

FROM THE AMERICAN WILDERNESS
TO THE ITALIAN HISTORIC LANDSCAPE AND SCENERY.
WITH MASTER THOMAS COLE IN ITALY: POETRY, ARTISTIC WORKS
AND GEOGRAPHICAL OBSERVATIONS FROM 1831 TO 1848*

... Those were bright hours my loving mem'ry sees
when by the convent gray I sat – beneath the trees
that shadowy wave on Mont Albano's top ...
And Rome was at my feet, but far below,
its ruined heaps still sparkling in the glow ...
Around the wide Campagna's waste of green
lay like a shipless sea – though wrecks were seen
of duct and tower – many a golden chain
on its breast broken – ne'er to join again-
Soracte like an island shone afar
the Sabine mountains made the eastern bar
while on the west – the tideless beauteous sea
pillowed the plain that slumb'ed tranquilly –

Thomas Cole, July 1834, from *The Painter's Lamentation*

This research, in its nature essentially interdisciplinary, is to suggest, on the one hand, the validity of the artistic work of Master Thomas Cole as an extraordinary historical documentation of some Italian landscapes and, on the other hand, it is going to offer some examples of bad ruling or degradation of splendid environmental and monumental sites in Italy. Master Cole's works on Italy become a very fruitful source for an history of the Italian historic landscape changes.

This research has its place in the context of a general trend of theoretical interests and studies which I have been doing in the last fifteen years, working in the Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Affairs, in Rome, as an expert on landscape and its preservation, and operating at the University of Viterbium (North Latium) as a professor of Geography.

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¹ For the present research, Mrs. Barbara Assanti has worked on the difficult task of ordering and transcribing Thomas Cole's Papers, processed in 1935 by the New York State Library.

Master Cole's papers, received from the Artist's grand-daughter, are kept by the New York State Library, Albany, New York.

For the extract from *The Painter's Lamentation*, see Tynn, 1972, pp. 69-71.

ABSTRACT

Thomas Cole, an eminent (renowned) northamerican artist (1801-1848) and the creator of the theory called nowadays (today) Environmental Ethics, left an impressive (a huge) corpus of writings, drawings and paintings on (focused on) natural habitats and historic italian landscapes of the nineteenth century.

Most of Thomas Cole's writings and drawings are unpublished and the authors of this essay have been working on them (analyzing them) for many years.

The study of the Thomas Cole's production (works) allows to identify (makes possible to find) in the current territorial situation the relics of those magnificent presences which point to (which are a proof, talking about the italian region called Lazio, of the lack of a far-sighted) - in case of Lazio – the absence of a far-sighted enviromental policy and of the historical-architectonic protection.

KEYWORDS

Environmental Policy
Protection (Preservation) of the Landscape
Environmental Ethics
Artistic Creativity (Artistry=skill)