



The Women's Print History Project

A Brief Journey through Women's Travel Writing in the Summer of 2021 (feat. the WPHP team), *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*

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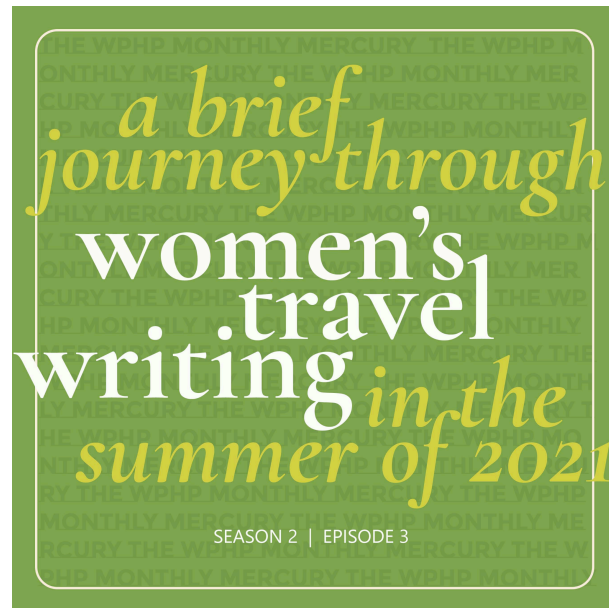
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A Brief Journey through Women’s Travel Writing in the Summer of 2021 (feat. the WPHP team)

Kate Moffatt and Kandice Sharren



Throughout the month of August, we’ve been sharing Spotlights for our “[Around the World with Six Women](#)” [Spotlight Series](#) on travel writing. In this month’s episode of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*, “A Brief Journey through Women’s Travel Writing in the Summer of 2021,” hosts Kate Moffatt and Kandice Sharren are joined by the authors of the Spotlight Series, who share what they have learned. By the end of the month, their Spotlights will have taken us vicariously through France, Italy, Germany, India, Chile, Rome, China, the Red Sea, and the Scottish Highlands with six women whose titles appear in our travel genre in the WPHP.

But this month’s episode and the Spotlight series both also touch on the stakes of travel writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in terms of British imperialism and colonial forces, and how considering these stakes can help us contextualize the genre. It prompted us to consider the stakes of our own travel, now that the world is opening up and travel is once again becoming a possibility.

Join us for the third episode of Season 2 of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*, “A Brief Journey through Women’s Travel Writing in the Summer of 2021” to learn more about women’s involvement in travel writing, its presence in the WPHP, and to hear from WPHP research assistants Angela Wachowich, Hanieh Ghaderi, Isabelle Burrows, Victoria De Hart, Amanda Law, and Julianna Wagar about their experiences reading some of the travel writing in the WPHP and contributing to “[Around the World with Six Women: A Spotlight Series on Travel Writing](#).”

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Season 1, Episode 7: “1816 and 2020: The Years Without Summers”

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Montagu, Mary Wortley (person, author)

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A journey made in the summer of 1794 (title)

Mysteries of Udolpho (title)

Von Minutoli, Wolfradine-Auguste-Luise (person, author)

Wilson, Lucy Sarah Atkins (person, author)

Dixon, Susannah Dorothy (person, author)

Bray, Anna Eliza (person, author and editor)

Fruits of Enterprize Exhibited in the Travels of Belzoni in Egypt and Nubia (title)

Relics of Antiquity, Exhibited in the Ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum (title)

Coleridge, Sara (person, author, translator, editor)

Letters from France (title)

Williams, Helen Maria (person, author)

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Wollstonecraft, Mary (person, author)

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft (person, author)

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Belzoni, Sarah (person, author)

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00:00:00 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Hey, Kate. Remember that time Michelle took us and Reese to the British Library for two weeks in 2018?

00:00:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And we rented a flat that was right next to Senate House?

00:00:09 Kandice Sharren (co-host) And there were strikes that meant there was security everywhere.

00:00:12 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And every time we tried to get into the flat, we had to try to explain to at least five different security guards, why we need to get in. And none of them would believe me when I said there was a flat behind the security perimeter?

00:00:24 Kandice Sharren (co-host) You were so much more patient than I was, as always.


00:00:28 Kate Moffatt (co-host) That was also the trip where I dropped a stack of rare books in the British Library and almost died. [laughs]

00:00:35 Kandice Sharren (co-host) We did so much research on that trip though.

00:00:38 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Yeah. I hand-checked all 50 volumes of *Barbauld's British Novelists*.

00:00:41 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yet still had time to take a picture of me every time I was eating a sandwich.

00:00:47 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Listen, that is my great photographic work.

00:00:55  [music playing]

00:01:02 Kandice Sharren (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 Kandice Sharren—

00:01:18 Kate Moffatt (co-host) and I'm Kate Moffatt—

- 00:01:20 Kandice Sharren (co-host) and we are long-time editors of the WPHP, and the hosts of this podcast. This season, we have some exciting special guests to interview, new research to share, and more stories to tell. Join us every third Wednesday of the month to learn more about the history of women’s involvement in print.
- 00:01:40  [music playing]
- 00:01:47 Kandice Sharren (co-host) We at the WPHP love a good research trip, even when we have to fight with, or in Kate’s case, politely persuade, security guards to let us into our accommodations every night. And in the last year and a half, we’ve really missed travelling, especially in the name of research.
- 00:02:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Inspired by our reminiscences about travel, during the month of August, the WPHP has been posting “Around the World with Six Women: A Spotlight Series on Travel Writing” in which six members of our team explore the various places listed in the travel writing genre in the WPHP and the women who wrote about them. Later in the episode, they’re going to join us to talk about their spotlights, but first we’re going to chat a bit about eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel, the travel writing in the WPHP, and what we can learn from the records that we have.
- 00:02:37  [music playing]
- 00:02:46 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Eighteenth-century tourism is often associated with the Grand Tour, in which wealthy men travelled through Europe, mostly by carriage, cementing family connections and finalizing their education. However, by the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the Grand Tour had become largely outdated, and travel was expanding to include a wider range of people, destinations and experiences.
- 00:03:10 Kandice Sharren (co-host) This is something that is really born out by the way that travel was represented in print. So this is something that Katherine Turner has talked about when she identifies that the market for most published travel writing was middle class, suggesting that travel was no longer just for the extremely wealthy portion of society.
- 00:03:32 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Part of this expansion can be seen in the fact that new ways of traveling, like walking, were growing in popularity. Pedestrianism is something that we’ve talked about a bit on the podcast before (it’s one of my research interests), and it was something that came into travel in a pretty big way during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, according to Robin Jarvis and Anne Wallace.

- Wallace argues that it became more popular because other forms of travel were becoming cheaper, which removed the necessity from walking and thus its connotations of poverty or vagrancy.
- 00:04:04 Kate Moffatt (co-host) However, it was gendered. It was much easier for a man to travel on foot than it was for a woman. Wallace and Jarvis, who've both written extensively on the subject, both argue that walking for women could have very sexual connotations as well as class ones. And it could therefore be dangerous for a woman's reputation, something that men really didn't have to worry about.
- 00:04:25 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And that's partly because mobility generally was fairly gendered with young women discouraged from walking or traveling alone; although new scholarship and studies of the history of women's mobility, their walking and their wandering and their travel seems to suggest that it was more common than we would maybe expect. Kerri Andrews, who was a guest for Episode 8 of Season 2, "50 Words for Walking", recently published her book *Wanderers: a History of Women Walking*. And it has a few examples.
- 00:04:51 Kandice Sharren (co-host) While women were writing about travel as early as the seventeenth century, and we do have some travel writing in the database that was published in the 1750s, it really started to take off as a genre that was being published in the 1770s. So this is something that Benjamin Colbert has talked about, and specifically he's talked about how women only wrote about 5 percent of the travel writing that appeared in the period of our database, which is significantly less than how much women published comparatively in other genres.
- 00:05:25 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So for example, the novel was split fairly evenly between women, men, and completely unknown authors. The growth of travel writing occurred alongside the expansion of the British empire during the eighteenth century. And this is something that comes up in a lot of postcolonial writing from the twentieth- and twenty-first century, starting with Frantz Fanon and going on, they've commented on the colonial dynamics of present day tourism.
- 00:06:53 Kandice Sharren (co-host) And this is something that Jamaica Kincaid addresses in the opening of her essay "A Small Place", where she hones in on twentieth-century tourism in Antigua, reversing the gaze back onto the tourist. So, Kincaid is fighting back against a centuries-long travel writing tradition in which Europeans represent the Other, describing instead how the European tourist is seen by the people who inhabit the place that the tourists have travelled to.

- 00:07:30 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So Kincaid says, “An ugly thing, that is what you are when you become a tourist, an ugly, empty thing, a piece of rubbish pausing here and there to gaze at this and taste that, and it will never occur to you that the people who inhabit the place in which you have just paused cannot stand you, that behind their closed doors they laugh at your strangeness (they do not look the way you look),
- 00:06:55 Kandice Sharren (co-host) The physical sight of you does not please them; you have bad manners (it is their custom to eat their food with their hands; you try eating their way, you look silly; you try eating the way you always eat, you look silly); they do not like the way you speak (you have an accent); they collapse helpless from laughter, mimicking the way they imagine you must look as you carry out some everyday bodily function. They do not like you. They do not like me! That thought never actually occurs to you. Still, you feel a little uneasy.”
- 00:07:29 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Similar dynamics are also present in eighteenth-and nineteenth-century travel writing, including that by women. So Katrina O’Loughlin has talked about how travel writing demonstrates women’s use of travel to negotiate a position of authority in and for their writing, and Yael Schlick identifies how the growth of women’s travel writing coincides with women writers arguing for the increased presence of women in the public sphere.
- 00:07:56 Kandice Sharren (co-host) However, that authority often came at the expense of colonized people, something that Sutapa Dutta notes when she says, “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 homogenize them as to stereotype the Other women as ‘oppressed.’”
- 00:08:21 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Alongside global imperial travel though, was an increase in domestic travel within Great Britain during the eighteenth century. This was especially true after the French Revolution and during the Napoleonic Wars, when travel to the continent, especially France, came with heightened risks. Think, for example, of Elizabeth Bennet traveling to Derbyshire with her aunt and uncle in *Pride and Prejudice*; in her exclamation “what are men to rocks and mountains?” she draws on a long tradition of travel writing.
- 00:08:48 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Zoe Kinsley has traced how the eighteenth century saw the improvement of infrastructure within Great Britain, from better roads to more accurate mapmaking, and how this enabled women in particular to negotiate spaces that could simultaneously be domestic, or familiar, and foreign. In some ways, domestic travel

- served a similar function to imperial travel in the sense that it cemented a national identity rooted in a sense of place.
- 00:09:11 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Kinsley identifies a “dual impulse, to affirm one’s feeling of national identity on the one hand, and to unfasten one’s relationship to it on the other, [as] one of the central features of home tour writing.” And we see a lot of home tour writing in the WPHP; we’ve got a lot of titles that are written by women about the towns or the counties where they live. So the travel writing in the WPHP covers European, global, and domestic travel.
- 00:09:37 Kate Moffatt (co-host) We also see a very wide range of places represented, including Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, various counties and towns in England, Ireland, Senegal, Turkey, the Republic of Formosa, which we now know as Taiwan, Russia, Scotland, Brazil, Iceland, Africa, including the Cape of Good Hope and Sierra Leone, the Caribbean, Denmark, Norway [both laugh]. Right now we have 430 titles in the database that are labelled Travel/Tourism/Topography. Thirty-four of these books are editions of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s very famous letters written during her travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa.
- 00:10:14 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Yet again, working on this episode made us realize we actually don’t have the post-1800 editions of this in the database—something that we ran into with Frances Burney in Episode 1 of this season. So there will be more, we will constantly be adding more.
- 00:10:28 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Always! [laughs]
- 00:10:29 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And this is something we’ve actually realized while working on *The WPHP Monthly Mercury* [Kandice laughs]; any numbers we reference are very quickly outdated because we’re constantly finding and adding works to the database. So no genre is safe.
- 00:10:41 Kandice Sharren (co-host) None.
- 00:10:42 Kate Moffatt (co-host) None. [both laugh]

- 00:10:44 Kate Moffatt (co-host) But not all of the records in the travel writing genre were written by women. Some are included because a woman-run firm was involved in producing them, or a woman was involved in some other collaborative capacity, such as, it was edited by a woman or a woman wrote the introduction, that sort of thing. But 369 of those titles have female authors or translators. Data about these titles has largely been gleaned from two main sources: a dataset from Catherine Nygren (thank you, Catherine!) and the *Women's Travel Writing* database led by Benjamin Colbert, which has been really invaluable.
- 00:11:19 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So this travel writing that we have in the database that women produced really took on a wide range of formats, including letters, journals, guides, descriptions of topography, illustrated books. But letters are far and away the most popular. So, 130 of those titles are letters. And the next most common format is journals. And there's only 35 of those. So as Katrina O'Loughlin notes, the popularity of the letter is in large part due to its flexible meaning; she says,
- 00:11: 50 Kandice Sharren (co-host) “Among these heterodox forms, the epistolary narrative is perhaps the most prominent: a highly fluid form, the letter connotes the privacy and authenticity of personal correspondence. It is also, however, available to more public address as the formal or open letter, a mode commonly utilised in philosophical and public writing of community debate.” However, travel writing is sneaky [Kate laughs], and also has close relationships with a number of other genres and modes.
- 00:12:24 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So, for example, and this is, you know, a big one, Anne Radcliffe's fiction includes lengthy descriptions of foreign landscapes, my favorite part of her very long novels [Kate laughs]. And you can kind of see the way that her fiction is being influenced by the popularity of travel writing. She also did write a journal of her travels that was published following the success of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. So while her official travel writing is classified under the travel genre in the WPHP, her fiction is not, even though they kind of cross-pollinate each other. And her fiction was clearly influenced by the cultural interest in travel.
- 00:13:11 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Adding, editing, and verifying travel writing is work that was mostly undertaken by one of our research assistants, Victoria De Hart, who will begin her MA in Archaeology at the University of York this autumn. We asked Victoria about her experience of working with the data—what the process looked like, what she found interesting. And here's what she said:

- 00:13:31 Victoria De Hart (RA) One of my tasks for the last year and a half has been adding the *Women's Travel Writing, 1780–1840: a Bio-Bibliographical Database* into the WPHP. It is a database spearheaded by Dr. Benjamin Colbert at the University of Wolverhampton and provides records of guidebooks, topographic descriptions, narratives, and other travel writings by women published in Britain and Ireland between 1780 and 1840. Colbert also includes notes, biographies, and links to accessible digital editions.
- 00:13:58 Victoria De Hart (RA) I was curious to see if we could find women involved in any capacity in the study or collection of antiquities. My major at SFU was in archaeology; and the study of the history of archaeology and antiquarianism has always fascinated me. I was a little disappointed with how few women and travelogues I found, but I was happy with those I did find. Within our data range were the works of Wolfradine von Minutoli, who is considered an early egyptologist, and Sarah Belzoni, who is the subject of my spotlight this summer for our “Around the World with Six Women Spotlight Series.”
- 00:14:28 Victoria De Hart (RA) I also came across Elizabeth Gray, who unfortunately falls outside of our data range in 1840, but she wrote *Tour to the Sepulchres of Etruria*, a book I would call an archaeological research project disguised as a travelogue. I found a few women, including Lucy Atkins, Susanna Dorothy Dixon, and Anna Eliza Bray, who are adjacently connected to antiquarianism, either through their husbands or fathers who were collectors or studied antiquities.
- 00:14:52 Victoria De Hart (RA) And in the case of Atkins, she published two children's books focused on antiquarian subject matter, *Fruits of Enterprize Exhibited in the Travels of Belzoni in Egypt and Nubia*, published in 1821, and *Relics of Antiquity, Exhibited in the Ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, published in 1825. Many of the texts in the *Women's Travel Writing* database focus on Europe and the UK but there are quite a few that revolve around areas outside of Europe including the Caribbean, India, North America, and Africa.
- 00:15:18 Victoria De Hart (RA) I also found that many of the women, including Sara Coleridge and Susanna Dorothy Dixon, did not travel to these places themselves but instead translated the works of others. Adding the *Women's Travel Writing* database into the WPHP has been a task I've thoroughly enjoyed. The *Women's Travel Writing* database is easy to navigate by author and text, and works can also be searched by continent, region, country, and language which is a helpful feature.

- 00:15:43 Victoria De Hart (RA) The database lists further editions of the texts, including those published in European countries and the United States, and often includes links to digitized editions. I particularly like how biographies are included for the authors and notes are included for the texts. The information provided and the way it is presented by the *Women's Travel Writing* database makes it easier for us to verify texts and untangle some of the more complicated publication histories.
- 00:16:05 Victoria De Hart (RA) Even though the *Women's Travel Writing* database is a great tool for us, sometimes the information provided conflicts with other databases we use. For example, *Letters From France* written by Helen Maria Williams, is a large multi-volume work that has been published several times over. So far, I have had two meetings with Kate discussing *Letters from France*, and its publication history still makes my head spin.
- 00:16:26 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Helen Maria Williams should sound familiar to anyone who listened to Episode 7 of our first season, “1816 and 2020: The Years Without Summers”, where we talked about Williams’ travel writing and its strong political commentary as an example of how travel writing can span multiple genres. Williams’ straddled political writing and travel writing.
- 00:16:48 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Her writing was based on her firsthand experience of life in France in the years following the Revolution and the years during which the Napoleonic Wars were taking place. But her focus was very much on political developments and their fallout. So less about, “oh, I went to this town and encountered these kinds of people and dined at this inn.”
- 00:17:11 Kandice Sharren (co-host) You can see this political leaning in the titles of her travel works. She's really not shy about it. And the titles become increasingly political over time. So, for example, in 1790, she published a book called *Letters written in France in the summer 1790, to a friend in England; Containing, various anecdotes relative to the French revolution; and memoirs of Mons. and Madame du F-, By Helen Maria Williams.*
- 00:17:37 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Compare that to 1815's title, *A Narrative of the Events which have taken place in France; with an account of the present state of society and public opinion.* So in the first one, she is identifying that she's going to be talking about—what's happening in relation to the French revolution, but in 1815, she's just saying it's about the state of society and public opinion. It's not about her and her own travels.
- 00:18:04 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Travel writing was really a way for Williams to expand into a genre that was even less welcoming to women than travel memoirs were. She was writing about politics. And we recently gained the ability to attach multiple genres to a single title, which

means that if you look at Williams' titles in the WPHP, you'll see that we've classified them as both Travel/Tourism/Topography and Political Writing to reflect the way that Williams does both.

- 00:18:39 Kate Moffatt (co-host) And this clearly worked out for her. Out of the 430 travel writing records we have in the WPHP, 33 are editions of her various travel works (almost exactly half of the total title records that we have for Helen Maria Williams). As Victoria mentioned, her *Letters* was one of the works that went into many editions, which is always exciting, but it can make it really tricky for us in a few ways.
- 00:19:01 Kate Moffatt (co-host) We have to determine if we've gotten all of the editions into the WPHP or if we're looking at the right digitizations for each edition—they don't always tell you which edition they are on the title page. And then we always seem to find new ones after we think we've gotten them all. [Kandice laughs]
- 00:19:14 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So Helen Maria Williams was really popular. She was a poet, a novelist, a translator, and a travel writer/political commentator with many of her works going into multiple editions. And she was one of many well-known women writers to contribute to travel writing as a genre. Others include Lady Mary Wortley Montague, Ann Radcliffe, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Shelley, all very canonical women writers.
- 00:19:42 Kandice Sharren (co-host) However, not all women who publish travel writing are nearly as well known. In our August spotlight series "Around the World with Six Women," we looked at a range of travel writing and authors who contributed to travel writing, from the well-known Hester Thrale Piozzi to the much more difficult to pin down Sarah Belzoni.
- 00:20:02 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Written by six of the wonderful Research Assistants on the project, this Spotlight Series has allowed the team to travel vicariously to France, Italy, Germany, India, Chile, Rome, China, the Red Sea and the Scottish Highlands. So for the rest of this episode, our team is going to join us to reflect on the experience of writing their spotlights.
- 00:20:25  [music playing]
- 00:20:33 Kandice Sharren (co-host) The first two spotlights in the series focused on balancing personal contexts with travel. Angela Wachowich wrote on the journey that Hester Thrale Piozzi took through Europe following her scandalous remarriage, exploring how her representations of France, Italy, and Germany served as an opportunity to

simultaneously present herself as a serious writer and to justify her personal choices. Here's Angela:

- 00:21:01 Angela Wachowich (RA) My spotlight on Hester Thrale Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections made in the course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* was inspired by my dedicated interest in its author. I did my undergraduate honours paper on a manuscript Piozzi compiled in her seventies, and I was delighted by the opportunity to explore an earlier period of her life. *Observations and Reflections* is primarily the story of Piozzi and her second husband, Gabriel Piozzi's, tour through Italy.
- 00:20:30 Angela Wachowich (RA) They followed the Grand Tour itinerary, spending Easter Mass in Rome and Carnival in Venice, even witnessing an eruption of Mount Vesuvius in Naples. But it is also an account of their honeymoon, and therefore implicitly responds to those who had attacked Hester's decision to marry Gabriel, an Italian Roman Catholic musician. I go into detail on the strategies Hester uses to balance an ebullient depiction of her honeymoon with her reputation for intelligent judgement in my spotlight.
- 00:21:57 Angela Wachowich (RA) Here, I'd like to share an excerpt from Virginia Woolf's account of Hester Thrale and Gabriel Piozzi's first meeting. This moment is a part of Woolf's short story "Dr. Burney's Evening Party," which is an anecdotal account of a famously bad soiree in history. The Piozzis part of the story foreshadows the context for which *Observations and Reflections* was eventually composed.
- 00:22:19 Angela Wachowich (RA) "Dr. Burney's Evening Party" is also a hilarious account of a dinner party where everyone in attendance was so proud that no one would demean themselves by starting the conversation: "Nobody said anything. Complete silence reigned. Here was the very moment for which Dr. Burney in his wisdom had prepared. He nodded to Signor Piozzi; and Signor Piozzi stepped to the instrument and began to sing.
- 00:22:47 Angela Wachowich (RA) Accompanying himself on the pianoforte, he sang an aria parlante. He sang beautifully, he sang his best. But far from breaking the awkwardness and loosing the tongues, the music increased the constraint. Nobody spoke . . . At last the strain became unendurable. At last Mrs. Thrale could stand it no longer . . . Giving rein to the spirit of recklessness which sometimes bubbled in her, she rose, and stole on tiptoe to the pianoforte.

- 00:23:16 Angela Wachowich (RA) Signor Piozzi was still singing and accompanying himself dramatically as he sang. She began a ludicrous mimicry of his gestures: she shrugged her shoulders, she cast up her eyes, she reclined her head on one side just as he did. At this singular display the company began to titter—indeed, it was a scene that was to be described ‘from coterie to coterie throughout London, with comments and sarcasms of endless variety.’
- 00:23:42 Angela Wachowich (RA) People who saw Mrs. Thrale at her mockery that night never forgot that this was the beginning of that criminal affair, the first scene of that ‘most extraordinary drama’ which lost Mrs. Thrale the respect of friends and children, which drove her in ignominy from England, and scarcely allowed her to show herself in London again — this was the beginning of her most reprehensible, her most unnatural passion for one who was not only a musician but a foreigner.”
- 00:24:11 Angela Wachowich (RA) Whatever ignominy it brought her at home, during their honeymoon, Piozzi’s “foreigner” musician husband allowed her to assume what she calls a “demi-naturalization.” This is to say that *Observations and Reflections* shows Piozzi experiencing Italy from a privileged position somewhere between tourist and local. In consequence, *Observations and Reflections* is both a more sympathetic and acculturated depiction of Italian life, as well as a happier one than can be found in most other eighteenth-century travel books.
- 00:24:44 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Piozzi’s writing keeps her personal life as more of a subtext, but not all writers were so subtle. Hanieh Ghaderi’s spotlight considers the eventful life and travels of the author of *Original Letters From India*, Eliza Fay, whose writing E.M. Forster described as “delightfully malicious.” For Hanieh, this book offered a surprising opportunity to connect with the past.
- 00:25:07 Hanieh Ghaderi (RA) Writing my spotlight on Eliza Fay and her book *Original Letters from India* was a very enjoyable and informative journey for me. This spotlight’s name is “Agency in Empire: Eliza Fay in India”, as it is related to the ways in which Fay’s lived experience is shaped and influenced by the Empire and the colonial atmosphere of her time. I am a graduate student in Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s studies, and researching Fay’s life allowed me to look into an independent woman’s life in the eighteenth century.
- 00:25:51 Hanieh Ghaderi (RA) Fay is a brilliant and courageous woman who travels to France, Italy, Egypt, and India. She encounters many difficult situations in these journeys; such as her imprisonment, her husband being in danger of being murdered by his captors, her

- separation from him, after learning about his infidelities. It deeply moved me how she manages to endure these difficulties and become a successful businesswoman.
- 00:26:25 Hanieh Ghaderi (RA) When describing the process of her separation from her husband to her sister, she writes: “You my dear sister, who know better than anyone, what exertions I have used, and what sacrifices I have vainly made for this most ungrateful of beings, will not be surprised to find out even my patience was not proof against this last outrage.”
- 00:26:54 Hanieh Ghaderi (RA) So here she explains how unhappy she has been with her then-husband, and how she is taking this step to become independent from him as she cannot tolerate his behavior anymore. Fay does not stand for his abusive behaviors nor does she wait until someone comes to save her. Of course, not everyone has the privilege to take action like Fay. But to see that Fay can come out of a toxic marriage and turn her life around was enjoyable for me.
- 00:26:28 Hanieh Ghaderi (RA) The other thing that I found notable is how Fay's power and independence are linked to the spaces in which she lives. Women's agency has been always impacted by particular social relations and historical contexts, and their freedom to achieve the level of success that they need has been socially and culturally mediated. Fay reaches her desired level of independence when she is separated from her husband and is in India.
- 00:28:02 Hanieh Ghaderi (RA) I think this is noteworthy as she reveals that she is unable to achieve the independence she yearns for in England. Only in India can she achieve the financial independence she seeks. When I was working on this, I was so impressed by her dedication to pursuing her dreams, her business, and what she calls freedom. I am an immigrant, and to me, it was understandable why someone may face the need to change her country in order to have the agency that she wants or to be the person she wishes to be.
- 00:28:40 Hanieh Ghaderi (RA) There are many people whose ability to shape their lives the way they want is limited by the countries in which they live. It was surprising how Fay represents this fact and how she deals with it. Fay's writing style made it easier for me to connect with her and see everything from her perspective, even though it's been 200 years since she died.
- 00:29:09 Hanieh Ghaderi (RA) To Fay, writing the letters is a way of expressing herself and exercising her agency and passing her lived experience to the next generations. So, seeing many of my own

aspirations in the writings of another woman years before me and making this connection with her was a delightful experience. After all, I think this is one of the greatest qualities of literature: you find a human being who lived years before you, and who has undergone many of the same experiences that you have, who has suffered the same, felt the same that you are feeling now. It is beautiful.

- 00:29:51 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Other Spotlights focused on the colonial and imperial forces that were active during the period, touching on the economics of empire, and in some cases, the promotion of imperial expansion. Isabelle Burrows’s spotlight explores how Maria Graham’s *Journal of a Residence in Chile, during the year 1822*, which is published in 1824, subtly supports British intervention following the Chilean War of Independence.
- 00:30:19 Isabelle Burrows (RA) Working on a data project centered on English literature, I don’t always have the opportunity to examine the affairs of the eighteenth-century world outside Britain and the United States. But Maria Graham’s *Journal of a Residence in Chile during the year 1822*, which was written against the backdrop of South American independence struggles and British diplomatic presence, supplies an opportunity to investigate the history of a region that is often overlooked in English-language scholarship.
- 00:30:44 Isabelle Burrows (RA) A lack of information around South American affairs was a problem in the English-speaking world of the 1820s too, and graham’s *Journal*, then as now, helped to inform its audience about events they couldn’t witness firsthand. In the early nineteenth century, works like Graham’s functioned as tools of colonial expansion, helping to promote British presence abroad as a positive influence, rather than as the exploitative force it often was.
- 00:31:09 Isabelle Burrows (RA) The varied materials included in the journal, designed to appeal to the curious public of a fast-growing empire, describe an aspect of British colonialism that I hadn’t considered before: their interference in a foreign resource-rich land for their own benefit without the legal ownership that went along with true colonial occupation. Graham’s own words capture the conflicting attitudes of their writer and the nation she represents, balancing a distaste and condescension for perceived primitivism in Chilean culture with an acknowledgement of the rich resources and beautiful landscapes that constituted the economic potential in the region.
- 00:31:44 Isabelle Burrows (RA) “‘England, with all thy faults, I love thee still”, she writes, quoting Cowper and Byron. “For my part, I believe if they had either of them been in Valparaiso, they would have forgotten that there were any faults at all in England. It is very pretty

and very charming to read of delicious climates, and myrtle groves, and innocent and simple people who have few wants; but . . . it is really very disagreeable to perform the retrograde steps to a state that counteracts the blessings of climate, and places less comfort in a palace in Chile than in a labourer's hut in Scotland.”

- 00:32:15 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Resources weren't the only thing being extracted from colonial spaces, though. Building on her interest in archaeology and early Egyptology, Victoria De Hart wrote her spotlight on 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*, which was published in 1820, with her husband. Working on this spotlight drew Victoria's attention to the wide-ranging ways in which Egyptology intersected with other forms of cultural appropriation and imperialism, such as fashion.
- 00:32:53 Victoria De Hart (RA) While going over the *Women's Travel Writing* database list with Dr. Levy, I recognized the surname Belzoni. Giovanni Battista Belzoni is a name that is familiar to students studying archaeology. He is famous today because of his discoveries but also because his story is such a fascinating one. Belzoni was born in Padua and supposedly stood between 6'5" and 6'7"; he changed career paths several times throughout his lifetime; he was a barber-turned-engineer-turned-circus-performer-turned antiquarian.
- 00:33:20 Victoria De Hart (RA) Many of the Egyptian antiquities currently held in the British Museum were collected by Belzoni, including sculptures and several papyri fragments. Today he is a wonderful example of how *not* to conduct archeological excavations and fieldwork; there is actually a fantastic book about this subject, entitled *The Rape of the Nile: Tomb Robbers, Tourists, and Archaeologists* written by Dr. Brian Fagan, Professor Emeritus of anthropology at University of California, Santa Barbara.
- 00:33:44 Victoria De Hart (RA) Belzoni wrote the book *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs, and Excavations in Egypt and Nubia*, published in 1820. I noticed that the *Women's Travel Writing* database noted Sarah Belzoni as a contributor to the work; her travelogue, *Mrs. Belzoni's Trifling Account of the Women of Egypt, Nubia, and Syria* is appended to the end of *Narrative of the Operations*.
- 00:34:05 Victoria De Hart (RA) As an archaeology student, I was hoping to focus my spotlight on a woman involved in the early days of modern archaeology, so the fact that Giovanni Belzoni's wife has been included in the *Women's Travel Writing* database caught my attention. *Mrs.*

Belzoni's Trifling Account documents Sarah Belzoni's travels through Egypt and Israel between 1815 and 1819. She documented the lifeways of the local women she encountered.

- 00:34:28 Victoria De Hart (RA) It is considered a groundbreaking work as never before had the everyday lives of early nineteenth century women in Egypt and Palestine been recorded by an English woman. As my spotlight, which will be posted on August 20th notes, Sarah Belzoni's account, although fascinating, describes a very eurocentric or anglocentric view of Egyptian and Middle Eastern societies. It is full of judgments, and she would be considered a very poor anthropologist or ethnographer today.
- 00:34:53 Victoria De Hart (RA) One of her more shocking endeavours during her travels happened while she was in Jerusalem; she dressed in the disguise of a Muslim man to enter the Temple of Jerusalem, a place where women and non-muslims were banned entrance. She quickly left Jerusalem for Egypt in fear of punishment. In the 1820s, the Belzoni's were famous in London society, so I expected to find more information about Sarah Belzoni as there have been several books written about her husband.
- 00:35:16 Victoria De Hart (RA) There is little information available concerning her early life and there are no known portraits of her. In *Fruits of Enterprise* written by Lucy Atkins, she includes two small engravings of a woman who is meant to be Sarah Belzoni, and they are the only depictions of her I have found. There are a few descriptions of Sarah Belzoni, the most well known was written by Fanny Kemble in 1878, in her published journals, *Records of a Girlhood*.
- 00:35:38 Victoria De Hart (RA) As a child, Kemble was neighbours with the Belzonis, and of Sarah Belzoni she writes: "Great too, was our satisfaction in visiting Madame Belzoni, who used to receive us in rooms full of strange spoils, brought back by herself and her husband from the East; she sometimes smoked a long Turkish pipe, and generally wore a dark blue sort of caftan, with a white turban on her head."
- 00:35:58 Victoria De Hart (RA) This is not the only description of Sarah Belzoni dressed in appropriated styles from the East, it was also discussed by Sidney, Lady Morgan, who deemed Belzoni's clothing to be "absurd attire." The appropriation of eastern cultures and styles was common during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as trade between the East and West increased. We see both men and women picking and choosing certain elements of Eastern clothing, such as turbans, which became fashionable headpieces for women at the time.

- 00:36:25 Kandice Sharren (co-host) The aesthetics of travel were sometimes included in book design itself, too. Amanda Law’s spotlight focused on a lavishly illustrated travel publication from 1835, *Views in India, China, and on the Shores of the Red Sea*. The descriptions for this edition were written by Emma Roberts, the author of a book of poems inspired by her travels, called *Oriental Sketches, Dramatic Scenes and Tales, with Other Poems*, and another work of travel writing focused on describing Indian and Anglo-Indian society, called *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan*, published in 1830 and 1835 respectively.
- 00:37:04 Amanda Law (RA) I wrote my spotlight on the 1835 title *Views in India, China, and on the Shores of the Red Sea*. This book features engravings by Prout, Stanfield, Cattermole, Purser, Cox, Austen based off Commander Robert Elliot’s *Original Sketches of India, China, and the Middle East*, though the book focuses mainly on Indian destinations. Emma Roberts was commissioned to provide the descriptions for each illustration for this second edition of the title.
- 00:37:28 Amanda Law (RA) Elliot previously published this book in 1833 with the title *Views in the east, comprising India, Canton, and the shores of the Red Sea: with historical and descriptive illustrations*. He supplied the descriptions himself for the first edition, which the *Women’s Travel Writing* database notes “were drawn from a variety of sources.” For the 1835 edition, Emma Roberts seemed to follow the same methodology.
- 00:37:49 Amanda Law (RA) She writes in the preface, “many 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. It has not always been possible to give the exact measurements or the dates of the buildings which embellish the splendid landscapes of Hindostan;
- 00:38:08 Amanda Law (RA) and where these are wanting, the Author has endeavoured to invest the subject with an interest of a different nature, by the introduction of characteristic traits of the native inhabitants of the neighbourhood, the political history of the country, or descriptions of its scenery and natural production.”
- 00:38:23 Amanda Law (RA) This passage drew my interest in the title because, while Roberts does state that she writes from firsthand experience, she puts an emphasis on the research behind her writing, which creates a contrast between this book and the epistolary and journal formats that dominated women’s travel writing in the period. This passage is even more interesting in light of her previous statement in the preface that literature on

- Asia “until very lately, . . . [has] been almost exclusively occupied by the researches of learned men,
- 00:38:48 Amanda Law (RA) whose lucubrations, though of the highest value, are not adapted to the general reader.” To me, this preface reads as Roberts navigating a careful balance with the amount of research in her writing. She highlights her various sources in order to give legitimacy to her work, but at the same time, she is wary of how overly intellectual information may alienate her readers. Roberts’s awareness of how she presents information in this preface reiterates to me that form, knowledge, and information are often heavily gendered.
- 00:39:14 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Women’s travel writing also stayed closer to home, as was the case with the subject of Julianna Wagar’s spotlight about Elizabeth Spence’s *Letters from the North Highlands*, published in 1817. We briefly mentioned this work in Episode 7 of Season 1—it was one of the travel narratives we found describing journeys taken between 1816 and 1817, but it was the only one that didn’t engage with the political and environmental crises that occurred during those years.
- 00:39:40 Julianna Wagar (RA) Hi everyone. My name is Julianna Wagar and the title that I have been working on is *Letters from the North Highlands, During the Summer 1816* by Elizabeth Isabella Spence. Elizabeth Spence writes of her adventures in the North Highlands of Scotland, ranging from popular tourist spots, like Edinburgh, to local gems like Flodden Field and Caledonia. Spence includes a historical narrative in her letters as well, telling stories and memories that are attached to each area she visits.
- 00:40:06 Julianna Wagar (RA) The tone of these letters is quite lighthearted and even satirical at times. Spence both praises and makes fun of her Scottish neighbours who insist on changing and modernizing places like Edinburgh. I wanted to share a quote that perfectly captures that tone; in this letter, Spence is writing of the new architecture built in Edinburgh that she has a love/ hate relationship with. She references the writer’s library, a new addition to Edinburgh, that amazes tourists but is not exactly useful for many locals.
- 00:40:33 Julianna Wagar (RA) Spence writes: “The Writer’s Library is a very large and truly magnificent room; finished with pillars, galleries, rich gilding, and all sorts of architectural ornaments, in a style that must astonish every stranger. At the same time, this astonishment is converted into admiration, on overusing, that love of literature, which seems to be inherent in the Scottish character, displayed in such a splendid establishment;
- 00:40:55 Julianna Wagar (RA) and that, erected solely at the expense of a body of men, who might be supposed too busy for the cultivation either of scientific or polite literature; and scarcely rich

enough to erect such a costly repository for the treasures of learning." Spence is aware of the beauty and splendour of this library but she pokes fun at the men who spent all their money building it, who will probably never get to use it.

- 00:41:17 Julianna Wagar (RA) I loved reading this collection of travel writing because it completely captures the culture and essence of Scotland. Spence incorporates Scottish phrases and slang, like 'Firth of Forth', which is the mouth of a river flowing into the sea. Spence truly has a stunning way of writing where she takes the time to describe each beautiful landscape,
- 00:41:34 Julianna Wagar (RA) an example being "the environs of Edinburgh are as rich in cultivation as the vicinity of London, and possess an air of grandeur, which mingles with every object, in a manner it is impossible to describe." It is clear that Spence loves Scotland and her incredible writing, engaging historical narratives, and picture-perfect descriptions make me want to hop on a plane and journey through the North Highlands.
- 00:41:55  [music playing]
- 00:42:05 Kate Moffatt (co-host) The love of Scotland that Spence expresses in her memoirs really resonates with us: we opened our episode with our own anecdote about traveling to a library (in our case, the British Library), and the fun memories we associate with that (and other research trips). However, as many of this month's spotlights reminded us over and over again, travel is inflected by global power dynamics, especially British Imperialism. The layering of those dynamics over the accounts that our team read that were based on personal experience and cultural and historical research results in texts that are rich, both as literary productions and as records of social and political contexts from centuries past.
- 00:42:44 Kandice Sharren (co-host) But the ever-present power dynamics in these eighteenth and nineteenth-century accounts have also made us reconsider our own experiences with travel, and what kinds of dynamics underpin those. As Jamaica Kincaid notes, "tourists are ugly", and often so is travel: in addition to new manifestations of the colonial and imperial dynamics that we found in these travel memoirs, the main way that we travel now—by air—contributes roughly 2.5 percent to all carbon dioxide emissions globally, and 3.5 percent to global warming overall, and is the most significant way that an individual can contribute to climate change.

- 00:43:25 Kate Moffatt (co-host) This too speaks to the inequalities embedded in travel: a recent article in *The Guardian* highlighted how “just 1% of the world’s population caused half of aviation’s carbon emissions in 2018”—notably, this wealthy subset of the population is less likely to feel the negative impacts of climate change, which disproportionately affects the impoverished. Those who are traveling at a rate that impacts the climate are not likely to also be the ones evacuating the small towns threatened by wildfires this year, whose smoke has made today’s sky an apocalyptic dark haze illuminated by an orange sun.
- 00:44:00 Kandice Sharren (co-host) But the relationship between travel and trying, and maybe failing, to imagine the future of humanity isn’t new. For last month’s read-a-thon, I revisited one of the better-known travel memoirs from this period, Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Letters Written during a Brief Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, a work known for its sentimental, elegiac qualities.
- 00:44:22 Kandice Sharren (co-host) In it, Wollstonecraft’s travels lead her to imagine both utopian and dystopian futures, in a passage that resonates even more this year than it did when I first read it: “The view of this wild coast, as we sailed along it, afforded me a continual subject for meditation. I anticipated the future improvement of the world, and observed how much man has still to do to obtain of the earth all it could yield.
- 00:44:51 Kandice Sharren (co-host) I even carried my speculations so far as to advance a million or two of years to the moment when the earth would perhaps be so perfectly cultivated, and so completely peopled, as to render it necessary to inhabit every spot—yes, these bleak shores. Imagination went still farther, and pictured the state of man when the earth could no longer support him. Whither was he to flee from universal famine? Do not smile; I really became distressed for these fellow creatures yet unborn. The images fastened on me, and the world appeared a vast prison.
- 00:45:33  [music playing]
- 00:45:44 Kate Moffatt (co-host) This has been the third episode of Season 2 of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*! 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. You can also find us at @TheWPHP on Twitter and on Instagram @womensprinthistoryproject.