

# **OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS**

Made in the Course of a Journey through France and Italy  
1786-1787

by  
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## Abstract

This paper is an historical fiction-- a travel journal written by Lady Aphrodite Macbain, an aristocratic English woman who records her observations and thoughts during her European tour in 1786-1787. Three voices tell this tale: Lady Aphrodite Macbain, a twenty-first century editor, Elizabeth Macbain, and the author of this text, Elizabeth Kidd. Elizabeth Macbain introduces the "found" journal, provides a biography of Lady Macbain and inserts historical background information on the eighteenth century, while Elizabeth Kidd (E.K.) provides background information on the cities visited, critical commentary and explanatory footnotes to the text. Included in the journal are the author's own botanical illustrations.

Three primary issues relating to the eighteenth century will be addressed: the changing role of women in European society; the emerging interest in botanical sciences, and the role of the Grand Tour in promoting social change. Experiences of three main characters, Lady Macbain, her brother Andrew and her niece Belinda, offer opportunities to explore these issues from different perspectives.

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Lady Serenek Timeless

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## Foreword

One warm evening, while I was sorting through a pile of boxes in the cool of my mother's basement and trying to dig out some of the Macbain family photographs, I came upon a small, worn, leather suitcase labelled "Family - archival." I was surprised as I thought that both my mother and grandmother had sorted most of the family's old birth and wedding certificates and other memorabilia, and placed them in chronological order in stacks of albums that now lay gathering dust in a cupboard in the spare room.

I hauled the suitcase out, put it on the top of the work table and opened it gingerly, releasing a strong odour of lavender and moth balls. Under clothing yellow with age -- worn leather gloves, white lace handkerchiefs, a silk shawl, bed jackets and lace collars-- I found a large Manila envelope. Within it was a book with pages filled with cursive handwriting. The pages were bound together between sheets of vellum and oversewn with thread on one side. I also found some botanical images painted on thick rag paper and wrapped in linen that seemed as fresh as if they had been made yesterday. I realized what I held in my hand was extremely old. I was barely able to make out the title of the book, written in faded blue ink: "Observations and Reflections Made in the course of a Journey through France and Italy in 1786 and 1787." It was signed "Lady Aphrodite Macbain."

I have become the archivist in my family, updating the family tree and saving each photograph for posterity within the family on-line database. With this new discovery, I realized that our family history could be extended back four more generations. I could now link my great great granduncle, James Macbain, born in the early nineteenth century, with a relative living much farther back in the eighteenth century! Spurred on by this awareness, I spent many months first transcribing Aphrodite's journals and then conducting further research on the life and times of my ancient relative. This has meant learning more about the world in which she matured, such as the kind of education that was available to women of her social class, the ideas that were being discussed, and the socio-political backdrop to her life in England. Using this material, I have introduced the journal text by placing Aphrodite within the context of her time. I also provide the reader with her brief biography compiled from my many hours of research in London's Public Records Office.

## Elizabeth Macbain

# Introduction

## The Eighteenth Century: A time of major change

Aphrodite lives at a time of major change that forms the backdrop of her narrative. Revolutionary new ideas and attitudes are transforming society, creating a sharp rupture between the past and the future in the fields of science, society, and the arts. The power of the church is diminishing especially in Northern Europe; the separation of the church and state is being called for and the Protestant Church is being torn into a number of factions and new, alternate religions and belief systems. In this century, often referred to as "The Age of the Enlightenment or "The Age of Reason", the philosophic movement challenges old beliefs and ideas and argues for a society based upon reason rather than faith and Catholic doctrine. It calls for a new civil order based on natural law, and for science based on experiments and observation. Women's education is only beginning to be recognized for its value to society as a whole as well as for its contribution to the quality of a woman's life. <sup>1</sup>

A new form of renaissance is taking place when the intellect and the individual are more highly valued than collective subservience to social and religious hierarchy, when social revolutions in America and France champion beliefs in the equality of man and his rights to individual freedom, and when people assume that advances in technology, science, and social organization, as well as in religion, can help improve the human condition. In the mid-eighteenth century, Europe becomes a center of this philosophic and scientific activity, challenging traditional doctrines and dogmas within a variety of fields.

The plant and animal kingdoms are being reclassified into a rational orderly system by Carl Linnaeus. As the world is opening up, new species of plants are being brought to Europe as new continents are discovered. Due to Caroline and William Herschel's work in creating the reflecting telescope, planets, comets and nebulae are being identified, expanding Europe's concept of the world's place within the cosmos. Scientific discoveries in chemistry and physics make some lives easier, and industrial and agricultural production faster, leading to the rise of a wealthy middle class and the dissolution of feudalism.

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the increase in the use of reason rather than faith in determining the nature of things, the eighteenth century still had its fair share of wizards, alchemists and spiritual seekers exploring the occult. David Hume's dictum, "A wise man proportions his belief to the evidence," was not always followed,



Within this turmoil of ideologies, our heroine is sometimes out of step with and sometimes at the vanguard of the changes taking place. She is one of a small percentage of women who have the independence, time and funds to join their husbands or brothers and travel to Europe. The Grand Tour is inevitably centred on tourists coming from the privileged classes of English society who, unfettered by financial restraints, can indulge themselves in whatever offerings Italy presents to them.

### The Grand Tour<sup>2</sup>

The Grand Tour is the traditional trip around Europe, usually undertaken by young men from British nobility and landed gentry, in search of art, culture and the roots of Western civilization. They are often monitored by their tutors who also serve as tour guides. Occasionally, women also make the tour and are accompanied by their husbands or other family members. Those who can afford it take along valets, chamber maids and cooks, while others hire their servants from the local population.

The custom of the Grand Tour flourishes from the late seventeenth century until the mid-nineteenth century. It serves as an educational and social rite of passage; the travellers commission paintings, visit archaeological sites and picture galleries, sample the local cuisine, perfect their language skills and mingle with the high society of the Continent.

Drawn by their voracious fascination with Greek and Roman antiquities or Renaissance masterpieces and triggered by the discovery of the ruins of Pompeii in 1748, they travel in their thousands, landing like flocks of migrating birds into the cultural capitals of Europe, particularly in Italy. The majority of the young male Grand Tourists come to see, firsthand, the classical antiquities and historic artworks they have learned about in their studies. Through their travel experience, often lasting two or more years, they hope to develop their tastes and knowledge of fine art, architecture, music and classical antiquities, and to bring home souvenirs and trophies that demonstrate their newly-acquired connoisseurship. Many are influenced by the writing of Johann Joachim Winckelmann who pioneered the field of art history with his comprehensive study of Greek and Roman sculpture in his *History of Art and Antiquity* published in 1764.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Lassels (c. 1603–1668), a Roman Catholic priest is credited for the first use of the term "Grand Tour" in his book, *The Voyage of Italy*, (Paris: Vincent du Moutier, 1670.)

<sup>3</sup> Winckelmann lived in Rome most of his life and devoted himself to the study of Roman antiquities. He gradually acquired an unrivalled knowledge of ancient art. Winckelmann's method of careful observation even allowed him to identify Roman copies of Greek art.

Because of its treasures of art and antiquity, Rome is the final destination for most of the Grand Tourists. "If the Grand Tour was a cultural pilgrimage, Rome represented the sacred goal at the end of a long, arduous and often dangerous journey."<sup>4</sup> Many British citizens live in Rome and by 1789 there are over 117 residing there. Sir Fleming Leicester observes that "The town is perfectly fitted with English."<sup>5</sup> For some gentlemen, a connoisseurship in the arts is essential to increase their standing within society; the breadth and polish they receive from their tour contributes to this goal

The energetic antiquities trade between Italy and England contributes to the rise in price of such things. Many Italian artists make a career of painting portraits of English gentlemen posed with graceful ease among Roman antiquities.

There are many opportunities for the British travellers to brush up on their knowledge of Italian art and antiquity. They can take art courses<sup>6</sup>, visit private art collections and archaeological sites, follow architectural tours and buy travel books. Along with their servants, wealthy young men of rank are accompanied by tour guides called "Bear-leaders" who escort them on the Grand Tour.<sup>7</sup> In Rome, antiquaries provide access to private collections of antiquities.

For budding young artists, the tour is also considered essential to understand proper painting and sculpture techniques. For others, it not only provides the opportunity to view and sometimes purchase specific works of visual art but also the chance to hear new music. By bringing together musical enthusiasts from different European cultural centres, the tastes of musicians and their patrons are broadened. Among the most popular souvenirs brought home by grand tourists are musical scores. For a large percentage of travellers, like Lady Aphrodite's niece, Belinda, music plays a very important part in their enjoyment of Italy, and for some, is the principal reason for their going.

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<sup>4</sup> John Wilton-Ely, "Rome," *Grand Tour. The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. John Wilton-Ely and Ilaria Bignamini, (London: The Tate Gallery: 1997), 137.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremy Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour*: (Yale: Yale University Press, 2003), 47.

<sup>6</sup> Instructors included James Byres and Colin Morison who gave six-week courses on Roman antiquities. Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour*, 47.

<sup>7</sup> The role of bear-leader blended elements of tutor, guardian, and companion. Often aristocratic families put their young sons in the care of a well-informed physician or member of the clergy who, like the bear-leaders, acted as a teacher and chaperone.

## Women and the Grand Tour

The aristocratic women who make the trip have a basic knowledge of classical antiquities, the Romance languages and Greco-Roman literature that they learn from their governesses, tutors and family members. During this time period in England, women are not allowed to attend university or college to further their education, so to expand their knowledge, women must be content with reading books and periodicals, attending literary and scientific lectures, and participating in local salons.

Despite the social pressure to stay at home and stick with domestic concerns, some women break from these directives and take up the distinctly male privilege of traveling to the Continent to develop mind, spirit, and body. Travel offers opportunities denied to them at home: freedom from a narrowly defined femininity, the chance to develop and exercise their intelligence, and an opportunity to learn.

Most often women travel with servants and family members for protection and for the sake of appearance. For many, like Aphrodite, the Grand Tour becomes a significant rite of passage. New landscapes, salons, and cultural encounters of Enlightenment Europe provide her experiences from which she can return well informed, more confident and better connected within society.

Italian scholar, Elisabetta Graziosi has observed that, "In the era of the Grand Tour it was not the experience of travel which changed female models of life and culture in Italy, but the practice of a more varied society, where people found opportunities and were encouraged to gather in groups which were not exclusively familial."<sup>8</sup> Through travel, women can fashion themselves into educated, discriminating observers, experts in a field, social commentators and cultural critics.

Male English writers caution about women's learning and learning "too much." Those women who excel in the fields of science and philosophy are often labeled pedantic, masculine, unmarriageable and un-maternal. For this reason the salons of intelligent and wealthy women offer a respite from women's traditional domestic roles and provide an acceptable opportunity to engage with people and ideas beyond the domestic realm without social rebuke.

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<sup>8</sup> Graziosi, Elisabetta. "Revisiting Arcadia: Women and Academies in Eighteenth-Century Italy," *Italy's Eighteenth Century. Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour*, Part Two, Trans. Matthew Sneider. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009),124.

Letters and journals, like Aphrodite's, record their responses to life abroad and their discoveries about themselves. These writings present a rare opportunity for Georgian women to articulate views on the world around them. Partly biographical and intimate, their writings can be political, descriptive, forthright and polemical. Many of these women who have the chance to travel and write about their experiences can change the course of common assumptions about what can be available to them. They can show those women remaining at home how travel can help them reach a new position in polite society.

### Salons

The salon, a social activity that flowered during the Enlightenment, is an important institution in which women can play a central role. It provides a place for women and men to congregate for intellectual discourse.<sup>9</sup> Salons (called *conversazione* in Italy) are held in the great aristocratic homes of England, Italy and France as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and contribute to the introduction and acceptance of new ideas within the public sphere.

Usually organized and conducted by educated, aristocratic women, they take place at different times of the day. Sometimes, literary groups gather around the breakfast table; others dine together in the evening, the lady of the house usually facilitating the conversation with the utmost skill and consideration for each guest. Although their intention, for the most part, is to promote witty, informed conversation, there is a variety of types of salons, depending on the knowledge and interests of the hostess. Most notable among the English literary salonniers is Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu who, beginning in the mid eighteenth century, leads the Blue Stockings Society<sup>10</sup> and invites such men as Samuel Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, David Garrick and Horace Walpole to her personal circle.

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<sup>9</sup> The coffee house was also a vehicle for public debate and discussion of new ideas, but unlike the salons which usually were held in aristocratic homes, women were unwelcome in the rough and tumble of the café.

<sup>10</sup> The Blue Stockings Society was an informal women's social and educational movement in England in the mid-eighteenth century. Following the salon tradition in seventeenth and eighteenth century France, it was founded in the early 1750s by Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Vesey and others as a women's literary discussion group. This was a revolutionary step away from traditional, non-intellectual, women's social activities. Montagu invited various people (both women and men, aristocrats and middle class) to attend, including botanist, translator and publisher Benjamin Stillingfleet who apparently was not rich enough to have the proper formal dress, which included white or black silk stockings, so he attended in everyday blue worsted stockings. The term came to refer to the informal quality of the gatherings and the emphasis on conversation over fashion.

Hester Lynch Thrale, (later Hester Piozzi) is also an important Bluestocking and literary hostess in London's Streatham Park. She is valued for her close friendship with the published author, Fanny Burney, and with the writer Dr. Samuel Johnson. Thrale's journals and letters are important sources of information about Dr. Johnson, eighteenth-century society and her Grand Tour of Italy made in 1784 and 1785.<sup>11</sup>

Not all English salons focus their discussions on literature. Before Aphrodite's birth, the Duchess of Beaufort and Portland, one of Britain's earliest distinguished gardeners, had the interest and the means to entertain a circle of leading scientists and botanical specialists at her home in Buckinghamshire. Here was a centre of a rich cultural life, drawing in celebrated figures of the day, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Captain James Cook and the botanist and explorer Sir Joseph Banks. The naturalist Daniel Solander, a pupil of Carl Linnaeus who accompanied Banks on Cook's expedition to the south Pacific, instructed the Duchess in the Linnaean system. It is primarily through a similar kind of social gathering that Aphrodite was able to learn about and discuss botany; she possibly met the botanist Benjamin Stillingfleet at one of Mrs. Montagu's salons and listened to his defense of Linnaeus' new taxonomic system.

### Botanophilia

As far back as the eighth century, monasteries studied the healing properties of plants, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries *physic gardens* were created for this purpose in Italian monasteries and universities.<sup>12</sup> Interest in botanical science grew as sea voyages of exploration brought botanical treasures to the large, newly-established scientific gardens, and introduced novel crops, drugs and spices. Now, trophies from distant lands decorate the estates of Europe's powerful and wealthy in a period of enthusiasm for natural history, especially botany (a preoccupation sometimes referred to as *botanophilia*). Botanical gardens are built to study plants and house the newly-discovered specimens.

The number of scientific publications are increasing and the new discoveries are shared with the public by learned societies like the Royal Society and the Linnaean Society.

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<sup>11</sup> After she returned from Italy, Mrs. Hester Piozzi might have spoken to Aphrodite at one of her salons; their routes and places of stay are very similar. It is also likely that Mrs. Piozzi gave Aphrodite letters of introduction to English and Italian contacts in the places she visited.

<sup>12</sup> The earliest botanical gardens were created by the Universities of Pisa, Padua, Firenze and Bologna in the mid sixteenth century. The University of Oxford botanic garden was the first to be established in Great Britain in 1621.

The Enlightenment values of reason and science coupled with voyages to distant lands begin a phase of encyclopedic plant identification, nomenclature, description and botanical illustration. Swedish botanist, Carl Linnaeus has developed a new taxonomic classification system, *Systema Naturae*<sup>13</sup> that he first published in 1735.

It is with this new taxonomic system that newly-discovered species of plants can be organized. With the popularization of the Linnaean system, the study of botany is becoming widespread among educated women, like Aphrodite Macbain, who attend classes on plant classification, collect herbarium specimens, make botanical illustrations and begin publishing on botanical topics.

Cultural authorities argue that education through botany creates culturally and scientifically aware citizens--part of the thrust for 'improvement' that characterises the Enlightenment.<sup>14</sup> Botany is one of the few sciences considered appropriate for genteel educated women. Publications designed for women readers place an emphasis on the healing properties of plants rather than on plant reproduction.

### **Elizabeth Macbain**

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<sup>13</sup> Linnaeus based his taxonomy on one diagnostic feature of a flower--the reproductive parts. This system was given many social meanings and analogies: the importance of order, hierarchy, and the mystery of gender construction.

<sup>14</sup> In the early nineteenth century, with the recognition of botany as an official science, women were again excluded from the discipline.

## Chapter 1.

# Biography of Aphrodite before 1786

Aphrodite shares very little about herself in her journal, only referencing her schooling and her training as a botanical illustrator. In my research in the Public Record Office, I discovered that her maiden name was Kidd and that she was born in October, 1728 into a wealthy upper middle-class family in the market town of Carlisle, in the district of Cumberland, near the Scottish border. Aphrodite's mother, Constance, was an avid gardener and herbalist; her father, John Kenneth Kidd, was a classical scholar and taught Greco-Roman history at the local college. I assume that his interest in Greek mythology had inspired him to give the name "Aphrodite" to his only daughter.

Constance died in childbirth, bearing Aphrodite's twin brothers: Philip and Andrew. During their early childhood, a governess home-schooled all three children, teaching them classical literature, mathematics as well as French and Latin. Both boys went on to study the literature, philosophy, history and archaeology of classical Greco-Roman antiquity at the Royal Grammar School in Newcastle and continued their studies at Queen's College and Trinity College, Oxford.<sup>15</sup> Philip joined the navy and quickly became a lieutenant on HMS *Resolution*. He was killed during the battle of Quiberon Bay in 1759 and was buried at sea. Andrew was the opposite of his twin and spent most of his twenties gambling and drinking in his London club. He met and married an ambitious noblewoman, Catherine Holmes, who bore him one daughter, Belinda, and managed the household with a firm hand. For a while their lives were calm, Andrew dealing in the burgeoning market for classical antiquities. In 1785 Catherine died of consumption leaving her husband and daughter devastated.

Aphrodite furthered her education by learning how to play the piano, paint and draw, embroider and dance--skills designed to attract high-born, wealthy men as marriage partners.<sup>16</sup> Delicacy and modesty in a woman were valued far more highly than a lively, intellectual mind.

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<sup>15</sup> There was an immense interest in classical education during the eighteenth century; a classical education was still revered in educational circles as the apex of intellectual training. <https://britlitwiki.wikispaces.com/Classical+Education+in+the+Eighteenth+Century>

<sup>16</sup> English women were not allowed to attend university as higher education was not considered relevant to their lives. The role of an aristocratic woman was a domestic one, played out within the nursery, kitchen and drawing room. The primary purpose of female education was to turn young girls into respectable, marriageable partners and mothers.

With the exception of painting and drawing, it appears that the social skills she learned held little interest for Aphrodite. Instead, when she was not managing the household, she spent many hours in her mother's garden carefully recording, in line and colour, the wide variety of plants growing throughout the herbaceous borders. She was more comfortable in the company of plants than people, and her interest in botany propelled Aphrodite into a world that had once been almost exclusively male.

As botany had become an acceptable subject for women to study and many books and periodicals on the subject delicately introduced them to the botanical science of the day but in a manner that continued to reinforce female stereotypes.<sup>17</sup> Aphrodite would have become familiar with Carl Linnaeus' new taxonomic classification system, *Systema Naturae* and read botany books such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Lettres Elementaires sur la Botanique* written with women readers in mind.<sup>18</sup> Aphrodite also might have met Joseph Banks, the chief botanist for the first exploratory voyages of Captain Cook, the President of the Royal Society and the adviser to King George III on the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. From him, she may have gained access to (and perhaps samples of) the plant specimens brought in from Australia, the Hawaiian Islands and the Americas.

Aphrodite may have visited the salons of avid gardeners where she would have met experts like Linnaeus and Banks, benefitting from their discussions on gardening, natural history and botany. It was from within the salons and those of the bluestocking circle that she gained most of her scientific knowledge.<sup>19</sup> She also must have attended public botany lectures, including those at the University of Edinburgh where she met her future husband, Lord Hubert Macbain, an amateur botanist who shared her passion for plants. They became soul mates and spent many pleasant hours together exploring Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden. They were married in 1755 in St. Giles Church, Durham.

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<sup>17</sup> In the eighteenth century the name of the goddess Flora "resonate(d) with traditional associations from myth and literature that link flowers and gardens with women and nature and with femininity, modesty and innocence." Shteir, A. *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science. Flora's Daughters and Botany in England 1760-1860*: (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996),3.

<sup>18</sup> It is possible that Aphrodite also read copies of Erasmus Darwin's English translation of Linnaeus' *A System of Vegetables*.

<sup>19</sup> Feminine accomplishments such as watercolour painting and botanising were valued in Georgian society and practiced at all social levels, from Queen Charlotte and the Duchess of Portland down to amateurs within the smallest country-town gatherings.



Lord Macbain owned an estate in Durham where they spent the following thirty years, creating their own botanical garden and growing exotic species, the seeds from which were being introduced into England by world explorers. Tragically, his passion took Lord Macbain away from Aphrodite when he joined the exploratory voyages of Captain George Vancouver as one of the naturalists. He died of yellow fever in the West Indies in 1784 and was buried at sea, making Aphrodite a widow at 56. I will now leave Aphrodite to tell her story which I have transcribed below.

### **Elizabeth Macbain**

## Chapter 2. *Aphrodite's Journal*

### OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS Made in the course of a Journey through France and Italy in 1786 and 1787

by  
Lady Aphrodite Macbain

#### England

May 3, 1786

I've made up my mind. I cannot sit around brooding the rest of my life. Now that dearest Hugh is no longer with me, I see no point in sitting in this drafty manor any longer, watering the plants and listening to the gossip about King George's marriage with Queen Charlotte<sup>20</sup> and their many children. I am no longer needed here in Durham and I am beginning to feel bored and isolated. Our garden can manage without me for a year thanks to our two excellent gardeners, so I can begin a new period of my life without being dragged down by domestic responsibilities. How I yearn for intelligent conversation, new experiences, and warmer weather! I have been thinking about travelling abroad--perhaps to Italy.



*Figure 1 Coleus*

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<sup>20</sup> Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz married George III and bore him 15 children.

I hope that if I travel to more happy climes and less conservative society, I can shed my deferential guise of an elderly widow and become a self-confident woman, still with a bright future ahead of her, contributing in some significant way to society. I want to learn more about science and the arts than what is allowed me here in England;<sup>21</sup>

I hope that new acquaintances, landscapes and aesthetic experiences will inspire me toward a new direction in life. I am particularly interested in meeting and learning from women who are respected and recognized within their society. If I cannot intentionally transform myself here in England into a better informed and more virtuous person, I might, instead, allow new foreign elements I encounter-- society, geography and the arts--to slowly work their influence upon me and change me for the better. It is my hope that I will return to England from Europe a happier, more informed and purposeful person-- better equipped to care for myself and others.

Things are slowly changing here in England. Women are being supported in their pursuit of certain interests that would have been discouraged fifty years ago-- particularly in such fields as botany and natural history.<sup>22</sup> However, although I have attended many botanical lectures and read a number of periodicals and books on new botanical discoveries, I am curious to witness firsthand what is happening beyond the shores of this little island and to see for myself some of the new botanical species being brought to Europe from all over the world. I hear there are wonderful collections within the botanical gardens of Paris, Turin, Padua, Bologna, Florence and Rome.

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<sup>21</sup> Despite the fact that the science of botany became more accessible to women, they were still not equal to men in opportunity. While their brothers, and sons were away at school or on the Grand Tour for the luster of experience, gentlewomen on their estates, and women of the new middle class in town were at home, taking part in mandatory conventional social rounds. They were excluded from formal participation in the public institutions of botany and science. They could not be members of The Royal Society or the Linnaean Society, could not attend meetings, read papers, or (with very rare exceptions) see their findings published in the journals of those societies." Shteir, A. *Cultivating*, 37.

<sup>22</sup> During the eighteenth century botany was one of the few sciences considered appropriate for genteel educated women. Around 1760 women attended classes on plant classification, and collected herbarium specimens although emphasis was put on the healing properties of plants rather than on plant reproduction which had dangerous overtones of sexuality!

In the Chelsea Physic Garden in London I have been learning about Dr. Carl Linnaeus' way of arranging and sorting the plant kingdom. He proposes a brand new plant taxonomy! His *Systema Naturae* is fascinating and makes me want to learn more. I know that some of the universities in Europe have been creating botanical gardens not only to house medicinal herbs but also to study and categorize the new plant species that are being brought to Europe from the newly discovered lands.

The botanical specimens that Joseph Banks has collected from his travels with Captain Cook and introduced to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew have whetted my interest to see other recently acquired collections within Europe. I am thinking I might join those on the Grand Tour and head south, through France and Switzerland to the Italian states of Europe.

**May 12, 1786**

I have just received a letter from Andrew, who has not yet recovered from the loss of his wife, saying he would welcome such a diversion. We will take with us his 17-year-old daughter, Belinda, as her musical studies here are completed for the season. Bindy is a pretty, clever little thing and, like me, is rather bored with life and badly misses her mother. She needs distraction and a trip like this could pull her out of the doldrums. Besides, she will benefit extensively from cultural activities that abound in Italy, particularly concerts of new music. Perhaps we can find a teacher there who can expand her knowledge of music composition and prepare her to become a talented flute player.

As I do not plan not to bring along a maid (as many do), Belinda will be a great value to me personally--helping me with my toilette, my dressing, arranging and occasionally curling and powdering my hair, and keeping me company when Andrew inevitably leaves us to join his male friends. I will hire a chef locally to do the cooking and shopping. I can afford to travel comfortably for a year and pay for Belinda's food while she is with me. Thanks to Father's endowment, Andrew is able to contribute to Belinda's accommodation and musical education and, provided he is careful, can cover the expenses of whatever we need to be comfortable in our journey.

**May 15, 1786**

I must make my plans carefully, first deciding what towns to visit and what kind of lodgings will be adequate. I think Bologna would be a fine destination and a place to live from July to September. I have heard it is one of the handsomest cities in Italy. There is an excellent and very ancient university there with a botanical garden of great antiquity, as well as beautiful palaces, theatres and concert halls. I am told that the town is also filled with many churches of different time periods. It has been part of the Papal States since the eighth century<sup>23</sup> so I'm afraid the citizens of Bologna are all papist. I hope I will be able to find a Presbyterian community there.

From my reading, I learn that the paintings by its local artists, Guido Reni, Il Guercino and the Carracci brothers could vie with Raphael in beauty. Bologna's food has been highly recommended by friends and in guide books, especially its meats and pastas. Perhaps I will learn some new recipes--although I hope good English food will always be available.

NB: I must immediately write to my European botanical colleagues in Paris and Turin to make appointments for me to see them *en route*. I have already written to Snr. Gaetano Monti, the Director of the Botanical Garden in Bologna.

It would also be useful to find someone who can take us on a tour of the antiquities in Bologna--the Roman and Medieval ruins in which the town abounds. I hear of men, referred to as *cicisbei*, who do this as a living but I am unsure of the true nature of the relationship between this type of guide and his female clients. (Apparently married women spend more than acceptable time with these Italian men and I wonder why their husbands allow it.) I'm definitely planning to have a family portrait painted of us by some local artist--I gather this is often done for those on the Grand Tour. It would be a wonderful souvenir of the journey.

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<sup>23</sup> The period of Papal rule saw the construction of many churches and other religious establishments, and the reincarnation of older ones. At this time, Bologna had ninety-six convents, more than any other Italian city.

### May 16, 1786

I have been warned that whether I travel by a diligence, a privately-owned carriage or hired vehicle, it will be necessary to rely on a system of posting by which fresh horses can be obtained along the roads of Italy. I imagine the quality, cost and availability of horses will vary. It worries me greatly and I wonder whether we should buy our own carriage despite the expense. I will ask Andrew what he thinks.

### May 17, 1786

I wonder who can recommend lodgings in Bologna; I will need clean and decent apartments for the three of us. I will ask my friends, Hester Piozzi<sup>24</sup> and Anna Miller<sup>25</sup> both of whom are writing about their travels to Italy and are probably familiar with good places to stay there. It is such a relief to know that we will have the company of English travellers and that there will be others throughout Europe upon whom we can rely for help, advice and company.<sup>26</sup>

I have begun to make a list of what to take on the voyage, keeping in mind that we may be travelling in many types of vehicles over diverse terrains. Although we mustn't overload ourselves, some basic supplies may not be available from the locals and we must be prepared to either accept lower quality material or take more things with us on the voyage. As I will be experiencing extreme cold in the Alps and extreme heat in the Bologna summer, I will have to pack a wide variety of clothing. I hope there will be room in our luggage!

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<sup>24</sup> Piozzi, Hester Lynch. *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey Through France, Italy, and Germany, 1789.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967).

<sup>25</sup> Miller, Anna Riggs, Lady, 1741-1781: *Letters from Italy, Describing the Manners, Customs, Antiquities, Paintings, &c. of That Country, in the year MDCCLXX and MDCCLXXI* (2 volumes; London: Printed for E. and C. Dilly, 1777).

<sup>26</sup> Edward Gibbon reported being told "that in the summer of 1785, forty thousand English were on the Continent." Christopher Hibbert, *The Grand Tour*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969) 25.

This is my list so far:

1 medicine chest  
white face paint and rouge, beauty patches  
2 bars of olive oil soap  
lavender scent and Hungary Water  
tooth powder and brush  
plenty of handkerchiefs  
2 fans  
drawing book, pencils, brushes and paints  
1 magnifying glass  
pens and ink, letter paper, wax  
3 ruled notebooks  
1 penknife  
1 passport holder  
1 travel clock  
2 sheets, one pillow and 2 pillowcases  
1 tea chest  
1 box of spices and condiments

#### Books

2 guide books  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Letters on the Elements of Botany*, 1781-3 (English Translation: 1785) and *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, 1782.  
Carl Linnaeus, *A System of Vegetables* (1783–1785).  
Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, 1760 edition  
Johann Winckelmann. *History of Art in Antiquity*, 1766. (French edition)

#### Clothing

1 broad-brimmed straw hat  
2 silk bonnets  
1 umbrella  
1 parasol  
1 pair of sturdy walking boots  
1 pair leather pumps  
1 pair leather gloves  
1 pair woolen gloves  
Jewelry: coral necklace and bracelet, pearl choker, amber earrings  
3 day dresses - 2 in cotton, one in wool  
1 evening dress - my mauve silk taffeta with matching fan  
1 wool riding habit  
2 jackets  
1 silk shawl  
1 woolen shawl  
1 kerchief, 2 fichus  
1 fur muff  
1 cloak with hood  
1 hoop underskirt and 3 linen shifts, stays  
2 panniers and side hoops

5 pairs of stockings (wool and silk) & garters  
2 mob caps  
2 under petticoats  
2 over petticoats  
2 bed gowns

I will have to purchase at least two large leather travel trunks--one for my clothing, one for all the rest--and a third smaller one to store my hats. Belinda will have a smaller trunk along with her flute with its padded case and Andrew will probably bring one large trunk and a hat box. We will be such a merry band! I'm getting more and more excited as our plans become specific.

### **May 17, 1786**

I have been talking with Hester Piozzi who has recently returned from the Grand Tour and I have learned of her physical challenges of travel through France, Switzerland and Italy. It seems both man and nature conspire in making the journey as unpleasant as possible! The coaches are slow and uncomfortable, the inns filthy and their food execrable. As well, the roads are rutted, the mountain passes terrifying and the seas rarely calm! I plan to take with me as much of my own bedding and food as I can carry.

I don't plan to carry much money with me due to the risk of highway robbers so I will get letters of credit from my London bank to present at the major cities of the Grand Tour. Andrew has decided to hire a carriage to take us far as Dover and to buy a passage across the Channel on a packet to Calais. There, we will have to go through French customs, pay duty, exchange pounds for livres and make sure that our entire luggage is present and intact. We will stay overnight at Hôtel d'Angleterre which I gather is the only reasonable choice for an English tourist. Fanny Burney stayed there.



From Calais, we will travel by a rented *carosse*<sup>27</sup> 183 miles to Paris--a week-long journey that I imagine will require spending nights at uncomfortable inns along the way. After passing through Paris customs, we will stay in the French capital long enough for us to recover from our first leg of the journey--perhaps a week. I am told the Faubourg St. Germain is a good area to find comfortable hotels or apartments.

Perhaps we can find a reputable tailor and purchase some French clothing provided there is time. I want to visit the Louvre and see the Tableaux du Roy including pictures by Raphael, Titian, Veronese, Rembrandt, Poussin and Van Dyck.

Perhaps I can also find a way of attending the salons of Mme Necker and Mme Helvetius; I gather some luminaries have been regular visitors such as Dr. Benjamin Franklin, Mr. Thomas Jefferson and the late Mssr. Denis Diderot. I am particularly interested in meeting the eminent naturalist, Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, who is a good friend of Mme Necker. I gather he is still the head of the Jardin du Roi<sup>28</sup> which he has transformed into a major botanical research center. It would be interesting to see the botanical specimens from all over the world he has added to the garden. I have written to my friends there to obtain letters of introduction to Mme Necker.

### **May 21, 1786**

Belinda will be ready to leave with us within a week and is packing her bags with all sorts of things she probably won't need! I will make sure we attend some concerts while we are in Bologna; the city has an excellent reputation for music. Apparently they have fine concert halls and their large churches are designed to enhance organ recitals and choir singing. I also plan to enjoy some of the operas presented in the Teatro Comunale featuring such composers as Vivaldi, Gluck, and Piccinni. There may also be an opportunity during the three-month period we are there, to contract a music tutor for Belinda from the highly respected Accademia Philharmonica.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The *carosse* is like the English stagecoach and can accommodate six travelers.

<sup>28</sup> Le Jardin du Roi was eventually named Le Jardin des Plantes.

<sup>29</sup> Besides being one of the most sought-after professional destinations for musicians of all parts of Italy, Bologna's Accademia Philharmonica gave technical and musical advice to important institutions, such as the Cappella Pontificia in Rome.

**May 25, 1786**

I have just received a very kind response in a letter from Snr. Monti, Professor of Botany and Prefect of the Botanic Garden in Bologna.<sup>30</sup> He says he will give me full access to the garden and its plants including their newly acquired exotic species from India they have protected in a greenhouse. I hope I will be allowed to draw and paint them. Snr. Monti tells me that everything in the garden is being re-classified Dr. Linnaeus' system.

**May 27, 1786**

After discussions with Andrew and my friends, we have decided upon the route we will take from Paris to Bologna. A carriage will transport us to Besancon, then on to Geneva or Lausanne, then through the Alps to Turin where we will spend a week resting and meeting with Snr. Carlo Allioni, a botanist, botanical illustrator and Director of the Turin Botanical Garden.<sup>31</sup>

**May 29, 1786**

Tomorrow we leave bright and early for Dover! I may not be able to write in my journal for the next few weeks as writing conditions may be inadequate and my energy somewhat low. I have taken along some lemons and a jar of honey in case of colds, and syrup of violets to soothe inflammation but I doubt whether I can take anything to prevent sea sickness while crossing the Channel. I will try and make the best of it.

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<sup>30</sup> The Botanical Gardens and Herbarium of the University of Bologna have been one of the more important centres of Italian botanical culture since the sixteenth century. There existed, since 1365, a garden in which plants with pharmaceutical properties were grown. Umberto Mossetti e Gianluca Bolelli, *Guida Per Il Visitatore* (Bologna: CISM. L'Orto Botanico dell'Universita di Bologna, n.d.), 32-40.

<sup>31</sup> Allioni was a strong supporter of the Linnaean taxonomic system. In 1785 Allioni published his three-volume work, *Flora Pedemontana*, which describes over 2,800 species of plants in the Piedmont. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlo\\_Allioni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlo_Allioni)

## *Lady Aphrodite's Journal: June 1786*

### **France-Bologna**

#### **June 15, 1786 - Turin**

At last we are in Italy in the lovely town of Turin! I have been unable to write in my journal due to the difficult lighting conditions and my ill health. Every night I fell into bed in exhaustion and managed to sleep despite the lumpy, flea-ridden mattresses, every bone in my body shaken by the carriages' passage over the winding rutted roads. After a gruelling three weeks travelling through France and the Swiss Alps we were ready to spend a few weeks of rest and recovery in Turin.

I think I have lost ten pounds and Andrew is a shadow of his former self (I am a bit worried about him.) Belinda, on the other hand, is bursting with good health and has been a wonderful support to us both. She has enjoyed herself immensely on the journey despite the discomfort of the carriages, the squalor of the inns and the challenges of geography. As we descended into Italy along the slippery paths winding up and down the snowy peaks of Mont Cenis, each seated in a sedan chair with long poles carried on the shoulders of two porters, I kept my eyes squeezed shut most of the descent. Belinda, however, was delighted by the snowy crags and mountain streams and sang all of the way! I think she would have done it a second time, if given the chance.

I think I might have enjoyed France a little more had we stayed in Paris a bit longer and travelled by coach a little more quickly. Paris is a fascinating study of contrasts. Aristocratic women are heavily painted and rouged, wear enormous wigs and hair pieces, and dress in embroidered silks. They parade through the Tuileries Gardens or the Palais Royal with silly little dogs, only concerned with their own well-being and fashionable appearance. In contrast, the rest of the population is not as gay as I had expected it to be. Women of all ages, some prostitutes, wearing rags, their hair tied up in scarves or hanging loose, beg in the narrow dark streets. Dirty, ragged children, often pickpockets, are always underfoot, begging or offering their services to the traveller.

I was often compelled to hold my nose or look away. Some well-lit shops along the colonnades are filled with jewellery, hats, hair powder and pomade, while other darkly-lit shacks sell rotten apples, boiled sheep's heads or black sausages. I wonder what Louis XVI and his Queen think about this terrible situation. Instead of helping his people he is overtaxing them so he can support the rebels fighting the British in the Americas or replant the gardens at Versailles. I doubt if the common folk will tolerate this privation much longer.

I was disappointed in being unable to attend Mme Necker's salon while I was in Paris; I had been especially interested in meeting the naturalist, le Comte de Buffon. Perhaps I will meet him on my return trip home. For the next months I will have to content myself in attending the salons in Italy.

As we passed through Geneva, I thought it was a shame that neither Voltaire nor Rousseau is still alive; I would have enjoyed meeting both of Switzerland's eminent citizens. I keep M. Rousseau's *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*<sup>32</sup> with me and am always uplifted by his prose. I particularly enjoyed reading his "Seventh Walk" wherein he complains of the one thing that deters people from taking an interest in the vegetable kingdom--the habit of considering plants only as a source of drugs and medicines. There is so much more to be gained by the study of plants than their utility--such as their beauty and complexity.

As I draw and paint each plant specimen, paying careful attention to the individual shape, pattern and colour of each plant, I am filled with delight as well as curiosity. M. Rousseau describes this feeling as a "state of blissful self-abandonment" and losing himself in the "immensity of this beautiful order."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, 1778, (London: Penguin Classics, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries*, 108.

**June 16, 1786**

The town of Turin is magnificently situated in the rolling hills of the Piedmont with the River Po running through it. The river's gentle green flanks are a relief to me after the tortuous alpine slopes. Part of the Kingdom of Sardinia, it was acquired by the Duke of Savoy sixty six years ago. Today it is the *de facto* capital of the House of Savoy and it is here that the King of Sardinia holds court where he is very supportive of the British visitor..

I am told Turin is a town where one can develop one's accomplishments--learn to draw, dance or play music. The King's Palace and Great Theatre are well worth seeing. Despite this, I am finding it hard to get to know people in Turin and the Piedmont; their dialect is difficult to understand so I feel we are just seeing the surface of things. Despite the fact that many of the local aristocracy are wealthy, tourists are rarely invited to stay or eat in a private house and have to be content with the fare provided at the inns. Perhaps it is not the custom to invite visitors to dine; there is no reason why we should expect that they should.

I try not to be like many of my English compatriots, only attracted by spectacles, impressive ceremonies and displays of wealth, and who constantly complain there is so little to do here. I think one can find diversion in many things when one has many interests--like botany.

I had a pleasant meeting with Snr. Allioni at the Turin Botanical Garden and looked at some of his exquisite botanical illustrations. He is highly respected in his field and some plants have been named after him: *Arabis allionii*, *Jovibarba allioni*, *Primula allioni* and *Veronica allionii*. I spent many happy hours exploring the garden and looking through his paintings. The latter are mostly illustrations of the plants of the Piedmont region that he compiled and published in his *Flora Pedemontana* in 1785. His painting style is careful and detailed, and his hand is steady.

I showed him some of my recent sketches and he made some very useful comments and suggestions on how to add colour. I am very impressed by his dedication to his profession. What a valuable contribution he has made to the local botanical knowledge of the Piedmont! I am inspired to do something similar when I return home

### **June 17**

The local women here are most attractive--they comb their hair away from their forehead and wind it in a large knot at the back, securing it with a very large pin. The wealthier citizens wear huge earrings and necklaces and jackets worked in gold thread. I was sorely tempted to purchase some local clothing at the markets but decided to wait until Bologna.

### **June 18**

Now I must begin to pack and prepare ourselves for the trip to Bologna. We have a long ride ahead of us--at least five days.

## BOLOGNA

Bologna has been named *La Dotta, La Grassa, & La Rossa*. *La Dotta*, (The Scholar) because of its importance as a university town that dates back to the eleventh century; *La Grassa* (the Fat) because of its fame for rich cuisine, and *La Rossa* (The Red) because of the red brick with which its predominantly medieval buildings are made.

### History and Politics

Bologna has long been an important urban centre. Its first settlements by the Etruscans, the Celts and later the Romans date back to at least 1000 BC. In the Middle Ages it was a free municipality until the troops of Pope Julius II besieged Bologna in 1506. From that point on until the eighteenth century, Bologna was part of the Papal States, ruled by a cardinal legate and a Senate. A walled city, Bologna became famous for its medieval towers, long porticoes, and antique buildings as well as its numerous churches, monasteries and convents.<sup>34</sup> Most of its early Roman and medieval buildings still remained in the eighteenth century.

### Women and the Academy

Home to the oldest university in the world, the University of Bologna boasts famous instructors and students.<sup>35</sup> As part of the University, the Science Academy or Institute of Sciences was formally inaugurated in 1714 as a center for advanced sciences in Bologna<sup>36</sup> and carried out scientific research in the tradition of Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton. The physicist Laura Bassi, who in 1732 had become the second European woman to be awarded a university degree,<sup>37</sup> became a member of the Institute where she presented annual papers. She is just one of a few remarkable women scientists in Bologna who successfully defied the social pressures on women to hide their knowledge and ideas under a veil of modesty. There were others, about whom Aphrodite will speak in her journal, such as Bettisia Gozzadini and Novella d'Andrea, Bolognese women who were also exceptions to the social rule.

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<sup>34</sup> By the end of the sixteenth century Bologna had ninety-six convents, more than any other Italian city.

<sup>35</sup> Students included Dante Alighieri, Nicholas Copernicus and Giovanni Boccaccio.

<sup>36</sup> Accademia delle Scienze dell'Istituto di Bologna.

<sup>37</sup> Elena Cornaro Piscopia, also an Italian, was the first woman to earn a doctor of philosophy degree. She received it from the University of Padua in 1678.

Like women in England, the average Italian woman did not have the time, money or family support to pursue academic studies and to present public lectures within a patriarchal society.

### Botany

The eighteenth century was a time of thriving botanical research, and many scientists actively collaborated with the Bologna Botanical Garden. Along with those in Padua, Pisa and Florence, the garden of the University of Bologna is one of Europe's oldest. Created in the sixteenth century, the original garden was transferred to Porta Santo Stefano in the eighteenth century where it now remains.

The ships returning from their exploratory voyages carried not only gold and silver stolen from the New World, but also seeds and desiccated plants. The former were germinated in gardens such as this one, while the latter were studied and classified by European botanists. Even in the seventeenth century, Bologna's Botanical Garden contained not just a simple collection of medicinal herbs. Thanks to the naturalistic interests of its founder, Giuseppe Aldrovandini, many exotic specimens were collected by him or obtained from correspondents

In 1745, a *hybernaculum*, (also referred to as an *orangerie*) with large south facing windows had been built to house and protect exotic plants during the coldest months of the year. The establishment of this special exotic section for plants being brought from distant parts of the world reflects both the new tasks assigned to botanic gardens and the new designs they were coming to have during the eighteenth century.

### The Grand Tourists and the arts

Although Bologna was not considered as important as the larger Italian cities, by the late seventeenth century, it had become a principal cultural centre and was included on the itineraries of wealthy young Englishmen who took the Grand Tour. They came to see Bologna's medieval architecture, to attend operas, or to admire the paintings displayed within its numerous monasteries and churches. Bologna rivalled Florence and Rome as a center of Italian painting. The tourists enjoyed the works by the city's late Renaissance artists particularly the Bolognese School which included the Carracci family, Domenichino, Guercino and Guido Reni.



Operas were presented regularly in Bologna and the Teatro Marsigli-Rossi, and Teatro Comunale regularly offered works by popular composers including Vivaldi, Gluck, and Puccini. Important singers, such as the castrato Farinelli, settled in Bologna to teach and perform. Father Giovanni Battisti Martini, famous as a composer, music teacher and theoretician, became choir master at the church of San Francesco in Bologna.

Mozart visited Bologna as a young man in 1770 preparing for the entry examination at the Accademia under the tutorship of Father Martini.

There was also a healthy social life for the noble visitors to the city; some hospitable residents provided bed and board for their visiting guests. There are stories about the sumptuous meals and excursions organized by a Marquis Albergati Capacelli,<sup>38</sup> a Bolognese writer, playwright and city administrator who owned a villa outside of town.

Many tourists participated in Bologna's fiestas and cultural celebrations, and as part of the social and cultural functions, young wealthy Englishmen could entertain themselves by gambling. Billiards and card playing in coffee houses, salons or casinos were very popular. The travellers could also bet on horses at the racetrack north of Bologna or spend a few days visiting Venice to play cards in its gambling houses or *ridottos*.

**E.K.**

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<sup>38</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *The Grand Tour*, 131.

## *Lady Aphrodite's Journal: June - August 1786*

### **June 21, 1786 - Bologna**

We have endured a long, tiring journey from Turin to Bologna, travelling along the bumpy roads between the Alps and Apennines and staying in uncomfortable inns along the way. We passed through Piacenza, Parma, Reggio and Modena in the Province of Emilio Romana. The state of public cleanliness left a lot to be desired--the offensive stench may be partially due to the climate and poor drainage. I had to hold a handkerchief to my nose on the very warm days.

I am delighted by our apartments here in Bologna where we three plan to spend the next few months; they are very comfortable.<sup>39</sup> I have been given the name of an excellent cook who knows how to prepare food *à la anglaise*. She is a local woman called Beatrice and will shop and cook for us daily except on Sunday. We have found lodging with furnished rooms, designed in the simple antique style<sup>40</sup>, on the third floor of a well-built palazzo on Via Galiera. There are three bedchambers, a dining room, a salon, a kitchen and a small room with a wash basin and a commode. The tall windows face the street but are covered with shutters and heavy curtains that serve to keep out both the street noise and the strong afternoon sunlight.

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<sup>39</sup> "It was not customary to live at a hotel except just long enough to enable one to find a furnished room elsewhere ...Those who intend to make any stay had better hire furnished apartments, which are very reasonable; for you may be accommodated with a palazzo, as they call it, or a handsome furnished house for about six guineas a month." Thomas. Nugent *The Grand Tour* III, (London, 1766), 291 quoted in William E. Mead, *The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century*: (New York: Benjamin Blom Inc., 1972), 91-92.

<sup>40</sup> Later referred to as the "Neo-Classical" style.

In my initial walks through the town I have noticed the very elegant porticos along many of the streets. They are functional as well as beautiful as they protect one from both the sun and the rain, making it very comfortable to move about the streets. I am looking forward to touring the city properly and to visiting its historical monuments.

I have heard of a Scotch clergyman, Reverend Stuart Carruthers Brown, who is highly knowledgeable about classical antiquity and who may introduce us to the Roman and Medieval ruins and statuary of this town. He is what is known as a "bearleader," someone who often acts as a tutor for young gentlemen on the grand tour.<sup>41</sup> I am sure, given the right financial incentive, he also would be willing to enlighten adults and members of the fairer sex. I do hope Andrew joins us.

### **June 22, 1786**

Bologna is everything I had hoped for and I suspect we will thrive here. There is good reason why Bologna is called *La Grassa*, "the fat". The Bolognese eat well and their rounded sleekness is a good testimony to their diet.<sup>42</sup> Belinda and I have enjoyed shopping in the many little markets installed in the shade of the porticos and are discovering that Bologna is famed for its cheeses such as Parmigiana, its meats (*salume, mortadella, prosciutto*), and its pasta (especially *tagliatelle, fettuccini and tortellini*) simply made from wheat, eggs, and water.

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<sup>41</sup> For the English gentry, "Classical heritage was Civilization, to all intents and purposes, (for a boy's parents) sought to provide (their sons) at worst a thin coating, at best a thorough marinading (sic), by immersing him at its fount." Roger Hudson, "Introduction." *The Grand Tour 1592-1796*, (London: The Folio Society, 1993), 13.

<sup>42</sup> Hester Piozzi observed that "The territory belonging to Bologna la Grassa centers all its charms in a happy *embonpoint*, which leaves no wrinkle unfilled up, no bone to be discerned..." Hester Lynch Piozzi., *Observations*, 126.

Their wine comes from local grapes--*Pignoletto*, *Sangiovese* and *Lambrusco*. It is cheap and readily available. Olives and olive oil, as well as fresh fruit and vegetables (harvested throughout the year) make the Italian diet a very healthy one. I am hoping that Andrew will eventually benefit from it within the next few months and begin to look less thin and sallow.

Bologna is also dubbed *La Dotta*, "the scholar," with good reason.<sup>43</sup> In it was built the first university in the world they say; even older than Oxford! The University of Bologna has a long and respected history, mainly known for teaching law and medicine. The student population of the city is large and very influential; a whole area of Bologna, along Via San Donato<sup>44</sup>, is filled with student activities.

What endears this place of learning most to me is its support of women scholars. Legend has it that in the thirteenth century Bettisia Gozzadini was the first woman to have taught at a university. Apparently, however, she had to dress in men's clothes and wear a veil over her face when teaching so as not to distract male students! What doesn't surprise me is the fact that her parents, Amadore Gozzadini and Adelasia de' Pegolotti, were of the nobility and had the means and the social standing to support their daughter in her studies of law and philosophy. Even now, centuries later, she is very well respected in Bologna; a terra cotta bust of her has been installed in the Salone d'Onore of Palazzo Fabbri. There are also stories told of another woman, Novella d'Andrea, living in the fourteenth century, who was also a lecturer at the University of Bologna.

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<sup>43</sup> " The university was thought by tourists to justify a visit to the city even if they took into no account other attractions." William. E. Mead, *The Grand Tour*, 299.

<sup>44</sup> Now named "Via Zamboni."

In this century, among the most famous women teachers here is Laura Bassi who died only ten years ago. At the age of 20 she was given the chair in philosophy, and later the chair in experimental physics, teaching logic, metaphysics, philosophy, chemistry, hydraulics, mathematics, algebra, ancient and modern languages, and geometry! I asked how a woman could gain such knowledge in such a short a period and become so respected during a time when women are considered unequal to men.

Apparently her father, a wealthy lawyer, decided she should be educated at home where she was tutored for seven years beginning at the age of five. She was constantly encouraged and supported by a wealthy family and powerful friends--prerequisites, it seems, for a successful female scholar.

There is a woman here who may be currently teaching at the University of Bologna whom I hope to meet. Her name is Maria Gaetana Agnesi. Apparently, at the age of nine she composed and delivered an hour long speech in Latin on the subject of women's right to be educated! She is about my age and is a mathematician, humanitarian, and linguist. She was the first woman to write a mathematics handbook and to be appointed as a mathematics professor at a university. If I can overcome my shyness and feeling of inadequacy, I will try to find and talk with her. I gather she speaks Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, German, and Latin. I hope she speaks English but, if not, I will try and converse with her in Italian. She could be an inspiration and perhaps help me navigate the next few years of my life. Perhaps we share similar belief systems and, although I gather she is a devout Catholic, I believe we can transcend religious differences.

It is a shame that it is considered exceptional when women do well intellectually and are respected for their academic contribution to society. Things may be changing for women, but very slowly. These days, only wealthy women of a good family stand a chance of becoming respected scholars. I have been fortunate to have had a governess and parents who have taught me well, but in England no woman has yet been allowed into the halls of higher education!<sup>45</sup>

I must spend some time with Belinda to find out what her aspirations are. Perhaps I can find ways to help her apply her love of music by improving her flute playing, singing or composing. We will have a few months here; perhaps I can find someone in the Music Academy here to help guide her.

**June 23, 1786**

There is a good reason why the town has been described as *La Rossa*. The red clay (*terra rossa*) has been used in making the roofing tiles and many of the brick walls of Bologna's medieval buildings. For the past few days we have been given tours of the Roman and medieval antiquities of Bologna by the bearleader, Rev. Brown. He has been a font of knowledge and enthusiasm for the art and architecture of the city. There are still remains of early Roman structures and sculpture that date back as far as the fifth century, but it is the red-brick abbeys, medieval churches and towers that dominate and colour the city.

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<sup>45</sup> Women's colleges were allowed in Oxford and Cambridge only during the late nineteenth century.

The period of papal rule in the sixteenth century saw the construction of many churches and other religious establishments and the reincarnation of older ones. The peace and quiet of their dim medieval interiors, removed from the noise and bustle of the streets, are welcome relief. Their sacred halls are lit only by shafts of sunlight passing through alabaster windows. I must assume that at night only candles illuminate the rooms of these voluminous spaces.

On our tour we visited the *Archiginnasio* of Bologna, the main building of the University of Bologna built in the sixteenth century. The interior as well as the exterior are magnificent. I was particularly impressed by the anatomical theatre with the dissecting table placed in the centre of a seating area exquisitely carved in fir wood. The ornate chair of the lecturing professor is supported by two naked and skinless men, gruesome reminders of the room's purpose. (I was a bit worried about their effect on Belinda's tender sensibilities but she told me later she had been "fascinated".)

A number of statues were carved on the wall, including those of Hippocrates and Galen but what made me chuckle was one of a medic holding a nose in his hand; apparently it is a portrayal of an early pioneer of nose surgery.

### **June 24, 1786**

I had sent a note to Snr. Gaetano Monti to make an appointment to visit him and the botanical garden and he kindly responded. He has invited the three of us to dine in his home this Tuesday and promised to give me a tour of his garden. I look forward to this and hope that I may return for subsequent visits. I will spend the next few days looking through my paintings to select the best to show him. Belinda laughs at me and says I fuss too much but I want to impress him enough that he invites me to frequently return and draw the plants in his collection.

### June 25, 1786

We went on a tour of some of the many churches here. One of the main ones is the Santuario de San Luca which displays a painting of Madonna di San Luca. During the most important religious festival in Bologna, Easter, the painting is carried through the city walls to the Basilica San Petronio that dominates the main piazza. There, it is blessed before it is returned to the Sanctuary. The Basilica, completed in 1479, is the main church of the city but, surprisingly, its facade is unfinished - surprising considering the religious piety of the people of Bologna. Not only have they built hundreds of churches, convents and monasteries, but clergy and pious women, all dressed in black, fill the streets and create a mournful mood.<sup>46</sup> I feel a little gaudy dressed in my simple blue frock.

### June 26, 1786

Another day touring! Despite my aching back, we spend a pleasant morning looking at pictures before I retired to my cool bedroom for an afternoon nap. We visited the Accademia Clementina and the Palazzo Pubblico and saw some wonderful art works by some Bolognese artists. Annibale, Agostino and Ludovico Carracci have painted many fine canvases and Guido Reni has also greatly impressed me. I spent a good deal of time just standing and staring at each painting for minutes at a time, attempting not so much to understand it as to simply enjoy it. I found that some of the work elicited something I can only describe as an aesthetic pleasure. The rich reds in the Venetian paintings, the dramatic chiaroscuro in the Caravaggios, or the sinuous borders on the clothing of medieval Madonnas become *felt* experiences.

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<sup>46</sup> Hester Piozzi said it well: "This sad Bologna has a tristful look, from the numberless priests, friars and women all dressed in black, who fill the streets, and stop on a sudden to pray, when I see nothing done to call forth addresses to Heaven." Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Observations*, 129.



I still want to have our family portrait painted and have been looking for painters to do this here in Bologna. I am particularly interested in Angelica Kauffman who I hear has recently come to Bologna from Rome where she is based. She is mainly a history painter but has done some excellent portraits of Winckelmann and of the Royal Family of Naples. Although Austrian born, she speaks Italian and expresses herself with facility in French and English, so we will be able to communicate. What we will say to each other, I'm not as sure. I doubt we can hire her to paint our portrait and must look for a less renowned artist within the city. And now, to bed!

**June 27, 1786**

I am getting a little worried about Andrew. He has linked up with a group of young English men who have more money than sense, and who entertain themselves by drinking, gambling and staying up to all hours of the night. He goes with them regularly to the *Ippodrome Archoveggio* just north of the city where he bets on the horses.

Most of his afternoons and evenings, however, are spent in the cafés, playing cards, chess and backgammon. Occasionally he attends gambling casinos where he plays *Faro* and *Rouge et Noir* and where, I suspect, he loses more money than he wins judging from his sour expression at the breakfast table the next morning.

His habits are not healthy; he smokes a pipe, takes snuff and rarely exercises. He does come with us in the carriage when we are taken on tours of the classical and medieval monuments and Renaissance paintings, although I suspect he does it so as not to look a boor in the eyes of his daughter. I am relieved that Andrew likes the theatre and opera and joins us whenever we go to a performance.

Speaking of the theatre, I find it curious how Italians behave when they are watching a play or an opera. They constantly talk among themselves, calling out from their boxes to the performers and to each other. They behave in a manner that would be considered extremely rude in most London theatres. I often find it hard to hear what is being sung or said. Theatre-going here seems to be more of a social occasion than a cultural one. I suppose I will have to adapt.

**June 28, 1786**

So she can keep in practice while here in Italy, I have managed to find a music teacher for Belinda. His name is Friar Stanislaw Mattei. He is a member of the Music Academy, a composer and a conductor of the girls' choir at the Franciscan convent. With him, she will continue with her flute playing and take voice lessons. Perhaps she will even have an opportunity to sing in the choir. I feel very happy that the talents of my niece are being nurtured and thankful that her father can pay for the best education money can buy here.

**June 29, 1786**

Oh the bells in this city! They are so loud, so persistent and so many! Sundays are the worst. How am I to get some sleep? They begin at dawn and continue until the middle of the night!

**June 30, 1786**

Tomorrow we dine at the home of Snr. Monti; I am so looking forward to this and have selected five of my botanical illustrations to show him. Now I must decide what to wear.



*Figure 2 Rosmarinus officinalis*



*Figure 3 Thymus serpyllum*



*Figure 4 Lavendula stoechas*



*Figure 5 Tilia bractea*



*Figure 6 Skimmia japonica*

**July 1, 1786**

I have had the most wonderful day! We were generously entertained by Snr. Monti who not only provided a delicious dinner but had invited guests from the University of Bologna to meet us. These included people from the Department of Natural Philosophy, Mathematics and Physics, including the former chair of the department, Maria Gaetana Agnesi. She is now retired and lives in a home for the elderly that she founded three years ago. I am so glad I had the opportunity to meet her.

While enjoying some of their best Lambrusco and the *tagliatelle alla ragù bolognese*, a specialty of Snr Monti's chef, we engaged in fascinating discussions on subjects ranging from Dr. Linnaeus' classification system, to the declining health of Frederic the Great,<sup>47</sup> to the astronomical discoveries of William Herschel and his sister Caroline, to the maritime maneuvers of Catherine the Great of Russia, and theorems of infinitesimal calculus!<sup>48</sup>

I was exceedingly impressed by Snra Agnesi's energy and extensive knowledge. Although I was unable to grasp everything she was saying, I warmed to her especially when I learned of her generosity and kindness to others. Although her mind dances in the abstract world of mathematics and physics, her feet are planted solidly on Italian *terra*. A devout Catholic, she has done much to help the poor, homeless and sick--setting up a hospital in her home, giving away the gifts she had received and begging for money to continue with her work with the poor. She is an inspiration. When I meet people like her, I begin to realize that, as I have long suspected, women not only possess the same intelligence as men, but can make a significant contribution to academic knowledge and to society. Eventually they may be recognized for it!

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<sup>47</sup> Frederick the Great died two months later in August 1786.

<sup>48</sup> One of the first and most complete works on both infinitesimal and integral calculus was written in 1748 by Maria Gaetana Agnesi.

After dinner, some of us took a tour of the Orto Botanico di Bologna. It will be interesting to compare this garden with other Italian botanical gardens in Padua, Florence, Rome and Naples that I plan to visit during the upcoming months. Snr. Monti said he liked my drawings (I'm sure he was just being kind) and encouraged me to come as often as I would like and to use the garden's collection as subjects of study. I hope to learn a great deal from him and the garden within the next two months. I feel like I'm beginning to look at the world with fresh eyes, feeling confident that I will gain knowledge that will allow me to contribute something of value during my aging years.

### **July 3, 1786**

Today Bindy and I went to look at the anatomical wax models made by Snra. Anna Morandi Manzolini at the Palazzo Poggi and at the Institute of Science. Some of her anatomical models are so skillfully molded that they are difficult to distinguish from the actual body parts from which they were copied. She holds the distinction of having been the first person to reproduce in wax, body parts of minute portions, including capillary vessels and nerves. Her self-portraits at the Palazzo are extraordinary lifelike. She died over ten years ago at the age of sixty-- I would have liked to have met her. She combined scientific knowledge, careful observation and creativity--characteristics that she must have honed during a lifetime of study.

### **July 5, 1786**

During these hot lazy hours of summer afternoons, I spend my time reading some of the books I have brought along with me--some learned and philosophical works (by Rousseau, Montesquieu and Linnaeus) to keep my mind in shape; some books of poetry; a few novels such as *Evelina* by my dear friend Fanny Burney; and Tobias Smollett's *Travels through France and Italy*.

Books by M. Rousseau have been constant reading companions up until now because of his love of botany and fascination with nature. I have enjoyed reading his *Reveries*<sup>49</sup> and botanical letters in his *Study of Pure Curiosity*<sup>50</sup>. But I am surprised and disappointed when I read his views on women and their role in society. He believes it is natural that men and women occupy separate spheres--the worldly sphere for men and the domestic sphere for women. He thinks the woman's sole purpose is to bear and raise children and that they have weak intellectual abilities --only designed to give and feel love. How little he knows us!

I wonder how he could come to such conclusions when there are women like Anna Morandi Manzolini & Maria Gaetana Agnesi in this world, contributing so intelligently and skillfully to science and the arts? He is as bad as those men and women in our English society who think that women are subordinate to men and should simply strive to make themselves pleasing companions and nursemaids to their children.<sup>51</sup>

In contrast to Rousseau, Montesquieu is supportive of women's equality in society but believes a man to be dominant in all things domestic! I wonder what his early home life was like for him to have formed such an opinion. In his book, *On the Spirit of the Laws*, he argues that women are too weak to manage a home but their calmness and gentleness would be helpful in making decisions in government! Montesquieu would have approved of some women I learned about at a Parisian salon I attended in May.

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<sup>49</sup> J.J. Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, 1782. (London: Penguin Books, 1979).

<sup>50</sup> J.J Rousseau, *Botany. A Study of Pure Curiosity. Botanical Letters and Notes Towards a Dictionary of Botanical Terms*, 1712. (Michael Joseph Ltd., 1979)

<sup>51</sup> Aphrodite's attitude is a bit out-of-date. Although Rousseau advocated for different roles for men and women, he did consider the female role--as supporters of family and moral values--essential within society. An Enlightenment thinker, he did a great deal to encourage women's education.

In 1774, the Edenton Ladies Tea Party, a group of women from North Carolina in the Americas, successfully led a protest against the British government.

### **July 10, 1786**

Yesterday morning, Andrew and his friends went to the race track again. He must have done well as he came back very happy. We spent the evening with other English visitors at the home of the Marquis Albergati where we were well entertained. Our host forbade all serious talk during our delicious meal, and the wine was poured liberally.

Andrew, happier than he had been for ages, later joined in the card games and played some billiards; I joined another group in the drawing room while a most elegant woman, Maria Rosa Coccia, a composer from Rome, was playing on the harpsichord. She was kind enough to invite Belinda to play a piece by Vivaldi on her flute, giving my niece the opportunity to show how well she has progressed in her lessons. Later, things turned a little sour when Andrew began losing the money he had made on the horses.

As we made our way home towards the lights of the city, blackbirds and doves called from darkened trees and shrubs, but we stayed silent, each buried within our own landscape of thoughts and worries.

### **July 15, 1786**

We have decided that before we leave this region and continue south, we must visit Padua (or Padova as they say in Italian). It would be a shame to miss the fourteenth century frescos by Giotto covering the walls and ceiling of the Scrovegni Chapel and the Mantegna frescos in the Church of the Eremitani. I must also visit the University of Padua and its Botanical Gardens which are about as old as the university here.

It is over seventy miles away but the terrain is relatively flat and we can break our journey in Ferrara. I think that to even entertain the hope of visiting Venice on this trip would be a foolish one. There is so little time to give that magical city proper attention. Florence, Rome and Naples will adequately satisfy our curiosity and our resources cannot last indefinitely. Perhaps I will make a trip there in the future.

### July 20, 1786

Almost every second day I visit the botanical gardens to sketch and to read their botanical archives. I have always been interested in the exotic plants that have been carefully selected and brought back to Europe from foreign lands. Their flamboyant beauty is a wonderful contrast to the shy modesty of English flowers. I associate these specimens with the tales of adventure and exploration that accompanied their discovery. In the earlier years, I spent many hours at Kew Gardens, capturing in paint the likeness of these often bizarre specimens. One of my earliest efforts was of the *Strelitzia* or Bird-of-Paradise, a plant that was discovered in South Africa a little over ten years ago by Scottish botanist Francis Masson. He sent to Kew Gardens over five hundred previously unknown plant species, one of which was this Bird-of-Paradise. Joseph Banks, the keeper of Kew Gardens, named it *Strelitzia* after Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Queen consort of George III. She was probably flattered but a bit surprised.

While studying and illustrating plants in the Botanical Garden here in Bologna, I painted an *antherium* acquired from the Palace of Schönbrunn in Vienna.<sup>52</sup> In the heat of an Italian summer the watercolour paint quickly dries and it is easy to work rapidly, building up the luminous layers of reds and greens. This particular *antherium*, grown from seed, has a strange dream-like quality.

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<sup>52</sup> Places like the University of Bologna did not have money to fund major expeditions and were dependent on larger, well-endowed botanical gardens in France, England or Austria.



Its bright red heart-shaped *spathe* is very stiff and folded, almost like an inner ear. The yellow *spadix* that sticks out from the *spathe* is densely packed with tiny flowers. The smaller, younger version of the *spathe* looks a bit like a little monkey face, nestled among the large heart-shaped leaves. I will wrap these paintings in muslin with my other artwork and pack them in the bottom of one of my trunks.



Figure 7 *Strelitzia*



Figure 8 *Antherium*

### July 30, 1786

Seeking out the dark coolness of the palazzi, churches and monasteries, I have returned a number of times to look at the painters of the Bolognese School dating to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and I like them increasingly. They are pleasing to the eye if one can ignore the absurd subject matter and focus on the painterly qualities. Although I have lacked knowledge and experience, I think the many hours spent here looking and comparing has given me the opportunity to discern the more successful paintings.

Today I invited Belinda to join me in my explorations and enjoyed listening to her comments as we walked along. Being young and idealistic, she loves the pastel cherubs and sweet Madonnas. I am, instead, drawn to the more somber and psychological portraits of saints and martyrs. Guido Reni is a master at evoking the underlying character of his subjects and, if I allow myself to be, I am drawn into their world. Reni's radiant fresco *St. Dominic's Glory*, in the cupola of the chapel of Saint Dominic in the Basilica of San Domenico is a masterpiece, as is his *Resurrection* in the Rosary Chapel.

The Carracci brothers, too, are extraordinary. I have been reading Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* to help me realize the importance of the two brothers and their cousin. Their works are drawn from nature and their broken brushwork creates energetic movement across the surface. Capturing the effects of light on form, they create three-dimensional figures that seem to burst through the canvas. Combining the classical linear style of Raphael with the vibrant colours of Venetian painters like Titian, their paintings stand out from the earlier Mannerist work of the late sixteenth century. How nice it would be to find someone who paints like that today! I realize I must abandon my hopes of finding someone in Bologna to paint our family portrait. Since we have arrived, I have not had a chance to be introduced to local artists. Perhaps we can locate someone in Rome or Naples.

### **August, 2 1786**

The heat of the Italian summer is almost unbearable, especially here in this stifling red brick town! We have decided to do what most Italians do and go to the seashore where cool winds blow off the Adriatic. We have decided to take a little apartment in the small coastal town of Porto Corsini outside Ravenna. I hear the Albergo Cappello is a nice place to stay.

It might prove a long trip there and back to Bologna, but as we are staying for the month, I feel it will be worth it. We can visit Ravenna to see the early Byzantine churches and their beautiful mosaics. I will read something undemanding and walk along the Lido in the evening, listening to the waves and seagulls. Perhaps Andrew will join me in my walks and Belinda will entertain us with her flute. I am glad to see he is feeling a little better and has more energy. It will be nice for all of us to just stop and do nothing for a few weeks--*dolce far niente*--as the Italians say.<sup>53</sup>

### *Lady Aphrodite's Journal: September 1786*

#### **September 9, 1786 - Padua**

Before I blow out my candle I must scratch a few pages of my journal and describe the past few weeks of our travel.

Feeling well rested and more comfortable after our peaceful stay in Ravenna, we returned to Bologna, said goodbye to some of the friends we had met there, picked up the rest of our luggage and headed off to Padua. After a certain amount of bartering, Andrew had repaired our carriage that we have been using a great deal during the summer, and found two healthy young horses. He also hired a driver-- a surly looking chap called Enzo who agreed to take us to Padua, saying it would take a hard three days--*molto impegnativo*. He was right. The journey to Padua was a rough one--the heavily rutted roads baked dry with the sun meant every bump in the road shook our bones.

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<sup>53</sup> Sweet doing nothing.

I was worried how our carriage would stand up to all the battering, fearing it might turn over or lose a wheel. Fortunately, the region of Emilia-Romagna is flat--a wide plain that stretches westward toward the Apennines- so we were able to move quickly, stopping briefly at an inn in Malalbergo to have a bite to eat in the shade of a large oak tree humming with cicadas. We finally arrived in Ferrara quite late at night, clattering through the broad cobblestone streets to the Three Moors *osteria*. Exhausted, we fell into bed, every joint and muscle screaming for a hot English bath.

I was tempted to look around Ferrara the next morning; the town was not busy and the heat was bearable. There are some beautiful buildings here--the architectural heritage of the Este family who patronized the arts during the Renaissance as well as a magnificent Romanesque cathedral and ancient city walls. But Belinda and Andrew were anxious to move on. We had to cover over fifty miles that day so when I suggested a quick trip to the Castello Estense, Belinda just rolled her eyes and Andrew walked out of the room

Just before nine in the morning, with a fresh pair of horses and some bread, cooked pasta, grapes and cheese packed in a basket, we began our journey north. It was a tumultuous day that tested our resilience. One crossing over a branch of the Po River threatened to tip us over entirely and, as we moved closer to the ocean, the winds picked up. Suddenly we were drenched in a violent rainstorm that quickly almost liquefied the poorly-drained clay roads. Much to our collective frustration, we had to stop in the little commune of Rovigo to wait for the rain to stop. The clouds finally parted and the sky turned a rich cerulean blue. Because of this unexpected interruption we were unable to reach Padua before nightfall and were obliged to stay in a small *osteria* in the hill-town town of Monselice. Our host boasted that despite its diminutive size the town has a history dating to the Bronze Age!

The next day, while the others were still sleeping, I got up and wandered through the peaceful streets, visiting the Romanesque church and enjoying the smell of baking bread and the sounds of roosters crowing. Apparently Enzo and Andrew had spent most of the night drinking and smoking. They were not as pleased as I was to see daybreak and slept well into the morning. Belinda seems to be unperturbed by anything and enjoyed a big breakfast.

### September 15, 1786

Padua, situated in broad plain spreading southwards is embraced by a range of mountains in the North West. In the far distance, I can see through the autumnal haze the tall snow-capped Alps of the Tyrol. Everything is lush and fertile here on the lowlands that are now ready for harvesting. Pumpkins and other squash hang from balconies and dot the fields in rows.



*Figure 9: Delicata squash*

Fruit trees are heavy with their bounty and jays and nuthatches fuss and flutter in the chestnut trees, pounding up the nuts to suit their taste. Even the donkeys are large, strong and beautiful--not surprising considering the quantity and quality of the food they are fed. How sweet the air is--a wonderful change from the stifling heat of the more southerly towns we have visited.

### **September 26, 1786**

Like Bologna, Padua is a university town. Founded in 1222 as a school of law, the University of Padua is one of the most prominent universities of Europe and the second oldest in Italy. On our tour of the university we found the classrooms small and cramped; the extremely old anatomy theatre is a narrow funnel-shaped space in which one looks directly down from above to the badly-lit dissecting table. I wondered how it was possible for a prospective doctor to adequately learn detailed human anatomy. Andrew, who has an irrational fear of small spaces, was overcome by dizziness and had to leave. I hope he will enjoy our visit to the university's botanical garden tomorrow.

### **September 27, 1786**

Today we three spent the morning in the world's first botanical garden! Created in 1545 as part of the university, like many others of that time it was first devoted to the growth of medicinal plants. Now, the ordering of the display has been done very scientifically by categories of species and looks to have been recently influenced by Linnaeus' taxonomy. Like the one in Bologna, the garden is enriched by exotic plants brought from the world over. Some trees are very old such as the chaste tree dating from 1550 and the plane tree from 1690.

A gardener pointed out to me a shaggy palm tree located in its own greenhouse that he told me dates back to 1585. We wandered over to look and noticed a clean-shaven man with dark brown eyes and a long hooked nose, examining the plant intensely, sketching its leaves and making copious notes. Some cuttings from different parts of the tree were wrapped in sheets of paper and lying on the ground.

My curiosity overcame my shyness and I introduced ourselves, asking him what it was about the palm that made it particularly interesting. With a strong German accent he introduced himself as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, explaining that he was here developing a theory about the metamorphosis of plants. The growth patterns of the dwarf fan palm, he said, might factor into his theory that all plant forms derive from one original plant.<sup>54</sup>

Belinda was delighted to learn who he was as she had recently read his book, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and had found it very moving. He smiled and said he had been rather surprised and embarrassed by the book's wild success and the attention it brought to him. Andrew admitted that he had also read the book and, like many European men, had been tempted to emulate the clothing of young Werther--yellow trousers, a blue jacket and an open-necked shirt.

Belinda chuckled and said she hoped her father would not also emulate Werther by committing suicide. There was an awkward silence and I quickly changed the subject, describing our travel plans and mentioning my concern about finding adequate accommodations in Rome. It turns out that Mr. Goethe is also going to Rome soon! He gave me names of some of his German-speaking friends there who might help us find lodging. I hope we might meet him again and have further conversations about his botanical theories.

### **September 30, 1786**

We spent the following few days in Padua enjoying the fine art and architecture of the city including the large thirteenth-century Basilica of St. Anthony, with its Byzantine-style domes, the Prato della Valle--the largest square in Italy, and the tenth-century Benedictine Abbey of Santa Giustina.

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<sup>54</sup> Goethe's *Essay on the Metamorphosis of Plants* was later published in 1790.

There are some wonderful bookshops here which seem to attract a variety of people interested in literature and publishing--clergy, nobility, artists and students. It is easy to strike up a conversation with strangers when they share a common interest. I spent a few hours there and purchased a copy of *Young Werther* and a small guide book on the Renaissance art of Florence while Belinda found a musical score for flute by Scarlatti. While we explored the bookshop, Andrew spent time at the Caffè Pedrocchi, a favorite gathering place of artists. He probably lost some *scudi* at the gambling tables.<sup>55</sup>

Tomorrow we prepare to return south, continuing on to Florence!

### *Lady Aphrodite's Journal: October 1786*

#### **October 5, 1786 - Through the Apennines**

Equipped with a carriage, driver and two horses, we retraced our route back to Bologna, staying overnight at Ferrara and then in a small *osteria* on the outskirts of Bologna. Our travel through the Apennine Mountains was slow but uneventful. The horses were up to the task and carried us up hill and down dale without too much need for the driver's encouragement. Occasionally, we had to traverse some torrential mountain streams and were obliged to cross on foot. Fortunately I carried a sturdy walking stick that I'd bought in Padua. Although I have read some travellers' tales that describe the Apennines as being without merit, I found them delightful and a nice transition from the north to the south. True, there were no towering snow-covered peaks to provide drama to our views but the fresh air and cool breezes were welcome after the heat of the towns we left behind.

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<sup>55</sup> Padua's Scrovegni Chapel, built in the fourteenth century and decorated by Giotto, although a major tourist attraction now, was not accessible to eighteenth century tourists.



During the long days in the carriage, we each had our own way of passing the time. My readings alternated between *Sorrows of Young Werther* during the lazy hours of the afternoon and, in the mornings, *Vasari's Lives*, focusing on the Florentine artists. I am looking forward to seeing Donatello's bronze *David* after seeing his *Gattamelata* in Padua's town square and hope we can find a reliable guide to take us around the town.

Belinda is again enjoying the excitement of travelling through mountains and constantly wants to get out of the carriage to pick berries and gather pine cones. Andrew is being very quiet and reserved; I don't know whether he is ill or worried about something. Perhaps he will cheer up after he reconnects with some of his male friends from Bologna; I'm sure he finds both of us tiresome, being either too old, too young or too female to share his interests.



Figure 10 Giant White Himalayan Pine Cone

It will be nice to get to Florence--the city of flowers. I miss my creature comforts and am glad we brought our own sheets, pillows and food that we bought in Padua, as many of the little mountain houses that serve as inns along the way have little to offer in the way of amenities but small beds, hot water, milk and black bread. I look forward to a good English meal when I get to Florence tomorrow.

# FLORENCE

## History and Politics

Florence, the capital of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, considered the birthplace of the Renaissance, was a cultural Mecca for European travellers. The popularity of Florence as a tourist destination and its worldwide fame owed a great deal to the British community there. It has been said that it was the British who made Florence the artistic capital of the world.<sup>56</sup>

When Aphrodite visited the city, the powerful banking dynasty of the Medicis had ended and Florence was controlled by the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty of Austria. It was overseen by the Grand Duke Peter Leopold, an enlightened member of the Austrian House of Lorraine whose reign lasted until the unification of Italy in 1861. The town was undergoing major civic renovations when Goethe briefly visited the Tuscan capital; he commented on these renovations after his experiences in the Papal State of Bologna:

"The most striking thing about Tuscany is that all the public works, the roads and the bridges look beautiful and imposing...a refreshing contrast to the Papal States, which seem to keep alive only because the earth refuses to swallow them."<sup>57</sup>

## Painting & Sculpture and the Grand Tour

Described by American diplomat, William Lee in 1752, as "a most agreeable place abounding in every species of virtue that one can wish to see, sculpture, painting and the arts carrying to the greatest perfection,"<sup>58</sup> the city was one of the highlights of The Grand Tour. By the 1770s the Uffizi Gallery, with its classical antiquities and Renaissance paintings, had become a tourist hub.

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<sup>56</sup> "The British in Florence," *The Tradition of the Grand Tour*, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze. [http://grandtour.bncf.firenze.sbn.it/tale/a-region-recounted/a-journey-through-customs/the-british-in-florence?set\\_language=en&cl=en](http://grandtour.bncf.firenze.sbn.it/tale/a-region-recounted/a-journey-through-customs/the-british-in-florence?set_language=en&cl=en)

<sup>57</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 117.

<sup>58</sup> Jeremy Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour*, 45.

The last of the Medici dynasty had ensured that all its art and treasures collected over nearly three centuries remained in Florence and the Uffizi Gallery was declared an “inalienable public good,” paving the way for its wealth of art to be shared with all. In 1769 Grand Duke Peter Leopold renovated the picture gallery, making it open daily to the public. It was completely reorganized according to the new scientific criteria of the Enlightenment. The *Tribuna*, an octagonal room in the Uffizi gallery, designed in 1584, housed the best of the Medici collection<sup>59</sup> and a visit to it was obligatory for any self-respecting antiquarian, fine art connoisseur, or diplomat.<sup>60</sup>

The Grand Duke had separated the Uffizi paintings from the scientific pieces for which a new museum was built, the Museum of Zoology and Natural History, best known as *La Specola*. It displayed three thousand specimens in the hall of skeletons and its fourteen hundred wax anatomical models form the largest such collection in the world.

The Anglo-Florentines were a culture-hungry community in Italy that purchased classical antiquities and commissioned works by local artists, sometimes indiscriminately. In 1729 Montesquieu wryly observed that,

“...the English carry off everything from Italy: pictures, statues, portraits [...] but the English rarely take away things of value: the Italians let as little go as they can, for they are connoisseurs selling to a people who are not. An Italian would rather sell his wife in the original than an original by Raphael.”<sup>61</sup>

English antiquarians, connoisseurs and collectors influenced the buying habits of Florence's visitors, while English artists like Thomas Patch (a caricaturist, topographical painter and antiquities dealer) and Sir Joshua Reynolds became important commentators of the social scene.

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<sup>59</sup> Johann Zoffany's famous painting of *The Tribuna* (commissioned by Queen Charlotte of Great Britain) included known residents and visitors to Florence, all identifiable. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribuna\\_of\\_the\\_Uffizi\\_\(painting\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribuna_of_the_Uffizi_(painting))

<sup>60</sup> It is noteworthy that not one flesh-and-blood woman is portrayed in Zoffany's *The Tribuna* painting despite the fact that it was commissioned for Queen Charlotte and that a large percentage of the closely-scrutinized art works on display are representations of women, both clothed and naked. The painting was not well received and was severely criticized, but not because of the absence of women represented but because of the impropriety of crowding in to it so many figures unknown to England's King and Queen. From 1777 until 1788 George III had it hanging in his rooms at Kew. It was subsequently relegated to the Upper Library at Buckingham House in 1819.

<sup>61</sup> “The British in Florence,” *The Tradition of the Grand Tour*, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze. [http://grandtour.bncf.firenze.sbn.it/tale/a-region-recounted/a-journey-through-customs/the-british-in-florence?set\\_language=en&cl=en](http://grandtour.bncf.firenze.sbn.it/tale/a-region-recounted/a-journey-through-customs/the-british-in-florence?set_language=en&cl=en)

The third Earl Cowper, an eccentric English expatriate and one of the richest residents of Florence, was a collector of paintings and patron of poets, scientists and musicians.

### Music

The Grand Duke also directed his patronage to the musical arts. As *protettore* of the leading theaters of Florence he subsidized and influenced important theatrical decisions. The Austrian court also supported an orchestra, chorus, and *maestro di cappella* for the performance of sacred music. The small size of Florence enhanced the effect of the Duke's musical patronage.

### Botany

The Botanical Garden in Florence, established in December 1545, is Europe's third oldest. Typical of that time, its prime interest was in medicinal plants. The garden was improved, embellished and updated thanks to the commitment of Cosimo III dei Medici who assigned its direction to the Florentine Botanical Society, under the direction of the botanist Pier Antonio Micheli. Its direction was transferred in 1783 to the "Accademia dei Georgofili" and was then referred to as an "Agricultural experimental garden."

### Social Life

The Renaissance treasures of the Uffizi were regarded as the single most important artistic attraction in Italy, but in addition, attending the theatre, dining and participating in salons were part of the social and cultural life for English tourists. Sir Horace Mann represented British interests in Florence from 1738 until 1786.<sup>62</sup> He kept an open house for British visitors that he held at the Palazzo Masnetti, inviting them for *conversazione* when there was no theatre performance. His generosity and kindness was universally acknowledged and prominent Florentine men and women also attended these *conversazione*. In 1784, Hester Piozzi observes in her journal, "Sir Horace Mann is sick and old, but there are conversations at his house of a Saturday evening, and sometimes a dinner, to which we have been almost always asked."<sup>63</sup>

### **E.K.**

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<sup>62</sup> Horace Mann at first held the post of secretary of legation in Florence, but was subsequently promoted to that of envoy and finally, in 1738, he was accredited as British Minister in the capital of the grand duchy, a position that he held until his death, serving during the passage of the grand duchy from Medici rule to that of the Lorraine.

<sup>63</sup> Hester Piozzi, *Observations*, 140.

## *Lady Aphrodite's Journal: October 1786*

### **October 8, 1786**

We are happily settled at the Hotel Vannini on the Piazza Soderini. The rooms are clean and spacious and we are relieved to discover that most of the food served here is quite acceptable. Beans, bacon or ham for breakfast and currant tarts for tea; who could wish for more? I gather the hotel keeper is English so tries to do things in the "English way" (although not always successfully.) I miss a good cup of strong tea but the coffee here is excellent; it has come all the way from Arabia via Venice. We often drive our carriage to a café in town and take our coffee and pastries there. It is a wonderfully social thing to do and an excellent way to meet other English travellers.

Our windows face the Arno, giving us a fine view of Santa Trinitá-- a beautiful Renaissance bridge that spans the river. On the other side is the town centre so it is easy for us to take a carriage or even walk to some of the sights. We each have our own interests but are obliged to travel together; Andrew and I want to keep an eye out for Belinda. Andrew, I'm sure, feels that something terrible will befall me if I go out on my own in this Italian city. How silly! Perhaps if we find friends to accompany us here, we won't be so dependent on each other.

### **October 15, 1786**

We were invited to a Saturday evening *conversazione* at the palazzo of Sir Horace Mann, the British Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Florence. Sir Horace looked rather tired and was seated most of the time but he welcomed us most graciously. His rooms were large with high ceilings; their walls were covered with mirrors and tall windows were open to birdsong and cool breezes. Louis XVI chairs, appointed with rich red damask that matched the curtains, were arranged along the length of each room.

Liveried waiters served champagne, ices and fruit juices, while bowls, piled high with walnuts and figs, lay on the long tables. I could discern the sound of a piano being played in the background, muffled by the murmur of polite conversation. Belinda, looking lovely in pink silk, shyly stayed by my side while Andrew wandered over to talk with some young men, one tall and dark and the other stocky with reddish hair. Their conversation seemed very animated. I was glad to see my brother looking happy for a change and wondered what the three were talking about.

We were introduced to the third Earl Cowper, a kind portly gentleman who, I hear, is one of the richest residents of Florence! He collects paintings and is a patron of the arts. What an excellent way to use a fortune! When I told him that Belinda is studying music and plays the flute, he invited us to one of his social gatherings in his home where, he said, she could join in the little concerts that he organizes. Belinda thanked him prettily and expressed a worry that she might prove an inadequate musician, but he reassured her, saying they were all amateurs and only wished to enjoy some friendly music-making together. I am delighted that we are so soon enfolded into this charming community.

The Earl introduced me to some Italian women whose English was impeccable. I noticed that their clothing was *à la française* with low-necked gowns opened in front to show the petticoat worn beneath. Their hair was curled and piled high on top of their heads and decorated with sweet little lace caps. They seemed to be very natural and open in expressing their opinion about everything from Paris fashions to Vatican politics. They even spoke knowledgeably about the new plant taxonomy introduced by Linnaeus. I hope I can spend more time in the company of Italian women; I feel I can learn many things from them I could not hear about in England.

Andrew introduced us to his friends as “connoisseurs of Renaissance Art”. One, Snr. Giovanni Benevento, is a tall, elegant Italian. The other, a red-headed Scot called Mr. Charles Arundel, offered to act as our tour guide to some of Florence's churches and palazzi, many of which, he said, contain frescos and sculpture by famous early Renaissance artists--Giotto, Masaccio, Donatello, Botticelli, and Michelangelo.

We readily accepted his offer. I will try and be a good listener and hope that my summer reading on Florentine artists will allow me to hold up my end of the conversation. Andrew's friends strongly encouraged us to visit the Uffizi Galleries to see antiquities and fine artworks collected or commissioned by the Medici family. There is a special room there, called the *Tribuna*, that houses the best of these works. They say the room attracts art and antiquity connoisseurs from all over Europe. In 1772 George III and Queen Charlotte commissioned the Bohemian artist Johann Zoffany living in Florence to paint the *Tribuna* and its contents. Apparently it is crammed with representations of the best objects from the Uffizi collection and portrays the most important of British *milordi*, art dealers and connoisseurs in Florence. I believe the painting is now hanging in obscurity in one of our king's palaces.

I thanked Andrew's friends for their suggestion, made an appointment with them to visit the Uffizi next Tuesday and left the gathering feeling very pleased and hopeful. It is wonderful to meet so many fellow countrymen and compare travel stories! Our calendar is filling up quickly!

**October 20, 1786**

For the past few days we have been touring this beautiful city and exploring some of the best examples of Renaissance art and architecture. I particularly enjoyed the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiori (that they call "the Duomo").

It is a Gothic structure but topped by a Renaissance dome designed by Filippo Brunelleschi. The colourful marble work on its facade and floor are astonishing in its delicate complexity. Although a huge building, the Duomo is made to appear lighter by the pink, white and green decorative panels and fine sculptural elements on its exterior walls. Belinda particularly liked it and wished we could spend time sitting inside, looking at Vasari's *Last Judgement* below the dome while listening to organ music. Mr. Arundel offered to find a schedule for organ concerts there; he seems to be quite taken by Belinda and blushes each time he speaks to her directly. Bindy seems not to notice; Andrew looks anxious.

In just one day we visited the Duomo, Santa Maria Novella, the Baptistery and the Basilica of Santa Croce! I particularly loved Santa Croce. It is another beautiful Gothic church whose inner walls are decorated with Giotto's frescos illustrating the lives of St. John the Baptist and St. Francis. Michelangelo and Machiavelli are laid to rest in the Basilica. I found myself speaking in hushed tones as we examined their tombs.

My feet are so tired with all this walking on hard marble! I will enjoy just sitting and listening to a harpsichord concert this evening at the Teatro della Pergola. I believe Bach and Handel will be played; Mr. Arundel will join us as, it appears, he is also interested in music.



**October 25, 1786**

Today we all visited the Uffizi galleries with our tour guides Snr. Benevento and Mr. Arundel. Each of them tried to outshine the other in knowledge and aesthetic sensitivity! I suspect they were each trying to impress Belinda who paid polite attention but remained detached. I was astonished by the number and variety of classical antiquities on display; Cosimo and Lorenzo Medici certainly knew how to invest their money!

In the *Tribuna* I saw some early Roman sculpture, such as two wrestlers, a dancing faun and a cupid and psyche, whose beauty almost brought me to tears. The marble Medici Venus modestly trying to cover her nakedness was by far the most admired artwork there; I fought an almost irresistible impulse to stand in front of her and protect her from the prying eyes of the male spectators.

I am still uncomfortable with nude images and wonder what response is expected from the observer. If I look too long, I often feel I am intruding. Seeing Titian's painting of the Venus of Urbino, however, made me chuckle--the reclining nude, unconcerned with her nakedness, boldly returns the viewer's stare. I wonder how many men that bold gaze has offended.<sup>64</sup>

While Snr. Benevento demonstrated his expertise in Roman, Greek and Etruscan sculpture that filled the room, Mr. Arundel spoke knowledgeably about Renaissance painting but showed great humility and restraint. With him, we saw some wonderful canvases by Raphael, Carracci, Reni and even by Rubens and Holbein. Just having seen them has made my visit to Florence quite worthwhile.

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<sup>64</sup> In his 1880 travelogue *Tramp Abroad*, Mark Twain described it as "the foulest, the vilest, the obscenest picture the world possesses."

I was surprised to see there were more English than Italians wandering through the Uffizi (I recognized a few of them--Lord Cowper, Sir Horace Mann, and Thomas Patch, a local painter and art historian, and some people whom I had met at Lord Cowper's party.)

Everyone there was dressed to impress. Appearances are important in Italy; there is an expression, *fare una bella figura*, "to put on a beautiful or good face," a maxim that both English here as well as Italians take seriously. Andrew followed this rule and looked most elegant in a new green velvet coat, waistcoat and breeches with white silk stockings. Snr. Benevento may have introduced him to the local tailors or perhaps his valet, hired locally, has been offering advice!

I found his high white wig a trifle excessive but it seemed to give him confidence and I was happy to see him so self-assured. I saw very few women in the Uffizi; Belinda and I felt a bit conspicuous and become aware that men were covertly staring at my lovely niece. Should I have been pleased or angry? I would expect that impudence from Italians but not from my fellow countrymen.

### **October 27, 1786**

It is my birthday today and I celebrated it by visiting both the Botanical and the Boboli Gardens. The former is more than a physic garden, having incorporated a number of trees and exotic species brought from distant lands. During this century, gardening has become a science of its own and these collections of plants have become subjects for research and experimentation. Apparently the Accademia dei Georgofili, which is responsible for the management of the garden, has acquired prestige as it has raised many issues facing agriculture and agricultural economics. I was fascinated to learn of their new discoveries and delighted by the beauty of many specimens.

Some fragile orchids were kept in a hothouse along with some bromeliads and delicate little tulips. I made a few quick sketches with colour notes that I will work up into some paintings when I return to the apartment. I notice I can still enjoy the beauty of a plant without also knowing about its scientific aspects!



*Figure 11 Phalaenopsis orchid*

The Boboli Gardens offered us quite a different experience. In its park-like setting with long green vistas, it features some beautiful statues from the Roman and Renaissance periods. Splashing fountains, obelisks and grottos, hedges and walkways combine to add sound and drama to the visitors' experience. It is a wonderful place to escape the heat of a Florentine afternoon but, despite our parasols, Belinda and I still found the sun oppressive so we relaxed and took some refreshments at the garden's *Koffeehous* with its green glazed dome. Mr. Arundel was most attentive -- especially to Belinda--and brought us some ices and cups of hot chocolate. When we returned home that evening we celebrated my birthday with champagne and a cake that Belinda had found in a pasticceria nearby.

Today, I will have lived 58 years. Perhaps I am entering a phase in my life that is very different from the one I have known. What I will do with it and what I will be allowed to do is yet to be determined. As I travel through Italy I am becoming aware that there are more options available to me, new models that can guide me that I haven't, until now, even imagined.

**October 28, 1786**

This evening we attended one of Lord Cowper's parties at the Villa Palmieri. Andrew's two friends joined us in the coach and we made our way together up to the hills of Fiesole above Florence. It is rumoured that the villa is the setting that influenced Boccaccio's *Decameron*--truly an earthly paradise.

The windows of his villa rooms, large and open to evening air, face down onto the twinkling lights of Florence below. Waiters distributed sweet wine and port and the gentle murmur of polite conversation settled over us. The Earl welcomed us graciously and invited Belinda to join the little group of musicians arranged in the centre of the room. A harpsichord, violin, and a *viola da gamba* played something that sounded like Boccherini.

Belinda shyly approached the group and they welcomed her with smiles. She saw that they had some sheet music for flute with which she was familiar and quickly joined in. The bright sound of her flute filled the room, rising above the hum of conversation, weaving and dancing around the more measured tones of the harpsichord. Encouraged by the applause, Belinda became more relaxed and was able to deliver a charming solo piece without fault. I was so proud of her! (It appeared as though Mr. Arundel was equally proud; he clapped fervently at every opportunity.)

Once the concert was over, one of the guests, a short young man, with a moustache and a head full of thick black hair, came over, bowed and thanked Belinda enthusiastically. He introduced himself as Snr. Bartolommeo Campagnola, a violinist and composer, who was currently performing at the Teatro della Pergola.

As he continued to heap praises upon my niece, Mr. Arundel rushed over, glared at the young Italian, and offered to guide Belinda over to the refreshments, giving her his arm. She linked arms with both of them and together they walked to the table piled high with little pies, fruits and sweets. I think Belinda is happy to find someone who is as passionate about music as she is; poor dear Mr. Arundel looked crestfallen.

I left the threesome to their own devices and joined Andrew and Snr. Benevento to look at Lord Cowper's astonishing collection of artworks. Among them are two small but exquisite Madonnas by Raphael. The Earl admitted that he has used Snr. Zoffany's expertise to acquire much of his art collection which is becoming very valuable. He has had his portrait painted a number of times and we are considering the possibility of hiring someone like Snr. Zoffany to paint ours. This could be one of our next initiatives.

Tomorrow we leave for Rome! I can hardly wait to find myself at the centre of the civilized world! My anticipation of living in this holy city, to which all roads lead, has made it hard for me to focus on my Florentine experiences. I am exceedingly prepared to enter this new chapter of my life with energy and open mind – ready for everything!

I have a number of letters of introduction to women who lead *conversazione* in Rome--Angelica Kauffmann, Margherita Sparapani Gentili Boccapaduli and Maria Cuccovilla Pizzelli. Each has an excellent reputation as a hostess and invites diplomats, artists, musicians and scientists to her gatherings.

It will be a wonderful opportunity for me to gain a kind of worldly knowledge that would be unavailable to me at home. I am also excited about seeing the ancient Roman sites and sculpture about which my dear father was so passionate. His teachings will finally come to life for me! (I might find an Aphrodite or two!)

Andrew is looking forward to Rome as well; many of the friends he made in Bologna will be there. Belinda is sad to have to say goodbye to her newly-made admirers and I'm sure Mr. Arundel is heartbroken! It is possible that Snr. Campagnola, whom she met at Earl Cowper's dinner party, will be playing his violin in Rome in December. Both men promised to write.

Thanks to Mr. Goethe's advice, I have booked my lodgings at Strofani's--a place in the heart of Rome, near the Spanish Steps. I am told that it has an excellent reputation among the English visitors. There is even an English tea shop nearby, called *Caffé degli Iglesi*, and in the piazza, a fountain sculpted by Bernini!

Andrew has hired a comfortable carriage, horses and driver for what may be a three day trip. I will not write until I am safely planted in my new Italian home!

# ROME

## History and Politics

Rome originated as a small village of the Latini in the ninth century BC. By the eighteenth century it was a large, flourishing city with an imperial history. The city-state of the Vatican, originally located on the outskirts of Rome, was ruled by the Bishop of Rome – the Pope.<sup>65</sup> Italian Popes gradually came to have a secular role as governors of regions near Rome and for more than a thousand years they ruled the Papal States which covered a large portion of the Italian peninsula. By the time Lady Macbain arrived, the Papacy had reached the peak of its temporal power. A unique institution of its kind, the Pope's court in the Vatican was the seat of authority of the Roman Catholic Church and was characterized by its absence of a single reigning dynasty, its exclusively masculine composition and the multitude of layers of hierarchy that surrounded it (cardinals, ministers, and the great Roman families). During the eighteenth century, the secularization of European society began to change people's view of Rome. It became the capital of neo-classical culture while nobility and curia were being replaced in importance by more secular powers within the wealthy bourgeoisie.

## Secular entertainment and the pursuit of fine art and antiquities.

For travellers and residents alike, secular opportunities for diversion included attending balls, art expositions, and musical concerts, visiting archaeological sites, and participating in salons and literary academies. Men met in coffee shops and casinos to gamble with dice and cards. They could turn almost anything into a wager; archery, chess, horseracing, and every other sport or event was used by gamblers to risk their savings or inheritance. Rome was used as the base of trips to outlying sites of interest such as the Appian Way, the hill town of Frascati, or the Gardens of the Villa D'Este in Tivoli.<sup>66</sup>

## Seasonal Celebrations and Explorations

Rome afforded a wide array of activities to please the heart and mind of many a Grand Tourist. These included Carnival, a celebration that took place in February. It lasted for eight days before the beginning of Lent and engaged crowds of participants and onlookers who thronged the Via del Corso between the Piazza dell Popolo and the Piazza Venezia. Some were able to afford rented apartments along the Via del Corso where they could safely show off their fancy costumes from their balconies, while watching the crowds below.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> The Vatican City only came into existence as an independent city-state in 1929.

<sup>66</sup> In the eighteenth century the lack of maintenance led to the decay of the Tivoli Garden complex, which was aggravated by the property's passage to the House of Hapsburg.

<sup>67</sup> Popular costumes worn by the street revelers were often inspired by the Commedia delle'Arte (especially the Harlequin); other costumes included lawyers, Quakers, and men wearing women's clothing.

In Easter and during Festival of St Peter and St Paul in June, the Roman population was treated to spectacular fireworks --such as the *girandola*, a type of firework like a horizontal Catherine wheel that was set off behind the Castel Sant'Angelo, dramatically lighting the sky and the dome of St. Peter's Cathedral.

Rome was an uncomfortable place during the summer. "Roman Fever" (malaria) was prevalent at that time in and around the low-lying areas of Rome.<sup>68</sup> This, along with the high temperatures, were reasons for Romans and tourists alike to avoid the city between May and September and to escape to hill towns or to the seaside. During September and October, the grape, chestnut, mushroom and olive harvests were celebrated in small and large towns throughout Italy, particularly during Harvest Festival in mid-September.

### **Art and Antiquities**

Italian Renaissance painters like Raphael, Titian and Guido Reni were most sought after and found in private collections of aristocratic families as well as in the numerous churches throughout the Rome. Some tourists commissioned paintings in the style of Renaissance artists or bought reproductions of paintings by the masters they liked.

Most travellers had little interest in the contemporary artists of the day or in contemporary subject matter, although the wealthier British aristocracy contracted Roman artists to paint their portraits. Pompeo Batoni was the most sought-after portraitist (he painted one hundred and fifty four British tourists<sup>69</sup>). Other (more affordable) portraitists also could be found; they included Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, a German Neoclassical painter, who painted the portrait of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe whilst Lady Macbain was living in Rome 1787.<sup>70</sup>

### **Sculpture**

Along with early Greek and Roman sculpture, Renaissance, Baroque and Neoclassical sculpture was also of great interest to visiting connoisseurs. The Popes restricted the export of significant works of classical sculpture from the country and actively collected ancient art for the Vatican Museums' collections.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Quinine, a medication used to treat malaria, was only isolated from the bark of the Cinchona tree 200 years later.

<sup>69</sup> Jeremy Black, *Italy*, 184

<sup>70</sup> Portrayed as an idealized, almost otherworldly, person, Goethe wears a large wide-brimmed grey hat, fashionable among German artists in Rome at the time, and a creamy white traveler's duster. He is portrayed in a classical manner, sitting in the open air, surrounded by Roman ruins, with the Campagna di Roma in the background.

<sup>71</sup> The Museo Pio-Clementino was the first major curatorial museum within what are known today collectively as the Vatican Museums. In 1771, Pope Clement XIV adapted the Belvedere Pavilion to accommodate the papal collection of ancient art. When the avid art collector, Pius VI, became pope in 1775, the pace of acquisition increased dramatically and in 1776, he restructured the existing museum and built new, grand spaces to house the ever-expanding collection.



As a result, the English visitor had to be content to commission local artists to reproduce their favourite sculptures that they could then take home to proudly display in their drawing rooms, libraries and gardens.

### **Dirty dealings**

Restrictions to the export of Italian antiquities by the Pope encouraged subterfuge and exploitation by local forgers. Unscrupulous dealers frequently took advantage of the greed and ignorance of foreign tourists (including Andrew Kidd). Some copies of paintings and sculpture were passed off as originals, while antique statues were retouched or restored, using parts from other sculptures.

### **Women and *conversazione***

In a city in which the scholarly community was, for centuries, identified with ecclesiastics, the public of the salons was a lay public precisely because it was characterized by the presence of women. Along with being places of pleasure, entertainment and flirtation, politics, literature and science were also discussed. As Rome was the centre of an international movement in artistic and literary endeavours, the salon was a locus for cultural growth--an opportunity for women to receive foreign savants, travelers and artists. Salons were available for all interests and social positions.

Their management took place in the family residences and was delegated (even if not exclusively) to women who adopted a freer and more lighthearted style which "made women the civilizer of customs."<sup>72</sup> *Conversazione* were held at different times of the day for different levels of society; the principal noble families stayed till dawn while the clergy attended in the early evening. As lay society gradually escaped from ecclesiastical hegemony and Rome became open to new cultural influences, women became an important part of this dynamic and used family connections to establish their position within society's elite.

The salon or *conversazione* became a central locus for the evolution of female intellectual figures in the Papal States. "Women became actors in a new public sphere; by inserting themselves into the circuits of knowledge, women contributed to their modification."<sup>73</sup> Salons held by Italian female aristocrats and the urban bourgeoisie were also an important resource for visitors and one of their principal amusements. *Conversazione* were greatly valued by foreign residents who, in addition to their visits to monuments and museums, felt they had to "visit" the salons in order to successfully integrate into Roman society.

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<sup>72</sup> Donato, Maria Pia, "The Temple of Female Glory, Female self affirmation in the Roman Salon of the Grand Tour," *Italy's Eighteenth Century. Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009),61.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 60.

Ambassadors from different European countries held regular evening parties during which guests conversed, theatrical productions were mounted, and music and impromptu poetry was heard. "Numerous salons were regarded as the branch offices of the ambassadors of foreign powers and travelers tended to frequent them in hope of meeting certain figures."<sup>74</sup>

The *conversazione* style of Roman hostesses differed from those in French salons. According to Milanese Count Alessandro Verri, "The Frenchwoman is a tranquil and tender being, who stays in one corner of the room and exercises the most urbane hospitality: she only rarely leads the conversation but is for the most part the fulcrum and preserver of decent sociability. In Italy she is the venerated idol, she is the centre of all thoughts; she wants to be preeminent and is the tyrant of, rather than a partner in, the conversation."<sup>75</sup>

Leading salonnières active in Rome included Margherita Boccapaduli who had a casual approach to the pleasures of the mind and senses and relied upon interpersonal exchange in places where fashion and culture mixed. It was an entirety of knowledge rather than specialization that pleased her.<sup>76</sup> The house of Maria Cuccovilla Pizzelli was a meeting place for intellectuals and shaped a Roman audience receptive to literary works, while a leading spirit of one of the most important salons in Rome was Angelica Kauffmann, a painter who established herself there in 1782. Her house on Via Sistina became the "preferred meeting place for antiquarians and theorists of the arts, artists and amateurs, creating a bridge between people of different classes and genders."<sup>77</sup>

### **Women and the Academy of Arcadia**

The Academy of Arcadia was an Italian literary academy founded in Rome in 1690. Its principal intention was to reform the diction of Italian poetry, which the founders believed had become corrupt through over-indulgence in the ornamentation of the earlier Baroque style. The Academy of Arcadia was inspired by pastoral literature, the conventions of which imagined the life of simple shepherds who were originally supposed to have lived in the golden age of Arcadia, divinely inspired in poetry by the Greek Muses--Apollo, Hermes and Pan. The Arcadians resolved to return to the fields of truth, always singing of subjects of pastoral simplicity and drawing their inspiration from Greco-Roman bucolic poetry. Arcadian gatherings became another locus of entertainment for visitors. "The Arcadia of the 1770s had become a fashionable place, frequented by many male and female foreigners who found themselves in Italy for the Grand Tour."<sup>78</sup>

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74 *Ibid.* 65.

75 *Ibid.* 64

76 *Ibid.* 69

77 *Ibid.* 74

77 *Ibid.* 122

Women, called shepherdesses (*pastorelle*) of Arcadia, were only admitted to this academy in 1700; they had to be a minimum twenty-four years old, of "noble quality" and "high culture", and were required to write, appreciate, and read poetry. Women were considered distracting so widespread participation of women in academies dates only to the eighteenth century in Italy starting with the Academy of Arcadia. To be admitted, women were not expected to produce new knowledge or culture,<sup>79</sup> however admission to the Arcadia gave additional opportunities for women to approach and diffuse new ideas and take on new roles and responsibilities.

**E.K.**

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<sup>79</sup> Elisabetta Graziosi, "Revisiting Arcadia: Women and Academies in Eighteenth-Century Italy. *Italy's Eighteenth Century. Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009),108

## *Lady Aphrodite's Journal: November 1786 - February 1787*

### **November 3, 1786 - Rome**

After an uncomfortable four-day carriage ride I am now happily seated in our Roman lodgings at Strofani's, gazing out my window at the busy life on the Piazza d'España. The noise of carriages passing by or disgorging their inhabitants, the cries of barking dogs and street vendors blending with the splash of Bernini's *Fontana della Barcaccia* and the clip-clop of horse's feet become a cheerful background to my thoughts.

In the dusty piazza, men are selling paintings and etchings to potential customers; a prostitute is provocatively showing her legs to passersby; a crowd of celebrants drink and sing loudly; beggars of all ages ask for alms and small groups of people converse in a bewildering number of languages. Even our new cook, Bettina, speaks English and French. It seems we are at the hub of the world's humanity!

It was a holiday when we arrived yesterday--the Feast of All Souls--and many commercial establishments were closed. We made do, finding a little market tucked away under an archway where we bought day-old bread, cheese and fruit from a boy who appeared to be no older than ten. Fellow lodgers informed us that Pope Pius VI was celebrating the holy day in his private chapel in the Quirinal Palace to which the public was freely admitted. We agreed that being part of such an event led by the Bishop of Rome and the leader of the Catholic Church would be an appropriate way to inaugurate our visit to the Eternal City! As I climbed up the stairs to the chapel I believe I saw Mr. Goethe in the throng. I tried to catch his eye but the crowd soon hid him from view.

My list of things I hope to do here is long and ever-growing. Like all the men who have travelled to Rome, I want to apply and experience first-hand the knowledge I was taught as a girl. All those hours I spent learning Greek and Latin and all those dry classical texts I read and translated will be given new life and meaning.

By experiencing Classical Antiquity firsthand, I hope to further my understanding of those ancient civilizations and perhaps gain an appreciation of my father's passion for them. Fortunately, I have Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art* as a resource and we plan to hire a guide to take us on tours of the Roman antiquities. While I am in Rome I will also try and develop a more extensive knowledge of the events taking place in the world (the English newspapers we get here are hopelessly inadequate), and hone my intellectual and social skills, drawing moral instruction from all I see and hear. To do this I count on meeting interesting people at the *conversazione* and discussing, with those others more worldly than I, the current ideas and theories from the fields of science, arts and natural philosophy. I will continue to record in my journal thoughts and reflections on what I learn. Perhaps my scribbling will be of benefit to others less able to travel if I decide to publish it; if nothing else they will focus my thoughts and capture memories.

### **November 10, 1786**

This past week I have travelled back centuries! We toured the city with one of the many antiquities experts living here including a Scot by the name of Mr. Colin Morison who was recommended by one of Andrew's old Bologna friends. The stories and descriptions of the ruins, (delivered in his soft Highland burr) reminded us of the dominant authority of Rome, especially during the first three centuries of our era. Compared to the quiet elegance of Florence, everything here speaks loudly of masculine power.

The Roman buildings and sculpture are so colossal in scale that they overwhelm me. Nothing I have read and studied has prepared me for their impact. We visited the Baths of Caracalla and Diocletian, the Coliseum, the Pantheon, the Roman Forum and the Capitoline Hill.

The Pantheon far surpassed my expectations and I felt a sense of kinship with all those, over the past sixteen centuries, who worshipped their own particular gods under its magnificent dome. Despite the noise of today's many visitors enveloped under its embrace, it still felt peaceful. Belinda called us over to point out the tomb of Raphael, saying how appropriate it is that such a gentle soul has been laid to rest among the gods within this benevolent space. I suggested that it is a good place for a soul to rest in life as well as in death. Mr. Morison agreed. He often uses it as a retreat from the noise and bustle of the surrounding streets. I feel a kinship with this young man and congratulated Andrew for finding such a sensitive guide.

### **November 18, 1786**

Andrew has been spending a lot of time with his friends from Bologna and is developing an interest in collecting Greco-Roman art as well as paintings and sculpture from the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Their visits to private collections throughout the city have inspired him to acquire some art work to take back home in England. I fear the prices will be prohibitive but I hate to dissuade him from something that finally excites him. As for me, I am quite satisfied to simply look at the early Roman sculpture in the Vatican's collection or at the magnificent works by Michael Angelo or Bernini in the public collections and churches throughout Rome. They bring me joy enough. Perhaps, eventually, Andrew will be satisfied with simply acquiring an album of etchings by Giovanni Batista Piranesi or taking home a collection of Roman coins or medals. Whatever he decides upon, I hope he is being well advised.

**November 20, 1786**

Thanks to Andrew's friends, we were invited to attend a *conversazione* at the home of Angelica Kauffmann, the Swiss painter I learned about in Bologna, who established herself in Rome only a few years ago. Her home has already become a well-known meeting place for antiquarians, art theorists, artists and writers. The fact that that Mr. Goethe will be reading from his manuscript *Iphigenia in Tauris*, that he has been reworking during his travels, has made me doubly interested in attending this social occasion.

The evening spent at the *conversazione* of Snra Kauffmann and her husband Antonio Zucchi will remain in my memory as a turning point in my life. We were very warmly received by Snra. Kauffmann who wore a simple, loose, white dress, much like our conception of a classical Roman toga. Her hair was piled on top of her head with some curls escaping down her neck; she stood out from the women wearing stiffer more formal attire--including myself. I envied her comfort and ease.

She offered us tea and invited us to be seated with some other guests; they included a couple of elderly cardinals, some diplomats from Austria, France and Milan, a Florentine musician who is known for his fine translations of Bach's harpsichord concertos, an astronomer from the University of Rome and an Italian landscape painter.

The conversation was ably guided by our hostess who gracefully shifted from subject to subject as easily as she moved from speaking Italian, to conversing in German and then English. During a break in the general discussion I wandered into the library where I met her husband who was quietly smoking a pipe. I think he was enjoying a moment of peaceful reflection but was very happy to sing his wife's praises when I inquired about her.

I was curious about the education of such an multitalented woman and learned that she had received a type of training similar to that which was given to those exceptional female scholars in Bologna--she was schooled by her parents. Having been taught painting by her father and then having worked as his assistant for many years, she developed her own painting skills very early in life. From her mother she learned Italian, French and English.

By the age of twelve she had already become a renowned portrait painter and is now one of the principal portraitists of British visitors to Rome. She has also mastered the art of history painting, normally the domain of male artists as it requires extensive expertise in biblical and classical literature as well as a knowledge of human anatomy, the kind of training not normally accessible to women today. As a professional painter, she has moved frequently throughout Europe, living and working in Milan, Florence, Bologna, Venice and Great Britain. This has allowed her to become familiar with the society and politics circulating within each of these centres. After her many travels, Snr. Zucchi explained with much delight, she finally settled down in Rome. I could hear the happiness and relief in his voice.

Our conversation was interrupted by Belinda who came to tell me that Mr. Goethe had arrived and was about to read from his current manuscript. After waiting until he had finished reading from selections of *Iphigenia*, which sorely tested my small knowledge of German, we reintroduced ourselves, and he, recognizing us immediately, invited us to his apartment on the Via del Corso for tea and to talk about plants and plant taxonomy which continues to be of great interest to him. We will pay a visit to him in a few days.



**November 23, 1786**

I've been thinking about Angelika Kauffmann and how I would like to be more like her; not only is she talented and knowledgeable, she is at ease in many societies--the aristocratic, the artistic and the wealthy middle class. She has the courage of her convictions based on experience and a worldly knowledge--more interested in new ideas than in new fashions. She is one of only two female founding members of the Royal Academy in London, and has travelled extensively, painting many people of consequence, from Goethe and Winckelmann to David Garrick and the King of Spain.

**November 25, 1786**

This week we are touring some of the churches and monuments built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and visited the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. The Sant' Agnese in Agone Church on the Piazza Navona with its magnificent dome by Borromini moved me exceedingly; the organ music being played there was enriched by the ornate decorative elements within the Baroque space.

After visiting the Vatican's Sistine Chapel, I left marvelling at the sublime skill of Michael Angelo in representing both the Book of Genesis and the Last Judgement. I wonder whether all those candles burning constantly will eventually discolour and spoil their perfection.

I am uncomfortable with the powerful role of the Pope and the ritual and trappings of Roman Catholicism, and as a Presbyterian I believe that Christ alone is the Head of His Church. I am forced to admit, however, that the papacy has inspired and nourished some very great art. I suspect that the quality of prayer and the depth of faith are increased by the splendour of the architecture and beauty of the painting and sculpture within these churches.

Although we Presbyterians cannot participate in its rituals and prefer greater simplicity of the liturgy, we can nevertheless share in the aesthetic enjoyment of the products of the Roman Catholic faith.

We continue to explore the fine art collections thanks to the guidance of Andrew's friends. Andrew has very little interest in work by contemporary artists or with contemporary subject matter, however he has discovered that reproductions of earlier masters are being made by enterprising Italian artists and is considering buying a copy of Raphael's Madonna of Foligno that he saw in the Vatican Museum. Some English friends we have met here have contracted Roman artists to paint themselves standing in front of famous Italian landscapes. The most popular portraitist here, Pompeo Batoni, is not available but I hope others can be found.

#### **December 5, 1786**

Winter is a busy season in Rome and a happy one for those who can afford it. The poor and hungry become more apparent on the streets these days as the rest of the populace stays inside; even small children are begging. I look outside at the people sitting in the rain under the shelter of a building portico and feel the uncomfortably heavy weight of my silk clothes and jewellery.

#### **December 9, 1786**

We have been invited to some other *conversazione* at the homes of Margherita Boccapaduli and Maria Cuccovilla Pizzelli, and like Angelica Kauffmann, they made us feel at home immediately. At these events, everyone is always beautifully turned out and I try to keep up appearances as best I can. I am now dressing *à la française* in my new gown of pale blue silk damask with embroidered flowers on the stomacher and petticoat.

The train at the back and panniers under the petticoat are encumbrances I must be willing to accept if I am to fit in. I have put some brown Maréchale powder in my hair to cover the grey--its scent of cloves and cinnamon adds to the festive aromas coming from the food table! I wonder if people notice it.

Belinda seems to be enjoying herself wherever she goes and looks beautiful in whatever she wears. Andrew, who is still a bit of a curmudgeon, rarely socializes with the ladies and immediately repairs to the card tables in hopes of winning some extra *scudi romani* with which to buy a painting from an art dealer he knows.

I have met so many interesting people at these *conversazione*! At the home of Snra Pizzelli, I met former Jesuits who introduced me to some interesting ideas. They claim that reason must be the primary source of authority and legitimacy and that we must challenge traditionally assumed beliefs that hold people in subjugation. They espouse ideals such as liberty, progress, constitutional government and separation of church and state. My head spun! I have always felt uncomfortable with Britain's role in the slave trade but I realize there is much more social injustice I have managed to overlook until now.

In these conversations, I have also learned about a radical sect called the Illuminati that supports similar ideals. This secret society also challenges abuses of state and religious power--a good reason for them to stay secret--especially here in Rome! These kind of popular democratic ideals have motivated the English colonists in America to reject the authority of King George and to found their own independent government. I wonder whether these ideas will ignite a similar movement by other disaffected peoples in Europe.

**December 12, 1786**

Snr. Bartolommeo Campagnola has arrived in Rome and Belinda is in love! We met him again at the home of Margherita Boccapaduli during one of her *conversazione*. After making his compliments to our hostess, he approached us immediately, looking quite dashing as he strode across the room with his red cloak swirling behind him. Belinda blushed with confusion and delight; she had not been prepared for the effect he had on her and made a failed attempt at saying something polite and detached.

Snra. Boccapaduli, sensing the strong emotions between the two of them, immediately turned the conversation to music and the concerts being scheduled for the festive season. This gave Snr Campagnola the opportunity to tell us that he will be performing at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia as part of a festive concert on Christmas Eve and to invite us to be his guests. We accepted with pleasure and I watched a bit nervously as he gently but firmly guided Belinda into the music room, ostensibly to sit together and listen to the pianist who was playing something by Bach.

As we spoke further with our hostess, I learned that Snra. Boccapaduli is interested in literature and a member of the Accademia degli Arcadi, an Italian literary academy that is inspired by pastoral literature from the "golden age" of Greece and Rome. Apparently it is hard for women to be accepted as members of the group, as men find women to be a distraction! I congratulated her on being chosen but secretly wondered why she would want to be part of such an unwelcoming men's group. As I had heard she had studied natural philosophy and science, I talked about my understanding of the new plant taxonomy and asked whether she had read any of Linnaeus' writings on the subject. She knew little about them but showed a strong interest in my botanical illustrations and asked to see them at a mutually convenient time in the future.

### **December 19, 1786**

Last night we went to the Christmas concert at the Accademia Nazionale and listened to Snr Campagnola play his violin. He played Vivaldi and Scarlatti brilliantly, showing himself to be a true virtuoso. Afterwards we were invited to a light supper at the home of a friend of Snr. Campagnola. Belinda and her adoring musician spent their time in animated conversation, scarcely moving their eyes from each other and behaving as though no one else were in the room. I will talk to her later and remind her of her manners that she seems to have completely forgotten.

### **December 27, 1786**

As is the custom in Italy, we spent Christmas at home. (There is an expression here: *Natale con i tuoi, Pasqua con chi vuoi*: "Christmas with your family, Easter with whom you want"). As they are far from their northern homes, we invited Snr Campagnola and Andrew's friend, Snr. Cristoforo Belli to join us.

While our cook Bettina had prepared *pasta in brodo* and baked a *pandoro* the day before (returning to her family for Christmas eve), Belinda impressed us all by baking a large capon stuffed with chestnuts, walnuts and sausage meat. Andrew and his friend provided some excellent Valpolicella Classico and *vin santo*. The sounds of singing from the Piazza di Spagna spilled into the room while Belinda and Snr. Campagnola serenaded us with traditional music from English and Italian Christmas carols.

We sang along as best we could, the English and Italian syllables converging into one melody after another. Our two visitors then bowed, thanked and left us with promises of future rendezvous.

We blew out the candles on the dining table and went to bed to the sound of St Peter's great bells tolling midnight.



*Figure 12 Ilex Aquifolia: Holly*

### **January 6, 1787**

Belinda is spending more and more time with Snr. Campagnola and although it pleases me to see her so happy, I worry about possible consequences. I must never allow Belinda to spend time alone with him and therefore frequently I act as a chaperone--Andrew always seems to be too busy. When the weather is fine, we go on long walks together and occasionally attend concerts that are a common occurrence during the winter season. We continue to explore the art and antiquities of this amazing city-- there is always something we haven't seen.

We often finish our wanderings by taking tea at the English teashop right next to the Spanish Steps. The place is always busy and has become a convenient place to meet other English residents. Often, I am invited to join friends at their table which allows me to safely leave the couple to enjoy each other's company while keeping them within my field of vision. I haven't been able to find out much about his family except that they are from Milan and that his father is also a violinist. I must ask Andrew to talk to the Earl Cowper to see if he can find out more about Snr Campagnola and his prospects.

**January 15, 1987**

Today we made our way to the Via del Corso and visited Herr Goethe, feeling very fortunate as we had heard he is somewhat reclusive in his habits. His rooms were small and cluttered with paintings hanging and leaning on the wall, a huge bust of Juno dominating his bedroom and many books and manuscripts stacked in tall piles.<sup>80</sup>

Goethe brushed aside some papers, invited us to sit on the only three chairs available while he perched on a small stool. Each of us had come with different intentions. Andrew wanted to find someone to paint our portrait; Belinda, who knew that Goethe had studied music and that his father was a flute player, was interested in anything he had to tell her, and I was curious about his progress on the metamorphosis of plants. How extraordinary that this writer of stories and plays is also an expert in painting, music and science. What genius!

Goethe invited his German friend, Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein with whom he shares rooms, to join us for tea. Tischbein is painting Goethe's portrait and we were shown the very early sketches for the art work. The writer is shown covered with a cloak and wearing a broad-brimmed hat. It seems to be a good likeness. He is seated on some kind of antique sculpture looking very much like a proud Roman senator. The countryside of Rome, with its scattering of ruins filling the background, is typical of many portraits made in Rome, in efforts to imbue the sitter with the sober gravitas of classical antiquity. Andrew inquired as to whether they could recommend someone to paint a portrait of the three of us. We were given the names and locations of some who may be available and Andrew was glad to have information to begin his search.

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<sup>80</sup> Goethe's rooms on the Corso have now become a museum, the *Casa di Goethe*.

It will have to be done during the two months before we leave Rome and continue on the last leg of our tour to Naples.

When Goethe discovered that Belinda played the flute he invited her to join him in performing a musical piece that had been written for one of his poems, *Erlking* by a German composer and old friend, Corona Schröter<sup>81</sup>. It was a lively piece and Belinda was able to follow the score quite readily, earning everyone's congratulations. I am so pleased with Belinda's progress; Andrew looked so impressed he couldn't stop grinning.

When I inquired about Goethe's research into the metamorphosis of plants he shrugged and said he hadn't accomplished a great deal since we met in September. Right now his attention is being focussed on the completion of his play. But, he said, he regularly visits the public gardens in the city, particularly the Orto Botanico and the gardens of the Villa Borghese.

Before we left, we were invited to join him and other guests during the festivities of carnival in February just before Lent, as many of the celebrations will take place right outside his window on the Via del Corso. We accepted with thanks. How comfortable I feel in this extraordinary city. It expands before me each day inspiring a new sense of freedom and optimism.

### **January 20, 1787**

It was a bright sunny day when Belinda, Snr Campagnola and I crossed the Tiber to Trastevere and visited the Papal Botanical Gardens that flourish on the slope of Gianicolo Hill. The garden dates from the fifteenth century; it is a peaceful place and a welcome escape from the bustle of the city.

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<sup>81</sup> *Der Erlkönig* is a poem by Goethe that depicts the death of a child assailed by a supernatural being. It was originally composed by Goethe as part of a 1782 Singspiel entitled *Die Fischerin*.



I found it a touch unkempt and wild--so different from the gardens of Padua and Bologna. Perhaps this is because it is not being managed by a university. Mr. Goethe had observed that despite its air of neglect, he found there much that was new and unexpected and had collected some of its plants for future observation. I had no desire to take any plants with me but I did do a few sketches of some of the majestic palm trees that lined the garden paths. We continued our walk through Trastevere (Belinda and her friend strolling slowly behind me in animated conversation). I was delighted to see citrus trees that line many of Rome's streets this time of year, heavy with fruit.

I plucked a few lemons and bitter oranges--I would normally make marmalade with them but instead, I will take them home and paint them.



*Figure 13 Citrus limon Osbeck*

### **January 25, 1787**

Andrew has found us a portrait painter and introduced him to us at the English tea room. His name is Mr. Friedrich Bury, a young, clean-shaven artist, whom Andrew found among Goethe's group of German-speaking friends. Mr. Bury agreed to do the job for a very reasonable price and said he can complete the task by the beginning of March. After making a number of preliminary sketches and grouping us in different poses, we will decide on one particular composition. As is the fashion, we will each hold something that reflects something that defines us--Belinda will have her flute; I will clasp a paintbrush while examining a plant, while Andrew might be placing his hand around a piece of Roman sculpture (although a deck of cards might be more appropriate.)

Mr. Bury will then transform the sketch into a more detailed drawing on canvas, paying special attention to our faces and hands. Only then will he take up his oils and begin painting, a process that will take a number of weeks.

The final step will be filling in the background. He is a landscape painter as well as a portraitist so this should come easily to him. We have agreed that the Borghese Gardens arranged with some Roman antiquities might be a suitable setting. Tomorrow he will come to our rooms on the Piazza di Spagna and begin.

### **January 31, 1787**

Last night we attended another of Angelica Kauffman's *conversazione* and were greeted warmly as old friends by this wonderful soul. I told her of our visit to Goethe's home and she admitted she is a close acquaintance, being an enormous appreciator of his poetry. She has been illustrating *Iphigenia auf Tauris*--his prose play that he is now completing. I expressed my interest in seeing some of her paintings so took me to her studio and showed me a self-portrait that she was currently painting for the Grand Duke of Tuscany. As is popular these days, she depicts herself in a simple Roman dress gathered in folds, with a belt under her breast. Her long hair is loose and modestly tied back with a ribbon. In the background, through a columned window, can be seen a suggestion of distant mountains, and in her hand she holds a paintbrush and palette.

This way Snra. Kauffmann identifies herself with nature and her trade, portraying herself as a classical muse. It is obvious that she has mastered a wide variety of types of painting, from portraiture to mythological scenes, history painting to landscapes. I feel that, given the opportunity, she could easily master the art of botanical illustration--her attention to detail is so fine!

I am constantly reminded by people like Snra. Kauffmann how, given the right opportunity and the training, women have the potential to attain the same level of excellence and perhaps influence experienced by men. Perhaps to do this, I wonder whether women would have to give up the pleasures of domestic life.

Such a transformation of status would be a difficult challenge in British society. There would be resistance from many quarters. To maintain some form of equanimity, one would need patience and friends of influence--especially the latter. Snra Kauffmann told me that she had been persuaded by Lady Wentworth, the wife of the British ambassador, to accompany her to London where she spent more than twenty years before returning to Rome. The rank of Lady Wentworth had opened society to the artist and she was everywhere well received. Snra Kauffmann was also befriended by Joshua Reynolds and David Garrick and became a regular exhibitor at the Royal Academy. I suspect it was also her strength of character that furthered her success.

### **February 3, 1787**

We have endured the first sitting for our portrait. Mr. Bury came with his paper and pencils and arranged us in a variety of poses. We eventually decided upon one in which Belinda and I are seated with our accoutrements on a low chaise. We look at each other while Andrew stands beside us, looking outwards, his hand on the shoulders of a marble bust of some Roman senator. I found the sitting tiring as we had to keep very still for a quarter and sometimes half an hour at a time. The artist will return in a few days to begin detailed drawings.

I have decided not to dress like an incarnation of early Roman matron, (I'm too old to disguise myself) but to wear my best *au courant* French clothing and to have my hair powdered and artfully arranged with curls and ribbons.

Belinda will dress modestly in a simple white shift with a blue ribbon and Andrew will look elegant in his embroidered waistcoat, ruffled shirt, cravat, breeches, green frock coat and white silk stockings.

**February 18, 1787**

This week and into the next, the streets of Rome will be transformed until the night of Mardi Gras that marks the beginning of Lent. I am anticipating this with both trepidation and curiosity. Carnival is one of the most important celebrations in this city and involves every level of society. It is a time when public order is abandoned and liberties taken--liberties not permitted the rest of the year.

Each day of the festival begins with a series of horse races along the Corso, the long straight road that joins the Piazza del Popolo to the Piazza Venezia. The narrow street is lined with people standing along the route or seated in grandstands built in front of the obelisk in the Piazza del Popolo. Carpets are hung from balconies and windows, chairs are put on the pavement, and the street is strewn with ash to prevent the horses from slipping.

After the races are over and evening approaches, another transformation takes place. The noise level increases and hundreds of people appear in a variety of costumes and masks (some of which are somewhat familiar to me from the *Commedia delle' Arte* (*Pulcinella, Pantalone, Dottore, Arlecchino*). There are other men dressed as lawyers accusing people of crimes, as Quakers wearing silk and velvet, or as ghosts, fishermen, boatmen or beggars. Men are often disguised as women and women as men. Children run around and between people laughing and calling. Everyone is made fun of--especially foreigners like us.

Open carriages drive through the streets--the coach and footmen always masked--and their elegant female passengers playfully throw confetti. Their faces covered, they show more of the rest of themselves than normal, eliciting calls of appreciation from the crowd.

The three of us began the first evening by watching the horse racing at the home of Mr. Goethe with a few of his German-speaking friends. Goethe expressed his irritation with the whole event, finding it foolish and oppressive, saying "one has to see the Roman Carnival to lose all wish to ever see it again." Therefore, although we will return to the carnival, we decided it would be on our own.

I am sure we will be well protected by Andrew and Snr. Campagnola. In the meantime, Belinda and I will have time to shop for *Pulcinella* costumes; their long-nosed masks, tall hats and loose garment are readily available in the shops.

### **February 24, 1787 - midnight**

The very worst thing has happened. Belinda and Snr Campagnola are missing! This evening we had decided to wander through the streets to get a closer look at everyone. Each of us was wearing a mask--Belinda and I dressed as *Pulcinella*, and Snr Campagnola wearing an elegant black *tabarro* costume complete with full face mask, tri-corn hat and long cape. It made him completely anonymous. Andrew, in contrast, was a jovial figure, fully dressed as a Harlequin (*Arlecchino*) with a black leather mask, a hat, a coat and leggings made of colourful mix of cloths sewn together. He played his character well-- acting the clown and the fool as soon as he put on his mask. I didn't recognize him; his transformation was complete!

We walked down to the side streets lit by lanterns hanging from balconies or from the hands of revellers. Shadows danced on the walls and faces. There were cries of "death to anyone not carrying a candle" and frequent attempts were made to blow out the candles of others. Loving couples embraced in the privacy of dark corners, crowds of clowns performed strange dances, young pickpockets slipped quickly through the crowds; a deafening cacophony of voices yelled, sang and laughed around us.

The closeness of the crowd and heat from many candles made me feel dizzy and anxious while the jostling and pushing by so many people caused me to fear we might get separated. My fears were realized.

When I turned around, intending to point out to Belinda a farcical performance of a woman in labour, Belinda was no longer there. I looked around through the mob of people and called her name but I did not see her and my cries were drowned by the noise. I then realized that Snr. Campagnola, his black clothes blending into the shadows, had also disappeared.

Andrew and I, frantic with worry, searched the streets of Rome until about midnight calling their names until our voices were hoarse. Everyone around us, oblivious to our fear, were focusing their attentions on eating, drinking and merry-making in preparation for the rigours of self-denial that Lent imposes on all Catholics. Ash Wednesday is tomorrow, making their revelry all the more urgent. We asked a pair of *carabinieri* for help but they shrugged their shoulders and suggested we wait until tomorrow. It is common for this to happen to couples during carnival they laughed. Hoping that this might be true and without any further recourse, we returned home exhausted.

### **February 25, 1787**

Belinda returned very early this morning, before Andrew and I were awake. She refused to give an explanation for what had happened and only said she would not be seeing Snr. Campagnola again. She looked hurt and disappointed and it seemed she had been crying. I didn't insist on hearing more and secretly felt relieved that the relationship was over. Andrew was much angrier and it took a while for me to persuade him to forgive her for causing us so much trouble and anxiety. We have decided, for the time being, to say nothing of Belinda's overnight disappearance to anyone. Her reputation and the family's must be protected at all cost.

It seems to me that this is a perfect time to bring to completion the painting of our portrait and to make preparations for our trip to Naples.

**February 28, 1787**

I am very happy with the family portrait and feel it will be a wonderful souvenir of our four months in Rome. Andrew looks splendid in his new Italian outfit; Belinda is the quintessential image of young womanhood, and I am a mix of old and new; wearing English and modern Roman clothing, my hair alarmingly tall and my nose a touch large. Behind us stand the tall green umbrella pines of the Borghese Gardens and a suggestion of white columns from Asclepius' temple.

The painting is rolled up with all our belongings, packed and ready for travel. Tomorrow we leave for Naples.

# NAPLES

## Politics

By the middle of the eighteenth century the Kingdom of Naples was the largest state in Italy, covering the southern portion of the Italian peninsula. The population of Naples, the capital, counted for roughly ten percent of the kingdom with almost 350,000 residents.

By the time of Lady Macbain's visit, Ferdinand IV ruled the Kingdom of Naples and was married to Archduchess Maria Carolina of Austria. Much loved by the people of Naples, Ferdinand often mingled with poor commoners (*lazzaroni*), but left the affairs of state to his wife. The Kingdom of Naples was unusual among major European states of the eighteenth century because, despite personal and political connections to other royal courts and alignment with certain nations, it managed to avoid direct involvement in most of the conflicts that happened during this period. This contributed to the economic progress and prosperity of the kingdom.

With the direct personal connection between the Spanish and Neapolitan royals, the independent kingdom of Naples initially maintained its geo-political alignment primarily with Spain. After Queen Maria Carolina gained influence at court, Naples aligned more with the interests of Great Britain and Austria. France on the other hand, despite various royal family connections and intellectual engagement, was held at arm's length, probably due to a history of French intervention into southern Italy.

In 1764 Sir William Hamilton, Scottish diplomat, antiquarian, archaeologist and volcanologist, became the British ambassador to the Kingdom of Naples, a post he held until 1800. Sir William helped facilitate the shift in Naples to an healthy affiliation with Britain. As ambassador, Hamilton was expected to send reports back to the Secretary of State every ten days or so, and to promote Britain's interests in Naples politically, militarily, and commercially. In concert with Naples' Prime Minister, Sir John Acton, Hamilton furthered the influence of British interests in Naples.

## Society

In the eighteenth century, Neapolitan society was extremely complex. The nobility and foreign merchants controlled the agricultural economy and kept a rural population poor and powerless. The aristocratic families of the provinces were drawn to Naples where they formed part of the ruling class with the old Neapolitan patricians, foreign officials, merchants, and financiers.



Meanwhile, the new bureaucracy, professionals, intellectuals and artisans made up a growing middle-class that was small in size, but eager for more say in the affairs of the Kingdom. These social and political pressures were further fueled by the influence of groups such as the Freemasons who held Enlightenment ideas around social equality.

Due to Naples' shift in alignment from one with Spain to one with Britain, there was a significant increase in English presence of both residents and tourists. In between his ambassadorial duties, Lord Hamilton and his wife, Catherine, were part of Naples' social elite and were patrons of the arts, keeping an open house for English travellers. During his long tenure Hamilton was a friend to many of the great names on the Grand Tour, including Mozart and Goethe, the latter of whom stayed in Hamilton's residence, the Palazzo Sessa, where they hosted official functions and where Hamilton housed his growing private collection of paintings and Etruscan, Greek and Roman antiquities.

After the death of his first wife, Hamilton married Emma Lyon<sup>82</sup> who enthusiastically participated in Naples' social and cultural life.<sup>83</sup> Official duties left Hamilton plenty of time to pursue his interests in art, antiquities, archaeology, and music, as well as developing new interests in volcanoes and earthquakes. In 1776 his first volume, *Campi Phlegraei. Observations on the two volcanoes of the two Sicilies* was printed in Naples and represents an important step in the science of volcanology.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> She had arrived in Naples on her 21st birthday in 1786 during the period where the Kidd/Macbains were living there.

<sup>83</sup> Living in Naples, Emma developed what she called her "Attitudes", using English painter Romney's idea of combining classical poses with modern allure as the basis for her act. Emma had her dressmaker make dresses modelled on those worn by peasant islanders in the Bay of Naples, and the loose-fitting garments she often wore when modelling for Romney. She would pair these tunics with a few large shawls or veils, draping herself in folds of cloth and posing in such a way as to evoke popular images from Greco-Roman mythology. This cross between postures, dance, and acting, was first revealed in spring 1787 by Sir William to a large group of European guests at his home (including the Kidd/Macbain family), who soon took to this new form of entertainment-- a sort of charade, with the audience guessing the names of the classical characters and scenes Emma portrayed.

<sup>84</sup> It includes fifty-four hand-colored plates after Pietro Fabris.

## The arts

The royal patronages of Charles III of Spain and his son, Ferdinand IV, were critical to the development of the Neapolitan character and the artistic growth of the city. It ushered in the golden age of Naples. In addition to his ambitious building campaign, Charles had founded a porcelain factory at the royal palace in Capodimonte in 1743.

Illustrated publications of the archaeological findings at Herculaneum and Pompeii inspired European interest in all things antique; scenes of antiquity on porcelain and in paintings became prominent about this time. In 1784, Angelica Kauffman completed her largest portrait painting of the Royal Family of Naples on behalf of Ferdinand IV and his wife, Queen Maria Carolina. The King and Queen asked her to accept an appointment as court painter but she declined, and in 1786, Jacob Phillip Hackert accepted the position.

The classical motifs found on wall paintings from Pompeii, and the looming presence of Vesuvius, made a substantial impact on young artists.<sup>85</sup> The landscape around Naples also became a favourite subject for painters. It was often depicted from the perspective of the hills around it, with trees in the foreground and the sea with Mount Vesuvius in the background. Paintings representing the volcano spewing fire and ash were particularly in demand, especially those executed by Jacob Hackert and Pietro Fabris. The volcano became a ubiquitous theme in the paintings and literature of the period. In pictorial representations, its perceived sublime character was largely demonstrated by these illustrations. For northern European painters such as the Englishman, Joseph Wright of Derby, Vesuvius bordered upon an obsession.

## The Grand Tour

Naples was one of the most popular places to visit for the travellers on the Grand Tour:

"...a jewel in its renowned setting of curving bay and picturesque hills, with Vesuvius brooding over all and occasionally an eruption adding to the excitements of a lively social calendar. The colossal royal place at Caserta was one of the modern wonders of the neighbourhood, and there were excursions to the volcanic Campi Phlegraei around Lake Avenus, west of Naples, or south to the newly discovered Greek and Roman sites of Herculaneum, Pompeii and Paestum."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> James Voorhies, *Art of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries in Naples*, Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, The Met, 2003. [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/npls/hd\\_npls.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/npls/hd_npls.htm)

<sup>86</sup> Andrew Wilton, "The Places," *Grand Tour. The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignami (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997.), 131-2.

Vesuvius and its regular eruptions was one of the major attractions to the area as it was possible to see this extraordinary natural phenomenon close hand without having to make a long and complicated expedition. Some climbed the volcano, thrilling at the "river of fire," the smoke, the flying stones and cinders. According to one visitor, "it perfectly answered Mr. Burke's idea of the sublime."<sup>87</sup>

Naples also became popular for its warm climate to those who were seeking a change of air away from the cold wet winters of the north and who went there for their health, some unsuccessfully seeking a cure for consumption. While other travellers were contemptuous of the character and the people of Naples, many tourists who came to Naples thought they had found a paradise. Goethe was one who thoroughly enjoyed his experiences in the Kingdom of Naples.

In his travel journal, *Italian Journey*, Goethe describes the "well-tilled fields," starfish and sea urchins, fragments of ancient buildings, aqueducts, and orchards. There, he found a great sense of peace.

"Naples proclaims herself from the first as gay, free and alive. A numberless host is running hither and thither, the King is away hunting, the Queen is pregnant, and all is right with the world."<sup>88</sup>

### Antiquities

A passion for classical antiquities was shared by visitors and residents alike. Sir William Hamilton has been considered "one of the most influential figures in the development of Neo-Classical taste in the second half of the eighteenth century."<sup>89</sup> He dealt not only as an agent for his own private collection, but also for those of his family, friends, and acquaintances. He traded in (and some might even say "stole") antiquities, accepted gifts, and in turn gave presents both to individuals and museums. These artifacts formed the nucleus of the Greco-Roman section of the British Museum.

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<sup>87</sup> Margaret Grenville quoted in Jeremy Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour*, 55.

<sup>88</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 185.

<sup>89</sup> Nancy H. Ramage, "Sir William Hamilton as Collector, Exporter, and Dealer: The Acquisition and Dispersal of His Collections," *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 94, No 3 (Archaeological Institute of America, 1990), 469-480.  
[https://www.jstor.org/stable/505798?seq=6#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/505798?seq=6#page_scan_tab_contents).

He exported antiquities despite the fact that it was illegal, and against the explicit instructions of the King of Naples. In 1787, when Goethe visited Naples and stayed with Sir William Hamilton he records an event that happened when his friend Jacob Hackert showed him Hamilton's trove of antiquities.

... I lifted the lid of a long case which lay on the floor and in it were two magnificent candelabra. I nudged Hackert and asked him in a whisper if they were not very like the candelabra in the Portici museum. He silenced me with a look."<sup>90</sup>

Naples was usually the southernmost place tourists visited. The south promised a place that was exotic, warm but immoral and was a suitable distance from their restrictive, but morally superior lives. For instance Hester Piozzi recorded in her journal that she saw in Naples a freedom from the "country, climate, and manners which she had found odious and constraining in England." It represented access to passion and liberty that society denied at home.

**E.K.**

### *Lady Aphrodite's Journal: March-April 1787*

#### **March 10, 1787**

We have arrived in Naples and are settled in comfortable lodgings with a fine view of Vesuvius. Our travels here were uneventful. We followed the old Appian Way from Rome enjoying the increasing warmth and freshness of the air as we progressed south. The countryside we passed through was exceedingly beautiful. Fig and orange trees were in full bloom and olive groves, vineyards and cornfields lined the road. In contrast, the accommodation we stayed in was uncomfortable and dirty. Horses were kept in the lower part of the buildings and we were pestered with flies. For this reason we only stopped once and travelled two long days to avoid stopping more frequently.

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<sup>90</sup> Johan Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey*, 315.

Gloom descended over the carriage and we spent much of our time asleep. Belinda was not her normally happy self; she sat silently, miserably staring out at the bright countryside. I hope the distractions of Naples will return her to a happier disposition.

The social life here is very different from what we have experienced so far. With the exception of fishwives, prostitutes and gypsies, I see very few women or girls of marriageable age in public. Apparently, girls of the regional aristocracy are placed in convents at an early age. There, they live all their lives unless husbands are found for them. Neapolitan society reflects the effects of Roman Catholic expectations of women to be exclusively wives and mothers; their education is seen as a waste of time and money. Occasional exceptions to this rule are found within the British society of Naples and the circle of people around Sir William Hamilton, the British ambassador to the Kingdom.

Fortunately, the court of the King of Naples and his Queen Maria Carolina fosters enlightened thinking; it has also become the meeting place for intellectuals, scientists and artists of both sexes. His Royal Highness often holds events in his marvellous palace at Caserta; the royal residence's magnificence rivals that of Versailles!

Thanks to the royal couple, a lively communal life for the wealthy and social elite is available in the city, with balls, musical performances and receptions where Neapolitan noblewomen can fully participate. Nevertheless, when we attended some of these social occasions, I felt a bit of a misfit; even secular thinkers here value women primarily for their roles within the domestic realm. The women I encountered at the palace seemed offended or confused when I ventured an opinion on subjects beyond family, fashionable dress, the courtly arts and the weather.

**March 13, 1787**

Last evening, we went to a party at Caserta. The Queen, who loves to entertain, had lined the ballroom with chairs for an open buffet where people mingled, conversed and ate off their knees! Her young children, Maria Theresa, Maria Louisa and Francis, ran around underfoot, delighting or irritating the guests, while her rather boorish husband, King Ferdinand, ate spaghetti with his fingers, nurturing his attempt to appear to be a man of the people. In many ways, Queen Carolina seems to be the stronger, more intelligent of the two. I learned that she exercises a great influence politically as well as domestically. Her authority stretches throughout Europe--particularly to Austria, her home, and to France where her sister, Marie Antoinette, is married to King Louis XVI.

At this event I could hear French, German, English and Italian being spoken and noticed some familiar faces, such as John Acton the prime minister (who, according to gossip, is the Queen's lover.) I met the Neapolitan writer and philosopher, Gaetano Filangieri, a gaunt young man with a moustache and a nasty cough, who is proposing the creation of a society based on reason, being influenced by people such as Benjamin Franklin and the Baron de Montesquieu. I look forward to reading some of his writing.

I noticed Belinda and Andrew were talking rather animatedly with someone whose back was turned to me. I moved toward them and happily recognized Mr. Arundel. He smiled and explained that he was here to buy paintings by local artists and to investigate the possibility of acquiring Roman antiquities through Sir William Hamilton. We plan to meet again soon to visit the archaeological sites of Herculaneum and Pompeii.

## March 18, 1787 - Pompeii & Herculaneum

Yesterday the four of us drove down to Pompeii and spent the afternoon wandering around the ruins. It was smaller than I had expected (much still has to be uncovered) and most of the rooms that had been cleared of Vesuvius' ashy debris were empty of objects. Over the past forty years, almost everything has been pillaged by locals and professional excavators alike.

The excavations of Pompeii continue today and are overseen and funded by Sir William Hamilton and while some objects and works of art excavated from Herculaneum and Pompeii are housed in the Royal Palace at Portici (now the Herculaneum Museum), some have somehow entered into his own collection.

Some beautiful paintings, mostly made in red and yellow ocher, still remain on the walls, hinting of past lives lived within them. Unfortunately, many paintings have been stripped from the surfaces while other artefacts have been damaged or irreparably destroyed.

What remains in homes and on the street are bodies encased in ash--frozen in time, testifying to the speed in which the town was covered in volcanic dust. We left the site feeling saddened, realizing how quickly a once rich and lively culture can be destroyed in a moment. *Sic transit gloria.*

We stayed at a small *osteria* near Portici and in the morning visited the Herculaneum Museum collection that includes murals, mosaics, statues made of marble, bronze or terracotta, precious coins, glass, marble and objects of daily life. Both men were entranced by these art and artefacts and spent a great deal of time taking copious notes and making sketches of what they saw. The look in Andrew's face showed a mix of eagerness and excitement. Like so many Englishmen we have met on our tour, he too was caught by the fevered craze for acquiring objects from classical antiquity.

We visited Herculaneum in the afternoon, finding it, in many ways, a more interesting place to visit than Pompeii. While roofs in Pompeii collapsed under the weight of falling ash, only a few centimetres of ash fell on Herculaneum, causing little damage. The city's buildings were, instead, buried by lava flow from the bottom up, that surprisingly caused little damage. Consequently there are many well-preserved buildings, many with the upper stories still intact, and some excellent frescoes and mosaics on both walls and floors still visible. Sadly, here also, objects within these rooms have been ransacked; the collection in the Portici museum can only hint at the culture that must have been lost through forces of nature and the hand of man.

**March 22, 1787**

I do feel more at home with the English. Yesterday we were invited to the residence of Sir William and Lady Hamilton at the Palazzo Sessa, a magnificent building in the fashionable district south of the city. The view from their bow window is spectacular.

There were a number of interesting people at the event including, to my surprise, both Mr. Goethe and Mr. Tischbein! What a small world we move in here!! We were introduced to Lady Emma Hamilton, Lord Hamilton's new young wife. She seemed a sweet amiable thing, much younger than her husband (I believe she is less than half his age) and I expected little from her other than the traditional gestures of a polite hostess. I was therefore unprepared for her way of entertaining us.

She performed what she called her "attitudes," posing as characters from mythology for us to identify. Wearing a variety of shawls and loose dresses, she postured, danced and acted in front of the guests. Her charade entertained our company immensely and is likely to become very popular.



My response to such an unusual form of creative expression, especially performed by the wife of the British Ambassador, was mixed. Initially, I was shocked and embarrassed at seeing a member of my sex comporting herself in such a vulgar way, but slowly I began to admire her creativity and courage. Bravery is a virtue rarely valued in women and it takes pluck to act against the unwritten rules of polite society.

Sir William has accumulated a large collection of European art and classical antiquities that he stores and displays in the palazzo. Many, I hear, have come from Pompeii and Herculaneum. After a light supper, after the promptings from Mr. Arundel and Andrew, he gave us a guided tour of his little museum.

I was particularly astonished by the large number of Etruscan, Greek and Roman vases, as well as Roman sculpture in bronze and marble that were on display or in disarray on the floor of his storage room. We learned that Sir William is very helpful in obtaining antiquities and works of art for his friends, acting as intermediary.

Andrew is particularly interested in acquiring an artwork from the excavations at Pompeii or Herculaneum and asked whether it would be possible to buy one. Lord Hamilton took him aside and they continued their conversation in private.

### **March 24, 1787**

I am finding it a bit disturbing how comfortably Lord Hamilton, along with his English associates, are able to take (one might say "steal") Greek and Roman antiquities from their original sites and handle them as though they owned them. Hamilton has sent many to the British Museum, kept them for himself or sold them to antique merchants and friends. I hear often the remark that the Italians are unappreciative of the value of their antiquities and are not worthy of such treasures.

This attitude might be supported by another commonly-held view, expressed quite strongly by Montesquieu and others, that geography and climate can influence the character of a society. For instance, they believe that southern people in warmer climates, such as that enjoyed by Naples, are overly emotional, lazy and unreliable while the cooler, northern races are rational, energetic and steady.<sup>91</sup> I privately wonder whether this belief has contributed to Lord Hamilton's disrespectful and patronizing attitude towards the Kingdom of Naples and its valuable antiquities that he seemed to treat as his own.

### **March 25, 1787**

During the time Sir William has been living in Naples, he has become an expert on volcanology and has written books on the subject. We felt very fortunate, therefore, that he invited a group of us to join him to visit the volcano of Mount Vesuvius and to approach, at close quarters, something we have been marvelling at from a distance. We travelled to the foot of the mountain in three carriages and then most of us decided to walk up rather than taking a donkey; I, too, preferred to rely on my own two feet. Waiting for us at the base of the lava cone were sturdy men who offered to pull us up using a strap that we held onto tightly. It proved to be a reassuring and less tiring way to climb. I was happy that I was wearing sturdy boots with thick soles as the ash-covered ground was rough and slippery and slowly became warmer as we approached the top.

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<sup>91</sup> Natalie Fowler, "Montesquieu's Socio-Political Climate Theory," *PROSPECT, Journal of International Affairs at UCSD*, 2012. <https://prospectjournal.org/2012/09/17/montesquieus-socio-political-climate-theory/>

The volcano erupted regularly, throwing stones and steam into the air. Red hot lava flowed slowly down the sides of the mountain, cooling as it went, forming a crusty surface that was soon replaced by another layer. Occasionally, clouds of ash were blown into the air, making it hard to breathe and see; I wrapped my scarf tightly around my nose and mouth.

I dared not climb up to the lip of the crater--the heat and flying rocks seemed too threatening, but Andrew, Belinda, Mr. Arundel and Sir William and some other younger guests continued their ascent until they could look down on the boiling mass below them. I noticed Mr. Arundel had placed his arm protectively around Belinda and kept it there as we all descended toward Naples.

Our return trip was like leaving Hell and returning to Paradise.

### **March 30, 1787**

It is time to leave this sunny Paradise, pack our belongings and return to the cooler pastures of home. We decided to sell our carriage and take advantage of the sirocco winds that peak in March and sail to Marseille via Leghorn, Genoa and Nice. From there we will travel north up the Rhône River from Arles to Lyon by boat, being drawn by a team of oxen. We will then hire a coach, horses and a driver to proceed to Paris and Calais. It will take well over two weeks but I am optimistic that we will find it very pleasant to travel through France in April seeing the country awakening from its winter slumber.

## *Lady Aphrodite's Journal: April-May 1787*

### **April 8, 1787- Marseille**

I am so relieved to be on *terra firma* once more! The sailing to France was rough almost the whole way despite the excellent navigation skills of the captain and the sturdiness of our three-masted barque. I spent most of my days and nights below deck in my bunk as did Andrew. We were both miserably seasick! Neither the Kidds, nor the Macbains are families bred for water-travel. I rarely ventured on deck to watch the shores of our beloved Italy slowly recede from view.

Andrew had an additional reason to be unhappy. As we passed through customs in Naples, they found, hidden in his luggage, an Etruscan vase that he had bought with the help of Sir William. As the export of Italian antiquities has been forbidden by the Pope, the customs officers made an enormous fuss, threatening to keep the vase and throw Andrew in prison.

As is common in Italy, the problem was suddenly resolved when Andrew handed over an outrageous sum of money to the two officials who then smiled happily, wished us *un buon viaggio* and let us be on our way, turning a blind eye to our illicit cargo.

We changed boats in Genoa, hiring a small felucca that used both oars and sails. The smaller boat clung to the shoreline and the cooler weather and calmer waters helped me to recover somewhat and to think about our way ahead as we sailed by the southern coast of France. Unlike the more idyllic sites of Monaco and Nice, Marseille is a noisy, smelly hub of activity. Its location makes it a perfect harbour, allowing it to become an important trading centre and the leading military port in France.

It pained me to see a huge galley ship filled with semi-naked African slaves, chained to their rowing positions and bound for the Americas. It is inexplicable to me how these poor wretches can maintain any hope for a happy existence, although the captain of the galley told me that some have been able to purchase their liberty. I cannot imagine how, as they seemed destitute. There are things I can't bear to think about.

### **April 15, 1787 - Paris**

After spending a miserable night in a rat-infested inn near the port, we booked places on a river boat heading up the Rhône to Lyons. I was tempted to stay a bit longer in the south, visiting the classical ruins in Avignon, Nîmes and Arles, but the others were suddenly anxious to return home quickly. At Lyons, we rented a carriage, horses and a driver and spent three days driving northward on rutted roads and sleeping in drafty inns.

We amused ourselves by comparing our memories of Italy, laughing at experiences that improved with each telling. Belinda, ever the optimist, has cheered up and Andrew scowls less, perhaps accepting his financial setback.

We will stay in Paris for about a week while we re-establish connections with some people we met in Italy as well as with those we visited in Paris last year. Perhaps we might attend a salon; I gather Madame Babois gracefully oversees a literary salon, reading the plays of Racine. While I have the opportunity, I must also look at some of the paintings by Jacques-Louis David. According to Diderot, his "Death of Socrates" is a masterpiece.

I also want to buy some of the newest French dresses; there is now a sort of "anti-fashion" for men and women that emphasizes simplicity and modesty, perhaps symbolizing the value of egalitarianism expressed by Monsieur Rousseau and the brave revolutionaries in the Americas.

Even Queen Marie Antoinette dresses in peasant clothing and straw hats when she is in her *hameau*; she has done away with panniers, corsets and weighty silk materials. Now, noblewomen may be confused with peasant girls! I realize the Queen's dresses are much like those worn by Angelika Kauffmann or Lady Emma Hamilton and wonder who has influenced whom.

**April 20, 1787**

Last night we were invited to a salon that included such eminent philosophers as Montesquieu, and Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle. Also attending was Madame and Monsieur Lavoisier, two brilliant French chemists who are working together on a variety of projects. I was curious to find out what kind of schooling Mme. Lavoisier had received that would allow her to act as her husband's laboratory assistant. She explained that although she had received an excellent formal education in a convent, it was inadequate in the sciences. As her interest in learning more about her husband's research grew, she received training in chemistry by some of her husband's colleagues, particularly Monsieur Jean Baptiste Michel Bucquet.

Monsieur Bucquet taught a public course in chemistry in his own laboratory prior to becoming professor of chemistry in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Paris in 1776. This year, Bucquet has been accepted into the French Royal Academy of Sciences as a chemist and continues to give public courses. I marvelled that lessons in the sciences are being taught to the public and, especially, that women are allowed to participate. Perhaps Mme. Lavoisier is an exception to the norm.

It seems to me that the quest of women's rights trails far behind today's agitation for men's rights. As in Italy, the highly-educated young women in England usually come from the nobility, have progressive parents and, in some cases, possess specific academic abilities. Unfortunately, they either have to hide their intellectual prowess or risk being outcasts in high society.

These thoughts are pressing on me constantly as I approach home. I shall be happy to leave France and return to England. Things are very tense here as the nation seems to near bankruptcy and no one seems capable of finding a solution, not even the beleaguered Finance Minister, Jacques Necker.

#### **April 26, 1786 - Calais**

We are back in Calais at the Hôtel d'Angleterre and will take the boat to Dover tomorrow. Our travel by *carosse* from Paris took almost a week and we were glad for comfortable beds and an English meal when we arrived. The weather was cool and rainy as we travelled north, grey mists rising above the forests and fields, occasionally revealing the bright green shoots of spring. We spent little time talking, each of us being immersed in our own thoughts and wondering about the next chapter of our lives. As I write, I look up occasionally to watch the pale sun set over the English Channel. Almost a year has elapsed since we were here last; time has moved far too quickly.

#### **May 15, 1787 - Durham, England**

It is still cold here in the north of England, making me long for Naples' balmy breezes. I stay warm by keeping busy. After removing the dust covers from the furniture, hanging our family portrait over the mantelpiece and inspecting the garden, (there is still a night frost that threatens to kill new growth) I spent a week sitting by the fire and reading the national newspapers to catch up on everything that has been happening in England.

William Pitt is still Prime Minister, a young man who considers himself a "new Tory" or even an "independent Whig." Although I find him somewhat reserved, he seems to be a true patriot and acts with integrity.

I am happy to read that there is a strong movement here to abolish slavery; it is driven primarily by Quakers but others follow. After seeing the miserable condition of galley slaves in Marseille I am heartened by this and hope the French also abolish slavery despite the fact that the practice is of vital importance to its possessions in the Caribbean.

I have received letters from both Andrew and Belinda. Both sound well and happy. Andrew is benefitting from his newly-found expertise in classical antiquity, and when he is not gambling he entertains members of his club with stories of his Italian exploits. The Etruscan vase holds a central place in his home in Chelsea, the furniture arranged to show it at its best advantage.

Belinda continues with her flute lessons and is soon to officially enter society. She tells me that Mr. Arundel will be travelling to England soon to negotiate, on behalf of Sir William Hamilton, the sale of some Renaissance paintings to the National Gallery. I look forward to receiving news of this developing relationship.

Finally, on a visit here, Belinda revealed to me what had happened to her on that terrible February night in Rome. I sipped at my tea and listened, trying to refrain from making any comments.

During their walk through streets filled with revelers, Snr. Campagnola pulled Belinda under an archway, withdrew her mask and kissed her for the first time. He then shamefacedly admitted that their friendship could not blossom into a deeper relationship because he was already happily married with four children!



He apologized for his reluctance for not having told her sooner, saying he had been afraid of losing her friendship.

Of course, Belinda was mortified and very angry. In her fury and despair she ran blindly away from him, intending to return home by herself, but she got dreadfully lost in the dark winding streets. Everything looked different at nighttime; nothing seemed familiar. Eventually, she met up with some merry-makers who, after a few detours, eventually guided her homewards toward Piazza d'España. After sitting crying for a while at the at the foot of the Spanish Steps, her sobs disguised by the splashing of the Bernini's *La Fontana della Barcaccia*, she entered our apartment after promising to herself she would never fall in love again. Poor dear! I am sure she will find here someone of good British stock who will make an excellent husband and life partner.

As I wander around our large estate, I have been thinking about what will occupy me in the decades to come. Perhaps I will continue my travels and visit Venice, Germany and Austria. I intend to visit Kew regularly on my way to see Andrew and Belinda and will continue to with my botanical illustrations, painting some of the new plants acquired from abroad.

As I begin reconnecting with old friends, many of whom have never left this country, I have begun to notice a change in myself, a metamorphosis stimulated by my travel experiences and being connected with a more cosmopolitan society. After meeting Italian women who could ably converse about music, art, science literature, and politics, I found, by comparison, that many English gentlewomen seem dull and uninteresting. Unless I am at a salon, they can only talk about balls, fashion or children and this is no longer enough for me.

I am also becoming more aware of the plight of the underprivileged people in our cities--especially in London where the gap between the rich and the poor increases daily. Have things changed so much since I left, or were things like this before, and I had taken no notice? Beggars fill London's streets and young girls are forced into prostitution. As in France, illnesses, accidents and old-age also prevent people from working, and result in poverty and often destitution. I have been reading about workhouses that have been set up by local parishes to house the poor. While some are clean and comfortable havens for the impoverished and provide education, rudimentary health care and clean clothing, others are overcrowded, prison-like institutions in which disease and premature death are common. England's democracy, which is the envy of all Europe, seems to only benefit men with wealth and power.

With all this talk of equality that is spreading from America to all of Europe, I see little improvement in women's quality of life in England, whether they are from the nobility or from the working poor. Unlike their counterparts in Italy and France, women still hold little influence within the public realm.

**May 20, 1787**

I have spoken to my solicitor about selling the estate dear Hubert bequeathed to me (it is far too big for my needs). I plan to use most of the funds from the sale for something that will improve the prospects of Englishwomen. I have observed in my travels that adequate time and money, as well as a supportive family and good education are the requisites for a woman to achieve a fulfilling and useful life. At the moment even aristocratic and well-to-do girls who go to boarding schools or have governesses are taught little of substance. Less well-off girls have even bleaker prospects.

No proper training is required for the instructors and the women who run these institutions; they are not qualified to give lessons in anything but manners, fashion and sewing. At the same time, at schools of higher learning, their male counterparts are being taught Latin, Greek, algebra and history – subjects considered particularly unfeminine.

I am fortunate to have received a good education but I still wish I had benefited from the same kind of training that Andrew and Philip received. Belinda, too, is limited in her knowledge of the arts and sciences and has chosen to deepen her education and experience within one of the specialized fields of study that are permissible – classical music and composition--fields only available to aristocratic and wealthy women.

I am happily aware that there are others who hold my views on the rights of women and am reassured when I discover supporters among my English female colleagues! In Britain the philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, speaks for complete equality between sexes including the rights to vote and to participate in government. In France, Montesquieu and the Marquis de Condorcet advocate women's suffrage and the right to participate in the public realm.

The writer, Catherine Macaulay Graham and the Bluestockings also challenge women's subordinate role in society. There is a particular woman whom I hope to meet--Mary Wollstonecraft. She has just written a book called *Thoughts on Education of Daughters*. In it she advises mothers to teach their daughters analytical thinking, self-discipline, honesty, contentment in their social position, and skills they might need to support themselves. While this is admirable, I feel she has not gone far enough in her recommendations and hope that in her future publications, she supports the educational needs of women who want to move beyond the domestic world.

**May 24, 1787**

After a making many inquiries, I have found an educational institution that has an exceedingly enlightened approach to the education of women. It is the Durham Boarding School for Young Ladies. They teach classical literature, history, Latin, French, Greek, philosophy, natural history, musical composition and mathematics. Often, the women who graduate from this school become teachers themselves, thereby passing their knowledge and expertise to future women. I hope that I can take advantage of this situation and increase the educational opportunities for deserving young women. Perhaps I can provide them with the means to achieve their potential through their studies at this boarding school and to make a difference to their lives and the lives of others.

To accomplish this, I plan to set up the Hugh Macbain Trust Fund from which five scholarships of twenty-five guineas each will be given annually to girls with insufficient means but who show academic promise. It will also pay for their board and lodging until they have completed their studies so that they can focus on their schoolwork. To girls who show an interest in the subject, I have offered to teach botany, plant taxonomy and botanical illustration at the boarding school. Perhaps we can build a physic garden there for research purposes.

In doing this I am realistic enough to know that my contributions will not make a large difference to society but their fruition may inspire others and serve as examples of what is possible if girls are given adequate education. Much can be accomplished when we act upon our observations and our conscience. However, for any significant change in women's lives, English society itself must profoundly transform itself. Women's current upbringing from the time they are infants turns them into weak, docile creatures, dependent upon men for their happiness and survival. If this continues, the future looks bleak and this popular dream of equality for all will be nothing but an unrealizable fantasy.

As I await a response from the school I am making preparations to move to a smaller cottage with a garden that I have bought near town. The Macbain estate will then be sold and the Trust Fund endowed. I will pack up my paintings and some light linen clothing (that is useless in the northern English climate), and put them in a trunk in the cellar until I am ready to embark on my next voyage. If I can find an editor, perhaps I will eventually publish my paintings and journals in the hope that they will be of benefit and inspiration to future women travellers.



*Figure 14 Promise (budding fruit tree)*

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