

# ITALIA ROMANTICA

*English Romantics and Italian Freedom*

RODERICK CAVALIERO

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## English Romantics and Italian Freedom

By Roderick Cavaliero



In the eyes of the English Romantics, Italy was not a nation but Italia, a place inhabited by the ancients. Theirs was a view shaped by the eighteenth century, the age of the Grand Tour, when no future nobleman's education was complete without a visit to Venice's carnival, the majestic ruins of the Forum in Rome, or the legendary Mount Vesuvius. The people of Italy, divided by language, region, and culture, were not part of this artistic and historical ideal Italia. After the Napoleonic wars all this was to change: Napoleon's march across Europe altered the map of Italy and brought an end to the Grand Tour in its previous form. Nationalist feeling grew amongst the people of Italy as they began to see a strong place for themselves emerging in a new, unified landscape.

*Italia Romantica* is a vivid history of the English Romantics' love affair with Italy. An independent Italy was a place they all wished to see but did not think they ever would. Through the eyes of Romantic travellers and poets such as Byron, Keats and Shelley, we see a fascinating picture of pre-unification Italy, struggling to recover after Napoleon and edging towards the Risorgimento. Here is the Italy of idealised antiquity, magnificent but crumbling, somewhat like a gigantic and rather run-down living museum. It is full of bandits, unreformed Catholicism, marvellous vignettes of urban and pastoral life, characters and anecdote. Roderick Cavaliero marshals his material effortlessly in this readable and strongly-etched cultural history.

Roderick Cavaliero is a writer and historian, author of *Admiral Satan: The Life and Campaigns of the Bailli de Suffren* and *Strangers in the Land: The Rise and Decline of the British Indian Empire* (both I.B.Tauris).

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