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**'Non vedete. È un rivoluzione.' [You don't see. It's a revolution]**

**Edward Lear Landscape Painter and Italy**

**Kathryn Walchester**

**Abstract**

Edward Lear's 1852 text *Journals of a Landscape Painter in Southern Calabria and the Kingdom of Naples* details the author's painting tours in the South of Italy during one of its periods of major political and social upheaval. The text was based on his journeys in Southern Calabria in the summer of 1847 and Basilicata in the autumn of the same year. In his travel writing, Lear attempts, through a rhetoric of the 'picturesque', to construct an Italian refuge for himself; one which is static and silently 'picture-like.' This article considers the tensions and negotiations in this text between Lear's picture-refuge and his reporting of the dramatic events of the Italian Risorgimento, which demanded his, largely unwilling, involvement.

**Keywords:** Lear, Italy, Landscape painting, Travel, Art, Representation

Edward Lear's two principal travel texts about Italy were *Illustrated Excursions in Italy* (1846) and *Journals of a Landscape Painter in Southern Calabria and the Kingdom of Naples* (1852). He also published *Views of Rome and its Environs*, a book of his paintings, in 1841. *Illustrated Excursions in Italy* was based on his journals written during the summer of 1843 during a tour of the Abruzzi, when he was accompanied by his friend Charles Knight, and the following summer, when he returned to cover the villages that he had omitted before. The second travel text about Italy was based on his tours of Southern Calabria in the summer of 1847 and Basilicata in the autumn of the same year. Lear was accompanied this time by the Hon. John Proby, son of the future Earl of Carysfort.

The title of this article comes from a scene in *Journals of a Landscape Painter in Southern Calabria and the Kingdom of Naples* when Lear is in Reggio Calabria in early September, 1847. Confronted with bands of armed men on the streets of the town, Lear asks his guide and muleteer, Ciccio what is happening. Ciccio is incredulous, repeating 'You don't see?' before informing Lear that this is a revolution (Lear, 1852,156). The unrest that he witnessed was also occurring at Messina over the straits in Sicily and whilst these uprisings were quashed by the royal troops of Ferdinand II, King of the Two Sicilies, they presaged other more successful revolutions the following year as part of the Italian Risorgimento. Lear's inability to see what might appear to be obvious seems startling, yet throughout this text about Calabria and his earlier travel text, *Illustrated Excursions in Italy*, the lack of understanding between Lear and the Italian people, about whom he writes with so much affection, is significant. My argument in this paper is that in his travel writing about Italy, Lear attempts to construct his relationship with the country as that of 'landscape painter and subject'. Italy in this construction is a refuge for Lear; it is mediated through a series of textual precursors, which fix Italy into a static and silent 'picture'. Italy, for Lear, becomes a place which is a picture-refuge both from his concerns about his own physical disabilities and from worries about the necessity of earning a living amongst the British community in Rome. Lear's work offers another perspective for contemporary debates in the study of travel writing about the relationship between aesthetics and experience. Several studies, such as that of Chapman and Stabler, Bohls and more recently Simoni, have addressed the work of travel writers, painters and accounts of the landscapes of Italy and the way in which accounts of aesthetics frame other debates about power, agency and the role of the artist-traveller. With this in mind I will discuss how, in Lear's work, the narrative persona is established not as a travel writer looking for new ways to represent Italy and its politics; he is neither 'traveller' nor 'high-road tourist', as he notes in chapter fourteen of *Journals of a Landscape Painter in Southern Calabria and the Kingdom of Naples*. Rather he presents himself as 'wandering artist' (Lear, 1852,137) and 'landscape painter' as indicated in the more precise title of the second Italian text.

However, in his travel writing, particularly in the later text about Calabria in which he is faced by the beginning of the Risorgimento, another version of Italy intrudes, one which is altogether more animated and cannot be contained by Lear's 'picturesque refuge'.

I want to begin by considering Lear's Italian refuge. Lear's account of his reasons for travelling in and writing about Calabria draws attention to the significance of visual and the fact that 'Calabria's scenery, excepting that on the high road, or near it, has been rarely portrayed' (Lear, 1852, 30). He sees the landscape of Italy in terms of its utility for his purposes as a painter; at Galliciano for example he notes that the 'neighbourhood [*sic*] abounds with studies for the landscape painter' (Lear, 1852, 2) and in the impressive view from the Palazzo Marzano, Sicily floats on the horizon's edge, 'just where a painter would have put it' (Lear, 1852, 53). Picturesque tourism in Italy had been popular from the late eighteenth century, as British travellers inspired by the Italian landscape paintings of Claude, Gaspar Poussin and Salvator Rosa from the previous century sought out such scenes on the Continent.



**Plate One:** Landscape with Travellers (1641) Salvator da Rosa  
(public domain)

The picturesque scene according to the conventions of William Gilpin contained features such as ruins, peasants and brigands and was framed by the presence of craggy mountains, and woods. During the eighteenth century following publications by Price, Gilpin and Burke, the categories of the sublime, beautiful and the picturesque grew more prescriptive until by the nineteenth century, as several critics such as Foster and Wheeler Manwaring have noted, such aesthetic terms as 'picturesque' had become 'outmoded' or even 'ridiculously hackneyed' (Foster, 1990, 57; Wheeler Manwaring, 1965, 68). What I want to focus on in this paper is the way in which in the thick of Italian unrest, Lear chooses to represent the country in terms of an outmoded rhetoric, that of the picturesque, in an attempt to construct a version of Italy which is static, silent and denies its people any agency.

In *Journals in Southern Calabria and the Kingdom of Naples* Lear sets out what seems to be the model for his experience during his travels in Italy. He describes,

When a landscape painter halts for two or three days in one of the large towns of these regions, never perhaps to be revisited by him, the first morning at least is generally consumed in exploring it: four or five hours are very well spent, if they lead to the knowledge of the general forms of the surrounding scenes, and to the securing fixed choice of subject and quiet study to the artist during the rest of his stay. (Lear, 1852, 100)

According to this template Lear assigns his usual behaviour on his tour to the general regime of 'the landscape painter' or 'artist', thus aggrandizing his behaviour and establishing it as the norm. Alongside this model, Lear sets out the idealized behaviour of the Italians. It is significant that these are places never before visited by English travellers, as Lear notes,

It is probable that no stranger had ever visited these wild and unfrequented nooks of a province, the great towns of which are themselves out of the route of travellers; but no one met or overtook me on the way to Bigonzi without a word or two of salutation; there were few who did not offer me pears, and parties of women laden with baskets of figs would stop and select the best for

us. Nor did anyone ask a question beyond, 'What do you think of our mountains?' or 'How do you like village?' (Lear, 1852, 101)

The local people are polite, generous but not overly inquisitive in Lear's model of Italy. As he notes with approval, 'The peasantry of Cànalo were perfectly quiet and well-behaved, and in nowise persecuted us in our drawing excursions' (Lear, 1852, 119). Therefore, according to Lear's ideal version of his travel in Italy, his status as 'landscape painter' prevails over other more intimate relationships with the people. He is able, in his picturesque refuge, to follow a prescribed itinerary without interruption and to produce painted versions of the places he visits.



*SANTA MARIA DI POLSI*

**Plate Two: Santa Maria Di Polsi**

(public domain)

Lear's descriptions of the sights of Calabria are from a distance; villages, geographical features, and in this example at Santa Maria di Polsi (Plate Two), a monastery are described as he approaches,

The *perpendicular* character of the scene is singularly striking, the wooded rocks right and left closing it in like the side slips of a theatre; and as no other building is within sight, the romance and the loneliness of the spot is complete.  
(Lear, 1852, 78)

Lear frames the scene linguistically; noting how the wooded rocks 'close it in.' This silent and remote place recalls both picturesque paintings and the romances of Ann Radcliffe, whose Gothic novels frequently featured religious settings.



**Plate Three:** The Forest of Pietrapennata

(public domain)

At Pietrapennata (Plate Three) Lear notes that there are, 'none of your dense carpet-forests – your monotonies of verdure, but made up of separate combinations of pictorial effect, such as one can hardly fancy – Claude and Salvator Rosa at every step!' (Lear, 1852, 64). At Bruzano, Lear notes how the village is, 'placed as if arranged by G. Poussin for a picture, on the edge of a great rock rising out of the plain, and built with all that beauty of simple form, and that independent irregularity, so identified now in our minds with the towns of Calabria' (Lear, 1852, 66).

Considering picturesque villages from a distance means that Lear's account of them is merely visual and thus rendered silent.

Lear's focus on distant, visual accounts of Italian settlements perhaps reveals something of his personality. A shy man, self-conscious of his various physical disabilities, he preferred the company of women and children to other men. At the *fiesta* at Tagliacozzo, Lear tells with relief that,

A gay scene it was and I always had the pleasure of getting a place by some one of the ladies of the company; a piece of good fortune I owed to my being the only foreigner present, for a dark mass of my superiors in rank - Generals, Judges, etc., were obliged to sit together, unilluminated by any of the lights of Creation.'(Lear, 1846, 65)

The company of women seems prized by Lear; metaphorically lighting his social experience. The tender account of Don Gregorio in *Illustrated Excursions* also demonstrates Lear's affection for children. Don Gregorio is, 'about twenty years of age, although so diminutive as to appear a boy of ten or twelve. Unable to move, having become lame from a fall during his infancy, he is always cheerful ...Poor little fellow!' (Lear, 1846, 68). Lear's preference for the company of women and children seems to indicate his distaste for a more competitive social relationship he encountered with other men. With women and children his role seems to have been more that of an entertainer and despite being the centre of attention he is not required to compete physically or financially.



Largely, Lear's discussion of women and children is related to their appearance in these texts. They are mainly described in groups and in aesthetic terms, adding a picturesque quality to certain scenes. For example in *Illustrated Excursions* he writes how at Scanno,

It is the prettiest thing in the world to see the children, who have beautiful faces, and are all turbaned, even as little babies. As for the women, they are decidedly the most beautiful race I saw in the Abruzzi: - their fresh and clear complexion, fine hair, good features, and sweet expression, are delightful; and owing to their occupation being almost entirely that of spinning wool, their faces have a delicacy, which their countrywomen who work in the fields cannot lay claim to. (Lear, 1846, 88)

Lear's account of the appearance of the women and children of this region demonstrates how for him they form part of the aesthetics of Italy and how he measures them against each other according to these terms. At the *fiesta* at Tagliacozzo, he describes for example how,

Many of the groups of Mothers and families, with the broken silver rays falling on them through the Gothic arches of the little temple, were picturesque and touching beyond description. (Lear, 1846, 66)

Here the women and children are set as part of a picture, complete with ruins, a staple of the eighteenth-century picturesque scene. It is noteworthy, that the women and children are as a group; they are neither named nor individuated. Later in the text, when Lear goes to the Monastery of San Michele for the *fiesta* he once again describes a group of Italians in preference to individuals. He writes,

Great numbers of peasants were arriving and encamping below the tall walnut-trees, forming a Fair, after the usual mode of Italians at their Fête; the costumes individually were not very striking, but the general effect of the scene, every part of it being clearly reflected in the water, was as perfectly beautiful as any I ever saw. (Lear, 1846, 201)

The Italians in general and women in particular, form part of Lear's ideal 'picture – Italy' but only so far as they are attractively positioned or dressed and are not separate, animate subjects. Indeed, when he is approached by a woman whose attentions he does not seek, a servant in Don Constantino's house, in Abadessa, one of the Greek settlements of Southern Italy, he is notably rendered powerless and extremely uncomfortable.

When the family separated for repose, Don Constantino and a very old and hideous domestic followed me into my chamber, the latter of whom proffered her services to "*spogliarmi*," which offer I respectfully declined, though again she entered to tuck all the sheets around the bed, an operation I could not prevent as the doors of all the rooms were open, but was thankful when it was concluded.' (Lear, 1846, 105)

By tucking Lear into bed, the female servant intrudes on Lear's privacy, and he becomes passive and infantilized. The situation is made all the more unsettling as he has protested and was ignored.

Lear's appreciation of women's company however does extend to their social conditions in these texts. Despite the insistence on the picturesque qualities of Italy and its people, he appears to have some insight into the limitations on women's lives in Italy. He notes how he abruptly responds 'Prosit' on his last evening in Scanno when having asked his host's sister if she has been to the nearby towns of Sulmona or Aquila and the answer is no - the host replies "*Si occupano le donne di Scanno dalle affari di case* [the women of Scanno are busy with household matters]'. He clearly feels sympathy with this woman and notes his disapproval at her and her townswomen's constrained life. At Tagliacozzo, before his surprise and pleasure at being placed alongside the women at dinner, Lear notes with disapproval that women are rarely introduced to visitors. He writes,

But there is seldom any presentation to the fair part of the household; and the secondary position in society, held by those who are with us of the first

importance, is a striking, and not over-agreeable feature in the domestic economy in many of these country establishments. (Lear, 1846, 63)

The comparison between England and Italy in those countries' relative treatment of women seems an overstatement; however it illustrates Lear's interest in the position of Italian women and his perception of their place in society.

As well as his preference for female company, Lear's biographers have noted that Lear disliked noise and indeed the Italian travel texts show his discomfort in noisy environments (Levi, 1995, 58; Montgomery, 2005, 10, 25; Noakes, 1991). At the festa at Tagliacozzo, Lear notes ,

To one whose greatest horror is noise, this sort of life was not a little wearying; but having been informed that to leave the house during the festa would be considered as the greatest insult to the family, I felt obliged to remain, and resigned me to my *fête* accordingly' (Lear, 1852, 66).

Lear is especially appreciative of quiet or lonely spots on his Italian tours. For example, in the Marsica, where he notes that 'an indescribable quiet, a feeling of distance from the busy world pervades this sequestered district', his description is in superlative terms (Lear, 1852, 14). He writes,

Shut up in its own circle of high mountains, the Marsica has no communication (beyond that afforded by mule-tracks) with any great city; and it possesses, besides the delight of its unfrequented tranquility, more attractions among its inhabitants, its scenery and antiquities, than any place it has been ever my fortune to visit. (Lear, 1852, 14)

Lear's emphasis on the aspect of silence and remoteness in these Italian scenes indicates a certain lack of involvement. He is not required to communicate with people at this distance and can control the scenes through his appropriation of them either pictorially or in words.

Lear's account of his visit with Knight to Lago Fucino also emphasizes his appreciation of the silent Italian landscape. They get to the 'celebrated Emissario', an

impressive example of Roman engineering which connects the lake with Rome and provided the city with water (Lear, 1846, 20). Lear describes how,

The solitary character of the place is most striking; no link between the gay, populous past, and the lonely present; no work of any intermediate century breaks its desolate and poetical feeling. I could willingly have lingered there for hours, for I recall no scene at once so impressive and beautiful. (*ibid.*)

The emphasis in this extract is on the remoteness of the place; Lear prizes this above both its Classical and scientific significance. He notes that Knight, 'left me, to explore and measure the Emissario; while I unapt to make researches into the bowels of the damp earth, greatly preferred reclining in the bright sunshine, untired with the solemn prospect before me.' (*ibid.*)

Unlike many of his contemporaries and predecessors, Lear rejects the Classics as a referent with which to represent the Italian landscape. Since the early days of the Grand Tour in Italy, as Ingamells notes, 'the visitor found living cheap and the climate generally attractive and beneficial, but such convenient attributes were outweighed by the lure of antiquity' (Ingamells, 1997, 21). Lear's lack of interest in the historical in Italy indicates, I suggest, his insistence in his travel writing on an ahistorical Italy.

The lack of interest 'to make researches into the bowels of damp earth,' similarly indicates Lear's disinterest in describing Italy in terms of science. He is confounded by the repeated interrogations by his Italian hosts about a contemporary engineering project - that of the Thames tunnel - a refrain which runs through both *Illustrated Excursions* and *Journals in Southern Calabria and the Kingdom of Naples*. At the house of Don Guiseppe Nanni, he notes how he and Proby, 'fought bravely through the *al solito* [usual] questions about the tunnel, and the produce of Inghilterra, though I confess to having been more than once fast asleep, and, waking up abruptly, answered at random, in the vaguest manner, to the applied catechetical torture' (Lear, 1846, 94). The Thames Tunnel, designed by Sir Marc Isambard Brunel was opened in March 1843, having taken eighteen years to complete. It crossed under the

Thames from Rotherhithe to Wapping and was considered a triumph of Victorian engineering over the natural world. Lear's frustration with his hosts' questions about the tunnel reveals his focus on a pastoral, non-technological Italy, in which the people are not interested in contemporary advances in science.

Lear's Italian refuge then has three main features: it is silent; static in its appearance, and also in terms of its history; and it draws on the conventions and is described with reference to the rhetoric and the painters of the picturesque. These precursor texts mediate Lear's experience and descriptions of Italy and contribute to his attempts to render Italy as a 'picture-like' refuge. However, Lear's interest in the lives of the Italians, shown for example in the distinctive portraits of his hosts and their families and his interest in the social position of women, offers one of the main challenges to his portrayal of a 'picture-Italy.' The lively anecdotes presented in the texts break out from the silent accounts of landscape. In *Journals in Southern Calabria and the Kingdom of Naples*, Lear presents a particularly fond account of his guide Ciccio, whose phrase '*díghi, dóghi, dà*' punctuates every sentence and which he and Proby never get to understand. Apart from 'faithful Ciccio' as Lear refers to him, the other notable character is Count Garrolo (Lear, 1852, 149). The Count's name is most likely an example of Lear's license to alter the details of his travels for dramatic effect; *garrolo* meaning talkative. He describes the Count Garrolo as 'a good-natured and fussy little man, excessively consequential and self-satisfied, but kind withal,' noting how he 'bustled about like an armadillo'; and on leaving him writing, 'Addio, Conte Garrolo! A merry obliging little man you are as ever lived, and the funniest of created counts all over the world' (Lear, 1852, 80, 82, 85). The descriptions of Ciccio and Count Garrolo illustrate Lear's affection for the Italian people and indicate how his account of them disrupts his silent refuge; however, in *Illustrated Excursions*, Lear describes an incident which occurs on the way to Leonessa, and in which his affection for the 'merry old monk' breaks apart the picturesque scene more dramatically. Lear exclaims,

What a walk! Such rocks and velvet turf! Such green hills, crested with tall,  
white-trunked woods, like those in Stothard's paintings! Such hanging oaks,

fringing the chasms deep below your path! Such endless flocks of sheep in the open glades! At a turn of the mule-path, through a sombre vale, we met a single capuchin, - the only creature throughout the day, - with a silver white beard below his girdle: a most merry old monk, who laughed till the tears ran down his face, because I would make a sketch of him. (Lear, 1846, 129)

The exclamations recall the rhetoric of the Gothic Romance and in his reference to Thomas Stothard, Lear conjures more connections with picturesque paintings. Stothard was an English painter of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, whose works focused on book illustrations such as an edition of *Ossian* and generally addressed the 'congenial' and 'everday'. The list of elements in this picturesque scene conforms to a model of the picturesque and yet by reporting the actions and voice of the monk, Lear disrupts the picture doubly. First the vibrancy of the monk disrupts the static aspect of the picture and secondly, the monk's laughter indicates that he does not value Lear's representation of him.

The gap between Lear's refuge and a more animated and sometimes dangerous place is similarly evident in his frustrated accounts of his interrogation by the people. They cannot understand why the Englishmen are there; in the earlier text as Knight and Lear travel around Abruzzo they are seen as business men or prospectors, whereas in Calabria the locals cannot believe that he and Proby are merely painters and not government agents or spies. At Palizzi, Lear voices his frustration, 'You might talk forever; but you could not convince them that you are not a political agent sent to spy out the nakedness of the land, and masking the intentions of your government under the thin veil of portraying scenes, in which they see no novelty, and take no delight' (Lear, 1852, 59). In *Illustrated Excursions* at Lanciano Lear is required to go to the house of the *Sindaco*, or mayor, by the owner of the Locanda in which he plans to stay that night. He notes indignantly,

These people cannot imagine one's motives for travelling to be simply the love of seeing new places etc; and the more one strives to convince them that it is so, the more they are certain that one has other designs. "*Dove vai!*" they

scream out, if one goes but a foot's length out of the high-way to seek a point for drawing. (Lear, 1846, 101).

Lear's frustration at the Italians' lack of understanding is two-fold; firstly he cannot make them understand that he is there to paint and secondly they are suspicious about his actions. His annoyance is prompted again, near the Lago di Paterno, when his host asks him for whom he is in mourning. Presumably Lear was wearing black gloves, hatband or cravat as was the expected mourning dress for men during the period. He was in mourning for his mother, Ann Lear, who died in 1844. "Mi spinge la curiosita," said Signora Aquinas "di Sapere per chi porta lutto?" These people always *will* know who you are in mourning for. (Lear, 1846,126) The emphasis in this extract and the stern 'these people' draws attention to his irritation. However, this intrusion may have been because this touched on a particularly sensitive issue for Lear. After his father's bankruptcy, the family had broken up and the responsibility for Lear's upbringing was given over to the eldest daughter, also called Ann. Lear wrote in his diary that, 'what I should have been unless she [his sister, Ann] had been my mother I dare not think'(Montgomery, 2005, 10). When Jeremiah, Lear's father, retired from the Stock Exchange in 1827 he, his wife and one daughter went to live in Gravesend, leaving Ann and Edward to fend for themselves in Gray's End Road. Although Lear shows some concern for his mother and her financial state he 'never seems to have wanted to see her again', as Levi notes (Levi,1995, 8). The interest of the Italian people in Lear's mourning dress seems to make him uncomfortable and irritable. These moments are rare in the text as the dominant tone of his discussion of the people is affectionate and humorous. Thus, the curiosity of the Italians contests Lear's 'ideal-Italy'. It makes active, vocal and intrusive a country which the 'picture-Italy' had idealized as static, silent and passive.

The culmination, however, of this conflict between Lear's desire to represent Italy as a 'picture' and the indications in the text of another version of the country occurs, I suggest, in Lear's journey of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1847 in *Journals of a Landscape Painter*. During this section, he comes to terms with the increasing tensions as the region moved towards the Risorgimento and this realisation is represented through

several changes of rhetoric. Lear refers more often to the Gothic as a means of illustrating the increasing anxiety and relies less on the rhetoric of the picturesque. Indeed, he struggles to find the picturesque in the landscape to the same extent as he did before; it seems incompatible with the agency and danger in the region. Finally, the tension, on a personal level at least, gives way to despondency and regret as Lear feels he must abandon the Calabrian tour.

In this final section of the Calabrian journal, Lear moves from the coast inland towards Pentadati and on to Melito before returning with growing unease back to Reggio. He writes,

On advancing, the views of the wondrous crags of Pentadati become astonishingly fine and wild, and as the sun set in crimson glory, displayed a truly magnificent scene of romance – the vast mass of pinnacled rock rearing itself alone above its neighbour hills, and forming a landscape which is the beau-ideal of the terrible in Calabrian scenery. (Lear, 1846, 149)

This scene, as it comes into view, is not static; the sun is setting and the rock ‘rears’. It contains more features of the sublime than Lear’s previous emphasis on the picturesque. The reference to the wildness of the landscape and the fact that it is terrible recalls the sublime landscape of the Gothic novel. Lear’s allusions to the Gothic Romance are much more pronounced in this section than before.





**Plate Four: Penteditilo**

(public domain)

Penteditilo (Plate Four) is thus named because of the shape of the rock; coming from the Greek for 'five fingers' and Lear gives one of the rare digressions from his accounts of the scenery and his lodgings to tell the horrific story of the feud between the people of Penteditilo and Montebello. The crux of which involves the Marchese of Penteditilo's blood-stained hand sliding down the wall of his castle.

Lear and Ciccio move on to Melito, and in the journal entry for September 1<sup>st</sup> 1847 he notes that whilst staying with the Don of Melito, Don Pietro, 'it appeared to me that some evil, general or particular, was brooding over the household' (Lear, 1852, 149). He is apparently unaware of the growing political tensions. After first claiming that he is 'ill at ease and unwell' the host and his family 'seemed to have agreed among

themselves that it was impossible to conceal their alarm, and a rapid succession of questions was put to me as to what I knew of political changes about to take place immediately' (*ibid*). Lear arouses the scorn of the family when he claims that he does not know anything despite having come from one of the principal towns of the region, Reggio. His perspective is still at this point distanced from that of the Italians. Whilst he does note the emotional outburst of the family, this is recounted in language reminiscent of melodrama.

*“È già principiate la rivoluzione!”* [The revolution has already started] shrieked aloud Don Pietro; sobs and groans and clamour followed, and the moaning hostess, after weeping frantically, fell into a violent fit, and was carried out, the party breaking up in the most admired disorder. (Lear, 1852, 150)

There is a note of condescension in this description rather than empathy or interest in the cause of the tension. However, it is immediately followed by Lear's initial worries about himself in the unsettled region.

As for me, revolution or no revolution, here I am in the toe of Italy all alone, and I must find my way out of it as best I may; so, wrapping myself up in my plaid, and extinguishing the light, I lay down in the front room on the bed allotted me, whose exterior was not indicative of cleanliness or rest.' (Lear, 1852, 151)

Lear acknowledges the possibility of the political agency of the Italian people but his focus remains on his own situation and the dangers to which he has exposed himself. There is still clearly a gap between his version of Italy and the political unrest facing its people; Lear at this point does not appreciate the gravity of the situation for his hosts and certainly does not seem to empathise with them.

The events of that night, again recall events from a Gothic romance. Lear settles down in his room pessimistic about his chances of a good night's sleep after the melodramatic scene he has witnessed. He perceives that he is not alone when he hears a 'mysterious noise', 'a hideous gurgling sob'. 'Feeling certain that I was not alone,' he writes,

I softly put out my hand for that never-to-be-omitted night companion in travelling – a phosphorus box –when before I could reach it, my bed was lifted up by some incomprehensible agency below, and puffing and sobs, mingled with a tiny tinkling sound accompanied this Calabrian mystery. Shade of Mrs. Radcliffe! It was a large and dirty tame sheep! So I forthwith opened a door into the next room, and bolted out the domestic tormentor. (Lear, 1852, 152)

The structure of this section is reminiscent of travel writers earlier in the century such as Charlotte Eaton and Anna Jameson and their use of similar Radcliffean anti-climaxes. The background of the fears and the discussion of brigandage heighten emotion in their texts; the protagonist is left alone (usually at night in a room without a bolt in some unsavoury inn or lodgings) and set to experience their own moment of terror. The moment of terror is found to have no grounds in the supernatural and is often comic in its resolution. Here the background of the horrors and fear of the revolution are used to heighten tension before a moment of humour and anti-climax. Thus Lear's serene, picture-refuge of Italy is disrupted in this account which recalls one of the texts he has employed to construct it.

There are two main aspects in the Italian texts which erode Lear's construction of the silent 'picture-Italy'; one, as in this incident with the sheep and that of the 'merry monk', is Lear's recourse to humour, and the other his affection for the people he meets and with whom he stays. This empathy with his hosts is demonstrated at Montebello where he stays the following night. As on the previous night, his hosts demonstrate their concerns about the impending revolution; however, this time Lear's reaction is different. He notes that he 'shall not easily forget' the wife's exclamation for the safety of her sons and the way in which her husband comforts her. 'I became truly grieved for these poor people, ignorant though I was actually of pending circumstances' (Lear, 1852, 153). Increasingly anxious for his own safety, Lear returns to Reggio. Lear understands the gravity of the situation and its impact on the Calabrian people and this seems to erode his ability to describe the region in terms of the picturesque. He tells how he and Ciccio walk alongside the 'tiresome

fiumara' and how this time the way was 'long and tedious to Reggio' (Lear, 1852, 155).

Lear is surprised at the appearance of the place, cannot understand what has happened and asks Ciccio. He writes how,

At the hour of one in the night we reached Reggio, and hear the secret divulged itself at once. How strange was the scene! All the quiet town was brilliantly lighted up, and every house illuminated: no women or children were visible, but troops of men, by twenties and thirties, all armed, and preceded by banners inscribed 'Viva Pio IX' or 'Viva la Costituzione', were parading the high street from end to end. 'Cosa x'è stata, Ciccio?' said I.

'O non vedete,' said the unhappy muleteer, with a suppressed groan. 'O non vedete? é un rivolzione! Díghi, dóghi, dà!' (Lear, 1852, 155)

Lear is faced with the political unrest, and after Ciccio's explanation it seems that Lear's Italian refuge cannot accommodate this other animated and politically dangerous version. The empathy for the Italians with whom he has stayed illustrates his new understanding of the gravity of the political tensions. Following this return to Reggio, Lear acknowledges the feelings of his hosts. He tells how, 'the agitation of the people at Montebello and Mélito; the suspicions of Don Tito and the woodmen at Basilicò, and even those of the fat Baron Rivettini, were all fully explained and justified' (Lear, 1852, 156). This side of the gap between the Lear's perception of the people and the reality is resolved; Lear acknowledges the reason for the curiosity of the Calabrians. On 3<sup>rd</sup> September Lear managed to procure a boat over to Messina across the Straits in Sicily where he rejoined his friend Proby. It was decided that they could no longer continue with the tour of Calabria for fear of their safety. Lear's journal entry for 11<sup>th</sup> September reads: the 'decision not to return to Calabria is fixed. All that part of Italy is at present in too unsettled a state to admit of prosperous artistic tours' (Lear, 1852, 165). The two instead set off to explore Basilicata to the north.

## Conclusions

To conclude then, what I want to suggest is, that in his account of Calabria, Lear attempts to set up a version of Italy which can be read as a refuge for him; a place which furnishes his career as landscape painter, is unchanging, safe and familiar because it is mediated by a series of precursor texts. In his account of the region, however, there emerges another version of Italy in which the people are curious about him, opinionated and for whom he has considerable affection. This alternative Italy cannot be contained within his original construction and as he and Proby leave Calabria, Lear acknowledges both his concern for the families again and also his sadness at the unfinished project. It is noteworthy that at this point Lear uses the image of the traveller faced with metaphorical bad weather rather than the painter. He writes,

I leave the shores of Calabria with a grating feeling I cannot describe. The uncertainty of the fate of many kind and agreeable families – Da Nava, Scaglione, Marzano etc – it is not pleasant to reflect on, Gloom, gloom, overshadows the memory of a tour so agreeably begun, and which should have extended yet through two provinces. The bright morning route of the traveller overcast with cloud and storm before mid-day. (Lear, 1852,161)

Lear, after the dangers, intimacies and frustrations of the Calabrian section of the tour, feels that he is, perhaps, more 'traveller' than 'landscape painter' now.

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