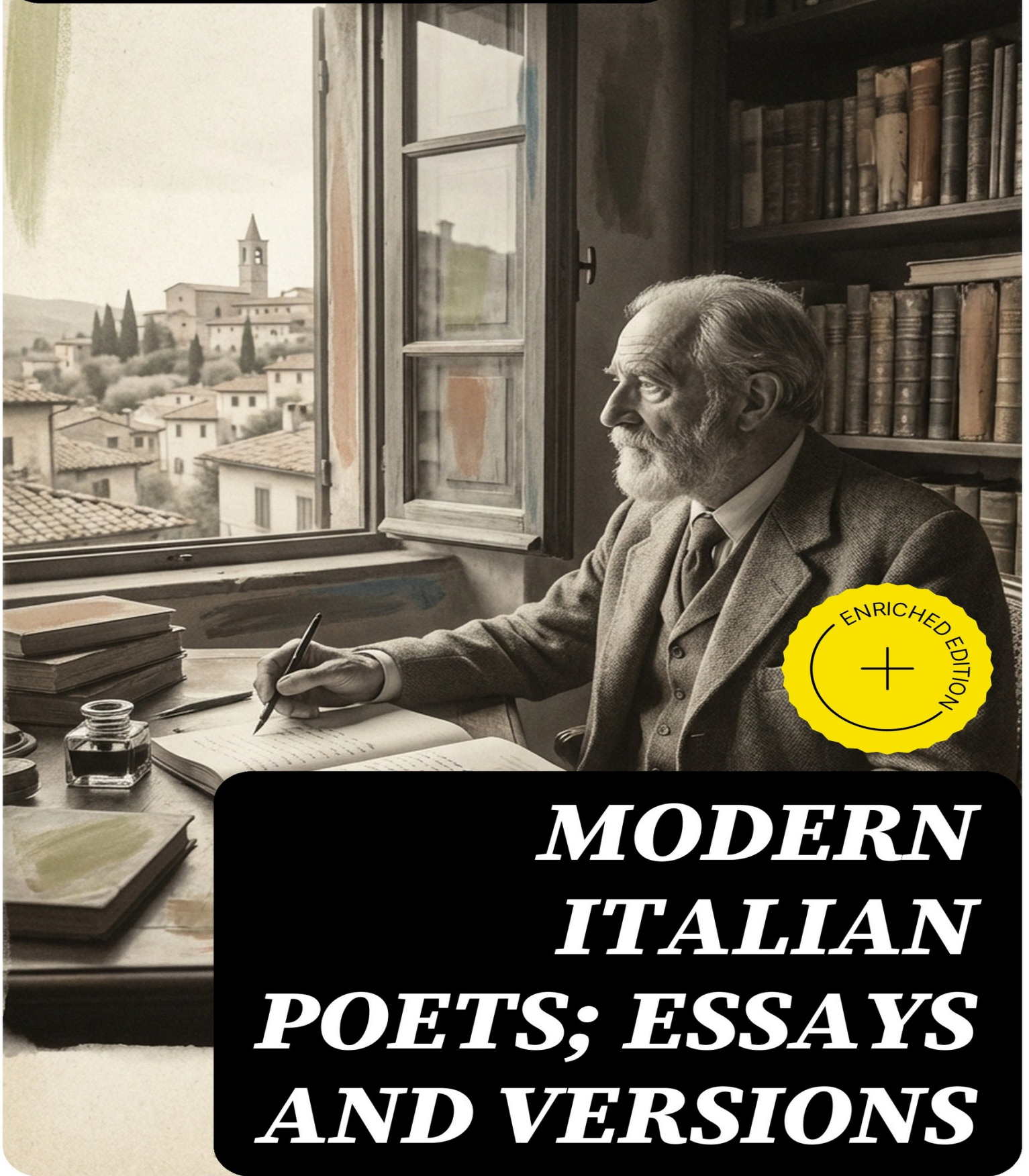


***WILLIAM DEAN
HOWELLS***



***MODERN
ITALIAN
POETS; ESSAYS
AND VERSIONS***

William Dean Howells

Modern Italian Poets; Essays and Versions

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Kenneth Gale

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Introduction

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Modern Italian Poets; Essays and Versions gathers William Dean Howells's critical portraits and accompanying translations into a single, coherent survey of Italian verse from the eighteenth through the nineteenth century. Its scope is selective rather than exhaustive: the volume does not claim to present complete works of the poets treated, nor to offer a comprehensive anthology of Italian poetry. Instead, it brings together essays that situate each writer within literary and civic life, and versions that exemplify characteristic tones and themes. The book's purpose is introductory and interpretive, presenting a guided path for English-language readers to encounter a modern tradition in an accessible form.

The collection is a single-author work of criticism and mediation. Howells supplies literary essays, biographical sketches, and historical context, then places beside them his English versions of representative poems and, in select cases, brief dramatic passages. The result is not a poet-by-poet oeuvre, but a series of carefully framed encounters designed to reveal character, temper, and influence. Readers will find criticism, literary history, and translation interleaved, with the author's voice providing continuity across the variety of Italian originals and the shifting tastes and movements that shaped them.

The genres present include critical essays, interpretive appreciations, and literary portraits, complemented by

verse translations that range from lyrical pieces to scenes from tragedies. Headings such as Scene I and Scene—The Prison indicate that some versions reproduce portions of dramatic writing to illustrate stagecraft and rhetorical gait. The translations are offered as versions rather than strict line-for-line renderings, signaling a concern for idiomatic clarity in English. Together, these modes create a dialog between commentary and example, letting analysis and enactment answer one another within the same pages.

The arrangement traces a literary arc from the Arcadian Shepherds—those reformers of taste who sought polish and restraint—through the civic satire of Giuseppe Parini and the tragic rigor of Vittorio Alfieri, onward to the classical eloquence of Vincenzo Monti and the exile-tinged passion of Ugo Foscolo. It proceeds to Alessandro Manzoni's historical and spiritual reorientations, and then toward voices engaged with national feeling, public ethics, and private sentiment in the decades around Italian unification. By traversing these stations, the book suggests a continuous conversation between art, citizenship, and conscience.

Howells's method is lucid and humane. He sketches the social position of each poet, notes principal works and reputations, and relates style to circumstance without reducing art to biography. His essays balance aesthetic description with moral and civic considerations, the better to illuminate why certain poems mattered at their moment. The versions are chosen to exemplify points made in the prose. He avoids pedantry, preferring intelligibility and proportion, and he refrains from plot disclosure beyond

initial premises when touching on dramatic or narrative materials embedded in the poets' work.

Several themes recur across the poets he treats. Satire and reform animate Parini and Giuseppe Giusti, where manners become mirrors for public life. Freedom and character dominate Alfieri's tragic imagination. Exile, memory, and nationhood shape Foscolo's energies, while Manzoni's pages examine history under the pressure of moral truth. Stoic endurance and civic feeling mark figures such as Silvio Pellico, and romantic introspection colors Giovanni Prati and Aleardo Aleardi. Giacomo Leopardi's philosophical lyric deepens the book's register. Howells presents these themes not as isolated traits, but as strands woven through a broader Italian conversation.

The stylistic hallmark of Howells's criticism is clarity joined to tact. He writes with measured irony when confronting pretension, and with sympathy when tracing courage or sorrow. His prose favors concrete comparisons that orient readers unfamiliar with Italian measures or schools. The versions aim to catch tone and movement over ornament, so that readers may hear a credible English cadence standing in for the original impulse. The result is a style at once urbane and transparent, cultivating trust that judgment has been earned and that taste is being exercised for the reader's benefit.

In framing the translations as versions, Howells acknowledges the practical limits and opportunities of bringing poetry across languages. He privileges communicability and temper, sometimes letting strict metrical schemes yield to a living English rhythm that can

carry the sense and mood. Dramatic scenes are rendered with particular attention to voice and momentum, so that a reader can apprehend the stakes of a confrontation or the pressure of a moral choice without recourse to specialized apparatus. The guiding aim is to make encounter possible, not to fix a definitive equivalent.

This book also serves a mediating cultural purpose. It introduces Anglophone readers to a modern Italian canon often overshadowed by classical antiquity or the medieval trecento in popular imagination. By charting lines from Arcadian polish to the urgencies of the Risorgimento era, the essays show how aesthetic ideals bend toward civic responsibility, and how public crises reshape artistic form. The translations, placed at hinge points, allow readers to feel shifts in diction, rhetoric, and theme, turning abstract history into a set of audible, memorable voices.

Within Howells's larger body of work, the volume exemplifies his ethical criticism and cosmopolitan curiosity. His novels and essays elsewhere argue for art's accountability to ordinary experience and public truth; here, that principle governs his assessments of poets distant in language but near in sentiment. He approaches reputations not to enthrone or dethrone, but to test vitality and relevance for contemporary readers. The patient exposition, the refusal of extravagance, and the preference for moral clarity align this book with the values that define his broader critical and imaginative practice.

The lasting significance of *Modern Italian Poets; Essays and Versions* lies in its double service as guide and gateway. It helped shape the English-language reception of poets

whose names were then less familiar, and it modeled a generous, historically alert way of writing about foreign literature. The combination of essay and version demonstrates how criticism can illuminate by companionship rather than by decree. For students of comparative literature, it offers a case study in responsible mediation; for general readers, a trustworthy introduction that invites further exploration beyond these pages.

Readers are encouraged to approach the collection as a sequence of encounters. The essays prepare the ground—period, personality, purpose—while the versions give body to claims the prose advances. This is not a repository of complete texts, nor a substitute for authoritative editions; it is a map with chosen vistas. Taken together, the parts trace a living line through modern Italian poetry and drama, allowing an English ear to meet Italian measures half way. In that meeting, Howells's voice remains a steady companion, urging attention, fairness, and delight.

Author Biography

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William Dean Howells (1837–1920) was an American novelist, critic, and editor whose advocacy of literary realism reshaped the nation’s reading habits in the late nineteenth century. Best known today for novels of manners and conscience, he was also a discerning mediator of European culture for American audiences. The collection represented here, *Modern Italian Poets: Essays and Versions*, situates him not only as a storyteller but as a critic-translator attentive to history, style, and national sentiment. Through introductions, essays, and interpretive “versions,” he presented Italian verse from the Arcadian tradition to the age of the Risorgimento, opening a panorama that complemented his broader career at the *Atlantic Monthly* and beyond.

Raised in Ohio and educated largely through newspaper work and voracious reading, Howells entered letters as a printer, journalist, and self-taught linguist. His early exposure to European languages and Romantic and classical traditions prepared him for diplomatic service; during the American Civil War era he served as United States consul at Venice, immersing himself in Italian life, theater, and journalism. That residency supplied the firsthand knowledge behind *Venetian Life* and *Italian Journeys* and deepened his sense of how literature interprets society. It also gave him a comparative outlook—testing American ideals against Old

World histories—that would inform his critical method and his fiction’s ethical, observational realism.

Modern Italian Poets took shape in the early 1860s as an ambitious introduction to a literature then unfamiliar to many Anglophone readers. Its Introduction and early chapters, such as *Arcadian Shepherds*, supply cultural context and a genealogy of taste before turning to individual writers. Howells’s stated aim was not philological completeness but intelligibility and sympathy; he offered succinct biographies, historical framing, and English “versions” that conveyed tone and intention without pedantic literalism. The arrangement leads readers from pastoral convention toward national self-recognition, mapping shifts in diction and public purpose that anticipated the civic energies of nineteenth-century Italy and resonated with contemporary American debates.

In successive sections he treats figures pivotal to that transformation: Giuseppe Parini’s satiric classicism; Vittorio Alfieri’s austere tragic will; Vincenzo Monti’s rhetorical mastery and Ugo Foscolo’s passionate exile; and Alessandro Manzoni’s moral clarity and historical feeling. Howells often underscores their public dimension—how verse addressed manners, freedom, and faith—and occasionally sets off key moments in dramatic form, as in the scenes labeled *Scene I.* and *Scene—The Prison*. His portraits balance admiration with reserve, noting limitations alongside strengths, and repeatedly return to the relation between style and citizenship, anticipating the ethical criteria he would later apply to American narrative art.

The collection's later chapters broaden the field to include Silvio Pellico, Tommaso Grossi, Luigi Carrer, and Giovanni Berchet; Giambattista Niccolini; Giacomo Leopardi; Giuseppe Giusti; Francesco Dall' Ongaro; Giovanni Prati; Aleardo Aleardi; and the triad Giulio Carcano, Arnaldo Fusinato, and Luigi Mercantini. Here Howells moves among patriotic hymn, reflective elegy, and civic satire, offering versions that catch cadence and temper rather than literal meter. He connects their themes—martyrdom, national unification, popular song—to the emotional economy of the Risorgimento, while keeping a comparative eye on English and American tastes. The conclusion draws together aesthetics and public virtue, arguing for poetry as humane social discourse.

Parallel to this European advocacy, Howells matured into the foremost American realist of his generation. At the *Atlantic Monthly* in the 1870s he used the editor's platform to argue for truthful representation of ordinary life and the moral pressures of modernity. His novels *A Modern Instance*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, and *A Hazard of New Fortunes* test those principles in narratives of marriage, business, class, and conscience, while *Criticism and Fiction* distills his aesthetic into plainspoken doctrine. The curiosity and fairness that buoy *Modern Italian Poets*—close attention to milieu, sympathy without sentimentality—thus feed directly into the signature American prose he helped canonize.

In later decades Howells remained a prolific essayist and mentor, reflecting on art, society, and fellow writers in volumes such as *My Mark Twain*. He continued to translate and interpret European letters, yet his early Venetian

apprenticeship and *Modern Italian Poets* retained a special place in his self-conception as mediator. He died in 1920, long recognized as an arbiter of taste and the conscience of American realism. Today the Italian anthology stands as a lucid guide to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century verse and an index to Howells's method: humane, historically alert, and ethically engaged—still useful for readers seeking connections between literature and civic life.

Historical Context

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William Dean Howells compiled *Modern Italian Poets; Essays and Versions* in the later nineteenth century after years of close exposure to Italy. As U.S. consul in Venice from 1861 to 1865, he lived amid the last Austrian years of the city and the decisive stages of the Risorgimento. The collection reflects his lifelong habit of introducing European literature to Anglophone readers through criticism and translation. Stretching from late eighteenth-century classicism to post-unification lyric and song, it surveys an era when poetry served not only aesthetic aims but also moral instruction, political dissent, and linguistic reform, allowing Howells to frame Italy's literary modernity for an American public.

The historical arc running through the volume is the movement from Enlightenment and classicist restraint to Romantic subjectivity and national commitment. Italian states experienced Napoleonic domination, Restoration censorship, and revolutionary uprisings (notably 1820–21 and 1848–49), culminating in unification between 1861 and 1870. In these decades, poets debated the proper language of a nation long divided by dialects and sovereignty. They used satire, tragedy, lyric, and popular song to contest aristocratic privilege, condemn foreign rule, and imagine community. Howells's sequence mirrors this progression, showing how literary forms adapted to shifting political

realities and how cultural capital migrated from court and academy to periodical press and public square.

Howells begins with the Arcadian shepherds to set a baseline. The Roman Accademia dell'Arcadia, founded in 1690, sought to temper Baroque excess with pastoral clarity and classical decorum. Its conventions—pseudonymous shepherds, polished diction, and idealized landscapes—influenced eighteenth-century taste, including the operatic libretti of Metastasio. By the late Settecento, however, Arcadian smoothness could seem complacent before social change. Howells uses these figures to illustrate the inherited poetics against which later writers defined themselves, even as they retained Arcadian craft in meter and rhetoric while redirecting it toward satire, moral critique, or patriotic feeling.

Giuseppe Parini stands for the Milanese Enlightenment's reforming energy. Under Austrian Habsburg rule, Lombardy became a laboratory of administrative modernization and intellectual debate; circles around the Verri brothers and Cesare Beccaria pursued legal and economic reform. Parini's *Il Giorno* (1763–1801) satirized noble idleness and frivolity, exposing the social costs of privilege. Its urbane hexameters and ironies exemplified a moral classicism that prepared readers to consider public virtue. Howells treats Parini as an early modernizer: still attached to classical discipline yet acutely attentive to contemporary manners, foreshadowing the later union of aesthetic purpose with civic conscience.

Vittorio Alfieri intensifies that civic conscience into political passion. A Piedmontese aristocrat turned self-fashioned tragedian, he wrote austere dramas—Saul,

Bruto Primo, Mirra—that elevated liberty and denounced tyranny. Writing in the last decades before the French Revolution, he made the stage a forum for ethical resolve and national dignity in an Italy still fragmented by dynasties. His pared style, “severe” architecture, and preference for Roman exempla furnished a repertoire for later patriots to read as coded politics. Howells’s inclusion of a “Scene I.” underscores Alfieri’s dramaturgy as action and argument, and his role in making tragedy a civic instrument.

Vincenzo Monti and Ugo Foscolo represent the Napoleonic hinge. Monti, a consummate classicist and translator, navigated the era’s shifting allegiances—writing on the Basseville affair, celebrating Napoleon, and later reconciling with Restoration authorities—revealing how patronage and politics entangled literary careers. Foscolo, by contrast, embodied the exile’s conscience. Born on Zakynthos and formed in Venetian and Milanese milieus, he answered the Treaty of Campo Formio (1797) and the St. Cloud burial decree with *Dei Sepolcri* (1807), a meditation on memory, tombs, and civic virtue. Howells juxtaposes adaptability and principled estrangement as twin responses to imperial upheaval.

Alessandro Manzoni anchors Italy’s Romantic turn and linguistic nation-building. His tragedies critiqued political violence and fatalism, while *The Betrothed* (initially 1827; revised 1840–42) fused historical narrative with Christian ethics and a purified Tuscan-based prose that helped standardize national language. Manzoni’s Catholic modernity—distrusting sensationalism yet engaged with social wrong—made him a moral authority. Howells’s

versions emphasize Manzoni's psychological sympathy and civic pedagogy; even a prison scene becomes not spectacle but meditation on justice and providence. Through Manzoni, Romanticism became less a license for fantasy than a discipline for truth telling about society, history, and speech.

Silvio Pellico, Tommaso Grossi, Luigi Carrer, and Giovanni Berchet illustrate how literature confronted Restoration repression. Pellico's arrest for Carbonari ties and his Spielberg imprisonment (1820s) produced *Le mie prigioni* (1832), a quiet indictment of Habsburg rule. Grossi, allied with Manzoni's circle, popularized Lombard themes in narrative poems later inspiring operatic adaptations. Carrer, working in Austrian-ruled Venice, cultivated refined lyric and criticism under censorship. Berchet's *Semiserious Letter* (1816) urged a national, popular Romanticism and castigated sterile erudition. Howells reads their diverse strategies—memoir, romance, lyric, manifesto—as complementary tools for sustaining public sentiment under surveillance.

Giambattista Niccolini's tragedies show theatre as political tribune in Tuscany. Works such as *Arnaldo da Brescia* and *Giovanni da Procida*, while set in medieval or Renaissance crises, spoke to contemporary controversies about clerical power and despotism. In the 1830s and 1840s, Florentine stages—within limits imposed by censors—became gathering spaces where audiences interpreted historical plots as allegories of present bondage and hope. Niccolini's blank verse, moral polarization, and martyred reformers offered a civic catechism. Howells notes how audiences learned to read between the lines, making

performance an act of communal interpretation and political education.

Giacomo Leopardi complicates the patriotic narrative with philosophical depth. Educated in Recanati's vast familial library, he fused classical mastery with a bleak meditation on human desire, nature's indifference, and the fragility of illusions. His early odes lament Italy's fallen glory; his later *Canti* and *Operette morali* interrogate progress itself. While contemporaries mined history for consolations, Leopardi insisted on lucid pity and solidarity born from shared limits. Howells presents him as Europe's equal in reflective lyric, reminding readers that Italian modernity includes metaphysical dissent as well as civic resolve, and that pessimism could sharpen rather than dull moral perception.

Giuseppe Giusti's satirical verse captures mid-century Tuscany's vernacular politics. Writing in a supple, conversational Tuscan, he punctured bureaucratic cant, foreign garrisons, and domestic hypocrisies. His poems spread orally and in clandestine print, exploiting humor to evade censors and to reach artisans and shopkeepers. Giusti exemplifies how satire, far from being merely corrosive, forged a practical ethics of citizenship by ridiculing bad governance and praising common sense. Howells values him as evidence that national language was not only codified by novelists and philologists but also energized from below by speakers who turned speech into democratic critique.

Francesco Dall'Ongaro represents the popular lyric of 1848-49. A participant in the Roman Republic, he composed

political stornelli—brief, singable verses—designed for streets and barracks rather than salons. After the Republic's fall, he experienced exile, journalism, and the hazards familiar to defeated revolutionaries. His work illustrates the porous boundary between folklore and literature at high political temperature: melody, refrain, and topicality enabled rapid circulation despite censorship and dispersal. Howells treats such poetry as documentary evidence of the revolutionary year's soundscape, capturing how song bound volunteers and sympathizers across regions and social classes.

Giovanni Prati's career maps the move from insurgent hope to constitutional nationhood. Born in Trentino under Austrian rule, he embraced Romantic sentiment and chivalric narrative in poems that mingled love, memory, and patria. After 1861, his verse often harmonized with the moderate liberal project of unification under the House of Savoy, celebrating heroic sacrifice while counseling order. His popularity in salons and schools shows how literature helped sacralize the new state. Howells emphasizes the costs and benefits of that shift: poetry gained public authority but risked formula, prompting debates over whether national feeling required renewed aesthetic rigor.

Aleardo Aleardi adds a melancholic, pictorial register to patriotic verse. Active around the 1848 upheavals and later subjected to Austrian arrests, he wrote descriptive poems where Italian landscapes—plains, cities, and coasts—carry ethical and historical memory. His cadence is elegiac rather than incendiary, blending personal sorrow with collective aspiration. Such modulation mattered after the defeats of

1849, when overt agitation invited repression but resignation threatened apathy. Howells reads Aleardi as crafting consolation without complacency, attesting that national poetry could preserve tenderness and clarity, and could bind civic resolve to a reflective appreciation of beauty and loss.

Giulio Carcano, Arnaldo Fusinato, and Luigi Mercantini exemplify literary mediation between elite culture and mass mobilization. Carcano, a Lombard writer and translator, diffused European models and helped shape a flexible Italian prose and lyric idiom. Fusinato's *L'ultima ora di Venezia* memorialized the 1849 fall of the besieged republic, fusing testimony and lament. Mercantini produced widely sung patriotic texts, including the *Spigolatrice di Sapri* about the failed 1857 expedition of Carlo Pisacane, and a hymn adopted by Garibaldi's volunteers. Howells underlines how print, schools, and songbooks multiplied such works, turning poetry into a portable arsenal of memory.

The Risorgimento's politics depended on new infrastructures of culture. Periodicals like *Il Conciliatore* (1818-19) crystallized debates about Romanticism and usefulness. Expanding literacy, cheaper presses, and later railways and telegraphy sped the movement of books and rumors. Censorship remained severe under Austrian, Bourbon, and papal regimes; writers responded with allegory, historical setting, and coded allusions. Howells traces this ecology, showing how salons, theatres, academies, and coffeehouses formed a republic of letters that was also a school of citizenship. His Venetian vantage

sharpened his sense of how empires patrolled words and how communities nurtured counter-publics.

Venice itself, where Howells served, functions as a symbol in the collection. Still under Austrian control during his consulship and only annexed to Italy in 1866, the city embodied both loss and endurance. Howells's occasional note about the bones of Saint Mark resting in the basilica gestures to the ninth-century transfer of relics that underwrote Venetian civic myth. By invoking such traditions, he registers how historical memory inhabits space—campi, basilicas, bridges—and how poets magnetize those places with meaning. The city's past glories and recent privations make it a living archive against which modern Italian verse measures hope and grievance alike. Howells's "versions" do more than illustrate arguments; they model cross-cultural reading. Translating scenes of imprisonment, lament, or exhortation, he reframes Italian debates—liberty versus order, faith versus skepticism, classicism versus Romanticism—for a transatlantic audience emerging from its own civil war. He avoids antiquarianism by linking form to function: tragedies as public pedagogy, satires as civic hygiene, lyrics as mnemonic devices. The essays thus document not only texts but their uses—on stage, in salons, in schools, in the street—clarifying how literature became a practical technology of Italian modernization and political consolidation. The chronological sweep ends near or just after unification's completion in 1870, when Rome became the capital. Post-unification culture institutionalized many of the tendencies Howells describes: national schooling diffused standardized Italian; commemorations enshrined

poets as secular saints; new theatres and presses professionalized letters. Yet the very success of patriotic rhetoric posed challenges. Writers renegotiated their relationship to power, debating whether poetry should celebrate achievement or critique new injustices. Howells's selections capture the hinge: the same forms that fostered unity could also curate dissent, preserving an ethical tension vital to the health of the new polity. Later readers have continued to reinterpret the figures in this collection. Alfieri's stern liberty now appears as pre-Revolutionary self-fashioning; Leopardi's pessimism anticipates modern existential inquiry; Manzoni's language reforms are read alongside sociolinguistics; populist songs are studied as media history. Post-World War perspectives have complicated patriotic narratives with attention to regionalism, gender, and empire. Yet Howells's core insight endures: Italian "modern" poetry is intelligible only when read with the pressures of censorship, revolution, exile, and institution building in view. His essays and versions remain a historical commentary on how art helped imagine, and then inhabit, a nation.

Synopsis (Selection)

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Introduction

The opening essays set out Howells's aim to survey modern Italian poetry through critical sketches paired with versions (translations). He outlines the criteria and context for his readings, blending history, aesthetics, and close attention to tone to prepare the reader for the range that follows.

Arcadian Shepherds

This section considers the pastoral school with its graceful artifice and idyllic settings. Howells weighs its appeal and constraints, and the versions illustrate polished diction even as they hint at a coming shift toward more publicly engaged expression.

Giuseppe Parini

Howells presents Parini as a hinge between ornamental poise and pointed observation. The essay traces how formal refinement serves moral argument, and the versions underscore urbane tone sharpened by critique.

Vittorio Alfieri

Framed through heightened emotion and ethical resolve, this portrait emphasizes a disciplined, dramatic voice. A

translated Scene I accompanies the analysis, showcasing spare rhetoric and relentless momentum as defining traits in Howells's account.

Vincenzo Monti and Ugo Foscolo

Paired to highlight contrast and continuity, these chapters chart a dialogue between classical finish and fervent feeling. The versions move from ceremonious address to intimate lament, revealing complementary routes by which modern Italian verse seeks resonance.

Alessandro Manzoni

Howells emphasizes reflective sincerity and historical conscience across these subsections. A translated dramatic interlude entitled Scene—The Prison anchors the profile, balancing ethical clarity with supple narrative or lyrical movement to present a humane, measured voice.

Silvio Pellico, Tommaso Grossi, Luigi Career, and Giovanni Berchet

Grouped as a cohort, these sketches sample diverse strands of accessibility, sentiment, and civic tone. The translations favor plain-spoken force and memorable cadence, showing how popular appeal can coexist with literary craft.

Giambattista Niccolini

The essay treats Niccolini's work as oriented toward public speech and staged conflict. Versions highlight firm

structure and elevated rhetoric, aligning poetry with moral argument before an audience.

Giacomo Leopardi

Howells reads Leopardi through concentrated lyric thought and wide, questioning horizons. The versions convey quiet intensity and measured music, framing a sensibility that is intimate yet expansive.

Giuseppe Giusti

Here the focus falls on quick perception and civic edge. The versions favor nimble phrasing and pointed turns, sketching a voice tuned to everyday manners and the public conscience.

Francesco Dall' Ongaro

These pages foreground narrative clarity and communal feeling. The versions blend simplicity with warmth, suggesting a poetry designed to circulate across a broad social sphere.

Giovanni Prati

A compact portrait that prizes melodic flow and emotive reach. The single set of versions concentrates these traits into brief, memorable stanzas.

Aleardo Aleardi

Howells frames Alardi's picturesque sweep alongside moments of tender, reflective pause. The translations trace shifts from panoramic vistas to personal appeal, threaded by smooth, flowing periods and occasional historical allusion.

Guilio Carcano, Arnaldo Fusinato and Luigi Mercantini

This triptych contrasts private lyric accents with verse suited to public occasions. The versions move between reflective intimacy and collective address, mapping different paths to immediacy and recall.

Conclusion

The closing essay gathers the volume's claims, marking a movement from pastoral refinement toward a more civic-minded, multifaceted modern voice. Howells reflects on the uses and limits of versions in criticism and leaves a tempered confidence in the vitality of Italian poetry.

MODERN ITALIAN POETS; ESSAYS AND VERSIONS

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courtliness becomes a measure against which satire judges affectation and elegy tests depth. The INTRODUCTION initiates this calibration; the CONCLUSION gathers its results without closing debate. Across the volume, the oscillation between laughing rebuke and solemn remembrance produces a register capable of carrying history without rhetoric's glare. By listening to how satire and elegy temper each other over time, the collection reveals continuity in change: manners give way to conscience, yet the wish for proportion persists as a steady guide.

Question 5

How do shifting forms—scenes, pastorals, odes—redefine intimacy between poet, public, and history?

Form shapes intimacy throughout. VITTORIO ALFIERI I-IV and SCENE I. invite readers into dramatic immediacy, where moral stakes are felt in live exchange. ALESSANDRO MANZONI I, III-IX and SCENE—THE PRISON. uses a staged fragment to compress the distance between individual trial and communal memory. In both cases, the presence of a scene among essays highlights performance as a way of thinking, not merely displaying. Dialogue becomes analysis enacted, altering how readers meet the poets: the voice is not solitary but relational, and history appears as something spoken through, not simply observed.

Numbered sequences—ARCADIAN SHEPHERDS I-III, GIUSEPPE PARINI I-IV, and GIAMBATTISTA NICCOLINI I-V—slow attention, creating a serial apprenticeship in tone. The design lets refinement, satire, and tragedy unfold without haste, giving shape to learning itself. SILVIO PELLICO,

TOMASSO GROSSI, LUIGI CAREER, AND GIOVANNI BERCHET I-IV applies the same pacing to varied registers, so that testimony and popular appeal can stand beside each other without collision. This arrangement suggests that intimacy with history is cumulative: not a single speech, but a series of proximate addresses, each adjusting the distance between private feeling and public duty.

GIOVANNI PRATI I offers concentrated lyric sensibility, whereas ALEARDO ALEARDI I.-III. expands reflection across landscapes and temporal layers. The brief footnote about St. Mark near ALEARDI's section adds documentary texture, reminding readers that lyric rapture lives within named places. GIULIO CARCANO, ARNALDO FUSINATO AND LUIGI MERCANTINI II-III tilt toward collective song, where refrain-worthy cadence strengthens communal recall. FRANCESCO DALL' ONGARO I-III's balladry similarly turns memory portable. These forms invite different proximities: the lyric whispers, the ballad circulates, the communal ode gathers. Each repositions the audience in relation to history's claims.

The INTRODUCTION and CONCLUSION bracket this formal variety by emphasizing coherence without uniformity. ARCADIAN SHEPHERDS models polite exchange; PARINI retools it as ethical conversation; ALFIERI and NICCOLINI dramatize contest; MANZONI and PELLICO test conscience; GIUSTI and DALL' ONGARO democratize address; PRATI and ALEARDI refine inwardness; CARCANO, FUSINATO, and MERCANTINI orchestrate chorus. Across essays and versions, the collection shows that intimacy with the past is mediated by chosen shapes—scene, pastoral, ode, ballad—each conferring a distinct kind of closeness. Form becomes

not ornament but pathway, guiding how private sentiment meets public remembrance.

Memorable Quotes

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1q "“When I write it is because I have something to do; my books are not productions, but deeds.”"

2q "The longing for freedom is the instinct of self-preservation in literature;"

3q "Thus he discourses; and a gentle tear Springs, while he speaks, into thy lady's eyes."

4q " Now take heart, And in the bosom of that whirling cloud Plunge fearlessly."

5q "Is it to be the minister of his death?"

6q "“Now wife, now mother, never wife nor mother,"

7q "One little day is given them, and then all is over."

8q "We are all made in one Likeness holy, Ransomed all by one only redemption;"

9q "All brothers, of one generation;"

10q "We must needs Drink the draft drop by drop."

11q "Adieu, my native land, adieu!"