

3-24-2017

Self-Representation of Women in Eighteenth-Century Europe: Lady Anna Miller and the Grand Tour

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Self-Representation of Women in Eighteenth-Century Europe:

Lady Anna Miller and the Grand Tour

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of History
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University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:
November 11, 2016

Keywords: travel literature, gender, national identity, eighteenth century, the body

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Acknowledgments

I would first like to honor my parents Peter and Carol Polzella for their continued love and support, as well as their dedication to my education. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Department of History for their commitment to excellence and their students. I would especially like to thank Dr. Julia Irwin for her kindness and inspiration, Dr. Susan Boettcher for her insight and strength, Dr. Elisabeth Fraser for her wisdom and energy, Dr. Anne Koenig for her brilliance and wit, and Dr. Julie Langford for her unending enthusiasm and creativity. Most importantly, I would like to thank my mentor Dr. Giovanna Benadusi. Dr. Benadusi first inspired me to pursue a Graduate degree, and without her continued assistance, I would not have written this Thesis. I thank her for her strength and sense of humor, for her enthusiasm and guidance, and especially for her patience! She continues to push me to become the best version of myself, and for that I am overcome with love and gratitude.

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Abstract

The Grand Tour is known to scholars as a significant period of travel in which members of English society could immerse themselves in the foreign, while also adhering to established social customs. Scholarship previously regarded the Grand Tour as an intellectual journey for aristocratic Englishmen; however, an incorporation of women into this narrative has introduced many new and important themes that merit further study. Women's increasing participation in the Grand Tour, which gained in popularity in the eighteenth century, reveals many unique aspects of British society in the period. The integration of women into the Tour is also an indication of increased mobility for an emerging class of Britons who sought amusement and distinction abroad. Cultural identity played an active role in not only shaping the traveler's experience but also in dictating how travelers represented themselves on their journey. Travelers served as cultural intermediaries that represented their country while abroad and transported aspects of the foreign societies they encountered home with them. While cultural identity certainly shaped perceptions of travelers, this work endeavors to bring into focus additional points of analysis and emphasize emerging areas of study. The appropriation of foreign objects and the significance of their integration into domestic life and social practices, the pursuit of amusement and that pursuit's influence on the Tour experience, and the essential role played by the body as another category of experience in travel are all areas of interest and focus in this additional interpretation of the Grand Tour.

Introduction

In the eighteenth century, the European continent captured the imagination of a number of English travelers, beaconing them to cross the channel and explore Europe for themselves. Those seeking knowledge, experience, and adventure found in the Continent an array of cultures, customs, cuisine, art, music, architecture, social practices, and philosophies. The Grand Tour, as this period of travel has been referred to by scholars, was an opportunity for both women and men to enrich their understanding of Europe and its history. This fostered a better understanding of their own society, and also established in the process, a better sense of themselves. For women in particular, this was an extraordinary opportunity to free themselves from the confines of domestic life in England and instead embark on a journey through which they were physically and mentally mobilized. The Grand Tour gave its female participants the chance to internalize a wide spectrum of experiences, which helped to satisfy curiosity, cultivate intellect, and refine taste. Women traveled to France, Italy (the geographical focus of this work), Germany, the East and beyond, acquiring intellectual as well as material gain. Foreign customs, languages, and objects impressed upon those women who experienced them, the dynamic reality of life beyond England. This was made more significant by the rich history on display in every facet of life on the Continent. Travel itself had a definitive impact on the women who endeavored to witness Europe firsthand. Brian Dolan suggests that “Through

travel, women of a certain status could fashion themselves into informed, discriminating observers, acute social commentators and listened to cultural critics.”¹

As discriminating observers, women expressed not only their fascination with their experiences on the Grand Tour, but also the apprehensions, distastes, and disappointments that they encountered abroad. In many ways, English women on the Tour (much like their male counterparts) were resolved to uphold certain customs and behaviors that were of particular value in English society. In this, English travelers abroad were both influenced by the cultures they experienced on the Grand Tour and determined to maintain their own national identity among them. For women, it was of the utmost importance to retain their femininity and propriety abroad. While much of the female authored travel literature inspired by the Grand Tour represents a new venue of expression for women, much of what was written reflects the desire of English women to exemplify through their actions and the written word, their own culture’s standards. Thus, in examining women’s travel literature in the age of the Grand Tour, scholars may not only catch a glimpse of the cultural exchange and intellectual opportunities experienced by women on the Tour, they may also be provided with the means to develop a better understanding of the construction of English feminine identity and the perception of cultural superiority which prevailed in that society throughout the age of British imperialism.

This thesis endeavors to develop an image of eighteenth-century women on the Grand Tour by examining the means through which this travel was possible, the motivations which drove women to Tour, and the particular methods they employed in observing and understanding the foreign cultures they encountered upon their arrival to the Continent. In

¹ Brian Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour: British Women in Pursuit of Enlightenment and Adventure in Eighteenth Century Europe* (New York: Harpers Collins Publishers, 2001), 5.

particular, Lady Anna Miller's correspondence during her travels will serve as the primary lens through which the Tour's impact on women can be better understood. What is provided by Lady Anna Miller's letters is not just a perspective of Europe in the eighteenth century from someone who lived within it, more importantly these letters provide the ever elusive *female* perspective of the eighteenth century, which was in many ways an especially pivotal period for the reassessment of the roles of men and women and the construction of English identity.² Miller's particular perspective of the Tour is also useful for what it indicates about the construction of English identity, particularly feminine identity. This study thus seeks to be significant in its aim to further develop the voice of an early modern English woman, who at home may have been relegated to a role of wifely domesticity, but who abroad, utilized her English identity and cultural authority not only to establish herself within foreign social circles, but once back in England imposed herself through her writing. This image of the eager, capable and cultivated Grand Tourist also challenges assumptions about the static nature of women in early modernity and instead gives validity to the dynamic experiences and opportunities seized by women for themselves in eighteenth-century Europe.

The main issues addressed in this introduction are further developed into four thematic chapters. Following the historiography of the Grand Tour, the first chapter "Locating National Identity and Imperial Undercurrents in Lady Anna Miller's *Letters from Italy*" discusses the extent of identity and identity formation as a result of nationality. The second chapter "Performing the Grand Tour at Home: Lady Miller and her Roman Vase" examines the transportation and transformation of foreign objects into the domestic sphere, as exemplified

² Paula Findlen, Wendy Roworth, and Catherine Sama, eds. *Italy's Eighteenth Century: Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 8.

by Lady Miller's celebration of a much-loved vase acquired during her Italian travels. The third chapter "But we who travel merely for our Amusement": The Significance of Amusement and Fun in the Grand Tour Experience" delves into the recreational aspects of travel that played a role in eighteenth-century travel and travel narrative. The fourth and final chapter "The Body on Tour: Examining Corporeal Experience and the Essential Role of Health in Travel" illuminates the importance of the body as a vessel of experience and a key factor in travel. This final chapter also suggests that an examination of corporeal experience will offer a refreshing and more nuanced perspective of the multi-faceted motivations of travelers.

The Historiography of the Grand Tour

The Grand Tour represents a period in which the European continent greatly intrigued men and women living in various parts of Britain so much so, that they journeyed there in search of education, enlightenment, and adventure. Members of English society, while very distinct in their own social customs and cultural history, endeavored to explore these places in an effort to witness firsthand both the remnants of the classical societies which had shaped the West, and the contemporary applications of those societies. Though the cities themselves, as well as surviving art and architecture, were physical representations of the greatly admired Classical societies of Europe's history, these places during the Grand Tour were not continuums of the Classical past but rather societies that existed simultaneously, yet starkly contrasted, to their own back home in England. Italy in particular served to pique the curiosity of the traveler in the age of the Grand Tour. Paula Findlen suggests that "Italy had long captured the imagination of foreigners, but it did so to an unprecedented degree in the eighteenth century."³ Italy, as a result of its rich history, served as the essential prerequisite to any self-proclaimed traveler. In many ways, it was a tourist's paradise—a place for reflection and self-discovery. Once there, in addition to the splendor of the Roman legacy, travelers were struck with the particularities of Italian society. Like Paris, Italy too had a thriving salon culture; however, the subjects of Italian salons focused more on the creative, such as literature, theatre, music, and

³ *Ibid.*, 1.

the visual arts.⁴ In addition to discussing matters creative, the educated elites in Italian society were preoccupied with discerning the nature of women as well.⁵ Women in eighteenth century Italian society, while serving as subjects for discussion, also participated in the dialogue. The prominence of women in the intellectual culture of Italian society was a feature that struck most visitors, especially as these women did not seem to abide by the rules of polite society which applied to other parts of Europe.⁶

One of the chief characteristics of the Grand Tour however, was immersion into the customs of the host culture. For both men and women who visited Italy, the impact of witnessing greater female participation in addition to the celebration of prodigious females “who could be found in virtually every city” impressed upon Grand Tourists and foreigners alike the notion that Italy was a place where, as Paula Findlen notes, “the differences between the sexes simply dissolved.”⁷ This dissolution (or perceived dissolution) of sexual difference, while presenting a challenge to customary gender relations elsewhere in Europe, also provided Grand Tourists with the opportunity to see this unique approach to women in practice—a sight at times both encouraging and bewildering to the women who observed it, and varying degrees of intriguing and disturbing for those men who were exposed. More extreme reactions to the relation of the sexes in the period included the perception that Italian society feminized men and masculinized women—less of a testament to actual gender relations in the period than the psychological impact it had on outsiders. While some scholars have argued that Italy was not as

⁴ Jennine Hurl-Eamon, *Women's Roles in the Eighteenth Century Europe* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2010), 91.

⁵ Paula Findlen, *Italy's Eighteenth Century*, 18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17 and 28.

active an agent in the eighteenth century in regard to its greater impact,⁸ the image of Italian society which proliferated throughout Europe was quite significant, in that while it represented a contrast to other cultural forms in Europe, it also represented the conceptual point of origin of the West for many Grand Tourists and Europeans alike. Michael Brennan addresses in his work, *The Origins of the Grand Tour*, the particular hold that Italy possessed on the minds of many in the English ruling classes, as a result of its “unique geographical identity as the motherland of the new humanist learning and the enduring focus of ancient imperial civilization.”⁹ Italy in many ways represented a conflict of identity for the English traveler. The attempt to reconcile the culture of the Classical past with the practices witnessed on the Grand Tour, delighted some while it repelled others. Often for these tourists, Italy represented what Nigel Leask described as “a ruin-strewn marble wilderness”¹⁰ which served as the historical backdrop for Classical imperialism (certainly of great interest to the British in the eighteenth century). This instilled in many English travelers the notion that they were the new inheritors of the legacy of empire.

In addition to reinforcing the new imperial identity of the traveler, the cultural climate of Britain’s eighteenth century was in fact well suited for the Grand Tour. As consumption practices broadened, and tastes expanded to include exotic materials and goods from abroad, those financially capable of travel found themselves in a position to acquire these goods in their places of origin. The process of consumption in the eighteenth century in many ways catered to the individual, and Grand Tourists in particular could enjoy the benefits of both obtaining the

⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁹ Michael Brennan, *The Origins of the Grand Tour* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 2004), 9.

¹⁰ Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.

objects they desired and distinguishing themselves as individuals through their purchases. In addition to the social comfort and respectability that could be achieved through consumption, consumers on the Grand Tour further enhanced their experience through the goods they purchased abroad due to the nature of discovery which accompanied consumption in the foreign market.¹¹ This exercise of individual taste also required a knowledgeable consumer with the skill and experience to recognize the potential of the purchase.¹² The Grand Tour provided the opportunity for its participants to obtain an array of goods from abroad, which though requiring a certain taste beforehand, served to refine and distinguish the taste of the individual even further after purchase. Tourist Hester Lynch Piozzi provides a wonderful example of the kind of eclectic consumption possible on the Grand Tour. In one amusing reflection from 1786, Piozzi remarks on the variety of her wardrobe: “My Riding Habit was bought at Rome I recollected; my Hat and Shirt at Naples, my Shoes at Padua, my Stockings at Brescia, my Ruffles at Genoa, one of my Petticoats at Milan, and the rest of my dress in England.”¹³ For Piozzi, these items were not only her treasured possessions but also representatives of her experience on the Grand Tour. These items were all the more precious to her as a result of the experience of gaining them abroad. In this way, Piozzi’s purchases were a display of her discerning taste—a testament to what she found most desirous (and acquirable) during her journey.

The actual act of embarking on the Grand Tour was itself a type of consumption, best described by utilizing Jan De Vries’ term “the consumption of pleasure.”¹⁴ This consumption of

¹¹ Jan De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 22.

¹² *Ibid.*, 24.

¹³ Hester Lynch Piozzi, edited by Herbert Barrows, *Observations and Reflections: Made in the Course of a Journey Through France, Italy, and Germany* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1967), 215.

¹⁴ Jan De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, 23.

pleasure meant that the Grand Tourist was consciously and willingly purchasing travel, then and now a considerable expense. In addition to the goods purchased abroad, it was the actual experience that was worth the cost. Men and women alike spent considerable sums in order to endeavor on a journey to the Continent. Many women of the Grand Tour were independently wealthy, and solely responsible for allotting their finances to travel.¹⁵ The primary subject for this study, Lady Anna Miller, is representative of a woman who individually possessed the financial means to Tour-and did. Miller's marriage to a Scottish captain provided her with the status to travel among elite circles in Italy; however, it was her own finances (the result of a large inheritance) that provided the Millers with the disposable income necessary for a long stay abroad.¹⁶ This designation of income to the purpose of travel, an intangible but nevertheless very real commodity, challenges assumptions in the period that women were merely consumers of whimsical fashions and domestic products. Instead, women who chose to spend their money on the Grand Tour reveal a kind of discernment in matters financial that emphasized experience over possession. Rosemary Sweet suggests in her work *Cities and The Grand Tour* that the increase in travel to the Continent coincided with a rise in disposable income and the improvement of travel conditions abroad.¹⁷

In addition to material gain and the consumption of pleasure through travel, the Grand Tour also provided intellectual and cultural enrichment for its participants. Brian Dolan suggests that "travel and the knowledge collected along the way gave currency to the metaphor 'the path of enlightenment'. By the end of the eighteenth century, the term was taken much more

¹⁵Brian Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, 7.

¹⁶ Ibid., 189.

¹⁷ Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 26.

literally.”¹⁸ The literal implementation of this path to enlightenment was the common trajectory of the traveler, which took them through the various hotbeds of intellectual and cultural production in Europe. Men had long been journeying to the grand cities of Europe in search of enlightenment and adventure. For many wealthy young men, the Continent was the culmination of their education. Cities like Paris, Florence, and Rome served as the ultimate classroom for the young male mind. Time spent abroad provided the opportunity to observe and explore, to impress and be impressed upon. In her work “A Gendered Journey” Ruth Watts reveals that part of the intellectual excitement experienced on the Grand Tour came from the “notion of the ‘civilised gentleman’ whose highly valued attributes of politeness, sensibility, sense and good taste were based on a classical education furthered by travel.”¹⁹ Thus young men and gentleman alike gained “polite knowledge” and enjoyed a recognized sense of accomplishment in traveling through Europe in the eighteenth century.²⁰ The period allowed for English gentleman to partake in the intellectual debates of the day in foreign venues, while often also serving to reinforce the English male identity. In many ways, these men toured in order to understand better the home which they left. Once on the continent, they were free to “compare and inspect, to collect and converse.”²¹ In spite of these potential gains afforded to gentlemen and male youths who could participate, there was a tendency among some male Grand Tourists to treat their visit to the Continent as a social obligation, or an intellectual rite of

¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹ Ruth Watts. “A Gendered Journey: Travel of Ideas in England, c. 1750-1800” (*History of Education*, Vol. 37, 2008), 517.

²⁰ Ibid., 518.

²¹ Brian Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, 9.

²¹ Ibid., 18.

passage. In this way, some men may have taken for granted the potential benefits of travel for personal improvement and self-discovery.²²

For women who were fortunate enough to endeavor to the European continent however, there was much more of an understanding of the potential for education, escape, self-improvement, and exploration. While the Grand Tour for most men was considered to be the crux of their education, many women saw it instead as “an opportunity to *begin* their education”.²³ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, perhaps the most recognized female Grand Tourist, expounded on the many benefits of travel for the intellectual cultivation of the feminine mind.²⁴ In addition to fostering education, travel provided excitement, exercise, and a means of escape from domestic life back home. In a world of familial duties and obligations, the Grand Tour provided a way for women who would have otherwise been confined to their local social sphere, to move about in a very mobile society. There she was free from the censure of her neighbors, able to adapt herself at every stop, or remain steadfast in her own convictions—all at her discretion. In embarking on the Grand Tour, women were thus able to be agents of their own education, adventure, and vitality. The mobile nature of the Tour coupled with a flood of new sensory experiences, afforded women who traveled to Europe a unique opportunity. This opportunity was an experience unencumbered (or at least less-encumbered) than what would have otherwise been available to them at home.

This freedom of movement, thought, and experience not only cultivated the minds of the female participants of the Grand Tour, it also resonated throughout a community of women

²² Ibid., 18.

²³ Ibid., 22.

²⁴ Paula Findlen, *Italy's Eighteenth Century*, 6.

who, though unable to Tour themselves, were very much impacted by correspondence with their female friends and family members fortunate enough to make the journey. It is through this communication that historians are able to discern and discuss the nature of women's experience on the Grand Tour. Women who participated were largely inspired to both record and relay the extent of their experiences. Some, like Lady Anna Miller, went to great lengths to record every detail of their trip for friends at home.²⁵ As frequently as women were inspired to document their experiences on the Grand Tour, women at home were inspired to read them. Margaret Hunt comments on the rise in popularity of travel literature among the literate English public in the eighteenth century, noting its particular prominence among the "middling classes" which comprised the very people who seized the opportunity to tour in the period.²⁶ The rise in travel literature authored by women, notes Katherine Turner, directly correlated with a rise in women's literacy. As a result, a growing number of women were now capable of conveying their experience to an increasing audience, comprised of women (and men) who were eager to view the Continent through the eyes of a compatriot. In that way, the Grand Tour connected even those women who would never leave England. They too could visualize the landscape, marvel at the artwork, taste the cuisine, delight in the conversation, and decide how they would respond to each particular encounter. The narrative voice of their fellow countrywomen served as a guide for many women, who could recognize a familiar English tone in a sea of foreign imagery. Without these women of letters, driven to recount the details of

²⁵Brian Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, 192.

²⁶ Margaret Hunt, "Racism, Imperialism, and the Traveler's Gaze in Eighteenth Century England" (*Journal of British Studies* Vol. 32, 1993), 333-357.

their travel for their own pleasure as well as the pleasure of others, the historiography of the Grand Tour might be wholly from the male perspective.

The historiography surrounding the Grand Tour continues to grow, illuminating with each study different aspects (and participants) that shed further light on the experience. One of the early works on the Grand Tour, Geoffrey Trease's *The Grand Tour*, from 1967, places much emphasis on the significance of Italy as "the ultimate destination, and indeed the culmination of the Grand Tour".²⁷ Trease also notes that the concept of the Grand Tour began to take shape long before scholars had examined it, citing (like several scholars after him) Richard Lassels, *An Italian Voyage* from 1679, as the first traceable mention of the Grand Tour, though he recognizes that many subsequent travel writers were aware that their journey abroad shared a specific trajectory and purpose with other countrymen who had similarly ventured to the Continent. Another influential and frequently cited work regarding the Grand Tour is Bruce Redford's *Venice and the Grand Tour*, which focuses on the impact that particular city had on perceptions of Italy. Redford's study also emphasizes his own specific guidelines for what exactly the Grand Tour was. For Redford, a Grand Tour requires four specific attributes to warrant the designation. He proposes: "The Grand Tour is not the Grand Tour unless it includes the following: first, a young British male patrician (that is, a member of the aristocracy or gentry); second, a tutor who accompanies his charge throughout the journey; third, a fixed itinerary that makes Rome its principal destination; fourth, a lengthy period of absence, averaging two to three years."²⁸ While scholars have since expanded Redford's narrow view of who and what constituted a Grand Tourist, some of his other sentiments regarding the

²⁷ Geoffrey Trease, *The Grand Tour* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967), 2.

²⁸ Bruce Redford, *Venice and the Grand Tour* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 14.

experience continue to resonate in studies regarding the practice. These sentiments reflect the often contradictory nature of the Tour, which could be observed through the manner in which Grand Tourists spoke about their experiences. Redford suggests that the approach of many English men who wrote of their travels was to continuously undercut praise with censure, to extol the virtues of touring while emphasizing the superiority of their own culture.²⁹ Margaret Hunt in her article “ Racism, Imperialism, and the Traveler’s Gaze in Eighteenth Century England”, expands the parameters of Redford’s Grand Tourist, to include respectable, private citizens, increasingly drawn from the middle or business classes.³⁰ Hunt echoes some of Redford’s conclusions however, as she also remarks on the capacity for male and female travelers alike to create a distinction between the host culture and English society, upholding and reconfirming stereotypes inherited through the literature of the Grand Tourists who came before them.³¹ In this again, Hunt and Redford reach a point of intersection, as Redford remarks on the tendency of the lore of the Grand Tour to not only condition the shape of the visit, but also its reception by the thousands of Tourists that followed.³²

Further scholarship on the Grand Tour has increasingly reflected a more holistic view of the enterprise. Katherine Turner’s *British Travel Writers in Europe, 1750-1800: Authorship, Gender and National Identity*, addresses women’s position as Grand Tourists, in relation to their male counterparts. Turner suggests that while the number of published travel accounts by men certainly exceeds the proportion of publications undertaken by women during the eighteenth century, there is plenty of evidence that “countless women did actually travel abroad: eloping

²⁹ Ibid., 1.

³⁰ Margaret Hunt, “Racism, Imperialism, and the Traveler’s Gaze”, 337.

³¹ Ibid., 339.

³² Bruce Redford, *Venice and the Grand Tour*, 10.

with lovers, pursuing a healthy climate, seeking a new home and employment, exploiting the much lower cost of living abroad, or simply accompanying their traveling husbands.”³³ Turner thus emphasizes not only women’s inclusion in the study of the Grand Tour, but their role as essential indicators of the scope and nature of the Tour as it pertained to British society. Turner’s focus on travel writing is particularly poignant in regard to deciphering the Grand Tour and expanding on its historiography. It is in this travel writing for Turner where “key notions concerning femininity, class, and national identity”³⁴ emerged. This identity was reflected not only in travel literature, but in the way Grand Tourists interpreted their experience. In discussing Lady Anna Miller, Turner recognizes the contradictory approach taken to the Grand Tour by English travelers-remarking that while Miller certainly professes an anthropological interest in the cultures she is exposed to, she approaches them with “an insular and snobbish propriety”³⁵, citing her refusal to sit at a table d’hôte in mixed company as an example of the often hypocritical behavior of English tourists, many of whom, like Miller, professed an extreme interest in the Continent but approached the journey determined to maintain certain boundaries-even at the cost of appearing ungracious or rude. For the English travel writer, the subject of Turner’s study, it was the perception of propriety back home in England that was of greater significance than offending their host abroad.

In the same year as Turner’s work, Brian Dolan delved even more exclusively into the realm of experience of the female traveler in his book, *Ladies of the Grand Tour: British Women in Pursuit of Enlightenment and Adventure in Eighteenth-Century Europe*. In this work, Dolan

³³ Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe*, 132.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

represents a transition in scholarship on the Grand Tour that is solely focused on the experience of women abroad in the eighteenth century. Like Turner, Dolan discusses the importance of travel literature not just in discerning the female experience abroad but in gaining a perspective on the construction of identity that was facilitated through travel writing. Dolan acknowledges that each decade in the period saw an increase in women “considering themselves justified to write about their experiences abroad.”³⁶ He notes that leaving a literary legacy became progressively central to the female experience of the Grand Tour. Ever an interesting subject of study, Lady Anna Miller represents for Dolan a female travel writer who distinguished herself first through her travels and then eventually, through the literature produced by it. Miller further serves as an interesting lady of the Grand Tour for her critiques not just on foreign culture, art, architecture, customs, and the like, but also on Grand Tour literature itself. Dolan notes: “She questioned the accuracy and thoughtfulness of other travel writers and provided a wealth of refreshing insights of her own.”³⁷ This is a particularly significant observation, as it exemplifies the critical nature of many English women traveling abroad. It is not enough then to simply say that women only passively experienced the Grand Tour, they were in fact active agents in the discourse. Scholarship further indicates the kind of authority women were willing to exercise in the face of foreign cultures and in the pages of their domestic publications.

Rosemary Sweet’s *Cities and the Grand Tour* represents some recent scholarship on the Grand Tour. Her research is indicative of the progression of the field, as she acknowledges herself that “the range of travelers undertaking these continental tours was more diverse than

³⁶ Brian Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, 12.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.

the traditional image implies.”³⁸ Presenting a further challenge to traditional scholarship on the Grand Tour, Sweet not only suggests that women made up much of this diverse group of travelers, she also emphasizes that women were commonplace and even essential to the Tour. It is the presence of women that allows English travelers to appropriately reproduce their own patterns of sociability abroad.³⁹ Thus, the English woman acted not only as a benefactor to the experiences of the Grand Tour, but also as an ambassador—a representative of the propriety and steadfast nature of English culture, in the midst of one that had ceased to maintain dominance. Though this perception of superiority was most obvious when asserted by male Grand Tourists, women shared in the ability to utilize an air of superiority at their discretion. As a result, Sweet’s study further recognizes the dual nature of women’s experience on the Grand Tour, in one sense as the recipients of a new, enriching cultural knowledge, and in another sense, pillars of femininity, propriety, and national identity abroad.

What the current body of historiographical work on the Grand Tour offers is a foundation from which further research regarding women’s experience in this grand age of travel may be done. Lady Anna Miller’s *Letters From Italy*, serves as a useful guide for this experience, as well as a primary illustration of the often contradictory nature of the Grand Tour for the English traveler. Miller was both a woman whose encounters abroad impressed strongly upon her and a woman whose strong sense of English propriety and femininity remained intact throughout the most novel of circumstances. Her letters indicate an intense desire to document, with incredible detail, the art, architecture, and landscapes of her Grand Tour. They also reveal the frequency with which she appealed to familiar social conventions opposed to

³⁸ Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour*, 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

submitting to the customs she witnessed abroad. In some of her accounts, Lady Miller addresses certain facets of Italian culture with wonderment and occasional empathy (the Italian practice of *cicisbei* is among these). In other parts of her letters, Lady Miller seems to relish with great pride, her own determination not to comply with the customs and formalities with which her principles were “diametrically opposite.”⁴⁰ While Lady Anna Miller spent countless hours meticulously documenting the famous works of art that were so highly valued, she also took the time to muse at her own obstinate resolve, such as her and her husband’s refusal to kneel at the elevation of the host in St. Peter’s Basilica, despite, as Miller seemed all too happy to recount, “a curious stare from the Pope himself.”⁴¹ What then can be learned from this inquisitive yet audacious figure? How does Lady Miller’s identity as an English woman supersede her identity as a foreigner, and what do her assertions abroad say about both her English identity and her status as a woman? The significance of these inquiries may help to uncover more of the realm of experience for women in the eighteenth century, as well as further construct the image of the English Grand Tourist, whose adventures abroad were enlightening while at the same time riddled with contradictions. Though British identity played a major role in perceptions and representations of the Grand Tour, travelers couldn’t help but be impressed upon by the society in which they were visiting. In some accounts, differences between the host society and its observer reinforced identity. In others however, the traveler found distinct parallels that diminished notions of difference. Elements of foreign cultural practices and even objects were transported back to England and incorporated into British society. This transportation of foreign ideas and items back to England thus empowered the

⁴⁰ Lady Anna Miller, *Letters From Italy*, ii. 25.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, iii. 21.

traveler to not only determine what practices and items were most appealing to their tastes but also to act as intermediaries across cultures. Travelers brought back home with them their own version of the Tour and in doing so became a kind of authority to those who had not experienced the Continent first hand. Lady Miller's profession of cultural authority, as exemplified through her writings, is a testament to the empowerment of travel for women in early modernity; however, this empowerment must also be viewed through the lens of eighteenth century British society, in order to determine the true extent of Lady Miller's experience. Without this consideration, any study regarding women on the Grand Tour would fail to recognize the strong hand of English identity at work, even from across the Channel.

Chapter One:

Locating National Identity and Imperial Undercurrents in Lady Anna Miller's *Letters from Italy*

While certainly those who traveled to Europe like Lady Miller were eager to immerse themselves in an environment, culture, and society different from their own, many who made the journey were accompanied by a strong sense of national identity, which not only shaped their experiences abroad but also presented itself in the travel literature that was produced. Lady Miller, like many of her countrymen, documented her travels in a series of letters written throughout the duration of her trip. These letters are part of a larger collection of travel literature which came to characterize the British experience abroad. What the travel literature provides, and what can be examined in Lady Miller's letters specifically, is the formation of national identity through travel and the particular imperial attitudes which often accompanied Tourists on their journeys abroad. In analyzing the construction of Lady Miller's English identity, I will examine the traits she ascribed to herself and her British compatriots, the supremacy of place she gave Britain in her comparisons to the societies she encountered on her Tour, and the privileges she believed her 'Britishness' afforded her abroad. In locating the imperial undercurrents present in Lady Miller's letters, I will highlight her attempts to challenge or ignore local customs in favor of her own, her desire to attain and appropriate antiquities and the Classical past (as part of a larger trend in British society), and the attitude of cultural superiority that permeated much of her discussion of the foreign peoples she encountered in

her travels. These themes present in her letters illustrate the kind of personal, social, and cultural ties to nation, specifically a nation in the process of building an empire, that strongly influenced the perceptions its citizens had about themselves in relation to the rest of the world. These perceptions not only influenced their behavior abroad, but returned home to England in the form of travel literature. The travel literature produced as a result of the Grand Tour thus served many purposes, not least of which were the contributions made to the formation of national identity, the assertion of an 'English' presence abroad, and the perpetuation of stereotypes which served to elevate British society while delegitimizing those societies they encountered. As early as the seventeenth century, Sir William Petty suggested that "national progress demanded" the kind of expansive faculty of mind that accompanied time abroad.⁴² Many in British society shared his sentiments and indeed linked the mastery of travel to national prestige.

National identity can be located in Lady Miller's letters in several forms: the traits she ascribed to herself and her countrymen, the comparisons she made between British society and the cultures she encountered on the Tour, and the way she perceived both the role and the reception of the British abroad. In discussing herself and the characteristics that compose English society, Lady Miller defined the British as possessing certain characteristics that were inherent to their identity. One feature Lady Miller viewed as particularly British, and indeed served as a unit of measurement in many of her observations, was cleanliness. She makes numerous references to the cleanliness (or lack thereof) in most of the places she visits on her Tour. At times, she deemed her living quarters to be too filthy even for sleep. Of one such inn

⁴² Margaret Hunt, "Racism, Imperialism, and the Traveler's Gaze in Eighteenth Century England," *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 32, 1993), 333.

she remarks: "The accommodations are so wretched, that they have banished sleep from my eyes: the hardness and dirt of the bed does not invite me to rest."⁴³ In other instances, she regarded the cleanliness of certain locations with a tone almost resembling surprise, often likening them to their English equivalents. In one example, Lady Miller was particularly pleased with the state of her accommodations, noting "Our inn is clean, and like an English country ale house."⁴⁴ In addition to asserting an authority on standards of cleanliness, Lady Miller also boasted of the "moderation" exercised by her and her husband, a feature she attributed to her English character, and one she mused was recognized (and laughably misconstrued for piety) by one Italian local.⁴⁵ Another feature Lady Miller attributed to her British identity was a healthy curiosity and a knack for "particularization and accuracy."⁴⁶ While she suggested that the English were particularly prone to "*une partie de vos ennues*"⁴⁷ or boredom, she delighted in her own affinity for amusement. Her knowledge of history, culture, and the natural world provided her with a more informed perspective through which she viewed the sights encountered in her travels. In this aspect, Lady Miller contributed to an expanding group of women, who in the eighteenth century "increasingly indulged in scientific pursuits."⁴⁸ This pursuit of amusement accompanied by a curiosity for scientific, medicinal, and natural properties led her to various baths, natural springs, and geographical features on the Continent. Lady Miller was especially convinced of the authority many of her countrymen held in regard to nature and the sciences, and expressed a desire for good English intellectuals to survey the

⁴³ Lady Anna Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 34.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁴⁶ Brian Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, 192.

⁴⁷ Lady Anna Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 17.

⁴⁸ Jennine Hurl-Eamon, *Women's Role in Eighteenth Century Europe* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2010), 100.

regions she had observed. Upon her inspection of a particularly curious natural spring, Lady Miller confides: "It is to be wished that some good natural philosopher of England was to reside here for some time, and to analyze them properly. I am sure the world would profit by his discoveries."⁴⁹ It is here that Lady Miller betrayed her bias, only an Englishman could 'properly' investigate the natural wonders that existed on the Italian peninsula-an attitude indicative of her belief in the superior faculties of the British.

While Lady Miller certainly expressed her sense that the English were of better stock through her portrayal of their merit-worthy characteristics, her cultural allegiances were perhaps even better displayed through her use of comparison. In examining the cultures she encountered, Lady Miller frequently evaluated the customs, features, and people of the places she visited in contrast to their English equivalents. Chloe Chard comments on this tendency of travelers to assign contrasting attributes to their own country, suggesting that the Italian "dramatic" was often described in opposition to English "tameless," a feature Lady Miller relished in her own character.⁵⁰ In addition to contrasting temperaments, Lady Miller noted the insufficiency of luxuries available abroad, most notably the dining and sleeping accommodations, remarking that "they are total strangers to the luxurious."⁵¹ Lady Miller even deems aspects of the natural world unworthy of comparison to England, commenting on the inferiority of the flora and fauna and the presentation of Italian gardens. Though Lady Miller does attempt to praise particular aspects of the societies she encounters, this praise is often prefaced with surprise. By making England the standard by which everything else pales in

⁴⁹ Lady Anna Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 24.

⁵⁰ Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 43.

⁵¹ Lady Anna Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 14.

comparison (or just barely competes), Lady Miller clearly expressed her belief that ‘the British do it better’.

Another important aspect of Lady Miller’s British identity was how that identity functioned abroad. For her, the belief that her ‘Britishness’ conveyed her and her countrymen particular benefits on the Continent, acted as a source of pride and further fostered a sense of British identity. Lady Miller notes the specific instances where natives attempted to appease her British sensibilities. She was always amused at those people who addressed her and her husband in English, and was delighted when she encountered people whose grasp of the language was exemplary.⁵² Lady Miller was also pleased at those attempts made by natives to provide English comforts. She marveled in one Italian town at a family who kept cows in their kitchen nine months out of the year, in order to make butter specifically for English travelers.⁵³ While this custom appeared unusual (and certainly unclean), these attempts to appease British tastes both flattered Lady Miller and gave her the sense that British approval was highly valued abroad. The positive reception of British travelers in Italy especially, further convinced Lady Miller of the value of her English identity. She commented that they were well received in every respectable household on the peninsula and was especially impressed by the warmth with which English travelers were received by the Duke of Modena. Of this she commented: “He distinguishes the English so far beyond all other foreigners, that they are permitted to see the palace at any hour they choose, without previous notice and quite undressed, even in boots are not objected to: this is an exclusive privilege.”⁵⁴ The accommodations and preferential

⁵² Ibid., 41.

⁵³ Ibid., 54.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 290.

treatment Lady Miller received abroad she attributed to her English identity. This belief that her Britishness afforded her treatment above all other visitors, contributed to her strong sense of cultural superiority-as she perceived that foreigners not only attempted to replicate the British, they sought to appease them.

In addition to revealing her deeply rooted sense of nation, Lady Miller also revealed certain sentiments that reflected her nation's tendencies toward imperial views regarding the foreign. The imperial attitude which characterized much of Lady Miller's experience abroad can be exemplified by her efforts to circumvent or challenge the cultural customs she encountered, her appropriation of antiquity and the Classical past, and the negative stereotypes by which she often characterized those she encountered. In challenging or choosing to ignore some of the customs she encountered on her Tour, Lady Miller asserted her own cultural values, and thus her culture's 'inherent' superiority. Perhaps the most striking example of Lady Miller's refusal to comply with custom is her approach to the Ascension of the Host when visiting St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Though Lady Miller makes several allusions to the inferiority of Catholicism, describing the priests as "croaking the masses" and referring to the Catholic practices as "superstition and priestcraft,"⁵⁵ her most bold assertion is undoubtedly her refusal to bow when the Host is presented. Lady Miller presents this refusal as more of an accomplishment than a slight. She boasts in one letter that both she and her husband acted in opposition, as they were good English Protestants and had no desire to express any feigned dedication to a Catholic practice.⁵⁶ In addition to challenging certain Catholic rites, Lady Miller also elevated her own knowledge of science and medicine above that of the regional authorities. In one amusing

⁵⁵ Ibid., 195.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 418.

instance, Lady Miller recounted her triumph over a local apothecary. After falling ill, Lady Miller sought a particular remedy that she had frequently used at home, she says of its arrival: “When it was brought to me, it appeared so unlike, in color and consistency, to the guaiacum I had seen in England, that I feared he had made some mistake.”⁵⁷ Upon interrogating the apothecary further, she learned that it was in fact a variation of the remedy she had tried to procure and decided to use it for the treatment of her ailment. What this account illustrates, is Lady Miller’s association of quality with those things that came from England. Because the product did not resemble what was familiar to her, and was not English (or of better quality), she felt it essential to inquire further into the state of her purchase. This application of English standards and units of measurement are indicative of the kind of approach to all things ‘foreign’ that accompanied imperial attitudes.

Another major indication of imperial undercurrents in Lady Miller’s letters is her desire to acquire antiquities and relics of the ancient past. This desire was shared by many of her fellow Grand Tourists, and was in fact very common of British travelers abroad in the eighteenth century and through the Age of Imperialism. Mark Bradley, as part of his assessment of the British and their appropriation of the Classics asks if “the extraction and relocation of classical culture is symptomatic of the arrogance and brutality of British imperialism?”⁵⁸ While brutality may be absent from Lady Miller’s motivations in acquiring antiquities, there is certainly a detectable tone of arrogance. One example of this is her account of sending a servant boy out to retrieve fossils or relics that she assumed he would find scattered about the city, instructing

⁵⁷ Ibid., 160.

⁵⁸ Mark Bradley, *The Classics and British Imperialism*, 4.

him not to return until he had obtained some.⁵⁹ Much to her dismay, there were “no antiquities to be seen, nor anything curious.”⁶⁰ Lady Miller was not alone in her disappointment. Many British travelers in the eighteenth century became disillusioned upon their arrival to Italy finding that much of antiquity had been lost to time or was already in the possession of others. Chloe Chard further elaborates on the “distressingly remote” presence of antiquities and collectables abroad, attributing much of the frustration to preconceived notions of the abundance of relics reflecting Italy’s ancient origins, a product of Classical education and the British preoccupation with antiquity that characterized their study of the region.⁶¹ This need to acquire antiquities demonstrates an imperial attitude in that it reflects the growing belief in British citizens that their nation functioned as the inheritors of Classical civilizations. This presupposes not only that the British were the new inheritors of empire, but also that other world powers, and even the populations who live among the coveted antiquities, were not qualified to possess them. It is this sense of right and qualification that characterizes British attempts to collect and control antiquity, this sense is also apparent in Lady Miller’s own attempts to secure for herself some pieces of the past.

Perhaps the most telling aspect of Lady Miller’s imperial view toward those she encountered abroad is her negative portrayal of non-English peoples. Her remarks on the physical, social, and political qualities that she came to define these ‘foreigners’ by, reflects the belief not only that those in England are superior, but that by definition, those that are not English are *inferior*. It is precisely this conception of the inferiority of others that lies at the foundation of

⁵⁹ Lady Anna Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 259.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁶¹ Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour*, 20.

imperialism. Travel literature is particularly well-suited for gaining a sense of the 'Other' that is present in British sentiments. Margaret Hunt suggests that British travel literature had a tendency to encourage the perpetuation of stereotypes and perceptions of inferiority. She adds that these stereotypes and xenophobic narratives, while slighting the people they are directed at, work to reaffirm or solidify the identity of the group.⁶² In Lady Miller's case, the stereotypes and seemingly racist comments she directed at non-English people were a reflection of the kind of attitude that conferred power to the British, while taking it away from 'the Other'. In one of her rants on the state of people abroad, she reduces them to an almost sub-human level, suggesting that the people from one village were "so brutified as to seem of a more different species from other human creatures than the man-tiger from them."⁶³ In another instance, she describes the town's inhabitants as "brown, meager, ragged, half-starved wretches, prancing and grinning at one in their dirt misery."⁶⁴ These attributes are almost directly in contrast to the characteristics prized among the British: white, well-fed, clean, respectable citizens. She further extended her barbs to speculate about the inhabitants of places she never visited. Alluding to the Swiss custom of eating cats, suggesting that it is a practice among those in the more rural regions there.⁶⁵ In addition to the consumption of cats, she ascribed the title of "uncivilized" frequently throughout her journey, and characterized the French as lazy, superstitious, despotic, and wretched (among other things). Her perception that these traits can be attributed to place rather than class or circumstance, suggests that Lady Miller associated these unfavorable conditions with the foreign. This negative portrayal of non-English people serves as

⁶² Margaret Hunt, "Racism, Imperialism, and the Traveler's Gaze," 340.

⁶³ Lady Anna Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 151.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

an indication of the kind of pro-British mentality that even permeated the psyche of a middle-class woman (herself in many ways subject to oppression). This reveals the strength and durability of eighteenth century discourses which emphasized the might of Britain through the denigration of the foreign.

The sense of national identity and the traces of imperialist ideology that can be found in the pages of Lady Miller's letters abroad reflect not a terrible, racist, self-involved woman however, but a proud citizen whose isolated lack of cultural sensitivity was undoubtedly shaped by living within a society fixated on developing its own greatness. In the eighteenth century this was certainly the case. While Lady Miller can be accused of prejudice, she was most certainly a product of her environment—a good English woman. Though her travels seemed to reaffirm her sense of identity and reflect an English-centric philosophy, not all hope is lost for Lady Miller. After spending some time on the Continent, Lady Miller offers a bit of her private reflections to her mother: "I think one very considerable benefit arising from seeing other countries besides our own, is the eradication (by the testimony of one's own senses) of many prejudices and littleness of thinking, which insensibly have taken so deep a root in our mind, as to render it almost impossible to judge in an impartial and liberal manner of our fellow-creatures who happen to live at a great distance from us, and whom we imagine must differ from us in every respect in proportion to the number of leagues that separate us from them."⁶⁶ What this quote demonstrates is the overwhelming tendency for transformation that is characteristic of cross-cultural exchange. Though these contacts were often met with grand presuppositions and sustained by lasting narratives, the power of these encounters and the presence of the 'foreign'

⁶⁶ Ibid., 282.

unalterably affected those who were exposed. For Lady Miller, this Grand Tour both helped to strengthen her identity as an English woman and introduced her to an entirely new world.

Chapter Two:

Performing the Grand Tour at Home: Lady Miller and Her Roman Vase

The Grand Tour experience was not only represented in the pages of travel literature or in an enhanced sense of country or self, it could also be displayed through the acquisition of objects and luxuries encountered abroad as a tangible reminder of the journey to both the traveler and the society that they returned home to. The Grand Tour also encouraged its participants to collect a variety of material goods from the places they visited. These movable objects made their way back to England in the form of clothing and costume, jewelry, home adornments, highly coveted works from 'native' artists and relics from antiquity. Thus, the Grand Tour was not simply a means to experience life abroad but an opportunity to transport back to England the cultural aesthetics of the foreign.

For the early modern traveler, this ability to obtain physical representations of their travels which could then be displayed upon their return home, provided the Grand Tourist with a tangible memento and also served as a means of distinguishing them amongst an increasingly mobile consumer class. These commodities themselves are testaments to identity in the eighteenth century-useful ones at that, which can allow the historian a point of entry through which they might further examine the effects of material culture in a given society and the importance of integrating objects into social and cultural life. Arjun Appadurai emphasizes the analysis of the life of an object as a method of interpretation that is particularly helpful, as

“value is embodied in commodities.”⁶⁷ By examining what objects were valued in English society and understanding how those objects were then incorporated into the lives of their owners, it is possible to reconstruct the life of those objects and give their presence meaning.

Understanding the ‘experience’ of an object through its travel is a vital category of analysis, so too is the analysis of the value humans infused in their own movement. The examination of the impact travel and mobility had on the lives of those who engaged in it cannot be overestimated. Experiences abroad were both transformative and reinforcing. The objects they brought with them underwent a transformation as well. Though procured in a foreign space, these objects (themselves alien), underwent a process of reassignment. In their new home, meanings would be renegotiated, functions would be established (or invented), and values would be ascribed. Once established in their host society, these items were placed within a hierarchy of goods. This hierarchy of goods not only served to further articulate the purpose of the items themselves but could also convey the luxury and prestige of their owners. As an emerging middle class gained more of a foothold on the foreign, the stratification of class and a desire on behalf of the aristocracy to further demarcate themselves from lower society, meant that once again these objects would be interpreted and assigned value. For Lady Miller, the acquisition of a Roman vase meant the attainment of a certain status in society. I argue however that it was not just the vase and its ‘foreignness’ (or essentially ‘ancientness’) which afforded her this distinction, rather Lady Miller actively imbued this vase with significance—utilizing her time on the Grand Tour to cultivate both her cultural sensibilities and her commodity collection.

⁶⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1.

Her appropriation of an ancient vase did not impress everyone it must be noted. In the eighteenth century, though British society increasingly identified itself as the inheritor's of the legacy of empire, the aristocratic class found it necessary to similarly distinguish themselves from the less desirable classes as the inheritors of the world's luxuries and curious treasures; thus securing their position atop the social pyramid not just within their nation but across the globe. As the English began to travel further distances and at greater lengths to acquire these material trophies, it became possible to delineate which objects that returned to England were especially covetable and which were increasingly commonplace. Thus, an item that may have once elicited the envy of all social classes, was no longer recognized as significantly rare or precious to a group of Britons who were progressively acquiring much more. For the social and literary life of one eighteenth century traveler-turned-poetess and officiator of ceremonies though, the amusements of even *one* highly esteemed object served as her entry into high society (albeit a questionable one). One cannot overstate the value of this precious Roman vase for Lady Miller then. For her, it was the means to engage with the ancient past, an essential tool in her ceremonious literary gatherings, a conversation piece, a relic of her travels, a representation of Italy in her English parlor, and most of all, a physical artifact with which she could perform the Grand Tour at home.

Lady Miller's incorporation of a foreign object into her domestic and social affairs does demonstrate an adoption of the foreign; however, the nature of the object was forever altered upon returning to England with the Millers. The narrowness that sometimes accompanied assessments of the foreign, prevented British travelers from rightfully ascertaining the meanings deeply imbedded in the cultures they encountered. Instead, British travelers ascribed

meaning to cultures and commodities based on their own systems of interpretation and evaluated objects and people as foils to their British equivalents. While this was most certainly performed abroad, the increasing tendency of British travelers to transport the foreign back to England meant that the reinterpretation of objects, culture and even ideas continued at home. Examining the transformation of ideas and objects in England serves to further underscore the degree to which British identity inevitably shaped the identity of the foreign. Lady Miller's own set of 'souvenirs' provides an insightful example of the various meanings that could be applied to the foreign, and more specifically the ancient (which itself implies remoteness and a removal from the familiar/domestic). Ruth Hessegrave, in a very early work on Lady Miller's literary gatherings at her home in Batheaston following her return from Italy, states: "Besides a desire for social and literary prominence, Mrs. Miller brought back from Italy two interesting discoveries-an idea and a vase."⁶⁸ For Lady Miller, the transportation of an idea, an idea directly inspired by her trip abroad yet specifically intended for her return, meant that she served as a kind of intermediary between Italian cultural thought and English social practice. Lady Miller herself acts as a go-between, receiving inspiration from her encounters with the foreign but seeing its potential for application in the domestic. This idea, to hold a sort of Olympics of poetical contests periodically at her home in Batheaston, relied on the integration of the ancient vase she purchased when abroad. While prior to her journey Lady Miller sought to promote a literary atmosphere in her gatherings,⁶⁹ it was only with the implementation of the vase that her idea gained its significance. Ruth Watts discusses the travel of ideologies and their influence on the social lives of women in the eighteenth century. She emphasizes that while

⁶⁸ Hessegrave, *Lady Miller*, 17.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

women managed to gain access to a growing network of ideas, taking advantage of new opportunities to share and receive culture, they were also afforded the opportunity to contribute ideas of their own.⁷⁰Lady Miller relished this opportunity to display to her neighbors all that she had achieved on her journey abroad. Her eagerness was apparent to one of her harshest critics, Sir Horace Walpole, who of her homecoming writes: “Mrs. Miller is returned a beauty, a genius, a Sappho, a tenth muse!”⁷¹Though his praises are blatant attempts at sarcasm, his perception of her return indicates the degree to which she displayed her belief that she been transformed through her travels.

The poetical games themselves required much contemplation on behalf of Lady Miller and were also an indication of the cross-cultural currents that inspired her while abroad. These games, performed in the French style of *bouts-rimes*, were designed to facilitate the literary production of even the most helpless poets. This style of poetry called for each participant to fill in the last lines of a predetermined poem (ones Lady Miller often had a hand in contriving), maintaining the rhyme scheme it was initially began with using a clever variation. The person with the best poem would be decided by a panel of party guests and given the distinction of the greatest literary mind of the day. They would then be adorned with the wreaths that had previously shrouded the vase the poems were held in. The poems were often trite, and the games themselves simple; however, they still required Lady Miller’s constant administration and delegation. While the conventions of the game were fairly unremarkable (though its origins she discovered abroad)⁷², it is the integration and more specifically the veneration of the

⁷⁰ Watts, “A Gendered Journey”, 513.

⁷¹ Hesselgrave, *Lady Miller*, 5

⁷² *Ibid.*,4.

Roman vase during these events that is so significant. Indeed, the vase was the center piece to all of the Millers' literary activity at Batheaston. All poem submissions were carefully placed into the vase, itself displayed prominently on a pedestal "occupying a place of honor"⁷³ in front of a scenic window in the estate's largest room. Once everyone had submitted their contributions, the reading of poems occurred with the upmost ceremony. At all times, the vase was both functional and aesthetic. While it performed a more or less utilitarian function by housing all of the "contending poetical morsels"⁷⁴, it remained the focal point of activity and the praise of the party guests. Ruth Hesselgrave suggests that "the idea of the poetical contests and the Roman vase were ingeniously combined by Mrs. Miller as the foundation of a unique institution-one destined to furnish an *entrée* into fashionable society which money alone could have never afforded her."⁷⁵

It appears then, that for Lady Miller, the incorporation of the ancient in her literary circles (even if not used as such) proved to be enticing enough to encourage the participation of a variety of her neighbors and noble acquaintances. Furthermore, the contests went on for nearly a decade, ceasing only upon Lady Miller's death. Certainly then, the vase as an object acquired a new meaning at Batheaston. The biography of the object itself before coming into the possession of Lady Miller would give no indication that it was ever intended for such use. Surely that this vase would eventually house the carefully crafted or hastily scribbled musings of English party goers had never occurred to the Roman who initially crafted it. It was the vase's new owner that bestowed upon the object this particular distinction.

⁷³ Ibid.,22.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 19.

Lady and Sir John Miller obtained the vase during the course of their Grand Tour, purchasing it off of a laborer who had discovered it two years before in Frascati, a town just fifteen minutes south of Rome and renowned as the past home of the great orator and rhetorician Cicero. Hesselgrave assesses the degree to which the Millers must have relished this new addition to their material life: "What could be more delightful than to imagine that this very vase had once been in the possession of the great Tully! The Millers purchased the urn and triumphantly bore it back to England."⁷⁶ That this vase was obtained in a region which bore ties to the great Cicero allowed Lady Miller to evoke a sense of the ancient spirit of poetry and performance—a sense she would have actively promoted in her animated gatherings. Once more it is important to incorporate theories of material value into an understanding of how Lady Miller fashioned her vase. For Simmel, value was never the inherent property of an object but rather "a judgment made about them by subjects."⁷⁷ This judgment was displayed in the representation and social construction of the object.⁷⁸ Relevance then is altered or retained in accordance with cultural contingencies which both ascribed and shifted the value of things.⁷⁹

The ascription and shifting of the value of a thing is characteristic of the travel of moveable objects in the eighteenth century. These objects, and the knowledge thereof, cannot exist and certainly could not travel on their own. As Lisa Roberts proposes, this knowledge required a "physical carrier"⁸⁰, a human instrument. Consumer culture based on global trade,

⁷⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁷⁷ Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*, 1.

⁷⁸ Paula Findlen and Pamela H. Smith, eds., *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe* (London:Routledge, 2002), 414.

⁷⁹ Maxine Berg, "In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present*. 182 (2004), 87.

⁸⁰ Lisa Roberts, "The Circulation of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe: Embodiment, Mobility, Learning and Knowing," *History of Technology*, 31 (2012), 51.

represented a kind of “mercantile imperialism”⁸¹ in the period, which was exemplified by the increasing procurement of the world’s treasures and luxuries on behalf of the British and the appropriation of ancient objects into their own society. This desire for appropriation, consumption, and knowledge is reflected especially by the British in Italy during the century. A fellow traveler and countrymen of Lady Miller, Sir William Hamilton, is perhaps one of the better known examples of this kind of ‘commodity hunter’. His time spent in Italy, and the vast collection he amassed while there, reportedly deemed him “the Ambassador to Naples, Vases, and Volcanoes”⁸². Publications of Hamilton’s collection of ancient vases were proliferated throughout Europe, especially England, in D’Hancarville’s *Collection of Etruscan, Greek, and Roman Antiquities* (1766-76), which represented the first in-color images of the mythological scenes and motifs found on ancient vases. Carole Paul notes that this publication is “but one example of the way in which antiquity was reproduced for the consumption of collectors and tourists in the eighteenth century.”⁸³

Lady Miller would have been well aware then of the value of antiquities, and of vases in particular. In fact, over the course of her journey she makes frequent allusions to the beautiful (and ancient) vases she encountered.⁸⁴ Her understanding of the value of the ancient is apparent too, as is her initial disappointment in finding that in some places, contrary to her assumptions, there were no antiquities to be found. Her surprise in not immediately encountering vast resources of ancient relics upon her arrival in Italy was matched by her

⁸¹ Nebahat Avcioglu and Finbarr Barry Flood, *Globalizing Cultures: Art and Mobility in the Eighteenth Century* (Special Issue of *Ars Orientalis*, 2010), 3.

⁸² Thora Brylowe, “Two Kinds of Collections: Sir William Hamilton’s Vases, Real and Represented,” *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Volume 32 (Winter, 2008), 23.

⁸³ Carole Paul, “Naples and Vesuvius on the Grand Tour,” *Eighteenth Century Studies*, Volume 36 (Fall, 2002), 87.

⁸⁴ Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 74, 294-295.

astonishment at the function of those she eventually discovered. In one notable encounter, Lady Miller relates her complete surprise at the perplexing rituals surrounding a vase that was the favorite possession of Mithridates King of Pontus, which he was rumored to have carried about in his baggage to various encampments, constantly drinking out of it, and eventually bringing it back to Rome, where it was triumphantly displayed.⁸⁵ The irony of Lady Miller's bewilderment is that she too utilized an ancient vase for very curious purposes, though it appears she did not recognize her own actions as such.

The role Lady Miller ascribed to the vase however, illustrates some foresight on her part since her gimmick of 'the ancient vase as a poetic receptacle' seemed to have worked. Lady Miller's gatherings (though ridiculed in London society) were quite popular, so too was her beloved vase. Of the variety of guests that frequented Batheaston, most at least at some point made reference to the vase and its presence and preeminence in the literary ceremonies. The vase inspired the envy of visitors, was among the most talked of subjects in reference to the Batheaston gatherings, and even made its way into the poems that were placed carefully inside it.

It is important to note though, that the object's symbolic value was one carefully crafted by Lady Miller herself. Placed on a pedestal and prominently displayed, the vase remained the focal point of the proceedings—a testament to Lady Miller's travels, her connection to an ancient literary past, and the worthiness of Batheaston to host such esteemed events. A purposeful exclusivity was among the other strategies Lady Miller employed in the maintenance of the vase's precious identity, an exclusivity that was also extended to her select

⁸⁵ Ibid., 296.

group of invitees.⁸⁶ In order to make her vase a rarity to her guests, and thus highly valuable when it was present, Lady Miller created a 'vase season' which ensured that it would only be available for use in ceremonies during the "fashionable months"⁸⁷ which saw the arrival of temporary Bathers, those who came to Bath at various (popular) points throughout the year for vacation and relaxation. The opening and closing of 'vase season' was ceremoniously announced through letters distributed amongst Lady Miller's favored guests. Some of her more spirited attendees even lamented their having missed the unveiling of the vase. Those who visited Batheaston when the vase was not presently displayed could only observe its absence atop the pedestal which periodically housed it.⁸⁸

More curious even than the vase's intended exclusivity, was its apparent ambiguity. Despite numerous surviving accounts of the vase making its way into journals, letters, local publications, and even the poetry authored at Batheaston, very little is known about the vase itself. One is struck by the relative absence of any detailed physical description of the object. Perhaps the most informative being the Reverend Richard Graves account of it in 1800 where he describes it simply as "an elegant antique marble vase."⁸⁹ Several potential reasons for the ambiguous nature of the vase exist. For one thing, it may be that the vase, though ancient in origin and precious as a result, was not in actuality very beautiful. This may be corroborated by the fact that when the vase was displayed, it was always accompanied by an array of adornments including laurels, myrtle wreaths, and the pink ribbons much mocked by Walpole.⁹⁰ That the vase was often juxtaposed with an urn, and indeed was identified by some who

⁸⁶ Hesselgrave, *Lady Miller*, 9.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

encountered it as such, is an additional ambiguity surrounding the object. It made its way into the pages of Batheaston poetry then both as “*the Vase*” and “*the Urn*”. Another reason for the vase’s ambiguity worthy of exploration is that its uncertain origins, physical properties, and specific identity made it possible for the vase to serve as a blank canvas. That the vase itself was a figure unmarked and understated meant that it housed endless possibilities for both its past life and future use. As a vase, it conveyed a carefully crafted beauty, an object that was always meant for display. As an urn, it could be viewed as having once contained the inhabitants of an ancient past that in the present, contained the literary productions of the Miller’s guests.

Whatever the purpose or meaning of the vase’s ambiguity, it seemed to only further its renown. Lady Miller’s strategy of self-promotion and exclusivity were essentially a success, for her gatherings were much talked of in Bath society, making their way into publications such as Phillip Thicknesse’s *New Bath Guide* (1778), the Genius Loci’s *Bath Anecdotes and Characters* (1782), and even standing the test of time appearing nearly forty years after Lady Miller’s death in *The Original Bath Guide* (1817). The survival of the vase and its place within Lady Miller’s literary circle, is demonstrative of Lady Miller’s success as her own kind of publicist. She single handedly perpetuated the significance of her vase and subsequently the value of her social functions.

Not everyone was so convinced of the notability of these events however. Lady Miller and her vase were the subject of much ridicule in high society and within renowned literary circles across England. Hesselgrave reveals that indeed some of Batheaston’s frequent guests “accepted Mrs. Miller’s invitation only because it was the fashionable thing to do, and would

have ignored her elsewhere.”⁹¹ Many of the upper crust felt it was necessary to ‘check’ the self-importance that was displayed by the middle class, whose newly emerging presence among the elite, a presence often justified through the acquisition of luxury, disturbed more than some in aristocratic circles who felt that the possession of a few antiques was not a justifiable qualification for their admittance into more reputable circles. Walpole remarks of the Miller’s estate: “tis’ a very diminutive principality with large pretensions”⁹², being particularly perturbed by Lady Miller’s presumption of her own literary reputation.⁹³ Society lady and reputable authoress Fanny Burney writes of Miller: “While her aim is to appear an elegant woman of fashion, all her success is to seem an ordinary woman in very common life, with fine clothes on.”⁹⁴ Lady Miller’s detractors, with their calculated critiques, are representative of the widening gap between ‘the middling sort’ and the aristocracy in the eighteenth century. The vase too suffered its fair share of criticism, being the victim of the occasional snubs placed covertly within it by disingenuous guests at Bath and the subject of crude poetry which mocked its significance and undervalued its existence.

Despite critics, the vase and its traveling companion did make an impact on Bath society in the period. Lady Miller for her part did become a known figure, even if sometimes for

⁹¹ Ibid., 14.

⁹² Ibid., 3.

⁹³ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 10.

ridicule. The vase itself was treated with considerable reverence by many of Batheaston's guests, especially those who had not had the opportunity to travel or procure foreign treasures of their own. Some guests to Batheaston were in fact highly delighted by the vase and its poetical ceremonies. For them, the gatherings provided an opportunity to partake in their own kind of Grand Tour-to be exposed to antiquities and the foreign, to engage with varied society and contribute something of themselves to a group of their peers (or betters). And though the Millers were never admitted into the select inner circles of literary societies like the Blue Stockings, they did enjoy a high degree of popularity spanning the years their own circle was active. Considering this then, it is possible to see Lady Miller's appropriation of a Roman vase and her creation of a literary ritual surrounding it, as a success. Sadly, Lady Miller died prematurely and with her death, so too did the literary circle meet its end. Her legacy continued however, perpetuated by close friends and even those who had previously snubbed her, they too recognizing that perhaps the uniqueness of her gatherings and the quirkiness of her behavior ultimately made her pretensions in literary society forgivable. As for the vase, its value was acknowledged by an Edwyn Dowding, whose importance, other than becoming the eventual owner, is unknown. Dowding also saw value in Miller's vase, though he did not at all utilize it in the manner so exclusive to Lady Miller. Instead, he placed the vase in a public park, to be displayed and enjoyed by all in Bath who frequented it (though now its particular location has been lost to time). That the vase's value was recognized even after Miller's death is indicative of her success in crafting its identity. It is also a testament to the dynamic life of objects and the shifting meanings placed upon them by those who discovered, valued, and ultimately incorporated them into their lives.

The examination of objects as a part of the Grand Tour narrative adds additional layers of understanding. While scholarship has tended to focus on the intellectual and cultural totems retained by travelers, it is important to remember that physical reminders of the journey made their way back to England as well. Just as foreign ideas and customs crossed the channel, so too did foreign items. These items retained aspects of their 'foreignness' but were also assimilated into domestic life, thus becoming 'familiar'. The 'foreignness' of an object gave it authenticity, which in turn authenticated the experience of the traveler. A physical object then, had the potential to be a powerful and very tangible reminder of the Grand Tour.

Chapter Three:

“But we who travel merely for our Amusement”:

The Significance of Amusement and Fun in the Grand Tour Experience

Lady Miller’s recreation of some of the social practices she encountered in her travels and the patterns of sociability she exhibited once home were directly influenced by moving in foreign social circles. Within Italian high society, she was able to seek out activities that both appealed to her taste and reinforced her status. Upon examining Lady Miller’s social experience during her travels, one is struck by the importance placed on seeking pleasures and amusements that were not only socially sanctioned but the shared pursuit of fellow travelers and members of Italian society. This quest for amusement dictated much of Lady Miller’s travels, and I argue it merits recognition as a dominant force in the Grand Tour experience. The pursuit of amusement was a very integral aspect of touring, one that for some tourists like Lady Miller was of utmost importance. Recreational activities and the time dedicated toward leisure while in Italy, was instrumental in shaping not only Lady Miller’s experience abroad but her account of the journey as well. Miller’s *Letters from Italy* reveals much more about her Grand Tour experience than just her particular assessments of art and culture, which they have traditionally been read for. Instead, these letters demonstrate the degree of importance amusement had in dictating the activities of Lady Miller and her husband while abroad. I also argue that this pursuit of amusement was not exclusive to the Millers, rather, the desire for

leisure and fun while on the Grand Tour was a concern shared by many of their countrymen and was catered to by a plethora of Italian hosts, who apparently were similarly disposed to this kind of excitement. This source exposes the level to which amusement factored into the activities of the Millers while on the Grand Tour. Grand Tour amusement and leisure can be interpreted as both instances of venturing beyond the familiarity of domestic activities and replicating them, while also proposing the degree of importance social class had in dictating where, how, and with whom the Millers would be engaging in this fun.

Lady Miller was well aware of, and happily admitted to, the pursuit of entertainment as her foremost concern abroad. In one letter she betrays her allegiance to amusement, suggesting that it was of the utmost importance and indeed the reason for her travels.⁹⁵ Of those activities she participated in while on her trip, there are those she repeated with frequency which comprised the greater portion of her Grand Tour and thus the bulk of her experience. For Lady Miller, these activities include dining and assemblies, the theatre, gambling and card games, and balls or *fetes*. In addition to being sources of amusement and pleasure, these activities also allowed Lady Miller to participate in events which were at once familiar to her in English society, and also slightly altered in their Italian versions. Another feature of these amusements that remains consistent and important to an analysis of amusement and leisure on the Grand Tour, is the vital role that social class played in both the Millers being initially introduced to these activities and in the particular way they experienced them, which was more privileged than a simple traveler, bystander, or native Italian.

⁹⁵ Lady Anna Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 7.

Any discussion of amusement and leisure must first begin with a definition of terms however. In *A History of Leisure*, Peter Borsay defines leisure in terms of what transpires in “discretionary or unobligated time.”⁹⁶ For the Grand Tourist, this holiday (which Borsay suggests we can consider it) is representative of time allotted for the sole purpose of enjoyment. Tourists spent months traveling the Continent, often with a flexibility which allowed them to indulge in those places and activities most appealing to them. This flexibility meant that the traveler could shape their own experience, while also adhering to the basic structure of the Tour. The Grand Tour indeed helped to shape the image of the early modern traveler through this negotiation between travel norms and the individual desires of the participant. Giuli Parrinello suggests that the eighteenth century marked a period of progress which saw the emancipation of the individual.⁹⁷ This emancipation meant that travelers could not only potentially escape the pressures of their own society, but were by definition on a journey whose main purpose was leisure. Parrinello also suggests however, that the eighteenth century represented a turning point in the construction of national consciousness, and as a result identity was continually shaped by leisure. Tourism was ultimately a recreational medium through which ‘Other’ spaces were explored,⁹⁸ and as a result, even strong allegiances to cultural custom could be reshaped during time abroad.

Peter Bailey recognizes leisure as an increasingly significant component of Western society, acknowledging it as an essential element of the social experience.⁹⁹ Some historians have argued that leisure is a direct product of the Industrial Revolution, a result of the rise in

⁹⁶ Peter Borsay, *A History of Leisure* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2.

⁹⁷ Giuli Liebman Parrinello, “Tourist Versus Traveler Revisited: Back to the Eighteenth Century”, in *Journeys* Vol. 13, Issue 1, 76

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁹⁹ Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 1978), 1.

disposable incomes and an expansion of the 'middling classes' into arenas of fun and recreation. Borsay suggests instead that the invention of leisure in the early modern context was initially an elite response, an indication of the growing separation of personal obligations and pastimes.¹⁰⁰ Certainly leisure was a kind of "cultural capital"¹⁰¹ for its proponents. That an individual might dedicate their time to recreation rather than work became associated with gentility and privilege. That an individual might leave their country in pursuit of this, was the ultimate indicator of refinement. The Grand Tour required, above all, time and money-both expenditures that the productive orders could not afford.¹⁰² As a result, the ability to travel helped to sharpen distinctions between the classes. A desire for social mobility, coupled with a rise in disposable income and the popularization of tourism to the Continent, also saw the introduction of the middle classes into the Grand Tour narrative. Those that could afford the cost and the time spent could elevate themselves in society. It is here that we can see the cultural capital of leisure at work.

Lady Anna Miller was able to distinguish herself in society through this kind of leisure. Though not of the highest crust of society in England, abroad the Millers were well received and enjoyed many of the spoils of high society. It is the distinction given to the Millers upon their arrival that placed them in a favorable position in Italian society. Their rank in English society was sufficient enough to get them abroad and provide them with the initial connections to engage within elite social circles in Italy. Once arriving however, these initial connections opened doors to new ones. Lady Miller marveled at and discussed at length, those new

¹⁰⁰ Peter Borsay, *History of Leisure*, 10.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 81.

acquaintances she had made while in Italy, many of whom provided the Millers with the best accommodations and the upmost amusement. The Millers are not alone in receiving the kind attention of Italian hosts as a result of their social distinction back home in England, nor are they unique in their forging of connections once abroad. Instead, the Millers illustrate the very strong networks at work on the Grand Tour. These networks functioned in two ways: they ensured that English travelers could be accounted for by their countrymen who had traveled before them, having been themselves already ingratiated into Italian Grand Tour society and it allowed English travelers to feel at ease going abroad, with the knowledge that they were already received in many elite Italian homes, with the potential to receive invitations to more upon their arrival (if they played their cards right of course). For Lady Anna Miller, this seemed to be a quite an easy task, too easy perhaps, for she even lamented on several occasions the difficulty in making so many new acquaintances and having to repay so many visits.

Though their demanding social schedule was occasionally tiresome to Lady Miller, it did not prevent her from attending a variety of events with frequency. Perhaps the most consistent obligation was the attendance of dinners and assemblies. Here, the Millers were invited to dine in the homes and palaces of elite Italians, French ambassadors, and residing Brits. What transpired in these engagements were what Lady Miller called in the Italian, *converzatione*¹⁰³ (though they were undoubtedly mostly in English). In these *converzatione*, Lady Miller could amuse herself in much the way she would at private assemblies in England, though she gained particular pleasure from having these discussions with distinguished, new peoples in a foreign land. What was perhaps the most important gain from these private assemblies, was the

¹⁰³ Lady Anna Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 290.

opportunity to form the acquaintance of many new and well-connected members of Italian society. These meetings, which took place in private settings and allowed for intimate connections, often led to continued encounters and frequent invitations. Among the invitations Lady Miller liked best to receive, one to the theatre was by far the one she most delighted in.

The theatre was undoubtedly a huge draw for many Grand Tourists, and certainly so for the Millers. Once again, it is an example of the Grand Tour providing analogous experiences to its participants. Certainly, the theatre was prevalent in Lady Miller's social life in England (she makes frequent allusions to it), so to experience it abroad gave Lady Miller both an opportunity to witness it in the Italian-style and a way to distinguish her much beloved British theatre among its foreign competitor. Another place frequented by the Millers, and certainly a favorite stop on the Grand Tour, was the *cassino*. Much like today, the *cassino* provided a lively environment in which gamblers and pleasure-seekers alike could play games of cards, argue, cheat, win, boast, and amuse themselves. Lady Miller herself admittedly did not enjoy playing cards, but found being a spectator to be quite amusing.¹⁰⁴ Her husband however, seemed fond of these games, which gave Lady Miller the opportunity to wander about marveling, chat with friends, and find the occasion to make new acquaintances.

The most spirited and celebrated of the amusements partaken in by the Millers were the balls, dances, and *fetes* which they attended with frequency. These events were exclusive, expensive and expansive. Lady Miller's experience at these *fetes* is quite revealing, and serves to support the claim that social rank and patterns of sociability on the Grand Tour both exposed and insulated its participants. In one account from the south of Italy, she describes a dramatic

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 250.

play which was put on for the community erupting into violence. While the Millers were able to watch these calamitous events unfold before their eyes, they did so from the safety of a nobleman's balcony, removed from any real danger yet close enough to experience the events. This in many ways is indicative of a larger trend in the Grand Tour experience, where travelers are able to enjoy all of the amusing features of Italian society while remaining safeguarded within their social circle. Lady Miller was literally afforded the opportunity to observe unharmed and unhindered, the barbaric (yet wildly entertaining) proceedings that may have resulted in her injury, or worse, had she been left to endure the *fete* down below with the common people. This is not to say, however, that Grand Tour amusements did not have their fair share of disorder. Lady Miller recounts multiple instances of disorder, impropriety, and general revelry which often took place within all of those activities she most delighted in.

In this way, Lady Miller's account sheds light on the social gatherings which took place on the Grand Tour. Rather than a stringent and regimented experience, these Grand Tourists and their foreign hosts often threw decorum to the wind and sought instead to enjoy themselves, often for long periods of time (the Millers were gone nearly a year) and until the wee hours of the morning (with most private parties ending as the sun rose).

Examining these instances of Lady Miller's amusement on the Grand Tour enhances understandings of the way time was divided while traveling. Not all activities performed abroad were acts of piety and pilgrimage or intellectual and cultural investigations; rather, enjoying the more spirited aspects of Italian society played a significant role in shaping the trajectory of the traveler. While certainly her time abroad cultivated her intellectually, exposed her to foreign cultures, and allowed for greater mobility, it is important to remember that much of the Grand

Tour for Lady Miller, and undoubtedly for others like her, was structured around the pursuit of amusement. In this I believe the Millers were successful. It is also important however, to note the overwhelmingly influential role that social rank played in this experience of pleasure abroad. While Lady Miller's position in English society conditioned her to seek out those activities abroad which she enjoyed at home, albeit with an Italian twist, it was her position which also afforded her the opportunity to comfortably participate in those amusements while on the Grand Tour. For her, and those Grand Tourists like her, the Grand Tour was an opportunity to enjoy, be amused, and 'let loose', all in an environment which was not only socially sanctioned, but encouraged those who traveled to above all: have a good time.

Chapter Four:

The Body on Tour: Examining Corporeal Experience and the Essential Role of Health in Travel

Incorporating amusement into an understanding of the Grand Tour narrative creates space for another category of analysis requiring development. The physical experiences of travelers are often taken for granted, and the body itself, the vessel of experience, has been largely ignored. Grand Tour travel accounts, and the literature surrounding it, continue to give primacy to matters intellectual when discussing the subject; however, as exemplified in Lady Miller's letters, the Grand Tour was much more than simply a vacation for the mind. Rather, as this source reveals, it was often the concerns of the body which led travelers abroad in the first place and indeed shaped many of their experiences once there. By branching out from scholarly analyses of Grand Tour literature, which solely emphasize the intellectual engagement promoted through this travel, I propose instead addressing issues regarding the body which were consistently present in the lives and literature of travelers. In order to bring the body to the foreground of Grand Tour scholarship, I will focus on one specific aspect of the body which preoccupied the minds of travelers and indeed featured prominently in travel accounts: health.

Health features as a unique part of the Grand Tour experience for several reasons. First, the pursuit of health was a prime factor in motivations to travel during the eighteenth century. Brian Dolan argues that for many eighteenth-century women, the association between travel and health encouraged many women to embark on long-term vacations to the Continent. He

suggests furthermore, that the opportunity to obtain health through travel not only inspired women's participation on the Grand Tour, but also gave them an opportunity to "gain power over their own lives."¹⁰⁵ Power was wielded by making it abroad in the first place, but once abroad, women continued to exercise it through a continual process of self-awareness and cross-cultural exchange. For women on the Grand Tour, like Lady Miller, there was a continual awareness of the necessity of health in sustaining their lives and their travels. Maintaining health in a foreign space then required the utmost attention. The traveler must first be aware of their body's needs, and then must be able to procure the means to ensure that health by interacting with locals who had the dual benefits of proximity and native knowledge. As Lady Miller demonstrates however, even this collaboration with local peoples was ultimately at the discretion of the traveler.

The want of health is also present in the Grand Tour narrative of the body through the common theme of "taking waters", which in eighteenth century English society referred to the internal and external benefits of touring natural water features on the Italian peninsula.¹⁰⁶ The prevalence of spas and natural springs in Tour destinations like Italy, coupled with an already thriving culture of "taking waters" in British society, ensured that most travelers visited natural or man-made baths at least once during their journey.¹⁰⁷ Many travelers spent considerable time at these spots, seeking what was perceived as the healing powers of water. In addition to the existence of spas and springs, the general perception of the Italian climate was one of health. For many traveling Brits, Italy's geographic location to the south of England's often cold

¹⁰⁵ Brian Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, 159.

¹⁰⁶ Amanda Herbert, "Gender and the Spa: Space, Sociability and Self at British Health Spas, 1640-1714," *Journal of Social History* 43 (2009): 361-383.

¹⁰⁷ David Wheeler, "Jane Austen and 18th- Century English Spa Culture," *English Studies* 2 (2004): 120-133.

and damp climate meant that travelers could enjoy all of the benefits of the Mediterranean: a warm temperature, fertile lands and therapeutic breezes. In this pursuit of healing waters and pleasurable weather, the Grand Tourist elevated both concerns for the health of the body and its desire for physical comfort.

In addition to promoting health and providing a therapeutic sensory experience, an examination of health on the Grand Tour also illuminates the networking strategies of its participants and reveals that the health of the body while traveling was a collaborative effort. This collaboration required the traveler's own awareness of their body while traveling and the cooperation of natives in order to provide these non-native visitors with the local knowledge needed to locate sites which promoted health. It also ensured that tourists had access to the medicinal resources which most would undoubtedly require at some point or another during their journey. This notion of collaboration on the Grand Tour not only enhances understandings of notable themes within travel scholarship, but also contributes to a larger understanding of the body itself; most importantly that the body, and particularly the body in foreign spaces, necessitates the intervention of others outside that body to contribute to its health.

Though the concerns for the body, and the physical body itself, may seem obviously intertwined with the experience of the Grand Tour, scholars have traditionally conceptualized the Grand Tour as an intellectual endeavor – a tour of the mind. That scholars have focused on this aspect of the Tour is no surprise. The absorption of ideas and images featured prominently in the travel literature produced in the period. Grand Tourists tackled intellectual quandaries, analyzed social customs, and dissected works of art, all as part of an experience which was considered to be overwhelmingly cerebral. Certainly the production of Grand Tour literature,

which typically consisted of the intellectual musings of its creator, is an indication of how strongly eighteenth century people regarded the Tour as a part of their own personal development.¹⁰⁸ Even Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, perhaps the most famous of Grand Tour *femmes*, proclaimed the Grand Tour to be an “ideal environment” in which thinking women could flourish.¹⁰⁹ Scholars of eighteenth century England, travel, and the Grand Tour also seem fixated on the Tour’s ability to (re)shape the minds of the British men and women who journeyed abroad.¹¹⁰

Lady Miller herself was aware of the importance of intellectual engagement on the Grand Tour. Born in Shropshire England in 1741 to Edward and Margaret Riggs, Lady Miller was situated at the higher end of society. After inheriting a considerable sum upon her father’s death, Lady Miller married John Miller in 1765, who though coming from a poor Scottish family had gained considerable rank in the Seven Years’ War. Thus, for the Millers, the match was advantageous for both: Lady Miller gained a title and Sir Miller gained a fortune. Once the union was made and the fortune secured, the Millers built an extravagant house in Batheaston, left their children in France with Lady Miller’s mother, and embarked on a nearly year-long journey to Italy. While historians discuss her at length in their examination of women on the Grand Tour, much of this discussion centers around Lady Miller’s intellectual engagement during her travels, a consistent and at times redundant theme when analyzing her in particular. This is not to undercut those intellectual endeavors which Miller did pursue on her travels however. Determined to demonstrate her mental prowess, she sought to create “a kind of

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰⁹ Paula Findlen, Wendy Roworth, and Catherine Sama, eds., *Italy’s Eighteenth Century*, 6.

¹¹⁰ Ruth Watts, “A Gendered Journey: Travel of Ideas in England c. 1750-1800,” *History of Education* 37 (2008): 513-530.

guidebook” for her readers which addressed all manners of art, assuring her audience of the tediousness with which she would analyze the artistry she encountered.¹¹¹ Miller also engaged with some of her Grand Tour predecessors, such as Cochin and Lalande, carefully scrutinizing those works which they had previously addressed in order to demonstrate her ability to interpret works of art, and perhaps to secure her own authority as a critic – certainly an intellectual endeavor. It is important however that this scholarship on Lady Miller’s mind at work not overshadow the experiences of her body.

Though Lady Miller actively sought intellectual cultivation while abroad, it was perhaps the concerns of the body which both led Miller to the Continent and shaped many of her experiences upon her arrival. It is the experiences of the body, which are so present in the letters of Lady Miller, that I feel merit further study in terms of significance for not just the Grand Tour but the history of travel in general. It is Lady Miller’s interest in health during her travels which serves as the basis for my notion of the Grand Tour as one ‘of the body’. Indeed this concept of ‘the touring body’ is one in the preliminary stages of development, with Lady Miller’s account serving as a template for future research and inquiry. Scholars such as Veronica Kelly have debated matters of the body for the last few decades and seem to have come to at least a tenuous conclusion: “there is no escaping the body.”¹¹² Some historians of the body like Dorothy Von Mucke have even emphasized the particular usefulness of the eighteenth century in discerning the body’s essential function in all matters social and cultural, and really in all

¹¹¹ Findlen, *Italy’s Eighteenth Century*, 4.

¹¹² Dorothea von Mucke and Veronica Kelly, *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 1.

conceivable aspects of lived experience.¹¹³ What has not been articulated however, is the way in which the body features as the primary mechanism for travel and as such requires careful analysis and continual investigation.

Lady Miller's preoccupation with physical health was arguably a major factor in her embarking on the Grand Tour in the first place. She remarks that her and her husband traveled to stimulate good health and facilitate amusement above all.¹¹⁴ For British travelers, the southern climate, that is the Mediterranean region in general and the Italian peninsula in particular, promoted health and became the prime destination for those seeking both rehabilitation and relaxation. During the course of their trip, the Millers frequented many springs and natural baths, often stopping to bathe, drink, or inspect those waters which were considered to have "medicinal qualities".¹¹⁵ The possibility that these springs had healing properties was enough for the Millers to physically investigate, sometimes much to their pleasure. Lady Miller was in raptures over the quality and taste of the water, which she considered "a most material object in the article of luxury."¹¹⁶ She even collected samples of the flaky, green coating which covered the rocks lining the spring, in order to procure some of its healing properties and transport them with her throughout her trip and possibly back to England¹¹⁷ - an endeavor that failed, or at least evaporated (much to her dismay).

Physically investigating Italian spring waters had its drawback as well. When testing a glass of water from a healing spring used in the treatment of "consumptions, and all disorders of the breast" Lady Miller found herself seized with severe stomach pains, a casualty of playing

¹¹³ Ibid., 3.

¹¹⁴ Lady Anna Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 7.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 21.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 306.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 22.

the role of ‘guinea pig’ while traveling.¹¹⁸ In another instance, her desire to physically evaluate the healing properties of spring water left her with a red and swollen hand, the trademark ‘heat’ of these hot springs proved too much for her sensitive, English skin.¹¹⁹ Regardless of the occasional physical discomforts associated with ‘testing’ medicinal properties abroad, it did not overwhelm her desire to seek health and wellness through trial and error. For not only was the Grand Tour itself a means to restore health to the body, it was also necessary that the traveler maintain the health of that body while traveling. Lady Miller was acutely aware of the necessity of staying healthy during her trip. She discusses her concern with falling sick while abroad: “I so dreaded being confined by illness, and consequently detained here longer than agreeable to us, that I determined to apply an outward remedy to my cheek, of spirit of guaiacum, and to take it inwardly at the same time, that by giving the rheumatism no quarter, I might have routed the enemy, so that he should not be able to rally again.”¹²⁰

The acquisition of this Guaiacum spirit required Lady Miller to seek the expertise of a local apothecary, though she hardly considered him an expert. She recounts the story of the apothecary’s arrival to their inn, at which point he mistook her husband’s blood shot eye (rather than her general illness) as the ailment which required the Guaiacum and prescribed it to her husband in a dose that his wife joked would have blinded him, had she not already been familiar with the remedy’s properties. This account of the apothecary’s visit, and his amusing blunder, is indicative of the kind of collaboration required for bodies on tour. In order to maintain the health of the body in foreign spaces, Lady Miller had to employ the resources and

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 22.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 21.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 160.

knowledge of locals, even if the local knowledge they employed was not always entirely helpful. It was up to the traveler however to determine what it was that the body required abroad and how best to locate/apply those things they required.

Ultimately, the needs and desires of the body, particularly the pursuit of health, often dictated not only the trajectory of the traveler, but their general behavior while abroad. As a result, the body emerges as an essential category of analysis in any examination of the Grand Tour. An incorporation of the body into the corpus of travel narratives opens up avenues for further discussions regarding what exactly constitutes the Grand Tourist's experience and to what degree the very physical circumstances of travel affected travel accounts.

Conclusion

The Grand Tour continues to intrigue scholars and historical enthusiasts alike, precisely because it remains a subject matter open to further investigation and interpretation. Women's entrance into the narrative marked the initial shift in scholarship, a shift that has since reshaped understandings of not just the Grand Tour specifically but of traveling women in the eighteenth century and the culture in which they lived. This culture certainly influenced their interpretations; however, the nature of travel ensured that the society encountered also played a role in shaping the lived experience of the traveler. The influence of lived experience sheds light on other aspects of the Grand Tour which can be assessed through an introduction of new categories of analysis. The main subject of this work, Lady Miller, persists as a figure whose documented journey provides rich details and personal insights that reveal other elements of travel which were of great importance. It is vital however, that any inquiry into travelers and their experiences also take into account the role national identity played. Whether causing initial prejudices to be confirmed or undone, or inspiring travelers to seek cultures beyond their own, identity undoubtedly shaped the Grand Tour narrative. Objects and their acquisition also contributed to the narrative. The transportation and incorporation of objects procured while touring, like Lady Miller's vase, indicate the adoption of foreign items and their accompanying uses which was so common in British travelers, most of whom became collectors themselves. Beyond analyzing how objects worked to represent foreign spaces in the domestic sphere, an

assessment of actual time spent abroad (rather than what travel writers represented) reveals that amusement in the form of established social recreations played a major role in the reality of travel. Amusement and sensory indulgence functioned as a prime motivator. As a result, the body then serves as the main vessel of experience and thus an emerging category of analysis. All of these aspects of the Grand Tour can be supported and further explored in Lady Miller's collected letters. A further analysis of this source will undoubtedly reveal even deeper connections between these lesser understood aspects of the Grand Tour, and continue to complicate the image of female travelers as static figures following imposed guidelines. Rather, the Grand Tour and travel itself for that matter, provided women with the opportunity to cross cultures and challenge perceived norms, to obtain experiences that made lasting impressions, and perhaps most importantly, it allowed women to represent themselves through their own achievements.

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