women. The men included doctors, lawyers, merchants, an actor and the independently wealthy.

Bugle-calls summoned them three times a day to lavish, multi-course meals served family-style at long tables. There was no professional entertainment, but there was a Music Room as well as a Library, and evenings filled with a mixture of singing, dancing, and amateur dramatics in addition to games and general conversation. Divine Service was held every Sunday morning in the dining saloon, led by the ship's commander, who read the Church of England services. There were prayers for President Grover Cleveland and Queen Victoria, and they sang hymns. Easter Sunday fell that year on April 14th, while they were still at sea.

The Clarkes had just one piece of luggage. It was probably a large trunk—their handbags would not have been listed—but considering that it contained all their worldly goods, and by comparison with others on board, they were traveling very light. The Churchill family (an English importer, two female relatives, and an infant) had nine pieces of stowed luggage. An English couple took sixteen pieces for a planned visit of two months. There was just one other passenger with a single piece: actor and writer Rudolph de Cordova, who was on his way to New York to resume work with his partner, writing a Broadway play.

I wonder if in later years, Rudolph and Genie remembered their brief acquaintance on this voyage and if they ever met again. She moved to California in 1914, by which time he was working in the motion picture industry – might he have helped her to get her first screen role?

Besides the actor, there were three other people I find interesting to think of in connection with my great-grandmother. Dr. Archibald Keightly, his wife Julia W. L. Keightly, and their close friend, Mrs. Alice Leighton Cleather formed a group described, in the New York Tribune of April 21, 1895, as "a delegation of three prominent English Theosophists."

They were members of the "inner circle" of the Theosophical Society who had personally known Madame Blavatsky and were on their way to attend the annual meeting of the American section, held in Boston at the end of April.

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York City on September 1875 by Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (HPB), Colonel Henry Steel Olcott and William Q. Judge, amongst others. Blavatsky was a Russian mystic who emigrated to the U.S. in 1873. She claimed to be in touch with "the Masters" – an immortal brotherhood of adepts dedicated to preserving and passing on their esoteric wisdom.

Dr. Keightly was responsible for bringing Madame H.P. Blavatsky from America to Britain, where he and his Uncle Bertram funded her living expenses, and helped by typing and correcting her manuscript of *The Secret Doctrine*, as well as supervising its publication.

I remember – although I never read it – there was an old copy of *The Secret Doctrine* in the bookcase in my childhood home. It was probably one of the books my father inherited from his father – maybe he inherited it from his mother? It doesn't seem like a book my grandfather would have bought for himself! Undoubtedly, Genie would have been interested in Theosophy, a philosophical system which emphasizes the fundamental similarities of all major religions and teaches the importance of spiritual growth, believing that there are cosmic cycles of evolution to release the potential of consciousness. I know she was raised a Baptist and was a dedicated church-goer in her later years, but she also believed that she possessed psychic powers,

was highly superstitious and had long possessed an interest in "ancient wisdom." I don't know how evangelical Theosophists might have been, but surely Genie would have had some deep and influential conversations with the two women in the group.

Mrs. Keightly, born Julia Wharton Lewis Campbell forty years before, had been, as Mrs. Verplanck, a close associate of William Q. Judge (head of the Theosophical Society in America). She wrote under several pen names, including "Jasper Niemand." Her father, James Hepburn Campbell (the U.S. Minister to Sweden and Norway under President Lincoln), died in Wayne, Pennsylvania, while she was at sea.

Alice Leighton Cleather, 41, had also been close to HPB and was also extremely wealthy. She was an active participant in the bitter in-fighting that went on over the direction Theosophy should take following the death of Madame Blavatsky, and she was responsible for establishing the Theosophical Library (aka HPB Memorial Library) in Toronto.

All of this material fires my imagination, but what interests me the most among the facts on the manifest is Robert's announced profession: Physician.

Was it a whim, or had he adopted a new persona as a way of making money after leaving Berlin – maybe in Paris (where, on November 1892, the French government had outlawed all amateur medical practitioners) or in London? Most passengers did not fill in that blank – there was no requirement for any traveler to have a profession.

This story from the New York Herald, December 16, 1895, tells what happened next:

> An army of creditors, great and small, are looking for G. Elliott Clark [sic], who until lately lived at No. 160 West Twenty-third street and who, it is said, had the letters "M.D." on his cards, although he did not openly practice as a physician. Along with the creditors are many stout persons, whom he had advertised to relieve of their fat, but who aver they are lighter only in their pockets.
>
> Mr. Clark is in London. Thither he went about three months ago, as silently as the tide goes out. At least that

> is the statement of Miss Henriette, of whom he rented apartments in Twenty-third street, and who is one of his largest creditors. Sometime before he left her house, his wife, with whom he did not live happily, took their little child and went to Washington and is now living with her parents there.

This time, Genie did not make the mistake of staying where her unwanted husband could find her. After a year's residence in Chicago, she was able to get a divorce.

As for Robert Elliott Clarke, he continued to call himself a doctor but avoided practicing medicine without a license. In 1902 he married Gussie Sheldon, a wealthy widow, and for almost a decade they lived comfortably in Boston. But by 1912, her money had run out.

While attempting to re-establish himself as a teacher of vocal culture, Robert met an English spinster, Miss Amy Perkins, a student of music and spiritualism. He told her he was an expert physician who had studied medicine in France, Germany, and England, and flattered her wildly. He said they were twin souls. He promised to buy her a car, a sealskin coat, a retinue of servants, and all the flowers she wanted. He claimed to be wealthy, but he just needed a little bit of money to get started building their dream home in California. She gave him $3,000 worth of bonds and later went out to Pasadena. But he was not there as promised, and she soon learned his other promises were equally worthless: he was not a doctor, not wealthy, and not single. She sued for the return of her bonds, but the money was gone. Robert's wife attempted to support them by baking and selling cakes, and he showed signs of increasing mental illness.

On March 23, 1920, Robert Elliott Clarke died of "General Paralysis (cerebral type)" – this was usually the result of syphilis— in Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. The Medical Record (New York) of April 17, 1920 (Vol. 97, issue 16, page 657) recorded his death thusly: "Dr. Robert Elliott Clarke, at one time medical advisor to Queen Victoria, died March 27 at the Matteawan Hospital, where he had been a patient for two years. He was sixty-six years of age."

Clarke's only son had married a doctor's daughter. I imagine that his father-in-law saw the notice and brought it to his son-in-law's attention – and that this is the source of our family legend.

My grandfather might not have believed it if he had read the longer, more detailed obituary (written, I suspect, by Clarke's adoring, gullible second wife) that appeared in The Poughkeepsie Eagle-News on March 26, 1920. Here is part of it:

> Dr. Clarke was born in New York City, a son of the Right Rev. John Clarke, a prominent Methodist Episcopal clergyman. Although he never attended college, he was a perpetual student and a man of distinguished ability. The quality of his voice won him recognition in Europe while he was still a comparatively young man, and his fame as a physician became widespread after he had cured the Earl of Eldesley of a case of shaking palsy which the best medical men in England had tried in vain to overcome. In recognition of his success, Queen Victoria admitted Dr. Clarke to membership in her cabinet.

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