

# Equiano the Adventurer



A View of Genoa by J T Serres, 1805  
© Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery

When we left Italy, we had delightful sailing among the Archipelago islands, and from thence to Smyrna in Turkey. This is a very ancient city; the houses are built of stone, and most of them have graves adjoining to them; so that they sometimes present the appearance of church-yards. Provisions <sup>1</sup> are very plentiful in this city, and good wine is less than a penny a pint. The grapes, pomegranates, and many other fruits, were also the richest and largest I ever saw or tasted. The natives are well-looking and strong made, and treated me always with great civility <sup>2</sup>. In general, I believe they are fond of black people.

(An) officer, took a liking to me here, and wanted me to stay, and offered me two wives; however I refused the temptation, thinking one was as much as some could manage.... The merchants here travel in caravans <sup>3</sup> or large companies. I have seen many caravans from India, with some hundreds of camels, laden with different goods...The plague broke out while we were still in Smyrna, and we stopped taking goods into the ship until it was over.

Our next voyage was to the Mediterranean. The ship was again got ready, and we sailed in September for Genoa. This is one of the finest cities I ever saw ... the churches were rich and magnificent ... But all this ... was disgraced by the galley-slaves, whose condition, both there and in other parts of Italy is truly piteous and wretched ...

We sailed to Naples, a charming city ... While we remained here, there happened an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, of which I had a perfect view. It was extremely awful; and we were so near that the ashes from it used to be thick on our deck



Vesuvius Erupting at Night, oil on canvas, Pierre Jacques Volaire  
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(Photo by Christie's Images Ltd)

## GLOSSARY

<sup>1</sup> Provisions means supplies of food and drink

<sup>2</sup> Civility means respect

<sup>3</sup> A caravan means a group of travellers journeying together