'Postcards from Italy: reading identity'

Jill Golden
Flinders University

Abstract

In 1932 a 22-yearold graduate from Melbourne University, Bob Shaw, won the Mollison scholarship to spend a year in Italy. Practising extreme frugality, he managed to make the money last for two years. During his time away he wrote a weekly postcard or letter to his mother, and long letters to Dorothy Adams, a young woman graduate he hardly knew. He also wrote a personal diary. All of these papers came to light after his death (at age 80) in 1989.

For five months of his time overseas, Bob tramped - from Florence to Rome, on to Naples, through Sicily and Sardinia, and then back to Florence through Umbria. 10 years after his death his three daughters met to retrace part of that journey on foot and to visit other parts by car. Written versions of these two expeditions, separated by sixty eight years, were brought together into a composite journal by one of the daughters (the author).

This paper reflects on the processes of life writing and construction of identity involved in all of these acts of ‘journeying and journaling.’