

NARRATING CALABRIA: NAVIGATING THE ENGLISHES OF TRAVEL WRITING FROM SOUTHERN ITALY

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The idea of composing an anthology of texts drawn from travel books in English by authors who have visited Calabria and other Southern Italian regions over the last three centuries arises from the intention to provide teachers of English as a Foreign language with a new didactic tool to be used both as a reader and as a basis for a variety of language learning activities by students in their final year of a three-year degree in Italian universities. The book is specifically intended for students attending the courses of study in “*Lingue e Culture straniere moderne*” and in “*Mediazione Linguistica*”; it has the purpose of guiding them not only towards the correct reading, comprehension, linguistic analysis of the selected texts, but also towards the identification of some of the discursive and narrative conventions which characterize travel literature in English, and, at the same time, towards the observation of how the rhetoric of travel writing has evolved across the last three centuries.

The selection of source material dating from different chronological periods certainly implies a diachronic approach to the study of texts which fall within the genres of travel writing, bearing in mind that some of the differences or affinities to be detected between the texts’ individual stylistic features reflect each author’s specific attitude towards the experience of the journey to Italy and personal motives to undertake it, his own cultural background, as well as subjective aims for writing about it.

The anthology includes extracts from various kinds of texts arranged chronologically in separate chapters, divided into two main sections: the first includes chapters containing texts written between the second half of the eighteenth century and the twentieth century; whereas the chapters contained in the latter section present some of the most recent contributions to the genre, published in the current century. Each chapter is devoted to an author, and is

structured in subsections ordered as follows: **a.** an introductory note on the author and his/her text; **b.** an extract from the text itself; **c.** a glossary; **d.** a questionnaire on the historical and cultural background to which the text presented refers; **e.** a section on language use, containing some notes on the author's style and use of language, and some didactic material consisting of exercises on grammar, lexis, syntax and comprehension of the text.

The first chapter is devoted to a letter written by Sir William Hamilton, British ambassador at the court of Naples between 1764 and 1800, to Sir Joseph Banks in 1783, containing a detailed account of his brief journey to Calabria following a disastrous earthquake in the area that was to be presented at the Royal Society of London, and published in its *Philosophical Transactions*. The following three chapters are devoted to three nineteenth-century writers, the first of whom is the American author William Dean Howells, whose *Italian Journeys*, published in 1867, is the object of the second chapter. The third chapter presents an extract from Crauford Tait Ramage's *The Nooks and Byways of Italy: Wanderings in Search of its Ancient Remains and Modern Superstitions*, published in 1868, which the Scottish writer wrote after undertaking a solitary tour of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in 1828; whereas Chapter Four is centred on *By the Ionian Sea*, the famous travel book George Gissing wrote after his journey to Southern Italy at the end of the nineteenth century. Chapter Five is devoted to Norman Douglas and his well-known *Old Calabria*, published for the first time in 1915.

The remaining five chapters present extracts from the works of some contemporary travellers and writers: John Keahey, Ann Cornelisen, Charles Lister, Mark Rotella and Annie Hawes, each providing a personal portrait of Southern Italy and interesting contribution to travel writing.

The Table of Contents reported below illustrates the basic structure of the textbook presented above:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I. SECTION 1: From the XVIIIth to the XXth century

CHAPTER 1:

- a. INTRODUCTORY NOTE: “Sir William Hamilton”
- b. TEXT: an extract from “An Account of the Earthquakes Which Happened in Italy, from February to May 1783. By Sir William Hamilton, Knight of the Bath, F.R.S.; in a Letter to Sir Joseph Banks, Bart. P.R.S.”
- c. GLOSSARY
- d. QUESTIONS on the historical and cultural background of the text
- e. LANGUAGE USE:
 1. Notes on the author’s style and use of language
 2. didactic material (questions and exercises on lexis, syntax, morphology)
 3. exercises on guided composition

CHAPTER 2:

- a. INTRODUCTORY NOTE: “Crauford Tait Ramage”
- b. TEXT: an extract from *The Nooks and By-ways of Italy: Wanderings in Search of its Ancient Remains and Modern Superstitions*
- c. GLOSSARY
- d. QUESTIONS on the historical and cultural background of the text
- e. LANGUAGE USE:
 1. Notes on the author’s style and use of language
 2. didactic material (reading comprehension; exercises on lexis, syntax, morphology)
 3. exercises on guided composition

CHAPTER 3:

- a. INTRODUCTORY NOTE: “William Dean Howells”
- b. TEXT: an extract from *Italian Journeys* (1867)
- c. GLOSSARY
- d. QUESTIONS on the historical and cultural background of the text

e. LANGUAGE USE:

1. Notes on the author's style and use of language
2. didactic material (reading comprehension; exercises on lexis, syntax, morphology)
3. exercises on guided composition

CHAPTER 4:

- a. INTRODUCTORY NOTE: "George Gissing"
- b. TEXT: an extract from *By the Ionian Sea: Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy*
- c. GLOSSARY
- d. QUESTIONS on the historical and cultural background of the text
- e. LANGUAGE USE:
 1. Notes on the author's style and use of language
 2. didactic material (reading comprehension; exercises on lexis, syntax, morphology)
 3. exercises on guided composition

CHAPTER 5:

- a. INTRODUCTORY NOTE: "Norman Douglas"
- b. TEXT: an extract from *Old Calabria*
- c. GLOSSARY
- d. QUESTIONS on the historical and cultural background of the text
- e. LANGUAGE USE:
 1. Notes on the author's style and use of language
 2. didactic material (reading comprehension; exercises on lexis, syntax, morphology)
 3. exercises on guided composition

II. SECTION 2: The XXIst century.

CHAPTER 6:

- a. INTRODUCTORY NOTE: "John Keahey"
- b. TEXT: an extract from *A Sweet and Glorious Land: Revisiting the Ionian Sea*
- c. GLOSSARY
- d. QUESTIONS on the historical and cultural background of the text
- e. LANGUAGE USE:
 1. Notes on the author's style and use of language

2. didactic material (reading comprehension; exercises on lexis, syntax, morphology)
3. exercises on guided composition

CHAPTER 7:

- a. INTRODUCTORY NOTE: “Ann Cornelisen”
- b. TEXT: an extract from *Torregreca: Life, Death, and Miracles in a Southern Italian Village*
- c. GLOSSARY
- d. QUESTIONS on the historical and cultural background of the text
- e. LANGUAGE USE:
 1. Notes on the author’s style and use of language
 2. didactic material (reading comprehension; exercises on lexis, syntax, morphology)
 3. exercises on guided composition

CHAPTER 8:

- a. INTRODUCTORY NOTE: “Charles Lister”
- b. TEXT: an extract from *Heel to Toe: Encounters in the South of Italy*
- c. GLOSSARY
- d. QUESTIONS on the historical and cultural background of the text
- e. LANGUAGE USE:
 1. Notes on the author’s style and use of language
 2. didactic material (reading comprehension; exercises on lexis, syntax, morphology)
 3. exercises on guided composition

CHAPTER 9:

- a. INTRODUCTORY NOTE: “Mark Rotella”
- b. TEXT: an extract from *Stolen Figs: and other Adventures in Calabria*
- c. GLOSSARY
- d. QUESTIONS on the historical and cultural background of the text
- e. LANGUAGE USE:
 1. Notes on the author’s style and use of language
 2. didactic material (reading comprehension; exercises on lexis, syntax, morphology)
 3. exercises on guided composition

CHAPTER 10:

- a. INTRODUCTORY NOTE: “Annie Hawes”
- b. TEXT: an extract from *Journey to the South: A Calabrian Homecoming*
- c. GLOSSARY

- d. QUESTIONS on the historical and cultural background of the text
- e. LANGUAGE USE:
 - 1. Notes on the author's style and use of language
 - 2. didactic material (reading comprehension; exercises on lexis, syntax, morphology)
 - 3. exercises on guided composition

BIBLIOGRAPHY