

**Nick Havely, *Apennine Excursions: Journeys on the Edge of Tuscany*
(Book in progress, to be completed during fellowship at the Fondazione Bogliasco,
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Walking along 'the spine of Italy' leads back in time, as well as forward in space. The path of the 'Great Apennine Excursion' (*Grande Escursione Appenninica*) covers a distance of over 400 kilometres, beginning at a pass above San Sepolcro, crossing the mountains of the Casentino, following the northern boundary of Tuscany, and ending at the border of Liguria. The Apennine ridge here is punctuated by a number of summits: Monte Falterona in the Casentino, Corno alle Scale near Abetone, and its highest point Monte Prato, dominating the Garfagnana valley. The route also passes a number of ancient sites and remote sources: the Franciscan sanctuary of La Verna; the monastic hermitage of Camaldoli; the springs of the Arno; the high, bleak Lago di Scaffaiolo, described by Boccaccio; and Lago Santo Parmense, at the head of the Parma river. The project deals with the route as it is today and with the narratives of others who over time have followed or crossed parts of it. They include medieval Franciscan friars, pilgrims and diplomats (including Chaucer and John Whethamstede, Abbot of St Albans); poets such as Dante, Ariosto, Heine, Shelley; and later travellers and writers like Joseph Forsyth, John Chetwode Eustace, Frances Trollope, and Ethel Smyth who came this way in 1884, equipped only with 'a camel's hair Salzburg cape, a comb and toothbrush, an Ordnance map and a revolver'.

Twentieth-century warfare has visited and left visible reminders in the region, from the trim German cemetery at the Passo della Futa to the vandalized monument for Italian partisans above the Val di Taro. During the closing years of World War II this part of the Apennines also saw dramatic activity on and around the 'Gothic Line' by an extraordinary range of combatants, many of whose stories are not well known to British readers. These include the polyglot Allied armies and their German and Italian adversaries; and enlisted intellectuals, like the medievalist Derek Brewer and the South African poet Guy Butler. Also active in the area in 1943-5 were the Italian partisan brigades of the Garfagnana, the Alto Appennino and the Lunigiana; and the British prisoners of war (like Gordon Lett at Rossano near Pontremoli, or Stuart Hood on Monte Morello above Florence), who, having been released after the Italian surrender in the autumn of 1943, had allied themselves with the *resistenza* in the mountains and valleys behind the lines of battle.

The book in progress thus portrays places in and around Tuscany, but it is not about restoring a ruin or colonizing the countryside. Instead, it follows itineraries through the human history of a landscape that is close to, yet remote from, sites familiar to modern tourism. It records experiences at close hand, and at walking-pace, of this mountainous terrain, its former travellers, its remaining inhabitants, and its strata of stories.