

A GENUINE APPROACH TO MOVIE CHARACTERS AND SPACIAL INFLUENCES

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Abstract: The strong binder between human beings and the variety of spaces they interfere with has been portrayed by skillful movie directors, who improved and nurtured the perspectives of literary critics and cinephiles. Characters will be plunged into several spaces, carefully chosen to exert a significant influence upon their careers, emotional selves and personalities. The iconic landscapes of Italy, the libertine lifestyle of Italian people, the way the characters interact will outline a successful and genuine spacial approach to Letters to Juliet and Under the Tuscan Sun Hollywood movies. Characters will experience happiness via authentic love stories, which will be favored by appropriate spacial background for expressing their deepest dreams, feelings and career goals. The ups and downs in every human being's life as well as the "messy bits" that life and love are made of will be outline via the characters' perseverance, serious quests and unexpected destinations.

Keywords: spacial criticism, career, lovelife, emotional self, lifetime goals

Spatial criticism, also known as geocriticism, is one of the latest and most interesting trends when it comes to literary approaches. Its basic concepts are: "the examination of the complex relationships between human beings and the multiple spaces they inhabit: geographical, natural, social, etc. and of the representations of these relationships in literature, the assessment of the role fulfilled by the presence of spaces and places in the general context of the text, the awareness of the flowing, dynamic character of space and space-time relationships and the awareness of the interdisciplinary character of the concepts and of the research" (Coşer, 2014: 141).

Bertrand Westphal's theories, which promoted the geocentric approach to literature, empowered my vision and enhanced the background of my critical knowledge. Alternative spaces are created, and fiction helps people understand the real world. The geocritic can have a complex vision of the same place just by using various texts or by analyzing the cinephile world.

My creative skills have known a major development via the process of exploring movie characters'. As such, I have tackled a spacial approach to prominent Hollywood movies: Letters to Juliet and Under the Tuscan Sun. For the approach to be properly constructed, I focused my work mainly on the dynamic relations between space, place and the human being. Authentic landscapes are created, the characters are developing, and the new spaces engender changes in behavior.

Space has a strong influence on the characters, and it changes their destiny. The characters are to be introduced to the iconic landscapes of Tuscany, searching for love or thriving to be successful in their careers. Their personalities are overwhelmed by intense emotions and various behavioral patterns. Driven by curiosity, the characters explore the surroundings of Verona and Tuscany and acquire further knowledge being

concerned with the Italian culture. Their journey shall imply serious quests and unexpected destinations for finding true love.

Various modes of expanding upon the relation between space and human being have been mirrored via one of the basic concepts of spacial criticism, namely “the examination of the complex relationships between human beings and the multiple spaces they inhabit” (Coşer, 2014: 141).

There has always been a bond between characters and spaces or places. The movie *Letters to Juliet* highlights the link between space (Verona) and the place (Juliet’s house) via a letter that changes the destiny of all the characters. Their whole life is constructed in terms of their way of facing various opportunities. They face challenges and they have to choose between career and love, between intuition and wisdom. Significant changes regarding their personality will take place by interacting in order to find true love. Space is friendly allowing them to experience both friendship and love in close connection with the “new social relations” that “demand a new space and vice-versa” (Lefebvre, 1991: 59).

For the approach to be properly constructed, a short account of the plot of the movie meets the demand for clarifying special issues and their emotional connotations. Sophie and Victor are engaged, and they are going to pre-honeymoon in Verona, where they are planning to find suppliers for Victor’s future restaurant and do some sightseeing (the former is a fact checker whereas the latter is a chef). When they get to Verona, they face a new reality. Space is radically influencing the characters, helping them to build a career and experience powerful feelings and emotions.

The topic of the second movie, *Under the Tuscan Sun*, is centered on a female protagonist, Frances Mayes, a successful literature professor, reviewer and author, who faces hard times in her life. She is unable to redefine her priorities mostly the finishing of her book because she is financially supporting her husband, Tom, who is writing his own book. Her hopes and dreams are shattered when Tom asks for the divorce. The situation gets even worse as Tom, her ex-husband, asks for alimony and wants to keep the house. Frances is unhappy and exhausted. She feels a desperate need to escape all these. Eventually, she accepts the offer of Patti, her best friend, to go on a vacation to Tuscany. It all happens because Patti and her lesbian partner Grace, who originally purchased for themselves a ticket to go there, must face a new reality due to Patti’s pregnancy. Frances will reach a completely different space and will discover a whole new world.

Space has a powerful influence on all the characters, helping them develop their lives and satisfy their needs. The most important aspects that are affected by space symbolism are their careers, their love affairs, and their personalities.

1.1. Career

Verona is the space that encourages Victor to develop his career and he loves it. Victor is more preoccupied with work than listening to Sophie or spending time with her. Space is overwhelming for Victor, who is so fascinated by his mundane quest that he doesn’t realize he is letting down Sophie. Victor and Sophie do not share the same aspirations. “Women have different perceptions of space than men” (Coşer, 2014: 151).

What is important for Victor (going to the truffle place) is insignificant for Sophie (it is not worth traveling 120 km to see a mushroom). Sophie proves to handle the situation very well and tells Victor to go to the truffle place while she is sightseeing. She is understanding and supportive of Victor's lifestyle.

Culinary space helps Victor to enrich and improve his cooking skills. The exquisite food issue allows him to learn cooking secrets, traditional recipes of the Italian dishes and last but not least to become a better chef. Victor's affection for Sophie makes him support her literary career and pursue her dreams, convinced that writing is "Sophie's passion and she should do that" (*Letters to Juliet*, 2010).

Space plays an essential role when speaking about building their careers. Italy turns out to be the ideal place for Victor's culinary goals. He is able to find what he needs for opening his restaurant. The Italian suppliers provide him with quality ingredients, which are important for his business to be successful. For Sophie, Juliet's house has a significant influence on her future career. She stops being a fact checker and proceeds to write. Trattoria *Lettere a Gioletta* is the place where she gets to know the Secretaries of Juliet, who reply to every note left on the wall of Juliet's house. Here, Sophie finds an old letter, hidden behind a brick. Even though 50 years have passed, Sophie writes a reply to it. The love letter ensures a fresh beginning for her literary career.

Space and its ingredients are not only the perfect background for a successful literary enterprise but also an agent meant to strongly influence their lives. The appealing Verona is the place that unites Sophie and Claire, the latter being the one who comes back to retrieve her past, which involves her former lover, Lorenzo. For the retrieval to be successful, Claire is accompanied by her grandson, Charlie. Sophie is good-mannered and asks for Claire's permission to join her in her search for Lorenzo. She is sincere from the very beginning. She confesses to Claire her intention to depict the journey as "it is a story worth telling" (*Letters*, 2010). Claire is very thrilled and agrees. Verona has brought excitement and disappointment in Sophie's life. Writing the story of Claire and Lorenzo proved to be her greatest achievement.

Italy traces her troublesome literary career. It is the space that gives Sophie wings to fly and the courage that she needed to become a writer. During her journey through Italy, Sophie involves her fact checker abilities to help Claire find Lorenzo. She also improves her writing abilities inspired by Claire's enthusiasm and by the genuine love she believes in. Her ambition motivates her to continue her journey and write the story up to the end, surpassing all the obstacles she encounters in the meantime. Space turns her search into a real journey with serious quests and unexpected destinations. Claire and Lorenzo's love story creates a bond between various cultural and spatial experiences, connecting Italy and the States, facilitating Sophie's career promotion. When she returns to New York, Sophie gets her story published and shares the good news with Victor, who is still the same guy, too preoccupied with pursuing his goal related to the opening of his restaurant.

Approached through the same methodological spatial lens as Sophie, Frances, the protagonist of the movie *Under the Tuscan Sun*, launches her career via two different

literary procedures. San Francisco is the space that defines Frances as a career woman, who instead of thinking about herself. Her altruism is proved by the fact that she is always concerned with the problems of the ones who surround her. And, as such, instead of working on her book, she offers guidance and support to one of her students, William, who finally becomes a successful writer, following her advice: "Terrible ideas are like playground scapegoats. Given the right encouragement, they grow up to be geniuses" (*Under*, 2003).

1.2. Spatial influences on the characters' emotional selves

Verona can be approached from a triple perspective, as the first place of objects, the second space of thought and the third space of experience according to Soja's spatial theory. The famous story of romance experienced by Romeo and Juliet represents a source of inspiration for Victor, whose emotional self is overwhelmed by Shakespearean lines. He greets Sophie in a particular way by adopting a line from Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* to his own love story: "Wherefore art thou", my sweet Sophia?

Juliet's house can be identified with a shelter for objects, which are symbolic for the mythical energy that surrounds Verona. Our attention is drawn, in the first place, by an element of utmost importance, Juliet's balcony, which underlines the everlasting bond between architecture, literature, and love. The balcony represents a literary motif of the Shakespearean famous play *Romeo and Juliet* and it can be associated with the reinterpretation of an outdoor theatre, which offers every woman the opportunity to play a genuine role. Among the iconic symbols of the place, we can find love notes which cover the walls, gothic architectural elements and Juliet's statue, which signifies the expression of art and good luck. Finally, true love is redefined by the old letter which brings together the present at the past via defying the passing of time.

A second space can be explored to add further meaning to Verona. Women's thoughts and aspirations regarding their love relationships bring together multiple spaces and various emotions they experience throughout their lives. Every woman's story is depicted by the indefinable power of love. The emotional burden offered by Juliet's house builds an idyllic and friendly space dedicated to women from all around the world who seek for further guidance to solve their love issues. The location is ideal for confessing sincere love. Here, even the deepest thoughts concerning love issues can be expressed without any restraint. The courtyard represents a sanctuary of the inner voices of women who experienced love, confusion, and disappointment. Juliet's house signifies the revival of hope and the encouragement to defend our feelings. Women are taught how to react to different challenges they are facing in their personal relationships and how to fight for the loved ones.

Verona, the city of love, is the ideal place for the pre-honeymoon of Sophie and Victor. As Shakespeare states in the Prologue of his famous play, *Romeo and Juliet*, "In fair Verona, where we lay our scene" a romantic atmosphere is created by the narrow streets of Verona, with its charming balconies and fountains. The nocturnal landscape of the city center engenders the desire of having an intimate walk through the beautiful square.

Juliet's house is widely regarded as a complex place that possesses the strength to connect the spaces of objects and thoughts into a space of experience. During her sightseeing, Sophie faces different challenges and new social relations are constructed by meeting and joining the Secretaries of Juliet, who answer each note from the wall. Sophie is offered the chance to improve her writing style by replying to Claire's 50 years-old letter. Guided by her life principles, Sophie is confident in "true love that hasn't got an expiration date" (*Letters to Juliet*, 2010). The boundaries of time and place have no meaning when it comes to satisfying a strong inner wish as Claire's. Love aspirations can last for a lifetime and it is not worthy to give up on them for any reason.

On the one hand, Verona is the place that highlights what true love is about. On the other hand, Claire, Charlie, and Sophie are offered a lively experience of happiness, melancholy, and adventure. Sophie's reply represents the motivation Claire needed to stand up and fight for her "long-lost soul mate," (*Letters*, 2010) whom she labels as being true love. Exchanging ideas with Claire offers Sophie a new perspective on love. Valuable life lessons and unforgettable moments are shared by Claire while having dinner with the secretaries of Juliet. Claire's passion is contagious when talking about Lorenzo and their mutual and sincere feelings. In the past, Verona was regarded as a place of refuge which generated doubts and second thoughts in Claire's mind and soul. In the future, the balance will be reestablished by the same place and remorse will be banished forever. Claire's regrets vanish when she decides to come back to Verona and find Lorenzo.

Claire starts her journey despite her grandson's disapproval. Life and space create the opportunity of meeting Sophie. Mutual trust and friendship are gradually acquired as Claire and Sophie become closer as they share their love stories in the shade of the olive trees, surrounded by the amazing Tuscan landscapes. Their communication is centered especially on their partners and their emotional experiences. Claire defines both her ex-husband and Charlie as two "skeptics", who, nevertheless, possess "underneath such a warm, passionate heart" (*Letters*, 2010). The contrast between Sophie's and Claire's love relationship is highlighted by the amount of time spent with their lover. Lorenzo and Claire enjoy life to its fullest, spending "every second that they could" (*Letters*, 2010) together. Sophie's loneliness begins to grow as the story evolves. Due to Victor's exaggerated preoccupation of meeting suppliers and attending wine auctions Sophie's feelings are blurred, and she feels neglected. Writing Claire and Lorenzo's story provides the refuge she needs. Claire is a subtle observer of Sophie's emotional self. The lack of parent-child bonding relationship has affected Sophie in the long term. Even though Sophie denies it, being abandoned by her mom left deep traces in her soul. Disillusion is diminished as Sophie's feelings are finally understood by someone. Claire empathizes with Sophie's misery of being abandoned by her mom due to the fact of having lived the painful experience of losing her son in a car accident.

The characters drive out through wonderful landscapes and fascinating vineyards of Tuscany, eager to find the charming Lorenzo. Words fail to describe the variety of emotions experienced by Claire, Sophie, and Charlie during their tour of Siena. Claire and Sophie explore the surroundings of Siena with enthusiasm, curiosity, and hope. Claire's perseverance is not discouraged by Charlie's obstinacy. The accuracy of Claire's

search is ensured by Sophie's fact checker abilities and Claire's conviction that they should not have left Siena's surroundings. The searching area for finding Lorenzo is established by making use of two significant objects which create the bond between love and geography: the ring Lorenzo gave Claire 50 years ago and a map.

Victor's passion is so powerful that it becomes an obsession. As his selfishness increases and as he is always in charge of wine auctions, Sophie is motivated to continue her journey with Claire. Victor's ignorance damages his love relationship with Sophie, who gets colder, distant and vulnerable. Charlie's vanity and total disagreement with his grandmother's actions bring about a superficial and subjective evaluation of Charlie's character. In the beginning, Sophie pins him down as an "elitist Oxford prig" (*Letters*, 2010). The situation changes when Sophie finds out about Charlie's "pro bono legal work" and eventually Charlie's "save-humanity type" (*Letters*, 2010) is revealed. Charlie's frustration and fury are tamed while having dinner. Finally, he proves to be the guy Claire was so fond of. Even though he blames Sophie for the situation he was dragged in, his good manners emerge when he walks Sophie to her room.

As the journey continues, Charlie stops teasing Sophie. Without realizing, a strong bond is created between them.

Sharing a passion for sightseeing brings Sophie and Charlie closer to each other. The charming streets of Siena give birth to a space of thoughts, enhanced by a romantic and intimate atmosphere. Questioned by Sophie, Charlie narrates his childhood and motivates his pessimistic attitude via the unfortunate experience of losing both his parents: "I'm not a big believer in happy endings, I'm afraid" (*Letters*, 2010). His grandmother's guidance and support are the things Charlie is thankful for. Sophie and Charlie exhibit a mutual curiosity regarding both their families and their relationship partner or status.

Charlie and Sophie face gradual emotional involvement during their journey. Charlie's threatening and antagonistic attitude disappears gradually. Progress is registered due to the way Charlie's emotional self undergoes serious changes, being thoroughly influenced by space and Sophie's presence. His bad behavior towards her is motivated by the fact that he is "genuinely worried about" Claire (*Letters*, 2010). Communication and sociality events bring about changes as concerns Sophie and Charlie's relationship. They share hidden thoughts, experiences and create new ones. Having so many things in common favors their capacity to stand up emotional testing and reunites their emotional selves. Their relationship begins to improve when they show mutual acceptance of each other.

Siena is the place where unforgettable love stories are born, disregarding time and space boundaries. Claire recalls her youth and the strong emotions she nurtured for Lorenzo. Sophie and Charlie surprise each other with their previous background, namely their work or way of writing. The fascinating squares of Siena create a predictable scenario that highlights the beginning of a new love story, like the one experienced by Lorenzo and Claire. Quality time spent together with Charlie pleases Sophie's emotional self, improves their way of enjoying each other's company and eventually they come to trust each other. In addition to this, a mutual physical attraction spices the link established between Charlie and Sophie.

The serenity of Siena at night is discovered by Charlie and Sophie, the latter is touched by natural beauty when she joins him. While watching the sky full of stars, Charlie and Sophie get closer. They recite Shakespeare's love lines: "Doubt thou the stars are fire/ Doubt that the sun doth move/ Doubt truth be a liar/ But never doubt I love" (*Letters*, 2010). This aesthetical and cultural experience makes the inevitable happen. Their emotional selves are overwhelmed by space and a perfect romantic moment is being portrayed through their passionate kiss under the starlight. They both fall in love with each other even if they seem confused and unaware of it. Being likened to the Montagues and the Capulets by Sophie offers Charlie the opportunity to express his intense need to find true love: "If I found the love of my life, I wouldn't stand there like an idiot, whispering in a garden. I would grab her from that blasted balcony and be done with it" (*Letters*, 2010).

Verona and Siena are the places where Claire's hope is strongly revived. Space makes her more ambitious and eager to finish her journey around Tuscany, being determined to find Lorenzo. During her journey, she meets many Italian men, who are fascinated by her charm. Claire experiences different feelings during her search: fun, enthusiasm, self-confidence, flirting, disappointment. The most important experiential aspect is that she does not give up searching, having Sophie by her side. A strong contrast between the fairy-tale like Villa Arvedi and the cemetery is underlined, suggesting the ups and downs in every human being's life. The happy end of the story is highlighted by Claire's desire to have a goodbye toast and drink her favorite wine, Caparzo, feeling motivated to continue her search for Lorenzo. The 50-year time span of the story and the way time has changed her physical brings about some sort of hesitation inside Claire's emotional self. Her fears of being ridiculous or of not being recognized vanish as Lorenzo immediately recognizes her. The romantic atmosphere is enhanced by the vineyard and by Lorenzo's arrival, on horseback. Balance is restored in Claire and Lorenzo's life, who recall their teenage love in the same space they met for the first time. Lorenzo's emotional self is so overwhelmed by emotions that he can hardly find the words to describe the way he feels. His youth is revived via Claire's arrival: "Well, I went for a ride this morning as an old man and I came back as a teenager again" (*Letters*, 2010). Their overwhelming feeling of joy impresses Charlie and Sophie's emotional selves.

Space reshapes the destiny of all characters. While Claire recalls her love, Charlie and Sophie find out what true love is, being enchanted by the romantic surroundings they explore. Tuscany represents a space of experience for Sophie and Charlie who become aware of their mutual genuine feelings only when they are apart from each other. The balcony is an icon as it is the most significant space that influences Sophie's love life, which changes gradually. Charlie's emotional self is deeply affected by seeing Sophie in Victor's arms on the balcony in Verona. When she returns to Verona, the balcony represents the place where Sophie realizes how much she misses Charlie and his loving attention. As Victor is unable to establish boundaries between personal life and his career, Sophie feels lonely again. Even if she has Victor by her side, he is always concerned with the opening of his restaurant.

Victor's carelessness and lack of interest in reading Sophie's story are the main reasons why Sophie realizes that their relationship has come to an end. Sophie's decision of breaking up with Victor is mainly because they spent a pre-honeymoon in Tuscany and didn't mind being apart from each other. In addition to this, the invitation to Claire and Lorenzo's wedding increases Sophie's determination to be happy and to meet Charlie once again.

Charlie and Sophie are given the opportunity to show their real emotions and confess their love while attending Claire and Lorenzo's wedding. The "messy bits" that life and love are made of are highlighted at Claire's wedding where Sophie's expectations are deluded by Charlie's cousin, named Patricia, his ex-girlfriend. The end of the dramatic love story of Romeo and Juliet is reconstructed at Villa Bartollini with the help of the balcony that represents a space of objects and thoughts shared by Charlie and Sophie. It gives birth to a third space of experience when they can finally express their sincere feeling for each other.

Charlie's backbone is ensured through clarifying the confusion that surrounds his cousin Patricia. His emotional self is very thrilled by Sophie's declaration of love. Space opens the way for Charlie to be a man of words. The romantic surroundings of Villa Bartollini allow him to fight for Sophie and to satisfy both his and Sophie's expectations regarding true love. The strength of Charlie's feelings towards Sophie is portrayed by suggestive adverbs laying out Charlie as being "madly, deeply, truly, passionately in love" with her (*Letters*, 2010). His confession depicts "a love to leave loved ones for, a love to cross oceans for", as he owns "courage to seize it" and leave London as long as Sophie will expect him "on the other side", in the "highly overrated city of New York" (*Letters*, 2010).

In *Under the Tuscan Sun* movie, San Francisco signifies a place of undesirable experiences for the main protagonist, Frances, whose love life collapses when she finds out that her husband has an affair. While San Francisco can be considered a space of madness for Frances with dark buildings and a divorce experience, Tuscany represents a space of hope, which encourages Frances to believe in love once again, encouraged by the countryside's peaceful atmosphere. Frances acquires the luxury of being self-centered for the first time in her life. Her emotional self thrives under the Tuscan light and the romance that surrounds the fascinating city of Positano.

Italian men reveal their well-known characteristic of being effeminate when Frances is being noticed due to her American look. While she looks for replacing parts to fix her glass chandelier, she is being stalked by three Italian men, who are literally running after her. Her on-the-spot decision to kiss a random guy from the street represents the beginning of her next relationship with the charming Marcello. Driven by her emotional self and overwhelmed by her vulnerability, Frances puts aside her logical self-defense. She can hardly stand the flow of emotions.

Consequently, she is easily seduced by Marcello and agrees to join him on a trip to Positano, the most romantic place of the Amalfi Coast. On the one hand, Positano is a space of objects that emerged from Frances' perception upon the sea, the beach, the traditional *Limoncello* drink and the view from Marcello's balcony. All these elements,

including the celestial scenery, depicted at night and enlightened by the stars, spice up the beauty of the scenery and create the perfect environment for spending a passionate one-night affair. On the other hand, Positano is regarded as a space of revival where Frances's femininity is restored. Space awards her a second chance to feel loved again.

Positano can be defined via Soja's theory regarding the third space of experience, while Frances is facing an unforgettable environment, namely Marcello's room. Surrounded by art objects like paintings and sculpture, her emotional experience intensifies. She is being introduced to the way Italian men make love. For them, love is just another expression of art. Marcello's house is the place where Frances' desire reaches the top of the mountain, proving herself that she hasn't forgotten how it is like to be a woman. Space has a great influence on the way Marcello behaves towards Frances. Being a passionate nature, Marcello succeeds in pleasing Frances' emotional self by "making love all over her" (*Under the Tuscan Sun*, 2003).

In terms of details meant to support the character's opinion about her relationship with Marcello, Frances's expectations should be mentioned, as they are gradually portrayed in ascension. Space increases the emotional distance between Marcello and Frances, and who is deceived once again. Frances and Marcello's relationship is doomed to failure and they do not have the chance to meet even if they try and want to. The sudden arrival of Patti in Cortona forces Frances to cancel her visit in Positano. Her love life is affected because of the altruism she possesses. Faith plays cruel tricks since Frances goes out into the woods to pick up mushrooms and does not arrive in time to meet Marcello. Frances' beautiful memories and feelings are destroyed when Frances finds out that Marcello has a new girlfriend. As her world collapses, Frances feels alone and disappointed again. Despite all these negative experiences she has had with men, her house is the place that protects and helps her up to the end. The Tuscan Sun brings light into Frances' heart and she ends up being happy in love with a handsome writer, Ed, who arrives in Tuscany driven by the wish to meet Frances, the famous reviewer of his books.

1.3. Spatial influences on the characters' personality

Victor has been imitating Italians since he arrived in Verona and this turns him into a superficial human being. This new space has engendered changes in his behavior. Victor's actions are meant to manipulate Sophie in order to achieve his goal. Even though he loves Sophie, space is too tempting, and Victor is unable to show what he feels. He does not mind being apart from Sophie as long as his career and his future as a chef are safe. The love for cooking is so powerful that it doesn't allow his love relationship to grow. Eventually, he has to face the consequences of his mundane quest of finding suppliers and lose Sophie.

The beautiful estate of Siena, Villa Arvedi, can win everybody's admiration, even the one of a stubborn guy like Charlie, who admits that he could have been happy if Lorenzo owned this place. His vanity is highlighted though as he has "a reputation to uphold" (*Letters*, 2010). His altruistic background emerges from his pro-bono legal work and it is contrasted with his impatience, skepticism, and arrogance. His behavior is

confused and overwhelmed by Sophie's presence "you seem to bring up the very worst in me" (*Letters*, 2010). Sophie and Charlie's personalities are strongly influenced by the positive atmosphere created by the iconic landscapes of Tuscany. As a result, Sophie and Charlie put their misunderstandings aside and start collaborating. Charlie's personality changes gradually and he becomes a more flexible guy. In the beginning, Charlie adopts a repulsive attitude towards Sophie, calling her "a lonely American girl who has to live vicariously through others" (*Letters*, 2010).

Claire's quest gives birth to another love story between Charlie and Sophie. Charlie's wish to maintain control of the situation is diminished as the story evolves due to the fact he leaves his stubbornness behind. His stiffness disappears since he unconsciously feels attracted by Sophie. Guided by his grandmother, he apologizes for his misbehavior and follows Sophie as she goes back to Verona. The environment brings disappointment for Charlie who is discouraged while seeing Sophie hugged and kissed by Victor. His feeling of accomplishment comes from the mutual love feelings he shares in the end with Sophie

Sophie's personality is entirely influenced by the new space she is plunged into. The journey she takes with Claire, the time spent with Charlie and the opportunity of pursuing her dream of becoming a writer change her life perspective. On one side, a special bond is created between her and Claire, who offers motherly affection to Sophie. Claire is clearly touched by Sophie's kindness and willingness to help her find Lorenzo, appreciating Sophie's behavior regarding "a complete stranger" (*Letters*, 2010). On the other side, Sophie's mental and emotional stability is ensured by Charlie's sincere concern for her writing and her passion for sightseeing, which he happens to share as well. Being apart from Victor and close to Charlie helps her discover true love and engenders major changes in her behavior. Her awareness is responsible for the decision of breaking up with Victor. The end of their relationship is motivated by the major change that occurs in Sophie's life while taking a tour of Tuscany: "I know, but I love...I love who you are. But I've changed. It's not working" (*Letters*, 2010).

Frances experiences a similar change of personality when she finds out about the divorce. Her positive attitude and her self-confidence are replaced by anxiety and depression. She is very hurt and hardly copes with the situation. San Francisco represents the space that shows her how wrong she has lived her life so far. Her books and a blue flower vase are the only objects that she takes from the old house. Everything else reminds her of her ex-husband, Tom, and of his betrayal.

For her freedom means, on one hand, endless choices and, on the other, confusion, Frances is afraid of changes and feels unprepared to meet new people. Even though her love life has collapsed, celebrating the end of her marriage with cake and champagne for dinner and the news that Patti is pregnant bring a pale smile on Frances' face. The discussion with Patti makes Frances' ponder on her life and the possibility of starting it all over again by doing what she really likes. The fact that Frances eventually accepts to go to Tuscany highlights her awareness of the need to be helped. Her staying in a short-term apartment shows her how annoying some spaces can be. The 10-day tour to

Tuscany introduces her into a more vivacious European lifestyle, which overwhelms her personality and gives birth to an inner desire of belonging to these places.

Italian life changes her personality entirely. The vivid colors of the market, the way Katherine cuddles the small duckling and the atmosphere of Cortona offers Frances a new life perspective, totally different from the one she was used to. The peaceful life of the countryside, the way Italian people know how to have fun are very tempting for her. Space encourages her to see and buy Villa Bramasole as she comes across to its sale advertisement twice. The fear of becoming the empty-shell person Patti was talking about plunges her into the countryside Italian life. Her ambition to succeed in life emerges from the way Katherine, an eccentric lady, who likes hats and ice-cream, encourages Frances to be part of the vivacious life of Cortona and its surroundings. Frances' skepticism is blurred by the space that welcomes her by providing a sign from God. The poop of the doves on Frances' forehead brings luck and convinces the Countess to sell the house to Frances. Tuscany is a comfortable space, widely considered by Frances as a refuge from her emotional issues. Her awareness is heightened, and she becomes more responsible.

As Frances buys the house, she rejuvenates her life, with new aspirations and plans for the future. Of course, second thoughts and remorse after buying Bramasole are inevitable. Her positivism arises from the fact she is able to see the bright side of it: "Buyer's remorse is a very common affliction among new homeowners. Just because you have a sudden urge to weep that doesn't mean you've made a mistake" (*Under*, 2003). Frances figures out that she needs help to improve her life, to repair her house and to move forward. Her depression vanishes due to the fact that Frances discovers herself and overpasses her limits. Her personality is facing a time of personal growth and serious self-evaluation.

While exploring Bramasole, Frances becomes familiar to the mysteries hidden by the villa, including the broken tap, which is a metaphor for Frances' broken heart. She takes care of the villa, starts cleaning it. Her thoughts are the ones which reflect the relationship between space and human being and vice-versa: "Pick one room and make it yours. Go slowly through the house, be polite, introduce yourself so it can introduce itself to you" (*Under*, 2003).

Frances starts believing in people again. She trusts Signor Martini, a real estate agent, who becomes soon the closest friend she can always rely on. Her personality is changed so much by the space that she asks his advice before making any decision, even the most important ones, namely choosing the most suitable contractors when it comes to Bramasole's restoration. The surroundings of the villa and the many surprises she finds during her houses' restoration are two interesting aspects when it comes to developing Frances' curiosity.

Her house becomes the source of her inner motivation inner for achieving her future goals. Frances' social life improves as she opens to Katherine and joins her neighbor, Placido at dinner. She acquires further knowledge by attending the process of picking olives and cooking traditional dishes for her workers.

Frances lists her goals while she talks about love and life with Signor Martini, underlining the main reason she bought the house: “Because I'm sick of being afraid all the time and because I still want things” (*Under*, 2003). The villa is the ideal space that makes Frances open to Signor Martini and express her inner wishes without restraint: “I want a wedding in this house, and I want a family in this house” (*Under*, 2003). Frances’ sadness emerges from the rooms’ emptiness.

Bramasole brings accomplishment into Frances’ life by allowing her to pursue her goals. Her house becomes a home for Patti and her baby girl, the ideal location for hosting the wedding party of Pawel, one of Frances’ workers and the place where Frances is able to finish her book and find a new lover. Frances’ personal development is illustrated via the broken tap from her house that starts dripping while she is concerned with repairing her house. After achieving her goals, the water gushes out of the tap suggesting how Frances feels and the accomplishment brought by the villa inside her life. The end of the movie expresses the major change undertaken by Frances’ life after moving to Tuscany. It underlines how space rounded up her life and influenced her personality: “What are four walls, anyway? They are what they contain. The house protects the dreamer. Unthinkably good things can happen even late in the game. It's such a surprise” (*Under*, 2003).

I will conclude my research with the strong claim that our differing individual values, strongly held, will finally show that these values are those genuine things about which we care the most, the spatial values being part of this psycho-sociological construct called personality.

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