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'A Cultured English Public in Italy': Expatriates, cultural propaganda and the British Institute of Florence, 1900 to 1940

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
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Statement of originality

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I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree

Abstract

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This thesis examines the history of the British expatriate community in Florence in the early twentieth century through the cultural institution that they established during the First World War as part of the British propaganda effort in Italy: the British Institute of Florence. By using the British Institute as a case study, the thesis demonstrates how ideas of being British played a major role in the ways expatriates conceived of themselves in relation to their immediate Italian environment, but also to their homeland and the wider British empire. Using personal and official correspondence between individuals in Florence and London, the British embassy in Rome, the British Council, and the Foreign Office, as well as newspaper articles and memoirs, this thesis reconstructs the complex network of relationships that connected Florence to Britain.

Until recently the history of expatriate groups has been generally overlooked and this thesis aims to contribute to a growing historiography on overseas British communities. It argues that the British expatriates, or Anglo-Florentines, involved in the foundation and administration of the British Institute of Florence were influenced by an imperial worldview that affected their motivations for establishing the Institute, as well as the ways in which they conducted their programmes of cultural outreach. The link between imperialism and interwar cultural propaganda has not until now been explored, and this thesis demonstrates that an intimate relationship between the two existed. Furthermore, although the Institute provided the model for similar cultural centres opened by the British Council around the world, its role in Britain's cultural propaganda effort has not been the subject of any major historical study. By addressing these issues, this thesis contributes new insights into the construction of expatriate identity, interwar cultural propaganda and cultural institutions, and the persistence of imperial ideas outside the empire.

Preface

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Earlier versions of Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis have appeared as an amalgamated article submitted to *Twentieth Century British History* as, "'Victory Will Be With Us': British Propaganda and Imperial Duty in Florence during the First World War," *Twentieth Century British History*, 23(3): 311-335.

Acknowledgements

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It is always hard to know where to begin to thank so many people who have helped me to get to this stage, but I shall have to try. Any omissions are of course my fault and totally unintentional.

First and foremost, I must thank my supervisor, Robert Aldrich, whose patience and support have been nothing short of superhuman in the four years of my thesis journey. In his enthusiasm, encouragement and valuable comments on my work and research process, he has been the best mentor I could have hoped to be at my side.

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I am also grateful for the amazing community of postgraduate students and staff at the University of Sydney's History Department. I have had opportunities for many good discussions and so much encouragement from my peers, and I am truly thankful for their unquestioning support of each other.

To my friends and family, whether in Singapore, Sydney, or further afield, I am also sincerely grateful. Special thanks to my uncle Richard and aunt Judy, for putting me up and putting up with me for these years. Thanks especially to Charmaine, Yi Ning, Evelyn, Amelia, and my big cousin Adrian, who led the way.

To my father, who waited until I got home, and whom I miss every day. Thank you for your unquestioning support of my studies and all your love.

My greatest thanks is to the two strongest women I know, and to them I dedicate the past four years of work: to my mother and grandmother, who showed me that adversity is only a part of the learning process, and without whose love and encouragement I would never have come so far.

因为有你们,我才可以来到这里。十分感谢你的支持。

List of abbreviations

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BIA – British Institute Archives, Florence

BRI – British Institute Collection

BW – British Council files

FCO – Foreign and Commonwealth Office files

FO – Foreign Office files

TNA: PRO – The National Archives (UK): Public Records Office, Kew

WAT – Waterfield Collection

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Introduction

'The spiritual value of British Institutes Abroad': Introducing the Anglo-Florentines and the British Institute of Florence

> For the thousands of patriotic Britons who jealously watch the extension of our territorial empire and its political prestige, how many are concerned with the far more important problem of the diffusion of its spiritual influence? To what extent is our Empire respected for its wealth and the power of the navy, or as an instrument for the civilization of the world? ... The object of the British Institutes abroad is to promote the study and the influence of our literature, and to diffuse our national culture, which is more and more coming to be recognised as the most solid foundation of political influence. This might not be admitted as a justifiable aim were it not generally recognised that the great British ideals are those that promote prosperity, justice and peace.
>
> *Harold E. Goad, Second Director of the British Institute of Florence, 'The Spiritual Value of British Institutes Abroad', 2 November 1934.*[1]

On 29 April 2011, a special celebration was held at the British Institute of Florence. Various dignitaries and members of the British expatriate community gathered in the Ferragamo room of the Institute's library, which had been hung with Union Jacks to mark the occasion of the marriage of Prince William to Kate Middleton. In keeping with contemporary media practice, photographs of the event were quickly uploaded onto the social media website Flickr, showing how the community commemorated the nuptials of the future sovereign of the United Kingdom with glasses of champagne and the requisite book for recording the congratulatory statements of those who attended the celebrations. As with many other expatriate communities around the world, in gathering to celebrate the Windsors' union, these expatriates were also celebrating and reaffirming their cultural ties with the home from which they were absent.

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[1] Harold E. Goad, 'The Spiritual Value of British Institutes Abroad', 2 November 1934, British Council files (BW) 40/2, The National Archives UK: Public Record Office (TNA: PRO), Kew.



Image 1: Union Jacks at the British Institute of Florence, British Institute of Florence, 2011, http://www.flickr.com/photos/britishinstituteofflorence/5692339505/

The 2011 observance of the royal wedding at the British Institute finds a precedent in the early decades of the twentieth century. The coronation of George VI in May 1937 was celebrated by the British community in Florence, though a good deal more lavishly than the simple reception that was given for the Royal Couple in 2011. The director of the Institute at that time, Harold E. Goad, was keen to make a good impression on the other inhabitants of Florence, whether Italian or otherwise. Along with a local Anglican church – Holy Trinity, run today by the Waldensians – he organised an entire day of celebrations to mark the coronation that included not only listening to the wireless broadcast of the ceremony as it happened in London, but also a concert of English songs later in the day, along with a reception and dinner. Much later in the evening the director and his guests all sang the national anthem 'with great enthusiasm' before the festivities finally ended at around midnight.[2]

[2] Harold E. Goad to Charles Bridge, 20 May 1937, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew. The coronation celebrations are analysed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

The British in Florence: a short sketch

The British in Florence have a long and colourful history, reaching back through the ages from the famously brutal fourteenth-century *condottierro* or mercenary John Hawkwood and the celebrated author and traveller Geoffrey Chaucer, to the illustrious tourists of the Grand Tour and the literary travellers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Byron and Shelley, Robert and Elizabeth Browning, and E.M. Forster. In 1900, when this thesis begins, the British community was one of the most visible and prominent groups of international residents in the city of Florence. Buoyed by the high value of the British pound against the struggling Italian *lira*, British expatriates could live in Florence much more comfortably than they could back at home.[3]

Those who chose to make their home in the city were entranced by Florence's long and bloody history, and its various artistic and cultural treasures, as much as by the low cost of living. Florence also catered to a mostly British tourist market, with many shops taking advantage of the large numbers of tourists to sell goods and foodstuffs directly imported from Britain for those travellers eager for a taste of the familiar. [4] The British who came to the city were drawn to Florence, as to the rest of Italy, by a deep attraction to a country that had only recently been united to the great acclaim of most of the British public.[5]

British residents in Florence were fully aware of and believed in the traditional relationship between Italy and Britain. They acknowledged that Britain owed a great deal of her cultural heritage to Italy – Florence in particular was often singled out for its great wealth of culture and art – and indeed much of what Britain understood as civilisation was believed to be passed down by the Romans and the great thinkers and artists of the Renaissance.[6] The relationship between the two countries was, however, considered deeply unequal, coloured by Britain's imperial experience and her perception that Italian civilisation was now degenerate, fallen from its once great

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[3] As a guide, £3 a day was apparently sufficient for an entire family's travels for three weeks in Florence, Switzerland and France. Richard Mullen and James Munson, *The Smell of the Continent: the British Discover Europe* (London: Pan Books, 2009), 24; Clara Louise Dentler, *Famous Foreigners in Florence, 1400-1900* (Florence: Bemporad Marzocco, 1964).

[4] Giuliana Artrom-Treves, "Come Firenze diventò Florence," in *Inghilterra e Italia nel '900* (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1973),9-17, 14.

[5] Maura O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Political Imagination* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

[6] Richard Bosworth, *Italy and the wider world 1860-1960* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 160.

Classical and Renaissance heights due to the insidious influence of the Roman Catholic Church and occupation by foreign powers, as well as the immorality of its people. [7]

Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of British residents in Florence for the forty-year period covered by this thesis, some general introductory observations may be made regarding the community's composition. Estimates at the turn of the twentieth century placed the number of British residents at 800. Of these, many who had made their home in Florence had come out of economic necessity, such as the author and adventuress Janet Ross, who was the aunt of Lina Waterfield, one of the British Institute's founders. There were also those individuals who, like many other expatriates around Italy, had decamped to Florence in order to escape the restrictive nature of British society. Unlike many of their counterparts around the British empire and in other foreign locales, however, most Anglo-Florentines had no interest in establishing businesses or conducting trade, instead taking an active interest in studying and preserving Florence's historical and artistic treasures. [8] Educated and well read, many of the Anglo-Florentines occupied villas in the hills surrounding Florence and protested against what they saw to be the ruinous modernisation of the city.[9]

The Anglo-Florentine preference for the city's art and culture was its defining feature, as were the unconventional backgrounds of some of its residents. As a later British consul was to remark, the Anglo-Florentine community in the early decades of the twentieth century was made up of, 'the distinguished, the rich, the respectably retired, the Italophiles ... minor poets, painters ... and an element with its own reasons for living abroad.'[10] This preference for culture would influence the

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[7] Andrew S. Thompson, *The empire strikes back?: the impact of imperialism on Britain from the mid-nineteenth century* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), 186.

[8] A more detailed study of the Anglo-Florentines before the First World War is found in Chapter 2.

[9] On the residential preferences of Anglo-Americans in Florence see, Daniela Lamberini, "Residenti anglo-americani e *genius loci*: ricostruzioni e restauri delle dimore fiorentine," in *Gli Anglo-Americani a Firenze: Idea e Costruzione del Rinascimento*, ed. Marcello Fantoni (Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 2000), 125-42. On protests against modernisation see, D. Medina Lasansky, "Reshaping Atitudes Towards the Renaissance: The Fight Against "Modern Mania" in Florence at the Turn of the Century," in *The Renaissance in the nineteenth century*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra and Yannick Portebois (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2003), 263-96.

[10] C.M. Pirie-Gordon to Michael Stewart, 25 February 1970, Foreign and Commonwealth Office files (FCO), 47/375, TNA: PRO, Kew.

foundation of the British Institute during the First World War, and set it apart from other similar institutions, thus ensuring its longevity.

The foundation of the Institute also reveals an important aspect of the Anglo-Florentines: they believed their loyalty to Britain and its empire was as strong as any of their compatriots'. This thesis argues that since the Anglo-Florentines (that is, the British residents of Florence) were located outside the boundaries of the British empire, they were linked back to it not by the usual colonial ties, as with many Britons living overseas, but by culture and sentiment. New technologies of communication and travel such as the telegraph and railways allowed the Anglo-Florentines to stay in close contact with their friends and family back in Britain and helped to create a sense of connectedness that fostered a strident patriotism amongst some individuals.[11] This is evident in the writings of one of the founding members of the British Institute, Lina Waterfield, who as a young woman took an active interest in the Anglo-Boer War, and would later participate in unofficial propaganda efforts with Italians during the First World War before eventually becoming head of official British propaganda in the region of Tuscany.[12] In the early months of the First World War, English-language newspapers published in Florence also highlighted the importance of Britons doing their duty for the empire and as the war erupted around them, published articles praising the British war effort, as well as poems and tracts espousing the greatness and validity of the Allied cause. The displays of patriotism, both in print and in person, demonstrate the extent to which Anglo-Florentines identified with the empire. This patriotism was further informed by an imperial worldview that designated the British as the spiritual descendants of the Roman empire.[13]

Due to these patriotic ties, Anglo-Florentine desires to take a more active part in defending Britain and its empire during the First World War resulted in the foundation in 1917 of the British Institute of Florence, an institution dedicated to conducting cultural propaganda amongst Italians by teaching them English and in doing so, acquainting them more with British civilisation and culture. Florence was

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[11] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880 - 1918: with a new preface* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 88.
[12] Lina Waterfield, *Castle in Italy: An Autobiography* (London: John Murray, 1961), 162 - 67.
[13] Duncan Bell, "From ancient to modern in Victorian imperial thought," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 3 (2006): 735-59.

especially associated with culture and learning, and it was this distinction that affected the choice of propaganda undertaken by Anglo-Florentine propagandists during the First World War and led to the establishment of the Institute. Indeed, it was Florence's reputation as a cultural centre in Italy that ensured the Institute's survival during the early years of the interwar period, when funding from the British government became increasingly hard to come by.

Florence was chosen as the setting for this thesis as no similar institution like the British Institute of Florence was established in other Italian cities with comparable British communities such as Milan, Rome, or Naples. The British School at Rome, for instance, was founded in 1901 and was dedicated to teaching archaeology and Italian to British students, rather than to spreading knowledge of British civilisation amongst Italians. [14] During the course of the interwar period, the British Institute would open branch Institutes in Rome and Milan, as well as in Naples, Genoa and Palermo, but it is important to note that British residents and diplomats always singled out Florence as the cultural centre of Italy. [15] In a study of cultural propaganda during the interwar period, Florence stands out as the most significant city for close study.

By 1940, when the thesis ends it story, the idea of the traditional friendship between Italy and Britain was in tatters, undermined by Britain's support of League of Nations sanctions against Italy during the Italo-Abyssinian war of 1935 to 1937 and the increasingly anti-British tone of Fascist propaganda. The British Institute closed at the end of May that year, just before Italy declared war on Britain and all British expatriates were designated enemy aliens. Those Anglo-Florentines who could flee the country did so, and when the war was over, the numbers who returned were vastly reduced. The days when Florentines automatically labelled any foreigner *inglese* (English) had passed.[16]

Finding precedents

Until recently, the historiography regarding expatriate groups has received little attention from scholars. Indeed, the notion of what defines an expatriate, as separate from a settler or exile, has proved difficult to pinpoint. For the purposes of this thesis,

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[14] Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome: one hundred years* (London: British School at Rome, 2001).
[15] William McClure to Rex Leeper, 15 January 1937, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[16] Artrom-Treves, "Come Firenze diventò Florence.", 9-17.

I have looked to anthropological studies of contemporary expatriate groups in an attempt to characterise and differentiate the expatriate experience. The most detailed recent study has been Anne-Mieke Fechter's work on the European expatriates of Indonesia. She argues that expatriates are unlikely to involve themselves in local politics and culture, though a level of general interest is not unusual. However, societal pressures within the expatriate community discourage any active interest in local affairs; expatriates are expected not to 'go native' but generally remain removed from local society.[17] Fechter also notes that 'the geographical dislocation of expatriates, living outside their native countries, gives the processes of their identity construction a particular urgency', both in relation to the native inhabitants of their new home and to other expatriate communities already present.[18] As this thesis proves, parallels to the experience of present-day expatriates can be found in the history of the British expatriates of Florence, who, especially during the First World War, were eager both to demonstrate their patriotism but also to assert their cultural identity as British subjects.

Unlike some of today's more mobile expatriates who change their residences on a regular basis, however, the Anglo-Florentines chose to make Florence their permanent home, though they were emphatically sure they were British, not Italian. Like the present-day British expatriates of the Costa del Sol studied by Karen O'Reilly, they constantly identified themselves as British, despite living outside Britain. Furthermore, like O'Reilly's group of retirees and economic migrants, the British in Florence had moved to the city partly for reasons of economy, since it was cheaper to live there than back in Britain.[19] Unlike the British in Florence, however, O'Reilly's expatriates are probably not attracted by the cultural reputation of the Costa del Sole.

In an important recent trend in current research, historians such as Robert Bickers have begun to uncover the history of British expatriates and the ways in which they formed unique ideas of self in relation both to their faraway homelands and their local surroundings. Indeed, Bickers' edited 2010 volume in the *Oxford History of the British Empire* series, *Settlers and Expatriates,* went a significant way

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[17] Anne-Meike Fechter, *Transnational lives: Expatriates in Indonesia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 112-13.
[18] Fechter, *Transnational lives*, 104.
[19] Karen O'Reilly, *The British on the Costa del Sol: transnational identities and local communities* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

to improving our understanding of the importance of studying the history of expatriate communities that existed outside the white settler Dominions, especially with regard the construction of communal identities and how these groups related back to the empire.[20]

At the end of the nineteenth century, as many historians have observed, the British empire had become a irresistible destination for many Britons seeking new opportunities away from the British Isles. Indeed, John Darwin notes that around twenty million Britons left their homeland from 1815 to 1914 to settle overseas.[21] Most of these emigrants decided to make their new home in the United States of America, or failing that, any one of the white settler Dominions. Australia, for example, saw massive growth in its two largest cities of Sydney and Melbourne during the latter half of the nineteenth century, owing to the discovery of gold. Sydney, for instance, grew from 16,000 inhabitants in 1833 to 378,000 in 1891, whilst Melbourne boasted an astonishing 473,000 permanent residents in 1891, when it had registered zero in 1835.[22] The non-Dominion colonies, too, were popular destinations, though they did not draw as many permanent settlers. The British Raj in India, for instance, continued to attract its fair share of fortune-seekers (David Washbrook places the European colony at 164,000 in 1911 – although this was in comparison to India's native population of 300 million[23]), as did the various African colonies such as Kenya or Rhodesia.[24] The histories of these communities have been extensively documented. As Darwin argues, it is the less well-populated pockets of expatriates around the world that have escaped the scrutiny of the historian.[25] This thesis addresses that oversight by revealing for the first time the role played by Anglo-Florentines in affecting official British cultural propaganda practices during the First World War and interwar years.

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[20] Robert Bickers, ed. *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[21] John Darwin, "Orphans of Empire," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),329-45, 329.
[22] James Belich, *Replenishing the earth: the settler revolution and the rise of the Anglo-world, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.
[23] David Washbrook, "Avatars of Identity: The British Community in India," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),178-204, 192.
[24] See the various essays by Donal Lowry, John Lonsdale and David Washbrook in Bickers, *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas.*
[25] Darwin, "Orphans of Empire," 329-30.

In *Settlers and Expatriates*, the contributions by David Rock on the Anglo-Argentines and by Bickers himself on the British in China contribute valuably to our understanding of what it meant to be British outside the empire by describing how distance and notions of loyalty affected their relations to it.[26] However, both these examples refer to cases of informal empire, that is, the unofficial networks of commerce, military interests, and/or politics that allowed British influence to be wielded in places that were nominally outside formal British territories. [27] Apart from China and most of South America, other areas where informal and semi-formal British imperial authority was wielded include Egypt and Morocco, where the British community has been the subject of a recent study by John Fisher, which shows how the chaos and economic fallout from the First World War affected British businesses and the expatriate community. [28]

The case of Florence is worthy of closer attention because the Anglo-Florentine community existed not only outside the formal geographical boundaries of the British empire, but also the influence of informal empire. Italy of course was neither a colony nor a protectorate. Nor did the British in Florence wield the same clout as their compatriots in areas such as Argentina, where Anglo-Argentine settlers influenced local politics to their advantage.[29] Florence also lacked any sort of armed British presence as found in Shanghai or Egypt.[30] The fact, therefore, that notions of Anglo-Florentine patriotism in an area so removed from British imperial influence led

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[26] Robert Bickers, "Shanghailanders and Others: British Communities in China, 1843 - 1957," in *Settlers and Expatriats: Britons Over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),269-301; David Rock, "The British of Argentina," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),18-44.

[27] See John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson's pioneering article on the nature of informal empire. John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (1953): 1-15.

[28] Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: community, culture and colonialism 1900-1949* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); John Fisher, "Keeping 'the Old Flag flying': the British community in Morocco and the British Morocco Merchants Association, 1914-24," *Historical Research* 83, no. 222 (2010): 719-46; A. G. Hopkins, "Informal empire in Argentina: An alternative view," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26, no. 2 (1994): 469-84; Andrew S. Thompson, "Informal empire? An exploration in the history of Anglo-Argentine relations, 1810-1914," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24, no. 2 (1992): 419-36.

[29] Rock, "The British of Argentina," 29.

[30] Bickers, *Britain in China*; James Whidden, "Expatriates in Cosmopolitan Egypt: 1864-1956," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),45-73.

to the creation of an institute dedicated to spreading British culture makes the history of the Institute even more remarkable.

This thesis is not a history of Anglo-Italian cultural exchange at the beginning of the twentieth century. Nor is it a detailed diplomatic history, or a study of the effects of the rise of Fascism on the Anglo-Florentine community. These subjects are considered, but are not the main focus. Rather, this thesis is to be understood as a British history set in Italy, rather than an Anglo-Italian one. James Belich's theory of the 'Anglo-world' has emphasised the need for histories of empire to move beyond traditional nation-based settings in order to properly understand the global reach of imperialism. Belich's study of the English-speaking settler Dominions and their relations with the rest of the British empire revealed the wider networks of trade and economics that brought British culture to and from Britain and her colonies, thus helping to generate the idea of a Greater Britain, which included the Dominions, but excluded the rest of the empire.[31] Though their approaches differ, Antoinette Burton has also called for histories of the nation to go beyond the nation itself, especially histories of Britain and her empire.[32] This thesis expands on both Burton's and Belich's ideas of going beyond the nation by examining how imperial ideas about the world, and Britain's place in it, allowed expatriates to conceive of themselves as still being connected to the empire through the bonds of culture and sentiment.

Recent histories of colonialism have emphasised that the distinction between metropole and periphery was more permeable than was once traditionally thought.[33] Catherine Hall has demonstrated the ways in which the metropole and colonial periphery were affected by their interaction, though the metropole continually wielded power over its colonies.[34] The case of Florence and the British Institute adds another aspect to consider when evaluating the lasting legacy of the British imperial project in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; that of expatriates' experiences, as distinct from those of settlers and colonists. The thesis considers not only how the Anglo-Florentines viewed the world around them, but how their efforts to demonstrate their

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[31] Belich, *Replenishing the earth*, 457.
[32] Antoinette Burton, "Who Needs the Nation? Interrogating 'British' History," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 10, no. 3 (1997): 227-48, 240 - 41.
[33] See Tony Ballantyne's comment. Tony Ballantyne, "Culture and Colonization: Revisiting the Place of Writing in Colonial New Zealand," *Journal of New Zealand Studies* 9 (2011): 1-22, 4 - 5.
[34] Catherine Hall, *Civilising subjects: metropole and colony in the English imagination, 1830-1867* (Oxford: Polity, 2002), 8.

loyalty to the empire eventually influenced the teaching of English by the British Council.

The British Institute of Florence: who and why

The British Institute of Florence was established during the First World War on the initiative of several concerned Anglo-Florentines and their Anglophile Italian supporters. Its goal was to promote better Anglo-Italian relations through the teaching of English to Italians and the establishment of an English lending library. Although it was nearly closed down in the immediate period after the First World War because of a lack of funds, the Institute proved a popular destination for young Italians wishing to study English and learn about Britain and her empire. Despite heightened Anglo-Italian tensions during the latter half of the 1930s, the Institute managed to remain open and continued its mission of educating Italians and acting as a venue for Anglo-Florentine gatherings on occasions such as the coronation of George VI. Thanks to its directors' vocal support of the Fascist regime, the Institute was only forced to close just before the Italian declaration of war against Britain in 1940. Significantly, as Frances Donaldson notes, the British Institute's approach in teaching Italians English was so successful that the British Council eventually modelled its educational programmes in other British Institutes around the world after this pioneering effort. [35]

Because of its origins as a propaganda initiative on the part of Anglo-Florentines, and because of its influence in shaping the curriculum of the British Council, the British Institute of Florence provides a valuable case study to understand and analyse the history of the British in Florence. The Institute keeps extensive archives which have until now not been the focus of systematic historical study and its position as an influential private organisation outside the empire presents an opportunity to examine how ideas of being British in Florence developed, and what effect expatriates had on the establishment and running of a cultural institution.

The role of the British Institute of Florence in Britain's interwar programme of cultural propaganda deserves greater scrutiny than has been afforded it. The Institute preceded and foreshadowed the official efforts of the British Council, which was formed in 1934 and tasked with organising Britain's programme of cultural

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[35] Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: the firsty fifty years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), 34 - 35.

propaganda in foreign countries. Philip M. Taylor's pioneering book on British interwar propaganda defines cultural propaganda as differentiating itself from its more conventional political counterpart through its promotion of a nation's cultural achievements and history, rather than by any explicit persuasive political statements. According to Taylor, although the ultimate goal of cultural propaganda is economic and political influence, this is not overtly pursued.[36] It should be noted that the usage of the term 'cultural propaganda' is often conflated with similar labels such as 'cultural diplomacy' and the more esoteric 'soft power', which usually refer to the same idea of using subtler means of gaining favour with other nations instead of conventional political or military methods. Indeed most scholarship related to either cultural diplomacy or cultural propaganda often highlights the importance of presenting ideas that could be considered propagandistic in a less confronting manner in order to ensure a more favourable reception, as observed by R.E. Cavaliero, chairman of the British Council in 1986. Recent work by Zsolt Nagy and Katherine Rietzler has uncovered the interwar efforts of Eastern European nations to win support in America, as well as how unofficial American philanthropic organisations could often be regarded as representing official American foreign policy. Examinations of British cultural propaganda and diplomacy by Taylor and Anthony Parsons, however, tend to highlight Britain's traditional reluctance to carry out cultural diplomacy, which they argue reflects the traditional British wariness of propaganda.[37] For the purposes of this thesis, the terms 'cultural propaganda' and 'cultural diplomacy' are used in order to highlight the nature of the activities undertaken by the British Institute and similar organisations.

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[36] Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British overseas publicity and propaganda 1919 - 1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 125 - 26.

[37] For more general discussion on cultural diplomacy, cultural propaganda and soft power, see Sir Harold Beeley, "The Changing Role of British International Propaganda," *Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science* 398(1971): 124-29; R. E. Cavaliero, "Cultural Diplomacy - The Diplomacy of Influence," *Round Table*, no. 298 (1986): 139-44; J. M. Lee, "British Cultural Diplomacy and The Cold War: 1946-61," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 9, no. 1 (1998): 112-34; Zsolt Nagy, "National Identities for Export: East European Cultural Diplomacy in Inter-War Pittsburgh," *Contemporary European History* 20, no. 4 (2011): 435-53; Anthony Parsons, "'Vultures and philistines': British attitudes to culture and cultural diplomacy," *International Affairs* 61, no. 1 (1984): 1-8; Katharina Rietzler, "Before the Cultural Cold Wars: American philanthropy and cultural diplomacy in the inter-war years," *Historical Research* 84, no. 223 (2011): 148-64; Philip M. Taylor, "Cultural Diplomacy and the British Council: 1934-1939," *British Journal of International Studies* 4, no. 3 (1978): 244-65.

The history of the British Institute of Florence provides insight as to how a sense of belonging and patriotism could evolve in areas outside the empire's formal and informal reach. Conscious of their relationship with both their homeland and their adopted city, the British residents of Florence represent an important but overlooked page of modern British history outside the borders of empire. However, this study seeks to uncover more than just the history of a group of British expatriates in Italy. Rather, it places them in their proper historical context, both as part of a longer tradition of British travellers and writing on Italy. Moreover, it aims to highlight the particular historical significance of the Institute that a number of Anglo-Florentines founded within the broader history of British cultural promotion overseas.

Sources have been drawn from the British Institute's archives in Florence, as well as those from the files of the British Council and Foreign Office at the British National Archives in Kew. They include official and personal correspondence between the directors of the British Institute, the Institute's governing council in London, and the British Council. Such documentation shows the intricate web of relationships that spanned the distance between London, the British embassy at Rome, and Florence.

Previous studies, such as Taylor's or Donaldson's history of the first fifty years of the British Council, have only skimmed over the significance of the British Institute, and this thesis is the first study to give due prominence to the historical conditions that led to the Institute's creation and to raise the question of what was its ultimate role. The history of cultural institutions is one that has yet to be explored in any great detail. Recent scholarship has begun to rediscover attempts at cultural diplomacy by nations in the years leading up the Second World War, and the great value attached to encouraging a wider knowledge of a nation's culture. Indeed, these interwar cases are historical precursors to the cultural propaganda employed of the Cold War era.[38] The history of the British Institute seeks to add a new dimension to the growing understanding of the intricacies of interwar cultural propaganda by analysing the British Institute's programmes in Florence and the ways in which the Institute used them to foster sympathy for Britain amongst its students.

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[38] See, for example, Nagy, "National Identities for Export: East European Cultural Diplomacy in Inter-War Pittsburgh."; Parsons, "'Vultures and philistines': British attitudes to culture and cultural diplomacy."; Rietzler, "Before the Cultural Cold Wars."

A study of the British Institute's history also shows the extent to which imperial thinking had permeated the British worldview. Established to encourage good relations between Britain and Italy through the exchange of culture (though in actual practice this meant the transmission of British ideas and history to an eager audience of Italian pupils), the Institute was influenced by the imperial worldview its founders possessed, which regarded modern Italian society as inferior to its British counterpart.[39] Harold Goad, the Institute's director and a voluble supporter of the Fascist government, could use a strikingly sexualised view to compare Italian men to British women in terms of their psychology, emphasising their psychological inferiority to British men.[40] As Maura O'Connor has pointed out, this identification of Italy and Italian men as feminine in contrast to presumably more masculine British men is reflective of the gendered terms that influenced much of nineteenth-century British writing on Italy.[41] Yet, from Goad's feminising Italian men, one also detects an echo of what Mrinalini Sinha has identified as imperial attitudes towards the colonised. Sinha distinguishes between ideas of the virile, masculine British coloniser and the feminised, passive Indian man,[42] replaced in this case with an Italian man. This reinforces Mary Louise Pratt's argument that the power dynamics between colonised and coloniser found in British travel writing about Africa or South America were also transferrable to countries such as Italy, which were felt to be relatively undeveloped when compared to Britain.[43] Even though Italy was regarded as the originator of many areas of British culture, she had failed to keep pace with the modern world, and her people were relegated to share almost the same status as colonised natives. In short, imperialism had a very real impact on the ways in which Britons interacted with natives they encountered, even outside the colonial setting.

Though some historians, notably Bernard Porter, have questioned the impact of the empire on the awareness of those not directly involved with the imperial exercise, observations such as Goad's contradict the allegation that the empire only

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[39] See John Pemble, *The Mediterranean passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 168 - 82.
[40] Goad to Rex Leeper, 10 November 1938, British Institute Collection (BRI) BRI:I:A:I:9:ff6-7, British Institute Archives (BIA), Florence.
[41] O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy*: 109 - 10.
[42] Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial masculinity: the 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' in the late nineteenth century* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 20.
[43] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial eyes: travel writing and transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 10.

mattered to a select few.[44] As Andrew Thompson has argued, Britons in the twentieth century saw the world through the lens of their empire.[45] That Anglo-Florentines like Goad who lived and worked outside the empire's boundaries could feel so attached to it illustrates how pervasive this sense of belonging was.

The history of the British Institute of Florence – as well as the Anglo-Florentines who founded it and administered its day-to-day operations – was profoundly affected by Britain's colonial experience, as much as by its undertaking of cultural propaganda during the interwar era. Studies of cultural diplomacy during the interwar era and of late imperial thought, however, have not generally taken into account the intersection between the two, although strong evidence exists of such an overlap. A good example is found in a letter from Goad to Charles Bridge, secretary-general of the British Council in London. In one particularly illuminating passage, Goad points out that 'it has always been my belief that what we should aim at is the creation of a cultured English public in Italy, able to appreciate our plays and lectures and contemporary literature, and so draw them more and more under our cultural and political influence.'[46] Even Lina Waterfield, who disagreed with Goad's running of the Institute, wrote to the officials of the Council asking them to consider sending more funds to develop the British Institute's educational programme on the history of the empire and its colonies.[47] Taylor has argued that the case for British cultural propaganda was only seriously taken up as a response to the increased anti-British efforts of totalitarian regimes in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.[48] This thesis ventures another reason unconsidered by Taylor: that of pride in British imperial achievement and the impact it had in determining the direction of cultural propaganda.

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[44] Bernard Porter, *The absent-minded imperialists: empire, society, and culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Bernard Porter, "Further Thoughts on Imperial Absent-Mindedness," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 1 (2008): 101 - 17. For contrasting views on the impact of imperialism in Britain, see John M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: the Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); John M. Mackenzie, "'Comfort' and Conviction: A Response to Bernard Porter," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 4 (2008): 659 - 68.

[45] Andrew S. Thompson, ed. *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9.

[46] Goad to Bridge, 3 April 1939, BRI:I:A:I:4:ff2-4, BIA, Florence.

[47] Lina Waterfield to Bridge, 12 October 1937, BW 40/3, TNA: PRO, Kew.

[48] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 173.

Organisation and terminology

The years covered by this thesis have not been chosen arbitrarily; in 1900 the British community in Florence was at the height of its power and influence. So many travellers and residents in the city spoke English that it caused one bemused visitor to remark that it was the most widely spoken foreign language in the city.[49] By 1940, in contrast, the British in Florence were in despair at the widening gulf between Italy and Britain, and of Mussolini's continuing shift towards an alliance with Nazi Germany. This situation had been aggravated by the tensions between Italy and Britain over the Italo-Abyssinian conflict from 1935 to 1937, and when the Second World War broke out there was a sense of fatalism in the way in which the British Institute's director Francis Toye and his subordinates made preparations for it to be shut down.[50] In a practical sense as well, 1940 must be when the thesis ends, as the British Institute archives for the period after the war are not yet open to researchers.

The thesis takes as its starting point late Victorian and Edwardian views of Italy and Florence, and how they were affected by Britain's experience of empire. It goes on to examine the Anglo-Florentine community as it existed in the years just before the First World War, and highlights some of the more notable figures in the community, particularly Lina Waterfield. The third and fourth chapters investigate the impact of the war on Anglo-Florentine notions of identity and on propaganda efforts in the city and the wider region of Tuscany, as the British Institute of Florence was a product of the Anglo-Florentine desire to take a more active role in helping to defend the empire. The fifth chapter of the thesis examines the survival of the British Institute after the war and reasons put forward for the British government's continued (although ultimately withdrawn) support. The sixth chapter analyses the mission of the British Institute of Florence during the interwar period and how it fits into the established historiography of interwar cultural propaganda and diplomacy. The role played by imperial thought is also considered, as well as rising tensions between the British Institute in Florence, its governing council in London, the British Council and the British embassy in Rome. Even though communication between London, Rome, and Florence had become cheaper and more efficient, physical distance still caused

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[49] Bernd Roeck, *Florence 1900: the Quest for Arcadia*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 85.

[50] Francis Toye to Michael Everett, 18 April 1940, BW 40/5, TNA: PRO, Kew.

conflict, as did political differences. The final chapter examines the fraught relationship between the Institute and officials in London and Rome as war with Fascist Italy loomed and Harold Goad became caught between proving his loyalty to the British empire and expressing his support for the Fascist government, and explores what this reveals of the nebulous position cultural institutions occupied in diplomatic relations during the interwar period.

A final note on terminology. Though only one chapter of this thesis is concerned explicitly with an Anglo-Florentine identity, it is necessary to define exactly what is meant by 'Anglo-Florentine' and the terms 'British' and 'identity'. While acknowledging that the use of the term 'identity' might be problematic, as it has been so often used as a catch-all term for historians interested in questions of collective belonging,[51] I must admit to finding no suitable substitute for the term that encompasses the various ideas articulating a sense of self as satisfactorily. As such, I use Charles Tilly's definition of 'identity' as 'an actor's experience of a category, tie, role, network, group or organization, coupled with a public representation of that experience.'[52] 'Britain' refers to the political entity comprising the three nations of England, Scotland and Wales. 'British' is used to describe the empire and the subjects who claimed allegiance to it. 'Anglo-Florentine' denotes the long-term British residents of Florence. In this case, I must defer to Belich's example in using 'Anglo' to refer to the language the expatriates spoke,[53] though I collectively term them 'British', not English. This is in spite of the fact that many of those quoted here refer to themselves as 'English', or talk about 'English culture' and an 'English public'. As Krishnan Kumar has pointed out, English national identity is often conflated with a wider British sense of self so as to make the two concepts almost indistinguishable from each other.[54] Marjorie Morgan also notes that it was not unusual for most travellers from Britain in the nineteenth century to say that they were English, even when they were not, both for ease of communication, and also because certain individuals did indeed think of themselves as being from England, rather than Britain. She also argues that the word 'British' could be used elastically, often excluding as

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[51] Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 88.
[52] Charles Tilly, ed. *Citizenship, identity and social history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5 - 7.
[53] Belich, *Replenishing the earth*, 58.
[54] Krishnan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 156.

much as it was inclusive.[55] In Italian *inglese* is also usually a catch-all word referring to any resident from Britain, rather than an exclusive term for the English. Indeed, this was generally how British travellers were perceived in the Continent.[56]

Finally, I am only writing about an Anglo-Florentine identity as is found in the printed documents consulted. This can only encompass a certain highly visible group of individuals, and I am aware of the dangers in trying to speak about an entire community. The records that have survived belong to an educated, highly mobile group of individuals and perhaps incompletely represent a common experience in the Anglo-Florentine community. However, the persons on whose records I base my analysis were instrumental in establishing the British Institute of Florence, or oversaw its day to day running, hence allowing their ideas of what being British in Florence entailed to influence the Institute's programmes and curriculum. Unlike more transient residents such as travellers and tradespeople, these were long-term residents of the city, deeply committed to spreading British culture in Italy. Indeed they felt it their patriotic duty. Any discussion of Anglo-Florentine identity, then, must be understood as having an effect on the aims and activities of the British Institute.

Today, the British community in Florence is not as visible, nor as influential as it once was. Thanks to rising costs of living following the Second World War, the community has not been able to reclaim its former grandeur. In 1903, there were an estimated 800 British residents out of a total population of 190,000.[57] By 1970, there were 977 residents in a population of 460, 944. [58] In present-day Tuscany there are an estimated 15,000 Britons living in a region of over 3 million people. [59] Unfortunately, after maintaining a presence in the city for over 500 years, the British consulate was forced to shut on 31 December 2011. Although their presence in the city is not so prominent as it once was, the British residents of Florence have over the past century contributed significantly to a programme of cultural propaganda and projection in

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[55] Marjorie Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 195 - 96.
[56] Morgan, *National Identities*, 195, 216.
[57] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, 49.
[58] Pirie-Gordon to Stewart, 25 February 1970, FCO 47/375, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[59] Devin Tooma, "On the British Consulate's closure" http://www.theflorentine.net/articles/article-view.asp?issuetocId=6779. 2011 (accessed 15 March 2012). As former consul David Broomfield points out, exact figures for the British residents in Tuscany are hard to estimate, given that as members of the European Union, Britons are not required to apply for permits to stay in the region, making it difficult to keep track of the exact statistics.

foreign countries. This has been because of their desire to play their part in promoting the empire, even though they moved beyond its borders. In return, they provide a valuable case study for the historian interested in the construction of a British sense of presence and belonging outside the empire, the development of cultural propaganda during the interwar period, and the day-to-day realities of running a cultural institution in a foreign city.

There have been many studies of the relationship between Britain and Italy over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This thesis does not replicate those efforts. Instead it considers a different aspect, as yet unexplored by scholars: the role played by an expatriate community in the establishment of a cultural institution devoted to projecting the cultural achievements of Britain in a foreign city. That the British in Florence wanted to promote a greater awareness of their homeland and empire abroad is not surprising. They believed that there was much to be proud of. What makes the history of the British Institute of Florence significant is that its very localised mission to spread British culture in an area beyond the periphery of empire could affect efforts by officials in the metropole.

Chapter 1
British views of Italy in the long nineteenth century

On 24 May 1913, the British consul in Florence, Alfred Lemon, and over fifty members of the Anglo-Florentine community gathered at the Hotel Villa Trollope, the former residence of Thomas Adolphus Trollope (1810-1892), the celebrated Anglo-Florentine writer, historian, supporter of the Risorgimento, and friend of Robert and Elizabeth Browning, which had been turned into a *pensione* when Trollope moved to Rome in 1871 (along with the government of Italy to its new capital city) to take up his post as a correspondent for the London *Standard.*[1] Lemon and his guests celebrated Empire Day with a lavish dinner and a host of speeches by notable members of the community. Over courses named after various notable Britons, such as *asparagus à la Lord Byron* or *mousse volaille à la Chamberlain*, the community toasted the health of the monarchs of Britain and Italy, each other, and the British empire. The national anthem was sung, and Lemon gave a speech about the enormous cultural debt Britain owed Italy, citing a history of Anglo-Italian relations that traced its way back to the foundation of London by Julius Caesar and all the way down to the present moment. As part of this grand performance of patriotism in a city that lay outside the British empire, one of the speakers, Canon Knollys, chaplain of Holy Trinity, one of Florence's two Anglican churches, spoke of being proud of 'the growth of [the] empire, but not so much for its magnitude and splendour as for its leading position in the advancement of civilization throughout the world.' If Britons were to remember the virtues that guided this philanthropic work, he noted, 'They would continue to influence the world's movement for good as no other race in modern times did.'[2] Later speakers, such as a Mr. Teague – an Australian – spoke of a pan-empire sentiment of brotherhood that transcended geographical borders. Teague proclaimed that 'the important thing was not so much the corner of the earth in which [subjects of the empire] were born, but the blood that tingled in their veins,' a

[1] Pamela Neville-Sington, "Trollope, Thomas Adolphus (1810-1892)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Oxford University Press http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27755. 2010 (accessed 10 August 2012).
[2] 'Empire Day: Celebration in Florence', *The Italian Gazette*, 27 May 1913, 1.

sentiment that received loud cheers from the room.[3] An Anglo-Florentine newspaper, the *Italian Gazette*, in reporting the event, was careful to note that 'it was significant that although no Italians were present at the dinner the toast of their [King and Queen] was received with a hearty demonstration.'[4] The festivities ended with the singing of 'Rule Britannia', and the party made the front-page news of the *Italian Gazette* the following Tuesday.

The British community in Florence at the start of the twentieth century must be understood in its historical, geographical, and social context if we are to appreciate how its unique sense of presence evolved. The desire of British expatriates to play their role in defending and promoting their empire would influence later developments such as the content and distribution of British propaganda in Tuscany during the First World War or in the founding of the British Institute of Florence. Anglo-Florentines were influenced by several centuries of English travel writing about Italy, especially the city of Florence, the relatively recent popular support for the Risorgimento back in Britain, and the near hysterical enthusiasm of all sections of the British public for the movement's hero, Giuseppe Garibaldi. In addition to a love for Italy, they still felt very much part of the British empire. Many Anglo-Florentines also took an interest in, and were deeply affected by, the redevelopment of their adopted city along more modern lines, often decrying its perceived ill effects. As such, their support of a united Italy was often at odds with the anxieties they felt as the nation struggled to drag itself towards modernity.

This chapter will examine the literary traditions and Anglo-Italian diplomatic relations that influenced British views of Italy and Florence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Britons believed that they shared an intimate cultural relationship with Italy, an idea that had significant impact on the way that Anglo-Florentines interacted with the Italians. Ultimately, this idea shaped the ways in which British cultural propaganda in the city developed in the interwar period, through the British Institute of Florence. As many studies of Anglo-Italian diplomatic relations and travel histories already exist, as well as on the popularity of the Risorgimento and Garibaldi in Britain, this chapter does not seek to provide an exhaustive commentary

[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

on British writing on Italy at the beginning of the twentieth century.[5] Its aim is to provide a context from which to understand the views of the British expatriate community in Florence.

A Classical heritage

Italy has long held a fascination for British authors. From writings by Chaucer and Shakespeare to Samuel Johnson and D.H. Lawrence, myriad works of varying quality relating to the peninsula's long history and the customs of its people have been published, offering to demystify Italy and educate the average Briton eager to learn more about the country. Accordingly, there have been numerous scholarly perspectives about the ideas of Italy presented in these works, which range from the Renaissance to after the Second World War.[6] In fact, it seems that as long as English-speaking tourists travel to Italy, the demand for books about it will see no signs of diminishing. Instead of recounting the history (and accompanying historiography) of English writing on Italy, it will therefore suffice for the purposes of this chapter to outline several key aspects of the British view of Italy before the First World War and how they affected Anglo-Florentines' relationships to the city and its inhabitants.

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[5] For example, Derek Beales, "Garibaldi in England: The Politics of Italian Enthusiasm," in *Society and politics in the Age of the Risorgimento: essays in honour of Denis Mack Smith* ed. John Anthony Davis and Paul Ginsborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991),184-216; Richard Bosworth, *Italy, the Least of the Great Powers: Italian foreign policy before the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Richard Bosworth, *Italy and the wider world 1860-1960* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Laura Cerasi, "Anglophilia in crisis: Italian liberals, the 'English model' and democracy in the Giolittian era," *Modern Italy* 7, no. 1 (2002): 5-22; James Tasato Mellone, "An Edwardian's Search for Meaning: Trevelyan's Garibaldi," *Journal of the Historical Society* 5, no. 2 (2005): 119-53; Jasper Ridley, "Il mito di Garibaldi in Inghilterra e la visita del 1864," *Rassegna degli Archivi di Stato* 45, no. 3 (1982): 270-84; Alfonso Scirocco, *Garibaldi: citizen of the world*, trans. Allan Cameron (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Marcella Pellegrino Sutcliffe, "Negotiating the 'Garibaldi moment' in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1854-1861)," *Modern Italy* 15, no. 2 (2010): 129-44.

[6] See J. R. Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance: the growth of interest in its history and art* (London: Faber, 1954); John E. Law and Lene Østermark-Johansen, eds., *Victorian and Edwardian reponses to the Italian Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); George B. Parks, "The Decline and Fall of the English Renaissance Admiration of Italy," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1968): 341-57; Rosanna Pavoni, ed. *Reviving the Renaissance: the use and abuse of the past in nineteenth-century Italian art and decoration* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Michael L. Ross, *Storied Cities: Literary Imaginings of Florence, Venice, and Rome* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994).

In an article directed against Italian misconceptions about foreign residents in 1913, the anonymous editor of the *Italian Gazette* noted that it was impossible for the foreign (referring to his largely British and American readership) resident of Florence to be prejudiced against Italy, as 'he has learnt from the cradle to yearn for her.'[7] The image is interesting, as it reveals a key aspect of the English perception of Italy in the early twentieth century. Italy had long been revered as the origin of much of British culture, with Anglo-Italian relations stretching back to the conquest of Britain by Julius Caesar and subsequent Roman leaders, who had brought their Latin civilisation to the British Isles. Indeed, some commentators felt that the British empire was the spiritual heir to Ancient Rome, bringing the *pax Britannia* and civilisation to less advanced countries under the imperial mission.[8] As John Pemble has argued in his study of Victorian and Edwardian travellers to the south of Europe, the entire Mediterranean region was regarded as the birthplace of modern Western civilisation by travellers.[9] Samuel Johnson had been of the opinion that 'all our religion, almost all our law, almost all our arts, almost all that sets us above savages, has come to us from the shores of the Mediterranean.'[10] Britain's cultural debt to Italy began in the Classical world, though the eventual decline and fall of the Roman empire was a constant worry for those who claimed it as Britain's spiritual ancestor.

Marc Fehlmann has outlined a struggle between the Greek and Roman empires for pride of place in British culture since the Renaissance, noting that both had strong influences on ideas of government, legislation and aesthetics.[11] A crucial part of the British school curriculum included a study of Classical writers and knowledge of Latin and ancient Greek. Fehlmann also notes that the choice of either Greece or Rome as a model for the empire largely depended on the different aims of various social groups in Britain. Greece during the Golden Age of Periclean Athens was revered for her intellectual triumphs and dedication to democracy by some, whilst those who championed Britain's imperial ventures lauded Rome for its martial values

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[7] 'The "Foreign Movement" of Foreign Requirements', *The Italian Gazette*, 7 January 1913, 1. The *Gazette* and its rival paper, the *Florence Herald* will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter.

[8] 'In the Italian Press', *The Italian Gazette*, 21 January 1915, 2.

[9] John Pemble, *The Mediterranean passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

[10] Quoted in Bosworth, *Italy and the wider world*, 160.

[11] Marc Fehlmann, "As Greek as it gets: British attempts to recreate the parthenon," *Rethinking History* 11, no. 3 (2007): 353-77, 354.

and mission to civilise the rest of the world through conquest. By appropriating aspects of both civilisations into its systems of education, government and public architecture, Fehlmann argues, Britain was appropriating these virtues for her own empire.[12] The ascendancy of imperial Roman virtues in the British public imagination, indeed, gradually eclipsed that of her Hellenic neighbour, as writers such as Cecil Rhodes and James Bryce – an ambassador to America – emphasised the empire as successor to Rome as it expanded further into India and Africa.[13]

Furthermore, the civilising mission of ancient Rome lent Britain's imperial role moral and intellectual authority and, as Duncan Bell points out, had been used since the Renaissance to justify expansion into overseas territories.[14] According to Bell, however, proponents of a greater British empire (with the exception of the case of India) found the Roman model troubling, as it intimated that all great empires must eventually begin to decline in power and influence, finally disappearing altogether. In India, though, the Roman empire provided the inspiration for much of the Raj's civil servants. Bell observes that British officials there were typically portrayed in Classical poses and costumes when they were painted and Classical knowledge was also a base requirement in the examinations for entry to the ranks of the civil service.[15] Apart from this exception, the novelty and longevity of the British empire had to be emphasised.[16] The solution was for Britain to inherit Rome's imperial mission and then surpass her illustrious ancestor. One way in which the Roman and British empires diverged, according to the former consul-general in Egypt, Evelyn Baring (ennobled as Lord Cromer in 1883), was that the British governed an empire of people who were more ethnically diverse than those over whom the Romans had presided. In this, he felt, the example set by Rome could not serve as one for the British. To find an alternative to the Roman model, Cromer corresponded at length with various historians and classicists on the nature of the proper way to govern the empire.[17] The glory of Rome was an inspiration and provided martial and ethical values for Britain to emulate, but her ultimate demise was to be avoided.

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[12] Fehlmann, "As Greek as it gets," 357-58.
[13] M. E. Chamberlain, "Lord Cromer's 'Ancient and Modern Imperialism': A Proconsular View of Empire," *The Journal of British Studies* 12, no. 1 (1972): 61-85, 140.
[14] Duncan Bell, "From ancient to modern in Victorian imperial thought," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 3 (2006): 735-59, 736.
[15] Bell, "From ancient to modern," 745.
[16] Bell, "From ancient to modern," 738.
[17] Chamberlain, "Lord Cromer's 'Ancient and Modern Imperialism'," 75.

The eventual fate of Rome and of the rest of Italy, occupied by foreign powers and divided into various dukedoms and kingdoms for a millennium and a half until 1861, served as a warning to the British empire and simultaneously provided a evidence of a degenerate civilisation against which the British could measure themselves. This sense of superiority, as Andrew Thompson argues, was coloured by contemporary notions of eugenics, which held Italians to be an inferior racial group.[18] Modern Rome, moreover, was a shadow of its former self, fallen into decrepit decline and only recently become the capital of the newly united Kingdom of Italy in 1871.

Visiting the city in the eighteenth century, the British traveller Joseph Spence lamented that when walking about Rome, 'you are continually seeing the very place and spot of ground where some great thing or other was done … *this* is the place where Julius Caesar was stabbed by Brutus; at the foot of *that* statue he fell and gave his last groan.... All these places I have often seen with pleasure, but there's one thing that mortifies one – that they [Romans] often turn these old Roman things into modern popish ones.' Spence went on to describe with a sense of bemusement the ways in which Catholicism had turned ancient Roman temples and other sites of worship into places of devotion to the Virgin Mary and a wide array of Catholic saints and martyrs:

> [T]he great amphitheatre is daubed over with pictures of saints in fifty places, and the Rotonda (the finest temple of the ancients) which was dedicated to Jupiter … is now dedicated to the Virgin… For my part I am glad to see religion still go on in a better way, and to see that devotion has got the better of everything else among them.[19]

The disdain that Spence felt for the modern city of Rome was shared by many British travellers, but was also tempered with an admiration for the civilisation that had built the now ruined amphitheatres, baths and temples that they saw dotted over the landscape. Shelley marvelled at the baths of Caracalla, for example, by musing that part of its allure was the air of melancholy that surrounded the site: 'Never was any desolation more sublime and lovely.'[20] An earlier traveller to Italy, Hester Lynch Piozzi, an English widow who had scandalised polite society by marrying her

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[18] Andrew S. Thompson, *The empire strikes back?: the impact of imperialism on Britain from the mid-nineteenth century* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), 186.
[19] Manfred Pfister, ed. *The fatal gift of beauty: the Italies of British travellers: an annotated anthology* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 366.
[20] Pfister, *The fatal gift of beauty*, 150.

daughter's Italian piano teacher, remarked that the Coliseum was, as a ruin, 'gloriously beautiful; possibly more beautiful than when it was quite whole; there is enough left now for Truth to repose upon, and a perch for Fancy beside, to fly out from, and fetch in more.'[21]

As with many other travel writers, Shelley and Piozzi were drawn to the sharp sense of decline that was attached to Classical ruins, and it was this sense of melancholy and loss at the decline of Italy's grandeur and achievements that would spur on many British supporters for Italian unification in the nineteenth century, though it was tempered with a wariness of the encroaching changes caused by the modern world. However, Classical Italy, though influential in general ideas of British culture and imperialist ideology, was not what held such allure for British travellers and residents of Florence in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their fascination was with her Renaissance past.

A Renaissance city

In the nineteenth century, the achievements of the Renaissance were felt to comprise a large part of the cultural debt that Britain owed to Italy. J.R. Hale, tracing the English admiration for the Renaissance, notes that Victorian travellers idolised not the great men of antiquity, in fact, but the personalities of the Renaissance, whose works they were familiar with and whose different conceptions of morality were intensely appealing.[22] For writers such as John Addington Symonds, for example, struggling with socially castigated homosexual desires, the attraction of the Renaissance lay in the belief that its enlightened thinkers had been able to freely express themselves, regardless of their sexuality.[23]

Influenced by the cultural pretensions of their predecessors on the Grand Tour who had ventured into the peninsula before them (but who did not find the Renaissance masters particularly interesting)[24], Victorian and Edwardian travellers to Italy had a canon of Renaissance painters whose works they sought out, from Filippo Lippi to Giotto, Raphael and Michelangelo. Pemble attributes a resurgence in the

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[21] Pfister, *The fatal gift of beauty*, 142.
[22] Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance*, 203.
[23] Hilary Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 244.
[24] Clare Hornsby, ed. *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond* (London: The British School at Rome, 2000), 9.

admiration for late Medieval and Renaissance Italian artworks to Victorian reassessment of the role of Christianity in art, and argues that the appreciation for Italian art and architecture can be traced further back to the eighteenth century and a secular 'Gothic revival' that had been widened to encompass Italian Gothic architecture.[25] The rediscovery of Renaissance painters such as Sandro Botticelli had in itself prompted an artistic renaissance in Britain, with the pre-Raphaelite movement of Dante Gabriel Rossetti becoming popular thanks to the writings of John Ruskin and other early art critics on Renaissance art and architecture. Between 1900 and 1920, more books on Botticelli were printed in England than on any other great painter.[26]

By the mid-nineteenth century, Florence had become primarily identified as a Renaissance city, almost to the exclusion of all other periods of her history.[27] This is a perception that has lasted to the present day, as D. Medina Lasansky has pointed out, with many tourist maps depicting the landmarks associated with the city's Renaissance past in isolation, so that Florence becomes what Lansansksy describes as a museum of its own history, or what she terms, 'Renaissanceland'.[28] Indeed some Anglo-Florentines' refusal to regard Florence as anything other than a monument to its past became a distinct point of conflict between the British expatriates and municipal authorities.

The fascination with the Renaissance was also taught to British travellers through their guidebooks, which described any number of frescoes by Fra Angelico or Cimabue, but also prescribed the appropriate reactions a viewer should have towards the artwork. This is a problem faced by E.M. Forster's heroine Lucy Honeychurch in his 1908 novel *A Room With A View* when she loses her Baedeker to Miss Lavish and has to venture into the church of Santa Croce by herself. Without the guidebook, Lucy feels distraught, not knowing what response to have to the church's frescoes or the proper way back to the *pensione*:

> How could she find her way home? How could she find her way about in Santa Croce? Her first morning was ruined, and she might never be in Florence again... Now she entered the church depressed and humiliated,

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[25] Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*: 200-02.
[26] Michael Levey, "Botticelli and Nineteenth-Century England," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23, no. 3/4 (1960): 291-306, 291.
[27] D. Medina Lasansky, "Reshaping Atitudes Towards the Renaissance: The Fight Against 'Modern Mania' in Florence at the Turn of the Century," in *The Renaissance in the nineteenth century*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra and Yannick Portebois (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2003), 263-96, 288.
[28] Lasansky, "Reshaping Attitudes," 291.

> not even able to remember whether it was built by the Franciscans or the Dominicans ... But how like a barn! And how very cold! Of course, it contained frescoes by Giotto, in the presence of whose tactile values she was capable of feeling what was proper. But who was to tell her which they were? She walked about disdainfully, unwilling to be enthusiastic over monuments of uncertain authorship or date. There was no one even to tell her which, of all the sepulchral slabs that paved the nave and transepts, was the one that was really beautiful, the one that had been most praised by Mr. Ruskin.[29]

Ruskin, in fact, had been particularly influential in dictating British tastes and perceptions of Italian art, particularly of the Renaissance and Medieval periods. As Pemble argues, until the First World War, opinions on Mediterranean art were inevitably based on Ruskin's writings.[30] His guide to Florence's considerable store of artworks, *Mornings in Florence,* first published in 1877, was so successful that it was translated into Italian and remained popular until the rise of Mussolini.[31] Despite his influential position, as will be shown, Ruskin was not particularly fond of modern Italians, nor of their efforts to conserve their artistic heritage, which he saw as vandalism.

In Victorian and Edwardian travel literature, the physical fabric of Florence became linked with the great individuals of the city's Renaissance history. Ruskin in *Mornings in Florence*, for example, waxed eloquent and at great length about Giotto's particular genius in his description of the artist's frescoes and the Campanile of Santa Maria del Fiore (more commonly known as Florence's Duomo, or cathedral). He declared that, 'of living Christian work [there is] none so perfect as the Tower of Giotto' and went on to lament the modernisation of the Piazza del Duomo with its omnibuses and hackney carriages.[32] The basilica of San Lorenzo, also, was famous for its association with the Medici family, and E.V. Lucas, in his 1912 guidebook for Florence, makes shivering mention of how, 'in a little room leading from the sacristy I was shown by a smiling custodian Lorenzo the Magnificent's coffin, crumbling away, and photographs of the skulls of the two brothers: Giuliano's with one of Francesco de' Pazzi's dagger wounds in it, and Lorenzo's, ghastly in its decay.' Of the

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[29] E.M. Forster, *A Room With A View*, ed. Oliver Stallybrass (Suffolk: Penguin, 1978), 40-41.
[30] Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*, 210.
[31] D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle and Tourism in Fascist Italy* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2004), 40.
[32] John Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence: being simple studies of history and art for English travellers* (New York: Ramella & Co., 1945), 105.

Medici, he wrote that 'they were seldom lovable; they were often despicable; but where they were great they were very great indeed'.[33] Santa Croce is associated with the graves of Michelangelo and Galileo, which Ruskin described in great detail, and the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who lived in Florence from 1847 until her death in 1861, took great delight in pointing out that 'the part of Florence where Dantesque recollections are centred is in the neighbourhood of the Cathedral and [its] Baptistery.'[34]

Associating sites around the city with illustrious personalities from the Renaissance resulted in an almost rabid protectiveness on the parts of some British travellers and residents. As Florence entered the twentieth century, areas of historical significance were earmarked for demolition in order to improve sanitation, the flow of traffic, and the general aesthetics of the city, actions which deeply distressed some foreign residents. Lasanksy has argued, in fact, that the interest in the Renaissance amongst Anglo-Americans living in Florence peaked during the city's planned urban renewal in the 1890s, as a response to the imminent destruction.[35] This she attributes to the campaign of Vernon Lee, author of copious volumes on Renaissance art, aesthetics, travel and the supernatural, and a widely respected figure in the Anglo-Florentine community, who led a movement to protest the modernising efforts of the city's municipal council. The group was made up of both foreign residents and Florentines and was called the Society for the Protection of Old Florence (*Associazione per la difesa di Firenze antica*). As part of their campaign, Lee penned a letter in 1898 to the Florentine mayor subsequently published in the *Times*, that lamented the necessity of having to demolish a group of fourteenth-century buildings in the Piazza di Parte Guelfa – reasons of sanitation were deemed 'unjustifiable' – and comparing it to Baron Haussmann's controversial redesign of Paris.[36] Significantly, it was not Lee who sent the letter to the newspaper, but the mayor himself, Pietro Torrigiani, who also published his reply in English, assuring them that he and the *Commune* were not 'careless of [our] own historic and artistic monuments.' He pointed out that the modifications were for the sake of hygiene and safety and noted that the Society for the Protection of Old Florence had eventually come to a

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[33] E. V. Lucas, *Wanderer in Florence* (1928), 69-70.
[34] Arthur Stanley, *Under Italian Skies: an Anthology* (London: Gollancz, 1950), 194.
[35] Lasansky, "Reshaping Attitudes," 264.
[36] Lasansky, "Reshaping Attitudes," 278.

compromise that saw the Piazza saved from destruction through private funding.[37] The fact that Torrigiani felt the need to justify his government's actions to a faraway British public is intriguing and says much about the Florentine regard for British opinion.

The protests against the destruction of the Piazza di Parte Guelfa along with eventual efforts undertaken to modernise Florence only served to emphasise the city's Renaissance history. Indeed, Lasansky observes that the architect of Florence's modernisation, Giuseppe Poggi, chose which buildings to save based on his assumptions of how a perfect Renaissance city should look. She argues, in fact, that architectural historians of the Renaissance should now understand that the buildings they analyse and study are actually the product of Poggi's nineteenth-century restructuring of the city according to his own idea of the Renaissance.[38] Deciding to use reasons of pragmatism, Lee pointed out that even if Florentines did not properly appreciate the historic or aesthetic importance of the city's Renaissance architecture, then they must surely understand the financial benefits in presenting Florence as a tourist destination:

> If the [Society] can succeed in making the majority of citizens understand, if not the aesthetic and historic importance of the what remains of Old Florence, at all events the importance thereof as an attraction to foreigners, and therefore as an important source of revenue, then Old Florence will be saved.[39]

Present-day Florence's hordes of tourists, therefore, are partly the beneficiaries of the efforts of Lee and other members of the Society (which included Janet Ross, the indomitable lady of Anglo-Florentine society, famed adventuress, and prolific author of books on Renaissance villas). Organisations such as the Society for the Protection of Old Florence, concerned with the damage modernisation might have on the city's historical character, can be seen as active reactions to the anxieties that some Anglo-Florentines held with regard to what they saw as the invasion of modern industrialised Europe into the untouched historical city that was Florence. The case of the Piazza di Parte Guelfa represents a paradox in British thinking about Florence, and the rest of Italy, at the dawn of the twentieth century. Though they decried Italy's descent from the once great cultural heights of the Roman empire and the

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[37] Pietro Torrigiani, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Times*, 15 December 1898, 8.
[38] Lasansky, "Reshaping Attitudes," 291.
[39] Vernon Lee, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Times*, 15 December 1898, 8.

Renaissance, many Britons were loathe to let Florence's historic streets and buildings modernise and indeed reacted violently to any suggestion for it to happen at all.

The denial of a need for Florence to modernise is at odds with the great support many Britons espoused for the trials of the movement for Italian unity, the Risorgimento. Indeed, the derision such progressive efforts provoked contrasts with the sentiments of Shelley, Byron, and Robert and Elizabeth Browning, who called for the Italian nation to shake off the yoke of foreign oppressors and return to its former glory. Many Britons, in fact, were mesmerised by the struggles of Italian patriots such as the fiery Giuseppe Mazzini and the dashing Giuseppe Garibaldi, whom they flocked to see in great numbers when he visited London. In short, there lay a gulf between the romanticised ideals many Britons held about the Risorgimento and the reality of their interactions with Florentines and other Italians they encountered. This paradox was particularly evident when the city's historical heritage was threatened.

Romantics and Risorgimento

In 1861, after centuries of internal conflict and occupation of parts of the peninsula by foreign powers, the first united kingdom of Italy was finally declared. The Risorgimento, a movement to unite the peninsula, was spearheaded by political exiles who took their ideas of a united Italy to other European countries, including Britain. The movement had gained great popularity amongst the British public, partly because it tapped into Romantic ideals of fighting against tyranny and unjust oppression. Byron and Shelley, for example, wrote at length on the Austrian occupation of Italy during their journeys there, and the enthusiastic foreign volunteers who fought in Garibaldi's brigades have provided the subjects of much historical scrutiny.[40] What is important to note, however, is the way in which Britons related the Risorgimento to their own ideas of nationhood and empire. In her pioneering study of the Romantic image of Italy in British political ideas during the nineteenth century, Maura O'Connor argues that the appeal of the Risorgimento to the English middle-classes lay in its power to alter the ways in which they formulated their own notions of English identity and allowed them to construct an Italy of their imagination. Travel literature took many of its cues from Lord Byron, casting Italy in the role of an abused

[40] Maria Schoina, "Leigh Hunt's 'Letters from Abroad' and the 'Anglo-Italian' Discourse of The Liberal," *Romanticism* 12, no. 2 (2006): 115-25, 121.

woman who was in need of salvation. O'Connor observes that many travellers and readers began to construct an idea of Italy that conformed to their idealised notions of the country, rather than actually reflecting any historical reality.[41] However, this idealised notion of an Italy struggling towards unity and regeneration after centuries of foreign tyranny drew the support of the British public.

O'Connor's argument that the members of the English middle classes who were enthusiastic supporters of the Risorgimento engaged in the articulation of their own ideas of what nationhood and being English meant (which, in the case of Anglo-Florentines, became conflated with being British) is significant. By defining the need for a unified Italy, as well as the reasons why their compatriots should support the Risorgimento, English supporters outlined their ideas of what being a free and democratic nation entailed, traits inevitably based on a British model.[42] O'Connor has studied a group of English women, led by the wealthy widow Julie Salis Schwabe, who, prompted by Garibaldi's appeal for help, volunteered to educate southern Italian women. These women saw it as part of their patriotic duty to 'civilise' southern Italian women, whom they saw as being representative of the entire nation. This was part of what she calls British women's 'imperial prerogative', and O'Connor suggests that such activities also helped to develop these women's ideas of British nation building.[43] She points out that Salis Schwabe's schools were also praised by British female reporters for teaching Italian women 'civilised' values and mannerisms. Innate Italian traits such as sloth and uncleanliness – a characterisation not too far removed from British encounters with natives in the colonies – made training women difficult, but it was important to do so, as Italian women's morality was important to the correct development of independent Italy.[44]

Another woman writing about Italy's downfall from the lofty heights of both Rome and the Renaissance, Vernon Lee ventured the thesis that Italy had sacrificed her morality in order to bring about modernity to the rest of Western Europe: 'The morality of the Italians was sacrificed to obtain the knowledge on which modern society depends, the political existence of Italy sacrificed to the diffusion of that

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[41] Maura O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Political Imagination* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 21.
[42] O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy*, 21.
[43] Maura O'Connor, "Civilizing Southern Italy: British and Italian women and the cultural politics of European nation building," *Women's Writing* 10, no. 2 (2003): 253 - 68, 267.
[44] O'Connor, "Civilizing Southern Italy: British and Italian women and the cultural politics of European nation building," 262.

knowledge, and that the nation was not only doomed to immorality, but doomed also to the inability to reform.'[45] The immorality of the Italians was a popular theme amongst British travel writers and reflects the wider belief that morality and the political fate of nations were entwined. The Roman empire was believed to have fallen due to waning ethical integrity of its administrators, and Pemble uses Ruskin's writings, amongst others, to show how many Victorian visitors felt that Italy's occupation during the nineteenth century by the Austro-Hungarian empire in the North and the Bourbons in the South was largely of Italy's own making, due to Italians' moral failings.[46]

This hostility to Italians seems to be at odds with the strong support for the Risorgimento found in Britain, and can probably be traced partly to the strong anti-Catholicism of Britons who were staunch Protestants. It is unsurprising that one of the reasons why the Risorgimento gained so much support was because it was seen as a struggle not only against foreign invaders, but against the religious tyranny of the Vatican.[47] Even after Italian unity was achieved, Dino Raponi observes, many evangelical politicians in Britain pushed for the signing of a Free Trade Agreement with Italy on the assumption that by doing so, other virtues of Protestantism might reach the Italian people. Free trade, as Raponi argues, was one of the cornerstones of the Britain's Protestant empire and it was believed that spreading its virtues to the unenlightened world (especially nations such as Italy oppressed by the superstition and ritual of the Catholic church), the entirety of the human race would benefit. Indeed it was believed that free trade was divinely blessed and that nations would reap material benefits from converting to the 'true' Gospel of Protestanism and engaging in free trade.[48] The opposition of Pope Pius IX to the appropriation of his lands by the secular government at the beginning of the 1860s only further convinced British supporters that the influence of the papacy was on the wane and that Italians were finally breaking free from the hold of the Catholic church.[49]

British supporters of the Risorgimento in London were made aware of the plight of Italy by political exiles who made the city their home. Amongst these was

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[45] Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy*, 225.
[46] Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*, 234-35.
[47] O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy*, 39.
[48] Danilo Raponi, "An 'anti-Catholicism of free trade?' Religion and the Anglo-Italian negotiations of 1863," *European History Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (2009): 633-52, 636.
[49] Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: a history of Italy since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 221.

Mazzini, who courted intellectual British society. Already the British public had been moved by the struggle of Greece to free itself from centuries of rule by the Ottoman empire in the 1820s, and had formed committees to lobby the cause for Greek independence in Parliament. The public had also shown support for Lajos Kossuth, former Regent-President of Hungary, who had visited Britain in 1848 as a fugitive after the failure of the Hungarian Revolution. In 1851, at the instigation of Mazzini the Society of the Friends of Italy was formed to educate the wider British public about the situation in Italy through public meetings and lectures, and to lobby Members of Parliament to discuss the case for Italian unity.[50] The Friends of Italy was one amongst an array of committees and societies set up around Britain to raise awareness of and sympathy for the Risorgimento. Mazzini's use of Romantic language in describing an Italy enslaved under the Austrian yoke captivated the audiences, even if his involvement in armed insurrections and other radical activities, not to mention his republican ideas, alienated many in Britain who felt him too controversial an individual to represent the cause.[51] Despite Mazzini's republican tendencies, the cause for Italian independence became so widely-known amongst the British public that, as Pemble has pointed out, the 'liberation of Italy became the gospel of a generation.'[52] No doubt a large part of this was due to the efforts of groups like the Society, but the exploits of Garibaldi and his Thousand captured the public's imagination and sympathy to an even greater degree.

Of all the patron saints of the Risorgimento, none loomed as large in the British public's imagination as Garibaldi. Garibaldi's impact on Victorian culture has been well documented, his visit to Britain in 1864 receiving the greatest attention.[53] As an example of just how enduring his popularity in Britain was, Derek Beales has discovered that there are more inn-signs in Britain depicting Garibaldi than either of the illustrious ex-prime ministers Benjamin Disraeli or William Gladstone.[54] Combining the traits of a Romantic hero for his fight against the tyranny of foreign

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[50] O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy*, 78.
[51] Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*, 87-88.
[52] Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*, 10.
[53] See Noel Blakiston, "Garibaldi's Visit to England in 1864," *Risorgimento: Rivista di Storia del Risorgimento e di Storia Contemporanea* 16, no. 3 (1964): 133-43; L. Elda Funaro, "Il viaggio di Garibaldi in Inghilterra e la crisi della democrazia Italiana dopo l'unita," *Studi Storici* 7, no. 1 (1966): 129-57; Christopher Hibbert, "Garibaldi in England, 1864," *History Today* 15, no. 9 (1965): 595-604; Scirocco, *Garibaldi.*
[54] Beales, "Garibaldi in England: The Politics of Italian Enthusiasm," 189.

oppression, a fearless explorer by his travels in South America, and a fearless revolutionary, the myth of Garibaldi appealed to a wide cross-section of British society. The fact that Garibaldi was of humble birth (his father was a fisherman) and that he had become such a noted adventurer and general endeared him to the British public, who saw him as fitting in with familiar political iconography, as had happened with the Risorgimento.[55] As a soldier, he had none of his fellow Risorgimento leader Camillo Cavour's dangerous pro-French leanings, or Mazzini's dogged republican ideas, which allowed for an almost universal embrace of his personal cult by much of British society.[56] Marcella Sutcliffe, for instance, has traced the emergence of Garibaldimania in the northern city of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne to show how the growing cult was appropriated by different groups in order to serve their own political ambitions.[57] By depoliticising the figure of Garibaldi, various groups were able to attach their own values and aspirations to him and thus incorporate the powerfully attractive myth of Garibaldi into their agendas.

O'Connor observes that Garibaldi's visit in 1864 demonstrates the ways in which different social classes identified with the general's image. The middle classes saw Garibaldi as a Romantic, liberal, pro-monarchist hero, whilst working class trade-union leaders chose to focus on the Italian as a champion of democracy and were attracted to his less than glamorous birth.[58] What this shows is the way in which Britons associated Garibaldi with values they found desirable in a national hero, thus projecting their own ideology onto the general. Both the Risorgimento and Garibaldi were relevant to British interest only when cast in the mould of British heroes and ideals. Indeed, since both aristocrats as well as members of the Labour movement claimed him as a patron saint, political tensions between his English hosts effectively curtailed Garibaldi's visit, forcing him to leave earlier than scheduled.[59] Such was his appeal amongst the aristocracy, in fact, that several society ladies were moved to write passionate letters of devotion after his visit to London. Christopher Hibbert quotes one such letter from the Dowager Duchess of Sutherland, who claimed that even though she was advanced in years, 'nevertheless I shall try to divert your attention from other women who still possess the blessings of youth and good

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[55] Lucy Riall, *Garibaldi: invention of a hero* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 195.
[56] Ridley, "Il mito di Garibaldi," 277.
[57] Sutcliffe, "Negotiating the 'Garibaldi moment' in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1854-1861)."
[58] O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy*, 162.
[59] Beales, "Garibaldi in England: The Politics of Italian Enthusiasm," 201-08.

health.'[60] The crowd who greeted Garibaldi's train in London is further testament to his popularity; whilst London police had prepared for 100,000 spectators, the actual number who came was closer to half a million, about as many as had turned up for the Prince of Wales' wedding the previous year.[61] The *Times* declared that the reception was

> given with such an earnestness and goodwill as has seldom been equalled, and will probably never excelled, even in our now somewhat long history of demonstrations in favour of distinguished visitors from all quarters of the globe.[62]

Not everyone in London was happy to see Garibaldi, however, with Karl Marx famously dismissive of the general's cult of personality, labelling Garibaldi's visit 'a miserable spectre of imbecility' whilst Queen Victoria was quick to chastise her Foreign Secretary, Lord Russell, for the enthusiasm shown for his visit by both Whigs and Tories, as she regarded Garibaldi as an inveterate revolutionary leader.[63] The fact that her eldest son paid a visit to Garibaldi galled the queen even more.[64] Beales notes that Irish Catholic leaders were offended by Garibaldi's hostility to the Vatican (another reason why he was so popular amongst Protestants), and Benjamin Disraeli refused a meeting with him, though Beales attributes this to the fact that Disraeli was at the time courting the favour of several Irish Tory MPs.[65]

Garibaldi's huge popularity in Britain, as part of the Risorgimento movement, raised the British public's awareness to the struggles of a newly independent Italy. His visit of 1864, however, also managed to affect certain aspects of British politics. Part of the impact of the general's visit was a gradual revival of Liberal politics that eventually resulted in the overwhelming victory of Gladstone in the election of 1868.[66] One reason for this was Gladstone's political radicalisation, which Beales attributes to Gladstone's admiration for Garibaldi.[67] Furthermore, this heightened awareness of the Italian situation also prompted Britons to travel to the peninsula and help in the development of the new nation, as with the case of O'Connor's Englishwomen who ventured to southern Italy to educate Italian women on their

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[60] Hibbert, " Garibaldi in England, 1864," 604.
[61] Scirocco, *Garibaldi*, 338.
[62] 'The welcome of General Garibaldi to London', *The Times*, 12 April 1864, 14.
[63] Hibbert, "Garibaldi in England, 1864," 599-600.
[64] Beales, "Garibaldi in England," 192.
[65] Beales, "Garibaldi in England," 193.
[66] Beales, "Garibaldi in England," 209.
[67] Beales, "Garibaldi in England," 209-14.

patriotic duties. The personal charisma of Garibaldi, and the Romantic notions of the Risorgimento would have been familiar to the Anglo-Florentines of the early twentieth century. They would have been well familiar with the rhetoric of an intimate Anglo-Italian relationship and the role played by various British supporters of the cause.

What is important to note is that enthusiasm for Italian unity pervaded much of British society, and when combined with the personal charisma of Garibaldi, significantly raised the profile of Italy in the British public's awareness to a greater extent than it had enjoyed before the Risorgimento, and indeed, in the subsequent years after Italy's independence. The historian George Macaulay Trevelyan, writing in 1919, lamented the lack of a personal connection between the two nations that had been evident during the nineteenth century, attributing it largely to the return of the exiled patriots from London to Italy after independence. As he observed, 'the affection of Englishmen for Italy has not, indeed, diminished; and it has always been something more than abstract, because it is rather felt than thought. But it had in our day become less personal than in the Victorian era.'[68]

Interestingly, Maurizio Isabella argues that Italian Risorgimento exiles read the negative portrayals of Italy and Italians by British travellers on the Grand Tour and then began to write their own travel histories of Italy in order to counteract them. Using Mary Louise Pratt's notion of transculturation, 'that is to say, the transfer of ideas of the travelled by way of the travellers' writings', Isabella ventures that from about the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Italian exiles began to effectively shape British views of their homeland.[69] The Risorgimento, or, more specifically, the high visibility in Britain of the exiles connected with the Risorgimento, helped to raise awareness and enthusiasm for Italian independence, but at the same time began to reshape British ideas of Italy through their writings in order to explain the ideas and principles behind the Risorgimento and to show how it presented no serious threat to British stability, unlike the European revolutions of 1848.

The flow of ideas and enthusiasm between the two nations was not totally one-sided, however, since Italian exiles also derived an idealised model for their new nation's political structures from the existing British system. According to Laura

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[68] George Macaulay Trevelyan, *Scenes From Italy's War* (London: Jack, 1919), 35-36.
[69] Maurizio Isabella, *Risorgimento in exile: Italian émigrés and the liberal international in the post-Napoleonic era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 210.

Cerasi, in the immediate period following Italian unification, the British political system was held up as a model for the new state. [70] For Italian Anglophiles, the freedoms enjoyed by the British and their access to proper education were the reasons why they were superior to Italians, who had become morally dissolute due to the despotic nature of Italian government under foreign occupiers. Oppression, therefore, was the cause of Italy's immorality. [71] Freedom had allowed the British to gain themselves an empire. Until the first decade of the twentieth-century, there was a marked Anglophilia in the Italian government, echoed by various liberal intellectuals on the Continent for the British political system, but also that of the aristocracy which was mobile and based on merit, a virtue Italian patriots thought more progressive to the stagnant nature of their own nobility. Isabella highlights how, in fact, the British aristocracy was believed to be the only one in Europe that was not oppressive towards the lower classes (though this seems highly unlikely to have been the case).[72]

Although there was widespread admiration for the British political model amongst the Italian elite, Cerasi argues, it was considered unsuitable in comparison to the examples of either France or Germany. She cites the case of the Anglo-Boer war, furthermore, as a moment when the Italian perception of Britain as a great power began to decline. In the years before the First World War there was growing suspicion about the links between British-style democracy and imperialism, which many Italian politicians thought might prove disastrous. The concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War had hardly shown Britain to be the exemplary advanced civilisation that she claimed to be.[73] It is unsurprising, therefore, to discover that many Italians were unenthusiastic about the prospects of Italy's entry into the First World War on the side of Britain in 1915, despite efforts to convince them that the very existence of Western civilisation was at stake.

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[70] Cerasi, "Anglophilia in crisis," 7.
[71] Isabella, *Risorgimento in exile*, 122.
[72] Isabella, *Risorgimento in exile*, 119-20.
[73] Cerasi, "Anglophilia in crisis," 10.

The aftermath of the Risorgimento and Anglo-Italian diplomacy

Despite Italy's hard-won independence, the superiority that many Britons felt they held over newly emancipated Italians remained. After all, it was one thing to support the Risorgimento, since it was a movement initiated by the Italian middle classes,[74] and another for British travellers to the peninsula to grow close to the Italians they met on their journeys. Bernard Wall remarks that even though writers who championed the unification of the country, such as Shelley and the Brownings would write to Pius IX to remonstrate with him over the issue, they remained aloof from the local people in the cities where they visited and lived.[75]

One source of tension in Anglo-Italian relations was that British travellers in the 1860s were often detained by Italian police for neglecting to carry passports, believing that as British subjects they were not required to carry them on their person. Owain J. Wright has explained this problem as the inability of British diplomats to understand the growing pains that the newly independent state was going through.[76] The reaction of the *Times* to reports that British subjects had been brutalised by Italian authorities (who, Wright notes, were not entirely blameless) however, bespeaks a sense of horror at the barbarous treatment of the police and the inability of Italian authorities to use non-violent methods to keep the peace, with the underlying implication that such outrages would not occur in Britain.[77] Anglo-Italian diplomacy was also strained by incidents where British military forces took part in Italian disputes, as happened in Sardinia in 1870. This was the Zamponi affair, when a British gunboat intervened in a Sardinian vendetta that had caused the British consul on the island to be alarmed enough to send a distress call to the Royal Navy (though no shots were fired). This suggests to Wright that British hopes that the Risorgimento would reinvigorate Italy's national character were disappointed.[78] In the same vein, Wright argues that the British regarded themselves as role models for independent Italy, and their readiness to send a gunboat to what was essentially a localised

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[74] Denis Mack Smith, *Victor Emanuel, Cavour and the Risorgimento* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[75] Bernard Wall, "L'ambivalenza storia degli inglesi verso l'Italia," in *Congresso di Bagni di Lucca per il Cinquecentenario del British Institute of Florence, 22-24 Settembre*, ed. British Institute of Florence (Firenze: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1967),165-70, 167.

[76] O. J. Wright, "Police 'Outrages' against British Residents and Travellers in Liberal Italy, 1867-1877," *Crime, Histoire et Sociétés* 14, no. 1 (2010): 51-71, 62.

[77] Wright, "Police 'Outrages' ", 55.

[78] O. J. Wright, "Sea and Sardinia: Pax Britannica versus Vendetta in the New Italy (1870)," *European History Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (2007): 398-416, 400.

Sardinian affair indicates the British willingness to override the Italian government's authority if it felt that its own interests were at risk.[79]

Indeed, the Zamponi affair is reflective of the general tone of diplomatic relations between Britain and the Kingdom of Italy during the last decades of the nineteenth century, which were heavily weighted in Britain's favour. Italy was heavily dependent on British coal, which made up 90% of her supplies, to provide her cities with energy and to keep her infrastructure running. Richard Bosworth argues that this dependence led to Britain having a 'stranglehold' on Italian diplomatic options, whilst her naval supremacy in the Mediterranean meant that Italy could not afford to antagonise British interests, as the authorities in Sardinia found out.[80] In the region, Italy was also jealous of France, which had territories in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Indeed, she entered into the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austro-Hungary as a reaction to the seizure of the strategically important Tunis in 1881.[81]

When Italy decided to join the Great Powers such as Britain, France, or Germany by belatedly acquiring an empire in Africa, the diplomatic balance of power in Europe was constantly changing. As Bosworth notes, Italian diplomats were keen to negotiate alliances and treaties instead of committing to firm (and undoubtedly costly) military action. Apart from the foiled efforts of Francesco Crispi to conquer Abyssinia in 1896 – a venture that resulted in the death of some 5000 Italian soldiers at the Battle of Adowa[82] – and the Libyan war of 1911, Bosworth notes, Italy supported peace in Europe.[83] Italian diplomacy was, somewhat unsurprisingly, characterised by European diplomats during this period as machiavellian. As Bosworth points out, Italian Foreign Ministers were depicted as being uniformly untrustworthy. The exception to this rule was, appropriately, the half-English Sidney Sonnino, who had a personal reputation for complete honesty and who, unfortunately, also bears the title of Italy's least effective Foreign Minister. [84] After the failure to negotiate for territorial gains at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, both Sonnino and his Prime Minster Vittorio Orlando, were branded architects of the 'mutilated

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[79] Wright, "Sea and Sardinia," 406.
[80] Bosworth, *Italy and the wider world*, 26.
[81] Bosworth, *Italy, the Least of the Great Powers*, 10.
[82] Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 347.
[83] Bosworth, *Italy and the wider world*, 26-27.
[84] Bosworth, *Italy and the wider world*, 28.

victory', and the anger of the Italian public at their failure would eventually lead to the rise of the Fascist party.

In addition to being dishonest (apart from Sonnino) in their diplomacy, Italy's imperial ambitions were regarded by the major European empires – the British, French, German and Austro-Hungarians – with derision and polite bewilderment. In the race to colonise Africa, Italy had arrived too late and was only left with Eritrea at the start of the twentieth century. More embarrassingly, she had failed to invade Abyssinia, an operation that was only successful nearly forty years later. Italy's place as a Great Power was far from assured.[85] In this, official British views of Italy matched other European nations. As the Italian ambassador to London, Antonino Di San Giuliano, observed in 1906:

> The truth is that in England, because of our artistic and literary glories, the beauty of our country and our climate, the recent memories of our Risorgimento, there is for Italy a sincere sympathy, but it has very little influence on practical policy … Italy... is considered weak militarily and uncertain in its political aspirations … In my opinion, there really exists a sincere Anglo-Italian friendship, but it would be dangerous for us to have too many illusions about its practical weight…[86]

Arthur Marsden's study on Lord Salisbury's negotiations with Crispi's government in 1896 confirms this attitude. The growing colonial ambitions of Italy in Africa and Crispi's constant pleas for British support in these endeavours made Salisbury wary of supporting Italy, especially at the risk of antagonising the French. Ultimately, Marsden notes, Salisbury was willing to sacrifice Britain's traditional support for Italy in order to placate French tempers, a move which led to a significant cooling of the 'traditional friendship' between the two nations.[87] Relations were further strained in 1914, just before the outbreak of the First World War, when Italy attempted to gain a better strategic position in the Middle East. Italian banks attempted to influence Khedive Abbas II of Egypt to help them quash the Senussi rebellion in Libya by promising to champion Egyptian independence from Britain and paying off his private debts, much to the irritation of colonial officials in Egypt and

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[85] Richard Bosworth, "Britain and Italy's Acquisition of the Dodecanese, 1912-1915," *Historical Journal* 13, no. 4 (1970): 683-705, 683.
[86] Bosworth, *Italy, the Least of the Great Powers: Italian foreign policy before the First World War*, 93.
[87] Arthur Marsden, "Salisbury and the Italians in 1896," *Journal of Modern History* 40, no. 1 (1968): 91-117, 116-17.

the Foreign Office in London.[88] According to Saho Matsumoto-Best, the aim of the Italian banks was ostensibly to cut off native rebellion in Libya and to protect Italy's colonial borders, whilst the British were irritated by what they saw as devious Italian plans to undermine their authority in Egypt. Ultimately the burgeoning conflict was overshadowed by the July crisis that led to the outbreak of war and the British removal of the Khedive from power, but Matsumoto-Best argues that this incident was the antecedent for later Anglo-Italian unrest in Africa and the Middle East, particularly with regard to the Italian-Abyssinian war in 1935.[89] Despite tacitly supporting her ambitions to become a Great Power, Britain was wary of Italian attempts to consolidate their empire.

The notion of British superiority over modern Italy was influenced, as Andrew Thompson has noted, by emerging ideas of imperialism and eugenics, whose proponents usually used Italians as an example of a racially degenerate 'other' to compare to the superior Anglo-Saxon.[90] Despite ideological support for the Risorgimento, the reluctance by British travellers to engage with the actual Italians they met was echoed in the realm of diplomacy, as events like the Zamponi affair show. Indeed, the ambassador to Italy in 1870, Sir Augustus Paget (incidentally the husband of another prominent woman in Florentine society, Lady Walburga Paget), was contemptuous of the entire structure of the Italian government and parliamentary system. Much of the embarrassment and resulting tension in Anglo-Italian diplomacy after the Zamponi affair was chiefly due to Paget's averseness to communicating tactfully with his Italian counterparts.[91] Moreover the anti-Catholicism that had prompted many in Britain to cast the Risorgimento as a crusade against Papist tyranny also played a significant role in the phrasing of the Free Trade Agreement between the two nations in 1863, which is peculiar as it contains several clauses relating directly to religion and the freedom of Protestants in Italy to practise their faith freely. Raponi has argued that this was due to the Evangelical belief that Protestantism would bring civic virtues to the inhabitants of Italy.[92] The Free Trade Agreement also shows, however, that the British tried to impose their ideas of conducting trade and

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[88] Saho Matsumoto-Best, "British and Italian Imperial Rivalry in the Mediterranean, 1912-14: The Case of Egypt," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 18, no. 2 (2007): 297-314, 298.
[89] Matsumoto-Best, "British and Italian Imperial Rivalry in the Mediterranean, 1912-14: The Case of Egypt," 297-314.
[90] Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?*, 186.
[91] Wright, "Sea and Sardinia," 405-06.
[92] Raponi, "An 'anti-Catholicism of free trade?'," 637.

Protestantism on newly independent Italy, just after they had championed her freedom from foreign rule.

In Florence, this feeling of superiority would find its expression in the columns of several Anglo-Florentine newspapers, which often contained chastisements and indignant queries relating to the municipal authorities' development of the city. Such expatriates came from the middle and upper classes of British society. As will be shown in the next chapter, they were often highly literate and most were liberal in their political views. Although they had been supportive of the movement for Italian unity, and were generally in favour of Italy's drive to establish herself as a Great Power, these expatriates did not particularly welcome the actual possibility of a modern Italy on their doorsteps. They feared the destruction of Italy's cultural heritage caused by modernisation and industrialisation. As will be shown, for writers like Vernon Lee and her contemporaries, Italy was seen as a retreat from the evils of industrialisation and urban redevelopment, and any attempts to drag her from her many centuries of dignified squalor were to be resisted.

British views of Italy were inevitably influenced by the experience of imperialism and contact with the native peoples whose lands they had colonised. Indeed, Pratt has commented on the fact that travel literature from the period describes encounters with Italians in similar language to that used in colonial observations of the native inhabitants of Africa or South America.[93] Since the Italians provided both the example of a degenerate race and were apparently barbarous in their treatment of criminals, it is unsurprising that colonially-inflected language was used to describe them to a British reading public familiar with tales of the bloodthirsty savages of Africa or Indian mutineers in a period where the British empire was arguably at its apogee. Yet, in many travellers' accounts, the Italian is often cast in the role of the noble savage, illustrating a more idealised view of Italians, but still maintaining British superiority.[94] Ruskin, unsurprisingly, was to describe the modern Italian as possessing an inherent idleness that he found odious, and in his words one finds the echoes of the same language used to describe the various subject peoples

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[93] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial eyes: travel writing and transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[94] Diana Webb, "La dolce vita? Italy by rail, 1839-1914. ," *History Today* 46, no.6 (1996): 45-51, 46.

encountered by the British throughout their vast empire.[95] As he wrote to his father, '...everybody here is idle, and therefore they are always in the way.'[96] This sedentary nature was to be the focus of another letter, in which he complained that, 'I have sworn vengeance against the French, but there is something in *them* that is at least energetic, however bad its principle may be – but these Italians – Pah – they are Yorick's skull with the worms in it – *nothing of humanity left but the smell.*'[97]

Indeed, the manner in which Ruskin described modern Italians as being incapable of functional communication in *Mornings in Florence* is striking, especially when compared with the adulation he shows to their medieval and Renaissance ancestors. Ruskin urged his readers to:

> look at the talkers in the streets of Florence, and see how, being essentially unable to talk, they try to make lips of their fingers! How they poke, wave, flourish, point, jerk, shake finger and fist at their antagonists – dumb essentially, all the while, if they knew it, unpersuasive and ineffectual, as the shaking of branches in the wind.[98]

Despite being the descendants of Giotto, Botticelli and Cimabue, it seems modern Italians, at least according to Ruskin were degenerate, not just in their morality, but on a fundamental evolutionary level. These Italians could not have been responsible for the construction of Florence's Duomo and its Campanile.

The spectre of modernisation

Contrasted with its glorious past, newly united Italy was in dire need of regeneration, a common fin-de-siècle idea that was intensely appealing to Victorian and Edwardian Britain in the face of modern progress.[99] The Libyan War of 1911 to 1912, in which Italy gained new territories from the Ottoman empire, was seen by many in the Italian government as a conflict that would lift the nation out of the nadir to which it had sunk after the defeat at Adowa in 1896, and imperialist themes of the regenerating

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[95] On the myth of the lazy native, see Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and Its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: Cass, 1977).
[96] John Ruskin, *Ruskin in Italy: Letters to his Parents 1845* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 118.
[97] Ruskin, *Ruskin in Italy*, 119-20.
[98] Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence*, 85.
[99] David Scott Fox, *Mediterranean heritage* (London: Routledge, 1978), 205.

qualities of war were used to justify the exercise.[100] This idea of war possessing regenerative properties, in fact, was a dominant theme in British imperial rhetoric – as with the nascent Futurist movement in Italy – during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, one of the reasons why the declaration of the First World War was greeted with such enthusiasm in Britain was the worry that British society was in danger of becoming indolent and effeminate, traits commonly attributed to Italians.[101] After the signing of the peace treaty between the Ottoman empire and Italy, the *Italian Gazette* commented on the outcome of the war and argued that Italy's achievements should not be criticised, as the nation was simply trying to advance itself to the same level as its European neighbours. The Italians were

> a people whose ambition has been to raise itself from a low status to the consideration that befits human dignity. Italy contributes so much to the general progress of to-day that she is entitled to all our regard.... A nation with growing strength that makes her all the more conscious of her past services to the world and of her present promise, may excite jealousy, but will not be pushed aside.[102]

Italy's war with the Ottoman empire was a means by which the nation would reinvigorate itself both militarily and morally, and become worthy of its past glories, another common justification for the imperial project.[103] The regeneration of Italy, initiated by the Risorgimento, was to pull the nation forward into the modern age and give her equal footing with the other European powers. Whilst those Britons who took an interest in Italian affairs would have approved of her progress they would still have been assured of Britain's inherent superiority over their cultural ancestor, as is seen in the examples of diplomatic conduct with Italy.

From 1864 to 1871, when it moved to Rome, Florence was capital of the Kingdom of Italy, taking over from Turin. Beginning in 1864 Florence's centre was transformed by a project of urban renewal, intended to rejuvenate and modernise the city. In spite of the controversy raised by Baron Haussman in Paris, Lasansky points out that his ideas were influential in the redesigning of the city by the Florentine architect Giuseppe Poggi. The physical layout of Florence was drastically changed;

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[100] Silvana Patriarca, *Italian vices: nation and character from the Risorgimento to the republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 113-14.
[101] John M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: the Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 2.
[102] 'Peace between Italy and Turkey', *The Italian Gazette*, 12 October 1912, 1.
[103] Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 2.

paraffin lamps were replaced with gas lights, streets were widened or destroyed altogether, the medieval city walls were torn down to allow the construction of new multi-lane roads and piazzas built around the surviving gates. The neighbourhood of the Cascine just outside the city, on the banks of the Arno, was turned into a public park in 1864 and in the same year construction began on the Piazzale Michelangelo which overlooked the city and presented a panoramic view of Poggi's redesigned Florence.[104] Most dramatic of all, however, were the changes wrought on the historic centre of the city. For the first time since its construction, Giotto's Campanile was finally liberated from the mass of buildings surrounding it and the outline of Poggi's perfect Renaissance city took shape. The Mercato Vecchio (Old Market) and the old Jewish ghetto – situated between the Duomo and the Piazza della Signoria, traditional seat of municipal authority – were demolished. Over 350 residents were evicted from the ghetto, which Lasansky points out the Florentine press had condemned as being uninhabitable, due to contaminated wells and overcrowded apartments.[105] The ghetto's destruction, which had housed Florence's Jews, prostitutes and criminals, also removed the picturesque warrens of narrow lanes and roadside shrines accumulated over Florence's long history and so beloved by British travellers. The Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II was built in its place, a sterile homage to Risorgimento architecture and modern aesthetics.[106]

Modernity, however, was a double-edged sword. Already wary of the changes being made around Italy, and especially concerned for the wellbeing of Florence, expatriates in the city and writers in Britain despaired of the attempts to drag Florence into the new century. Augustus Hare, describing the area around the Mercato Vecchio for his Florentine guidebook of 1900, listed the palaces of prominent Florentine families that have been destroyed 'to make room for the horrors we now see.' Contemplating the ruins of the Mercato Vecchio, Hare noted that 'this most interesting part of Florence was doomed by its ignorant and short-sighted Municipality in 1889, and the destruction is a disgrace which will cling to its members for ever.'[107] Of the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, Hare was even less complimentary, telling his reader that 'not only has all the interest of all this centre of

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[104] Lasansky, "Reshaping Attitudes," 265-68.
[105] Lasansky, "Reshaping Attitudes," 269.
[106] Bernd Roeck, *Florence 1900: the Quest for Arcadia*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 50.
[107] Augustus J. C. Hare, *Florence*, (New York: Macmillan, 1900), 116.

Florence been remorselessly destroyed since 1889, but the square … which has replaced it is the most hideous, the most utterly vulgar and ostentatious, which disgraces any town of Europe.'[108] In his description of the Protestant Cemetery near the Piazzale Donatello, the burial place of many notable British and American literary and artistic figures, he complained that 'it was formerly a lovely spot, backed by the old walls of the city, but these have now been removed, and the place is encircled by dusty high-roads.'[109] Hare was also scathing of reconstruction efforts by Italians on the artworks found in Florentine galleries and churches. Describing Santa Maria Novella, he groused that 'the best of the fine fifteenth-century paintings have been "restored" to their destruction.'[110]

That the city's Renaissance architecture and artworks were being destroyed by efforts to preserve them was worrying enough, but the attitude of the Italians themselves – mainly apathy or indeed ignorance at the loss of what British observers saw as their invaluable cultural heritage – was distressing. This could sometimes send writers into fits of misanthropic musings, inflected with the constant underlying assumptions of British superiority. This was not particular to the fin-de-siècle moment; Ruskin was amongst the most virulent critics of the modern Italian. On his first solo journey to Florence in 1845, he was walking around the historic centre of Florence, and already upset (one might even say severely distressed) by the scaffolding and conservation of some of Florence's most famous art treasures, as well as the 'disappearance' of an entire street, Ruskin was to pen his most damning assessment of the Florentines. 'I was walking home with my eyes on the gutter', he wrote, '*wishing that I could wash the whole population of Florence down with it into the sewer.*'[111] Indeed, the young Ruskin's loathing of the Italians was complete – 'take them all in all, I detest these Italians beyond measure.'[112]

Modernity and Italian independence, it would seem, were good ideas in theory, but when put into practice, attracted the ire of the British who travelled to the country. Hilary Fraser's observation that Italy was attractive to the British because it was an example of a country aware of its historical past as opposed to the ever-progressive, aggressively modernising pace of Britain, is reflected in the constant

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[108] Hare, *Florence*, 120.
[109] Hare, *Florence*, 191.
[110] Hare, *Florence*, 203.
[111] Ruskin, *Ruskin in Italy*, 89. Emphasis added.
[112] Ruskin, *Ruskin in Italy*, 122.

denigration of any changes to Florence's architecture, but also in the types of tourists that were beginning to flock to the city.[113]

The first Italian railway line was built in 1839, servicing Naples and Portici and ushering in a new era of travel opportunities for Britons venturing to the peninsula.[114] By the end of the nineteenth century, Pemble notes, it took about fifty-five hours to travel from London to Rome by rail, a significant reduction in a journey of three to four weeks in the early decades of the century.[115] As package tour operators like Thomas Cook became increasingly popular with the middle classes, who were now able to undertake the journey to the Continent previously only available to aristocrats on the Grand Tour, the beginnings of mass tourism saw a reaction by some travellers against the phenomenon.[116] To the Britons who fancied themselves more sophisticated than the typical package tourist venturing abroad for the first time, these groups were an obvious embodiment of the evils of modernity.

Forster satirises such travellers in *A Room With A View* in the person of Miss Lavish, who is so disdainful of tourists carrying Baedeker guidebooks that she takes Lucy Honeychurch's away, on the grounds that it will improve Lucy's experience of Santa Croce. Indeed, she says, she cannot bear the thought of tourists to Florence who are not adequately knowledgeable about their history and culture, confessing, 'It's very naughty of me, but I would like to set an examination paper at Dover, and turn back every tourist who couldn't pass it.'[117] As it happens, however, Forster was not greatly exaggerating his depiction of the cultured tourist. Pemble observes, for example, that for some Britons, preparation for their journeys to the south of Europe often involved reading an entire canon of literature on the countries they were about to visit. Often reading lists were found in the introduction to guidebooks as a suggested method of preparation, so that by the time they arrived at their destination, travellers were often so well versed that they had similar reactions and fits of ecstasy over the monuments and relics they had read about.[118]

The concerns of those travellers who feared that modern means of transportation and mass tourism would lead to Florence's eventual ruin was one

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[113] Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy*, 3.
[114] Webb, "La Dolce Vita?," 48.
[115] Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*, 27.
[116] J.A.R Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday: A Social History* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1976), 169.
[117] Forster, *A Room With A View*.
[118] Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*, 68-69.

echoed by many Anglo-Florentines. They feared that the municipal council's plan to attract more tourists by allowing modern innovations like the gramophone and cinematographs was deeply flawed, and they were not above writing angry letters to the newspapers to vent their frustrations.[119] Lasanksy has suggested that because of its enthusiastic protectiveness of Florence, the 'English were the unofficial custodians of the city's Renaissance past.'[120] This refusal to let the modern world intrude on their historical haven, combined with Tuscan aristocrats' decision not to allow extensive industrial development of the countryside, in comparison to the heavily developed north, meant that any suggestion of modernising Florence to cater to the masses would always be met with a hail of protest.[121] Modernity, then, at least in Florence, was something to be wary of, if not outright hostile towards, both for the destruction it threatened, and the moral and cultural degeneration of the illustrious city that would occur if its effects were unchecked.

Conclusion

At the end of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth, Victorian and Edwardian travellers to Italy were well aware of its turbulent recent history, and the well-read were instantly familiar with its Renaissance luminaries and of the cultural heritage Britain drew from the Classical example of Rome. Viewed through their own ideas of nationhood and heroism, the Risorgimento and the exploits of Garibaldi were also familiar subjects and immensely attractive to the British popular imagination. The enthusiasm for Italy, however, was blunted by the sense that the British empire had far surpassed Italian civilisation, and that Italians were generally to blame for their own reduced circumstances. Though many British writers called for Italian independence during the middle of the century, it was clear that for many, writing in support of middle-class patriots like Mazzini or Camillo Cavour, or reading about the adventures of Garibaldi and his soldiers, was very different from interacting with the Italians who inhabited the towns and cities they visited or lived in. Though Italians were encouraged to be free from the choking control of their Austro-Hungarian or Bourbon overlords, as a civilisation they were decidedly inferior to the British and were often treated as such; in Anglo-Italian diplomacy, Britain saw itself as a role

[119] This is examined in the next chapter.
[120] Lasansky, "Reshaping Attitudes," 263.
[121] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, 47.

model and teacher, with its diplomats highly critical of the government and judicial systems of the new nation, and willing to supersede local Italian government when British interests were at stake.

These ideas and views of Italy would inevitably affect the ways in which Anglo-Florentines, as well as other British residents in Italy, interacted with the inhabitants of their adopted homes. Drawn by the historic nature of cities like Florence, British expatriates and travellers were fiercely protective of the built environment and supposed cultural refinement these cities represented. As such, the dangers of modernity and the destruction posed by such efforts were often a point of tension between Britons and local authorities. Though living in the country could bring about a greater level of understanding between British residents and Italians, such relations were often coloured by the perceptions that the British carried about Italy and Italians. In time, this would affect the nature of Anglo-Italian relations in Florence, with consequences for the spread of British culture in the city and the rest of Italy.

Chapter 2
The British in Florence before the First World War

It was April 1908, and the unnamed editor of one of Florence's English-language newspapers, the *Florence Herald*, was fuming. In an editorial he fulminated against the woeful inaction by the Florence *sindaco*, or municipal authority, in dealing with a bequest. Frederick Stibbert, the late Anglo-Florentine who had fought with Giuseppe Garibaldi during the wars of Italian unification, had left his house and its collection of armour, weapons and military memorabilia to the city. In his will, Stibbert had specified that the house was to be turned into a museum, but in the two years since his death, there was still no sign it would be opened any time soon, much to the editor's disgust.[1] Such a slight to Stibbert's generous gift, the editor felt, was unforgivable. Even worse was the fact that Carlo Lari, a columnist at the conservative Florentine newspaper, the *Nuovo Giornale*, had heard of his earlier editorial condemning this inaction and had decided to weigh in on the side of the mayor. The editor fumed:

> As wellwishers [*sic*] to Florence most English-speaking residents know... no party occupying municipal power can afford, if loyal to Florence, to despise the moral and material strength the large numbers of British and American residents give to the place.[2]

Feuding between the two newspapers continued for about a month before the editor of the *Herald* ran out of his store of righteous indignation. A notice in an issue in October observed that the *sindaco* had finally taken full possession of the museum. However, the Herald was unsure if this meant any concrete progress, observing:

> When the museum will be opened the authorities cannot say. It is to be hoped that out of respect for the generous testator and the reputation of the Florence Council amongst the English-speaking community, Signore Sangiorgi, the Mayor, whom we believe to be desirous of hearkening to the desires of the British and American colony on this matter, will see the necessity of keeping the Trustees alive to a sense of their duty.[3]

Administrative hiccoughs notwithstanding, the Stibbert Museum did eventually open to the public, and continues to draw tourists to the present day, though the

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[1] "The Stibbert Museum Question: A Dictation Lesson ", *Florence Herald*, 2 April 1908, 8.
[2] Ibid.
[3] "The Stibbert Museum," *Florence Herald*, 29 October 1908, 1.

Florence Herald did not enjoy the same longevity, ceasing publication in 1915 because of rising costs and the censorship imposed because of the First World War.

The controversy over the Stibbert Museum reveals the tensions that existed at the start of the twentieth century between expatriate British residents and the Italians with whom they shared their adopted home. Their continuing identification as British subjects impacted the way many Anglo-Florentines interacted with Italians and with other international residents in Florence. Indeed, this sense of connection to the British empire would have a profound impact on the development of a unique Anglo-Florentine identity during the First World War.

As will be shown, the case of the *Florence Herald* and the Stibbert Museum was not unusual. Many of the Anglo-Florentines railed against measures by the municipal government to improve the city's entertainments and attractiveness as a tourist destination, believing themselves to be more interested in Florence's wellbeing than the Italians around them. Ironically, as Miles Glendinning has argued, this push against the improvement of Florence was itself a product of modernisation, as was the conservation movement back in Britain.[4] While Glendinning's argument is certainly persuasive, the protests against Florence's development by its British residents are telling not just of a modernist awareness of heritage destroyed because of progress, but also of how Anglo-Florentines related to Italians and modern Italy.

This chapter provides a general overview of the British community of Florence at the beginning of the First World War. After a summary of the history of British travellers to Florence, it introduces the British presence in the city. Drawing on studies of other expatriate Britons during this period, the chapter aims to place them within a wider historiography of Britons living outside the empire. Several prominent British writers and residents are introduced as well, in order to illustrate how Anglo-Florentines reacted to modern Italy and their faraway homeland and empire, the ways in which they contributed to the idea of Florence as a city of culture, and how imperial ideas influenced the ways in which they regarded the Italians. All these factors would play an important role in the conceptualisation of the British Institute of Florence during the First World War, as Florence's special status as a cultural capital dictated the specific forms of propaganda produced in the city.

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[4] Miles Glendinning, "The Conservation Movement: A Cult of the Modern Age," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 13(2003): 359-76, 359-60.

British travellers in Florence

One of the earliest accounts of a Briton travelling to Italy dates back to the fourteenth century, when Geoffrey Chaucer journeyed to Genoa in 1372 to conduct business on behalf of Edward III. By that time, Olive Hamilton notes, Chaucer would have been familiar with both the work of the Tuscan poets Dante Alighieri and Petrarch. Indeed she proposes that it is likely Chaucer was introduced to the work of Boccaccio through Petrarch, who was then living in Padua. The imagined meeting between the two men is fanciful, but Hamilton notes that Petrarch features in a later poem by Chaucer, thus providing one of the first examples of how Tuscan (and indeed, Florentine) authors and poets were to influence the British. The journey to Florence in the days of Chaucer was a perilous one that included crossing a Channel dominated by French pirates, after which travellers then had to contend with the dangers of the Alps before descending into the Italian peninsula. Hamilton, in fact, points to the many graves of British travellers during the Middle Ages to illustrate just how the journey was fraught with danger. [5]

During the Renaissance, the Medici dukes who governed Florence from the sixteenth to eighteenth century began to develop Florence's reputation as a cultural capital as a means of legitimising their rule and promoting their legacy, portraying themselves as patrons of Florence's culture. As Jay Tribby points out, it was through the Medici's efforts that the terms 'Florence' and 'the Renaissance' began to be perceived as 'nostalgia machines for a social order, a time, and a place that are invariably celebrated ... as a refuge from the present.'[6] This reputation drew scores of aristocratic travellers, antiquarians, and scholars from Britain on the Grand Tour, and continues to do so today. The perception of Florence as a cultural centre and as a sanctuary from the modern world, then, stretched back to the Renaissance and accounts in part for the fierce protectiveness of those Anglo-Florentines like Vernon Lee who were wary of any move to modernise the city.

Thanks to the workings of the Medici dukes, by the time of the Grand Tour, Florence had become identified as a city for art. Indeed the whole of Italy was regarded as a finishing school for the sons and daughters of aristocrats and the gentry.

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[5] Olive Hamilton, *Paradise of exiles: Tuscany and the British* (London: Deutsch, 1974), 2-3.
[6] Jay Tribby, "Florence, Cultural Capital of Cultural Capital," *Eighteenth Century: Theory & Interpretation* 35, no. 3 (1994): 223-40, 224.

By returning to the one of the very origins of Western Civilisation, Grand Tourists were able to experience the cities about whose history they had been taught. Even if it did not prove as popular as the city of Rome – which was the destination of many travellers eager to visit the Classical ruins they had learnt about in the course of their education – or of Naples,[7] Florence was generally acknowledged to be welcoming to British travellers. In the seventeenth century, they often spoke highly of the Grand Duke Cosimo III's well-disposed nature and how he welcomed visitors with lavish gifts of fruit and wine. By the eighteenth century, the Earl of Winchelsea wrote back home to his mother and boasted of the fact that English was more popular amongst the Florentines than French.[8]

Travellers to Florence on the Grand Tour enjoyed the works of art on display at the Uffizi gallery, although the Renaissance was not yet the main draw for them (that would come later in the nineteenth century). They also visited art dealers and collected pictures by Italian painters. Interestingly, Clare Hornsby argues that in the demand for Italian art during the eighteenth century, works by the Grand Masters were not so popular as those by contemporary Italian artists, which were collected by growing numbers of travellers to decorate their homes in Britain as a mark of cultural achievement.[9]

The Grand Tour also saw the rise of the art connoisseur. Edward Chaney suggests, in fact, that our present-day notions of what constitutes art and is considered worthy of collecting originated with British travellers in Italy during the Grand Tour.[10] According to Hornsby, it was believed that through the contemplation of art, the connoisseur was able to identify the universal notion of perfection, and thus improve his or her own character. By being able to sympathise with the artists who had created the pictures, the connoisseur was able to rise to the spiritual level of the artist – though this presumes that all artists were spiritually superior – and thus acquire virtue.[11] This sentiment was reproduced in the theories of later art connoisseurs who lived in Florence, notably Bernard Berenson and Vernon Lee,

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[7] Jeremy Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 45-46.
[8] Rosemary Sweet, "British Perceptions of Florence in the Long Eighteenth Century," *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 04 (2007): 837-59, 841-46.
[9] Clare Hornsby, ed. *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond* (London: The British School at Rome, 2000), 9.
[10] Edward Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations Since the Renaissance* (Oxon: Routledge, 2000), 204.
[11] Hornsby, *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond*, 4.

although in their analyses, the belief in the ability of art to improve an individual's ethics was combined with ideas about psychological reactions to viewing art, influenced by nineteenth-century studies in psychology and logic.[12]

Apart from cultural pursuits and art collecting, there were also opportunities for conversation and sociability amongst both Florentine and other international visitors to the city, especially at events such as the opera and the theatre.[13] Despite later Anglo-Florentines' dislike of theatrical amusement and the gramophone, as will be seen, travellers on the Grand Tour enjoyed the opportunity to socialise. Unlike their later counterparts, they were also pleased by modern improvements to the city, which included wider streets than in most other European cities that were washed daily.[14] The eighteenth century also saw the rise of businesses catering specifically to British travellers, some of which were owned by British expatriates. These capitalised on the yearning of travellers for home comforts and goods, shops and hotels. Indeed, they were the forerunners of shops such as the Anglo-American Stores frequented by twentieth century Anglo-Florentines.[15] As the eighteenth century wore on, the background of the tourists visiting Florence began to become noticeably less aristocratic and more middle class.

By the nineteenth century, Florence had become synonymous with the Renaissance. The sites around the city had become associated with the famous men of the Renaissance past, and travellers had John Ruskin's words from *Mornings in Florence* to guide them as they walked around Giuseppe Poggi's redesigned city (as well as to point out the destructive attempts by Italians at restoration of their cultural heritage, as will be seen), whose art and architecture now seemed permanently fixed in the Renaissance. The poet Arthur Symons illustrates the association many travellers made between Florence and its Renaissance artists:

> Florence, the city of all the arts, the corridor through which all the arts have passed and in which they still linger, is the city made to be a shrine for Donatello .... He is part of the Renaissance, and, together with Botticelli, expresses the secret and perpetuates the delicate, severe essence of Florence, as it came in that age to perfection.[16]

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[12] Alison Brown, "Vernon Lee and the Renaissance: From Burckhardt to Berenson," in *Victorian and Edwardian Reponses to the Italian Renaissance*, ed. John E. Law and Lene Østermark-Johansen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005),185-209.
[13] Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour*: 45.
[14] Sweet, "British Perceptions," 845.
[15] Sweet, "British Perceptions," 843.
[16] Pfister, *The fatal gift of beauty*, 362.

Following the example of earlier Grand Tourists, until the 1870s Victorian and Edwardian travellers took a route through Italy that included visiting Florence in the autumn before moving on and spending winter in Rome and Naples.[17] By this time, Thomas Cook and his guided tours were increasingly known around Italy, as tourists began to rush from city to city, intent on 'doing' all the sites of interest.[18] This style of touring was in direct opposition to Ruskin's idea of travelling, which demanded that deliberate time be set aside for the enjoyment of the artworks and architecture he pointed out to his readers.[19] Despite accusations of vulgarity against these package tourists, it should be remembered that most of Cook's customers were drawn largely from the middle classes in Britain. Touring Europe was still not widely available to the working classes.

Thanks to technological advancements such as the advent of the railway and steamships, and lower costs of travelling, more British travellers began to take the ferry across the Channel and into the Continent. By about 1880, the once perilous trek over the Alps in winter could be undertaken safely from the relative comfort of a warm train carriage. Europe was agreeably affordable for Britons abroad as well, with a trip to Florence, Switzerland and France costing one Welsh family around £3 a day in 1853, less than half of what it cost a similar family about forty years before.[20] Richard Mullen and James Munson show how British travel overseas steadily increased in the nineteenth century. Before 1814, fewer than 10,000 travellers ventured to the Continent. By 1914, the number of Britons travelling to Europe was estimated at over one million.[21] Of these, a great number made their way to Florence and Rome, where John Pemble describes them as overrunning the cities and turning them into versions of London. Indeed, many travellers remarked how many businesses selling British goods and hotels run by British landlords there were in the

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[17] John Pemble, *The Mediterranean passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 41.
[18] J.A.R Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday: A Social History* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1976), 193. Thomas Cook had started taking tourists to Italy around the middle of the nineteenth century.
[19] John Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence: being simple studies of history and art for English travellers* (New York: Ramella & Co., 1945).
[20] Richard Mullen and James Munson, *The Smell of the Continent: the British Discover Europe* (London: Pan Books, 2009), 24.
[21] Mullen and Munson, *The Smell of the Continent*, 56.

city.[22] By the end of the nineteenth century, in fact, English was the most often heard foreign language around the city, not just from the travellers who passed through Florence on their way to other Italian cities, but also from the British residents who called the city their home.

Introducing British Florence

Emerging from its brief stint as the capital of Italy, Florence was a growing city. From 1861, the population rose from 114,000 to 190,000 in 1903.[23] By 1912, this number had grown again to 232,860, according to statistics in the *Florence Herald.*[24] Unfortunately, until 1934, the British consulate did not keep a list of British residents living in Florence. This has meant that the number of residents before this date is hard to quantify. However, an article in the Florentine newspaper *La Nazione* in 1903 estimated the total number to be at around 800.[25]

Describing the community as it existed before the Great War, the British consul in 1970, C.M. Pirie-Gordon, remarked on the community's literary bent, explaining it was made up of the 'intellectual heirs of the Brownings, the Trollopes, [Arthur Hugh] Clough and [Walter Savage] Landor, the distinguished, the rich, the respectably retired, the Italophiles, the students, minor poets, painters and governesses, also an element with its own reasons for living abroad, giving rise to the aphorism that Florence was "a sunny place for shady people."'[26] Despite the community's small numbers, what is certain is that the British were a significant cultural presence and were determined to have their voices heard.

By 1912, a banker could claim that Italy derived about £18 million from her tourism industry, a large proportion of which came from British tourists.[27] That figure, though impressive, did not take into account the expenditures of the various British expatriate communities such as those in Florence, Rome or Milan. Given such

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[22] Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*, 43.
[23] Bernd Roeck, *Florence 1900: the Quest for Arcadia*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 49.
[24] 'Height, Population, Distances', *Italian Gazette*, 3 October 1912, 5.
[25] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, 170.
[26] C.M. Pirie-Gordon to Michael Stewart, 25 February 1970, Foreign and Commonwealth Office files (FCO) 47/375, The National Archives (UK): Public Records Office (TNA: PRO), Kew. Pirie-Gordon also gives the number of British residents as being around 5,000-10,000 before the war, but this seems to take into account the expatriates in Livorno, Tuscany, Le Marche, and Umbria as well, which were part of the 1970 consular district.
[27] Mullen and Munson, *The Smell of the Continent*, 101.

economic prominence, it is no surprise to find Anglo-Florentine attitudes towards Italians bordering on the arrogant and patronising, since some British residents believed that their presence in the city provided Florence not only with economic strength, but also moral fortitude as well.[28] How much of this attitude can also be attributed to the status of Britain as a dominant imperial power will be considered later in this chapter.

Anglo-Florentines contributed to modern Italy's growing economy by patronising restaurants such as the Gran Caffé Doney,[29] which served British-style meals, and bought good British products from stores specialising in selling goods from their homeland. There were the bookstores selling English books on the Lungarno, British chemists on the Via Tornabuoni, the Old Albion Tea Room on the Via Calimara, and on the Via Vecchietti, English letting agencies which would find holiday homes for their customers.[30] On the Via del Corso, the Negozio di Impermeabili Inglesi sold that most necessary of British garments, the raincoat.[31] The most famous of these shops was the Anglo-American Supply Stores on the city's main street, the Via Cavour. It stocked a wide variety of products, including 'gollywogs and teddy bears for small children, paddles for ping-pong and Spalding racquets … and for the home Irish linen, and Lipton tea and biscuits from Huntley & Palmers and Colman's mustard.'[32]

The British consulate was housed in the imposing Palazzo Spini Feroni, on the shopping street of the Via Tornabuoni, near the dome of the Duomo. According to an inspection carried out in 1935, records at the consulate were not well kept before the First World War – and a great deal were destroyed as a matter of course – making it difficult for a historian to gain a complete picture of the community. As an example, the report notes somewhat testily that 'when [the consul] took charge he found three Marriage Warrants, two of them very old and the third dating from a year or two before the war. Arguing that, since Consular marriages were not permitted in Italy, Marriage Warrants were unnecessary, he destroyed them.' In fact later checks

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[28] See the remarks of the *Herald's* editor at the beginning of this chapter. "The Stibbert Museum."
[29] Established at the end of the nineteenth century, this was shut down in 1986.
[30] These are all advertisements taken from the *Italian Gazette*, 31 October 1912, 4-5.
[31] Oreste Del Buono, Gherardo Frassa, and Luigi Settembrini, *Gli Anglo-Fiorentini: una storia d'amore* (Firenze: Edifir, 1986), 122.
[32] Giuliana Artrom-Treves, "Come Firenze diventò Florence," in *Inghilterra e Italia nel '900* (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1973),9-17, 14.

revealed that Marriage Warrants were indeed necessary, and demonstrates the difficulty of obtaining any firm official data on the British expatriate community during the pre-war years (and even today).[33] Indeed, the problem with trying to gain a better understanding of the numbers of residents is one that has been common to British consuls in Florence throughout the years: many residents simply did not want to register their details with the consulate. [34]

The consular despatches that have survived reveal the issues with which consuls in Florence had to contend. Whilst commercial work was mostly handled at the British consulate in the nearby port city of Livorno, apart from the registration of births, deaths and marriages, as well as the validation of visas and issuing of passports, the consul was kept busy offering assistance to distressed British residents and travellers, which provide a colourful glimpse into the consul's travails.[35] One letter from 1905 describes the plight of a Miss Caroline E. Kelly, who was apparently being held in Italy against her will and, 'for some reason unknown to her she has been condemned to death by a member of the Church of Rome.' At a loss about how to proceed, the consul, Chapman Poncini, begged the embassy to inform him if there was anything known to them about Miss Kelly.[36] Another letter from the consul in 1915, Alfred Lemon, to the British ambassador, Rennell Rodd, explained that Lemon had to certify the nationality of a British resident who wanted to join the Italian army after being rejected by the British after failing to pass the health examination. Further reports from Rome revealed that the man was suffering from dangerously poor health and that the consul there, who had previously provided assistance, was 'sorry for Mr. Lemon'.[37]

Thanks to lower costs of living than in Britain, many Anglo-Florentines took up residence in the picturesque villas on the hills surrounding the city, some of which were only occupied for six months a year. [38] According to Daniela Lamberini, who has focused on villas in the Oltrarno quarter of the city from 1869 to 1940, at its peak

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[33] G.T. Maclean, Foreign Office report on the Florence consulate office, 1935, Foreign Office files (FO) 369/2412, K4841/4841/222, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[34] Ibid.
[35] For a general overview of the British consular service, see D. C. M. Platt, *The Cinderella Service: British Consuls Since 1825* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1971).
[36] Despatch from Chapman Poncini, 28 July 1905, FO 45/910, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[37] Lemon to Sir James Rennell Rodd, 7 June 1915, FO 170/865, TNA: PRO, Kew, and C.L. Morgan to Mounsey, 10 June 1915, FO 170/865, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[38] Harold Acton, *Memoirs Of An Aesthete* (London: Methuen, 1948), 9.

in 1927, foreign ownership accounted for seventy-five villas, 47% of the villas in the district. Of these, she argues, the majority of owners were Anglo-American, though exact numbers are not available.[39] Britons also took rooms in the city's historic centre, especially where the Renaissance past was most visible. Lamberini analysed their favoured locations and uncovered what she terms the 'golden quadrilateral', an area between the Via Cerretani, Via Calzaiuoli, the Lungarno and the Via Tornabuoni.[40] This area, incidentally, includes the Arno, the Ponte Vecchio and Ponte Santa Trìnita, providing a picturesque view of the river and its two famous historic bridges. Other areas that met with approval for the British included apartments in the historic areas of Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce in the city's east, and the Oltrarno, where the Palazzo Pitti and Casa Guidi (the residence of the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning) were located.[41]

Two Anglican churches ministered to the spiritual needs of Anglican Anglo-Florentines. Richard Mullen and James Munson have noted that Continental Anglican churches at this time often struggled for funding and were ruled by factional majorities, which could often lead to in-fighting between Low and High Church factions. In Florence, the High and Low Church divide was played out in much the same manner as in the rest of Europe. These European churches were placed under the care of the Bishop of Gibraltar, who by 1891 had 150 permanent chaplaincies on the Continent in his jurisdiction.[42]

Holy Trinity, the older of the pair, was built after lengthy negotiations with Tuscan authorities in 1846. It stood in the Via Maglio, today the Via La Marmora, north of the Duomo and not far away from the city's Protestant Cemetery. Significantly, a condition of the local authorities in granting authorisation was the stipulation that the church should not outwardly give away the fact that it was a Protestant place of worship. Instead of standing out as an obvious British church, Holy Trinity was forced to blend in with its Italian surroundings, as was the case with

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[39] Daniela Lamberini, "Residenti anglo-americani e *genius loci*: ricostruzioni e restauri delle dimore fiorentine," in *Gli Anglo-Americani a Firenze: Idea e Costruzione del Rinascimento*, ed. Marcello Fantoni (Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 2000),125-42, 140.
[40] Lamberini, "Residenti anglo-americani e genius loci," 133.
[41] Lamberini, "Residenti anglo-americani e genius loci," 140.
[42] Mullen and Munson, *The Smell of the Continent*, 289-90.

the later St. Mark's on the Via Maggio, on the other side of the river Arno, which simply occupied an existing building.[43]

In order to comply with the authorities' request, the Italian architect, Domenico Giraldi, designed an ordinary-looking building with a flat roof for Holy Trinity. In 1890 the church already was in need of renovations, and the British architect and one-time collaborator of William Morris, George Frederick Bodley, was commissioned to oversee construction, which was only finished in 1904.[44] From 1896 to 1931, the Chaplain of Holy Trinity Church was the Reverend Archibald Augustus Knollys. A well-known member of the Anglo-Florentine community, he served on the British Institute's Governing Board until his retirement in 1931, when members of his congregation as well as the British community feted him in a ceremony at the British Institute.[45]

Despite the presence of one Anglican church in the city, the Church of St Mark was established in 1880 in the High Church tradition. Instead of building an entirely new structure, the Reverend Charles Tooth decided instead to purchase a palazzo on the Via Maggio, across the Arno towards the south of the city. St Mark's proved popular enough to outgrow its premises on the Via Maggio, which held space for 400 worshippers. A side-chapel to seat 60 was constructed in 1906.[46] Owing to the decreasing numbers of the British community, Holy Trinity was eventually sold off to the Waldensians in 1965, but St Mark's has survived to the present day.

According to notices in the *Italian Gazette*, another Anglo-Florentine newspaper, during the tourist season of 1912 (which ran from October to June) services at Holy Trinity Church on Sundays included two celebrations of Holy Eucharist, Matins and a sermon, and Evensong and a Litany. There were also services during the week. Not to be overshadowed by its rival, St Mark's celebrated Holy Eucharist in two services on Sunday, had Matins on Wednesdays and Fridays, and

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[43] Catherine Danyell Tassinari, *The History of the English Church in Florence* (Florence: Barbera Press, 1905), 56-57.

[44] For more on Bodley's rebuilding, see Berenice Schreiner, "The Collaboration of G.F. Bodley & J.R. Spencer Stanhope in Florence 1892-1904," *Journal of William Morris Studies* 14, no. 2 (2001), 90-96.

[45] William F. Copinger, *Holy Trinity Church Florence: Forty Years of its History* (Florence: L'Impronta, 1946), 21-23.

[46] St Mark's Church, "A Short History and Guide to St Mark's Anglican Church of Florence" https://sites.google.com/site/saintmarksenglishchurch/history (accessed 12 August 2011 2011). Unfortunately a full account of St Mark's history is yet to be written and material regarding the precise reasons for its foundation is missing.

Evensong daily.[47] Lacking a church of their own, British Catholics had to be satisfied with English-language masses celebrated at the Chiesa di San Giuseppe on the Via Santa Caterina, close to the imposing Fortezza da Basso, and Presbyterians could attend services on the Lungarno Guicciardini, on the same side of the Arno as St Mark's.[48] The frequency of services at both Anglican churches, as well as the availability of English masses for Catholics, and for non-conformist Presbyterians, reflects the demand for religious services by British travellers and residents of Florence, and the variety on offer testifies to the vibrancy of their religious beliefs.

In addition to shops and churches, the British presence in Florence was also represented by the weekly English-language newspapers sold around the city and found in public reading rooms such as the Gabinetto Viesseux, which were patronised by international residents and travellers. *The Italian Gazette*, like its rival publication, *The Florence Herald*, was produced for the 'Anglo-Saxon' community of Florence, but promoted an almost exclusively British perspective. Resurrected from obscurity in 1909, its editor proclaimed the paper's purpose in its first issue for the social season of 1909-1910. The *Gazette*, he noted, was,

> An independent journalistic enterprise unconnected with other interests... It is the only "English" paper in Florence alike owned, edited, written, and conducted entirely by Anglo-Saxons, and is therefore the only one that can be in touch with the feelings and wishes of its readers and cultivate on the part of foreign residents a friendly feeling towards the Italians.[49]

This claim of independence was a major point of difference between the *Gazette* and the *Florence Herald*, which was funded by a conglomerate of Florentine hotels.

The *Gazette* and *Herald* were both published once a week, instead of daily, and were intended to act more as cultural supplements to the news reported in international editions of Anglo-American newspapers such as the *International Herald Tribune* than actual newssheets. Many of the articles printed in the *Gazette* or *Herald* provide uniquely Anglo-Florentine viewpoints, either reporting on events like the Empire Day celebration quoted at the beginning of Chapter One, or providing an

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[47] 'Florence English Church Services', *Italian Gazette*, 23 May 1912, 5.

[48] Unfortunately the Presbyterian Church in Florence has not survived, and its history has not been found in the archives consulted.

[49] 'REORGANIZED: The Italian Gazette', *Italian Gazette*, 4 October 1909, 2. Unfortunately, both the *Italian Gazette* and its rival, the *Florence Herald* have proved hard to trace past what is found in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence and used in this thesis. Their editors and staff, apart from when they have named themselves explicitly, remained anonymous and no clear start dates only add to the difficulty.

opinion on British attitudes towards the Italians. Articles ranged from book reviews, to commentaries railing against the possibility of industrialisation in Italy's historic cities such as Venice and Florence (a common theme),[50] to translated Italian articles about the British (which could cause a backlash of letters to the editor if they were anything less than complimentary),[51] and more practical tips such as how to cook various kinds of risotto.[52]

Unfortunately, no circulation figures for the newspapers are available, but the *Italian Gazette* claimed to be the 'most read Anglo-Saxon paper in Italy', though this is obviously difficult to assess. Both newspapers offered practical information such as train timetables to and from Florence to other Italian cities, and the average prices of groceries and other household necessities. Advertisements for hotels and businesses dominated the graphical space of the newspapers, often at the expense of regular columns, which are printed in very small type and sometimes hard to read. Indeed, the front page of the 4 December 1906 issue of the *Florence Herald* had no news columns on its front page. These only started on the fourth page. Because of these advertisements, the *Florence Herald* consisted of around eight double-sided pages, whilst the *Italian Gazette* ran fewer and consisted of four.

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[50] 'How Not to Attract Visitors to Italy', *Italian Gazette*, 10 October 1909, 1.
[51] 'The English According to Others: Very Fond of Old Things', *Florence Herald*, 6 November 1906, 8. Reactions to such articles are discussed later.
[52] 'The Household', *Italian Gazette,* 31 October 1912, 5.


THE FLORENCE HERALD
(FIORENZA)
Grand Hôtel de la Ville
on the Lungarno, Full South
FLORENCE
STEAM-HEATING THROUGHOUT
ELECTRIC LIGHT - LIFT - PENSION - GARAGE
DAMPFHEIZUNG
FLORENCE
Hôtel d'Albion
Pisa - GRAND HOTEL MINERVA
COMO Plinius Grand Hotel
Rome - REGINA Hotel
Les Palmes
S. DE NICOLA
1 Via Pouzzal — FLORENCE
LADIES' TAILOR
Formerly Cutter in the biggest firms of Paris and London, besides others Messrs. Redfern, Paris.
Tailleur pour Dames. Ex-Coupeur dans les premières Maisons de Paris et Londres, entre autres de la Maison
REDFERN
Telephone
15-41
GENTLEMEN'S
TAILORING

Image 2: Front page of the Florence Herald, 4 December 1906.

Given Florence's small size, conflict between the two newspapers was perhaps inevitable. In an article in 1909 entitled 'Our Competition Causes a Panic', the editor of the *Gazette*, Clarence J. Bateman, took issue with the *Herald's* insistence in a circular distributed by its new editor Algar Thorold explaining that the *Herald* was the only newspaper allowed to print the names of residents and visitors staying at Florence's hotels. In fact it was common practice by both newspapers to list the names of visitors at hotels in the city, and also to furnish the addresses of Anglo-Florentine residents and provide the times at which they could be visited. Insulted, Bateman stated that the lists of such visitors was not copyrighted, and further challenged the *Herald*'s other claim of being independent, addressing himself to Thorold and pointing out:

> Your paper does belong to the Florence hotelkeepers, and you might explain to us what is the meaning you give the word "independent" in regard to what … has been by themselves typographically described as the "organ of the Florentine Society of Hotelkeepers"… What is the cause of the enmity displayed by the hotelkeepers … against this paper, which

> certainly does not live to do them harm? ... Their object is not so much to create a good paper as to prevent anyone else from doing so.[53]

Appropriately, Bateman was equally emphatic about protecting the *Gazette*'s own copyright. On one occasion, another English-language newspaper, the *Roman Herald,* was accused of copying three issues of the *Gazette* verbatim, whilst another unnamed newspaper was warned for copying two columns worth of material.[54]

The British and other expatriates in Florence

The British in Florence, of course, did not exist in isolation but were also part of a wider foreign community. However, the histories of other expatriate groups in Florence during this period have not been extensively researched, other than works on famous visitors to Florence and the French Institute of Florence, which was founded in 1907.[55] Bernd Roeck's seminal book on the German community at the beginning of the twentieth century provides a valuable insight into how other foreign residents lived and related to the Anglo-Florentines. As Roeck notes, the German community in Florence possessed a distinctly scholarly bent. [56] In 1897 a *Kunsthistorisches Institut* had been established in the city.[57] The German community was made up of members of the German educated classes, who often felt intellectually superior to their Anglo-American counterparts. Roeck tells us, for instance, that the noted art historian Aby Warburg disdained most Anglo-Americans in the city as being too superficial and insufficiently scholarly. Furthermore, even though English-language books were more readily available, it seems that German literature and ideas were also widely known to educated Florentines. [58]

Though the Germans had not shown the same wild enthusiasm for the Risorgimento as was found in Britain, Roeck notes that there was a great deal of

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[53] C.J. Bateman, 'Our Competition Causes a Panic', *Italian Gazette*, 18 October 1909, 4-5.
[54] 'The Pilferers', *Italian Gazette*, 7 November 1913, 5.
[55] Artrom-Treves, "Come Firenze diventò Florence."; Giuliana Artrom-Treves, *The golden ring: the Anglo-florentines 1847 - 1862*, trans. Sylvia Sprigge (London: Longmans, 1956); Clara Louise Dentler, *Famous Foreigners in Florence, 1400-1900* (Florence: Bemporad Marzocco, 1964); Isabelle Renard, " À l'origine des instituts culturels français à l'étranger. L'Institut Français de Florence au début du XXe siècle," *Melanges de l'Ecole Francaise de Rome* 114, no. 1 (2002): 89-101.
[56] Roeck, *Florence 1900.*
[57] On the history of the *Kunsthistorisches Institut,* see Hans W. Hubert, *L'Istituto germanico di storia dell'arte di Firenze: cent'anni di storia (1897-1997)* (Firenze: Ventilabro, 1997).
[58] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, 169.

admiration in Germany for Garibaldi's exploits. The idea, also, that the Italians had let their once proud Roman empire and Renaissance cities degenerate was prevalent in German thought as well. In this case, however, Roeck points to German imagery that depicted the ancient Roman as 'effeminate ... necessarily enfeebled by his blood and contrasted with the superior Teuton'.[59] These sentiments reflect both the growing concerns in European society with relation to racial purity and eugenics, and show that the sense of superiority over Italians was not restricted to British residents in Florence, but formed of a wider belief that Italy was still very much a fallen civilisation.

Of Florence's foreign residents, however, the British and Americans were the most influential. Within this group, British residents far outnumbered Americans. The Protestant Cemetery, located at the Piazzale Donatello in the northern part of Florence, for example, was labelled by locals the English Cemetery, on account of the number of British individuals buried there; of the 1409 persons interred in its grounds, seven hundred and sixty are British, whilst only eighty-seven are American.[60] Indeed, a famous quotation by a hotel porter to his manager, 'some *inglesi* have arrived, but I haven't found out yet whether they are Russians or Germans', illustrates the extent to which the Florentine idea of foreigners and the British was conflated.[61]

The dominance of the British could lead to tensions with American residents. In response to a call in 1908 as to how better social entertainments could be acquired for the foreign community in Florence, a letter writer to the *Florence Herald* was of the opinion that '[In Florence] there are many English and many Americans, and the nations do not mix well ... And as nations they dislike each other cordially'. Until both groups overcame their differences, any project aimed at bringing together foreign residents in the city would be doomed to failure.[62] In the *Italian Gazette*, a review of artworks by English artists at the Italian Lyceum social club prompted a letter from an aggrieved American resident, complaining that the newspaper should have mentioned that a work by John Singer Sargent had been included in the exhibition. As he wrote, 'Will you oblige your American readers, who like to see credit given where it is due, by correcting this lapse in your next number?' The

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[59] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, 98-99.
[60] James A. Freeman, "The Protestant Cemetery in Florence and Anglo-American Attitudes Toward Italy," *Markers* 10(1993): 218-48, 223.
[61] Artrom-Treves, *Golden ring*, 6.
[62] 'Correspondence', *Florence Herald*, 21 January 1908, 9.

dismissive reply from the editor of the *Gazette* brushed off his concerns, stating, 'We think our correspondent has taken this little lapse too seriously.'[63] Too often, the label 'Anglo-Saxon' was a synonym for 'British', and it is very difficult to find editorials in either the *Gazette* or *Herald* where an American perspective is presented instead of a British one.

In spite of the tensions that could occur from time to time, the different groups of foreigners living in Florence did not come into serious conflict. As Roeck points out, they shared a common notion that they had all been drawn to the city out of love for its art and history, and so treated each other as likeminded aesthetes.[64] Indeed, a supporter for the establishment of a social club in 1906, Sir Francis Fletcher-Vane, formerly a major figure in the Scouting movement, Anglo-Boer war veteran, and a resident of Bagni di Lucca (where he founded the Italian Boy Scouts or *Ragazzi Esploratori* in 1910),[65] wrote to the *Florence Herald* of the need to stop residents from forming cliques along what he termed 'racial lines' instead of mingling together in a cohesive community.[66] The pre-war enthusiasm for international cooperation is discernable in such statements, even on the relatively small stage of Florentine society, which was part of a wider worldwide enthusiasm for increasing understanding between nations.[67]

Even though Florence played host to a cultured international community, it is important to remember that it was above all an Italian city. Despite the profusion of hotels and shops catering to tourists and expatriates in Florence, the young nation of Italy was still struggling to keep pace with the rest of her European neighbours economically. Industrialisation was slow to start in the country, mainly as the result of a shortage of coal and as a result, Italy's GDP in the period from independence to the Second World War was only 70% that of other European nations.[68] Massive growth in the country's north, spearheaded by the automotive industry in Milan, was

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[63] 'The English Masters at the Lyceum', *Italian Gazette*, 14 March 1910, 5.
[64] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, 252.
[65] On Fletcher-Vane see John Springhall, "Sir Francis Fletcher Vane, anti-militarist: The Great Boy Scout Schism of 1909," *Historian* 101(2009), 27-31.
[66] F.P. Fletcher-Vane, 'On the value of clubs', *Florence Herald*, 6 November 1906, 8.
[67] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880 - 1918: with a new preface* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 231-32.
[68] Paolo Malanima and Vera Zamagni, "150 years of the Italian economy, 1861-2010," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15, no. 1 (2010): 1-20, 11, 5.

countered by the slow development of Italy's southern regions.[69] Most of Florence's population were either skilled craftsmen, or handymen and unskilled labourers, but there was a small but growing group of factory workers. Tourism, especially, was a growing sector for the Florentines.[70] The rush to modernise the city by the municipal authorities would have seemed a natural course of action in order to attract more tourists to Florence, despite the complaints of some Anglo-Florentines.

Yet, despite their interest in Florence's past, it is clear that the Anglo-Florentines, like many other groups of international residents had little to do with the modern Italians with whom they shared their home. Roeck describes an uprising by Florentines against the municipal government in May 1898 protesting about a lack of jobs and food. This was brutally put down by armed forces and four people lost their lives. It is a testament to just how disconnected the international community was from local events that Roeck could not find a single mention of the incident in the diaries of travellers and residents he studied.[71] Neither is the uprising referenced or alluded to in any of the archival sources consulted for this thesis. Graham Smith has observed that Victorian photographs of Florence often pictured its Renaissance buildings in isolation, without any people in the frame who might remind viewers of the fact that these structures were not, in fact, timeless.[72] In their disengagement with modern Italian society, Anglo-Florentines were applying to real life what they had seen in the photographs. Consequently, it is telling that when the First World War began, Anglo-Florentines would finally begin to actively try to persuade Italians to support the Allied cause. Until the threat to civilisation the Germans posed, there had previously been no need to acknowledge modern Italy.

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[69] Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: a history of Italy since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 355; Malanima and Zamagni, "150 years of the Italian economy, 1861-2010," 8-10.

[70] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, 46.

[71] For a fuller account of the uprising, see Roeck, *Florence 1900*, 109-21.

[72] Graham Smith, "Florence, Photography and the Victorians," in *Victorian and Edwardian Reponses to the Italian Renaissance*, ed. John E. Law and Lene Østermark-Johansen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005),7-32, 23-27.

The Anglo-Florentines and other British communities overseas

Unfortunately, until recently expatriate communities have not attracted significant historical scrutiny. The edited 2010 volume by Robert Bickers on British settlers and expatriates in both formal and informal areas of the British empire, as well as his own examinations of the history of the international settlement in Shanghai, contribute significantly to filling that gap. As these studies have shown, British expatriate communities generally kept aloof from local societies, preferring the company of their compatriots. John Plotz uses the colonial setting of India to show how British settlers in the Raj defined themselves in opposition to native culture around them. Plotz examines how a group of British expatriates did this by using their memories of 'home' and objects to tie themselves back to Britain and so remain distanced from their Indian surroundings.[73] Bickers and David Rock, writing on British expatriates in China and Argentina respectively, have focused on the more nuanced cases of expatriate identity in areas of informal empire. That is, geographical spaces existing outside the formal boundaries of the British empire where semi-official forms of influence were exerted by the presence of British military forces, settlers and businesses.[74]

Bickers' seminal book, *Britons in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism 1900-1940,* studies the British settlers who lived in the International Settlement of Shanghai (the Shanghailanders) during the early twentieth century. It provides invaluable insight into the workings of British informal empire, and has thus been used a model for the present study.[75] Bickers discusses the British view of China, and how British settlers had pre-existing ideas of China long before they arrived. Bickers also demonstrates how Shanghailanders formed clubs and associations that barred Chinese from joining in order to keep the contagion of Chinese-ness out of their community. He also notes that the various office buildings,

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[73] John Plotz, "The First Strawberries in India: Cultural Portability in Victorian Greater Britain," *Victorian Studies* 49, no. 4 (2007): 659-84. For more on the British in India see Elizabeth Buettner, "Haggis in the Raj: Private and Public Celebrations of Scottishness in Late Imperial India," *Scottish Historical Review* 81, 2, no. 212 (2002), 212-39; David Washbrook, "Avatars of Identity: The British Community in India," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),178-204.

[74] John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (1953), 1-15.

[75] Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: community, culture and colonialism 1900-1949* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

schools and even race-courses also acted as a demonstration of British wealth and superiority to local Chinese.[76] Visible barriers and differences in architecture, therefore, were part of the construction of a British presence in Shanghai.

A similar situation existed in Argentina, where Rock points out the growth of what he terms British 'ethnic' associations such as sporting and social clubs during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which promoted an insular Anglo-Argentine sociability. He explains how religion was used as a source of Anglo-Argentine affiliation by Protestant settlers who feared learning Spanish as they believed it would lead to conversion to Catholicism and eventual assimilation within Argentinian society. Disdainful of becoming personally involved in local politics, they formed pressure groups and approached upper-class Argentinian politicians.[77] Yet, Anglo-Argentines and British businesses contributed significantly to the country's economy, helping to develop Argentinian agriculture, building railway lines, and establishing retail companies, as Roger Gravil and Roy Hora's studies have shown.[78] Although Andrew Thompson has taken issue with whether informal empire existed in Argentina, the contribution of Anglo-Argentine settlers, as well as their lobbying of politicians, surely suggests otherwise.[79]

Most studies of British experiences of expatriate communities are restricted to territories outside the Continent. The exception to this is Brian Shelmerdine's study of the British travellers and expatriates in pre-Civil War Spain. He also charts the perception of Spain in the British cultural imagination and how this affected travellers' experiences of the country. Like many other historians of expatriate communities, he also points out the insularity of expatriate Britons in Spain, observing that they shared a similar pattern of behaviour with other expatriate British communities by having little to do with Spaniards, in clear anticipation of Karen

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[76] Bickers, *Britain in China*, 83.

[77] David Rock, "The British of Argentina," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),18-44, 29.

[78] Roger Gravil, "British Retail Trade in Argentina, 1900-1940," *Inter-American Economic Affairs* 24, no. 2 (1970): 3-26; Roy Hora, "Britain, the British Landed Class, and Argentine Landowners," *Canadian Journal of Latin American & Caribbean Studies* 30, no. 59 (2005): 9-54.

[79] Also see A.G. Hopkins' response to Andrew S. Thompson, "Informal empire? An exploration in the history of Anglo-Argentine relations, 1810-1914," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24, no. 2 (1992), 419-36; A. G. Hopkins, "Informal empire in Argentina: An alternative view," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26, no. 2 (1994), 469-84.

O'Reilly's retirees on the Costa del Sol.[80] Perhaps this is because of the existence of visible structures of colonialism and informal empire in areas such as China, India, or Argentina, compared to their scarcity in a European city such as Florence, which provide an established framework for analysis not readily available outside the influence of empire. Fortuitously, the history of the British Institute provides an opportunity to discover how these ideas influenced expatriates' experiences of Italians and affected their programmes of cultural propaganda.

Unlike in Argentina or China, although there were many businesses in Florence catering to the needs of the Anglo-Florentine community and travellers, they were mostly Italian-owned, and the refusal of the Tuscan aristocracy to industrialise on a large scale prohibited the expansion of major British business interests in the region, removing one of the chief components of informal empire.[81] Regulations that forced Protestant churches such as Holy Trinity to blend into their surroundings also decreased the visibility of such landmarks. Instead of emphasising difference, as with churches and race-courses, Anglo-Florentine institutions such as churches and the British consulate were forced to assimilate into the environment, not stand apart from it. Furthermore, there was never a strong settler presence in the city as there was in Argentina, nor were there any concessions of land placed under British government control as existed in the treaty ports of China or in Egypt.[82] Ideas of being Anglo-Florentine developed, therefore, without the structures of colonial government or highly visible centres of settler culture that were found elsewhere.

Unfortunately, there is little comparative historiography regarding the various British communities around Italy. There have been studies of the impact of the Italian environment on artists' works,[83] and of the experience of expatriation as found in

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[80] Brian Shelmerdine, "The Experiences of British Holidaymakers and Expatriate Residents in Pre-Civil War Spain," *European History Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (2002): 367-90, 378-80; Karen O'Reilly, *The British on the Costa del Sol: transnational identities and local communities* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[81] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, 47.

[82] See James Whidden, "Expatriates in Cosmopolitan Egypt: 1864-1956," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),45-73.

[83] Even though it is on Americans in Florence the most recent work is Francesca Bardazzi and Carlo Sisi, *Americans in Florence: Sargent and the Impressionists of the New World* (Florence: Marsilio, 2012). Also see, Duncan Bell et al., *Classic ground: British artists and the landscape of Italy, 1740-1830* (1981); Corlette Rossiter Walker, *The Anglo-American artist in Italy, 1750-1820* (Santa Barbara: University of California (Santa Barbara), 1982).

literature.[84] These, however, are specialised literary and artistic studies. This is especially the case with the 2003 *Forum for Modern Language Studies* volume entitled 'Anglo-American and Irish Expatriate Communities in Italy', which covers the experiences of several expatriate writers rather than introducing collective histories of the communities themselves.[85] Histories of the various British communities in Italian cities have generally been broad survey views of the communities or studies of famous residents, not connecting their stories to wider historiography on expatriation or migration.[86] Indeed, it is not their intention to do so. Rather, they are aimed at providing a general sketch of the character and personalities of each community. However this means that the historiographical value of studying these groups in a comparative context has tended to be overlooked. No study similar to Bickers', explaining how the British expatriates of Italy constructed networks of sociability in their adopted homes, for example, has been undertaken.

Of the published works about British residents in Italy, Marcello Fantoni's edited 2000 collection on Anglo-Americans in Florence and their ideas of the Renaissance is notable for using a specific theme to examine the history of the Anglo-Americans in the city. However this focus on Anglo-American ideas of the Renaissance does mean that conclusions drawn by the contributors are limited to the central theme of the collection.[87] However, Margaret Harvey's work on the medieval English expatriates in Rome must also be highlighted, as it is one of the few works on an actual community, and how they formed two hospices which acted as forerunners to the Venerable English College, a seminary for English and Welsh priests. Instead of solely focusing on individuals, Harvey places the community within the

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[84] Giorgia Alù, *Beyond the traveller's gaze: expatriate ladies writing in Sicily (1848-1910)* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008); Barbara Schaff, *Exiles, Emigrés and Intermediaries: Anglo-Italian cultural transactions* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2010); Maria Schoina, *Romantic 'Anglo-Italians': configurations of identity in Byron, the Shelleys, and the Pisan Circle* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Company, 2009).

[85] Alison Chapman and Jane Stabler, eds., *Anglo-American and Irish Expatriate Communities in Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the University of St. Andrews, 2003).

[86] For example, Alessandro Bartoli, *The British Colonies in the Italian Riviera in the '800 and '900* (Savona: Fondazione "A. de Mari" Cassa di Risparmio di Savona, 2008); Katie Campbell, *Paradise of Exiles: the Anglo-American Gardens of Florence* (London: Frances Lincoln Ltd., 2009); Campbell, *Paradise of Exiles: the Anglo-American Gardens of Florence*; Dentler, *Famous Foreigners in Florence*; Hamilton, *Paradise of exiles*; Olive Hamilton, *The divine country: the British in Tuscany, 1372-1980* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1982); Agostino Lombardo, *Gli Inglesi e l'Italia* (Milano: Scheiwiller, 1998).

[87] Marcello Fantoni, ed. *Gli Anglo-Americani a Firenze: Idea e Costruzione del Rinascimento* (Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 2000).

historiographical context of fourteenth century Rome and investigates their motivations behind establishing the hospices.[88] In doing so she paints a far more compelling history of a group of expatriates, rather than individual writers or artists who happened to be expatriates.

Although there are no histories of British expatriate sociability in Italy, there have been studies of the American expatriates in Italy. Lisa Merrill and Timothy M. Roberts have studied the lives of two American expatriate women who lived in Rome in the later half of the nineteenth century. Merrill traces the life of the actress Charlotte Cushman, who was the nucleus of a group of like-minded lesbian women, and Roberts examines the writings of Margaret Fuller to show how American ideas of democratic freedom were applied to the case of Italy. She examines how spaces in Rome were constructed that allowed for the expression of Cushman's sexuality, but also considers the ways in which a diverse range of social and international groups in Rome reconstructed the space around them to fit with their agendas and identities, from clerics and diplomats to artists and political activists.[89]

It is not within the purview of this thesis to compare the various British communities around Italy with the one in Florence, but broad similarities and differences in the characteristics can still be articulated. For the purposes of this comparative sketch, the relatively well-documented histories of communities in southern Italy, Venice, Rome, and the Italian Riviera have been chosen. Particular focus has been paid to the various cultural and social institutions established by these communities, where detailed information is available.

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[88] Margaret Harvey, *The English in Rome, 1362-1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[89] Lisa Merrill, "'Old Maids, Sister-Artists, and Aesthetes': Charlotte Cushman and her circle of 'jolly bachelors' construct an expatriate women's community in Rome," *Women's Writing* 10, no. 2 (2003): 367-85, 370-71, Timothy Roberts, "Margaret Fuller's Rome and the problem of provincial American democracy," *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, no. 1 (2006): 45-60. For studies of American expatriates in Paris during this period, see Karen Lane Rood, *American Writers in Paris, 1920-1939* (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1980); William Wiser, *The Great Good Place: American Expatriate Women in Paris*. (New York: Norton), 1991, Nancy L. Green, "Americans Abroad and the Uses of Citizenship: Paris, 1914-1940," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 31, no. 3 (2012): 5-32; David G. McCullough, *The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011).

Like many of those who fled the restrictive morality of Britain for the sunnier climes of Capri[90] or Taormina, both in Italy's south, the Anglo-Florentine community was also home to several notable homosexual writers. Vernon Lee, for example, was a lesbian and enjoyed an intimate friendship (although it is debated whether this relationship was ever consummated) with Clementine Anstruther-Thompson.[91] The distinguished author Violet Trefusis (who would later publish a novel on Florence's British community entitled *Pirates at Play* in 1950)[92] first visited Florence in 1908 with her lover Vita Sackville-West before moving there permanently after the Second World War.[93] Dramatically, the writer Aldous Huxley, who lived in Italy from 1923 to 1928, remarked that Florence was, 'a third-rate provincial town, colonized by English sodomites and middle-aged Lesbians' just before leaving the city for Rome.[94] However, Florence never acquired the same reputation as Capri or Taormina, chiefly because it was still more associated with intellectuals, history and art. It never attained the notoriety of the salons of Jacques d'Adelswärd-Fersen in Capri, and no Anglo-Florentines produced photographs of bare-chested young peasant boys in the style of Wilhelm von Gloeden.[95]

One expatriate community that has been studied closely is that of the group of Anglo-Americans in Venice. Just as in Florence, they had been drawn to the city by its historic character. Pemble has studied the construction of the myth of Venice amongst Victorian society to show how British travellers and residents were drawn to its air of dignified decay and the romantically charged notion of a floating city on the brink of extinction. Many Anglo-Americans, he ventures, were seduced by the allure of Venice as existing in a frozen moment of time while the rest of the world continued to develop, and as a result were intensely protective of any major restoration work to its historic buildings. In the 1870s, British intellectuals and artists were mobilised to

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[90] On the homosexual community on Capri, see James Money, *Capri: Island of Pleasure* (London: H. Hamilton, 1986).

[91] Sally Newman, "The Archival Traces of Desire: Vernon Lee's Failed Sexuality and the Interpretation of Letters in Lesbian History," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 1/2 (2005): 51-75, 57.

[92] Clare L. Taylor, "Trefusis, Violet (1894-1972)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Oxford University Press http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/76253. 2011 (accessed 10 August 2012).

[93] Mitchell Leaska and John Philips, eds., *Violet to Vita: the Letters of Violet Trefusis to Vita Sackville-West, 1910-21* (New York: Viking, 1990), 1-54.

[94] Kinta Beevor, *A Tuscan childhood* (London: Viking, 1993), 145.

[95] Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art and the Homosexual Fantasy* (London: Routledge, 1993), 101-35.

save Venice from what they saw as the 'ravages of restoration and modernization.'[96] Pemble attributes this mobilisation of outrage to the fact that there was an increase in British newspapers reporting the efforts to modernise Italian cities shortly following the unification of Italy in 1861. In 1879, William Morris' Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, founded two years earlier to preserve historic British buildings, was mobilised to protest against the proposed restoration of the facade of the Basilica di San Marco.[97] The efforts of this society can be compared with the later efforts of Vernon Lee's Society for the Protection of Old Florence (SPOF), mentioned previously, which was formed along similar lines.

The establishment of both the SPAB and SPOF clearly demonstrates that many of the British residents and travellers were willing to defend what they felt to be invaluable historic architecture and heritage. Their fears, that the relentless advance of the modern world would result in the loss of many a priceless palazzo or piazza, are manifestations of Oscar Ortiz's concept of 'cultural hypochondria', 'an excessive anxiety over the possibility of the disintegration and death of a culture.'[98] As Wendy M.K. Shaw has observed, the fear was also prevalent in Britons writing about the Orient, a 'nostalgic perception of progress as loss, complimenting the sublime glorification of ruin.'[99] For many of the British residents in Florence or Venice, the cities served as refuges from the evils of modern society, historical ruins that should be left untouched. Considering that much of the anxiety at the end of the nineteenth century was based on the supposed degenerative effects of modern society, it is unsurprising that these bastions of retreat were defended furiously by those who sought to escape the modern world. [100]

Like their counterparts in Venice and Florence, the British in Rome took an active interest in the city's history. Influenced by recent trends in Classical scholarship that had already seen French and German schools of archaeology established in Athens and Rome, the British School at Rome was founded in 1901, on

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[96] John Pemble, *Venice rediscovered* (Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1995), 144.
[97] Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*, 178.
[98] Wendy M.K. Shaw, "Between the Sublime and the Picturesque: Mourning, Modernization and the Production of the Orientalist Landscape in Thomas Allom and Rev. Robert Walsh's *Constantinople and the Scentery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor* c. 1839," in *The Poetics and Politics of Place: Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism*, ed. Zeynep Inankur, Reia Lewis, and Mary Roberts (Istanbul: Pera Müzesti, 2011),115-23, 118.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Shearer West, *Fin de Siècle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), 58.

the model of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, which had been established in 1880.[101] The British School's purpose was to provide British students with an education in Classical art and archaeology, 'but it was established on a basis broad enough to make it a valuable centre of information for students of art travelling to Italy.'[102] In 1911 the School received its Royal Charter and gained a plot of land through Rennell Rodd's negotiations with the mayor of Rome. Located on the Valle Giulia, the School boasted a Classically-influenced building designed by the imperial architect Sir Edwin Lutyens.[103] The bulk of the school's funding was drawn from private grants, including from the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Royal Academy, and British and colonial universities.[104] A Commission and Executive Committee governed the School, both based in London, and although this could cause problems in communication between the School's directors and its Honorary Secretary, Sir Evelyn Shaw, the model inspired the later structure of the British Institute in Florence.[105]

Unlike the later British Institute in Florence, the British School at Rome was devoted to providing an education for students from the British empire (not just from Britain), and did not conduct programmes of cultural outreach. Although it proclaimed itself 'a cultural embassy of the Empire,' there is no evidence that the School actively engaged in cultural propaganda. It is more likely that the School saw itself as representing British scholarship amongst the many international archaeological institutions spreading across Rome.[106] In the 1930s, the School would compete with the British Institute for funding from the British Council, but would be regarded as having little to do with conducting cultural propaganda amongst Italians.[107] Though its position as a British educational institute in Italy makes the School worthy of further research (especially given its pan-empire appeal for students), its archives have not as yet been fully catalogued, or proved the subject of

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[101] Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome: one hundred years* (London: British School at Rome, 2001), 18.
[102] Evelyn Shaw, *British School at Rome: A Note on the School and its Scholarships* (London: Gale & Polden, 1939), 1.
[103] Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome: one hundred years*, 38.
[104] Shaw, *British School at Rome: A Note on the School and its Scholarships*, 5.
[105] Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome: one hundred years*, 41.
[106] These included the American, French and German Academies. Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome: one hundred years*, 28.
[107] This is explored in Chapter 7.

any sustained historical inquiry, and unfortunately, it is not the intention of this study to do so.

Even though the American and British communities in Florence did not mix, in Rome the situation was markedly different. In 1906, a group of Anglo-American expatriates, including Rennell Rodd and the American author Edith Wharton, joined together to save the boarding house where John Keats had died of tuberculosis in 1821, which was about to be demolished.[108] The house was reopened in 1909, in a ceremony attended by the Italian king, Vittorio Emanuele III. The Keats-Shelley House, as the building was now known, was turned into a museum, and a library dedicated the both Keats and Shelley, as well as other Romantic writers such as Byron and Leigh Hunt, was established. Today the House is run by the Keats Memorial Association, based in London, and the Keats-Shelley Association of America, but retains a Rome-based Executive Committee headed by representatives from the American, British and Italian governments in a show of international cooperation.[109]

The preservation of the Keats-Shelley House and its transformation as a memorial to the death of two British poets in Italy, is significant, as it demonstrates the cooperation that existed between the British and American communities in Rome, one that was apparently lacking in Florence. It also reflects that Anglo-American expatriates in Rome shared contemporary attitudes towards saving significant historic buildings, although obviously the Keats-Shelley House was more intimately connected with English literature than Italian historical architecture. As Glendinning argues, the conservation movement that swept Europe from the end of the eighteenth century was intimately connected with modernism, and the drive to protect old buildings such as the Keats-Shelley House was the result of the awareness that there was a historical heritage to protect.[110]

Moving on from the capital, Alessandro Bartoli has recently rediscovered the British communities in the Italian Riviera, the line of cities on the coast of the Ligurian sea. In his survey, he highlights the social and sporting clubs established by British residents who spent their winter months on the Riviera. Genoa boasts Italy's oldest football club – the Genoa Cricket and Football Club, founded in 1893 by a

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[108] For more on the Keats-Shelley House, see Christina Huemer et al., *Spellbound by Rome: the Anglo-American community in Rome (1890-1914) and the founding of Keats-Shelley House* (Rome: Palombi Editori, 2005).
[109] The Keats-Shelley Memorial Association, *The Keats-Shelley Review*, no. 21 (2007), 1-3.
[110] Glendinning, "The Conservation Movement," 359-60.

group of British residents and the British consul.[111] Bartoli observes that initially the club did not have the word 'football' in its name, as it was felt by the mainly aristocratic and bourgeois members of the club to be an inappropriate sport for their members. However, it is significant that when the club was first formed, Italians were not allowed to be members. This was changed in 1897, but a quota on Italian members limited their numbers to fifty before the restriction was removed altogether in 1899. For the next three years the club won the Italian football championships. Today, Genoa Cricket and Football club is still active, but as Bartoli notes, ever since the end of the First World War, the football players and managers have all been Italian.[112]

The case of the Genoa Football Club is fascinating, as its early incarnation as a British-only members club clearly mirrors the same situation found in Britain's colonies, which also excluded native peoples from becoming members.[113] What circumstances forced the club to change its rules is, however, unknown. Bartoli's short summary does not provide more information and as yet, no history of the club exists. As with the British School at Rome, an investigation into the history and practices of the Genoa Cricket and Football Club is not within the scope of this thesis, but it would provide a unique opportunity to study the attempt at trying to establish a bastion of British sociability in Italy.

Despite the distances separating them, Anglo-Florentines shared one commonality with their compatriots around the world. This was in their lack of engagement with modern Italian society. As James Freeman observes, it was a common trait of British travellers to Florence to balance admiration of Italy with disdain for her people.[114] This had already been the case in the early nineteenth century, when the poet Walter Savage Landor had addressed Tuscan authorities in 1829 and protested against a charge of treason, explaining:

> I take no interest whatever in the affairs of Italians: I visit none of them: I admit none of them within my doors: I never go to the gaminghouse, to

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[111] Bartoli, *The British Colonies in the Italian Riviera in the '800 and '900*, 149.
[112] Bartoli, *The British Colonies in the Italian Riviera in the '800 and '900*, 150.
[113] See, for example, Margaret Jones, "'Permanent Boarders': The British in Ceylon," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),205-32, 220-21; Tim Harper, "The British 'Malayans'," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),233-68, 242-47.
[114] Freeman, "The Protestant cemetery in Florence," 220.

> the coffeehouse, to the theatre, to the palace, or to the church: where then and with whom am I likely to be guilty of conspiracy and treason?[115]

Although failing to mix with Italians was not the case for all of the Anglo-Florentines, especially Lina Waterfield, and Janet Ross, it was a significant feature of the British expatriate community in the city, and one that was remarked on by visitors. Francis Fletcher-Vane, in his guidebook to walks around Tuscany, observed remorsefully, 'There are many excellent and intelligent persons of our [British] race who live the best part of their lives in Florence without really knowing one single Italian.'[116] Of course, this experience is not exclusive to the British, or to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Anne-Meike Fechter has observed in the case of present-day Europeans in Indonesia, the maintaining of distance from the local population is a common trait of the expatriate experience.[117]

What makes the case of the British in Florence stand out amongst the rest of the British expatriate communities in Italy is the fact that it produced an institution dedicated to cultural outreach: the British Institute, formed during the First World War in 1917. Unlike Anglican churches or social clubs in other cities that encouraged British sociability at the expense of engaging with local society, the British Institute was dedicated to sharing British culture with others. Though it should be emphasised that the British Institute did not operate on a strict principle of equal cultural exchange – in fact, as will be shown, Italian influence at the Institute was highly disapproved of – it is significant that British expatriates in Florence took pride in making their culture known to Italians.

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[115] Pfister, *The fatal gift of beauty*, 96.
[116] Francis Fletcher-Vane, *Walks & People in Tuscany* (London: The Bodley Head, 1910), 7.
[117] Anne-Meike Fechter, *Transnational lives: Expatriates in Indonesia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

Famous Britons in Florence: visitors and residents

Amongst the Italian cities, Florence acquired a unique reputation in the nineteenth century for attracting renowned British authors. These included not just Byron and Shelley, but also Robert and Elizabeth Browning, Thackeray, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Walter Savage Landor and the vitriolic John Ruskin.[118] Fletcher-Vane remarked that the city's cultural bent meant that the city's foreign colony was unusual when compared with other European cities:

> Florence, it must be remembered, is an exceptional place, more fortunate in many ways than any other town in Europe, in that it contains a larger leisured population of foreign residents, British, American, Russian, German, etc. than any of its compeers and moreover it is not too much to say that almost every man of the civilized races who can claim any right to be considered educated, at one time or another spends a few weeks here.[119]

Though the focus of this thesis on the history of the British Institute prohibits the extended discussion of the life and works of famous British expatriates in Florence, profiles of several key individuals reflect British attitudes towards modern Florence and its people before the First World War. Furthermore, their work contributed to Florence's reputation as a cultural centre in Italy, and they were influential in the history of the British Institute of Florence.

One of the most influential works for British travellers to Italy during this period continued to be John Ruskin's 1877 *Mornings in Florence*. As informative as most of his observations are about Florence's architecture and art, Ruskin's writings also reveal his disdain of modern Italy and its attempts to restore its cultural heritage. Warning his readers in *Mornings in Florence* against trusting their copies of Murray's guidebooks too easily,[120] Ruskin notes that

> When, indeed, Mr Murray's Guide tells you that a building has been "magnificently restored" you may pass the building by in resigned despair, for that means that every bit of the old sculpture has been destroyed, and modern vulgar copies put up in its place... But a restored picture or fresco will often be to *you*, more useful than a pure one; and in all probability – if an important piece of art – it will have been spared in many places, cautiously completed in others...[121]

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[118] Wall, "L'ambivalenza storica degli inglesi verso l'italia," 166-67.
[119] 'On the value of clubs', F.P. Fletcher-Vane, *Florence Herald*, 6 November 1906, 8.
[120] On Murray's guidebooks, see Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*, 70-72.
[121] Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence*, 56.

Not only was Florence uncaring about her precious cultural capital, but she was also all too willing to mar it for the sake of modernity.

Although Ruskin made his last journey to Florence in 1888, *Mornings in Florence* continued to be used by subsequent tourists visiting the city until the First World War. As Keith Hanley and John K. Walton argue, Thomas Cook made *Mornings in Florence* and Ruskin's work on Venice, *The Stones of Venice,* the basis of his popular handbooks to the two cities, guiding a reader's gaze to fit Ruskin's descriptions.[122] Ruskin's writings provide the most vitriolic example of British dismay at Italian modernity in contrast to the perfection of its past. His views on modern Italians, furthermore, outlined in the previous chapter of this thesis, were even less complimentary.

The American-born, naturalised British writer and traveller Henry James was not as scathing as Ruskin on his journey to Florence in 1877, and he even mocked Ruskin's work lightly, remarking that Ruskin was 'for ever making his readers laugh.'[123] But James also exhibited a sense of melancholy at the thought of modern Florence sweeping away her traditions, though he took a more pragmatic approach to the changes wrought on the city. Visiting Santa Croce, he wrote that 'almost all the old monuments at Santa Croce are small ... and interesting and exquisite, so the modern, well nigh without exception, are disproportionately vast and pompous, or in other words distressingly vague and vain.'[124]

Though he predicted that Italy would eventually surpass the United States of America in terms of her enterprising spirit, James opined that 'the art of Italy lies buried as in a thousand mausoleums.'[125] Yet in James' writing there is none of the simmering resentment or outright anger of Ruskin.[126] Instead of picturing Florence in a state of alarming decay, James instead compared the city's architecture to that of an embalmed body. He wrote that 'in this blessed Italy, reluctantly modern in spite alike

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[122] Keith Hanley and John K. Walton, *Constructing Cultural Tourism: John Ruskin and the Tourist Gaze* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2010), 147.
[123] Henry James, *Italian hours* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). 115.
[124] James, *Italian hours*, 268.
[125] James, *Italian hours*, 103-4.
[126] Moinca Manolescu-Oancea has compared Ruskin and James' writing on the restoration of old buildings and shows how James resisted Ruskin's more condemnatory language. Monica Manolescu-Oancea, "'We have botched them and patched them": Modernity and Restoration in Henry James's *Italian Hours*," *E-rea* 7, no. 2 (2010), available at http://erea.revues.org/1029.

of boasts and lamentations, [Florence] seems to have been preserved for curiosity's and fancy's sake, with a vague, sweet odour of the embalmer's spices about it.'[127] For James, Florence's cultural legacy and her new place in the modern world were not at odds with each other, but two halves of the same entity, to be cherished and be concerned about in equal measure. This attitude finds parallels with articles in the *Florence Herald* and *Italian Gazette*, which acknowledged the necessity of modern improvements, but despaired of the changes they would bring.[128]

The most famous novel of Florence and its British residents in this period is, of course, E.M. Forster's *A Room With A View*, published in 1908. Based on his 1901 journey to Italy with his mother, Forster's impressions of the Anglo-Florentines provide a colourful insight into the characters that made up the community, and reflect Forster's own experiences. His mother disapproved of their first hotel in Florence, the Pensione Simi, located on the Via Panzani near the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, because it lacked an 'Arno view' and the Cockney landlady did not meet Forster's approval as she 'scatters her Hs like morsels and calls me "the young gentleman", but perhaps this is fastidious.'[129]

Interestingly, in *A Room With A View*, one of Forster's characters is a parody of the British residents he met whilst on his journey to Italy. The Reverend Eager, it is explained, is

> no commonplace chaplain. He was a member of the residential colony who had made Florence their home ... Living in delicate seclusion, some in furnished flats, others in Renaissance villas on Fiesole's slope, they read, wrote, studied and exchanged ideas, thus attaining to that intimate knowledge ... of Florence which is denied to all who carry in their pockets the coupons of [Thomas] Cook.[130]

Forster's words descriptively convey the character of Florence's British expatriates, but also illustrate a delineation between residents and tourists. The Reverend Eager later remarks that he feels sorry for tourists on package holidays who are taken through Venice to Florence and Rome without stopping, reflecting the influence of

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[127] James, *Italian hours*, 262.
[128] This attitude is found in 'How Not to Attract Visitors to Italy', *Italian Gazette*, 10 October 1909, 1, and is discussed below.
[129] Note by Oliver Stallybrass in E.M. Forster, *A Room With A View*, ed. Oliver Stallybrass (Suffolk: Penguin, 1978), 235.
[130] Forster, *A Room With A View*, 71.

Ruskin's ideas that travel was not something to be hurried through.[131] Yet, Forster is sure to point out how the Reverend Eager brushes off the Italians who approach his tour group to sell souvenirs and postcards in his hurry to show his visitors the historical buildings and sights of the city.[132] This disregard for the modern Italians in preference for their history is demonstrative of Forster's own attitude on his travels. As he wrote to a friend, 'Tourist Italy delights me so much that I can afford to leave the Italian Italy for another time.'[133] Again, the demarcation between the historical Italy of the Renaissance and its artists and great statesmen – that is, what the tourists came to see, and its modern condition – is emphasised. In this, Forster, shared a common view with many residents and tourists.

One of the most influential figures in the Anglo-Florentine social scene was also a member of the German aristocracy who had married the British diplomat Sir Augustus Paget. Walburga Paget was a dedicated anti-vivisectionist and firm believer in the supernatural, even experimenting with automatic writing to contact the spirits of the dead. The parties held at her residence at the Torre di Bellosguardo were often attended by members of European royalty and other diplomats, especially during the short period when Florence was the capital of Italy, from 1865 to 1870. As she recalled, her husband, who was the British Ambassador to the Kingdom of Italy during Florence's term as Italy's capital,

> Like most Englishmen ... had a great sympathy with United Italy, and the Italians at that time were still grateful to England for the moral support she had given them and which had been such a great factor in their unification. It was therefore only natural that all the most prominent Italian Statesmen, politicians and patriots congregated at our house.[134]

Considering Augustus Paget's patronising attitude towards his Italian diplomatic counterparts covered in the first chapter of this thesis, his wife's claims should be regarded with some scepticism. It is telling, also, that Paget found the large numbers of Italians congregating at her home 'only natural.' This echoes similar sentiments of apparent cultural sympathy for Italy that existed back in Britain amongst the supporters of the Risorgimento, but also highlights the paradox that existed during this period of professing support for Italy's journey towards

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[131] Hanley and Walton, *Constructing Cultural Tourism*, 154.
[132] Forster, *A Room With A View*, 72-73.
[133] Nicola Beauman, *Morgan: A Biography of E.M. Forster* (London: Sceptre, 1994), 104.
[134] Walburga Paget, *Scenes and Memories* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1912), 159-60.

nationhood but treating Italians as social inferiors who were drawn to the British as a matter of course. It is also of interest to note that statesmen are mentioned, but Italians of other, less exalted classes, are not.

The author Vernon Lee – also known by her birth name of Violet Paget (but of no relation to Walburga Paget) – was born in Boulogne in 1856. A child of expatriate British parents, Lee spent little of her life in Britain, instead moving around various parts of Italy, France and Germany before finally settling down in the small town of Fiesole, just outside Florence in 1889.[135] She was the childhood friend of the American painter John Singer-Sargent – who despite being born in Florence, declared that he could not paint there[136] – and was devoted to her elder half-brother, Eugene Lee-Hamilton, who shared her home at the villa Il Palmerino until his death in 1907. Amongst her mentors were the noted Renaissance scholar Walter Pater, and John Addington Symonds, who was wary of Lee's constant questioning.[137]

A prodigious writer, Lee produced books on Renaissance art, aestheticism, and the supernatural. Amongst these was *Euphorion*, a collection of essays on Renaissance history. Influenced by Jacob Burckhardt, who had argued that the Italian Renaissance was the genesis of the modern world,[138] Lee also believed that the Renaissance had a transformative effect not just on Italian society, but on Western civilisation.[139] She wrote:

> The Renaissance possessed the germs of every modern thing, and much that was far more than a mere germ: it possessed the habit of equality before the law, of civic organization, of industry and commerce developed to immense and superb proportions. It possessed science, literature, and art; above all, that which at once produced and was produced by all these—thorough perception of what exists, thorough consciousness of our own freedom and powers: self-cognizance.[140]

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[135] Mandy Gagel, "1897, A Discussion of Plagiarism: Letters Between Vernon Lee, Bernard Berenson, and Mary Costelloe," *Literary Imagination* 12, no. 2 (2010): 154-79, 154.
[136] Acton, *Memoirs Of An Aesthete*, 23.
[137] Alison Brown, "Vernon Lee and the Renaissance: From Burckhardt to Berenson," in *Victorian and Edwardian Reponses to the Italian Renaissance*, ed. John E. Law and Lene Østermark-Johansen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005),185-209, 185-89.
[138] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S.G.C. Middlemore (1878). For a refutation of Burckhardt's theory, see Gene Brucker, *The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).
[139] Brown, "Vernon Lee and the Renaissance," 190.
[140] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion: being Studies of the Antique and the Mediaeval in the Renaissance*, 2 vols. (London1884), 46-47.

This represents a slight contradiction. Despite the fact that the Renaissance led to the advent of modern understanding, it also brought about the development that Lee had protested against in her campaign the save the Piazza di Parte Guelfa. Lee also saw the study of the past as a retreat from the oppressive pace of the modern world that the Renaissance had birthed. In *Renaissance Studies*, Lee posed the question:

> Turn your backs to Realities, become idle strollers in the Past? And why not, dear friends? Why not recognise the need for a holiday? Why not admit, just because work has to be done and loads to be borne, that we cannot grind and pant on without interruption? Nay, that the bearing of the load, the grinding of the work, is useless save to diminish the total grinding and panting on this earth .... And so, for our greater nobility and happiness, we require, all of us, to live in some extent in the Past...[141]

It is unsurprising that Lee fought to keep a part of historical Florence preserved in its original state. The preservation of the past was not just a protest against the destruction caused by progress, but could actually have restorative qualities for an overworked society. These sentiments echo Lee's theories on the reception of art and the emotional and psychological effects this had on the viewer, in which she argued that art could be beneficial for a person's morality, much as the Grand Tourists had believed.[142]

In 1897, Lee fell out with her fellow art critic, the young Bernard Berenson, over accusations of plagiarism in an article she had published with Clementine Anstruther-Thompson, entitled 'Beauty & Ugliness'. Berenson claimed that Lee and Anstruther-Thompson had stolen his ideas about 'tactile values' (referring to how the composition of a figure gave it an almost touchable quality) and the spatial composition of paintings.[143] Incensed, Berenson accused the two women of having appropriated his theories from conversations the three had together in the Uffizi, and referred to Anstruther-Thompson as a 'recording angel' who merely took down all he had said.[144] In response, Lee provided her own notebooks and annotated books in order to prove she and Anstruther-Thompson had come up with the theories

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[141] Vernon Lee, *Renaissance Fancies & Studies* (London: John Lane, 1909), 238, 40.
[142] Vernon Lee, *The beautiful: an introduction to psychological aesthetics* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1913).
[143] Ernest Samuels, *Bernard Berenson: the Making of a Connoisseur* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1979), 283-84.
[144] Brown, "Vernon Lee and the Renaissance," 198.

themselves.[145] Mandy Gagel argues that the concentration of intellectual expatriates in Florence at the end of the nineteenth century could lead to an atmosphere of intense competition between authors such as Lee and Berenson. In this case, an official apology and retraction by Berenson at the end of the year prevented a further falling out, although the two were effectively estranged from that moment. [146] Yet, Lee was not the first to fall afoul of Berenson, who was prone to accusing many of his enemies of plagiarism.

During the First World War, Lee came into further conflict with the novelist H.G. Wells over his letter to the London *Daily Chronicle* on 24 August 1914 in which he called for American ships to stop German boats from supplying Germany with war materials. In response, Lee penned a scathing letter to the New York *Nation* on 17 September, observing: 'What Mr. Wells is asking of America is ... in plain English: let neutral America ... show her neutrality by starving Germany.'[147] The backlash this produced from intellectuals on both Allied and neutral sides was enormous. Lee lost many friends as a result of daring to speak up against the demonization of Germany, but defended her pacifism by remarking that she had previously been critical of Britain in the Anglo-Boer War and of Italy's role in the Libyan War of 1911.[148] In Florence, her article would be referenced (but not quoted) in the *Italian Gazette* and she publicly branded disloyal because of her pacifist views.[149] Despite this, Lee continued to welcome visitors to her villa after the war, including the author Aldous Huxley and the Italian scholar of English literature, Mario Praz.[150] When she died in 1935, Praz paid tribute to her work, and observed that Lee had been one of the few geniuses who had been able to discover 'the secret rhythm of a landscape, of an era, [or] of a work of art.'[151]

Grace Brockington explains Lee's pacifism by arguing that because of Lee's mobile upbringing, she had no strong sense of national identity and was only

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[145] Brown, "Vernon Lee and the Renaissance," 200-01.
[146] Gagel, "1897, A Discussion of Plagiarism," 164-65.
[147] "Mr Wells and Vernon Lee," *Colby Library Quarterly* 3, no. 8 (1952): 129-33, 130.
[148] Grace Brockington, "Performing Pacifism: The Battle between Artist and Author in *The Ballet of the Nations*," in *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, ed. Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (2006),143-60, 147; Vineta Colby, *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography* (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2003), 293.
[149] The furore over Lee's article in discussed in the next chapter.
[150] Peter Gunn, *Vernon Lee: Violet Paget, 1856-1935* (New York: Arno Press, 1964), 210-11.
[151] '...come pochi il genio di scoprire il ritmo segreto d'un paesaggio, d'un'epoca, d'un' opera d'arte.' Lamberini, "Residenti anglo-americani e genius loci," 129.

nominally British.[152] It is therefore unsurprising to learn that she played no part in the foundation and work of the British Institute, unlike the staunchly patriotic Lina Waterfield, although Lee's library of books was left to the British Institute following her death. Because Vernon Lee played no role in the Institute's history, however, her story in this thesis must cease here.

Another prominent figure in the British Institute's history, Harold Acton was born in 1904 at La Pietra, his father's villa just outside Florence. Arthur Acton married the daughter of William Mitchell, who founded the Illinois Trust and Savings Bank, and used her family's money to fund his purchase.[153] Located on the northern outskirts of Florence, along the Via Bolognese Nuova, Acton noted wryly that La Pietra had 'escaped devastation by special providence.'[154] His early years were spent in Miss Penrose's private school for the international residents of Florence,[155] where boys were in the minority, which prompted fears on the part of his nurse that he might grow to become an Italian 'dago'.[156] To prevent this happening, Acton was sent away to Wixenford Preparatory School in Britain in order to become a 'proper Englishman' at the age of nine before the disruption of the First World War and the danger of travelling to Britain forced his parents to enrol him at an international school in Geneva. Whilst Acton was too young to play a role in the foundation of the British Institute in 1917, his father Arthur was one of its early supporters, along with Janet Ross and Bernard Berenson. Along with monetary support, they also donated books and furniture to the fledgling institute. Arthur Acton's link with the Institute would be one that was continued by Harold after the Second World War.[157]

Acton enrolled at Eton in 1918 and helped to edit the *Eton Candle*, a student literary magazine. In 1923, Acton entered Christ Church at Oxford and meet Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, who based the character of Anthony Blanche in *Brideshead Revisited* on him. After stints in Paris and London to hone his writing

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[152] Brockington, "Performing Pacifism: The Battle between Artist and Author in *The Ballet of the Nations*," 147.
[153] Acton, *Memoirs Of An Aesthete*, 18.
[154] Acton, *Memoirs Of An Aesthete*, 7.
[155] Unfortunately it has impossible to trace the history of Miss Penrose's school in the archives and memoirs consulted for this thesis.
[156] Acton, *Memoirs Of An Aesthete*, 25.
[157] Lina Waterfield, *Castle in Italy: An Autobiography* (London: John Murray, 1961), 167.

skills, Acton left Europe for China, where he taught English in Beijing until the Second World War forced him to return to Europe in 1939.[158]

Acton wrote both fiction and histories of Italy, including the controversial *The Last of the Medici* (which scandalised readers with its accounts of the decadence of the last Medici duke, Gian Gastone de' Medici), along with books on the Bourbons of Naples, and a guide to Tuscan villas.[159] He wrote in his memoirs that he 'took pride in being a Florentine by birth,'[160] though what he meant by this is not certain. David Kubiak points out that Acton's upbringing and various family connections in Britain and America combined to deprive him of any firm identity, much in the same way of Vernon Lee's migratory experiences in childhood.[161] Unlike Lee's ambivalent attitude towards her British citizenship, this did not stop Acton from becoming a supporter of the British Institute's activities. In fact, Acton became a major figure in the British Institute's history after the Second World War. However, his education and travels during the interwar period mean he that he did not take part in any of the events discussed in later chapters of this thesis.

Although Bernard Berenson does not play a major role in this thesis, his friendship with Janet Ross and Lina Waterfield, as well as his intellectual contribution to the scholarship of Renaissance art, require that he be briefly introduced. Berenson was one of the key figures of the Florentine art landscape in the early years of the twentieth century. Born in 1865 in Lithuania and educated at Harvard, he was one of a number of influential art connoisseurs and dealers in Florence, a group that also included Herbert Percy Horne, the art critic, poet, designer and biographer of Botticelli, who had moved to Florence in 1904,[162] and Aby Warburg, who was

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[158] Acton's early life is outlined in the first part his memoirs, *Memoirs Of An Aesthete*.
[159] Harold Acton, *The Bourbons of Naples, 1734-1825* (London: Methuen, 1956); Harold Acton, *Tuscan villas* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973); Harold Acton, *The last Medici* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1980). On the controversy related to *The Last of the Medici*, see Edward Chaney's account, Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations Since the Renaissance*, 379.
[160] Acton, *Memoirs Of An Aesthete*, 23.
[161] David Kubiak, "Memories of an Aesthete," *Modern Age* 51, no. 3/4 (2009): 314-25, 315.
[162] On the life of Herbert Horne, see Ian Fletcher, *Rediscovering Herbert Horne: poet, architect, typographer, art historian* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 1990). Also his biography of Botticelli, Herbert P. Horne, *Alessandro Filipepi, commonly called Sandro Botticelli, painter of Florence* (London: G Bell & Sons, 1908) and the museum he left to the city, Brenda Preyer, "Renaissance "Art and Life" in the Scholarship and Palace of Herbert P. Horne," in *Gli Anglo-Americani a Firenze: Idea e Costruzione del Rinascimento*, ed. Marcello Fantoni (Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 2000),235-48.

unimpressed when he met Berenson.[163] Previously Berenson had acted as art adviser to wealthy American buyers such as Isabella Steward Gardner, who were looking to purchase artworks, and this was how he had made his fortune, as well as because of his reputation as an expert in Renaissance art.[164] Apart from outlining his theory of aesthetics, based on the notion of 'tactile values' and how good art could improve a viewer's quality of life (an idea not dissimilar to Lee's theories), Berenson also grouped artists into categories and identified anonymous paintings solely on the basis of his analysis of their individual style, a skill for which he was to become renowned.[165]

Having made his home in Florence, Berenson began to deal in art in 1892. In 1900, he married Mary Costelloe, the wife of the late Irish barrister Frank Costelloe, who also became an art historian.[166] Their home at Villa I Tatti would eventually draw many visitors, both professional and amateur, wishing to learn more about Florence's art and studying under Berenson's tutelage, contributing significantly to Florence's reputation as a cultural centre.[167] The crowd at Berenson's could be so large that when Lina Waterfield went to one such gathering and was about to leave, she was unable to say goodbye as 'He was so surrounded yesterday that I could not dare to encroach. He looked like a philosopher encouraging his disciples...'[168] In addition to these disciples, Berenson also enjoyed a high reputation amongst *scorpioni* (Florentine slang for spinster tourists of the sort memorably captured in Franco Zeffirelli's movie *Tea With Mussolini*), who visited Florence's galleries. They were enraptured by his 'Four Gospels', Berenson's work on the Italian painters of the Renaissance, which were collected into the single volume *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance* in 1930.[169]

Berenson was also famous for his feuds in Florence. These included the spat with Lee, which had led to their estrangement. Interestingly, Berenson's biographer

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[163] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, 160.
[164] Meryle Secrest, *Being Bernard Berenson: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980), 72-94.
[165] Samuels, *Bernard Berenson: the Making of a Connoisseur*, 190-94.
[166] On Mary Berenson's life, see Barbara Strachey and Jayne Samuels, *Mary Berenson: A Self Portrait from Her Letters & Diaries* (London: Hamilton, 1983).
[167] Samuels, *Bernard Berenson: the Making of a Connoisseur*, 315.
[168] Lina Waterfield to Mary Berenson, 1925, Waterfield Collection (WAT), WAT:1:G:36:ff14-15, British Institute Archives (BIA), Florence.
[169] Bernard Berenson, *The Italian painters of the Renaissance* (New York: Phaidon Publishers; distributed by Garden City Books, 1952); Ernest Samuels, *Bernard Berenson: the Making of a Legend* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1987), 48.

Ernest Samuels posited that the reason why Lee and Berenson clashed was not simply a case of plagiarism, but because both parties were 'amateurs and outsiders' in the field of art criticism and aesthetic theory, since both were self-taught. As Samuels observes, 'If their one talent was death to hide, it was death to share.'[170] Unsurprisingly, given Florence's small size and reputation as a centre for the study of art, conflict was inevitable. Berenson also accused other art critics in the city of plagiarism over his theories of aesthetic appreciation. This included Horne, and the two only reconciled on the latter's deathbed. Mary Berenson, describing the scene, observed 'We were the last people [Horne] saw, and he said B.B.'s friendliness had given him a few moments of great happiness and peace.'[171] Not one to easily forgive, Berenson also fell out with the English art critic Roger Fry, co-founder of the prestigious *Burlington* magazine, for failing to support him more strongly against his detractor Langton Douglas, who took issue with Berenson's approach to connoisseurship.[172]

Both Berensons were close friends of Ross and Waterfield, but Mary was especially close to the two women. Whilst I Tatti was being prepared for their wedding, Bernard Berenson stayed at Ross' villa. In 1906, when the lease on I Tatti was to expire, a group of Berenson's friends, including Ross, loaned the sum of £6,000 in order to renew the lease.[173] After Ross' death in 1927, Waterfield would write to Mary to tell her that in her last moments, 'she called out your name so often.'[174] Despite Berenson's position in the world of art criticism and connoisseurship, to Ross and Waterfield, both Bernard and Mary were neighbours and friends, first and foremost.

The granddaughter of the translator Sarah Austin, and the daughter of the author Lucie Duff-Gordon, as well as a prolific writer in her own right, Janet Ross arrived in Florence from Alexandria where they had been living for six years after her husband Henry's investments with an Egyptian bank failed in 1867. This was because the cost of living in England was too high to return. Their son Alexander was left in England to be educated.[175] Ross lived at Poggio Gherardo, a medieval villa in the hills

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[170] Samuels, *Bernard Berenson: the Making of a Connoisseur*, 290.
[171] Strachey and Samuels, *Mary Berenson,* 208.
[172] Samuels, *Bernard Berenson: the Making of a Connoisseur*, 390-401.
[173] Strachey and Samuels, *Mary Berenson*, 64.
[174] Waterfield to Mary Berenson, 24 August 1927, WAT:1:G:39:ff14-15, BIA, Florence.
[175] Janet Ross, *The fourth generation: reminiscences* (London: Constable, 1912), 159, 64.

of Fiesole, a house that was supposedly used by Boccaccio as a setting for a story in the *Decameron*. The legend was referenced in Forster's *A Room With A View,* when the Reverend Eager points out Lady Helen Laverstock's villa to his tour group, remarking that beyond the thick green hedge lies 'perfect seclusion. One might have gone back six hundred years.' [176]

In her autobiography, *A Castle in Italy*, Waterfield describes how new arrivals to Florence would often attend her aunt's Sunday afternoon receptions, though Ross' legendary temper and forthright opinions could often prove intimidating. Waterfield recounts in the case of one visitor who arrived at Ross' villa bearing a letter of introduction and rang the doorbell, 'and then [ran] away, his courage failing at the last minute.'[177] In a similar vein, Ross recalled a tense moment with the great Victorian liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone in 1888, over the question of Tuscan peasants and the tenure of the land they worked. Gladstone's wife, Ross writes, was worried that she might contradict Gladstone on the issue 'too flatly' and she was thus forced to change the conversation.[178]

Like her neighbour Vernon Lee, who lived about three kilometres away, Ross was an author, writing just over a dozen books in her lifetime. However, she did not produce the same theoretical works that Lee favoured. Instead, amongst other books, Ross wrote on the history of the Tuscan villas around her, translated the letters of the Medici family into English, and compiled a cookbook on how to prepare vegetables.[179] She also completed a biography of the last three generations of her matrilineal ancestors, and brought the story up-to-date in 1912 when she penned her own autobiography, fittingly entitled *The Fourth Generation*, and contributed articles on Italy to literary journals.

Whilst Ross did not indulge in the same level of intellectual writing as Lee, she counted a wide circle of writers and philosophers amongst her friends. Mark Twain had been a visitor and Ross had helped him find a villa to rent, and John Addington Symonds stayed at Poggio Gherardo whilst he wrote his biography of

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[176] Forster, *A Room with a View*, 81.
[177] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 54.
[178] Ross, *The fourth generation: reminiscences*, 250.
[179] Janet Ross, *Leaves from Our Tuscan kitchen; or, How to Cook Vegetables* (London: J.M. Dent, 1899); Janet Ross, *Florentine villas* (London,: New York,:: J.M. Dent & co. ; Dutton & co., 1901); Janet Ross, *Lives of the early Medici as told in their correspondence* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1910).

Michelangelo.[180] His daughter Margaret would follow in her father's footsteps and go on to co-author a book on the history of Perugia with Waterfield.[181] Other friends included the French philosopher Jules Barthélemy-Saint-Hilaire, from whom she learned French and with whom she continued to correspond with for most of her life, the poet George Meredith (whom she rejected as a suitor), the historian and author Alexander Kinglake, and the Anglo-Italian politician and contemporary of William Gladstone, Sir James Lacaita.

Unlike the Anglo-Florentines bemoaned by Fletcher-Vane, however, Ross was deeply involved with the lives of the Italians living on her estate. The land around her villa included three peasant farms, or *poderi*, the running of which Ross personally supervised.[182] Despite her authoritarian manner, Waterfield describes the *contadini*, or peasants, as devoted to her aunt.[183] Yet Ross was not afraid to get involved with the actual work of farming. Writing in 1918 to Mary Berenson, Ross complained that the farm was so short of hands that she was having to help with the olive harvest.[184] Ross also oversaw the mixing of vermouth at Poggio Gherardo from a closely guarded recipe. The results were sold to shops in Britain, to the bemusement of other British expatriates, who were more used to art being sold than wine and regarded Ross' commercial activities as inappropriate.[185]

Waterfield's relationship with Janet Ross was complex. She was born in 1874, the daughter of Ross' brother Maurice Duff-Gordon, who later abandoned his wife and child. Waterfield was sent to France for education at a convent. She became her aunt's ward soon after her mother died and moved to Florence in 1890. Educated by Janet Ross' circle of intellectual friends, amongst them a director of the Laurentian Library in Florence,[186] Waterfield was able to observe much of the social activity of Florence's British expatriates and writes of the luminaries, including Alfred Austin, Poet Laureate from 1896 until his death in 1913, who came to her aunt's Sunday

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[180]Clara Louise Dentler, *Famous Foreigners in Florence, 1400-1900* (Florence: Bemporad Marzocco, 1964), 213.

[181] Margaret Symonds and Lina Duff-Gordon, *The story of Perugia* (London: J.M. Dent, 1898). A letter from Waterfield to Symonds-Vaughn gives sales figures for the book on Assisi as having sold 1219 copies out of a run of 2500, 5 February 1907, WAT:I:G:80:ff7-12, BIA, Florence.

[182] Campbell, *Paradise of Exiles: the Anglo-American Gardens of Florence*, 52-55.

[183] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 46-50.

[184] Janet Ross to Mary Berenson, 12 November 1918, WAT:1:E:8:f7, BIA, Florence.

[185] Campbell, *Paradise of Exiles: the Anglo-American Gardens of Florence*, 51.

[186] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 51.

receptions for friends and travellers passing through Florence. However, she could grow tired of the sheer number of visitors. In a 1900 letter to Margaret Symonds after a particularly trying weekend, she complained, 'I've never been so rushed in my life. People, people, until I begin to hate everybody.'[187] This bout of melancholy was probably brought on by the fact that many of Ross' visitors were much older than Waterfield,[188] and it was hard to find friends her age. Furthermore, she also complained of the near obsession of people in Florence with its art and history. As a result, as she wrote in another letter to Symonds, Waterfield speaks of her disgust for the people in Florence (although it is not clear which group in particular she is singling out):

> It is awful how little I care for the people in Florence & what an effort it is to see them. One gets into a terribly callous state towards the whole human race living in a country where <u>things</u>, by which I mean pictures, places [*sic*] and old places are more to one than the people who own them.[189]

Despite this fit of antipathy, Waterfield still formed close relationships with the art collectors and critics who had made their home in the city. After meeting Mary and Bernard Berenson in 1895, she became good friends with the couple and attended their wedding in 1900.[190] Their friendship was to last over sixty years until the death of Bernard Berenson in 1959 (Mary Berenson passed away in 1945). In her memoirs, Waterfield describes trips to regional towns and villages taken with Berenson (whom she called 'B.B.') and accompanied by Robert Trevelyan, poet and brother of the historian George Macaulay Trevelyan, and Mary Berenson's brother, Logan Pearsall Smith, the American critic. Occasionally, they were joined by Herbert Horne, who Waterfield recalled as being 'the silent member of the party and who avoided giving a decided opinion on pictures.'[191] Despite being bored by Berenson's and Smith's intellectual discussions on the perfection of Italian pictures, Waterfield found herself enjoying Mary Berenson's games of 'conoscing' (a play on the Italian verb 'conoscere', or to know), a guessing game which involved working out the identity of

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[187] Waterfield to Symonds-Vaughn, 19 April 1900, WAT:1:G:76:ff9-10, BIA, Florence.
[188] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 73.
[189] Waterfield to Symonds-Vaughn, 8 December 1900, WAT:1:G:79:ff5-8, BIA, Florence.
[190] Unfortunately, Mary Berenson's early correspondence with Lina Waterfield and Janet Ross is not available, depriving historians of gaining a fuller picture of the relationship between the three women.
[191] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 75.

a painting after having seen a photograph covered up with paper so that only a small part of it was visible.[192]

Like her aunt, Waterfield also counted Italians amongst her circle of friends. Apart from the *contadini* who called her *padroncina* (little mistress), she was close to Angiolo Orvieto, the poet with whom she helped to conduct unofficial Allied propaganda during the First World War, as well as Guido Biagi, librarian at the Laurentian Library, and the explorer Sir Filippo de Filippi.[193] Although these friendships are not described in much detail in her autobiography, the recollections of her daughter are illuminating. Kinta Beevor asserted that her mother had more Italian friends in Florence, but pointed out that – significantly – Waterfield's closest friends were still British, such as Percy Lubbock, former husband of Lady Sybil Cutting, the mother of the novelist Iris Origo. Waterfield's friendships with Italians, *contadini* and intellectuals, make her objection to a growing Italian influence at the British Institute in the 1930s telling. Her letters to the British Council reveal her views regarding the proper running and purpose of the Institute, which was to have been a jointly run Anglo-Italian venture, and will be discussed in detail later.[194]

In 1902, Waterfield and Ross fell out over her marriage to the painter Aubrey Waterfield, whom Ross felt was an unsuitable match for her niece. As she wrote to Margaret Symonds,

> Until Mr. W[aterfield] can show that he can make £400 as a minimum by his own exertions, I consider the idea of marriage an insanity ... Forgive me dearest Madge if I say that what you write about Lina's wonderful personality being above the ordinary ways & means of life is (forgive me) absolute bosh. Bread & butter is the first necessity in life & I do not conceive that under £300 a year to come at the death of a woman who is about 65 now [Waterfield's mother-in-law], & Lina's own £130 a year (which does not fulfil for her clothes now, as I know to my cost) can supply even bread, without the butter.[195]

Despite Ross' objections, however, Lina and Aubrey Waterfield were married in July 1902 and moved to the Fortezza Brunella in Aulla in northern Tuscany. At Aulla, Waterfield and her husband would meet the author D.H. Lawrence in 1914. Lawrence had recently eloped with Frieda von Richthofen and walked to Italy over

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[192] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 74-75.
[193] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 46, 51, 164.
[194] This is discussed in Chapter 6.
[195] Ross to Margaret Symonds-Vaughn, 12 August 1901, WAT:1:E:28:ff1-3, WC, BIA, Florence.

the Alps. He was transfixed by the Waterfields' castle, remarking to a friend that 'it is a wonderful place, but it gives me the creeps down my back,' an observation that the Waterfields found slightly puzzling.[196] They did not meet again for another fourteen years, by which time the Great War had taken its toll on Lawrence, and he had exiled himself from Britain. At the lunch she had organised for them, Waterfield was taken aback as Frieda now 'interrupted his talk all the time in order to tell his stories herself.'[197]

The rift between Ross and Waterfield lasted for twelve years until the outbreak of the First World War, when Aubrey Waterfield volunteered for active military service and Lina returned to Poggio Gherardo at her aunt's insistence. From there she and Ross raised the couple's three children until the end of the war, when the family moved back to England for three years, before returning once more to Aulla. Importantly, it was during the war that Waterfield became a driving force behind the initiative that resulted in the British Institute of Florence and her experiences of life in the city, combined with a strong sense of patriotism, shaped the initial focus of the Institute's activities. This patriotism, as will be shown, was already evident in the years leading up to the Great War, and it demonstrates that despite Waterfield's mobile upbringing, unlike Vernon Lee's, she still felt part of the British empire and identified with it closely.

For the purposes of this thesis, the profiles of famous British residents in Florence must end here. Indeed, as long as Britons are drawn to the city and its history, the list will continue to grow. The personalities highlighted here, however, serve to show British perceptions and experiences of Florence at the beginning of the twentieth century. Common ideas emerge in their writing, such as the preference for 'old' Florence over the modern city and their love of the city's art and history. Indeed, such was the reputation of the city's intellectual British community that when Violet Trefusis visited Florence with her mother in 1921, she wrote, 'The only Englishmen who reside here are … nearly all clever. The cosmopolitan set is clever, there's no doubt about it, diabolically, nauseatingly clever.'[198] She was one of a group of later literary expatriates, including Norman Douglas, Aldous Huxley, and Iris Origo, who

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[196] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 140.
[197] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 143.
[198] Leaska and Philips, *Violet to Vita: the Letters of Violet Trefusis to Vita Sackville-West, 1910-21*, 277.

would continue to provide Florence's British community with its literary, cultured quality after the First World War. This thesis, however, does not propose to investigate individual lives, but how the writings and experiences of the British residents of the city contributed to ideas of Florence as a cultural capital at the start of the Great War, and of how they thought of themselves in relation to their empire. These perceptions were influential in dictating the type of propaganda used in the First World War, and led to the foundation of the British Institute of Florence.

The influence of empire?

Lisa Merrill observes that 'expatriates define themselves by their spatial dis(locations); since they are identified by what they are not, national and other identity categories show up in sharper relief in their chosen setting.'[199] In the case of the Anglo-Florentines, this can be seen in the ways their imperial understanding of the world affected the way in which they interacted with Italians, or indeed how they interpreted local events around them. Even though physical distance separated them from their fellow British subjects, they shared a common sentiment of being part of a greater empire. This manifested itself most clearly during the First World War, but it is also possible to see a cultural link back before the war. As Stephen Kern's cultural history of the concepts of time and space at the beginning of the twentieth century has shown, technology was to play a significant part in changing the way individuals thought about the world and their place in it.[200] Therefore, even though they were influenced by traditional ideas that Italy should remain an untouched repository of historical culture, the worldview of the Anglo-Florentines during this period was affected by the rapidity of new methods of communication and travel that changed the ways they viewed their empire, themselves and Florence.

Writing to her friend Margaret Symonds in March 1900 (during the Anglo-Boer War), Waterfield complained of the impending visit of distant relatives from England to Poggio Gherardo. She was not looking forward to the visit of the Markbys as they were 'pro boer [sic] & we are all so terribly patriotic in this house that we fly

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[199] Merrill, "'Old Maids, Sister-Artists, and Aesthetes': Charlotte Cushman and her circle of 'jolly bachelors' construct an expatriate women's community in Rome," 371.
[200] Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space,* 211-240.

into a passion if anyone dares even to say 'Poor old Mrs Krueger'!'[201] This display of patriotism is reflective of the loyalty that Waterfield and the rest of her family in Italy felt for an empire they regarded themselves as part of, regardless of the vast distances separating them from the fighting in South Africa. In an earlier letter, Waterfield's martial spirit had been raised by the accounts of the fighting that she had read in newspapers. She wrote to Symonds, confessing that at the present moment 'I read three papers a day & dream all night I am fighting the enemy – but I must not run on about it for it becomes a perfect mania.'[202]

In later life Waterfield would play a major role in the production and distribution in Tuscany of pro-British propaganda during the First World War, eventually organising the British effort in the region after her immediate superior as coordinator, the author Edward Hutton, was recalled to London. Apart from helping to found the British Institute in 1917, she would also serve as Italian correspondent for the London *Observer* during the interwar years. She conducted several interviews with Benito Mussolini and found herself the victim of Fascist intimidation.[203] Her early displays of patriotism, however, reflect both her fascination with violence, which would not abate during her long lifetime, but also her feeling of connection with the struggles faced by British soldiers on the front line in the Transvaal. Empire in the case of Waterfield, then, was not so much bounded by geographical space, but could transcend it to become cultural and deeply embedded in the consciousness of those expatriates who lived beyond its borders.

Kern has pointed out that one of the effects of new technology in the years leading up to the First World War was a dramatic reduction in the amount of time it took to communicate over long distances. In particular, inventions like the rotary press allowed for the wider distribution of newspapers to audiences.[204] As Kern argues, a result of the new idea of simultaneity was 'a growing sense of unity among people formerly isolated by distance and a lack of communication.'[205] This sense of a growing unity amongst remote communities can clearly be seen in Waterfield's passionate declarations of support for the British troops in South Africa, as she felt

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[201] Waterfield to Symonds-Vaughn, March 1900, British Institute Archives WAT:1:G:76ff3-6, BIA, Florence.
[202] Waterfield to Symonds-Vaughn, 1 January 1900, WAT:1:G:75:ff1-2, BIA, Florence.
[203] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*: 225-27.
[204] Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, 67-71.
[205] Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, 88.

their struggle was very much her own. Before the invention of the telegraph or other modern means of communication, news about the conflict in South Africa would have taken much longer to reach the foreign community in Florence, and it is doubtful that Waterfield would have spent her nights dreaming of fighting off Boer guerrillas if she had heard the news about the Battle of Magersfontein several months after it had occurred, instead of the two weeks between the battle and her letter to Symonds.[206]

Their affinity with the empire also affected Anglo-Florentine views of Italian society and politics. Though both the *Florence Herald* and the *Italian Gazette* claimed to be cultural conduits between Anglo-Florentines and their Italian neighbours, it was often the case that their explanation of Italian points of view could take on a slightly patronising air. A good example is an article in the *Gazette*, which recognised the validity of Italy's war against the Ottoman empire in 1911 as a means of re-establishing the nation's standing on a global stage as a rising imperial power.[207] As John Mackenzie has pointed out, imperialism was generally regarded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a means of arresting a nation's moral decline,[208] and the *Gazette* article fits the Italian case within an evolutionary progression from nation to empire, through which Britain had already advanced. In fact, the superiority of British civilisation over its Latin counterpart was highlighted in several letters to the *Herald* in response to a translation of an article found in an Italian daily, the *Tribuna.* Entitled 'The English According to Others: Are They Obtuse?', the article, based on the original from the *Tribuna*'s London correspondent, was clearly printed to rouse a reaction from its readers:

> "The English sprit," continues the [*Tribuna's*] correspondent, "by a fortunate obtuseness does not succeed in understanding these ['perfect' cosmological] theories which shut the world and its things in a golden cage, and therefore is not inclined to apply them. Thus it pushes on between good and evil, and with much prudence on one hand and the other, by the earthly road, without being tempted to flights in the seventh heaven of the ideal."[209]

This thinly veiled insult to British intellect did not go unnoticed. In the next issue of the *Herald*, two letter writers voiced their dissatisfaction with the *Tribuna*'s

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[206] The Battle of Magersfontein took place on 11 December 1899.
[207] 'Peace between Italy and Turkey', *Italian Gazette*, 12 October 1912, 1.
[208] Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 6.
[209] 'The English According to Others: Are They Obtuse?', *Florence Herald*, 30 October 1906, 2. Unfortunately the editor of the *Florence Herald* did not provide a reference for when exactly this article was published.

unnamed correspondent. 'T.C.W.' was incensed at the Italian claim to superior intelligence (though none seems to have been printed in the original article):

> This claim of greater intelligence continually claimed by the Latin peoples strikes me as absurd. In what way are they more intelligent than we? They certainly have as a race more aptitude for the arts, but they are far below others in grasping the needs of practical life, which means that they are deficient in a very important part of intelligence ... As one who has travelled and dwelt in every part of the world I venture to say that there is nowhere else such a high degree of healthy and real intelligence than in England...[210]

A second letter, from 'Briton', echoed this sentiment, asking if the editor might 'not tell [the *Tribuna*] through your columns that John Bull has more solid intelligence than all the *Tribuna* correspondents put together, and that before posting as a judge of British character he might learn to avoid errors of criticism and fact.'[211]

Italy's desire to modernise her cities also led to a loud chorus of protests from Anglo-Florentines. Residents were worried about the modern entertainments the Florentine municipality was about to introduce in order to lure more tourists to the city. There were grave concerns that cultured Florence, sullied by the lure of modernity and mass tourism, might become an Italian copy of a British seaside resort. According to several letter writers to both the *Italian Gazette* and *Florence Herald*, the class of traveller who came to Florence would not care for the same vulgar amusements found in places such as Margate or Brighton. These Anglo-Florentines were eager for their visions of Florence to be appreciated by the newspapers' editorial staff as well as Florentine municipal government, who (it was intimated) should be grateful for the advice they were getting. A correspondent to the *Herald*, styling himself 'An Old Florentine', listed his grievances with the modern city in a letter full of harsh criticism for both the paper (which had solicited readers' opinions as to how Florence might best be 'improved') and the municipal government, and was typical of many letters both newspapers received. He wrote:

> Twenty years ago, Florence was delightful; delightful, because [it was] unspoilt ... What is it at present? A noisy, bustling, crowded place, invaded by ill-managed and unnecessary trams, ablaze with cinematographs, bereft of intellectual life, aping the worst styles of modern architecture, crammed full of drinking-shops, and presenting all

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[210] 'Replies to 'Are the English Obtuse', *Florence Herald*, 6 November 1906, 9.
[211] Ibid.

> the symptoms of being on the downgrade which leads to utter philistinism and vulgarity.[212]

The people who were attracted by such amusements should 'go to Margate! In Florence we care for something better.'[213] 'An Old Florentine's diatribe appropriates Florence as the author's own personal space in which common entertainments for the masses have been allowed to vulgarise the city by its ignorant government, which he seems to regard as a personal insult. Even the editor of the *Herald* was accused of 'leading a movement the object of which is to attract visitors whose greatest pleasure is found in music halls, casinos and circuses … [Florence] is terribly vulgarized already. Do you wish to see it transformed into a sort of merry-go-round for the benefit of hotelkeepers?'[214] The city, by his reasoning, was better undeveloped and kept away from the ravages of the modern age, and he called on the 'shades of Dante, Savonarola and Lorenzo!'[215] to add to his argument. Yet the wishes of the local Italians were not taken into account in his letter, nor in the response that the *Herald* published, which assured its readers that

> Neither we nor members of the foreign colony would advocate anything which was not in keeping with the high standard of taste reigning among our fellow-residents … At the same time, whatever their views, we should like our readers to discuss the subject … It is only by knowing what the majority of people want that good can be done or evil be averted.[216]

As was typical for Florence's expatriate community, neither letter nor response attempted to present the Italian view of the matter of modern amusements in the city, or the benefits of modernisation to the average Florentine.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that all of Anglo-Florentine society was vehemently opposed to modernisation of any sort. The editor of the *Florence Herald*, for example, took a more prosaic approach, noting that

> With the slums disappeared many a quaint nook, many an artistic column, and many a valuable frieze. But was the loss compensated by the gain? We think so. The health of a people is surely worth any sacrifice… The old lament, however, of what the town lost by change still lingers in some breasts, though probably the same persons would fill the columns of newspapers with complaints had they to live near such spots to-day.[217]

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[212] 'The Future of Florence', *Florence Herald*, 7 January 1908, 9.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid.
[215] 'The Future of Florence', *Florence Herald*, 7 January 1908, 9.
[216] 'Response', *Florence Herald*, 7 January 1908, 9.
[217] 'Editorial', *Florence Herald*, 30 October 1906, 1.

Both the *Italian Gazette* and the *Herald* were generally more cautious about criticising the municipal government, though perhaps because it enjoyed the financial support of the Società degli Albergatori di Firenze (the hoteliers association of Florence), the *Herald* was freer to make harsher comments about the government's effectiveness, as seen in the affair of the Stibbert museum.

The paradox of Anglo-Florentine opinion, as found in these newspapers, which encouraged Italians to emulate aspects of British civilisation, but denied them the right to fully modernise their country in the same way Britain had done, finds a parallel in the British colonies. Tim Harper has studied the ways in which the Chinese in Malaya negotiated with the colonial British government during the early decades of the twentieth century. He notes that however Anglicised Chinese traders might become (a development encouraged by British colonial authorities), they were still subject to racial barriers that prevented them gaining equal social status within Malayan society. Wealthy traders, for instance, were still forced to travel second class on trains whilst their British counterparts enjoyed the freedom of being able to travel first class.[218] Subject peoples, and Italians as well, were to be encouraged to engage with their British superiors in trade and to copy their example, but would never be regarded as totally equal, owing to defects in their racial and ethical makeup. This explains how British residents could be supportive of Italian attempts to gain colonial territories overseas (the defining mark of a new and powerful nation), and yet derisive of efforts to modernise Florence. Italians could upgrade the amenities of their hotels and provide British goods in their shops, but they were to be guided by the knowledge and opinions of British expatriates who more fully understood the pitfalls of modernity. Indeed, they were expected paradoxically to maintain their pristine historical state, untouched by modern development whilst simultaneously providing comforts familiar to British travellers.

[218] Harper, "The British 'Malayans'," 247.

Conclusion

At the start of the First World War, the Anglo-Florentines formed part of a larger expatriate community drawn to Florence's artistic and historical heritage. Unlike their ancestors who had come on the Grand Tour or even earlier before, these British residents carved out a 'colony' of their own, buying villas and establishing businesses and churches. Seeing the city as a place of refuge from the relentless pace of the modernising world, they were deeply suspicious of any attempts to modernise Florence, and often directed their ire against the Florentine government in rhetoric influenced by Britain's experience of empire, casting Italians in the roles of ignorant natives. Assured of their superiority over modern Italy, these expatriates used language similar to that of their countrymen who lived within sight of the colonial frontier.

Advancements in communications ensured that there was a constant supply of news from Britain's empire as well, reinforcing cultural ties back to Britain, but also to the wider empire. As such, these ties formed the basis of a patriotic Anglo-Florentine identity that would manifest itself during the First World War. It also would lead to the division of Florence's once internationalist foreign community along more pronounced national lines. A desire to do their duty for the empire would lead many Anglo-Florentines like Lina Waterfield to play a role in the dissemination of pro-British propaganda in the city, and set the basis for the eventual foundation of the British Institute of Florence.

Chapter 3
"Serving their country": Anglo-Florentine newspapers and initial responses to the First World War

The start of the First World War signalled a serious change in the way Anglo-Florentines thought of themselves, both as loyal subjects of the British empire and as residents of the city of Florence. Cultural links to the empire roused their patriotism and this gave rise to a desire on the part of many to do their duty for Britain's war against the Central Powers. Newspapers such as the *Italian Gazette* and *Florence Herald*, once devoted to cataloguing amusing anecdotes and the social movements of Florence's Anglo-American community, became vociferous defenders and promoters of the Allied war effort. Similarly, individuals such as the future co-founder of the British Institute in Florence, Lina Waterfield decided to contribute their efforts towards the unofficial production and distribution of pro-Allied propaganda in the region of Tuscany, which was regarded as being particularly susceptible to persuasion by German propagandists. In time, she would be seconded to the Foreign Office's News Department propaganda effort in Tuscany, and from this the idea for the British Institute of Florence first emerged.

Hostility from Italians and the efforts of German propagandists in Florence and the wider region of Tuscany, both real and imagined, were a constant anxiety for Anglo-Florentines who became involved in Allied propaganda work. Furthermore, their efforts to perform their patriotic duty would for the first time see the demarcation of a clear Anglo-Florentine identity that linked them to their empire and designated them cultural mediators between their compatriots and Italians.

The effects of the First World War on almost every aspect of British society have been well-documented. From how poets conceptualised their experiences of war, to the experience of nursing sisters, and the evolution of a rabidly anti-German press which delighted in printing atrocity stories, historians have documented the tremendous impact war wrecked on everyday life in Britain and how the conflict forced a reassessment of both patriotism and British identity.[1] Recent works have

[1] Bernard Bergonzi, *Heroes' Twilight: a Study of the Literature of the Great War* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1980); Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Janet Watson, *Fighting*

forced a re-examination of long-held beliefs about the nature of how propaganda and enthusiasm affected responses to the conflict.[2] What has not been covered, as John Fisher has suggested, is the impact of the First World War on expatriate British communities.[3] It is important to take into account how distance from the empire, as well as an sense of imperial belonging, affected the ways in which these communities identified themselves as loyal subjects and patriots.

This chapter explores how the Anglo-Florentine identity espoused by the *Gazette* and the *Herald*, as well as the early propaganda activities of Lina Waterfield reflect the ways in which Britons in Florence related to their empire in the early days of the war. Since propaganda activity in Florence did not come under the direction of the News Department until 1917, it is important to show how early ideas of Anglo-Florentine identity and patriotism influenced the direction and scope of the British Institute's activities. These are most clearly articulated in the newspaper articles studied here, and in Waterfield's reasons for taking up unofficial propaganda work. Many themes found in the newspapers, too, are common to later News Department propaganda produced for Tuscany. This chapter will also examine how these initial responses to the war sharply divided the international community in Florence along nationally-bounded lines, eclipsing the pre-war cosmopolitan atmosphere amongst the city's foreign residents.

Being British in Florence: patriotism and duty

In the years before the war, being British in Florence meant belonging to the city's wider international community, which had attracted intellectuals and socialites from around Europe and America. Florence's reputation as a cultural centre was further strengthened when the German community, which boasted prominent individuals in the field of art history such as Heinrich Brockhaus and Wilhelm von Bode established the Art Historical Institute or *Kunsthistorisches Institut* devoted to the study of Florence's Renaissance art in 1897, and the French followed by opening a French

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Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[2] For example, Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 24-25.

[3] John Fisher, "Keeping 'the Old Flag flying': the British community in Morocco and the British Morocco Merchants Association, 1914-24," *Historical Research* 83, no. 222 (2010): 719-46, 719.

Institute in 1907.[4] Bernd Roeck argues that until war broke out in 1914, a feeling of internationalism pervaded the expatriate community.[5] For British residents, the outbreak of the war would shatter this utopian notion in favour of a sharply delineated national identity informed by a sense of a shared Classical past with Italy and an imperial worldview.

Historians have noted that the British enthusiasm for the war, at least in its early stages, can be traced to the notion of a 'cleansing war', which was influenced by imperial rhetoric. As John Mackenzie has observed, the idea of war rejuvenating a nation bordering on dangerous indolence was a common imperialist trope.[6] Nicoletta Gullace has pointed out, too, that a general anxiety regarding the degeneration of the British race in the years before the war prompted politicians and army recruiters to portray volunteering for active service as a means of reinvigorating British masculinity.[7] W.J. Reader notes that the conflict was 'in some obscure way a wanted war', adding that by the outbreak of the conflict, patriotism and imperialism became inseparable.[8]

The same symbiotic relationship between patriotism and imperialism was found in Florence as well, although the reaction to the beginning of the war, as recorded in the Anglo-Florentine newspapers, was delayed somewhat since both the *Florence Herald* and the *Italian Gazette* were on their usual summer break. However, the first issue (5 November 1914) of the more stridently patriotic *Italian Gazette* after the summer hiatus sounded a resounding call to arms, running a bevy of articles detailing everything from a summary of the latest developments on the fronts and poems extolling the virtues of war to an article on Anglo-Florentines involved in the war effort. There was denunciation of Vernon Lee, who had written a letter to the New York *Nation* to protest against H.G. Wells' plan to blockade German ports.

The most striking aspect of this first wartime issue is its profiling of various Anglo-Florentines who were involved in the British war effort, particularly because

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[4] The French Institute is discussed in the following chapter.
[5] Bernd Roeck, *Florence 1900: the Quest for Arcadia*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 252.
[6] John M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: the Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 6.
[7] Nicoletta F. Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 40-41.
[8] W. J. Reader, *At duty's call: a study in obsolete patriotism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 15-16, 40, and Peter Parker, *The Old Lie: the Great War and the Public-School Ethos* (London: Constable, 1987), 54.

the article printed the letters of two brothers who had volunteered for Kitchener's army, which capture the popular enthusiasm for the war in its first stages. In keeping with what Reader has written about the sudden overwhelming enthusiasm of the first few months of the war, the *Gazette's* publication of these letters is a clear demonstration of how the patriotic fervour for battle transcended the geographical boundaries of empire. Back in Britain, as Reader points out, over 750,000 men had joined the army within the first two months of the war. [9] The *Gazette* was thus effectively declaring itself and the British expatriate community as much a part of the war effort as their fellow British subjects.

Eric Johnson, the older of the two Anglo-Florentine brothers, had left for Britain in the years before the war to work at an unnamed bank. His letter to his parents in Florence is poignant and warrants extended quotation:

> "I am to-day one of the happiest chaps in the country. Since this morning I am a soldier in His Majesty's Forces. For the last few weeks we have been balloting in our Bank for young chaps to join the Army, and until to-day I have not been among the lucky ones. I was nearly on the point of going off when this morning another fellow and I were sent for and we were told we had the Bank's consent to join. We could go straight off and enlist. I nearly dropped with joy."[10]

Jack's letter is no less enthusiastic, and full of confidence in the righteousness of the British cause. After describing how five hundred of his fellow volunteers sang hymns and were treated to a sermon, Jack closes his letter with the observation that it was 'no wonder that England wins, *with a just cause and with such boys as we see here.*'[11] Unfortunately the scarcity of information provided by the *Gazette* regarding the brothers' backgrounds or details of enlistment has meant that their ultimate fate remains unknown.[12] Also included in the same issue was a poem by the flowery named 'Rose de Boheme', which utilised both bucolic and martial imagery in its plea for divine aid:

> England, where peaceful homesteads smile,
> Where hedge and flowery bank beguile

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[9] Reader, *At Duty's Call*, 15.
[10] "Serving Their Country: Florence British Residents in England and at the Front," *Italian Gazette*, 5 November 1914, 1.
[11] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[12] A search on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website returns 545 entries for 'Jack Johnson' and 212 entries for 'Eric Johnson'. As the *Gazette* only printed the men's names and not even their ages, it is impossible to narrow the results down any farther.

The traveller with fragrant wile,
AVENGE US
Free England, lo! We cry to thee,
Crush out the Vandals ruthlessly[13]

Entitled *Louvain*, the poem directly references the infamous sacking of the Belgian city by German forces. The incident was one that Adrian Gregory has identified as being among the first atrocity stories to be given extensive coverage in the *Daily Mail*, one that he notes was integral to engendering anti-German sentiments amongst the British public.[14] This was followed by an even more lurid piece, penned by Mrs. E.H. Procter. Entitled 'Don't Wait, Enlist Today', it warned young men that if they did not take the initiative and join up, Britain might end up like Belgium,

You may see your own dear mother
Struck down by Uhlan blades,
While your unprotected sisters
Share the fate of Belgian maids.
...
Still there is time for action,
Listen to K[itchener]. of K[hartoum].,
"Your King and Country need you,
Come and enlist to-day."
Join all our brave defenders,
Scatter the brutal foe,
With all our Empire praying,
God bless you where you go.[15]

Procter's language is emotionally intense, playing on fears of barbourous Germans defiling British women, but also referencing an imperial hero in the form of Lord Kitchener. By championing the notion of patriotic duty and using the image of the entire British empire praying for their soldiers, she suggested that both were not restricted by geography or borders, instead being a spiritual link that bound all British subjects, even those in Florence.

Though less ardent in its language than the *Italian Gazette*, the *Florence Herald* also made sure to point out where its sympathies lay. Its first issue after the summer carried an editorial stating in no uncertain terms that any neutrality on the part of the paper and its staff was impossible. For the editor of the *Herald*, forming an

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[13] Rose de Boheme "Louvain," *Italian Gazette*, November 5 1914, 2.
[14] Gregory, *The Last First World War*, 50.
[15] E.H. Procter, "Don't Wait, Enlist Today," *Italian Gazette*, 28 January 1915, 1.

opinion of the conflict was the moral duty of all concerned: 'It is not only a duty to form an opinion … but in all well thinking citizens of "this world" it is the inevitable consequence of having a conscience.'[16] That this conscience would have pro-British inclinations was a given; as later British propaganda showed, and as Eberhard Demm and Cate Haste point out, the British cause was portrayed as the moral opposite to that of Germany's.

Germans were depicted as having callously started the conflict in order to gain more overseas territories for her empire and causing a threat to Western civilisation.[17] By printing letters from volunteers and poetry heavy with symbolic images of Britain and that referenced Kitchener, and by declaring their unwavering support for the war, the editors of the *Herald* and *Gazette* ensured that their patriotism towards the wider British empire was noticed, both by Anglo-Florentines and by any other resident who read their newspapers.

The British expatriates' enthusiasm for the war in Florence can be compared with the exploits of their compatriots in other expatriate communities outside the empire, such as in Argentina and China. Anglo-Argentine identity was also strongly patriotic, with many young Anglo-Argentine men volunteering for armed service at the outbreak of the First World War. Out of the 28,000 strong community in 1914, 5,000 men volunteered for the front, of whom three-quarters were killed.[18] In addition to the two ambulances and airplanes provided to the British army by the community, Anglo-Argentine women also contributed to the effort by setting up Queen Mary Needlework Guilds to provide soldiers with clothing and by establishing a British Women's Patriotic Association in September 1914.[19] Similarly, a crowd of 7000 people gathered to send off a contingent of 110 men in Shanghai, and the community lost 200 volunteers in the war.[20] The statistics for the Anglo-Florentine volunteers are not available, but it is clear that the many British subjects living overseas felt an

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[16] "Fair Play", *Florence Herald*, 31 October 1914, 1.
[17] Cate Haste, *Keep the home fires burning: propaganda in the First World War* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), 22; Eberhard Demm, "Propaganda and Caricature in the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, no. 1 (1993): 163-92, 175.
[18] John Walker, ""A Little Corner of the Empire": British Travel Writers in the Argentine: an Overview," *Inter-American Review of Bibliography* 44, no. 2 (1994): 265-81, 278.
[19] Arthur L. Holder, *Activities of the British Community in Argentina during the Great War 1914-1919* (Buenos Aires: The Buenos Aires Herald, 1920).
[20] Robert Bickers, "Shanghailanders and Others: British Communities in China, 1843 - 1957," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),269-301, 269.

obligation to defend their homeland and empire.[21] Geographical distance clearly played no great barrier to expatriates' patriotism, and did not prevent them from engaging with Britain's war.

Another way in which the *Gazette* displayed its patriotism was through denouncing a letter written by Vernon Lee, which was covered in the previous chapter. Unfortunately the author of the article in the *Gazette* remained anonymous, so there is no way of discerning if his or her comments towards Lee were not informed by personal animosity, but there is no disputing the intended effect. Expressing disgust at Lee's horror at the author H. G. Wells' plan to starve Germany into surrender by asking American ships to block other ships carrying war materials and provisions to dock at German ports, the anonymous correspondent of the *Gazette* noted:

> Miss Paget is horrified that Mr. H.G. Wells should have proposed to Americans the reduction of Germany by starvation but she has not a word of sympathy for the Belgians, reduced to beg their bread in foreign lands by Germany's hordes of pillagers.[22]

The article painted Lee in no uncertain terms as a 'confederate of Germany' and observed scathingly that 'Miss Paget [would have] been "blameless" in the eyes of her countrywomen had she stayed her disloyalty.'[23] That a prolific author and long-time British resident would display such unpatriotic sentiments was unforgivable to the *Gazette's* correspondent, but the *Gazette's* printing of the response to Lee's letter without reproducing the original itself is telling: obviously the newspaper would not print views that might be considered sympathetic to Germany, in keeping with contemporary attitudes.[24] Yet by pointing out Lee's disloyal views, the *Gazette* was restating and emphasising its own patriotism and moral outrage that any right-thinking British resident might consider that the German cause had any validity.

Until they were forced to shut down by rising costs and government censorship – the *Gazette* in 1915, the *Herald* in 1917 – both newspapers printed articles that portrayed the Allied forces as better prepared and more successful than

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[21] The First World War memorial in Holy Trinity Church, for example, is dedicated simply 'In Memory of Those connected with Florence who gave their lives for their Country.' No names are listed. William F. Copinger, *Holy Trinity Church Florence: Forty Years of its History* (Florence: L'Impronta, 1946), 50.
[22] "A Lady's Speech: Miss Paget and Germany ", *Italian Gazette*, 5 November 1915, 2.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Haste, *Keep The Home Fires Burning*: 3.

that of Germany and her allies. Some were translations from Italian newspapers, printed in order to show the support of Italian journalists for the Allies, but also to highlight the morality of Britain's war and to encourage solidarity between the two nations, especially in the months before Italy entered the war in May 1915.[25] In one such article, found in the *Italian Gazette*, Luigi Einaudi, the economist and future president of the Italian republic, designated the British empire the spiritual heir of Rome:

> The British, and not the Holy Roman Empire, nor the present German Empire, nor the Napoleonic, is the true spiritual heir and perfector of the finest political creation the world has ever known – the Roman Empire.[26]

Other translated articles emphasised the preparedness of the British soldier and helped to project the idea of military superiority. One example of this was the translated dispatch of Paolo Scarfoglio from Melville, found in the issue of 5 November 1914. A war correspondent for *La Stampa* and the *Resto del Carlino*, he wrote:

> As in all the villages occupied by the British the roads are barricaded. A sentry, almost always an enormous Scotsman with naked legs, points with his bayonet to the way that must be taken to avoid the barricade. The Englishman's precaution is never an improvisation. It is not the sudden invention of a man who feels himself in danger and attempts to parry it, but it is the whole of a series of systems thought out and strictly applied.[27]

Cheered by the respected military historian Enrico Barone's assessment of the British fighting spirit, and the German navy's inadequacy, the Gazette printed his belief that,

> Certainly no Zeppelin bombs in London can force England to ask for mercy. With all the most profound respect the German fleet is entitled to, no one in Germany, I think, can reasonably hope that it is capable of inflicting on the British Fleet such a defeat as could win Germany the mastery of the seas and then go and impose peace on English soil.[28]

Such confidence in the superiority of British forces was echoed in the *Florence Herald*, which provided the following augury at the beginning of 1915,:

> We do not believe the war will last very long … here is our forecast: The war will be concluded within the present year. Till next spring the war

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[25] For example: 'In the Italian Press', *Italian Gazette*, January 21 1915, 2, 'Rule Britannia', *Florence Herald*, January 23 1915, 2, 'The British Army's Vigilance', *Italian Gazette*, November 5 1914, 1.
[26] 'In the Italian Press', *Italian Gazette*, January 21 1915, 2.
[27] 'The British Army's Vigilance', *Italian Gazette*, November 5 1914, 1.
[28] 'Italian Military News', *The Italian Gazette*, 5 November 1914, 1.

> will go on more or less like at present, but when this season of the year is reached, it is not unlikely that while England comes to the field with fresh forces, Germany will be able to face the emergency only with fresh troops representing her utmost effort. ... In our judgement it seems impossible, barring a miracle, that Germany should win ... the task she has undertaken is simply gigantic.[29]

Given their pre-war roles as purveyors of news about Florence's international community, both newspapers still devoted a few pages at the end of every issue to pressing social concerns. In keeping with the early hope that the war would be quickly won, the *Italian Gazette* was at pains to point out to travellers unsure about making the journey to Florence that tourist numbers for the season of 1914-1915 were unchanged from the previous year. Attributing this to the ability of Allied forces to keep the German army at bay, the *Gazette* reassured its readers:

> That people who could remain at home have come all the way to Italy is another mark of the calm confidence the nation has in the power of the Allies to stem the enemy's inroads ... No one of British or American nationality need be deterred from returning to Italy ... Furnished villas and apartments will be obtainable at reduced rents ... and the leading shops continue to receive regular supplies of British goods...[30]

Inevitably, though, the war affected how British expatriates interacted with German residents, who might have once been close friends. Indeed, the *Gazette* ran an issue dedicated to the question of 'The War and Social Interaction', in which correspondents debated the viability of remaining friends with German residents in Italy during hostilities, which most of the letter writers seemed to think was inappropriate during times of hostility.[31] In the same issue, however, the social movements column reported that 'a good deal of gaiety is taking place at the Anglo-American Hotel for on a Sunday last it was the scene of an afternoon tea given by Madame Allatini; on Monday a bridge party and yesterday there was another tea.'[32]

As the war dragged on, these notices became inevitably less cheerful, with one observation in the *Gazette* bemoaning the fact that the war had become the central topic of conversation for most of Florentine society:

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[29] "War Dramatis Personae: Pythonesses, Augurs, Haruspices and Prophets," *Florence Herald*, 9 January 1915, 1.
[30] 'Italy and Visitors', *Italian Gazette*, November 5 1914, 2.
[31] 'Correspondence', *Italian Gazette*, 17 December 1914, 3.
[32] 'Social Note', *Italian Gazette*, 17 December 1914, 4.

> War and rumours of war occupy the minds of Florentines these days to the exclusion of almost everything else. Hardly a family but has some member liable to be called up for military service, and the thought of possible mobilisation in the near future brings anxiety to the hearts of many wives and mothers.[33]

The language used in this short passage is more evocative of the general mood in Florence even during the initial stages of the war than many other articles found in either the *Gazette* or the *Herald*, as it shows how the issue of mobilisation and the possible outbreak of fighting in Florence itself was a concern for the city's British residents. In this way, Anglo-Florentines could claim to share a common anxiety with their fellow British subjects. Compared also, with the stridently patriotic poems published earlier, which were designed to inspire confidence and support for the war effort, the passage above reflects the sombre realities of living in Florence in the war.

During the course of the conflict, both newspapers commented on British attitudes towards Italy's military situation, before and after the signing of the Treaty of London on 26 April 1915. Often, the sentiments on the ground in Florence were at odds with general political opinion back in Britain. The *Gazette*, for example, reported somewhat testily on 26 November 1914 on the attitude that some London newspapers were taking to Italy's inability to commit herself to the Allied war effort:

> It is unfortunate that at this critical juncture some leading newspapers understand so inadequately the cross-currents of Italian politics, and that the advice they tender is often more calculated to irritate than to persuade.[34]

Though the editor of the *Florence Herald* acknowledged his newspaper had a limited circulation and a negligible impact on the views of the Italian public, he felt that 'a paper published in Italy for English speaking readers … has a higher duty to perform and may eventually raise its humble voice to help strengthen Latin and Anglo-Saxon friendship at a moment when these two elect branches of the human Family are heroically defending the cause of Civilisation.'[35] This sense of duty to foster stronger Anglo-Italian ties is noteworthy, and tapped into the already long-

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[33] 'Our Florence Letter', *Italian Gazette*, March 11 1915, 1.
[34] 'Italy's attitude – From a London Correspondent', *Italian Gazette*, 26 November 1914, 4.
[35] "To Our Readers", *Florence Herald*, 27 November 1915, 1. At this point Italy had entered the war on the side of the Allies, after the signing of the Treaty of London on 26 April 1915, in which Italy was promised her former territories held by Austria in exchange for her declaring war on the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

standing British tradition of equating civilisation with the Mediterranean, and indeed, with Italy in particular.[36] The editor of the *Herald* was intimating that by helping to improve Anglo-Italian relations, British residents were playing their part in defending the stability and longevity of Western civilisation itself.

Defining an Anglo-Florentine self

An important aspect of the anti-German rhetoric found in official British propaganda was the disavowal of any cultural links between Britain and Germany and a championing of the Latinate heritage of the empire.[37] For the British residents of Florence, this would be a defining feature of their wartime identity. The *Florence Herald*, quoting from the same article from the *Corriere della Sera* by Einaudi as the *Gazette* had, opted to dwell less on the image of Britain as the spiritual successor of the Roman empire, preferring to reprint Einaudi's observation that Britain was protecting the future of Western civilisation. Referring to the empire's policy of gradually introducing self-government in its colonies, Einaudi was of the opinion that

> England is apparently the only country to have learned through past experience to foster freedom and the spirit of independence in her colonies, and ... the weakening of England might be the loss to the cause of civilisation of one of the greatest factors of progress.[38]

One reason why the *Florence Herald* would have published this passage in particular was no doubt because it followed the line of official British propaganda on the necessity of war. Britain's entry into the war was seen as the defence of 'poor little Belgium' against the evil German invader, who disregarded previous agreements on Belgian neutrality.[39] Britain was dutifully defending the rights of small nations, a trope that was intimately connected with the imperial mission of bringing the light of British civilisation to those less fortunate. [40] Einaudi's views regarding the contribution of Britain in civilising the world, also, are in the tradition of the

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[36] Richard Bosworth, *Italy and the wider world 1860-1960* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 160; John Pemble, *The Mediterranean passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 139.
[37] John S. Ellis, "'The Methods Of Barbarism' and the 'Rights Of Small Nations': War Propaganda and British Pluralism," *Albion* 30, no. 1 (1998): 49-75, 70.
[38] 'Rule Britannia', *Florence Herald*, January 23 1915, 2.
[39] Haste, *Keep The Home Fires Burning*: 22; Demm, "Propaganda and Caricature in the First World War," 175.
[40] Parker, *The Old Lie*, 54.

Anglophile leanings of the exiled Risorgimento patriots studied by Maurizio Isabella. In echoing the beliefs of thinkers such as Ugo Foscolo, or Giuseppe Pecchio, who had claimed that Britain had prospered because of the freedom her society provided, Einaudi and the other Italian authors quoted in the *Herald* and *Gazette* illustrate the continuing admiration of some Italian intellectuals for Britain, another reason why the *Herald* printed his views.[41]

As Duncan Bell has pointed out, British imperialists in the late nineteenth century traced the foundations of their empire and its civilising mission to the example provided by Rome, though they were careful to distance themselves from that empire's eventual fall and dissolution.[42] The invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar and his troops, however, provided Anglo-Florentines with an appropriate starting point from which to begin the history of Anglo-Italian relations; from the Romans who brought civilisation to the British Isles, through the Renaissance which had inspired Shakespeare, to events closer to the present day, with the Risorgimento and the exploits of its hero Garibaldi . Printed not long after Italy's declaration of war, the following verse by Nesta de Robeck, a religious author of the lives of saints, employs familial imagery with a heavy hand to emphasise the relationship between Britain and Italy:

> What English heart does not go out today
> To thee, oh Italy, as we see thee stand,
> Great Latin mother of our northern land,
> Beside us as our sister in the fray -
> For we remember how, when far away
> In the dim past thou stretchedst out thy hand
> ...
> Always we loved thee, yea and love thee still[43]

It is interesting to note that de Robeck names Italy explicitly as the spiritual ancestor of Britain, but intimates that the two countries are now on equal terms as sisters. This was a common British view of Italy, influenced by Britain's imperial experience;[44] though Italy was heralded as the ancestor of modern Britain, she was

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[41] Maurizio Isabella, *Risorgimento in exile: Italian émigrés and the liberal international in the post-Napoleonic era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 117-22.
[42] Duncan Bell, "From ancient to modern in Victorian imperial thought," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 3 (2006): 735-59, 745.
[43] Nesta de Robeck, "To Italy, May 1915," *Florence Herald*, 31 July 1915.
[44] Maura O'Connor, "Civilizing Southern Italy: British and Italian women and the cultural politics of European nation building," *Women's Writing* 10, no. 2 (2003): 253 - 68, 261-64.

regarded as a fallen civilisation, weakened by her many years of occupation from foreign invaders, and only lately united as a nation.[45] Britain, on the other hand, boasted a vast empire and superior armed forces. Part of being Anglo-Florentine was to appreciate the cultural heritage of Italy, but to recognise its ultimate inferiority to the power and civilising force of the British empire. Although they were located outside the realm of formal empire, it is clear that many British residents in Florence still regarded themselves as being very much part of it, if not physically, then very much in an almost spiritual sense where ties to Britain negated the separation of distance.

These feelings of connectedness to the wider empire despite geographical separation are evidently seen in Lina Waterfield's early displays of patriotism, especially in her response to reports of the Anglo-Boer war in the newspapers she read, and in her subsequent dreams that she was killing Boer soldiers.[46] Her patriotism also clearly influenced the propaganda work she undertook at the start of the war, when she educated Italians on the reasons for Britain joining the conflict. This had been prompted by what Waterfield felt was an alarming lack of information amongst Italians about the war.[47]

Moved to act by what she saw as a woefully inadequate attempt by the Italian authorities to inform their own citizens about the war, Waterfield started writing up her own propaganda posters. She eventually joined Angiolo Orvieto's *Assistenza e Resistenza* (Assistance and Resistance), an unofficial patriotic organisation attached to the elite Florentine social club, the Leonardo da Vinci, which coordinated talks and produced posters for distribution around Tuscany. Eager to do her part for her country as well, Waterfield produced a poster entitled 'What is England doing?' in order to promote the British cause widely amongst Italians who were often ignorant of the role Britain was playing in the war.[48]

Through these unofficial organisations, Orvieto, Waterfield and a group of like-minded intellectuals, Italian and British, first proposed the idea of a British lending library. It would be the first step in the initiative that would eventually result in the British Institute of Florence, founded under the auspices of the Foreign Office

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[45] Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*, 141.
[46] Lina Waterfield to Margaret Symonds-Vaughn, 1 January 1900, Waterfield Collection (WAT), WAT:1:G:75:ff1-2, British Institute Archives (BIA), Florence.
[47] Lina Waterfield, *Castle in Italy: An Autobiography* (London: John Murray, 1961), 163.
[48] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 164-65.

back in London. [49] That Waterfield's efforts led to the establishment of the Institute demonstrates how ideas of Anglo-Florentine patriotism were intimately connected with propaganda in wartime Florence, and indeed, shows how grassroots efforts by expatriates could eventually become officially sanctioned activities, as Philip M. Taylor has argued was typical in this period.[50]

Given the nature of the conflict, the Anglo-Florentine identity espoused by the *Gazette* and *Herald* was also explicitly anti-German. This is unsurprising, but shows how Anglo-Florentines defined themselves along nationalist lines, in contrast to pre-war ideas of being part of an indistinct international community. Their idea of 'German-ness' could equate the Kaiser and his troops with Biblical notions of evil. In a 1915 article in the *Italian Gazette*, a writer who called himself 'An Old Volunteer' encouraged his fellow Anglo-Florentines to regard the war as a blessing in disguise, for there was now an opportunity to check the destruction threatened by German expansionism, which he claimed had been slowly gathering force in the years leading up to the war. In fact, instead of growing weary of the fighting, the British and their allies should welcome the opportunity to rid the world of German aggression:

> Some day we may realize with thankfulness how important it was that the wild animal should come out into the open and offer us the golden opportunity to kill it. And as for hatred, does not the fox hate the huntsman, the burglar the policeman, the assassin his judge? Now let us look forward to the thief hating his captor.[51]

Furthermore, 'An Old Volunteer' was of the opinion that it was the patriotic duty of all Anglo-Florentines to hate Germans, branding those who were squeamish about applying blanket condemnations to an entire people disloyal, proclaiming:

> At all events I sincerely hope a relative or friend of mine who has gone to war *without* hating the Germans will straightaway return to England and to his afternoon tea. Let Messrs. Lyttelton & Co. see their own families begging in the streets, their own livelihoods gone – and we shall listen with more patience to all this twaddle about loving the Germans and not humiliating them.[52]

'An Old Volunteer' was very clear on this point, writing that 'the Germans, to me, in this war represent evil. We are commanded in the Scriptures to hate evil.

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[49] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 167.
[50] Philip M. Taylor, "The Foreign Office and British Propaganda During the First World War," *Historical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1980): 875-98, 878.
[51] 'Approaching the Dawn', *Italian Gazette*, 22 April 1915,1.
[52] Ibid.

Therefore surely we should hate the Germans.'[53] In his equating of Germans to the spiritual offspring of Satan, the author of this tirade displays another trope found in British newspapers and propaganda, namely the vilification of all Germans as cruel and debased. This was a sentiment echoed by the celebrated author of fiction and Italian travelogues and peer, Richard Bagot. He viewed the war as a holy crusade:

> Let us make no mistake in this matter – neither we British nor our Italian friends among whom we live and to whom we look to uphold that splendid Latin civilization on the basis of which the British Empire itself has been founded and which has taught to the world the true meaning of the word Liberty [wanted this war]. England and her allies are waging a war not against Germany or the Germans but against "spiritual wickedness in high places" – a spiritual wickedness seeking to destroy all that is most noble in human nature and to set up in its place a military despotism supported by a perverse and abnormal "civilization" which is but a fungoid growth ...[54]

Despite Bagot's caveat that he was not, in fact, condemning all Germans or German culture, he then went on to add the following apocalyptic warning for those with pacifist or pro-German views, hinting that a German victory would only encourage more aggressive expansion (since this was one of the reasons she had gone to war), at Italy's cost:

> The victory of the most tyrannical and retrograde form of military despotism backed by the most material conception of civilization the world has ever known would prove the ruin of Italy as an independent nation, does not seem to strike our pro-Germans in this country. And yet they can hardly think that ... Germany ... would long remain content without supreme control of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, and of all the roads to the East.[55]

As has been observed, atrocity stories found in the British press painted German forces as capable of inhumane cruelty through graphic descriptions of the carnage wrought by soldiers.[56] This quickly roused a hatred of the enemy, inspiring greater resolution that the conflict at hand was righteous and worth supporting.[57] The press in Britain also utilised the tactic of defining Britishness as being contrary to

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Richard Bagot, 'Richard Bagot on the War,' *Florence Herald*, 6 February 1915, 1.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 68-69.
[57] Haste, *Keep The Home Fires Burning*, 3.

'lesser' German civilisation, illustrated eloquently by Bagot's tirade.[58] Thus, the newspapers in Florence fell in step with their counterparts back in Britain, evidencing that ideas prevalent in the British press affected notions of Anglo-Florentine identity.

Being Anglo-Florentine was also to act as a cultural conduit between Britain and Italy. Indeed, this was the niche that the *Italian Gazette* and *Florence Herald* had claimed, and a driving force behind the efforts of individuals like Hutton and Waterfield, who produced and organised the distribution of propaganda through official and unofficial channels. It was essential that Italians were made aware of the great threat to the civilised world that the war posed. Creating a clearer understanding between British residents and Italians had been the purpose of the newly revamped *Gazette* in 1909.[59] While this usually meant that the newspaper simply printed the British community's points of view (often complaints related to the municipal council's running of the city) and offered a translation of interesting articles in the Italian press, the crisis of the war meant that such complaints and anecdotes had to be set aside to foster a genuine Anglo-Italian understanding. More often than not this meant trying to influence British views of Italians, and not the other way around. The *Gazette* and *Herald* translated Einaudi's article and the pro-British views of other Italian journalists quoted earlier for their readership but efforts to influence Italian opinion were muted, as propagandists on both sides of the conflict were initially prevented from printing material that contradicted Italy's position as a neutral power. The *Gazette* only reacted after what it perceived as the actions of German propagandists active in Florence, and produced several bilingual editions. Ultimately, the role of Anglo-Florentine newspapers in helping to promote cross-cultural understanding between their compatriots and Italians may be more accurately stated to be printing Italian praise for British efforts, and occasionally chiding negative British views of Italy.

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[58] J.M. Winter, "British national identity and the First World War," in *The Boundaries of the state in modern Britain*, ed. S.J.D. Green and R.C. Whiting (1996),261-77, 266.
[59] 'REORGANIZED: The Italian Gazette', *The Italian Gazette*, 4 October 1909, 2.

Italy's entry into the First World War

During the early years of the war, the Central Powers and the Allies wooed Italy to intervene in the conflict. As the war began to consume its toll of men and resources on both sides, the need for Italian soldiers as support troops grew ever more pressing. Italy's resources of manpower and its influential position with other neutral nations, such as Romania, made it a valuable potential ally to both sides. Indeed, the British Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey, saw Italian involvement in the war as being crucial to effecting the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire.[60] Despite international pressure, as Christopher Duggan points out, Italy did not need to go to war in 1915. Rather, he argues, she was wooed by both the Central Powers and Allies with the promise of new territories to be distributed after fighting had ended. Worried that Italy would not be able to sustain the costs of another major conflict so soon after the Libyan War of 1911-1912, the Prime Minister, Antonio Salandra, wanted to secure the best deal he could by negotiating with both sides simultaneously and in secret.[61] This caused no small amount of frustration for British diplomats in Rome, led by the indomitable Sir James Rennell Rodd.

In his study of Italy's period of neutrality and eventual participation in the war, William A. Renzi reveals that another source of concern to Salandra and his hapless foreign minister, Sidney Sonnino, was the weakened state of Italy's position within the Triple Alliance of Italy, Germany, and the Austro-Hungarian empire if the war was to be won by the Central Powers. He outlined the growing influence of several prominent Austro-Hungarian diplomats with Italophobe views and the assertion by German officials in 1914 that Italy was not to be depended on as an ally in times of war. Salandra's worries related to territorial disputes that would result if the Central Powers won the war. Sonnino's fear was that Italy might become a vassal state to her northern neighbour.[62] Given the traditional friendship between Italy and Britain also, Italy needed to maintain cordial relationships with the Triple Entente of France, Britain and Russia. Part of the appeals made by the Triple Entente was to Italy's growing imperial ambitions. A Central Powers victory, the Entente argued,

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[60] William A. Renzi, *In the Shadow of the Sword: Italy's Neutrality and Entrance Into the Great War, 1914-1915* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 148.
[61] Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: a history of Italy since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 388.
[62] William A. Renzi, "Italy's Neutrality and Entrance into the Great War: A Re-Examination," *American Historical Review* 73, no. 5 (1968): 1414-32, 1417.

would be severely hamper Italian territorial expansion. Only armed intervention promised any guarantee that Italian colonial interests would be respected. Indeed, as Renzi notes, most Entente propaganda (disguised as pro-Allied newspaper articles like those quoted by the *Gazette* and *Herald*) took this line before the Italian government decided on a course of intervention.[63] Since Italy's disastrous attempt to conquer Ethiopia in 1896, and the successful but costly Libyan War of 1911, such an argument found traction amongst the Italian elite.[64] For Italy, intervention was both a scramble for territorial gain as much as it was a defence of Italy's sovereignty.

The appeal of new territories and the threat of what a victorious Germany would do persuaded Salandra. The British and French managed to secure Italy's support for the Allied cause. The 1915 Treaty of London promised territories in the Austro-Hungarian empire, including the South Tyrol, Trentino, Istria and what would be the highly disputed city of Trieste. On 24 May 1915, Italy declared war on the Austro-Hungarian empire, and so entered into the First World War, which was to cost the country a toll of over one million casualties, both military and civilian. [65] It would be the inevitable backlash against the war and its instigators, along with outrage at what was deemed the 'mutilated victory' when Italy was cheated out of the territories promised to her at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, that would allow the rise of Mussolini's Fascists in the inter-war period.

The push by the Anglo-Florentine newspapers and British propagandists for Italian intervention also received a boost from Italian supporters. These ranged from the fiery poet Gabriele D'Annunzio and Benito Mussolini, as well as Italian irredentists and those who believed in the reforming power of war,[66] to (somewhat surprisingly) Italian peace brigades. Sandi E. Cooper has studied how the rhetoric of Italian peace societies changed noticeably in the lead up to Italy's intervention in the war. She argues that reports from the Western Front, particularly from Belgium, helped to pave the way for a more muscular stance by prominent individuals connected to peace activism.[67] Although initially concerned with the promotion of

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[63] Renzi, "Italy's Neutrality and Entrance into the Great War: A Re-Examination," 1426.
[64] Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 381.
[65] Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 411 - 12.
[66] On Italians writing for and against intervention, see Thomas Widrich, "Tanto inchiostro quanto sangue umano': letteratura propagandistica dell'intervento 1914/15" *Romische Historische Mitteilungen* 40(1998): 573-91.
[67] Sandi E. Cooper, "The Guns of August and the Doves of Italy: Intervention and Internationalism," *Peace & Change* 7, no. 1/2 (1981): 29-44, 29.

what Cooper describes as a Mazzinean-Garibaldian vision of international community, by late 1914, reports of German atrocities in Belgium had helped to turn the bulk of Italian peace societies in favour of armed intervention against Germany. Cooper argues, in fact, that part of the rationale for these activists was the protection of an international peace. According to them, 'peace was not "just" or worth protecting at any price... [Italian] peace activists believed in the nation in arms.'[68] The peace won by Garibaldi in the Risorgimento had to be defended against the war-mongering Germans and Austro-Hungarians. Indeed, it is significant that the Nobel Peace Prize winner Ernesto Teodoro Moneta was so incensed by the actions of Germany that he cut off all ties, both ideological and personal, with the German peace activist Ludwig Quidde, who supported his nation's cause.[69] The German attack on Belgium which prompted the peace movement's calls for intervention was followed by assertions that Britain and France were defending the cause of peace and were a far more civilised people than the Germans.

The language of civilisation and barbarity was not restricted to British literature but used within Italian society as well. What is also important about the support of the Italian peace activists for the war is that they couched their justifications for intervention in the same language used by British propagandists; that is, the (armed) defence of peace and civilisation against the chaos posed by the Central Powers. This common ground, along with the Latinate heritage of the British empire, offered another channel through which appeals for Italian support of the Allies could be solicited. Cooper also notes that the Italian peace movement was distinct from other peace movements during the war, such as the Quakers, in favouring the defence of peace through war, and this was probably a useful point of difference for Allied propagandists.[70]

Significantly, like its Russian counterpart, the Italian Socialist Party decided to vote against intervention, in contrast to most other European socialist groups.[71] This caused concern to propagandists in Tuscany, as the local Socialist groups there

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[68] Cooper, "The Guns of August and the Doves of Italy: Intervention and Internationalism," 31.
[69] Cooper, "The Guns of August and the Doves of Italy: Intervention and Internationalism," 36.
[70] Cooper, "The Guns of August and the Doves of Italy: Intervention and Internationalism," 32.
[71] Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 389.

exerted a strong influence on the peasantry and influenced them against the war. Indeed in May 1914, Socialist protests against the shooting of three demonstrators in the city of Ancona brought the whole of central Italy to a standstill in an event that became known as Red Week.[72] The author Edward Hutton was to later complain that undertaking official propaganda work in the region required a different approach to that found in other Italian cities, owing to what he felt to be the native Tuscan tendency towards cynicism and scepticism.[73]

Conducting Propaganda: countering German persuasion

To some Anglo-Florentines, proclaiming their patriotism in the *Gazette* and *Herald* and hating Germans was not sufficient. The Italian people needed to understand the moral urgency of intervening in the war on the side of the Allies. For these Anglo-Florentines keen to act in a more pro-active sense, propaganda work provided an obvious outlet. Local Florentines were to be cajoled and taught that Britain's war was the concern of every individual who would save the civilised world from the destabilising forces of the German war machine.

In late 1914, the *Italian Gazette* published a series of bilingual issues in order to combat what it labelled the insidious influence of German propaganda in the Florentine newspapers, a concern that was not unfounded. As stated earlier, the German community was a significant presence in Florence before the outbreak of war. Worryingly for British propagandists, Germans could also lay claim to an intimate relationship with Italy that could be traced back to the first Holy Roman emperors through Goethe and a similar adulation of Garibaldi.[74]

Gary Messinger has noted that at the beginning of the war, German propagandists were more prepared than their Allied counterparts. An impressive bureaucracy ensured the distribution of propaganda to German and enemy soldiers, as well as civilians as soon as war had been declared.[75] In neutral countries such as Italy, German legations provided monetary assistance and encouragement to newspapers

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[72] Nicla Capitini Maccabruni, "Evoluzione politica e crisi socialista in Toscana alla vigilia della "Grande Guerra," *Movimento Operaio e Socialista* 15, no. 2 (1969): 175-94, 186.
[73] Edward Hutton to John Buchan, 1 November 1917, Foreign Office files (FO) 395/98, N22/217349, The National Archives (UK): Public Records Office (TNA: PRO), Kew.
[74] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, 97.
[75] Gary S. Messinger, *British propaganda and the state in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 15-16.

sympathetic to their views and even printed their own.[76] German-funded newspapers in Italy included two Florentine dailies, the *Nuovo Giornale* and *La Nazione*. This was in addition to the two founded by the German embassy in Rome, the *Concordia* and the ironically named *La Vittoria.* However, as Renzi points out, these did not enjoy a very wide circulation, with the two German-founded dailies eventually being distributed free.[77] German and Austrian propaganda in Italy was generally unsuccessful when compared with the Allied effort. Tuscany was the notable exception, though Renzi quoted Rennell Rodd as being of the view that '"the opinion of Florence ... is not of much importance" in national politics.'[78] This observation, however, was evidently not shared by the Anglo-Florentine newspapers, by Edward Hutton, who was dispatched to the city by the Foreign Office to head its propaganda bureau in the region in 1917, or by Lina Waterfield.

On 26 November 1914, the *Italian Gazette* printed the first of a short series of bilingual issues. Designed to be shared with readers' Italian neighbours and friends, these issues reproduced English and Italian versions of editorials and articles side by side. The Italian editorial in this first issue stated:

> This is not a newspaper of propaganda, and until today was always published exclusively in English. But for this issue we make an exception, not for propaganda, but to show Italians the methods of the papers in Florence which tell lies and calumnies that bear the mark of Germans.[79]

In fact, this bilingual issue was the result of the *Gazette*'s ongoing feud with the Florentine daily, the *Nuovo Giornale*, which was, as Renzi has pointed out, in the pay of German propagandists. A week earlier, the *Gazette's* editor had protested against what he felt to be an 'infamous' article in the *Giornale*:

> Thrice infamous is the article and not less infamous the person who wrote it. Whether those who are responsible for its insertion are venal, blind, or merely ignorant we are not in a position to judge.[80]

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[76] Messinger, *British propaganda*, 16.
[77] Renzi, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, 164-65.
[78] Renzi, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, 166.
[79] "Gli Articoli di Guerra: del "Nuovo Giornale" e della "Nazione"," *Italian Gazette*, 26 November 1914,1. 'Questo non è un giornale di propaganda, e fino ad oggi è sempre stato pubblicato esclusivamente in lingua inglese. Però in questo numero facciamo un'eccezion, no be far propaganda, ma per segnalare agli italiani i metodi seguiti da giornali quotidiani di Firenze della diffusione di menzogne e calunnie di pura marca tedesca.'
[80] "'Impressioni Londinesi'," *Florence and Italian Gazette*, 19 November 1914, 1.

The article in question, signed only 'E.I.' in the *Nuovo Giornale*, decries the apparently appalling conditions of Germans living in Britain. It described the plight of those forced into concentration camps and the heavy penalties handed out to British employers who refused to dismiss their German and Austrian employees. Describing the concentration camps, 'E.I.' remarked that prisoners at an unnamed camp were given

> A blanket with which to wrap themselves to sleep on the bare ground in an uncovered shed, threatened by humidity and from infectious diseases, which have already claimed over 400 victims ... In [one] camp alone there are 8000 internees. The disgraceful little tents there are too small. Under each one twelve internees fit on four mattresses, which are soaked by moisture during the night and become cold .... At first prisoners were able to cook their own food, which was therefore bearable. Now, instead, the kitchen has been taken over by a supplier and the treatment leaves much to be desired, meanwhile hygiene is banned and typhus, as a consequence, triumphs.[81]

'E.I.' added that:

> This news is printed and circulated in the London newspapers and confirmed by a correspondent of the [pacifist German Socialist newspaper] *Vorwaerts*, which protests against the way Britain treats thousands and thousands of foreigners.[82]

This passage and most of the article was translated into English for readers of the *Gazette*. The editor made certain to point the German newspaper out, observing 'that a "London" correspondent must go to a German paper for his *impressioni* is eloquent of the origin of this article.'[83] He further called on the *Nuovo Giornale* to prove that the paper had a correspondent in London at all.

Leaving aside its supposed source as a report from the pacifistic *Vorwaerts* (which would have already prejudiced the editor of the *Gazette*) E.I.'s article does

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[81] 'E.I', "Impressioni Londinesi," *Nuovo Giornale*, 19 November 1914, 2. '...dando loro una coperta nella quale avvolgersi per dormire sulla nuda terra in capannoni aperti, insidiati dall'umidità e dalle malattie infettive, che già mieterono fra essi oltre 400 vittime... Nel solo campo .... ne sono internati 8000. I disgraziati occupano piccole tende, sotto ciascuna delle quali se ne ammassano dodici su quattro paglericci, inzuppati dall'umidità, durante le notti cosi fredde .... Dapprima i prigionieri potevano cuocersi da sé il cibo, che era, quindi sopportabile. Ora, invece, la cucina è stata assunta da un fornitore ed il trattamento lascia assai a desiderare, mentre l'igiene è bandita ed il tifo, conseguenza logica, trionfa.'

[82] 'E.I', "Impressioni Londinesi," 2. 'Queste notizie vengono raccolte e diffuse dalla stampa londinese e la conferma una corrispondenza ai *Vorwaerts*, che protesta appunto contro il modo con cui la Gran Brettagna [sic] tratta migliaia e migliaia di stranieri.'

[83] 'E.I.', "Impressioni Londinesi," 2.

reflect some historical truths about internment camps in Britain. Over 50,000 German, Austro-Hungarian and Turkish nationals in Britain were forcibly moved to the internment camps in the first few months of the war, and about half of those jailed were still in detention at the end of the war.[84] Whilst the figure of 400 dead at this early stage in the war is exaggerated,[85] living conditions at the camps did produce a condition dubbed 'barbed wire disease', a mental disorder linked to spending prolonged periods of time in detention.[86] Although there is nothing explicitly pro-German (as anti-British) in E.I.'s writing, the article does paint a picture of wretchedness at the internment camps, tarnishing Britain's claims of being a more civilised society than Germany. The article's focus on the camps' overcrowded, unhygienic conditions, as well as the numbers dead, would have doubtless outraged the editor of the *Gazette* and convinced him the article was a product of the German propaganda machine. However, it is ironic that when presented with a similar opportunity to influence what articles were written in the *Nuovo Giornale*, Algar Thorold, the ex-editor of the Florence Herald, believed it to be an excellent method of propaganda.[87]

The conflict between the two newspapers was carried over to the next week's issue of the *Gazette*, 'for circulation among all classes of Italians.'[88] English articles were printed with an Italian translation alongside, with special attention given to the effects of the *Nuovo Giornale* article, which had prompted a protest from the British Embassy in Rome, filed two days after the original article in Italian had been printed, demanding a retraction.[89] Unfortunately, these bilingual editions were only produced for a six-week run, and in February 1915, they abruptly came to a halt without any further explanation, two months before the paper ceased publication altogether. The

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[84] A.D. Harvey, "Alexandra Palace as a Concentration Camp," *Local History News* 1, no. 87 (2008), available at http://www.balh.co.uk/lhn/article.php?file=lhn-vol1iss87-6.xml. For more on the internment of Germans in Britain, see Panikos Panayi, "An Intolerant Act By an Intolerant Society: the Internment Of Germans in Britain During the First World War," *Immigrants & Minorities* 11, no. 3 (1992): 53-75.

[85] On statistics for the camps, see Panikos Panayi, "An Intolerant Act by an Intolerant Society: The Internment of Germans in Britain During the First World War," *Immigrants & Minorities* 11, no. 3 (1992): 53-75, 62-66.

[86] Anna Braithwaite Thomas, *St. Stephen's House Friends' Emergency Work in England, 1914 to 1920* (London: Emergency Committee for the Assistance of Germans, Austrians and Hungarians in Distress, 1920), 55.

[87] This is discussed in the next chapter.

[88] "The War and Press Propaganda," *Italian Gazette*, 26 November 1914,1.

[89] Ibid.

bilingual issues can be seen as an illustration of Taylor's claim that British propaganda was always more reactive than assertive, even in its unofficial form.[90]

Although German propagandists were more prepared than their British counterparts, Messinger has argued that their effort was ultimately doomed to failure. He attributes their lack of success to what he calls the German tendency towards autocratic militarism, which tolerated no dissent and operated on the assumption that arguments of military necessity would be persuasive to neutral parties and their enemies.[91] However, what is important to understand is the fear and paranoia caused by German propaganda amongst British residents in Florence, especially those involved in counter-propaganda work. Richard Bagot, for example, complained of the insidious influence of German propaganda at work in Florentine society:

> Unless I am misinformed, it would appear that this German propaganda of hatred, supported by falsehood which is sometimes insidious but often childish in quality, is particularly active in Florence. I do not think it is surprising that this should be so. … it has been the proud tradition of Florence for many centuries to represent intellectual Italy. As we know that Germany professes to aim at imposing on Europe in general … 'civilization' … it is perfectly natural that she should be particularly anxious to convert the principal Italian centre of intellect to her cause.[92]

Bagot's reference both to the significant German presence in Florence, as well as to Florence as a centre of Italian civilisation, harkens back to the pre-war image of the city. It also references the trope of comparing 'German-ness' with ideas of Western civilisation to show how the two were incompatible. Yet, the anxiety caused by German methods of persuasion was palpable. The *Gazette*, in fact, painted a harrowing picture of the bullying methods used by German propagandists against Florentine business owners in one of their issues, noting that it had received news that many businesses had been threatened with boycotts by German residents if they refused 'to assist in the propagation of their falsehoods.'[93]

By the time that the News Department of the Foreign Office took over the coordination of British propaganda in Italy from Rennell Rodd in 1917, both the *Gazette* and *Herald* had stopped publication. Nevertheless, unofficial organisations

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[90] Taylor, "The Foreign Office and British Propaganda," 876.
[91] Messinger, *British propaganda*, 18-19.
[92] Bagot, "To the Editor of the *Florence Herald*," *Florence Herald*, 6 February 1915, 1.
[93] 'Stop Press News', *Italian Gazette*, 5 November 1914, 2. The concern of propagandists regarding anti-British sentiment is discussed in the next chapter.

continued to produce their own pro-Allied propaganda and British residents provided help in designing and overseeing the distribution of leaflets and posters. For instance, Waterfield was actively engaged in Angiolo Orvieto's unofficial Italian propaganda effort. She wrote in her autobiography, in fact, of venturing out into the Tuscan countryside with a companion in order to give lectures in villages on the reasons and justifications for the war. Because of the strong socialist presence in these towns, as well as the growing unpopularity of the war with many peasants, who had lost able-bodied men to the conflict and suffered scarcities of food, her visits were perilous. Waterfield recounted one such meeting in a village near the city of Prato, where she had to flee from an increasingly hostile crowd, noting, 'as we drove away the women called us devils and hoped that a shell might hit us.'[94] Undeterred by this initial setback, she was eventually became head of British propaganda in 1917 for the entire region of Tuscany after her immediate superior, Hutton, was recalled to London to work for the Italian embassy as part of its own propaganda branch.[95]

In fact Edward Hutton (1875 – 1969) had written to the Foreign Office early on in the war in order to offer his services to the head of the News Department, the arm of the Foreign Office concerned with British propaganda overseas. As the writer of over twenty books related to Italy and its history, he pointed out, 'I really believe I know the country as few Englishmen do' and promised to do his part for his country by talking to his Italian friends and spreading a 'quiet and unobtrusive influence on Italian opinion.'[96] In this, however, he was not to prove as successful as Waterfield, and soon after being assigned by the Foreign Office to oversee its efforts in Tuscany in 1916, was recalled about a year later.

As will be shown in the next chapter, Hutton's return to London in 1917 resulted from his inability to work with propagandists in Tuscany. What is important to note, however, is that both Hutton and Waterfield engaged in propaganda work in Florence on their own initiative and out of a genuine sense of wanting to play their part in the British war effort. That Waterfield's own unofficial work was eventually co-opted into the official British propaganda effort in Tuscany is significant as it

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[94] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 164.
[95] John Buchan to Lina Waterfield, 28 December 1917, WAT:1:G:90:f4, BIA.
[96] Christopher Seton-Watson, "British Propaganda in Italy 1914-1918," in *Inghilterra e Italia nel '900: Atti del Convegno di Bagni di Lucca* (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1973),119-28, 122-23.

reveals how British expatriates living outside empire thought of themselves in relation to it and responded to the war.

Conclusion

When First World War ended in 1918, it left in its wake a trail of destruction that claimed the lives of nearly 38 million people, changed geographical borders and left an indelible legacy on the cultural landscape of Europe. Many of the after-effects of the First World War would be catalysts for the events that led to the Second World War. The initial response to the war, found in the rhetoric of Anglo-Florentine newspapers, dipped into the history of Anglo-Italian relations to emphasise the Latinate heritage of the British empire to encourage Italian support and participation in the war. These newspapers were also careful to stress their continued loyalty towards Britain and to define an Anglo-Florentine identity that was staunchly pro-British, acknowledged the contribution of Florence and the rest of Italy to British history, and was (most importantly) defiantly anti-German. Faced with the threat to the empire, individuals like Lina Waterfield and Edward Hutton chose to contribute to the war effort in their capacity as cultural mediators between their compatriots and the Italians of their adopted city. To this end, they conducted propaganda under the direction of the Foreign Office, but also started their own initiatives, spurred on by a desire to educate Florentines and other Italians about the reasons for Britain's war and why the help of Italy was vital to this effort.

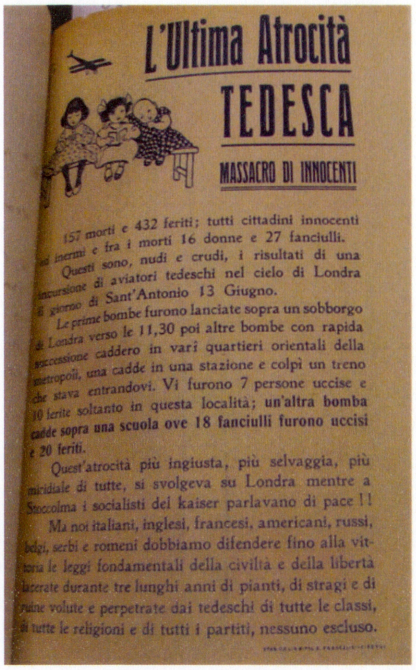
The emergence of a strongly patriotic Anglo-Florentine identity in the initial period of the First World War replaced previous notions of belonging to a wider foreign community in the city. Ties to the empire were not bound by geography but transcended it. The example of the Anglo-Florentines studied here, as with Britons living outside the empire, demonstrates another way in which Britishness was constructed outside the formal empire. In undertaking what they believed to be their patriotic duty, the efforts of Waterfield and Hutton would eventually have international repercussions, as it was under their initiative that the British Institute of Florence was established.

Chapter 4
British Propaganda in Italy and the origins of the British Institute of Florence, 1917-1918.

Writing to Charles Hubert Montgomery at the News Department of the Foreign Office in London in the summer of 1917, Edward Hutton was keen to show off the results of his latest propaganda efforts, a leaflet detailing the atrocities committed by German pilots who participated in a recent air-raid over London, dramatically entitled '*L'Ultima atrocità tedesca'* (The latest German atrocity).[1] Designed to be dropped over Florence by aeroplanes, the leaflets were to coincide with an exhibition of Allied war photographs at the Palazzo Vecchio.[2] One can hardly think of more appropriate circumstances for such a demonstration. Subtitled '*massacro di innocenti*' (massacre of the innocents), the leaflet made sure to get across its grim message. It contained the alarming statistic that one hundred and fifty-seven people had died in the attack, of which sixteen were women and twenty-seven children. In order to ensure the sympathetic horror of readers, the leaflet depicted three children quietly reading on a bench whilst the threatening black silhouette of a biplane hovered above their heads.

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[1] The News Department or the Department of Information was formed under David Lloyd George's government to coordinate propaganda in foreign countries in 1917.
[2] Hutton to Charles Hubert Montgomery, Foreign Office files (FO) 395/99, N22/133899, 6 July 1917, The National Archives (UK): Public Record Office (TNA: PRO), Kew.



L'Ultima Atrocità

TEDESCA

MASSACRO DI INNOCENTI

157 morti e 432 feriti; tutti cittadini innocenti ed inermi e fra i morti 16 donne e 27 fanciulli.

Questi sono, nudi e crudi, i risultati di una incursione di aviatori tedeschi nel cielo di Londra il giorno di Sant'Antonio 13 Giugno.

Le prime bombe furono lanciate sopra un sobborgo di Londra verso le 11,30 poi altre bombe con rapida successione caddero in vari quartieri orientali della metropoli, una cadde in una stazione e colpì un treno che stava entrandovi. Vi furono 7 persone uccise e 30 ferite soltanto in questa località; **un'altra bomba cadde sopra una scuola ove 18 fanciulli furono uccisi e 20 feriti.**

Quest'atrocità più ingiusta, più selvaggia, più miridiale di tutte, si svolgeva su Londra mentre a Stoccolma i socialisti del kaiser parlavano di pace !!

Ma noi italiani, inglesi, francesi, americani, russi, belgi, serbi e romeni dobbiamo difendere fino alla vittoria le leggi fondamentali della civiltà e della libertà lacerate durante tre lunghi anni di pianti, di stragi e di ruine volute e perpetrate dai tedeschi di tutte le classi, di tutte le religioni e di tutti i partiti, nessuno escluso.

Image 3: L'Ultima atrocità tedesca, 6 July 1917, Foreign Office files (FO) 395/99 N22/133899, The National Archives (UK): Public Record Office (TNA: PRO), Kew.

Using forceful language, the leaflet highlighted the consequences of the air raid, in which fifteen German aeroplanes dropped bombs over the East End of London.[3] In striking bold type, it noted that one bomb had fallen on a school and had killed eighteen children and wounded twenty. The author of the anonymous leaflet (likely Hutton) was in no doubt as to who deserved the blame for this tragedy: Germans, 'of all classes, of all religions, and of all parties, without exclusion.'[4] It was up to the Allies to defend the 'fundamental laws of civilisation and of liberty torn during the three long years of tears, of massacre.'[5] Moral superiority was firmly on the side of the Allies, who fought to protect innocence and civilisation from the uncivilised, rampaging Germans.

Hutton's leaflet, along with its accompanying exhibition of photographs, was part of a larger propaganda effort undertaken by Allied forces in Italy during the First World War. It included lecture tours, pamphlets, manifestos, postcards and books printed in Italy, supplied by the War Propaganda Bureau ensconced in Wellington House in London. With spirits in Italy flagging as fighting dragged on, ways had to be

[3] 'Air raid over London', *The Times*, 14 June 1917, 7.
[4] 'L'Ultima atrocità tedesca', 30 June 1917, FO 395/99 N22/133899, TNA: PRO, Kew. '… tedeschi di tutte le classi, di tutte le religioni e di tutti i partiti, nessuno escluso.'
[5] Ibid. '… le leggi fondamentali della civiltà e della libertà lacerate durante tre lunghi anni di pianti, di stragi…'

found of raising morale amongst civilians, and of encouraging soldiers to keep fighting. Unlike the wild enthusiasm for war in Britain, conscripts made up the Italian army and the conflict proved unpopular with most of the population.[6]

This chapter begins with an explanation of the perception of the urgent need for Allied propaganda in Italy. It then examines the official British propaganda effort and the changes implemented when the Foreign Office took over propaganda work in 1917 from the British embassy in Rome, and analyses the methods through which it was distributed, as well as the content of the material produced. As William A. Renzi noted, Florence and the rest of Tuscany was of great concern to British propagandists, who noted the city's continuing Germanophile sympathies even after Italy had declared war on the Central Powers in 1915.[7] Their efforts in the city would produce a British Institute which would survive long after fighting had ended as an enduring symbol of the British presence.

To understand the significance of the Institute's foundation, and why it was able to survive the end of the war, it be must considered within the broader context of the Allied propaganda mission in Italy, and of British propaganda more generally. A longer continuum of British propaganda in Florence will thus become apparent, of which the British Institute was both a product and producer. Since the Institute also provided a model for later institutes around the world that promoted British ideas and culture, it is thus important to understand the events that led to its formation.[8]

Allied propaganda in Italy

Pro-German sympathies in Tuscany as well as the region's Socialist tendencies were a cause for concern amongst the British propagandists there, since the Germans had been more prepared than the Allies at mobilising their propaganda efforts.[9] Sent by Montgomery, an official at the Foreign Office to head propaganda work in Tuscany, Hutton painted a pessimistic picture of the situation in the region. He noted that, 'in

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[6] W. J. Reader, *At duty's call: a study in obsolete patriotism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 15; Mark Thompson, *The White War: Life and Death on the Italian Front, 1915–1919* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008).

[7] William A. Renzi, *In the Shadow of the Sword: Italy's Neutrality and Entrance Into the Great War, 1914-1915* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 166.

[8] Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: the firsty fifty years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), 34.

[9] Gary S. Messinger, *British propaganda and the state in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 15-16.

Italy generally the pro-German propaganda is far better organised than that of the Allies & the anti-English feeling grows & spreads.'[10] Austro-German propaganda in Italy was a well-funded and well-organised venture; to counter it the Allies would have to present a united front.

Though the French were the first to send an armada of artists and intellectuals on lecture tours and to persuade influential Italians to push for intervention in the war,[11] the British did not lag too far behind. The ambassador, Sir James Rennell Rodd, took personal charge of the propaganda mission in Rome, and used his personal relationship with Italian diplomats to state the case for the Allies. Aided by two Italians with strongly British sympathies and the secretary of the British-American Archaeological Society of Rome, a Mr Mills, Rennell Rodd directed operations in the country until 1917.[12] These consisted of a plethora of pamphlets, leaflets and lecture tours that featured Italian speakers touring the peninsula promoting the Allied cause.[13] These speakers encouraged antagonism towards Austria (a traditional foe of the Italian people) and Germany over the violation of Belgium's neutrality and attacks against civilians, and also hinted that Italy would find herself losing out on valuable territories when peace was negotiated if she remained neutral. As Renzi has argued, even if this early Entente propaganda did not prove a decisive factor in persuading the Italian government to intervene, it still played a major role in raising awareness of the conflict amongst the public.[14]

The entry of Italy into the war in May 1915 changed the nature of Allied propaganda. As the head of the French Institute in Florence Julien Luchaire noted, the need for propaganda in Italy did not cease.[15] On the contrary, more was needed to inform Italians of exactly why their government had broken away from the traditional Triple Alliance with Austro-Hungary and Germany and to maintain the morale of troops and families who had lost loved ones.

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[10] Hutton to Montgomery, 20 January 1917, FO 395/98, N22/20823, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[11] Renzi, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, 155. Renzi also notes that the Russian effort was mostly ineffectual and minuscule in nature.
[12] Montgomery to Rennell Rodd, 13 August 1917, FO 195/1061, Propaganda 178, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[13] 'Propaganda in Italy', FO 395/98, N22/217349, 14 November 1917, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[14] Renzi, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, 161.
[15] Renzi, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, 161.

Spreading the word: the British propaganda effort in Italy

The British propaganda mission in Italy was the result of a concerted effort by the Allied nations to influence the Italian government and public that intervention in the First World War was desirable and beneficial. The British government took great pains to obfuscate the origin of its propaganda material, reasoning that overtly pro-Allied propaganda that was known to come from foreign sources would undermine its own credibility. This shows similarities with propaganda efforts in the United States of America before its entry to the war.[16] The decision to hide the true source of Allied propaganda contrasted with German methods, which Wayne A. Wiegand has argued alienated many in neutral countries.[17] In Italy, propaganda literature and materials were printed as much as possible by local Italians, often acting under the direction of an agent of the British embassy or, after 1917, a representative from the News Department. By using local agents as much as possible, and by ensuring that any involvement by foreigners in production of such materials was kept secret, British propagandists ensured that the origin of their work appeared to be the spontaneous efforts of like-minded Italians, rather than the result of foreign attempts at interfering with Italian opinion. They would thereby present more credible information and persuasive arguments than the Austrians and Germans.[18]

One of the Italians who placed herself and her considerable abilities at Rennell Rodd's disposal was Donna Bettina di Casanova, the daughter of an Italian marchese and British mother.[19] Working from Milan with a team of women, she produced, imported and distributed books, pamphlets and leaflets, and organised lectures. Her efforts were known to the War Propaganda Bureau founded by Charles Masterman, and Montgomery held the opinion that she was 'a most meritorious female.'[20] Rennell Rodd, too, believed that individuals like Donna Bettina were the proper agents of British propaganda work in Italy, observing that 'in order to get the best possible results from our propaganda work in Italy it is advisable to entrust it to Italians.'[21]

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[16] Wayne A. Wiegand, "British Propaganda in American Public Libraries, 1914-1917," *Journal of Library History* 18, no. 3 (1983): 237-54, 240.
[17] Wiegand, "British Propaganda in American Public Libraries," 239.
[18] Nicholas Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda During the First World War* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 11.
[19] 'Obituary: Donna Bettina di Casanova', *The Times*, 23 October 1929.
[20] Minute by Montgomery, 25 January 1917, FO 395/97, N22/20187, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[21] Rennell Rodd to Arthur Balfour, 21 January 1917, FO 395/97, N22/ 20187, TNA: PRO, Kew.

Rennell Rodd, in fact, looked down on British residents in Italy, finding many of them unsuitable to undertake propaganda work. Writing to the Foreign Office's librarian Stephen Gaselee, he remarked that for so-called experts of the country, these residents 'become diletante [*sic*] and useless, and in some cases actually harmful.'[22] He did observe, however, that certain other British residents who were being employed in propaganda work who were actually useful to the cause. Donna Bettina represents an important milestone in propaganda work in Italy, because it was through her efforts that the first Anglo-Italian Institute in the country was established in Milan in 1917. It was from the model of this first institute, as well as the comparable example of the French Institute of Florence, that the British Institute was founded.[23] The difference between Donna Bettina's Anglo-Italian Institute in Milan and the later Institute in Florence, was in the nature of the propaganda that they produced. The Florence Institute was dedicated to promoting British culture amongst a more educated class of Italians, whereas Donna Bettina's Milan Institute was a centre from which British propaganda was imported and written, translated and distributed to Italians of all classes. Literate Italians would be able to read the posters Donna Bettina's team placarded in city centres, whilst those who were illiterate or living in rural areas were sent lecturers and provided with pro-Allied soup kitchens.[24]

Donna Bettina's Milan Institute was typical of British propaganda in Italy. She sent reports of her work to Rennell Rodd at the embassy and took his direction in the production of materials that provided Italians with a pro-Allied point of view. Also available to her, thanks to her aristocratic background, was a network of social connections that included several government ministers, which in the highly personal nature of Italian society could be more persuasive than diplomatic entreaty. As Rennell Rodd glowingly observed, 'her social position, energy and ability are guarantees of the efficient performance of her task.'[25]

Personal contacts were a feature common to all British propaganda agents working in Italy, and it seems highly probable that they were chosen for the quality of

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[22] Minute from Stephen Gaselee to Alec Randall, 10 April 1918, FO 395/175, 63274, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[23] Isabelle Renard, " À l'origine des instituts culturels français à l'étranger. L'Institut Français de Florence au début du XXe siècle," *Melanges de l'Ecole Francaise de Rome* 114, no. 1 (2002): 89-101.
[24] Hutton to Montgomery, 11 February 1917, FO 395/98, N22/37199, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[25] Rennell Rodd to Arthur Balfour, 21 January 1917, FO 395/97, N22/ 20187, TNA: PRO, Kew.

the people they knew in addition to their ability to oversee the distribution of material. Hutton, for example, reported his collaboration with local government officials in Florence. In a letter to Montgomery, he wrote that a new Allied manifesto had been pasted on walls in the city with the sanction of the mayor of Florence: 'This is done quite spontaneously and without any knowledge of the origin of the manifesto I think and hope you will agree with me that it is a success.'[26] It was the opinion of the propagandists, following the example of Masterman at Wellington House, that cultivating a healthy support for the Allied cause was best done through Italians sympathetic to Britain, rather than by British speakers or literature. Sent by the Foreign Office in May 1917 to appraise propaganda in the country, Algar Thorold remarked:

> It should be borne in mind that Italian propaganda is entirely sui generis and cannot be judged on the analogy of propaganda in other countries. Italians are at once very cynical and very susceptible to personal influence. The past success of the Ambassador has undoubtedly been due to the personal effect of his relations with Italian statesmen. Italians are not taken in by printed rhetoric ....They are vain and sensitive to an extent hard for an Englishman to credit. They are also in disposition gregarious and affectionate and therefore very open to social and personal persuasion. Articles singing the praises of England emanating from an obviously English source are completely discounted by them.[27]

Thorold's observations accord with the position taken by British propagandists in other neutral countries. As Peter Buitenhuis has argued in the case of America, any material seen to come from British sources that attempted to influence opinion would have not only prejudiced Americans against them, but could conversely encourage pro-German or neutral sentiments amongst the public.[28] Wiegand has also observed that many books and pamphlets produced by Wellington House were sent to American libraries as gifts or charitable donations by non-governmental organisations, a tactic that Gary Messinger has noted as favoured by British propagandists.[29] This was clearly the case in Italy. Even though Wellington House provided Donna Bettina and other propaganda agents in Italy with material, Alec Randall boasted proudly at the News Department that most of the propaganda in Italy

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[26] Hutton to Montgomery, 21 January 1917, FO 395/98, 21532, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[27] Algar Thorold to John Buchan, 29 June 1917, FO 395/97, N22/129150, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[28] Peter Buitenhuis, *The great war of words: British, American, and Canadian propaganda and fiction, 1914-1933* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 55.
[29] Messinger, *British propaganda*: 23; Wiegand, "British Propaganda in American Public Libraries," 240.

was actually translated from English materials and printed in the country. Smarting from a comment made by Hutton about the inadequacy of materials received from Britain, Randall pointed out:

> Occasionally small illustrated sheets, which for technical reasons it was impossible to bring out in Italy, have been sent from this country, and in one of these it is true that there were certain errors of translation, but there is, and has been for considerably over a year past, no wide distribution of any pamphlets which were not published in Italy by Italian firms under the direction of our Italian assistants.[30]

The 'errors of translation', as Randall termed them, seem to confirm the statement by Renzi, who noted that some British pamphlets were written in 'relatively mediocre Italian.'[31] Hutton, in fact, complained 'the great mass of printed matter we receive from England is ... for the most part, useless. Most of it is written in the vilest and most broken Italian and unless it can be altogether improved ... I ... suggest that the supply of it be stopped.'[32]

Apart from literature and lectures, another method employed by the propagandists was to offer bribes to Italian newspapers friendly to the Allied cause, a tactic also used by the Austrian and German embassies. Though this went against perceived traits of British frankness, the influence the press had on Italian opinion was a resource that the former editor of the *Florence Herald* Algar Thorold did not intend to overlook. At the beginning of 1918, he wrote to John Buchan, the author, future governor-general of Canada and present head of the News Department, informing him that it was possible to, 'ensure the complete control of the "Nuovo Giornale" - one of the leading papers of the place - for the very moderate sum of 2000 *lire* per month.' It will be remembered that the *Nuovo Giornale* was in fact one of the papers originally taking money from the German embassy in Rome at the end of 1914, before Italy entered the war. Furthermore, Thorold wrote, 'this "control" would mean that the Editor would take his direction from me, and could, if I saw fit, be replaced by some other person more representative of our views; any article sent by me would be inserted, and I should exercise a censorship over the whole paper.'[33] The fickle nature of the *Nuovo Giornale* notwithstanding, British propagandists in Italy

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[30] Minute by Alec Randall, 14 November 1917, FO 395/98, N22/217349, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[31] Renzi, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, 150.
[32] Hutton to Buchan, 1 November 1917, FO 395/98, N22/217349, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[33] Thorold to Buchan, 14 January 1918, FO 395/175, N22/8092, TNA: PRO, Kew.

had no qualms about bribing pressmen to write articles favourable to the cause, despite their bluster about the insidious nature of German propaganda.[34]

Hutton was obsessive about keeping his role in the production of propaganda in Tuscany as secret as possible. Bemoaning the persistence of pro-German sentiments in the region, he informed Buchan in no uncertain terms that, 'any direct method of English propaganda ... would have been disastrous here in our special conditions; for me have to deal with the most sceptical and the most disaffected people, with regard to the war, that exists in all Italy.'[35] Indeed, Hutton's preoccupation with making his work as secretive as possible would eventually lead him to regard his powers of subterfuge as more proficient than they actually were. Informing Montgomery of progress made in the later part of 1917, he boasted that because of his use of local agents in printing his propaganda, Italians had no idea that the News Department was behind the work, a claim that Montgomery underlined and annotated with a brief, but descriptive, 'rubbish.'[36] Hutton's insistence on the utmost secrecy was evidently amusing enough to his superiors in London for it to distract them from presumably more pressing matters. After receiving one of his reports on the results of an interview with an Italian politician named Luzzatti, the Foreign Office official and art historian Eric MacLagan minuted that, 'I understand from Mr Thorold that [Hutton] acts quite in the spirit of the mediaeval conspirator when he moves about Florence, & thoroughly enjoys it.' This was followed in the official minute paper by a drawing initialled by both MacLagan and Buchan of Montgomery depicting such a spy.[37]

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[34] Unfortunately, no record exists in the archives to suggest this idea was implemented.
[35] Hutton to Buchan, 1 November 1917, FO 395/98, N22/217349, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[36] Minuted remark on a letter from Hutton to Montgomery, 24 July 1917, FO 395/98, N22/150838, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[37] Minuted remarks by Eric MacLagan and Montgomery, 1 August 1917, FO 395/98, N22/150838, TNA: PRO, Kew.



Image 4: Drawing by Charles Hubert Montgomery, 1 August 1917, FO 395/98, N22/150838, TNA: PRO, Kew.

Though his antics might provide a welcome distraction from the grim work of wartime propaganda, Hutton's methods eventually alienated many of those who worked with him. At the end of December, the poet and educator Frederick Herbert Trench wrote to Buchan directly, accusing Hutton of poor judgement, a lack of understanding of the difficulties faced by modern Italians and, most seriously of all, no working knowledge of the Italian language.[38] Lina Waterfield was also critical over Hutton's plans for the British Institute. Reading the correspondence between the News Department and various individuals in Florence, it seems that the disagreement was over the exact nature of the propaganda to be carried out by such an establishment.[39]

To understand the concerns that Waterfield had in regards to the mission of the Florence Institute – which will be discussed later – the function of Donna Bettina's other Anglo-Italian institutes already operating around the country must be considered. These were supported by funds from the News Department that provided for the rental of appropriate premises and the running costs involved.[40] The institutes received material from Wellington House and maps from the War Office showing the various theatres of combat.[41] The original branch in Milan was run ably by a group of Italian women headed by Donna Bettina. On a visit to the city, the secretary of the British embassy, Edward Capel Cure, observed that:

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[38] Trench to Buchan, 7 December 1917, FO 395/98, N22/245100, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[39] Lina Waterfield to Buchan, January 4 1918, FO 395/175, N22/2227, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[40] Intra-department memo, 12 March 1917, FO 395/97, N22/52900, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[41] Alec Randall to Lord Onslow, 20 September 1917, FO 395/97, N22/183369. , TNA: PRO, Kew

> Within the "Institute" itself, there was a hum of life that suggested the simile of a bee-hive; people coming and going receiving their instructions and making their reports. Donna Bettina had got together a nucleus of energetic men and women drawn from the people, whom she was sending into the suburbs and country districts, to give strength to the weak and preach friendship towards England.[42]

The institute at Milan consisted of a propaganda 'department', and a reading room where British residents and soldiers on leave could read newspapers and socialise. Indeed the institute in Milan did its work so well that another Anglo-Italian reading room was set up in Rome not long after, followed by others in Genoa and Naples.[43] The Milan institute was also able to coordinate its fund-raising with the Franco-Italian league in the city, and between the two organisations, over 110,000 *lire* was collected for troops at the front in gifts of 'wine, chocolate, postcards, etc. … of which more than 70,000 represented the part of the "Anglo-Italian Institute."[44] In comparison to the hostile atmosphere that Hutton and Waterfield found so challenging in Florence, there was greater enthusiasm for the war in the prosperous northern city. So successful were efforts to popularise the war, in fact, that even Boy Scouts were roped into the mission. They were told that they could best serve the Allied cause, according to Capel Cure, if they

> Allowed no one to say a word in their hearing against the war or against the Allies. If they were present when anyone spoke disparagingly, they were to hand the man over to the police. There is a Royal Decree which enables them to do this …. On the first day when these instructions were given, several people were marched off to the police-station, and one was badly mauled. You may laugh at this form of propaganda, but I can assure you that it is most effective.[45]

Whilst in Milan, Capel Cure also attended a meeting to organise a patriotic demonstration of support for the war and the Allies at the famous La Scala theatre. The municipal authorities were in attendance, and patriotic songs from Italian operas to *It's a Long Road to Tipperary* were sung, the latter performed by British soldiers. Overall, Capel Cure's visit was a success and he observed 'there can be no question but that the Anglo-Italian Institute in Milan, has not only entered deep into the heart

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[42] Edward Capel Cure to Alec Randall, November 24 1917, FO 395/97, N22/230245, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[43] Capel Cure to Montgomery, 10 July 1917, FO 395/97, N22/141245, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[44] Capel Cure to Alec Randall, November 24 1917, FO 395/97, N22/230245, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[45] Ibid.

and sympathies of the people, but represents at the moment, one of the officially acknowledged leaders of Milanese thought and war-like activities … all of this helps our cause in Italy.'[46] The Rome institute thrived as well, with Rennell Rodd reporting at the beginning of 1918 that, even though it had only been open a short time, four hundred members had already enrolled to take advantage of the institute's reading room and opportunities for social interaction.[47] By the end of the war, the Roman institute was approaching two thousand members, and it had become more of a social club, organising lectures and concerts for its members.[48] Branches in Genoa and Naples were organised along the same lines. After the end of hostilities, a combination of pressing war debt and the post-war unease with propaganda forced the institutes to close, with the exception of Florence which would lose its official status but continue as a privately funded venture, supplemented by funds from the British Council.[49]

'Cosa ha fatto l'Inghilterra?': the content of British propaganda

Owing to the various agents involved in producing and distributing propaganda in Italy, it is difficult to develop any generalised picture of the material produced. Even though Wellington House sent out leaflets and books to Donna Bettina and her institutes in Milan and Rome, for example, the translation of such material was done in Italy by individual Italians. Agents like Hutton and Waterfield were also encouraged to develop their own propaganda. As Philip M Taylor has argued, the News Department concerned itself more with the dissemination of facts and statistics rather than leaflets or pamphlets. In foreign countries such as Italy the production and development of propaganda material was left to local anglophiles and British residents like Waterfield.[50] The result was that British propaganda in Italy was uniquely adapted to the kingdom's position in the war, and was never exceedingly pro-British. This is explained by Thorold's anxiety that any overtly British

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[46] Ibid.
[47] Rennell Rodd to Arthur Balfour, 28 March 1918, FO 395/176, N22/58427, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[48] Rennell Rodd to George Curzon, 13 March 1919, FO 395/274, N22/001219, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[49] Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British overseas publicity and propaganda 1919 - 1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 78.
[50] Philip M. Taylor, "The Foreign Office and British Propaganda During the First World War," *Historical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1980): 875-98, 877-78.

propaganda would be discounted by most Italians, and is in keeping with Charles Masterman's views that propaganda could not be seen as emanating from an obviously British source, in order to maximise its credibility.

A recurrent theme of British propaganda produced in Italy was the favouring of Latinate (thus, Italian) civilisation over Austro-German barbarism. The leaflet quoted at the beginning of this chapter, 'L'ultima atrocità tedesca', provides a good example of how news stories highlighting the barbarity of the Germans were used in order to win the sympathies of the Italian people. Apart from recounting the numbers of children left dead and wounded by the air raid over London, it also mentions that the attack took place on the feast day of St. Anthony, 13 June 1917.[51] Not only were the Germans stooping to murdering (the leaflet uses the verb 'uccidire' or 'to murder') innocent civilians and children, but they had decided to do it on a holy feast day. The emphasis on the day of the attack being the feast day of a well-known saint is telling; in choosing such a day to launch their bombardment, Germany was behaving in a highly unholy and blasphemous manner. In this way 'L'ultima atrocità tedesca' pointed out the hypocrisy and irreligious nature of German forces, and highlighted the moral urgency for Germany's defeat. The characterisation of Germans as barbaric was also a common tactic back in Britain. Cate Haste notes that German culture was deemed the antithesis of Christianity and Nicoletta Gullace has shown how images of sexual violence, such as the 'rape of Belgium', painted Germans as uniformly inhumane and uncivilised.[52]

Notepaper produced by Hutton for Italian soldiers to send letters home depicted similar themes. One example portrays Italy as a fully outfitted Roman soldier stamping decisively on the vanquished figure of a barbarian, helpfully identified by the words on his shield.

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[51] 'L'Ultima atrocità tedesca', 30 June 1917, FO 395/99 N22/133899, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[52] Nicoletta F. Gullace, "Sexual violence and family honor: British propaganda and international law during the First World," *American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (1997): 714, 725-26 ; Cate Haste, *Keep the home fires burning: propaganda in the First World War* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), 107.



Image 5: British-produced notepaper. News Department, FO 395/98, N22/135549, TNA: PRO, Kew.

The words behind the figures can be translated as 'We sons of Rome combat Prussian militarism,'[53] which emphasises the link to a Roman past that British propagandists evidently wanted Italian soldiers to remember, perhaps in an effort to stir up their martial spirit. The notepaper also contained an exhortation to Italian soldiers to remember that their efforts echoed that of both Caesar and Garibaldi, and at the same time would be contributing to their own place in history. It ended with the slogan 'Victory will be with us'[54] in large, bold capital letters, underlined for emphasis.

Civilisation as embodied in the figure of the Roman soldier, would triumph over the destabilising threat posed by German barbarity. Though the example here is of a Roman soldier, the language and imagery are clearly influenced by popular ideas in Britain that defined Britishness as being everything opposed to German inhumanity and brutishness.[55] By embodying the same idea in the guise of a Classical Roman soldier (hence the even stronger links with the history of Western civilisation), the notepaper turned the Allied cause, into the defense of civilisation against the devastation threatened by Germany.

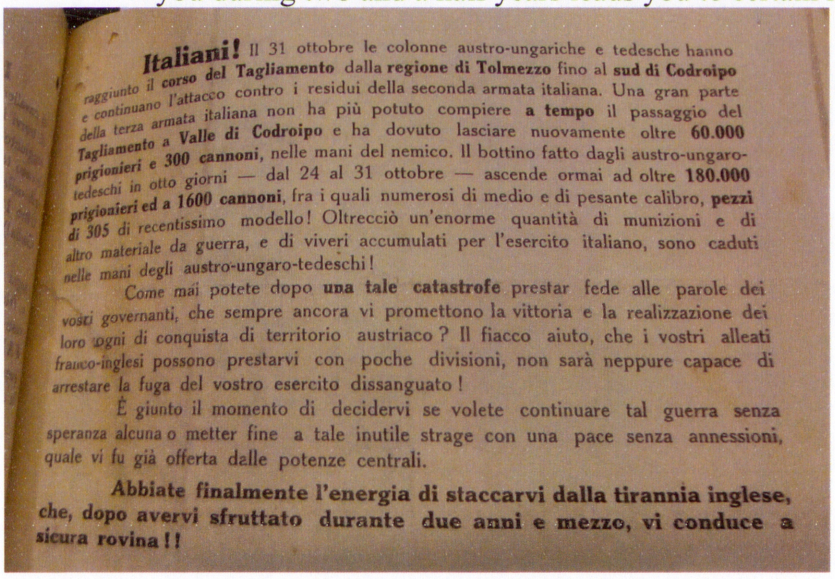
British propaganda in Italy provided an obvious response to pro-German leaflets and newspapers. These tried to persuade Italians of the futility of the Allied cause, as well as instil a fear that their government had entered into a war that had been instigated by the British in order to protect its colonial empire, a sentiment

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[53] 'Noi figli di Roma combattiamo il militarismo di Prussiano.' FO 395/98, N22/135549, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[54] 'La Vittoria Sarà con noi'
[55] J.M. Winter, "British national identity and the First World War," in *The Boundaries of the state in modern Britain*, ed. S.J.D. Green and R.C. Whiting (1996), 261-77, 268.

echoed in America.[56]Writing to Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, Rennell Rodd attached two leaflets dropped by airplane over northern Italy by Austro-German forces. Irritated with the response of the Italian government, which was to shield its populace from any bad news related to the war, Rennell Rodd groused that 'it has not as yet been possible to reproduce these leaflets here for propaganda work as the Italian Government insist so strongly on withholding from the public all knowledge of the extent of their losses and with that object have even stopped all foreign newspapers since the 26th of October [1917].'[57] He included a translation of the leaflets, which played on the Italian government's high-handed behaviour and fears that the Italian army was losing the war. The Franco-British forces, one insinuated, were helpless in the face of the full might of the Austro-German war machine,

> After such a catastrophe [the Italian defeat at the Battle of Caporetto] how can you rely upon the words of your rulers, who continue to promise you victory and the realisation of the dreams of conquering Austrian territory? The feeble help which your Franco-English allies can lend you with a few divisions, will not even suffice to check the flight of your exhausted army .... The moment has come to decide whether you wish to continue such a lifeless war or to bring this senseless slaughter to an end .... at least have the energy to rid yourself of English tyranny, which after having exploited you during two and a half years leads you to certain ruin!![58]



Italiani! Il 31 ottobre le colonne austro-ungariche e tedesche hanno raggiunto il **corso del Tagliamento** dalla **regione di Tolmezzo** fino al **sud di Codroipo** e continuano l'attacco contro i residui della seconda armata italiana. Una gran parte della terza armata italiana non ha più potuto compiere **a tempo** il passaggio del **Tagliamento** a **Valle di Codroipo** e ha dovuto lasciare nuovamente oltre **60.000 prigionieri e 300 cannoni**, nelle mani del nemico. Il bottino fatto dagli austro-ungaro-tedeschi in otto giorni — dal 24 al 31 ottobre — ascende ormai ad oltre **180.000 prigionieri ed a 1600 cannoni**, fra i quali numerosi di medio e di pesante calibro, **pezzi di 305** di recentissimo modello! Oltrecciò un'enorme quantità di munizioni e di altro materiale da guerra, e di viveri accumulati per l'esercito italiano, sono caduti nelle mani degli austro-ungaro-tedeschi!

Come mai potete dopo **una tale catastrofe** prestar fede alle parole dei vostri governanti, che sempre ancora vi promettono la vittoria e la realizzazione dei loro sogni di conquista di territorio austriaco? Il fiacco aiuto, che i vostri alleati franco-inglesi possono prestarvi con poche divisioni, non sarà neppure capace di arrestare la fuga del vostro esercito dissanguato!

È giunto il momento di decidervi se volete continuare tal guerra senza speranza alcuna o metter fine a tale inutile strage con una pace senza annessioni, quale vi fu già offerta dalle potenze centrali.

Abbiate finalmente l'energia di staccarvi dalla tirannia inglese, che, dopo avervi sfruttato durante due anni e mezzo, vi conduce a sicura rovina!!

Image 6: Pro-German propaganda. FO 395/99, N22/223782, TNA: PRO, Kew.

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[56] Wiegand, "British Propaganda in American Public Libraries," 242.
[57] Rennell Rodd to Balfour, 18 December 1917, FO 395/99, N22/223782, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[58] English translation of German propaganda, 23 November 1917, FO 395/99, N22/223782, TNA: PRO, Kew. The 'tyranny' here obviously references Italy's two years of fighting in the war under inducement by the British.

It is telling that Rennell Rodd also reported the leaflets as having being dropped over the war zone. This choice of location points to the intended targets of such disheartening propaganda; the Italian campaign was suffering severe losses and desertion was high amongst the troops, especially after their catastrophic defeat at Caporetto in 1917, where the Italian army sustained over 340,000 casualties in comparison to the Austro-German army's 20,000.[59] Furthermore, Italian soldiers were paid poorly and could expect no support from their government if taken prisoner by the enemy.[60] Such leaflets were obviously an inducement to desert and thus weaken the resistance Austro-German troops faced.

Yet, the idea of British tyranny was not simply restricted to the war zone but a common theme in the anti-Allied propaganda that was particularly popular in Tuscany. Richard Bosworth has noted that Italy was already dependent on British coal imports in the years before 1914 and indeed, one of the many problems facing British propagandists was the belief that Britain was deliberately withholding coal from Italy and not contributing as fully as it could to help its allies.[61] This is illustrated by a report from Hutton about rioting in Florence as the result of a shortage of coal and other fuel. His response was to set up a soup kitchen for the poor to 'demonstrate … how to live more economically. Where we are interested is however in the fact that after this demonstration we shall be allowed to lecture and to distribute manifestoes and pamphlets and post cards and pictures. In my opinion this is by far the best way that could be devised of getting at the poor and as we really invented it we intend to take full advantage of it.'[62] Buchan was of the opinion that a pamphlet was needed to explain that British coal prices were not much higher than they were in peacetime, and that the British Government was not artificially inflating its cost.[63] Subsequently a manifesto Hutton produced was titled 'Ciò che ha fatto l'Inghilterra', or, 'What England has done'.

Taylor has pointed out that British propaganda in the First World War was by nature reactive, and indeed the very existence of 'Ciò che ha fatto l'Inghilterra'

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[59] Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: a history of Italy since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 392.
[60] For an overview of the Italian war campaign, see Thompson, *The White War*.
[61] Richard Bosworth, *Italy and the wider world 1860-1960* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 24.
[62] Hutton to Montgomery, 11 February 1917, FO 395/98, N22/37199, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[63] Memo by Buchan, 7 November 1917, FO 395/99, N22/326572, TNA: PRO, Kew.

proves this.[64] The leaflet presented various anti-British views and opinions which were rebuffed with a combination of simple language and statistics, evidently deployed to demonstrate that Britain was contributing to the war just as equally as Italy. The author of the manifesto begins by refuting what he or she dubbed a 'German lie (una menzogna tedesca)', namely that Great Britain was responsible for the war and had allowed other nations to fight on her behalf whilst she prospered.[65] The leaflet went on to describe just how much Britain was spending per day on the war, around 192 million *lire*, the estimated total cost of the war, which was about 128 billion *lire*, and the various taxes imposed on the British people, ending with the exclamation 'these are the earnings of war!' One of the most interesting statistics provided by the leaflet is the number of men deployed to the various theatres of war; over nine million, and from the summer of 1916, five million volunteers. It was also careful to point out that Britain had not wanted to go to war, but had been provoked by the threat that Germany posed to Western society. War, it argued, was an absolute necessity. Britain had always loved liberty and desired it, not only for herself, but for others as well.[66] In fact, the author of 'Ciò che ha fatto' argued in capital letters, the entire Allied cause was fighting for 'Liberty and the future of all civilised peoples.'[67]

Hutton sent a large printed sheet, designed to be plastered on walls, and a smaller postcard size of the manifesto back to London, and noted that they had been printed in conjunction with the Florentine municipal authorities. The contrast of civilised Allies fighting against the chaos of brutal Germany is repeated, as well as the subsuming of the British cause within the broader Allied mission. In the hostile environment of Florence and the rest of Tuscany, it was important that Allied propaganda did not simply present British participation in the war but related it to the Italian experience and how it affected Anglo-Italian relations. 'Ciò che ha fatto' did this by appealing to the bond shared between the two countries dating back to the Risorgimento, pointing out that British help had been extended to heroes of the movement from Ugo Foscolo to Mazzini and Garibaldi.[68] The perception that the

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[64] Taylor, "The Foreign Office and British Propaganda," 876.
[65] 'Ciò che ha fatto l'Inghilterra', 5 June 1917, FO 395/98, N22/115672, TNA: PRO, Kew. 'La Germania sostiene che l'Inghilterra è responsible di questa guerra, e che a combattere gli altri per lei, mentre essa prospera e arricchisce.'
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid. 'LA LIBERTA' E PER L'AVVENIRE DI TUTTI I POPOLI CIVILI.'
[68] Ibid. 'Quando nel RISORGIMENTO combattevamo per la nostra libertà, l'Inghilterra ci fu sempre amica ed ospitò ed onorò i nostri grandi da Ugo Foscolo a Mazzini e Garibaldi.'

British were simply wasting the human resources of their allies and withholding valuable supplies had to be countered by explaining what contributions the empire was making to the other Entente powers. 'Ciò che ha fatto' is an example not only of the language used in British propaganda in Italy, but also of the specific circumstances in Tuscany to which it had to adapt.

Anti-Allied sentiment in Tuscany at the beginning of 1917, when the News Department took full control of propaganda operations, remained worryingly high. Hutton might have been exaggerating the situation when he called the people of the region the most disaffected in the whole of the country, but Rennell Rodd was in no doubt that the enemy propagandists were finding Tuscany fertile ground for cultivating animosity against the Allies and the war. Attributing the unpopularity of the conflict in Tuscany to its agricultural livelihood, he explained:

> Tuscany is one of the worst areas in Italy from our point of view. All the people are ... farmers, and when the sons go to the war the old people cannot run the farms adequately & if the sons get killed the old people run the risk of being turned out because they cannot produce enough to satisfy the ... landlord. ... In Tuscany also the upper classes are all against the war. ...What we want to keep people quiet is military success and the prospect of a speedy end to the war.[69]

To this end propagandists like Hutton depended on statistics from the News Department to prepare pamphlets in order produce pamphlets like 'Ciò che ha fatto l'Inghilterra.'

Propagandists did not simply limit their efforts to the written word. Lecture tours by Italians and some Allied agents proved popular as well. Renzi highlighted the case of a Belgian lecturer, Jules Destrée, who Rennell Rodd credited with singlehandedly helping to influence Italian opinion in favour of the war. His lecture in Messina in April 1915 proved so rousing, containing as it did images of atrocities committed by German troops in Belgium, that after it part of his audience attempted to stage an impromptu demonstration at the German consulate.[70] The British-Italian League, a patriotic organisation that was one of the many unofficial organs through which British propaganda was disseminated by the Foreign Office, employed a similar tactic in Tuscany two years later. Applying to the Foreign Office for a grant of £25 to subsidise the lecture tour of a Signora Teresina Campani, Janet Penrose

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[69] Rennell Rodd to Montgomery, March 13 1917, FO 395/98, N22/57847, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[70] Renzi, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, 151-52.

Trevelyan, wife of the historian George Macaulay Trevelyan, explained that it had been Campani's own idea to give a series of lectures, targeted to Italian women, on their English counterparts working in munitions factories.[71] Campani explained that many Italians thought English women rich and idle and had forgotten how to properly run a household. She wanted to give these lectures so as to ensure that, 'when Peace will come again the sisters of Italy will appreciate better the English ones and a closer friendship will be established between the two noble nations whose women are working for the same cause and do not know enough [about each other].'[72] The Foreign Office replied favourably to the suggestion and sent over several boxes of lantern slides to Italy for the lectures. Coincidentally, Randall noted that a larger sum had been provided to another Italian, Aldo Sorani, who had undertaken a similar tour of the whole of Italy. Yet Randall recognised the importance of securing the people of Tuscany's favour, noting that it was 'perhaps, more in need of propaganda of this kind than any other province in the country.'[73]

British propaganda in Italy, and especially in Tuscany had two characteristics. It informed Italians of the aims of the war, which many were not enthusiastic about. This was described as the clash of civilisation versus barbarity, and of culture threatened. The second was to reassure them that Britain was fully committed to the war effort, and was not, as rumoured, profiting from the war or withholding supplies from its allies. In Florence and the rest of Tuscany, propaganda was aimed at raising awareness about Britain, not only as a belligerent power, but also as a nation that boasted cultural links with Italy stretching back to its support of the Risorgimento. Lecture tours like Campani's, which provided an insight into the culture of Britain, shed light on a country that many Italians knew little about. The founding of the British Institute in Florence can be seen as a natural extension of this mission to raise the profile of British ideas and culture.

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[71] Janet P. Trevelyan to Alec Randall, 5 March 1917, FO 395/97, N22/54054, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[72] Teresina Campani to Helen Zimmern, 25 February 1918, FO 395/97, N22/54054, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[73] Minute by Randall, 12 March 1917, FO 395/97, N22/54054, TNA: PRO, Kew.

Propaganda in Florence and the birth of the British Institute

The unique status of the institute in Florence can be explained by the delicate situation of propaganda efforts in the city. As mentioned earlier, Florence and the rest of Tuscany were regarded as a stronghold of neutral and pro-German sympathy. Two of its daily newspapers had been funded by German money from the embassy in Rome and German intellectuals were a well-established presence in the city. Indeed, the number of German residents was often a great cause for concern amongst propagandists in both London and Florence. Alec Randall pointed out that, 'the ultimate cause of any inferiority there may be in our propaganda to that of the Germans in Italy is clearly indicated ... to be the numerical inferiority in which British citizens are even now, as compared with German residents in Italy.'[74] After observing the situation, Thorold opined that 'it is not improbable that the German agents encourage [Italian nationalism] so as to develop the national ambitions of Italy to a point which shall be incompatible with the general policy of the Entente.'[75]

The solution to this problem, according to Hutton, was to encourage more cultural propaganda. Suggesting that English nannies be provided to Italian households who requested them, Hutton noted that they would be one of the 'finest sources of permanent cultural propaganda conceivable. Our language would be taught and our ideas in morale and in life would become known to great portions of the Italian people now wholly ignorant of them.'[76] Though Hutton did not provide a definition as to what he meant by the term cultural propaganda, Taylor has defined it as the promotion of a nation's achievements in a more general fashion, rather than through conventional political or economic methods.[77] Ignoring Hutton's suggestion about British nannies (which was not taken up), it is important to note his use of the term cultural propaganda and what he thought to be its purpose. The British Institute of Florence, therefore, was established as an outpost of cultural, rather than political, propaganda and for this reason it was spared the fate of the other Anglo-Italian institutes in Italy at the end of the First World War. The institute was also conceived as more of a long-term effort than were its political counterparts and could thus

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[74] Minute by Alec Randall, 31 January 1918, FO 395/175, N22/12640, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[75] Thorold to Buchan, 13 June 1917, FO 395/97, N22/117681, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[76] Hutton to Buchan, 6 October 1917, FO 395/99, N22/192494, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[77] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 126.

operate in Florence without the hostility that purely political propaganda efforts attracted.

The idea of an Anglo-Latin library[78] in Florence was first proposed to the News Department in late 1917. Writing to Buchan, Trench outlined a scheme modelled on the French Institute of Florence. This had been founded in 1907 to promote the 'scientific study' of modern languages in the city. Originally an annex of Grenoble University, its founder and first director from 1907 to 1920, Julien Luchaire, had aimed for it to compete with the German *Kunsthistorisches Institut* as an institute of higher learning, thereby raising France's cultural and intellectual profile in Florence. In addition to French, the Institute had departments in art history, music, history, and Italian. From 1910, it drew an annual subsidy of 30,000 *francs* from the Quai D'Orsay.[79] During the war, Luchaire was determined to separate his Institute from the taint of propaganda, and established an annex in Milan dedicated to distributing political propaganda, but also opened a centre in his Florence Institute for Italian soldiers on leave to visit. [80] When it first opened, the French Institute was intended to act as a centre for French students of Italian. Its focus only changed when teaching French to Italians proved the most popular of the Institute's courses. This is where the original purposes of the French and British Institutes diverge, and it is a significant point of difference that the British Institute was set up to conduct cultural outreach primarily, rather than provide an education to Britons, as was the case with the French Institute.

In his letter, Trench informed Buchan that Waterfield had helped to secure premises for the fledgling Anglo-Italian library in the Loggia dei Rucellai, situated in Florence's centre, with funds raised on her own. The purpose of the library, he noted, would be 'the cultivation of a better relationship, and mutual understanding, between the students of the two countries by means of literature and economics, the formation of a very select small library in a central position, and a system of lectures.'[81] Importantly, Trench highlighted the need to keep the work of the library separate from that of more conventional propaganda efforts, emphasising that 'political

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[78] The terms 'library' and 'institute' were used interchangeably when referring to the fledgling British Institute and do not represent distinct entities.
[79] Renard, " À l'origine des instituts culturels français," 90.
[80] Renard, " À l'origine des instituts culturels français," 91.
[81] Frederick Herbert Trench to Buchan, 2 December 1917, FO 395/99, N22/234333, TNA: PRO, Kew.

propaganda work now under Mr Hutton must be kept distinct from the far-reaching objects of the small Institute proposed. *On our part, we believe that, in time, the Institute may itself prove a propaganda of no less usefulness and importance.*'[82]

Though the term cultural propaganda was not employed to describe what was being proposed, it is clear from both Thorold's later letter to Buchan regarding the institute and memorandums within the News Department that cultural propaganda was one of the main reasons why the institute was propose. In fact, a minute on the draft scheme for the Institute stated that 'it seems inadvisable that this academic scheme shall be confused with propaganda work - useful as the library may be.'[83]

The cultural propaganda carried out by the British Institute in Florence was also seen as a precursor to more blatant political propaganda efforts. Thorold was quick to point out the benefits of such an approach, noting, 'the great difficulty of any kind of propaganda is the ignorance of people about England. An English Institute here would be an organised form of providing accurate information, which, besides being in itself propaganda, would create a propitious atmosphere for any special propaganda work. As it is we are mistrusted & the cause of the mistrust is ignorance.'[84] Raising the Italian public's knowledge of Britain, therefore, would help make later political propaganda more fruitful. Thorold was also concerned that the French and German institutes already existing in the city meant that the British presence was being smothered by the combined weight of their culture. He calculated that the Institute would cost around £1,000 a year to run, which accounted not only for the rental of the Loggia dei Rucellai but the services of two librarians and an assistant for Waterfield as well.[85]

The Institute and its library were also intended to cater towards a more educated class of Italians, and Waterfield found herself at odds with Hutton, who despite having apparently understood that political propaganda was to be carried out separately from the Institute's work, wanted to transform it into an establishment more along the lines of the ones in Rome and Milan. After a serious disagreement with Hutton, Waterfield wrote to Buchan, to outline what she believed to be the purpose of the Institute, and how Hutton had misunderstood her position. Her

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[82] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[83] Minute, 11 December 1917, FO 395/99, FO N22/234333, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[84] Thorold to Buchan, 22 December 1917, FO 395/175, N22/2228, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[85] Ibid.

flustered letter merits extended quotation, as it identifies the Institute's main points of divergence from political propaganda:

> I had understood that, although we had often held different views on propaganda & on matters regarding the Library, Mr Hutton had quite come round to my point of view that the Library should in no way be run as a propaganda Office, with posters & war books in the windows, flags flying, & the coming & going of either Italian or English soldiers. The Library was to be for Professors & Students .... The more we were able to keep the Library working on a purely intellectual basis the more likely we were to obtain a valuable & permanent influence for good in Florence, among this interesting but highly critical & cynical people. I did not succeed in getting Mr Hutton to see that, *while it were well not to acknowledge our Library to be a propaganda centre or to run it on obvious propaganda lines, it would in reality be the essence of propaganda...*[86]

Helpfully for Waterfield, Hutton was recalled to London not long afterwards to undertake Italian propaganda in London under the aegis of the Italian embassy there, owing to the antagonistic feelings he had raised amongst the propagandists in Florence.[87] At the same time, the News Department awarded a grant of £600 to the Institute and Buchan transferred Hutton's duties as official representative of British propaganda in Tuscany to Waterfield.[88]

The British Institute of Florence, as outlined in its first draft scheme, was to be founded by the Department of Information in conjunction with both Oxford and Cambridge universities. Its aims were the 'fostering & strengthening [of] mutual relations between the United Kingdom & Italy, by promoting & spreading the study & knowledge of the language, literature & life of the English-speaking & Italian peoples.' In addition to a reference library, there were to be weekly lectures and courses in English for Italians, as well as the 'publication of a quarterly bilingual Bulletin, giving news of literary & artistic events & movements which may interest Great Britain, Italy & Latin Countries in general.'[89]

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[86] Lina Waterfield to Buchan, 4 January 1918, FO 395/175, N22/2227, TNA: PRO, Kew. Emphasis added.
[87] Buchan to Thorold, 31 December 1917, FO 395/175, N22/2228, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[88] Montgomery to Thorold, 11 January 1918, FO 395/175, N22/2228, TNA: PRO, Kew, and, Buchan to Lina Waterfield, 28 December 1917, Waterfield Collection (WAT), WAT:1:G:90:f4, British Institute Archives (BIA), Florence. Interestingly, Waterfield was happy to accept half of Hutton's original salary for the same amount of work.
[89] 'Rough draft of scheme for the proposed BRITISH INSTITUTE at Florence', 4 January 1918, FO 395/175, N22/2228, TNA: PRO, Kew.

No overtly propagandistic language is found in the scheme, but it is telling that the Director of the Institute was required to be an official of the Department and was directly responsible to it. The more scholarly nature of the Florence Institute would separate it from the other Anglo-Italian institutes in Italy and its insistence on being distinct from what Lina Waterfield termed 'pure propaganda' were key factors in its post-war longevity. By educating the intellectual classes, the Institute engaged in Masterman's original intended purpose of British propaganda, namely the influencing of key individuals who could thus in turn influence the general public.[90] In this way, a complete obfuscation of the origins of British propaganda was achieved: educating Italians who were themselves educators allowed the British Institute to present opinions and arguments that would be in turn passed on to other Italians through their teachers. In theory at least, this was the perfect kind of propaganda work, ensuring a visible British cultural presence in Florence that would guarantee more long-term results than overtly political propaganda. The lack of any strong British representation in Florence to counteract Germanophile sentiment in the city had been regarded as a key area of difficulty in conducting propaganda during the war. The British Institute was insurance that the same problem would not be encountered again; by raising awareness of their culture in the city, British propagandists were more prepared for the battle for the hearts and minds of Florence's citizens than their predecessors. By targeting the educators and intellectuals of Florence, and by avoiding association with more overtly political forms of propaganda, the Institute ensured that its longevity would far outstretch the duration of the war. During the interwar period, however, the Institute would have to contend with rising Italian hostility towards Britain, and even friendships with the Fascist authorities could not stop its inevitable shutdown as the Second World War began.

[90] Messinger, *British propaganda*: 38.

Why the British Institute of Florence outlived the war

The proposal to establish an Anglo-Italian library in Florence was one of the many responses to the belief that the city was a vital battleground for Allied propagandists, but it is clear that it had a longer lasting impact than any other propaganda effort undertaken by the British. A large part of this must be attributed to the fact that the initiative that finally resulted in the founding of the Institute was not political, but rather cultural in nature. Promoting understanding between Italians and Britons in the name of cultural exchange intimated that the two nations were at least on equal footing and helped to combat Italian ideas of British aloofness and high-handedness. It also raised the cultural profile of the British in a city where the French and Germans had already established significant presences and ensured that British points of view found an outlet. By educating Italians about British ideas, literature, language and history, the Institute separated itself from the short-term goals of pro-Allied propaganda and instead guaranteed its relevance in post-war Florence.

In his draft of a scheme for an Anglo-Italian library, Trench set out guidelines that outlined the library's function and its administration. One major recommendation was that the Institution be run by a committee or council 'half composed of Italian and half of English persons, in order to form a sort of local control.'[91] Though the Institute did not adopt his suggestion (and would instead be run in the interwar years by two governing committees, with one based in London), it demonstrates the original commitment to making the venture cross-cultural.

The proposed content of the library included any books by Italian authors about British art or politics, and a bilingual bulletin of studies. A small note appended to the bottom of the document outlining the scheme states, 'It is intended that the advantages to be derived from the scheme *shall be wholly reciprocal*; and especially that English-speaking citizens be made aware how much they have to learn from modern Italy, and from intercourse with the minds of leading and cultivated Italians.'[92] This reflects the fact that both British and Italian intellectuals were instrumental in helping to establish the library, including the respected historian Gaetano Salvemini, the Italian Jewish poet Angiolo Orvieto (who had worked with

[91] Trench to Buchan, 2 December 1917, FO 395/99, N22/234333, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[92] Trench to Buchan, 2 December 1917, FO 395/99, N22/234333, TNA: PRO, Kew. Emphasis added.

both Hutton and Waterfield in producing propaganda), Arthur Acton, and Walter Ashburner, a lawyer and professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford.

As will be shown, however, the Institute's evolution during the interwar years made this conduit of exchange flow almost entirely in one direction, and though Italian students were sent to London for summer immersion schemes, Italian lessons were so little in demand that they were only offered occasionally. Yet it is important that at the outset, the intent of the individuals behind the initial scheme was an equal cultural exchange and understanding.

Importantly, Trench was insistent that the library be distinct from other propaganda activities. The condition was imposed by both Italian and British residents of Florence, who threatened to withhold from donating books to the reference library if it was to be used as a conventional propaganda centre, as found in other Italian cities. They insisted that the premises 'should not be used except for purposes of culture and intellectual co-operation, and that the purposes of the work should not be confused by mixing it with temporary political Propaganda, such as postcards, posters, reception of English soldiers and so forth.'[93] This insistence that the two branches of work remain separate was repeated by Thorold in a later letter to Buchan, which was highly critical of Hutton's attempts to conflate the two. He wrote that, 'The Library will do very useful propaganda which ... may well become of permanent usefulness, & the class which it will be able to reach would only be hopelessly put off by the adoption of more popular & obvious methods.'[94] As mentioned earlier, it was hoped that the work of the Library would be to educate Italian teachers and intellectuals who could then in turn influence other Italians, which would ensure a more permanent feeling of sympathy with Britain than through other propaganda methods. This distinguishing feature would ultimately enable the British Institute to survive the upheaval caused by the advent of peacetime.

By the end of the First World War, however, it seemed as though all types of propaganda in Italy, whether political or cultural, were doomed. Mounting public unease with the work of the Ministry of Information in Britain, and budget constraints threatened to cut-off funding to the various Anglo-Italian institutes. Unless private funding could be secured, and unless the institutes could become self-sufficient, their futures were bleak. At the Foreign Office, Stephen Gaselee was of the opinion that the

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[93] Ibid.
[94] Thorold to Buchan, 17 December 1917, FO 395/98. N22/245100, TNA: PRO, Kew.

Department could not justify spending eight hundred pounds a week on the running of the institutes in peacetime, and considered propaganda work to be a natural extension of the duties of the embassy in Rome.[95] Several other diplomats, including Rennell Rodd and the Canadian newspaper magnate, Sir Campbell Stuart, who had prepared a memorandum on the state of the institutes in Italy, argued that the Institute at Florence should be considered separately from the rest, owing to the long-term nature of the work it performed. Noting that the Institute now boasted an enrolment of 250 students, a hundred of whom were skilled workers undertaking both language and technical instruction, Campbell Stuart wrote that 'the Institute at Florence deserves special mention and consideration, and ... special treatment. It is an educational establishment.'[96] More importantly, the Institute had also begun instructing Italian teachers in the English language, 'in order to prepare Italian teachers of English for the Italian middle schools' and had an enrolment of 160 students.[97] In about a year, the Institute had also begun to publish a review, *La Vita Britannica,* for Italian students of British literature, which lasted until the next year. The Institute had also been asked to publish a manual on British schools for use in Italian institutions, and had set up a Shakespeare Society.[98] All of these activities were intended to have a permanent effect on educated Florentines and were at risk of being stymied by the cessation of government aid and recognition.

The model of the Florence Institute was to prove instrumental in the establishment of other British institutes around the world, and within Italy itself branches of the Institute were opened in Rome, Milan, Naples, Palermo and Genoa. Indeed the Institute's expansion was only halted with the beginning of the Second World War. The success of the Institute would not have been as long-lived, or as widespread, if it had not been for the insistence of its founders on distinguishing itself from the rest of the British propaganda effort in Italy. By disassociating itself with conventional propaganda, and from overtly political arguments by advocating the exchange of cultural ideas over lectures on politics, the Institute ensured that it both

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[95] Minute by Gaselee, 27 January 1919, FO 395/274, N22/00211, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[96] Campbell Stuart, 'Memorandum on the situation in Italy, and recommendations for the future of Institutes and relief work', 22 January 1919, FO 395/274, N22/00211, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.

addressed itself to a more influential audience of Italians and presented itself as a centre for education, not propaganda.

Conclusion

The establishment of the British Institute of Florence was a direct result of a propaganda campaign waged by pro-Allied forces in order to win over the hostile region of Tuscany. Realising that ignorance of British culture was hampering propaganda work in the region, propagandists like Lina Waterfield created an institution to educate Italians about the culture and history of Great Britain, in the hope that shared understanding would bring about cooperation and a more sympathetic Italian public. Conducting cultural propaganda enabled the British Institute to outlive the First World War because it appealed to Italians on the basis of equal cultural exchange and offered a more comprehensive understanding of British ideas than what was found in the more conventional methods of propaganda, such as sheets scattered by airplanes, or favourable articles in newspapers that were the result of bribes from pro-Allied agents. As a result, the Institute proved that it had more relevance to post-war Italian society than its sister institutes in other Italian cities set up for the purposes of pure propaganda and this distinction allowed them to survive after a cash-strapped British government shut down the other institutes.

As an officially sanctioned outpost of British culture in Florence, the Institute not only inspired other establishments, but also presented a highly visible idea of what it meant to be British in Florence through its educational and social programmes. During the interwar years, this would cause the directors of the Institute no small amount of grief as they grappled with the rise of Fascism and the wishes of the British Council back in London.

Chapter 5
'Exceedingly beneficial to the Italians': Post-war Italy and the survival of the British Institute, 1918-1923

The British Foreign Office records that on 15 July 1920, in a sitting of the House of Commons, the Liberal member for Norwich, Lieutenant Commander Edward Hilton Young,[1] later to become First Baron Kennet and a representative to the League of Nations in the 1920s, asked a question of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs regarding the continuation of funding for the British Institute of Florence. In view of a report by the Foreign Office's Committee on British Communities Abroad, and

> The tribute paid ... to the very valuable work that is being carried on by the British Institute at Florence, has any decision has been arrived at as to the express recommendation of the committee that the Government should continue to subsidise the institute...?[2]

Furthermore, he wanted to know if the work the Institute had been carrying out – the educating of Italians in the language and culture of Britain and its wider applications on a more international scale – would be supported by the government, asking if 'every effort will be made to encourage this and similar institutions which are promoting a good understanding between this and other countries.'[3] John David Rees, the Conservative member for Nottingham East and a former colonial administrator in India, raised a similar question on 5 August, asking the Board of Education whether it would continue to supply funds for the Institute in Florence.[4] At the same session, Young again asked if the continuance (or lack thereof) of a government subsidy for the Institute would mean that consideration would also 'be given to the importance of maintaining an official connection with the institute in order that its status may not suffer by comparison with that of the official institutes of other nations at Florence.'[5] On this occasion, as with Young's earlier question, both the Secretary of State for the Treasury, Austen Chamberlain, and the Under-Secretary

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[1] Hilton Young was a close personal friend of the historian George Macaulay Trevelyan, and had taken photographs for Trevelyan's *Garibaldi and the Thousand.* George Macaulay Trevelyan, *An autobiography and other essays*, Longmans, London, 1949, 31.
[2] Parliamentary Question, Foreign Office files (FO) 395/340 P750/23/122, 15 July 1920, The National Archives (UK): Public Record Office (TNA: PRO), Kew.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Parliamentary Question, FO 395/340 P893/23/122, 5 August 1920, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[5] Parliamentary Question, FO 395/340 P894/23/122, 5 August 1920, TNA: PRO, Kew.

of State for Foreign Affairs, Cecil Harmsworth, indicated that both their departments were still negotiating the continuation of the Institute's subsidy, but as Harmsworth noted, 'the importance of maintaining the connection … will not be lost sight of.'[6] Despite their pleas, the Treasury decided only to support the Institute for a further year, after which it would have to secure its own private funding.

A friend of Trevelyan, Young's question highlighted the perilous state of the Institute; at the end of the First World War, the British Institute of Florence, and other British propaganda outlets in Italy, were cut off completely or encountered drastic reductions in the funding they had enjoyed during the war. However, the cultural work of the Institute ensured that it was considered separate from the more overtly political propaganda work of its sister institutes in Milan, Rome and Naples, all of which were liquidated soon after the war had ended. The British Institute was able to survive the upheaval caused by the end of the war by appealing to the need to improve Anglo-Italian relations in the aftermath of the Italian disaster in negotiating for territories at the peace talks in Paris. The Institute's supporters also played on British fears of falling behind the diplomatic efforts of countries such as France and Germany which had already established government-supported institutes in Florence. Furthermore, the imperial notion of a civilising mission to bring superior British culture and civilisation to the less fortunate nations of the world played a significant factor in securing funding from private individuals, as will be discussed.

In a period when British influence in international relations began its slow decline, and when other British colonies and expatriate communities around the world began to feel the effects of Britain's crippling war debts and the general disorganisation of its bureaucracy,[7] the Institute's survival represents an opportunity to understand how the absence of official government support could be replaced with that of private individuals both in Britain and Italy. The discussions between the supporters of the Institute and the Foreign Office also illustrate the attitude

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[6] Ibid.

[7] See Jonathan R. Barton, "Struggling against Decline: British Business in Chile, 1919-33," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 32, no. 1 (2000): 235; John Darwin, "Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy between the Wars," *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 3 (1980): 657-79; David Meredith, "Government and the Decline of the Nigerian Oil-Palm Export Industry, 1919-1939," *Journal of African History* 25, no. 4 (1984): 311-29; Jim Tomlinson, "Thrice Denied: 'Declinism' as a Recurrent Theme in British History in the Long Twentieth Century," *Twentieth Century British History* 20, no. 2 (2009): 227-51; Tony Woods, "Why Not Persuade Them to Grow Tobacco": Planters, Tenants, and the Political Economy of Central Malawi, 1920-1940," *African Economic History* 21(1993): 131-50.

government officials had towards Italy and the efforts of the Foreign Office in trying to raise Britain's profile. Furthermore, as the post-war survival of the Institute was due largely to the pre-war notion of an imperial British civilising mission, the story of its continuance in the inter-war period reveals the extent to which an imperial worldview still influenced both the supporters of the Institute and officials back in London. It also provides valuable understanding as to the importance with which the Institute regarded its work in spreading British culture to Italians.

Italy at the end of the First World War and attitudes towards Britain

The cessation of hostilities in 1918 was not greeted with wild enthusiasm in Italy. On the contrary, when the peace talks at Paris concluded in October 1919, the general feeling was that the nation had been betrayed by her allies and left with a 'mutilated victory'.[8] Italy, it was widely supposed, had been cheated out of territories promised by the 1915 Treaty of London, the very catalyst for her entry into the First World War. As Christopher Duggan has pointed out, however, the demands for territory in Trentino, the South Tyrol, Trieste, Istria, Southern Dalmatia and – most controversially – Fiume (present day Rijeka in Croatia) by the Liberal government of Vittorio Orlando were regarded by Britain, France and the United States of America as the arrogant posturing of a nation which had not contributed equally to the war effort and which was, as Duggan claims, a 'parvenu and undeserving of full membership of the great powers' club.'[9] Orlando himself did not particularly help matters when he stormed out of negotiations and returned to Rome, disgusted by the deadlock over the case for Fiume, to the bemusement of the Allies and the acclaim of the Italian public. By this time, the anger of the public was whipped up by the fiery assertions of the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, the bombastic predecessor of Benito Mussolini, that Italy deserved the maximum number of territories promised by the Treaty of London. Hostility towards the Allies, particularly Britain, ran high. Orlando's failure, when he returned to sign the Treaty of Versailles in May, to acquire more territories for Italy spelt his political death and he was forced to resign as Prime Minister. His successor, Francesco Nitti, had to concede both Dalmatia to the newly

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[8] Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: a history of Italy since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 410.

[9] Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 411 - 12.

formed Yugoslavia and allow the League of Nations to make Fiume a neutral city under its protection.[10]

Lost territories, however, were not the only problem with which the nation had to contend with. Rising rates of inflation and a drastic fall in the value of the *lira* meant that Italy was losing economic as well as actual physical ground to other nations.[11] There was also the upsurge of unemployment as soldiers returned home, as well as rising discontent amongst many workers in factories and in the countryside, encouraged by the Socialist Party, which also utilised the casualties sustained in the fighting to appeal to a disillusioned public already feeling the disappointment of losing out to the other Allies in territorial gains. In fact, as Zara Steiner has pointed out, Tuscany was a veritable hot seat of Socialist activity, as it had been during the war.[12] Indeed, the popularity of Socialism in Tuscany, as Duggan argues, was due to the influence of its grassroots leaders and their ambitions. They provoked violent outbursts in towns and cities, leading to fears that a Socialist revolution on the scale of what had happened in Russia, was imminent.[13]

In 1920, peasants joined in what has been termed the largest agricultural strike in Italian history to demand better welfare conditions and a say in the management of the land on which they worked.[14] As Richard Bosworth points out, this was not an isolated incident. Instead, it paralleled similar events that occurred in factories and farms around Italy, where Socialism became increasingly popular from the southern fields of Puglia, and even in the cafés in Venice, where a strike by waiters forced the iconic Caffé Florian to close temporarily in September 1919.[15] Less dramatically, in her villa at Poggio Gherardo, Janet Ross was also faced with the prospect of her gardeners threatening to join in a strike. It was a threat that she faced with her typical forthright nature. In a letter to Mary Berenson, she vowed, 'If mine does I shall say,

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[10] Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 414. For more on Italian diplomacy in this period and the idea of the 'mutilated victory', see James Burgwyn, *The legend of the mutilated victory: Italy, the Great War, and the Paris Peace Conference, 1915-1919* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993).

[11] Richard Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life under the Dictatorship, 1915-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 100.

[12] Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History, 1919 - 1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 318.

[13] Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 421-22.

[14] Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 104.

[15] Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 105.

two can play at that game, & that I shall strike, he can go & I shall not pay for the days when, & if, he strikes.'[16]

The popularity of the Socialist movement was also being observed with some worry by the British embassy in Rome, and when Nitti called the first post-war election in November 1919, the ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, sent instructions to consuls to report on the political situation. The consul for Florence, C.W. Maclean, sent his report on 22 November, barely a week after the election. He described demonstrations by the Socialist Party on the two consecutive nights after the ballot, although he was at pains to stress that they took place in an 'orderly manner'. Of the fourteen parliamentary seats for the district of Florence, he noted, the Socialists had won a majority of eight seats, though he noted that only 51% of the electoral roll had voted. He attributed the Socialists' success to

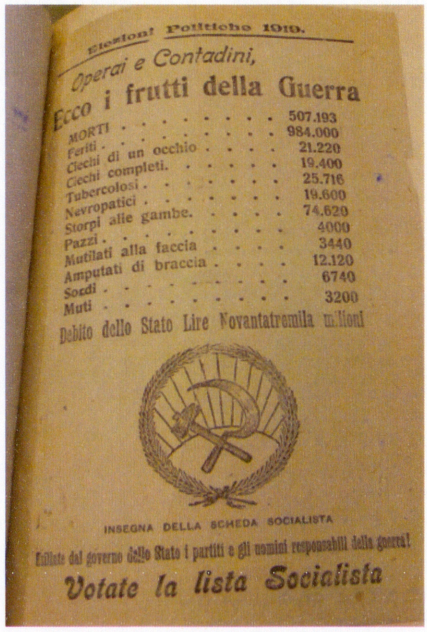
> The apathy and want of organisation and the splitting up of the Conservative Party [so] the Socialists easily won the day. It appears that there is a considerable amount of feeling against the present Government existent among the smaller shopkeepers and the lower middle class, which led to their abstention from voting, principally caused by the fear of another expedition similar to that of D'Annunzio, [who had invaded Fiume in September before being forced to retreat by the Italian navy] might take place which might lead to another war. And also, it is said for the same reason, in some cases voters with Anti-Socialist views voted for the Socialist Party.[17]

British officials in Italy considered the radical faction of the Socialist Party to be of particular concern. They were wary of its links with the Soviet Union. Often, too, the Socialists were identified with violent attacks. A letter from Maclean on 4 December 1919 reported two attacks by Socialists two days earlier, one on a procession organised by the Liberal party and the other by a group of Socialists' 'numbering 30 & 40' on two army officers, who were forced 'to draw & use their revolvers without, however, fatal results.'[18] What prompted this outburst of violence is not clear, but Maclean was of the opinion that they had been triggered by the unrest at Rome that had followed the opening of the new Parliament. Maclean noted in another letter that what he termed the 'Extreme Socialistic party' had been playing on the great number of men killed or wounded in the war in order to win votes. An

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[16] Janet Ross to Mary Berenson, 30 July 1920, Waterfield Collection (WAT), WAT:1:E:9:ff5-6, British Institute Archives (BIA), Florence.
[17] C.W. Maclean to George Buchanan, 22 November 1919, FO 170/1253, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[18] C.W. Maclean to George Buchanan, 4 December 1919, FO 170/1253, TNA: PRO, Kew.

election leaflet he sent back to the embassy in Rome contains a long list of casualties, and provides details of those wounded under the bold heading, 'These are the fruits of War.' The wounded are starkly listed under headings such as 'blinded in one eye', 'blinded completely', 'suffering from tuberculosis', 'mad', 'mutilated facially' or 'having an arm amputated', while Italy's war debt is listed as standing at 93 million *lire*. The leaflet also contains the exhortation, 'Exile from the government of the State the parties and men responsible for the war![19]


Elezioni Politiche 1919.

Operai e Contadini,

Ecco i frutti della Guerra

MORTI	507.193
Feriti	984.000
Ciechi di un occhio	21.220
Ciechi completi	19.400
Tubercolosi	25.716
Nevropatici	19.600
Storpi alle gambe	74.620
Pazzi	4000
Mutilati alla faccia	3440
Amputati di braccia	12.120
Sordi	6740
Muti	3200

Debito dello Stato Lire Novantatremila milioni

INSEGNA DELLA SCHEDA SOCIALISTA

Esiliate dal governo dello Stato i partiti e gli uomini responsabili della guerra!

Votate la lista Socialista

Image 7 Socialist leaflet, 1919, Foreign Office files (FO) 170/1253, The National Archives (UK): Public Record Office (TNA: PRO), Kew.

It is obvious that the growing discontent with the outcome of Italy's war, along with her failure to negotiate favourable terms at the Paris conference, resulted in the Socialists finding favour with many Italians. As such, British officials monitored the activities of the Socialist Party, with consuls such as Maclean reporting on strikes and demonstrations carried out around Italy. Such unrest, furthermore, was part of the European-wide enthusiasm for Socialism and Communism that followed the end of the war. As Steiner has observed, the post-war European political landscape was radically altered by the change the conflict had brought in terms of changed labour conditions and the 1917 revolutions in Russia had raised awareness amongst the working class about the political power they possessed. The growth of support for Socialism in Italy must be understood as being part of wider European trends which

[19] 'Elezioni Politiche 1919', FO 170/1253, TNA: PRO, Kew. 'Esiliate dal governo dello Stato i partiti e gli uomini responsabili della guerra!'

raised the very real possibility of a revolution similar to what happened in Russia occurring, at least according to the opinion of British officials and diplomats stationed there.[20]

In Rome, the British embassy first observed the political situation on the ground with caution and bemusement, then with a steadily growing sense of alarm. A press bureau created at the end of the war monitored the sentiments expressed by the major Italian newspapers. Amongst these were the strongly pro-British newspapers that had supported the Allied forces during the war, such as the *Corriere della Sera* and *La Sera*, both printed in Milan. However, it was noted by the embassy that these newspapers had, after the Paris peace talks, begun to display anti-British leanings. Nervous diplomats in Rome sent envoys to *La Sera* to find out the reasons for the newspaper's displeasure, prompting an explanation from its editor, A.W. Zanetti. The problem, he surmised, was that 'no Italian can tolerate being placed on the level of the Slavs. Least of all by England, for whom Italy has always had a deep affection and sincerest devotion.'[21] This was an obvious allusion to the loss of Dalmatia to Yugoslavia and an imagined Italian superiority over the Slavic people, a belief that would have serious consequences during the Second World War, when Fascist Italy invaded the Balkan states with the help of Germany.[22] Zanetti's argument was one that officials in Rome had also heard, with one member of the press bureau observing that Zanetti's letter 'represents very accurately the attitude of all moderate papers, and people in Italy, and, I think, may be taken as a guide of what public opinion towards us is in Italy at the present moment.'[23]

The fact that the moderate newspapers such as the *Corriere della Sera* held these anti-British views, was cause for concern as anti-British sentiments in the country could and did turn violent on occasion. One such incident was prompted by an article that appeared in the *Times* on 28 October 1920. The London newspaper described the north-eastern city of Trieste – acquired by Italy as part of the post-war peace negotiations – as being economically unstable, adding that the local population

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[20] Steiner, *The lights that failed*, 7.
[21] A.W. Zanetti to The British Press Bureau, 6 March 1919, FO 395/275 N22/001430, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[22] Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 268.
[23] P.A. Alexander to J.A.C. Tilley, 29 March 1919, FO 395/275, N22/001439, TNA: PRO, Kew.

of Austrians and Slavs were ill-treated, which 'unless stopped must inevitably lead to very serious trouble.'[24] The unnamed correspondent went on to deplore the immunity that the various gangs of *Fascisti* (members of Mussolini's growing Fascist party) were granted in the city and the disruption they caused to trade. Indeed the Italian occupation of Trieste, in the author's opinion, was the cause of her woes, as the Italian bureaucracy and local government were incompetent in tackling the rising level of unemployment in the city which was coupled with a cost of living that surpassed Rome's. The violence of the *Fascisti* was another problem, one that the author blamed on the influence of D'Annunzio's invasion of Fiume in September 1919. Offering an opinion on how Trieste could return to her former economic prosperity, the author stated that 'things would greatly improve if only the Italians would leave things to the [local] Triestines.'[25] Such a radical suggestion, was bound to inflame the already volatile mood of the Italian public, especially the inhabitants of Trieste.

In a report on the Italian press sent to the Foreign Office in November 1920, an official at the press bureau in Rome described the reaction to a translation of the *Times* article printed in the Socialist daily, *Il Lavoratore*, which provoked a demonstration against the British consul at Trieste. Twelve policemen were dispatched to the consulate as a precaution, and the local chamber of commerce lodged a formal protest against the article. This incident, he wrote,

> illustrates the extreme sensitiveness to foreign criticism which is universal in this country .... Given the state of exaltation of the "fascisti", and their bitterness over the Dalmatian renunciations, any further unfriendly articles in the Times might easily provoke incidents of [a] more serious issue than that at Trieste.[26]

Anti-British sentiment was also provoked by what was seen as the deliberate price-fixing by British merchants on the shipments of coal sold to Italy. Furthermore, Italian plans to expand its empire in the Middle East had been stymied by the San Remo Agreement of 1920, in which the British had refused to grant her equal

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[24] 'Trieste Trade – Flourishing Port At a Standstill: Nationalist Gangs' Excesses', *The Times*, 28 October 1920, 11. On Italian irredentism, Trieste and the problem of the Italo-Yugoslav border, see Glenda Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 39-62.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Geoffrey Scott, 'Summary of the Italian Press', 13 November 1920, FO 395/339, P1428/17/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.

opportunities for oil in the region, thus cutting off the possibility of her becoming self-reliant.[27] As such, even formerly pro-British newspapers expressed the opinion that British coal and oil interests were trying to extract the maximum price possible from their Italian customers, a motive hotly denied by diplomats in Rome. Indeed, the British embassy was so concerned about the idea of price-fixing that Buchanan made it a point to meet with the editor of the *Corriere della Sera* to clear up the bad air about devious British price fixing. Reporting back to the Foreign Office, he stated that

> it is suggested here that England has, since the war, cornered various commodities such as coal, oil etc. with the express object of excluding Italy and other countries and destroying any possibility of their competing with her on the foreign markets.[28]

Buchanan recorded that a counsellor at the embassy had earlier attempted to set the Rome correspondent of the *Corriere* straight on the troublesome matter, blaming the rising coal prices on striking miners back in Britain:

> As the price of coal was fixed for the home consumer ... it was essential to leave the coal owner the small margin of profit he obtained by the higher price of coal for export ... the trouble lay with the tyranny of the coal miner whose wages had risen and whose output had fallen to such a degree that conditions had radically altered. The price of coal for export was, however, in no way controlled and no invidious distinction was made against Italy.[29]

To counteract the bad press, the embassy considered ways of raising Britain's profile in Italy, and in this the British Institute of Florence was to play a significant part. The embassy hired the noted *Times* correspondent William McClure, to reorganise the press bureau, provide reports on the political situation in Italy, and present Italian journalists and politicians with a more favourable impression of Britain. Until 1920, McClure had curried favour with various Italian politicians and was well known and liked in Rome. When he was dismissed from the *Times* for unknown reasons, the British embassy was quick to swoop in on what they believed to be an invaluable asset in helping to combat the growing tide of anti-Britishness in the Italian press. Writing to inform the Foreign Office of his desire to take McClure

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[27] Marian Kent, "Guarding the bandwagon: Great Britain, Italy, and Middle Eastern oil, 1920-1923," in *National and international politics in the Middle East: essays in honour of Elie Kedourie*, ed. Edward Ingram (London: Frank Cass, 1986),144-63.

[28] Buchanan to George Curzon, 31 December 1920, FO 395/339, P1741/17/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.

[29] R.W. Kennard, Memorandum, 13 December 1920, FO395/339, P1741/17/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.

on in an official capacity, Buchanan was quick to point out that McClure combined 'all the qualifications of an excellent Political Intelligence Officer with the gifts and experience of a first-class journalist', and that at the present moment, when 'the Press is indulging in an anti-British campaign, that is turning public opinion more and more against us, such a man would be of the greatest use.' The Foreign Office concurred.[30]

McClure's reports for the embassy provide an in-depth analysis of the state of Italian politics during the turbulent 1920s. The fact, however, that British officials in Rome found it necessary to employ an individual to report on negative portrayals of Britain in the press is indicative of their desire both to monitor the political situation in Italy and to influence it in their favour. This tallies with what M.L. Roi and B.J.C McKercher have observed of British inter-war diplomacy; in seeking to make friends and influence allies, British diplomats at home and in overseas posts were attempting to gain Britain increased influence in European affairs. Furthermore, the British embassy's move to discreetly influence Italian politicians and journalists through the establishment of a press bureau and the employment of William McClure demonstrate what Roi and McKercher have termed the practice of 'old', or pre-1914, diplomacy at work in post-war Rome. Intimidated and threatened by the anti-British sentiments that seemed to abound in Italy, diplomats sought to improve the image of Britain by winning over influential individuals, to ensure the alliance with Italy was kept strong, thus protecting British interests in the country, a tactic that had been employed during the war.[31] The Institute at Florence played a part in this effort. Though its links with British government institutions were not as clearly defined (and indeed, its official status was lost when government funding ended), its aims remained: to educate and inform the Italian public about British culture and history, and to create a more sympathetic picture of Britain and her empire.

The other observation in the press bureau's report about the *Fascisti* illustrates the growing popularity of Benito Mussolini's Fascist party. Those at the press bureau considered his party a real alternative to the growing threat posed by Socialism. With his bombastic rhetoric, a promise to rid Italy of the ills of the Liberal government, and a vow to redeem the nation's lost pride over the peace talks, Mussolini was a deeply

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[30] Buchanan to Walter Tyrrell, 17 December 1920, FO 395/339, P1685/17/122.
[31] M. L. Roi and B. J. C. McKercher, "'Ideal' and 'Punch-Bag': Conflicting Views of the Balance of Power and Their Influence on Interwar British Foreign Policy," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12, no. 2 (2001): 47-78, 54.

charismatic figure who gained the support of many Italians who felt neglected by the government and embarrassed by Orlando's concessions at Paris.[32] As will be shown, he was a popular figure within the British diplomatic service as well. When the Liberal government of Luigi Facta failed to form a governing coalition with the Fascists in late 1922, King Victor Emmanuel III handed the Prime Ministership to Mussolini, who had descended on Rome with his followers and para-military *squadristi* in a relatively peaceful handover of power. McClure, now head of the press bureau, wrote a report for the Foreign Office on the events in Rome leading up to the Mussolini's seizure of power, observing:

> I have sounded a good many people as to their impressions, and the general feeling is one of deep enthusiasm. … I am bound to say I am optimistic. I believe the stuff which I know is in this country [*sic*] is going to have a chance of proving itself.[33]

McClure's report highlighted the deep relief felt by many sections of Italian society, though not explicitly pro-Fascist, preferred Mussolini's proposed program of regeneration for Italy to the threat posed by the destabilising effects of the Socialists and the incompetence of the Liberals. The report was deemed important enough for officials in the Foreign Office to show to King George V, presumably to demonstrate how much popular support there was for Mussolini's takeover.[34] P.G. Edwards has observed that the Foreign Office practiced a form of self-censorship with regards to reports of Fascist triumphs as well as the violence perpetrated by the *squadristi* and their assaults on Socialist targets around Italy. Edwards notes that from around 1924, only junior Foreign Office officials were sent negative reports of Fascist violence from Rome, whilst more positive portrayals of Mussolini and his party could be transmitted up the ranks to both the Permanent Under-Secretary and Secretary of State.[35] McClure's 1922 report represents an early example of the later practice of passing good first-hand impressions of Fascism on to the higher ranks of government,

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[32] For a full account of Mussolini's rise to power, see either Bosworth or Denis Mack Smith's consideration of the various factors involved in Mussolini's rise. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*; Denis Mack Smith, *Mussolini* (London: Widenfeld and Nicolson, 1981).
[33] William McClure to Percy Koppel, 10 November 1922, FO 395/373, P2038/7/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[34] Minute by Percy Koppel, 13 November 1922, FO 395/373, P2038/7/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[35] P.G. Edwards, "The Foreign Office and Fascism, 1924-1929," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 2 (1970): 153-61, 154.

in order to demonstrate the positive effects Fascism could have on Italy.[36] However, whilst Foreign Office officials were not threatened by the rise of Mussolini to power, scholars such as Steiner argue (and as we shall see) that this benign attitude stemmed from notions of Britain's inherent superiority over Italy; although Fascism had brought stability to Italy, in Britain the political situation would have never been allowed to degenerate as much as to require the intervention of a dictator.[37]

The view from London

In early 1919 Janet Penrose Trevelyan wrote a letter, in her capacity as Honorary Secretary of the British Institute of Florence, to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Cecil Harmsworth, requesting more financial support for the Institute. She was aware, she told him, that British propaganda efforts in foreign countries were being reorganised and, in many cases, discontinued. She wanted, however, to make a case for the British Institute, as

> [A]nything which tended to reduce or impair the efficiency of this work ... might have very unfortunate effects on Anglo-Italian friendship. Italy will probably be subjected ... to new attempts on the part of the Germans to recapture their old ascendency there ... and if we were to sacrifice such an excellent point d'appui as the British Institute in Florence we should be open to the reproach that we did not care for Italy's friendship, or for making a real educational entente between ourselves and the Italians.[38]

The reply was a harried, scribbled minute by the Foreign Office's librarian, Stephen Gaselee, who noted that a printed acknowledgement was to be sent out as he had first to confer with his superiors about the future of British propaganda in Italy before sending a despatch to the present British ambassador, Sir James Rennell Rodd (soon to be succeeded by George Buchanan) on the matter. By then, he hoped he would have information to send Trevelyan a fuller reply to her plea for help.[39] After a

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[36] Edwards, "The Foreign Office and Fascism," 155-56.

[37] Steiner, *The lights that failed*: 330. See also Edwards, "The Foreign Office and Fascism."; Jon Lawrence, "Fascist violence and the politics of public order in inter-war Britain: the Olympia debate revisited," *Historical Research* 76, no. 192 (2003): 238-67; Gianni Silei, "I Conservatori Britannici e il Fascismo (1929-1935): La parabola discendente di una "storica amicizia"," *Il Politico: Rivista Italiana di Scienze Politiche* 57, no. 3 (1992): 497-528. Fascism in Britain is discussed in Chapter 7.

[38] Janet Penrose Trevelyan to Cecil Harmsworth, 19 February 1919, FO 395/275, N22/00831, TNA: PRO, Kew.

[39] Minute by Stephen Gaselee, 23 February 1919, FO 395/275, N22/00831, TNA: PRO, Kew.

week Trevelyan was sent a letter informing her of the government's decision to continue funding the Institute until the 'close of the present year', after which the Institute would be expected to secure enough money from other sources to become self-sufficient.[40] Trevelyan's appeal to the Foreign Office, and Gaselee's list of superiors to consult before replying, illustrate both how those involved in the running of the Institute regarded its role in promoting better Anglo-Italian relations, and how their appeals were received by a Foreign Office struggling to find enough funds to manage a war-time propaganda operation in the immediate post-war period.

Philip M. Taylor has pointed out that during the winter of 1918 to 1919, when Janet Trevelyan sent her letter, the Foreign Office was in a state of confusion with regard to the propaganda effort in foreign countries. He argues that the Ministry of Information, which had been tasked with the war-time distribution of British propaganda to foreign countries, was dissolved at the end of 1918, and the remnants absorbed into the News Department of the Foreign Office, which until 1917 had supervised British propaganda until the Ministry had taken over. Now that propaganda was back in the hands of the Foreign Office, there was as yet no clear direction in which to proceed.[41] In the face of this uncertainty it is not surprising to find the Foreign Office recommending that the Institute find some way of becoming self-sufficient. Indeed, this was to become a common suggestion put to the Institute each time it applied to the government for more funds, much to the frustration of its director, Alfred Spender. He had been appointed by the News Department in 1917 to oversee the Institute's day-to-day operations in Florence, and as he pointed out, worked for no pay other than living expenses and the rent for his accommodation. Furthermore in 1920, he complained of an irregular schedule of payments of the government's grant to the Institute's accounts in Florence, noting that the Institute often had to spend money that it did not yet have in order to pay teachers' salaries and the rent of the Institute's premises, which were in the Via dei Conti in the centre of Florence, where it had moved in 1918.[42]

Spender's frustrations echo the problems faced by other British overseas communities during this period, as the government struggled with a war debt of

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[40] Gerald Spicer to Trevelyan, 26 February 1919, FO 395/275, N22/00831, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[41] Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British overseas publicity and propaganda 1919 - 1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 49.
[42] Alfred Spender, 'Note on the manner in which the British Institute is financed', 17 April 1920, FO 395/275, P260/23/122

USD$4.3 billion owed to the United States, and loans amounting to $3.2 billion to the colonies and dominions.[43] The government also had to contend with unemployment at home, which had grown to almost 18% at the end of 1921, and were faced with striking workers who protested cuts to their wages as part of the national movement to curb costs because of Britain's war debts.[44] Local economic difficulties meant that there was less money in the budget allocated to the Foreign Office and other government departments for work overseas. This was a period where, as John Darwin has pointed out, Britain began to disengage from the practice of over-government in her colonies and dominions, replacing this with limited self-government, which would, it was hoped, lead to a reliance on British power, and stronger ties to the empire once the (perceived) temporary fervour for independence had passed.[45] British businesses trying to compete in foreign markets also suffered from the government's inability to understand economic conditions on the ground in places like South America, where American ventures threatened to dominate the economic landscape, or in Africa, where a failure to innovate led to the decline of local industries.[46] What is important, however, is the failure or indeed, lack of interest on the part of the British government in this period to commit itself to overseas projects that demanded an investment of its over-stretched budget or a change to the status quo of its operating structures.

When considered as part of this bleak post-war context of government disengagement and disinterest, then, the fact that the British Institute managed to secure funding at least until 1922 must be attributed to the lobbying of the Foreign Office by individuals like Janet Trevelyan and Alfred Spender, and to the efforts of those in the Office itself, which, despite government policy, saw a tangible value in allowing the Institute to continue its operations. Indeed, when other propaganda institutes were being liquidated in the immediate period after the war, as part of the dissolution of the Ministry of Information and its activities, special consideration was

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[43] Steiner, *The lights that failed*: 186.
[44] Noreen Branson, *Britain in the Nineteen Twenties* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), 69 - 70.
[45] Darwin, "Imperialism in Decline?," 679.
[46] Paul B. Goodwin, Jr., "Anglo-Argentine Commercial Relations: A Private Sector View, 1922-43," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 61, no. 1 (1981): 29-51; Roger Gravil, "British Retail Trade in Argentina, 1900-1940," *Inter-American Economic Affairs* 24, no. 2 (1970): 3-26; Meredith, " Government and the Decline of the Nigerian Oil-Palm Export Industry."

granted to the Institute in Florence and the press bureau in Rome.[47] A main reason why the Institute was considered separately from similar war-time Anglo-Italian institutes established in Milan, Naples and Rome seems to be that the Florence Institute had been a centre of primarily cultural propaganda, which concentrated on educating local audiences about British culture and civilisation. At the end of the war, however, the Foreign Office found it hard to determine the exact circumstances involved or any specific steps taken that had led to the institute at Florence being designated as separate from its sister institutes. Gaselee found that

> In the matter of the Florence institute there is one particular source of trouble - which is not one of extravagance, as in the case of the similar institute at Naples; namely, that Sir Campbell Stewart [*sic*] gave Sir R. Rodd perfectly definitively to understand - for H.E. has repeated it on several occasions - that separate provision (ie provision quite apart from that of the other institutes) had been [made] for it; and it has accordingly gone on piling on debt with nobody looking after it this end.[48]

The precarious position of the Institute was another consequence of the uncertainty surrounding the News Department's future, as well as the role of the Foreign Office in its operations. Gaselee thought that it was up to the Treasury to release funds that would save the Institute from 'its present most humiliating position', as a matter of British pride and prestige.[49] The Treasury, however, replied that it had differing details on the exact nature of how the Institute was funded, as it had first been informed that the Institute had been started as a private venture before being turned over to official government control, only to be contradicted (when no further information was forthcoming from the Ministry of Information) by later 'semi-official communications that the Institute was started for propaganda purposes and has no source of financial support other than public funds.'[50] The wrangling between the Foreign Office and the Treasury often led to a delay in the actual transference of funds to Italy, a situation that was lamented by Rennell Rodd and his successor Buchanan.

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[47] Foreign Office telegram to Rennell Rodd, 4 March 1919, FO 395/275, N22/00838, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[48] Minute by Gaselee, 28 February 1919, FO 395/275, N22/00838, TNA: PRO, Kew. Gaselee refers to Campbell Arthur Stuart, who was a protégé of Lord Northcliffe and who became managing director of the *Times* and briefly director of enemy propaganda in the Second World War.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Letter from T.L. Heath, 2 January 1919, FO 395/275, N22/00838, TNA: PRO, Kew.

The reluctance of the Treasury to devote more funds for propaganda and publicity work in Italy can be attributed to the grim economic situation in Britain. Furthermore, money was required by almost every government department to assist in the rebuilding of the empire. It is also probable, as well, that the conflicting information coming from the News Department did not particularly help the Institute's case, either. When the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, George Curzon, began to make representations to the Treasury for the continued existence of the Institute, his rival in the Conservative Party and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Austen Chamberlain, tried to resist his calls for more funding, pointing out that 'I have been asked for assistance for Institutes or Schools at Rome, Milan, Salonika & in the Far East as well as Florence' and that providing more financial assistance for Florence could constitute a dangerous precedent for other such institutes and schools to appeal for government aid.[51] In this, Chamberlain was following the lead of the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, who was also wary of providing funds to the Institute, stating resolutely 'I cannot agree to spend further British money on providing an education in English for Italians.'[52] His sentiment, that the spread of the English language was not worth more of his government's money, is starkly illustrative of Taylor's argument that propaganda and cultural diplomacy were much lower priorities in the immediate post-war period, and were regarded as war-time measures that were no longer necessary.[53] Whilst this reluctance to engage in cultural propaganda would be remedied with the establishment of the British Institute in 1934, as will be shown later, the British government's inability to match the spending of its French and German counterparts provided much anxiety to those involved with the British Institute's activities in Florence.

To add to its other difficulties, the Institute also faced competition for government funds from other publicity efforts to promote British interests in Italy. These included the *Anglo-Italian Review* started by Edward Hutton, who had for a brief moment been in charge of British propaganda efforts in Tuscany during the war.

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[51] Austen Chamberlain to George Curzon, 29 July 1920, FO 395/340 P836/23/122, TNA: PRO, Kew. The idea for an institute at Salonika is one that Harold Goad, the British Institute's director from 1923-1939, claimed to have suggested during his war service in Greece around 1918-1919, though it was not taken up. Undated document, British Institute Collection (BRI) BRI:I:A:IV:1:f1, British Institute Archives (BIA), Florence.

[52] Stanley Baldwin to Cecil Harmsworth, 24 June 1920, FO 395/340, P595/23/122.

[53] Philip M. Taylor, "Cultural Diplomacy and the British Council: 1934-1939," *British Journal of International Studies* 4, no. 3 (1978): 244-65, 44-57.

In fact, Hutton's *Review* caused no small amount of trouble to the News Department, who were forced to buy copies of it. The *Review* had been started in 1918 as part of a joint Anglo-Italian initiative to promote a closer understanding between the two nations. However, as its articles were written in English (and it was printed in London), it was considered by the Foreign Office to serve Italian propaganda purposes rather than the other way around, as they had hoped. As Alec Randall in the Foreign Office pointed out, the *Review* 'must, I think, fairly be regarded as more an organ of Italian than of British propaganda.'[54] Further, the notion of having to apply to a reluctant Treasury for more funds to buy copies of a publication that was seemingly more beneficial to Italian than British propaganda – Hutton boasted that the wealthy philanthropist and Anglo-Italian Arthur Serena was prompted to donate money to fund Chairs of Italian at Cambridge and Oxford as well as open of an entire Department of Italian studies at the University of Manchester thanks to his efforts, although no corresponding English Chairs had been established in Italian universities[55] – made Gaselee nervous. In the end the Foreign Office decided to bypass the Treasury and buy only five hundred copies of the *Review* instead, sending two hundred to the British Institute at Florence.[56] Without recourse to more official funding, the *Review* continued with the support of the British Italian Commercial Association until it ceased publication altogether in 1921.[57]

The first issue of the *Anglo-Italian Review*, published in May 1918, reveals an image that is telling of how little British attitudes towards Italy during and in the immediate post-war period had changed since the nineteenth century. The frontispiece of the issue, entitled 'On the Western Front', depicts a bare-chested British soldier standing protectively over the still-clothed skeleton of a Roman legionary. The soldier, in modern garb, is shown drawing the legionary's sword and about to attack an on-coming army (though how far he would get without a rifle or ammunition is not explained). In bold type below the picture are the words 'Cave Adsum' ('Beware, I am here'). The title page opposite the picture also boasts a quotation from Act Five of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*:

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[54] Minute by Alec Randall, 10 April 1919, FO 395/275, N22/001492, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[55] Edward Hutton to Randall, 4 April 1919, FO 395/275, N22/001492, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[56] Minute by Gaselee, 15 April 1919, FO 395/275, N22/001492, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[57] *The Anglo-Italian Review*, 1, April 1921, (London: Constable and Co.).

Set we forward: let
A Roman and a British ensign wave
Friendly together[58]

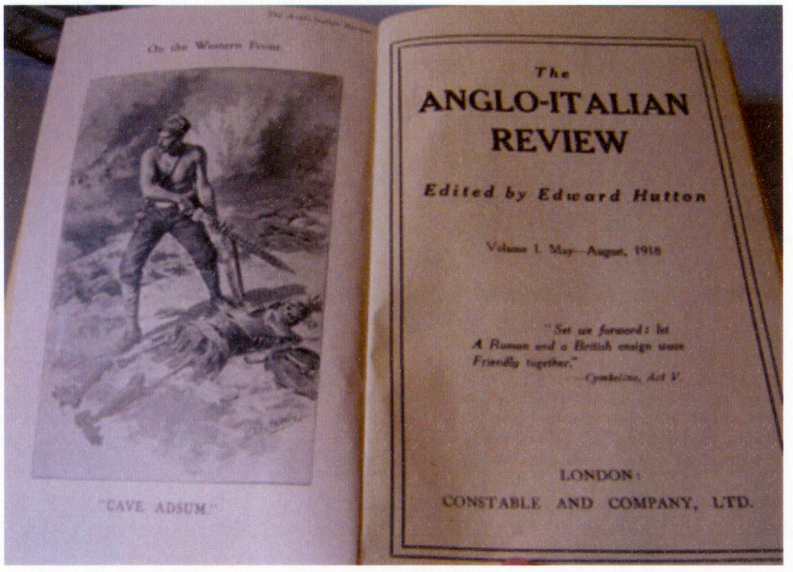


Image 8: The Anglo Italian Review, Vol. 1, May-August 1918, (London: Constable and Co.).

The image of the robust, virile British soldier, picking up the fallen Roman's sword to fight is one replete with imperial symbolism, and harks back to the idea that Britain owed much of the accomplishments of its empire to its spiritual ancestor of Ancient Rome. The fact, also, that the Roman legionary is a long-dead skeleton is revealing of how the British, and indeed other Western nations, regarded modern Italy's place in the world. As both Bosworth and Duggan have noted, the major Allied powers saw Italy as having contributed insufficiently to the war effort and its demands for post-war territories were considered grasping and unacceptably greedy for a nation so lately arrived on the world stage.[59] Italy was also regarded as a degenerated civilisation by many in Britain, and officials in the Foreign Office believed that because of this degenerate nature, the only means of keeping the country from sinking into chaos was the control wielded by a dictator like Mussolini. Edwards points out that Foreign Office officials believed that Fascism would only be successful in Italy due the unique political situation of the country, which required a firm, authoritarian government under the power of a dictator. He argues that, in fact, officials were dismissive of Fascism as a movement outside the borders of Italy, and shows how attempts to form a league of British fascists in Italy were quashed by the

[58] *The Anglo-Italian Review*, 1, May-August 1918, (London: Constable and Co.).
[59] Bosworth, *Italy and the wider world*, 33; Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 413.

Foreign and Home Office.[60] Fascism was only acceptable in Italy alone, because it was the only way to maintain order in the country. Such extreme measures in Britain, however, were not to be encouraged.

Foreign Office officials, as well as those involved in the British Institute of Florence, were influenced by these imperial ideas and attitudes, especially the notion of the civilising mission. Indeed, the British Institute in Florence was seen as one way in which the light of British culture could illuminate the rest of Italy. The industrialist Walter Becker, who was to become the Institute's largest single donor in 1921 when official support of the Institute ended, certainly saw its purpose as such. A wealthy industrialist who had made his fortune in shipping and lived in the prosperous northern Italian city of Turin, Becker was so convinced of the Institute's great use in helping to educate Italians that he promised half the funds required in order to allow the Institute to continue without the benefit of a government subsidy. As Becker noted in a letter:

> I, for my part, think very highly of the methods of the British Institute at Florence with its classes for the study of the English language and literature … and am of the opinion that the inculcation of British ways and ideals will be exceedingly beneficial to the Italians. By creating and intensifying sentiments of sympathy with our country, this will react favourably, if indirectly, on commercial intercourse between the nations, and on British trade in Italy.[61]

Becker's idea of the benefits of educating Italians about British culture also highlights another useful purpose: that of propaganda, though it is not explicitly named as such. Indeed, it is argued that the Foreign Office's principal reason for wanting the British Institute to continue its work in Italy was related to the useful propaganda work that the Institute did amongst the Italian public. The views of those involved in the day-to-day running of the Institute, however, did not always tally with those back in London or indeed, with some of the Institute's directors. This ultimately led to the resignation of Alfred Spender and the incorporation of the Institute under a Royal Charter in 1923, just after Mussolini had marched on Rome.

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[60] Edwards, "The Foreign Office and Fascism," 159.
[61] Walter Becker to Percy Koppel, 4 July 1920, FO 395/340, P698/23/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.

The survival of the British Institute of Florence

In the winter of 1919 to 1920, the Foreign Office, under the auspices of George Curzon, established the Committee on British Communities Abroad, which was formed in order to

> (1) Foster a greater spirit of solidarity among British communities abroad, and (2) make British ideals more generally known, and appreciated by, foreign nations.[62]

To this end, the Committee conducted an enquiry and took testimony from a wide range of individuals, from those employed in the diplomatic and consular services to members of expatriate British communities or those involved in commerce or education in overseas locales. Significantly, John Fisher has noted that the Committee was also tasked with looking at those nations not part of the British empire; the only countries excluded were the Soviet Union and the United States of America, which serves to highlight the encompassing nature of the Committee's remit.[63] Fisher also observes that the report of the Committee and the suggestions for further action overseas should be considered a precursor of the British Committee for Relations with Other Countries, which led to the formation of the British Council in 1934. Indeed, the Committee's second aim of spreading ideas of British culture internationally, and not only within the empire, clearly foreshadows the Council's later mission. What makes the report of the Committee especially relevant to the history of the British Institute in Florence was that it was deemed significant enough to merit special mention in the Committee's findings and recommendations:

> We feel that special mention should be made of the very valuable work which is being carried on by the Florence Institute ... which was founded originally as a result of our alliance with Italy, is under a British director, and provides courses of instruction for Italians in English literature, history and art .... We consider that His Majesty's Government should continue to subsidise the Institute until it becomes part of a centralised and self-supporting movement .... The Committee regret that no other Institute similar to that at Florence seems to exist.[64]

Amongst the Committee's investigations into the possibility of requiring expatriate Britons to register with their consulates, or the establishment of

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[62] 'Report of the Foreign Office [FO] Committee on British Communities Abroad', cmd. 672, 22 March 1920, 2, TNA: PRO, Kew.

[63] John Fisher, ""A call to action": The Committee on British Communities Abroad, 1919-20," *Canadian Journal of History* 44, no. 2 (2009): 261-86, 267.

[64] 'Report of the FO Committee', cmd. 672, 9 – 10, TNA: PRO, Kew.

government-funded private British schools for the children of expatriates, then, the British Institute was considered of great importance to the spread of British culture in Italy. In the view of both the Foreign Office and the Institute's backers, it was being forced to compete with the rising influence of the French, who were investing much more money, around 26 million francs in 1921, in their programs of cultural propaganda through the Alliance Française.[65] The continuation of the Institute, therefore, was also a matter of national prestige. Indeed, the later establishment of the British Council was also partly prompted by both the popularity and money invested in the Alliance Française and the subsequent effort by Weimar Germany, the Directorate For Germanism Abroad and Cultural Relations, to spread German *Kultur* to other lands. Taylor has suggested, in fact, that for most of the 1920s, Franco-German tensions had effects on the budgets allocated to both institutions.[66] However, in 1920 Spender was already raising the concern that, in a recognised cultural and educational centre like Florence where both the French and Germans had opened cultural institutes that were funded by their governments, the British effort seemed amateur, an appearance that the constant wrangling over funds did nothing to dispel. As Spender argued, in such an international city where Franco-German efforts at cultural projection provided a highly visible presence, the British surely should be represented by a similarly government-funded Institute.[67]

The concern not to fall behind other nations in overseas propaganda was a sentiment echoed in the Foreign Office by William Tyrrell, the head of the News Department, who was concerned at the fact that the Americans, as well as the French, were enjoying more popularity than the British in Italy as a result of the unfavourable concessions granted at Versailles (though Tyrrell thought that the reasons for British unpopularity 'is much deeper' without going into further details).[68] Significantly, Spender's insistence on the maintenance of official associations with the British government even after funding had ceased proved to be a catalyst for his resignation from the directorship of the Institute in 1922.

As part of the Committee testimony, both Janet Trevelyan and Spender were called to provide evidence to the Committee, an event which Spender thought might

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[65] Fisher, ""A call to action"," 277.
[66] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 126, 35.
[67] Spender, 'A Few Notes on the British Institute of Florence', 17 April 1920, FO 395/339, P260/23/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[68] Minute by William Tyrrell, 17 July 1920, FO 395/341, P734/734/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.

provide him with an opportunity to drum up support for requesting more funds from the Treasury. The Foreign Office, however, were uncertain about the wisdom of this strategy, and relied more on the testimony of Trevelyan. The list of work done for the winter of 1919 to 1920 that she provided for the Committee provides a glimpse into the activities organised by the Institute for its students. Apart from instruction in the English language, there were also lectures on subjects ranging from English music and the plays of Shakespeare, to an examination of English statutes under the Tudors and the influence of Dante and Petrarch on English literature.[69] The most significant work that the Institute undertook, however, was the instruction of Italian teachers in the English language and British history and culture. In his memorandum to the embassy at Rome on the usefulness of the Institute in 1920, Spender reported that there were 180 pupils enrolled for English classes, 'not a few of whom have come from distant parts of Italy.' Furthermore, he pointed out

> One may therefore count that in at least 150 families in Italy the British Institute is talked of and England kept constantly before their eyes... moreover if the pupils of the Institute are well treated and are happy (as they certainly are) each one of these will become a propagandist for England. And as they most of them aim at becoming teachers the value of such propaganda is evident.[70]

Though the Institute publicly emphasised its role as facilitating the intellectual exchange between Britain and Italy, it is clear that Spender and the rest of his colleagues realised the political advantages of educating Italians about Britain and creating a more sympathetic image amongst schoolteachers which could then be transmitted to Italian children. This again recalls the ideas of 'old' or 'secret' diplomacy outlined by Roi and McKercher: the formation of alliances and the discreet influencing of international opinion championed by many in the Foreign Office in the interwar period.[71] Pro-British propaganda in Italy, according to the former ambassador Rennell Rodd, was desperately needed, especially after the events of the Paris Peace Conference. Already worried about the mounting hostility as a result of the talks and wary of the efforts of other nations in Italy in 1919, Rennell Rodd was also frustrated with what he saw as a lack of commitment to the British Institute in

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[69] 'Work done at the British Institute of Florence during the winter of 1919 – 1920', n.d., BRI:1:D:I30:ffl-2, BIA, Florence.
[70] Spender, 'A Few Notes on the British Institute of Florence', 17 April 1920, FO 395/339, P260/23/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[71] Roi and McKercher, "'Ideal' and 'Punch-Bag'," 48.

Florence by the Foreign Office. Outlining the good propaganda work the Institute was doing in a letter to Curzon, he pointed out:

> I have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that propaganda work is even more necessary now than during the war, when the battle with rival influences is about to be renewed with vigour and has to some extent already begun, and I cannot believe that the few hundreds or thousands of pounds involved can weigh in the balance against the danger of leaving the field open to those rivals who are only awaiting the first opportunity of reasserting their influence.[72]

Indeed, Spender saw his work as the continuation of the British war-time propaganda effort and made his sentiments clear to the Committee on British Communities Abroad in a written statement as part of the Institute's submission. Asked by the Committee for ways in which feelings of solidarity amongst expatriate Britons could be encouraged, he suggested the foundation of institutes to replace the traditional British social clubs in cities known for their intellectual character (like Florence). They should provide lectures on British culture and history in the native language of the country in which it was based. Such institutes, he added, would have as their primary purpose 'the preparation of first-class English teachers for the schools of the country which is the very best propaganda imaginable.'[73] The benefit of having such an institute in any city, according to Spender, would be the prestige that it brought, surpassing that of a social club, which only catered to recreational interaction, rather than the more advantageous propaganda achieved by providing academic instruction. However, there was only one such Institute established along such lines: 'the only example that exists at present, as far as I know, is that of Florence, and of that the English residents are undeniably proud.'[74]

The menace of foreign propaganda in Italy and the fear that Britain was lagging behind in her efforts provided a major argument used by the Foreign Office to pressure the Treasury for more funds, though not always successfully. In a letter from the Roman embassy in December 1920, R.W. Kennard complained about hostility against the Allies in the Italian press that he felt sure indicated 'an insidious form of Boche propaganda against more particularly this country'.[75] In reply to Kennard's plea for financial assistance to hire William McClure (who eventually headed the

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[72] Rennell Rodd to Curzon, 27 May 1919, FO 395/275, N22/002257, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[73] Spender, 'Memorandum', 25 January 1920, FO 395/275, N22/004660, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Kennard to Koppel, 3 December 1920, FO 395/339, P1554/17/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.

British press bureau in Rome), the Foreign Office replied that obtaining the required money from the Treasury posed problems. The largest difficulty the News Department faced at the moment was the uncertainty regarding the future of any propaganda work to be carried on in foreign countries and the tensions that had lately arisen between Spender and the Institute's would-be saviour, Walter Becker. The problem, according to Percy Koppel, the future head of the News Department, was that Spender

> is clamouring for the Institute to remain under Government control. How it can remain under Government control when Government is not subscribing towards its upkeep seems an insoluble problem, especially as Becker, who is paying for it, is sure to require to have the control himself. If you can think of any way out of these difficulties I wish [Kennard] would let e know, for it would be a pity for the good work of the Institute to come to an end.[76]

In an effort to continue the government's funding of the Institute, Cecil Harmsworth wrote to Stanley Baldwin applying for a further subsidy of £750, and asking him to reconsider the government's decision that activities related to cultural propaganda in foreign countries after the war must be stopped as the remit was too wide given post-war budgetary constraints, which had resulted in the termination of financial support to the Institute.[77] On information from Koppel, Harmsworth informed Baldwin that Becker had offered, on the encouragement of a group of supporters of the British Institute which included George Macaulay Trevelyan (whose 1st British Red Cross Ambulance Unit had been supported by Becker),[78] to provide half of the funds required for the Institute to continue, which amounted to 70,000 *lire*.[79] £750 annually, Harmsworth felt, would be more than adequate in helping to secure the Institute's future. Harmsworth also drew attention to the recommendations set forward by the Committee on British Communities Overseas. Unfortunately Fisher notes that the Committee's work was ultimately hobbled by a wary Treasury, a budget that did not have the capacity to adopt every suggestion the Committee made to encourage solidarity with British communities abroad and a cabinet strangely

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[76] Koppel to Kenard, 21 December 1920, FO 395/339, P1554/17/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[77] Harmsworth to Baldwin, 11 June 1920, FO 395/340, P387/23/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[78] Annotation by Janet P. Trevelyan in Harold E. Goad, *History of the British Institute of Florence*, BRI:1:A:IX:5:f8, BIA, Florence.
[79] 'Accounts: Nov. 1921 – Nov. 1922', 1924, BRI:I:D:93:f2, BIA, Florence.

reluctant (probably because of the expenditure) to adopt the Committee's recommendations, which eventually led to the its demise in official policy-making.[80]

The tension between Spender and Becker can be traced to the time when the Institute's war-time subsidy ended at the close of the academic year in June 1920. Unfortunately for historians, Spender does not seem to have kept extensive accounts of either his budget or expenditure for the term of his directorship at the British Institute. In fact, no records for its financial situation in the immediate post-war period still exist, as the Institute only began to publish annual reports with statistics regarding student enrolments after Spender had resigned from the director's position in 1922. Indeed, Spender's refusal to produce proper accounting statements when Becker requested them led to much tension between him and Becker, and a sore point that would lead to their eventual estrangement. As Trevelyan noted after his departure:

> No doubt he had the accounts excellently kept at the Institute, but he somehow hadn't the knack of making & rendering financial statements when they were wanted. That was the whole trouble ... between him & Becker ... [he could not] get intelligible statements out of him. And I found that that was the view the Foreign Office took of him too ... I don't know what the Italian custom is about having one's annual accounts audited, but of course it's the most ordinary thing in England & that was what we asked for from the Institute.[81]

Trevelyan's letter contains the implication that the disorganisation shown by Spender was a result of his running the Institute in an Italian, rather than in the British manner expected of him. This, perhaps, was where Spender had gone wrong.

The assessment made by the Committee on the Institute's future was used by both Harmsworth in his letter to the Prime Minister in 1920 as well as by the Institute itself later in 1924 when its funding was in a desperate situation. It will be recalled that Committee had made the recommendation to continue funding the Institute. Unfortunately, the Treasury was not particularly moved by this entreaty, nor were they entirely persuaded by Hutton's diatribe against the cessation of the Institute's funding in an article printed in the *Observer*, in which he accused the government of abandoning the Institute:

> The British Institute will be destroyed in Florence not because it costs a thousand pounds to keep it alive, but because no British Government cares

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[80] Fisher, ""A call to action"," 283.
[81] Trevelyan to Harold E. Goad, 11 April 1923, BRI:1:A:i:45:f10, BIA, Florence.

> anything at all about the most valuable and human things it is trying to do and doing so successfully. There are no votes and no money in the British Institute.[82]

As stated earlier, Hutton was an early supporter of the Institute when it opened during the First World War, and had only parted ways with Lina Waterfield because they had disagreed on the nature of propaganda to be produced. Appeals to the usefulness of the cultural propaganda being carried out through the Institute's programs fell on deaf ears. The Institute's grant was extended for one more year in 1920, and it was encouraged to find private support for the academic year 1921, with the final subsidy received in September of that year.[83] In response, Becker guaranteed the Institute's deficit for three more years, with the provision that 'energetic efforts should be continued to make it self-supporting and that measures should be taken to give it a proper constitution.'[84] Until 1934, when it was the recipient of further government grants from the newly formed British Council and the director of the Institute at the time, Harold Elsdale Goad, assumed more direct control over the Institute's expenditure, the Institute managed to survive on funds from private subscribers alone. This funding was not guaranteed, however, a point that caused much stress in both Florence and London, where the Institute had its administrative headquarters.[85]

With its official funding links to the government cut, the Institute petitioned for and received its Royal Charter in March 1923, after Janet Trevelyan drafted its statutes on her own with the help of the original charter of the British School in Rome and advice from the Privy Council.[86] The cessation of government support, however, was felt keenly by Spender, who claimed in a 1921 letter to Goad (a lecturer in Italian at the University of London who he was already grooming as his successor) that he had been abandoned by the British government in trying to secure more funding for the Institute's work, remarking that its survival had been due to his hard work soliciting for private donors.[87] Given, however, the difficulties the Foreign Office was facing, it is more likely that the Treasury's reluctance to invest in overseas

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[82] Edward Hutton, 'The British Institute in Florence: decision to stop it', *Observer*, London, 11 June 1920, 8.
[83] Koppel to Walter Becker, 24 August 1920, FO 395/340, P 698/23/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[84] Goad, *History of the British Institute of Florence*, BRI:1:A:IX:5:f8, BIA, Florence.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Janet Trevelyan, *Two Stories* (London: Longmans, Green and Co.), 1950, 136-137.
[87] Spender to Goad, 1 January 1922, BRI:1:A:i:41:ff9-10, BIA, Florence.

propaganda had stymied the Foreign Office, as was the case for similar ventures in the interwar period. Spender also felt that Becker was trying to control too much of the Institute's day-to-day operations. Further, Spender thought Becker's representative on the governing council of the Institute, Seymour Conway, a lecturer at the Institute whose salary was paid for by the donation of Arthur Serena, cast aspersions on his handling of the Institute's finances. In a dramatic meeting that an observer from the embassy described as 'a classic Florentine quarrel … in full swing,'[88] Spender stood his ground in the face of strong opposition by Becker and Conway – who he described as 'not a gentleman' with whom he refused to have any further dealings – and was eventually forced to resign from his post. [89] Thus ended the early history of the British Institute of Florence.

For most of the interwar period, from 1922 to 1939, the Institute would be run under the directorship of Goad, whose sympathies with Fascism would cause no small amount of friction with London. The establishment, too, of the British Council would also bring the Institute back into the official sphere of cultural propaganda and raise questions about the role of the Institute in and how it should be run, with wider implications for cultural institutions in other foreign countries.

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[88] Geoffrey Scott, 'Memorandum', 5 May 1922, FO 395/373, P 869/869/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.

[89] Spender to Goad, 8 October 1922, BRI:1:A:i:42:ff7-9, BIA, Florence.

Conclusion

There are several important points to note about the Institute's survival and how they relate to wider questions of Anglo-Italian relations during the early 1920s and about conduct of British cultural propaganda in Italy in the immediate post-war period. Firstly, it is clear that the Institute was considered important enough to the Foreign Office as a centre of British publicity and influence in Italy for it to campaign vigorously for the Institute's continued existence. Furthermore, the fact that both the Foreign Office as well as Spender and others at the Institute acknowledged its usefulness in conducting propaganda work clearly highlights the more political purpose behind the Institute's creation and post-war continuation. Though the Institute was publicly touted as being an establishment that promoted intellectual and cultural exchange between Britain and Italy, it was also regarded as having the ability to promote British political and economic interests. Given the tense situation that existed after the events at Versailles and the subsequent rise of Fascism, discussions around the Institute's continued existence also reflect British views of post-war Italy and, correspondingly, the influence of the imperial worldview in shaping these attitudes. The patronising attitude of Foreign Office officials who watched Mussolini take power is complemented in the statement of Walter Becker who believed that a knowledge of British culture and civilisation could be of great benefit to devastated post-war Italy.

This belief in the beneficial properties of British culture, along with the obvious political and economic benefits a more sympathetic idea of Britain would bring, was a reason for Becker's support of the Institute at Florence. It also reveals the extent to which official and individual opinions on this subject were in agreement. Thus, it is clear to see how traditional conceptions of Italy and of Italians continued to influence British ventures of cultural exchange in the country at the end of the First World War, and how these Britons were possessed of the notion that it was an inherently unequal relationship, with the empire offering the sum of her cultural knowledge to the degenerate Italians.

Chapter 6
'An educated English public in Italy': Cultural propaganda and the British Institute

On 3 April 1939, Harold Elsdale Goad, who had served as director of the British Institute in Florence from 1922, wrote to the Secretary-General of the British Council in London, Charles Bridge, discussing the present state of the Institute's finances (which were supplemented by regular contributions from the Council), and observed that the running of two new branch institutes, opened in Milan and Rome over the past year, was about to be handed over to Ian Greenlees, who had been appointed by the British Council. Given that the idea of opening similar institutes in other Italian cities based on the model of the Florence institute had been Goad's original idea, it is unsurprising that he was hesitant about Greenlees taking over. Since the Council had not yet given Goad a definite date as to when Greenlees would assume control of the branches,

> I am naturally carrying on and listening to weekly verbal reports from [the two teachers at the Rome and Milan institutes] and settling their minor problems for them. I only hope that this young man will be as careful and assiduous about the work as I am. I think you will have no complaints regarding the precision of the accounts and the economy that I have exercised.[1]

Goad went on to assure Bridge further that the Milan institute was proving popular with students wishing to learn English, and that the institute in Rome was already growing too large for its premises. Apart from the health of what Goad dubbed his 'sprouts', however, he was also keen to remind Bridge of the original mission of the British Institute in Florence. Agreeing with the opinion of his teachers, Goad cautioned against a rapid expansion of the branch institutes, warning that the Italian public might regard such a move as increased propaganda activity on the part of the British government. In the light of the events surrounding the Italo-Abyssinian

[1] Harold E. Goad to Charles Bridge, 3 April 1939, British Institute Collection (BRI), BRI:1:A:i:42:ff7-9, BIA (British Institute Archives), Florence.

War of 1935 to 1936 and the subsequent estrangement in Anglo-Italian relations, such a view is understandable.[2]

Goad advanced another reason for objecting against a too hasty growth in the institutes' activities. It was important, he reasoned, that the high standard of teaching be maintained, and that the right students were admitted. His explanation reveals what he believed to be the true purpose of the British Institute,

> It has always been my belief that what we should aim at is the creation of a cultured English public in Italy, able to appreciate our plays and lectures and contemporary literature, and so draw more and more under our cultural and political influence. I think it should not be our object to give a smattering of English to large numbers of guides, chauffeurs, clerks and shopmen who are naturally stimulated by wish [*sic*] to earn money and not by love of English ideas.[3]

This portion of Goad's letter demonstrates not only his belief in the ultimate goal of the British Institute, but also portrays the Institute as less of a commercial enterprise (hence the rejection of those motivated by money and not by a true 'love' for Britain), and more of a cultural outpost.

Until recently, the historiography on British cultural propaganda in the interwar period has been represented almost solely by the work of the late Philip M. Taylor, who explored almost every facet of British propaganda in the years leading up to the Second World War.[4] In his study of the birth of the British Council, Taylor defined cultural propaganda as the promotion and dissemination of 'national aims and achievement in a general rather than specifically economic or political form, although it is ultimately designed to promote economic and political interests.'[5] For the purposes of this chapter, the term 'cultural diplomacy' is used synonymously with 'cultural propaganda'. Manuela Aguilar defines cultural diplomacy as 'the way a government portrays its country to another country's people in order to achieve certain foreign policy goals … to instil sympathy and understanding for the goals of a

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[2] The difficulties faced by the British Institute in light of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict will be dealt with in the following chapter. See Daniel Waley, *British public opinion and the Abyssinian War, 1935-6* (London: Temple Smith, 1975).
[3] Goad to Bridge, 3 April 1939, BRI:1:A:i:42:ff7-9, BIA, Florence.
[4] Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British overseas publicity and propaganda 1919 - 1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
[5] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 125-26.

country's domestic and foreign political action.'[6] Traditionally, studies of cultural propaganda have focused on American and Soviet efforts during the cultural Cold War, rather than the activities that preceded the lowering of the Iron Curtain.[7] The role played by the British Institute in the cultural propaganda effort during the interwar period has not been the subject of any scholarly study.

This chapter will examine the context in which the British Institute operated in the 1920s and 1930s, and explain why cultural propaganda (or cultural diplomacy) was deemed of such importance to Goad in Florence, the British Council in London, and the British embassy in Rome. Faced with anxieties about the declining power of Britain, and the increased cultural activities of other European nations, especially France and Germany, the British Council was formed in 1934 to organise and coordinate the deployment of cultural propaganda within the British empire and outside its borders. Though the British Institute in Florence had been operating without official support since the end of 1921, it quickly came under the patronage and direction of the Council. Studying the British Institute through the lens of cultural propaganda reveals the reasons for the Institute's longevity and how it used its programmes to promote a certain idea of British culture to Italians.

British social club or missionary outpost?

Before going into detailed discussion about the various activities and conflicts within the Institute, it is necessary to describe its administration. Under a Royal Charter, granted in 1923, the British Institute was governed by two bodies. These were the Board of Governors, based in Florence, and the Council of the Institute, convened in London and headed by a nominated chairman. The Board of Governors was made up of those individuals directly involved with the Institute's work in Florence and included concerned Anglo-Florentines, a representative from Florence University, the British Consul, and Italian teachers from the Institute's school. The Council had representatives from 'various public bodies' such as the distinguished scholar of

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[6] Zsolt Nagy, "National Identities for Export: East European Cultural Diplomacy in Inter-War Pittsburgh," *Contemporary European History* 20, no. 4 (2011): 435-53, 436.

[7] See Nagy, "National Identities for Export: East European Cultural Diplomacy in Inter-War Pittsburgh," 438; Katharina Rietzler, "Before the Cultural Cold Wars: American philanthropy and cultural diplomacy in the inter-war years," *Historical Research* 84, no. 223 (2011): 148-64, 148.

Italian history, Edmund Gardner, some politicians, such as Walter Runciman, the Liberal MP, and major private donors such as Sir Daniel Macaulay Stevenson, a shipbroker and future Chancellor of the University of Glasgow.[8] Significantly, there was more Italian representation on the Governing Board than there was on the Governing Council, which had executive power. In 1934 –1935 for instance, there were seven Italians on the Governing Board, including Filippo de Filippi, a famous Italian explorer, whilst the Governing Council only had one, Cesare Foligno, a professor of Italian Studies at Oxford University.[9] This is significant as the higher number of Italians on the Governing Board later led some critics of Goad to complain that he was pandering too much to them during his term as director, and forgetting that the Institute was supposed to remain under British control.

The Board met at least six times every academic year, while the Council met only twice a year, in July and December, to receive reports and accounts from the Institute's director. It also approved the appointment of new members to the Board of Governors, numbering eighteen, plus four ex-officio members. A third of these elected members were to retire each year (their names were chosen alphabetically) and could stand again for re-election. However, they had to compete with any newcomers who wished to stand.[10]

Although the Florentine Board of Governors held power over the day-to-day running of the Institute – coordinating and approving funding for educational and library related expenses and programmes – it remained subservient to the direction and will of the Council in London, which held executive powers. Indeed, it was the Council that conducted the search for Goad's replacement as director after he expressed a wish to resign in 1937 and again in 1938, following the sudden resignation of his deputy and intended replacement, Ronald Bottrall. [11] During the fraught years of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict and the subsequent growth of Italian hostility towards Britain, this geographical separation proved significant in determining how much freedom directors of the Institute had to operate. Furthermore, the personal politics of the directors and the governing bodies had an influence on the

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[8] Harold E. Goad, *History of the British Institute of Florence* (Florence: Giannini & Giovannelli, 1939), 16-17.
[9] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1934-35,* 1935, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 1.
[10] Goad, *History of the British Institute of Florence*, 16.
[11] Janet Trevelyan to W.B. Brander, 25 August 1937, British Council files (BW) BW 40/3, The National Archives: Public Record Office (TNA: PRO), Kew.

way in which British culture was presented to the Italian public, an aspect of the Institute's mission considered important not only by the Institute's governing bodies, but also by British diplomats, who saw the Institute as occupying a semi-official position.

In her 1984 history of the British Council, Frances Donaldson noted that the role of the British Institute in Florence proved the subject of constant internal debate. Some believed that the Institute, with its vast library of around 20,000 books and reading rooms,[12] should be run along the lines of a traditional British social club, with membership restricted to British residents. These individuals, however, were opposed by a faction who thought the Institute should operate more as a missionary outpost of British culture, encouraging the exchange of literature, history and philosophy between expatriate Britons and Italians.[13]

Such disagreements proved the subject of a testy letter from Goad to Bridge in 1936, when the Institute's budget attracted scrutiny in light of a possible British Council grant. Until the establishment of the British Council, the Institute had drawn the bulk of its funding from private donations (the largest proportion of which came from subscribers residing in London – these included Sydney Renée Courtauld, of the famous philanthropic family, a Suffragette, and sister of Samuel Courtauld, who gave the Institute £350 in 1924 and thereafter endowments amounting to £10,000, and Sir Daniel Stevenson, who donated £5,000[14]) and invested in Italian securities, supplemented by the fees it received from students of its language courses, which formed the basis of the Institute's operations in Florence.[15] When Goad was asked to compile a list of his expenses during his time as director, he was sure to point out that the Institute's books balanced because he had been able to curb the unnecessary spending proposed by some members of the Board of Governors. Without his guidance, he wrote, there would have been

> unnecessary expenditure upon the social side of the Institute … on the members, whose number and subscriptions did not warrant such

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[12] Goad, *History of the British Institute of Florence*: 27.
[13] Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: the firsty fifty years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), 34.
[14] Goad, *History of the British Institute of Florence*: 12-13, with annotations by Janet Trevelyan.
[15] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report and Summary of Accounts Nov. 1 1922 – April 30th 1923*, 1923, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 5-6. Though language teaching was the Institute's primary purpose, it never formed the bulk of the Institute's income, nor did Goad feel that this was necessary, as will be seen.

> expenditure. For many years I have had to struggle against a group of governors who have always persisted in the old idea that the Institute was a sort of Club .... These people always concentrated their efforts upon getting more members, despite the fact that such small subscriptions ... can never compensate for such disproportionate expenditure as ... was necessary to bring them in.[16]

In response, Goad had curtailed the number of what he called 'popular' public lectures held at the Institute, unless 'they are given gratis or have some real scholastic value.'[17] The same dispute would reappear two years later, when Goad wrote to Bridge about how his proposed replacement as director, Ronald Bottrall, was settling in:

> I think Bottrall will settle in all right if only certain members of the British Colony will let him alone. I have done my best to warn him against this small set, which has been a thorn in my flesh for the past fifteen years - ever since they realized that my aim for the Institute is to train Italians to teach English and to understand our imperial and historical traditions, and not to form a cultural club for their own benefit.[18]

In these words is evident the clash of opposing views about the role of the Institute. The wish of some to exclude Italians from what was a perceived bastion of Britishness in Florence was countered by the desire on the part of Goad and his supporters to promote the beneficial effects of British culture to the Italian public. Both of these positions echo the experiences of the British across their empire.

As Lynn Hollen Lees has observed, in early twentieth century Malaya, British residents were careful to demarcate areas of Britishness by laying down racial boundaries on public spaces such as train carriages and residential areas, preventing non-British individuals from trespassing in their domain.[19] Tim Harper has observed that the architecture of the houses of British expatriates in Singapore at this time began to reflect their ideas of British suburbia. Expatriates erected walls and other barriers to keep out undesirable neighbours, whilst the social clubs they set up defined Britishness by what it excluded, namely the participation of non-Europeans.[20] In areas outside of the formal empire as well, such as Argentina, British expatriates formed

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[16] Goad to Bridge, 28 January 1936, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Goad to Bridge, 13 February 1938, BW 40/3, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[19] Lynn Hollen Lees, "Being British in Malaya, 1890-1940," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 1 (2009): 76-101, 96.
[20] Tim Harper, "The British 'Malayans'," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 233-68, 242-43.

social clubs and associations involved a wide range of activities, from performing charitable deeds to literary discussion.[21] In wanting to turn the British Institute into a social club along the lines of the Tanglin Club in Singapore, or the Colombo Club in Ceylon,[22] those Anglo-Florentines against whom Goad had railed could have argued that they were simply following a precedent already found in the colonies and protecting what it meant to be British in Florence by excluding those who were not (although in Europe, rather than the colonies).

In a similar vein, the perceived threat of Italian influence at the British Institute is revealing about what the members of its Governing Board regarded as its proper role. In 1937, during the period after the Italo-Abyssinian conflict when Anglo-Italian tensions were high, some members of the Board of Governors felt Goad's strong support for Fascist Italy a political liability. As Lina Waterfield told Bridge, 'As far as the teaching of English to Italian teachers went, the job is well done, but the whole atmosphere [at the Institute is] too Italian.'[23] Since Waterfield had been one of the founders of the Institute in 1917, had been earlier involved in establishing schools for Italian children with her aunt, Janet Ross, and that she was an ardent anti-Fascist, this choice of words is telling.[24] To let Italians influence the director so significantly was unacceptable. Taking into account Goad's own predilection for Fascism, which will be explored in the next chapter, it is no great surprise that Waterfield opposed his running the Institute, which was supposed to remain politically neutral, for much longer. While Waterfield's choice of words might be taken to equate all Italians with Fascists, it seems an unlikely conclusion given her admiration for and friendship with many Italians.[25] She was more likely anxious about the intrusion of Italian influence into a British-run organisation, aimed at spreading knowledge of British culture. To let Italians run it would go against the principles on which the Institute was founded, as a British institution run by Britons, a feature that

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[21] David Rock, "The British of Argentina," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),18-44, 32.
[22] Margaret Jones, "'Permanent Boarders': The British in Ceylon," in *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas*, ed. Robert Bickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010),205-32, 220-21; Harper, "The British 'Malayans'," 242-47. On clubs in the colonies, see Mrinalini Sinha, "Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India," *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 4 (2001): 489-521.
[23] Charles Bridge to Lord George Lloyd, 13 August 1937, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[24] See Waterfield's autobiography for an account of her arrest at Molinella by Fascist troops. Lina Waterfield, *Castle in Italy: An Autobiography* (London: John Murray, 1961), 197-203.
[25] See for example her praise of Italian anti-Fascists in Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*: 189 - 96.

had differentiated the Institute during the First World War from Anglo-Italian institutes in other cities, which had come under the control of Italians.[26]

Goad's quasi-missionary aim of encouraging the spread of British ideas and the English language should be seen as influenced by the British imperial exercise and the idea of the civilising mission. In the aftermath of the First World War, with Italy left heavily in debt, the British Institute portrayed itself as an outpost of British culture, fostering sympathetic feelings toward Britain. In an early appeal for more private subscribers, the Institute's Annual Report for the year 1922–1923 sets out its mission as the altruistic repayment of Britain's cultural debt to Italy:

> The Institute should never be regarded as a club existing for the benefit of members who subscribe to it and regularly frequent it. By far the larger portion of its income is given by those who do not live in Florence. Its object is to form a bond between English and Italian culture, an expression of the gratitude that Britain must always feel for all that in art, music and literature she learned from Italy in the past, and to make a small return by affording opportunities for Italians to learn our language and study our literature...[27]

Implicit in this statement is the belief that British culture had surpassed its Italian counterpart.[28] The theme was developed in the Institute's Annual Report a few years later, when Goad reported a growing number of students wishing to learn English. From 120 students in 1922, in 1926 the Institute could boast over 300 attending its language courses. Goad again reiterated the important work the Institute was doing, for both British prestige in Italy, and the improvement of Italians, who would benefit from an understanding of British civilisation.

Such ideas were inevitably derived from the imperial assumption that British civilisation had a positive effect on those it touched.[29] His statement merits extended quotation:

> The object of the British Institute of Florence as stated in its Royal Charter is to «promote the study of the English language and literature and the diffusion of British culture generally in Italy». By this means it

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[26] See Chapter 4 and Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*: 167..

[27] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report and Summary of Accounts Nov. 1 1922 – April 30th 1923*, 1923, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 5-6.

[28] John Pemble, *The Mediterranean passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 234 - 40.

[29] Peter Parker, *The Old Lie: the Great War and the Public-School Ethos* (London: Constable, 1987), 54; D. M. Schreuder, "The Cultural Factor in Victorian Imperialism: a Case-Study of the British "Civilising Mission," *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History* 4, no. 3 (1976): 283-317, 285 - 87.

> endeavours to extend the influence of our country abroad *by a fuller recognition of its spiritual greatness, as apart from its political or commercial power*... to make some return for the incalculable spiritual debt that our countrymen ... owe for all the joy and enlightenment that we derive from the great treasures of art so carefully preserved and so generously opened to us in the churches, galleries and palaces throughout this country. The Institute offers in return to Italians the chance of knowing our own incomparable literature and such other manifestation of our spiritual life, in art, music, history or philosophy, as it may be able to put before them.[30]

Goad melded the idea of a cultural debt to Italy with the notion that the Institute was repaying it by teaching Italians about British cultural achievements. He also refers to the 'spiritual greatness' of Britain, an idea deeply rooted in imperial thinking.[31] Goad was careful, however, to make sure that he referred only to a cultural exchange between Italy and Britain, as opposed to comparing their politics and economy, a distinction dating back to the earliest days of the Institute's existence during the First World War.

Taylor's discussion of cultural forms of persuasion, concerned as it is with the establishment of the British Council, does not consider this imperial influence as part of the reason why private organisations such as the British Institute conducted their brand of cultural propaganda before 1934. He argues instead that the anxiety caused by Britain's losses in the war and its perceived decline in diplomatic influence drove the push for a government department dedicated to the cultural projection of Britain in overseas countries. Indeed, the British Council was set up partly to counteract the harmful effects of hostile propaganda against Britain by the totalitarian regimes of Germany and Italy, as they preached about Britain's decline from its once lofty perch on the world stage.[32] According to Richard Overy, the notion of decline was a common post-war belief and reflects the sentiments of intellectuals in Britain. Overy notes an almost obsessive interest on the part of intellectuals such as Oswald Spengler with the perceived downfall of Western civilisation, which was regarded as the model for modern progress. The horror and obsession with its deterioration was tied, again, to notions of the rise and fall of Classical empires, which, in the wake of the chaos

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[30] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1925-1926*, 1926, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 4. Emphasis added.
[31] Duncan Bell, "From ancient to modern in Victorian imperial thought," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 3 (2006): 735-59, 756.
[32] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*: 173.

caused by the First World War, seemed the likely fate of the British empire.[33] Whilst not denying that fears of degeneration provided key elements in the push for Britain to undertake cultural propaganda in the 1930s, the British imperial experience should not be overlooked. Its influence on the language of the British Institute's activities and mission is significant, and evident not only in the writings of Goad, but also among the Institute's chief supporters. Taylor's argument that British propaganda has always been reactive rather than proactive certainly rings true, but it is important to acknowledge the role of pride in the empire, a desire to make its achievements more widely known, and above all, a belief that such knowledge would be beneficial to Italian society as motivation for undertaking cultural propaganda activities.

Goad's attitude matches the zeal shown by chairmen of the British Council such as Lord George Lloyd of Dolobran, who revamped the fledgling Council and was responsible for shaping the Council's objectives of spreading British culture overseas.[34] As Lloyd explained to Parliament in 1939, the British had become too negligent about spreading awareness of their culture and civilisation and had allowed other countries' propaganda (the most prominent being France and Germany) to dictate what foreigners thought of Britain. He stated: 'As a race we have too long been content to remain aloof and misunderstood. Our strength and our wealth have in the past won us respect; we have never sought sympathy or understanding.'[35] Lloyd's anxieties were mirrored in Florence, where the activities of France and Germany (and after the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, of Italy as well) were a constant source of anxiety to Goad and other members of the Institute.

The idea that British culture would be of great value to Italians was a commonly held view, at least in the case of those Anglo-Florentines concerned with the Institute's running. In 1937, Waterfield attended a meeting of the Institute's Educational Committee and

> Was cheered when ... the Italian Professor of the School said that we needed an Englishman who could lecture on the British Empire, Colonies etc - This side of the Institute needs development - many young Italians for the Foreign Office would come to such lectures with great pleasure (and... profit).[36]

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[33] Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain and the crisis of Civilisation, 1919-1939* (London: Penguin, 2010), 24-25.
[34] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 178.
[35] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 177.
[36] Waterfield to Bridge, 12 October 1937, BW 40/3, TNA: PRO, Kew.

This study of Britain's empire would supplement the Institute's own Library of Imperial Geography which was started in 1925 and featured a collection of annual reports and maps sent from the various colonies and dominions to the Institute through the Colonial Office, illustrating how the Institute was keen to promote the study of Britain's empire.[37] Waterfield's sentiments, moreover, that Italians would be happy to come to lectures about an empire of which they had barely any personal experience, and would be considerably better off for doing so, finds resonance in the earlier experiences of Maura O'Connor's group of British women who travelled to southern Italy during the Risorgimento in order to teach Italian women about nationhood.[38] They had stressed an urgent need to educate Italian women about the responsibilities of nationhood, which was, naturally, a British concept. On the other hand, Waterfield held the opinion that a deeper understanding of the British imperial system would be beneficial for Italian diplomats, and was further convinced that educating Italians about Britain and her colonies should be developed as part of the Institute's teaching programme.

The same belief in the beneficial nature of learning about British culture was present in 1984, when Donaldson wrote her fifty-year history of the British Council. Accusing previous British governments of a lack of foresight with regard to the importance of cultural propaganda, she wrote that, the British 'scepticism about the value of spreading such intangibles as language, literature, the arts and civilised values was almost as complete as the French belief in it.'[39] However she does not refer to what these 'civilised values' might actually be, or the implication that countries without any previous cultural contact with the British were thus 'uncivilised'.

The conflict between the two rival ideologies on the British Institute's Governing Board was a long-standing one, though resolved in favour of the Institute becoming a centre of British teaching. So successful were the Institute's teaching programmes that they provided the model on which the British Council eventually

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[37] Goad, *History of the British Institute of Florence*, 26.
[38] Maura O'Connor, "Civilizing Southern Italy: British and Italian women and the cultural politics of European nation building," *Women's Writing* 10, no. 2 (2003): 253 - 68.
[39] Donaldson, *The British Council*, 12.

based its institutes in other countries.[40] The constant bickering between rival factions, however, could (and did) cause great stress to both Harold Goad and to the Honorary Secretary of the Institute, Janet Penrose Trevelyan. Commenting on another conflict within the Governing Board in 1938 – about the advisability of admitting Ronald Bottrall, who had only recently joined the Institute, as a full member of the Board – Trevelyan made the bemused observation: 'Funny place, Florence! Guelf and Ghibelline still I suppose.'[41]

In any case, the Institute's work of spreading British culture was well and truly thriving during the 1920s and 1930s. As the Institute's annual report for 1939 stated, on the event of Francis Toye taking over the directorship from Goad: 'the Director [was] especially glad to note the practical unanimity with which the audience approved his insistence on the function of the Institute as being primarily an agent for Anglo-Italian co-operation and understanding, not merely a British club.'[42] Though Toye might have tactfully glossed over the long-standing dispute within the Institute, his assurance that the Institute was a centre for Anglo-Italian understanding demands a more detailed discussion.

Language and culture: the Institute's activities

One of the most significant points about the British Institute's English language programmes is the type of the students who attended them. Whilst some learnt the language for business (despite Goad's aversion to such a lowly pursuit) or for entrance to university studies, a great many worked as teachers in Italian state schools, and in turn taught both the language and literature of Britain to their students.[43] In a sense, the British Institute was also training its own cultural envoys, who presented to their students the Institute's version of British civilisation. The number of students they reached was not insignificant. Although no official statistics are available, by 1936, Goad estimated that the actual number of Italian students reached through the Institute's work was 22,000 or 23,000, which actually

[40] Donaldson, *The British Council*, 34.
[41] Janet Penrose Trevelyan to Bridge, 3 February 1938, BW 40/3, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[42] British Institute of Florence, *Interim Report 1939*, 1940, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 2.
[43] Donaldson, *The British Council*, 34.

represented a decrease from the 24,000 pupils for 1928.[44] As a comparison, Goad pointed out that he unofficially counted 61,000 students of French and 22,000 of German (compared to 17,000 students in 1928); other languages attracted about 19,000 students.[45] He had a sense that the number of Italian students of German was increasing at the expense of English. If Goad's figures are to be believed, however, the drop in student numbers was not so dramatic as he had feared.

Given that the Institute's teaching programme was deemed to have enough merit for the British Council to adopt it as the model for future institutes around the world – which Donaldson defines as distinct from normal British Councils on the basis that they carry out teaching onsite as well as conducting cultural outreach programmes[46] – consideration of the Institute's curriculum is necessary, though the British Institute's archives do not provide a detailed description of what exactly was taught, and only contain a bare outline of curricula on offer to students. The courses for the school year of 1933-1934 were as follows:

Corso Inferiore 3 anni	1° e 2° anni: Morfologia 3 sintassi; letture, traduzioni e dettati; conversazione elementare. *(4 ore settimanali ciascuno, in italiano)* 3° anno: Riassunto generale della grammatica; letture, traduzioni, conversazione, dettati, componimenti; sommario di letteratura e storia politica inglesi *(6 ore settimanali, in inglese)*
Corso Medio 2 anni di 9 ore settimanali ciascuno, in inglese	1° anno: letture, traduzioni, compnimenti, dettati, conversazione. Letteratura inglese da Chaucer a Milton, storia politica inglese fino al 1603 2°anno: letture, traduzioni, dettati, componimenti, conversazione; letteratura inglese da Milton a Swinburne; storia politica inglese dal 1603 ai giorni nostril.
Corso Superiore di Perfezionamento	Letteratura medioevale moderna e contemporanea, corsi su Shakespeare, di

[44] Goad to Bridge, 18 November 1936, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Donaldson, *The British Council*: 31-32.

2 anni con 10 corsi, in inglese	letteratura comparata, storia e storia della lingua, traduzioni e componimenti
Corso Serale 3 anni di 3 ore settimanali ciascuno	Studio practico della lingua inglese per scopi professionali. Grammatica, traduzioni, letture, dettatura e conversazione. Studio della vita e della istituzioni inglesi contemporanee.
Corso Complementare Commerciale (in collaborazione con le British Chambers of Commerce in Italy) 1 anno con 2 ore settimanali	Studio dei termini commerciali. Pesi e Misure. Nozioni generali sul commercio, sulle banche e sulle industrie inglesi.

Table 1: Details of English language courses, Annual Report 1933-1934, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 11.

As can be seen from Table 1, the most basic course on offer lasted three years, the intermediate course for two, and the final level, the *Corso Superiore di Perfezionamento* (which may be loosely translated as the 'advanced fluency course'), lasted two years. These courses prepared Italian teachers to teach English in state schools, and comprised at least four hours of lessons a week, increasing to eighteen hours at the end of the third level. Despite Goad's abhorrence of teaching English to Italians for the purposes of conducting business, there existed two practical courses. The 'Corso Serale' or evening course aimed at professionals and lasted three years, comprising only three hours each week. Students were taught grammar, translation, reading and dictation, as well as the study of contemporary British life and institutions, no doubt so that students could better acquaint themselves with the British way of doing business. A second complementary course, which lasted one year, was held in conjunction with the British Chambers of Commerce in Italy, another unofficial body that had been formed in Genoa in 1904 to facilitate Anglo-Italian trade. This course taught students about the British systems of weights and measures, as well as the specific terms and language used in banking and industry. At the end of this course, candidates could sit an examination for a certificate of 'Proficiency in English', which allowed commercial firms to be certain that clerks were fluent in the language and 'English currency, weights and measures, and the

usual technical commercial technology.'[47] Fees for the 1922-1923 school year were 120-140 *lire* for the commercial course, 120-180 for the comprehensive course, and a flat fee of 200 *lire* for the final level of the comprehensive course. For each of the multi-year courses, fees were increased each year by ten *lire*.[48]

In 1938, the Institute was formally allowed to hold examinations on its premises for the Certificate of Proficiency in English by the Cambridge Examination Syndicate. Before this, at the end of the language courses, students could present themselves for an examination in order to earn the Institute's teaching diploma, which was co-awarded by the University of Florence, but which held no legal recognition either in Italy or Britain.[49] However, most of the students were those wishing to become teachers of English, and those wishing to learn the language for commercial reasons only remained in the minority.[50] Goad reported in 1936 that the previous year 236 students had enrolled in the comprehensive language courses compared to only forty-one in the commercial course.[51]

What is most interesting about the comprehensive language courses is the inclusion of the study of works of British authors and the political history of Britain, beginning in the third year of the beginner's course. All of these upper level courses were taught entirely in English. Attendance at the lectures remained, which remained compulsory until the last year of the advanced course, included everything from a survey of English literature from Chaucer to Milton to one course entirely on Shakespeare and another on the history of the English language.[52] In addition to learning the technical details of English grammar, translation and conversation, students were also receiving a rudimentary course in British culture and what was deemed to be essential learning about the building blocks that made up contemporary British civilisation. Since the Institute had been established on the initiative of prominent figures in the Anglo-Florentine community to promote the idea of what

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[47] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1929-1930*, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 5-6.
[48] British Institute of Florence, *Programma dei Corsi 1922-1923*, 1922, BRI:I:D:91:ffl-2, BIA, Florence.
[49] *British Institute of Florence: Memorandum re the Status and History of the Institute*, November 1936, 4, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1933 -1934*, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 11.

being British meant, what was being taught to Italian students was the Anglo-Florentines' notion of what constituted British culture.

Whilst teaching English to Italians provided the main focus of the Institute, Italian lessons for non-Italians in Florence began in 1931. These were held in conjunction with the Italian university authorities and the *Federazione Toscana per il Movimento dei Forestieri* (literally, the Federation for the Movement of Foreigners), the first class held at the Institute included pupils from Sweden, Switzerland and Denmark in addition to the expected British and American. These courses, however, did not become regular fixtures on the Institute's curriculum, nor are further details available.[53] Teaching Italian to British students was not a priority, despite the Institute's professed aims of Anglo-Italian cultural exchange.

In addition to the regular courses on offer, from 1927 the Institute organised a Summer School for pupils and teachers of English from all over Italy, which proved to be popular from its first year drawing forty-six participants from seventeen Italian provinces. At the end of the course, the students sat an examination to qualify for a diploma.[54] From 1928, the Summer School took place in London. For three weeks students were taken around the capital and attended lectures on contemporary British culture and politics during the day, while at night they were treated to private receptions and concerts (generally organised by expatriate Italians living in London)[55], as well as enjoying excursions to the English countryside on Sundays. 'The School', the annual report for the first Summer School conducted abroad in 1930 explained,

> may be said to have consisted in a course of study of modern English life and Institutions and of London in her chief monuments of historical and artistic interest. For example, at the Houses of Parliament, the London County Hall, the Inns of Court, the University of Oxford, Eton College, Windsor Castle and so forth ... as well as the British Museum and the National Gallery, Westminster Abbey, the Tower, the London Museum, Tate Gallery, Canterbury Cathedral, St Albans Abbey etc. etc. .... They enjoyed the hospitality of several well-known English country houses, and saw some of the most beautiful private parks and gardens .... Besides the

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[53] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1931-32,* 1932, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 8.
[54] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1926-1927*, 1927, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 2-3.
[55] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1931-1932*, 1932, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 7.

> lectures given by their guides as they went about, they had others … upon English architecture, art, history, institutions etc.[56]

What is striking about the itinerary of the Summer School students in 1928 is how they were taken to traditional symbols of Britishness, conforming to a canon laid out by the British Institute. Furthermore, as Emma Robertson has shown, the Houses of Parliament, with the clock tower Big Ben, were a potent symbol of home to listeners of the BBC's Empire Service, with the mere recording of its chimes enough to evoke memories and images of London and Britain in British subjects across the empire (and in this case, outside of it).[57] What the summer school students were experiencing was a tour of sites that constituted what the British Institute regarded as integral to a particular idea of Britishness, one intimately linked with tradition and nostalgia.

The Summer School proved successful enough through the 1920s, although the Summer School of 1930 was cancelled, owing to the death of Aldo Ricci, a well-respected academic and headmaster of the Institute's school, a teacher with a passionate interest in Medieval English and the works of Chaucer, and who had been responsible for planning much of the school's curriculum.[58] It continued to thrive well into the 1930s, although from 1933 it was conducted as part of London University's 'Great Summer School for foreign students … in this school there were three hundred students altogether, deriving from over twenty nations; but the largest contingent [in 1933] was the Italian group of sixty-eight, of whom thirty-one formed the special British Institute group.'[59] The growing popularity of learning English, however, was checked dramatically by the beginnings of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict in 1934, though in 1937, at the height of Anglo-Italian tension, twenty-three students managed to make the journey to London to join the rest of the overseas students attending

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[56] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1928-1929*, 1929, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 4-5.
[57] Emma Robertson, "'I get a real kick out of Big Ben': BBC versions of Britishness on the Empire and General Overseas service, 1932-1948," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 28, no. 4 (2008): 459-73, 463.
[58] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1929-1930*, 1930, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 6.
[59] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1932-1933*, 1933, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 6.

London University's Summer School.[60] Indeed, though this number was only eight down on the contingent that represented the British Institute in 1933, the anxiety that the drop in numbers for both the Summer School and the usual language courses caused Goad was significant, since he felt that English was falling dangerously out of favour with Italians in exchange for German.[61]

The reputation of the Institute's programmes is reflected in the growing number of students who signed up for language courses throughout the 1920s. From 163 in the first school year of 1919–1920, the number of students increased to 444 at the height of the Institute's popularity in 1928–1929. In the table given below, the numbers for the Day School correspond to the longer language courses, which included supplementary courses on literature and history, whilst the Evening Classes were for the commercial courses.

Session	*Day School*	*Evening Classes*	*Special Classes*	*Total*
1919/20	157	--	6	163
1920/21	153	--	5	158
1921/22	134	--	6	140
1922/23	127	--	7	134
1923/24	134	--	10	144
1924/25	179	87	12	248
1925/26	196	101	--	297
1926/27	236	134	--	370
1927/28	240	135	50	420
1928/29	235	134	75	444
1929/30	224	121	81	426
1930/31	249	93	100	442
1932/33	211	83	--	294
1933/34	184	49	60	293
1934/35	164	41	66	271
1935/36	119	37	98	254
1936/37	146	57	58	261

[60] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1936-1937*, 1937, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 6.
[61] Goad to Bridge, 18 November 1936, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.

1937/38	186	79	39	304

Table 2: Student enrolments at the British Institute of Florence, 1919-1938. Extracted from Harold E. Goad, *History of the British Institute of Florence*, 20.

Goad explained the drop in students for the Day School in the 1931–1932 as a mark of the Institute's success in training English teachers for Italian schools. As he wrote, 'It is therefore no cause for regret that the actual numbers in the school of the British Institute have of late years slightly diminished, for, as we have said, it is merely a proof that in other schools English is being taught to a much greater extent than before, and often by our ex-students.'[62] A 1935 letter to Trevelyan from the teachers of the Institute also took pride that many of the Institute's ex-students were able to find teaching posts in state and private schools.[63] Producing teachers of English, who had been trained by the Institute, but also imbued with the Institute's ideas of what constituted Britishness, and who could spread this knowledge to the students they taught, was more of an achievement than merely drawing in record numbers of students. Despite the role they played in disseminating the British Institute's particular idea of British culture, however, no further detailed records survive of the students who graduated.

The priorities of the British Institute were less commercially-driven and more focused on a missionary-like diffusion of the English language and British culture amongst Italians. This model, by Goad's admission, was never going to be able to be self-supporting. Hence, it was usual for all the Institute's annual reports to end with a plea for more donations in order to continue to fund the good work of enlightening the Italian public by teaching them about British civilisation and its values. As Goad wrote in his first appeal for funds:

> It must be borne in mind that since Higher Education all over the world has to be aided by the state or by liberal private endowments and can never be made self-supporting, so in proportion as the schools extend, which is the main object of the Institute, will the disproportion between expenditure and the need for generous support by patriotic Englishmen

[62] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1931-1932*, 1932, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 6.
[63] Piero Rébora, A.C. Sleigh, Dorothy Benton, Hilda Cox and Kathleen Speight to Trevelyan, 21 October 1935, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.

> grow greater.... English should displace German as the second language in all [Italian] secondary schools.[64]

The focus upon the duty of patriotic Britons to support this altruistic enterprise, and the sense of urgency for English to replace German as the second most popular foreign language in Italian secondary schools, are reflective of more commonly-held anxieties in British society in the aftermath of the First World War. The need for English to be ranked more highly in Italy than German was partly the result of a growing panic, and the activities of German cultural propagandists will be addressed later. The appeal to patriotism, however, was a trope found throughout the empire. Indeed, as Keith McClelland and Sonya Rose have argued, post-war rhetoric in Britain often spoke of the duty of a subject of the empire to encourage the outreach of imperial interests.[65] Goad's language of self-sacrifice, as well as the need to stave off German influence in Italy, tapped into two issues directly relevant to contemporary concerns back in Britain. The appeals for funds and subscriptions was overwhelmingly successful, and in his report for the school session of 1931–1932, Goad was able to boast of the financial contributions from major English academic institutes such as Oxford University, Kings College London and University College London.[66] Cambridge University was added to the list in 1934, and the Institute still functions as a centre for the Cambridge University Test of English as a Foreign Language today.

In addition to language training and lessons in British literature and history, the Institute organised guest lectures, which were free to the public. Covering a wide range of topics, these were given by a varied number of lecturers. In his first annual report, for the school year of 1923, when the Institute acquired its Royal Charter, Goad wrote that no fewer than forty-two public lectures had been delivered in the past six months, working out to almost two lectures weekly.[67] Although the frequency decreased afterwards, the lectures remained a regular feature of the Institute's social

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[64] British Institute of Florence, *Report and Summary of Accounts, 1922-1923*, 1923, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 4.
[65] Keith McClelland and Sonya Rose, "Citizenship and empire, 1867-1928," in *At Home With the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 275-97, 293-94.
[66] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1931-32,* 1932, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 8.
[67] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1922-1923,* 1923, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 3.

activities, along with recitals of Italian and British music, of which both Goad and the Institute's third director, Francis Toye, were fond. Lectures were delivered in both English and Italian, and could range from a recounting of a private trip to Mesopotamia to an Italian academic's impressions of life at the University of London.


THE BRITISH INSTITUTE
PALAZZO ANTINORI - FIRENZE - PIAZZA ANTINORI

On Thursday 13th May 1937
at 5.15 p. m.

Mr. J. A. SPRANGER

will give a lecture on

A FLYING TRIP TO MESOPOTAMIA

(illustrated with lantern slides)

This programme serves as an invitation.
Members wishing to have further invitations for their friends should apply to the Secretary.

THE BRITISH INSTITUTE
PALAZZO ANTINORI - FIRENZE - PIAZZA ANTINORI

Martedì 29 Novembre 1938-XVII
alle ore 17,30 precise

Il Prof. CAMILLO PELLIZZI
(dell'Università di Londra)

terrà una conferenza su

IMPRESSIONI DI UN ITALIANO NELLE UNIVERSITÀ INGLESI

Questo programma serve d'invito; da mostrarsi all'ingresso.
I soci che desiderassero avere altri inviti sono pregati di rivolgersi alla Segreteria.

Image 9: Leaflets for lectures at the British Institute, British Institute Collection (BRI) BRI:I:F:i:1:ff1-2, British Institute Archives (BIA), Florence.

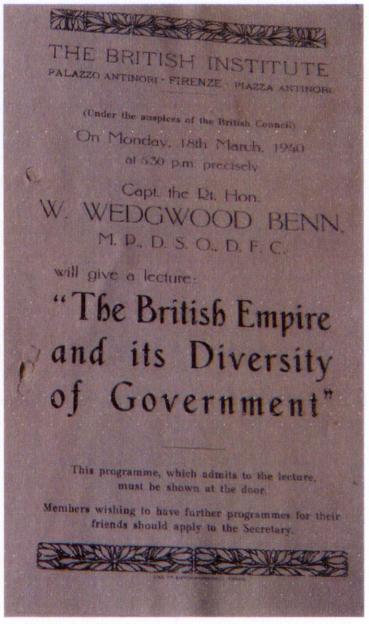
Budgetary concerns in the 1930s forced the Institute to restrict lectures to two each month. Several letters between lecturers and the Institute reveal that remuneration for lecturers amounted to 300 *lire*, which P.N. Vallentine, the Institute's secretary and librarian, acknowledged as being a token sum but was 'the largest fee that we are allowed to give under the present regulations of the Board of Governors.'[68]

The overwhelming majority of lectures were related to British culture and history, Anglo-Italian cultural contact, or the British empire. In keeping with Goad's belief that scholarly value was to be prized over popularity, this is unsurprising. The purpose of these lectures, however, continued the cultural outreach initiated by the Institute's language lessons, and encouraged the fostering of closer Anglo-Italian understanding, though as will be shown later, this was not without controversy.

Spreading knowledge of the wider empire, as William Wedgwood Benn's (First Viscount Stansgate, Labour MP and ex-Secretary of State for India, as well as a decorated First World War hero who had seen action in Italy) lecture in 1940 was

[68] P.N. Vallentine to E.J. Dent, 2 May 1933, BRI:I:B:43:f2, BIA, Florence.

designed to do (see below), linked the Institute back not only to Britain, but to the settler Dominions and colonies. In doing so, the Institute emphasised the ties between all British subjects, whether living within the empire's boundaries or outside them. The leaflet for Benn's lecture, as well, is also interesting because of the rider underneath the Institute's title, which reveals that the lecture was to be presented 'under the auspices of the British Council.' Given that in 1935 the Council had established a Lectures Committee for the purposes of sending recognised experts in literature, art, culture and science overseas as part of their cultural propaganda mission,[69] the Institute's public lectures were an obvious destination for their speakers. A letter on behalf of the secretary of the British Council's Music Committee in London also shows that it supplied sheet music for the Institute's concerts.[70] In short, the Council was supporting the existing work of the Institute in conducting cultural propaganda in Florence. This is in keeping with the close relationship that Katharina Rietzler has observed between official agencies of diplomacy and unofficial organisations like the Institute.[71]


THE BRITISH INSTITUTE
PALAZZO ANTINORI - FIRENZE - PIAZZA ANTINORI

(Under the auspices of the British Council)

On Monday, 18th March, 1940
at 5.30 p.m. precisely

Capt. the Rt. Hon.
W. WEDGWOOD BENN,
M. P., D. S. O., D. F. C.
will give a lecture:

"The British Empire and its Diversity of Government"

This programme, which admits to the lecture, must be shown at the door.

Members wishing to have further programmes for their friends should apply to the Secretary.

Image 10: Leaflet for a lecture on the British Empire, 1940, BRI:I:F:i:2:f7, BIA, Florence.

A cornerstone of the Institute, the bulk of the Institute's library was chiefly made up of donations from individual Anglo-Florentine residents, through government agents such as the Foreign and Colonial Offices, and bequests. The most

[69] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 154.
[70] Kenneth Johnstone to Vallentine, 21 November 1938, BRI:I:B:40:f1, BIA, Florence.
[71] Rietzler, "Before the Cultural Cold Wars," 151.

significant of these was from the literary executor of Vernon Lee's estate, who donated Lee's entire library of around 420 books to the Institute in 1935.[72] Other significant donations included the entire set of Old English Text Society publications from the scholar of English literature Sir Israel Gollancz in 1924 and 'a special library consisting of the English contribution to the study of Dante' from a private donor in 1930.[73] Although an entire catalogue for the Institute's holdings for this time is not available, Goad reported in his official history of the Institute that the library had holdings of classical and modern British literature (though he does not define what was meant by modern), as well as sheet music and books on art.[74] As most of its acquisitions were through donations, the library at the British Institute might be said to be more eclectic, than decidedly focused on specialist subjects.

Apart from its cultural and educational programmes, the Institute also became a meeting point for the British in Florence. As Donaldson remarks, one of the defining qualities of the Institute's location was that a large proportion of Florence's 500[75] British residents relied on the Institute to provide 'intellectual pursuits.'[76] Indeed, part of Goad's trouble with the members of his Governing Board who wanted the Institute run more as a private members' club was that they had already been using and contributing to the costs of the reading rooms and libraries of the Institute since its opening. As Janet Trevelyan outlined in a letter to Bridge, the problem stemmed from the Institute's desperate early days when its main subscribers were resident Anglo-Florentines, who along with the students the Institute admitted had originally been the main sources of its income. However, the numbers of these members had declined since Goad and the Governing Board directed their energies 'more towards furthering the educational than the social work of the Institute.'[77]

One of the grandest events of the Institute's interwar history was the coronation of George VI in May 1937. In a letter to Bridge, Goad described the

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[72] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1934-35,* 1935, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 5.
[73] Goad, *History of the British Institute of Florence*, 26-27.
[74] Goad, *History of the British Institute of Florence*, 27.
[75] Foreign Office report on the Florence consulate office. Foreign Office files (FO) 369/2412, K4841/4841/222, 1935, TNA: PRO, Kew. This number is nearly half that of the 800 reported in 1903, a reflection of how the Anglo-Florentine community had been affected by the Great War.
[76] Donaldson, *The British Council*, 35.
[77] *British Institute of Florence: Memorandum re the Status and History of the Institute*, November 1936, 4, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.

festivities organised in Florence to mark the occasion. After a special thanksgiving service in the morning at Holy Trinity, one of two Anglican churches in Florence, Goad and his invited guests listened to a special BBC broadcast of the coronation ceremony over the wireless, during which Goad observed that the lecture hall of the Institute was nearly full. Around 350 people came to hear the broadcast, which was followed by tea, dinner provided by the British Consul, C.H. Wakefield-Harrey, for the 'principal British residents' (though no names were listed), and dancing. Attended by over 130 guests, the party finished at midnight, with 'English songs by well-known English singers', though the total attendance was somewhat less than expected, Goad said, owing to the late hour and the long programme of activities during the day. As a celebration of their loyalty to the Crown, Goad and his guests had also drunk to the health of the new King, and had sung the national anthem 'with great enthusiasm.' Interestingly, probably due to the prevailing tensions in Anglo-Italian relations, Goad noted that no Italian officials had been invited to the celebration, although a few Italian supporters of the Institute had attended, along with a handful of American and French guests.[78]

As a highly visible celebration of Britishness in the city, the Institute's coronation festivities drew together British residents of the Florence. Indeed, on this occasion, the Institute managed to attract the attention of Anglo-Florentines who had up to that moment had no contact with it. As Goad told Bridge, 'I have received a great many letters and cards of thanks from various members of the British community who were not formerly in touch with the Institute.'[79] Goad had also secured special permission from the municipal authorities to hang a Union Jack on the Institute's façade for most of the day alongside an Italian flag. On occasions such as this, Anglo-Florentine identity went on display for the rest of the city, which provided the Institute with an opportunity to reinforce its cultural presence in Florence, and provided expatriate Britons the chance to celebrate their cultural identity.[80] Though the Institute was primarily established to conduct cultural propaganda, events such as

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[78] Goad to Bridge, 21 May 1937, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[79] Ibid.
[80] This is still observed today in British expatriate communities around the world. See Anne-Meike Fechter, *Transnational lives: Expatriates in Indonesia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Karen O'Reilly, *The British on the Costa del Sol: transnational identities and local communities* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

the coronation functioned more as a celebration for the British community than as part a programme of cultural outreach to Italians.

The British Council and cultural propaganda

To understand the contributions made by the British Institute to interwar cultural propaganda, the history and motivations behind the establishment of the British Council in 1934 must also be considered. The similarities in the official efforts of the of the British Council, and the Institute's unofficial endeavours had a significant impact on the relationship between the two bodies. The efforts of other nations, particularly France and Germany, must also be considered in order to grasp the constant anxiety felt by Goad, Trevelyan and Bridge that Britain was not doing enough to foster cultural sympathy in foreign countries.

The British Council was established in 1934 under the auspices of the News Department of the Foreign Office as a department devoted to the production and organisation of cultural propaganda in foreign countries. Formed at the initiative of a Foreign Office official, the Australian-born Rex Leeper, the British Committee for Relations with Other Countries first sat on 5 December 1934; for the next year it struggled to convince the Treasury of the vital importance of conducting cultural propaganda, spearheaded by the indefatigable Leeper and the Council's first Secretary-General, Charles Bridge.[81] This Committee became the British Council, and like the British Broadcasting Corporation, enjoyed a semi-autonomous position from other government organisations. This meant that while it was ultimately responsible to the government, the Council retained control over its own administration and finances.[82]

Leeper argued that cultural forms of persuasion were vital weapons in the tussle for greater influence in international diplomacy, where he felt British prestige was being eroded by the anti-British tone of propaganda produced by the French and Germans. Leeper's arguments, articulated before by the Committee on British Communities Abroad in 1919, had their detractors. One of the largest and most vocal was the Treasury, which insisted that the remit of what constituted cultural propaganda was much too wide to be practical.[83] Yet, in light of reports of increased anti-British propaganda received by the Foreign Office and the Department of

[81] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 151.
[82] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 153.
[83] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 131.

Overseas Trade, the Treasury was persuaded to reassess its 1919 ruling on the inadvisability of conducting cultural propaganda.[84]

In 1935, the Treasury awarded the Council an initial grant of £5,000, which was tripled the following year to £15,000.[85] As a comparison, Donaldson points out that during the same period, the French and German governments were each spending over £1 million a year on their cultural propaganda efforts. Despite the obvious difficulties of having a much smaller budget than its rivals, the British Council earmarked the Institute in Florence as one of the key unofficial organisations for support, and provided an initial grant of £200 in 1935.[86] Goad boasted of this support in his report for 1935, and pointed out that the Council had also provided the Institute with books and newspapers for its growing library.[87] The subsidy increased annually until 1937, when the Council provided £1,050 and agreed to establish a pension fund for the Institute's teachers once they reached the age of 65. By 1939, the Council was receiving £130,000 from the British government[88] and was giving the Florence Institute a subsidy of £1,500,[89] in addition to providing part of the salary for Goad's successor as Director, Francis Toye. The last grants from the Council were provided in 1940, before the Institute was closed following Italy's declaration of war. Records show that Toye was being paid £600 out of the Institute's total grant of £1,743 for his salary, and that the amount spent by the Council in Italy totalled £10,770, with the rest of the grant money sent to branch institutes in Rome, Milan, Genoa, Palermo and Naples.[90]

These grants were minuscule compared to the amount commanded by propagandists in other countries, but as Leeper argued, the goal was not competition with other nations, but the promotion of Britain.[91] Despite growing anxiety about the activities of other nations, Leeper believed that ensuring Britain was portrayed in a positive light was of more importance than producing comparable denunciations of others. As he wrote in 1934:

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[84] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 137.
[85] Donaldson, *The British Council*, 32.
[86] Donaldson, *The British Council*, 35 and Taylor *The Projection of Britain*, 143.
[87] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1934-1935,* 1935, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 6.
[88] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 165.
[89] Donaldson, *The British Council*, 35.
[90] Grants to Institutes in Italy for 1940/41, 1940, BW/9, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[91] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 147.

> In conducting cultural propaganda, we should avoid the idea that it is directed against any other country or indeed that it is competitive. Cultural relations will only improve political relations if they are maintained on a basis of strict reciprocity. It is just as good propaganda for this country to bring distinguished foreigners to lecture and meet people here as it is to send our own speakers abroad. We shall obtain better publicity for our own culture in other countries if we take an equal interest in their culture .... It is more subtle and very much more fruitful than the one-sided propaganda which French, German and Italians are apt to pursue so vigorously. In the long run we shall be the gainers by this method. Not only we, but Europe in general.[92]

Despite his insistence on balanced cultural exchanges, Leeper was also clearly assured of the great benefit of bringing British culture to the rest of the world. In an address to the Overseas Trade Development Council in the same year, he pointed out that 'The British nation has made, and was still making, an immense contribution to the common stock of ideas.... It was time that we should rid ourselves of our traditional aloofness and insularity not only because it would pay to do so, but because we should lose heavily if we should not.'[93] His sentiments were almost totally in sympathy with Goad's; British civilisation had much to offer the rest of the world, and her prestige was very much tied to a decision to make her culture known. Indeed, Leeper had identified the Institute as one of the non-official organisations dedicated to spreading awareness of British culture that the Council should support.[94] Leeper's belief in the positive effects of the spread of British culture echoes the earlier comments of the Institute's first major private supporter, Walter Becker, who claimed in 1920 that he could 'imagine no more efficacious means of benefiting this distressful Italy of ours, than the injection of British ways, ideas and culture into the veins of its youth.'[95] Here again, is apparent the familiar notion of the good that British culture could do and it is further evidence of the extent to which thinking about cultural propaganda was influenced by the British imperial worldview.

At this juncture, it is necessary to examine the efforts of other nations, particularly France and Germany, with regards to cultural propaganda. The British

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[92] Rex Leeper, Memo on cultural propaganda, 23 April 1934, Foreign Office files (FO) 395/504 P 1255/9/160, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[93] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 147.
[94] Rex Leeper, Memo on cultural propaganda, 23 April 1934, FO 395/504 P 1255/9/160, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[95] Walter Becker to Austen Chamberlain, 23 November 1920, FO 395/341 P 1658/23/122, TNA: PRO, Kew.

Institute was based partly on the model of the French Institute of Florence. Taylor argued that the French were the first to realise the benefits of conducting cultural propaganda overseas, and that their motives for doing so were chiefly political and economic in nature. Culture to the French was to be a vehicle for commerce and diplomacy, not an end in itself. The Quai d'Orsay established a branch devoted entirely to cultural propaganda, the Service des Oeuvres des Français à l'Etranger, which ran its activities through the Alliance Française, founded in 1883 to promote an awareness of the French language globally and to encourage more interactions between French speakers and the rest of the world.[96] After the First World War, French efforts at cultural propaganda became more overt, and in 1920 the Quai reorganised the Services des Oeuvres, allocating it a starting budget of 17 million *francs*.[97] Richard Arndt writes that by 1938, this department was drawing a fifth of the Quai's budget, not counting the contributions from other government departments such as the Ministry of Education.[98] In Italy, the French were so successful with programmes of cultural outreach that French was the foreign language with the highest number of pupils for the interwar period, as shown by Goad's statistics above.

However, Goad did not consider the French rivals of the Institute in competition for the hearts and minds of young Italians. In his opinion, the efforts of Germany posed more of a threat to British cultural prestige in Italy. Taylor argues that the Germans were only second to the French in realising the power of promoting their cultural achievements abroad, and points to the efforts beginning in the 1880s to spread German *Kultur* through the *Auslandsschulen*, or German schools abroad. In 1920, the Weimar government created the Directorate for Germanism Abroad and Cultural Relations to oversee its cultural propaganda and maintain cultural ties with Germans living overseas.[99] In 1934, after the Nazi Party had been in power for a year, the amount spent on Germany's cultural propaganda was estimated at over £1 million, on par with the French.[100] Considering the German level of funding in its programmes

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[96] Like the British Council, Johnathan Gosnell observes that the history of the Alliance Française has not been widely studied. Jonathan Gosnell, "The Alliance Française, Empire and America," *French Cultural Studies* 19, no. 2 (2008): 227-43, 228.
[97] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 136.
[98] Richard T. Arndt, *The 'first resort of kings': American cultural diplomacy in the twentieth century* (Dulles: Potomac Books, 2005), 60.
[99] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 127.
[100] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 143. Recall that the figure for British cultural propaganda at this time was around £15,000.

of cultural outreach, it is unsurprising that Goad believed that German in Italian schools was gaining students at the expense of English, especially during the hostility towards Britain during the Abyssinian crisis. In the absence of a comparable study of the efforts of German cultural propagandists in Florence, it is difficult to say whether Goad's fears were realised.

Apart from the German and French efforts, other nations were discovering the benefits of cultural propaganda. The Italian counterpart of the Alliance Française, the Dante Alighieri Society, which was founded in 1889, was a recipient of state funding during the 1930s, with 0.3% of the Italian budget being allocated to its work in 1935.[101] Until the Abyssinian conflict in 1935, Italian activities were devoted mostly to reminding overseas Italians of their national (and Fascist) identity, as Claudia Baldoli has pointed out.[102] During the war with Ethiopia, in fact, *L'Italia Nostra*, a newspaper published by the Italian embassy in London produced a supplement in English. Entitled *The British-Italian Bulletin*, this was designed to counteract increasingly hostile denunciations of Italian violence in the British press. Featuring contributions from British Italophiles, including Conservative ex-MPs, right-wing journalists, Goad and the poet Ezra Pound, the newspaper was not a particular success, quickly ceasing publication after Italy conquered Ethiopia in 1936.[103] However, it is the only example of Fascist propaganda designed to present Italy in a positive light to British audiences. For Fascist propagandists, ensuring that expatriate Italians maintained their ties with their homeland held a higher priority than convincing sceptical Britons of the legitimacy of Italy's colonial ambitions.

Further afield, Zsolt Nagy has studied the efforts of Czechoslovakian, Romanian and Hungarian groups to promote their cultural identity in the Nationality Rooms at the newly built landmark of the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh. He notes that governments of these Eastern European nations saw cultural diplomacy as a means to convince more powerful Western European nations of the validity of their claims to sovereignty.[104] American cultural diplomacy during this time was spearheaded by the philanthropic foundations such as the Carnegie

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[101] Ibid.
[102] Claudia Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism: Italian Fascists and Britain's Italians in the 1930s* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 9. The influence of Fascism in Britain will be discussed in the next chapter.
[103] Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism*, 107-08.
[104] Nagy, "National Identities for Export: East European Cultural Diplomacy in Inter-War Pittsburgh," 453.

Endowment and the Rockefeller Foundation, which funded chairs and research at European universities and libraries in addition to providing donations to humanitarian causes and international organisations, notably the League of Nations. As Katharine Rietzler points out, the activities of the American philanthropic organisations proved so prolific that diplomats could end up identifying key members of these philanthropic organisations as representatives of official government policy.[105]

In order to counter the cultural influence of other nations, British Council funds were provided to similar private institutions like the Institute, established to encourage the spread of British culture overseas. Leeper identified some of the key organisations for support in his April 1934 memo on cultural propaganda. These included the British Institute in Paris, which was opened in 1927 and eventually absorbed by the University of London as a centre for French studies. Also included was the All People's Association, formed by Sir Evelyn Wrench, the founder of the English Speaking Union, as well as the Ibero-American Society, of which the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) was a keen supporter. It was important, Leeper noted, that these privately-founded institutions be supported by the government in some way, both to continue the good work that they were doing, as well as to ensure that their activities could be controlled in some way. As he wrote,

> If the Foreign Office is to exercise any effective supervision it is important to canalise the work as far as possible and to concentrate our support on those private organisations which are best fitted to undertake the work .... I do not mean that we should frown on the many similar societies in existence which may do something useful locally, but we should not encourage the extension of small societies and should reserve most of our attention for those organisations which can operate on a large scale.[106]

The relationship between these private organisations and the British Council, and the perceived need to control them, reveals the intimate ties that Rietzler has observed between American philanthropic foundations and American foreign policy. In her study of American cultural diplomacy during the interwar period, she notes that Nicholas Murray Butler, president of the Carnegie Endowment, was seen by

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[105] Rietzler, "Before the Cultural Cold Wars," 153 -55.

[106] Leeper, Memo on cultural propaganda, 23 April 1934, FO 395/504 P 1255/9/160, TNA: PRO, Kew. It is interesting that British Council institutes based on the Florence model were not opened in Germany or Japan during this period. Indeed Taylor points out that cultural propaganda seriously considered until the Munich crisis in 1938. See Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 174-175.

Hungarian officials as a representative of American policy during his visit there in 1931, an association that alarmed American diplomats in Budapest.[107]

Whilst Goad at the British Institute did not raise the same level of concern amongst British Council officials, on occasions his behaviour could prompt censure from both the British Council and British diplomats. In particular, a lecture in late 1935 at the Institute by Muriel Currey, a close associate with whom Goad had collaborated on a book about the Fascist state,[108] earned him a serious letter of reprimand from Trevelyan and from William McClure at the British Embassy in Rome. Whilst actual details of Currey's talk are not available, McClure's letter from Rome provides an outline of her lecture, which seems to have been on Currey's visit to Abyssinia.[109] Given Goad's and Currey's Fascist sympathies, a voluble protest from members of the Institute forced McClure to reprimand Goad for his lack of tact and to remind him that 'the British Institute is not, at this moment, the place for this particular activity.'[110] That the director of a private organisation could be instructed as to what was appropriate behaviour is telling of the highly visible position Goad occupied as director of a foreign cultural institute in Italy, and the extent to which he was seen as a representative of official British policy. Goad was aware of this, and as McClure notes, often referred to his position as being 'semi-official', which made his transgression in 1935 all the more open to criticism from detractors like Lina Waterfield, who had already complained of the pronounced Italian influence in the Institute.

The close relationship between the Institute and the British Council meant that the level of control the Council could wield over the everyday administration of the British Institute was considerable. In 1937, Janet Trevelyan offered a place on the Institute's London-based Governing Council to a person of the British Council's choosing, since 'it was felt that the British Council had already done so much for the Institute that it would be only fair to offer them the opportunity of influencing its policy.'[111] The Council of the Institute clearly felt that their interests and those of the British Council's were so closely aligned that the ceding of some of the Institute's

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[107] Rietzler, "Before the Cultural Cold Wars," 155.
[108] Harold E. Goad and Muriel Currey, *The Working of a Corporate State* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1934).
[109] Currey's trip to Abyssinia and the implications it had on British attitudes towards Fascism are discussed in the next chapter.
[110] William McClure to Goad, 18 February 1936, BRI:I:A:i:36:ff3-7, BIA, Florence.
[111] Trevelyan to Bridge, 12 January 1937, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.

autonomy was acceptable. Further, when Goad's original replacement as Director, Ronald Bottrall, resigned from the Institute suddenly in 1938 after having secured a higher paying post at a London college, Trevelyan and the Institute's Council rushed to find a replacement. On their own initiative, they decided that suitable candidates should be interviewed by a selection committee consisting of members from the Institute's Council, the British Council, and the Universities Bureau of the British Empire (an organisation that held information on the universities of the British empire), as had been the case with Bottrall's appointment.[112] Likewise, when Goad was invited to give a talk on Fascism in Italy on a BBC radio programme in 1937, he was sure to check with Bridge as to whether it would be acceptable to do so.

Even before the Council started to provide an official subsidy to the Institute in Florence, the News Department had been providing books and sending speakers to the city to provide lectures. In a draft letter to the Treasury on 1 January 1934, Leeper noted that the amount spent by the Department on cultural propaganda in 1932 had been around £600, out of which the Department managed to send the prominent scientists Joseph Barcroft and William Bragg to Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, whilst the poet laureate, John Masefield, had been dispatched to the British Institute to give a talk, which had proved a great success.[113] The choice of Masefield for Florence is telling of the associations made between the city and notions of high culture. Barcroft and Bragg, who had made significant scientific discoveries in physiology and physics, were sent to the growing economies of South America, where the British were facing a decline in trade, owing to the considerable financial difficulties of the post-war period.[114] Masefield was welcomed by Goad, who sought to establish the Institute at Florence as a centre of higher learning and as an outpost of British high culture.

By the late 1930s, however, Florence as a cultural centre was beginning to seem passé and inadequately equipped to handle the expansion of the British Council's work in Italy. Branch institutes in Milan and Rome were suggested by Goad as a means of reaching more pupils in the major Italian cities and the Council received the idea warmly. However, the British Coucil felt that there was a need to

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[112] Appointment of Director and Professor of English Literature and History, 1938, BW 40/4, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[113] Rex Leeper to Treasury,1 January 1934, FO 395/404 P 188/9/150, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[114] See Forrest Capie, "Invisible Barriers to Trade: Britain and Argentina in the 1920s," *Inter-American Economic Affairs* 35, no. 3 (1981): 91-96.

move away from Goad's influence in the setting up of these branch institutes. A man entirely under the British Council's control would have to be appointed for the job. Goad was tainted by his association with the Fascist party and political viewpoints that were increasingly becoming a liability for British diplomats in Italy. The British embassy in Rome recommended that Goad be allowed to step down from his role as Director, citing his continued presence in the post as untenable.[115] The running of the new branches was given to Ian Greenlees, a young scholar from Oxford who had obtained a First in Italian, and was well qualified to teach despite minimal experience. Full control of these Institutes was given to the British Council after the Second World War, and the Florence Institute allowed to function independently, as it still does.[116]

Conclusion

When the British Council was founded in late 1934, the British Institute of Florence had been carrying out its programme of cultural propaganda by educating Italians in the language, literature and history of Britain for sixteen years. Prompted by the efforts of other nations in spreading knowledge and awareness of their culture amongst Italians, and concerned that British prestige was at stake, the Institute's directors and its governing bodies, both in London and Florence, believed themselves to be fighting a battle for the attention and sympathy of Italian students. By educating teachers, they ensured that their ideas of British culture spread through local conduits to a wider audience of school students. Influenced by the imperial experience, they trusted that this knowledge would be beneficial to Italians.

Though there was debate within the Institute's Governing Board as to whether it should function more as an exclusive traditional British social club, or as a centre for cultural outreach amongst Italians, the latter stance was adopted, allowing it to distinguish itself on the strength of its academic programme. The social side of the Institute, nevertheless, was allowed to flourish, and the public lectures, as well as occasions such as the coronation of George VI, allowed the Anglo-Florentines to gather and reaffirm their shared loyalties.

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[115] E.M.B. Ingram to Bridge, 12 August 1937, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[116] Donaldson, *The British Council*: 35. According to Donaldson, the British Council ceased funding the British Institute in Florence after 1977.

The Institute at Florence is significant because of the role it played as a typical interwar centre for cultural propaganda, and because it was the result of an expatriate community's patriotic desire to share their culture with the local inhabitants of their adopted home. Furthermore, the Institute's curriculum was judged sound enough to be adopted as the model for other institutes opened by the British Council around the world. This specific idea of Britishness, developed outside of Britain and the empire, was taken international. Even though the British Council came to dictate Institute policy, it had allowed the Institute's model of teaching to influence its own plans. Located beyond the imperial periphery, the Institute in Florence had influenced the metropole.

Chapter 7
'None of it does any good to Italy!': Expansion, conflict, and the coming of war

In his annual report for the academic year of 1932–1933, Harold Goad highlighted the growing popularity of studying English amongst Italians, not just in the city of Florence, but in the rest of Italy as well. As proof of this heightened interest, he offered the growth of subscription numbers to the Institute's Italian-language bulletin of English studies and an increased number of students applying to be admitted to the Institute's Summer School programme, as well as those who wished to sit for the examinations that the Institute organised. As a result, it was becoming necessary to consider expansion in the form of branch institutes in major Italian cities. Goad remarked: 'It is becoming a matter of considerable urgency that the Institute, when funds permit, should have branches in other cities to prepare students for its examinations and to direct the study of English on more literary and scientific lines.' [1] Indeed, if the cultural mission of the Institute in Italy was to compete with the popularity of learning English for more base, business-related purposes, it was imperative that the Institute take charge of the teaching of English in other urban centres. Goad explained that 'if the Institute desires to promote the serious study of English all over Italy for the sake of its literature rather than its mere diffusion for commercial reasons, it is important that it should direct the course of the movement it has largely created.'[2]

Goad's tone evokes the image of a colonial missionary, poised to bring the Good News of British cultural salvation to the rest of Italy, in order to save it from the less altruistically-minded who would exploit the English language in order to conduct trade.[3] His plans for the establishment of branch institutes, or 'sprouts' as he liked to call them, won favour with the Institute's Governing Council and the British Council back in London, which assisted with funding. Over the next few years until 1940,

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[1] British Institute of Florence, *Annual Report 1932-1933*, 1933, (Florence: British Institute of Florence), 5-6.
[2] Ibid.
[3] See Catherine Hall's study of missionary Baptists, for example: Catherine Hall, *Civilising subjects: metropole and colony in the English imagination, 1830-1867* (Oxford: Polity, 2002), 93.

branch institutes were opened in Milan, Rome, Naples, Palermo and Genoa, all under the direct control of the British Council and its appointed director, Ian Greenlees. Indeed, the Council was careful to ensure that Goad did not retain any control over their administration, or curriculum.

The move to curb Goad's influence was mainly due to his pro-Fascist leanings, which were widely known to the Anglo-Florentine community as well as his superiors in London. This would prove a point of no small controversy in the turbulent 1930s, even provoking censure from the British embassy in Rome on one particular occasion. Yet it was because of Goad's sympathy for Fascism that the Institute was allowed to operate during the fraught period between 1934 to 1936, while the Italo-Abyssinian War wreaked considerable havoc on Anglo-Italian relations.

The tensions and relationships between Goad, the Institute's Governing Council in London, the British Council and consular authorities, in Rome and Florence shed considerable light on the paradoxes of the semi-official status the Institute possessed as a nominally independent cultural institution in a foreign country. Controversial episodes in the Institute's history, such as Goad's ill-timed decision to ask his fellow Fascist sympathiser Muriel Currey to speak at the Institute in 1935, and his contributions to various British fascist pamphlets, reveal the clashes between those who tried to dictate the ideological direction of the Institute's activities from London and the reality on the ground in Florence.

This chapter will show how competing demands on the British Institute – which was supposed to remain aloof from local politics, but at the same time had to maintain good relations with the Fascist government in order to stay open – could and often did cause conflict between Florence and London, and between Florence and Rome. Operating as an outpost of cultural propaganda in a foreign country brought with it particular political and social challenges and, given the less than friendly relations between Britain and Italy during the interwar period, the British Institute in Florence provides a good example of the methods employed and problems encountered in keeping such an institute functioning.

Expanding the Institute – tensions exposed

The first branch of the British Institute of Florence opened in Milan in 1936. Initially conducted in a room at the *pensione* of a former teacher from the Florence Institute, Isopel May, who had already managed to acquire several pupils who wished to learn English. Goad had been unable to get the Institute's London-based Governing Council to agree to this experiment, and so provided May's lodging and travel expenses out of his own pocket, until the British Council started to provide funds.[4] The Milan branch was followed in 1938 by the opening of a larger institute in Rome, and it was in Rome that the British Council saw the Institute's future. Until the disruption caused by the Second World War, the Council had planned to absorb each new branch institute into its own administration, while leaving the Florence Institute independent, as it had traditionally been.[5] Ultimately, however, this was effected only after the Second World War.[6]

The new director of the British Council's Institutes in Italy, Ian Greenlees, had earlier been recommended for the post of assistant director of the Florence Institute. He had been dropped in favour of Ronald Bottrall, an English master who had worked at Raffles College in Singapore. Bottrall had, however, ultimately returned to London before he could take over Goad's job. Greenlees was twenty-six when he assumed the post of director and possessed a youthful energy and vigour that made him eager to differentiate his institutes from the Florence Institute, especially in the case of Rome. As Greenlees himself remarked, when dismissing the British Council's recommendation of a teacher from the Florence Institute for the post of Director of Studies in Rome:

> I think it would be disastrous for someone so closely associated with the Florence Institute ... to be in charge of the scholastic side of the Rome Institute. The Rome Institute is already the largest and most important in Italy, and I am determined that it shall grow still further; but it will not develop if it is organised along the lines of the Florence Institute, which is rather exclusive and old-fashioned. We in Rome are teaching English both

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[4] Harold E. Goad, *History of the British Institute of Florence* (Florence: Giannini & Giovannelli, 1939), 30.

[5] Whilst there is no precise reason for this, Florence had always been considered independently from previous Anglo-Italian Institutes during the First World War, and this association likely carried over.

[6] Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: the firsty fifty years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), 35.

> to those who want a profound knowledge of [the] literature and civilisation of England and to those who merely want to learn the language for more practical purposes. Florence has never attempted to do the latter. Our Institute is run along modern lines, and should not be retarded by someone who is more accustomed to a different type of Institute.[7]

Greenlees was not opposed to the teaching of English for 'practical purposes' as compared with Goad's more high-minded approach that treated the commercial courses of the Florence Institute as being secondary to a higher mission. Greenlees would become the Florence Institute's fourth director in 1958, but his insistence on a completely fresh start for the Institute in Rome shows how detrimental and restrictive he found the association with Florence. Indeed, he was determined to embark on a project of expansion of branch institutes around Italy that would surpass Goad's in scale. This plan worried the Secretary-General of the British Council, Charles Bridge, who wrote to Goad's successor as director of the Florence Institute, Francis Toye, remarking with some concern that 'Greenlees wants to go ahead in Milan, Naples and other places, on rather a bigger scale than Goad had intended, that unfortunately there is a possibility that the money may not be available.'[8]

Despite worries about sufficient funding to support this expansion, by the time Italy declared war on Britain in the summer of 1940, Greenlees had opened further Institutes in Genoa, Palermo and Naples, bringing the total number of branch institutes up to five.[9] Further institutes were considered at Venice, Trieste and Turin before war with Italy made this impossible.[10] At the end of 1939, a British Council report observed that around 1300 pupils were enrolled at these branch Institutes, with the numbers in Rome with 600 students naturally the highest. These new Institutes were all placed under Greenlees' direct control and received funding provided by the

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[7] Ian Greenlees to Lord Lloyd, 24 January 1940, British Council files (BW) 40/9, The National Archives (UK): Public Record Office (TNA: PRO), Kew.

[8] Charles Bridge to Francis Toye, 3 July 1939, BW 40/9, TNA: PRO, Kew.

[9] 'Mr Everett's Report on his visit to Italy – November 30th – December 11th 1939', 1939, BW 40/226, TNA: PRO, Kew. No reason is given for the opening of the branches in Genoa, Palermo and Naples, but as all three are port cities, it would have been, ironically for Goad, to attract students who wanted to learn the language for trade. Genoa is also where the British Chambers of Commerce in Italy had their headquarters, with whom the Institute was already working closely.

[10] Percy Loraine to Viscount Halifax, 27 December 1939, BW 40/9, TNA: PRO, Kew.

Council to pay for British teachers.[11] The Council's funding to each Institute (including the original at Florence) is broken down in the table below:

British Council grants to Institutes in Italy for 1940/41.

Florence		
General Subsidy	£1,143	
Mr. Francis Toye [Director]	£600	Total: £1,743
Rome		
General Subsidy	£1,810	
Director's Salary	£800	
Librarian	£300	
Director of Studies	£400	
[Derek] Antona Traversi [Lecturer]	£325	Total: £3,635
Milan		
General Subsidy	£917	
Director's Salary	£600	
2 Assistant Teachers	£650	Total: £2,167
Naples		
General Subsidy	£917	
Assistant Teacher	£325	Total: £825
Palermo		
General Subsidy	£500	
3 Assistant Teachers	£975	Total: £1,475
Genoa		
General Subsidy	£400	
Assistant Teacher	£325	Total: £725
Palermo and Genoa		
Director (if Mr Greenlees is appointed)	£200	
		Grand Total: £10, 770

Table 3: British Council grants to Italy for 1940-1941, 1940, BW 40/9, TNA: PRO, Kew.

As can be seen, Rome already claimed the largest amount of funds, and although this is unsurprising, it is important that the Florence Institute was still receiving a significant level of funding, despite having its own private backers and subscribers. Indeed, despite the rising importance of Rome as a modernising force in the teaching of English, and the industrial power of Milan, Florence was still regarded as the most cultural city in Italy, and worthy of the Council's continued support. The projected amount to be spent on Institutes in Palermo and Genoa, reveal that the expansion of British Institutes in Italy had not been significantly impacted by anti-British sentiments found in Italian propaganda.

The Florence Institute's history in developing its programme of cultural propaganda through its curriculum, and British Council perceptions of Florence as a

[11] 'Mr Everett's Report on his visit to Italy – November 30th – December 11th 1939', 1939, BW 40/226, TNA: PRO, Kew, 4.

more cultural city than either Rome or Milan, also gave it a higher priority. An earlier report from the British embassy in 1938 typified the attitude that the Council and diplomatic service took when comparing Rome and Florence. Asked for the embassy's opinion on whether the British School at Rome, which had been established in 1901 to educate British students on Italian culture and archaeology, or the British Institute at Florence deserved higher priority in funding, William McClure of the press bureau at Rome was adamant:

> Our views ... are that of these two institutions the British Institute at Florence is far the more useful for the general purpose of spreading British culture in Italy. The Institute is quite a flourishing concern and wields considerable influence; moreover, its influence is directly used to spread knowledge of the English language and English literature among Italians, a function which the School never has and never could fulfil. Under the guidance of its Director it is attempting to establish contacts in other cities in Italy, and we have always regarded it as the centre of British cultural propaganda here. Despite the efforts of the Fascist Government, Florence is still far more the cultural capital of Italy than Rome .... In comparison with the work of the Institute, the part played by the British School in developing cultural relations is negligible.[12]

Indeed, an earlier letter from the embassy was frank about the inconsequential role of the British School in conducting cultural propaganda:

> Only by a stretch of the imagination can it be argued that the School furthers Anglo-Italian cultural relations .... It serves almost exclusively the needs of British art and archaeological students .... To our way of thinking its primary objects ... do not "promote a wide knowledge and appreciation of Great Britain and the English language abroad" .... it was never intended that the School should fulfil such a function instead of in a very indirect way.[13]

McClure's letter reveals not only the high regard with which the embassy held the Institute, but hints at the broader implications of its work and the potential for expanding its activities. What diplomatic purpose this could serve is not explicitly stated, but McClure and Goad were both obviously aware of the great benefit to Anglo-Italian relations the Institute provided, especially during periods of high tension such as the Abyssinian crisis. In a letter to Rex Leeper, Goad was keen to highlight how the Institute could help to win over more Italian hearts and minds:

> Above all it is the youth who are most bitter against us at present, and who must be converted, for Italians are constant to their spiritual attitude

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[12] William McClure to Rex Leeper, 15 January 1937, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[13] Eric Drummond to Rex Leeper, 4 November 1936, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.

> once they have decided on it. We must get hold of as many young Italian boys and girls as possible, and having once brought them up as friends of England, we can count on their friendship for life.[14]

Goad's tone reveals a quasi-missionary zeal in talking about young Italians being 'converted.' Presumably he meant conversion to a more pro-British point of view. This presents a quandary: Goad was often criticised for being too pro-Italian in his views, and yet this passage suggests his willingness for them to be brought around to British ways of thinking. Claudia Baldoli, in her study of Anglo-Italian Fascism, has grouped Goad among a number of British Italophiles, including Goad's long-time collaborator, Muriel Currey and the popular historian Charles Petrie, who were strong supporters of Mussolini, and who 'had no sense of superiority over the Italians, whose country they genuinely loved.'[15] It is hard to argue against Goad's love for Italy and its people, but to claim that he felt no sense of cultural superiority over them is open to contention, especially with sentiments such as those expressed in his letter to Leeper. What is more likely is that, taking his cue from ideas about the British civilising mission, Goad really did believe in the ultimate superiority of his native culture over that of the young Italians he sought to convert.

Greenlees was not the only one concerned about his new branches being tainted by an association with the Florence Institute. Resistance to the traditional Florentine curriculum and Goad's influence was to be found in Florence itself, where the local British consul, C.L. Wakefield-Harrey, was extremely anxious to report to the Foreign Office on the inadvisability of Goad being allowed to remain in charge of the Institute's expansion. As he explained in a lengthy letter to the Chairman of the British Council, Lord Lloyd of Dolobran:

> I have the authority to inform Your Lordship of the opinion of several of my colleagues on the Board that any system whereby the present director, if he were retained to advise regarding the branches, had any responsibility regarding the Institute itself, would be quite unworkable. The future director could not be expected to handle his task successfully unless he were solely responsible for the Institute to the Board.[16]

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[14] Goad to Leeper, 7 January 1937, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.

[15] Claudia Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism: Italian Fascists and Britain's Italians in the 1930s* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 109.

[16] Copy of a letter from C.O. Wakefield-Harrey to Lord Lloyd, 28 June 1938, Foreign Office files (FO) 395/576 P 2167/83/150, TNA: PRO, Kew.

In fact, Goad's term as director of the Institute, with his problematic pro-Fascist tendencies and a fondness for favouring Italian points of view, had garnered him many enemies on the Institute's local Governing Board, and Wakefield-Harrey was keen to point out that certain members of the Board (including himself) had opposed Goad's continuation as Director, even to the point of resigning:

> ...three members of the Board have informed me unequivocally that if there is no prospect of an early change in the directorship of the Institute by the beginning of next year, they will resign from the Board and sever their connection with the Institute .... I would also myself ask to be relieved of the chairmanship of the Finance Committee as I find myself unable to continue to work indefinitely in conditions which are intolerable and which have already alienated many others beside myself.[17]

Some officials at the Foreign Office were of the same opinion. Concerns about Goad's behaviour were raised when the idea of opening a branch of the Florence Institute in Rome was first suggested. The Foreign Office file reporting the suggestion provides insight not only into the tensions that existed within the Institute's governing circle, but also the difficulties involved in trying to trying to negotiate between the different local factions (pro- and anti- Goad) from London. The official records belie an impatience on both the British Council and Foreign Office's part in contending with the infighting in Florence. A memo by one Foreign Office official relates the impressions of both Wakefield-Harrey and Goad, complimentary about neither but distinctly more irritated by Goad:

> I have every sympathy with [Lord Lloyd]'s impatience at local squabbles and I personally find Wakefield Harrey a bore; but I must say that I find Goad an even greater bore and a tactless ass into the bargain. He is the sort of man one cannot help arguing with and makes one lose one's temper surprisingly quickly. I know that he has all sorts of virtues, but I should be very much happier if he were not so much in charge of our cultural propaganda in Italy. He sucks up to the Italians too much and splits the British colony in Florence into two bitterly opposed factions.[18]

This opinion was shared by the embassy in Rome, which was consulted by the Council as to how long Goad could be expected to carry on as director of the Florence Institute after his proposed replacement, Bottrall, had resigned earlier than expected.

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[17] Ibid. The Governing Board minutes for this period of the Institute's history suggest nothing particularly untoward, unfortunately.

[18] Foreign Office minute, 16 February 1939, FO 395/661 P 395/300/150, TNA: PRO, Kew.

Writing on behalf of the British ambassador, Sir Percy Loraine, E.M.B Ingram informed the Council's Secretary-General, Charles Bridge:

> We have of course felt for some time past that Goad had incurred too much criticism and too many enmities among the British Colony in Florence to make his indefinite continuance as Director desirable. We were disappointed by the way he handled things during the Abyssinian trouble and I'm afraid that even if he had had more right on his side than he had the mere fact that he succeeded in alienating so many of the British Colony detracts enormously from his usefulness.[19]

If nothing else, Goad seems to have been a polarising figure, making himself a good number of enemies, but gaining a few influential supporters as well, including Lord Lloyd, Charles Bridge, and Janet Trevelyan. His untiring work, however, did ensure that the Institute had expanded its operations in Italy by the time he resigned as director and that he had furthered his vision of gaining a 'cultured English public in Italy'.

The problems that were raised as part of Goad's plans for the opening of the branch Institutes also hint at deeper issues with his tenure as director, and the grievances will be examined in greater detail, as they reveal the conflicts within the British Institute and the position of the Institute as a semi-official representative of Britain in Florence. Goad's behaviour throughout the Abyssinian conflict provoked censure from diplomatic authorities and others, while at the same time ensuring that the Institute was able to continue its activities with minimal disruptions from the Fascist authorities. Indeed this paradox exemplifies the fragile middle ground that the Institute, and especially its director, had to tread between the Italian state and the obligations to its empire.

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[19] E.M.R. Ingram to Bridge, 12 August 1937, BW 40/2, TNA: PRO, Kew.

Conflict: Fascism and the British Institute

Chief amongst the complaints directed against Goad was that he was too strongly pro-Italian and supportive of the Fascist regime. This was the cause, as Ingram's letter points out, of the Institute's Governing Board being split into two factions and a reason for why his influence over the branch Institutes was controlled and, indeed, curtailed. As already mentioned, a particular bone of contention was his actions during the Abyssinian war. The British Institute was supposed to remain politically neutral. However, as Daniel Waley has pointed out, Goad was one of a number of British individuals who became voluble supporters of Fascism, who wrote to newspapers in praise of Mussolini's actions and who indeed contributed articles to Fascist funded newspapers.[20]

Apart from what is recorded in various British Institute records, British Council correspondence and his articles in British pro-Fascist newspapers such as the *British Italian Bulletin,* the details of Harold Elsdale Goad's life are sparse. Before becoming director in 1923, he had been teaching Italian at the University of London, served as a translator in Greece during the First World War, and had already been thinking about the establishment of British Institutes in other countries as early as 1920, according to a pamphlet he wrote, which took the Alliance Française as a possible model for a British 'National Society'.[21] Historians of Anglo-Italian Fascism such as Julie Gottlieb and Claudia Baldoli have referred to him as an Italophile who was supportive of Mussolini, but have not managed to uncover much more details about Goad's life.[22]

In 1934, Goad's book *The Working of a Corporate State* outlined for British readers the organisation of Mussolini's new Italy. Co-authored with Currey, the book described the Corporate State in utopian language as

> [assuming] that all men desire the good of their fellows and are willing to make sacrifices for the commonweal. Each individual is bound to contribute to the welfare of the nation according to his talents and opportunities, to counsel or criticize, but in no sense to oppose. The Corporate State condemns all selfishness, whether of a class, a group or

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[20] Daniel Waley, *British public opinion and the Abyssinian War, 1935-6* (London: Temple Smith, 1975), 128 -29.

[21] Goad, 'Scheme to establish a National Society on the lines of the Alliance Français', 1920, British Institute Collection (BRI), BRI:I:A:IV:1:ff6-11, British Institute Archives (BIA), Florence.

[22] Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism,* 107-108; Julie V. Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism: women in Britain's Fascist movement, 1923-1945* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 127.

> an individual; it asserts as its supreme law the old motto – "All for each and each for all." … The Corporate State provides for the largest possible measure of individual liberty consistent with national corporate harmony. It only intervenes when conflict hinders development.[23]

Reading these lines, one wonders if Goad and Currey were ignorant or in denial regarding the brutal wave of attacks by Fascist *squadristi* that plagued the Italian countryside during Mussolini's rise to power. Yet, Goad was deeply enamoured of the philosophical underpinnings of the movement. Already in 1929, he had produced a pamphlet explaining the 'essential principles' of Fascist thought, in which he claimed that, excepting 'many merely temporary and local accidents, [Fascism] may still prove to be the standard of salvation to her and yet greater lands.' He did not approve, however, of importing Italian Fascism to Britain wholesale. Unlike Oswald Mosley, Goad believed that 'the British people as a whole are infinitely more orderly and disciplined than the Italians and have justly a far greater respect for and confidence in the law.'[24] Instead, he made a suggestion, asking, 'Could not a National Party be created to carry out a strong policy, for the remedy of the terrible disease of unemployment, the expropriation and rebuilding of our ghastly slums, the revitalising of our almost moribund agriculture and the exploitation of our incomparable empire?'[25] Again, though Goad's enthusiasm for Fascism is evident, it is clear that he still held a strong belief in the superiority of the British over Italians.

Goad's support for Fascism and Mussolini were not unique. Fascism, as historians of interwar Britain have pointed out, represented a fresh alternative to what was seen as effete capitalism and the threatening spectre of Socialism. Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF), in particular, found a significant following in a disenchanted British public with its promises of reinvigorating British society, and garnered the support of the Italian Fascist party. As Gottlieb has pointed out, the movement also attracted women from the Suffragette movement enticed to join the BUF after they had been politically frustrated by the vicissitudes of Britain's post-war liberal democracy.[26] According to Baldoli, Mussolini received regular reports on the

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[23] Harold E. Goad and Muriel Currey, *The Working of a Corporate State* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1934), 13 -14.
[24] Harold E. Goad, *What is Fascism? An explanation of its essential principles* (Canterbury: Steven Books, 2006), 29, 25.
[25] Goad, *What is Fascism?*, 26.
[26] Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism*, 147 - 56. Of course, Feminists and other groups of Britons were strongly anti-Fascist as well. See Nigel Copsey and Andrzej Olechnowicz, eds.,

BUF's activities from the Italian ambassador in London, Dino Grandi.[27] British Italophiles like Goad, not all of whom happened to be fond of Mosley, were also active in writing to newspapers in support of Fascist Italy.[28] This became another point of controversy for Goad during the Abyssinian war, as his political leanings clashed with his supporter Janet Trevelyan's, much to her distress, and again raised questions as to the appropriateness of his actions as director of the British Institute.

Within government circles in Britain, too, the rise of the Fascist party in Italy was initially believed to be a good turn of events for the politically turbulent country. As P.G. Edwards has argued, throughout the 1920s, the Foreign Office saw the Fascists as staving off the growing threat of Bolshevism on the Continent, whilst bringing some kind of order to the Italian state, which was sorely lacking in efficacy under its liberal parliamentary democracy. As one official observed, Italian governments were 'either dictatorships or ineffectual.'[29] However, although Fascism was seen as beneficial for Italians, it was certainly not to be brought to Britain, which had no need of its authoritarian methods. In this aspect, both Goad and the Foreign Office were in agreement. Already in 1926, a venture to gather British residents in Italy into the Italian Legion of British Fascists had been suppressed by the Foreign Office, and Austen Chamberlain had declared emphatically that Fascism was 'not for export.'[30]

This sense of superiority over Italy led to the underestimation of Italian propaganda efforts when, in 1935, Britain's opposition to Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, and the subsequent imposition of sanctions by the League of Nations provoked a rash of Fascist anti-British propaganda, both in Italy and the Middle East, where it targeted disaffected Arabs in Britain's colonies.[31] Strangely, the Foreign Office's reaction was not to wage an open propaganda war, as they feared that radio broadcasts to Italy would have no effect. This traditional British reluctance towards propaganda

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Varieties of Anti-Fascism: Britain in the Inter-War Period (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[27] Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism*, 40 - 41.

[28] Waley, *British public opinion and the Abyssinian War*, 129.

[29] P.G. Edwards, "The Foreign Office and Fascism, 1924-1929," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 2 (1970): 153-61, 156.

[30] Edwards, "The Foreign Office and Fascism," 157.

[31] Massimiliano Fiore, *Anglo-Italian relations in the Middle East, 1922 - 1940* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

eventually caused no little trouble for British residents in Italy, even those supportive of the Italian cause, like Goad.

Fascism found strong support from British residents in Italy. Amongst the Anglo-Florentine community, Lina Waterfield's aunt, Janet Ross, welcomed the Fascist takeover after the paralysing strikes organised by the Socialists in the Tuscan countryside in 1922.[32] She was particularly fond of their physical intimidation of Socialist mayors in country towns, and described the ousting of the Socialist mayor at Fiesole with relish, remarking on the bravery of the

> Fascisti who took [the mayor] to the tram & told him to go to Florence & not to set foot in Fiesole again as he & his party had ruined the 'Comune'. It is a pity they did not give him a good beating. He deserves it.[33]

Ross died in 1927, before the Abyssinian war and the rise of anti-British sentiment amongst Italians. Ross' niece, however, had opposed Fascism since it first appeared. In her autobiography, Waterfield recounts the growing popularity of Mussolini amongst British expatriates she met in Italy, and recalled her own growing amazement when 'an official of the commercial department of the Embassy said to me after an early attempt on the life of Mussolini: "If he were to be killed, it would be like crucifying Christ all over again."'[34] Waterfield met Mussolini personally over the course of the next few years in her capacity as the Italian correspondent for *The Observer*, but made her own anti-Fascist views well known, to the point of falling out with her editor, J.L. Garvin,[35] whose paper, as Waley has noted, was vocally pro-Fascist.[36]

Given Goad's praise of the Fascist system, it is no small wonder that several high-ranking British diplomats, as well as members of the British Institute's two governing bodies – the London-based Governing Council and the Governing Board in Florence – were wary when Goad was invited to give a talk on Fascism by the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1937. The incident surrounding Goad's invitation to broadcast illustrates both attitudes towards Goad and his pro-Fascist standpoint, and concerns over the British Institute's position as a visible (though unofficial) presence

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[32] See Chapter 5.
[33] Janet Ross to Mary Berenson, 31 August 1922, Waterfield Collection (WAT) WAT:1:E:19:ff7-9, BIA, Florence.
[34] Lina Waterfield, *Castle in Italy: An Autobiography* (London: John Murray, 1961), 196.
[35] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 245.
[36] Waley, *British public opinion and the Abyssinian War*, 130.

in Italy. According to the BBC, the subject of this series of talks was to be 'national efficiency and individual liberty', with each speaker focusing on a particular country where efficiency had been effectively combined with a respect for private liberty.[37] However, Goad himself was unsure whether it would be suitable for him, as director of the Institute, to lecture. He wrote to the Institute's chairman, Sir Frederick Kenyon, and to Lord Lloyd at the British Council to seek their approval. He also wrote back to the BBC pointing out his worries and his enthusiasm to speak to the British public:

> As Director of the British Institute of Florence I naturally am expected to avoid political discussion, although according to our Charter I am instructed to afford opportunities for students of Anglo-Saxon nationality to study the philosophy and institutions of Italy, of which of course the Corporate State and the principles of political science that it involves are the most important.[38]

Significantly Goad cited his position as director of the Institute as a possible impediment to his participation, but at the same time relished the chance to take his mission of greater understanding between the two countries to a wider audience. The Council did not object to him giving his talk, with Bridge informing Goad:

> As far as the British Council and the Foreign Office are concerned, there is no objection whatever to your accepting the BBC's invitation. In Lord Lloyd's opinion there are few people who know Italy and can put the case for the Italians so well and more sympathetically than you, and from the Institute's point of view, this ought to be helpful.[39]

The embassy in Rome, also, saw no great harm in Goad's broadcast, noting that 'the opposition to [Goad] in Florence had in the main been factious and foolish, the work of people who could not forgive him for his Fascist sympathies, or who thought that the Institute ought to be an English club' but added a caveat that, should Goad continue with his talk, 'it would be a very good thing if his broadcasts were well "vetted" so that he should not, in his enthusiasm for Fascism, do more harm than good.'[40] In fact, the main objection to Goad's participation came from the Institute's Governing Council, with the chairman, Frederick Kenyon, also president of the British Academy, taking a dim view of the situation. As he wrote to Goad,

> I am very sorry to stand in the way of your doing what you should want to do, but I cannot help feeling that it would prejudice the Institute if the

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[37] Richard Machonochie to Goad, 24 September 1937, BW 40/3, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[38] Goad to Machonochie, 27 September 1937, BW 40/3, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[39] Bridge to Goad, 15 October 1937, BW 40/3, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[40] McClure to Bridge, 19 November 1937, BW 40/3, TNA: PRO, Kew.

> Director were to broadcast as the interpreter of Italian Fascist administration. You would naturally be expected, and would yourself personally wish, to emphasise the best points of Fascism; and (especially with an interviewer who will presumably play the part of *advocato diaboli*) you will instantly appear as the advocate of Fascism … it seems to me that this is an impossible position to be taken publicly by the Director of the British Institute, which is required to keep itself clear of politics, and which is supported by both Fascists and non-Fascists.[41]

In the end, Goad chose to heed his chairman's warning, and obeyed the instruction not to broadcast a talk.[42] However, the warning and prohibition on Goad's broadcasts reveal not only Kenyon's anxiety that Goad might be taken as an advocate of Fascism, but the special position the Institute occupied as an official British presence in Florence, and indeed in the rest of Italy. Even though the Institute functioned as a private organisation, distinct from the British Council, the attitude of both its governing body and the diplomatic service, was that the Institute maintained a semi-official position, not entirely under the control of the British government, but at the same time completely open to its direction. This again brings to mind the slippage between official and unofficial forms of interwar cultural diplomacy observed by Katharina Rietzler.[43]

The position Goad held entailed performing a fine balancing act between appeasing local tempers and making sure ties to Britain were kept strong. As Janet Trevelyan noted in a letter to the secretary of the Universities Bureau of the British Empire during the search for Goad's replacement:

> I fear the chief [criterion] in this case is one that we can hardly put into print - "a capacity for getting on with Italian Fascists while at the same time sticking up for your own country"! Our safest course will be to secure a scholar rather than a politician, but he must also have a certain capacity for business.[44]

In deference to Trevelyan's wishes, the Bureau promised that it would carefully vet the applicants for the position, and ensure that candidates with strong anti-Fascist views were excluded from the final selection.[45] Trevelyan did not need to

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[41] Frederick Kenyon to Goad, 2 October 1937, BRI:I:A:i:33:ff3-4, BIA, Florence.
[42] Annotated remark on the above correspondence.
[43] Katharina Rietzler, "Before the Cultural Cold Wars: American philanthropy and cultural diplomacy in the inter-war years," *Historical Research* 84, no. 223 (2011): 148-64, 151.
[44] Janet Penrose Trevelyan to W.B. Brander, 25 August 1937, BW 40/3, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[45] Brander to Trevelyan, 1 September 1936, BW 40/3, TNA: PRO, Kew.

worry: Goad's eventual successor, Francis Toye, who took over in 1939 was a former music critic for the British newspaper *The Morning Post*, as well as a teacher and author. He and his wife were ardent supporters of Mussolini. Waley notes that Nina Toye was a frequent letter writer to *The Morning Post* who praised Mussolini's actions, and that Toye himself was one of six signatories to a letter to *The Times* in 1935 which claimed that the Italian reasons for going to war with Abyssinia had not received enough attention in the British press.[46] In this way, the Institute selected a spiritual successor to Goad as well as an administrative replacement.[47]

Despite the controversy that his continued support for the regime might have caused amongst his fellow countrymen and women, Goad (and later Toye) was aware that his vocal support allowed the Institute to continue with its programme of expansion even after the damage dealt to Anglo-Italian ties during the Abyssinian war. To this end, Goad explained in a letter to the British consul in Florence accounting for his personal expenses that his subscription to the local newspaper produced by the Florentine *Fascio* (or local branch of the party), *Il Bargello*, which was not paid for by the Institute, was a political necessity.[48] As the director of a foreign institute in the city, he was also expected to be a member of the *calcio fiorentino*, an organisation that oversaw the annual historical football game (*calcio in costume*), a traditional sport redesigned by the Fascists to glorify the city's illustrious Renaissance past. Christopher Duggan has noted that events like *calcio in costume* or the Saracen joust in Arezzo were ultimately supposed to reinvigorate the Italian public and foster a sense of Fascist national identity.[49] It is interesting that the directors of the foreign institutions in Florence were asked to be part of the *calcio*, perhaps hinting at an attempt by the authorities to dilute foreign influence in the city.

Though the British Institute was a foreign institution in Florence, it was still bound by Italian laws and complied with them. This became an issue with the gradual exclusion of new Jewish pupils from all Institutes around Italy from 1939 onwards. Duggan has noted that the barring of Jewish students from Italian schools and other public institutions began with the strengthening of ties between Italy and Nazi

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[46] Waley, *British public opinion and the Abyssinian War*, 130.

[47] As will be seen in the next chapter, like his predecessor, Toye's association with Fascism would later become a liability to his wartime work.

[48] Goad to Wakefield-Harrey, 22 January 1935, BRI:I:A:V:2:ff1-4, BIA, Florence.

[49] Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: a history of Italy since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 492.

Germany, not long after the end of the Abyssinian war. Jews were increasingly persecuted from 1938 onwards, with many losing employment and being subjected to strict racial segregation.[50] In the 1939 British Council report on the Institutes in Italy, the cessation of admitting new Jewish students was justified through the following reasoning: 'Not only would the admittance of Jews to the Institute give the Italian Government a pretext to interrupt the activities of the Institute; it would also discourage the Italians from enrolling, getting into trouble with the authorities.'[51] Given the troubles the Institute had faced – a drop in student numbers due to the anti-British sentiment caused by the Abyssinian war and the precarious nature of their fledgling branch Institutes – it is unsurprising that they complied with the Fascist directive to prevent Jewish students from attending the Institute's courses. Separate classes for Jewish students were, however, held at Milan, as there was sufficient demand– as well as a willingness by the Institute's teachers to teach – in that city for lessons to continue, a situation the British Council saw as a compromise, stressing that the problem 'was not of a serious nature.'[52]

That the Institute in Florence was able to maintain cordial relations with the Fascist government is evidenced by the fact that even in the last few months before Italy declared war on the Allies, the opening of the Roman branch of the Institute on 1 December 1939 could still boast the attendance of a representative from the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs. The British Ambassador in Rome, Sir Percy Loraine, wrote to Viscount Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, describing the occasion:

> The attitude of the Italian Government to the British Council's activities has been sympathetic, though cautious. It was noticeable that, apart from a representative of the Minister for Foreign Affairs (Count Vitetti), none of the other members of the Italian Government who had been invited to the inauguration of the Rome Institute attended themselves or sent representatives .... Count Vitetti ... mentioned ... that the speeches made by myself and Lord Lloyd, which had been framed with the object of emphasising the cultural and educational mission of the Institutes, has [*sic*] sounded the right note; from which I infer that the Italian authorities would find it embarrassing if the Institute were invested with any openly propagandist character.[53]

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[50] Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 513 - 14.

[51] 'Mr Everett's Report on his visit to Italy – November 30th – December 11th 1939', 1939, BW 40/226, TNA: PRO, Kew, 5.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Percy Loraine to Edward Wood, 27 December 1939,BW 40/9, TNA: PRO, Kew. The underlined words are an annotation on the copy received by the British Council.

Loraine's reference to 'open propaganda' hints at the growing differences between Britain and Italy, which had moved towards an alliance with Germany after the events in Abyssinia had effectively alienated Italy from other members of the League of Nations. Indeed the consequences of Italy's colonial war in Abyssinia had significant repercussions, not only on Anglo-Italian relations, but also within the British Institute itself, as pro- and anti-Fascist members clamoured to have their say. A deeper analysis of the war in Ethiopia and its subsequent effects illustrates the conflict between the parties, in London and Florence, in defining a clear role for the Institute and its diplomatic position.

The Italo-Abyssinian War and the British Institute

The roots of the Abyssinian conflict stem from Italy's ambition to be a grand colonial power, much like Britain or France. The humiliation suffered by Italy at the Paris Peace Conference, the army's defeat by Ethiopian troops at the Battle of Adowa in 1896, and her glorious Roman past were all used by Mussolini in an effort to drum up support amongst the Italian public for a war against the Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie. Italy needed more land in order to expand, Mussolini proclaimed. It was important that the famous mutilated victory of 1919 be avenged and Italy's empire secured.[54] Indeed the invasion of Abyssinia was part of the Fascist ambition to expand Italy's empire in the Middle East and Africa, though maintaining it was not without its problems. Uprisings in the Italian-held colonies of Libya and Somalia had resulted in the armed suppression of native rebellion by Italian troops. Duggan recounts one occasion, for example, when two hundred Somalis were hunted down and killed by Italian *squadristi* after they had tried to protest against being forced to labour on Italian-owned banana plantations. In Libya, the brutal consolidation of power and the establishment of Italian rule over the country alienated the majority of the native population, especially after the leader of the Libyan rebellion, Omar el Mukhtar, was executed for treason in front of a crowd of supporters numbering about 20,000.

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[54] On this myth and the Italian historiography of its empire, see Jacqueline Andall and Derek Duncan, "Memories and Legacies of Italian Colonialism," in *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory*, ed. Jacqueline Andall and Derek Duncan (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005),9-28, 11-12; Angelo Del Boca, "The Myths, Suppressions, and Defaults of Italian Colonialism," in *A Place in the Sun: Africa in Italian Colonial Culture from Post-Unification to the Present*, ed. Patrizia Palumbo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003),17-36.

Mukhtar became a martyr for many Arabs, both in Libya and around the Middle East and his death still remains a controversial affair in Italy today.[55]

Like Libya, Ethiopia was portrayed as a barbaric, uncivilised country, where slavery was still practised and the Italian invasion of 1935 was to be a liberating force. Indeed Italian propaganda styled the war as a means by which the Italian people would finally shake off the languor suffered under effete liberalism and finally take their place as a world power. The Ethiopian army was desperately under-equipped to defend itself properly against the invading Italian force, which over the course of the war – although Ethiopia never officially surrendered, Italian occupation of the country was virtually complete by late 1936 – cost the Italian government 40 billion *lire*, approximately one year of the nation's entire income.[56]

In Britain, the invasion of Abyssinia was opposed by a majority of the population as being contrary to the basic principles of the League of Nations, of which Italy was a member. The League of Nations Union, an unofficial organisation devoted to promoting the League's cause, conducted an organised, coherent campaign denouncing Italy's actions by lobbying British MPs and organising protest meetings.[57] In November 1935, the League itself imposed economic sanctions on Italy, a move widely supported in Britain,[58] which would cause no little trouble in Florence, where Goad felt its effects almost immediately. In a letter to Bridge, he describes the atmosphere in the city and adds his own disappointment in both the League and in Britain's own actions:

> Today is the first day of the sanctions, and the flags are out in the street as a symbol of aggrieved defiance of the economic state of siege in which this country finds herself against those whom she wished to regard as friends. However, the League of Nations will not have it so, and unfortunately England in particular comes in for the brunt of this tacit and courteous hostility. The Institute is endeavouring to carry on just the same.[59]

Goad's pro-Fascist views naturally cast Italy in the role of the wronged party, despite the fact that the Italian army made use of mustard gas in its attacks against Ethiopian civilians as well as soldiers, an act widely condemned in Britain but that has only

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[55] Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 493-98.
[56] Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 507.
[57] Waley, *British public opinion and the Abyssinian War*, 91.
[58] Waley, *British public opinion and the Abyssinian War*, 81.
[59] Goad to Bridge, 18 November 1935, BRI:I:A:I:3:ff1-2, BIA, Florence.

recently been admitted by Italian officials at the Ministry of Defence.[60] Waley has observed that Goad was a frequent contributor to British newspapers on the subject of the Abyssinian conflict. Goad constantly cited Italy's lack of land as a reason for why she had gone to war. Britain, he claimed, was to blame for Italy's current actions, since British colonial enterprises had left few territories for the Italians to claim. Another common theme in Goad's writing was, unsurprisingly, Britain's cultural debt to Italy.[61]

After letting many of Goad's articles pass without comment, the Institute's governing council in London finally took issue with an article in 1935 that appeared in *The British Italian Bulletin*, in which Goad had been identified as director of the Institute. The article riled Trevelyan and the chairman of the Institute, Sir James Rennell Rodd, former ambassador to Italy. In Trevelyan's testy and frustrated letter to Goad just after the publication, the article itself is not discussed in any great detail, indeed there is no mention of its title, making it difficult to trace. [62] It apparently related the terms of the much-reviled Hoare-Laval pact (named after the British Foreign Secretary and the French Prime Minister who drafted it), in which Britain and France were prepared to concede territories in Abyssinia to Italy in order to appease Mussolini, a pact that was never ratified because of hostile public reaction when the details were leaked. The revelation was enough to force the resignation of Samuel Hoare and Pierre Laval, and dealt a clear blow to Goad's hopes that Italy's colonial claims would be acknowledged and accepted by its European neighbours. Shortly after his resignation at the end of 1935, Hoare sent a personal letter to Goad, thanking him for his support, remarking that 'it is worth going through these times of trial as it has shown me how many good friends I have.'[63] Trevelyan's letter reveals that she considered Goad's article clearly unacceptable. She admonished Goad for his folly and reminded him that he ought to have known better:

> I wonder what it is that seems to drive you into taking part with groups of people like these – Ezra Pound, of all the fifth-rate self-advertisers … to produce a thing of this sort which I am sure you would admit, if we could only talk about it, could not possibly cut any ice … and there you are

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[60] Alberto Sbacchi, "Poison Gas and Atrocities in the Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-1936)," in *Italian Colonialism*, ed. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005),47-56, 52-53.

[61] Waley, *British public opinion and the Abyssinian War*, 129.

[62] Trevelyan to Goad, 2 January 1936, BRI:I:A:i:47:f4, BIA, Florence.

[63] Samuel Hoare to Goad, 7 January 1936, BRI:I:A:i:32:f1(2), BIA, Florence.

> among that crew, as Director of the British Institute of Florence. My dear friend, do think of the harm it may do to the Institute, with its University supporters and all![64]

Not for the first time had Goad courted controversy, but what was different about this particular occasion was that Goad's name and position as director had been attached to a Fascist-funded publication. Trevelyan brought up a previous protest from one of the Institute's subscribers, when she had defended Goad, but could find no justification to do so this time:

> I don't see how I am going to lecture anyone if they write and protest about this, because as you know I detest all subsidised propaganda. And none of it does any good to Italy! That is the melancholy thing, and the thing that I thought you were almost inclined to believe when we talked about it that day. Do please believe it quite, and relieve all our minds![65]

Goad later annotated the letter, protesting that his original article had been published in August 1935 (before the proposals put forward by the Hoare-Laval pact in December that year) for a magazine, *Peace*, of which nothing else can be traced. Goad did manage to put his views about the controversy in a document, presumably addressed to the Institute's Governing Council. The document hints that he had run into trouble with the embassy in Rome as well as with his superiors in the Institute. It contains the explanation that the piece in the *British-Italian Bulletin* was:

> A brief extract from an article explaining the present Italian need for colonial expansion in order to obtain overseas markets and raw materials, a need which had already been acknowledged by the British Foreign Secretary at Geneva.[66]

Goad further pointed out that the article had not been written expressly for the *British-Italian Bulletin*, but was 'quoted in it without my knowledge or permission .... On my insistence the Editor of that periodical in a subsequent issue acknowledged and apologised for his plagiarism.'[67] He also asserted:

> In teaching the history of the formation of the British Empire, it is difficult to avoid any exaltation of the ideals of British Imperialism ... and in helping English-speaking students to study Italian institutions it is hard to see how an explanation of the principles of the Corporate State can be avoided; and when these matters have become ... a special subject, how is

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[64] Trevelyan to Goad, 2 January 1936, BRI:I:A:i:47:f4, BIA, Florence.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Goad, untitled document, 1936, BRI:I:A:I:17:ff9-10, BIA, Florence.
[67] Ibid.

> it possible to avoid answering serious enquiries? What are the limits to my academic freedom to make public the results of my studies?[68]

In Goad's protests can be seen the physical and ideological difference separating Florence and London. His letter also reveals conflicting ideas as to what the role of the director of the Institute should be. Not for the first time did Goad's position as director and the political implications it carried become a point of conflict. Indeed, Goad's multiple political missteps during the period of sanctions against Italy by the League of Nations provided potent ammunition for his detractors and most certainly contributed to the curtailing of his influence in helping to set up the branches of the Institute.

Despite Goad's justifications, the incident proved worrying enough to warrant an official letter of censure from London. This letter is lost, but Trevelyan sent along a more personal message to Goad, apologising for it. As she wrote:

> You will have realised from my previous [letter] that the situation is really serious. Miss [Sydney Renée] Courtauld's letter raised the whole question of the Director's practice of writing to the Press on controversial subjects … The practice here is so deep-rooted that heads of institutions should not write to the press. I blame myself that I did not put that aspect of it more strongly to you … instead of emphasising the uselessness of propaganda…[69]

Goad raised the question of what was expected of the head of an institution basically dedicated to cultural propaganda in a letter sent to Trevelyan shortly after her initial reprimand. Even though, he wrote, he was meant to teach Italian students about British culture and history, it was part of his Institute's charter to facilitate the study of modern Italy amongst British students by providing them with information about the Fascist state. He argued,

> According to the Charter the British Institute exists to promote Britain-Italian [*sic*] friendship and to supply information to Italian students in English literature, language, philosophy and institutions, and to British students in Italian literature, language, philosophy and institutions.[70]

Goad developed this theme further in a later letter to Trevelyan in which he addressed the accusation that he was acting as a propagandist for Italy:

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Trevelyan to Goad, 29 February 1936, BRI:I:A:i:47:ff9-10,BIA, Florence.
[70] Goad to Trevelyan, 2 March 1936, BRI:I:A:I:17:ff6-8, BIA, Florence.

> When people say I am a "propagandist", that of course I am this officially, for the Institute exists to do British propaganda among Italians and Italian propaganda among English-speaking people.[71]

It is hard to take Goad at his word. The British Council, for instance, would not have funded an organisation that claimed to conduct Italian propaganda amongst Britons. That aspect was already being handled by the propaganda agencies set up by the Italian authorities in London, under Grandi's direction. Waley observes that from November 1935 to May 1936, the equivalent of £14,600 was spent on propaganda by the Italian embassy there. The Centro di Distribuzione (Distribution Centre) was disguised as part of the Società Dante Alighieri and received £50 a week from the embassy.[72] The *British Italian Bulletin* was a product of the Italian propaganda effort, an English supplement to *Italia Nostra*, the newspaper of the Italian community in London. Writers such as Ezra Pound and the Toyes, along with Goad and the historian Luigi Villari, wrote at length to sympathetic newspapers such as the *Observer* on the need for Italian colonial expansion. They also highlighted the supposed barbarity of the Ethiopians against their own people, often in graphic detail, which led to complaints in British newspapers that Italian propaganda was offensive and simplistic. However, these Italian propaganda efforts did not prove effective in convincing the British public that Italy had a just cause for going to war in Abyssinia.[73]

It is interesting to read that Goad saw himself as conducting Italian propaganda amongst Britons, as the Institute had only recently begun to offer Italian-language courses, and then only on a casual basis for travellers to Florence. No record exists of a steady influx of British travellers coming to the Institute to explicitly learn abut Fascism, nor was there any real demand for such information amongst Britons. Most had already made up their minds about Fascism by 1936. Waley points out that a poll conducted by *The New Statesman* had 83.3% of its readers opposed to Italian action in Abyssinia, and argues that compared to supporters of the League of Nations, Britons with pro-Fascist views had a harder time making an impact on the British public. [74]

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[71] Goad to Trevelyan 4 March 1936, BRI:I:A:I:18:ff1-3,BIA, Florence.
[72] Waley, *British public opinion and the Abyssinian War*, 117.
[73] Waley, *British public opinion and the Abyssinian War*, 131.
[74] Waley, *British public opinion and the Abyssinian War*, 73.

Trevelyan's initial letter to Goad and his subsequent replies raise the issue of Goad's name being tied to official Italian propaganda. As Massmiliano Fiore has shown, the Abyssinian war produced a new type of Italian propaganda, one explicitly anti-British and prepared to use blatantly false statistics. The Italians also used the new broadcasting technology of the wireless transmitter to spread its message to Italians and the peoples of the Middle East.[75] That Goad regarded himself as a propagandist for the Italian cause, when official propaganda had turned violently anti-British, seems like a display of passion more than an actual statement of fact. Indeed, Fascist propaganda would impact negatively on the operations of the Institute, and led to a drop in student enrolments during the years of the conflict.

Fiore's study of Fascist propaganda in the Middle East has argued that until the summer of 1935, Italian propaganda was mostly pro-Italian, instead of being anti-British. This was largely because of reasons of practicality: Italy had no political or strategic reasons to antagonise Britain, the predominant power in the Middle East. Despite Anglo-Italian tensions over territories in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, therefore, relations between the two nations remained strained but civil.[76] This changed when Mussolini decided to invade Ethiopia and incorporate it into the new Fascist empire. Fiore argues that Italy's plans for invasion, and British opposition, made the tone of Italian propaganda turn from one designed to garner sympathy for Italy, to encouraging outright hatred of Britain. With much of the Middle East under British colonial rule, this was not an especially difficult task, particularly in Palestine and Egypt, both important strategic territories with strong undercurrents of anti-British sentiment.[77]

The Italians set up Radio Bari, a radio station for the Middle East, which was designed to reach a wide Arabic audience through its programmes of Arabic music and political commentary. Operating from 1935 to 1938, it played a significant role in spreading anti-British sentiment, and fuelled the anxiety of Foreign Office officials and private citizens concerned at the virulent anti-British sentiment. Broadcasting from Bari in southern Italy, the station was especially popular with Arabs living in rural areas, and mixed entertainment with politics. Radio Bari broadcasts focused on promoting the image of the British as being anti-Islamic, with an antiquated navy and

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[75] Fiore, *Anglo-Italian relations in the Middle East*, 35.
[76] Fiore, *Anglo-Italian relations in the Middle East*, 204.
[77] Fiore, *Anglo-Italian relations in the Middle East*, 36.

a decadent society.[78] Italy was portrayed as being sympathetic to the struggles of the Arabs living under French and British colonial rule in territories such as Syria, Lebanon and Egypt for independence.[79] Indeed, Mussolini was portrayed as a defender of the Muslim faith, an image bolstered in 1937 when the Duce was proclaimed the Protector of Islam and received the Sword of Islam during an official visit to Libya.[80] As Fiore points out, the problem with Italian propaganda in the Middle East was that, while it was not hard to convince Arabs to become anti-British, it was harder to convince them that Mussolini had their genuine interests at heart when he was bent on the colonial conquest of Abyssinia.[81]

Within Italy itself, Fascist propaganda began to break down the notion of the traditional Anglo-Italian friendship, claiming that no such link had ever existed. Baldoli points out that from 1935 onwards, Italian propagandists instead began to speak of Britain as a traditional enemy. British aid in the Risorgimento was motivated not by true friendship, they claimed, but by cynical opportunism and greed.[82] British society was decadent and aging, in contrast to Italy's vigorous and virile population. The newly resurgent Italian empire was being held back by British selfishness and would be defeated easily by Italy's superior military. The British were also to blame for Italy's humiliation at the Paris Peace Conference, where they had refused to recognise Italian claims to territories in Trieste, Fiume, the South Tyrol, Trentino, and northern Dalmatia. British colonialism in Africa, unsurprisingly, was presented as being inherently exploitative and unjust, whilst Italian colonialism was based on justice and sound Fascist principles.[83] Seemingly unaware of the irony in their statements, Italian propagandists wrote that any claims that the British empire was

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[78] Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British overseas publicity and propaganda 1919 - 1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 139.

[79] Manuela Williams, *Mussolini's propaganda abroad: Subversion in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 1935-1940* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 110-12.

[80] On the visit and the Sword of Islam, see Fiore, *Anglo-Italian relations in the Middle East*: 50; Williams, *Mussolini's propaganda abroad: Subversion in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 1935-1940*: 109-16; John L. Wright, "Mussolini, Libya, and the Sword of Islam," in *Italian Colonialism*, ed. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005),121-30, 123-24.

[81] Fiore, *Anglo-Italian relations in the Middle East*, 36.

[82] Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism*, 112.

[83] Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism*, 112 -15.

anything like ancient Rome were a product of British delusions and official propaganda.[84]

Paradoxically, but in keeping with the character of British interwar propaganda efforts, the British response to the Italian propaganda campaign was late in coming, despite the new Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden's growing alarm at the persistent spread of Italian propaganda. As Philip M. Taylor has noted, Eden's proposal to set up a broadcasting service in languages other than English as part of the BBC was only taken up in 1937.[85] Britain was the only Great Power not to have a foreign language service until the late 1930s. Furthermore, when the BBC's Arabic service was finally launched in January 1938 (a full three years after Radio Bari had begun to broadcast), it failed to achieve the same kind of resonance with its listeners. The BBC reports only provided the bare details of news stories, as it was committed to producing factually based content, unlike its rival, in keeping with the official practice of most British propaganda.[86]

In Italy, the Foreign Office preferred to combat the wave of anti-British propaganda by emphasising the importance of not antagonising Mussolini, but reminding the Italian public of the significance of the traditional Anglo-Italian friendship and Britain's continuing status as a Great Power. A memorandum from the embassy in Rome regarding British publicity in the country highlighted the need to

> remind Italy that Powers which are strong in their manhood, proud of their traditions and their race, especially such as the United Kingdom which has never refused reasonable discussion, are bound to stiffen under demands made on them or threats directed against them; and point out that while we recognise the new spirit that has come alive in Italy, we can ask her to remember that the old spirit of Britain ... is very far from dead .... Insist that it is not in the nature of Englishmen to harbour revengeful feelings.[87]

Anglo-Italian relations were felt to be so precarious that in late 1939 Loraine was anxious to alert the Foreign Office to the dangers of criticising Mussolini too harshly in the British press. Pleading that the diplomatic work of the last few years was at stake, Loraine begged Halifax for harsher censorship of British newspapers:

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[84] Denis Mack Smith, "Anti-British propaganda in Fascist Italy," in *Inghilterra e Italia nel '900* (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1973), 87-117, 90.
[85] Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, 193 - 95.
[86] Fiore, *Anglo-Italian relations in the Middle East*, 85.
[87] Percy Loraine to Viscount Halifax, 27 July 1939, FO 395/661 P 3551/300/150, TNA: PRO, Kew.

> I renew this plea with all the earnestness at my command. A continuance of such [anti-Fascist] comment is perfectly capable of wrecking everything we have been trying to do here, in the very difficult and delicate circumstances with which your Lordship is familiar.[88]

The reply from the Foreign Office was not reassuring. They were doing as much as they could, but even pro-Fascist newspapers were conscious of the fact that Mussolini's obligations to the Axis alliance had to be remembered.[89]

Despite claims by Denis Mack Smith as to the ultimate impossibility of knowing exactly what were the effects of anti-British propaganda on the wider Italian public, there are indications that the tactics employed by Italian propagandists in drumming up anti-British sentiment were effective on some Italians,[90] especially against visible symbols of British culture such as the British Institutes around the country. Just before the closure of all the Institutes in Italy, Greenlees observed in a letter:

> Demonstrations of pathetically young schoolchildren have been organised throughout Italy and some of these demonstrations have taken place in the different Institutes. The Institutes of Palermo, Milan, Genoa and Florence have all been singled out for the honour of such demonstrations.[91]

Greenlees also noted that the demonstrations at Genoa and Florence were, however, generally milder than those at Palermo, where the directors of the Institute had to hang out an Italian flag to mollify protestors. In Milan, '30 students (not ours) invaded the Institute last night, tore down the pictures of the [British] King and Queen, smashed the telephone and stole an engraving.'[92] In the light of such protests, Greenlees advised the cessation of all further attempts at expanding the Institutes' activities. This would soon prove a moot point when Italy declared war and the Institutes were shut down in May 1940.

Considering these developments, and the virulence of Italian anti-British propaganda, it is unsurprising that a faux pas by Goad at a particularly sensitive period earned him the official reprimand of the embassy. In the summer of 1935, he invited Currey, well known as a supporter of Mussolini and a member of Oswald

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[88] Loraine to Halifax, 28 August 1939, FO 395/666 P 3686/3686/150, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[89] Foreign Office to Loraine, 28 August 1939, FO 395/666 P 3686/3686/150, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[90] Mack Smith, "Anti-British propaganda in Fascist Italy," 117.
[91] Greenlees to Everett, 16 May 1940, BW 40/9, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[92] Ibid.

Mosley's British Union of Fascists, to give a talk at the British Institute on her experience of travelling through Abyssinia. Sadly, the details of her talk are not available, but considering that Currey was already on record that Italian action represented a 'wonderful colonisation' in Ethiopia, it is more than likely that the lecture included some mention of the great civilisation that the Italians were bringing to the country, influenced by the general tone of Italian propaganda.[93] William McClure's official letter of censure to Goad contained the observation that

> I know that Miss Currey's address was not political, and I believe that no exception could be taken to it .... I gather that it would have been an excellent address for her to give in England, although no doubt some people would say of course she had been spoon-fed. That doesn't matter.[94]

The British Institute in Florence was plainly not the appropriate venue for such a talk. McClure further explained that he knew Goad had his detractors, and was finding it hard to keep up the numbers of student enrolments, but

> Might not the wisest line be to stick even more closely, in present circumstances, to the purely educational side of the Institute, avoiding any suspicions of propaganda? ... Personally I would rather lose still more [student enrolments] than gain a little through "sops" such as Miss Currey's address. Thirty extra pupils are not, I think, worth the price. Non tali auxilio[Not with such allies]![95]

The more important issue was Goad's behaviour as director in allowing the talk even to take place. This part of McClure's letter is even more illuminating, as it reveals the position which Goad occupied as the director of a British cultural organisation in Florence, what was expected of him, and how the British Institute straddled the boundaries between the official and private spheres of British diplomacy. Taking issue with Goad's failure to meet the British ambassador on a previous visit to Rome, McClure wrote:

> I wish you could have made a point of seeing the Ambassador when you were last here. I think it was very important for you to do so. He is a member of the council of the Institute ... in writing to me on November 13th you emphasised the importance of your keeping in close touch with the Embassy, while in yours of November 23rd, enclosing the memorandum you drew up for your own guidance, you rightly refer to your "semi-official position", and on more than one occasion you have

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[93] Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism,* 111.
[94] William McClure to Goad, 18 February 1936, BRI:I:A:i:36:ff3-7, BIA, Florence.
[95] Ibid.

> said you want "counsel and guidance". That's one reason why we are upset. [96]

Goad was not simply answerable to his superiors in London and the governing board in Florence. The Institute also had ties to the British Council and the British embassy. Engaged in the work of spreading British culture abroad, the Institute was regulated by official direction (and funding) on cultural propaganda and instructions from the diplomatic service.

The distance between London and Florence, and even between Rome and Florence, meant that even with faster means of communication and travel at their disposal, the directors of the Institute had considerable freedom to act on their own initiative, which inevitably led to much controversy on Goad's part, but which arguably allowed the Institute to survive amidst a torrent of anti-British propaganda. Despite Goad's pro-Fascist sentiments, he too was prevented from letting his politics influence the way in which he ran the Institute by the various factions in Florence. Even if this sometimes happened, as seen above, he was quickly reprimanded by his superiors and detractors. They held the opinion that he pandered too much to the Italian point of view and were anxious to curb his influence.

The expansion of the Institute's activities, as well as the heightened tension between Britain and Italy, are significant milestones in the Institute's history, as they reveal the divisions within the Institute's governing bodies, and the extent to which the Institute could be controlled by the government, despite its claims of independence. Goad's successor, Toye, seems to have faced fewer difficulties, although the onset of war meant that his initial term at the Institute was inevitably cut short, but not before he managed to organise a music festival with the municipal authorities in early May 1940.[97] On 29 May, the Institute was closed, and Toye was forced to flee to France in June, eventually returning to Britain in July. All of the Institute's British teachers were repatriated and the Palazzo Antinori placed under the care of the American embassy in Rome.[98]

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Francis Toye to Michael Everett, 19 February 1940, BW 40/5, TNA: PRO, Kew.

[98] As Toye had to flee Florence, details relating to this period in time at the Institute are, unfortunately, scant. What follows in the conclusion of this thesis provides a short narrative of his journey.

Conclusion

The expansion of the British Institute of Florence was a mark of its popularity with the Italian people, though it did not come without a great deal of controversy. Despite shunning the more lucrative opportunities of teaching English for purely commercial reasons, Harold Goad concentrated on educating Italians about the cultural history and literature of Britain. The move to open branch Institutes around Italy, however, uncovered old tensions within the Institute's governing body, exposing not only differences between factions in the Institute, but also the nebulous position that the Institute occupied in Anglo-Italian diplomacy. The Florentine curriculum was felt to be too outdated and traditional, and its refusal to acknowledge the importance of teaching practical English was considered by the British Council to be detrimental to the development of more modern British Institutes in Italy.

Another concern was Goad's relationship with the Fascist authorities. Whilst Goad's pro-Fascist ideas helped the Institute to stay open during a fraught period in Anglo-Italian relations, it was also deeply problematic, to those within the Institute itself, and to official British diplomats, who took a dim view of his promotion of the Italian point of view over British policy. By the time of the Abyssinian war in 1935, Goad's pro-Fascist views had become a dangerous liability to the Institute's reputation as a politically neutral organisation, and a semi-official British presence in Florence. It was impossible for Goad to continue in his role as director, and he was eventually replaced by Francis Toye.

The controversies related to the running of the branch Institutes, and Goad's last few years as director of the British Institute highlight the difficulties involved in running a cultural institute in a foreign country. Torn between loyalty to the Empire and the need to placate Italian tempers on the ground, the directors of the Institute realised they could not afford to antagonise the Fascist authorities. They were also constantly reminded of their duty in conducting cultural propaganda for Britain, and of the proper behaviour expected of them as directors. For all its claims of independence, the British Institute remained subject to official direction, illustrating the close bonds between official diplomatic policy and private institutions. Furthermore, the difficulties encountered by Goad are symptomatic not only of the uneasy political and diplomatic situation in the years leading up to the Second World War, and demonstrate how distance continued to hamper the proper flow of communication between London and Florence. As the Second World War loomed,

the British Institute of Florence found that its balancing act was ultimately doomed to failure.

Conclusion
Tea after Mussolini? The British Institute and the end of the Second World War

> "Now it is all dark. Now Beauty and Passion seem never to have existed. I know. But remember the mountains over Florence and the view. Ah, dear, if I were George, and gave you one kiss, it would make you brave. You have to go cold into a battle that needs warmth, out into the muddle that you have made yourself; and your mother and all your friends will despise you, oh, my darling, and rightly, if it is ever right to despise. George still dark, all the tussle and the misery without a word from him. Am I justified?" Into his own eyes tears came. "Yes, for we fight for more than Love or Pleasure; there is Truth. Truth counts, Truth does count."
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> *- E.M. Forster, A Room With A View, Chapter 19*[1]

Francis Toye was lucky to get out of Florence. When the British Institute closed on 29 May 1940, war between Britain and Italy was imminent. In an earlier letter to a friend, Toye had joked about finding three *maîtres d'hôtel* from various hotels in London to swap him for if he was interned at an Italian prison camp, but observed more seriously that the situation in Italy was 'a bad one and one must make preparations at any rate for the worst.'[2] The keys for the Institute's premises at the Palazzo Antinori were left with the American consul in Florence. Back in London, Janet Trevelyan tried to sort out the muddle of the Institute's finances, and did her best to ensure that the Institute's teachers would continue to be paid in the event that war was declared.[3] Right up to the eve of Italy's declaration of war on France and Britain, Toye remained unsure of what he planned to do.[4] War was officially declared on 10 June, when Toye (along with his wife, who had previously been a vocal supporter of Mussolini) had already fled for France. By 1 July 1940, he had safely arrived back in London, and was, as Michael Everett at the British Council reported, 'naturally somewhat tired out by his experience.'[5] For the rest of the war, Toye served as Director for the British Council's institute in Brazil, the Rio Cultura, after having been denied work with the Ministry of Information. Francis Donaldson attributes this

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[1] E.M. Forster, *A Room With A View*, ed. Oliver Stallybrass (Suffolk: Penguin, 1978), 225.
[2] Francis Toye to Michael Everett, 18 April 1940, British Council files (BW) 40/5, The National Archives (UK): Public Record Office (TNA: PRO), Kew
[3] Janet Trevelyan to Everett, 9 May 1940, BW 40/5, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[4] Toye to Boyd Tollinton, 23 May 1940, BW 40/5, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[5] Everett to Trevelyan, 1 July 1940, BW 40/5, TNA: PRO, Kew.

to his support of both Fascism and Mussolini, not a unreasonable supposition.[6] Yet in 1946, the British Institute reopened under the directorship of Toye, who was eventually succeeded by Ian Greenlees in 1958, the previous overseer of the British Council's other Institutes around Italy.

Lina Waterfield also took a route out of Italy through France, though the account in her autobiography of the travels she and her husband Aubrey undertook is naturally more colourful than that of Toye's, which is gleaned from passing mentions in official correspondence. When war broke out, the Waterfields had to flee the medieval castle they called home in Aulla, a small village in northern Tuscany, and travelled to the French border, much as Toye and his wife had done. However, they soon ran out of money and had to depend on the generosity of friends and relief funds from British consular authorities. Eventually they found their way to Monte Carlo, where they were issued permits for travel to England through Spain and Portugal, both neutral powers during the war. From Lisbon, the Waterfields took a fishing boat to Liverpool, though this was nearly sunk just outside the city's harbour during a storm that snapped the boat's anchor chain and washed it onto a sandbar. On the boat deck the passengers watched a 'tremendous' air raid on the city of Liverpool, before disembarking the next day. Waterfield's escape from Italy took nearly five months, and, as she recalls, had worried her daughter greatly, though Waterfield described it as 'the greatest experience of our lives.'[7] For the rest of the war she would work with the Political Intelligence Department, where she helped to prepare a weekly newspaper for Italian prisoners.[8] After the end of the conflict, Waterfield returned to live in her castle at Aulla, where she passed away in 1964.

When the British Council began to reopen its Institutes around Italy in 1946, the Institute at Florence was once more singled out for special attention. Many of its former teachers had returned and the British community in the city had slowly begun to rebuild itself after the devastation imposed by the long years of war. In fact, it was deemed to be in such good shape as to be almost detrimental to other Institutes around Italy, as it continued to draw funds from the British Council for its directors and teachers. Despite protests that the Florence Institute was diverting funding from

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[6] Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: the firsty fifty years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), 109.
[7] Lina Waterfield, *Castle in Italy: An Autobiography* (London: John Murray, 1961), 249 -57.
[8] Waterfield, *Castle in Italy*, 260.

needier branches, British Council support continued until 1977.[9] A consular report noted that the British Institute had achieved a record number of 1234 Italian and 420 British students in 1976, thanks mostly to the work of its director, Ian Greenlees. Although there were concerns about the Institute's financial well-being (even with British Council support), the consul was pleased to report that the number of students was growing steadily.[10]

The Anglo-Florentine community also began to recover from the war, though it would never again reach the same numbers as it did at the beginning of the First World War. A brief resurgence in the number of permanent residents in the 1950s turned into a decline by the 1960s. For the immediate post-war period, the numbers of permanent residents hovered just below 1,000.[11]

The present state of the British Institute and the British community in Florence

Today, the British Institute of Florence remains a flourishing centre for Italians wishing to learn English. The Institute also boasts a comprehensive Italian language programme as well, in addition to courses on the history of art, which are popular with university students from the United Kingdom. The present Duchess of Cambridge was one such participant, and spent the summer of 2000 in Florence undertaking a course in art history and Italian. Her father-in-law, Prince Charles, is the present patron of the Institute, a position he shares with Wanda Ferragamo, of the famous Florentine fashion empire.[12] The Institute maintains its educational ties with Oxford and Cambridge, though it has at present no formal ties with Italian universities, as it did under Harold Goad's directorship. On 3 June 2012, a tea party for Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee was held, following the Institute's tradition of celebrating significant British ceremonial events. At this tea party, footage of the Thames Diamond Jubilee pageant was screened, 'traditional British family games'

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[9] Michael Grant to Ronald Bottrall, 25 March 1946, BW 40/9, TNA: PRO, Kew.
[10] C.M. Pirie-Gordon to Michael Stewart, 25 February 1970, Foreign and Colonial Office files (FCO) 47/375, TNA: PRO, Kew. Pirie-Gordon reports financial concerns for the Institute, but does not go into much detail about them, and the files for this period of the Institute's history are not available from its archives.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Harry Mount, "Kate Middleton's classic Gap Yah in a Florence Palazzo" http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/culture/harrymount/100052997/kate-middletons-classic-gap-yah-in-a-florence-palazzo/. 2011 (accessed 23 March 2012).

were played, and a hamper from Fortnum and Mason was the grand prize of a raffle.[13] As with the royal wedding of Prince William, the Jubilee tea party provided an opportunity for the expatriate British community to collectively participate in an event that will help to reinforce their ties with Britain, and celebrate a milestone in their sovereign's life, though they live outside her realm. Even though their numbers have dwindled since the early twentieth century, the British expatriates of Florence still maintain a visible cultural presence in the city, thanks to the Institute.



Image 11: The Jubilee Tea Party at the British Institute, 3 June 2012, British Institute of Florence, 2012, https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150895270504849.416124.162352894848&type=3

Cost-cutting by the current Coalition government in the United Kingdom has, unfortunately, robbed Florence of the British Consulate. As Matteo Renzi, the present mayor of the city observed, 'the British Consulate in Florence has a very unique and beautiful history [but] the world changes, and it's clear that in the era of EasyJet and Ryanair there's no more Grand Tour'[14], reflecting how the democratisation of international travel has led to the consulate's demise. Until recently the consulate occupied rooms at the Palazzo Corsini. Located in the central area in the historical centre of Florence, just off the glamorous Via Tornabuoni, where many Italian fashion designers display their wares, the Palazzo Corsini suns itself along the banks of the river Arno. Conveniently, it stands across the river from the present site of the

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[13] British Institute of Florence, "Jubilee Tea Party sull'Arno" http://www.britishinstitute.it/en/news/2012/117/jubilee-tea-party-sull-arno/. 2012 (accessed 1 June 2012).

[14] Rachel Donadio, "Britain to Close a Consulate With a View", New York Times http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/27/world/europe/27florence.html/. 2011 (accessed 9 August 2012).

Institute's large lending library (boasted to be the largest on the Continent[15]) at the less grandiose Palazzo Lanfredini, given as a bequest to the Institute by the Anglo-Florentine aesthete, Harold Acton. Separated from the library, the language centre of the Institute is located at the Palazzo Strozzino, a stone's throw away from the Piazza della Repubblica (formerly the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, which was dubbed 'the most hideous, the most utterly vulgar and ostentatious [edifice], which disgraces any town of Europe'[16]). The Palazzo Strozzino is even more centrally located than the library, barely five minutes walk away from the imposing dome of Santa Maria del Fiore. Despite the Institute once having commanded an entire Palazzo to itself, the present language centre shares its premises with the Cinema Odeon, which screens English movies in their original language, a rarity in Florence.

The loss of the British Consulate, after an official presence in Florence of over five hundred years (barring the disruption caused during the Second World War), means that the British Institute of Florence is left now as one of the most visible British cultural presences in the city, along with St. Mark's Church, which lies five minutes from the Institute's library on the Via Maggio. The British Institute operates as a registered British charity, and derives its funding from private subscribers. Its last grant from the British Council in 1977 amounted to £12,000.[17] It seems ironic that the Institute, with its history of less than a hundred years, should survive the grander, more illustrious official diplomatic presence of the British consulate in the city, owing to budget issues, when previously the directors of the Institute had to rely on the support of the consulate to secure grants from the British government.

One aspect of the British community in Florence and the rest of Tuscany, however, remains unchanged. A recent sociological study of British retirees living in southern Europe has noted that Tuscany still attracts the well-educated and creatively-minded. The authors note the traditional connections many Britons have with the region, but point out a crucial difference between contemporary expatriates and their

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[15] At the latest count, there are over 50,000 books at the Harold Acton Library. British Institute of Florence, "Library: Collections", http://www.britishinstitute.it/en/library/collections.asp. 2012 (accessed 9 August 2012).
[16] Augustus J. C. Hare, *Florence*, (New York: Macmillan, 1900), 120.
[17] Donaldson, *The British Council*, 35.

early twentieth-century counterparts – namely, 'some inter-marriage with the Italian population … and adoption of the Italian way of life.'[18]

What the history of the British Institute signifies

The British Institute of Florence offers an example of how the efforts of an expatriate community could not only create an institution designed to promote British culture, but how it could have an effect on official cultural propaganda efforts. The expatriates who founded the Institute lived outside their empire and were driven by a sincere desire to play their patriotic role through the promotion of Britain in Italy, thus demonstrating an attachment that they felt despite geographical separation from home and empire. As this thesis has shown, that the British Institute became the model for similar institutions established by the British Council around the world highlights its significant contribution to the history of interwar cultural propaganda.

In this thesis, I have outlined three key themes in discussing the history of the Anglo-Florentine community, and of the British Institute of Florence. Firstly, I have argued that we need to consider how thoughts of belonging to a wider British empire went beyond the traditional boundaries of the formal empire and defined the worldview of those individuals who lived in the areas that did not fall under its control. James Belich has argued that the concept of a Greater Britain emerged during the American Revolution, provoked by ideas of a wider English-speaking world.[19] Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich have also pointed out the need to remember that the experiences of those who lived in the settler Dominions shaped ideas of the British world as much as those who lived back in Britain.[20] As Catherine Hall has noted, the colonial experience redefined what it meant to be British.[21]

This thesis has demonstrated that same can be said of the expatriates who lived in areas outside the empire, and even then not just in areas of informal imperial influence. For the Anglo-Florentines, empire was not so much a lived experience as a notion that connected them back to the land in which they were born and with their

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[18] Anthony M. Warnes et al., "The Well-being of British Expatriate Retirees in Southern Europe," *Ageing and Society* 19, no. 6 (1999): 717-40, 724.

[19] James Belich, *Replenishing the earth: the settler revolution and the rise of the Anglo-world, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 555.

[20] Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, eds., *The British world: diaspora, culture, and identity* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 5.

[21] Catherine Hall, *Civilising subjects: metropole and colony in the English imagination, 1830-1867* (Oxford: Polity, 2002), 16.

compatriots around the world. Given access to up-to-date news about Britain and the lands under her control, and possessing a view of the world influenced by Britain's colonial endeavours, the Anglo-Florentines conceived of empire largely in emotional and cultural terms. The symbols they chose, and the language they used to describe Britain were traditional – the Houses of Parliament and Windsor Palace as destinations on the British Institute's Summer School itinerary, for example, or the poem by Nesta de Robeck in the *Florence Herald* with its bucolic imagery of the English countryside – appealing to nostalgia and a sense of familiarity and home.[22] Indeed, the links that they claimed with Britain were strong enough to move Anglo-Florentines to play a part in doing their duty for King and country during the First World War, a loyalty that eventually led to the foundation of the British Institute. Social gatherings such as the festivities held for the coronation of George VI and the weekly lectures at the Institute, also allowed the community to celebrate a shared sense of identity through public expressions of their 'Britishness'. Yet the wider empire was also considered part of their heritage, as is evidenced by the Institute's plans to hire a lecturer to teach students about Britain's colonies and Dominions. By highlighting how Anglo-Florentines were linked culturally and emotionally to their empire, I have ventured that we need to reconsider just how pervasive the imperial influence on British identity was. The British community in Florence was certainly not absent-minded about its empire, as Bernard Porter claims.[23]

Secondly, I have uncovered the vital role the British Institute played in Britain's cultural propaganda programmes during the interwar years, a previously overlooked but important aspect of the promotion of Britain overseas. In doing so, I have revealed the importance attached to cultural propaganda by non-government organisations and the difficulties caused by the constant eliding of unofficial and official cultural propaganda in Anglo-Italian diplomacy.

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[22] For more on the role of nostalgia in expatriate experience see Peter Graham's article on Byron's experience, Peter W. Graham, "Byron and Expatriate Nostalgia," *Studies in Romanticism* 47, no. 1 (2008): 75-90, and Emma Robertson's examination of the BBC's Empire Service, Emma Robertson, "'I get a real kick out of Big Ben': BBC versions of Britishness on the Empire and General Overseas service, 1932-1948," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 28, no. 4 (2008): 459-73.

[23] Bernard Porter, *The absent-minded imperialists: empire, society, and culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Educating Italians about British culture was regarded by the Anglo-Florentines involved with the British Institute as vitally important in order to gain sympathy amongst the Italian people, especially during the First World War and the interwar period. Anglo-Italian tensions ran high following the disappointment of the Versailles peace talks, and the growing popularity of the German language and literature amongst Italians presented a constant worry. The Institute's educational programmes were designed not only to teach students the complexities of the English language, but to instil in them a knowledge and affection for Britain and British culture. That the British Council developed institutes along the model set by the British Institute of Florence speaks of how highly these programmes were regarded. Goad and Greenlee's plans in the 1930s for the expansion of the British Institute's work are today realised in the British Council, which operates in 100 countries. In this the British Institute can be said to have prefigured this vast expansion.

While Whitehall struggled to curtail unnecessary spending in the face of enormous debts after the First World War, the British Institute's governing bodies sought to comprehend why the government was abandoning such important cultural propaganda at such a crucial stage in Anglo-Italian relations. The sense of abandonment that the Institute's backers felt also fed into growing anxieties about how Britain was falling behind its traditional rivals, France and Germany, in the propaganda stakes. The rise of virulent anti-British propaganda by the Fascist government during the Italo-Abyssinian conflict did nothing to allay these fears, and indeed, distressed those at the Institute even more. Their fears reflected the general anxiety common during the interwar period and undoubtedly contributed to an air of impending doom that was realised as the Second World War broke out.

Furthermore, Goad's difficulties with the British embassy in Rome and his superiors in London reflect the curious double nature of the British Institute. Even though it was nominally an independent organisation, receiving some funding from the British Council, it was also regarded by British diplomats as having a semi-official status in Florence. This blurring of the boundaries between private and official and the ability of private individuals to influence diplomatic relations serves to highlight wider trends in interwar cultural diplomacy, which has only recently

become the subject of historical scrutiny.[24] When Goad was cautioned by the British embassy for his role in hosting Currey's talk, he was reminded above all of the image he projected as the director of the British Institute, rather than chastised for his obvious support of a pro-Fascist view of the conflict. Since the Institute was a foreign cultural institution, it was supposed to remain neutral and above local politics. Yet it is arguable that if Goad or Toye had not been favourable to the Fascist government, the British Institute might have been forced to close during Abyssinian conflict. The balancing act that directors of the British Institute had to perform, appeasing local authorities whilst being sure not to venture too deeply into local politics, was a tricky one. More often than not, this led to conflict and unhappiness, illustrating the role played by personal politics and differing opinions over the role of a cultural institute.

Finally, I have asserted that imperial views of the world and perceptions of nations less advanced than Britain had a clear influence in how Anglo-Florentines viewed Italy and Italians. After all, the aim of the British Institute in conducting cultural propaganda by educating Italians about Britain and her empire was motivated by a fervent conviction that this knowledge would be beneficial to Italians. Pointing out these influences on the motivation behind the Institute's foundation and its activities, demonstrates that an intersection existed between imperial ideas and cultural propaganda, an area yet to be extensively studied by both British imperial and diplomatic historiography.

Since it was believed that Italian society had become degenerate over the centuries since the golden ages of the Roman empire and the Renaissance, because of foreign invasion, the tyranny of the Catholic church, and the moral frailty of her own people, she had much to gain from a knowledge of British culture and customs. Indeed, after the chaos of the First World War, several key figures in the British Institute, such as its first major private sponsor Walter Becker, and Goad and Waterfield, all believed that an injection of British morals and culture could help to rebuild Italian society. Furthermore, Goad regarded the purpose of the British Institute as being partly that of repaying the cultural debt that Britain owed Italy. Since British society had benefitted so greatly from the knowledge and culture passed on from Italy's glorious civilisation (which was of course the reason why many British

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[24] Katharina Rietzler, "Before the Cultural Cold Wars: American philanthropy and cultural diplomacy in the inter-war years," *Historical Research* 84, no. 223 (2011): 148-64.

travellers were drawn to Florence), it was only right to offer modern Italians the same courtesy as a means to reinvigorate their deteriorated society.

In this aspect the British Institute was not unlike the Baptist missionaries studied by Catherine Hall.[25] This is not to say that the British Institute regarded their students as akin to the Jamaicans that Hall's Baptists were trying to reach, as Italians were obviously free subjects of another European nation. Rather it suggests a genuine sense of altruism involved in the Institute's mission to spread awareness of British culture amongst Italians. That this venture might also reap economic benefits was only secondary to the cause, at least according to individuals such as Harold Goad, who saw the learning of English for purely commercial reasons as something to be discouraged.

Moving forward

General questions about the ultimate purpose of cultural institutes in foreign countries have still to be answered. As is seen in the case of the British Institute, it is not always clear if those involved in running such institutes share similar opinions. While the history of cultural propaganda during the Cold War has been well documented,[26] it is important to heed Katharina Rietzler's observation that the precedents of the propaganda carried out during the Cold War are found in the efforts at cultural diplomacy during the interwar period.[27] Future studies of cultural institutions and the special position they occupy in diplomacy will provide valuable insights into the workings and ideology behind the promotion of a foreign culture in another country. The case study of the British Institute has shown that cultural propaganda is a long game, aiming to foster greater sympathy amongst a foreign nation's population over an extended period of time. Philip M. Taylor suggested that the ultimate ends of such

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[25] Hall, *Civilising subjects*.

[26] See, for example: Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, "'How Good Are We?' Culture and the Cold War," *Intelligence & National Security* 18, no. 2 (2003): 269-82; Arthur Goodfriend, "The Dilemma of Cultural Propaganda: "Let It Be," *Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science* 398(1971): 104-12; Frances K. Pohl, "An American in Venice: Ben Shahn and United States Foreign Policy at the 1954 Venice Biennale or Portrait of the Artist as an American Liberal," *Art History* 4, no. 1 (1981): 80-113; Reinhold Wagnleitner, "American Cultural Diplomacy, the Cinema, and the Cold War in Central Europe," *European Contributions to American Studies* 28(1994): 196-210.

[27] Rietzler, "Before the Cultural Cold Wars," 147.

persuasion were political and economic goals,[28] but other factors should be considered as well. With regard to the British Institute, imperial ideas of a civilising mission and a belief in the beneficial nature of British culture to Italians were also at play. Delving more deeply into the history of cultural institutions offers historians of diplomacy the chance to gain a fuller understanding the complex reasons behind why they are established and the methods used to spread their cultural message. Indeed, the study of veteran cultural institutions such as the British Institute (founded 1917) can shed much light on contemporary efforts by other countries, especially developing nations, such as China's Confucius Institutes or South Korean Cultural Centres, and the role they play in developing diplomatic, social and economic relations through their programmes of cultural outreach. In trying to establish themselves as major world players, the extent to which these new cultural institutions differ – or not – from the methods used by the British Council or similar organisations will reveal how cultural diplomacy has evolved since the early days of the British Institute, and what direction it has taken.

Another area worthy of further study is the history of the expatriate experience. Thanks to the work of Robert Bickers and likeminded historians, scholarship has recently begun to discover the complexities and intricacies related to the phenomenon of expatriation.[29] Possibly this late discovery is explained by the fact that sources of expatriate history are largely autobiographies of individuals, or else selectively edited reminiscences, which are obviously mostly subjective retellings. As such, these do not engage with the scholarly literature of overseas settlement or migration, nor is it their aim to do so. Rather, they are recollections of life as it used to

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[28] Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British overseas publicity and propaganda 1919 - 1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[29] Robert Bickers, ed. *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Elizabeth Buettner, "Haggis in the Raj: Private and Public Celebrations of Scottishness in Late Imperial India," *Scottish Historical Review* 81, 2, no. 212 (2002): 212-39; Nan Enstad, "To Know Tobacco: Southern Identity in China in the Jim Crow Era," *Southern Cultures* 13, no. 4 (2007): 6-23; John Fisher, "Keeping 'the Old Flag flying': the British community in Morocco and the British Morocco Merchants Association, 1914-24," *Historical Research* 83, no. 222 (2010): 719-46; Lisa Merrill, "'Old Maids, Sister-Artists, and Aesthetes': Charlotte Cushman and her circle of 'jolly bachelors' construct an expatriate women's community in Rome," *Women's Writing* 10, no. 2 (2003): 367-85; Timothy Roberts, "Margaret Fuller's Rome and the problem of provincial American democracy," *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, no. 1 (2006): 45-60; Alexandra Schneider, "Home Movie-Making and Swiss Expatriate Identities in the 1920s and 1930s," *Film History* 15, no. 2 (2003): 166-76.

be.[30] The challenge in this thesis has been to move past the confined nature of such sources to show how the history of an expatriate community fits into a wider historical context. The British Institute as a case study demonstrates how the history of expatriate groups has relevance to wider historiographical concerns by highlighting the intersection between cultural propaganda, imperialism, and the history of Britons living overseas.

This thesis has identified the important role that a cultural institute founded by expatriates had in helping to define the form of official British cultural propaganda in the interwar period. In doing so, it has proved that the history of the British overseas does not have to be restricted to its colonies and dominions. Indeed, studying the British who did not enjoy the same direct links back to Britain that their compatriots around the empire enjoyed provides a more comprehensive understanding of what it meant to be British in the twentieth century and should be just as worthy of historical scrutiny.

Understanding the motivations behind the British Institute's creation has identified how ideas of being British outside the empire led Anglo-Florentines to establish an institution dedicated to making it more widely known amongst the Italians with whom they shared the city. Deprived of the same obvious ties back to Britain that their compatriots in the Dominions and the rest of the empire enjoyed, the Anglo-Florentines who established the Institute found an outlet to demonstrate their loyalty and patriotism. Indeed, they ensured a lasting legacy of British culture in the city that has outlived the official British consular presence. There is much more to the history of the British Institute of Florence than just tea and Mussolini.

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[30] For example: May Holdsworth and Caroline Courtauld, *Foreign Devils: Expatriates in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2002); Maxime Pilon and Danièle Deiler, *The French in Singapore: An Illustrated History (1819 - Today)* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2012).

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