

ITALY AT THE CENTER



The Ends of the Novel. Vincenzo Cuoco's *Plato in Italy*

The novel, it has been argued, is “the most centralized of all literary genres.” According to a center-periphery model of literary relations, the genre of the novel spread from cultural centers along political and economic lines of power. A “peripheral” novel, Vincenzo Cuoco's *Plato in Italy* (1804-06) provides us with the material to problematize the relationship between core and margin. Cuoco's reflections on historical and cultural processes show his awareness of the power dynamics inherent in such a paradigm and probe the limits and dangers of importing foreign models. By examining how *Plato in Italy* engages with and challenges notions of genre, period, and historical reception, this lecture aims to show how Cuoco uses the form of the novel to resist and subvert the dynamic of center and periphery.

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