

A painting of a man in 18th-century attire, wearing a large grey bowler hat and a white coat over a red waistcoat and white cravat, looking out over a landscape. In the foreground, there are classical statues and ruins. In the background, Mount Vesuvius is visible. The scene represents a typical view for tourists in Italy during the Victorian era.

JOURNEY TO ITALY: Mass Tourism, the Victorian Age, & the Modern Novel

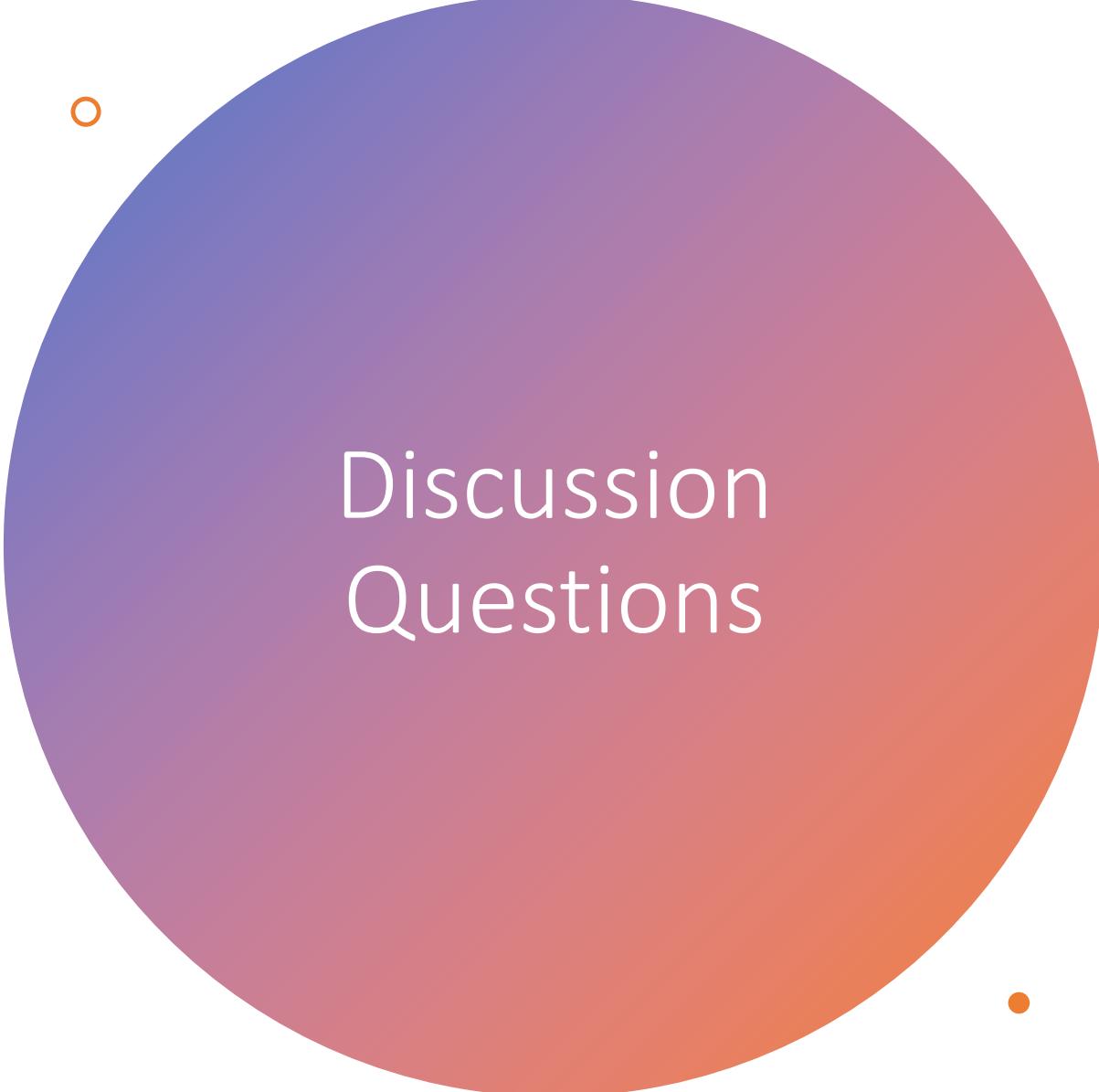
December 18, 2020

Make-up Final Class

- We will not have class on Friday, Dec. 25th.
- Our make-up class will be Sunday, Dec. 27th at 8AM, Beijing time.
- You can attend class with out regular class link.
- Two people have marked that they are unable to attend on Sunday morning (Mike, Sophia). I will record the class and send it to you. IT should be available to watch within 48 hours.
 - Those of you have marked that you can attend on Sunday must be there.
 - You can join with the usual class Zoom link.



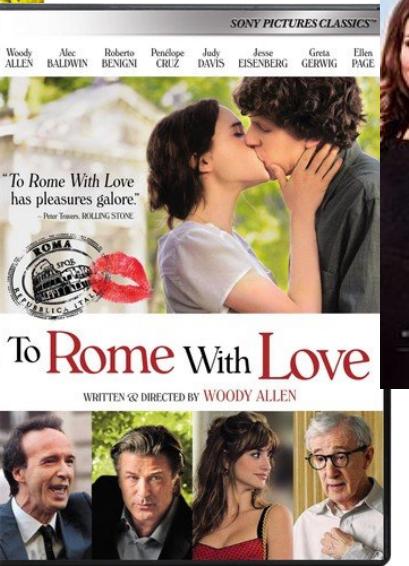
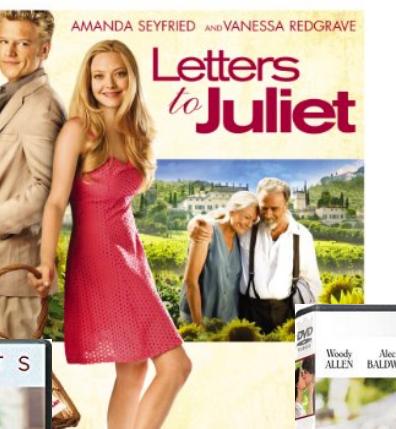
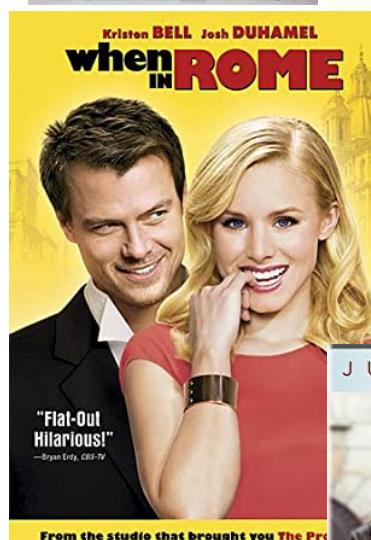
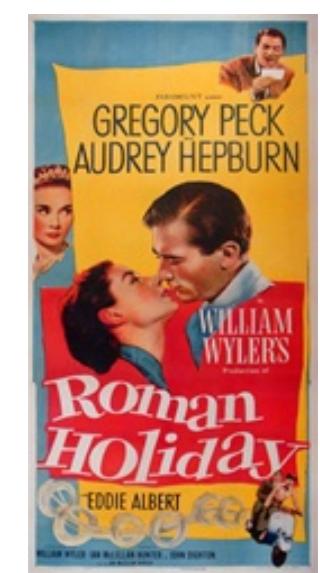
A Room with a View



Discussion Questions

PP. 97-99:

1. GROUP 1: What role does the concept of 'view' play in this section, especially as it relates to past discussion of 'view' in the book?
2. GROUP 2: What role does literature play in this section? How does literature in this section relate to other types of literature, and its role, in previous sections of the novel?
3. GROUP 3: What role does Italy play in this section? How is Italy's role in Miss Lavish' novel similar to or difference from Italy's role in Forster's novel? What do you make of this similarity/difference?



Chapters 17 - End

- What happened in these chapters?
- What happened of import in these chapters?

Lucy Speaks Up for Herself (106)

- Why does Cecil's opinion of Lucy change (in the way Lucy wanted it changed) in the moment that she leaves him? Forster says it has to do with the relationship between desire and loss, but I suspect there is more and it relates to Cecil seeing her as a 'living woman'.
- What is Lucy claiming that Cecil has done to her? How could we put this in academic or theoretical terms?

Lucy Speaks Up for Herself (106)

- What could we call this moment for Lucy? How could we define or give a title to what has happened here?
 - Lucy's emancipation
 - Lucy finds her voice
 - Lucy gains agency
 - Lucy transitions from an abstract model to a concrete individual
 - What else?
- Also, who else in this novel needed to be emancipated, be individualized, gain agency/voice? And do they transform as Lucy does?



Discussion Questions

- Stop and really meditate on the bottom of 109 when Mr. Beebe begins to talk about ‘romance’ and Romance’. He says so many meaningful things and he says it in completely the wrong moment when neither of his interlocutors is listening and when no conversation can begin that might unfurl the many important ideas packed in here.
 - GROUP 1
 - What is the difference between romance and Romance?
 - Why do young people in 1908 say romance is dead and what do they mean by ‘romance’ when they say it is dead?
- GROUP 2
 - What do you think romance/Romance means in 1908?
 - What does the idea of the view in an exotic land have to do with romance/Romance here?
- GROUP 3
 - Why does he say they want the pension Keats?
 - And what does all of this have to do with the ways we have treated romance/Romance in this course?

Phaeton Speaks Up for Himself? (Chapter XX)

- What do you think about the line “The cab driver, who at once saluted him with the hiss of a serpent, might be the very Phaeton who had set this happiness in motion twelve months ago” (129)?
- What do you think of the Italian refrain throughout the final chapter and the reference to the singing cabman in the final lines. “The song of Phaethon announced passion requited, love attained.”?
 - Has Phaeton gained any of the egalitarian rights or any of the narrative agency and personhood Lucy has gained?
- Finally, this final seen is a return in many ways. It is a return to spring. It is a return to Florence and Italy. It is a return to the original room. It is a return to the same view that began the story (“Lucy, you come and look at the cypresses; the church, whatever its name is, still shows.” (129)). That which is different seems, apparently, to be only George and Lucy.
 - What, finally, does Italy *signify* in this story?

Takeaways?

- Perhaps we can say that egalitarian and progressive attitudes in 1908 have not quite progressed beyond the boundaries of the nation.
- What else can we say?
- What is the state of affairs regarding travel writing and these same themes/concerns in the late 20th and 21st centuries?



COURSE EVALUATIONS

- Please fill out the course evaluation
- DO NOT include your name. This is **anonymous**.
- Please send your evaluation forms to LYDIA **without your name in the file name**.
- LYDIA, when you have them all, please forward them to me, via email, in no particular order.

Reading Questions

- ET IN ARCADIA EGO: I have included the Auden poem because of its title, obviously, but also because it is relationally interesting. Auden was the English translator of Goethe's *Italian Journey* and he spent a great deal of time in Italy himself. He is also Joseph Brodsky's sponsor and mentor as he transitions from life in the Soviet Union to life at the University of Michigan, where he was a poet-in-residence and professor.
- WATERMARK AND IN OTHER WORDS: We have discussed various ways in which authors have engaged Italy. One of the ways Italy was engaged by the Romantic poets was as a place of both Paradise and Exile. WE will consider how Italy is somehow both of these things to the two writers we are reading for the final class, Joseph Brodsky and Jhumpa Lahiri. Keeps those ideas in mind as you read and consider how the concepts are similar to or different from how they were used by poets like Byron or Shelley.

Reading Questions

- WATERMARK:
- Brodksy says on page 2 that “the Italy I had in mind at the moment was a fusion of black-and-white movies of the fifties and the equally monochrome medium of my métier.”
 - How does this relate to our class discussions of the construction and imagination of Italy for travelers? (see also 18-9)
 - What does he mean by the last words of the quotation? To what/whom do you think he is referring precisely?
- Based on the different types of tourists we’ve seen form across the two hundred years preceding Brodksy’s arrival in Venice, why do you think it’s important that he note to himself that ‘I felt inconspicuous’ (2)? What kind of tourist do you think he’d like to imagine himself as? What kind would he like to differentiate himself from? (See also page 12).
- Consider how we have discussed that foreigners use Italy as a narrative device, as a tool for their own personal story. Is Brodsky doing this? Is he doing something else? Engaging Italy differently? I think page 3 is a useful place to start this consideration.
- I have spent a lot of time in this course discussing how people (women or locals) can be objectified, turned into aesthetic objects (often in the case of women), by the narrative gaze (often male, often a tourist in the case of travel literature). Consider how the excerpt starting with “I saw the only person I know in that city” and ending with “visual properties.” (4-5).
 - What do you make of these lines in light of our previous discussion about the relationship between the gaze, aesthetic judgment, and objectification of people/landscape? What do you make of the final line of her description “Besides, she was a Veneziana” (5)?
- Venice is described almost immediately as infinite, primordial, mythological (Buddha, Cyclops, Minotaur, Ariadne, Eden), ideal. How does this description relate to trends we have seen in previous works and authors?
- “What follows, therefore, has to do with the eye rather than with convictions, including those as to how to run a narrative. One’s eye precedes one’s pen, and I results not to let my pen lie about its position.” (10)
 - This reminds me of certain introductory claims made by Stendhal and Twain. Particularly in the case of Stendhal we see that truth claims are really a signal of where the author is deceiving us. What do you make of this truth claim? Is there more truth to it or is it always a mode of deception in writing to claim that you are being 100% honest?
- Why do you think he references Poussin twice on page 10? What is he trying to summon in our imaginations?

Reading Questions

- WATERMARK CONTINUED:
- Here it comes again, the word ‘romance’. What does it mean here? Are you surprised that it’s always brought into the traveler’s frame when it comes to Italy? (18)
- Brodsky introduces Venice in a prolonged section (pp. 18-20) as explicitly discursive. It is like the places struggles to, as he says, come into the “three-dimensional”. Why do you think he spends so long introducing the many ways he was introduced to Venice before arriving in Venice?
- Who is Brodsky citing on p. 21? Is this interesting to you? What might it signify?
- “Once or twice over these 17 years, I’ve managed to insinuate myself into a Venetian inner sanctum, into that beyond-the-amalgam labyrinth of Regnier described in *Provincial Entertainments.*” (23-24) In his allusion to the ‘true’ Venice, what does he reference? Why is this notable?
- Page 50 talks about how Venice is at risk of sinking. Brodksy proposes a solution that I find extremely problematic and extremely in line with foreign writers’ treatment of Italian spaces since we read Goethe and his assessment of Italian archeologists at Pompeii. What do you think?
- I would argue that the woman as object of gaze and the city as object of gaze nearly become a single object in Brodsky. The woman becomes ‘it’, ‘the sight’ and the city becomes ‘her’. What more might one say along this line of thought?
 - In this same line of thought, on page 56 he discusses the city as like a woman and how avaricious men want to ‘rape’ her. He seems to speak as if he is not one of these men, don’t you think? I would argue that tourists more than any other group of men (capitalists, industrialists, etc.) have raped Venice. What do you think about his privileging of his use or misuse of the city?
- Consider Brodsky’s treatment of gondolas, starting on p. 63, and our discussion of how the tourist gaze on the heritage city requires it to stay the same. Byron rode gondolas as the locals did back when gondolas were an authentic aspect of city living. What role do gondolas play now? Are they still authentic? If not, why do tourists ride pay so much to ride in them?
- How does the final excerpt we read return Italy, return Venice, to its roots in the Romantic imagination, which, I have argued in this course, have come down to us, discursively, as the ‘real’ Italy?
- I think it’s wishful thinking on the part of the traveler to claim that “the city is static while we are moving.” (68) Would we claim this of a city we lived in?

Reading Questions

- IN OTHER WORDS:
- You know I like that frontmatter. Titles, dedications, etc. Look at the frontmatter and tell me what you notice. Jhumpa Lahiri is an American author whose parents were immigrants to the US from India. What language does she write this book in?
 - Why does this make it immediately different from previous travel writing we have read?
- This version of the book has been written in a second-language and translated into the author's mother tongue by, not the author herself, but by Ann Goldstein. Why do you think this may be?
- What does writing in a second language, a language the authors isn't certain of herself in, the language belonging to the travel destination, add to travel writing?
- We have seen many 'discursive Italies' that become the models for the expectations of authors' experiences of actual Italy. We have seen guidebooks, travel memoirs, artwork, film, novels, all act as discursive introductions and models for the actual place. How does Lahiri's discursive introduction to Italy differ from the others (she specifically notes "I didn't buy a guidebook" (17))? Why is this, perhaps, significant?
- Lahiri says of her Italian-English dictionary (as opposed to the choice of guidebook) that she brings it everywhere with her in Italy and that "It guides me, protects me, explains everything. It becomes both a map and a compass, and without it I know I'd be lost" (17) Again I wonder, what is different between this model of 'guide' and the 'guidebook' model?
- Pay particular attention to the chapter 'Exile' and consider how we saw Romantic poets treat exile in Italy and how it compares to Lahiri's treatment.
- Lahiri mentions in 'Exile' that Italian/Italy seems to be on the other side of a locked gate and that "Marco and Claudia give me the key" by speaking in Italian instead of English to Lahiri. She says: "In spite of all my mistakes, in spite of my not completely understanding what they say. In spite of the fact that they speak English much better than I speak Italian." (23)
 - It stands out to me, it's almost shocking to me, that for the first time in this course we have two Italian individuals who not only have names of their own, they have agency, and, most importantly, they, rather than the traveler, posses the 'keys' to Italy. What do you think?
- In "Impossibility", Lahiri talks about the difficulty of grasping, let alone possessing, the foreign. How do you think this compares to past foreign writers' treatment of the foreign?

Reading Questions

- IN OTHER WORDS:
- How does Lahiri's "Venice" compare to Brodsky's *Watermark*?
- What role does the traditional discursive romantic Italy we have seen in past writing play in Lahiri?
- In "The Second Exile" I wonder what the relationship is between Exile and Paradise in Lahiri? I have dealt with these terms largely together as it seemed they were developed that way in Romantic poetry and in Brodsky. What about here?
- Lahiri says "Books are the best means – private, discreet, reliable – of overcoming reality." (61) She says this just before coming to the realization that her exile was not a true exile and that her truest exile is from the definition of exile itself. It makes me think that this treatment of exile and paradise in other writers might have more to do with an exile into literature itself rather than in Italy. Do you have any other ideas?
- For the first time in this course, we get the author setting a scene in which she (not the Italian) is the foreign other in the Italian city (63). How does it make her feel to be treated this way? How does this resolve some of the objectification of Italians that we have seen in previous writing?
- Who has the power in scenarios of 'foreignness' that Lahiri describes in 'The Wall'? What does this do to the power dynamics, the Other and other dynamics, the relegation of agency, that we have seen as wholly one sided in previous narratives?