Revolutionary Feminist Narratives and Perspectives on the Italian Risorgimento

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By

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INTRODUCTION

This study extends from the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799 to the first unification of Italy in 1861. Included are feminist authors who responded to the Italian Risorgimento in their writings, including novels, poetry and non-fiction political analyses. The narratives of these women form a cohesive view of the emerging feminism in the nineteenth century in response to the Italian Risorgimento. American and British women who lived in Italy (Emma Hamilton, Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Barrett Browning) or who were Italian (Eleonora Fonesca Pimentel and Cristina Belgiojoso) participated directly in the developing events of the Risorgimento revolutions for Italian independence and unification while French, British and American authors who travelled to Italy, including Mary Shelley, George Sand, Marie d'Agoult (Daniel Stern) and Edith Wharton, joined their cause and rallied support for democracy, civic justice and gender equality. These authors promoted gender equality through their feminist narratives and political analyses of the Italian Risorgimento.

The Italian Risorgimento consisted of a series of revolutions throughout Italy from 1820 to 1871 which resulted in the unification of the Italian states and the expulsion of foreign Austrian rule. Placed chronologically in between the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799 and the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, French author Germaine de Staël and Florentine salon hostess, editor and patron, Louise Stolberg, provided role models for women who engaged in the revolutions that carried over into the Risorgimento period. Staël's novel, *Corinne* (1806), about the half-Italian half-English *improvitrice*, sibyl and poetess in Rome, set against the backdrop of the Napoleonic invasions of Italy, continued to inspire women writers throughout the nineteenth century, including Sand, Fuller and Barrett Browning. Their interest in fiction as a rudiment of revolution is largely attributed to the examples of de Staël and Stolberg, although Stolberg is less frequently referenced by modern scholars. Nonetheless, Stolberg exerted a great deal of influence on the revolutionary literature of the Napoleonic period as the female editor of her lover, Italian patriot and neoclassical playwright, Vittorio Alfieri's collected posthumous works. Both Staël and Stolberg established feminist precedents for the narrative of the revolutionary experience for women who viewed Italy as a place where the ideal of

feminist equality could be asserted. Italy was the repository of ancient Roman culture and history which influenced the neoclassical style during the era of revolution and the Napoleonic empire that followed. Italy would also become the destination for the romantics, including Byron and the Shelleys, following the defeat of Napoleon. Feminists followed the example of de Staël's *Corinne* in addressing the issue of equal rights for women through the forum of Risorgimento Italy. The women writers represented in this study were inspired by one another and the historical precedents set by feminist authors. Pimentel, Mary Shelley, Sand, Belgiojoso, Fuller, d'Agoult (Daniel Stern) and Barrett Browning each responded to the literature and politics of the Italian Risorgimento and used fiction as a medium for promoting women's rights and social revolution.

Pimentel began her career as the queen's librarian and official poetess in Naples. When the 1799 Revolution occurred, she became the chief editor and author of the official newspaper of the new revolutionary Parthenopean Republic. After the revolution was defeated, and Queen Maria Carolina's monarchy was restored by British Admiral Horatio Nelson, Pimentel and other conspirators were executed for treason.

This relationship between women, literature and revolution was also established by Mary Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, during the first French Revolution when she published her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) while witnessing the events of the Reign of Terror in Paris. Wollstonecraft was not only a witness to the executions of the king and queen but also those of feminist authors Olympe de Gouges and Manon Roland, who were executed by the revolutionary Jacobins soley for their feminist politics. Mary Shelley later eloped with Percy Bysshe Shelley to Switzerland, where she wrote her most famous work, *Frankenstein* (published anonymously in 1818) and then to Italy where she published *Valperga* (1823) in the year after her husband, Shelley, died in a shipwreck in Lerici. *Valperga* features strong heroines who are pitted against the cruelty of the 14th-century historical tyrant Castruccio during the conflict between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, but the contemporary allusions to tyranny align with the early Risorgimento insurrections of 1820 in Italy that both Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley supported in their poetry and politics.

Sand responded to this tradition of joining literature, women's rights and revolution in her novel, *Consuelo* and its sequel the *Countess of Rudolstadt*. Sand's inspiration for the character Consuelo was likely a composite character derived, in part, from her friend, Belgiojoso. Belgiojoso maintained

a salon in Paris where she entertained Italian exiles, who like herself, continued to offer support to the revolutionary Carbonari in Italy. Belgiojoso sponsored revolutionary periodicals and wrote books and essays on a variety of Risorgimento conflict topics as well as works on philosophy and women, such as her *Oriental Harems*. Fuller and Belgiojoso also became close friends in Rome where Fuller worked in the army hospital Belgiojoso founded to treat wounded soldiers during the Roman Revolution (1848-1849). Both feminist authors supported the feminist cause and the Italian Risorgimento.

Belgiojoso and Fuller an formed an important part of the feminist literary and artistic milieu around Sand. After supporting the Italian Revolution of 1830 in her native Milan, Belgiojoso fled to Paris in exile where she opened her salon and became a friend of Sand. Sand's novels *Consuelo* and *The Countess of Rudolstadt* demonstrate keen insights into the process of the recruitment of women for the revolutionary cause. Fuller was directly inspired by Sand's heroine and made repeated references to the profound influence of Sand on Fuller's development as a foreign correspondent covering the Roman Revolution of 1848-1849. At the end of the novel, Sand's heroine, Consuelo, is given an audience with the Austrian empress, Maria Teresa. The powerful Habsburg empress was also the mother of Marie Antoinette, the French queen who was executed during the French Revolution, and her sister Maria Carolina, the queen of Naples, who was temporarily deposed by the Revolution of 1799. Set in the Enlightenment period of the late eighteenth century, Sand's novel portrays Empress Maria Teresa as an autocrat, who seizes the property of the Count of Rudolstadt after declaring the resurrected man, Liverani, who assumes the identity of the dead count, an imposter.

The Austrian dynasty produced the last major monarchies in Europe after taking the thrones of Spain, France, Northern Italy and Naples, and the Italian Risorgimento, meaning resurrection, was inspired by the goal of expelling Austrian rule. After the French queen, Marie Antoinette was executed by the French Jacobins in 1792, a Jacobin movement in Naples succeeded in overthrowing the Bourbon monarchy of her sister Maria Carolina and Ferdinand and establishing the short-lived Parthenopean Republic in 1799. These revolutions are of primary importance to Sand, who supported social utopian movements and revolutions in France. The Revolution of 1830 that deposed the reactionary Charles X coincided with the publication of Sand's important novels featuring female heroines. Sand's plots for *Consuelo* and the *Countess of Rudolstadt* illustrate the emotional catharsis that women experienced in supporting revolutionary

egalitarian principles. Sand's novels act as manuals for conversion and participation in revolutionary events and demonstrate modern reactions against the *ancien regime* autocrats. Sand's heroine, Consuelo, sacrifices all for the revolutionary ideal of equality and follows Liverani into exile. Belgiojoso and Fuller likewise sacrificed everything to follow the revolutionary impulse. Sand's interest in revolution and women's rights created a natural affinity with the goals of both Belgiojoso and Fuller.

After meeting Thomas Carlyle and Joseph Mazzini in Britain in 1846, Fuller went directly to France and sought out a meeting with Sand, whom she idolised. An introduction was arranged by their mutual friend, Mazzini, a Risorgimento leader sent into exile after the failed revolutions of 1830. Sand and Fuller's friendship with Mazzini also facilitated their friendship with Belgiojoso, who returned to Italy in 1846; Fuller and her future husband, Giovanni Ossoli, arrived in Italy at about the same time in 1847 while Mazzini returned during the Roman Revolution of 1848. Their mutal participation in the revolution grew out of their correspondence with Mazzini and culminated in the establishment of the short-lived Roman Republic in 1849. Following the defeat of the Roman Republic, Fuller was forced to return to America but died tragically together with her husband and infant son in a shipwreck off the coast of Fire Island, New York in 1850. Fuller's pivotal "Woman in the Nineteenth-Century (1843-45)" and *"*These Sad but Glorious Days: Dispatches from Europe and Abroad (1846-49)," first published in the *New York Tribune* while serving as their first female correspondent, demonstrate the impact of a feminist narrative in writing the contemporary events of the Italian Risorgimento. After the Roman Republic was overthrown with the aid of the French troops sent by Napoleon III in 1849, Belgiojoso too fled with her daughter into exile to the Ottoman Empire where she authored *Oriental Harems* about the conditions of women.

French feminists, such as Sand and d'Agoult became involved in Risorgimento politics due to the intervention of France and the close alignment between the French and Italian revolutions of 1830 and 1848. Agoult was a close friend of both Sand and Belgiojoso and formed part of their Parisian salon circles. She had an affair with the composer-pianist Franz Liszt and followed him to Italy. When he abandoned her to follow his performance itinerary and took other lovers and the custody of their children, Agoult devoted herself to literature, writing feminist novels and political analyses of the French Revolution of 1848 and the Italian Risorgimento. The impact of the Italian revolutions on her feminist politics was evidenced in her feminist novel, *Nelida* (1846), as well as her political commentary. Like

Sand and Fuller, d'Agoult's correspondence with Mazzini also had a profound impact on her political philosophy and her feminist engagement with the Risorgimento.

Barrett Browning eloped to Italy in 1846 with Robert Browning and lived in Florence for the remainder of her life. Inspired by the example of de Staël's *Corinne*, and her friend Fuller, Barrett Browning engaged the politics of the Risorgimento in her collection of poems, *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851) and *Aurora Leigh* (1856). She died shortly after publishing her *Poems before Congress* (1860) which show support for the French Emperor Napoleon III and the Italian Question, for an international political congress that was cancelled. Henry James' biographical *William Wetmore Story and His Friends* (1903) provided an account of the recent history of Fuller and Barrett Browning's activities in Italy, while his friend, Edith Wharton, published her first novel, *The Valley of Decision* in 1902 with its setting in northern Italy in the 1790s during the French occupation led by Napoleon. In the historical setting of her novel, Wharton reflected on the intellectual Enlightenment school of thought that gave rise to the emerging Risorgimento in the 1790s. Although her hero – or anti-hero – Odo is a man, Wharton's strong female character, Fulvia, who resembles de Staël's Corinne and Pimentel, becomes the heroine of Risorgimento politics when she persuades Odo Valsecca, the Duke of Pianura, to adopt new modern progressive political philosophies on his hereditary estate. James' novel, *The Princess of Casamassima* (1886) is a fictional novel set against the setting of civil unrest in London, whose female antagonist is based upon Princess Belgiojoso and her revolutionary activities in France and Italy. James' misogynous portrayal of Belgiojoso is consistent with the female antagonists found in his novels, such as *The Bostonians* (1886), about the defeat of a rising feminist speaker, or *The Aspern Papers* (1888) based loosely on the release of the Shelleys' correspondence, who provide sharp contrasts to the exceptional feminist authors of the nineteenth century.

Several excellent studies focus exclusively on Italian, French and English nineteenth-century comparative feminist fiction and revolutionary politics, as well as the influence of de Staël's *Corinne* on later feminist authors. Linda Lewis, for example, in her *Germaine de Staël, George Sand and the Victorian Woman Artist* (2005) examines the profound influence of de Staël's heroines on Victorian authors, including Barrett Browning and George Eliot. Kari Lokke's *Tracing Women's Romanticism: Gender, History and Transcendence* (2004) identifies feminist literary parallels between de Staël's *Corinne*, Shelley's *Valperga* and Sand's *Consuelo*. Whitney Walton's *Eve's Proud Descendants: Four Women Writers and Republican Politics in*

Nineteenth-Century France (2000) includes comparative studies of Sand and d'Agoult, as well as Hortense Allart and Delphine Gay. Finally, Christian Veauvy and Laura Pisano's *Paroles oubliées: Les femmes et la construction de l'État-nation en France et en Italie, 1789-1860* (1997) collates excerpts of feminist writings on revolutionary events in France and Italy, including excerpts by Pimentel and Belgiojoso, d'Agoult and others. Claire Marrone's *Female Journeys: Autobiographical Expressions by French and Italian Women* (2000) includes essays about Belgiojoso's period of exile in the east. Numerous anthologies feature Italy as a destination for British and American women authors and artists. Alison Chapman and Jane Stabler's *Unfolding the South: Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers and Artists in Italy* (2003) includes essays about Barrett Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows* and her political activism in Italy, and *Transatlantic Conversations: Nineteenth-Century American Women's Encounters with Italy and the Atlantic World* edited by Beth Lueck, Sirpa Salenius and Nancy Lusignan Schulz (2017) includes essays about Fuller, her relationship with Mazzini and her contributions to the *New York Tribune* as a foreign correspondent covering the Roman Revolutions (1848-1849).

CHAPTER ONE

GERMAINE DE STAËL'S *CORINNE*, QUEEN MARIA CAROLINA, LADY EMMA HAMILTON, ELEONORA FONESCA PIMENTEL AND THE NEAPOLITAN REVOLUTION OF 1799

Lady Emma Hamilton (1765-1815) and Eleonora Fonesca Pimentel (1752-1799) experienced the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799 from opposite ends of the spectrum of the political landscape. Emma Hamilton rose from poverty and prostitution as a young teenager to become the wife of Britain's ambassador to Naples and she experienced the grandeur of court life as both the wife of a diplomat and an entertainer; she is known for her famous "attitudes" or poses drawn from Greek literature and her portraits by George Romney and Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun which made her an international celebrity. She became an intimate friend with the queen of Naples, Maria Carolina, and the lover of Admiral Horatio Nelson; Lady Hamilton also transmitted British intelligence during the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799 and the successful counter-revolution. By contrast, Pimentel was born in Italy to Portuguese nobles who emigrated to Italy. At the age of sixteen, she became Maria Carolina's royal librarian after writing laudatory verses about the queen's marriage to Ferdinand IV. Recognised for her erudite poetry, Eleonora became a member of Arcadia and the Accademia dei Filateli.[1] Lady Hamilton and Pimentel's lives illustrate the two literary trajectories for women of their time. Emma Hamilton helped to promote Nelson's success and celebrity after his victories in the Napoleonic Wars. By contrast, Eleonora was executed for embracing the democratic Neapolitan Revolution that created the short-lived Parthenopean Republic in 1799 and for criticising the queen in its newspaper, *The Monitor*. A comparison of the two women was never broached until the late 20th century by Susan Sontag in her 1992 historical novel, *The Volcano Lover*. In this work, Sontag contrasts the two

[1] Luigi D'Alessio, "Eleonora de Fonseca Pimentel tra Arcadia e Illuminismo," in *Eleonora de Fonseca Pimentel, Tra Mito e Storia,* ed. Francesco D'Episcopo (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2008), 11-12.

women by devoting the final two chapters to their deaths. Lady Hamilton died in poverty at the age of 49 in Calais where she had travelled to escape creditors, accompanied only by her daughter by Nelson, Horatia. Emma was ostracised by friends and acquaintances and died of a disfiguring degenerative liver disease. Sontag writes of Emma in the first person: "I was very talented, as a performer."[2] De Staël's character, Corinne, is suggestive of a composite of the social mobility of both Lady Hamilton and Pimentel and their revolutionary-era activism. Emma's lover, Admiral Nelson, was widely celebrated during his time and after his death. His fame was enhanced by his affair with Lady Hamilton who helped promote him through her own celebrity. While Eleonora fell into obscurity after the defeat of the republic and her ignominious death by public hanging, Lady Hamilton was regaled in biographical literature throughout the nineteenth century as the lover of Nelson, the hero of the Napoleonic Wars. Lady Hamilton's memoirs were published in 1835 and a fictional biography was published in 1849, while Admiral Nelson's correspondence to Emma was published in 1814; she was also well-known through famous portraits of her by George Romney and Elizabeth Vigée-Le Brun.[3] By contrast, the first major publication of Pimentel's writings did not appear until the 20th century. Benedetto Croce's "Eleonora de Fonseca Pimentel. Monitore Repubblicano del 1799; articoli politici, seguiti da scritti vari in verso e in prosa della medesima autrice" (1943) placed her life within the context of the Neapolitan Revolution, and this publication was followed by Croce's *History of the Neapolitan Revolution*.[4]

Portraiture communicates the essence of the sitter through posture and iconography. Women's portraits convey traditional values, but also provide clues about the transition to feminist platforms during revolutionary periods.

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[2] Susan Sontag, *The Volcano Lover* (Picador, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1992; eBook, 2013), Part 4, chapters 3-4.

[3] Horatio Nelson, *The Letters of Lord Nelson to Lady Hamilton*. 2 Vols. (London: Lovewell, 1814); Emma Hamilton, *Lady Hamilton, Or, Nelson's Legacy: A Romance of Real Life* (London: E. Lloyd, 1849); Emma Hamilton, *Memoirs of Lady Hamilton; with Illustrative Anecdotes of Many of Her Friends and Distinguished Contemporaries* (London, 1835): *Exhibition of a Special Selection from the Works by George Romney, Including a Few Portraits of Emma, Lady Hamilton by Other Artists* (London: Grafton Galleries, 1900).

[4] Benedetto Croce, ed, "Eleonora de Fonseca Pimentel. Monitore Repubblicano del 1799; articoli politici, seguiti da scritti vari in verso e in prosa della medesima autrice" (Bari: Gius, Laterza e Figli, 1943); Benedetto Croce, *La Rivoluzione Napoletana del 179. Biografie, Racconti, Richerche.* (1897) (Bari: Gius, Laterza e Figli, 1961).

Maria Carolina, Queen of Naples, was often the administrative ruler of Naples in the absence of the king, who lacked her education and training. During her reign, she was pregnant 18 times and gave birth to 17 children, including one stillborn; only 7 of her children survived to adulthood. She kept a daily diary of her personal and professional activities which reveal the emotional strain of her roles as both mother and ruler. Her portraits reveal a beautiful, steadfast and domineering woman who struggled to assert herself and maintain control of her kingdom in the face of repeated insurgencies. Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun began her career as the portrait painter to the Queen of France, Marie Antoinette. When the French Revolution broke out in Paris in 1789, Vigée-Le Brun fled to Naples where she was given asylum and painted the French queen's sister, Queen Maria Carolina, who was at the height of her power. Maria Carolina's portrait exudes both femininity and authority (1791) (Plate 1-1). Dressed in sumptuous blue and red velvet with a hat ornamented with a large red feather that suggests a challenge to the republican cockade, the queen holds a book on her lap which is marked by one finger, and she gazes directly at the viewer. Within three years, Maria Carolina's sister, Marie Antoinette, and her husband, Louis XVI, as well as their children, would be executed for treason by the Jacobin revolutionaries in Paris in 1793-94.[5]

By contrast, Vigée-Le Brun's 1792 portrait of Emma Hamilton (plate 1-2) portrays her as a bacchanal, sibylline character who dances freely with a tambourine and long flowing hair against the backdrop of Mount Vesuvius. This portrait anticipates de Staël's character, Corinne, who acts as a priestess-sibyl in her glorification of ancient Roman and Italian Renaissance art and culture. Emma Hamilton (Emma Hart/Amy Lyon) became the mistress of the British ambassador to Naples, William Hamilton (Plate 1-3), and married him in 1791. Hamilton was also a vulcanist who studied the local volcano, Mount Vesuvius, and an antiquarian who collected Roman and Etruscan artefacts in Naples. Emma's poses or "attitudes" appealed to his classical background, and she posed for artists and performed for guests at the Neapolitan court as characters from classical antiquity.[6]

Emma Hamilton had been legitimised from her position as mistress to the wife of a diplomat and received the title of Lady Hamilton. She was a

[5]Cinsia Recca, "Maria Carolina and Marie Antoinette: Sisters and Queens in the Mirror of Jacobin Public Opinion," *Royal Studies Journal* 1 (2014):17-36.
[6] B. Fothergill, *Sir William Hamilton, envoy extraordinary* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969).

celebrity in her own time due to her portraits and attitudes as well as her affair with the hero of the Napoleonic wars, Admiral Nelson. She expressed her power as a woman through her celebrity and beauty, but she was also entrusted with state secrets due to her close friendship with Queen Maria Carolina, Ambassador William Hamilton and Admiral Nelson. Emma Hamilton was raised in poverty and worked as a domestic servant, then as a prostitute until her modelling talents were recognised by a portrait painter, George Romney (7-1). She became the mistress of William Hamilton's nephew, Charles Greville until he could no longer afford her, and he persuaded his uncle to take over her care in Naples.[7]

While Maria Carolina's portraits express her status as the highest-ranking woman in her realm, Emma Hamilton's portraits communicate the subjugation of women as sex objects. Through the guise of a classical repertoire, these attitudes can also be said to align with feminist goals. From the perspective of the 18th and 19th centuries, women's literature created a subliminal text for the freedom of women from male bondage. The portrayal of de Staël's improvitrice, for example, illustrates an occupation for a woman that demonstrates not only her artistic talent and natural beauty but also her independence from the financial and emotional enslavement by men. Emma Hamilton's attitudes in her first portrait by Vigée-Le Brun in Naples in 1790 reveal an alluring nymph, *Ariadne* (Plate 1-7), who, according to Greek mythology, is abandoned by the hero Theseus along the shores of Crete after he slays the minotaur. Ariadne awakes bereft of her lover but is rescued from unrequited love by Bacchus, the god of wine. As a *bacchante* in the next portrait by Vigée-Le Brun, Emma is freed from the constraints of love in her newfound devotion to wine and dance. She happily dances in the foreground juxtaposed against the threatening volcano of Mount Vesuvius in defiance of the danger it poses. Her attitude demonstrates that she is not constrained by the slavery of women to love, but rather has overcome it. The playful relationships with men illustrated by her attitudes repeatedly demonstrate this flirtation in defiance of the domineering roles of men. For example, as Theseus appears to sail away on the horizon, Emma confronts the viewer with a slight smile and holds one of William Hamilton's vases in her hand demonstrating new confidence and control over her life in the absence of Theseus and perhaps, Hamilton's nephew who had abandoned her. In the portraits by George Romney that portray

[7] Kate Williams, *England's Mistress: The Infamous Life of Emma Hamilton,* (NY: Balantine Books, 2006); Flora Fraser. *Lady Emma Hamilton*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009; Kate Williams, *Emma Hamilton: Seduction and Celebrity* (London: Thames and Hudson/National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, UK, 2016).

Emma Hamilton as Medea, a Sibyl, Cassandra or Circe, she acts as female heroines who deliver their revenge on the men who formerly abused them. Thus, women expressed their feminist views frequently through the feminine genres of art and literature. While Maria Carolina's portraits communicate her status as a powerful female monarch, Emma Hamilton's portraits portray a woman who has gained her privileged status as a woman through her associations with men. As the wife of William Hamilton, she gained a title and respectability in the Neapolitan court of Maria Carolina where she enjoyed a privileged status through her performances for diplomatic guests.

In 1818-21, the French artist Francois Gerard painted *Corinne on Cape Miseno*, (Plate 1-4) in which he portrays de Staël's heroine Corinne at Naples. In the background, the volcano of Mount Vesuvius is visible with its plume of smoke; in the foreground, Corinne holds her harp while resting one arm on the ruins of a classical column. To the left, characters from the novel enter the composition, including Prince Castel-Forte and Oswald, Lord Nevil, Corinne's lover. The work was commissioned by Prince Auguste of Prussia to commemorate the achievements of de Staël, who had recently died. Prince Auguste became a close friend of de Staël's friend, Juliette Récamier, who had joined de Staël in her exile at Coppet in Switzerland where she waged a counter-propaganda war against Napoleon, who censored her writings, including *Corinne*. The painting highlights the importance of Italy and specifically Naples to women writers who associated the erupting volcano in Italy with the revolutionary cause. The location also indicates an underlying knowledge of the importance of Naples in the modern Risorgimento events that followed. The revolutionary Carbonari was formally organised in Naples in 1806 in opposition to the reign of Napoleon's brother Joseph, followed by his sister, Caroline and her husband, Joachim Murat. Byron had also recently visited de Staël at Coppet in 1816 before descending into Italy where he joined the Carbonari activists who fomented the first revolutionary insurrections. When de Staël travelled to Italy in 1806 to research her book, she was accompanied by Auguste Schlegel, her children's tutor and the brother of the German romantic Friedrich Schlegel; Auguste Schlegel also inspired the character of Castel-Forte.[8]

[8] Giulia Pacini, "Hidden Politics in Germaine De Staël's Corinne Ou L'Italie," *French Forum*. vol. 24, no. 2, (1999):163–177; Chloe Edmondson., "An Enlightenment Utopia: The Network of Sociability in Corinne," *Digital Humanities Quarterly*. vol. 11, no. 2 (2017).

The occupation of Florence influenced the backstory of de Staël's novel, *Corinne*. By 1806, key events had taken place in Italy. When Napoleon crossed the Alps and invaded Italy, he promised to expand the liberties of the French Revolution to Italy in 1796. He descended into northern Italy and created the Cisalpine Republic was created. He offered Italians the hope of democratic reforms and republics and the expulsion of the Habsburg rulers from Florence and Bourbon rulers from Naples. However, he quickly declared himself emperor of France in 1804 and King of Italy in 1805, and proceeded to annex Italy to the French Empire, and subsequently Germany. By 1806, he had annexed Naples and Tuscany to the French Empire which were soon joined by the Papal States in 1808.[9] Thus, de Staël witnessed the demise of the republics in Italy and the spread of the Empire. Her heroine, Corinne, demonstrated the significance of Naples in this shifting conflict and the direct participation of Naples. De Staël was antagonistic towards Napoleon's empire and her works, including *Corinne*, were subject to censorship for not glorifying the emperor.[10] Her character Corinne suggests a strong identification with the women who actively participated in the revolution of 1799 in Naples. Corinne is half-British, which demonstrated an identification with the British naval intervention in Naples against the French occupation. At the same time, Corinne's rejection of a respectable marriage to an English aristocrat, Oswald, Lord Nevil, also demonstrated her commitment to the revolutionary cause in Italy.

Women who identified with the Italian cause of freedom often freed themselves from the limitations of marriage and devoted themselves fully to their writings that advanced the revolutionary cause. De Staël's new friend in Italy, Louise Stolberg, had divorced her estranged husband, Charles Stuart, the Last Pretender to the British throne, who lived under asylum from the papacy, for her lover, the leading neoclassical playwriting and Italian patriot, Alfieri. After Alfieri died in 1803, she devoted herself to editing and publishing his posthumous writing, and patronising artists and authors, including Antonio Canova and Ugo Foscolo, who were associated with her salon. Like de Staël and the Carbonari, they supported the defeat of Napoleonic rule in Italy. Since Stolberg lived in Florence, in the Kingdom of Etruria, which was ruled by Napoleon's sister, Elisa, she was also close to Elba Island, where Napoleon was sent in exile following his first defeat in 1814; she had been able to closely observe the military movements of

[9] Claire Marrone, "The Florentine Sojourn in Staël's Corinne ou l'Italie," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* Vol. 42, no. 1 (2013): 1-17; Maria Fairweather, *Madame de Staël* (London: Constable, 2005).
[10] Marrone, "The Florentine Soujourn in Staël's Corinne ou l'Italie,"4.

Napoleon and the events that lead to the emperor's defeat. These events demonstrated that neoclassical and romantic art and literature were being used to promote political propaganda.[11] The British naval presence in Naples had overthrown the Neapolitan Parthenopean Republic of 1799 and restored the Bourbon monarchy of Maria Carolina and Ferdinand I in Naples and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies; following the defeat of the Bourbon ruler by Napoleon, Britain also formed a coalition with Austria and Russia to defeat the spread of the French Empire.[12] Thus, by the time de Staël was in Italy in 1806, the British alliance supported the goal of defeating Napoleon's empire.

In her novel, *Corinne*, de Staël demonstrates the importance of celebrity and the location of Naples to the emerging Risorgimento politics. The proximity of Lady Hamilton and Pimentel to Maria Carolina ensured their celebrity, as did the court of Naples, which was the centre of both political intrigue, art and literature. Both Emma Hamilton and Pimentel celebrated the classical ideal in beauty and literature, and both women exerted an enormous influence on politics and society. Kate Williams, Emma Hamilton's biographer, writes "Corinne is pro-British and pro-Nelson." She also notes similarities in the name of Corinne's British lover, Nevil, and Emma Hamilton's lover, Admiral Horatio Nelson. Most importantly, Williams points out that Corinne's improvisations appear to be directly inspired by Emma's famous attitudes in which she would assume the poses of famous characters from classical myths and history.[13] However, de Staël's character Corinne also bears a resemblance to Pimentel who supported the revolutionary cause for Italian independence. Scholars have traditionally read *Corinne* as a revolutionary metaphor for de Staël's protest against Napoleonic hegemony, but Corinne's identification with Italy over Britain and her lover, Oswald, Lord Nevil, suggests that the early cause of Italian independence was equally important to the author, whose setting includes Naples as a sacrosanct location for Italian culture. For example, in Naples, Corinne visits the grave of Virgil, author of the *Aeneid*, and she and Nevil plan to ascend the volcano, Mount Vesuvius. Naples itself is described by de Staël

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[11] Sharon Worley, *Louise Stolberg's Florentine Salon and Germaine de Staël's Coppet Circle: Neoclassical Art, Patronage and the Code of Freedom in Napoleonic Italy* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2014).

[12] Sharon Worley, *The Legacy of Empire: Napoleon I and III and the Anglo-Italian Circle during the Risorgimento.* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018).

[13] Kate Williams, "Nelson and Women: Marketing, Representations and the Female Consumer," *Admiral Lord Nelson: Context and Legacy,* D. Cannadine, ed. (Palgrave-MacMillan, 2005), 67-92.

as an amphitheatre, suggesting its theatrical associations with myth and imagination. Corinne, although half-British, rejects Britain in favour of her homeland and her Italian mother's ancestry. She prefers to die alone in Italy rather than align herself with the British cause and the patriarchy of the noble houses. British support of the Bourbon monarchy of Maria Carolina and Ferdinand was also facilitated through the close personal contact of Emma Hamilton who served as the queen's lady in waiting. However, Maria Carolina's connection with Pimentel was equally relevant to the later Neapolitan Revolution of 1799. Pimentel may well have been persuaded to join the revolutionary cause through her contact with Arcadia, an elite cultural organisation that de Staël references in the crowning of Corinne at the Capitol in Rome. In Naples, the organisation of Arcadia merged with the Masonic lodge, an offshoot of which later evolved into the revolutionary Carbonari during the Napoleonic Wars. Queen Maria Carolina joined the organisation of Arcadia but defied its egalitarian republican tendencies in her commitment to authoritarian monarchical rule.

Born in Rome in 1752, the child of Portuguese nobles, Pimentel (Plate 1-5) moved to Naples at the age of eight. At the age of 16, she won competitions for her poetry and was made royal librarian to Queen Maria Carolina. She became a member of Arcadia and the Accademia dei Filateli after writing her classically inspired poem, *Il Tempio della Gloria, (The Time of Glory* 1768).[14] Pimentel corresponded with the major *literati* of her time, including Metastasio and Voltaire. Metastasio called Pimentel, "*l'amabilissima musa del Tago*," "the most amicable muse of the Tagus." Voltaire recognised her extraordinary talents and even dedicated a poem to her that addresses her as the muse and voice of Italy, *"Usignolo della bella italia",* "Nightingale of beautiful Italy." Pimentel was recognised by her contemporaries as the Sibyl and muse of Italy, much like de Staël's Corinne.

Pimentel's unhappy marriage to the Neapolitan noble, Don Pasquale Tria de Solis, in 1778, resulted in the birth of one infant son who died. His death inspired her poems which are marked by love and the pathos of loss, *Sonetti in Morte del Suo Unico Figlio,* (*Sonnets for the Death of my Only Son*). Because Pimentel's husband was abusive, her father asked to annul her marriage due to the beatings by her husband which caused her miscarriages. In retaliation, her husband wanted her to be confined to a convent, but the

[14] Additional works by Pimentel include *La Nascita de Orfeo, The Birth of Orpheus* (1775); *Il Trionfo della Virtu, The Triumph of Virtue* (1776); the *Sonetto Napoletano, Neapolitan Sonnet* (c. 1788); *Sonetti per S.* Leucio *, Sonnets for S.* Leucio (1789); and *La Fuga in Egitto*, *The Flight to Egypt* (1792).

court instead discontinued his management of her dowry and his control over her. Her marriage ended and her father died. Thereafter, she exercised her independence as a woman and author while retaining her privileges at court and receiving a pension. Pimentel continued to demonstrate her support for court politics through her writings, such as her translation from Latin into Italian in 1707 of *Niun diritto compete al sommo Pontefice sul Regno di Napoli* (*The Pope doesn't have any rights on the Kingdom of Naples*) (1707) by Nicolo Caravita. However, when she joined the radical Jacobin club and supported the Neapolitan Revolution, she lost her pension and privileges. After the establishment of the Parthenopean Republic in 1799, she became the editor in chief and principal author of the republican newspaper, *Il Monitore Napoletano.*[15]

Pimentel's first major poem, *Il Tempio Della Gloria* was written to celebrate the wedding of Maria Carolina to King Ferdinand. Replete with classical references to Venus and Mars, the poem ensured Pimentel's invitation to join Arcadia at the age of 16 and become the queen's librarian.[16] Her induction into Arcadia most likely introduced Pimentel to contacts within the organisation who later supported the revolutionary cause. The Masonic lodge of Naples had also initiated the offshoot Carbonari movement, which practised rituals similar to the masons but was expressly revolutionary in its support of Italian independence. Its name, Carbonari, or charcoal burners, refers to the charcoal they smeared on their faces during their secret meetings in the forest. Although the rulers of Naples demonstrated an Enlightenment interest in the cultural aspects of Freemasonry and Arcadia, their desire to control revolutionary tendencies caused them to ban Freemasonry—and the Carbonari—in Naples altogether.[17] Like Pimentel and de Staël's Corinne, Sand's character, Consuelo, transitions through the Masonic-like order of the Invisibles to pursue the socialist cause of Albert/Liverani in defiance of the Austrian Empress Maria Teresa, also Maria Carolina's mother. Corinne died before she could proclaim her political platform, but her identification with Italian culture is accepted as a metaphor for Italian independence from Napoleonic hegemony.

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[15] Julieta Almeida Rodrigues, "Eleonora de Fonseca Pimentel" *Project Continua* (June 22, 2015): http://www.projectcontinua.org/eleonora-de-fonseca-pimentel/

[16] Irene Zanini-Cordi, "From Queen's Librarian to the Voice of the Neapolitan Republic," in *Economic Imperatives for Women's Writing in Early Modern Europe,* eds. Carme Font Paz and Nina Geerdink (Brill, 2018), 167-191.

[17] G. Gertoldi and Frederick Lewis Maitland, *Memoirs of the Secret Societies of the South of Italy, Particularly the Carbonari* (London: J. Murray, 1821).

Maria Carolina, like her mother, Maria Theresa, was trained from birth to rule as an autocrat without her husband. Maria Theresa's father had changed the course of primogeniture in the Holy Roman Empire to include his daughters as direct heirs to his throne, and Maria Theresa ruled as an absolute monarch when she became his successor. Following her marriage to Ferdinand IV of Naples, Maria Carolina exerted a new control over the government in the absence of her husband, who was uneducated and spent his time hunting. He had never been prepared to rule and was dependent upon his father's minister, Bernardo Tanucci, to manage all affairs of state in Naples after his father, Charles of Bourbon, ascended the Spanish throne as Charles III. Maria Carolina's marriage contract gave her the authority to take over the governing responsibilities of her husband whom she replaced in many administrative capacities. However, her ruling privileges were dependent upon her ability to give birth to a male heir. This did not occur until the birth of her son in 1775 after which time she was formally admitted to the State Council.

The queen's association with the Freemasons made it a popular organisation though it had previously been officially banned by Carlos VII. The Freemasons were also powerful in Vienna, where Maria Carolina's mother, Maria Teresa reigned as empress. Although the Freemasonic lodges were regarded as suspect and banned by Maria Carolina's predecessor, Charles of Bourbon, Maria Carolina raised Freemasonry to a new level of legitimacy. When the queen's minister Bernardo Tanucci tried to issue an edict banning the institution of the Freemasons in Naples on 12th September 1775, it was ignored due to the queen's affiliation with the organisation. Tanucci was subsequently removed from office on 25th October 1775.[18]

In Naples, the Freemasonry lodge was also associated with Arcadia. Maria Carolina's admiration for Arcadia was no doubt due to its use of classical iconography and allegory, which she used to promote her unique status as queen. Pimentel's membership of Arcadia and her promotion to the royal librarian to the queen were attributable to her ability to write classical allusions that flattered the queen's royal office and promoted her regal authority. Thus, the poetry that Pimentel produced to celebrate the queen's marriage and the birth of her son resounded with the regal iconography of absolute monarchy. Maria Carolina was also identified with the divine right of kings and queens, and she was hailed by her court poet, Pimentel, as a

[18] Cinzi Recca, *The Diary of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples, 1781-1785: New Evidence of Queenship at Court* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, eBook), Introduction, Location 149.

goddess, although the queen considered herself to be an enlightened despot, like her peers Frederick the Great and Catherine the Great. Maria Carolina had also come into her office intending to modernise her country. She wrote of her background:

> I was educated imperially, that is, with contempt for mankind. Everyone I saw at my feet was there to trample. Nature gave me beauty and intelligence … I learned many languages, including Greek and Latin; I studied literature and philosophy… I became open-minded, strong spirited, and desired like my brothers those reforms that put an end to the usurpations of the priesthood and increased the power of the principality. Freedom, progress, people's rights, were always for me words without meaning. I envisioned from a young age, men destined to obey principles and nothing else.[19]

After Carlos VII, the Bourbon ruler of Naples, moved his regency to Spain in 1759, becoming Carlos III, the minister Bernardo Tanucci was appointed regent in Naples for the prince, Ferdinand IV. Maria Carolina's marriage contract stipulated that she would be given administrative control of the kingdom following the birth of her first son. This was due to the king's incompetence since he had always relied upon his regent Tanucci to rule the kingdom in his father's absence. Maria Carolina, much like Catherine the Great, nearly exerted a coup against her husband by excluding him from administrative duties, writing: "his distracting life makes it impossible for him to rule … he has not been educated in this and never will be, so rather than see him killed by his ministers … or misled by his confessor, I am forced to act so that he has trust and confidence in me."[20] As to her modern reforms, Maria Carolina began by establishing the Royal Academy of Sciences and Humane Letters in 1778. One contemporary named Pietro Colletta wrote of her influence and power:

> The power of the Queen strengthened in the opinion of subjects and the councils of the State, which at the age of 25, wanting children, beautiful, superb by nature and the size of the house, could easily subdue her husband, who was only intended for bodily pleasures. Thus, she became the hope of

[19] C. La Cecilia, "Confessioni di Maria Carolina. Da lei personalmente scritte in punto di morte." *Storie segrete dei Borboni di Napole e Sicilia.* (Palermo: di Marzo, 1860) p.170. Quoted in Cinzi Recca, *The Diary of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples, 1781-1785: New Evidence of Queenship at Court,* eBook location 121.

[20] 30 November 1779, Maria Carolina to Duke Peter Leopold. Quoted in Recca, "The Eagle Eye of the Habsburg Family on the Kingdom of Naples: Lights and Shadows of Queen Maria Carolina at Court," eBook location 5880.

> the great, the ambitious, the honest, the people, and she felt her majesty and she was pleased.[21]

Maria Carolina's influence on Lady Hamilton and Pimentel is evident in their professional successes which they achieved as members of her court. Emma arrived in Naples in 1783 and after her marriage to William Hamilton in 1791, she became a close confidant and ally of Maria Carolina who entrusted Emma with secret diplomatic missions between the British and the Bourbon monarchy of Naples. Lady Hamilton's celebrity derived from the performance of her attitudes and her portraits; she graced the court and salons of Naples and was known for her kind ingenuous sensibility. Pimentel became the queen's royal librarian following the queen's marriage in 1768; born in 1752, both women were just 16 years old at the time and shared the affinity of their youth. However, Pimentel's laudatory sonnet which celebrated the union of Maria Carolina with Ferdinand IV, with classical allegories and attributes also belied hints of the approaching storms of the Age of Revolution.[22] The opening stanza which describes the Bay of Naples as a woman's bosom is certainly a reference to Maria Carolina as the personification of Naples; she is also aligned with the goddess of love, Venus who subdues the bull and Taurus: "Dell' ondoso Ocean nel vasto seno,/Una vaga Isoletta alsar si mira …" (I:1-2). Laudatory phrases accompany the celestial regal couple who bring heaven to earth and continue the tradition of hereditary monarchy in Europe:

> Di Casto accesi e Coniugale ardore, (Of chaste and conjugal ardour)
> E CAROLINA e FERDINANDO fieno:
> Nuova il Tempio n'attenda alto splendore,
> Torni lieta la Terra, il Ciel serno,
> Il mondo intier nuova Letisia adorni,
> E novello incominici ordin di giorni.
> (LXXIV: 587-592)

Minerva (LI: 408) is also an allegorical reference to the queen who would assume complete administrative control over her kingdom like the Enlightenment despots, Maria Theresa of Austria and Catherine the Great of Russia. Elsewhere, the Queen of Naples and the city itself are described as a closed oyster shell: "Dell'incorrotto cor l'ostrica tiene" (XXIV: 191).

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[21] Quoted in Recca, *The Diary of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples*, Introduction, eBook location 215.

[22] Elenora de Fonseca Pimentel, "Il Tempio della Gloria." *La Vicenda Letteraria e Politica di Elenora de Fonesca Pimentel*, Elena Urgnani, ed. with a preface by Luisa Muraro (Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, 1998).

The bull recurs as a metaphor for the minotaur and a revolutionary antagonistic trope which the queen challenges: "Ne fosca nube oscura il suo sereno/Ne fiero nembo danni suoi cospira" (I:5-6). ("Neither a dark cloud obscures its serenity/Nor threatens with conspiracy"). A metaphor of nature for the brightness of the queen's court is created with negative statements that suggest that perhaps the opposite is true. The queen's association with the Freemasons, despite their ban by the Neapolitan administration, also suggests that revolutionary ideas had already penetrated the queen's court. As the queen's poet and royal librarian, Pimentel had contact with the intellectuals of the university who supported enlightened reforms that led to the revolution. In stanza XXIV: 185-192, the mythical King Minos of Crete, who proudly dispenses rewards and punishments, is juxtaposed against Timoleone, a historical figure who freed Sicily from despotic rule after participating in the assassination of his brother, Timophanes, the tyrant of Corinth. Brutus, an assassin of Julius Caesar is also mentioned as a revolutionary trope:

> Minos il primo in atto grave, e degno
> Giustamente dispensa, e premi, e pene.
> Firero dimostra, e nobile contegno
> Licurgo, indi solone il saggio viene,
> Confucio, Odino, ed Aristide in segno
> Dell' incorrotto cor o'ostrica tiene,
> Timolene, e Bruto, oh illustre esempio!
> Fa del German, de' Figli il giusto scempio.
> (XXIV:185-192)

Praises for the heroes of tyrannicide are also juxtaposed with references to tyrants, such as Attila the Hun (XXXVII: 293) and the German ancestors of the Holy Roman Empire and later the Bourbon/Habsburg lines. The revolutionary subtext interpretation of this lineage reveals a foreign tyrannical dynasty that has been ordained as divine by the medieval feudal system through the union of the ancestry of the Germanic Holy Roman Emperors and the Ancient Roman emperors: "E Germania, ed Italia orni riposi" (LXXII: 576):

> Divide tra' suoi Figli il Regno intero
> Clotario de' Germani ultimo Erede, Sigisberto d'Austrasia ottien l'impero,
> Sigisberto da cui l'altro procede.
> Che del Tronco Reale in Suol straniero
> Condusse un Ramo, e ne fissò la Sede,
> Glorioso Ramo, ch'emular si vanta
> L'istessa sua generatrice Pianta.
> (XL: 313-320)

Such classical references also littered the neoclassical culture and iconography of the later French Revolution. The bull or minotaur is also a revolutionary trope that suggests the agitation of the people and the need for a hero, like the Greek Theseus, to slay the minotaur and deliver the Greeks from the despotic tyrant King Minos. The bull is mentioned in the last line of the second stanza where it is described as aggravated by the beauty and splendour of the queen's kingdom. Classical references also refer to the founding of Naples as a Greek colony, named Parthenope. The reference was used again by the revolutionaries who named their republic the Parthenopean Republic in 1799 after its Greek origins in the 8th to 9th centuries BCE. The last two lines of the second stanza also suggest a revolutionary agitation by juxtaposing the terms, work, "lavoro," with the female organ, "cervice" that entices and agitates the bull: "Senza, che sudi intent al suo lavoro,/O la dura cervice aggravi al Toro" (II: 15-16).[23] In stanza XIX, another negation similar to the opening stanza suggests that what is important here is to recognise the contribution of labour, rather than the splendour and riches of the Palace of Caserta, which had been designed to mirror the Palace of Versailles:

> Non apprestaro al nobile lavoro
> Materia il marmo, la agata, e l'ofite,
> Non l'adorno l'argento, il bronso, e l'oro,
> Ne l'illustrastrar l'indiche gemme unite,
> Non le famose, mura, eccelse foro
> Da Greca industre man pinte, e scolpite,
> Ch'allo splendore, all struttura illustre
> Cede oro, gemma, e Greca mano industre.
> (XIX: 145-152)

The Enlightenment combined neoclassical idealism with new ideas about the revival of classical democracies. The combination of the two helped ignite the revolutionary era when neoclassical tropes simultaneously symbolised the divine right of kings and the revolutionary need to overthrow tyrants. Patrons promoted their regal image through classical regalia while revolutionaries drew upon the literature and history of the classical period as evidence of the right of the people to depose tyrants. The poet's description of the earthly temple certainly was inspired by the luxurious Palace at Caserta designed in the style of the Palace at Versailles. However, the great work that the poet Pimentel extolls is not made of marble, silver, bronze, or precious gems, or painted and carved with the

[23] Elenora de Fonseca Pimentel, "Il Tempio della Gloria." *La Vicenda Letteraria e Politica di Elenora de Fonesca Pimentel*.

Greek craftsmanship, but is a temple illuminated by Prometheus, who was punished by Zeus for giving humans the gift of fire. Prometheus is also a revolutionary trope that suggests that punishment awaits the conspiratorial secret societies that fomented revolt against absolute monarchies.

Prometheus spreads the Enlightenment or fire and then bears the wrath of the king: "Come I primi a destar vitali sensi/Nell'Uom, tolse Prometeo I raggi al sole" (XXI:62). Thus, sunlight in the poem is a metaphor for the Enlightenment. Fire then becomes the sun and the radiance of the sun which spreads across the entire bay: "Dagl'orbi accolse lucidi, ed immensi,/Onde sfavilla, la celeste mole,/Fuse, e tempro li sparsi lumi intensi/Vulcan, conarti inusitate, e sole*"* (XXI: 165-166). Vulcan was further associated with the volcano, Mount Vesuvius, and the Carbonari appropriated this significant symbol of revolution for their members in Naples when they secretly met near this site. This celestial material then creates the building with the proportions of the Greek temple: "Ed il ricco edificio indi di quella/Materia fé sfolgoreggiante, e bella," (XXI: 167-168). The ideal divine temple is certainly an idea representing enlightened rule, but to contemporaries, it could only point the way to the recent revivals of republicanism in pivotal Enlightenment books, such as Rousseau's *Social Contract* (1762), Voltaire's, *Republican Ideas* (1765), Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* (1748) and John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* (1689). Pimentel's husband abused her for acquiring French and English books which undoubtedly were on Enlightenment topics. She had a subscription to the French *Encyclopédie* which was a landmark in Enlightenment thought. This conflict between them led to her divorce.

Pimentel's admission to the *Accademia dei Filateli* (Friends of Truth) under the name of Epolnifenora Olcesemante was recognised by the librettist, dramatist and poet Metastasio and they corresponded between 1770-1776. In Pimentel's *Il Vero Omaggio Cantata Per Celebrare il Fausto Ritorno delle loro Maestà* (1785) which was written to celebrate the return of the royal couple to Naples from Sicily, Parthenope describes Maria Carolina as a deity and extolls her as both the Virgin Mary and goddess of love, Venus:

E tu di tanto RE degna Consorte (You are a worthy royal consort)
Germe di Semidei, (Seed of demi-gods)
In cui virtù non dorme, (In which virtue does not sleep)
E ne l'ette forme (And the form of)
De la beltà del Ciel fede a noi sei; (A reflection of the beautiful sky)
Di gloriosa Madre (The glorious mother)
Cara a l'Italia, e riverita imago, (Beloved of Italy and revered image)
Eccelsa CAROLINA …

> Frutto, o Donna immortal, tutto si rende. (Immortal woman, she renders all fruitful)
> (lines 139-152)[24]

The poet becomes Parthenope who offers gratitude for her patroness for allowing her to develop her talents. Irene Zanini-Cordi points out that this eulogy of the Queen in *Il Vero Omaggio* ("The Real Homage") (1785) was written in response to the queen's stipend of twelve ducats a month which allowed Pimentel to live independently of her abusive husband.

Revolutions were occurring throughout Europe and would have been evident to an educated woman like Pimentel at the Neapolitan court. Pimentel's position at court as the queen's librarian also facilitated her contact with contemporary intellectuals, such as the naturalist Alberto Fortis and the Veronese poet, Silvia Curtoni Verza.[25] Important intellectual contacts such as these provided knowledge about Enlightenment books and ideas and helped to change her attitudes towards an absolute monarchy. Pimentel would also have learned of the revolutions occurring elsewhere in Europe through contact with the ambassadors sent to the Neapolitan court. Foreign nations like Russia were currently undergoing insurrections and revolutions, such as Pugachev's Cossack Revolution (1773-75) against Catherine the Great, followed by the American Revolution of 1776 against Britain's monarch George III, and similar insurrections that occurred in Poland and Denmark were brought to the attention of the Neapolitan court. Enlightenment philosophers like Voltaire communicated with absolute rulers like Frederick the Great and Catherine the Great about advancing political reforms. In fact, in response to Voltaire's correspondence, Catherine the Great said that she was "working on reforms."[26]

In 1788, Pimentel translated Nicolò Caravita's treatise "Nullum jus romani Pontificis in Regnum neapolitanum. Dissertatio historico-juridica" ("The

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[24] Pimentel, "Il Vero Omaggio Cantata Per Celebrare il Fausto Ritorno delle loro Maesta," 7 September 1785, *La Vicenda Letteraria e Politica di Elenora de Fonesca Pimentel*.

[25] Zanini-Cordi, "From Queen's Librarian to Voice of the Neapolitan Republic: Eleonora de Fonesca Pimentel," 182-183; Maria Luisa López-Vidriero, *The Polished Cornerstone of the Temple: Queenly Libraries of the Enlightenment* (London: The British Library, 2005), 1-22.

[26] Edward Andrew, "Voltaire and His Female Protectors," in *Patrons of Enlightenment* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto; Buffalo; London, 2006), 99–118; A. Lentin. *Voltaire and Catherine the Great; Selected Correspondence* (Cambridge, UK: Oriental Research Partners, 1974).