

Romantic Exiles in Italy

Experiencing the Southern Landscape

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When the Napoleonic Wars ended (1815), British travellers returned to the Continent and to Italy...



*Italy was famous for its art, its literature and
its landscapes...*



Itsscenerywasconsideredsublime...

- “whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling...” Edmund Burke (1757)
- “...whenever experiences slips out of conventional understanding, whenever the power of an object or event is such that words fail and points of comparison disappear, *then* we resort to the feeling of the sublime...” Philip Shaw (2006)



**John William
Polidori
(1795-1821)**

Polidori's father was Italian. John felt deeply connected to Italy, which he regarded as his fatherland. He finally managed to visit the country in September 1816.

The sight of the Alps enthralled him...



- *“From Guttannen the road went through the wildest and most sublime scenery I ever read of: vegetation less and less, so that, instead of grass, there was moss, then nothing. Instead of trees, shrubs; then nothing - huge granite rocks leaving hardly room for the road and river. The river's bed the most magnificent imaginable, cut deep and narrow into solid rock, sinuous and continually accompanied by cascades, and amazing bold and high single-arched bridges. Snow covering in some parts the whole bed of the river, and so thick and strong, that ever huge stones have fallen without injuring its crust.” John Polidori (1816)*



Joseph Severn (1793-1879)

Joseph Severn was a painter. He went to Italy in 1820 as a companion to the terminally ill poet John Keats. Severn also hoped a long stay in Rome would benefit his career as a painter.

In 1873 Severn remembered the beauty of the Bay of Naples...



- *“The aspect from the Bay of Naples was sublime. On the right was the range of Apennines with Sorrento[,] to the left the splendid city of Naples, terrassed up & up with gardens and vineyards, in the centre Vesuvius with its clouds of smoke opening & extending all along the horizon, the clouds edged with golden light, then the lovely deep blue sea making the foreground. All this was an enchantment with the people surrounding our ship with their guitars & songs and no end of delicious fruits in great abundance grapes peaches watermelons & plums.” Joseph Severn (1873)*



Leigh Hunt (1785-1859)

Leigh Hunt faced a long voyage to Italy in 1821. A champion of Italian Art and Literature, he journeyed to Italy to escape debts, save his wife's health and join his dear friend Shelley.

Uponseeing the Mediterranean, Hunt wastransfixed...



- *“Countless generations of the human race, from three-quarters of the world, with all the religions, and the mythologies, and the genius, and the wonderful deeds, good and bad, that have occupied almost the whole attention of mankind, look you in the face from the galleries of the ocean-floor, rising one above the other, till the tops are lost in heaven. The water at your feet is the same water that bathes the shores of Europe, of Africa, and of Asia – of Italy and Greece, and the Holy Land, and the lands of chivalry and romance, and pastoral Sicily, and the Pyramids, and old Crete, and the Arabian city of Al Cairo glittering in the magic lustre of the Thousand and One Nights.” Leigh Hunt (1828)*