

Sarah Ortiz

This past summer I was blessed enough to spend five weeks at Monteverdi in the Val d'Orcia region of Tuscany. Thanks to Mr. Cioffi's generosity, I lived at Monteverdi as their scholar in residence, working on my senior thesis research and soaking in the astounding natural beauty. Surrounded by rolling green hills and fields of poppies, Monteverdi is located atop a mountain in Tuscany in the medieval village of Castiglioncello del Trinoro. The nearest town, Sarteano, is a seven kilometer walk down the mountain. On my daily hikes I often thought about the richness of the land and the vision of Monteverdi as a meeting place for all the arts, a place of cultural legacy. Every sunset cast a warm glow on the hills and broke through the clouds in a glorious way; morning fog lingered around the dewy roses; fresh lavender and sage filled the gardens; brilliant poppies dotted the thousand-year old ruins of a castle. I could not believe I was there, nor did I realize the depth of the history until the residents of the village and hotel staff began to tell me: Roman legions marched through this region, Etruscan tombs lay deep in the forest (as I discovered on a morning walk), Renaissance artists were inspired by this land.

Monteverdi provided the perfect place to contemplate the poetry of two poets rooted in some way to Italy: Ovid and Keats. My research focused on the influence of Ovid, specifically through the *Metamorphoses*, on the poetry of John Keats. As a PLS and classics major this idea struck me as a fascinating way to bring together a Roman and Romantic poet, centered on the ever-present question: who is the poet? I spent my time at Monteverdi reading and analyzing the poems of John Keats, specifically the narrative poem *Lamia* and the unfinished works *Hyperion* and the *Fall of Hyperion*. Keats' letters also provided rich material on his views of poetry and the poet within the world. Alongside this, I read in Latin selected myths from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that deal with the theme of artistic creativity: Arachne, Canens & Picus, and Orpheus. I traced thematic similarities between Keats' and Ovid's poetry, considering that Keats read Ovid in English as well as in Latin. I also traveled to Rome, Florence, Siena, and surrounding medieval towns to experience the great of art of Italy. In Rome I visited the Keats-Shelley House, the very place where John Keats stayed and eventually died overlooking the Spanish Steps.

At the end of my stay I gave a talk on my research to the hotel guests and staff, thankful for the opportunity to share my work. For a few days I was able to meet with Mr. Cioffi to discuss my research and his vision of Monteverdi. He emphasized the transformative power of beauty present in Monteverdi, through the land, the architecture and landscaping, and especially through the hospitality. My time at Monteverdi was indeed transformative, not only due to the beauty but also the warm hospitality of the staff, who welcomed me and graciously tried to teach me Italian! I hope to see them again some day. I learned so much about Italian culture, food, wine, and history during my stay at Monteverdi and I am forever grateful.