

Ann Gallagher

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Against the backdrop of the gorgeous Val d'Orcia and surrounded by the peaceful quiet of the Monteverdi gardens, I began my summer by studying Virgilian poetry in preparation for my senior thesis. Thanks to the incredible vision of the Cioffi family in undertaking the restoration of this 900 year-old village and to their generosity in creating the Monteverdi scholarship, I had the incredible opportunity of living in Castiglioncello del Trinoro, experiencing a seclusion from the busyness of daily life, and delving into my independent research for over five weeks.

Monteverdi was unlike anything I had ever seen or experienced before. High above the Sienese countryside and more than an hour-long walk from the nearest town, the tiny village rests in an enchanting quiet; the dominating sounds throughout the village are those of the wind and birds in the trees. In this environment, I spent hours reading Virgilian poetry, studying the early Christians' reception of Virgil, and translating Latin Biblical, epic poetry. Occasionally I made excursions to Siena, Florence and Rome where I discovered artwork that illuminated scenes from the very texts which I was studying in Monteverdi. In addition to my research, I had the opportunity to attend concerts and view the exhibitions of several Monteverdi artists in residence. During my first week, I sat in on the singing master classes, taught by Angelo Gabrielli, and attended the concert in which these students performed a selection of pieces from Mozart's operas. I also met Resident Artists Sylvia Volpe and Vivian Chang-Freiheit and attended their performance of several Dvorak, Debussy, Brahms and Gershwin pieces inside Monteverdi's 800 year-old chapel. During my final week in Monteverdi, I also was able to lead a

seminar with Michael Cioffi and present to Monteverdi guests some of my own research during my time in Italy.

It is impossible to express the depth of my gratitude to the Cioffi family for their generosity and to all those who have made and continue to make Monteverdi such an incredibly breathtaking and enriching experience. I know that both the knowledge and cultural enrichment I received through the Monteverdi award will continue to shape and influence me for the rest of my life.