

Between myth and reality: Naples in the American travel memories in the first half of the Nineteenth century

Rosa Maria Delli Quadri*

American travelers after 1815, increasingly present in the Mediterranean, move towards an Italy that still represents a country of art and ancient, but whose axis moves finally to the South, in the area as disadvantaged in comparison to the fortunes of the north-central. In a scenario in which foreigners seeking the order first and then the classic beauty and picturesque, where Rome is no longer the extreme limit, but this expands to Naples 'noble' for its superb processions and parties, for the equipments and the opulence of the court, for the sacred relics, villas, music and antiquities of Vesuvius, the image of the South moves between myth and reality. Naples, in the American travel memories, appears as the overly frantic and riotous capital than the ancient Roman ruins, works of art, capital of scholarly training. It is the city of a thousand lights and a thousand voices, populated by a swarming crowd, is that 'feudal monster' that, over time, assumes the proportions of the 'metropolitan monster', the "city of eternal metamorphosis in which nothing seems to disappear forever". It is the place where it seems possible to implement what is not achievable elsewhere.

* University of Naples 'L'Orientale', Italy.