LANDSCAPE AND HERITAGE STUDIES

William Bainbridge

Topographic Memory and Victorian Travellers in the Dolomite Mountains

Peaks of Venice

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Introduction: Tools for Unravelling Heritage

Abstract
Collins's theory of symbolic interactionism is here introduced to the study of landscape heritage. His method for unravelling symbols in society can be profitably used to identify a signature of prestige indicating centres of attraction or civilizational poles charged with strong magnetism. The activation of that signature occurs through three levels of social circulation that culminate in the inclusion of symbols in the internal conversation of individuals. In the case of the Dolomites, the complex cluster of symbolic ingredients emerging in their heritage formation oscillates between competing zones of civilizational prestige – Venice and its Romantic aura, Switzerland and its Alpine sensationalism, Austria and its Germanic folklore, London and its cosmopolitan modernity – coexisting today in a multi-layered heritage, re-enacted, at various levels, through the interplay between different imaginative and contested geographies.

Keywords: UNESCO, landscape heritage, Englishness, symbolic formation, topographic memory, Randall Collins

> Too much is asked of heritage. In the same breath, we commend national patrimony, regional and ethnic legacies and a global heritage shared and sheltered in common. We forget that these aims are usually incompatible.
> – *David Lowenthal*

In January 2014, the BBC reported on an acquisition of a painting by Francesco Guardi for Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, a purchase made possible through the Arts Council's 'Acceptance in Lieu' scheme (Hopkinson, 2014, p. 81). Produced in 1758 for the British Grand Tour market, Guardi's *Venice: the Fondamenta Nuove with the Lagoon and the Island of San Michele* (Figure 1)

Bainbridge, William, *Topographic Memory and Victorian Travellers in the Dolomite Mountains: Peaks of Venice*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press 2020
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depicts an unusual view of the Lagoon. The director of the Ashmolean, Christopher Brown, proudly noticed:

> This painting brings to the Ashmolean a poetic masterpiece in which Francesco Guardi reveals his full artistic potential. As the first major Venetian view-painting to enter the Museum's collection it makes an inspirational addition to the Britain and Italy Gallery. We are profoundly grateful to the Arts Council, the Art Fund, and other supporters for making this acquisition possible (BBC, 2014).

Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair of Arts Council England, added:

> The fact that this stunning painting has been largely unseen by the public before now demonstrates the importance of the 'Acceptance in Lieu' scheme. Many members of the public will now have the chance to view and interpret this important piece at the Ashmolean when its fate could very easily have meant that is was lost forever from history (*ibid.*).

Similarly, Steve Hopkinson, in the *Art Quarterly*, highlighted again that the painting had never hung in a public gallery before, and that its acquisition was made possible through additional funding from the Art Fund (Hopkinson, 2014).

Why should a painting by a Venetian artist represent a 'heritage object' for England? Why should it enrich the 'Britain and Italy Gallery' of an important public museum? And why do people commit themselves to supporting a campaign to the point of raising more than two million pounds to ensure that objects of the sort do not leave the country or are not 'lost forever from history'? The memory of the Venetian Grand Tour seems to provide an adequate storyline to justify the investment. The painting might, indeed, as Hopkinson maintains, depict 'a fleeting moment in Venetian daily life', but what counts here is that the experience linked to that moment in 1758 could have been English, and as such rightfully included in a transnational inflection of English heritage.

The piece offers one of the first *vedute* from this vantage point, executed by Guardi for one of the many British *milordi* on the Grand Tour. It is a rare and uncommon view: certainly not one of the most sought after views recorded in paint during that period. The site of the Fondamenta Nuove is located at the north end of the city, facing the *terraferma*, and was rarely featured in eighteenth-century *vedute* – never, as in this case, with the Alps featured so prominently in the background. Guardi, instead, represented

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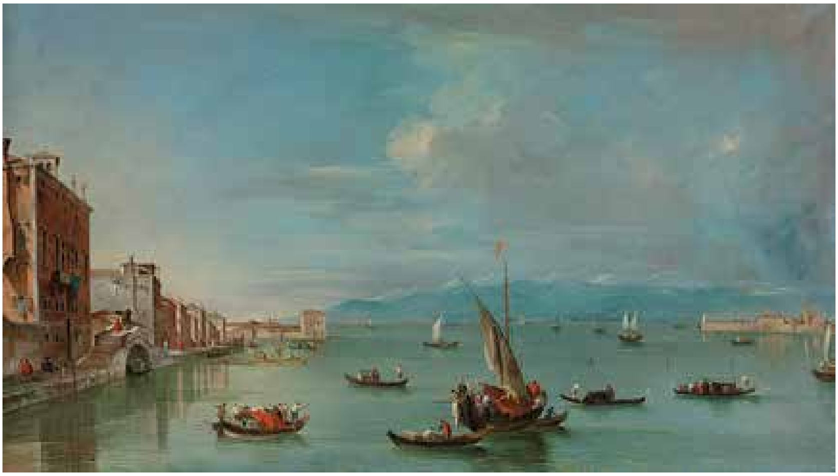

Figure 1 Francesco Guardi, *Venice: the Fondamenta Nuove with the Lagoon and the Island of San Michele* (1758), oil on canvas, The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

this scenery several times, though often omitting the mountainous horizon from the composition (Bonnet Saint-Georges, 2014). The mountains are mostly invisible in the two similar views found at the Kunsthaus in Zurich (1755-1760) and the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (1765-1770). Another painting, dating from around the same time and still in a private collection, is very similar to the one now in Oxford – the size and point of view are the same, even the position of the crowded boats in the foreground, and so are the mountains that can be seen in the distance (Bonnet Saint-Georges, 2014; Morassi, 1973, p. 220). The fact that another British Grand Tourist commissioned this view reinforces the hypothesis that Guardi's scenery was particularly sought after in England.

This book deals precisely with this scenery and the legacy of a Grand Tourist gaze cast over the Venetian Alps from the Lagoon near Murano. It is a view that about a century later Victorian travellers would again fantasize about, after the publication of Anna Jameson's memorable 'The House of Titian'. In her *Memoirs and Essays Illustrative of Art, Literature and Social Morals* (1846), she located in the area of the Fondamenta Nuove the lost Venetian house of Titian, away from the crowded south side of the city. The impulse to fancy upon what Titian could have looked at himself from the little garden of his house then emerged:

> He then, from 1539, rented the whole of it; and a few years later he took the piece of land, the *terreno vacuo* adjoining, which he fenced in and converted into a delicious garden, extending to the shore. No

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> buildings *then* rose to obstruct the view; – the Fondamente Nuove did not then exist. He looked over the wide canal, which is the thoroughfare between the city of Venice and the Island of Murano; in front the two smaller islands of San Cristoforo and San Michele; and beyond them Murano, rising on the right, with all its domes and campanili, like another Venice. Far off extended the level line of the mainland, and, in the distance, the towering chain of the Friuli Alps, sublime, half defined, with jagged snow-peaks soaring against the sky [...] This was the view from the garden of Titian; so unlike any other in the world, that it never would occur to me to compare it with any other. More glorious combinations of sea, mountain, shore, there may be – I cannot tell; *like* it, is nothing that I have ever beheld or imagined (*ibid.*, pp. 42-43).

Jameson's description could be read as an illustration of Guardi's painting at the Ashmolean. But what is more interesting is that Jameson also located in those 'Friuli Alps' the birthplace of Titian. Her piece appealed – as Adele Ernstrom rightly observed – to 'the English tourist's fantasized desire to approach or recapture the painter's aura by visiting his former haunts' (1999, p. 430). Jameson made of Titian's house the starting point for an itinerary that would recuperate, together with that gaze, also Titian's Alpine horizon, spurring the fantasy in her readers to climb and ramble in the background of Titian's canvasses.

Guided by the romantic compass of Jameson, Ruskin, and Turner, Victorian Grand Tourists sketched through their wanderings in the mountain backdrop of Venice a cultural 'Petit Tour' of global significance. As they zigzagged across the different frontiers of an unfrequented land that they still perceived as belonging to Venice, Victorian travellers discovered a unique blending of natural, aesthetic, and cultural values utterly different from those refracted through the bombastic conquests of the Western Alps achieved during the 'Golden Age of Mountaineering'. Their encounter with the Dolomites is marked by a series of cultural practices that define instead a 'Silver Age of Mountaineering'. Revealing a range of interests that are more ethnographic than imperialistic, more feminine than masculine, more artistic than sportive – rather than racing to summits, the Silver Age is about rambling, rather than conquering peaks, it is about sketching them. It is through these practices that the Dolomite Mountains came to be known in England as 'Titian Country', spurring a sentimental drive among travellers to ramble in the very backgrounds of Titian's paintings.

The memory of that drive is now lost. The British gaze that underpins Guardi's view has not been noticed. Even the most credited art historians, in commenting about that view, avoid mentioning the cultural singularity of that background. Antonio Morassi, for instance, in his comprehensive study on Guardi, encourages the viewer to pay attention to the details in the foreground, leaving the background where it is (1973, p. 220). Jameson's scenery seems to be lost in the clouds. Caught in the 'tourist maze' of one of the most coveted cities on the planet, visitors to Venice are not interested in some nostalgic pilgrimage to the 'relic' of Titian's house (Davis & Marvin, 2004). Those who mob around the Fondamenta Nuove are instead waiting for the *vaporetto* to the islands of Murano, Burano, and Torcello. Few guidebooks, if any, tell them to pay attention to the faint mountainous scenery that on the clearest days is possible to see from the boat. Venice and the Dolomites appear to be disconnected from one another.

In the attempt to capture that scenery and the desire to travel in it, this book will focus on a heritage to unravel – a hidden heritage lost in the mountainous background of Venice. It is a heritage linked to a particular way of 'seeing', 'exploiting', and 'challenging' a mountainous landscape scenery, which revealed, during an interwar period roughly delimited by Waterloo (1815) and Sarajevo (1914), the nostalgia for a series of bygone symbols once attached to the British tradition of voyaging to the continent. During this pivotal interval, between the ending of the Napoleonic wars and the beginning of the First World War, Italy, and Venice in particular, continued to play a crucial role in the British imagination, when the distinctively aristocratic mode of travelling typical of the Grand Tour had already, by then, lost its meaning.

Far from constituting an essential stage in the process of acculturation for the British elite, the travel to Italy persisted during that interval as a chimera – a dreamy voyage on a well-beaten path to fantasize longingly about a certain idea of culture, a certain idea of style, a certain idea of status irremediably lost on the shores of the Mediterranean (Buzard, 1993b, p. 26). In the post-Napoleonic era, Britons, like all other emerging nations, were forced to acquire that culture, that style, and that status within the borders of their own land (Colley, 1992b, pp. 171-173; Dekker, 2004, p. 14; Lamb, 2009). The 'beaten path' to Italy became a journey of memory, providing a momentary escape from that task – a flickering distant land in which Britons, once 'stranded in the present', could only longingly contemplate their own absence (Fritzsche, 2004).

After the Great War, the symbols acquired in centuries of travelling abroad were recycled in an internal quest for an English identity 'in search of England' (Morton, 1927).[1] It is in that quest for identity, in its rural countryside, that foreign symbols, fabricated and perfected abroad, became markers of an intangible English heritage more decisively allegiant to an idea of Englishness than Britishness, as David Lowenthal maintained: 'heritage countryside is less British than English' (1991b, p. 8; Langlands, 1999; Kumar 2003, pp. 1-16). It may be, as Peter Mandler has further qualified, that an influential and unrepresentative minority mostly shared this anti-modern and anti-urban version of Englishness (1997; Ward, 2004, p. 54). Nevertheless, its recirculation was powerful enough to compose a distinctively English idea of looking at a landscape, charged with a considerable amount of emotional prestige – a distinct outlook constructed in circulatory phases that contemplates moments of travel, moments of literary recollection, moments of artistic reconfiguration, moments of touristic exploitation, and moments, in our days, of filmic adaptation (Colls & Dodd, 1986; Stapleton, 1994; Robbins, 1998; Matikkala, 2011; Sherwood, 2013; Winter & Keegan-Phipps, 2013). It is the intangibility of an English gaze originally cast by some Victorian travellers over an inhospitable and distant mountain range, rather than its alleged pertinence for the entire British nation, that this book seeks to unpick.

The historical scenario sketched out above forms the cultural background of this study. Its foreground is occupied by the Dolomite Mountains, a geologically exceptional range of mountains located in a secluded swathe of the Italian Eastern Alps and situated away from the main roads bringing travellers to Venice, in a roughly square territory stretching south of the hydrographical watershed of the streams flowing into the Adriatic, between the basins drained by the river Adige and the river Piave. During the Victorian period, it was not possible to see them from the main roads that linked Munich, Lucerne, and Milan to Venice through the Brenner, Resia, or Stelvio Passes. But later in the period, a new road, joining Venice to Toblach/Dobbiaco, through the Cadore and the Ampezzo valleys, made them fully enjoyable. It is a view, therefore, that for geographical and historical reasons remained largely hidden from the eyes of British Grand Tourists on their way to Italy – a view located 'off the beaten path'.

Still scarcely mentioned in current historical landscape studies, the Dolomite region presents itself as a unique Alpine borderland in the north-east of Italy. Its uniqueness is associated, politically, with its 'debatable land' status (Lamont & Rossington, 2007), as a contested territory divided by different ethnic, linguistic, and historical frontiers. The two geographical designations 'Dolomite Mountains' (referring to mountains predominantly made of dolomite rock) and 'Dolomites' (referring to the territory in which these rocks are to be found in their highest density) have a history – an English history – clearly distinct from the one that motivates other labels. This history, as we shall see, is linked to a gaze that finds its ideal origin in Titian's garden in Venice and to a focus upon the bizarre landscape scenery that the morphology of these mountains creates.

---

[1] See also Lowerson (1980, pp. 260-264), Wiener (1981, pp. 72-80), Howkins (1986, 2001), Lowenthal (1991a, 1991b), Matless (1998), Kumar (2003, pp. 229-232), and Ward (2004, pp. 54-58).

It is a history marked by a distinct cosmopolitan character, initiated during the nineteenth century by some German scientists, looking for clues to understand the Earth's past, and endorsed by some British travellers, searching for an uncontaminated mountain scenery, away from the already crowded Swiss Alps (Ciancio, 2005). During the first half of the nineteenth century, these mountains became the privileged destination of some enlightened geologists, puzzled by the eccentric stratification of igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rocks, which had the potential to challenge the most accredited theories of the time about the Earth's formation. These scientists provided the first morphological description of these enigmatic mountains, utterly distinct from the ones found in the Western or Central Alps, and turned to the competence of artists to portray their most bizarre outlines. Their verbal and visual descriptions, confined initially in papers and articles primarily destined for the scientific community, recirculated in British travel guides, with the result of disseminating the first portrayals of what is now known as the 'Dolomite landscape'.

The main point of my argument revolves around the symbolic formation of the magnificent scenery of the Dolomite mountains, which needed that British gaze to be perceived – the trained gaze of a nation that since the period of the Stuart dynasty had learned to forge its identity through the mirror of a generalized sense of geographical space, made of artistic, textual, and aesthetic 'ways of seeing' (Cosgrove, 1984), able to supplant a localized sense of political place, made of 'customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits constituting a distinct complex', in a direct engagement with 'actual landscapes' (Olwig, 2008b, p. 166, 1996, pp. 630-631). These two ways of understanding landscape subtend the duplicitous semantics of the term, which Kenneth Olwig extracts from Doctor Johnson's 1755 classic dictionary: (1) 'A region; the prospect of a country'; (2) 'A picture, representing an extent of space, with the various objects in it' (2008b, p. 159). This duplicity is not to be confused with what Claudio Minca calls the 'paradox of landscape', inherent to an idea of landscape as a 'geographical metaphor able to refer to both an object and its description' (2007c, p. 433; Porteous, 1990, p. 4);

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landscape (2) does not describe landscape (1), but rather, as Olwig maintains, it masks or conceals it, transforming 'place' into 'space' (Olwig, 2008b, p. 166). Englishness, therefore, pertains here to this particular gaze itself endowed with an agency able to reveal the 'diaphoric' meaning of landscape (Tuan, 1978, p. 366).

As amply documented by the work of Olwig (2002), this utterly British gaze acted as an exportable template that in its exportability was able to unfold all its imperialistic potentialities (Mitchell, 1994a, 1994b). Rarely, however, the effects of such potentialities have been explored on a field devoid of any political links to Great Britain or its colonial empire. In this work, I endeavour to illustrate the cultural outcomes of this gaze as applied to a landscape that has never been part of or associated with any British imperialistic design. In the eyes of the travellers considered here, the Dolomite valleys provided a cultural 'place' to be rhetorically reduced to 'picturesque' views sometimes Tyrolean and sometimes Venetian in character. The peaks, instead, offered a uniform 'space', above any ethnic or political frontiers; a space that would be symbolically transformed into globalized 'sublime' scenery (Meinig, 1979; Cosgrove, 1984; Cosgrove & Daniels, 1988; Backhaus & Murungi, 2009).

Following this divide between place and space, the frontier I intend to unmask here is neither the one, already studied, that distinguishes between different areas of linguistic or ethnic minorities in the region (Burger, 1966; Kaplan, 2000; Steininger, 2003; Pergher, 2009) nor the hidden one inherent in the very notion of the 'diaphoric meaning of landscape' (Tuan, 1978, pp. 366, 370; Daniels, 1989; Olwig, 2008b, pp. 158-159). I instead heuristically locate this frontier above sea level – on the horizontal divide between valleys and peaks. The inscription of the Dolomites onto the World Heritage List in 2009 clearly privileged the 'metropolitan' project that German and British travellers concurred to launch during the nineteenth century, transforming the contested narrative of a borderland region into the pacifying narrative of a landscape scenery to be appreciated globally (Bainbridge, 2016).

The powerful magnetism of the Dolomite landscape emanates from its unique geological features (Panizza, 2009). These features, however, needed a trained gaze to be appreciated for their scenic value. British travellers possessed it; they also possessed the vocabulary and the suitable communicative apparatus to transform what until then was seen as just a geological oddity into a 'symbolic landscape' of global significance, now acknowledged in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The official UNESCO documentation aptly credits the British contribution to this heritage (Gianolla, 2008, pp. 30-32, 75-89); but in the list of institutional and individual supporters of that inscription none are British (*ibid.*, pp. 125-141).[2] It is a history that Britons have largely forgotten, but a history to which Italians are today reviving and giving a particular relevance.

There where the valleys spoke German, Italian, or Ladin, and where different ways of living – consolidated in different customary traditions and governed through different political norms – created a tension that would ultimately culminate in the Great War, their peaks spoke English, at least for a certain period of time. Victorian travellers successfully renamed the entire region as 'Dolomite Mountains' or 'Dolomites' – a unified geographical label that by privileging the fantastic outline of their unique peaks ended up masking the customary, political, and ethnic differences of their contested valleys. The compilers of the UNESCO documentation insisted precisely on the aesthetic and scientific value recognized in their peaks in order to promote the Dolomites globally, leaving aside from that promotion the debatable nature of their valleys (Bainbridge, 2016).

Returning in 1998 to the conceptual framework that informed, in 1984, his landmark study, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Denis Cosgrove openly admitted to having paid less attention to the meaning of 'symbolic landscape' per se, indicating some approaches to consider in order to fill that gap:

> If an entire chapter is devoted to exegesis of the phrase 'social formation', 'symbolic landscape' is nowhere precisely defined. I was astonished to find

---

[2] The list includes the following prominent personalities: Reinhold Messner, eminent alpinist and creator of the MMM Messner Mountain Museums (Meran, Italy); Prof. Maria Bianca Cita, Chair of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) Sub-commission on Stratigraphic Classification (University of Milan, Italy); Prof. Forese Carlo Wezel, President of the Italian Geological Society (University of Urbino, Italy); Michael J. Orchard, Chair of the IUGS Sub-commission on Triassic Stratigraphy (Geological Survey Canada, Vancouver, Canada); Francesco Zarlenga, President of ProGEO, the European Association for the Conservation of Geological Heritage; Prof. Gian Gaspare Zuffa, President of the Italian Federation of Earth Sciences (University of Bologna, Italy); Prof. Emmanuel Reynard, President of the working group on Geomorphosities of the International Association of Geomorphologists (University of Lausanne, Switzerland); Prof. Franco Salvatori, President of the Italian Geographic Society (University Tor Vergata, Rome, Italy); Nickolas Zouros, Coordinator of the European Geoparks Network (Sigri, Lesvos, Greece); Prof. Wolfgang Schlager, Professor Emeritus of Marine Geology/Sedimentology (Vrije University, Amsterdam, Netherlands); Prof. Edward L. Winterer, Geosciences Research Division (Scripps Institution of Oceanography, La Jolla, CA); Prof. Rainer Brandner, Head of Department of Geology and Paleontology (University of Innsbruck, Austria); Dominick Siegrist, President of the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA, Schaan, Lichtenstein); Michael Vogel, President of ALPARC, the Alpine Network of Protected Areas (Chambéry, France); and Guido Plassmann, Director of the Task Force Schutzgebiete (ALPARC, Chambéry, France).

> that it does not even appear in the index, and the theory of symbolism underlying the work is left unclear. No reference is made to semiotic or other communicative theories of symbolism, to iconographic or other methods of symbolic hermeneutics of interpretation, to the relations between symbol and myth, nor to forms of symbolic interaction (1998, p. xxv).

Cosgrove did not clarify his understanding of 'symbolic landscape' in later theoretical contributions. He did, however, inflect the concept in various interpretative essays on specific topics, manifesting a privileged allegiance to the iconographic method practiced in art history. In these essays, the symbol emerges as an empirical tool to illustrate the enduring iconic power of the landscape as a 'way of seeing' (*ibid.*).

Despite his increased attention towards other ways of understanding and reading a landscape, notably those responding to a phenomenological or non-representative epistemology, Cosgrove always remained fundamentally loyal to his 'iconic' approach, defending it boldly in his last monograph, *Geography and Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World*, against what he evaluated as the ascendant 'distrust of vision [...] in a number of theoretical dispositions', symptomatic of the 'strained relations between geography and the pictorial image' in some of the most current trends in cultural geography (2008, p. 4). Here re-emerges Lowenthal's need to identify and study a range of responses to 'key symbolic landscapes – landscapes that perennially catch the attention of mankind and seem to stand for, reflect or incorporate, the meaning and purpose of life itself' (1967, p. 2; Cosgrove, 1982, p. 146). Some distant landscapes catch such attention not only because of their intrinsic geographic estrangement, but because they are embedded in 'networks of attraction that carry prestige through various channels, passing over or penetrating other civilizational zones' (Katzenstein, 2009, p. 18).

I am less concerned in this book with the distinction between Englishness and Britishness, or with the theoretical discussion about the different symbolic ingredients that allow 'identity' to become 'national' at a given point in history (Mandler, 2006). I am more interested in their transnational recirculation, and, in particular, in the enduring cultural dialogue that England has entertained with its 'neighbourhoods' abroad. The circulatory movement towards the outside and back towards the inside – from home to abroad and from abroad to home – is a persistent gesture in the formation of English identity. This might bring us to consider Linda Colley's methodological procedure of looking at identity by asking what it is not, or of defining Englishness against an Other located outside England, so as to be able to unravel 'the enigma of Englishness' by exploring England's engagement with its distant neighbours (Colley, 1992a; Kumar, 2003, p. xii; Mandler, 2006, p. 284). In landscape studies, this approach has been notably adopted by David Matless, with the fruitful definition of an 'Englishness in variation', in which national identity 'is regarded as a relative concept always constituted through definitions of Self and Other and always subject to internal differentiations' (Matless, 1998, p. 17; Tolia-Kelly, 2006).

The traditional storyline through which this movement, from home to abroad and from abroad to home, has been figured constitutes a progressive narrative divided into several 'periods' interspersed with several 'epochs', variously defined according to the reasons and drives that put people on the move.[3] The chronological distribution of epochs along this storyline is controversial. It compels us to acknowledge a teleological and stage-oriented idea of history. But instead of understanding this movement as a story developing into a history, Randall Collins has proposed seeing it as a series of repetitive chains of interaction rituals (Collins, 2004). Symbols might find their consolidation in a given historical epoch, but what counts is their circulation and recirculation in different interactions at different historical latitudes. Through this recurrent mobilization, the activity of symbols and the practices surrounding them can be enhanced or diminished. Symbols, therefore, are not attached to a particular 'spirit of time' nor to a given 'spirit of place', but ought to be understood as vessels or symbolic reserves of meaning to be reinterpreted and reinvented through time and space.

Scholars of tourism have detected in this oscillating movement from one centre to another a general agreement with what Judith Adler has termed 'the underlying narrative structures, or story lines, on which the meanings of travel performances are founded' (1989b, p. 1375; Buzard, 1993b, p. 16). Crucial for the heuristic outlook of this book is Adler's emphasis on the dynamics of 'historical breaks and continuities' that make these storylines accessible even in conditions utterly different from those in which they took shape originally. Away from Adler's rhetorical turn, however, I tend to understand her usage of 'story lines or tropes' in terms of enduring or ground-breaking 'symbols' emerging and circulating at different epochs on a calendar and in different places on a map, whereby the complicity between calendars and maps configure here the possibility for a traveller to exploit these symbols unreservedly, moving imaginatively through time and space. The two images also explain my allegiance to both history and geography in defining cultural heritage (Baker, 2003).

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[3] For the theoretical distinction between 'period' and 'epoch' in historiography, see Pot (1999, pp. 51-52). Away from the current usage that treats the two terms as synonyms, 'period' stands for a span of time, in which a particular historical phenomenon revolves around a set of relatively constant cultural, social or political features; 'epoch', instead, is understood as a moment in time, in which such continuity arrives to its tipping point – a 'period', therefore, is technically defined as the span of time between two 'epochs'. The confusion between the two terms resides in the fact that an 'epoch' often appears as non-instantaneous, or with a duration of undetermined length, defining moments of transition in history.

Not only travel puts people on the move between different times and spaces, but it also puts them into a particular interactive mood, making them able to manipulate these symbols in a dialogue with the different agents and the different objects they encounter along the road. The enactment or activation of symbols is negotiated through an interaction between different travel roles that takes place in accordance to a particular travel ritual, similar, in principle, to the idea of 'performance' proposed by Adler (1989b). The basic model of these interactions is indeed a set of performances and conversations that make up the landscape through which the traveller moves while abroad. But it would be misleading to think of that 'landscape' only in terms of physical presence; the landscape that travellers construct is also conditioned by the stock of symbols – both material and mental – that they pack in their bags before leaving home. One of the tasks, in this research, has been to carefully unpack those bags looking for the symbols that eventually recirculate in the loop of heritage formation.

Collins maintains that through these interactions or performances the subject experiences feelings of excitement or indifference measurable in terms of what he calls 'emotional energy' (EE): 'the social emotion par excellence' (2004, p. xii). Successful rituals produce emotional energy and convey a strong sense of belonging or solidarity within a certain group; failed rituals drain them and provoke the disquieting feeling of absence or alienation. The traveller, like any other individual, is an EE-seeker in the market of available interaction rituals (IR).

In this context, Collins also provides a set of 'Rules for Unravelling Symbols', which prove effective for identifying ingredients of Englishness circulating in the formation of Dolomite heritage (*ibid.*, p. 95-101). Collins considers a set of situated interactions, in which symbols emerge and subsequently circulate in a series of loops of emotional energy, fostering feelings of social solidarity and community bonding in a given group. His methodology has been applied throughout this book to explore the English character of the Dolomite landscape by investigating the life cycle of a set of unravelled symbols from their origin, through their subsequent English transformation, up to their institutional exploitation at a global level.

Collins suggests that we ponder initially on the intensity of symbols mobilized in a given interaction, and to evaluate their status in three distinct, but sometimes concomitant, symbolic circulations. For the first circulation, Collins understands the first set of interaction rituals that ascribed to symbols their original intensity, a primary realm of rituals and the symbols that they charge with emotional energy. For the second circulation, he considers a further realm of rituals responsible for making those symbols circulate in different social networks, whether taken as positive or negative emblems, or just treated reflexively as items of news, gossip, or reputation. It is through these situations that these symbols become representations of groups located outside from the primary realm of rituals. The third circulation of symbols concerns individuals and the inner conversations that make up their thinking or the fantasies that forge their inner self (*ibid.*, p. 98-99).

My starting point is a set of artistic, scientific, and sportive symbols, originating from three main matrices of topographic memory (Nora, 1996; Della Dora, 2008, 2011, 2013): the Venetian Grand Tour, the geological discovery of the Dolomites, and the Golden Age of Mountaineering. Matrices of topographic memory might be better understood as 'symbolic reserves' (Mandler, 2006), from which to draw clues for unravelling notions of Englishness in variation (Matless, 1998, p. 17). These matrices provided British travellers with the symbolic toolbox for 'inventing' the Dolomite Mountains. What they found there was able to satisfy their appetite for novelty, without forcing them to renounce their old passion for the picturesque, or to venture in landscapes too exotic to be safely brought home. For the inhabitants of the Dolomite districts, be they Tyrolean, Venetian, or Ladin in origin, these mountains merely constituted a resource for economic exploitation – their scenery exemplified a landscape as the product of a 'way of living'. For British travellers, instead, that 'way of living' was merely a feature confined to the 'unfrequented valleys'; their 'untrodden peaks' were left free to be reinvented as a new 'way of seeing' utterly unknown to locals.

Disencumbered today from their historical conditions and rehashed in different discursive patterns, these symbols re-emerge in the controversial debate on the cultural heritage of the Dolomites. This debate, critically revived after their inscription onto the World Heritage List, subtly exploits discourses of Englishness at sites where the economy of mass tourism and the internationalization of leisure cultures appear to overshadow ethnic and national divides. In the epilogue, I discuss aspects of this most recent symbolic circulation within the ethnic clash and debates around competing heritages still at play in the Dolomite region. It suffices here to repeat that while perfectly aware of crossing multiple ethnic, linguistic, and political borders, British travellers were mainly concerned with a picturesque landscape scenery cast over the mountains – a scenery that they could freely translate into their own language.

James Buzard has amply shown how the voyage to Italy persisted during the nineteenth century as part of a diluted interpretation of the Romantic travel (1991); he has also exposed the modes in which that particular style of travelling was ultimately referable to symbols acquired during the Grand Tour (2002), engendering the feeling of an inescapable 'belatedness' in Victorian travellers (Schoina, 2009). Distinct from Mount Athos, studied by Veronica Della Dora (2011), and its multi-layered re-enactments of symbols, the Dolomite Mountains were not attached to a distinct storyline to re-enact and reinvent, they were not associated with a mythology to re-evoke. They had, however, a topographic 'sponsor' identifiable in the birthplace of Titian in Cadore. Ideally located between two 'zones of prestige', Venice and Switzerland, the 'untroddenness' and 'unfrequentedness' of the Dolomites offered Victorians the possibility of conquering a landscape scenery hitherto uncontaminated – and to invent it as a fashionable escape from modernity.

According to Collins, zones of prestige are 'places where culturally impressive activities go on, places which attract attention. Impressiveness radiates outward from a civilizational core, attracting people inward. They come to renew or confirm their identities as members of a civilization; they come also as sojourners, students or visitors, attracted by a civilization's magnetism, its cultural charisma, which they wish in some measure to share. Thus, a zone of civilizational prestige is also a pattern of social contacts, a flow of people and their attention across space' (Collins, 2001, p. 421). Zones of prestige, in this sense, are not to be confused with 'free-standing, monolithic and unchanging essences' (Katzenstein, 2011, p. 152, 2009, p. 18) nor with simple storehouses of touristic attraction. They emerge, instead, in moments in which the symbolic essence of those storehouses is contested among rival positions.

The cities from which the Dolomites are visible – Bolzano/Bozen and Venice – are culturally and historically distinct. They constitute two poles of a contested territory divided by different ethnic, linguistic, and historical frontiers – a classic example of a 'debatable land'. It is worth keeping in mind the different cultural intensity of these two poles. While Venice certainly represents the paramount example of a zone of prestige and 'civilizational attraction', and therefore an autonomous pole of attraction in its own right, Bolzano/Bozen constituted, during the period taken here into consideration, a relatively modest city on the periphery of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – a city to go through rather than a city to arrive at in an ideal tourist itinerary.

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As they meandered through their peaks and valleys, British travellers were keen to perform four kinds of comparisons: with Venice and its Romantic aura, with Switzerland and its Alpine sensationalism, with Austria and its Germanic folklore, with London and its embodiment of modernity. In the travelogues taken up here, these competing zones of civilizational prestige offer the topographical system that allowed British travellers to put the Dolomites on a tourist map and imbued them with cultural prestige.

The Victorian discovery of the mountainous background of Venice emerged as an alternative not only to Switzerland and the Western Alps, but also to the 'beaten path' of Italy and its fashionable allure. The Dolomite Mountains allowed British travellers to fantasize about a 'Petit Tour' through which they could safely recycle some travel styles or postures attached to the Grand Tour. The 'untrodden peaks' and the 'unfrequented valleys' of the Dolomite districts offered them a new Arcadia (Darby, 2000, p. 14) – a new spectacular 'fairyland' in which to perform new and old travel practices and to promote new and old travel symbols, between the watery sceneries of the Venetian lagoon and the mountainous sceneries of the Venetian highlands. The bulk of these practices and performances represent today a heritage figuratively lost in the clouds.

In the first part of this book ('Matrices of Topographic Memory'), I will present three ways of transforming an 'actual landscape' into a 'symbolic landscape' through practices that embody three different styles of travel. Chapter One ('The Alps and the Grand Tour') deals with a landscape as the aesthetic product of a 'way of seeing' a geographical 'scenery', imbued with artistic and poetic symbols. Chapter Two ('The Laboratory of the Picturesque') explores a landscape as the product of a 'way of inspecting' a geographical 'terrain', mediated through scientific and touristic symbols. Chapter Three ('The Golden Age of Mountaineering') exposes a landscape as a product of a 'way of challenging' a geographical 'playground', filtered through sportive and material symbols. The notions of 'scenery', 'terrain', and 'playground' are here proposed as three performative inflections of 'symbolic landscape', understood as a generalized sense of geographical 'space' able to supplant a localized sense of political 'place', made of 'customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits' (Olwig, 2008b, p. 166, 1996, pp. 630-631).

In the second part ('The Invention of the Dolomites'), I will illustrate the ways in which these symbols recirculated in a selection of travel discourses branding the Dolomites as a British 'invention'. Chapter Four ('The Silver Age of Mountaineering') will expose the blending of pictorial, geological, and sportive symbols in the pioneering Dolomite books by Josiah Gilbert (artist), George Cheetham Churchill (geologist), John Ball (botanist and alpinist),

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and Amelia B. Edwards (novelist). Chapter Five ('Titian Country') will show how the Dolomite Mountains became the pearl of an artistic itinerary in the Venetian Highlands. Chapter Six ('Picturesque Mountains') will expose how the picturesque features of the Dolomites acquired a symbolic value in the art of Elijah Walton. Chapter Seven ('Dolomite Close-Ups') will focus on the 'prominence' of the Dolomites as the paradise for British rock-climbers, portrayed in the feats of Joseph Sanger Davies. Chapter Eight ('King Laurin's Garden') will discuss the adoption of the Dolomites as a model for the English rock-garden, in a time in which symbols of Englishness were replaced by symbols of Austrianness, in the promotion of the Dolomites as luxurious tourist destination for the elites of Mitteleuropa.