Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies Vol. No. (2026) doi: 10.1111/1754-0208.70038

Crossroads of the *Life* of Vittorio Alfieri

SARA GALLEGATI

Abstract: This article examines Vittorio Alfieri's *Life* as a deliberately constructed narrative of cultural, linguistic, and political self-fashioning within eighteenth-century European intellectual networks. Rather than treating the autobiography as a transparent record of experience, the article argues that Alfieri retrospectively reorganizes his education, travels, and ideological shifts to produce a coherent image of himself as an Italian tragic author. By focusing on three decisive moments — the French-dominated formative years, the *spiemontizzazione* of 1778, and the political and linguistic conversion associated with Tuscany and Siena — this study shows how Alfieri systematically minimizes his French cultural debts while foregrounding a Tuscan-centred Italian identity. The article contributes to eighteenth-century studies by demonstrating how autobiographical writing functions as a strategic tool for redefining cultural belonging, political thought, and literary authority in a period marked by transnational circulation and ideological fracture.

Keywords: cultural networks, *Life*, political ideology, *spiemontizzazione*, Vittorio Alfieri

1. *Introduction*

To trace an overview of Vittorio Alfieri's cultural networks is to analyse the intellectual journey of one of the most emblematic and greatest representatives of eighteenth-century European culture, working at a fundamental juncture between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. This exploration cannot be separated from the rich documentary legacy he left behind, which continues to shed light on his intellectual connections and historical context.

The enduring significance of Alfieri's archive as a source of scholarly inquiry is also evidenced by the critical discoveries made in recent decades. Noteworthy among these are the identification of the Ferrero Ventimiglia manuscript by Roberto Marchetti[1] and the reconstruction of the inventory of Alfieri's Parisian library by Christian Del Vento.[2] Del Vento, together with Pierre Musitelli, leads also the *Manuscrits Italiens* group (federated at the ITEM, Institut des textes et manuscrits modernes[3]), one of the most active research initiatives dedicated to the study and analysis of Alfieri's work, particularly in relation to manuscript sources, editorial practices, and the broader cultural and historical contexts of his production. Among the group's most recent projects, we highlight the editions of *Della Tirannide* and *Del Principe e delle Lettere* edited by Lucia Bachelet; the editions of *Etruria Vendicata* and *L'America Libera* edited by Alessandro Vuozzo; the edition of Alfieri's autobiography curated by Monica Zanardo; and the *Digital Alfieri* project, which seeks to virtually reunite Alfieri's literary archive by creating a digital edition of his manuscripts and annotated works on the EMAN platform.[4] The reconstruction — even virtual — of the archive proves especially effective for an author like Alfieri, whose study of materials reveals a clear 'intenzione d'archivio'. As highlighted by Zanardo, Alfieri has a deep awareness of the value and function of his own papers, making them a central tool in orienting the reception of his work and his authorial image.[5] The papers he left behind, as Zanardo

observes, are the result of a careful selection by the author and were organized to corroborate the autobiographical narrative, of which they do not constitute a mere pendant, but rather an essential complement,[6] thus possessing important intellectual value.

This archival consciousness is deeply intertwined with the way Alfieri constructs and narrates his own cultural formation: Riccardo Scrivano speaks precisely of a 'network' for the history of Vittorio Alfieri's culture, a personal and sectorial 'plot' that begins from a situation of poverty or even of total absence and ends in one that is almost excessively dense.[7] Representing this network through his autobiographical work is even more effective if we consider the words of Angelo Fabrizi, according to whom one of the guiding threads of the *Life* is precisely the passionate and never detached evocation of the gradual and passionate discovery of culture and poetry.[8] The autobiography *Life* therefore preserves the imprint of the cultural horizon within which Alfieri operates.

This article argues that Alfieri's *Life* should be read not only as an autobiographical account but as a strategic reconstruction of cultural memory. Its central claim is that Alfieri retrospectively reorganizes his education, travels, and intellectual affiliations in order to distance himself from French Enlightenment culture and to legitimize his later identity as an Italian tragic author and political thinker.

The article traces Alfieri's cultural and linguistic transformation through several key phases. It begins by reconstructing his French-dominated upbringing and examining how the *Life* later suppresses this formative influence; the analysis then turns to the *spiemontizzazione* of 1778 as both a symbolic and material rupture with Piedmontese and French cultural constraints. Moving forward, it explores Alfieri's Parisian experience and the increasingly negative portrayal of France across successive autobiographical drafts. The discussion culminates in an examination of Tuscany — particularly Siena — as the crucible of Alfieri's linguistic and political conversion, where the French Revolution forces a fundamental reassessment of revolution, tyranny, and cultural belonging.

2. *French Cultural Formation and Its Retrospective Rejection*

A crucial event in the author's literary career is the *spiemontizzazione*[9] that took place in 1778, when Vittorio stipulated a contract with his sister Julia for the cession of his entire patrimony in exchange for an annual rent. The episode is thus recalled in his *Life*:

> A law existed at this time in Piedmont which ran thus: 'It is enacted that no one shall print books or other writings out of our states, without permission of our censors, under the pain of incurring a fine of seventy crowns, or corporal punishment, if circumstances render it necessary to exhibit a public example'. To this law is subjoined another still more iniquitous, worded in the following manner: 'Those subjects who inhabit our states shall never absent themselves without our express authority in writing'. Hence it is evident, I could not be both a subject of his majesty of Sardinia and an author. I chose the latter, and, being an enemy to all chicane and subterfuge, I took the most direct road to disfranchise myself, by resigning the whole of my property to my sister Julia, who had married Count Cumiana. This resignation was executed in the most solemn and irrevocable manner. I only reserved to myself an annuity of fourteen thousand livres of Piedmont, which amounted to little more than one half of my original revenues. I would even have been contented to resign the other half to have purchased the freedom of thinking and writing, and the liberty of choosing my place of residence.[10]

By this choice, Alfieri manifests the need to recover new and more solid roots,[11] by repudiating the cultural milieu of his origins. Indeed, *spiemontizzazione* also responds to a desire to detach himself from the cultural framework of his early education, initiating a linguistic search whose meaning was not merely literary, but also ideological and personal, coinciding with the amputation of roots alien to the construction of his own persona.[12] In this regard, the paragraph in the autobiography in which, around 1766, Alfieri laments the consequences of the *anfibia* education he received is emblematic:

Alfieri 13, c. 148*r*[13]

Non avea recato libri con me altri che qualche viaggio d'Italia, e in Francese, e così m'avviava a perfezionare la mia già tanto inoltrata barbarie. Parlava coi compagni di viaggio in Francese, coi milanesi nelle case dove andava coi compagni; in Francese, e il poco che io pensava, e combinava, in Francese, e alcune letteruzze che io scriveva, in Francese; e alcune memoriette ridicole che m'era messo in capo di voler fare sul viaggio, in Francese; e tutto alla peggio, non capendo il Francese, e non volendo saper l'Italiano; e il tutto, frutto della valente educazione ricevuta, e della disgrazia di nascere in un paese anfibio quanto alla lingua.

Alfieri 24, p. 75[14]

Del resto, essendo io partito per quell viaggio d'un anno, senza pigliar meco altri libri che alcuni Viaggi d'Italia, e questi tutti in lingua Francese, io mi avviava sempre più alla total perfezione della mia già tanto inoltrata barbarie. Coi compagni di viaggio si conversava sempre in Francese, e così in alcune case Milanesi dove io andava con essi, si parlava pur sempre Francese; onde quell pochin pochino ch'io andava pur pensando e combinando nel mio povero capino, era pure vestito di cenci francesi; e alcune letteruzze ch'io andava scrivendo, erano in Francese; ed alcune memoriette ridicole ch'io andava sciccherando [sic] su questi miei viaggi, eran pure in Francese; e il tutto alla peggio, non sapendo io questa linguaccia se non se a caso; non mi ricordando più di nessuna regola ove pur mai l'avessi saputa da prima; e molto meno ancora sapendo l'Italiano, raccoglieva così il dovuto frutto della disgrazia primitive del nascere in un paese anfibio, e della valente educazione ricevutavi.

The excerpt can be rendered in English as follows[15]:

Alfieri 13, c. 148*r*

I had brought no books with me other than a few travel guides to Italy, and in French, and so I set about perfecting my already advanced barbarism. I spoke with my travelling companions in French, with the Milanese in the houses where I went with my companions; in French, and the little I thought and planned, in French, and the few letters I wrote, in French; and the ridiculous little memoirs I had decided to write

Alfieri 24, p. 75

Moreover, having set off on that year-long journey without taking any books with me other than a few Travels in Italy, all of which were in French, I was moving ever closer to the total perfection of my already well-advanced barbarism. My travelling companions and I always conversed in French, and so in some Milanese houses where I went with them, French was always spoken; hence, the little

on the journey, in French; and all for the worse, not understanding French and not wanting to learn Italian; and all of it, the result of the excellent education I had received and the misfortune of being born in a country that was amphibious in terms of language.

that I was thinking and planning in my poor little head was also dressed in French rags; and some of the little letters I was writing were in French; and some ridiculous memoirs that I was scribbling about my travels were also in French; and to make matters worse, I knew this language only by chance; I no longer remembered any of the rules, if indeed I had ever known them; and knowing even less Italian, I thus reaped the due fruit of the primitive misfortune of being born in an amphibious country and of the valiant education I had received there.

From the very first draft, the cultural establishment that the author seeks to eradicate is therefore primarily that of French influence. Between 1759 and 1766, Alfieri attended the Accademia Reale of Turin. In his autobiography, he devotes harsh pages to this institution, although he nonetheless derived from it not insignificant cultural stimuli.[16] In addition to the training provided by the Accademia Reale, which prepared young elite Europeans for diplomatic and military careers, from 1763, Alfieri supplemented his formal education with 'clandestine'[17] French readings, to which he was initiated by some of the Academy's masters, such as Abbot Aillaud. As Fabrizi notes, Aillaud must have been one of the first to transmit to Alfieri an interest in Enlightenment culture. The scholar reconstructs the readings that the Abbot recommended to his students, which reveal his sympathy for the great authors of the Enlightenment,[18] including Fénelon, Voltaire, and Rousseau.[19]

His ideological and philosophical education therefore took place almost entirely on French texts, although among his confirmed readings was Alexander Pope.[20] Vittorio also attended French comedies and tragedies in Turin and France in 1767; from 1769, he read Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Helvétius, Montaigne, and Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* translated by Dacier.

This former education, made of 'pedantic'[21] studies and 'clandestine' French readings, coupled with travels to England, Holland, and France, provided the young author's cultural framework, which resulted in his first piece of writing, the *Esquisse du jugement universel*, composed in Turin between 1773 and 1774. The *Esquisse* is fully embedded in the European Enlightenment panorama and shows a clear and sustained dependence on Voltaire's model, a relationship that has been extensively examined by Guido Santato.[22] The language chosen for this satirical dialogue is French, and its reference models are also French. According to Angelo Fabrizi, Alfieri as a writer was initially shaped within a French cultural and literary framework, since it was French authors who first influenced his sensitivity and imagination with a lasting taste for the novelistic and a persistent habit of moral reflection on humanity.[23] For this reason, the 1775 conversion cannot be described as a passage from ignorance to culture, but rather as a transition from French authors to Italian ones.[24] Del Vento reaches a similar conclusion, noting through his research on Alfieri's library in Paris that the true *Lehrjahren* of the young Alfieri were not those of the so-called conversion, but rather the years of travel, during which he was shaped as a writer open to the most radical suggestions of European culture — from the *philosophes* to the major historical and political frameworks of contemporary

Europe, from Montaigne to Machiavelli and Plutarch. Later, however, in the reconstruction offered in the *Life*, the protagonist becomes the future tragic author, and the centre of the literary fiction inevitably shifts from the years of peregrination to those of the literary conversion.[25]

With the addition on the recto of the flyleaf of the autograph manuscript of the *Esquisse*, added later in Alfieri's own handwriting ('Prime sciocchezze sciccherate in gergo Francese da un asino scimmiotto di Voltaire' [Early pretentious bits of nonsense in French jargon by a Voltaire-aping donkey]), the author delivered a posthumous negative judgement on the work, marking a distancing that is above all critical and self-critical.[26] The systematic downplaying of the Voltairean model, also carried out within the autobiography, is part of Alfieri's broader project of diminishing and, when possible, denying any debt to French sources and models. The author carried out the same operation for *Cleopatra*, a tragedy conceived and written by him in 1775 and presented in the *Life* as the result of years of 'no study'.[27] However, a more detailed analysis of the play reveals the rich series of readings undertaken by the young aristocrat from the years of the Accademia until 1775, which first included French authors and then Italian ones, as well as Shakespeare.[28]

In his autobiography, Alfieri partially rejected 'sa formation francisant et presque entièrement refoulé les hommes de lettres qu'il fréquenta pendant la période parisienne [his French education and almost entirely repressed the men of letters he frequented during his time in Paris]'[29]: this operation also extended to the French places he visited, first and foremost Paris. In the *Life*, the first stay in the French capital is accompanied by high expectations, especially due to Alfieri's interest in the theatrical performances held in the city:

> My journey to France was chiefly undertaken with a view to become acquainted with the French theatre. Two years previous to this period I had fallen in with a party of French comedians, and assiduously attended them during the whole summer. In this way I had become acquainted with many of their principal tragedies, and with most of their celebrated comedies [...]. The tragedies from which I derived the greatest gratification were Alzire, Mahomet, and a few others.[30]

The young poet also felt drawn to the culture of a country that had nourished him during his formative years, which, as has been pointed out, «s'insère entièrement dans l'horizon cosmopolite et dans la culture francisant des Lumières européennes [fits perfectly into the cosmopolitan horizon and French-influenced culture of the European Enlightenment]».[31]

In the *Life*, Alfieri conveys a strongly negative impression of his arrival in the city in 1767. Here are the descriptions of the episode as found in the manuscripts Alfieri 13 and Alfieri 24:

Alfieri 13, c. 152*r*

Ma tediatomi pure del soggiorno di Marsiglia, perché ogni cosa presto mi tediava, e incalzato dalla frenesia di Parigi, partii verso il 10 d'agosto 1767, più come fuggitivo che come viaggiatore, non mi arrestai fino a Lione. Non Aix, col suo

Alfieri 24, pp. 97–98

Ma tediandomi pure anche del soggiorno di Marsiglia, perché ogni cosa presto tedia gli oziosi; ed incalzato ferocemente dalla frenesia di Parigi; partii verso il 10 d'Agosto, e più come fuggitivo che come viaggiatore, andai notte e giorno senza

sontuoso passeggio, non Avignone già sede papale, e tomba di Laura, e stanza del divino Petrarca, non la tanto famosa Valchiusa, nulla mi potea stornare dall'andar dritto come una saetta scoccata verso Parigi. A Lione la stanchezza mi fece stare due giorni, poi da capo giorno e notte, in meno di tre giorni da Lione fui in Parigi per la via della Borgogna.

Cap. 5. Primo Soggiorno in Parigi

Era non mi ricordo bene i quanti di Agosto, ma fra il 15, e il 20; una mattina nubilosa, fredda e piovosa; io lasciava quel bellissimo cielo di Provenza e d'Italia, non era mai venuto fra queste sudicie nebbie, e l'entrare in Parigi pel sobborgo di San Marcello, e come in un fetido sepolcro il progredire poi in quello di San Germano dove andava ad albergo, mi serrò si fortemente il cuore, che non mi ricordo di aver avuto in vita mia per soggetto si piccolo più dolorosa impressione. Tanto correre, tanto desiderio, tante illusioni di fantasia riscaldata, per poi entrare in quella orribile cloaca. Arrivai all'albergo disingannato già, e se non fosse stata e la stanchezza estrema, e la vergogna, sarei ripartito immediatamente. Le mie prime uscite poi sempre più mi confermavano in quel disinganno; la umiltà del fabbricato, risibile pompa delle poche cose che pretendono a palazzi, il sudiciume delle chiese, la barbara struttura dei teatri d'allora, e i tanti e tanti oggetti spiacevoli che mi cadevano sott'occhio, oltre il più amaro di tutti, la bruttezza universale delle donne impiastrate; tutto ciò non mi veniva poi abbastanza compensato dalla bellezza dei giardini, dalla frequenza dei bei paesaggi si ben forniti d'oziosi, da una certa eleganza dei cocchi, dalla sublime facciata del Louvre e altre poche cose [...].

posarmi sino a Lione. Non Aix col suo magnifico e ridente passeggio; non Avignone, già sede Papale, e tomba della celebre Laura; non Valchiusa, stanza già si gran tempo del nostro divino Petrarca; nulla mi potea distornare dall'andar dritto a guisa di saetta inverso Parigi. In Lione la stanchezza mi fece trattenere due notti e un giorno; e ripartitone con lo stesso furore, in meno di tre giorni per la via della Borgogna mi condussi in Parigi.

Capitolo Quinto.

Primo soggiorno in Parigi.

Era, non ben mi ricordo il dì quanti d'Agosto, ma fra il 15, e il 20, una mattinata nubilosa fredda e piovosa; io lasciava quel bellissimo cielo di Provenza e d'Italia; e non era mai capitato fra si fatte sudicie nebbie, massimamente in Agosto: onde l'entrare in Parigi pel sobborgo miserissimo di San Marcello, e il progredire poi quasi in un fetido fangoso sepolcro nel sobborgo di San Germano, dove andava ad albergo, mi serrò si fortemente il cuore, ch'io non mi ricordo di aver provato in vita mia per cagione sì piccola una più dolorosa impressione. Tanto affrettarmi, tanto anelare, tante pazze illusioni di accesa fantasia, per poi inabissarmi in quella fetente cloaca. Nello scendere all'albergo, già mi trovava pienamente disingannato; e se non era la stanchezza somma, e la non picciola vergogna che me ne sarebbe ridondata, io immediatamente sarei ripartito. Nell'andar poi successivamente dattorno per tutto Parigi, sempre più mi andai confermando nel mio disinganno. L'umiltà e barbarie del fabbricato; la risibile pompa meschina delle poche case che pretendono a palazzi; il sudiciume e goticismo delle chiese; la vandalica struttura dei teatri d'allora; e i tanti e tanti e tanti oggetti spiacevoli che tutto dì mi cadeano sott'occhio, oltre il più amaro di tutti, le pessimamente architettate faccie impiastrate delle bruttissïme donne; queste cose tutte non mi venivano poi abbastanza

rattemprate dalla bellezza dei tanti giardini, dall'eleganza e frequenza degli stupendi paesaggi pubblici, dal buon gusto e numero infinito di bei cocchi, dalla sublime facciata del Louvre, dagli innumerabili e quasi tutto buoni spettacoli, da altre sì fatte cose.

An English translation of the passage is provided below[32]:

Alfieri 13, c. 152*r*

But I soon grew weary even of my stay in Marseilles, for everything soon wearied me; pressed on by the frenzy of Paris, I departed around the 10th of August 1767, more as a fugitive than as a traveller, and did not halt until I reached Lyons. Not Aix, with its stately promenade, nor Avignon – once the papal seat, the tomb of Laura, the dwelling of the divine Petrarch – nor the much-renowned Vaucluse, nothing could divert me from going straight as an arrow shot toward Paris. At Lyons fatigue forced me to remain two days, then once more day and night, in less than three days from Lyons I was in Paris by way of Burgundy.

Chapter V. First Stay in Paris

It was – I do not recall the exact date of August, but between the 15th and the 20th – on a cloudy, cold, and rainy morning. I was leaving behind that most beautiful sky of Provence and of Italy; I had never before entered into these filthy mists, and entering Paris through the suburb of Saint-Marcel, and then, as into a foul sepulchre, proceeding on to Saint-Germain where I was to lodge, my heart was so tightly closed that I do not recall in all my life having suffered a more painful impression from so small a cause. So much haste, so much desire, so many illusions of an overheated imagination – only to enter that horrible sewer! I arrived at the inn already disillusioned, and had it not been for my extreme fatigue, and for shame, I would have departed immediately. My first outings thereafter only confirmed me more in that

Alfieri 24, pp. 97–98

But growing weary even of my stay in Marseilles – for everything soon wearies the idle – and fiercely driven on by the frenzy of Paris, I departed about the 10th of August, and more as a fugitive than as a traveller, went day and night without repose until I reached Lyons. Not Aix, with its magnificent and cheerful promenade; not Avignon, once Papal seat and the tomb of the celebrated Laura; not Vaucluse, so long the dwelling of our divine Petrarch – nothing could divert me from hastening straight, like an arrow, toward Paris. In Lyons fatigue compelled me to remain two nights and a day; and setting forth again with the same fury, in less than three days by way of Burgundy I reached Paris.

Chapter Five.

First Stay in Paris.

It was – I do not well recall the precise day of August, but between the 15th and the 20th – on a cloudy, cold, and rainy morning. I was leaving behind that most beautiful sky of Provence and of Italy; and never before had I encountered such filthy mists, least of all in August: thus, the entrance into Paris through the most wretched suburb of Saint-Marcel, and then the further progress, as into a foul and miry sepulchre, through the suburb of Saint-Germain where I was to lodge, so tightly closed my heart, that I do not remember ever in my life having suffered from so small a cause a more painful impression. So much haste, so much longing, so many mad illusions of a heated fancy, only to be plunged into that stinking sewer!

disillusion: the meanness of the buildings, the ridiculous pomp of the few things that pretended to be palaces, the filthiness of the churches, the barbarous structure of the theatres of that time, and the many and many displeasing sights that fell under my eyes – besides the bitterest of all, the universal ugliness of the women plastered with paint. None of this was sufficiently compensated by the beauty of the gardens, the throngs of idlers so well supplied with fine landscapes, a certain elegance of carriages, the sublime façade of the Louvre, and a few other things.

On descending at the inn, I already found myself entirely disillusioned; and had it not been for my utter weariness, and for the no small shame that would have ensued, I would at once have departed.

As I went about thereafter through all of Paris, I became more and more confirmed in my disillusion. The meanness and barbarity of the buildings; the laughable, paltry pomp of the few houses that pretend to be palaces; the filth and Gothicism of the churches; the vandal-like structure of the theatres of that age; and the countless unpleasant sights that daily met my eye – besides the bitterest of all, the wretchedly contrived, painted faces of the most hideous women – all these things were not sufficiently tempered for me by the beauty of the many gardens, by the elegance and abundance of the splendid public promenades, by the good taste and infinite number of fine carriages, by the sublime façade of the Louvre, by the innumerable and for the most part excellent entertainments, and by other such matters.

From the first to the second draft, the hostility evoked by the city increases in the author's account, as shown in the following table:

Alfieri 13	*Alfieri 24*
incalzato dalla frenesia di Parigi	incalzato **ferocemente** dalla frenesia di Parigi
in meno di tre giorni da Lione fui in Parigi per la via della Borgogna.	**e ripartitone con lo stesso furore**, in meno di tre giorni per la via della Borgogna mi condussi in Parigi.
l'entrare in Parigi pel sobborgo di San Marcello	l'entrare in Parigi pel sobborgo **miserissimo** di San Marcello
e come in un fetido sepolcro il progredire poi in quello di San Germano	e il progredire poi quasi in un fetido **fangoso** sepolcro nel sobborgo di San Germano
la umiltà del fabbricato	L'umiltà e **barbarie** del fabbricato
il sudiciume delle chiese	il sudiciume e **goticismo** delle chiese
la bruttezza universale delle donne impiastrate	le pessimamente architettate faccie impiastrate delle bruttissïme donne

English translation[33]:

Alfieri 13	*Alfieri 24*
spurred by the frenzy of Paris	**fiercely** driven on by the frenzy of Paris
in fewer than three days from Lyons I found myself in Paris, by the road of Burgundy.	and **departing thence with the same fury**, in less than three days by the road of Burgundy I made my way into Paris
the entrance into Paris through the suburb of Saint Marcel.	the entrance into Paris through **the most wretched** suburb of Saint Marcel
and, as into a noisome sepulchre, the further advance into that of Saint Germain	and the further advance, as into a **foul and miry** sepulchre, in the suburb of Saint Germain
the humility of the structures	the meanness and **barbarity** of the buildings
the foulness of the churches	the filth and **Gothic gloom** of the churches
the universal hideousness of the bedaubed women	The most ill-contrived, plastered countenances of the most hideous women

In the second draft, Alfieri amplifies the emotions and sensations that preceded and accompanied his arrival in Paris[34] – from the eager anticipation of entering the city to the disillusionment at the sight of the 'miserissima' ('most wretched') and 'fangosa' ('muddy') 'cloaca' ('sewer'). The parenthetical remarks, rich adjectival use, and attention to toponymic details in *Alfieri 24* produce a growing climax of disgust, further emphasizing, compared to the first draft, the scornful judgement of women and the contrast between the classical façade of the royal palace and the Gothic style of the churches. As Isabel Violante Picon states, 'Paris attire tout esprit du XVIIIe siècle, si bien qu'arriver à Paris est un moment déterminant dans un itinéraire biographique, et le récit de cette arrivée un topos inévitable dans tout projet autobiographique [Paris attracts every 18th-century mind, so much so that arriving in Paris is a defining moment in a biographical journey, and the story of this arrival is an inevitable topos in any autobiographical project]'.[35] The scene of arriving in Paris, which found its archetype in Rousseau's *Confessions*, thus offers Alfieri an opportunity to assert in the *Life* his distance from the pro-French attitude that marked the first phase of his cultural formation and to reinforce the anti-revolutionary and anti-French dimension of the autobiography. Indeed, Alfieri's antithetical and capricious reaction appears to lack coordinates unless understood in relation to the pressing need to shed French habits, as experienced by a border intellectual in search of his own autonomous cultural identity.[36]

In reality, the Parisian stay must have been more fruitful for the author than he lets on in the *Life*: in the French capital, Alfieri attended performances of tragedies by Racine, Corneille, Voltaire, Lemierre, and De Belloy, as well as comedies by Molière, Dancourt, and Beaumarchais — authors who had no minor influence on his own theatre.[37] However,

> Au fil des récits autobiographiques de ses séjours successifs, à l'automne-hiver 1767-68, en 1771 et en 1787-92, Vittorio Alfieri met en place une progression dans le dégoût, codifiée par une image extrême: « quella fetente cloaca » devient plus loin une « cloaca massima », puis « immensissima fogna ». Ainsi la capitale française se configure en lieu scatologique, et l'auteur de la *Vita* se campe en contempteur de la Gaule [Throughout his autobiographical accounts of his successive stays in the autumn and winter of 1767–68, in 1771 and in

> 1787–92, Vittorio Alfieri builds up a progression of disgust, codified by an extreme image: «quella fetente cloaca» becomes later a «cloaca massima», then an immensissima fogna». Thus, the French capital is configured as a scatological place, and the author of Vita positions himself as a despiser of Gaul].[38]

As shown, the gradual acquisition of an Italian literary identity stands out in the autobiography at the expense of French culture: thus, during his second stay in Paris, the missed meeting with Rousseau — who could have served as a literary model — highlights instead the encounter with figures from the past, six canonical authors of the Italian literary tradition[39]:

> Instead therefore of cultivating an intimacy with Rousseau, I formed what was much more interesting to me, an acquaintance with the works of the most celebrated characters in Italy, or perhaps in the world. I purchased during my stay in Paris a collection of the works of our most celebrated writers both in prose and verse, in thirty-six small handsome volumes. These became my constant companions, though I must confess I did not derive all the advantage from them which might naturally have been expected, during the two or three first years they remained in my possession, as I then had neither inclination nor opportunity for study. With respect to the Italian language; I had so totally forgotten it, as to be scarcely capable of comprehending the least abstruse of our authors; but on occasionally opening some of my thirty-six volumes, I was much surprised to see such a list of poetasters and rhymers, bound up with our principal poets. So consummate indeed was my ignorance, that I knew not even the titles of the works of Torrachionne, Morgante, Ricciardetto, etc., poems which I have since regretted having spent so much time in perusing. The acquisition of this collection proved of most incalculable benefit to me; I never afterwards parted with these six fathers of our divine language, Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Boccaccio, and Machiavel, in whom every excellence is concentrated.[40]

The linguistic and cultural crisis experienced in the early works is overcome as of the *Life*'s *Fourth Epoch*, where he 'solemnly vowed [...], neither to spare trouble nor fatigue, in order to render myself an equal proficient in my native tongue with the most learned philologist in Italy [...]. Having thus bound myself by an oath, I resolutely plunged, with the courage of a Curtius, into the abyss of grammar'.[41] In 1775, Alfieri translated the two tragedies originally conceived in French into Italian prose, although 'these two tragedies always exhibited a mongrel appearance of Italian and French', he also began 'to read and study, in the order of their antiquity, all our most celebrated poets',[42] that is, Dante, Petrarca, Tasso e Ariosto, and then proceeded to Cardinale Cornelio Bentivoglio's translation of Stazio and Scipione Maffei's *Merope*.

3. *Tuscany and Siena: Linguistic and Political Conversion*

The perfect 'italianizing' (Alfieri 1877, 202), however, could not take place from Turin: in 1776, Alfieri therefore resolved to go to Tuscany 'to speak, hear, think, and dream in Tuscan, and not otherwise, evermore',[43] with the ambitious goal of forming the new Italian tragic verse. Tuscany and the cultural networks of Florence, Pisa, and Siena proved fundamental for consolidation of these new foundations and for Alfieri's establishment as a tragic author. Through his autobiography, Alfieri depicts his personal Tuscan cultural landscape as a complex space shaped by a well-defined artistic and political imaginary. The Tuscan cities are perceived by the author as the most faithful custodians of the Italy's longstanding cultural and literary pre-eminence, and the close connection between poetry and place reaches its culmination in Tuscany, which closely aligns with the cultural

ideal he envisioned and longed for.[44] To study Tuscan, in 1776, Alfieri went to Pisa and was introduced by Paolo Maria Paciaudi to 'some of the professors of the University'.[45] The author's reconsideration of this first encounter with the Pisan scholars in 1790 appears retrospectively reshaped and partially misleading. This reinterpretation is likely influenced by the rejection of Alfieri's tragedies by the Pisan scholars in 1783. The initiated exchange proves to be decisive, however: thanks to the recommended studies, including Horace's *Ars Poetica* and Seneca's tragedies, Alfieri's work is finally freed up, and the author carries on with the drafting of *Antigone* and the versification of *Polinice*. Evidence of the importance of this cultural transition comes once again from his *Life*, in which, at the end of his stay in Pisa, some considerations on tragic verse are reported:

> I was so struck with some passages of the true sublime, that I endeavoured to render them into blank verse. This contributed not only to improve my Italian and Latin, but also my powers of versification and expression. By this employment I perceived the great difference which exists between epic and iambic verse, the measure of which alone is sufficient to enable us to distinguish colloquial poetry from every other species of verse.[46]

In 1777, Alfieri once again went to Tuscany, this time to Siena, 'where they not only speak better, but where there is a less of an influx of foreigners'.[47] The city immediately emerges as a place where the author can conduct his language studies and his work as a tragedian without any kind of distraction.[48] Emblematic in this regard is the comparison between the descriptions of the entry into Paris and the entry into Siena as presented in the autobiography:

> From Leghorn we proceeded to Siena, the site of which I did not admire; but here a ray of light darted suddenly across my mind; my feelings were subdued by hearing the language of these people, which they spoke with elegance, clearness, and perfect precision. I remained, however, only twenty-four hours among them. The period of my literary and political conversion was yet far distant.[49]

The different impressions evoked by the two cities reflect the author's need to recover new and more solid roots, exalting Tuscany while repudiating his original cultural milieu. The arrival in Siena and the emotional response elicited by the sound of the Tuscan language foreshadows 'l'acquisition de cette nouvelle identité en parcourant [...] en vue de substituer au bilinguisme franco-piémontais d'origine un monolinguisme toscan rigoureux [the acquisition of this new identity by travelling [...] with a view to replacing the original Franco-Piedmontese bilingualism with strict Tuscan monolingualism]'.[50]

Alfieri found in Siena a dynamic city: Grand duke Pietro Leopoldo was enacting a reformist policy inspired by the enlightened despotism theorized in France; numerous salons were also active, including that of Teresa Regoli Mocenni, an important space for the circulation of Enlightenment ideas and Leopoldine reforms. It was in this *milieu* that a second conversion of the author took place, the political one. According to *Life*, this came about thanks to one of the members of the Mocenni salon, Francesco Gori Gandellini, who recommended Alfieri the reading of Machiavelli:

> I not only instantly conceived my tragedy, but, delighted with the copious, original, and nervous style of the author, I felt myself unable to resume my other studies, and proceeded to write the two books on Tyranny, such as they were printed several years afterwards. If I had treated this subject anew at a more advanced period of my life, I might have displayed more erudition, and fortified my opinions by the authority of history; but I was disinclined

> when I printed these pieces to enfeeble, by the frost of years, and the pedantry of my little learning, the fire of youth, and that noble and just indignation which I believe is visible in every page, without being deficient in just and forcible reasoning, which, if I deceive not myself, is the characteristic feature in this little piece.[51]

Siena is thus presented as Alfieri's political laboratory, where his political conversion begins with the writing of *Della Tirannide*, **under the intellectual guidance of Machiavelli.**[52] Nevertheless, in this context, the celebration of Tuscany cannot obscure the impact of English models, especially in the political sphere. Alfieri's travels outside Italy, particularly to England, were undoubtedly useful for his political formation; during these journeys he experienced the benefits of the English political system at a time of *anglomania*,[53] which became a constant model of reference.[54] His work is deeply rooted in contemporary political debate: as Giuseppe Rando notes, the treatise draws on texts that shaped French and English constitutional thought in the wake of Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*, including works by De Lolme, Mounier, and Mably.[55] Christian Del Vento also highlighted that the peculiar element of the 1790 *princeps*, compared to the first Sienese draft, is precisely its contextualization within the political issues of the second half of the eighteenth century, and that Machiavelli serves more as a starting point than as a theoretical foundation for reflection on the nature of monarchical power (*Della Tirannide*) and on the relationship between political power and culture (*Del Principe e delle lettere*).[56]

In the last chapter of *Della Tirannide*, the author addresses the necessity of revolution and the unavoidable use of violence to overthrow the political order and bring about radical changes, according to a path that should lead from tyranny to freedom:

> Let it be considered that changes of great importance can never take place in human affairs (as I have noted above) without serious dangers and losses; and it is at the cost of many tears and much blood (never otherwise) that people pass from slavery to freedom, much more so than from freedom to slavery. An excellent citizen, then, without ceasing to be so, may ardently desire this passing evil, because it puts an end at one blow to many other evils no less serious and much more durable, and at the same time the good which is necessarily born of it is much greater and more permanent. This desire is not evil in itself, since it looks to no other purpose than the true lasting advantage of all. And perhaps the day is fortunately dawning when a people, formerly oppressed and debased, now free, happy, and powerful, will bless that slaughter, that violence, that blood, by means of which there has at last been created out of many generations of enslaved, corrupted individuals, an illustrious distinguished generation of free and virtuous men.[57]

The fierce *misogallismo*[58] discernible in most of the author's writings from 1789 onwards does not prevent him from acknowledging the traumatic significance of what he persistently condemned, rejected, and vilified. In his own way, he witnessed that something irreversible had occurred.[59] From 1791 onwards, however, according to Massimo Boni, an adverse attitude develops within the author, who criticizes not only the Revolution itself but also the ways in which it was carried out by its protagonists, paving the way for a new form of tyranny: the popular tyranny.[60] Alfieri shares the ideological trajectory of an entire generation of intellectuals attracted to the Enlightenment and reformist ideals yet shocked by the gap between their ideal projects and the political practices dramatically revealed by the events in France.[61]

The French Revolution marks, according to Giuseppe Santarelli, two clear-cut activities in Alfieri's work: in the first phase, the sublimity of tragedy prevails; in the second, the

humility and disenchantment of the *Satire* and the *Commedie*.[62] In his autobiography, the author articulates the creative resurgence and literary intention behind his turn to comedy:

> I know not how my mind was led to enter on this species of composition, during the most sorrowful period of my life, when we had fallen into a state of the most abject slavery, from which it was impossible to escape; at a period too when both time and opportunity were denied me to execute what it was my wish to undertake. Suddenly a poetizing spirit animated my mind, and in one of my excursions I almost simultaneously conceived my four first comedies, which, in the groundwork, form only one, since they all tend to the same object by different means.[63]

In the *Commedie*, Alfieri expresses the full extent of the disappointment brought about by the revolutionary events, which leads him to lose faith in the model he had theorized in *Della Tirannide*. In these works, Alfieri sets up representations of possible forms of government (monarchy, oligarchy, democracy), highlighting how they can all turn into forms of tyranny and become governments of «rei»,[64] a term used by the author to denote rulers who govern as criminals or oppressors rather than legitimate sovereigns. The events unfolding in France from 1792 onward also undermine Alfieri's confidence in the English constitutional system, which is depicted in the fourth comedy, *L'Antidoto*, as an unattainable utopian ideal, opening a perspective of total pessimism regarding human nature and history.[65] The contemporary political reality leaves no room for any expectation of political or moral renewal; Paris and France are therefore rejected in the *Life* and other works, in favour of a deliberate and opposing turn toward Italy.

4. *Conclusion*

Within this framework, it is possible to conclude that the places and networks of Alfieri's landscape, as well as the brief portraits of the European countries visited during his travels, function as the tesserae of a geographic, political and cultural mosaic, which the author decomposes and recomposes according to the development of his persona and its growth.[66] The systematic rejection of French culture, whose presence nevertheless remains evident in the various editions of the *Life* as proof of its continuing relevance, is matched by an opposite exaltation of Tuscan culture, which Alfieri recognizes as the centre of Italianism. The appropriation of this cultural network is thus presented in the autobiography as an inevitable recognition, within a trajectory leading to Alfieri's development as an Italian tragic author.[67]

The significance of this study lies in demonstrating that Alfieri's cultural networks cannot be understood as mere biographical data, but rather as deliberate narrative constructions serving a broader autobiographical project.

The examination of manuscript variants (particularly in the descriptions of Paris and in the account of *spiemontizzazione*) reveals how the author progressively intensified his anti-French rhetoric across successive drafts, transforming initially moderate observations into vehement rejections of French cultural hegemony.

Moreover, by tracing the evolution from the *Esquisse du jugement universel* through the Tuscan conversion to the final disillusionment with the French Revolution, the article has shown how Alfieri's *Life* retrospectively reworks his intellectual trajectory to privilege rupture over continuity: the systematic minimization of French influences, despite their demonstrable importance in his formation, together with the corresponding exaltation of

Tuscan linguistic and literary traditions, reveals the autobiography as an act of cultural self-fashioning rather than mere documentation.

Alfieri's case is particularly instructive for eighteenth-century studies because it illustrates how an intellectual formed entirely within French cultural frameworks could construct an oppositional identity through strategic narrative rewriting. The analysis of Alfieri's Sienese conversion demonstrates the crucial intersection of linguistic, literary, and political transformations in his self-representation. This spatial dimension of cultural identity formation, in which specific cities are invested with ideological significance, offers valuable insight into how eighteenth-century intellectuals conceived the relationship between place, language, and political consciousness.[68]

Finally, the evolution of Alfieri's position on revolution and tyranny, reconstructed through his political treatises and comedies, reveals the profound impact of the French Revolution on his worldview. The shift from theorizing revolutionary violence as a necessary path to freedom (*Della Tirannide*) to representing all forms of government as potential tyrannies (*Commedie*) reflects a broader crisis among European intellectuals confronted with the gap between Enlightenment ideals and revolutionary practice.[69] Alfieri's response represents one possible intellectual trajectory at the crossroads of Enlightenment and Romanticism, characterized by the abandonment of cosmopolitan optimism in favour of the construction of a particularist identity.[70]

The archival consciousness that Zanardo has identified in Alfieri's management of his papers finds its narrative counterpart in the deliberate structuring of the *Life*. The autobiography's function as an '*archivio autoritratto*' (self-portrait archive) implies that the cultural networks it presents are preselected and arranged to support a specific authorial image: this contribution aimed to shed light on the mechanisms underlying this selection process, thereby revealing what is excluded or downplayed as much as what is emphasized.

For eighteenth-century studies more broadly, Alfieri's case illuminates the complex negotiations between national and cosmopolitan identities that characterized the period. His trajectory — from a French-educated aristocrat and European traveller to a self-proclaimed Italian cultural nationalist — maps a path followed, with variations, by numerous intellectuals across Europe, as political events compelled a reassessment of Enlightenment universalism.

Read through the lens of its cultural networks, the *Life* thus emerges as more than an autobiography: it is a political and cultural manifesto that seeks to define Italianness in opposition to French cultural dominance while simultaneously (and perhaps unconsciously) testifying to the enduring influence of that very culture. This fundamental contradiction renders Alfieri's autobiography a particularly rich document for understanding the tensions inherent in the formation of cultural identity. The gaps between Alfieri's presentation of his own development and the documentary evidence of his readings, travels, and actual influences reveal the creative labour required to construct a coherent narrative self from the fragments of lived experience.

NOTES

1. Roberto Marchetti, 'Nuovi manoscritti alfieriani', *Annali alfieriani* 3 (1983), 69–72.
2. Christian Del Vento, *La biblioteca ritrovata: la prima biblioteca di Vittorio Alfieri* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2019).

3. <http://www.item.ens.fr/manuscrits-italiens>.
4. <https://eman-archives.org/DigitalAlfieri/>.
5. Monica Zanardo, 'Un «archivio autoritratto»: Vittorio Alfieri e i suoi manoscritti', in *Volontà d'archivio. L'autore, le carte, l'opera*, ed. by Paola Italia and Monica Zanardo (Roma: Viella Libreria Editrice, 2023), pp. 411–31 (p. 430).
6. Ibid., p. 426
7. Riccardo Scrivano, *Biografia e autobiografia: il modello alfieriano* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1976), p. 121.
8. Angelo Fabrizi, *Rileggere Alfieri* (Roma: Aracne, 2014), p. 93.
9. By *spiemontizzazione*, Alfieri refers to a deliberate and radical act of self-detachment from Piedmontese political, social, and cultural constraints. The term designates a symbolic process of 'de-vassalization' through which the author sought to free himself from the legal obligations imposed on Piedmontese subjects — particularly censorship and restrictions on movement — to claim full intellectual and authorial independence. This process took concrete form in 1778, when Alfieri formally transferred his entire patrimony to his sister Giulia in exchange for an annuity. As he explains in the *Life*, this act allowed him to escape a legal system that made it impossible to be both a subject of the King of Sardinia and a free author. *Spiemontizzazione* thus represents a foundational moment in Alfieri's self-fashioning: a material sacrifice undertaken to secure the liberty of writing, thinking, and choosing one's place of residence and a symbolic rupture with what he perceived as the 'ill-fated nest' of his origins.
10. Vittorio Alfieri, *Life of Vittorio Alfieri with an essay by William D. Howels*, trans. by William D. Howells (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1877), pp. 232–33.
11. Simona Costa, *Lo specchio di Narciso: autoritratto di un «homme de lettres». Su Alfieri autobiografo* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1983), p. 125
12. Ibid., p. 85.
13. Vittorio Alfieri, Ms. Alfieri 24, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Firenze.
14. Vittorio Alfieri, Ms. Alfieri 13, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Firenze.
15. As these passages are drawn from my consultation of the original manuscripts, the English translations are by the author.
16. Fabrizi, *Rileggere Alfieri*, p. 53.
17. Walter Binni, *Alfieri. Scritti 1969–1994* (Firenze: Il Ponte, 2015), p. 17.
18. Fabrizi, *Rileggere Alfieri*, p. 63.
19. 'In the course of this year I took lessons in geography, and on the harpsichord. Frequently amusing myself with globes and charts, I made some progress in the former of these studies, to which I joined that of history, and especially ancient history. My geographical master being a native of the Valley of Aosta, occasionally lent me some French works, which I began to comprehend a little, and among others Gil Blas, with which I was perfectly enchanted. This was the first book I had ever read from beginning to end, except the Æneid of Caro, and it afforded me much greater entertainment. About this period I likewise perused several romances, such as Cassandra, Almachilda, etc. and the interest with which they inspired me was in proportion to the horrific and melancholy nature of the story. Among other productions of this kind, I read the Memoirs of a Man of Quality six times at least' (Alfieri 1877, 99).
20. Stefania Buccini, *Alfieri beyond Italy: Proceedings of the International Conference (Madison, Wisconsin, September 27–28, 2002)* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2004), p. 5.
21. Alfieri, *Life of Vittorio Alfieri*, p. 90.
22. Guido Santato, *Alfieri e Voltaire: dall'imitazione alla contestazione* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1988).
23. Fabrizi, *Rileggere Alfieri*, p. 161.
24. Ibid., p. 152.
25. Del Vento, *La biblioteca ritrovata*, p. 120.

26. Santato, *Alfieri e Voltaire: dall'imitazione alla contestazione*, p. 43.
27. Alfieri, *Life of Vittorio Alfieri*, p. 6.
28. *Alfieri tragico*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti and Roberta Turchi (Firenze: Le Lettere, 2004), p. 768.
29. Christian Del Vento and Guido Santato, *Quand Alfieri écrivait en français: Alfieri et la culture française (Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 21 novembre–19 décembre 2003)* (Paris: Bibliothèque Mazarine, 2004), p. 15.
30. Alfieri, *Life of Vittorio Alfieri*, pp. 136–37.
31. Del Vento and Santato, *Quand Alfieri écrivait en français*, p. 15.
32. As these passages are drawn from my consultation of the original manuscripts, the English translations are by the author.
33. As these passages are drawn from my consultation of the original manuscripts, the English translations are by the author.
34. In the *Life*, there is in fact a personalization of the landscape, as Alfieri invests it with his own moods and passions. His gaze is never impartial, but subject to the intense emotion evoked through a personal filter, experiencing each landscape with a uniqueness that results from a marked shift of emphasis from object to subject, producing significant pathetic effects stirred by places with unquestionably sublime features (Gino Tellini, *Letture alfieriane* (Firenze: Polistampa, 2003), p. 21).
35. Isabel Violante Picon, 'La scène de l'arrivée à Paris', in *Vittorio Alfieri e la culture française*, ed. by Pérette-Cécile Buffaria, *Revue des Études Italiennes*, 1–2 (2004), 79–86 (p. 79).
36. Costa, *Lo specchio di Narciso*, pp. 135–36.
37. Del Vento, Santato, *Quand Alfieri écrivait en français*.
38. Violante Picon, 'La scène de l'arrivée à Paris', p. 79.
39. Ibid., p. 80.
40. Alfieri, *Life of Vittorio Alfieri*, pp. 171–72.
41. Ibid., pp. 200–01.
42. Ibid., p. 205.
43. Ibid., p. 14.
44. Angelo Fabrizi, *Alfieri a Siena e dintorni: omaggio a Lovanio Rossi. Atti della Giornata di Studi, Colle di Val d'Elsa (22 settembre 2001)* (Roma: Domograf, 2007), p. 34
45. Alfieri, *Life of Vittorio Alfieri*, p. 213.
46. Ibid., p. 213.
47. Ibid., p. 225.
48. Fabrizi, *Alfieri a Siena e dintorni*, p. 10.
49. Alfieri, *Life of Vittorio Alfieri*, p. 121.
50. Del Vento, Santato, *Quand Alfieri écrivait en français*, p. 16.
51. Alfieri, *Life of Vittorio Alfieri*, pp. 226–27.
52. Beatrice Alfonzetti, 'Sublimi letterati, sublimi cittadini. Il principe Gonzaga e il conte Alfieri', in *«Tutto ti serva di libro». Studi di letteratura italiana per Pasquale Guaragnella* (Lecce: Argo Editrice, 2019), pp. 590–602 (p. 590).
53. By *anglomania* (or *anglofilia*), Alfieri refers to a sustained admiration for England that encompasses political institutions, civic culture, and moral values rather than mere aesthetic or fashionable taste. In the context of his intellectual development, anglomania designates a form of political anglophilia rooted in Alfieri's direct experience of England and in his perception of the British constitutional system as the most effective historical realization of liberty. On Alfieri's anglophilia and its ideological implications, see Andrea Battistini, 'Vittorio Alfieri, le "mosche" francesi e le "api" inglesi', in *La rivoluzione francese e l'Inghilterra*, ed. by L. M. Crisafulli-Jones (Napoli: Liguori, 1990), pp. 399–419; John Lindon, *L'Inghilterra di Vittorio Alfieri e altri studi alfieriani* (Modena: Mucchi, 1995).

54. Buccini, *Alfieri beyond Italy*, p. 4.

55. Giuseppe Rando, *Tre saggi alfieriani* (Roma: Herder, 1980).

56. Christian Del Vento, 'Il Principe e il Panegirico. Alfieri tra Machiavelli e De Lolme', *Seicento e Settecento: Rivista di letteratura italiana*, 1 (2006), 149–70 (p. 151).

57. Vittorio Alfieri, *Of Tyranny*, trans. and ed. by Julius A. Molinaro and Beatrice Corrigan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), pp. 100–01.

58. By *misogallismo*, Alfieri denotes a radical and polemical form of anti-French sentiment that emerges forcefully in his writings from the late 1780s onward. The term — derived from Greek *misos* (hatred) and Latin *Gallus* (Frenchman) — encapsulates a moral and political condemnation of France, which Alfieri came to regard as responsible for betraying and discrediting the ideal of liberty. This attitude finds its most explicit literary formulation in *Il Misogallo*, a satirical work comprising both prose and verse, inspired by the events of the French Revolution between the Parisian insurrection of July 1789 and the French occupation of Rome in February 1798. In this openly anti-French collection, Alfieri revisits and repudiates his earlier, more favourable judgements of the Revolution — most notably those expressed in the ode *A Parigi sbastigliato* — recasting them in the light of the Terror and its violent excesses. The first complete edition of *Il Misogallo* appeared posthumously in 1814 in Pisa, published by Sebastiano Nistri, but bears the false printing date 'London 1799'; similarly, the second edition, also issued in 1814 in Florence by Guglielmo Piatti, carries the false date 'London 1800'. Matteo Navone, *Introduzione*, in Vittorio Alfieri, *Misogallo*, ed. by M. Navone (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2016), p. XIII.

59. Fabrizi, *Rileggere Alfieri*, p. 304.

60. Massimo Boni, *L'Alfieri e la Rivoluzione francese con altri scritti alfieriani* (Bologna: Edizioni Italiane Moderne, 1974), p. 73

61. Clara Domenici and others, *Il poeta e il tempo: la Biblioteca Laurenziana per Vittorio Alfieri* (Firenze: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2003), p. 198.

62. Giuseppe Santarelli, *Studi e ricerche sulla genesi e le fonti delle Commedie alfieriane* (Milano: Bietti, 1971), p. 23. However, as Francesco Novati had already pointed out in 1881 in *L'Alfieri poeta comico*, Alfieri's final comic work continues the line established by his early humorous writings. Scrivano (1963) and Vincenzo Placella (1973) also renewed scholarly attention to Alfieri's comic production, highlighting its connections with the *Satire* and, more broadly, the significance of his comic literary experience, which extends beyond linguistic experimentation to encompass a broader human dimension. Only through the combination of these elements does it fully acquire meaning within the development of Alfieri's personality (Riccardo Scrivano, *Biografia e autobiografia: il modello alfieriano* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1976), p. 261).

63. Alfieri, *Life of Vittorio Alfieri*, p. 344.

64. Vittorio Alfieri, *Commedie*, ed. by Simona Costa, 2 vols (Milano: Mursia, 1990), p. 111.

65. Marco Sterpos, *Alfieri fra tragedia, commedia e politica* (Modena: Mucchi, 2006), p. 193.

66. Fabrizi, *Alfieri a Siena e dintorni*, p. 28.

67. *Alfieri in Toscana: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Firenze, 19–21 ottobre 2000)*, ed. by Gino Tellini and Roberta Turchi (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2002), p. 204.

68. *Vittorio Alfieri in Toscana. Una scelta di ambiente e di vita. Atti del Convegno di Studi Alfieriani (Pisa, 14 April 2002)*, ed. by Giuseppina Rossi (Pisa: ETS, 2003).

69. Rando, *Tre saggi alfieriani*.

70. As Di Benedetto has argued, 'ciò che separa Alfieri da un Beccaria e dalla cultura a cui Beccaria apparteneva è ben più che la sopravvenuta "crisi" dell'illuminismo; infatti agisce su di lui un parziale rigetto di quella cultura. Anche il suo legame più forte con essa – la sopravvalutazione del momento politico, inteso, peraltro, soprattutto sotto il profilo etico – sarà da lui vissuto con contraddizioni via via più evidenti. O si veda cosa diventa in un tale scrittore la filosofia universalmente dominante nel suo secolo e da lui stesso condivisa: il sensismo' [what

separates Alfieri from a Beccaria and from the culture to which Beccaria belonged is far more than the subsequent 'crisis' of the Enlightenment; in fact, he experiences a partial rejection of that culture. Even his strongest connection to it — the overestimation of the political moment, understood, moreover, primarily from an ethical perspective — will be experienced by him with increasingly evident contradictions. Or consider what becomes, in such a writer, of the philosophy that was universally dominant in his century and shared by him: sensationism]. Arnaldo Di Benedetto, *Le passioni e il limite. Un'interpretazione di Vittorio Alfieri* (Napoli: Liguori, 1994), pp. 37–38.

Acknowledgements

Open access publishing facilitated by Universita degli Studi di Macerata, as part of the Wiley - CRUI-CARE agreement.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

SARA GALLEGATI is a research fellow at the University of Macerata within the framework of the PNRR project *ART.it — Art in transition. Arts between environmental sustainability and digital innovation*. As part of her PhD in *Digital Humanities* (University of Macerata, 37th cycle), she developed a dissertation entitled *Trattamento digitale e studio critico del 'Panegirico di Plinio a Trajano' di Vittorio Alfieri*.