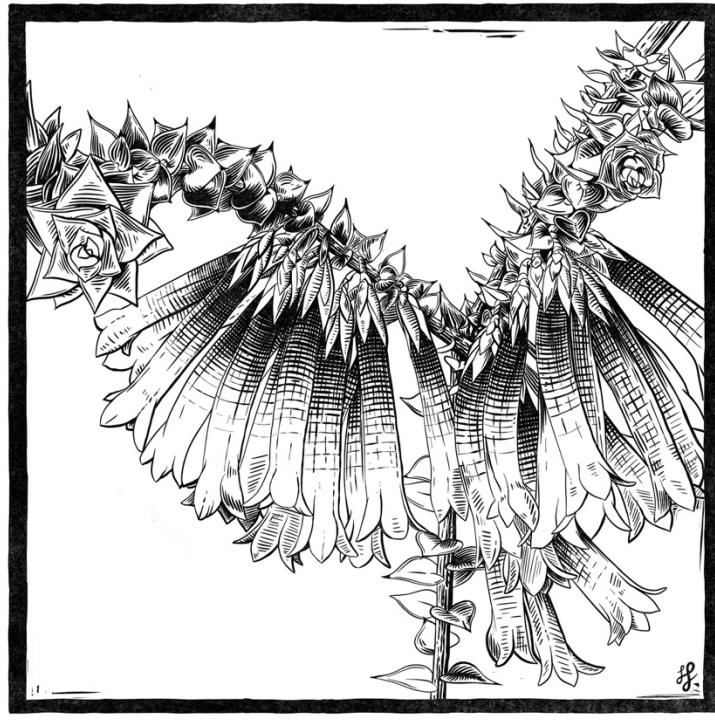


19.

COLD BEDS AND HOT POTATOES



Cigarette flower, or fuchsia heath (Epacris longiflora)

Aesi's first letter to Dr Lang during her time abroad was written from Dr Hodgkin's home in Bedford Square in December 1855. In this she mentions Caroline Chisholm was on board the *Speedy* with her and Martha and that their vessel was caught in a shipwreck, which filled their cabins with water and forced all passengers on deck. Aesi also details her first adventures in London, as outlined. The Ironsides did spend time with Sir James Clark and his wife during this first visit and the Physician-in-Ordinary to Queen Victoria, did then prepare her introductions for Rome, and became her London advisor on all things to do with Italy. The frescos in the House of Parliament were one of the Prince Consort's less successful enterprises, and among those who applied to contribute to this project, was Joseph Severn, who Sir James and Minnie Clark met during the time they lived in Rome in the 1820s. Sir James and Severn both cared for the poet John Keats in the small apartment Sir James found for them, directly above the Spanish Steps. According to Severn's biographer, Sue Brown, Severn was so broken by grief and exhaustion

after Keats' death, that he required special care from Minnie. Brown also notes Severns was bitterly disappointed to have his later application for the fresco project overlooked by the Prince Consort. Brown's biography paints Severns as a well-intended and amiable man, with a vastly exaggerated sense of his own artistic and social abilities. A bit of a trumpet bower.

Despite Sir James' publishing numerous works on consumption-related illnesses, his medical reputation suffered because of his failure to diagnose Keats, as well as a form of treatment considered cruel and counterproductive as it involved a strict diet that no doubt weakened the ailing poet. Sir James' involvement in the unfortunate scandal associated with Lady Flora Hasting further damaged his reputation such that George Villiers, Fourth Earl of Clarendon, insisted that he would not trust Clark to 'attend a sick cat'. His diplomatic skills were however unquestionable, and he so endeared himself to Queen Victoria that she continued to visit him for advice at Bagshot Park, the property she gifted him, well after he had officially retired.

In contrast to Sir James' questionable medical skills, Dr Hodgkins was a highly accomplished and well-regarded doctor who made several important medical advances, including identifying the form lymphoma which is now named after him. It is likely that Dr Lang befriended Dr Hodgkin via their shared interest in a number of philanthropic pursuits which were aligned with Dr Hodgkin's Quaker convictions, including the London chapter dedicated to the protection of Aborigines. In the 1840s, Dr Hodgkin's friend, the explorer Edward Eyre, negotiated with the famous Ngaiawang elder, Tenberry, of the Murray River in South Australia, to take his son Warrulan (or Warru-loong) and another boy named Pangkerin to England to become ensigns of sort for their people. On 26 January 1846 both boys were successfully presented to Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. Little is known about what happened to Pangkerin, other than that he died soon after this. More is known about Warrulan, who was renamed Edward, presumably after Edward Eyre, and sent to a Quaker school where he proved popular but not academic. With Dr Hodgkin's support Warrulan then secured an apprenticeship in saddle-making but in early 1855, moved to take up another position in Birmingham. After visiting the Hodgkins in London over the summer, Warrulan contracted pneumonia and returned to

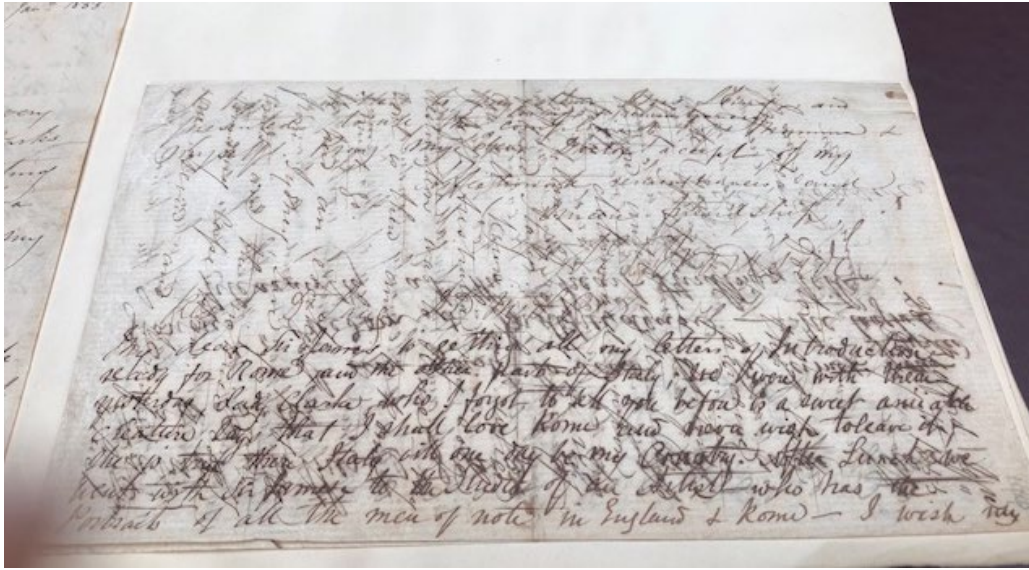
Birmingham while still unwell, only to die a few months later on 23 October 1855, around the time the Ironsides arrived in London. Although records suggest that Dr Hodgkins did hasten to Birmingham to tend to Warrulan during his final days, I do not know if this topic was ever raised while the Ironsides were visiting the Hodgkins.

I have drawn closely on the work of art historian Deborah Cherry, who has written extensively about the geographies of art and feminism in 1850s and 1860s London. In one work she includes a quote from Sophie Beale regarding the many freedoms of life available to her in London at the time, including the pleasure of eating a hot potato from a street vendor. Deborah Cherry and others such as Alexandra Wettlaufer, have produced biographical studies of female contemporaries of Aesi's such as Anna Mary Howitt, Tottie, and Eliza Fox, all of whom were active in the group of political women who became known as the Langham Place Set or the Langham Ladies. This group not only produced the *English Woman's Journal* in 1858, in which Matilda (Max) Hayes was active, but they also played a pivotal role in securing the Married Women's Property Act and in allowing women to display their work and study at the Royal Academy of Art (RA). The group's leader was Barbara Leigh Smith (later Barbara Bodichon), who was also the model for Howitt's once contentious and now lost painting 'Boadicea Brooding Over Her Wrongs'. This work was subject to such brutal criticism from John Ruskin that it changed the direction of Howitt's life. Howitt did describe her automatic spirit drawings as 'scribble-scrabbles'. I do not know if the Howitts were friends with Dr Hodgkins, but both were Quakers and knew many of the same people, including Elizabeth Gaskell and the Brownings. Sir Moses Montefiore was certainly a close friend of Dr Hodgkin's and Mary Howitt was a prolific publisher while her husband and son spent some time in Australia. The latter, Alfred William Howitt, was to earn renown as the man who rescued John King from the failed Burke and Wills expedition. He went on to produce anthropological studies.

As the Bibliography details, I have drawn upon the outstanding work of historians of the Spiritualist movement, including Alex Owen and Janet Oppenheimer. Their careful exploration of the sources details how this movement was ignited by the famous American Fox Sisters who visited

England in the early 1850s to demonstrate how their distinctive rapping techniques could be used to access the spirits in large public seances. As these historians note, the Spiritualist movement was often particularly appealing to those from dissenting traditions as they already recognised the moral and spiritual authority of women in ways that allowed them a public voice. Such dissenting traditions were also active within the Abolitionist movement and later advocacy associated with ‘the Woman’s Question’. Such historians also show how Spiritualism provided independent-thinking women, such as Aesi, with an acceptable platform, through which they could release frustration and command attention and authority. Their review of the sources indicate that Mary Howitt wrote to her husband while he was in the colonies in 1853, sensing that the growing interest in Spiritualism was such that the world seemed to be ‘on the eve of a great revelation’. I have gleaned other details about Spiritualism and the Brownings from biographies on the famous couple as well as Alex Owen’s pioneering work on Spiritualism.

Although I did not include these scenes, in Aesi’s 1855 letter to Dr Lang she also describes a visit to the studio of a famous artist and meeting Alesandro Gavazzi while staying with Dr Hodgkins: ‘My heart is too full to tell you all that I think of that noble generous courtier-like and graceful ideal of my soul’s early dreams of everything magnanimous and heroically noble, kind, gentle and warm hearted he is indeed worthy of being the idol of Italy.’ The Catholic priest who had left the faith and denounced the Pope had become something of a champion to Protestants, such as Dr. Lang, who saw the world as locked in a spiritual battle with the Anti-Christ of Rome. Gavazzi was about to produce a weekly journal entitled *The Free Word* and was preparing to return to Italy to serve as the chaplain in Garibaldi’s army.



Adelaide Ironside to Dr Lang, December 1855, SL NSW Mitchell John Dunmore Lang Papers vol 9, ML A2229/194. Most of Aesi's letters to Dr Lang are cross hatched like this one, meaning that to save paper and money, she wrote first one way, then turned the sheet to write on the side of the page. This was standard practice but can make transcribing very challenging.



Sir James Clark (left) and Dr Thomas Hodgkin (right)

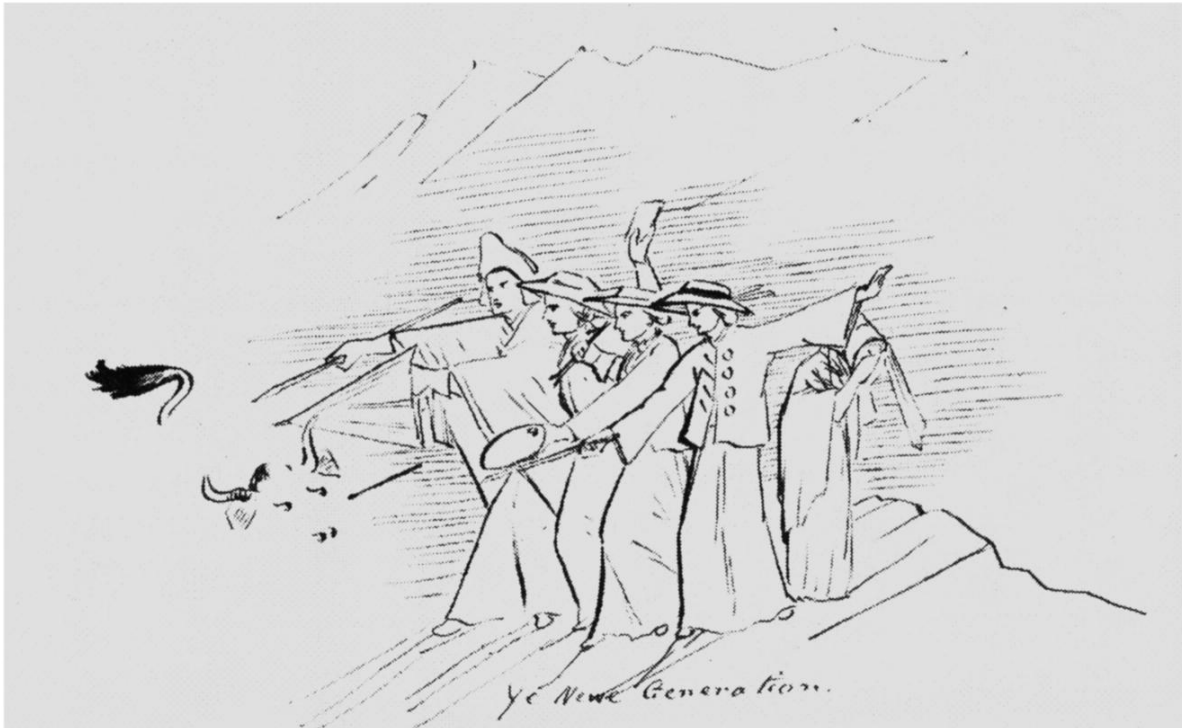


Fig. 1. Ye Newe Generation (c. 1850) by Barbara Leigh Smith. As reproduced in Alexandra Wattlauffers, *The Politics and Poetics of Sisterhood* Anna Mary Howitt's "The Sisters in Art", *Victorian Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Spring 2010), pp. 129-146.

20. THE LIKE-MINDED



Handsome flat-pea, or eggs-and-bacon (Platylobium formosum)

The Ironsides' passport featured in the opening of Part 3, indicates that Martha and Aesi left London shortly after Christmas and then spent a week or so in Paris before travelling onto Marseille. There they took a boat to Civitavecchia in Italy, where they disembarked and took a diligence to Rome. Aesi's 1855 letter to Dr Lang (cited above) describes meeting the MacDonalds en route and travelling with them thereafter, although I have imagined the nature of that meeting. My research into Rome during this period indicates that up to 35,000 people travelled from England to the Eternal City each winter, with the hope of benefitting from its healthful climate and enjoying the artistic atmosphere stimulated by established expatriate studios around the Spanish Steps. This extensive tourism required sufficient transportation infrastructure which meant that the journey from England to Italy had improved dramatically in the 1850s from the 1820s when it had taken John Keats approximately three months to travel (largely by sea) to Rome with Joseph Severn. The 1856 edition of *Murray's Hand-Book Rome*

and its Environs, then the most popular guide for English travellers of that town, confirms

By means of direct steamers and the railway from Marseilles travellers can now reach Paris in 72 hours and London in 85 hours – including a detention of some hours on landing in France and short ones at Lyon and Paris ... the outer voyage and journey can scarcely be accomplished in 4 to 4 and a half days between London, Paris and Rome – but travellers will be able to sleep at Paris, Lyon and Marseilles ... employing this mode a person may reach Rome from London, not including hotel expenses on the road and travelling first class trains and cabins, for 12 pounds and 16 shillings and from Paris for 230 francs and by second class for 9pounds and 180 francs.

The MacDonalds were lairds in Perthshire area and lived between St Martin's Abbey and Rossie Castle, which the Ironsides visited when they returned to the British Isles in 1862 for the London Exhibition. Aesi transcribed a poem from Ossian in her diary, confirming that she was familiar with this controversial cycle of epic poems which were published by the Scottish poet James Macpherson in the 1760s and believed to have been once composed by a blind seer known as Ossian, who was cared for by a woman named Malvina. These poems were highly influential during the Gaelic revival and Romantic movement and believed to comprise both Scottish and Irish stories. Soon after publication, however, the famous author Samuel Johnson, was among the many who declared Macpherson, 'a mountebank, a liar and a fraud'. While questions of legitimacy continued, so do the influence of these works.

The Ironsides' archive includes a letter from Robert Browning's uncle, also named Robert Browning. He was introduced to the Ironsides by Dr Hodgkin and appears to have worked as a banker, in Trusting Lane New Court, managing the finances for those on the continent, including his famous nephew. I have quoted from this letter verbatim. By triangulating the Brownings' correspondence with various biographies, I have been able to confirm that the Ironsides first met the couple in Paris early in the new year. The Brownings had previously been in London to oversee the publication of Robert's new book of poems, *Men & Women*, which

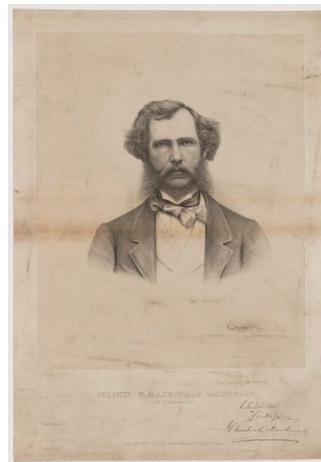
includes the well-known work dedicated to Fra Lippi Lippo. During that time, the Brownings famously attended a séance at Ealing villa, the residence of the Rymer family. The famous Scottish American medium, Daniel Dunglas Home, was their guest and had already put the suburb in a spin during his stay. In one of her letters, Elizabeth Barrett Browning (EBB) claims that Home and the spirits had been witnessed lifting tables at 90 degrees, floating accordions as spirit hands squeezed knees, lifted skirts and even placed a floral crown upon EBB's head. I have described Robert Browning's response to this event as he himself recorded it for that evening, when he sat down to write a furious letter to Mrs Kinney, who shared his contempt and loathing for such experiments.

Kinney was an American friend of the couple, who lived in Florence with her husband, who had been sent to Italy for diplomatic purposes. She features in the follow chapters, so I have described her here, as EBB did in a letter to her sister. I have also used Mrs Kinney's description of the couple from her later memoirs. I have gleaned details of Paris and the International Exhibition from various sources, including the Brownings correspondence. Another of EBB's letters confirm that on 31 December 1855, Robert Browning attended a performance by the mesmerist Baron du Potet for the purpose of trying to better understand his wife's attitude to spiritualism. This may have been prompted by the thirty-page letter Mrs Kinney had recently sent the couple describing the new 'Circle of Love' she had initiated with Home, who had recently set up in Florence after he conducted a private séance with her and the spirits had revealed secrets about her childhood and health which were unknown to even her husband. I have quoted from the Baron du Potet's writing in his speech, but I do not know if the Ironsides attended this event, nor where they may have first met the Brownings. The only clues I have regarding the nature of their meetings come from references to 'Aes' and Aezi' and Miss Iremonger' which first in the Brownings' correspondence from March 1856 onwards when Robert Browning wrote to Harriet Hosmer, while the couple was still in Paris, asking if she had yet

'seen a young lady who had a mother with her, called "Iremonger", an Australian bent on studying painting in Rome,—who made a memorable transit thro' this place at the end of last year,—

memorable, I mean, for her enthusiasm and wild ways? She had a letter for Mr Gibson, she said—how has it all turned out?’

At this time EBB was yet to complete her modern verse epic, *Aurora Leigh*, which was loosely based upon the American sculptor, Harriet Godhue Hosmer, and also intended to be a reworking of de Staël’s famous but tragic sybil, Corrine. The Brownings’ letters from Paris indicate that it was a mild winter with plentiful sunshine, and EBB began to recover after they removed from the damp and stuffy rooms they had initially rented.



Left: Baron du Potet, *La magie dévoilée, ou Principes de science occulte*I, By unknown (Life time: 19th century engraving) - Original publication; and right: WILLIAM MACDONALD FARQUHARSON COLQUHOUN MACDONALD, Esq., F.R.G.S., and F.R.S.E., of Rossie Castle, J.P., and D.L., Lieutenant-Colonel of the Perthshire Highland Rifle Volunteers, and Archer of Her Majesty’s Scottish Body Guard, born May 26th 1822, married, June 26th 1849, to the Honourable Clara Anne Jane Brownlow, second daughter of Charles, first Lord Lurgan.

HANDBOOK
FOR
TRAVELLERS IN CENTRAL ITALY.
ROME.
GENERAL INFORMATION.

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§ 1. *Hotels.*
The greater number of the hotels at Rome frequented by foreigners are situated near the N. extremity of the city in the space comprised between the Porta del Popolo, the Piazza di Spagna, the Via Condotti, and the Tiber. The *Europa*, kept by Madame Melga, an Englishwoman, in the Piazza di Spagna,

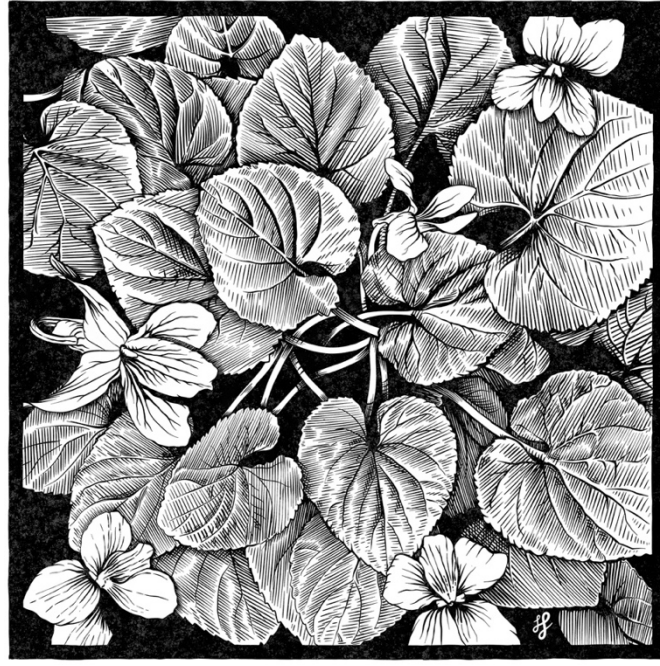
Excerpt from *Murray's Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy: Rome* (1856).



Portrait of Gordon Forlong, evangelist, and his wife Elizabeth Anna Forlong taken, probably in the 1880s, by an unknown photographer. National Library of New Zealand.

21.

VIOLATIO



Parma violet (Viola alba)

I suspect the English poets would have little sympathy for Aesi's ecstatic poetry as they strived for a style which was consciously conversational, according to the taste of the time. The Ironsides did meet Gordon Furlong en route to Italy and I have described him according to newspapers, the image below, his own publications and his correspondence with Martha. He was certainly there when Aesi first arrived and 'kissed the dust of Italy', as I have quoted verbatim from her letter to Dr Lang regarding this self-conscious performative movement as well as what Furlong said to her at the time. As we shall see, Furlong went onto build an iron tabernacle in London before migrating to New Zealand, where he earned a reputation as 'one of the last of the puritans'. The scene in the train from Paris to Marseilles is speculative, but again many of Furlong's words come from his pen, and Aesi's diary includes a transcription of Byron's *On a Skull* as well as stanzas from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* which refer to Italy. I have drawn on *Murray's Guide* to Italy regarding the advice that, Signor Lucchese was 'the last honest

and careful *veturinos*' in Rome. *Murray's Guide* also provides details about Madam Melga, who served British food at her hotel on the Spanish Steps, and the Presbyterian services which were held at the American Legation. Clara's description of first seeing the dome of Saint Peters on the route from Florence, is recounted by many, but I have taken this account from a lecture by Charles Nicholson given in the 1860s. Dickens visited Rome in 1853 and described, 'the Coliseum in its magnificent old decay ... with an electric telegraph darting through one of its ruined arches like a sunbeam and piercing direct through its cruel old heart, even grander'.



From the photographic archive at the American Academy of Rome. All roads might lead to the Eternal City, but they were notoriously uneven when Aesi and Martha were travelling there with the MacDonalds in early 1856.

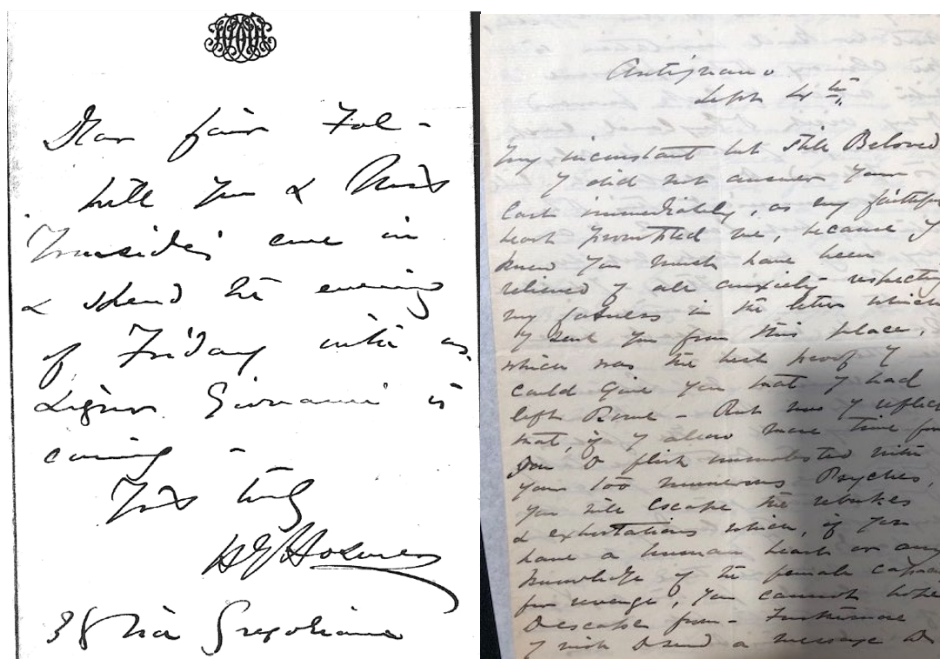
I have gleaned details about the Trattoria Lepri as a haunt of the expatriate artists, as well as Gibson's studios from numerous contemporary sources associated with this period, including those associated with his papers which are held at the National Archives of Wales (NAW) and the RA. Among those in the NAW is a menu for Caffè Greco which allowed me to speculate about what Aesi may have ordered had she gone off to meet him as he breakfasted, as I evoked this scene. As Gibson had lived in Rome since the 1820s, when he first met Sir James and Minnie Clark, he was the recognised doyen of the art scene. There are numerous published accounts of his studio, and I have drawn on these to describe his famous studio, which was based in a filthy by-street off Bambuino. Visitors were immediately struck by the stark contrast between the dirty stable door of his studio and the arcadian interior, complete with winter roses and violets as well as a 'fern covered fountain'. One account includes a description of Gibson's model, Grazia, who apparently had a furious temper and a strong sense of her abilities as a critic.

The American writer, Nathaniel Hawthorne, recalls setting eyes on Harriet Hosmer as she was working in Gibson's studio for the first time:

We found Miss Hosmer in a little up-stairs room. She is a small, brisk, wide-awake figure, of queer and funny aspect, yet not ungraceful ... she seems so frank, simple, straightforward, and downright ... She had on petticoats, I think; but I did not look so low, my attention being chiefly drawn to a sort of man's sack of purple or plum-coloured broadcloth, into the side-pockets of which her hands were thrust as she came forward to greet us. ... She had on a male shirt, collar, and cravat, with a brooch of Etruscan gold, and on her curly head was a picturesque little cap of black velvet; and her face was as bright and funny, and as small of feature, as a child's. ... She was indeed very queer, but she seemed to be her actual self, and nothing affected nor made-up; so that for my part, I give her full leave to wear what may suit her best and to behave as her inner woman prompts.

In fact, Hosmer's petticoats were full bloomers, cut like a Zouave's trousers as they allowed her to climb scaffolds. In Lady Elizabeth Eastlake's later biography of John Gibson, she describes her old friend

as ‘very handsome’ with a ‘well-knit figure, regular and noble features, strong chin deep set eyes’, and a manner of ‘extreme simplicity, blended with acute shrewdness and resolute firmness’, as well as a certain way of sprinkling ‘his assertions with a very decisive "yes", reiterated in a dry incisive tone and with a firm closing of the lips’. While he still dressed in the English style, he rarely wore a shirt collar. The Ironside archives include several letters from Hosmer and Gibson to Aesi. In these Hosmer refers to Aesi as ‘dear sister painter’ and ‘My Fair Foe’, while Gibson uses ‘Spirit’, as a term of endearment. There are several newspapers references which refer to Aesi as Gibson’s ‘particular pet’. In the RA I also found letters between Hosmer and Gibson indicating Hosmer, who Gibson often called ‘The Imp’, enjoyed exaggerating her rivalry for Gibson’s affections.



Left: Hosmer to Ironside, n.d, ML SLNSW; Right: Hosmer to Gibson c. 1861, in which she refers to herself as his neglected but doating slave and also mentions Miss Ironside, Royal Academy of Art, GI/I/189. ‘Miss Ironsides has convinced me that I need not place my youthful affections upon one who is devoted to the multitude and that my only chance of success remains with Williams ...’

Of the nine surviving letters the Ironsides wrote from Rome between 1859 and 1867, eight are to Doctor Lang and one to Caroline Clark. These give the address 113 Via Della Quattro Fontane, although sometimes this is the first or second floor, which indicates they may have moved floors after returning from periods travelling Italy or the British

Isles, or simply had an arrangement for collecting mail with the landlord. For ease of the narrative, I decided upon the first floor for Aesi's studio and permanent residence. During my spring fellowship at the American Academy of Rome, I spent seven weeks in Rome and retraced the journeys Aesi made from this apartment to visit Gibson, Hosmer, Caffè Greco and other artist residents and studios about the Spanish Steps, including that of Gibson's intimate partner, Penry Williams. While in Rome, I met the American sculptor Patti Cronin, who has written about Hosmer and so together, the Australian and American, retraced the steps of their biographical subjects, as well as the studios of the other 'sister artists' then living in Rome before concluding with a cocktail at Caffè Greco in honour of both women.

Charlotte Cushman was one of the most famous actresses of the period, and renowned for her performances as Romeo and Hamlet, in which she took the male part and her sister played the female romantic lead. Cushman moved to England in the 1840s, where she met the writer and part time actress Matilda Hays in 1848, and they formed what Elizabeth Barrett Browning described as 'a female marriage. They wore tailored shirts and jackets ...made vows of eternal attachment to each other ... Matilda was often referred to by their friends as Matthew or Max'. The pair moved to Rome in 1852, after Cushman retired from the stage. According to Hosmer's many biographers, Hosmer first saw Cushman on the Boston Stage and they soon developed a friendship, which led to the young sculptor travelling to Rome for the first time with Cushman, Hays and her father. There they all resided at Cushman's 'house, which was then considered a 'harem scarem of emancipated females ... living in heavenly unity'. Even Hiram Hosmer, Hosmer's father, was given a female name apparently, much to the disgust of an American visitor. Hosmer benefitted greatly from the patronage of Cushman who was often referred to by her friends as 'Big Mamma'. Cushman certainly gave Hosmer the use of one of her many horses but there were tensions within the party, stimulated by the fact that Hosmer persuaded Hays to leave Cushman to commence a relationship with her in 1854. That affair did not last long, however, and Hays returned to Cushman in 1855. Hosmer continued living with Cushman during this period, in fact well into the late 1850s.

I have invented Aesi's meeting of Hosmer and Cushman on the campagna, although both American women were considered excellent horsewomen and known to enjoy riding there. Cushman's later biographer, Emma Stebbins, who we meet in later chapters, recalls she had a 'bright Chestnut' named Iban with whom she also went hunting. Although this group of 'jolly female bachelors' were tolerated by some they were more often a source of fascination and admiration for others. Nonetheless, Hosmer was to be the source of several controversies during her life, and in these was more likely to receive support from John Gibson than Cushman. Indeed, sources suggest Cushman often encouraged the chorus of disapproval against her sometime protégé, suggesting the relationship remained complicated, as I have depicted it.



Left: As many biographers observe, Hosmer was an adept publicist, who pioneered visual representations of sister artists at work. One such publicity image taken while working on a giant commission of the American politician, Thomas Hart Benton. Right: "Charlotte Cushman in costume as Romeo", Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library.



Photograph of the Campagna near Rome, featuring the Roman Aqueduct built by Emperor Claudius, ca 1850-1860. Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



Anonymous photographer, 'Campagna with Riders near Ruinous Aqueduct'
ca. 1890 photograph *Victoria & Albert Museum*

22.

THE ROSES OF HELIGOABALUS

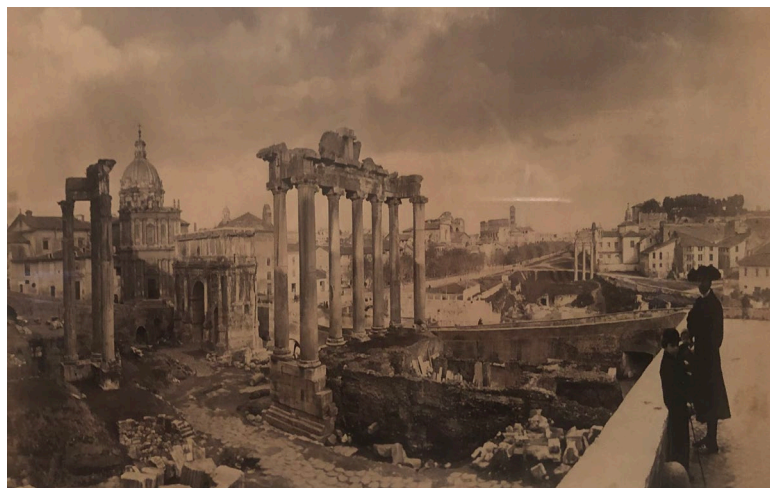


Hundred-leaved rose (Rosa x centifolia)

The first archaeological excavations of The Forum began in 1802. Between 1824 and 1834, there were a series of unsystematic excavations which became more organised in the second half of the nineteenth century. My characterisation of Aesi's first maestro, Tommaso Minardi, is based on the scholarship cited in the bibliography. The Manifesto of Purity was written by his student, Antonio Bianchini, between 1842-43. Minardi signed the Manifesto along with Pietro Tenerani, who produced Wentworth's statue in the 1860s. Another signatory was Johann Friedrich Overbeck, the most famous of the German Brotherhood of Saint Luke, also known as the Nazarenes, who set up in an abandoned monastery in Rome in 1810. The Manifesto of Purity precedes that produced by the PreRaphaelite Brotherhood in 1848, when Gabriel Dante Rossetti and William Holman Hunt nailed their 'List of Immortals' to the wall of a studio. Overbeck was one of the first to articulate a preference for Quattrocento artists such as Perugino, Fra Angelico, Fr Lippi Lippo and early Raphael, and as Hunt visited Rome

to met the much older and celebrated artists and these ideas then became integral to the RPB's aesthetic, it is possible this earlier Manifesto of Purity was an inspiration for the PRB's own 'pre-Raphael' preferences.

Letters in the RA from Gibson confirm that he did refer to his 'intimate friend', Penry Williams as 'Old Williams'. Williams was Gibson's long-term life partner, and had poor eyesight as a result of working long nights in his gloomy studio. The story of Hosmer rebuffing a man with her iron-pointed umbrella one evening while returning to Cushman's house after a night out is recounted in the Brownings correspondence. My characterisation of Miss Hayes is based upon various contemporary accounts and the fact that few of her working relationships lasted long, including those with Barbara Bodichon and the other editors of the *English Woman's Journal*, with whom she soon parted ways in acrimonious terms. 'The Cushman' was a term occasionally used by Hosmer and others to signal the way Charlotte Cushman performed her brand. The tensions I describe in relations between these women were likely the result of Hosmer persuading Hayes to leave Cushman for a spell, with Cushman then courting Hosmer's young and beautiful American friend, Emma Crow.



My photographs at the Museo di Roma in 2019 from a photographic exhibition of nineteenth-century Rome. Left: The so-called temple of Vesta, taken in 1847. The signature of Giacomina Caneva suggests it is the oldest paper print taken in Rome. Right: The Roman Forum between 1850-1855. Aesi would have encountered such views.



My photographs from the archive at the American Academy of Rome. Left: the washing hung from a windowsill to ruin which visitors wrote of. Right: A glimpse into Roman street life.



My photographs at the Museo di Roma in 2019 from their photographic exhibition of nineteenth-century Rome. A view of two avenues at the Pincio, post 1865, popular for evening walks, and familiar to Martha and Aesi.

My description of the different religious figures Aesi sees in the streets comes from *Murray's Guide* as well as Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*, which was published in 1860 and loosely based upon Hosmer and other female artists in Rome. This was the same group of lady sculptors who Henry James would condescendingly describe as 'the

White Marmorean flock’. Although I don’t know if Old Williams and Gibson had different attitudes to Garibaldi’s short-lived Roman republic in the late 1840s, Gibson was well known for insisting that artists rise above the world and have nothing to do with local politics. Indeed, he cautioned the women he mentored to remain neutral when it came to debates about the Unification of Italy, so I speculate this may have been a source of tension for Aesi, whose republican convictions were already well-developed by the time she became his ‘pet’.

The works of art described in the scene when Minardi takes Aesi to Palazzo Doria Pamphilj are those which are currently held there, and I have assumed they may have been so then. I also imagined Aesi’s encounter with Fra Lippi Lippo’s *Annunciation* as this work was highly valued by contemporary artists who felt its medieval reverence epitomised the purity of style associated with the Quattrocento artists which they strongly preferred over what they perceived of as the despised decadence of previous renaissance artists such as the late Raphael preferred by Sir Joshua Reynolds. I used this scene to illustrate the shifting attitudes to art at the time as they were to be a source of growing tension during this period and for Aesi, in particular.



Filippo Lippi, *Annunciation* (c. 1445–1450) 117 x 173 cm, Doria Pamphilj Gallery. Rome.

William Holman Hunt’s famous painting *The Light of the World* (1854), is generally recognised as one of the first, if not the first, blockbuster paintings because Hunt charged attendees to sit in a dark

room so they could inspect it more intimately in a state of spiritual meditation. This entrepreneurialism so repulsed Overbeck that he scorned Hunt thereafter. I do not know if he ever expressed himself as he did in the scene when he is introduced to Aesi, but this provided me with an opportunity to demonstrate the tensions even among artists with similar tastes. Aesi certainly met the great Overbeck, if not in the late 1850s, then certainly in the 1860s for she describes how much he admired her work in a 7 Feb 1862 letter to Caroline Clark:

Overbeck has been to see the picture he likes it very much and was very much surprised to hear that I had come from Australia - he quite warmed up and pointed to the Pilgrim and said something about my being like him. He so much admired the little sketch of genius, took it to the light and said it was said it was exquisite, beautiful for colour and form and quite pure. He said the new picture was most brilliant and full of richness and harmony...

My evocation of Cushman's Sapphic salonnière is based on numerous accounts from travellers and biographers, which all describe exotic foods being imported from America and parts of Europe, as well as Cushman's love of theatrical performances, extravagant conduct and costumes and lush interior splendours. I took some liberty however by filling the house with roses as I wanted to suggest a playful link to the myth of Emperor Heliogabalus who killed his guests during an orgy by suffocating them with rose petals.



The Roses of Heliogabalus by Alma-Tadema (1888), oil on canvas.

Cushman was known to command certain stage during these events, reprising her Shakespearean roles and performing recitals of her favourite gospel songs such as the one I have her singing. As Cushman and Hayes were on the brink of breaking up at this time and Cushman was known to be flirting with younger, prettier women, I have depicted her doing so here. Cushman's next partner and later biographer, Emma Stebbins, confirms Bushie was the name of the Cushmans' dog. Although Gibson was in a lifelong partnership with Old Williams, he also admired female beauty such that he was considered a great flirt, particularly with attractive wealthy women. Certainly, his letters in the RA and National Library of Wales include extensive correspondence with female friends and admirers. These include several from Caroline Clark, who Gibson was so enamoured with that he begged for her Carte de Visite [visiting card] so that he could use her as a model.

Isa Blagden was in Paris at the time when Dickens was residing there with Wilkie Collins as both worked on the play, *The Frozen Deep*, which concerned the disappearance of Sea Captain John Franklin during his famous expedition, apparently in search of the Northwest Passage in 1845. This topic greatly preoccupied the imagination of Victorians, including many mediums. The bibliography includes a 2018 article by Gillies W Ross who shows it was a Melbourne medium who came the closest to identifying what happened and where the human remains would be found.

GI/1/76

Clarence Cottage.
Hampton Court
Sept 17th 1861

My dear Mr Gibson,

I have been unable to send you the portraits earlier but I hope these may not be too late to find a place in your luggage.

I should have sent one of the larger portraits for your approval, but the people were too dark, & the lines too harsh - the general form was very good, but if I can get some sketch

not Mr Noble but perhaps in that my account etc. was intended that Miss Ironside should read to Mr Manning & Co

Let us not compare ourselves by ourselves but compare ourselves with Paul, with the fish, our real people, let the Spirit of God write to us that we may have a name to live whilst we are dead. - I find we require to be so careful. "to be perfect in"

You do not meet

we will we shall I trust meet around the throne and when the Lord (w^{ch} Christ says is to judge us not him) judges us may we found rejoicing in Jesus

Oh let us remember that as the tree falls, so shall it lie

Let us say "to live to love is Christ and to die to gain"

With best wishes
Richard P

John Furlong
Gordon Furlong

Tell Miss Ironside not to love the world in anything so much. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world & lose his soul?

Left: Caroline Clark to John Gibson, 17 September 1861, Royal Academy of Art, GI/1/76
Right: Gordon Furlong to Martha Ironside, Society of Genealogists 4/I2973

The term 'celestial influx' was used by EBB in a letter to Isa Blagden in regard to Aesi. I don't know if Williams was interested in the stars, but Blagden and her associates certainly were. My description of the séance comes from manuals of the period, but the lines Aesi articulates while in a trance come from *Rose Mary*, a 1881 poem by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Rev Furlong did write a rather terse letter to Martha announcing his departure:

There is something in the very air of Rome that makes it injurious to the soul and I trust you may be warned of it - I regret you not your bible but perhaps on that very account it was intended that Miss Ironside should read to you morning and evening ...

let us not compare ourselves by ourselves but compare ourselves with Paul ...

PS: Tell Miss Ironside not to love the arts or anything too much. 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul'.

23.
**YELLOW BELLS;
A VIGOROUS CLIMBER**



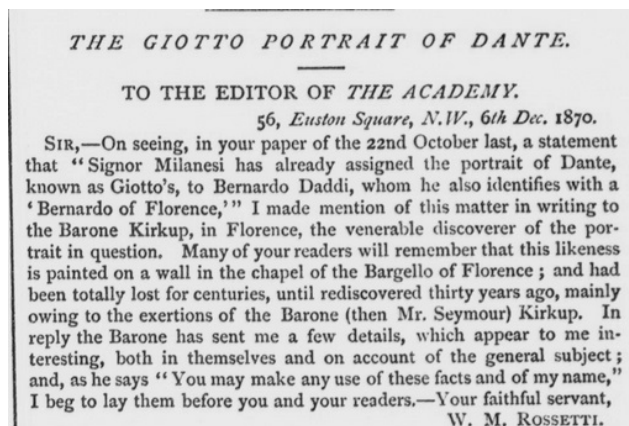
Yellow bells, or wonga-vine (Pandorea pandorana)

After much speculation and triangulation of sources I was able to confirm that the initials in the 1867 *Athenaeum* obituary dedicated to Aesi are those of Henry Wrenford who was a minor British journalist who lived in Naples and corresponded on Italian matters in the British press during this period. Very often, Wrenford was so unwell that his sister Mary wrote his column, and her despatches were much preferred. The Ironsides' passports, published in Part 3 of *Wild Love*, confirm that mother and daughter toured Firenze (Venice), then made their way through Tuscany via Bologna before establishing themselves at Florence. Torta di riso is a rice and custard tart popular in Bologna. Although the sojourns of poets such as Byron, Shelly and Keats had made touring the continent more popular in the 1820s, it was John Ruskin and his many writings about Venice which put that town on the map for touring Victorians.

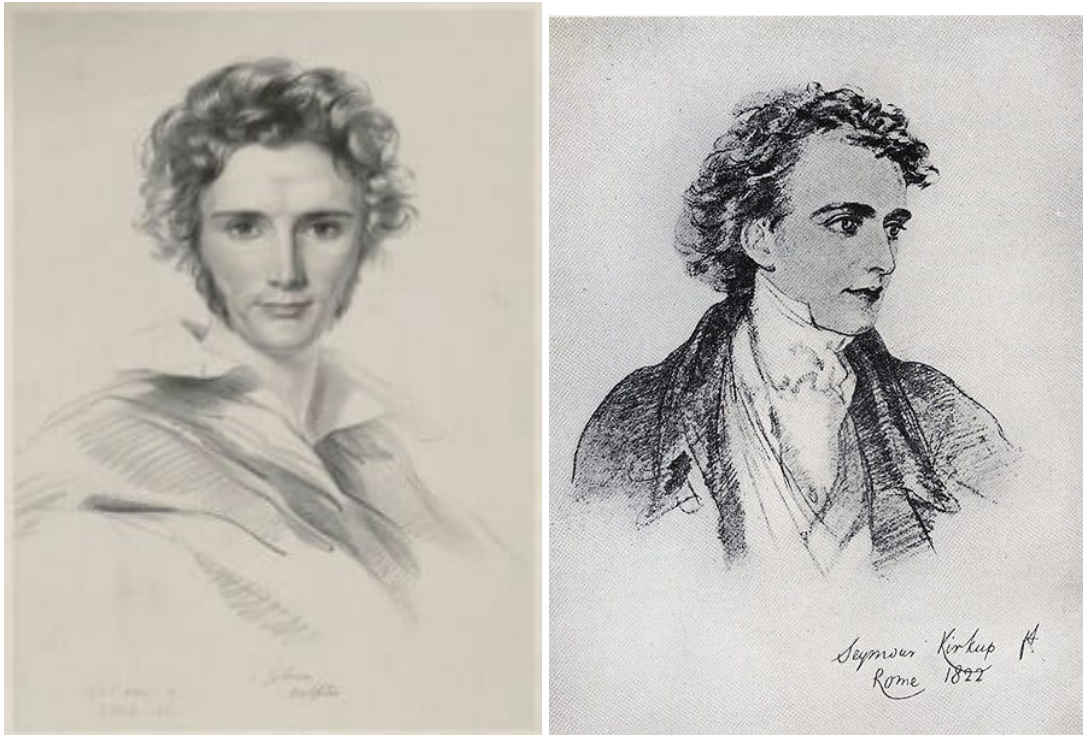
A letter to Martha Ironside from Clara McDonald dated July 1856 confirms the McDonalds had left Florence and the author had been

advised to ‘take the waters’. Clara’s letter includes references to Sir James Clark and her cousin, Gordon Furlong, and also express common contemporary attitudes to Rome, which many Protestant Evangelicals then considered ‘deadening’ because of the Pope’s influence in the town. There is also a curious statement which may be about John Gibson, perhaps regarding his sexuality, in which Clara confides to Martha that she ‘trusts’ Miss Aei will think of his soul and the soul of others – who I fear are wandering sheep without a shepherd’.

By cross-referencing the Browning’s correspondence with various biographies, I was able to confirm that the couple were in London checking the proofs of EBB’s celebrated *Aurora Leigh*. Florence was very different to Rome during the period when the Ironsides lived in Italy. The expatriates who chose to live there, rather than the Eternal City, often did so because of their devotion to the long-dead poet, Dante, or the living poet couple, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The most ardent of all Dante aficionados was the English artist and dilettante, Seymour Kirkup, who had grown up in London and studied painting with the likes of Henry Fuseli, Benjamin Haydon and William Blake. Kirkup was a handsome young man when his father, a diamond merchant died, leaving him in such straitened circumstances he had to flee to the continent in 1816. After residing in Rome for a few years where he befriended Joseph Severn, Sir James Clark, John Gibson and others, Kirkup set up in Florence in a house he named Casa Caruna adjoining Ponte Vecchio on the River Arno. By the time Aesi visited, Kirkup was the undisputed doyen of Dante and oversaw the expatriate literary circle. Although many considered him eccentric because his obsession with esoterica, few dared to cross him because of his deep connections across both Italian and English society.



William Michael Rossetti (Dante Gabriel’s brother) pays homage to Seymour Kirkup’s Dante researches. *The Academy* 15 Dec 1870, 59.



Seymour Kirkup, [John Gibson](#), 1821. Right: Seymour Kirkup, Joseph Severn, 1822.

Kirkup's voluminous correspondence in the King's College archives reveals a highly opinionated but often generous character who was convinced by Spiritualism and the mediumship of Daniel Dunglas Home. At this period when Aesi visited he was believed to have been in the thrall of Bibi, the daughter of his recently deceased housekeeper. Kirkup was convinced both women had mystical powers and there was some concern that they were taking advantage of his kindness. Nathaniel Hawthorne, a regular visitor to Florence and so intrigued by Kirkup that he made him the subject of several short stories, including one which mentions Kirkup's deafness and the little bells he tied to some fishing lines cast from one of the windows facing the Arno.

Kirkup's papers in the King College archive include three letters to Severn, who still served as British Counsel in Rome for some of the 1860s. These are worth quoting in some detail as they provide useful context to understanding attitudes to Rome which Severn considers 'the new Jerusalem of Art' art, as well as Aesi's art and spiritualism. Most importantly, Kirkup makes a few comments about Martha's attitudes and influence upon both, which helped to shape the way I constructed their

relationship as they provide insight into how Aesi's talents may have been constrained by the more socially anxious Martha.

The first letter from Kirkup to Severn is dated 18 August 1861 and expresses disgust for what he considers a foolish preference for imitating the ancients espoused by Overbeck before insisting that he never considered the German artist anything more than 'an ignorant humbug'. After discussing Severn's current 'Gothic or Christian treatment' of the Marriage of Cana, he turns to the topic of Aesi, who was then working on her own version of this subject:

You have no chance, nor Miss Ironsides, who is all wrong, and has mistaken her vocation. Scripture subjects are worn out. They make no impression, like old-fashion music or sermons. The public sleep over them ... You say people are fascinated and never recover their sober reason. They must be crazy, I suppose. Take care of yourself. you talk of a new Jerusalem of Art and breathing in company of its immortal spirits! Now real Spiritualism is a science that requires the greatest exercise of reason. You are afraid of being carried off your feet ... Miss Ironsides has some favourable dispositions, but her stupid mother cramped them and she has gone wrong ever since she went to Rome amongst ignorant people, until she has fallen into the vulgar and commonplace, by all accounts. I can only judge from hearsay. I hate the cant about Art and Artists, her art, and my art, artistic gossip of art and artists and early art and primitive art, love of art, &c, &, I never called myself an artist; I said painter once; I had rather have added glazier than artist. All the tea-drinking old maids were full of their pretty artists and all the little drawing-masters, daubers and parasites of art were full of the name, while the great were always sneering at it. One told me he had a clever artist travelling with him. It was his cook. A lady bestowed the title on her hairdresser. It is not that I care for such classification, for I am very democratic, but I am sick of the vulgar cant and find that others are so too, so if you publish anything avoid it. The word is prostituted and blackballed. ... I have a drawing by Miss Ironsides of an angel and a child she saw in a crystal of mine. It is not much but it is enough to prove that she had the faculty, a rare one, and

more valuable than worn-out Bible pictures, thanks to her mother and Roman advisers.

On 23 June 1864 Kirkup wrote again to Severn, still British Counsel, after recommending Daniel Dunglas Home to Severn and asking him to protect Home ‘against the Jesuits and priests’ in Rome who he fears will turn Home out of Rome for being ‘an imposter’ or ‘sorcerer’ when he has found him to be ‘a man of honour’ and very generous’, Kirkup then asks after Aesi:

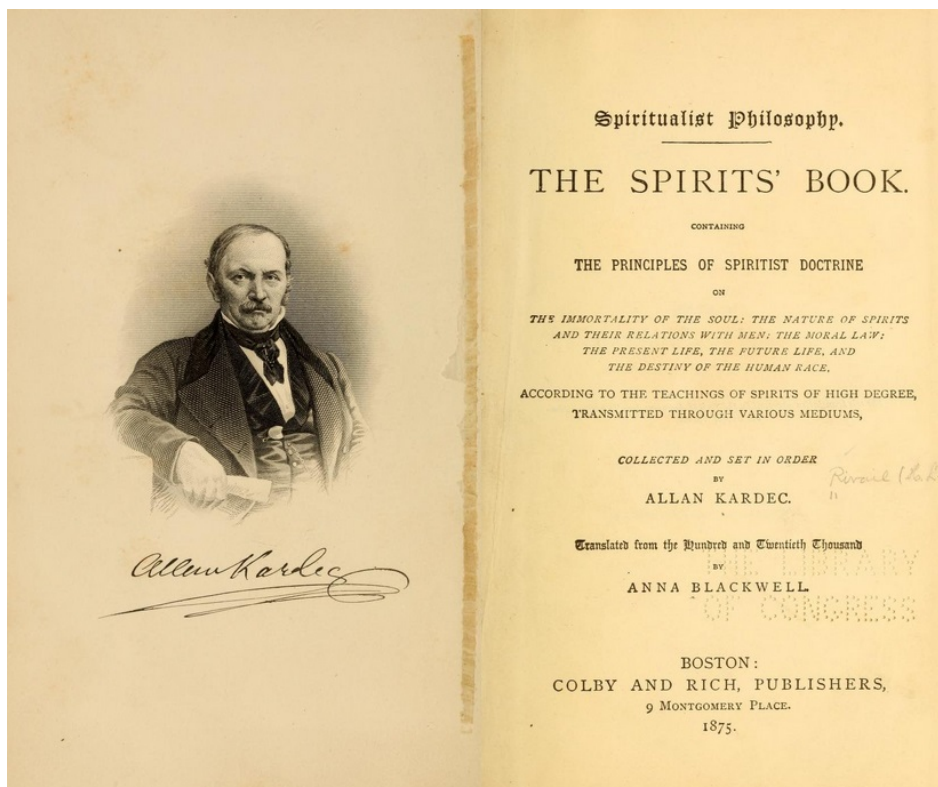
Do you ever see Miss Ironsides? A friend of hers (Mrs Ramsay) lately came to see me. Miss Ironsides was gifted as a medium, but her weak, vulgar mother extinguished her, and encouraged her in commonplace studies under the direction of snobs, when she might have been a painter of the imagination, like my old friend William Blake, who I thought was mad, but I don't think so now.

There is a third letter from Kirkup to Severn dated 4 April 1868, which I refer to in more detail in the Notes for Chapter 30. In this, Kirkup refers to ‘a drawing of a *vision* she (Miss I.) had drawn in my house, which vision she saw in a crystal ball.’ I drew on these sources as well as broader contextual reading about the Brownings life in Florence to construct much of the Ironsides’ time in Florence. Below is a photograph of Kirkup taken two years before his final encounter with Martha in 1868.

Although I do not know the circumstances associated with the Ironsides’ visit to the Brownings’ famous Florentian home, Casa Guidi, EBB certainly wrote to Isa on 4 July 1857 about an incident which had occurred the night before, when they had been interrupted by Mrs Kinney, who was once more vehemently opposed to Spritualism. ‘Think of Mrs Kinney arriving in the midst of Aizee. Robert ran down to prevent her coming up— I dare say she is angry—’ Combined with other letters in the *Browning Correspondence* from this period, this tantalising sentence stimulate my speculations about the nature of their conversation as well as ‘Aizee’s’ possible performance. I understand from these that Brownings did take a conservative attitude to Italian politics and speculate that this would have been a point of difference with Aesi who was probably more inclined to admire the radical actions of the

outspoken Englishwoman, Jessie White, who was stirring up trouble in Genoa with Mazzini.

Likewise, this scene includes a reference to Allan Kardec, who was born Hippolyte Leon Denizard Rivail in 1804 and respected as a man of science as well as a member of the Society of Natural Sciences of France before he met a ‘magnetizer’ who persuaded him to meet a medium who gave him the mission of being ‘the spokesperson of the Dead’. Kardec took to his new assignment with energy and scientific thoroughness, eventually publishing an account of the answers he received to the one thousand questions he posed to ten distinct mediums, all purportedly unknown to one another. He was so convinced by his findings that he published his first book on ‘Spiritism’, entitled *The Spirits’ Book*, comprised these answers and other matters concerning the nature of spirits and the spirit world also advanced a belief in universal unconditional love, as espoused by Daniel Home and other mediums. This proved highly unpopular with Evangelicals such as Gordon Furlong and Mrs Kinney, who were greatly invested in notions of sin and eternal damnation. There is no evidence that Aesi engaged with *The Spirits’ Book*, but she did describe herself to Ruskin as a Christian Spiritualist and these attitudes were very much a part of that movement.



Allan Kardec's *The Spirits' Book* (1857), seen here in its 1875 third edition.

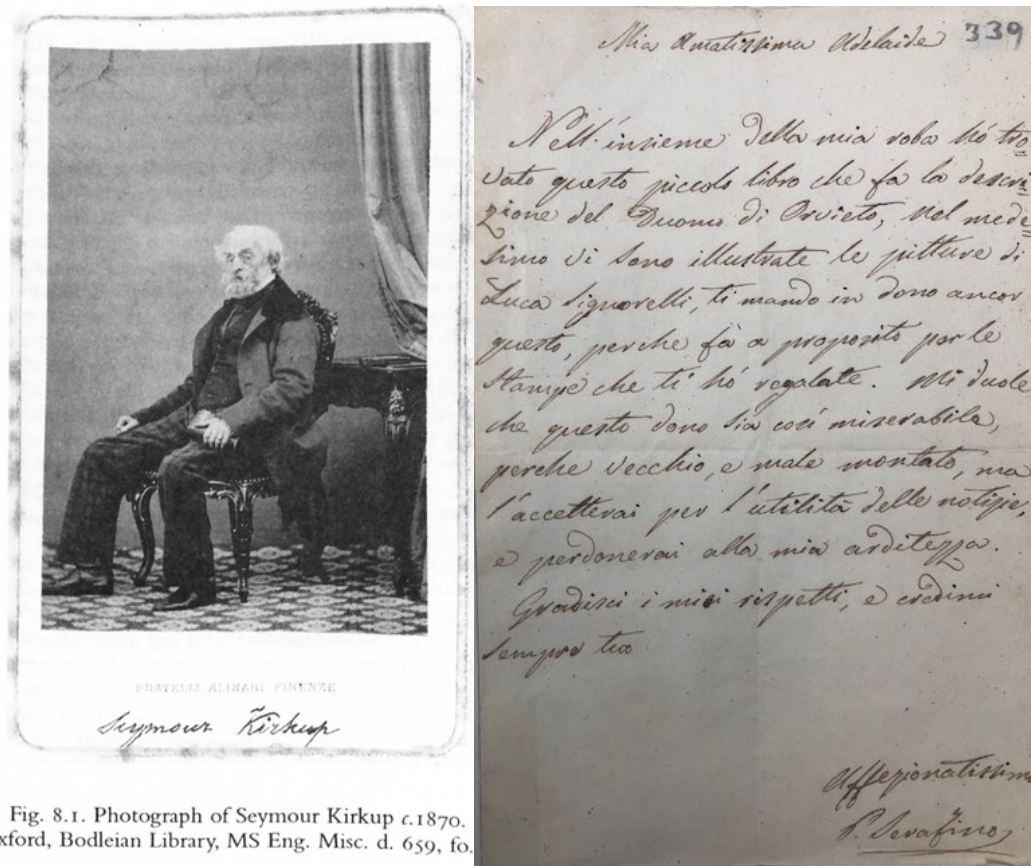


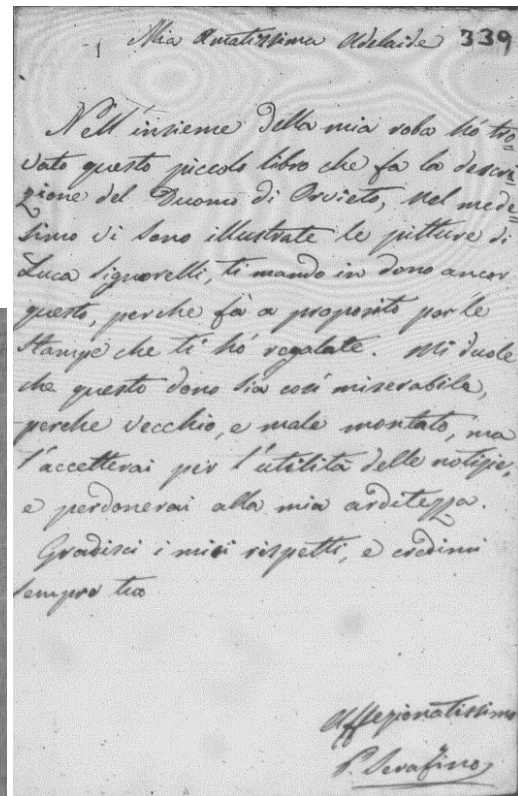
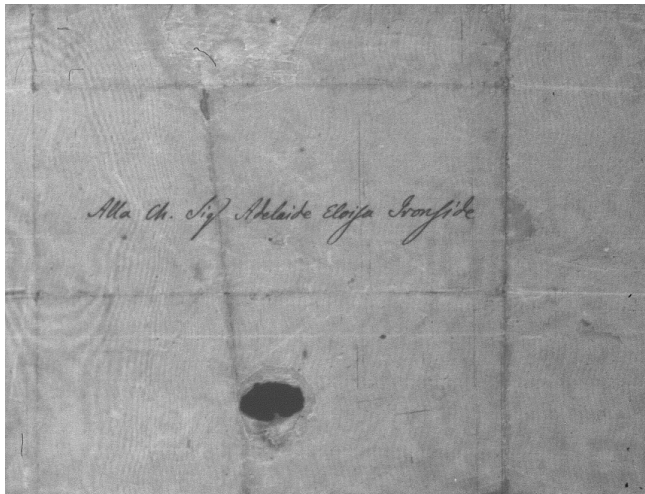
Fig. 8.1. Photograph of Seymour Kirkup c.1870. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. d. 659, fo.

Left: Seymour Kirkup as he was photographed two years after his 1868 encounter with Martha Ironside, Right: Guidotti, Serafino to Adelaide Ironside, 12 September 1860, Ironside Papers, ML MS 272/327

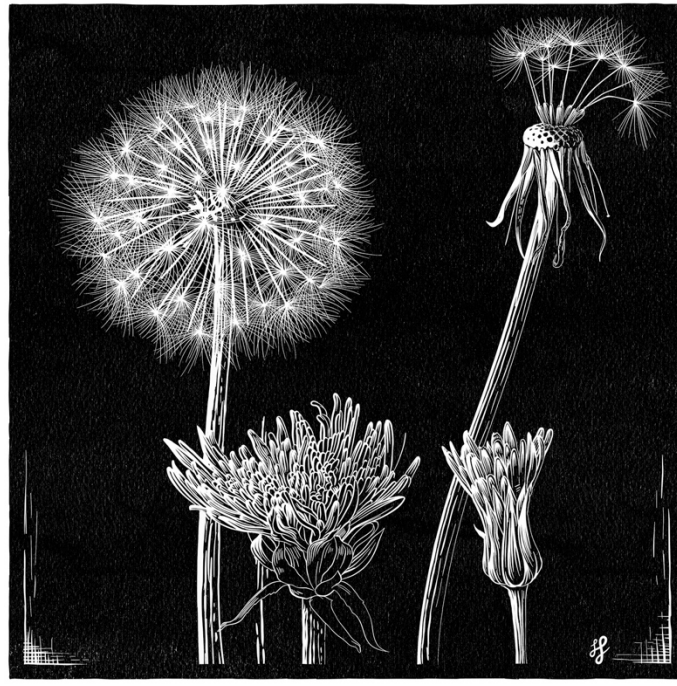
The details associated with Charles Nicholson’s travels are gleaned from his passport, which is still held in the University of Sydney archives where Nicholson served as the very Chancellor. I am extremely grateful to the work conducted by an Italian postgraduate researcher who was working at the archives when I visited. He not only generously shared his careful transcribing of Nicholson’s passport with me but also exchanged his opinions about the nature of Nicholson’s collecting project in Italy as well as his thoughts regarding expatriates and the Risorgimento in ways that then shaped my approach.

There are four letters from Padre Serafino to ‘My Australian Adelaide’ in the Ironsides’ Papers. Each is highly effusive and includes references to paintings bought and sold, which align with contemporary descriptions of the priest as a man of enterprising talents who was keenly interested in the art industry in Rome, particularly in expatriate purchases. The memories of John Thomas Hynes, later Bishop of Leros and

Apostolic Administrator, later Vicar Apostolic of British Guiana, 1843-1858, notes that he purchased seven oil paintings from Padra Serafino, six being originals; 'four landscapes ... three Madonnas'. This scene in the marketplace with Sir Charles purchasing antiquities from the University of Sydney is fabricated but not beyond the realms of possibility.



24. DANDY LION; OR THE PRINCE AND THE PILGRIM



Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale)

Several comets illuminated the skies in the mid-nineteenth century, including the comet observed by Giovanni Battista Donati from the Florence Observatory on 2 June 1858, described as ‘a small nebula-like object of magnitude 7 near the ‘head’ of Leo’. By August, this comet had become visible to the naked eye, and in early October came so near to the earth that many in the Northern Hemisphere were startled by the sight of ‘a brilliant object with a long, scimitar-like dust tail’ and feared it was an omen. There were, of course, rich traditions associated with reading the sky which had influenced different parts of the Northern Hemisphere for millennia. The Roman Catholic church had distilled many into their own distinctive astronomical and astrological teachings, although the influence of Enlightenment thinking upon the church would continue to separate symbolic and scientific thinking as the century progressed. Nonetheless, in an 1863 letter to Dr Lang Aesi refers to the prophecies of ‘a certain learned padre’:

‘There are prophecies of great heat here for this summer especially in the month of the Lion, which is August and there is a

certain learned padre at the Roman college who prophesies such awful and fiery heat that to use his language ‘by the Almanack from 63 blood is to start boiling from the veins and great fevers are to ensue desolating Rome’ –‘

These and other references in Aesi’s correspondence and contextual research compelled me to re-present a little of the wonder which was still intrinsic to the nineteenth-century world at this period.

My descriptions of Perugia are drawn from the time I spent there in 2018, as I followed the Ironsides’ footsteps from their rented room on Via San Paolo, across the unstable cobblestones of the piazza to Cappella di San Severo. During my time there, I also conducted research in the Perugia House Library and was delighted to find Mrs J Westropp’s *Summer Experiences of Rome, Perugia, and Siena, in 1854* (see bibliography). During Mrs J Westropp’s 1854 visit, for instance, she describes being deposited beside a goat track at the foot of a misty valley and having to wait for a peasant to arrive with his ox and cart so her party could be taken up the long and winding road into the ancient hilltop town. Mrs J Westropp also stayed at Hotel la Corona where she enjoyed warm breakfast rolls, albeit without butter, as this was a curious scarcity. The Ironsides’ Papers include numerous letters from two monks of the Camaldolese order which was then associated with the Cappella di San Severo which was built on an ancient temple to the Sun God and boast stunning views of Umbria. Aesi appears to have experienced a particular attachment for the region, for in the second letter she wrote to Dr. Lang since leaving Sydney, she mentions her time in Perugia and her love of ‘the mystical school of Umbria’:

When we were at Perugia last summer (an Etruscan city of past time) I became the disciple (poetically) in art of a monk-ecclesiastic of the noble Order of Camaldolesi. My monk-master possesses the secret of his convent, the painting in fresco or fresh-lime upon wall, and for ‘poleia’ [sic] he accepted of me as his ‘Discipola’ iin art, and taught me how I shall fresco the University etc., ... ‘Neath the first fresco of Raphael in the ancient sacristy of his convent, I bcame (one of my dreams of old)

the disciple of a monk, a painter and an aged man vested in pure white' ...

'We have been now some years in Italy and have never been once to England since we left in 1855 - I am quite happy here as regards my beautiful Italia, in this classic land I have my food in the spiritually artistic; with the real old Masters; the grand prophet poets of the past, my soul's soul unburthens itself how in these seers of the beautiful the spirit of the past and mystical school of Umbria become almost Divine. I feel a sympathy deeper, more earnest and pure in this mystical school than in any other, from its exactly suiting firstly and truly with my own early seclusion from the world. Its abstract spirituality and mysticism elevate the soul to God.'

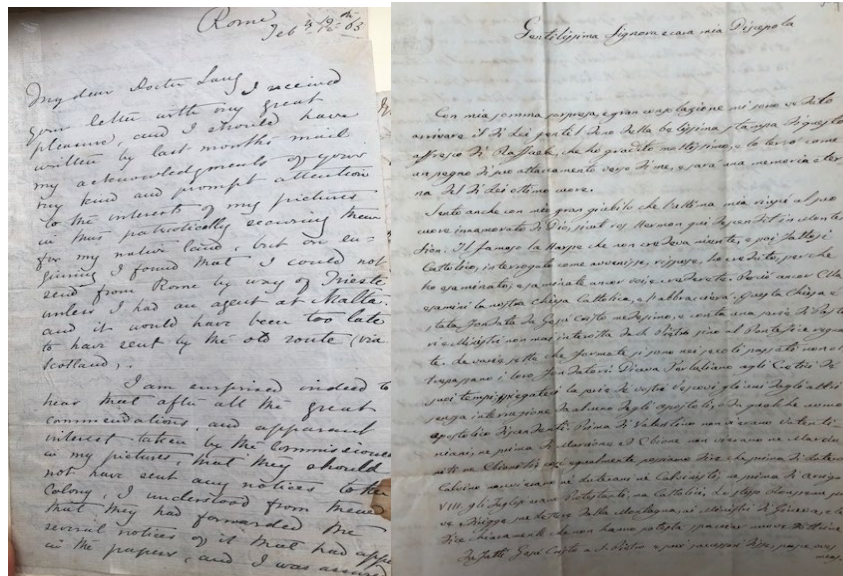
Although we do not possess a complete manuscript version of this important letter, a transcription was published as one of nine letters included in *The Catholic Press's* 3 Feb 1900 account of Ironside, 'The Fairest Daughter of Sydney'. It highlights how yet again, Aesi charmed and befriended an elderly male mentor, this time in the form of the monk, Giovanni Gualberto Bonfiglio, whose correspondence in the Ironside Papers suggests an affectionate attachment to 'My Most Kind lady Adelaide', as well as some admiration in her ability, and a clear desire to convert her to Catholicism. Pope Pius IX was so intent upon the conversion of the large expatriate communities in Italy (largely Rome and Florence) that he encouraged his many orders to befriend Protestant women as he believed they were most receptive to the rituals and sensibility of his faith. This certainly worked with Lady Russell, who we meet in this chapter and who, much to the horror of the Protestant community in Rome, converted during this period.

The Fairest Daughter of Sydney.

Adelaide Ironside.

A FRIEND AND PUPIL OF RUSKIN. HER ROMANTIC CAREER

'The Fairest Daughter of Sydney', a 1900 account which includes transcriptions of several important letters. *Catholic Press*, 3 Feb 1900, 4.



Left Adelaide Ironside to Dr Lang, 12 Feb 1863, SL NSW Mitchell John Dunmore Lang Papers vol 9, ML A2229/236. Right From Giovanni Gualberto Bonfiglio to Adelaide Ironside, November 1858, Ironside Family Papers SL ML A2229/309

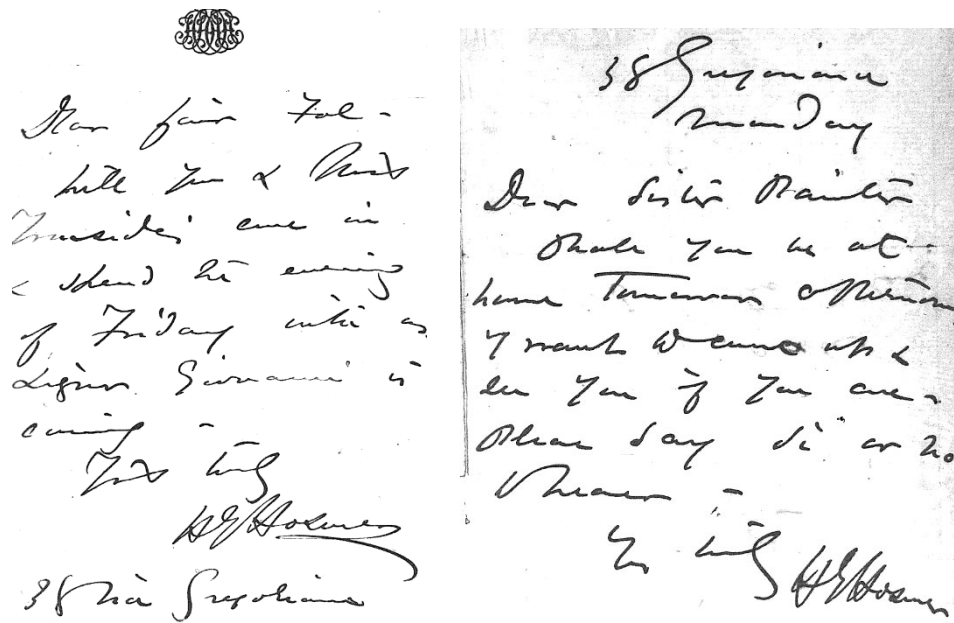


Adelaide Ironside, White Bearded Monk, n.d. Private collection

I do not know if Sir Charles Nicholson ever visited Perugia, let alone recommended its frescos to the Ironsides, but the works of Perugino, who was named after the city of his birth, were highly regarded during this period. Mrs J Westropp also described the pleasures of picnicking among the sangfroid and dandelions outside the Etruscan walls of the hilltop town and how the locals would promenade through the trees about certain city gates during the summer evenings. She also mentions how the blackened broken bricks of the own town walls tell the stories of past sieges and how the residents suffered during these events due to the

absence of a well, which once established was perceived as a source of political freedom as well practical benefit.

I know nothing of the family with whom the Ironsides resided in Perugia but the women of the town were often described as fearless warriors so I sketched the three sisters, Alcmena, Attilia and Innes as Mrs J Westropp describes in her account so they could tour their town with Aesi, including the Etruscan tunnels and medieval fountain which is still adorned with astrological symbols according to the harvest seasons.



Harriet Hosmer to Adelaide Ironside, n.d. Ironside Papers

In 1858 Hosmer was working on what would become a seven-foot sculpture of the third-century leader Zenobia, but at the time she described a ‘monstrous lump of clay’ occupying her new studio. Although Hosmer and Aesi were both described Gibson’s ‘pets’, references in multiple sources suggest the American sculptor did not entirely take to the Australian painter. In a letter dated April 1856 to the Brownings, for instance, Hosmer responds to Robert’s initial enquiry regarding if she had met ‘Miss Iremonger’:

You ask about Miss Ironmonger too, I do know her, that is have seen her two or three times— She seems to be a queer body & told someone she didn’t mean to study anatomy lest it should destroy

the poetry of womanhood— Whew!!! I haven't seen any of her performances yet—am going—

This statement is contradicted by the date on the nude sketches (Private Collection) which feature in *Wild Love* and were produced before Aesi left Sydney. Like the relationships both women enjoyed with others, theirs was clearly complex, for in the few surviving hastily written letters from Hosmer, she refers to Aesi as 'Sister Painter' and 'Fair Foe' while in a letter to Gibson (RA) she makes a point of referring to 'Miss Ironside' as a source of unfair competition for Gibson's attention. The two women had very different sensibilities. Where Aesi, the slightly younger of the two women, had mystical inclinations and a self-proclaimed 'enthusiasm for the invisible' as well as a slightly theatrical preoccupation with death, Hosmer had lost several family members as a child and maintained a hale disposition which recoiled from death. The two women differed socially too. While references to Aesi's 'performances' suggests she liked to command the room and her poetry expresses an intensity which could be oppressive, Hosmer was all wit and wisecracks, with the physical disposition of a tom boy. These qualities had been cultivated by Hosmer's father, who encouraged her to run, swim, ride horses and shoot game to ensure she remained healthy, after his wife and other children had died of consumption. Hosmer did receive the Diploma di Socio Onorario from the Accademia dei Quiriti during this period and I suspect this further stimulated the rivalry between Gibson's two pets.

Lady Russell was the mother of Odo Russell, a respected diplomat who was originally based in Florence but moved to Rome to watch over Joseph Severn during this period when it became clear that Severn was a dangerous liability in the role of British Consul during a period of political sensitivity associated with the Italian Wars for Unification. Lady Russell was a woman of considerable accomplishments who enjoyed a broad European education and was praised by Byron in his poem *Beppo*, as 'one whose bloom could, after dancing, dare the dawn'. I do not know if Aesi met Lady Russell during her time in Rome but it is likely that she would have encouraged Aesi to produce a holy subject such as Saint Catherine, which Aesi was working on during this period, as Lady Russell

was then in the process of converting to Catholicism. Dovizielli's Drawing Materials was at Via del Babuino in Murray's Guide of Rome.

Charlotte Cushman did return to Rome at this time, in the company of a young and devoted American sculptor named Emma Stebbins, who would remain Cushman's devoted life partner and upon her death, become her biographer. Florence Freeman was another American sculptor who arrived in Rome at this time, again under Cushman's aegis. In her 2022 article 'Finding Florence Freeman', Jacqueline Marie Masacchio, describes how Freeman soon became enamoured with Hosmer who, letters suggest, increasingly found her hero-worship irritating and oppressive. In a letter from Cushman to Hosmer's childhood friend, Emma Crow, she wrote 'Hattie has been making use of Florence Freeman as a fag ... it is hard work to love Hattie for she will not suffer any human being to hold her one moment longer than she pleases'. As Masacchio also notes by May 1864 Hosmer had run out of patience with 'the inexpressive she' who:

'... drives me almost mad with her silence and non-want of comprehension but seeming want of it and utter inability to make any response to any thought feeling or action. I tried hard to be patient but nearly broke down several times.'



Left: Emma Stebbins, Middle: Ann Florence 'Flori' Freeman. Right: Sophia May Eckley twenty years earlier in 1841 with her half-sister Hannah Tuckerman Mason.

I don't know if Nathaniel Hawthorne attended the celebrated party associated with Cushman's return to Rome, however, it is very likely as he certainly knew the famous actress. He appears to have had an ambivalent attitude to 'little Hatty' who partially inspired his novel *The Marble Fawn*, which he was then writing. I have drawn their conversation from dialogue in his novel and my description of Hosmer's appearance is based on his description of her in his letters to others from this time. Likewise, I do not know if the Brownings attended this event, but they certainly knew Cushman, and biographers confirm they were in Rome that winter and in the constant company of the wealthy Americans, David and Sophia Eckley. Records suggest William Charles Wentworth arrived in Rome before family to commence sitting for Tenarani who then produced the statue which still stands in The Great Hall at the University of Sydney.

Although an undated letter from the British artist William Ewing to Martha confirms the Ironsides had domestic assistance during their time in the Eternal City, Rosa is an imagined character, who I constructed in keeping with the way contemporary accounts frequently represent relations between domestic classes and expatriates in Rome during this period.

The account of the young Prince of Wales's visit to Rome and Aesi's studio is based on Aesi's own account, contextual research, newspaper reports, and Gibson's papers including correspondence from Colonel Bruce. As Gibson had enjoyed many commissions from Queen Victoria and was well-regarded as the doyen of the art world in Rome, Colonel Bruce asked him to devise the studio visits for the Prince and his party, and to accompany them each day. I contacted Windsor Castle and other royal authorities associated with their art collection to confirm what artwork the Prince purchased from Aesi, but they claim to have no record of her work, although Aesi certainly told Dr Lang that he did purchase a work and this appears to have been a source of considerable pride for Martha, who I have made the narrator of this event. As the later subscription pamphlet for Aesi's *Australian Wild Flowers*, indicates several flowers were missing from the original folio, I speculate the young Prince of Wales was drawn to the mighty Waratah, the prince of Australian native flowers.



These are photographs of the studio of Mariano Fortuny from the 1870s but evoke the sense of spectacle which made them such a delightful destination from the Roman tourist. Although the Ironsides had more straightened circumstances, Martha and Adelaide's rooms probably also strived to create a sense of theatre for their visitors, my photographs at the Museo di Roma in 2019 from their photographic exhibition of nineteenth-century Rome.

The British newspapers from the period indicate the Prince attended the Easter mass to hear the Vatican choir sing the celebrated *Miserere*. One of Aesi's letters to Dr Lang describes attending the same event and seeing Prince in full uniform on that occasion. I have drawn my descriptions and Aesi's response to Michelangelo's art from contemporary accounts. Curiously, in a late-nineteenth century colonial newspaper account Aesi's stepbrother, Frederick Ironside, recalls how she used to hang from a hammock in the Sistine Chapel so she could sketch the famous ceiling. Although this was tempting to include, I found no accounts of any artist being permitted to doing so at this time, let alone Aesi. It is possible that Frederick Ironside conflated this with the later episode when Aesi secured permission from Pope Pius IX to visit the Convent of Saint Mark in Florence so she could study the frescos of Fra Angelico.

The newspapers of the period indicate this was a particularly fraught period in relations between Italy and England and the primary reason Queen Victoria sent her eldest son, the future king, to Rome on a soft diplomacy mission. Nonetheless, the once liberal pope Pius IX was so anxious about various threats to his earthly rule, that he choose to transform Holy Week into something of a theatrical spectacle or show of strength. Thus, the crowds associated with the famous Festival of the Barbary Horses was said to be particularly boisterous that year and the Pope did also order the arrest of the respectable Roman gentlemen who protested for the relinquishment of his earthly dominion. Early spring

in Rome was also famous for its sirocco winds which blasted a ‘blood rain’ of desert heat and dust over the town.

Although the colonial newspapers confirm Mary Redman died at the home of her son, William Redman on 25 February 1859, I fabricated the letter from Uncle Jo as there was no reference to this in the Ironside Papers and therefore no way of ensuring that the Ironsides received notice of this important family news.

Funeral the Friends of Mrs Mary Redman relict of the late Mr John Redman are invited to attend her funeral to above at 10 o’clock in the forenoon of Saturday ... from the residence of her son Mr William Redman, solicitor, Mr Flood’s cottage corner of Elizabeth and Devonshire streets Sydney to the Old Burial Ground.

25 February 1859, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8.

Again, there is nothing in the archive to indicate the nature of relations between Mary Redman and her daughter, Martha, let alone her granddaughter, Adelaide Ironside. The trial records associated with Mary Redman’s transportation to New South Wales and smattering references in the colonial archive however suggest an assertive and improvised temperament which may not have been compatible with Martha’s more refined sensibility. There is certainly no reference to her convict past in the family records. Dr Deakin is listed as an English doctor based in Rome during this period, and also inscribed his name into a copy of his book of *Flora of the Colosseum* which he gave Aesi and remains within the family’s private collection. The Austrians declared war against the French and allied forces during the Easter Holy Week.

25.

UPRISINGS



Pope's pennies (Lunaria annua)

Contemporary accounts of Rome in early spring are so effusive, it is possible to describe the flowers in bloom, including the Lunaria, also known as the Pope's Pennies, which I chose for the opening flower to draw attention to the presence of Pope Pius IX, who becomes a central force behind the scenes in this chapter. The phrase 'roses, roses all the way' quote comes from one of my favourite Robert Browning poems, *The Patriot*. Using his celebrated conversational tone, Browning's 1855 poem recounts the changeable fortunes of one who is welcomed in town as a hero one year:

It was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day.

The air broke into a mist with bells
The old walls rocked with the crowds and cries.

Had I said, 'Good folks, mere noise repels -
But give me your sun from yonder skies!'
They had answered, 'And afterward, what else?'

But then a year later, makes his way down the same road 'in the rain ... a rope cuts both my wrists ...', his forehead bleeding for the stones which the crowd fling at him because of his 'misdeeds'. The poem allowed me to acknowledge the best of Browning's distinctive style and observational skills in ways that also hint at the precarity of Aesi's life, which is further destabilised in this chapter thanks to her encounter with him. During this period of the Risorgimento, the pope did order the cutting of all telegraph wires as a means of controlling communications in and out of the Eternal City. My depiction of expatriate and local Italian attitudes to the Risorgimento, or Italian Wars of Unification, is based upon the secondary contextual research I conducted for this project, as well as the two months I spent retracing Aesi's travels in Italy, which included a month or so as a Visiting Fellow at the American Academy in Rome. During that time, I consulted numerous libraries, archives and art galleries and visited several state and local museums dedicated to this time period. These indicate that different regions and classes in Italy often held starkly different attitudes to Garibaldi, Cavour and Risorgimento. Nonetheless, as scholar Kees Windland has shown (see Bibliography), British Protestant antipathy to perceived Papal despotism and Roman Catholic corruption was so entrenched among so-called British elites and liberals of this period, that not only did few question the righteousness of the wars but most championed Garibaldi as the great hero of their age. Thus, as Windland shows, Garibaldi's mission and later visits to England became something of a lightning rod for these attitudes which explains why he and his Hunters of the Alps became so celebrated, particularly among expatriate communities, such as those which clustered about the Spanish Steps. For a time, the French Emperor, Napoleon III was likewise revered, particularly by EBB whose capacity for hero-worship was such that she seemed to have elevated him to the status of Italy's saviour.

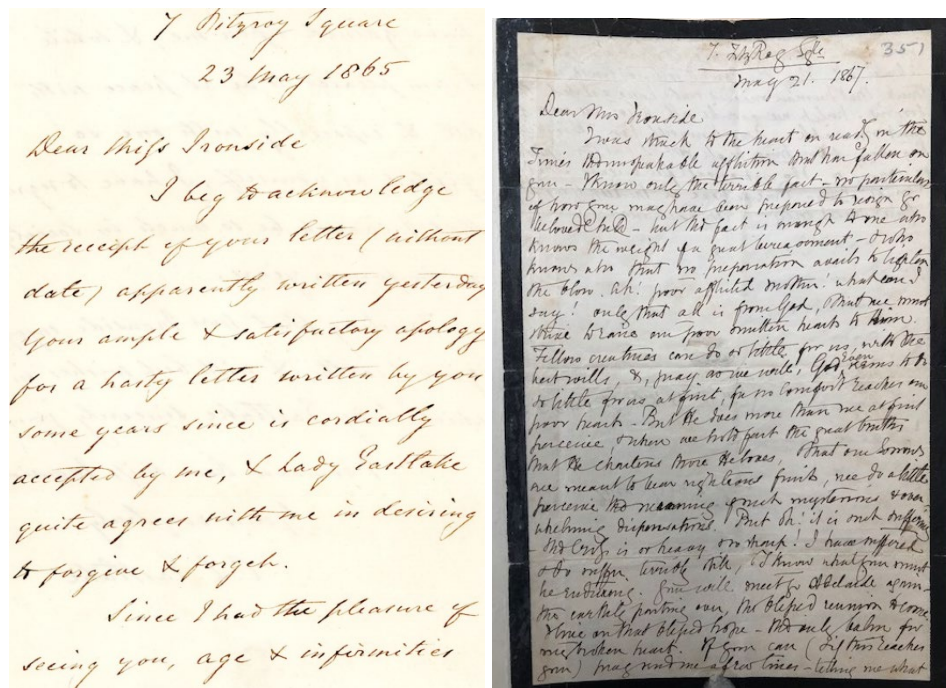
The industry of Victorian mourning culture has been subjected to significant scholarly study, including the excellent 2020 special issue 'Life Writing & Death' of the *European Journal of Life Writing*, edited

by Jane Wildgoose & co. I sourced the details of the Ironsides' mourning rituals from sources in that special issue as well as my own research in the British and Wellcome Libraries.

In *Beyond the Frame; Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain, 1850-1900*, Deborah Cherry, gives an excellent account of the rise of 'artists and militants' between 1850 and 1866 when women such as Barbara Leigh Smith (later Bodichon), A.M. Howitt, Matilda [Max] Hays and many others who later became known as 'the Ladies of Langham Place' began to advance practical reforms associated with women-only art classes and reading rooms, as well as political matters concerned with the Married Women's Property Acts and women's working conditions. Cherry's purpose is to demonstrate how 'the politics of feminism connected to the practice of art' and she commences her first chapter with a brief account of the day, in mid-July 1860, when Laura Herford entered the schools of the RA, after 'a brilliantly orchestrated campaign to secure the admission of women students to an institution which had excluded them since its foundation'. In fact, this event had only been possible because Herford had only signed her application with her initials, which meant that her drawing had been accepted on its own merits and the relevant masters were obliged to accept her work accordingly.

There are several references in Aesi's papers which suggest she may have been aware of this momentous event, or at least, conscious of the lobbying work being undertaken by her sister painters in England. Harriet Hosmer was certainly aware of these activities, and something of a celebrity for many of the women closely associated with these movements. Thanks to their friendship with John Gibson, both women were also acquainted with then-Director of the National Gallery and President of the Royal Academy, Sir Charles Eastlake. Indeed, in her 1862 letter to Caroline Clark, Aesi describes his recent visit to her studio: 'Sir Charles Eastlake was in Rome in the summer and came to see my picture - he was delighted and praised it very much indeed. He admired especially the composition, beauty and grace of the whole and even at the time - the colouring ...' However, a letter from Sir Charles Eastlake to Aesi dated 1865, suggests there was an altercation between the colonial artist and England's most established art figure of the age in the

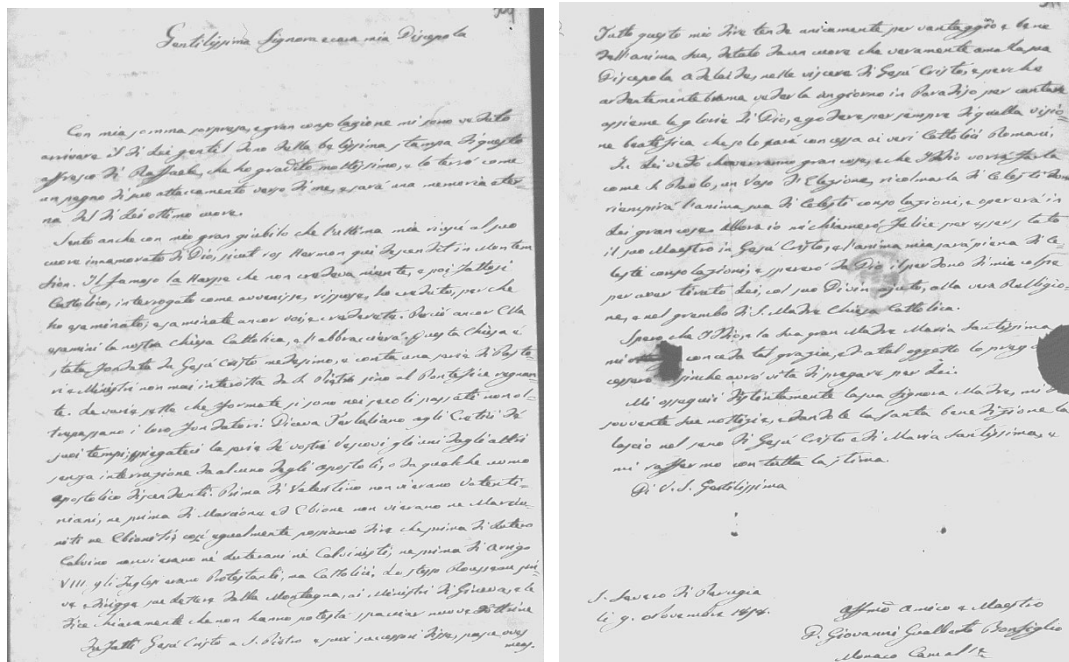
intervening years for which Aesi felt compelled to apologise. Although the RA's annual Summer Exhibition had always displayed works by female artists, I suspect Aesi's first work, Saint Catherine may have been rejected, perhaps because she was a colonial artist based in Rome.



Left: Charles Eastlake to Adelaide Ironside, 23 May 1865, 4/12973 Ironside Australian Society of Genealogists (1 of several pages). Lady Eastlake to Martha Ironside, 21 May 1867, SL NSW Mitchell Ironside Family Papers, MSS 272/1/351

In Susanna Avery-Quash and Julie Sheldon's biography of Sir Charles and Lady Eastlake, *Art for the Nation: The Eastlakes and the Victorian Art World*, they detail the complex political context the Eastlakes regularly negotiated as the art world's power couple, particularly in regards to the demands female artists were then making in regards to the RA. In 1859, numerous women signed a petition demanding to enrol as students in the RA schools of art and once Laura Herford secure her status as an RA student in 1860, the Academy to allow other women to join those ranks. There are no letters from the RA in the Ironside Papers, nor reference to Adelaide Ironside in any of the catalogues associated with the RA Summer Exhibitions between 1855 and 1867, but there are several letters from Charles and Lady Eastlake, including a moving letter from Lady Eastlake to Martha written in response to news of Aesi's death. As Charles Eastlake died in Italy in December 1865, the claims he makes of ill-health in his letter to Aesi were clearly sincere.

A surviving letter to Aesi includes fresco instructions from Father Giovanni Gualberto Bongiflio:



Fresco Recipe from Father Giovanni Gualberto Bongiflio to Adelaide Ironside, 9 November 1858, ML MS 272/309-311 Pages I and 3.

After reviewing the above translated several times, I drew the details for Adelaide’s fresco experiment directly from the above letter composed by the elderly monk who Adelaide befriended in Perugia. I have envisioned this period as one of grieving and retreat for Martha and Aesi, compounded by the war raging throughout Italy but in fact there is little in their archive to provide any insight into their actual conditions in 1859 and 1860, other than the fact that Mary Redman did die in early 1859 and the Brownings were residing in Rome during this period.

The church still known as Sant’ Andrea dell Fratte is in easy walking distance from the Ironsides’ apartment on Via Quattro Fontane and Hosmer’s sculpture of the tomb of Judith Falconnet had been commissioned and installed there, making it the first work by a female artist to be included in an Italian church. It had become something of a pilgrimage for Protestant women mourning others of the ilk, during this period and correspondence confirms that both Brownings greatly admired this work. The extensive surviving correspondence to and from both Robert and Elizabeth Browning during this period has made it possible for biographers to trace events in such detail that they have also

been able to speculate about the nature of the break down which occurred with the Eckleys. Like many Victorian women, EBB was in the habit of forging rather intense intimacies with other women, who then became like sister figures to her, and in so doing probably alleviated some of the suffering she experienced regarding her own somewhat estranged family. Such was EBB's friendship with Isa Blagden, who Robert also came to confide in. However, due to EBB had fragile health and the fact that women were constantly fawning over the poetess, Robert Browning was extremely cautious, even territorial regarding those who sought to inveigle their way into their inner circle.

At this particular time he was even more so than usual due to the fact EBB had recently lost three very close people: John Kenyon, who was something of an uncle figure to them both, Mary Trep sack and her father, with whom she never reconciled after she married Robert Browning. I have drawn upon the Brownings Correspondence to describe the nature of EBB and Mrs Eckley's spiritual experiments, which involved automatic writing, spirit hands and 'discerning of spirits' as well as Mrs Eckley's attempts to channel messages from EBB's dead relatives. Although, it must be said that EBB encouraged Sophia to think of herself as a medium and that she claimed to 'too timid and afraid of being known' as such.

There is absolutely no evidence that Aesi participated in any of these experiments, nor that she spent ever met Mrs Eckly, nor spent time with the Brownings during their winter in Rome. However, the barbed nature of Robert Browning's later comments about Aesi to mutual acquaintances Isa Blagden and the American sculptor, William Wetmore Story, suggest there was a rupture and I have speculated that this was caused by Browning's well-known loathing of Spiritualism. Keen to 'show' rather than 'tell' this speculation, I have woven her into the well-known episodes which occurred during the Brownings' winter in Rome as EBB came to realise Mrs Eckley was a fraud and Robert then banished the American couple from their inner sanctum. As these events were unfolding at roughly the same time Napoleon III made the treaty with the Austrian King Franz Joseph which concluded the second Italian War for Unification by restoring much of Italy to papal control, EBB was devastated. Biographers speculate that EBB then suffered a breakdown as

a result of the two disappointments—Mrs Eckley’s betrayal and Napoleon III’s treaty. Robert was certainly sufficiently concerned to rapidly leave Rome and I have drawn much of the dialogue from these scenes directly from their letters. I have given Mrs Eckley a bouquet of heliotropes as I believe these were one of the flowers she saw in one of her visions.

The Massacre of Perugia is a recorded atrocity which received significantly less attention in the British press than it deserved because it was eclipsed by news associated with the Battle of Solferino. Nonetheless the suggestion that the three fictional sisters might have been victims of the bloodthirsty violence perpetrated by the French and Papal soldiers helped to evoke the horror of this event. There is no mention of it all in the Perugian monks surviving correspondence to Aesi, but given that correspondence in and out of the Eternal City was regularly checked during this time, perhaps that is not surprising.

This chapter concludes with Aesi commencing work on a new and ambitious oil painting, *The Pilgrim of Art*, which she refers to in a letter to Dr Lang as ‘a cartoon’. Although the actual work has since deteriorated beyond repair, all descriptions of this work in *Wild Love* are based on Aesi’s comments, those in the colonial newspapers and a black and white photograph which was taken in the 1930s.



My photographs of the local Romans captured in the photographic exhibition of nineteenth-century Rome at the Museo di Roma in 2019.



Antonio e Paolo Francesco D'Alessandri, Zouaves on the Steps of the Castle in Mentana, 1867, my photographs at the Museo di Roma exhibition of nineteenth-century Rome.