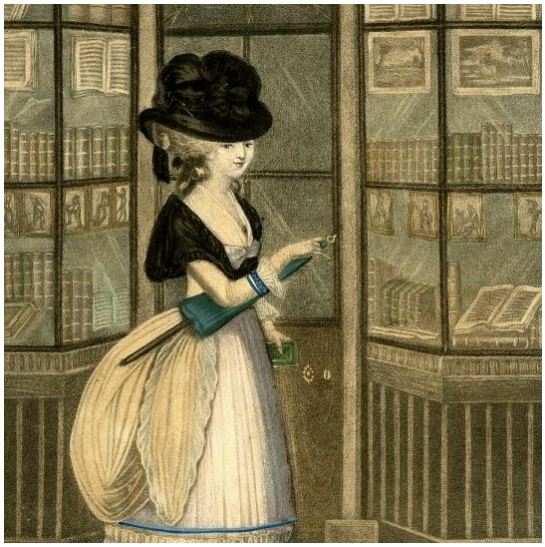

The Women's Print History Project

Around the World with Six Women: A Spotlight Series on Travel Writing [Spotlight Introduction]

Authored by Kate Moffatt and Kandice Sharren
Edited by Michelle Levy

Project Director: Michelle Levy (Simon Fraser University)

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Around the World with Six Women: A Spotlight Series on Travel Writing

Kate Moffatt and Kandice Sharren

This post is part of Around the World with Six Women: A Travel Writing Spotlight Series, which will run through August 2021. Spotlights in this series focus on travel writing by women in the database.

Figure 1. William Hamilton, 1751–1801, British, Travellers in Turkey, undated. Yale Center for British Art.

As travel begins to open up around the world after nearly eighteen months of a global pandemic, we thought the time was ripe to explore the rich history of women's travel writing in the WPHP. From Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763), to Hester Thrale Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* (1789), to Ann Radcliffe's *A journey made in the summer of 1794, through Holland the western frontier of Germany, with a return down the Rhine* (1795), to Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), to Mary Shelley's *History of a Six Weeks' Tour Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland* (1817), we find important contributions to the genre by major women writers of the period. At the same time, these women are just a few of the many who wrote and published about their travels in the form of letters, journals, guidebooks, topographies and narratives. We have more than 350 titles in our Travel, Tourism, and Topography genre in the WPHP, including journeys from Scotland and Ireland to China, India, Africa, and South America.

Prior to the late eighteenth century, travel writing—and travel itself—was predominantly considered a man's pursuit. Indeed, in *Continental Tourism, Travel Writing, and the Consumption of Culture, 1814–1900*, Benjamin Colbert and Lucy Morrison point out that "the Grand Tour and 'the activity of travel itself was insistently gendered as male,' a critical prejudice that persisted well into the nineteenth century even as greater numbers of women now represented

continental tourism in their own voices" (Colbert and Morrison, quoting Schlick). In recent years, various projects, including our own, have begun to account quantitatively for women's growing involvement in the genre from the late eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth. Colbert's bibliographical project, *Women's Travel Writing*, accounts for 204 works by women published between 1780 and 1840 in Great Britain and Ireland, which he estimates as constituting only 5% of all travel narratives published in that period. In the WPHP, we have at the time of this Spotlight Series more than 350 titles in the genre, populated from a variety of sources, most notably Colbert's *Women's Travel Writing* project and a dataset provided by Catherine Nygren. Many of the works that make up this number are by women less known than Montagu, Piozzi, Shelley, Wollstonecraft, and Radcliffe, offering the opportunity to explore the voices of women and their perspectives on travel beyond those included in the literary canon of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Alongside the expected descriptions of landscape, modes and styles of travel, and interactions with other tourists as well as the residents of the places they are visiting, travel writing also offered the opportunity for women to enter other spheres of public discourse, including politics and history. Helen Maria Williams, well-known for her poetry, published her first travel narrative, *Letters written in France, in the summer 1790, to a friend in England; Containing, various anecdotes relative to the French revolution*, in 1790—a title that gestures to the political implications of travelling in France. By 1817, the political commentary contained in her travel writing was even more overtly displayed in her titles—*Letters on the events which have passed in France since the Restoration in 1815* (1819)—demonstrating how travel writing, as a genre, accommodated reflections on politics, history and culture.

At the same time that women disrupted the gendered norms by travelling the globe (and writing about it) more than ever before, it is inevitable that their privilege, in terms of class, nationality, and race inflects their writing and the views they express, much in the same way that travel today during the pandemic is riven with inequalities. Thus while travel writing afforded British women writers a venue to claim the authority to represent a foreign country's politics and current events, it did so in the context of British imperialism and militarism: Britain was engaged in aggressive imperial expansion during the period covered by the WPHP, and, between 1792 and 1815, it prosecuted a war fought on a global scale. British culture of the period was also steeped in beliefs of European and white supremacy. As Sutapa Dutta notes, "These British women, in locating to other parts of the world posit the contradictory position as both agents and subjects of imperialism; and it is as much fallacious to homogenise them as to stereotype the Other women as 'oppressed'" (6). In this month's spotlight series, we will be exploring some of these complexities by considering how six women positioned themselves in relation to the places they traveled and the people they encountered en route.

Our Around the World with Six Women: A Spotlight Series on Travel Writing begins today, July 30, with Angela Wachowich's "Hester Thrale Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* (1789)." Wachowich's Spotlight considers the common expectations for British travel writers' experiences abroad, and how Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections* responds to and challenges the expected portrayals of Europe beyond Britain in travel narratives during the period.

On August 6, Hanieh Ghaderi's Spotlight considers the eventful life and travels of the author of *Original Letters From India* (1817), Eliza Fay, whose writing E.M. Forster described as "delightfully malicious."

On August 13, Isabelle Burrows's Spotlight explores how Maria Graham's *Journal of a Residence in Chile, during the year 1822* (1824) subtly supports British intervention following the Chilean war of independence.

On August 20, the travel writer Sarah Belzoni, wife of the famous Egyptologist Giovanni Battista Belzoni and co-author of *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs, and Excavations, in Egypt and Nubia* (1820) with her husband, is the focus of Victoria DeHart's Spotlight.

On August 27, Amanda Law's Spotlight explores Emma Roberts' *Views in India, China, and on the Shores of the Red Sea* (1835), a lavishly illustrated travel publication.

On September 3, the series wraps up with Julianna Wagar's consideration of Elizabeth Spence's *Letters from the North Highlands* (1817), a work briefly mentioned in Season 1, Episode 7 of our podcast, *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*, "1816 and 2020: The Years Without Summers."

Our August episode of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury* will feature each of the team members who contributed to this Spotlight Series and take a closer look at travel writing during the period, alongside a more general survey of the travel writing included in the database. Watch for it on August 18!

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The Women's Print History Project

Hester Thrale Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* (1789) [Spotlight]

Authored by Angela Wachowich
Edited by Michelle Levy and Kandice Sharren

Project Director: Michelle Levy (Simon Fraser University)

Wachowich, Angela. "Hester Thrale Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany*." *The Women's Print History Project*, 31 July, 2021, https://womensprinthistoryproject.com/blog/post/79.

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Hester Thrale Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* (1789)

Angela Wachowich

This post is part of Around the World with Six Women: A Travel Writing Spotlight Series, which will run through August 2021. Spotlights in this series focus on travel writing by women in the database.

Figure 1. Hester Lynch Piozzi (née Salusbury, later Mrs Thrale) by George Dance, pencil, 1793. NPG 1151.

On 23 July 1784 Hester Lynch Thrale married the Italian, Roman Catholic singer Gabriel Piozzi despite the opposition of her children and her friends, including Samuel Johnson, the literary lion who had lived with her intermittently for the past twenty years. The marriage took place three years after Piozzi's first husband, Henry Thrale, died in 1781. That July, Piozzi wrote Johnson an anxious letter asking for his approval regarding her decision to brave society's prejudice and marry Gabriel Piozzi for love. Prior to her second marriage, the voluble Dr. Johnson and the unassailable Mrs. Thrale had been nearly inseparable—he relied on her for psychological support and she enjoyed holding the attention of the legendary writer, appreciating, perhaps most of all, the recognition he gave her poetry. Upon receiving her letter, Johnson responded: "If you have abandoned your children and your religion, God forgive your wickedness; if you have forfeited your Fame, and your country, may your folly do no further mischief" (qtd. in McCarthy 37). He, like her friend Frances Burney and the rest of London, promptly cut her off. The Piozzis

subsequently escaped to Europe for a three-year honeymoon, leaving the malicious reports and caricatures of them circulating in England in favour of warmer climes. This journey is detailed in Hester Thrale Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* (1789).

Observations and Reflections was the third of Piozzi's five published books, following the success of *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson, L.L.D. during the last twenty years of his life* (1786), and *Letters to and from the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D. to which are added some poems never before printed* (1788). As such, it was the first of Piozzi's works to escape Johnson's long shadow. *Observations and Reflections* was published by Thomas Cadell in London and a group of firms in Ireland, all of whom had been involved in her earlier ventures. *Observations and Reflections* only went into one lifetime edition, but by any measure, it was a triumph—by July the Queen was reading a copy to Piozzi's former friend Frances Burney to their mutual delight (OED).

The majority of *Observations and Reflections* is concentrated on the Piozzis' time in Italy. Their journey followed the established routes of the Grand Tour itinerary in the late eighteenth-century, including Easter Mass in Rome and Carnival in Venice. In brief (and omitting the plethora of small towns detailed in *Observations and Reflections*), they crossed from France to the pass of Mount Cenis (the Alps), then proceeded to Milan and Venice, where they rested until May 1785. From there, they turned south, arriving in Rome in the fall, and continued to Naples, where Piozzi witnessed an eruption of Mount Vesuvius. They stopped once again in Milan on their way home (d'Ezio 171).

Figure 2. Piazza San Marco by Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal), oil on canvas, late 1720s. The Met, 1988.162.

Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections* was one of if not the first British travelogue published by a woman to diverge from the form of published correspondence, a fact of which she was well aware. Piozzi was well-read in travel literature, and acquainted with the works of her female as well as male contemporaries. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady My W---y M----e: written, during her travels in Europe, Asia and Africa* (1763) and Anna Riggs-Miller's *Letters from Italy* (1776) played a significant role in the prominence of women's travel literature in the

early-nineteenth century. But it was with Observations and Reflections "that a specifically woman's travel narrative was born and began to take the conscious form of cultured prose" (D'Ezio 168).

Piozzi decided to diverge from the epistolary form because, in her words, "a work of which truth is the best recommendation, should not above all others begin with a lie" (vi). In other words, she perceived the edited correspondence of her predecessors as assuming a false posture by pretending the letters were private observations when actually crafted for a wider audience. The task Piozzi was undertaking required that she give an indubitable impression of her own truthfulness—in the context of her ridiculed second-marriage, Piozzi needed to write a travelogue that would demonstrate the rightfulness of her choice of second husband. As she notes in the introduction, "My old acquaintance rather chose to amuse themselves with conjectures, than to flatter me with tender inquiries during my absence" (vi–vii). For this reason, Piozzi needed to prove them wrong by painting an ebullient picture of her honeymoon. In addition to that, however, *Observations and Reflections* was the first of Piozzi's published works to take on a subject other than Samuel Johnson, and therefore in it she felt she had to prove her literary skill to the critics who had attributed her past successes to the public's curiosity about Johnson and his oversized personality. *Observation and Reflections* needed to consolidate her reputation as an intelligent and talented author in her own right.

These tasks were not necessarily compatible: in the eighteenth-century, most British travel writers demonstrated their intelligence by assuming a splenetic posture. Displeasure was seen to demonstrate an author's ability to judge according to British tastes, and was therefore considered a credential of intelligent travel writing. In 1774, when Henry Thrale, Samuel Johnson and Hester Thrale Piozzi visited Wales, her home country, "Doctor Johnson disliked all he saw, and taught Mr. Thrale — who readily learn'd — to despise my poor Country . . . My old Mansion was a Subject of Ridicule; and I was gladder to quit the Country than I had been to come into it" (Piozzi, MS Eng 1280, 1: 73). Johnson's cynical attitude in Wales, as well as in his work *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759), was characteristic of British travel writing of the period. Piozzi most explicitly gives her opinion of this attitude in *Observations and Reflections* when she writes "one might as well hope to get a just view of nature by looking through a coloured glass, as to gain a true account of foreign countries, by turning over pages dictated by prejudice" (Piozzi, qtd. in d'Ezio 175). Not only did Piozzi dislike the attitude of the peevish traveller, she couldn't risk it without having her contemporaries infer her displeasure was connected to her new marriage.

In *Observations and Reflections*, Piozzi navigates these tensions by authenticating her moments of contentment with moments of discernment and disapproval. As William McCarthy puts it, Piozzi "finds a rhetoric of pleasure which subdues the rhetoric of spleen and yet retains intelligent perception" (163). In other words, she finds a way to both prove her happiness and maintain her reputation for intelligent judgement. One of the ways she does this is by consistently weighing the positive and negative features of the customs and places around her, therefore demonstrating her ability to distinguish while choosing to hold up the favorable side of her experiences. While Johnson uses "but" and "however" as skeptical conjunctions, Piozzi uses them as compensatory (McCarthy 167). For example she writes:

> The road from Padua hither is not a good one; but so adorned, one cares not much whether it is good or no: so sweetly are the mulberry-trees planted on each side, with vines richly festooning up and down them, as if for the decoration of a dance at the opera. One really expects the flower-girls with baskets, or garlands, and scarcely can persuade one's self that all is real. (236; emphasis added)

Piozzi authenticates her pleasure by "remaining open to reservations" (McCarthy 166). She knows the road is "not a good one," but she enjoys it anyway. In this fashion, over the course of many pages, Piozzi trades splenetic and ironic statements for romantic ones.

Figure 3. Porta Portello, Padua, oil on canvas, ca. 1760, Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection on loan at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, CTB.1996.6.

In *Observations and Reflections*, Piozzi not only balances her contradictory roles of critic and appreciator, but also of tourist and native. As Marianne D'Ezio posits, Piozzi's position as a tourist is unique in that her husband and fellow traveller is a native of their destination country. Piozzi therefore experiences what she calls a "demi-naturalization" (35), which is to say that she experiences Italy from a privileged position between traveler and local. Piozzi explains the significance of this position:

> [I] may chance to gain that insight into every day behaviour, and common occurrences, which can alone be called knowing something of a country: counting churches, pictures, palaces, may be done by those who run from town to town, with no impression made but on their bones. I ought to learn that which before us lies in daily life, if proper use were made of my demi-naturalization. (qtd. in d'Ezio 172)

From the position of "demi-naturalization," Piozzi attempts to know something of the real Italy, engrossing herself in its art, delighting in regional delicacies, and paying attention to differences in custom and dialect wherever she visits. On the single occasion she and her companions stay at an English inn, Piozzi and her company are enormously disappointed:

> many of the last miles were passed very pleasantly by my maid and myself, in anticipating the comforts we should receive by finding ourselves among our own country folks … and by once more eating, sleeping, &c. all in the English way … [but] here are beans and bacon in a climate where it is impossible that bacon should be either wholesome or agreeable; and one eats infinitely worse than one did at Milan, Venice, or Bologna. (Piozzi qtd. in McCarthy 162).

This episode stands in sharp contrast to comparable episodes in splenetic travel literature, which depict British inns as a place of respite and relief for English tourists (McCarthy 163). Altogether, *Observations and Reflections* encourages British travelers to acclimatize.

This is not to idealize Piozzi's depiction of Italy—her work is prone to generalizations about Italian character, and she recounts her fears of being forced to convert to Catholicism in cringe-worthy detail. But certainly for the period, Piozzi's sympathy for Italian life was unique, at least partially as a result of her acculturation. Understood in tandem with her openness to be pleased by her surroundings, *Observations and Reflections* reflects a willful neutrality, lending Piozzi's opinions an air of authenticity as she, a proud Welsh woman, does her best to "do as the Romans do" and to like it. In addition to being Piozzi's most accessible work, *Observations and Reflections* is likely also one of her most deliberate, showcasing her acute self-awareness and commitment to paving a new way for travel literature, both in terms of form and attitude.

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Burney, Frances (person, author)
Piozzi, Hester Lynch Thrale (person, author)
Letters from Italy, describing the manners, customs, antiquities, paintings, &c. of that country, in the years MDCCLXX and MDCCLXXI, to a friend residing in France, by an English woman. In three volumes (title)
Letters of the Right Honourable Lady My W---y M----e: written, during her travels in Europe, Asia and Africa, to persons of distinction, men of letters, &c. in different parts of Europe. Which contain, among other curious relations, accounts of the policy and manners of the Turks; Drawn from Sources that have been inaccessible to other Travellers. In three volumes (title)
Letters to and from the Late Samuel Johnson, LL.D. to which are added some poems never before printed. Published from the original MSS. in her possession, by Hester Lynch Piozzi. In two volumes (title)
Montagu, Mary Wortley (person, author)
Observations and reflections made in the course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany. By Hester Lynch Piozzi. In two volumes (title)
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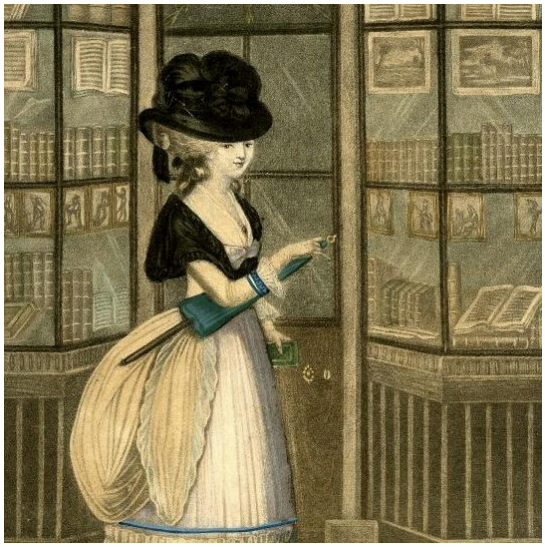

The Women's Print History Project

Agency in Empire: Eliza Fay in India [Spotlight]

Authored by Hanieh Ghaderi
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Project Director: Michelle Levy (Simon Fraser University)

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Agency in Empire: Eliza Fay in India

Hanieh Ghaderi

This post is part of Around the World with Six Women: A Travel Writing Spotlight Series, which will run through August 2021. Spotlights in this series focus on travel writing by women in the database.

Figure 1. Thomas Daniell, *Views of Calcutta* (1788). Plate 9. British Museum.

Eliza Fay's letters about her grueling and adventure-filled journeys to India by land and sea between 1779 to 1796 were published as *Original Letters from India* (1817) in Calcutta, modern-day Kolkata, shortly after she died in 1816. Born in 1755 or 1756 as Eliza Clement, little is known of her early life. She married Anthony Fay, at the age of sixteen or seventeen, in 1772. *Original Letters from India* contains letters from three of Fay's trips to India: her first trip, from 1779 to 1783, which followed her journey through France, across the Alps to Italy, from Leghorn (now Livorno) to Alexandria, Egypt, then to Cairo, across the desert to Suez, and then on to India, where she was captured and taken prisoner due to the war between England and France; her second voyage took place from 1784 to 1794, when she started to engage in local businesses and trading in India; and her third voyage, from 1795 to 1796. The book opens with an engraved frontispiece of Fay in an Egyptian costume. It ends when Fay leaves India for New York in 1796 (404).

Figure 2. Eliza Fay in Egyptian Costume, frontispiece to the second edition. British Library.

In her letters, Fay positions herself as the heroine of her adventures and offers a colorful first-hand account of the events, providing detailed information about her private life as well as the places and people she encounters. Her letters convey her personal character, especially her independence and bravery as if she were a protagonist in a novel, which draws the readers in. Fay's emphasis on her personal experience is at odds with what Carl Thompson identifies as the primary expectation for travel writing during this period, namely, "reasonably well-informed, factual reportage across a variety of topics; mere frivolity, ostentatious elegance in the writing and excessive sentimental exploration of the writer's personal feelings were all liable to be dismissed as self-indulgent" (135). The preface to the first edition of *Original Letters from India* (1817) adheres to modesty tropes common to publications by women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It has been a conventional practice for many travel writers in the period to reassure the reader that they are not writing for money or fame, and if it was not for the request of friends, they would have never published their work (Colbert 155). In the preface, Fay claims to have had doubts about publishing her letters for fear of criticism, despite persistent encouragement from her friends to publish her adventures. The preface points to the common harsh evaluations of female authors in that era. Citing a cultural shift whereby "a female author is no longer regarded as an object of derision" (v), the preface explains her change of heart. However, the advertisement at the end of the first edition indicates that the book was published posthumously, "with a view of benefitting the estate" (405), suggesting that there was a financial motive for the publication of the letters. The Advertisement also notes that the administrator who took over the publishing subsequent to Fay's death had opted not to include subsequent parts of her journal, "not appearing to contain any events of a nature sufficiently interesting to claim publication" (405).

This book, along with the second edition, which appeared in 1821, is one of the only titles in the entire WPHP database that was printed in Kolkata (the other title is *Oriental Scenes, Dramatic Sketches, and Tales, with Other Poems*). It is not clear who has published these editions. However, that a second edition of the book was called for, in 1821, suggests its popularity and success at the time (O'Loughlin & Gamer 149). The book can be divided into two parts: the first contains letters Fay had written for her family, describing her first voyage in detail. In these letters, dating from 1779 to 1782, she expresses her emotional responses and feelings more openly. For instance, her dissatisfaction with her husband is pronounced in this part. The second part includes reports about her second and third voyages in a more formal and self-consciously crafted way as if she were thinking of publishing them. This part acts as a memoir of her journeys. Fay conveys her high spirits and resourcefulness in describing her passage to India, which included crossing the Alps and caravaning across the Egyptian desert. All of this occurred when Fay was newly married and twenty-three. Upon arriving in Calicut (known now as Kozhikode), the Fays found themselves in the middle of a war between England and France and were captured by an ally of France, Hyder Ally, the ruler of the Kingdom of Mysore In Southern India (Barros & Smith 186). The image below shows one of the later battles in the Mysore war.

Figure 3. Aquatint of Robert H. Colebrook's *North View of Sewandroog shewing the attack in Decr. 1791*, 1805. National Army Museum.

Her imprisonment at Calicut is an instance in which she presents herself as the heroine of her journeys, showing her narrative power through descriptive language and bold action. She captures her fearlessness in many situations, such as the letter in which she describes how she has saved her husband from Pereira, one of Ally's officers, during their imprisonment:

> I had long marked his hatred to Mr. Fay and dreaded his revenge. I was sitting at work when he [Pereira], naked from the middle, entered the room Just as Mr. Fay was going into the next room. His strange appearance and the quickstep with which he followed my husband caught my attention, and I perceived that he held a short dagger close under his arm nearly all concealed under his handkerchief. The exigency of the moment gave me courage. I sprang between him and the door through which Mr. Fay had just

passed, drawing it close and securing it to prevent his return, and then gently expostulated with Pereira on the oddness of his conduct and appearance. He shrunk away, and I hope will never trouble us again. (109)

One may note how this event is narrated to construct Fay as the heroine who saves the day by her bravery. Fay's detailed description of the way each character looks, Pereira is "naked from the middle," and her heroic activities, "I sprang between him and the door" are important examples of the ways in which Fay positions herself, rather than factual information about the places she travels to, at the centre of the story.

Figure 4. Selection from Rigobert Bonne's 1770 Map of India and Southeast Asia, showing to the west, the port of Calicut, where the Fays landed, and to the East and North, their destination, after travelling by ship to Calcutta. *Wikimedia*.

The Fays went east to Kolkata soon after their release. The map above shows northern India in the 1780s, with Bangladesh to the east. You can find "Calcutta" in the center of Bangladesh. In Calcutta, Fay's life underwent profound changes that allowed her to gain greater independence. While there, she found out that her husband had a child with another woman (Barros & Smith 186). By the end of July 1781, Fay's husband left her, and in the same year, she filed for a legal separation, which was enacted in August (186). Fay captures all these details in her letters (Mickelson-Gaughan 135). She does not just write about her private life, however, but shows great awareness of the political affairs of her time in India, probably since most of them are related to her own life. For instance, Fay talks about affairs in the Carnatic as a result of her previous encounter with Hyder Ally and the fact that she resents him (Mickelson-Gaughan 136). She writes:

> We may think ourselves very well off in escaping from the paws of that fell tyger Hyder Ally as we did, for I am assured that the threat of sending us up the country to be fed on dry rice, was not likely to be a vain one; it is thought that several of our countrymen are at this very time suffering in that way: if so, I heartily wish that the War he has provoked, may go forward 'till those unhappy beings are released and the usurping tyrant is effectually humbled. (231)

Furthermore, some scholars believe that Fay's separation from her husband also impacted her attention to the political and cultural circumstances around her. Barros and Smith state that after her separation, Fay began to write about patriarchal values that affected Indian women. They argue that this sudden attention can be a result of Fay's independence from her husband, which has played an important role in her worldview (Barros & Smith 186).

In order to understand Fay's independence and agency, it is necessary to contextualize them in relation to the geopolitical spaces in which she lived. Central to such a line of inquiry is to examine Fay's power and autonomy in India and compare it to her presence in the British Empire. One can see how her experience of independence is shaped and challenged by political and economical influences in each country. In 1783, Fay traveled to England, where she found that she could not achieve the level of economic independence she desired in that country. Her mother had passed away (184), and there was nothing to keep her there. Considering the circumstances, she decided to once again travel to India. After a year, she managed to acquire means for transportation to Bombay by protecting four women during the trip (Barros & Smith 187). A captain let Fay travel with them to India on the condition that she would act as a chaperone. After her arrival, she started to engage in business in Bombay and ran a military business for four years. Fay managed to acquire some property and became a successful tradesperson in Europe and India (187). Fay's ability to be independent was profoundly influenced by her position within the British Empire.

The book remained of interest to readers well into the twentieth century; E.M. Forster, the famous novelist and the author of *A Passage to India*, republished Fay's book in 1925 with a critical introduction and annotations. This introduction is valuable as it points to the ways in which the letters reveal Fay's character. Forster describes her letters as "delightfully malicious," and states that Fay narrates the details of the events in a manner that one may see her personality in every corner of the book. He believes that compared to her fellow travel writers, Fay is notably present in each episode of the stories and every word she writes is a reflection of her character (Introductory notes). Forster also asserts that Fay's letters both reflect the colonial environment of India in the eighteenth century and her character. He considers Fay "'in her sense, as in her sentiment, the child of her century" (Forster Introductory notes), explaining that Fay displays the sentimentalism in eighteenth-century literature. He writes that Fay celebrates the emotional aspects of the events she narrates and lets her feelings enter the letters. However, her emotions as well as her lived experience are profoundly impacted and shaped by colonialism in her era.

In *English Travellers in Egypt during the reign of Mohamed Ali*, M.R. Rushdy writes: "It is in this fidelity to herself, combined with an extraordinary keenness of perception, that the freshness of her writing lies; even the old and familiar theme of the 'ruins of empire' is turned in her hands into something new and lively because she makes us feel it was personal" (Rushdy 48). Fay reflects the colonial atmosphere of her time in the letters, but she also combines it with her sentiments and personal views. Her book does not seek to be an objective narrative of past events. It is a story of Fay's lived experience within the British Empire and her agency in relation to the space in which she lives. Fay's capacity to reflect and act within the colonial atmosphere of her time is well documented in Original Letters from India. She positions herself as the heroine of her book and keeps her personal experiences at the front and center of the historical events that shaped her life.

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Original Letters from India; containing a narrative of a journey through Egypt, and the author's imprisonment at Calicut by Hyder Ally. To which is added an abstract of three subsequent voyages to India (title, 1817 edition)
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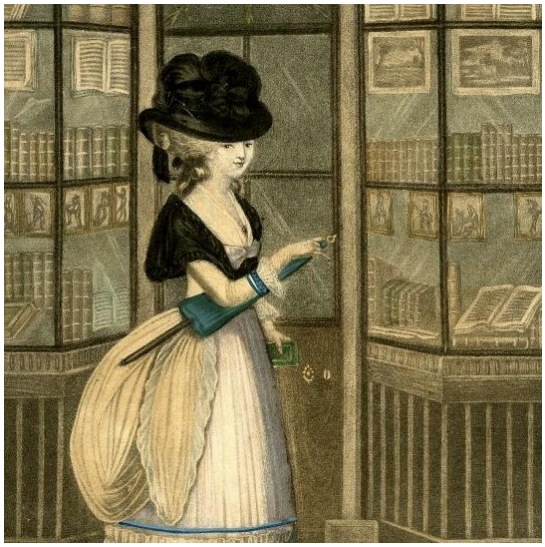

The Women's Print History Project

Narratives of Empire: Cultural Colonialism in Maria Graham's *Journal of a Residence in Chile during the year 1822* [Spotlight]

Authored by Isabelle Burrows
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Project Director: Michelle Levy (Simon Fraser University)

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Narratives of Empire: Cultural colonialism in Maria Graham's *Journal of a Residence in Chile during the year 1822*

Isabelle Burrows

This post is part of Around the World with Six Women: A Travel Writing Spotlight Series, which will run through August 2021. Spotlights in this series focus on travel writing by women in the database.

Figure 1. Maria, Lady Callcott by Sir Thomas Lawrence, © National Portrait Gallery.

Recently at the WPHP we've expanded the genre function in our title records to allow for the selection of multiple genres on a single title record. This function allows us to fully capture the nuances of the works we record, revealing a fuller picture of a work, its purpose, and its contents. Maria Graham's *Journal of a Residence in Chile* is one such genre-bending work. Equal parts travel narrative, history, and political document, the journal weaves together varied aspects of Chilean cultural life in the early 1800s. Bending genre boundaries allowed Graham to describe a multi-faceted dynamic between herself, Britain, and Chile that appealed directly to the colonial concerns of British audiences.

When she wrote *Journal of a Residence in Chil*e, Maria Dundas Graham was neither a novice traveller nor travel writer. Crossing genres was as familiar to her as crossing oceans, and her travels carried both her person and her literary career

through three continents and across more than a dozen literary works, from her *Journal of a Residence in India*, based on her travels in 1809, to her *Memoirs of the Life of Nicholas Poussin*. An author, translator, editor, and critic, Graham was a ready learner and an expert writer, and these qualities made her the perfect representative for Britain's cause in Chile. Although she arrived there accidentally, after the death of her naval officer husband, Graham wasted no time turning the experience from a tragedy to an opportunity as she recorded and commented on the conditions she observed in her temporary home. A series of often-deposed provisional juntas had secured precarious independence for Chile, beginning in 1810 (Prago 132), so when Graham arrived in 1822, the country was enjoying a period of relative stability. The issue of South American independence, however, was far from resolved: though Chile had officially declared itself independent by 1818 (150) under the direction of Chilean-born patriot Supreme Director Bernardo O'Higgins, neighbouring Peru was still under Spanish administration. The border between colonial control and independence was a constant cause of contention. Graham arrived with the British naval force to which her husband belonged as part of Britain's effort to mediate this contention, to "preserve . . . amicable relations with the government of Chile . . . so necessary for the protection of the subjects of his Britannic Majesty who are engaged in lawful commerce" (*Journal* appendices, "Letter from Commander in Chief of the British Navy to Chile's Minister of Marine" 488).

Journal of a Residence is divided roughly into thirds, consisting of a history of Chile, Graham's personal travel journal, and a series of appendices. Each section serves Graham's professed narrative of "calling attention" (v) to Chile as a nation in need of foreign cultivation and development. The basis of a British economic future in Chile relied on Chile's ability to negotiate its own interests autonomously, outside the grasp of Spanish colonial power. Graham's portrayal of Chile's struggle for independence "reconstruct[s] the region's past in order to secure Britain's place in its economic future" (Caballero 119) by positioning Britain as not just a friendly trade partner, but as an agent of liberation in Chile's history, and thus worthy of favour and attention from the newly independent nation. Graham casts Britain (nominally neutral in the South American colonial wars) (Caballero 114) as a great friend of Chilean national independence from the country's earliest years. In her history of Chile, Graham emphasizes the war of independence above all other matters, and attributes eventual victory over Spanish rule to Supreme Director Bernardo O'Higgins' education in England, "where he had not only learned the language perfectly, but a good deal of the free and independent spirit of the nation" (16). Similarly, she paints her friend the Admiral Lord Cochrane, a naval officer involved first in Chilean independence and then the war for the liberation of Spanish-held Peru, as a hero who "ought to have influence to mend some things . . . which, without such influence, will, I fear, prove highly detrimental to the rising state of Chile if not to the general cause of south American independence" (147). The dynamic of Chile as an infant nation in need of support from the more developed and civilized Britain underpins Graham's narrative, in which she pronounces herself "too old not to be afraid of ready-made constitutions, and especially of one fitted to the habits of a highly civilized people applied too suddenly to an infant nation like this" (147–48). The implication of this statement is that Chile requires the presence of more developed nations like Britain to achieve effective self-government. This narrative paints British presence in the region as not just beneficial, but necessary. By expressing these sentiments under the labels of historical fact and personal observation, Graham legitimizes her opinions as the

foundations of a dynamic of superiority that continues to this day, ensuring that the progression of Britain's interference in South America is presented in a credible way.

Figure 2. View of Valparaiso, drawn, like the other prints featured in this article, by Graham herself.

While Graham probably didn't see the Journal as a piece of propaganda, the work is certainly a product of the colonial circumstances in which it was written. It is a conscientious exercise in genre manipulation, and Graham's self-professed purpose in writing it is political:

> There can be no doubt of the ultimate success of their [the Chileans'] endeavours after a free and flourishing state: but there are no ordinary difficulties to get over...If the following pages shall in the slightest degree contribute directly or indirectly to supply those wants, or to smooth those difficulties, by calling attention to that country, either as one particularly fitted for commercial intercourse, or as one whose natural resources and powers have yet to be cultivated, the writer will feel the truest satisfaction. (v)

Graham doesn't state whose attention she is calling to Chile, but the purpose of calling that attention is clearly to show the economic and political potential of Chile as a region ripe for resource extraction, largely uncultivated, and open to colonization. It is this mission which guides Graham's presentation of Chile, of herself, and of her British colleagues in the new world. Her ability to present this narrative in a believable way is aided by her choice of form and genre. The nuances of the travelogue, which by its nature allows the inclusion of a variety of topics subject to the author's observations, seems to convey truth directly from her lived experience to the public (Baudino 3), while the genres of history and political writing carry the illusion of academic accuracy. Graham reminds the reader within the journal portion of the text that "the journal is true; true to nature, true to facts . . . This truth I solemnly engage myself to preserve" (146). In short, she insists that the detailed picture she is painting of Chile is a completely accurate one.

Graham's independent spirit and acuity of observation made her a master of the travel genre, and her journal balances idealization of British actions with believably detailed observations of local events to create an account that appealed to the curious public at home. Graham's records of her travel in South America gave her first-hand experience that made her contributions useful to the scientific community in Britain, as evidenced by the publication of her account of the earthquakes of 1822 in the *Transactions of the Geological Society Journal* (Thompson 329), as well as the use of her botanical drawings and samples by the director of Kew Gardens (Manthorne, "Female Eyes on South America"). While this increased participation by women like Graham in travel, science, and politics was a welcome step forward in independence for them, the exploration Graham participated in with so much aplomb was a facet of colonial expansion and exploitation. Maria Graham was only one of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women explorers (including Maria Sibylla Merian, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, and Ida Pfeiffer, to name a few; Dr. Katherine Manthorne's scholarship on these women is linked below) whose literary and artistic records of travel in South America were exported back to Europe in service of colonial rhetoric. Such works facilitated more effective colonial relationships by creating "public knowledge [in Europe] about foreign spaces; they were in many ways, the narratives of the empire" (Caballero 115). While a woman's botanical drawings or written description of her environs might seem benign, to dismiss such works as decorative or trivial would be to ignore their efficacy as tools of both empiricism and empire. *Journal of a Residence in Chile*, with its political undertones and carefully curated illustration of foreign culture, clearly aids Britain's self-interested presence in South America.

Figure 3. Graham's view of Laguna de Aculeo, showcasing the vast, rich, and, to European eyes, underutilized landscapes of the region.

Like the travelogue and history sections of the *Journal*, the final section of collected political documents emphasizes not just Britain's significant contributions to economic and political development in Chile and adjacent regions, but also Britain's right to continue that interference. As she does in the history section, Graham shows her friend Lord

Cochrane as a paragon of British honour and intellect, "the embodiment of her civilising model" (Caballero 112) of cultural improvement rather than explicit exploitation. The inclusion of a document from the new independent junta of Peru, thanking Cochrane for "services rendered to Peruvian freedom by the Right Honourable the Lord Cochrane,—owing to whose genius, worth, and bravery, the Pacific is freed from the insults of enemies" (486) leaves little room for doubt in the minds of readers that British men like Cochrane were doing nothing but good for the "uncivilized" nations of the new world.

Cultivation and development of the land in the name of civilization are the primary reasons that Graham presents as evidence of Britain's beneficial influence in Chile. While the ideals of civilization (both of land and of minds) appealed to Graham, she was careful to align herself in her writing with the intellectual side of this development rather than with the unpleasant realities of the commercial and industrial expansion, which she disparaged. Even though her "presence [as an agent of British interests] fundamentally aligns her with these 'incurious money makers' and depends upon safeguarding the 'very low scale' of British tradesmen in the region" (Caballero 122), Graham associates herself almost exclusively with British intellectual culture and civilization. She draws a clear line between the beneficial British culture exemplified by fellow women writers with whom she identifies as she expresses her pride in "[belonging] to the sex and nation, which will furnish names to engage the reference and affection of our fellow-creatures as long as virtue and literature continue to be cultivated" (140). Names like Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Sarah Trimmer, and Maria Edgeworth are among Graham's examples of correct British cultural influence, while the British tradesmen in Chile are uniformly derided and condemned as "specimens of such [vulgar] people as one meets nowhere else but among the Brangtons, in Madame d'Arblay's *Cecilia*, or the Mrs. Elton's of Miss Austin's admirable novels" (180). By framing herself as an agent of culture and learning, Graham elides the economic, political, and cultural aspects of Britain's interference into a single mission of magnanimous civilization. Shifting responsibility for visibly exploitative economic actions onto the "lower" classes of British society, Graham frames her own colonial agenda of artistic and intellectual erasure and reeducation as philanthropic. "I am sorry," she writes, "that they [the Chilean people] have something of more pressing importance than the fine arts to attend to" (178–79), suggesting that only by abandoning what she sees as "primitive" modes of subsistence living for "civilized" (British) ones can Chilean society expect to pursue artistic and intellectual development.

Figure 4. View of a street in Santiago.

Because the failure to cultivate and maximize production was seen "specifically as the failure to rationalize, specialize, and maximize production" (Pratt 148), Graham presents observations of Chile's economic and cultural status which require not just a practical, but an ideological, solution. Graham's note that "The immediate wants of Chile are education in the upper and middling classes, and a greater number of working hands . . . Not a hundredth part of the soil is cultivated" (158) demonstrates her belief that the "civilizing" mission involves not just industrial and agricultural developments, but the implementation of the stratified education system on which "developed" countries like her own relied. Quoting an address from Supreme Director Bernardo O'Higgins to the Peruvians, in which he emphasizes economic development and international trade as the advantages and causes of liberty in independent countries, Graham supports her continuing claim that independence and civilization necessitate resource extraction and industrial development: "They [independent nations] enjoy the fruits of their liberty; and are considered by the nations of the universe, who emulously bring to them the products of their industry" (*Journal* 475, "The Supreme Director of the State of Chile to the Natives of Peru"). By referencing this speech, Graham fully realizes the narrative of economic development as civilization. England, a "ready-civilised country in Europe, where the niggard earth yields not wherewithal to trade" (290), is at the height of civilization, having fully extracted all of its natural resources and graduated to industrial manufacture. Meanwhile, Chile and its neighbours are just beginning this journey, flowing with precious metals and agricultural products which, with Britain's help, will fuel their rise to the European ideal of nationhood. This conflation of economic development with political autonomy successfully merges the ideological and the practical improvements which Graham believes Britain will, and should, introduce in Chile. Meanwhile, Chile and its neighbours are just beginning this journey, flowing with precious metals and agricultural products which, with Britain's help, will fuel their rise to the European ideal of nationhood.

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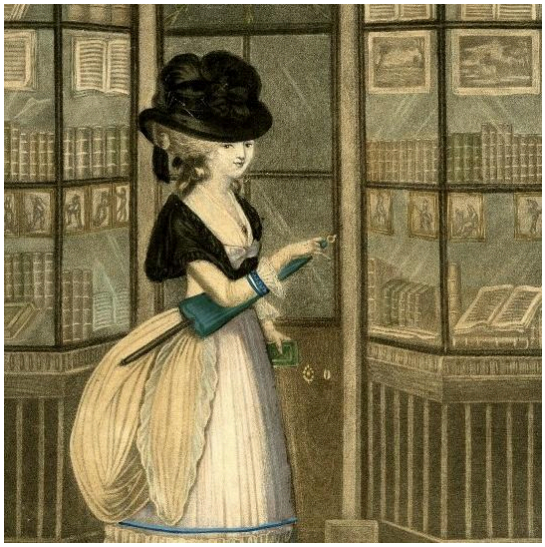

The Women's Print History Project

Sarah Belzoni's (Not So) *Trifling Account of Women in Egypt, Nubia and Syria* [Spotlight]

Authored by Victoria DeHart
Edited by Michelle Levy and Kandice Sharren

Project Director: Michelle Levy (Simon Fraser University)

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Sarah Belzoni's (Not So) *Trifling Account of Women in Egypt, Nubia and Syria*

Victoria DeHart

This post is part of Around the World with Six Women: A Travel Writing Spotlight Series, which will run through August 2021. Spotlights in this series focus on travel writing by women in the database.

Figure 1. Removal of the statue of Ramses II, also known as The Younger Memnon. AramcoWorld.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, antiquarianism, or the study and collection of antiquities, was a field largely dominated by men. On very rare occasions we find a woman engaging in antiquarian pursuits, they are usually known only through the achievements of their male associates or husbands. Such is the case of Sarah Belzoni (1783–1870), who married Egyptologist Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778–1823) in 1803 (Peck 1).

Little is known about Sarah Belzoni's early life—her maiden name is believed to be Banne and her birthplace either Bristol or Ireland (Peck 1-2). After her marriage, Sarah Belzoni accompanied her husband through the British Isles and Europe while he performed as a circus strongman. The couple left Europe and arrived in Cairo in 1815, where they met Henry Salt, the British Consul to Egypt. Salt employed Belzoni as an engineer to remove an ancient statue of Ramesses II, also known as *The Younger Memnon*, from Thebes; this event marked the beginning of Giovanni Belzoni's career as an antiquarian and the beginning of Sarah Belzoni's travelogue, *Mrs. Belzoni's Trifling Account of the Women in Egypt, Nubia and Syria* (1820).

Although a divisive figure amongst archaeologists today due to his destructive techniques, his leaving of graffiti at the tombs he discovered, and his plundering of artifacts, Giovanni Belzoni is nevertheless considered a pioneer archaeologist and the father of modern-day Egyptology. In addition to his career as a circus strongman, he pursued different paths as an engineer, explorer, and antiquarian. He discovered the entrance to the pyramid, Khafre, of the Giza Pyramid Complex; revealed the entrance of the great temple at Abu Simbel; discovered the tomb of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings; and successfully identified the ruins of the ancient seaport Berenike, on the Red Sea (Park 1). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, antiquarianism became an endeavor tied to Britain's empire-building; Giovanni Belzoni became the main agent of Henry Salt to secure antiquities and objects for the British Museum to showcase the extent of England's reach in the Middle East. While Sarah Belzoni often accompanied her husband on his excursions, she was also left on her own for long periods of time, during which she took the opportunity to visit with local women and explore the cities and villages on her own (Peck 2; Colbert).

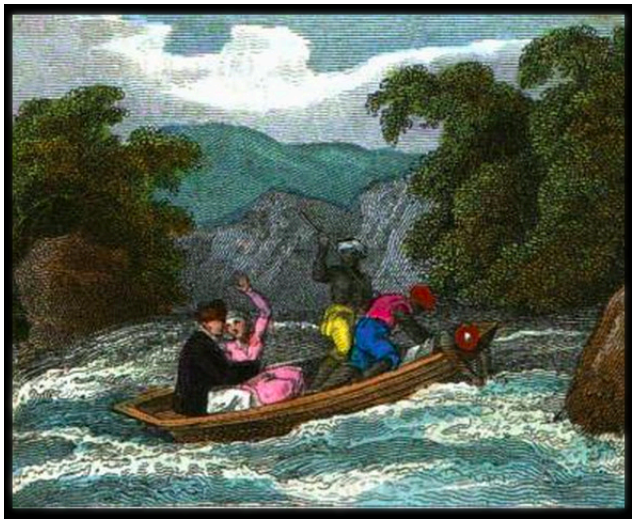

Figure 2. Engraving of Sarah and Giovanni Belzoni in a Bark in the middle of the Cataract, featured in Wilson's Fruits of Enterprise (1841). *Wikipedia*.

While her husband was working in Thebes, Belzoni stayed in Luxor for two months without an interpreter and "about twenty Arab words in [her] mouth" (449). Although she could hardly communicate, Belzoni established a rapport with the local women, who daily came to "look, talk and trade antique beads for modern ones" (Manley 1). During her stay, she was struck with a severe case of ophthalmia and completely lost her vision for a period of time. Belzoni was helped by the local women who persuaded her to steam her face over hot water and garlic; the remedy appears to have aided in her recovery and helped her to regain her sight (451).

In 1818, Belzoni writes, "I persuaded Mr. B. to let me visit the Holy Land" (457). The descriptions of her journey give us a remarkable glimpse into travel of the Middle East and the practices of pilgrims during the nineteenth century (Peck 1). In the company of an Irish attendant, James Curtain, she arrived in Jaffa in mid-march to witness the last days of Holy Week. In May, she left for Jordan by mule and participated in the Jordan pilgrimage before continuing to Jericho, Nazareth, and Bethlehem. Before leaving Jerusalem, Belzoni dressed in the disguise of a Muslim man and

visited the Temple of Jerusalem, a place where non-muslims and women were banned entrance; she quickly left for Cairo in fear of punishment (468). Belzoni remained on her own in Cairo for two months as her husband continued work in Philae; she decided to travel to Luxor where she was informed that the Tomb of Seti had suffered from severe flooding. She entered the tomb and had the mud removed lessening the extent of the damage. She reunited with Giovanni Belzoni in December (474).

Figure 3. The Younger Memnon; removed by Belzoni in 1816 and acquired by the British Museum in 1821. Currently held in the British Museum, Museum Number EA19.

In September of 1819, the Belzonis left Egypt for England (437). They were preceded by the news of the statue's removal and rumours swirled of Giovanni Belzoni's exploits. *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs, and Excavations, in Egypt and Nubia* (1820), written and published quickly by the Belzonis return to England as other explorers and antiquarians were taking credit for Belzoni's achievements (v; ix). The book was a tremendous success in England and Europe. It was first published in London in 1820, then published a second and third time in 1821 and 1822. The travelogue proved to be as popular in continental Europe; it was translated into French, Dutch and Italian, appearing in Paris in 1822, Groningen in 1823, and Milan in 1825; and was published in English in Brussels in 1835. In addition to the book, Giovanni Belzoni published a series of illustrative plates in 1820 and 1822, which proved to be equally popular. It is probable that Sarah Belzoni helped her husband to write the book despite his claim that *Narrative of the Operations* was his own work (v–vi). English was not Belzoni's first language, and, as noted by Megan Price, Belzoni's account "displays marked differences" in style from his existing letters in circulation today (Price 2008).

Mrs. Belzoni's Trifling Account, roughly forty pages, is appended to the end of *Narrative of the Operations*. Despite the briefness of her travelogue, it is considered a trailblazing account of Egypt and the "first of its kind" by many because

of her descriptions of the everyday lives of local women in early-nineteenth century Egypt and Palestine (Manly 1; Peck 2). Never before had the practices, customs, and possessions of local women in Egypt and Palestine been recorded by an English woman (Peck 2). Although a fascinating work, Belzoni presents a very anglocentric view of Egyptian and Middle Eastern societies. Her travelogue is innately biased towards Western Civilisation and she brands the different cultures she encounters as "wild" and "immoral" (441; 482). Many of her actions she describes are equally disrespectful; Belzoni disguised herself and snuck into the Temple of Jerusalem, a space where women were not allowed entry at the time, causing much distress for both the Muslim and Christian populations in Jerusalem; and in one instance, she obtains Bibles from the British consul and dispenses them to the local people of Rosetta as a means of spreading Christianity (482).

Figure 4. Drawing of Giovanni and Sarah Belzoni's public exhibition of the Tomb of Seti, featured in Don Juan in London (1822) by Andrew Thornton, Factum Foundation.

Giovanni Belzoni's involvement in the removal of the statue of Ramses II and the successes of the travelogue and plates made the couple famous in London society and helped spur the Egyptomania of the early nineteenth century (Moser 1289). The excitement surrounding the statue's arrival in London alone is said to have inspired a friendly competition between Percy Bysshe Shelley and Horace Smith; both poets published a sonnet entitled "*Ozymandias*" in 1818, exploring the fleeting nature of power. Smith later wrote a second poem entitled, "*Address to the Mummy in Belzoni's Exhibition,*" published in 1826.

The Belzonis also prepared and curated an immensely popular public exhibition of the tomb of Sethi I. The exhibition included casts, mummies and other objects recovered from Egypt, as well as life-sized reconstructions of the tomb painted in watercolour (Peck 4). Their most famous exhibition took place in Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, in 1820, and caused a sensation amongst the public (Moser 1289). Dr. Stephanie Moser, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Southampton, notes that in the 1820s in England and France, there was a surge in the popularity of decorative products that used Egyptian motifs and style, particularly for furniture and clock making (Moser 1289).

Narrative of the Operations' influence reached even to children's literature in the 1820s. In 1821, with permission from Giovanni Belzoni, Lucy Atkins Wilson published *Fruits of Enterprise Exhibited in the Travels of Belzoni*. The novel reached a much larger audience than *Narrative of the Operations* and centres around the adventures of both Sarah Belzoni and her husband. *Fruits of Enterprise* proved to be one of Wilson's most successful works; at least eight editions of the novel were published between 1821 and 1830; six in London (1821; 1822; 1823; 1824; 1825; 1830), one in Paris (1823), and one in Boston (1824). Children's author Barbara Hofland also included Sarah Belzoni in her work, Africa Described published in 1826.

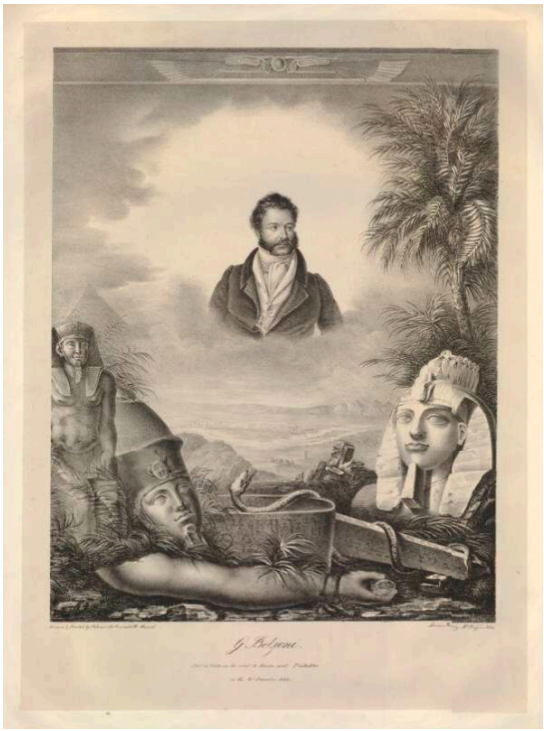

Figure 5. Portrait of Giovanni Belzoni (1824) by F. Fabriani; commissioned and published by Sarah Belzoni after her husband's death in 1823. Held in the British Museum, Museum Number 1888,0716.307.

Sarah Belzoni accompanied her husband on one final adventure to West Africa. She was left on her own in Morocco while he tried to find the source of the Niger River. Giovanni Belzoni fell ill with dysentery and died at Benin in December of 1823 (Peck 4). Sarah Belzoni returned to England and promoted her husband's achievements but faced severe financial difficulty (Waanders 2). On her own, she organised an exhibit of the Tomb of Seti in London and sold many of the objects recovered from Egypt, including an alabaster sarcophagus of Seti I to Sir John Soane (Waanders 2). The exhibition closed in 1825 and she tried unsuccessfully to publish her husband's drawings of the tomb in 1828 (Manley 2). The Royal Literary Fund awarded Belzoni £50 in 1823, and an additional £25 in 1833 for her contributions to Narrative of the Operations. It was not until 1851 when Sarah Belzoni was awarded a Civil List pension by the British government for a yearly sum of £100, lessening her financial difficulty (Waanders 2; Peck 5).

Much like Sarah Belzoni's early life, there is little information available concerning her later years after her husband passed. She left for Brussels around 1833 and likely lived there until 1854. In 1857, it appears Belzoni moved to Jersey,

where she remained until her death on January 12th, 1870, at the age of eighty-seven. After several attempts to locate her tombstone in Jersey; it was finally found in 2011 and restored (Waanders 2).

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Fruits of Enterprize Exhibited in the Travels of Belzoni in Egypt and Nubia: Interspersed with the Observations of a Mother to her Children (title, third edition)

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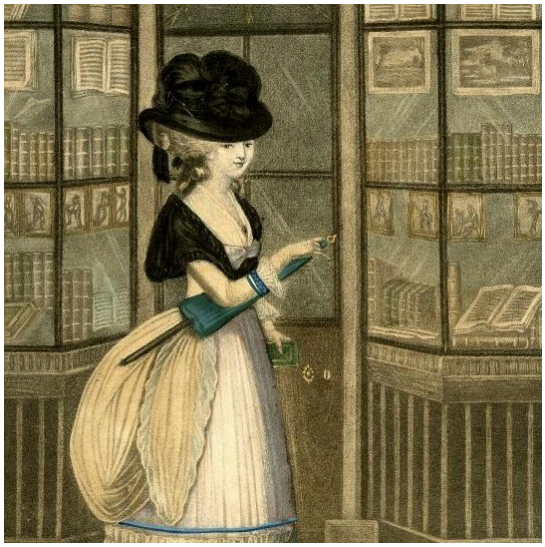

The Women's Print History Project

Describing India, China, and the Shores of the Red Sea: Emma Roberts and British Literature on Asia [Spotlight]

Authored by Amanda Law
Edited by Michelle Levy and Kandice Sharren

Project Director: Michelle Levy (Simon Fraser University)

Law, Amanda. "Describing India, China, and the Shores of the Red Sea: Emma Roberts and British Literature on Asia." *The Women's Print History Project*, 27 August 2021, https://womensprinthistoryproject.com/blog/post/86.

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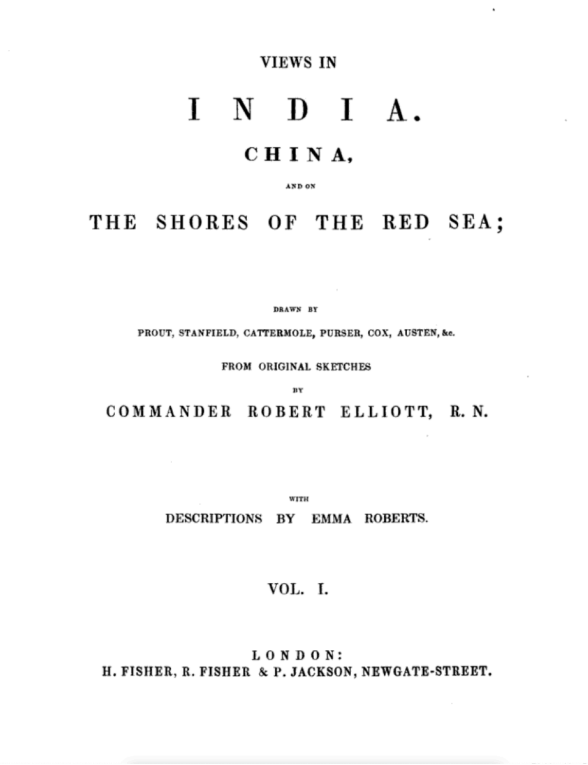
Describing India, China, and the Shores of the Red Sea: Emma Roberts and British Literature on Asia

Amanda Law

This post is part of Around the World with Six Women: A Travel Writing Spotlight Series, which will run through August 2021. Spotlights in this series focus on travel writing by women in the database.



VIEWS IN

INDIA.

CHINA,

AND ON

THE SHORES OF THE RED SEA;

DRAWN BY

PROUT, STANFIELD, CATTERMOLE, PURSER, COX, AUSTEN, &c.

FROM ORIGINAL SKETCHES

BY

COMMANDER ROBERT ELLIOTT, R. N.

WITH

DESCRIPTIONS BY EMMA ROBERTS.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
H. FISHER, R. FISHER & P. JACKSON, NEWGATE-STREET.

Figure 1. *Views in India, China, and the Shores of the Red Sea* (1835) title page. *Google Books*.

In 1828, writer and editor Emma Roberts (1791/94?–1840) travelled with her sister and her sister's husband to India, where her brother-in-law was stationed as an officer in Bengal. She spent 1829 and 1830 travelling between the upper province stations of Agra, Cawnpore, and Etawa (Hale 885) before moving to Kolkata in 1831 after her sister's death. In the upper provinces, she wrote descriptive poetry, stories, and essays, which were compiled and published as a collection titled *Oriental Scenes, Dramatic Sketches and Tales, with Other Poems* (1830). As Hanieh Ghaderi notes in her spotlight on Eliza Fay, this book, along with Fay's *Original Letters from India* (1817) is one of the only titles in the WPHP published in Kolkata. Once in Kolkata, Roberts edited and wrote for the periodical the *Oriental Observer*. Unfortunately, Roberts's health began to fail, and she returned to England in 1833 (Gorman 1013).

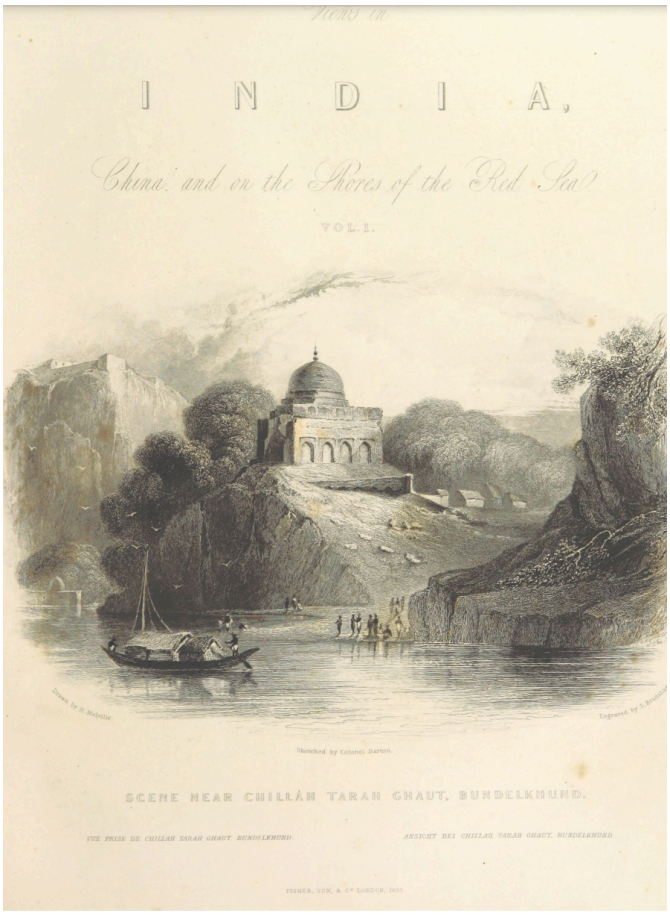


Figure 2. *Views in India, China, and the Shores of the Red Sea* (1835) half-title page. British Library.

Roberts continued to edit and write upon her return to England, editing publications such as Maria Eliza Rundell's *A New System of Domestic Cookery*, beginning from the sixty-fourth edition (read more about this title in Michelle Levy's spotlight), and a book of poems by Letitia Landon, with whom she had become close friends at school (Hale 885). Most notably, though, Roberts wrote extensively about India, China, and the Middle East. The publishing firm H. Fisher, P. Fisher, and P. Jackson commissioned her to compile the letterpress for the 1833 title *Views in the East: comprising India, Canton, and the Shores of the Red Sea: with historical and descriptive illustrations. By Captain Robert Elliot, R. N.* and hired her again to write new descriptions for the 1835 second edition, *Views in India, China, and on the shores of the Red Sea; Drawn by Prout, Stanfield, Cattermole, Purser, Cox, Austen, &c. from original sketches by Commander Robert Elliott, R.N.; with descriptions by Emma Roberts*. This spotlight focuses on the 1835 *Views in India, China, and on the Shores of the Red Sea* rather than the 1833 first edition because Roberts's authorial presence is more distinct in the second edition. Along with being definitively listed as a contributor in the full title, Roberts includes a new preface that speaks to her intentions and reflections as a travel writer.

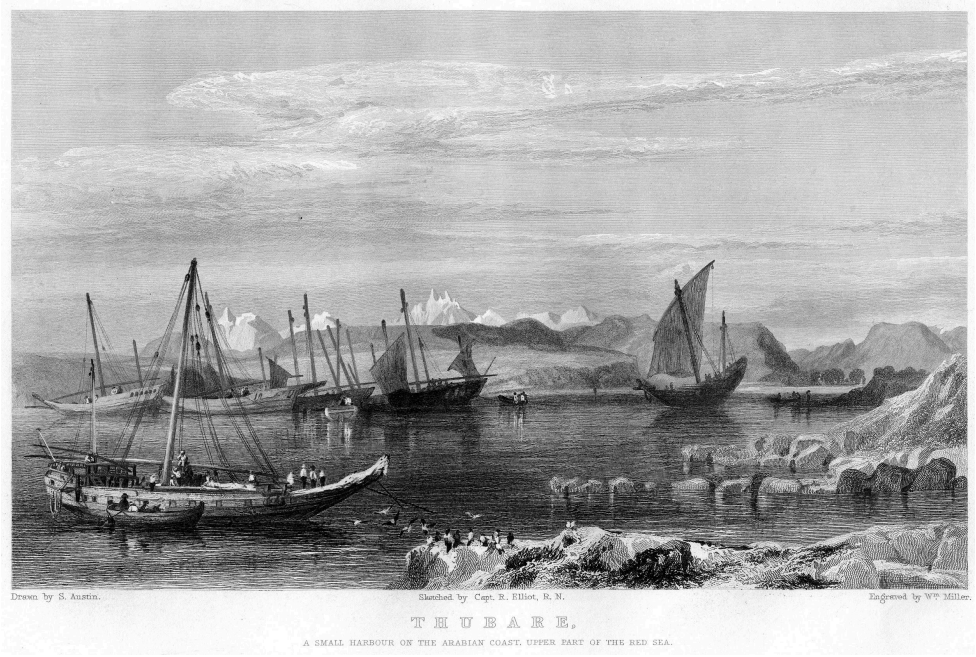


Figure 3. Thubare (Arabian Coast); S. Austin, illustrator; William Miller, engraver; 1835. *Google Books*.

The publication of *Views in India, China, and on the Shores of the Red Sea* features the sixty-seven engravings that populate the two volumes. The full title itself highlights the artists involved in the illustrations before noting Roberts's written contribution. Reviews of the book highly praised the visual aspects but rarely mentioned the written text accompanying the illustrations. For example, a review of the first part of the sketches in the 4 September 1830 issue of *The Athenaeum* deemed it a "valuable work" for illustrations that were "alone worth the money as a work of art" (557). Another review in the July 1831 issue of the *Metropolitan* offhandedly praised the descriptions, stating that it was "a very beautiful as well as instructive work," but ultimately landed on commending the illustrations, stating that "[t]he public are greatly indebted to Captain Elliot for this work, which no lover of the arts will be without, for the very superior style in which it is got up" (116). Although public reception and the publishers themselves focused on highlighting the engravings in *Views in India, China, and on the Shores of the Red Sea*, Roberts's text deserves more attention, as she presents a significant critique of the elitist nature of literature on the East.

In the preface to *Views in India, China, and on the Shores of the Red Sea*, Roberts registers how the general reader faces multiple barriers in the field of travel writing about Asia and attempts to position her own work against these obstacles. She writes,

> The fields of Oriental literature, until very lately, have been almost exclusively occupied by the researches of learned men, whose lucubrations, though of the highest value, are not adapted to the general reader; while a vast quantity of information, of a more popular kind, remains locked up in expensive quartos, and is consequently inaccessible to a large portion of the community.

Roberts frames literature on Asia as a field for privileged individuals, either because they have specialized knowledge or because they can afford to pay for, or can otherwise access, "expensive quartos." Contesting the exclusionary nature of the literature on Asia, Roberts positions her own writing as overcoming some of these barriers. She continues in the preface,

> The attempt, therefore, to remove some of the difficulties attendant upon an acquaintance with the numerous objects of interest and attention with which our Indian possessions abound, will doubtless prove acceptable to all inquiring minds; and though the plan of the present work does not admit of any detailed account of the various cities and provinces illustrated in the accompanying engravings, nothing has been omitted which the limits would allow, calculated to excite interest, and to induce the reader to enter more deeply into the study of Indian history.

As Nigel Leask notes in his chapter about women travel writers in British India, a "large number of women travel writers [were] now contending for positions in the literary field" (204). He attributes this surge to "[t]he increasing absorption of travel writing into the literary sphere from the 1820s . . . render[ing] specialist scientific knowledge less necessary for travel writers in general, a fact which empowered many women authors" (204). When Roberts concedes that her written descriptions do not contain the most detailed accounts of the cities and provinces, but are rather intended to foster interest and fascination, she demonstrates this move away from scientific knowledge towards more accessible information within the genre of travel writing.

Figure 4. Sarnât (near Benares); William Purser, illustrator; W. Taylor, engraver; 1835. British Library.

It is important to note that while Roberts attempts to diverge from the elite knowledge conveyed in British accounts of Asia, an imperialistic attitude still bleeds into her writing. Quoting Indira Ghose, Leask argues that European women writers, such as Roberts, "occupied the amphibious subject position . . . of being 'colonised by gender, but colonisers by race" (204). By setting herself apart from the work of learned men, Roberts makes a point to push against the gendered constraints on this field of writing, but by considering her subject "Indian possessions" she aligns herself with the imperialistic. In the section on Canton, Roberts cautions against forming opinions on entire populations and cultures based on minimal information, stating that "[u]nfortunately, our scanty knowledge of the tone of morals in the interior [of China], rendered us but too apt to form our estimate of the whole from that which comes our own observation" (14). While this statement reads as Roberts condemning imperialistic tendencies to objectify and stereotype large groups of people, elsewhere she engages in similar judgments.

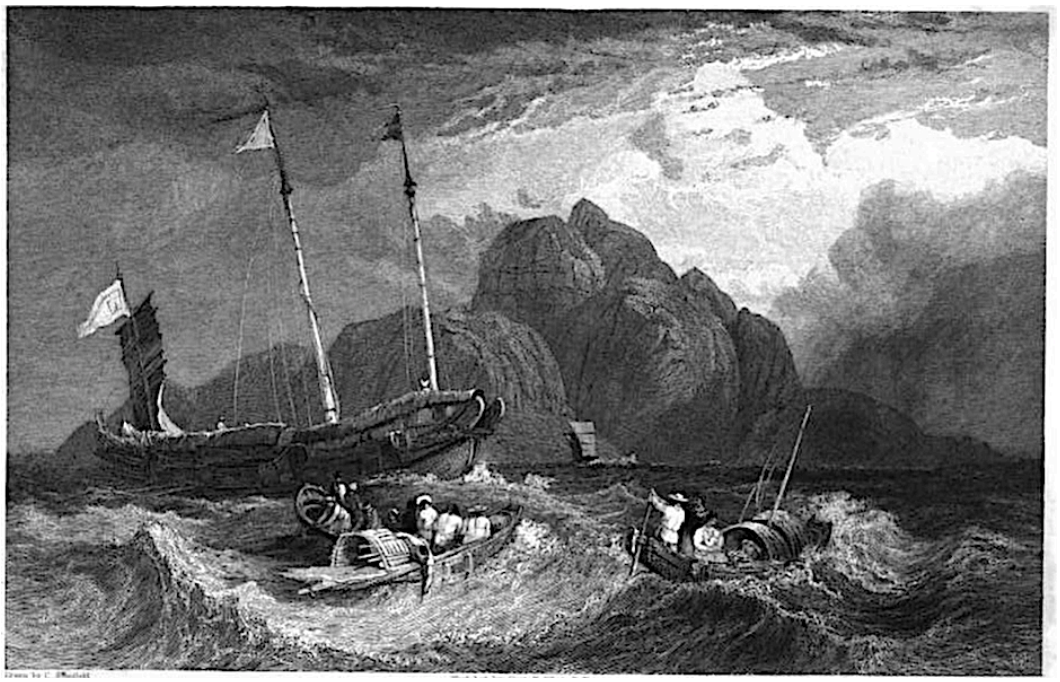


Figure 5. Tiger Island (Canton River); C. Stanfield, illustrator; Edward Goodall, engraver; 1835. *Google Books*.

Despite her wariness of the existing literature on the East, Roberts reveals in the preface that she consults this specialized knowledge to write her own descriptions. Immediately following her thoughts on "the fields of Oriental literature," she states that "[m]any of the scenes described in the following pages are familiar to the writer; and she has spared no pains in procuring information from the most authentic sources, concerning places which she had no opportunity of visiting in person" (Preface). While she points out that she has personally travelled through several of the locations she describes, she also emphasizes the sources she consulted to supplement her writing. The preface concludes with Roberts listing these sources, including "extracts from the translation of a Persian MS., and the latest descriptions of Canton, taken from a periodical published in China, of which very few copies have found their way into [England]" (Preface). She then continues to thank George Bennett, Esq., Sir Alexander Johnstone, and "the

Members of the Asiatic Society, for the access granted to the library of their establishment" (Preface). Although Roberts criticizes these societies for their exclusivity, she also relies on them for the content of her writing.

From the beginning of her writing career, Roberts's work had heavily depended on her research. In her biography on Roberts, Sarah Josepha Hale notes that "[w]hile prosecuting her researches for her first literary performance [*Memoirs of the Rival Houses of York and Lancaster* (1827)], [Roberts] evinced so much diligence and perseverance, that the officers of the British Museum, where she was accustomed to study, were induced to render her every assistance in their power" (885). Taken altogether, Roberts's preface does not seem to condemn research and erudition in itself, but rather how they can exclude the general and non-elite reader. Roberts's solution is to position herself as a translator of experience and research for the general reader, using the malleable genre of travel literature to achieve this end.

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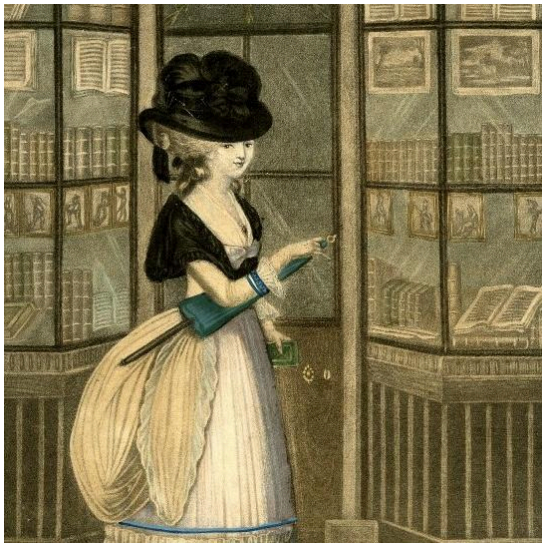

The Women's Print History Project

A Journey Through Scotland: Spence's *Letters from the North Highlands, During the Summer 1816* [Spotlight]

Authored by Julianna Wagar
Edited by Michelle Levy and Kandice Sharren

Project Director: Michelle Levy (Simon Fraser University)

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A Journey Through Scotland: Spence's *Letters from the North Highlands, During the Summer 1816*

Julianna Wagar

This post is part of Around the World with Six Women: A Travel Writing Spotlight Series, which will run through August 2021. Spotlights in this series focus on travel writing by women in the database.

Figure 1. Elizabeth Isabella Spence from *La Belle Assemblée. Wikipedia.*

Travelling through the North Highlands of Scotland and seeing the different beautiful landscapes, learning the histories of the land around you, and yearning for glimpses of Scottish folklore perfectly describes the experience of reading *Letters from the North Highlands, During the Summer 1816* by Elizabeth Isabella Spence. Spence captures the essence of Scotland so eloquently, stopping to describe hidden gems of the North Highlands and explaining the histories behind each rock and tree she passes. Similar to Maria Graham's *Journal of a Residence in Chile*, Spence weaves historical narratives in with her travels, writing letters to her friend the novelist Jane Porter and paying special interest to the women of the North Highlands. Spence is late to the Scottish travel writing genre; however, she reworks this genre by focusing on the importance of personal connections as well as the historical narratives of Scotland. Spence, returning to her homeland after living in London for more than twenty years, engages readers as if they were journeying through the North Highlands with Spence herself as their tour guide.

Elizabeth Isabella Spence was born in Dunkeld, Perth in 1768. Her parents, Dr. James Spence and Elizabeth Spence, were avid readers which they passed down to their only child. Spence herself published three novels before she turned to travel writing, including *Helen Sinclair* (1799), *The Nobility of the Heart* (1804), and *The Wedding Day* (1807). Afterwards, she wrote three travel memoirs: *Summer Excursions Through Parts of Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Derbyshire, and South Wales* (1809), *Sketches of the Present Manners, Customs, and Scenery of Scotland, with Incidental Remarks on the Scottish Character* (1811), and of course, *Letters from the North Highlands, During the Summer 1816* (1817). Spence also wrote fiction tales, *The Curate and his Daughter; A Cornish Tale* (1813), *The Spanish Guitar* (1814), *A Traveller's Tale of the Last Century* (1819), *Old Stories* (1822), *How to be Rid of a Wife, and the Lily of Annandale: Tales* (1823), and *Dame Rebecca Berry; or, Court Scenes in the Reign of Charles the Second* (1827).

When Spence began publishing Scottish travel writing, it was already an established genre. Although Sarah Murray wrote the first Scottish travel guidebook, *A Companion and Useful Guide to the Beauties in the Western Highlands of Scotland*, in 1799, those who followed after her were mainly men. Pam Perkins highlights how Scottish women travel writers were constantly oppressed by their male peers, who viewed travel writing as a man's job (172). Perkins states that "Scotland in general and the Highlands in particular were coming to be seen as a site for the 'cultivation of . . . masculinity'" (171). Men like John Stoddard thought that women were too weak or fragile to dig into the dirt and grime of Scotland and thus, their writing was not as detailed or effective as that of men (171). Many Scottish female writers were highly influenced by male writers, as Anne Grant, a popular Scottish poet and travel writer, was by James Macpherson's poetry (Perkins 173). Grant focuses on the journey that Macpherson took and draws on his poetry: "Her writing becomes . . . the decorative accent on Macpherson's 'bold' and 'dark' sublime . . . Grant more or less literally grounds her aesthetic vision in influential and authoritative masculine work" (173). Whereas Spence writes with women in mind within her *Letters*. Spence expresses excitement when viewing sites previously visited by women writers. For example, she references Grant's former presence and its impact on her experience: "Perhaps the scenery was the more soothing to my imagination, from knowing the delight which it had afforded [Anne Grant]" (177). Spence even mentions Grant in her footnotes, calling Grant her "respected friend... the accomplished author of the ingenious and original '*Letters from the Mountains*'" (177).

While reading these Letters, one can feel a strong connection to Spence because of her intimate address to fellow author, Jane Porter. Jane Porter was well-known and admired for her novel, *The Scottish Chiefs* (1809). Perkins states that "[Porter] had a . . . great presence and influence in the Romantic-era literary world" (180). Spence was able to use Porter's esteem to promote her *Letters*, but beyond that, Spence and Porter had a close friendship that was rekindled when Spence returned to Scotland. Spence and Porter were friends as children, thrust together through family ties but when Spence left for London, their friendship fizzled out (Orlando). Through these letters, Spence's delight in her revived relationship with Porter mirrors the joy she feels in her returning to Scotland. Spence states "Yet, who is there, but at some period of life has not felt their heart glow with delight, when, after a lapse of time, the same objects are again presented, which formed a large portion of enjoyment. The same scene again meets the eye, the same hand is

again extended, formerly pressed in youthful friendship" (52). Spence has such a prominent connection to Scotland and Porter, such that returning to one means returning to the other. We also see Spence's great admiration of Porter in her dedication: "I shall be satisfied if I should have caught only one ray of that Genius which lives in every page of your admirable writings, for then I might hope to convey entertainment as well as information to the reader" (i). Spence's relationship and connection to Porter fuels the intimate and personal narrative of these *Letters*.

Figure 2. Engraving of Jane Porter from 1846. *Wikipedia*.

Zoë Kinsley notes how Spence celebrates her womanhood and the independence that accompanies travel, writing of the liberation that she felt while travelling around London for her *Summer Excursions* (50). *Letters from the North Highlands* is not an explicitly political piece of travel writing, yet Spence weaves in commentary on women's rights and issues, and how women are treated differently in Scotland and London. Spence writes:

> With less elegance of form, sweetness of voice, and persuasive grace of manner, [Scottish women] are more of nature and decided character in the Scottish than English females, in the same condition of life. This, I imagine, is owing to their being educated at home, except a year given to a boarding-school, where only accomplishments are taught. At home young ladies learn to think and feel, in a well-regulated and well-informed family, which alike cultivates the heart and understanding. (24)

Scottish women grow up surrounded by family, while many English women are sent to boarding schools where they acquire “a superficial education,” and thus develop “a superficial character, wholly engrossed with self” (25). Scottish women are taught to not only respect their family, but to learn from them.

Figure 3. Map of Scotland in 1814. *Wikimedia Commons.*

Spence began her journey in Trinity Lodge, near Edinburgh, leaving London in search of a historical and personal connection to Scotland. She begins her letters in June, stating “Having long felt an ardent desire to revisit my native country, I left London at a season when its gaieties present to multitudes the most powerful attraction” (1). Spence leaves London to experience the summer beauty of the North Highlands, which were scarcely visited by tourists. She specifically mentions Flodden Field, which was the site of the Battle of Flodden in 1513 between England and Scotland, which England won. Despite this loss, Spence writes of this site as an important landmark: "This dreary spot has been consecrated not merely by the blood of its warriors, but the tears of the Muses have been copiously poured forth, as a tribute to the unveiling valour of the slain; and the unutterable sorrow of the survivors" (2). She discusses John Leyden, a Scottish poet, in reference to Flodden Field and his poem “Ode on Visiting Flodden.” She responds to his and other poetic accounts of the battle by saying, "it is impossible to pass with indifference a spot marked with such indelible traces in History, and consecrated to fame by successive poets” (3). Spence mentions places like Flodden Field throughout her letters, and instead of sweeping past their difficult histories, she highlights the loss and distress these sites arouse, describing the melancholic history of Scotland.

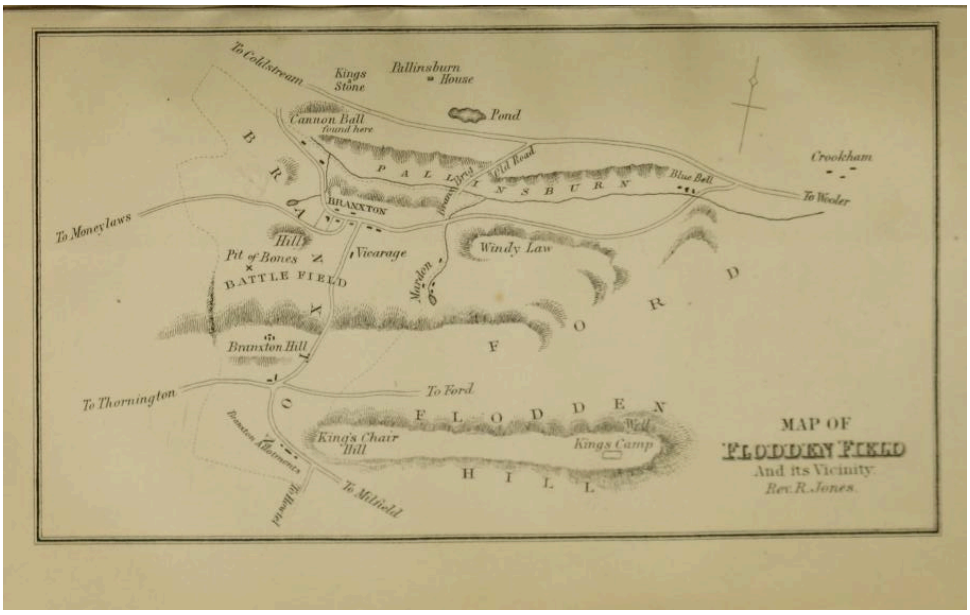

Figure 4. "Map of Flodden Field" by Reverend R. Jones. *Wikimedia Commons.*

She also references writing by famous authors like Robert Burns, Ann Radcliffe, and Shakespeare, as she visits different places that feature in or evoke their works. My favourite is her mention of Radcliffe's novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. While she is in Stirling, she comes across the Castle of Gloom, about which she writes: "not all that Mrs. Radcliffe has described of the horrors of Udolpho, can exceed this place" (262). Spence read widely and was able to connect different landscapes to places that she has only read about, and her excitement about these places radiates off the page.

Figure 5. "Heron Hawking Below Stirling Castle" by Jan Wyck 1690, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B1981.25.726.

What makes Spence's letters so special, is her admiration of Scotland. Despite having grown up in Scotland and growing accustomed to its landscapes and history, she is still able to capture the beauty around her. These descriptions take my breath away, as I imagine every inch of the North Highlands would. Spence writes as she travels along Loch Ness, specifically the Fall of Foyers: "Woods never appeared to me so verdant, or waters so clear, as those which met my view along this road, as glimpses of the translucent, or rushing mountain-streams, casually appeared through shades of tremulous birch" (166). As she travels from more central places like Edinburgh and Stirling to the less-populated and vast landscapes of Aberdeen and Inverness, her writing moves from the certainty of the familiar landscapes to astonishment. Her description of summer nights in Ross are especially affecting:

> You can imagine nothing half so beautiful as the summer evenings in Scotland. The dark curtain of night is scarcely spread in this northern hemisphere... The firmament retains a glow of light, often brilliantly heightened by the aurora borealis, here called, the merry dancers, which has a grand effect; and, when the softer shades of evening prevail, and throw into partial gloom the sleeping landscape, it is even at midnight, during the months of May, June, and July, only like our evening at twilight, when every object is indistinctly visible. The grandeur of the mountains, the pellucid tranquility of the rivers, and the deep gloom of the dark fir woods, altogether form a scene no person who has not beheld it, can picture. (153–54)

Figure 6. "View of the City of Edinburgh" by Alexander Nasmyth, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B1974.3.21.

As she journeys along the North Highlands, she is drawn to the folklore of the locals. Spence shares a superstition of Inverness, on the Hill of the Fairies, *Tom-ma-heurich.* She writes "the signification of the Gaelic, *Tom-na-heurich*, is, *the Hill of the Fairies*, or under-ground inhabitants, who are supposed to visit it at certain times, to hold their revels. It is superstitiously believed to this day, that various cures are effect upon the sick" (125). According to this superstition, if one spends the night under the hill, they are cured of their ailments. Weaving the lore of Scotland throughout her

letters not only provides an interesting insight into the lives of Scottish people in the eighteenth century, but it shows us the whimsical storytelling in those regions that has prevailed for centuries.

Letters from the North Highlands, During the Summer 1816 is an alluring tale of history, friendship, folklore, and the landscapes of Scotland. Spence partners her eloquent writing with the stunning backdrop of Scotland and entices readers to learn about the history within each landmark and area of the North Highlands. Following her journey from Trinity Lodge to St. Andrew's Square, she tackles every inch of the North Highlands, bringing historical and personal narratives of the townspeople and architecture.

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The Wedding Day (title)
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The Curate and his Daughter; A Cornish Tale (title)
The Spanish Guitar. A Tale; for the use of young persons (title)
A Traveller's Tale of the Last Century (title)
Old Stories (title)
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The Women's Print History Project

1816 and 2020: The Years Without Summers, *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*

Produced by Kate Moffatt and Kandice Sharren

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Moffatt, Kate, and Kandice Sharren, hosts. "1816 and 2020: The Years Without Summers." *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*, Season 1, Episode 7, 16 December 2020, https://womensprinthistoryproject.com/blog/post/58.

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1816 and 2020: The Years Without Summers

Kate Moffatt and Kandice Sharren

This double episode of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury* is part of *Romanticism on the Net*'s special issue, "Romanticism, Interrupted." The script has been peer-reviewed.

We are fast approaching the end of this (incredibly long) year. 2020 has been a year of climate crisis, of political upheaval, of a global pandemic; on a smaller scale, it has been a year of working from home, of finding new ways of forming community, and of learning how to function in a world that looks drastically different from years past.

In this peer-reviewed double episode of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury,* hosts Kandice Sharren and Kate Moffatt put 2020 and its many catastrophes into conversation with 1816, known as "the Year Without a Summer," the unusually cold year during which Mary Shelley began to pen *Frankenstein*. More generally, 1816 was, like 2020, a year of catastrophes, marked by riots, political upheaval, and typhus and cholera epidemics set against a change in the weather that we now know was caused by the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia. This episode uses the WPHP to explore what other works exist about those years beyond what might be called the "1816 canon"—think Lord Byron, Mary Shelley, John Polidori. Looking at Elizabeth Heyrick's *Exposition of one principal cause of the national distress*, Helen Maria Williams's *Letters on the events which have passed in France since the Restoration in 1815*, Charlotte Caroline Richardson's *Harvest*, Jane Waldie Watts's *Sketches descriptive of Italy in the years 1816 and 1817*, and Frances Jane Carey's *Journal of a Tour in France in the years 1816 and 1817*, we examine how women writers acknowledge global background catastrophe, what they can tell us about the voices we hear and the voices we do not, and how our own experiences this year have shaped our readings of their works.

Including reflection pieces of the hosts' own experiences of 2020, as well as considerations of how the year's seemingly-endless disasters have had far-reaching and severe consequences whose effects have been distributed unevenly across gender, class, race, and geography, Episode 7: "1816 and 2020: The Years Without Summers" considers the intersection of print, production, and processing in both 1816 and 2020.

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Journal of a tour in France (title)
Williams, Helen Maria (person, author)
Letters on the events which have passed in France Since the Restoration in 1815 (title)
Richardson, Charlotte Caroline (person, author)
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Byron, George Gordon (person, author)
Wordsworth, William (person, author)
Hunt, James Henry Leigh (person, author)
Political Writing (genre)
William Darton, Joseph Harvey, and Samuel Darton (firm, publisher/bookseller)
Baldwin, C. Cradock, and W. Joy (firm, publisher/bookseller)
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00:00:00	🎵	[music playing]
00:00:09	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	In chapter 4 of Jane Waldie Watts' *Sketches Descriptive of Italy in the Years 1816 and 1817, with a Brief Account of Travels in Various Parts of France and Switzerland in the Same Years*, she writes of her time in Lyon: "The idea of [Napoleon's] second return, indeed, I found very general among the lower orders in this part of France. They believed, and perhaps still believe, that the man we hold in custody at St. Helena is not the real emperor, but some one who personates him, while he is himself lying in concealment somewhere on the Continent, and will appear again in time.
00:00:44	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	No arguments that I could use, could persuade the people with whom I conversed on the subject, of the reality of Buonaparte's present detention, or that his former escape was not the design and contrivance of the British ministry, whom, however, they now suppose to be as completely deceived in regard to his identity, as the whole British people. At that time, indeed, the Lyonese looked forward to the probability of their idol's re-appearance with ill-concealed pleasure.
00:01:09	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Wherever we went, we heard complaints of the decay of trade, and the dearness of grapes, which, however, absurdly, were invariably coupled together, as if both emanated from the same cause, —the reign of the Bourbons; and to the ill-conduct of that unfortunate race, were referred all the disorders and distresses, public and private, which were experienced during this disastrous year."
00:01:28	🎵	[music playing]
00:01:36	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	In the essay, "Screengrabs," included in Zadie Smith's 2020 essay collection *Intimations*, she writes: "There is an ideal, rent-controlled city dweller who appears to experience no self-pity, who knows exactly how long to talk to someone in the street, who creates community without overly sentimentalizing the concept—or ever saying aloud the word "community"—and who always picks up after their dog, even if it's physically painful to do so. Whose daily breakfast is a cigarette and a croissant from the French place on the corner, although to accommodate her new walker, Barbara now eats and smokes on the bench outside the hairdresser, properly intended for clients of the salon. But no one minds because this is Barbara and Beck we're talking about, regular in their habits and known to all.
00:02:22	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	There she sat on that last day—I was passing with my little dog: a final chance for Maud to pee before we put her in the rental car—and I could see Barbara was preparing to bark one of her ambivalent declamations at me, about the weather or a piece of prose, or some new outrage committed by the leader of a country which, in

		Barbara's mind, only theoretically includes her own city. Already missing New York, I was keen to hear it. Instead she sucked hard on her cigarette and said, in a voice far quieter than I'd ever heard her use:
00:02:53	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	"Thing is, we're a community and we got each other's back. You'll be there for me, and I'll be there for you, and we'll all be there for each other, the whole building. Nothing to be afraid of—we'll get through this, all of us, together." "Yes we will," I whispered, hardly audible, even to myself, and walked on, maintaining a six-foot distance, whether to conform with the new regulations or to avoid Beck biting me in some vulnerable spot I couldn't tell.
00:03:20	🎵	[music playing]
00:03:32	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Hello and welcome to *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*, the podcast for *The Women's Print History Project*. The WPHP is a bibliographic database that collects information about women and book production during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. My name is Kate Moffatt—
00:03:47	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	and I'm Kandice Sharren—
00:03:48	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	And we are long-time editors of the WPHP, and the hosts of this podcast. On the third Wednesday of every month, we'll introduce you to anecdotes, puzzles, and problems related to recovering evidence of women's involvement in print.
00:04:01	🎵	[music playing]
00:04:09	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	This episode is part of *Romanticism on the Net's* special issue, "Romanticism, Interrupted," which called for "in-the-moment responses to current social, political, and cultural events, and tracings of relations between the past and present." The script has been peer-reviewed, and we would like to thank the reviewers and editorial team of *Romanticism on the Net*, especially Matthew Sangster and Michael Sinatra, for their expertise and willingness to take on this format. We would also like to thank project director Michelle Levy for her feedback and WPHP Research Assistant Victoria De Hart for her behind-the-scenes support on this episode.
00:04:43	🎵	[music playing]
00:04:51	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	In April 1815, Mount Tambora erupted in Indonesia. The following three years of temperature cooling resulted in global crop failures, cholera and typhus epidemics,

and riots. In Western Europe and North America, 1816 came to be known as "the year without a summer" or "eighteen hundred and froze to death."

00:05:10 Kandice Sharren (co-host) While it is often referenced as the cold and fog-laden year in which an 18-year-old Mary Shelley came up with the idea for *Frankenstein*, 1816 was more generally a year of crises: political, environmental, and epidemiological. As Jane Waldie Watts writes in the travel memoir that we quoted at the beginning of this episode, "in Europe the abrupt shift in climate and its agricultural and economic fallout was closely tied to the political upheavals taking place, especially the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in France."

00:05:39 Kate Moffatt (co-host) This feels painfully familiar. 2020 has been a year of climate-induced wildfires, of necessary political unrest and resistance, and, of course, of a world-wide pandemic. It has been a year of constantly chasing the non-existent 'new normal', of working towards the necessary 'better' normal that we hope for, of spending weeks operating on some desperate form of autopilot only for the enormity of the world's happenings to hit you all at once at three o'clock on a Wednesday afternoon and render you overwhelmed until the following Tuesday.

00:06:08 Kate Moffatt (co-host) In British Columbia, where Kandice is based, many of the measures taken in response to the first wave of the pandemic were framed in terms of 'giving people a summer' before the anticipated second wave of infections hit in the autumn. And, weather-wise, we did have a summer; August 2020 was the hottest month on record in the northern hemisphere. But the summer we had was unlike any other: no conferences, no family barbecues, no road trips.

00:06:32 Kate Moffatt (co-host) These restrictions led us to question what, exactly, makes a so-called summer? Is it simply the space of time between the summer solstice and the fall equinox? Is it defined by the weather? The activities you engage in? What, exactly, made 1816 a year without a summer, and does 2020 count as a year without a summer too?

00:06:52 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And yet, even as we recognize the manifold and particular catastrophes of both 1816 and 2020, we also know that the events of both years reflect a culmination of systemic problems with broad and far-reaching consequences, which are unevenly distributed: geography, class, race, and gender have impacted how different individuals and groups have experienced and continue to experience upheavals.

00:07:15 Kandice Sharren (co-host) We don't yet have the distance from any of the events of 2020 to be able to see their long-term repercussions or comment on them—and we are a podcast about

eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century women's writing [Kate laughs], so for that kind of analysis we suggest you go elsewhere—but this year has prompted us to look backwards, to similarly tumultuous times in the past, including the original Year Without a Summer.

00:07:37 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Our heightened sense of the unequal effects of catastrophe has prompted us to reconsider what we know about 1816 and its crises, asking: how were its social and political effects represented in print more broadly? How were they distributed by class and gender? And how can we use the metadata collected in the WPHP to find out more about how women writers, specifically, responded to the catastrophic years between 1816 and 1818?

00:08:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) For this episode of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*, we went digging for non-canonical representations of the year without a summer and its aftereffects and found five obviously topical titles: one political pamphlet, Elizabeth Heyrick's *Exposition of One Principal Cause of the National Distress*); three travel memoirs, Frances Jane Carey's *Journal of a Tour in France in the Years 1816 and 1817*, Jane Waldie Watts' *Sketches Descriptive of Italy in the Years 1816 and 1817*, and Helen Maria Williams' *Letters on the Events which Have Passed in France Since the Restoration in 1815*; and also Charlotte Caroline Richardson's *Harvest*, *a Poem, in Two Parts; with Other Poetical Pieces*, published in 1818.

00:08:45 Kate Moffatt (co-host) In this episode we will discuss how we found these titles and what they can tell us about the crises that marked the period between 1816 and 1818. Our findings highlight the intersections between different social, political, and environmental phenomena. In the works we found, we were struck by how writers leveraged these separate issues in conjunction with or against each other, and how different publication formats and genres highlight the effects of these crises on everything from daily life to important political and economic debates.

00:09:13 Kate Moffatt (co-host) At the same time, reading these works forced us to ask: whose voices are we hearing, and how are they being mediated and brought to our attention? How does print as a system allow for a diversity of voices and genres, and which ones get left out? The books we identified are not canonical, but most of their authors were wealthy and educated enough to travel and write books, and to have access to networks that made publication possible. Although some of these writers do consider experiences beyond their own—such as Heyrick's advocacy for the working poor in manufacturing districts, and Williams's sympathy for the rural poor in France—we only encounter the voices of the lower classes secondhand.

00:09:51	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	We were also struck by the pervasiveness of catastrophe in these texts, the impact that it has on both public and private life, and the longing for a solution as simple as a leader stepping up. In the passage from Jane Waldie Watts's travel memoir that we quoted at the beginning of this episode, the French link the "decay of trade, and the dearness of grapes" to "the same cause, —the reign of the Bourbons," as though Napoleon had the ability to control the weather.
00:10:17	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	This parallels our own current moment and the long- and short-term failures of leadership that have resulted in a climate crisis that has been foreseen for decades and a global health crisis that has, in a short space of time, completely reshaped our interactions with other humans, from how we greet each other to if and where we interact at all.
00:10:35	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	We opened this episode by pairing the Jane Waldie Watts passage with a quote from Zadie Smith's latest essay collection, *Intimations*, published earlier this year, for the way that it speaks to the individual emotional response to these changes, as well as their potential to reshape and fracture communities. We didn't want our focus to be solely on the past—we originally conceptualized this as an episode about the Year Without a Summer loosely inspired by our own experiences, but over the last few months it mutated into an ongoing conversation about how our distinct experiences over the course of this year have been shaped by our own privileges and precarities.
00:11:08	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	So, this month we're going to try something a little different. After we've talked about our findings, we're going to conclude the essay with our personal reflections—a little bit of processing, if you will—to consider how the books we found in the WPHP have allowed us to see our own moment more clearly.
00:11:23	🎵	[music playing]
00:11:31	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	So, the existing scholarship about 1816 is largely dominated by discussions of canonical texts, especially those inspired by the infamous evening that spurred Mary Shelley and John Polidori to write their genre-defining works. However, as Gillian D'Arcy Wood explores in *Tambora: The Eruption that Changed the World*, the effects were simultaneously global and local in scope—what might a wider range of texts tell us about how these effects were experienced by a wider range of people? And how might they help us frame our experiences now?

00:12:04 Kandice Sharren (co-host) To understand what the non-canonical texts we found can contribute, first we need to look at the canon to identify what its blind spots are. So, the majority of current scholarship about the Year Without a Summer has focused on how it was represented in canonical texts like the literary productions of the Byron-Shelley circle or Jane Austen's final novel, *Persuasion*.

00:12:25 Kandice Sharren (co-host) All of these we know were composed at that precise historical moment from sources outside of the books themselves. This means that we've heard a very limited range of voices on the effects of the Year Without a Summer. Many of which are from the same group of friends who represent radical, but also elite perspectives. In these works, we see philosophical representations of crises that explore what they mean for humanity on a large scale.

00:12:53 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So, David Higgins has talked about *Frankenstein* as a "reflection on the vulnerability of human communities, living with uncontrollable geophysical and climactic forces, the entanglement of humans and non-human nature and the possibility of human extinction." Similarly, Chris Washington talks about both *Frankenstein* and one of Mary Shelley's later novels, *The Last Man*, saying that they participate in what he calls "post apocalyptic Romanticism", which he defines as a propensity to "think within the ashes of posthuman history, to theorize life and the hope of life in the darkness they find themselves unexpectedly strangling through."

00:13:32 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Not all of the works he discusses as examples of post-apocalyptic romanticism were inspired by the Year Without a Summer, but a lot of them are, and both Higgins and Washington frame the existential questions that exist in these works in their own kind of contemporary theoretical terms. While these works aren't necessarily engaging directly with strange weather or crop failure or food shortages, they are still, though, responding to the anxieties of the moment, and these scholars have kind of taken those anxieties and applied contemporary terms to them.

00:14:14 Kandice Sharren (co-host) *Persuasion* is a novel that focuses a little bit more on the kind of immediate effects of what's going on. So, its attention to the seasons, especially the chill of autumn really makes sense when it's considered against the backdrop of both its composition and its setting. It was written in 1816 and set during 1814, which was another unusually cold year.

00:14:36 Kandice Sharren (co-host) And Amelia Dale has kind of talked about its relation to climate and weather saying "*Persuasion* was written and read with the immediate experience of 'frosts' and 'springs' capable of 'revolv[ing]' in irregular rather than predictable rhythms, and

subject to multitudinous variations in length, moments of appearance and severity. *Persuasion's* seasonal temporal markers therefore potentially denote radical instability and a capacity for a 'revolution … almost beyond expression' in established rhythms that coincide with the novel's striking narratological innovations and attentiveness to socio-political change."

00:15:15 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So essentially what she's saying here is that the disruption in weather patterns during the time of *Persuasion's* composition gives rise to possibilities of change and renewal, both politically, and in terms of narrative structure, narrative innovation. All of these canonical representations are really clearly attenuated to questions of environment, politics, and population, but they aren't texts that really directly represent the people who were, for example, starving to death.

00:15:45 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Those people are largely effaced by these existential questions that arise in the face of disaster. As we've grappled with, in this year in 2020, different sections of the population suffer the consequences of crises in different ways. So a farmer in France whose apricot crop failed is going to have a really different experience of 1816 than Lord Byron with his personal physician and pet bear in a Swiss Villa [Kate laughs].

00:16:19 Kate Moffatt (co-host) That said, it isn't necessarily easy to find literature that grappled with this topic outside of the canon. This is, in part, because it was only in the twentieth century that the famine and disease that swept across the world was linked to the Tambora eruption and could therefore be understood as part of a larger global climate event. As David Higgins points out, "Tambora does not provoke a significant body of catastrophe literature by canonical writers working within Britain, for the obvious reasons that they were largely protected from its effects and that it was not widely reported."

00:16:52 Kate Moffatt (co-host) But even though the events of 1816 and 1817 were not obviously linked to the Tambora eruption, they *were* occurring against a backdrop of philosophical and scientific shifts that suggested events should be considered within the context of a larger scale. Climate and especially changes in climate and their causes began to be discussed in scientific and philosophical literature in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

00:17:13 Kate Moffatt (co-host) According to David Womble, Montesquieu theorized the relationship between climate and population as early as 1748, arguing in *The Spirit of the Laws* that the characteristics of populations were shaped by their climates. Gillian D'Arcy Wood talks about Benjamin Franklin theorizing that volcanic eruptions could cause changes

to the global climate in 1783–4, though Franklin's speculations were dismissed at the time.

00:17:36 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And discussions about climate were also shaped by a growing sense of the scale of history. Noah Heringman, for example, has traced the emergence of geological science in the eighteenth century, which resulted in a new understanding of history in geological terms, which meant that the human became dwarfed in the face of "deep time."

00:17:52 Kandice Sharren (co-host) While these large-scale concepts had largely theoretical (and theological) implications, specific, local instances of crisis that resulted from the Tambora eruption were visible and had pretty immediate effects on people throughout the world; as Olivia Murphy reminds us, "climate is a planetary phenomenon with myriad local consequences." The kinds of writing that most evidently capture these local consequences are forms of writing that allow for immediate representation, things like meteorological records and newspaper reports.

00:18:24 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So, for example, Alexis Harley has looked at the early meteorological accounts kept by London resident Luke Howard, whose records of the weather in London seem surprisingly unconcerned with the unusual temperatures he recorded in 1816 and 1817. Alongside eyewitness accounts of the Tambora eruption and a discussion of the Shelley-Byron circle's writing that came out of 1816 and after, David Higgins focuses on the way periodicals represented the effects of the Tambora eruption.

00:18:50 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So he says that "They should be read as part of a broader public discourse about the so-called 'distresses' affecting Britain after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, which were caused by a complex matrix of factors: high taxation; the post-war collapse of the coal, iron, and textile industries; agricultural foreclosures; unemployment; and the climatic conditions."

00:19:14 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Higgins sets the calls for reform that appeared in William Cobbett's *Two Penny Trash* and Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* against the refusal of conservative papers like *The Courier* to acknowledge the possibility of systemic solutions to the intense poverty experienced by the lower classes in Britain during this time.

00:19:31 Kandice Sharren (co-host) And as an aside, it's worth noting that, although Higgins is trying to kind of expand the scope of this discussion beyond the Shelley-Byron circle, and although the *Examiner's* influence predates the Shelley-Byron circle by a number of years, Leigh Hunt's association with its members has largely dominated discussions of his newspaper. As a result, Higgins's focus on Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* continues to

		center canonical Romanticism because of these connections to the Shelley-Byron circle.
00:20:04	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Because newspapers and meteorological records offer relatively immediate commentary on local conditions and events, reporting on an event is likely to happen within a given date range. It means you can read through a newspaper or a meteorologist's journal in the weeks after a given event and be reasonably certain that you'll find something relevant. The WPHP's focus on books, broadly defined, makes things a bit trickier. While some of our findings are similarly immediate, published in 1817 and 1818, the others have a significant lag between composition and publication.
00:20:36	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Elizabeth Heyrick's pamphlet was written and published in 1817, while the crises of 1816 and 1817 were ongoing. Pamphlets usually aimed to comment on a contemporary issue, so were intended for immediate distribution; like Hunt's and Cobbett's newspapers, Heyrick used the current crisis to argue for structural reforms, in this case a minimum wage for the urban poor.
00:20:57	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Helen Maria Williams's *Letters on The Events which Have Passed in France* comment on the time period between the second restoration of the Bourbon monarchy and the book's publication in 1819. So it also had a fairly immediate focus and was designed to provide news and information quite immediately. Charlotte Caroline Richardson's poetry collection *Harvest* was also published in 1818, which is the year of the bumper crop that saw the end of this particular crisis.
00:21:27	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	The reviewers of this episode actually very helpfully identified a notice of publication by subscription in the March 1818 issue of the *Lady's Monthly Museum* for *Harvest*, which gives us a much more precise date of its publication. Essentially, this means that the book was written and published before the 1818 harvest, which means that the optimistic representation of bounty that we find in its pages is anticipatory. And at the same time, its pervasive imagery of unpredictable weather and small disasters suggests a continued anxiety, will this year's harvest be successful?
00:22:05	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	While both *Harvest* and *Letters On the Events Which Have Passed in France* saw fairly immediate publication, they were exceptions. Books overall, as result of genre and form, took longer to prepare for the press than pamphlets and newspapers, and therefore tended to have a more significant delay between composition and publication, which we see with the travel memoirs that we found. Frances Jane

Carey's *Journal of a Tour in France, in the Years 1816 and 1817* was published in 1823, six years after her trip.

00:22:32 Kate Moffatt (co-host) The author even acknowledges this delay in her preface, writing, "the publication of this journal has been delayed between four and five years by circumstances, an explanation of which would be uninteresting to the public" (which does, of course, make me want to know intimately these uninteresting circumstances). But also Jane Waldie Watts's Sketches *Descriptive of Italy in the Years 1816 and 1817, With a Brief Account of Travels in Various Parts of France and Switzerland in the Same Years* was published in 1820, three years after her trip.

00:23:01 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Delays could be even more substantial; it took twenty years before Mary Elizabeth Southwell, the Baroness de Clifford's *A Short Journal of a Tour, Made through Part of France, Switzerland, and the Banks of the Rhine in the Months of May, June, July and August, in 1817* appeared. It was published in 1837, which nudges it just outside the dates of the WPHP, so we won't talk about it in detail, but this gap of twenty years between the journey being discussed and its publication *did* lead us to hope for a more reflective consideration of the year's historical significance. But no! [Kate laughs]. Instead, it reads like a society report, complete with "A list of English visitors at Paris, in June 1817" [Kate laughs].

00:23:46 Kate Moffatt (co-host) As we've already mentioned, the works most widely associated with the Year Without a Summer are canonical, and the WPHP, as a resource that seeks to account for women's involvement in print more broadly, offers the opportunity to move beyond the canon. Using the WPHP to search for works dealing with 1816 was not a particularly straightforward undertaking; rarely, if ever, do titles read "A book about the wild weather of 1816 and its direct impact on my life," or "Daily processing in 1816: a memoir."

00:24:17 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Most of the relevant canonical works don't explicitly deal with the Year Without a Summer, in either their contents or their metadata. As Amelia Dale traces in relation to Emma and the "potential 'error' describing apple trees in 'blossom' in June", identifying how nineteenth-century climate conditions may have affected a novel requires really careful historical and, in this case, meteorological scrutiny; these kinds of effects will not be obvious to the casual reader.

00:24:42 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Because Shelley and Austen are canonical writers, They've been subject to that degree of scrutiny. We know quite a bit about their composition, including when and under what kinds of conditions they were created—but there isn't actually anything in their

metadata, other than the dates of publication, that suggests these works—*Emma*, *Persuasion*, *Frankenstein*—should be read in the context of events like those that shaped the Year Without a Summer.

00:25:04 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And it's worth noting that while publication dates can be helpful, they do not always have a direct relationship to date of composition. Northanger Abbey, for example, which was published at the same time as *Persuasion*, was actually written about twenty years earlier. So, how did we use the WPHP to find our works of interest for this episode?

00:25:22 Kandice Sharren (co-host) First, we considered that the books *about* 1816 would be very unlikely to have a *publication date* of 1816, so we searched for post-1816 titles in the database. The WPHP collects data up until 1836, so an advanced title search for publications from 1817 to 1836 provided us with twenty years of titles: 3606 titles, to be exact! This was too large a number for us to reasonably sort through, so we narrowed our search to the titles published in the years 1817 to 1820. This gave us 739 titles. Again, this number felt unwieldy. Excellent for the sheer volume of production involving women, but difficult to work through looking for thematically specific content.

00:26:12 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Using our advanced search and limiting the results to anything published in 1817 or later though, we began to search for keywords. Most of these search terms had very limited results and many of the results fell outside the scope of our interest. While everything published post-1816, particularly in the years directly following, could technically be read through a lens of global catastrophes, we were looking particularly for works that dealt directly or explicitly with 1816's disasters and those of the surrounding years.

00:26:47 Kandice Sharren (co-host) We tried the common words associated with the disasters we knew were taking place: "harvest," ... of poetry, "disaster," nothing, "catastrophe", still nothing, "plague," nothing, "typhus," nope, "typhoid," nope, "cholera," nope, and even "volcano" and "eruption", although, as we've mentioned, it wasn't until years later, many years later, that the cause of the Year Without a Summer was widely known. We also searched for "storm", nope, "terror", nope, and "weather", still nothing. Finally, we searched for "1816" and "1817"—not works published in these years, but works that actually contained them in their titles— and, finally, success! This is where our travel memoirs came from!

00:27:34 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Our research for this episode also led us to another keyword that brought us some results. I found the term, “the distresses” in David Higgins’s discussion of periodicals, which revealed it was a term frequently invoked to describe the state of Britain during this time. Searching for "distress", as a keyword, led us to Elizabeth Heyrick’s pamphlet.

00:27:59 Kate Moffatt (co-host) As our search results indicate, there are limitations to using a database that is metadata, rather than content-focused, for thematic searches: titles, while in our metadata, are not always descriptive. A full-text corpus would likely yield more results (although those results would likely be no less unwieldy than our own). And a lot of poetry collections had generic titles like “Poems on Several Occasions.” Titles for fiction often feature the names of characters or fictional places—things that are ultimately meaningless unless you have actually read the work in question.

00:28:31 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And this contributes to many of our relevant results being travel memoirs—they often indicate both the time and place of travel in their titles, which renders them more readily visible in metadata searches. Publication data is useful, but must be considered carefully. As we’ve already pointed out, some of the works we ended up finding by searching for “1816” were actually published many years later. Searching by publication date can really only be as reliable as the searcher is thorough, and specificity (for example, looking for works only published in 1817) can actually be to the searcher’s detriment.

00:29:04 Kate Moffatt (co-host) It is also worth considering that meanings of words change over time and have particular connotations during particular periods, so keywords used for searches might not mean what you expect them to mean in titles. For example, when we searched for “distress”, it did give us Heyrick’s pamphlet, but it largely led us to works about women whose virtue is in peril [Kandice laughs].

00:29:26 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So even though we didn't find a vast body of women's writing about the Year Without a Summer hidden in plain sight, what we did find was fascinating and represents a range of genres and approaches to representing current events, from the explicitly political to the literary. So we're going to talk about the most explicitly political works first, starting with Elizabeth Heyrick’s *Exposition of One Principle Cause of the National Distress* (self-published and sold by Harvey, Darton and Co. in 1817), and, then we're going to talk about Helen Maria Williams’s *Letters on the Events which Have Passed in France* (published by Baldwin, Cradock and Joy in 1819).

00:30:05 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Elizabeth Heyrick has already turned up in one of our podcast episodes, our August episode, “Black Women and Female Abolitionists in Print", where we discussed her as an uncompromising abolitionist whose 1824 pamphlet, *Immediate, Not Gradual, Abolition*, called for a boycott of West Indian products like sugar until emancipation was effected and demanded immediate emancipation of enslaved people.

00:30:30 Kandice Sharren (co-host) One of our RAs, Victoria De Hart, has also written a spotlight about her that you can find on the WPHP site. *Exposition* is an earlier example of her argumentative style that displays a similar awareness of economic issues on a larger scale. In it, she calls for a government mandated increase in wages as a way of at least mitigating the effects of intense poverty. And in this pamphlet, Heyrick links the distresses experienced in Northern England's manufacturing communities in 1816 and 1817 to the horrors of slavery, arguing that *both* are products of England's economic model.

00:31:09 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So about this, she says, “It is probable that even the horrors of the slave-trade may with justice be referred to ambition, to the love of distinction, rather than to any innate principle of cruelty in human nature. The love of distinction exerts itself in an endless variety of pursuits, but none with more extended and pernicious influence than that of trade in general." Let us observe the influence of the spirit of trade in our own country, during the last fifty years.

00:31:29 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Before that period England might be considered as an agricultural, rather than a commercial country. It was then, comparatively, a poor and insignificant, but at the same time, a contented, a happy, and a virtuous country. In the same proportion as its agricultural was exchanged for a commercial character it became rich and powerful; its influence with foreign nations was extended; but simplicity, contentment, virtue and happiness, gradually deserted the land.”

00:32:10 Kandice Sharren (co-host) In other words, Heyrick would have us believe capitalism is the virus [both laugh]. So while Heyrick's pamphlet focuses on the distress being experienced by the poor in manufacturing towns, Helen Maria Williams’s 1819 *Letters on the Events which Have Passed in France* outlined the political and religious changes that have taken place in France since the second restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1815, following Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo. Her wide ranging discussion covers attempts to integrate the Napoleonic code into the French legal system, as well as the ongoing persecution of Protestants in rural regions.

00:32:52 Kandice Sharren (co-host) And the main thrust of Williams' discussion is really that France has at last settled into the compromise of a constitutional monarchy after the chaos of the revolution

and the despotic rule of Napoleon. Her writing in 1819 is focused on celebrating the end of military involvement in France. And there's really only a brief reference to the difficulties being caused by the strange climate event late in the book. And when she represents it, she actually kind of represents it as an event that has already passed. And instead she's focusing on the new potential of France in 1818.

00:33:33 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So, she writes, “Nature seemed also to be in sympathy with man, and decorated France with lavish gifts for the festival of deliverance. The harvest had been abundant beyond the hopes of the husbandman, and the vintage crowned with gay profusion this season of gladness. All was in strong and delightful contrast with the gloomy horror of the preceding year.

00:33:56 Kandice Sharren (co-host) The corn had been destroyed by incessant rains, and the half-famished peasants, unable to find either employment or bread, flocked in crowds to Paris, demanding alms in the streets, in a tone of importunity that told the passer-by to beware of refusal. But sedition and hunger, humiliation and despair, were all forgotten together in the joys of this auspicious moment. The husbandman no longer saw the tent of the stranger pitched in his field; and was no longer compelled to furnish subsistence for men who expressed their desires, or their discontent, in strange accents, and a confusion of tongues, all to him equally unintelligible.”

00:34:39 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Both Heyrick and Williams are really unusual for women writers in this period, and their direct engagement with the political sphere reflects this. So, Heyrick was an independently wealthy and widowed woman who converted to Quakerism after her husband's death and devoted herself to philanthropic causes, especially the emancipation of slaves. And it's her financial freedom, and the fact that she's not married, that really allows her to participate in public debates beyond what was typical.

00:35:06 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So Williams was a bit different. She was a high profile writer who had been writing dispatches from France since 1790, which provided up to date political context and analysis. So she'd really been living in Paris and France and traveling around Europe for at this point almost thirty years. So this is quite late in her writing career. Her writing about France was primarily published in book form and her books really blurred the boundary between more journalistic reports and the popular travel memoirs genre.

00:35:40 Kandice Sharren (co-host) In the WPHP we've listed Williams' writing about France as political writing, but it's also included in for example, Benjamin Colbert’s database of *British Women’s Travel*

Writing, and in an article about his database's findings, Colbert treats her writing as straightforward travel memoir.

00:36:00 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Although the blurred space between political report and travel memoir may have provided Williams with an opportunity to comment on contentious political issues in the guise of a travel narrative earlier in her career, by the time she published the 1819 *Letters*, Williams was well established as a political commentator, and you can see this in the fact that she does not frame 1819 *Letters on the Events which Have Passed in France* in terms of her personal experience as a traveler at all. Instead, she writes from a relatively omniscient and reporterly perspective. She's giving you a kind of overview of the political situation and the developments, but she's not really in the story. She's not a figure in the story.

00:36:42 Kandice Sharren (co-host) That said, travel narratives by women weren't actually all that common either. It's not in print at least a particularly feminized genre. So Colbert has pointed out how "women accounted for only about 5 percent of travel books published in Britain and Ireland" between 1780 and 1840." And this is a significantly lower percentage than their participation in other genres, such as the novel, where men and women's books are fairly equal. In his recent book, *Stepping Westward*, Nigel Leask explores this further, and he kind of points out that it wasn't that women didn't travel or write about traveling, but that their accounts circulated primarily in manuscript.

00:37:29 Kandice Sharren (co-host) For example, he identifies only four travel accounts of the Scottish Highlands by women that were published between 1770 and 1830. By contrast, there are thirty-six known travel accounts of this region by women in manuscript. He also points out that women could really be subjected to harsh rebuke if they seemed to be too authoritative in their travel accounts, as Elizabeth Spence was in her 1817 travel memoir. So the content of Williams's 1819 *Letters* on the events which have passed in France forms a really sharp contrast with the actual travel memoirs we found that engaged with the Year Without a Summer, which Kate read and is going to talk about.

00:38:18 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Unlike the political writing we found, which is attempting something of a systemic approach, the travel memoirs offer individual and personal perspectives, which while very compelling, can sometimes eclipse the larger social and political events taking place at the time. For example, one of our results was Elizabeth Spence's *Letters from the North Highlands during the Summer 1816,* published in 1817.

00:38:40 Kate Moffatt (co-host) This is one of Spence's works mentioned by Leask and interestingly it's one of the only works we looked at in this episode that actually has scholarship available about it, which isn't unusual for works that we have in the WPHP. This work fell within our date range, and it appeared to be precisely what we were looking for—1816, summer, published very soon after the journey—but it actually almost completely ignores any of the disasters that we've identified as having taken place during 1816 and the surrounding years.

00:39:08 Kate Moffatt (co-host) At the very least, I expected some reference to the strange weather, but it's more preoccupied with sharing Scottish history and generally describing the land, the cities, and the people than reflecting on her specific journey at that particular moment in time. It's written kind of like a guidebook encouraging readers to visit Scotland rather than a record of her lived experience that would do something like capture peculiarities. The lack of documentation, of course, could have been the result of a number of circumstances. It could be because the author didn't personally experience or notice the changes, because she wasn't directly impacted by them, or even possibly because they didn't serve the purpose of her work.

00:39:45 Kate Moffatt (co-host) From works like *Highlands*, which Spence wrote, that contain no visible engagement with the year's crises, to the travel memoirs that are directly complaining about the terrible and unusual weather, there was a broad diversity of documentation taking place, which we see in the memoirs that we did choose to look at a little bit more closely today.

00:40:05 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Williams's travel memoir that Kandice just talked about, feels journalistic. Frances Jane Carey's *Journal of a Tour in France in the Years 1816 and 1817* and Jane Waldie Watts's *Sketches Descriptive of Italy in the Years 1816 and 1817*, in comparison, feel intimate. It's by considering their voices, their narration that is so inflicted by both personality and by their status as tourists, that we begin to get at one of the questions at the heart of this episode: whose voices do we hear and have access to during moments of catastrophe and how are they mediated?

00:30:40 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Frances Jane Carey's *Journal of a Tour in France in the Years 1816 and 1817* was published in 1823 by Taylor and Hessey, and it includes in the preface that an effort "to be useful to succeeding travellers has induced the author to enter into many trifling and minute details, respecting the modes of conveyance, the charges at inns, the state of the roads, and the weather, which she is apprehensive may prove very uninteresting to the general reader."

00:41:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) We are perhaps not general readers, but we are very interested to see how Carey notes what we know are actually effects of the Tambora eruption. The descriptions she includes are largely in terms of how it impacted her travel. Her recounting of August 1816 includes that on one day, "the morning was beautiful, and we enjoyed the sunshine exceedingly after the cold wet weather we had so long experienced."

00:41:31 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And in another, she writes, "we spent three weeks at Tours ... It rained every day for the first week: and was so cold on the 30th of August, that we had a large fire in the drawing room; afterwards it cleared up, and became extremely hot." Her description of September 19, 1816 includes "the sky being very black, and the lightning vivid, we did not walk out; and in the morning the fog was so thick, that we could not take a view of the town till it was dissipated."

00:41:59 Kate Moffatt (co-host) However, Carey does also include brief descriptions of the impact of this strange weather that she has recorded. But again, these are largely framed by her status as a tourist. The human impact is largely veiled. Instead of explicit descriptions of the people affected, she describes their crops. In August 1816, she notes "this garden of France abounds with fruit of all kinds. The season was unfavourable; but the green gage plums, for which it is famous, were delicious; the peaches, though very large and beautiful to the eye, were wanting in flavour; and the apricots had failed." She also writes "the clover appeared to be very luxuriant: a small quantity is cut at a time, and brought to market for immediate use. We saw hay lying on the ground nearly spoiled by the continual rain..."

00:42:45 Kate Moffatt (co-host) We don't have much biographical information about Frances Jane Carey, which is the case for many of the authors in the WPHP. That's not unusual. But traveling with her husband and son suggests that they had the wealth to do so. This wealth is also suggested at the beginning of their travels, when she writes that they were looking to purchase a carriage to use while in France— can you imagine buying a car to use while traveling through a foreign country? We must take her status into consideration here. Her experiences of these years likely look very different from those who, for example, had their hay "spoiled by the continual rain" or had a failed apricot crop.

00:43:20 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Jane Waldie Watts, who wrote the other sort of true travel narrative that we're looking at today, was in a similar position. While there's limited information available about her as well, what can be found indicates that she married George Augustus Watts of Langton Grange. And this was following her travels, which she did as a single woman

with her sister. George Augustus Watts of Langton Grange is a man who is of a country house, which suggests a certain status.

00:43:45 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And this implies that Watts herself was of a similar class. Her book *Sketches Descriptive of Italy in the Years 1816 and 1817, with a Brief Account of Travels in Various Parts of France and Switzerland in the Same Year*, was published in 1820 by John Murray, and is perhaps the most explicitly personal of the works that we're dealing with today.

00:44:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) There's a very delightful and ridiculous moment where she complains about this French man from Philadelphia that she meets, who is annoying in both languages. She says he was "bewailing himself in French and English alternately" [Kandice laughs] because he hadn't gotten to see a pretty valley with the rest of the party, and how, "as he wanted no lack of self-conceit nor forwardness" [Kandice laughs], they had quite a lot of trouble getting rid of him—

00:44:29 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Relatable.

00:44:30 Kate Moffatt (co-host) She also shares—at least three times—how much she *loathes* getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning to catch boats, which is, I would argue, also relatable [Kandice laughs].

00:44:41 Kate Moffatt (co-host) In a lot of ways, Watts's memoir is exactly what I expected to find when looking at records of 1816. Personal anecdotes aside, she records the strange weather regularly, especially when it impacts her travel. Early in the work she mentions that "though the weather had been extremely stormy for some time, we made a most prosperous passage; light and favouring gales wafting us across the Channel with a steady course." She also directly refers to the summer of 1816 as a cold one, calling it the"wintry summer of that year."

00:45:09 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And she, much like Carey, records the impact of the weather on the areas that she travels through. One memorable example is when she describes a village "almost in ruins, from the effects of a late dreadful overflow of the river, which had laid the whole country under water, carried off horses, cows, sheep, and corn; and drowned two poor women, who were busy in the cellars of the village at the time of the inundation."

00:45:35 Kate Moffatt (co-host) But unlike Carey, Watts also references her conversations with the people that she talks to on her travels. The quote we used at the beginning of this episode was from

this memoir and it begins to gesture to some of the responses to crises more specifically. The cause of the poor weather was unknown, but its effects and also the political upheaval following the Napoleonic wars were all keenly felt and the responses were more specific. Watts writes that the people of France are convinced that Napoleon will return and save them from poor crops and other disasters. It's a reaction that she seems to find mildly ridiculous. She spends much of her memoir talking about other people being ridiculous.

00:46:12 Kate Moffatt (co-host) But it's one that we find particularly interesting for its resonances with our current moment. Throughout the US election campaign, and the pandemic more generally, public debates have revolved around the expectation that our leaders can and should save us. Although what or who they're saving us from depends on who you ask. The urgency of this issue is largely a class-based one; Watts is able to poke fun at the French lower orders because she is less affected by the catastrophes that have ravaged their homes and their livelihoods.

00:46:43 Kandice Sharren (co-host) The political and travel writing that we found is similar to the reporting that David Higgins talks about, in that it is relatively explicit about its subject and when it was written. And it has a journalistic quality that records conversations with lower orders or the influence weather has on one's travel plans. Trying to identify non-canonical literary works was more difficult; as we discussed in relation to canonical works by Mary Shelley and Jane Austen, nothing in their metadata aside from publication dates suggested a link to the Year Without a Summer.

00:47:15 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Short of reading every single work of fiction or poetry published after 1816 in the database, how could we identify relevant works? Not easily. We only identified one through our date and keyword searches: Charlotte Caroline Richardson's *Harvest*, a collection of poems printed for the author in 1818 and sold by a consortium of booksellers. And what a find it was! These poems are agricultural *and* political, linking the end of the Napoleonic Wars to a plentiful harvest.

00:47:47 Kandice Sharren (co-host) The opening two-part georgic poem "Harvest" includes descriptions of abundance and joyful soldiers returning home after nine years of war, but it is also haunted by images of storms and frosts. Other poems in this collection are also kind of explicitly political in various ways. So, Richardson was one of many people to write an … mourning the death of Princess Charlotte of Wales, the beloved daughter of the less popular Prince Regent. So she died in childbirth in 1817, and one of the poems in this volume is dedicated to her.

00:48:24 Kandice Sharren (co-host) More unusually, Richardson also includes a poem commenting on the Prince Regent's opening speech in Parliament in 1818. There's also a poem literally called "The Distressed Villagers," which recounts a local tragedy caused by a weather event; the poem announces that it was "Occasioned by the Loss of Twenty-Nine Fishermen, belonging to Runszvick and Slaiths, Yorkshire, in a Storm at Sea."

00:48:51 Kandice Sharren (co-host) This poem offers small portraits of the grief of local families, young and old. And it really kind of sets these losses alongside the poem mourning the death of Princess Charlotte, granting them greater significance. The author herself, Charlotte Caroline Richardson, came up in our first episode, on Jane Austen, as one of only four women in the database associated with Austen's first publisher, Thomas Egerton. So just to recap, Egerton was the proprietor of a military library and therefore a slightly unlikely publisher for a domestic novelist like Austen.

00:49:28 Kandice Sharren (co-host) However, the more political and even military at times, focus of Richardson's poetry makes a bit more sense. Richardson herself is a really, really fascinating figure. Her father was a clerk and after his death, her mother ran a small boarding school at Vauxhall. So she's a much, she occupies a position much lower on the class rung than many of the other writers we've encountered in this episode, whether canonical or not, and her relationship to publishing was really shaped by the annual, *The Ladies' Diary; or Woman's Almanack*, which ran from 1704 until 1840 and had a focus on science, mathematics, and natural history and phenomena such as eclipses.

00:50:15 Kandice Sharren (co-host) It also included witty exchanges of verse, which is actually how her parents met. In addition to her published works, Richardson along with her parents and two sisters, were frequent contributors and this periodical shaped Richardson's personal life as well as influencing her poetry. So her parents met through a flirtatious exchange in the pages of the periodical. As well, after her father's death, Richardson was sent away to live with an aunt.

00:50:45 Kandice Sharren (co-host) And after 10 years, she was finally able to regain contact with her mother by publishing a poem addressed to her in the pages of *The Ladies' Diary*. *The Ladies' Diary's* focus on practical science, mathematics, and calendar year, natural phenomena, manifests in Richardson's book in a few ways. Most obviously in its dedication to Charles Hutton, a mathematician who was also the editor of *The Ladies' Diary* between 1774 and 1818. So he would've been Richardson's editor.

00:51:20 Kandice Sharren (co-host) We also see the influence of *The Ladies' Diary* in the titular poem, "Harvest", which celebrates the end of the Napoleonic wars as an opportunity for agricultural renewal.

So in this poem, a harvest is interrupted by a sudden storm that causes the gleaners to flee in search of shelter. But quickly anxiety gives way to relief, when the storm is not as dramatic as feared. So Richardson writes, "The God of Harvest comes not to destroy! / Lightly the show'r descends: the thunder rolls / On the far distant shores ; the op'ning skies / In lovely azure glow ; and all around / The setting Sun a soften'd lustre throws. Refreshing breezes fly across the plains, / And dash the moisture from the drooping Corn. / Tis mildness all, and Nature smiles again In sweet serenity ; then sinks to rest."

00:52:14 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So this resolution invites a reading of the poem as a hopeful way of looking forward to a new agricultural year, following two years of crop failures. However, this is far from the only instance of weather, especially destructive weather, that appears in the book. Two short poems, much later in the volume, called "Redbreast," and "The Early Primrose", represent a northern wind blasting through the scene. However, unlike in Harvest, these poems do not resolve with "Nature smil[ing] again / In sweet serenity," but rather in small tragedies.

00:52:49 Kandice Sharren (co-host) In "Redbreast,", a robin appears at the speaker's door in the midst of winter, and the speaker takes him in "Till warmer suns appear." However, a local cat has an empty belly and other plans [Kate laughs]. The poem concludes with the robin being devoured and the speaker "weep[ing] o'er Robin's tomb." Likewise, "The Early Primrose" describes a flower whose "untimely bloom" "dares tempt yon frowning sky."

00:53:15 Kandice Sharren (co-host) At the conclusion, the speaker links, "the driving show'r, the cruel storm / [that] Will soon thy lovely charms deform" to "Fate's dire storm," which "O'erthrew my joys, my pleasures quell'd, / With anxious cares this bosom fill'd, / And check'd it's calm repose." In both poems, a fragile symbol of spring appears out of season and suffers the consequence. However, while the primrose is merely battered to death by a storm, the robin is rescued from the cold only to encounter a new peril. While less direct than the poems mourning the deaths of the fisherman and the Princess of Wales, these poems together suggest a vulnerability to circumstance and an anxiety about the future crisis that will arise once the present one has been resolved.

00:54:07 Kate Moffatt (co-host) The deep-seated anxiety seeded throughout the poems in *Harvest* is a familiar one to us this year: you manage to bloom even though it's cold, then a storm comes along and knocks you down. Richardson captures the psychological impact of living with crises continually in the background—especially large-scale crises like those related to

the climate. While Richardson comments on the deeply personal, the other writers that we have considered in this episode take a variety of other perspectives.

00:54:34 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Each one illustrates the degree of severity to which particular groups are impacted: Heyrick's pamphlet communicates the economic effects of the abnormal weather on the urban poor and uses it to advocate for concrete government policy, Williams's political dispatches speak to the state of France, and the travel memoirs by Watts and Carey underscore the buffer that exist between catastrophes and more privileged classes.

00:54:57 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So to return to the question of how women writers specifically responded to the catastrophic years between 1816 and 1818, the answer seems to be not in any unified way. This finding is a striking one for us, given that the social effects of the 2020 pandemic have disproportionately affected women, whose increased domestic duties have led to them leaving the workforce in record numbers. Of all the writers we looked at, only Charlotte Caroline Richardson represents the specifically gendered experience of disaster in her poem "The Distressed Villagers."

00:55:29 Kandice Sharren (co-host) In it, she describes the grief of the widows and children of the twenty-nine drowned fisherman, and ends with a plea for those better off to provide financial aid to the families that have just lost their primary source of income. The absence of gendered commentary in the other works prompts us to think about who it is we're hearing from. In most cases, those with the wealth and position to travel and with access to print.

00:55:58 Kate Moffatt (co-host) In many respects, in 2020 print remains a bastion of privilege, but this is an issue that current writers seem more interested in self-consciously investigating. In trying to identify writers and works that address our current moment, the two writers who immediately sprang to mind were Zadie Smith and Ali Smith, both of whom have already published books addressing the events of 2020.

00:56:18 Kate Moffatt (co-host) But some of the same questions arise: whose voices are we hearing, whose don't we hear? What circumstances allow us to hear them? As successful writers both, Zadie Smith and Ali Smith are prestigious enough to produce something quickly and release it into the world through traditional publishing avenues; they can create and publish something without going through the lengthy process more typical of publication.

00:56:41	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	But this is also a time in which less traditional forms of publication or more generally the platforms for sharing information are flourishing. Twitter, blogs, Instagram, and other digital avenues provide a space, if not always a guaranteed audience, for written reflection or processing. In this spirit, Kate and I will be sharing short reflection pieces of our own prompted by both our experiences this year and our work on this podcast episode, which finds value in the personal records and documentation that goes beyond the most frequently heard canonical voices. Go ahead, Kate.
00:57:18	🎵	[music playing]
00:57:28	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	I have a friend who shares posts tagged as "daily processing" on her blog. The other day on Twitter, I saw a tweet that read: "The main thing I've learnt in 2020 is that background global catastrophe really decimates your attention span and short-term memory. I keep forgetting what i'm doing *while I'm doing it*." (I can relate—I forgot I was making banana bread while halfway through making it a few weeks ago.) Another friend asked me recently, "How many sick days can I reasonably give myself this year in the name of being 'gentle' with myself when the actual issue is I can't seem to remember how to function?"
00:58:07	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Since March of this year, I have crocheted no less than three queen-sized blankets and a cardigan; attempted NaNoWriMo (twice); baked countless loaves of banana bread; made homemade tortillas for the first time; made homemade pasta for the first time; hand-painted a dozen Christmas ornaments as gifts; created a blog specifically for writing about the steam that curls up from my coffee cup and how golden hour hits my bookshelf just right at eight o'clock in the evening in June; did cartwheels in my backyard every day for a week straight in July because I realized I couldn't remember the last time I did a cartwheel;
00:58:39	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	bought myself a Debussy music book with a great amount of trust in my single year of official piano lessons that I took at the age of nine; and painted a half dozen studies of works from my favourite artists. It has been, to say the least, a year of restless energy, and this restless energy of mine is finding itself made manifest in various creative endeavours. I am constantly eager to work with my hands, eager to produce, eager to translate this year's cocktail of nervous energy—a combination of adrenaline, fear, and frustration—that is constantly running beneath the surface of my skin into something.
00:59:14	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	But nothing I've created this year, if one were to look at this odd collection in fifty, a hundred, two hundred years, explicitly betrays its roots. That my blankets, whose

		colours and shapes are inspired by the landscapes and topographies of places I've called home, are probably an instinctive response to the environmental crisis; that my blog about coffee and sunlight is probably an attempt to gasp for air during the lockdowns caused by the global pandemic.
00:59:43	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	It is, as the tweet I quoted above, so aptly puts it, "background global catastrophe." It is unnecessary to name it explicitly because it is obvious. Everyone knows the context of this year. The term "2020" will forever have connotations of ongoing and inescapable disaster. "What a 2020 last night was!" will undoubtedly make its way into vocabularies. But if this is the case for what I've produced, my endless streams of cartwheels, and my studies of famous paintings, and my painstakingly decorated Christmas ornaments and an ode to summer's golden hours all seemingly disconnected from 2020—might it also be the case for, say, the travel memoirs that we found?
01:00:22	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	So too are the catastrophes of their period in the background of these authors' lives. Privileged enough to avoid direct or devastating impact, these women and I refer to disaster in distanced ways, only vaguely acknowledging its position on the periphery of our lives —but there is, when one looks, evidence of its constant presence and influence.
01:00:41	🎵	[music playing]
01:00:52	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	My experience of this year has really been framed by the fact that I've taught some unlikely courses. Unlikely, at least for anyone who knows me. I began the year teaching a theory survey and am ending it with a twenty-first century literature class. As someone who tends to take a historicist approach, both of these presented some practical and conceptual challenges, which I responded to by seeking to ground both in contemporary events and asking students to consider how theory and literature can help us understand the immediate and the personal in a larger social and political context. From the beginning, there was no shortage of material.
01:01:34	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Across what is currently Canada, land defenders disrupted major supply and transit lines in January and February in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en resistance to the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline. In mid-March, Canadian universities shifted to remote delivery for the rest of the semester, and in a stroke of luck, maybe the only one of the year, the week I had planned on biopolitics and affect came after we'd moved online. Foucault's discussion of the right to life and death, as well as Clemence X. Clementine's discussion of the cultural dominance of the couple form, felt newly

urgent amidst a pandemic that made more visible the inequalities between different populations and demanded populations exist within a narrowly defined 'household.'

01:02:19	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Since September, I've been teaching remotely a twenty-first century course built around readings that engage explicitly with events contemporary to their composition and publication; from the start of the new millennium—remember how we all thought that computers would crash?—to 9/11 to the Ferguson protests and the emergence of Black Lives Matter.
01:02:40	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	The last reading on the syllabus, which I was in the process of teaching while we were scripting this episode, is Ali Smith's *Spring*, the third novel in her *Seasonal Quartet*, a project that tries to present an immediate and localized representation of contemporary events, including Brexit, climate change, and the refugee crisis, by closing the gap between when a manuscript is submitted and when the book is published. It turns out she's whittled it down to six weeks. One of the major throughlines of this course has been the ubiquity of allusion and direct reference, to past events, as well as cultural touchstones and other works of art.
01:03:16	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	It's really highlighted for me how powerful the urge to look back, to reach out, to draw connections to other different-but-similar events is when confronted with a bewildering new reality. And, as it developed, that's very much what this podcast episode became, in part inspired by the conversations I've been having with students all semester. In that spirit, we're going to close this episode by juxtaposing Charlotte Caroline Richardson's poem "Redbreast," with some Ali Smith—a short passage from the most recent and final installment in the *Seasonal Quartet*, *Summer*, which speaks to systemic and personal failures amidst upheavals.
01:03:57	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	First though, we want to turn briefly to how our experiences this year have shaped our understanding of the relationship between print, production and catastrophe. The creation of this podcast episode and of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury* podcast more generally, which aired its first episode in June 2020—occurred within the context of global disaster.
01:04:18	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	It was, for us, a pandemic production: I had the opportunity to leave my job in retail to work as a Research Assistant in the late spring, and Kandice, who is a contract instructor, wasn't teaching this summer, so we had the time and the resources to devote to the podcast's creation, albeit time that was available to us due to our current positions, which, despite the privileges they offer—working from home, producing academic work—are also precarious.

01:04:41	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	We tried to start this podcast in the summer of 2019. It didn't work because between my teaching schedule, and the conferences I was attending, and Kate moving provinces, we didn't have enough time. In the inevitable slowdown of a pandemic summer—was it even a summer?—and the restless energy that ensued, we finally did it.
01:05:00	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	And part of how we did was through collaboration. Developing and scripting each episode becomes an ongoing conversation in which we discuss a topic from a variety of angles. The conversational mode of podcasting resists settled conclusions and encourages us to draw new connections between our objects of study and our lives—and many a scripting session has thus become part therapy [Kate laughs].
01:05:25	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	And that's something that this episode made us think about. The relationship between production and processing. We don't want to get too meta with this, but this episode was not easy to write. Inspired by our own weird summer, we wanted to talk about the 1816 Year Without a Summer—but it was impossible to do so without recognizing the frankly uncanny parallels to our own somewhat incomprehensible year. This episode required us to turn off the autopilot that seems to kick in on a daily basis so that we can keep functioning— and that meant engaging with all of the things that we've been avoiding.
01:06:00	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	It required looking critically at the many disasters happening in the world in 2020 and their disparate impacts; it required acknowledging the precarity of our own positions, even as we recognize and appreciate the privileges that come along with them; but it has also allowed us to engage with and understand the historical writing that we've looked at today as its own form of processing.
01:06:20	🎵	[music playing]
01:06:31	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Now for a reading of Charlotte Caroline Richardson's "Redbreast": Cold blew the freezing Northern blast, / And Winter sternly frown'd ; / The flaky snow fell thick and fast, / And clad the fields around. Forc'd by the storm's relentless pow'r, / Embolden'd by despair, / A shiv'ring Redbreast sought my door, /Some friendly warmth to share.

1:06:54	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	"Welcome, sweet Bird!" I fondly cried, / "No danger need'st thou fear, / "Secure with me thou may'st abide, /Till warmer suns appear. "And when mild Spring comes smiling on, / "And bids the fields look gay, / Thou, with thy sweet, thy grateful song / "My kindness shalt repay." Mistaken thought! But, how shall I / The mournful truth display? / An envious Cat, with jealous eye, / Had mark'd him as her prey. Remorseless wretch! her cruel jaws / Soon seal'd her victim's doom, / While I in silence mourn his loss,/ And weep o'er Robin's tomb. / So, oft in Life's uneven way, / Some stroke may intervene ; / Sweep all our fancied joys away, / And change the flatt'ring scene.
01:07:41	🎵	[music playing]
01:07:51	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	From Ali Smith's *Summer*: "Then she'd told Iris—foolishly, her selfish self knows now— about Art and herself going to visit the detainees in the SA4A Immigration Removal Centre and how a clever and thoughtful young virologist being held indefinitely there had taken pains to explain to them, and this was back in early February, when nobody much was taking the virus seriously in England, about the dangerous-sounding virus that was beginning to take hold in various countries and had reached England via the airport right next to the Immigration Removal Centre they were sitting in now, from which the planes that took off over their heads made the room they were sitting in literally shake every few minutes, and the virus was apparently now also present in the city just down the road from here where they were about to go and stay for the night.
01:08:36	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	He told them that if the virus happened to get into this centre he was being held in then all the detainees would catch it because the windows are make of a combination of perspex and metal bars, none of them openable to the outside world, the only air in there the recycled old air filtering through the place's ventilation system. Iris's eyes had lit up. They'll quietly let them out, she said. They won't want detained people dying and becoming a bad publicity story."
01:09:05	🎵	[music playing]

01:09:15	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	This has been the seventh episode of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*. We will be releasing an episode every third Wednesday of the month. If you're interested in learning more about what we discussed today, we've compiled a list of suggestions for further reading and links to some relevant entries in the WPHP in a blog post that you can find at womensprinthistoryproject.com.
01:09:36	🎵	[music playing]
01:09:47	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	[outtakes] [laughs] There's so much lag going on.