

## INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

# UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA  
313/761-4700 800/521-0600



WOMEN'S DEPARTURES - REWRITING VOYAGE/RETHINKING  
FEMALE TRAVEL *RÉCITS*

by

Maria Hanna Makowiecka

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate  
Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Doctor of Philosophy, the City University of  
New York.

1996

**UMI Number: 9630485**

**Copyright 1996 by  
Makowiecka, Maria Hanna**

**All rights reserved.**

---

**UMI Microform 9630485  
Copyright 1996, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized  
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

---

**UMI**  
**300 North Zeeb Road**  
**Ann Arbor, MI 48103**

© 1996

MARIA HANNA MAKOWIECKA

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

|                       |                              |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| <u>April 30, 1996</u> | <u>Frank N. Martin</u>       |
| Date                  | Chair of Examining Committee |
| <u>April 30, 1996</u> | <u>Vincent J. Legrand</u>    |
| Date                  | Executive Officer            |

Prof. Amy Mandelker  
Reading Committee Member

Prof. Claire Carroll  
Reading Committee Member

The City University of New York

## Acknowledgments

I am indebted to the Department of Comparative Literature for the support that allowed me to complete my doctoral study at the Graduate Center, my American *alma mater*.

I am particularly grateful to Prof. Fred J. Nichols for his insight and careful readings, and for being such a wonderful mentor before and during the time of writing this dissertation. I am also deeply indebted to Prof. Amy Mandelker for her insightful comments on the manuscript and for continued support through the years. Prof. Claire Carroll also offered helpful ideas and criticism.

My family members have always believed in me and I am indebted to them as well. I am grateful to my late aunt Dr. Zofia Makowiecka, whose scholarship in Polish romanticism has been my inspiration. My late grandmother Irena Cibor has been my role model of a woman who stood so admirably to the many challenges in her life.

I would like to thank my friends for their encouragement and help, and Jane Silverman in particular.

To Mark Gettes, for inspiring discussions, tireless editing and loving support he has given me.

## Table of Contents:

|             |                                                                 |     |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Chapter I   | Women's Departures - Definitions                                | 1   |
| Chapter II  | Self-Creation of Identity                                       | 13  |
| Chapter III | Cultural Narratives of Race and Gender -<br>Meeting of Cultures | 62  |
| Chapter IV  | Factual Travel Accounts as Metaphors of<br>the Self             | 104 |
| Chapter V   | Voyage Into the World of Women                                  | 154 |
| Chapter VI  | Conclusions on Gender and Genre and<br>Textual Self-Creation    | 203 |
| Works Cited |                                                                 | 208 |

## I

## Women's Departures - Definitions

The theme of departure has proved useful for a myriad of intellectual tasks in various literary contexts. Voyage, map, border and center, metaphoric geography, cosmography are key words that point to the usefulness of the metaphor of voyage and geography for an understanding of the cultural and literary space we live in. The theme of departure allows the introduction of alternative worlds governed by different rules, where the official telos no longer applies. From the Iliad to Joyce's Ulysses, examples can be found. The alternative world can function as a metaphor of interior pilgrimage, an indirect criticism of society, or an attempt to rewrite the existing reality.

The departures as quest for the self and self-definition has taken many writers on various voyages at different times and literatures. As women writers ventured out, literally and metaphorically, they had to overcome the cultural limitations that bound them to their homes; this is reflected in the relative scarcity of textual evidence. Their travels -- from Egeria's, Cavendish's and Behn's to Gilman's Herland and Djuna Barnes' fantasmagoric world of totally subjective imagination in Nightwood -- have taken them to the continent and beyond, as well as to their own imaginary worlds situated outside the consensual reality. Feminine

fictitious and autobiographical discourses of departure alike demonstrate how the construction of a valorized feminine subject is tied to the notion of a travelling woman: a woman as the subject of movement cannot be essentialized. Travel accounts negate the reductive image of woman because they create a feminine literary space from which women can emerge, not as objects of men's story, but as subjects making and writing women's history. Importantly, these authors signed their work with their own names. The question of how to evaluate women writers' complex relation to what is today considered the foundation of modern authorial identity, the signature, is tied to their place in the economy.<sup>1</sup> In the sense of Michel Foucault's *nom d'auteur*, the signature is a public gesture that signifies an individual's desire to be identified as the author of a literary corpus.

Early female travel accounts date back to Egeria whose first person account is the earliest surviving account -- male or female -- of travel undertaken for the sake of the personal experience of traveling<sup>2</sup>. Egeria travelled from Gaul to Jerusalem in the fourth century AD; she was probably

---

<sup>1</sup> Joan DeJean, Tender Geographies (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1990) 3.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Palmer, "Egeria, the Voyager, or the Technology of Remote Sensing in Late Antiquity" Travel Fact and Travel Fiction ed. Martels, Zweder (E.J.Brill: Leiden, New York, Koln, 1994) 39-53.

a select member of a women's religious group who described her impressions for the women at home. Her trip led her to the heart of civilization at the time. However, travel accounts by women authors mostly took their heroines to the edges of their culture, or beyond. Authors of such works include Margaret Cavendish, Madeleine de Scudéry, Françoise de Graffigny, Claire de Duras, Henrietta Bellgrave, Marguerite Daubenton, Madelaine Gomez, Anne Marie Robert, Olympe Audouard and Charlotte Gilman, among others. Looking at female travel writing created before the twentieth century, one can see parallels and continuities in the tradition of their use of the theme of departure into a different sphere, world or convention.

This work explores selected women's travel writing from the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in English, French, Polish and Russian. From travel into a utopian world where women rule, where one language is spoken and where all inhabitants live in harmony, to travel into the private world of subjectivity and poetic inspiration, female heroines venture outside the realities that bind them. In accounts written by women, women are the main protagonists and in turn become writers themselves. Writing is depicted as a liberating act of self-expression and self-assertion. This work will focus on four uses of the theme of departure. Chapter II, entitled "Self-Creation of Identity," discusses departure into a fantastic world as a metaphor for self-cre-

ation when female travel is constrained in its own time and culture. Being away from home offers a platform to start rethinking or rewriting the self. Home, an often mentioned opposite of travel, is where a traveler has a history and a sense of connectedness with familiar landscapes and culture. Specifically, Margaret Cavendish's The New World, Called a Blazing World and Aphra Behn's Oroonoko exploit the secondary world images to achieve their goals of giving female characters freedom to be independent and to become writers of their own stories in an original blend of genres. The dialectic of unusual content and form allows women writers to write themselves as autonomous selves and, at the same time, to confront sexual politics in seventeenth century England. Chapter III, "Cultural Narratives of Race and Gender -- Meeting of Cultures" deals with departure as an alternative way of establishing cultural credibility and cultural authority from a woman's viewpoint. Based on two eighteenth century examples from French literature and one American, this chapter shows how exotic heroines struggle with language and self-expression. Their writing metaphorically reflects women writers' plight. Bound by different obligations and faiths, and therefore freer to express analytical comments on the home culture of the female writer, non-European women can depart from the confinement of plausible plots more easily. An exotic context and a mixed ethnic background create a mental geography which facili-

tates identification of the represented or "dramatized" narrator as the other who validates what is narrated according to different rules. The theme of a pagan or half pagan woman appears both in Françoise de Graffigny's Lettres d'une Péruvienne (1747) in *ancien régime* France, in Unca Eliza Winkfield's The Female American (1767) in England, and in Claire de Duras' Ourika (1823) in post-revolutionary France. The different sociolects within which all three works are situated allow their respective heroines different solutions to their status of being exotic.

Chapter IV, entitled "Factual Travel Accounts As a Metaphor of the Self," discusses factual accounts as a medium for rewriting self in the context of and in opposition to a famous male counterpart. The works discussed here, Germaine de Staël's Dix années d'exil (1823) and Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820, deal with the anxiety of disappearance and woman's self-signification in the context of travel accounts where the authors create themselves in opposition to Napoleon Bonaparte and William Wordsworth, respectively. These travel accounts are approached in terms of their being a metaphor for the identity of a female subject who is at the same time a narrator and writer of her own *récit de voyage*.

Chapter V, "A Voyage to the World of Women," focuses on the theme of departure as a means of exploring and textualizing individual women's experience and a way into

the world of women. This chapter focuses on several excellent Polish and Russian writers whose texts offer a feminist revisionist reading. Maria Wirtemberska, Maria Sadowska and Karolina Pavlova are Slavic *voleuses de langue* used here as examples of authors who reclaim language for women, recording the female "I" and female experience in the form of departure. Their works show different efforts at rewriting history, or creating and disseminating new myths that would allow development of new symbols and metaphors which would in turn create a female mythology.

The topic of women's literary departures is rich in themes and is a relatively unexplored area. I will use my own approach which is informed by current theoretical and critical approaches to literature. The selected texts are approached as metatexts on how women's stories are written and what the implications of their meaning are. All these variations on the theme of departure are one way of women's venturing into the arena of cultural criticism, politics, and the discussion of literary values in environments more or less hostile to such efforts. Situated in quite different sociolects and often stylistically different, the writers discussed are progressive and interesting both as authors of idiolects in contradiction to their respective repository of traditions, and as women who found efficient means to express women's experience. At odds with their cultures' view of them as marginal to male discourse, they share a common-

ality of intellectual goals. Using departure as a theme, they also create women's space in literature for themselves and for other women to emerge in as subjects.

Travel writing was one of the major literary genres throughout the period under consideration, especially in the eighteenth century, yet the genre was traditionally dominated by men. Women who wanted to write travel accounts needed to overcome many obstacles, including the difficulty of traveling itself. It has to be said that all the writers discussed here had a privileged status in the society they critique as they were educated and, with the exception of Behn, Sadowska and Pavlova, financially secure.

Some attempts have been made to create a taxonomy of female fictions about "a better place." Natalie M. Rosinsky suggests "speculative essay" to fit works that cross generic boundaries under one umbrella - because "women's studies research and the new physics indicate that such conventional concepts of im/possibility [as that marking the boundary between fantasy and science fiction] are limited and value laden."<sup>3</sup> Marleen Barr proposes "feminist fabulation," which modifies the tradition of a speculative fiction with an awareness that patriarchy is a contrived system, a meaning-making machine which constructs and defines patriarchal

---

<sup>3</sup> Natalie M. Rosinsky, Feminist Futures: Contemporary Women's Speculative Fiction (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research, 1984).

fictions - myths of female inferiority - as integral aspects of human culture."<sup>4</sup> Joanna Russ reflected that "*What If Literature*" should be "the perfect literary mode in which to explore (and explode) our assumptions about 'innate' values and 'natural' social arrangements, ... about differences between men and women, about family structure, about sex, ... about gender roles." Literature of estrangement, in general, has been a recognized tradition. It denotes a literature concerned primarily with the alienation experienced by individual subjects, realized textually by a setting displaced in time and/or space. Recent feminist scholarship has expanded the definitions of estrangement and has illustrated how writing women use fiction to embody their politics in the structures of their work. Rachel Blau Duplessis described feminist apologues - including utopian literature - as

teaching stories containing embedded elements from assertive discourse - genres like sermon, manifesto, tract, fable - ... in which elements like character and plot function mainly as the bearers of philosophical propositions or moral arguments.<sup>5</sup>

She expands the borders of the debate. The construction of the self has traditionally taken many forms. Some prevailing

---

<sup>4</sup> Marleen Barr, "Food For Postmodern Thought" in Feminism, Utopia and Narrative ed. Sarah Webster Goodwin and Libby Falk Jones (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992) 21-33.

<sup>5</sup> Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "Feminist Apologues of Lessing, Piercy and Russ" in Frontiers 4, Spring 1979, 1-8.

paradigms of writing the self can be discerned. One of them has been "story of one's life" - convention of Western literary narrative with a beginning, a middle and an end. To achieve coherence and endurance, such a self must transcend the body - become a consciousness that exists only in language. Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" explains how male narratives struggle for independence in the Oedipal model. Yet another one is based on St. Augustine's Confessions - a tradition of "crisis autobiography." Meyer Abrams explains this type of writing the self reflects a secularization of seventeenth and eighteenth-century religious autobiographies grounded in a narrative of confession and conversion, retrospection and introspection. In Roland Barthes' terms - autobiography consists of biophemes, detached mobile signifieds relating to scattered biographical facts.

To a degree, every written self is already a metaphor.<sup>6</sup> The uncertain relation between the referential self and the written self marks the inevitability of distance between self-as-lived and self-as-imagined in autobiographi-

---

<sup>6</sup> James Olney, Metaphors of Self - the Meaning of Autobiography (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972) 34. He says "Metaphors ... are that by which the lonely objective consciousness gives order not only to itself but to as much of objective reality as it is capable of formalizing and controlling."

cal acts.<sup>7</sup> A defender of genre of autobiography, George Gusdorf, asserts that autobiography "requires a man to take a distance with regard to himself in order to reconstitute himself in the focus of his special unity and identity across time... [it is] a second reading of experience... is truer than the first because it adds to experience itself consciousness of it."<sup>8</sup> The inherent assumption of such an approach is that the self in autobiographical acts is on some level coherent and unified. Post-modernist and feminist critics have undermined the assumption of the fundamental conflation of the author and the protagonist, traditionally expected of autobiography.

\*

The fictions that the traveling heroines exist in allow them a temporary departure -- an attempt at subverting feminine genres and going beyond the doxa of women's space. Ultimately, however, they have to stay in the dominating culture. Their situation forces them to find an alternative means of expression; they effectively create a subculture. Contextual similitude of women's secondariness occurs diachronically in all the literatures represented in this

---

<sup>7</sup> The debate on whether an autobiography can claim a truth status has involved among others: James Olney, Autobiography; Huntington Williams, Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography; Paul John Eakin, Fictions in Autobiography.

<sup>8</sup> George Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" trans. James Olney in Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) 28-39.

work. Many parallels can be drawn between works belonging to different conventions. Boundaries of travel bring about the questions of how plausible the fictive geographies are. Writing is a partial solution to the women authors' discontent. It is a departure/withdrawal from the convention and an act of self-creation. Writing is a departure.

As usual in the case of the analysis of obscure texts two problems need to be addressed: the reason that the works have become obscure and their interpretation today. The texts discussed here do not readily fall into clearly defined generic limits, one of possible reasons for their current obscurity. With more stress on irregularities than regularities of form, this work points out the freedom with which the authors discussed blended elements of different forms. During Cavendish and Behn's time, the novel was still a hybrid genre which combined various conventions. The writers discussed here experimented with the novel on the level of both form and content before and after the period considered to have allowed its codification. It is generally agreed that the 1750's is when the theme of moral domestic life became dominant and the realist form prevailed. The phenomenon has been justified either as an evolutionary process, convergence of existing genres or as a discourse model derived from Foucault whereby it was a rupture when no old form fitted the new reality. The authors in this study have been selected to satisfy the requirement of being self-

reflective and creative writers, experimenting with form. The other reasons for their inclusion in this work are their awareness of the binary hold of oppositions that denied women creativity, outspokenness and an articulate stand on gender, an atypical set of features of most female writers in the period under discussion.

## II

## Self-Creation of Identity

*...once I was a subject of  
this Kingdom, which is but  
small part of this world... I  
am now a great and absolute  
princess and empress of a  
whole world.*

*Margaret Cavendish*

*...What I have mention'd I  
have taken care shou'd be  
Truth.*

*Aphra Behn*

Departure into a different reality enables the creation of a new reality and provides an opportunity for dialogue with other voices. Being away from home offers a platform to start rethinking or rewriting the self. Home, an often mentioned opposite of travel, is where a traveler has a history and a sense of connectedness with familiar landscapes and culture. These are often the constraints that force an individual to depart to a secondary world, a metaphorical extension of home. How the women authors discussed here shaped and directed their accounts reveals much about the imaginative investments in various regions of the wider world. They exploited the secondary world images to achieve their goals of giving female characters freedom to be independent and to become writers of their own stories in an

original blend of genres. The dialectic of unusual content and form allows women writers to write themselves as autonomous selves and, at the same time, confront sexual politics in seventeenth century England.

Typically much of pre-modernist women's writing took the form of letters, diaries and autobiographies since they are private forms of writing describing a very limited sphere of education and experience. Not meant for publication, they reveal women's dissatisfaction with their inability to participate in culture as subjects and with their lack of recognition. In her correspondence, Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle, like Mary Astell later on<sup>9</sup>, complains of her historical invisibility in 1664. The woman's name is literally not her own as it

(...) is lost as to her particular in her marrying, for she quits her own and is named after her Husband; also her Family, for neither Name nor Estate goes to her Family according to the Laws of this Country... she hazards her Life by bringing [children] into the World, and has the greatest Share of Trouble in bringing them up [but cannot assure] themselves of Comfort or Happiness by them, when they are grown to be Men, for their Name only lives in Sons, who continue the Line of Succession, whereas Daughters are but Branches which by Marriage are broken off from the Root from whence they sprang, and ingrafted into the Stock of another Family, so that the Daughters are but moveable Goods or Furnitures that wear out; and though sometimes they carry the Lands with them, for want of male-Heirs, yet the Name is not kept nor the Line continued with them, for the Line, Name, and Life of a Family ends with the

---

<sup>9</sup> Mary Astell delivers a vocal critique of women's powerlessness in marriage, inadequate education and limited rights as citizens in A Serious Proposal to the Ladies (1697) and Some Reflections Upon Marriage (1700).

male Issue...<sup>10</sup>

This amazingly eloquent pronouncement foregrounds the situation of women as silent mediators between generations of men and it clearly shows Cavendish's awareness of it.

Her statement on the question of identity written for the reading public takes on quite a different shape. The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World uses the theme of a fantastic discovery of a world to be governed by women. Coincidentally, the authoress of the story is a traveller and advisor to the Empress of the new world. It is a wonderful and rich example of a woman writer using the space of fiction to comment on women's absence from the public life of England, her power to author and be responsible for an entire world. She offers her female characters freedom in the New World, crosses the boundary between romance and essay and dialectically confronts the sexual politics of seventeenth century England. In The Blazing World two women find themselves in another world where they can exercise their powers in organization and government.

The Blazing World is both a challenge to the existing order and an alternative identity for a woman. A fantastic voyage on the mimetic level, it is a rich metatext on the hermeneutic level. The actual text compels us to such a reading of it.

---

<sup>10</sup> Margaret Cavendish Newcastle, Sociable Letters (London, 1664) 183-84.

Addressing the problematics of authorship, the female narrator gets caught in a duplicitous process: she exists in the text under the circumstances of alienated communication because the text is the locus of her dialogue with the tradition she tacitly aims at subverting. Describing the events that have helped her assume a given heritage, she communicates with a narratee who figures in a particular kind of relationship both with her as narrator and with their shared cultural environment.<sup>11</sup>

The contiguity of the primary world, seventeenth century England, and the secondary world, the world "discovered" at the North Pole, posits a parallelism which suggests their interchangeability. In the environment of the new world in Cavendish's fantasy, based on another design, an alternative viewpoint is allowed. The narratee of a story that departs from familiar points of reference is inclined to suspend judgment according to the first world. In Shklovsky's terms, this departure into a secondary world creates *ostranienie*, [estrangement] or 'a reading frame' in Derrida's, necessary to avoid a development and ending 'natural' or 'inevitable' to women, which would be a conventional plot of confinement.

Bound by the same sociolect as Margaret Cavendish, Aphra Behn also reacts against the tradition of women's invisibility and namelessness.<sup>12</sup> She launches a direct at-

---

<sup>11</sup> Françoise Lionnet, "Métissage, Emancipation, and Female Textuality in Two Francophone Authors" in Displacements eds. Joan DeJean and Nancy Miller (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990) 254.

<sup>12</sup> Angeline Goreau discusses the realities of late seventeenth century in England in terms of women's social situation in Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn (NY: Dial Press, 1980)

tack on those who criticized her as a writing woman. She is conscious of her transgression, acknowledges it and speaks on behalf of women. In seventeenth century England being a woman in the public sphere meant illegitimacy, transgression and powerlessness. In particular, Behn's Oroonoko takes the reader to Surinam, where the narrator of her text observes and comments on the racial conflicts. She writes her self as an independent eye-witness who gives credibility to the account by the fact of 'having-been-there' and seen the events narrated. She inscribes herself in abolitionist discourse. Also Behn's plays and poems are excellent examples of the writer's self-consciousness as a creator of her own text and a commentator on a tradition which forces women to use extraordinary measures to preserve self-identity. Behn's narrators do not reveal as much about her as Cavendish's do, however.

In order not to appear immodest and to gain a favorable attitude from the reader, both Cavendish and Behn wrote apologetic introductions to their works. It does not alter the fact that they published under their own names. By at once negating and reaffirming authorship, they actually formulate a problematics of female authorship. The authors discussed, unlike most other female writers of the time, do not hesitate to sign their work, ultimately affirming their writers' status. In the Preface, the Duchess asks the scholars at Cambridge University not to judge her harshly as she

is a woman.

You might, if not with Scorn, with Silence have passed by, when one of our Sex, and what is more, one that never was versed in the sublime Arts and Sciences, took upon her to write, not only of Philosophy, the highest of human Learning, but to offer it to so famous and celebrated a University as yours; but your Goodness and Civility being as great as Learning, would rather conceal than discover and laugh at those Weaknesses and Imperfections which you know our Sex is liable to...<sup>13</sup>

By negating her strengths, she actually asserts them. At the same time, she refutes the accusations that a woman writing is a manifestation of an illness. She hopes that her profuse writing will place her in "the Register of Fame." Aware of her otherness as a female writer, she states she must "strive to hit [her] opinions with a side-stroke, rather covertly, than openly and directly." She implies that her text requires different levels of interpretation. Cavendish knows that she is perceived either as "an angel, a sorceress, goddess or the Devil in the fine Lady." Knowing that both male and female readers criticized her for the assertive quality of her writing, she nonetheless continued to write and publish.

It is probable, some will say, that my much Writing is a Disease; but what Disease they judge it to be I cannot tell; I do verily believe they will take it to be the Disease of the Brain but surely they cannot call it apoplexical or lethargical Disease. Perhaps they will say it's extravagant, or at least a fanatical Disease, but I rather hope they call it a Disease of Wit. But, let them give it what Name they please, yet

---

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Cavendish, Introduction, Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy: To Which Is Added The Description Of The New World Called The Blazing World (London: Maxwell, 1668) B.

of this I am sure that if much Writing be a Disease, then the best Philosophers, both Moral and Natural, as also the best Divines, Lawyers, Physitians, Poets, Historians, Orators, Mathematicians, Chymists, and many more have been grievously sick. And Plato, Seneca, Plinius, Aristotle, Cicero, Tacitus, Plutarch, Euclid, Homer, Virgil, Ovid, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, Scotus, Hippocrates, Galen, Paracelsus, and hundreds more, have been at the death's door with the disease of writing.<sup>14</sup>

Painting with a broad stroke indeed, she nonetheless places herself in an impressive tradition. She refutes the tradition of writing in Latin and difficult discourse of writers who "instead of making hard things easy, make easy things hard." (C) It is interesting that she is aware that a language of exclusion is produced on purpose to prevent readers like her from understanding the content. The writer and the narrator of The Blazing World does not shy from creating herself as a thinker whose fame will defy time.

Margaret Cavendish was an outstanding writer and a fortunate woman. In her Memoirs<sup>15</sup>, she describes a nurturing atmosphere at home and the parents who supported their daughters' learning. Later on, her husband, Duke William Newcastle, was quite encouraging of her work, a meaningful fact in seventeenth century England when writing women were considered an oddity. He extols her work:

(...) Your new-borne, sublime Fancies, and such store,  
May make our Poets blush, and write no more.  
May Spencers Ghost will haunt you in the Night,

---

<sup>14</sup> Cavendish, Observations. B.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Cavendish Newcastle, The Life of the First Duke of Newcastle (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1916).

And Johnson rise, full fraught with Venom's Spight.  
 Fletcher, and Beaumont, troubl'd in their Graves,  
 Looke out some deeper, and forgotten Caves.  
 And gentle Shakespeare weeping, since he must,  
 At best, be buried, now, in Chaucers Dust.  
 Thus darke Oblivion covers their each Name,  
 Since you have rob'ed them of their Glorious Fame.<sup>16</sup>

Interestingly, Cavendish and Newcastle often vindicate each other in this fashion. In the dedicatory poem to The Blazing World, William Newcastle compares her not to Thomas More but to Columbus. He believes that she is better than Columbus, since he only found a new world whereas she created a world. Cavendish married the Duke while in exile on the continent during the Civil War and lived there for eight years. They suffered political adversities connected with the dislocation of their class. Although Cavendish clearly wrote as a member of an elitist seventeenth-century culture and class, she was marginalized as an ambitious woman and a political exile. Moreover, the collapse of the longstanding sources of power and security, beheading of the king and the devastation of her family estates must have also contributed to her desire to create an alternative world.

Sensitive to the spirit of her time and inclined to study natural philosophy, Cavendish sat in her study and contemplated nature to reach conclusions by analogy and speculation. It was a common though dangerous habit of those who did not take Francis Bacon's injunction to test every-

---

<sup>16</sup> William Newcastle, "To the Lady Newcastle On her Booke of Poems" in Margaret Cavendish Newcastle Poems and Fancies (Scolar Press: Menston, England, 1972) A1.

thing very seriously. Cavendish was aware of the need for observation and experiment, however. She regretted not being able to dissect and study human anatomy, since participation of women in research and experimentation was not possible. She was once allowed to attend a meeting of the Royal Society, an exceptional event. It is argued that her full-scale skepticism and extreme individualism were her only choice. When in Antwerp, she observed and described the metamorphosis of a chrysalis. At that time, she sent some of her poems presenting natural phenomena in terms of atomistic cosmology to Constantijn Huygens, who observed that her "extravagant atoms kept [him] from sleeping a great part of last night in this [his] little solitude."<sup>17</sup> In keeping with popular quests, she also tried to invent a way of traveling to the Moon, another search for an alternate space.

Cavendish was quite invested in natural philosophy. The fact that it was difficult for her to gain knowledge is meaningful in an analysis of The Blazing World, meant to be a literary illustration of her theories. It was published as an appendix to Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy, one of her philosophical treatises. This imaginative fantasy is interesting on many levels. Cavendish is a materialist who makes a complete distinction between the natural and the

---

<sup>17</sup> J.A. Worp, ed., De Briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens (The Hague, 1916) v.187 quot. after Douglas Grant, Margaret the First (London: R. Hart-Davis, 1957) 193.

supernatural. Her casual attitude towards divine providence is paired with her insistence that religious persecution cannot change opinion. She demands in the name of Christianity itself the right of everyone to freedom of conscience.<sup>18</sup>

Her amazing secularism, tolerance and comments on the situation of women added to the controversy surrounding her throughout her writing career. Although she asserts in the Preface that she does not wish to stir up controversy, she violates this principle by using much sarcasm and contempt when addressing her adversaries. She debates her contemporary philosophers and points out their inconsistencies.

One of the main themes of Observations, published in 1666, is the microscope and its discoveries which came into focus after publication of Robert Hooks' Micrographia in 1665. It brings up the theme of looking/seeing and analyzing the world through different optics. On the one hand, it is clear why Cavendish rejected the work - his argument rested in realistic terms supported by observations through the microscope and she preferred long divagations on matter, motion and immaterial spirits. Her position is evidenced in many of the longer passages on how "the inspection of a bee will bring men no more honey; neither will the inspection of

---

<sup>18</sup> Douglas Grant discusses Cavendish's life and philosophy and its implications in Margaret the First. A Biography of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, 1623-1673 (Rupert Hart-Davis: London, 1957) 71.

dusty atoms and reflections of light teach the painters how to make and mix colors. (...) The best optic is a perfect natural eye ... and the best judge is reason."<sup>19</sup> However, she embraces the theory of self-moving matter which is at the center of her own philosophy. "I find that nature is but one infinite self-moving body, which by the virtue of its self-motion, is divided into infinite parts [which] being restless, undergo perpetual changes and transmutations by their infinite compositions and divisions." (48) On the other hand, debarred from the kind of learning that produced this kind of writing, she asserted her independence and developed her own idiosyncratic style and metaphor for textualizing the world that interested her so much.

To prepare the reader for the fanciful story, she says that The Blazing World does not follow Observations

... out of a Disparagement of Philosophy; or out of an Opinion, as if this noble Study were but a Fiction of the Mind... Fictions are an issue of Man's Fancy, framed in his own Mind, according as he pleases, without regard whether the Thing he fancies be really existent without his Mind or not; so that Reason searches the Depth of Nature, and enquires after the true Causes of natural Effects, but Fancy creates its own Accord whatsoever it pleases, and delights in its Work. (...) I added this piece of Fancy to my Philosophical Observations, and joined them as two Worlds at the Ends of their Poles. (...) I chose a Fiction as would be agreeable to the Subject I treated of in the former Parts; it is a Description of A New World, not such as Lucian's,<sup>20</sup> or the French-man's World in the

---

<sup>19</sup> Cavendish, Observations. B3.

<sup>20</sup> Lucian wrote a fantastical description of the Moon as a country of lights - a place called Lamptown where the inhabitants were lamps. He influenced François Rabelais, too,

Moon; but a World of my own creating, which I call The Blazing World: the first Part of thereof is romancical, the second philosophical, and the third is merely fancy, or (as I may call it) Fantastical. (...) [because] of my Sex... I cannot be Henry the Fifth, or Charles the Second, yet I endeavour to be Margaret the First.<sup>21</sup>

Cavendish's curious addition of the fantasy in The Blazing World to a philosophical text creates a coupling: an intellectual-interpretive text is followed by a personal-subjective one.<sup>22</sup> As she is at odds with the philosophers in the first world, she needs the imaginary to create a space for her own philosophy.

The theme of a woman's voyage and escape from misfortune was Cavendish's favorite, ever since her own sea escape through rough waters to France together with Queen Henrietta Maria's court. The heroine of her earlier story "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity" makes three extraordinary voyages and becomes so traveled that she adopts the name of Travelia. The Blazing World begins with the abduction of an innocent heroine by a merchant in love. "A merchant, visiting a foreign country, fell extremely in love with a young lady." He eventually freezes to death with his crew when they find

---

however it is not clear whether Cavendish was familiar with Rabelais's work as she did not speak French or whether she read the existing English translation.

<sup>21</sup> Cavendish, The Blazing World. A3.

<sup>22</sup> The Blazing World was actually preceded by Francis Godwin's Man in the Moone published in 1638, John Wilkins' The Discovery of a World in the Moone and her own earlier writings.

themselves near the North Pole. "The young Lady only, by the light of her beauty, the heat of her youth, and the protection of the gods, remaining alive." This conventional though brief passage deconstructs the romance plot. Its improbable resolution ends the first part of the story which becomes a story of fantastic travel, and the woman is no longer a simple object of male desire but an independent traveller. The North Pole is the site where the adventure begins: the frozen landscape, white like paper, has no burden of history or fiction. There is no dense textual landscape many other travellers must navigate. The ship continues, drawn by the Pole and reemerges at the Pole in the second world, contingent to the first. She is greeted by extraordinary creatures of the Blazing World: bear-men, fox-men, goose-men, satyrs and green colored men who lead her across innumerable islands, rivers and kingdoms to the capital city, Paradise. The second world is characterized by multiplicity on all levels of representation. Once arrived in the city of Paradise, she is impressed by its complex architectural design and its utility and magnificence. The variety of elements and colors in the decorations is an extension of the colors in the second world's nature. The narrator describes the residents of the second world who:

were of several Complexions; not white, black, tawny, olive or ash-colored; but some appeared of an azure, some of deep purple, some of grass-green, some of a scarlet, some of an orange-colour, etc. [and] were Men of several different Sorts, Shapes and Figures, Dispositions, and Humors... Some were Bear-Men, some Worm-

Men, some Fish- or Mear-Men...; some Bird-Men, some Fly-Men, some Ant-Men, some Geese-Men, some Spider-Men, some Lice-Men... some Magpie-Men, some Satyrs, some Giants, and many more which I cannot remember.(14-15)

The young lady soon conveniently marries the Emperor and thus assumes the role of the Empress, which is her first and only name. This marks the end of the first part of the narrative. She is given "an absolute power to rule and govern all the worlds as she pleased." Her clothing expresses the magnificence and multitude of her new realm.

The Empress's power in the New World established, she looks closely at the government. She first summons all the philosophers and scientists of her time to speculate on the nature of things and she organizes them into professional schools.<sup>23</sup> The bear-men become philosophers, the bird-men astronomers, the fly-, worm- and fish-men become natural philosophers. She carries out lengthy conversations with them, which is a pretext for a larger presentation of her ideas about nature. In the process of intellectual exchange, she reproves and corrects some of the bear-men-philosophers' ideas but also learns from her interlocutors. Like Plato in The Republic, she chooses what branches of knowledge are good for the society and, similarly, bans from public discourse what she considers useless. She is angry at the

---

<sup>23</sup> Jane Donawerth and Carol A. Kolmerten argue that Cavendish's Blazing World is a prototype of today's women's science fiction and feminist utopias in the Introduction to Utopian and Science Fiction by Women (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1994) 4-5.

logicians whose syllogisms contradict one another, or at the spider-men, mathematicians who thwarted real science.

In her dispute with the Galenic physicians the Empress strives to know the nature of origins of things. To her disappointment, she hears different explanations. Diseases, for instance, come "by a division or composition of parts; that is, by expiration and inspiration [or] imitation(...)" (158) Confused by multiple and inconsistent explanations of reasons for things, the Empress selects which scientific societies should be allowed in the empire. The Empress knows that "no particular knowledge can be perfect, by reason knowledge is dividable, as well as composable." (162) She tells the logicians "I do not always approve of your profession; and though I will not dissolve your society, yet I shall never take delight in hearing you any more; wherefore confine your disputations to your schools." She conveniently removes the unwanted branches of knowledge from dissemination in public discourse in the Empire.

The Empress also tests the experimental philosophers' ability to deliver coherent answers. When they cannot agree on their observations of the first world stars through the telescopes, the Empress becomes upset and orders them to break and discard the tools.

(...) The Empress demanded them to go with their Telescopes to the very end of the Pole that was joined to the World she came from, and try whether they could perceive any Stars in it; which they did; and being returned to her Majesty, reported that they had seen three blazing-Stars appear there, one after another in

a short time, whereof two were bright, and one dim; but they could not agree neither in this Observation; for some said it was but one Star which appeared at three several times, in several places; and others would have them to be three several Stars; for they thought it impossible, that those three several Appearances should have been but one Star, because every Star did arise at a certain Time, and appeared in a certain Place, and did disappear in the same Place: next, it is together improbable, said they, that one Star should fly from Place to Place, especially at such a vast Distance, without visible Motion, in so short a Time, and appear in such different Places, whereof two were quite opposite, and the third side-ways: lastly, if it had been but one Star, said they, it would always have kept the same Splendour, which it did not; for, as above mentioned, two were bright, and one was dim. After they had thus argued, the Empress ... said... I do plainly perceive, that your Glasses are false Informers, and instead of discovering the Truth, delude your Senses; wherefore I command you to break them.(141)

The measuring instrument is wrong and therefore the data are unreliable. The Empress will later let philosophers keep the telescopes for pleasure, not as a source of truth to be disseminated. The experimental philosophers try to explain:

(...) it was not the Fault of their Glasses, which caused such Differences of their Opinions, but the sensitive Motions of their optic Organs did not move alike, nor were their rational Judgments always regular.(143)

The Empress remains unconvinced: "if their Glasses were true Informers, they would rectify their irregular Sense and Reason." Her knowledge tells her that some of the properties that we observe in objects may be due to the nature of the observer and the qualities of the instruments used rather than the objects themselves. Existing in a pre-Kantian world, she rejects the idea of argument as a cognitive tool as a result of this discovery. Kant, however, will later

accept the argument itself as a conclusion.

The passage quoted above from Cavendish's text is a sample of her style, method and sense of humor with which she deconstructs the postulates of truth in natural science. Without reverence, she will later similarly dismiss all European philosophers for the same reason - they are not reliable sources of knowledge about the nature of man or the nature of knowledge as they disagree with each other and mystify things rather than explain them.

Unlike Plato, the Empress bans some branches of science from her textual empire, but not the lyrical poet. She herself is after all dependent on fictions such as poetry creates. Somewhat contradictorily, having devoted so much attention and having delighted in disputes so much, she negates the absolute value of rational knowledge in forming a coherent system of understanding nature as knowledge itself has proven to be an arbitrary construct. Eventually, she will find that a complete metaphor for the ultimate reason for things is to be worded in poetry, not philosophy or science. Furthermore, she will attempt to write a "poetical cabala" to contain the primary truth of nature in a poetic form.

Disenchanted with the state of knowledge in the newly acquired empire, the Empress immediately proceeds to question the situation of women. She notices that there are no women in the places of worship in the Empire. She is told

that women cause trouble both in church and state and therefore are "not admitted in public Employments." In response, she decides to change this and makes up a congregation of women to teach them. Since "Women... generally had quick Wits, subtile Conceptions, clear Understandings, and solid Judgements," (62-63) they quickly learn teleology and become experts, and peacefully convert the people to Christianity. Women are now in control of morality. She orders a construction of two temples according to her own design: a Chapel of Terror with an emblem of Hell where she evokes the fear of damnation and where the wet stone burns, and the Chapel of Heaven where she preaches comfort in the perpetual light of starstone, another invention of the Blazing World. The preachers in the Empire will now be women. The Empress herself has set an example of a multi-talented individual who has wielded multiple functions: first a traveller, then a politician, scientist, philosopher, architect, religious leader and, eventually, a war tactician.

Cavendish's Blazing World, or the New Republic, is characterized by its corporeal quality expressed in bodily images of various creatures and the tangible quality of nature. As "the word World [itself] implies a Quantity or Multitude of corporeal Creatures"(174), phenomena are often given various interpretations without giving one total authority. The stars there are "...said they [natural philosophers], solid, firm and shining Bodies as the Sun and

Moon, not of a globular, but of several sorts of Figures, some had Tails, and some other kinds of Shapes."(138) The nature of wind is that it is "more dense than Air, and therefore subject to the sense of touch." Its source is debatable, however:

... the Manner how it was made, they could not exactly tell; some said, it was caused by the Clouds falling on each other, and others, that it was produced of a hot and dry Exhalation, which ascending, was driven down again by the Coldness of the Air that is in the middle Region, and by Reason of Lightness, could not go directly to the Bottom, but was carried by the Air up and down: some would have it flowing Water of the Air; others again a flowing Air moved by the Blaze of the Stars.(139)

Inquisitions into the natural world go as far as questioning whether eternal "immaterial spirits" would be able to appropriate the bodies of deceased humans for use as vehicles in the natural world. In keeping with baroque imagery, the narrator supplies an elaborate description of why human corpses cannot be thus appropriated and used in battle by immaterial spirits due to time lapse. "They would stink and dissolve; and when they came to a Fight, they would moulder into Dust and Ashes."(204) Although the two worlds overlap, one cannot easily intervene in the other.

The positioning of the two worlds in The Blazing World lays itself open to a feminist psychoanalytical interpretation as "writing from a maternal body." The worlds are connected by a narrow passage which can be read as an umbilical cord connecting this world of Margaret Cavendish with her literary baby, a fantastic world of her own making - a

baby girl in the young potent Empress. On the other hand, the tight passage to the other world has the quality of the uterus - as it leads into a uniquely feminine and creative space. This is a sample of a "woman's writing from the body."

The theme of repetition and multitude in Cavendish's writing dissatisfies some readers as she has a tendency to restate the same ideas in different images and show various enactments of the same actions. Margaret's writing reflects the phenomena she describes, a process she compares to: "Painters [who] do not copy out one and the same Original just alike at all Times .. as several Parts of the Air make different Patterns(...)." Such an oscillating perspective shows there is no one coherent story leading to the conclusion that there is no single truth, or that truth is a contest of shifting images. Cavendish's style is at the same time forceful, unlike the writing of her female contemporaries such as Lucy Hutchinson's self-effacing style, for instance. She uses concrete metaphor. Her double, the Empress, is assertive and has strong convictions about the arbitrariness of knowledge and the trappings of engendering.

Having established her order of knowledge and given legitimacy to selected scientific institutions in the Empire, the Empress evokes immaterial spirits. They answer her questions regarding the developments in the first world, the invisible world, the origin of things and the reliability of

the Bible and the Kabbalah. Although the spirits confirm that God is a superior being, many of the truths of the Old Testament are said to be uncertain, including the number of days of creation. The spirits also deny any mythical meaning to numbers. Therefore the texts codifying postulates of truth such as the Old Testament and the Kabbalah are said not to be reliable, since their actual meaning depends on interpretation.

The Empress then uses the immaterial spirits to inquire about the nature of knowledge. Their exchanges structure a deconstructive argument on the authority of discourse while earlier pretensions of absolute truth are exposed with the use of satire. Cavendish skillfully and subversively points out the fictionality of many postulates of truth through longer deconstructive passages of various analyses of the same natural phenomena such as what air is, what the nature of sunlight and its warmth is and what anatomic features make certain animals live under water and some on land. The scientists of the Blazing World cannot reach a consensus. By focusing on how the postulates of truth are arrived at, the questioning and critical narrator erodes their coherence.

Neither holy books, nor philosophy are reliable sources of truth. Even the Spirits get confused by the philosophers' argument: "Many, both of your modern and ancient Philosophers endeavour to go beyond Sense and Reason, which makes them commit Absurdities." Dissatisfied with the philoso-

phers' explanations, the Empress suddenly wishes to create her own cabala which is a notion so outrageous that the spirits escape to the antipodes and the Empress herself falls into a trance. It is hard to determine whether it is the challenge to the existing cabala or the fact that a woman aspires to rewrite the postulates of truth that is so earth shattering. The spirits are summoned back from the antipodes, however, and aid her with her new endeavor for which she needs a scribe. The spirits suggest philosophers' names for her consideration, from Aristotle to Descartes, yet they are all rejected, since they will not be willing to transmit her text.

...they were so wedded in their own Opinions that they would never have the Patience to be Scribes.(...) the most famous modern Writers, as either of Galileo, Gassendus, Descartes, Helmont, Hobbes, H. More, etc. (...) were fine and ingenious Writers, but yet so self-conceited, that they would scorn to be Scribes to a Woman.(181)

The Empress decides to choose a good scribe and adviser to help her govern in Margaret Cavendish, "a plain and rational Writer" - a common Protestant trope which in case of Cavendish is misleading. Margaret's soul appears in the second world. A one-way departure is not possible for her, she has a loving husband, the Duke, so her voyage has to end in homecoming. The New World, Called a Blazing World is a secondary domicile for Margaret Cavendish's heroine, Margaret.

The Empress embraced her and saluted her with a spiritual Kiss; she asked her if she could write? Yes,

answered the Duchess's Soul, but not so intelligibly that any Reader whatsoever may understand it, unless he be taught to know my Characters; for my Letters are rather like Characters than well-formed Letters.(181)

Margaret's writing requires a key in order to be understood, since it is unusual and individualistic. The Empress will use Margaret's help regardless of the added difficulty because she "writ Sense and Reason" and she is "one of her Sex." Margaret is already a writer when she appears in the second world and she understands that the writer's position has a crucial influence on his/her writing. She therefore objects to the task of "writing Jews Cabala"<sup>24</sup> proposed by the Empress. She warns the Empress that in order to write an exegesis of Jewish texts, she should have Moses or "some famous Jew" for a scribe or "otherwise [her] Majesty will be apt to Mistake, and a thousand to one, will commit gross Errors." (181) She then advises the Empress to create instead a "poetical Cabala," not a political or theological one. It will allow her a sufficient degree of freedom to express her own uniqueness. She will be able to use "Metaphors, Allegories, Similitudes and interpret them as she pleases." (183) It is interesting that it is the fictionality of poetry which provides an alternate space to that of male texts.

---

<sup>24</sup> "Kabbalah," a Hebrew word for "tradition," is often used by Cavendish instead of the actual titles of the theological texts that codify Jewish mysticism. Therefore it can be understood either that The Empress will want to rewrite the existing stories or write new stories formally in keeping with the tradition, yet at the same time subverting it. Interestingly, Kabbalah, translated into Latin, enjoyed a considerable vogue among Christians in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Margaret believes the available sources of truth such as the Kabbalah or the Old Testament are formulaic and limiting to a woman's imagination therefore a new kind of book needs to be written by a woman. She opposes the praxis of patriarchal reifying texts.

The Duchess travels to the Blazing World in spirit and shares a "platonick Love"(110) with the Empress. This doubling actually represents two facets of the same character. The Empress's presence is physical and her powers executive. The Duchess is in the second world in spirit and she is an advisor. Whereas the former is young and innocent and she is learning, the latter is mature and draws on her knowledge and experience. This facet of the fantasy is an exposition on female power and talents, a growth of "a young innocent Lady" into "a knowledgeable and powerful Queen." This double structure of power reflects dualities on other levels. The contention between the two forces in her work are reflected in the dialectic of the overlapping worlds of which one is peaceable and harmonious and the other cruel, unjust and conflictual.

The polarity of the two worlds in The Blazing World corresponds to the polarity of reason and truth, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, fancy and fiction. The passage between the two worlds symbolizes the gap between the Infinite and the finite world. It is bridged by the immaterial spirits who can travel in between and communicate with the

Empress and Margaret. They resemble the mystical *sefiroth*, emanations, occurring between the Infinite and the finite world in the Kabbalah which tempts the Empress to explicate its secrets.

Other dualities are present in the character of the authoress Margaret who, on the one hand, proclaims herself "Margaret the First," the empress of her philosophical divagations and, on the other hand, defines herself as an "honest writer," a scribe to the Empress of the Blazing World. She misleadingly states:

there are many useless and superfluous Books, and perchance mine will add to the number of them; especially it is to be observed, that there have been in this latter Age, as many Writers of natural Philosophy; which Multitude, I fear, will produce such a Confusion of Truth and Falsehood, as the number of moral Writers formerly did [...]"(b)

She actually believes that her book will bring about a conclusion to the dense philosophical discourse of her time.

Cavendish's textual "self" is dual and paradoxical like her discourse which combines passages of opaque philosophical investigations with clear and witty illustrations. Her narrated "self" displays her mental processes, involving her preoccupation with textual self-creation. In The Blazing World, the author creates a character "The Duchess of Newcastle", a self-referentially named author of her own world. The heroine-authoress creates, asserts and preserves herself through an ultimate fantasy, "fancy", of the mind. Interestingly, she is "chosen" by the Empress to be a scribe in

the second world, therefore her pretextual identity is already that of an author. She actually becomes the "writer" of the character she has created. Moreover, she is conscious that a writer

may create a world of what Fashion or Government he will, and give the Creatures thereof such Motions, Figures, Forms, Colours, Perceptions, etc. as he pleases, and make Whirlpools, Lights, Pressures and reactions, etc. as he thinks best; nay, he may make a World full of Veins, Muscles, and Nerves, and all these to move by one Jolt or Stroke: also he may alter that World as often as he pleases.(186)

Writing is an act of arbitrary creation. Margaret claims not to have been influenced in the creation of the New World by Thales, Pythagoras, Plato, Epicurus, or Aristotle on through Descartes and Hobbes. Thinking about how she would have to write to fashion a world according to those philosophers caused her thoughts to "so stagger, as if they had all been drunk." Hobbes in particular caused her such "a horrible pain in the Head"(188) that she concluded that since "no Patterns would do her any good in the framing of her own World, she was resolved to make a World of her own Invention." (188) Margaret repeatedly affirms the authority in her authorship.

The Empress resolves to stage a court trial to clear Margaret's husband, the Duke of Newcastle of accusations of wrong-doing and restore his estates (196-198), another symbolic gesture toward her husband. It is followed directly by the Second Part - a military expedition against the enemies of the first world - the empress's world. This is a

single but quite spectacular material penetration between the separate worlds, an intervention of the second world into the first world in defense of Margaret's country, EFSI, another name for England. The Empress conquers the enemies of EFSI and goes further by conquering the country itself, and she proclaims herself Empress of this whole world, too.

The space of The Blazing World liberates women and encourages their expression. Female power and creativity are multiple and show the generative potential of a relational rather than isolated self. The plot of Cavendish's fantasy validates partnership as opposed to romance or domination. It constructs varied positions for women. The ideal social order that emerges from Cavendish's writing differs greatly from those systems devised by Socrates or Thomas More. Cavendish fantasizes about collaborative efforts of shared power and sisterhood rather than hierarchy. The Empress's vision of a perfect government is based on the acceptance of the laws and love of the subjects: "without Enforcement or blood-shed ... for Fear, though makes People obey, yet does not last so long, nor it is so sure a means to keep them to their Duties, as Love." (164) She therefore writes a new myth for women. Eventually, Cavendish, the writer of The Blazing World, will admit that the text is her own creation and the Empress a facet of herself. The fiction is no longer viable for her purposes. In the Epilogue the narrator of The Blazing World concludes:

By this poetical Description, you may perceive, that my Ambition is not only to be Empress, but Authoress of the whole World; and that the Worlds I have made ... are framed and composed of the most pure .. rational parts of Matter, which are the Parts of my Mind. (...) In the formation of those Worlds, I take more Delight and Glory, than ever Alexander or Caesar did in conquering the terrestrial World (...) if any should like the World I have made, and be willing to be my Subjects, they may imagine themselves such ... if they cannot endure to be Subjects, they may create Worlds of their own, and govern themselves as they please. (225)

Margaret, the writer traveling in The Blazing World asserts her independence by stressing that she wants to set an example rather than follow examples. She favors pastimes such as thinking of natural causes and effects and watching the sky at night when the blazing star constellation is clear. The literary character, however, is more powerful than a woman writer could be in seventeenth-century England.

Catherine Gallagher argues that Cavendish exploits images of absolute monarchy to construct a self-enclosed autonomous nature "isolated and complete unto itself" and explains that

Her emphasis on the microcosm of the self does suggest a compensatory withdrawal; because her sex conflicts with her ambition, she retreats to the domain of subjectivity... narrative implies that the absolutist desire, the ambition, exists prior to gender awareness that thwarts it.<sup>25</sup>

Sandra Sherman argues:

that Cavendish's withdrawal from the contemporary discourse into a world of her own imagining, implying a self anterior to any text, is continually undermined by

---

<sup>25</sup> Catherine Gallagher, "Embracing the Absolute: The Politics of a Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England," Genders I (1988), 27.

a constant appeal to the judgement of history, implying a self determined by discourse and entirely inter-textual. Images of monarchy contend with images of submission.<sup>26</sup>

This tension reflects Cavendish's unorthodox disbelief in the authority of discourse and usefulness of inventions in science, which partly prevented her from studying the texts of her contemporaries. Cavendish creates an autonomous self which jealously guards her "purity of thought" though at the same time she has a desire to situate herself in the available discourse to ensure herself a space in history.

But certainly they that remember their own Wit least, have the most of it; for there is an old saying, and surely true, that the best Wits have the worst Memory, I mean Wit-Memory; for great Memories are standing Ponds that are made with Rain; so that Memory is nothing but the Showers of other Men's Wits; and those Brains are muddy that have no running Springs of their own, that issue out still fresh and new. Indeed it's against Nature for natural Wits to remember; for it is impossible that the Brain should retain and create.<sup>27</sup>

Free from remembered discourse, a female writer can create her own discourse and "self." Yet her future glory is to be dependent on memory and her own greatness as a writer lies in an accumulation of her own work. She undertakes an effort to create a new comprehensive system of signification. She hopes that her new social and philosophical order will be remembered. By textually creating an alternative world, she draws an implication of her status in her own world. She can

---

<sup>26</sup> Sandra Sherman, "Trembling Texts: Margaret Cavendish and the Dialectic of Authorship," English Literary Renaissance, Winter 1994:1, 184.

<sup>27</sup> Margaret Cavendish, True Relation (London: 1656) 176.

only operate through texts. The male philosophers in whose tradition she locates herself serve as models; they had the same fate.

One of the remarkable features of Cavendish's writing is that it extols the life of a woman writer. The Blazing World concludes with a statement that being an authoress is superior even to being a powerful empress. In Sociable Letters, for instance, Cavendish writes:

The Lady M. L. spoke of me, saying, I lived a Dull, Unprofitable, Unhappy Life, Employing my time onely in Building Castles in the Air. Indeed, if I were of her Ladiships Humour, I should be Unhappy, but as I am, I would not change the Course of my Life with her Ladiship... as for the Minds Architecture, as Castles in the Air, or Airy Castles, which are poetical conceptions, and solitary Contemplations, which produce Poems, Songs, Plays, Masks, Elegies, Epigrams, Anagrams, and the like, they will be more lasting than Castles of Wood. (SL 226-27)

The creative talent of a woman is affirmed. The woman lives a solitary life, withdrawn into herself, yet her creative powers are a means to happiness as opposed to practical, unpoetical wisdom, the usual women's sphere. She reasserts a woman's power to author texts. Writing one's own world is a difficult task.

In the meantime, the Duchess was also making and dissolving several Worlds in her Mind, and was so puzzled, that she couldn't settle in any of them wherefore she sent for the Duchess, who being ready to wait on the Empress, carried her beloved World along with her, and invited the Empress's Soul to observe the Frame, Order and Government of it. Her Majesty was so ravished with the Perception of it, that her Soul desired to live in the Duchess's World. (BW 186-189)

This fantastic multiplication of the worlds and their images

adds to the dazzling effect of multitude and oscillation between opposing poles of reference.

Cavendish's figurations have a tangible, corporeal quality and she makes remarks on the writing process involving both mind and body. In True Relation she writes:

[W]hen I am writing any sad feigned Stories, serious Humours, or melancholy Passions, I am forced many times to express them with the Tongue before I can write them with the Pen, by reason those Thoughts that are sad, serious or melancholy are apt to contract, and to draw too much back, which Oppression doth as it were overpower or smother the Conception in the Brain. But when some of those Thoughts are sent out in Words, they give the rest more liberty to place themselves in a more methodical Order, marching more regularly with my Pen on the Ground of white Paper. (TR 172)

The written world is dependent on the primary spoken world.

In Poems and Fancies, she writes:

True it is, Spinning with the Fingers is more proper to our Sexe, than Studying or writing Poetry, which is the Spinning with the braine: but I having no skill in the Art of the first... made me delight in the latter; since all braines work naturally, and incessantly, in some kind or other; which made me endeavour to spin a Garment of Memory. (...) Condemne me not as a dishonor of your sex, for setting forth this Work; for it is harmlesse and free from all dishonesty ... is so natural for our Sex ... Poetry which is built upon Fancy ... Women may claime, as a worke belonging most properly to themselves. (...) I imagine I will be censur'd by my own sex; and men will cast a smile of scorne upon my Book, because they think thereby, Women incroach too much upon their Prerogatives; for they hold Books as their Crowne, and the Sword as their Scepter, by which they rule, and governe.<sup>28</sup>

Cavendish is aware of the codifying power of writing, encourages women to write and compares making poetry to sowing

---

<sup>28</sup> Margaret Cavendish, "The Epistle Dedicatory" to Poems and Fancies 1653 (Scolar Press: Mendon, England, 1972) A2-A3.

fancy garments using ribbons to make the process more accessible to women. Somewhat contrary to her remarks on creativity, she states that spinning should be a means of creating women's memory. Anne Bradstreet, her contemporary, writes about the "needle" as being a sign of female endeavor.

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue,  
Who says my hand a needle better fits,  
A Poet's Pen all acorne, I should thus wrong:  
For such despite they cast on female wits:  
If what I doe prove well, it won't advance.  
They'll say its stolne, or else, it was by chance.<sup>29</sup>

The metaphors of spinning and making textual fabric by weaving have been used in feminist criticism ever since.

The Blazing World can be approached as an archetypical female science fiction voyage.

[it] foregrounds the issue of revision as a necessary precondition to expressions of feminist desire... it is a precursor to a whole set of feminist utopias in England and France during the next century and a half that estrange the reader from her ordinary world, teach her that the good life consists of education for women along with seclusion from the world of men, and offer her a subject position in that separate world.<sup>30</sup>

This pattern is present in the works of d'Aulnoy and Scudéry, and Françoise de Graffigny, which are set in secluded places where educated aristocratic women enjoy an intellectual life. In those texts private and public worlds meet. The depictions of private relations often assume more impor-

---

<sup>29</sup> Anne Bradstreet, Prologue to The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America (Boston: 1981) 1.

<sup>30</sup> Jane Donawerth and Carol Kolmerten, eds., Introduction, Utopian and Science Fiction by Women (Syracuse UP: Syracuse, 1994) 5.

tance than the discussion of laws and social institutions. The pleasures depicted include the intellectual, moral, sensual and esthetic. The presence of the above themes in Cavendish's work create a precedent three centuries before they became abundant in women's writing.

The narrative makes it clear that the voyage is fantastic; yet what is the most fantastic is the fact that Cavendish actually wrote and published such a powerful fantasy in which she creates an independent and creative self. All Cavendish's writings have a clear staple of her character and belief. Anxious that she may be by posterity confused with the first wife of the Duke or perish from people's memory for other reasons, she wrote (about) herself in many texts. The entire world gives in to the power of the team of two women: a young Lady turned empress there and the Duchess, a writer that the Empress summoned from England to her world to help her record her deeds and give counsel. Cavendish builds an elaborate case for herself as a totally unique insightful individual.

A much harder case is Aphra Behn, Cavendish's contemporary and fellow writer. It is now impossible to determine many basic facts of Behn's life because she did not succumb to the temptation of writing an autobiography or a single work of fiction which would include clear allusions to the writer herself. Briefly married to Mr. Behn, a merchant about whom little is known, Aphra is said to spend a few

years in Surinam. Working as a King's spy in Holland left her in debt, for which she was thrown into prison. Once free she started her career as an author of thirteen plays,<sup>31</sup> many poems and translations. The available accounts regarding Aphra's biography are inconsistent. There is also a degree of contamination between the facts of her life and her fiction.<sup>32</sup> Behn's fictions tempted historians to recreate her life based on the facts she mentions in her works. One of the striking ones is her alleged intimate relationship with Oroonoko whom she undertakes to defend. Her biographers have struggled with the question whether she did go to Surinam or not. However, Anneke Prins-s' Jacob presents a convincing argument that Behn must have traveled there at some point of her life, since Oroonoko includes references absent in the travel accounts available at the time.<sup>33</sup>

Whereas Cavendish uncovers herself by writing a self that is coherent and definable regardless of her idiosyncrasies and frequent contradictions, Behn hides behind many voices, female and male. She mainly wrote plays that do not

---

<sup>31</sup> In 1660's the other female writers who wrote for the public theater were Katherine Philips, Frances Boothby and possibly Elizabeth Polwhele, yet they only produced one or two plays each.

<sup>32</sup> Janet Todd argues "Behn refuses to reveal a single plausible life" in her discussion of the reliability of available sources on Aphra Behn's life in *General Introduction to The Works of Aphra Behn* (London: William Pickering, 1992) ix-xxx.

<sup>33</sup> Anneke Prins-s'Jacob, "Aphra Behn. Surinam and the Critics" *OSO* 3,1 (May, 1984) 127-136.

have a narrating voice. Her assertiveness as a writer takes on a different shape in her writing than in Cavendish's. She makes fewer feminist pronouncements, yet she is clearly conscious of women's plight as evidenced in her many female characters in her plays and the frequent female gaze in her prose.

The Blazing World is unique in its self-referential quality, to be sure. However, Aphra Behn is like Cavendish preoccupied with the themes of women's writing, creativity and their minority position under the guise of metaphor of departure. The novel Oroonoko or The Royal Slave (1688), for instance, is particularly interesting because it features a female character, an Englishwoman temporarily in Surinam, who observes and writes a story of a slave. Her own 'otherness' as a woman prompts her to point out the injustices done to the blacks in English colonies. She reports events that she eye-witnessed and participated in in the first person narrative. The implied, though never mentioned name of the narrator is "Aphra Behn."

What is certain about Behn is that she was fluent in French and observant of the complexity of the process of writing and translation. In the Preface to her translation of Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle's Discovery of New Worlds from the French, she points out the importance of the cultural context of a literary work and the difficulty of rendering it in translation. She also says she was prompted

to complete the work partly due to "the Author's introducing a Woman as one of the speakers."<sup>34</sup> Herself a victim of prejudice against women writers, she formulated a feminist stance in the Preface to The Dutch Lover, her first staged play, which received severe criticism. She derisively rebukes the critic for accusing her of lack of learning:

Indeed that day 'twas Acted first there comes me into the Pit, a long, lither, phlegmatic, white ill-favour'd, wretched Fop, an officer in Masquerade newly transported with a Scarfe & Feather out of France, a sorry Animal that has nought else to shield it from the uttermost contempt of all mankind, but that respect which we afford to Rats and Toads (...) A thing, Reader - but no more of such a Smelt: This thing, I tell ye, opening that which serves for a mouth, out issued such a noise as this to those that sate about it, that they were to expect a woful play, God damn him, for it was a womans. (...) [I would] make him know how much he errs. For waving the examination, why women having equal education with men, were not as capable of knowledge, of whatever sort as well as they: I'll only say as I have touch'd before, that plays have no great room for that which is mens great advantage over women, that is Learning: We all well know that the immortal Shakespeares Playes (who was not guilty of much more than this that often falls to womens share) has better pleas'd the world than Johnsons works, though by the way 'tis said that Benjamin was no such Rabbi neither(...) Then for their musty rules of Unity, and God knows what besides, if they meant anything, they are enough intelligable, and as practible by a woman(...) <sup>35</sup>

The theme of women's limited access to learning and the need for their education is frequent in Behn's writing. In the

---

<sup>34</sup> Aphra Behn, Translator's Preface, A Discovery of the New Worlds (1688) in The Works of Aphra Behn ed. Todd, Janet. 73.

<sup>35</sup> Aphra Behn, The Dutch Lover, Women Critics 1660-1820 ed. Folger Collective on Early Women Critics, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995) 20.

Preface to The Lucky Chance she offers an even stronger assertion of a woman's right to write plays. Behn challenges the reader:

Any unprejudiced Person that knows not the Author, to read any of my Comedys and compare 'em with others of this Age, and if they find one Word that can offend the chastest Ear, I will submit to all their peevish Cavills; but Right or Wrong they must be Criminal because a woman's.<sup>36</sup>

It is claimed that, like to Cavendish who was the only female writer to publish extensively before her, Behn became a "mental hermaphrodite, feminine in her commerce and in the prejudices felt against her, and masculine in her involvement in high culture and intellectual art."<sup>37</sup> Her preoccupation with her authorship is combined with her demanding status irrespective of sex:

had the Plays I have writ come forth under any Mans Name, and never known to have been mine; I appeal to all unbyast judges of Sense, if they had not said that Person had made as many good Comedies, as any one Man that has writ in our Age; but a Devil on't the Woman damns the Poet... All I ask, is the priviledge for my Masculine Part the Poet in me... to tread in those successful Paths my Predecessors have so long thriv'd in ... I am not content to write for a Third day only. I value Fame as much as if I had been born a Hero; and if you rob me of that, I can retire from the ungrateful World and scorn its fickle Favours.<sup>38</sup>

Behn wants to be part of the intellectual elite on equal terms. She is conscious of the arbitrariness of gender roles.

---

<sup>36</sup> Aphra Behn, *Preface, The Lucky Chance* in *The Works* 185.

<sup>37</sup> Janet Todd, *General Introduction, The Works of Aphra Behn*. xxix.

<sup>38</sup> Aphra Behn, *Preface to The Lucky Chance* 186-187.

Behn explores the social construction of gender and affirms woman's right to self-determination using the plot of departure. Her early *Commedia dell'Arte* farce The Emperor of the Moon, for instance, presents a character, a Neapolitan philosopher Dr. Baliardo, removed by his fancy from his earthly domicile to the Moon. The action takes place in the first world but an alternate world's rules are in operation. It is a reversal of a typical voyage. Dr. Baliardo refuses to agree to his daughter Elaria and Don Cinthio's union because he does not believe that the young woman was made for a terrestrial man. Elaria's predicament is stated upon her first appearance:

A curse upon that faithless Maid,  
Who first her Sex's Liberty betray'd;  
Born free as Man to Love and Range,  
Till nobler Nature did to Custom change,  
Custom, that dull excuse for Fools,  
Who think all virtue consist in Rules."

Though Elaria's freedom is denied her by cultural restraints, her feelings "cannot be confined to slavery" long. Ironically, although Dr. Baliardo sees most wondrous things on the Moon using his twenty foot telescope, he is oblivious to things happening in his own house. It is a variation of a Renaissance trope - the most usual form is an astronomer who is so engrossed in the stars that he does not see his wife is having an affair. Determined to achieve

---

<sup>39</sup> Aphra Behn, The Emperor of the Moon in The Works of Aphra Behn, ed. Montague Summers (Benjamin Bloom: New York, 1967) 396.

their goal, the lovers exploit Dr. Baliardo's weakness - his deep belief in the existence of a superior society on the Moon based on his reading of Lucian's Icaromenippus (Dialog of a Lofty Traveller) and Francis Godwin's The Man in the Moone. They write and stage a play entitled The World in the Moon to cast him in a role that will carry the desired pronouncements. He does not know he is a character in a play-within-a-play and the lunar travellers are his adversaries. The typical Restoration drama game of secretly exchanged *billets doux* and mistaken identities takes on the shape of an imaginary intervention of lunar travellers. Like Sigismundo in Calderon's La vida es sueño where reality and dream are blended, Baliardo struggles to understand the difference between fact and appearance. The final scene is a pageant in which the whole Zodiac descends in the presence of Galileo and Kepler and the lunar court. Baliardo cannot resist such an alternative reality and consents easily to the suitors' demands therefore restoring Elaria's "natural right" to determine her life.

A departure is a central theme in A Voyage to the Island of Love<sup>40</sup> published in 1684. The poem actually re-

---

<sup>40</sup> The play is a paraphrase from the French Le Voyage de l'Isle d'Amour (1663) by Paul Tallemant, a text derived from Madéleine de Scudéry Clélie. Most of Behn's plots are borrowed and reworked according to her own design. She sometimes misleadingly claimed an originality of plots to fend off accusations of plagiarism. Anne Bradstreet complained of a similar problem in the Prolog to The Tenth Muse that if a woman writer did anything well "They'l say its stolne, or else, it was by chance." Mary Astell concluded in Reflections

works the theme of romance and romantic love from Paul Tallemant's story based in turn on Madeleine de Scudéry's mega-novel Clélie, histoire romaine of 1654-60, including the celebrated *Carte de Tendre*<sup>41</sup>, an allegorical map of love. Allegorical topographies of spiritual struggle were abundant in romance literature, in Tasso, Spencer or Bunyan, for instance, but Scudéry's originality is in that she created a literal map for a literary convention. Whereas for Scudéry the map represents social and national concerns, for Tallemant it is mainly a story of male seduction. Behn changes his version in ways that make one think of a critical revision rather than a translation. She lengthens Tallemant's story substantially by creating a female-controlled plot, delaying its conclusion, with the time for a leisurely exploration of the map of courtship.

In the poem, Lysander tells Lysidas the story of his sudden passion for Aminta who tests his feelings before she

---

Upon Marriage: "The world will hardly allow a Woman to say anything well, unless as she borrows it from Men, or is assisted by them."

<sup>41</sup> Its principal purpose was to invest the relationship between the sexes with a new dignity, by defining the topography of the 'land of tenderness' and advising men how to best approach the difficult route which leads from *Nouvelle Amitié* to the town of *Tendre sur Reconnaissance*. It was based on a loosely drawn map of France. The lover had to proceed from south to north to win his mistress's affection by a series of carefully regulated moves which take him through provincial towns from *Complaisance*, *Soumission*, *Petits Soins*, *Assiduité* and *Empressement* to *Tendresse*, *Obéissance* and *Constante Amitié*. The principal dangers for any who dare to try to circumvent this arduous journey lie in the bordering seas and mountains. (The Bloomsbury Guide to Women's Literature, 1992)

reciprocates his. The site is an island where topography is marked by such points as Love with Prudence guarding its access, Respect, Inquietude, the Dream, the City of Hope beyond the River of Pretension, the City of Discretion "where the beloved Aminta lives," etc. Aminta has an opportunity to articulate her feelings, however. She speaks to Lysander out of pity, and writes him when she is with another man before she accepts him. Having gained the City of Love, Lysander suddenly loses his masculine powers "between her arms" and angers Aminta, for she does not want to prolong the game of love any more. Janet Todd observes that in Behn's plays male impotence terminates "high-flown romantic sexuality" with "yawns interrupting romance."<sup>42</sup> Behn ironically twists the convention of pastoral love, not unusual in Restoration and libertine literatures. It is an interesting possibility of an alternative ending to romance. Eventually Lysander "passess away" with pleasure and Aminta dies, at which the narrative reestablishes a patriarchal order.

While Behn's Oroonoko or The Royal Slave is set in this world, it is a portion of the world as remote as Cavendish's Blazing World - Surinam in South America. This departure also serves to critique the pliers of binary thinking and enable an act of textual self-creation. The narrating 'I' of the story, a female writer and a traveller from England,

---

<sup>42</sup> Janet Todd, The Sign of Angellica. Women, Writing and Fiction 1660-1800 (London: Virago P, 1989) 78.

asserts the factual truth of her account in which a black slave is the main hero:

I Do not pretend, in giving you the History of this *Royal Slave*, to entertain my Reader with Adventures of a feign'd Hero, whose Life and Fortunes Fancy may manage at the Poet's pleasure; nor in relating the Truth, design to adorn it with any Accidents, but such as arrived in earnest to him.<sup>43</sup>

She claims the stories to be true, since she says "I was myself an Eye-witness to a great part of what you will find here set down; and what I cou'd not be Witness of, I received from the Mouth of the chief Actor in this History." (1) She does not add any episodes to embellish the story but selects some of the many events from Oroonoko's account. She admits editing Oroonoko's tale within the frame of her own story to fit the needs of her audience: "a thousand little accidents ... might prove tedious and heavy to my Reader." Her point of view, her knowledge of the events and her ability to write take precedence over the actual points of attention of the text.

Although the narrator inscribes herself as a reporter faithful to reality, her account combines romance themes with narrative verisimilitude as in the scene of Oroonoko's brave killing of a tiger that does not die from seven bullets through the heart. It also freely mixes African and Middle-Eastern cultures. These facts point to a fictitious

---

<sup>43</sup> Aphra Behn, Oroonoko or the Royal Slave (New York: W.W.Norton, 1973) 1. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

character of the narrative. The narrator maintains the position of a reporter of events even when she tells of the hero's mythical encounters and supernatural deeds. It reflects a general characteristic of prose narratives through the eighteenth century to claim to be true stories.

Whereas the realities of Cavendish's Blazing World are written in the context of a fantastic departure into an alternative world, in Behn's work an alternative context is provided by colonialism and anthropological exotica: native Americans and black slaves. She observes the slave trade with disdain. In her text, she actually reevaluates patriarchal postulates of racial hierarchies and revises the syntax of colonial relations.

Oroonoko, the black prince from Coramantien<sup>44</sup> and the main hero of the novel, is discovered and observed by the narrator who sees his cultured demeanor with amazement. Behn's creation of a black prince is an attempt at representing Africans as equals in a time when such a depiction was completely unique. Oroonoko and his beloved Imoinda often resemble well bred Europeans, a perfect courtier and a lady. His education and ability to speak French and English are impressive to the narrator, who appreciates English education and civility:

---

<sup>44</sup> Coramantien or Coromantyn was the name given in the New World to ethnic groups like the Ashanti, who came from the African Gold Coast, now Ghana. These slaves had a reputation for being very proud and rebellious.

He had heard of and admired the Romans: He had heard of the late Civil Wars in England, and the deplorable death of our great Monarch; and wou'd discourse of it with all the Sense and Abhorrence of the Injustice imaginable.(...) He had nothing of Barbarity in his Nature, but in all Points he address'd himself as if his education had been in some *European Court*.(7)

Oroonoko is not a noble savage in Rousseau's sense of the term. According to Rousseau only an uncorrupted savage is in possession of real virtue.

First the narrator gives Oroonoko a history - she describes his life in "the African court" where he spends time studying with a French tutor, and later his spartan life at military camps as a general. He is "noble" by virtue of education and cultural refinement; "he took delight in the White Nations; and, above all, Men of Parts Wit." Ironically, he is made a defender of the English monarchy and a proponent of a tradition that does not grant him humanity. Also his physical features are markedly European: "his nose was rising and *Roman*, instead of *African* and flat" and his hair was relaxed and grown down to his shoulders. At the same time, he is very black and proud to belong to his people. These incongruencies are some of the signs of how the narrator oscillates between granting other cultures integrity and positing European superiority in an effort to depict a convincing hero.

Oroonoko is said to be the first major abolitionist tract in English. Its narrator strongly denounces black slavery. Unlike many other texts of savagery and redemption,

it deals with a black African who is treated by slave traders as a savage although he is not savage by European standards. The narrator juxtaposes the mischief of the corrupted whites who trade in people and Oroonoko's infallible sense of honor. He is captured in a violation of hospitality - invited to a ship as an unsuspecting guest of honor and chained.

...the Captain, who had well laid his Design before, gave the Word, and seiz'd on all His guests; they clapping great Irons suddenly on the Prince... The same Treachery was us'd to all the rest; and all in an instant, in several places of the Ship, were lash'd fast in Irons and betrayed to Slavery.(33)

Lead off the slave ship in chains,

he only beheld the Captain with a Look all fierce and disdainful, upbraiding him with Blushes on his guilty Cheeks, he only cry'd in passing over the side of the Ship; *Farewel, Sir, 'tis worth my Sufferings, to gain so true a Knowledge both of you and of your Gods by whom you swear.*(37)

Somewhat belatedly disenchanted with the English, Oroonoko wields such a presence that can make a slave trader blush. Even other whites call it "perfidy." Deprived of his magnificent garb

he had no less Admirers than when he had his dazzling Habit on: The Royal Youth appear'd in spite of the Slave ... his Eyes insensibly commanded respect, and his Behavior insinuated it into every soul."(39)

Amazingly insightful for her time, the narrator perceives the conditions of slavery as uncivilized and unjust. When the narrator meets Oroonoko, his body already has marks from flogging and is therefore the site of violence. The contradiction between his demeanor and physicality is reflected in

the unease of the narrative which sometimes slips from praise to abjection of his blackness. The stories heard and seen by the narrator contradict each other. The black slave's body is inscribed with a history of abuse and pain, which diverts the gaze of the narrator whose focus is often the eyes of her subject. Never accepting being a captive and slave, Oroonoko organizes a failed slave uprising to lead his people back to Africa.

The narrator struggles to combine blackness with western freedom, individuality and cultural mores. In this unstable process,<sup>45</sup> Behn's narrator poses vital questions such as whether human nobility is a result of natural predispositions or education, whether Western civilization is uniquely noble and how a society guided by Machiavellian principles can claim superiority over others. All these questions underlie the image of the inquisitive narrator, who is capable of such insights.

The narrator's gaze is mainly directed at slavery and African culture in the New World but she also looks and writes (about) the countryside with her "Female Pen." She foregrounds the scene of her exploration with a detailed description of birds and plants and other rarities in Surinam. She includes a description of Native Americans' life in

---

<sup>45</sup> It is sometimes argued that Behn's work ultimately argues for maintaining the institution of slavery as in Susan Z. Andrade in "White Skin, Black Masks: Colonialism and the Sexual Politics of *Oroonoko*" in *Cultural Critique* vol.27, 1994.

harmony with nature and with the English colonizers with whom they trade. (The Dutch are depicted as ruthless towards Native Americans, however.)

And these People represented to me an absolute *Idea* of the first State of Innocence, before *Man* knew how to sin... simple Nature is the most inoffensive and virtuous Mistress. 'Tis she alone, if she were permitted, that better instructs the World, than all the Inventions of Man ... Religion... Laws..."(3)

Her ideal belief in purity of 'natural people' is anachronistically reminiscent of Rousseau.

By assuming an eye-witness perspective of the represented world, the narrator validates the verisimilitude of her narrative. She is free to make her own decisions, since her father, the male protector, conveniently dies during her sea voyage from England to Surinam. She ventures out to the jungle and describes her adventures and observations of the colorful fauna and flora of South America. She also undertakes trips to Native American villages populated by people who see whites for the first time.

[they] came swarming out, ...they touch'd us, laying their hands upon all the features of our Faces, feeling our Breasts and Arms, taking up one Petticoat, then wondering to see another; admiring our Shoes and Stockings, but more our Garters, which we gave them.(55)

Not offended by their desire to examine her closely, she resolves to study these natives' lives and language.

The narrator of Oroonoko explains not without irony that part of the tragic fate of the great hero is that he will not be adequately remembered by history because there was only a female writer to hear and record his story.

Mr. Trefry [a slave owner] gave Oroonoko that [name] of Cæsar; which Name will live in that Country as long as that glorious one of the great Roman: for 'tis most evident he wanted no part of the personal Courage of that Cæsar, and acted things as memorable, had they been done in some part of the World replenished with People and Historians, that might have given him his due. But his Misfortune was, to fall in an obscure World, that afforded only a Female Pen to celebrate his Fame. (40)

Behn frequently returns to the question of writing women.

No creolization being possible in seventeenth-century England, there is no future for Oroonoko who has to remain where he was found - in a remote colony. The novel immobilizes the object in a spectacular tableau of dismemberment. Finally, nature and exoticism overcome Oroonoko's western culture. Sympathetic to anti-slavery sentiments, the novel contributed to the abolitionist movement by creating the first well-rounded character of a noble and heroic black slave in English.

Behn's novel does not aspire to philosophical discourse as Cavendish's does, yet it situates itself close to Montaigne and Rousseau in its interest in the ways in which Western civilization affects individuals and the effect of one culture upon another. Similarly to Cavendish's self-referentially called authoress "Margaret, the Duchess", the narrator of Behn's Oroonoko is implied to be "Aphra Behn." None of the texts necessarily represents the narrating self as auto-biographical. These are textual acts of self-creation, in which both writers get involved in the issues of their own otherness as women, their creative instincts and

desire to be recognized as authors equal among their male contemporaries. They both use *meiosis* in their respective novels in an effort to gain the readers' sympathy by raising their sex and limited access to learning. Deprived of a legitimate space in seventeenth century English literary market, they undertake extraordinary travels into the worlds of their own. The female authors write (themselves) under their proper names, a rare and brave act in a time when being a writing and publishing woman meant illegitimacy.

## III

## Cultural Narratives of Gender and Race - Meeting of Cultures

*...criticism is worldly  
and in the world so long  
as it opposes monocen-  
trism, a concept I under-  
stand as working in con-  
junction with ethno-  
centrism, which licenses  
a culture to cloak itself  
in the particular author-  
ity of certain values  
over others.*

*Edward Said*

The topos of exotic otherness of a native American or black heroine in women's writing of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century derives partly from intense colonial activity and from the women writers' disadvantaged social position. The foreign heroine's struggle with the language and expression in writing metaphorically reflects women writers' plight. The exotic heroine becomes a vehicle for cultural criticism. It is also a disguise for the alternate self. Bound by different obligations and faiths, and therefore freer to express analytical comments about the home culture of the female writer, non-European women can depart from the confinement of plausible plots more easily. For as much as literature is expected to "reinscribe received ideas about the representation of life in art", a woman writing on what is not a part of a "doxa of

sociabilities"<sup>46</sup> is not credible.

Departing from the maxim by bringing in a heroine of color is a shared ploy of the women writers in the early modern works to be discussed. Women writers utilize the plot of departure to an exotic culture to alter the reader's expectations and make their cultural criticism credible and therefore acceptable. An exotic context and a mixed ethnic background create a mental geography which facilitates identification of the represented or "dramatized" narrator as the other who validates what is narrated according to different rules. The theme of a pagan or half pagan woman appears both in Françoise de Graffigny's Lettres d'une Péruvienne (1747) in *ancien régime* France, in Unca Eliza Winkfield's The Female American (1767) in England, and in Claire de Duras' Ourika (1823) in post-revolutionary France. The different sociolects within which all three works are situated allow their respective heroines different solutions to their status of being exotic.

The eighteenth century naturally suggested an exploration of the idea of the other because of heavy colonial activity. Montesquieu, one of the most prominent travellers of the time, questioned in Lettres persanes what it might mean to be Persian. The works discussed here question what it means to be "woman and other," black or native American

---

<sup>46</sup> Nancy Miller, "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction," The New Feminist Criticism ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Columbia UP, 1985) 340.

in white European culture. The exotic heroines' social estrangement corresponds to that of a writing woman who is marginalized as a woman and author.

The foreign woman's introduction to society represents a young woman's *début* and her alienation and vulnerability. Casting a naive female character in a complex network of social contracts and noting her inability to understand their inconsistent logic allows the writers dramatically to question that logic. Interestingly, those heroines are spared the plot of seduction as they are accompanied by honorable protectors who in turn shield them from dangers and teach them how to understand the ways of the society and proper behavior. Although their identity is considered in terms of their usefulness for social roles,<sup>47</sup> the texts written or told by those heroines defy the inevitability of such an approach.

The female protagonists' acquisition of language and culture, and their resulting insight form an important element of the design. Women's literacy being so low, it was an important point of departure in a critique of the society, a literary comment on social reality. Whether women experienced the Enlightenment still remains to be exa-

---

<sup>47</sup> Julia Douthwaite, Exotic Women: Literary Heroines and Cultural Strategies in Ancien Régime France (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania UP, 1992) 16.

mined.<sup>48</sup> The exotic heroines make great efforts to master a foreign language and to write down their story. Such mastery of the language and an ability to write their story is now referred to by Hélène Cixous' term of "coming to writing," or *venue à l'écriture*.<sup>49</sup> Ourika is an exception. She does not find a means to textualize her story and has to die. Creative writing is the only door of escape from the heroine's plot.

Writing the self as the other has raised many questions. A metaphorically useful dislocation of the narrating "I" to the colonies is an extension of the colonial enterprise. However honest, the attempts at creating an exotic other may be perceived as objectifications of the other. The contemporary critical approaches to colonial discourse would situate those writers in colonialist discourse as intellectual colonialism. Yet eighteenth century orientalism makes women doubly other, female and exotic. Monique Wittig sees the roots of women's marginalization in heterosexuality understood as a social contract, a combination of ruler and ruled which has become a paradigm for all hierarchical relations since Aristotle.

The perennality of the sexes and the perennality of slaves and masters proceed from the same belief. And as

---

<sup>48</sup> Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" Becoming Visible: Women in European History ed. Renate Brithenthal and Claudia Kanz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977).

<sup>49</sup> Hélène Cixous, Madelaine Gagnon and Annie Leclerc, La Venue à l'écriture (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1977).

there are no slaves without masters, there are no women without men... The category of sex is the political category that founds society as heterosexual... The category of sex works specifically, as "black" does, through an operation of reduction, by taking the part for the whole, a part (color, sex) through which the whole human being has to pass as through a screen.<sup>50</sup>

The parallel metonymic positioning of femaleness and blackness, she suggests, does not create a contract; it stays beyond the main paradigm of power relations. Yet, although women writers of travel narratives were part of a colonialist enterprise, their own position as marginalized led them to examine the legitimacy of heterosexuality and family. Writers such as Graffigny, Lafayette and Charrière subvert and refuse this paradigm. Colonialism itself is also questioned by Graffigny, Duras and Winkfield, although obviously they were not yet alerted to the fallacies of anthropology, inhibiting cultural predispositions of language in describing other cultures, and limitations of the interpretive tools we use in describing them.

Nancy Miller argues that there is a need to revise the history of eighteenth century France. To question why the very women's writing that actually created the genre of the novel became marginalized, one has to look at the gender arrangements, compulsory heterosexuality (Wittig's "heterosexual contract"). Miller argues that "*parler-femme*," "speaking as woman" had been staged as a man's interrogation

---

<sup>50</sup> Monique Wittig, "On the Social Contract," The Straight Mind and Other Essays (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992) 42-44.

in the eighteenth century within the framework of a "persistent and unexamined assumption of whose pleasure and knowledge are at stake in a fiction or history of sexuality. ... Foucault's fable turned into history remains a man's story."

She further argues that

What desire means to women themselves, is the great question of female-authored novels in *ancien régime* France, even if posed from the place of the second sex to which they have been assigned. In these novels, women are the subjects of sexual knowledge and the history of their alterity is part of the story they have to tell. It's also what they've been reading.... Graffigny published the slim volume of Lettres d'une Péruvienne in which the emblem of the heroine's subjectivity is the Inca *quipu*, which Graffigny translates into an instrument of cultural mastery - her magic ring - that allows her to write her way out of the predictable meanders of sexual plot I've called "a heroine's plot."<sup>51</sup>

Writing women managed to resist the libertine tradition objectifying them and trivializing their experience. It is one of the asymmetries underlying the competing narratives of sex and gender in the eighteenth century.

The female writer's revisionary battle takes place against the male reading of the world and his reading of her. To the extent that the eighteenth century treated the novel as a marginal genre, it was a vehicle for subversive ideas; the use of "oriental" heroes or found memoirs, allowed the writer to avoid the censors but manage to incite

---

<sup>51</sup> Nancy Miller, French Dressing (New York: Routledge, 1995) 5-7.

the readers.<sup>52</sup> Graffigny admits her intertextuality by referring to Montesquieu's Lettres persanes in an introduction to her novel:

... toujours prévenus en notre faveur, nous n'accordons du mérite aux autres nations qu'autant que leur mœurs imitent les nôtres, que leur langue se rapproche de notre idiome. Comment peut-on être Persan?<sup>53</sup>

Yet Graffigny's vision of French society departs from Montesquieu's. In the terms of Adrienne Rich, "re-vision, the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction - is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival."<sup>54</sup> "Reading in pairs" of Lettres persanes and Lettres d'une Péruvienne revises the plot of female victimization vis-à-vis a dominant order.

The years 1670-1784 were a tempestuous moment in French history, when the very cornerstones of the *ancien régime* - the monarchy, catholicism and patriarchy - were undergoing a crisis of legitimacy. One might read the exotic woman's intrusion on the norm as a literary means of representing the emergence of this new, unpredictable element of (non) belief in French thought. The author's treatment of the Other can thus be seen as a localized response to the conflicts dividing *ancien régime* society.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Les lettres persanes was followed by Les lettres juives 1736-38, Lettres d'une Péruvienne 1847 and L'espion chinois 1752, Lettres écrites de Lausanne 1785, etc.

<sup>53</sup> Bernard Bray and Isabelle Landy-Houillon, Avertissement, Lettres d'une Péruvienne by Françoise de Graffigny, (Paris: Flammarion, 1983) 249.

<sup>54</sup> Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing As Revision," Norton Anthology of Literature by Women eds. Gilbert and Gubar (New York: Norton, 1985) 2045.

<sup>55</sup> Julia Douthwaite, Exotic Women 18.

Lettres d'une Péruvienne met with a great success for thirty years after its publication but was excluded from the nineteenth century canon. It has aroused much interest in this century for its pointed cultural criticism and its other subversive qualities. The Peruvian woman, Zilia, is positioned outside French culture but becomes an amazingly skillful learner and practitioner of the discourse of the Enlightenment and an enlightened critic of that culture. In her letters to Aza, the lover she was forced to leave behind, she delivers the most eloquent and thoughtful social satire on French culture, women's education and their role as object in the family.

Graffigny's heroine criticizes French culture in such a bold way through the French language and the contact with the culture. Initially, the novel refers to the tradition of Lettres portugaises, the first epistolary novel of the kind which was a well-established tradition by the mid-eighteenth century. She first laments the forced separation from her lover in conventional terms and considers suicide, a common solution of many other heroines in literature of her time.<sup>56</sup> Yet, being conscious of the conventionality of such an ending for women where weakness is the main principle for female heroinism, she chooses to depart from that tradition. As she is learning French and the culture, her tone changes

---

<sup>56</sup> Joan DeJean, *Introduction, Lettres d'une Péruvienne* by Françoise de Graffigny (New York: MLA, 1993) xi.

together with her awareness. She is *rendue à elle même* through the process of writing. Her voyage into exile is a journey of self-discovery and assertiveness. Although her beloved Aza disappointed her, she lives on. She departs from the available either/or closure to her story; she does not die or fade away in a confinement, nor does she get married. Therefore the ending is neither dysphoric or euphoric. She does not "have it all" and she will continue her textual life beyond the actual end of the story. Like the *Princesse de Clèves*, she rejects a suitor who could replace her lost lover and recreate the link in the chain of social exchange of women. Lettres d'une Péruvienne marks a departure from genre in its double intentionality. It is an epistolary novel and a philosophical tale at the same time, written by a self-reflective and modern heroine. Zilia's act to subvert the authority of the culture that she is situated in is a central theme of her writing.

Like Zilia, Unca from The Female American juxtaposes the supposed simplicity and honesty of a non-Western culture to bring out the problems prevalent in the culture observed. Both watch the difference between cultures with a sympathetic and keen eye in an attempt at favorable comparison. They use their characters to comment on cultural differences, Eurocentrism, recognition and the education of women from at least two perspectives.

Unca is a Native American and English female Robinson

Crusoe and narrator of her story who travels to and from Europe to Virginia, North America. Conscious of gender roles and their implications, she remarks that:

the lives of women being commonly domestic, the occurrences of them are generally pretty nearly of the same kind; whilst those of men, frequently more vagrant, subject them often to experience greater vicissitudes, many times wonderful. Though a woman, it has been my lot to have experienced much of the latter; for so wonderful, strange and uncommon have been the events of my life, that true history, perhaps, never recorded any that were more so.<sup>57</sup>

Here, in contrast to Lettres d'une Péruvienne, an Englishman finds himself among Native Americans. Saved from death by an Native American princess who is overcome with passion upon seeing him, he stays with the tribe and learns her language and culture. Eventually he produces an offspring who becomes the authoress of the memoir. In The Female American, Native American women are allowed to pursue passion as men do, practice martial arts and hunt. Due to complicated circumstances, Unca is orphaned at six and receives an education in England. Probably one of the uncommon events referred to by Unca was the fact that she learned together with her cousins all of whom, girls and boys, received the same instruction. Unca combines the freedom allowed women by a Native American culture together with exceptionally progressive education in England. The Female American is also a rendering of a popular culture theme of a Native American

---

<sup>57</sup> Unca Eliza Winkfield, The Female American (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Literature House, 1970) 6. All subsequent page numbers refer to this edition.

queen Pocahontas and her progeny.

Ourika, on the other hand, is the first novel in French set in Europe with a black female protagonist. Ourika, an African woman, was rescued from slavery in childhood and raised happily in an aristocratic family until she discovers she has no prospects for a marriage and children in the white society. Her identity wavers greatly at her realization of prejudice. Claudine Herrmann reads it as a *roman à clef* in which Duras uses a black woman to represent her sensitive and misunderstood self.<sup>58</sup> The black heroine chooses a traditional Western woman's solution to the problem of feeling useless and alienated - the convent. It does not free her from her confused cultural and racial identity, however, and she dies of a progressive depression. She is situated in post-revolutionary France where women actually suffered a setback to their situation. Actually, they enjoyed a greater freedom before the Revolution - they had more access to education and a greater importance in politics. The narratee of her story is a male doctor and his cures cannot "heal her past." He gives her time and attention but does not engage in a dialogue with her. Sympathetic, he only watches her become emotional as her story unfolds. Ourika unsuccessfully attempts to rewrite her life. She cannot accept her alienation, yet she has no means to

---

<sup>58</sup> Claudine Herrmann, *Introduction*, Ourika by Claire de Duras (Paris: des femmes, 1979) 18.

either leave or disengage herself from her position. Her internal struggle continues until she dies. There is enough space for her racial difference in social life, however inequitable, and she participates in salon life successfully. It is, however, her unsuitability for the ultimate social contract, marriage, that makes her inadequate in her own eyes. She does not see her otherness as liberating her from the necessity to marry. Also her sociolect inscribes woman as an identity created by her status of either a daughter, wife or mother. As she is none of the above, she is excluded from participating in the signifying chain which would give her a meaning. In Nancy Miller's terms, this is a *dysphoric heroine's text* which ends in the heroine's death in the flower of her youth as she cannot have all in the "either/or closure within the conventional rhetoric of the sociolect."<sup>59</sup>

The novels discussed are all interesting attempts at remapping women's cultural origins. Whereas Ourika's journey has led her into confinement, Zilia's dislocation into exile has turned into a liberating experience. Whereas Ourika's roots cause her tragic demise, Zilia's background helps her deconstruct the French Enlightenment and is then forgotten. Unca performs a similar role in English. They integrate themselves into the tradition and ideology of

---

<sup>59</sup> Nancy Miller, The Heroine's Text (New York: Columbia UP, 1980) xi.

female travel narratives which subvert their own secondary status by focusing on the depiction of women's lives in the first person female narration. Ellen Moers calls the practice of female narrators in early fiction *heroinism*, "the telling of the woman's side of the love story in her own words."<sup>60</sup> Joan DeJean argues that early women's prose, in the form of letters,

succeeded in imposing, for nearly a century and a half, the archetypal image of the female literary style. This fiction, established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by epistolary writers inspired by the tradition's canonical text, Ovid's *Heroides*, promoted a formula whose success can only mean that contemporary readers found in it a convincing construction of gender: the equation of Woman in love with Woman seduced and abandoned. In this founding vision of *heroinism*, when Woman writes (...) it is always a tale of lamentation, the litany of woes of one forsaken addressed to the man who has left her behind.<sup>61</sup>

This being the framework for early female writing, both Graffigny's and Winkfield's heroines are placed outside this *heroinism*. Positioned differently, they talk about women's stories rather than tell "their side of the love story." They did not therefore create a genre. With the exception of Duras' *Ourika*, which conforms to the tradition of the either/or closure, these texts do not feature the traditional lamentation. It is therefore a departure from the Ovidian tradition. The refusal of closure in the novels discussed is

---

<sup>60</sup> Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985) 160.

<sup>61</sup> Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies. Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991) 79.

subversive of the tradition of not giving the female heroine a post-textual freedom. It is an anti-heroicism which twists the tradition.<sup>62</sup> They rewrite the cultural commonplace of the heroine's text. Although the Péruvienne does not renounce her passion for the unfaithful Aza, she has learned to affirm other of life's pleasures than romance:

Le plaisir d'être; ce plaisir oublié, ignoré même de tant d'aveugles humains; cette pensée si douce, ce bonheur si pur, je suis, je vis, j'existe, pourrait seul rendre heureux, si s'en souvenait, si l'on jouissait, si l'on en connaissait le prix..<sup>63</sup>

Zilia, like many of her contemporaries, departs from love and seeks long lasting friendship and controlled indifference instead.

Venez, Déterville, venez apprendre de moi à économiser les ressources de notre âme, et les bienfaits de la nature. Renoncez aux sentiments tumultueux, destructeurs imperceptibles de notre être; venez apprendre à connaître les plaisirs innocents et durables, venez en jouir avec moi... (168)

Zilia is spared the onslaught of potential seducers, although she has been exposed to dangers: Spanish soldiers abduct her on her wedding day, and take her on a ship which is then lost to the French who bring her to France. The gentle Déterville observes decorum and although he is madly

---

<sup>62</sup> Madeleine Scudéry's heroines also oppose this tradition. Clélie, for example, believes that men and women's contributions will be deemed equally valid by the posteriority. Joan DeJean calls Scudéry's heroicism *feminocentric heroic* in *Tender Geographies* 80.

<sup>63</sup> Françoise de Graffigny, *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* (New York: MLA, 1993) 168. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

in love with her, he makes no sexual advances. She can therefore sacrifice herself to other activities rather than defending her virtue as she is freed from the plot of seduction. Moreover, she does not allocate discursive space to any males in her letters. Those written to Aza using *quipu* are not sent for there is no opportunity for her to do so until she has completed a large body of writing. Half of the letters are in French, a language he doesn't know. The two letters addressed to Déterville are only written in response to his, but his letters are not included.

She eventually learns French and masters it sufficiently to be a proficient writer in a second language. She finds the alphabet and the phonetic production quite difficult as she is taught the rudiments of the language. She reflects that the process of writing helps her remember ideas in an order.(72) She enjoys learning so much that she would like to live alone to consecrate all her time to the study of French without distraction. She appreciates solitude and will finally choose to be alone rather than with her benefactor, Déterville, who wants to marry her. This ending was so difficult for the reading audiences to accept that many letters were sent to Graffigny pleading with her to alter the ending and marry them. Yet Graffigny preferred to let her live an unattached life.

Although Zilia only lives in the Temple of the Sun before being abducted, she is well educated as a princess.

She admits that Peruvian women do not have access to education and is grateful to prince Aza, her brother and fiance:

Je serai restée dans l'ignorance à laquelle mon sexe est condamné; mais ton âme, supérieure aux coutumes, ne les a regardées que comme des abus; tu en as franchi les barrières pour m'élever jusqu'à toi.

She learns French culture well and becomes a skillful analyst of it because she is a curious intellectual.

J'avais résolu de ne plus penser; mais comment ralentir le mouvement d'une âme ... que de si grands intérêts excitent à réfléchir? Je cherche des lumières avec une agitation qui me dévore, et je me trouve sans cesse dans la plus profonde obscurité.(48)

She turns away from the Inca Sun to the brilliant light of French culture. At first pleased to see and learn French culture, she soon starts noticing its underlying paradoxes and discontinuities. When she discovers that their inventions she calls prodigies "trompe(nt) les yeux et le jugement," (118) she delivers an outspoken critique of French society which worships the superfluous:

(...) les Français ont choisi le superflu pour l'objet de leur culte... le superflu a corrompu leur raison, leur coeur et leur esprit; qu'il a établi des richesses chimériques sur les ruines du nécessaire; qu'il a substitué une politesse superficielle aux bonnes moeurs, et qu'il remplace le bon sens et la raison par le faux brillant de l'esprit (119) ... leur légèreté exclut presque toujours le raisonnement. (120)

Alienated by her newly acquired knowledge, Zilia amuses herself with her own thoughts. She is surprised that "avec d'autant et de lumière qu'aucun autre nation, ils semblent ne pas apercevoir les contradictions choquantes que les étrangers remarquent en eux dès la première vue." (135) She

cannot agree with the treatment of women.

Graffigny herself knew that there was no fulfillment in marriage. She was physically abused by her husband and eventually separated from him after she learned the details of the precarious situation of women desiring to regain her freedom. Family support was not sufficient to remove her from her husband. Others' testimony proving the abuse was insufficient, too. Yet as the family's financial well-being was also threatened - the husband gambled, the system accorded her freedom. Zilia, an Inca princess, explains her observation of French women:

Et en effet, mon cher Aza, comment ne seraient-elles pas révoltées contre l'injustice des lois qui tolèrent l'impunité des hommes, poussée au même excès que leur autorité? Un mari, sans craindre aucune punition, peut avoir pour sa femme les manières les plus rebutantes, il peut dissiper en prodigalités aussi criminelles qu'excessives non seulement son bien, celui de ces enfants, mais même celui de la victime qu'il fait gémir presque dans l'indigence par une avarice pour ces dépenses honnêtes, qui s'allie très communément ici avec la prodigalité. Il est autorisé à punir rigoureusement l'apparence d'une légère infidélité en se livrant sans honte à toutes celles que le libertinage lui suggère. (...) Il semble qu'en France les liens du mariage ne soient réciproques qu'au moment de la célébration, et que dans la suite les femmes seules y doivent être assujetties. (144)

She delivers this exceptionally outspoken and powerful critique of women's precarious position, where the husband has almost total control of the wife and is not accountable for his behavior even if it is physical abuse. She knows that women are so vulnerable because they lack education. "... l'éducation qu'on leur donne est si opposée à la fin

qu'on se propose, qu'elle me paraît le chef-d'oeuvre de l'inconséquence française ... on les enferme dans une maison religieuse pour leur apprendre à vivre dans le monde." (138) She criticizes the fact that women are mainly taught to restrain their body movements and pretend confusion as a sign of good breeding. (139) The women Zilia remains with in the convent are so ignorant that her simplest questions cannot be answered. When she tries to share her observations with other women in the society, their inflexibility precludes communication. They are victims of the culture of the superfluous. They think she speaks Peruvian when she analyses and explicates French culture to them. (141) Although the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries mark an improvement in women's education thanks to the Catholic teaching orders, even the best educated women had problems with grammar, syntax and spelling and had to use men's help to prepare their texts for publication. Literacy and writing skills were therefore a major theme for female writers.<sup>64</sup> Zilia goes to impressive lengths in her negative observations of women's education, conventional behaviors and hypocrisy.

To strengthen her observations, Zilia often quotes Inca customs. Her country is illuminated by the Sun, a natural source of light which propagates good moral and cultural qualities. She is an anthropologist who studies the French and sees them through the prism of her culture and language.

---

<sup>64</sup> Douthwaite, Exotic Women 13.

Unlike Montesquieu whose Persians are Frenchmen in drag, Zilia consistently evaluates the French against Peruvian culture. Her favorite rhetorical figure is periphrasis. Encountering a multitude of new artifacts, she describes them and the effect they may produce. Seeing a mirror, "cette ingénieuse machine qui double les objets", she reflects on what it does to vision: "Ces prodiges troublent la raison, ils offusquent le jugement; que faut-il penser des habitants de ce pays? Faut-il le craindre, faut-il les aimer?" (50) She questions the validity of culture which is based on repeated images. Repetition, the implied companion of mimesis, blurs the truth, according to her. She tries to understand the culture in terms of truth which she identifies with reason. She knows that the age of reason is a fallacy in itself; it is actually based on the uncanny and the subjective.

Among the cultural differences, there is one that Zilia and her benefactor Déterville will not overcome. Déterville, an honorable French aristocrat in love, displays all the conventional signs of his affection but Zilia cannot read his system of signification. She misunderstands his changing moods, blushing, sighing, mumbling about honor and decency under his breath for some alarming disturbance.(57) When he declares love, she is shocked:

Comment cela se pourrait-il? ... Vous n'êtes point de ma nation; loin que vous m'ayez choisie pour votre épouse, le hasard seul nous a réunis, et ce n'est même que d'aujourd'hui que nous pouvons librement communi-

quez nos idées. Par quel raison auriez-vous pour moi les sentiments dont vous parlez?(96)

Zilia does not believe in coincidental romantic encounters that alter the order of things. According to her, he has no reason to have expectations of her. He is not of her nation or her family, either. Graffigny makes it clear to the readers that Incas did not believe in incest.

For as long as Zilia does not know French, she continues her emotional lament over losing Aza - a tradition well-established at the time. "Je rendrai immortelle l'histoire de notre amour et de notre bonheur... une peinture fidèle de nos actions et de nos sentiments."(19) She writes her story in *quipu*, colorful knots used by Incas to communicate ideas for as long as the supply of *quipu* lasts. Traditionally *quipu* do not serve as writing as such but are meant to record historical events. Using *quipu* to write a woman's story of love is a subversion of that tradition.<sup>65</sup> Zilia wants to learn French to "conserver la mémoire des principaux usages de cette nation singulière."(72) Isolated by her strangeness, Zilia struggles to understand: "tout m'est nouveau, tout interesse ma curiosité, et rien ne peut le satisfaire." The moment she runs out of *quipu* coincides with her thoughts of death. The chain of communication is then broken. She knows, however, that women in general tend to give in to weakness and she will defy that. Amazingly self-

---

<sup>65</sup> Nancy Miller, *Introduction, Lettres d'une Péruvienne* xviii.

conscious of being a female heroine functioning in a tradition, she will redefine heroinism.

Ma raison, anéantie par le désespoir, ne m'était plus d'aucun secours; ma vie ne me paraissait d'aucun prix ... Que le sang froid est cruel après la fureur ... nous ne trouvons que de la faiblesse pour principe de notre héroïsme, pour fruit que le repentir, et que le mépris pour la récompense. (42)

These thoughts mark a change in the text which gradually becomes more reflexive to turn into a philosophical tale in which Aza is mainly a rhetorical device. We learn that writing is her favorite occupation. The crisis that comes when the supply of *quipu* ends and breaks the chain of communication between Zilia and Aza represents discontinuities on other levels, too. She is now on her own, disconnected from her culture. "Cher Aza, il me semble que l'on nous sépare encore une fois... Je te perds, je te quitte, je ne te verrai plus." (77) By learning another language and culture, she abandons the one sided view of the world. She knows her strength now, since she has already overcome crises. She will learn the Latin alphabet and French, and abandon the past to live in the present as a new heroine. "Toutes les pensées n'étaient que des désirs, toutes mes réflexions que des projets, tous mes sentiments que des espérances." (78) The new and most significant discovery she makes is that writing gives meaning to her life. "Je me sens ranimer par cette tendre occupation. Rendue à moi-même, je dois recommencer à vivre." (78) A conscious decision maker, Zilia writes down her name in French therefore reasserting herself

as a writer in French.

Once she discovers the pleasure of reading and writing in French, she is interested to know the position of writers in society. The state of affairs does not please her.

"...ces hommes, sans contredit au-dessus des autres par la noblesse et utilité de leur travail, restent souvent sans récompense, et sont obligés, pour l'entretien de leur vie, de vendre leur pensées." (90) Graffigny, once freed from her own marriage, started writing to support herself. Zilia's interests reflect Graffigny's who undertook her own career as a writer after her separation in 1738 at age forty-four. Zilia's passion for reading and writing will be rewarded with a library of her own, a privileged space for reflection and writing. In this context, Graffigny continues the tradition of a feminist utopia where an educated woman enjoys the life of the intellect in seclusion from the world of men and without an ideal of a husband begun by Margaret Cavendish in The New World, Called the Blazing World.

It has been pointed out that Zilia is perhaps the first user of the word "class" in its modern sense.<sup>66</sup> She knows her strangeness alienates her. "Je n'ai ni or, ni terres, ni industrie, je fais nécessairement partie des citoyens de cette ville [Paris]." (85) The solution to this appears when the gold treasure, a gold Inca throne, is brought into the

---

<sup>66</sup> Joan DeJean, *Introduction, Lettres d'une Péruvienne* xiii.

picture. Déterville turns it into a house and a pension for her. She is exiled in France, since there is nothing in Peru for her to go back to after the Spaniards have destroyed her nation. Her beloved Aza, the addressee of her correspondence, has come to Europe and his heart has changed. The Spaniards separated them twice: first physically then culturally. Catholicism won't tolerate incest and they are brother and sister. Nonetheless, a house of her own and an independent life give her "une ivresse du joie." Once she discovers that she also has a library in her new abode, she wants to read all the books even before visiting the whole house.

(151)

One of the interesting aspects of Lettres d'une Péruvienne is its "primitivism" and treatment of nature. Zilia's peruvianism is also a reflection of a fashion for exotica, displayed by Voltaire and other figures. The Incas were idealized as more noble than savage.<sup>67</sup> When she writes about the cruelties of her captors (Letter I, III and V), when she juxtaposes the liberalities of the Inca king and the oppressiveness of the French king (XX), or when she compares the religious doctrines of the Incas and Catholics, she sounds like a daughter of Enlightenment. DeJean points out that she predates Rousseau in her treatment of nature.

Zilia, an intellectual heroine of the Enlightenment, is

---

<sup>67</sup> D.J. Adams, "The Lettres d'une Péruvienne: Nature and Propaganda," Forum for Modern Language Studies 2.4 (1992) 121.

invested with curiosity and intelligence and her contemporaries who, although blind to the sex and gender issues, considered her an innovator of the tradition of epistolary novel and the philosophical tale.<sup>68</sup> The ideas of the philosophers were disseminated mainly through essays, dialogues and encyclopedic writing. The importance of Graffigny's contribution became clear as the popularity of her novel continued to grow. As the male authored novel was mainly a vehicle for libertinism, the new genre was a legitimate form that addressed philosophical questions, conflating novel and philosophy more successfully than Montesquieu. Its popularity was rivaled only by La Nouvelle Héloïse.<sup>69</sup>

A skeptic, Graffigny's heroine resists closure: she won't marry Déterville, she won't give answers to the questions she poses. Graffigny was asked to do both by her contemporaries, as well as to put it in Zilia's mouth that social inequality was good for the country, but she did not agree. She remains skeptical; reforms do not interest her like Rousseau's Julie later. Graffigny's discourse is situated closer to Diderot's than to Rousseau's. In her time, Graffigny's success positioned her in the generic traditions rather than in gendered traditions. She was cited as the

---

<sup>68</sup> Janet Gurkin Altman, "A Woman's Place in the Enlightenment Sun," Romance Quarterly 38.3 (August 1991): 261.

<sup>69</sup> Janet Gurkin Altman, "Graffigny's Epistemology and the Emergence of the Third-World Ideology," Writing the Female Voice, ed. Elizabeth C. Goldsmith (Northeastern UP, 1989) 172-202.

peer of Montesquieu for the philosophical tale and of Richardson for the sentimental novel.

Lettres d'une Péruvienne is written in the present tense to collapse the gap between the event and narrative. The frequent apostrophe to Aza as well as frequent quotation of conversational exchanges allow Zilia to maintain the sense of his presence and the urgency of telling the story. The narration in Ourika, on the other hand, is more interpretive and distanced from the event. The events that led to Ourika's depression are revealed in retrospect.

With seemingly simple turns of the plot, Graffigny creates a powerful and coherent story with an atypical closure. Unca's adventures will be more complicated. Zilia is a successful "model of virtue" not only as a woman who guarded her virtue, but as a model of assertiveness and freedom. The editor's *Preface* informs us that having gained independence and the luxury of leisure, Zilia translated the letters written in quipu into French and deposited the whole collection with Déterville who passed it to the editor.

Ourika, another exotic heroine, has to overcome the codes of gender and race and the conventions of genre in a different political climate. Her task is much harder, however. A freed slave from Senegal, her otherness isolates her so completely that she has no means available. Unlike in the case of Zilia, self-knowledge is destructive to her, since it renders her melancholic and impotent. Ourika was pub-

lished eighteen years after 1815 which marked the end of Napoleon's Empire, well into the restoration of the Bourbons. It is one of the few works that describe the political situation under Napoleon, as this subject matter was consistently on the censor's list. Graffigny even describes the years of The Terror. More importantly, it is written from the perspective of women's hope for equal rights. That hope rose and fell quickly as the Revolution did not deliver its promise. Ourika's hope for change in her status reflects a larger abolitionist debate over reforming *le Code Noir*.<sup>70</sup> Needless to say, all the laws were only tightened over time. Napoleon's *politique antillaise* further pathologized and persecuted interracial relations between whites and blacks until slavery was finally abolished in the French colonies in 1848.

By the time *Ourika* is published, the solitary hero, sick and fading away due to the *mal du siècle*<sup>71</sup> is a character well known from the novels such as Sophie Gay's

---

<sup>70</sup> Louis Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987). The Black code was first drafted in 1615 to reinforce the earlier law of expatriating Jews from French islands. Subsequently, it was expanded to include black slaves by regulating christianization and labor, reproduction and the like. It accommodated growing fears of the possibility of black blood contaminating French blood in view of the supposedly rapid growth of the number of black slaves in France. In fact, there were about five thousand black people in France at the time of the Revolution.

<sup>71</sup> Margaret Waller, *The Male Malady. Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1993)

Anatole or Chateaubriand's René.<sup>72</sup> Those heroes suffer from isolation and a melancholy that affect them physically. Possibly due to the crisis of paternal order caused by the decapitation of the king and the Revolution, the *mal du siècle* literature reflects an anxiety of male disempowerment. DeJean points out that the later nineteenth century French novel is the novel of the father, based on linearity of time and the chronology of generations.<sup>73</sup> The beginning of the nineteenth century malady being a commonplace, it seems to affect men more than women. Duras' Ourika and Sand's Lélia are exceptions. Like other early romantic heroes, Ourika is financially privileged, highly intelligent and remarkably sensitive, but remains a social outcast who gives voice to profound social isolation. Unlike those other heroes who shrink away from women and society, she cannot function in the world on its own terms because of her race and gender; she has to retreat from society. René had no place in his father's home, he couldn't bring himself to fulfill the promise made to a woman and live by the other rules imposed by society. Ourika's problem is not her unwillingness: she has eagerly let the environment totally

---

<sup>72</sup> Robert Tilton observes in Pocahontas. The Evolution of an American Narrative (New York: Columbia UP, 1994) that there is an influence of the American Pocahontas literary tradition on Chateaubriand's Réne and Atala. Several versions of it were translated into French by the mid-eighteenth century, including Unca Eliza Winkfield's The Female American.

<sup>73</sup> Joan DeJean, "Stael's Corinne: The Novel's Other Dilemma," Stanford French Review 11 (Spring 1989): 42-51.

socialize her like aristocratic women. Yet she was brought away from her home and placed in an environment whose rules she cannot follow. To her dismay, she learns that her blackness excludes her from the roles of daughter, mother and wife that all women are expected to play. Ourika's *mal du siècle*, however, is used to focus on the question of women's rights and racial prejudice. She departs from the tradition in which there is little or no space for issues of political and social questions. Ourika has been criticized for a depiction of "a white face, black mask" character. Yet it seems irrelevant here to discuss whether a white woman writer can approximate a black woman's experience because Duras' novel, seen in the context of the early nineteenth century is unquestionably a piece of abolitionist writing. Most importantly, like de Staël in Mirza, Duras elected to weave her novel on an actual event involving a black woman. Actually, Princess de Beauvau raised a black girl who was given into her custody as a "gift"<sup>74</sup> which inspired them both. Indeed the callous practice of bringing people as exotic souvenirs from trips to distant lands seems quite appalling today. In fact, Duras' Ourika is an interesting play on the earlier theme. Staël's narrator creates an unappealing black character. "Ses traits n'avoient aucun des défauts des hommes de sa couleur." His French is better than

---

<sup>74</sup> Richard Switzer, "Mme de Staël, Mme de Duras and the Question of Race," Kentucky Romance Quarterly 20 (1973): 303-316.

that of a Frenchman.<sup>75</sup> Duras' Ourika was raised in France and she does not have a behavior or language different from the environment, or any "awkward" features to be observed. The first edition of the novel was published anonymously to benefit a charitable institution. Whereas de Staël's novel rightly found its way into oblivion, Duras' is much more sensitive to the issue of race. Having seen slavery in Martinique where her mother came from may have given her an intimate understanding of it. Unlike de Staël, she draws a deep psychological portrait of a black woman against the backdrop of the Black Code, hopes for abolishment of slavery and equal rights.

Ourika, unfairly exiled from society, withdraws from the unwelcoming world to an Ursuline convent where a doctor is brought in to diagnose her illness and cure it. The doctor is sympathetic. Upon seeing Ourika clad in black at the convent, past a ruined graveyard, he thinks of her as yet another victim of the convent and his anticlerical feelings are awakened. He observes that her mind still lives but her body was destroyed. Alienated, she does not hope to be understood.

Les chagrins dont j'ai éprouvés ... doivent paraître si étranges, que j'ai toujours senti une grande répugnance à les confier: il n'y a point de juge des peines des autres, et les confidents sont presque toujours des accusateurs (...) [Mon chagrin] vous paraîtra déraison-

---

<sup>75</sup> Germaine de Staël, "Mirza," Oeuvres complètes de baronne de Stael publiées par son fils (Paris, 1820) 207.

nable.<sup>76</sup>

Ourika is "rescued from slavery and her life is saved again" when she is placed with Madame de B. At the same time, she is dislocated, separated from her people and parents who are never mentioned in the story. The word "mother" is cried out when Ourika realizes she herself can't be "mother" in French society. She strives to understand this fact. She knows the myth of Galatea which does not say whether she was given happiness as well as life. She learns that her blackness will ostracize her and prevent her from having a family, which throws her into despair, self-hatred and physical suffering. She perceives her own body as the obstacle and tries to cover it in order not to see it. She wears gloves and a big hat with a veil. She gradually avoids going outside, wears gloves all the time and dresses to cover her neck and arms. Although Ourika briefly considers going back to Senegal, she understands that she is too different from her people now and concludes that there is no return to any simpler or nobler state. She responds to Rousseau's notion of the noble savage and to the earlier orientalist depictions of the other. She thinks she is cut off from human race. She tries to talk to a priest at confession but "he never probes" into her unhappiness.

When Charles, her benefactress' grandson and the object

---

<sup>76</sup> Claire de Duras, *Ourika* (MLA, 1995) 5. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

of her secret love, goes away on a Grand Tour, the Revolution starts. Ourika hears the many political debates that it poses.

... je n'entendais parler tout le jour ... que des grands intérêts moraux et politiques que cette Révolution remua jusque dans leur source; ils se rattachaient à ce qui avait occupé les esprits supérieurs de tous les temps. Rien n'était plus capable d'étendre et de former mes idées, que le spectacle de cette arène où des hommes distingués remettaient en question tout ce qu'on avait pu croire jugé jusqu'alors. Ils approfondissaient tous les sujets, remontaient à l'origine de toutes les institutions, mais trop souvent pour tout ébranler et pour tout détruire... (18)

Having learned that no order of things is permanent, Ourika hopes to see how the Revolution will upset the social order and emancipate the blacks. Soon she becomes critical of the Revolution. Although it could have been useful, the people involved were small-minded and preoccupied with private interests only. She quickly deconstructs the idea of equality and fraternity, which she knows does not extend to her. This is one of the most amazing qualities of the novel.

Still identifying herself with the French more than "others like her", she denounces the massacres on Santo Domingo.

"Les massacres de Saint-Domingue me causèrent une douleur nouvelle et déchirante: jusqu'ici je m'étais affligée d'appartenir à une race proscrite; maintenant j'avais honte d'appartenir à une race de barbares et d'assassins." (20)

During the years of the Terror, Ourika is less preoccupied with depressing thoughts of her otherness as Mme de B.'s circle breaks up. In view of the execution of Louis XVI and

the general sense of fear, she identifies herself with the aristocracy.

Je me disais quelquefois, que moi, pauvre négresse, je tenais pourtant à toutes les âmes élevées, par le besoin de la justice que j'éprouvais en commun avec elles. (27)

Mme de B. cannot help Ourika overcome her difficulties, although she is incisive and critical. She is quick to debunk the inconsistencies of an old priest's argument.

Mme de B., dont l'esprit juste et lumineux faisait admirablement ressortir les absurdités du pauvre abbé, qui ne se fâchait jamais; elle jetait tout au travers de son ordre d'idées, de grands traits de bon sens que nous comparions aux grands coups d'épée de Roland ou de Charlemagne. (25)

Ourika neither confides in her, nor in Charles who is a childhood companion. She struggles alone and analyses her feeling in retrospective. "Il y a quelque chose humiliant à ne pas savoir se soumettre à la nécessité.(...) Mais qui peut dire ce que c'est que la raison? Est-elle la même pour tout le monde? Tous les coeurs ont-ils tous les mêmes besoins?" (27) She felt that not facing her problematic position was self-deception. "Comme les enfants, je fermais les yeux, et je croyais qu'on ne me voyait pas." Quite conscious of her own strengths and weaknesses, Ourika only has Mme de B. as a role model but she is unable to act upon her observations. Mme de B., a true aristocrat, has no desire or vision to change the *status quo*. As Ourika's sense of isolation deepens and she is less able to bear it, she even stops painting and singing, her favorite means of self-

expression. This creates a contrast with Zilia for whom writing constitutes her existence.

Religion, a common ornament of consolation, is not real consolation for Ourika. She chooses the convent only to be able to think every day about Charles and not being able to have a family. The burden will be too much, however, and she will die. After a longer monologue, she suddenly gives a real explanation. She voices the opinion of society only to take a turn and twist the meaning of her "reformation," which would be a satisfactory traditional closure to her story. She fights the convention until her own end, followed by the doctor's commentary that his science could not help her and that she died "avec les dernières feuilles d'automne."

Duras' Ourika is part of a trilogy together with Edouard and Olivier. The other novels also deal with social outcasts: Edouard belongs to a lower class than his beloved and cannot reveal his secret, and Olivier is impotent and therefore excluded from performing the male role as defined by his society. The common theme is that of an individual that finds her/himself in exile in her/his society, a romantic hero dilemma. All these heroes have a flaw that prevents them from full involvement in society, yet only Ourika's is undeniable and visible. Edouard will gracefully disappear and Olivier will fool even his closest friends. Ourika's incompatibility is undeniable, fully visible. Also outside

narrators corroborate Ourika's story. The doctor sees her physical state. Mme de B. has a conversation with Mme de... and they confirm the worst: Ourika has to be lonely in France because she is black. The novel is a commentary on how society views Ourika as well as how she views herself.

Ourika's love for Charles has the quality of an incest as they grew up in the same household like brother and sister. The theme of an incestuous relationship was common in the pre-romantic and romantic literature and it reflected a narcissistic sensibility.<sup>77</sup> This love is not reciprocal, however, as in the case of Zilia. Yet as it is prevented by racial discrimination as elaborated in the Black Code, it represents the ideology of an unforgiving society rather than being an accusation of Ourika's wrong-doing. Her love is after all a result of a happy childhood. When she fully realizes the extent and futility of this affection, her isolation is deepened in yet another dimension.

... l'isolement complet, réel, où je me trouvois pour la première fois de ma vie, me jeta dans un profond désespoir. Je voyois se réaliser cette situation que mon imagination s'étoit peinte tant de fois.(35)

Close to Charles' wedding, Madame de..., who verbalized racial prejudice for Ourika earlier, now unveils Ourika's true feelings to her:

... tous vos regrets, toutes vos douleurs ne viennent que d'une passion malheureuse, d'une passion insensée; et si vous n'étiez pas folle d'amour pour Charles, vous

---

<sup>77</sup> Grant Crichfield, Three Novels of Madame de Duras: Ourika, Edouard, Olivier (The Hague: Mouton, 1975) 8.

prendriez fort bien votre parti d'être négresse. (41) Ourika is shocked at hearing this; it is unclear, however, whether she is more impressed by the revelation about her love or by the suggestion that she should accept a humiliating position in society. She will decide to choose the convent, an extension of aristocratic life. She is in many ways a romantic heroine: a victim of an unjust and immutable order, she sees herself outside society. Knowing she cannot change her situation, like René, for example, she suffers and her life is an unbearable burden. Like other romantic figures, she will not accept anything less than she feels she deserves.

\*

Like Zilia and Ourika, the heroine of The Female American, Unca Eliza, is an exotic heroine and a traveler. A brave heroine, she writes her story herself as she is a proficient reader and writer in English. She knows that memory is not as reliable as text, her notes "enabled me [Unca] to render the following relation more regular and complete than otherwise it could have been, had I been obliged to trust only to the power of recollection." (2) She conceives of herself as "female American," thus showing her awareness of a growing national identity and her identity as a woman. Her story partly takes place in Virginia where she is born and where she eventually returns to live, partly in England where she stays with the English side of the family

and gets a thorough education and on a deserted island which turns out not to be deserted at all. Her long itinerary exposes her to various situations and forces her to make discoveries and adjustments. Raised in two cultures, she maintains her skills as a Native woman, she knows two languages and wears a traditional garb. She is appealing to our sensibilities as a heroine who preserves the best of both worlds. Like Zilia, Ourika and many other heroines in their convention, Unca survives being kidnapped. There is nobody to save her, however. The captain, who blackmails her to have her marry his son upon arrival in England, discards her on a desert island when she ardently refuses to comply. She will eventually design a way out of the banishment herself and return to live with the natives.

Not as apparently critical of social life in England as Zilia's or Ourika's stories, The Female American nonetheless offers interesting alternatives to traditional plots about women and colonialism in its variation of the mainstream genre. Certainly the most powerful critique it offers is that of the British colonization of America.

Unca Eliza belongs to the literary progeny of Pocahontas. She is the daughter of an English settler and a Native American princess who bears a strong resemblance to Pocahontas. It makes Unca a daughter of Pocahontas and puts her into another category of writing: the eighteenth century British tradition of glorifying life in the colonies in

order to entice more people to relocate. Unca's mother's union with an Englishmen symbolically accentuates a friendship between Native and white Americans. In most versions of the Pocahontas story, however, the culminating final scene is the scene of rescue of an Englishman by a Native American princess. In Unca's story, it takes place at the beginning. It is her mother who saves her father from certain death.<sup>78</sup> This shift bears heavily on the significance of its departure from the convention. The killing of the whites is also made more palatable by an initial plea of the Native chief to the whites' conscience: "Why have you taken possession of our lands, ate our fruits, and made our countrymen prisoners? Had you no lands of your own? ... You designed to kill us ... and you must die." (12) Whereas focusing on the rescue gives the impression that Native Americans somehow invited and aided their colonizers, letting an interracial union live and beget children bears a suggestion that maybe coexistence of the two races was, after all, possible. However he initially has to overcome "disgust" over her "tawny face", Winkfield accepts racial difference. This

---

<sup>78</sup> The Pocahontas story is based on the union of an Englishman and a native American woman, a daughter of Patawomeck chief named Powhatan. He took her and their son, Thomas Rolfe, to England to introduce her there. She died on the way back to Virginia at twenty two. This story was first included in John Smith's The Generall Historie of Virginia published in 1624. Factual or fictitious, the story developments have been found inspiring by many writers and painters. Also Virginians have a Pocahontas Society which meticulously records hundreds of names of families who are supposed to derive from that union.

union gives a life full of unusual turns and adventures to Unca, the main heroine of the story. The fact that the Native princess' child is not male but female is another important alteration of the tradition.

As Robert S. Tilton argues in his book, the focus on the rescue scene in the tradition absolves the white men's conscience of the Native American genocide.<sup>79</sup> The Female American addresses the fact that the conquest cannot be justified. Unca's father, Winkfield, is warned by his brother before venturing to America with a hundred other settlers who founded Jamestown:

We have no right to invade the country of another, and I fear invaders will always meet a curse; but as your youth disenables you from viewing this expedition in that equitable light that it ought to be looked on, may your sufferings be proportionally light. (9)

Thus his capture and the killing of his companions by Native Americans, parallel to the traditional Pocahontas story, is initially depicted as an enactment of an expected curse for breaking a natural law rather than an act of self-defense on the part of the Native Americans. Also, in the traditional story as reflected in the Disney movie, the Native American princess rejects the Native American man chosen for her by her father for a white man. His death shows what happens to those who do not adopt the white man's order of things. In The Female American, on the other hand, this theme is ab-

---

<sup>79</sup> Robert S. Tilton, Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative (New York: Columbia UP, 1994)

sent. Unca's mother is free to make her choice and does not cause anybody's death. In Unca's story, there is simply no romance. Moreover, Unca vows not to marry a man who cannot shoot an arrow as well as she. A white man is therefore an unlikely candidate.

The episode on the island where Unca subsists alone is interesting, since it takes on and twists Robinson Crusoe's story. Unca, like Robinson, explores the island, finds its secret religious site where some natives come to perform a rite. She clearly does not need as much time as Robinson to find ways of subsisting. She conveniently comes across a manuscript written by a hermit which includes the necessary information on the usefulness of local fauna and flora. She also finds some provisions. Provided for and thus spared long experiments in agriculture, Unca devotes herself to the study of the religious site, built for the worship of the Oracle of the Sun. She discovers there are numerous mummies of "the Native American priests of the Sun, one thousand years old.... and consecrated virgins in thousands."

The idol [is] a man standing, clad in long dress, girdled at the waist; the neck and the bosom quite bear like the manner of women; on the head was a curiously wrought crown, and between the two breasts an image of the sun carved in gold, as was all the rest of it. The right hand supported the figure of the new moon, and the left held a cluster of stars. On the back part of the idol was written in large Indian characters (sic!) to this purpose, the Oracle of the Sun.(83)

Unca observes the statue's androgynous quality as she notices the details of it. It is hollow and she climbs inside and

discovers that its construction amplifies sound. Her voice gains superhuman volume when she speaks through the statue's mouth. She enjoys this new and empowering exercise. She will use this device in her Machiavellian scheme to eventually escape from the island. When the natives come to the idol to hear a prophecy, she speaks to them and foretells the coming of a female goddess to live with them and bring forth a new faith. They accept her when she finally reveals herself. Before this happens, however, her cousin comes to the island with a crew, looking for her, and is given a start when she speaks to them through the Oracle. The crewmen are so terrified by the supernatural sound and by her "tawny face" when she reveals herself that they all leave the island in a hurry. The cousin will return to join her when she has become a missionary.

Thanks to her linguistic abilities, she translates the Bible and common prayer into the Native tongue that she clearly shares with the tribe, although these are not her people. They acquire the new religion as an oral culture, learn prayers by choral repetitions. She enjoys the role of a religious authority: "From a solitary being, obliged to seek my food from day to day, I was attended by a whole nation, all ready to serve me; and no care upon me but how to discharge the important business of an apostle (of the Church of England!)." Having now become an English priest in a woman's dress, Unca hears the repentance of the evil

captain Shore who had abandoned her before and now regrets his deed.

Unca is allowed to have an independent life until she marries her English cousin, a priest, and settles down as a quiet housewife among the Native Americans whom they together convert to Christianity. This ending is somewhat abrupt and obviously incongruent with the entire story. The conclusion of The Female American is certainly puzzling. We see Native Americans reconciled with the new religion taught to them by Unca and therefore complicitous with the colonization process. As indicated above, such an ending belongs to the tradition of stories that rationalize colonization and is incongruent with the initial statement made in the story. We also see Unca suddenly get married to her cousin because "she had to do it" for the sake of propriety. It is implied that Native men did not threaten her virtue, a concept only present in the story in the context of white Americans, whereas the arrival of her cousin forces her to give up her freedom and vows. The sudden eagerness with which she accepts the marriage and the tribe's acceptance of Christianity create a serious incongruence with the entire story. It may be speculated that the author complied with the publisher's request to give the story a viable ending, one that the reading public would accept. Another speculation is that the author designed to serialize the story.

However conventional in its conclusion on race and

colonialism, The Female American is an attempt at sympathetic rewriting of American - Native American relations. It is also an adventurous woman's story where her race is an advantage rather than a problem as is the case of Ourika. At no point in the story is her race made an obstacle. It places her in situations and events beyond a white woman's reach at the time: she travels alone, is physically quite strong and goes through adventures alone, using her own education and wit. She is given much time to be on her own before she is joined by her cousin. Most importantly, she in the authoress of her own story who has selected such episodes from her "loose memorandums" that show her independent and adventurous side.

The works of Graffigny, Duras and Winkfield inscribe heroism in the narratives written by exotic, non-white heroines of their stories. As non-white and "other," they are learning about white European culture, observe and critique its paradoxes and injustices. They particularly focus on women's disadvantaged social position. Using the plot of departure literally and metaphorically, the female writers give their writing textual heroines an opportunity to transcend the conventions in which they function.

## IV

## Factual Travel Accounts as Metaphors of the Self

*...to wander freely through the spheres without belonging to any country (...) to exist beyond oneself to such a degree that one may entertain illusions about life's limits in time and space, and to see in the self metaphysical attributes of the infinite.*

*Germaine de Staël*

The non-fictional *récit de voyage* is a hybrid form which combines autobiography and journalism. As autobiography and reportage contain both realist and subjective elements, tied to individual memory and experience, the *récit de voyage* falls partially within the sphere of fiction. Of particular interest is its self-enacting quality. It is traditionally assumed that we read autobiographical texts "not as factual truth, but as a wrestling with the truth."<sup>80</sup> The emergence of a woman as writer of her own story of departure brings up questions concerning the author's self-creation and her name in autobiographical acts. While it has been argued that "feminine" is a criterion that can be a non-gender specific but a qualitative modality that can be used by any author, whether signature

---

<sup>80</sup> Roy Pascal, Design and Truth in Autobiography (London: Routledge, 1960) 75.

reveals the "true name of the author" is debatable.<sup>81</sup> Margaret Cavendish pointed out that the woman's proper name is the name of the father whereas the matrilineage is erased from a woman's history. Therefore her name is not her own; it is not *propre à elle*.<sup>82</sup>

The works discussed here deal with the anxiety of disappearance and woman's self-signification in the context of travel accounts where the authors create themselves in opposition to their male counterparts. This work will approach the texts in terms of their being a metaphor for the identity of a female subject who is at the same time a narrator and writer of her own *récit de voyage*. Both feminine fictitious and autobiographical discourse of departure alike demonstrates how the construction of a valorized feminine subject is tied to the notion of a travelling woman: a woman as subject of movement cannot be objectified. Travel accounts negate the prevailing reductive image of woman because they create a feminine literary space from which women can emerge, not as objects of men's story, but as subjects making and writing women's history.

---

<sup>81</sup> Domna Stanton calls women's autobiography "autogynography" in "Autogynography: Is the Subject Different?" The Female Pen (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1984) 7.

<sup>82</sup> Lejeune asserts that the identity of author, narrator, and protagonist is marked by the "autobiographical pact," the identity of the signature on the title page with that of the subject of the narrative. Feminist critics have contrarily argued that since a woman's name is not her own, she cannot enter the "pact."

The rhetoric of confinement and departure has proved a useful tool to analyze women's literature. The imagery of enclosure has long expressed the writing woman's sense of limitations:

From Ann Radcliffe's melodramatic dungeons to Jane Austen's mirrored parlors, from Charlotte Bronte's haunted garrets to Emily Bronte's coffin-shaped beds, imagery of enclosure reflects the woman writer's own discomfort, her sense of powerlessness, her fear that she inhabits alien and incomprehensible places.<sup>83</sup>

This catalogue of images of confinement and escape in nineteenth century English literature can be expanded with earlier examples. For a woman writer to use the open spaces, wide horizons and moving perspective means a departure from her confinement. The literary voyage, mapping the world of *self* and writing *self* on the map are undeniably acts of transgression and liberation.

\*

Narratives may invent scenarios at will for the purpose of conveying truths that transcend specific situations.

Since it is notoriously difficult for us women to recognize ourselves in the images that literature and society ... traditionally project or uphold as models, it should not be surprising for an autobiographical narrative to proclaim itself as fiction: for the narrator's process of reflection, narration, and self-integration within language is bound to unveil patterns of self-definition...<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979) 83-84.

<sup>84</sup> Francoise Lionnet, "Métissage, Emancipation and Female Textuality," Displacements eds. Joan DeJean and Nancy Miller (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990) 255.

*Récits de voyage* can be an elaborate metaphor of identity as in Germaine de Staël's Dix années d'exil (1821) or Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820.

Germaine de Staël writes about her exile from France and travels to Russia and Sweden after she had been forced out of Bonaparte's empire in 1803. Engaged in an open conflict with Napoleon who considered her dangerous enough to the empire that he chose to persecute her, she writes an interesting idiosyncratic "travel memoir." Her narrative is as much a self-creation as Cavendish's Blazing World, though it uses the authorial "I" without a pretence of fiction. Dix années d'exil has large time gaps and does not provide the continuity that the title suggests. It focuses mostly on the confrontations between Bonaparte and Staël. The work covers only two periods of four years divided by a six year pause.

Throughout the text Staël pursues the theme of her conflict with Napoleon - she actually writes to immortalize her own resistance to despotism. She writes her self in opposition to and in the context of Bonaparte. Not without reason does she challenge the most powerful man in Europe as she clearly asserts herself in this conflict. She rewrites the myth of Napoleon as a greedy and fearful man who deals in fear, while she is a female intellectual who is not given justice. Her depiction counters a rich tradition of Napoleon's apologues. He is cynical, devious, rude to women,

abusive to diplomats and servants alike.<sup>85</sup> Having challenged him, she defeats him textually. The conclusion of the work is deferred beyond Napoleon's defeat in Russia, therefore the text outlives Napoleon's glorious days and her exile ends in victory.

A different factual account, Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820<sup>86</sup> achieves a similar effect of differentiating the female narrating subject from her magnificent male counterpart - in this case her brother and travel companion - William Wordsworth. Having crossed the paths that Staël took in the Tyrol, Wordsworth writes about her travel in the Alps, her solitary meditations and her occasional observations of local women. Curiously, although Dorothy travels with her famous brother William, she chooses to erase him from the account as a speaker. She only mentions him diageetically in the context of travel complications but does not let his presence affect her appreciation of the tour. She resists the possible temptation of quoting his discussions of poetry, or his impressions from the tour, although she sometimes quotes his poems or corrects the facts that he describes. She is con-

---

<sup>85</sup> Some other writers who conveyed the atmosphere of solitude and death of the Terror are Chateaubriand, Duras, Lamartine and Michelet.

<sup>86</sup> Dorothy Wordsworth, "A Tour of the Continent (1820)," Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth ed. E. de Selincourt (MacMillan: London, 1952). All subsequent page numbers refer to this edition.

sciously writing her own story from her own point of view, and stresses that William writes his in "the poem [poetry] of his life." (220) Her editors, however, like to fuse the two lives of brother and sister and treat Dorothy's work as footnotes of William's texts.

\*

Staël writes without using punctuation except the question mark and exclamation point. The first editor was actually her son Auguste, who published the work in 1821 with the division into chapters and with omissions of politically inflaming fragments, later restored. Although the book was not ready for publication at Staël's death, it has clear organizational patterns. The editor of the 1904 edition of Dix années d'exil, alerted to the irregularity of the genre that the work represents, remarks upon the original:

Il existe dans les archives du château de Coppet quelques cahiers de papier vergé, jaunis par le temps, couverts d'une large et rapide écriture, dont les lignes montent, montent sans cesse: nulle ponctuation, des ratures nombreuses, des pages entières barrées d'un trait vertical. La couverture porte une note au crayon, sans doute de la main d'Auguste de Staël: Dix années d'exil. Six cahiers. Qu'est-ce que c'est cet ouvrage?<sup>87</sup>

This book indeed is a curious form with a pretence to autobiography, political treatise and travel account. Stael did not actually leave a traditional autobiography but only gives an account of her participation in the public life

---

<sup>87</sup> Paul Gautier, *Introduction, Dix années d'exil* by Germaine de Staël (Paris, 1904) I. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

and, specifically, of its most difficult moments. Autobiographical commentary can be weaned from her writings on Rousseau and his autobiography, and from a moral and political treaty "De l'influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations" (1792-1796). The two works include general reflections on the self. Also Delphine, Corinne and the chapter on "Des femmes qui cultivent les lettres" from De la littérature can be read autobiographical as to a degree. Dix années d'exil, however, consists of personal memoirs of her life as affected by Napoleon's politics. The particularly difficult period falls between 1811-12 when she literally ran away from a forced imprisonment at home at Coppet through Vienna and Moscow to Sweden, while narrowly escaping the French Army marching east.

Staël creates an image of a female writer who needs intense mental activity to remain healthy.

(...)l'étude de la littérature allemande donnait à mon esprit tout le mouvement dont il a besoin pour ne pas me dévorer moi-même. (108)

Persecuted for her dissent and forced to leave Paris and France, Staël complains of the arbitrariness and humiliation of her exile. Female intellect finds no space in Bonaparte's France:

Vous voyez, monsieur [gendarme], où cela me mène, d'être une femme d'esprit; déconseillez-le, je vous prie, aux personnes de votre famille, si vous en avez l'occasion.(99)

She wonders of the forces aligned against her: "Quoi! policiers, gendarmes, espions, préfets, ministres, l'Empereur

lui-même, tant de pouvoir ligué contre une femme, contre un livre!" Metonymically, her book stands for her writing persona - a female writer mixed up in politics as if by accident. The narrator of her account, Germaine de Staël, will remain a writer although her publication has caused her persecution. Writing remains a source of pleasure and respect, and it liberates. It allows the creation of a personal space where the writer can be at ease:

Mais, quoique ce dernier écrit [De l'Allemagne] m'ait attiré d'amères persécutions, les lettres ne me semblent pas moins une source de jouissances et de considération, même pour une femme. J'attribue ce qui j'ai souffert dans la vie aux circonstances qui m'ont associée, des mon entrée dans le monde, aux intérêts de la liberté que soutenaient mon père et mes amis; mais le genre de talent qui a fait parler de moi, comme écrivain, m'a toujours valu plus de plaisir que de peine. (...) Enfin, quand même on aurait longtemps à souffrir de l'injustice, je ne conçois pas de meilleur asile contre elle que la méditation de la philosophie et d'émotion de l'éloquence. Ces facultés mettent à nos ordres tout un monde de vérités et de sentiments dans lequel on respire toujours à l'aise. (25-26)

She is a writer conscious of her literary reputation who asserts her own talent. Writing allows her a space where she can breathe freely.

The topography of her itinerary in the ensuing exile is marked by signs of Bonaparte's terror. When she passes through the French countryside, she maps all the prisons that he used to send his opposition to. She mentions the fortress at Joux where Toussaint Louverture perished from the cold. In Orléans, she stops at the statue of Joan of Arc and bitterly remarks that France was freer when occupied by

the English than under Napoleon. The French/Swiss border is densely built in:

A cinquante lieues de la Suisse, la frontière est hérissée de citadelles, de maisons d'arrêt, de villes servant de prison, et l'on ne voit partout que des individus contraints par la volonté d'un seul homme, des constricts du malheur qui sont tous enchainés loin des yeux où ils voudraient vivre.(176)

In the Alps, the top of the only mountain she climbs in this text had earlier been his place of reflection. She draws a metaphorical map of Bonaparte's governance and her own exile. His conquest of Europe almost acquires the quality of his personal vendetta against Staël. Whereas she is writing about her exile, an imposed departure, she uses the spatialization of crossings, wanderings and transgressions to write her self against a scathing portrait of Napoleon.

An intellectual and a writer, the narrator uses cultural and literary images to make her depictions more vivid. Therefore Bonaparte, like Leviathan, swallows people:

Néanmoins les malheureux magistrats des pays qu'on appelle les alliés de la France sont très souvent chargés d'arrêter ceux qu'on leur désigne, ignorant s'ils livrent des victimes innocents ou coupables au grand Léviathan qui juge à propos de les engloutir.  
(198)

To convey the terror imposed on her by the house arrest and the police, she recalls the story of Bluebird: "mon gendarme revenait chaque matin, comme dans le conte de Barbe-Bleue, me presser de partir le lendemain, et chaque fois j'avais la faiblesse de demander encore un jour."(100) Exile is death because:

...le bannissement perpétuel est considéré comme une des peines les plus sévères; et le caprice d'un homme inflige en France, en se jouant, ce que des juges consciencieux n'imposent qu'à regret aux criminels.  
(101)

The exile affects the narrator's self-expression permanently. "Nul écrivain n'exprimera librement sa pensée, s'il peut être banni quand sa franchise aura déplu... s'il peut lui en coûter le bonheur de sa famille entière. Les femmes, surtout..."(103) Her understated feminine expansiveness acts against female repression. Although she was exiled by Napoleon from making history and thus forced to play a role of a passive witness, Staël takes recourse of writing her own female epic.<sup>88</sup> She writes herself back into history.

Every autobiographical act is characterized by selecting and retracing past events. Yet the fidelity of such an act to anterior reality is often questioned as arbitrary. "Tout récit de vie est la reprise ou la transformation de formes de vie préexistantes."<sup>89</sup> Staël engages in this process covertly. The title points to its autobiographical quality and it is indeed about Staël's exile, although the main protagonist is Napoleon Bonaparte. Autobiographical narrative naturally reflects the split between the narrating subject and the experiencing subject. It is another argument

---

<sup>88</sup> Carla L. Peterson, The Determined Reader: Gender and Culture in the Novel From Napoleon to Victoria (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1986) 57-58.

<sup>89</sup> Phillipe Lejeune, Je est un autre (Paris: Seuil, 1980) 9.

to scrutinize the polarity of fact and fiction. Staël's particular selections and significant omissions are revealing of the narrator's control of the story told and also of the level of subjectivity in the work. Not mentioned, for example, is her husband whom she married at nineteen of whom she elsewhere says "Je l'aime de toute puissance de ma raison." Staël's biographers mark her hostility towards her mother who is conspicuously absent from the work, too. According to feminist psychoanalysts, the lack of acceptance of one's mother, and therefore oneself, has a bearing on one's self-representation. Severe maternal images in Staël's prose reflect this relationship. Female characters mainly serve to pull away daughters from their fathers, they are jealous women, the second wives of their husbands and do not gain the sympathy of the reader. In Dix années Staël's mother is conspicuously absent together with her husband. Her own relationship with her children is out of focus, although they travel with her most of the time. Another curious fact omitted from the account is her secretly giving birth to Monsieur Rocca's child in 1812 at the age of forty six. That year she takes flight to Vienna and Russia.

The prominent family figure in her life and writing is her father, whom she evokes in images of energy, grandeur and stability.<sup>90</sup> He also understands Bonaparte's plan. "Il

---

<sup>90</sup> Simon Balayé discusses Staël's autobiographical acts in "Madame de Stael et la statue intérieure" in terms of her attachment to her father. Her mother is said to have been

nous revenait de tous les côtés que la véritable raison de la colère du Premier Consul, c'était ce dernier écrit de mon père, dans lequel tout l'échafaudage de sa monarchie était tracé d'avance."(82) When her father resolves to speak to the Emperor on her behalf, she portrays him as a commanding presence and a seductive man at the same time:

Je me faisait une telle idée de l'ascendant que devait exercer sa présance, qu'il me semblait impossible de lui résister: son âge, l'expression si belle de ses regards, tant de noblesse d'âme et de finesse d'esprit réunies, me paraissaient devoir captiver même Bonaparte.(83)

He is a philosopher, administrator and financial advisor of high morals and he only brings her happiness.

...on n'a jamais été, comme lui, vivement ému par les peines de ses amis, toujours actif pour les secourir, toujours prudent pour en choisis les moyens, admirable en tout enfin.(107)

He is a protector:

Mon père eût accueilli son pauvre oiseau, battu par l'orage, avec une ineffable bonté.(103)

When he is sick and dies, she says:

Depuis que je l'ai perdu, je vois et je sens la moitié moins que je na faisais quand j'avais pour but de lui plaire, en lui peignant mes impressions. (107)  
(...)un sentiment de terreur inexprimable se joignit à mon désespoir. Je me vis sans appui sur cette terre et forcée de soutenir moi-même mon âme contre le malheur (...) je ne serai plus heureuse par le coeur, comme je l'avait été, quand cet homme tout-puissant en sensibilité veillat sur mon sort... (129-130)

When she plans her big escape, she invokes his memory: "cet

---

distant from her daughter and jealous of her close relationship with her father. This article appears in Autobiography, Historiography, Rhetoric - a Festschrift in Honor of Frank Paul de Bowman (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994).

homme, le Fénelon de la politique, dont le génie était en tout opposé à celui de Bonaparte." (223) This opposition between the two men marks the entire text.

Bonaparte, unlike Monsieur Necker, is depicted as a politician and leader who is consistently dangerous to her and to all people of good will and intellect. He is a negative double of her father. In this parallel masculine portrait one man is cathected - the hero, the other is abjected - the anti-hero. One is eloquent and commands respect, a friend of democracy and the revolution. The other cannot even be addressed - a tyrant who gains respect mainly through the rhetoric of popular press and intimidation. The narrator of her work, Staël identifies with her father and writes her self in pairs with the two men to transcend the borders framing the feminine domain. What is disquieting about Staël's writing is her complete devotion to her father and, on the other side, a megalomania that makes her challenge Bonaparte's Empire. On both ends of the spectrum the narrator remains in a fatal dialectic with patriarchal power, and a legacy which she must push aside for her own sake. Cornered by Bonaparte's restrictions, she symbolically bids farewell to her father and literally escapes from Napoleon's persecutions. Her text reflects this growing conflict and a gradual easing up of the father-daughter bonding and her gradual liberation through her text. When she leaves Coppet, she is more a mistress of herself than

before.

The moment she departs from her father's home, a temporary abode, to escape Switzerland under cover, seems crucial in the process of gaining strength and liberating herself from his influence. It occurs after a five year break in the text and marks the beginning of part two of the account. The time gap is bridged by her son - her first editor - who summarizes what he calls the principal events in her life. He mentions her publishing her father's last manuscripts and composing an essay about him, as well as her trips to Italy and Vienna, not included in Dix années d'exil. Staël bids farewell to her father's memory, objects, etc.

J'allai revoir le cabinet de mon père, où son fauteuil, sa table et ses papiers sont encore à la même place; j'embrassai chaque trace chérie, je pris son manteau, que jusqu'alors j'avais ordonné de laisser sur sa chaise, et je l'emportai avec moi pour m'en envelopper, si le messenger de la mort s'approchait de moi. Ces adieux terminés, ... j'écrivis aux amis que je quittais...(223)

The intensity of this attachment lessens after the narrator ventures out east on her own.

One of the contradictions in Staël's work is the fact that she seems almost embarrassed to appear in her own account. Like many of her heroines, even those gifted with great intelligence, she seems to submit herself to her destiny. She appears as a victim, not as a fighting heroine, as if the relentlessness of Bonaparte's tyranny were even worse when aimed at a weak woman. Her subversive opposition to the system is largely understated in the text. She did,

after all, threaten Bonaparte's authority with her salon meetings as well as her publications. The argument that "she is no more than a rather innocent woman, at the most inconsequential and in any case not responsible, just like other women, conforming to the role the society of her time assigns her"<sup>91</sup> seems to overlook Staël's eloquence and rhetorical savvy. It seems that she stages this apparently self-erasing heroine to make her argument better suited for the reading public. Whereas her heroine "Madame de Staël," the writer accidentally involved in politics, vows to wish only to be able to live in peace, the narrator's adamant disapproval of the system is clear.

Bonaparte resents Staël's influence, "[il] disait que l'on sortait toujours de chez moi moins attaché à lui qu'on n'y était entré." Staël believes that Bonaparte has betrayed the revolution.

...ce qu'il voulait, au moment de saisir la couronne, c'était d'inspirer une telle terreur, que personne ne sût lui résister. Il viola tout dans une seule action: le droit des gens européen, la constitution telle qu'elle existait encore, la pudeur publique, l'humanité, la religion. Il n'y avait rien au delà de cette action donc pouvait tout craindre de celui qui l'avait commise. (127-128)

To express his dictates, he uses the popular press because he is deficient in using the language. The constant sophisms in the newspapers confuse the public's good sense. Bonaparte:

---

<sup>91</sup> Simone Balayé, *Introduction, Dix années d'exil* (Paris: Bibliothèque 10-18, 1966) xviii.

(...) s'occupa d'éducation, c'est-à-dire des moyens de préparer la génération future à la servitude, comme si ce n'était pas assez pour cela de l'exemple que leur donnait leurs pères. ... On eut beaucoup de peine à obtenir du Premier Consul la permission d'enseigner le latin, mais le grec fut positivement banni. En effet, à quoi cela peut-il servir dans un Etat où le chef ne veut que des laboureurs et des soldats! (75-76)

Unlike most other writing women of her time, Staël does not limit her writing to romances or personal narratives but uses writing as a statement and a form of action. Dix années d'exil actually constitutes an external time frame for Staël's other works such as Delphine and Corinne. De l'Allemagne was first published in 1810 and seized by censors. In it Staël engaged in clever but veiled criticism of the political situation at home. She wrote it in the tradition of Montesquieu's Lettres persanes and Voltaire's Lettres anglaises, two masterly attacks on the regime in France. Both gave favorable presentation of foreign institutions and naive comments on France by foreign visitors for their effectiveness. Staël is actually asked to write about Napoleon in 1811, yet she asserts her freedom of topic choice and persecution continues.

...[le préfet] me dit qu'un talent comme le mien était fait pour célébrer l'Empereur, que c'était un sujet digne du genre d'enthousiasme que j'avait montré dans Corinne. J'ai lui répondu que, persécutée comme je l'étais par l'Empereur, toute louange de ma part, adressée à lui, aurait l'air d'une requête, et que j'étais persuadée que l'Empereur lui-même trouverait mes éloges ridicules dans une semblable circonstance.... il revint... ne fût-ce qu'une feuille de quatre pages: cela suffirait, assurait-il, pour terminer toutes des peines que j'éprouvais.(184)

Staël remains adamant in her decision not to succumb to

pressure from any of Bonaparte's envoys. Later she comments "Je suis tentée de rire aujourd'hui de toute cette activité préfectorale contre une aussi pauvre et faible chose que moi." (185) She is upset, however, when her friends are forced to depart from her.

M. Schlegel, qui depuis huit ans avait bien voulu se charger de l'éducation de mes fils, venait de recevoir l'ordre... Le préfet, qui avait l'habitude, comme la plupart des agents de l'Empereur, de joindre des phrases doucereuses à des actes très durs, me dit que le gouvernement éloignait de ma maison M. Schlegel, qui me rendait anti-française. (187)

His fault is comparing Euripides' and Racine's Phèdre and preferring the former. Not without irony does she comment:

C'était bien délicat pour un monarque corse, de prendre ainsi fait et cause pour le moindre nuances de la littérature française... dans le vrai, on commençait à mettre en oeuvre le système qui devait se manifester, de me faire une prison de mon âme en m'arrachant toutes les joissances de l'esprit et d'amitié. (188)

Staël feels more French than Bonaparte due to her birth and her father's contribution to France. Deprived of freedom and friends, she finally resolves to leave Coppet although it is a difficult and dangerous task. Violating the interdiction to depart from her estate means imprisonment. She nonetheless decides to travel to Sweden via Russia. In preparation of a secret flight from house arrest, she studies the map of Europe.

Je passai donc ma vie à étudier la carte d'Europe pour m'en fuir, comme Napoleon l'étudiait pour s'en rendre maître, et ma campagne, ainsi que la sienne, avait toujours la Russie pour l'objet. Cette puissance était le dernier asile des opprimés; ce devait être celle que le dominateur de l'Europe voulait abattre. (190)

Staël plans a strategy for an escape over the entire map of Europe, since she knows Bonaparte's power extends almost everywhere. Finding herself under great pressure, she takes to opium to numb her anguish.

Je passait huit mois dans un état que l'on ne saurait peindre, essayant mon courage chaque jour, et chaque jour faiblissant à l'idée de la prison ... je ne pouvais me dissimuler que je n'étais pas une personne courageuse; j'ai de la hardiesse dans l'imagination, mais la timidité dans le caractère, et tous les genres de périls se présentent à moi comme des fantômes. L'espèce de talent que j'ai me rend les images tellement vivantes, que si les beautés de nature y gagnent, les dangers aussi en deviennent plus redoutables.(214)

She overcomes her doubts and fears and eventually makes a successful escape. The people who help her are persecuted by Bonaparte, however. The property of the convent which has given her shelter for one night is confiscated by Bonaparte in retaliation. Staël thinks that persecution of women is particularly cruel "ce qui ajoute à la barbarie de persécuter les femmes ... elles souffrent plus vivement des peines, et sont moins capable de la force qu'il faut pour y échapper."(215)

Dix années is an interesting contribution to historiography - a new transcription of historical events from the point of view of a woman who tries to write herself against the most powerful man of her time. It has been a commonplace to believe after Montesquieu,<sup>92</sup> and, more recently Jean

---

<sup>92</sup> In Montesquieu's Lettres persanes one character writes "People complain in Persia that the government is controlled by two or three women: it is much worse in France where women generally govern, and not only assume wholesale all control of

Starobinski, that the eighteenth century in France was the most truly feminine century where women reigned. Certainly, this is not correct.<sup>93</sup> While they were enjoying an increased freedom, aristocratic women in their salons did not change man's norms in the eighteenth century, and lost their limited privileges with the Revolution. Charlotte Hogsett explains that although Staël's contemporaries Constant and Chateaubriand wrote confessionally and politically, this mode of writing was considered inappropriate to women.<sup>94</sup> It has been observed that Staël, as a woman challenging power, was by Bonapartists considered unnatural, even obscene. Her work is the site of the various conflicts and entrapments for women in Revolutionary France.

Staël's exile account actually belongs to the nineteenth century and focuses on the loss of the importance she used to have. She knows, however, that language has power and that through a controlled use of language women can exert influence. "L'art d'écrire est aussi une arme." She writes against limitations of individual freedom and reproof of sexual freedom of women.

---

authority, but even divide among themselves the retailing of it."

<sup>93</sup> Madelyn Gutwirth discusses women and representation in the French Revolutionary era in Twilight of the Goddess (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992).

<sup>94</sup> Charlotte Hogsett, "Generative Factors in Considerations on the French Revolution," Germaine de Staël. Crossing the Borders ed. M. Gutwirth et al. (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1991) 34-41.

\*

Whereas the former part of Dix années d'exil focuses mainly on the political realities in France under Napoleon, the latter part shows the narrator's interest in the world around her. The focus changes from inside to outside. Her description of the countryside and people actually begins in the part of the account on her trip to Poland and Russia. In Galicia, she observes people's poverty. Less sensitive to landscape than to people, she describes people's faces: Jewish merchants, Polish mendicants and processions of men and women along the roads. She remarks on the sophistication of Polish aristocrats and of the deep contrast between rich and poor. She also comments on the Poles' interest in regaining their freedom through Napoleon's campaign against Russia.

Parmi les nations que Bonaparte traîne après lui, la seule qui mérite de l'intérêt, ces sont les Polonais. Je crois qu'ils savent aussi bien que nous qu'ils ne sont que le prétexte de la guerre, et que l'Empereur ne se soucie pas de leur indépendance. Il n'a pu s'abstenir d'exprimer plusieurs fois à l'Empereur Alexandre son dédain pour la Pologne, par cela seulement qu'elle veut être libre; mais il lui convient de la mettre en avant contre la Russie, et les Polonais profitent de cette circonstance pour se rétablir comme nation.(244)

Staël also visits the Czartoryski family at Łancut where, to her annoyance, she is followed by an Austrian spy and forced to leave the next day. Once in Russia, she remarks on the irony of that although Russia is not customarily thought of as the freest country in Europe, it is exactly that to her. She makes discoveries that counter the image of Russia as

barbaric current in France at the time:

Quelques mauvaises anecdotes des règnes précédents, quelques Russes qui ont fait des dettes sur le pavé de Paris, quelques bons mots de Diderot ont mis dans la tête des Français que la Russie ne consistait que dans une cour corrompue, des officiers chambellans et un peuple d'esclaves; c'est une grand erreur....dans cet empire russe, si faussement appelé barbare, je n'ai éprouvé que des impressions nobles et douces. (272)<sup>95</sup>

She is curious about *l'âme russe*, the national character and pastimes in 1812. Her depictions full of appreciation would certainly anger Napoleon, had he read Staël's account. Pushkin later praises Staël's account of Russia for its penetrating views, the originality and variety of her observations.

Travel to Russia is among the semi-exotic factual departures. Situated between Asia and Europe, Russia attracted many travellers including Germaine de Staël and Olympe Audouard. In her Voyage dans le pays de boyards (1881), Audouard notices and comments upon the disparity between the rich and the poor. Staël, on the other hand, notices the poverty, poor attire, and weariness of the peasant women with a degree of indifference. The voyages present completely different impressions made at a similar time. They both notice the eastern influence of vivid colors in women's attire.

Staël considers French influence a sign of Napoleon's

---

<sup>95</sup> Some of the available accounts on Russia that Stael may have read are Lévesque's L'Histoire de Russie, Rulhière's Anecdotes sur la Révolution de Russie and Histoire de l'anarchie de Pologne.

influence - a kind of cultural hegemony.

Je pris en peu de temps tellement de goût à ces habits orientaux, que je n'aimais pas à voir des Russes vêtus comme le reste des Européens; il me semblait alors qu'ils allaient entrer dans cette grande régularité du despotisme de Napoléon, qui fait présent à toutes les nations de la conscription d'abord, puis des taxes de guerre, puis du code Napoléon, pour régir de la même manière des nations toutes différentes.(279)

Staël is aware that clothes can be powerful signs and a dress code may be a means of control. On the other hand, she prefers to see the original Russian garb, a mark of difference rather than similarity.

Among her cultural observations on the customs of the country, she notices Russian men's courteous behavior towards women "Jamais un cocher russe ne passe devant une femme, de quelque âge ou de quelque état qu'elle soit, sans la saluer, et la femme lui répond par une inclination de tête qui est toujours noble et gracieuse."(286) She is flattered to find that she had a literary reputation among Russian noblemen. Russians should, however, use eastern examples for literature rather than French.

Mais les Russes ont, comme tant d'autres peuples du continent, le tort d'imiter la littérature française, qui, par ses beautés mêmes, ne convient qu'aux Français. Il me semble que les Russes devraient faire dériver leurs études littéraires des Grecs plutôt que de Latins. Les caractères de l'écriture russe, si semblables à ceux des Grecs, les anciennes communications des Russes avant l'empire de Byzance, leurs destinées futures, qui les mènent peut-être vers les illustres momuments d'Athènes et de Sparte.(314)

While Staël enjoys the hospitality of the Emperor, Napoleon's army approaches. Not even Russia is safe from the

fast advancing troops. When she enjoys a master view of Moscow from the cathedral belfry called Ivan Veliki, she realizes that Napoleon might yet walk on the same tower.

Un moment la pensée me vint que Napoléon pourrait se promener sur cette même tour d'où j'admirais la ville qu'allait anéantir sa présence; un moment je songeai qu'il s'enorgueillirait de remplacer, dans le palais des czars, le chef de la Grande Horde, qui sut aussi s'en emparer pour un temps.(310)

To avoid Napoleon's army, Staël is forced to first go to Moscow and then to Petersburg. Catherine the Second's country residence at Tsarskoe Selo inspires Staël's respect and admiration to the point that she wonders whether the Russians were not indebted to Catherine rather than to Peter I for their "heureuse persuasion qu'ils sont invincibles." She admires Saint Catherine's Institute for women, run by the Empress. She above all praises the Russians' resistance to Napoleon. Her account stops when Staël safely crosses to Finland and Sweden.

\*

A Swiss woman in France, Staël was an exile from her native country all her life because she adopted France as her spiritual motherland. Her departures are a natural consequence of her initial status. Karyna Szmurlo discusses Staël's complete body of work terms of

Geo-graphics [which] infiltrate the titles and tables of content of her work, illustrating how deeply her thought organized itself around the ideas of wanderings, passages, crossings, and transgressions. This corpus of the voyage, governed by a metonymic logic of spatial contiguity, also functions as a metaphoric index; that the "denoted space" engenders the "connoted

space" of desire."<sup>96</sup>

Recent criticism points out that a woman's coming to writing can effectuate itself through acts of "crossing over."

Displaced and decentered, the woman writer must redefine herself. She may seek out new contexts for the same redefinition, however, as an independent traveller. Staël's forced exile turns into a liberating process during which she buries her father and defeats Bonaparte textually to emerge as a mobile subject that cannot be objectified. The topos of departure marks Staël's discourse and differentiation from the men in whose context she defines herself. She formulates an ethics of challenge and confrontation.

Joan DeJean discusses Staël's Sapphic self-representation,<sup>97</sup> a tradition initiated by Louise Labé in French that was perfected by Madelaine de Scudéry and continued by Staël. She does not identify herself with Ovid's woman consumed by passion but with the theme of loss and abandonment by women jealous of her talents and by an unfaithful lover Phaon. As DeJean explains, Staël fashioned her myth of Sappho on her contemporary variations on the theme. She creates a dynamic portrait of herself, mobile and escaping objectification.

\*

---

<sup>96</sup> Karyna Szmurlo, *Introduction, Germaine de Stael. Crossing the Borders I.*

<sup>97</sup> Joan DeJean, "Portrait of the Artist As Sappho" in *Germaine de Stael*. 122-137.

Dorothy Wordsworth's *récits de voyage* perform a similar function. They are journals of her travels on the continent and in England. Specifically, Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820 describes her peregrinations from Calais, Bruges, Cologne, through the Alps to Milan, and back through Geneva, Paris and Boulogne, in the company of William and Mary Wordsworth. Dorothy's Journals have for a long time been considered footnotes to William's poetry; a renewed interest in Dorothy's work focuses on the independence of her status as a writer. For most of her life, Dorothy wrote her observations of people and nature in prose, whereas William used her notes as raw material for his poetry, a fact often commented on by their biographers. The close relationship between Dorothy and William was clearly more fruitful for him than for her. His talent flourished, whereas she remained in his shadow. Encouraged by friends to publish her work, she refused because she would "detest the idea of setting [herself] up as an Author." It is stressed that William discouraged Dorothy's independent publishing because it would affect his sister's poor health.<sup>98</sup> As a result, none of her journals, poems or voluminous correspondence were published in her own lifetime.

Having spent her life for and with William, she would have been of little literary importance had she not captured

---

<sup>98</sup> Susan M. Levin, Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1987) 79.

some of her own life in words. Dorothy, the narrator of the Journal, is anxious about remembering and writing experiences. She knows that events of her life quickly erode from her memory and she writes to prevent their loss. Her detailed writing has the quality of life writing or "writing life as it happens" - an autobiography in the making. In the terms of Phillipe Lejeune, she "lives her life and writes it." Her observations focus on her own impressions of the views and places seen through her own eyes. Only rarely does she quote anyone in the group or encountered during her travel. The narrating "I" dominates other voices in the text.

Part of Dorothy's endeavour is to grasp the images and feelings they evoked in William on his original trip through the Alps thirty years before. She read and reread his Descriptive Sketches, yet the real images behind the poet's visions are different, smaller and less impressive. She writes some factual corrections to William's poems. "We ...quitted this dirty Inn to float upon the Lake of Como" - not "Como buried deep in chestnut groves" (216) as William writes in his Descriptive Sketches. The "tremendous torrent" that came "thundering down a chasm of the mountains" from William's past turns out to be "now, upon this sunny day, a brisk rivulet, that chearfully bounded down to Vedro." (259) She thus exposes some of his poetic visions, "the tales of thirty years gone by." Interestingly, William refuses to enter the spittal he had described. From the outside it does

not create the same impression; William refuses to be confronted with the past. It makes William "anxiety-ridden" and sleepless, whereas Dorothy celebrates the day with a merry dinner party after which she sleeps soundly.(261) Dorothy observes that the reality seen through her own eyes surpasses the written descriptions.

Dorothy Wordsworth and her siblings lost their parents at an early age and spent years with relatives in separation from each other. Deprived of her brothers' presence until the age of twenty one, she moved in with William in 1795. Their years of separation and their status as orphans shed some light on the unusual, compensatory closeness that developed between Dorothy and William. Eventually, they settled down in Alfoxden to be closer to their friend Samuel Coleridge, where the three met daily. Dorothy's Alfoxden journal containing sensitive observations of nature actually served William as the first set of materials he adapted for his poetry.<sup>99</sup> "To please William," she continued writing journals. Interestingly, her works display a movement towards greater self-erasure as William profits more from her observations. It can be argued that she writes in an effort to differentiate herself from William, her famous brother and beneficiary of her experiences and writings. She fulfills her desire to record life on the tour for William but,

---

<sup>99</sup> Charles and Mary Lamb are another example of a poet and his sister whose writing is used by her brother.

by avoiding exposing herself, she refuses to be subject of his poetic endeavor. By hiding herself, she saves her *self* from appropriation. This is an interesting strategy of writing the self.

Dorothy states the goals of the tour initially. When two girls with whom they share the Union coach cannot fit inside, and one of them has to walk, Dorothy comments:

there was nothing unusual in ... the young Lady's notion of dreariness and a long walk, and I should hardly have thought this incident of my journal worth preserving but for the ludicrous effect, at the time, of contrast with our own schemes and wishes; it being the object of our ambition to cross the Alps on foot.(7)

Unlike Dorothy, the younger women consider travel "dreary." They do not know the pleasure of travel on foot and the vantage point that it offers. In contrast, Dorothy appears as a mature individual of a higher degree of philosophical awareness, who enjoys travel on foot and even laborious ascents in the mountains.

Her departure from England and arrival in Calais is marked by her stay at Dessins Hotel, "famous since the days of Sterne." She occupies a room marked "Sterne's Room" and decorated by a print of the writer. Not altogether coincidentally, this reference reminds the reader of the tradition of travel writing. Much of her journal has the characteristics of a picaresque novel, where the events, including travel complications, are a loose sequence connected by the persona of the main character and narrator. Unlike female

picaroons, however, the narrator of Journal of a Tour is a predictable noblewoman who is not involved in any unusual events. Additionally, the reader learns that Dorothy, the author of her own travel account, has brought Chaucer's Canterbury Tales to read on the way, and she draws a parallel between the Friar and the "jolly tavern host." The narrator thus foregrounds the events of the tour as possibly related to literature or being potentially literary material. She alerts readers to literary interpretations of the events she will recount. Much of Dorothy's previous work became poetry and she is conscious of the process in which life writing becomes literature.

Most critics of Dorothy's Journals notice an absence of subjectivity for the most part of her work.<sup>100</sup> It should not be altogether surprising given the fact that her writing, experiences and observations, are accessible to and reusable by William. It can be argued she writes in this "selfless" manner to protect herself from being read and exposed. Tyler points out the difference between Dorothy's more subjective style from the period before she joined William's household and the change into an objective style,

---

<sup>100</sup> Ernest de Selincourt claims her journals to be "entirely without self-consciousness." Margaret Homans observes "Dorothy's tendency to omit a central or prominent self." James H. McGavran sees her as "self-sacrificing diarist."

dominating the journals, while she makes comparisons.<sup>101</sup> She comments on how William actually encroached on Dorothy textually by writing his own occasional comments in the notebooks she used to write her journals in, as well as the striking similarities between some of their texts. On this continental tour everyone kept a journal but William, the publishing poet, who in turn used his sister's and his wife's journals as a resource of ideas to appropriate for his poetry.

The narrator of Journal of a Tour on the Continent is sensitive to nature and people alike. She constructs many vivid portraits of women she sees on the way. These women are mostly peasant women engaged in some activity to sustain their families. Dorothy perceives their physicality and the garb they wear, and records them with vivid detail. She draws an interesting image of the fishwomen of Calais:

(...) we stopped to gaze at a groupe - rather a line of women and girls, seated beside dirty fish-baskets under the old gateway and ramparts - their white nightcaps, brown and puckered faces, bright eyes etc. etc. were very striking. (...) but the cleanly, tight dress of these females prevents all disgust in looking at them; however you may dislike the smell from their slovenly baskets, and even in the countenances of these fish-women, the very lowest of the people, there is something of liveliness, of mental activity, interesting to me...(10)

This remarkable passage reflects the narrator's struggle to

---

<sup>101</sup> Lisa Tyler explores this question in "Big Brother Is Watching You: Dorothy Wordsworth's Alfoxden and Grasmere Journals" University Of Dayton Review, Spring 1995 23:2, 87-95.

transcend the poor fish sellers's physical unattractiveness and grasp their essence. Dorothy's companions did not perceive this scene like her. "Others, however, ... hardly remember this - and much of it may have been the gift of my own fancy."(10)

One distinguishing quality of Dorothy's journal is her interest in domestic themes - she observes households, food making, child rearing, relations between family members and parental pride in particular. She writes mini portraits of people in the context of their homes and daily toil - whereas she herself is a mobile subject, an atypical woman whose gaze is directed at women. Her observations somewhat contradict the idea of travel - of non-connectedness and the brevity of encounters, which is the life she chooses for herself. At the same time, the contrast between the domesticated and mobile subjects is stressed by this juxtaposition.

...Landed again in the harbor of Belaggio - walked through the piazzas - clomb up the town... We descended to our boat (...) The women on the banks of the lake of Como are often handsome - the girls graceful; - and there is a softness, with cheerfulness, even in the manners of the poorest.(221)

The narrator of her account frequently describes the original local costumes of different regions.

The Frenchified dresses of Milan, and the graceful white veil no longer seen, we find the women in the old costume of their country, with handkerchiefs bound round the head, and short red petticoats hung on shapeless waists.. (254)

Dorothy draws parallels between the environment and the

state of people's health. In the Alps people are often deprived of iodine and suffer from thyroid malformation. In Martigny "It was dismal to behold pallid faces of all ages, throats deformed by *goitres* - the children like the diseased and dwarf old men."(280) In Como, the narrator "walked alone in the streets [and remarks] so many dwarfed and deformed persons... people looked pallid."(230) In the valley of Giswil, she noticed "an unusual number and proportion of memorials of deaths of *children*; and probably *they* suffer most from the effects of climate and situation."(138) Although Dorothy is at times unwell on the trip, the actual crossing of the Alps rejuvenates her.

Let me express my thankfulness for the strength and chearful spirits with which I was enabled to undertake a journey on foot across the Alps, having but a few weeks before suffered so much from oppression and sickness that I had little hope of being able to accomplish the journey in any way. The change was marvellous, for when I began to climb the mountains at Lauterbrunnen, the full possession of health and even a youthful vigour seemed to have returned;- and never again did I suffer a moment from pain or weakness - hardly from fatigue.(174)

She rejoices in having the stamina and becomes the group leader on this trail.

At the time of Dorothy's tour Europe heals from the wounds inflicted by Napoleon. Strikingly, from beginning to end, the trail of her tour is marked by the remnants of former Napoleon's presence. Unlike Staël's account, synchronic with Bonaparte's rule, Wordsworth's is written several years after his defeat. The first site she visits on

the continent is the Waterloo battlefield, now covered with ripening crops, where Dorothy reflects on the "visible record of slaughter." While visiting sites on her tour, Dorothy frequently remarks on the legacy of both the French Revolution and of Bonaparte's terror as she hears the stories of local people. Dorothy and the party meet Aloys Reding - a former soldier in the Swiss Army fighting against Napoleon; he is later immortalized by William in a poem. She rests next to the ruins of a Convent destroyed by the French. She notices broad tracts made for Napoleon's quick troop marches, the construction of which ruined forests and displaced people: "Buonaparte's broad, unshaded road was stretched out in a right line. However convenient... for conquest or traffic, they are, of all others, the least pleasant to the foot-traveller." (256) However, in his rapid rise and fall, Bonaparte did not finish many of his projects. Some of them were obstructed by nature: "For several leagues near Milan Buonaparte has caused trees to be planted; they are of very poor growth, and never can produce a shade." (230) In Milan, Dorothy remarks "I wish Napoleon had contrived no worse schemes for making himself remembered than the finishing of this Cathedral, which his reign was too short to accomplish... [there are now] fifty workers... Napoleon's number was a thousand." (235) Together with William and Mary, Dorothy watches a "grand military mass in the Place d'Armes, Buonaparte's field for reviewing his

troops." After that, the party goes to see Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" and they are shown "the mark of a musket Ball, fired in wantonness by a French soldier... in one part of the painting of Leonardo da Vinci." Whereas the guide focuses on Napoleon's destructive legacy, Dorothy observes at the same time that in reality "this picture suffered more from the negligence of the Monks than from the scorn of the French. A hole was broken through the lower part of the centre of the picture to admit hot dishes from the kitchen into the Refectory."(238) Aware of how interpretation can bias impressions, she points out the irony of the events connected with the painting.

At Montbar, Dorothy learns in Buffon's gardens about yet another example of Napoleon's terror: the naturalist's father was guillotined during the Revolution. She records the inhabitants' stories: "[a man] groaned over the changes of times - was in a hot passion at the name of Bonaparte, and cursed at the Revolution, which had thrown [people] out of employ."(317) At Joigny "a woman flashed with bitter rage." The group passes the "terrible prison in the revolutionary times" at Bicêtre. Before departing for England from Boulogne, the narrator comments: "Buonaparte's Pillar unfinished... monument of the founder's vanity and arrogance; and so it may stand as long as the brick towers of Caligula have done, a remnant of which yet appears on the cliffs."(333) The sixteen week "pleasant ramblings" is punctuated by

Dorothy's scathing portrait of Napoleon. Skilful at grasping Napoleon's grand designs of power, she does not reveal how she perceives William's role in her life in the Journal. She calls him "the Bard" thus acknowledging his poetic greatness.

Although the dominating tone of Wordsworth's account is serious and factual, it also displays a sense of humor. When William hears peasant women singing from afar and is esthetically moved by its beauty to write a sonnet, Dorothy's reaction is quite different.

I was so close to the women when they began to sing, and hence, probable it was that I perceived nothing of the sweetness in their tone... The powerfulness of their tones was perfectly astonishing.(118)

The vantage point of the observer may greatly affect his or her perception. Even a second look at a familiar view can produce a different impression.

On second view of the Cathedral of Milan I felt that I lost something. The ideal of Princely magnificence, and of the perfection of human art was not impaired but there is, at the first bursting of the view, an enchanting power in that building to conjure up and even to realize those imaginations that stir the youthful mind in reading Fairy Tales or the Arabian Nights Entertainments, or histories of the glory of antient Cities decayed or overthrown. Such romantic pleasure could not be recalled at will.(234)

In Voltaire's chateau in Geneva, Dorothy is disappointed at its worn out state: "[tattered curtains] as more devoted visitors than we not infrequently purloin a slip of the material, carrying it home as a precious relic."(305) She likens tourist visits to pilgrimages, first invoked in the

text by Cantenbury Tales.

\*

Dorothy records her enjoyment of hiking, especially crossing the Alps on foot, a highlight of the tour. She often ventures out alone, especially in the mornings, which does not go unnoticed by local people. They stare at her when they see "a solitary female from a foreign country. The young laughed, yet not rudely..."(226)<sup>102</sup> When she sits on a crag, looking at a valley in the rain, she feels stifled by unwanted company "the people from the village having spied me, one came, then another, and another, all stupidly staring at me."(179) She notices the different treatment given to men and women in their party. She records that at the Ambrosian Library in Milan, the librarian speaks to men in Latin. At Darmstadt, she sits at supper at the table d'hôte "among Germans and Prussians... the only female at the table." (61) She pretends not to understand either German or French to be able to overhear their conversations. She does not reveal what she overhears, however. On another occasion she remarks that local men find it "altogether inexplicable that we (females especially) should travel so far, and expend so much money for the sake of seeing the Country." (267) She enjoys traveling, and likes to venture

---

<sup>102</sup> In Journal of my Second Tour of Scotland (1822) that Dorothy took with Joanna Hutchinson alone, Dorothy describes a fearful encounter with two crude Scotsmen, when she is convinced the inn keeper admits the men who had "come in after us in the evening" to murder them. (393-394).

out alone, which emphasizes her strength. "I pushed forward."(76) "- passed alone above the unfenced precipice - and wondered to find myself in such a place, fearless and in safety. I plunged into the forest."(148) "I was alone - the first in the ascent."(184)<sup>103</sup> In comparison with European women, the narrator remarks not without national pride, "English women (in quest of leisure, at least) are certainly more adventurous than those of any other European Nation." (282)

Most of the time of the tour William is responsible for dealing with guides, boatmen and innkeepers. From the very outset, the group is not free from broken contracts and excessive service prices. "Unreasonable demands made by the postillions, and Wm. at the inn door looked as fierce as Buonaparte... back again to threaten this poor town"(24) Even worse, the group loses their coats and cloaks because of an unreasonable carman who has locked them up before he

had the audacity to demand (instead of 18 francs) seven and twenty. Wm. refused to give more than agreed for - the man grew impertinent - and Wm. desired the Magistrate might be summoned - a woeful resource! ... he himself was the magistrate... On parting Wm. asked the man formally, if he persisted in the detention; and left him with the assurance that, if justice were to be had in Switzerland, he should feel the weight of it. The people (of whom forty or fifty might have gathered round) all sided with the Magistrate...(150)

Luckily for the victims, help does arrive some days later

---

<sup>103</sup> Not accidentally, Dorothy writes an appealing portrait of Columbine who "is a graceful, slender creature; a female seeking retirement, and growing freest, and most graceful where it is most alone." (Grasmere 1800-1803).

and the garments are retrieved. Some of the inconveniences encountered on the way, though clearly annoying to the travelers, have a comical quality in Dorothy's description.

A disagreeable waiter, dirty rooms, bad smells, and a wretched dinner were enough to disgust us with Italian Inns, and all this with ostentation and finery. We had a miserable trout that made us think of a sickness among fishes, cheese soup (the only thing which in our travels I turned from with disgust), bad bread, bad butter, indifferent cheese, sorry peaches and poor wine; and for this fare, the landlord had the audacity to demand five francs each person. The Gentlemen threatened to call in the Magistrate...(202-203)

Dorothy is not pleased with the services in the Italian Alps and she is fearful of men in Locarno.

[The] Inhabitants of that retired district were distinguished by peculiar manners and customs... carrying knives in their pockets of peculiar construction, which they are ready to use upon slight provocation, especially when crossed by jealousy, their ruling passion.(205)

Often having to bargain with demanding inn-keepers, Dorothy remarks: "the charges were, as usual, in proportion to the discomfort."(315) At Sens, Dorothy, who always comments on the quality of the food served to the group, records "They served us with a diminutive twice-roasted *rôtie*, and pigeons that had been stewed and restewed, it might be, for the tables d'hôte for a week past. The arrangements of this "superbe" hotel were, indeed, very indifferent."(320) She is capable, however, of putting events into perspective and those minor episodes cannot spoil the pleasure of traveling. Riding in a bad carriage, she remarks: "It is indeed worth while to be jolted now and then to know, by transi-

tion, what may be the pleasure of swift motion upon silent wheels."(149)

Dorothy reflects on the sites she sees on the trail with a great degree of sensitivity. In Milan:

I remained alone, not venturing to follow the rest of the party to the top of the giddy central spire, which is ascended by a narrow stair-case twisted round the outside... I wandered about with space spread around me; the floor on which I trod was all of polished marble, intensely hot, and as dazzling as snow; and instead of moving figures I was surrounded by groupés and stationary processions of silent statues - Saints - sages - and Angels. It is impossible for me to describe the beautiful spectacle, or to give a notion of the delight I felt...(234)

She frequently describes nature and romantic quality of the views. Some of the passages read like poetry in free verse.

I saw the snow of the Alps burnished by the sun about half an hour before its setting. After that they were left to their wintry marble coldness, without a farewell gleam. Yet suddenly the city and the cathedral tower and trees were singled out for favor by the sun among his glittering clouds, and gilded with the richest light.

She makes frequent remarks on the weather changes. She records every rain. She wonders at the magnificence of the Alps: "from safe bridges crossing the torrents we looked without trepidation into their gulphs."(185) She relives the experiences of the day:

Thus ended the first of our happy days spent in crossing the Alps; and before ten o'clock we all retired to rest, without painful fatigue. It was not the nipping air which found its way into our bed-rooms that kept me awake: so many images moved before my mind, not like *dreams* but realities, that I could not at once compose myself to sleep, and travelled over again the journey of the day.(188)

Among the sites visited on the Tour, Mont Blanc teases her

imagination the most.

[The] fantastic or sublime masses of granite... cannot be looked at without sometimes recalling images of castles, spires, towers, ancient cities, and fragments in the deserts of the East, though their bulk, their number, their sublime stations, forbid all but transient thoughts unconnected with lonely Nature, and the first mysterious Cause of whatever we behold.(285)

This location, central to romantic travels in the Alps, brings about images of bareness, death, "multitude of wasting precipices" and also grandeur and depth. These reflections mark the high point of Dorothy's trip, literal and metaphoric. The Mer de Glace, a glacier called a "sea of ice," causes her reflections on eternity and makes her turn inward.

It is very curious, perhaps more curious than beautiful, yet no one can behold without admiration the exquisite hues and gem-like clearness of the edges of the arch, and of the fearful green chasm beneath it, whence the River rushes with terrible commotion and a thundering sound. I could have sate the day through to look only and listen, and dream of the underground workings, the obscure passages - to be concealed for ever from human eye. No spectacle that I ever beheld - not even the ocean itself - has had an equal power over my mind in bringing together thoughts connected with duration and decay - eternity, and perpetual wasting - the visible and invisible power of God and Nature...(286)

Dorothy's thoughts wander to the underworld of nature, the invisible recesses filled with activity -- a metaphor of the subconscious. Having reached the highest point on her trip, she no longer looks out but inside. Besides inward reflection, the glacier also causes Dorothy fear when she crosses it on foot - treading on the icy steps carved by the guide when one wrong step would cause sliding into a precipice and

certain death.

After Mont Blanc, Dorothy records a deterioration of weather and displays a lowered interest in visiting places. It is cold and rainy. Paris is "dull." The view of Mont Blanc will be remembered later in the text - in one of some infrequent moments of textual memory in the Journal. It is devoted to recording events organized by the narrative order and chronology, rather than self-expression. In general, the narrator's impulse is to describe the events as she encounters them, without much summary or interpretation in view of the previous developments. What underlies her descriptions is an added difficulty of finding her own vision of the views that William saw thirty years before, on a similar trip, and described in Descriptive Sketches. She strives not to let William's projections intrude upon her vision and successfully achieves independent observations. Susan Levin discusses the difference between the siblings' visions. She observes:

Neither William's stories, nor her own past interpretations of them... can match present reality. William's words do not equal her vision(...) Dorothy's account of her own journey combines her joy at finally accomplishing such a feat [crossing the Alps] with the awareness that it is somehow too late, that her youth has passed and that death approaches. What was for William a prelude is for Dorothy a finale.<sup>104</sup>

Indeed, Dorothy's insights come late in her life. Her states of feeling and reflections resurface from time to time and

---

<sup>104</sup> Levin, Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism 100-102.

shed a new light on the writing persona. There is a certain reluctance on the part of the narrator to be detected occasionally. When the events of the day are many, the narrator takes few notes: "we had already seen many sights, which I have left unrecorded having been careless of taking notes when needed." (239) Twice she literally leaves her journal behind and a special messenger has to be sent to fetch it. It is not an obvious self-dramatization, yet the self-creative quality can be argued. It is hard to determine to what degree the journal narrator truthfully reflects the persona of Dorothy Wordsworth or how spontaneous, truthful or private the content of the Journal is.

The narrator admits taking notes to be able to describe the events of the day in the journal. The journal is actually a secondary recording of events. Some travelers have fantastic memory but Dorothy is not one of them. Her impressions and her life are said to be limited to what is written. She claims that when she has no notes to write from, there will be no record. In Fontainebleau, "took no notes, if inclined, could not describe the magnificence." (321) If she needs notes to write from, she not only relies on an earlier text but also implies interpretation and selection of events. In this unspontaneous process, she first reads the notes and then she creates a new rendering of the story. Dorothy's text displays a degree of anxiety of not being able to remember often accompanies descriptions of experi-

ences.

My memory fails when I would recall this man's [Frenchman's] lively gestures. (...)It is impossible even to remember (therefore how should I enable any one to imagine?) the power of the dashing, and of the sounds - the breezes -- the dancing dizzy sensations - and the exquisite beauty of colors! The whole stream falls like liquid emeralds - a solid mass of translucent green hue...(89-90)

The text, pointing to her suspicion that nature can not be adequately recreated in writing, continues nonetheless. She refers to this contradiction in other scenes describing nature. Writing about nature is problematic because of the medium but also because of the threat of forgetting.

Dorothy remarks on the process of writing occasionally. These are rare moments in which the narrator discloses her intentionality regarding revealing facts. She is in control of her text and leads the reader along the paths she chooses to describe. The only direct address to the reader is included under the entry on Dorothy's birthday, August 16. She is distracted from writing about the travel by discovering the name Wordsworth in a magazine that published a poem by William. To return to her account, she says "But I was going to lead you to the end of the long bridge under a dark roof of wood..."(151) This break in the narrative reminds the reader of the consciousness of her effort to record events relating to the journey. Eventually, the reader is also told some history of the journal. No mention is made of the actual length and time she sacrifices for writing, except that she writes in privacy.

Dorothy writes herself in the shadow of William, to be sure, in an effort to preserve part of herself. Those two lives intertwine very closely. At the time of the tour, she is forty nine years old. She writes about him at length in her letters, though he has little presence in Journal of a Tour on the Continent. She not only supplied William with ideas for poetry but also diligently read proofs of his work. In "Recluse" William says of his sister: "she gave me eyes, she gave me ears." She devotes her life to her brother until she dies at eighty three, after almost twenty years of being affected by dementia. A curious entry in the Grasmere journal indicates Dorothy's great affection for her brother, when she suddenly discloses information of his marriage.

On Monday, 4th October 1802, my brother William was married to Mary Hutchinson... I [stayed home] kept myself as quiet as I could, but when I saw the two men running up the walk to tell us it was over, I could stand it any longer, and threw myself on the bed, where I lay in stillness, neither saying nor hearing anything till Sara [Hutchinson] came upstairs to me and said "They are coming." This forced me from the bed where I lay, and I moved, I knew not how, straight forward, faster than my strength could carry me, till I met my beloved William, and fell upon his bosom...I stayed to welcome my dear Mary.<sup>105</sup>

This entry has risen speculations so as to the nature of their relationship, yet there is no textual proof of an incestuous relationship, although it is marked by closeness. Not dominating her text, William is present in it. Her

---

<sup>105</sup> Mary Moorman, ed. Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth. The Alfoxden Journal 1789. The Grasmere Journals 1800-1803 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971) 154.

watchful interest in her brother is especially evident in the passages in which she looks at him when he does not look. The reader of the Journal learns that William falls asleep in his wet clothes after a rain drenches them (139), and that he lies down on a steep of a hill with his eyes closed.(165)

There has been an amazing contention among the critics regarding whether Dorothy Wordsworth had an independent self or not.<sup>106</sup> Since her work has mostly been read by Wordsworth specialists, she appears not to have received full justice as a writer in her own right. Susan Levin describes Dorothy's self as "precarious, vulnerable, ambivalent... characterized by gestures of refusal."<sup>107</sup> Ann Mellor approaches Dorothy's work from the point of view of romantic conception and linguistic representation of self, and she finds her work to be "exceptionally revealing autobiographical writing." She argues

Masculine Romanticism has traditionally been identified with the assertion of a self that is unified, unique, enduring, capable of initiating activity, and above all aware of itself as a self (...) The construction of such a self was William Wordsworth "The Prelude." (...) Paul de Man... argued that Wordsworth's project was undercut by his own recognition that language can never be more than an alienating 'garment' ... tracked the

---

<sup>106</sup> Margaret Homans, Women Writers and Poetic Identity (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) chap. 1-2; James Holt McGavran, Jr., "Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals - Putting Heself Down," The Private Self - Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings ed. Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 232.

<sup>107</sup> Levin, Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism 7.

way images of an achieved unitary self give way... to images of a lost boy, a self "bewildered and engulfed..."<sup>108</sup>

In terms of romantic requirements of defining self, even William Wordsworth's "The Prelude," considered to be the fullest example of a "unified self," has shown a hiatus between the referential and written self. Unlike masculine epic autobiographies reflecting the theme of heroic quest, the feminine autobiographies discussed here reflect writing a self that is relational and synchronic, but not necessarily valorized as secondary.

Dorothy's poem "Floating Island at Hawkeshead, An Incident in the schemes of Nature," written on one of her travels, reflects her poetics of writing the self and adds to the meaning of the Journal:

Harmonious Powers with Nature Work  
On sky, earth, river, lake, and sea:  
Sunshine and storm, whirlwind and breeze  
All in one duteous task agree.

Once did I see a slip of earth,  
By throbbing waves long undermined,  
Loosed from its hold;- how no one knew  
But all might see it float, obedient to the wind.

Might see it, from the verdant shore  
Dissevered float upon the Lake,  
Float, with its crest of tree adorned  
On which the warbling birds their pastime take.

Food, shelter, safety there they find  
There berries ripen, flowerets bloom;  
There insects live their lives - and die:  
A peopled world it is;- in size a tiny room.

---

<sup>108</sup> Ann Mellor, Romanticism and Gender (Routledge: New York, 1993) 145.

And thus through many seasons' space  
 This little island may survive  
 But nature, though we mark her not,  
 Will take away - may cease to give.

Buried beneath the glittering Lake!  
 Its place no longer to be found,  
 Yet the lost fragments shall remain,  
 To fertilize some other ground.<sup>109</sup>

Dorothy wrote this poem soon before she lost lucidity -- she captured, however, the essence of a life which "agrees" with Nature. The island, a metaphor of the self, is a friendly and safe place, of domestic quality "Food, shelter, safety there they find." It is a symbiotic microcosm of a fluctuating dimension "A peopled world it is;- in size of a tiny room." This self is relational and supportive of others.<sup>110</sup> The island is in a gentle motion. Its "crest of trees" is visible but not its inside. When the Isle is taken away by Nature, "the lost fragments shall remain,/ To fertilize some other ground." Interestingly this poem, reflecting a deep harmony with nature, has been considered an example of eco-feminism. Susan Wolfson sees the movement from "I" to "you" to "all" as an "expansion of individual subjectivity into visionary community... - the vision "undermined" - may be

---

<sup>109</sup> "The Collected Poems of Dorothy Wordsworth" in Levin, Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism 175-237.

<sup>110</sup> Ann Mellor compares this poem to another image of an island in William's "Prelude."

Rotted as by a charm, my life became  
 A floating island, an amphibious thing,  
 Unsound, of spongy texture, yet withal,  
 Not wanting a fair face of water-weeds  
 And pleasant flowers.

accepted and integrated into a larger vision of a natural process."<sup>111</sup> This poem is a subtle but definitive departure from William's vision. Another late poem entitled "Thoughts on my sick-bed" includes revealing reflections upon her own life. "And has the remnant of my life/ Been pilfered (...)"(219) - the sense of her life being stolen from her conveys sadness and loss. Regardless of this, the persona in the poem asserts she had a "hidden life/ Couchant in this feeble frame" and it was "enriched by kindred gifts." In youthful days, she found pleasure in observing the world around her, a substitute for acting: "With busy eyes I pierced the lane/ In quest of known and unknown things." Remembering and disclosing the past is not altogether pleasing but it brings the persona a sense of relief and liberation.

With some sad thoughts the work was done,  
Unprompted and unbidden,  
But joy it brought to my *hidden* life,  
To consciousness no longer hidden.

In another draft of this poem she refers to "the true self," which is no longer hidden. She is empowered by remembering her youth and makes a last metaphoric journey of her own.

I felt a Power unfelt before,  
Controlling weakness, languor, pain;  
It bore me to the Terrace walk  
I trod the hills again;~

No prisoner in this lonely room,

---

<sup>111</sup> Susan Wolfson, "Individual in Community: Dorothy Wordsworth in Conversation with William," Romanticism and Feminism ed. Ann Mellor (Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1988) 145.

I saw the green Banks of the Wye,  
 Recalling the prophetic words,  
 Bard, Brother, Friend from infancy!

(...)  
 And with Memory I was there.

Surprisingly the conclusion of the poem includes an apostrophe to William, and asserts her new insight. Although she is confined to her room physically "Alas! my feet no more may join/ The chearful sabbath train," her "mind is free to roam." Dorothy Wordsworth, or the autobiographical narrator of her journals and the persona of her poetry, uses the theme of travel to write a reflective self, conscious of the process of writing and endowed with the power to write her observations. Although none of Dorothy's work was published in her lifetime, she revised and perfected it. It is hard to determine in what way William limited her expression, how much she gave of herself willingly and what prevented her from publishing her work. Her texts, however, give evidence that she creates a distinctive self of an independent observer and a writing woman.

Together with Germaine de Staël, Dorothy Wordsworth belongs to a tradition of travel account writing which involves curious tactics of allusion and omission. The themes of travel and a significant male counterpart in different ways allow both Staël and Wordsworth to redefine those males' experiences and create independent images of their own selves. They each create an autonomous textual self in the process of life writing. Their works show a

tightening gap between travel writing and fiction.

## V

## A Voyage Into the World of Women

*I was looking for a distraction - I expected joy... I found none of this, but! But better yet. Oh, how much better. I can't express it in any words how much better!*

*Maria Wirtemberska*

Women writers more often than not travel into the world of women where the points of arrival are household and romance, as well as fantasy, where events stem from a private reality. Joan DeJean, for instance, discusses the rise of the novel in France in terms of geography and gender, a literary mapping of women's experience.<sup>112</sup> Feminist transgressions allow a different view of the available geography, order of the world, history and women's participation. The texts to be analyzed in this chapter offer such a revisionist reading. Maria Wirtemberska, Maria Sadowska and Karolina Pavlova are Slavic *voleuses de langue* whom I have chosen as examples of authors who reclaim language for women, recording the female "I" and female experience in the form of departure. These works show different efforts at rewriting history, or creating and disseminating new myths that would allow development of new symbols and metaphors which would in turn create a female mythology. Writing or rewriting the female departure may also be a case of *remythopeia* in the

---

<sup>112</sup> Joan DeJean, Tender Geographies (New York: Columbia UP, 1991)

terms of Alicia Ostriker. Revisions of myth are:

(...)reenactments of feminist antiauthoritarianism opposed to the patriarchal praxis of reifying texts. (...) involve reevaluations of social, political and philosophical values, particularly those enshrined in occidental literature, such as the glorification of conquest and the faith that the cosmos is - must be - hierarchically ordered with earth and body on the bottom and mind and spirit on the top. (...) [They] contain no trace of nostalgia, no faith that the past is a repository of truth, goodness, or desirable social organization.<sup>113</sup>

Women's departures relate directly to the issues of freedom and fulfillment. Denied the freedom to roam outside, women turn inward, to their emotions and private metaphors of the self. The nineteenth century in Western literatures abounds in women's travel literature and fantastic departures. Like their Western counterparts, Polish and Russian women depart on literal and metaphoric voyages in search of education and pleasure. They also write about their experience with a varied degree of subjective vision. Like some Western female writers of the nineteenth century, Sadowska uses a male pen name, Zbigniew, and also a male narrator. This phenomenon is not atypical of the early stages of women's fiction. Appropriating a male voice is an empowering exercise for a woman writer who knows her work will be depreciated solely because of her gender, should it be revealed. The problematic aspect of women's namelessness and the question of signature is raised again. How does the fact of a woman writing women's

---

<sup>113</sup> Alicia Ostriker, "The Thieves of Language," The New Feminist Criticism ed. Sandra Gilbert et al. (New York: Pantheon, 1985) 330.

experience in male discourse for a mixed audience bear on the meaning of her writing, means of expression and the reception of her work? Adrienne Rich and Alicia Ostriker, among others, point out the difficulty of finding a woman's means of expression in the phallogentric culture, where the whole tradition including the language gives man a privileged position.

A number of interesting revisionist questions arise from Maria Wirtemberska's Some Events, Thoughts and Feelings Experienced Abroad (Niektóre zdarzenia, myśli i uczucia doznane za granicą, 1816), Maria Sadowska's Memoirs of A Fly (Pamiętniki Muchy, 1861)<sup>114</sup> and Karolina Pavlova's A Double Life (Dvojnaja Zhizn, 1848). Functioning in different sociolects and stylistically different, these authors share important qualities. They are wonderfully progressive and interesting both as writers, and as women who found efficient means to express women's experience. That their writing is remarkably self-conscious is apparent in the inclusion and treatment of feminist issues.

In the literature of the nineteenth century fantastic travel is a popular topos which serves many functions. Often called utopian, those texts take the reader to distant places: to the Moon or unknown happy islands, which may involve visions of ideal societies. Whereas Polish readers

---

<sup>114</sup> Maria Sadowska used the theme of travel also in a short story Podróż dookoła świata w trzy godziny (A Voyage Around the World in Three Hours) published in Warsaw in 1859.

know the fantasies by writers such as Jan Potocki A Memoir Found in Saragossa, or Hoffman's novels, women's fantastic voyages remain unknown and not imitated. Both Maria Sadowska and Maria Wirtemberska, the author of Some Events, are examples of this. The state of Polish fantastic literature of the nineteenth century has been dealt with by many. In "On Classicism and Romanticism", Kazimierz Brodziński discusses the creative potential of the fantastic. Jan Śnia-decki argues that "imagination can invent ... but not stray from probability." Adam Mickiewicz approves of "brave fantasies that rise above the limits of reality". He stresses that fantastic literature has been an integral part of European tradition and that the fantastic plays a metaphoric role in expressing moral and educational values. Maurycy Mochnacki gives the writer complete freedom: "The subject of art is not reality, therefore the poet can create ultimate ideals according to his fancy." It will only be later, in "The Genesis of the Imagination", that Piotr Chmielowski will observe that women use imagination to express subconscious and intuitive feelings differently from men. He observes that women are better predestined to write fantastic literature than men but refrains from explaining the reasons. Only Deotyma (Wanda Łuszczewska) claims that fantastic themes are as much history of culture as factual. She knows that women are absent in the public sphere and therefore function in the private sphere of fantasy. In an ode on

"The Position Of Women" she remarks that they have no voice in history: "a crowd of women slowly proceeds without a sound, like a silent choir of ghosts." She creates a new mythology using some old themes in a rewritten version in which women are active subjects. Her unfinished epic cycle "Poland in Song" is a new history of Poland from prehistory until her day with the inclusion of the participation of women. "Wanda" is a metaphoric voyage, a reworking of the old myth of Wanda who refused to marry a German prince and thus subjugate her people to his rule. The atypical rendering of the theme lies in the fact that there is actually a women's army and it defeats Rutger who asks to serve Wanda. This is an instance of what Nancy Miller calls:

(...)a fantasy of power revising the social grammar in which women are never defined as subjects. It is a fantasy of power rejecting the economy in which women can only function as objects of exchange (...) the plots of women's literature are not about "life" (...) They are about the plots in literature itself, about the constraints the maxim places on rendering a female life in fiction.<sup>115</sup>

Many parallels can be made between Polish and Western literatures, but it must be stressed that the situation of women in Poland in the nineteenth century is different from that of women in Western Europe. The public domain traditionally dominated by men is controlled by the countries occupying Poland, and therefore Polish men do not partake in power. The duty to preserve nationality and culture is rel-

---

<sup>115</sup> Nancy Miller, "Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction," The New Feminist Criticism. 356.

egated to the private sphere where the woman reigns. It will be important in women's understanding of subjective space. The Polish man is marginalized but Polish woman is in a double bind. A lack of freedom, sense of misplacement, resistance, dissatisfaction with reality and history, as well as victimization create a peculiar context for literature. When man is exiled, woman has to follow. One of the impacts of that situation was that Polish writers are evaluated from the point of view of their involvement in the cause of freedom, both male and female. Also, critical and popular interest in literature was until very recently primarily influenced by political realities and totalitarian taste - forming directives. Polish romanticism, for obvious reasons, preoccupied itself with the theme of the nation, creating a peculiar national group hero that has haunted the Polish canon ever since. Works of individualistic, personal quality have had therefore a lesser place. Stanisław Brzozowski, Witold Gombrowicz and Czesław Miłosz have pointed to the polonocentrism of Polish literature as well as the national messianism which deprive it of individual sin and doubt. The Polish canon of the nineteenth century has overstated the value of the literature of engagement. The mainstream canon authors such as Eliza Orzeszkowa and Maria Konopnicka are examples. Although skillful writers, they are more utilitarian than imaginative and insightful. These phenomena have also blurred the struggle of the individual and

blurred the question of women's inequality until today.

In Russia, the activity of women writing and publishing bordered on the edge of the illegitimate. Zhenskij vopros was dealt with by many but few women actually wrote until the end of the nineteenth century. Regardless of regional differences, the norm for women's fiction in the sociolect of the nineteenth century was the realm of domesticity and emotion, contained in the framework created by the security of the man's world. These writers recognize and deconstruct this, and expose and criticize interpretive strategies of male reading. Specifically they consider the question of the marginality of the feminine genres such as sentimental fiction which we today value for their subjective dimension. Taken further, they examine the paradox of how women, a literal majority, managed to create a subculture. Sadowska, Wirtemberska and Pavlova comment on feminist themes, and affirm the standards and values associated with women as legitimate. Particular attention is given to the process by which a woman is socialized, i.e. engendering. In the context of women's interactions, they explore how gender imposes an order of things, and how an order of things engenders - the chiasmus expressing a goal of feminist studies today. They also reflect on how men and women misread their respective systems of signification within the available epistemology.

Maria Wirtemberska's Niektóre zdarzenia, myśli i u-

czucia doznane za granica (Some Events, Thoughts and Feelings Experienced Abroad) covers a female narrator's impressions from a trip from Poland to Italy via Prague which comes to an end in Italy. Although the initial aim of the trip is to learn about the world and people, the account does not include concrete facts or revelations, or an epic description of events which would fulfill the reader's expectations. It is an antithesis of conventional travel accounts, travelogues, or *guides de voyage*. It is partly a sentimental journey but instead of describing feelings, it hides them. The author's voyage on the border of reality and subjectivity is written against convention, as it mixes the elements of two traditionally non-contingent styles. Like the other women writers discussed, she travels from the public sphere where women are visible and their expression is limited to a private sphere of her impressions and subjective experience. She engages in a dialogue with the reader, whose expectations she knows but does not meet. The voyage is also subversive in its conclusion. The goal has been achieved but will remain a private discovery. The discourse she uses predates many works in women's literature and will be fully developed by Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf. It clearly has modernist qualities.

Some Events, Thoughts and Feelings Experienced

Abroad<sup>116</sup> is a telling title which points to the fragmentary nature of the travel account. Wirtemberska questions how it relates to the story itself and what the reader could be led to understand from it.

Those Events can't be attractive to him, since I am so little known to him as a citizen of the Moon to an inhabitant of Earth. I don't know how much he can learn from "my thoughts" ... and feelings, so contradictory to one's own heart.

Te "zdarzenia" niczym go zając nie mogą, gdyż ja jemu tak mało znana i tyle obojętna być mogę, ile obywatelka księżycy mieszkańcowi naszej ziemi. Z "myśli moich" nie wiem czy wiele czego się nauczy.

She asks for the company on the trip a reader who:

(...) not knowing what to do after a night of good sleep, not knowing what to do, wants to drowse some more ... he should (turn to) various places, diversions of the imagination, in the peculiar turn of "my whim" that guides my pen. (41)

jeśli trafem osobliwym baki zbija lub po smaczno przespanej nocy nie wiedząc, czym czas spędzić, jeszcze drzy-mać zamyśla, wtedy niechaj (...) rusza dalej, azali w różnaitości miejsc i ludzi (...) wreszcie może w zwrocie dziwaczego "widzi mie się", które piórem moim kieruje.

Although she misleadingly suggests that the work is of little interest to a reader, the intentionality of the text defies that. From the Preface on, we know that the text is original, rich in diverse observations and samples of different types of discourse. The narrator of the story, Malwina, herself points to the subjective quality of the account and engages the reader in the play with the form. Pre-modernist in its quality, it is an idiosyncratic short work

---

<sup>116</sup> All quotations are from Maria Wirtemberska, Niektóre zdarzenia, myśli i uczucia doznane za granicą (Warsaw: PIW, 1978). Translations are mine.

of fiction.

Maria Wirtemberska, de voto princess Czartoryska, encouraged by the success of the first novel Malwina, wrote Some Events inspired by her own travels through Silesia and Austria to Italy. Freed from an old and mentally ill husband to whom she was married at a very young age and the consequences of this experience, she undertook that trip in search of material for the imagination and the heart. She actually created three written documents from the trip: a diary containing various details concerning the trip, letters to the family filled with informative material gathered on the way and Some Events, Thoughts and Feelings Experienced Abroad, written for publication but not published until 1978. This presents a unique opportunity to compare these accounts, written at the same time yet addressed to different audiences. Also the actual process of selection of the material for the work of fiction can be discerned. Some of the actual episodes Wirtemberska witnessed on the trip found their way into fiction. However, much of the work of fiction does not have a source in the diary. (Interestingly, the book did not take the shape of the epistolary novel so popular at the time.) Interpreted as a journal or diary, Some Events was found deficient in details which could serve a biography. Yet it was originally meant to be a work of fiction. The autographs show much revision.

First, the narrator identifies herself as a woman writ-

er, Malwina.

Whereas I am not to deny my gender for a moment, I reveal I am a woman, and departing on a long voyage when it would be hard not to have a name (at least to know what to say on the Silesian border in Wartenberg, when they ask me who I am), I will begin by looking for a name. (42)

Lecz gdy i na moment zaprzec się płci swojej nie myślę, nie taję, że kobieta, a w daleką puszczając się drogę, gdy ciężko jakiegokolwiek nie mieć imienia (choćby też dlatego jedynie, by wiedzieć, co odpowiedzieć na granicy szląskiej w bramie Wartenbergu, gdy zapytają się, kto jestem.

The persona of Malwina, Wirtemberska's traveller, is a conscious self-creation. Her initial identity is female, but she has no name. Aware of that being nameless is difficult, she selects the name of Malwina from a novel of the same title because she was a character from a novel written by a woman in Polish, two reasons why she couldn't resist it. She clearly stresses an affinity with other female writers and being part of a female written tradition in Polish. She also stresses that it is not her age, beauty or the lack of it, or financial status that is important for the reader to know but that she is a writing woman. Wirtemberska thus gives an earlier younger heroine, prone to romance, a continued life as a mature traveller who has put romance between fictitious stories.

Some Events was addressed mainly to readers looking for deeper meanings and a moral basis in literature, who also knew the new literary trends. The author wanted to propose a new model of literature of entertainment and education of the heart. It was an antithesis of the travel accounts

widely read by women, texts that popularized interesting tidbits of information about wondrous adventures of the brave traveller. Jan Śniadecki called those accounts gossip. Wirtemberska's work was also different from the useful and detailed *guide de voyager*. In her text, Wirtemberska distances herself from the tradition represented by such popular accounts as La Lande's Voyage d'Italie, Dupaty's Lettres sur l'Italie, Chateaubriand's Voyage en Italie and Staël's Corinne ou l'Italie (1807). She also alludes to and mentions Laurence Sterne, who created the sentimental character of Yorick, and a narrative in which digression and reflection can function independently. The whole court of Czartoryski developed a cult of Yorick and his ideals, interpreted in their own way. Quite popular in other Slavic literatures, the sentimental novel did not become a trend in Polish literature, however. Wirtemberska uses the tradition freely and has a sense of the novelty of the genre she creates. Interestingly, the first chapter is entitled "The Border", in which the traveller leaves behind an older tradition, the country and Warmbrun, the estate of her former husband whose name she kept. Thus liberated on three different levels, she departs abroad. She will venture into the world and write about it through the prism of her impressions and feelings. Her text reflects the rigor of the trip; the chapters are entitled with names of cities. Yet the account includes only fragmentary descriptions of those places. Wrocław is the

city where the traveller did not meet her beloved mother as planned and cried. Prague is a city through which she will "drag her feet for the sixth time", where the food is unappealing and expensive. Vienna deserves more attention as Malwina practically grew up there. Happy childhood memories will end on a sad note, with her loss of freedom and innocence. Subjective expression is more important than references to the world outside. She claims the right to a free selection of material to write about: "Let's pass by Wartenberg in silence!" Facts are less important than feelings and impressions. Malwina occasionally addresses the reader: "I am asking for some patience, soon the bomb will drop which will topple completely all products of my (youthful) fancies." (119) Malwina knows the reader's expectations of a factual account but she frustrates them. Although the actual account is not a completely free record of thoughts, it has surprising turns:

The reader maybe expects that, waking up the next day, I return to St. Mark's Square and, starting there, I will describe for him all the buildings, galleries, rooms, arsenals, paintings, statues, etc., the way I was looking at them all week! The reader is wrong! - I humbly apologize, but I have fatigued myself so badly climbing all those stairs, my neck is hurting so much from my looking at all those masterpieces that I have no more courage or patience to describe them; also each

Czytelnik może się spodziewać, iż obudziwszy się na-  
zajutrz, wróciłam na Plac  
Świętego Marka i że stamtąd  
zaczawszy, opiszę mu wszel-  
kie budowle, galerie, sale,  
arsenały, obrazy, posągi  
etc., jak ja sama przez ty-  
dzień obzierałam! Otóż w tym  
się myli! - Przepraszam go  
pokornie, lecz takem się  
zmordowała po tyłu schodach  
chodząc, tak mnie kark roz-  
bolał przypatrując się tym  
wszystkim arcydziełom, że  
nie zostało mi już odwagi ni  
cierpliwości, żeby je opisy-  
wać; wreszcie kuźda "podróż

*guide de voyageur* will describe all the smallest features of those rich treasures in more detail. (147)

po Włoszech", każdy *guide de voyageur* dokładniej mu opiszę najmniejsze szczegóły tych obfitych skarbów.

The narrator briefly appears in the text physically, in the middle of her travel toils. We also learn that she is "hot and hungry" at the gothic Oleśnica, and eats and sleeps badly in Prague. Malwina has no erotic presence on this trip. The only romance will occur in the independent story of the half-sisters.

In Karlsbad, for instance, the narrator notices the preparations for the arrival of the Prussian king. It gives her an opportunity to reflect on the court ceremonies, the etiquette and its victims. She writes an episode of the battle for a sofa. Two reigning queens arrived at a ball where there was only one sofa and small stools. As they required an honorary seat each, their respective husbands made them depart. Malwina combines humorous and serious reflections.

Oh, looking at those poor victims of the enslaving etiquette, dancing with whomever I pleased and sitting wherever I pleased, I quietly repeated to myself: Freedom, dear Freedom, you graceful creature, no one will change your scepter into iron. Oh, heavens, give me freedom for a companion together with health, and lavish fortunes on those who want it! [109]

Ach, jakże patrząc na te biedne ofiary niewolniczej etykiety tańcząc z kim chciałam i siedząc gdzie mi się tylko podobało, po cichu powtarzałam sobie: - Wolności, luba wolności, wdzięczna istoto, nikt nie zdoła w żelazo berła twego przestoczyć. O, nieba, dajcie mi ze zdrowiem wolność za towarzyszkę, a sypcie mitry po głowach tych, którzy o nie stoją.

Malwina asserts her independence using a sense of humor and

distance from the convention she describes. Freedom is an important theme in the text and one of the main goals to achieve during the trip. In her pre-textual life, Malwina used to escape from the oppressive reality into her imagination which "carried (her) into the dear fantasies healing the scars gotten in the binds of the real life." Now she does not live in dreams any more but still likes freedom and the work of imagination.

An apostrophe to freedom underlies the narrative from the Preface on: "I willingly repeated after Sterne: Freedom, dear Freedom..." She claims the freedom to write freely as well.

(...) writing ... I state that I don't want to be bound by any plan, any order - I want to freely throw my thoughts on paper without a pattern, one after another, in the order they come to my mind! Warned, no reader will have the right to wonder and criticize if the reader finds little order, not much meaning or other similar defaults in this writing.(44)

... pisząc ... oświadczam, że żadnym planem, żadną zwykłą kolejną skrepowana być nie chcę - chcę swobodnie rzucać na papier myśli bez układu, jedna po drugiej, jak mi do głowy przychodzić będą! Ostrzeżony nikt już prawa mieć nie będzie dziwić się i łajać, jeśli mało porządku, niewiele może sensu lub inne podobne wady w tym piemku znajdzie.

The narrator asserts her authorial freedom and parries the anticipated criticism. She is conscious of violating a convention which would limit her creativity, and her own order of thoughts. The narrator is conscious of occurring in and reacting against a tradition. Her personal freedom and a sense of being in one own's space are what is most important to her. She recalls her stay in Vienna as a young girl and

"the pleasure of being *chez soi*." Personal freedom interests her as a way to function freely in the circle of friends and family, to travel independently and write. We know she has lost it and wants to regain it. Although she is mainly pre-occupied with her own individual freedom, she sympathizes with the nations which lack independence:

(...) torn apart, divided, handed out to different masters without their knowledge, as a result of the dealings of strangers who didn't even know their language, religion, custom, rights (...) Poor Italy - I repeated! Oh, poor, poor nations (...) Poland, Greece, cry together with this land (...) (142)

... rozszarpane, podzielone, różnym panom porozdawane bez ich wiedzy, przez układy osób im cudzych, które języka ich ledwie znały, religii, zwyczajów, swobód ... - Biedne Włochy - powtarzałam! Biedne Narody, których losy nieszczęsne do waszego stały się podobne! Polsko, Grecjo, użyćcie hołd łez waszych tej bratniej ziemi.

The date of the ball at Karlsbad, September 15, is coincidentally the late Napoleon's birthday<sup>117</sup> which makes Malwina reflect on the transience of fame, happiness and power.

Wirtemberska's travel account crosses the borders of the genre she uses and gives her story an original treatment. She looked for a new formula for her work and considered using such terms as "*petit voyage d'imagination*", "journal, a collection of thoughts" or "travel". Another feature blurring the clarity of genre was introducing an independent story of Berta and Rozwinda, not directly connected with the travel. Some Events includes themes of memories and free "voyages of imagination." The main hero

---

<sup>117</sup> In Poland, Napoleon was considered to be liberator and hero, a fact commented on by Staël in Dix années d'exil.

and focus of interest is Malwina herself.

Malwina is an interesting self-creation. She is conscious of being a continuation of a character from an earlier novel and the fact that she is more mature and reflective. She stands for an extension and completion of a woman's education which effectuates itself through an independent voyage and authoring her own text. Whereas the former Malwina is guided by the heart and awaits her lover faithfully, the latter appreciates her freedom and searches for constant qualities in life. The themes of an idyllic and fulfilled love will only be introduced in the parenthesis of the text of a different genre, a knightly gothic story of "Berta and Rozwinda, or Two Different Loves" subtitled as "An Excerpt From the Old Chronicles of Silesian Princes Translated Into Polish." The story presents the cult of the Middle Ages and knightly virtues. It functions, however, as an autonomous story and an antithesis of the represented world of the nineteenth century. Malwina and her companion Lidia read the story and reflect on the two female characters and their love struggles in the context of a visit at a gothic castle at Oleśnica. The parallel themes Wirtemberska uses on many levels create an interesting dialogue. The two sisters in the parenthetical story are two opposites parallel to Malwina and Lidia. The internal story reflects symbolically on the Malwina story. The two travellers share their observations on how traditions are tied to their age

and their relativity. Ideal love and lifelong sacrifice for love are a fiction to be enjoyed but not lived. Wirtemberska makes her characters voice quite reflective comments on tradition and writing and women's lives.

Lidia, Malwina's travel companion, a double of Wanda from the earlier novel Malwina, has also matured. The originally carefree and joyful character of Wanda/Lidia has known disappointment and knows how far life can stray from the patterns offered by literature. Both Malwina and Lidia are now mature observers, selective in choosing objects of affection and people to lavish their interest in. They are quite different from Yorick, for example, whose program involved an unconditional interest and sympathy in all he encountered. Like other pre-romantics, Wirtemberska's characters are not yet at odds with society but already look for solitude and peace for individual reflection. Wirtemberska's apotheosis of freedom does not take the shape of a radical protest against the world or a violation of the social order.

Malwina and Lydia visit various places synchronically and diachronically - from Poland to Italy through the gothic German past, childhood in Vienna, public ceremonies in Karlsbad and the Greek and Roman antiquity. The Greek heritage is most compelling to her. Her favorite play is Racine's Athalie and she wants to understand an inscription in Greek on the tomb of Antenor.

Not surprisingly the noisy St. Mark's Square in Venice, and the evening din of the city reminds Malwina of "a great collection of crazy people." The city can be tiring: "Satiated with the walls, I desperately need trees, fields, earth and free air." Then she does leave the city, briefly, on a sea voyage back to the Grand Canal which makes her think of Charon's boat carrying spirits across the Styx.

Sad thoughts have overcome  
my Heart, I couldn't discern  
whether I live now or if I  
already lived - the past is  
so present here, they think  
of it so much here that the  
present moments have the  
quality of sad longing and  
abandonment! (145)

Smutne myśli Serce zajęły,  
niedokładnie rozróżniałam,  
czy żyję teraz, czy już  
żyłam - przeszłość tyle tu  
jest przytomna, tyle i us-  
tawnie się przeszłością zaj-  
mują, że chwile obecne cechę  
mają jakiejś smutnej tę-  
sknoty i opuszczenia!

Some Events situates itself closely to Chateaubriand's Voyage en Italie,<sup>118</sup> in its awareness of the transience of life. The image of old deserted palaces and churches helped her to create an atmosphere of the past: "How beautiful it is; how sad!" She claims that the sense of a double existence, the presence of historical time and the experience of that presence so intensify the life of the narrator that her only escape is nature.

Wirtemberska's impression of the Italy contemporary to her, "the country of the dead", overlap with those of other travellers. The dirt and squalor of the beginning of the nineteenth century in Venice did not inspire her in positive

---

<sup>118</sup> Alina Aleksandrowicz, Introduction, Some Events, Thoughts and Feelings Experienced Abroad (Warsaw: PIW, 1978) 28.

terms. What travellers looked for in Italy were monuments of the past. There really is no escape for Malwina. All voyages are circular in the sense that all discoveries only enrich the initial perspective of the traveller, educate to some degree, but do not alter the initial reality. The traveller will always eventually return home. Malwina discovers the pleasures of rambling freely on the roads of Europe but sees the limitation of freedom she so eagerly pursued. The conclusion of her text hides the real discovery:

I was looking for a distraction - I expected joy, I wished Lidia and myself health! I found none of this, but!... But better yet. Oh, how much better. I can't express it in any words how much better.

Szukałam roztargnienia - spodziewałam się wesołości, życzyłam zdrowia dla siebie i dla Lidii! Nic z tego wszystkiego nie znalazłam, ale!... Ale lepiej. Och, jak lepiej. Żadnym słowem nie wyrażę jak lepiej!

Omissions have been made in order to let the reader's imagination wander. She playfully engages the reader in the interpretation of events. Certainly an important change has taken place as a result of the whole voyage but the promised revelation will not take place. The discovery or reflection referred to will not be told in the text. It is a secret in the narrator's experience for the reader to uncover. This type of narration will be characteristic of later literature. Several themes are accomplished through the voyage: Malwina loses the residue of her youthful fancies, she finds herself positioned between historical and present times; visiting new places ceases to be a novelty, as she discovers that novelty is an exercise in the old. All these themes

suggest a closure in Malwina's textual voyage of discovery.

I broke off the vine twigs which covered the inscription in Greek. I desired to break that stone, get into its core and into that ancient past and satisfy my ravenous curiosity!... But I didn't break the stone, I let go of the vine twigs which started creeping on the Greek letters, and abandoning the ruins of Troy and Dido's opulent palace - I sadly turned to a street which *simpliciter* led me to the inn! (149)

Odrywałam gałązki bluszczu, co napis grecki zasłaniały. Przełamać ten kamień, przedrzeć się wgłąb niego i wgłąb tak dawnej Przeszłości pragnęłam i zgłodniała ciekawość nasycić! Lecz kamienia nie przełamałam, gałązki puściłam, które znów po greckim napisie czepiać się zaczęły, a sama rzucając rozwaliny Troi i pałac wystawny podwojów Dydony - smutnie zwróciłam kroki moje w ulicę, która *simpliciter* do oberży mnie doprowadziła.

Malwina's travel is also a *voyage imaginaire*. Free digressions, associations of the imagined with the real would be out of place in a documentary travel account. However, in Some Events the transition between fact and imagination is fluid and constitutes the basis of narration. Her imagination tells the narrator to see in an older man encountered outside the gothic castle a knight. Yet she debunks her own fantasy "(...) unfortunately his too contemporary clothes have spoiled this image a little." (49) She is conscious of creating a new reality during her journey, of the artifacts and probability of the represented events and situations. A picturesque Italian village "seems to be a decoration." There is no willing suspension of disbelief expected of the reader who is an accomplice in this act of creative writing, privy to the deception inherent in story writing.

The travel of the narrator's imagination realizes

itself in their story, as well as against the backdrop of the narrow streets of Oleśnica. In Padua, she is compelled to reconstruct scenes with Antenor, Aeneas and Dido.<sup>119</sup>

Open in its form, Some Events does not have a formal ending. Chapters often begin with fragments of conversations or a question. The open composition of the whole tries to conceal the main organizing principle, although the capricious narration is well thought out. It enables a fluid transition from one subject to another, breaking up the narration at any moment and including other autonomous literary texts. This discontinuity of the account points to the many possibilities of constructing a character. The ultimate conclusion suggested by the text is the fictionality and arbitrariness of writing.

Wirtemberska's work is innovative and accomplished on many levels. She gave a continued textual life to the character of Malwina, a mature and independent writer of her own story. Malwina, knowledgeable about literature, conventions of writing and fictionality of the textual world, as well as cultural relativism in history, creates her own subjective account of a significant voyage to Italy. Departing not only from national and family preoccupations but metaphorically also from the available literary conventions, she creates a new genre based on the sentimental novel but original in its

---

<sup>119</sup> The Aeneid was popular in Poland because Aeneas' voyage metaphorically expressed the Polish people's political exile.

own right. Moreover, she also violates the convention of a defined closure to a female character's life. Malwina not only does not reveal what the most important discoveries of the voyage were, but does not tell the readers what her next destination is. Her secret may take her anywhere. It is one of the few instances when a woman character has an inner life of her own, not known to any omniscient narrator, guarded jealously throughout her story - she walks off into the sunset. She most likely discovers the power of not telling the whole story and the limitations embedded in story telling. For as long as the secret is not revealed, there is tension trapping reader's attention. What is invisible, cannot be defined and categorized. She discovers that actual moving in space is a means of avoiding any closure that her contemporary reality would impose on her, thus refusing to be part of the available taxonomy. The opacity of her account places it closer to modernism than her own time.

Wirtemberska's work includes one woman writer's story; Maria Sadowska presents several. Sadowska never read Wirtemberska's, yet there is a close kinship between their works. Both are "sentimental journeys", although they differ from Sterne's prototype. Like Sadowska later on, Wirtemberska creates a multitude of female characters. Portrayed in the context of a fairly brief text, they comprise a significant contribution to creation of a woman's space in Polish

literature - a space that is non-traditional, fluid, based on learning, discoveries, and offering new possibilities.

Shining all the more brilliantly, Maria Sadowska summarizes possible female topoi in the fantastic Memoirs of A Fly. Memoirs include a series of episodes from the point of view of a winged traveler, a fly, which is looking for a situation that will make it shed a tear of sincere sympathy as a redemption for a previous life as a callous man. The fly travels around the female world that is the domestic sphere of girls' growing up, romantic love, and marriage. It visits some women it knew before its transformation and sees how vulnerable they are in view of the limitations and paradoxes of the culture they live in. Their activities are often limited to reading romances and they are disappointed when life doesn't want to imitate literature. Sadowska does not create perfect models to follow but reconstructs fragmentary individual experience, and defines the symbolic role of the images that help us understand the limitations of language and culture. In its travel to women's private spaces, the fly reports various complications of their reading and writing. Through the accumulation of episodes, it is clear that those women win who take control over their own lives. Sadowska best rewards those heroines who have become writers. She uses the canon ironically, to debunk the images of women created by men and vice versa. She creates women writers as characters in the faith that mastering the

medium of writing, and starting a written tradition for women is the ultimate answer to women's neglect by society.

Memoirs is designed to expose and deconstruct the postulate of the order of inheritance, the patriarchal order. It has a tentative time frame that leaves a degree of openness, and suggests more loose connections and fragmentation on different levels. It begins with a preface, the structure and meaning of which point to the self-consciousness of the creator of the text. It reflects on authorship, the process of writing as well as its product. The narrator of the preface, the friend and publisher of the deceased 'author' of Memoirs, explains the authorship and origins of the text. The 'original' author is Serwacy, a man transformed into a fly in the Ovidian fashion as punishment for being light-hearted and inconsiderate of others. Now he has to look for a situation which would make him shed an unselfish tear. On one level, the theme of metamorphosis concerns people turning into insects which, in the tradition of animal allegorical stories, represent human qualities. On another level, it is a literary metamorphosis of real people from Sadowska's circle into the characters of a novel. It makes Memoirs also a *roman à clef*, impossible to annotate furthermore.<sup>120</sup>

In the 1950's Sadowska's Memoirs was classified by the

---

<sup>120</sup> In an interview in 1993 Juliusz Gomulicki revealed to me that it was common knowledge that Sadowska hid some real characters in many of the episodes according to his father, Wiktor Gomulicki, who was close to Sadowska's circle.

Warsaw Institute of Literary Research, part of Polish Academy of Arts and Science, as belonging to the nineteenth century realist tradition and therefore has not been dealt with until now. In the spirit of current redefinitions, her place, if it is still to be based on genre, should be with other works of fantastic literature.

The unnamed writer, who authors the preface and the concluding remarks of Memoirs of a Fly, says that he or she is present in one of the characters, insists that the stories which follow are true, and solemnly informs the reader that to disbelieve is to die, therefore commanding the suspension of disbelief. There is the encouragement to strive for truth and not to be fooled by appearances, but the reader is fooled quickly. The reader must suspend disbelief - the narrator is, after all, a fly. The fly itself is a writer and editor. He has selected stories to record, of which he self-consciously reminds us in the text. He is also the mastermind behind a scenario of disappointment for his family. He leaves them *memoirs*, yet they record fiction, not fact; fiction is the only inheritance. Actually, at closer examination the narrator's invitation to a close reading makes much sense. If fiction is the only inheritance, how do the fictitious Memoirs comment on the question of heritage and history? The paradox has proven true. The inheritance is a fiction. It is a story, a script that could be rewritten. The novel includes many discontinuities at other levels

also. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the novel is, as it were, modernist before modernism even existed.

The fly is the reader's Cicerone and its winged form enables it to penetrate otherwise inaccessible places and bring to light that which is hidden from view. It is a story of eavesdropping and voyeurism in an effort to uncover secrets and plots, and expose everyday details only visible from close-up. It is objectifying people with a gaze unseen by the object. The fly occupies the invisible position of omniscience, the master perspective. It uses its power mainly to textualize the observed world, though it sometimes physically interferes with it. When the Fly revisits Kocia - his former fiancée who made a promise to die if he died, but failed to keep the promise and then lavished another man with equal affection - the Fly bites her on the nose. Occasionally, it whispers into the characters' ears to explicate their own situation. Disappointed by her hard working and ultra-prosaic husband Piotr, Emilia has chosen as her object of affection a handsome poet, Albert, who sings like Dobrski and dreams like Byron. The Fly witnesses their conversation<sup>121</sup>:

Unfortunately, as often happens in a love duet, when one voice tires and quietens *diminuendo*, the other *crescendo* rises *poco a poco* -

Niestety, jak to często bywa w duecie miłosnym, że kiedy jeden głos nuży się i ucicha *diminuendo*, drugi *crescendo* wznosi się *poco a poco* - aż

---

<sup>121</sup> Maria Sadowska, Pamiętniki Muchy (Warsaw, 1861) 13. All quotations from the text come from this edition in my own translation.

until *con tutta forza*. The conversation must have been long - weighing heavily - because like the flickering of a lamp it was dying down, spilling on Albert's lips; the lamp of truth has burned out; only the dry snuff glimmered with the pale blue flame of effort.

do *tutta forza*. Rozmowa snąć trwała długo - snąć była uciążliwa - bo jak błyski lampy dogorywała, pryskając na ustach pana Alberta, oliwa prawdy już się wypaliła; migał tylko knot suchy, bladoszafirowym płomieniem wysilenia.

In those musical terms, we find out that there is no happy ending to this story. The Fly feels sorry for Emilia and tries to interfere on her behalf by whispering in Albert's ear "Look how beautiful, her posture is highly tragic, she looks like Ristori..." (Patrz jaka ładna, jak jej postawa jest wzniośle tragiczna, jak w tej chwili przypomina Ristori!). Albert's esthetic chord is struck, but not that of his feelings, and he will write a love tragedy for a Warsaw theater as a result. Another male character who looks for esthetic inspiration in women and is deceived by the reality is Adolf.

I met her at her mother's funeral... Oh, I can't even tell you how beautiful she was... pale like a shadow, doleful like an angel at the feet of the Savior on the cross (by Delacroix), her eyes blue, big, filled with tears; you would think it was blue enamel set in a tear... she walked without a moan or complaint, burdened with heavy mourning and pain in her soul. I am telling you, she was most wonderful; the majesty of dolor shone so bright that you would bow in front of such grandeur! If you remember Byron's Hil-

Poznałem ją na pogrzebie matki... Oh, nie umiem ci wypowiedzieć jaka była prześliczna... bo to blada jak cień, smętna jak anioł u stóp krzyża Zbawiciela pędziła Delacroix, oczy jej niebieskie, duże, były pełne łez, sądziłbyś, że to emalia szafirowa w łezę oprawna... szła bez jęku i skargi, ubrana w ciężką żałobę i z ciężkim bólem w duszy. Po-wiadam ci, była precudna, ten majestat nieszczęścia tak ją opromieniał, że ze czcią uchyliłbyś czoła przed jej wielkością! Jeśli przypominasz sobie Hildę Bajro-

da, that's what she looked like... (131) ... Imagine, said the lover with deep sadness, how I felt seeing Cesia in a simple gown with the sleeves pulled up, cutting macaroni and reaching to me with the hand in flour; I bend down to kiss it and I smell melted butter instead of a rose...Blood rushed to my head, my heart froze - so this is my ideal. (135)

na, to ona zupełnie tak wyglądała (...) Wyobraź sobie, mówił z głębokim smutkiem ex-kochanek, jakiego doznałem uczucia na widok tejże Cesi w prostym szlafroku z zakasanyimi rekawami, krajała sama makaron i tę rękę zamoczoną wyciąga do uścisku, pochylałam się ją pocałować, a tu masło roztopione. Krew mi uderzyła do głowy, serce jakby kto lodem obłożył - i to mój ideał!

Adolf soon marries a woman whom he considers an ideal. It is Arabella whom he has met riding a horse on a stormy night, a woman who understands Byron. She is actually a comparatist working in German literature. Adolf's disappointment lies in this: although she is versed in poetry, and Romanticism in particular, she is not of romantic or poetic disposition. She is too busy with her work to see him. The Fly describes her room:

There is nothing more beautiful than the study of a woman artist, a dreamer and a writer - paintings of famous masters on the walls, statues, mirrors, flowers, archeological pieces, gold plumes, various inks, lavishly bound books and other gems! (...) Look, this is marvelous Egeria, Aspasia, Sappho, vel Arabella, my friend Adolf's wife. (...) "His lordship is asking to see you because he hasn't seen you in a week." "Me? ... has it been a whole week? ... excuse me but I am very busy... I am comparing Goethe and Schiller..." (150)

Nic piękniejszego jak gabinet kobiety-artystki, marzycielki i literatki - obrazy sławnych mistrzów, posągi, rzeźby, lustra, kwiaty, drobiazgi archeologiczne, pióra złote, atramenty różnokolorowe, książki pysznie oprawne i tym podobne cacka! (...) Patrzcie, to cudna Egerya, Aspazyja, Safo, vel Arabella, małżonka mojego przyjaciela Adolfa. (...) - Jasnie Pan pyta pozwolenia widzenia jasnie pani, bo już cały tydzień nie widział. - Mnie? ... czyż to już tydzień... przepraszam pana, że i dziś nie mogę... jestem bardzo zajęta. Porównywał Szyllera z

## Goethem..

Arabella enjoys surrounding herself with art and esthetic objects, she reads and writes a great deal and does not need the company of her husband as much as he does hers. Now Adolf dreams of the Cesia he has discarded. The Fly comments:

What an intellectual harmony! Although apart, they are both engaged in comparison. She Goethe with Schiller, he - turquoise eyes with blue... One is analyzing objectively, the other subjectively. (155)

Co za harmonis intelektualna! Co za zgodność myśli! - Chociaż są osobno, oboje bawią się w porównania. Ona Szyllera z Goethem, a on oczu szmaragdowych z niebieskimi. Jedno analizuje przedmiotowo, drugie podmiotowo.

Arabella "neglects" her husband for her comparative work in German romanticism. In this marriage, the texts are the only children.

Aside from romantically complicated encounters, the Fly also meets other insects who, like it, were transformed based on their earthly deeds. After the trip the Fly took around the world, it goes back to its archives located in a hive of drones. The drones, former literary critics, always know the latest gossip. They mock a woman writer's, Karysta's, contribution to literature and laugh. The Fly is compelled to join them but is secretly embarrassed for succumbing to the pressure. It secretly believes it is commendable that a young woman should desire a writer's recognition for herself. The Fly questions the situations it encounters with the depth of a cultural critic.

Memoirs is a novel with a frame encompassing a cycle of

stories, specifically love episodes, set in different conventions, paradigms and genres. These stories of relationships deconstruct the patriarchal postulates of order, the "feminine" subject matter of love, marriage and family. Both male and female characters read romantic literature and make unsuccessful attempts at realizing those fictions in their lives. They fall into the danger of applying its premises to life. The narrating "I" systematically goes beyond the magical closure of marriage to explore how man's promise of "happiness ever after" works years later, or rather how it does not work. Most stories in Memoirs, therefore, come in two episodes, the "then" and "now." They show the strength of habit and limited education of the character, however atypical. Men look for happiness in fulfillment of dreams of perfect women; women, on the other hand, look for fulfillment in professional work which is often creative writing. The most "developed" and interesting are the characters of the female authors. Unhappy in love, Karysta does not reach for arsenic, a common solution to women's problems in nineteenth century literature, but becomes an independent person, and an author whose work inspires the literary milieu of Warsaw to ponder complex questions in interpretation of a literary work, the measure of talent and the goals of literature and art in general. She despises that reading public who consumes literature as "a course for good digestion after dinner." Although her emotional goals are frustrated,

she finds meaning in life. She is a possible double for Sadowska, as she hides behind the Creole poetess whose work is discussed in the after dinner episode. She is different and misunderstood.

The form of Memoirs is first and third person prose narrative, but it also includes occasional poetry and dialogue. It is also a theater play in many scenes, a dramatization of familiar themes in a new light. Sadowska, like the other writers discussed here, creates a new mythology, a new repertoire of themes allowing women a wider range of choice of models of behavior. She is a new Clio of nineteenth century Poland with a scroll of romantic stories with unconventional endings.

The Fly will finally burst out crying unselfishly and gain its redemption at seeing how Laura Modesta Virginia lives up to the expectations implied by her triple name. She is a "modest" wife who will not reveal to her husband that she is another man's Laura. She applies all the paradoxical precepts of women's education. Her reading list includes works on Christian women, and on women and their mission. Thanks to that education, she makes a discovery "bigger than Columbus's." She communicates with her lover through the notes they place in her husband's oilcloth hat. Unknowingly he is the lovers' intermediary. The Fly exclaims:

Oh, women, who can match you  
in the cunning of discovery  
and invention... What is the  
discovery of the way to the

O, kobiety! Któż wam dorówna  
w dowcipie odkryć I wynalaz-  
ków. Czymże jest odkrycie  
drogi do nowego świata,

new world in view of what you, wonderful Virginia, discovered to communicate with the one who loves you. Christopher Columbus, how trite is your deed...(235)

wobec tej, którą ty wynalazła, cudowna Wirginio, do komunikowania się z tym, co cię ubóstwia! O Krzysztofie Kolumbie, jakże błahe twe dzieło.

Her husband, whose name is Prezompcjon Knociński (Presumption Wick), summarizes his understanding of women:

A woman's heart should be like a ship which in the storm saves those who are on it... and it shouldn't be like the ship that crashes against the rocks, or ejects even the greatest treasures to prevent its own sinking. The heart of a woman should be like a swallow which nests under the protection of the roof and hides it from profane eyes... but it shouldn't be like the swallow which flies away to other countries in the winter... (239)

Serce kobiety powinno podobne być okrętowi, który wśród burzy chroni tych, co na nim przebywają... i nie powinno być podobne okrętowi, który się rozbija o skały, lub w czasie niebezpieczeństw wyrzuca z siebie najdroższe skarby, byleby sam nie zatonął. Serce kobiety powinno być do jaskółki, która zwykle pod strzechą lepi gniazdeczko i ukrywa je przed okiem profanów... ale też nie powinno podobne być jaskółce, która na zimę odlatuje w inne kraje.

He uses a series of stock metaphors and although he deconstructs them, he does not allow the possibility of bad connotations to apply to his life. Presumption also writes a history of women to win Emetycja's heart. "An Apotheosis of Woman" presents her as a continuator of the tradition started by Deborah, Judith and Esther who freed their nation, continued by Cleopatra and Madame Pompadour who ruled their kings, the female geniuses: Temistocla - Pitagoras' sister, Sappho, Aspasia and Karmenta. The catalog of names is a yet another way in which women's heritage is presented in Sadowska's cyclical novel of interconnected stories.

There is a kinship between this meaning in the authors

discussed and Maria Rodziewiczówna's The Distaff, (Kadziel) (1898), another Polish novel about women trying to find a means of expression and self-realization. Rodziewiczówna also knows women are expected to be part of the feminine plot in the doxa of sociabilities. Her young heroine Stasia achieves her goals as she has inherited a feminine/feminist tradition in the two books: the book of "unremarkable tales" by Taida and the book of healing by Dysia. Taida explores the ways of gender markings and this will help Stasia who must learn to unravel the truth of the sexist neglect of an important point of view. Not only is Taida creating a source of knowledge for the new generation of women but also a counterstatement in the codifying format of The Book. Her book records the memory of women, 'the other' memory. She creates a monument to women's contribution to society. The book naturalizes and codifies the values and ideals important to women. It deploys evidence in text. The project reflects on the tradition of the heritage on the sword side. Reading, like writing, is an important activity, both informative and revelatory. Whereas the older women have only a male heritage, Stasia has two books written by women to read and learn from, and, of course, surpasses her role models.

Maria Sadowska's novel is wonderfully rich in design, intertextuality and the incisive expression of male/female conflict in the world of book writing and the dissemination of knowledge. It is also a wonderful comment on the typical

nineteenth century representation of women in literature, on artistic society, and the wider question of the influence of literature on life. She did not find an audience with this book, though it is written in a vivid and intellectual language which easily appeals to the modern reader. She is not 'feminine enough' in content and form for the female readership, and too personal for the male readership. Nonetheless, Sadowska created some wonderfully rich and vivid meanings for our reading or, more precisely, re-reading pleasure. Sadowska's Memoirs of A Fly and Wirtemberska's Some Events, Thoughts and Feelings Experienced Abroad end with an unexpected question mark. Both the Fly and Malwina find what they were looking for, but will not reveal it to the reader. The writers leave their heroines (and there are many in Memoirs) an open future, an option to continue the voyage of discovery and also the freedom of inner life, not bound by an obligation to reveal everything. A Double Life, discussed below, ends in a sad closure in the material world as Cecilia is inevitably married off to an unloving and gambling man, but she finds a voice in the poetry she writes.

\*

If interesting female travel accounts were written in Russia before the twentieth century, none have yet resurfaced. Interestingly enough, as Russia trailed in development of European literature, Russian women writers did not find a voice until that time. One outstanding exception is

Karolina Pavlova (1807-1893). Her Dvojnaja zhizn<sup>122</sup>, A Double Life, (1848) falls naturally together with Sadowska's work. Both writers engage in profound cultural criticism, remarkably modern and thoughtful, feminists avant la lettre. A wonderfully interesting author, Pavlova recreates the dichotomy between the superficial cultural expectations of a Russian aristocratic woman and her desire to defy those expectations by departing into the world of subjectivity and fantasy. Cora Kaplan observed that "the doubled inscription of sexual and social difference is the most common characteristic trope of the nineteenth century" and it holds true for Central and Eastern European literatures as well.<sup>123</sup>

Pavlova was literally ostracized by the literary world for being outspokenly critical of other writers of the time.<sup>124</sup> The situation got even worse when she was impoverished by a gambling husband.<sup>125</sup> Exiled, she lived in Germany for over thirty years, writing for hours every day. She

---

<sup>122</sup> Karolina Pavlova, Dvojnaja zhizn (Moskva: Tipographia Gotie i Monigietti, 1848). All subsequent quotations in Russian refer to this edition. Karolina Pavlova, A Double Life (Ardis: Ann Arbor, 1978). All quotations in English refer to this edition.

<sup>123</sup> Cora Kaplan, Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism (London: Verso, 1986) 167.

<sup>124</sup> Adam Mickiewicz was her first romantic love. He taught her Polish and, impressed by her talent, encouraged her to write. She knew all major European languages and Dutch.

<sup>125</sup> Barbara H. Monter discusses the reception of Pavlova's work in her time in the *Introduction* to her translation of Karolina Pavlova, A Double Life (Ardis: Ann Arbor, 1978).

suffered economic hardship. In 1860 she met Tolstoy who got her a small pension from the tzar. He recognized her greatness and she translated his poetry into German. A Double Life was published at the height of her literary career and was well-received by the critics. It reflects on her life and it is at the same time a spiritual biography of many women in the nineteenth century.<sup>126</sup>

Vera Vladimirovna brings her daughter to the materialist, unemotional aristocratic circles to find her a good marital contract. Cecilia resists that reality and escapes into the world of subjectivity - she dreams in verse. She is not only creating a metaphoric space of her own, but she is a poetess, too. The world outside is conventional and based on maintaining appearances. Cecilia, due to some skillful intrigue, is married off to the wrong man. The better candidate was desired by a competing mother for her own daughter. Lamentably, both mothers are defeated and their daughters suffer the life-long consequences of their actions. In this story, everything goes wrong for Cecilia.

She is restricted to the home, together with her mother; it is the women's sphere. In the aristocratic world in Russia, women remain enclosed and protected by the home, or in the carriage traveling to another woman's home, or the

---

<sup>126</sup> Other works written in the 40's in Russian on the situation of women are Nekrasov's "Trojka", "Edu li noc'ju", Herzen's Kto vinovat?, "Soroka-vorovka", Drizinin Polinka Saks, Sollogub Bal, Majkov Mashenka and stories by E.A. Gan, M.S. Zhukova and E.N. Shahova.

church. There are a few moments when she is actually released from this microcosm in the prose part of the text. She briefly goes out on to the balcony and later takes a horse ride. Symbolically, she temporarily steps outside and takes control. However, she is more successful at distancing herself from reality in the privacy of her bedroom at night, when she starts dreaming of the developments of the day in her own way. The vain and materialistic world is transformed into her own sequences of images. The narrator knows there are places where "everything was united harmoniously" and one of them is an old aunt's house where there is also space for dust and cracks in furniture, yet Cecilia is unaware of it. Each chapter of the book begins with a longer prose passage and ends in verse reflecting her state of mind metaphorically. It certainly reminds one of interior monologue. This peculiar combination of prose and poetry is a significant accomplishment.<sup>127</sup> Although A Double Life is comparable to Novalis' Henrich von Ofterdingen, in Novalis' work the connection between poetry and prose is much looser than in Pavlova's where both are aspects of the same character's reality. She uses no fairy tale elements or mystical dream interpretation characteristic of his novel. Her use of the metaphor of dream as an insight into the invisible is pre-symbolist. Interestingly, the mysterious visitor in her

---

<sup>127</sup> Pushkin intended to combine poetry and prose in "Egyptian Nights" ("Egipetskie noci") but never completed the work.

dream, the voice of her soul or the personified spirit of poetry and creativity, initiates a dialogue.

With the approach of her marriage, her dreams become more dramatic and anxiety ridden. From spring to fall, she is matched, engaged and married off for the winter ahead. Cecilia, like Pavlova herself, loses her dowry and status to her husband's gambling. No matter how deeply Cecilia resembles Pavlova in this respect, the character represents the situation of many women of the time. Cecilia finds a temporary solution to the pressures of the expectations and actual staging of encounters and other elaborate activities that are designed to win a man's heart. At bedtime

(...) a strange and inexplicable thought kept breaking through, a heavy and persistent feeling, as if she were being made to guess a riddle, find a word, remember a name and was not able to. (...) The drowsiness closed it [the view of an icon] from her sight.. but the question in her soul did not sleep... what was it?... who?...and where?..(8)

между тем, сквозь эту веселую мысль про-  
глядывала беспрестанно, советъ не к стати,  
мысль странная и непонятная, чувство тя-  
гостное и неотступное, какъ будто бы ей дол-  
жно было разгадать какую-то загадку, найти  
какое-то слово, вспомнить какое-то имя, кото-  
рое ей не давалось.... какъ это было? .. кто?.. и гдѣ?..

She escapes into her own world of dreams and switches into verse. The poem is written in the third person singular. First, there is silence, a starry sky and a sense of emptiness where:

She walks - walks against her will  
Against distances ever more silent

To where, powerful and despondent  
That glance shines, like a summons  
And she stood before unknown force  
Bowing a submissive head.(10)

Она идеть— идеть неволью  
Через вѣтвистый просторъ,  
Туда, гдѣ властный и унылый  
Тотъ взглядъ сіяетъ какъ призывъ,  
И стала предъ безвѣстной силой,  
Главу покорную склонивъ.

Cecilia will engage in a dialogue in the second dream and finally assert her voice in the very last poetic passage. It is indeed fascinating to read the symbolic world of dreams reflecting Cecilia's reality. The mysterious appearance says

I am the secret of your dream  
That you could not reach with reason,(...)  
Weren't you filled with the unknown,  
Didn't you look into the distance?  
Not knowing loss, still  
Didn't you miss something? (...)  
That small-souled being isn't you.(...)  
You will understand inspiration's secret,  
You will live the soul's life fully. (18-19)

Я таинство твоей мечты;  
Чего умомъ не постигала,  
Ты мыслей въ міръ несясь богатый,  
Его границы не перешла-ль?  
Безвѣстнымъ не была-ль полна ты!  
И не глядела ли ты въ даль!  
Тебѣ, незнающей утраты,  
Чего-то не было ли жаль!

After witnessing a poet's declamation at her mother's party, Cecilia dreams again. The prose narrator scorns the salon audience's taste for utilitarian poetry and lack of empathy for the young imaginative poet:

(...) for the first time ... was he preparing to deal with this class of people, who are separated from the rest of humanity and compose that proud "world of fashion" as it is so naively called, for which no other world exists in the Lord's universe. (22)

По всему было видно, что онъ въ первый разъ готовился занять собою этотъ разрядъ людей, отдѣляющихся отъ остальнаго человечества, и составляющихъ тотъ надмен- ный *Свѣтъ*, такъ наивно названный, для ко- тораго нѣтъ инаго въ Господней вселенной.

Yet Cecilia listened to him carefully when he spoke of destiny and inspiration. She was told "there were even women poets, but this was always to her as the most pitiable, abnormal thing, as a disastrous and dangerous illness." (27) Nonetheless "there awakened in her a new and obscure sympathy for that harmony of verse, ... those improper delights." The mysterious stranger from the earlier verse is revealed to be her new conscience. In a small boat, the persona of her new verse travels down the river. She is a poetess reciting her autobiographical verses to herself. The whole world responds to her poems. In the prose of the next day, she takes a ride "with that violent female daring which is so far from manly valor... she wanted to gallop away from life's imprisonment... shining eyes, her hair flying loose." (32) At the same time her life is being decided by others. Dmitriy who was "inadvertently" told Cecilia would have a large dowry, courts her and wins her heart.

(Dmitriy) looked only at what was pointed to him.... He saw Cecilia in a different light, one extraordinarily

favorable to her. Decidedly he didn't wish for the death of her brother or even the old aunt, but it was totally beyond his power to save the poor boy or the good lady, he began to consider them in their grave. (36)

Ума прѣтомъ ограбленнаго, онъ обыкновенно глядѣлъ только туда, куда ему указывали; и теперь, следуя указанію, онъ въ первый разъ увидѣлъ Цецілію въ другомъ освѣщеніи, и въ необыкновенно для нея выгодномъ. Онъ рѣшительно не желалъ смерти ни брату ея, ни даже старой теткѣ, но такъ какъ ему невозможно было никакими силами спасти ни бѣднаго мальчика, ни доброй старушки, то онъ сталъ ихъ считать уже похоропѣвшими.

He belongs to a lower stratum of Cecilia's class and is poor<sup>128</sup> and not well-educated, which features a rare combination of an unequal marriage.<sup>129</sup> He also makes a bet with his male friends that he will continue gambling and drinking. They express prejudices against women such as their idea that women limit man's freedom and sap his energy. We know Cecilia is one of those young women who have been brought up in ignorance and then placed in a world where they are powerless. Needless to say she does not understand poverty and her future life with Dmitrij. She thinks poor

---

<sup>128</sup> Adam Mickiewicz proposed to Pavlova when she was eighteen but her uncle threatened to disinherit the whole family should the marriage take place.

<sup>129</sup> Diana Greene discusses the role of social politics in Russia in Karolina Pavlova's "At the Tea Table and the Politics of Class and Gender", The Russian Review: An American Quarterly 1994 Apr., 53:2, 271-84.

people "look bad because they have no sense of taste".

Before the actual wedding she dreams of death. Her mysterious interlocutor sadly bids farewell to her and foretells that she will suffer and learn about the world, but she will be able to turn it into "rich fruit". Nothing will rescue her from the marriage although the dream seems to have mixed with the reality. She remembers a couplet "So go as agreed/ Defenceless and alone." (108) The "rich fruit" will be her poetry.

I am weighted down with impotent striving,  
I am full of heavy questions.  
Consciousness alone lives in my soul,  
The only strength, and may it never die. (111)

Меня томить безсильное исцанье,  
Вопросами я тяжким полна.  
Одно лишь есть въ душѣ моей сознанье,  
Одна лишь мощь, и не умереть она!...

Defeated on one level, Cecilia will strive to find the answers, hoping that her poetry will stay with her.

The worlds that Cecilia functions in are uncongenial. Her dreams try to bridge their differences but she can't read and learn from them fast enough. She is not conscious of her transgression; there is no space for a female poet. The conflict between the poet and society earlier inspired Pavlova's great predecessors in Russia: Lermontov and Pushkin. It pervades her poetry as well, and is reflected in the novel, yet its consequences are deeper. Not accepted as a woman poet, Pavlova dealt with the inner unresolved con-

flict of a poet and a woman. Her contemporaries thought she looked "somehow ridiculous reciting" her poetry because it was not fit for a woman to do. Nekrasov wrote a parody entitled "My Disillusionment", in which he questions that "women might want to give up jelly-boiling and pickle-making for philosophy and literature."<sup>130</sup>

If we are to believe Madame de Genlis who wrote in "La femme auteur" that "men would never accept a woman author as an equal, they would be more jealous of her than of a man,"<sup>131</sup> the problems faced by women writers are universal. Pavlova is an outspoken critic of the secondary status of women and it is reflected in all her writing. Cecilia comments on the position of the woman poet, although she will not reveal her poetic disposition or write her poetry down until the very end of her story. In the second poetic passage, Cecilia actually speaks with the personified poetry that tells her she does not have to be "The blind slave of custom,/ That small being isn't you." (18) The poetry reveals her precarious position and its cause, and promises she will understand the secret of inspiration and be freed by poetry.

The binary oppositions underlying the epistemology of the late nineteenth century world are evidenced in her

---

<sup>130</sup> Munir Sendich, The Life and Works of Karolina Pavlova, diss., New York University, 1968 (New York: New York University, 1968) 2-39.

<sup>131</sup> Madame de Genlis, Nouveaux contes moraux et nouvelles historiques (Paris, 1804) 61-62.

story. Her marginalized position of being underaged, female, voiceless and dreaming of autonomy in verse stands against the universal and dominant prose of female fate in terms of marital contracts and contests for fortunes. The temporality and supposed wholeness of the exterior world is contrasted with the extemporaneity and contingency of Cecilia's "I". The ride in the "little boat" of her interior independence cannot prevent the closure written for her in the available sociolect. She is inevitably married but it is a negative closure. She knows well that it is a grave mistake. She will have her own poetry to defy her fate by writing her self.

Cecilia's life is incomprehensible due to other limitations as well. In terms of the oedipal object-relations and in the way these are psychologically appropriated, internalized and transformed, Cecilia cannot ever completely disengage herself from the mother. Nancy Chodorov has stressed:

The feminine oedipus complex is not simply a transfer of affection from mother to father and a giving up of mother. Rather, psychoanalytical research demonstrates the continued importance of a girl's external and internal relation to her mother, and the way her relation to her father is added to this. This process entails a relational complexity in feminine self-definition and personality...<sup>132</sup>

Cecilia experiences a continuation of the two-person relationship of infancy. Her preoedipal period is very long.

---

<sup>132</sup> Nancy Chodorov, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley: California UP, 1978) 92.

This attachment sustains the mother-infant exclusivity and the intensity, ambivalence, and boundary confusion. Cecilia seems unable to distance herself from this relationship and gain autonomy and freedom. Her dreams show a desire and an effort to do so on the symbolic level. Yet the nature of Vera's motherliness and the quality of her mothering propagate this inability. She treats Cecilia as an extension of herself. She misunderstands her daughter's conformity as her acceptance of the rules whereas Cecilia just feels too weak to free herself from the bind. She is "empty of herself". She has a feeling of lack of self, an emptiness typically pronounced in the presence of others who read the social and emotional setting differently but do not recognize this, nor recognize that the person herself is in a different world.<sup>133</sup> Pavlova's novel vividly illustrates this kind of a psychotic mother-daughter relationship. Cecilia is not accorded a separate reality and she unconsciously tries to create an agency to interpret the world in her own way. There is lack of feedback to her needs. Vera is oblivious to her daughter's inner life. Interestingly, the father figure in this family "was generally only referred to as the husband of Vera Vladimirovna." He has nothing to say. Cecilia is still at the stage of primary identification. The general process of individuation and separation remains a female developmental issue. It bears on women's attempt at creating

---

<sup>133</sup> Enid Balint, "On Being Empty" (1963).

their own means of expression, their own discourse.

Other metaphoric voyages are taking place while Cecilia is attempting to create some personal space for herself. The high society women make tours of the city to visit each other. "With the topographical knowledge of ladies, they rode wide and far." (12) The map of Petersburg's treasures is intricate, has its safe and dangerous places, both visible and hidden passages. To get the prize in the form of rich husbands for their daughters, Vera Vladimirovna and Natalia Afanasjevna Valitskaja tirelessly traverse the city in a pattern only known to them. Especially the latter knows how society works. She pays all the necessary visits during which she plants the right seeds for the desired results to emerge. She carefully follows the trails on the social map: she knows who sits or walks with whom in the drawing rooms and at the balls. She understands the significance of clothing as a system of signs as well. Her trips resemble an overview of the battlefield before an actual war. Pavlova creates a sense of the density of those connections, made more opaque by the rules of the game where everything being artificial must appear natural. Secrets pile up, otherwise the guises of the actors involved would be revealed and the available scripts do not allow disclosure.

Pavlova's style and sense of humor resemble Sadowska's. They both possess romantic qualities but mix them with a strikingly contemporary intellectual and ironic sense of

humor, partly didactic and always amusing. They both balance on the border of reality and subjectivity. Observant, intellectual and vivid, they use the theme of departure to show the dialectic dichotomy of the private and public worlds that women inhabit and question the narrative authority of the dominating discourse. They exercise authorial authority by creating a new sequence, an addendum to the cultural history and women's double existence. Similarly to Wirtemberska, they expand the limits of the respective genres.

Some Events, Thoughts and Feelings Experienced Abroad, Memoirs of a Fly and A Double Life naturally fall together in their self-reflexivity and literariness. These works comment on the romantic conventions of writing as well as writing literature in general. They enjoyed a certain recognition in their lifetime but later disappeared as writers. Wirtemberska's work was not accepted for publication because of its deficiency of realistic detail. Sadowska was well-known and was published in Warsaw. She failed to be recognized by later audiences, however, because she transgressed the limits set for a woman writer. Other, more realist female writers were given priority in the canon. Pavlova was viciously criticized and fell into oblivion due to her forced exile.

Sadowska, Wirtemberska and Pavlova deserve renewed attention, both popular and critical, as they represent early Polish and Russian feminist writing. They are pro-

gressive and interesting both as women expressing their experience and as women writing about women writing. By recording the female "I" and female experience in the form of departure, they write new stories and myths for women which allow a development of new symbols and metaphors for a female mythology.

## VI

## Conclusions on Genre, Gender and Textual Departure

in the fourth world  
 someone I had never met before called me by my name  
 'come here a minute, Sandra'  
 and gave me a map on which was clearly marked  
 the way through suburbs airports deltas avenues  
 letters windmills tulips galaxies  
 to the fifth world  
 and the sixth world  
 and the seventh

Sandra Gilbert In the Fourth World. Worlds of Difference

This text written by a literary critic also seeks to imagine changed, charged dimensions of social and linguistic freedom for its female creator.

My own voyage has taken me far beyond the initial point of departure and altered my own geography. Literally, I have changed continents and switched from a national to comparative literature. Metaphorically, I have circled the globe of literary study synchronically and diachronically. The tour has revealed many clear views; some have been a little clouded. From the old books collection at the National Library in Warsaw, Polish archives in Grodno, Bielarus, Paris public hospital records and la Bibliothèque Nationale, to the Rare Books Collection and other divisions of the New York Public Library -- by plane, by train and on foot, at times with a Metro pass in hand -- I travelled far and wide for the pleasure of finding female travel accounts in different languages.

The works discussed, from Margaret Cavendish and Aphra

Behn, Françoise de Graffigny, Claire de Duras and Unca Eliza Winkfield, to Maria Sadowska and Karolina Pavlova, exploit secondary world images to achieve the goals of giving female characters freedom to be independent. Textual displacements of the heroines are used as a subversive trope in sociolects where women's potential for creativity was limited.

The dialectic of unusual content and form allows women writers to write themselves as autonomous selves and confront the sexual politics of their time. This playful relationship between gender and genre, where the texts oscillate between fact and fiction, suggests that there is a reason why women writers have to resort to twisting the available form. Since neoclassicism through romanticism, considered to be a breakthrough in genre development, women writers continue mixing forms. Conscious of socio-political exigencies of their time, the writers in question acknowledge their transgressions and speak on behalf of women. By using first person female narrators, they give eye-witness credibility to their travellers.

The works by Cavendish and Behn exploit the theme of departure in metaphoric images of an alternative world while the female travellers create their own textual identities. Similarly to Cavendish's self-referentially named authoress "Margaret, the Duchess", the narrator of Behn's Oroonoko is implied to be "Aphra Behn." None of the texts necessarily represents the narrating self as auto-biographical. These

are textual acts of self-creation, in which both writers are involved in the issues of their own otherness as women, of their creative instincts and desire to be recognized as authors equal among their male contemporaries. They both use *meiosis* in their respective novels in an effort to gain the readers' sympathy by raising their sex and limited access to learning. Deprived of a legitimate space in the seventeenth century English literary market, they undertake extraordinary travels into the worlds of their own. The female authors write (themselves) under their proper names, a rare and brave act in a time when a writing and publishing woman meant illegitimacy.

The works of both Graffigny, Duras and Winkfield inscribe heroinism in the narratives written by exotic, non-white heroines of their stories. As non-white and "other," they are learning about the white European culture, and observe and critique its paradoxes and injustices. They particularly focus on the women's disadvantaged social position. Using the plot of departure literally and metaphorically, the female writers give their writing textual heroines an opportunity to transcend the conventions in which they function.

Germaine de Staël and Dorothy Wordsworth belong to a tradition of travel account writing which involves curious tactics of allusion and omission. They each create an autonomous textual self in the process of life writing;

their works show a tightening gap between travel writing and fiction. The themes of travel, in opposition to a significant male counterpart, in different ways allow both Staël and Wordsworth to redefine those males' experiences and create independent images of their own selves at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Maria Sadowska, Maria Wirtemberska and Karolina Pavlova are progressive and interesting as self-reflective writers of fictions of female departures in Polish and Russian. Both Sadowska's Memoirs of A Fly and Wirtemberska's Some Events, Thoughts and Feelings Experienced Abroad end with an unexpected question mark. Both the Fly and Malwina find what they were looking for, but will not reveal it to the reader. The writers leave their heroines (and there are many in Memoirs) an open future, an option to continue the voyage of discovery and also the freedom of inner life, not bound by an obligation to reveal everything. A Double Life ends in a closure in the objective world as Cecilia is inevitably married off, but she finds a voice in the poetry she writes. Pavlova recreates the dichotomy between the superficial cultural expectations of a Russian aristocratic woman and her desire to defy those expectations by departing into the world of subjectivity and fantasy.

The writers discussed in this work depart from the norm both in content and form. They expand the limits of genres they use. Cavendish consciously blends romance and

essay in The Blazing World. Behn uses a border form between fiction and reportage in Oroonoko. Françoise de Graffigny combines epistolary novel and a philosophical tale in Lettres d'une Péruvienne. Wirtemberska and Sadowska write pre-modernist fragmented texts reflecting various discontinuities. Pavlova uses prose and poetry as two facets of the same character. They experiment with the form as well as the subject matter in their accounts.

These works explore the relationship between travel and women's space, and the theme of a woman who travels and creates a textual space for herself in particular. Not stating why they travel - they imply that creating space is the actual purpose of their travel. These works deserve renewed attention, as they represent early feminist writing. These authors are progressive and interesting both as women expressing their experience and as women writing about women writing. By recording the female "I" and female experience in the form of departure, they write new stories and myths for women which allow a development of new symbols and metaphors for a female mythology.

### Works Cited

#### Primary Sources:

- Astell, Mary. A Serious Proposal to the Ladies. 1697.
- . Some Reflections Upon Marriage. 1700.
- Audouard, Olympe. "Voyage dans le pays de boyards" in Le voyage en Russie. Paris: Editions Laffont, 1990.
- Behn, Aphra. The Dutch Lover. The Works of Aphra Behn. ed. Sommers, Montague. Benjamin Bloom: New York, 1967.
- . The Emperor of the Moon. The Works.
- . The Lucky Chance. The Works.
- . Croonoko, or the Black Slave in The Works of Aphra Behn. N.Y.: Benjamin Bloom, 1967.
- . Voyage à l'isle d'amour in The Works of Aphra Behn. N.Y.: B. Blom, 1967.
- Bradstreet, Anne. The Tenth Muse Recently Sprung in America. Boston, 1981.
- Cavendish Newcastle, Margaret. The Description of the New World, Called the Blazing World. London, 1668.
- . The Life of the First Duke of the Newcastle. London: J.M. Dent, 1916.
- . Poems and Fancies. Scolar Press: Menston, England, 1972.
- . Sociable Letters. London, 1664.
- Duras, Claire de. Ourika. N.Y.: MLA, 1994.
- Genlis, Madame de. Nouveaux contes moraux et nouvelles historiques. Paris, 1804.
- Gomez, Madelaine A. La jeune Alcidiane. Paris, 1733.

- Graffigny, Françoise. Lettres d'une Péruvienne. N.Y.: MLA, 1993.
- Pavlova, Karolina. Dvojnaja zhizn. Moskva: Tipographia Gotie i Monigietti, 1848. A Double Life. Ardis: Ann Arbor, 1978.
- Rautenstrauchowa, Łucja. Miasta, góry i doliny. Poznań, 1844.
- Robert, Anne Marie. Voyages de Milord Ceton dans les sept planètes. Garnier, 1787.
- Sadowska, Maria. Pamiętniki Muchy. Warsaw, 1860.
- . Podróż dookoła świata w trzy godziny. Warsaw, 1859.
- Staël, Germaine. Dix années d'exil. Paris: Librairie Polon, 1904.
- . "Mirza". Oeuvres complètes de baronne de Staël publiées par son fils. Paris, 1820.
- Winkfield, Unca. The Female American. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Literature House, 1970.
- Wirtemberska, Maria. Niektóre zdarzenia, myśli i uczucia doznane za granicą. Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1978.
- Wordsworth, Dorothy. Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820. London: Macmillan, 1941.
- . Journal of my Second Tour of Scotland. London: Macmillan, 1822.

#### Secondary Sources:

- Abel, Elisabeth, Marianne Hirsh and Elizabeth Langland, eds. The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development. Hanover, NH.: UP of New England, 1983.
- Adams, D.J. "The Lettres d'une Péruvienne: Nature and Propaganda." Forum for Modern Language Studies. 2:4, 1992. 121.
- Adams, Percy. Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel. Lexington: Kentucky UP, 1983.

- . Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660-1800. Berkeley: California UP, 1962.
- Adickes, Sandra. The Social Quest: The Expanded Vision of Four Women Travellers in the Era of French Revolution. N.Y. Lang, 1991.
- Altman, Janet Gurkin. "Graffigny's Epistemology and the Emergence of the Third-World Ideology." Writing the Female Voice ed. Goldsmith, Elizabeth C. Northeastern UP, 1989. 172-202.
- . "A Woman's Place in the Enlightenment Sun." Romance Quarterly 38.3 August 1991. 261.
- Anderson, Patrick. Over the Alps: Reflections on Travel and Travel Writing with Special Reference to the Grand Tours of Boswell, Beckford, and Byron. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1969.
- Andrews, Malcolm. The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989.
- Atkinson, Geoffrey. The Extraordinary Voyage in French Literature Before 1700 New York, 1920.
- . The Extraordinary Voyage in French Literature from 1700-1720. Paris, 1922.
- Auerbach, Nina, and U.C. Knopfmanhel, eds. Forbidden Journeys - Fairy Tales and Fantasies by Victorian Women. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992.
- Balayé, Simon. Autobiography, Historiography, Rhetoric - a Festschrift in Honor of Frank Paul de Bowman. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994.
- Barr, Marleen. "Food for Postmodern Thought" Feminism, Utopia and Narrative ed. Goodwin, Sarah Webster and Jones, Libby Falk. Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1992. 21-33.
- Batten, Charles L., Jr. Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth-Century Travel Literature. Berkeley: California UP, 1978. Biguenet, John, and John Mosier, eds. New Orleans Review 18, no.2 (Summer 1991). Special issue on Travel.
- Bishop, Peter. The Myth of Shangri-La: Tibet, Travel Writing and the Western Creation of the Sacred Landscape. Berkeley: California UP, 1989.

- Bruss, Elizabeth. Autobiographical Acts. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976.
- Buford, Bill, ed. "Travel Writing." *Granta* 10(Winter 1981).
- . "In Trouble Again: A Special Issue on Travel Writing." *Granta* 20(Winter 1986).
- . "Travel." *Granta* 26(Spring 1989).
- Campbell, Mary B. The Witness and the Other World. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988.
- Carlson, P. Literature and the Lore of the Sea. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1986.
- Carpenter, Lynette. Haunting the House of Fiction. Knoxville: University of Tennessee P, 1991.
- Cheyfitz, Eric. The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from "The Tempest" to "Tarzan". N.Y.: Oxford UP, 1991.
- Chodorov, Nancy. The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
- Christ, Carol P. Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest. Boston: Beacon Press, 1980.
- Christie, John A. Thoreau as World Traveler. N.Y.: Columbia UP, 1965.
- Cixous, Hélène, Gagnon, Madelaine and Leclerc, Annie. La Venue à l'écriture. Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1977.
- Clifford, James and George Marcus. Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Berkeley: California UP, 1986.
- Conrad, Peter. Imagining America. N.Y.: Oxford UP, 1980.
- Crichfield, Grant. Three Novels of Madame de Duras: Ourika, Edouard, Olivier. The Hague: Mouton, 1975.
- DeJean, Joan. Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of Novel in France. N.Y.: Columbia UP, 1987.
- . Displacements: Women, Tradition, Literature in French. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990.

- . "Staël's Corinne: The Novel's Other Dilemma." Stanford French Review. 11 Spring, 1989. 42-51.
- Dodd, Philip, ed. The Art of Travel: Essays on Travel Writing. Totowa, N.J.: Frank Cass, 1982.
- Donawerth, Jane and Kolmerten, Carol A. Utopian and Science Fiction by Women. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1994.
- Douthwaite, Julia. Exotic Women: Literary Heroines and Cultural Strategies in Ancien Régime France. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania UP, 1992.
- DuPlessis, Rachel Blau. "Feminist Apologues of Lessing, Piercy and Russ" Frontiers 4, Spring 1979. 1-8.
- Flammarion, Camille. Les mondes imaginaires et les mondes réels: voyage pittoresque dans le ciel et revue critique desentifiques, et romanesques, anciennes et modernes sue les habitants des astres. Paris, 1863.
- Franklin, Wayne. Discoverers, Explorers, Settlers: The Diligent Writers of Early America. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1979.
- Gallager, Catherine. "Embracing the Absolute: The Politics of a Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England." Genders I. 1988. 27.
- Geertz, Clifford. The Interpretation of Cultures. N.Y.: Basic, 1973.
- Gilbert, Sandra et al. The New Feminist Criticism. N.Y.: Pantheon, 1985.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Gubar, Susan. The Madwoman in the Attic. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.
- Goreau, Angeline. Reconstructing Aphra - A Social Biography of Aphra Behn. N.Y.: Dial Press, 1980.
- Gove, Philip B. The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction. New York, 1941.
- Grant, Douglas. Margaret the First. A biography of Margaret Cavendish Newcastle. 1623-1673. London: Rupert-Hart Davis, 1957.
- Greene, Diana. "At the Tea Table and the Politics of Class and Gender." The Russian Review: An American Quarterly. April, 53:2. 271-84.

- Gusdorf, George. "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography." Autobiography. Ed. Olney, James. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980. 28-39.
- Gutwirth, Madelyn. Twilight of the Goddess. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992.
- Herrmann, Claudine. Les voleuses de langue. Paris: De Femmes, 1976.
- Hogsett, Charlotte. "Generative Factors in Considerations on the French Revolution." Germanine de Staël. Crossing the Borders. ed. Gutwirth, Madelyn. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1991.
- Homans, Margaret. Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Bronte and Emily Dickenson. Princeton, NJ.: Princeton UP, 1980.
- Kamionka-Straszakowa, Janina. Złakany Wędrowiec. Z dziejów romantycznej topiki. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1992.
- Kaplan, Cora. Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism. London: Verso, 1986.
- Kelly-Gadol, Joan. "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" Becoming Visible: Women in European History ed. Brithental Renate. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.
- Kowalewski, Michael. Temperamental Journeys: Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel. Athens: Georgia UP, 1992.
- Kristeva, Julia. Desire in Language. New York: Columbia UP, 1980.
- Lachèvre, Frédéric. Les successeurs de Cyrano de Bergerac. Paris: 1922.
- Leed, Eric J. The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism. N.Y.: Basic, 1991.
- Lejeune, Phillipe. Je est un autre. Paris: Seuil, 1980.
- Levin, Susan N. Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1987.
- Lewis, Robert W., ed. "Travel/Travail: A Special Issue." North Dakota Quarterly 54:4 Fall, 1985.
- Lionnet, Françoise. "Métissage, Emancipation, and Female Textuality in Two Francophone Authors." Displacements eds. DeJean J. and Miller N. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

UP, 1990. 254.

Lowes, John Livingstone. The Road to Xanadu A Study in the Ways of the Imagination. Boston: Constable, 1927.

Michael, Maurice A., ed. Traveller's Quest: Original Contributions Towards a Philosophy of Travel. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries P, 1950.

Miller, Nancy. "Emphasis Added: Polts and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction." The New Feminist Criticism ed. Showalter Elaine. New York: Columbia UP, 1985. 340.

----. French Dressing. New York: Routledge, 1995.

----. The Heroine's Text: Readings in the French and English Novel, 1722-1782. N.Y.: Columbia UP, 1980.

Mills, Sara. Discourses of Difference. An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism. N.Y.: Routledge, 1993.

Moers, Ellen. Literary Women. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.

Mulvey, Christoper. Anglo-American Landscapes: A Study of Nineteenth Century Anglo-American Travel Literature. London: Cambridge UP, 1983.

----. Transatlantic Manners: Social Patterns in Nineteenth Anglo-American Travel Literature. London: Cambridge UP, 1990.

Nicholson, Marjorie. A World in the Moon. London, 1936.

Olney, James. Metaphors of the Self - the Meaning of Autobiography. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972.

Ostriker, Alicia. "The Thieves of Language." The New Feminist Criticism. Ed. Gilbert, Sandra. New York: Pantheon, 1985. 330.

----. Writing Like a Woman. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983.

Palmer, Andrew. "Egeria the Voyager, or the Technology of Remote Sensing in Late Antiquity." Travel Fact and Travel Fiction. ed. Zweder, Martels. E.J. Brill: Leiden, New York, Koln, 1994.

Pascal, Roy. Design and Truth in Autobiography. London: Routledge, 1960.

- Peterson, Carla L. The Determined Reader: Gender and Culture in the Novel From Napoleon to Victoria. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1986.
- Porter, Dennis. Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. Imperial Eyes. Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation. N.Y.: Routledge, 1992.
- Price, Hendricks, and Margo Jennet. "The Roaring Girls: A Study of 17 th. Century Feminism. Ann Arbor, MI (DAI). 1988 Apr., 48: 2492A-2493A.
- Prins-s'Jacob, Anneke. "Aphra Behn. Surinam and the Critics." OSO. A Journal for Surinamese Linguistics Literature and History. 3:1 May, 1984. 127-136.
- Rice, Warner G., ed. Literature as a Mode of Travel. N.Y.: New York Public Library, 1963.
- Rich, Adrienne. "When We Dead Awaken." Norton Anthology of Literature by Women. eds. Gilbert and Gubar. New York: Norton, 1985. 2045.
- Riffaterre, Michael. Fictional Truth. N.Y.: Columbia UP, 1991.
- Ring, J. Betty, and Plasa, Carl. The Discourse of Slavery. Aphra Behn to Toni Morrison. N.Y.: Routledge, 1994.
- Robinson, Jane. Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990.
- Robinson, Jeffrey C. The Walk: Notes on a Romantic Image. Norman: Oklahoma UP, 1989.
- Rosinsky, Natalie. Feminist Futures: Contemporary Women's Speculative Fiction. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research, 1984.
- Rudman, Mark. "Secret Destinations: Writers on Travel." Pequod 1985. 19-21.
- Russel, Mary. The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt: Women Travellers and Their World. London: Collins, 1986.
- Sadoff, Dianne F. "Mythopoeia, the Moon, and Contemporary Women's Poetry." Massachusetts Review 19 Spring, 1978: 93-110.

- Said, Edward W. Orientalism. N.Y.: Pantheon, 1978.
- Sala-Molins, Louis. Le Code Noir. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 1987.
- Sells, A. Lytton. The Paradise of Travellers: The Italian Influence on Englishmen in the Seventeenth Century. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1964.
- Sendich, Munir. The Life and Works of Karolina Pavlova, Diss. New York: New York University, 1968.
- Sherman, Sandra. "Trembling Texts: Margaret Cavendish and the Dialectic of Authorship." English Literary Renaissance Winter, 1994:1. 184.
- Showalter, Elaine, ed. The New Feminist Criticism. N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1985.
- Spengemann, William C. The Adventurous Muse: The Poetics of American Fiction. 1789-1900. New Haven: Yale UP, 1977.
- Stanton, Domna, ed. The Female Autograph. New York: New York Literary Forum, 1984.
- Stout, Janis P. The Journey Narrative in American Literature: Patterns and Departures. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood P, 1983.
- Switzer, Richard. "Mme de Staël, Mme de Duras and the Question of Race." Kentucky Romance Quarterly 20, 1973. 303-316.
- Tilton, Robert. Pocahontas. The Evolution of an American Narrative. New York: Columbia UP, 1994.
- Todd, Janet. The Sign of Angellica. Women, Writing and Fiction 1660-1800. London: Virago Press, 1989.
- Tyler, Lisa. "Big Brother Is Watching You: Dorothy Wordsworth's Alfoxden and Grasmere Journals." University of Dayton Review, 23:2 Spring, 1995. 87-95.
- Walker, Alice. In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose. N.Y.: HBJ, 1983.
- Waller, Margaret. The Male Malady. Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1993.
- Wilson, Katharina, and Frank Warnke, eds. Women Writers of the Seventeenth Century. Athens: Georgia UP, 1989.

Wittig, Monique. "On the Social Contract." The Straight Mind and Other Essays. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992. 42-44.

Wolfson, Susan. "Individual in Community: Dorothy Wordsworth in Conversation with William." Romanticism and Feminism. 145.